

Donna Coleman

pianist – presents

Ragtime's Missing Links: Cuba's Role in the Evolving Ragtime Tradition

a concert-with-commentary created for



Cuban Cultural Center of New York

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program

Scott Joplin

(1867 near Marshall TX – 1917 New York NY)

Maple Leaf Rag (1899)

cakewalk rhythm; opening of C phrase = *tresillo*

Manuel Saumell Robredo

(1818 Havana – 1870 Havana)

Contradanzas (c. 1839–1865?)

La Tedezco [translation unclear; possibly a surname]
[*danzón* elements in first eight bars]

La Celestina [The Matchmaker]
[*choriamb* in bar 1 and in canon throughout the B phrase]

El Somatén [The Alarm]
[B phrase = obvious use of *cinquillo*]

La Matilde [Matilda]
[B phrase = *guajira* in bass and in both hands at cadences]

La Nené [The Baby]
[B phrase = *criolla*]

Dice Que No [He (or She) Says No] *A mi amigo L.M. Gottschalk*
[A phrase = 6/8 in 2 and 3; B phrase – in 3, a distinctive eighth-eighth-quarter-quarter rhythm]

Luisiana [Louisiana] *A mi amigo L.M. Gottschalk*
[B phrase cross-rhythms (waltz in bass, duple time in treble)]

La Quejosita [Little Miss Complainer]
[brilliant exploration of the myriad possibilities in 6/8 time]

¡Toma, Tomás!! [Take It, Tomas!] *A mi amigo Don Tomás Ruiz*

Lamentos de Amor [Laments of Love]
[habanera; harbinger of Cervantes style expressiveness and expansive use of the piano]

Recuerdos de Gottschalk [Memories of Gottschalk]
[*habanera*; B phrase = cakewalk]

Ignacio Cervantes Kawanagh

(1847 Havana – 1905 Havana)

Danzas Cubanas (c. 1875–1895)

Adiós a Cuba [Farewell to Cuba]

Lejos de Ti! [Far Away from You]

Ilusiones Perdidas [Lost Illusions]

Tiene Que Ser [It Must Be]

Improvisada [Improvised]

Gran Señora [The Great Lady]

Amistad [Friendship]

No Llores Más [Weep No More]

Nicolás Ruiz Espadero

(1832 Havana – 1890 Havana)

Partez Ingrate! [Leave Me, Ungrateful One!] *Romance sans paroles*, opus 15 (1861)
[no syncopated rhythms] [excerpt only for comparison with the other repertory]

Tomás Ruiz

(1834 Havana – 1888 Havana)

La Sultana, contradanza (c. 1883)
[obvious cakewalk rhythm]

Louis Moreau Gottschalk

(1829 New Orleans – 1869 Rio de Janeiro)

O, Ma Charmante, épargnez-moi! [O, My Charmer, Spare Me!] RO 182 (1861)
[a genuine *contradanza*, two phrases in contrasting key (I–IV) and character]

Ay! Lunarcitos! [Ay! Beauty Marks!] [not published in Offergeld catalogue] (1860)
[contradanza; two 16-bar phrases; 3 vs 2 cross-rhythm in A; oom-pah bass variant in B]

Réponds Moi (“*Di que si.*”), RO226 (opus 50) (1859), *Danse Cubaine. Caprice Brillant*
[cakewalk rhythm, oom-pah bass, a single A phrase repeated with variations] [excerpt only]

RO numbers refer to the catalogue of Gottschalk's works compiled by Robert Offergeld
<http://www.thompsonian.info/gottschalk-catalogue.html>
<http://www.thompsonian.info/gottschalk-legend-offergeld.html>

Scott Joplin

Solace – A Mexican Serenade (1909)
[*abanera* rhythm throughout]

Louis Moreau Gottschalk

La Gallina [The Hen] *Danse Cubaine*, opus 53, RO 100 (1859)
[cakewalk rhythm, two 16-bar phrases, oom-pah bass in B phrase, B phrase repeated with variations]

Keywords

all definitions excerpted and adapted from Oxford Music Online

Afro-Cuban rhythms: the first Africans were taken to Cuba in 1513, and their traditional music, in particular the multi-layered drumming that creates *polyrhythm* and *syncopation*, is an essential ingredient in the evolution of Cuban (and Latin American music in general) as well as in Ragtime and the Cakewalk. The specific rhythms listed below are in many cases very closely related.

Cakewalk: an African American couples dance style that evolved on the southern plantations into a “contest” for which a cake was the prize. The dance featured outrageous strutting and extravagantly high steps that lampooned the dancing of the plantation “masters.” The cakewalk rhythm is a close cousin of the habanera and the *tresillo*.



Cervantes (Kawanagh), Ignacio. Born and died in Havana, 1847–1905. Studied with Espadero and with Gottschalk, who encouraged him to go to Paris where he studied piano and composition (for which he was awarded First Prize) at the Conservatoire. He toured the USA between 1875–1879, and was exiled in Mexico between 1898–1900, accused of being a political revolutionary. His *Danzas Cubanas* are miniature gems, superbly crafted, exquisitely poised, perfect “half Rags” that represent the pinnacle of Cuban “classical” music. “Thirty-seven tracks that unfold like episodes in a steamy romance novel, steeped in Afro-Cuban rhythmic verve, Chopin’s pathos, Bach’s contrapuntal detail and voice-leading, sumptuous French harmony, and sensuality redolent of rum, cigar smoke, sea air, sweat, and tears.” [Donna Coleman, cover artwork for *Don’t Touch Me*, the thirty-seven solo-piano *Danzas Cubanas* published by OutBach®].

Choriamb (choriambus): a poetic “foot,” a *metron*, consisting of long + two short + long syllables (a *trochee* alternating with an *iamb*). The rhythmic effect would be the same as the *criolla* (see below).



Cinquillo: a rhythmic pattern associated with Afro-Haitian (Saint-Domingue) music. Remove the first pitch and the remaining four are the Cakewalk rhythm. It is also an elaborated version of the *tresillo* (below); tie pitches 1 & 2, 3&4 together and the result is the *tresillo*.



Clave: a rhythmic pattern associated with Afro-Cuban music. The *tresillo* is the first three pitches.



Contredanse: the French version of the English country dance, the most popular dance of the 18th century, from which the Cuban *contradanza* evolved (and eventually, the Rag).

Creole: people of mixed European and African descent, in particular those living in the region of the Gulf of Mexico and more specifically, the state of Louisiana. The term also refers to the style of music that evolved from the mingling of African and European elements.

Criolla: a rhythmic pattern (technically a cross-rhythm) which came to the New World (and ultimately to Cuba) from the peasant music of the Canary Islands.



Cronin, Stephen (born 1960 Brisbane, Australia). Australian composer and weaver and longtime friend. I invited Dr Cronin to create a brand new *contradanza* for this program, to demonstrate that the genre is alive and well around the world. His *Peribolion Rag* features on my *Rags to Riches: A Syncopated Century* CD.

Danzón: a “couples” ballroom dance that evolved from the *contredanse* (imported from France via Saint-Domingue (Haiti) that morphed further into the *danza* (n.b. Cervantes’s *Danzas Cubanas*). The *habanera* rhythm, two-part structure, and 2/4 time are important elements in common.

Edelmann, Juan Federico (1795 Strasbourg, France – 1848 Havana). Composer, pianist, and upon settling in Havana in 1832, established a music publishing house that was the primary publisher of the work of Cuban composers. He recognized Saumell’s talent and gave the poor young man lessons without charge. More about him in S. Frederick Starr (below).

Espadero, Nicolás Ruiz (1832 Havana – 1890 Havana). One of the brilliant pianists and composers living in Cuba in the nineteenth century, when Havana was a mecca for music and culture. He became a close friend of Gottschalk’s and edited that composer’s posthumous works.

Guajira: a version of the *tresillo* rhythm, and essentially another type of cross-rhythm, with the eighth-notes subdivided into groups of three against a “slower” rhythmic pattern.



Gottschalk, Louis Moreau (1829 in New Orleans – 1869 Rio de Janeiro). At age twelve, he travelled alone to Paris with the intention of studying at the Paris Conservatoire (he was not admitted). He nevertheless enjoyed a brilliant career as pianist and composer throughout France and Spain. He returned to mixed reviews in the USA, and thus began his wanderings that took him to Cuba for three extended and productive visits [14 February 1854–23 February 1855, 12 February 1857–10 June 1857, 26 November 1859–17 January 1862] during which he was closely associated with Manuel Saumell, Ignacio Cervantes (for whom he was an important mentor), and just about every other musician (and dignitary) in the country. His compositions combine European “classical” traditions with distinctive African and Spanish folk elements. During the Civil War, Gottschalk traveled across the USA by train for concert tours featuring the syncopated music that he brought with him from Cuba. I posit that Gottschalk was the Missing Link between the syncopated *contradanzas* of Cuba and the evolving Ragtime tradition in midwestern USA in the 1870s, 1880s, bursting onto the scene in

the 1890s. See the brilliant biography by S. Frederick Starr (below) for more details of the life and music of this extraordinary man, a nineteenth century matinee idol, and the places and times he lived in.

Habanera: (Havana-style *contredanse*, also a type of song) imported initially from Spain (where Louis Moreau Gottschalk likely heard it), consisting of two distinctly different sections of 16 bars, each comprised of a specific type of dance step. Its distinguishing rhythmic device is closely related to the Cakewalk, and it features prominently in the *Contradanzas* of Manuel Saumell and in the *Danzas Cubanas* of Ignacio Cervantes.



Havana: In 1860, this vibrant, culturally rich city was the largest and busiest slave port in the world. Prior to Christopher Columbus's landfall on the island on 28th October 1492, its population was c. 75,000, primarily the Indigenous Taino, Cibony, and Guanahatabey. Little is known about their music. The earliest Spanish settlers (1511) brought African slaves and their musical traditions. Between the years 1763–1860, Cuba's population increased from less than 150,000 to more than 1,300,000, and slaves accounted for approximately one-third of the latter number. Sugarcane became the most important crop for export, with the rise of huge plantations worked by these slaves, and by 1860, Cuba was producing one-third of the world's sugar. The slave trade in Cuba ended in 1865, and slavery was abolished in 1886.

Jazz: principally associated with African Americans, with the notion of individual or group improvisation that often overlays several different rhythmic patterns. The resulting syncopation creates the “jazzy” or “ragged” sense of time.

Joplin, Scott (1867 near Marshall TX – 1917 New York). The King of Ragtime. One of the first African-American composers, whose fifty-one piano Rags are quintessential examples of the genre. His life story is a tragic commentary on the way African American genius was exploited by music publishing companies, to the extent that Joplin died a pauper, despite the fact that compositions like *Maple Leaf Rag* were effectively “million sellers.” See Edward A. Berlin (below) for the definitive biography.

Offergeld, Robert. [dates not available]. The primary cataloguer of the music of Louis Moreau Gottschalk, published as the *Centennial Catalogue*. “RO” numbers listed in titles of Gottschalk works are his initials.

Polyrhythm: when two or more voices interact in different “time,” i.e. treble voice is in 2/4 and bass voice is in 3/4 (as will be heard in several of the Saumell *contradanzas*).

Ragtime: an African American style of music that evolved from the mid-nineteenth century (in tandem with Jazz, which supplanted Ragtime c. 1917), flourished between c. 1897 and 1917, and produced hundreds (if not thousands) of “Rags” for the piano. The specific elements of the solo piano Rag, and its relationship to the March and to Afro-Cuban music will be demonstrated in the lecture.

Ruiz, Tomás (1834 Havana – 1888 Havana). Cuban composer and pianist, associated with Manuel Saumell (and most likely also with Ignacio Cervantes). He wrote approximately twenty-three *contradanzas*, which this researcher has not been able to source (as music scores) except for the one heard on this program (*La Sultana*).

Saumell (Robredo), Manuel. Born and died in Havana, 1817–1870. Considered to be the “Father of Cuban Classical Music,” he composed at least fifty-one *contradanzas* (see *contradance* above), each a marvel of inventiveness, brilliant contrast between the two halves, experimenting with the subtle rhythmic possibilities in 6/8 time. He seems to have been the first composer to employ the *cinquillo* rhythm (see above), which surfaced initially in Oriente (the eastern provinces of Cuba) c. 1802. Gottschalk was inspired by these compositions to write his own *contradanzas*, which for this researcher are *proto-Rags*. Saumell and Gottschalk both taught Cervantes.

Sedalia, Missouri: an important location for the evolving Ragtime tradition as well as for the Transcontinental Railroad, for which construction was halted during the period of the Civil War. Scott Joplin lived here during a richly productive period of his adult life when he composed *Maple Leaf Rag* and other great works. See Edward A. Berlin (below) for more comprehensive information about the composer and the town. The Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival takes place in Sedalia each year (“virtual” in 2021).

Syncopation: a rhythmic device that displaces the normal strong beat in one layer of textures against a stable pulse in another, creating a “jazzy” feel.

Tresillo: a “triplet” rhythm that is not precisely even, although this rhythm is frequently alternated with the true three subdivision of a beat or a bar.



The Rag is a Syncopated March and a Double *Contradanza*

Structure: 16-bar phrases, *contradanza* has two (A&B); Rag has four (AB&CD) (like the March)

Harmony: begins in I; second half is often in IV (like the March)

Texture: two voices; *contradanza* bass is often *habanera*; Rag is usually “oom-pah” (borrowed from the March)

Melody: dance-like, and the Rag often imitates banjo-picking

Rhythm: syncopated; *contradanzas* use *habanera*, *tresillo*, etc.; Rags use “cakewalk,” *tresillo*. The syncopated rhythm is the feature that distinguishes Rags from Marches.

Meter: Rags are almost always in 2/4 (“March” time); *contradanzas* are usually 2/4, but Saumell wrote one-third of his *contradanzas* in 6/8

Rhythmic Patterns Common to Cuban Music and Ragtime

all patterns subdivide into 3 + 3 + 2 rather than the "normal" 4 + 4;

">" = a stressed rhythm or "accent"

Three:	1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2
Clave	
Tresillo	
Habanera	
Cakewalk	
Cinquillo	
Over Four:	1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

Donna Coleman

pianist

"Spirit, Passion, and the Right Hands"

Peter Cossè, *Fono Forum* (Berlin, 1990)
headline for his review of the Et'Cetera recording of Charles Ives's *Concord Sonata*

Donna Coleman's performances and recordings have taken her to four continents for solo and ensemble concerts and for workshops featuring her *Dancing with the Piano* philosophy of music-making. Her research into American and twentieth century repertoires, with focus on the music of Charles Ives, created two internationally acclaimed recordings for Et'Cetera Records and earned fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the North Carolina and the Southern Arts Federations, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Fulbright Foundation, Radcliffe College, and Second Prize in the first John F Kennedy Center International American Music Competition, among many other awards. A Fulbright Senior Scholar Fellowship sponsored her first visit to Australia that led to her appointment as Head of Keyboard in the Victorian College of the Arts (Melbourne) and a twenty-five year, ongoing commitment to nurturing Australia's finest talent. She created the OutBach® project that explores relationships between Indigenous, art, and popular music and presents performances in unexpected locations and combinations such as the world-first piano, banjo, and didgeridoo collaborations and Bach's keyboard concerti with orchestras of guitars. Research into the evolving Ragtime tradition in the USA and its roots in Cuba produced two compact discs for ABC Classics (Sydney), *Rags to Riches: A Syncopated Century* and *Havana to Harlem*, and her own label OutBach® (Melbourne and Santa Fe) released *Don't Touch Me*, the *Danzas Cubanas* by Ignacio Cervantes (2010) and *The Lost Lady* (2015). Jean-Marc Warszawski, writing for *Musicologie.org* about *Don't Touch Me*, said, "everything here is a rare musical success, thanks to the serene majesty of the interpretation, the tone colour, the presentation, and the interest and curiosity that these compositions arouse." Donna's CDs are available from amazon.com and iTunes.

Discography

Charles Ives: *Concord Sonata*, Donna Coleman, pianist and producer [Et'Cetera Records, Amsterdam, KTC 1079, 1989].

Charles Ives: *Piano Sonata No 1*, Donna Coleman, pianist and producer [Et'Cetera Records, Amsterdam, KTC 1147, 1995].

Rags to Riches: A Syncopated Century, Donna Coleman, pianist [ABC Classics, Sydney, 1996].

Havana to Harlem, Donna Coleman, pianist [ABC Classics, Sydney, 2005].

Don't Touch Me: The Thirty-Seven Danzas Cubanas by Ignacio Cervantes, Donna Coleman, pianist and producer [OutBach®, Melbourne, 2010].

The Lost Lady, Donna Coleman, pianist and producer [OutBach®, Melbourne, 2015].

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Last but by no means least, if you are able to access (most likely through a university library) *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press is a near-inexhaustible resource for music-related research, or the hardbound versions found in music libraries.

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* * * * *

This concert is dedicated to my revered mentor

Niccolò Antonio Sartori

with enduring devotion, gratitude, and love

“I couldn’t have done any of this without you.”



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