The Ibero-American Centennials Project: Curating a Subject-Specific Online Exhibition in Omeka Classic and Omeka S

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Data Collection and Organization

Data collections for each of the luminaries consisted of research using encyclopedias, print resources available at IUB, and electronic resources such as RILM, Alexander Street Press, and HAPI. We developed a research checklist to ensure we covered a wide range of sources and perspectives and stored the individual research data in designated Microsoft Word documents.

To organize our data, we used a master Excel spreadsheet. The purpose was twofold: to easily sort the data and to store and maintain the data for multiple years. We linked to the public versions of the pages for the luminaries and the Word documents for each figure for ease of access and to ensure we maintained the integrity of the data.

Building the Sites

The first iteration of the Ibero-American Centennials Project was conceived in the Exhibit Builder in Omeka Classic, a digital repository and exhibition software. Each luminary page featured videos, audio recordings, links to resources in IUCAT, and images, highlighting open access resources and those available exlcusively at IU through the creation of items and metadata following Dublin Core standards. To build the site, we were limited to the layout options provided by Omeka Classic, but we were able to embed multimedia content directly into the pages with an HTML editor. (fig. 1)

In May 2021, the second iteration was to be realized in Omeka S. The shift to a new platform allowed more flexibility in designing a layout and navigation. We designed the Omeka S site with the vision of this being a multi-year project, and it needed to facilitate both the short-term exhbition of figures in the current year and long-term access to previous figures. We created a name index and allowed users to access the figures from various facets: discipline, country, and year in order to facilitate discovery. In addition, we were able to link to the previous exhibit in order to continue to highlight the figures from the 2020 centennial. (fig. 2)

About the Project

In a collaboration between the Latin American Music Center, the Cook Music Library and the Iberian and Latin American Collections at Indiana University Libraries, the Ibero-American Centennials Project honors cultural luminaries for their landmark contributions to the arts, humanities, and social sciences in Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain, and Portugal. The project seeks to create a curated virtual exhibition that showcases selections from IU Libraries for the featured artists, intellectuals, and writers.

Alicia Alonso (Cuba, 1920-2019)



Alicia Alonso as the Black Swan, 1955.

BIOGRAPHY

Ballet dancer, choreographer, and artistic director

One of the most influential figures in establishing a unique Cuban identity within classical ballet, **Alicia Alonso** was known for her dramatic portrayals and superior technique. Alonso trained at the Sociedad Pro-Arte Musical and School of American Ballet and worked with notable choreographers and dancers of the twentieth century, including Mikhail Fokine, George Balanchine, Léonid Massine, and Agnes de Mille. Despite vision problems and a failed eye operation leaving her nearly blind, she established a prestigious international career in classical ballet, particularly with her roles in *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, and *Theme and Variations*. She founded the Ballet Nacional de Cuba in 1948 and served as director until her death. Alonso received several coveted awards such as the Dance Magazine Award in 1958, and was given the title of *prima ballerina assoluta,* a rare honor reserved for the most prestigious and exceptional dancers within a generation. Alonso's influence on Cuban ballet remains, as the Festival Internacional de Ballet de La Habana Alicia Alonso is held annually and the Gran Teatro de La Habana in 2016 was renamed to *Gran Teatro de La Habana 'Alicia Alonso'*.

Fig. 1 Sample Luminary Page from Omeka Classic Exhibit (2020)

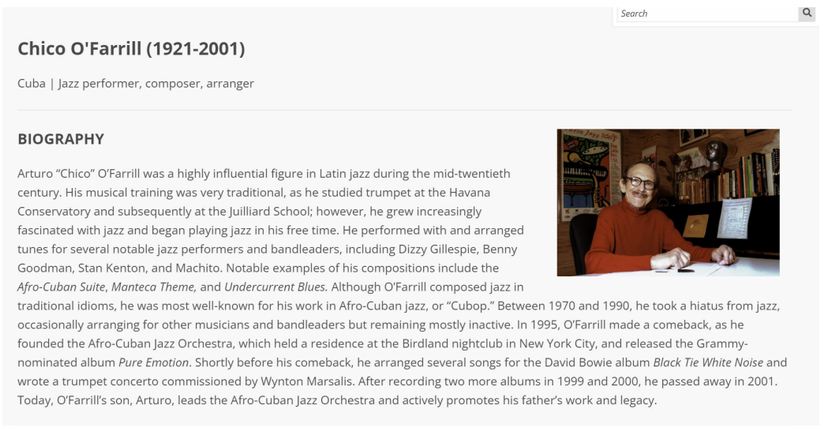


Fig. 2 Sample Luminary Page from Omeka S Exhibit (2021)

Collaboration

The Ibero-American Centennials Project is a highly collaborative effort between the Cook Music Library and the Iberian and Latin American Collections at the Herman B. Wells library. In order to facilitate collaboration admist the COVID-19 pandemic, we held Zoom meetings to illustrate the progress of the site and provide feedback and suggestions. In addition, we had the support of the Digital Initiatves Librarian to help us navigate technical challenges.

Progress and Challenges

The Ibero-American Centennials Project for 2021 is scheduled to be released in late October through IU Digital Exhibitions. Currently, we are finailizing the individual pages for the 2021 luminaries and adding new design elements.

With the shift to Omeka S, we were presented with new challenges. Initially, we did not have a source code editor, which limited our ability to embed multimedia directly into the pages and manually adjust stylistic elements (font colors, tables, etc.). We also attempted to display our indices through the injest of our master spreadsheet, which is not supported by Omeka S.
Despite these challenges, we were able to adapt through other means, such as the creation of tables within our pages in order to display our indexes.

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