Indecent Kalinda

BY MARCOS SUEIRO

It isn't everyone who knows how to dance the two-beat waltzes.

—"Allons Danser Colinda"

BEFORE the lambada, before the twist, there was the kalinda—an incendiary dance of African origin that spread like wildfire throughout the Caribbean and was eventually banned. The kalinda was the original dance craze of the Americas; it has been performed throughout the Caribbean and even reached Louisiana, where it was one of the dances of the famous Place Congo in antebellum New Orleans. It is still danced today in Trinidad and Carriacou, is the precursor of the ever-popular calypso, and influenced the Puerto Rican bomba. It has been called "the universal Caribbean dance."

Early descriptions
Like a good recipe, the kalinda seems to have endless regional variations—both in name and in form. The earliest known written account of the dance comes from Martinique, where Father Labat (who calls it calenda) in 1698 describes it as two lines of dancers—one line of males, one of females—approaching each other "with absolutely lascivious gestures" and then retreating several times, encircled by a clapping ring. Labat, even at this early date, condemns the performance as "contrary to all modesty." It was a sign of things to come.

During the next century and beyond, numerous descriptions of the kalinda appear, often under different spellings (calinda, caleinda, kalenda, and colinda) or names (Joe-and-Johnny, Joan-and-Johnny, Jo-and-Johnny, chica, fandango, and congo). The labeling frequently becomes confusing or seemingly arbitrary, since all these West Indian dances (which also include the chica, the juba, and the bamboula) influenced one another; for example, one of the drums used in the kalinda was the bamboula. Although disparate, the descriptions agree that most of the movement came from the hips, that almost always there were two lines of dancers (though not necessarily of different gender) surrounded by a ring, and that the music was "hideous," "screeching," "infernal," or just plain "bad."

Despite the less than (continued on 2)
Kalinda (continued from 1)

favorable reviews by many of its observers, the kalinda must have had some universal appeal, for it crossed racial, ethnic, linguistic, and geographical boundaries. It soon was being danced by the Spanish Creoles. Labat himself reports having seen nuns performing it on Christmas Eve, lamenting, “I am willing to believe that they do this dance with the purest of intentions, but how many spectators are there who would not be as charitable as I in their judgment?” The kalinda would in time travel overseas—to opera stages in Europe, no less. British composer Frederick Delius spent several years in the Americas, and from his experiences he wrote in 1904 the opera Koanga, whose most famous passage was a stylized version of the kalinda.

Stickfighting kalindas

Some descriptions mention a kind of kalinda that seems to have been most popular in Trinidad: the stickfighting kalinda, where men stripped to the waist would take part in a mock fight with often-charmed sticks. According to J. D. Elder, the fight could become real and turn into “lethal combat.” It is possible that this was the original kalinda, which later would substitute towels for sticks (as in the “Old People Kalinda” of Carriacou) and eventually evolve into several different types.

The fight sticks were between “yards”—groups, living in barrack-yards, which came out only during carnival in Trinidad. This kind of highly organized group was found throughout the Americas, from New England to Brazil, and included the “societies” of St. Lucia, the New Orleans kreweas, the comparsas of Uruguay, and the cabildos of Cuba. All these associations had a leader (variously called king, queen, wizard, chief, and so on) and were allowed prominence only during carnival parades. (Originally, holidays were the only times when slaves were allowed to dance, and eventually they “took over” the carnival celebrations.) It is during these fights that kalinda music was played. The leader of the yard, called “chantwell,” sang often-boasting lyrics which

the crowd answered with a repeating line. The song “Joe Talmana” is a famous example. Talmana was a leader in the 1881 insurrection in Trinidad, and in this kalinda, he repeatedly tells “Captain Baker,” the then—police chief, “Here I am.”

Kalinda lyrics and calypso

Many of the lyrics were also used for social protest. They generally spoke of current events and frequently ridiculed authority figures. During his travels throughout the South and the West Indies, George Washington Cable observed in 1886 that the kalinda “has long been a vehicle for the white Creole’s satire; for generations the man of municipal politics was fortunate who escaped entirely a lampooning set to its air.” A famous kalinda scoffs at a Judge Preval who tried to charge three dollars for an indoor ball: “Michié Preval li donné youn bal/ Li fé naig payé trois piass pour entré/Dansé calinda, bondjoum! Bondjoum!” (Judge Preval gave a ball/Charged three dollars to get in/Dance the calinda, bondjoum! Bondjoum!)

As a precursor to the mega-popular calypso, the kalinda provided the melodies for the first calypsos. Though the words were different, the themes often resembled those of the kalinda: calypso lyrics were known for their boastfulness and referred to “stick men,” perhaps the stick fighters of the kalinda.

The origin of the word remains a mystery. An 1891 article by W. W. Newell submits: “[It is a survivor] of the Latin Calendae, Calends. Thus in the Provençal romance ‘Flamença’ (thirteenth century) we read: ‘Cantan una maia’ (they sing a song of the calends of May). These songs are danced. De Puymaireg ... observes that the ‘trimazos’ (May songs), formerly serious, have degenerated into satire.”

Others think the kalinda has African or, possibly, mixed origins. An informal search through several dictionaries of Congo languages failed to bring to light any possible origins; in fact, some African languages seem to have imported the word “kalenda” (meaning “calendar”). It is interesting to note that a calenda was a type of seventeenth-century Mexican villancico (church song), thus
predating the earliest accounts of the Caribbean kalinda. Does this support Newell’s theory, or is it just a coincidence?

Popularity also brought the wrath of the authorities upon the kalinda, although the official reason for criticism was supposedly lascivious character. Slave owners worried at the sight of large numbers of blacks all obeying a leader in the highly organized yards. Thus, the kalinda—along with other dances and sometimes along with drums—was eventually banned nearly everywhere: in 1724 in Martinique, 1881 in Trinidad, around 1843 in New Orleans.

Although the kalinda was banned, it continues to be played on some of the islands, even to this day. Its echo can still be heard in the ever-popular calypso (and thus soca) and in the Puerto Rican bomba. And who knows what other musics it influenced from the legendary Place Congo in New Orleans or elsewhere. As we search for a common source, the indecent kalinda may properly provide us with clues to the musics of the Americas.

On Joining the Americas
The CBMR and American Musical Scholarship

BY SAMUEL A. FLOYD, JR.

THE COLUMBIA COLLEGE Center for Black Music Research facilitates the study of black music the world over; it distributes the results of such research through its scholarly journals, its newsletters, monographs, conferences, and performances. The Center’s Library and Archives, with its books, sound recordings, printed music, dissertations, ephemera, and other material, serves scholars, students, and the general public as a unique resource for the study of this music. Until now, the focus of the Center has been primarily upon black music in the United States. But, recently, we have begun to give more attention to the musics of Latin America and the Caribbean, purchasing, for example, a large number of compact disc recordings of the musics of these regions and searching for additional resources to make the study of the musics of these regions potentially coequal with the study of black music in the United States.

More than a year ago, we at the CBMR concluded that without fuller knowledge of the Latin-American and West Indian contributions to black music in the United States, we would never fully understand black music. We have long known of and heard the “Latin tinge” and the West Indian rhythms and other musical gestures in jazz and other United States black musics. But that is all we have done—just observed them. Serious study of this “tinge” and its origins and implications has not been undertaken. This means, in part, that our investigations of the black presence in American culture and its contributions to our culture should embrace not only people, issues, and music in the United States but also those of Latin America and the Caribbean. Given the little knowledge we have about influences from these regions on our music, it is clear that we do not possess an adequate picture of our musical past. Therefore, I believe, we do not fully understand our musical present, in spite of how much we might enjoy it. We at the CBMR, recognizing the gaps in our knowledge and seeing how those gaps hamper our study of black music, last year decided to devote serious attention to the study of common origins and characteristics of Latin-American, West Indian, and U.S. black musics.

Soon after this initiative was announced, Rex Nettleford, the founder (continued on 4)
On Joining (continued from 3)

and choreographer of the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica, said in response, “It’s time the United States decided that it wants to become a part of the Americas, too.” And this is just one of the things this new enterprise will accomplish: it will join the CBMR and the college with the other parts of the Americas. But we quickly recognized that, while searching for these common points of contact between and among Latin-American, West Indian, and U.S. black musics, we might also share our knowledge with individuals in Chicago who have roots in those cultures and, in turn, benefit from their perspectives on the common points of this cultural contact. From whom can we best learn other than those of those cultures?

The United States, I believe, is at a crossroads—a crossroads brought on by a rapidly changing world with growing ethnic and racial implications that we are not adequately prepared to cope with. Our country’s traditional vision of the future did not include the new immigrants from Haiti, Dominica, Jamaica, and other locations in the West Indies, nor immigrants from Colombia, Mexico, and Cuba in Latin America. But if the United States is to enter the twenty-first century with a chance to survive as a viable nation, we must begin to envision a new future appropriate to a new makeup of our society. That new vision must be fueled by an understanding of the common elements of the various cultures that will constitute our culture in the new age.

Currently, we do not know enough about the various aesthetic foundations of these various cultures to envision an appropriate future, and we need, in order to formulate such a vision, not only knowledge about the musics of the various American and other cultures but also the participation of these citizens in the creation of that new vision. Columbia College’s mission is consonant with this task; indeed, one might say that it mandates such participation.

We look forward to the development of a project that not only will be successful for us here in Chicago but that also might serve as a model for similar activities elsewhere in our nation.

The purpose of the program held on April 27 (see accompanying article on page 12) was to establish the basis for the planning of exciting activities that will properly explore the common roots and characteristics of Latin-American, West Indian, and U.S. black musics. Help us begin this process by sharing ideas that you find interesting, provocative, informative, and pregnant with possibility.

Voices

The Voices column welcomes submissions of 50 to 200 words that share news and commentary related to the local black music community—Editor

ARIC CARILLO
Chicago musician and member of the newly formed Afro-Caribbean Music Society

I’VE been a lover of black music all of my life, and I will remain a student of black music for the rest of my life. Black music in North and South America and the Caribbean has roots so deep, so diverse that the full and complete story of its pervasiveness in the dominant cultures, especially in the United States, may never be realized. But I believe this story is closer to being understood than ever before. I would like to be a part of that, no matter how small a part I may have.

I have been buying and collecting music since my seventh birthday. I have been a hand drummer (congas and African drums) since I was 13 years old. I’m 45 now. I’ve been an off-and-on professional musician since I was 28 or 29. I’ve been seriously studying jazz, Afro-Cuban, and Afro-Puerto Rican music since I was 16. These were my personal musical milestones. I can bring love and enthusiasm to this exploration of black music.
AUDLEY CHAMBERS
Musicologist specializing in music of Jamaica

ON MY arriving to the Evanston area during the late 1980s, I did not know anyone. The last time I had had any personal contact with large groups of people from the Caribbean was prior to my leaving my home-country, England, in 1981. But after making the effort to know people within the community by becoming involved with social and cultural programs, including the presentation of informative dialogue about music of the Caribbean, I found a large nucleus of people whose background connects them to the island of Jamaica.

Through my own involvement with Northwestern University professor and ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner and my own personal project, under his guidance, concerning the folksongs of Jamaica, I have managed to make lasting relationships with the people of the Jamaican community in this area. I have found that they have a lot of information to share. One only has to walk down Howard Street, or visit one of the Jamaican restaurants on Clark Street or Rogers Street, or the Haitian restaurant on Dempster, which has the added feature of a live band, to get a full awareness of the concentration of the Caribbean influence in the community. The churches that have a high concentration of people from the Caribbean also make a very lucrative arena for musical study.

I do think that I could be a channel of communication to many of the people in the Evanston area concerning programs that the CBMR will be implementing. It is nice to know that the CBMR is acknowledging that the African diaspora in music can be found in almost every corner of the globe. As is customary in the Jamaican dialect when something spectacular is being accomplished or is about to be, I will say, "Dis gwine be one rankin projek man, go fi it!" (This is going to be a project of great impact and importance, go for it!)

Africa in America

BY MARY FARQUHARSON

WHAT would America and the Caribbean be without the presence of Africa? We wouldn’t have son, nor cumbia, salsa, nor cadans: there wouldn’t be blues, reggae, calypso, soca, zouk, merengue, jazz, mambo, cha-cha-cha, or rock ’n’ roll. Without falling into clichés, we wouldn’t have that exuberant character, the spirit for life, the ability to speak with the body—and not just when dancing—but the continuous search for the harmonization of rhythm.

The Afro-American is not a homogenous [sic] culture but, from the south of the United States to the port of Montevideo, passing through the many islands of the Caribbean, there is a very resistant cultural thread and it traces back to Africa.

The majority of indigenous and European people have lived, during almost 500 years, with the many African groups brought to the new world. The biological mix created, from the start, a series of contradictions in the minds of the descendants that contributed, over time, to American identity. In this way, the Afro-American, or neo-African, as one of the descendants, recreated his past within an entirely new perspective.

The richness of the black character and heritage is what makes us move—even those who are not oil-stained, as they say in Cuba—when we hear the voice of Celia Cruz, the drums of a rumba matancera or the electric rhythm of reggae-rap.

Afro-American music has spread all over the region. If in some places—the islands and mainland of the Caribbean, much of Brazil and the south of the United States—it dominates, in the rest of the region its influence is also significant. It’s also clear that, at different times and by different people, (continued on 6)
Africa (continued from 5)

this cultural presence has been underestimated, ignored or simply disregarded. During all this time, consciously or unconsciously, the influence of black America on other musics has been transcendental.

When Hernan Cortes arrived on these shores with his African companion Juan Garrido, the story of Africa in America began. The seed of voodoo, santeria, candomble, dugu, arará and all the other neo-African religions was cast. These religions, blended with other beliefs—Christian and indigenous—are the guardians of the most profound of what remains in Africa.

There were continuous doses of these values into the Americas, since the traffic in slaves did not stop during more than three centuries. New arrivals were received and educated in what the neo-Africans had already created and they, in turn, brought with them recent experiences of Africa.

In this cultural hive, where of course it was the Europeans who made the rules, a new culture was generated and, in particular, a new music. On one hand the old songs and drum beats of African religions were recreated but on the other they were mixed with European and indigenous styles (especially in the case of Brazil) to give birth to the enormous range of Afro-American rhythms that we know today.

The African footprint is stamped in the rhythms, sometimes simple, often complicated, in the singing style—in the “call and response” (the soloist calls and the chorus responds)—in the unexpected—but conscious—changes in tempo as well as in the melodic lines that are impossible to measure in terms of European music whether from the 16th or the 20th century.

The many forms of black music in the Americas today are a reflection, above all, of how the Africans and Europeans interacted in each place. The Yoruba, together with other African groups like the Fan and Bantu, developed alongside people from different regions of Spain, producing the complexity of Cuban santeria while the same African groups, in conjunction with the Portuguese, produced candomble in Brazil. The Fan, also with the Bantu, mixed with Spaniards, and later with the French, to give birth to voodoo in Haiti. As for the non-religious music, like the son, cumbia, and merengue, these grew out of the Bantu, Madinga and Yoruba cultures, amongst others; blending with Spaniards in different contexts. Calypso and mento are clear evidence of the mixture of many African groups with the British.

In other circumstances, as in the case of Mexico, different African cultures mixed at an early stage with the Spanish and indigenous, leaving a musical imprint that does not express itself strongly today. Although Africans lived in many parts of the country, working in the mines of Central Mexico and on cattle ranches and in sugar mills in various other regions, the strongest presence today is on the coasts of the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico. Possibly, today’s mestizo styles—like the Mexican son—originally incorporated certain rhythmic forms from Africa. In Cuba, on the other hand, the black musical culture flows strong and, from the end of the last century, it began to reach other countries. In Mexico, Cuban music took root and became part of the national repertoire. It was a Cuban, living in Mexico City, who introduced a new rhythm that we dare to call Mexican: the mambo.

In Mexico, in the Afro-mestizo population of the Costa Chica, in Guerrero and Oaxaca and some regions of Veracruz, voices interpret mestizo songs with a very African timbre. There is no musical style, however, that is identifiably African, like the cumbia from Colombia or the merengue (continued on 13)
Nueva España
Close Encounters in the New World, 1590–1690

BY JOEL COHEN

THE AGE of Exploration! In our school days, we were told it was a time of heroes, and of high adventure. Later, we came to understand what terrible suffering and injustice the Spaniards had wrought in their drive for fame, glory, and riches. Nowadays, our renewed awareness of the Conquest’s dark side has eliminated forever the too-simple, cliché images of the old school books.

This recording, nonetheless, has a different case to make: it pleads for attention to the meeting places of light and beauty that did indeed exist in those terrible, hard centuries. The Indians (and, shortly thereafter, the African immigrants) were at once drawn to the music they heard from the Spaniards. And the Europeans were fascinated, and often influenced, by the astounding, new sounds of other cultures.

So enthusiastic was the Indians’ response to European polyphony, and to the playing of guitars, harps, flutes, shawms, and sackbuts, that the newly built churches were soon full to overflowing with skilled, enthusiastic native musicians, singing praises to the Christian Lord with every means at hand. The choirmaster/composers generally came from and were trained in Spain (Seville was an especially important center of musical diffusion towards Nueva España). But most of the performers (and some composers), were born and bred in the New World. They were, in the main, people with brown and black skins. Time and again, visitors from Europe would note, with wonder and admiration, the skill and dedication of the New World’s musicians.

Virtually all the surviving repertoire from the colonial period (with the exception of a few guitar tablatures) is sacred religious music. Music of European origin was often performed in the New World—several such examples are included in our program. Most often, though, when polyphonic music was wanted, the choirmasters of the new cathedrals composed music a fresh. There were, generally speaking, two kinds of stylistic models for the new pieces: the contrapuntal, neo-“renaissance” idiom you will hear in the Latin motets, and a more “baroque,” vernacular style employed in the villancicos. Both kinds of writing had their roots in Spanish music; both were admitted into church services.

And both styles—one restrained and conservative, the other youthful and even insolent—can astound us! Renaissance-type polyphony was composed and sung in Spain (a European region in a time warp) through the eighteenth century, and also in the Spanish colonies (a time warp within the time warp). The beautiful Lamentations of Lienas sound to our ears like they were written in the 1550’s; their actual date of composition was probably about a century later.

The villancicos incorporate dance-like rhythms, catchy refrains, and reminiscences of Iberic folklore. Most fascinating of all, they search out and assimilate dimensions of popular life and indigenous music-making in the New World. Texts can be in Castillian, or in one of the many languages current in Nueva España: Quecha, Nahuati, Galician, Portuguese, Afro-Spanish.

The presence of a vigorous black musical culture this early in the New World’s history may come as a surprise. In fact, there has been an African element in Spanish (continued on 8)
España (continued from 7)
music since the Middle Ages. What gives the listener an immediate rush of pleasure—the enormous rhythmic energy of the New World villancicos—creates a substantial headache for the music historian. Did these characteristic rhythms come from a medieval, arabo-andalou substratum, or from the New World’s contact with black Africa, or (most likely) from some combination of both?

Although the music of Nueva España existed in its own, protected sphere, it is by no means “primitive” and technically awkward like the New England anthems of Billings or Read. These composers were solidly trained, skilled, and open minded. The best of them deserve to be ranked with their leading contemporaries in Europe; a neglected master like Araujo could compose circles around any number of Old Country second-stringers.

The music of Nueva España, emerging now after centuries of dormancy and neglect, is a source of pride and joy for Americans North and South, a precious extension of the European and African musical heritage, and a witness to human possibility on our small, turbulent planet.

Rafael Hernández and the Black Heritage

BY PETER BLOCH

RAFAEL HERNÁNDEZ (1891–1965) was Puerto Rico’s most popular composer, a highly creative genius mostly famous because of two anticolonialist songs (“Lamento Borincano” and “Preciosa” which became unofficial anthems of the island country), because of songs about the Puerto Rican atmosphere, and because of romantic songs. Neither pathos nor humor are lacking in his work. He wrote songs for children, two musicals, an opera, and instrumental music. He was something like a national hero, and although he was not a political figure, his songs contributed to the national and cultural consciousness of the Puerto Rican people. He had become the

PETER BLOCH heads the Association for Puerto Rican-Hispanic Culture (New York City), which was founded in 1965. Since, the organization has sponsored concerts of Latin music as well as poetry and theater events.

The photographic exhibit, “Africa’s Legacy in Mexico,” was featured earlier this summer at the Field Museum. While photographer Tony Gieaton finds a cultural legacy resulting from the dissemination of black people throughout the Americas, perhaps we will find musical legacies.
musical and poetic voice of their deepest collective feelings.

Rafael Hernández was a black Puerto Rican. African influences are part of Hispano-Antillean culture. One of the outstanding characteristics of the Hispanic civilization is that it has been able to assimilate—and blend with—Native American and African elements, having already been multiethnic and multiracial in Spain despite the racism of Spanish aristocrats.

African influences in the Hispanic Antilles extend not only to people of color—the Afro-Cuban subculture being especially significant—but to whites as well. Luis Palés-Matos, a Puerto Rican who wrote much-recited poems on Afro-Antillean people, was white. However, Puerto Ricans of color have never failed to identify as Puerto Ricans and, in spite of a certain amount of social discrimination on the part of a white upper class (the so-called blanquitos), have not been made to feel the kind of separateness imposed on African Americans in the continental United States. Thus, in Loiza Aldea, the town with the strongest African influences in Puerto Rico where African-type masks are part of a rich folklore, the medieval Spanish tradition of staging the struggle between Spaniards and Moors on the day of the Apostle James (renamed Santiago, Patron Saint of Spain) has been preserved.

The music

Rafael Hernández grew up as a patriotic Puerto Rican, as a Hispano, and as a descendant of Africans—conscious and proud of this heritage. The music and lyrics of his songs demonstrate his heritage, for he was his own lyricist, like other Puerto Rican song composers, and a genuine poet.

While Hernández celebrates the Spanish civilization and the echo of the pre-Columbian (Taño) Indians of Borinquen (Puerto Rico) in “Preciosa,” he concentrates entirely on the African heritage in “El Príncipe Negro” (The Black Prince) and “Rebeldía Negra” (Black Rebellion), which use a musical idiom that is clearly Afro-Caribbean. Rhythmically, songs like “Tabú” (Taboo) and “Camina” (Wandering) are related to songs of African heritage, even though they do not seem to deal specifically with African themes. Or do they? It seems to me they might.

The general scenery in “Tabú” and the very title of the song speak for themselves. Do the pain, bitterness, and the “chain” in “Camina” really refer merely to an unhappy love? The song is not without some resemblance to “Rebeldía Negra” in expressing the feelings of the slave. “Rebeldía Negra” arrives at an outcry for rebellion only at its end, after dwelling mostly on the slave’s sufferings and his wishing for death. “El Príncipe Negro” is one of the master’s most eloquent and emphatic tributes to Africa, including the exclamation “Africa! Africa!” and the ending which repeats the words “Yo soy el Príncipe Negro” (I am the Black Prince) in such a way that the emphasis is on “Negro.” The song’s lyrics are meant to be a strong evocation of African sound and pride.

In 1962, Don Rafael recorded a selection of twelve of his songs under his own musical direction, for the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture in San Juan (an autonomous government agency), and he included “El Príncipe Negro,” “Rebeldía Negra,” “Tabú,” and “Camina,” thus underlining their importance in his output. “Quimbamba,” which he called “Canto Negroide” (Afro Chant), “Murio la Reina de Buyanga” (The Queen of Buyanga Died), and “Salambó” might also be mentioned as typical of Hernández’s African heritage.

There are still quite a few Dominicans and Cubans who believe that Rafael Hernández was, respectively, Dominican or Cuban—so great is the popularity of his songs in those countries too. He was much attracted to Afro-Cuban rhythms and they are another aspect of the Afro element in his work. Countless are Don Rafael’s songs with Afro-Cuban rhythms. “El Cumbanchero,” a rumba-guaracha, became so famous that when President Kennedy met the composer, he greeted him: “Hello, Mr. Cumbanchero.” “Cachita,” another big hit, is (continued on 10)
Hernández (continued from 9)
a rumba-conga. "Los Hijos de Buda" (The Sons of Buddha) refers to the large Chinese colony in Havana, although most of that community’s people are not Buddhists, and its rhythm, another rumba-conga, is Afro-Cuban.

In the last twenty years of his life, Rafael Hernández wrote a number of piano compositions which are not yet sufficiently known. Among these, his “Black Rhapsody” stands out as a particularly exciting evocation of the Afro–Puerto Rican, Afro-Antillean musical ambiance. I organized the Rafael Hernández Festival of 1968 in Tompkins Square Park, New York, where this little-known piece was performed by the late Genoveva de Arteaga. It is a fine piece of music that should not be ignored.

The man
Rafael Hernández was as warm-hearted and noble as he appears in his songs. He also could be ironic and cutting with phonies. As his devoted sister Victoria mentioned on a recent cable TV program, he was also very much a bohemian. (Victoria, a former piano teacher and businesswoman, was his manager and enforced the necessary work discipline. The renowned Victoria Quartet was named after her. This performing group was established in 1935 and consisted of two singers and two guitarists, including the composer.)

After his passing in 1965, I held a memorial meeting in New York. Referring to his song "El Príncipe Negro," I called my great and dear friend Rafael Hernández a Black Prince. Yes, he was indeed the Black Prince of Antillean music.

Selected Titles from the CBMR Library

An Introduction to Afro-Caribbean Music


My Musical History

BY CARLOS FLORES

I vividly remember my first musical experiences while growing up as a seven-year-old in the town of Guayama, Puerto Rico. In the late 1950s, I was one of many Puerto Rican children whose parents had migrated to the United States seeking ways to support and provide a better life for the rest of the family; therefore, I was raised by my grandparents. In my grandparents’ home, we were one of the few families in the entire barrio that owned a television set. Most evenings, neighbors gathered outside the house to watch various programs. A popular program was the “Taberna India,” a variety-comedy show that featured comedians like Floripondia and Reguerete. But the one act that everyone awaited with enthusiasm was Rafael Cortijo y su Combo, with Ismael Rivera doing the vocals.

At that time I was not aware of the impact that these two individuals were having on the musical history of Puerto Rico. These two Afro-Puerto Ricans were responsible for exposing the music style bomba y plena to the entire world. Their efforts resulted in the creation of more opportunities and improved conditions for Puerto Rican musicians—like more recording and performance contracts as well as increased salaries.

Cortijo’s influence on me was apparent when I would annoy my grandparents by constantly beating on the dinner table, the counter of my grandfather’s small food store, tin cans, bottles, you name it. I remember memorizing tunes like “El Negro Bembon,” “Perico,” and “El Chivo.”

At the age of ten, I arrived in Chicago to join my immediate family. I grew up in a large family—my parents, four girls, and two boys. I remember the big fiestas held by my parents and their friends. They would be stomping on the floors until the early hours of the morning, dancing to the pachangas and guarachas. During this period, from our record players came the sounds of El Gran Combo, Tito Puente, Johnny Pacheco, Tito Rodriguez, Sonora Matancera, Celia Cruz, Cortijo y su Combo, Porfi Jimenez, and many more.

Added to the Flores household during my teen years was the music of Little Anthony and the Imperials, Chubby Checker, Jackie Wilson, The Impressions, and The Temptations. The music of these artists became part of the music that influenced us, and these groups provided a bridge to cross over to a different language and culture. It was a very natural transition.

In the 1970s, the explosive music of Eddie Palmieri, Ray Barreto, Willie Colon and Hector Lavoe, the Joe Cuba Sextet, and La Sonora Poncena added elements of jazz as well as English lyrics. An interesting aspect of their music was an attempt to raise the listener’s level of social consciousness through messages in the lyrics. Eddie Palmieri’s “Justicia” and Ray Barreto’s “Power” raised questions about self-identity and political empowerment. Issues like poverty, discrimination, and self-respect were being echoed throughout the music of many of these artists.

During this same period, rock groups like Santana, Malo, and Azteca were creatively adding Afro-Caribbean music styles to their music. I continue to be amazed at the processes between jazz and Afro-Latin Caribbean music. Pioneers like Dizzy Gillespie, Mario Bauza, Machito, Juan Tizol, Chano Pozo, Tito Puente, and Cal Tjader were some of the many individuals who not only had a vision but cultivated this perfect combination that we identify as Latin jazz. Their efforts were not in vain, because they were responsible for creating the emergence of several talented musicians from throughout the Caribbean: Hilton Ruiz, Jerry Gonzalez, and Giovanni Hidalgo (Puerto Rico); Gonzalo Rubalcana and Arturo Sandoval (Cuba); Michele Camillo (Dominican Republic); Danilo Perez (Panama); Poncho Sanchez (continued on 12)}
History (continued from 11)

(Mexico-U.S.); and Claudio Roditti (Brazil).

I consider myself fortunate for having had the opportunity to experience all these musical styles. They helped me understand and adopt other languages and cultures. I am excited to be part of this CBMR project, which is innovative and long overdue. This project was established with the goal of researching and exploring the commonalities and relationships in the music of the Latin-American, Caribbean, West Indian, and African-American communities. I welcome the challenges that will come in achieving the Center’s goal. I also expect to grow personally with the music that has always been a part of my personal history, my identity, and my community.

The First Gathering
CBMR Introduces Program

BY ARIEL JOLICOEUR

ON APRIL 27, the Center for Black Music Research introduced its newest initiative—a project to study black music of the West Indies and Latin America and its connection to black music in the United States. In a program organized by the coordinator for the project, Carlos Flores, three guest speakers generated momentum for the open dialogue.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., Director of the CBMR, urged that connections between U.S. black music and Caribbean black music that had been cursorily noted, be clarified through serious and dedicated study. From Dr. Floyd’s words, the project is necessary for fully understanding black musical history. An integral part of serious exploration is exchange among members of the West Indian, Latin-American, and African-American communities.

All the speakers of the evening stressed the potential contribution of dialogue and participation among Chicago’s diverse communities. The distinguished speakers were Mr. Juan Dies, the Director of Community Outreach for the Old Town School of Folk Music; Dr. Lorna McDaniel, an ethnomusicologist who teaches at the University of Michigan; and Dr. Martha Ellen Davis, a faculty research associate at Indiana University’s Center for Latin-American and Caribbean Studies.

In his comments, Juan Dies demonstrated musical connections between Mexican and African music. Lorna McDaniel traced the etymology of names for Caribbean songs and dances, revealing a network of influences extending to Spain and Africa. In a testimony to knowing oneself by preserving culture, McDaniel recounted that the people of Carriacou, the island she studied, knew their great-grandparents through song—not one or two community representatives but people in the thousands retained some personal history through song! Drawing on the comments of her colleagues, the closing speaker, Martha Ellen Davis, responded to the issues raised by her colleagues as well as making her own presentation demonstrating the politics in recognizing African culture in the Americas through a video recording illustrating her studies in the Dominican Republic.

When the floor opened for remarks, excited proposals and questions were posed. Comments came from around the room, and an audience of teachers and (continued on 14)
CALENDAR

1994

September 1–30
NuevO!
Cutting-edge interpretations of traditional Latin music, art, film, and dance will be featured in this series of events. For more information, call 744-6630.

September 2–4
Chicago Jazz Festival
This festival in Grant Park features performances on two stages. For more information, contact the Mayor’s Office of Special Events at 744-3370.

September 3–5
Fiesta de la Villita
This three-day festival of musical acts, arts, and other entertainment celebrates Mexican independence. For more information, call 521-5387.

September 10–11
Viva Chicago
Celebrating Latin-American music, this event was headlined in 1993 by artists Celia Cruz and Sonora Matancera. For more information, call 744-3370.

September 17
Central American Independence Day Parade
Bands and floats will march in this parade of 300 people. For the time and path of the parade, call 744-3315.

October 1 and 8
Eleventh Annual Festival of Latin Music
The Old Town School of Folk Music celebrates with a program that features performers including Conjunto Céspedes, an Afro-Cuban twelve-piece band.

At the Field Museum, the Festival will close with a special concert for children, La Fiesta en el Bosque (Fiesta in the Rainforest). For tickets and more information, call the Old Town School of Folk Music at 525-7793.

Africa (continued from 6)
from Santo Domingo.

Neo-African music, religious and profane, has its own distinctive stamp born of a particular cultural mix.

With reference to jazz, Virgil Thompson says: “European classical composition, Anglo-Saxon folk, Spanish dance metre, hymns, percussion, the German lied, ragtime, Italian opera, all is food for the insatiable black apetite [sic], provisions to be digested as if inside every North American of color there were, or perhaps there is, an ancient African enzyme ready to digest (or Africanize) voraciously when it finds musical material in its path.”

Ensemble Kalinda
Chicago

Join us for a lecture/performance on September 24.

FREE
Admission

Ensemble Kalinda Chicago
Six Chicago musicians who perform folk and popular music from all regions of South America, Central America, and the Caribbean will be sponsored and presented as Ensemble Kalinda Chicago. The musicians—Raphael Benito (Haitian), guitar and vocals; Willie Garcia (Puerto Rican), flute and saxophone; Carlos Equis-Aguila (Cuban), percussion; Tony Mujica (Mexican), trumpet; Mike Rivera (Puerto Rican), acoustic and electric bass; and Luiz Ewerling (Brazilian), percussion—bring a measure of authenticity to the wide variety of musics they play.

The group will play and sing genres such as the son, samba, merengue/méringue, bomba y plena, salsa, calypso, queble, and zouk in several lecture-demonstrations in the coming months. Look for information about these informative and entertaining events.
Gathering (continued from 12)

their students, musicians, academics, and community organization leaders turned in their chairs to listen. One question concerned what was to be considered American culture (or from the United States) and what should be viewed as non-American culture. Another comment urged participants to involve children and the larger community in the activities of the project. Someone asked if the project would truly be able to bring individual specialists together. In part, these questions will be answered by those who attend future programs and participate in the discussion.

This program not only introduced the CBMR project but also elicited responses the CBMR will find useful in shaping its future efforts, including programs to follow this one.

Martha Ellen Davis demonstrated her discussion with a videocassette

Juan Dies answered questions from the audience

Raphael Benito performed Haitian folk songs

Lorna McDaniel