



# Conjunto Music from South Texas

Amanda C. Soto  
Texas State University  
asoto@txstate.edu



**Historical & Contextual Information:** Regional dance music that originated in the borderlands of South Texas. South Texas was once occupied by native Americans, then settled by Spain in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, later became Mexico, Republic of Texas, and then the United States. Conjunto is an integral part of the cultural lives of Mexican Americans of different generations living in the United States and around the world. Conjunto refers to both a musical style and to a group of musicians that play that music. The typical ensemble includes a *bajo sexto* (a double-coursed 12-string bass guitar, accordion, drum set, and bass guitar). The music is a combination of polkas and waltzes borrowed from the Czech, Polish, and German immigrants that migrated to South Texas and Mexican *nortero* music. Standard repertory includes polkas, *rancheras*, *cumbias*, *huq pangos*, *redovas*, *chotis*, *danzones*, and *boleros*. *El taquachito* (baby opossum) is a smoother, slower dance style where both people are very close together resembling a baby opossum on its mother's back.

**Album: *Taquachito Nights: Conjunto Music from South Texas***

**Song 1:** *Bajo Sexto y Accordion*

**Song Type:** *Canción Ranchera* (Ranch Song) - Mexican country/folk songs with a refrain and generally played in waltz or polka dance tempos

[Lyric translations](#)

[Album Liner Notes](#)

**Let's Sing:**

Tanto talento local  
también internacional  
le llevamos el mensaje  
en forma muy especial.

Cantamos nuestras canciones  
con bastante corazón  
es la música tejana  
bajo sexto y acordeón.

**Album: *Taquachito Nights: Conjunto Music from South Texas***

**Song 2:** *El Coco Rayado* (The Stripped Coconut)– Ruben Vela y su Conjunto

**Song Type:** *Cumbia* – Contemporary Colombian dance rhythm that has grown in popularity among Latin American countries, especially in Mexico and Central America. The tempo is moderate and the harmony is fairly simple.

**Let's Sing!!**

Que sí, que sí.  
Que no, que no  
Ese coco rayado  
lo quiero yo.

**Album: *Los Texmaniacs Borders y Bailes***

**Song 3:** *A Mover el Bote* (Shake Your Booty)

**Song Type:** *Cumbia* – Contemporary Colombian dance rhythm that has grown in popularity among Latin American countries, especially in Mexico and Central America. The tempo is moderate and the harmony is fairly simple.

**Let's Dance:** Cumbia

*Examples of Cumbia dancing on YouTube*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EKD-Etizcmw> – Cumbia at South Coast Dance Studio

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nlYI30Dqfc0> – How to do Cumbia Dancing: How to do basic cumbia dance steps

**Let's Play the Recorder:**

# Bajo Sexto y Accordion

Freddy Gonzalez y Super Unidos

Verse 1

Arr. A. Soto

Soprano Recorder 

S. Rec. 

## Composition:

- Have students compose their own verses using the main melody from *Bajo Sexto y Accordion*.
- 4 Lines in either English or Spanish

## Comparing Cumbias Musically:

1. *El Coco Rayado*
2. *Chicitios pero Picos*

## Ask about the differences in the two songs:

- Same instruments as the first recording?
- Do both recordings have singing?
- What about the form of each piece?
- Do both recordings have parts that repeat?
- Which recording do you think came first?

## Let's Play:

Pattern 1 – repeat twice

Pattern 2 – repeat twice

## Chicitios pero Picos

Los Polkeros de Ben Tavera King

Arr. A. Soto

## Song Form

Intro

A 1<sup>st</sup> Ending

A 2<sup>nd</sup> Ending

B

A 1<sup>st</sup> Ending

A 2<sup>nd</sup> Ending

B

Solo Section

B

A 1<sup>st</sup> Ending

A 2<sup>nd</sup> Ending

B


A 1<sup>st</sup> Ending

A Coda

A Section

Soprano Recorder 

Drum Rhythm 

Orff Bass Xylophone 


To Coda B Section

Soprano 

Drum 

O. B. Xyl. 

D.S. al Coda

Soprano 

Drum 

O. B. Xyl. 

## Lesson Extensions:

- Dance to the music: learn other types of dances associated with the music
- Invite musicians to give lecture demonstrations
- Learn about other song forms, meter, and rhythm
- Sing more songs
- Discuss issues of identity, racism, and immigration
- Take a field trip: Visit the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center in San Antonio; Attend the Conjunto Festival, or attend Conjunto/Tejano concert
- Start a Conjunto ensemble

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## **Resources**

### **Books:**

- Pena, Manuel H. 1985. *The Texas-Mexican Conjunto: History of a Working Class Music*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Tejeda, J., ed. & A. Valdez, ed. 2001. *Puro Conjunto: An Album in Words and Pictures*. San Antonio: Center for Mexican American Studies, University of Texas at Austin, and Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center.

### **Articles:**

- Soto, A. (2008). Conjunto in the Classroom. *Music Educators Journal*, 95, 54-59.

### **Recordings:**

- Tejano Roots: The Roots of Tejano and Conjunto Music. Ideal/Arhoolie CD-341
- Tejano Roots: The Women (1946-1970). Ideal/Arhoolie CD 343
- Taquachito Nights: Conjunto Music from South Texas. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings - SFW40477 1999.
- Accordion conjunto champs of Tejano and Norteno music. Arhoolie Records, 2004
- Conjunto! Texas-Mexican Border Music. Rounder Records, 1994. (Vol.1-6)
- Borderlands from Conjunto to Chicken Scratch. Smithsonian Folkways Records. 1993
- Mexican-American Border Music. An introduction, The Pioneer recording artists. Arhoolie Folklyric, 1994

### **Videos:**

- Songs of the Homeland, Austin, TX: Galan Productions
- Tex-Mex video recording: Music of the Texas Mexican borderlands
- ACCORDION DREAMS, filmed by Hector Galán in 2000, had a national broadcast premier on August 30, 2001 on PBS.
- Latino Music USA – PBS Documentary

### **Websites:**

- <http://www.folkways.si.edu> - Tools for Teachers/ Lesson Plan, Videos, and Albums
- <http://musicaldelpueblo.org> - Online Exhibit Featuring Music from Latin American (Conjunto Video under Community Section)
- [www.pbs.org/accordiondreams/main/index.html](http://www.pbs.org/accordiondreams/main/index.html) - Website on the History of the Accordion and of Conjunto Musicians
- <http://www.texasfolklife.org> - Conjunto Tradition Curriculum Guide
- <http://americansabor.org/> - Free K-12 Curriculum that features the role of Latinos in U.S. Popular Music
- <https://www.lib.utexas.edu/benson/border/arhoolie2/raices.html> - The Roots of Tejano and Conjunto Music

### **Definitions:**

- Norteño** – genre of music in Northern Mexico
- Rancheras** – genre of traditional music in Mexico; songs originated in countryside of rural Mexico
- Cumbias** – Columbian folk dance and dance music
- Huapangos** – Mexican musical rhythmic style of the Son Huasteco genre
- Redovas (redowa)**—originating from a Czech Folk dance
- Danzones** – dance originated from Cuba
- Boleros** – A Spanish popular dance or song

**CATALOG**

# Borders y Bailes

Los Texmaniacs



**DIGITAL DOWNLOAD**  
\$9.99

**CD** \$14.98

## Release Info

CATALOG NUMBER  
SFW40555

YEAR(S) RELEASED  
2009

LABEL(S)/COLLECTION(S)  
Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

SERIES  
Tradiciones/Traditions Series

ARTIST(S)  
Los Texmaniacs

GENRE(S)  
Latin, World

RECORDING ERA(S)  
2000s

CREDIT(S)  
Max Baca - Producer  
Daniel E. Sheehy - Producer, Liner Notes, Photographer  
Pete Reiniger - Recorder, Mixing Engineer  
Joe Treviño - Recorder  
Charlie Pilzer - Mastering Engineer  
Cooley Design Lab - Designer  
Carolina Santamaría Delgado - Translator

[Download Liner Notes](#)



## TRACK NOTES



### 1. Marina (Marina) *canción-polka*

This popular bilingual song in the classic Tejano polka-rhythm song form anchors the album firmly in Texas Mexican cultural territory.

You know I love you, / and that I never have forgotten you. / I swear to you, my Marina, / I will never forget you.

### 2. A mover el bote (Shake Your Booty) *cumbia*

The *cumbia*, a popular dance form that spread from Colombia to many parts of Latin America, caught on in south Texas, where it took on its own, regional style. “A mover el bote” is local parlance for “shake your booty.”

Come on, my pretty dark girl. / Come on, let’s dance. / Let’s shake our booties / because we should enjoy life.

### 3. Redova *redova*

The *redova* (also spelled *redowa* and *redoba*) rose to popularity in Europe in the mid 1800s and was imported to Mexico shortly thereafter. Its sprightly one-two-three step resembles a fast waltz. David Farías points out that the *redova* is still danced in the Rio Grande Valley and the Gulf of Mexico coast around Corpus Christi, and that an accomplished accordionist keeps the genre an active part of the *conjunto* repertoire. David Farías and Max Baca perform this *redova* as a duo—the early *conjunto* sound set by pioneering musicians such as accordionist Narciso Martínez and *bajo sexto* player Santiago Almeida.



[Album Link](#)

[Liner Notes Link](#)

1. Explain cultural context & musical characteristics
2. Review prior knowledge needed for the lesson
3. Attentive Listening Experiences
  - a. Marina (cancion-polka)
  - b. A Mover el Bote (cumbia)
  - c. Redova (redova)
4. Engaged Listening Experiences with 3 Songs
  - a. Have students move or do body percussion to beat on their own for each song
  - b. Ask about the meter for each song
  - c. Ask about differences between each song (tempo, style, meters, voices, etc...)
5. Explain what each song form is
  - a. Canción Polka – Danceable 2/4 polka beat; Polka is a dance and genres of music originating in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Czech Republic that spread to other parts of Europe and then around the world
  - b. Cumbia – Colombia’s national dance and one of the most popular Latin American music rhythms with historical roots in Africa, Europe, and indigenous people of Colombia. Cumbia has a binary rhythmic structure and is in a 2/4 meter.
  - c. Redova – Czech origin derived from *rej* (whirl) danced in a 3/4 meter with turning and leaping waltz steps.
6. Dance
  - a. Watch videos of how to dance each song and have students try each dance out
  - b. Allow them to create their own dances depending on the music and what they hear
    - i. When would they turn or do spins within each song?

Videos:

1. Canción Polka
  - a. [Polka in Original Style](#)
  - b. [Conjunto Polka](#)
2. Cumbia
  - a. [Cumbia Basics](#)
  - b. [Conjunto Cumbia](#) (start at 1:03)
3. Redova
  - a. [Original Redova in Polka Time](#)
  - b. [Conjunto Redova](#)
4. [Old Highway 90 Project – How to Dance Tejano Style](#)
  - a. Reviewing different ways of dancing Conjunto/Tejano music