

# CIVITAS GES NEWS



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*Civitas GES News, Cuba*

## WHEN DANCE MEETS MUSIC – BY WILL ALLEN

VERSIÓN ESPAÑOL



Not many people are lucky enough to have the experience we did, especially as musicians.

Being a Latin Ensemble from New York, understanding the culture and tradition behind the music we play is so

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my time in Cienfuegos, Cuba, was the importance of dance and movement that goes along with music.

In our band, we never focused so much on the physical movement of the songs we play. I have since learned that the physical connection of movement and dance combined with the traditional Cuban songs we play is essential to understanding the culture behind this music. I noticed that dance is one of the biggest components of Cuban culture. Music is dance and dance is music. It is dance that so beautifully enables us to be one with the music. From dancing the Cuban rhythms that occur in every song, to experiencing the passion and emotion that was so vibrantly displayed by the people of Cienfuegos, it was clear that to play traditional Cuban music with the same passion, we need to learn how to dance.

Lucky for us, the students and professors at the University of Cienfuegos were excited and eager to teach us exactly how to do just that. The band took dance classes where we learned the numerous styles of dance and rhythms that we had been playing in our music all along. We learned Merengue, Rumba, the Cha Cha, Salsa, and many other types of dances and movements that would ultimately change the way we experienced traditional Cuban music. In the end, I have to say that we are a different band now, and for the better. It was a beautiful experience, filled with beautiful people, that all of us in the Crane Latin ensemble will cherish forever.”



Will Allen is a sophomore and Music Business Major at SUNY Potsdam. He plays the saxophone and performs vocals for the Crane School Latin Ensemble.

SUNY Potsdam started its partnership with the University of Cienfuegos after attending the Cuba TIES 2015 Conference. Since then it has run five programs to Cuba. The Latin Ensemble is one of three students groups that have studied at the University of

Cienfuegos. In February 2017, the two institutions signed an MOU and are exploring diverse collaborative programs in both directions.