

INSIDE THE ARCHIVE OF OSWALDO LARES

Music Across Venezuela 1969-1989

Presented by Guillermo Lares and Laura Jordan

Scenography by Kinderhook & Caracas

July 3 - September 20, 2015

Oswaldo Lares Soto (b. 1932, Maracaibo) is a Venezuelan architect who graduated from Cornell University (USA) and worked as a professor in Caracas. While studying abroad he realized that all of his friends at the university who were from other Latin American countries had a strong cultural music identity, while he didn't. Upon his return to Venezuela, he dedicated his life to trying to form this musical identity for his country and on his free time began researching the traditional music culture of Venezuela and the rest of Latin America. Following the steps of his uncle, Venezuelan poet Juan Liscano, Oswaldo spent decades documenting different forms of musical expression across the country. He also produced around 450 thirty-minute radio shows titled *La Revuelta, Musica de Venezuela y el Continente* for the National Radio. In 1974 he founded a group called Convenciones, Music and Dance Across Venezuela, with which he participated as a musician and presenter in about 400 concerts, including 14 international tours. Nowadays Oswaldo is still at the head of the group which celebrated its fortieth birthday this year. Among other offerings, his most important is perhaps the donation of all the original audio recordings done between 1969 and 1977, including all of his radio programs, to The National Library in Caracas. In 2002 he started a foundation called Fundalares to begin the activity of digitizing this material. This exhibition focuses on his recordings which have been digitized up until June 2015.

This work has echoed in many ways through the life of Oswaldo's son, architect and sound artist Guillermo Lares. Through all of the inspiring stories his father has told him of encounters with so many wonderful people across the country, a deep desire arose to share these stories and in some way give continuity to his father's work. Rather than simply allowing the archive to rest in a basement or library, he has set out with his wife and documentary filmmaker Laura Jordan, to give this work a contemporary relevance and to open up new dialogs around the collection for future generations.

Laura and Guillermo wish to deeply thank Oswaldo Lares for his active collaboration in the realization of this project; he has contributed from afar in many different ways and will join us in Berlin for a series of special on- and off-site events. We also wish to sincerely thank Christopher Kline and Sol Calero for their commitment to making this exhibition come true. We hope this is only the beginning of a project determined to keep creating inspiring encounters.

Last, and most importantly, in the words of Oswaldo, "A very special thanks to the musicians, poets and creators, present and absent, honorable representatives of our collective memory, to whom I owe eternal gratitude for allowing me to be the vehicle through which they have generously passed on for posterity their voices, songs and interpretations." -Oswaldo Lares in his prologue to the catalogue donated to the National Library of Venezuela

Special Events: (Further workshops and screenings in September to be announced)

15. Juli. Doors 19h Start 20h

Noche de Música Venezolana with special guests:

Oswaldo Lares, Ricardo Sandoval, Leonidas Rondón, Katherine Lasso, Carolina Riaño
at Acud Macht Neu, Veteranenstraße 21, 10119 Berlin

18. Juli. 17-20h

On Music Archives: Between Preservation and Appropriation

Listening Session and Panel Discussion with Oswaldo Lares, Gilles Aubry and Peter Cusack.
at Errant Bodies, Kollwitzstrasse 97, 10435 Berlin

25. Juli. 14-18h

Visit with Oswaldo Lares at Kinderhook & Caracas

KINDERHOOK & CARACAS
Kreuzbergstraße 42e, 10965 Berlin
www.kinderhook-caracas.com

ENTRE CUENTOS y ENCUENTROS - A GUIDE TO THE WINDOW SLIDES

This is a selection from the original slides which makes up part of Oswaldo's documentation during his trips across Venezuela. These stories are based on conversations with Oswaldo during the past few months. (Audio recordings from any rhythm, person, *place* or instrument found in this text can be searched within the archive found on the tablets)

LEFT WINDOW

1. Indio Figueredo playing the harp at his house in *San Fernando de Apure, Los Llanos* (The Plains), 1969.

"This was what I saw when I went to meet el Indio Figueredo at his house in San Fernando de Apure in 1969. I heard the harp (arpa) and looked through the window and took this picture. That was the beginning of a long friendship. That moment marked a turn in my life, it was the beginning of an activity I would passionately pursue. From then on I began my comings and goings through our exuberant geography, registering, this time with technical resources, the most representative musical forms from all the different regions, through the voices and interpretations of the people themselves."

2. Bar Capanaparo, *Barinas*, 1977.

"I always went to this place when I went to Barinas, there were always people playing there. I once recorded a guy there named Salgado, he had a very strong voice, he was a gardener. The Joropo comes from the Spanish bulerías, because many people came from Andalucía in the south of Spain".

3. Pedrito Beroes playing Joropo, *Los Llanos, Barinas*, 1972.

4. Perucho Cova and his oriental cuereta, *Cariaco, Sucre*.

"When recording I would sometimes arrange a human barrier to stop the wind, we would then listen to how it had turned out. They were always marvelling at how they sounded. In some places I would take the slides along, we would look at them together, then I would leave them."

5. Listening to a recording, *El Vinculo, Paraguana*, 1973.

6. Fiesta de los Santos Inocentes, *Sanare*, 1980.

"This festivity is inspired by the Biblical tale of Herod's slaughter of babies (Massacre of the Innocents)."

7. Zaragoza Celebration, San Antonio Day, *Sanare*, 1980.

8. The Rojas Brothers (Los hermanos Rojas) from Lara, *Caracas*, 1976.

"The Rojas brothers had been invited to a presentation at Caracas. Afterwards I invited them to Manuel's house because he had a big garden and we could play outdoors."

9. Dancing Tamunangue, San Antonio Day, *Sanare*, 1976.

"Sanare is a small remote town, I went once or twice. We did not listen to the recordings in those events, they were all in a festive mood. When we recorded something more static I would play the people the recordings and they were always very interested, people would be surprised that such a small device had so much fidelity."

10. Miguel Dubén, *Margarita*, 1974.

"Miguel singing old sailor songs accompanied with his fishing companion playing the cuatro. He enjoyed listening to his recordings very much; he would laugh when he heard himself. Miguel was a scuba diver when he was young, they would fish all the way to Panama."

11. Marciana Gomez, pilon songs (cantos de pilon), *Margarita*, 1972.

"Women "pilando" corn to prepare arepas, they sing as they work (cantos de pilon). I saw Marciana many times because I would always look for her when I went to Margarita, last time we went she was blind but she still remembered that day we recorded at the patio of her house at six in the morning."

12. Kavanayan, *Gran Sabana*, 1974.

"There I recorded ritual songs in Pemon language."

13. Communal Dwelling, *Cunucunuma River, Amazon*, 1979

"This round dwelling evokes the Yekuana (Makiritare) microcosmos. Micro and macro are related through the central support that surpasses the ceiling pointing to the cosmos. The energy accumulated through music and dance is used to chase away bad spirits."

14. Yanomami, Alto Orinoco, *Amazonas*.

"The Yanomami are the most isolated indigenous groups in the country, they live close to the border with Brazil. They have not developed musical instruments."

15. Catalino Leon, *Oricao*, 1972.

"That was the first time I saw Catalino Leon and his musical arc, which he called marimba. He would place the tip of the bow on a wooden box on the floor which would amplify the sound. He would play the string with a piece of coconut shell and interpret melodies from merengue or joropo."

16. Mr. Griffin and Estella, *El Callao*, 1975.

17. Carlo Small, Estela Small, Enrique Silva and Luis Giraud, *El Callao*, 1979.

"I only heard of Luis Giraud the fifth time I went to El Callao. I recorded him once outdoors and once at Estela's house, he played a very slow calypso with guitar. He came from Martinica and played a pure calypso from the Antilles, he would not take part in the carnival. Estela and Carlo would welcome Convenzuela at their house and prepare a mondongo (soup based on cow or pig intestine) but I did not like the Mondongo! I would always spend some time with Carlo, he was very special, like a saint, did a lot of social work and people appreciated him very much. He played the bumbac drum. He worked at the mines and spoke English from the Antilles. El Callao was the only trilingual town in Venezuela, people spoke Spanish, English and French patois."

18. Isidora and the Viking troupe, Carnaval, *El Callao*, 1972.

19. Isidora's Troupe (Comparsa de Isidora), *El Callao*, 1979.

"Look, you can see the microphone with the wind protector. I must be there recording. It was complicated because the music would be moving all the time, it was hard, carrying the Nagra and so much heat. I realized I had to dance to the rhythm of the calypso so that the movement of the microphone would match the movement of the dancing musicians."

20. Isidora, Lourdes Basanta, Miguelina y Kenton St. Bernard, *El Callao*, 1981.

“The four leading figures of the carnival. Isidora was the queen of the carnival. I once had a time when things were going bad for me, I was depressed during the carnival that year. Isidora told me someone had cast the evil eye on me and gave me her necklace, I wore it during that year. Suddenly Isidora had a hemorrhage and went into a coma. Lulu called me and told me she was in Caracas at the hospital. When I went there a Chinese doctor was attending her, she was lying on a bed. I took off the necklace and gave it back to her. She started recovering; the doctor could not really understand. By the next carnival she was back to dancing and drinking rum.”

RIGHT WINDOW

21. Drummers playing the cumaco drum, *Caruao*, 1971.

“These were some of the first recordings from ‘71 at Caruao, they were the first drums (tambour) I heard in that region and it was then when I realized each place had something in particular. We would arrive at Paco Vera’s place, he had a rooftop at the beach. It was a very small village. I asked the children there, does anyone play drums? And they called the drummers. The whole village came to listen to them.”

22. Children drumming at the beach, *Caruao*, 1971.

“I woke up that morning and they had left the drums there, children had arrived very early and were playing. That is the tradition, from generation to generation. Today is June the 24, San Juan Day, they are playing drums all along that coast.”

23. Ciriaco Iriarte with his group, *Naiguatá*, 1972.

“Ciriaco lived alone, he took care of this house. There he would manufacture his instruments, his masks, paint, they called him Ciriaco Canta-Bonito (nice-singer). He would call me on the phone, when are you coming? And he would invite the musicians to come over.”

24. Ciriaco Iriarte manufacturing mask, *Naiguatá*, 1973.

“We once did an exhibition from Ciriaco at the museum, there I bought three or four paintings from him. I bought the painting of the boat that’s on the cover of the LP on one of my first visits, I loved it.”

25. Ciriaco Iriarte, Foreman of the Devils (Diablos de Naiguatá), *Naiguatá*, 1973.

26. Devils posing, *Naiguatá*, 1973.

27. Teodoro Merentes playing drum and a boy devil dancing the glass dance, *Naiguatá*, 1972.

“Naiguata was basically my operation center of the Vargas coast, we did many recordings there. I would always return because they celebrate something every two weeks: San Antonio, San Juan, the Burial of the Sardine, Carnival...”

28. Aerial view of devils dancing at the Boliva Plaza, *Naiguatá*, 1973.

“At the left of the church is the house from the Corro family where they keep the saint San Juan by tradition. Saints belong to the people, their safe-keeping is done at particular homes. He’s not so much a sanctified saint, more like a friend, a mortal.”

29. San Juan Procession in town, *Naiguatá*.

“They take the San Juan saint out of the Corro house on San

Juan Day. The first time I visited this town I arrived as the procession had started. La Negra Concha, whom I had met at Ciriaco’s house was singing in the procession: Negra Concha: “San Juan está borracho!” (San Juan is drunk!) Public: “y yo también!” (and I am too!) Negra Concha: “y así como vamos?” (and how are we doing?) Public: “vamos bien.” (we’re doing fine!) I thought, “wow”... but after this I understood that the saints are more like friends.”

30. San Juan taken through Rancho Grande, *Chuaio*, 1979.

“This picture is from Kiko Salazar. They were taking the saint up the hill and playing a drum. They gather money from the different small villages until they get to the Chuaio. This crossing of the jungle is incredible, the San Juan has folded bills all over it from devotees.”

31. Maria Ignacio y los tucusitos, San Pedro Festivity, *Guatire*, 1977.

32. Carangano Manufacturing, *Curiepe*, 1977.

“The carángano is made from the palm leaf’s main rib. They put two sticks to its end, creating a vegetable string in the air. They use a tapara (a type of bowl) with dried corn grains and when they hit the string the corn grains jump. Two people play it and two people hold it over a wooden tray.”

33. Playing the Carángano, *Curiepe*, 1977.

“That time I recorded they put it on a table, but it sounds better on a wooden tray. It’s a twenty-four hour instrument since once the leaf rib starts to dry it doesn’t work anymore.”

34. Fortunato Piña cutting a drum, *Curiepe*, 1977.

“That is the same drum from the Congo, made with balso. Curiepe is an isolated town where different African cultures are found. One can identify the African culture through the type of drum.”

35. Fortunato Pina, at his house with his three drums (culo e puya), *Curiepe*, 1977.

“Fortunato would come over to my house in Caracas once a week for a long time. He would arrive and they would bring him coffee. When I came downstairs he would always be cheerful, he was a gentleman, I came to be very close to him. He then organized drum playing at the Birongo River.”

36. Quitiplas Instrument made with bamboo sections, Birongo River, *Panaquire*, 1974.

37. Playing at the patio, Alta Gracia de Orituco, *Guarico*, 1974.

“On that trip I went to an hacienda to record some drummers but they were late. While we waited they brought Juan Esteban García, who played an eight string bandola, he was a maestro, he played his own compositions the whole time. When the drummers arrived we were listening to the bandola. When I got back to Caracas I did a radio program, and Juan Esteban ended up winning the national prize for popular culture.”

38. Constantino Ramones, *Puerto Cumarebo*, 1972.

“Asking around if anybody played an instrument, we arrived to Constantinos house. He was very sick so we told him we just wanted to say hello because we heard he had beautiful compositions. He asked his wife to hand over the cuatro. He sat in his hammock and started playing. He ended up standing up and telling jokes, by the end of the evening he accompanied us to the door to say goodbye.”

39. Coronado Family with their carrizos (flutes), *Cumanacoa*, 1974.

“On that occasion they gave me a pumpkin as a present. People were very grateful that someone was interested in what they were playing, someone from somewhere else would come and record them and take pictures and they did not know how to thank me, so that time they gave me an Auyama (pumpkin). We then went on to Cruz Quinal’s house, in the next town, San Lorenzo.”

40. Cruz Alejandro Quinal playing with his sons at his house/workshop, *San Lorenzo, Sucre*, 1974.

“Those times have gone by... what an active period, right? I would not pass up heading out to any strange place, and the musicians, what wonderful people in those times, they didn’t even know if they would see me again. Most of them are not in this world anymore. I can’t believe I am still on my feet and going. Sabine (my wife) says I forget everyone’s name except for the musicians...” •

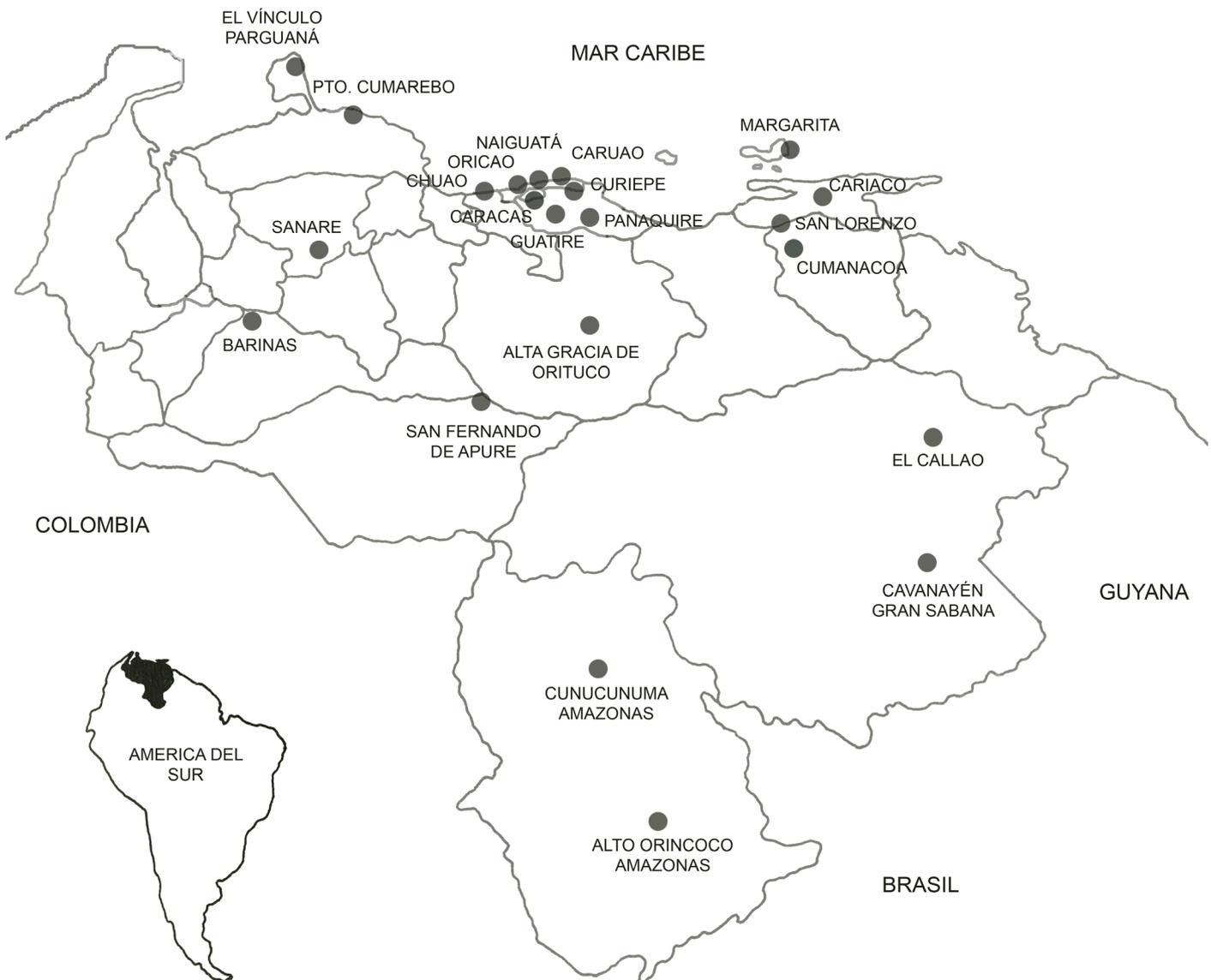
Exhibition created in collaboration between Guillermo Lares, Laura Jordan and Kinderhook & Caracas (Sol Calero and Christopher Kline).

The following people assisted Oswaldo Lares in one way or another during audio and image recordings shown here:

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English translation: Laura Jordan
German translation: Johanna Müller de Oviedo



Throughout Venezuela indigenous, European and African cultures have mixed in very different ways depending upon the geographic conditions and regional economic powers influenced first by the spread of the Spanish and then the arrival of African slaves. This mix resulted in a great cultural diversity that manifests in the country’s music. This map illustrates only the places which have been referenced in one way or another in this exhibition, hoping to orient the visitor.