

Bachata Music

Songs of the Heart

Bachata is a popular style of music, sung in Spanish, that comes from the Dominican Republic. The first Bachata song ever recorded was by singer José Manuel Calderón in 1962. Back then, bachata songs had a slower beat, rhythmic guitars, and sad lyrics about love and heartbreak. As bachata became more popular over the years, the songs became faster and mixed with pop music. But, they are always still about love. Today, bachata artists like Aventura, Anthony Santos, Romeo Santos, Juan Luis Guerra, and Prince Royce perform for millions of fans. Bachata songs can be heard on dance floors around the world, from Santo Domingo to London and New York.



Bachata comes from the Dominican Republic.



Romeo Santos and Juan Luis Guerra perform in DR.

Grupo of Five

A traditional bachata band has five instruments. The lead guitar is called the **requinto**. A second guitar plays the rhythm, called the **segundo**. A bass guitar player keeps the beat, working together with two drummers. The first drummer plays **bongos** or **tambora**. The second drummer strikes the metal **güira** and shakes **maracas**.

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Controversial Past

Bachata music wasn't always accepted, even in the Dominican Republic. For more than 30 years, the Dominican Republic had a dictator named Rafael Trujillo. A dictator is a leader who keeps power only for themselves. President Trujillo did not like bachata music. The first bachata musicians were poor farmers from the countryside. The dictator Trujillo thought that bachata music was only for poor, uneducated people. People even used the word "bachata" as an insult!



The güira (right) and tambora (left) are two important instruments in bachata.



Legendary Bachata band Aventura with reggaeton star Bad Bunny.

However, bachateros kept playing the music they loved. Eventually, Trujillo's rule ended and the music was accepted and celebrated as an important part of Dominican Culture. Now, bachata is one of the most popular music styles in the world. For example, the Dominican-American band Aventura was the first bachata band to perform at the White House and sell out Madison Square Garden in New York. They call themselves the K.O.B. (Kings of Bachata).