

# Lamento Borincano

(Puerto Rican Lament)

CD I - 7037

1. CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: *Héroes De Borinquen* (Seis Jíbaro)
2. QUINTETO BORINQUEN: *Sara* (Danza)
3. ORQUESTA EUTERPE: *Laura Y Georgina* (Danza)
4. TRIO BORINQUEN: *Si Me Quieres* (Bolero)
5. TRÍO BORICUA: *A Mi Madre* (Canción)
6. TRÍO BORICUA: *Purupita* (Bambuco)
7. GRUPO QUISQUEYA: *Pobre Gaviota* (Bolero)
8. GRUPO BORINQUEN: *Bon Ye* (Bamba)
9. TRIO BORINQUEN: *Mi Patria Tiembla* (Canción)
10. PLENEROS SUREÑOS: *No Le Llores Miguel* (Plena)
11. PLENEROS SUREÑOS: *Las Navidades* (Plena Aguinaldo)
12. LOS JARDINEROS: *Antiguo Seis Borinquen* (Seis-Jíbaro)
13. LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: *Josefina, Josefina* (Plena)
14. LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: *El Nuevo Gobernador* (Plena)
15. LOS REYES DE LA PLENA:  
*Los Misterios De Lenox* (Plena)
16. LOS REYES DE LA PLENA:  
*Qué Dulces Son Las Canciones* (Plena Bolero)
17. TRÍO PONCEÑO: *Adiós Borinquen* (Bolero)
18. TRÍO PONCEÑO: *Cusita* (Bolero)
19. LOS JARDINEROS: *Mercedes* (Bolero)
20. TRIO BORICUA: *Anhelos* (Bambuco)
21. GRUPO ANTILLANO: *Fuego En La Cantero* (Plena)
22. GRUPO ANTILLANO: *Fausto Y Su Ford* (Plena-Danzonete)
23. GRUPO ANTILLANO: *A Lolita* (Guaracha)
24. GRUPO ANTILLANO: *Todo Es Mentira* (Guaracha)
25. LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: *Espérame En El Portón*  
(Rumba Samaria)

CD II - 7038

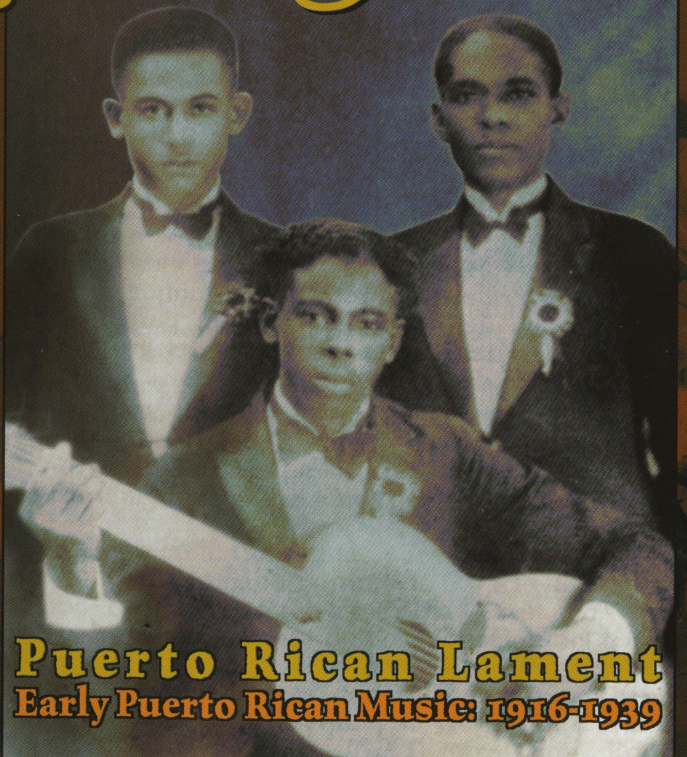
1. CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: *Lamento Borincano* (Bolero)
2. LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: *Quejas Del Ausente* (Guaracha)
3. CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: *Amor Sin Dolor* (Bolero)
4. CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: *Cantares De La Sierra* (Yaguare)
5. LIRA BORICUA: *Sueños De Vestales* (Vals)
6. LIRA BORICUA: *Mis Amores* (Danza)
7. SEXTETO FLORES: *No Juegues Con Candela* (Plena)
8. SEXTETO FLORES: *Mamita, Qué Frio* (Plena)
9. SEXTETO FLORES: *Siboney* (Son)
10. CUARTETO FLORES: *Polongui* (Bolero)
11. CANARIO: *Consejo A Las Mujeres* (Bolero)
12. CANARIO: *Llanto Del Campesino* (Cante Jíbaro)
13. GRUPO AURORA: *Alegría Boricua* (Foxtrot)
14. GRUPO AURORA: *Alma Boricua* (Two Step)
15. GRUPO AURORA: *Mi Bien Baila El Son* (Bolero Son)
16. ORQUESTA DE PACO DUCLERC: *Pepiña* (Danza)
17. CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: *Alla Vá* (Bolero Son)
18. CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: *Tras La Tempestad* (Bolero)
19. CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: *El Home Relief* (Plena)
20. CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: *Estan Tirando Bombas* (Plena)
21. CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: *Qué Vivió* (Plena)
22. QUINTETO "LA PLATA": *El Portal* (Aguinaldo)
23. QUINTETO "LA PLATA": *La Joven Qué Yo Amaba* (Décima)
24. CONJUNTO TIPICO LADÍ: *El Día Ee Los Sorullos* (Seis Villarán)
25. CONJUNTO TIPICO LADÍ: *Para El Año Nuevo* (Aguinaldo)



CDs 7037 & 7038

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# Lamento Borincano



2 CDs  
Arhoolie  
7037-38

**Puerto Rican Lament**  
**Early Puerto Rican Music: 1916-1939**



# Lamento Borincano

(Puerto Rican Lament)

Early Puerto Rican Music: 1916-1939

## DISC # 1

**1** CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: **Héroes De Borinquen** (Seis Jíbaro) (M. Jiménez) (Co 18281, 5364-X) New York 11/20/1935

**2** QUINTETO BORINQUEN: **Sara** (Danza) (A. Mislán) (B 18211/3 - 69036B) NY, 8/3/1916, José López Rivera - mandolin ; Joaquín Rivera - cuatro ; Felipe Rodríguez - violarina ; Francisco Paniagua & Alberto Mitchell - guitar

**3** ORQUESTA EUTERPE: **Laura Y Georgina** (Danza) (Juan Morel Campos) (W95809 - 6145X) NY, 7/1927, director: Carmelo Díaz Soler

**4** TRIO BORINQUEN: **Si Me Quieres** (Bolero) (R. Saldaña) (W 95767 - 2688-X) NY, 7/1927, Hernández, Ithier, & Mesa

**5** TRÍO BORICUA: **A Mi Madre** (Canción) (E. Dorrego) (BVE 45645/2 - 46007A) NY, 6/19/1928

**6** TRÍO BORICUA: **Purupita** (Bambuco) (F. Ventura, Pastor Villa, E. Dorrego) (BVE 45616/2 - 46007B) NY, 6/11/1928

**7** GRUPO QUISQUEYA (Trío Borinquen): **Pobre Gaviota** (Bolero) (R. Hernández) (W 96803 - 3342-X) NY, 10/1928

**8** GRUPO BORINQUEN: **Bon Ye** (Bamba) (Rafael Hernández) (W 96810- 3299-X & 3341-X) NY, 10/1928

**9** TRIO BORINQUEN: **Mi Patria Tiembla** (Canción) (Rafael Hernández) (W 96333 - 2997-X) NY, 1928, Rafael Hernández - guitar; A. Mesa & R. Ithier - vocal duet

**10** PLENEROS SUREÑOS: **No Le Llores Miguel** (Plena) (Plácido Acevedo) (E-31046, Br 40824) NY, 6/1929, Director: Plácido Acevedo, w/ accordion, vocal, & tpt.

**11** PLENEROS SUREÑOS: **Las Navidades** (Plena Aguinaldo) (Plácido Acevedo) (E-31047, Br 40824) NY, 6/1929, same as # 10

**12** LOS JARDINEROS: **Antiguo Seis Borinqueño** (Seis Jíbaro) (Heriberto Torres) (W 402587B - 16393) NY, 8/9/1929

**13** LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: **Josefina, Josefina** (Plena) (Julio Alvarado) (Br 40752) NY, 1929, with tpt & accordion; director: R. A. González Levy

**14** LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: **El Nuevo Gobernador** (Plena) (Julio Alvarado) (Br 40752) NY, 1929, with tpt & accordion, director: R. A. González Levy

**15** LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: **Los Misterios De Lenox** (Plena) (Contreras) (E 31790 - Br 41076) NY, ca. 1929, with accordion & tpt.

**16** LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: **Qué Dulces Son Las Canciones** (Plena Bolero) (Julio Alvarado) (E-30554 - Br 40835) NY, 7/1929, with accordion & tpt.

**17** TRÍO PONCEÑO: **Adiós Borinquen** (Bolero) (R. Concepción) (E 29641 - Br 40736) NY, April 1929, with piano, guitar, and clave; singers: Concepción, Menéndez, y Carrión

**18** TRÍO PONCEÑO: **Cusita** (Bolero) (G.V.Carrión) (E 29640 - Br 40736) NY, April 1929, with piano, guitar, & clave; singers: Concepción, Menéndez, y Carrión

**19** LOS JARDINEROS: **Mercedes** (Bolero) (Heriberto Torres) (W 402589 - 16393) NY, 8/9/1929

**20** TRÍO BORICUA: **Anhelos** (Bambuco) (Julio Alvarado) (E 31070; Br 40835) NY, ca. October 1929, F. Ventura, Pastor Villa, & Yayito

**21** GRUPO ANTILLANO: **Fuego En La Cantera** (Plena) (Pastor Villa) (Br 40938) NY, ca. 1929, includes: Concepción, Villa, Fausto, & Yayito

**22** GRUPO ANTILLANO: **Fausto Y Su Ford** (Plena-Danzonete) (R. Concepción) (Br 40957) NY, ca. 1929/30

**23** GRUPO ANTILLANO: **A Lolita** (Guaracha) (R. Concepción) (Br 40957) NY, ca. 1929/30

**24** GRUPO ANTILLANO: **Todo Es Mentira** (Guaracha) (Br 40939) NY, ca. 1929

**25** LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: **Espérame En El Portón** (Rumba Samaria) (Luis Villalobos) (E 31783-A, Br 40905) NY, January 1930, González Levy - director; with accordion & trumpet



## DISC # 2

**1 CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: Lamento Borincano** (Bolero) (Rafael Hernández) (BVE-62790-2; V 30008) New York - July 14, 1930

**2 LOS REYES DE LA PLENA: Quejas Del Ausente** (Guaracha) (Felipe Arana) (E 32937, Br 41146) NY, 1930

**3 CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: Amor Sin Dolor** (Bolero) (Ramón Quirós) (BVE 67702 - V 30262B) NY, 12/9/1930

**4 CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: Cantares De La Sierra** (Yaguaré) (Rafael Hernández) (BVE 64400 - V 30262A) NY, 12/9/1930, three voices, clarinet, cuatro, 2 guitars, traps

**5 LIRA BORICUA: Sueños De Vestales** (Vals) (Juan Garriga) (W 176123, 4045-X) NY, January 1930, director: **Rafael González Levy** (instrumental with violin, mandolin, etc.)

**6 LIRA BORICUA: Mis Amores** (Danza) (Simón Madera) (W 176122, 4045-X) NY, January 1930 (same as # 5)

**7 SEXTETO FLORES: No Juegues Con Candela** (Plena) (Pedro Flores) (Br 41232) NY, Sept./Oct. 1930, with accordion & trumpet

**8 SEXTETO FLORES: Mamita, Qué Frío** (Plena) (Pedro Flores) (Br 41232) NY, Sept./Oct. 1930 (same as # 7)

**9 SEXTETO FLORES: Siboney** (Son) (E. Lecuona) (E 36016 - Br 41312) NY, 4/8/1931, group includes **Diosa, Enrique, Cándido & Lara**

**10 CUARTETO FLORES: Polongui** (Bolero) (Pedro Flores) (E 36017, Br 41312) NY, 4/8/1931

**11 CANARIO: Consejo A Las Mujeres** (Bolero) (Rafael Hernández) (BE 67449 - V 30422A) NY, 2/16/1931, three voices, tpt, 3 gtrs, cuatro, mar, sticks

**12 CANARIO: Llanto Del Campesino** (Cante Jíbaro) (Rafael Rodríguez) (BE 67450 - V 30422B) NY, 2/16/1931

**13 GRUPO AURORA: Alegría Boricua** (Foxtrot) (Felipe Goyco) (PR 1011, 5056-X) Puerto Rico, 1932, with piano, guitar, cuatro, güiro

**14 GRUPO AURORA: Alma Boricua** (Two Step) (Clodomiro Rodríguez) (PR 1017, 5056-X) Puerto Rico, 1932, with trumpet

**15 GRUPO AURORA: Mi Bien Baila El Son** (Bolero Son) (Ladislao Martínez) (PR 1002A, Br 41498) Puerto Rico, 1932

**16 ORQUESTA DE PACO DUCLERC: Pepiña** (Danza) (Rafael Márquez) (PR 1025B, Br 41498) Puerto Rico, 1932 (instrumental)

**17 CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: Alla Va** (Bolero Son) (Rafael Hernández) (BS 75350 V-30840A) NY, 3/2/1933

**18 CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: Tras La Tempestad** (Bolero) (Pedro Flores) (BS 75352 V-30840B) NY, 3/2/1933

**19 CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: El Home Relief** (Plena) (Lolito Guzmán) (Co 18167, 5351-X) NY, 10/19/1935, with accordion

**20 CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: Estan Tirando Bombas** (Plena) (Lolito Guzmán) (Co 18168, 5351-X) NY, 10/19/1935, with accordion & trumpet

**Edited by** Chris Strachwitz & Cristóbal Díaz  
**Original 78 rpm discs from** THE ARHOOLIE FOUNDATION'S FRONTERA COLLECTION, Zac Salem, & Dave Soffa

**Discographical information from** Spottswood: Ethnic Music On Records - Vol.4, & Cristóbal Díaz Ayala

**Notes by** Cristóbal Díaz Ayala (with editing by Chris Strachwitz & Zac Salem)

**Transcriptions and translations of songs by** Zac Salem and Cristóbal Díaz Ayala

**21 CANARIO Y SU GRUPO: Qué Vivió** (Plena) (C. Rosado) (Co 18922, 5490-X) NY, 4/9/1936

**22 QUINTETO "LA PLATA": El Portal** (Aguinaldo) (José de Jesús) (V-82195A) 1937, with **Dávila** and chorus

**23 QUINTETO "LA PLATA": La Joven Qué Yo Amaba** (Décima) (José de Jesús) (V-82195B) 1937

**24 CONJUNTO TIPICO LADÍ: El Día De Los Sorullos** (Seis Villarán) (Jesús Sánchez) (V-82881B) 1939, vocal by **Jesús Sánchez**

**25 CONJUNTO TIPICO LADÍ: Para El Año Nuevo** (Aguinaldo) (Jesús Sánchez) (V-82881A) 1939, vocal by **Natalia y Jesús Sánchez**

**Note:** The accordion player(s) throughout both CDs are unidentified.

**Sound restoration by** George Morrow  
**Photos from** the Collections of the Library of Congress, unless otherwise noted

**Cover photo:** **Trío Aurora** with Moncho Davila (guitar) from the book: *A Tres Voces Y Guitarras - Los Tríos en Puerto Rico* by Pablo Marcial Ortiz Ramos (1991) Lib. of Congress Cat.# 91-90392  
**Graphic Design by** Morgan Dodge

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## A Tale of Two Cities: A Revolution in Puerto Rican Music (1916 – 1939)

*(Dedicated to the people of Puerto Rico,  
in their quest for peaceful living  
on the island of Vieques)*

As with the Caribbeans in general, the beginnings of Puerto Rican popular music are told via many tales of constant struggle between dominant European music, and emerging Afro-Caribbean influences. By the end of the 19th century the island had a solid inventory of folk and popular music, consisting mainly of *danzas*, *mazurkas* and other dances of European origin (endorsed by the dominant classes) but also *jíbaro* (rural) music such as the *seis* and the *bomba*, with strong African influences. Borinquen was to a large degree able to resist influences from the north, even after the American occupation in 1898. Nevertheless, motivated by better economic opportunities, a slow wave of

emigration toward the U.S., especially New York, followed very soon. When American citizenship was granted to Puerto Ricans by the Jones Act in 1917, this process was accelerated, and thousands of *jibaros* (field hands) invaded New York where they started a new life as blue collar workers. Perhaps more than the European immigrants who had already become part of the American melting pot, the Puerto Ricans had to struggle with drastic changes in climate, language, culture, as well as everything else. Naturally, they tried to maintain as much of their original culture as possible, especially music. However, while back in their home country they had been compelled to give preference to the “*danza*,” the “national” dance as dictated by the upper classes, here in New York there was no Puerto Rican high class to tell them what to sing and dance; and Americans couldn’t care less what these newcomers wished to do for their entertainment. Consequently they soon began to play and record the music they felt was their own.





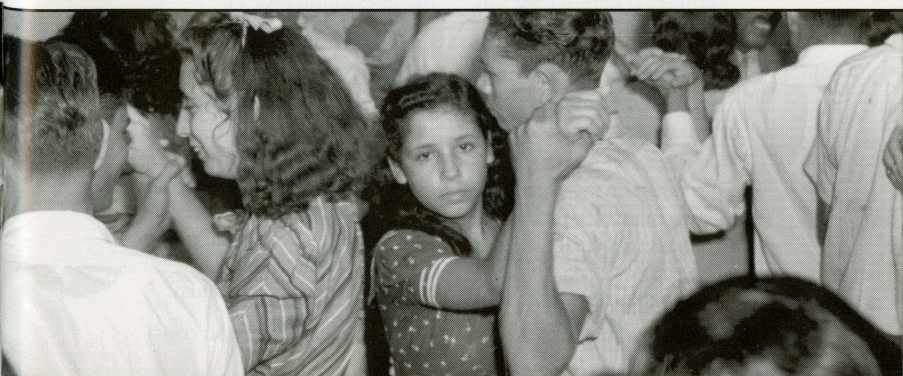
Between 1910 and 1917 the first commercial recordings were made both in San Juan and New York by two major American firms with the majority of these early recordings being *danzas*. By the end of the twenties, many of the best artists and composers from the island had fled to New York, attracted by the better economic conditions in the big city. Soon the newcomers had enough money to support their own music and to buy recordings. The big labels soon invited the “*newyoricans*” to their studios and a dramatic change took

place in the repertoire of these musicians. Instead of the ever present *danza*, the crop of Puerto Rican composers such as Rafael Hernández, Pedro Flores, Canario and many others, started creating *seis*, *plenas*, *aguinaldos* and other genres. Many more were adapted from Cuba, such as the *son*, *rumba*, *guaracha* and *bolero*. The Puerto Rican “song book” was suddenly enlarged tremendously. That enabled them to compete during the next decades, hand in hand with Cuba and México, as musical purveyors for the Caribbean and American markets.

There was however a Puerto Rican musical genre which has existed since the 19th century and was popular in coastal towns such as Loiza and Guayama with large populations of African origin, which was not documented on recordings during this period: the *bomba*. Two big drums were needed for this music to be played and perhaps this sound was too overpowering for the recording engineers! But more likely, bomba was simply not that appealing to most Puerto Ricans who had the means to purchase records

during this era! Many years would elapse before the *bomba* would cease to be considered an isolated folkloric element and finally become an important part of the Puerto Rican music panorama. The first commercial recordings of *bomba* took place in the 1950s and that's why they are not included in this collection.

This compilation offers a good view of the struggle between the European traditions in Puerto Rican music and the new elements coming to the fore in New York.





# Volume I

## CD 7037

Although we will follow a chronological order in the rest of our program, we start with a very dramatic *seis* composed in 1935 in the wake of an incident between members of the Puerto Rican Nationalistic Party (pro independence for Puerto Rico) and the police in Río Piedras, a suburb of

San Juan. It is performed by **Canario** and his group using a narrative form similar to the Mexican corrido and other ballad genres popular in Latin America. The *seis* does not moralize or condemn: it just describes what happened. The clarinet adds to the song a sad, urgent and dramatic cry:



### Héroes de Borinquen

### Heroes Of Borinquen

Esto pasa en Puerto Rico  
y al Partido Nacional  
si que es queremos triunfar,  
y olvidar que somos chico,  
los que decimos bendito,  
somos hombres de valor  
tenemos esa opinión  
debe ser con nuestra fuerza,  
y lo que pasó en Río Piedras  
sentimos de corazón.

Según lo que presencié,  
eso dice el cable ayer:  
estando parado en el pueblo

This is what's happening in Puerto Rico  
to the Nationalist Party,  
if we want to triumph  
and forget we are small,  
we say "bendito" (blessed)  
but we are men of courage  
who have this opinion,  
it should be with our own force,  
and what has occurred in Río Piedras  
we feel in our hearts.

As they saw it,  
the cable said this yesterday:  
while in the town

el guardia le disparó.  
Eso Don Ventura vió,  
que le pasó a su cuñado  
a él también lo registraron  
no teniendo arma agresiva  
con balas de policía  
allá en Río Piedras mataron.

Varios carros que pasaban  
por las calles del cuartel  
la policía sin saber  
a todos les disparaba.  
Fueron muertos y agraviados,  
haciendo varios disparos  
declarando su cuñado  
que Palá no usó pistola,  
y los familiares lloran  
los sucesos que han pasado.

Según la prensa lo explica  
al pueblo de Nueva York  
cinco miembros de la unión  
de ideas nacionalista,  
todos los ponemos en lista  
a Dionisio y a Ramón  
Dionisio con Juan Muñoz  
Pedro Quiñones, y Santiago  
La policía había matado  
cinco miembros de La Nación.

the police shot him.  
This is what Don Ventura saw,  
what happened to his brother-in-law,  
they also searched him [Ventura],  
and finding no firearms on him,  
then it was the policeman's bullets  
that killed in Río Piedras.

Several cars went by  
on the street by police headquarters,  
and the police without knowing  
shot at everyone.  
There were dead and wounded,  
and many shots were fired  
while the brother-in-law  
declared that Palá did not use a gun,  
and the families cried over  
the events that took place.

As the press explained  
to the people of New York,  
five members of the party  
of nationalistic ideals,  
we have listed all of them  
from Dionisio and Ramón  
Dionisio with Juan Muñoz  
Pedro Quiñones, and Santiago.  
The police have killed them,  
five members of the Nation.



Next comes our earliest recording, made in New York in 1916, a typical string quintet of those times, **Quinteto Borinquen**, a group of Puerto Ricans playing mostly *danzas* such as this one, *Sara* (#2). There is however something very uniquely Puerto Rican about this group. From

the picture of the group you will note two guitars, a mandolin, a *cuatro* (the four double-stringed guitar invented in Puerto Rico – it's the smaller guitar in the middle) and a *violarina*, the violin-shaped guitar in the hands of its inventor, Felipe Rodríguez (seated on the right in the photo below).



Quinteto "Estrellas de Borinquen" (1916) – from *Puerto Rico Ilustrado*, August 26, 1916 - p.28.

Eleven years passed, and by 1927 **Orquesta Euterpe** recorded 52 selections in New York, 41 of which were *danzas*. Here they play (#3) *Laura Y Georgina*. It was a big orchestra, fit for the big dance halls of the Puerto Rican bourgeoisie, but not appropriate for the small apartments of the recent immigrants living in New York. Therefore, more suitable to their dreams and realities, was the cozy **Trío Borinquen**, also recording in 1927, formed by Rafael Hernández, (guitar) and two singers, Rafael Ithier, (a Puerto Rican) and Antonio Mesa, (a Dominican). Rather than *danzas*, they are playing a *bolero* (#4) *Si Me Quieres* (If You Love Me), a genre of Cuban origin, but used all over the Caribbean. Between 1925 and 1929, **Trío Borinquen** recorded 109 selections, only one of which was a *danza*. The records were a big success. As one of the members of **Trío Borinquen** was Dominican, the record company also marketed many of their selections under the name "**Trío Quisqueya**," for sale in Santo Domingo. Quite a gimmick. Another group was **Trío Boricua**, (F. Ventura, Pastor Villa, & Yeyito Maldonado, guitar) with the same combination of the guitar and two voices. They recorded with a rival firm in 1928 and 1929, but never achieved the success of **Trío Borinquen**.





They play here a *canción* (song) (#5) ***Mi Madre*** (To My Mother) in a very operatic style, and a *bambuco* (a genre from Colombia) (#6) ***Purupita*** (a

lady's name), as well as the beautiful *bambuco* ***Anhelos*** (Longings) (#20), which features the addition of a violin to the ensemble:

CD 1  
20

**Anhelos**

Quisiera cual ave errante  
que va por valles y montes  
vagar por los horizontes  
como una nube distante,  
y solo sin un testigo  
en mi delirio profundo  
quisiera formar un mundo  
para vivirlo contigo,  
quisiera formar un mundo  
para vivirlo contigo.  
(se repite)

Y en ese mundo jardines  
con abundancia de flores  
y fuentes y ruiseñores,  
hasta serafines,  
y en sus profundos confines  
vivir de nuestros amores,  
y en sus profundos confines  
vivir de nuestros amores.

**Longings**

Just like a wandering bird  
I would travel over mountains and valleys,  
just like a cloud that hovers  
over the distant horizons,  
and there, alone, without company,  
in my wild imaginings  
I would create a world  
in which to live with you,  
I would create a world  
in which to live with you.  
(repeat)

And in this world of gardens  
abundant with flowers  
and fountains and nightingales,  
and even seraphim,  
in whose deep confines  
we would live a life of love,  
in whose deep confines  
we would live a life of love.



**Canario's Group** (N.Y.C. – December 1929) standing l to r: Pastor Villa, Fausto DeLeado, Manuel Jiménez Otero ("Canario")  
seated: Eladio Maldonado ("Yayito") – photo courtesy José Ortiz.



Sometimes the **Trío Borinquen** would add some extra musicians, and then would record as **Grupo Borinquen** or **Quisqueya** (as the case may be). For example, (#7) **Pobre Gaviota** (Poor Sea Gull) where they have added Heriberto Torres on *cuatro* and a very expressive *guiro* player.

(#8) **Bon Ye**, composed by Rafael Hernández, is labeled a “*bamba*,” but sounds more like a Haitian *merengue*, and adds a sax player. **Borinquen Trío** was probably the first one to record patriotic or protest songs, as the next one, (#9) **Mi Patria Tiembla** (My Country Trembles) shows:



### Mi Patria Tiembla

### My Country Trembles

Mi patria tiembla.

My country trembles.

Yo sé porque,  
nadie más sabe.

I know why,  
no one else knows.

Es un misterio  
que en ella se encierra,  
y que nadie podrá adivinar,  
sino los buenos patriotas  
que hace tiempo murieron  
por su libertad,  
Ay sí, por su libertad.

It is a mystery  
that she conceals,  
and no one can guess  
except the loyal patriots  
who died years ago  
for her liberty,  
Ah, yes, for her liberty.

Aquellos nobles patriotas  
que yacen en sus tumbas frías  
No han muerto, no  
Y al ver, las infamias y tiranías

Those great patriots  
lying in their cold graves,  
they are not dead,  
And seeing the infamies and tyrannies

parece que quieren su patria salvar  
Y siendo imposible  
se muestran rebeldes  
agitan sus tumbas  
se sienten temblar  
pues ellos prefieren  
Borinquen se hunda  
antes que ser esclava  
se la trague el mar.

they want to save their country,  
and that being impossible  
they rebel,  
they shake their tombs.  
They do tremble  
because they prefer  
Borinquen to be sunk,  
rather than be enslaved,  
she be swallowed by the sea.

This kind of song would not have been recorded in Puerto Rico at that time; but perhaps a mixture of ignorance of the Spanish language by the American recording director, plus the democratic attitude of New Yorkers, probably permitted this one and many others to be waxed.

By 1929 the *plena* was becoming very popular around New York, with many groups playing it, such as **Los Pleneros Sureños** (“Plena Players from the South,” meaning the city of Ponce where the *plena* was supposed to have originated). The *plena* surged during the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century as it was a novelty and thus popular with everybody. (#10) **No Le Llores Miguel** (Don’t Cry For Her, Miguel) was written by composer Plácido Acevedo, who was also a member of the group. Although primarily a trumpet player, here he played the *pandero*, a small, flat drum held in one hand while the other hits it, very similar to the spanish “*pandereta*.” The wonderful rough voice we hear probably belongs to Rafael Capacete “Tripopi.” There are also several guitars, including Rafael González Levy, Pellín Serrano possibly on *cuatro* and Vicente Velázquez



possibly playing the accordion. The next number is (#11) **Las Navidades** (The Christmas Celebration) which is a mixture of *plena* and an old form,

CD 1  
**11**

**Las Navidades**

Levantarse todos,  
levantarse todos,  
si están acostao  
que las navidades  
ya han comensao,  
que las navidades  
ya han comenzao.

Pasen adelante,  
pasen adelante,  
noble caballero  
aunque soy muy pobre  
algo les daré,  
aunque soy muy pobre  
algo les daré.

No queremos nada,  
no queremos nada,  
solo la alegría  
de pasar las fiestas

*aguinaldo*. Here Acevedo takes the muted trumpet solo while Mateo Malavé plays the *pandero*.

**The Christmas Celebration**

Everyone get up,  
everyone get up  
if you are asleep,  
the Christmas celebrations  
have commenced,  
the Christmas celebrations  
have commenced.

Come on in,  
come on in  
noble gentleman,  
although I am very poor  
I will offer you something,  
although I am very poor  
I will offer you something.

We don't want anything,  
we don't want anything,  
just the happiness  
of being at this celebration



hasta er nuevo día,  
de pasar las fiestas  
hasta er nuevo día.

Estos aguinaldos  
estos aguinaldos  
que canto yo aquí  
no es de Caguas,  
que es de Manatí,  
no es de Caguas,  
que es de Manatí.

Con cuanta alegría  
con cuanta alegría  
si no fuera tarde  
yo les cedería  
la casa par baile,  
yo les cedería  
la casa par baile.

Esto no, mi amigo,  
esto no, mi amigo  
no queremos tanto  
dejelo pa'l día  
que venga su santo,  
dejelo pa'l día  
que venga su santo.

all night long,  
of being at this celebration  
all night long.

These Christmas songs,  
these Christmas songs  
that I sing here  
they are not from Caguas,  
they are from Manatí,  
they are not from Caguas,  
they are from Manatí.

With so much happiness,  
with so much happiness,  
if it weren't so late  
I would let you  
use my home for a dance,  
I would let you  
use my home for a dance.

No, my friend,  
no, my friend,  
we don't want that much,  
leave it for another day,  
when your birthday comes around.  
Leave it for another day,  
when your birthday comes around.



**Los Jardineros** were another very popular group presenting the older traditions such as the various forms of “seis.” Its director was Arturo Cátala

CD /  
12

## Antiguo Seis Borinqueno

A una gran fiesta en la artura  
estuve yo con mi amigo  
y como soy buen testigo  
cuento esa horrible diablura.

Pues daban a la cintura,  
los platanos sancochaos  
a los lechones asaos  
de todo hay en este relato  
no lo brincaba ni un gato  
de aquellos que andan alzaos.

Comimos con gran locura  
gandinga con aguacate  
de mondongo con tomate  
nos dimos una jartura.

Yo miraba a la hermosura  
de mi amigo con sus dientes  
que con ganas permanentes  
dejaba blancos los huesos

and Heriberto Torres played the *cuatro*. Here we hear them with a *seis jíbaro* called (#12) **Antiguo Seis Borinqueno** (Old Boricuen Seis).

## Old Borinquen Seis

To a big party in the hills  
I went with a friend,  
since I'm a good witness  
I'll tell of that terrible mischief.

They had a lot of good food,  
from parboiled plantains  
to roast pork,  
there's everything in this tale,  
a cat couldn't even get between  
all those people that were milling around.

We ate with abandon  
avocado with entrails  
and tripe with tomato  
until we couldn't hold anymore.

I was looking at the beautiful sight  
of my friend chewing away  
with everlasting desire,  
throwing away the blanched bones

tirándolos como besos  
por esas grandes pendientes.

Los músicos no paraban  
ni para darse un buen palo  
y con muchísimo agrado  
tocando el seis se lo daban.

Mas la gente que bailaban  
aquel caliente chorreao  
bebían un champurreao  
que a mi amigo puso loco  
y se cayó por un roto  
que estaba en el soberao.

Mas con los fuertes dolores  
que sufríamos sin tasa,  
allí debajo de la casa  
amanecimos señores.

Esos son los sinsabores  
de este borrachón de fino  
que en mi bohemio camino  
solo pierdo la vergüenza  
pero admiro la decencia  
del boricua campesino.

as one throws kisses  
down from those great heights.

The musicians did not stop,  
not even for a good drink,  
and with great pleasure  
played the “seis,” giving it all they had.

And the guests were dancing  
that hot chorreado (1),  
while they were drinking champurreado  
which drove my friend a little bit crazy,  
and he fell through a hole  
that was in the floor.

And with the great aches  
we suffered without end,  
we woke up there  
under the house, friends.

Those are the hardships  
suffered by this distinguished drunkard,  
in my bohemian adventures  
I only lost my dignity,  
but I admire the decency  
of the Puerto Rican country folk.

(1) One of the styles of the “seis.”





Instrumentation is simple, just strings and percussion. González Levy organized his own group which he called **Los Reyes de la Plena** (The Kings of the Plena) and sounding very similar to **Los Pleneros Sureños**, even with the same “Tripopi” as singer. Here we have them with (#13) *Josefina, Josefina* (Joséphine,

Joséphine) a very slow *plena* that sounds like an *habanera*. They also play (#14) **El Nuevo Gobernador** (The New Governor) dedicated to Theodore Roosevelt Jr., the incumbent in 1929. As he was a hunter like his father, the lyrics warn the “lions” (Puerto Rican politicians) about the hunter.

CD 1  
14

**El Nuevo Gobernador**

Yo quiero ver los leones  
Yo quiero ver los leones  
Queremos ver los leones  
Cuando llegue el cazador

Soñando con la derrota  
Don Pepito Barceló  
La casa blanca le dijo  
deme la hostia, Cabó.

Yo quiero, etc.

En el año veinticuatro  
el público protestó,  
que viejo está que queremos

**The New Governor**

I want to see the lions  
I want to see the lions,  
we want to see the lions  
when the hunter arrives.

Dreaming of the overthrow  
Mr. Pepito Barceló  
the White House told him  
give me the wafer, Cabó.

I want to see, etc.

In the year 1924  
the people protested,  
for some time we have wanted

de un manifiesto el peor.  
Yo quiero, etc.

Tengamos buena memoria  
después de lo que pasó  
colocado Moncho Reyes  
Pa' lo lider no sirvió.

Yo quiero, etc.

Sabemos que es militar  
y en el que fue tirador  
yo quiero ver a las fieras  
cuando venga el gobernador.

Yo quiero, etc.

the worst from a manifest.  
I want to see the lions, etc.

Let's all remember  
after what happened:  
that once in office, Moncho Reyes  
was no good as a leader.

I want to see, etc.

We know he is a soldier  
and also a sharpshooter,  
I want to see the wild beasts  
when the governor arrives.

I want to see, etc.





The group kept recording during this 1929-30 span, and since the *plena* always tells a story, this next one

CD  
15

### Los Misterios De Lenox

En la Avenida de Lenox  
Se ve cosas sin igual  
Misterios que a mi me asustan  
Y hasta me hacen temblar.

Se ve a un grupo de latinos  
Qué no les gusta pegar  
Porque el frío no los deja  
A la pega caminar.

El tiempo ellos se pasan  
en la calle 115,  
oyendo sones y plenas  
en la tienda de Martínez.

En la avenida, etc.

Y si la guardia los retira  
ellos a la casa se van  
y vuelven al mismo sitio  
a nuestros discos escuchar.

(#15) *Los Misterios De Lenox* (sic)  
(The Mysteries Of Lenox) is about  
what's happening on Lenox Avenue:

### The Mysteries Of Lenox Avenue

On Lenox avenue  
you see some strange things,  
mysterious things that scare me  
and even make me tremble.

You see a group of latinos  
who don't like to work  
because it's so cold  
they can't walk to work.

They spend their time  
on 115th Street,  
listening to *sones* and *plenas*  
at Martínez's record shop.

On Lenox avenue, etc

And if the police tell them to go,  
they go to their homes  
and return to the same spot  
to listen to our records.

En la avenida, etc.

Cuando quieren divertirse  
cuando van a cumbanchar  
siempre compran pizza Broadway,  
que son de fama mundial.

En la avenida, etc.

On Lenox Avenue, etc.

When they want to have fun,  
when they go to a party  
they always buy Broadway pizza,  
famous all over the world.

On Lenox Avenue, etc.





**Los Reyes** now switch to a romantic mood in (#16) *Qué Dulces Son Las Canciones* (How Sweet Songs Are) where the composer, Julio Alvarado, claims that the strings of his guitar are broken due to so much singing, but he'll keep playing with the fibers of his heart...

However the “*pleneros*” were not everything. There were still tríos, just like **Trío Ponceño**, (the Trío of

Ponce), the second city of Puerto Rico, always in rivalry with San Juan. The Trío was formed by Concepción, Menéndez and Carrión, and was able to play with either two guitars or with piano and guitar, not a very common or easy combination, which they carry off quite well, like in (#17) *Adiós Borinquen*, another song saying goodbye to Borinquen, a sure hit either in San Juan or New York!

CD 1  
17

### Adiós Borinquen

### Farewell, Puerto Rico

La tarde moría en su seno de rosa,  
cantaban las aves su postrer adiós,  
y yo me alejaba al vaivén de las olas  
con el alma entregada a la pena y el dolor.  
(se repite)

Oh borinquen, patria mía,  
tus recuerdos son mi gloria,  
cuantas veces te he enviado,  
cuantas veces te he enviado  
miles besos con las olas.  
(se repite)

The afternoon faded in a rose colored glow,  
the birds sang their final farewell,  
and I was sailing away, rolling on the waves,  
with my soul resigned to suffering and pain.  
(repeat)

Oh Puerto Rico, my country,  
the memory of you is my glory,  
how many times I have sent you,  
how many times I have sent you  
thousands of kisses over the waves.  
(repeat)

(#18) *Cusita*, (a woman's nickname), also by the **Trío Ponceño**, is a *bolero* very much in the style of the old Cuban *trova*, with very good guitar playing. **Los Jardineros** have

added a trumpet, and, with Heriberto Torres on the *cuatro*, they render a beautiful *bolero* (#19) *Mercedes*, recorded in 1929.

### Mercedes

### Mercedes

CD 1  
19

En las vastas soledades  
todo viene a mi memoria,  
aquella pasada historia  
que en su oculto se perdió.

In the vast solitude  
everything comes back to me,  
that love affair long past  
that is buried and gone.

Y son los tristes recuerdos  
de mi amor y la ternura,  
pues será mi sepultura  
que tu ingratitud labró.

And it's the sad memory  
of my love and tenderness  
that I will take to the sepulchre  
that your ingratitude has built for me.

Mas no importa,  
seguir puedes  
con tu risa lastimera,  
yo seguiré mi carrera  
hasta cumplir la misión.  
Y si en mi postrer momento  
quieres dar fin a mi vida,  
prepara el arma homicida,  
Mercedes, tendrás perdón.

But it doesn't matter,  
you can go on  
through life with your taunting smile,  
I'll continue on with my journey  
until my mission is completed.  
And if, in my last moment,  
you want to put an end to my life,  
get ready with your weapon,  
Mercedes, you will be forgiven.



The first one to record *plenas* was the singer **Manuel Jiménez Otero**, better known as **Canario** and his group, who made his first discs at the beginning of 1929. He quickly discovered that he could record under pseudonyms for

different labels and for that reason most probably used the name **Grupo Antillano** on some of his recordings. (#21) **Fuego En La Cantera** is a *plena* that exposes us to a full fledged fire in La Cantera, in the city of Ponce.

CD /  
21

**Fuego En La Cantera**

**Fire In La Cantera**

Fuego fuego fuego,  
fuego en La Cantera,  
vengan los bomberos  
mamá, el pueblo se quema.

Fire! fire! fire!  
Fire in La Cantera!  
Go get the firemen, mama,  
the town is burning.

Oigan bien ustedes,  
Oiganme esta plena,  
Cantada por Fausto, Pastor,  
Cueva, que requema.

Listen up people,  
listen to this plena,  
sung by Fausto, Pastor,  
Cueva, it is really hot.

Fuego fuego fuego, etc.

Fire! fire! fire! etc.

Tocan la corneta  
tambien la sirena,  
y al toque de pito, mamá  
mi Ponce se quema.

Sound the bugle,  
and sound the siren,  
and sound the whistle  
my Ponce is burning.

Fuego fuego fuego, etc.

Fire! fire! fire! etc.

Por la calle Ucar  
pasaba un vieja:

On Ucar street

“Llamen los bomberos por Diós,  
mi hijita se quema.”

a woman was passing by:  
“Call the fire department, my God,  
my daughter is burning up!”

Fuego fuego fuego, etc.

Fire! fire! fire! etc.

Gritaba Pacheco

Pacheco was yelling:

“Fuego en La Cantera  
y al toque de alarma cordial  
la bomba que llega.”

“Fire in La Cantera!”  
And at the sound of the alarm  
the firemen arrived.

Fuego fuego fuego, etc.

Fire! fire! fire! etc.

Venga Pérez Vivas,  
venga Cartagena,  
a apagar el fuego, mamá,  
que el pueblo se quema.

Go get Pérez Vivas,  
go get Cartagena,  
to put out the fire, mama,  
the town is burning up.

Fuego fuego fuego, etc.

Fire! fire! fire! etc.

Toca la corneta,  
toca retirada,  
ya se apagó el fuego, mamá  
mi Ponce se salva.

Sound the bugle,  
play the retreat,  
the fire is out, mama,  
my Ponce is saved.



(#22) **Fausto Y Su Ford** (Fausto And His Ford) is a slower *plena* which is



### Fausto Y Su Ford

Anoche yo me encontré  
con la negra de mi amor  
y solo le pregunté  
si le gustaban los Ford.

Ar punto solía pasar  
el mismo carro de ayer,  
guiado por Fausto el man  
con quien lo podía creer.  
(se repite)

La negra asustada  
solo me decía:  
"Este no es chofer  
ni tampoco guía"  
(se repite)

"No no, no monto  
No no, no monto,  
No no, no monto  
En este Ford."  
(se repite)

obviously dedicated to Fausto Delgado, one of the singers in the group.

### Fausto And His Ford

Last night I was with  
the woman that I love,  
and I had just asked her  
if she liked Ford automobiles.

Just then a car passed by,  
the same one as always,  
driven by Fausto "El Man,"  
just as I expected.  
(repeat)

My girlfriend, all shook up,  
just told me this:  
"That guy isn't a driver,  
and he isn't a guide either!"  
(repeat)

I won't get in,  
I won't get in,  
I won't get in to  
that Ford with him!  
(repeat)

(#23) **A Lolita** (To Lolita) although called *guaracha* on the label, is really a fast *bolero*, with good *cuatro* soloing by Yayito. American engineers had quite a problem recording the *claves*. The sound was too loud, too high as in this number, and there was apparently no way to solve this. Normally the *claves* were played by one of the singers, who also has to be close to the only microphone available

at that time, and therefore, they were ever present!

(#24) **Todo Es Mentira** (Everything Is A Lie) is another *bolero*, like the former, very much in the style of the genuine first Cuban *boleros*.

This disc closes with **Los Reyes de la Plena** singing (#25) **Espérame En El Portón** (Wait For Me At The Gate), an instrumental "*rumba samaria*" which is an older dance routine.



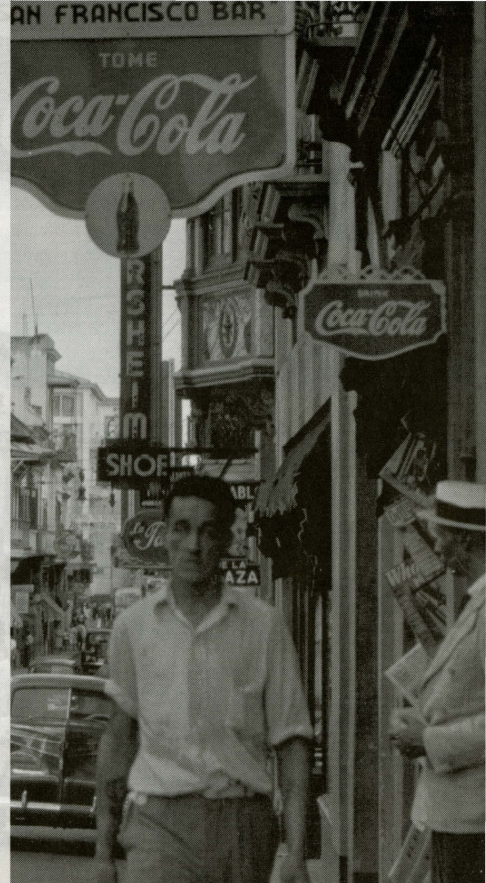


## Volume II

### CD 7038

*Lamento Borincano* is one of the best remembered Puerto Rican songs of the 1920s. Written by veteran songwriter Rafael Hernández (1891-1965) while living in New York, the song has enjoyed wide popularity throughout the Spanish speaking world for decades, probably because of the universality of its theme. With its simple, direct and touching description of a Puerto Rican campesino trying to sell his wares in town and meeting with failure and economic hardship, the song has a beautiful melody characteristic of Rafael Hernández's style. He followed it with a sequel in

1932 called *Viejo Camino*, recorded by his own **Grupo Victoria**, and a year later with another sequel *Romance Jibaro*, again with his own group. This was during the depth of the Great Depression, and *Lamento Borincano* obviously struck a chord with many people. This song was also recorded in San Antonio, Texas, by Mexican-American singer and guitarist Lydia Mendoza at her very first solo recording session in 1934 (see Arhoolie/Folklyric CD7008 Lydia Mendoza "Vida Mia"), illustrating its broad appeal. Heard here is the first recorded version of this song, with Canario and his group, dating from July 14, 1930. (For more on Rafael Hernández see Harlequin CD 68 "Rafael Hernández 1932-1939").







CD II  
1

## Lamento Borincano

## Puerto Rican Lament

Sale loco de contento  
con su cargamento  
para la ciudad, para la ciudad.  
Lleva en su pensamiento  
todo un mundo lleno  
de felicidad, de felicidad.

Piensa remediar la situación  
del lugar que es toda su ilusión, si.

Y alegre el jibarito va,  
pensando así, diciendo así  
cantando así por el camino:

For the city he leaves,  
happy and contented  
with all of his wares.  
He carries in his thoughts  
a whole world full  
of happiness, of happiness.

He thinks he's going to make things better  
in the place that is dearest to him.

And happily, the Puerto Rican goes  
thinking this way, talking this way,  
singing this way on down the road.

Si yo vendo la carga mi Dios querido,  
un traje a mi viejita voy a comprar.

Pasa la mañana entera  
sin que nadie quiera  
su carga comprar, su carga comprar.  
Todo, todo esta desierto,  
el pueblo esta muerto  
de necesidad, de necesidad.

Se oye este lamento por doquier,  
en mi desdichado Borinquen, si...

Y triste el jibarito va,  
pensando así, diciendo así,  
llorando así por el camino:  
¿Qué será de Borinquen,  
mi Dios querido?  
¿Qué será de mis hijos  
y mi hogar?

Borinquen, la tierra del edén,  
la que al cantar el gran Gautier  
llamó la perla de los mares,  
ahora que tu te mueres con tus pesares,  
déjame que te cante yo también,  
yo también.

If I manage to sell my goods, my dear God,  
I'll buy a new dress for my wife.

He passes the entire morning  
without anyone stopping  
to buy his goods.  
Everything is deserted,  
the town is dead,  
dead from necessity.

You hear this lament everywhere,  
everywhere in my unhappy Puerto Rico.

And sadly the Puerto Rican goes  
thinking this way, talking this way,  
crying this way on down the road,  
Dear God, what will become  
of my Puerto Rico?  
What will become of my children  
and my home?

Puerto Rico: land of Eden,  
who the great Gautier once called  
"the pearl of the oceans,"  
now that you are dying with your troubles,  
let me sing to you as well,  
let me sing to you as well.



**Los Reyes de la Plena** follow up this classic by **Canario** with another genre they have also learned from the Cubans; the *guaracha*, a festive and faster rhythm, but also in the narrative style. In (#2) *Quejas Del Ausente*



## 2. Quejas Del Ausente

Nueva York, Nueva York,  
Eres solo una ilusión,  
Me alejé de mi borinquen  
tropical nido de amor,  
donde una amada trigueña  
con besos me despidió,  
al salir de la bahía  
cuando pitaba el vapor  
sentí una pena en el alma  
que me ahogaba el corazón.

De las murallas del Morro  
todas bañadas de sol  
llega un gemido doliente  
de las olas el rumor.

En las pencas de las palmas  
agitando su verdor,  
eran manos gigantescas

(Sorrows Of The Absent), the author calls New York "just an illusion," and reminiscences about his island and his farewell, comparing the big leaves of the palm trees to gigantic hands bidding him goodbye....

## 2. The Voyager's Lament

New York, New York,  
you are just an illusion,  
I left my Borinquen,  
tropical nest of love,  
where a dear girl  
kissed me goodby.  
While leaving the bay,  
when the steamship blew its whistle,  
I felt a terrible longing  
that overcame my heart.

The walls of Morro Castle  
were shining in the sun,  
and from the murmuring of the waves  
I heard a sad complaint.

The fronds of the palm trees  
shaking in the wind  
seemed to me like giant hands

Qué me decían adiós.  
Mañanitas de mi tierra  
con trinos de ruiñeñor  
suaves rumores de fuentes  
y salpicadas de sol.

Nueva York, Nueva York,  
Eres solo la ilusión,  
Me alejé de mi borinquen  
tropical nido de amor,  
donde una amada trigueña  
con besos me despidió,  
y tus aires soñolientos  
te invitan a la oración,  
pasamos por el cansancio  
del pobre trabajador.

Puerto Rico patria mía  
y yo extraño tu calor,  
y los besos de la novia  
Qué al despedirme lloró.

Nueva York, Nueva York,  
eres solo la ilusión,  
me alejé de mi borinquen,  
tropical nido de amor,  
donde una amada trigueña  
con besos me despidió.

that were bidding me farewell.  
Gentle mornings in my country  
when the nightingale sings,  
soft murmuring of the fountains  
splashed with sunshine....

New York, New York,  
you are just an illusion,  
I left my Borinquen,  
tropical nest of love,  
where a dear girl  
kissed me goodby.  
And your drowsy airs  
calling people to mass,  
we feel the weariness  
of the poor worker.

Puerto Rico, my country,  
I miss your warmth  
and the kisses of my lover  
who cried for me at my departure.

New York, New York,  
you are just an illusion,  
I left my Borinquen,  
tropical nest of love,  
where a dear girl  
kissed me goodby.



**Canario** also used various other musical venues, as the *bolero* (#3) **Amor Sin Dolor** (Painless Love) illustrates and he uses a form of fast *seis*, called *Yaguaré*, in the 1930 cut, (#4) **Cantares De La Sierra** (Songs From The Sierra). Canario always hired good singers such as Quirós and Fausto Delgado (on #3)

and Davilita with Fausto as second voice (on #4). Playing the guitars were Yayito and Mengol, and probably Chemín played the clarinet. Puerto Ricans will use their songs to complain about the presence of North American culture in Puerto Rico as “**Cantares De La Sierra**” illustrates:



## Cantares De La Sierra

## Songs From The Sierra

Allá en mis niñeces cuando  
yo escuchaba  
A los jibaritos que alegre cantaban  
Sus obras tan tristes por la madrugada  
Al son de sus coplas, también  
yo cantaba.

Jo Jo Jo, Jo jo jo  
Camina Lucero, ay  
Jo jo jo, jo jo jo,  
La mañana se va.  
(se repite)

Los tiempos aquellos han ido pasando  
Ya los jibaritos no bajan  
cantando,

Way back in my childhood when  
I heard  
the country people happily singing  
their sad songs in the morning,  
I also sang along, to the rhythm of  
their song.

Jo jo jo jo jo jo  
get along, “Lucero”  
jo jo jo jo jo jo  
the morning is gone...  
(repeat)

But the times have changed now  
the country people don't come  
down to sing,

Y solo se siente de los carreteros  
Gritarle a los bueyes: “¡Maldito Lucero!”

Jo Jo Jo, Jo jo jo  
Camina Lucero, ay  
Jo jo jo, jo jo jo,  
La mañana se va.  
(se repite)

Ya todo ha cambiao en mi  
Puerto Rico

No tocan chorreao al son de un  
buen güiro  
Los americanos con música extraña  
quitó al borincano lo de nuestra España.

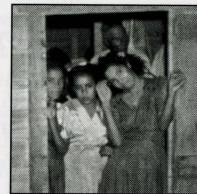
Jo Jo Jo, Jo jo jo  
Camina Lucero, ay  
Jo jo jo, jo jo jo,  
La mañana se va.  
(se repite)

and you only hear the cart drivers shout  
to their oxen: “Damned Lucero.”

Jo jo jo jo jo jo  
get along, Lucero  
jo jo jo jo jo jo  
the morning is gone...  
(repeat)

Now everything has changed in my  
Puerto Rico  
they no longer play *seis chorreao* along  
with the *güiro*,  
the Americans with their strange music  
have taken away our Spanish traditions.

Jo jo jo jo jo jo  
get along, Lucero  
jo jo jo jo jo jo  
the morning is gone...  
(repeat)





The older styles, of course, did not completely disappear. While most of these recordings took place during 1929 and 1930, that same year a group called **Lira Boricua** directed by the same *plenero*, Rafael González Levy, was rendering a romantic old fashioned *waltz*, (#5) **Sueño De Vestales** (Dream Of The Vestal Virgins) and a *danza*, a very popular one, (#6) **Mis Amores** (My Loves), both with plenty of violins and a mandolin. But to remind us that this is not a Viennese *waltz*, there is the distinct sound of a *giüiro* heard on both the *waltz* and the *danza*.

Even the **Flores** group, usually more active with a repertoire of *boleros* and *sones*, recorded a lot of *plenas* such as (#7) **No Juegues Con Candela** (Don't

Play With Fire) featuring good voices, trumpet and accordion and (#8) **Mamita Qué Frío** (Mama, It's Cold!) with kind of a litany; after each complaint by the soloist about the cold, the choir will answer: "*Echale mano al galón*" (Get hold of the jug – meaning moonshine, of course...)

The **Pedro Flores** group with Humberto Lara on the trumpet, Cándido Antomattei on *cuatro*, and Enrique "*Borrachito*" González and Diosa Costello as singers, was experimenting with a *bolero* (noted as a *son* on label) by Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona, (#9) **Siboney** which soon became a world famous tune, followed by a song by Pedro Flores, (#10) **Polongui**.



## Siboney

Siboney, yo te quiero,  
yo me muero por tu amor.  
Siboney, en tu boca  
la miel puso tu dulzor.

## Siboney

Siboney, I love you  
and I am dying for your love.  
Siboney, your lips are  
as sweet as honey.

Ven a mi, que te quiero  
y que todo tesoro  
eres tu para mi,  
Siboney, al arrullo  
de la palma pienso en ti.

Siboney de mis sueños  
si no oyes la queja de mi voz  
Siboney si no vienes  
me moriré de amor.

Siboney de mis sueños  
te espero con ansias en mi caney  
porque tu eres el dueño  
de mi amor Siboney.

Oye el eco de mi canto de cristal,  
no se pierda por entre el rudo manigual,  
Siboney.....

You will note the group was using instead of a string bass, a Cuban instrument called a "*marimbula*," a wooden box with a hole, crossed with some steel strips fastened to it; the player sits on the box and plucks the strips,

Come to me, I love you,  
you are everything,  
you are a treasure to me,  
Siboney, the murmur of the palm trees  
reminds me of you.

Siboney of my dreams  
don't you hear the longing in my voice,  
Siboney, if you don't come  
I'll die from love for you.

Siboney of my dreams,  
I await you in my caney,  
because you are  
the one for me, Siboney.

Listen to the echo of my crystal song,  
don't let it be lost in the wilds  
of the jungle, Siboney....

each of which is tuned to a particular pitch. Diosa Costello soon left the group to become the first important Puerto Rican *vedette* (cabaret entertainer) during the thirties and forties, as a night club and film entertainer.





**Canario** was also experimenting with the *bolero*, (#11) **Consejo A Las Mujeres** (Advice To Women). At that time **Canario** had in his group, among others, Pepito López on trumpet, Yayito

on *cuatro*, Mengol on guitar, and Fausto Delgado and Ramón Quirós, vocals. **Consejo** actually carries some good advice for both women and men, unusual in those machismo times:

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### Consejo A Las Mujeres

Para terminar les digo  
esta máxima a saber:  
la mujer hace al marido  
y el marido a la mujer

### Advice To Women

To sum it up, I say  
this principle you should learn:  
the wife makes the husband  
and the husband makes the wife.



(#12) **Llanto Del Campesino** (Lament Of The Country Man) is typical of the frequent social or protest songs of Puerto Ricans in New York, in the wake of the groundbreaking

**Lamento Borincano** by Rafael Hernández. In this song, the “*jibarito*” came back from the market, crying that he had no money. There is an ironic twist at the end of the song:

### Llanto Del Campesino

Así pasa la vida en los campos  
llorando sin tener qué comer  
y los pobres siempre tienen a Borinquen  
le llaman la isleta del placer

### The Country Person's Lament

Thus passes life in the country  
crying, without a thing to eat  
and the poor always have Borinquen  
calling it the pleasure island...

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While all these groups were recording Puerto Rican music in New York, back in San Juan the American pop music influence was strongly felt, and one of the most famous groups of those times, **Grupo Aurora**, in 1932 recorded a fox-trot, (#13) **Alegría Boricua** (Borinquen's Joy) and a spanish *pasodoble* (two-step) (#14) **Alma Boricua** (Borinquen's Soul). These two sides constitute a very significant homage to the past and



present regimes ruling Puerto Rico. Ladí, the best *cuatro* player, was in the group, as well as the famous composer Don Felo, who played guitar. Singer Claudio Ferrer also played guitar and Coto was on the string bass. And of course the king of the *güiro*, Toribio, was also in the group, adding that “*boricua tinge*” to these foxtrots and *pasodobles*. You will notice that Toribio with his *güiro* is imitating the sound of the tap dancer's shoes.

## Alma Boricua

## Soul Of Puerto Rico

Dejé en los campos  
de la patria mía  
un paraíso, un verdadero edén.  
Encuentro el mundo un campo frío y desierto  
al compararlo con mi Borinquén.

Viva mi patria, mi bello país,  
viva por siempre, glorioso y feliz.  
Yo veo riquezas en esta tierra extraña  
yo veo bellezas muy dignas de admirar.  
Mas hace falta un no sé qué de encanto  
que solo tiene mi terruño ideal.

Dejé al salir de aquellas playas néveas  
mi hogar querido, el nido de mi amor.  
Dejé dos ojos que me lloran siempre,  
dos ojos claros, limpios como el sol.

Yo soy boricua, mi amor es Puerto Rico,  
para mi isleta no encuentro parangón.

Nací en los montes del centro  
de mi tierra,  
yo soy boricua de sangre y corazón.  
(se repite)

¡Qué viva Puerto Rico, que viva!

I left behind, in the fields  
of my country  
a paradise, a genuine Eden.  
I find the world a cold and empty desert  
when I compare it with my Puerto Rico.

Long live my beautiful country,  
live always, glorious and happy.  
I see riches in this strange land,  
I see things of beauty worth admiring,  
but it lacks that indescribable charm  
that only my ideal homeland has.

I left behind on those snow white beaches  
my beloved home, the nest of my heart.  
I left behind two eyes that cry for me always,  
two light colored eyes, eyes as clear as the sun.

I am a *boricua*, my love is for Puerto Rico.  
For my little island I can find no comparison.

I was born in the mountains in the center  
of the country,  
I am a Puerto Rican, both by blood and by  
loyalty.

Long live Puerto Rico!



The Puerto Ricans musical revolution in New York was also soon accepted back in San Juan. In 1932 **Group Aurora** recorded a *bolero-son* by Ladí, (#15) ***Mi Bien Baila El Son*** (My Love, Dance The Son). Once in a while the musicians will let the claves lead the group with their unmistakeable sound of three short and two long strokes. You can hear them on this number as well as on ***Siboney*** and ***Mercedes***. In contrast, that very same year the big band of **Paco Duclerc** also recorded in San Juan a *danza* by Rafael Márquez: (#16) ***Pepiña*** (A woman's nickname). The *danza* was hard to kill, and has managed to keep a place, although a small one, but a space nevertheless, among the musical preferences of Puerto Ricans to this date. This one is an excellent performance by Duclerc's band.

In 1933, **Canario** was frequently using compositions by the two greatest Puerto Rican authors. (#17) ***Allá Va*** (There It Goes) is a *bolero-son* by Rafael Hernández and (#18) ***Tras La Tempestad***

(After the Storm) is by Pedro Flores. By this time the featured first voice belonged to Davilita and at the piano was Manrique Pagán. In 1935 **Canario y Su Grupo** recorded (#19) ***El Home Relief*** (The Home Relief) commenting on the government's economic help to poor families during those years of the Great Depression. This number, along with (#21) ***Qué Vivío*** (What A Living) by **Canario y Su Grupo** recorded in 1936, might give the wrong impression of Puerto Ricans boasting about getting funds from the US Government while not working, stating in both that they will not leave New York as long as they are receiving such benefits. It is not quite so. Most working class *latinamericans* hold to a philosophy inherited from Spanish colonial times, and well expressed in the classic works of the picturesque Spanish novels of the 16<sup>th</sup>, or Golden, Century. It's a kind of Robin Hood syndrome; if we take something from the government, that means the government will take so much more from us.





**El Home Relief****The Home Relief**

Yo no puedo vivir,  
yo no puedo vivir,  
yo no puedo vivir  
Si a mi me quitan  
el home relief.

I can't live,  
I can't live,  
I can't live  
if they take away  
the Home Relief.

Me mandan a buscar la carne,  
me la mandan de roast beef  
yo no puedo vivir etc.

They get the meat for me,  
they send me roast beef,  
I can't live, etc.

Me aumentaron el cheque  
por el nene que viene ahí,  
también la luz to' los meses  
en el guiso del home relief.  
yo no puedo vivir, etc.

They increased my paycheck,  
because I have a child on the way,  
they also help with the electricity bill,  
it's a great deal, this Home Relief.  
I can't live, etc.

Ellos me pagan la renta,  
yo me encuentro feliz,  
también me da la receta  
y el doctor del home relief.  
Yo no puedo vivir, etc.

They pay the rent,  
and I am happy,  
they give me prescriptions,  
and send the doctor from Home Relief.  
I can't live, etc.

Ellos me compran zapatos,  
sobra todo en mi vivir,

They buy me shoes,  
I have enough of everything,

por eso es que yo me aguanto,  
en el guiso del home relief.  
Yo no puedo vivir, etc.

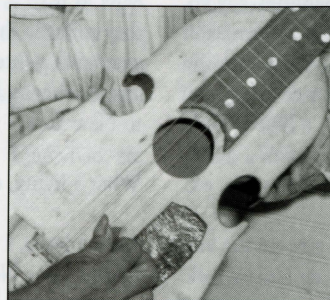
that's how I manage to get by,  
with this Home Relief deal.  
I can't live, etc.

Yo voy a Puerto Rico  
para el pueblo de Manatí,  
no voy a encontrar el guiso  
como yo lo tengo aquí.  
Yo no puedo vivir, etc.

I travel to Puerto Rico,  
to the town of Manatí,  
but I'll never get the deal there  
that I get with Home Relief.  
I can't live, etc.

No salgo de Nueva York  
yo no dejo este país,  
aquí tengo un palo de ron  
y el cheque del home relief.  
Yo no puedo vivir, etc.

I won't leave New York,  
I won't leave the country,  
here I've got rum  
and my check from Home Relief.  
I can't live, etc.





## Qué Vivío

## What a Living

Qué vivío, que vivío,  
que vivío tiene la gente  
aquí en Nueva York.

What a living, what a living,  
what a living the people have  
here in New York.

Ayer tarde llegó  
de la esquina, sabe Dios,  
el lunes por la mañana  
temprano se dirigió  
a donde daban el guiso  
y enseguida se reportó.

Last evening he arrived  
from God knows where,  
early Monday morning  
he went to the place  
where relief was given  
and right away he reported in.

Qué vivío, etc.

What a living, etc.

¿Caballero, quien es?  
Señorita, soy yo,  
pues me dieron la información  
que estaban dando la cita  
y por eso vine aquí  
a Nueva York.

Who are you sir?  
Miss, it is I,  
they told me that they  
were giving interviews here,  
and that's why I came here  
to New York.

Qué vivío, etc.

What a living, etc.

No me voy, no me voy,  
no me voy de Nueva York.

I won't leave, I won't leave,  
I won't leave New York.

Aquí me pagan la casa,  
me dan ternera con papa,  
y carne de lata  
que es un primor.

Here they pay my rent,  
and give me veal and potatoes,  
and canned meat  
that is a real treat.

Qué vivío, etc.

What a living, etc.

Papacito son las nueve,  
el reloj ya llegó,  
muchachita déjalo y vete,  
que a las doce viene el cheque  
y ahora sigo durmiendo yo.

Daddy, it's nine o'clock,  
time to get up!  
Little girl, leave me alone,  
the check will arrive at noon,  
but for now I'll keep on sleeping.

Qué vivío, etc.

What a living, etc.

Está diciendo la vecina  
que el reloj ya llegó,  
muchacha, déjalo y vete,  
que a las doce viene el cheque  
y yo sigo durmiendo.

The neighbor lady is saying  
that the time has arrived!  
Little girl, leave me alone,  
the check will arrive at noon,  
but for now I'll keep on sleeping.

Qué vivío, etc.

What a living, etc.



In 1932, as part of the struggles of the independence movement for the liberation of Puerto Rico directed by Pedro Albizu Campos, some bombs exploded in the city. The *plena* was always ready to tell a story such as this. **Canario** recorded it in 1935, (#20) *Están Tirando Bombas* (They

Are Throwing Bombs) but most probably the *plena* was written earlier. The melody is the same as for an old *plena*, **Cortaron A Elena**, and was also used in **El Home Relief**. This pioneer protest song was composed by Lolito Guzmán.



## Estan Tirando Bombas

'Tan tirando bombas,  
'tan tirando bombas,  
'tan tirando bombas  
en la ciudad de San Juan.

De la isla de Puerto Rico  
señores les voy a hablar:  
el que tiene algún dinerito  
con el pobre quiere acabar.

'Tan tirando, etc.

Todos los puertorriqueños  
salían en procesión,  
gritaban, no lo queremos,  
afuera el gobernador.

## They Are Throwing Bombs

They are throwing bombs,  
they are throwing bombs,  
they are throwing bombs  
in the City of San Juan.

People, I'm going to tell you  
about the island of Puerto Rico.  
The people with some wealth  
want to finish off the poor people.

They are, etc.

All of the Puerto Ricans  
went on a march  
yelling: "we won't take any more of this,  
down with the governor!"

'Tan tirando, etc.

Y llegaba la policía,  
el sargento y el capitán  
con toda su hipocresía  
a ver quien podían llevar.

'Tan tirando, etc.

Aquí le llaman La Prera,  
El Home Relief en New York,  
la gente puertorriqueña  
protesta ante el gobernador.

'Tan tirando, etc.

Se presenta una guerra  
el blanco se va a su sport,  
en llegando a la Piquera  
a la boca del cañon.

'Tan tirando, etc.

Pues el que tiene la culpa  
de esta revolución,  
porque estan tirando bombas,  
es el mismo gobernador.

'Tan tirando, etc.

They are, etc.

And the police arrived,  
the sargeant and the captain  
with all of their hypocrisy,  
looking for anyone they could arrest.

They are, etc.

Here they call it La Prera,  
in New York, El Home Relief,  
the people of Puerto Rico  
protest before the governor.

They are, etc.

A war is about to take place,  
the white man takes his car,  
arriving at La Piquera  
at the mouth of the canyon.

They are, etc.

Well, the one who is responsible  
for this revolution,  
the reason they are throwing bombs  
is because of the governor.

They are, etc.



By 1937 Rafael Hernández left New York and settled in México, but his musical group remained; they just changed the name to **Quinteto La Plata** ( La Plata Quintet) with Davilita and Borrachito as the singers. In 1937 they recorded an *aguinaldo* (#22) **El Portal** (The Porch) and a *décima*, (#23) **La Joven Qué Yo Amaba** (The Girl I Was In Love With). The continued popularity of old *jibaro* music was also evident in San Juan. By 1939 **Conjunto Típico Ladí**, with another great *cuatro* player, Archilla, plus Don Felo at the guitar and Toribio, the greatest *güirero* (güiro player) that Puerto

Rico ever had, recorded (#24) **El Día De Los Sorullos** (The Day Of The Corn-fritters) sung by Chuito, and (#25) **Para El Año Nuevo** (For The Year), an *aguinaldo* or Christmas song, sung by Jesús “Chuito” Sánchez and Natalia.

*Jíbaro* music, as old country music in many parts of the world, can be solemn and rhetorical, as in **El Portal** a biblical recount of the Nativity with Jesús and The Three Kings; it can also be coy, as in **La Joven Qué Yo Amaba** where the protagonist resists the advances of a young lady for ten verses, but finally yields and makes love to her:

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### La Joven Qué Yo Amaba

Qué si su amor perdía  
no le tenía novedad  
que le dió felicidad  
a quien lo merecía.

### The Girl I Was In Love With

If she should lose her love  
it doesn't matter to her,  
because she made happy  
he who really deserved it.

(Of course you can wonder: Who deserved it, him or her?)

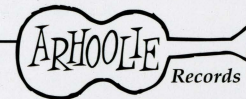
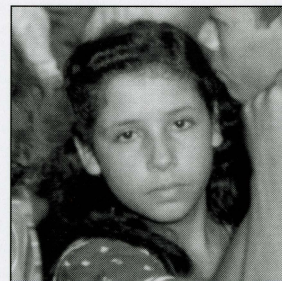
**El Día De Los Sorullos** is a long tale about an old man who only wants to eat corn fritters, with the candid humor typical of this kind of music; and finally **Para El Año Nuevo** is an *aguinaldo*, a way of wishing merry Christmas and happy

New Year, with all the compliments of the season. But all of them are gay, with a lot of life and vitality.

Enjoy it, *compay*.

Cristóbal Díaz Ayala

(with editing by Chris Strachwitz)



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