



FANDANGO! at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian

The *fandango* is an ancient Mexican celebration that includes traditional music, dance and poetry. It is a particular mix of local indigenous influences combined with Afro-Caribbean and Spanish traits that came with the conquest of Mexico.

The word *fandango* comes from the African dialect of Mandinga and means ‘party.’ The *fandango* started its development in the early 1700’s and is still celebrated in the region of Sotavento that includes southern Veracruz, north of Oaxaca and parts of Tabasco.

Popoluca and Nahuatl indigenous living in the region before the arrival of the Spanish had their rituals for dance and music. Those rituals were drastically changed with The Conquest; fortunately that ritual atmosphere survived and it naturally blended in the *fandango*, becoming an essential part of the celebration.

The *fandango* nowadays is a colorful celebration where musicians, dancers, poets and the community gather around the dance platform to dance and sing *sones jarochos*.

Semilla is a collective of young Mexican musicians and dancers performing *son jarocho*, *son huasteco* and *son de tarima* in the New York City area. Hailing from diverse parts of Mexico, from Veracruz to Mexico City, Semilla focuses on the *fandango*, the traditional fiesta performed in these styles.

Semilla's members have traveled to different parts of Mexico, learning and performing. From *encuentros* in the *huasteca*, to *fandangos* in Tixtla, Veracruz and Mexico City, they received essential lessons on how to play and dance traditional *sones*.

Semilla started performing in 2001, pioneering Mexican *son* in New York. These days you may find the group playing at local parties, *cantinas*, or dancing clubs. They have also played at Lincoln Center's La Casita, Fandango de Tortugas at Central Park, Telemundo Canal 47, and WBAI radio. Every month since June 2005, Semilla has celebrated *fandangos* at East Harlem's Carlito's Cafe.

<http://www.semillanyc.com>