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Handwritten musical score on a black background with white lines. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The top staff is labeled "Clas" and contains a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second staff contains a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff contains a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The fourth staff contains a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. There are handwritten annotations: "Clas" above the first staff, "Tricky" below the second staff, and "Baro and Gith" below the fourth staff. A circled "4" is written above the first measure of the second staff.

Harlem RENAISSANCE

Handwritten musical score on a black background with white lines. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines. The top staff contains a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The second staff contains a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The third staff contains a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The fourth staff contains a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. There are handwritten annotations: "Cm" above the second staff, "Tricky Brown" below the second staff, and "Dizel" below the third staff. A circled "4" is written above the first measure of the second staff.

Puerto Rican musicians of the Harlem Renaissance

BASILIO SERRANO

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the contributions of Puerto Rican musicians to the African-American bands and orchestras that were active during the Harlem Renaissance. The essay provides biographical sketches of the musicians who were instrumentalists and composers of the leading orchestras of the period, including those led by Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Noble Sissle, James Reese Europe, Leon Abbey, Don Redman, Luckey Roberts, Claude Hopkins, among others. Biographical sketches are provided for the following Puerto Rican musicians: Rafael Escudero, Carmelo Jari, Rafael Hernández, Rafael Duchesne, Ramón Usera, Francisco Tizol, Gregorio Félix, Fernando Arbello, and Ram Ramírez. Brief references are made to a number of additional musicians who were also participants during the important cultural surge that is best known as the Harlem Renaissance. Background information on the early Puerto Rican diaspora is also included with brief references to the migrations to New Orleans, Hawaii, Washington, and New York City. The purpose of the essay is to develop a more complete picture of the Puerto Rican experience in jazz. The essay provides information that helps explain why the contemporary music of Puerto Ricans, in the States and the homeland, was influenced by the music of the African American community. [Key words: music, jazz, Harlem Renaissance, Puerto Rican musicians, Puerto Rican migration, New York]



The role played by Puerto Rican musicians who were members of orchestras that were active during the Harlem Renaissance is a subject that has not received much attention. When we think of jazz in Harlem, we may not consider that musicians from the island occupied a space in the history of this uniquely American genre. When we consider the Puerto Rican participation in jazz, we often think that it begins with contemporary musicians such as Tito Puente, Ray Barretto, or Eddie Palmieri. The following is a case in point. The January 22, 2006 edition of *El Nuevo Día*, the Puerto Rican daily with greatest readership on the island, had an interesting article that was titled “Pioneros del jazz” and focused on the contemporary jazz environment there. The article described the work of Victor Orta Salamán, who was the founder of a “big band” jazz orchestra on the island in the 1960s. Orta Salamán is a pianist who recruited a number of leading musicians devoted to the genre, and these included the late trumpeters Juancito Torres, and Lito Peña, Elías Lopés, Tommy Villarini; drummer Tony Sánchez; saxophonist Roberto Jiménez, and Mario Ortíz and Emilio Reales, among many others (Delgado-Castro 2006: 1). There were few locations where jazz was played on the island, making it a struggle to find playing time before live audiences.

Since the 1960s, the popularity of jazz and Latin jazz in San Juan and other island cities have grown incrementally. Today there are numerous venues for jazz and several annual concerts, including the gigantic Mayagüez and Heineken Jazz Fests, that are held every year. Jazz is now more widely accepted among the general public. For example, in the January 2006 Festival de la Calle San Sebastián, several jazz presentations were part of the overall program. A most impressive segment featured trumpeters Luis “Perico” Ortíz, Humberto Ramírez, Charlie Sepúlveda, and the pioneering Elías Lopés. The 2007 version of the festival again featured another beautiful jazz segment led by Humberto Ramírez.

Today, Boricua communities in the States and on the island have produced a number of outstanding jazz artists. Last year, the late percussionist Ray Barretto received the coveted Jazz Masters award from the International Association for Jazz Education (IAJE) when they held their conference in New York in January 2006. Other contemporary jazz greats of Puerto Rican heritage include the late Tito Puente and Hilton Ruiz, Giovanni Hidalgo, Papo Vázquez, William Cepeda, David Sánchez, Miguel Zenón, Dave Valentín, Néstor Torrez, Eddie and Edsel Gómez, Carli Muñoz, and Andy and Jerry González, among many others. One of the genre's finest exponents, Eddie Palmieri was the recipient of the 2006 Grammy Award in Latin Jazz. Others have also won or received nominations in that award category.

Although jazz may be relatively new to the island, if we accept that it flourishes in the 1960s, the Boricua participation goes back to the incipient days of the genre, the early 1900s and the years that coincided with the Harlem Renaissance. The most influential early jazz pioneer was, arguably, Juan Tizol. Not long after arriving in New York in 1920, Tizol began to leave a legacy as an innovating composer of jazz, Latin jazz, ballads, and exotica. The Vega Baja native was a valve trombone trailblazer and early transcriber of the music when it was near its infancy. The compositions by Tizol, such as "Caravan," "Perdido," "Jubilesta, Bakiff," among others, continue to be recorded. Much of Tizol's work with Ellington was undertaken during that cultural surge in the African-American community known as the Harlem Renaissance or the New-Negro Movement.

The Harlem Renaissance was a period of the past century, from the end of World War I to the mid 1930s, that witnessed an incredible swell in the cultural production of the African-American community in the United States and beyond. African-American novelists, poets, playwrights, actors, dancers, and musicians made a profound and everlasting contribution to the cultural life of the United States and elsewhere. A number of Puerto Ricans who settled in the States had the good fortune of being active contributing participants. Bibliophile Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, who was born and raised in San Juan, played such an important role that he has been called the "documentor" and patron of the Renaissance (Sinette 1989). He collaborated with many of the most distinguished leaders of that cultural movement in the process of compiling his famed collection. Elvera Sánchez was another Boricua who participated as a stage dancer and as a club manager. Best known as Sammy Davis's mother, she was also a dynamic woman who enjoyed a long and very positive reputation in her adopted neighborhood, Harlem. Pura Belpré was another participant. She arrived in New York in 1920 and became the first appointed Latina of the New York Library system; she worked at the 135th Street branch in Harlem, where Schomburg was compiling his collection of realia of the Africana experience. She is best known as a writer of children's books. Her first book *Pérez and Martina* was published in 1932. Today, the American Library Association (ALA) recognizes the outstanding Hispanic writer of children's books with the Pura Belpré Award. Juano Hernández was another Renaissance participant as an actor on stage, radio, and film. He debuted on Broadway in 1927 as part of the cast of the classic play, *Show Boat*. One of his early films was called *Harlem is Heaven*; it was produced in 1932. Hernández established a significant reputation as an actor before returning to his native Puerto Rico to start his own school for actors.

This article will focus on the participation and accomplishments of Puerto Rican pioneers in jazz during the Harlem Renaissance, and in doing so, we may better understand why jazz and Latin jazz has become part of the music repertoire of the

Boricua communities of the States and on the island. Their participation and their back-and-forth movement from the island to America in part explains the evolution of contemporary music from their homeland.

It is worth noting that the Puerto Rican participation in jazz may predate the Harlem Renaissance period. We know that hundreds of Puerto Ricans, including many who were musicians, were recruited to work at sugar plantations in Hawaii at the turn of the past century, around 1900. A number of musicians and artisans settled there and reproduced the music and the instruments of their homeland.¹ We know that on the way to Hawaii the ships carrying Puerto Rican workers stopped in New Orleans. We also know that a number of Boricuas who landed in New Orleans and later in San Francisco refused to continue to Hawaii. We know that the Porto Rico Line (New York & Porto Rico Steamship Company) provided regular service between the island and New Orleans in the early 1900s (Larsson 2007: 3) to serve a fledgling community. We also know that among early jazz and ragtime musicians of New Orleans, considered the cradle of jazz, many had Spanish surnames.² Those Spanish-surnamed musicians came from various parts of Latin America including México, Panamá, and the Spanish territories of the Caribbean. Puerto Ricans who fled the recruiters working on behalf of Hawaiian farmers were most likely reluctant to identify themselves for fear of being arrested or placed on a boat headed for the Pacific, making it more or less impossible for researchers to know how many stayed behind in New Orleans.

We know that years after the initial arrivals in New Orleans, Puerto Ricans continued to choose this southern city as a preferred destination. This was the case for Agustín Serrano, who arrived with a shipload of Boricuas in 1918. The ship's manifest listed 28 passengers who came from various towns of the island, including Aguadilla, Aguas Buenas, Arecibo, Bayamón, Carolina, Cataño, Corozal, Fajardo, Humacao, Manatí, Maunabo, Mayagüez, Ponce, Río Grande, Río Piedras, San Germán, San Juan, and Vega Baja.³ Additional research remains to be done to determine the fate of the Puerto Rican workers who refused to continue to Hawaii and may have settled in New Orleans (Tamir 2006: 2).⁴ It is possible that these early settlers became the cigar workers to whom some sources make reference.

Approximately 20 years after the Puerto Rican arrival in New Orleans, the Harlem Renaissance or New Negro Movement began to unfold. At the time another Puerto Rican exodus was under way. This time the migration was triggered by two important events. The first was the unfolding of World War I, a conflict that would eventually involve the United States and its citizens. The second was the 1917 Congressional approval of the Jones Act, which imposed American citizenship on the people of Puerto Rico. At the time, the majority of the people on the island were opposed to United States citizenship because they believed that it would interfere with their aspirations for eventual self-rule and independence. Islanders who refused American citizenship were essentially disenfranchised from participation in the governmental affairs of the homeland. Historians indicate that citizenship was forced because of the need for servicemen to fight the war (Maldonado Denis 1972). Almost 250,000 Puerto Rican men registered for the United States military draft that year, and that number included hundreds, possibly thousands of trained musicians.

We may never know how many musicians from the island made their way to the States during the First World War and the immediate years that followed. Some may have Anglicized their names. For example, in 1920 Camelo Jarí was a 26-year-old resident of San Juan, but in 1921 he was a member of a jazz band in New York City.

A record of Jarí's arrival in the States has him listed as a third cook on the *SS San Juan* when he arrived on July 5, 1921. Jarí, however, was also known in the jazz community as Carmelo Jejo. Others arrived as stowaways in ships that had stopped on island ports from Europe or Latin America, a practice that made their arrival difficult to document. Fortunately, many came through Ellis Island, and we therefore have some records of their arrival. Others, however, left no trace as to when or how they came to the United States.

The following is a review of the Puerto Rican participation in jazz during the Harlem Renaissance. The review is limited to those who played a significant role, and their work has been documented by multiple sources. Continued research will potentially increase the number of musicians identified and their contributions.

Rafael Escudero

Among the first Boricuas to receive substantial recognition in the fledgling jazz genre was Rafael Escudero. He was born in 1891 and was known in American jazz circles as Ralph. Today, however, Escudero is largely forgotten. Nevertheless, this native of Manatí was an excellent musician and instrumental as a link between the growing number of jazz bands and other orchestras of Washington, DC and New York and the musicians who came from Puerto Rico. Escudero has been identified as one who (following the example of Lieutenant James Reese Europe) successfully enlisted musicians from Puerto Rico and found places for them to work in the States (Tizol 1978).



Photograph of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra in 1924. Henderson was also known as the “uncrowned king” of swing music. Henderson was a pianist whom Duke Ellington took as a role model. The picture captures Rafael Escudero holding his tuba and Fernando Arbello holding his slide trombone. A very young Louis Armstrong is holding his trumpet in the top row, third from right. Photograph courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution Duke Ellington Collection. Reprinted, by permission, from the Smithsonian Institution.

Escudero was unique in that his departure for the United States predates World War I and the Jones Act. At the early age of 21 Escudero boarded the steamer *Caracas* at the port of San Juan on his way to New York, where he arrived on June 13, 1912.

Records of his arrival are now part of the archives of the Ellis Island Museum. The youngster was listed as a “Porto Rican” on the ship’s passenger manifest. He came to New York to play professionally under the auspices of the New Amsterdam Musical Association (NAMA). His fledgling musicianship had earned him a valuable scholarship (Chadbourne 2005a).

Escudero was an accomplished tuba player and later a bassist who in 1920–1921 played professionally with the NAMA band that featured the great Ethel Waters (Chadbourne 2005a). During this period Escudero was also with the Marie Lucas band at the Howard Theater in Washington, DC. Later, in March 1923, Rafael Escudero was with the Wilber C. Sweatman band, for which he played both the tuba and string double-bass; Duke Ellington played the piano (Tucker 1991: 82). In a book, jazz historian Gunther Schuller makes numerous references to Escudero’s talents on the tuba. He described Escudero as the one who put the “swing” on a recording of the memorable *Put it There* (Schuller 1989: 189).

Escudero was also a member of the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra. The Henderson Orchestra was considered one of the most popular African-American bands in New York during the Harlem Renaissance. Although extremely trendy, when Henderson was contracted in 1924 to play in the Roseland Ballroom opposite a white band, the white musicians objected. A few months later they quit in protest (Glasser 1995: 71). Escudero was a dark-skinned islander, and this experience was likely one of his many encounters with racism in the States.

Standing next to his tuba, Escudero appears in a photograph of the Fletcher Henderson band taken circa 1924. The photograph reveals him to be a tall, dark, handsome man with a receding hairline. Interestingly, a youthful Louis Armstrong was a member of the same band. Escudero was recruited by Henderson when he heard the tuba player with the Sweatman band at the celebrated Howard Theater in Washington, DC (Chadbourne 2005a).

Escudero left the Henderson band to join the Detroit-based McKinney’s Cotton Pickers led by Don Redman. Drummer William McKinney organized the Cotton Pickers in 1926. At times, that band included such jazz greats as Benny Carter and Rex Stewart. The band had all-star sessions with such players as Jabbo Smith, Sidney De Paris, Coleman Hawkins, and Fats Waller (Schuller 1968: 168).

In 1928 Rafael Escudero also recorded with the Cotton Pickers as the Chocolate Dandies with Lucille Hegamin, Bessie Smith, and Ethel Waters (Chadbourne 2005a). Later, Escudero was also a member of the early Louis Armstrong band, contributing to several recordings that are available today on CDs. At one point, he also toured with W.C. Handy. Escudero’s diversified experiences during the Harlem Renaissance and beyond were truly remarkable.

A stalwart of the tuba was how Gunther Schuller also described Escudero. Schuller refers to a role on one recording as “firmly anchored by Escudero’s deep tuba” (Schuller 1968: 308–9). According to Eugene Chadbourne of the *All Music Guide*, “This Puerto Rican musician was a valuable rhythm section member in some of the most prominent of the larger classic jazz ensembles” (2005a: 1). According to the *Tom Lord Jazz Discography*, Escudero participated in approximately 87 jazz recording sessions between 1920 and 1931 (Lord 1997).

Despite a solid reputation playing the large horn, Escudero made the transition to the string bass when it came into vogue. The pioneering switch from the tuba was viewed as a necessary innovation that permitted the bass sound produced to be more audible when performing in large ballrooms and the recording studios.

By middle age Escudero may have been tired of traveling through the Washington, New York, and Los Angeles club scenes. He may have also been homesick, and it is likely that he returned to Puerto Rico for this reason. He continued to perform in more traditional Caribbean-music venues and maintained a busy schedule.

Escudero was related to the award-winning, contemporary composer with the same name, Rafael “Raffi” Escudero. This Escudero composes contemporary Puerto Rican danzas with much acclaim. The island-based Escudero has fond recollections of the late Escudero, whom he knew as “Tiranía” (Tyranny). Raffi Escudero reminds us that his uncle was also a respected musician on the island, where he played with the reputable Rafael Muñoz Orchestra. The contemporary Escudero said that when he first recorded at age 20, the late Rafael Escudero played the accompanying bass (Escudero 2000).

Unfortunately, the legendary bassist met a tragic death at age 79. According to music Professor Rafael Aponte-Ledée (2000), Escudero was the victim of a hotel fire on April 10, 1970 in Old San Juan.

Today, more than 50 CDs list Rafael Escudero as playing either the tuba or the double-bass. His performances are true standouts and easy for the listener to appreciate.

Rafael Hernández

Rafael Hernández was born in Aguadilla in 1891. He received his musical training on the island, where he became a member of various bands including one led by Manuel Tizol. Hernández was a bandmate of both Juan and Francisco Tizol. He participated in the earliest recording sessions ever held in Puerto Rico with the Tizol-led bands.

In 1917 he and his younger brother Jesús were recruited by Lieutenant James Reese Europe for the Harlem Hell-Fighters jazz band. The Hell-Fighters were both musicians and combatants and earned their name because of their skills as fighters. Lt. James Reese Europe played an instrumental role during the early Harlem Renaissance. He organized musicians and sought ways to improve their employability. Reese Europe was an accomplished musician and bandleader.



This picture was taken in San Juan's Plaza del Mercado circa 1917. Rafael Hernández is captured with his valve trombone similar to the one played by Juan Tizol. Ariosto Cruz is also pictured holding the cello. Photograph courtesy of Pedro Malavet Vega. Reprinted, by permission, from Pedro Malavet Vega.

Rafael Hernández was an outstanding trombonist and was recruited for that purpose. A 1917 photograph of a San Juan-based 11-piece band captures Rafael Hernández sitting and holding a valve trombone similar to that played by Juan Tizol. Years later Hernández was best known as a composer, guitarist, and singer. It is said that his family wanted him to learn the trumpet, but he passionately disliked the instrument and refused to play it.

On July 23 1917, Hernández arrived on Ellis Island, where he indicated that he was 24 years old.⁵ When recruited, Hernández chose not to leave with Reese Europe in May when 13 of his compatriots left to join the band—an indication of his fiercely independent nature. His initial experiences with jazz came as a member of the Hell-Fighters, the band that is credited with introducing jazz to France. He was one of 20 Puerto Ricans who comprised the band when it went to Europe.

When the Hell-Fighters returned to the United States, Hernández participated in the first jazz recordings of the band. In March 1919, he was a member of a four-piece trombone section, and one of the recordings was titled *The Moaning Trombone* (Kay 1997: 27).

After Hernández left the military, he had opportunities to play with several jazz groups thanks to the contacts he had established and the reputation that he enjoyed. For a time, he joined the C. Luckyeth (Luckey) Roberts' band. Roberts was considered significant among the Harlem Renaissance stride pianists although he did not leave behind many recordings. The stride-piano style was very influential among jazz pianists. Duke Ellington developed into one of the most important exponents of the style. Roberts was also a composer and a writer of musical comedies. Roberts enjoyed a considerable reputation; for example, in 1922 he was one of the pianists playing for the very successful Broadway production *Shuffle Along* and earned a salary of \$125 per week (Kimball and Balcom 1973: 127).

Hernández also spent time in Cuba and eventually made his way to Mexico, where he had an extended stay. He achieved substantial recognition as a composer and/or band leader in both of those countries before returning to his homeland. Hernández was incredibly versatile, playing the violin and evolving into a premier composer. In fact, Rafael Hernández is considered Puerto Rico's greatest composer; his compositions reflect his varied musical experiences. His early experiences in the jazz venues of Harlem became part of his foundation, which led to his incomparable career in music.

Rafael Duchesne Mondriguez

Rafael Isidro Duchesne Mondriguez was born in Fajardo in May 1890. By 1912 he was a member of the San Juan Municipal Band, led by Manuel Tizol. In 1917 he was among the musicians recruited by Lieutenant Europe for the Hell-Fighters jazz band, for whom he was a standout clarinet soloist and band sergeant. Duchesne is among the musicians who took jazz to Europe. The band played in 25 French cities between February 12th and March 19th (Duchesne 2007).⁶ It was among the first to record the genre in 1919.

Duchesne did not stay in the States-side jazz scene too long. When the Harlem Hell-Fighters returned from the war, they received one of the most documented receptions in Harlem and all of New York City. When he returned from the front in Europe in 1919, Duchesne participated in the recordings with James Reese's Europe-led band. The sounds of his clarinet were captured in the recordings of the Hell-Fighters. The band recorded 24 numbers between March 3 and May 7, 1919.



Rafael Duchesne Mondríguez in 1917 just days before he left for New York to join the 369th Regiment, the Harlem Hellfighters and the band. Photograph courtesy of Rossana Duchesne. Reprinted, by permission, from Rossana Duchesne.

Those recordings are available thanks to the Memphis Archives, which arranged to make them available on CD format.

A photograph taken days before Duchesne, who was nick-named Raf, left for the United States reveals an attractive young man of mixed racial heritage. He was sometimes described as white and other times black. He wore glasses throughout his life, but they did not prevent him from becoming one of the most important composers of danzas from his homeland.

After his military service this Rafael Duchesne subsequently chose to return to Puerto Rico and rejoined the San Juan Municipal Band. Years later, with the outbreak of World War II, he re-registered for military service at age 52, when he was living in Hato Rey; he worked there as a music teacher for the blind.⁷

On the island he was a member of the Orquesta Sinfónica, the San Juan municipal theater band, and the Club Armónico. Later he directed an orchestra for the blind and became a music teacher who used Braille. He was also a prolific composer of danzas, minuets, marches, and hymns. He also wrote songs, a symphony, and an overture. As early as 1917, a composition by Duchesne was recorded by Orquesta Tizol for the Victor Talking Machine Company. In recognition of his talents as a composer of danzas, a collection was recorded in 1982 by the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña and is available on CD.

One of Rafael Duchesne's 13 children became an outstanding musician. José Luis Duchesne Landrón was a saxophonist and a member of El Gran Combo de Puerto Rico from 1969 to 1980. He was known as Keko and participated in numerous recordings.

Rafael Duchesne died in his homeland in 1986, after a very productive and illustrious career in music; he was four years short of his 100th birthday. Unlike most of the Hell-Fighters, he is buried in El Cementerio Nacional in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, among those who served the United States military.

The Duchesne family produced many outstanding musicians. Several were active in the jazz world, including the two musicians who were named Rafael Duchesne.

Rafael Duchesne Nieves

Rafael Duchesne Nieves was a cousin of Rafael Duchesne Mondríguez. This Duchesne was born in San Juan on October 24, 1899, and unlike other Duchsenes was placed in a residence for children without homes. In 1917 he left San Juan to join the 15th Infantry Division of Harlem, the home of the Hell-Fighters. The August 6, 1917 manifest of the ship that brought him to New York indicates that he was listed as a resident the armory in Harlem and this implies that he enlisted while still in San Juan. He stayed in the army until February 1920. His military transcript indicates that he was a musician in the ranks.

Duchesne participates in a number of jazz recording sessions; however, a complete list of his participations is difficult to document because he also went by the name of Ralph Duquesne. There are records of his participation in at least six jazz recording sessions as a clarinetist and alto and tenor saxophonist between 1929 and



This is a photograph of the 1929 Noble Sissle Orchestra. Saxophonist Rafael Duchesne Nieves is first saxophonist from right. Saxophonist-clarinetist Ramón "Moncho" Usera is second from the right. Photograph courtesy of Smithsonian Institution. Reprinted, by permission, from the Smithsonian Institution.

1932 (Lord 1997). He also recorded in Europe when the legendary Noble Sissle and the Southern Syncopated Orchestra when he traveled there. Duchesne had the enviable opportunity to participate in a performance at Buckingham Palace in London in 1929. The band included the incomparable Sidney Bechet and other jazz greats (Wyer 2006). The recordings of that period are available today on the British Proper label.

Duchesne and Noble Sissle worked together for some time. Sissle was a former member of the Hell-Fighters who collaborated extensively with James Reese Europe. He was a singer and drummer, and participated in the 1919 recordings of the Hell-Fighters band. Later Sissle organized his own band and collaborated extensively with renowned composer Eubie Blake.

During the Harlem Renaissance Rafael Duchesne continued as a member of the Noble Sissle Orchestra. The band was captured in a video that is available today on the Internet. Ramón Usera was another Boricua in that band. When the band completed their engagements in Europe, the two musicians went together to New York. Traveling on the *SS Paris*, they arrived on Ellis Island on December 22, 1930 after an extended tour.⁸ In 1932 he also arrived in New York from a trip to Europe, departing from Plymouth, England.

In the 1940s, Rafael Duchesne returned to Puerto Rico and led an orchestra that carried his name and performed at the historic dance hall, El Escambrón Beach Club (Malavet Vega 2002: 97).

He made at least one more tour of Europe, completing it in 1952. Duchesne returned on the *SS Liberte* from France on February 22nd. At the time he was living at 301 East 106th Street in El Barrio.⁹

Rafael Duchesne is credited, along with Ramón Usera, with introducing legendary trumpeter Mario Bauzá to the world of jazz via the Sissle band in 1930 (Glasser 1995: 69). Bauzá evolved into a great jazzman in addition to being successful in the African Caribbean music environment with his famed brother-in-law Frank Grillo, better known as Machito.

Rafael Duchesne's best-known composition is "Linda mujer," a number made

famous by the great Xavier Cugat and his orchestra. It has also been recorded by jazz great Chico O'Farril. The song was given lyrics in English and re-titled "You Never Say Yes, You Never Say No." The composition was used in two significant American films: one, titled *Holiday in México*, was released in 1944 by Metro Golden Mayer (MGM), the other, titled *The Thrill in Brazil*, was released in 1946 by Columbia Pictures.

This Duchesne had a brother named Miguel who was not in the jazz world but was a member of the Radio City Music Hall Orchestra (Glasser 1995: 74). He also had a cousin named Miguel Angel Duchesne who was active in jazz as a trumpeter for the Paul Whiteman Orchestra; he was described as a "hot Spanish trumpet" (Glasser 1995: 75). Miguel Angel was also known as "Mitchell" according to Rossana Duchesne. These two Duchesne were perceived to be racially white, and that, in part, explains their work with white orchestras.

Rafael Duchesne Nieves died in 1958 in New York. He was only 59 years of age. He is buried in the Long Island National Cemetery in Farmingdale, New York, in a cemetery reserved for those who were members of the military. Several other Puerto Rican musicians who were members of the Hell-Fighters are also buried at this location.



Gregorio Félix Delgado, who was recruited by Lt. James Reese Europe along with Rafael Hernández and others to become members of the Harlem Hell Fighters jazz band. He led his own band, called the Internationals. Photograph courtesy of Smithsonian Institution. Reprinted, by permission, from the Smithsonian Institution.

Gregorio Félix Delgado

Gregorio Félix Delgado was also among the musicians recruited by Lt. James Reese Europe in 1917. Félix initially arrived on Ellis Island in New York on May 11th. The SS *Caracas* carried 13 musicians and Lieutenant James Reese Europe. Félix indicated then that he was from San Juan and was born on September 26, 1886. He had enlisted in Puerto Rico, as did the other recruited musicians. Félix returned to Puerto Rico after World War I for an undetermined period. In 1924 he again arrived on Ellis Island, this time to stay. At the time, he indicated that he lived at 1761 Third Avenue in New York. He died in New York in 1965.

Gregorio Félix was an outstanding clarinetist who was fortunate to have participated in jazz's first excursion to Europe, when the Harlem Hell-Fighters went to the war front. Upon his return, he participated in one of the most documented receptions that were given to the Hell-Fighters by the Harlem community—an experience he no doubt would never forget. When Félix returned from the war, he immediately immersed himself in the Harlem Renaissance music environment. The apparent first jazz recordings by Félix were completed in 1919 in New York while he was a member of the Hell-Fighters Jazz Band. Other recordings, several undocumented, followed with Félix playing the clarinet or the saxophones.

Another memorable experience for Gregorio Félix was when he was a member of the group named Fess Williams and his Royal Flush Orchestra. The musicians performed at the 1926 grand opening of the jazz palace known as the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. The Savoy served as a showcase for musicians and dancers throughout the Harlem Renaissance and beyond. A picture taken circa 1926, when Félix was a member of the Williams Orchestra, revealed him to be a dark, medium-height, attractive man.

Research documenting Félix's participation in the jazz environment is ongoing. According to the *The Tom Lord Jazz Discography*. Gregorio Félix Delgado participated in at least eleven recording sessions between 1929 and 1938. He played various instruments during these sessions, including the clarinet, alto and tenor saxophone, and lead drums. Félix's participation in jazz recordings, between 1924 and 1929, remains to be fully documented since he recorded using four different names.

After years in the jazz ambience, Gregorio Félix Delgado made a dramatic transition to calypso music. Calypso is associated with the people of Trinidad and was internationally popular in the 1940s. The genre is similar to the Puerto Rican plena in that it is a poetic retelling of current events put to music; this may have facilitated Félix's transition. With the switch to calypso came a change in name to Gregory Felix and Felix Gregory. That Felix excelled in the calypso environment is well documented by the many recordings that survive; some have been reissued. Included in the available recordings are examples of Felix as a band member and leader of his group, dubbed The Internationals.

In a review of a CD released in 2000, containing a calypso program recorded in 1946 in New York's Town Hall, the following was said by reviewer Norman Weinstein of Gregory Felix's participation: "The three [singers] are ably backed by guitarist Gerald Clark's Invaders, a quintet with Victor Pacheco on fiddle, Albert Morris on piano, 'Hi' Clark on double bass, and Gregory Felix on clarinet. Felix, whose broad vibrato and sense of swing evokes Sidney Bechet, is the star player of the band" (Weinstein 2000). The comparison to legendary jazz great Sidney Bechet is quite a compliment to Félix and confirms his high level of musicianship.

Fortunately, a number of photographs of Gregorio Félix have survived. They capture him in both the Harlem jazz venue and the Calypso scene. In the Calypso environment,

he is documented as a clarinetist, and additionally, one photograph shows him as a solo singer. (A significant number of recordings in which Félix is a participant are available, giving the listener opportunities to hear the famed clarinetist.)

Francisco Tizol

Francisco Tizol y Tizol was born on October 10, 1893. He was known as Paco and was the out-of-wedlock son of a distinguished Puerto Rico government leader, José de Jesús Tizol. He lived with his mother, uncle Manuel Tizol, and family members, including Juan Tizol. The family lived at the historic but modest home at 31 Calle de la Cruz in Old San Juan.

It is well known that Paco Tizol's uncle was an outstanding musician, music educator, and band leader. Manuel was an aggressive supporter of the island's music and musicians and organized many bands and orchestras. Manuel Tizol is also remembered as someone who challenged American authorities that sought to



The 1925 Leon Abbey band with Paco Tizol as bass player. Abbey, the violinist, was a standout bandleader who organized many groups. In 1926 Leon Abbey and his Savoy Bearcats was one of three bands to inaugurate the Savoy Ballroom as a Harlem Renaissance dance palace. Photograph courtesy of María Asunción Tizol. Reprinted, by permission, from María Asunción Tizol.

deny funding to support the orchestras performing in town plazas. Puerto Rican historians indicate that the American authorities were actually more interested in diminishing manifestations of Puerto Rican culture represented by these concerts and other cultural and religious events (Díaz-Stevens 1996: 157). Manuel Tizol was also a great humanitarian who adopted three boys, two who were nephews, into his already large family.

Francisco Tizol was not part of the group of musicians recruited by James Reese Europe although he was eligible for the military. He along with his cousin Juan and his uncle Manuel registered for the draft's selective service system.

Francisco Tizol played the bass and the cello in Puerto Rico, where pictures were taken of him holding either of the instruments. This Tizol was also known to be a bandleader who recorded in 1921 a collection of songs by composers from the island

(Malavet-Vega 2002). The 1920 United States Census indicates that Tizol was married and a resident of San Juan. Once in America, Tizol entered the jazz world, as did his cousin Juan Tizol. Paco at one point collaborates with Eubie Blake, Noble Sissle, and many other jazz greats in the production of the very successful Broadway review, *Shuffle Along*. That show band also included Moncho Usera, Rafael Escudero, and a group of Puerto Rican dancers. The immortal Josephine Baker was also a dancer (Lizarraga 2002). The salary list for this production indicates that Francisco Tizol was earning \$70.00 a week while the fledgling Josephine Baker earned \$30 weekly (Kimball and Balcom 1973: 127). The 1922 *Shuffle Along* was considered the first successful all African-American Broadway show. It is also considered, by some, to be a catalyst for the Harlem Renaissance.

“ Paco Tizol left the jazz scene to play more often in Latin American venues in the rapidly growing Latin community of New York. ”

Paco Tizol was also an associate and bandmate of the legendary Leon Abbey. Abbey was a violinist who organized several outstanding orchestras. Tizol was a member of the Leon Abbey band in 1925. Around that time Abbey organized the Charleston Bearcats, and in 1926 his band was one of three that opened the legendary Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. The band's name was changed to the Savoy Bearcats. Frank Driggs, legendary producer and photograph collector of many jazz greats, has identified the members of the 1925 Abbey band when Tizol was a member. The band featured Abbey (leader and violinist), Leroy Tibbs (pianist), Theodore “Pucs” Johnson (drummer), Demas Dean (trumpeter), and, Jonas Walker (trombonist). The band also included Tizol as bassist. The Abbey band toured South America in 1927 and in 1928 went to Europe. Abbey was considered one of the “black kings” of the period (Driggs 2006).

Paco Tizol left the jazz scene to play more often in Latin American venues in the rapidly growing Latin community of New York. At one point he joined a band led by the great Rafael Hernández, and that resulted in a series of recordings that are available today from World Records. Francisco Tizol died in New York in September 1960.

Carmelo ‘Jejo’ Jarí

Carmelo Jarí y Namgo was born in Manatí on July 16th in 1894. In the States he was also known as Carmelo Jejo. Carmelito Jejo is the way he was described by long-time Ellington trumpeter Rex Stewart. His official name appears to be Carmelo Jarí since that was the name he used when he registered for the World War I draft while still a resident of San Juan. Ethnic music chronicler Richard Spottswood posits that Carmelo Jarí was nicknamed “Yeyo” by his compatriots (Spottswood 2006)—and thus Jejo became an apparent poor translation of Yeyo. On at least one occasion the Yeyo name is used to credit him with serving as co-director, along with Jesús ‘Pocholo’ Hernández, of an orchestra that performed at a fund-raising function in New York City in 1923 (Glasser 1995: 129). It is also possible that, like other musicians of the period, Jarí used the Jejo name to avoid contractual conflicts with recording companies. In early jazz, musicians and bands would record under different names with more than one recording company to increase their income.

Jarí was not among the musicians recruited by Lt. Europe although he was eligible for the military. He registered for the armed services on June 5, 1917. His registration card indicates that he was a professional musician employed by the San Juan Municipal Band led by Manuel Tizol. He was a bachelor who lived in the Old City at 12 Boulevard Norzagaray with his mother, whom he supported (this was stated on the registration card). He may have avoided the military to take care of his mother.

The 1920 United States Census reveals that Carmelo Jarí was married but still a resident of San Juan in that year. However, by late 1921 Rex Stewart confirms that Jarí was a rising star in the Harlem jazz scene. The Ellis Island archives confirm that this musician had arrived on July 5, 1921. He said that he was 28 years old, was five feet seven, and weighed 175 pounds. He was an apparent stowaway who was listed as a cook on the ship's manifest.¹⁰

Carmelo Jarí was an accomplished musician who excelled on the clarinet and saxophones. He was praised by many musicians, including the great Rex Stewart, who worked with him and who wrote in his autobiography that Jarí was another great musician, a Puerto Rican clarinetist of stature (Stewart 1991: 50). Stewart goes on to say of Jarí: "Our clarinet man, Carmelo Jejo, was the star of our group, and from our opening number there was a second line of fans and musicians in front of him" (1991: 204).

Carmelo Jarí was also a composer, and the *Discos Victor Portorriqueños* catalogue indicates that one of Jarí's compositions, titled "Cambio chinas por botellas," was recorded by the Banda Municipal de San Juan. On the flip side is a composition by Rafael Hernández, which was titled "Patria" and recorded in 1917.¹¹ Another of Jarí's compositions was recorded in 1921 for Victor in their Camden, New Jersey, studios by a band led by Paco Tizol (Spottwood 2006).

In April 1922, Carmelo Jarí was listed in the salary list for the very successful Broadway production of *Shuffle Along*; he was a member of the orchestra. He was paid \$70.00 a week, the same salary that was paid to his compatriot Francisco Tizol who was another band member (Kimball and Balcom 1973: 127).

Jarí also had the distinction of being a member of the Leon Abbey-led Charleston, later the Savoy Bearcats orchestra, when it was selected to be one of the bands to play at the grand opening of the incomparable Savoy Ballroom in Harlem. Abbey was a respected bandleader and jazz pioneer whose band recorded for the Victor label. Membership in the Abbey band confirmed Jarí's high level of musicianship.

The 1926 opening of the Savoy Ballroom featured three great bands, the Savoy Bearcats, and the Fess Williams and Fletcher Henderson orchestras. All three bands conceivably featured Puerto Rican musicians. Carmelo Jarí was with the Bearcats, Gregorio Félix with Fess Williams, and Rafael Escudero and Fernando Arbello were with the great Fletcher Henderson band. The coming together of these Puerto Rican musicians, between sets, on that historic evening was surely a heart-warming and never-to-be-forgotten experience.

With Leon Abbey, Jarí participated on a tour of South America. They returned together from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on October 11, 1927. At the time Jarí was a resident of 116 East 116th Street in East Harlem, El Barrio.¹²

Years later Carmelo Jarí, while using the Jejo last name, was a member of the Fletcher Henderson band. At the time the Henderson band was considered the finest swing band of the period, without comparison, until the Duke Ellington band arrived. Henderson was known as the 'uncrown king of swing' by many critics and fans. Many believed that the Henderson orchestra was better than any black or white band.

The *Tom Lord Jazz Discography* indicates that Carmelo Jarí was credited with five recordings sessions between 1926 and 1927 when he played the clarinet, and the alto and baritone saxophones. He is also credited as Carmelo Jejo in seven recording sessions that took place as late as 1928, and when he played the flute. Richard Spottswood indicates that Jarí recorded with Abbey, Henderson, and Clarence Williams. He was also a member of the house band for the show titled *Blackbirds*, directed by Lew Leslie, that included other Puerto Ricans (Spottswood 2006). Fortunately, several CDs now available document Jarí's work as a band member, giving the listener the opportunity to appreciate his talents.

One source, the death roll for Local 802 of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) (Spottswood 2006), indicates that Carmelo Jarí died in January 1939. This may be accurate since recording sessions after 1928 do not have Jarí as a participant. No other confirmation of his passing has been located. Jarí remains an enigmatic personality of the jazz scene during the Harlem Renaissance. To complicate matters, he, along with other Puerto Rican musicians, had been identified as Cuban. Much research remains to be done to document all the contributions of this legendary native of Manatí.

Ramón Usera

One of Puerto Rico's premier bandleaders in the middle 20th century was Ramón Usera, who was also known as Moncho and Raymond. He organized his first bands in New York and subsequently did the same in his homeland.

Ramón Usera Vives was born in Ponce on August 31st in 1904. He arrived in America via Ellis Island in 1924. By the time he arrived in America, Usera was a well-trained musician who played the piano, flute, clarinet, and saxophone. Usera briefly stayed in New York but by 1925 was enrolled at the *Escole Normale de Musique* in Paris (López-Ortíz 2004).

Unlike most of his compatriots, Moncho Usera enters the jazz scene in Europe when he joins Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds*, an all African-American musical in Paris. In 1928 that band traveled through Europe and also recorded there. In 1929, Usera returns to New York, where he joins the famed Noble Sissle Orchestra. It is possible that he had been recruited by the older Rafael Duchesne who was already a band member. Both were in the band when it went to Europe and recorded in 1930. A video of that recording is available on the Internet. They arrived from Plymouth, England, on December 22nd on the *SS Paris*.¹³ They were also together in the recording studios in February and April 1931. Usera returns to Europe with Noble Sissle in 1931.

In 1933 Usera joins the band led by trumpeter Arthur Briggs and returns to Paris where he performs at the *Ambassadeur Club*. In 1934 the band travels to England to perform at the *London Jazz Club* (López-Ortíz 2004). That band included Sidney Bechet and Noble Sissle (Wyer 2006: 2). Usera participates in approximately ten jazz recording sessions between 1928 and 1937 as a violinist, clarinetist, and tenor and alto-saxophonist (Lord 1997).

Usera leaves the jazz scene to return to a Latin-American music base, performing with outstanding bandleaders such as Enrique Madriguera, Desiderio "Desi" Arnaz, and Eliseo Grenet. Usera participated in numerous recording sessions and traveled throughout the States, South America, and Europe. Afterward, he records and arranges music for several leading bands, led by Vincent López and Don Maya, among others (López-Ortíz 2004: 2). Usera's association with so many great bandleaders is impressive and a confirmation of his musicianship.



Trombonist Fernando Arbello worked with several bands. Here he is on the extreme right, next to fellow trombonist Ed Cuffee. The trumpeters from left to right are Dick Vance, Joe Thomas, and Roy Eldridge. Photograph of the of the Jimmie Lunceford band horn section courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Reprinted, by permission, from the Smithsonian Institution.

Moncho Usera was a composer of different genres. Among his compositions we find “Under the Creole Moon” that he wrote with Sidney Bechet and Noble Sissle. His other compositions include “Añoranzas,” “Boga Boga,” “Caribbean Fantasy,” “Ha Ha Ha,” “Moment that We Fell in Love,” “Mosquito el,” “Tal es la vida,” “There is No Tomorrow,” and “Vuelta a la,” among others.

Usera is fondly remembered among musicians in Puerto Rico because he transcribed and arranged the music created by the legendary composer Pedro Flores. Flores created many, many memorable songs; however, he never fully mastered how to read or write music. He, therefore, turned to Ramón Usera, who transcribed his musical ideas onto paper, ensuring that they would be available to those who recorded them (Artau 2007; Mora-Bosch 2007).

One of Puerto Rico’s most prolific composers of the 20th century, Catalino “Tite” Curét Alonso described the Ramón Usera band as one that emerged during World War II in Puerto Rico with the characteristics of the big jazz-band sound. (Curét-Alonso 1987: 17). No doubt such characteristics were the result of Usera’s experience with the jazz venues of the States.

A number of recordings in which Moncho Usera is an instrumentalist or bandleader are available. Most recently, Harlequin Records released a CD titled *Ramón Moncho Usera 1941–42*. The photograph of Usera used for the cover of this collection reveals that he was a handsome man with a broad smile. Ramón Usera died in his homeland in 1972.

Fernando Arbello

Fernando Arbello was also known as Fernando Arbelo and Chico among musicians. He was one of several trombonists from the island who made their way to the early American jazz scene. The distinguished Puerto Rican musicologist Juan Mora-Bosch believes that this musician’s correct name is Fernando Arvelo. The Social Security Death Index lists him as Arbelo. The spelling of his name may have been changed when he moved to the States. He was born in Ponce in 1902 and as a youngster headed for the States with the skills he had learned at home. His training was such that he was able to perform with a homeland symphony. Once in the States, at the height of the Harlem Renaissance, Arbello had tenures with several great bands, including Jimmie Lunceford, Fletcher Henderson, Claude Hopkins, and Chick Webb (Chadbourne 2005b). In 1933 he was captured on a nine-minute short film, *Barber Shop Blues*, with the Claude Hopkins band. For a time he was the only trombonist of the Hopkins band.

A reputable trombonist, Arbello was also a jazz composer when there were few in the genre. His best-known composition is “Big Chief de Sota,” a piece that he wrote in collaboration with famed Andy Razaf (Chadbourne 2005b). The tune was recorded by the leading bands of the period, including the great Fats Waller.

Fernando Arbello had many opportunities to record with the many bands with which he had extended stints starting in the 1920s and ‘30s. He recorded with the Henderson, Lunceford, and Hopkins bands, in addition to playing with Fats Waller, Roy Eldridge, and Rex Stewart to name a few. He was essentially a trombonist but had limited experience with the tuba and the trumpet. Arbello participated in approximately 54 jazz recording sessions as a trombonist or trumpeter between 1931 and 1953 (Lord 1997). Arbello’s participation with the Henderson band can be heard in a CD collection titled *The Indispensable Fletcher Henderson*. His participation with the Chick Webb orchestra can be heard on a

Pianist Rogelio-Roger-Ram Ramírez arrived in New York in 1920. He offered a solo concert at the world famous Carnegie Hall after many years of work in small jazz clubs and dance halls. Ramírez was also a standout organist. Photograph courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Reprinted, by permission, from the Smithsonian Institution.



2003 CD titled *Stompin' at the Savoy*. Arbello also participates with Midge Williams and his Jazz Jesters in recordings that were re-released in 2006; the CD is titled *The Complete Midge Williams vol. #2*.

Arbello enjoyed a fascinating experience with jazz orchestras; however, in his later years he chose to join the Machito Orchestra, which played Caribbean music. Fernando Arbello subsequently gave up on the States and returned to Puerto Rico, where he died in July 1970.

Rogelio 'Ram' Ramírez

Rogelio Ramírez was also known as Roger or Ram. He was born in San Juan on May 10, 1913. He arrived at Ellis Island on November 3, 1920. Ramírez was an accomplished pianist who was comfortable in swing, bop, and traditional jazz settings. By age 13 he was a professional musician who belonged to the union. Ram Ramírez was also a composer; he is best known for "Lover Man," a tune that is considered a jazz standard and has been recorded by numerous artists, including the great Duke Ellington. "Lover Man" was made famous by the immortal Billie Holiday; it was also recorded by Ella Fitzgerald.

During the Harlem Renaissance Ramírez worked with the Louisiana Stompers and Monette Moore in 1933. At 20 he had appeared in New York City ballrooms with

bands such as the one led by Sid Catlett. The following year he joined legendary trumpeter Rex Stewart for a set of recordings that are available today on the Columbia and Classic labels (Ehrenzeller 2002: 4).

A highlight in Ram Ramírez career came in 1934 when, at the very young age of 21, he substituted for Duke Ellington, when one of the latter's small groups, led by Rex Stewart, recorded "Stingaree" and "Baby Ain'tcha Satisfied" (Ehrenzeller 2002: 4). In 1935 he joined Willie Bryant and in 1937 went to Europe with a group led by Bobby Martin.

Ramírez also backed the legendary Ella Fitzgerald and worked with Frankie Newton and Charlie Barnet in 1942. In 1944 he joined the John Kirby Sextet and this was followed with stays with his own trio. In the 1950s he also doubled on the organ (Yanow 2005).

Another highlight in Ramírez's career came in June 1981, when, at 67, he offered a recital as soloist at the world famous Carnegie Hall. Ram Ramírez was selected to participate as part of the Kool Jazz Fest solo piano series. The reviews of that presentation were exceptionally positive.

Ramírez lived until 81 years of age, and he remained active in the music world almost until his death. He was quite active in the 1970s, when he played with the Harlem Blues and Jazz Band. Throughout this period, however, he was best known primarily among members of the musicians' community. He led recording dates for the Gotham label in 1946, Super Disc in 1947, Black & Blue in 1960, and Master Jazz in 1973–74 (Yanow 2005).

Ramírez recorded as a pianist and organist, and according to the *Lord Jazz Discography*, he participated in approximately 62 jazz recording sessions between 1934 and 1981 (Lord 1997). Anyone interested in collecting music that has Ram Ramírez playing as pianist or organist can buy those recordings of his that are available. Of particular interest to collectors is a 2005 release called *I'll Remember April*, by the Roger Ram Ramírez Trio; for this recording he is the leader, pianist, composer, and arranger.

“ A highlight in Ram Ramírez career came in 1934 when, at the very young age of 21, he substituted for Duke Ellington, when one of the latter's small groups, led by Rex Stewart, recorded 'Stingaree' and 'Baby Ain'tcha Satisfied.' ”

Conclusion

In addition to the musicians described, a number of others played lesser roles in the jazz environment of the Harlem Renaissance—perhaps because they preferred to incorporate themselves into the Latin-American music arena or they chose to return to the homeland. Those with brief tenures in jazz include several of the musicians who came with James Reese Europe. Among them: clarinetist Jesús Hernández, Antonio González, Genaro Torres, Eligio Rijos, and Arturo B. Ayala. Others in that group included saxophonist Ceferino Hernández, bassoonist Pablo Fuentes, mellophonists Francisco and Eleuterio Meléndez, euphonium players Nicolas Vázquez and José Froilán Jiménez, and tuba players José Rivera Rosas and Sixto Benitez (Kay 1997: 27). All participated in the 1919 early recordings of the Harlem Hell-Fighters jazz band.



Picture taken in 1928 of the McKinney Cotton Pickers with Manatí, Puerto Rico native Roberto 'Bob' Escudero standing alongside his tuba. Escudero also played with other bands of the Harlem Renaissance including the great Fletcher Henderson. Photograph courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution. Reprinted, by permission, from the Smithsonian Institution.

In addition to the Hell-Fighters, other Boricuas such as Bob Escudero had limited stints. This Escudero played the tuba from 1922 to 1928, and he participated in at least nine jazz recording sessions (Lord 1997). When Rex Stewart joined the Fletcher Henderson band, he said that Bob Escudero was the bass player (Stewart 1991). A photograph taken circa 1928, shows Escudero as a member of the McKinney's Cotton Pickers jazz band. Ironically, the picture shows him as a short, heavy man standing next to his tuba; the association suggests that he played the tuba up to that period instead of switching to the double-bass. Bob Escudero, like Rafael, was also from the north-coast city of Manatí. Curiously, more than one source has indicated that Bob and Rafael Escudero are two names for the same person, even though they appear to be different individuals in photographs and discographies. Therefore, there is a need for additional research to confirm the participation of Bob Escudero.

Also among the pioneers was Oscar Madera, who came from a distinguished family of musicians; he was born in 1905 and died in San Juan in 1992. He was a violinist in early jazz bands and participated in at least two jazz recording sessions as late as 1936. At one point in 1930 Madera was a bandmate of Moncho Usera when they were in the Noble Sissle Orchestra. Efraín Vaz was another musician of early jazz who had multiple experiences, including playing time with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra and jazz bands in Harlem (Glasser 1991: 116). The same can be said for Willie Rodríguez, who played with the all-white Paul Whiteman orchestra, among others. Ariosto Cruz was an accomplished cellist on the island who briefly came to the States to be a member of the pit orchestra of the Howard Theater in Washington and was a bandmate of Juan Tizol. Cruz had been a member of the Manuel Tizol bands where he was also a bandmate of Rafael Hernández. Francisco Dulievre, another participant, was from an island-based family of musicians, was and played as a member of the Howard Theater Orchestra and as another Juan Tizol bandmate (Tizol 1978).

Agustín Serrano, a Ponce native, was another musician with a brief tenure with the Harlem jazz bands. One highlight in Serrano's career came when he was invited to join the Duke Ellington orchestra on stage in a manner resembling a jam session. Born in early May 1911, Serrano was best known as a bassist. In later years he also worked with such jazz greats as Count Basie, Benny Goodman, and Buddy Rich. Serrano was also active in the Latin music venue when he played with such outstanding bandleaders as Eliseo Grenet and Ernesto Lecuona. He was also the founder of his own Cuarteto Yumurí (Figueroa 1996: 39).

“ Coen has been credited with being the first to arrange for Puerto Rican music in a style consistent with the large bands of the 1920s. ”

Augusto Coen achieved substantial popularity as a bandleader who played primarily Afro-Caribbean music in New York; however, he was also a participant of early jazz bands. Coen was among the musicians who were also a part of Lew Leslie's *Blackbirds* review. Coen was known to play with other jazz bands, including Duke Ellington's (Glasser 1995: 79). Born in 1895, he was originally from Ponce. He arrived on Ellis Island in 1919.¹⁴ Coen has been credited with being the first to arrange for Puerto Rican music in a style consistent with the large jazz bands of the 1920s. After a significant career in New York, Coen returned to the island, where he died in San Juan in 1970.

Discussions on Latin American participation during the fledgling period of jazz and the development of Latin jazz does not often include much on the Puerto Rican presence, and this lack may lead some to think that jazz is new to the Boricua experience. Very often they were incorrectly identified with other ethnic groups. Thanks to oral history investigators, discographers, jazz historians, and music ethnographers, more and more is known about the participation of different ethnic and immigrant groups, including Puerto Ricans, in jazz. As an increasingly large audience now understands, during the Harlem Renaissance, Puerto Ricans played a role in early jazz similar to contemporary Boricuas in contemporary hip-hop.



NOTES

- ¹ For additional information on the Puerto Rican migration to Hawaii, see the collection of materials housed in the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College of the City University of New York.
- ² For a comprehensive list of Spanish-surname musicians of early jazz in New Orleans, see the Bigard (1986) autobiography.
- ³ Ship Manifest, available from www.Ancestry.com.
- ⁴ We know that about this time in the early migration, the famous Louisiana Porto Rican yam was introduced into the northern Florida or the New Orleans area. It is probable that it was those Puerto Ricans who landed or settled in that area, in the early 1900s, who introduced the Puerto Rican sweet potato since many migrants carried island foods to survive the voyage to Hawaii. After that time what was called Porto Rican yams became extremely popular in New Orleans and neighboring cities. Linguists speculate that the term “yam” was used because of confusion with the Puerto Rican *ñame*. Obviously, when the Boricua pioneers traveled to Hawaii, they carried many varieties of Puerto Rican foods, especially those falling under the typical “vianda” category. Ñame is another root, like the sweet-potato, that is very popular among the islanders. It was a favorite food of the poor that was often consumed with green bananas and codfish.
- ⁵ Ellis Island Museum Archives (2006). *SS Carolina* Ship’s Manifest for 23 July 1917 in www.Ellisland.org
- ⁶ Rossana Duchesne is the grand-daughter of Rafael Duchesne Mondríguez.
- ⁷ Military Registration Card (undated). For Rafael I. Duchesne, copy made available from Rosanna Duchesne.
- ⁸ Ellis Island Museum Archives (2006). *SS Paris* Ship’s Manifest for 22 December 1930 in www.Ellisland.org.
- ⁹ Ellis Island Museum Archives (2006). *SS Liberte* Ship’s Manifest for 22 February 1952 in www.Ellisland.org
- ¹⁰ Ellis Island Museum Archives (2006). The *SS San Juan* Ship’s Manifest for 5 July 1921 in www.Ellisland.org
- ¹¹ Discos Victor Portorriqueños (Victor Porto Rican Records) (1920). Catalog 5012-ITA-4-20-20-Porto Rican, Victor Talking Machine Company, Printed July 1920, including August 1920, Supplement.
- ¹² Ellis Island Museum Archives (2006). The *SS Cross* Ship’s Manifest for 11 October 1927 in www.Ellisland.org.
- ¹³ Ellis Island Museum Archives (2006). The *SS Paris* Ship’s Manifest for 22 December 1930 in www.Ellisland.org,
- ¹⁴ Ellis Island Museum Archives (2006). The *SS Maracaibo* Ship’s Manifest for 9 March 1919 in www.Ellisland.org.

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