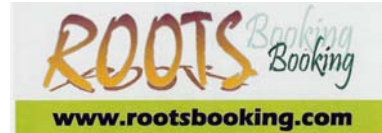


# SEPTETO NACIONAL

## Ignacio Pineiro



The history of the Septeto Nacional is closely associated with one musician, who, were there a Pope for Cuban son, would long since have been canonised - Ignacio Piñero, an excellent sonero, singer and composer Piñero lived in Pueblo Nuevo, the black quarter of the city. Even as a child, Ignacio Piñero sang in choirs and played drums with the Afro-Cuban cabildos Then he formed his own first line-up, Los Roncos, the Hoarse Ones, for which he composed choir music. In 1926 he played bass with the Sexteto Occidente, whose leader was Maria Teresa Vera.



Piñero travelled to New York with this sextet and on his return to Havana he

immediately set about making history with son: in 1927, together with the troubadours Juan Ignacio de la Cruz Hermida, Bienvenido León Chacón and Alberto Villalón, who until then had performed as a trio, plus the tres player Francisco González and José Manuel Incharta on bongos, he founded the Sexteto Nacional - under contract to Columbia Records in Havana, who had been eagerly searching for a band capable of competing with the Sexteto Habanero, who were under contract to RCA Victor.

In 1932 George Gershwin travelled to Cuba and happened to turn on the CMCJ radio station when the Septeto Nacional were playing Piñero's sones. Gershwin visited Piñero and the two men became friends. Gershwin studied Piñero's sones and even cited "Échale salsita" in his own "Cuban Overture" But other Septeto Nacional hits had also become part of the classic repertoire of nostalgic son line-ups and modern salsa bands: for example "No juegues con los Santos", "There's no playing with the Gods", a half-joking, half-earnest warning about respecting the Afro-Cuban gods, an early musical demonstration of black consciousness. In the late 1920s, Havana's dance enthusiasts witnessed a musical sparring match for which there is no comparison in the history of Cuban music.

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