

## Performer: El Septeto Santiaguero

For more than 20 years, El Septeto Santiaguero has kept son connected to its original roots in Santiago de Cuba, a province at the southeast of the island. Today they are the foremost son music ensemble in the Cuban music scene.

Son comes from the centuries-old Afro-Cuban musical tradition, which married African percussion to the melodies and instrumentation of the Spanish canción. After the abolition of slavery in 1886, many Afro-Cubans moved from rural areas to the cities, and by the start of the 20th century, son emerged from this working-class rural/urban interchange. Son matured in the 1920s, becoming the island's pre-eminent musical style, featuring a sextet of guitar, tres (triple-stringed guitar), bongos, claves, maracas and double bass. In Havana -- teeming with Americans avoiding Prohibition -- soneros embraced the hot, new sounds of American jazz, making horns an integral component of son. Although eclipsed by newer genres in the 1940s, rem son remains a foundational Cuban style.

While Buena Vista Social Club's mid-1990s recordings sparked a worldwide revival of interest in classic son, Cuban musicians never ceased making this marvelous music. Fernando Dewar, the ensemble's founder and leader, on tres and Rudens Matos on guitar set up the acoustic-guitar-led Santiago style of son with syncopation and sparkling runs that support the beat with concise chording behind the vocalists.

"I think that if we lived in another place," Dewar explains, "we wouldn't have all the elements that we need. Cuba is a musical island, but Santiago stands out because of the diversity of genres that are preserved there. And you can see those manifestations in theaters, restaurants and in the streets, constantly."

Originally a septet but wanting to reinforce the rhythms of son, they later added another percussionist. Joining Dewar and Matos are Gabriel Montero (conga), Carlos Danger Plana (bongos), Giraldo Bravo (güiro), Alain Dragoní (trumpet), Dairon Robert (bass), and Inocencio Heredia (lead vocals). Passionate and powerful interpreters of this great tradition, their sweet tunes and strong rhythms set listeners into constant motion.

Source: [http://www.lowellsun.com/folkfest/ci\\_31170277/el-septeto-santiaguero-cuban-son](http://www.lowellsun.com/folkfest/ci_31170277/el-septeto-santiaguero-cuban-son)