THE 28TH US-CUBA FRIENDSHIPMENT CARAVAN ARRIVED ON JUL. 13TH IN HAVANA TO EXPRESS THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH THE CUBAN PEOPLE AND CHALLENGE THE US TRAVEL BAN

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Divers Adore Cuba’s Undiscovered Seabed

Professional dive guides and tour operators have ratified that hundreds of adventure-seeking tourists who enjoy diving and doing underwater photography continue to be enchanted by the possibilities Cuba’s ocean waters offer.

Cuba’s unspoiled seabed is an enchanting example of the Caribbean island’s virgin natural beauty and attracts increasing numbers of people with a passion for diving and snorkeling.

Specialized tour operators recommend particular dive sites throughout the archipelago for these purposes, such as the south-western Isla de la Juventud and Cayo Largo del Sur, María La Gorda, Havana city’s northern coastal region, Varadero, the Zapata peninsula, Santiago de Cuba, Northern Camagüey and Holguín and both the Jardines del Rey and the Jardines de la Reina.

The last name on the above list actually ranks first. Jardines de la Reina is a wonderful place worthy even of special praise by the most experienced international professional divers who have immersed themselves in the areas crystal clear ocean waters.

Cuba’s seabed offers visitors a unique opportunity to treasure truly unforgettable experiences.

The extraordinary preservation of beautiful dive sites, almost perfect climatic conditions and the requisite infrastructure have ensured the success and popularity of diving related and underwater photography events around the country.

Such natural resources have encouraged Cuba’s tourism authorities to promote diving and related activities in the hope that Cuba will become increasingly recognized as a world class underwater destination.

Divers are particularly attracted to Cuba’s luscious Caribbean seabed because of the island’s favorable weather conditions and water temperatures, which are a true panacea for many.

Stunning dive sites are complimented by adequate points of access, hotels and marinas and the availability of internationally qualified, experienced and affable dive guides.
International Solidarity with Cuba

Representatives from different New York-based organizations have agreed that their activities will primarily focus on tributes to the late historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro, calls for the lifting of the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba for more than 50 years and an end to regime-change programs.

Homage will be paid to Fidel Castro to coincide with the anniversaries of his birth and death, on both August 13 and November 25, respectively.

Acts of solidarity will be carried out during this year’s UN General Assembly vote on the resolution to lift the blockade of Cuba, which since 1992, has usually taken in late October.

Organizers also announced that solidarity marches, demonstrations and meetings are also included in their plans.

Ike Nahem, coordinator of the New York-based Solidarity with Cuba organization, told the Prensa Latina News Agency that these forthcoming activities form part of a range of worldwide mobilizations in support of Cuba and against the U.S. hostility.

“Demonstrations will not only be held here, but also in other U.S. cities and across Europe and Canada as well,” he announced.

Such demonstrations of solidarity are particularly important in the wake of the recent announcement by U.S. President Donald Trump, which represents a retrograde step for the bilateral rapprochement promoted by the previous U.S. President Barack Obama.

Nahem stressed that this Trump led U.S. government has returned to an anti-Cuba rhetoric of yore, a stance that represents a sign of weakness and possible political isolation.

According to the New York based activist, the upcoming vote at the UN will be a key ratification that this anti-Cuban hostility is devoid of international support.

Cuban Jewish Leaders Call for Stronger U.S.-Cuba Ties

Cuban Jewish leaders asked their American counterparts to support policies of engagement that have strengthened Cuba’s religious institutions and their ability to help the Cuban people.

In an open letter sent on Jul. 12, Cuba’s Jewish leaders seek unity from the American Jewish community as the Administration undergoes the rule-making process for new Cuba regulations following President Trump’s recently announced directive.

The text voiced the concern of Cuba’s Jewish leaders that even a partial rollback of policy would curb the progress that has helped to strengthen Cuba’s Jewish organizations and their capacity to help all Cuban people of need in their surrounding communities.

“There is a permanent desire to promote the continual development of this relationship and to strengthen the benefits that are starting to take shape, mainly for our people,” the Cuban Jewish leaders wrote.

“Knowing that the Jewish communities and institutions of the United States have an interest in the relations with the Jewish people of the world, and especially towards Latin America, we request that we work together so that our countries do not go backwards in what has been accomplished and assure that the Cuban and American people enjoy a peaceful and prosperous future,” they added.

Regarded as a step backward in the rapprochement started by former president Barack Obama and Cuban leader Raúl Castro in December 17th, 2014, Trump signed on June 16th the National Security Presidential Memorandum on Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba.

The new measure is aimed at further restricting trips by American citizens to Cuba, as it creates bureaucratic barriers and bans individual trips.

It also bans all economic, commercial or financial transactions by US companies with Cuban entities linked to the military Revolutionary Armed Forces and intelligence and security services.

The Cuban Jewish community is sustained and supported in part by North American Jewish organizations and communities. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, for instance, has initiated programs in Cuba such as Shabbat dinners, organizing bar and bat mitzvahs, religious education, and Jewish summer camps.

Additionally, with support from American counterparts, Cuba’s Jewish community has been able to provide important services to the people of Cuba through the operation of a pharmacy and by organizing social and religious events and gatherings.
Lucius Walker’s Wonderful Legacy

By Ernesto VERA

Members of the XXVIII Pastors for Peace United States-Cuba Friendship Caravan paid a special tribute to the legacy of the founding architect of the solidarity initiative 25 years ago, Reverend Lucius Walker.

After placing a wreath in front of the commemorative plaque at Havana’s Tribuna Antimperialista that renders tribute to the North American religious leader who died in 2010, activists reaffirmed their commitment to continue defending Cuba’s right to build its future in peace and free from foreign interference.

According to Pastor Darilyn Tito, from the Baptist Churches Fraternity affiliated William Carey Church, Reverend Walker united people of different origins and beliefs through his humanitarian, social justice and solidarity vocation for the Cuban Revolution.

The pastor stated that in view of the present United States government’s attempt to undermine the Cuban socialist project, Pastors for Peace is intensifying demonstrations and information work about the reality of the Cuban life, as well as their acts of solidarity.

Several members of the US religious group especially recalled Lucius Walker’s warm friendship with Fidel Castro, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution and -- inspired by the resistance of its people -- expressed their commitment to continue supporting the Caribbean nation’s right to sovereignty, self-determination and peace.

Yanela González, an official of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, appreciated the group’s solidarity “at a time when US Government has strengthened an obnoxious position in an attempt to destroy the Revolution”.

“Nothing can stop us smiling or living in harmony through the possibility of enjoying justice,” she added.

The visiting group, composed on this occasion of activists from the US, Mexico and Europe, arrived in Cuba in mid-July to support demands for the lifting of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by Washington for more than sixty years.

Pastors for Peace executive director, Gail Walker, said that the activists are calling on Donald Trump’s administration to continue promoting progress made by his predecessor, Barack Obama, and to authorize the US citizens to freely travel to Cuba.

The group, which brought a symbolic donation of first-aid and other medications to Cuba, will tour several Cuban provinces and engage in exchanges with civil society, churches and cultural institutions.

The Friendship Caravan set out last April to tour 50 US cities and to truthfully inform people about Cuban life and Trump’s attempt to revert the incipient process of normalization of bilateral relations.

Pastors for Peace was created in 1988 by the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO), which was headed at the time by Reverend Lucius Walker and since 1992, it has undertaken pro-Cuba solidarity initiatives.

Lucian Walker Leader’s Timely US Visit

By Martha ANDRÉS

A recent visit by a Cuban trade union leader to the United States offered members of different US unions and Cuba solidarity activists an opportunity to become more familiar with the reality of the Island’s working class.

Secretary General of the National Hotel Management and Tourism Trade Union, Victor Manuel Lemagne’s US tour commenced on June 27th and during it he participated in meetings in Berkeley, Sacramento, Los Angeles, San Diego, Chicago, New York and Baltimore.

Lemagne, who is also a member of Cuba’s National Trade Union’s (CTC, in Spanish) Executive Secretariat, told the Havana Reporter that he participated in 106 acts of solidarity and 13 meetings with trade union associations during his stay.

He said that these aimed to share information about the updating of Cuba’s economic model and to highlight the effects of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by Washington on Cuba since 1962.

In their announcements about the tour on Facebook and other social media, organizers emphasized that this was the first time since 2001 that a CTC leader was able to visit the US to address trade unions there.

Several groups commented that the visit had a particular resonance because it had provided a forum for solidarity with Cuba following President Donald Trump’s decision to claw back some of the progress made by the two neighboring countries during Barack Obama’s administration (2009-2017).

The Cuban trade union leader said that he had availed of the opportunity to explain the latest modifications to Cuba’s Labor Code to people from the hotel management and tourism sector and other areas of the US economy.

According to Lemagne, people in the US lack information about what is really happening in Cuba, that workers were eager to know first-hand about the Caribbean island and that this tour had fostered further rapprochement between the two countries.

Participants in the activities expressed interest in topics such as health care and education in Cuba and in the organization of Cuba’s trade union movement.

Lemagne said that many had been impressed by the fact that 97% of Cuban workers are represented by a trade union, in contrast to the US, where the number is just slightly over 10% and where divisions between trade unions are commonplace.

An important component of Lemagne’s US tour was his visit to Sacramento, where he was welcomed by the Senate and at the Californian Assembly.

In Berkeley, also in California, he participated in activities organized by the International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity, the U.C. Berkeley Labor Centre and other community and trade union groups.

Lemagne also highlighted his participation during the tour in a San Francisco Longshoremen and Warehouse Union organized event in the San Francisco Bay area to commemorate “Bloody Thursday”. The event recalled the police murder of two workers on July 5th, 1934, during a general strike that led to the unionization of the West Coast docks.

Lemagne’s heartfelt cry during his intervention of “long live solidarity between the people of Cuba and the United States!” was cheerfully acclaimed by dozens of participants.

In Baltimore, Maryland – his last tour stop – he gave a talk to services and transportation sector workers on the background to the blockade and its consequences and impact on Cuba’s tourism sector in particular.

He noted that he will share his US tour experiences on his return to Cuba, particularly during October, when nationwide tributes will be paid revolutionaries Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos.

On October 28th, the National Hotel Management and Tourism Trade Union will celebrate its 22nd anniversary and representatives of US trade unions are expected to be present for the occasion.

At the end of his visit, Lemagne stated his appreciation to the people in the US who had provided him with an opportunity to talk about topics of common interest for the benefit of workers.
Cuba Enhances Seismic Monitoring

By Martha CABRALES

Eight new broadband stations have been linked into the Incorporated Seismology Research Institution (IRIS) and the Puerto Rican seismic network in what is an indication of notable progress by Cuba’s National Seismology Service (SSN).

Dr. Enrique Arango, technical deputy director of the National Seismic Research Center (CENAIS), told the Prensa Latina news agency that Cuba’s incorporation into world and Caribbean networks – which will soon also include Jamaica – significantly strengthens the seismic and tsunami warning systems in the northern Caribbean region.

He explained that such communications are reciprocal because the SSN automatically receives real-time data generated by seismology networks in countries that surround Cuba, ensuring that seismic activity everywhere in the country is constantly monitored.

Cuban stations record small and moderate telluric movements in the Caribbean and Central American region and stronger movements from around the world.

Arango stressed that with the recent integration of those in Baracoa and San Antonio del Sur municipalities and the setting up of nine accelerographs in the Cuban city most vulnerable to seismic movements, the number of Cuban stations now totals 20.

He also mentioned plans to install similar technology on the Isla de la Juventud and in Jagüey Grande and San Diego de los Baños (in central and western Cuba), enlarging the SSN network and improving the country’s seismic monitoring capacity in the west.

The executive also referred to, amongst other CENAIS applied research works, efforts undertaken jointly with the Environment Agency on dangers, vulnerabilities and risks related to investments in the country.

Progress on the Digitalization of Cuban Society

By Ana Laura ARBESÚ

Cuba’s Minister for Communications Maimir Mesa, recently informed the national parliament that progress is being made on enhanced internet access for the population and the probability that tariffs would become increasingly affordable.

Mesa reiterated during a meeting on a comprehensive policy for the enhanced digitalization of society, held prior to the 9th period of the National Assembly’s eight legislature sessions, that despite complex economic challenges, real progress has been attained in this regard.

He explained that amongst the most important results thus far were that broadband access for institutions had been increased by 72 percent overall and that there are now 869 radio bases on the cell phone network – 358 of which operate on 3G technology.

There are now also more than 630 points to surf the net nationwide in addition to 370 public Wi-Fi “hot-spots” and four million network users, more than 1.5 million of whom have permanent nauta e-mail serviced accounts.

More than seven million Cubans have access to the digital terrestrial signal, in excess of one million digital TV receivers have been sold, 910 ATM machines are operating nationwide and over three million electronic bank cards have been issued, the minister added.

The minister acknowledged that many things remain to be done to resolve connection problem, availability, access, the lack of sustainable mechanisms and beneficial business models and the poor implementation of digital services, related issues.

However, the minister said that insofar as the economic factors permitted, the quality of peoples lives will continue to be enhanced by such developments and that production and service processes will also become increasingly efficient.

Mesa stressed that the comprehensive policy to improve the digitalization of society will become, in keeping with its general principles, a weapon to defend Cuba’s socialist Revolution.

It will also guarantee the country’s cyber-security against threat or attack and safeguard the nation’s technological sustainability and sovereignty.

Enhancing citizens’ access to and use of the latest information and telecommunication technologies and the development and modernization of all social spheres according to the country’s priorities, are further objectives of the policy.

Its implementation will include several planned initiatives during the 2017-2020 period, which are defined under two distinct parameters: the creation of a technological infrastructure and the generation of digital services and content.
In recording an album with her father Pablo, Haudee Milanés has paid a worthy tribute to both her musical and biological heritage and this new CD “Amor” remains loyal to the loving sentiments suggested throughout. Precisely because many people may have thought it is easy for the daughter of one of Ibero-America’s greatest singer songwriters to make it in the world of music, Haydeé has made noble efforts to establish herself in her own right, by spending many a long hour studying and meditating on her craft. This has not been in vain; both critics and the public are generous in their praise of her work.

Descemer Bueno first came to attention in Cuba over a decade ago, when he wrote and produced all the songs for the artist’s first album: Haydée (2004). Her fresh and romantic voice captivated a strong young audience that faithfully supported her and her Interactivo band at Havana’s La Zorra y el Cuervo night club, as radio spread the word far further afield.

For many Cubans, this twenty-something year old singer was a true blessing for Cuban jazz, son and trova music, at a time when young artists with an interest in such genres were very thin on the ground.

After a series of sell-out concerts and the release of an album of her own compositions, the Amadeo Roldán Music Conservatorium graduate surprised the industry and her fans by recording a CD of the Cuban singer songwriter Marta Valdés’ songs.

In an exclusive interview with the Havana Reporter, Haydee said ‘working on her songs and being close to (Marta) completely changed my professional outlook and approach. I discovered a deeper understanding of the importance of staying true to my roots.’

She explained that Valdés is very demanding professionally and had insisted that the melodies, the harmony and every detail remain true to their original conception.

Therefore, Haydéé engrossed herself in the creative process as if it were a university where she was constantly learning.

‘My career grew and matured immensely after the Palabras (Words) album was released. It seems to have the step that helped me see my father’s work from a different perspective and with the benefit of experience,’ she said.

She new album’s Amor title reflects both the loving and creative bonds between a daughter and a father and the love inherent in the beautiful songs of one of Ibero-America’s greatest composers.

‘I chose all the songs on Amor. Some of are famous and others almost previously unheard, but all are special to me,’ she said.

Haydeé told her interviewer that ‘recording with my father was a unique experience. I appreciate that he allowed me choose the songs and decide that he perform in a particular way in places on the disc.

He was very sweet and obliging and he respected all my decisions about repertoire and the production.’

The arranger and guitarist chose guitar as the principal instrument on the CD, and her 74-year-old father easily returned to it after a break of many years.

Haydee revealed that it had been ‘a real challenge to direct a consecrated artist who is also my father and she described the process as a creative fusion of their student – teacher and father - daughter connection.’

Milanes will perform songs from the Amor album -- which include Para vivir, Hoy no estás quizás más lejos, Ya ves, Te espera una noche de éxitos, Ya se va aquella edad, Amor, Hoy la vi, El breve espacio en que no estás, A veces cuando el sol, El 405 de nunca and Canción -- in a concert at Havana’s Mella Theater on Dec. 20.
Ben Jones Back in Cuba

By María Martínez

The renowned US visual artist Ben Jones, who presently has a show of his work running in Havana, has lent his voice to the condemnations of US President Donald Trump’s recent assault on progress in Cuba-US relations.

He said that “most US people in the don’t think like him.”

Ben Jones is in Cuba for an exhibition of a series of his works, at the National Fine Arts Museum’s Transient Hall at the Universal Arts Building, from July 21st to October 23rd.

He expressed his concern about the very racist tendencies of many Trump supporters who care far less for environmental protection than for profit and don’t want to admit that the world has changed.

Jones told The Havana Reporter that “several doors between the United States and Cuba had opened during Barack Obama’s administration. Many people from my country want to come here for a visit and those who have already been want to come back.”

Jones, who feels part Cuban because of his many trips to the Island since 1977 said, “I always advise people to go to Cuba and to form their own opinions about the country.”

He has many friends here, including Cuban ballet stars – he also a folklore dancer in his youth – and he has repeatedly expressed his passion for Yoruba culture through his art.

African roots unite people in the United States and Cuba, but the extent of racial discrimination in his homeland often culminates in the murder of innocent civilians.

Over the past few years, a series of incidents involving police officers have left more than one African-American family mourning a loved one, something Jones denounces and challenges in his art.

He remains true to his generation’s legacy as a protagonist of the struggle for the civil rights in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s.

Jones came of age during the Vietnam War.

The ideals behind Black Power and the Black Panthers led to the birth of a Black Arts Movement from which he emerged as a major artistic force.

In 1968, he was an appointed advisor to the Black Freedom Society and he enriched his artistic style with elements of expressionism, action painting and pop art Andy Warhol and Robert Rauschenberg inspired creations.

Icons of US culture such as singers Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holliday, Sarah Vaughan, and African-American activists Malcolm X and Fannie Lou, are represented in Jones’ works as an artistic tribute to personalities who used their talent and profiles to challenge the unjust social order of their times.

He recalled that despite their talent and stardom, Fitzgerald, Holliday and Vaughan – three of his homeland’s most beautiful voices enjoyed by the world – were obliged to enter hotels by the back door and suffer other humiliating discriminatory practices.

Jones added that in addition to racial segregation, wars and other forms of violence also cost human lives and that regardless of race, they destroy the spirit of those who fight them.

He explained that many police officers working today in Latinos and African-American neighborhoods they were soldiers who saw combat in Afghanistan and patrol US streets in a state of high anxiety, as though they had not yet returned from Asia.

In addition to violence racial, gender-based, militaristic and other related traumas, Jones’ Resistance exhibition also addresses several critical environmental problems, such as oceanic oil spills which have disastrous consequences for forms of life.

He is fearful of the answers to fundamental questions like “where are our children going to live? and what planetary legacy will we leave for future generations?”

He immediately answers his own question by saying, “we must and we can leave them a cleaner planet.”

Cuba’s Most Interesting Rivers

By Francisco Menéndez

Cuba’s rivers are small and shallow. Because of the prominence of limestone on the Island, many rivers have underground courses and as a consequence they are very irregular.

Cuban rivers generally flow in one of two directions: north or south.

Both located in the east, the Cauto is Cuba’s longest river and the Toa is the mightiest and biggest.

Principal waterways flow into a lake or the sea and tributaries join other rivers.

Their elongated and narrow shapes, their complex geographical profiles and the distribution of orographic massifs are what most characterize superficial drainage in Cuba.

Cuba and the Isle of Youth have a combined total of 633 water courses that flow into the sea both on surface and underground, 272 of which flow into the Gulf of Mexico and the Northern Atlantic Ocean, covering a territory of 32,283 km2, and 361 that flow into the Caribbean Basin, covering a territory of 48,860 km2.

The remaining 26,002 km2 forms part of the territory that does not have a defined fluvial network where the rivers flow into marshlands and mangrove swamps.

Even though the vast majority of Cuba’s rivers flow north or south, there are some that run in an east-west direction.

Indeed, these are the longest and most extensive in terms of basin coverage and water volume.

Most Important Rivers

The 370-km long Río Cauto, in the province of Granma, is the Caribbean island’s most important river and is followed by the 163 km long Sagua La Grande river in the central province of Villa Clara.

The Cauto flows east to west through the four provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Granma, Holguin and Las Tunas.

Also on this list are the rivers Zaza (155 km), in Sancti Spiritus; Caonao (133), in Ciego de Ávila; San Pedro (124), in Camaguey, and the Hatiguánico del Sur and Hatiguánico del Norte (119 both), in Sancti Spiritus.

The biggest rivers of the western, central and eastern territories are, respectively, the Hatiguánico (Ciénaga de Zapata), the Hanabanilla (Trinidad) and the Toa (Sagua-Baracoa region). The two first flow from east to west and the third flows from west to east.

Western Cuba is commonplace for streams with a relatively small water volume that receives vast volumes of underground water at certain points along their course.

Such is the case of the Almendares, the Mayaque, the San Juan and Canimar rivers and the La Yana in Ciego de Ávila.

Other important rivers include Las Yeguas (117), in Camaguey; Cuyaguauteje (112), in Pinar del Río; Mayari (106), in Holguin, and Agabama (105), in Sancti Spiritus.
American artist Ben Jones at Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (National Fine Arts Museum’s Universal Arts Building. From July 21st to October 23rd.

Exhibition by German painter Albert Oehlen, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (National Fine Arts Museum’s) Universal Arts Building (Groundfloor). From July 7th to Sep. 11th

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Wednesday Presentation of Bismusic D Corazón CD
8:00 to 11:00 pm
Thursday Kelvis Barreto,
7:00 pm
Friday Summer special with Leo Vera in concert
5:00 to 7:00 pm / Mauricio Figueiral, 10:00 pm
Saturday “La Rueda de la Fortuna” (Wheel of Fortune) with Martha Sánchez,
2:00 pm / Raúl Torres, 10:00 pm
Sunday Discotemba Barbaram
(Music from the 70’s, 80’s
From 5:00 to 10:00 pm
Café Cantante Mi Habana
Grupo Karamba
Every Thursday, 5:00 pm

Casa de la Música de Miramar
Quimbombó que resbala
With singer songwriter Ray Fernández
Every Thursday at Tun Tun piano bar
(Calle 20 y 35, Playa)
From 5.00 to 9.00 pm

Fresa y Chocolate
(23 entre 10 y 12 en el Vedado)
Peña El Lobo y Los Corderos
Singer-songwriter Frank Martínez
Every Thursday at 9:00 pm
## CIRCUS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Centro En Guayabera</td>
<td>Diego Ulloa y su peña La pipa de la paz Every Friday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circo Nacional de Cuba</td>
<td>Zoológico de 26 Ave. 26, Nuevo Vedado Magic Gift Sat. 8:30 p.m. Sun. 5:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Teatro Apolo Circo Fantástico Wed. Fri. 7:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Cine Yara Fantasias Sat./Sun. 3:00 pm</td>
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### OTHER EVENTS

- **MAGIC GIFT**: Sat. 8:30 p.m. Sun. 5:00 p.m.
- **CUBA’S NATIONAL CIRCUS**: TrompolocoTent Back to Havana Fr. Sat. Sun.
- **CIRCO FANTÁSTICO**: Wed. Fri. 7:00 p.m.
- **CINE YARA**: Fantasias Sat./Sun. 3:00 pm
That Singularly Cuban Beat of Aceituna sin Hueso

Daimarelys Pérez

"Rellenas con Pimiento" (Stuffed and Spicy), the latest release by the band Aceituna sin Hueso (Seedless Olives) is one of the most solid fusion albums released in Cuba and adds a vital touch of 'seasoning' to Havana's tropical bohemian summer nightlife.

The group's director, Miriela Moreno, said that the disc, available on the Producciones Colibrí label, eventually emerged following 9 years of hard work.

According to Moreno, the group had a very busy schedule of commitments to audiences and the recording of new songs and clips during that gestation period, to preserve the band's work.

He told The Havana Reporter that they continued working through years "to keep the band's legacy alive" and that the delay was due to "not being favoured by a more consolidated musical product."

In this regard, the talented and enigmatic director said that the new CD is more in keeping with a style of music people can dance to.

"One might imply that pepper symbolizes that spicy, happy nature that characterizes Cubans. Previous albums of mine featured fusions but lacked a vital natural, essential element that is part of what we are," the singer said.

"Maestra María Teresa Linares always said that my music was a sort of melodic mixed salad that lacked the one important ingredient I added to this album. It might be said that my music has now come of age."

Moreno stressed the maturity and Cubanism inherent in a release that features a big band - metals, drums, piano - and everything else that orchestra means in our country and then flawlessly fuses with other genres.

"Rellenas con Pimiento" includes fusions with flamenco and other genres and styles that the band has been cultivating since its very inception, together with creative combinations of Caribbean music, son, macuta and African influences.

"It's a very good album produced by a team of musicians that were very helpful," Miriela added.

David Álvarez, director of the Juego de Manos band, co-arranged of one of the numbers and the renowned musician and maestro, Manolo Simonet, also worked on the production.

Founded by Miriela Moreno, Aceituna sin Hueso made their first appearance in 2000 during the Hermanos Saíz Association sponsored "Valga la esperanza" concert, in Villa Clara province.

Today, 17 years after that artistic premiere, the band has once again taken to Cuban and international stages to showcase the quality of their music.

Recreating the work and life of Aceituna sin Hueso at a series of concerts and important music events like the La Huella de España Festival, is akin to bathing in the deep blue pools depths of favorite and not forgotten old melodies.

The band performed the first in a series of great concerts at Havana's Amadeo Roldán's Alejandro García Caturla hall, as part of the Las mil y una noches show, where it proved that Caribbean rhythms can be combined with elements of Arab, Indian, Celtic, country and grunge music.

This band is now very well established and easily incorporates the peculiar rhythms that distinguish it from other contemporary Cuban bands, preserving European-like origins and melodies.

The singer commented that fusions with Celtic music rhythms in particular developed on the album Rellenas con pimiento have been present since the band's very beginning.

"I am very much identified with this music which, when enriched by other instruments, is the band's very essence," Miriela said.

"These European rhythms stimulate my creative vibrations and almost all my pieces contain elements of this culture, which Cubans have a right to be exposed to. They are amongst my favorite international rhythms and contrary to what many people may think, are even more so than flamenco music."

This album undoubtedly marks Aceituna sin Hueso's coming of age.

The diverse flavors that compliment these delicious olives are simultaneously intriguingly different and vaguely familiar to those of years past.

Mexican expert praises Cuba's heritage conservation

By Raúl García

Cuba is among the Latin American nations best conserving its historical and cultural heritage, said Autonomous University of Mexico's Research Dept. professor Vicente Ortega.

The university professor, who recently participated in a project to restore and preserve several sites in Cuba, told The Havana Reporter that institutions in charge of restoring sites are performing their work in compliance with the best international standards.

For Ortega, the government investment in training specialists and in preserving and restoring heritage cities and sites is worth noting.

The renowned Mexican expert and students from the Mexican university participated in the restoration of Fidel Castro's Rebel Army military headquarters in the Sierra Maestra mountain range.

The team also worked in the old Triunvirato sugar mill, cradle of first slave uprising in 1843. According to Ortega, the exchange with Cuban restorer, painters and artisans was very useful, since they are very creative, use local resources and know how to recover the beauty of ancient monuments and palaces.

Such exchanges are very important to rescue cultural heritage and strengthen professional and friendship ties between Mexico and Cuba, he said.

Ortega was one of the promoters of the agreement signed 10 years ago between the Autonomous University of Mexico and the Heritage centers in the Cuban provinces of Granma and Matanzas.
This is both Havana’s and Cuba’s most emblematic site, as much for its present ties to the Revolutionary Triumph of 1959, as for its background.

Having been home to many of the nation’s most important political and cultural events, the Jose Marti Revolution Plaza is of singular historical significance.

The Plaza and its grand esplanade have hosted an impressive array of conferences, international events, massive acts of solidarity, military parades and other events of international importance.

The construction on what was then called the Civic Plaza concluded on July 16th, 1961.

The original idea to build it dates back to the early 1940’s and the announcement of an international competition to erect a monument to Jose Marti in the part of Cuba’s capital city where the Catalonian Hermitage once stood.

The above facts may have paled into insignificance had the Plaza’s history as the central point for Cuba’s mass gatherings since 1959, taken a different course.

Rising to a height of 112m, the Jose Marti Monument is Havana’s highest point.

It encompasses a total diameter of 78.5m and its approximately 28m wide pyramid has an interior lift that climbs 90m and a stairwell with 579 steps.

The Jose Marti Memorial, where 79 of the National Hero’s reflections are inscribed in golden colored lettering and distributed throughout its five halls, is located in the base of the Monument.
The international community’s concerns about the devastating humanitarian and environmental consequences of the use of nuclear weapons, has resulted in a United Nations treaty banning their use.

In its introduction, the multilateral agreement approved during the recent closing of the UN negotiating conference on a Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty, makes it clear that it is necessary to eliminate all nuclear weapons because of the threat they represent.

After the document was adopted at the final session, all the speakers agreed that this treaty was historic and emphasized its importance.

Conference chairperson and Costa Rican ambassador Elayne Whyte, said that in addition to its historic legacy for humanity, the treaty provided a platform from which to tell future generations that it is possible to inherit a world without the only weapons of mass extermination still to be prohibited.

¨We are leaving the sessions with the satisfaction of having accomplished last Decembers UN General Assembly’s directive to adopt a nuclear weapon ban regulation, demanded by the world community in its desire to build a peaceful world, she stressed.

The South African delegation head, ambassador Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko, told The Havana Reporter that a persuasion process should be encouraged in the future.

It is important to create spaces that facilitate understanding, always keeping in mind that for the past 70 years it has been dialogue and not nuclear weapons that has solved conflicts, she said.

For her part, the executive director of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Beatrice Fihn, said the organization will open a dialogue with all nations to guarantee the treaty is signed in September and later comes into effect.

To attain this, the treaty must be signed by 50 countries.

“This is a very solid treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons and we hope that common sense prevails, even though that may take some time” she commented.
Cuba Turns to solar panels to solve power needs

By María Julia Mayoral

Cuban authorities are relying on solar panels to solve power needs in far-reaching communities such as Caguaba, in the northern municipality of Quemado de Guines, in Villa Clara province.

Cuba’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 1.1 percent in the first semester of 2017, which is considered encouraging by local authorities amid the serious material and financial tensions the country is facing.

When drawing up the 2017 budget, the government took into consideration that fuel supply from Venezuela might be affected in spite of the Venezuelan government’s will to accomplish it, Cuban President Raul Castro said during the latest session of the People’s Power National Assembly (Parliament).

Since the plan and budget for the current year were being prepared, we have warned of persistent financial tensions and challenges that could complicate the national economy’s performance. We likewise foreseen periodic difficulties in the delivery of power from Venezuela, despite the unwavering commitment of President Nicolás Maduro and his administration, he said.

The President, however, considered that amidst these difficult circumstances, encouraging, modest results have been achieved.

According to him, the GDP 1.1 percent-growth in the first half of the year indicates a change in the economy’s direction as compared to last year.

He praised the progress attained in prioritized investments and the fact that free social services accessible to all Cubans alike, such as education and public health, have been guaranteed.

Contributing to this result were agriculture, tourism, and other exports of services, construction, sugar production, and the transportation and communications sectors.

Referring to the financial situation, Raul Castro said “pains were taken to maintain strict fulfillment of payment commitments to our principal creditors, which resulted from the restructuring of Cuba’s foreign debt.”

However, he admitted that despite many attempts, Cuba has not been able to stay current on running accounts with providers, but reiterated the government’s intention “to honor each and every one of these overdue obligations.”

Speaking on the domestic transformations being carried out, Raul Castro said that more than half a million Cuban are self-employed workers and over 400 non-agricultural cooperatives have been set up on a pilot basis.

This confirms their validity as a source of employment, while contributing to an increase and greater variety of goods and services available with an acceptable level of quality, he added.

The Cuban leader warned, however, that deviations from the policy established on this subject have been noted, and violations of the legal regulations in effect, such as the utilization of raw materials and equipment of illicit origin, under-declaration of income to evade tax obligations, and insufficient state control at all levels.

Nonetheless, he made sure that Cuba such problems would never lead to reversing or discouraging the self-employment policy, or the continuation of the experiment with non-agricultural cooperatives.

“Are we not going to draw back or stop, nor will we allow the non-state sector to be stigmatized or face prejudice, but it is imperative that laws be respected, progress consolidated, positive aspects - which are more than a few - generalized, and illegibilities and other deviations from established policy resolutely confronted,” Raul Castro stated.

During the legislative session, Economy and Planning Minister Ricardo Cabrisas named drought, insufficient availability of hard currencies and fuel and the level of bank debts, plus the impact of the U.S. economic, financial and trade blockade the US government has imposed on the small island nation for the last five decades, as the negative factors preventing economy growth.

According to the government official, the country’s total imports for 2017 will fail to comply with the plan due to difficulties in the use of credits, limited allocation of cash flow, difficulties in the hiring process.

This year’s prediction entails “making greater efforts to comply with export plans and their income to avoid further disproportions in the trade balance,” Cabrisas noted.

The minister also warned that all the accumulated problems “cannot be fully solved in the short term. Their solution compels us to work more comprehensively, where organization, rigor and discipline must prevail.”

Cuban authorities are relying on solar panels to solve power needs in far-reaching communities such as Caguaba, in the northern municipality of Quemado de Guines, in Villa Clara province.

Official reports cited by the Cuban News Agency (CAN) mentioned that 2,200 houses from Caguaba will soon be using electricity generated by the solar panels built in the area.

According to engineer Carlos Vergara, the facility has a power generating capacity of 2,2 megawatts, equivalent to 2,376 megawatts per year. Fuel saving will also be significant since the current power plant in Caguaba uses 877 tons of diesel per year.

In case of hurricanes or other extreme climate event, the solar panels can be easily dismounted to preserve them, the expert added.

Another 12 projects will be built in nearby communities, schools and factories during the next three years.

Other solar panel parks will be built in La Criolla community, in the municipality of Santo Domingo, the Marta Abreu University of Las Villas and the Valle del Yabú agro-farming industry.

The amount of solar radiation that reaches Cuba does not vary much about the country’s potential in this field.

Though expensive, solar panels have an estimated useful life of 25 years, so experts consider that investing in solar energy is worthy, mostly in far-reaching areas where conventional power lines are not available.
The times when sugar cane was basically used to extract sugar are now over, since this raw material is being regarded by Cuba and many other countries as a source of goods which in some cases are more important than sugar itself.

Gone are the days when sugar cane was used only to produce sugar, because agricultural diversification, that’s to say, a better use of all its potential as a power source, alcohol, animal food and other products, is increasing, International Sugar Organization executive director Jose Orive told The Havana Reporter.

According to London-based CEO, in order to be successful and profitable, we need to look at as many options as we can.

“We should not put all the eggs in one basket, but open the our business opportunities,” said Orive, who recommended all sugar producing countries to diversify their production in order to enhance their added value and profitability.

Oliver mentioned, for instance, the use of sugar cane bagasse in power generation.

In the Central American region, although hydroelectric plants play an important role in power generation, the bagasse is widely used, he said.

We need to have options, because these cogeneration projects have prevented massive bankruptcy in the Central American sugar industry, Oliver added.

He pointed out that bagasse allows to operate the sugar mill almost free of charge, because electricity is generated during the sugar extraction process, while eliminating solid waste accumulation.

Cuba’s sugar industry company Azcuba chairman, Orlando Celso Garcia, said a balanced production of sugar, molasses, energy and other byproducts optimizes the use of sugar cane.

Sugar is not longer the only valuable product in the sugar industry, because molasses and power generation have seen a five-fold increase in their prices, Garcia noted.
The Giro d’Italia 2017 came to ratify the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic champion, Dutch Anna Van der Breggan, as the number one in this sport, while Cuban Arlenis Sierra, one of the leading Latin American cyclist, made an outstanding comeback.

This was the second time that Van der Breggen won the gold medal in this competition, after winning the 2015 tournament.

It was also the fourth time in a row that the Dutch athlete finished among the best three in the Giro d’Italia after having ranked third in 2014 and 2016, always with the RaboLiv Women’s Team.

The Dutch cyclist was followed by Italian Elisa Longo Borghini (Wiggle High5/+01:03 m) and her fellow countrywoman Annemiek Van Vleuten (Orica-Scott/+1:39.

Meanwhile, Cuba’s Arlenis Sierra, who made her debut this year with the Astana Women’s Team, left a very good impression for a cyclist taking part in this tournament for the first time.

Sierra finished in the tenth position on the individual general classification.

The Cuban cyclist also featured as the best athlete for Latin America having recorded a 6:19 minute-difference behind Van der Breggen, who clocked 25:39:43 hours.

Sierra made her best performance during the 9th lap, when she finished fourth.

The bright young hope of the Cuban cycling also performed well during the tenth and last stages of the Torre del Greco 124 km-long tour where she finished eighth and ranked among the tournament’s top ten.

Beside these outstanding results, the 25-year-old Cuban maintained a well performance all through the competition for a cyclist taking part in this kind of event for the first time.

She was always among the top 15 cyclists except for the third stage (27th place).

In the first lap, Sierra finished fifth, 10 in the second stage, 13 in the fourth, 6 in the fifth, 14 in the sixth, 13 in the seventh, 11 in the eighth and 8 in the tenth.

Her outstanding performance kept her among the world’s top 30 cyclists, with 417 points on a list headed by Van der Breggen (1341.25).

As to the World Tour, Sierra is placed eighth with 342 points, with the Dutch cyclist also in the lead with 837 points.

Sierra’s list of achievements includes titles won at the Guadalajara-2011 Pan-American Games, and the regional championships of Zacatecas-2013 and Puebla-2014.

By Alejandro MARTÍNEZ
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