PUERTO RICO is a tropical island of the Caribbean Sea - about 100 miles long by 35 miles wide - southeast of the United States of America and north of Venezuela (G.A.). Columbus discovered Puerto Rico - November 19, 1493 - on his second trip to the New World.

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PUERTO RICAN DANZA. The true Puerto Rican danza is a popular expression which began its early stages over 110 years ago. About 1840 Cuban youngsters migrated to Puerto Rico and brought a new dance from Havana indistinctly called upa (lingual corruption of the word aupa, meaning "to lift") or merengue. It was a merry, voluptuous rhythm; naive, trivial melodies; primary harmony; 2/4 time; binary-form. Puerto Rican composers improved the novelty with local touches until the real personality of the danza puertorriqueña was evolved reaching its full bloom toward the turn of the 20th century. It progressed into a ternary-form preceded by a short introduction; the melody became graceful, often suggesting a "song without words"; the harmony was enriched; the rhythms were greatly elaborated; and it acquired a sensuous tone color. These danzas have come to mean to the Puerto Ri-
can people what Chopin's mazurkas are to the Polish people. Words have been set to quite a number of dansas.

There are two main styles of Puerto Rican dansas: (1) one romantic - sensual, modulating rhythm; expressive melody with tropical gusto; tempo slow; (2) the other is festive - piquant, merry, incisive rhythmic patterns; frolicking melody; tempo allegro. Both are true expressions of the charm of an aristocratic tropic.

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JUAN MOREL CAMPOS (1857-99). Born in Ponce. Orchestra conductor and the outstanding Puerto Rican composer. His works include 1 symphony, 2 overtures, religious, light and popular music, 3 zarzuelas and over 150 Puerto Rican dansas. He won prizes in many music contests including the Buffalo Exposition. (2) Bitten by the mal du siècle nonchalantly expressed his innermost sentiments. He accomplished the exaltation of the dansa puertorriqueña.

ANGELO MELAN (1862-1911). Born in San Sebastián. Virtuoso trombonist, orchestra and band leader, composer of popular music. His best known dansas are Sara and Yú Yú - the latter is the musical setting to one of the "Rhums" by Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, Spanish romantic poet.

SIMON MALERA. Born 1871 in Mayagüez. Clarinetist, flutist, violinist, orchestra and band conductor, pedagogue. Composer of 3 zarzuelas, waltzes, light and popular music, songs and about 35 dansas. His amores was composed when he was 16 years old. Simón Madera is the eldest member of a family of well known musicians.
RAFAEL ALENS. Born in 1905 in Aguadilla. Trombonist, orchestra and band leader, composer of popular music. Violeta is a danza composed in 1935 with words adapted by Antonio Cruz y Nieves.

FELIX ASTOL (1811-1901). Born in Cataluña, Spain. Operatic tenor, composer of songs. Established his home in Puerto Rico about 1840. La Borinqueña - 1867 - words and music by Félix Astol. Patriotic words were adapted by the Puerto Rican poetess Lola Rodríguez de Tío - thus the love message was changed into a revolutionary song in 1868. Today it is the national anthem of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico sung to platonic words by Manuel Fernández Junco, a Spanish educator.

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GRACIELA RIVERA - coloratura soprano born in Ponce - has sung with the San Carlos Opera Co., New Orleans Opera, San Francisco Opera and the Metropolitan Opera Co. Also Carnegie Hall besides touring Europe, the United States of America and Latin America acclaimed as an outstanding coloratura.

Orchestra accompaniment under José Piqueria. Pin Madera

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(1) The merengues reached the Dominican Republic via Puerto Rico about 1847. Later on it became the national dance of the Dominican Republic.

(2) Posthumous, year 1901

(cont. on p. 4)
A free translation of the titles of the Puerto Rican danzas included in this album reads as follows; however, the title often has no relation whatsoever with the musical contents:

Felices días        (Juan Morel Campos)        Happy days
Sueño de amor     (" " " " )                Dream of love
Alma sublime      (" " " " )                Sublime soul
Laura y Georgina  (" " " " )                Laura and Georgina
No me toques       (" " " " )                Do not touch me
Tú y yo          (Angel Mislán)              You and I
Mis amores        (Simón Hadera)            My loves
Violeta           (Rafael Alers)            Violeta (a girl's name)
La Borinqueña     (Félix Astol)             The Borinqueña

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Notes by

Augusto Rodríguez