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An Overview of Latin American Bands

Latin America possesses a great band tradition. For over 100 years, these musical organizations have been serving their communities by presenting indoor and outdoor performances. Many civic, social and religious organizations include band participation as an important part of their programs.

Latin American bands show a clear influence from Spain and Italy. In some countries a significant number of performers and teachers as well as many of the earliest works of the repertoire came from these two European countries. Furthermore, some of the earliest bands of Latin America were founded by Italians or Spanish *maestros*. Also, the first music schools were modeled after the Italian and Spanish music systems.

But in spite of a long period of a very productive, intensive and active service to the Latin American community, bands have frequently been underestimated and even omitted in the written music history of these countries. Unfortunately, a great deal of attention has been given exclusively to symphony orchestras, ignoring the long-established position that bands have held in the region. Professional organizations like WASBE have been carrying out the responsibility of promoting bands around the world and establishing a professional network in pursuit of that goal. This certainly has been a benefit to bands in Latin America.

Major Types of Bands

As in other parts of the world, many different kinds of bands exist in Latin America. Most Latin American countries have marching bands. Marching bands are also called show bands and are normally associated with schools that include students from grades 7 to 11 (middle to high schools). Generally, marching or show bands are offered only in private schools. In recent years, a few countries have funded marching bands as a social activity. Conservatories do not offer show-band classes. These bands normally play for civic events, city fairs, holiday parades, season-opening games of baseball, soccer, and basketball, and the like.

Military bands are commonly found in Latin America. Virtually every military force has a band, although the size of the bands vary from city to city in each country. When compared to similar units in many other countries, the performance level is generally low to medium. Musicians in these organizations are active members and commonly enter the force with a rank of sergeant. In some countries these bands present outdoor concerts on Sunday evenings in front of their respective headquarters building.

Many civic organizations such as the police and fire departments also have bands. In these organizations musicians are not active members; they are considered administrative personnel. Paramilitary organizations like the police band play at government events as well as indoor and outdoor public concerts.

Another type of band found in Latin America is the processional band. Derived from a Spanish tradition, these bands are in charge of performing during religious processions and festivities. These groups used to be comprised of up to twenty members. However, more recently these bands have been reduced to four or five players at the most and in many places they have ceased to exist. Processional bands can only be found at the present time in traditional old-fashioned towns. The current role of this kind of processional band remains the performance of

traditional/religious music. They lead the congregation in walks that range from one to five miles – in some cases even more. Players are hired by the church. The instrumentation varies according to the budget. Due to the fact that many of these bands play for processions, music is played from memory.

Unlike North America, professional concert and symphonic bands play a significant cultural role. Every major city in each country of Latin America has such a group, and some of these bands are over 100 years old. These bands are official organizations funded by the government. Bands generally range from 65 to 120 players, even though in recent years a reduction of personnel has been observed in some of these ensembles. A few bands, like the Simon Bolivar Concert Band in Maracaibo, Venezuela, include cellos and one to four string basses as part of their instrumentation. The level of performance in these groups ranges from medium to high in most cases. Musicians wear uniforms depending on the occasion; tuxedos or suits with the band logo for theaters or similar, or casual uniforms, like a polo shirt with the band logo, for outdoor or scholastic performances.

These symphonic and concert bands play a significant number of indoor and outdoor concerts, basically playing every week. In past years the number of concerts in theaters has increased substantially. Many of these organizations present programs that combine symphonic music, normally in the first half, with national music in the second. In many Latin American cities band concerts are now better attended than orchestra concerts.

Leading Latin American Symphonic or Concert Bands

Table 1 provides a listing of some of the most well known bands in Latin America. This list represents four countries.

Country	Bands	Contact Person	Email
Argentina	"Banda Municipal de Buenos Aires" and "Banda Sinfónica de Córdoba"	Miguel Gilardi	miguel_gilardi@hotmail.com
Brazil	"Banda Sinfónica de São Paulo" and "the Brazilian Wind Orchestra of the Conservatoire of Tatui"	Dario Sotelo	dsotelo@uol.com.br
Costa Rica	"Banda Nacional de San José" and University of Costa Rica Wind Ensemble.	Juan B. Loaiza	juanba_60@hotmail.com
Venezuela	"Banda Marcial Caracas" and Banda de Conciertos Simón Bolívar	Rosa Briceño	bricenorosa@cantv.net

Table 1. Leading bands from Latin America

Contemporary Band Repertoire

Most repertoire performed by bands in Latin America in the past featured orchestral transcriptions, marches, and folk music. Recently, the situation has

changed drastically. This is due in part because many composers have begun to study abroad in recent years. They have been exposed to new trends in music, a broad range of international styles, and the most advanced technology. Many have written works expressly for bands and wind ensembles ranging from moderate to difficult in terms of their technical complexity.

While contemporary works written by Latin American composers reflect the newest compositional techniques, many still include national rhythms and/or melodies from their respective countries. This nationalistic element has been recognized by professional and international organizations as a powerful cultural element and a valuable teaching tool.

Publishers and bands in the United States have recently begun showing some interest in Latin American works that include national elements, especially regarding rhythm (see below). But unfortunately, many of these works have yet to be published. Much of this music is therefore not yet readily available for performance in other parts of the world.

Like composers in the United States and Europe, many Latin American composers write music using software such as Finale, Sibelius, and Encore. Many have begun to distribute their music independent of conventional publishers. They promote their works at professional conferences or by using the Internet. Unfortunately, this can result in having to devote considerable time and energy on business matters rather than on composition.

Rhythmic Elements

As stated above, rhythm is a very important element in Latin American music, and the repertory for band is no exception. Each of the twenty countries of the region has at least one national rhythm that is associated with its culture. Table 2 illustrates some of the most important rhythms from six of these countries.

Country	Rhythm	Example
Argentina	Tango	La Comparsita
Brazil	Samba	Brazil
Colombia	Bambuco	Brizas de Pamplonita (Breezes of Pamplonita)
Dominican Republic	Merengue	Compa'e Pedro Juan
Cuba- Danzón-Almendra	Danzón	Almendra (Almonds)
Venezuela	Joropo	Alma Llanera

Table 2. Nationalistic rhythms

Latin American Band Composers

Currently, there are many fine Latin American composers who are writing excellent works for bands. Below you will find a partial list of active composers.

Argentina

Vicente Moncho was born in San Juan, Argentina. He studied violin and viola at the School of Music of the National University of Cuyo in Mendoza. He played for several chamber orchestras in the Buenos Aires area, as well as for the La Plata Symphony Orchestra in Buenos Aires until 1965. Under the guidance of professors such as Mr. Teodoro Fuchs in harmony and Mr. Miguel Corrado in counterpoint and fugue, Moncho managed to complete this five years major in only

two years, and was awarded the Best Graduate University Prize. Some of Moncho's most important band works are: *I heard you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ, ...de tango, Tango Band, Ultreya, and Music for Viola and Wind Orchestra.*

Dante Medina is a pianist and composer who began his piano studies at an early age. A graduate of the University of Córdoba, he later earned a master's degree at Indiana University after receiving a Fulbright Scholarship. His teachers included Abbey Simon and Gyorgy Sebok. Mr. Medina's compositional style is influenced by his work as a performer. He has written for piano and for chamber and symphonic ensembles. His music is filled with references to Latin, jazz, tango and exotic rhythms, all of which impart a characteristic flavor to his music. Some of his most important band works are: *Combo II* for piano, wind ensemble, double bass, and percussion (Grade 6) and *Rhapsodia* for solo piano, symphonic band and percussion (Grade 6).

Brazil

Hudson Nogueira was born in Itapetininga in rural São Paulo State, Brazil. He grew up in the small city of Porangaba, also located in rural São Paulo. He began his studies at an early age, graduating from the Escola Superior de Música Mazarteum in São Paulo in 1997 with a Bachelor's degree in clarinet performance. In 1995, he began his career as a composer with his first pieces written for chamber ensembles. In 1998, he became the resident composer at the Conservatório Dramático e Musical Dr. Carlos de Campos in Tatuf, São Paulo. His pieces have been performed by chamber, symphonic, and popular ensembles throughout Brazil as well as in other countries, including Hungary, Ukraine, France, Italy, Spain and the United States. Some of Nogueira's most famous band works are: *Retratos do Brasil* (Grade 6), *Carnaval de Rua* (Grade 5), *Abertura Festiva* (Grade 5), *El Torero* (Grade 4), and *Alegria do Carnaval* (Grade 5).

Edmundo Villani-Cortêz was born in 1930 in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais. He studied piano and theory at the Brazilian Conservatory of Music. From 1954 to 1959, he resided in Juiz de Fora where he was director of the State Conservatory of Music of that city for two of those years. In 1982 was invited to teach counterpoint and composition in the Art Institute of UNESP. In 1988 completed his Master of Music in composition at the School of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. On May 30, 1998 he received a doctoral degree from the Department of Music of the Institute of Arts UNESP. Villani was a pioneer in Latin America in writing original compositions for band. Some of his most important band compositions are: *Braseijo* (Grade 5), *Estados D'Alma* for Winds and Percussion (Grade 5), *Congada* (Grade 5), *O Passarinho da Praça da Matriz*. Fantasy for Symphonic Band and Choir (Grade 6), and *Impressões de Asa Branca* (Grade 5).

Colombia

Blas Emilio Atehortua was born in Santa Elena in the state of Antioquia, Colombia on October 22, 1943. His early music studies took place in his own country, at the Institute of Fine Arts in Medellín and at the Conservatory of the National University in Bogotá. He studied with Alberto Ginastera, Aaron Copland, Olivier Messiaen, Luigi Nono, Iannis Xenakis, and Earle Brown. He has been awarded several scholarships and fellowships from the Rockefeller and Di Tella Foundations, Ford Foundation, Organization of American States, and one from the

John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation. He has won several prizes and awards, including the Official Cross of Civil Merit from King Juan Carlos of Spain (1982) and the Béla Bartók Centenary Medal from the Hungarian Institution (1983). The following are some of Atehortua's most important works written for winds: *Concerto for Bass Trombone*, Op. 203, *Impromptu para Banda*, Op. 199, *Choral and Ustinato Fantastico*, Op. 200 for wind symphony, *Tropic Utopian*, Op. 192 for alto sax, harp, piano and percussion, *To the Wonderful Rivers of Pittsburgh*, Op. 193 for wind symphony, *Fantasia-Cantata*, Op. 183 for soprano, tenor, speaker, choir and wind ensemble, *Saludo a Colorado*, Op. 174 for wind ensemble, *Music for Winds and Percussion*, Op. 152, *Fantasia Concertante*, Op. 107 for piano and wind symphony, *Concerto Da Chiesa*, Op. 28 for wind symphony.

Francisco Zumaqué was born in Cereté, Córdoba. His father, Francisco Zumaqué, was the artistic director and conductor of the Banda Departamental de Córdoba, Colombia. In 1970 he received a Bachelor's degree in composition and instrumental conducting from the Universidad Nacional. He continued his education in the American Conservatory in France. He worked there with Nadia Boulanger, Annette Dieudonné, and Michel Philippot. He also studied electro-acoustic music with Pierre Schaeffer and Guy Reibel in the Groupe de Recherches Musicales (GRM) of Paris. He also studied orchestra conducting with Igor Markevich and composition with Olivier Messiaen, who inspired him to develop innovative ideas about rhythms. Some of Zumaqué's most important band works are: *Nuevo Amanecer*, *Obatalá*, *Arde Roma*, *Concierto para clarinete bajo y banda sinfónica*, and *Zapqua Bacatá*.

Venezuela

Lucidio A. Quintero was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela. He began his musical training at the age of 10. Under his father's supervision, Quintero received lessons on the clarinet and instruction in theory and solfege. In 1972 he joined the band school of the Fire Fighter Department in Maracaibo as a clarinet player under the instruction of Gregorio Garrido and Elías Núñez. He engaged in formal studies at the Conservatorio José Luis Paz in 1975 under the instruction of Félix Mozo Núñez and Giuseppe Terencio. He would alternate his studies at the conservatory with practical orchestral experience with the Youth Symphonic Orchestras Program in Zulia, Venezuela. He studied piano and harmony with Renzo Salvetti, who worked with him over 10 years until he concluded his studies in musical composition. In 1990 he joined the Conservatorio José Luis Paz in Maracaibo as a professor of harmony. In 1992 and 1993 he won the National Band Composition Award offered by the Consejo Nacional de Cultura (CONAC). He became the artistic director and conductor of the Simón Bolívar Concert Band in 1993. Some of Quintero's most important band works are: *Sorte*, *Catatumbo*, *El Vals de los Sueños*, *La Rosa Mística para Banda*, *soprano, tenor, y Coro*, and *Suite Caribeña*.

Ricardo Teruel was born in Caracas. He has been composing music for more than 30 years. Since 1990 he has been teaching composition, orchestration and electronic music at the Universidad Experimental de Arte (UNEARTE) in Caracas, Venezuela. He has also taught courses on electronic music at the Simón Bolívar Conservatory since 1983. From 1971 to 1973 he was a member of the Experimental Youth Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela playing piano, celesta and minor percussion. In January of 1979 he graduated with a major in electrical

engineering at the top of his class from the University Simón Bolívar. He completed his Master's Degree in Music Composition at the same university in 2004. Some of Teruel's most important works for band are: *Mestizaje*, *Cuentas Claras, para banda sinfónica y dos sintetizadores opcionales*, *¡Vaya!*, and *Vitrales*.

Glenn R. Garrido was born in Maracaibo, Venezuela. He received a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Engineering from University of Zulia in 1988 and a Bachelor's degree in music from Zulia State Conservatory in Maracaibo, Venezuela. He served from 1991 to 1993 as Assistant Director of Bands at the University of New Hampshire where he received the Master of Arts in Music with emphasis in conducting. He received a Ph.D. in Music Education from University of Florida in May 2000. He is a member of the College Band Directors National Association, the Music Education National Conference, Georgia Music Educators Association, and the World Association for Symphonic Bands and Ensembles. Currently, Dr. Garrido is an Associate Professor of Music, Director of Bands and Coordinator of the Music Education Program at Berry College in Rome, Georgia (USA).