

related to the Northeast, Diamond traces the powwow from the southern Plains in the early twentieth century to the northern territories “after the 1950s,” after which it was established in the Northeast a few decades later (119). Following a rundown of “powwow fundamentals” in which the reader is introduced to aspects such as the grand entry, northern versus southern singing styles, men’s and women’s dance categories, and the basic forms of powwow songs, Diamond moves to popular music and theater. A wide array of artists spanning many genres are featured here, including Mi’kmaq fiddler Lee Cremo, Trurez Crew, the Innu duo Kashtin, Joy Harjo, and Ulali. Several of these artists as well as many others from *Native American Music in Eastern North America* appear on the accompanying CD, a thoughtful selection of recordings that informs the subject in ways the text alone cannot.

Diamond’s book represents a step forward in collaborative studies between cultural insiders and outside researchers, privileging indigenous epistemologies while striving to maintain a cohesive dialogue. As can be expected, at times Diamond and her indigenous advisers threaten to talk past one another during their multi-vocal encounter. Both have something to offer, however, one of the reasons why Diamond’s book is so important. By consciously avoiding a unilateral approach Diamond has enabled a discourse that is long overdue. Still, one can hope for many more univocal texts on the horizon, written by a wave of Native scholars intent on reframing what we think we know with indigenous ways of knowing.

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*Juan Bautista Plaza and Musical Nationalism in Venezuela.* By Marie Elizabeth Labonville. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.

Venezuela is often in the news, mostly because of its (in)famous president, Hugo Chávez. However, the recently minted conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Gustavo Dudamel, is focusing attention on other, lesser-known dimensions of Venezuelan society, in particular its spectacular program of national music education called *El Sistema*. Dudamel is a product of this “system,” and his remarkable career is in large measure the result of a century of efforts to create a cultural environment in which a talent as large as his could mature and flourish. Although Juan Bautista Plaza (1898–1965) did not live long enough to savor the fruit of these efforts, no one contributed more to this development.

Consider the following description by Venezuelan musicologist José Antonio Calcaño, a contemporary of Plaza, of the state of European-derived classical music in Venezuela in the postcolonial era: “After that colonial beginning, so wonderful and surprising, our [art] music did nothing but descend until it almost disappeared at the beginning of the government of Gómez. This sad development paralleled

the general life of the country” (5).<sup>1</sup> Juan Vicente Gómez (ruled 1908–35) was, in Labonville’s words, a “repressive and brutal leader” (5),<sup>2</sup> and, in the estimation of Calcaño, the *caudillo*’s chief preoccupation was livestock. “If he could have converted the country into a gigantic cattle ranch he would have felt satisfied” (5). It is not hard to imagine the struggles that Plaza, Calcaño, and other Venezuelan musicians faced in promoting music appreciation, education, performance, and composition in a country without much of a cultural infrastructure. They eventually succeeded to a degree scarcely imaginable at the turn of the twentieth century, and this book chronicles their struggles and triumphs by tracing the career of Plaza, who emerges as a personality of singular vision, determination, and stamina.

Plaza’s name is not generally familiar outside of Venezuela. Yet, in reading Labonville’s superb biography, one quickly realizes that he was a figure of tremendous importance not only in the history of music in his native Venezuela but also in Latin America as a whole, as a composer, organist, conductor, music critic, musicologist, educator, and administrator, one who traveled throughout the Americas promoting Latin American music. His accomplishments are all the more impressive when placed in the context of the culture in which he grew up.

At the time of Plaza’s birth, Caracas had no symphony orchestra, choral societies, or conservatory. In 1923 he went to Rome to study music at the Pontifical Advanced School of Sacred Music, on a scholarship from Caracas Cathedral. At the conclusion of his studies, he returned there to serve as organist and *maestro de capilla*. (Interestingly, he was an ambivalent Catholic and developed a lifelong devotion to Rosicrucianism, whose emphasis on “cosmic forces” dovetailed with his interest in astronomy.) His initial efforts at renovation were logically directed at church music, but he soon realized that the only way to encourage change and stimulate interest and support for Venezuelan art music was to attack on several fronts simultaneously. He therefore wrote newspaper articles, delivered public lectures, and spoke on the radio, always attempting to educate the public about music. He also helped found a choir, the Orfeón Lamas, in 1929 (named after colonial composer José Ángel Lamas). This group came into being at the same time as Venezuela’s first permanent symphony orchestra, which he conducted on occasion.

These developments spurred Plaza’s creative activities, and during his career he composed a total of 380 works (170 sacred, 210 secular), in both nationalist and nonnationalist styles, in addition to 130 small didactic pieces. Among his best-known works are the *Fuga criolla* and *Misa de Réquiem* (both available on iTunes). He was an avid student and promoter of Venezuelan folklore, which he evoked in his works in ways both subtle and overt: “He asserted that music is the art best suited for unifying the sentiments of a people, stressed the value of folk music studies, and emphasized the necessity of cultivating Venezuelan folk music” (48). He was elected president of the Asociación Venezolana de Conciertos in 1942 and two years later was named Director of Culture in the Ministry of National Education. Starting in 1948, he directed the Preparatory School of Music. He established important contacts in

<sup>1</sup> José Antonio Calcaño, *La ciudad y su música: Crónica musical de Caracas*, 3rd ed. (Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, 1985), 440.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 434.

the United States and Mexico and traveled extensively to promote Venezuelan and Latin American music at conferences and meetings throughout the hemisphere, especially of the Pan American Union and, later, the Music Educators National Conference. Moreover, he formed a close personal and professional bond with musicologist Curt Lange. Plaza recovered and edited manuscripts of Venezuelan colonial music, and Lange declared Plaza's discoveries "a Latin American miracle" (185).

Because Plaza was active in so many different areas at the same time, writing about him presented the author with a distinct challenge. Labonville ably meets this challenge by setting the stage with a quick overview of the state of Venezuelan music culture in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, followed by a summary of Plaza's achievements and importance. Her approach thereafter is to proceed in chronological fashion but to maintain a topical focus in each chapter, often dividing one aspect of his career among different chapters. This organization works well and takes us systematically through his early compositions and writings, education in Rome, work at the Caracas Cathedral, early career as an educator, secular and nationalist compositions, early newspaper articles, relationship with the Orquesta Sinfónica Venezuela, mature journalistic writings, major instrumental works with a nationalist thrust, later educational work, musicological investigations, critical reception of his work, nonnationalist compositions and educational activities of his later years, and finally retirement. A retrospective section provides a frame in which to understand the impact of the Herculean tasks Plaza undertook. Labonville gleaned many valuable insights from the sizable Juan Bautista Plaza Archive and from interviews with family members; moreover, she makes good use of secondary sources and abundant newspaper articles.

Labonville tells us several times that Plaza wanted to promote "good music": "Plaza recognized early in his career the potential of the print media to teach his countrymen about good music" (88); "Plaza's articles aimed to teach readers about music and musical taste, and about the spiritual benefits of listening to good music" (89). This repeated assertion leaves the reader pondering what "bad" music was, in Plaza's mind or the author's. Labonville gives a hint: "Plaza and other Venezuelan writers had deplored the influx of foreign dance music such as rumbas, foxtrots, and tangos" (143); "Radio listeners . . . were accustomed to bad popular music—so it was now absolutely necessary 'to try to wean them away from listening to such a class of music and lead them slowly and progressively towards learning to recognize and enjoy music of quality'" (177).<sup>3</sup>

This clarification is crucial because such distinctions between classical, folk, and popular musics often track differences in class and race in Latin America. The mere suggestion that some music was "bad" raises questions about political and social views, especially in the case of a solidly bourgeois (if largely apolitical) figure such as Plaza. Few would agree today that tangos and foxtrots were "bad," although Labonville makes it clear that, at that time, Plaza and his colleagues viewed them as

<sup>3</sup> Plaza's words are taken from a letter he wrote to General Elbano Mibelli dated Caracas, 2 February 1939.

a sort of cultural invasion that threatened autochthonous Venezuelan music. This dimension of Plaza's life and work would be worth further exploration.

Ultimately, such matters must be understood in the context of Plaza's view of himself, his culture, and his mission: "All of his activities had a patriotic, or 'nationalist,' motivation. His work helped transform the art music culture of his country, and he became a founding father of the present Venezuelan musical and musico-pedagogical establishments" (246). A pioneering book such as Labonville's study can have a positive impact in generating interest in a subject, both outside and within a country such as Venezuela. *Juan Bautista Plaza and Musical Nationalism in Venezuela* points to the many research opportunities in Latin American art music still awaiting investigation.

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*Music in the Hispanic Caribbean*. By Robin Moore. Global Music Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

*Music in the Hispanic Caribbean* is a recent book in the Global Music Series published by Oxford University Press. The aims of the series's general editors, Bonnie C. Wade and Patricia Shehan Campbell, are to provide instructors who teach courses in world music and ethnomusicology with (1) a set of case study volumes from which to choose and facilitate the design of their own courses and (2) case studies focused on a particular musical tradition or the music of a discrete geographical area. The editors contrast this format with the conventional world music and ethnomusicology textbook that purports to cover the music of the world. Each volume in the series focuses on the contemporary musical scene, providing historical background to elucidate the present. The volumes also address the ways in which gender, globalization, race, ethnicity, national identity, and authenticity make music particularly meaningful and useful to the lives of people.

Robin Moore meets all of these expectations in providing a lucid introduction to the musical cultures of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic as well as the impact that these musical cultures have had on musical developments in the United States. Moore acknowledges that each island's music merits an independent volume of its own, but suggests that a comparative approach will help the reader think about the interrelated yet distinct musical histories of these areas. Three overarching themes guide his comparative approach: the legacy of colonization and slavery; hybridity or creolization; and diaspora, movement, and musical exchange.

The volume is organized into seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the growing prominence of Latin music in the United States via demographic changes, music festivals, and the commercial music industry. It then defines the Caribbean culturally, geographically, and musically; in the last instance, the author