



May 2018

Providing supplies
for the
León School of Music

BACKGROUND

Situated in an old colonial building with cracked adobe walls and heavy wooden beams supporting a lofty tile ceiling, the León School of Music serves as a center of study and practice for the city's music students. Founded in 1997, the school bears the name of one of León's most celebrated composers, José de la Cruz Mena. Students come outside of normal school hours to study trumpet, piano, recorder and other instruments with the school's small but dedicated staff. The school also hosts a band composed of teachers and community members that performs regularly in the city.

The school has had a difficult history. The first music school in León, founded in 1975, was destroyed by civil war in Nicaragua in 1982. The new school was founded in 1997, but closed its doors in 2003 following the transfer of the first director, Carlos Bravo Jirón, to a school in Managua. After a seven-year hiatus the school has now reopened under the renewed direction of Jirón and with increased support from the municipal government.

Formal music education is still rare in Nicaragua, but music is very much a part of the culture and the government hopes to improve the availability and quality of training. Nicaragua has a national orchestra and a chamber group, la Camarata Bach, both based in Managua. There are also a handful of municipal schools of music scattered across the country, the most notable being la Casa de Tres Mundos (The House of Three Worlds) in Granada. There is also a small but growing National Conservatory in Managua, offering studies in all orchestral instruments. The nine professors of the Conservatory have studied in the USA, Germany, Mexico and other countries, and offer the highest degree of music education currently available in Nicaragua.

The León School of Music is the only music school for the entire department of León, population approx. 335,000. Members of the National Orchestra visit once a month to work with the teachers, and once a year the staff travels to Granada to receive master classes in la Casa de Tres Mundos. All of the staff are also currently working towards earning degrees in music from the National Conservatory.

The school currently has three full-time staff members, two auxiliary teachers, and a student body of 86.

STAFF



Gustavo Benito Cortéz Jimenez – Gustavo began studying music when he was 13 years old, learning trumpet and theory from books. In 1983 he began playing classical music with a band, *Fran Fernandez*, based in León, as well as Leonese street bands. In 1986 he went to Managua and played as principal trumpet in the Nicaragua Military Band. Afterwards he began playing with various groups in the capital and in León, which traveled to most countries in Central America. He began teaching at the music school in March of 2010.



Felix Socrates Lindo Calión – Felix comes from a highly musical family. His father, grandfather and brothers all play music, and at 16 his father taught him to play the clarinet. He studied under two teachers, and at 18 entered into the Nicaragua Military Band, with which he played for five years. Felix afterwards studied at the National University of Engineering where he earned a degree in Industrial Engineering, but he never abandoned music. He continued to play clarinet with a band in León, dedicated to the composed José de la Cruz Mena.



Carlos Marcelino Bravo Jirón – In 1975, Carlos began studying percussion in the old municipal school of music in Leon, destroyed by the war. Studied under Humberto Espinoza Rueda, Roger Sanbrana, and Kevin C. Latroff, a Peace Corps volunteer from the United States. He played trumpet with the Nicaraguan National Military Band from 1983 to 1998. During this time he also studied in the National Conservatory of Music in Managua. In 1998 he was named director of the León School of Music.

Felipe Loasiga Quintana – auxiliary teacher in piano, graduate of the National University of Costa Rica

Anubio Tercero – guitar instructor, graduate of the National Conservatory in Managua.

MATERIALS & PRIORITIES

The school is working very hard with what it has, but their poverty of materials is limiting the talents of their students. Reeds are used until they crack or disintegrate, played on leaky clarinets with tape wedged in the cork joints. Students use rainwater in place of valve oil. The school has a piecemeal collection of books and methods, which they usually cannot lend to the students for their being only one copy. There is no acoustic piano.

The school's annual budget for upkeep of the building and instruments is approximately \$9,220.

Carlos Bravo, the director, has identified the school's most urgent priority as being for comprehensive method books for all of their instruments. These do not have to be in Spanish; they currently use books that are also in English, French and Italian. Their second priority is for instrument parts and repair – the school owns only two trumpet mouthpieces and has currently no functioning clarinet mouthpieces. Many of their instruments are also in unplayable condition, and the staff would like to learn instrument repair, should training and tools be available.

Further, the school hopes to acquire new instruments in the coming years. Their most-needed instrument is (of all things) a sousaphone, which is a very popular instrument in Nicaraguan street bands. They also would greatly appreciate an acoustic piano for the school, or a full-size digital piano. Instrument availability is currently the greatest limiting factor in their program. Any instruments given or lent to the school would receive a great deal of use and appreciation. Even instruments in which the staff is not currently trained (such as most stringed instruments), they would use their relationship with the National Orchestra to learn it or train a new teacher for the post.

Longer term, the building in which the school resides will need to be better-adapted to its purpose. There are no practice rooms, and so students practice outside or in the main hall, which can quickly turn cacophonous and make concentration difficult. The instrument storage room was a hasty annex that is cramped and has a flimsy door and lock. However, with some restoration and retrofitting the building could be made spectacular. It is a well-built colonial hall 80 years old, with massive pitched timbers and a 19-foot roof apex. There is ample space for a performance/practice hall, with cloistered practice rooms, instrument storage and the main office behind. The school also sits on about 3 acres of land, under the shade of two enormous, 100+ year-old trees. There is a great amount of potential in both the fabric of the school and its students.

PARTNERSHIP

Tololamos plans to assist the school with an infusion of method books, instruments and supplies. We will:

- (a) Collect donated instruments in the United States, and purchase new or used instruments where donated ones cannot be obtained,
- (b) Purchase or solicit donations of Spanish-language method books for different instruments,
- (c) Transport collected materials down to Nicaragua, via our staff and affiliated groups,
- (d) Give a series of workshops to the León music teachers to familiarize them with the new method books, and
- (e) Hold a collaborative concert in León to showcase the new instruments and our partnership.

The types and quantities of instruments given to the school will depend on our fundraising and donations, but a presumptive budget of **\$5000** would break down as follows:

\$2500 for purchasing instruments – 1 digital piano, 2 clarinets, 2 trumpets, 1 trombone, 1 baritone

\$1000 for purchasing method books

\$800 for refurbishment and repair of donated instruments

\$300 for supplies, such as cork grease, valve oil & reeds.

\$400 for transportation – airline baggage costs, in-country shipping to affiliate organizations.

APPENDIX I Instruments currently owned by the school

Baritone Horn – Eric Patterson, Royal Tone; ancient and damaged. Unplayable.

Baritone Horn – Unmarked, but with plaque reading “Proprieta della Filarmonica Rossini di Firenze”; tarnished. Playable.

Clarinet – Yamaha, fiber. Playable. (2)

Clarinet – Amati-Kraslice Special, grenadilla; missing mouthpiece, damaged keywork. Unplayable.

Clarinet – Century Special Edition, fiber; damaged corks. Playable. (2)

Clarinet – Yamaha, fiber; stuck high A key. Unplayable.

Clarinet – faint mark, from Milan, “Prof Rome Cor”?, grenadilla; body only, missing bell, neck and headjoint, keys gutted. Fine workmanship but unplayable.

Clarinet – Condor, fiber; broken and gutted. Unplayable.

Soprano Clarinet – borgani, fiber; worn corks. Playable.
Electric Bass – Good Condition.
Flute – Bundy; leaky pad in foot joint. Playable.
Flute – Unreadable mark, from Italy; light tarnish. Playable.
Classical guitar. Good condition (3)
French Horn – Yamaha; rotary valves damaged. Unplayable. (2)
French Horn – C.G. Conn; ancient and damaged. Unplayable.
Keyboard – Yamaha PSR-170, 5 octaves. Good Condition (6)
Piccolo – Bundy; gutted. Unplayable
Soprano saxophone – borgani; missing head cork. Playable.
Tenor sax – Yamaha; leaky pads. Playable.
Sopranini Saxophone – borgani; missing mouthpiece. Playable.
Trombone – Century; heavy tarnish and needs slide grease. Playable.
Trombone – Yamaha; tarnished. Playable.
Valve Trombone – Yamaha; tarnished and clanking valves. Playable.
Trumpet – Yamaha YTR6320; heavily tarnished, damaged 2nd valve. Unplayable
Trumpet – silver, unmarked; damaged bracing and water key. Playable.
Trumpet – Lazer LB322; damaged water key. Playable.
Trumpet – Amadeus, silver; broken water key. Playable.
Concert tuba – Yamaha; hard valve action and tarnished. Playable.
Marching Tuba – Anborg. Playable.
Concert Bass Drum – Yamaha . Good condition.
Marching Bass Drum – Lazer. Good condition.
14” Snare – Lazer. Playable
14” Snare – Allegro; broken head and missing snare. Unplayable.
Marching Tom – Jugs Percussion; missing head. Playable.
Marching Tom – Allegro; torn head. Playable.
Drum kit – Century. Playable.

APPENDIX II Books and Music owned by the school

Yamaha Band Student, Book One – Trombone, French horn, Tuba, Alto Sax, Clarinet
 Las Lecciones Básicas... – Trumpet
 El Mejor de la Clase – recorder
 Basic Method, Judith Akoschky and Mario A. Videla – recorder
 Michael Aaron Piano Course book I (Bilingual copy)
 Silver Burdett Instrumental Series, volume 1 - flute
 Rubank Elementary Method for Drums
 Hilarión Eslava – Solfege
 Barbara Wesby, Curso de Lectura Elemental – rhythm
 50 Classical Studies for Flute, Vester
 1954 edition of Arban’s – trumpet (2)
 Giampaolo Nitiffi – Les Pleurs D’une Rose pour piano
 Hanon – The Virtuoso Pianist (complete)

