An Analysis of the Evolution of Improvised Double Bass Solos in Afro-Cuban Jazz

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AN ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF IMPROVISED DOUBLE BASS SOLOS IN AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ

By

Juan Manuel Monroy Romero

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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A doctoral essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
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AN ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF IMPROVISED DOUBLE BASS SOLOS
IN AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ

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Afro-Cuban music and jazz have had a very close interaction since their origins. Both music styles are the result of the synthesis of West African and European music. Improvisation is one of the several commonalities that these two music styles share. This study provides jazz double bass students with the insight into the origins and characteristics of Cuban music pertinent to double bass and improvisation. It analyzes the vocabulary of improvised double bass solos as influenced by Cuban music. It presents a comparison of several improvised bass solos from different historical eras in order to identify the characteristics of the improvisational vocabulary utilized, with the objective to trace a development lineage.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Latin music has had an important influence on American popular music, affecting all major musical styles developed in the United States including jazz, rhythm-and-blues, country music, and rock.\(^1\) Despite the richness and variety of Latin music, the majority of influential Latin music stems from only a few countries: Cuba, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico.\(^2\) “Of these, the impact of Cuban music, not only directly but through its effects on most of the others, has been much the greatest, most varied, and most long lasting.”\(^3\)

Since their inception, both Cuban music and American jazz have had a very profound interconnection. Each has been highly influenced by the music of West African. Despite the differences that exist between these two countries’ historical, social, political, and cultural environments, jazz and Cuban music are more interrelated than one would assume. Perhaps the most relevant example of Caribbean music’s influence in the formative years of jazz is piano player Jelly Roll Morton’s claim that it is necessary to include a “Spanish Tinge” in one’s music to differentiate jazz from ragtime.\(^4\) Morton’s music was substantially influenced by Caribbean music with its influence most notable in Morton’s compositions “Mamanita,” “The Crave,” and “Creepy Feeling.”\(^5\)

Improvisation also has played a significant role in the conception and evolution of both Cuban music and jazz. For example, the danzón is a musical form that originated in late 19\(^{th}\) century Cuba. It is one of the first African-influenced music styles ever recorded.

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\(^2\) Ibid., 3.
\(^3\) Ibid., 4.
\(^4\) Ibid., 38.
\(^5\) Ibid.
and contains collective improvisational sections very similar to those found in early New Orleans jazz ensembles. We can find another example in the early stages of the Cuban style called son. In this music, the sonero was expected to improvise melodic lines with words during the montuno section. This practice evolved and remains present in contemporary Cuban styles such as Timba.

The bass instrument has had a crucial function in both jazz and Cuban music. In the early 1920s, New Orleans jazz saw the string bass gradually replacing the sousaphone when the music transitioned from being an outdoor to an indoor practice. At approximately the same time, in the city of Havana the double bass began replacing the more traditional marimbula as the son became a popular style.

Not long after, the role of the bass in both Cuban music and jazz began evolving. In 1939, Duke Ellington’s bass player Jimmy Blanton became one of the first jazz bass players to improvise double bass solos. In the late 1950s, Israel “Cachao” López made a tremendous impact with his descargas (improvisational jams) – recordings that featured various improvised bass solos. After López, other double bass players have continued to develop improvisation synthesizing jazz and Cuban elements at a high level. These include Bobby Rodriguez, Andy González, Carlos Del Puerto, John Benitez, Charles Flores, Carlos Del Puerto Jr., Carlos Henriquez, and Luques Curtis.

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7 In son, the main vocalist of the group is referred to as the sonero.


9 Marimbula is a wooden box with metal keys that performed the function of the bass in changüí and early son.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Though there is a strong bond between jazz and Cuban music, the vital part that the double bass has played throughout the history of both music styles, including the development of the double bass as a featured solo instrument in *Afro-Cuban jazz*,\(^\text{11}\) has been a neglected area of study. Despite the tremendous development of jazz improvisation pedagogy in the last decades, my research has led me to conclude there is a lack of pedagogical material that approaches solo double bass improvisation in Afro-Cuban jazz.

NEED FOR STUDY

In 1947, bebop trumpet player John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie and Cuban percussionist Luciano “Chano” Pozo introduced their revolutionary musical style “Cubop” – a blend of Cuban music and bebop. Since then, musicians from all over the world have studied, composed, and performed this fusion of jazz and Cuban music, and it has become an important subgenre of jazz, with newer generations of jazz students expressing significant interest in the merging of these styles. Schools have responded by introducing classes, ensembles, and lessons on this topic in their curriculum. Nevertheless, only a few scholars have acknowledged and explored the richness that Cuban music has brought to the jazz world. It is of crucial importance for scholars to investigate the characteristics of Afro-Cuban jazz improvisation.

\(^{11}\) In this study, the term Afro-Cuban jazz will be employed to define the music that incorporates styles, rhythms, and instruments from Cuban folkloric and popular music with jazz elements and improvised solo organized in a traditional jazz setting.
STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this essay is to document and analyze the development of improvisation by double bass players in Afro-Cuban jazz. It will proceed to provide a historical, theoretical, and technical examination of Cuban musical styles, the role that improvisation and the double bass have played in these styles, and the relationship between Cuban music and jazz. It will analyze the rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic elements of improvisations of three Afro-Cuban jazz double bassists: Israel “Cachao” López, Andy Gonzalez, and Carlos Del Puerto Jr. It is hoped that this study can serve as a pedagogical resource for jazz educators and jazz double bass students who are interested in obtaining familiarity with double bass improvisation in Afro-Cuban jazz.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is intended to answer the following questions:

1. How has the history and evolution of Cuban music impacted double bass improvised solos in Afro-Cuban jazz?
2. What are the characteristics of the vocabulary employed in Afro-Cuban jazz double bass improvised solos?
3. How have Afro-Cuban jazz double bass improvised solos evolved from their origin to the present?
CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following paragraphs provide an historical overview of the origins and development of Cuban music, its relationship with jazz, and the evolution of the double bass in Cuban music. This narrative intends to present the most relevant Cuban music elements and concepts and provide the necessary tools to analyze the transcriptions of the improvised solos. There is debate on whether Cuban music should be notated in common (4/4) or cut-time (2/2). Though both notations have advantages and disadvantages, in this essay musical examples will be written in cut-time as it is the more common way Cuban music is written in the United States.

Origins of Cuban Music

After the arrival of Christopher Columbus in Cuba in 1492, the island became established as a Spanish colony. The first African slaves were brought to Cuba in the early 16th century on account of the decimation of the island’s native population who were enslaved by the Spanish in search of gold.¹ Because Cuba was an undeveloped economy, African slaves were brought in in small numbers until 1762 when the British occupied the port of Havana increased their import by thousands.²

In the late 18th century the Cuban economy experienced massive growth. With the advent of the Haitian revolution there was a considerable shortage of sugar. This provided the perfect opportunity for Cuba to step in and the island soon became the most

² Ibid., 34.
significant sugar producer in the world.³ To fill this demand, Cuba increased its importation of African slaves, with the vast majority arriving in Cuba between 1790 and 1886, the year when the island abolished slavery.⁴

Slaves from Africa came from different tribes with different customs and most importantly different musical traditions.⁵ This forced them to readapt their systems and their music to their new circumstances, leading to the creation of a broad and rich variety of music. Being the largest island in the Caribbean with an extensive regional diversity and the presence of a broad variety of African slaves, Cuba established an ample pathway for musical development.⁶

The vast majority of slaves brought to Cuba were from West and Central Africa and came from five principal ethnic groups: Fon (Arará), Yoruba (Lucimi), Ibo, Efik (Abakuá), and Bantu (Congo).⁷ Slaves in Cuba faced fewer restrictions about retaining their musical instruments as opposed to the Africans imported into colonial America who experienced far greater difficulty The usage of African musical instruments in Cuba also promoted and influenced the development of local musical instruments, such as the tumbadoras and the bongó, which were ultimately employed in other parts of the Americas.

³ Aimes, 57.
⁵ “The massive transports of Africans to the Americas brought a radical break with ancient lineages, hierarchies, and roles, which were destroyed by the dispersion of ethnic groups and by the very nature of slavery.” Maya Roy, Cuban Music: From Son and Rumba to the Buena Vista Social Club and Timba Cubana (Princeton and London: Markus Wiener Publishers and Latin America Bureau, 2002), 15.
⁶ Sublette, 122.
One of the most important musical elements brought to Cuba was a rhythmic pattern found in the music of the majority West and Central African ethnic groups. This pattern had seven strokes and used to be played on an iron bell (gankoqui). The pattern lacks a specific name, but musicologists call it the “standard pattern.” At present, it is commonly known as Abakuá rhythm, often referred to as a “6/8 bell pattern,” or “6/8 cowbell pattern.”

**Figure 1. 6/8 Bell Pattern**

![6/8 Bell Pattern](image)

The Haitian revolution brought to Cuba another crucial element in the development of the island’s music. At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, thousands of French slave owners with their slaves arrived in eastern Cuba fleeing the bloodshed in Haiti. With their involvement in the development of the coffee industry these refugees brought prosperity to the region. The cultural interaction of French courtly music and dances with African rhythms gave birth to the musical style known as tumba francesa.

The contredanse also was an essential musical genre brought by the French migration into Cuba. It was a dance style that eventually evolved into the contradanza habanera (also called habanera), though there is some evidence that it is possible that

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10 Sublette, 115.
11 Roy, 15.
12 Sublette, 119.
Cuba had already been exposed to these dance forms through Spanish and English contact.\textsuperscript{13} After the arrival of the \textit{contredanse}, the \textit{contradanza habanera} became the most popular music style of 19th century Cuba.\textsuperscript{14} The rhythmic cell used in the \textit{contradanza habanera} gave birth to the \textit{tresillo}, one of the most significant rhythmic cells in Cuban music.\textsuperscript{15} Later, the \textit{tresillo} figure would become the typical bass pattern for several Cuban music styles.

\textbf{Figure 2. Habanera}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{habanera.png}
\end{center}

\textbf{Figure 3. Tresillo}

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{tresillo.png}
\end{center}

In the early 19th century two different styles of \textit{contradanza} were popular in Cuba – one from Havana and one from Santiago.\textsuperscript{16} The Havana style was the most European-influenced version of the \textit{contradanza},\textsuperscript{17} while the Santiago style had a significant African influence. One of the characteristics of the \textit{contradanza} from Santiago was the \textit{cinquillo}, a five-note syncopated rhythmic cell present in the \textit{tumba francesa}, and used in an African dance called \textit{coyoyé}, brought to the eastern part of Cuba by African slaves from Haiti.\textsuperscript{18} The \textit{cinquillo} would become the foundation of the \textit{danzón}, and it

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[13]{Sublette, 119.}
\footnotetext[14]{Ibid., 120.}
\footnotetext[15]{Ibid., 134.}
\footnotetext[16]{Roy, 84.}
\footnotetext[17]{Ibid., 134.}
\footnotetext[18]{Ibid.}
\end{footnotes}
remains present in various Cuban and Cuban influenced styles like *son*, *salsa*, Afro-Cuban jazz, and *timba*.

**Figure 4. Cinquillo**

![Cinquillo Rumba notation](image)

**Rumba**

*Rumba* is a musical style developed by African descendants among low-class workers in the northern urban areas of Matanzas and Havana in the late 19th century. This secular music style had a large interactive and improvisational component. It was performed by an ensemble of percussion instruments, voice, and one to two dancers. The percussion ensemble consisted of a group of three wooden boxes of different sizes called *cajones*. The largest *cajón* (*tumbador* or *salidor*) provided a constant rhythm, the middle size *cajón* (*tres dos* or *tres golpes*) added a rhythmic pattern connected with the *tumbador*, and the smaller *cajón* (*repicador* or *quinto*) was used to improvise and engage in a musical dialogue with the dancer. The importance of the development of the improvisational vocabulary on the *quinto* drum was essential in the evolution of improvisation in Afro-Cuban jazz. In addition to the *cajones*, two more percussion instruments: the *guagua* or *catá*, a section of tree trunk struck with two sticks supporting the ensemble with a repetitive rhythmic pattern; and the *claves*, two cylindrical pieces

---

19 Roy, 49.
20 Ibid., 51.
22 Roy, 51.
of wood that were struck against each other, provided a continuous pattern that rhythmically locked the ensemble together. The vocal soloist began the piece with an introduction called the *diana*, a sequence of expressive and rhythmic syllables similar to the *cante jondo* style of Spanish *flamenco*, followed by the central theme and improvisation, where the singers interacted with what is known as question-and-answer. The soloist would sing the melody, and the chorus would reply to that melody creating a musical conversation. These particular call-and-response patterns are widely used in African religious and secular music.

There were three styles of *rumba* dances: *columbia*, *yambú*, and *guaguancó*. These styles had two variations depending on whether they came from Havana or Matanzas. The first one to appear was the *columbia*, a very acrobatic, aggressive, and virtuosic dance for a solo dancer, usually male. The *columbia’s* primary subdivision of the pulse was ternary, but the *quinto* player was free to improvise in a binary subdivision, creating an interactive rhythmic tension.

**Figure 5. Columbia Clave Pattern**

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23 Roy, 51.
24 Ibid., 54.
25 Ibid., 50.
27 Sublette, 257.
28 Ibid., 268.
The *yambú* was a sensual and elegant couples dance, played at a slow tempo with a binary pulse subdivision.\(^{29}\) The *guaguancó* is the most recent style of *rumba* to appear and became the most recognized and played *rumba* style around the world.\(^{30}\) It incorporates elements from both the *columbia* and *yambú*:\(^{31}\) Like the *yambú*, the *guaguancó* used a binary subdivision of the pulse, and was performed by a female and a male dancer. However, it was played at a faster tempo and with a rather aggressive and sexual character.\(^{32}\)

The appearance of *rumba* was paramount in the development of Cuban music. The patterns played by the *claves* in *rumba* evolved into the *clave*, the key pattern that holds and locks the rhythmic structure of Cuban music.\(^{33}\) The *catá* pattern used in *yambú* and *guaguancó* from Havana (later known as *cáscara*) was adapted from *rumba* into other Cuban styles, such as *son*, *songo*, and *timba*, and became an essential rhythmic pattern in Cuban-influenced styles developed outside of Cuba, such as *salsa*. Along with the *clave*, the *cáscara* became one of the most fundamental rhythmic patterns in Cuban music.\(^{34}\)

**Figure 6. Yambú and Guaguancó Clave Pattern**

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\(^{29}\) Roy, 58.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., 59.
\(^{31}\) Ibid.
\(^{32}\) “[the dance] centers around the movement called *vacunao*, an overt game of pursuit and capture of the female by the male.” Sublette, 271.
\(^{34}\) Peñalosa, *Rumba Quinto*, xxv.
Traditional *rumba* performance is still present in Cuba today, with the change that the *cajonés* were replaced by the *tumbadoras* or *congas*, the most iconic instruments in Cuban music. *Rumba guaguancó* has been incorporated into numerous contemporary arrangements. In most of these arrangements, the bassist plays the basic bass pattern of the *son montuno*, (which will be discussed later) or a *guaguancó* bass pattern that plays along with the open tones of the *tumbadoras* pattern from Havana’s *guaguancó*.

Figure 9. Havana Guaguancó Tumbadoras Pattern Adapted for a Single Player

Figure 10. Guaguancó Bass Pattern

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36 Ibid., xxv.
Danzón

During the 1800s, performing European music for the upper-class was an opportunity for African slaves to temporarily acquire a higher social status. Consequently, a vast number of them became highly proficient on both European musical instruments and European musical styles. These circumstances were crucial to the development of the danzón, a slow, elegant dance that was performed by large bands in dance halls where men and women went in search for a partner. The official birth of the danzón took place in Matanzas in 1879 when Cuban composer Miguel Failde presented his composition Las Alturas de Simpson. The traditional instrumentation of the danzón was the following: a brass section, clarinets, violins, and kettle drums. This instrumentation was called orquesta típica. The danzón presented a balance of European and African influences, and, despite being banned for a period because of its African influences, it acquired rapid popularity and became the first national music of Cuba.

The danzón was performed predominantly with European orchestral instruments, and its form was influenced by the European rondo, while its sound blended European melody and harmony with African elements such as the cinquillo and tresillo. The danzón was the first popular Cuban music style rhythmically based on the

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38 Roy, 81.
39 Roy, 81.
40 Ibid., 86.
41 Ibid., 87.
43 Ibid.
44 Sublette, 134.
clave, with the basic pattern played by the güiro (a hollowed gourd struck and scratched with a stick) aligned with the clave. This two-measure rhythmic cell, nowadays known as baqueteo, was built with the cinquillo followed by four quarter-note downbeats.

Figure 11. Baqueteo Pattern

In the beginning, the bass role in the danzón was performed by brass instruments such as the ophicleides and the tuba until becoming replaced by the string bass in the 1920s. The basic bass pattern of the traditional danzón consists of a measure with two half-notes and a measure with the tresillo. This pattern served as a kind of road map, played freely but with enough structure to maintain the groove and flow of the music.

Figure 12. Danzón Bass Pattern

The impact of the danzón on Cuban popular music triggered the emergence of a diverse group of music styles. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, composer and pianist Antonio Maria Romeu brought a fresh sound to the danzón by replacing the brass

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47 Moore, Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1, 50.
48 Ibid., 48.
50 Moore, Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1, 56.
51 Del Puerto and Vergara, 2.
section with the piano and incorporating flute, double bass, güiro, and pailas or timbales (two small drums attached, a creolization of the European kettle drums). This instrumentation gave birth to the charanga.

In the 1930s, when the son had already achieved success in popular Cuban music while the danzón appeared to be on its last legs,\textsuperscript{52} multi-instrumentalist Orestes López and bassist Israel “Cachao” López, members of Antonio Arcaño’s orchestra, introduced a new section in the danzón, known as the mambo or montuno section.\textsuperscript{53} This section brought new life to the danzón, giving birth to a new style called danzón de nuevo ritmo.\textsuperscript{54} In contrast to the other sections, the danzón mambo or mambo section had a higher rhythmic activity and more syncopation.\textsuperscript{55} The tumbadoras (incorporated in the danzón by Arcaño) and the campana (a small cowbell that was attached to the pailas) developed an essential role in the mambo section.\textsuperscript{56} The bass line used in the mambo section later became the primary bass line of the cha cha cha.\textsuperscript{57}

Figure 13. Danzón de Nuevo Ritmo Bass Pattern\textsuperscript{58}

In the 1940s, pianist, singer, and composer Damaso Peréz Prado developed the mambo,\textsuperscript{59} a musical style influenced by danzón, son, and American big bands. This style

\textsuperscript{52} Sublette, 451.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{54} Del Puerto and Vergara, 7.
\textsuperscript{55} Roy, 93.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57} Del Puerto and Vergara, 7.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
arrived in America in the 1950s and had immediate success, especially in New York City. *Mambo* was a powerful up-tempo, horn-driven dance music usually performed by an expanded big band with *tumbadoras*, *bongó*, and *pailas* with cymbals. In *mambo*, the bassist played the basic bass line of the *son*, but the notes were played shorter.

**Figure 14. Mambo Bass Pattern**

In 1953, Enrique Jorrín created another style that evolved from the *danzón*, the *cha cha chá*. Defined by steady downbeats and less syncopation, the *cha cha chá* offered dancers a less complex dance style. The basic bass pattern of the *cha cha chá* comes from the *mambo* section of the *danzón*. As in the *mambo* style, the notes are played short.

**Figure 15. Cha Cha Cha Bass Pattern**

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59 Not to be confused with the *mambo* section of the *danzón*. Fernandez, 63.
60 Sublette, 508.
61 Roy, 95.
62 Del Puerto and Vergara, 14.
63 Ibid.
64 Roy, 56.
65 Ibid., 98.
66 Del Puerto and Vergara, 8.
67 Ibid.
Son

Son is considered to be the most influential popular music style in Cuba, and the most well-known Cuban musical style in the world. As with most Cuban musical styles, it is hard to trace a single and precise predecessor. However, it is impossible to neglect the tremendous influence that *changüí* had in its conception. Changüí originated in the mountainous regions around Guantanamo located on the eastern side of Cuba during the early 19th century. It was a highly syncopated style, profoundly influenced by *tumba francesa* and other Afro-Haitian rhythms such as *nengón*, a style that used an African instrument known in Cuba as the *tingo-talango* or *tumbandera*, which developed the function of the bass.

The instruments used in *changüí* were the *guayo*, a metal scraper that was scratched and struck with a metal rod; the *maracas*, two shakers made of gourd; the *tres*, a Cuban creole version of the Spanish guitar that had three courses or double strings; and the *bongó*, two small hand drums attached to each other. Like the *quinto* in rumba, the *bongó* was the instrument with the highest improvisational role. Bongó players were used to produce a distinctive sound called *bramido*, achieved by moistening one finger

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71 Lapidus, 123.

72 *Tingo-talango* or *tumbandera* was a flexible tree branch fixed to the ground, bent while attached to a taut string or chord that was plucked to generate a low sound. Sublette, 50.

73 Sublette, 50.

74 Ibid., 16.

75 Ibid., 22.

76 Ibid.
with saliva and sliding it across the head of the drum⁷⁷ which mimicked the sound of an African drum called ekue used in Abakuá religious music.⁷⁸ The bass function was performed by the botija or botijuela, a clay jug with two holes that was blown to produce its sound.⁷⁹ Later, the botijuela was replaced by a lamellophone instrument descendant from the African mbira called marímbula,⁸⁰ a wooden box with attached metal strips of different sizes that produced different pitches.⁸¹ The marímbula player had to sit on top of the instrument and pluck the metal pieces with one or both hands.⁸² It was also common for marimbuleros to often use the marímbula box as a percussion instrument, hitting the side and back of the box with one hand while plucking the metal strips with the other.⁸³

Figure 16. Marímbula Changüí Pattern⁸⁴

![Marímbula Changüí Pattern]

When changüí was played at a high tempo, the marímbuleros would play the pattern with a laid-back triplet time feel, pulling the two 16th-notes toward a triplet subdivision.⁸⁵

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⁷⁷ Sublette, 339.
⁷⁸ Moore, Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1, 79.
⁷⁹ Roy, 122.
⁸⁰ Sublette, 340.
⁸¹ Roy, 122.
⁸² Lapidus, 17.
⁸³ Ibid., 66.
⁸⁵ Moore, Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1, 46.
Figure 17. Illustration of Marímbula Laid-Back Triplet Feel in Up-Tempo

Changüí

![Diagram of Marímbula Laid-Back Triplet Feel in Up-Tempo](image)

The marímbula pattern in changüí was the first trace of anticipation in Cuban bass lines. Later, the anticipation device became widely used in son and many other styles that appeared after it. This pattern also lines up with the two open tones in the basic tumbadoras pattern played in son commonly known as marcha. Changüí was the first Cuban style to use a tumbao in a nonpercussion instrument, the tres. In the son, tumbaos became an essential element of the style. There is a similarity between the tres and marímbula tumbaos relationship in changüí and the piano and bass tumbaos relationship in the son.

Son emerged in eastern Cuba during the late 19th century around the same time as guaguancó appeared on the western side of the island. The establishment of the Cuban Republic in 1902 led to more movement around the island, with people from the eastern side of Cuba traveling to Havana, bringing with them a rustic form of son called son oriental.

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86 Moore, Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1, 46.
87 Lapidus, 138.
88 A fundamental pattern played by a specific instrument that repeats over and over through the course of a composition or a section. Orovio, 215.
89 Moore, Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1, 47.
90 Sublette, 334.
This rural style was profoundly influenced by *changüi*. There was an absence of the *clave* pattern, and the instrumentation was very similar to the one used in *changüi*.\textsuperscript{91}

When *son* arrived in Havana and Matanzas, it was influenced by the *rumba* performed in the streets. Perhaps the most relevant outcome from the *rumba* influence in *son* was the development of the *son clave* pattern.\textsuperscript{92} Although almost identical to the *rumba clave*, it differed in that the last note of the three-side was played on the downbeat. This minor variation gave a slightly less syncopated feel to the pattern. In *son*, the *son clave* pattern was also performed by the *claves* instrument used in *rumba*.

**Figure 18. Son Clave Pattern**

[Figure 18]

In the early *son* from Havana the improvisational role was developed by the *bongó* player and the singer. The *bongó* player improvised resembling a *changüi bongosero*,\textsuperscript{93} and the *sonero* (*son* singer) improvised melodic lines with lyrics and poetical content during the *montuno* section alternating with a repetitive line from the *coro* (chorus),\textsuperscript{94} while the *marimbula* (and to a lesser degree the *botijuela*) performed the bass function. The patterns played by the bass instrument in the early Havana *sones* were simpler and less syncopated than the *changüi* pattern.\textsuperscript{95} During the verses, most bass patterns were built with a half-note followed by two quarter-notes (the *tresillo*, or the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[91] Lapidus, 138.
\item[92] Ibid.,
\item[93] Fernandez, 28.
\item[94] Ibid., 32.
\item[95] Moore, *Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1*, 74.
\end{footnotes}
habanera rhythmic cell). In the montuno section the bass had the opportunity to increase its rhythmic activity and include more syncopation.

Figure 19. Three Basic Son Bass Patterns

![Image of three basic son bass patterns]

It is important to take into account that the marimbula was a pitched percussion instrument and could only play a limited number of notes. Despite efforts made to intonate the instrument, precise tuning was neither achieved nor needed as a certain amount of dissonance was desired, and indeed valued as a characteristic of the old-style son.

When the double bass appeared in the son instrumentation in the 1920s, many marimbuleros switched to the double bass and played it with a marimbuleros mindset. For this reason, it is common when listening to early son records to hear the double bass

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96 Moore, Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1, 74.
97 This is the climax section of the son, where the singer improvised alternating with a background phrase sang by the chorus. Del Puerto and Vergara, 10.
98 Moore, Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1, 74.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.
player staying on a V chord when the tres player had already moved to the VI chord, or sometimes to arpeggiate a major chord over a minor chord.\textsuperscript{101} This worked in this context via the percussive attributes of the instrument and the fact that the double bass was not amplified.\textsuperscript{102} Thus, the most essential aspect to consider in early son bass lines is the percussive sound and feel inherited from the marímbula.

The danzón was the most popular style in Cuba at the time when the son arrived in Havana in 1909. Although it was considered a lower-class musical style, the son started to gain popularity among the upper classes with the appearance of the sextetos (sextets).\textsuperscript{103} The most important sexteto at the beginning of son was the Sexteto Habanero, which established the standard instrumentation of the sextetos: tres, maracas, bongó, clave, guitar, and botijuela.\textsuperscript{104} In 1923, when the double bass was already being used in danzón, Gerardo Martínez, who was a singer, claves player, and founding member of the Sexteto Habanero, began playing the double bass, becoming the first double bass player in the history of son.\textsuperscript{105} Soon after, most sextetos discontinued the use of the marímbula and incorporated the double bass into their instrumentation.\textsuperscript{106} With the addition of the trumpet to the son in the late 1920s, the sextetos era reached its end, opening the way for the septetos.\textsuperscript{107}

\textsuperscript{101} Moore, Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1, 74.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{103} Roy, 131.
\textsuperscript{104} Soon replaced by the marímbula. Ibid., 129.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., 131.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
The **septetos** period witnessed the development of a great tradition of trumpet players in Cuban music,\(^{108}\) with the trumpet acquiring an improvisational role, improvising lines alternating with the *coro* in the same fashion as a *sonero*.\(^{109}\) The *Septeto Nacional* was the most significant group of the *septetos* era. Ignacio Piñeiro, leader and double bass player of the band, became an essential figure in the evolution of the *son*.\(^{110}\) Piñeiro grew up playing *rumba* in Havana. Later, he began playing the double bass in *Sexteto Occidental*.\(^{111}\) In 1926, he founded the *Septeto Nacional*. His *rumba* influence, compositional talent, and innovative arrangements led the *son* to the next step in its development.\(^{112}\) Piñeiro became one of the first musicians to incorporate other dance styles into the *son*, creating the *guajira-son*, *rumba-son*, and *guaracha-son*.\(^ {113}\)

*Guajira* was a country song form initially performed in 6/8 meter. The first section of *guajiras* was composed in a minor key, succeeded by a second part written in a major key.\(^ {114}\) *Soneros* adapted the *guajira* style to a 2/4 meter when it was included in their compositions.\(^ {115}\) The bass patterns used in *guajira* were the same as those used in *son*.

*Gvaracha* was a dance style from the colonial period. It was used in theater plays, and it featured a satirical tone.\(^ {116}\) When *guaracha* was first incorporated in the *son*, the bass line employed the same patterns as *son*. Later, the *guaracha* bass pattern

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\(^{108}\) Davies, 61.
\(^{109}\) Ibid., 26.
\(^{111}\) Roy, 132.
\(^{112}\) Sublette, 366.
\(^{113}\) Roy, 133.
\(^{114}\) Orovio, 101.
\(^{115}\) Sublette, 487.
\(^{116}\) Ibid., 238.
incorporated other styles and became a staple bass pattern in Cuban music, *salsa*, and
Latin jazz.\(^{117}\)

**Figure 20. Guaracha Bass Pattern\(^{118}\)**

> In the course of the *sextetos* and *septetos* days, the *son* achieved a high level of
development.\(^{119}\) However, it was not until the *conjuntos* era that the *son* got closer to its
contemporary sound.\(^{120}\) The figure of Arsenio Rodríguez represents a massive leap
forward in the evolution, not just of the *son*, but of all Cuban music.\(^{121}\) Rodríguez was
exposed to *rumba* music while he was growing up in the provinces around Matanzas and
Havana.\(^{122}\) After settling in the city of Havana, he started playing with *son* groups. In the
early 1940s, Rodríguez became the leader of a *son* group where he established a new
instrumentation with the introduction of the piano and *tumbadoras*.\(^{123}\) Rodríguez, who
was blind due to a childhood accident, earned the nickname *El Ciego Maravilloso* (the
marvelous blind man) because he was a very talented *tres* player, as well as a multi-
instrumentalist, and became recognized as an influential composer and great innovator.\(^{124}\)

Anticipation in bass *tumbaos* was used to some degree in the *sextetos* and *septetos*
eras. However, this device became more prominent during the *conjuntos* era. This device

\(^{117}\) Del Puerto and Vergara, 19.
\(^{118}\) Ibid.
\(^{119}\) Roy, 137.
\(^{120}\) Ibid.
\(^{121}\) Moore, *Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 1*, 105.
\(^{122}\) Sublette, 442.
\(^{123}\) Roy, 137.
\(^{124}\) Orovio, 181.
became one of the most essential and intriguing elements of bass *tumbaos*.\(^{125}\) Over a single chord, bass line anticipation was achieved when the first note of each measure was tied to the last note of the preceding measure, while in chord progressions the bass line anticipated every chord, playing the root of each chord one note before the chord’s downbeat. The following two figures are examples of anticipation using the *tresillo* pattern.

**Figure 21. Bass Tumbao—Tresillo With Anticipation (Single Chord)**

![Figure 21](image)

**Figure 22. Bass Tumbao—Tresillo With Anticipation (Chord Progression)**

![Figure 22](image)

Rodríguez is recognized as a great bass *tumbo* composer, as some of his bass lines became as important as the main melody, and, in fact, many of his compositions could be identified by just listening to the bass *tumbao*.\(^{126}\) Rodríguez developed longer bass *tumbaos* built with a combination of two different basic bass patterns.\(^ {127}\) The following figure is an example of the combination of *tresillo* and *habanera*, both patterns anticipated.

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\(^{126}\) Ibid, 107.

\(^{127}\) Ibid., 111.
Rodríguez created bass *tumbaos* in the same way he composed melodies for other instruments. He made use of different notes in his bass lines contrary to the commonly used root and fifth, giving his *tumbaos* a melodic nature. The figure below is an example of this innovation.

Before Rodríguez, most bass *tumbaos* were a measure long when written in cut-time, or a half-measure when written in 4/4. This means that the rhythmic bass pattern that was played on the two-side of the *clave* was also performed during the three-side of the *clave*. In other words, bass *tumbaos* were neutral to the *clave*.

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131 Ibid., 105.
Rodríguez brought a new awareness of the clave to Cuban music. This clave consciousness is reflected in his several composed bass tumbaos that were aligned with the clave.\(^{132}\) The following figure is an example of Rodríguez’s clave-aligned tumbaos.

As can be ascertained from his recordings, there were three bass players who performed in Arsenio’s conjunto at one time or another: Nilo Alfonso, Agustín García, and Lázaro Prieto.\(^{134}\) Because Arsenio’s bass tumbaos were composed, these bass players had very little freedom for improvisation in their bass lines.\(^{135}\)

\(^{132}\) “His clave was at the same time deeply felt and almost an intellectual puzzle.” Sublette, 481.
\(^{133}\) Ibid., 118.
\(^{135}\) “Having little desire to invent or embellish his part, Lázaro Prieto described himself as a soldier who played the bass tumbaos as taught to him by Arsenio Rodríguez.” Ibid., 40.
Eventually, the timbales were added to the conjuntos lineup establishing the standard instrumentation that would be adopted by the New York salsa groups beginning in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{136} In son, the timbales played two basic rhythmic patterns: the cáscara (a rhythmic pattern played by catá in Havana style rumba), and the cencerro pattern.\textsuperscript{137} The cáscara was played on the side of the timbales during the low-intensity sections,\textsuperscript{138} while the cencerro pattern was played on the timbales bell called the cencerro during the montuno section.\textsuperscript{139} Both patterns are aligned with the clave, and they are still used in Cuban music and Afro-Cuban jazz today.

\textbf{Figure 27. Cáscara Pattern with Clave}

\textbf{Figure 28. Cencerro Pattern with Clave}

\textsuperscript{136} Sublette, 478.
\textsuperscript{138} Mauleón, 76.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 81.
Cuban Music and Jazz

From their origins, Cuban music and jazz have had a profound interconnection. Although each musical style has followed its own path, both genres have been influential upon each other throughout their development. They share a common origin, being the result of the blend between African culture and European culture.

The first Cuban style that became a direct influence on jazz was the *contradanza habanera*[^140] a rhythm brought to America by way of Mexico. In 1884-85, the Eighth Regiment band of the Mexican Cavalry traveled to New Orleans to take part in the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition.[^141] The ensemble consisted of approximately 60 to 90 musicians who performed Mexican waltzes, *schottisches*, and most importantly, *danzas*. Because of the influence of Cuban music in Mexico, these *danzas* were a Mexicanization of the *habanera*.[^142]

The performance of the band was a great success.[^143] So much so that soon after their concert their music was published, selling thousands of copies in New Orleans.[^144] There is more evidence showing that following the Mexican Cavalry band’s appearance other bands from Mexico came to New Orleans. When these ensembles returned to Mexico, many of their members opted to leave the regiment to remain in New Orleans and become part of the music scene of the city.[^145]

[^143]: “What the Mexican group played was almost certainly of Cuban origin.” Storm Roberts, *Latin Jazz*, 4.
One of these musicians was saxophone player Florencio Ramos, who became one of the founding members of the New Orleans musicians’ union. Joe Viscaya was another saxophonist who later played with Jack “Papa” Laine’s group. Cuban-Mexican clarinetist Alcides Nuñez went on to become an early member of the *Original Dixieland Jazz band*, although he quit the band by the time of their first recording.

The most significant evidence of the influence of the *habanera* rhythm in early 20th century New Orleans’ music is found in the music of creole piano player Ferdinand Joseph Lamontthe, better known as Jelly Roll Morton, during the ragtime and early jazz era. Morton affirmed that it was necessary to include what he called the “Spanish Tinge” in music to differentiate jazz from ragtime. Morton openly declared that he listened to a lot of “Spanish” music and a Cuban influence can be ascertained in several of his compositions where he clearly incorporates the *habanera* rhythm, e.g., “Creepy Feeling,” “Mama Nita,” and ” The Crave.”

As in the early 20th century it became easier to travel, this fostered better communication between Cuban and American jazz musicians. These circumstances promoted the birth of the first fusion of jazz with a foreign music style. Mario Bauza’s arrival in New York City in 1930 is often cited as one of the most significant events in the development of Afro-Cuban jazz. Bauzá began working in the Harlem jazz scene, and became the lead

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149 Morton used the word “Spanish” to refer to places where people spoke the language.
151 Ibid., 38.
152 “It was the first consistent, conscious blending of Cuban and jazz elements since Jelly Roll Morton’s *habanera*-based compositions.” Ibid., 59.
153 Ibid., 92.
trumpet player of Chick Webb’s band. In 1937, Bauzá persuaded his brother-in-law Francisco Raúl Gutiérrez Grillo, known as “Machito,” to join him in New York. “Machito,” a maracas player and outstanding rumba and son singer, along with Bauzá as his musical director, in 1940 created a new sound blending Cuban music and big band jazz with his band Machito and his Afro-Cubans. Although Cuban music was not well accepted and considered of lower status among some jazz musicians in that time, the band achieved great success among audiences.

It is thought that the terminology of 2-3 clave and 3-2 clave was coined during Bauzá’s time. Although this concept has never been associated with a particular person, it is probable that Bauzá developed it because of the need to explain to American musicians the way Cuban music worked. For its study, the clave was divided into two equal parts. The result of splitting the clave was a measure with two strokes and a measure with three strokes. These were called two-side and three-side of the clave respectively. When the clave cycle started on the two-side it was called 2-3 clave, and when it started on the three-side it was called 3-2 clave.

Figure 29. 3-2 Son Clave

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154 Ibid., 93.
155 Sublette, 464.
156 Ibid.
159 Ibid.
The impact of Bauzá’s figure extends beyond his collaboration with *Machito and his Afro-Cubans*. Bauzá became a close friend and mentor of a young trumpet player named John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie who, along with Charlie Parker, became a founder of the *bebop* movement in the 1940s.\(^{160}\) Through their interaction, Gillespie became intrigued with Cuban rhythms\(^{161}\) becoming the first American jazz musician to introduce bass *tumbaos* in his compositions.\(^{162}\) The influence of Cuban music can be observed in his early composition *Pickin’ a Cabbage*.\(^{163}\) Although the arrangement is played with a swing feel, the opening bass line is written in the style of a *tumbao* and is aligned with the *clave*.\(^{164}\)

\[\text{Figure 30. 2-3 Son Clave}\]

\[\text{Figure 31. “Pickin’ a Cabbage” Bass Line}\]


\(^{162}\) Ibid., 89.


\(^{164}\) Ibid.

\(^{165}\) Ibid.
The bass line in his famous “A Night in Tunisia” is another example of the Cuban bass *tumbaos* influence in Gillespie’s music.\(^{166}\) Its syncopated rhythmic pattern is two beats long and consequently neutral to the *clave*.

**Figure 32. “A Night in Tunisia” Bass Line**

In 1947, Gillespie was looking to feature *tumbadoras* in his band.\(^ {167}\) He asked Bauzá for a recommendation, leading to his influential work with Luciano “Chano” Pozo, a Cuban percussionist, singer, dancer and composer born in Havana. Pozo had absorbed the *rumba* and *son* tradition of his country and had recently relocated to New York.\(^ {168}\) This collaboration led to Pozo debuting with Gillespie’s band at their Carnegie Hall concert in 1947,\(^ {169}\) initiating the Cubop movement.\(^ {170}\) Sadly, Pozo was killed just a year after he started playing with Gillespie.\(^ {171}\) Pozo’s contribution to Cubop extended beyond his work as player\(^ {172}\) as he co-wrote with Gillespie a number of compositions that were to become part of the standard jazz repertoire. Perhaps the most influential of these compositions is *Manteca*,\(^ {173}\) an AABA form composition that has a bass *tumbao* played over the A section and a walking bass on the B section.\(^ {174}\)

\(^{167}\) Shipton, 199.
\(^{168}\) Ibid.
\(^{169}\) Ibid.
\(^{170}\) Sublette, 572.
\(^{172}\) Ibid.
\(^{173}\) Ibid.
**Figure 33. “Manteca” Bass Line**

![Manteca Bass Line Image]

**Descargas**

At the same time that Cuban musicians were traveling to New York, American jazz musicians were visiting Cuba. During the 1950s bassist Milt Hinton journeyed there with the Cab Calloway Orchestra. In Havana, Hinton met Israel “Cachao” López and they played numerous jam sessions together. The influence of jazz on Cuban musicians originated a new style called *descargas* – jam sessions with simple compositions that gave less importance to the arrangement than instrumental solos. The first example of *descargas* is cited as Bebo Valdés’ *Con Poco Coco* in 1952.

In 1957, the Cuban record label *Panart* released *Cuban Jam Sessions in Miniature* by the bass player Israel “Cachao” López. The release became one of the most acclaimed *descargas* records of its time and is often cited as one of the most influential in Cuban music. López’s *descargas* were based on the *son* and *rumba* traditions and featured virtuosic solos from some of the best musicians in Havana.

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176 Fernandez, 76.
177 Ibid.
179 Ibid.
181 Fernandez, 65.
183 Fernandez, 78.
Israel “Cachao” López

Israel “Cachao” López was born into a musical family.\textsuperscript{185} He became a professional bassist from a very early age, and was quickly recognized for his outstanding facility on the instrument leading him to become part of the Havana Symphony Orchestra when he was only 13 years old.\textsuperscript{186}

López was a great innovator in two different eras. In the 1930s he was part of the evolution of popular Cuban music when he and his brother Orestes López developed the \textit{mambo} section of the \textit{danzón}.\textsuperscript{187} Then, in the 1950s, he again transformed Cuban music with his \textit{descargas}.\textsuperscript{188}

López reinvented the role of the bass in Cuban music. He is recognized as the first bassist to present the double bass as a solo instrument,\textsuperscript{189} and provided the foundation for the development of a bass improvisation tradition in Cuban music. López’s pizzicato technique defined the archetypal sound of the double bass based on his concept of making the bass sound like a \textit{conga} drum.\textsuperscript{190} To achieve this sound he used to pull the strings away from the fingerboard, getting a short, percussive, hollowed sound.\textsuperscript{191} Further expanding this percussionist mindset, he would often to pluck the strings with one hand, while tapping a rhythm on the body of the bass with the other.\textsuperscript{192}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{185} Orovio, 125. \\
\textsuperscript{186} Ibid., 126. \\
\textsuperscript{187} Fernandez, 65. \\
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{189} Moore, \textit{Beyond Salsa Bass: The Cuban Timba Revolution Volume 2}, 140. \\
\textsuperscript{191} Fernandez, 48. \\
\textsuperscript{192} Jarvis, 78. 
\end{flushright}
López, like many of his contemporaries, eventually moved to the United States after the Cuban revolution.\footnote{Jarvis, 22.} In 1963 he settled in New York City and quickly established himself as one of the first-call bassists in the city’s Cuban music scene.\footnote{Ibid., 24.} López’s music further had a tremendous impact on the development of the new style known as salsa.

**Salsa**

*Salsa* was a popular musical style that emerged in New York City during the second half of the 1960s.\footnote{Orovio, 194.} It was firmly based on Cuban music, but also encompassed a wide variety of influences – from the music of other Hispanic countries like Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, to rock and roll, rhythm and blues, and jazz.\footnote{Ibid.} *Salsa* reached its peak success in the 1970s and had a tremendous impact on the growing Hispanic community in New York, as well as in Latin America and beyond.\footnote{Cesar Miguel Rondon, Frances R. Aparicio, and Jackie White, *The Book of Salsa a Chronicle of Urban Music from the Caribbean to New York City* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2.}

Like most American music styles of the 1960s, *salsa* was impacted by the arrival of electric instruments. In 1962, the amplifier company Ampeg released an electric double bass under the name of “Ampeg Baby Bass.”\footnote{The Ampeg baby bass was based on the design from a small company called Zorko. Gregg Hopkins and Bill Moore, *Ampeg The Story Behind the Sound* (Milwaukee WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1999), 101.} The instrument became popular among *salsa* bassists due to its percussive sound, deep thud, and short decay.\footnote{Ibid., 102.} Despite
its great acceptance in the *salsa* community, the instrument unfortunately never had the success that Ampeg projected and its production ended in 1972.  

**Andy Gonzalez**

During the *salsa* boom in New York there was a flourish of several great musicians of Puerto Rican origin, among them Andy Gonzalez. Following López’s tradition of percussive notes and the concept of using the bass as a melodic drum, he became one of the first-call bassists during the peak *salsa* years. Gonzalez cofounded two of the greatest Afro-Cuban jazz bands of his time: *The Fort Apache Band* with his brother Jerry Gonzalez, and *Conjunto Libre* with percussionist Manny Oquendo. With his deep knowledge and musical proficiency, Gonzalez became one of the most important bass players in Afro-Cuban jazz, becoming a role model for future generations of bass players such as Carlos Henriquez and Luques Curtis.

**Contemporary Cuban Music**

At the same time, music on the island of Cuba continued to evolve and new music styles developed there. In 1969, the bass player Juan Formell formed an ensemble called *Los Van Van*. With this band, Formell developed a new genre called *songo*, a blend of Cuban *son* with styles from other countries, like *reggae*, *merengue*, American pop, and

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200 Hopkins and Moore, 102.
201 Douglas Tejada, “Stylistic Analysis of Two Influential Salsa Bassists Eddie ‘Gua-Gua’ Rivera and Salvador Cuevas” (doctoral essay, University of Miami, 2004), 61, accessed April 2, 2016, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
202 Ibid., 58.
204 Roy, 159.
funk music. In 1973, the pianist Jesús “Chucho” Valdés formed Irakere, which would become the most successful experimental group of its time. Irakere incorporated elements from folkloric and popular Cuban music, rock, jazz, and classical music, and consisted of very talented musicians who eventually went on to pursue successful solo careers, the most notable being saxophonist Paquito de Rivera, trumpet player Arturo Sandoval, and bassist Carlos Del Puerto.

**Carlos Del Puerto Jr.**

Carlos Del Puerto Jr. is the son of Carlos Del Puerto and grew up in Cuba. Influenced by his father’s music, he started playing the cello at a young age. Later, he switched to the double bass and studied at the National School of Music and Arts in Havana. Del Puerto Jr. is acclaimed for his high level of musical skills in Cuban music and jazz, and achieved worldwide fame due to his work with top jazz musicians Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea, and with Cuban musicians Frank Emilio Flynn and Arturo Sandoval.

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205 Roy, 159–160.
206 Ibid., 165.
207 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The purpose of this essay is to document and analyze the development of improvisation by double bass players in Afro-Cuban jazz. It will proceed to provide a historical, theoretical, and technical examination of Cuban musical styles, the role that improvisation and the double bass have played in these styles, and the relationship between Cuban music and jazz. It will analyze the rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic elements of improvisations of three Afro-Cuban jazz double bassists: Israel “Cachao” López, Andy Gonzalez, and Carlos Del Puerto Jr. It is hoped that this study can serve as a pedagogical resource for jazz educators and jazz double bass students who are interested in obtaining familiarity with double bass improvisation in Afro-Cuban jazz.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is intended to answer the following questions:

1. How has the history and evolution of Cuban music impacted double bass improvised solos in Afro-Cuban jazz?

2. What are the characteristics of the vocabulary employed in Afro-Cuban jazz double bass improvised solos?

3. How have Afro-Cuban jazz double bass improvised solos evolved from their origin to the present?
PROCEDURES FOR ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Question One requires consulting books on the history of Cuban music, Cuban music bass method books, Cuban music performance methods, and improvisation in Cuban music to understand the essential elements that define Cuban music, where these elements come from, the origin and characteristics of improvisation in Cuban music, the role of the double bass in Cuban music, and the relationship between Cuban music and jazz. This research will provide useful knowledge in the analysis of the selected double bass improvised solo transcriptions.

Question Two requires an analysis of the information gathered in Chapter 2 to determine the three double bassists for this study. The selection will then be narrowed by listening to their recordings to choose the improvised double bass solos that will be examined. The transcription of the improvised double bass solos will be done with the aid of Transcribe, a transcription software used to maximize accuracy. Subsequently, the study will proceed to execute an in-depth analysis of the transcriptions.

Question Three requires comparing and contrasting the transcribed solos to trace an evolution line in improvised double bass solos in Afro-Cuban jazz.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Transcriptions of Israel “Cachao” López’s

“Descarga Cubana”

“Descarga Cubana” was recorded by Israel “Cachao” López in 1957 on his debut album *Cuban Jam Sessions in Miniature*.¹ In this piece, López is accompanied solely by percussion instruments with only the bass responsible for establishing the D-Mixolydian harmonic center. “Descarga Cubana” has been hailed as a milestone in Cuban bass solo improvisation for both being the first time that the double bass was spotlighted as a solo instrument in a Cuban music recording and for the impact this solo had on the following generations of bassists. Although the solo was brief, its syncopated rhythmic phrases and drum-like approach became an integral part of the Cuban bass improvisational vocabulary.


From measures 9-12, López explores polyrhythms by repeatedly playing a rhythmic dotted half-note phrase. The simultaneous co-existence of the original pulse and the secondary time-feel established by López creates a rich rhythmic tension that resolves in measure 12 when he re-establishes the original pulse. As Simha Arom formulates, polyrhythms have always been an essential element of Central African music.

López then plays a series of syncopated melodic phrases until measures 23-24 when he twice plucks a G2 and slides it to an A2. These glissandos resemble the sound of the *bramido* played in changüí and early *son* by bongó players.

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2 *Polyrhythm*, also known as *rhythmic counterpoint* or *cross-rhythm*, is the superimposition of two or more contrasting rhythms. Arom, 39.

3 Ibid., 42.
After a solo loaded with syncopation, López closes his solo in measures 25-26 with a final phrase made up of several downbeats. Such phrasing lowers the rhythmic intensity, creates a sense of release, and assists in bringing the solo to a satisfying conclusion. After completing his solo, López plays a tumbao for a few measures followed by a tutti figure to set up the next solo.

“Y Tú Que Has Hecho”

“Y Tú Que Has Hecho” appears on the descargas album Jam Session With Feeling released in the US in 1958. The piece begins with a slow-tempo section employing voice and lyrics in a danzón style followed by an energetic higher tempo descarga that stays on a single chord. The bass solo is accompanied by piano and tres providing a D-Mixolydian sound and López takes more time to develop his solo.

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Overall, this proves an excellent example of López’s drum-like approach to the double bass.

López’s solo begins with a four-measure rhythmic phrase using only the note D3, thus giving minimum weight to the harmony to focus on the rhythmical aspect of the improvisation. The first three dotted half-notes of the phrase create a rhythmic counterpoint against the original time-feel, while the following group of three quarter-notes becomes a rhythmic diminution of the first group. López plays upbeats throughout the phrase, building rhythmic tension that arrives at a release on the last note which is the only downbeat of the phrase.

In the chapter, “Rhythmic Cells for Improvisation” in The Conga Drummer’s Guidebook, Michael Spiro provides eight rhythmic cells that contain quinto rhythmic improvisational vocabulary and suggests students use them as starting points for developing improvisation. He advocates that a way to give cadence to a syncopated rhythmic cell is to add a downbeat after the last note of the line.

Figure 2.5 “Y Tú Que Has Hecho” bass solo, mm 1–4

Beginning in measure 5, López uses odd groupings to create a polyrhythm. In this case, a group of three pitches (C3, D3, and A2) are repeated several times implying 3/4

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6 Ibid., 57.
over the original time signature (2/2). This hemiola\(^7\) generates the illusion of having two different time pulses happening at the same time. He then concludes his phrase by breaking up the three note group in measure 9 when D3 is played twice.

**Figure 2.6 “Y Tú Que Has Hecho” bass solo, mm 5–12**

The impact of Cuban percussion on López’s improvisational style can be observed in the numerous occasions that he develops rhythmic lines using a high note and a low note. This is a widespread practice usually found among Cuban percussionists. The bongó and timbales have two drums of different sizes; the large drum is called hembra (female) and the small drum is called macho (male), as well as the basic tumbadoras set, which consists of tumba and conga. Cuban percussion players tend to develop phrases alternating between the high and low drum during their improvisation.

From measures 10-22, López uses an A3 (small drum) and a D2 (large drum) to develop rhythmic variations in the style of a percussionist. Because of the fast tempo of the piece, the note pairs in these measures can be described as flams\(^8\). In *The Conga Drummer’s*

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\(^7\) Hemiola is the interplay of two groups of three notes with three groups of two notes. Arom, 81.

Guidebook, Michael Spiro talks about the flam as a vehicle to thicken the texture of a musical idea.\(^9\)

Figure 2.7 “Y Tú Que Has Hecho” bass solo, mm 9–24

In measure 47 López expands the two-drum concept incorporating polyrhythms and chromaticism. He establishes D3 as the high pitch and moves it up chromatically while alternating with an open D2. He continues moving up the high pitch until the end of measure 55 when he reaches D4. Afterward, he plays single-note consecutive upbeats that end on measure 59 to return to the small drum–large drum concept of measures 60-67.

\(^9\) Spiro and Rayan, 109.
In this solo, we can find several examples of tension-and-release cycles within the *clave*. In measure 23, López plays a melodic line using the exact rhythm of the *cásca*ra providing stability to the two-side of the *clave*, while on the three-side of the *clave* he plays a series of consecutive upbeats creating tension.
The same thing happens in measures 33-34 when the three notes that López plays on the two-side of the clave (measure 33) lineup with the cáscara, while on the three-side of the clave he generates tension by playing continuous quarter-note triplets.

In measure 83, López provides a stable two-side of the clave playing three quarter notes starting on a downbeat and lined up with the cáscara, whereas on the three-side of the clave (measure 84) he builds up rhythmic tension by playing a cross-rhythm with dotted quarter-notes.
When the solo is approaching its end in measures 72-81, López begins incorporating *double-stops*\(^{10}\) which provides a fuller sound to his percussive notes.

**Figure 2.12 “Y Tú Que Has Hecho” bass solo, mm 72–83**

![Figure showing double stops](image)

**“Yo No Camino Mas”**

“Yo No Camino Mas” is included on the album *Maestro de Maestros*,\(^ {11}\) released in 1986, one of several recordings that López did during his days in Miami, Florida. The composition uses I-IV-V7-IV, one of the most common chord progressions in Cuban music. This solo is one of the few examples where López used an Ampeg Baby Bass instead of an acoustic double bass.

For the first four measures of his solo, López improvises around the bass *tumbao*, which helps to maintain the flow of the music.

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\(^{10}\) The term *Double-stops* means to play two notes simultaneously on a string instrument.

Figure 2.13 “Yo No Camino Mas” bass solo, mm 1–4

From measures 5-14, López organizes his solo in four-measure patterns of rhythmic tension-and-release. In measure 5 he plays a stable rhythm followed by a syncopated descending line with some chromatic passing tones. This provides rhythmic tension that leads to a release in measure 9, when López returns to the rhythm played in measure 5. He then proceeds to play a complex syncopated line comprised of large interval leaps and triplets followed by the release in measure 13 accomplished by playing two quarter-notes starting on the downbeat. Also, in measure 6 we can see López’s jazz influence with his use of chromaticism.
In measure 14 López plays a descending melodic line with consecutive quarter-note upbeats until measure 17 when he continues playing the melodic pattern using dotted quarter-notes. This creates both a polyrhythm and rhythmic augmentation of the melodic pattern.
Regarding note choices, López’s jazz influence is evident in his use of chord tones, arpeggios, and scalar patterns. Although mostly diatonic, López’s solo includes chromatic passing tones and an ascending chromatic line.

Although the piece has ample harmonic activity, López manages to explore his drum influences by choosing one common tone for the whole progression to delve into
the small drum–large drum concept. For example, from measure 32-37 López plays rhythmically using just two pitches (E2 and E3).

Figure 2.17 “Yo No Camino Mas” bass solo, mm 29–40

![Image of musical notation]

“Cemento, Ladrillo y Arena”

In 2007, López recorded a solo on “Cemento, Ladrillo y Arena” during his collaboration with Cuban singer Issac Delgado on the album *En Primera Plana*. This is purported to be the last solo that López ever recorded. He passed away a year later in March 2008 at 89 years of age.

At the beginning of the solo, López plays a simple melodic motif that develops into a rhythmic augmentation using quarter triplets in measure 2.

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From measures 3-7 López plays melodic lines alternating between binary and ternary subdivision. This practice is commonly found in *rumba quinto* improvisations. Although each variation of *rumba* has a primary pulse subdivision, both duple and triple pulse subdivisions are simultaneously present, leaving the *quinto* player free to improvise alternating from binary to ternary and vice-versa.¹³

López’s classical training is also evident in his playing. One early example is his use of the melody of “Chanson Triste” by Serge Koussevitzky in his *danzón* composition

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This influence can be observed here in the second half of the solo. In measure 13 López switches from pizzicato to arco and then improvises rhythmically using D3, then alternates between melodic phrases and sixteenth note patterns, and closes his solo employing a fast tremolo while ascending the chromatic pattern in measures 23-26.

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Figure 2.20 “Cemento, Ladrillo y Arena” bass solo, mm 13–26
Transcriptions of Andy Gonzalez

“Imágenes Latinas”

“Imágenes Latinas” appeared in 1978 on Con Salsa Con Ritmo Vol. 2 Tiene Calidad, the second album by Conjunto Libre and is one the earliest bass solos recorded by Andy Gonzalez. This solo opens with a fast pizzicato tremolo demonstrating Gonzalez’s virtuosic right-hand technique.

Figure 3.1 “Imágenes Latinas” bass solo, mm 1–8

Gonzalez’s solo on “Imágenes Latinas” clearly exhibits López’s influence as it employs a percussive sound, continuous upbeat melodic lines, consecutive triplets, odd groupings, cycles of tension-and-release in clave, flams, and polyrhythms. The three following figures provide some examples:

Figure 3.2 “Imágenes Latinas” bass solo, mm 5–8

Figure 3.3 “Imágenes Latinas” bass solo, mm 21–28

Figure 3.4 “Imágenes Latinas” bass solo, mm 29–36
In measure 42 Gonzalez begins to play an ascending line using continuous upbeats in perfect fifths which ends on measure 47, leading to a repetitive dotted half-note rhythmic phrase creating a polyrhythm.

**Figure 3.5 “Imágenes Latinas” bass solo, mm 41–52**

![Consecutive Upbeats]

During his solo, Gonzalez plays several upbeats and syncopated lines. Most of them end on the downbeat on the two-side of the clave. However, when the lines end on the three-side of the clave, they resolve to a note that matches a stroke of the clave or the cáscara.

**Figure 3.6 “Imágenes Latinas” bass solo, mm 13–16**

![Syncopation and End of the Phrase Matches with the Clave]
We can identify Gonzalez’s *rumba* influence in this solo by the use of what David Peñalosa calls the *quinto lock*. Peñalosa states, “The *quinto lock* is the basic form of the part played on the *quinto* drum in *rumba*.”\(^{16}\) It consists of the *son clave* displaced by one eighth-note.\(^ {17}\) This means that each stroke of the *quinto lock* occurs right after each stroke of the *clave*.\(^ {18}\)

Because the *quinto lock* is a starting point for *quinto* improvisation, it has several variations. One variation omits one or more strokes of the *quinto lock*.\(^ {19}\) The other variations requires playing a double stroke on one or more strokes of the *quinto lock*.\(^ {20}\)

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 3.
20 Ibid., 8.
In measures 18-20, Gonzalez plays variations of the *quinto lock*. Starting on the three-side of the *clave* (measure 18), the first stroke of the *quinto lock* is doubled, the second stroke omitted and the third is played. In measure 19 (two-side of the *clave*), he plays a series of consecutive upbeats that includes the two strokes of the *quinto lock*. Finally, in measure 20, Gonzalez plays the first and second stroke of the three-side of the *quinto lock*.

*Quinto* players often use only the three-side of the *quinto lock*, making it a displaced *tresillo*. In measure 38, Gonzalez plays the first and third strokes of the displaced *tresillo*. In addition, he plays the first and second strokes of the displaced *tresillo* in measure 40.

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21 Ibid., 7.
Gonzalez concludes his solo by playing a bass *tumbao* comparable to how López ends his solo in “Descarga Cubana.” From measures 81-84, he plays a *clave* aligned *tumbao*, and from measures 85-92 he plays a *tumbao* based on an anticipated *tresillo*. 

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**Figure 3.12 “Imágenes Latinas” bass solo, mm 33–40**
“Río Está Hondo”

*The River is Deep*\(^{22}\) was the first album of the Fort Apache Band and was recorded live at the Berlin Jazz Festival in 1982 and released in 1983. It is a remarkable blend of Cuban music and jazz, as the music included both Cuban folkloric and religious music as well as two bebop compositions. Like López in “Descarga Cubana,” Gonzalez’s solo in “Río Está Hondo” is accompanied solely by percussion instruments.

In “Río Está Hondo” Gonzalez brings the idea of using the bass as a drum to a different level. He bases his solo on the use of three notes (Eb, Db, and Bb) and plays...

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with them as if they were three drums or three different sounds of a percussion instrument, very much in the way a *conga* player would use slaps, mute, and open tones.

**Figure 3.14 “Río Está Hondo” bass solo, mm 1–9**

**Figure 3.15 “Río Está Hondo” bass solo, mm 46–53**
Gonzalez’s skills in motivic development are on display here. He constructs his solo with call-and-response phrases and develops simple musical statements throughout his improvisation via the use of repetition, fragmentation, sequencing, addition, and interval augmentation. The following four figures analyze the development of four different motives in this solo.

**Figure 3.16 “Río Está Hondo” bass solo, mm 1–13**
Figure 3.17 “Río Está Hondo” bass solo, mm 14–25
Figure 3.18 “Río Está Hondo” bass solo, mm 26–45
Gonzalez’s solo integrates some elements already found in López’s improvised solos such as consecutive upbeats with a single note or with melodic lines, rhythmic phrases aligned with the clave or cáscara, glissando (bramido), and double-stops.

“Nica’s Dream”

“Nica’s Dream” composed by the jazz pianist Horace Silver is an example of the reciprocal influence between jazz and Cuban music. In Silver’s original recording, the A sections were played with even-eighths and Caribbean-influenced rhythms, while the B sections was played with a jazz swing feel. Silver’s composition became popular among Afro-Cuban jazz musicians.

Gonzalez’s solo provides an excellent example of how to improvise a solo over jazz chord changes while making almost exclusive use of Cuban musical elements. In the majority of the first two A sections of his solo, Gonzalez uses notes of the Bb pentatonic
minor scale, omitting the note Ab on the Bb-minor/major seventh chords. This allows him to play with greater freedom through the chord progression. In measure 6 he incorporates the three-side of the cáscara rhythm and adds odd groupings with consecutive triplets in measures 8-9.

Figure 3.20 “Nica’s Dream” bass solo, mm 1–12

From measure 17-20, Gonzalez plays consecutive upbeat melodic lines with the use of the Bb-pentatonic minor scale. In measure 21, he starts a phrase with consecutive triplets that ends in measure 23 with a rhythmic augmentation, and in measure 24 he plays a short phrase alternating between duple and triple beat subdivision. To close the second A section, Gonzalez establishes a cross-rhythm with the use of a consecutive dotted quarter-note melodic line that starts in measure 25 and ends on the first downbeat of the two-side of the clave in measure 31.
In his solo on “Nica’s Dream,” Gonzalez shows a tendency to use pacing\textsuperscript{23} in \textit{clave} by resting on the two-side of the \textit{clave}, and playing on the three-side. Of course, this is not a set rule, and we can find some exceptions. However, it is evident that the majority of times that he plays fewer or longer notes, or employs rests, this tends to happen on the two-side of the \textit{clave}. The following five figures illustrate Gonzalez’s pacing in \textit{clave}:

\textsuperscript{23} Hal Crook defines \textit{pacing} as the “control of the quantity of playing and resting in an improvised solo.” Hal Crook, \textit{How to Improvise: An Approach to Practicing Improvisation} (Rottenburg N., Germany: Advance Music, 1991), 17.
Figure 3.22 “Nica’s Dream” bass solo, mm 5–8

Figure 3.23 “Nica’s Dream” bass solo, mm 29–32

Figure 3.24 “Nica’s Dream” bass solo, mm 41–44

Figure 3.25 “Nica’s Dream” bass solo, mm 49–52
“Ran Kan Kan”

Gonzalez’s solo on the Tito Puente composition “Ran Kan Kan” is an excellent example of how to create a bass solo using the development of bass tumbaos. Gonzalez begins his solo with the rhythm of a tumbao lined up with the clave. Instead of using the notes that tumbaos are generally built of (first and fifth degree of the chord of the moment), he uses inversions of the chord and the ninth. After playing the tumbao rhythm twice he then plays consecutive upbeats using the same melodic contour.

In measure 17 Gonzalez begins an ostinato pattern using F#3 and open D2 employing the concept of small and large drum previously discussed. The ostinato pattern
has the duration of three quarter-notes, which generates a rhythmic counterpoint. In measures 20-21 he plays a different ostinato pattern with consecutive upbeats using the notes E3, C3, and open A1. The open string (A1) allows him the convenience to alternate high and low pitches without having to shift his left-hand position and adds the tension 13, giving color to the sound. In measures 22-23 Gonzalez repeats the phrase played in measures 18-19, and in measures 24-25 he displaces the ostinato from measures 20-21 playing the same notes on the downbeats.

**Figure 3.28 “Ran Kan Kan” bass solo, mm 14–25**

From measures 38-51 Gonzalez plays *tumbao* variations using the first, fifth, and ninth degree of the chord of the moment, whereas from measures 78-101 he alternates between the main *tumbao* and the melody of the composition.

During these *tumbaos*, Gonzalez introduces short rhythmic fills on the three-side of the *clave*. In measure 43 he plays a series of single note upbeats, while in measures 93 and 97 he plays a displaced *tresillo*. 
Figure 3.29 “Ran Kan Kan” bass solo, mm 38–53
“Gandinga, Mondongo y Sandunga” is a descarga composed by the pianist Frank Emilio Flynn and is based on a syncopated rhythmic vamp over a D7 chord. The vamp consists of six notes; the first one is played on a downbeat, and the other five notes are played on upbeats.
In “Gandinga, Mondongo y Sandunga” Carlos Del Puerto Jr. displays his ample dexterity on the double bass. In contrast to López, whose approach to chromaticism was linear (i.e., using ascending or descending chromatic scales as a device to build tension), Del Puerto Jr. approaches chromaticism with a jazz improviser’s mindset, using enclosures, chromatic approaches, and bebop scales.

Del Puerto Jr. opens his solo with a short statement that includes binary and ternary pulse subdivisions. The second phrase repeats the rhythm of the opening line with different pitches in a higher register and adds a fragment of the original motive at the end of the phrase.

The strong jazz influence in Del Puerto Jr.’s improvisation can be observed in the following figure. In measures 8-9, he includes a Lydian dominant motive, followed by an
ascending scalar line that ends in the high register of the bass with a chromatic enclosure of the ninth (E4) in measure 11. In measures 12, 13, and 14, he plays through composed lines using the D bebop dominant scale. In measure 15, Del Puerto Jr. repeats the first binary and ternary pulse subdivision rhythmic phrase.

**Figure 4.3 “Gandinga, Mondongo y Sandunga” bass solo, mm 5–16**

In this solo we find several tension-and-release cycles aligned with the *clave*. In measures 27-28 he plays a syncopated melodic sequence creating rhythmic tension that extends to the first half of measure 29 with the inclusion of quarter-note triplets. The tension releases when the phrase ends on the second stroke of the two-side of the *clave* in measure 29. In measures 32, 33, and 34, most of the notes that Del Puerto Jr. plays match with the strokes of the *cáscara*. The use of *rakes*\(^{24}\) with triplets and open strings in measures 30-31 further demonstrate Del Puerto Jr.’s jazz influence.

\(^{24}\) *Rakes* with triplets are an essential part of jazz double bass players’ vocabulary in walking bass lines and improvised solos.
From measures 35-40, Del Puerto Jr. plays a series of consecutive triplets using a combination of two high notes and one low note in the style of a percussion player.

In measures 49-50, he plays a group of upbeats with the available consecutive perfect fourths of the D-altered scale, heightening the tension of the D7 chord.
In measure 53 Del Puerto Jr. goes into the high register of the instrument once more, enclosing the D4 with a chromatic approach from above and below. He then alternates the D4 with an open D2 as a nod to López’s small drum–large drum concept, integrating binary and ternary beat subdivisions.

Through the course of his solo, Del Puerto Jr. incorporates the use of pull-offs providing a different articulation to the notes, and ghost notes contributing a percussive sound.
Figure 4.8 “Gandinga, Mondongo y Sandunga” bass solo, mm 5–16

Figure 4.9 “Gandinga, Mondongo y Sandunga” bass solo, mm 21–28

Figure 4.10 “Gandinga, Mondongo y Sandunga” bass solo, mm 61–64
“Las Boinas de Cachao”

The original version of “Las Boinas de Cachao” was released in 1961 by Walfredo de Los Reyes y su Orquesta on the album *Sabor Cubano*.\(^{25}\) This *descarga* features an opening and closing improvised solo performed by López. In the 2009 version recorded by the *timbalero* Orestes Vilato on the album *It’s About Time*,\(^{26}\) Del Puerto Jr. pays tribute to López by playing the opening solo of the original version before embarking on his improvised solo.

In Del Puerto Jr.’s solo we find the same elements that were present in López’s and Gonzalez’s improvisations: consecutive upbeats, consecutive triplets, tension-and-release in *clave*, alternation between binary and ternary pulse subdivisions, upbeat triplets, displaced *tresillo*, and polyrhythms. At the same time, we can observe a jazz influence in his improvisation with the use of voice leading with guide tones, bebop scales, chromatic approaches, and upper structures.

Del Puerto Jr.’s solo begins in measure 48 (three-side of the *clave*) with a series of consecutive upbeats arpeggiating the triad of each chord. The end of the phrase on the last eighth-note of measure 51 matches with a stroke of the *cáscara*. The next line starts with upbeat triplets on the three-side of the *clave* and continues with a group of eighth-notes with anticipated downbeats in measures 53-54.

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\(^{26}\) Orestes Vilató, *It’s About Time*, Rafca Records, RAFCA01, 2009, CD.
Figure 4.11 “Las Boinas de Cachao” bass solo, mm 45–56

Measure 55 starts with an upper structure arpeggio (C#min7), succeeded by a triplet-based line that voice-leads with guide tones from the seventh degree of the A7 chord to the third degree of the D-major chord in the next measure. In measure 56 Del Puerto Jr. plays a group of consecutive triplets building up rhythmic tension that releases in measure 58 when he ends the line on a cáscara stroke. The following phrase lines up with the two-side of the cáscara, and he plays two notes of the displaced tresillo on the three-side. In measures 61-62, he plays a three eighth-note repetitive rhythmic phrase creating a cross-rhythm. Del Puerto Jr. also employs pull-offs and hammer-ons in measures 62-63.
The solo moves again to the bass’s high register with an eighth-note ascending line starting in measure 65 with an F#2 and culminating on B3 in thumb position. In measure 67 Del Puerto Jr. plays consecutive quarter-note triplets, using an upper structure seventh chord (C#min7). He remains in thumb position for the next four measures as he plays a descending line using guide tones to voice-lead the A7 chord in measure 71 to the D chord in measure 72. There he plays a descending D bebop dominant scale starting on the third (F#). In the next measure, Del Puerto Jr. plays upbeat triplets for the second time in this solo.
From measure 77-79 Del Puerto Jr. plays a series of mostly consecutive eighth-notes with anticipated downbeats. Of interest is his use of the D-major arpeggio in measure 78, which is an upper-structure triad of G major. In measure 79 he employs a C#min7 arpeggio, which is the upper structure seventh-chord of A7.
When Del Puerto Jr. is approaching the end of his solo, he shifts again to the upper register of the instrument. This time he does it by playing an ascending D-Mixolydian scale in thirds. From measure 84 (three-side of the clave) to the end of his solo, Del Puerto Jr. uses a rhythmic approach by playing syncopated lines that alternate between binary and ternary pulse subdivisions with minimum pitch variations, which, together with the high register, bring intensity to the conclusion of his solo.

**Figure 4.15 “Las Boinas de Cachao” bass solo, mm 81–96**
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Double bass improvised solos are an established practice in Afro-Cuban jazz. There has been development of a sophisticated double bass improvisational vocabulary that has been nurtured from the rhythmic richness of Cuban, music and elements of the jazz tradition. This essay has presented an historical overview of Cuban music focused on the understanding of essential elements of Cuban music, improvisation in Cuban music, the development of the double bass sound and function in Cuban music, and the reciprocal influence between jazz and Cuban music. To provide the tools to analyze and understand the characteristics of the musical vocabulary in the transcribed solos, this study has provided an in-depth analysis of the improvisational style of three double bass players in Afro-Cuban jazz. It is aimed at jazz double bass students interested in obtaining familiarity with this music style.

Cuban music is improvisational by nature. Since the early stages of its development percussion instruments like the quinto in the rumba, and the bongos in changüí and son have had an improvisational role. The addition of the trumpet to the sextetos started a tradition of great trumpet improvisers. However, it was not until 1957 that Israel “Cachao” López introduced the double bass as a solo instrument in Cuban music, creating the foundation of a long tradition of bass improvisation. The fact that the debut of improvised solos on the double bass in Cuban music did not happen until the late 1950s, when Cuban musicians had already a couple of decades of contact with jazz
musicians, suggests that there was already a certain influence of jazz music in Israel López’s first improvised solos.

This study reveals the vast influence that percussion instruments (especially the *quinto* from *rumba*) have had on the improvisational vocabulary and sound of the double bass players transcribed. In all the transcriptions, we can observe the importance of rhythm. The soloists build up intensity, tension, and release often through the sole use of rhythm. They create rhythmic cadences, with the same effect of a harmonic cadence in European harmony.

This investigation exposes the extreme importance of the *clave* and *cáscara* patterns in the rhythmic choices of the transcribed bass players. It was found that, the transcribed bassists in general play more downbeats on the two-side of the *clave* and more upbeats on the three-side. They employ the *clave* as a mean to create tension (three-side) and release (two-side). The most used devices to build tension are consecutive upbeats, syncopated lines, consecutive triplets, and polyrhythms. Moreover, the most common tools to generate release are rests, fewer notes, longer notes, and consecutive downbeats.

This does not mean that the transcribed solos include repetitive two bars cycles of tension and release alone. In many cases, tension is prolonged for several measures and often resolved on the two-side of the *clave*. When the phrase ends on the three-side, the last note of the phrase most of the time matches with a stroke of the *clave* or *cáscara*. Several times, the improviser plays over the bar line with *clave* rhythmic tension and release in the same way a jazz improviser anticipates or delays the arrival of a chord.
The first solos of Israel “Cachao” López are mostly diatonic, with occasional use of the chromatic scale and frequent use of a single note to play with rhythmic variations. Andy Gonzalez exhibits a strong influence of López’s approach to the bass. Gonzalez creates lyrical melodic lines in his solos, yet preserves the rhythmic complexity and percussive sound from López. Carlos Del Puerto Jr. alternates López’s right-hand technique to obtain a percussive sound with a left-and-right-hand jazz-oriented technique, generating legato notes and using pull-offs and hammer-ons. Del Puerto Jr. demonstrated his jazz influence with the use of chromatic approaches, bebop scales, altered scales, enclosures, and voice leading with guide tones.
APPENDIX

TRANSCRIBED SOLOS
Las Boinas de Cachao

As played by Orestes Vilato
It's About Time
Rafca Records 2009

Israel "Cachao" Lopez
Transcribed by Juan Monroy

D = 107

D G A D

G A D

D G A D

D7 G A7 D

D7 G A7 D

D7 G A7 D

D7 G A7 D

D7 G A7 D
DISCOGRAPHY


Vilató, Orestes. *It’s About Time*. Rafca Records, RAFC01. 2009. CD.

WORKS CITED


