THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CUBAN POPULAR MUSIC GENRES AND THEIR INCORPORATION INTO ACADEMIC COMPOSITIONS

by

ALEJANDRO EDUARDOVICH FERREIRA

(Under the Direction of Levon Ambartsumian)

ABSTRACT

In the sixteenth century, Cuba became the host of two very diverse and different cultures. Here, European and African traditions met on a neutral ground where the interchange of rhythms, melodies, and musical forms became inevitable. Over the centuries, this mutual interaction gave birth to genres such as the *contradaza, danza, danzón, son, conga, habanera, güajira, criolla,* and *trova.* Despite the fact that these genres were born as dance and popular music, their rhythms and style started to be incorporated into the most refined realm of academic compositions. The purpose of this study is to explain the origin and evolution of the above mentioned genres. Moreover, with the aid of the accompanying recording, I will explain how some Cuban composers participated in the creation and development of these genres. Furthermore, I will show how some other composers where influenced by these genres and the way in which these genres were incorporated in their compositions.

INDEX WORDS: Cuban Music, Academic Cuban Compositions, Violin and Piano, Cuban Duo, *contradaza, danza, danzón, son, conga, habanera, güajira, criolla, trova*

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To my parents Marina and Alejandro

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THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF CUBAN POPULAR MUSIC GENRES AND THEIR INCORPORATION INTO ACADEMIC COMPOSITIONS

The origins of Cuba's musical genres and their development are obscure and full of gaps. Along with the inconsistent and interchangeable use of terms, the lack of documentation leaves a lot of space for a number of hypotheses. With enough records it would be possible to establish the exact process of creation and development of Cuban musical genres and their exact characteristics without resorting to speculation. Still, nobody knows if one day the necessary documentation will be available to establish Cuba's popular genres' genesis and development as a true history, based on proven facts rather than abstract theories.[1] However, one thing is certain; everything in Cuba is "a mongrel mixture of Spanish and Italian melody and harmony with African rhythms."[2] This "mongrel" gave birth to many genres, among them, the *contradaza, danza, danzón, son, conga, habanera, güajira, criolla,* and *trova*, all of which are included in the accompanying recording. Cuban music's identity is the result of both popular and academic musicians, who, since colonial times, were in search of the sound that was to characterize the eclectic music of the island.

Cuban music was probably influenced by the music of four main ethnic groups: the Indians; the Cuban natives who lived on the island before the arrival of Christopher Columbus (this ethnic group and subgroups were almost extinct by the sixteenth century); the Europeans; the conquerors who accompanied Columbus and the fortune seekers who came in subsequent

[1] Edgardo Martín, *Panorama Histórico de la Música en Cuba,* Cuadernos CEU (Universidad de La Habana, 1971), 23.

[2] Jory Farr, *Rites of Rhythms: The Music of Cuba* (New York: Regan Books, 2003), 36.

years; the Africans; the slaves who were brought to Cuba for centuries as labor; and finally, some Asians.[3] While the Asian influence has been very weak and could be easily overlooked, the Cuban natives' musical influence has to be completely denied.[4] Basically, the music from the Taino and Siboney was wiped out when the Spanish conquered the island.[5] On the other hand, the other two cultures, African and European, have been extremely important, intense, everlasting, and very diverse.[6] Both, Africans and Europeans (specially Spaniards) brought with them their melodies, dances, and instruments to the New World. These two cultures started to interact on a neutral ground creating an unavoidable mutual influence. In the words of Raul A. Fernandez, "this long, rich, and complex process was like an enchanting courtship that led to the powerful and simple description of Cuban music as a marriage between the Spanish guitar and the African drums."[7] Similarly, Cuban musicologist Fernando Ortiz used the word *sandunga,* (elegance or grace) in order to describe the hybrid aspect of Cuban music. For him, the *sa* is "the white salt of Andalusia, and *dunga,* the black pepper of Africa."[8]

According to the degree of mixture between these two main ethnic groups, two types of music originated in Cuba: the Euro-Cuban and the Afro-Cuban. The European influence gave birth to genres such as the romantic song and the *güajira,* while the African influence produced genres such as the *rumba,* the *conga,* and the *son.*[9] While the Spanish models of melody and

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[3] Fernando Ortiz, *La Música Afrocubana,* Biblioteca Jucar 26 (Madrid: Ediciones Júcar, 1975), 37.

[4] Ortiz, 40.

[5] Isabelle Leymarie, *Cuban Fire: The Story of Salsa and Latin Jazz* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 9.

[6] Ortiz, 38.

[7] Raul A. Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz,* Music of the African Diaspora 10 (Chicago: Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College, 2006), 25.

[8] Leymarie, 9.

[9] Ortiz, 27.

harmony remained mainly with the *güajiros* (Cuban peasants), the African rhythms had a greater impact on Cuban music as a whole.[10]

In Cuba there is a proverb that says *"Quien no tiene de Congo tiene de Carabalí"* (who does not have from *Congo* will have from *Carabalí*), meaning that it does not matter what we think about our individual background, the African heritage is pretty much unavoidable.[11] The presence of African descendants in the Cuban musical realm is overwhelming. People of this ethnic group have dominated Cuban popular music for a long time. In the first half of the eighteenth century, there were three times more black musicians than white.[12] According to a census that took place at the beginning of the twentieth century, 46% of the musicians in Cuba were black. This is even more significant if we take into consideration that at that time, the black population in Cuba was much smaller than the white.[13] As Cuban musicologist Alejo Carpentier pointed out, "the arts are in the hands of people of color. Among the greatest evils this unfortunate race has brought to our soil is to have distanced the white population from the arts."[14]

The strong presence of Afro-Cuban musicians is not hard to explain. While the white population did not consider music as a respected and reputable profession as they did administrative jobs, law, and medicine (to which only they had access), black people saw in music a way of accessing the upper classes, however, "through the servants' entrance."[15] Moreover, because of the lack of resources to become a painter or sculptor, it was easy for Afro-

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[10] Leymarie, 10.

[11] Leymarie, 10.

[12] Peter Manuel, *Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean*, Studies in Latin American and Caribbean Music (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 10.

[13] Glenn A Chambers, "The Rise of Son and the Legitimization of African-Derived Culture in Cuba, 1908-1940," *"Callaloo" and the Cultures and Letters of the Black Diaspora: A Special Thirtieth Anniversary Issue* 30, no. 2 (Spring, 2007): 10.

[14] Manuel, 60.

[15] Manuel, 60.

Cuban to accompany a chant or dance with simple hand claps, or beating boxes, sticks, kitchen utensils, or anything that could produce a sound, in order to express their culture and heritage.[16] They not only found in music a way of making a living but also a way to express the emotions banned by the social establishment. In addition, it could be said that they took revenge on their humiliating social condition by asserting themselves in music. They imbued it with their own tendencies, rhythms, and ways of interpretation which created the seductive, energetic, and original sound that whites inevitably succumbed to.[17]

Analyzing the African musical elements that influenced Cuban music is not an easy task. The so-called Afro-Cuban music is the result of the mixture of very diverse people, not only white, but also African nations so different that they could even be differentiated by their hair and skin color. Talking about African music is as vague and ambiguous as to refer to European music as one kind of music. There are as many styles of folk music in Africa as there are in Europe, all of which are different not only in form and general structure, but also and more importantly, in rhythm. Nonetheless, western African nations, in the same way that happens in Europe, could be considered as a cultural unity. They share many aspects of their folklore that makes it possible, and sometimes unavoidable, to draw some generalizations.[18]

The main African musical influence in Cuba and in the rest of the Caribbean was in rhythm. An example of this is the strong inclination toward syncopations. Moreover, rhythmic ostinatos were used in a way which was uncommon to any kind of popular music in Europe at the time. These ostinatos, made out of four or five complemented cells, were combined in order to produce accompanimental patterns, rather than melodic motives. A clear example of this

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[16] Natalio Galán, *Cuba y sus Sones,* Pre-Textos 52 (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 1983), 332.
[17] Martín, 20.
[18] Ortiz, 151-52.

practice would be the *habanera* rhythm, also called *tango* or *congo* rhythm.[19] (See Example 1: *Habanera*).

Example 1: *Habanera*

Along with their rhythms, African tribes brought with them different kinds of drums. These instruments, which varied in shapes, forms, and functions, were gradually integrated into the Cuban musical culture and became a fundamental part of its sound.[20]

Despite the overwhelming impact of African culture on almost every aspect of Cuban music, its influence tended to be denied because of the prevalent racism and discrimination of the time. Musicologist Eduardo Sánchez de Fuentes alludes to a law passed in Havana which banned the use of instruments of African origin, mainly drums, in any aspect of Cuban culture. This law specifically attacked the increasing popularity of the *son.*[21] Upper classes in Cuba accepted African influence of dance and song on some parts of society, as long as the African-derived genres were not to be used "as a symbol of national identity."[22] However, by the late 1920s and early 1930s, music of the island began to be strongly influenced by North American styles and with it, the danger of being absorbed by its strong and exciting new trends. As a result, "the

[19] Manuel, 19.
[20] Fernandez, 25.
[21] Chambers, 4-5.
[22] Ibid., 7.

Cuban elite was forced to come to terms with their lack of Cuban identity."[23] In order to create a barrier, the only effective obstacle that could oppose this threat was the long denied African aspect of Cuban culture. Consequently, their views and attitude toward African influence were to change dramatically in a positive way.[24]

One of the first Cuban genres originating by the peculiar mixture of European and African traditions was the Cuban *contradanza.* In the nineteenth century, the *contradanza* was the most important and characteristic national music in Cuba. Its development throughout the nineteenth century made the *contradanza* one of the most important resources of Cuban musical identity.[25] From it branched off the *habanera*, *danza*, *danzón*, *mambo*, *chachacha*, and even twentieth century genres such as the *criolla* and *güajira.*[26]

The origin and development of Cuban dances, among them the *contradanza,* is still an object of debate. One of the many difficulties is the inconsistent use of terminology. For instance, the terms *contradanza, danza,* and *quadrille,* could identify different genres or, depending on the context, refer to either musical or choreographic characteristics. In the same way, the word *contradanza* and *danza* were used interchangeably when alluding to the same genre.[27] Furthermore, the available documentation is quite inaccurate because dance music composers traditionally only wrote down a lead sheet for professional popular orchestras. These ensembles made the final versions on stage according to performance practice traditions.[28] Moreover, it would be incorrect to think of the *contradanza* as a single kind of dance music. Until the nineteenth century, the *contradanza* was characterized by having different styles. Some

[23] Chambers, 9.
[24] Chambers, 9.
[25] Martín, 24.
[26] Manuel, 51.
[27] Manuel, 9.
[28] Martín, 24.

of them were written in 6/8, while others bear the meter of 3/4 or 2/4. Consequently, it is very challenging to reconstruct how the *contradanza* was composed and performed between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century.[29]

The Cuban *contradanza* originated in England in the 1500s as a rustic folk dance among peasants. This dance, referred to as country dance, made its way across the Channel and was rapidly adopted by France and Holland. The word "country," rather than translated, was changed to "contre" (against, versus), which also partly characterized the format of "counterposed" male and females lines."[30] In France, the country dance established itself beside the minuet in the court of Louis XIV. From there, it spread through France and Europe under the name of the French quadrille.[31] Despite its humble origins, the country dance reached all social classes. Unlike the minuet, its simpler choreographies did not require the same amount of time to master. It finally came to replace the aristocratic minuet in the court of Elizabeth I of England, where it was danced by both masters and valets.[32] Logically, this dance spread to the French colonies of Santo Domingo and New Orleans, and from there, to the Spanish Caribbean.[33] In Santo Domingo, the country dance, or contredance, met with the African culture, with which, inevitably, it started to interact.

The *contradanza,* as it was called in Spanish, was a figure dance with a strong element which was attractive to black people; its circles and lines are basic dance figures that could be traced back to the Stone Age. Even the arrangement of men and women in two lines, opposed, and divided into couples, has been found in many African tribes. In these ancient and primitive

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[29] Martín, 23.

[30] Manuel, 4.

[31] Maya Roy, *Cuban Music: From Son and Rumba to The Buena Vista Social Club and Timba Cubana* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002), 82.

[32] Manuel, 4.

[33] Ibid., 5.

dances, the main theme was the love combat where the attack and retreat was represented by the couples' approach and subsequent separation.[34] Because of this, African descendants eagerly adopted the *contradanza* and immediately infused it with lively rhythmic figures unknown to the original model.[35]

One of the most important contributions made to the *contradanza* by the so-called French blacks from Santo Domingo was the rhythmic cell called *cinquillo*.[36] (See Example 2a and 2b: *Cinquillo*)

Example 2a: *Cinquillo* (One bar format)

Example 2b: *Cinquillo* (Two Bar Format)

The *contradanza* was introduced to Cuba when on August 14, 1791, the Haitian revolution made the French settlers flee from the island. While some of them established themselves in the eastern part of Cuba, especially in Santiago de Cuba, others traveled to New Orleans. With them came many African descendants, some of them because of their loyalty to

[34] Alejo Carpentier, *La Música en Cuba,* Colección Popular (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1972), 125.

[35] Carpentier, 126.

[36] Carpentier, 130.

their masters and others brought as domestic slaves.[37] The French blacks brought with them their culture and rhythms and as a result, not only the *contradanza* reach Santiago de Cuba, but with it, the *cinquillo.*

It is possible that the *cinquillo* was found on the island before the arrival of the French blacks. However, it might have been confined to the slaves' barracks because it only made its presence in dance music after the Haitian revolution. In contrast, in Santo Domingo, this rhythm was so active that it was even incorporated in the *contradanza.*[38] That the *contradanza* made its way to Cuba because of the Santo Domingo revolution is not the only theory. Some musicologists, among them Zoila Lapique, believe that the *contradanza* and its characteristic rhythm came from Spain, and from there it spread out to the rest of the new continent.

The *cinquillo* was not the only creole rhythmic pattern present in the *contradanza.* Another characteristic ostinato was the *tango* cell, later called *habanera*. (See Ex. 1 - *Habanera*) For the sake of consistency, I will refer to this rhythmic cell as *habanera*. The association between this name and the rhythmic pattern that it represents will make it easier for the reader to identify. However, Cuban musicologists use the term *tango* when alluding to this cell. Not surprisingly, musicologists are still debating its origin. The habanera pattern has been found "in many types of Arab, Arab-Andalusian, and African Bantu music."[39] In the Cuban *contradanzas* from the late 1700s and 1800s, this cell was a recurrent feature. It was typically present as an ostinato in the left hand especially in the B section. However, some times it also appears in the right hand melodies.[40]

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[37] Carpentier, 129.
[38] Carpentier, 130.
[39] Roy, 82.
[40] Manuel, 20.

Besides the *cinquillo* and *habanera* cells, there was another characteristic creole rhythm in the *contradanza,* the *trecillo.* This pattern occurs both in the accompaniment as well as in the melody.[41] (See Example 3: *Trecillo*)

Example 3: *Trecillo*

In the early 1700s, Spanish nobles started to adopt foreign dances such as the minuet, gavottes, allemandes, and *contradanzas.* From all these dances, the *contradanza* became their favorite in the same way in which it happened with other monarchies throughout Europe. These *contradanzas* were very well known to dance enthusiasts in Madrid as early as 1733. In 1755, composer Pablo Minguet published a dance treatise called *El noble arte de danzar a la española y a la francesa* (The Noble Art of Dancing in the Spanish and French Style). Along with his treatise, Minguet published the music scores and explained with illustrations the choreography of eighteen *contradanzas.* Later, José María Bidot analyzed them and identified a rhythmic pattern that was going to be present in the Cuban *contradanza* as well as in the rest of the new continent's music. This refers to the rhythm of the *habanera* (*tango*) (Ex. 1 - *Habanera*). The fact that this rhythmic cell was found in the early eighteenth century in the Spanish *contradanza* confirms that both, the genre and the cell, were introduced into Cuba via Spain and from there to the rest of the Spanish colonies. In Cuba, the *habanera* cell was reinforced by the black and creole's musical activities decades earlier to the arrival of the French blacks from Santo

[41] Manuel, 20.

Domingo. Further evidence reinforces this theory. In a set of French *contradanzas* published in Paris in the eighteenth century, the *habanera* (*tango*) cell was not to be found.

According to this idea, when the French settlers and their African slaves and servants arrived in Cuba in the late eighteenth century, the *contradanza* was already firmly established in Santiago de Cuba after being brought from Spain to Havana. Consequently, this group of musicologists rejects the idea that the *contradanza* was brought by the French settlers and their slaves who fled the Haitian revolution. Furthermore, these musicologists do not think that the French blacks modified the French *contradanza* with their African rhythmic and musical elements. Finally, they do not support the hypothesis that the *contradanza* spread from Santiago to Havana; rather, they believe that it was the other way around.[42] In the end, it could be virtually impossible accurately to trace the origins of the Cuban *contradanza.* As Cuban musicologist Galán suggested, the Cuban *contradanza* could be labeled as English-French-Hispanic-Afro-Cuban.[43]

Despite its eclecticism and diverse styles, the Cuban *contradanza* has specific characteristics that define the genre. It has a binary structure made up of two balanced sections of eight measures each. Each of these sections is repeated for a total of thirty-two bars and creating an AABB structure. The first part (A) was called *primera* and the second (B) *segunda.* The A section was also referred to as the *paseo* (promenade) because of the stroll that the dancers took around the ballroom. Generally, the B section was invigorated with creole rhythms such as *cinquillo* and the *habanera* pattern which are not present in the *paseo*. This, however, is not consistent. In some cases, the *paseo* does not differ in character from the subsequent B section.[44]

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[42] Zoila Lapique, "Presencia de la Habanera," in *Panorama de la Música Poular Cubana,* ed. Radamés Giro (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1998), 139-146.

[43] Manuel, 56.

[44] Ibid., 23.

In general, the melodies are diatonic, consisting of four- or eight-bar phrases over simple common practice tonality conforming to the eighteenth century European conventions.[45]

The *contradanza* was not only confined to dance accompaniment. These pieces were published as piano scores in the local newspaper and were played by amateurs, who enjoyed them as entertainment, and by professionals, who performed them in salons and concert halls.

The leading *contradanza* composer of the nineteenth century was Manuel Saumell, who is considered the father of Cuban nationalism. He did not create the genre, nor did he introduce any innovations to it. Rather, he elevated it to a whole new level by unifying the "Cuban creolisms with the European sophistication."[46]

In the accompanying recording I have included two *contradanzas* by Jorge Junco (*"*Ilmar*"* and "Dagmar*"*). Junco was a Cuban clarinetist who was born in Cienfuegos in November 13, 1913. He began his musical studies with his uncle Abelardo Junco. In his hometown he became a member of the *Exploradores de Cienfuegos* Band (Cienfuegos Explorers Band) and the Cienfuegos Municipal Band, with which he also played as a soloist. He moved to Havana in 1933 and became a member of the most prestigious ensembles, including the Havana Philharmonic, the Cuban National Orchestra, and *Nuestro Tiempo* (Our Time). Junco was awarded the National Order by the Cuban Government for his outstanding career as a performer and pedagogue. He is considered one of the most outstanding Cuban clarinetists.[47]

Junco labeled these two pieces, *"Ilmar"* and *"Dagmar"* as *contradanzas.* However, they do not strictly follow the bipartite structure earlier described. Rather, Junco takes some liberties and gives to each one of them a different form. In *"Dagmar,"* the structure is hard to classify.

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[45] Manuel, 70.
[46] Ibid., 79.
[47] Helio Orovio, *Cuban Music from A to Z* (Druham: Duke University Press, 2004), 117.

Roughly, Junco includes an introduction, a middle section made out of small melodic motives, and a closing section where the alternation of the dominant and the tonic leave room for improvisation (Intro, A, Coda). In *"Ilmar,"* the structure is more defined. Junco again includes an introduction followed by an A section in 2/4 in the minor mode. For the B section, he not only changes the meter from 2/4 to 6/8, but also changes the mode and goes to the relative major. After this, a *da capo* sign takes us back to a shortened A section. The structure is ternary; Introduction, A, B, A.'

Even though the form does not follow the nineteenth century *contradanza* structural conventions, Junco imbues these two pieces with the characteristic creole rhythms such as *tresillo* and *cinquillo* mentioned earlier, and easily recognizable throughout the works. In addition, in the B section of *"Ilmar,"* the change of meter allows him to include another cell that was used earlier by Saumell in some of his *contradanzas.* I am referring to the *coriambo*, which consists of a quarter note, two eighth notes, followed by a quarter note (See Example. 4: *Coriambo*). According to Carpentier, this cell became the forerunner of genres such as the *güajira, criolla,* and *clave.*[48] In accordance with the *contradanza* tradition, Junco's harmonies are simple and the phrasing is regular.

Example 4: *Coriambo*

[48] Carpentier, 193.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the *contradanza* gradually replaced the European dances in the ballrooms. By the middle of the century, its name was shortened to *Danza* and its meter, which varied between 6/8 and 3/4, established itself in 2/4.[49] Even though the genre retains the bipartite structure, the second part creates much more contrast with the first one compared to the *contradanza.*[50] In general, its musical characteristics are similar to those found in its predecessor.

Despite their musical similarities, there was a fundamental change between the *contradanza* and the *danza.* This difference resides in the realm of choreography. "Throughout the Spanish Caribbean and unevenly in the French Caribbean, the practice of collectively performing--whether fixed by convention or directed by a caller--came to be seen as old-fashioned and inhibitingly structured."[51] Consequently, figure dances such as the *contradanza*, influenced by the waltz, gradually gave way to dances such as the *danza,* where couples were allowed to dance independently, "embracing--perhaps intimately--in ballroom posture."[52] This transition, however, was not abrupt. The last section of the *contradanza,* the *cedazo*, already consisted of an independent couples dance. Therefore, "the transition took the form of gradual extension of the *cedazo* at the expense of the other figures."[53] This new way of dancing found some resistance from conservative groups who considered it indecent, "as it allowed intimate embracing and sensual hip-swaying."[54]

[49] Martín, 36.

[50] Emilio Grenet, "Música Cubana. Orientación para su Conocimiento y Estudio," in *Panorama de la Música Poular Cubana,* ed. Radamés Giro (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1998), 75.

[51] Farr, 14.

[52] Ibid., 14.

[53] Manuel, 66.

[54] Farr, 14.

Due to the gradual transition from *contradanza* to *danza* and its musical similarities, the terms were used inconsistently and interchangeably. However, *danza* was usually referred to as the couple dance while the *contradanza* represented the figure dance.[55]

As it happened with the *contradanza,* the *danza* became an independent light classical piano piece which reached its peak in the nineteenth century with the composer Ignacio Cervantes.[56] Cervantes, according to Alejo Carpentier, was the most important Cuban musician of the nineteenth century.

After having been initiated to music by his father, Cervantes was sent to France in 1865 in order to study at the Paris Conservatory. A year later, Cervantes won the first prize in the conservatory's piano competition. In 1868 he not only obtained the first prize in the piano competition for the second time, but also first prizes in harmony, fugue, and counterpoint. He was admired by important figures such as Rossini and Liszt, who also considered Cervantes as part of their more intimate circle of friends. In 1870, Cervantes returned to Cuba where he started a successful and active career as a teacher and performer. After a few years, he had to leave the island because of his connection with war of independence. He established himself in the United States where continued his career in order to raise money for the independence cause. In 1900, he returned to Cuba and frequently performed there as well as in the United States.[57] Ignacio Cervantes was considered one of the greatest Cuban nationalist composers. He neither paraphrased nor inserted folk melodies into his music. He worked with his own ideas, which did

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[55] Manuel, 9.
[56] Manuel, 84.
[57] Martín, 61.

not come from the countryside or from the city. In his music, he incorporated creole rhythms which he did not use as ostinatos, but rather, as an element of style.[58]

In the accompanying recording, I have included six of Cervantes' *danzas.* Five were originally written for solo piano (*"La encantadora", "Los tres golpes," "Ilusiones perdidas," "Improvisada," "Adios a Cuba"*) and one for two pianos (*"Los muñecos"*). Even though these *danzas* are his better known works, he never considered them as important compositions. For him they were a hobby, small pieces he made in honor of his friends; in short, simple musical jokes. However, without knowing it, Cervantes created some of the most precious gems of Cuban music. They not only became the supreme model of the Cuban *danza* of the nineteenth century, but also the most important example of Cuban nationalism of the time.[59]

In Cuba, Manuel Saumell's piano pieces are known as *contradanzas* while Cervantes' are referred as *danzas*. However, these categorizations could be misleading as throughout books and articles these terms are used inconsistently. When Peter Manuel, in his book *Creolizing Contradance in the Caribbean,* refers to Cervantes pieces, he calls them *contradanzas.* Also, he points out that in the *contradanzas,* "all these composers [Saumell and Cervantes] tend to adhere to the conventions of the genre."[60] In the same way, Dulcila Cañizares, in her article "La trova tradicional cubana," classifies *"Los tres golpes"* and *"Improvisada"* as *contradanzas* rather than *danzas.* She further mentions that Cervantes took the Cuban *contradanza* as a model and stayed within its form and parameters.[61] All Cervantes' *danzas* included in this recording, without exception, closely follow the *contradanza's* main characteristics that were enumerated earlier. Basically, a binary form (AABB), regular phrasings of four or eight measures, presence of creole

[58] Dulcila Cañizares, "La Trova Tradicional Cubana," in *Panorama de la Música Poular Cubana,* ed. Radamés Giro (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1998), 278.
[59] Martín, 60.
[60] Manuel, 73.
[61] Cañizares, 278.

rhythms especially in the B section, and thirty-two measures in length. Consequently, there are no musical arguments that can deny that the two terms, *contradanza* and *danza,* correspond to the same genre. At least this is true when we are referring to the *contradanzas* as concert pieces. In his book *Cuba y sus sones,* Galán reaffirms this theory by stating that twenty-six years after the *danza* was defined as a genre in Pichardo's dictionary, in the notated score, there was no difference between this and the *contradanza.* He suggests that the distinction was made in live performances where the music was supporting the earlier-mentioned change in choreography.[62] Thus, the traditional differentiation made between Saumell's *danzas* and Cervantes' *contradanzas* alludes to a time period where the *contradanza* was giving way to the *danza,* rather than to musical characteristics.

My recording also includes *"Dora Amalia,"* a *danza* by Jorge Junco. In the same way as he did with the *contradanzas*, his *danza* does not follow the bipartite structure. It includes a return to a shortened A section which transforms the binary form into a ternary form.

One aspect of the *danza* that could be taken as superfluous is its length. However, this feature will have important consequences for the development of other genres, among them, the *danzón.* The approximate duration of the Cuban *danzas* was between fifty and sixty seconds. Yet, some chronicles describe instances where couples danced non-stop for up to three hours. Without doubt, the music score written for the dance orchestras could be lengthened by some sort of performance practice.[63] Some musicologists, among them Peter Manuel, point out that *danzas* could be prolonged by improvisations or theme with variations practice, mainly in the B section which finalized the *cedazo.* This would create a rondo with the C, D, E, etc... sections

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[62] Galán, 169.
[63] Manuel, 77.

constituting fresh transformations over the harmonic material of the B section (AA BB AA B'B' AA B''B'').[64]

Gradually, the bipartite structure of the dance gave way to a rondo like form. "At the end of this process, we see the appearance, in the late nineteenth century, of the *danzón*, the first dance rhythm considered authentically Cuban."[65] The *danzón* freed itself from the binary form of the *danza* for the tripartite form of the rondo, this being its main innovation. From its predecessors, it adopted the characteristic *cinquillo,* which became prominent both in the melody as well as in the accompaniment.

This new form suited the Cuban people better, who according to Galán, live in the concept of "theme and variations" rather than in "sonata" form. Always looking to blend two opposing ideas, the *danzón,* by adopting the rondo structure, came to satisfy this preference and to fulfill the Cuban inclination toward the ritornello.[66] The form of the *danzón* could be seen as the practice of varying the B section of the *danza,* thus prevailing over its inherent monotony.

The gradual development from the *contradanza,* then to the *danza,* and ultimately to the *danzón,* did not happen without the inconsistent use of terminology. *Contradanzas* from the late 1800s were labeled as *danzones,* while some *danzones* at the turn of the new century were regarded as *danzas.*[67]

The *danzón* did not arise overnight. However, some musicologists believe that it was created by Miguel Faílde when in 1879 he presented in an exclusive club in Matanzas four compositions that he labeled *danzón.* Among them were *"El delirio," "La ingratitud," "Las quejas,"* and *"Las alturas de Simpson."* This assertion ignores the fact that years before,

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[64] Manuel, 78.
[65] Roy, 79.
[66] Galán, 298.
[67] Manuel, 93.

danzones were already being published and labeled as such.[68] "Hence, Galán and a few other scholars regard the 1879 *danzón's* creation date as inaccurate and artificial."[69]

Even though Faílde did not create the genre, it could be attributed to him the fact that instead of allowing musicians to improvise freely over the *danza's* B section harmonies, he composed and notated what we can now called C, D, ect... sections, instead of referring to them as B', B'', B''', and so on.[70]

The *danzón,* as is its predecessor, is a dance genre. As a result, the transformation from the bipartite structure of the *danza* to the ternary of the *danzón* corresponded with a change in choreography. In the same way in which the *danza* branched off from the *contradanza* by focusing on the *cedazo,* the *danzón* did the same thing by focusing on the *danza's cadena.* In the *cadena,* couples walked around the ballroom making a double-ss pattern in order to reduce the excitement elicited by the *cedazo.* As a result, the *danza's cadena* became the *danzón's paseo*. This *paseo,* which means promenade, would correspond to the *danzón's* distinctive ritornello.[71]

I have included three *danzones* in my recording; *"Danzón"* by Dagoberto González, *"Migdalia"* by Jorge Junco, and *"Danzón Legrand"* by Andrés Alén. In addition, Guido López-Gavilán labeled one of the sections of his *"Chacona Tropical"* as a *danzón*. All of these *danzones* use the characteristic *cinquillo* in its two bar format. (Ex. 2b - *Cinquillo*, Two Bar Format)

Dagoberto González was a violinist of the legendary Cuban *charanga Orquesta Aragón.* This ensemble was established by Orestes Aragón in Cienfuegos in September 1939. The orchestra started playing mainly *danzones* but gradually expanded its repertoire including *cha-*

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[68] Carpentier, 237.
[69] Manuel, 93.
[70] Manuel, 78.
[71] Carpentier, 176.

cha-cha, pachanga, and *son* among other genres. Between 1955 and 1958, the orchestra released four recordings for RCA. In 1959, they released their first of a total of nine albums for Discuba. The ensemble traveled broadly and played in more than thirty countries around the world.

While Dagoberto was a popular musician, Alén had a classical background. He studied in Cuba at the National School of Arts and Letters. After finishing his studies in Havana, he moved to the Soviet Union and studied at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory in Moscow, from which he graduated in 1976. After his return to Cuba, he developed a successful career as a performer, which took him to countries such as the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, and India. Parallel to his performing career, he taught at the National School of Art. In addition, he has recorded with the Cuban label EGREM and is a member of the ensemble *Perspectiva*.[72]

Guido López-Gavilán was born in Matanzas, Cuba, in January 3rd 1944. He studied at the Havana Municipal Conservatory and later moved to Moscow to continue his training at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory from which he graduated in conducting in 1973. López-Gavilán has conducted concerts in the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Colombia, and the United States. In Cuba, López-Gavilán has been the conductor of the National Symphony Orchestra and of symphonies orchestras in Matanzas, Las Villas, Camaguey, and Oriente.[73]

These *danzones* show the genre's characteristic ritornello. Dagoberto's *danzón* structure is ABAC. In the C section, Dagoberto writes a harmonic ostinato that invites performers to improvise. Since Dagoberto is a popular musician, this *danzón* is more like a guide. Consequently, after one instrument finishes its improvisation in the C section, the A section could make a return and give way to another improvisation. According to traditional

[72] Orovio, 8.
[73] Ibid., 127.

performance practices, this would dramatically lengthen the *danzón* so the couples would have the opportunity to keep enjoying the dance.

Junco's *danzón* is slightly shorter than Dagoberto's. As in his *contradanzas* and *danzas,* he takes some freedom and includes a four measure introduction. Unlike Dagoberto's *danzón,* he does not end the piece with a harmonic ostinato which invites musicians to improvise. Rather, he writes a clear ending. The structure would be as follows: introduction, ABA. Despite the small difference in form, Junco fills the piece with the characteristic *danzón's cinquillo.*

Alén's *danzón* is slightly longer and has three ritornellos (ABACAD). Like the *danzón* by Dagoberto, the last segment comprises a harmonic ostinato that invites performers to improvise.

In his *Chacona Tropical,* López-Gavilán includes a *danzón* and its characteristic *cinquillo.* This section follows the chacona's introduction and starts with this rhythmic pattern in the piano part. Here, the *cinquillo* is not used as it is in popular music where the rhythm is clearly heard throughout the piece. Rather, when he does not write it down, he implies it. Similarly, López-Gavilán does not follow the rondo structure. Instead, he writes three variations over the same harmonic progression which relates both to the characteristic harmonic ostinato of the ciaconna and to the variations aspect of the *danzón.*

Besides the *danzón,* the Cuban *contradanza* was also the forerunner of one of the most popular and well known genres in Cuban music, the *habanera.* In 1841, in a small coffee shop in Havana, a *contradanza* was sung for the first time. Its verses, rather than being borrowed, were specially written for its characteristic rhythms. This was the beginning of a new genre, the *habanera*, as it was later called. In 1842, on November 13th, this song, *"El amor en el baile"* (Love in Dance), was published in a newspaper as *nueva canción habanera* (New song from

Havana).[74] This song represents a milestone in Cuban music because it was one of the first pieces where the *habanera* rhythm or *tango* cell, reserved only for the majority of the *contradanzas,* pervaded both the melody and the accompaniment.[75] (Ex. 1 - *Habanera*)

This, however, is not the only version about the origin of the *habanera.* Some musicologists, such as Galán, have pointed out that the *habanera* originated from a slower *danza* which arose in the dance academies in order to provide contrast in tempo with the faster *danza.*[76]

Despite its debatable origin, shortly after its appearance the *habanera* gained popularity and became one of the favorite genres in Cuba as well as in other countries in Latin America. Nonetheless, it was in Spain the *habanera* was embraced as in no other place. The *habanera* was brought to Spain by seamen, soldiers, and travelers. Its nostalgic music and characteristic pattern reminded them of the beautiful island they left behind.[77] *Habaneras* became such an integral part of Spanish music that some of them are considered to be from the Peninsula, rather than imported from Cuba. Many others were transmitted orally from generation to generation and their origin, either Cuban or Spanish, got lost in time.[78]

The *habanera* was inserted into the Spanish lyrical theater in the second half of the nineteenth century and from there it went to the French Opera, where George Bizet immortalized it in his opera *Carmen*. Either as the original aria or as an arrangement, Carmen's *habanera* has traveled the world becoming one of the most famous *habaneras* ever written. Other great French composers such as Saint-Saëns, Chabrier, Lalo, Aubert, Faure, Debussy, Ravel, along with the

[74] Lapique, 155.
[75] Lapique, 156.
[76] Galán, 125.
[77] Lapique, 159.
[78] Manuel, 97.

Spanish Sarasate, Albéniz, and Falla, wrote *habaneras* that are still being performed and recorded by the most prestigious artists in the world.[79]

Despite its Cuban origins, the term *habanera* did not originate on the island but in Spain. What Europeans regarded as *habanera,* Cubans considered it a *danza, danza criolla* (creole dance), or *danza cubana* (Cuban dance). For the music editors in Paris, *contradanza, danza, guaracha, tango africano, americano,* or *congo,* was the same thing. Havana was famous for its musical rhythmic richness so they believed that by labeling everything as *habanera* (from Havana) they would ensure that the editions would be successful.[80]

Besides their characteristic rhythmic pattern in both melody and accompaniment, *habaneras* are usually written in duple meter, in a calm tempo, and with an introduction which differentiates it from the *contradanza.* In my recording, I include two *habaneras, "La Bella Cubana"* (The Beautiful Cuban Lady) by José White and *"Flor de Yumurí"* (Flower from Yumurí) by Jorge Anckermann.

José White was born in Matanzas in 1835 and died in Paris in 1918. In 1855, White traveled to France to study violin, harmony, and counterpoint at the Paris Conservatory. A year later, he won the first prize at the conservatory's violin competition. He spent the last thirty years of his life in Paris. He taught at the Paris Conservatory and had outstanding disciples such as Jacques Thibaud, George Enescu, and Cecile Chaminade. Besides his teaching, White developed a successful performing career. As a composer, he wrote with good taste and elegance, sometimes achieving a sensual creole sound, like in his *"La Bella Cubana*." White has an important place in Cuban nationalism by being one of its more important contributors.[81] In his

[79] Lapique, 169.
[80] Galán, 232-38.
[81] Martín, 59-60.

"La Bella Cubana," White creates a tripartite structure, making a contrast with the endless number of bipartite dances that saturated Cuba in the twentieth century. He starts with the *habanera,* moves to a faster and lively section that does not correspond to any specific genre, and then releases the tension by coming back to the initial *habanera.*

Jorge Anckermann was a pianist, composer, and orchestra conductor. He was born on March 22, 1877 and died in Havana in 1941. He was initiated into music by his father at the age of eight. Later in life he lived in Mexico City, where he worked as a teacher. After his return to Cuba, he became the musical director of the Havana's most important theaters producing many *zarzuelas, revues,* and comic sketches. He was a prolific composer writing many *sones, criollas, boleros, guarachas, rumbas,* and *danzones.* Anckermann is regarded as the creator of the *güajira.*[82] One of his most popular works is the *habanera "Flor de Yumurí,"* which he infuses with a swinging *habanera* rhythm.

While the *habanera* represents the metropolis, the *güajira* and *criolla* are the quintessence of the Cuban countryside. Alejo Carpentier tells us that the *contradanza* was the predecessor of the *güajira* and *criolla.* He points out that Manuel Saumell, in some of his *contradanzas* in 6/8, foreshadows the characteristic bass pattern of these two genres called *coriambo*.[83] (Ex. 4 - *Coriambo*). He, thus, is considered the father of the *güajira* and the *criolla*. The matter, however, is more complicated than that. As we have seen with other Cuban music genres, the origin of the *güajira* and *criolla* is being debated. First, let us start with the *güajira.*

Galán points out that in the nineteenth century the *güajira* was derived from the *punto cubano. Punto* was actually the way in which the *décimas* (ten-line poems) were accompanied

[82] Orovio, 14.
[83] Carpentier, 129.

either by the harp or by the guitar. Originally, *punto* or *puntear* was a way of playing which could be compared to the pointillist technique in painting.

The *décimas* could be written down or improvised. The structure of the music corresponded to the structure of the text as follows: introduction, lines 1, 2, 3, and 4; ritornello; lines 5 and 6; shorter ritornello; lines 7, 8, 9, 10; and coda. Between *décimas,* the *zapateo* (tap dance) was introduced. Because it was an instrumental section, it served as contrast to the vocal *punto.* This, however, was not the only way in which the *punto* was interpreted. In the nineteenth century, the bipartite structure of the *contradanza* influenced the *punto,* especially in the piano versions written by academic composers.

The *punto* arrived in the city where the composers did not cultivate it with the same interest. It was then substituted by a stylized *güajira* which kept the melodic contour of the *punto* and *zapateo*. Its two sections contrasted in mode. Although the 6/8 meter was taken from the *zapateo,* the *güajira's* tempo was slower, which differentiated the two of them.[84]

In opposition to Galán, Edgardo Martín, in his book *Panorama Histórico de la Música,* says that the *güajira* developed as a contrast to the *zapateo* and parallel to the *punto.* He mentions that unlike the latter, the *güajira* neither depended on the improvisation nor on the *décimas.* Its melody was freer and did not respond to fixed patterns. The *güajira* became the epitome of the *canto campesino* (peasant singing).[85]

In his article "The 'Güajira' Between Cuba and Spain: A Study in Continuity and Change," Peter Manuel agrees with Galán that the *güajira* is derived from the *punto.* However, he expands the subject and is more specific about the origins and evolution of the genre. He mentions that even though the *punto's* distinct melodies cannot be reconstructed because of the

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[84] Galán, 26-51.
[85] Martín, 38.

lack of documentation, the practice of alternating verses and instrumental interludes has Moorish roots. One of the *punto* characteristics that he points out is the *sesquialtera/*hemiola figure, which is the continuous alternation between bars written in 6/8 and 3/4 which has been found in "various peninsular sources as far back as the mid-sixteenth century."[86] When the *güajira* branched off from the *punto,* it retained some of its characteristics such as the use of *décimas*, pervasiveness of the sesquialtera, and a chordal ostinato present in the alternation between the dominant and tonic in the major mode.[87]

Nonetheless, a dramatic change overcame the *güajira.* In 1899 in Havana, Jorge Anckermann started a new form of *güajira* when composing the music for a drama that took place in the Cuban countryside. This song, *"El arroyo que murmura"* (The stream that murmurs), became a model for other composers. In his *güajira* Anckermann, as well as others, kept some of the characteristic features of the *punto* and *zapateo* including the use of the sesquialtera ostinato, the use of *décima* form, the syllabic vocal style, "and the invocations, however idealized, of the Cuban countryside."[88]

The history of the *güajira* does not stop here. In the 1930s a new *güajira,* the *güajira de salon* (Salon *Güajira*) emerged. Like its predecessor, it was created in the city rather than in the countryside. However, it did not use the *décima* form "and its lyrics presented an idyllic, bucolic image of *güajiro* life."[89] It was more like a sub-genre of the *son,* with which it shared the quadratic meter and the syncopated rhythm. Its harmony was the simple and plain alternation of I, IV (ii), V in an ostinato manner. This new *güajira* had so little in common with the one created

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[86] Manuel, 148.
[87] Manuel, 144-45.
[88] Ibid., 152.
[89] Ibid.,152.

by Anckermann that rather than being considered its descendant, it is considered its successor.[90] Because of this great difference Peter Manuel suggests that the new *güajira* should be called *güajira-son,* acknowledging the process in which the ternary meter gives way to the quadratic one, more popular in Afro-Caribbean-derived genres.

The *güajira* I have include on my recording, *"Angela"* by Jorge Junco, corresponds to the latter kind. It is written in 4/4 and the cadential ostinato is easily heard, especially at the beginning and the end of the piece.

Like the *güajira,* views about the origins of the *criolla* differ. According to Galán, the theater *güajira* created by Anckermann in 1899 was the origin of the *criolla* and the *clave.* Carpentier, as stated before, says that the *güajira,* the *criolla,* and the *clave* came from the *contradaza,* especially from those by Saumell. He further states that if there is a difference between them, it is only superficial because they share the same rhythmic and harmonic patterns.[91] On the other hand, Martín affirms that in the twentieth century, the *clave* became the *criolla.* This view is shared by Emilio Grenet who observes that compositions that nowadays would be classified as *criollas* were already being labeled as *claves.* For him, the *criolla* derives from the *clave* and looks for more expression, which is not completely achieved due to the restrained characteristic rhythmic pattern of its predecessor. The *criolla* has a short introduction and a bipartite structure. Its meter is in 6/8 and it is slower than the *clave.*

Musicologist Grenet pointed out that the *criolla* could be combined with other genres, especially with the *bolero* which appears in the second part as a consequence. Galán also mentions this combination. However, for him this is not the result of combining the two different

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[90] Manuel,152.
[91] Carpentier, 193.

genres, but rather he states that when the *criolla* modulates to the relative major in minor key or vice versa, it is called *criolla-bolero*.

One of the most famous *criollas* is *"La Bayamesa"* (Lady from Bayamo), by Sindo Garay. Garay was born in Santiago de Cuba on April 12, 1867 and died in Havana on July 17, 1968. Garay is considered the greatest composer of *trova*, a musical movement that will be discussed later. In *"La Bayamesa,"* it is easy to recognize the *coriambo* pattern (Ex. 4), present in Saumell's *contradanzas,* which pervades the bass line throughout the entire song.

As stated before, the *criolla* could be combined with other genres such as the *bolero.* This is precisely what Junco does in *"Nela del Rosario."* As in *"La Bayamesa,"* Junco's *criolla* has a brief introduction. However, he does not use the *coriambo* in the same way in which Garay utilized it. In fact, after the short introduction, he includes only two measures that contain this cell after which the *coriambo* is dropped. For the *bolero*, Junco changes the meter from 6/8 to 2/4 and the melody and accompaniment are permeated with the *cinquillo* and *trecillo* cells, so characteristic of this genre. (Ex. 2 - *Cinquillo,* Ex. 3 - *Trecillo*).

Throughout the nineteenth century, the style of the Cuban song gradually became more defined until the genre reached its final stage. The Cuban song did not respond to particular patterns, morphological characteristics, or rhythmic models. What defines its style is the sum of all its elements. The Cuban song was the result of the eclectic sound of the nineteenth century, where Italian opera and the music trends from France, Spain, and Naples intimately blended with African rhythms. Generally speaking, by the mid 1800s Cuban song was characterized by a profound sentimentalism which was given by the subjective content of the poetic lyrics. It uses different meters and a variety of rhythms. The Cuban song leans toward binary forms, even

though some songs present a tripartite structure where the first section comes back after the second.[92]

In the beginning, the Cuban song consisted of Cuban poetry over foreign music patterns. It was not until the arrival of the *cantadores* (singers), later called *troveros* or *trovadores,* when the Cuban song acquired its national identity.[93] These *cantadores* (singers) came from the poorest areas of Santiago de Cuba, and their songs became the exponents of a musical movement that was later called the *trova tradicional cubana* (Cuban traditional *trova*). From an early age, the *trovadores* were exposed to European melodies and African rhythms. They were self taught on the guitar because their humble condition did not allow them access to professional training. These two aspects gave their interpretation a singular flavor that was not to be found anywhere else. This movement started in the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the Cuban *bolero,* and it was so rich that it not only created new genres, but also absorbed some others that already existed. That is why we find the *criolla,* the *güajira,* and the *habanera* along with the *bolero* and duple meter songs that they created.[94] This movement had many important exponents, Sindo Garay being its greatest figure.[95]

The eclectic nature of the Cuban song sometimes makes it hard to classify. As a whole, it comprises different meters and rhythms. They are full of tenderness, melancholy, and romantic feeling. Their harmony, even though conventional, includes surprising and distant modulations which intensify emotions.[96] Even though creole rhythms are present, Cuban song tries to escape

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[92] Martín, 38.

[93] Rosendo Ruíz, Vicente González-Rubiera, and Abelardo Estrada, "Canción Contra Canción," in *Panorama de la Música Poular Cubana,* ed. Radamés Giro (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1998), 261.

[94] Cañizares, 273.

[95] Ruíz, 262.

[96] Grenet, 69.

from the absolute power of rhythmic ostinatos, which are so characteristic of the Cuban musical organization.[97]

By the beginning of the twentieth century to the present, academic composers such as Jorge Anckermann, Rodrigo Prats, Gonzalo Roig, and other outstanding figures paid tribute to those modest *troveros* by refining the popular song and taking it to the vernacular and lyrical theaters.[98] Many arrangements were made for different ensembles such as the ones presented in this recording. From the more refined song, I have included three works: *"La Lupe"* and *"Frente a Frente"* by Juan Almeida and *"Canción de María"* by Rodrigo Prats.

Cuban composer Juan Almeida Bosque was born in Havana on February 17, 1927 and died on September 11, 2009. In his youth, Almeida became a close friend with Fidel Castro while attending the University of Havana. Shortly after, he joined him in the assault on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba. He was captured and imprisoned along with Fidel and his brother Raúl. After being exiled in Mexico, Almeida returned to Cuba in 1956 with other revolutionaries in the Granma expedition, a journey that culminated with the triumph of the revolution in 1959. He later became a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba. Among his compositions, *"La Lupe"* is one of the best known.[99]

"La Lupe," like many Cuban songs, cannot be classified as a specific genre. However, its Cuban flavor is undeniable. Rhythmic cells such as the *cinquillo* and *trecillo,* if not written down, are implied. The piano introduction, along with the violin's first phrase does not contain much syncopation. Nonetheless, the accompaniment becomes more syncopated and also includes the anticipated bass, a characteristic feature of the *son* and the *guaracha.* In *"Frente a Frente,"*

[97] Grenet, 66.
[98] Ruíz, 263.
[99] Orovio, 10.

rather than taking advantage of the syncopated nature of Cuban music, Almeida exploits the characteristically profound sentimentalism of the Cuban song.

"Canción de María" is one of Rodrigo Prats' best known works. Prats, a composer, violinist, and pianist, was born in Sagua la Grande on February 7, 1909 and died in Havana on September 15, 1980. Prats started his musical studies at the age of nine with his father, Jaime Prats. At a very young age he joined the Havana Symphony that was established by Gonzalo Roig. Prats was the founder and conductor of the Symphonic Wind Orchestra and of the Chamber Orchestra of the Fine Arts Circle. In addition, he was appointed assistant conductor of the Havana Philharmonic Orchestra, musical director of the *Cadena Azul* radio station, and musical director of Cuban television Channel 4. Moreover, he was the conductor of the Ministry of Education's Symphony Orchestra and founder and director of the Jorge Anckermann theater group at the Martí Theater as well as the musical director of the Havana's Lyric Theater.

In his song, *"Canción de María,"* Prats makes use of the characteristic syncopations of Cuban music as well as the lyric nature of Cuban song. In the first part, especially in the consequent phrases, he makes use of the *cinquillo.* As a contrast, the second part of the song features great lyricism and the profound sentimentalism so characteristic of the Cuban song.

So far I have discussed the so-called Euro-Cuban genres, the ones that have received more Spanish/European than African influence and consequently, remained closer to the European models of harmony and rhythm. As mentioned earlier, there is another group of genres, the Afro-Cuban ones, which are strongly rooted in African traditions. Among them, we find the *conga* and the *son.*

Even today, the term *conga* is related to a street parade. Here, the party sings and dances to the rhythm produced by a family of African drums of different sizes, spoons, pans, boxes,

metal pieces, bottles, and sticks: in sum, pretty much everything capable of producing a sound. The rhythmic pattern of the *conga* includes a syncopation in every even measure which is marked by the dancers by slightly lifting one of the legs along with a sudden movement of the rest of the body.[100] Its music is repetitive and the two syncopated measures are enough to keep the movement of the hips going, resembling traditional African dances of erotic nature.[101] (See Example 5 *Conga*)

Example 5: *Conga*

From the beginning of the Cuban Republic in 1902, the *conga* was used as political propaganda, where their playful and humorous songs advocated the triumph of some candidates or the defeat of others.

According to musicologists like Ortiz, the term *conga* derives from *kunga,* which in some African dialects means "song" and "lively and noisy festivities."[102] For others, like Grenet and Galán, *conga* comes from the name of an African drum.[103] In the same way, while many musicologists attribute the *conga* to an African heritage, others like Carpentier state that the conga is derived from the *contradanza.* He says that in the mid-eighteenth-century *contradanza "Tu madre... es conga,"* the "tying of two notes in the traditional accompaniment established a

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[100] Grenet, 84.
[101] Galán, 334.
[102] Galán, 323.
[103] Grenet, 95.

rhythmic pattern that has been preserved unchanged in the *conga* of today."[104] Here, as in many other Cuban genres, the origin of the term, as well as of the genre itself, is a matter of debate.

In my recording, I have included two examples of *conga* both by Guido López-Gavilán. In his *"Chacona Tropical,"* after the *danzón* mentioned earlier, a short piano introduction sets the tone for the *conga.* This section features left hand pizzicato in the violin part. His other work is *"En mi menor, mi menor conga"* (In e minor, my minor *conga*). The title of this *conga* is a word game. In Spanish, *mi menor* refers to the key signature, and also means "my smallest." In these two works, the *conga* rhythmic pattern is easily recognizable and present throughout.

The other Afro-Cuban genre included in my recording is the *son*. The *son* originated in *Oriente,* "a region that has historically been referred to as the *Faja Negra* or 'Black Belt' of Cuba."[105] Because of its African origins, the *son* faced great resistance from the Cuban elite who thought that the acceptance of African-derived genres would bring as a consequence "the decline of Cuban civilization."[106] At the beginning, the *son* did not receive classical influence from the capital and remained loyal to its rural origins. Consequently, in its early stages, the music stayed clearly African.

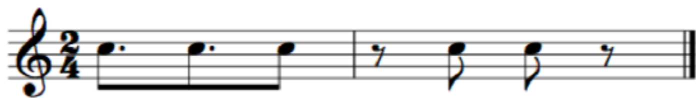
The issue of the origin of the *son,* as expected, is a matter of debate. On one hand, Carpentier, Martín, and Grenet agree that the *son* arose in the sixteenth century with the song *"Ma Teodora."* On the other hand, Roy and Isabelle Leymarie place its origin around the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

The *son* made its way to the capital in 1908 and was the first street genre of music "to gain national acceptance and to be performed without excessive stylistic alteration or

[104] Carpentier, 375.
[105] Chambers, 3.
[106] Ibid., 3.

transformation."[107] It has the same elements that constitute the *danzón,* however, while the *danzón* was danced in the ballroom, the *son* was a popular dance; while the *danzón* was played by orchestras, the *son* was accompanied by a guitar, a *tres,* and some percussion.[108] It was a dance divided into two parts, the rhythm of which was based on syncopation.[109] From the African songs, it took the alternation between solo and choir.[110] Consequently, its form is simple. Basically, it is the repetition of a refrain (*montuno*) no longer than four measures which is sung by a choir. This refrain contrasts with the solo part, which is no longer than eight measures.[111] A characteristic rhythmic figure in the *son* was the *clave.* (See Example 6: *Clave*)

Example 6: *Clave*



This figure remains steady throughout the piece and it is played by two wooden sticks. Interestingly enough, if the *clave* is not present, the rhythm "is internalized by the musicians and remains implicit."[112] This is something that happens not only in the *son,* but also in other Cuban genres.

Another characteristic rhythmic pattern in the *son* is the *güajeo.* (Example 7: *Güajeo*)

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[107] Chambers, 4.
[108] Carpentier, 244.
[109] Martín, 37.
[110] Argeliers León, "Notas para un Panorama de la Música Popular," in *Panorama de la Música Poular Cubana,* ed. Radamés Giro (La Habana, Cuba: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1998), 41.
[111] Grenet, 82.
[112] Leymarie, 38.

Example 7: *Güajeo*

The *son "Hanoi,"* included in my recording, presents some of the characteristic features of this genre. Even though it is a short instrumental piece, it has a hint of what would be an alternation between refrain and chorus. In addition, and more importantly, the *güajeo* pervades the whole piece.

Besides the works discussed so far, I have included two others, which although Cuban, do not fall into a specific category. One is *"Danza Cubana"* by Juan Almeida and the other one is *"Un Recuerdo"* by Guido López-Gavilán.

Even though *"Danza Cubana"* (Cuban Dance) bears the name *danza* (dance), it does not refer to the genre previously examined. In this case, it alludes to the generic meaning of the term. In this piece, Almeida achieves the Cuban flavor by including syncopation, some rhythmic ostinatos, and the anticipated bass, which is one of the characteristics of the *son* and *guaracha*.

"Un Recuerdo," by López-Gavilán, is imbued with the *cinquillo*, a rhythmic cell that has been present in Cuban music since colonial times. As in his *"Chacona Tropical,"* López-Gavilán does not use the rhythmic cells as ostinatos, and most of the time they are implied, rather than written down.

Tracing an accurate origin and development of Cuban music genres is an impossible task, not only because of the countless historical gaps and lack of documentation, but also because of the peculiar ways in which they arose. The island, because of its geographical location, received direct and indirect influence from all over world. The latest European trends met in Cuba with

African traditions creating unique genres. At the same time, these genres evolved and gave birth to new ones. While some of them emerged in a specific region of the island, others arose in different locations at the same time, creating an unsolvable puzzle for those who want to understand their exact genesis. I personally believe that in some cases we do not necessarily have to lean toward one theory or the other. I think that somehow the arguments previously exposed complement each other. Each of them is telling, if not the whole story, at least part of it. Despite any discrepancies, one thing cannot be denied; Cuba has been one of the most influential countries in popular music. The marriage between Europe and Africa has transcended the country's frontiers and has had a great impact on the rest of the Caribbean, Latin America, the United States, and Europe.

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COLLABORATORS

For this recording, I will have the collaboration of the Cuban violinist Alejandro Ferreira and the Russian pianist Marina Pavlovna.

Alejandro started his musical studies at the *Amadeo Roldán* Conservatory in Havana, Cuba. In 1971, he received a scholarship from the Soviet Union Government to continue his graduate studies at the *A. Nezdanova* Conservatory in Odessa, USSR. After finishing, he moved back to Cuba in 1976.

Between the years 1976 and 1991, Alejandro was member of the Havana Symphony Orchestra, Havana Chamber Orchestra, and *Nuestro Tiempo* Contemporary Music Ensemble. He also was faculty at the "Manuel Saumell" music school, National School of Arts, and the Havana Art Institute.

As a soloist and member of different chamber ensembles he has performed in Cuba, Germany, Mexico, Nicaragua, Poland, Check Republic, Bulgary, Yugoslavia, USSR, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru.

Since 1991, Alejandro moved to Peru where he continued his career both as a performer and a teacher.

He has played as a soloist in several Peruvian cities and has been member of different ensembles such as, Peruvian National Orchestra, Lima Philharmonic Orchestra, and *Prolirica* Symphony Orchestra.

Parallel to his performance career, Alejandro has been a violin teacher for over 35 years. He has given master classes in Cuba, Colombian, Venezuela, Ukraine, and Peru. In 1999, he established the International Violin Festival.

Nowadays, Alejandro is a faculty member of the Peruvian National Conservatory and Markham College.

Mrs. Pavlovna started his piano studies in Kherson, USSR. Later, she moved to Odessa and finished her graduate studies at the *A. Nezdanova* Conservatory.

As a soloist and member of chamber ensembles, she has performed in different music festivals in Cuba, Mexico, Russia, Ukraine, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, and Peru.

In Cuba, she was faculty at the *Amadeo Roldán* Conservatory, National School of Arts, and the Havana Art Institute. She has also given master classes and conferences in Cuba, Venezuela, Colombian, and Ukraine.

Marina has published two books, one about sight reading and the other about injury prevention for pianists.

Since 1991, she has been faculty at the Peruvian National Conservatory and Markham College.

CUBAN MUSIC…WITH A VIOLIN TOUCH

(AUDIO CD)

Chacona Tropical by Guido López-Gavilán .... Audio CD Track 01

Danza Cubana by Juan Almeida .... Audio CD Track 02

La Bayamesa by Sindo Garay .... Audio CD Track 03

La Bella Cubana by Jose White .... Audio CD Track 04

Danzón Legrand by Andrés Alén .... Audio CD Track 05

Frente a Frente by Juan Almeida .... Audio CD Track 06

La Lupe by Juan Almeida .... Audio CD Track 07

Flor de Yumurí by Jorge Ankerman .... Audio CD Track 08

Danzón by Dagoberto Gonzalez .... Audio CD Track 09

Canción de María by Rodrigo Prats .... Audio CD Track 10

En mi menor, mi menor conga by Guido López-Gavilán .... Audio CD Track 11

Un recuerdo by Guido López-Gavilán .... Audio CD Track 12

Improvisada by Ignacio Cervantes .... Audio CD Track 13

Los Tres Golpes by Ignacio Cervantes .... Audio CD Track 14

La Encantadora by Ignacio Cervantes .... Audio CD Track 15

Ilusiones Perdidas by Ignacio Cervantes .... Audio CD Track 16

Adios a Cuba by Ignacio Cervantes .... Audio CD Track 17

Los Muñecos by Ignacio Cervantes .... Audio CD Track 18

Hanoi by Juan Jorge Junco ....Audio CD Track 19

Angela by Juan Jorge Junco..Audio CD Track 20

Dora Amalia by Juan Jorge Junco ....Audio CD Track 21

Migdalia by Juan Jorge Junco..Audio CD Track 22

Ilmar by Juan Jorge Junco..Audio CD Track 23

Nela Del Rosario by Juan Jorge Junco ....Audio CD Track 24

Dagmar by Juan Jorge Junco ....Audio CD Track 25

STUDIO RECORDING INFORMATION

Downpour International Studios, Athens, GA.

Recording Engineer - Ken Jansen