

FERNANDES, Gaspar: *Xicochi* (ed. Ahmed Anzaldúa)

FERNANDES, Gaspar (1566 - 1629) Xicochi (unknown) (ed. published 2021)

Voicing: SA w/ S and A solo

Accompaniment: continuo and percussion **Duration:** 2' 45''

Availability: Border CrossSing, Graphite Publishing (BC-006c)

Difficulty: easy **Language:** Nahuatl

Text Source: anonymous

Text:

Xicochi conetzintle	<i>Hush little beloved child,</i>
Caomiz huihui joco in angelos me	<i>Behold, there are angels here to rock</i>
	<i>you to sleep.</i>
Aleloya	<i>Hallelujah</i>

Tempo/Style: ♩ = 90; Much slower, with freedom (♩ = ca. 100)

Range and tessitura: (C4 = Middle C)

S Solo: A4 - E5 (G5)
Soprano: D4 - C5
Alto: D4 - C5

Musical characteristics:

- written in C-major
- written in 3/4, felt in 1 with the exception of mm. 49 - 55 (felt in 3)
- dynamic range: *p* - *f*; with each repetition at a different dynamic level than the last
- predictable harmonic structure (often in parallel thirds or fourths)
- mm. 42 - 55 sung in hymn-like style with S descant
- score indicates: S solo is generally improvised, notation provided is a suggestions, performers are encouraged to create their own descant

Technical considerations:

- attention to intonation with repeated pitches
- hemiola appears in the final two systems (mm. 42-55) in all voice parts
- melodic material is passed between A soloist and S line in canon; awareness of which part has the melody is crucial
- main melody is repeated 3 times, allowing for ease of learning
- alignment of down beat and maintain a consistent, steady tempo throughout is crucial

- alignment of beginning and final consonants

Supplementary information:

- editor's program notes:
 "Very little is known about the Portuguese-Mexican composer Gaspar Fernandes. It is clear that a musician with this name worked in Évora, Portugal; Guatemala City, Guatemala; and Puebla, Mexico although it is still uncertain whether it was the same person or several people with the same name. "Xicochi" is one of many villancicos by the Gaspar Fernandes who worked in Puebla Cathedral, notable for writing works in pseudo-African and Indigenous languages in addition to numerous works in Spanish. This performing edition incorporates performance traditions associated with Xicochi from various communities in Central Mexico and is how Border CrosSing often performs this work. Editions that reproduce only the notes and rhythms as they appear in the manuscript preserved in the Oaxaca Codex, without the addition of these performance traditions, are freely available and in the public domain.

This villancico from the early 1600s has become a standard of choral Christmas repertoire in Mexico. In the manner of the early Baroque, the music itself illustrates the text expressively. The alto lead-in for each new phrase, the use of ternary meter, and the consonants of the Nahuatl language all contribute to paint a picture of a mother rocking a child to sleep. This work is often performed in a wide variety of voicings, with the two upper parts often assigned to children, or in different call-and-response groupings. It has become a tradition in many Mexican congregations to separate the "Hallelujah" section from the rest of the work, creating the effect of angels singing to the mother and child; we enhance this effect by performing this section a cappella and by adding a soaring improvised soprano cadenza. It is also traditional in some Mexican communities to sing several repetitions of this piece, changing the dynamics and performing forces each time. One additional performance tradition is the use of goat-hoof shakers by the choristers, meant to imitate a baby's rattle.

The instrumentation is flexible. While a harpsichord or organ would both be historically-appropriate harmony instruments, this piece is most often performed in Mexican congregations with guitar or regional strummed string instruments such as the jarana, vihuela, or harp. Various bass instruments can be used, including cello, bassoon, or double bass; for Border CrosSing performances, we generally omit the bass instrument or only add it for the loudest repetition."

- IPA pronunciation guide is provided in score
- also available: [SSA](#) (BC-006b), [SATB](#) (BC-006a)
- recording link: [Border CrosSing](#)