

Music in Puerto Rican Public Ceremony: *Fiestas Reales, Fiestas Patronales, Ferias,* and *Exposiciones*

A Chronological List of Official Reports and Similar Documents, 1746–1897

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IN WRITINGS ABOUT MUSIC AND MUSICIANS in Puerto Rico, passing reference has often been made to particular public events which have been associated with the composition or the first performances of specific works, or which have provided milestones in the lives and careers of specific persons. For example, the 1882 Fair and Exposition, taking place in Ponce, is mentioned in all biographies of Juan Morel Campos as the site of the defeat of Morel's orchestra, resident in that town, by the San Juan-based ensemble of Fermín Toledo in an historic orchestral duel. Too, the occasion on which Felipe Gutiérrez's opera *Macías* was awarded a gold medal (the Puerto Rico Fair and Public Exposition of 1871) is carefully repeated in all biographical treatments of this composer. Yet a considerable body of literature containing important information about Puerto Rican musical life lies unexplored in any systematic fashion: a body comprised of official and semiofficial documents dealing specifically with public ceremonies and observances.

Puerto Rico, by royal decree from Madrid and by the weight of ecclesiastical tradition within the Roman Catholic Church worldwide, regularly mounted

public ceremonies connected with patriotic celebrations and Patron Saint observances. There is evidence of such public and official celebration as early as 1533, only forty years after the island was first seen by Europeans. At the other end of our time frame, Puerto Rico, as one of Spain's last American provinces, continued to observe royal births, successions to the throne and other forms of patriotic commemoration up to the very eve of the United States' invasion in 1898.¹ In addition, fairs and expositions

¹"12 marzo 1533. Celebranse fiesta [fiestas] reales por la victoria alcanzada contra los turcos," *Almanaque de bufete para la isla de Puerto Rico, en el año bisiesto de 1884*. . . . [San Juan: Imprenta de J. González Font, 1884], 58. Early references to deliberations by the San Juan Municipal Council regarding *fiestas patronales* and other public observances may be seen in *Catálogo de las cartas y peticiones del Cabildo de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico en el Archivo General de Indias (siglos XVI–XVIII)*, ed. José J. Real Díaz (San Juan: Municipio de San Juan and Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1968), as well as in *Actas del Cabildo de San Juan Bautista de Puerto Rico 1730–1750* (San Juan: Gobierno de la Capital, 1949). Other valuable primary and secondary sources of information dealing with early public ceremony in Puerto Rico are given in Myrna Casas, *Theatrical Production in Puerto Rico From 1700–1824*;

of agriculture and industry began at mid-nineteenth century incorporating music in both ceremonial and representative functions.

The following list provides a guide to this mainly unknown body of information concerning music in Puerto Rican public life. As the list is limited to official and semi-official reports and similar documents, its exploration should be supported by the study of other contemporaneous sources, particularly newspapers following the introduction of the printing press in the first decade of the nineteenth century.² The present list excludes reports in which music escapes specific mention, such as the report of the Puerto Rico Exposition of 1855.³ It is probable that ceremonial musical activity indeed did take place during the 1855 exposition and during other events that are also excluded from the present list; for this reason a study of other contemporaneous sources is doubly apposite.

All items herein described may be consulted at the Puerto Rican Collection of the José M. Lázaro General Library, University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras.

1746- "Relación verídica en la que se da noticia de lo acaecido en la Ysla de Puerto Rico a fines del año de 45 [46] y principios de el 47 en el motivo de llorar la muerte de N. Rey y Señor don Felipe Quinto y celebrar la exaltación a la corona de N.S. Don Fernando Sexto. . . ." *Boletín histórico de Puerto Rico*, v (1918), pp. 148-192.

Philip V died on July 9, 1746, whereupon his son Fernando became Fernando VI of Spain. Both events were observed throughout the Spanish world

The Role of the Government and of the Roman Catholic Church (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1974), iv-viii et passim. For example, at page 23 Casas cites San Juan Municipal Council correspondence which mentions observances, including musical activities, connected with the death of Carlos II and the accession to the throne of Philip V in May 1701.

²For a key to newspaper coverage of musical activity in nineteenth-century Puerto Rico, see Annie F. Thompson, *Puerto Rican Newspapers and Journals of the Spanish Colonial Period as Source Materials for Musicological Research* (Ph.D. dissertation, The Florida State University, 1980). See also the review of this dissertation in *Inter-American Music Review*, iv/2 [Spring-Summer 1982], 91-94.

³*Memoria descriptiva de la Segunda Exposición Pública de las Bellas Artes, Agricultura e Industria de la Isla de Puerto Rico, celebrada en junio de 1855.* (Puerto Rico: Establecimiento Tipográfico de D. Ignacio Guasp, 1855).

with appropriate ceremonies. This anonymous contemporaneous report—errors in the transcription of which have been analyzed and provisionally corrected by Myrna Casas—offers some of the earliest extant information dealing with musical activities in urban Puerto Rico.⁴ The following is an account of singing in the streets on May 7, 1747, by roving bands of maskers during the celebration of Fernando's succession to the throne:

During the celebration of the mass a procession of maskers wandered through the entire city accompanied by the sweet harmony of the band which went along for this purpose. So great was the resulting joy and tumult that even the invalids [took to the streets] through windows and doors, followed by women and children, all singing lustily and joyfully as far as the doors of the Cathedral itself. . . .

1789 *Relación de las fiestas que en la proclamación del Señor Rey Don Carlos IV ha celebrado la ciudad de San Juan de Puerto Rico en los días 17, 18, 19 y siguientes hasta el 28 de octubre 1789.* Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1790. 4 pp.

Upon the death of Carlos III on December 14, 1788, his son became Carlos IV of Spain. The succession was celebrated in San Juan in October 1789 with appropriate pantomimes, comedias, dances, and *Te Deums*. On the afternoon of October 19 a demonstration of precision horsemanship was offered by 24 ladies and gentlemen before the portraits of Their Majesties in the main plaza, to the measure of harmonious music. A dance followed, lasting until 4:30 A.M.

1820 "Relación de las fiestas públicas celebradas en esta capital en obsequio de la instalación del Congreso Nacional y elección del diputado a Corte por esta isla, D. Demetrio O'Daly." *Boletín histórico de Puerto Rico*, VIII (1921), pp. 371-372.

Reprinted from the official *Gaceta del Gobierno de Puerto Rico*, August 26, 1820, this is the official report of the four days of public rejoicing (including musical events) that signaled the election of Puerto Rico's representative to the Spanish Cortes.

1823 *Ingenua descripción o vivo cuadro de las funciones con que se celebró en Puerto-Rico el aniversario de su espontáneo juramento de la*

⁴Casas, *op. cit.*, 29-31.

constitución política de la monarquía española el 15 de mayo. Puerto Rico: Imprenta Fraternidad, de D. J. Blanco, 1823. 28 pp.

Military bands, drum and bugle corps and the newly organized Sociedad Filarmónica participated in the 1823 celebration of the anniversary of the Spanish Constitution of 1820.

1830 "Relación de las fiestas públicas con que se han celebrado en la capital de la isla de Puerto-Rico las Reales Bodas del Rey nuestro Señor con la augusta Princesa de Nápoles Doña María Cristina de Borbón," in Pedro Tomás de Córdoba, *Memorias geográficas, históricas, económicas y estadísticas de la Isla de Puerto Rico*, 6 vols. [San Juan]: Oficina del Gobierno, 1831-1833. Facs. ed., San Juan: Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, 1968. vi, pp. 18-37.

Reprinted from the *Gaceta del Gobierno de Puerto Rico*, March 2 and March 3, 1830, this is a detailed account of the celebration in San Juan of the wedding of Fernando VII and María Cristina of Naples. Observed on February 17-19, 1830, the occasion enlisted the participation of military bands and dance orchestras, and included also the playing of *bombas* and "other appropriate instruments" by the *moros* (blacks). More than 200 elegantly dressed ladies attended a ball at the theater, where two orchestras alternated in the playing of *contradanzas* and waltzes from 9:00 P.M. until 3:00 A.M. Despite the great press of spectators, space was found on the dance floor for the simultaneous maneuvering of three *contradanzas* (figure groups) of 30 couples each.

1831 *Relación de las fiestas públicas verificadas en esta capital y por mayor número de los pueblos de esta isla, con el plausible motivo del nacimiento de la serenísima infanta Doña María Isabel Luisa Princesa de Asturias*. Puerto Rico: Oficina del Gobierno a cargo de D. Valerio Sanmillán, 1831. 211 pp. Facs. ed., San Juan: Editorial Coquí, 1971.

Public festivities were organized throughout Puerto Rico in 1831 to signal the birth of María Isabel Luisa (who would reign as Isabel II). On the evening of January 31 an ambulant *alborada*, accompanied by a military band and illuminated by 100 torches, serenaded the streets of San Juan. A string orchestra had been formed to accompany the

singing of a newly composed hymn, expressing the gratitude and joy of one of Spain's still loyal American possessions. Similar activities were organized in other island towns. Ponce was favored with a concert and dance on February 15.¹

1832 *Relación exacta de las fiestas que se han practicado en esta plaza, con motivo de la instalación de la Real Audiencia, y entrada del real sello....* [San Juan]: Imprenta del Gobierno a cargo de D. Valeriano de Sanmillán, 1832. 55 pp.

This is the official report of festivities marking the establishment of the Provincial Court of Appeals in Puerto Rico and the receipt of the royal seal to be used in the validation of documents originating therein, July 23-29, 1832. Consistent with established practice, the occasion was observed with *Te Deums* and *bailes*.

1832 "Aviso al publico—Reunidas en el día de ayer en el palacio de mi morada las autoridades de esta Plaza, con el objeto de acordar las fiestas que deberían practicarse por el feliz restablecimiento de S.M. . . . Puerto-Rico 29 de noviembre de 1832.—Miguel de la Torre," in Córdoba, *Memorias*, vi, pp. 385-387.

A proclamation by the Governor General of Puerto Rico ordering festivities in honor of the restoration to good health of the monarch, Fernando VII. Pages 387-402 of Córdoba's text describe the celebration, which took place the following December 6 through 9, and which was marked by *Te Deums*, concerts, masquerades, and balls. The façade of the new theater was illuminated by 3060 colored lights. A "brilliant" orchestra accompanied the singing of hymns at a special mass on December 7. On December 9, the *moros* enjoyed their customary diversion of *bombas* and dancing.

1844 *Descripción de las fiestas y regocijos públicos con que la ciudad de Puerto Rico ha celebrado el juramento prestado el 10 de febrero de 1844 a S.M. la Reina de las Españas Doña Isabel II, declarada mayor de edad por las cortes del reino*. Puerto Rico: Imprenta de Gimbernau, 1844. 24 pp.

¹This description of the San Juan festivities is also to be found, verbatim, in Pedro Tomás de Córdoba, *Memorias*, vi, 108-136.

In addition to informal dancing outdoors and formal balls at the theater, public masking was permitted until 8:00 P.M. and persons of color were allowed to dance to *bombas* and maracas, "according to their custom," in the place known as St. Barbara's Cross. Staged figure-dances also took place, the participants representing Turks, Harlequins, and spirits, to music of *galop*, *rigodón*, *danza escocesa*, and *contradanza española*.

1854 Fernando de Norzagaray. "Programa de la exposición, feria y festejos públicos que se celebrarán en el mes de junio de 1854," *Boletín histórico de Puerto Rico*, III (1916), pp. 165-173.

The official announcement, rules, and program of the first of a series of fairs and expositions which took place in Puerto Rico, consistent with practices throughout the remaining overseas Spanish lands. See the following official report.

Andrés Viña. *Memoria descriptiva de la primera Exposición Pública de la Industria, Agricultura y Bellas Artes de la isla de Puerto Rico en junio de 1854*. Puerto Rico: Establecimiento Tipográfico de D. Ignacio Guasp, 1854. 56 pp. Also in *Boletín histórico de Puerto Rico*, III (1916), pp. 173-222.

Among displays of agricultural products, machinery, and pharmaceutical products, the results of efforts in the fine arts included a *Fantacía* [Fantasia] *con variación sobre la Polka favorita de Genni-Lind* [Jenny Lind], by Adolfo Eraclio [Heraclio] Ramos, that was awarded a silver medal.

1858 *Descripción de las fiestas reales que celebró la muy noble y muy leal ciudad de Puerto Rico, con motivo del fausto natalicio del Srmo. Príncipe de Asturias don Alfonso*. San Juan: Imprenta de Acosta, 1858. 80 pp.

Religious, governmental, civil and popular observances took place from February 12 through February 16, 1858, in honor of the birth of Alfonso, Prince of Asturias and the future King Alfonso XII. The performance on February 12 of a mass by the recently deceased Maestro Delgado enlisted the participation of a "select orchestra" and a number of singers and amateurs under the direction of José Ruiz. A ball at the *Ayuntamiento* (city hall) the same evening was dominated "as always" by the Puerto Rican *danza*, although also observed were the old *contradanza* and dances "imported from the banks

of the Seine and the Vistula." "The *danza* is a delicious thing; not of complicated choreography but of delicate motion; not of grand gestures but of gentle movement; not of artifice but of naturalness. Finally, it is not of great formality but of closeness so intimate as to engender physical contact and inevitable collisions." The band of the Valladolid Regiment played for a public dance in the main plaza. Staged regional dances were performed by several other military units. At a ball at the San Juan Casino, the native *danza* almost entirely displaced European dances, due to the great floor space required by the latter and the volume occupied by the hoop skirts and high coiffures then in vogue. A *Gran alborada gibaresca* enlisted 69 young people (representing the 69 island municipalities) in a profession of Antillean loyalty to the throne. Heraclio Bermúdez and José Solá offered, in the *jibaro* dialect of the mountaineer, erudite and topical satires of the *caballo*, *seis*, and *seguidillas* (*cabayo*, *seis chorraeo*, and *seguriyas* as pronounced), composed by Eusebio Núñez. This last event was to resonate in Puerto Rican literature for decades. Núñez's epigrammatic ruralisms have periodically been revived, occasionally with his humorous spellings laundered to conform to Castilian pronunciation.

1860 *Memoria descriptiva de la tercera Exposición Pública de la Agricultura, la Industria y Bellas Artes de la isla de Puerto Rico, celebrada en junio de 1860*. Puerto-Rico: Imprenta del Boletín Mercantil, 1860. 34 pp. Also in *Boletín histórico de Puerto Rico*, VII (1920), pp. 287-306.

During this exposition, Manuel Gregorio Tabares [Tavárez] was awarded honorable mention for four didactic *cuadernos con estudios de música para salón*.

1864 *Crónica de San Juan o sea descripción de las fiestas con que la ciudad de Puerto Rico ha celebrado a su Santo Patrono en el año de 1864*. [San Juan]: Imprenta del Comercio, 1864. 54 pp.

A detailed account of the festivities from June 1 to June 30, 1864, organized in honor of St. John Baptist, Patron Saint of the city of San Juan. Bands and orchestras, fixed and ambulatory, with or without fireworks, were endemic. On the evening of June 14, "as no *alborada* had been planned, doubtless to give the other musicians respite, Mr. Esco-

var's improvised orchestra roamed throughout the city accompanied, as always, by a crowd. A new and pretty *danza* was played, which the people sang perfectly." On June 18, groups dressed as *jibaros* entertained the public with *cabayos* and *seguirillas*. A ball at the San Juan Casino on June 20, "one of the most splendid entertainments ever to take place in these aristocratic halls," found an overflow crowd dancing to music provided by the sixteen-piece orchestra of Messrs. Callejo and Meléndez playing select *danzas*. During religious services in the Cathedral on June 23, the music of Felipe Gutiérrez, "imbued with a sweet sadness," produced an "extraordinary effect" on the assembled faithful.

1865 *Memoria descriptiva de la Cuarta Feria y Exposición Pública de la Agricultura, la Industria y Bellas Artes de la isla de Puerto Rico celebrada en junio de 1865*. . . . Puerto-Rico: Imprenta de Acosta, 1865. 28 pp. Also in *Boletín histórico de Puerto Rico*, ix (1922), pp. 127-139.

Manuel G. Tavárez exhibited two works, receiving first prize for his *Marcha fúnebre á Campeche*, dedicated to the memory of the late celebrated painter; Heraclio Ramos received a gold medal for his *Fantasia sobre "God Save the King."*

1868 Federico Asenjo y Arteaga. *Las fiestas de San Juan; Reseña histórica de lo que han sido y de lo que son y relación verdadera de las que se celebraron en este año de 1868*. [San Juan]: Imprenta del Comercio, 1868. Repr. San Juan: Editorial Borinquen, [1971]. 137 pp.

A detailed description of the festivities surrounding the celebration of St. John Baptist, which occupied almost the entire month of June. Musical activities (processions, concerts, religious events and balls) were interspersed among horse races, regattas and fireworks displays. A mass by Felipe Gutiérrez was performed, requiring an orchestra of fifty instrumentalists plus a dozen singers. The *fiestas patronales* ended with a concert in the halls of the Sociedad Filarmónica by pianist Manuel Tavárez, painter/baritone Francisco Oller and tenor Ignacio Martí. Josefa Gautier y Benítez delivered a melodrama (*melopea*) composed by poet Lorenzo Puente Acosta "in a voice even sweeter and purer than the tender notes which Tavárez drew from the piano in accompanying her." Appendices offer the texts of hymns and anthems sung during the *fiestas*

by guilds and clubs of shoemakers, barbers, carpenters, musicians, masons, stablehands, porters, and other groups.*

1870 *Programa general de las fiestas con que el Ayuntamiento de la Capital celebra a su patrón San Juan, en junio de 1870*. San Juan: Imprenta del Comercio, 1870. 14 pp.

The general program for the celebration of St. John Baptist, June 1-24, 1870, mentions horse races, regattas and fireworks, dances, parades with military bands, and other activities involving music.

1871 *Programa de la quinta Feria y Exposición Pública que se han de celebrar en esta isla en el mes de junio de 1871*. Puerto-Rico: Imprenta del Comercio, 1871. 22 pp.

Section VII, "Bellas Artes" (pp. 16-17), announces that a first class honorable mention and a gold medal will be awarded for the best musical composition displayed at the fifth Puerto Rico Fair and Exposition. See the following official report.

Memoria descriptiva de la quinta Feria y Exposición Pública de la Agricultura, la Industria y Bellas Artes de la Isla de Puerto Rico celebrada en junio de 1871. . . . Puerto Rico: Imprenta de Sancerrit, 1871. 21 pp.

Felipe Gutiérrez was awarded a gold medal for his opera *Macías*, and Ignacio Marty [Martí] received a gold medal for a *sinfonia* entitled *La inspiración*.

1875 Ramón Marín Solá. *Las fiestas populares de Ponce. Crónica sucinta de las que han tenido lugar en el año 1875 en celebración de su Santa Patrona la Virgen de Guadalupe*. Ponce: Impr. "El Vapor," 1875. 72 pp.

A description of Ponce's 1875 Patron Saint festivities (December 8-12). The program of activities (pp. 23-26) documents music in virtually every event, from special masses to parades, concerts, and balls. In a description of the inaugural religious service, during which music by Juan Morel Campos and the younger Eduardo Cuevas was performed, the violins "endeavored only to make themselves heard in a fashion which was in no way agreeable. . . . Even the euphonium, which the young [Morel] Campos plays with such skill and taste, more than once sounded much too loud." On the

*Asenjo y Arteaga's *Las fiestas* also covers periods of decay and revival in the history of patron saint celebrations in Puerto Rico from the seventeenth century onward.



lack of orchestral musicians in Ponce: "Is it not humiliating, for example, that whenever a zarzuela company visits us, we often see musicians from places inferior in resources to Ponce, brought here in order to form the small orchestra which Ponce cannot provide with its own players?"

1882 *Feria de Ponce. Programa de los festejos, año 1882*. Ponce: Tipografía El Vapor, 1882. 11 pp.

The program of this Ponce Exposition itemizes the many musical activities scheduled during the sixteen-day event. These included balls, band and orchestra concerts, and music competitions. See the following official report.

José Ramón Abad. *Puerto Rico en la Feria-Exposición de Ponce en 1882. Memoria redactada de orden de la junta directiva de la misma*. Ponce: Tipografía "El Comercio," 1885. 351 pp. Facs. ed. San Juan: Editorial Coquí, 1967. A summary of this official report can be seen in Pedro Luis Perea Roselló, "Un capítulo de la historia de Ponce: La Feria-Exposición de 1882," *Horizontes* (Ponce), v/9 (October 1961), pp. 69-78.

A total of 26 musical works were submitted. Prizes were awarded to Juan Morel Campos, José Aguilló y Prats, Fermín Toledo, Casimiro Duchesne, and Manuel G. Tavárez. Ensembles conducted by Morel Campos and Fermín Toledo, symbolizing a traditional rivalry between Ponce in the south and San Juan in the north, competed for an award for the best orchestra; the latter's ensemble won the gold medal and the former's, the silver.

1893 *Cuarto Centenario del Descubrimiento de Puerto-Rico. Exposición para 1893. Reglamento*. Puerto-Rico: Tipografía del Boletín Mercantil, 1893. 16 pp.

Rules and regulations for the official celebration of the fourth centennial of the discovery of Puerto Rico in 1493 by Christopher Columbus. Theater music, church music and salón music were to be considered in the same group as science, literature, painting, sculpture and architecture. Musical instruments would be judged in the same category as bookbinding, photographic apparatus, medical and surgical instruments and materials for teaching science, geography, and cosmography. See the following official report.

Alejandro Infiesta. *La Exposición de Puerto Rico: Memoria redactada según acuerdo de la Junta del Cen-*

tenario. [San Juan]: Imprenta del Boletín Mercantil, 1895. 312 pp.

Musical events included appearances of bands and orchestras at ceremonies, the especially contracted performances of an opera company, and displays and competitions of musical works and musical instruments. Despite what one judge called its "deficiencies in melodic development, harmony, aesthetic appeal and counterpoint," *Sinfonía: Puerto Rico* by Juan Morel Campos was awarded the grand prize of 100 pesos. Works were also submitted by Casimiro Duchesne, Felipe Gutiérrez, Joaquín Cerdá Segrellés, Ignacio Martí, and Mateo Tizol. Musical instruments included an *órgano eólico* especially recommended for use by families, schools, and churches by noted writer Manuel Fernández Juncos, factory representative. A repertory of more than 6000 pieces was advertised for the instrument, which was perhaps a player harmonium.

1897 Jacinto de Aqueña. "Las fiestas del Centenario," in *Lealtad y heroísmo de la Isla de Puerto Rico, 1797-1897*. San Juan: Lynn e Hijos de Pérez Moris, 1897. Pp. 335-363.

This collection of poems, essays, and other centennial tributes to the defense of Puerto Rico against the British attack of 1797, contains allusions to such musical activities as band concerts, dances, and a special *zarzuela* production. A Quartet in C# minor by Professor Sotós, of Mayagüez, won a 100-peso award in a competition sponsored by the Ateneo Puertorriqueño.

Apart from fairs and expositions taking place in Puerto Rico during the nineteenth century, island products, were displayed in international expositions at Paris (1867), Philadelphia (1876), Paris (1878), Matanzas (1881), Bordeaux (1882), Amsterdam (1883), New Orleans (1884), Brussels (1888), Cologne (1888), Barcelona (1888), Paris (1889), and Chicago (1893).⁷

Great changes took place in patterns of musical patronage in Puerto Rico after the island's annexation by the United States in 1898. Patron Saint festivities continued, but now much diminished due to

⁷The descriptions in José G. del Valle, *Puerto Rico. Chicago. Trabajos descriptivos y de investigaciones críticas* ([San Juan: Tipografía de "La Correspondencia"], 1895) of the island's participation in these international expositions include occasional musical references.



the ending of the traditional government subsidy of religious institutions and religious observances. Patriotic occasions, now organized around the celebration of U.S. holidays and the reception of appointed governors and other U.S. dignitaries, called mainly upon police and military bands for ceremonial music. And finally, regional and insular fairs, in a pattern established in *Concursos Agrícolas* of 1889-1895, now also took on aspects related to

the U.S. model of state and county fairs. Musical participation was on the order of that found at similar events on the mainland, usually limited to band music and an occasional public dance. In the absence of published official records approaching the completeness and the style of the nineteenth-century reports for these later public events, the existing runs of twentieth-century island newspapers and magazines provide the best sources of information.