



Enrique Ubieta, Composer

He has written original music for seven films; has composed more than 70 works, including chamber, vocal, and symphonic music; and has created various innovations in music.

In Cuba, he studied at the Conservatorio Municipal de la Habana ("Amadeo Roldán"); where he graduated as music professor, at the age of 18.

In 1951, Ubieta publishes his first musical innovation, which he calls, "*Phonocromy*"— A system of musical notation that, using distinct colors, replaces the dynamic terms in music. For example, a note in clear green, replaces the term *pp*; in cyan, *p*; in purple, *mf*; in orange, *f*; and in red, *ff*. As known, each note in the staff indicates a sound and its value. Now, if the note is colored, the color will indicate the dynamic term carried by it. In other words, in each note will then be represented the sound, its value and its dynamic term. This is, therefore, the contribution of *Phonocromy* to contemporary musicography: (1) Representation of dynamic terms on the note itself; (2) Psychological use of color, as a representative agent of the dynamic terms; and (3) Conversion of the score into a kind of *colored map*, whereas the graduated dynamics terms are immediately visible to the eye.

Ubieta also practiced musicology, in chronicles about the folkloric music of his country, which were published by the Cuban paper, El Mundo. Alternating his journalistic activity with the musical composition, Ubieta wrote numerous scores of incidental music for the Teatro de Bellas Artes, and other private halls of Havana.

At the triumph of the 1959 Revolution, Ubieta composes the music for "Himno Agrario" (Agrarian Hymn), the official hymn of INRA; with the collaboration of the national poet, Nicolás Guillén, who wrote the lyrics of the famous hymn.

In that same year, Ubieta also participates as founding composer of ICAIC (Cuban Institute of Arts and Cinematographic Industries), which commissions him to compose the music for "*Realengo 18*" (the first feature length film of ICAIC*). He was also

commissioned by ICAIC for creating the music for a documentary and three animated cartoons. All these films have won prizes in several of the most reckoned worldwide film festivals. (* **Realengo 18** is available in video-cassette, in USA.)

In 1960, Ubieta was formally invited to take master classes with Aram I. Khachaturian, at the Moscow Conservatory; where, he remained working some time under the supervision of the Soviet composer. (Ubieta was the first Cuban composer who, invited by the USSR, studied with Maestro Khachaturian.)

Returning to Havana, Ubieta continued writing vocal and chamber music, which was premiered on national TV both by the soprano Iris Burguet, and the Chamber Orchestra of Havana. During this time, and through his work, he exposed a harmonic school of his own conception, called Bimodalism. A system based exclusively on the simultaneous use of major and minor triads of equal root: **c-eb-e-g**. This harmonic fusion—the begetter of a new ethos in harmony—can be used throughout a complete work; or in one of its

sections; or, in a symbiotic manner, in sharing with other compatible harmonic entities, already in existence. Ubieta's treatise that appears in the internet ("**Bimodalism: A New Dimension and Ethos in Harmony**") details, with the aid of musical examples, both the aesthetic fundamentals and the theory and practice of the new System.

In 1961, French directors Joris Ivens and Chris Marker used Ubieta's music in their own film productions. In the following year, Ubieta publishes another innovation in music: "*Pictorial Music Scores*." This is a pictographic system that replaces the name of the listed instrument on the left column of the score, by its respective images. Two advantageous visual factors support this graphical reform: (1) The image of an instrument is universal; but, its name is not; and (2) An image is *caught* by the eye, more quickly than a word is. (30 years after this innovation was globally exploited by Ubieta, under the Pictorial Music Score label, **Sibelius 3**—the musical notation program—currently provides it for its users.)

Ubieta's comic zarzuela, "*Mefistofeles*" was premiered in 1964, when he was named "composer in residence" of the Musical Theatre of Havana, by its then director, the Mexican film maker, Alfonso Arau.

At the end of said year, Ubieta left Cuba to reside in Paris; where, he joined SACEM (the French society of music composers), and his music is transmitted by Radiofusion Française; while the National Scholastic TV, as well as other advertising firms of the country assign to him as composer/director of some their audiovisual productions.

The symphonic work by Ubieta, "*The Cuban Mass*", published by Walton Music Corp., in 1975, was premiered at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, in 1973, by Dr. Alec Wyton (former president of the American Guild of Organists and Chapel Master of said cathedral); who, handed his baton to the guest composer for the World Premiere. This work has been performed by the renowned choir of the late Normal Luboff, and the choir

of Almeda and Jackson Berkey, Soli Deo Gloria Cantorum, as well as by numerous choral groups across the USA and the world.

In 1975, the first guitar work by Ubieta is premiered at Carnegie Recital Hall. It is Bimodal (a sonata of one movement); whose language exhibits, in total splendor, the harmonic school of Bimodalism. This piece has been performed, throughout time, in various countries.

In the winter of 1978, Ubieta was commissioned to composed and conduct the music of the film, "**El Super**" (New Yorker Films). The film and its music superceded the most optimistic expectations, winning among many awards, the Manheim Foreign Award of 1979, the Venetian Critics Award in that same year, and the Biarritz Award in 1980.

A year after this colossal success, the original sound track of the film is recorded by Kim Records. And, in 1985, the guitar version of the theme "New York Rush", transcribed by

the composer, is recorded by Carlos Barbosa Lima on the Corcord Record label. ("Impressions" CCD-42009)

In 1999, the guitarrist Manuel Barrueco recorded said theme in his EMI Classics CD, Cuba!

("New York Rush" was published in its various instrumental versions by G. Schirmer, Inc. As of then, Hal Leonard Publishing Corp. distributes this score in its world market.)

In the summer of 1980, Ubieta is commissioned by the U.S. Government to compose the music for the documentary, **In Their Own Words** (winner of the Gold Medal in the 23rd. International Film Festival of New York).

In 1985, Ubieta premiered his first piano trio, "*Canon over Hanon*", at the Vineyard Theatre of New York. This work, aesthetically analogous to its congeners in painting, is a true musical collage, where melodic "layers" by the violin and cello are *painted* over the first 20 lessons of the famous piano method, Hanon. (In other words, the Hanon's Method is the *real object* of collage).

In 1986, The New York Council on the Arts commissions Ubieta to compose his second piano trio, "*Lo Negro Y Lo Blanco*" (The Black and the White). During that year, such work was premiered by Trío Música Hispana of New York.

Also, in 1986, Levande Ton, an excellent choral group from Sweden directed by Thore Kennestad, records the Kyrie and Aleluya from "*The Cuban Mass*" for the Scandinavian label, Four-Leaf Clover. (The musical accompaniment of the LP was performed by the known Cuban pianist, Bebo Valdés, with two typical percussionists.)

To commemorate the centenary of Heitor Villa-Lobos birth, in 1987, Ubieta composed, "*La Cubachiana*". The composer transcribed 12 instrumental versions, some which have

been premiered by different interpreters and musical groups. For example, The Florilegium Chamber Choir premiered the choral/piano version at Merkin Hall in New York. (Both, "*La Cubachiana*" and "*The Cuban Mass*", received excellent reviews for this concert).

Ubieta's choral work, "*Voces de Navidad*" (Christmas Voices), with lyrics in Spanish and English, written by him, is premiered by Las Voces, a chamber choir directed by Xiomara DiMaio (San Diego, 1991.)

The year 1994 brought the debut of "*The Cuban Mass*" to Stockholm, where it was magnificently executed by well-known Swedish performers, during the annual and celebrated Skinnskatteberg Choral Festival. These two-day performances of the work were enthusiastically received by the huge crowd attending and given a standing ovation.

The Bach Choir of Pittsburg, under the direction of Dr. Brady Allred, successfully presents, "*The Cuban Mass*", in October of 1998, at Carlow College Community Center, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

In 1999, the Westchester Philharmonic and Chorus of the Americas (directed by Nelly Vuksic), presented three parts of "*The Cuban Mass*" (Kyrie, Santo and Aleluya), under the baton of Paul Lustig Dunkel, its musical director.

Later, during April of 2002, the Cleveland Duo, of James Umble and Carolyn G. Warner, successfully presents a special version with saxophone of "*La Cubachiana*", in Jefferson, Ohio.

In recent years, more musicians have performed works by Ubieta, in concert and recordings. Among these, worth mentioning is Chucho Valdés and his quartet; who presented and recorded, "*Son XXI*", in a live concert at the Village Vanguard, from April 9-10, 1999, in New York.

Another important mention is that of the piano recitalist, Nohema Fernández, Dean of Arts at the University of California (in Irving); as well as the chamber group, Acapella Choir of the University of Wisconsin-Superior, which is directed by Dr. Matthew Faerber.

ATTENTION: Each year there are various presentations of Ubieta's works, as much as in the USA, as in other parts of the world. Of such events, only the most relevant are briefly mentioned in this website. References to the composer can be obtained from Who's Who in American Film Now (a book by James Monaco, published by Baseline, the 1975-86 editions.) In addition, it is propitious to inform that, both the Lincoln Center Music Library and the Latin American Music Center, at the Indiana University School of Music, maintain in their respective archives, recordings and publications of some Ubieta's works, as reference materials available to the public.