A Return to Cuba Helps Eduardo Machado Find Home and Inspiration

By Kristin Sterling

“It did they throw me out, or did I walk away from my country?” This question plagues many Cuban exiles and resonates throughout Eduardo Machado’s “Havana is Waiting.” The production will run through Dec. 31 at the Cherry Lane Theatre.

Felix Solis, left, Bruce MacVittie, center, and Ed Vassalo, right, take a journey home in Eduardo Machado’s play, “Havana is Waiting.” The production will run through Dec. 31 at the Cherry Lane Theatre.

Cleveland Chamber Symphony’s Edwin London Wins Columbia’s Ditson Conductor’s Award

By Loralie Nolletti

Edwin London, founder of the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, has won the 2001 Ditson Conductor’s Award for his commitment to the performance of American works. Composer/conductor London will receive the award at a performance of the Cleveland Chamber Symphony, which he will conduct, at Cleveland State University on Nov. 5.

Described as “a champion of new American music,” London has been a major figure in the contemporary music field for more than 40 years, founding and leading several renowned ensembles, and presenting new music choral ensembles, in addition to leading the Cleveland Chamber Symphony in 1980.

Robert Ward, chairman of the Ditson Advisory Committee, will present the citation from Columbia’s President George Rupp to the conductor at the Nov. concert. In his citation, Rupp praised London for his diversity of his musical interests, a reference to London’s simultaneous beginnings in a jazz band and a symphony orchestra, and for the conductor’s central focus on American music. Rupp went on to acknowledge that London’s performances have won praise from composers of every “stylistic persuasion,” noting that in the last three seasons more than fifty new works have been performed in public or recorded.

The Ditson Conductor’s Award, the oldest honoring conductors for their commitment to American music, was established in 1945 by the Alice M. Ditson Fund at Columbia. Past recipients include Leonard Bernstein, Eugene Ormandy, Michael Tilson Thomas and James DePriest.

London received his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa (1961). At Iowa he studied composition with Philip Greeley Clapp. Subsequent teachers have included Luigi Dallapiccola, Darius Milhaud and Gunther Schuller.

London was composer-conductor for the Toledo/Antioch Shakespeare and Lyric Theater Festivals (1956-57) and later toured with the Armando Truyol’s Orchestra in Rome as a French horn player and composer. He taught at Smith College (1960-68), the University of Illinois (1973-83) and the University of San Diego (1972-73), before being named chairman of the music department at Cleveland State University in 1978.

The Cleveland Chamber Symphony is dedicated to supporting the creative work of “emerging” composers by the presentation of semi-annual concerts and recordings of competitively selected new works chosen from leading colleges, conservatories and universities. Under the leadership and artistic direction of London, the CCS has received recognition over the years for its excellence. ASCAP has awarded the Cleveland Chamber Symphony five John S. Edwards awards, the country’s most prestigious honor recognizing an orchestra’s commitment to showcasing American music. Other honors include the American Music Center Letter of Distinction, the Laurel Leaf Award from the American Composers Alliance and others.

As a composer London has received awards from the Guggenheim Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Fromm Foundation, Ohio Arts Council, ASCAP and Meet the Composer. He has received the Cleveland Arts Prize and was named Individual Artist of the Year by the Ohio Arts Council.