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From Havana to Hollywood: Marco Rizo in the Cuban Diaspora

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

FROM HAVANA TO HOLLYWOOD: MARCO RIZO IN THE CUBAN DIASPORA

By

Cary Peñate

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Music

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2015

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FROM HAVANA TO HOLLYWOOD: MARCO RIZO IN THE CUBAN DIASPORA

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For generations, Latin Americans have carried with them components of their culture to the United States. Through transculturation, these elements have fused into mainstream American concert music, jazz, and popular music to create new genres. An important figure who brought with him the roots of his Cuban musical traditions was the pianist, composer, and arranger Marco Rizo (1920-98). His combination of Latin vernacular rhythms, mixed with the influence of Western art music and jazz, contribute to the diverse musical culture of the United States.

Rizo left the island in 1940 and established a prominent US career as a composer, conductor, and performer. In the 1950s, his compositions and arrangements established the perfect background setting for the romantic comedy, *I Love Lucy*, whose storyline revolved around the marriage of the American actress, Lucille Ball, and the Cuban musician Desi Arnaz. Many of the comic insinuations in the story stem from the encounter of the two cultures as embodied in the music of Rizo himself, although regrettably the composer never received credit for his work and was forced to resign his copyright privileges to CBS. Moreover, Rizo's contributions go far beyond Hollywood. Rizo developed an internationally diversified style through his collaborations with Ernesto Lecuona, Rosina Lhévinne, Igor Stravinsky, and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco.

In this paper, I will overview the highlights of Rizo's musical life and career and examine his contributions to Latin American music in the United States. My research, based on primary sources in the New York Public Library, demonstrates that his achievements encompass an eclectic blend of creative activities. This study reveals Rizo's position as a pronounced figure in the spread of Cuban culture and discloses his considerable influence on music of the United States—a topic that calls for detailed investigation.

To my parents.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For generations, Latin Americans have carried with them components of their culture when they have come to the United States. Through transculturation, these elements have fused into mainstream American concert music, jazz, and popular music to create new genres. The Cuban diaspora in particular has exercised a prominent influence on the music and culture of the United States. Marco Rizo (1920-98) was an important figure who brought with him the roots of his Cuban musical traditions through his roles as pianist, composer, and arranger. His musical personality and his use of a distinctive combination of vernacular rhythms—mixed with influences drawn from Western art music and jazz—form an important contribution and exemplify the work of Cuban exiles who fled the island and helped shape the musical culture of the United States.

Marco Rizo left the island in 1940 and established a prominent US career as a composer, conductor, and performer. In the 1950s, his musical compositions and arrangements established the perfect background setting for the romantic comedy, *I Love Lucy*.¹ He mixed Afro-Cuban rhythms with an American lyric style which allowed him to collaborate in the composition of the theme song for the show whose storyline revolved around the marriage of the American actress, Lucille Ball, and the Cuban musician, Desi Arnaz. By incorporating Cuban percussive rhythms into the North American melody of the *I Love Lucy* theme song, he helped create a piece of music that exemplified the two main characters of the series (Ricky and Lucy). Many of the comic insinuations in the story stem from the encounter of the two cultures as embodied in the music of Rizo

1. The *I Love Lucy* show was broadcast by CBS from October 15, 1951 until March 2, 1960 featuring Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz. Today, the complete series is available on DVD. *I Love Lucy*, directed by Marc Daniels, DVD (Paramount Pictures, 2007).

himself, although the composer never received credit for his work and was forced to resign his copyright privileges to CBS, which collected the royalties for his music. Nonetheless, Rizo's contributions travelled far beyond Hollywood. Throughout the development of his career, he had the opportunity to work with important musical figures of his time, including Ernesto Lecuona in Cuba, Rosina Lhévinne in New York, and Igor Stravinsky and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco in Los Angeles. These collaborations enabled him to create an internationally diverse style.

In my thesis, I examine Rizo's contributions to Latin American music in the United States by shedding light on the formative cultural influences that Rizo experienced in Cuba and the numerous professional roles that he played in the United States. I will demonstrate how this cultural interchange coalesced to form his music, illustrating the way that he shaped musical developments in the United States and the way that the North American artistic environment transformed his music in return. To do so, I draw upon a theoretical framework that emphasizes the conceptual constructs of hybridity, transnationalism, biculturation, and colonialism based on the works of Deborah Pacini-Hernández, Gustavo Pérez Firmat, Edward Said, Nestor Garcia-Canclini, Aviva Chomsky, and Louis A. Pérez Jr. Through this process, my study sheds light on Rizo's position as a pronounced figure in the spread of Cuban culture within the United States and discloses his considerable influence on North American music.

My thesis shows that Marco Rizo's eclectic career affected the promotion of Latin American music in the mainstream culture of the United States. Rizo's work in Hollywood and on the radio was broadcast into millions of American homes across the country, making a substantial impact on Latin American music. Simultaneously, he

pursued a prominent career in classical music both as a performer and composer. By the end of his life, he had composed more than 100 works; he had played solo piano recitals in venues such as Carnegie Hall, Town Hall, and Lincoln Center; and he had recorded more than 30 albums of Latin jazz and classical music. His different professional roles, which occasioned an innovative musical language, contributed to the hybridization and transnationalism of American music culture that grew at an extremely rapid pace during the twentieth century. This study draws from and builds upon the research on intercultural exchange throughout the Americas and research on Latin American music and musicians in the United States.

Theoretical Framework

To understand Rizo's contribution, it is critical to position him within a theoretical framework that encompasses the concepts of hybridity, transnationalism, biculturation, and postcolonial representation that conditioned his creative production on the island and in the United States. Rizo assimilated hybrid musical genres from Cuba and later adopted these genres to new layers of intermixture. This process allowed him—along with other Hispanic musicians—to create new musical genres that have circulated throughout the world.

A starting point for examining the conceptual constructs that inform this study appears in the foundational writings of the early Cuban scholar, Fernando Ortiz. Ortiz formulated the term *transculturación* (transculturation) to describe the musical, artistic, and literary blending of the European, Afro-Cuban, and indigenous cultures that has

taken place in Cuba to create a distinctive national identity.² *Transculturación* in Cuba implies the acquisition of a new culture while uprooting a previous culture (i.e., deculturation). Ortiz argues that the Cuban culture was comprised of different ethnic groups that were separated from their original sources in Europe and Africa either by will or by force. Members of these ethnic groups, once displaced, retained their original identities while acquiring characteristics of the new cultural environment in Cuba. Rizo experienced transculturation in two ways. First, by birth in Cuba, a nation shaped by a hybrid culture and later, by migration to the United States in which elements of his original Cuban heritage were lost or adapted, through deculturation, and others were gained.

Similarly, Nestor García Canclini's cornerstone work on hybridity (1989) opens a valuable approach to analyzing Rizo's synthesis of musical styles and techniques.³ By contrasting tradition and modernity in Latin American culture, García Canclini shows how the dominant culture can affect a particular style of music in different ways. A culture emerges through the interchange of tradition and modernity which helps to identify Rizo's own style that emerged from influences stemming from colonized Cuba (e.g. Spanish, Afro-Cuban, and indigenous traditions) and the new influences of the twentieth century (e.g. jazz). In Rizo's case, music from Cuba was modified in order to fit the preconceptions and ideas of North American audiences. While maintaining his traditions from Cuba, he incorporated new stylistic elements pertinent to more

2. Aviva Chomsky, Barry Carr, and Pamela Maria Smorkaloff, *Cuba Reader: History Culture, Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 26.

3. Nestor G. Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. Lopez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

commercial aspects of Latin American music. Rizo negotiated the US influences in shaping his own identity

Deborah Pacini-Hernández's book, *Oye Como Va!* sheds light on the transnationalism that defined and shaped Rizo's creative work by exploring the transformation of Latin American musics that expanded across national borders. Pacini-Hernandez shows how Latin American music mixed within the United States, enabling new hybrid musical genres to emerge. She defines hybridity as a combination of two elements which in turn creates objects or people that are "in between" or "out of place."⁴ Rizo's career exemplifies this condition through the diverse life experiences and hybrid musical styles that he brought with him from Cuba to the United States. Upon his arrival, he had to alter his Cuban lifestyle and musical practices in order to adapt to the dominant culture. He had to learn a new language, accommodate his music to a new audience, and join the US Army during World War II in order to maintain his residency in the United States. His condition of "in betweenness" may have led him to struggle in communicating and connecting with North American culture, but it also helped when it came time to earn a living. Rizo held on to his mixture of Cuban and North American traditions to appeal to diverse audiences. Even though Cuban popular music had grown widespread in New York through the work of performing artists such as Tito Puente and Xavier Cugat, Rizo's infusion of classical influences distinguished him from such artists, who were primarily known for their mixture of Afro-Cuban vernacular music and jazz.

Rizo's role in the *I Love Lucy* show can be meaningfully understood by applying ideas from Gustavo Pérez Firmat's book *Life on the Hyphen*. This work explains how

4. Deborah P. Hernández, *Oye Como Va!: Hybridity and Identity in Latino Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), vii.

individuals who had to adapt to North American culture at a young age experienced feelings of displacement. Pérez Firmat's analysis of artists such as Desi Arnaz, Gloria Estefan, and Dámaso Pérez Prado helps interpret Rizo's sense of being "in between" and "out of place." In the chapters dedicated to Desi Arnaz, the author examines different episodes from *I Love Lucy* and demonstrates how Cuban and North American cultures interacted on the show in ways that shaped North American perceptions of Cubans during the 1950s. By extension, Pérez Firmat's writings form a basis for understanding the way that Rizo's music enhanced and contributed to these images, which millions of Americans viewed each week.

Edward Said's classic study, *Orientalism* explores the concepts of colonialism, postcolonialism, and Self and Other, which provide valuable insights into the representation of Rizo's Cuban identity within the Hollywood film industry.⁵ *Orientalism* deals with the preconceived notions or stereotypes held by Westerners about people from the Middle East. Said demonstrates that these notions are not informed by close proximity or experience to the region but instead derive from literary, musical, artistic, and commercial sources that may inaccurately represent Middle Eastern cultures. Although Said originally published *Orientalism* in the 1970s and is no longer alive today, his analysis can still be used to explain many of the pejorative behaviors and attitudes against Islamic peoples in contemporary society. Different historical events have created an image of Middle Easterners as enemies, terrorists, and irrational beings even though Said shows us that there is an entire secular and humane culture we do not see.

5. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

Similarly, as a Hispanic American composer, Rizo negotiated Eurocentric constructions of difference throughout his career. As Melanie Plesch asserts, “Latinamericanism” is a phenomenon comparable to Orientalism.⁶ Supporting this statement through her analysis of the Hollywood film industry, Plesch argues that the United States has tended to think of all Latin American countries as one homogenous entity without any diversity or individuality among its constituent cultural groups.⁷ She refers to films made in Hollywood that identify certain dances such as the Argentine tango with erroneous national characteristics such as Spanish flamenco.⁸ Likewise, Rizo had to deal with the stereotypical confluences of Latin American culture in Hollywood and accommodate preconceived stereotypes of what “Latin” music should sound like. These negotiations changed Rizo’s creative conception as well as the perceptions of Cuban music and musicians in the United States.

State of Scholarship

Primary source collections that provide the basis for an analysis of Rizo’s life and binational musical career are located in the New York Public Library and the Cuban Heritage Collection of the University of Miami. These libraries and archives contain Rizo’s unpublished writings, scores, concert programs, newspaper articles, and magazine articles.⁹ I also consulted the six-season DVD collection of the *I Love Lucy* show, which

6. Melanie Plesch, “Topics of Spanishness in Tango Scenes. A Postcolonial Reading of Mainstream Film,” *Diagonal: Journal of the Center for Iberian and Latin American Music* 8 (2013): 6, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://www.cilam.ucr.edu/diagonal/issues/2013/Plesch.pdf>.

7. *Ibid.*, 7.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Rizo’s most substantial written work consists of his unpublished book manuscript, “The Desi I Knew.” In addition, he authored miscellaneous writings about Latin American music and instruments, all of

provided the material for the analysis and interpretation of Rizo's role in Hollywood. Apart from these digital and archival source materials, I additionally had the opportunity to interview the musician's younger sister, Vilma Rizo, who helped me understand her brother from a personal perspective and granted me access to additional resources from her family archives.¹⁰ Vilma Rizo's apartment in New York City is located in the same building where her brother lived until his death in 1998. She invited me to the same café where she had dined with Rizo and told me stories about their shared experiences. Her personal account of the family history helped answer many questions and connect the gaps in my research.

Despite the significance of Rizo's creative work, little published literature on his life and music exists. The only major secondary source that sheds light on his biography and creative production is Christina Abreu's doctoral dissertation in which the author compares Rizo to Mario Bauzá by identifying the impact that both musicians had on Latin American music in New York City during the 1940s and 1950s.¹¹ Abreu directly worked with primary source materials in the New York Public Library and held interviews with Vilma Rizo, among other musicians connected with the Latin music scene. In the first chapter of her dissertation, she provides an analysis of Rizo's impact on Latin American music and musicians situated in New York City. She offers important

which are located in the archival collection, Marco Rizo Papers: 1938-1999, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Manhattan, NY.

10. Vilma Rizo provided me with indispensable support during this project and gave me access to materials from the Rizo family archives such as pictures, awards, and the most updated version of Rizo's unpublished manuscript, "The Desi I Knew." I am grateful for her support and cooperation during this project

11. Christina D. Abreu, "Authentic Assertions, Commercial Concessions: Race, Nation, and Popular Culture in Cuban New York City and Miami, 1940-1960" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2012), accessed March 1, 2015, <http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/95982>.

insights into the way that race affected the treatment of Latin American musicians. Her analysis furnishes a valuable understanding of the different factors that affected Rizo's representation as a musician in New York and in Hollywood. Abreu focuses on the representation of musicians who were not well-recognized, such as Mario Bauzá, Marco Rizo, and Perucho Irigoyen, in part because of their perceived Afro-Cuban background.

In addition to the major sources described in the foregoing paragraphs, other authors have contributed to my research. Louis Pérez Jr. lays out the relationship between Cuba and the US throughout different periods of history and describes how this relationship reciprocally affected both countries. Desi Arnaz's published autobiography titled *A Book*¹² details the performances and tours of the Desi Arnaz Orchestra as well as the *I Love Lucy* show, which furthered the understanding of Arnaz's treatment within the industry.

Robin Moore's book *Nationalizing Blackness: Afro-Cubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* played an instrumental role in understanding multiple forms of Cuban music. The author's detailed description of the vernacular dances that developed in Cuba along with an analysis of the diverse peoples that contributed to this music aid in the examination of Rizo's early education and his subsequent incorporation of Afro-Cuban dance elements that he assimilated during his years in Cuba.

12. Desi Arnaz, *A Book* (New York: Morrow, 1976).

Organization of Thesis

This thesis will be organized into five chapters that exposes the life and work of Marco Rizo through the lens of his impact as a Cuban-American musician. Each chapter will focus on a different aspect of his experience, using the aforementioned theoretical categories of transnationalism, hybridity, and postcolonialism in Chapter 1 as touchstones for exploring his career. Chapter 2 follows with a biographical sketch that depicts the composer's life in Cuba during his formative years. I will demonstrate how Rizo's contribution is best understood by recognizing that Cuban music to this day consists of a hybrid mixture brought forth by the different kinds of populations that have inhabited the island throughout its history.

Chapter 3 will discuss the two interconnected concepts of hybridity and transnationalism and their impact on Rizo's music. This chapter will focus on Rizo's professional roles in the United States, the Latin American musical scene in New York, and the resulting impact on the composer's creative output. Chapter 4 deals with Rizo's contributions to the *I Love Lucy* show. It will focus on the colonialist representation of Rizo's Cuban identity in the Hollywood studios. It probes deeper into the controversy that surrounded the loss of Rizo's copyright privileges and his failure to receive credit for his work. This chapter endeavors to put Rizo's situation in context by comparing him with other "ghost composers" and relating his treatment to parallel case studies of Latin American musicians in Hollywood during the period. It endeavors to document his suppression and struggle as a Latino composer in the Hollywood television and film industry. Together these chapters highlight the significance of Rizo's contribution to

Latin American music in the United States and therefore give acknowledgment to his under-documented musical personality and achievement.

CHAPTER 2

THE TRANSCULTURATION OF CUBA

Cuban music, like its people, is the product of a collision of different cultures and ethnicities, developing as a result of a constant interplay between the native and the foreign.

-Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," 1991

Marco Rizo's contribution to the music of the United States is best understood by first examining his Cuban musical roots. His formative education in a hybrid and changing Cuban culture molded his identity as a classical pianist, jazz musician, arranger, and composer. Cuban music to this day consists of a hybrid mixture brought forth by the different populations that have inhabited the island throughout its history. With its roots in African religious rituals, Iberian traditions, and some Native American influences, the music of this small island has created new genres that dominate popular music today. The business relationship and proximity of Cuba to the United States during the 1930s and 1940s caused the island to appropriate and assimilate many North American traditions. From baseball to Protestant missionaries and railroads to North American television, Cubans enjoyed many facets of US culture, and eventually embraced them—a significant part of Cuba's national identity.¹³

As a young man, Rizo listened to a hybrid musical blend of North American cinematic music, jazz, and popular music, classical music, as well as the Cuban *contradanza*, *danza*, *danzón*, and *habanera*, which developed on the island through creolization—a process by which different musical forms coalesced to form new local

13. Louis A. Pérez Jr., *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 5.

and national genres. In this chapter, I seek to examine how Rizo's experiences with diverse genres in Cuba contributed to his own development of a vibrant musical language once he came to the United States. I first describe the musical and cultural environment of Cuba during Rizo's formative years (1920-1940). I then draw upon his written testimony to illustrate what he identified as the music of "his Cuba." Finally, I show how this experience changed when he moved from Santiago to Havana—a move that ultimately prepared him for his transnational journey to the United States.

The Musical Diversity and History of Cuba

Marco Rizo was born in 1920 in Santiago de Cuba, where he lived until the age of 16. Santiago was the second most populated city in Cuba next to Havana and served as the capital from 1515-1607.¹⁴ This city was located on the eastern side of the island, known as the *oriente*, which was characterized by a more extensive indigenous and Afro-Cuban population. Unfortunately, much of the city's earliest music remains unknown as a result of the invasions by French privateers (1553) and British troops (1662) as well as the eruption of a major earthquake (1675).¹⁵ However, eventually a distinctive musical form of expression arose in eastern Cuba that was rooted in its connection to Hispaniola, which today is the island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. From 1790-1868, refugees from the Haitian revolution inhabited Santiago, bringing with them the French *contradanse*. Originating mostly in the Eastern coast of Cuba, this dance eventually

14. Ned Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music from the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2004), 62.

15. Robert Stevenson and Robin Moore, "Santiago de Cuba," *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/24542>.

evolved into the *habanera*—a predecessor to the *contradanza*, *danza*, and *danzón*.¹⁶ Of these three dances, the one to gain worldwide popularity and influence was the *danzón*, which was widely disseminated and popularized by urban dance bands in Havana during the 1920s.¹⁷ These musical influences contributed to the formation of a unique culture in Santiago, as compared to the rest of the country, which consisted mostly of Spanish and African influences.

An important predecessor to these dances, the *tumba francesa*, also came to Santiago with French immigrants from Haiti. *Tumba francesa* was a dance accompanied by a *composé* (a vocalist and rhymer), three *tumbas* (derived from the French word *tambours* meaning drums), a *cata* (cylinder xylophone), a *tambora* (a smaller drum with two heads), and *chachas* (metal maracas).¹⁸ The aesthetic appeal of a “good” *composé* resided in the ability of its members to create and rhyme verses.¹⁹ Usually, two to three *composés* competed with each other at *tumba francesa* parties.

The main feature that distinguished the Santiago folkloric dances (such as the *contradanza*, *danza*, and *danzón*) from those of European descent was the *cinquillo*. This rhythmic pattern, as the name implies, consisted of five notes per measure and served to unify the performance of the dancers and musicians.

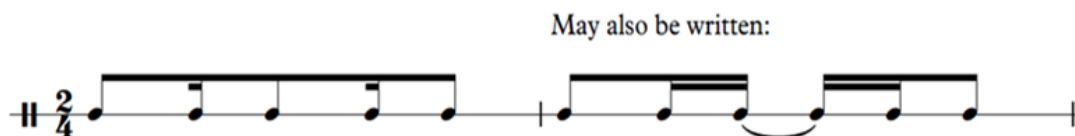
16. Olavo Alén, *La música de las sociedades de tumba francesa en Cuba* (Havana: Casa de las Américas, 1986), 9.

17. Robin Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), 89.

18. *Ibid.*, 42.

19. Alén, 54.

Example 2.1 - *Cinquillo* Rhythm



At first, *danzones* were performed by *orquestas típicas* (typical orchestras, consisting mainly of winds) and eventually by *charanga* ensembles.²⁰ The latter had an instrumentation that consisted mainly of piano, acoustic bass, transverse wooden flute, two violins, *timbales*, and *güiro*.²¹ The *danzón* was the most influential Cuban popular genre in Santiago and Havana. It was most often performed by *charanga* ensembles, which, beginning in 1916, were gradually replaced by North American jazz bands.²²

The *son* was another genre that originated in the Santiago de Cuba area and mixed African and Spanish musical elements together.²³ One of the most influential vernacular genres, it gained widespread popularity during the 1920s and 1930s, which were precisely the years that Rizo lived in Santiago de Cuba as a teenager. During this time, the invention of new communication technologies such as the phonograph and radio allowed the *son* to spread across Cuba to the United States.²⁴ After its initial arrival in Havana, it was mostly performed by poor Afro-Cubans and mulattos in rural areas. With

20. Robin Moore, "Charanga," *Grove Music Online*, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2084955>.

21. Ibid.

22. Lise Waxer, "Of Mambo Kings and Songs of Love: Dance Music in Havana and New York from the 1930s to the 1950s," *Latin American Music Review* 15, no. 2 (1994): 149.

23. Robert Stevenson and Robin Moore. "Santiago de Cuba."

24. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 103.

the general acceptance of Afro-Cuban traditions, this style became an inherent part of the classical dances of the nation and a signifier of Cuban musical identity.²⁵

The instrumentation of the *son* changed throughout different periods of Cuban history. During Rizo's time in Cuba the instruments included guitar, *tres*, acoustic bass, maracas, *claves*, *bongo*, and trumpet.²⁶ During this time, the genre was performed by *sextetos* and *septetos* (sextet and septet bands), which included groups such as the Septeto Habanero, Sexteto Boloña, and Sexteto Occidente.²⁷ The vocal line usually alternated between a verse and a chorus. The verse sections consisted of poetic stanzas such as the *décima* (10-line poetic structure) and were followed by improvisational sections known as the *montuno*.²⁸

The *son* and *danzón* originated in Santiago de Cuba and eventually became popular in Havana. At that time, Havana had a cosmopolitan reputation due to its closer proximity to the United States.²⁹ The renowned musical institutions of the capital city such as the Orquesta Filarmónica de la Havana (Havana Philharmonic Orchestra), Coro Nacional (National Choir), and Ballet Nacional de Cuba (Cuban National Ballet) fostered the circulation and integration of these vernacular genres. There the Teatro de Tacón served as the home of many operas and *zarzuelas* during the late 1800s. Another important venue was the Teatro Amadeo Roldán which was initially founded by Pedro Sanjuán, who was a famous conductor and pedagogue. Roldán, a pioneer of Afro-Cuban

25. Ibid., 104.

26. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 91.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 90.

29. Robert Stevenson and Robin Moore. "Santiago de Cuba."

musical nationalism, conducted the Havana Philharmonic at the theater from 1930-39. Through Roldán's connections, many important musicians came to perform there, such as Yehudi Menuhin, Jascha Heifetz, Arthur Rubinstein, Pablo Casals, Erich Kleiber, Juan José Castro, Serge Koussevitzky, Pierre Monteux, Ernest Ansermet, and Igor Stravinsky.³⁰ Due to the strong musical impact that Roldán had on the orchestra and more generally on Cuban music, the hall was subsequently named after him.

Robin Moore has identified the years 1920-40 with the beginning of the *afrocubanismo* movement.³¹ Due to the economic depression and political tensions in the country, Cubans held on to the unique qualities that made them distinct as a people. The characteristics that they conceived as Cuban resulted from a new hybrid culture that emerged out of the interactions between rural Afro-Cuban people and Cubans of Spanish descent. From this unique blend of European music and Afro-Cuban traditions in this specific setting, authentic Cuban music was created.

Rumba, and religious music from *santería* and *Abakúa* rituals from rural black neighborhoods came to represent Cuban music. *Rumba* is a two-step couples dance which emerged during the nineteenth century in Cuba. Its instrumentation consisted of a melodic vocal line accompanied by Afro-Cuban percussion instruments such as the *claves*, *congas*, *madruga* (metal shaker), and *catá* (two woodens sticks hitting another wooden object such as a chair or the side of a drum).³² The *rumba*, along with the

30. Robert Stevenson and Robin Moore. "Santiago de Cuba."

31. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 2.

32. Katherine Hagedorn, "Rumba," *Grove Music Online*, accessed February 17, 2015, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2263104>.

drumming from sacred practices of *santería* and *abakúa*, fused into Cuban dances such as the *son* and *danzón*.³³

An influential context for the performance of Cuban music was the *carnaval*, a city-wide celebration that usually occurred once a year in the period before Lent. However, contrary to Havana, in Santiago, this event usually took place during the summer.³⁴ Similar to Mardi Gras in New Orleans, crowds of people would parade through the streets, dancing and playing music while dressed in costumes representing different stock characters that existed in Cuba at that time. These figures included French creoles, Africans, indigenous Cubans, Spaniards, mulatos, the English, and the Chinese.³⁵ Musically, the instruments and rhythms derived from Afro-Cuban elements in Santiago de Cuba at that time. The performance included vernacular dances such as *rumba*, *guaracha*, and *comparsa*, which are found in Rizo's compositions and which notably influenced the theme song of *I Love Lucy*. In this theme song we hear a percussion background played by Afro-Cuban drums that include the rhythmic elements of these vernacular dances.

Moore recounts that *carnaval* offered subaltern groups an event through which they could express themselves freely.³⁶ It represented a means of allowing suppressed Afro-Cubans to perform their music, which was often associated with religious rituals outside of Christian worship. For that reason, *carnaval* brought many conflicts between Cubans of Spanish descent and the Afro-Cuban population. Although *carnaval* was a

33. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 91.

34. Robert Stevenson and Robin Moore, "Santiago de Cuba."

35. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 2.

36. *Ibid.*, 62.

secular context that preceded Lent, it did contain African religious traditions pertaining to those subaltern groups.³⁷ It was one of the few available means through which Afro-Cubans were able to perform their traditional music.

Another characteristic of Afro-Cuban music that conflicted with elite society related to the implicit sexual content of the vernacular dances. Dominant groups considered two specific choreographic gestures immoral: the *vacunao* (a pelvic thrust by male dancers) and the *botao* (a covering of the groin by female participants). For that reason, the government outlawed many forms of Afro-Cuban music during various points in the nation's history. For example, in 1924, the mayor of Santiago de Cuba banned certain instruments such as the *tambores*, *tumbas*, frying pans, Chinese cornets, and congas because he believed that these instruments promoted vulgar indecencies such as the movements of the hips with sexual connotations. In this way, the conflicts between Afro-Cubans and Cubans of Spanish descent encompassed religious, moral, ethical, racial, and political issues.

Similar to other countries of Latin America, classical music arrived in Cuba through church authorities who wanted to convert African and indigenous populations to Christianity.³⁸ Beginning in the nineteenth century, a national tradition of secular concert music also emerged. Both Manuel Saumell and Ignacio Cervantes, who figured among the most renowned national composers of the 19th century, captured folkloric dance elements in their music.³⁹ Most of their compositions consisted of lyrical piano works

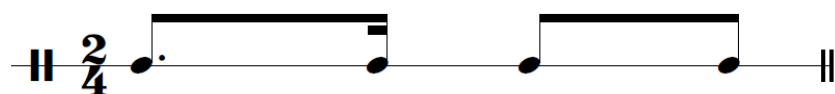
37. Moore, *Nationalizing Blackness*, 62.

38. Robin Moore and Walter Aaron Clark, eds, *Musics of Latin America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012), 214.

39. *Ibid.*, 215.

that comprise a Romantic style mixed with Cuban vernacular dances. One particular idiom that Saumell and Cervantes helped establish was the *habanera* style.⁴⁰ The *habanera* is a couple's dance that is usually played at a slow tempo and accompanied by an ostinato pattern in duple meter.

Example 2.2 - *Habanera* Rhythm



Among the elite, the production and creation of the *zarzuela* arose as one of the most important forms of Cuban classical music. This genre originated in Spain through the mixture of French and Italian opera with Spanish popular theatre.⁴¹ Upon its arrival on the island, the *zarzuela* mixed with other national traditions including the *afrocubanismo* movement. In a parallel development to *carnaval*, the *zarzuela* captured different personalities from everyday life in Cuba. The format changed to represent the local stock characters of the surrounding culture, which resulted in the emergence of new personalities that arose as a common part of the genre.⁴² This development facilitated a linkage between Afro-Cuban culture and the Cuban *zarzuela*, which assimilated dances such as the *rumba* and *son* into its performance.⁴³ Three prominent composers who

40. Robin Moore and Walter Aaron Clark, eds, *Musics of Latin America*, 215.

41. Moore and Clarke, 12.

42. *Ibid.*, 13.

43. Susan Thomas, *Cuban Zarzuela: Performing Race and Gender on Havana's Lyric Stage*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 20.

contributed to this genre were: Gonzalo Roig, Rodrigo Prats, and Ernesto Lecuona.⁴⁴

Another important influence involved jazz and related forms of American popular music that had begun to merge into the Cuban cultural scene. North American jazz arose as an integral part of Cuban culture—a development that emerged in its incipient stages during the mid-nineteenth century. One of the first encounters between Cuban music and North American jazz occurred with the interaction of musicians from New Orleans and Havana. Louis Moreau Gottschalk was one of the popular North American musicians who travelled frequently to the Cuban capital city during the 1850s and 1860s, bringing with him “jazz elements from his country”.⁴⁵ He grew fond of Cuban music and began incorporating rhythmic elements from the *habanera*, *son*, and *contradanza* into his own piano pieces.⁴⁶ Musicians in Havana returned the favor by adopting the jazz elements from Gottschalk’s music into their own compositions.

Apart from jazz, cinematic music from the United States trickled into the musical scene. Once the nation achieved its independence in 1898, Cubans began to create their own moving pictures with accompanying music. The first film produced in Cuba was a one-minute advertisement of a brewery titled, *El brujo desaparecido* (1898) that was directed by José Casaus. Another early film was *Un duelo a orillas del Río Almendares* (1907) by Enrique Díaz Quesada, who also was known for creating 16 other films during the period.⁴⁷ Another popular motion picture was *La virgin de la Caridad del Cobre*

44. Susan Thomas, 1.

45. Lise Waxer, “Of Mambo Kings and Songs of Love: Dance Music in Havana and New York from the 1930s to the 1950s,” *Latin American Music Review / Revista de Música Latinoamericana*, 1994. 15 (2): 141.

46. *Ibid.*, 149

47. Miriam Celaya Henken and Dimas Castellanos, *Cuba* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 351.

(1930), directed by Ramón Peón, which dealt with the appearance of the Virgin Mary. Although Cuba had its own cinema, the more popular motion pictures in the theaters came from the United States. Since this was the era of silent films, language was not an issue and the North American movies were understood by the Latin American audiences. With the emergence of sound technology in films of the 1930s, however, Cuba began to create its own distinctive form of Spanish-language cinema.

Rizo's Formative Education

Rizo grew up in a middle-class family during the 1920s and 1930s. He received his earliest musical instruction from his father, Sebastián Rizo Maury—a musician who played flute and saxophone with the Orquesta Filharmónica de Santiago (Santiago Philharmonic Orchestra), conducted his own chamber orchestra, and directed the Rizo-Ayala Jazz Band. Due to the high social stature associated with elite concert music in Cuba at that time, Rizo's father began his son's musical training with classical piano lessons. However, since his father was a flutist and not a pianist, his ability to guide his son's pianistic development was limited. Fortunately, Rizo had the opportunity to study with the Spanish pianist, Tomás Planas, who was a renowned piano pedagogue in Santiago at that time. Planas helped Rizo develop his sight-reading ability and gave him a strong technical foundation. He introduced Rizo to the music of Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, and other significant composers—a repertoire that ultimately gained him admission into the Santiago Conservatory.⁴⁸

48. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," book manuscript, 1991, box 3, folder 8, Marco Rizo Papers, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Manhattan, NY, chapter 3, page 12.

Rizo's family background was European. His mother, María Ayala was the daughter of Juan Ayala and Carmen Polo, who were both Cubans of Spanish descent. The composer's father, Sebastián Rizo Maury, was the son of Antonio Rizo (originally Rizzo) who was of Italian parentage and Juana Maury, who was of French ancestry. Nonetheless, Rizo gravitated toward Afro-Cuban sources in his music during his childhood. He added highly percussive Afro-Cuban elements to his early arrangements for jazz band on the island. Although he was not of Afro-Cuban descent, he came into close contact with the music from that tradition, recalling that:

My earliest memories carry me back to a Santiago of the late 1920s, and, as I envision my family's home, vistas of the bustling city come into my mind. The original capital of Cuba, Santiago, was replete with sections of African black and European white, with stark contrasts between rich and poor.⁴⁹

Even though his father performed European music as a flutist in the Santiago Symphony Orchestra, Sebastian Rizo nonetheless showed an interest in jazz and other vernacular forms. Perhaps the family had been drawn to Afro-Cuban traditions through the popular music they heard and experienced in their surroundings. The *carnaval* must have had a large influence on their musical lives. Without ready access to mass-mediated forms such as the radio, people learned about music by performing and participating in it. Lecuona, Saumell, and Cervantes assimilated many of the folkloric, popular, and Afro-Cuban traditions that unfolded in Santiago into their classical compositions. This practice signaled the possibility that many concert musicians were also expected to participate in the popular and folkloric music of the country. Rizo mastered the different musical

49. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 1, page 2.

idioms of classical, jazz, and film music, along with Cuban vernacular styles as a young man. His fusion of these diverse languages later distinguished his creative career.

Sebastián Rizo Maury's position as a notable Santiago musician provided his son with the connections that would aid his future career. Rizo's father was close friends with Desi Arnaz's father, Desiderio Arnaz, who was the mayor of Santiago. Marco Rizo grew up with the mayor's son, who later became one of the main connections for his successful career in the United States. The two young men shared countless musical memories in the Santiago *carnaval*, as well as in other venues where they played popular music together. Rizo recounts his youthful memories of Arnaz with the following words:

With the backdrop of life in the same neighborhood, the close relationship of our parents, and our own shared interests, we became very close friends, as close as brothers. Neither [one] of us could have ever foreseen or imagined the future, linked to the carnival, that we would ultimately share together.⁵⁰

Rizo describes some of the formative influences on his musical career in an unpublished book manuscript that he retrospectively created in 1991, titled "The Desi I Knew." This work interestingly provides as much information about Rizo's own musical experiences as it does about those of Arnaz. Rizo devotes an entire chapter to the description of African influences on Cuban traditional music, which are tellingly found in his own compositions.⁵¹ The 28 pages he employs to explain different African deities, religious rituals, instruments, and music demonstrate his extensive knowledge of these traditions, as well as the notable impact they had on his own creative work. The four most popular religious cults that Rizo describes are the Lucumí, the Arara, the Abakúa, and the

50. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 1, page 2.

51. *Ibid.*, chapter 2.

Kimbisa which eventually merged with different Christian divinities.⁵² Many of the titles of Rizo's compositions, such as *Cantata a la Madonna Negra*, *Ecue Yamba-O*, *Liturgia a la Virgen de la Caridad*, *Ñañigo*, and *La Negra Macusa* point to a recurrent Afro-Cuban presence in his music. Rizo's exposure to these diverse vernacular genres granted him access to a hybrid musical language and identity that served as an important source for his diverse cultural perspective once he came to the United States.

Rizo discusses one particular performance of Afro-Cuban music at the *carnaval* de Santiago and notes these influences on his music. Specifically, he describes the effect that the *comparsas* of the *carnaval* had on him.

The conga rhythm of our *comparsa* is almost magical, possessing a relentless, irresistible drive. Its effect is almost hypnotic. It is impossible to maintain control of the feet and body, as the energy of the *comparsa* performing the conga spreads to the crowds of thousands of onlookers standing by. As we danced down the street, we saw that everyone else was beginning to dance, joining in our show. This was high-energy entertainment coming from a people of peculiar improvisatory drive and brilliance.⁵³

In this case, the *comparsas* were groups of musicians that performed together during that *carnaval*. Describing the people as having an “improvisatory drive” and “brilliance,” Rizo felt admiration for his hometown music of Santiago de Cuba.

During the years that Rizo spent in Santiago (1920-1936), he also encountered Sindo Garay, who was a troubadour and Afro-Cuban guitarist. Garay is most known for his composition, “La Bayamese,” which until this day remains a renowned melody in Cuba. One ensemble that Rizo admired was the group Trio Matamoros which alternated at parties with the Rizo-Ayala Band. Like Garay, this group had a troubadour spirit, never

52. Marco Rizo, “The Desi I Knew,” chapter 2, page 8.

53. Ibid., chapter 1, page 11.

remaining in a single location. The group traveled around the world, bringing many outside influences back to Cuba. These musicians made their first recording in 1928 in New Jersey, and many upper-class Cuban families listened their records.

Rizo's testimony tells of the *carnaval* music he played with Arnaz. On Sunday afternoons, his uncle, Enrique Bueno directed the Municipal Band concerts which took place at the Plaza de Armas. The young Rizo and Arnaz begged him to play percussion instruments (maracas, claves, and güiro) during the *danzón* number, but Bueno warned them that they needed to know how to perform the correct rhythms. Much to his surprise, the boys succeeded due to their experiences at the Santiago *carnaval*. Rizo recounts:

On one occasion, Desi and I, anxious to get into a performance, begged Maestro Bueno to let us each play one of the ensemble's percussion instruments, such as the *claves*, maracas, or *güiro*, during the *danzón*.

"Would you mind if we played the instruments, please?"

"I do mind, because I doubt that either of you really know how to handle the instruments," he rather tersely replied.

"Yes, we do know how."

"Well, go over there to those playing the percussion and ask them to lend you their instruments, but I warn you, make sure that you know how to play them, because if I don't like what I hear. I'm going to stop you right away and kick you out of here!"

So, we picked up the instruments and played the *danzón*. I glanced at godfather and he smiled, seeming to enjoy what he was hearing.⁵⁴

These childhood experiences influenced the music Rizo and Arnaz later created and performed on *I Love Lucy*. The one thing that distinguished their group on the show, the Ricky Ricardo Band, from the traditional US dance bands of the late 1940s and early 1950s was the prominence of Afro-Cuban percussion instruments such as the conga

54. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 3, page 1.

drums, *maracas*, *güiro*, and *timbales*. The Latin music in *I Love Lucy* had its roots in the music of the Santiago *carnaval* experienced by Arnaz and Rizo. During *carnaval*, Rizo recalled that he would play different portable percussion instruments as he and Desi danced through the streets of different neighborhoods. These instruments included *calderos* (frying pans), *maracas*, *güiros* (scrapers), *bongos*, *cucharas* (spoons), and *claves*.⁵⁵ Rizo gives an in-depth description of the Chinese cornet performed during *carnaval* and he describes the origin of the *agogós*, *bongos*, *claves*, *congas*, *güiros*, *maracas*, *tambores batás*, *timbales*, *quijadas*, and *quintos*.⁵⁶ Later, he incorporated some of these *carnaval* percussion instruments into his orchestral scores and Latin jazz arrangements. *Carnaval* dances became a part of Rizo's music, even though he was primarily trained as a classical pianist.

Latin jazz was an important part of the cultural scene in which Rizo lived. He reports that the first musician to perform jazz in Cuba was Max Dolin in 1920.⁵⁷ Later, other jazz musicians such as Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Earl Hines, Jimmy Luncheon, Johnny Hodges, Sonny Greer, and Coleman Hawkins also traveled to Cuba.⁵⁸ Rizo argues that jazz started to become "Cubanized" in the 1930s. He and his father would receive jazz scores from his aunt in New York which they fused with Afro-Cuban elements to create new hybrid compositions.⁵⁹ This mixture began to

55. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 1.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid., chapter 3, page 14.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid., chapter 3, page 15.

emerge during Rizo's youth, which he then further assimilated with North American jazz elements when he came to the United States.

Rizo also learned how to accompany silent films at the piano. As a young teenager, he acquired this skill while working at the Santiago Movie Theater—a position he obtained through his private piano teacher, Mercedes Colas, who served as the permanent accompanist there. Rizo became Colas's assistant and substituted for her whenever she was unable to work at the theater. This skill later proved indispensable in his future endeavors in Hollywood.⁶⁰

From Santiago to Havana

Throughout his career, Rizo immigrated to different cities, which provided him with diverse musical cultures that in turn gave him new perspectives, connections, and opportunities. When he was 16, he moved from Santiago to Havana leaving his hometown to make his own living. Although Rizo experienced a difficult transition, he was determined to pursue his musical studies. He arrived in Havana with the dream of becoming a classical pianist and engaging with the renowned classical musicians in Havana such as Ernesto Lecuona, Pedro Sanjuán, and Amadeo Roldán, who were active in the city at that time. He wrote that his father used to say: "If you want to be a good musician, you must associate with top-notch musicians."⁶¹ It was Rizo's connections to different musical personalities that opened new career opportunities for him. His experiences in Havana helped him attain his dreams as he performed alongside many

60. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 3, page 16.

61. *Ibid.*, chapter 3, page 11.

renowned artists and ultimately had the opportunity to move to New York and study music at Juilliard.

Havana served as the gateway to Mexico and New Orleans during the 1930s and 1940s which allowed this city to form close connections with the United States. Prior to modern transportation, the connecting path between the two Cuban cities on opposite sides of the island was long and strenuous.⁶² More interchange between Havana and Santiago became possible with modern transportation such as railroads. Although the two cities were within the same country, they were culturally very different. Havana was more commercial and had a more developed industrial system. These differences caused Rizo to experience radical changes in his move from Santiago to Havana.

In Havana, Rizo attended the National Conservatory of Music beginning in 1936, where he studied harmony and composition with Pedro Sanjuán, who founded the Havana Philharmonic Orchestra.⁶³ This relationship made it possible for Rizo to work with Lecuona and join the orchestra as the official pianist in 1938. There the developing musician encountered Ernesto Lecuona—one of the most renowned Cuban pianists and composers of the twentieth century, who influenced Rizo’s life and musical career. The two musicians’ close collaboration in the Havana Symphony Orchestra allowed Rizo to grow familiar with Lecuona’s contribution as a performer and composer. Many critics have noted that the pianistic styles of Rizo and Lecuona resemble one another. Both have expressive melodic characters, and it is this lyrical sensibility that pervades Rizo’s recordings of Lecuona’s music. There is no evidence that Rizo ever studied with Lecuona, but the two may have been connected indirectly. Rizo’s piano teacher Sentenat,

62. Sublette, *Cuba and Its Music*, 151.

63. Marco Rizo, “The Desi I Knew,” chapter 4, page 11.

studied with Joaquin Nin—an important pianist, composer, and pedagogue in Havana who had several important pupils, including Lecuona. It was Lecuona’s esteem for Rizo’s artistry that ultimately led him to ask Rizo to record his piano music shortly before his death in 1963.⁶⁴

It was during those years that Amadeo Roldán conducted the Havana Symphony Orchestra. Through Roldán and his association with international musicians who played with the ensemble, Rizo made vital connections with important figures in the classical music scene. His desire to expand upon and enter this cosmopolitan musical network eventually led him to Julliard in New York City to study with Rosina Lhévinne. However, as we will see, the new circumstances he faced in the United States changed his goal of becoming a classical pianist and led him to venture into jazz and cultivate vernacular forms of Latin American popular music.

The unique cultural environment of Cuba where Rizo received his musical training was fundamentally hybrid in nature. The opportunities that the developing musician received in Cuba provided him with the ability to create a fresh and invigorating musical style. Even though his music gained multiple new dimensions when he came to the United States, Rizo’s own identity as a musician in Cuba exemplified a vast and eclectic heritage. The interaction of the varying musical elements he encountered exemplifies the musical diversity of the Americas, through which he absorbed new elements and contributed fresh influences that shaped the transnational journey of his music from Cuba to the United States.

64. Marco Rizo, “The Desi I Knew,” chapter 4, page 11.

CHAPTER 3

RIZO'S HYBRIDITY OF LATIN AMERICAN MUSIC IN THE UNITED STATES

Multiculturalism should teach us to accept our weaknesses as well as our strengths, and work to improve ourselves.

-Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," 1991

Marco Rizo came to New York City in 1940 to study at the Juilliard School for two years, a scholarship facilitated by his piano professor in Havana, César Pérez Sentenat. Rizo belonged to a group of immigrants that came to the United States during the 1930s and 1940s. At that time, people did not migrate for the same strong political reasons as Cuban exiles during the post-1959 revolutionary years. Other motivations, such as personal preference or financial opportunities in highly industrialized countries, occasioned their migration. In Rizo's case, the composer's desire to establish an international career as a concert pianist and study at Juilliard—one of the most prestigious music conservatories worldwide—caused him to immigrate to the United States.

Upon his arrival in New York, Rizo played his entrance audition and began his studies with the renowned Russian piano pedagogue, Rosina Lhévinne, who stressed a "pure" musical interpretation of classical composers, with a precise rendition of the rhythms and expressive characteristics in the specific style of the composer. Lhévinne's instruction was based on the Russian School of piano playing which she helped implant in the United States. Rizo describes his studies with Lhévinne:

As a teacher, she trounced on a harsh tone, any kind of musical exaggeration, either in tempi or dynamics. ... She was a musical purist who hated mannerisms...[She contended that] "Beethoven should always

be played as Beethoven, not as Schubert or Mozart. Each composer has his own particular style and you should get to know it well. You should read biographies and get to know the pianist as a person,” she would insist.⁶⁵

During his studies with Lhévinne, Rizo made his début recital at Town Hall in 1941. His program consisted mainly of Latin American composers, such Ignácio Cervantes, Gilberto Valdés, Jorge Anckerman, and Ernesto Lecuona, as well as including some of his own compositions. The only European music he performed was by Claude Debussy. During the 1940s, it was the norm for Juilliard pianists to make their debuts in Town Hall. These recitals typically featured virtuosic European piano works and were usually full-length recitals performed by the featured soloist. The particulars of Rizo’s recital were unusual in that the Cuban musician shared the program with Gilda Lois, a dramatic monologist. Moreover, his program consisted mainly of the music of Cuban and Latin American composers. Rizo might have departed from the norms for his Town Hall debut to conform to US expectations about Latin American pianists. He may have also found it strategic to embrace music that was perceived as a novelty, rather than compete on the more difficult playing field of the canonical piano repertoire. Whether he arrived at this decision independently or through the advice of his piano teacher remains a matter of speculation.

Apart from immersing in a highly competitive culture at Juilliard, Rizo was forced to adapt to a new country with a different language and cultural traditions. In his writings, he describes the way he left Cuba without knowing any English.⁶⁶ He learned this language in New York City while studying at Juilliard and aspiring to establish his concert career. Fortunately, Rizo had an important support system in place during his

65. Marco Rizo, “The Desi I Knew,” chapter 6, page 2.

66. *Ibid.*, chapter 5, page 17.

move to New York City, where his aunt, Caridad Ayala, generously shared her apartment with him. Musically, Rizo had to adapt to a very different cultural system from that of his native Cuba—a situation that fundamentally altered his musical identity and influenced his creative work.

New York’s Cuban Music during the 1940s and 1950s

In the 1940s and 1950s, New York City emerged as a major site for the expansion and development of Cuban musical styles. The city’s technological advances in media, transportation, and communication enabled the quick inclusion of Cuban idioms that led to the creation and emergence of new genres such as mambo, salsa, and Latin jazz. The famous Palladium ballrooms were dance halls where the Latin ensembles that performed this music gained popularity in New York City. They facilitated a mixture of popular Latin American genres that included Afro-Cuban music mixed with jazz and created a new sound that, in turn, reverberated back to Cuba. The success of the Palladium ballrooms created a new craze for “Latin” music.

Many scholars have contributed to research on the emergence and development of Cuban genres in New York City.⁶⁷ Yet, according to Christina Abreu, less literature exists on the personalities that participated in the New York Latin jazz scene—individuals who transformed the music of both the United States and Cuba than on the

67. Lise Waxer, “Of Mambo Kings and Songs of Love”

Washburne, Christopher, *Sounding Salsa: Performing Latin Music in New York City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008).

Christina D. Abreu, *Rhythms of Race: Cuban Musicians and the Making of Latino New York City and Miami, 1940-1960* (Chapel Hill, NC : University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

actual dances.⁶⁸ According to Lise Waxer, Cuban music was the most prevalent form of Latin American music in New York City.⁶⁹ She describes the circular transmission between the two simultaneously developing cultures. In the statement below, based on the ideas of Margaret Kartomi, Waxer explains how traditions performed in different settings affected the constantly changing forms and practices of music.

The change of scenery undergone when musical traditions move from one social arena to another entails a complex shift in the range of resources available to and constraints placed on musicians; music cannot be considered a fixed, bounded entity that, beyond a few cosmetic alterations, remains essentially the same from place to place (see Kartomi 1981).⁷⁰

Waxer's statement applies to the continual musical interchanges between Cuba and the United States. The diverse audience members, performers, and cultural resources involved in this exchange inevitably transformed the nature of the music-making process which created a constantly shifting musical identity. Rizo's music itself changed as the composer moved to different cities throughout his career, especially during his move from Cuba to the United States. He began this trajectory with an immersion in Cuban vernacular sources, coupled with a strong classical foundation. This background, in turn, intersected with new elements of Latin jazz and popular musics in New York. There Rizo encountered a wider range of resources which included new recording and broadcast technologies. He also experienced new constraints, in which he was forced to negotiate stereotypical constructions of "Latin" music. All these factors led him to avoid an

68. Abreu, 13.

69. Lise Waxer, "Of Mambo Kings and Songs of Love: Dance Music in Havana and New York from the 1930s to the 1950s," *Latin American Music Review* 15, no. 2 (1994): 141.

70. Lise Waxer, "Of Mambo Kings and Songs of Love," 140.

Margaret J. Kartomi, "The Processes and Results of Musical Culture Contact," *Ethnomusicology* 25, No. 2 (May 1981): 140.

exclusive emphasis on the canonical classical training rooted in European musical models that he experienced at Juilliard. He simultaneously immersed himself in the NY Latin jazz scene, where his collaborators included Mario Bauzá, Desi Arnaz, Xavier Cugat, Arsenio Rodríguez, Perucho Irigoyen, Miguelito Valdés and Machito. Yet, Rizo diverged from these musicians through his integration of diverse vernacular musical elements with his classical training, through which he produced his own distinctive blend of hybridized music in the United States.

According to García Canclini, art is nothing but an aesthetic decision and music cannot be defined as a specific and stationary object.⁷¹ He affirms that music is similar to a living organism which is constantly adapting and changing with its surroundings. This statement is particularly true of Rizo whose career encompassed diverse styles. Even in Cuba, his music never fit into a single defined category. Instead it developed as a mixture of classical, jazz, and Afro-Cuban styles that dated from his formative years and incorporated innovative components that Rizo assimilated throughout his national and transnational journeys. The diverse environments in which he performed and created music responded to these musical styles and practices differently, which, in turn, reflected back on Rizo and the way that he projected his own persona as a creative artist. Although we define certain musical genres as Cuban in origin, the truth is that they are a product of the constant interplay between foreign cultures and the island as well as the specific context that surrounded and conditioned this interchange. Thus, Cuban music in New York created and established a musical identity that differed from the aesthetic perspectives of Cubans on the island. Rizo himself embodied this distinction.

71. Nestor G. Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. Lopez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 226.

Fascinated with jazz, Rizo was excited to meet this music in its main place of exchange. He noticed the difference between the reception of this repertoire on the island, in contrast to its rapidly-growing acceptance in the fast-paced environment of New York. In the United States, Latin American music was mainly associated with the stereotypes portrayed by Hollywood, which generalized the music from different Latin American countries into a single category. Rizo had to adapt, and he needed to change the way that he presented his music in order to negotiate these new social dynamics. Although he still performed, composed, and arranged Cuban musical genres, he designed this work for audiences much different from those he had encountered in Santiago or Havana. Many of the performance elements that Cubans on the island had perceived as “authentic” received an inaccurate representation in the United States. Musicians did not play the Cuban rhythms in the same way, and the patterns they substituted sometimes vaguely resembled those from Cuba. Rizo’s music now had to adapt to the aesthetic labels of audiences in the United States. This public had a narrow vision of Latin American music through its portrayal by popular musicians in New York City who had also adapted to North American tastes. These new audiences had been influenced by stereotypical definitions of Latin American music in Hollywood and the entertainment media. Although these changes may have occasioned a loss of historical and cultural accuracy, they nonetheless brought about gains in developing fresh conceptions of music. The flourishing culture that surrounded Rizo instilled in him dynamic new ideas that he elaborated in his performances, arrangements, and compositions.

Professional Roles as a Classical and Popular Musician in the United States

Similar to other immigrants seeking the American Dream, Rizo found that his US experiences differed from his original expectations. His initial aspiration was to become a classical pianist and study at Juilliard. Yet, only two years later, as a consequence of WWII, he was forced to face the decision of enlisting in the US army or returning home to Cuba. Given these choices, Rizo chose enlistment, which allowed him to remain in the United States. Through his military duties, he worked in new professional roles, which did not necessarily correspond to his classical piano career.

One of these unexpected duties occurred during his service for the 2D Army Band, which lasted from 1942-1945. Rizo was assigned to the Memphis, Tennessee headquarters and was given a position in the percussion section because the piano had no permanent place in the ensemble.⁷² Apart from playing percussion instruments, he assisted the conductor and arranged musical scores for the wind band. This ensemble consisted of clarinets, French horns, brass, percussion, and occasionally, the piano. Rizo's exposure to different percussion instruments of a traditional wind band, along with the opportunity to arrange musical scores for the ensemble, contributed to the complex percussion parts he later incorporated into his own compositions. The two orchestral works he created during his lifetime, *Broadway Concerto* and the *Cuban Symphony*, contained many intricate percussion parts that he most likely learned to orchestrate through his work in the US Army wind band. In his writings, Rizo mentions that these experiences in the military contributed to his future accomplishments. It was during this

72. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 6, page 4.

time that he experienced various kinds of American folkloric and popular music that he later incorporated into his musical language.

After World War II, Rizo's career took an unexpected turn when Desi Arnaz asked him to play for his Latin orchestra. Although Arnaz had made this request several times previously, Rizo never accepted the offer because of his desire to pursue a career as a classical pianist. In 1946, however, encouraged by the popularity and positive reputation of the band, he finally agreed.⁷³ This new job entailed much more responsibility than appeared on the surface. Apart from performing in the band, Rizo also composed and arranged much of the music. Arnaz made all the final decisions, but his reliance on Rizo facilitated his success. In "The Desi I Knew," Rizo describes his final 1986 meeting with Arnaz, who states: "You [Rizo] contributed so much to my career and music. We had the best orchestra in the world and I truly appreciate your part in making it a success."⁷⁴ It was Rizo who worked with the orchestra, rehearsing for long hours on a daily basis.⁷⁵ Later, when Arnaz starred as Ricky Ricardo in the *I Love Lucy* show, he brought many of members of his Latin jazz band with him to Los Angeles.⁷⁶ This ensemble consisted of piano, two violins, viola, cello, acoustic bass, two clarinets, flute and a horn section. Rizo counted among the musicians who made this journey with him.

Arnaz lacked formal musical training and therefore relied on Rizo and other professionally trained musicians to contribute to the band's arrangements and repertoire. Arnaz wanted Rizo to help him attain an authentic Cuban flavor for his Latin orchestra.

73. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 6, page 10.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

76. Desi Arnaz, *A Book*,

The latter musician reported that non-Cuban performers tended to rush the *cinquillo* syncopations of the conga.⁷⁷ In order to attain the refined musical inflections pertinent to Cuban music, Rizo rehearsed extensively with different sections of the ensemble. Many Afro-Cuban rhythms are played with a slight alteration from the original written rhythm. For this reason, it was difficult for the musicians who did not know these rhythmic patterns from childhood to perform them correctly.

Rizo's involvement with the Desi Arnaz Orchestra opened the door to greater opportunities. He met important figures in the Latin jazz scene such as Xavier Cugat, Moisés Simons, Francisco Raúl Gutiérrez Grillo ("Machito"), Mario Bauzá, Alberto Socarras, Duke Ellington, Chico O'Farrill, Pérez Prado, Enrique Jorrín, Tito Puente, Miguelito Valdés, Don Azpiazu, Cándido Camero, Dizzie Gillespie, Chano Pozo, and Celia Cruz,⁷⁸ and he composed and arranged jazz pieces and Afro-Cuban dances for the band. His early fusion of jazz and traditional Cuban music helped position Rizo as one of the early active Latin jazz musicians of his time.

Together, Rizo and Arnaz proved a successful team. They performed in the Copacabana Theatre, Paramount Theatre, and the Roxy Theatre in New York. In addition, their live performance in Radio City received positive reviews. More importantly, their collaboration on the *I Love Lucy* show transformed Rizo's career. It was his arrangement of Eliot Daniel's melody that we hear in the introduction of every *I Love Lucy* episode.

77. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 6, page 10.

78. Ibid.

Rizo's time in Hollywood shifted his focus towards composition. He studied harmony and composition with Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Igor Stravinsky for two years at UCLA while composing and arranging music for the *I Love Lucy* show. Yet, as a result of Rizo's decision to work with Arnaz, his contributions as a composer in the classical music scene were overshadowed. Today, Rizo's identity is usually recognized for his work with Desi Arnaz. His music is associated with the *I Love Lucy* show and other programs in Hollywood during the 1950s.⁷⁹

Although Rizo often identified his music as authentically Cuban, he also used a broader "Latin" designation to promote and market his work. In different advertisements he described his concerts as "Latin" and included composers from Venezuela, Argentina, and Puerto Rico. His personal writings reveal his knowledge of the musical history of different Latin American countries. One of his lifelong goals was to educate American and European audiences about Latin American music. This aspiration came to the foreground when he founded the non-profit organization, South America Project, which aspired to reach out to schools around New York City and teach children how to play Latin American percussion instruments.

During the 1990s, Rizo travelled to Russia, Tahiti, Bali, Hong Kong, Japan, Hungary, Romania, and the former Yugoslavia to give a series of lecture-recitals on Latin American music. In these events, Rizo usually lectured for thirty minutes on Latin American composers, instruments, rhythms, and the vernacular dance heritage before he performed the music.

Rizo took advantage of his Cuban nationality in order to market himself in an environment in which Latin American music was not widely recognized. Similar to

79. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 6, page 10.

Xavier Cugat, he promoted his identity as a Cuban and Latin American musician in order to gain popularity within a new culture that had a limited understanding of his musical roots. He did not believe that talent alone was enough to “make it” as a musician. This strategy of promoting himself as “Latin” became apparent from his initial performances in the United States. In contrast to Rizo’s earlier concerts in Cuba, which consisted mainly of European classical music by canonical composers such as Chopin, Beethoven, Debussy, and Mozart, at his Town Hall début he highlighted the Latin American repertoire.⁸⁰ Later, after his return to New York City from Hollywood, he gained an even greater interest in promoting Latin American music, especially since he was then recognized as the pianist from the *I Love Lucy* show.

In 1958, Rizo returned to New York and worked with artists such as Arnaz, Mario Bauzá, Xavier Cugat, Yma Sumac, and Paquito D’Rivera. According to his sister, Vilma, Rizo had a great love for New York City. He never returned to Cuba—a decision that might be attributed to the 1959 Revolution, which occurred after the filming of the *I Love Lucy* show. By that point, the Cuba Rizo would have returned to was not the Cuba he remembered.

García Canclini suggests that the lines between classical and popular genres become blurred once we start seeing these two elements blend in art, music, and literature. More traditional genres (e.g. classical music) will begin to gain characteristics of popular genres and vice versa. This phenomenon appears markedly in Rizo’s compositions, which contain diverse layers of classical and Afro-Cuban musics. In addition, García Canclini states that the move toward urban expansion intensifies cultural

80. Marco Rizo, “The Desi I Knew.”

hybridization, which is precisely what happened to Cuban music once it arrived in the United States.⁸¹ With new technologies in media (e.g. television and the *I Love Lucy* show) Cuban music intermixed with new popular forms. The resulting hybridity of different genres on the show influenced the conception and construction of Latin American music in the United States.

Even though Rizo wanted to establish a career as a classical pianist, it is evident that his contributions were more powerful in Latin jazz and popular music. He composed for and performed with the top jazz musicians of his day. His jazz compositions exemplify the early sound of this idiom in the United States. Through his work in the *I Love Lucy* show, he was one of the first to establish the jazz sound on American television. His use of Latin percussion instruments in combination with lyrical jazz elements allowed him to influence the music of the US through the transnational elements he brought with him from the island.

Compositional Language

Rizo's compositional career began as an arranger for the Rizo-Ayala Band—a Latin jazz band formed with his father in Santiago de Cuba. This band consisted of two trumpets, piano, double bass, timbales, maracas, conga, *tumbadora*, *güiro*, and vocals.⁸² Caridad Rizo, the young musician's aunt who lived in New York, sent the jazz scores used by the group. The music they performed consisted mostly of Cuban vernacular dance genres such as the *son*, *habanera*, and *danzón* that were mixed with North American jazz. The art of arranging eventually led Rizo to create his own compositions.

81. Nestor G. Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity*, trans. Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. Lopez (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 5.

82. Abreu, 46.

Due to his formative musical training, classical music also came to form part of his compositional output.

Rizo's experiences working with different genres enabled him to compose in diverse styles. He wrote the lead sheets for jazz bands, combos, and big bands while also composing in classical genres including symphonic works, piano pieces (such as toccatas, waltzes, and Cuban dance genres), piano concertos, and accompanied songs. Stylistically, his popular and concert music idioms cross-influenced each other. His concert music contained Afro-Cuban and jazz elements, whereas his jazz compositions and arrangements showed classical influences. For example, in his big band composition, *Chopin Goes to Rio*, he incorporated melodic lines from Chopin's *Waltz in B minor*, whereas in his symphonic composition, *Broadway Concerto* he used Afro-Cuban rhythms and instruments. This approach reflected the hybridization process that characterized Rizo's creative work.

Most of his compositional output consisted of classical piano pieces, which ranged from lyrical compositions to rapid virtuosic styles. The musical accompaniments of these pieces usually featured arpeggiated chords reminiscent of the Cuban *tres* (a small three-stringed guitar) and suggestive of Cuban vernacular dance rhythms such as the *habanera*, *son clave*, and *rumba clave*. As mentioned earlier, the titles of Rizo's compositions also reveal a strong Afro-Cuban presence, as shown in his *Cantata a la Madonna Negra*, *Liturgia a la Virgen de la Caridad* (choral work), "Ñañigo (piano)," "Ecue Yamba-O (piano)," and "La Negra Macusa (piano)."⁸³

83. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," unpublished book, 1991, box 3, folder 8, Marco Rizo Papers, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Manhattan, NY.

One of Rizo’s later compositions for piano that represents his ability to combine diverse styles is his “Junto a las Cascadas” (By the Cascades), composed in 1990. A short piano character piece, it contains many classical elements fused with Cuban vernacular roots and jazz influences. With the melody in the right hand and the accompaniment in the left, this piece is marked *Andante cantabile*. As its title suggests, it begins with an introduction that evokes a falling cascade with downward scales and arpeggios. This opening of the piece highlights a two-measure figure with ascending and descending arpeggiation in the left hand followed by a cascading effect in the right hand (Example 3.1). Below this figuration, the left hand initiates a syncopated pattern that anticipates the *habanera* rhythm maintained throughout the rest of the work.

Example 3.1 – “Junto a Las Cascadas”

The image displays two systems of musical notation for the piano piece "Junto a las Cascadas". The first system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a whole rest and a bass clef staff. The bass staff begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *legato* marking. It features a two-measure figure with ascending and descending arpeggiation. The second system also has two staves. The treble staff starts with a triplet of eighth notes, marked *mp* (mezzo-piano), and includes an *8va* (octave) marking. The bass staff continues the syncopated pattern from the first system.

The lyrical, legato style of the right-hand melody is by no means simple (Example 3.2). Here, the syncopated melodic line is doubled at intervals of thirds, fourths, and sixths. While the right-hand moves between triple and duple rhythms, the left hand remains in a strictly syncopated duple pattern that occasionally incorporates a triplet.

Although this piece may not seem difficult at first glance, it contains hidden pianistic complexities such as syncopation, rhythmic independence between the hands, rapid passagework, and difficult fingering combinations. The key signature of Db also creates difficulties in reading the notation with the use of all five black keys on the piano.

Example 3.2 - “Junto a las Cascadas”

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Junto a las Cascadas". It is written in grand staff notation (treble and bass clefs) in the key of D-flat major (three flats) and 6/8 time. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows the beginning of the piece, with a left-hand ostinato and a right-hand melody. The second system features a triplet in the right hand, a crescendo in the left hand, and a ritardando marking.

“Junto a las Cascadas” displays many characteristics of a traditional classical composition. This piece is tonal, shifting between standard diatonic and chromatic harmonies that were common to the nineteenth-century aesthetic ideals of composers such as Chopin and other Romantic figures. The ornamentation resembles embellishments present in Chopin’s music, which stem from the *bel canto* tradition of Italian opera in Paris and Italy during the nineteenth century. Melodically and rhythmically, “Junto a las Cascadas” reveals a similarity to Chopin’s Nocturne in D-flat Major. Both pieces use the same key signature, a 6/8 meter, and similar rhythmic gestures, including a left-hand ostinato that accompanies an embellished and syncopated melody. Rizo’s affinity for Chopin’s music comes as no surprise since he regularly incorporated the French composer’s works into his performance repertoire. Other notable

“The Charanga” is another one of Rizo’s short popular pieces written for voice and piano. Although the piano part is clearly notated, it resembles a lead sheet or popular music score because Rizo writes out the chord changes underneath using jazz theory notation. Also, the piano accompaniment is rather simple suggesting that the pianist may further develop the texture to include more rhythmic activity and additional improvised ornamentation. Although this piece belongs to a popular jazz style, the left-hand rhythmic pattern begins similarly to “Junto a las Cascadas” with an ostinato pattern derived from the *habanera* (Example 2.1). The left-hand part retains this pattern throughout the piece while the right hand doubles the vocal line.

The structure of “Charanga” is in an AABA form with a short piano introduction. Here the written piano part remains fairly simple with the right hand doubling the vocal line the entire time. In the B section, the right-hand continues to double the singer but now in parallel thirds. When the A section returns, the piano melody remains in thirds. The vocal part is syncopated throughout the piece. Beginning on the “and” of one with a quarter note it almost resembles a *clave* pattern. This rhythm is repeated three times in the A section and again during the return of the A. In the coda, the singer and pianist have a longer melody in half and whole notes—the first time in the piece where there is no syncopation.

Rizo composed the lyrics of this piece in Spanish, which Hal David set into English (Example 3.4). Yet, a number of discrepancies can be discerned by comparing David’s version (right column) with a faithful translation of the Spanish text (left column).

Example 3.4.1**English Translation of Rizo's Lyrics**⁸⁵

The Charanga, yes sir,
Is Charanga with flavor.
It's a new tropical rhythm like no other

Let's dance Charanga of my love
It's the new rhythm we all dance.
Come here my "black woman," I want to
have fun.

It's my Charanga of *obatala*.
Who leave on a horse
The drum already sounds
The handkerchief is seen
The Charanga is already leaving.

Now to end,
This is my Charanga of love.

Example 3.4.2**David Hall's Lyrics**⁸⁶

I could dance away with you,
To a secret rendezvous;
And we'll sway the whole night to the
magic of Charanga.

While we're dancing face to face,
Oh, my darling, let's embrace;
We'll be drifting into space while doing the
Charanga.

Back and forth we go on a magic carpet
ride,
Like two birds in flight, ev'ry now and then
we glide.
I just float on air like my feet had wings,
What a thrill it is when the leader sings.

A caballo on the horse,
Wave your handkerchief of course;
Oh, my darling, when you do,
I go oh, so wild for you.

Say you'll only dance with me,
To the Charanga melody.

Although Rizo's and David's lyrics vaguely resemble one another, they have very different meanings. Rizo associates the *charanga* with the Afro-Cuban *obatala* deity, whereas David relates it solely to the romantic experiences of a dancing couple.

85. Marco Rizo, "The Charanga," musical lyrics by Marco Rizo, translated by Cary Peñate, 1961, box 8, folder 17, Marco Rizo Papers, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Manhattan, NY.

86. Marco Rizo, "The Charanga," musical lyrics by David Hall, 1961, box 8, folder 17, Marco Rizo Papers, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Manhattan, NY.

Moreover, certain terms in Spanish such as *sabor* (meaning “taste” or “flavor”) at the end of the second verse refers more to the “authenticity” of the music than to a sensory experience. These elements lost in translation give one small perspective about how Rizo’s music was changed in order to be understood by American audiences. Not only did David alter the literal Spanish text, but he frequently misconstrued the meaning to fit mainstream US tastes. For example, his phrase “we go on a magic carpet ride” references an exotic association that has absolutely nothing to do with the *charanga* or Cuban music. These references to a “magic carpet” call to mind images of Aladdin and exotic representations of the Orient, and offer yet another illustration of Plesch’s affirmations about how Orientalism and images of a Latin American Other intersect.⁸⁷

Within Rizo’s compositions we see his aesthetic flavor as a musician. Although he strove to create a classical music style and aspired toward a career as a concert pianist, the popular culture that surrounded him had a significant impact on his musical direction. We see the musician’s Cuban “side” in the percussion arrangement he added to the *I Love Lucy* theme as well as in most of his classical compositions. During his life, Rizo’s was proud of his cultural background and often deemed his music as “authentically Cuban.” With his vernacular musical roots, classical training, and juxtaposition of prevailing jazz influences, Rizo positioned his music strategically in the marketplace, which allowed him to promote his distinctive musical sound in the United States.

87. Melanie Plesch, “Topics of Spanishness in Tango Scenes.

CHAPTER 4

THE IMPACT OF POST-COLONIAL REPRESENTATION OF LATIN AMERICAN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS IN THE HOLLYWOOD STUDIOS

So, screen credit on "I Love Lucy" was one detail I overlooked, though I believe that if I had asked for it, Desi would have made certain it was given.

-Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," 1991

Rizo's representation as a Cuban musician in the Hollywood studios provides a basis for understanding the way that North American audiences perceived Latin American musicians in the United States. Apart from Desi Arnaz, Rizo was the only other Cuban musician in the Ricky Ricardo band. It is likely that his experience derived in part, from US conceptualizations of race, which according to Pacini-Hernández, categorized Latino musicians according to polarized black-white divisions. Christina Abreu mentions that it was only "white" Hispanic Cubans who gained prominent careers as "Latin musicians" in the United States.⁸⁸ She notes that Latin American immigrants who passed for "white" did relatively well within the system, compared to those categorized as "black," who were accorded far less favorable treatment. Two examples of lighter-skinned Latin American musicians with successful careers were Arnaz and Xavier Cugat, both of whom were regarded as "white" Cubans. Others such as Mario Bauzá and Facundo Rivero, who were Cubans of African descent, never received the same acknowledgement as their "white" Cuban counterparts. Within this racialized conception, Rizo occupied an ambiguous position. On the one hand, he was regarded as a white

88. Abreu, 25.

Cuban, but, on the other hand, he was somewhat darker-skinned. As a result, it is possible that his physical appearance may have prevented his equal acceptance in the world of television and influenced his less favorable treatment on the *I Love Lucy* show.

Pacini-Hernández's ideas about the marginalization of hybrid groups offers insights into US perspectives on race and the way they may have affected Rizo's role in Hollywood. Pacini Hernandez states that: "The disavowal of racial and cultural mixture in the United States has been a powerful challenge to Latinos' popular music practices because it has excluded them from musical domains perceived in binary terms, such as 'black' and 'white.'" ⁸⁹ Rizo's work in Hollywood was credited to Wilbur Hatch, a white male musician. Although, like Arnaz, Rizo "passed" for white, his hybrid mixture of identities derived from his Cuban background remained incomprehensible or undervalued by American audiences. In this way his creative contribution occupied an ambiguous space for, although he did not receive credit for the music he composed for *I Love Lucy*, his work on the show helped him secure musical employment on other television sitcoms during the period.

On the *I Love Lucy Show*, Rizo assumed the role of a ghost composer, who never received credit for his work. Although Rizo appeared on different episodes of the show as a pianist in the Ricky Ricardo Orchestra, he was never credited for his arrangements or compositions. Usually ghost composers did not receive credit because the main broadcasting company wanted to keep the royalties under one "approved" name. This "approved" label was usually associated with musicians who had strong and lasting Hollywood reputations.

89. Deborah Pacini-Hernández, *Oye Como Va!: Hybridity and Identity in Latino Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 9.

Little information exists about why Rizo failed to receive credit for his compositions and arrangements. The Cuban-born musician explains that:

I am often asked why my name never appeared in the screen credits during the years of my work with Desi Arnaz. The answer is very simple. I never asked for it. Involved in many additional endeavors at the time, I never even thought to ask.⁹⁰

Despite this statement, we do not know whether Rizo would indeed have received credit had he asked for it, since Hollywood practices contradict this claim. Because Wilbur Hatch was named as the composer of the original compositions on the show, it would have been problematic to have added or substituted Rizo's name to the list of credits. This decision may have resulted from the racial discrimination that pervaded the United States during the 1950s, privileging Hatch's Anglo American identity over Rizo's Latino ethnicity. As Richard Carlin, who has addressed the subject of copyright privilege in research for his upcoming study on Morris Levy notes: "Racism is implicit in many aspects of business and American society—the black/Latino songwriters and performers were usually mistreated by the producers/industry owners."⁹¹ Yet, as Carlin aptly notes, these individuals operated slyly in ways that avoided the appearance of discrimination, by giving the impression that "this was a 'business' decision and not necessarily a racial one."⁹² This may have been the case with Marco Rizo.

The music on the show arose through the collaboration between Wilbur Hatch (music director), Eliot Daniel (composer), Arnaz, and Rizo. Yet, no detailed information referencing the work distribution between the four musicians exists. All screen credit was

90. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 7,

91. Richard Carlin, e-mail message from author, April 13, 2015. I would like to thank Mr. Carlin for providing me with insightful information on this topic.

92. Ibid.

given to Wilbur Hatch. The only other composer apart from Rizo who did not receive credit was Eliot Daniel. He wrote the melody to the theme song and according to Rizo, he was present in the day-to-day preparations of the show's music.⁹³ He was a well-respected song writer and film composer for Hollywood and thought that having his name associated with television would lower his prestige as a composer.⁹⁴ Television at this time was viewed with lesser stature than films in Hollywood circles. Also, the *I Love Lucy* show did not promise much success when it first began.. Therefore Daniel composed for the show with the condition that his name would not appear on the credits.⁹⁵

Many reasons might explain why Rizo minimized or even denied the lack of acknowledgement of his own work. One possible cause was that he was writing a biography of his friend and wanted to maintain a good relationship. Another explanation might be that he was reluctant to oppose an entire industry that was accustomed to this practice. After all, he was just one of many composers who did not receive credit for his work. Moreover, he did derive significant benefit from working as a musician on a renowned television show. Raising the specter of artistic credit could have started an argument he had little likelihood of winning. Moreover, bringing up the subject may have caused him to lose his job in Hollywood altogether. Together these circumstances shed light on Rizo's ambivalence toward confronting the marginalization of his musical role in Hollywood.

93. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," .

94. Joe Flint, "Eliot Daniel; Composer of 'I Love Lucy' Theme Song," obituary, *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1997.

95. Ibid.

I Love Lucy

I Love Lucy remains one of the most popular American TV shows in history. Broadcast during the golden years of television sitcoms, it aired for six seasons on a weekly schedule from October 15, 1951 until May 6, 1957. More than ten million people watched this show every Monday night, when it aired from 9 to 9:30 p.m.⁹⁶ Today the reruns are still streamed on television. The profits and popularity of *I Love Lucy* exceeded all expectations. Although many obstacles hindered the production of the show (related to issues of filming location, money, cast, and broadcasting), the business-savvy Desi Arnaz facilitated the success of the TV series through his persistence in convincing the network that this project was worthwhile.

During the latter part of the 1940s, Lucille Ball had been working on the radio program, *My Favorite Husband*. CBS wanted to convert this show into a television series but Ball only agreed to do so under the condition that Arnaz played the role of her husband. Due to the systematic racial discrimination in effect in Hollywood at that time, Arnaz's Latino background was not openly accepted and it became difficult to convince CBS to allow him to play this role. In response, Arnaz strategically planned multiple tours around the country to gauge the artistic response that he and Lucy would evoke among different theatrical audiences. After the success of this endeavor, CBS accepted Ball's wish and allowed Arnaz to play opposite her on the show, the title of which was changed from *My Favorite Husband* to *I Love Lucy*.

The plot of the show revolved around the televised marriage of Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball. The story of *I Love Lucy* involves Ricky Ricardo, who owns a night club

96. Arnaz, 233.

where his Latin jazz band performs and rehearses. His wife Lucy usually stays home in their apartment cooking, cleaning, and gossiping with her friend Ethel. However, Lucy is constantly trying to devise a way in which she can play a part on Ricky's show. Yet, she never gets the part because Ricky claims that she has no talent and wants her to stay home and be a good housewife. In *I Love Lucy*, the music plays an active role in the story while also setting the mood for the show. The opening credits, accompanied by the theme song, signal the opposing Cuban and North American cultural backgrounds of the two main characters. *I Love Lucy* frequently relies on diegetic music to establish the atmosphere on the screen when the Ricky Ricardo band performs in the nightclub. Other than these occasions, spoken dialogue dominates the weekly episodes.

I Love Lucy captivated audiences with its well-executed humor that often involved the disparities between Ricky's Cuban character and Lucy's American personality. Also, the relationship between the Ricardos and their neighbors Fred and Ethel Mertz created many scenarios for comedy. American audiences identified with the relationships among the characters. Lucy and Ethel were best friends who often conspired against Fred and Ricky. This battle of the sexes featured in many episodes was a trendy topic in US popular culture of the time.

Due to its close association with the mambo, Latin jazz, and rumba in New York, Cuban music grew synonymous with Latin American music as a whole. Thus, by extension, Desi Arnaz's character in *I Love Lucy* fit nicely with the stereotypes of both Cuban and Latin American musicians. Overall, the show adopted slightly skewed characters and created circumstances and scenery that pleased the aesthetics of North

American audiences at the expense of realistic understandings and representations of the lives of new Latino immigrants.

The real-life marriage between Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball differed from the roles of the characters on the show. Ball was an important actress who played leading roles on the radio and in television. In contrast, Arnaz was unable to find longstanding employment in Hollywood during the couple's first ten years of marriage. Instead of staying home, he decided to create his own Latin jazz band in New York City and tour around the country to make a living. Later he brought many members of this band to play on the *I Love Lucy* show. Some of these musicians included Bobby Jones (first trumpet), Charlie Harris (violinist), Joe Miller (saxophone), Ralph Felices (band boy), Roger Holler (saxophone), Jose Gutiérrez (first trombone), Fred Dutierrez (saxophone), Jack Pickering (trombone player), Jack Baker (saxophone), and Marco Rizo (piano).

Because of the extensive time that the Ricky Ricardo Band spent touring and performing in different US cities, it acquired a large repertoire before coming to Hollywood. Rizo had arranged many of the pieces for the New York band such as "Babalu," "Tabu," and "Cuban Pete," which remained part of the Hollywood ensemble's stock arrangements. These pieces were highly percussive and usually featured Arnaz on the conga drums. Rizo, Hatch, and Daniel were responsible for all the major production numbers performed by the band in the show. The theme song, originally composed by Daniel consisted of a Broadway tune in 4/4 meter. Rizo suggested to Arnaz that it would sound better in 2/4 time, with the addition of Cuban rhythms and percussion instruments. Arnaz liked Rizo's arrangement of the melody and it became the show's main theme song. Rizo describes how this transformation occurred. He explained:

Every time I heard the number, it seemed to lack something. It aired three or four times, arranged as a Broadway show tune, in 4/4 meter. I guess I was rather insistent about my feelings, but Desi had an open ear.

“Look, Desi, it would sound great if we changed the meter from 4/4 to 2/4 and added Latin percussion to the accompaniment.”

“OK, Marco, warm up the orchestra and let’s hear how it sounds.”

I revved up the band and watched Desi’s face light up. He excitedly insisted that some of the show’s principals hear it, and their reaction was the same. That’s how the *I Love Lucy* theme song came to have its distinctive percussion background. Desi would often mention how glad he was I suggested the change since it gave so much life to that melody.⁹⁷

In addition to his work on the theme song, Rizo fashioned numerous musical arrangements as well as composing original music. In his writings, Rizo recounts that his main duties on the show included performing, composing, and arranging.⁹⁸ Many of the musical numbers included duos and trios performed by Ricky, Lucy, Ethel, and Fred in various combinations.

Rizo explains the details of a regular work week in the filming of an *I Love Lucy* episode. From Monday until Wednesday the musicians did not attend the rehearsals since the time was spent running the principal parts and dealing with technical details of lighting and recording. On Thursdays, the band would come in to rehearse the pieces that they later recorded live on Friday evenings.⁹⁹ During these rehearsals, Desi would listen and let Rizo know if there was something he wanted to change. Rizo gave a detailed account of these rehearsals:

Once we readied the band for rehearsal of a new arrangement, Desi sat down to listen. If he was displeased by something he heard, the feeling immediately

97. Marco Rizo, “The Desi I Knew,” chapter 7, page 9-10.

98. Ibid.,

99. Ibid., chapter 7, page 14.

showed on his face. “Marco, let’s hear it again.” We would play the number two or three times as he formulated an opinion. “The rhythm was good on the first number, but on the second number I would like a change of color to something a little more soft.” Discerning what he meant, I quickly rescored the piece with woodwinds and flute. Desi loved a lot of rhythm along with the sounds of the woodwinds and flutes, muted trumpet and brass riffs with woodwind punctuation along with harp glissandi. The harp was Desi’s choice made especially for the *I Love Lucy* orchestra, giving visual character, besides possessing a universal appeal. I used a combination of 2 flutes, clarinet, and harp in the “Similau” number. This very simple arrangement had a lot of appeal, and Desi loved it. He often suggested changes in color, and once the score was approved, I could appreciate how it enhanced a visual element in the program.¹⁰⁰

This account reveals how Rizo spontaneously created and altered his arrangements. It seems that Arnaz often wanted changes to the music that Rizo would execute in the moment. This account also shows how Arnaz lacked formal musical training and depended extensively on Rizo and the other musicians to understand his ideas and carry out the musical changes in accordance with his tastes. In this way, Rizo’s contribution to the process remained undocumented and under-acknowledged.

I Love Lucy provided the starting point for the success of many of its contributors. Among them was Rizo, who, through this show, gained a valuable perspective in making a living as a musician in the United States. Surrounded by Hollywood business personnel, Rizo participated in an experience that diverged completely from his initial job accompanying silent films in Santiago. Although Rizo did not receive the proper treatment or compensation for his work, his experience on the *I Love Lucy* show helped him learn new ways to promote and market his music as a “Latin” composer.

100. Marco Rizo, “The Desi I Knew,” chapter 7, page 12.

From New York to Hollywood

The *I Love Lucy* show lasted for six seasons (1951-57).¹⁰¹ In a sense, Los Angeles signified for Rizo what New York had represented during his years in Havana. On this show Rizo acquired the opportunity to meet many important musicians and promote his work. During this period, he enrolled in UCLA to study composition with some of the most renowned musicians of the twentieth century, such as Igor Stravinsky and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Rizo states that the latter musician would often watch the *I Love Lucy* show and comment on his playing. Castelnuovo-Tedesco seemed to support Rizo's work with popular music by acknowledging his performances he heard on the television. Rizo's graduated from UCLA in 1953 with a Master's degree in Composition. The pieces he wrote during this period are not clearly documented, but it seems that he composed his bigger works such as the *Broadway Concerto* and *Cuban Symphony* upon his return to New York following his stay in Los Angeles.

During his time on the West Coast, Rizo had his own Latin orchestra, which performed in important locales in and around Los Angeles: the Mocambo and Ciro's in Hollywood; the Flamingo Hotel, Sands Hotel, and Sahara Hotel in Las Vegas; and the Crescendos Club in Reno.¹⁰² Many of his group members also belonged to the *I Love Lucy* band. One of the more important accomplishments of this ensemble included a performance with Laurindo Almeida, who was a famous guitarist at that time.¹⁰³ Outside of playing with his own group, Rizo performed "Rhapsody in Blue" at the Hollywood

101. Abreu, 28.

102. Marco Rizo, "The Desi Knew," chapter 7, pages 10-11.

103. Ibid., chapter 7, page 11.

Bowl with the Pops Orchestra under the direction of Johnny Green, who headed the MGM Music Department.¹⁰⁴

After his work on the *I Love Lucy* show, Rizo continued to work for CBS on several other sitcoms. Rizo worked as a performer, composer, and arranger for programs such as *December Bride* and *Joe Franklin show*, *Perry Como*, and *Hollywood Hall of Music*.¹⁰⁵ It was not until 1958 that Rizo decided to return to New York City. This voluntary decision demonstrated his affinity for a place that had now become home.

Through his work on the *I Love Lucy* show, Rizo met many Hollywood musicians and learned how to market himself in a competitive environment. Although other facets of his musical contribution in the areas of classical piano, Latin jazz, and popular music were also extensive, he is primarily remembered today for his association with the *I Love Lucy* show, due to its popularity in the United States and across the world.

Traditions of Music for Television Comedy

Television sitcoms of the 1950s reflected the social idiosyncrasies that occurred in middle class homes of that time. Much in the same way that television today represents contemporary social issues, *I Love Lucy* dealt with current events of the 1950s. Throughout that period, the percentage of television viewing in US homes increased from 9% to 90%. Television became a primary medium to impose trends and traditions in the popular culture.¹⁰⁶ The rapid growth of TV in American homes led the 1950s to emerge

104. Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew," chapter 7, page 11.

105. Ibid., Introduction, page 3.

106. Lynn C. Spangler, *Television Women from Lucy to Friends: Fifty Years of Sitcoms and Feminism*, 25.

as the “Golden Years” of television.¹⁰⁷ The shows of that period affected the perception of how people should interact as a family. The 1950s broadcast sitcoms reinforced notions that women were supposed to remain housewives and that men should dominate the household. They perpetuated negative stereotypes of various ethnic groups, undermining the authenticity and validity of marginalized US cultures. The *I Love Lucy* show reinforced and interrogated these stereotypes through the use of comedy.

Humor is the vehicle through which *I Love Lucy* both imposes and stretches the limits of ideas about gender roles and cultural acceptance. Spangler states that television sitcoms can serve as a medium to instill in their audiences moral and traditional values.¹⁰⁸ In the same way that *The Crosby Show* provided a model of everyday life in a middle-class African-American family, the scenarios presented on the *I Love Lucy* show brought new concepts of how a Latin American middle-class man behaves.. For many people in the United States during the 1950s, the idea of a Latino male married to an Anglo American female was a new concept. By bridging this divide, the show served to unify what were otherwise heterogenous Cuban and US cultures. Many minority groups, such as Asians, Latin Americans, and Native Americans did not receive as much attention in US television.¹⁰⁹ Because the *I Love Lucy Show*, coupled with Rizo’s evocative music, gave North American audiences a greater exposure to Latin American music and culture, this program had a pronounced effect on both the assimilation and misrepresentation of Latinos and their music in the United States.

107. Lynn C. Spangler, 30.

108. Ibid., 7.

109. Ibid., 8.

The Suppression of a Latino Composer

Rizo's composed his music to fit the stereotypes of what was considered Cuban for Hollywood, something that may have limited his output. The *I Love Lucy* show of the 1950s arose during a time when Latin American music was still a relatively new genre in the United States. In this show, Rizo and Arnaz created a style that fit into the preconceptions of what Americans believed Cuban music to be. Arnaz was not the most talented musician, actor, or even comedian but his quick-witted personality combined with the popularity of Lucille Ball appealed to American audiences. Rizo's understanding and musical support contributed to the success of the TV show. The "hyphenated"¹¹⁰ sound that Rizo and Arnaz created charmed the American public. By hyphenated I refer to the "in between" style that they had to acquire in order to fit into the stereotypes of Latin American music in the United States. In his writings, Rizo describes Arnaz's music as authentic with a creative twist. This creative "twist" referred to his involvement in Hollywood and interaction with North American musical elements. This bicultural experience involving the mixture of music from Cuba with the existing music from the United States thus created a new style that sounded exotic to American audiences. This process of accommodation and adaptation of Cuban musical culture is a central theme in the career of Marco Rizo.

Pérez Firmat, in his book *Life on the Hyphen*, addresses the biculturalism of Cuba and the United States by examining the interaction of the two cultures through comedy,

110. Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way*, University of Texas Press, 1994.

humor, and sometimes even absurdity in the *I Love Lucy* show.¹¹¹ Lucy often ridicules Arnaz's thick Cuban accent, yet, for her, it is his most attractive characteristic.¹¹² In the episode, "Be a Pal," Lucy believes that Arnaz is bored with their marriage. She tries to regain his interest by emulating a more Cuban demeanor by dressing up as his mother and dancing like Carmen Miranda. Lucy, who had never been to Cuba, believed that this music and dance was Cuban. In the scene where she sings Carmen Miranda's "Mamãe Eu Quero," she— aided by Hollywood— takes a series of cultural missteps, evoking tropes of Mexicanness such as the burro, poncho, taco, and singing of the popular hit "Granada." The cultural misrepresentation in this episode most likely would have insulted Cubans who would not have identified any of these elements with their own culture. Moreover, within the US social system at that time, Cuban exiles would generally have belonged to a higher social class than the working class migrants of Mexican descent living in Southern California. The conflation of these two different groups must have deepened the sense of indignity over the cultural misrepresentation portrayed in this episode.

After this scenario unfolds, Arnaz, who is disturbed by Lucy's actions, responds by telling her: "Lucy honey, if I wanted things Cuban I'd [have] stayed in Havana. That's the reason I married you, 'cause you're so different from everyone I'd known before."¹¹³ According to Pérez Firmat, this dialogue captures the notion of "heteroculturalism," in

111. Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way*, University of Texas Press, 1994.

112. *Ibid.*, 38.

113. Pérez Firmat, 38.

which opposite cultures attract: a major theme of the show.¹¹⁴ This “heteroculturalism” is present in Rizo’s music as he combines Cuban elements with Broadway styles. For example, in the main theme of the show, he uses Daniel’s Broadway-infused melody and combines it with Afro-Cuban rhythms and instruments. This arrangement displays the interaction of the two cultures on the show. This heteroculturalism is also apparent in Rizo’s other compositions and arrangements such as the *Lucy Cha*. Similar to the show’s theme song, this piece incorporates Cuban percussion within a Broadway style. Rizo’s fusion of Broadway musical elements, Afro-Cuban dances, and jazz melodies, creates new images of Latin Americans and their music in the United States.

Ricky’s character on the show emphasizes and reinforces Cuban stereotypes. From his accent, often ridiculed by Lucy, to Rizo’s music, which at times comes across as a stereotype of the Hollywood music associated with Carmen Miranda, the misrepresentation of Hispanic identity appeals to the normative biases and clichés of North American audiences. The scene from “Be a Pal” illustrates Walter Aaron Clark’s important point about the way that the Good Neighbor Policy of the 1940s led to a biased conception of Latin American music in Hollywood.¹¹⁵ Clark analyzes how Hollywood used Carmen Miranda to represent the entire Latin American region and failed to acknowledge the differences between musical genres from the diverse countries encompassed within it.¹¹⁶ Melanie Plesch makes a similar argument in relation to the Hollywood treatment of tango. She discusses the movie, *The Four Horsemen of the*

114. Pérez Firmat, 38.

115. Walter Aaron Clark, *From Tejano to Tango: Latin American Popular Music* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 3.

116. Ibid.

Apocalypse in which Argentine tango is misrepresented by incorporating musical elements and cultural objects from Spain and other Latin American countries.¹¹⁷

To some extent, the *I Love Lucy* show bears a close resemblance to other TV shows and Hollywood films that represented Latin America and its culture. The Good Neighbor Policy affirmed the acceptance of Latin America and its cultural traditions. Yet, the way that the US implemented these policies and the manner in which Hollywood represented this relationship called into question the notion of a fair and equal partnership. To some degree, the music on the *I Love Lucy* show realistically incorporates Cuban elements. Therefore,, I argue that this sense of cultural inclusion stems from Rizo's backstage and behind-the-scenes presence as a Cuban musician, whose contribution has gone largely unnoticed and which the present study aims to reclaim.

117. Melanie Plesch, "Topics of Spanishness in Tango Scenes," 2.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

How I wish that the positive elements of Carnival [sic] could be made an earth-wide reality. We are faced with a world splintered by divisive elements, where thousands of children die each day from starvation. It is a world where racial, social and political factions are all clamoring for attention more than solutions.

-Marco Rizo, "The Desi I Knew"

Marco Rizo ends his unpublished book, "The Desi I Knew" by comparing life to a *carnaval*. The *carnaval* represented for Rizo a space where subaltern groups could express themselves freely while achieving equality with all other ethnic societies. He hoped that through the heightened awareness of Latin American music he could help unite Cuban and North American cultures. He believed that through education diverse communities throughout the world would be able to achieve peace. Although Rizo lived his adult life outside his natal city of Santiago, his musical roots remained a part of his musical identity throughout his career. He envisioned a world where different cultures could coexist without any conflicts and unconditionally accept one other.

Rizo's words form an appropriate epigraph for the conclusion of this thesis because they align with the purpose of the present project, which is to observe and examine how musical interchanges have brought different cultures together. His work as a Cuban musician in mainstream American culture exemplifies the way that Latin American musicians have interpenetrated the music of the United States.

The interchange that took place as a result of Rizo's move to the United States corresponds with García Canclini's theory about the way that tradition interacts with

modernity. In Santiago and Havana, Rizo performed and arranged in traditional cultural practices based on *contradanza*, *danzon*, *rumba*, and *danzon*, which he combined with North American innovations such as jazz. He dealt with the interplay of tradition and modernity in Cuba, which then he then extended onto a horizontal plane when he moved to the United States and brought forth new layers of influence. The result of this interaction caused many styles to lose their initial identities, leading newer styles to emerge. The constant communication and interchange between these two cultures created new syncretized genres in which the traditional components become less defined. This process is evidenced by the way that the US bands altered the *cinquillo* rhythm which was a signature component of the vernacular dances of Cuba. Although some of “authentic” Cuban elements are lost other important qualities are gained due to the interaction with other musics present in the New York scene.

This artistic development helps us observe how transcultural contact can profoundly change the initial makeup of a specific musical style. Therefore, we can say that Rizo’s music is hybrid in two dimensions: first by virtue of his transnational journey from Cuba to the United States and the mutual effect that the music of each country had on the other, and second, through the different styles that he assimilated within his professional US musical roles, including elite concert music, jazz, Cuban vernacular dance styles, and music for the cinema and television. Although these genres contrast, each influences the other. Even though Rizo was proficient in multiple genres that crossed cultural borders, this was not an unusual practice during his time in Cuba and among Latin American composers living in the United States. Musicians in the US did

not need to become proficient in Latin American styles in order to live and work, but Hispanic musicians did need to master both idioms in order to succeed professionally.

The different professional roles that Rizo played in the United States, influenced by his formative training in a diverse musical environment of Cuba, allowed his music to have an important influence in Latin American music in the United States. Although he was not well-known in comparison to his contemporaries, Rizo contributed to the “Cubanness” of the music on the *I Love Lucy* show and had a crucial impact on the interchange of music between Cuba and the United States. His Cuban *sabor* allowed him to compose music that was truly Cuban and different from the standard “Latin” music in Hollywood.

Marco Rizo’s eclectic career had a significant effect on the promotion of Latin American music in the mainstream culture of the United States. Through his work in Hollywood and on the radio, he impacted the early Latin jazz scene. Rizo’s music for the *I Love Lucy* show was broadcast into millions of American homes across the country. Simultaneously, he pursued a prominent career in classical music both as a performer and as a composer. His different professional roles, which occasioned a unique and innovative musical language, contributed to the hybridization of American music culture. This study therefore forms part of and contributes to the broader research topic of intercultural exchanges throughout the Americas. By recovering and revalorizing a composer’s work that was often ignored/undervalued/erased from the official record, this project advances emerging research on Latin American music and musicians in the United States.

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