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Huayno

The *huayno* is a popular song and dance form indigenous to the Andean region of Peru. It features a fast and upbeat duple meter. Traditional ensembles involve Western and native instruments such as violin, trombone, *charango*, and *quena*. *Huayno* compositions combine instrumental sections with strophes sung in Spanish or Quechua (Peruvian native language). Lyrics encompass themes of love, economic struggle, and bucolic remembrance of the highlands landscape. Melodic phrases utilize pentatonic scales and are usually fluid and embellished, with a preference for high pitches and brilliant timbres. Forms frequently emphasize binary structures, presenting a harmonic movement from a major section to a relative minor section or vice versa. Occasionally, a faster and celebratory coda—also known as *fuga*—is introduced to provide closure. As a dance, *huayno* comprises the interaction between male and female couples. Such couple-centered choreography relates to the ancient indigenous notion of *yanantin*, or complementary duality, which has played a preponderant role in shaping Andean social values and cultural milieus through history.

The *huayno* emerged in Peru as a manifestation of an ongoing process of *mestizaje*. This process compounds a syncretism of ethnic and cultural elements that derive from Amerindian and western cultures. Contrary to an exoticist view of *huayno* as living patrimony of the Incan Empire, the genre is in actuality not more than 400 years old. Even though scholars have argued that *huayno* was originally a funeral dance with little popularity among pre-Hispanic communities, its most salient characteristics were crystallized during colonial times and henceforth.



A Peruvian ensemble plays a traditional *huayno*. (AP/Wide World Photos)

Historically, *huayno* has experienced multiple changes in standard instrumentation and compositional procedures as well as other areas; much of this change has resulted from the use and adaptation of European instruments and esthetic priorities. String instruments such as the *charango* and the *arpa indigena* were derived from the **guitar** and **harp**, becoming extremely popular. The Spanish language was incorporated into song lyrics and the use of raised sevenths, or leading tones. These alterations led to an expansion of the genre's expressive capabilities. In that sense, the performance of *huayno* served as a vehicle for an increasing participation of indigenous and *mestizo* groups at a national level, enfolding a survival strategy for the Andean community within the ongoing process of cultural amalgamation.

After 1950, the genre started to grow in popularity. Several commercial recordings were made and distributed via radio and eventually other mass media. Artists such as Pastorcita Huaracina and Jilguero del Huascarán became icons of Andean nationhood, bringing working-class audiences music that reflected the sharp consciousness of the social and economic issues that oppressed indigenous groups. Peruvian upper classes—which previously had rejected Andean music as boisterous and primitive—slowly started to accept *huayno* as one tangible voice within the nation's multifaceted identity. In light of its power to attract rural and indigenous listeners, the genre also became popular in **Bolivia**, **Argentina**, and

Chile. Groups such as Inti-Ilumani and Quilapayun from Chile proposed a fusion of *huayno* with popular Latin American rhythms, promoting, in this way, a pan-Latino consciousness. In Argentina, songwriter Atahualpa Yupanqui and singer Mercedes Sosa borrowed *huayno* instrumentation and sonorities to develop a contemporary language that appealed to the local sensibility. Their goal was to reformulate *huayno* in order to spread a message against the inequalities afflicting indigenous communities.

In the 1970s and 1980s, *huayno* served as a point of departure for the creation of styles that reflected Peruvian movement toward integration. While the process of *mestizaje* was still painful, indigenous populations managed to solidify their cultural presence through the development of a genre that merged *huayno*'s traditional elements with more contemporary styles such as *cumbia* and rock. The emergence of a *Peruvian tropicalism*—rooted both in a rich indigenous past and in the flow of transnational influences—was a key element in the reinforcement of the Andean identity. Born in the context of migratory movements that took entire communities from the highlands to the coastal city of Lima, *Peruvian tropicalism* included styles such as Andean *cumbia* and *chicha*, which rapidly captivated the masses.

The popularity of the *chicha* surpassed all other native musical forms in Peru. It combined *huayno* elements—e.g., melodic phrases, inner pulse, preference for brilliant tonality—with *cumbia*'s danceable duple syncopations. Part of *chicha*'s success relied on the use of Afro-Caribbean percussion instruments, the electric guitar, and the bass. These instruments conferred a sense of pride and modernity to the *mestizo* and disenfranchised audiences. Ensembles such as Chacalon y La Nueva Crema and Los Shapis appeared in massive concerts at which Lima's immigrant working-class had the chance to dance and socialize. *Chicha* concerts led thereafter to the formation of a new type of sociocultural dynamic in the country.

In the 1990s and 2000s, a new incarnation of *huayno* once again achieved popularity without precedent. *Techno-cumbia*, a hybrid form that fuses electronic dance music, *cumbia*, and *huayno*, took the country by surprise when singer Rosy War's single "Nunca pense llorar" broke records for sales across the nation. This time, however, the popularity reached the middle and upper classes. From that point on, *huayno* and its multiple intersections have remained an expression that embodies central aspects of the Amerindian and Peruvian *mestizo* population.

Further Reading

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