

Folk Songs of Puerto Rico

*Recorded by
Henrietta Yurchenco*

*With Peter Gold &
Peter Yurchenco*

ASCH MANKIND SERIES AHM 4412



M
1681
P6
F666
1971

MUSIC LP

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Side I

- Band 1: Decima, 4:20
- Band 2: Aguinaldo, 2:39
- Band 3: Pasodoble, 3:45
- Band 4: Me Mataron El Gallo, 3:06
- Band 5: La Plena Viene de Cidra, 1:27
- Band 6: Waltz, 2:44
- Band 7: Guaracha - La Mujer del Zapatero, 2:30

Side II

- Band 1: Bomba, 1:30
- Band 2: Juba, 1:00
- Band 3: A. Ven Acá, Ven Acá, 1:00
B. Melitón Tón Be, 1:30
- Band 4: A. El Rabo de La Cometa, 1:15
B. Dolores, 1:15
- Band 5: A. Venga Ron, 1:20
B. Agua Tire, 1:15
- Band 6: Christmas Party
A. Maria Magdalena, 0:45
B. Waltz, 2:50
- Band 7: Piece for Concertina and Drum, 2:45
- Band 8: Mensaje de Alto, Rondalla del Templo
de Mita, 3:53

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COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

ASCH MANKIND SERIES AHM 4412

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Folk Songs of Puerto Rico

Side I

Band 1: Decima, 4:20.

Luis Marcano, singer, José Miguel Velez and Francisco Cruz, guitarists.
Recorded in Cidra, 1967.

Band 2: Aguinaldo, 2:39.

(In decimas); Luis Marcano and Gilberto Laza, singers. José Miguel Velez and Francisco Cruz, guitarists.
Recorded in Cidra, 1967.

Band 3: Pasodoble, 3:45.

Luis Marcano, singer.
Recorded in Cidra, 1967.

Band 4: Me Mataron El Gallo, 3:06.

Luis Marcano, Gilberto Laza, singers.
Recorded in Cidra, 1967.

Band 5: La Plena Viene de Cidra, 1:27.

Luis Marcano and Gilberto Laza, singers.
Recorded in Cidra, 1967.

Band 6: Waltz, 2:44.

Luis Marcano, singer.
Recorded in Cidra, Puerto Rico, 1967.

Band 7: Guaracha—La Mujer del Zapatero, 2:30.

Gilberto Laza, singer.
Recorded in Cidra, 1967.

Side II

Band 1: Bomba, 1:30.

Raul and Freddy Ayala.
Recorded in Loiza Aldea, 1967.

Band 2: Juba, 1:00.

Raul and Freddy Ayala.
Recorded in Loiza Aldea, 1967.

Band 3: A. Ven Acá, Ven Acá, 1:00.

B. Melitón Tón Be, 1:30.

Recorded during the fiesta of Santiago in Loiza Aldea, 1967.

Band 4: A. El Rabo de La Cometa, 1:15.

B. Dolores, 1:15.

Recorded by the Parilla Family, Loiza Aldea, 1967.

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Band 5: A. Venga Ron, 1:20.

B. Agua Tiré, 1:15.

Recorded by the Parilla Family, Loiza Aldea, 1967.

Band 6: Christmas Party.

A. Maria Magdalena, 0:45.

Recorded at a Loiza Aldea Christmas Party. Sung by Ana Iris Parilla, with güiro accompaniment.

B. Waltz, 2:50.

Played by Viviano Pizarro, concertina.
Recorded in Loiza Aldea, 1967.

Band 7: Piece for Concertina and Drum, 2:45.

Played by Viviano Pizarro and "Chichito" Cruz Ortiz, drum.

Band 8: Mensaje de Alto, Rondalla del Templo de Mita, 3:53.

Recorded in Hato Rey, (San Juan), 1969.

Introduction

Puerto Rico or Borinquen, its original Indian name, has two important cultural and ethnic strains - Spanish and Afro-Caribbean. Discovered by Columbus in 1493 it was first settled under Ponce de Leon in 1508. The Conquistadores quickly subdued the local Tainos Indians and later successfully fought back the marauding Caribs, one of the fiercest tribes of the area and after whom the Caribbean Sea was named. Today, hardly a trace of Indian culture or race remains.

From the beginning slaves were imported from Africa to work in the coastal areas. By 1850 half of Puerto Rico's 500,000 inhabitants were mixtures of African and Spanish. Slavery gradually began to fade out officially and ended in 1873. While prejudice against blacks is found on the island, it is more a class than a racial problem. The mixture of black and white is most vividly seen along the coast; whites predominate in the mountains. Despite the racial blending, Puerto Ricans generally feel a closer affinity to their Spanish heritage than to the African. However, African influences, particularly in music and dance are powerfully felt everywhere on the island.

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From the 16th to the end of the 18th century Puerto Rico was a target for French, English and Dutch pirates and privateers. While other Caribbean islands were overrun, sacked and ruled in the name of various European powers Puerto Rico, well fortified, successfully fought would-be intruders.

During the 17th and 18th century Puerto Rico was also an important smuggling center. Because Spain had complete control over trade in the New World, what could not be done legally was done illegally. During periods when Spanish shipping slowed to a halt in San Juan and the city starved, the rest of the coastline prospered. Often with the connivance of corrupt Spanish administrators, smugglers from Dutch Curaçao the Danish Virgin Islands and English Jamaica ran their sloops down to the tropical beaches exchanging linens, implements and slaves for animals, spices, tobacco (and coffee after 1850).

When Spain lost Latin America in the early 19th century it relaxed its trade restrictions on Puerto Rico. Settlers set up plantations, particularly coffee, in the mountains, and a long period of prosperity and peace came to the island.

On the political front, the 19th century was a fight for independence. After decades of political maneuvering, in 1897 the Puerto Ricans won their autonomy from Spain within a dominion status. Months later the United States occupied the island "liberating" it from Spain.

Puerto Rico has prospered since the 1950's when Operation Bootstrap, a plan which industrialized the economy, relieved to some extent the oppressive poverty. Puerto Ricans are American citizens, free to work and live on the mainland. They enjoy many social benefits like unemployment and social security. Yet, dissatisfaction is growing. The question is status. Who are we, to whom does our allegiance belong? Do we wish to be Puerto Ricans, or Americans?

This recording is a sampling of the musical traditions, both black and white - which have been grown and nurtured on Puerto Rican soil.

Side I Band 1 - Decima

Luis Marcano, singer
José Miguel Velez and Francisco Cruz, guitarists, recorded in Cidra.

According to Gilbert Chase in his book "Music of Spain," the decima of Spain is a variant of the popular ballad based on a poetic form first cultivated in the sixteenth century. The traditional form is an eight-syllable, ten-line stanza with the following rhyming scheme:

abbaaccdda,

It is generally preceeded by a four-line introduction. Popular throughout Latin America, it is used in various musical contexts; in Mexico, the valona, Uruguay and Argentina, the estilo, and Venezuela, the guasa. In Puerto Rico the musical form is the seis, a basic country dance.

The decima deals with a wide variety of subjects. Unlike the ballad, it is given more to philosophical comment than story telling. Some mountain "trovadores," although illiterate, have been known to improvise in perfect style on learned subjects, history, and incidents of the Bible. During World War II Jesus, El De Bayamon, used to sing the news in decimas on a San Juan radio station. The custom has continued to this very day.

Luis Marcano, the talented singer and composer of this decima, lives a life of poverty on farmland near Cidra. Only a poor man could write such a work! He dreams that one day he will be able to live by his music. This is the first time he has appeared on records. The recording was made in the beautiful house of Ellen and Peter Hawes, one of the original Almanac Singers, and long time resident of Puerto Rico. The two guitarists who accompany Luis are his friends. These teen-age musicians play with the assurance and style of veterans.

Le, lo, le, etc.
no tengo nada que hacer (2)
en esta vida tengo que seguir
porque para me es un placer
todo lo puedo tener
no me tengo que ahorrar
yo no tengo en que pensar
este sistema nos ama
yo tengo todo a la mano
sin tener que trabajar

Le, lo, le, etc.
me levanto como a las diéz
me tiro la ropa encima
luego voy a la cocina
tengo el almuerzo y el cafe
y luego como a las tres
un baño me voy a dar
y vuelta me pongo a dar
hacia abajo y hacia arriba
y así paso mi vida
sin tener que trabajar

Le, lo, le, etc.
me meto en vasilon (2)
me tomo la cervecita
y si estará guitarrita
también canto mi canción
y si consigo el vellón
yo lo juego en billard
puedo perder o ganar
porque voy a enfurecerme
si lo mio es entretenerme
sin tener que trabajar

Le, lo, le, etc.
yo tengo una madrecita (2)
ella es mi madre adorada
que me pone en la semana
mi ropa bien planchadita
si no me lo hace mi hermanita.
no la tengo que ahorrar
no lo tengo que mandar
para que voy a insistir
si así yo puedo vivir
sin que tengo que trabajar.

Le, lo, le, etc.
voy a dejar la ciudad (2)
al campo me voy a ir
a ver si puedo vivir
en toda tranquilidad
como allí hay felicidad
algo bueno a encontrar
allí fui a formar mi hogar
junto a mi esposa querida
y así pasará mi vida
sin tener que trabajar

Note: Final "R" is pronounced like "l" by many Puerto Ricans.

Le, lo, le, etc.
I have nothing to do (2)
In this life I must go on
Because for me it is a pleasure
I can have everything
I don't have to save
I have nothing on my mind
This system loves us
I have everything at hand
Without having to work.

Le, lo, le, etc.
 I arise at about ten
 I throw my clothes around
 Then I go to the kitchen
 I have lunch and coffee
 And then about three
 I take a bath
 I go for a walk
 To the bottom and up to the top
 And that's how my life goes,
 Without having to work.

Le, lo, le, etc.
 I have become a wastrel (2)
 I drink my little beer
 And if there's a little guitar
 I also sing my song
 And if I get a nickel
 I spend it on billiards
 I can lose or win--
 Why should I be mad
 If I can entertain myself
 Without having to work.

Le, lo, le, etc.
 I have a little mother
 She is my adored mother
 And every week she sets out
 My clothes well ironed
 If not my little sister does it
 I don't have to spare her
 I don't have to order her
 Why should I insist
 If I can live like this
 Without having to work.

Le, lo, le, etc.
 I will leave the city
 To the country I will go
 To see if I can live
 In all tranquility
 Since happiness is there
 Something good will come my way
 There I went to make my home
 Together with my dear wife
 That's how I will spend my life
 Without having to work.

Side I, Band 2 - Aguinaldo (in decimas of six-syllable lines).
 Luis Marciano and Gilberto Laza, singers
 José Miguel Velez and Francisco Cruz, guitarists, Recorded in Cidra, Puerto Rico, 1967.

The Spanish word Aguinaldo means a Christmas present but also a Christmas song. Roving groups who go from house to house singing carols consider their songs as gift-offerings. But Christmas is the time for the exchange of gifts, and so the household is expected to give something in return--money, food or drink. Such customs are worldwide. In Europe they go back at least to the festival of Saturnalia in Roman times.

In Puerto Rico, the custom of singing aguinaldos is observed everywhere, in cities and mountain towns. In San Juan, the skyscrapers blaze with colored electric lights. At midnight the city is as bright as at noon! In the evening, singers are heard in plazas, in elegant restaurants and poor neighborhood bars. Children wander the streets, singing to passersby, and pluck their sleeve for a present of money.

In the mountains the air is frosty in December. Bands of singers and guitarists wander the hills playing for their friends and families until dawn, drinking body-warming rum, eating delicious meat-filled "pastelillos" or sweet rice pudding cooked in coconut milk.

The aguinaldo on this recording has nothing to do with Christmas yet it is sung during that season. It is a lyric outburst in praise of nature and womankind. Sung in decimas, its musical setting is similar to the first band on this recording. Although not included here, during the recording session in Cidra we recorded a true Puerto Rican "contraversia," an improvised musical and poetic contest. Luis Marciano and his friend Gilberto Laza improvised an aguinaldo about the nativity, each one taking a turn until the story completely unfolded.

Le, lo, etc.
 entre aquel palmar } 2
 también tengo mi bohío }
 y a la orilla del río
 yo tengo un cafetal
 Se escuche el cantar
 de los ruseñores
 y los trovadores
 cantan con destello
 y brilla en su cuello, muchacha
 un collar de flores

Lo, le, etc.
 Se ve la montaña también } 2
 cubierto en nieblina }
 y allá en colina
 yo tengo mi cabaña
 el turpeal se baña
 entre cundeamores
 hay ricos colores
 de flores sencillas
 en tu cuello brilla, muchacha
 un collar de flores.

Lo, le, lo, etc.
 Con gran voluntad
 va la jibarita
 lava su ropita
 allá en la quebrante
 el paisaje está
 lleno de fergores
 muy ricas las flores
 se ven alumbrando
 en su cuello, niñita
 un collar de flores

Le, lo, le, etc.
 In that palm grove
 I also have my hut
 And at the river's edge
 I have a coffee plantation.
 I listen to the song
 Of the nightingales
 And the troubadours
 Sing with brilliance
 And on your throat sparkles, little girl
 A necklace of flowers

Le, lo, le, etc.
 You see the mountain also
 Covered with mist
 And there on the hill
 I have my cabin
 The turpeal (bird) bathes
 Among the cundeamores (flowers)
 There are rich colors
 of simple flowers
 And on your throat sparkles, little girl
 A necklace of flowers

Le, lo, le, etc.
 With great pleasure
 Goes the little country girl } 2
 She washes her clothes
 There in the ravine
 The landscape is
 Full of fergones (flowers)
 Very rich the flowers
 They seem to illuminate

On your throat, little girl
A necklace of flowers.

Side I Band 3 - Pasadoble
Luis Marciano, singer. Recorded
in Cidra, Puerto Rico, 1967.

Pasadoble - This popular Spanish dance, in fast 4/4 time is played by a band at the beginning of the bull fight to announce the entrance of los matadores, the bull fighters. It is a lively, almost march-like couple-dance. The uninitiated have only to walk around the dance floor to the rhythm, but the experts weave many fascinating patterns. Unlike Caribbean-flavored couple-dances common to Latin America, the pasadoble is danced, not with undulating torso, but with a proud rigid stance. As a matter of fact, many movements are reminiscent of the characteristic passes of the bull fighter.

In this version from Puerto Rico, the original Spanish exuberance has been mellowed. Melody and words have an air of melancholy that gives way to passionate despair.

Quitate la caratita
pa' mirarte frente a frente
que el momento ha llegaito
pa' decirte la verdad,

Tu con uno y yo con otra
y a vivir tranquilamente
que la vida aunque no quiera
siempre ha sido un carnaval.

Yo te quise me quisiste
me olvidaste y te olvidé,
No vale ponerse triste
ni por cuanto ni porque.

Chorus

Que no, que no, que no, que no te quiero
que no, que no, sin ti que no me muero
ayer con frenesí te daba el alma
pero ahora se acabó lo que se daba.

Que sí, que sí, que sí que te quería
que no, no era un papel que yo te hacía
pero hay que vida y que dolor
que ya nuestro cariño se acabó.

que le vamos a hacer, si no vale ni existir
la cosita del querer
la cosita del querer
en la vida son así.

Quién ha visto una pastora
vestida con ricas pieles?
Quién ha visto un limpiabotas
con corona de marques?

Quién ha visto una leona
con un ramo de claveles?
Como quieras que te pongas
tu no tienes na que ver.

Yo te quise me quisiste
me olvidaste te olvidé.
No vale ponerse triste
ni por cuanto ni porque.

Reveal your face
So we may look at each other
For the moment has arrived
To tell you the truth.

You with one and I with another
And to live gracefully.
For life although one wants it
Always has been a carnival.

I loved you, you loved me
You forgot me, I forgot you -
It is not worth being sad
No rhyme or reason for it.

Chorus

Oh no, Oh no, Oh no, -
For I do not love you
Oh no, Oh no, without you I will not die
Yesterday, in frenzy I gave you my soul
But now is gone, what we gave each other

Oh yes, Oh yes, Oh yes for I loved you-
Oh no, it was not a role I played with you
But, what a life and what a sorrow
Now that our love is gone. . .
What shall we do, if life is not worth living?
The little thing called love.
The little thing called love-
In life, it's like that!

Who has seen a country girl
Dressed in rich furs?
Who has seen a bootblack
With crown of marquisite?

Who has seen a lioness
With a bouquet of carnations?
No matter what you want
It is not up to you!

I loved you, you loved me-
You forgot me, I forgot you-
To be sad is not worth it
No rhyme or reason for it!

Side I Band 4 - Plena
Luis Marciano, Gilberto Laza,
singers.

The plena of Puerto Rico comes from the slum areas of coastal towns and like Calypso is a perfect vehicle for recounting incidents in the daily lives of ordinary people, historical events, social customs, and religious beliefs. More like gossip than news, the comments of the plena are funny, satirical or feigned matter-of-fact.

A combination of Afro-Caribbean and Spanish characteristics, the plena probably made its first appearance late in the nineteenth century. Some old songs are still heard but the plena did not become universally popular or respectable until the 1920's. Many popular composers wrote them but the most important was Manuel A. Jimenez, affectionately called El Canario (The Canary). A long-time resident of New York, he heard his first plena performed there in 1925, in a Puerto Rican neighborhood by a group of young people from Ponce.

Played with full orchestra of guitar, clarinet, guiro, string bass, accordion and tambourine, or by two guitars, as in this disc, the plena is one of the most exciting and joyful dance-songs of the Caribbean. Along the coast the four-line stanza and refrain are broken up into call and response patterns by solo and chorus. In the mountains, at Cidra, the stanza was performed without breaks. When sung in harmony, thirds and sixths predominate.

The subject here deals with the cock fight, the ever-popular amusement of Puerto Rico. The tune was originally used for Cortaron a Elena, a song about a barrio girl of easy virtue.

Me mataron el gallo (3)
los pica piedras de la cantera.

Mi mataron el gallo (3)
allá la ambulancia
viene tocando sirena.

Me mataron el gallo (3)
los pica piedras de la cantera.

Yo no quiero mi gallo (2)
 mi gallo no quiero
 lo que quiero son las espuelas.
 Que pica, que pica, pica (2)

 los pica piedras de la cantera.

Chorus

They killed my fighting cock, (3)
 The stone cutters of the quarry.

They killed my fighting cock (2)
 There comes the ambulance -
 Sounding its siren!

I don't want my fighting cock (2)
 My fighting cock I do not want
 What I want are his spurs!

To cut, to cut, to cut (2)

 The stone cutters of the quarry.

Side I Band 5 - Plena - La Plena Viene de Cidra.
 Luis Marcano and Gilberto Laza,
 singers, Recorded in Cidra,
 Puerto Rico, 1967.

La plena que yo conozco } 2
 no es de la China ni del Japon
 Porque la plena viene de Cidra
 y es del barrio de Bayamon

Se cansa cualquiera
 se acaba la vida
 comiendo marota
 de almuerzo y comida

Yo sigo adelante
 cantando canciones
 preste atenciones
 que iré más pa' alante.

The plena that I know
 Is not from China or Japan
 Because the plena comes from Cidra*
 From the barrio of Bayamon

Anyone gets tired
 Life can end
 Eating "marota"
 For lunch and dinner.

I continue ahead,
 Singing songs
 I pay attention
 So I may go further on

*The original version claimed the city of Ponce
 as the birthplace of the plena.

Side I Band 6 - Waltz
 Luis Marcano, singer. Recorded
 in Cidra, Puerto Rico, 1967.

No European dance form has had the wide
 distribution of the waltz. Long before it
 became the smooth, elegant Viennese couple-
 dance in the early nineteenth century it was
 a lascivious folk dance of South German
 peasants. According to eye-witness reports
 of the time, the women wrapped their huge
 skirts around their male partners and danced
 into dark corners of the dance floor and did
 "lewd" things!

The waltz became popular throughout Latin
 America, each country adding its own particular
 flavor to the original base. First heard in
 city dance halls and small towns, the waltz

reached remote areas where it was performed
 by Indians on flutes and rustic harps.

The introduction of this Puerto Rican
 waltz played by the two guitars is a mixture
 of three and two beat measures but finally
 stabilizes into regular 3/4 waltz rhythm. The
 singer sings his waltz freely.

Adiós, adiós, mis ojos no vuelven
 a contemplar tu rostro encantador
 y esas miradas que son recuerdos míos
 y esa boquita de perfumada flor

Ya se acabó la vida para mí
 mis ojos se cansaron de llorar
 recordarás, ingrata, que yo fui
 el amante que no te olvidarás.

Yo seguiré llevando con dolor
 la cruz de mi destino que es tan cruel
 que venga la muerte y dejaremos de existir
 dejaremos de existir.

pero dime que me juras
 amor, amor hasta la muerte
 para mí no hay placeres en la vida
 hay en la vida solo el quererte (2)

Farewell, farewell, my eyes will not again
 Behold your enchanting face
 And those looks which are my keepsakes
 And that mouth flower-perfumed.

Life is now ended for me
 My eyes are tired of tears
 You will remember, ingrate, that I was
 The lover who will not forget you

I will continue to bear with pain
 The cross of my destiny that is so cruel
 May death come, and we will cease to exist
 Let us cease to exist

But tell me that for me you swear.
 Love, love until death
 For me there are no pleasures in life
 In this life there is only my love for you.

Side I Band 7 - Guaracha - La Mujer del Zapatero
 Gilberto Laza, singer, recorded
 in Cidra, Puerto Rico, 1967.

The Guaracha is an old Afro-Cuban street-dance
 of great melodic and rhythmic charm and vigor.
 It has long been popular in Puerto Rico among
 country (jibaro) singers. Like other Caribbean
 songs such as the habanera and guajira, the
guaracha was popular in Spain for a while.
 Even today they are performed in the villages
 of Andalusia in Southern Spain.

The guaracha is difficult to define be-
 cause it takes on many different musical and
 poetic forms. This tuneful country version is
 in fast 6/8 alternating occasionally with 3/4.

La mujer del zapatero
 se llamaba doña Olivo
 y si no se hubiera muerto
 todavía estuviera viva

Hablele así de mi comai
 cuidado si le esta mal
 hablele así de mi compai
 cuidado si le esta mal

Ayer me dijo Penuco
 caminito bien perdido
 la mujer que se enamora
 algo se trae en manos

Que susto pasó la gata
 cuando se comió el tocino
 más susto pasó Rufino
 corriendo con las batatas.

Rufino se entretenia
con una mujer ajena
y cuando llegó el marido
allí empezó la carrera.

The wife of the shoemaker
Her name was Doña Olivo
And if she had not died
She'd still be alive.

When you talk about my godmother
Take care if she's in bad temper
When you talk about my godfather
Take care if he's in bad temper.

Yesterday Penuco told me
Wandering quite aimlessly
The woman who falls in love
Brings something in her hands.

How scared was the cat
When he ate the bacon
More scared was Rufino
Running with the potatoes

Rufino played around
With someone else's wife
And when her husband arrived
That's when the chase began.

Side II Band 1 - Bomba Rhythms
Raul and Freddy Ayala. Recorded
in Loiza Aldea, Puerto Rico,
1967.

An hour from San Juan on the North Shore is
the town of Loiza Aldea, the only black town
in Puerto Rico, and its barrios Baja and Alta
Medianias. A sleepy little town, built among
palm groves, each year late in July it comes
to life for a week's celebration in honor of
Santiago, its patron saint. For this brief
period it is crowded with costumed Loizans,
relatives and friends from the United States
and other parts of the island. Carnival comes
to town with its side shows of magical tricks.
Roadside restaurants spring up everywhere,
selling beer, fried cakes of banana pulp and
meat, crab pones and barbecued meat. Half
pageant, half religious fiesta, it celebrates
the victory of the Christians (Spaniards) over
the Moors, or good over evil, a Spanish heritage
in the New World.

Santiago is also time for match-making,
marriages, and baptisms. Most of all it is a
time when Loiza becomes a huge theater where
everyone acts out his role in an oft-played
drama.

The characters in this play are: The
Spanish gentlemen, dressed in Conquistadore
costumes, brilliant colored pants, capes,
dashing hats, and masks of chicken wire. They
represent Good and "civilization." The most
bizarre of all are the vejigantes, dressed in
weird bat-like costumes in riotous colors,
with three-horned masks made of coconut husks.
They are the Moors, the Devil, or Evil-incarnate.
In addition there are lesser characters: Locos
(mad people), men dressed as women whose crazy
antics are the fun of the festival. Viejos, too
poor to make expensive costumes, they only use
masks.

The principal activities of the fiesta are
centered on the three religious processions, one
for each of the three images of Santiago - for
the men, the women and the children. Each day
the procession, headed by the statue on a litter,
leaves the church in Loiza Aldea and ends on
the beach at Alta Medianias followed by horse
races. Hundreds of people in costumes line up

behind the steel and brass bands, mounted on
trucks, and dance down the hot road for the
five-mile trip. Behind them come hundreds of cars
(formerly decorated ox-carts) honking their horns
to the rhythm of the music.

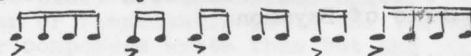
On arrival at Alta Medianias the play acting
begins. Children, the locos, stuffed with pillows,
and vejigantes speaking in mysterious voices
through their masks, go through the town, begging
for money, singing songs, telling jokes, acting
out their roles.

One of the highlights of the fiesta is the
bomba. Every night, often until dawn, Medianias
pulsates with the hypnotic rhythm of drums,
undulating dance and tuneful songs. People of
all ages appear from dark coconut groves to
form a circle around two drummers, one playing
the acompanimiento and the lead drummer the
repique, or improvisation. The drums begin -
then a solo dancer steps into the center of the
circle, jumping, shaking and twisting his body
until thoroughly exhausted, while the villagers
sing the traditional verses. Even the youngsters
are encouraged to dance and try the drums.

The homemade wooden drums heard here are made
of barrels covered with skin-heads. They are
tuned and tightened by heating them over a
fire. Teenage Freddy and his older brother
Raul are members of the most musical and artistic
family in Loiza. Everyone sings, dances and
plays the drums, even their five-year-old
nephew. Every year they perform a theatrical
version of the main events of the Santiago
festival, at the theater of the Institute of
Puerto Rican culture in San Juan. Lately, they
have shown it on TV as well. Although Raul
goes to the University of Puerto Rico, and his older
brother works in television in San Juan, both
live in Loiza. They love their town and its
traditions, particularly the fiesta and plan to
live there the rest of their lives.

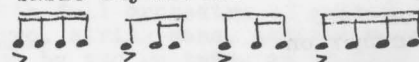
Castor Ayala, their fascinating father, is
the chief craftsman and mask-maker of the village.
He is also a painter and sculptor.

The basic rhythm of the improvisation is:



Side II Band 2 - Juba Rhythm
Raul and Freddy Ayala. Recorded
in Loiza Aldea, Puerto Rico,
1967.

The basic rhythm is:



Side II Band 3 - Recorded during the fiesta of
Santiago in Loiza Aldea, Puerto
Rico, 1967.

The bomba, where these two songs were recorded
was held in la Calle de las Carerras, (Street
of the Races) where the Santiago processions end
and where the horseraces take place. The two
drummers played under a huge tree, in the dim
light of the nearby street lamp. The songs
were sung by a solo voice and answering chorus,
the lines repeated in haphazard order.

A. Ven acá, ven acá.

Come here, come here.

B. Melitón, ton be
Se cayó la casa del gallo
ay, el corral de los caballos
Melitón, ton be

The house of the fighting cock fell down
Oh, the corral of the horses.

Side II Band 4 - Recorded by the Parilla Family,
Loiza Aldea, Puerto Rico, 1967.

These songs were recorded at a bomba given by the Parilla family. One night Sofia, a widow with six children, rounded up the good singers and drummers in her family and also invited a family friend, Loiza Aldea's finest drummer, "Chichito" Cruz Ortiz. The marvelous harmony, the animated singing and expert drumming, make these unique performances in Afro-Spanish Caribbean.

A. El Rabo de la Cometa

Una vieja camisa se levantó
y el rabo de la cometa se la llevó
si la quieres ver
levántate temprano y la verás

An old shirt was lifted up
And the tail of a kite took it away
If you want to see it
Get up early and you will see it.

B. Dolores

Dónde está Dolores
para bailar, Dolores
ay, buscame a Dolores
para bailar, Dolores

Where is Dolores?
Let's dance, Dolores!
Oh, I look for Dolores
Let's dance, Dolores!

Side II Band 5 - Recorded by the Parilla Family,
Loiza Aldea, Puerto Rico, 1967.

A. Ron, Ron

Ron, ron, pido yo
anis, anis de Corazon
si no hay anis
que venga ron.

Rum, rum I beg of you
Anis, anis de Corazon
If there is no anis
Let there be rum.

B. Agua Tiré

Llegando al puente
agua tiré
o li, agua tiré
Arriving at the bridge
I threw in water
Oh, li, I threw in water.

Side II Band 6 - Recorded at Loiza Aldea. Sung
by Ana Iris Parilla, with guiro
accompaniment.

These recordings were made at a Christmas party given by the Parilla family in 1967. It was held in the small house of Ana Iris Parilla and her husband right off the main road of the Medianias section of Loiza. In the tiny living room, members of the family and their friends assembled. There were mountains of fried chicken, rice and beans, (the Puerto Rican staple), and bottles of golden rum. Good natured, warm and hospitable, they helped us set up our recording equipment. Singing began, the drums vigorously played, and the guiro (notched stick) sounded full and strong. In a matter of minutes, the house shook with the vibrations. Soon the little room was choked with people and bands of wandering singers joined in from the back yard. Everyone sang carols, love songs, bombas, either alone or with others as the spirit moved them. More rum, more food, more music, more laughter.

A. Maria Magdalena
se cortó su pelo
y después lo puso
mirando por fuera.

Si no me conoce
conoce mi voz
pregunta mañana
y te dirán quien soy.

Dos y dos son cuatro
cuatro y dos son seis
seis y dos son ocho
y ocho dieciseis

Mary Magdalena
Cut off her hair
And then she placed it
In front of her to gaze at it

If you do not know me
Know my voice
Ask tomorrow
And they will tell you who I am

Two and two are four
Four and two are six
Six and two are eight
And eight are sixteen.

B. Waltz

Played by Viviano Pizarro, concertina.

Also present was the energetic seventy-year-old Viviano, a favorite old time concertina player. A gentleman of the old school with beautiful manners (and an eye for the young girls) Viviano plays the tunes of his childhood and young manhood. When he was a boy at the beginning of this century, just after the American occupation, waltzes, mazurkas and other European dances were in full flower in this black village. Although such music is dying out, replaced by steel bands and pop songs from the city, the crowd at this Christmas party inside and outside the house applauded him roundly.

Side II Band 7 - Piece for Concertina and Drum
Played by Viviano Pizarro and
"Chichito" Cruz Ortiz, drum.

Side II Band 8 - Mensaje de Alto
Rondalla del Templo de Mita,
Recorded in Hato Rey, (San
Juan) Puerto Rico, 1969.

Before the Americans occupied Puerto Rico at the end of the last century the island was, like all of Spanish America, mainly Catholic. Then came many Protestant denominations - Baptist, Methodist, Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostal groups. In 1940 a new religion was born, the only native Puerto Rican church.

The founder of the new religion was a wealthy woman from Arecibo. Her followers called her Mita. Until her death in 1970, Mita was adored by thousands of people. Temples were established in many Puerto Rican cities and in the United States as well - New York, Philadelphia, Washington.

Mita was revered by her congregation as the prophet of the 20th century, as Jesus, and Moses had been in their time. She had a great reputation as a healer, and many miraculous cures are attributed to her. She was a woman of humility, and her concern for her people went beyond their spiritual needs. The Temple was run as a cooperative. Members bought shares in property and businesses of many kinds and investments paid off well.

The big, white Temple in the Hato Rey section of San Juan was always filled with Mita's white-robed followers. Music played an enormous role in the services. Mita herself often picked the popular tunes she liked, and members of the congregation composed new words. At every service there were three bands - brass, strings and a small ensemble of professional musicians. They, like the others, sang and played only the songs of Mita. The small group, The Rondalla, is the one heard on this record. Congregational singing was always highly charged. Some singers would go into trance as they turned around and around near their seats. The followers of Mita, of all ages, are conservative people who do not drink, dance or go to parties. Their pleasure in life stems from their sense of devotion to Mita. Now that she is gone, her disciples carry on her work.

Como los tiempos de Noé vino el espíritu
anunciando que viene destrucción
ya se ven los juicios en la tierra,
dentro del arco tendrás la salvación

Chorus

Amigo, ven y oyes la voz de Dios
que en este día hablando está
es el mensaje que viene de lo alto
nos estan juntando en esta gran ciudad.

Desesperado y angustiado y en dolor,
de lejos vienen llegando hasta aquí
y cuando hacen pacto con Mita
son sanados y se sienten feliz.

As in the time of Noah came the spirit
Announcing the coming of destruction
Already is seen the judgment on earth
Within the Arc will you have salvation.

My friend, come and hear the voice of God -
That on this very day is speaking -
It is the message that comes from above
It is uniting us in this great city

Desperate and anxious and in pain
From afar they come, arriving here
And when they make a pact with Mita
They are cured and feel content.

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