

Jazz and Latin rhythm for kids, from the hands of "Hot Peas'n Butter"

By, Paco González Paz Nueva York, 8 jun (EFE) (translated by Naomi Lapidus Shin).

"Hot Peas 'n Butter" has gone from being an unknown children's musical group to being on television and a multitude of concerts, thanks to its multicultural rhythms that combine jazz and Latin sounds.

The group is made up of two old friends, Francisco (Frank) Cotto, who is Puerto Rican, and Danny Lapidus, a musician born in Belgium. Six years ago, they decided to get together to compose music and create a distinct way of reaching little children.

So they started to mix their eclectic styles with sounds from Latin jazz, Caribbean rhythms, R&B, folk music, and rock & roll, things which came from their personal background, but also the cultural variety that permeates New York.

The result was "Volume I" of 'Hot Peas 'n Butter,' a CD that was made in somewhat of an artisan fashion and without much means. The compilation brought together traditional songs from Latin culture, such as *Mi Cuerpo*, 'My Body,' and *Baila*, 'Dance,' as well as American folk songs, such as 'The wise old man,' and 'Johnny Bucker.'

On this first volume, as well as on "Volume 2," that arrives shortly after, Cotto and Lapidus included some original songs, which little by little have become more central to their repertoire.

But the group really took off this year with their third CD, "Volume 3," especially their two songs "Number One" and "Deep Down." Using these two songs, they have made videos for children's television programs for children's programs, "Jack's Big Music Show," which is on Noggin, and "Move to the Music," on Nickelodeon.

This work has also gotten them the backing of a big record producer, Sony Red MRI, assuring them national distribution, with the possibility of reaching audiences outside of the U.S., as well.

This recent recognition has sparked a lot of live shows, with various concerts in New York throughout the year, as well as others in Orlando and Philadelphia.

"The concerts are the best part of our job. Nothing compares to having an audience of children," says Danny Lapidus, who has converted his passion for children into a full-time job (apart from his dedication to "Hot Peas 'n Butter," he gives music classes to children under five years of age).

"Not even the jazz clubs in the West Village can pride themselves on having an audience as honest and dedicated as ours," says Lapidus.

“It’s that kids are sincere; they don’t lie. If they like it, they get up and jump around and dance without stopping. If they don’t like it, they start crying and they leave,” notes Frank Cotto.

In concert "Hot Peas 'n Butter" combine their songs with other cultural elements, such as dance, which has the effect of making their shows very didactic. For example, in their last show, they incorporated the *bomba*, a genre originally from Puerto Rico, which includes song, dance, and music.

Both Cotto and Lapidus are aware that children’s music is going through an exceptional period, to the point that some weeks it even takes up the **highest rankings in music sales.**

Nevertheless, they also know that children are much pickier than they used to be with respect to their taste in music, and they don’t really go for the easy and repetitive songs that prevailed in the past.

“With television, the internet, videogames, kids today are exposed to many more things than before, and you see that in music too. That’s why we try to show them different styles of music with different influences,” notes the musician of Puerto Rican origin.

“Also the parents have changed,” remarks Lapidus, since “these days they are much more focused their children’s needs, and are more conscious of their musical tastes.”