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"Chinampa y trajinera" Distills Musical Folklore

For Enrico Chapela, the composition *Chinampa y trajinera* represents his own *Danzón No. 2* by Arturo Márquez, or his *Huapango* by Moncayo, because, like these works, it starts from a folkloric language that he develops and brings into his own area of interest.

Commissioned by the Mannheim Orchestra in Germany in 2021 with the request to incorporate Mexican elements, Chapela decided to create a piece that would capture the essence of the country without resorting to the obvious.

His search led him to Xochimilco, where the *trajineras* and *chinampas* became the connecting thread for a musical structure reminiscent of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, the suite by Russian composer Modest Mussorgsky.

The lack of a uniquely original folklore from Mexico City led Chapela to explore the sounds that converge in the capital.

In a parallel to Mussorgsky's "Promenade," in which the spectator walks between pictures, *Chinampa y trajinera* narrates a stroll through the canals of Xochimilco, making stops at different *chinampas*.

During the sections in between, musical *trajineras* approach, playing traditional Mexican *sones*, according to the composer's notes.

The *chinampas* were composed with a contemporary language, while the *trajineras* preserve more of the characteristic style of their popular origins.

On the journey, sounds of the Chiapanecan marimba, the Jarocho harp, the Huastecan violin, and the mariachi trumpet emerge, representing the country's sonic diversity.

The sections of the work take their inspiration from Xochimilco: *Trajinera Chiapaneca-Chinampa de Ahuejotes*, *Trajinera Jarocho-Chinampa de Ajolotes*, and *Trajinera Huasteca-Chinampa de Muñecas-Trajinera Tapatía*.

Chapela has explored folklore in several of his works. *Ingesu*, with its homage to soccer and its use of urban Mexican language; *Dan-Son*, a fusion of various traditional *sones*; *Braceros*, his cantata for mariachi and orchestra that he now seeks to turn into an opera; and finally, *Chinampa y trajinera*, in which he synthesizes his previous explorations in a work of great symphonic scope.

In each of them, the composer approaches Mexican musical roots from a contemporary perspective, adapting them to his own language.

Instrumentation plays a crucial role in the piece. Chapela incorporates advanced orchestral techniques along with rhythmic patterns characteristic of traditional genres.

His deep study of *son huasteco*, *jarocho*, and mariachi, undertaken during the composition of his cantata *Braceros*, allowed him to approach *Chinampa y trajinera* with an informed and respectful perspective on tradition.

In his words, the folkloric passages turned out to be more challenging than the contemporary ones, both for him and for the orchestra. The rhythmic precision of *son huasteco* and the spontaneity of mariachi required additional effort from the musicians, who were accustomed to a different type of articulation and phrasing.

"In a discussion with another 'hardliner contemporary' composer, I said to him: 'Look, if it's so easy, I challenge you to surpass Arturo Márquez's *Danzón*. Better yet, not you, let's get Pierre Boulez or Karlheinz Stockhausen and see if they can surpass Arturo Márquez's *Danzón*. I'd bet on Arturo Márquez.'

"I bet Boulez couldn't have, even if he had wanted to. It's not as easy as it seems; it has other challenges. Rhythm is one of them, melodic fluidity," he asserts.

Chinampa y trajinera will be performed on March 1 and 2 by the UNAM Philharmonic Orchestra; on May 23 and 24 by the Río Negro Philharmonic Orchestra in Argentina; and on September 26 and 28 by the Yucatán Symphony Orchestra.

Chapela is also considering another ambitious project: the conversion of his cantata for mariachi and orchestra, *Braceros*, into an opera, for which the INBAL's National Coordination of Music and Opera has shown interest.

This is a commission from the Santa Rosa Symphony in California that addresses the history of Mexican agricultural workers in the United States under the Bracero Program from 1942 to 1964.

In parallel, Chapela has been called by the organizers of the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will be co-hosted by Mexico, the United States, and Canada, to compose a work for the inauguration of the cultural events.

Erika P. Bucio 26/02/2025 <https://www.reforma.com/decanta-chinampa-y-trajinera-folclor-musical/ar2960838>