

Cuban Choral Music: Historical Development and Modern Influences

José Rivera

Cuba has a rich choral legacy full of musical traditions that extend across centuries, yet most choral conductors in the United States are not familiar with Cuba's choral tradition. This is due in part to the historical political tension between the two countries and limited professional exchanges.

Fortunately, today's conductors have more opportunities than ever to expand their knowledge of this rich tradition. In fact, Cuban choirs have delighted their North American colleagues with performances at various divisional and national conventions, and in 2012 conductors from both countries participated in the first Cuba/US Choral Symposium in Havana, Cuba. The summit was a cross-cultural exchange between composers, directors, and students from the United States and Cuba, showcasing the distinct choral music styles of Cuban tradition and American genres.¹

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Cuban Choral Music: Historical

In response to the opportunity to broaden the awareness of and familiarity with Latin American choral literature, this article provides a brief overview of the development of Cuba's choral tradition, featuring the contemporary folk and popular music elements from an historical perspective.

Historical Developments

The origins of Cuban ecclesiastical music can be traced to the appointment of Miguel Velazquez. Velazquez, the first Cuban-born choir master of the Catedral de Santiago in 1544.² Records from the second half of the seventeenth century show the contributions of Domingo de Flores, who became the first appointed *Maestro de Capilla* (choir-master) at the newly constructed music

chapel of the Catedral de Santiago de Cuba in 1682. During that period, choral music was performed primarily by boys and clergy.³ The performance practice of choral music at the time was unaccompanied with the use of continuo.

If one considers the early music being performed today, it stands to reason that Cuba's choral history began with the arrival of Esteban Salas y Castro (1725–1803), a Cuban musician, composer, and ordained priest who revitalized the decaying music conditions at the Catedral de Santiago in 1764.⁴ Salas began working at Parroquia Mayor in Havana before being appointed to La Catedral de Santiago, where he served as chapel master for forty years until his death in 1803.

His legacy as one of Cuba's first great composers lives through his 189

collected works, which include passion settings, cantatas, Stabat Maters, hymns, sequences, antiphons, psalm settings, canticles, motets, vespers, and *villancicos* (carols, primarily written for three voices).⁵ His music reflects the European tradition of the Baroque style, although in Latin America it is referred to as music of the Colonial period. The music of Salas was discovered in 1945 by Alejo Carpentier, a Cuban novelist and musicologist.⁶ His complete catalogue of works is currently published in eight volumes under the auspices of *El Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Música Cubana* and the work of musicologist Miriam Escudero.

Another notable composer whose works were conceived on Cuban soil was Juan Paris (1759–1845). Paris followed Salas's footsteps at the Catedral de Santiago (1805–1845), composing mostly sacred vocal music following the European tradition of the late Baroque and early Classical styles. Under Paris's leadership, the church became a library, academy, a rehearsal and concert hall, and a venue for diverse musical events.⁷

Paris's discovered choral works include: *Misa a tres, con violines flautas y bajos* (Mass for three voices with violins, flute, and bass); and several carols, including *Respirad mortales, Patrió María en Belén, Oid cielos piadosos, Produzca la tierra*, and *Villancico de kalenda* for four voices, four violins, viola, bass, and oboes or flutes. Paris's instrumentation changes from his predecessor's (Salas) times.

In his *villancicos* *Albricias Pastores* and *Vamos Presto a Belén*, Paris introduces idiophones (cymbal and triangles) and membranophones (timpani) to sacred compositions in Cuba.⁸ Paris's first sets of *villancicos*, written in 1805 and 1807, were recently transcribed by the Cuban musicologist Claudia Fallarero. In the summer of 2013, a concert in Havana



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featured premiere performances of music by Juan Paris and Cayetano Praguera, two composers of Spanish origin born at the end of the eighteenth century who remained working in the island through the nineteenth century.

Soon after Paris's departure, Cratilio Guerra Sardá (1835–1896), considered another important musician and liturgical composer of the nineteenth century, followed in Paris's footsteps at the Catedral de Santiago. Guerra's works include a Mass in C and a Mass in D, each for three-part chorus, flute, clarinet, and strings (no viola). In addition, Guerra composed a *Misa de pastorella* (mass for nativity), *Misa sobre motivos del Himno de Santiago*, several *Stabat Maters*, and carols.

Much of what is known today about Sardá's music stems from the work initiated by musicologist Pablo Hernández Balaguer in 1961. Presently, Sardá's works are being performed because of the work of musicologist Francesca Perdigón Milá. Her recent book on Sardá's sacred works reveal traces of popular rhythmic idioms in his Mass in C, including *mazurkas*, *vals*, salon songs, and operatic themes.⁹ This practice is still observed by contemporary composers, including Villa-Lobos, Alberto Ginastera, Osvaldo Golijov, Roberto Sierra, and Cuba's own José María Vitier in his *Misa Cubana (Laudamus te)*.¹⁰

Cuba's sacred choral tradition continued to flourish at other chapels in and around Havana, including the Parroquia Mayor de la Habana and at the Capilla de Música de Bayamo. One of the most recognizable nineteenth-century Cuban composers, Antonio Raffelin (1776–1882), composed many sacred works, including several masses, motets, and hymns. According to Suzanne Tiemstra, Raffelin's compositions best represented the music of the classical period in Cuba.¹¹ His instrumental works include

several symphonies and chamber music written in classical style.

Later, Laureano Fuentes Matons (1825–1898) continued the sacred tradition in Santiago de Cuba. Matons's works reflected the changing compositional styles in the country. For instance, his *Stabat Mater* was written in a more classical style, while *Misa de Difunctis* for three voices and orchestra, two Requiems, and *Liberame Domine* for choir and orchestra all resembled music of the Romantic style. The *Misa Nupcial* by Gaspar Villate (1851–1891) and a *Misa Solemne* written by Cristóbal Martínez Corres (1823–1842) were other important masses written during this period.

It is almost impossible to ignore the apparent disparity between the existing timeline delineation of the Baroque and Classical periods in western classical music and the dates these styles of music actually reached Cuba (Latin America). This chronological disparity—likely caused by the distance between both continents and the time it took to reach the masses—can account for the type and style of music being heard in churches across Cuba during this Colonial period.

By the end of the nineteenth century, several sacred and secular musical entities began to emerge in Cuba. These included opera and zarzuela, religious choirs, provincial Spanish choral societies of Basque, Galician, Asturian, and Catalan descent (dissolved by 1915), and several amateur choirs organized throughout Havana and the interior provinces of the island.¹² By the beginning of the twentieth century, nationalistic influences began to make their way through music. There is a similar quest in the music of Spanish nationalistic composers (Albeniz, Granados, and de Falla). We also find these traits in the music of Alejandro Cartula and Amadeo Roldán.

In the first half of the twentieth

century, María Muñoz de Quevedo was an influential choral figure who made significant contributions to the development of choral music in Cuba. The Spanish-born musician, educator, and cultural icon arrived in Cuba in 1919. She eventually became a naturalized Cuban citizen and was responsible for founding and directing Havana's Choral Society, an important organization of its time.

Muñoz's choir performed classic repertoire of the western European choral tradition and new music written by Cuban composers. Her vision for the art of choral music marked a new era in the advancement of choral music in the island. She first sought help from her friend Alejandro García Cartula, an influential orchestral composer who became the first to write a polyphonic work for choir in *son* style.¹³

The *son* is a sung and danced musical genre born in the eastern provinces and transformed in Havana. Today, it is known as salsa and is a widespread dance form practiced throughout the world. The *son* exemplifies the mixture of Spanish influences (melodies and guitar accompaniment and African rhythms) and is considered one of the major types of popular music of Cuba. Cartula's *Canto de los Cafetales* and *Caballo Blanco*, along with Amadeo Roldán's *Curujey*, were both premiered by La Coral de la Habana in 1932.¹⁴

Cartula's and Roldán's unaccompanied compositions became the turning point in the evolution of Cuban choral music. Other composers to follow were Harold Gramatges, Nilo Rodríguez, and Gisela Hernández. Since then, many folk and popular melodies of diverse popular genres, originally conceived for popular music, have gradually become part of the standard choral tradition in Cuba. This is particularly the case if we consider the current choral music being

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performed in concert halls worldwide.

African Influences

The rich music of Cuba is a result of a merger of two distinct and influential cultures from the Old World on an island in the New World. African rhythms and Spanish melodies merged to create an extraordinary musical tapestry immersed in the island's history and folklore. By 1513, African slaves began to arrive in Cuba, primarily from Nigeria. It is estimated that as many as one

thousand Afro-Cubans were living on the island by 1534.¹⁵

As was the case in other countries, slaves brought with them their language, music, and traditions. Some African slaves became an integral part of the church choral tradition, singing and playing traditional European sacred music at music chapels. Others ultimately assimilated their native Yoruba systems of worship, adapting old religious beliefs with Catholic divinities known as Santería (Reglas de Osha).¹⁶ Traces of African influences can be found in much

of the music in Cuba. Other forms of vocal musical expression were later carried into secular music.

Coros de Clave

Coros de clave were vocal groups developed by Afro-Cubans in the late nineteenth century for the purpose of celebrating major festivities. They were comprised primarily of male and female vocalists who sang two- or three-part songs in 6/8 time with simple European harmonies, accompanied by instrumen-

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talists playing the “viola” (a banjo with the strings removed and played as a percussion instrument), guitar, clave, and occasionally the *botija*, harp, or other instruments.¹⁷

A *clarina* (lead female singer) would typically begin with a solo, followed by responses from the chorus. These groups, comprised of up to one hundred fifty members, primarily performed lyrical songs.¹⁸ By 1902, there were between fifty and sixty *coros de clave* in black, working-class barrios. Numerous *coros de clave* developed in the late nineteenth century and remained popular throughout the following decade.

African influences in contemporary Cuban choral music settings reflect strong rhythmic and textural elements of Afro-Cuban musical idioms like *Chivo que rompe tambó* by Moisés Simons and arranged by A. Ramírez; *Yambambó* by Emilio Grenet and arranged by Octavio Marin; *Afroritmos* by Yaniel Fernández; *Sin Palabras* by Wilma Alba; *Babalú en la Habana Vieja* by Roberto Valera; and *Tríptico de Cantos Yorubá* and *Misa para Yarini (Osun Requiem)* by Calixto Alvarez.

In one of the movements (*Lacrimosa*) of Calixto Alvarez’s *Requiem*, the composer juxtaposes two languages sung simultaneously, representing the duality between European and African heritages. This duality is stated by juxtaposing the melody sung by a female voice in *Yoruba*—the language spoken by East African slaves—above the chant-like mantra sung by the male voices in Latin.¹⁹

One of the most important traits of the Cuban choral performance practice is that most music is performed unaccompanied. Vocal lines contain a variety of rhythms and musical nuances of this type and other genres of popular or folk music. Therefore, one will seldom find instrumental parts in choral works; composers leave it to the director’s discretion for any addition of instruments.

Influence of Folk and Popular Styles in Cuban Choral Music

By the 1950s, Cuban popular music—the *cha-cha-chá*, *son-montuno*, *bolero*, *guaguancó*, *canción*, *guajira*, mambo, rumba, and conga—had already flourished in mainstream popular culture. Today it represents the heart of Cuban secular choral repertoire. Some of Cuba’s most recognizable personalities in these popular styles include Manuel Corona (1880–1950), a Trova musician who wrote *Mercedes*; Eliseo Grenet (1893–1950); Emilio Grenet (1901–1941), who composed *Negro bembón*, *Chivo que rompe tambó*, and *Tu no sabe Inglés*; and Moisés Simons (1844–1944), who wrote *El Manisero*.²⁰

In addition, Miguel Matamoros is considered one of Cuba’s most prolific composers of the Cuban bolero and *son* genres.²¹ Matamoros’s music has been adapted to choral settings, many of which have become staples of the Cuban choral tradition (such as *Lágrimas negras*, *Son de la loma*, *Dulce embeleso*, *Juramento*, *Triste muy triste*, and *El que siembre su maíz*). This last song features a trait commonly found in the Cuban *son*: a call-and-response section between soloist and choir, accompanied by wood sticks playing a repeated clave pattern.

The Cuban “Son”

The *son* has become the very expression of Cuban identity.²² This popular genre was developed in the eastern rural communities, where it was highly influenced by the *trova* (a rural genre that featured improvisation) before it migrated to western Cuba. The *son* also reflects Cuba’s ancestral African and Spanish influences and

influences from the eastern and western parts of the island.

The genre became widely popular with dance couples in the 1920s and 1930s. Soon after, it would permeate Cuba’s musical folklore. This music was also felt in choral compositions, where it fused the island’s native musical styles with traditional European classical forms. The *son*, *guaguancó*, rumba, and other Cuban popular music genres have, in some sense, gradually become “choralized” over time.²³

The catchy song *Chan Chan*, originally composed by bandleader Máximo Francisco Repilado (aka Compay Segundo), is an example of a popular *son* arranged for choir. This song revolves around two central characters: Juanita and Chan Chan. The choral arrangement of this song, written by Jorge Martínez, introduces each vocal line in layered fashion, beginning with the basses’ repetitive rhythmic motif.

This distinct syncopated pattern features an anticipated upbeat (typically heard in the bass line in the instrumental version) followed by the tenor part carrying the clave pattern. The clave is the underlying rhythmic pattern heard throughout the song. Later, the alto and soprano vocal lines imitate the *gaugeo*, a syncopated accompaniment pattern typically played by the guitar (*tres*). (Figure 1)

Together these voices create the distinct rhythmic flavor of the *son* before the melody is introduced and harmonized in thirds or sixths. However, the most anticipated point in the song



Figure 1. Clave pattern (3 + 2) or (2 + 3)

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occurs at the improvisatory *montuno* section, where the soloist (typically a tenor) alternates in a call-and-response section with the choir, creating the climax of the work. The intervention of the chorus in the refrain *estribillo* can go from a single phrase to an entire verse. While the treatment of voices in

this particular arrangement is typical in choral *son* arrangements, variations of styles and forms are found across the western Caribbean, Colombia, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela.

Table I provides a sample of choral compositions or arrangements in *son* style.

Guaguancó

The *guaguancó* is a derivative from the *rumba*. Its Afro-Cuban secular music roots stem from the regions of Havana and Matanzas.²⁴ The *guaguancó's* rhythm and instrumentation vary from the ones utilized in the *son*. It uses the *rumba* clave instead of the clave used in the tra-

Table I

"Son" Titles	Style	Arranger	Composer
La Mujer de Antonio	Son-Pregón	Conrado Monier	Miguel Matamoros
Son de la Loma	Son-Montuno	Conrado Monier	Miguel Matamoros
El Que Siembre su Maíz	Son	Electo Silva	Miguel Matamoros
Canto de los Cafetales	Son		Alejandro G. Cartula
Caballo Blanco	Son		Alejandro G. Cartula
Curujuey	Son		Amadeo Roldán
Son Mercedes	Son		Leo Brower
El Manisero	Son-Pregon	Conrado Monier	Moisés Simons
Chan Chan	Son	Jorge Martinez	Francisco Repilado
Este Son Homenaje	Son	Conrado Monier	A. Almeida
Lágrimas	Bolero-Son	Conrado Monier	Miguel Matamoros
Todo a tus Pies	Bolero-Son	Graciano Gómez	René Baños
Chivo que rompe Tambó	Son	Amauris Ramirez	Moisés Simons
Me Bendo Caro	Son		Conrado Monier
Laudamus te (Misa Cubana)	Son		José Maria Vitier
Manisero	Son in 5/4	Yaniel Fernandez	Moisés Simons
Tiempo para un Tiempo	Son	Conrado Monier	Roberto Valera
Negro Bembón	Son	Electo Silva	Eliseo Grenet
Iré a Santiago	Son		Roberto Valera
Mulata	Son		Conrado Monier
Todo a tus Pies	Bolero-Son	Rene Baños	Graciano Gomez
El Almuerzero	Son	Conrado Monier	Pedro L. Ferrer
Chanchullo	Son	Marialys P. Campos	Ruben González y Cachao López
Cuba, Que Linda Es Cuba	Cancion-Son	Eduardo Saborit	Electo Silva

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ditional son. A spirited example of this style is exemplified in Roberto Valera's *Guaguancaglia* or *Quisiera* (Guaguancó).

Another prominent Cuban composer whose choral arrangements can challenge any choir's rhythmic and technical skills is Guido López Gavilán. His choral works are known for transcending conventional popular musical idioms. *El Guayaboso* (featuring the polyrhythms of a guaguancó), *Pak-kin-kin*, *Pa ti Pa ti* (in mambo style), *Que Rico É* (mambo), *La Aporrumbeosis* (inspired by rhythmic elements and melodic gestures of the rumba) are some of his works. (Figure 2)

The Cuban Bolero

The *bolero* derives from the Spanish *seguidilla* first heard in Andalusia in 1780. It existed in Cuban salons from the early nineteenth century; however, the *bolero* that arose in Santiago in 1883 was a particular type that was danced by couples in a simple 2/4 meter. The Cuban *bolero* is more closely related to African dance rhythms and Cuban melodic styles than to the Spanish *bolero*. Performed in duple meter (most often 2/4, in contrast to the Spanish *bolero* in 3/4) in a moderately slow tempo, the *bolero* features passionate lyrics and memorable melodies.²⁵

Its melody and guitar accompaniment were marked with the presence of the *cinquillo* rhythmic pattern and was often combined with a *tresillo* pattern. The melody in the Cuban bolero is often heard harmonized in thirds. The textural

characteristics of the Cuban bolero are often associated with themes related to love, betrayal, bliss, yearning, rejection, or suffering.

Electo Silva's *30 Canciones Populares de Cuba* is considered an important collection of arrangements of various popular genres, including *boleros* such as *Ausencia* by Prat and *Dulce Embeleso* and *Juramento*, a *bolero* composed by Miguel Matamoros. Other choral settings include *La Rosa Roja*, arranged by Oscar Hernández. (Figure 3)

Over time, the *bolero* has evolved into variations or combinations of styles. Matamoros's *Lágrimas Negras*, in an arrangement by Conrado Monier, is a classic example of a *bolero-son*. Here, two distinct musical styles are combined to create a new genre. The song begins in *bolero* style (A section) and begins its B section in *son* style.

This B section also serves as the refrain within a *bolero-son*. The *bolero's* (A part) underlying rhythmic pulse is driven by repeated two-measure phrases containing a *cinquillo* pattern (Figure 3) followed by four eighth notes, while the *son* (B part) rhythmic pulse is driven by the *son* clave. The result is a song that begins slow and develops in a spirited, dance-like section.



Figure 3. The Cuban Bolero

Lágrimas Negras (Black tears) translated text:

Verse 1 (Section A)

Although you have left me in the abandonment
Although you have killed all my illusions
Instead of cursing you with fury
In my sleep I fulfill you,
In my sleep I fulfill you with blessings

Verse 2 (A')

I suffer the immense sorrow of your loss
I feel the deep pain of your game
And my crying
Carries black tears,
Carries black tears of my life

Son (Section B) refrain:

You want to leave me
Yet, I do not want to suffer
With you I go away, my saint
Even if it costs me death

Trova and Canción

Trova is a genre of Cuban song closely associated with working-class singer-songwriters. Primarily self-accompanied on the guitar, its early form (known as *vieja trova*) was popular in the late nineteenth century. It is credited with the creation of the Cuban *bolero*. Composers including Pepe Sánchez, Manuel Corona, Chicho Ibañez, Rosendo Ruiz,



Figure 2. The Guaguancó

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and Sindo Garay are considered the founders of Cuba's proponent of this genre. An example of a *trova* is best seen in Electo Silva's *6 Canciones de homenaje a la Trova*, a set of songs arranged for choir that pay tribute to the *trova*. During the latter part of the twentieth century, a new wave known as *nueva trova* emerged as a popular genre, reflecting the political "protest song" movement throughout the Americas.

Canción is another popular genre of music heard throughout Latin America. Its roots stem from Spanish popular forms, Italian operetta and Neopolitan songs, slow waltzes, and French romanza. In Cuba, it was highly influenced by the *trova* movement. This genre is best known for its beautiful and memorable lyric melodies combined with heartfelt lyrics. One of the most recognizable works in this genre include *Mercedes* by Manuel Corona.

Today, the choral music of this genre is exemplified in Beatriz Corona's works, including *Corazón Coraza*, *Penas*, *Entre el Espanto y la Ternura*, *Solo de Guitarra*, *No es Preciso*, *Triptico*, and *Aire Nocturno*, with

texts by Nicolas Gulién, Silvio Rodríguez, Jose Martí, Mirta Aguirre, and Pablo Milanés. Other notable works include *Suite Choral* by Gisella Hernández, with text by Federico G. Lorca; and *Canciones amatorias* by Leo Brower, with text by Federico G. Lorca and José Hernández.

Cha Cha Chá

The *cha cha chá* originated from the *danzón*, a form related to the *mambo*. This genre of music has distinct rhythmic characteristics due to the fact that, unlike most other Cuban styles, it is not rooted in the *clave*. The text used in this style of music is typically of a humorous or jovial nature. Richard Egües, composer of *El Bodeguero* and many of today's classics of this style of music, was a well-known Cuban musician and flautist. *El Bodeguero*, nicknamed by Egües as "the magic flute," became a popular song in the 1950s.²⁶ (Figure 4)

Cha cha chá rhythm



Danzón rhythm



Figure 4.

El Bodeguero

Always at her (his*) house,
present are,
the grocer and the cha cha chá,
Go to the corner and you'll see him,
and in a friendly way he will
always assist you,
go now, run over there, the grocer,
the one with the money you will
find him,
on the other side of the counter,
helpful and service oriented

Grocer what's going on, why so
happy

I think it's a result, of what is in
the grocer, dancing he goes
in the store the dance goes like this,
with beans there is potato here,
the new rhythm of the cha cha chá
he drinks chocolate, he pays what
he owes

in the store the dance goes like this,
with beans there is potato here,
in the store the dance goes like this...

Movement and Dance

For years, Cuban professional choirs have been international ambassadors of their native folk and popular musical forms. In Cuban popular music genres, movement and dance are natural responses to music and are considered

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symbiotic. It is almost impossible to listen to songs as *Afroritmos*, *El Guayaboso*, *Chanchullo*, *Chan Chan*, or *Guantanamera* without allowing the body to move to the highly syncopated rhythms of this music. In recent years, several professional Cuban choirs—including Schola Cantorum, Vocal Leo, and Entrevoces—have introduced creative and innovative choreographies to performances of their native music.

Other Popular Genres

There are other distinctive genres within the popular music spectrum in Cuba. Cuban secular choral music is filled with the musical flavors found in popular styles, such as the *conga*, *guaracha*, *bilongo*, and *guajira*. A variety of dance rhythms and contemporary harmonic sonorities are featured in works such as *Cimarrón* (a conga) by A. Agramonte/arr: Calixto Alvarez; *Conga* by Guido Lopez Gavilán (specially written for the VI World Symposium of Choral Music in Minneapolis); *Guantanamera* (a guajira) arranged by Conrado Monier; and *Variaciones sobre la Guajira Guantanamera* arranged by Electo Silva. Other works within these genres include *Me Quiero Casar Contigo* (guaracha) by Angel Aldae/arr: Monier; *La Negra Tomasa* (bilongo) by Guillermo Rodriguez/arr: Monier; *Rumbamban* (danzón) by Rafael Inciarte/arr: Miguel García; and *Cofrecito de dudas* (habanera) by Roberto Valera.

Contemporary Choral Works

Within the last twenty years, there has been an emergence of extended choral works by Cuban composers, including works by Guido López Gavilán; Leo Brower's *Salmo de las Américas*; Roberto Valera's *Cuatro Poemas de Nicolas Gullien*; José Maria Vitier's *Misa Cubana*; Electo Silva's *Misa Caribeña* and *Misterios de Nuestra Señora*; Beatriz Corona's *Misa*

V; and the well-recognized unaccompanied work by Calixto Alvarez, *Osun Requiem*.

Other influential choral composers and arrangers whose music has won

international recognition include Electo Silva, Conrado Monier, Beatriz Corona, and Frank Fernández. Today, a wave of emerging choral composers such as Monica O'Reilly, Keila Orozco, Yaniel



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Allen Hightower (center), Luther College professor of music and director of choral activities, has been installed as the Weston Noble Endowed Chair in Music. The Weston Noble Chair is named in honor of Weston Noble '43, professor emeritus of music, whose service of teaching and conducting at Luther influenced the lives of thousands of students for more than 50 years and whose dedication and service to the college also witnessed to the Gospel. Established by Ervin and Phyllis Johnson, the award recognizes the value of Christian higher education and the quality of the academic and music programs provided by Luther.

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Photo: Luther choral conductors Jennaya Robison; Weston Noble, professor emeritus; Allen Hightower; Linda Martin; and Andrew Last

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Fernández, Luis Ernesto Peña, Tania Leon, and Wilma Alba continues to delight audiences with new choral works.

The rich history of choral music of Cuba spans over four centuries. Their

choral tradition stems primarily from early sacred European influences and the musical rhythms brought by African slaves (syncopated rhythms, ceremonies, and musical instrumental). Consequently,

these influences merged with Spanish and native secular idioms, giving birth to new musical genres such as *son*, *guaguancó*, *cha cha chá*, *guajira*, *danzón*, *trova*, *bolero*, and *canción*. Since the turn of the twentieth century, choral music has given a voice to these native musical genres, and they continue to live in the mass settings, song cycles, sacred, and secular compositions written by Cuban composers in unaccompanied style. 

NOTES

¹ José Rivera, "Choral Symposium 2012: Building Cultural Bridges in the Twenty-First Century," *Choral Journal* 53, no. 9 (2013): 69.

² Alejo Carpentier, *Music in Cuba* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2001 [1945]): 71. Ed. Instituto de Libro, Havana, Cuba.

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