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Puerto Rican Music and Dance: RicanStructing Roots / Routes  PART I
The City University of New York
New York, Estados Unidos

Available in: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=37716101
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PART I
PREFACE

JUAN FLORES AND WILSON A. VALENTÍN-ESCobar

Finally, Puerto Rican music has caught the public ear. Over the last ten years, Puerto Rican musical and dance expressions have captured the imagination of many, including popular audiences, journalists, documentarians, collectors, cultural workers, as well as university students and scholars. A host of new books and music specials, concerts, conferences, and articles are now available for study and enjoyment (see the end of this preface for a partial bibliography).

The present issue, the first of two volumes, offers a rich and broad sample of that intellectual and creative work. This Spring 2004 issue provides historical perspectives on the social world of Puerto Rican music and dance from a range of approaches. Starting off with an assessment of the significance of 1898 and the central role of Puerto Rican musicians and innovations in the story of what is known as “Latin music,” the essays, articles, interviews, and stories address traditional forms such as bomba and plena, identify the social locations of music scenes, profile some of its major yet often overlooked exponents, and track some of the historical “re-constructions” brought to the roots and the routes of popular genres and styles. We conceive of this present issue as leading up to the salsa period and beyond, which will be the subject of the Fall 2004 issue of the journal.

As such, the varied contributions pursue some of the paths traveled by Puerto Rican music and dance, and examine their circuitous and complex intersections while identi-