

Facundo Cabral Biography by Craig Harris

Compiled by Dr. Andrés R. Pérez Riera

Argentina's culture was explored in detail through the songs and novels of Buenos Aires-born singer, guitarist, and novelist Facundo Cabral. His repertoire included the international hit "No Soy de Aquí, Ni Soy de Allá," which has been translated and recorded in nine languages by such artists as Julio Iglesias, Pedro Vargas, and Neil Diamond. His novels include *Conversations with Facundo Cabral*, *My Grandmother and I*, *Psalms*, and *Borges and I*. In 1966, the United Nations Department of Education, Science, and Culture (UNESCO) declared him a "worldwide messenger of peace."

Cabral overcame numerous obstacles in his climb toward international fame. The youngest of three children, he was raised by his mother after his father deserted the family. Moving to south Argentina as a youngster, he continued to struggle. Arrested and locked up in a reformatory, he managed to escape and became a born-again Christian. Relocating to Tandil, he worked a series of menial jobs, including street cleaning and farm laborer.

Inspired by the music of Atahualpa Yupanqui and José Larralde, Cabral taught himself to play folk songs on the guitar. Moving to Mar del Plata, he found a job singing in a hotel. With the success of "No Soy de Aquí, Ni Soy de Allá," in 1970, Cabral rose to the upper echelon of Argentinian music. His outspoken

lyrics, however, continued to stir controversy. Labeled a "protest singer," in the mid-'70s he was forced to leave his homeland and seek exile in Mexico. He remained a world citizen, however, performing in more than 150 countries. Returning to Argentina in 1984, Cabral performed a series of concerts in Buenos Aires' Luna Park that attracted as many as 6,000 people each night. Three years later, he performed at Buenos Aires' football stadium for an audience of more than 50,000 people. Cabral toured with Alberto Cortes in May 1994.

En Vivo Cabral continued to perform and record into the 21st century; his recordings during this period include 2003's *En Vivo*, recorded live at the Universidad de Lima in Lima, Peru. On July 9, 2011, while on tour in Central America, Cabral was shot to death in an apparent ambush of his SUV while en route to the airport in Guatemala City, Guatemala. The killing of the "worldwide messenger of peace" provoked shock and outrage around the world. Facundo Cabral (May 22, 1937 – July 9, 2011)

Cabral was killed when the car in which he was a passenger, on its way to the airport in Guatemala City, was ambushed by unidentified gunmen in three vehicles. His road manager, David Llanos, and a concert promoter and nightclub owner from Nicaragua, Henry Fariña Fonseca, were seriously wounded in the attack.

The death of Mr. Cabral, who in 1996 was designated a "worldwide messenger of peace" by the United Nations, caused consternation throughout the Spanish-speaking world. President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela sent a message via Twitter: "Oh what pain! They have killed the great troubadour of the Pampas." René Pérez, leader of the Puerto Rican hip-hop group Calle 13, wrote, "Latin America is in mourning," and other leading pop-music figures, among them Ricky Martin, Alejandro Sanz and Ricardo Montaner, also sent Twitter

messages lamenting his loss. Guatemalan government officials said that Mr. Fariña, the nightclub owner, was most likely the gunmen's intended target. But Rigoberta Menchú, the Guatemalan Indian leader who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, seemed to contradict this view when she said Saturday, "I can't help but think he was assassinated for his ideals."