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Europe's largest ever festival of Cuban culture

Cuba50, the largest ever festival of Cuban culture outside of Havana, announces a spectacular showcase weekend at the Barbican Centre, London, on 27 and 28 June.

The weekend festival is the highlight of over 200 events throughout the UK in 2009. It features Cuba's greatest dance band Los Van Van, nueva trova legend Pablo Milanés, the dynamic Afro-Cuban rumba company Yoruba Andabo and many more of Cuba's finest artists. Alongside these acts performing on the Barbican's main stage, will be live music, workshops and family events on free stages throughout Saturday and Sunday.

Cuba50 celebrates and promotes the diversity of contemporary Cuban culture over the last half a century in this 50th anniversary year of the Cuban revolution. It draws together the largest ever collection of exhibitions, performances and activities, big and small, spanning Cuban film, music, dance, visual arts, theatre, books and debate, sport, education, travel and sustainable initiatives under one festival banner.

As part of Cuba50 talks, special guests will also include Aleida Guevara, daughter of Che Guevara and Mariela Castro, Director of the National Centre for Sex Education, LGBT rights activist and daughter of Cuban President Raul Castro.

The nationwide Cuba50 festival www.cuba50.org has gathered pace, with more than 200 events being promoted throughout the UK in 2009.

H.E. René Mujica Cantelar, Cuban Ambassador to the UK, commented: "I hope Cuba50 will increase the UK public's enjoyment and understanding of Cuban culture and contemporary Cuba and strengthen the links between our two countries and people."

Rob Miller, Cuba50 Festival Director said: "Cuba overflows with talent across the entire cultural spectrum, which is nurtured at every level, from the very young to the oldest citizens. The Cuba50 showcase at the Barbican is a fitting tribute to the wealth of creativity continuing to thrive and develop in Cuba. We hope everyone will join with us this year in the hundreds of activities around the country and learn and enjoy something of Cuban culture."

For more information, interviews and press tickets contact:

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Note to Editors:

Cuba50 is an initiative of, and coordinated by, the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, an NGO which campaigns for an end to the US blockade of Cuba and for normalisation of relations between the UK and Cuba. For more information see www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk

Cuba50's sponsors and supporters include Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Cuba Tourist Board, Air Cubana, the Cuban Embassy in the UK, Havanatour UK Ltd, Cuban Ministry of Culture, Unite the Union, UNISON, Thompsons solicitors, OH Parsons & Partners solicitors, the Music Fund for Cuba charity, ComoNo productions, Havana Club, SoyCuba Contemporary Art.

For details of all events mentioned and more plus cultural news from Cuba see www.Cuba50.org

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DETAILS ON BARBICAN FESTIVAL ACTS AND OTHER FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 27 June

Cuba50: Pablo Milanés + Harold Lopez Nussa + Son del Tropicico

7.30pm, Tickets £10/15/20

Pablo Milanés

An emotional genius. No one else can write love songs quite like the great singer-songwriter Pablo Milanés. His unique voice is known throughout the Spanish speaking world, his songs sung by heart. One of the great composers of *nueva trova*, his bitter sweet love songs engender a mood that does not exist elsewhere in Cuban music, as such he helped to redefine Cuban song.

Harold Lopez Nussa

Pianist Harold Lopez Nussa was born into a family of musicians in Cuba, and is nephew of famous pianist Ernan Lopez Nussa. His mesmerising Cuban jazz piano style reveals him to be following in the great tradition of Chucho Valdes, Gonzalo Rubalcaba and Roberto Fonseca.

Son del Tropicico

The nine members of Son del Tropicico, from Havana and Santiago, are masters of the Son style, the predecessor of Salsa and so many contemporary Latin styles.

Sunday 28 June

Cuba50: Los Van Van + Yoruba Andabo

7.30pm, Tickets £ 10/15/20

Los Van Van

Juan Formell, bassist and founder of Los Van Van, is one of the most important figures in the history of Cuban music since the revolution. In the late 1960s, he formed Van Van and developed a whole new rhythmic approach. They created the *Songo* rhythm which brought the power and drama of rock and funk into Cuban music making Van Van the premier dance group on the island – and influencing all the Cuban dance acts who followed. Their hugely popular songs, full of wry observations and street slang, always capture the Cuban zeitgeist as seen from the streets of Havana.

Yoruba Andabo

Yoruba Andabo is a company of singers, percussionists and dancers performing original West African music styles preserved since the 16th and 17th centuries. Loosely translated as '*Friends and followers of Yoruba lands and culture*', the group emerged out of spontaneous musical get-togethers held at Havana harbour in 1961 by a group of dock workers, turning professional in 1980. Their dynamic performance celebrates the irresistible power of Cuba's African rhythms, the source of the countless dance styles which Cuba has given the world.

Both concerts are produced by the Barbican in association with Cuba50.

June: Daughters of the Revolution

Talks by Aleida Guevara, daughter of Cuba Guevara and Mariela Castro, Director of CENESEX, LGBT rights campaigner and daughter of Cuban President Raul Castro.



Other associated events

Sunday 21 June

Cuba50 in Victoria Park: Orquesta Aragon + Changüí de Guantanamo + other artists

from 1pm

A free open-air Cuban music spectacular. Paradise Gardens, Victoria Park, London E3

Orquesta Aragon

Now marking their 70th birthday, Orquesta Aragon were founded by bassist Oreste Aragon in Cienfuegos and became international stars during the cha-cha-cha boom of the 1950s; they have come to exemplify the charanga tradition of the island – riffing strings and flutes giving a lighter, folkier and more rural sound than the brass sections of salsa.

Changüí de Guantanamo

Guantanamo was the birthplace of *changüí*, a style of Cuban music, at the beginning of the 20th century, generally seen as the first contemporary music to merge the Spanish guitar sound with African rhythm. The group have been performing together since before the revolution and are still based in Guantanamo.

Thursday 25 June

Cuba50 at Hackney Empire: Orquesta Aragon + Yoruba Andabo

8pm; Tickets £ 17.50

A showcase of the African and rural roots of Cuban contemporary music and dance styles. Hackney Empire, London E8. Box Office: 020 8985 2424 www.hackneyempire.co.uk/

Saturday 27 June

Cuba50 in Gillett Square: Yoruba Andabo + Changüí de Guantanamo

4pm – 8pm

Open-air performance near home of the Vortex jazz club. Gillett Square, London N16

All above are produced as part of the Barbican's summer music series BLAZE09 (see Barbican website for details).

JULY HIGHLIGHTS

CineCuba 3-9 July. A major Cuban film festival at London's Barbican featuring contemporary films and documentaries, accompanied by special events and an exhibition of classic Cuban film posters.

UK premiere of Cuban salsa and timba band **Bamboleo** at London's **HMV Forum, 18 July.**

Cuba's greatest male ballet star **Carlos Acosta** performs at **Manchester International Festival 9-11 July** and at the **Coliseum, London, 22-25 July.**

Tolpuddle music and politics festival in **Dorset 18-19 July** has a Cuba50 focus with live Cuban music and workshops.

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

Cuba50 film tour of UK cinemas July – September.

OCTOBER

11-piece **Orquesta Buena Vista Social Club**, including remaining members of the original Buena Vista Social Club and other top musicians performing their traditional Cuban son on a nationwide tour **2 Oct-8 Nov.**

Berwick upon Tweed holds a day's festival dedicated to Cuba on **4 October.**

The Cuban community in London comes together to celebrate Cuba's National Day of Culture, **20 October.**

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