

## **THE MUSIC ARCHIVES AT THE CIDMUC AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON THE MUSICAL CULTURE OF CUBA**

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The Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo de la Música Cubana (Centre for Research and Development of Cuban Music), generally known by its acronym CIDMUC, was founded in Havana, Cuba, on 26 December 1978. The institution was designed as a scientific unit of the Ministry of Culture, to further research in the field of music. Its main objective is to foster and encourage studies, researches and to gather information on Cuban music, taking into account its diverse cultural roots and the relation it has maintained at all times with the musical cultures of other people.

From the time that it was founded, CIDMUC has achieved significant results in musicological research, particularly in ethnomusicology and the psychology and sociology of music. It has improved considerably in the scientific and technical services it provides for other researchers. Over the last 10 or 12 years, CIDMUC has developed a wide range of activities that complement its research work. Among the most important of these activities are teaching and the establishment of lasting relations with other similar institutions in Cuba and abroad. Despite the fact that the majority of its research employees are trained musicologists, the institution draws on the knowledge of sociologists, psychologists, ethnologists, mathematicians, sound engineers and information specialists.

The institutional structure of CIDMUC consists of four principal sections: i) Administrative Management Department; ii) Basic Research Department; iii) Development Department; iv) Information

and Documentation Department (Archives). It also has a computer section, an audio and recording section and a photo laboratory. A small auditorium designed for lectures and conferences was constructed some 15 years ago and has played an important role in the work of CIDMUC.

The work of the administrative section is self-explanatory; the three other departments require further description.

*Basic Research Department*

This department organizes research work in the field of Cuba's traditional popular musical culture and its relations with other musical cultures of Hispanic and African antecedents, as well as with the music of Latin America and the Caribbean. Research here is based upon varied fields within musicology comprising ethnomusicology, musical instruments, musical acoustics and the history of Cuban music. During the 1980s, fieldwork was done throughout Cuba with the purpose of gathering information on its traditional music. Thousands of interviews were conducted, thousands of pictures taken and hundreds of hours of music recorded. Research was also carried out abroad, in the Federative Republic of Guyana, in Granada, in the Island of Guadeloupe and in Angola. Substantial material and information on African and Afro-Caribbean music was gathered during this fieldwork.

Cuba was going through severe economic difficulties in the beginning of the 90s and all fieldwork came to a standstill. This situation introduced changes in the functioning of CIDMUC. More deskwork has been done since and the information gathered during the 80s has been put into order. A great effort was made to put together a final version of the *Atlas of Cuban Traditional Musical Instruments*. The book was published in 1997. More than 300 articles were also written for the *Dictionary of Spanish and Iberoamerican Music*. This dictionary is being published in Spain. The researchers of CIDMUC wrote all the entries that provide information on Cuba.

*Development Department*

The second department at CIDMUC undertakes research that

deals with the development of Cuban music at different levels and social layers. This department studies the present status of Cuban music and its projection into the future: creativity, performances, dissemination and consumption in all its forms. Its work is aimed at influencing the evolution of Cuban music with the information gathered through diagnostic and prognostic studies. The information provided by CIDMUC has brought about important changes in most of the country's musical activity.

The department has a multidisciplinary team of musicologists, psychologists, sociologists, acoustic physicists and computer specialists. Its studies are approached from very different angles. While the sociological study focuses on how musical behaviour has a direct influence on the way of life of the Cuban people, the psychological study observes the development of musical capacities, motivations, needs and the interpersonal ties that develop between musicians and different sectors of the population. The commercial aspects of music are dealt with in the economic study; the technological study covers the material support of music such as instruments, records and cassettes; the pedagogical study relates to specialized musical education as well as the national elementary and secondary school system and the musicological study analyses regularities, tendencies and stylistic transformations that have taken place not only in traditional and popular professional music in Cuba but even in its classical and contemporary music.

#### *Information and Documentation Department*

The Information and Documentation Department is in charge of processing, storing and retrieving information (printed and recorded) on Cuban music that may be required by researchers, students, specialists, musicians and institutions all over Cuba and abroad. This department has two main functions:

1. To gather all the existing information on topics related to researches that have been carried out by the Basic Research Department and the Development Department;
2. To process, store and give back information gathered by the

other two departments in order to make it useful for researchers outside the institution.

This department also functions like a small but very specialized library of Cuban music. Hundreds of visitors come to us every year to work, mostly to consult our firsthand documents (questionnaires, unpublished reports on fieldwork, photos and in-situ recordings). A very important responsibility of this department is maintaining contact with other institutions and researchers in Cuba and abroad in order to establish a permanent exchange of documents (books, journals, reports, recordings and photographs). This is a very effective way of increasing the number of documents in our archives.

Today the archives at CIDMUC have made it possible to put together major works by Cuban musicologists in the *Atlas of Musical Instruments of Cuba* volume. Important compilations of Cuban music have found their way to the CIDMUC archives, thanks to the recordings. Even filmmakers who have worked on Cuban music have found necessary information in these archives.

Keeping the archives from growing unnecessarily has become one of the principal jobs of the information specialists and musicologists who work in the Information and Documentation Department. Leaving out documents that might not be so essential can be as important as bringing in the documents that are really indispensable. The selection of information is probably one of the most difficult and specialized jobs in any archives or library. A good selection comes very close to the definition of a good archives. Of course, selection always forces you to take a risk. A good selection will not only conserve space but will also help visitors find the right information quickly. Specialized archives need not be big but they need to be effective. This last statement does not deny the importance of big libraries and big archives that include the information to be preserved by humankind in a more comprehensive way. The effectiveness of small archives, perhaps, helps in the first steps of research. At the same time, they prepare the way for the work of bigger archives.



CD cover: 'Official Retrospective Of Cuban Music' published by Tonga Productions, 1999.



CD cover: 'Sacred Rhythms of Cuban Santería' published by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings,

*Cuban Music and Archives Profile*

'Cuban music' is the term that constitutes the ideal frame of the topic whose information we want to preserve. This allows us to recognize the information we want as well as the information we have to leave out in order to send it somewhere else to be stored and preserved. The concept of 'Cuban Music' must first be made very clear. Now, if we take 'Cuban Music' as the framework to define the profile of our archives, then we need to have a very good definition of this concept. At the end of the 20th century there were, in Cuba, different types of folk music with very strong traditional roots. Some of them are bearers of the oldest traditions of Cuban music. This is the case of folk music linked to the syncretic Afro-Cuban religions. Their African origins go back a very long time, even before the discovery of America by the Europeans. The folk music of the rural population in Cuba still retains a number of old, traditional characteristics. These come from its antecedents in the music of Spain dating back to several hundred years ago. There are thriving and deeply-rooted traditions in Cuban folk music also that have taken shape only recently. Perhaps it is this very coexistence of ancient traditions and more recent ones that lends dynamism to the present reality of Cuban music and this is also true for the broad-ranging sectors of Cuban society. We may categorically state that Cuba not only has a living and constantly evolving folk music but also that this music is continuously renovating itself in highly varied ways. Perhaps this is the factor that determines its constant interaction with all the other types of music that people in Cuba have created, including classical music and popular professional music.

Strictly speaking, we cannot say that Cuban music was born any further back in history than the late 18th century or the early 19th century. Before that, music in Cuba was predominantly composed or interpreted following either the European or the African models of composition or performance. That is, there was European music created in Cuba as well as African music created in Cuba. It was only very late in the 18th century that we find musical expressions in Cuba containing stylistic elements that differ significantly from the European and African ones that were being cultivated in the country at that same time.

In my book, *From Afrocuban Music to Salsa*, I make an attempt to classify Cuban music. I have suggested that all types of genres belonging to Cuban music may be divided or grouped into five major musical genre complexes. These complexes are: Son, Rumba, Canción, Danzón and Punto. There is a sixth genre complex which I prefer calling Afrocuban which we may understand as not totally Cuban but not African music either.

It might seem very easy to identify the object you want to focus on, but sometimes this is only a mirage. The more we work on a definition of the object in question so as to preserve it, the closer we will come to an optimal definition of the object to be preserved. I know many people think that the best approach is to preserve everything, but the bigger the archives the bigger the budget you need to keep it going. If you try to keep a balance between the information you want to preserve and the money you have for doing that, then you find out that you really need to make a good selection of the information you bring into your archives.

The value of what we have in the archives, and the value of what we do in order to preserve it, are increased if we optimize what we do with it. A good picture depends not only on a good image but also on a good camera and above all on a good photographer. If we bring this simple concept to the level of archiving, we can easily understand the importance of the persons who work in the archives. We not only need good collections but good facilities and good people working in them.

Here we come to an issue I want to stress. Who are the persons that work in or for an archives? Preservation starts long before the object that contains the information (book, journal, cassette, CD, film) comes into an archives. The very first selection of information appears during research which normally takes place somewhere else, totally removed from the archives where the information will be finally preserved. Research institutions are normally not connected to the work of archives. Perhaps in other fields of science, viz. medicine, physics, chemistry, the lack of this bond is not a problem. But in social sciences, and above all when we are dealing with cultural heritage, the divorce between these two activities—research and archiving—may lead to the

damage of the information somewhere along the way to the archives. Some researchers in the field of music, mostly ethnomusicologists, have made attempts to keep traditions they have been working on, artificially alive. At first glance, this may look like a proper way to lend continuity and longer life to a tradition that has proved itself as genuine and of great social value.

Normally, bringing in money that will artificially support regular festivities, performances, construction or reconstruction of houses, the making of food, clothes and even musical instruments and music itself, may cause changes that substantially transform the essence of the tradition. Also, pushing people to hold on to their traditions will not only limit the authenticity of the traditions but will turn these people into living museums. This will bring negative changes in their normal lives thus causing serious damage to their community. Studying a cultural tradition closely makes us acutely aware of our ignorance. Even attempts to define tradition itself can lead to very different concepts.

Each socioeconomic environment acquired by a nation's economy is reflected in specific forms of behaviour that are to be found in its ideological, cultural, scientific, ethical, aesthetic, linguistic, religious and artistic manifestations. Whenever the socioeconomic environment changes, or a qualitative change takes place at the level of the relations between its productive forces and its means of production, we may speak of a change of era. New manifestations appear, some of the old disappear and some endure from one era into the other.

In the field of culture, those elements that survive the transit over successive changes of era become part of the body of tradition. Traditions, then, are cultural forms through which mankind projects itself, forms that are so deeply rooted in a society that they can transcend in time the original use value for which they were conceived and acquire a new dimension as they persist beyond the era that engendered them. The new generations no longer value them for their original use value but rather for their new intrinsic cultural value.

For example, a work song originally conceived to diminish the physical or mental tension produced by a given job, like harvesting,

may be beautiful enough to transcend its original use and assume the value of a song or of a musical expression as such having nothing to do with farm work. Thus, this type of song can reach the urban environment and go on being heard long after the original farm work has been mechanized and the song is no longer needed to reduce mental or physical tension. Even a new song may have come up, linked to the job of driving a tractor or harvester, but this will not necessarily impede the coexistence of both musical expressions.

At this point it is important to stress that for a given work of art to become well known and gain popularity among a given population group, it must contain a certain number of aesthetic elements already known to the individuals at the moment of perception. This will allow them to recognize and assimilate the aesthetic message quickly. At the same time, this work of art must contain a certain number of unknown elements that will convey new aesthetic information that will capture the attention and favour of the receiver.

However, the principle stating that the new is not a break with the traditional but rather a specific form of its projection and development is not restricted to music. It is the principle that allows us to understand better the process of human communication in general. Taking the associations of something well known as a starting point is one of the most important means of communicating new elements that may appear in connection with it. This general principle helps us understand that music is just one specific form of behaviour within the general framework of an individual's understanding of the universe.

On the basis of this optimum association of the old and the new to facilitate understanding of the latter and increase interest in the former, one may place a new kind of music within a well-known non-musical context or use a well-known musical element associated to a new non-musical context.

Bertolt Brecht has said that the fundamental objective of art—and therefore of music—is to entertain. We would prefer using what is perhaps a more precise term, 'to recreate'. We prefer this word because the idea of recreation implies a destruction and recuperation taking place within the framework of a process. When music fulfils its func-

tion, it contributes to restore certain lost capacities like the fatigue incurred during intense intellectual work and all of these happen in a process intimately linked to our emotions.

What makes this process particularly complex in the case of music as well as in the other arts is that it codifies both the emotional and cognitive aspects of music—man possesses only one neuropsychological system and that is where both of these processes take place. The most widely known studies to date on music's function or ability to recreate have been aimed at analysing its ability to appeal to the emotions. However, the emotional appropriation of the universe must be learned and is therefore accompanied and complemented by diverse cognitive processes.

It is precisely in these efforts to recreate the intellectual capacities lost during the process of abstract thinking, which has become increasingly complex throughout the history of mankind, that the individual has resorted to more complete and complex ways of recuperating the eroded capacities. That is perhaps the main objective of the arts and therefore of music. New things are things that surprise us precisely because they are new and surprise is an effective means to produce emotion. However, in order to transmit *the new*, a number of very specific conditions must be provided to facilitate communication. Perhaps the most difficult problem is to establish an adequate ratio between the new and the old elements in order to facilitate the understanding of reality while an emotional enjoyment of it takes place.

But let us return to the idea of preserving musical traditions. The relationship between research activity and archives brought us to the definition of Cuban music and traditions. The question is, what happens when the documents to be preserved finally go into the archives? As I have mentioned earlier, small archives should be structurally attached to research activities not only because of the theoretical bond between these two but also because funds come easier to research activities as they go to the preservation of archives. At least, that is the case in Cuba. Research activities build a very solid supply of firsthand documents that not only enlarge the archives but also make them unique. These firsthand documents can be commercialized in many

ways thus giving the archives ways of becoming self-sustaining.

The CIDMUC archives have sold many hours of their recordings of traditional music of Cuba to several record companies in the United States, Italy and Germany. The money generated from the payment of royalties is used for the preservation of the archives itself.

New technologies change, sometimes so quickly that we do not have enough time to react to them. Due to the climatic conditions prevailing in our country, we are faced with the daunting task of preserving tapes of recorded music. Experts seem to prefer DAT tapes as the most appropriate long-term storage medium. But that did not prove to be right. Now the same experts say that preservation on CDs may be the solution for the long-term preservation of music. Hopefully this is true. CIDMUC is planning an investment to convert all our tape recordings into CDs. CDs as carriers for music are also stronger than tapes particularly in countries like Cuba where humidity is very high.

The dissemination of information has always been an issue that has been left for the future at CIDMUC. At certain times we have thought that it would be a good idea to have our own journal. But since we do not have a distribution channel for it, it would cost us too much to print and we probably would not be able to sell it. Until now, our researchers have used other journals, mostly musical journals, to publish their articles and essays on Cuban music. But this channel does not allow us to follow a strategy in accordance with what we want to publish and when we want to publish it.

The same thing happens with our recordings. Not being able to publish our own records puts us in a very dependent position since we cannot really decide what will be published next. Recently, Salsa Blanca Inc. (in the United States) released a compilation of traditional music from Cuba using the CIDMUC archives. That was an important step in disseminating the music from our archives. We had been looking for such a possibility for years and luckily Salsa Blanca surprised us with a proposition that allowed us to put together a beautiful compilation of Cuba's traditional music. Even our relations with Cuba's broadcasting system (TV and radio) make us dependent on what they want at a certain time, excluding the possibility for us to develop a

strategy for proper dissemination of the information contained in our archives. Of course we can, from time to time, push some of our ideas, but that is not enough for a long-term dissemination strategy.

Sharing information is a very important issue for CIDMUC. The greatest difficulties come in trying to let the proper persons know that we may have the information they need or are looking for. CIDMUC carries out a programme known as 'Advisormentships' which allows individuals from all over the world, interested in any topic belonging to Cuban music, to receive our guidance and assistance. Many researchers, scholars and students have visited us and have found this programme to be effective for their purposes. Many of them have come back with new topics on Cuban music and many have recommended this programme to their colleagues and friends. Through this programme, CIDMUC has been able to share information topics as diverse as Afrocuban music, Salsa, traditional music of the Caribbean, Latin jazz, musical instruments, music notation and folk music among others, with individuals from as far afield as United States, Canada, Spain, Denmark, Finland, Colombia, Germany, Japan and many other countries.

Substantial changes in technology which are occurring very fast and substantial changes in politics which are occurring very slowly, may introduce new eras in the work of our archives. Preservation of the cultural heritage from one millenium to the next one does not necessarily mean from one era to another. But it surely gives us a very good occasion to think about what we are doing and to meditate deeply on how to introduce substantial changes that will improve preservation and provide more accurate information for the future. It will be easier for future generations to find out how to make the best use of it.