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INTERVIEW: Virulo Sings to the Covid-19. Burn it!

By: Giusette León García / CubaSí

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Well-cooked humor against the virus of discouragement and negativity, with rhythm and truths from Cuba. Respectful humor, smoothie, where laughter also becomes a tribute. Humor that mobilizes without brochures, from empathy, because doing the right thing can also be fun. Virulo humor!

With Alejandro García, we talked via telephone about Dale candela, the song he recently premiered next to the Ignacio Piñeiro National Septet. We started by finding out where the idea came from: "The idea for the song came from Mayito (Mario Escalona), EGREM director. He called me and said why don't you do something about the coronavirus? And I said, well, yes, go ahead."

"I wanted to play it with the National Septet, as the lyrics speak of elders, because I wanted to do it with a group of old people, because the Septet is already an old group. Gioser Rodríguez, the tres guitar player of the group was the one who did the entire arrangement, then each of the musicians recorded it, he sent it to me, I added the voice to it, I returned it to him, he put song together ...", said Virulo.

So, the whole process went without violating the rules of social distancing: "The process of recording music was a mess, but everything, everything was done under those rules. After that came the video clip, which was also filmed in each of our homes. Meanwhile, the ICAIC found out about the song and was also interested in making a cartoon, and well, there it is the result of the entire work process."

"This first video was recorded by a group of boys lead by Mildred Ruiz, who have been filming with the Institute of Music the presentations of many musicians, they have been visiting the homes of all those who have wanted to offer their work for the networks".

Virulo reminds us that "the capacity of humor to return optimism must never be neglected and I believe that life must be built with optimism. If you don't have optimism and you don't have joy, you can't build things, you can't create and you can't live."

"Dale Candela" follows this principle: "What's behind all this, above all, is a huge desire to give a little encouragement, to make a joyful song, in the midst of all this drama and give people a little encouragement, because like professor Calviño, who was the one who made the presentation, says, humor is a very necessary thing in these times. We need a good amount of humor to tackle all these problems and Cubans have always characterized ourselves by hilariously solving our problems. The solution to the problems of Cubans have always been, in one way or another, splashed with a sense of humor, because it's our sense of humor that brings us out of the most serious problems we may be sunk in."

The truth is this is how we are, we don't laugh at problems to minimize them, but to look at them from another perspective, therefore, the response of Cubans to Virulo's song does not surprise me:

"Finally, the result of the song is going to be measured by people and in reality this made their life happy. I think that was the idea of this song: to do something that was not offensive, that did not hurt feelings, that it was happy and that it gave everyone some optimism".

"Besides the song came out at a good time, when we are all optimistic, the figures of Cuba are very good and I think that in that sense it has worked. In has gone viral on the networks, in the first four days the video received forty thousand visits and the cartoon is following suit. A lot of people have downloaded, one thing I really like is

that, for example, in Cuba, they are exchanging it. I have an interview with Mexico's Canal 22, which is also playing the video and has served to give people back a bit of optimism, confidence, something that makes us happy life in the midst of all this misfortune, because the truth is that this whole situation is a disgrace and also we have the damn Donald Trump on top of us, taking advantage of this situation to strengthen the negative things. "

But the laughter also paid tribute: "In the song I finished saying that always at nine o'clock I go out to applaud, because I speak of the problems of the elders and the ways in which they are being solved in Cuba. I speak of the Prevengo-Vir, I speak of family doctors, I speak of the visits to the house, of the people who offer to bring you food home, which are things that I am living front-row, I am not making anything up, these are things happening to a lot of people."

**How do Virulo's days go by in social distancing? What are you working on?**

"Before the quarantine started, I was writing a book called My Memories, Before I Forget Them, which contains the whole story of my life since I was a child, my friends, when I started singing, my relationship with Silvio, with Pablito, with Noel, with all the people of the Nueva Trova movement, after the creation of the National Ensemble, my relationship with Carlos Ruiz de la Tejera, with Sara González, with Mirtha Medina, the founding members of the Ensemble, our tours, everything done until today. I'm not even halfway yet. I am now at the stage when I enter the National Ensemble and the first job I did there, which was a show with Guayabero and Nico Saquito, the author of María Cristina me quiere gobernar and Cuidadito compay gallo and, well, it contains many amusing anecdotes all this story that I am making of my life, I think the pandemic will not be enough, I think this book will take me at least two years.

**Before the farewell, we wanted to do like Mediodia en TV show and hear what is the first thing Virulo is going to do when all this ends?**

When all this ends? I think it will not be like this. It's not going to end just like that, and everyone will head for the street, I think that will be gradual and you have to mentally prepare yourself to be like that, slowly, because anyway, being realistic, the damned coronavirus will stay with us and that disease will continue, unless the vaccine is obtained and I think it will take a little while. So I am trying to slow things down, because I live with my wife and my two children, who are my closest family, and I'm crazy to see my sister, of course, my friends, I can't wait to give them a hug and drink a bottle of rum with them, but everything must be little by little".

**Translated by Amilkal Labañino / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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