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Oral history interview with Wayner K. Ramón Ortega, November 4, 2023

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ORAL HISTORY LAB (OHL)

University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez

Oral History Interview with Wayner Kalik Ramón Ortega, November 4, 2023

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview of Wayner Kalik Ramón Ortega conducted by Isbeth A. Ramón Ortega on November 4, 2023. This interview is part of coursework done by students at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

Interviewer: Isbeth A. Ramón Ortega

Interviewed: Wayner Kalik Ramón Ortega

Date: November 4, 2023

Location: Caguas, Puerto Rico (interviewer), Bloomington, Indiana (interviewee)

Isbeth [00:00:01]: My name is Isbeth Ramón Ortega. I will be interviewing Wayner Ramón Ortega. Could you spell your name?

Wayner [00:00:09]: Yeah, huh. In fact, it is Wayner Kalik Ramón Ortega. Wayner would be W-a-y-n-e-r, Kalik, my middle name would be K-a-l-i-k, my first last name would be Ramón, R-a-m-o(accent)-n, and my second last name would be Ortega, O-r-t-e-g-a.

Isbeth [00:00:38]: Thank you. Today's date is November 4, 2023, and it is 5:46 in the afternoon. I am in Caguas, Puerto Rico and the narrator is in Bloomington, Indiana. Is that information correct?

Wayner [00:00:54]: Yes, in Bloomington Indiana.

Isbeth [00:00:56]: Okay. Do I have permission to record this interview?

Wayner [00:01:00]: Yes.

Isbeth [00:01:02]: Okay. If at any time you do not want to share any information, you do not have to.

Wayner [00:01:08]: Okay.

Isbeth [00:01:09]: I'm going to start with the questions. When and where were you born?

Wayner [00:01:14]: I was born in Caguas, Puerto Rico on September 21, 98. When I was born it was the day of Hurricane George. Hurricane George was over Puerto Rico.

Isbeth [00:01:30]: Did you grow up where you were born?

Wayner [00:01:34]: Yes. I was born and raised in Caguas, Puerto Rico.

Isbeth [00:01:38]: Can you describe this place to me?

Wayner [00:01:42]: The way I see Caguas is that it is, probably, in my eyes, the perfect combination between the countryside and the city. Like it has everything you need in a big city, but it also has the peace, the patience of being in the countryside. Not patience, the tranquility of being in the country. Like, a little bit of everything. We also have a little bit of plugs [inaudible] in the metropolitan area, but you can also spend a quiet night in the park, or you can go to a farm, and you are still in Caguas.

Isbeth [00:02:26]: Yes. Okay. Where do you live now?

Wayner [00:02:33]: Now I live in Bloomington, Indiana, in the United States.

Isbeth [00:02:39]: And what is the difference between this place and the place where you grew up? I mean, what is the difference for you?

Wayner [00:02:47]: Well, to begin, I am born and raised in Caguas like most of my family. And basically, all my family is in Caguas or near Caguas. The biggest difference here is that you spend most of your time alone. You don't have mom, grandpa, family there for you. Here right now we are already beginning the winter season, the temperature is already dropping, the heat that there is in Puerto Rico is not here all year round as one is used to. The climate is very dry, it is a different language that is spoken here, the way everything works is different. It's also a relatively small city with other big cities that...that there are in the United States. So, this is also a city that is, what is known here as College Town, which is a city that is basically...defined by the university. Here, if I'm not mistaken, the population of the city is about 80... about 80 thousand people and 50 thousand of these people are students... at the university.

Isbeth [00:04:21]: Damn, there are a lot of them. It's like Mayagüez that...which is basically also a city like that...of a university and everything around it is based, mostly, on the life of the students. Prices also influence, of things, they influence that.

Wayner [00:04:42]: The prices, everything. The... most of the houses are for rent, from rental companies, and so on. Basically, everything is based on that.

Isbeth [00:04:54]: Yes. Ok, next says... ok. Tell me a little, what are you doing now? And what is your profession? And how did you get to that?

Wayner [00:05:05]: Well, I'm a musician. I am doing my master's degree in music; I am a trumpet player. I'm doing my master's degree. Currently I am... I also have what they call an Assistant [inaudible]), which... in other places they call a 'GA', a Graduate Assistant. This... but here it is called an 'AI', which is an Assistant Instructor, in my case, because I have to teach trumpet classes so... I am currently studying and teaching at the university. And... well, I'm a musician, what they call a freelancer [Sp?]. Freelance [Sp?] musician that... which is basically for each call, payback, hire, that if you need a trumpeter, you can call him, and... I go, I play in the activity or the services that you need, you pay me, but I am not necessarily affiliated with you in a direct way but rather for service... professional services is the way to say it.

Isbeth [00:06:15]: What did you say how it is called? Freelancer?

Wayner [00:06:15]: Freelancer. Freelancer.

Isbeth [00:06:20]: Okay, okay. Let's continue. These questions are to get to know you a little better. What is your best childhood memory? If you have any. If you don't have any, then...

Wayner [00:06:45]: I think the Christmas holidays, probably. When the whole family was in Puerto Rico and everyone was in the same house, enjoying themselves and having a good time. I think those are the best memories [inaudible].

Isbeth [00:07:24]: Yes.

Wayner [00:07:06]: Well, it's not that specific, but yeah. Those are the best Christmases, those Christmases when the whole family was together. Especially before... as you know, around like 2010, 2011, 2012.

Isbeth [00:07:21]: Yes, before everyone left.

Wayner [00:07:25]: Exactly.

Isbeth [00:07:29]: Okay. Who was a big influence on your life growing up and why?

Wayner [00:07:37]: I think the biggest influence for me... has been papá Rubén, my grandfather. Because, well, as you know, I... my... my dad, our dad, because it's not a [inaudible], well he wasn't there and basically, mom, being a single mother, had to take care of us and well... had to work and all this, she had to work, and... well, I had to stay with papá Rubén since I was little. And well, he has always been my dad. The one who has taught me everything, the one who taught me to fix cars, to fix plumbing, to fix everything, to be an independent person. The one who has taught me to... to live life basically and the one who has given me the values to move forward no matter what, to fight for what I like and always want to do things better. One of the things that he always told me and tells me, but that are the things that have stayed with me the most is: if you do it, do it well. If not, don't do it. That is that... that value of always aspiring to do things... in a correct way, the best you can do it. I think he is the biggest influence that... that I can say now.

Isbeth [00:09:12]: Yes, really, yes. Do you miss anything from your childhood?

Wayner [00:09:25]: I think so. I think being at home.

Isbeth [00:09:33]: [laughter] I think so too, not having so many responsibilities.

Wayner [00:09:37]: Mjm. Not having to pay rent [laughs]. But I think that's everyone, right, but... really yes, being at home and knowing that if I'm at home it's all there.

Isbeth [00:09:52]: Yes. Okay. What was one of your first jobs, or your first job? And did you like it or not? And why.

Wayner [00:10:04]: Well... as a musician... I have been doing work in what we call freelancing [SP?] in Puerto Rico since... I was already in my last years of high school, so like since... 2015, 2016 more or less, I was already playing in... as they call it in Puerto Rico, playing on the street. This...and well, one goes around making like one's money out there and one does a couple of things for professional services. I joined the municipal band of Caguas, um... and I was playing with the municipal band of Caguas for 4 or 5 years... almost... almost 6 years. But I was playing with them for that time and well, a stable job, as

well as... as such that was my first job that, although it had been (inaudible) a couple of times with what was the... the storm, Hurricane María, COVID, the earthquakes and everything that happened after, well, that was my first official job that I received a monthly check, and it wasn't a lot of money, this, and I did like it. Yes, I liked it a lot. This, yes... if we have to talk about another more traditional job, well my first job was at Home Depot, which I started doing when the pandemic came out and all this that I couldn't do anymore... the municipal band was no longer working and well... I had to... I had to adjust to be able to do this, also help my house and save for what I wanted to do, which is to study my master's degree. I mean [inaudible] preparing for that.

Isbeth [00:12:06]: Okay. And I really forgot to ask you, when did you start in music?

Wayner [00:12:15]: I started when I was like... like in 4th grade, more or less in it, as they call it in Puerto Rico, right, on the street. Um... I started taking conga and Latin percussion classes with Reynaldo Ortiz who was... he is a taxi driver; I think he is still a taxi driver. He is a taxi driver in... Puerto Rico, in Caguas, and he simply decided to give free classes, without charging anyone anything, give classes to little boys, to children who wanted to learn... and that was the way I started the music. After that, I was about 8, 7 or 8 years old...after that, when I was with him for about a year and a half, two years, he told me to go to the Libre de Música school. He told me "I have nothing more to teach you." and he told my grandfather, papá Rubén, to take me to the... to take me to the Libre de Música school to play bass, he said. (quote) "No, go play bass because if you play bass, you will have a job in any orchestra because every orchestra, no matter what genre, has to play bass" but when... when I was... uh, 8 years old, when I entered Libre de Música school. And I was about 8 years old I measured, more or less, what some people refer to as a floor bump, [inaudible] when I was 8 years old. And I don't know if you know what a double bass is, if you know what a double bass is, it's a very big instrument, basically it looks like... it looks like a giant violin. And when I saw that instrument, I was afraid of it. And the teacher had told me that there was room for trumpet and so I went to play trumpet. So, I continued that way, and you know how at first people don't take it so seriously, but then you get the hang of it and they go around and realize that it's what they like, and they start practicing, and you start to realize that you can be good at doing... doing what you're doing and... well, that's how I've continued... until now.

Isbeth [00:14:59]: Okay. And you were little when you started in music. Who introduced you?

Wayner [00:15:17]: Well... in different ways this... they introduced me to music because dad, my dad, he's a musician, as people say, a natural musician. He always liked to play and so and he plays all the percussion and all that, although we never spent enough time for him to teach me... either. That was never possible. And he tried to teach me perhaps one or other times, but frankly, he never took the time... that is needed to do a discipline in that way. And I remember that... my mother once gave me some timbales for my birthday... for Christmas. Well, Santa Claus, right. Santa Claus gave me some timbales for Christmas. And although I didn't know how to play it, I played it around and it was more like a stimulant that they were introducing to me little by little. So, once they gave me a birthday gift, Grandfather Ramiro, he gave me a classical guitar... this one... for... my birthday. And although he played, he never taught me to play the guitar either and I at that time, because what I made was noise with the guitar, although I didn't play it well, because I was still a child. This was long before I started playing percussion, because I was maybe 6, 5 years old when they gave me the timbales and maybe 6, 7 years old when they gave me the guitar and... and then later... this ... my grandma tata tita... heard about Rey. That Rey gave... percussion classes in front of the Arcelay theatre in... in Caguas. On Acosta

Street, if I'm not mistaken, if I remember correctly in Caguas. And... and I, frankly, I wasn't interested at first because I was like, 'Oh yeah, look, there it is.' Once they passed me like that in the car and I was like, 'No, hmm,' I don't know, shy. Sometimes, you know like... I don't know, I don't dare. And as things in life are, one time, papá Rubén and I were at a friends' wedding and Rey sat at that table. And Rey, I believe that he is one of the best teachers that I have had the... the... the blessing of having. That he is a teacher who frankly enjoys teaching. And that he enjoys what it means to sow something good in the... in the boys, in the children, just because. Because of the... because of the... because of the support of my family... I am where I am. But a lot of that also has to do with the teachers I had. With Rey, he was the one who started me in all this... in music. Rey is.... Rey was at the table where we are sitting at the wedding and suddenly, he says 'If not, yes, oh look, yes this, yes that', and he showed me a couple of things there on the table, without any instrument. And since I was little, I was always... like... as people sometimes say, a nerd. I was quite intelligent and I kind of learned things very quickly and all that. And that night I learned what they call tres 'tumbao'. The march on 7/45, as they knew it at that time. And... and he says... that was on a Saturday, and he says 'Ah, well look, at Monday, go there and... and... and I'm going to give you classes'. And I spent the whole weekend just practicing those things that he told me, that was doing on... on my ehh... on my thighs while I was... sitting like that. I just did it on my thighs. And... and I got stuck with it... I mean, I learned it very brutally. And when... when I went there and saw a conga, I arrived early because Papa Rubén took me early. That's how we took out the conga. Suddenly I remember that there was a cafeteria on the corner and from there they took out a conga, they took out a chair and I'm like this and papa Rubén is talking to... with... with Rey. And I hit it like that, and I played it and I'm like 'Wow, how this sound!' And so, I continued, and I liked it a lot and I continued doing it so, because, who introduced me to music... to put one person alone would be to forget a lot of other people. That I think... was... perhaps... an unconscious effort by all the people who were around me.

Isbeth [00:20:47]: Okay, wow. Well. Now... I'm going to ask you questions more related to the initial topic of the interview. You hear me well? Can you hear Maiah barking in the back?

Wayner [00:21:08]: I can hear it a little bit, but it's okay.

Isbeth [00:21:13]: You are a master's student. What is the name of the University where you are studying and where is it located?

Wayner [00:21:21]: I am studying at Indiana University, which is the university in the state of Indiana in the city of Bloomington.

Isbeth [00:21:29]: Okay. How long have you been studying at this university?

Wayner [00:21:34]: This is my third semester at the university of... of... studying my master's degree. So, I've been here since August 2022, right? Yes, August 2022 I am studying here. Since August 2022.

Isbeth [00:21:54]: And the truth is that you are doing a master's degree, what are you doing it in and for what purposes?

Wayner [00:22:00]: Well... the... the name of the master's degree, the title I get from here is MM, which is Master of Music... in trumpet performance which would be trumpet performance. This... the fi... the end of this is for me to be an orchestral or band musician, or a trumpeter, if you want to put it that way, able to be able to play what I need to do on the trumpet. Basically... a professional musician.

Isbeth [00:22:37]: Okay. And you were born in Puerto Rico. Why did you decide to study outside the country? Did you decide or why did you have to study outside the country?

Wayner [00:22:50]: Well [pause]. I was born in Puerto Rico and... and I did my undergrad in Puerto Rico. I did... I did my bachelor's degree in Puerto Rico in trumpet performance. I decided to move from Puerto Rico because in Puerto Rico, the highest degree that can be obtained in the... the field that interests me... which is the performance of the orchestral trumpet, is a bachelor's degree. At the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music, it is the... the highest thing you can do in... in... in this field, which is what I want to do. And... I had already done it. And although I had already done it, and... I graduated as one of the best trumpet players at the time in school, because job opportunities are very limited, although I was able... And I am very grateful for the opportunities that I had, that I was able to play with the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, the Puerto Rico Philharmonic Orchestra, the Borinquen Brass, and... many... many other groups and I was able to develop in different other genres. Which is actually an advantage when I'm here, because a lot of people, like here there are a lot of opportunities to just... erm, develop in a single genre there are a lot of people who can just play classical music and can't play anything else. And in that style, I did prepare myself better for when I have to leave here. This, for example, this week, this... I have presentations, this... I have presentations playing classical music and next weekend I have presentations playing salsa and popular music and... last week I had a presentation in a church that I have to play music ...classical music and popular music in the same place and it has to be only one person capable of doing both things and well... well I have had the opportunities I needed to be able to develop and be able to do both things. And for that I am grateful, but I decided to study outside of Puerto Rico because Puerto Rico, well, was no longer going to have the professional opportunities that I wanted to be able to do what I want to do.

Isbeth [00:25:38]: Could you tell me the events of when you moved to the United States?

Wayner [00:25:44]: Well, um, I was working at Home Depot when I was in Puerto Rico, and well, it was one of the strategies that... that I used to be able to move... to be able to move to the United States and have a job in the United States. As long as... to be able to move to the United States and already have a job instead of having to move and look for a job. Simply what I did was that I transferred to the United States... to Texas. This... one of the reasons that... why I moved, even though I knew I was going to move... the reason that pushed me to move the way I moved, which was super fast. Ehh... I bought the ticket one day like that in... eh... a month in advance. And I decided I'm leaving. And I left. This... part of the reason I left that quickly is because I was very comfortable in the job I was in. I was doing well, they were paying me well... it was very good, they were already trying to tell me that... this... offer me training to... to... make me a leader. And... and they wanted to offer me full time at work, and I was still playing outside in the Municipal band, and I was having stews with the Ska band. I was having stews with the alternative rock band, Indie Rock, and I was having salsa stews out there and they were calling me a lot, I was doing a lot of things. And I said 'uy', I felt very comfortable, too comfortable and I said... looking at other students, other trumpet students and other trumpet players who... who have done it before me.... That happens to many of them. They get too comfortable when they leave the Conservatory. When they left the Conservatory, they had a job that paid well and they were still playing and they said, 'no, that's fine, I'm working, saving to go do my master's degree.' And I know... and I think they are still saving. And I said that, it's not going to be me. I had like 4,000, 3,000, 4,000 dollars in an account. I spoke with Uncle Wilson, who was the one who received me in Houston. I said, 'tío, is it okay if I come on November 1st?' (quote) 'You arrive when you want, and I will receive you.' OK, it's fine, no

problem. I bought the ticket and... and I called mom. 'Ma, I bought the ticket, I'm leaving on November 1st.' Well ok, that's fine. So, it was it.

Isbeth [00:28:51]: What were your experiences? Or rather, how did you feel and what challenges did you face in that transition of moving?

Wayner [00:29:03]: Well... the biggest challenge and the one that cost me the most, I think was when... when I told Tata Nydia, and she told me, 'are you going to leave me alone?'. And one thinks that 'ah, she told you hesitantly', but she told it to me with watery eyes. And the biggest challenge is leaving your family behind so you can go get the things you want. And... and then call and they tell you the problems and the things they need and not being able to be there to help. And... And so. The... the other thing, one of the problems is... the language. Although I... Well, when I left, I already spoke a lot of English and was fully bilingual. I realized that I knew more English than I thought, because I thought I was going to have a problem with my English. But... with little time I realized that, frankly, I was more advanced, and my language was much better than I thought, but in any way understanding and speaking is not the same as living doing... doing this every day, speaking in English every day, saying hello every day, like that. Although it may seem a little funny, one of the things... of the biggest culture shocks that... that... that I had is that, in American culture, in American culture, because we are all Americans, right, in American culture we don't ...there is no 'buen provecho', that does not exist. And you see someone eating and it's like you're going to talk to them and you, right, at first... and after speaking in English for a while, you start to speak in English and everything is more fluid, but this ... at the beginning when you come from Spanish translating everything, everything word by word, sometimes idea by idea, you open your mouth and it's like 'ah, hey, ehm. Oh. Never mind', like you no longer have to say 'buen provecho' because they don't do that there. But you kind of stay with that... with that... with that idea that you have to say it and you're like, 'Wow, what a fool I must have looked.' I think that was one of the cultural shocks, so it cost me a little more.

Isbeth [00:31:42]: Yes, that has happened to me when I have traveled. Um... when I traveled to Washington, every time I passed by the people who were eating, I said 'buen provecho', and I said it without realizing it. And then when I realized it, it was like 'bruh', people don't understand me. But I think they also say 'enjoy your meal' if I'm not mistaken. But they don't say it like we do, we say it to anyone.

Wayner [00:32:07]: Exactly, no...exactly. But if you are... you walk into the cafeteria and someone is eating and they make eye contact with you, you normally say 'ah buen provecho' or 'good morning, buen provecho' or something like that, right.

Isbeth [00:32:23]: Yes, also that... like... the feeling of... like... that is not as familiar as one is used to.

Wayner [00:32:33]: Exactly, the warmth of the people is not there because it is not the... it is not part of the culture. The... caring about each other like that. Because like, sometimes people complain that, in Puerto Rico, people don't take care of each other, something like that, but... probably where you live right now, you know who your neighbors are around you. I live in an apartment complex, now there are two buildings. In my building there are an average of between 25 and 30 apartments. I only know one person, and it was because when he was moving here, we were moving at the same time, and I helped him move some things. That, but I've seen the person twice. That is the difference. If this were Puerto Rico, I would probably know all the people on my floor and... and you know how it is. But... there is no

such culture here. Everyone is on his side, everyone cares about their own thing, and no one cares about anything else.

Isbeth [00:33:55]: Yes, it's very different here. So, for you, what is the difference between studying in the United States and studying in Puerto Rico?

Wayner [00:34:08]: Well... in perspective, especially in... in the field of what I study, most of the professionals in Puerto Rico who... who practice in the profession studied a long time ago. And Puerto Rico is great, and I'm not saying that the education I had was bad, because not at all, thanks to that education, I am where I am, and I can proudly say that... That I am one of the good trumpeters of the school. (pause) But many of the things that...that are played in Puerto Rico, there were many things that were outdated, they were out of date, not necessarily obsolete, but... but we were not aware of what was happening in the world. In the United States and in other places, because simply, well, the reality is that Puerto Rico is an island. And the fact that it is an island means that it is isolated, it's kind of in the name. And that means, among many things, that there are things that are lost. Especially when the teachers that... that... that you have are teachers who studied. Yes, most of them left Puerto Rico, the vast majority of them, but many of them left more than 20 or 30 years ago to study abroad. And although some did, many of them are not updated as they should be updated to be able to show what is happening in the world right now. And that's one of the great things. Here, the biggest difference, I would say, is that, that it is the... the fact that everyone knows everyone in the field in which they are studying because it is different, right. It's different here that I'm living in this building and I don't know my neighbors. But in the world of trumpet, for example, a person like my teacher who has been doing this for too long, there is not a person that I can mention in a class that he doesn't know, or that he doesn't know about something. Because also, I mean, it's a... this is one of the best schools. And, in my opinion, my teacher is one of the best teachers in this subject. And I am very lucky to be here. But, with everything and that, a guy who is well prepared who reads every day and who every day is looking for new information and sees things differently, therefore, the way he looks at things is like a much more open mind, because there is so much variety and there are so many things. And it's not necessarily that sometimes they are good and other times they are bad, it's just that they are different forms and different approaches to different things, because that is something else that in Puerto Rico well... I saw many times. That this is what is right, and this is the only thing that is right. If you do it any other way that is not right, that is already wrong. And in music, that is art.... Art, I understand, should not be like that. Because... it's not necessarily a right way, there are many ways you can do things and still be right. One of the things... one of the biggest challenges for me in Puerto Rico is being a classical trumpeter who could also play jazz. Even though I wasn't... even though I wasn't as good as the people who studied jazz, but I could play it. Or being able to play classical music, and being able to make Caribbean music, and being able to make music of different styles and being accepted by other trumpet players in that. Because with other people I didn't have any kind of problem, but especially with trumpeters, ehh, I had the... what I saw was... was that there was this sense of 'ah, yes, I'm making a stew in classical music' it's like 'ah that's not the way to phrase it here, this is not salsa.' Or if I was making a salsa stew, 'ah he's phrasing as if you were a classical musician.' And when you start to see... I say, could it be that I'm really doing something wrong or that a closed mind is simply prejudging me because I do other things too? When the truth is that you can do different types of work and you can do them both well. And I didn't... it's not that I was the best at doing everything I did, because I consider that in many moments I was learning, and I continue to learn. And I keep trying to do things in a better way. But...in retrospect at

those times, I kind of thought. I think what I'm doing isn't that bad. You understand me? I'm not playing like... And when I come here, and I play with... with other trumpet players... that's something else. There are some incredible trumpet players here. And they say 'ah, do you also play classical music?' 'Yes', Ah, brutal!' 'And do you also play popular music?' 'Wow, super!' And it's like... people can see that you can do that and a lot of them do it too. And it is an open mind and with that sense they do it with many other things, but what is happening? That there are so many opportunities, and the... You know, there are many more opportunities, there are many fields in which you can work. Well yes you can do it. In Puerto Rico, basically, you are either a musician in the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, or an independent classical music musician, or you play salsa, merengue, jazz, and rock on the street. There is not necessarily an in-between.

Isbeth [00:41:06]: And was it a goal for you to study at the university you are currently attending or did you have other institutions in mind when you moved to the United States?

Wayner [00:41:21]: Well... basically when I moved to the United States, yes, I knew what I was looking for, I didn't necessarily know where what I was looking for was. The... the university where I study now, I didn't know it existed before applying here, but I had a good mentor in Houston who pointed me in the right directions and well... I arrived here with a good scholarship and all this, I also had other institutions in mind, but well... for some of them... many of them I never auditioned... and for others I auditioned, but I didn't pass the round, or they simply didn't give me enough money to be able to pay to study there.

Isbeth [00:42:16]: Okay. And what has been your experiences studying at Indiana University?

Wayner [00:42:28]: Well look, one of the greatest experiences... one of the.... A greater moment of realization is when you realize that... Puerto Rico truly is on another level. The things that are done in Puerto Rico, many times, are despised by ourselves for... for different reasons, I think. But... the caliber that Puerto Rico has and the things that are done in Puerto Rico are at the level that I arrived at this university and... truth, fortunately, because it is the truth, I had the joy of... of winning the audition in my year and be the highest score and win this... the scholarship I have. Which basically covers me for all the master's studies, and I also have the opportunity to teach individual classes and group classes. And they give me a stipend, money, so I can cover my monthly expenses. And... well... to be very honest, in Puerto Rico perhaps they never gave me that... that perspective that I could do something like that. And... and it's not that they tell me that 'wow, you're so good', or anything like that, but like... no... It's just that there's also no way to compare. But I got here and said, 'wow.' In other words, there are a lot of good people here, but in Puerto Rico there are also a lot of good people, and they can do all the things that these people are doing too. Also, the... that's one of the things that... what else perplexed me. But the difference here is that... this is a much larger university than the school I was at before, which is the Conservatory of Music. When I was at the Conservatory of Music... when I entered there were more students, but when I left, I think we were about six trumpet students. And here in my first year, we were around 25 students and this year we are more than 40. And that influences a lot because you have competition, but the way the competition is here is not a toxic competition in which I want to crush you for me to be able to go up, but it is a competition that says, 'we are going to help each other be better. Let's see how I can help you, make you better and how you can help me be better.' We get together to practice and do different things that help us. And it's something that... for me it's... it's huge. The sense of community between people who are doing the same thing, who want to do the same thing

and have the same... the same goals, or the same... the same path that needs to go through certain places to reach different goals, but they need to learn this. They have the same interests.

Isbeth [00:46:11]: Yes, that's like... even though you're not there, like, in a family environment, the interests between yourselves kind of unite you.

Wayner [00:46:23]: Sure, and professionally you don't grow, otherwise. Because you are looking for some things and you are looking for something here. For example, when it comes to the trumpet, sometimes I'm listening to certain sounds and I'm looking for certain things and when I'm playing with another person, this person is focusing on other things that maybe I kind of missed, like that. I did not see it. And I said, 'eah rayo'. And then since this person was doing it, I say 'ah, ah, okay, this kind of slipped past me, but let me do it now because I realized' and vice versa. Maybe the other person says the same thing, it's like 'ah, you're not doing this'... 'Ah, I wasn't doing this, let me do it too.' And like that sense of community that we don't help each other, that's one of the biggest things. In addition to this school... the level at this school is very high, that is, the musicians who study here... the people who play here are great. And that keeps you going, it's like a reality check. It's like, 'Hey, there are people here who are great.' And just because there are people who are great doesn't mean that you're not good enough, that's another thing that helped me a lot to be in a place like this, just because there are other good people doesn't mean that you're not good enough, we can all be good at the same time.

Isbeth [00:47:56]: And right? To finish we already spent a little time, but it could be more time. She said there was no problem with that, um... do you think it was a good decision to go study abroad?

Wayner [00:48:13]: Definitely. I have grown in ways I cannot describe. As a person and as a musician, professionally and personally.

Isbeth [00:48:31]: Okay. So, the last one now. How do you see yourself in the future?

Wayner [00:48:41]: Especially today it is a very difficult question to... to answer. But, definitely with the trumpet in hand, and giving classes.

Isbeth [00:49:00]: Okay. Well, those were all the questions. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Wayner [00:49:15]: I know that... I know that this is about the people who faced difficulties leaving Puerto Rico, and well, clearly, I have not been the only one, there have been thousands, or millions, of people who have left Puerto Rico to look for, um, better opportunities in the things they want to do. But... something that I have seen is that it doesn't matter why they left, the people who have left, everyone misses Puerto Rico. I don't think I have met a single person who says 'ah, no, Puerto Rico, I'm not going back there.' [inaudible] A comment like that, right, that.... I don't think I have met a single person; everyone misses Puerto Rico.

Isbeth [00:50:12]: Yes, the warmth here is like no other.

Wayner [00:50:15]: And although there are many people who are not going to come back, because it is reality. The simple fact that you were there and that you miss it, I think says a lot. And that... and I don't blame anyone because there are people who say 'but why don't you stay in Puerto Rico to... improve the country and work for the country? I think that putting that type of responsibility and... and the sense of guilt that people feel for that is not correct. Because I would like, I would love, I would be fascinated to do all this that I want in Puerto Rico, but it is not that easy. That I could be making it have some kind

of relevance to help Puerto Rico right now. Maybe in the future, a few years from now, I could do something, find a way. And believe me, if I do it, I would. I mean, if I find a way, I would try to make it possible, but it's not that easy. That, at least call a little sense of conscience and empathy for the people who have to leave Puerto Rico.

Isbeth [00:51:41]: Exactly. Yes, they also say that a lot in my classes. I have a professor from a concentration class who was recently in a seminar, and they were identifying the problems that... um... there are in Puerto Rico with the infrastructure and maintenance and that, and most of the problems were like... a big problem, it was like keeping the workers, the civil engineers in our case, in Puerto Rico. I heard that, and I was like... well, if I don't know... if there isn't... if in Puerto Rico I don't have the opportunity to do what I want to do, then obviously I'm not going to stay, that's it. It also has a lot of influence on that topic.

Wayner [00:52:38]: A lot of people forget that. In Puerto Rico I couldn't do what I wanted to do. That's why I'm here, getting cold.

Isbeth [00:52:48]: Um, nothing. Are you available for follow-up questions?

Wayner [00:52:54]: Yes.

Isbeth [00:52:56]: Well, thank you for your time. We're done now.