

Cuban entertainment legends: Celina González Zamora



Celina González Zamora was born on 16 March 1929, in Jovellanos, Matanzas was a Cuban singer-songwriter, who specialized in traditional music of the Cuban countryside or *la música campesina*. She is best known for co-authoring *A Santa Bárbara* with her partner Reutilio Domínguez. Her recording of it was a hit, as was Celia Cruz's version. Celina and Reutilio wrote *Yo soy el punto cubano* and the recording was a hit in many countries throughout the world.

At age 16, Celina met Reutilio Dominguez in Santiago de Cuba. He became her singing partner and husband, resulting in a collaboration that lasted until his death in Guantanamo in 1971. In 1948 they began working with the famous Níco Saquito and gained increasing popularity on radio, film and television. They performed in New York with Beny Moré and Barbarito Diez. In 1964 the duo stopped performing together and Celina continued as a soloist. In later years she sang with her son Lázaro, and was usually accompanied by the conjunto Campo Alegre.

Initially, her music was mainly that of the white countryside peasant or *guajiro* with lyrics based on the poetics of the *décima*. The musical form was often that of the *punto cubano*. The relationship with Níco Saquito taught her a great deal about the son and the *guaracha*, and her later work made frequent use of those forms.

In 1980 she won Egrem's Disco de Plata award for the album *Celina*. This was the first of many awards. In 1984 she was awarded the Vanguardia Nacional for her artistic. In 1984 she won the award for Best Singer at the 27th International Music Festival in Cali, Colombia and after a successful tour in Europe in 1988 she recorded a session for the BBC.

Her Albums *La rica cosecha* and *Desde La Habana te traigo* were well received, and she was nominated for a Grammy in 2001 in the 'Best Traditional Tropical Latin Album' category, for her CD *Cincuenta años... como una reina*. The album won the Cubadisco award for the same year. She died on 4 February 2015, at the age of 85.

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