

# Graduate Student Profile

Sean Bellaviti, University of Toronto

Sean Bellaviti is nearing the end of his Ph.D. studies in Ethnomusicology at the University of Toronto. His dissertation examines the unique relationship of the Panamanian musical genre called “*música típica popular*” (popular traditional music) to the territory and the social construction of the Panamanian nation and modern nation-state. It maps a history of musical practices, commercialization, and musical mixing, and suggests that at various points in its history the genre epitomized the Panamanian national ethos of progressive modernity and cultural cosmopolitanism while underscoring the nation’s want and need of a “vernacular” cultural legacy and identity. With a focus on professional lifestyles and musical practices, his dissertation works to show how genre practitioners actively negotiate (and indeed exploit) the space within and between these dual national allegiances so as to cater to a socially and territorially disparate audience base. In the process, Bellaviti argues, musicians are complicit in shaping the cultural geography and popular identity of the Panamanian national imagination.

Bellaviti has been published in scholarly journals and most recently authored the entry for “*areito*” for the *Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd ed. (forthcoming).

## Musical Interests

When moving to Toronto, Canada, from Italy in 1996, Sean Bellaviti had little idea of the direction in which the city’s vibrant music scene would take him. As an aspiring jazz pianist, Sean enrolled in York University’s jazz performance program. There he studied with Toronto-based jazz pianists Mark Eisenman and Richard Whiteman. It was during this time that Sean began to take an interest in, and actively study, Latin music with local musicians, including Luis “Luisito” Orbegoso and Cuban virtuoso Hilario Duran. Whilst in university, Sean also studied classical piano performance at the Kingsway Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of pianist Brad Ratzlaff.

To date, Sean has performed and recorded with many jazz musicians/vocalists, including Lynn MacDonald, Janelle Monique, and Universal recording artist Matt Dusk. He has also performed with the large majority of Toronto’s salsa groups, including Caché, Proyecto Charanguero, Mora Sextet, Tropibanda, Moda Eterna, Salsotika, and Lady Son y Arti-

culo Vente, as well as with international performers such as Tito Rojas, Eddie Santiago, Junior Gonzalez, Tony Vega, and Henry Fiol, among others. Sean performs extensively as a solo pianist and with his own jazz outfit (the Sean Bellaviti Trio) and salsa ensemble (Conjunto Lacalú).

## Recent Publications

“Areito.” *Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd ed. (forthcoming).

2010. “Donald Thompson: 1928-2010.” *Latin American Music Review/Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 31:1.

2010. “Songs of Love and Displacement: Indexing Panamanian Migrant Experiences in the Lyrics of Sentimental *Música Típica Popular* Songs.” Presented at In Transit: 12th Annual Graduate Student Conference (University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario).

2009. “*Parado en el Puente del Mundo*: Peripateticism and Cosmopolitanism in Panamanian *Música Típica* Performance Practice.” Presented at the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM) annual conference (Mexico City, Mexico).

2007. “Perception, Reception, and All That Popular Music: An Interview with Alejandro Viñao.” *Discourses in Music* 6:2.



Sean Bellaviti (centre) with Abdiel Nuñez and Jorge “Balbinito” Gómez