



# *Popular Tradition*

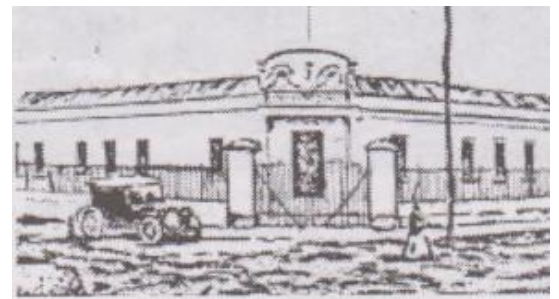
Folklore Studies Center  
University of San Carlos of Guatemala





# Music

## in New Guatemala of the Assumption (1776–1944)



National Conservatory of Music  
(Engraving circa 1919)

### THE NEW GUATEMALA OF THE ASSUMPTION

*"Guatemala of the Assumption,  
third city of the conquerors!  
Now the little white houses are real,  
surprised from the mountain like  
Nativity toys,  
I'm filled with pride by the human  
gesture of its walls clergy or soldiers  
dressed by time, I'm saddened by the  
closed balconies  
and the old-fashioned gates make  
me feel like a child again.  
Now the children's races through the  
streets are real,  
and the girls' voices playing  
Andares:  
—'Andares! Andares!'  
—'What did Andares say?'  
—'That I may go through!'  
My people! My people! I repeat  
to believe I am arriving.  
Its joyful plain..."*

— Miguel Ángel Asturias

The New Guatemala of the Assumption marks a stage that, while still bearing some colonial traits, opens pathways toward new dimensions in the future. It represents the struggle between a colonial past and the broadening of new ideas in every sense Guatemala with a new face and new dramas, emerging from a medieval society into adventures that would revolutionize political and social thought.

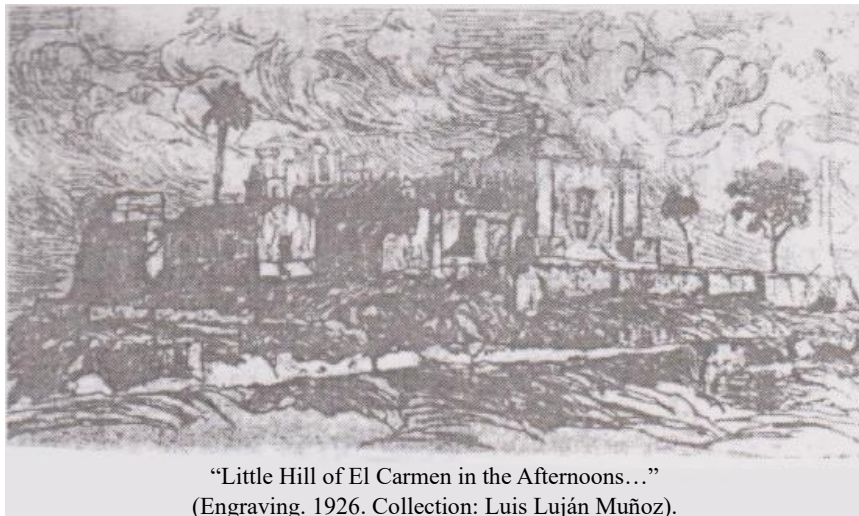
After various valleys were reviewed to determine which one met the necessary conditions for relocating the new city, and following the verdict issued by the examining commission, Mayorga, "with the vote of the royal agreement, decided that the city be built on the plain of El Rodeo, with a slight inclination toward the eastern part of the valley. However, due to later disagreements, the plain

of La Virgen was ultimately chosen" (P. Valenzuela).

At that time, the Hermitage on the hill of El Carmen already existed, and since the year 1749 according to our historian Valenzuela an ordinary mayorship had been instituted, in view of the growing number of Spaniards who had already settled in the town.

Don Luis Díez Navarro had designed the layout of the new city, and in light of the painful experience of previous earthquakes, the form and materials of construction were carefully reconsidered. Thus, the priest Bernardo Muñoz advised that new buildings be constructed with precautions against tremors. The expert Francisco Javier Gálvez proposed the invention of a new method as Valenzuela emphasizes for building, due to the frequent





"Little Hill of El Carmen in the Afternoons..."  
(Engraving. 1926. Collection: Luis Luján Muñoz).

earthquakes. When the attorney general, Dr. Cistué, was asked for an opinion, he gave the following view, as summarized by Valenzuela: "...Dr. Cistué believed that single-story houses would be safer against earthquakes; however, the city would then occupy a very large expanse of land, distances would be greater, and interaction among neighbors less frequent. Architecturally, the buildings would lack beauty, and many would not face the street due to the presence of commercial shops.

Two-story houses, in his opinion, posed greater risk during earthquakes; yet they would be healthier due to better ventilation, more beautiful in appearance, and would save land. Economically, they would be more beneficial for the owners, as the lower floors could be rented as shops, and many rooms could be rented to people without homes of their own." "If two-story buildings were to be constructed, it could also be arranged that all houses include covered walkways or porticoes at street level, so that people may pass through them during rainy weather, free from the discomforts of water and mud something that would make the city

extremely comfortable and beautiful."

The doctor favored three-story houses, with interior walls made of wood. The first floor would be built of stone, or of brick and lime, or *talpetate*; the second and third floors, being lighter, would be made of *bajareque*. Dr. Cistué also pointed out a certain monotony in the facades, suggesting that "...whether one or two stories, the houses should be harmonious with each other both in height and facade, for which engineers SHOULD

PROVIDE THE NECESSARY GUIDELINES; avoiding that each person builds them... at their own whim or fancy..." As for the streets and their paving, due to a lack of government funds, each neighbor, upon constructing their house, was to pave the front of it a vara and a half wide; the rest would be done by the government. And although Dr. Cistué's report was approved by royal decree, "... at the time of lot distribution and building construction, it was not followed, allowing each owner to build their house however they wished." The religious orders began their constructions with the clear intention of replicating the former style; the same was considered for the organizational system of the government. Sociologists suggest that the "colonial adventure," as G. Bockler writes, unfolded based on religious fanaticism and an unequal classist system that included an exaggerated interdependence of superiority and inferiority: "...The emergence of a colonial-type social stratification begins when the military and technical superiority of the Spaniard tears



"Large house on Soledad Alley, in the San Sebastián neighborhood..."  
December, 1975. (Photograph by Mauro Calanchina)



apart the native society...” However, it will be the specific forms of landownership and exploitation, born from that initial confrontation, that will endure in the long run. After the dispossession of Indigenous lands, the conqueror would open a new chapter with the establishment of *caballerías* (land grants for horsemen), *peonías* (grants for foot soldiers), and *encomiendas* (systems of entrusted Indigenous labor), all of which inherently contained the seeds of a segmented and unequal system. This system embedded within itself hierarchies among the Spaniards (replicating the stratified social structure of the Iberian Peninsula by creating positions of superiority and inferiority), while placing Indigenous peoples at the very bottom, primarily through enslavement and forced agricultural labor.

This persistent fact of social stratification must be considered a fundamental element, for it would also arise in the New Guatemala during its foundational period. To preserve the distances imposed during the previous era, the new order sought not only to uphold the system itself but also, in religious terms, to maintain the same structure so much so that the infamous tribunal of the Inquisition continued to wield its fearsome power during these early years. The aim, then, as we have pointed out, was to continue and firmly maintain the social division, preached to their benefit by Christian dogma.

This social division had its roots in the formative period of the Iberian world and was transplanted by the Iberians who came during the conquest of the Americas.

“...The life of that reality called Spain and of that man called

Spaniard is woven through the interrelations of the three castes of believers that contributed to its formation: the Islamic, the Jewish, and the Christian. Among them, a balance prevailed, arising in part from the division of labor (the dominance of techniques and certain forms of social organization by the Muslims; the cultivation of science, philosophy, and finance by the Jews; and the exercise of leadership roles as well as warlike tasks by the Christians) and in part from the formation of a value system that involved, in shared collective representations, beliefs contributed by each.” As the Christian came to dominate over the other two, the roles traditionally held by Jews and Muslims were relegated to a secondary status and condemned.



Thus, Christians refrained from dedicating themselves to such trades, giving prominence instead to leadership, which would come to characterize the Hispanic identity. This also led to the persecution and condemnation of Jews and Muslims, as was clearly seen in various examples throughout the Americas by the action of the “Holy Office.”

This stance in turn laid the groundwork for the intense religious fanaticism that characterized the colonial period and the “worshippers” of colonialism. Fortunately, in the New Guatemala, due to a series of factors we will

enumerate, there was a sharp resistance to the continuation of such a system. Even though the relocation disrupted various existing organizations many of which had become firmly established and were already outdated for the time it also led to a deepening of social divisions, which culminated in the so-called “independence” and class struggles, a phenomenon that has continued to intensify gradually up to the present day. The breakdown of the colonial structure in the New Guatemala was a consequence of the socio-political struggles in Europe that resulted in the French Revolution. The ideas of thinkers such as Diderot, Voltaire, and Rousseau, known in the European colonies of the Americas, opened the eyes of the colonial societies to their reality and awakened a longed-for thirst for rights inherent to every individual.

Criticism of the aristocracy which saw itself as having more rights due to its descent from “noble families of the conquistadors” and was one of the major problems of New Spain became a central topic of strong commentary. The newspaper *El Editor Constitucional*, which was among the most important outlets fighting for independence, published some of the most poignant fables, including that of the “Peacock” an apologue aimed at one of the wealthiest families in Guatemala, which prided itself on holding a noble title, according to Salazar.

Pre-independence ideas were widely disseminated thanks to tools such as the press and, especially, the Enlightenment. While it is true that a particular group formed the so-called *ilustrados* (the enlightened or enlightened thinkers), their ideas spread to the general population through the dissemination channels



mentioned.

Carlos Meléndez, in his work "La ilustración en el antiguo Reino de Guatemala", explains that one of the core goals of Enlightenment thought was the aspiration to reform individuals, in order to thereby reform society. The aim was to lead the people onto the path of progress, because:

**"It will lead us to a state in which all people will be happy, where evil will not exist."**

According to intellectuals of that time, this state could be achieved through the diffusion of reason, since it allows humans to master the environment around them. He adds that: "...efforts should therefore be directed toward making what belongs to the world of ideas the actual way of life for the billions of human beings who live or should live within civilization." In other words, the various features of the Enlightenment movement that was emerging became visible through the idea of a "new belief" gradually being introduced namely: "...the feeling that humans are not out of place in this world; that, in a certain sense, this world is designed for humans to live in it." He continues: "The faith of the enlightened is that paradise is to be found on Earth... in the future, yes, but on Earth."

This, then, is an index of the need for change that was already being felt: the structure of the previous system was perceived as outdated, and the population had grown considerably, multiplying its needs. The Church, in the eyes of the Enlightened thinkers, was seen through its dogmas as conservative and an ally of the old regime. As they saw it: "Original sin, in Christian dogma, and ignorance, in the Enlightenment conception, are

the obstacles preventing a good life in this world." That is why: "The Enlightenment, in a way, frees us from original sin, so strongly upheld by the Church in its secular tradition." The Enlightenment believed that: "Man is naturally good; it is society through its abuses and prejudices that corrupts the individual." But those distortions, they argued, were not definitive; they were flaws that could be overcome through reason, education, and reform.

These ideas, of course, were viewed as dangerous by both the government and the clergy, and although some sectors of the aristocracy appreciated them to a degree, they had no real intention of putting them into practice. The Criollo class, however, enthusiastically embraced Enlightenment, especially those sectors that would later be known as the "founding fathers" or "patriots." While they saw these ideas as a path to independence from Spanish rule, they also envisioned a shift in power in which they themselves would become the new leaders. This dynamic lead perhaps unexpectedly to civic uprisings and independence movements.

Institutions of the time among them, the university while not entirely breaking from traditional molds, underwent undeniable renewal (Meléndez, *ibid.*).

Other key groups in the development of the city, such as the artisans, organized into guilds, and the merchants, also began to loosen traditional constraints, often demonstrating a strong spirit of progress and cooperation. Even lower social classes in urban areas actively participated in these changes and played a role in the

broader push to break with past practices.

The struggle would also bring as a reward the social elevation of certain groups, notably the group of free artisans. The first were organized into guilds in the capitals of the kingdom, while the latter were grouped into confraternities or brotherhoods in towns with more freedom, since their numbers were not sufficient to establish formal guilds (C. Meléndez, *ibid.*).

Meléndez also identifies among the causes of these changes the increase in foreign trade, the emergence of new forms of labor that clashed with traditional ones, and the Spanish state's own impulse for reform, brought about as a result of the abandonment of the mercantilist system to allow space for newer economic ideas linked to the innovative forces derived from early industrialism and economic liberalism.

The connection of the guilds with industry in its various forms and development made them, along with their privileges and special entitlements, a significant barrier to the forces of change, "giving rise to unfortunate economic stagnation." For this reason, the constitutional movement of 1812 sought to dismantle the guilds in the name of freedom of labor.

The struggles for emancipation from Spanish rule in 1821 eventually led to government control by certain groups, particularly two: the liberals and the conservatives. Ideological battles culminated in the armed struggle led by the liberal group in 1871, in which lawyer Miguel García Granados played a key role. During this period from the founding of Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción to the movements of 1821 and 1871



ideas of progress in many fields were sharp and transformative. A way of life began to take shape, gradually becoming more regulated, although even today there continue to be outbursts of movements advocating freedom of thought and protesting political and social injustices. These form part of the Guatemalan social mindset. These constant struggles for power would not allow for long periods of peace or stability necessary for the normal development of aesthetic movements, which were almost always interrupted and gave way to new ones. Nonetheless, it is possible to trace a thread that allows us to determine their evolutionary path up to the present day.

For historians, this period is characterized by frequent struggles between both factions, extending throughout all the provinces of Central America. Later came other events, such as the temporary annexation to Iturbide's government, driven by the lack of patriotic sentiment among treacherous aristocratic families, who following the illogical medieval mindset of social class differentiation and placing value on vain and hollow concepts like "aristocratic heritage" encouraged said annexation. However, once the people developed a sense of patriotism, the annexation was broken off, though the nation also suffered territorial losses consequently.

The power struggles among the provinces continued, and eventually, the personal ambitions of those who called themselves *caudillos* led to the disintegration of Central America into the current republics. This is the panorama of that period: ideological and political struggles, not for the benefit of the people, but for the interests of social classes,



Benedicto Sáenz, son. (1815–1857).  
Lithograph from the late 19th century.

specific groups, or individuals, turning our Central America into a battlefield.

The intellectuals of the time, who infused the people with their writings, thereby opened a positive path for the expression of ideas of "nationhood" and "patriotism" and this, above all, is what characterizes the musical expressions of that period. Among the ideas publicly promoted by the precursors of the 1821 independence movement to raise awareness among citizens, the writings of Dr. Pedro Molina stand out, particularly his major work, the newspaper *El Editor Constitucional*, which was later renamed *El Genio de la Libertad*. This publication was one of the main platforms for expressing the newly born sense of national consciousness. Thus, in issue number 14, dated Monday, August 27, 1821, we find the following editorial: "When we began to publish our newspaper under the title *Editor Constitucional*, we set out to

enlighten the people by providing them with an understanding of their true interests. We made several observations about the inequality produced by the new system in relation to the Americans; however, since prejudice still had widespread dominion in these lands, we judged that the time was not yet ripe to clearly express our way of thinking.

Later, we noted the rapid progress of ENLIGHTENMENT BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS. The works of Mr. de Pradt, esteemed by scholars, dispelled errors that had been venerated as truths simply because they had aged. The cataracts that had clouded the political vision of the Americans gradually disappeared from their eyes. We continued to follow the course of ideas in our writings until we reached the fortunate outcome in which we now find ourselves."



This way of thinking among the Enlightened thinkers, as previously mentioned, took root among the people; and musical expression also became a channel for these ideas, as the freedom to write and think brought with it the freedom to explore new forms up until then limited or unknown. During the period known as the pre-independence era, that is, the early years of La Nueva Guatemala, religious music continued to dominate for a time. However, as participants in a shifting era, composers were not isolated from the new ideas. Some of them traveled beyond our borders and returned with a wealth of experiences that contributed to the technical advancement of musical art and the renewal of its forms.

Thus, religious music gradually gave way, making room for a type of music that would fulfill the aspirations of the time. The "freedom" to create, to express ideas and emotions that did not align with the colonial yoke as religious form did to some extent found new paths in expressive forms outside the church, better aligned with the moment and more worldly in nature.

Among the earliest musicians of this period, we find a group whose names appear in the records of the Ecclesiastical Chapter. Among them were Josef Estrada, Nicolás Espinoza, and José Andrino, a violinist and singer who served for over forty years in the chapel of the Metropolitan Cathedral and to whom, according to Poggio, the invention of the large violón is attributed. Esteban Garrido is also listed as interim organist in 1802, and Benedicto Sáenz Sr. as the official organist in 1803.

These documents also mention compositions bequeathed to the

Church by Rafael Castellanos, who upon his death in 1871 left to the chapel of the Metropolitan Cathedral various works he had purchased with his own money, as well as others of his own creation. The total value of the legacy exceeded eight hundred pesos. Notably, among the bequeathed items was a collection of villancicos by Don Vicente Sáenz.

The most important figure of the time, however, is Benedicto Sáenz Jr., who in many ways altered the course of the musical current of the era.

He was the first musician to travel throughout Europe, and upon returning from his research journey, he gave great impetus to instrumentation, which was "extremely underdeveloped," according to Vásquez. He was the first orchestra conductor, the first to understand operatic study and theatrical performance, and the one who directed it in Guatemala.

A great composer of sacred music, among his principal works are Mass (which he had printed in Paris), religious pieces, the *Domine Salvam fac Republicam*, *Regina Sine Lave Concepta*, a *Te Deum*, *Lauda Mus*, *Office for the Dead*, and *El Miserere*. However, his contribution to secular music is also notable with *tonadas* and patriotic hymns. He held a degree from the Faculty of Medicine and was "the first to undertake the monumental task of translating the texts of various Italian operas into our language."

The musician and historian Rafael Vásquez notes that he was the first musician to whom the Guatemalan nation owes its musical direction along new paths. He was an illustrious eclectic.

Other composers who worked in the sacred genre include: Indalecio Castro; Vicente Peralta Flores, author of a *Miserere*; Lucas Paniagua, who wrote a Mass for four voices and orchestra; Victor M. Figueroa, with a *Votive Mass*; and Miguel A. Paniagua, with a Mass and a *Miserere*. Among other composers who worked in this sacred genre especially the Mass are Luis Gamero, Nemesio Moraga, Rafael España, Juan de J. Fernández, Remigio Calderón, and Pedro Nolasco, the latter being the author of *villancicos*.

The emerging momentum in Guatemalan musical life was enriched by the contributions of private associations, such as the Philharmonic Association established in 1813. Individuals like León Garrido and Miguel Pontaza founded schools where music was taught. In this vein, others also contributed through their academies: Eulalio Samayoa, Juan de Jesús Hernández, Alfonso Méndez (Schools of Santa Cecilia), Máximo Andrino, as well as the Seminary College, the School of San Ignacio, and San Buenaventura, all of which had their own ensembles composed of students.

The Economic Society of Friends of the Country hired Don Domingo Speranza to establish a singing academy, according to Poggio, with the aim of providing voices for opera theater companies.

In 1860, the Philharmonic Society of Amateurs was founded; even earlier, in July 1813, Don Eulalio Samayoa had founded the Philharmonic Association of Guatemala.

We must consider the direction that musical art was taking during this time as highly significant.





The Teatro de Carrera, 1859, later called the National Theater and finally the Colón Theater, in the new Guatemala de la Asunción.

The private music schools, by informing students about the latest European musical trends and through the visits of foreign companies, brought knowledge of composers, works, and styles. Thus, in the year 1835, the first opera was performed in Guatemala a valuable detail provided by Sáenz Poggio: "...around the year 1835, the first opera was staged in this capital, in a lovely masonry theater called Fedriani. The location of this theater is on 5th Street East, marked with number 7. (In 1877, the numbering of houses and streets began, replacing some of the previous informal names; therefore, the information Poggio provides about the location of these buildings was recorded in 1878, when his *History of Guatemalan Music* was published). "There, the opera *Adolfo y Clara* was performed. Around 1843, another theater was established and was called "Teatro de las Carnicerías" ("The Butcher Shops Theater") because the location had previously housed shops supplying meat to the population. That site is currently occupied by La Albóndiga, located

at 7th Avenue North, No. 3, on 15 de Septiembre Street. Only one opera was performed there: *The Barber of Seville*. Later, Don Apolinario Cáceres opened a theater named Teatro de Oriente, located at what is now number 29 on 7th Street East, right on the corner next to the place known as Caballo Rubio.

Don Anselmo Sáenz staged the following operas there: *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Il Furioso*, *La Cenerentola*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, and *La Donna del Lago*, all performed by local Guatemalan artists, as had been the tradition up to that point.

Don Benedicto Sáenz (the son), upon returning from a trip to Europe, staged the opera *Belisario* in that same theater, and later, in the Teatro de Variedades, he presented *Norma*, *La Fille du Régiment*, and *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

In 1859, Don Pablo and Don Felipe Sáenz, along with Don Prudencio España, staged several operas. A Spaniard named Don Manuel Lorenzo attended one of these performances. Noticing the great enthusiasm for that kind of entertainment in Guatemala and

seeing that construction on the Teatro de Carrera was nearing completion he decided to travel to New York to bring back an Italian opera company.

This company did indeed come, bringing others as well, and following their example were Don Domingo Speranza, Tomás Pasini, Domingo Lorini, Timolión Baratini, Egisto Petrelli, the government of the Republic, and Don Alberto Frenchel.

Thus, we know that during this period, organized ensembles such as bands and the orchestra that accompanied the opera companies were already in place. Composers were writing works for orchestra, and the operatic genre, along with the enthusiasm it inspired at the time, was partly responsible for the construction of the *Teatro de Carrera*.

Poggio, in his *History of Music*, gives us a rather vivid portrait of how passionate General Carrera was when he believed his power or pride was somehow slight. Among the anecdotes that link him to music and to the famous theater that bore his name, several stand out.

When Carrera entered the capital of Guatemala in 1839, he brought with him a military band he had arranged to form in the mountains. This band was made up of instruments such as drums, cornets, and fifes, and was directed by Carlos Urtarte. Under the leadership of Captain José Aguilar, the band "made some progress." Poggio notes that Guatemalans referred to the band as *la tambora* (the drum band).

For political reasons, Carrera had to go to El Salvador, and after a peace treaty with the Salvadoran general Malespín in Ahuachapán,



the latter gave Carrera a serenade one evening with the Salvadoran military band organized and directed by Maestro José Martínez, "a native of Florida and former director of the band of the León Regiment in the city of Havana." According to the same source, "upon hearing the military tones of that band, Carrera was filled with jealousy and immediately sought to contract Maestro Martínez to come to Guatemala to form another band, equal to or better than the Salvadoran one."

At the end of 1842, Martínez arrived in Guatemala, and Carrera commissioned Don Juan Matheu to assist him in organizing the band; for that purpose, Matheu sent for instruments and uniforms from Havana. The band grew to have 50 members, and one night, in General Carrera's Hall, the first notes of "that music which is the soul of war..." were heard in Guatemala. Poggio adds that while the musicians played the opening piece of the concert, Carrera silently squeezed Don Juan Matheu's hand in a gesture of gratitude and satisfaction.

Three years after Martínez arrived in Guatemala, he had to flee due to being persecuted for his political involvement against Carrera.

That same spirit of jealousy as General Carrera's personality, as mentioned by Poggio, also influenced the importance given to the construction of a theater that would match the stature of the capital city. In issue number 64 of Volume XI of the *Gaceta de Guatemala*, the following information is recorded: "...and from before independence until recent years, the lack of a formal and comfortable building where

dramatic and lyrical performances could be held has been addressed by the construction of various makeshift theaters, imperfect. Six or seven such theaters had already been built, and after serving for a short time for one or another company either those coming from abroad or those formed with local artists they have gradually disappeared, leaving behind only the charming yet small theater that the intelligent and hardworking Don Julián Rivera set up in his variety establishment."

On August 10, a decree was signed by His Excellency, the President, ordering the construction of the building, which was completed in the year 1859.

Among the descriptions of such a beautiful structure, it is important to highlight details concerning its seating capacity and the distribution of the auditorium. From a courtyard with lunette-style seating, accessed through three doors, there were *sofas with cushions upholstered in crimson fabric, providing 450 seats. There were 14 doors to the 14 box seats in the orchestra level, each with 8 to 10 seats. Additionally, there were 2 doors beneath the staircases leading to private sections, designed for the comfort of the audience, one area designated for ladies and the other for gentlemen. Two staircases, each two varas wide (about 1.67 meters), were built with steps made from single stone blocks extracted from the ruins of the former capital. These led to the second-floor corridor, where there were 16 entry doors to other box seats, and eight to ten more doors leading to the upper gallery. This gallery contained 85 front-row seats, 320 bench seats, and two doors that led to the lounges adjacent to the rest areas.*

The Carrera Theater was inaugurated on the night of October 23, 1859 (the eve of Carrera's birthday). The theater had been given to Mr. Iglesias's company for a few performances, and they staged the drama *Torquato Tasso* by Goldoni. Following a grand orchestral overture, a curtain speech was delivered: an ode titled *At the Inauguration of the Carrera Theater*, composed by the Spanish writer Manuel P. de la Sala, editor of the European newspaper *La Península Ibérica*, who happened to be in Guatemala at the time. The ode was followed by the announced drama and then a short piece, concluding the performance. The attendance was so large that the venue could barely accommodate the crowd comfortably. (Poggio, p. 63).



Later, on November 8 of the same year, the first performance of Italian opera was held, presenting the four-act *dramma lirico* titled *Ernani*, or *Castilian Honor*.



In 1875, "The Supreme Government decided to make some improvements to the theater." By 1871, its name had been changed to "National Theater." The improvements involved costumes, the stage, and especially the lighting system, which was completely replaced" as the old one was substituted with a gas lighting system. The main hall was illuminated by 19 chandeliers containing a total of 83 lights, in addition to a footlight battery of about 38 lamps along the front edge of the stage, in front of the curtain. The lights could be raised and dimmed simultaneously across all chandeliers thanks to a general control lever in the machinery."

In the theater archives, as part of the orchestra's repertoire, the following operas were listed: *Hernani*, *Ruy Blas*, *Rigoletto*, *Victor Pisani*, *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *The Counterfeiters*, *Faust*, *Crispino e la Comare*, *I Vespri Siciliani*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Il Trovatore*, *Don Pasquale*, *Macbeth*, *I Puritani*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Robert le Diable*, *La Traviata*, *Lucrezia Borgia*, *Les Martyrs*, *I Due Foscari*, *Linda di Chamounix*. In addition to these, performances included *Joan of Arc*, *Norma*, *La Sonnambula*, *Martha*, *Othello*, among others.

Another significant reference provided by Poggio concerns the number of members in the orchestra. From before 1840 until 1875, the orchestra consisted of approximately 35 violinists, classified as "distinguished violinists" from both the old and the modern school. Notable names among the three divisions of composition include Mateo Sáenz, Rafael España, Anselmo Sáenz, Salvador Iriarte, Nemesio Moraga, and Indalecio Castro.

Among the "violinists" (a term also encompassing violoncellists and double bassists), 16 are mentioned, as well as 5 flutists, 8 clarinetists whom Poggio refers to as excellent including the composer Lucas Paniagua, 1 bassoonist, 3 cornetists, and 8 trumpeters (French horn players).

There is also record of highly skilled luthiers, such as Santiago de Paz, Santiago Ganuza, and Melecio Morales, who crafted violins, violas, cellos, and double basses.

By 1892, the theater known as the "National" was renamed "Teatro Colón." According to historian Francis Polo Sifontes, it was one of the most beautiful theaters ever built in the country and a glory of the government that commissioned its construction. It could have been restored after the earthquakes of 1917–1918, but the political passions of that era preferred to demolish it to erase the memory of its origins.

In the field of composition, since the early 19th century, the influence of the environment on composers is evident. With Don Benedicto Sáenz (the son), composition takes on new directions, and soon José Escolástico Andrino and Eulalio Samayoa also openly participate in these new musical pursuits.

The work of Escolástico Andrino is particularly significant for both its musical and political ideology. A master violinist, he traveled to Havana and joined the orchestra of the Teatro de Tacón, where he performed as one of the first violins. His compositions include three short masses, two symphonies, and a piece titled *La Mora Generosa*, which, according to

Poggio, was never performed because he had not finished arranging it before his death. Among his literary endeavors, he also wrote a small booklet titled *Nociones Filarmónicas*, and, as a true representative of his era, he was a man deeply involved in politics. Also from that period is violinist Juan de Jesús Fernández, composer of several pieces, including the *Mass of Our Lady of Sorrows*, and Remigio Calderón, who also composed a mass.

A product of the Enlightenment, Eulalio Samayoa like José Escolástico Andrino was deeply influenced by its ideals. Although he represented the classical movement in Guatemala, his early works were composed in the religious style of the pre-independence period. Poggio himself attests to Samayoa's investigative spirit: "...his constant dedication to *Facistol* singing and Gregorian chant earned him such mastery in these areas that no other teacher in Guatemala has since matched it." It is worth remembering that Samayoa was highly interested in European musical and political movements. The precedent for this renewal had already been set by Benedicto Sáenz (the son), and Samayoa (1791–1859), like Andrino, lived during the time of the 1821 independence struggles and participated not only as a citizen but also through their artistic expressions. Among Samayoa's musical works is a *divertimento* for orchestra and a set of six symphonies. Notably, his *Sinfonía Cívica* stands out for its ideological content. According to researcher Héctor Lainfiesta, this original work is listed in a volume of the *Repertorio y Registro de la Propiedad Musical* (Society of Authors and Composers)



from 1893, which is housed in the National Museum of History.

In the same article (September 1968), Lainfiesta also provides information about other works by Samayoa that are part of the music archive at the National Conservatory of Music.

Composer Humberto Ayestas rescued several of Samayoa's compositions that were about to be incinerated by someone unaware of their valued individual who likely caused the irreversible loss of other works by Samayoa and other composers. Among the salvaged pieces is *La estatua ridicula*, which Samayoa called a *Toccata for clarinets and violas*.

In 1981, Maestro Manuel Alvarado revealed Symphony No. 7 in E-flat major, which, like the Civic Symphony, carries a subtitle. The latter *The Triumph of the Federal Arms in Xiquilisco* was composed in July of 1834.

Another work by this composer is the Historical Symphony in D major, premiered by Maestro Humberto Ayestas on August 23, 1979, with the National Symphony Orchestra. It consists of five movements, and the third, a solemn march, is marked with the addition "with octave flutes and other military instruments."

Journalist René Augusto Flores notes that although little is known about his life, there are indications that he was involved in the so-called Conspiracy of Belén, an early independence plot devised years before 1821. He adds that when the composer dedicated his sixth symphony to the musical guild, he wrote: "I live peacefully in the condition of an honest artisan, who never abandons his profession, nor

is puffed up by the honors bestowed by rank or public office..."

He also composed a Requiem in E-flat and several Masses, and he was the founder of the Philharmonic Association of Guatemala in 1813.

With these contributions, the formally organized period of composition and early significant musical production in Guatemala essentially ends. By 1871, with the Liberal Reform, the arts naturally began to take new directions.

The period that defines the 19th-century landscape is of great importance for the intellectual development of Guatemala. The Enlightenment bore fruit in this regard; although some authors diverged from religious music, the environment did not allow new trends to be deeply explored. This was due in part to the lack of an educational center where a broader range of experiences essential to the comprehensive training of composers or musicians in general could be taught. This situation changed following the Liberal Revolution of 1871, with the founding of the National Conservatory of Music on August 3, 1880. Its purpose was to provide professional training in the various fields of music, as well as to promote and develop music in all its forms. At that point, with a formal center for musical education, the study of harmony and composition according to the standards of the time became part of the curriculum, as did instrumentation.

The growing interest in music initially led to the formation of societies to support it. One such organization, "The Philharmonic Society of Guatemala," was inspired by the Conservatory itself. Don Juan Aberle, director of an existing

conservatory and of the society, requested from the government in 1875 the amount of \$165 to cover the conservatory's operational expenses. This institution, as previously mentioned, was officially established by presidential decree on August 3, 1880. Thus began a period of structured, state-sponsored musical education that continues to this day. According to González Orellana in his *History of Education in Guatemala* and based on selected documents from a study by researcher and teacher Héctor Lainfiesta, the Conservatory of Music was founded by a government resolution on June 29, 1873, and was housed in the building of the former Santo Domingo convent. "At the time of its inauguration, it had 52 boarding students and 20-day students. The direction of this institution was entrusted to the Italian maestro Juan Aberle, who had come to the country as the conductor of an opera company's orchestra." Three years later, this important institution had to suspend its activities due to financial difficulties faced by the regime because of the war with El Salvador.

A government decree provided to me by Maestro Héctor Lainfiesta states: Government Decree.

*"Executive Power Palace. Guatemala, August 3, 1880. Believing it to be not only useful but also necessary to create a Conservatory of Music in order to prevent the extinction of the orchestra due to a lack of professors to replace those who currently comprise the one in this capital, etc., the President of the Republic decrees:*



1. To establish in the former Convent of La Merced a National Conservatory, which should begin with the students from the Music section of the Institute of Arts and Crafts... (Rafael Vásquez, *Historia de la Música en Guatemala*, p. 81).

The music studies that were carried out at the School of Arts and Crafts were expanded, and although the Conservatory could not yet be created due to fiscal reasons, a regulation was issued for the National School of Music and Declamation. (\*Bauer Paiz, Alfonso – *Destellos y Sombras de la Historia Patria*).

The creation of the Conservatory would have a significant influence on the advancement of composition and music in general not only due to the institution's existence, but also because the State granted scholarships to the most outstanding students so they could study in the best European music centers.

On the other hand, the nation, education, ideas, and the city itself began to transform in accordance with this new historical period. The scientific advances of the era, along with new technologies and social transformations, changed the face of our city.

Education in all its forms had notably changed since pre- and independence times. As Don Miguel García Granados recounts in his memoirs: "...After having acquired the basic rudiments of reading, I began to attend a public school called San José Calazans. A brother of mine, almost three years older than I, was already attending that same school. The building consisted of two classrooms arranged at an angle. At the far end of one room

were the youngest children, who were learning to read. Two rows of benches followed, where the boys from more comfortable families sat, we paid a small, though very modest, fee. We were the 'decent' ones, or as they used to say, the children. In the other, larger room was the entire class made up of children from working-class families, who were learning to write. At the vertex of the angle formed by the two rooms sat the head teacher at his desk, and in the center of the larger room sat the second teacher at his own desk. The head teacher would cut our pens and correct the handwriting of the 'children', while the second teacher did the same for the working-class students. There were about 200 of us in total. We would arrive at eight in the morning and leave at five; however, we were dismissed fifteen minutes earlier than the rest of the students, at which point the head teacher would call out 'Váyense los niños' ('Children, leave'), and we would rush out without any ceremony."

Our only task, both in the morning and in the afternoon, was to complete a handwriting line following the model corresponding to our level. This task could be completed in just over an hour, and since for most of the year nothing else was taught, it can be said that we spent more than half our time doing nothing. On Saturday mornings, Christian doctrine was taught using Ripalda, and in the afternoon, instead of reading and writing, we would recite a rosary, which was counted by the teacher. Lessons in sacred history were given orally by the head teacher from 7 to 8 in the morning, which I rarely attended. As for Spanish grammar, I never saw a student who knew it, and in arithmetic, we did not go beyond the four basic operations.

The most common punishment was flogging (with whips), usually applied over the clothing. But when the offense was serious, the punishment was administered directly to the skin. The offender was taken to a corner of the room, undressed, and the teacher administered three, six, or twelve lashes depending on the severity of the misbehavior.

While this took place, four of the older boys, holding out their capes, would conceal the scene from the rest of the class. (Virgilio Rodríguez Beteta – *Ideologías de la Independencia*).

Later, in the period following independence, education began to take a different direction as a means of shaping individuals. However, the ideas for which many advocated, when handled by fanatics, often caused harm even as relative progress was achieved. This was the case during the liberal period, when certain individuals embraced philosophical positivism with local variations, and for a time, creative expression was stifled.

The new political era was seized upon by positive ideas, which were incorporated into educational curricula. Politics came to embody a form of personal revenge, and various kinds of differences were invoked under the banner of positivism. Those who embarked on this path overreached in some cases such as Rufino Barrios. On this, the humanist Jesús Julián Amurrio González writes in his study "*El Positivismo en Guatemala*": "General Miguel García Granados was a moderate liberal... He was not one of the 'fanatics', because the history of the early years of our independent life had taught him that violent and abrupt changes bred backlash... Miguel García Granados was indeed anti-clerical.



...his moderation, the product of his deep historical knowledge and his temperament, clashed with the enthusiasm, resolve, and energy of Justo Rufino Barrios, who by nature and due to the struggles of his restless life wanted to see changes take effect immediately... If García Granados's anticlericalism stemmed from ideology, Justo Rufino Barrios's was born of personal hardship. It is very likely that his anticlerical stance was not premeditated. By this, I mean it did not arise from reading, studying, or indoctrination. But the opposition he began to feel when the Jesuits attacked him over the publications appearing in his newspaper *Malacate*, in Quetzaltenango, turned him anticlerical. Furthermore, the Church was still associated with the former regime and did not support the new liberal-reformist government. García Granados was stunned when, upon returning from a campaign in Honduras, he found that all monastic orders had been effectively expelled just as he had previously been dismayed to learn of the extradition order issued against the Jesuits by his colleague, who was then governor of Quetzaltenango."

This, however, was taken advantage of by intellectuals of the time for their own interests: "...Hispano-American positivists embraced concepts and attitudes that were essentially positivist, such as anti-metaphysical thinking and scientism. They adhered to the moral utopia that material improvement both biological and economic would lead to a higher moral standard. They based ethics and psychology on biology. The 'religion of humanity' was notably absent. They neglected the cultivation of the fine arts; in

particular, they overlooked literature.

Finally, they adopted positivism as the solution to educational problems, expecting from it a panacea for all evils." (Jesús Julián Amurrio–idem)

That same humanist, Amurrio, asserts that the fact the final years were a period of literary splendor in Hispanic America may be seen as proof that many intellectuals were not truly inspired by the positivist current.

Thus, the government did not serve as a guide for philosophical currents; rather, it was a moment seized for personal interests in an era rich in scientific rediscovery. This characterized the new paths taken in its trajectory, for they could not remain disconnected from the advancements already evident in other nations that had moved beyond the positive phase.

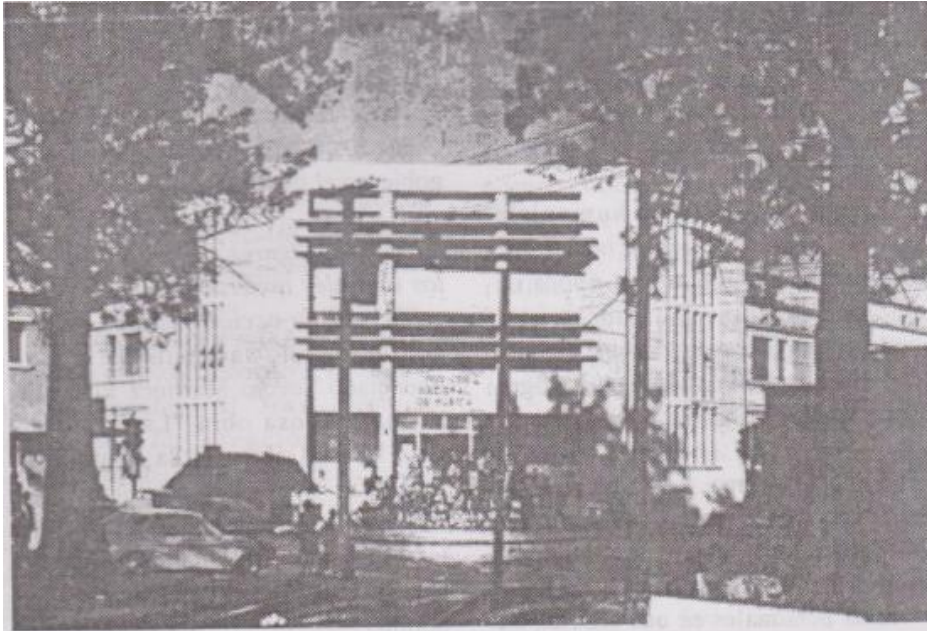
This period was yet another dictatorship. Let us gloss over some lines by Licenciado José Mata Gavidia, which also give us an idea of the times: "Until 1880, Barrios was a dictator; he ruled without any constitution and was cruel and bloodthirsty toward his enemies. He built roads that were required to pass through his property. He gagged the press and allowed only newspapers that flattered him. He stripped his adversaries of their property, and during the 14 years of his government, he amassed a fabulous fortune consisting of 13 houses in Guatemala City, 2 in Quetzaltenango, and one in New York; 15 high-production estates, 2 large saltworks... Just as the alliance with England cost Guatemala dearly during Carrera's government with the compromise over Belize, likewise the support Barrios

received from Benito Juárez led to the signing of a border treaty in 1882 in which Mexico was enormously favored, and Guatemala was stripped of jurisdiction over the region of Soconusco. Thus, Barrios not only failed to elevate Guatemala through Central American Union, but he also paid for foreign support with Guatemala's rich territory, legally ceded by his government to Mexico."

In the places and moments when liberals had enough power and freedom of action writes our brilliant historian-researcher Licenciado Severo Martínez Peláez in his magnificent work *La Patria del Criollo*: "...Gálvez, during his leadership of the State of Guatemala, for example: the interests of mid-level landowners prevailed and a policy began to be adopted that favored the ladinos of towns and cities but not the large sector of poor rural ladinos, and it was very unfavorable for the indigenous population."

He continues: "It is no problem at all to find out what the liberals wanted fifty years after independence, because that's when they seized power in Guatemala, imposed a terrible dictatorship, and achieved all their goals... Two pressing needs had been felt by medium and small landowners since their birth during the colonial era. These needs had grown by the mid-19th century with the prospect of exporting increasing quantities of coffee. The very production and export of that crop, already underway despite many difficulties, placed the new landowners in an economic position to organize, to forge an alliance with the city's merchants, to arm themselves and seize power in 1871.





Facade of the National Conservatory of Music (1970)

The new landowners finally succeeded in becoming the true masters of the indigenous people. Everything else depended on this: clearing land suitable for establishing new coffee estates, making them productive with nearly free forced labor, building roads and outposts to export the beans to markets, erecting poles and stringing wires for a telegraph and telephone network that would connect the estates to cities and cities to foreign buyers, etc.

At the base of the Reform lay, as one might expect, land and labor legislation. The land legislation unfolded in two directions. One was the gradual but effective suppression of the communal lands of indigenous villages. This major undertaking was carried out under the liberal doctrine that advocated increasing the number of landowners; BUT IT WAS LEGISLATED AND ACTED UPON IN SUCH A WAY THAT THIS INCREASE FAVORED THE UPPER-MIDDLE RURAL CLASS-THE LADINOS OF THE

VILLAGES AND CAST A GROWING MASS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, STRIPPED OF THEIR LANDS AND TERRIFIED, INTO THE LABOR MARKET. The labor legislation of the Reform created the regulatory instruments of a new form of servitude for the indigenous people, now in service of the interests of the estate owners. From the infamous **Reglamento de Jornaleros** (Laborers' Regulation) of Barrios's era to the less infamous **Ley de Vagancia** (Vagrancy Law) under the last coffee plantation dictator, Ubico, these laws were gradually perfected not humanized, as has been maliciously claimed..." (Some of the emphasis is mine.)

...from Barrios to Ubico, the Jornaleros (day laborers) manual invented and established by the government of the first mentioned dictator remained in effect...

This reality causes the scientific advances of the time in Guatemala to appear as allied instruments, and in a lesser sense, to lack the true

weight and prominence of genuine "scientific progress." (p. 80).

In aesthetic expressions, this is evident in neoclassicism: "The most overbearing neoclassical buildings are the headquarters of the generals or doctors of bourgeois democracy, around which beggars sleep or meditate, and pensioners read the newspaper..." (Desnoes, *Para verte mejor, Latinoamérica*. Ed. Siglo XXI).

If this atmosphere also stifled musical creation despite the officialization of instruction then the two or three composers who stand out, and who were awarded scholarships abroad, brought back elements of Romanticism. These were welcomed by the bourgeois aristocracy, though they failed to comprehend its philosophical underpinnings or the new technical propositions that, due to the era, had to be incorporated into music education and interpretation.

A precursor to Romantic tendencies in Guatemala and in a certain sense, a transitional composer into Romanticism was Lorenzo Morales, who composed the first overture, *El perfume de la infancia* ("The Fragrance of Childhood"), and Santa María. He served as professor of piano and harmony at the Conservatory during the time of Cantilena.

Julián González was another forerunner of Romantic trends, author of the orchestral suite *Guatemala* and a *Waltz*. The name of the Teatro de Carrera had been changed to Nacional in 1871, and in 1892, on the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America, it was renamed Teatro Colón. Julián González composed a waltz dedicated to this event, titled *Estudiantina Colón*.



González had studied in Italy. Herculano Alvarado and Manuel Figueroa studied there at the same time as he did, and with their enthusiasm for composition, they promoted the new knowledge they had acquired in Europe. Among Alvarado's known works is a Waltz in F, as well as nocturnes, minuets, and other pieces.

### THE ROMANTIC TRENDS

While most liberal thinkers embraced positivism, a doctrine that sought to eliminate anything lacking immediate utility politics operated freely, doing away with whatever it could not comprehend and yielding space to partisan interests and disciplines that could be used for its own benefit.

Under the tyranny of Barrios, classical studies, the arts, and philosophy were suppressed. Emphasis was placed instead on encyclopedic knowledge in the natural, physical, and mathematical sciences, while history was also pushed into the background. It has been said that romantic art was the first to become a "human document, a shouted confession, an open and naked wound." Its spread found fertile ground in nations whose societies were shaken by political and social upheaval, and such was the case in the Americas.

The reaction to this trend was Romanticism, which, at its core, incubated a revolution. Yet in its fervor, it followed three paths that would become, to varying degrees, its defining characteristics. For Hausser, Romanticism is labeled as sickly; the flight to the past is one form of the unrealistic and illusionistic traits of Romanticism though there is also flight to the future, to utopia, to things the

Romantic clings to, however insignificant they might seem.

Philosophically, Romanticism finds its roots in the torment of the world. People become more romantic and elegiac the more adverse their conditions are. Flight to utopia and to fairy tales, to the unconscious and the fantastical, to the gloomy and the secret, to childhood and nature, to dreams and madness these were all concealed and somewhat sublimated forms of the same sentiment: attempts to escape social and political chaos and anarchy.

Romanticism acknowledged no external bonds; it was incapable of binding itself and felt exposed and defenseless before the overpowering reality. "It either violated reality or surrendered to it blindly and without resistance but never felt itself equal to it."

Undoubtedly, contact with French Romanticism led to a search for new paths in thought and expression in our homeland. When discussing the hues that color this movement, it is important to highlight a certain emphasis on nationalism and individualism, as well as escapism and a resurgence of the past. On the other hand, there are traces of a return to nature a notion already anticipated by Rousseau challenging the urban, civilized, and aristocratic image of man, a shift that also found expression in exoticism.

Three major figures embody Romantic ideas in Guatemalan literature: José Milla y Vidaurre, José Batres Montúfar, and Enrique Gómez Carrillo. Within their work, the elements mentioned above clearly emerge. For instance, Milla's novels often portray a flight to the past; Gómez Carrillo's works evoke exoticism; and Batres Montúfar's poetry, particularly "Yo Pienso en

Ti", expresses heightened emotions that transcend their limits even beyond death (see *Estudios sobre José Milla*, Mario Alberto Carrera, p. 17). These features align closely with Romantic philosophy, which, in turn, influenced other art forms.

In music, an additional trait must be noted: virtuosity. In pursuit of it, many musical compositions veered toward excessive technical displays, where this showmanship often became the central element even at the expense of the musical form itself. Numerous composers and artists left Guatemala for political reasons, escaping the dictatorship of Barrios and the gag of Positivism. Upon returning, they brought new ideas and concepts that would contribute to the evolution of Guatemalan music.

This new phase, spanning from the late 19th century well into the 20th, marks a broad development of Romanticism in the history of Guatemalan music.

Víctor Manuel Figueroa, who traveled abroad between 1888 and 1900, brought back significant experiences from his time overseas. As a participant in Romantic currents, he composed a waltz titled *Pensamientos Íntimos* and a work called "Danza Indígena sobre Motivos Australianos".

Vásquez notes Figueroa's noteworthy dedication to teaching harmony, recognizing him as a complete musician: composer, performer, and teacher.

Another composer of this era was Miguel Espinoza (1858), trained in Europe and well-versed in harmony, counterpoint, and composition. Fully immersed in Romanticism, Espinoza also focused on music education.

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His works include a cadenza for Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 8 and a musical setting of the madrigal "Yo pienso en ti."

However, according to Vásquez, it was Luis Felipe Arias who brought Guatemalan musical expression to its highest peak during that period.

Born in Guatemala City on August 23, 1870, and passing away on March 24, 1908, Arias was not only a gifted composer and performer, but also an innovator and a political dissenter during the dictatorship of Estrada Cabrera. Described by Flores as the quintessential bohemian, he embodied pure Romantic idealism a dreamer, lost in his own visions, "with his feet somewhat in the clouds." Unable to bear the bleak reality under the oppressive regime of Estrada Cabrera, he tragically ended his life at a young age.

One night, while he was near the Teatro Colón with other "bohemian" companions, Luis Felipe Arias was the victim of a cowardly attack: a European adventurer in the service of the dictator Manuel Estrada Cabrera shot him without warning, fatally wounding him. Although friends took him immediately to a clinic and he underwent emergency surgery, he died hours later.

Born into a modest family, he was fortunate to receive the support of Ángel Muttini, a generous Italian merchant and music lover who owned a shop in the Portal del Comercio. Recognizing Arias's extraordinary talent, Muttini personally funded his eight-year studies at the Royal Conservatory of Naples, where in 1894, Arias earned degrees as Master in Harmony, Piano, and Violin.



Left to right, pictured are Mariano Bracamonte (violinist), Germán Alcántara (cornet player), Tránsito Molina (cellist), Luis Felipe Arias (pianist), Fabián Rodríguez (band director), and Julián Paniagua (violinist). (1895)

Upon returning to Guatemala, Luis Felipe Arias began a major musical renewal, notably by introducing Guatemalan audiences to the great Romantic composers: Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Chopin, Liszt, Brahms, and Schumann. This was a significant cultural shift for a public accustomed to opera and light salon music.

In 1901, he was appointed director of the National Conservatory of Music, replacing the Italian professor Ángel Disconzi. His term was so influential that the era is known as "The Decade of Luis Felipe".

However, as journalist Flores points out, "sordid intrigues conspired against him, eventually resulting in his removal." Arias's dreamy temperament, independent character, and total devotion to music were difficult to reconcile with the mundane duties of administration. Furthermore, as Cabrera's dictatorship intensified,

mediocrity became entrenched in the artistic scene, reflecting the provincial tastes of "El Señor Presidente", and government funding for the Conservatory was drastically reduced.

Finding his successor in Germán Alcántara, who was appointed director of the music center "a destitute music school, located in the gloomy cells of the former Convent of San Francisco, where today stands the 1st Division of the National Police". Thanks to him, "the love for learning musical aesthetics, acoustics, and the history of music arose in Guatemala."

Broad in his dissemination of European musical works and composers, "The entire intermediate scale was enforced by Arias upon his disciples, and regarding the revolution of ideas, innovation of styles, invention of forms, and orientation of schools: we were familiar with the attempts, successes, and failures from



Monteverdi and Porpora, to Widor and Gabriel Fauré.”

An exceptional musician, a master performer “what was most admirable in him was his interpretive sense, his profound musical understanding, the elevation of his intellect, and the clarity of his spirit things that cannot be spoken, written, or translated, and which left with him...” (said a eulogist). A magnificent piano and orchestral accompanist, his work as a composer holds great value in our history: Mouresque, Dance for Orchestra, Nocturne for Violin, Gray Page, Romance for Piano, Berceuse for Piano, and Hymn to Minerva for voices.

The body of Luis Felipe Arias was laid in state at the home of another distinguished musician of the era, Fabián Rodríguez. After a Mass at the San Juan de Dios church featuring choir and orchestra performing the Mass by Ambroise Thomas his funeral continued at the cemetery. There, Máximo Soto Hall delivered “a heartfelt poetic creation,” followed by a funeral oration given by Licenciado Manuel Martínez Sobral, and further remarks by Licenciado Benjamín López Colom. None of the newspapers of the time gave details of the event, only vague references and carefully measured expressions of grief so as not to provoke the wrath of the tyrant. The newspaper *La Mañana* stated: “The country as a whole has just suffered the irreparable loss of the notable artist Don Luis Felipe Arias...”

Likewise, the bulletin of *Diario de Centro América* and the book **Las Bellas Artes** en Guatemala by Víctor Miguel Díaz noted: “...fate struck him a mortal blow; the maestro, after prolonged suffering, passed away surrounded by many

who loved him...” (Sources: Vásquez, Flores, and Víctor M. Díaz).

Other composers from this period include Rafael Castillo, who wrote a piano concerto in the classical form, waltzes, a rhapsody on the jota aragonesa, and for orchestra his “Overture No. 1” and “Carnavalesca”. He also composed a piano sonata and established himself as a music educator. Rafael Álvarez, author of the music for the Guatemalan National Anthem. Fabián Rodríguez, composer of the Hymn to the Tree, Hymn to Estrada Cabrera, Hymn to Minerva, Hymn to Central America, the march Oda Libertad, and other marches such as “El Regreso” and “Mi Patria”.

Raúl Paniagua (b. 1898), a composer and brilliant pianist, student of Herculano Alvarado, who contributed greatly to music from a young age. He traveled abroad and gave several recitals in the United States, forming a trio with which he premiered many of his works.

If Raúl Paniagua was renowned for his exceptional talent as a concert performer, he also demonstrated in composition a refined style and a clear concern for the technical and evolving aspects of the music of his time. One review from one of his performances in the United States commented: “...in this series in natural D by Raúl Paniagua, we find an essentially modern composer... and although the forms are ancient, the thought is evidently new and original. The themes develop in a completely modern way; the technical approach makes ample use of the efficient resources of today’s instruments...” (Brooklyn Life and Activities of Long Island Society, 1928). Among his works are a Madrigal for violin, piano, and cello, published by an

American house; a Symphonic Series in the Style of the Old Masters for the same instruments, consisting of the following movements: Prelude, Air, Pastorales, Minuet, and Rondo; Nubes for violin and piano; Nocturne for piano; and Leyenda Maya, a symphonic poem for orchestra. Another of his pieces is Music for Piano in the Form of Studies (sources provided by Maestro Julio Reyes).

Julián Paniagua Martínez (1856–1945) was the author of the waltz Murmullos de Besos, Minerva, the piccolo polka Canario, the waltzes Tecún Umán and Saludo al Siglo XX, a Misa de Gloria, and La Locomotora, an example of descriptive music. Other composers of this period include Salvador Iriarte, author of the son Fin de Siglo, and Anselmo Sáenz, who left us his traditional sones El Pavo and Noche Buena. Germán Alcántara, who succeeded Luis Felipe Arias as director of the Conservatory, composed the waltzes La Flor del Café and Dime si me amas, the gavotte Crisantemo, and several mazurkas, including Mi Bella Guatemala.

Jesús Castillo (1877–1946) represents the nationalist variant within musical Romanticism. Born in San Juan Ostuncalco, he was involved, to some extent, in a political protest and was forced to flee, taking refuge deep in the Cuca Coast. There, a chimán (traditional healer) named Diego Díaz introduced him to the secrets of vernacular music. This marked a renewed connection with the Indigenous element, which had long been suppressed and overshadowed by the emerging Creole elite. That Indigenous element began to resurface as a driving force in the nationalist movement at the turn of



the century and into the mid-20th century. This revival was bolstered by archaeological discoveries sporadic yet highly significant at the time which awakened a national awareness of pre-Hispanic cultures. Such discoveries, which continue even today, contributed to the rise of a form of "nationalist" art rooted in pre-Hispanic themes.

Among the pioneers of this current, Jesús Castillo holds a prominent place. From the knowledge and materials, he gathered in the Cuca Coast with Diego Díaz's help, he composed his first Indigenous overture. Indigenous themes became the lifelong focus of his musical work, gradually taking shape in compositions such as the Tecún overture, three Indigenous suites, five Indigenous overtures, and the operas Quiché Vinak (in three acts, written between 1917 and 1925, with a libretto by Virgilio Rodríguez Beteta) and Nicté (in two acts, left unfinished due to his death). He also composed the symphonic poems *Guatemala* and *Vartizanic*.

René Augusto Flores mentions that in some letters, Jesús Castillo referred to a new orchestral work titled *Las telas mágicas* (The Magic Fabrics), inspired by the *Popol Vuh*. He also left behind piano music and a small book published in a modest edition around 1941, titled *La música Maya-Quiché* (The Maya-Quiché Music).

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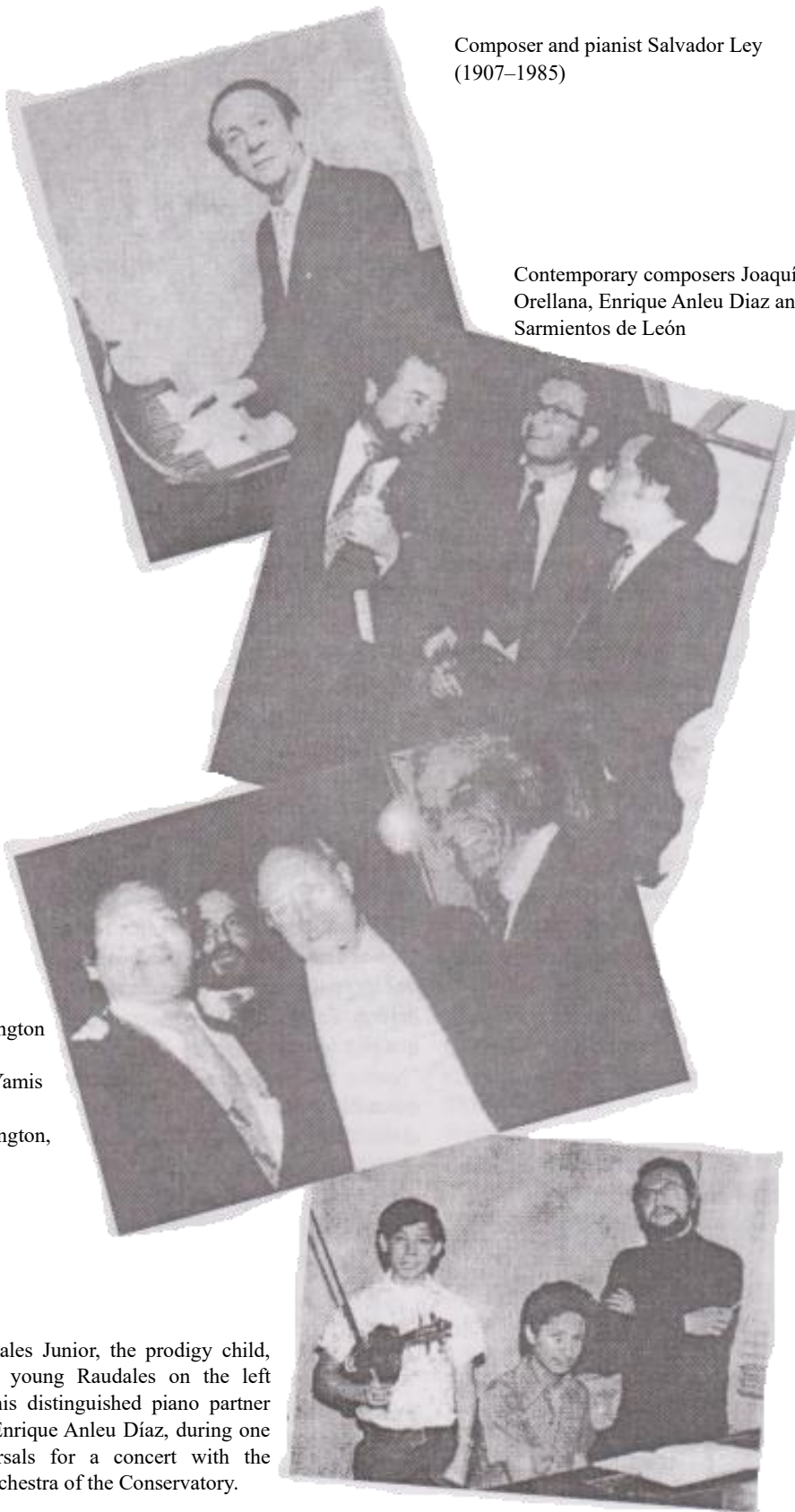
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October 1988.

Composer and pianist Salvador Ley  
(1907–1985)

Contemporary composers Joaquín  
Orellana, Enrique Anleu Díaz and Jorge  
Sarmientos de León

Enrique Raudales Junior, the prodigy child,  
alongside the young Raudales on the left  
appear with his distinguished piano partner  
and maestro Enrique Anleu Díaz, during one  
of the rehearsals for a concert with the  
Symphony Orchestra of the Conservatory.







# Popular Tradition

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