

Arrangers' Notes: A Pescar Camaron

A Pescar Camaron is a folksong from Cuba. The original form is *Son*, the rural root of many well-known Afro-Cuban dance styles. It represents a fusion of the music of Spanish farmers with that of African slaves. In the old days (1800's), *son* would have been accompanied by *tres* (a smaller relative of the Spanish guitar) and a small percussion ensemble (bongos, maracas, guiro, and clave).

During the 1940's and 1950's, *Conjuntu* ensembles expanded the *Son* to create *Son Montuno*. It was characterized by more elaborate arrangements, a larger instrumental ensemble (especially percussion), and open sections for instrumental improvisation.

A Pescar Camaron is a miniature *Son Montuno* for treble chorus. We have reduced the size of the percussion ensemble, however, to prevent obscuring the choir. We have notated percussion parts which can be performed by members of the choral ensemble. An optimal performance, however, will utilize a professional conga player...who should ignore the notated conga part and simply improvise. In this case, the notated conga part will be omitted altogether. The guiro and clave, however, should still be used as indicated in the score.

There are some text issues which beg explanation. There are words which are misspelled because 1) this is how they were given to us by an authentic practitioner, and 2) they reflect a rural pronunciation. Examples are *vamo* (which would technically be *vamos*), *Cuano* (Cubano), and *pa'* (para).

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Translation:

Pescar camaron.

Fishing for shrimp.

"Cubiche, que este Cubiche," me dice un Americano.

"Hey, little Cuban," an American said to me.

¿Qué es esta canción que cantas? ¿Y qué sentido tiene ella? Dime, dime, ¿qué significa?
What is this song you sing? And what does it mean? Tell me, tell me, what does it mean?

Que vamo al rio a pescar camaron,
Let's go to the river to fish for shrimp,

Que rio arriba a pescar camaron.
The river above to fish for shrimp.

Que vamo al rio a pescar camaron,
Let's go to the river to fish for shrimp,

Que rio abajo a pescar camaron.
The river down below to catch shrimp.

Vamo al rio a pescar camaron.
Let's go to the river to fish for shrimp.

Pues, es una canción pa' cantar, no más,
Oh, it is just a song to sing, nothing more,

Una canción pa' pescar.
A song for fishing.

Y cuando la canto,
And when I sing it,

Me da alegría.
It makes me happy.