



## ***The Influx of Latin American and Caribbean Choral Music in the New Millennium: Puerto Rico as a Newcomer in the World Stage***

Dr. Lauren Fowler-Calisto

lfowler@cnu.edu

Christopher Newport University – Newport News, VA

Since the inception of two important publishers of choral music in the United States during the 1980's, *Earthsongs* and *World Music Press*, an enormous influx of Latin American and Caribbean music has been added to the traditional choral canon—now available to choral directors throughout the world. Prior to the 1980's music of this genre was passed from generation to generation of choral conductors following noteworthy performances at both the National and Divisional Conferences of the American Choral Directors Association [ACDA]. Following these performances, individual manuscripts of Latin American and Caribbean music were sought by directors who valued cultural choral arrangements of worth, reflective of the various Latin American and Caribbean cultures found throughout the United States. In 1993, *Salmo 150*, an original choral composition by Brazilian composer Ernani Aguiar, was introduced to American choral directors and published that year by a relatively new and independent choral music publishing company, named *Earthsongs*.

[Example: <http://www.earthsongschoralmusic.com/catitem.php?seqnum=100190>]<sup>1</sup> And in 1997, the Orfeón Universitario Simón Bolívar directed by Maria Guinand and Alberto Grau was invited by the former, and now deceased ACDA Executive Director, Gene Brooks, to perform and present interest sessions at the ACDA National Convention held in San Diego, California.<sup>2</sup> According to *Earthsongs'* editor and founder, Ron Jeffers, "The work of both Maria Guinand (Director of Cantoría Alberto Grau from Venezuela) and Anton Armstrong (Director of Choral Activities at St. Olaf College) has inspired other editors to publish music from overseas, as well as Clayton Parr (Director of Choral Activities at DePaul University) with the music of the Republic of Georgia. It was really

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<sup>1</sup> Ernani Aguiar, *Salmo 150*, mp3 file from *Earthsongs Choral Music*, online version, accessed 21 May, 2011.

<http://www.earthsongschoralmusic.com/catitem.php?seqnum=100190>.

<sup>2</sup> Christina Puchra, Director of Archives, *American Choral Directors Association*, Oklahoma City, OK, Phone Interview, November 23, 2010.



the networking of these editors [which now total over thirty] that have helped to further the music of these countries.”<sup>3</sup>

In a recent statement found on the American Choral Directors Association website, Maria Guinand, currently editor of the “musica de latinoamerica” collection at *Earthsongs* and also Vice-President for latinamerica of the international Federation for Choral music, says, “ACDA represents to us an example of choral organization, networking, perseverance and hardwork [sic] to promote choral singing. Its 50th anniversary [sic] is undoubtedly a benchmark for the whole international choral community. The success of our performances and sessions encourages Venezuelan and Latin American choral music in the world. It also strengthens our institutions such as the Cantoría Alberto Grau because its members feel recognized and motivated. I personally think it is a new opportunity to showcase the work I do in my country with love and enthusiasm.”<sup>4</sup> This spirit of sharing and enlightenment in the field of choral music has turned to the publication of more works from Puerto Rico as well. In online links to *Latin American Choral Music* and *Music of Puerto Rico* choral directors from the international choral community are now able to access limited publications of music from Puerto Rico as their rich musical heritage is discovered outside the confines of manuscripts found only within the country, itself. In addition, organizations such as the International Federation of Choral Music and MusicaNet have also created interest in both the dance rhythms and inherent beauty of Puerto Rican folk music and classical music traditions through performance and publication. *Earthsongs* has now published two Cuban arrangements, three Haitian arrangements and one Puerto Rican arrangement of choral music in their catalogue, while the *World Music Press* contains eight songs from the Caribbean, three of which are Puerto Rican. Each year the possibility of more music from the Caribbean and Puerto Rico is added as international choirs travel from their home country to perform in America and abroad in greater numbers.

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<sup>3</sup> Ron Jeffers, Director, *Earthsongs Choral Music*, Corvallis, OR, Phone Interview, November 23, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Maria Guinand, *American Choral Directors Association*, <http://acda.org/node/712>, accessed 23 November, 2010.



Although titled, “The Influx of Latin American and Caribbean Choral Music in the New Millennium: Puerto Rico as a Newcomer in the World Stage,” the music of Puerto Rico, herself, is filled with a rich heritage of both folk and classical repertoire, including many unpublished choral works from the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Many native Puerto Rican composers, including Felipe Gutierrez (y) Espinosa, 1825-1899, and Rafael Hernández, 1891-1965, composed several choral compositions of breadth in a variety of styles. According to the *International Dictionary of Black Composers, Vol. 1*, Gutierrez y Espinosa, “is considered one of the most distinguished of Puerto Rican musicians, and he has been acknowledged as his country’s leading composer from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>5</sup> Over seventy different unpublished manuscripts of “Choral Music with Keyboard or Instrumental Accompaniment” are listed in this reference including nine works with orchestra. “In a recent publication, Guillermo Menéndez Maysonet, Professor of Music History, University of Puerto Rico, has provided a detailed thematic catalog of the musical works. . . . with those in the sacred category far outnumbering those in the secular. There are 13 Masses, including four requiem masses, three passions, 16 Salve Regina settings, eight litanies, and a host of other liturgical pieces, as well as 23 sacred pieces with Spanish text and 19 instrumental works for church services.”<sup>6</sup> He was also the first Puerto Rican to compose an opera entitled, *La palma del cacique* in 1856, and his opera, *Macías* won a gold medal in 1872, dedicated to King Alfonso XII of Spain five years later; however, the premiere performance did not occur until almost a century later at the Teatro Tapia in San Juan on August 19, 1977. This performance was possible through the use of a microfilm copy of the score that can be found only at the Biblioteca de Palacio in Madrid, Spain.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the lack of published scores creates a choral and vocal music “black hole” for choral directors without direct access to the music of these composers, underlining the importance of new arrangers

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<sup>5</sup> John Druessedow, “Gutierrez (y) Espinosa, Felipe” in *International Dictionary of Black Composers, vol. 1: Abrams-Jenkins, Floyd, Jr, Samuel A.* (author); *Floyd, Jr, Samuel A.* (editor). United States: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999, 514.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 517.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 515.



and editors as they seek publication with American publishers of Latin and Caribbean composers.

Rafael Hernández, also listed as a Puerto Rican composer in the *International Dictionary of Black Composers, vol. 1*, composed six pieces of mostly unaccompanied choral music, of which only two are currently published in editions found only in Puerto Rico.<sup>8</sup> Dufrasne-Gonzalez states that “Hernández’s “Aleluya” [*villancico*] is an obligatory carol in the repertoire of most Puerto Rican choirs”<sup>9</sup> and has been performed in concert by the *Camerata Coral de Puerto Rico* as listed on their website under repertoire. Also, Hernández’s popular song “El cumbanchero”, performed by the *Coro Nacional de Puerto Rico* (directed by William Rivera Ortiz) on their album entitled, *Contrastes*, can be heard via their website homepage. [Example: <http://www.coronacionalpr.org/esp/>]<sup>10</sup> “This piece is included in Cuba’s repertoire as a standard, and its energy, rich harmony, and simple melody offer the arranger many possibilities for diverse orchestrations and arrangements. . . . The lyrics are onomatopieic [sic], imitating the sounds of bongo and conga drums.”<sup>11</sup> And yet neither of these aforementioned choral octavos, however, is easily found in publication for the American choral director, although contact with the directors of these choirs could produce a manuscript for performance with permission.

Although several excellent sources for manuscripts and arrangements of Puerto Rican choral music are referenced on the Internet, both folk and classical in nature, a recent exhaustive search produced websites that cannot be found by the author of this paper. One website in particular, *Iglesia Católica de Puerto Rico*, claiming to have a huge collection of catholic choral music in pdf form, would have significant influence in

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<sup>8</sup> J. Emanuel Dufrasne-Gonzalez, “Hernández, Rafael” in *International Dictionary of Black Composers, vol. 1: Abrams-Jenkins, Floyd, Jr, Samuel A.* (author); *Floyd, Jr, Samuel A.* (editor). United States: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999, 589.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 592.

<sup>10</sup> *Coro Nacional de Puerto Rico*, online homepage, accessed 14 August, 2011. <http://www.coronacionalpr.org/esp/>. To listen to mp3 recordings, including “El cumbanchero”, click on the far right, lowest link, “*aquí*” which accesses an iTunes library “Jukebox” containing several mp3s of their work. In addition, a YouTube video link of the choir performing, “Plena”, in concert can also be found on the same page.

<sup>11</sup> Dufrasne-Gonzalez, 593.



providing manuscripts for American choral directors, and yet, every reference to this site in Spanish and in English proved fruitless, with the proverbial internet notice, “page unknown OR cannot be found”. For this reason, the work of the American Choral Directors Association in bringing to light Latin American and Caribbean music, and eventually, published octavos by expert editors and arrangers in this area of multi-cultural and ethnic music cannot be overstated. Indeed, prior to the 1997 ACDA National Convention held in San Diego, music by Latin American composers or ethnic music of Latin America and the Caribbean rooted in the native dance and rhythmic patterns was rarely performed, if heard by American choral conductors.

Historically, prior to the 1997 ACDA convention, American choral directors were previously exposed to Puerto Rico primarily through one of the country’s adopted sons, Pablo Casals (1876-1973). Casals, who was born in Vendrell, Spain, had a significant musical impact on the country of Puerto Rico, where he died after refusing to move back to Spain upon the political takeover of Francisco Franco in Spain. In Jose Rivera’s dissertation entitled, *Roberto Sierra’s “Missa Latina”: Musical Analysis and Historical Perspectives*, published in 2006 he states that “Another important event in the development of classical music [in Puerto Rico] was the cellist Pablo Casals’ commitment to the development of musical arts in the island. Casals established his residence in Puerto Rico after visiting his mother’s hometown in 1955. He decided to contribute to the island’s artistic development, making his presence immediately felt among musicians.”<sup>12</sup> The Casals festival was established in 1957 as part of Puerto Rico’s industrialization program to promote the music of classical masters. Casals stated, “Puerto Ricans will be exposed to the best music performed by the best musicians.”<sup>13</sup> Both the Puerto Rico Symphony and eventually, the Conservatory of Music were born out of the Casals Corporation through the Puerto Rican government. And, “Thanks to its advisory committee and Casals’ close collaboration with the governor, the Puerto Rican Conservatory of Music became the primary institution

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<sup>12</sup> Jose Rivera, *Roberto Sierra’s “Missa Latina”: Musical Analysis and Historical Perspectives*, PhD diss., (The Florida State University), 2006, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Donald Thompson and Annie Thompson, *Music in Puerto Rico: A Reader’s Anthology*, Lanham: Scarecrow Press Inc., (2002), 54.



responsible for training professional musicians in the island. By 1965, the Conservatory of Music's choir was performing along with the Cleveland Chorus at the Casals Festival under conductor Robert Shaw. Since then, the choir has performed at the Casals Festival every year."<sup>14</sup> From the inception of the Festival during the 1950's, Rivera notes the growth of independent choirs in Puerto Rico "that were not necessarily affiliated with any religious or educational institution. . . . These choirs made invaluable contributions to the development of choral tradition by performing a more specialized choral repertoire—from *a cappella* music to symphonic works."<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, Rivera also discusses the influence of the native Puerto Rican genres such as the *danza* in his dissertation but adds, "According to historical writers, choral *danzas* are relatively young, in view of the fact that by the mid Nineteenth Century, folk music had already been arranged for choirs in other countries. Dr. Bartolomé Bover became the first choral arranger of Puerto Rican *danzas*. . . . and these *danzas* were included in his collection entitled *Arreglos Corales del Dr. Bartolomé Bover*."<sup>16</sup> However, as previously stated these collections of arrangements and editions of Puerto Rican choral music are difficult to find and access for the American choral director.

If it were not for the work of ACDA and the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM), conductors of American choirs and music education programs would not have easily heard the music editions and arrangements of folk music from countries outside of the traditional western choral canon. Specifically in the areas of Latin American and Caribbean influenced music, after the invitation of *Orfeón Universitario Simón Bolívar*, directed by Maria Guinand and Alberto Grau to perform at the 1997 ACDA convention in San Diego, there was an influx of clinicians and interest sessions held in connection with both the national convention as well as state and divisional conventions. Traditionally, American choral directors are somewhat reticent to perform music from

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<sup>14</sup> Rivera, 17. Digitized DVD, audio, and video recordings of historically significant performances can be accessed and viewed at the *Pablo Casals Museum* in Old San Juan, Puerto Rico. Museum information can be found on their website, <http://www.prboriken.com/casals.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Evelyn Roberts, "La danza Puertorriqueña en la música coral," *Coral*, 11/1, (1995), 6, as quoted in Rivera, 19.



outside their training in the western music tradition because they are not cognizant of the styles, musical markings and intricacies of rhythm and cross rhythm inherent in the music of Latin American and the Caribbean unless exposed through the genre of American jazz or colleagues with experience in these forms. Even though *Earthsongs* had published *Salmo 150* by Ernani Aguiar in 1993, conductors were reticent to perform music of non-western styles until the music, and/or arrangement, had been directly experienced through a performance at an ACDA convention, a high school All-State choir performance, or an interest session in which the music and edition were introduced by a guest clinician with experience in the interpretation, or from the country of origin. Bruce Ronkin in his Spring 2000 article, "Introducing Global Musical Awareness Into the Undergraduate Music Industry Degree", states that

Most [music] historians are quick to point out that there are very few truly new ideas [in the interpretation of musical style]. While diversity and multiculturalism may be seen as exciting, new ideas in higher education, any student of the arts knows that forward-thinking musicians have always looked outside of their cultures for influence and inspiration. Composers like Dizzy Gillespie incorporated Latin music elements into their music in the 1940's. . . . Creative artists whether involved in music, painting, or other areas of artistic expression have continuously sought inspiration from other artists, other cultures, other times. Perhaps it is a good thing that academia is catching up with the arts and realizing that cultural awareness can be beneficial.<sup>17</sup>

To underscore this point, following the 1997 ACDA convention there was an influx of sessions and performances at both state and regional conventions regarding performance and interpretation in the music of Latin America and the Caribbean. American choral directors, many of which were hearing this type of music in a choral context for the first time, became interested in programming these very octavos in their own programs at all levels of musical performance and music education. The author of this paper personally attended an interest session at the summer conference of the Iowa Choral Directors Association, a subsidiary of the American Choral Directors

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<sup>17</sup> Bruce Ronkin, "Introducing Global Musical Awareness Into the Undergraduate Music Industry Degree," *Music and Entertainment Industry Educator's Association Journal*, (Spring 2000), 31.



Association, in July of 1998. This session, entitled “Choral Music of Latin America” discussed Caribbean Choral Music specifically, using musical examples of the countries of Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. Representative dance rhythms, patterns, and figures were presented to the audience in addition to excerpts from specific songs and choral arrangements published by *Earthsongs* as well as unpublished manuscript selections. Perhaps as important as the musical examples and interpretation of dance rhythms, the session also provided an annotated list of Latin American and Caribbean published music and included publisher information. Unfortunately, most of these published editions did not include information on the interpretation of style for these choral pieces. The publishers *Earthsongs* and currently, *World Music Press*, however make a concerted effort to use native and well versed editors from the country or area of origin and often provide notes, and/or musical mp3’s on their website as to the specific interpretation of these pieces. One published Latin American work by *Earthsongs*, “Salseo” by Oscar Galian, is based on salsa rhythmic patterns, using only onomatopoeic sounds.

[Example: <http://www.earthsongschoralmusic.com/catitem.php?seqnum=100244>]<sup>18</sup>

Another, specifically Puerto Rican, published work by *World Music Press* that can be accessed by American choral directors is, “Si Me Dan Pasteles”, an authentic Puerto Rican *jibaro* arranged by Alejandro Jimenez.

[Example: [http://www.worldmusicpress.com/wmp/detail.php?product\\_group=819](http://www.worldmusicpress.com/wmp/detail.php?product_group=819)]<sup>19</sup>

And finally, a Puerto Rican arrangement of a Traditional Christmas Carol, “En El Portal A Belen” by Ed Henderson, can be found at *Earthsongs*.

[Example: <http://www.earthsongschoralmusic.com/catitem.php?seqnum=100402>]<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Oscar Galian, “Salseo”, mp3 file from *Earthsongs Choral Music*, online version, accessed 21 May, 2011.

<http://www.earthsongschoralmusic.com/catitem.php?seqnum=100244>.

<sup>19</sup> Alejandro Jimenez, “Si Me Dan Pasteles”, mp3 file from *World Music Press*, online version, accessed 21 May, 2011.

[http://www.worldmusicpress.com/wmp/detail.php?product\\_group=819](http://www.worldmusicpress.com/wmp/detail.php?product_group=819).

<sup>20</sup> Ed Henderson, “En El Portal A Belen”, mp3 file from *Earthsongs Choral Music*, online version, accessed 21 May, 2011.

<http://www.earthsongschoralmusic.com/catitem.php?seqnum=100402>.





As previously mentioned, Maria Guinand and Alberto Grau provide editorial support for music of Latin America and the Caribbean with *Earthsongs* publishing. Another such editor, specifically of Puerto Rican birth, is Luis Olivieri. He is professor of music at the Metropolitan Campus of the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico and also conducts the choir and community choir at the university. Similar to the work of Guinand and Grau in the international touring of their professional chorus from Venezuela and their influence on the performance of Latin American music, Olivieri's concert choir, the Schola Cantorum of Puerto Rico has completed eight international choral tours. "Olivieri is president of the Choral Federation of the Caribbean and Central America (FCCC), is a member of and advisor to the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM) as well as a member of IFCM's Ethnic Committee, and serves as advisor to the Latinamerican Association of Choral Singing (ALACC). With other colleagues and singers, he organized the Puerto Rico Choral Directors Association in 1978, renamed as Choral Society of Puerto Rico, and is the current president of the organization. He is also the director of Coral, the magazine of the PRCS. At present he is also editor of the Ediciones Schola Cantorum de Puerto Rico, publishers of choral music of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, both sacred and secular. He has worked on the editorial committees of the New Century Hymnal (UCC), Mil voces para Celebrar (Methodist), and the joint hymnal of the Presbyterian, United Church of Christ and Episcopal churches, in which some of his hymns are included."<sup>21</sup> Olivieri's joint interest session on Latin American/African Repertoire held during the International Federation for Choral Music Sixth World Symposium of Choral Music in 2001 also included presenters Maria Guinand & Alberto Grau from Venezuela (previously mentioned as influential performers and editors with ACDA), as well as Juan-Tony Guzmán on the music of the Dominican Republic. On the website of the International Federation for Choral Music (IFCM) Olivieri states the following in his "Motivation Text" for continuation as a board member with the IFCM:

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<sup>21</sup> Luis Olivieri, *International Federation for Choral Music*, bulletin for the Sixth World Symposium of Choral Music in 2001, interest session entitled, "Latin America/Africa Repertoire Session", Conductor's Biographies including Karle Erikson, Maria Guinand & Alberto Grau, Juan-Tony Guzmán, and Luis Olivieri, <http://www.madolu.com/ifcm/wcs6/latinafricabios.html>, accessed 21 May, 2011.



“I would like to continue as member of the IFCM Board to help the promotion and presence of the IFCM among the Caribbean, Central American and South American countries [sic]. I believe that the choral movement in these places is of vital importance to foster the growth and influence of IFCM. We would like also to explore new and creative ways in which IFCM can contribute to improve choral quality in these Region [sic] through a better communication among directors, choirs and choral organizations. We won't rest until each country in the Caribbean and Central América have at least a member in the enrollment of IFCM and until each national and regional choral organization and choirs also affiliates to the Federation and get [sic] involved in its Work Program. At present we have members in ten countries for a total of 36 persons, organizations and choirs. We will work hard for [sic] at least duplicate this quantity in the next two years.”<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the important accomplishments of Olivieri in the proliferation and performance of Puerto Rican music through the IFCM and performances of his choirs, he also edits and publishes Caribbean choral music through Ediciones Schola Cantorum de Puerto Rico. His publication, *Antología de la Musica Coral Sacra Puertorriqueña*, published in 2000 includes musical notation, indices, and musical accompaniment for sixteen songs.<sup>23</sup> However, this is a special order book in which the website for *Libros Latinos* states that the order may take up to ninety days to arrive at the current purchase price of forty-five dollars. Again, at the risk of overstating the obvious, most American choral directors would not go to the trouble of researching the music of Puerto Rico without the attendant publishing and performance of Latin American and Caribbean publishing through well known companies in the United States. Frankly, without hearing a live performance of this music at a conference held in America, many choral directors easily choose repertoire for their choirs in easily performed octavos that they have often heard numerous times. As many American choral directors spend a great deal of time researching and programming music of great depth and breadth with their choirs, just as many directors turn to music that is familiar

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<sup>22</sup> Luis Olivieri, *International Federation for Choral Music*, public document “Motivation Statement” from Elections to the Board–IFCM General Assembly 2008, <http://www.ifcm.net/public/doc/502.pdf>, accessed 21 May, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Luis Olivieri, *Antología de la Musica Coral Sacra Puertorriqueña*, San Francisco, CA: Libros Latinos, 2000, <http://www.librosLatinos.com/cgi-bin/libros/68522.html>, accessed 21 May, 2011.



or arrives in their mailbox via mass mailings from music publishers. Fortunately, for those choral directors who wish to program Latin American and Caribbean music, there is now a worldwide internet host of resources available due to the foresight of both the ACDA and IFCM organizations in the monumental effort of providing music of wealth and breadth from foreign countries and cultures.

In conclusion at this time, the words of Marian Dolan, Assistant Professor of Church Music and Choral Conducting at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, and Repertoire and Standards Chair for the ACDA in Ethnic and Multicultural Music states the obvious in the importance of the proliferation of understanding and performance of music from foreign cultures:

When we learn and perform choral music, we sing an *externalized expression* of that particular ethnicity. We learn about that ethnicity through the culture; in our case, through one of the expressions of that culture: the music, specifically choral music. A given choral score, no matter the ethnicity of the composer or poet exhibits two inherently cultural elements: musical language/style and text language/style. A secondary consideration is the influence of cultural elements on the composer, the author, the singers, and the listeners.<sup>24</sup>

For this reason, the importance of the American Choral Directors Association and the International Federation for Choral Music and their influence in bringing the music of Latin America and the Caribbean cannot be understated. Without the invitation of Gene Brooks of the *Orfeón Universitario Simón Bolívar*, directed by Maria Guinand and Alberto Grau to sing at the 1997 ACDA convention in San Diego, and the influence of Ron Jeffers in his *Earthsongs* publications, the music of Latin America, and specifically the music of Puerto Rico would not have enjoyed its very recent appearance on the world stage in the new millennium, particularly to the American choral director. What is needed in the future is a continued effort by those individuals such as Luis Olivieri and the work of the *Coro Nacional de Puerto Rico* to bring this important music to the

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<sup>24</sup> Marian E. Dolan, "Multicultural Choral Music: Theological, Semantic and Contextual Guidelines," *Cross Accent* (a publication of the *Association of Lutheran Church Musicians*), 8/1, (Spring 2000), 25.



forefront of all American choral directors through more publication and performance for those of us who do not often travel beyond the borders of America due to cost and time consideration. Thankfully, with the increasing availability of the internet, and more public access to publications, manuscripts, YouTube performances, and conversation with conductors from around the world, we can begin to hear more music, performed faithfully from Latin America and the Caribbean, and more specifically, the music of Puerto Rico on the world stage.

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