

Art Music by Caribbean Composers: Bonaire

Christine Gangelhoff
The College of The Bahamas¹

Cathleen LeGrand
Royal Thimphu College, Bhutan

INTRODUCTION

Bonaire is the most easterly of the “ABC” (Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao) islands of the former Netherlands Antilles (“Bonaire island”, 2013). After a period of Spanish rule, Bonaire has been under Dutch control since 1636 (Bilby, 2013). As of 2010, the island has been a special municipality of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (“Bonaire”, 2012). Situated only 50 miles north of Venezuela and its oil industry, oil transshipment forms part of the island's economy (“Bonaire island”, 2013).

The island is formed of limestone and has an arid climate, qualities making it less suitable for the agricultural plantations that were common on other Caribbean islands. The island's salt flats were more easily exploited and salt production has long been one of Bonaire's major industries (“Bonaire”, 2012).

The island is surrounded by coral reef, making it a popular destination among divers who help make tourism a growing industry in Bonaire (“Bonaire island”, 2013). Bonaire

served as a slave market before the abolition and much of the island's current population is descended from slaves (“Bonaire”, 2012).

Bonaire has musical traditions similar to those of its Antillean neighbors, Aruba and Curacao. All three islands “share a neo-African, drum-centred tradition known as tambu (in Bonaire often referred to as bari), a quintessential Netherlands Antilles folk music” (Bilby, 2013, para. 4). Tumba, a unique mixture of tambu music with other, more modern musical elements, is a particularly popular local musical style (Bilby, 2012).

Music in Bonaire has been strongly influenced by its neighbours to the south, Venezuela and Colombia. The influence of European ballroom dances, such as the schottische, the mazurka and the quadrille can also be felt. “Both ‘purer’ and more creolized versions of these [dances] have long formed part of the repertoires of dance bands” on Bonaire and the other Lesser Antilles (Bilby, 2012, para. 9).

¹Christine Gangelhoff, Assistant Professor, School of Communication and Creative Arts, The College of The Bahamas, P.O. Box N-4912, Nassau, Bahamas; Cathleen LeGrand, Librarian, Royal Thimphu College, Ngabiphu, Thimphu, Bhutan.

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E-mail: cgangelhoff@cob.edu.bs

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West African influences are also visible in the musical and cultural traditions of Bonaire. Songs and dances surviving from the time of slavery and intermingled with New World styles can be seen in the music of Simadan, a harvest festival (Razak, 2005).

The Classical Music Board Bonaire, established in 2009, works to “promote,

organize and develop classical concerts on Bonaire” for both residents and tourists (“Classical Music Board”, 2013). The Classical Music Board Bonaire is especially interested in creating opportunities for the performance of local Antillean classical music.

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COMPOSERS

Domenico B. Herrera

COMPOSITIONS, by composer

Herrera

Atardecer en Curazao

Bonaire

Dominguin

Elina

Feddy

Jeanette Amelia

Joan

Maritza

Mi a scapa

Noche de fiesta

Tan chita

Te saludo Aruba

LIBRARIES & OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Classical Music Board Bonaire

<http://www.classicalmusicbonaire.com/index.html>