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The Saxophone in Puerto Rico: History and Annotated Bibliography of Selected Works

Marcos David Colón-Martín

Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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THE SAXOPHONE IN PUERTO RICO:
HISTORY AND ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF
SELECTED WORKS

A Monograph

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor in Musical Arts

in

The School of Music

by

Marcos David Colón Martín

B.M., Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico, 2007

M.M., University of New Mexico, 2009

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Abstract

The tradition of classical saxophone performance in Puerto Rico officially began quite recently in 1994. Musicians performing regularly in the style are few and local composition of new music for the instrument is rare. This research provides a historical overview of the saxophone in the musical culture of Puerto Rico and explores reasons for the delay on saxophone classical performance to develop. In an attempt to help promote the local performance and composition of new works, the author provides an annotated bibliography of music for saxophone by selected Puerto Rican composers.

Introduction

A “repertoire” or repertory is commonly known as a list or collection of works available for performance.¹ Every musical instrument has its own list of available compositions. When we study the history of the saxophone, we learn that the creation of repertoire was crucial for the instrument to survive, and also to bring forth the dawn of the classical tradition of saxophone playing. Adolphe Sax was well aware of the importance of repertoire, and during the early years of the saxophone, he always encouraged composers to write for the instrument. He also encouraged saxophonists to perform for audiences.² It was important to demonstrate the instrument to other musicians, not simply to demonstrate its characteristics of sound and technical capabilities, but to present the instrument as a tool for expression. In the 20th century, the classical repertoire for saxophone was developed with the incredible efforts of many saxophonists such as Marcel Mule, Sigurd Rascher, Cecil Leeson, and Larry Teal, who worked ceaselessly in promoting the saxophone as a classical instrument by commissioning and inspiring new repertoire, performing, and teaching the instrument.³ The saxophone classical repertoire encompasses more than 29,000 compositions in the present day, and more continue to be written.⁴ The activity is such that often at saxophone conferences like the North American Saxophone Alliance, most works presented are world premieres or very recent compositions that are yet to be published.

¹ Ian D. Bent and Stephen Blum, “Repertory,” Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/40606?q=repertoire&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed July 14, 2013).

² Thomas Liley, “Invention and development,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, ed. Richard Ingham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 12, 15.

³ Thomas Dryer-Beers, “Influential soloists,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, ed. Richard Ingham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 37-44.

⁴ Jean-Marie Londeix and Bruce Ronkin, *Londeix Guide to the Saxophone Repertoire 1844-2012*, ed. Bruce Ronkin (Glenmore, PA: Roncorp, 2012).

Active classical saxophone performance and composition is found mainly in the United States and Western Europe. This outcome is due to the fact that the influential figures of saxophone established their careers in these places of the world. Marcel Mule spent most of his time in France, working as a musician for the *Garde Republicaine*, and later became the saxophone professor at the Paris Conservatory.⁵ Sigurd Rascher spent his early career performing in Europe and teaching in Germany, Denmark and Sweden. In 1939, he moved to the United States where he spent the rest of his life and had a long career performing, teaching the instrument, and commissioning new works.⁶ Cecil Leeson was an American saxophonist who influenced classical saxophone in America by commissioning and performing regularly early in the 20th century. His most known commission is the *Sonata* for alto saxophone and piano by Paul Creston, which remains today one of the most performed pieces from the saxophone repertoire. He was also the first saxophonist to perform in New York's Town Hall in 1937.⁷ Larry Teal was a woodwind instrumentalist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. His love for the saxophone motivated him to promote the use of the instrument in the classical music genre. He exposed classical saxophone playing to the American audience through the radio and later became the first full time saxophone professor in an American university at the University of Michigan.⁸ Other countries around the world have also produced great saxophonists who have contributed greatly to the classical saxophone tradition.⁹ However, there are also some countries where

⁵ Thomas Dryer-Beers, "Influential soloists," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, ed. Richard Ingham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 43-44.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁸ Thomas Dryer-Beers, "Influential soloists," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, ed. Richard Ingham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 39-40.

⁹ Thomas Dryer-Beers, "Influential soloists," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, ed. Richard Ingham (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 43-44

contribution to the classical saxophone repertoire has not been extensive, and in some cases very scarce.

In his dissertation, Dr. Miguel Villafruela investigated the history and development of “serious” music for saxophone in Latin America. Through his research we find that very active saxophone composition and performance in Latin America began after 1970, and mostly in Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Chile, and Mexico.¹⁰ Among these five countries, Argentina is placed first with 345 works and Mexico in fifth place with 108. Following this group, we find Colombia, Venezuela, Perú, and Puerto Rico with some activity not even starting until the last decades of the 20th century. The rest of the 11 countries in Latin America have very few or no works written for saxophone. Why are some of these countries behind in the development of a classical saxophone tradition such as that found in the United States and Europe? This is the question that Villafruela asked in his dissertation and the motivation for his research. However, his plan was to try to find an answer to this question by only investigating the history of the saxophone in the five countries where higher activity was found.

Villafruela’s research reported that there are a series of factors responsible for the creation of works for saxophone throughout its history. These factors are present today in every country around the world where an active classical saxophone tradition exists. Among these factors are the enthusiasm and insistency from performers for composers to write for the saxophone, grants won by performers with the purpose of commissioning works, composer competitions hosted by saxophone organizations, commissioning of works for international

¹⁰ Miguel Villafruela, *El saxofon en la musica docta de America Latina* (Santiago de Chile, Chile: Universidad de Chile, 2007), 42.

competitions, dedicated works among friends, and thesis projects involving a musical composition.¹¹

Villafruela's work provides evidence of some important aspects that served as a foundation for the development of classical saxophone in the five countries with higher activity. Among these, the establishment of concert bands from institutions like the police department, fire department, and military in many cities and the early foundation of musical institutions like conservatories seemed to be the most influential events that allowed saxophonists to flourish. In all five countries, concert bands performed regularly during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of the musical institutions were already founded by the end of the 19th century, and in some of these countries, the saxophone was already being taught at institutions by 1930.¹² In the 20th century, the rise of popular music groups and the influence of jazz brought forth more exposure of the saxophone to local audiences. Although not explained fully in Villafruela's dissertation, there always seemed to be an interest from saxophonists to experiment with the instrument in a classical setting. Many of these saxophonists were musicians from the concert bands; some were also clarinetists who played both instruments and found in the saxophone a quality that was useful in classical music. Exposure of the instrument in the classical setting is also another very important factor, and probably the most important. For example in Brazil, the saxophone was incorporated in Brazilian music because in 1857, composer Henrique Alves de Mesquita went to study composition at the Paris Conservatory where Adolphe Sax had just started his teaching studio. Mesquita's exposure to the saxophone inspired him to introduce the

¹¹ Miguel Villafruela, *El saxofon en la musica docta de America Latina* (Santiago de Chile, Chile: Universidad de Chile, 2007), 200.

¹² Miguel Villafruela, *El saxofon en la musica docta de America Latina* (Santiago de Chile, Chile: Universidad de Chile, 2007), 82.

instrument in Brazilian music.¹³ Another example of the importance of exposure is found in Cuba, where musicians experienced an event that pushed many saxophonists to dedicate themselves to the study of the classical side of the saxophone. In 1941, the *Orquesta Filarmónica de La Habana* programmed a saxophone soloist in one of their concerts. The only saxophone soloist invited during the orchestra's seasons of 1924 to 1959 was the famous German saxophonist Sigurd M. Rascher, who performed the Ibert *Concertino da camera* and Debussy *Rapsodie*.¹⁴ After this event, the incidence of classical saxophone activity in Cuba increased greatly.

In my opinion, the urge to imitate the customs of others and to expose the saxophone as a classical instrument was the strongest influential factor in the creation of a saxophone classical tradition in all five of these countries. When we look back at the careers of the classical saxophone pioneers we also find that it is exactly what they created. Their exposition of the instrument's playability caused inspiration for other people to learn the instrument and imitate them. Their work also created interest in composers, leading to more original repertoire. Is it possible that the exposition of classical saxophone has not been successful in countries where very few works are found? This is possibly the case in Puerto Rico, although some activity is found there.

My motivation for research is to provide an addition to Villafruela's work by investigating the history of the saxophone in Puerto Rico. As I mentioned previously, his research only provided historical documentation in the five Latin American countries with highest classical saxophone activity. Puerto Rico was placed at the bottom of the second group of countries where some classical saxophone activity was found. Villafruela's research does not

¹³ Miguel Villafruela, *El saxofon en la musica docta de America Latina* (Santiago de Chile, Chile: Universidad de Chile, 2007), 57.

¹⁴ Miguel Villafruela, *El saxofon en la musica docta de America Latina* (Santiago de Chile, Chile: Universidad de Chile, 2007), 74.

surprise me when reporting the delay of Puerto Rican musicians in contributing to the classical saxophone repertoire. It has been my experience as a Puerto Rican saxophonist that in Puerto Rico many musicians are not fully aware of the existence of the saxophone in classical music.

When I took music lessons as a child during the decade of the 90's, I never heard anything about classical saxophone at the music school I attended. My perception of playing a "classical style" on the saxophone was to play the concert band repertoire; I thought the saxophone was only used as a classical instrument for that musical ensemble. Everything else I played during my childhood were jazz tunes and the local popular music styles of salsa and merengue. It was not until my senior year of high school that I got involved with the classical saxophone tradition, because I told my teacher that I wanted to do a career in music and study at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music. It was not until then that I started learning the classical saxophone repertoire. However, at the Conservatory, I also experienced some negative remarks from other musicians towards the saxophone as a classical instrument. The comments were always passive, just an indication from others that the saxophone was simply not needed in classical music. Even some faculty members employed a more clearly negative response to the instrument in a classical setting. For example, I remember that our final juries for the semester were scheduled separately from the rest of the woodwind instruments. The justification was that since the saxophone was a hybrid instrument, it should not be included in the woodwind family. It was not until my junior year that the saxophone was included for the first time at the woodwind juries. I cannot help but wonder why still not so long ago some musicians in Puerto Rico had such a negative perception about the saxophone as a classical instrument. I also wonder about what historical events in the country's general history and the evolution of its musical culture have led to a delay in the formation of a saxophone classical tradition, as well as the

absence of a solid interaction between saxophonists and composers, contrary to the activity that is happening currently in the United States, Europe, and in other Latin American countries. It is very surprising to me that in Puerto Rico, a country that has been a territory of the United States since 1898, there is not the same level of interaction between classical saxophonists and composers as in the mainland. On the other hand, the jazz culture and jazz saxophone playing is immense in the island, and at the same level as in the United States.

Although the questions I have presented about the perception of classical saxophone in Puerto Rico intrigue me, the current research did not attempt to provide an answer to these questions. The purpose of this monograph was to document a general history of the saxophone in Puerto Rico and discuss the present activity of classical saxophone on the island.

This document is structured in four chapters followed by an annotated bibliography. All four chapters consist of a historical overview of music in Puerto Rico and the use of the saxophone in different aspects of the musical life of the island. The annotated bibliography consists of 5 works for saxophone by composers from Puerto Rico. For each entry, I include a biography of the composer, a description of the piece, and the composer's contact information. In addition, I have asked permission to include sample pages of their works. These sample pages will help the saxophonist to review each piece, hopefully finding interest in the performance of the piece or even commissioning a new work from one or more of the composers listed.

A great part of my research involved the interview of musicians in Puerto Rico. As an additional source of information, in the appendix at the end of this document, I have also included a transcript of sections of the interviews that were recorded by permission of each person.

My motive with this annotated bibliography is to promote the creation of new works by Puerto Rican composers. With this monograph, I hope to promote more interaction between Puerto Rican composers and saxophonists, both locally and outside the island. My annotated bibliography represents my first step in promoting some of the music written for saxophone by Puerto Rican composers, with the intention of creating interest in the performance of these compositions and the commission of new works. I would also like to encourage other saxophonists to explore and document more information on the history of the saxophone in Puerto Rico, especially in popular music. The figures I mention in chapter 3 are the ones I consider to be the most influential in both saxophone playing and in their contributions to Puerto Rican popular music. It should be noted that there are many others that were not mentioned. An additional research document is needed to report the lives of all saxophonists and teachers that through the 20th century have contributed to the evolution of saxophone playing and popular music performance in Puerto Rico.

Musical Life in 19th Century Puerto Rico and The Arrival of the Saxophone

The island of Puerto Rico is the smallest of the Great Antilles. Christopher Columbus and his crew claimed it for Spain in November 19, 1493 during their second trip to the Americas.¹⁵ The Spaniards quickly colonized the island. The local Amerindian people, the Taíno, were decimated through years of slavery, forced labor and diseases.¹⁶ African slaves began arriving in Puerto Rico by the 1500s, and worked extensively in the harvest of sugar, which became one of the greatest sources for commerce during the 18th and 19th centuries.¹⁷ Through the years, the racial mixing of the European, Amerindian, and African led to a highly diverse population. By the 19th century, this racial diversity also influenced socio-economic differences defined in three segregated sub-cultures or social classes. The presence of such diverse cultural influences led to the formation of different musical practices within the three sub-cultures in Puerto Rico.

Generally speaking, there were two social classes among Europeans in Puerto Rico: the people who lived in the coastal areas, and the people who lived deep within the island in the mountain regions.¹⁸ The people from the coasts, located primarily in San Juan, Ponce, and Mayagüez, the main ports for the import and export of merchandise, were either actual Europeans or *criollos*, a name given to those who were of Spanish descent and born in Puerto Rico. They constituted the upper class, many of whom were owners of plantations and businesses, clearly having a superior education and economic status. The people who lived in the mountain regions of Puerto Rico were called the *jibaros*. They were also *criollos* for the most

¹⁵ Fernando Picó, *Historia General de Puerto Rico*, (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracan, Inc.), 43-44.

¹⁶ Jorge Duany, "Popular Music in Puerto Rico: Toward An Anthropology of Salsa" in *Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City*, ed. Vernon W. Boggs (New York: Excelsior Music Pub. Co., 1992) 72.

¹⁷ Fernando Picó, *Historia General de Puerto Rico*, (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracan, Inc.), 151, 184.

¹⁸ Jorge Duany, "Popular Music in Puerto Rico: Toward An Anthropology of Salsa" in *Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City* (New York: Excelsior Music Pub. Co., 1992) 74.

part, and some were *mestizos*, people of mixed European and Amerindian descent. They were poor farmers dedicated to their crops of mostly coffee and tobacco, and selling their products in the cities. Along the people of the coasts, there was also a community of slaves. They were either actual Africans or *mulatos*, people of mixed European and African descent. Most worked in the sugar cane fields for their masters, owners of the plantations. However, after 1873, when slavery ended in Puerto Rico, the slave and *jibaro* communities in Puerto Rico became the working class of the island.¹⁹

Separated by economic and racial differences since the early 1700s, these three social groups developed their own cultures and musical practices. The communities in the cities and coastal regions were in closest contact with the musical tradition from Western Europe. They were the intellectuals, and many people had the chance to become professional musicians by studying in Europe with scholarships funded by the Spanish government. These musicians would later return to the island and create private lesson studios in the cities. These musicians established musical and cultural societies such as the *Ateneo Puertorriqueño*, creating festivities and competitions in order to promote cultural development and preservation.²⁰ One of these festivals was the *Feria de Exposición*, a composition competition. Other organizations formed were musical groups such as the *Orquesta de capilla de la catedral* (Chapel Orchestra of the Cathedral) and a Philharmonic Society in San Juan.²¹ In 1840, the San Juan Theater was completed by the efforts of another society, the *Real sociedad económica de amigos del país*

¹⁹ For more details on Puerto Rican history and 19th century life, see chapters 8-12 of Fernando Picó, *Historia General de Puerto Rico*, (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracan, Inc.), 115-222.

²⁰ Fernando Callejo Ferrer, "Musica y musicos puertorriqueños," Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/msicaymsicos00call> (accessed October 6, 2013), 47.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

(Royal Economic Society of Friends of the Country).²² This decade also experienced the beginning of many visits of opera companies from Spain, Italy, and France, enriching musical activity on the island. It is important to mention that while musicians living in the cities benefited from all of these opportunities for performance and for learning, music making was not a respected profession in Puerto Rican society.²³ Musicians were usually artisans who provided entertainment for the higher class.

The beginning of the 19th century also saw the independence of many Spanish colonies in Latin America. This brought a reinforcement of military presence on the island. In the cities of San Juan and Ponce, military bands were stationed with their regiments. These bands gave outdoor concerts called *retretas* at least twice a week from the beginning of the century.²⁴ Many musicians from the military bands also became teachers in the island, influencing the development of music education.²⁵

One of the most common activities for entertainment in the upper class was ballroom dancing. The music was usually provided by ensembles of different instrumental combinations that performed dances such as polkas, mazurkas, and the Spanish *contradanza*. By the second half of the 19th century, Cuban music had also integrated into the Puerto Rican ballroom. Cuban musicians introduced in Puerto Rico musical genres such as the *guaracha*, *rumba*, *son*, and the *bolero*, all significant genres in the formation of the Puerto Rican popular music repertoire in the

²² Ibid., 29.

²³ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 24.

²⁴ The *retreta* tradition was carried on by municipal bands in the 20th century and is still active today in some cities of Puerto Rico.

²⁵ Fernando Callejo Ferrer, "Musica y músicos puertorriqueños," Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/msicaymsicos00call> (accessed October 6, 2013).

20th century.²⁶ It is from the *contradanza* that the Puerto Rican *danza* emerges with alterations done to both the structure and rhythmic material. Manuel Gregorio Tavarez was one of the main exponents of *danza* around the decade of 1870 composing for piano and experimenting with compositional techniques learned while studying in Paris. Tavarez pushed the *danza* into becoming more a form of artistic expression than just a dance. Other musicians who were also major proponents of the *danza* were Heraclio Ramos and Juan Morel Campos. The *danza* came to be highly embraced because it gave Puerto Ricans a sense of Nationalism, a musical genre that was unique and represented their culture.²⁷ Another influential factor on the development of classical music in Puerto Rico was the ideas of pianist and composer Aristides Chavier. After returning from completing his studies overseas in 1893, Chavier began a campaign for classicism, for performing the works of the great masters, and following the compositional practices of Western European music. His ideas created a division between musicians who shared his beliefs and those who turned more to the danceable movement driven by the development of *danza*.²⁸ The ideas of Chavier also led to a very conservative view of music, one that I believe continued to be carried on by Puerto Rican musicians in the 20th century, influencing the way musicians approach classical music on the island even in the present day.

The music of the slave community came to be as a result of cultural mixing of different tribes of African people in Puerto Rico. When colonization began in the 1500s, the Spaniards mixed slaves of different tribes to prevent communication and retaliation. The Africans in Puerto

²⁶ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 23-25.

²⁷ More information about the *danza* and its role in national identity can be found in A. G. Quintero Diaz, "Ponce, the *Danza* and the National Question" in *Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City* (Excelsior Music Pub. Co., 1992), 47.

²⁸ Fernando Callejo Ferrer, "Musica y músicos puertorriqueños," Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/msicaymsicos00call> (accessed October 6, 2013) 54.

Rico taught each other their own cultural traditions, as well as their religions.²⁹ As centuries passed, a blending of these traditions developed into the culture of the African slave of Puerto Rico in the 19th century. The musical genre of *bomba* came to be as part of this blending, a mix within African tribe cultures, not only with slaves brought directly from Western Africa, but also with many arriving with the settlement of French planters from territories such as New Orleans and Haiti.³⁰ The *bomba* is monophonic, sung in a call-and-response manner, but at the same time polyrhythmic. Drums and various percussion instruments accompany the melody. Each of the accompanying drums employs a different rhythm, thus enhancing the polyrhythmic texture.³¹ The *bomba* is associated with dances and ceremonies of *Santería*, a religious movement that came to be due to European and African cultural mixing. The religion adopts both Christian beliefs and African tribal practices. This social class is also responsible for the creation of *plena*, a similar genre in the implementation of the polyrhythmic content and call-and-response style. In contrast to the *bomba*, the *plena* is not associated with a religious practice. It was a form of entertainment within the community. The *plena* songs were about social and political situations, often written in a satirical or nostalgic manner.³²

Lastly, the music of the *jibaros* is closely related to Spanish folklore. While the higher-class European was in closer relationship to the Western European classical tradition, the *jibaros* kept the customs of the European peasantry. Through oral tradition, old folk music genres dating back to medieval times such as the *seis*, *aguinaldos*, and *villancicos*, were passed down through generations. The *seis*, being the most prominent, is based on the rhyme of the *décima*, a ten line

²⁹ Jorge Duany, "Popular Music in Puerto Rico: Toward An Anthropology of Salsa" in *Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City* (New York: Excelsior Music Pub. Co., 1992), 73.

³⁰ Ibid., 75

³¹ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 19.

³² Juan Flores, "Bumbum and the Beginnings of La Plena," in *Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City*, (New York: Excelsior Music Pub. Co. 1992), 64-65.

poetic stanza.³³ The *jibaro* songs were usually accompanied with guitar-like instruments such as the *tiple*, the *cuatro*, and the *bordonúa*, and percussive instruments such as the maracas and guiros, the only remnants of Amerindian influence in Puerto Rican music.³⁴

The arrival of the saxophone in Puerto Rico is difficult to document. Most previous research documents of Puerto Rican music makes no clear mention of presence of the saxophone on the island during the 19th century. This fact might mean that 1) the saxophone did not arrive to the island until the 20th century, 2) the instrument was present but nothing important happened with it in relationship with the growth of the island's musical culture for scholars to write about it, or 3) simply lack of available documentation or research in this topic. There is only one article I found by Hector Campos Parsi in *La Gran Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico*, who mentions that Felipe Gutierrez composed the first Puerto Rican composition that included the saxophone somewhere around 1860 to 1870. The piece was titled *Tota Pulchra*, a sacred work for orchestra and choir written for the Chapel Orchestra. The same article mentions the deficiency of Gutierrez's orchestration of his works due to the lack of instruments in the orchestra.³⁵ The use of the saxophone might indicate the instrument was used mainly for the need of an addition to the instrumentation. The fact that the saxophone makes an appearance in a Puerto Rican composition in the 19th century indicates a clear presence of the instrument on the island's music scene. There are also other facts that suggest the presence of the instrument in the last decades of the 19th century.

³³ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 19.

³⁴ Donald Thompson, "Puerto Rico," in Oxford Music Online, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/41092?q=Puerto+Rico&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#S41092.2, (accessed January 26, 2014).

³⁵ Hector Campos Parsi, La música en Puerto Rico vol. 7, *La Gran Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico* (San Juan, PR: Ediciones Madrid, 1976), 186.

In his dissertation, Fred L. Hemke mentions that the saxophone was already implemented in Spanish military bands in 1852.³⁶ To support this claim, an article published online by the *Conservatorio Superior de Musica "Rafael Orozco" de Córdoba* and written by saxophonist Alfonso Padilla Lopez, reports the saxophone having arrived in Spain in 1850 through the bazaar Casa España in Barcelona.³⁷ However, in contrast to Hemke, the same article mentions that a military band reform happened in 1852 but the saxophone was not officially included in the bands at that time. According to Padilla Lopez, it is not clear when the saxophone began to be used in the military bands of Spain, but it is definite that the instrument was already part of the instrumentation by 1870. Based on this information, we may suggest that it is possible that the saxophone had already been introduced to Puerto Rico during the last decades of the 19th century with the bands that were stationed there at that time. In addition, Ruth Glasser in her book *My Music is My Flag* makes a statement suggesting that musicians in Puerto Rico were already learning to play the saxophone during the 19th century. However, the author does not provide any citation to support her claim.³⁸

The use of the saxophone in Puerto Rico during the 19th century would have most probably remained in the military bands. The saxophone would not have been used in the music of either the jibaro or slave communities of Puerto Rico. It was difficult for these social classes

³⁶ Fred L. Hemke, *The Early History of the Saxophone*, DMA diss., (University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1975), 221.

³⁷ Alfonso Padilla Lopez, "El saxofon en Espana en el s. XIX. Los primeros metodos espanoes para saxofon," *Conservatorio Superior "Rafael Orozco" de Cordoba*, <http://www.csmcordoba.com/revista-musicalia/musicalia-numero-3/199-el-saxofon-en-espana-en-el-s-xix-los-primeros-metodos-espanoles-para-saxofon> (accessed November 10, 2013).

³⁸ If interested see Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 61.

to keep up with the cultural development happening in the cities, especially with the low economic resources that would have made impossible the affordability of musical instruments.³⁹

Due to the factors mentioned above, it is not surprising that there is difficulty finding some information about the saxophone in Puerto Rico during this period. In comparison to saxophone history in the United States and Europe, by this same time in these countries, the instrument was not very much in use outside of military bands.⁴⁰ It is not until the 20th century that the saxophone rises greatly into the musical scene in both classical and popular music of Puerto Rico.

³⁹ See Fernando Picó, *Historia General de Puerto Rico*, (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracan, Inc.), 168-171 for more information on social and economic status during the 19th century.

⁴⁰ Don Ashton, "In the twentieth century," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Saxophone*, ed. Richard Ingham, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 20.

20th Century Bands and Entertainment

The year 1898 witnessed the Spanish-American war, a conflict between Spain and the United States for the ownership of colonies in the Americas. The war ended with the Treaty of Paris of 1898, an agreement declaring American ownership of Puerto Rico and other islands of the West Indies.⁴¹ The people of Puerto Rico encountered dramatic political, social, and economic changes very different from the previous four centuries. Some Puerto Ricans greeted the arrival of the Americans with much enthusiasm, rejoicing in the ending of the Spanish regime. Others felt that the Americans would ruin everything that had been established by Spain and were not very sympathetic to the new sovereignty. In fact, as historian Fernando Picó mentions in his book *Historia general de Puerto Rico*, when the Americans were fighting remaining Spanish troops in different sectors of the island, civilians who were defending the Spanish regime regularly attacked them.⁴²

As the hostile environment ended, the United States established a military regime in Puerto Rico from 1898 to 1900.⁴³ Changes made by the American government were felt almost immediately within Puerto Rican society. The most drastic change with the new government was the separation of church and state.⁴⁴

It was customary during the 19th century that the Catholic Church would sponsor funding for many aspects of cultural development. In music, the Church provided funding for many organizations including the Chapel Orchestra, the official orchestra for the chapel in San Juan. As mentioned in the previous chapter, there were also scholarships provided to musicians with

⁴¹ Fernando Picó, *Historia General de Puerto Rico*, (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracan, Inc.), 230.

⁴² Ibid., 229.

⁴³ Ibid., 230-231.

⁴⁴ Fernando Callejo Ferrer, "Musica y musicos puertorriquenos," Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/msicaymsicos00call> (accessed January 10, 2014) 57-58.

exceptional abilities to study outside the country. When the Americans took over, all funding related to these activities disappeared. The highly regarded Chapel Orchestra disbanded, and many musicians studying in Europe had to return with unfinished degrees.⁴⁵ Many of these musicians continued their careers in Puerto Rico by performing recitals and establishing private lesson studios. For example Eliza Tavárez (daughter of *danza* composer Manuel Gregorio Tavárez), Ángel Celestino Morales, and opera singer Antonio Paoli, returned to the island decades later after a long journey of tours through Europe.

In addition to the economic changes brought by the new sovereignty, in 1899 the island suffered the catastrophic devastation of a hurricane, which destroyed major fields of crops leading to a massive food shortage and economic troubles. To the musical community, the sums of all of these events lead to an absence of local musical activity in the first years of the American occupation.⁴⁶

In 1900, the US established a civil government in Puerto Rico and ended the military regime.⁴⁷ With a civil government established, it became easier for musicians in Puerto Rico to renew some of the activities that were performed before the American occupation. Musical and cultural societies such as the *Ateneo Puertorriqueño* reemerged. Civil and military bands began forming again and continued the *retreta* tradition from the 19th century. One of these early 20th century bands was the *Banda de la policía insular* (City Police Band) in San Juan, with maestro Francisco Verar as conductor. Another band from the same year was the band from a local military regiment also in San Juan with Luis R. Miranda as conductor. In 1910, other professional bands began to form. Some of these other bands were the *Banda de los bomberos*

⁴⁵ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 61-62.

⁴⁷ Fernando Picó, *Historia General de Puerto Rico*, (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico: Ediciones Huracan, Inc.), 232.

(Firefighter's band) in San Juan with Manuel Tizol as conductor, and the municipal band of Ponce, originally founded by Juan Morel Campos in the 19th century. Another organization formed about this time was a local opera company called the *Gira Artística* (Artistic Tour), formed due to the absence of opera companies traveling to Puerto Rico after the hurricane at the beginning of the century.⁴⁸

Even with musical organizations beginning to reemerge, the early 20th century was a very difficult time for musicians in Puerto Rico. It was rare to see a musician in Puerto Rico who did not have the need to find a job in another profession. Many found themselves having careers as mechanics, plumbers, and barbers to name a few. Musicians would then get together during their spare time to rehearse and perform. Even when some had positions in municipal bands, the compensation received was not enough for a decent living.⁴⁹

Dancing continued to be one of the most common forms of entertainment in the higher classes during the beginning of the century. The live music needed provided performance opportunities for many musicians. In fact, many bandleaders like Manuel Tizol would form their own dance orchestras where members were the same as in the municipal bands with additional string musicians joining at the dances.⁵⁰ The dance orchestras usually varied in size depending on the monetary amount being offered. Also, with the arrival of the Americans, the music styles of fox-trots, one-steps, and two-steps became integrated into the Puerto Rican dance repertoire.⁵¹ The Puerto Rican musician found himself performing a varied repertoire during these dances. For example, the first piece at a dance might be a Puerto Rican *danza*, followed by a two-step,

⁴⁸ Fernando Callejo Ferrer, "Musica y músicos puertorriqueños," Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/msicaymsicos00call> (accessed January 10, 2014) 57-58.

⁴⁹ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995) 36-37.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 37-38.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 38-39.

and then a waltz.⁵² In addition, when it was not affordable to have large ensembles at the dances, it became necessary for musicians to learn to play multiple instruments when smaller groups were hired.⁵³ It was also common for many musicians involved in dance orchestras and concert band performance to explore classical music. Luis R. Miranda and Braulio Dueno Colón for example were municipal band directors who also practiced the performance and composition of classical works. Miranda also became a highly respected Puerto Rican *danza* composer in the 20th century. The musical scene then provided an opportunity for a vast musical training for the Puerto Rican musician. In this way, the economic struggle of musicians in Puerto Rico brought positive outcomes for the musical culture on the island.⁵⁴

From 1910 through 1930, entertainment in Puerto Rico began to expand. During this time the film industry from the United States began distributing silent films to Puerto Rico.⁵⁵ Films provided musicians another opportunity for performance. Film music varied from just piano to different groups of instruments. Just as in the dance orchestras, many band and orchestra directors were also theater managers, making it convenient for them to hire musicians or provide the music themselves.⁵⁶ It is within these forms of entertainment that the saxophone, already on the island in municipal and military bands, began to move into the Puerto Rican popular music scene.

The saxophone was in regular use in bands in Puerto Rico by the beginning of the 20th century. Fernando Callejo Ferrer's description in his book *Musica y músicos puertorriqueños* of Miranda's military band gives an account on saxophones present on the island by 1900. Callejo

⁵² Ibid., 129.

⁵³ Ibid., 44.

⁵⁴ For more information on the band tradition of Puerto Rico, see Emmanuel Dufrasne, "¿Que es una Banda?" *80 grados: Prensa sin prisa*, <http://www.80grados.net/que-es-una-banda/> (accessed September 21, 2014).

⁵⁵ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995) 43.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 43.

Ferrer reports the ensemble having 23 musicians, two of them saxophone players.⁵⁷ Another description by Callejo Ferrer of Manuel Tizol's *Banda de los bomberos* in 1910 reported five saxophone players in a band of 43 musicians.⁵⁸ In the dance orchestras, the saxophone would also have its appearance not only because it was already an instrument present in the municipal bands, but also because of the strong influence coming from American popular music, in which the instrument was present especially in ragtime and vaudeville music by 1920.

In an interview by Miguel López Ortiz of Francisco López Vidal, the latter talked about his experiences as a musician for silent films in Puerto Rico.⁵⁹ López Vidal was a violinist who taught himself how to play saxophone because, for him, the saxophone was better suited for the music of American films. He also mentioned that he decided to learn the saxophone because the more instruments he could play the more chances he had of getting called for performances. López Vidal (or "Paquito," as he was known) became a prominent 20th century popular music performer and composer in Puerto Rico, famous especially for his *boleros*, which were popular with Latin bands during the 40s and 50s in the United States. He served as one of the pioneers in exposing and introducing the baritone saxophone within the popular music scene on the island.

There were many other important factors that helped in the production of saxophone players since the beginning of the American sovereignty. The United States government began to work on many changes on the island, among them new roads facilitating transportation through the island and improving public education. It is with the improvement of public schools that band programs begin to form. Although small and suffering from lack of resources, bands at the

⁵⁷ Fernando Callejo Ferrer, "Musica y musicos puertorriquenos," Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/msicaymsicos00call> (accessed January 10, 2014), 64.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 65.

⁵⁹ Miguel López Ortiz, "Paquito Lopez Vidal revolucionó el sonido de las orquestas puertorriqueñas" *Fundación Nacional para la Cultura Popular*, http://www.prpop.org/noticias/jul08/paquito_lopez_vidal_jul05.shtml (accessed May 10, 2014).

schools provided musical training for children from elementary through high school. It is in school bands that the saxophone also made its appearance. In 1910, a festival of school bands took place in San Juan. A number of bands from different parts of the island competed, and a band from Comerio under the direction of Francisco Milián won first prize. A description of this band reports 21 children composing the ensemble with only one alto saxophone present.⁶⁰

School bands and music programs existed only in those schools that could afford to have them. Even though music instruction was available at some schools, it is possible that the conditions in which these programs functioned were not sufficient to provide solid instrumental instruction.⁶¹ Many Puerto Ricans during this time would self learn or take private lessons with professionals; such was the experience of López Vidal who was only 16 when he taught himself to play the saxophone. High quality musical instruction would then be available to those who could afford it. Music education in Puerto Rico functioned this way until 1946 when it would turn into another direction and flourish.

In 1946, the *Escuelas Libre de Música* (Free Schools of Music) were founded. These were small conservatories subsidized by the government to offer free music education to all the people of Puerto Rico. The idea of forming these types of schools was developed by meetings between groups of musicians and Ernesto Ramos Antonini, former president of the Puerto Rican senate. Their view was that there were no schools in Puerto Rico that offered high quality musical instruction, and there was a need for it to harvest young talent. Three schools opened first, the ones in San Juan, Ponce, and Mayaguez. Other schools in Humacao, Caguas, and Arecibo would open years later. European formal music training is offered in these schools.

⁶⁰ Robert M. Fitzmaurice, "Music Education in Puerto Rico: a Historical Survey with Guidelines for an Exemplary Curriculum." (PhD diss., Florida State University, 1970), 140.

⁶¹ Ibid., 160-180 The author describes the difficulty of establishing music programs at schools in Puerto Rico, and students relying on private instruction to become proficient musicians.

Students are taught solfege and take private lessons on their instruments biweekly. In addition, the schools have ensemble opportunities for students at all levels.

One of the main goals of the *Escuelas Libres* was the training of young musicians for the professional world. Because of the popularity of the saxophone in Puerto Rican popular music, the saxophone was included in the curriculum from the beginning. In San Juan, by 1947, there were already at least 250 students enrolled in saxophone lessons.⁶² The first saxophone instructors were Julián Sánchez, Rubén Rivera, and Luis González Peña who taught flute, clarinet, and saxophone. The school in Ponce, being smaller, had only 21 students enrolled as clarinet and saxophone performers by 1969.⁶³ Today, the six schools continue preparing musicians to begin their careers in music as they finish high school.

Another major step forward in the development of classical music culture in Puerto Rico was the creation of the *Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico* in 1960. Offering degrees in music education, composition, and instrumental and vocal performance, the conservatory provides the training needed to establish a professional career in music. However, it was not until 1994 that the conservatory includes the saxophone in its curriculum.⁶⁴

Saxophone performance in Puerto Rico was strongly geared towards popular music playing throughout the 20th century. For the Puerto Rican saxophonist, the performance of popular music genres was the only path to a career in music. As we discussed in this chapter, these performance opportunities for the saxophone began with the municipal bands, dance orchestras, and silent cinemas of the 20s. Later on, as the 20th century progressed with the formation of a popular music culture in the United States, Puerto Rican saxophonists became

⁶² Ibid., 206.

⁶³ Ibid., 226.

⁶⁴ Wilfredo Corps, interview by author, Carolina, Puerto Rico, December 30, 2013.

involved in the performance of jazz, and in the evolution of Latin popular music genres such as *Salsa*, and the fusion of Latin jazz.

The Saxophone in Puerto Rican Popular Music

In the 20th century, the development of a popular-music culture in Puerto Rico is centered in the musical activities happening within Latino communities in the United States, especially in New York City. This development is influenced by 1) the migration of Latinos to New York City, and 2) the commercialization of music.

Puerto Ricans began migrating to areas of the United States as early as the beginning of the American occupation of the island. The industrialization of sugar cane fields and other crops forced many farmers to abandon their homes and search for jobs in wealthier cities of the island such as San Juan, Ponce, and Mayagüez.⁶⁵ Other people took a bigger step and migrated to the United States, relocating mostly in New York City where industrial work provided job opportunities. Within these migrating waves many Puerto Rican musicians entered the American musical scene of the 20th century.⁶⁶

In 1917, the Jones Act was passed by the Congress of the United States and gave American citizenship to all the people of Puerto Rico. One of the benefits of citizenship was that travel to the continental U.S. became very easy, thus increasing the number of Puerto Ricans traveling to the mainland. It also allowed Puerto Ricans to join the United States Armed Forces. With the United States entering World War I that same year, about 236,000 Puerto Rican men were considered eligible for the draft. Through the military, Puerto Rican musicians interacted more closely with American music.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press), 28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

⁶⁷ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 53.

A month after the United States entered World War I, Lieutenant James Reese Europe was given the task of creating a regimental band for the 15th Infantry Regiment, the very first military unit of African Americans in New York. For an unknown reason, it was in Puerto Rico where he decided to look for the best musicians for his band, and with them created the Hellfighters band. According to Ruth Glasser, Europe knew that he would find trained musicians in Puerto Rico:

It is possible that he knew about the musicians because they had already been “discovered” by North Americans, a little over a year before. At the beginning of 1917 agents for the Victor Talking Machine Company had stopped off in San Juan as part of a recording tour of South America and the Caribbean. Several numbers by both Tizol’s band and an orchestra led by Rafael Hernández ended up on their acetates. Jim Europe had himself been recording for Victor since 1914 and would have had good connections with company personnel.⁶⁸

Europe was a talented ragtime composer and had begun implementing jazz into ragtime music.⁶⁹ With Europe, Puerto Rican musicians travelled across France in 1918, performing a varied repertoire of opera overtures, Sousa marches, ragtime, and blues. Among the eighteen musicians he recruited from Puerto Rico were brothers Jesús and Rafael Hernández, and Rafael Duchesne. A picture from 1919 shows three saxophone players in the front row, but unfortunately no names are provided. Ceferino Hernández was one of the saxophone players that played with the Hellfighters, and, although not clear, it is possible that he is one of the musicians in the picture.⁷⁰ Rafael Hernández, who was a baritone horn player in Europe’s band, later had an extensive musical career, becoming one of the most important Puerto Rican popular music

⁶⁸ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁹ Luisillahermosa. “James Reese Europe the Hellfighters.” Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eC9m3Xie3uk> (accessed March 16, 2014).

⁷⁰ Email with Dr. Noel Allende, Jan. 7, 2014.

composers in the 20th century. He composed many *boleros*, *guarachas*, *danzas*, *rumbas*, and *plenas* among other genres. His song *El Cumbanchero* is known internationally today.⁷¹

The Hellfighters band disbanded in 1919, after the tragic and sudden death of James Reese Europe, who was killed by his drummer after a heated discussion.⁷² However, the fame gained by Europe and his band motivated many musicians, especially in the black communities of New York, to create their own bands and continue with the musical tradition Europe had established. Noble Sissle, Europe's vocalist and drum major with the Hellfighters, was one of these musicians who followed Europe's model. It was in these bands, many of which turned into Broadway pit orchestras, that Puerto Rican musicians found performance opportunities. With the ideas of racial segregation that dominated American society during that time, Puerto Ricans and other Latinos interacted more with African American musicians than white Americans.

Puerto Rican migration to the United States continued even more after the 20s. Those who arrived in New York City slowly began establishing communities in poorer parts of the city, such as Harlem and the Bronx. In these areas of the city, Puerto Ricans began living alongside many other migrating people from the Caribbean and Latin America. By the late 1920s, Hispanics in New York City had begun establishing their own businesses in Manhattan and East Harlem, such as markets, music stores, and clubs, where Latin music groups performed every week.⁷³ Up to late 1920s, many Puerto Rican and Cuban musicians often performed together in African-American jazz bands.

⁷¹ Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico Recinto Metropolitano, Rafael Hernández Marín (1891-1965) Apuntes Biográficos del Compositor, http://www.metro.inter.edu/sala_museo/bibliografia_rafael.pdf (accessed March 18, 2014).

⁷² Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 66.

⁷³ Isabelle Leymarie, *Cuban Fire: The Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 85-86.

When the Great Depression struck in the United States, unemployment became a big problem for Latino and African-American musicians. With performance opportunities scarce during this time, white swing bands took over the few opportunities available. This turn of events is one of various reasons that pushed Latino musicians to turn to Latin music again and form more of their own musical groups.⁷⁴ As Latinos formed their ensembles and worked performing for mostly Latinos and African-American audiences, many other groups also searched for performance opportunities within the white communities of New York, in casinos especially, where pay was much better.

Puerto Ricans and all Hispanics in the United States faced extreme challenges of racism during this time. The Latin groups that performed in theaters and casinos in white communities were known as “relief” bands, which alternated with featured white American swing orchestras such as Tommy Dorsey’s. These Latin “relief” bands had to be organized with lighter-skin Puerto Ricans to perform at these venues, creating a bigger challenge for dark-skin Puerto Ricans to find work.⁷⁵ Even though it was more difficult for dark-skin musicians to find employment, decades later, many of them reigned in the popular music scene in both the United States and Puerto Rico like singer Bobby Capó, Rafael Hernández, Johnny Rodríguez, and Augusto Coen.

Augusto Coen is considered a pioneer in the formation of Latin bands from the 1930s. He is not only a very important figure in the development of Puerto Rican popular music, but also contributed greatly in the use of the saxophone in Puerto Rican music. After arriving in New York City in the 1920s, Coen quickly began playing trumpet with black musician pit orchestras. These experiences led him to perform with artists such as Duke Ellington and Fletcher

⁷⁴ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 76.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

Henderson, experiences that influenced his playing, arranging and composing skills. Following the influence of these great jazz artists, Coen assimilated the Big band concept of the use of horn sections (saxophones, trombones, and trumpets) in his orchestra *Augusto Coen y Sus Boricuas* formed in 1934. Smaller in size than the common Big band, Coen's orchestra used only about three saxophones, two trumpets, string bass, piano, trap drums, and a few Latin percussion instruments.⁷⁶ Just like Coen, many other Puerto Rican and Cuban musicians also formed similar ensembles through the 30s and 40s, such as Alberto Socarrás, Mario Bauzá with his *Machito's Afro-Cubans*, Xavier Cugat, and Noro Morales. Coen gave the saxophone a new role when performing danzas. In the Puerto Rican danza, there is always a countermelody, which supports the melody by providing both rhythmic and harmonic structure. This counter melody was often employed by the *bombardino* (euphonium) in earlier dance orchestras on the island. As Glasser mentions, Coen gave the counter melody to saxophones instead, creating a different and new sound for the Puerto Rican danza.⁷⁷

The career of the Puerto Rican saxophone player in New York City from 1920 to 1950 relied mostly on performing in groups like Coen's. Versatility as a musician was very common during this time, probably a tradition influenced by the competitive environment of the freelance musician in Puerto Rico during the times of the silent cinema. Saxophonists usually played multiple woodwind instruments, a practice that is still common among saxophone players in Puerto Rico today. As I remember, when I was in high school, my saxophone teacher, Nelson Vega, who is also an excellent clarinet player, encouraged me to learn the clarinet, and in my senior year I was playing clarinet in various ensembles. A few years later, when working on my undergraduate degree at the *Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico*, Wilfredo Corps, my

⁷⁶ Ibid., 81.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 82.

saxophone professor, encouraged me to learn the flute. Thanks to these musicians' advice, in 2006 I played as reed player at multiple musicals. In these musicals, all reed players were actually saxophone students at the *Conservatorio*.

Some distinguished saxophonists during the 30s in New York City were José “Pin” Madera and Ramón “Moncho” Usera, who both played with Augusto Coen, and Rafael “Agugue” López, who played in a Puerto Rican group called *The Happy Boys* formed by percussionist Arsenio “Federico” Pagani.⁷⁸ Among the three gentlemen, “Moncho” Usera stood out as the most influential figure in both saxophone playing and Puerto Rican popular music.

Ramón “Moncho” Usera was born in the city of Ponce in 1904. He began his studies in music at age nine, and by the age of 15 he was a skilled performer on the piano, flute, clarinet, and saxophone. In 1925, he moved to Paris and studied at the *École Normale de Musique*. He began performing with Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds* when the group was touring Europe in 1928, and after finishing his studies in Paris, he moved to New York City in 1929. Usera also performed with Noble Sissle and later with trumpeter Arthur Briggs. As Latin bands gained popularity in the 30s, Usera spent most of his time arranging, composing, and performing in these ensembles. In 1943, he organized his own orchestra performing in many New York City clubs such as La Conga Club, Tico-Tico Club, and RKO Theater, and travelled across the United States offering presentations in Chicago, Miami, and Los Angeles. In 1951, the orchestra disbanded and Moncho Usera joined Xavier Cugat in a tour across Latin America. After the tour, he returned to Puerto Rico and established another orchestra. From this moment until the end of his life, he acted primarily as a music director. From 1950 to 1970, his orchestra had seasonal contracts with numerous important hotels and clubs throughout the island. He also organized music ensembles

⁷⁸ Ibid., 86.

for short films and became one of the first musical directors for WAPA-TV when the local television channel inaugurated. As a composer, his boleros are very well known, popularized by vocal artists such as Bobby Capó and Joe Valle. Some of these are *Esos besos tuyos*, *Hilarión*, *Más, más y más*, and *Yerba Mala*. After his long and productive journey in music, “Moncho” Usera died a victim of cancer in the city of Santurce in 1972.⁷⁹

Popular music performance in Puerto Rico circled around an interaction between musicians on the island and those on the mainland. It was common for musicians on the mainland to travel frequently back to the island, and while visiting their families, they would also perform music with friends and exchange ideas with them. It was also common for musicians on the island to travel to the United States in search of making recordings.⁸⁰ Throughout this interchange, it is one of various ways Afro-Cuban rhythms were adopted and developed strongly on the island while *jibaro* music and *plena* gained popularity in the Puerto Rican communities of the United States.

During the first half of the 20th century, saxophones were in use at first mostly in municipal bands and silent films, and later in dance bands when the former decayed. During the 20s and 30s dance bands began blossoming, offering performances in major nightspots and clubs in San Juan. Some of these were the *Orquesta Los Trovadores* and the orchestra of Rafael Muñoz, who was also a saxophonist himself.⁸¹ With the interaction between musicians in the island and those outside, popular music continued growing in Puerto Rico, and during the 1950’s developed into a rich era of dance orchestras.

⁷⁹ Fundacion Nacional para la Cultura Popular, Moncho Usera, <http://prpop.org/biografias/moncho-usera/> (accessed August 2, 2014).

⁸⁰ Ruth Glasser, *My Music Is My Flag: Puerto Rican Musicians and Their New York Communities 1917-1940*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 50-51.

⁸¹ Isabelle Leymarie, *Cuban Fire: The Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 101.

The emergence of the 1950's dance orchestras were large ensembles modeling the "big band" instrumentation of full saxophone and brass sections, drums, plus an extensive use of multiple Latin percussion instruments such as congas, bongos, claves, maracas, and güiro. The repertoire of these bands continued the tradition of a diverse selection of musical genres such as *guarachas*, *rumbas*, *boleros*, *mambos*, *danzas*, and *plenas*. Some of the leading orchestras of this decade in Puerto Rico were Cesar Concepción's orchestra, the *Dandies del 42* led by "Moncho" Usera, *Armando Castro & His Jazz Band* led by saxophonist and clarinetist "Fajardito" Armando Castro, and the *Orquesta Panamericana* led by saxophonist Ángel Rafael "Lito" Peña.⁸²

Probably the most recognized Puerto Rican saxophonist in the 20th century, "Lito" Peña mesmerized audiences with his *Orquesta Panamericana*. Growing up in a family of musicians in the town of Humacao, "Lito" Peña began his musical journey at an early age. His father, Juan Peña Reyes, music teacher and director of the municipal bands in Humacao and Guayama, guided him through his first steps in music. As a young adult, "Lito" Peña joined the Army of the United States, and with the help of his brother, formed a band. After leaving the military, he continued performing as saxophone and clarinet player, and by the end of the 1940s he was performing with the orchestras of Armando Castro and César Concepción. In 1954, he forms his *Orquesta Panamericana* along with trumpet player Berto Torres and Luisito Benjamín on the piano. The *Orquesta Panamericana* became famous throughout the island and featured some of the best musicians in Puerto Rico, often accompanying highly acclaimed singers. The orchestra's popularity increased even more during the 60s when it was hired to provide music for the local television program "El Show del Mediodía" (The Show at Noon) on WAPA TV.⁸³

⁸² Isabelle Leymarie, *Cuban Fire: The Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 185-186.

⁸³ Fundacion Nacional para la Cultura Popular, Lito Peña, <https://prpop.org/biografias/lito-pena/> (accessed May 11, 2014).

The *Orquesta Panamericana* set the example for younger generations of musicians on the performance and composition of popular music genres in Puerto Rico. The musical interpretations of songs popularized by Peña's orchestra are still followed today with present day ensembles, such as the municipal bands of Ponce, Caguas, Humacao, and the *Banda Estatal de Puerto Rico* (Puerto Rico State Band), which have the sufficient number of musicians to recreate the sounds of the Puerto Rican dance orchestras when performing in the popular style. The *Banda Estatal* was formed in 1966, and "Lito" Peña became its conductor in 1985.

Lito Peña was also recognized as a classical composer. After the Conservatory in Puerto Rico was founded in 1960, Lito Peña decided to formalize his musical training and completed a degree at this institution.⁸⁴ His classical compositions explore the fusion of Puerto Rican popular genres within a structured classical framework. His focus was geared especially to the use of the *bomba* and *plena*, using those musical elements to construct a classical piece of music. His compositional style is very well presented in his *Fantasia Caribe* for band, a multi-movement work that narrates the mixture of European, Amerindian and African races in Puerto Rico.⁸⁵

By 1960, the phenomenon of Salsa emerges. The popularity of Salsa, especially its name, was highly influenced by the recording and radio industry. Izzy Sanabria, a publicist from New York during the 60s and 70s, is considered to be responsible for the popularization of the term. As he mentions on an interview by Vernon Boggs, Salsa was simply a name used as a marketing tool to promote the music coming from the Latin communities of New York. The musical

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ A video recording of a performance of *Fantasia Caribe* by the Banda Estatal de Puerto Rico and conducted by Peña is available on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Zt03v5yh-Y> (accessed October 1, 2014).

content of Salsa is not any different than the music styles already present in New York since the 30s and 40s. Instead of mambo, rumba, son, or guaganco, everything was identified as Salsa.⁸⁶

In relationship to the saxophone, the use of the instrument is one aspect that differentiates the Afro-Cuban music from earlier decades with Salsa. Latino musicians, influenced by the newer music styles emerging in the United States of the 50s such as R&B, Rock and Roll, and Soul music, inclined to use a smaller ensemble than the large big bands.⁸⁷ In addition, the sound of the trombone became more popular than the saxophone. Tite Curet, one of the most distinguished Puerto Rican Salsa composers, discussed in an interview with Manuel Silva Casanova, the diminishing use of the saxophone in Salsa:

Well, the trombone was in use long before the word “salsa” was even introduced. You see, the sound of the saxophone, especially the soprano and the alto, overshadows everything else. The trombone, besides clashing less with the singer, is easier to write for. Any musician with a little skill can arrange using trombones.

Only a few groups kept using the saxophone in their groups such as El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico (The Great Combo of Puerto Rico) formed in 1962. Having celebrated their 50-year anniversary in 2012, the vision of El Gran Combo is to keep a traditional identity of the genre by avoiding any alterations to musical elements like many other salsa groups have done in the decades of the 80s and 90s. Although El Gran Combo did not keep the Big Band concept, they usually have two trumpets, two trombones, and two alto saxophones as their winds, following a traditional sound for the ensemble.

⁸⁶ Vernon W. Boggs, “Visions and Views of a Salsa Promoter Izzy “Mr. Salsa” Sanabria: Popularizing Music,” in *Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City* (New York: Excelsior Music Publishing Co, 1992), 187.

⁸⁷ Isabelle Leymarie, *Cuban Fire: The Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 222.

One of the founding members of El Gran Combo, saxophonist Eddie “La Bala” Perez has been another influential figure for saxophone players in Puerto Rico.⁸⁸ He was born in the city of Santurce and at an early age quickly began taking private lessons on the saxophone. He later studied music at the Escuela Libre de Musica in San Juan, where he learned to play the flute and the clarinet. When he was in high school he formed a group called “Los Pajaros Locos” for the graduation ceremony and later continued as a professional group. His fame in the popular music scene began when plena singer Rafael Cortijo invited him to join his group and leave for New York. Establishing a good relationship with Rafael Ithier, another member of Cortijo’s group, both of them founded El Gran Combo in 1962. His prominent playing in recordings from both Cortijo and El Gran Combo can always be appreciated. Many younger musicians followed his sound and interpretative style. As Wilfredo Corps, saxophone professor at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music mentions in an interview, “You know back then, you wanted to be Eddie Perez.”⁸⁹

As Big bands faded into smaller ensembles, the use of the saxophone moved to other musical genres that rose from the 1960s. With American popular music, we see the saxophone making its appearance in Rock and Roll. The instrument also continued into the new trends of Jazz, one which became a big hit to both jazz and Latin music audiences was the fusion of Latin Jazz. This new jazz style was pioneered by Dizzy Gillespie and his interaction with Latin musicians, especially Cubans such as Chano Pozo and Mario Bauzá.⁹⁰ Dizzy was fascinated by the complexity of Afro-Caribbean rhythms, and always had the interest of applying these musical

⁸⁸ A video with information on Eddie Perez’s life is available on Youtube, <http://youtu.be/rF8yuvt1ode> (accessed August 3, 2014).

⁸⁹ Wilfredo Corps, interview by author, Carolina, PR, December 30, 2013.

⁹⁰ Christopher Washburne, “Latin Jazz,” *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2262587?q=latin+jazz&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed November 3, 2014).

ideas into jazz. Beneficial for the jazz scene in Puerto Rico, the collapsing relationship between the United States and Cuba caused by the Cuban revolution during the 1960's, improved the jazz musical scene on the island. Until this time, most American jazz groups traveled mostly to Cuba, but after this incident, San Juan became the primary venue of American entertainment in the Caribbean.⁹¹ After 1960, jazz performance becomes highly popular among musicians in Puerto Rico, providing musicians a music style that allowed performers to grow in artistry.

By the late 80s, another music genre became highly popular in Puerto Rico, the merengue, coming from the neighboring island of the Dominican Republic. Fleeing the devastation of hurricane Hugo in 1989, many Dominicans migrated to Puerto Rico. The merengue, making its way into clubs in San Juan, overpowered Salsa.⁹² In Puerto Rico, musicians created an adaptation of the genre called merengue-bomba, with a bomba rhythm replacing the original cinquillo rhythm of the *tambora*. Merengue features very active saxophone playing. With the need of saxophones in a merengue band, the popularity of the style provided saxophonists in Puerto Rico with vast performance opportunities.

Jazz performance had been growing since the 60s with people practicing and teaching the style. Through the *Escuelas Libres* many young musicians learned to play jazz as well. We need to understand that since the establishment of these schools in 1948, many performing musicians held teaching positions at these institutions, and passed down their knowledge to younger generations. Throughout the decades jazz has grown so much in Puerto Rico that today the island celebrates every year the Heineken Jazz Fest, featuring top internationally renowned jazz

⁹¹ Wareen R. Pinckney, Jr., "Puerto Rican Jazz and the Incorporation of Folk Music: An Analysis of New Musical Directions," *Latin American Music Review* 10, no. 2, <http://www.jstor.org.libezp.lib.lsu.edu/stable/779952> (accessed July 14, 2014).

⁹² Isabelle Leymarie, *Cuban Fire: The Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 306.

artists.⁹³ In addition to the annual Festival, the Berklee College of Music has established an annual summer camp in Puerto Rico, where students from all around the island audition to be admitted. Those who pass the audition enjoy a week of classes in jazz performance, theory, and improvisation with faculty members from Berklee. With the popularity of jazz playing, and the efforts of the island's music education programs, Puerto Rico has produced many saxophone players who today continue to inspire young musicians in and outside the island. Some of these saxophone players are Ricardo Pons, who is a faculty member at the *Universidad Interamericana Recinto Metro*, Ivan Renta, international artist and saxophonist with Salsa legend Willie Colón, David Sánchez and Miguel Zenón to name a few. The two latter saxophonists are among the top jazz musicians today. Both Sánchez and Zenón have revolutionized Latin jazz with their compositions, fusing the jazz language with Puerto Rican music.

David Sánchez began his musical journey by playing percussion when he was 8 years old at the Escuela Libre de Musica in San Juan. A few years later, he began studying the tenor saxophone as well as other woodwind instruments such as the flute and clarinet. When he graduated from high school in 1986, he enrolled briefly at the Universidad de Puerto Rico, but he always felt attracted to exploring the musical scene in New York City. His way into the mainland was achieved by continuing his undergraduate studies at Rutgers University in New Jersey, which allowed him to pursue his interest in entering the jazz scene in New York. Highly talented as a player, he quickly found performances with top artists such as Eddie Palmieri and trumpeter Claudio Roditi. It was Mr. Roditi who introduced Sánchez to Dizzy Gillespie, who later invited Sánchez to one of his tours in 1991. The tour with Dizzy marked the beginning of Sánchez's journey to stardom. Since then, David Sánchez has had a long career of touring and recording

⁹³ Puerto Rico Heineken JazzFest 2015, <http://prheinekenjazz.com/#/save-the-date> (accessed February 20, 2015).

with many jazz artists such as Lalo Schifrin, Tom Harrell, and Roy Hanes. In 1994 he recorded his first album “The Departure” and in 2000 he received his first Latin Grammy nomination for his album “Melaza.” In “Melaza,” Sánchez features some of his compositions that involve the fusion of bomba and plena rhythms with jazz. Since then, Sánchez has achieved some powerful compositions blending perfectly both musical styles. In 2004, he receives his first Latin Grammy award for Best Instrumental Album with “Coral,” featuring more of his compositions, which included the participation of the City of Prague Philharmonic.⁹⁴

Sánchez is also equally adept as an educator and has always been involved in presenting lectures, teaching lessons and masterclasses at many institutions around the world. He has also held residencies at Georgia State University and the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music. Sánchez remains an inspiration for young musicians in Puerto Rico and around the world.

Miguel Zenón is probably Puerto Rico’s most highly acclaimed jazz saxophonist worldwide today. Just like David Sánchez, Zenón is a product of the Escuela Libre de Musica in San Juan. After graduating from high school, Zenón received the opportunity of studying for his bachelor’s degree in Jazz Studies at Berklee College of Music. He later worked to obtain his master’s degree in Jazz Performance from Manhattan School of Music. Distinguishing his performance to the alto saxophone, Zenón performed extensively as a sideman to other artists before engaging into his solo career. In fact, Zenón appeared as sideman on three of Sánchez’s albums until 2004 when he continued working on his own projects.⁹⁵

Since his first album “Looking Forward” in 2002, Zenón has demonstrated his ability of not only as a great performer but also as composer and producer. His musical ideas are similar to Sánchez in creating a new sound by implementing Puerto Rican genres into jazz. However,

⁹⁴ David Sánchez, “Biography,” www.davidsanchezmusic.com (accessed June 8, 2014).

⁹⁵ Miguel Zenón, Bio and Discography, <http://www.miguelzenon.com/bio.php> (accessed June 8, 2014).

Zenón has taken an approach to his music, which explores the raw essence of Puerto Rican music and culture. Whereas Sánchez is creating beautiful music influenced by his Puerto Rican roots, Zenón has focused into capturing the sound of the Puerto Rican culture. For example, in his album “Jibaro” in 2005, he explores the seis and aguinaldos of the jibaro culture. In “Esta Plena,” he captures the sound of the plena by taking melodic, harmonic and rhythmic ideas, and going even beyond by incorporating vocal sections, so essential of plena music. In a later album “Alma Adentro,” he brings tribute to the Puerto Rican popular music singers and composers by creating his own arrangements of salsa and bolero songs that were hits throughout the 20th century. In my personal opinion, I consider Sanchez’s music as jazz transformed into Puerto Rican music, while Zenón’s compositions as Puerto Rican music conceived in jazz. His projects and musical innovations have taken him to receive in 2008 the McArthur Fellowship, an award that has helped him continue his fruitful career. Zenón has also contributed to less fortunate communities in Puerto Rico by creating his project *Caravana Cultural*. With this project, he offers free concerts to the public with the purpose of promoting the appreciation of music and culture.⁹⁶

In the world of popular music, the saxophone in Puerto Rico has served as a useful tool for the creation and progress of new music throughout the 20th century. From the silent cinemas and early jazz, through mambos, boleros, plenas, salsa, merengue, and the modern trends of jazz, the saxophone has always been present to provide a sound that was essential for the development of these styles and the creation of great artists. Saxophone playing continues to evolve in Puerto Rico since the creation of the saxophone curriculum and the Jazz and Caribbean Music program at the Conservatory in Puerto Rico in 1994. Many other similar programs have been established

⁹⁶ Miguel Zenón, Caravana Cultural, http://www.miguelzenon.com/caravana_cultural.php (accessed June 8, 2014).

since then at other institutions on the island such as the *Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico* (San Germán and Metro campuses), and the Universidad de Puerto Rico, which have contributed greatly to the development of popular music performance. I look forward to seeing what Puerto Rico will continue to offer in the jazz and popular music scene with the saxophone. While the jazz and popular music scene in Puerto Rican culture has provided saxophonists a place to express their artistry and flourish, the classical music scene has not provided the same opportunities.

Classical Saxophone in Puerto Rico

The idea of a “classical saxophone performance career” is exemplified by the 20th century classical saxophone pioneers such as Marcel Mule, Sigurd Rascher, and Larry Teal. Such a career consists of the performance of the saxophone as a classical instrument, the academic instruction of the instrument in the performance of the style, and the commissioning of new works for the instrument.

This type of professional music career is very young in Puerto Rico. Through my investigation, I found that very few saxophonists on the island are dedicated to this type of performance, and academic positions allowing the instrument to be taught in this style are few. In addition, a comparison in numbers of compositions written for saxophone in different countries across Latin America also provides an insight into how much classical saxophone exists in Puerto Rico. In his book, *El saxofón en la musica docta de America Latina* (*The Saxophone in Latin America's Serious Music*), Miguel Villafruela reported over 100 works for saxophone written by composers throughout the 20th century in each of the countries of Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, Cuba, and Chile, while only about 20 works written by Puerto Rican composers.⁹⁷ The musicians I interviewed during the course of my research clarify reasons for this delay in both composition for the instrument and the performance of the style itself. The musicians interviewed were Wilfredo Corps, saxophone professor at the Puerto Rico Conservatory; Leslie Pagán, saxophone professor at the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico in San Germán; Roberto Sierra, composer and professor at Cornell University; Raymond Torres, composer and former head director of the Puerto Rico Conservatory; Sonia I. Morales-Matos, composer and former piano professor at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music; Awilda

⁹⁷ Miguel Villafruela, *El saxofon en la musica docta de America Latina* (Santiago de Chile, Chile: Universidad de Chile, 2007), 42.

Villarini, composer; William Ortiz-Alvarado, composer and conductor; Alberto Guidobaldi, composer and professor at the Puerto Rico Conservatory; Alberto Rodriguez-Ortiz, composer and guitar professor at the Puerto Rico Conservatory; Kathleen Jones, principal clarinet with the Puerto Rico Symphony and clarinet professor at the Puerto Rico Conservatory; and Noel Allende-Goitia, musicologist, composer, and professor at the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico in Hato Rey.

Everyone I interviewed agreed that performance of classical saxophone on the island is not substantial. However, when asked about opinions regarding the small number of compositions for saxophone, I received many different responses. The opinions did not conflict with each other, but rather created a series of factors indicating that today it is still difficult to improve composing for the instrument. In Puerto Rico throughout the 20th century, the majority of classical musicians and their audiences followed a conservative path for classical music, a conservative way of thinking that may have begun with the ideas of Aristides Chavier, who preferred and promoted the study of music from the great classical masters rather than composing *danzas*.⁹⁸ In addition, the *Festival Casals* and the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra were both founded in 1957 under the guide of virtuoso Catalan cellist Pablo Casals. Both institutions, which remain today as two of the major exponents of classical music on the island, followed the musical vision of Casals, who was not interested in contemporary art.⁹⁹ By 1960, any music composed in a post-romantic style was not well received, and musicians that approached contemporary art were criticized and sometimes joked about. Francis Schwartz, composer and columnist for the *San Juan Star* and promoter of contemporary music on the island

⁹⁸ Fernando Callejo Ferrer, "Musica y músicos puertorriqueños," Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/msicaymsicos00call> (accessed October 6, 2013) 54.

⁹⁹ Annie Thompson, "Praeludium," in *Concert Life in Puerto Rico: 1957-1992*, edited by Donald Thompson and Francis Schwartz (San Juan, PR: University of Puerto Rico Press, 1998), xix-xx.

during the 60s and 70s, often gave strong remarks such as the one below regarding the status of contemporary composition at the time:

Musical composition in Puerto Rico is dying. For a serious composer, the conservatism, which characterizes our musical institutions, presents an almost insurmountable barrier. To the creator who moves with the innovations of the world, our current tastes are a Dantean torture. To the composer who seeks professional debate, technical interchange, contributions by fellow composers against which to measure one's own work, Puerto Rico is a desert.

What happens to art when it depends exclusively upon public approval for its stylistic base? What happens to creativity when the self takes refuge in a romantic past? The result is a meaningless output of mediocre quality; a futile exercise in nostalgia which leads nowhere. And that is the situation of our community of composers.¹⁰⁰

Contemporary art in Puerto Rico of the 60s struggled for support. The saxophone, an instrument with a standard classical repertoire rooted in the 20th century, could find very little attention in a society centered in music from a previous era, especially while receiving extra attention in the popular music scene. It is this same conservatism in the minds of many musicians plus the active presence of the saxophone in popular music that carried on the idea that the saxophone was a lesser quality instrument, representative of “lowbrow” music. In fact, during some interviews, it was mentioned that the saxophone was prohibited at the Conservatory of Music, to the point that it was looked on with disgust if someone brought one to campus.¹⁰¹ This kind of perception of the instrument would hinder composition for it due to some composers’ ignorance or prejudice.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Schwartz, “The Plight of a Young Composer,” in *Concert Life in Puerto Rico 1957-1992*, ed. Donald Thompson and Francis Schwartz (San Juan, PR: University of Puerto Rico Press, 1998), 47.

¹⁰¹ Wilfredo Corps, interview by author, Carolina, PR, December 30, 2013.

Another thought mentioned was that still today on the island there is not the satisfactory training of musicians to be able to perform new works.¹⁰² Some of the composers that have written for the instrument have done so outside the island in places where they had people who could prepare their works efficiently and in a manner satisfying to the composer. For example, Noel Allende did not write for saxophone until he was a doctoral student at Michigan State University in 1997, where he encountered a solid saxophone studio of extremely talented musicians.¹⁰³ Alberto Rodriguez wrote for saxophone for the first time in 2003 while living and studying in Paris. He met American saxophonist Scotty Stepp, who introduced him to the saxophone's extended techniques, which intrigued him and motivated him to write for the instrument.¹⁰⁴

I agree with these composers' thoughts regarding the musical performance training on the island. In Puerto Rico, there are only undergraduate-level degrees in music performance offered at the universities, forcing young musicians to move out of the island in search of more training to improve their performance. With a professional training of only 4 to 5 years in length, saxophonists do not have time to extend their preparation into extended techniques or bring their technical dexterity to the performance level in today's compositions.

The availability of funds was also mentioned as another factor behind the lack of works composed for saxophone, also for contemporary music in general.¹⁰⁵ Finding funds for new-music projects and commissions is very difficult in Puerto Rico. The main musical institutions on the island, like the Symphony Orchestra, are all managed by the government, which technically means that new projects depend on approval of the government office that manages

¹⁰² Noel Allende, interview by author, Santurce, PR, January 7, 2014.

¹⁰³ Noel Allende-Goitia, interview by author, Santurce, PR, January 7, 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Alberto Rodriguez-Ortiz, phone interview by author, March 14, 2014.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

the orchestra. One of the composers has also experienced what he calls as “lack of seriousness” from some managers of private organizations and sponsors. He recalls that one of his new music festivals had to be shortened when a sponsor suddenly backed away five days prior to the first concert, leaving him to cancel the performances of musicians who had taken much time to prepare for the occasion. He mentions that many composers get tired and frustrated because of dealing with people who are not serious in supporting the arts, therefore diminishing any motivation for composing and creating new projects.¹⁰⁶ The availability of a fully supported institution such as the orchestra drives local composers to prefer writing for the large ensemble because of more chances for performance rather than organizing concerts themselves to present their music. This also affects the saxophone, which is not a regular member of a Symphony Orchestra, since it is not likely for composers to include the instrument in an orchestral work.¹⁰⁷

In addition to interviews, I went to the program archives of the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, to see what I could find regarding the appearance of the saxophone in the leading classical music organization on the island. Since being founded in 1957, the orchestra had not programmed a single orchestral work that included the saxophone until 1988, when the Ravel orchestration of Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition* was performed. Since then, the saxophone has appeared with the orchestra at least once or twice per season. Works such as Bizet’s *L’Arlesienne* suites, Ravel’s *Bolero*, Walton’s *Belshazzar’s Feast*, and Bernstein’s *Suite from West Side Story* have been performed. The saxophonist on call for all performances was Robert “Bob” Handschuh, who held the position of 3rd clarinet in the orchestra from 1964 until

¹⁰⁶ Alberto Rodriguez Ortiz, interview by author, March 14, 2015.

¹⁰⁷ There are exceptions to this however, since Alberto Rodriguez had also composed in 2003 a piece for chamber orchestra including the saxophone and was programmed by the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra recently in 2012. Nevertheless it is not common to see a saxophone in a Symphony Orchestra.

1996.¹⁰⁸ He was also in charge of performing any other non-conventional parts when needed such as bass clarinet, and Eb clarinet. After his retirement in 1996, clarinetist George Morales took the position and currently serves as saxophonist when needed.¹⁰⁹

The saxophone as a soloist with the orchestra is present since 1995, with the Concerto in Eb for alto saxophone and string orchestra, op. 109, by Alexander Glazunov. The program was not from the orchestra's regular season; it was for a special event titled *Concierto de Familia* (Family Concert). After this date, I could only find a saxophone concerto being programmed in 1999, 2006 and 2008, all performed by virtuoso saxophonist and multi-instrumentalist Edgar Abraham. For the concerts in 1999, Glazunov's Concerto was performed again two times. For the performances on 2006 and 2008, the orchestra featured the *Rhapsody* for orchestra and saxophone by Claude Debussy, and one of Abraham's own compositions, *Los Diez Mundos*, for alto saxophone and strings.¹¹⁰ For the 2008 program, he performed John Williams' *Escapades* for alto saxophone and orchestra. Edgar Abraham has been the only saxophonist to perform as a soloist with the Puerto Rico Symphony. Even though Abraham has been the only soloist, the amount of solo works programmed is quite substantial, considering that even in major orchestras in the United States it is rare to see a saxophone concerto programmed. In my opinion, this indicates that exposition of the saxophone in the style has not been a problem. A major issue in the composition for the instrument is found mostly in the financial support and performance opportunities given to local composers.

¹⁰⁸ Vincent Jubilee, In Memoriam: Robert "Bob" Handschuh, Orquesta Sinfonica de Puerto Rico Temporada 2012-2013 (San Juan, PR, 2012), 18.

¹⁰⁹ Kathleen Jones, phone interview by author, August 13, 2014.

¹¹⁰ Some movements of this piece are available for listening through Edgar Abraham's channel on Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/user/EdgarAbraham7>

In the subject of saxophone pedagogy, the earliest account of classical saxophone teaching on the island that I could find at the college level is found at the *Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico in San German* in 1971. Leslie Pagán, the current saxophone professor at the institution, mentions studying the classical saxophone repertoire while working on his bachelor's degree at this institution during 1971-1974. His teacher was a saxophonist named Salvador Rivera, who had just returned from studying at Florida State University. After graduating with his bachelor's degree in 1974, Pagán became a teacher in the public education system of Puerto Rico and taught saxophone at the Escuela Libre de Musica Juan Morel Campos in the city of Ponce. He held this position until 2008 when he retired. He still continues teaching saxophone at the *Universidad Interamericana*, a position he has held since 1992 mentoring aspiring saxophonists through their journey in college.

The curriculum at the *Interamericana*, in the words of Pagán, focuses on preparing a versatile musician.¹¹¹ There is no specific concentration to either classical or popular music performance, but rather a combination of both. The purpose for the curriculum is to prepare students for the professional scene, and have at their disposal the knowledge necessary to immerse in professional performance in either classical or popular genres. The first semester functions as a “preparatory” phase, in which it is determined if the student meets the requirements for continuing in the program. From the second semester on, students are evaluated in final jury exams. Students in saxophone performance prepare two recitals, one during their junior year and another in their senior year.

While musical training on the saxophone at the college level was present in the southwest region of Puerto Rico in San German by 1971, it is not until 1994 that the Conservatory of Music

¹¹¹ Leslie Pagán, phone interview by author, November 5, 2014.

included the saxophone in their music performance program. The addition of the saxophone at the Conservatory did not emerge from a desire of expanding course offerings for the development of the institution. According to Wilfredo Corps, the inclusion of the saxophone and the institution's Jazz and Caribbean music program was based on a need to meet requirements for accreditation.¹¹² The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools had visited the Conservatory to evaluate the institution's effectiveness in higher education. According to them, the Conservatory was incomplete in their course offerings by not having a saxophone studio and a jazz program, and therefore their accreditation was going to be withheld if the institution did not add the programs. Bob Handschuh served as temporary saxophone teacher while the institution searched for candidates. After a few saxophonists were interviewed, Wilfredo Corps obtained the position in 1994, and became the first saxophone professor at the institution.

Wilfredo Corps began his musical journey in 1964 when he was 17 years old. It was at the school he attended in the town of Yabucoa where he had his first musical experience under the tutelage of Angel Cruz. After graduating from high school he enrolled at the Universidad de Puerto Rico and worked on his Bachelor of Arts degree with a concentration in music. In 1975, he began studying for his Masters degree in music education at the University of Illinois, where he studied saxophone with Willis Coggins and Randy Salman. It was there in Illinois where he learned and studied the classical repertoire of the saxophone. He recalls while in Puerto Rico never hearing about anyone performing the saxophone in the classical genre. He was so intrigued about the classical saxophone that he decided to dedicate his career in the performance and teaching of the style. After graduating with his Masters degree, he returned to the island where he worked as band director and woodwind teacher at schools in the cities of Luquillo, Humacao,

¹¹² Wilfredo Corps, interview by author, December 30, 2013.

Fajardo, and Caguas. Today, in addition to teaching at the Conservatory of Music, he performs regularly and offers masterclasses at schools around the island. He is also founder of the saxophone quartet *Conversación*, a chamber group formed with some of his current and former students at the Conservatory. The quartet has released two albums. In addition, Corps and his quartet have traveled to saxophone conferences in the United States and Latin America presenting recitals and lectures.

The saxophone performance degree at the Conservatory focuses on the study of classical performance on the instrument. Four years of coursework fulfill the requirements for the Bachelor of Music performance degree. Depending on the student's level of performance at the time of the audition process, it is determined if the student needs a preparatory period (remedial applied instruction course), in order to begin the first year of performance. Students are evaluated in a jury exam at the end of every semester with the exception of their last semester where they need to perform a senior recital as final examination of their degree. Music education students are not required to perform a recital and jazz studies are offered as elective courses. The Conservatory also offers a Bachelors degree in jazz studies, in which saxophone students form part of a different studio taught by the jazz saxophone professor, Norberto Ortiz.

Even though classical saxophone has been taught in Puerto Rico since the 70s, it is very common for saxophonists to leave behind their classical playing after they graduate with their college degrees.¹¹³ The main reason for this is the availability of jobs in music on the island. A classical saxophone career in the United States is available mainly in academic positions at universities and performance opportunities in concert bands through the Armed Forces. Since college jobs require the individual to have more experience in the field than a person who has

¹¹³ Leslie Pagán, phone interview by the author, November 5, 2014.

just finished a bachelor's degree, the only career option for most musicians in Puerto Rico is to become an educator for the Department of Education or do freelance work, or both. Also, those who become educators struggle finding available positions since there are only six *Escuelas Libres* on the island, and only a handful of public schools have music programs. Many decide to become freelance musicians, which means performing mainly jazz and popular music. Other saxophonists have joined the military or left the island in search for more job opportunities in the United States or go to graduate school in order to enhance their knowledge in the field.

Through the course of my research and my conversations with composers and musicians, I have come to understand that the current situation for classical saxophone in Puerto Rico continues in a type of vicious circle governed by an absence of opportunities for both performers and composers to flourish. While performers find it difficult to continue performing in the style after their time as college students, composers struggle to find commissions. If performers do not commission works, composers will not write, and if composers do not write, performers will not present new music. Fortunately, I believe there is hope for improvement.

Corps mentions that after 20 years of leading the saxophone studio at the Conservatory, in recent years, he has seen an improvement in the type of student that auditions for the Conservatory.¹¹⁴ He says that in his first years, people who auditioned had no clue about classical saxophone. In the past few years he has begun to see students coming to audition with a clear concept of the style and with determination of wanting to study classical performance. In those 20 years, former students from the Conservatory have become saxophone educators who have taught and motivated students to follow the style.

¹¹⁴ Wilfredo Corps, interview by author, December 30, 2013.

In the midst of the difficulty of improving composition for the instrument, there are composers from Puerto Rico who have actually written works for the saxophone unknown to many saxophonists outside the island. Following this chapter, I have included an annotated bibliography of six works for saxophone or saxophone quartet by composers I had the chance to interview. The six composers are Noel Allende Goitía, Alberto Rodríguez Ortiz, Sonia I. Morales Matos, William Ortiz Avarado, Roberto Sierra, and Alberto Guidobaldi. Five of the six works are not included in Villafruela's list, which I used to complete the full list of compositions that follows the annotated bibliography.

It is my desire to bring this music to the attention of saxophonists around the world, not only for the purpose of having these pieces performed but also of presenting the work of these fascinating composers whose contributions are great additions to the saxophone repertoire. I also hope for not only an increase in classical saxophone performance in Puerto Rico but for the improvement of new music and contemporary art.

Annotated Bibliography of Selected Works

Allende, Noel. *Saxophone Quartet, mvt. 2 Paseo a solas...* East Lansing, Michigan, 1997.

Noel Allende Goitía is Associate Professor of Music at the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico, Recinto Metropolitano (Inter-American University of Puerto Rico, Metropolitan Campus). He received his Bachelor of Music degree from the Conservatorio de Musica de Puerto Rico, a Master of Arts in History at the University of Puerto Rico, and obtains a PhD in Music at Michigan State University. His works tackle the musical culture of Puerto Rico, the Spanish Caribbean, and the African Diaspora in the Americas through the theoretical and methodological perspectives of social history, cultural studies, and music philosophies. From 1996 to 2004 he was associate researcher for the African Diaspora Research Project of Michigan State University. Some of his works have been published in journals such as *La Página*, *Resonancias*, *Cuaderno Internacional de Estudios Humanísticos y Literatura*, *Black Music Research Journal*, *Revista de Literatura Hispanoamericana*, and with the Zamora Institute of Michigan State University. Professor Allende has presented his works on social history in music at conferences in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, and across the United States, the Virgin Isles, Spain, Mexico, and Ghana.¹¹⁵

Paseo a solas is the second movement of a three-movement work for chamber ensemble. It was originally written for a woodwind quartet consisting of flute, oboe, clarinet, and bassoon. While working on his doctorate degree in composition at Michigan State University, Allende Goitía arranged the work for a group of students from the saxophone studio. This movement is based on the *paseo*, the introductory section of the Puerto Rican *danza*. An admirer of baroque music and counterpoint, the composer constructs this movement by using various *paseo* themes from different known *danzas* in a fugato style. Never establishing a strict fugue, the composer creates a four-voice counterpoint throughout the piece. Also an admirer and follower of Anton Webern's compositional style, the piece is short in length, never approaching theme developments. In the words of the composer, he likes the idea of "I said it once" in his works. The playability of the piece is difficult, requiring from the performers a clear execution of triplet and sixteenth-note patterns appearing simultaneously on different parts of the ensemble. It also requires great control of the altissimo register, especially in the soprano and alto saxophones, where they have to play altissimo notes in pianissimo dynamic. The movement is also in the key of concert A major, making it technically challenging for saxophones. The piece is suitable for advance students and professional level performers.¹¹⁶

If you are interested in a copy of this piece, you may contact the composer at allendegoitia@gmail.com.

¹¹⁵ Biographical information obtained from Bubok, "Noel Allende Goitía," Bubok, <http://www.bubok.es/autores/allendegoitia> (accessed May 13, 2014).

¹¹⁶ Noel Allende Goitía, interview by author, Hato Rey, PR, January 7, 2014.

Paseo a solas...

Partitura

Versión para cuarteto de saxofones

Noel Allende-Goitía

1 Andante $\text{♩} = 58$

Soprano en Bb *mf*

Alto en Eb *mp*₃

Tenor en Bb *mf*

Baritono en Eb *mp*

Saxofones

6

S. *mf*

A. *mp*

T. *mf*

B. *mp*

Allende-Goitía © 1997

11

S. *p*

A. *mp*

T. *p*

B. *mf*

16

mp

mf

mf

Other works for saxophone:

Concierto Gordo for soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, violin and chamber orchestra.
East Lansing, MI, 2000.

Seis piezas para varios instrumentos for chamber ensemble. East Lansing, MI, 2000.

Guidobaldi, Alberto. *Toccata and Fugue* for saxophone quartet. San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2014.

Alberto Guidobaldi was born in 1967 in Italy, but has resided in Puerto Rico since 1993. His musical studies began in the "Scuola di Musica Arturo Toscanini" in Savona, Italy, where he studied piano and accordion. In June 2006, he graduated "Summa cum Laude" at the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico (CMPR) completing a Degree in Music with an emphasis in composition under the guidance of Professors Armando Ramirez, Alfonso Fuentes, Sonia Morales and the late professor Roberto Milano. Guidobaldi is an active performer and composer. His classical compositions include many choral and chamber music works, an opera buffa premiered in 2006, and a symphonic poem premiered in 2005 by the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra. In addition, renowned conductors such as Joseph Flummerfelt, Sergei Pavlov, Clyde Mitchell and Roselín Pabón have conducted his compositions. He was the winner of the 2005 Fanfare for Brass and Percussion Composition Competition of the CMPR and the 2012 National Flute Association Flute Choir Composition Competition with his *Tarantella*.

He has been a faculty member of the CMPR since 2010, teaching music theory, sight singing and Italian.¹¹⁷

Toccata and Fugue is a piece for saxophone quartet written for Conversaxión, a saxophone quartet led by Wilfredo Corps at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music. The piece was composed for the purpose of a performance at the Honduras Saxophone Festival 2013. The structure follows the title of the piece; it is a strict toccata followed by a four-voice fugue. The toccata has all the characteristics of the form, musical lines in an improvisatory feel, and cadences at the end of phrases. At the beginning, all four saxophones play in unison, later continuing in harmony. The fugue is a basic four-part form beginning the subject with the baritone saxophone. The tenor provides the second entrance of the subject, the alto follows with a third entrance, and the soprano provides the last statement to conclude the exposition. While the structure of the piece is very traditional, the harmonic and melodic materials are based on the octatonic scale. The rhythmic material is reminiscent of blues and jazz. The composer's idea behind the piece was to create a perfect blending of the classical and jazz idioms.

The piece is not too difficult to prepare. It is also ideal as an educational tool to help students learn to play together and precise, and for introducing them to the octatonic scale.

If you are interested in a copy of this piece you can find it at www.alrypublications.com. Alberto Guidobaldi has also written other works for saxophone, which are available for purchase at www.jeanne-inc.com. You may also contact the composer at aguidobaldi@cmpr.edu.

¹¹⁷ Biography obtained from composer's profile at www.jeanne-inc.com (accessed April 13, 2014).

to Emilio, Daniela, Julio and Willie
Toccata and Fugue
 for Saxophone Quartet

Alberto Guidobaldi

Moderato (♩ = c. 90)

Soprano Saxophone
 Alto Saxophone
 Tenor Saxophone
 Baritone Saxophone

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Other works for saxophone:

5, 3 and 2 for saxophone quartet. Jeanne Inc., Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, 2004.

Nuances for solo oboe or saxophone. Jeanne Inc., Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, 2004.

Sonatina for soprano saxophone and piano. Jeanne Inc., Hato Rey, Puerto Rico, 2004.

Morales Matos, Sonia I. *Divertimento Caribeño no. 3* for saxophone quartet. Cincinnati, OH, 2011.

Sonia I. Morales-Matos is a freelance composer and performer in Cincinnati, Ohio. Originally from San Juan, Puerto Rico, her compositions explore the colorful sounds of Latin American music. Her music has been performed extensively across the United States, and Puerto Rico, including world premieres at the Puerto Rico Casals Festival in 2009 and at the North American Saxophone Alliance Biennial Conference 2012. As a teacher, she taught piano and composition at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music from 2000-2004. She holds a bachelor of music degree in Jazz Studies from Berklee College of Music and a master of music degree in Composition and Jazz Studies from Indiana University-Bloomington.

Divertimento Caribeño no.3 was commissioned by the Iridium Quartet and premiered at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music in October 2011. The piece follows as the third composition in a series of “divertimentos” based on Caribbean rhythms. Following the title of the piece, the composer provides a lighthearted mood throughout the composition. The piece is structured in three sections. The first is based on the Dominican merengue featuring fast 16th note melodic runs and aggressive and accented rhythms characteristic of the style. The middle section is based on the Cuban bolero. The mood relaxes to a pleasant and beautiful melody accompanied by rich jazz influenced harmonies essential of the bolero. The last section is a recapitulation of the merengue creating an ABÁ form.

This piece is very fun to perform and serves as a great addition to any professional saxophone quartet. It is technically challenging and demands the quartet to have great control of pulse. Any minor decrease in tempo through the merengue section will affect the lively mood. If you would like a copy of this piece, you may contact the composer at simoralesmatos@gmail.com

Divertimento Caribeño No. 3 for Sax Quartet

Sonia Ivette Morales-Matos

Vivace ♩=132

Soprano Saxophone

Alto Saxophone

Tenor Saxophone

Baritone Saxophone

2

p

p

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2 4

6

8

mf

mf

p

p

mf

Detailed description: The image shows a page of musical notation for a piano piece. The score is organized into three systems, each containing four staves. The first system covers measures 2 and 4, the second system covers measure 6, and the third system covers measure 8. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The notation is complex, featuring many sixteenth and thirty-second notes, often beamed together. There are various articulations, including accents and slurs. Dynamic markings are present: *mf* (mezzo-forte) appears in measures 6 and 8, and *p* (piano) appears in measure 8. The staves are numbered 2, 4, 6, and 8 at the beginning of their respective systems.

Ortiz Alvarado, William. *Housing Project* for saxophone quartet. New York, 1985.

William Ortiz-Alvarado was born in Puerto Rico and raised in New York City. A member of that fascinating hybrid culture known as “Newyorican”, Ortiz composes music that often reflects the realities of urban life. After studying composition with Héctor Campos Parsi at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, he received his M.A. from SUNY at Stony Brook where his teachers were Billy Jim Layton and Bulent Arel. He later was granted the Ph.D. in Composition from SUNY at Buffalo, where he studied with Lejaren Hiller and Morton Feldman. Ortiz is currently Full-Professor of Music and Humanities at the University of Puerto Rico at Bayamón, where he is also director of the University Concert Band. He also teaches at the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico and is Music Director of the Ateneo Puertorriqueño. Among his numerous awards, grants and commissions includes the 2001 Latin Grammy Nomination for the Baja California Orchestra’s CD “Tango mata danzón mata tango,” which includes his Guitar Concerto “Tropicalización,” Composer-in-Residence (“Music in Motion”) Atlantic Center for the Arts (1996-97), American Music Center Copying Grant (1985, 2007), Festival Casals Commission (1995), and the Felipe Gutiérrez Espinosa International Composition Award (1980).

He makes the following statement on his music: “I conceive of music as the ‘violent beauty’ of urban life; as the expressions of the cries and shouts of the street – cries and shouts that reflect the thoughts of those who are oppressed, of those who feel. It is my intent to convert the language of the street into a legitimate instrument.”¹¹⁸

Housing Project was written in 1985 for the Amherst Saxophone Quartet, through a commission by the Hallwalls Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York. The piece takes form from the vocal music genre of “Doo-Wop” that gained popularity during the 1950s and 60s. This “Doo-Wop” character is recognized from the beginning of the piece, presenting harmonies and a four-voice hymn texture reminiscent of a vocal *a capella* group. Throughout the piece an African folk song called “Zum zum zum” is used as the main theme, a song usually heard in the African-American and Hispanic communities in New York at the time, which the composer also heard throughout his childhood. The statement of the main theme is not clear until the middle section of the piece, where the four performers first play then sing the first four-measure phrase of the song. After the statement is presented, the main theme appears later in fragments throughout the remainder of the piece.

This piece is suitable for advanced students and professional musicians. The technical demands on each part are not difficult, but there are many rhythmic unison phrases that are challenging to perform precisely among the four parts. The unison phrases and harmonies in fourths and fifths will demand special attention to tuning. The piece also has many sudden tempo changes requiring excellent communication within the members of the ensemble.

¹¹⁸ Biography transcribed from the composers website, William Ortiz Alvarado, “Biography,” <http://www.williamortiz.com/biography.html> (accessed June 2, 2014).

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of this piece, you may contact the composer at williamortizupr@yahoo.com.

Housing Project

11

76

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

This musical system contains measures 76 through 80. It is written for four voices: Soprano (S. Sx.), Alto (A. Sx.), Tenor (T. Sx.), and Bass (B. Sx.). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The Soprano part begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The Alto part begins with a half note G#4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The Tenor part begins with a half note E3, followed by quarter notes D3, C3, and B2. The Bass part begins with a half note C3, followed by quarter notes D3, E3, and F#3. The system concludes with a final measure where the Soprano and Alto parts have a half note G4, the Tenor part has a half note E3, and the Bass part has a half note C3.

81

S. Sx.

A. Sx.

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

This musical system contains measures 81 through 84. It is written for four voices: Soprano (S. Sx.), Alto (A. Sx.), Tenor (T. Sx.), and Bass (B. Sx.). The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The Soprano part begins with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The Alto part begins with a half note G#4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5. The Tenor part begins with a half note E3, followed by quarter notes D3, C3, and B2. The Bass part begins with a half note C3, followed by quarter notes D3, E3, and F#3. The system concludes with a final measure where the Soprano and Alto parts have a half note G4, the Tenor part has a half note E3, and the Bass part has a half note C3.

84

accel. ----- ♩ = 126

S. Sx. *p* *f* *mf*

A. Sx. *mp* *f* *mf*

T. Sx. *mf* *f* *mf*

3. Sx. *f* *mf*

88

1. Sx.

2. Sx.

3. Sx.

4. Sx.

Musicians sing:
(in unison)

93

S. Sx. *ord.*

A. Sx. *ord.*

T. Sx.

B. Sx.

zum zum zum zum by zum by yea zum zum zum zum by zum by yea

zum zum zum zum by zum by yea zum zum zum zum by zum by yea

zum zum zum zum by zum by yea zum zum zum zum by zum by yea

zum zum zum zum by zum by yea zum zum zum zum by zum by yea

97

S. Sx. *p*

A. Sx. *p*

T. Sx. *ord.* *p*

B. Sx. *ord.* *mp* *p*

Other works for saxophone:

Del Caserío for trumpet, tenor saxophone, trombone, electric guitar, percussion, and double bass. Bayamón, Puerto Rico, 1988.

Dios se mudó de North Philadelphia for flute, oboe, alto & soprano saxophones, viola, bassoon, percussion, piano, and bass. 1996.

Plena-Merengue for alto saxophone, electric guitar, and percussion. 1985.

Polifonía Salvaje for alto saxophone and percussion. 1995.

Rodriguez-Ortiz, Alberto. *Introspeccion I* (in the woods) for alto saxophone. Paris, France, 2003.

Alberto J. Rodríguez-Ortiz is among the most active contemporary interpreters and composers of the new generation of Puerto Rican musicians. Among various international festivals Rodríguez-Ortiz has participated are the Second Sundays Series of the New York Classical Guitar Society (New York, 2009), Festival Pa'Lo Escrito (Mexico City, 2009, 2008), Festival Casals (Puerto Rico, 2008), Fiesta Iberoamericana de las Artes (Puerto Rico, 2009 and 2007), Festival de Música Contemporánea and Foro de Compositores del Caribe (La Habana, Cuba, 2006 and 2004); International Guitar Festival of Puerto Rico (2000), El Salvador's International Festival of Contemporary Music (2000); María Escalón de Núñez's Guitar Festival (El Salvador 2000), Second Twentieth Century Music Festival (San Juan, Puerto Rico 1999). That same year he opened the concert series "Caras Nuevas", sponsored by FAMA. In 1997, he was invited as composer in residence at The Rome Festival. Rodríguez-Ortiz has also performed in cities such as London, Porto, Paris, Vienna, Morelia, Orlando, Miami and New York. In this last city, he made his debut in 1997 as part of the series "Música de Cámara, Inc." He has performed extensively with the guitar trio "Matices", ensemble that received the first prize at Puerto Rico's Chamber Music Festival in 1994 with his composition "Invocando a Yúcahu". He has been soloist with the National Symphony Orchestra of El Salvador and the Symphony Orchestra of Bayamón.

In the year 2000, Rodríguez-Ortiz inaugurated the series "Caras Nuevas", sponsored by F.A.M.A. and Casa de España in Puerto Rico. In duo with Dr. Eladio Scharrón, the critic has appraised them as "two virtuosos of the guitar with great capabilities for interpretation and complete technical dominance". The Puerto Rican newspaper *El Nuevo Día* described Mr. Rodríguez-Ortiz as a performer "with refined technique, great agility, and plenty of tenderness".

Rodríguez-Ortiz obtained his Bachelors of Arts degree from the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras, where he studied with three of the most distinguished guitarists of the country: Juan Sorroche, Ernesto Cordero, and Eladio Scharrón. He has studied composition as well with Carlos Vázquez, Luis Manuel Álvarez, Miguel Cubano, Raymond Torres Santos, Carlos Cabrer, Stella Sung, Kevin Putz and Francis Schwartz. His participation in master-classes include studies with Flores Chaviano, Miguel Angel Girollet, Nicholas Goluses, Malcolm Bilson, Paul O'Dette, William Kanengiser, Arthur Brooks, José Daniel Martínez and the duo Castellani-Andriaccio. In 1997, he obtained his Masters degree in Music and Literature (Guitar) from Eastman School of Music in New York, where he studied with Nicholas Goluses. He studied as well in Paris with Alberto Ponce and Yoshihisa Taira. In 2001, he received the "Diplôme de Composition" of the École Normale de Musique de Paris.

His works have been performed by artists such as: guitarists Nicholas Goluses, Eladio Sharrón, Pedro Rodrigues and Trio Matices; Ateneo String Quartet, Symphony Orchestra of Bayamón, Choeur et Orchestre de Sciences Po, pianist Harry Aponte, San Juan String Quartet and Camerata Caribe, to name a few. Currently, Mr. Rodríguez-Ortiz resides in

Puerto Rico, where he is Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Guitar Department at the Conservatory of Music Puerto Rico.¹¹⁹

Introspección I (in the woods) is a single movement work for unaccompanied alto saxophone. It was written for American saxophonist Scotty Stepp, when the composer met him in Paris in 2002. As the title suggests, “introspección” (Spanish for introspection); the piece describes through the saxophone’s variety of sonorities, the image of an individual self-examining his existence. The strange sounds of extended techniques such as multiphonics, quartertones, and slap-tongues are the essential elements for creating the ambiance of this piece. The piece is structured in three narrative sections, each representing a different part of the story being told. The first section represents the person falling into a trance-like state. In the middle section, the person’s spirit arrives in a forest-looking realm where he begins a conversation with a supreme being represented as “nature.” The person begins asking questions about the purpose of life, sometimes not liking the answers received, getting angry and frustrated. Finally, the section ends in a “sigh,” the person accepting nature’s answers but still not mature enough to understand them. The final section begins as a recapitulation of the first, where the person begins to awake from the introspective experience.¹²⁰

The extended techniques are used as motives to represent the different characters of the story. The outer sections are governed by quartertones and slap tongues representing the transition of the person falling into the trance, and awakening from it at the end of the piece. In the middle section, melodies are used to represent the person’s spirit asking questions. Key clicks; trills, and some slap tongues are used to represent “nature.” In my opinion, this piece is very fun to perform, but it is very challenging. The many fast passages require the performer to master all quartertone fingerings and accomplish a fast slap tonguing technique.

If you are interested in getting a copy of this piece and performing it, you may visit the composer’s website www.nuevavenecia.com and contact the composer at alberto@nuevavenecia.com.

¹¹⁹ Biographical information obtained from composer’s website, www.nuevavenecia.com (accessed March 15, 2014).

¹²⁰ Alberto Rodríguez Ortiz, interview with author, March 14, 2014.

for Alto Saxophone

Very fast and nervous

©2003 by Alberto Rodríguez Ortiz

66

Sierra, Roberto. Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra, mm. 43-51. Subito Music Publishing, 2002.

For more than three decades the works of American composer Roberto Sierra have been part of the repertoire of many of the leading orchestras, ensembles and festivals in the USA and Europe. At the inaugural concert of the 2002 world renowned Proms in London, his *Fandangos* was performed by the BBC Symphony Orchestra in a concert that was broadcast by both the BBC Radio and Television throughout the UK and Europe. Many of the major American and European orchestras and international ensembles have commissioned and performed his works. Among those institutions are the orchestras of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, New Mexico, Houston, Minnesota, Dallas, Detroit, San Antonio and Phoenix, as well as the American Composers Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the Tonhalle Orchestra of Zurich, the Spanish orchestras of Madrid, Galicia, Castilla y León, Barcelona, and others.

Commissioned works include: *Concerto for Orchestra* for the centennial celebrations of the Philadelphia Orchestra commissioned by the Koussevitzky Music Foundation and the Philadelphia Orchestra; Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra commissioned by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for James Carter; *Fandangos* and *Missa Latina* commissioned by the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington DC; *Sinfonía No. 3 "La Salsa"*, commissioned by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra; *Danzas Concertantes* for guitar and orchestra commissioned by the Orquesta de Castilla y León; *Double Concerto for violin and viola* co-commissioned by the Pittsburgh and Philadelphia Orchestras; *Bongo+* commissioned by the Juilliard School in celebration of the 100th anniversary; *Songs from the Diaspora* commissioned by Music Accord for Heidi Grant Murphy, Kevin Murphy and the St. Lawrence String Quartet; and *Concierto de Cámara* co-commissioned by the the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival, Chamber Music Northwest and Stanford Lively Arts.

In 2003 he was awarded the Academy Award in Music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. The award states: "Roberto Sierra writes brilliant music, mixing fresh and personal melodic lines with sparkling harmonies and striking rhythms . . ." His *Sinfonía No. 1*, a work commissioned by the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, won the 2004 Kenneth Davenport Competition for Orchestral Works. In 2007 the Serge and Olga Koussevitzky International Recording Award (KIRA) was awarded to Albany Records for the recording of his composition *Sinfonía No. 3 "La Salsa."* Roberto Sierra has served as Composer-In-Residence with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, The Philadelphia Orchestra, The Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra and New Mexico Symphony. In 2010 he was elected to the prestigious American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Roberto Sierra's Music may be heard on CD's by Naxos, EMI, UMG's EMARCY, New World Records, Albany Records, Koch, New Albion, Koss Classics, BMG, Fleur de Son and other labels. In 2011 UMG's EMARCY label released *Caribbean Rhapsody* featuring the *Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra* commissioned and premiered by

the DSO with James Carter. In 2004 EMI Classics released his two guitar concertos *Folias* and *Concierto Barroco* with Manuel Barrueco as soloist (released on Koch in the USA in 2005). Sierra has been nominated twice for a Grammy under best contemporary composition category, first in 2009 *Missa Latina* (Naxos), and in 2014 for his *Sinfonia No. 4* (Naxos).

Roberto Sierra was born in 1953 in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, and studied composition both in Puerto Rico and Europe, where one his teachers was György Ligeti at the Hochschule für Musik in Hamburg, Germany. The works of Roberto Sierra are published principally by Subito Music Publishing (ASCAP).¹²¹

The *Concerto for Saxophones and Orchestra* was written for saxophonist James Carter. Inspired by Carter's playing, who is a very distinguished jazz artist, Roberto Sierra's goal was to give the performer the freedom to improvise during various sections of the piece. The final result is a perfect blending of Sierra's Classical writing and Latin heritage with Carter's Jazz influence. As the title suggests, this is a Concerto for more than one instrument. The piece is only for one soloist, but the performer switches from tenor saxophone to soprano saxophone a few times. The piece is structured in four movements.

The first movement, *Rítmico* is highly rhythmic, featuring a Salsa-based motive from the beginning. Many of the soloist's phrases through this movement are very fast gestures imitating Carter's style of improvisation. Throughout the movement there are also a few sections including a cadenza demanding the saxophonist to improvise. The second movement, *Tender* is a very beautiful and relaxed tune. In this movement, the saxophonists plays on the soprano saxophone for the most part with a short and mostly improvised section on the tenor saxophone. The movement ends with a cadenza on the soprano. In the third movement, *Playful*, the soloist and the orchestra engage in a fun scherzo with a few slow-swing and melodic sections. The saxophonist switches saxophones again through the movement and finalizing with a cadenza that links to the last movement. In this concluding movement, *Fast (with swing)*, the whole orchestra is absorbed into the world of Blues. The orchestra provides the harmonic structure while the soloist improvises for the most part.

This piece is very demanding for the saxophone player. It requires a high ability to improvise and great endurance to switch between instruments multiple times during performance.

If you are interested in performing this piece, you can purchase a copy through Subito Music Corporation following the link:
http://store.subitomusic.com/index.php?main_page=product_info&cPath=3_117_212&products_id=288

You may also contact the composer at robertosierra@me.com.

¹²¹ Biographical information obtained from composer's website <http://www.robertosierra.com/biocalendar.html>.

Pno.
 T. Sax.
 Vln. I
 Vln. II
 Vla.
 Vc.
 Db.

*keep playing scales (gaps allowed)

cresc.
 ff
 f
 p
 mf
 arco
 pizz.
 mp

Full List of Compositions for Saxophone by Puerto Rican Composers¹²²

- Abraham, Edgar. *Los Diez Mundos* for alto saxophone and string orchestra. 2005.
- Álvarez, Luis Manuel. *Seis Pregón* for solo alto saxophone, 1987.
- Ayala, Matthew. *Suite Hybrida* for saxophone quartet.
- Allende-Goitia, Noel. *Saxophone Quartet*. East Lansing, MI, 1997.
- Cartajena, Saviel O. *Hablando sin hablar* for tenor and soprano saxophones, piano, and double bass. San Juan, PR, 2003.
- _____. *Solo un recuerdo* for saxophone quartet. San Juan, PR, 2004.
- _____. *Recital* for Tenor saxophone and saxophone quartet. San Juan, PR, 2004.
- _____. *Tiempo Perdido* for alto saxophone and piano. San Juan, PR, 2006.
- _____. *Concierto Gordo* for soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, violin and chamber orchestra. East Lansing, MI, 2000.
- _____. *Seis piezas para varios instrumentos* for chamber ensemble. East Lansing, MI, 2000.
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- _____. *Del Caserío* for trumpet, tenor saxophone, trombone, electric guitar, percussion, and double bass. Bayamón, Puerto Rico: Colegio Universitario Tecnológico de Bayamón, 1988.
- _____. *Dios se mudó de North Philadelphia* for flute, oboe, alto & soprano saxophones, viola, bassoon, percussion, piano, and bass. 1996.
- _____. *Plena-Merengue* for alto saxophone, electric guitar, and percussion. 1985.

¹²² To see Dr. Villafruela's list go to <http://saxofonlatino.cl/obras.php3?pais=Puerto%20Rico>

____. *Polifonía Salvaje* for alto saxophone and percussion. 1995.

Rodríguez-Ortiz, Alberto. *Introspección I (in the woods)* for solo alto saxophone. Paris, France, 2003.

____. *Los colores de una noche negra* for chamber orchestra. Paris, France, 2003.

Schwartz, Francis. *4+3= Paris VIII* for voice, violin, guitar, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, and percussion. San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1978.

____. *Grimaces* for voice, flute, saxophone, guitar, double bass, percussion, electronic tape, and audience. San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1983.

____. *Sex-six-sax* for solo alto saxophone. San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1985.

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____. *Imágenes Caribeñas II* for saxophone quartet. 2002.

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Appendix: Highlights from Personal Interviews

December 30, 2013

Wilfredo Corps

-So, let's begin by talking about who you are and how you began your musical journey.

"Well, I began to study music around 1963-64 when I was 17 years old."

-Did you started right away on the saxophone or on another instrument?

"Saxophone. I began with the arrival of a new band teacher in my hometown of Yabucoa called Angel "Tino" Cruz."

-Was there a band program before Cruz?

"Yes but back in the 50s. There was a teacher called Alfonso Herrero, father of Aníbal Herrero, one of the musicians who played with Cesar Concepción. He later became an arranger, and then even a pilot. He ended up switching careers to become a pilot for Pan Am. So that guy, Angel Cruz, began teaching music in Yabucoa again after many years.

The first saxophone I had was one that I found at home while trying to find items to build a slingshot with some of my friends. It was my brother's but he did not play it anymore. A friend of mine, who played the clarinet, told me that the saxophone had the fingerings, so he began teaching me how to play on it. I started in the band with Mr. Cruz and in 9 months I was playing better than all my friends.

By that time the Department of Education was trying to build music programs in many schools. The band program in Puerto Rico was managed then, I believe by Leopoldo Santiago Lavandero, but the supervisor, the person in charge of evaluating and supervising programs around the island was Ramón Collado, who wrote the current version of our anthem. He even developed band methods that probably are still around. He used to visit our school, bringing repertoire, materials, some of which were even his arrangements."

-Were there private lessons offered as well, or was everything taught in a classroom?

"No private lessons, everyone at the same time, from the very first note."

-Well, that's how usually it is taught in the United States, kids begin learning music in a classroom setting.

"Yes, with the only exception that I bet over there, teachers promote private lesson study when kids demonstrate genuine interest. Here, however, it is not a custom that was encouraged, not even today at the schools. Only a handful of parents take their kids to private study. In the US there are even people that make a living teaching privately, I knew many in Illinois, in

Champaign-Urbana who didn't even spend time performing they only taught lessons all day. In fact, there was an article about that published in the Saxophone Journal."

-During those early years in your musical learning, did you hear anything about the classical repertoire of the saxophone, or the instrument played in that setting?

"Well, sometimes, but not much. I only heard a few recordings that someone would play for me, usually Al Gallodoro. However, he was not really a "classical" saxophonist. I sometimes heard some of Abato's recordings, but you know, he usually did not use the right equipment for classical performance. Here in Puerto Rico, nothing. No one played in that style."

You know, you wanted to be Eddie Perez, or someone like that. Saxophonists over here that you had as an example were people like "Moncho" Usera, who was also a clarinet player. The majority of saxophonists here usually also played clarinet, flute, and even violin. Many of them would play both the saxophone and the violin in dance orchestras. There was also no repertoire available over here for saxophone. People played whatever they could. Even at hotel shows, which most of them were Spanish, until American shows became more prominent in the 50s, usually there were not the available instruments to create the original score for the shows, so saxophonists transposed the oboe part, or played them on the flute. It was very common for saxophonists over here to be dedicated to sight-reading every night or even transposing at sight in those shows. That was the way of life for the popular musician in Puerto Rico. You know, Jazz and an interest in improvisation came much later, people really started doing that a lot after the 90s, only a few were playing Jazz and exploring that style, usually people that had migrated to the US, coming back years later having learned the style and wanting to continue that path."

-Beside Eddie Perez and Moncho Usera, who were other saxophone players that people used to follow while you were growing up?

"Others that played really well were Rafael Gonzalez Peña and "Lito" Peña of course. So, "Lito" Peña and Leslie López were the saxophonists with Cesar Concepción's orchestra, which was one of the best musical groups on the island by that time. The Rafael Muñoz orchestra was the preceding orchestra, and its saxophonists were Rafael González Peña and Luis González Peña. One played the alto, while the other played tenor. Rafael González Peña was a virtuoso on the saxophone and the clarinet. He was such a wonderful performer on both instruments. There was actually a piece written by another González Peña brother for saxophone and band, the *Vals Renacimiento*. Other than that, there was another well-known saxophonist, Tomás Corazón. There were also other people as well, not as famous as these, but you would hear a lot about them like Domingo Zaiter, and others who I can't remember their names."

-When was it that you began studying the classical style and repertoire of the saxophone?

"Well, after 1975 when I went to Illinois to study for my Masters degree. It was then when I began studying the classical repertoire with Willis Coggins. Here, however, no one played in the style. Well, there was Bob Handschu, who played at hotels. He was a very good saxophone, clarinet, and flute player. He played 3rd clarinet with the Puerto Rico Symphony, and was also in charge of playing any additional woodwind part as necessary."

-Before going to Illinois, did you study music in college?

“Yes. The only program available was Music Education. At the Conservatory, you could only play clarinet or flute, no saxophone. In fact, if you pulled out a saxophone, people would be bothered. There are still people that get bothered by it.”

-What motivated you to dedicate to the study of the saxophone’s classical repertoire?

“Since I was obliged to study the clarinet at the Conservatory, I learned about the performance of classical music. So when I went later to Illinois, and learned about the classical side of the saxophone and began listening to Marcel Mule, Cecil Leeson, and others, and learned that there was a developed repertoire with a structured method for learning, I became very intrigued and interested to study the style. At the University of Illinois there was no jazz program there, there was a jazz band, but no jazz program. They started the jazz program after I left though.”

-When was the saxophone program at the Conservatory finally begun?

“Here? In 1994. A group of supervisors from the Middle States came to the Conservatory and asked if there was a saxophone program offered, and they said no. The Middle States said that since the saxophone was not included, the Conservatory’s accreditation was going to be provisional. So, Bob Handschu was a temporary saxophone teacher for three months, while the Conservatory did the search for possible candidates for the position. By that time, I was teaching at the Escuela Libre in Caguas, and I remember I got a call from them to be one of the candidates. I auditioned and did a masterclass, and was given this position.”

-I find it very interesting that the addition of the saxophone was due to the Middle States Request.

“I know. The Conservatory never had a desire of adding the instrument into the program, not even for the expansion of the curriculum, or for the improvement of education, or in a way of recognizing or accepting the instrument.”

-Then, how has been your experience here in Puerto Rico of promoting the saxophone as a classical instrument? Have you found any support from other musicians, and what difficulties have you encountered?

“There has been some support from some composers, not much, like Guidobaldi, who has taken his time to write some pieces for me by his own interest, others have asked for commissions, but you know, it is usually to the sum of more than a thousand dollars, and you usually don’t find the money for that. Here, the growth for repertoire for the instrument is very limited because here in Puerto Rico the performance of classical music is only approached up to the beginning of the 20th century. I mean the Symphony does not usually perform anything more recent than early 20th century repertoire. So if the odds for them being able to program a single piece at a Symphony concert are minimal, the programming of a piece that includes the saxophone will be

even more difficult since most of them have not included a saxophone in their orchestral writing.”

-Have you encountered any other difficulties in your journey of promoting the instrument?

“The major difficulty at first was the available repertoire at the Conservatory. I was buying pieces and method books out of pocket for students to be able to study something. Years later, the institution began obtaining more saxophone repertoire and resources for the library.”

-In your opinion, what are some of the reasons for composers in Puerto Rico to not write for saxophone in the same manner we find in other countries in Latin America?

“Well, since there is not much active performance to begin with, maybe many composers do not think there are capable performers here to perform effectively the demands we find in contemporary repertoire. I personally think it is not the lack of performers; it is mostly a lack of funds to contribute to new pieces. It is very difficult to find someone to sponsor such projects.

I would like to say that I have seen a positive growth in the perception of the saxophone as a classical instrument. In recent auditions, I have seen students determined to study classical saxophone, whereas in my first years at the Conservatory most people that auditioned did not know what classical saxophone was. For example, many come from Humacao, where Raziel teaches; they come from Arecibo and Caguas as well.”

January 7, 2014
Noel Allende

“Pieces here in Puerto Rico that include the saxophone; it all has to do with how many saxophonists can sight-read, how many can accomplish the technical level desired by the composer, and this is even without entering in multiphonics, or other stuff. Even if there are pieces from the 70s and 80s with that complex language, as a performer you need to know that it at least existed.

I had the opportunity of interacting with the saxophone, not extensively, but I had the chance of having the experience of writing some ideas and having them performed, since at Michigan State University there was a great variety not only because of the jazz program, but even within jazz musicians there were saxophonists that would not simply identify themselves as just jazz players. You could ask them “Hey, I have this piece I am writing which is pretty crazy,” and they would welcome it by responding “ok, I’ll take a look at it.” So, the result was that you had a composition recital in which you could hear live the craziness you just wrote and decide later if you wanted to keep working on it or forget about it, but the point is that there was always someone available and willing to spend the time to prepare your piece, which is something that every composer would dream of. That’s the way things work, you say “Hey look, try it out, tell me what you think, and then I’ll decide if I want to keep it or burn it away.” In the case of here in Puerto Rico, we even need to figure out where to publish our works.

I had a piece for a woodwind ensemble, and did the transcription for saxophone quartet. There were a few register issues with the soprano saxophone, but I do not know if it was because the player could not play them well or if the notes were out of the allowed range of the instrument.

As a composer I like miniatures. I enjoy very much the idea of Webern of saying it once, and that’s it, no development. This is a piece in three movements. One is based in a polyphonic presentation, since I like baroque music so much, of *Si me dan pasteles* and the “seis de aguinaldo” *Los Reyes Que Llegaron a Belén*. It fascinates me the baroque quality of jibaro music. I have my own hypothesis regarding this. I can’t prove anything since we have no scores from that era but it is very present when you listen to it especially the melismas and the high content of counterpoint. The second movement is titled *Paseos*, in which I take pre-composed melodies, in this case various paseos from Danzas, and put them together through the voices of the quartet. The third is based on a guajeo. I simply use the rhythm and create some counterpoint within the different voices.”

January 7, 2014
William Ortiz

-How often are you involved with the saxophone as a classical instrument?

“Well, when I came back from the US I began teaching band at the University of Puerto Rico in Bayamón, and it was there when I first began interacting more with the instrument. The pieces I have written for the instrument though have all been by coincidence, simply commissions I have received. The sound of the saxophone interests me very much; I consider it to be a very sensual and powerful instrument.

So, it just happened by coincidence when I was working on my doctorate the Amherst saxophone quartet, who were actually quite famous at the time, and the Hallwalls Art Gallery in Buffalo commissioned me a piece to be performed by this quartet. The piece is called *Housing Project*. This piece has been played a few times and recently the quartet of Miguel Villafruela has performed it and have a video recording on youtube.

-Have all your experiences writing for saxophone been outside Puerto Rico?

“Yes. The very first experience writing for saxophone was with *El Caserío* in 1976, a piece I wrote for a group called the East Buffalo Media Association they had a saxophonist who was mostly a jazz player.

Here I have a Plena-Merengue that I composed in 1985 when I was still living in the US. This piece is for saxophone, electric guitar and percussion. Since plena has very rhythmic similarities to merengue, I decided to unite both styles. This piece has been performed quite a bit. The most recent performance was about a year ago in Oberlin. There was a festival called Boricua Rhythms featuring Puerto Rican composers. This was at Oberlin College.

I brought you a few scores here for you to look at. Here is another piece I wrote titled *Polifonia Salvaje* for alto saxophone and Percussion. This is really out there, very complex, it's like a labyrinth. It is Atonal and employs extended techniques on the saxophone. The performers have much freedom of interpretation in this piece. The final result should be an inspired improvisation between the two players.

I also have this piece called *Dios se fue de Philadelphia* for a very varied set of instruments. On this one the saxophonists switches from alto to tenor. The piece has this instrumentation because of the group that commissioned it. They had a flute, oboe, saxophone, percussion, bass, anyway it was a very diverse selection of instruments.

-I would like to ask you, what is your personal opinion regarding the small number of compositions for saxophone coming from Puerto Rico? What could be some of the reasons for the lack of composition activity?

You know, in our country there is a lack of interest for new music and even classical music in general. When I was living in the US you could find opportunities everywhere, people interested

in performing and much support. Here I feel stuck because you don't find enough people motivated and interested in classical music to make things happen. Maybe back in the 70s and 80s there was some movement but after the 90s it all declined. Today, sometimes the Symphony Orchestra performs something new and a small festival occurs but it is all very sporadic, there is no continuity, and the support is not consistent enough to grow and expand. A while back ago you could even see often reviews on various concerts in the newspaper, but now for some reason you don't see that anymore, only for the symphony.

January 20, 2014
Roberto Sierra

-What motivated you to write for the saxophone?

“Well, the Concerto for Saxophones came to be as my interaction with James Carter. I saw him play live and I was fascinated with his playing. So basically the contact with James produced this project. The concept of the Concerto did not emerged from me simply wanting to write for the instrument, because I know that there are many great saxophone players in the classical world but it is a concept that does not catches my attention. It was pretty much Carter’s vibrant sound and his skills as an improviser that fascinated me. I was inspired by the soloist and not necessarily by the instrument.”

-You mentioned that the concept of classical saxophone does not attract you that much?

“Well you know, that concept of the saxophone concerti of the French school it is pretty and admirable but it is not something that moves me. I won’t deny if I get a commission from someone who plays in that style, I would write the piece and will make something out of it that satisfies me, but there were some music elements out of Carter’s playing that motivated me to create this piece.”

-I would like to ask you, what is your personal opinion regarding the small number of compositions for saxophone coming from Puerto Rico? What could be some of the reasons for the lack of composition activity?

“I can talk to you based on my experience. I began studying at the Conservatory in 1969 and I can tell you about how things were perceived back then. The saxophone in Puerto Rico was Papa Candito, the Orquesta Panamericana with Lito Peña; that was the world of the saxophone. Then came the merengue, the Salsa combos, and big bands. Overshadowing all of this was the fact that formal training in composition in Puerto Rico really doesn’t begin until the Conservatory opens in 1960. This already tells you that composition activity cannot be compared with for example Brasil, which already had a long tradition of formal training in music. There were composers but there was never an infrastructure that supported and developed training. I think the way things took shape in Puerto Rico led to people creating barriers within musical styles. I do not think that people taught that there could be a bridge uniting both styles. I could see that there was no interaction between popular and classical musicians; everyone minded their own business. Then, the saxophone was related to the popular world, so classical people ignored it. For Casals, the saxophone was like speaking Chinese.”

February 20, 2014
Alberto Guidobaldi

-Did you compose any pieces for saxophone before moving to Puerto Rico?

“I did write some things including the saxophone back in Italy when I was young but it was all dance music, never anything in the classical context.”

-What motivated you to write these pieces for saxophone?

“Well, some of them have been requests, for example the *Toccata and Fugue*, which Willie asked me to write for him. Others have been for my own interest because I like the sound of the saxophone in the classical context. *Nuances* was primarily composed for an oboist but I still thought of it since I started writing as a piece to be played on saxophone as well. The *Sonatina* was created in the same way. The quartet 5, 3, y 2 was actually for my own pleasure just for fun. Finally, *Toccata and Fugue* was a commission to be played at the Honduras Saxophone Festival. Overall, what motivates me? I simply like the saxophone. In my opinion, if you think about it any of the quartets will not create the same effect if they are not performed on saxophones.”

-When did you hear for the first time the saxophone played as a classical instrument?

“It was here in Puerto Rico when I started my degree at the Conservatory. In particular it was the concept of the saxophone quartet that was very new for me. I really did not know how much could be done with this combination of instruments.”

-I would like to ask you, what is your personal opinion regarding the small number of compositions for saxophone coming from Puerto Rico? What could be some of the reasons for the lack of composition activity?

“In order to have a better idea, I think we need to find out how many composers are active in Puerto Rico. At the same time I think it is not fair to compare with other countries in Latin America because Puerto Rico is really small. Clearly there would be more composers and musicians in Cuba or Argentina. However, if we want to think about other reasons, I think many people still do not know the instrument in the classical context. They might think of the instrument as something like Stan Getz or the instrument in merengue. They might associate it to popular music.”

March 14, 2014
Alberto Rodriguez

-I would like to ask you, what is your personal opinion regarding the small number of compositions for saxophone coming from Puerto Rico? What could be some of the reasons for the lack of composition activity?

“You know, I think that here in Puerto Rico the people that are willing to create festivals and organizations (which all need to be private since here the government doesn’t help to create new things and the vision is always short) are few and due to the lack of consistency and seriousness in the government people get frustrated and stop trying. For example, Alfonso Fuentes just brought some composers from China and even when he found a way to cover for their expenses, he had to sweat incredibly to make it happen and he ended up doing his program at the Conservatory instead of a main venue. I did a concert series here at the Tapia theater and man; I quit because the guy in charge just decided to cancel the last concert 5 days prior to it. I had to cancel a pianist who had been preparing his program for four months. Many of these sponsors lack seriousness. Carlos Vazquez has also prepared some of his programs but you know everyone gets tired of the mediocrity and lack of seriousness.

Then, we depend on those things that are already established and have consistency like the Symphony, the Casals Festival, the Interamerican Festival and Pro Arte Musical, which are the only functioning entities, but the problem is that if they don’t do the events or the activity you desire, it is extremely difficult to find other ways to make it happen. I also understand that it is also not that easy for these organizations to make new projects because for example the Symphony has its own function to preserve their repertoire and to follow the tradition they have established.

We also need to take in consideration that Puerto Rico is much smaller than other countries. You know our island fits like 9 times in Cuba, so there would be less opportunities to create organizations here than in other countries.”

Vita

Marcos David Colón Martín received his Bachelor of Music degree in saxophone performance from the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music in 2007. After graduating he continued his graduate studies at the University of New Mexico where he earned his Master of Music degree in saxophone performance in 2009. He is currently an active freelance musician and serves as private instructor for various school districts in Houston, Texas.