Further Readings

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FURTHER READINGS

by Edgardo Díaz Díaz


This book is a valuable source of information on the early history of plena. The book is based on interviews with some of the surviving pioneers of plena and their family members. Included in the texts are valuable photographs and song texts.


A valuable source available in English, this essay relies mostly on Echevarría Alvarado’s findings while providing its own sociological perspective.


As the title suggests, this work is a rushed but useful compendium of plena’s stylistic evolution since its beginnings until recent years.


In this essay, Ramón López debates various writers’ long-established assumptions in their views about plena (i.e., as “the newspaper of the poor”). Privilege is granted to the meaning of plena as an oral and highly participatory genre.


Valuable English-language article that analyzes the importance of plena in the construction of Puerto Rican identities both on the Island and in Puerto Rican comminities in the United States.

Filmography:
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- **La Plena.** 1957. Director Amilcar Tirado. Division of Community Education (DIVEDCO). 28 min.

  This documentary is a panoramic assessment of various cultural traditions rooted in Puerto Rico since the pre-Columbian era. Of great prominence is plena’s Afro-Hispanic input in aspects like Spanish poetry, Arab-Andalusian melodies as well as dance and rhythm improvisation. Valuable video clips feature a strong Afro-Puerto Rican tradition on the verge of disappearance.

- **Plena is Work, Plena is Song.** 1989. Directors Pedro A. Rivera and Susan Zeig. Distributed by Cinema Guild. 37 min.

  Winner of “Best Documentary” at the Festival CineSanJuan, this film is praised for being a landmark, as it gives pre-eminence to the music’s working class roots, with interviews – both in New York and Puerto Rico – with former sugar-cane and needle laborers, union representatives, and community leaders, who describe the importance of plena as a satirical medium during many periods of socio-economic vicissitudes and crisis.

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