



## Ernesto Lecuona

### BIOGRAPHY

In a music world that focuses so much on American and European artists, it can be easy to forget that every country has a long musical history with its own works and its own legends. For Cuba, Ernesto Lecuona is that legend. Having written many pieces and performed with great skill, Lecuona stands out not only among Cuban composers, but among composers from all around the globe.

Lecuona (pronounced “lay-quo-nah”) was born in Cuba’s capital, Havana. His mother was from Cuba and his father was from the Canary Islands, a Spanish-speaking region in Africa. Like many other famous composers, Lecuona received music education very early in his life. His sister, who was also very talented in music, taught him piano from the time he was just 5 years old. By the age of 11, he had composed his first piece, and at only 17, he had graduated from the Havana “Conservatory,” or school of music.

Lecuona’s name quickly spread in Cuba, and after a very successful tour in Europe, he was known all over the world. London, Lima, Paris, and New York were just a few of the cities where he performed. Over the next 40 years, he wrote in a wide variety of styles, including piano works, popular songs, and film scores.

In 1960, Lecuona moved to the Tampa, Florida and stayed there for the rest of his life. Fidel Castro, the Cuban dictator, had become too powerful. He passed away 3 years later during a visit to the Canary Islands.

Lecuona is known for helping connect Americans to Cuban music. He is sometimes called the “Gershwin of Cuba.” Gershwin was an American composer who came to define a time, place, and style in American history. In other words, to be nicknamed after Gershwin is a big compliment!

### READINGS, RESOURCES, AND VIDEOS

[Ernesto Lecuona from ALLMUSIC](#)

[The Gershwin of Cuba: Ernesto Lecuona from Songwriters Hall of Fame](#)

[Ernesto Lecuona plays...from Pianopera](#)