

Los Llaneros - Sample Program

Concierto en la llanura (Concert of The Savannas)

Juan Vicente Torrealba - Venezuela - Rhythm: pasaje - Llanos

Juan Vicente Torrealba, author of this well-known piece, was a prolific composer and one of the most famous virtuosos of the Llanero harp in Venezuela.

La risa del diablo (The Devil's Laughter)

René Devia - Colombia - Rhythm: joropo - Llanos

With this piece, our very own harpist, René, has brought life to the spirited "joropo" rhythm, which is the most characteristic musical genre of the Llanos of Venezuela and Colombia.

Canto mañanero (Song of The Dawn)

Traditional - Venezuela - Rhythm: tonada - Llanos

A haunting love song: "This song of the early dawn whispers to me: Let's fall in love!" "I don't know what happens to me when I'm near the ocean: I can't say 'no' to anything my sweetheart asks of me."

El venado (The Deer)

Traditional - Venezuela - Rhythm: golpe tocuyano - From the mountainous Tocuyo region, on the northern edge of the Llanos
Traditionally played by a variety of guitars and cuatros (no harp), plus percussion instruments. Lyrics are usually a collection of lines -usually humorous- which bear no relationship to one another.

"Let her go - she will not die! If jealousy takes her away, love will make her return." "They call me dumb, though I don't understand why. When the smart ones go in one direction, I am always walking in the opposite direction."

*Refrain: "deer, tapir, ram, agouti, squirrel, iguana, macaw, armadillo, **and rabbit!**"*

Barlovento

Eduardo Serrano - Venezuela - Rhythm: fulía - coastal Barlovento region

"Barlovento is the burning land, the land of drums. How deliciously the women of Barlovento sway their hips, and how delicious the beat of the mina!" (The mina is a drum characteristic of the region, about six feet long.)

Canoa ranchada (The Canoe)

Gayle Tonara - Colombia - Rhythm: cumbia - Caribbean Coast

This sensuous "cumbia" is of Afro-Caribbean origin. It is considered the national rhythm of Colombia. "My canoe is cutting through the water, I am paddling upstream to visit you. As I paddle, I see your name written in the starts."

Comadrita la rana (Godmother Frog)

Traditional - Venezuela - Rhythm: gaita - northern Zulia State

Gaitas are traditionally sung during the month of December, as part of the pre-Christmas caroling tradition. Their lyrics, however, rarely make reference to religion, tend to be humorous, and can even be raucous. Gaita songs evolved from a context of celebration and socializing. Their very structure makes it possible for anyone to sing along: someone sings a line, all present repeat it in chorus.

"Today's coins, I'll tell you how they are: they used to be of silver, now they are of tin." "If the ocean were of rum and the shore of beer, I'd jump in it like a pelican."

La voz del viento (The Voice of The Wind)

René Devia - Colombia - Rhythm: pasaje - Llanos

Another one of René's compositions for the harp, written in traditional llanero style.

El gavián (The Hawk)

Traditional - Colombia / Venezuela - Rhythm: gavián - Llanos

"If you could eat a hawk as he eats his prey, I would have eaten the red hawk already. / On the cliffs of the Apure River the hawk sighs, and in his sigh he says: "Oh, girl of Camaguán!" / Boatman of the Arauca River, take me to the other side, because the red hawk is after me."

El Morichal Sombrío (The Dark Palm Stand)

René Devia - Colombia - Rhythm: pasaje - Llanos

This instrumental piece was inspired by the childhood memories of René Devia, harpist of "Los Llaneros." The expansive grasslands of the Llanos are interspersed with thick stands of the "moriche" palm, a characteristic presence in the Llanero skyline.

Macapay

Karin Stein - Colombia - Rhythm: joropo - Llanos

"Macapay" is the name of a farm in the Llanos or savannas of Colombia, where Karin Stein (member of "Los Llaneros") spent much of her childhood. This joyful piece was inspired by her memories of galloping horses on open plains, skies filled with the colors of the white egret and the red ibis, and evenings of listening to cowboys playing their home-made instruments at the end of a long working day.

Sangre Tuyera (Blood of Tuy River Valley)

Miguel Rodríguez - Venezuela - Rhythm: seis corrio - Llanos

Miguel Rodríguez, a Venezuelan composer noted for his classical compositions, returned to the folk roots of his nation and wrote this showpiece as an homage to Venezuela's national rhythm, the "joropo," which is predominant within Llanero folk music traditions. This highly syncopated piece is played on the "arpa llanera" (folk harp from the Llanos), the "cuatro" (small, four-stringed folk guitar), and the "capachos" (maracas filled with seeds of the Canna species). String instruments arrived in the Llanos in the sixteenth century with Jesuit missionaries, and since then their use in folk music has brought about a fascinating blend of musical cultures.

Names of Instruments

Arpa: Harp. Traditionally, the arpa llanera is used.

Cuatro: four-stringed strumming instrument from the Llanos

Guitarra: Spanish guitar. It has become the most widely used folk instrument in Latin America.

Capachos: maracas filled with "capacho" seeds obtained from plants of the Canna genus.

Tambora: a drum played with wooden sticks.

Ensemble Members:

Edgar East (Panama): Latin percussion, vocals, guitar, flute, miscellaneous other wind instruments

Karin Stein (Colombia): cuatro, guitar, quena, miscellaneous small percussion instruments, vocals

Vidal Garzón (Colombia): harp, cuatro, guitar, maracas (capachos), tiple, vocals

The Llanos (YAH-nos)

The Llanos is the savanna region which stretches along the vast basin of the Orinoco river. It unites eastern Colombia with the central third of Venezuela. This enormous and beautiful land is characterized by ample, open terrains; slow-flowing rivers and creeks which cut through it and are flanked by gallery forests; and the mata de monte, isolated forests which crop up here and there. The human population in the Llanos has always been of low density, primarily because of its poor soils.

Precolumbian Indian tribes, which were descendants of Caribbean cultures, led a nomadic life and subsisted from hunting, gathering, and horticulture. Beginning in the Sixteenth Century, Jesuit missionaries arrived in the Llanos, followed by the great landowners and their large cattle herds. Since then, the life of the Llaneros has been closely related to cattle ranching. Even today, cattle ranching is the predominant economic base of the Llanos, although rice farming and oil extraction have also become important.

The Llanero culture is very similar in Venezuela and Colombia, as are the music and the instruments used. Frequently, Llanero songs speak of the life of the vaqueros (cowboys), of cattle and horses, and of the love which the Llaneros feel for nature.

The majority of the pieces which Los Llaneros perform come from the Llanos and reflect the mestizo (Indian and Spanish) tradition of the Llanos. They play their exhilarating llanero music on the arpa llanera (folk harp of the savannas), the cuatro (small, four-stringed guitar native to Venezuela), the Spanish guitar, and the capachos (maracas filled with the seeds of Canna sp.). String instruments were first introduced to the Llanos by the Jesuits, and since then their use in folk music has led to a fascinating blend of musical cultures.

In addition to performing the music of the Llanos, the ensemble routinely plays instruments and selections from other regions of Colombia and Venezuela.