

Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest

Volume 1
Issue 1 *Identity, Culture, and Art in New Mexico*

Article 32

2021

Fiesta de San Lorenzo, Bernalillo, Nuevo Mexico

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Recommended Citation

Gandert, Miguel A.. "Fiesta de San Lorenzo, Bernalillo, Nuevo Mexico." *Chamisa: A Journal of Literary, Performance, and Visual Arts of the Greater Southwest* 1, 1 (2021). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/chamisa/vol1/iss1/32>

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Fiesta de San Lorenzo, Bernalillo, Nuevo México

by Miguel A. Gandert

The Bernalillo *Matachines* dance is among the oldest celebrated in New Mexico. Oral tradition links it to *La Vuelta*, the return of the *Españoles Mexicanos* in 1693 (formerly known as, *La Reconquista*). The dance celebrates San Lorenzo, the first Iberian saint, whose feast day in 1680 marked the start of the Great Pueblo Revolt. Then, "Bernalillo" was a series of ranches scattered between two Pueblos: *Tuf-Shurn-Tui de San Antonio* (Sandía) and *Tamayá de Santa Ana*. *Hispano* settlers were mercifully warned by their Pueblo neighbors to flee for their lives, a deliverance attributed to *San Lorenzo*. Characters like *Monarca* (Moctezuma) and *Malinche* link the choreographic narrative to the Conquest of Mexico, but the dance is about spiritually surviving conquest. The death scene of the *Torito* at the hands of the *Abuelos* or ancestral spirits is especially symbolic. If the bull is the ancient totem of imperial Spain, his death and post-mortem castration are a sign that the imperial nightmare is over. By definition, the *Matachines* is a ritual of decolonization.



Miguel A. Gandert, "*San Lorenzo, Sea Mi Guía y También Mi Defensor*, Bernalillo, New Mexico," 2000



Miguel A. Gandert, "*Entre Palmas Anda La Malinche*, Bernalillo, New Mexico," 2000



Miguel A. Gandert, "Dos Ángeles de la Danza, Bernalillo, New Mexico," 2000



Miguel A. Gandert, "*Mi Jesús, Pastor Divino, llévame por buen camino*," Bernalillo, New Mexico, 2020



Miguel A. Gandert, “*Tres Princesas del Monarca*, Bernalillo, New Mexico,” 2000

Miguel Gandert, an award-winning documentary and fine-art photographer, is a native of Española, New Mexico, and currently lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Gandert is a Distinguished Professor of Communication and Journalism at the University of New Mexico. His photographs have been shown in galleries and museums throughout the world and are in numerous public collections, including, the Smithsonian Museum of American Art. His series, *Nuevo México Profundo, Rituals of an Indo-Hispano Homeland*, was the subject of a book and one-person exhibition, which was held at the National Hispanic Culture Center of New Mexico in 2000.