## William Grant Still Danzas de Panama

for String Orchestra



## FOREWORD

Music for the native dances of Panama has been notated so infrequently that it is still unknown to people outside of the country itself. It was Narciso Garay who first called the attention of Elisabeth Waldo to it and she, in turn, interested the American composer, William Grant Still, in developing it for concert use. Now Mr. Still has written, on Panamanian dance themes collected by Miss Waldo, a work which is adaptable to string quartet or string orchestra. Nothing like it has been done before in the literature for strings. Mr. Still has further departed from traditional practices by making an attempt to approximate the sounds of native instruments, giving the music an unusually interesting quality.

There is a distinct unity and a touch of Caribbean color in the four dances. The first and last are Negro in origin, probably brought by the first slaves imported into Panama, while the second and third are of Spanish-Indian derivation.

- 1. TAMBORITO: This dance is performed with percussive instruments and voice, or with strings and percussion. The drum introduction is repeated at the end of the dance.
- 2. MEJORANA: Usually in the major mode, the Mejorana is improvisatory in style. The instruments used are the Mejoraneras (guitars playing in counterpoint) and the Rabel (three-stringed violin).
- 3. PUNTO: This is a graceful dance in six-eight time, distinguished by the Zapateo (shoe-tapping) section and a Paseo (Promenade), which occur in the Mejorana as well.
- 4. CUMBIA: Most sensuous of all the dances, and completely lacking in European elements. When it is danced in the streets, the women hold lighted candles in their upraised hands, while the men dance about them in an abandoned manner. A more refined Cumbia is adopted for other occasions.

## 4. Cumbia y Congo



















