

Maureen Reyes Lavastida

Canto Negro

for Orchestra.

ABOUT THE WORK

Canto Negro is an orchestral work inspired by the poem with the same name by Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén. The poem is part of the book *Sóngoro cosongo* (1931) where Guillén incorporates rhythms, and the lexicon and expressive forms of Afro-Cuban speech and song.

Poem *Canto Negro*: (Original version in Spanish)

¡Yambambó, yambambé!
Repica el congo solongo,
repica el negro bien negro;
congo solongo del Songo
baila yambó sobre un pie.

Mamatomba,
serembe cuserembá.

El negro canta y se ajuma,
el negro se ajuma y canta,
el negro canta y se va.
Acuememe serembó,
aé
yambó,
aé.

Tamba, tamba, tamba, tamba,
tamba del negro que tumba;
tamba del negro, caramba,
caramba, que el negro tumba:
¡yamba, yambó, yambambé!

Poem *Canto Negro*: (Translation to English)

Yambambó, yambambé!
The congo solongo rings,
rings the black man very black;
congo solongo del Songo
dance yambó on one foot.

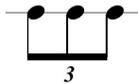
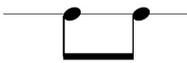
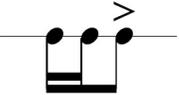
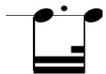
Mamatomba,
serembe cuserembá.

The black man sings and gets drunk,
the black man gets drunk and sings,
the black man sings and leaves.

Acuememe serembó,
aé
yambó,
aé.

Tamba, tamba, tamba, tamba,
tamba of the black man that tumba;
tumba of the black man, dammit,
dammit, the black man tumba
yamba, yambó, yambambé!

Instead of using the text of the poem as part of the music, the goal was to use the rhythms suggested by different words as a basis for the rhythms used in the music. To achieve this, ten different words of the poem were selected, and their suggested spoken rhythms were transcribed and used as a point of departure and inspiration for the rhythmic structure of the piece. These ten selected words and their suggested rhythms are shown below in a preconceived chart of rhythmic possibilities to be developed through the work.

	(ring)			(sing)	
	repica	yamba	yambó	canta	a é
1-		2-		3-	
				4-	5-
					
			(black men)		
	yambambó	yambambé	negro	so--longo	caramba
6-		7-		8-	
				9-	10-
					

The journey of black slaves throughout Cuba in the 1800's inspired the orchestra piece. In addition the idea of sadness and the intrinsic joy heard in the singing of all Afro-Cuban black slaves was also an inspiration.

Canto Negro is a one-movement piece with a total duration of approximately thirteen minutes. It was composed between September and December 2016, and is the last piece that I composed as part of my graduate studies in composition at Florida International University.