



# Intimate Distance: Andean Music in Japan

*Michelle Bigenho*

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What does it mean to play "someone else's music"? *Intimate Distance* delves into this question through a focus on Bolivian musicians who tour Japan playing Andean music and Japanese audiences, who often go beyond fandom to take up these musical forms as hobbyists and even as professional musicians. Michelle Bigenho conducted part of her ethnographic research while performing with Bolivian musicians as they toured Japan. Drawing on interviews with Bolivian musicians as well as Japanese fans and performers of these traditions, Bigenho explores how transcultural intimacy is produced at the site of Andean music and its performances.

Bolivians and Japanese involved in these musical practices often express narratives of intimacy and racial belonging that reference shared but unspecified indigenous ancestors. Along with revealing the story of Bolivian music's route to Japan and interpreting the transnational staging of indigenous worlds, Bigenho examines these stories of closeness, thereby unsettling the East-West binary that often structures many discussions of cultural difference and exotic fantasy.

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