



Rebolú

Artist Information Sheet

ALL AGES

Tradition: Afro-Colombian Music & Song

While often overlooked in popular media, the influence of the peoples of African descent (Afro-Colombians) on Latin American culture and life is profound, and they have created numerous musical styles and cultural movements. Long before the Spanish arrived on these lands, Indigenous peoples lived and thrived there. Afro-Colombians lived with and often married Indigenous peoples, sharing music, food and language.

Rebolú's music is a celebration of Afro-Colombian cultural expression, and their sound reflects the confluence of African, Indigenous and Spanish cultures. Those influences can be seen in the instruments they play, such as the *cuarto* (a four-stringed instrument derived from the Spanish guitar), the *alegre* (an African-derived drum), and perhaps most uniquely, the *gaita*. The *gaita* is a long flute made from a hollowed-out cactus stem with a feather quill held in place by charcoal-infused bee's wax. The *gaita* is played by blowing air into the quill down into the long body of the instrument. The *gaita*'s origins are likely with the Kogi, an indigenous people who first inhabited and still remain on the Caribbean coast of Colombia. The *gaita* has been embraced by Colombians as a traditional instrument and is crucial to popular music styles such as *cumbia*.

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Morris hails from a long line of celebrated master Afro-Colombian drummers and Ronald showed an early knack for composing music. When they were still in their teens, the pair toured the world as musicians in a traditional music and dance company. During this time, they would hone the skills that would define Rebolú as a singular band rooted in the Colombian Caribbean tradition. Ronald would become a master composer while Morris became a master percussionist.

The third core member of Rebolú, Johanna Castañeda was born into a family of *Música Llanera* musicians in Colombia. Sometimes referred to as Colombian cowboy music, this style was developed by ranchers and cattle herders in the flat plains region that cuts between Colombia and Venezuela. It is characterized by a greater emphasis on stringed instruments—especially the percussive harp and the small guitar-like cuatro. Johanna's father is a master on the harp, her brother is an internationally recognized jazz harpist and she is a brilliant singer and cuatro player.

In 2008, Ronald and Morris moved to New York City and formed Rebolú. They met Johanna who soon became the third lead member of Rebolú adding a *son joropo* sound to the Afro-Colombian core brought by Ronald and Morris. She and Ronald have since married. As the years went by the group became more and more influenced by the global sounds of their new home city.

An interesting fact about Rebolú: The Disney movie *Encanto*, about an extraordinary family that lives hidden in the mountains of Colombia, features a musical score that uses the diverse sounds of traditional Colombian music to create the songs you likely know and love. The film scorers (people who wrote the music that goes along with the film) tapped Rebolú drummers Erica Parra and Moris Canate to provide the rhythmic base for many of these songs. These days, these Erica and Morris along with Rebolú singer Ronald Polo regularly tour with a live music and film production of *Encanto* that might come to a performance space near you!

Place: Colombia and Queens, New York

Morris' musical family has roots in Palenque de San Basilio, the first town in the Americas to be founded by runaway enslaved peoples, and a focal point for Afro-Colombian culture. Johanna is from Bogotá, the capital and economic hub of Colombia. Historically, many Colombians who immigrated to the US have made New York City their home, particularly in the Jackson Heights area in the borough of Queens. Rebolú is dedicated to celebrating the musical traditions of their native country and providing Colombians in New York City with strong connections to home. The group is also dedicated to forging their own path as artists, driven by Ronald's innovative compositions and their use of modern instruments.