



## Luis Felipe Ramón y Rivera (1913–1993)

**B**ORN AT San Cristóbal (Táchira) August 23, 1913, Luis Felipe Ramón y Rivera died at Caracas October 21, 1993.

In 1992 he published *Memorias de un andino* (Caracas: Fundación Internacional de Etnomusicología y Folklore [FINIDEF], 1992; 156 pp.), an invaluable account of his life (to the close of 1944) that contains frequent passages reprinted from *Mi Tierra. Estampas de una ciudad* (San Cristóbal, 1949) and *Notas de Amar y Recordar*.

Both his father, Andrés de Jesús Ramón y Becerra, a shoemaker of Spanish descent and Colombian birth (*d* Caracas in 1978), and his mother Eva María Carreño de Ramón (*b* San Cristóbal 1892; *d* Caracas 1984) were talented musically. While residing at Pamplona, Colombia, his father met and married his mother in 1909. After crossing the border with her to San Cristóbal he taught guitar and *bandolín*, and purchased one of the few pianos in the town. Luis Felipe's mother, who bore nine children, inherited her taste for music and poetry from her father. His maternal uncle José María Rivera, a professional bandsman and church musician, opposed Juan Vicente Gómez, and in 1926 died in prison.

Between 1919 and 1928 Luis Felipe's family moved frequently: residing at Cúcuta and neighboring San Luis in Colombia 1919–20 and in Caracas 1922–25. Upon José María Rivera's death, the family fled back to Colombia (San Luis de Cúcuta and Pamplona), settling again at San Cristóbal, Táchira, in mid-1927, and returning at the close of 1927 to Caracas where Luis Felipe now enrolled in the Academia de Música y Declamación headed by a native of Táchira, Miguel Ángel Espinel.

His studies in the Academia included violin, theory, and solfège; in 1928 he also became an altar attendant and singer in a neighboring parish church. Although Vicente Emilio Sojo's Orfeón practiced 5 to 7 P.M. in the classroom where Sojo taught theory and solfège, director of the Academia Espinel opposed Sojo, Juan Bautista Plaza, and José Antonio Calcaño. As a result, Luis Felipe, who studied with both Sojo and Espinel, walked a thin line. From the Orfeón, which he joined in 1930, Luis Felipe that same year passed to the Caracas cathedral where under Plaza's guidance he earned a monthly 120 bolívares until departure from the cathedral choir in 1937.

In June 1934, after a year dedicated to the viola, then director of the Academia Ascanio Negretti gave him a certificate attesting his maximum grades in all examinations and adding his recommendation for a government grant enabling him to continue studying in Europe. The grant not materializing, he instead immediately joined the Orquesta Sinfónica Venezuela. So greatly did he distinguish himself as first violist that Sojo gave him on occasion an opportunity to play solo cadenzas.

In December 1938 he returned to San Cristóbal where the president of Táchira offered him a monthly 500 bolívares to head the music section of a newly created Escuela de Artes y Oficios. On January 31, 1942, he became Director of the Escuela de Música de Táchira, with 350 bolívares monthly salary. In January 1945 Venezuelan president Isaiás Medina Angarita awarded him a monthly pension of 400 bolívares, enabling him to depart for advanced studies at Montevideo. Leaving 200 of the 400 to sustain his first wife, Rosario Blondel Hernández,





and his two children María and César, he departed amidst fervent local tributes. During the eight months from April 1945 he studied at Montevideo with Vicente Ascone, next year settling at Buenos Aires as a disciple of Carlos Vega.

His further career, summarized by Héctor Goyena in the *Boletín* of the Asociación Argentina de Musicología, Año 8, N° 24 (December 1993), page 8, reads thus:

Completing his year with Carlos Vega [1946], he entered the Servicio de Investigaciones Nacionales at Caracas in 1947. In 1953 the Servicio became the Instituto Nacional de Folklore, directed by him until 1976. In turn, the INF became the Centro de Formación Técnica del Folklore, evolving thence into INIDEF (Instituto Iberoamericano de Etnomusicología y Folklore), an institute vitalized from its inception by his wife Isabel Aretz. He last visited Argentina in 1992, giving lectures at the VII Jornadas Argentinas de Musicología and at the Escuela de Artes in Córdoba. Jointly with Isabel Aretz, he gave also a short course at the Universidad del Salvador in Buenos Aires.

His abundant publications assure future generations opportunity to admire and digest the results of his indefatigable ethnological and folklore researches.

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