

# *Cuban Musicians and People Mourn Death of Juan Formell*

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Havana, May 3, (RHC), -- José Luis Quintana ("Changuito") on the drums, César ("Pupy") Pedroso at the keyboards and singer Pedrito Calvo performing La Sandunguera; in this way Cuban musicians bid farewell to late Juan Formell, the leader of Los Van Van orchestra as a seemingly endless crowd chanted while waiting outside the National Theater of Cuba, where his ashes were on display.

The greatest of Cuban music is gone, said Changuito, one of Formell's allies and accomplices in the creation of songó, a genre of popular Cuban music that incorporated rhythmic elements from folkloric rumba into popular dance music.

Puppy revered Formell as a maestro to the point that he confessed *Prensa Latina* that one of the toughest decisions of his life was telling him "I won't continue in the band."

"Los Van Van are a school and a family to me; I learned a lot from my friend Juan; he was my musical guide and even passed on to me some of his patience and his sense of comradeship," he added.

"When I got the news of his death I could not believe my ears. He left a great legacy to all Cubans and we will continue loving him forever," said singer Pedrito Calvo.

Juan Formell, the founder of Los Van Van orchestra, (considered "the Cuban music locomotive") died on May 1 after several days in hospital. Hundreds of people have gone to the lobby of the Havana-based National Theater to pay tribute to the beloved musician.

A Cantata to Formell will be staged today at Havana's Jose Marti Antimperialist Tribune, where Cuban artists will remember this legendary figure, who was granted the National Music Award 2003, the Womex Award 2013 for exceptional achievements in world music, two Grammy awards and several Cubadisco prizes.

Homages will also be paid to late Formell in other venues countrywide.

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