

Concert online in homage to Ernesto Lecuona on his 125th birthday anniversary



A concert online Thursday afternoon paid tribute to Cuban pianist, composer, conductor and arranger Ernesto Lecuona on the eve of his 125th birthday anniversary.

The virtual concert was streamed on the digital platforms, including the YouTube channels of the Cuban Ministry of Culture and the Cuban Music Institute, and a network of more than 100 Facebook pages, and was also broadcast live on Cuban radio and television.

Born in 1896, Lecuona made his performing debut at the age of five. He was considered by all accounts a prodigy. He studied at the National Conservatory in Havana, graduating in 1913 with a gold medal in performance.

Lecuona is considered Cuba's best known and perhaps the nation's most prolific composer. Of his more than 1000 compositions, his most popular works remain standards in Latin music. These include popular tunes such as "Malagueña" and "Siboney," but his work was not confined to popular compositions but

spanned a variety of musical forms. His wonderful collection of memorable songs, his talents in music-making were literally all over the map. He also created 176 piano pieces, 53 theater works (zarzuelas, operettas, theatrical revues and an opera), 31 orchestral scores, 6 pieces for piano and orchestra, 3 violin works, a trio, 5 ballets, 11 film scores and many incidental arrangements.

Lecuona's work stretched considerably beyond the printed score sheet. He was the co-founder of the Havana Symphony Orchestra, the Lecuona Cuban Boys Band and La Orquesta de la Habana. During the '30s and '40s, he was hired to create a number of motion picture scores for MGM, Warner Bros. and 20th Century Fox, and his score for the 1942 Warner Bros. film 'Always in My Heart' (Siempre en mi Corazón) was nominated for an Academy Award.

María la O, Lecuona's zarzuela, premiered in Havana on March 1, 1930. Another popular tune composed by Lecuona, *Damisela encantadora*, was an immediate hit, sung by legendary singer Esther Borja."

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