

Art music of caribbean latin america



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al Affiliation] Q. How do these Caribbean island countries compare to each other with regard to the development of their own musical cultures?

A. In the Dominican Republic, popular music sprang up from the time of independence. Although not classically trained, amateur Dominican musicians began to experiment with their styles and led to the formation of a national dialect of music. Among the prominent musicians, Colonel Juan Bautista Alfonseca, also known as the ‘ father of Dominican music’, Jose Reyes, Jose de Jesus Ravelo, Juan Francisco Garcia, Luis Emilio Mena, Enrique de Marchena Dujarric, Jose Dolores Ceron, to name just a few, are notable for their contribution.

Early Dominican music had a patriotic tone, as seen in the songs that celebrated economic and social progress. Folklore too was used as subject matter for the songs, by musicians like Juan Francisco Garcia, for instance. There were classical influences too, like that of Claude Debussy on Marchena’s music. Jose Dolores is famous for adding the bells and bass to band music in the army. Jazz was incorporated too, by Luis Alberti, and others. Rafael Ignacio is famous for popularizing dance music.

Classical music was very influential in Cuba. Ernesto Lecuona, Amadeo Roldán and Julian Orbon are again three notable pioneers of this country. Musical forms like the Salsa, had their roots in the Son, which first began in the 1570s. The influx of African slaves as well as the Spanish colonization had lasting impact on the development of music. The Rumba, Danzon, Chachacha and other dance forms became very popular and influential also. In Puerto Rico, Felipe Gutiérrez Espinosa was one of the best-known 19th century composers of religious music and operas. Manuel Gregorio Tavarez became the nation’s first Romantic composer, while Juan Morel Campos is

known for taking the danza form to its peak.

Music in Latin America has progressed more or less similarly; although, comparatively, the Dominican Republic appears to have several more well-known exponents of music. Influence of the Spanish colonization and the immigration of African slaves were responsible for a lot of the music development.

Q. What are/have been agents/causes for change in the musical climate of each?

This vast and varied repertoire of music was influenced, to a great degree, by the Spanish colonization. The elementary instrument of the guitar itself was introduced by the Spanish, without which a lot of the later musical forms would not have been conceived. The coming of the African slaves too made a profound impact, as they brought their traditional music along with them. The high-pitched nasal quality of singing, for instance, was introduced in this way.

The political state too had a role to play. In the Dominican Republic, the coming of independence sparked off the popular music movement. In Cuba, legal reforms like the abolishing of slavery in 1888, led to the growth of popular music. The rule of Castro in later years influenced contemporary musicians, many of whom became disillusioned and left the country. Folk music forms in Puerto Rico, like the Bomba, have roots in religious grounds. The Bomba was first created by black slaves who were not allowed to worship their own gods; while the Danza grew from a political cause: as a reaction against the habanera music of Cuban immigrants (Wikipedia, 2009).

The friction between various factors therefore has led to the rich and diverse

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legacy of Latin American music that is today famous all over the world.

Works Cited

“ Music of Puerto Rico.” Wikipedia. 28 Sep 2009. Retrieved from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Music_of_Puerto_Rico#Bomba