

## Music & Performance

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The musical traditions of Mexico, Latin America, and the Caribbean have been crucial wellsprings for Latino poetry. How have Latino poets drawn on musical traditions in their poems? Which musical figures have they singled out for praise and why? How has music informed their sense of poetry as a performative art, to be heard aloud as much as (or more than) to be read on the page?

Read an essay on  
this theme by  
Michael Dowdy



This brochure was compiled from  
*A project reader to Latino Poetry, The  
Library of America Anthology,*  
Rigoberto González, editor, ©2024.  
The full resource is at  
<https://www.latinopoetry.org>

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## Discussion Guide Music & Performance

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The Center for the Book, in collaboration with New Hampshire Humanities and UNH, and thanks to a grant from the Library of America invites you to join us in a celebration of Latino Poetry here in the Granite state in 2024/2025. Our celebration will center around *Latino Poetry: The Library of America Anthology*, edited by Rigoberto González, 2024.

A national public humanities initiative directed by Library of America with generous support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and Emerson Collective, comprising a groundbreaking anthology, events around the country, and an online media archive.

Una gran iniciativa pública en el campo de las humanidades, dirigida por Library of America con el generoso apoyo del Fondo Nacional para las Humanidades y Emerson Collective, que comprende programas públicos por todo el país; un archivo multimedia; y una nueva antología sin precedentes.

<http://nhsl.dncr.nh.gov/latino-poetry>

## Start with these poems

“Trio Los Condes” by Victor Hernández Cruz (*Anthology*, p. 276)

“Duke Ellington, Santa Ana, El Salvador, 1974” by William Archila (*Anthology*, p. 365)

“Arroz con Son y Clave” by Willie Perdomo (*Anthology*, p. 435)

Notes on the theme generally

These three poems are also at <https://www.latinopoetry.org/humanities-themes>

## Questions to Consider

1. What did you expect based on the title of the poem? Were your expectations met?
2. Did the structure or tone of any of the poems affect your reading experience?
3. Did the poem make you think about any of your own experiences?
4. What are some of the specific musical effects achieved in these poems through language and rhythm? How do they compare with the experience of actual music?
5. What is the effect of music on the body in these poems? What is its effect on the mind?
6. Choose one of the poems, and imagine it being set to music (its words sung and/or spoken). What genre of music would you set it to?
7. Music has a social dimension, bringing people together to sing, to dance, and to listen. What are some of the ways music affects its listeners and their relations to one another in these poems?
8. In William Archila’s poem a visit from legendary jazz musician Duke Ellington leaves a lasting impression. What was Ellington able to communicate to Archila’s sixth-grade class, and why do you think it is important for the poet to share that memory?
9. Victor Hernández Cruz’s poem is named for the well-known Puerto Rican group Trio Los Condes, but it

begins by evoking ancient music, “the a capella of the Greek / chorus, the Taino\* Areyto flute in the dance.” Why might the poet wanted to have begun his poem so far back in history?

\* The Taino were the Indigenous inhabitants living in Puerto Rico and elsewhere in the Caribbean when the Spanish colonizers arrived.

## Poems for further reading

“Latin & Soul” by Victor Hernandez Cruz (p. 274)

“When Hearing Bàtá Drums,” by Adrian Castro (p. 376)

“Last Mambo in Miami” by Gustavo Pérez Firmat (p. 306)

“1992/ 5th sun / our present” by Steven Alvarez (p. 361)

“de Versos Sencillos / from *Simple Verses*” by José Martí (p. 50)

“Mambo” by Jaime Manrique (p. 290)

“Laredo Riviera” by Emmy Pérez (p. 515)

Both poems by Sandra María Esteves (p. 266)

“Santayana the Muralist” by John Murillo (p. 426)

“At the Rainbow” by Robert Vasquez (p. 353)

Song lyrics in the anthology’s “Corridos and Nostalgia Songs” section (p. 80-119)

**Page numbers are from *Latino Poetry, The Library of America Anthology***