
Wesleyan University

TOURIST SONGS:
CULTURAL TOURISM,
THE BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB,
AND CUBAN SON

By

David A. Garlitz

Faculty Advisor: Eric Charry

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Wesleyan University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Middletown, Connecticut

April 2005

For my mom.

Table of Contents:

Acknowledgments.....	i
Introduction.....	1
Fieldwork.....	7
Written Sources.....	11
Oral Sources.....	12
Tradition and Authenticity.....	13
Terms related to Cuban son.....	14
Related Genres.....	19
Jazz Terminology.....	21
The Empresa System.....	21
Chapter 1: Cuban Son and Cultural Tourism.....	23
Tourism in Cuba Since the 1980's.....	23
Tourism Studies in Ethnomusicology: A brief summary.....	28
Cultural Tourism and Commoditization in Cuban Son.....	31
The Empresa System.....	36

Hotel and club managers.....	43
Tourists.....	47
Musicians' Perspectives: Regional Identity and Competition.....	54
Amateur Musicians: Estrellas de Son and Innova.....	58
Conclusion.....	62
Chapter 2: The Buena Vista Social Club Phenomenon.....	67
The Story of the Buena Vista Social Club.....	67
Cuban Music in the International Market: Context.....	69
The Son Revival in Cuba.....	72
The Secrets of Success: Cuban Music as World Music.....	75
The Politics of Nostalgia.....	82
The BVSC vs. Música Bailable.....	85
Regional Identity in BVSC.....	90
Conclusions.....	92
Chapter 3: Genre Issues in Cuban Son.....	94
Dominant Theories of Cuban Music.....	95

The Importance of Genre in Practice.....	101
Genre and Subgenre.....	103
Blackness in Son: Issues of Class and Race.....	109
A Word About Salsa.....	115
What is Cuban salsa?.....	119
Conclusion.....	122
Chapter 4: Stylistic Analysis.....	124
The Golden Age: Classic Havana Son.....	127
The Classic Septeto Sound.....	128
The Son Montuno of Arsenio Rodríguez.....	133
Contemporary Son.....	135
Influences of Guaguancó.....	136
Timba Influences.....	138
Analyses of Contemporary Son Groups: Havana.....	140
Santiago de Cuba.....	154
Conclusion.....	168

Conclusion.....	170
Style and Tradition.....	170
Economic and Social Changes.....	173
The Importance of Regional Identity.....	175
Internal and External Audiences.....	178
Tourist Songs: The Importance of Style.....	181
Future research.....	182
Appendix A: Musical Examples.....	184
Appendix B: Photos.....	222
Sources.....	230
Interviews Conducted by the Author.....	230
Field Recordings.....	231
Written Sources.....	231
Commercial Music and Video Recordings.....	243

Musical Examples:

In Chapter 3:

1. The “mambo rhythm.” (García 2003: 169).....108

In Chapter 4:

1. José "El Chino" Incharte ("Aquella Boca," Sexteto Habanero 1927).
CD Track #1.....185
2. Introduction to “A la Cuata Co y Co” (Sexteto Boloña 1926).
CD Track #2.....186
3. a. Introduction to “Suavecito” (Septeto Nacional 1930).
CD Track #3.....187
b. Introduction to “Caballeros, Silencio” (Sexteto Habanero 1927).
CD Track #4.....187
c. Introduction to “Vitico” (Isaac Oviedo 1998). CD Track #5.....187
4. Bass patterns.....188
5. “Alza Los Pies, Congo” (vocal melody), Sexteto Habanero 1928.
CD Track #6.....188
6. Bongó *martillo* pattern and bell pattern.....188
7. Standard 2-bar piano patterns.....189
8. Son clave and Guaguancó clave.....189
9. Composite melody in guaguancó.....189
10. a. Guaguancó diana (“Mi Arere,” Los Muñequitos de Matanzas 1988).
CD Track #7.....190

b. Son guaguancó diana (“La Gente del Bronx,” Arsenio Rodríguez 1951). CD Track #8.....	191
11. Timba piano pattern (“La Bola,” Manolín, El Médico de La Salsa 1996). CD Track #9.....	192
12. Bass and vocal unison lines (“La Expresiva,” NG La Banda 1990). CD Track #10.....	193
13. Bomba break (“No Se Puede Tapar El Sol,” NG La Banda 1990). CD Track # 11.....	194
14. Félix Godón’s solo on “El Traguito” (excerpt). CD Track #12 (2:44-2:56).....	195
15. Bomba break in “El Traguito” (Félix Godón). CD Track #12 (4:28-4:52).....	196
16. Bomba break in “Harina de Maíz” (Cuarteto Rumí). CD Track #13 (2:22-2:42).....	197
17. Ilián Torres’ guajeo in Dm. CD Track #14.....	198
18. Introduction to “Se Quema Pueblo Nuevo” (Septeto Machín). CD Track #15.....	199
19. Son guaguancó diana in “Ven, ven, ven” (Septeto Machín) CD Track #16 (0:30-0:50).....	200
20. Mambo in “Me Quedé Con Juana” (Son Soneros). CD Track #17.....	201
21. Trumpet riffs in “Saca La Mano, Antonio” (Son Soneros). CD Track #18 (0:34-43, 0:52-61).....	202

22. Bridge in “Saca La Mano, Antonio” (Son Soneros).	
CD Track #18 (1:01-1:33).....	203
23. a. Mozambique percussion patterns. Mozambique example	
“Mozambique” (Pedro “Pello el Afrokán” Izquierdo ca. 1963)	
CD Track #19.....	206
b. Mozambique quote in “Saca la Mano Antonio” (Son Soneros).	
CD Track #18 (3:25-4:04).....	207
24. Scat-style soneo in “Ahora Te Pido, Sonero” (Son Soneros). CD Track	
#20.....	208
25. Bomba break in “Lágrimas Negras” (Son Diamante).	
CD Track #21.....	209
26. Choral “mambo” in “El Que Siembra Su Maíz (Perlas del Son).	
CD Track #22. (3:34-4:01).....	210
27. Introduction to “Sabor a Caney” (Perlas del Son).	
CD Track #23.....	212
28. Rubén Blades quote in “El Que Siembra Su Maíz” (Perlas del Son).	
CD Track #22 (2:23-3:23). An excerpt from the original Rubén	
Blades song is found on CD Track #24 (“Pedro Navaja,” 1978,	
Fania Records 537).....	213
29. Daniel Cos’ guajeo in Am. CD Track #25 (5:06-5:22).....	213
30. Introduction to “Si No Te Veá” (Moneda Nacional). CD Track #26	
(0:00-0:24).....	214

31. Son guaguancó diana in “Si No Te Vea” (Moneda Nacional). CD Track #26 (1:02-1:09).....	216
32. Introduction to “La Raya Rumbero” (Moneda Nacional). CD Track #27 (0:17-0:26).....	217
33. Classic-style vocals in “La Raya Rumbero” (Moneda Nacional). CD Track #27 (0:52-1:06).....	218
34. Introduction to “Aquella Boca” (Cañambú). CD Track #28.....	219
35. Montuno in “¿Que está Pasando?” (Cañambú) CD Track #29 (montuno starts at 1:15 and continues to the end).....	219
36. Manuel Alemán’s bongó cañambú solo (Cañambú). CD Track #30.....	220

List of Photographs

1. Armando Hernández.....	222
2. The Innova timbal.....	223
3. Playing the <i>timbal con teclas</i>	223
4. María Elena.....	224
5. Estrellas del Son with Tamara André.....	225
6. Moneda Nacional at the Festival Nacional de Septetos.....	226
7. Perlas del Son.....	226
8. Antonio Ayala Torres and Ramón Suárez.....	227
9. Manuel Alemán’s bongó cañambú solo.....	228
10. Manuel Alemán’s crowd-pleasing “on-the-back” move.....	229

Acknowledgments

This thesis could not have been completed without the support of many faculty members, colleagues, friends, family members, and musicians. I am grateful to my faculty advisor Eric Charry for his patience, close textual readings, and valuable suggestions. I would also like to thank Mark Slobin, my committee chair, for his insightful comments and for making special arrangements to work with me around his sabbatical.

I corresponded with a number of colleagues, whose input added a great deal to this work, including Ben Lapidus, T.M. Scruggs, Peter Manuel, David García, Vincenzo Perna, Elizabeth Sayre, and Nick Hockin.

Several musicians in the United States offered their expert knowledge as well, especially Aaron Halva and Orlando Fiol.

I would also like to thank my close friends, traveling companions, and band mates Scott MacDonald and Jim Jordan for their unwavering support, their willingness to try anything and go anywhere for great music, and their talent as interpreters of song – I could not have gotten this far without them.

My fieldwork in Cuba could not have been accomplished without the support of many musicians and close friends. I would like to thank Elsa Capote, and Julio, Loipa, and Lucía Rimada from the bottom of my heart for their hospitality, friendship, and support while I was in Havana. I would also like to thank Rosa and Rosita Chang for their hospitality, knowledge of Havana's neighborhoods, and for the many delicious meals we shared.

I am grateful to the many musicians in Havana and Santiago who

warmly welcomed me into their midst, including the members of Son Soneros, Ignacio Richard, the members of Cuarteto Rumí (especially José Graciela and Román de la Fé), Liuva and the rest of Explosión Latina, Ángel Luís “Sinsonte” Balmaseda, Daniel Cos, the members of Moneda Nacional, Iván Batista, the members of Cañambú (especially Candido Dupuy), and, most of all, the members of Estrellas del Son, for their unsurpassed hospitality, genuine friendship, and for their help navigating the chaotic streets of Santiago during Carnival – may they truly reach the stars.

I was lucky enough to travel with an amazing woman whose critical thinking, skill with a digital camera, and ability to keep me under my budget proved absolutely invaluable. For these things, and for her constant love and support, I am forever grateful to Cécile Dessertenne.

I am also grateful to our other traveling companion, Tamara André, who kept our spirits high and our feet moving even when we were sure we would never find our way out of the Sierra Maestra.

I owe much of my interest in Cuban music and ethnomusicology to Robin Moore, who has been a friend, fellow band member, mentor, and role model for me for a number of years. I cannot thank him enough for his help with this project, both in the field and as a member of my thesis committee.

Most of all I would like to thank my parents, without whose love and support (financial and otherwise), none of this would have been possible.

Tourist Songs: Cultural Tourism, The Buena Vista Social Club, and The Cuban Son

Introduction

The severe economic crisis caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, known as the *Período Especial en Tiempo de Paz* (Special Period in Time of Peace), forced the Cuban government to seek alternate sources of revenue. Desperate for international trade, Cuba opened its doors to tourism for the first time in nearly forty years. Shortly after, the runaway international success of the *Buena Vista Social Club* recording and documentary insured the place of Cuba's national music, the *son*, in the nation's burgeoning tourist economy. In the wake of the Special Period, conservatory-trained musicians who made their careers in the 1980s backed by 12-piece salsa bands have been forced to reinvent themselves to fit into small bars, hotel lobbies, and tourists' preconceived notions, while self-taught country musicians have received new status.

This thesis will examine the ways in which *son* is being re-imagined by Cuban musicians, simultaneously as a renewed symbol of national identity and as a real opportunity for gaining economic and social freedom. It will focus on the musicians of *septetos* of different levels of experience, musical training, and popular recognition within the contexts of different touristic

settings, with emphasis on the urban poles of Havana and Santiago. It will also examine the ways in which the new influx of younger musicians to the genre of *son* and the format of the septet, combined with the heightened competition of the dollar economy, have produced vastly different performance styles drawing both from traditional musical vocabulary as well as that of U.S. jazz and contemporary Cuban *timba*. Stylistic choices made by musicians reflect larger changes brought on by tourism and address issues of national and local identity.

This work adds to a growing body of ethnomusicological work focusing on music in tourist settings. With the works of Margaret Sarkissian (2000) and Helen Rees (2000) as theoretical models, this study focuses on tourism as perceived by the performers themselves, and their notions of authenticity and tradition. The relatively young Cuban tourism industry, and the many ways in which Cuba hopes to avoid the pitfalls of tourist dependency, show that tourism can be the focal point of a complex set of social dynamics. Adding to tourism and folklore studies like that of Hagedorn (2001), this study points out that tourism's "internal" and "external" audiences (Cohen 1988) for popular music can be multifaceted, consisting not just of "hosts" and "guests," but of multiple layers of social interaction.

The nature of music making for tourists in Cuba is unique in that it exists in the context of a socialist system. In this sense, Cuba stands apart from other Caribbean countries, but also other socialist systems as well.

Rasmussen (2002) shows how music can function commercially within socialism, and other writing on the former Yugoslavia has examined how popular music can be used by the state to disseminate notions of national identity. However, in Cuba's case, commerciality in music does not always exist within a larger state system; it also forms a part of an external tourist market. Musicians are employed by government agencies, but in many cases make more income from tips or gifts from tourists than they do from their own salaries, constantly negotiating two parallel and occasionally oppositional systems.

Close examination of stylistic traits found in bands from Cuba's two urban poles, Havana and Santiago, complements studies of both traditional and contemporary Cuban dance music, such as Perna's (2001) study of *timba* and Lapidus' (2002) study of *changüí*. Robbins' (1990b) concept of "identifiers" is expanded in order to more closely observe the ways in which players imply "traditional" vs. "modern" approaches to playing son in the septeto format. In tourist contexts, these identifiers function differently for different internal and external audiences (roughly tourists and locals) to shape perceptions of authenticity and local or regional identity. These analyses also complement studies of New York salsa performance styles such as those of Manuel (1985, 1998) and Washburne (1998).

Perhaps the greatest contribution of this work is in the ethnographic material collected through interviews and informal conversations with musicians across the country. Although a few were already well established

international performers, the majority represent the next generation of Cuban musicians, determinedly competing for the spotlight both at home and abroad. Their accounts offer some small glimpse of the world they inhabit, the place of music in that world, and the directions that that music might take in the future.

The first half of Chapter 1 provides an overview of tourism studies in ethnomusicology and a brief history of contemporary Cuban tourism since its beginnings in the 1980s. This is followed by an examination of the internal and external audiences in Cuban tourist settings, including government agencies, local employers, and tourists, using Bruner's (1994) model for understanding different meanings of "authenticity." While tourism has greatly expanded performance opportunities for musicians performing son, it has also created a climate of intense competition among musicians; septetos must meet often contradictory criteria for "traditional" music while simultaneously attempting to create a unique, ear-catching sound.

Chapter 2 takes a closer look at the *Buena Vista Social Club* (BVSC) album and film, their impact on the international market for Cuban music, and the role of the project in the "son revival" in Cuba. Given the project's overwhelming international success, it is my view that it plays a major role in the shaping of tourists' expectations of Cuban music. It has also directly and indirectly affected perspectives on traditional son in Cuba. The chapter gathers together a number of criticisms, sometimes contradictory, that have been aimed at the BVSC project, both in Cuba and abroad, with special

attention given to the rift between university-educated and self-taught musicians brought out by the BVSC's success.

As Lapidus (2002: 10) notes, "nothing is more central to the discourse of Cuban music than the study of genre and genre complexes." Chapter 3 engages in this discourse, problematizing the concept of the "genre complex" as it is applied to son by Alén Rodríguez (1992, 1998) and Danilo Orozco (1992). Following the lead of Robbins (1989, 1990a, 1990b) and Acosta (n.d.), an attempt is made to deal with son and its variants in terms that are useful to musicians. This provides the basis for the closer examination of style and genre found in chapter 4. In order to understand the ways in which musicians negotiate regional identity and notions of tradition and modernity through stylistic choices, it is first necessary to understand the greater context of genre classification as it functions in established music institutions and among musicians. Chapter 3 also picks up discussions of race and class in son raised in chapter 2, and deals with son's relationship to *salsa*.

Chapter 4 presents stylistic analyses and transcriptions of several groups I recorded in the summer of 2004 in Havana and Santiago. Some of the groups participated in the Festival Nacional de Septetos, held in late June in Havana. Others perform professionally or semi-professionally in hotels, restaurants, and other tourist locations.

The analyses focus on the overall sound of each band, and the elements that contribute to that sound. Specific aspects of arrangement are examined, such as harmonic choices, changes of rhythmic texture, and

signature breaks, as well as the groove of each band: how much the band locks together as a unit and really “swings.”¹ The latter topic follows up on theories of feel, groove, and swing as applied to *salsa* by Washburne (1998). The role of improvisation in each group is also examined, identifying patterns found throughout Latin dance music as suggested by Manuel (1998).

Stylistic analysis reveals the connection between musical sound and larger social forces. The radical change in the Cuban economy and the new status of son as a marketable tourist commodity has brought performers of varied backgrounds and interests to the genre, all of whom make individual stylistic choices that reflect their experience. In addition, certain playing styles and techniques associated with particular regions or time periods are often employed by musicians to address issues of authenticity and regional identity.

By way of conclusion, I call for further study of tourism contexts in Cuban music. The expansion of tourism is reshaping the lives of all Cubans, especially musicians, and this study just scratches the surface. The impact of son’s newfound popularity on musicians performing other genres, such as rock, jazz, or rap, would no doubt be a great complement to this work.

¹ Although the use of the word “swing” is most commonly associated with jazz, it is also used by New York salsa musicians and Cuban son performers as well (Washburne 1998: 181).

Fieldwork

My thinking about this project began on a brief visit to Havana in June of 2003. I traveled with the members of a Cuban music group with whom I have performed professionally for a number of years in Philadelphia.

Although one member of the group, Robin Moore, is also a well-established ethnomusicologist in his own right, the rest of us were essentially music tourists, looking for opportunities to hear bands whose records had taken hours of internet searching to find back home, and to have jam sessions, talk shop, and generally hang out as much as possible with Cuban musicians.

Although this trip was my second to Cuba, it was my first chance to make more substantial connections with musicians there. We quickly made friends with a host of musicians that Robin had befriended on previous trips, who would later form a crucial support network for my own fieldwork the following year.

I returned for eight weeks in June, July, and early August of 2004, spending roughly three weeks in Havana, two weeks making a slow, circuitous trek by rental car across the island, and ending up for the last three weeks in Santiago. In the course of the cross country trip, I made two- or three-day visits to Viñales, Pinar del Río, Matanzas, Camagüey, Trinidad, and Santo Domingo (Granma Province). I had the good fortune to be in the right place at the right time for two important events in the musical lives of both Havana and Santiago; while in Havana I attended the Festival Nacional de Septetos, and I arrived in Santiago just in time for the first day of Carnival.

Inspired by the great playing I had seen by young soneros in 2003, and by T.M. Scruggs' (2003) SEM paper on son's continued popularity among young players in Oriente, my primary goal at the outset was to talk to as many musicians as I could, young and old, and to learn as much as I could about the music. The importance of tourism, which became central to this thesis, emerged gradually; having first experienced Havana as a tourist myself, I initially backgrounded tourism in favor of talking about music. As my vision of the end result crystallized, my approach changed, and I began asking different questions of the musicians I met later in my journey.

The end result, then, is not a systematic census of contemporary Cuban soneros. My goal in writing has been to accurately portray the music and the people I encountered along the way, all of whom share common goals and offer unique perspectives on what it means to be a Cuban musician during the "Special Period in Time of Peace."

In some cases, the musicians I spoke with had already accomplished many of their goals, having gained recognition, and at times financial success, on national and even international levels. However, my goal was not to seek out the most successful players, nor even necessarily the most talented ones. As Robbins (1990a: 23) suggests, "a study of the 'everyday' can be conducted every day." In other words, my attempt was to discover something about Cuban musical life, not about Cuban celebrities; I learned just as much, if not more, talking with musicians at the other end of the spectrum.

I worried that the time I spent traveling between Havana and Santiago would effectively put my fieldwork on hold, since I had not planned on staying long enough in any one place to find and develop a rapport with musicians. This did not prove to be a problem, however, as wherever I went I was warmly welcomed by the musicians I met. Cubans have a reputation for warmth and hospitality, and also a general interest in all things foreign, which Robbins (ibid.) attributes to their extremely limited opportunities to travel outside of the country.

The biggest hindrance to quickly finding and meeting musicians was that as an immediately recognizable tourist (these days *turista* and *extranjero* are more or less synonymous), I was quickly targeted by *jineteros* (roughly “hustlers”) who, if they learned that I was interested in music, would try to claim some sort of musical knowledge, relationship with a famous musician, or any number of improvised scams in the same vein. However, I was prepared for this approach by my experiences on previous trips, so I was able to sidestep these characters with a few polite but firm words of disinterest.

Most often, I approached other musicians as a fellow musician and music student. The fact that I carried a tres with me and knew a handful of Cuban tunes set me apart from the average tourist, and showed that I was genuinely interested in learning about Cuban music. My interactions with musicians usually started in the form of an exchange of musical ideas, ranging from informal jam sessions to music lessons, for which I occasionally paid either in dollars or in some sort of trade (for this purpose, I brought

almost an entire backpack full of new steel guitar strings, which are incredibly hard to find in Cuba due to shortages of all kinds of metal). Once conversation got going, I explained my thesis project, which was almost always received with enthusiasm.

Although my thesis focuses on musicians I encountered in the urban centers of Havana and Santiago, the conversations I had with musicians in other parts of the country were crucial in forming my ideas about how to best frame my experiences there. There remains much to be studied about the impact of tourism in rural areas, especially recently developed tourist hotspots like Trinidad or Viñales.

One flaw in my fieldwork plan was that I budgeted no time for return trips to any sites. While I spent the majority of my time in Havana and Santiago, once I had left Havana I only returned in time to catch my plane and leave. As my ideas about this project were crystallizing, I asked better questions of the musicians that I met, but I wished that I had time to ask the same questions of musicians in Havana as well. As a result, more of my interviews related to tourism come from the weeks I spent in Santiago, while interviews conducted in Havana tend to be somewhat less focused, ranging from musical tastes to general attitudes about Havana's music scene.

Although there are many avenues of inquiry left open by this study, a major area not explored here is that of gender in contemporary son bands. The gender dynamics of son, traditionally a male-dominated genre, are fascinating and could no doubt fill several volumes. Although I chose to leave

gender out of this thesis, it will no doubt form a part of my future research in Cuban music.

Written Sources

Most of the secondary sources I have used here are available to the academic community, either through commercial publications or through university library loan systems. Luckily, many key articles published in Cuban journals were also available through inter-library loan, and others were located on the web (citations of internet sources are identifiable in the text by the absence of page numbers).

Two unpublished conference papers by Ariana Hernández-Reguant (2000) and T.M. Scruggs (2003) proved invaluable to my discussion of the *Buena Vista Social Club*.

In addition, I was fortunate enough to have at my disposal several chapters from Robin Moore's soon-to-be-published book on Cuban music during the Special Period, as well as a copy of Vincenzo Perna's dissertation on timba (which has since been published by Ashgate).

I also worked with an early copy of Leonardo Acosta's (n.d.) article "On Generic Complexes and Other Topics in Cuban Popular Music," which will be published in the October 2005 issue of the *Journal of Popular Music Studies*.

Oral Sources

My interactions with informants were documented in four ways: 1) recorded interviews or music lessons, 2) notes taken during interviews, 3) notes taken immediately after conversations or interviews, 4) journal entries summarizing the events of a few days. Opportunities for planned, recorded interviews were limited not only by time, but also by the fact that it was often difficult to find a suitable location to record. Interviews often took place during breaks in a musician's performance schedule, which did not allow enough time to return to one or the other's house and set up a microphone in relative silence. When the band is on break, most bars and restaurants turn up their radio or sound system, so even when I chose to record an interview, I took notes immediately afterward as a safeguard against the noisy environment. For simplicity, all oral sources are cited as "interviews," since the information may have been recorded in more than one of the aforementioned formats.

Tradition and Authenticity

Williams (1977: 115) characterizes "tradition" as active rather than inert, "an intentionally selective version of a shaping past and a pre-shaped present, which is powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification." In essence, Williams suggests that in any given culture, there are a number of competing "meanings and practices" which are recognized or dismissed according to a particular hegemony. Tradition serves

contemporary culture, offering historical evidence in support of dominant norms or values.

This notion is echoed in Bruner's (1994: 408) definition of "authenticity" as "a struggle...in which competing interests argue for their own interpretation of history." Like Williams, Bruner's definition denies the possibility of a primitive "truth" located in the past, but suggests cultural processes inherently tied to the present.

Both concepts have been similarly problematized by Hobsbawm (1983), in the study of tourism by Cohen (1988) and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995, 1998), and specifically in ethnomusicology by Lau (1998) and Rees (1998, 2000), among others.

My use of the terms tradition and authenticity in my discussion of Cuban music and cultural tourism assumes the above definitions, which suggest fluidity rather than stasis, but do not deny the importance of the terms themselves for participants. Williams notes that tradition is simultaneously powerful and vulnerable; it can effectively dismiss or alienate practices that it does not incorporate, but it is also open to attack, since opposing practices can exist synchronically. In other words, the notions of tradition and authenticity have considerable effect on culture, but the opportunities to challenge these notions are many.

In Cuban music, the term *música tradicional* (traditional music) approaches concrete definition in its use by official music employment agencies (*empresas*; see below), which use it oppositionally and diachronically

(“traditional” versus “modern”) or somewhat synchronically (“traditional” versus “popular”) (Robbins 1990a: 445-70). Terms like traditional and authentic can have implicit concrete meaning to musicians (e.g. with regard to repertoire or style) and to employment agencies, but can still be qualitatively contested. In other words, two musicians who play *música tradicional* might disagree about the degree to which one or the other plays the most “authentic” son.

Terms related to Cuban son

My discussion in these chapters presupposes some basic knowledge of Cuban music terms, as well as some terms carried over from U.S. jazz usage. I will briefly define some key terms here.

Spanish terms will always be pluralized and otherwise manipulated according to the rules of Spanish grammar, rather than English. For example, the plural of “son” will always be written “sones” rather than “sons.”

Typically, instrumentalists who perform a certain instrument are described by the name of the instrument with a standard suffix (“-ero/a”) added. A bongó player is a “bongocero” (or bongocera, if female). Some terms of this nature have special significance. A “sonero” is literally someone who plays son, but the connotations are of a musician who has dedicated his life to performing son. Thus, there are many musicians performing son who might not define themselves this way (Robbins 1990b: 194).

The core instruments of traditional son groups are the *tres*, the *bongó*, the maracas, the *claves*, and some sort of bass instrument, either a *botija*, a

marímbula, or a standard double bass. Ensembles also frequently use the guitar, as well as other percussion instruments, such as the *guiro* (gourd scraper) (Orovio 2004: 200).

The tres is one of the core instruments of traditional son groups. It is shaped like a guitar, but tuned in three double courses rather than six individual strings. The outer pairs of strings are tuned in octaves, and the inner pair in unison. Many tunings exist for the tres, but the most common are gG-cc-Ee and aA-dd-F#f# (uppercase letters refer to the lower octave). The tres has a limited range (usually not more than one and a half or two octaves), but this tuning allows players to use octave displacement to trick the ear of the listener, implying longer ascending or descending passages than the instrument can actually play (Lapidus 2002: 50).²

The bongó consists of two small hand drums joined together by a piece of wood or metal. The skins are generally of goat skin. One head, the larger *hembra* (female), is tuned lower than the other, called the *macho* (male). The player is typically seated, and holds the drum between his or her legs (Orovio 2004: 32).

The marímbula is a type of lamellophone not unlike a giant mbira. It is most commonly constructed out of a wooden box, to which a varying number of metal tines are attached. The player sits atop the instrument, plucking the tines with one hand and keeping time with the other (although some players

² See Lapidus (2002: 50-53) for more details on octave-ambiguity in the tres.

occasionally pluck with both hands). The botija is a large clay jug with a hole cut in the side. By blowing across the top and covering or uncovering the hole, a player can produce one, two, and sometimes even three pitches. Both instruments have been used to produce a bass-ostinato pattern; they were used historically before their substitution by the European double bass, and are still used by some groups, especially in *changüí* ensembles, where the marímbula is still the standard bass instrument.³ Because of the limited range of these instruments, few son ensembles still use them, although those that do, such as Típicos de Son, are lauded as upholding a dying tradition (ibid.: 8, 131).

The maracas and claves are typically performed by the singers of the group. Maracas are two shakers, often made out of hollowed gourds, dried animal hide, or plastic, which are attached to wooden handles. The claves are two wooden sticks that are struck together to perform the rhythm called the *clave* (ibid.: 54)

The concept of *clave* is central to almost all Cuban music, and is found in many other forms throughout Latin America as well. The son clave consists of a two-part rhythm, with one syncopated segment and one relatively “straight” segment. The clave is often discussed in terms of “sides”: the syncopated segment, which has three strokes, is called the “3-side,” while the

³ Changüí is a dance style related to son, performed in eastern Cuba, especially in the province of Guantánamo. See Lapidus (2002) for social and musical characteristics of changüí, as well as its possible connections to early forms of son.

straighter segment, with two strokes, is called the “2-side.” For musicians, the clave functions as a “generative timeline” (Manuel 1998), which is related to all other parts in specific ways. Although the phrases of a piece may change in their relationship to the clave, the orientation of the clave remains constant throughout an entire piece. Chapter 4 deals with clave and its relationship to other musical elements in greater detail.

Most son compositions consist of two major sections, the verse (also called the *tema*, or *largo*) and the *montuno*. The verse is typically a closed structure of several eight- or twelve-bar phrases, using conventional European harmonies. The montuno consists of a shorter harmonic cycle that is repeated many times, usually incorporating call-and-response singing between a lead singer and a chorus. The montuno is typically a bit faster and much more rhythmically intense than the verse. Essentially, it constitutes a sort of climactic “jam” section of a piece, where musicians improvise and elaborate on themes presented in the verse.

The refrain sung by the chorus in the montuno is called the *coro* (or *estribillo*). Although instrumental improvisation also takes place, the primary form of improvisation in the montuno is in the part of the lead singer, who improvises short musical phrases, called *soneos*, between iterations of the *coro*. These phrases typically rhyme with the *coro* and elaborate on the text of the verse, although it is quite common, especially in live contexts, for the singer to invent *soneos* that respond to events on stage, invite the audience

members to dance harder or have a good time, or praise the band or bandmembers.

The word *montuno*, which literally means “from the mountains,” can also refer more specifically to the accompaniment pattern played by the piano or *tres* during the latter climactic section. This pattern can also be called a *tumbao*, or, in the case of the *tres*, a *guajeo*. Accompaniment styles in the verse vary, ranging from arpeggios and melodic fills around the vocal line to patterns similar to those heard during the *montuno* section (Orovio 2004: 141).⁴

Related Genres

Other genres related to *son* are also mentioned in the following chapters. While chapters 3 and 4 deal with genre and subgenre in greater detail, a brief definition of some other widely known styles will prove useful.

Rumba is a highly African-influenced secular percussion and vocal genre. Not to be confused with “*rhumba*,” or “ballroom *rhumba*” as it came to be known in the U.S. (actually closer to *son* than *rumba*), traditional *rumba*

⁴ The word *tumbao* can also refer to the typical pattern of the bass or *tumbadora* (conga drum), or the overall groove of a band. It is also sometimes used to describe playing in a *montuno* style; musicians have often told me “*Ponle un tumbao*” (“Put a *tumbao* on it”), meaning that I should play a typical *montuno*/*guajeo* pattern. For clarity, I will use the word *montuno* to describe form, *guajeo* to describe syncopated *tres* patterns, and *tumbao* for the patterns played by the *tumbadora*. Bass patterns will be referred to as “bass lines” or “bass patterns” for lack of a better term.

uses complex and highly improvisatory percussion and vocals exclusively. It is credited with having had a great deal of influence on son, especially in its formal structure, which culminates in a climactic call-and-response section similar to the montuno in son (Manuel 1998: 129-30; Orovio 2004: 191).

Danzón was the most popular dance music in Cuba before the commercial success of son. Derived from the European *contradanza* (*contredanse*), by the end of the 19th century it was typically performed by groups called *charangas francesas* (or simply *charangas*), consisting of flute, violin, piano, double bass, *paila* (a “Creole tympani,” precursor to the *timbal* found in salsa), and gourd scraper (*guiro*). Danzones follow a rondo form and a rhythmic timeline closely related to the son clave (Orovio 2004: 65).

From the late 1960s through the early ‘80s, the most popular style of music was called *nueva trova* (roughly: “new song”). The name refers to a traditional genre called *trova*, which consists typically of ballads performed by voice and guitar, and forms part of the pan-Latin American phenomenon known as *nueva canción* (“new song”). Stylistically, *nueva trova* draws influence from Cuban traditions as well as jazz, rock, and Western art music, and has a strong connection to U.S. protest songs of the 1960s and ‘70s. The most important performers, especially Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanés, are considered by many to be Cuba’s greatest songwriters (Orovio 2004: 151).

Since the early 1990s, the most popular form of dance music in Cuba has been *timba*. Often characterized as a synthesis of the son-derived dance music of the 1950s with rumba, Afro-Cuban sacred music, and U.S. funk and

soul, timba is a hard-edged, rhythmically intense and musically virtuosic style. Timba became the center of controversy in the mid-'90s due to the lyrics of many of the songs, which were viewed by detractors as "crass" and "capitalistic." Timba lyrics often refer to life in marginalized neighborhoods and issues relating to Cuba's economic struggles during the Special Period (especially the black market and prostitution), while making overt use of street slang and sexual innuendos. Due to its overwhelming popularity among Afro-Cubans, and its adoption of Afro-Cuban religious music and imagery, timba is often characterized as "black music" (Perna 2001: 272-73; Hernández-Reguant 2004; Moore 2005: 188).

Jazz Terminology

In my discussion of performance styles, I often use terms borrowed from jazz, such as "comp," "riff," and "lick." A riff or lick is a short, distinct melodic or rhythmic phrase. Riffs are typically repeated, and can form part of an arrangement, while licks are typically part of an improvised solo. Comping (short for "accompanying") is the practice of articulating the harmony of a given piece behind a soloist. In a jazz context, comping styles can vary widely depending on the individual performer, but I use the term here to describe the use of block chords in a manner reminiscent of jazz pianists or guitarists such as Wynton Kelly or Wes Montgomery.

The Empresa System

Most professional musicians in Cuba are employed by local artist management institutions, commonly called *empresas*, under the direction of the Ministerio de Cultura (Ministry of Culture). Empresas organize musicians' pay scales, keep track of performances, and negotiate the employment of musicians by clubs, hotels, or other venues (Robbins 1990a: 78). Musicians who wish to perform professionally or semi-professionally must first pass an audition to receive representation from the local empresa, and groups who attempt to perform without official representation are often subject to fines and confiscation of instruments. The tourist industry and changes in laws regulating pay to musicians who perform abroad have changed the role of empresas, which many musicians now regard as primarily tax-collecting agencies (Moore 2005: 154).

Empresas constitute one of the many different audiences for which musicians must perform "credible and convincing" (Bruner 1994: 399) renditions of son. Chapter 1 examines this complex dynamic, pointing to ways in which notions of authenticity are reflected in musical choices. In the following chapters I'll show the importance of musical sound as a lens through which to view larger social changes and issues of local and national identity.

Chapter 1: Cuban Son and Cultural Tourism

Tourism in Cuba Since the 1980s

Rosalie Schwartz points to 1982 as the year in which Cuba entered its third phase as a tourist destination.⁵ During the first two decades of the Cuban revolution, Castro's government had little reason to actively pursue tourism as a source of revenue. While inflated sugar exports to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe alleviated the immediate need for other sources of income, tourism was also associated with the corrupt capitalism of Batista and the imperialistic presence of the United States. Thus, tourism was left out of Castro's plan for a new Cuban society (Schwartz 1997: 205-06). Although some sources indicate that the government had shown interest in tourism as early as the mid-1970s, it was not until 1982, and the passing of the Cuban

⁵ Cuba first became a tourist hotspot in the 1920s, when it was visited primarily by the American jet-set. Prohibition, combined with the relative inaccessibility of Europe during World War I, turned the attention of rich American vacationers to Havana and Varadero beach (Moore 1997: 183). Schwartz (1991: 251) holds that tourism stopped abruptly after the revolution of 1933 and the end of prohibition, but Moore (1997: 82-83) provides evidence of tourism continuing into the late 1930s. The 1950s represent a second boom and a change in character of Cuban tourism, as Havana became a favorite destination for the U.S. middleclass (Schwartz 1991: 521-52).

Joint Venture Law (also known as Decree #50), that the government began to pursue tourism in earnest.

Decree #50 allowed up to 50% ownership by foreign companies, something unheard of until that time. However, Cold War politics prevailed, and Cuba's continued trade and political involvement with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, combined with pressures to enforce the U.S. embargo, intimidated investors in Europe and the Americas (Jenkins 1992: 141-42).

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the onset of the *Período Especial en Tiempo de Paz* (Special Period in Peacetime) in 1990 forced the Cuban government to make tourism a major source of national revenue (Schwartz 1997: 206). Castro scrambled to make up for debilitating losses in foreign trade; in 1988, 85% of imports and exports had been carried out with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Jenkins 1992: 142; Pozo Fernández 1993: 5). The GNP dropped by over 40 % in 1990, and lack of energy supplies and manufactured goods made water rationing, widespread power outages, transportation crises, and shortages of food common occurrences by the early months of 1992. Up until 1989, Cuba had been one of Latin America's most affluent countries; in a matter of a few years, it became one of its poorest (Moore 2005: 343).

Despite the new allowances for foreign investment passed in the 1980s, tourism progressed slowly until 1993, when, in the face of continually declining sugar harvests, large-scale blackouts, and food shortages, the government passed another string of special measures, including price

freezes, rationing, and, most importantly for the tourist industry, the legalization of the U.S. dollar (ibid.). 1993 was also the year in which some forms of self-employment were made legal, such as home-based food production, and taxi service (Travel & Tourism Intelligence 1996: 16).

In 1994, tourism surpassed sugar as the main source of revenue, earning \$850 million, above sugar's \$720 million. Unfortunately, the exodus of Cubans in the summer of 1995 cost millions in bad publicity: "As in the past, resort tourism's fortunes depend on positive images and expectations of relaxation and good times" (Schwartz 1997: 206).

However, many are quick to point out that the real source of revenue for the Cuban government comes in the form of remittances from Cubans living abroad. Money sent to individuals from friends and relatives is in turn spent in new government dollar stores, all in all contributing well over \$800 million each year to the GNP. Much of this money comes from the members of the Miami exile community, who would, hypocritically, deny Cuba any and all political and economic aid but pay the welfare of their relatives out of their own pockets (Moore 2005: 344).

According to some studies in the late 1990s, the tourist industry in Cuba is expanding at a rate of 15% per year (de Holán 1997: 783; Aoki 2002: 44). Although statistics on the number of tourists vary, most studies indicate that by the year 2000 the number of visitors per year had increased by more than 500% since 1985, with gross earnings in the neighborhood of 1.7 million

dollars. Italians are the most common tourists, followed by Canadians, Mexicans, Spaniards, and other Europeans (Moore 2005: 348).⁶

Music plays a prominent role in Cuba's promotional plan to attract tourists. At major hotels, every night features a performance of a salsa band, folkloric troupe, or even a big-name *timba* group. When I visited Havana in 2003, Issac Delgado's group, one of the most popular on the island at that time, performed weekly at the Spanish-owned Meliá Cohiba, the newest hotel on Havana's waterfront.

The effort to attract tourists has changed the content of Hotel cabaret shows. As Rosalie Schwartz notes:

After two decades in which the government downplayed ethnic distinctions for ideological reasons, it once again emphasizes Cuba's African and [Native American] heritage and, like other tourist destinations, capitalizes on folklore (Schwartz 1997: 208).

Katherine Hagedorn (2001: 12) notes the impact of tourism on the "folkloricization" of Santería rituals:

⁶ This growth has not continued as expected into the 21st century. Statistics provided by the World Tourism Organization show a drop in net tourist earnings from \$1.737 million in 2000 to \$1.639 million in 2002 (WTO 2005). Moore (p.c. 2005) suggests that this might have to do with Cuba's tendency to copy other models of tourism in the Caribbean without taking into account unique aspects of Cuba that might attract different types of visitors, such as those interested in learning about Cuba's successful socialist programs in education and medicine. My own experience confirms Moore's observation (see below).

Afro-Cuban religions such as Santería have been catapulted from the target of both persecution and prosecution to the destination of foreign tourism (ibid.: 10).

As Pacini Hernández (1998: 114) notes, it is through a clearer affirmation of African roots that Cuban music has been successfully marketed as “world music” to international audiences, including not just percussion-based groups like Conjunto Folklórico, but also those performing son, like the *Buena Vista Social Club* (BVSC) and the Afro-Cuban All-Stars.⁷

While the tourist boom has created more performance opportunities for musicians, it has had negative consequences for the population as a whole. The legalization of the dollar, along with the opening of dollar stores which sell a wide range of manufactured goods, has created a dual economy in which those with access to even small sums in dollars can afford to live much more comfortably than the best paid government employees. Highly trained professionals leave careers as doctors or lawyers to work in the tourist sector, finding better pay in restaurants or driving *bicitaxis* (bicycle taxis).

Music is increasingly seen as a way of accessing the tourist dollar economy that is open to almost anyone. This is especially true of son, since it requires little initial investment (although even finding a guitar and guitar

⁷ See Chapter 2 for further discussion of the marketing behind the Buena Vista Social Club.

strings can be difficult) and has had overwhelming success with foreigners.⁸ Thousands of amateur musicians have flocked to the cities and major tourist destinations in the hopes of making dollars in tips, music or dance lessons, or even catching the eye of foreign entrepreneurs (Moore 2005: 345). Meanwhile, the best music venues and nightclubs charge admission in dollars, effectively creating a “musical apartheid” (ibid.: 348); Cuban citizens cannot see live performances of the most popular bands simply because they cannot pay the cover charge.

For performers on the island, performing for tourists is a new experience, with potential for notable musical and social consequences. The study of music in tourism is not a new field, however. The following section provides a summary of its history in ethnomusicology and then addresses issues relative to Cuban musicians in more detail.

Tourism Studies in Ethnomusicology: A brief summary

Although anthropologists had addressed issues relating to tourism peripherally as early as the 1960s, the first works published with a specific

⁸ Chapter 2 discusses some factors contributing to son’s rise in popularity. Among Cubans, son and dance music in general have been on the rise since the 1980s, but most tourists are probably exposed to Cuban music through World Music marketing networks, which most often feature “traditional” Cuban music (e.g. the *Buena Vista Social Club*).

focus on tourist phenomena saw light in the mid-1970s.⁹ MacCannell (1976) and Smith (1977) are the two most important works on the subject.¹⁰

Ethnomusicologists were slow to follow suit in the active study of tourism. It was not until 1986, more than ten years after the Anthropological Society's national symposium on tourism, that the International Council for Traditional Music held its first colloquium on the impact of tourism on traditional music. The papers presented at this colloquium, held in Kingston, Jamaica, were published in the volume *Come Mek Me Hol' Yu Han'* (Kaepler 1988), which represents the first major ethnomusicological study of tourism.

As Frederick Lau (1998: 117) points out, up until the early 1990s "most discussions of tourism [could] be charted along a continuum between the two extremes of condemning or celebrating its consequences."

In recent years, however, this evaluative approach has been largely replaced by an emphasis on meaning and "sub-text" in tourist performance

⁹ In her introduction to *Hosts and Guests*, Valene Smith (1977: 2) cites Theron Nuñez's (1963) article on tourism, as well as the Central States Anthropological Society session on tourism in 1964, as the earliest tourism studies in American anthropology.

¹⁰ Emanuel de Kadt (1979) is also widely cited. Although de Kadt's contributions to the subject are significant, the two books mentioned here are recognized as the pioneering works in tourism theory. The journal *Annals of Tourism Research*, established at around the same time, is widely cited as well, especially in its early volumes. I will not include a detailed discussion of *Annals* here, as I have not seen it cited significantly in ethnomusicological work, with the exception of some key articles (e.g. Cohen 1988).

(Lau 1998:114). The works of Benedict Anderson (1983) and Eric Hobsbawm (1983) greatly influenced tourism scholarship across disciplines in the 1990s. Lau (1998), Sarkissian (1998), and Rees (1998), whose papers on tourism in Southeast Asia were published in a special issue of *Journal of Musicological Research*, all deal with tourism in terms of Anderson's definition of nationalism, identifying ways in which tourist performance can oppose or affirm national and local identities.

All three authors use Hobsbawm's theory of tradition as well, problematizing the rhetoric of "tradition" and "authenticity" as strategically employed by both musicians and audience members (*ibid.*)¹¹ Frederick Lau elucidates these concepts most clearly, saying:

What is considered "authentic," "historic," and "traditional" in the context of these cultural performances can only be views rooted in the imagination of either the foreign audience or a segment of modern Chinese society (Lau 1998:118).

Lau (1998: 117-18) is among the first to include the theory of folklorist Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett in his work (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1995, 1998) has proven to be immensely important for ethnomusicologists in the late 1990s and early 21st century.

¹¹ Here Erik Cohen (1988) and Edward Bruner (1994) are important as well for their theories of "authenticity."

Herself heavily influenced by Hobsbawm, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett presents a theory of “heritage” as a socially constructed, “‘value-added’ industry” (1995: 369). In other words, outmoded cultural products are given renewed value in the present as display objects. Rather than a preserved or rediscovered cultural continuity, “heritage” is a “transvaluation” of outdated practices (ibid.).¹²

Sarkissian (2000) presents one of the best in recent models for understanding tourist performance through the eyes of performers. Her ethnography of musicians in Malaysia’s Portuguese settlement combines Bruner’s (1994) theory of authenticity and Hobsbawm’s (1983) theory of invented tradition with Clifford’s (1997: 12) “experiments in travel writing and poetic collage.” She explores the way local and national identities are constructed and negotiated in the interaction of music, tradition, and tourism.

Cultural Tourism and Commoditization in Cuban Son

The notion of commoditization, as it is used by tourism scholars such as Eric Cohen (1988 : 380), or commodification, as the term has emerged in other disciplines, is often of central importance in contemporary scholarship on tourism. However, in the case of son, a popular dance music that has become “traditional,” commoditization is not a new factor in the sense that

¹² Transvaluation, here, is another articulation of “value-added,” i.e.: Cultural products are given new value vis-à-vis their new status as display objects rather than as practical components of everyday life.

one can say that it applies to sacred music, for example. In the case of the Conjunto Folklórico, sacred performances once reserved for local private participation become “folkloricized” (Hagedorn 2002: 12) and, in effect, commoditized for the benefit of tourist audiences. Son, on the other hand, has always existed in a context of commerciality.¹³

Nonetheless, contemporary musicians in Cuba approach the growing re-commercialization of son differently than their predecessors might have. After more than forty years of the U.S. embargo and the resulting limits on international trade, as well as ideological opposition to capitalism, an entire generation of musicians has grown up in Cuba without having to deal with market pressures the way musicians know them in other parts of the world. Cuban pianist Elio Villafranca cites this as being one of his biggest obstacles to a career in music in the United States:

In this country [the U.S.], business issues such as market penetration and selling product are difficult for me...It is much more difficult to have a commercial sense or direction over there [in Cuba]...As an artist in Cuba...you have to depend on [your own] musical talent whereas in this country it's more important to know how to navigate the musical industry than having talent (Quiñones 2003).

¹³ See Moore (1997) for an excellent account of the rise of son in the context of early radio, changing political climates, and changing notions of “blackness” during the early part of the 20th century.

This fact has the romantic allure of purity and exoticism that attracted artists like Ry Cooder, who thought of his musical collaborators on the island as “not yet touched by commercialism” (Cooder in Mariner 1999). But of course, the reality is much more complex. It is not as though lack of commercial engagement in the world recording industry has had any preservational or “time-capsule” effects. Quite the opposite: Cuban musicians have had to succeed or fail based on their local and national popularity.

This is still the case, to some extent, especially for bands that perform for local concerts in city amphitheatres, playing salsa, *timba*, and *reguetón*.¹⁴ For son groups it is also important, as they often perform concerts for locals as well as for tourists, and for an amateur to group to gain recognition by an *empresa*, it helps to have local support.

For the younger generation of musicians, European and American tourists, whose presence may have shaped the history of son since its origins, once again provide an “external public” (Cohen 1988: 382). This new “external public” can provide some space for renewed meaning: thanks to the commercial success of son in international markets, many musicians who self-identify themselves as *soneros* have found a respect among their musical peers not enjoyed in earlier periods.

¹⁴ Reguetón is essentially a blend of Jamaican dance hall styles, hip hop, and Puerto Rican bomba and salsa popularized in the 1990s. It is primarily associated with Puerto Rican and “Nu-yorican” culture, but has become popular throughout much of Latin America. The name, (also spelled “reggaetón”), literally means “big reggae.”

This effect has been noted before by tourism scholars. Cohen writes:

Folk musicians...may be excited by the opportunity to present their art and proud to display their competence...It would be absurd to think that all popular music is meaningless for the artists simply because it is commercialized (ibid.: 381-82).

Many musicians remain ambivalent about the extent to which this increased value placed on son represents a real “revival” among musicians and a renewed interest in son within Cuba. They view it simply as an attractive way to make a living. But even to non-musicians whom I spoke to, son seems to have gained renewed significance in light of its new-found currency (literal and figurative).

Tourism is not a simple one- or two-way exchange between foreigners and locals. The average tourist audience member represents only part of the new external public. Other foreigners, such as entrepreneurs and record company scouts, form another audience with different criteria. The internal public is multifaceted as well, consisting of different local players with varying levels of interest in and control over musical performances, including empresa representatives, hotel and nightclub managers, and local music fans.

For each internal and external public, musicians must present some acceptably “authentic” product. According to Bruner (1994: 399-401), authenticity can have four different meanings: verisimilitude, genuineness, originality, and authority. The first two meanings describe reproductions of an original; the first being a reasonable facsimile that is acceptable according

to the public's expectations, and the second a more detailed replica incorporating historical data. The third meaning refers to "original" as opposed to "replica," and does not allow for any reproduction whatsoever. Finally, the fourth meaning refers to an endorsement or certification by some authority.

The application of these meanings to musical performance could be illustrated by, for example, a Led Zeppelin cover band. According to the first meaning, a band could be considered to perform authentic Led Zeppelin covers as long as they played Led Zeppelin's songs in a style more or less similar to that heard on the band's most well-known recordings, including all of the well-known guitar riffs and drum solos. The players might still improvise note choices or rhythms in the accompaniment parts, or the guitar player might play his own Jimmy Page-inspired guitar solo.

According to the second meaning, the band would only be acceptably authentic if they cut their hair like the original band members, wore similar clothes, and mimicked the original recordings as specifically as possible, performing all guitar solos and vocal lines note for note. To be authentic according to the third meaning, the band could not be considered authentic at all, since they are not, in fact, members of the original group. If the band members had all attended the official Page and Plant University of Rock, they might be considered authentic according to the fourth meaning.

The next section examines the "publics" or audiences that gauge a given group's authenticity in Cuba, including interview data from musicians

and other participants. In all cases, I stress the agency of both the musicians and the public; the public actively assesses musicians according to predetermined criteria, while the musicians actively present performances according to what they think will be acceptable.

The Empresa System

Since around 1978, two years after the official formation of the Ministry of Culture, nationally centralized hiring centers for musicians were restructured into empresarial systems, following a general trend of decentralization in Cuban government during the 1970s.¹⁵ These systems, although slightly revamped in 1984, remain in place today. In common parlance, “*empresa*” refers to any of the various agencies whose main function is the employment of musicians (Robbins 1990a: 59, 76-87).¹⁶

Each province and municipality has at least two *empresas*, which function simultaneously as both talent agencies and musicians’ unions. Their

¹⁵ It is widely agreed that the earlier central hiring system had catastrophic consequences for musicians, causing innumerable bureaucratic delays and “destroy[ing] the customary mechanisms of contact between the public and popular musicians” (Acosta in Robbins 1990a: 84; see also Moore 2005: 144; Fonet et al. 2001: 175).

¹⁶ Technically, only “auto-financed” agencies are called *Empresas Artísticas*, while the ones that receive an annual budget have other names. Robbins (1990a: 77, 88-91) points out that the organization of musical genres into budgeted or auto-financed *empresas* can be indicative of values assigned to one genre over another at the level of local and national government.

official responsibilities are to organize the hiring, contracting, and payment of professional and semi-professional musicians (ibid.: 78).

Musicians are given a rating of "A" through "F" ("A" being the highest) based on their performance at an audition, and this rating is the principle factor determining the musicians' pay scales and performance opportunities. Musicians who rate a "C" or higher are eligible for a *plantilla* (staff, or salaried) position; all others fall into the second category, *por contrato* ("by contract") (ibid.: 96-97).

Since 1968, professional musicians have been required to hold a degree from a national conservatory such as ENA (*Escuela Nacional de Arte*). Conservatories are free, but entrance is fiercely competitive, as there are many more applicants than slots. For those who are unable to attend a conservatory, or unable to graduate, the prospect of becoming a professional musician is considerably more difficult. Amateur musicians must work on an act in their spare time, and make arrangements to play for free at local venues. Once they have a steady monthly rate of "amateur" performances, something like twenty per month, they are eligible to audition for an *empresa* (Moore 2005: 143).

The only way in which *empresas* differ from talent agencies is that they do not seek out contracts for musicians. Musicians must approach nightclub owners, hotel managers, and others, to find performance opportunities for their bands. Occasionally, non-music agencies will contact *empresas* to hire musicians for an event. In either case, the rules of payment

are standardized and set by the empresa, so musicians do not typically discuss payment with the venue (Robbins 1990a: 110).

Up until the Special Period, the empresa was the sole means of employment for musicians. Although there were problems with the system, for the most part, musicians' salaries only varied slightly (ranging from 128 to 450 pesos per month), and work was easy to come by.¹⁷ Robbins (1990a: 110-111) notes that in the late eighties, he never heard a single complaint about musicians having difficulties filling their monthly quotas of performances. At most, musicians complained about competition to get into a good band or having to play an instrument that they did not like.

Since then, the dual economy of pesos and dollars has divided musicians and drastically altered their relationships with empresas. Recent changes in laws regarding compensation for performances abroad has allowed musicians to keep most of the money earned on tour in Europe or Latin America, but musicians who perform on the island, even at high-priced tourist venues, are still paid in virtually worthless pesos. While Robbins' (1990a: 111) experience indicated that musicians generally regarded empresas as fair and sometimes helpful to musicians, many today have come to regard the empresas as nothing more than corrupt tax collecting agencies.

Ángel Luís "Sinsonte" Balmaseda, the lead singer of a Havana-based septeto, is one of many who feel that the empresas are run unfairly:

¹⁷ In 2004, the official exchange rate for one dollar was 26 pesos.

Look, to win an audition, you have to know the brother of the [artist representative]. You have to already have money, before you make any, because you have to take him out for drinks, introduce him to your sister, and I can't do that! (Balmaseda, interview).¹⁸

Balmaseda pointed out that the process of getting gigs for the band, which is still left up to the musicians, is just as corrupt as passing the audition, and in the end, he claims, there is no incentive to bring people to see your show, since all of the money you make will be split up by all the other acts that the empresa represents.

Other musicians have expressed similar concerns, saying that empresas now often deduct taxes of up to 65% of earnings. One bandleader called his empresa "a vampire that sucks your blood and won't let you live" (Aponte in Moore 2005: 155).

It may be that one reason for this recent negative reaction on the part of musicians is that monetary transactions, especially entrance fees, which were once exclusively handled by the empresa, are now out in the open and often negotiated by musicians themselves. Robbins (1990a: 111) notes that in the 1980s, musicians were largely unaware that empresas took money off the top of performances fees, since musicians were paid according to set pay

¹⁸ "Mira, para ganar una audición, tienes que conocer el hermano del representante. Tienes que tener dinero ya, antes de ganarlo, porque tienes que invitarle a tomar una copa, presentarle a tu hermana, ¡y yo no puedo hacer eso!"

scales. Also, entrance fees for public performances were most often free or at extremely low prices; performances were typically funded out of specifically allocated budgets. Today, any musician can read the sign advertising a cover of “10.00 USD,” take one look at the crowd, and immediately realize that their performance is generating well beyond the measly 300 pesos paid to the band.

Joaquín Leyva, who works for Empresa Santiago de Cuba, contradicted some of the things that musicians told me about the empresa’s goals and responsibilities. According to Leyva, the only criterion for acceptance of a group into an empresa is the quality of the music – no practical matters, such as whether or not the group will be able to work in local establishments, are taken into consideration. Leyva stressed that many of the members of the audition evaluators were musicians themselves, which helped to rate prospective performers fairly.

It doesn’t matter what genre, it doesn’t matter whether they play a son, a changüí, a ... if it’s a *good* changüí, well there you go, if it’s a *good* guaracha, we accept them (Leyva, interview).¹⁹

Clearly, the audition and rating process of a band could be quite subjective, regardless of whatever strict criteria might be in place beforehand. In this case, empresas appear to adhere to the first meaning of authenticity;

¹⁹ “No importa el género, no importa si tocan un son, un changüí, un...si es un *buen* changüí, pues ya, si es un *buen* guaracha, nosotros les aceptamos.”

they are concerned with whether or not a performance is “credible and convincing” (Bruner 1994: 399) according to their previous expectations.

Leyva went on to say that in many cases, the empresa does in fact promote its groups to the extent of finding gigs for them, sometimes even working with other towns outside of Santiago. But most of the time, the work that is available is dictated by the requirements of the venues. For the Hotel Casa Granda, for example, bringing a big band, or a band that uses amplifiers, would be too loud for the space.

In most cases, according to Leyva, these kinds of practical concerns are what make son groups more favorable. They are a great combination, from the point of view of the venue: they are small, they play acoustically, and they are popular with tourists. Leyva agreed with other musicians I spoke with in saying that it was easiest to book son than any other type of music.

Leyva assured me, however, me that son bands were not the only groups that found work in Santiago. The groups that played salsa and timba got lots of gigs as well, but they needed much bigger venues. Unfortunately these venues are on the outskirts of town, outside of the tourist center. Leyva seemed to think that this was ok, since tourists generally preferred son bands anyway.

This last statement shows how empresas reinforce the kind of “musical apartheid” mentioned earlier, where musical events are divided into “tourist” and “local” categories, in this case by geographic location. Compared to Havana, Santiago’s tourist music venues are relatively accessible to locals as

well; a number of the most well known ones, like Casa de La Trova, are free during the day and charge a split admission (two dollars for tourists, 10 pesos for Cubans) at night.²⁰ However, for the practical reasons Leyva describes, most shows that would appeal to young Cuban fans are performed near the outskirts of the city, in marginalized neighborhoods. This leaves the center of town, with its attractive colonial architecture (much of which has been recently renovated thanks to UNESCO funds [UNESCO 2005]) for tourists.

Hotel and club managers

EGREM, the Empresa de Grabaciones y Ediciones Musicales (Company for Musical Recordings and Publication), was founded in 1962 and charged with the “historic mission of preserving all the values of Cuban music which are not yet totally recorded” (Gómez García in Robbins 1990a: 179). The majority of recordings produced through the 1980s were made without any regard for popular interest or market pressures. Audience polls and radio “top ten lists” were rejected on the basis of their inherent connections to capitalism. Instead, recording projects were approved by a panel of thirty music experts, including ethnomusicologists such as María Teresa Linares (who was president of the panel during the 1980s) (ibid.: 180-85).

²⁰ Havana does have some venues that offer similar discounts for Cubans, such as the Hurón Azúl Club at UNEAC (National Union of Cuban Artists and Writers), but these represent only a small portion of the city’s commercial music venues.

Robbins (*ibid.*) outlines the many problematic aspects of record production governed by scholarly consensus rather than market demand, including uneven sales of records produced, seemingly arbitrary decisions about which popular band to record, and a tendency toward musical conservatism. Although these problems have begun to be addressed in recent years, my experience suggests that the problematic lack of feedback mechanisms from local and national audiences persists, both in recording and in the newly established Casas de la Música (Houses of Music).

The Casas de La Música were established in 1996, and are a completely auto-financed, semi-autonomous enterprise (Martínez Galán, interview). The first Casa de la Música was opened in Miramar, followed by another in downtown Havana. Since then Casas de la Música have opened in Trinidad and Santiago, and EGREM has also been charged with the management of two other venues in Santiago, the Patio de Los Abuelos and the Casa de la Trova.

Yurina Martínez Galán, who acts as the “Principal Commercial Specialist” for EGREM in Santiago, described the music booking process for the Casas de la Música as identical to that of clubs like Nell’s in New York.²¹ Essentially, bands are booked on a trial basis, and the bands that bring in the

²¹ Nell’s has since closed its doors, but through the summer of 2004 it was one of the best-known venues for Cuban son in New York City. Martínez Galán was contacted by the owner to discuss the possibility of bringing some Santiago musicians to perform there (which accounts for her knowledge of this specific club and its procedures).

most revenue are asked to return. Martínez Galán contradicted Leyva's assumption about tourist audiences' preference for son, saying that the best groups were always the more "modern" ones (i.e. salsa or timba).

Just across Plaza Céspedes, at Hotel Casa Granda, musicians perform on the terrace overlooking the plaza. This is an important regular gig shared by three local bands, Son Diamante, Septeto Naborí, and Moneda Nacional. Other groups are occasionally hired when these three are out of town (which happens fairly often). I spoke with hotel manager Andrés Santor, who told me that the hotel qualifies for a budget from local and national cultural agencies including the Centro Provincial de la Música (Provincial Center for Music) and the Agencia Cubana de Música Tradicional (Cuban Agency for Traditional Music). Bands are selected from the roster of Empresa Santiago de Cuba, and Santor stressed that their criteria are mostly practical: the limited space and live acoustics of the terrace cannot accommodate bands much bigger than septetos.

Hotel and restaurant managers prefer acoustic ensembles as they perform at a much more manageable volume level, and can play in a patio or other open-air space that may not have access to electrical outlets (Santor, interview). Also, although in recent years power outages have become much less common, electricity is still not something that can be relied on with any confidence, so an entirely acoustic ensemble is preferable to one that relies on amplification (Brito, interview).

I asked Santor if he had ever booked bands that performed acoustic music that was not son, such as jazz combos or acoustic rock bands, and he laughed at the idea. "Tourists aren't interested in that sort of thing. You know, why would you come to Cuba to hear music from another country?" (Santor, interview).²²

However, neither EGREM nor Casa Granda has any set mechanism for gauging audience response or interest. EGREM does well with the bands that have an established reputation, but cannot effectively plan ahead and pick out up-and-coming acts. Casa Granda's groups are booked based on anecdotal experience of tourist tastes: "We know this to be the case thanks to lots of experience – lots of experience with tourists, working in the world of tourism for a long time" (ibid.).²³ There are no mechanisms in place for evaluating tourists' opinions of the music they hear or would like to hear.

For Casa Granda, authenticity is an important factor, since tourists presumably want to hear "real" Cuban music; Santor's comment above indicates that he considers son and other "traditional" music to be more Cuban than jazz or rock, even if performed by Cubans. But Santor does not select the musicians himself, or even pay much attention to them. Instead he follows the fourth meaning of authenticity, relying on the empresa's

²²"A los turistas no le interesa esa serie de cosas. Usted sabe, ¿cómo va a venir usted a Cuba para escuchar música de otro país?"

²³ "Nosotros sabemos eso gracias a mucha experiencia- mucha experiencia con los turistas, trabajando en el mundo del turismo desde hace mucho tiempo."

endorsement of a certain group as a guarantee that they are “certified” septetos.

EGREM, on the other hand, is not so concerned with finding “real” Cuban music. Martínez Galán enthusiastically touts the eclecticism of the Casa de la Música programming, which even includes local rap groups from time to time. Martínez Galán does not waste time evaluating groups before they perform. Instead, the sole criterion is their success at drawing a crowd.

Tourists

Although Cuba’s tourist sector continues to grow, this growth has fallen somewhat short of expectations in the last two to three years. As noted above, some studies in the late 1990s estimated annual growth at 15%, but a recent presentation by Cuban Tourism Deputy Minister Oscar González at the International Tourism Fair of Berlin in March of 2005 showed that tourist arrivals had only increased in 2004 by about half that, around seven percent (Cuba XP 2005).²⁴

One reason for this may be that Cuban marketing has targeted the wrong type of tourist. Tourism projects initially hoped to pick up where 1950s tourism had left off, capitalizing on the reputations of Havana and Varadero beach as fantastic Caribbean getaways with vast beaches and exciting nightlife. The main obstacle to tourism was seen as the limited hotel

²⁴ Also see figures from the World Tourism Organization, above (in footnotes).

capacity, since five-star hotels like the Habana Libre (the old Hilton) and the Hotel Nacional were in serious need of renovation (Pozo Fernández 1993: 12).

However, tourists who can afford to pay five-star prices are more likely to vacation in established Caribbean destinations, like the Bahamas, Cancún, or Jamaica, since these offer comprehensive luxury packages complete with golf courses, sunset cruises, jungle tours, etc., all in complete comfort. Although old hotels have been beautifully renovated and new hotels are of equal or better quality, Cuban tourism agencies cannot offer these kinds of all-inclusive vacations.

In fact, many tourists come to Cuba for reasons other than to relax poolside in a five-star hotel. Gislène and Caroline, two schoolteachers from Paris, came to take an informal tour of Cuban primary schools as part of their vacation. Their interest in Cuba came partially from its reputation for sun and good music, but also from the success of its educational system. They were much more interested in learning something about the way Cubans lived than in glitzy hotel cabaret shows. Like me, they avoided the most expensive venues for music, hunted for local restaurants that charged in pesos rather than dollars, and stayed at *casas particulares* (privately owned houses)²⁵ rather

²⁵ Tourists are legally allowed to stay in rooms rented by locals who hold official licenses to do so, as part of a general trend toward allowing more self-financed enterprise. However, these sources of income are heavily regulated and taxed, making it difficult to turn a profit except in the busiest tourist areas. Many Cubans rent rooms to foreigners illegally for lower

than hotels (Caroline, interview).

Michel, also a teacher, came to hear music and get away from the hustle and bustle of Paris. Although his interest in Cuba was much more stereotypical (hot sun, pretty women, great music), he also traveled on a budget, and stayed at the house of a friend's distant cousin in Santiago. Michel pointed out to me that in many cases there were no intermediate options between activities promoted to tourists at high prices and activities open, and sometimes restricted to, local participation (Michel, interview).

Moore (p.c. 2005) agrees that there has been little effort to promote anything other than first-class tourism, and that plans for the future (including cruise ship docks and golf courses) continue in the same direction.

Thus the tendency of Santor and Leyva to generalize about tourist taste can be viewed as part of a larger trend throughout Cuba's tourist industry. In terms of music, all three of the tourists mentioned above expressed an interest in a wide variety of Cuban music, and complained of hearing the same songs over and over again from septetos. They fall into the category of what Cohen (1988: 378) would call "experiential" tourists, those who are concerned with the appearance of authenticity (as opposed to "existential" tourists, who demand "the real thing" in every last detail). They were most entertained by performances that did not openly reveal themselves to be "just for tourists." Hearing the same songs from different bands made them realize that the

than average prices, but are subject to heavy fines and even confiscation of property if discovered.

songs evidently formed some kind of tourist repertoire and were not just the songs that the musicians themselves liked to play.

For tourists like Gislène, Caroline, and Michel, who are interested in music but have no musical training, repertoire is one easily quantifiable aspect of musical performance.²⁶ Rees (2000: 155) suggests that age is often an important factor in suggesting authenticity, and this can be true for repertoire performed by Cuban septetos as well. Some of the most frequently requested songs, according to musicians, are compositions from the 1920s by Miguel Matamoros, such as “Son de La Loma” or “Lágrimas Negras.” However, the extent to which the age of a given piece can certify its authenticity has its limits. Specifically, recognition of the piece is crucial; if a band performs a song that is not recognized by the audience, they may have little ability to recognize it as older or newer than other pieces.

What seems to be most important in establishing authenticity in repertoire is covered by the fourth definition. When a given piece is duly authorized (by important performers or recordings, for example) it becomes authentic, regardless of age. An excellent example is the song by Francisco Repilado (a.k.a. Compay Segundo) called “Chan Chan,” which I heard performed by nearly every band I saw in 2004. Although the song’s composer was the oldest musician on the *Buena Vista Social Club* (BVSC) recordings, the song itself was written in the 1980s. Its presence on the recording, which has

²⁶ This is not a representative sample of tourists’ musical tastes. The attitudes of these three tourists constitute one of many possible perspectives.

itself been given the stamp of authenticity, deserving or not, in World Music networks, ensures its place in what tourists perceive as authentic repertoire.²⁷

Thus, tourists' perceptions of authenticity in Cuban septeto performance have direct links to international music markets, even if many groups performing in Cuba do not have access to these markets. The more familiar a tourist is with a certain set of recordings, the more rigorous (and perhaps idiosyncratic) their criteria for an authentic sound.

Although a growing interest in Cuban dance music has seen the re-release of many out-of-print recordings, distribution problems make all but the most well known groups difficult to obtain. The ease of internet shopping offsets this to some degree, but it is still true that only the most well-publicized artists are sold in large quantities.²⁸

Even eight years after the initial release of the BVSC, the most well-known artists remain those associated with this project in some way. Thus, the expectations of foreign audiences in Cuba are shaped by the repertoire, stylistic elements, and instrumentation heard on BVSC and its affiliated

²⁷ As Pacini Hernández (1998: 114) points out, Cuban music has, since the early 1980s, been marketed as a World Music commodity, avoiding the more insular Latin category in the U.S. See Chapter 2.

²⁸ For example, Nonesuch records (the U.S. subsidiary of World Circuit, producers of the BVSC) has garnered 6 gold and 3 platinum record awards since 1994. Re-releases of Septeto Habanero, Septeto Nacional, and other well-known groups from the 1920s and '30s, produced by Arhoolie Folkways, Tumbao Cuban Classics, and other small labels, have sold only in the tens of thousands (RIAA 2003).

recordings (Ibrahim Ferrer, Afro-Cuban All-Stars, etc.). These recordings provide audiences with an idealized version of what authentic Cuban music should sound like.

However, as Hernández-Reguant (2000: 1) points out, BVSC may not have had a significant impact on local music scenes in Cuba. In fact, the recording itself remains unavailable on the island, even in tourist shops (ibid.). Thus, tourists are often asking for music that they define as “son” (according to the liner notes of BVSC), with very specific expectations and different criteria than those of performers.

This might explain the communication gap between musicians and tourists implicit in Gislène and Caroline’s complaints; musicians continue to play the same songs, thinking that they are catering to tourists’ desires, while tourists are actually tiring of the same old repertoire and searching for more authentic performers. It could be that tourists, who use repertoire as the easiest way to communicate style, might request something from BVSC or other World Music compilations that local performers have never heard. For musicians familiar with the song in other contexts, it might have other stylistic connotations or be associated with another performer.

The members of Cañambú, a band that until recently was still directed by one of its founding members, Arístides Ruíz Boza (see Chapter 4), attribute the lack of variety in repertoire to regional differences.

Let me tell you: we play mostly in hotels, and tourists will come up and say [in a high-pitched voice] ‘What about “Son de La Loma”?’

What about Chan Chan?' because they always come from Havana first, toward Oriente, all along hearing all the groups play all the same things! (Ramón Suarez in Cañambú, interview).²⁹

The group suggested that musicians in Havana, where son has not been as popular in recent years as in Santiago, simply do not know as much repertoire. They therefore only learn songs that are specifically requested, while Santiagueros have a wealth of local knowledge to draw from.

This assertion is in itself a bid for authenticity, as Cañambú's members seek to define themselves as "the real thing" as opposed to imitators in Havana. Judging from this remark it is clear that musicians themselves have other criteria for authenticity that may not be significant to tourists.

Musicians' Perspectives: Regional Identity and Competition

As the comment above suggests, regional identity can often serve as an authenticator. In general, across the country the musicians I spoke with conceded that Oriente was still the region with the strongest tradition of son. Many pointed out that the star players in many groups, both septetos and bigger bands, like Adalberto Álvarez y Su Son, were from Oriente. The

²⁹ "Déjame decirte que, nosotros tocamos en hoteles, y viene el turista y dice 'Y el "Son de la Loma"? Y el "Chan Chan"?' Porque siempre vienen desde la Habana, hacía Oriente, ¡oyendo los mismos y todos grupos con la misma cosa! Cuando nosotros tocamos, la gente aplauda y baila, ¡y gozan bien!"

winning group of this year's septeto competition was Moneda Nacional, from Santiago.

A finer distinction is often made by noting that a player is *de monte* (of the hills). Musicians who come from eastern mountainous regions near the Sierra Maestra, and especially close to Guantánamo, are considered to be "hard-wired" for son. The perceived authenticity of certain musicians by their band members was often articulated to me in this way.

For performers in Santiago, Havana musicians are perceived as lacking in both musical talent and respect for tradition. Their eclectic tastes and efforts at musical fusion are regarded with disdain and sometimes ridiculed. As Manuel "Bigote" Palacios, of Sonora La Calle, told me "Yeah, they try to stick everything in there, cha-cha, jazz, reggae, but you can't do that! It's not son!" (Palacios, interview).³⁰

Meanwhile, Habaneros often consider bands that perform too closely within established regional styles as not inventive enough. When I mentioned to Julia, the lead singer for Son Soneros, how strikingly different I found the vocal harmonies of Pinar del Río group Compás de Espera, she was not impressed. "Well, that group is from Pinar del Río. They play in the style

³⁰ "Si, ellos quieren meterlo todo – cha-cha, jazz, régue, ¡pero no se puede hacer eso! ¡Eso ya no es son!"

from over there, I mean, like Polo Montañez, who is from there too" (Julia, interview).³¹

I spoke with Joaquín Leyva about the feeling of rivalry with Havana that I felt from other musicians in Santiago. He explained that, yes, there is a tradition of regional antagonism, but that these days, the economic situation for musicians brings this much closer to the surface.

The thing is that Havana is a much bigger tourist center than Santiago. Because of that, they have more resources for the employment of musicians. They have more theatres, more bars, the Casa de la Música is much bigger. And lots of tourists never go outside of Havana, so they think they've seen everything. That's why a lot [of musicians] moved there [to Havana], like Adalberto Álvarez (Leyva, interview).³²

It is true that Cuba's tourist industry is largely centered around Havana. As a brief example, www.cubatravel.cu, a tourism website run by the Cuban tourist agency Publicitur, shows that Havana alone has 68 hotels (not including another 45 located along Varadero beach, a two-hour drive to

³¹ "Bueno, ese grupo es de Pinar del Río. Tienen el estilo de allá, o sea, como Polo Montañez, que es de ahí también."

³² "Lo que sucede es que La Habana es un centro turístico mucho más grande que Santiago. Por eso, tienen mas recursos para el empleo de los músicos. Tienen más teatros, más bares, la Casa de la Música es mucho más grande. Y muchos turistas nunca salen de La Habana, así que creen que han visto todo. Por eso muchos [músicos] se fueron de aquí para allá, como Adalberto Álvarez."

the east), while other tourist centers around the island rarely have more than ten. Santiago, Cuba's second largest city, as well as the "birthplace of son" and the city with the highest Afro-Cuban population, only has 15 hotels (*Cubatrazel* 2005).

Many in Oriente, near Santiago and the rural province of Guantánamo feel left out of the Ministry of Tourism's plan for the future. Ben Lapidus (2002: 3) notes that Guantánamo, where most performers of *changüí* reside, is absent from official lists of developing tourist attractions.

Dolores, an older trova singer in Santiago, figures that the influx of tourists has done good things for music in Santiago, except, she feels, for the musicians who are doing music "automatically," or just for the extra cash, and not because they love music. She notes that when tourists started to arrive, the number of son bands playing in Santiago multiplied exponentially. "It used to be just the old guys...young people go [to Casa de la Trova] now, but not because they like son. No! It's to find a *yuma*, you see!" (Dolores, interview).³³

Dolores' comment underlines the ubiquitous nature of *jineterismo*³⁴ in tourist areas. Hustlers hoping to sell bootleg CDs or cigars, others hoping to

³³ "Si, los jóvenes entran ahora, pero no porque les gusta el son. No! Es para buscar un yuma, fíjese!" Yuma is a slang term for "foreigner," "tourist," or, specifically "American." Its use is generally somewhat negative, implying someone who has money and can be easily hustled.

³⁴ Roughly "hustling." While *jinetera* (lit. "jockey") in the feminine form means a prostitute, the masculine form refers to small-time scam artists or hustlers who make money off of

make a new friend that can afford to buy them some drinks or a meal, and women hoping to exchange sexual favors for gifts or money often frequent music venues, especially those that offer lower entrance fees for Cubans (Moore 2005: 348). Some musicians feel that playing for dollar tips and catering to tourists' tastes constitutes another form of *jineterismo*. Ángel Luís Balmaseda, describing musicians who play in bars around Old Havana, said:

A lot of people hustle, down in Old Havana, and you know why? To make money, yeah, but [the biggest thing] is to have more contact with the Yuma [the tourist/foreigner]. Because they want to do their thing, but that's being a prostitute, and I can't do that (Balmaseda, interview).

Rather than trying to get by on tourist handouts, Balmaseda is determined that his group will stand out from the competition enough to catch the eye of another type of foreigner, the foreign entrepreneur. This is the end goal of many aspiring groups, especially since the success of the BVSC. In some musicians' eyes, Ry Cooder could have made a star out of anybody, and, as Cantor (1998) and Katerí Hernández (2002: 65) point out, Cooder is not the only fish in the sea. Many recording executives from the U.S. and Europe regularly send representatives to Cuba in search of new

tourists. Both hustling and prostitution are worthy of study, and have some relevance here since they often occur in musical contexts, but these are outside the scope of this work. See, for example, Hodge (2001).

talent, and musicians on the island are ready, willing, and able.³⁵

Amateur Musicians: Estrellas de Son and Innova

The final section of this chapter is an ethnographic account of two bands that hope to achieve success as international touring acts. Chapter 4 returns to some of the same issues raised by musicians in this section, showing ways in which the newly competitive climate of the tourist industry affects performance styles.

Due to the difficulty of acquiring professional status without a degree from a conservatory (as noted above), many amateur musicians choose to focus on trying to attract attention from foreigners in hopes of economic salvation and opportunities to travel outside of Cuba.

On my first day in Havana, I met Armando Hernández, director of a most unusual band called Innova (short for *innovación* or “innovation”). He is in his late sixties and a retired music teacher. The rest of the band, also retired, rehearse at the Casa de Cultura de Playa, in Vedado.

The band was founded ten years ago, at the start of the Special Period. María Elena, who is the director of the Casa de Cultura and also plays guitar in the band, told me that the band was initially formed “just for laughs”

³⁵ While the opportunity to travel and perform abroad is generally a positive experience, Cuban musicians are easy targets for exploitative foreign companies. See Moore (2005), Perna (2001), and Katerí Hernández (2002) for more details.

(Innova, interview),³⁶ but that the band members quickly realized that they might have a chance to make money or travel if they played their cards right.

Musically, Innova is far from innovative. They are basically a conjunto, playing simple tunes in the style of Arsenio Rodríguez or Chappotín y sus Estrellas. However, the band is clearly designed to catch the eye (rather than the ear) of foreigners.

One look at the band gives a sense of Hernández' quirkiness: he has spent the past ten years building homemade instruments for the band members to play, including percussion instruments in the shape of umbrellas or giant scissors, an electric bass that can be worn as a necktie, and a number of guitars and percussion instruments specially modified to be played with piano keys!³⁷

I wondered if this apparent obsession with piano keys (*teclas*) could be some sort of commentary on contemporary bands' excessive use of synthesizers, but Hernández offered few words of explanation about his inventions. Clearly, he is not the "people-person" of the band.

María Elena is responsible for promotions, and more than makes up for Hernández' shyness. According to her, Innova represents the foremost development in Cuban music of this century!

At first I was skeptical that this rag-tag bunch of retirees could really attract the attention of foreign concert promoters, but sure enough, Innova

³⁶ "solo para reírse"

³⁷ See photos 1-4, in appendix B.

has been on two international tours. In 2002 they traveled to perform in France, and in 2003, they toured Canada. Mateca Productions, who organized their Canadian tour, describes them as “traditional, original, funky and fun” (*Mateca Productions* 2003).

For ten years of rehearsal, two tours does not seem like a very big payoff, especially since Innova have not really benefited from their success at home in Havana. They occasionally perform at Casa de Cultura events, but never receive payment for performances. Still, they count themselves as lucky and eagerly prepare for their next trip, whenever it might be.

In Santiago, I met a group of young amateur musicians who still have a long way to go to reach the success of groups like Innova. Estrellas del Son is an amateur septeto, formed two years ago at a CDR party.³⁸ Initially, the group was just for fun, but the group leaders, David and Nargis, thought that maybe the group had a shot at getting some work. Now the group rehearses five days a week, performing whenever they have the chance at local functions.

³⁸ The *Comite Defensa de la Revolución* (Committee for the Defense of the Revolution) is the civilian branch of the communist party, consisting of a national network of neighborhood organizations committed to maintaining the moral integrity of Cuban society. In my experience, attitudes toward the CDR were ambivalent at best; although the CDR does sponsor a number of cultural events, such as the one in which the founding members of Estrellas del Son played, many see the CDR as nothing more than neighbors spying on neighbors. Cubans rarely explicitly criticize the CDR, but there are many jokes about the ubiquity of *elefantes* (“elephants,” i.e. people with big ears and very long memories).

Carnival is an opportunity for many new groups to cut their teeth, and to try and get noticed by tourists, representatives from Empresa Santiago, and local fans. During the week of Carnival, the city offers performance opportunities to amateur groups; each group is given permission to play at a certain location for a certain period of time. The members of Estrellas were excited to have gotten a good gig: 10am-2pm and 3pm-6pm at Plaza Céspedes.

I accompanied the group one afternoon on their lunch break, to the outskirts of Santiago, Reparto Altamira. A far cry from the newly renovated colonial homes of the tourist center, Reparto Altamira reveals the hidden class system in this so-called classless society. While across town, groups like Son Diamante, with access to dollars and contacts in foreign countries, record their albums in snazzy home studios, Estrellas del Son rehearse in the basement of Nargis' two room, cinder-block home.

David hopes that someday, when the group has a really solid sound together, they will get a contract to travel to the U.S. or Europe, and be able to save money. Nargis has plans to build a third room on the house, which he would do himself, but his salary does not provide any extra money for cinderblocks or cement. The others have similar plans. But more than saving money, they told me, the main attraction of playing in a band is the possibility of travel. Being in a band is as good a chance of seeing Europe as there is.

Unfortunately, the end of Carnival probably means the end of regular performance opportunities for Estrellas del Son. Santiago's normal performance venues are limited, and most gigs are tied up by empresa bands. It seems that success for Estrellas is still quite far off.

Conclusion

Identifying the criteria by which different audiences judge musical performance highlights the complex nature of musical interaction in tourist settings. For performers of son, the importance of creating a unique sonic identity, or *sello* (lit.: stamp), while remaining true to tradition in the eyes of both tourists and employers, heightens the importance of stylistic choices. Performers who stick too closely to traditional styles might not stand out enough from the competition, while those who sound too "modern" might be rejected by the local empresa and not even get a chance to perform.

First, it is necessary to closely examine factors that might shape the formation of the aforementioned criteria. In the next chapter, I examine the Buena Vista Social Club (BVSC) project and the controversy surrounding its portrayal of Cuba and its musicians. Chapter 3 discusses scholarly definitions of son and related genres, which have more than theoretical significance given the importance of genre classification in Cuban empresas. Through these discussions, I suggest some possible factors affecting the multiple publics of tourist contexts, providing a basis for examining the ways in which musicians make stylistic choices that reinforce or oppose notions of tradition and local identity.

Chapter 2: The *Buena Vista Social Club* Phenomenon

I knew it would be much easier for me to keep filling my pockets with money doing more Buena Vista projects, producing what the record companies want. But I am Cuban, and I understand very well what I have to do for my culture and identity.

-Juan de Marcos González (2000)

The Story of the Buena Vista Social Club

In 1996, American guitarist Ry Cooder traveled to Havana planning to record an album with Malian and Cuban musicians for the British label *World Circuit Records*. Due to visa complications, the musicians from Mali never arrived, and Cooder was forced to form a new group consisting only of Cuban musicians. He enlisted the aid of Sierra Maestra bandleader Juan de Marcos González, who contacted some of his own personal heroes, many of whom were long retired from professional music. The recording sessions that followed resulted in two releases, *Buena Vista Social Club* and *Afro-Cuban All-Stars: A Toda Cuba le Gusta*. Two years later, after *Buena Vista Social Club* had become a surprise hit in World Music markets, Ry Cooder convinced documentary filmmaker Wim Wenders to return with him to film the recording of one of *Buena Vista's* singers. The documentary, also titled *Buena Vista Social Club*, was a huge financial success as well (Hernández-Reguant 2000: 3; Katerí Hernández 2002: 62).

The *Buena Vista Social Club* documentary and music collection have had a tremendous impact on the world market for Cuban music. During my years performing son in the U.S., the *Buena Vista Social Club* (BVSC) was the lowest common denominator for communicating to audiences, booking agents, and skeptical relatives exactly what it was that I *did*.

More important than the direct economic impact on the international sales of Cuban music recordings, the iconic quality gained by the BVSC since its release in 1997 is perhaps one of the biggest influences on the expectations of tourists who travel to Cuba. Given its widespread success around the world, it is reasonable to believe that almost all visitors to Cuba are at least familiar with the album, the documentary, or both. As noted in Chapter 1, tourists' expectations affect what kinds of performances they will accept as authentic, and given that many performers rely on tips for most of their income, tourists' preconceptions can have real consequences.

In this chapter I will examine the impact of the BVSC phenomenon from perspectives on and off the island. Differing views on the project, its musical interpretations and misinterpretations, its distortions of social realities, and the label of authenticity imbued by World Music sales, will help us to understand the complexity of musicians' attitudes to the so-called "son revival" of the late 1990s.

Cuban Music in the International Market: Context for the BVSC

Contrary to popular belief, the BVSC project was not an isolated breakthrough for Cuban music in international markets. Since the late 1980s, Cuban music had been enjoying a growth in sales not seen since before the U.S. embargo. Cuban music had been successfully promoted in the U.S. on David Byrne's *Luaka Bop* label, and some Cuban groups regularly toured Europe (Pacini Hernández 1998: 345; Fornet et al. 2000: 175).

Music became an important source of revenue for the Cuban government soon after the onset of the *Período Especial* (Special Period) in 1990. Since then, popular music has generated revenue for the state through taxes withheld on performances at tourist venues, licensing fees for archive material charged by local record companies, revenues from performing rights collected, percentages on money earned by musicians touring abroad, and income tax paid by musicians at home and abroad (Perna 2001: 79-80).

Economic reforms in the 1990s focused on music as a product for export, and encouraged musicians to tour abroad in Europe, Canada, and South America. By 1999, more than 6,000 musicians had spent part of the year on tour outside Cuba, mainly performing salsa, son, and traditional music (i.e. rumba, *batá*, etc.). Perhaps the greatest economic impact of this increased world-wide visibility of Cuban musicians has been the generation of tourist revenue, as a growing number of tourists flock to Cuba to hear music and learn dance steps (ibid.).

Although a handful of dance bands have had success touring abroad, recordings produced on the island have yet to find real success on the international market. This is primarily due to lack of infrastructure and expertise in the recording industry. Despite the recent construction of state-of-the-art recording studios (at EGREM, as well as Silvio Rodríguez' Abdala Studios), lack of distribution deals on the international market means that sales lag behind expectations (Perna 2001: 82; Fonet et al. 2000: 177).

Another major reason that Cuban music has not flourished in global markets is the U.S. embargo. During the 1950s, the U.S. was Cuba's most important market for export, including tourism and music (Schwartz 1997: 117-20). After 1960, the U.S. trade embargo effectively cut off Cuba from Latin music hotspots like New York and Miami. Despite opportunities for recording and touring in Europe and South America, Cuban recordings were rarely sold in significant numbers during the 1960s and '70s. Until the mid-1980s, Cuban musicians were cut out of the Latin music loop that they had once dominated (Pacini Hernández 1998: 111).³⁹

In 1978, Columbia Records negotiated with the U.S. state department to produce and record a joint concert of U.S. and Cuban musicians in Havana. A recording of the concert was released in the U.S., and one of the Cuban groups, Irakere (by then renowned in Cuba for their innovative fusion of jazz, funk, and Cuban popular dance styles), so impressed Columbia that they

³⁹ It could also be argued that the Cuban government did a fair amount to shut out U.S. musical influence as well – see later in this chapter.

signed the band, agreeing to hold the group's earnings in an escrow account in the United States (ibid. 116).

Since then, many similar arrangements have been made with Cuban artists. This has helped the sale of Cuban music to some extent, but in general it benefits the foreign record companies without really helping sales of music produced in Cuba. Perna (2001: 93) notes that BVSC, the only recording of Cuban music to reach hundreds of thousands (much less millions) in sales, was recorded by a British label. Meanwhile, only a handful of the island's musicians benefit from contracts with foreign labels; most of Cuba's 13,000 musicians are unemployed or underemployed (ibid.: 84).

The BVSC's release by World Circuit in 1997 represented the first international bestseller for Cuban music. Since then, it has been called one of the best-selling world music albums of all time, selling 5 million copies worldwide (*Music Week* 2004: 8). Ry Cooder received a Grammy for "Best Tropical Latin Performance" in 1997, and Ibrahim Ferrer's solo album (produced by Cooder and the subject of the BVSC film) received the same Grammy award two years later (*Grammy.com*). World Circuit later released several other albums featuring the performers heard on the original BVSC recording: two CDs featuring pianist Rubén González, two more by Juan de Marcos González' Afro-Cuban All-Stars, and two solo albums each by singers Ibrahim Ferrer and Francisco Repilado (a.k.a. Compay Segundo). *Music Week* (2004:8) called the BVSC album an "essential world title for retail" in 2004, stating: "This album, more than any other, has changed the English-speaking

world's perception of what music from other cultures can provide..." By 1999, over 1000 articles had been printed in the U.S. alone about the album, and *Rolling Stone* magazine declared a "Cuban music invasion" (Valdés-Rodríguez 1999).

The Son Revival in Cuba

International sales do not accurately gauge popularity within Cuba. Since few Cubans can afford CD players or even CDs, most use tapes either bought at subsidized prices at government stores or dubbed from friends. Thus Cubans are rarely considered in market studies such as those that trace the BVSC and similar projects. While Perna (2001) and others point to BVSC as the marker for the son revival on the island, other sources suggest a much longer trajectory for son's return to the mainstream.

A number of factors contributed to a decrease in the popularity of son, and dance music in general, during the 1960s and '70s. On one hand, the gradually increasing pressure on artists of all disciplines to openly express their support for revolutionary ideals and to create new compositions centered on appropriate moral values caused a number of well-known musicians to leave the country in the early 1960s. Organizational difficulties in establishing centralized music agencies, as well as shortages of musical equipment of all kinds, made the production of concerts more difficult. Into the 1970s, officials in charge of cultural policies tended to favor music that

promoted revolutionary ideals; dance music was increasingly viewed as hedonistic and, potentially oppositional (Moore 2005: 171-75).

Although many established bands, such as Estrellas de Chappottín and Orquesta Aragón, continued to perform through the 1970s, son-derived dance music was largely replaced by other styles. Eliades Ochoa recalls that “in the ‘60s, you never heard a single son, or a single danzón, or a single guaracha, but you did hear the Beatles”⁴⁰ (Pineda 2002: 157). Godfried (2000) asserts that excessive emphasis under the new government on all things “new” and “progressive” put new forms such as nueva trova and songo in the spotlight and eclipsed older styles.

Godfried credits the group Sierra Maestra as having rescued the traditional son from obscurity in the late 1970s. Founded by Juan de Marcos González, a music school dropout then studying engineering, the band originally performed rock, Andean music, and the nueva trova songs popular at the time (Alemañy 2001). But de Marcos González’s father, who had been a singer with the great bandleader Arsenio Rodríguez, convinced the group to start performing in the older son septet style. Sierra Maestra impressed older generations with their authentic recreation of the traditional septet sound, while still managing to connect to younger audiences; as de Marcos González recalls, “...part of our success came from the way we dressed like punks” (de Marcos González 2000).

⁴⁰ “En los ‘60, no se oía ni un son, ni un danzón, ni una guaracha, pero sí los Beatles,”

Ignacio Richard, director of the newly formed Septeto Antonio Machín, confirmed Godfried's statements about music trends in the '60s and '70s. However, like many other musicians I spoke with, along with musicologist Maya Roy (2002: 169), Richard credits Oscar D'León as having started the dance music revival in Cuba. D'León, who became the first internationally known dance music artist to perform in Cuba in 1984, had always expressed his affection for Cuban music. According to Richard, it was D'León's use of older repertoire that rekindled an interest in Cuban son.

At that time, people here, in Havana, realized that there was something of ours, something of "us," of Cuba, that had almost been lost. And it was in that moment that son was reestablished here (Richard, interview).⁴¹

By the 1990s, dance music was once again the popular favorite, but the most popular performers were those of timba or salsa, not traditional son. Timba bands like Charanga Habanera and NG La Banda, bolstered by support from local audiences, were able to find work touring in Europe, as timba gradually began to find its way into DJ playlists there (Roy 2002: 196). To those caught up in the timba craze, the success of BVSC seemed hard to believe.

⁴¹ "En ese momento, la gente de aquí, de La Habana, se dio cuenta de que había algo nuestro, algo de nosotros, de Cuba, que casi se había perdido. Y fue en ese momento que el son se restableció aquí."

The Secrets of Success: Cuban Music as World Music

Although Ry Cooder received a Grammy award in the Latin category for BVSC, the project has had relatively little success in traditional Latino markets (Valdés-Rodríguez 1999). Instead BVSC was an overwhelming World Music success, relying on mostly middle-class white consumers.

According to Monica Ricardez, Latin music buyer for the Tower Records chain in the Los Angeles area, the typical Buena Vista Social Club consumer is a Caucasian between 35 and 55 who has heard about the album through the Wenders documentary, public radio or newspapers. This assessment was echoed by several other retail specialists (in Valdés-Rodríguez 1999).

Pacini Hernández (1998) and Hernández-Reguant (2000) have argued that the path for the success of the BVSC was paved by earlier recordings that helped to position Cuban music as World Music, thus circumventing the strict boycott of all things Cuban maintained by ex-patriot Cubans in the U.S., who control much of Latin American radio. In particular, David Byrne's compilation *Dancing with the Enemy* (Luaka Bop 1991) helped to bring Cuban music into the forefront of World Music market in the U.S.

Pacini Hernández (1998: 113) holds that the success of Cuban music as World Music is owed to its greater recognition, relative to other Caribbean popular forms, of its African origins. She suggests that consumers of World Music trace authenticity not through closeness to older playing styles or use

of acoustic instruments, but through loyalty to African roots.⁴² It may be true that, relative to other Hispano-Caribbean nations, “Cuba is exceptional...in the degree of attention it has given to its links – historical, cultural, and ideological – with Africa” (ibid.: 114). Daniel (1995), Hagedorn (2001), and Bettelheim (2001) have demonstrated Cuba’s support of Afro-Cuban culture, at least since the 1980s.⁴³

However, Pacini Hernández’ theory would imply that the most visibly “African” groups, like Los Muñequitos de Matanzas or Conjunto Folklórico, would be at the forefront of Cuban World Music sales. Although many musicians featured in BVSC projects are of African descent, neither the album nor the documentary film foreground this aspect in the way that Pacini Hernández suggests.⁴⁴

⁴² Pacini Hernández cites artists such as Fela Kuti and the Haitian group Boukman Eksperyans, who, despite using amplified Western instruments, are seen as authentic by consumers because of their incorporation of African-derived melodies, lyrics, or rhythms (ibid.).

⁴³ See Moore 1997 for an in-depth examination of shifting attitudes toward Afro-Cuban culture from the turn of the 20th century through the 1940s. Since 1959, promotion of Afro-Cuban culture has been problematic, in that cultural products such as music and dance are promoted as part of national folklore, while actual participation in Afro-Cuban religious activity was strongly discouraged (de la Fuente 1998: 61-63; Hagedorn 2001).

⁴⁴ This point has been debated in several cases. For example, Perna (2001: 273) argues that BVSC effectively “whitens” Cuban son, traditionally an Afro-Cuban genre, in order to “cuddle the nostalgic tastes of the white, middle-class exile community.” Katerí Hernández

It may be that it was Ry Cooder's established reputation as a "World Music veteran" (Hernández-Reguant 2000: 4) that gave the BVSC album the promotional edge that it needed to reach 5 million buyers. Cooder had already won two Grammy's for his recordings with V.M. Bhatt (Water Lily Acoustics 1993) and Ali Farka Touré (Rykodisc 1994); World Music audiences, although not particularly interested in Cuban music, might rely on Cooder's knack for finding "authentic" musicians to play with (Hernández-Reguant 2000: 4; Perna 2001: 256; *Music Week* March 6, 2004: 8; Valdés-Rodríguez 1999).

This would not be the first time that a celebrity producer pushed through a hit record in World Music. Pacini Hernández (1998: 117) points out that David Byrne's Talking Heads fame helped him get started promoting Latin American and Caribbean music in the 1980s.

Whether or not Ry Cooder's celebrity was a part of World Circuit's marketing scheme, it is clear that Latin music markets were intentionally left out. BVSC did not just happen to hold greater appeal for World Music buyers

(2002: 64), on the other hand, criticizes the film for its presentation of an artificially constructed "Afro-Cuban indigenous 'Other'" through, for example, its references to Afro-Cuban religions such as Santería.

The intentions of the filmmakers and producers notwithstanding, I assume that the perceived racial character of the musicians is highly subjective, depending on audience expectations and preconceptions of race. However, I make this point in order to demonstrate that proximity to African roots is not the sole criteria for success in World Music markets.

than for Latinos; Valdés-Rodríguez (1999) shows that the decision to target World Music networks and neglect Latino buyers was deliberate. According to her article in the *Los Angeles Times*, WEA Latina, the sister label of World Circuit/Nonesuch, was not even contacted to help promote the album. Many recording industry experts feel that this was a grave error on the part of Peter Clancy, World Circuit's marketing director, since Latin music has been a growth market since the end of the 1990s. But most likely, the marketing plan that was a sure sell with World Music fans would have little effect on Latinos.

This is because the main selling point of the BVSC is the promise of discovery. In the liner notes to the album, Ry Cooder proclaims, "Music is a treasure hunt. You dig and dig and sometimes you find something" (Cooder 1997). In this case, the hidden treasure is in the form of exotic Cuban music from a bygone era. The production notes read like a travel brochure:

Cuba is a land of sensuality, passion, determination, pride – an exotic place sealed off from the ultra-organized and noisy world where most of us live. It is a land filled with stunningly dramatic music created by some of the world's greatest (and least-recognized) musicians (Wenders 2000: 2).

In the film, Cooder claims that the musicians on the album were "still alive and well, though forgotten." The poverty of their surroundings is foregrounded to emphasize just how forgotten they are; later Cooder said in an interview that "a lot of people thought Rubén [González] was dead" (in Mariner 1999).

The message of the BVSC project was taken up whole-heartedly by journalists and popular music critics, who applauded Cooder for having “discovered Cuban musical treasures that the nation itself had overlooked” (Thigpen 1999) and “revitalize[d] the forgotten music of *son* that made Cuba great before the before the socialist revolution” (Johnson 1999).

Needless to say, the target audience ate it up as well. Visitors to a bulletin board on the film’s official website wrote their reactions:

I had to hold back tears when I saw the film...Through the songs and images one can feel the triumph of the human spirit over the chains of economic tyranny (in Hernández-Reguant 2000: 6).

Havana comes across as a surreal time-warp panorama of gorgeous 1940s cars, derelict yet splendid architecture and an impoverished, pastel-dressed people that seem eerily happy. Cuba, as never imagined. After the movie, I wanted to buy a ticket immediately (ibid.).

This rhetoric of exoticism and discovery was clearly geared toward listeners with no previous knowledge of Cuban music. The BVSC offered escape from middle-class America to the idyllic beauty of a Caribbean isle. Cooder later said, “People want to go somewhere and stay home, to travel in their armchair. That’s fine. Journey with us now for an hour or so and that’s enough” (in Williamson 1999: 23). For World Music fans in search of something new, Cooder’s invitation was quite tempting.

Obviously, this approach would not have had the same effect in the Latin music market, where son and danzón are old news. Valdés-Rodríguez suggests that

It may be that the mass U.S. Latino audience just wouldn't care about the album, a collection of antique Cuban folk music recorded by a geriatric group of Cuban musicians. After all, the son style has been out of date for 50 years, and the average age of a Latino in the U.S. is 26. There are no commercial Latin radio stations in the nation that would play it (Valdés-Rodríguez 1999).

Indeed, the awe with which Cooder and his son talk about Cuban son seems ridiculous, and a bit condescending, to those already familiar with Cuban music. In the words of Cuban musicologist Helio Orovio, "Someone showing up and saying they discovered Rubén González makes me want to die laughing!" (in Fornet et al. 2000: 174).⁴⁵

Since the narrative of discovery was so central to BVSC's success with World Music fans, it would have been difficult to modify it to appeal to Latino consumers. Although Valdés-Rodríguez criticizes this decision as short-sighted, it is important to remember that Latin music is not nearly as lucrative in Europe and Japan, where BVSC has been extremely successful.

⁴⁵ "Aparecerse alguien diciendo que ha descubierto a Rubén González es para morirse de la risa!"

Ibrahim Ferrer's solo album sold three times as many copies in its first year in Germany, for example, than it did in the U.S. (Hernández-Reguant 2000: 3).

While the U.S. Latino community might feel that Cuban music is being "over-hyped," in the words of Prestigio Records President Bill Marin (in Valdés-Rodríguez 1999), the impact of Buena Vista on musicians, scholars, and music consumers cannot be overestimated. While some credit the BVSC success with increases in tourism and record sales, others criticize the project for its many distortions (even blatant inventions) of reality.

The Politics of Nostalgia

Perhaps the most common criticism shared by both Cuban and foreign scholars is the BVSC's apparent attempt to rhetorically distance the musical material and its performers from the politically problematic Cuban Revolution (Hernández-Reguant 2000; Katerí Hernández 2001; Scruggs 2003). This is accomplished by emphasizing the age of the performers, the antiquity of the musical tradition they represent, and through romanticizing poverty and political isolation.

The oldest musicians of the group (Compay Segundo, Rubén González, and Ibrahim Ferrer) are foregrounded. Less attention is paid to Eliades Ochoa, for example, who is only in his late forties. Compay Segundo and Rubén González, in their 80s and 90s, link the entire group to pre-Revolutionary music. Each musician tells a part of his or her musical background; the stories emphasize the musicians' humble origins and

musical families (further proof of their musical purity) (Hernández-Reguant 2000: 6). Those musicians who made their careers during the Revolution, including Ibrahim Ferrer, Omara Portuondo, and Ochoa, are either mentioned less or depicted as guardians of the much older tradition: Cuban son.

In fact, many of the musicians involved in the project are known for their contributions to more recent dance music styles. Ibrahim Ferrer, for example, is best known as the lead singer for Pacho Alonso y sus Bocucos, a *pilón* band from the 1960s (Moore, p.c. 2005). Omara Portuondo made her mark as a singer of nueva trova, the most popular genre of music in Revolutionary Cuba during the 1970s and '80s. Instead of acknowledging the group's eclectic background, great care is taken to highlight the musicians' common ground as that of traditional Cuban son and the even older genre, danzón (Scruggs 2003: 3; Perna 2001: 256-57). In the liner notes, Cooder (1997) describes the musicians as having developed "over the past 150 years." There is no mention, in the recording or the film, of the U.S. embargo or the Período Especial (Katerí Hernández 2001: 63).

BVSC presents a romanticized vision of the pervasive poverty of Cuba in the 1990s. Old cars and crumbling buildings are seen as just part of Cuba's magical atmosphere, what Wenders calls "a time warp" (in Hernández-Reguant 2000: 5). In a roundtable discussion on the BVSC, Cuban scholars voiced similar opinions:

I think there is a kind of valorization, of sugar coating poverty and showing it as something good...That kind of exoticization of poverty bothers me (Alan West in Fonet 2000: 169)⁴⁶

The contrast of Havana with that New York – which isn't the New York that corresponds to that Havana, because, actually, there is another New York – also seems to me to be an attack (Maria Teresa Linares in Fonet 2000: 165)⁴⁷

In this latter comment, Linares points out that the sections of Havana shown in the film were not analogous to the sections of New York shown. In other words, driving around Centro Havana should have been compared to driving around Harlem, instead of midtown Manhattan.

Cuba's economic isolation is also valorized. Cooder (1997) proclaims that the musicians are more "pure" because they are "not yet touched by commercialism." This simultaneously serves to authenticate the performers (since they have obviously not been "corrupted" by outside influences) and to contribute to the project's narrative of discovery.

No mention is made whatsoever of the U.S. or any Cuba/U.S. politics. The economic problems caused by the U.S. embargo, exacerbated by the fall

⁴⁶ "Creo que hay una especie de valorización, de dorar la píldora de la pobreza y mostrarla como algo bueno...Ese tipo de exotismo de la pobreza me perturba."

⁴⁷ "Pero el contraste de La Habana con esa Nueva York – que no es la Nueva York correspondiente a esa Habana, porque, efectivamente, hay otra Nueva York – también me parece una agresión."

of the Soviet Union, are absent from both the film and the recording.

Hernández-Reguant (2000: 7) calls the film “imperialist nostalgia,” noting that it attempts to replace Cuba’s violent past and precarious present with sunsets, cigars, and smiling negritos.

Katerí Hernández (2001: 68) argues that the BVSC portrayal of Cuba could have real impact on future U.S. policy toward Cuba. She points out that court decisions are often influenced by popular thought and mainstream media. Thus, the depiction of Cuban musicians as sadly neglected by an inept and backwards regime could provide “ideological justification for contemporary colonial and economic conquest.” The implicit message of the film, in Katerí Hernández’ eyes, is that Cuba needs the U.S. to intervene on its behalf.

The BVSC vs. Música Bailable

Political implications aside, many argue that the more immediate impact of the BVSC has been on younger musicians performing newer styles, especially *música bailable* (lit.: “danceable music”).⁴⁸ Although *música bailable* remains the most popular music on the island, its international audience is dwarfed by that of BVSC. While son has been thrust forward to meet tourist

⁴⁸ Although it translates literally as “danceable music” or “dance music,” in common usage the term *música bailable* refers specifically to salsa and timba groups, connoting modern rather than traditional styles (see chapter 3).

demand, música bailable remains difficult to market abroad and receives less government support as a result (Perna 2001: 257). Effectively shut out of Miami-dominated U.S. Latin music markets, timba had gained some popularity in Europe by the late 1990s, although Roy (2001: 193) notes that BVSC has largely replaced timba in European popular concert venues and record sales since 2000.

The success of BVSC has polarized the popular music community in Cuba. Those who feel that traditional music has been neglected in recent years, such as Godfried (2000) and de Marcos González (2000, 2001), welcome the BVSC as a long-awaited triumph for Cuba's national music. Musicologists such as Maria Teresa Linares and Helio Orovio, while objecting to the imagery used in the film, applaud the album's success on the grounds that any international recognition of Cuban music, especially traditional music, is a good thing (Fornet et al. 2000: 163-69). Meanwhile, many musicians argue that the album is out of step with contemporary Cuban music. Timba bandleaders José Luis Cortés and David Calzado, among others, have vocally denounced the album. Their objections include the fact that the musicians do not represent the best performers of traditional music, and that the presentation of the album implies that traditional son is Cuba's only music (Perna 2001: 264-66). Rumba musicians echo these concerns, calling the BVSC stars "old" and "out of touch" (in Ghertner 2003: 113).

Released the same year as the controversial ban placed on the popular timba bailable band La Charanga Habanera, critics argue that the BVSC gave

opponents of timba the leverage they needed to wrest it from the mainstream, or, more specifically, to undermine its government support.⁴⁹

While *Buena Vista* has generated substantial economic returns for Cuba, its bigger dividends for the government have been political. Together with the film, the album has affirmed a “traditional” image of local culture against xenophile, socially embarrassing timba (Perna 2001: 272).⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Although in recent years government censorship of musicians has relaxed to some degree, artists are still not free to deal with many hot-button issues. Censorship is most often directed at specific songs rather than bands; songs with recognizably “anti-revolutionary” lyrics are *bajada de frecuencia* (lowered in frequency, i.e. on radio playlists, etc.) (Moore 2005: 194). However, in 1997, La Charanga Habanera, the most popular band in Cuba at the time, was banned from all public appearances and other professional activity for a period of six months “so that the band could evaluate their artistic projection and image” (*Granma* in Perna 2001: 244). The ban was a major blow to timba artists in general, who until then had been enjoying widespread national and international success, despite a climate of controversy. The ban on Charanga Habanera, which was explained by officials in rather broad terms, put many música bailable musicians on the defensive (see below).

⁵⁰ See Perna 2001: 247-72 for details on controversies surrounding timba. The term itself, although arguably in common parlance for many years, was officially adopted in 1998 by groups such as Los Van Van, La Charanga Habanera, and Paulo FG as an attempt to set Cuban dance bands apart from New York salsa. Perna argues that this move was also a reaction against revivalists bolstered by the success of BVSC. Moore (p.c. 2005) and Lara Greene (p.c. 2005) note that in recent years, timba-style playing (see chapter 4) has been

This polemic environment gave added importance to the use of terms like “timba” versus “son” to describe música bailable. Juan Formell emphasized that the term timba should refer to all music made in Cuba since 1959. Meanwhile, other música bailable stars chose to strategically define themselves more closely with traditional son. Giraldo Piloto, of Klimax, has used the term “son progresivo,” for example, while others such as Adalberto Álvarez prefer “son duro” or simply “son cubano” (Perna 2001: 100, 266).

Juan de Marcos González (2000, 2001) has hedged his position on traditional music since the late 1990s. Although it was his ambition to bring traditional son back into the limelight, he later announced his intention to “try to convince people that Cuban music continued after Castro, contrary to what so many people think” (2000). De Marcos González blames the international media for its portrayal of BVSC:

People who don't know Cuban culture and Cuban music and are inside of a phenomenon in a sort of boom like what's in fashion, started writing and implying that the only kind of music that we have in Cuba is the music of the 50s. They started talking about pre-revolutionary music and post-revolutionary music and shit like that (de Marcos González 2001).

imitated by Miami salseros with some success, despite Miami's continued boycott of music originating on the island.

Subsequent albums released by the Afro-Cuban All-Stars, under de Marcos González' direction (*Distinto, Diferente* 1999; *Introducing Félix Baloy*; 2000) were intended to fuse traditional music with modern harmonies (ibid.).

De Marcos González does not go so far as to endorse timba. While conceding that there are many fine musicians involved, he asserts that timba has lost its connection to the roots of Cuban music. At best, timba is merely “a transition music [sic] going toward something better and more authentic” (de Marcos González 2000).

Despite all of this controversy, many claim that the BVSC has had little impact on Cuban audiences. The actual album is not legally available in Cuba, and although sales of other recordings of the BVSC stars have gone up in tourist shops, timba remains the most popular dance music. Hernández-Reguant (2000: 9) stresses this point, pointing to poorly attended concerts, negative reviews, and poor radio coverage of BVSC stars. According to one radio DJ in Havana:

[The Buena Vista Social Club] has not affected me. I haven't benefited from it. In Cuba nobody cares. In Cuba, they say, what? They got a prize? Huh! Good for them! And that's it. (in Hernández-Reguant, 2000: 9)

Bands performing traditional son, such as Sierra Maestra (until recently headed by the same Juan de Marcos González), continue to have greater success traveling abroad than performing for local audiences (Perna 2001: 266).

However, the perception of traditional son as a more marketable style for foreign consumption has affected Cuban musicians. Roy laments the fact that many young musicians who would otherwise be playing jazz or classical music,

confine their talents to a narrow traditional band performing the inevitable *Son de la Loma*, *Lágrimas Negras*, and *Guantanamera*...hoping for tips in dollars that nonetheless are often few and far between (Roy 2001: 197).

In 2004, every musician I spoke with, whether or not they expressed a long-standing interest in son, agreed that it was much easier to find work if they participated in a septeto. Many had worked in the past with timba bands or orquestas típicas, but had had to switch because those bands did not find enough work during the Período Especial. Others, such as the senior members of Cañambú, had been playing son for as long as ten or twenty years, and were finally finding the audience that they felt they deserved.

Regional Identity in BVSC

T.M. Scruggs (2003: 10) criticizes Hernández-Reguant (2000) and Neustadt (2002) for reinforcing the BVSC's "Havana-centrism." He argues that scholars too often rely on Havana as the point of reference for all of Cuba. While Scruggs concedes that timba is still the most popular music across the country, he asserts that in the eastern province of Oriente, son still

has a loyal and active following among all ages. He notes that BVSC's big hit, Compay Segundo's "Chan Chan," was a regional hit in Oriente, performed by several groups for "standing-room only audience[s]."

Scruggs (2003: 8) points out that the BVSC project completely omits any reference to the regional identity of the performers. The film is shot entirely in Havana, and viewers are left to assume that all of the musicians live in the neighborhood, when in fact several key players live on the eastern end of the island.

This omission in the album and film only replicated an on-going process that virtually everyone I spoke about music with in the Oriente expressed, often virulently: Havana's hegemony that unfairly defines national culture and denigrates that of the eastern region, their music in particular (ibid.: 9-10)

My experience confirms Scruggs' statement. Musicians attribute the lack of government support, inadequate and insufficient performance spaces, and thin tourist population to neglect on the part of the central government in Havana. Ivan Batista, of the septeto Típico de Sones, told me that the recent transfer of the second largest TV broadcasting station from Santiago to Havana has had a tremendous impact on musicians in Oriente as well, since groups often gain notoriety through performances on television (Típico de Sones, interview).

Conclusions

It is difficult to trace directly the impact that BVSC has had on Cuba, even in strictly economic terms. The album's release coincided with a boom in tourism, and may have contributed to tourism's steady rise since the late 1990s. However, musicians are reluctant to attribute tourism growth and interest in Cuban son to just the BVSC. Obviously, the project remains controversial for many, whether or not they may perceive themselves as benefiting from its success.

Despite the controversy discussed here, though, the album was almost universally loved in World Music circles. Its huge financial success, especially in Europe, home to the majority of Cuba's tourist market, is a testament to that fact, and suggests that perhaps the greatest impact of the album has been in the way that it has shaped the expectations of tourists. The fact that BVSC far outsells other recordings of Cuban music means that some tourists may hold BVSC as their sole point of reference, and many more may have been introduced to Cuban music through the project.

Thousands arrive in Havana and request their favorite traditional Cuban number, "Chan Chan," from the trio on the corner, the band at hotel café, and everyone in between. Tourists are quick to tip when their requests are honored, and it's no accident that "Chan Chan" and "El Cuarto de Tula" now form part of the standard septeto repertoire across the country. For tourists, BVSC stands as an icon of Cuban son, and informs their notions of authenticity. As noted in Chapter 1, these expectations on the part of tourists

have real consequences for musicians, and support a narrow definition of traditional music that is not universally held by musicians or local, internal audiences.

The following chapter examines scholarly definitions of son and related genres. While tourists may not be aware of these issues, they also affect the lives of musicians in their application to empresa categories. Following the lead of Robbins (1989, 1990b) and Acosta (n.d.), I adopt a definition of son based on musicians' usages, which often include a much wider range of music than that heard on the BVSC recording.

Chapter 3: Genre Issues in Cuban Son

In talking with musicians about son, *música tradicional*, and *septetos*, I discovered a great deal of discrepancy regarding the definitions of these terms. In particular, for some, “son” as a generic category seems to be synonymous with the instrumentation of the classic 1930s septet, while for others, it is a much broader category, a set of musical formulas that inform most of Cuban dance music. Some musicians use the term to describe a way of life, similar to the ways in which blues artists in the U.S. use the term “the blues” (Lapidus 2002: 23).

In this chapter, I present an overview of research on Cuban categories of musical genres, focusing on the “son complex” (Alén Rodríguez 1998; Orozco 1992) as it is commonly understood. I adopt an approach to son and related genres that reflects common usage by musicians and *empresas*.

Generic categories have practical application as the basis for concert planning, employment of musical groups, and other aspects within the local *empresas*. As noted in Chapter 1, *empresas* constitute a crucial “internal public” for which musicians must present a “credible and convincing” performance of traditional son.

The second half of this chapter examines more closely some issues raised in Chapter 2. As noted there, the increased international success of son has brought issues of class and racial identity associated with son and other

contemporary dance music to the forefront, particularly with regard to the polarization of supporters of traditional son and performers of timba. I clarify here the distinction between son, salsa, and timba, and address issues of class and race.

Dominant Theories of Cuban Music

Most analyses of Cuban music are concerned with the identification and separation of genres and subgenres. Taking their cues from Cuban ethnologist Fernando Ortiz (1952, 1965), who described Cuban music as an *ajiaco* (stew) combining European and African elements, most scholars have defined genres on the basis of instrumentation and ethnic derivation (i.e. figuring out what is European and what is African). Carpentier (1946), Linares (1982), León (1984, 1991), and Díaz Ayala (1998, 2003), among others, make these criteria central to their research.

The presupposition that the Cuban *ajiaco* consists of two finite poles, the European and the African, has indirectly supported linear, evolutionist theories of Cuban music. The aforementioned scholars, joined by Pérez Sanjurjo (1986), Évora (1997), and Betancur Álvarez (1999), in attempts to pick apart Cuban musical “ingredients,” place Cuban music along a timeline of changing instrumentation. A typical narrative of the development of son, for example, notes the arrival of small, string-based quartets in Havana shortly after the turn of the century, soon followed by the addition of claves and bongó. By the mid 1920s, a trumpet was added to the typical ensemble, making the *septeto* (lit.: septet) the most popular band in Havana until the

early 1940s, when Arsenio Rodríguez and Conjunto Casino expanded to a larger format with two more trumpets, a piano, and *tumbadoras* (conga drums).⁵¹

This evolutionist approach, while perhaps accurately tracing some of the developments of dance music styles, inadvertently equates group formats with “traditional” or “modern” performance styles. Readers must assume that after 1927, for example, no son group performed without a trumpet; the older sextet sound was replaced by the more modern septeto. As Sublette (2004: 365) points out, however, only the most successful bands could afford the added expense of a trumpet player.

David García (2003: 257-61) criticizes this type of evolutionist thinking in the dominant theories of the development of mambo in Cuba and New York, pointing out that the tendency to trace musical developments linearly through changes in instrumentation and a few key performers can place excessive emphasis on a “‘traditional-modern’ dichotomy” and obscure the co-existence of differing styles at the same time and place.

However, a linear account of musical development is often supported by Cuban musicians themselves. The oral history of son among changüí musicians in Guantánamo, for example, traces the development of son out of changüí, which itself was preceded by older forms such as *nengón* and *kiribá*.

⁵¹ Although both *conga* and *tumbadora* are used to describe the same instrument commonly known as a “conga drum,” conga is also a genre of music performed during Carnival in Cuba. To avoid confusion, I will use *tumbadora* to describe the instrument.

Each successive change (i.e.: the use of the tres or the incorporation of certain characteristic rhythms) is attributed to specific players (Lapidus 2002: 15-18).

The theories of Alén Rodríguez (1992; 1998) and Orozco (1992), while still closely linked to the aforementioned historical studies, focus on Cuban music in contemporary practice in an attempt to codify Cuban music into distinct genre complexes.

Orozco (1992: 168) divides Cuban music into four discrete genre complexes: *rumba*, *son*, *danzón*, and *canción* (which includes, but is not limited to, bolero.) In brief recognition of the potentially porous nature of these categories, Orozco suggests a possible fifth category of “the inter-generic complex of popular dances (in a hybrid and unstable state).”⁵²

Alén Rodríguez (1998: 56) identifies five complexes: *rumba*, *son*, *danzón*, *canción*, and *punto guajiro*. Beyond some stylistic unity within each complex, he asserts that “one can detect a certain homogeneity in the musical attitudes and behavior” of its performers.

These approaches have been criticized for their oversimplification. As Jorge Duany notes,

[Alén Rodríguez] straightforwardly attempts to trace the origins and transformation of musical styles in different times and places to assess their present configuration. However, stressing separate traditions produces a fragmented view of Cuban music, and one is sometimes

⁵² “...el complejo intergénero de bailes populares (estado híbrido inestable).”

left wondering if such a thing actually exists. In a sense, the whole is lost in its parts (Duany 1995: 94).

French musicologist Maya Roy (2002: 113) accurately observes the fluidity of genres in the Cuban context, pointing out that even in the case of Miguel Matamoros, whose compositions form a major part of classic son repertoire, “the lines between *trova*, bolero, and *son* fluctuate,” somewhat contradicting Orozco and Alén Rodríguez, who would place boleros and sones in two distinct genre complexes.

Also, placement of genres within one complex or the other is often open to interpretation. Alén Rodríguez (1998: 132) includes cha-cha-chá in the danzón complex on the basis that it was performed by charanga groups that had until the 1940s performed mostly danzones. On the other hand, Urfé (in Orovio 2004: 204) includes the cha-cha-chá as one of many different types of sones, along with other styles popularized by charangas, such as the mambo.

Such ambiguity often causes scholars to err on the side of inclusivity in discussions of son-derived dance music. Peter Manuel (1985: 249, 254) uses the terms “Afro-Cuban popular music,” “*salsa*,” and “modern *son*” interchangeably to discuss music recorded in Cuba and New York.⁵³

⁵³ In 1997, Manuel (1998: 127) adopts the term “Latin American dance music” for a discussion of a similar cross-section of music. Although avoiding the controversy surrounding the use of the term *salsa* (discussed later in this chapter), this term presents problems of its own, since music from elsewhere in Latin America is not discussed.

Acosta (n.d.: 5) echoes the sentiments of Duany, above, arguing that the concept of a “genre complex” arbitrarily organizes different genres and variants into separate “musical ghettos.” Acosta holds that each of the genres typically called “complexes” (son, danzón, rumba, canción) are intrinsically related on fundamental formal and rhythmic levels.⁵⁴ Genre complexes also conflate diachronic elements with synchronic elements. While son variants appear to have existed at the same time in different places, the change from contradanza to danzón and on to cha-cha-chá is a fairly well documented linear progression. I follow Acosta’s general suggestion, then, to avoid referring to son and its variants as part of a “complex.” However, he instead suggests the use of terms like “protogenre,” “paragenre,” and “inter-genre.”⁵⁵ I find that these terms are too awkward for the discussion at hand, and will rely on terminology used by musicians themselves in reference to instrumentation, form, repertoire, and performance practice.

James Robbins presents a sophisticated analysis of these factors, supporting a more general application of the term son:

Son as a generic label has an extremely broad range of meaning, from the designation of a particular complex of specific musical elements to

⁵⁴ For example, Acosta notes the similarities between rhythmic timelines in danzón, rumba, and son, all three of which consist of two-part patterns with one “syncopated” part and one “straight” part.

⁵⁵ These terms are actually some of many proposed by Orozco in more recent work, endorsed by Acosta.

a cluster of related genres linked by commonalities of form to the identification of the essence of Cuban music, that is, the thing that makes it Cuban (Robbins 1990b: 182).

Robbins (ibid: 188) asserts that any piece can be performed as a son provided that it incorporates a sufficient number of “identifiers,” such as a characteristic *tumbao* pattern in the piano or tres, an anticipation in the bass or guitar, or typical percussion accompaniment parts. Robbins (ibid.) uses the term “*matriz*” to describe the overall feel of a characteristic pattern in any instrument, similar to the way North American pop musicians use the term “beat” to discuss different instrumental patterns (i.e. “It’s got a really good beat.”).

Formal structures and instrumentation can also serve as identifiers:

When enough of the musical practices associated with son are present--the *matriz*, or a prominent tres and bongos [sic], or, most commonly, a montuno--a piece becomes part of the son complex (Robbins 1990: 190).

So, according to Robbins’ definition, a great deal of Cuban popular music can be described as son. Vincenzo Perna (2001: 98) uses the term *música bailable* (lit.: “danceable music” – music for dancing) to refer to contemporary son-derived styles, most often called timba or salsa.⁵⁶ Despite differences in

⁵⁶ See later in this chapter for more in-depth discussion of the controversy surrounding the term “salsa” in local and international markets. Although this term is used in official contexts

typical instrumentation, and a much wider range of stylistic influences, *música bailable* has enough identifiers, or *matrices*, to be recognized as son, or at least a close relative. As Perna points out:

At times, tactical reasons suggested the use of [terms] in retroactive fashion, as when [Juan] Formell declared that timba is *all* music made in Cuba after 1959...Conversely, the recent international boom of 'traditional' *son* persuaded other dance bands to dub their own music as *son*, thus choosing to underline continuity, rather than rupture, with the music of the past (Perna 2001: 100)

The Importance of Genre in Practice: Institutional Music Structures in Cuba

Robbins (1989) underlines the relationship of official generic categories with actual musical practices. Since all public performances are organized according to genre through local branches of national cultural programs, such as the Casas de Cultura or Casas de Música, musicians who wish to participate must be able to describe their music in clear generic terms. For example, the director of a local performance event might wish to plan the

to mean, literally, any music that can be danced to (including Cuban music outside of the son complex, such as *danzón*, as well as foreign dance music such as the tango or the merengue), Perna has observed that it often is used to distinguish between contemporary and older styles (e.g. *música tradicional* [traditional music, often referring to son] vs. *música bailable*).

spacing of the concert, avoiding too many slow songs in a row, or making sure to have a couple of high energy numbers at the end. Rather than asking participants to perform specific songs, he or she would request a list of genres – i.e. *bolero-son-danzón* – to ensure that the event would go according to plan (Robbins 1989: 386).⁵⁷

There is a great deal of feedback from musicians in the formation of official generic categories. The Ministry of Culture and the Instituto Cubano de la Música (Cuban Music Institute) serve as official advisories for the formation of policies regarding music. Also, music administrators are hired from the ranks of professional musicians, and most continue to be active themselves in the musical community. Ideas about musical genre are not merely imposed from-above, but rather formed by musicians for musicians (Robbins 1989: 380; Moore p.c. 2005).

With this in mind, it becomes clear that the subject of musical genre is not just of academic interest. Generic identification is a part of a musician's daily life. For practical reasons, musicians must be fluent in generic terms.

In general, musical groups are organized by subgenre. Under the general umbrella of son based music, terms like *conjunto* or *orquesta típica* designate a specific instrumentation, playing style, and repertoire. Numeric

⁵⁷ Robbins (1989: 386) provides an anecdote of one musician in Santiago who was chastised for performing a piece in a style other than the one he had planned. Thus the decision to perform a son as a bolero, or vice-versa, can, in the eyes of the concert director, upset the flow of the event.

terms, like *trio* or *sexteto* are also used somewhat less specifically, although in some cases they are also associated with a specific style or repertoire (Robbins 1989: 381). In my experience, for example, a septeto was any group performing *son tradicional* (traditional son), especially those who incorporated classic repertoire (sones from the 1920s and 1930s) or playing styles that recalled older incarnations of groups such as Septeto Nacional or Septeto Habanero. These groups would almost surely have a tres and bongó, and were expected to have at least some classic son numbers in their repertoire. Most septetos were actually seven musicians, but some were anywhere from 6 to 9 players.⁵⁸

Genre and Subgenre

In the institutional music system, musical groups are categorized according to “subgenre” (*subgénero*), or group formats associated with particular styles. Here, Robbins’ (1990b: 188) concept of “identifiers” often functions more specifically: certain characteristic trumpet lines, accompaniment parts, and other *matrices* might allow musicians to imply

⁵⁸ As a further example of the use of *septeto* as a more specific designation akin to *conjunto*, I attended the 2004 Encuentro Nacional de Septetos in Havana, at which groups performed exclusively son and guaracha, with the occasional bolero. All groups had a tres player, but not all groups were septets.

“charanga” or “mambo” style, even if they are not using the appropriate instruments.⁵⁹

The term “son” is often combined with other qualifiers to suggest a different form, style, or attitude in a given tune. Hyphenated terms like “bolero-son,” first started to appear in the 1920s (Robbins 1990: 187). This can refer to a more or less literal hybrid, as in the case of Miguel Matamoros’ “Lágrimas Negras,” which is typically performed as a bolero-style verse with a son-style montuno at the end. However, it can also indicate a less obvious stylistic union, such as a son that is in a more relaxed tempo, or one that has a verse that is considered “bolero-like” by the performers. Although the list of hybrid terms coined by artists over the years is seemingly endless, some have been more clearly defined.

David García (2003) uses the term “son montuno” to refer specifically to the conjunto style of Arsenio Rodríguez, beginning in the 1940s. Although “son montuno” is often used interchangeably with other terms, García argues for its use in specific reference to Rodríguez’ sound on the basis of its profound impact on other dance bands during the 1940s and ‘50s. García points out that, although by the mid-1940s many bands had copied Rodríguez’ instrumentation (i.e. the conjunto, with added trumpets, piano, and tumbadora), few bands had the same arranging scheme in terms of the

⁵⁹ In Chapter 4, I provide a number of examples of how septetos employ characteristic melodic and rhythmic material from different subgenres, especially *son tradicional*, *guaracha*, and types of contemporary *música bailable*.

way these instruments were used.

Thus the term “son montuno” implies not only a certain instrumentation, but also a specific formal structure and reorganization of the rhythm section. Rodríguez added to the standard septeto formal structure (i.e. intro – verse – montuno) by expanding the montuno, adding a break section (called a *cierre*) at the end of the montuno, and a truncated version of the montuno which often incorporated interwoven horn lines along with coro singing.

The term *guaracha* first referred to lively, bawdy songs found in nineteenth century Cuban *teatro bufo* (burlesque theater). Orovio (2004: 102) indicates that it was often performed either in 6/8 or 2/4 time, and, like son and rumba, incorporated call-and-response passages between a lead vocalist and chorus. Sublette (2004: 346) suggests that son groups began to use popular guarachas to “liven up the repertoire,” performing them as essentially faster sones.

Conjuntos who played in faster tempos during the 1940s were called “conjuntos guaracheros.” García (2003: 235) suggests an oppositional, racialized relationship between the son montuno and the guaracha. In addition to differences in tempo, guarachas performed during this period by La Sonora Matancera and Conjunto Casino were far less syncopated than son montunos recorded by Arsenio Rodríguez. Audiences and musicians at the time equated slower tempos, denser structures, and off-beat emphasis with a

“black sound,” while faster tempos, and less complex rhythms were thought of as “white.”

It appears, however, that this opposition does not exist in contemporary usage. Robbins (1990b: 190-91) notes that older musicians tend to distinguish between *guarachas* and *sones* in their repertoire, while younger musicians consider the terms to be interchangeable. Alén Rodríguez suggests that the *guaracha* has been “absorbed” by *son*:

In many interviews with musicians in which we have inquired about the relationship existing between the *guaracha* and the *son*, we have come to the conclusion that at present the *guaracha* is nothing more than a *son* with spicy or funny lyrics, and played at a faster tempo (Alén Rodríguez 1998: 78)⁶⁰

The main competition for *son* sextets in the 1920s were the *charangas*, or *charangas francesas*, groups that performed *danzón* in middle-class dancehalls. To compete with *son*, *charanga* bands started adding *montunos* and sung choruses to their *danzones*. These “*danzonetes*” adapted the

⁶⁰ *Guaracha* remains hard to define. Moore (p.c. 2005) suggests that *guarachas* typically had shorter harmonic cycles, tending to start with the *coro* instead of with a longer verse. The lead vocal line would then sing a comical or picaresque quatrain before the *coro* entered again, thus using a somewhat less symmetrical “call-and-response” pattern.

charanga's instrumentation (flutes, violins, piano, double bass, *paila* [timbal], and *guiro*) to the son (Orovio 2004: 51, 66).

In the 1940s, Bandleader Antonio Arcaño, along with Israel and Orestes López, eventually popularized an instrumental style of son-influenced *danzón*, adding a montuno section that they called a "mambo," similar to Arsenio Rodríguez' "diablo" section, which created heightened intensity for dancers. Arcaño's *danzón de nuevo ritmo* (*danzón* to/with a new rhythm) contributed to both the mambo and the cha-cha-chá (García 2003: 201; Sublette 2004: 307; Orovio 2004: 50).

By the late 1940s, most charangas had adopted a final montuno section incorporating what came to be called the "mambo rhythm" (example 1, below) (García 2003: 169-73). While the origins of the dance music style known as mambo are the subject of much controversy, the style that gained the most international recognition was that promoted by Damásio Pérez Prado, "The King of Mambo." Pérez Prado's version is thought of as the "crystallization" of mambo by scholars such as Acosta (1993) and Betancur Álvarez (1999). It was his adaptation of son-derived rhythms (such as typical *tres guajeos*) to Stan Kenton-style big-band arrangement techniques that characterized the sound made famous in the mambo craze of the 1950s (García 2003: 286-87).⁶¹

⁶¹ García argues that Pérez Prado's mambo style was not highly innovative, since it uses simpler harmonic structure and less rhythmic variety than the arrangements of Arcaño and Rodríguez (2003: 287). However, it can be argued that Pérez Prado did use the U.S. big-band

which can be varied depending on the practical and artistic needs of the group.

Blackness in Son: Issues of Class and Race

Moore (1997: 87-113) shows how son, initially repressed as an “inferior” Afro-Cuban form, was eventually accepted, appropriated, and adapted to fit into mainstream culture, helping to form conceptions of Cuban national identity in the 1930s. In Moore’s (1997: 88) words, “*Son*...[mediates] stylistically and ideologically between the cultural practices of working-class Afro-Cubans and the white and black middle classes.”

Contemporary attitudes toward son reflect this mediation. Although son is recognized officially as Cuba’s national music, its cultural value is often argued (whether aggrandized or disparaged) on the basis of perceived racial or class identity.

Robbins (1990b: 194) notes that son is still associated by some Cubans with *la gente más baja de la clase baja* (the lowest of the low). One of his informants suggests that soneros are uneducated and prone to drunkenness and fighting. At least through the late 1980s, even some musicians who played son did not describe themselves as soneros because of the negative connotations of the term (*ibid.*).

The perception of soneros as uneducated persists among musicians in the 1990s. In a series of interviews, José Luis “El Tosco” Cortés (leader of timba band NG La Banda) called Juan de Marcos González (band leader and

arranger of Sierra Maestra and the BVSC recordings) “musically illiterate” (Perna 2001: 266).

Several musicians that I spoke with in 2004 explained that these sentiments still exist today, although many conservatory graduates are also playing in septetos in order to earn tourist dollars. At the same time, some musicians performing in septetos pride themselves on their humble origins. As I noted in Chapter 1, a *sonero de monte* (of the hills) is often thought of as more naturally talented and authentic.

The racial identity of *son* remains highly contested. Godfried (2000) laments the fact that in the 1970s, many Cubans turned up their noses at *son*, calling it *chea*, which he defines as “ugly; to be despised.” Robbins notes the same term in association with *son* in the 1980s, but adds that “‘*Cheos*’ or ‘*guapos*’ are ‘*negros*’; they are considered violent and like *son* and *salsa*” (1990b: 195).⁶³ Muguercia (1985: 105) also identifies a negative attitude towards *son* on the basis of racial prejudice, saying that many still think of it as “‘rhythm of slave quarters, music of blacks.’” This connection between musical sound and racial stereotypes parallels the *cocolo* versus *rockero* discourse surrounding Puerto Rican salsa in the 1980s, as well as racial stereotypes associated with U.S. hip hop culture.⁶⁴

⁶³ *Pepillos*, on the other hand, are white, wear fashionable clothing, and listen to U.S. rock (Robbins 1990b: 105).

⁶⁴ The racial dynamics surrounding Puerto Rican salsa are in fact quite similar: *cocolos* (which loosely translates as “coconut heads,”) are lower-class blacks who listen to salsa and are

Juan de Marcos González has spoken on numerous occasions about the importance of son in establishing Cuban national identity as primarily African in nature. In his words,

it's very important that the [U.S.] African American community understands the reality of Cuba: the fact that we're a black country. [Cubans] are much more African than the [U.S.] African-American community because we have capitalized the African roots (De Marcos González 2000).

Eugène Godfried, an outspoken supporter of son as Cuba's most important national music, also emphasizes its African roots. He argues that bandleader Arsenio Rodríguez

ensured a permanent African presence of the Congolese Bantu and Calabar Abakuá components inside the manifestation of the Son, through the lyrics and the introduction in the musical group formations of the percussion such as the "tumba" and the "bongos" (Godfried 2000)

Godfried denounces contemporary timba bands as elitist and capitalistic, claiming that the only true African popular music is the son. He claims that any African influence in timba groups has either been "lost or suppressed" (ibid.).

considered to be uneducated, out-of-style, and prone to violence. *Rockeros* (rockers) are whites who wear expensive, "preppy" clothing and listen to U.S. rock groups.

[The manager of a Miramar club] strictly preferred “new” bands that played the so-called “Cuban salsa” or “timba,” which he defined to be “Afro-Cuban” music. I told him that having a group of youngsters of African descent playing in a band does not mean that they are playing either African or Cuban music (ibid.).

Godfried views the attempt by dance bands to officially adopt the term “timba” over “salsa” as a deliberate attempt to co-opt African identity, “grasp[ing] the African Cuban legacy known as rumba”(ibid.). He views timba’s overtly cosmopolitan attitudes and references to international consumer culture as negations of traditional Afro-Cuban culture; while it may not be “white people’s music,” Godfried holds that timba is decidedly “non-black.”

On the other hand, Perna (2001) and Hernández-Reguant (2004) argue that timba is the most clear musical expression of contemporary Cuban blackness. Hernández-Reguant calls timba “black people’s music” (2004), showing how it “glorified Afro-Cuban heritage as central to Cuban identity”(ibid.). Perna (2001: 261), like Godfried, views timba and traditional son as polar opposites, but observes the opposite racial characteristics. He argues that while son has traditionally been an Afro-Cuban genre, revivalist projects like the BVSC have effectively backgrounded its African elements. He contradicts Pacini Hernández (1998), saying that the Cuban son has emerged on the World Music market as a white version of Afro-Cuban music, not thanks to its African character:

while [BVSC], with its patronizing portrait of lively oldies, comfortably falls into laid back, joyous clichés of third world 'traditional' music, contemporary Cuban dance music has proved [sic] far too complex, topical, angry, and Afro-Cuban, to break into the world music circuit (Perna 2001: 273).

My own view falls somewhere in between those of Perna and Godfried. In light of the overwhelming popularity of timba among Afro-Cubans and its affirmation of Afro-Cuban religious practices and musical traditions, as well as its relatively open criticisms of the economic plight of working class Cubans, timba has potential as a powerful voice for the Afro-Cuban community. It is also appealingly "hip," fluidly incorporating a wide range of Cuban and U.S. styles in creative and exciting ways. However, the accusations that timba artists promote crass commercialism and elitist, anti-Cuban sentiments are not altogether unfounded. While many timba lyrics address the concerns of Cubans in the midst of a severe economic crisis, the handful of successful timba performers have gotten rich singing them. Seen from this perspective, Perna and Godfried's views are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

However, these kinds of polemic attitudes underline the contested nature of racial identity in connection with musical sound. As Moore (1997: 1), Robbins (1990b: 195), and others have noted, racial issues in Cuba are often more nuanced and complex than in the U.S. due to the presence of a strong mulatto identity. The controversy as to the racial character of son

demonstrates the way in which music can provide insight into larger trends of racial conflict (Moore 1997: 10).

Biased attitudes about music are part of an ongoing social dialogue on race and must be understood as a component of the larger phenomenon manifesting itself as racial segregation, discrimination, and overt physical repression (Moore 1997: 10).

In 2004, I saw no overt examples of racial discrimination or prejudice on the part of musicians. What I encountered were subtle clues as to the hidden complexity surrounding race in Cuba. For example, a friend jokingly commented to me that I liked to dance with lots of intertwining arms, *como los negros* (like the blacks). The leader of Perlas del Son, an all-female septeto in Santiago that performs son repertoire with often overt references to Afro-Cuban religious music, takes care to introduce both the petite straight-haired guitar player and the only dark-skinned member of the group (the bongocera) as “Las Chinas” (the China girls). While neither of these examples are particularly malicious, they indicate that there are certainly some stereotypes that have survived the official elimination of racial discrimination during the revolution.

While racial issues surrounding timba are hotly debated, it may be that the perception of son as old time music by the younger generation has in some way neutralized former racial connotations, similar to the way rock

music has become a neutral category for younger audiences in the U.S.⁶⁵ Clearly, what is written here only scratches the surface of class and race issues as expressed through music, a subject which is beyond the scope of this volume.

A Word About Salsa

Because musicians and audience members often refer to *música* available of different types as “salsa,” a term which has been problematized by musicians and scholars for the past several years (see Duany 1984; Manuel 1991; Padura Fuentes 2003), I will provide a brief overview of the history of its use in the U.S. and Cuba. I will show how, despite its problematic nature, it still serves as a useful descriptive term for musicians in Cuba, which will in turn aid my discussion of septeto performance styles.

The social dynamics surrounding salsa parallel those of son in many ways. Like son, salsa has been historically associated with racial stereotypes (as in Puerto Rico; see above), and its origins are frequently debated and contested by musicians for different ideological reasons. Also, salsa is often recognized by listeners according to discrete musical identifiers in much the same way as son. These identifiers have much in common sonically with son, making the lines between son and salsa highly subjective. This fact underlines the close relationship of the two genres, and shows that debates about salsa’s

⁶⁵ Thanks to Robin Moore for suggesting this analogy.

origins, similar to debates surrounding timba and son in Cuba, are staged on ideological rather than musical grounds.

Peter Manuel (1991: 159) defines salsa as “Cuban-style dance music as produced by Latinos in New York City and elsewhere.” Although the precise origins of the music known internationally as salsa are contested, the general consensus among scholars and musicians is that salsa is at least “very significantly based in Cuban dance music” (Berríos-Miranda 2002: 27). Cuban son styles popularized throughout the Caribbean in the 1940s and ‘50s were brought to New York by a primarily Puerto Rican immigrant community after World War II (Manuel 1991: 160; Waxer 2002: 4). Although salsa has multiple “sites of articulation” (Waxer 2002: 5), its commercial center has always been New York City (Duany 1984: 186-87).

A common narrative is that Puerto Rican bandleaders such as Tito Rodríguez, Eddie Palmieri, and Ismael Rivera “updated” the sound of Cuban conjunto and charanga bands, adding instruments as well as Afro-Puerto Rican rhythms to the typical sound (Berríos-Miranda 2002: 27). Although there is considerable disagreement as to whether these updates represent a truly separate musical genre, rather than another style of Cuban son, musicologists agree that salsa represents a fusion of a variety of music from Cuba, Puerto Rico, the United States (especially jazz, rock, and soul), and other Latin American countries, especially Colombia and Venezuela (Duany 1984: 186; Manuel 1991: 160; Orozco 1992: 176-77; Waxer 2002: 4-5).

The precise origins of the term “salsa” are unknown. Venezuelan disc jockey Phidias Danilo Escalona, New York publisher Izzy Sanabria, and Fania Records producer Jerry Masucci have all been credited with coining the term (Rondón 1980: 33; Roberts 1979: 187; Manuel 1991: 160). In any case, it gained currency as a marketing term for dance music records produced in New York during the 1960s and '70s, the majority of which were on Jerry Masucci's Fania label (Manuel 1991: 160; Moore 2002: 58; Waxer 2002: 4).

Although Lise Waxer (2002: 5) suggests that salsa was a standard term for Latino dance music by the late 1970s, other sources indicate that the term was not universally accepted, even by musicians who were considered “salseros” by audiences:

Now, you have to go with what people are saying, so I adapted the word salsa, but it really doesn't mean anything to me (José Manguál, Jr., in Blum 1978: 144)

This is not a musical terminology at all. The music that I am playing today, which I have been playing for the last 20 years or more, if they want to call it Salsa or matzo ball soup, the name doesn't make any difference to me. But I would imagine that the younger generation has to have a title for this music so it can be used commercially as the New York sound (Tito Puente, in Blum, *ibid.*)

Meanwhile, the term salsa was not familiar to Cuban audiences until the late 1980s (Moore 2002: 58, 63). Due to the break in U.S./Cuba relations in

1960, Cuban musicians were cut off from a market that they had once dominated; since the “rumba craze” of the 1920s, Cuban music had had a profound influence on American jazz and popular music (Blum 1978: 145; Manuel 1991: 159; Pacini Hernández 1998: 110; Moore 2002: 58). Manuel (1991) and Moore (2002) both note that the U.S. embargo on Cuba, combined with changes in recording industry structures (the decline of the major record labels such as RCA Victor, Columbia, and BMI after World War II) and negative reactions to the Cuban Revolution, allowed smaller independent record labels like Fania Records to enter the Latin music market.

It could be argued that the Cuban Revolution, and the subsequent political fallout during the years 1959-61, are at the center of the controversy around salsa. With the public image of Cuba suddenly transformed from island paradise to communist stronghold, record producers were hesitant to try to market Cuban music (Manuel 1991: 161). The label “salsa” effectively wiped the slate clean, providing a music without such problematic connotations. While some musicians, like Tito Puente and José Mangual, were ambivalent about the term, others, especially Cubans, viewed its adoption as an outright attack “designed to marginalize and disenfranchise Cuban artists under socialism” (Moore 2002: 62). While this view is perhaps extreme, the truth remains that a large amount of Cuban repertoire was recorded and

marketed to Latino audiences in the U.S. as salsa without any recognition of its origins, much less royalties paid to composers (*ibid.*).⁶⁶

However, salsa has nonetheless become a term of great cultural significance throughout much of Latin America. Jorge Duany (1984) emphasizes the strong Puerto Rican roots of the music, tracing its origins back to the European and African influences on Puerto Rican music during the colonial period. Berríos-Miranda (2002) details the ways in which salsa differs from Cuban son. Others, while conceding salsa's debt to Cuban music in terms of form and structure, join Duany and Berríos-Miranda in asserting that salsa has social and political importance as a source of Puerto Rican and pan-Latino identity (Padilla 1990; Waxer 1994: 140, 2002: 5; also Moore 2002: 59; Manuel 1991: 162-63).

What is Cuban salsa?

For my purposes here, it is important to understand how Cubans have used the term salsa. As noted earlier, Cubans were almost completely cut-off from the salsa market until the 1980s, thanks to the U.S. embargo as well as

⁶⁶ In a recent roundtable on the impact of the BVSC project, María Teresa Linares recalled that Jerry Masucci and other representatives from Fania Records had actually come to Cuba in 1981 to record "fragments" of playing by popular Cuban musicians, presumably with the intention of teaching Cuban style playing to New York musicians (Fornet 2001:168). Whether true or not, this anecdote demonstrates the extent to which some Cuban musicians feel victimized by the commercial success of salsa.

ensorship by the Cuban government.⁶⁷ During the first 20 years of the Cuban Revolution, salsa was “informally suppress[ed]” (Moore 2002: 63). Although there was no official policy with regard to salsa, it was never heard on the radio, deejays were prohibited the use of the term itself, and even playing a bootleg tape or black market LP of Gloria Estefan could result in various forms of political harassment (ibid.).

The 1970s saw a shift toward acceptance of salsa by government policy makers. Moore speculates that this may have been due in part to the relaxed political relations with the U.S. under Jimmy Carter, and in part to the growing international popularity of salsa. The latter statement is supported by the fact that EGREM began producing records to compete with New York salsa, most notably the ensemble known as “Estrellas de Areíto” [Areíto Stars]. The formation of “Estrellas,” a group made up of the best dance band musicians of the moment, was a direct challenge to Jerry Masucci’s “Fania All-Stars” (Moore 2002: 63-64).

Since the onset of the Special Period in the early 1990s, dance music has been promoted more than ever as a valuable source of revenue. Godfried (2000) and Perna (2001: 98) note that contemporary dance music was commonly called *música bailable*, Cuban salsa, or simply salsa until 1998, when popular bands including La Charanga Habanera and Los Van Van

⁶⁷ Some salsa, as well as American rock and jazz, was available to those able to pick up radio reception from neighboring countries. Adalberto Álvarez claims to have been influenced by New York salsa broadcasts from Venezuela (Roy 2002: 164).

officially adopted the term timba. While Godfried insists that this term is an attempt to superficially incorporate traditional rumba into an otherwise elite, non-African dance music, Perna holds that the term “timba” emerged as a defensive move against critics (like Godfried) who viewed timba as excessively cosmopolitan, indulgent, and capitalistic:

Música bailable musicians found themselves caught between increasing institutional attacks on dance music and the international success of the Buena Vista Social Club...In 1998, through a series of public concerts, interviews and articles on the press [sic], they publicly launched the word “timba” (Perna 2001: 99).

Today, Cubans still use “salsa,” “salsa cubana,” or “salsa dura” interchangeably with “timba” (Perna 2001: 98). In common parlance, the term salsa might be used in reference to timba or New York salsa. In either case, it refers to a style of playing derived from son, but with more aggressive arrangements, faster tempos, and a wider variety of influences, such as American R&B and jazz. While musicians might argue that salsa is just another version of son (Palacios, interview), they still use the term for its own descriptive merits. Some soneros even use it as a derogatory term to undermine the authenticity of other musicians: “All that stuff that they play –

you know, it's very fast, it doesn't have that 'swing' that son has! ...It's nothing more than salsa, played in a son format" (Cañambú, interview).⁶⁸

Conclusion

Generic categories have direct application in actual musical practice in Cuba. Musicians are employed and concerts are organized according to genre, and, as Robbins (1989) suggests, official *empresa* categories are often developed with the help of musicians and musicologists. Since all performers must be officially represented by a local *empresa*, a band must be clearly identifiable as belonging to one category or the other; septetos cannot sound too much like jazz combos or timba bands if they want to find work easily.

At the same time, the Cuban definition of son seems wider than that implied by the BVSC. As noted above, son can be defined simply as a way of playing something, and thus can incorporate a wide range of musical ideas while still retaining its essential "son" quality. Although many traditionalists such as Godfried (2000) and Juan de Marcos González (2000, 2001) see contemporary dance music as a direct opposition to son, others point out the many similarities between the two.

The tourist boom and the international success of traditional son has had the direct effect of attracting a wider range of musicians to septetos, which has indirectly affected performance styles and the definition of what

⁶⁸ "Todo lo que tocan ellos – usted sabe, es muy rápido, no tiene ese swing que tiene el son! ...Es nada más que salsa, tocado en formato de son."

can be called a “traditional” music group. Septeto musicians stylistically negotiate local definitions of “traditional son,” as well as regional identity, which, as noted in Chapter 1, has become an important issue for musicians due to the centralization of tourism around Havana.

Chapter 4 uses the information discussed here as a starting point for a closer analysis of these kinds of stylistic choices. Each group studied has developed a different approach for balancing tourists’ and empresas’ expectations while striving to create a distinct *sello* (stamp, or signature sound) that might catch the ears of wealthy tourists or the next Ry Cooder.

Chapter 4: Stylistic Analysis

As shown in previous chapters, stylistic choices reflect larger changes brought on by tourism and address issues of tradition and identity. Many musicians who would not have dreamed of performing traditional son ten years ago have changed their tunes, literally and figuratively, in the radically altered socioeconomic environment of the Special Period. Others struggle to assert their longtime connection to son in an increasingly competitive environment. These attitudes are directly implicated in musical sound.

In this chapter, I will analyze performances by musicians I recorded during the summer of 2004. My analysis focuses on formal structure, arrangement techniques, and elements relating to each septeto's "groove." My understanding of "feel," "groove," and "swing" follows that of Washburne, who states:

Feel encompasses what notes are chosen, how they are played, and where they are placed by the musician. The groove refers to the overall effect of their interaction. Swing is achieved when a balanced tension and resolution between the feels of the musicians create momentum within the music. In this way you can have a groove that does or does not swing (Washburne 1998: 161).

Special attention is paid to tres guajeos, bass patterns, and rhythms played by the bongó and other percussion, as these elements often serve as identifiers of other styles.⁶⁹

I make a distinction between classic and contemporary son styles. I define the classic style as that of the recordings made in the late 1920s and early '30s by groups such as Septeto Nacional, Septeto Habanero, and Sexteto Boloña. Orozco (1992), Díaz Ayala (2003), Acosta (n.d.), and others have identified these recordings as typifying the Golden Age of Cuban son, when the format of the septeto was crystallized.

As Manuel (1985) and Scruggs (2003) have noted, contemporary styles of son often bear little resemblance to these early recordings. Despite performing in the classic septeto format, contemporary performers are inevitably influenced by a wide range of playing styles. Some players, however, make reference to the classic son style through identifiers such as specific tres licks, bass patterns, or vocal style. I argue that these identifiers

⁶⁹ One element that will not be discussed here is that of lyric content. In my experience, the lyrics of original songs are more or less in line with conventional son repertoire, consisting mostly of upbeat exhortations to party, love songs, or other variations on these themes. Although sexual innuendos are common, they are never as explicit as those of timba, and I have not heard any songs that seem to imply any deeper social commentary. Perna (2001: 111) suggests that the topical lyrics of timba have contributed to its popularity, and it may be that son groups are less popular because their lyrics tend to be less relevant, but I reserve this aspect for further study.

take on iconic significance, immediately identifying the performer as a more authentic sonero.⁷⁰

Although, as noted in Chapter 3, relating particular styles to specific moments in history is problematic in many ways, my approach here reflects the rhetoric of traditional vs. modern employed by musicians themselves. It is my view that, while certain stylistic traits are thought of as “older” or “newer” by musicians who play them, the fact that they are used within the context of a single ensemble serves to break down dominant conceptions of genre “evolution.” In other words, identifying elements that are commonly described diachronically reveals their actual synchronic nature.

This again underlines the ways in which musical sound relates to larger social dynamics. The association of a discrete musical element with a

⁷⁰ The earliest recordings are often characterized as “urban son” or “modern urban son” (Moore 1997: 88). For my purposes here, neither term seems adequate, due to the complex ways in which these playing styles have come to represent a national, and no longer specifically urban style, and, with regard to the latter term, the fact that “modern” has also been used by some scholars to describe later styles. García (2003: 307) notes that commercially successful mambo recordings in the 1950s were characterized as “modern” for their use of extended harmonies and arrangement techniques associated with jazz, and Manuel (1985: 254) uses “modern son” as the rough equivalent of “salsa” (see Chapter 3 for a discussion of the problematic aspects of “salsa” as a descriptive term for Cuban dance music). Thus, the terms “classic” vs. “contemporary” seem to be the least problematic choices for my purposes.

particular moment in history can reveal attitudes about tradition and authenticity that in turn reflect contemporary culture.

The Golden Age: Classic Havana Son

It is difficult to trace regional identity through performance practice in the early years of son, since during the first two decades of radio broadcast and phonograph recording in Cuba, all recording and radio performance took place in Havana. This fact is less relevant to the dominant history of son, since most accounts describe the son as having traveled gradually from Oriente to Havana, evolving as it went, and emerging fully formed in time for the first recordings in 1916 (Blanco 1992: 21). However, more recent studies suggest that different son variants may have existed much earlier and in different parts of the country (Acosta n.d.; Orozco 1992).

Nonetheless, the groups that recorded in Havana, especially Septeto Nacional and Septeto Habanero, were those that first gained commercial success.⁷¹ It was their playing style that became known as Cuba's "national music" (Díaz-Ayala 2003; Moore 1997: 88), and provides the basis for the dominant evolutionary theory of son performance styles as noted in Chapter 3. In musical terms, this discourse tends to suggest an evolution in terms of

⁷¹ See Moore (1997: 92-113) for an account of the commercial rise of son. Factors such as the development of cheaper recording technology and Cuba's relatively earlier entrance into radio broadcasting were crucial factors in the popularization of the Havana septets.

rhythmic complexity as well as instrumentation; since the Havana sound did not often include syncopated tres guajeos or an anticipated bass, scholars typically view the subsequent use of these elements in later recordings as innovations, despite the fact that these elements may have been present in other son styles throughout the country. García (2003: 168) notes that syncopated patterns used by bandleader Arsenio Rodríguez in the 1940s may have been rooted in tres guajeos performed in rural son variants since the beginning of the century. It seems probable that son was typically highly syncopated until it got “smoothed out” for recordings in Havana (Ben Lapidus, p.c. 2005.)

Still, the performance styles of the early Havana septetos are regarded by musicians and audiences alike as the quintessential son sound (Acosta n.d.:16). Thus, a brief examination of this classic sound will aid our understanding of contemporary performances of traditional son.

The Classic Septeto Sound

The first groups to be recorded playing son in Havana were sextets, consisting of tres, guitar, bongó, maracas, claves, and some type of bass instrument, often a double bass, but also sometimes a *marímbula* or *botija*.

Sexteto Habanero was the first to incorporate a trumpet in 1927, and its competitor, Sexteto Nacional, followed suit almost immediately, making the septeto the most popular format (Blanco 1992: 41).

The bongó style of the early septetos (and sextetos) was almost single-handedly defined by José “El Chino” Incharte, who recorded with Sexteto

Boloña, Sexteto Habanero, and Sexteto/Septeto Nacional at various points throughout the 1920s and '30s (Strachwitz and Ávalos 1995: 5). His playing closely resembles the typical changüí bongó style. He appears to be continually improvising, playing few time-keeping patterns. He also frequently incorporates the low growling sound called the *bramido*, also used in changüí (Lapidus 2002: 124).⁷² Musical example 1 shows Incharte's playing just before the montuno of "Aquella Boca," recorded by Sexteto Habanero in 1927. Incharte frequently employs rhythmic patterns that push against the central pulse, especially ternary phrasing of binary subdivisions (mm. 75-76 and 82-84), one of the central characteristics of improvisation in Latin dance music (Manuel 1998: 138).⁷³

⁷² The *bramido* is produced by rubbing the fingers across the head of the drum (this effect can be heard at the beginning of CD Track #1, notated in musical example 1). Changüí bongoceros, as well as those on the early recordings in the 1920s, favor a much lower tuning of the bongó, and frequently use wax to tune the heads. Both factors make the *bramido* much easier to produce than on standard contemporary bongoes, which tend to be tuned much higher (the skin is pulled much tighter). Some scholars have suggested that the *bramido* actually stems from Afro-Cuban sacred music, specifically *ekué* drumming styles (liner notes, Sexteto Boloña 1995). Although the bongó playing of this period is extremely fluid and improvisational, Orlando Fiól has suggested to me that there are important formal elements, such as key moments when the bongocero is expected to play certain types of phrases.

⁷³ Musical examples transcribed from recordings include measure numbers relative to the entire piece, rather than just the excerpt. Each transcription can be heard on the compact disc accompanying this volume (CD track information can be found in the table of contents as well

The addition of trumpets to son ensembles significantly changed the role of the tres. In the sexteto format, the tresero played the dual role of accompanying the singers and playing the various *llamadas* (calls) that signaled each section. The introduction to each piece was typically a part of the main melody or the melody of the *estribillo* (coro) usually ending in an arpeggio of the tonic chord (see musical example 2). With the trumpet able to play the melody, the tres introduction was reduced to the simple arpeggio. After Septeto Nacional and Septeto Habanero began recording with a trumpet player, nearly all of the introductions followed the same formula: the tres played the tonic arpeggio twice, the band entered on the clave, and the trumpet played part or all of the melody. Musical examples 3a.-c. show variations on the typical introductory arpeggio.

as in the subheading of each musical example). In the case of sound clips excerpted from longer pieces, two time-readings are noted. The first, found in the subheading of the example, refers to the occurrence of the clip within the original recording. The second time-reading is found under the last staff of each system, and refers to the time relative to the sound clip on the accompanying compact disc.

In bongó and tumbadoras notation, noteheads on lower lines indicate attacks on a second, lower drumhead. Normal noteheads indicate open tones, “x” noteheads represent slaps, and slash noteheads represent notes that are not played as strongly. The bongó bell, when played at the same time as the bongó, is notated above the staff; higher “x” noteheads represent attacks on the closed end of the bell and normal noteheads represent the more resonant open end.

The tres accompaniment pattern was generally quite similar to the introduction, consisting of 1-bar phrases that emphasize the downbeat and the “and-of-two” of each measure. This pattern lines up strongly with the 3-side of the clave, but makes no significant change for the 2-side (as in example 3a).

Although the anticipated bass found in most son-derived dance music began to emerge in recordings during the 1930s (Manuel 1985: 254), Cuban bass players assert that the “real” son bass pattern is much less syncopated (Del Puerto 1994: 6). Bebo Valdés confirms this:

The original son in its beginning, as played by Septeto Habanero, Septeto Nacional, and Septeto Boloña [sic] and Sonora Matancera, never had syncopation, and it consisted of...bass lines that accented strong beats (Valdés in García 2003: 142).

Indeed, bass players on the classic recordings either employ the *tresillo* or *bolero* bass patterns (García 2003: 142; see example 4). Although there are several theories as to the origin of the anticipated bass (Manuel 1985; Betancur Álvarez 1999), it is unclear how or when it became the standard performance style. Although it was used almost exclusively by Arsenio Rodríguez’ band in the 1940s, many of Rodríguez’ contemporaries continued to use the straighter bolero pattern well into the 1950s (García 2003: 239-41). At the same time, many rural son variants, such as *nengón*, *kiribá*, and *changüí*, may have been using variations on the anticipated bass before the turn of the century (Lapidus, p.c. 2005).

Vocal performance styles of this period reflect the need for vocalists to sing without amplification over the rest of the band. Leads often had piercing, almost nasally vocal quality, as exemplified by Abelardo Barroso, while tenors, such as Bienvenido León have a robust, full quality.⁷⁴ Although melodies are often syncopated, the singers tend to favor legato phrasing, glissandi, and other vocal techniques that by contemporary standards might sound rhythmically imprecise. The verse sections, in particular, often featured two- or three-part harmony on sustained notes, giving way to the somewhat more rhythmic estribillo (see example 5).

Although trumpets had been used in other popular music ensembles in the past, the addition of the trumpet to the son groups was probably prompted by widespread interest in jazz (Robbins 1990b: 186). Like early jazz trumpet playing, the classic septeto style is very closely linked to singing. Trumpet players typically played the introductions just as they would be sung by the ensemble, with little variation. The trumpet also typically played two or three call-and-response improvisations at the beginning of the montuno, with phrasing that echoed typical soneos. Despite being

⁷⁴ It is unclear to what extent the voices heard on these early recordings were altered by the recording process. The vocal timbres heard could be a result of such alteration, an indication of the particular voices present in each group, an indication of the styles preferred at the time, or all of these. Barroso, whose singular nasal style marks many early recordings through the beginning of the 1920s, later recorded with Orquesta Sensación in the 1950s with a completely different vocal sound!

emblematic of jazz, Cuban trumpet players did not incorporate a jazz vocabulary (e.g. blues scales) (Manuel 1998: 133).⁷⁵

The recordings of this period typically feature a long verse (or *largo*) with two subsections (AB), each with different harmonic progressions. These are often repeated two or three times, making the verse considerably longer than the montuno. Occasionally, the montuno consists of only one repetition of the estribillo with one iteration by the lead singer, and some recordings even leave out the montuno completely.⁷⁶

The Son Montuno of Arsenio Rodríguez

In the late 1930s, groups performing son began to expand the septeto format by adding a second trumpet, tumbadora, and piano. Although various groups had been experimenting with these instruments in various configurations since the late 1920s, the first group to standardize what came to be called the “conjunto” format was that of bandleader Arsenio Rodríguez, who formed his first conjunto in 1942 (Blanco 1992: 34, García 2003: 132).

⁷⁵ Rick Davies (2001) discusses in detail the performance style of Félix Chappottín, the longtime trumpet player for Septeto Habanero and later Arsenio Rodríguez, who almost single-handedly defined Cuban trumpet playing in the early half of the 20th century.

⁷⁶ See discography, especially recordings by Sexteto Boloña (1995). Díaz Ayala (1994: 12) points out that production factors may have shaped early recordings considerably. The producer may not have allowed bands to extend the montuno, for example, due to the limited space on 78rpm records.

García's (2003: 133-63) analysis shows that, beyond merely adding instruments to the ensemble, significant changes were standardized in Rodríguez' band in both formal structure (i.e. the arrangement) and interaction between core instruments (especially the bass, bongó, and newly added tumbadora).

Rodríguez expanded the classic son form (largo – montuno) to include six distinguishable subsections: a prominent introduction, a short verse, the montuno, a solo (either by tres or piano), followed by a 1- to 8-bar break performed by the whole ensemble called a *cierre*, and a final climactic section called the *diablo* (lit. devil), which incorporated interweaving trumpet parts with the sung estribillo (ibid: 136-41).

Rodríguez instructed bass players to “make the bass ‘sing’” (ibid.: 142), and created bass lines that broke from the typical tresillo or bolero patterns. They emphasized off-beats, and included notes outside of the corresponding triad. The bass, as well as the tres and piano, tended to rhythmically complement the vocal melody, especially in the montuno.

In order to make the bongó work well with the tumbadora, Rodríguez greatly reduced the improvisation of the bongó, insisting instead that it perform more steady time-keeping patterns. In this way, the bongó and the tumbadora were able to interlock tightly and create a more dense, driving groove (ibid.: 154-55).

Rodríguez also standardized the use of the *cencerro* (cowbell) by the bongocero. Although the use of a bell in the montuno section can be heard on

some early recordings by Septeto Habanero, it was Rodríguez who codified its use as part of the main role of the bongocero. Whenever the band moves to the montuno, the bongocero stops playing the bongó and plays the bell instead (Sublette 2004: 480).

Example 6 shows the typical time-keeping pattern of the bongó (called the *martillo*, or “hammer”) and the pattern of the bell used during the montuno. Unlike the playing of “El Chino” Incharte, as shown in example 1, these bongó patterns strongly emphasize the quarter-note pulse.

Rodríguez’ main competitors, all-white conjuntos like La Sonora Matancera and Conjunto Casino, gained popularity performing guarachas at fast tempos. Although they had adopted Rodríguez’ conjunto format, their arrangements tended to be much simpler, especially in terms of rhythmic elements. García (2003: 235-237) and Sublette (2004: 483) both note that La Sonora Matancera played straight downbeats in the bass, and lacked the level of sophistication in the rhythm section that Rodríguez’ band had.

Although the term conjunto is often used, like septeto, to loosely describe a band’s stylistic approach as well as its instrumentation, the difference in styles between conjuntos soneros, like Rodríguez’ band, and conjuntos guaracheros, like Conjunto Casino, makes it difficult to discuss performance in terms of a unified conjunto style. For my analysis here, I follow García’s lead in referring to arrangement techniques and performance practice that emulate Rodríguez’ conjunto as son montuno style.

Contemporary Son

Contemporary son performance styles bear greater resemblance to son montuno than to classic son. Bass players almost always play what is commonly termed an anticipated bass pattern (see example 4), and tres players almost always play some variation on the standard 2-bar piano pattern, shown in example 7 (Manuel 1985: 249, 1998: 134; García 2003: 151).⁷⁷ Bongoceros always switch to the bell in the montuno section, and tend to tune the bongó much higher than those of the classic players. They also rely much more on the martillo pattern (see example 6).

Formal structure also tends to follow that of the son montuno. Performances often have a composed introduction and invariably include a verse, montuno, and tres solo, although the diablo (also frequently called a mambo, or, in the case of shorter, improvised back-up lines, a *moña*) is often left out. Instead, the group might return to the original estribillo, sing a shorter version, or change to a completely different estribillo (always over the same harmonic cycle).

Perhaps the most immediately noticeable difference between classic and contemporary styles, however, is the tempo. Early recordings rarely feature bands playing faster than 160 bpm, while contemporary bands favor tempos in the 200 bpm range.

⁷⁷ Unlike classic tres accompaniment patterns, the standard 2-bar pattern reflects the two halves of the clave, emphasizing the down-beat of the 2-side and off-beats on the 3-side.

Influences of Guaguancó

The influences of sacred and secular Afro-Cuban percussion styles on popular dance music have been well documented. Manuel has noted the influence of rumba on the anticipated bass (1985: 252-53) and on soneos (1998: 129-30). Betancur Álvarez (1999) suggests that the claves (musical instrument) as well as the son clave (timeline) are borrowed from rumba. Also, countless performers of popular music throughout the 20th century have been active in other Afro-Cuban musical contexts, sacred and secular (Évora 1997: 187; Moore 1997: 94-95).

These traditions each have their own vast repertoire and specific performance techniques, which are beyond the scope of this work. However, certain elements found in performances of guaguancó (one of the best known and most commonly performed rumba variants) can serve as identifiers that are immediately recognized by performers and audience members when performed in other contexts.

An immediately recognizable identifier is the clave pattern. Guaguancó uses a clave that differs only slightly from son clave (example 8). In guaguancó performance this clave accompanies a specific composite rhythm in the *segundo* and *tumbadora* drums. Example 9 shows the interlocking patterns of the two supporting drums in guaguancó (the *segundo* and the *tumbadora*) and the melody resulting from the open tones of the two parts.

The style known as son guaguancó, as used by Arsenio Rodríguez to describe some of his own compositions, deserves some mention as well. Rather than incorporating rhythmic elements from rumba, Rodríguez' guaguancoes employ lyrics and formal structures derived from guaguancó. Most notably, Rodríguez arranged the *diana* (a long introductory phrase, usually sung in vocables) for trumpets. Example 10a shows a typical guaguancó diana, followed by one of Rodríguez' stylized version arranged from trumpets in example 10b.

Timba Influences

Perna (2001: 110-56) details performance practices associated with timba, currently the most popular dance music in Cuba. In many ways, timba bands expand the formulas of son in much the same way that Arsenio Rodríguez expanded upon classic son. Bands place much greater emphasis on the montuno section, alternating rhythmic changes, breaks, and virtuosic instrumental passages with a nearly endless supply of estribillos.

A typical timba band incorporates up to 15 musicians, always including drumset, electric bass, horns, and, often, two keyboards. Although essentially using the same harmonic cycles found in other dance music genres, timba arrangements often use modal harmonies and chromaticisms such as those found in post-1960s jazz, funk, and soul (ibid; also Moore 2005: 18).

While many of timba's salient features rely on the dense textures created by this expanded, electric ensemble, stylistic differences between

timba and other styles are found in core instruments such as the piano and bass. The rhythmic texture is more often felt in relation to guaguancó clave than to son clave, prompting some scholars to characterize timba as a mixture of U.S. jazz, funk, and rumba (Hernández-Reguant 2004; Orovio 2004: 210).

Piano montuno patterns are typically more rhythmically tense and percussive than the standard 2-bar pattern (see above), often varying over 4 or 8 bars (Perna 2001: 127). Pianists strive to develop their own, unique style of playing a montuno (Moore 2005: 18). The montuno from “La Bola,” in example 11, is a typical example. It uses tenths rather than octaves, employs contrary motion, and never emphasizes the first beat of any measure.⁷⁸

The role of the bass is greatly expanded in timba. In addition to playing highly syncopated accompaniment patterns, bassists often play melodic figures in unison with the horn section or the vocalists. Bass players occasionally incorporate slap-style playing similar to that heard on recordings by U.S. groups such as Parliament Funkadelic or Tower of Power (Perna 2001: 123-25). Track 10 of the compact disc, from “La Expresiva” by NG La Banda, is a great example of funk and R&B influenced bass playing. Toward the end of the clip, the bass plays a unison line with the vocalist, transcribed in example 12.

⁷⁸ Actually, this example was quite difficult to transcribe, and may contain some minor errors. This in itself is further evidence of the greater complexity of timba piano styles relative to standard 2-bar patterns!

Most timba arrangements have a significant textural change, or “breakdown” section, usually at the entrance of the montuno or in other key moments of heightened intensity. Various referred to as a *bomba*, *apoyo*, *presión*, or *masacote*, this section usually involves some combination of instruments dropping out of the mix while others continue to play, sometimes increasing the tempo or rhythmic intensity of their parts. A typical *bomba* has percussion dropping out while the piano continues and the bass begins to thump the side of the bass and emphasize beat four with downward slides on the bass strings (Perna 2001: 130; Moore 2005: 18; see example 13).

Given the controversy surrounding timba and the rhetoric of timba and son as two opposing poles, the use of timba styles by performers of son might have significance beyond simple stylistic affinity. Although my questions along these lines were never answered clearly by musicians, incorporation of timba-style breaks represent, at the very least, a way of “updating” the septeto sound, making the best out of an otherwise limiting musical situation. The need to improvise and make the best of things is a recurring theme in the everyday lives of most Cubans living at this particular moment in history.

Analyses of Contemporary Son Groups: Havana

The following analyses cover several groups recorded during my fieldwork in Havana in June and early July of 2004. All groups gave

permission to be recorded, and in most cases I was able to discuss the performances with the performers afterward. The musical examples show how musicians fluidly incorporate both traditional and contemporary elements.

Félix Godón y Su Trío

Recorded June 18th, 2004, Havana.

Felix Godón is a tresero of Congo ancestry from Las Tunas, in Oriente. He plays every other day in a bar on Calle Obispo in Old Havana. I sat down with him during his lunch break, and he told me a bit about himself.

Godón told me he cannot remember when he started playing music. He only knows that when he joined the military, at sixteen, he was already playing the tres and some percussion. His stint in the army brought him to Havana, and he joined the military band for a while, after which he was promoted to become the director of Melodías de los 40, a post which he held for 14 years. Like many larger orquestas, Melodías was dissolved after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and Godón now finds himself in the position of having to retire (and take a 30% pay cut in his already meager salary) or make ends meet by playing in bars and hustling gigs for his bands.

Godón is an amazing tresero. His heaving picking style and frequent use of the double-strum or *doblando* technique identify him immediately to my ears as a tresero of the old school, from Oriente. This is what had initially drawn me to him, with the multitude of treseros posted up and down the streets of old city. In this tourist district, conservatory trained guitarists

turned treseros are a dime a dozen, and I was curious to see what a more seasoned player would have to say.⁷⁹

However, Godón was not much interested in talking with me about playing the tres or about classic son. He was eager to tell me about the many other projects that he worked in on the side. He listed the instruments that he could play: accordion, piano, trombone, trumpet, guitar, and bass. He urged me to come see his larger group rehearse, to hear some more sophisticated music.

When he plays on Calle Obispo, he is accompanied by a bass player and bongocero, both of whom are in their late twenties. Although I was unable to speak at length with either of the younger performers, the bass player mentioned that the two younger musicians had graduated from ENA (Escuela Nacional de Arte), one of the two major music schools in Havana.

On the recording analyzed here, “El Traguito” (a famous guaracha by Juan Almeida ⁸⁰), the trio was joined by a friend who sang the lead vocal line

⁷⁹ Lapidus (2002: 88) identifies *doblando* (tremolo) style picking (where the tresero essentially attacks each note twice, producing a sort of echo effect) as a style only employed by older players in *changüí*. I have observed that it is employed even by soneros from Oriente who don't play *changüí* actively; it is rarely heard in Havana.

⁸⁰ Juan Almeida fought alongside Fidel Castro in the 1959 Revolution, and has since occupied a number of important posts in the Cuban government and armed forces. He represents one of the only high ranking government officials to express any interest in music, as well as one of the only highly visible Afro-Cubans in office. He is generally highly regarded as a true hero of the Cuban revolution, especially among musicians (*Cubanacan* 2005, Moore p.c. 2005).

and played maracas; normally, Godón sings the lead line, and the other two players sing the coros.

The tune begins with a variation on a classic style tres intro, similar to the one heard in “Vitico” (see example 3c, above). This introduction gives the piece a flavor that leans toward classic son, despite the fast tempo.

The performance of the verse continues in more or less standard contemporary style. The bass player plays an anticipated pattern, the bongó sticks pretty close to the martillo pattern, and Godón’s tres playing falls fairly regularly into 2-bar phrases against the clave. Godón’s use of the *doblando* picking technique can be heard throughout the verse (listen for a slight echo-effect in his more pronounced lines), but it is much more audible in the tres solo (example 14). Judging from Godón’s attitude toward his younger, Habanero colleagues, I view this emphasis on older picking techniques to be a conscious affirmation of his superiority as a sonero. It is immediately clear to listeners that he is an Oriental, a real sonero, and not just some university graduate who can play some guajeos. This solo is also another example of ternary phrasing of binary subdivisions. Brackets show how Godón phrases cross barlines, creating rhythmic and harmonic tension by not resolving strongly to the tonic until measure 168 (marked “c”).

The end of the tres solo marks a shift in the groove (or rhythmic texture; see above). Godón sets up a rhythmic vamp while the bongocero works the crowd for tips. When he returns and the coro enters again, the bass player stops playing his anticipated pattern and begins a much more

syncopated, funky bass line that fits in between the alternations of the coro. The bongocero also changes his pattern on the bell and bongó, playing the guaguancó clave (see example 15). Given the funkiness of the bass line, I view this texture change as more of a reference to timba than to guaguancó, since timba bands tend to use the guaguancó clave.

This last example shows a style of bongó playing not found in classic septeto or conjunto recordings, since Godón's bongocero plays a bongó on a stand instead of between his knees, as the bongó is traditionally played. Many bongoceros in Havana have started to use a bongó stand to enable them to play the bell while continuing to fill on the bongó heads with their other hand. Other percussion items are sometimes affixed to the stand as well, effectively transforming the bongó into a miniature drumset.

José Graciela, bongocero for Cuarteto Rumí

Recorded June 19th, 2004, Havana.

I first heard Cuarteto Rumí in 2003, while traveling with a group of American musicians. They were among the first groups that I heard incorporating timba-style bombas, although since then I have learned that it has been a popular addition for the last few years among younger musicians. Graciela told me that he played drumset for years in a timba band, and would prefer to be playing drumset today, but the work for big bands had almost completely dried up. Cuarteto Rumí's gig playing in front of the Hotel Inglaterra has been his main source of income for the past few years.

Like Godón's bongocero, Graciela plays his bongó on a stand. He has also added a number of auxiliary percussion instruments to the stand as well, making his the most elaborately-modified bongó I have seen. He has developed a highly personal feel (or *marcha*) which incorporates the bongó martillo pattern, the clave (played on a plastic woodblock), cha-cha bell,⁸¹ and a lower drum affixed to the side of the bongó itself (his playing can be heard on CD track #13). Example 15 shows the transition to a bomba-style break in Cuarteto Rumí's version of "Harina de Maíz." The first two measures of the example show Graciela's normal *marcha*, which he alters as the band enters the bomba, leaving more space and making the groove a bit funkier.

Ilián Torres

Recorded June 24th, 2004, Havana.

Ilián Torres, a tresero who plays at the bar called Lluvias de Oro, just down the street from Félix Godón, told me that he listens more to piano players than to tres players. He graduated a few years ago from ENA in classical guitar, but, like many of his classmates, he switched to playing tres because that was where the work was.

The band at Lluvias de Oro plays the standard batch of tourist songs, like "Son de la Loma," "Lágrimas Negras" and "Hasta Siempre," along with a

⁸¹ The cha-cha bell is smaller than a normal cencerro. As the name suggests, it gained popularity in charangas during the rise of the cha-cha-cha. It is typically played by the timbalero, who mounts it to the side of the timbal.

handful of jazz standards popularized by Frank Sinatra, like “My Way,” and “As Time Goes By.” Torres’ playing tends to be quite busy, and incorporates a fair amount of chromaticism and blues-inflected lines. Torres appreciates jazz for its instrumental virtuosity, but his real love is timba. Like many piano players, he works on defining his unique style of guajeo, stretching the normal 2-bar phrase to 4 or 8 bars. He played me one of his favorite creations, which shows an obvious timba influence (see example 17).

In this example, points where the guajeo lines up with a stroke of the clave are marked with an “X.” As Washburne (1998: 163) notes, the clave is also emphasized by attacks on the “and-of-four” of the 2-side (which is heard as an anticipation of the syncopated 3-side), and by playing straight quarter note or eighth-note patterns on the downbeat of the 2-side. The former instances are marked “a” in the example, and the latter marked “b.” This guajeo is even more rhythmically tense than the example from “La Bola” (example 11), since in the downbeat of the 2-side is only emphasized at the end of each eight bar section, and the beginning of the second 4-bar phrase (mm. 5-7) does not emphasize the clave at all.⁸²

Torres’ case underlines the ways in which the larger socioeconomic context of the Special Period is implicated in musical sound. Although essentially forced into joining a son group by the dire economic situation, his obvious interest in more modern dance music is immediately evident in his

⁸² Although Ilián showed me this guajeo a number of times, I was not able to even be sure of where the pulse was until listening back to it for hours on headphones!

playing style. To local listeners, he is instantly recognizable as a member of the younger generation and a fan of timba.

Ignacio Richard and Septeto Machín

June 23rd, 2004, Havana.

In my first week in Havana, I spoke with Ignacio Richard, director of the newly formed Septeto Antonio Machín. Richard invited me to his home to see some rehearsals of the group several times, but on each occasion, the rehearsal was cancelled or postponed due to power outages or schedule conflicts with the key group members. Fortunately, I was able to record the group at a performance at UNEAC that same week.

Richard told me that he was the director of Septeto Nacional for thirteen years, but had decided to break off from that group in order to perform more interesting repertoire, with a bit more of a modern sound. Along with some other members of Nacional, Richard formed Septeto Antonio Machín.

The modern sound Richard was talking about, however, amounts to little more than the incorporation of an electric bass and some more extended tres solos. Otherwise, the band stays pretty clearly within the son montuno style. Richard, like his contemporary Juan de Marcos González, is a revivalist at heart. Like many musicians of his generation, he was inspired to return to Cuban son by the historic performance of Oscar D'León in 1983.⁸³

⁸³ See chapter 2.

Like Juan de Marcos González' band, Sierra Maestra, Septeto Machín stays close to the aesthetic of son montuno. Their introduction to "Se Quema Pueblo Nuevo" features somewhat simple breaks based on the son clave (example 18).

Something that is quite often found in contemporary septetos is the substitution of vocals for horn parts. In the introduction to the son guaguancó "Ven, Ven, Ven," Septeto Machín performs a stylized version of the guaguancó diana (which in Arsenio Rodríguez' band was normally arranged for three trumpets) in three-part vocal harmony (example 19).

Both of these examples show that Septeto Machín's arrangement concept takes its cues from son montuno rather than classic son. In addition to stylistic similarities, the band's repertoire has all of the formal structure found in Arsenio Rodríguez' compositions, especially in terms of the subsections of the montuno. The following table shows the formal structure of "Ven, ven, ven."

0:00	0:53	1:23	2:33	3:54
Intro	Verse	Montuno	Solo (bongó)	2 nd Coro ("diablo")

Although the section I have labeled "diablo" does not involve a specific pre-composed trumpet line, as in the case of Arsenio Rodríguez' diablos, I argue that this section functions as a diablo, because it incorporates interwoven lines between the vocals and trumpet, and constitutes the climactic moment of the tune.

Rubén Niddetz, the tres player for group, is also a traditionalist. Niddetz won the Encuentro de Treseros competition at the Festival Nacional de Septetos, which indicates that his playing had the swing that Barbarito Torres, one of the judges, and himself a tresero, was looking for. Compared to the other players in the competition, Niddetz' playing is virtuosic but devoid of jazz tropes like the use of major-7th tonic sounds, "ii-V" progressions, and blues scales. Niddetz won the competition over players like César Brito, whose playing belies his greater interest in jazz.

César Brito and Son Soneros

Recorded July 2nd, 2004, Havana.

César Brito, tresero and director of septeto Son Soneros, started as a trombone player in charanga bands. Originally from Matanzas, he made a career of playing in the hotels of nearby Varadero beach, until an operation on his stomach made it difficult for him to use his diaphragm, seriously affecting his trombone playing. While in the hospital, he wrote arrangements, and started to learn the guitar. Later he switched to tres so that he could lead a septet, and he formed Son Soneros with some other musicians on the hotel circuit in Varadero.

César is heavily influenced by jazz, especially guitarist George Benson. His style on the tres definitely reflects this; in his solo performance during the Encuentro de Treseros, he even did a little Benson-style scat, matching the notes of the tres with his voice. Brito told me he felt his approach was not looked upon favorably by the judges at this competition. He was sure that his

use of jazz phrasing and harmonic sensibility (e.g. diminished scales, extended chromaticism) would not sound traditional enough.

It is true that when Brito played with the back-up band for the competition, which played a very basic son accompaniment for each soloist, his playing sounded quite idiosyncratic. But when I had the opportunity to hear his group Son Soneros at a rehearsal downtown I could see where his approach was going.

Son Soneros was perhaps the most eclectic sounding group I heard all summer. My first impression was that these were energetic young musicians eager to make their mark as a highly original, different-sounding septeto.

Brito, in his late thirties, is by far the oldest of the group, who are all in their twenties. Trumpeter Joaquín is the youngest, having just graduated from the university. Brito writes all the arrangements and, in rehearsal, he is definitely in control. He bounds around the stage, cuing dynamics, breaks, and coros, then bounding back to center stage for a George Benson-style tres lick. The arrangements are extremely tight, and make use of jazz harmonies, Tower of Power-style breaks, as well as a range of Cuban dance styles. The mambo section in “Me Quedé Con Juana” shows the use of a tonic major-7th sound, and Brito’s proclivity for blues scales in the trumpet line (example 20). Note also the use of a ii-V progression to reach the bVI chord in this example. Although “ii-V” progressions are occasionally found in contemporary son, this approach to a non-tonic or relative major chord sounds particularly jazz-

influenced. The phrase itself is also a bit surprising, since the phrase is finished by the vocals and ends on the bVI rather than the tonic minor.

The use of blues scales is also heard in the background trumpet parts on “Saca La Mano, Antonio” (example 21). Here the trumpet background parts, which in other bands might be left to the trumpet player to improvise, are through-composed like in salsa and jazz big-band arrangements.

Like Septeto Machín, Son Soneros also uses vocals in place of horns, as in the bridge of the same song (example 22). I also note the use of dynamics in the vocal part at measure 63, as well as the chord, which incorporates the 3rd, major-7th, and major-6th of the IV-chord, an interesting harmonic change.

This section also shows Brito’s penchant for complex arrangements: the first iteration of the coro line by Julia, the lead singer, is accompanied by a highly syncopated unison line in the bass and tres, followed by the entrance of the coro, the sforzando at measure 63, which is then followed by yet another syncopated unison line begun instrumentally and answered by the chorus. The actual montuno does not start until the end of this example, so the whole 28-bar segment functions as an introduction to the first estribillo.⁸⁴

“Saca La Mano, Antonio” also includes a number of changes in rhythmic texture, including a section that quotes the melody and typical

⁸⁴ I note the sforzando here as a creative use of dynamics, since the dynamic range in contemporary son typically follows the form of the tune. Bands tend to increase in volume during the montuno, pulling back a bit for the solo, and then cranking up to full blast for the end of the montuno.

rhythm of “Mozambique No. 1,” by Pedro “Pello el Afrokán” Izquierdo. Mozambique is a variation of comparsa style rhythms played at carnival time, invented by Izquierdo in the 1960s (Moore 2005: 9).⁸⁵ Example 23a shows a sketch of rhythms performed in a typical mozambique percussion ensemble, followed by a transcription of Son Soneros’ Mozambique quote (“Mozambique #1” can be heard on CD track 19). The rhythms played by Rosa, Son Soneros’ bongocera, loosely mimic the overall sound of mozambique. Like José Graciela from Cuarteto Rumí, Rosa plays with a bongó stand, allowing her to play bell and skins at the same time.

Although Brito writes all of the arrangements, he is not the only one interested in jazz and R&B. Lead singer Julia gets a chance to show off her R&B vocal style in “Ahora Te Pido, Sonero.” Example 24 shows one of her scat-style soneos.

When I saw them rehearse in Old Havana, the band was pumped up for their Havana debut. All but the trumpet player regularly play together in hotels near Varadero, so they are seasoned players, but I could tell that coming to the capital was an important event for them. Floored by the creativity and vitality of their arrangements, I asked whether or not they got a chance to play these tunes for tourists in Varadero.

⁸⁵ See Moore (2005, Chapter 6) for a discussion on Izquierdo and the widespread influence of mozambique in the 1960s.

Yeah, yeah, from time to time. A lot of times, the tourists want something more well known, “Son de la Loma,” or something like that, and, sure, we play that too. We have an arrangement of “Son de la Loma” that’s on fire, really! But we play our thing from time to time (Brito, interview).

I asked the bandmembers if they thought it was easier to get gigs since they were a septet (and thus a “traditional music” group), and they all nodded agreement. They were upbeat about these circumstances. Because they enjoyed playing in a septet, they were glad to be able to get gigs, even though not all of them were avid dance music listeners.

Joaquín, the trumpet player, later confessed to me that at the beginning he was not so sure about joining a son band. His friends, who, like him, mostly listen to rap groups, gave him a hard time. But the success of the band, especially its invitation to a national festival, had shut them up. He told me that now he was pretty excited about son, and felt like he could continue to play in bands like this professionally if the opportunity arose.

None of the members of the group are full-time professional musicians. Each works another job, and rehearse nightly in Matanzas at Brito’s mother’s house. Although the group is officially a professional group, represented by Empresa Ignacio Piñero, they have not worked enough to be entitled to a full-time pay schedule.

I met several other musicians in Havana who shared Son Sonero's enthusiasm for jazz. Ángel Luís "Sinsonte" Balmaseda, the lead singer for a Septeto called Jelengue, told me,

Oh yeah! Stevie Wonder, Lionel Ritchie, Earth Wind & Fire, Tower of Power, George Benson! Everything, that's what I like. I'm only a sonero at the moment that I start singing! (Balmaseda, interview).

Ramón Castro, a left-handed tresero from Trinidad, had a flashy, over-the-top style that reminded me of César Brito, but he did not play much in the way of a tumbao. Instead, he frequently left the tumbao to "comp" like a jazz guitar player would.

He proudly proclaimed himself a completely self-taught musician, having learned the tres, the piano, and the accordion solely with the help of Chick Corea method books. Of all the treseros I spoke with on my trip, he was the most vocal about his disdain for what he called "tourist songs,"⁸⁶ saying that if he could, he would much rather play *filin* or ballads with "American harmonies."

⁸⁶ "Canciones de turista."

Santiago de Cuba

Son Diamante

Recorded July 30th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba.

In Santiago I heard markedly fewer traces of jazz and American harmonies, but the impact of timba was evident in many groups. The following excerpt comes from a 15-minute jam on “Lágrimas Negras,” and features a bomba-style break similar to the one played by Cuarteto Rumí back in Havana (example 25).

I had the opportunity to attend a recording session with Son Diamante, where the group was in the process of recording their fourth album. They have been lucky enough to be invited to tour in Europe a number of times, and were able to pay a local musician for the use of his home studio for the recording sessions.

I spoke with bass player José Luis, who told me that his first experience playing around Santiago was in the backup band of a vocal ensemble, performing jazz, R&B, and soul-influenced material. The group broke up, and José Luis formed Son Diamante with some other Santiagueros, all of whom are under the age of thirty, in 1997. They told me that bomba-style breaks started showing up in septetos in Santiago about five years ago, when they were already standard in timba bands.

Las Perlas del Son

Recorded July 26th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba.

Las Perlas del Son, who perform five days a week at a relatively new venue called Patio Artex, have gained national recognition as one of the only all-female septetos. The group was founded in 1995 by bassist Rosa María López, who was at the time the only experienced musician of the group. The other members left jobs as school teachers, lawyers, and actresses, to become members of the group, which they built from the ground up.

Now the group is in its fourth generation of players, as earlier members left to pursue family, career, or even a life outside of Cuba. The group has become something of a launch pad for local women looking for opportunities to make dollars and get the opportunity to travel. All of the current members, with the exception of Rosa María and the bongocera (María) learned their instruments in the context of group, under the instruction of Rosa María and other senior members.

Perlas has been fortunate enough to tour Europe, Mexico, and Australia, where they have wowed audiences with their charismatic stage presence, choreography, and tight arrangements of son classics by Miguel Matamoros, Francisco Repilado, and Sindo Garay, to name a few.

The arrangements seem perfectly tailored to performances for foreign audiences. Although the repertoire is strongly rooted in the works of prominent Santiagueros, the band performs almost everything at lightning

tempos. Many tunes have tempo changes and double time sections, making them fun for listening, but difficult for dancing.

The signature sound of Perlas lies in their vocal arrangements. Since one of the original members was a secondary school choral director, her knowledge was applied generously to the standards that would become the group's mainstays. In their arrangement of the tune "El Que Siembra Su Maíz," they create a vocal substitute for the mambo or diablo that obviously stems from Western choral writing (example 26).

Rosa María, who handles the instrumental side of the arrangements, frequently uses changes in tempo or groove to add excitement to these tunes, many of which are being played up and down the block by countless tourist-oriented bands. She told me that she immediately saw the need to do something different, and this has typically taken the form of unexpected turns in the song structure; sometimes songs speed up or slow down, change meter, or drop out to just the voices. Example 27, the introduction to "Sabor a Caney," shows a few examples from Rosa María's bag of tricks. It starts slow, but goes to double-time at the entrance of the voices. The instruments drop out, foregrounding the close harmonies in the vocals.

This example reveals Perlas del Son's loyalty to classic styles as well. In this and a number of other arrangements, slower sections of the tune use a much more classic groove. The tres plays the melody and the bass sticks to a straight bolero pattern (see above). Although the group's arrangements offer some refreshing twists on these standards, they stay away from overly

modern harmonies. The example here is dissonant, but not in the same way that Son Soneros used dissonance. There are no jazz inflected vocals or major-7th tonic sounds to be found here.

This is not to say that the group's sound is completely disconnected from contemporary styles. Rosa María confesses to being a long-time fan of salsero Rubén Blades, and the group's incorporation of one of his well-known coros into their arrangement of "El Que Siembra Su Maíz" is proof (example 28; the coro from Blades original tune, "Pedro Navaja," can be heard on CD track 24).

Moneda Nacional

Recorded July 1st, 2004, Havana.⁸⁷

Moneda Nacional was the winner of the Festival de Septetos in Havana. Its sound is much more stylistically conservative than some of the other groups that competed, in that it does not stray too far from son montuno form or use any jazz or timba riffs, but it also would never be confused for a classic son group, either. Although it does make occasional reference to classic son in its arrangements, it is the quintessential contemporary septeto: very solid, very energetic, and extremely swinging.

Of the groups that I analyze here, Moneda Nacional is the only one to incorporate a tumbadora in the ensemble. This element is immediately

⁸⁷ I recorded Moneda Nacional a number of times in Santiago as well, but the clearest recording is of their performance at the Festival Nacional de Septetos, in Havana.

noticeable in the overall groove of the group, making the percussion sound much fuller and more “macho,” as Cubans would describe it. The inclusion of the tumbadora is not unique to Moneda Nacional, however. Many groups prefer to include an extra percussion instrument at the expense of the claves or the trumpet. Moneda Nacional uses a flute instead of trumpet, and the flautista plays claves when the arrangement does not call for flute.

After seeing them at the festival in Havana, I caught up with the group a few weeks later in Santiago, at their regular gig playing the café of Hotel Casa Granda. Daniel Cos, the tresero, showed me that the key to his tres sound was a very strong right-hand technique. Rather than trying to play piano-style montuno patterns like Ilián Torres, he sticks to relatively simple 2-bar patterns but fills them in with continuous double-picking (example 29). Unlike Félix Godón, Cos’ style is much more even, giving his montuno the sound of continuous eighth-notes. This contributes to the band’s rock-solid swing, since the tres, tumbadora, guitar, and maracas all effectively play continuous eighth-note patterns.

Cos is one of few treseros I met who tunes his tres like the highest three strings of a guitar (gG-bb-Ee, rather than gG-cc-Ee). When he first got interested in learning to play the tres, almost all of the musicians in Santiago were really interested in nueva trova, and everyone was tuning their treses like guitars in order to be able to learn guitar lines from Silvio Rodríguez and Pablo Milanes records. Cos never played much nueva trova himself, but since

that was what was in style, he learned to play the tres in the popular tuning of the moment.

Although Cos, about 60, is the oldest member of Moneda Nacional, he is not the senior musician in terms of his playing experience. His first career was as a high school English teacher, but after the start of the Special Period, it became clear to him that he would never make a decent living on just a teacher's salary. Like many Cubans, Cos' family was forced to seriously take stock during the early nineties. He made the decision to stay and make things work playing music, but half of his family, including his daughter, made the decision to move with relatives to Miami.

Tony, the lead singer, although a good 30 years Cos' junior, has had much more experience singing in dance bands. Before the Special Period, he sang in a big charanga band that played regularly across the country and on television. He told me that a lot of his friends, all of whom had graduated from conservatories, had a hard time getting used to the idea that smaller traditional bands could make more money, since they had always looked down on son and trova as being "música inculta" (uneducated music).

Nowadays, the competition in Santiago is fierce. Despite having won the Festival de Septetos, Moneda Nacional is still an underdog in Santiago. More successful bands, like Septeto Naborí and Son Diamante have been able to get contracts touring abroad, and were not interested in traveling all the way to Havana to perform for free (the prize for the Festival was a handmade guitar – a valuable prize for many musicians, but not much in comparison

with a European tour). When I spoke with Daniel and Tony, they told me that a plan to tour Sweden was “under discussion,” but it seemed clear that they were not confident at all about the chances of it working out.

Still, the band has an incredible swing, even compared to Son Diamante, and while its sound may not be as eclectic as that of Son Soneros, the arrangements make good use of all the band’s resources. Like other groups, Moneda Nacional uses the voices to substitute for horns, as in the introduction to “Si No Te Veá” (example 30).

This use of voices is similar to that of Septeto Machín, but Moneda Nacional is a bit more swinging. As Washburne (1998: 171) points out, adhering too closely to the clave can cause a phrase to lose its “rhythmic vitality.” Septeto Machín’s introductions are constructed fairly literally on the clave (see example 18), while Moneda Nacional’s introduction to “Si No Te Veá” (example 30) creates rhythmic tension by layering the straight rhythm of the vocal harmony, the anticipated bass pedal, and the flute melody against the clave. This tension is finally released in measure 5, when the bongocero switches to the bell, and the tres joins the flute in a unison line that emphasizes the clave.

Having a tumbadora in the band enables Moneda Nacional to more gracefully incorporate guaguancó elements. Later in “Si No Te Veá,” the bass and tumbadora briefly switch to the guaguancó “composite melody” (see earlier in this chapter). The change occurs for only a few bars, but creates a noticeable rhythmic shift (example 31).

Like Las Perlas del Son, the members of Moneda Nacional feel a sense of pride and responsibility toward traditional son. Although the overall swing of the band is very contemporary, with songs performed at fast tempos and arrangements that echo larger dance bands, the band also incorporates elements of classic son. “La Raya Rumbero” starts with a standard break like the one heard on “Caballeros, Silencio,” by Sexteto Habanero (example 32; also see example 3b).

This is a good example of the way Moneda Nacional can simultaneously sound very traditional and very inventive at the same time. Its sound on “La Raya Rumbero” is very fast, energetic, and swinging, and its use of vocals to substitute horn lines recalls the big conjuntos and charangas of the 1950s. But at the same time it incorporates a very common classic son break. Later in the same tune, a classic-style legato vocal passage is combined with a guaguancó diana played by the flute (example 33).

These combinations are fairly common in contemporary septetos. In general, as with both Septeto Machín and Moneda Nacional, septetos freely incorporate familiar melodies, rhythms, and formal structures from son montuno, rumba, and classic son, and do their best to expand the possibilities of their relatively limited format. What sets Moneda Nacional apart from other groups, and what contributed to its success at the festival in Havana, is its fluency with a wide range of Cuban popular music, rather than progressive or innovative arrangement techniques. Because of this, it is a success as a traditional group even though its sound is very contemporary.

Cañambú

Recorded July 30th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba.

As a well known story goes, back in 1940 in the town of San Luis, north of Santiago, one of the Ruíz Boza brothers noticed that the bamboo stalks used to carry water throughout the village made a resonant, hollow sound when dropped. Since none of the villagers could afford musical instruments, building some out of the local *cañambú* (a variety of cane that grows thick and tall all around San Luis) seemed like the next best thing (Cañambú, interview).

It was then that the group called Cañambú was founded, launched by their first regional hit “Cañambú con Los Cinco Hermanos.” Until recently, the group was still led by the last surviving member, Arístides Ruíz Boza, who retired in 2002. The group is currently under the leadership of Andrés Cardona Alemán, who joined the Ruíz Bozas in 1978 and helped bring Cañambú to the attention of national concert organizers. Since then, Cañambú has become something of a legend as the only “all-bamboo” septeto (actually, the tres is really made of wood, but it is coated with a layer of bamboo to match the rest of the band).

The band gets its signature sound from the use of two percussion instruments of Ruíz Boza’s invention, the *bajo percutivo* (percussive bass), and the *bongó cañambú* (cane bongó). The bajo percutivo consists of a 6-foot piece of hollowed cane tied to two shorter pieces. It is played by simply dropping it on the ground, which produces a resonant thud. The lengths of cane are very

precisely cut, and the group members told me that the three tones produced approximate an A major triad (although in performance these pitches are not clearly audible).

The bongó cañambú consists of two small pieces of the same type of cane cut in two different lengths, which the player strikes against a wooden stool. These are also very specifically cut to mimic the sounds of the macho and hembra heads of a normal bongó.

The use of bamboo stalks of differing lengths as percussion instruments is not without precedent. The 'Are'are people of the Solomon Islands use bamboo stamping tubes to create complex polyrhythmic textures (see 'Are'are 1997, in discography). Cañambú's founders may have been influenced by Trinidadian Tamboo Bamboo bands, the precursors to steel drum bands, which were popular in Trinidad until around the 1920s (Brown 1990: 87-92; see Various Artists 1956 in discography).

The recordings here are from the Cañambú's steady gig at Casa de Las Tradiciones, a small venue in the famous Tivolí neighborhood of Santiago. When I first arrived, the lead singer, Ramón Suárez, proudly announced to the mostly tourist crowd: "This is Cañambú, the *real* Cuban son!"⁸⁸

When I was able to interview the bandmembers a few days later, they told me that they were committed to playing their music as it has always been played. Cardona, the director, told me he has not changed the repertoire very

⁸⁸ "¡Esto es Cañambú, el verdadero son Cubano!"

much in the 28 years that he has been playing with the group, because he does not want to lose the “essence, the special stamp (*sello*)” of the group’s sound (Cañambú, interview). They scoffed at the other so-called “traditional” groups who play around Santiago.

The problem is... for example, in the center of town there, two septetos might play and you can’t tell which is Juan and which is Pedro! Why? Because they’re all playing the same thing! (Ramón Suárez, Cañambú interview)⁸⁹

We see everyday how these other groups play, and it’s basically popular [contemporary] music...They’re forgetting a little bit what the *essence* of the tradition, the roots... We don’t want to lose that (Andrés Cardona Alemán, *ibid.*)⁹⁰

These other groups, they play a lot of stuff mixed together. Our thing is much simpler, much more natural. This son smells of palm trees, of sugar cane, of grass, of the mountains. This is our son (*ibid.*)⁹¹

⁸⁹ “El problema es que...por ejemplo, en el centro del pueblo allá, tocan dos septetos, y tú no sabes cual es Juan y cual es Pedro, ¿por qué? Porque están tocando lo mismo!”

⁹⁰ “Nosotros lo vemos diario, como los demás grupos hacen su música, que casi ya es popular...Se olvida un poco de lo que es la *esencia* de lo tradicional, de la raíz...Nosotros no queremos perder eso.” Italics represent emphasis on the part of the interviewee.

⁹¹ “Esos otros grupos hacen mucha bomba, mucha fusión, mucha mezcla. Lo nuestro es mucho más sencillo, muy natural...Este son huele a palma, a caña, a hierba, a monte. Este son es de nosotros.”

I was not surprised by this attitude, having heard the group. Its style is very close to classic son, incorporating repertoire from classic recordings, classic tres guajeos, and even singing like the classic singers. I was struck by how much Ramón Suárez sounds like Abelardo Barroso, with his high, nasal vocal timbre.

Rather than sticking to the tried and true list of tourist songs, Cañambú sticks to tunes written by original members of the band, and songs by classic septetos like Nacional and Habanero, many of which are even considered a bit esoteric by Cuban standards. I was surprised to hear a quite faithful rendition of Sexteto Habanero's tune "Aquella Boca," including the standard tres intro in the classic style (example 34). The rest of the tune follows the same form as the original, and remains at a comparable tempo as well.

Suárez explained to me that the group feels a responsibility to preserve the works of composers who, despite having profoundly influenced Cuban son in its early years, are for whatever reason not being performed anymore. In this regard, Cañambú could be described as representatives of a "residual tradition," (Williams 1977: 120), whose cultural values were at one time connected to dominant cultural forms but are now marginalized.

While the group occasionally takes a request from audience members, Cardona expressed his weariness for this sort of thing:

Let me tell you: we play mostly in hotels, and tourists will come up and say [in a high-pitched voice] 'What about "Son de La Loma"?

What about Chan Chan?' because they always come from Havana first, toward Oriente, all along hearing all the groups play all the same things! When we play, people clap and dance, and really have a good time!⁹²

The group's sound, which they call *son campestre* (country son), makes a good case for the popular theories suggesting son's descendance from changüí.⁹³ The bajo percutivo plays on the last quartet note of every measure, like a marímbula, and on certain faster tunes, the bongó cañambú seems to imitate the *despedida* pattern played at the end of changüí compositions (example 35).⁹⁴

Manuel Alemán's bongó cañambú style is very similar to changüí styles, just like Sexteto Habanero's first bongocero "El Chino" Incharte (see above). Over the years, the group has learned to use Alemán's flashy playing style to their advantage, featuring at least two raging solos in each set

⁹² "Déjame decirte que, nosotros tocamos en hoteles, y viene el turista y dice 'Y el "Son de la Loma"? Y el "Chan Chan"? porque siempre vienen desde la Habana, hacía Oriente, ¡oyendo los mismos y todos grupos con la misma cosa! Cuando nosotros tocamos, la gente aplauda y baila, ¡y gozan bien!

⁹³ Lapidus (2002) notes that local accounts of traditional music are often very linear, tracing the emergence of son from older styles, such as *nengón* and *kiribá*, by way of changüí. As noted earlier, similarities are found in the fluid playing style of early son bongoceros. Lapidus also suggests that the classic tres intro might be a simplified version of the *paso de calle*, an arpeggiated pattern in the tres that signals the entrance of vocals in changüí.

⁹⁴ See Lapidus (2002) for detailed transcriptions of changüí performance styles.

(example 36). Alemán has a whole routine worked out, starting the solo on the top and sides of his wooden stool, and then moving to the dance floor, where, surrounded by dozens of cheering tourists, he plays on his back while hitting the canes against the tile floor. This is usually a very effective routine, and typically after a solo Suárez will take the opportunity to remind the crowd about Cañambú's CD.⁹⁵

For all of the group's revivalist rhetoric, however, it is interesting to note that after 64 years in existence, the group added a standard double bass and the occasional use of a standard bongó only in 1993. In Cardona's words, this was to give the group a "stronger, more perfect sound" (Cañambú interview).⁹⁶ Cardona felt that the addition of a double bass in particular would give them more flexibility in terms of what keys and what kind of chord progressions they could play (since the bajo percutivo only plays an A-major chord), but one wonders why the group waited more than fifty years to make this change. The year, 1993, corresponding with the legalization of the dollar and the beginning of the tourist boom, suggests to me that Cardona might have made the change in order to make the group more tourist friendly, enabling them to play at least the occasional request for "Chan Chan" (which they did eventually play the night that I saw them). However, this was never confirmed by any of the group members.

⁹⁵ See photos 9 and 10 in Appendix B.

⁹⁶ "...un timbre más fuerte, una sonoridad más perfecta."

Conclusion

The groups analyzed here were chosen to highlight both the great variety and the common characteristics of many groups I encountered over the course of my fieldwork. I stress that all of the groups I encountered, including those discussed here, as well as others like Estrellas del Son and Innova (discussed in Chapter 1), strive to develop their unique *sello* (stamp) in order to stand out in incredibly competitive environments.

However, as these analyses show, there are definite regional identities at work in the performance styles of these groups. In Havana, young players like José Graciela and Ilián Torres take generous helpings of timba, while Son Soneros create a new style of son-R&B fusion. Even fairly straight-ahead son montuno groups like Septeto Machín employ a rhetoric of modernity when talking about their approach to the music.

In Santiago, musicians are no less creative and competitive than in Havana, but their aesthetic has a marked “sonero” stamp. While the use of bomba breaks seems inevitable, given the overwhelming popularity of timba, jazz influences are fewer and farther between. Although bands like Moneda Nacional and Las Perlas del Son draw from a wide range of styles, they are more consciously emphasizing the *cubanía* (roughly “cubanness”) of their sound, turning to rumba, classic son, and even Western choral writing, rather than jazz, for inspiration. Meanwhile, groups like Cañambú hope that their claims of lineage and authenticity will give them an edge in the increasingly competitive tourist market.

The economic crisis in Cuba has radically affected performance styles, both through the simple addition of a wider range of musicians to the field, and through stylistic choices made by musicians to address issues of authenticity and identity. Musical sound is thus inherently connected to larger social and economic factors, and can be used as a lens through which to view the larger social context.

Conclusion

Style and Tradition

Stylistic choices made by musicians reflect larger social changes brought on by tourism and negotiate notions of identity and tradition for internal as well as external audiences. As musicians have become the new elite class, with better pay and opportunities to travel abroad, competition among musicians has intensified and more musicians have turned to traditional son as a way to gain access to tourist dollars. Still employed through the empresa system, bands must conform to local (empresa) as well as tourist expectations of traditional music, while attempting to create a unique sound that will set them apart from other groups. The centralization of tourism around Havana brings regional tensions to the forefront; Santiago groups feel that they are more closely related to “traditional” son, and often express this musically through stylistic choices.

Williams (1977: 114-16) suggests that in any given culture, there are a number of competing “meanings and practices” which are recognized or dismissed according to a particular hegemony. Tradition serves contemporary culture, offering historical evidence in support of dominant norms or values.

This definition of tradition can be applied to Cuban son, in that stylistic analysis reveals son to consist of not one tradition, but a number of

traditions, often in competition with each other. Groups like Son Soneros follow son's tradition of infinite flexibility, adapting a variety of musical vocabulary in much the same way as early son groups adapted the use of the trumpet from American jazz. Meanwhile, the members of Cañambú follow the tradition of son as a simple, natural, country music that "smells of palm trees, of sugar cane" (Cañambú, interview).

The connection to contemporary culture is clear, as accurate imitation of older groups is not the most prized feature of "traditional" septetos. Moneda Nacional won the Festival Nacional de Septetos not because they sound like early Sexteto Habanero recordings, but because of their fluency with a number of national styles including classic son, son montuno, and guaguancó. Moneda Nacional, as the winning septeto, represents the dominant tradition according to contemporary local listeners.

Sonic icons or identifiers like those associated with the classic son of Septeto Nacional and Septeto Habanero, provide, as Williams (*ibid.*: 115) suggests, historical evidence in support of contemporary norms. The *doblando* technique of Félix Godón and the standard *arpeggio tres intro* used by Cañambú identify the performers as older and more "authentic." Moneda Nacional also incorporates similar elements, so that even though their overall sound bears little resemblance to that of Septeto Nacional or Sexteto Habanero, they are identifiable as a traditional group.

Contemporary son (i.e. the dominant tradition) actually draws from various different styles, rather than just classic son. Many groups, such as

Septeto Machín, Moneda Nacional, and Perlas del Son, use formal structures and rhythmic or harmonic elements reminiscent of Arsenio Rodríguez' son montuno sound from the 1940s and '50s. Bands frequently use harmonized vocal passages to simulate horn lines associated with this style as well.

Moneda Nacional and Septeto Machín both sing a stylized *diana* and incorporate rhythmic elements from guaguancó, whose presence has been felt in son throughout its recorded history.

Many musicians performing in traditional groups today began their musical careers with only casual interest in traditional music. Tony, the lead singer for Moneda Nacional, made his living during the 1980s as the lead singer for a popular charanga band, playing música bailable (i.e. "salsa"). José Graciela, of Cuarteto Rumí, and the players in Félix Godón's trio have had similar experiences. Countless younger musicians like Ilián Torres hoped to join bigger bands or more forward-thinking musical projects, but have found themselves filling the ranks of septetos instead. Inevitably, they bring their aesthetics to the bandstand, playing a kind of *son timbeao* ("timba-fied son") on traditional instruments like the tres and the bongó instead of the drumset and the synthesizer.

These stylistic choices reflect greater economic and social changes brought on by tourism. The fact that a growing number of musicians from a variety of backgrounds are bringing their musical ideas to septetos is a direct result of the economic fallout of the Special Period and the subsequent growth of tourism.

Economic and Social Changes

After the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba lost nearly 85% of its foreign trade. The early nineties saw widespread food shortages, water rationing, large-scale blackouts, and transportation crises. Tourism became the main hope for generating much-needed revenue, especially after the U.S. dollar was legalized in 1993 (Pozo Fernández 1993: 5; Moore 2005: 343).

The dual peso-and-dollar economy has had a dramatic impact on the lives of all Cubans. Although black market trade in dollars for commodity items had existed for many years, the legalization of the dollar and the opening of dollar stores (which sell basic manufactured goods including household items, clothes, and food in dollars) made access to dollars a crucial part of survival for many citizens. As noted in Chapter 1, most Cubans today have some alternate source of income, most commonly in the form of remittances from relatives living in Miami or elsewhere. Those unlucky enough to be forced to survive only on their salaries live far less comfortably than those with access to dollars, stretching food rations to their limits, never indulging in even the smallest luxuries, and with little hope of improvement.

As the Cuban government has increasingly viewed music as a valuable export commodity, Cuban musicians have become one of the few groups allowed to travel abroad (Perna 2001: 80). In this sense, musicians have become a new elite class, despite the fact that only a handful reach real success as international touring artists. Still, many leave jobs as teachers,

doctors, or lawyers to become musicians, like the members of Las Perlas del Son and Daniel Cos from Moneda Nacional.

The musical apartheid created by the newly established venues charging five- and ten-dollar entrance fees has had its effect on musicians as well. Performers are increasingly aware of the discrepancy between their peso earnings and the gross income of the venue, and *empresas* have become little more than taxing agencies. Performers who generate dollars for tourist clubs on the island still receive payment in pesos, while international touring artists have now been allowed to accept almost all of the money they earn in foreign currency, which contributes to the feeling among musicians that the *empresas* are hurting rather than helping musicians (Balmaseda, interview; Moore 2005: 155).

Beyond this, the practical concerns such as those expressed by Joaquín Leyva and Andrés Santor further stratify the music industry. The large public amphitheaters on the outskirts of town have become the accepted venues for local timba and salsa, while more intimate settings like *café*s and hotel gardens in the tourist centers are reserved for septetos and smaller son bands. Thus, while timba bands might enjoy great local popularity, they will rarely make more than the likes of Félix Godón or José Graciela, who regularly make tips in dollars even if the *café* is almost empty.

The music community is further stratified by the international success of the BVSC. The album's surprise success has propelled a handful of retirees to stardom and unimaginable wealth. The sense that it could have happened

to anyone holding a guitar and standing on the right street corner is pervasive. Some, like American rockers who play for free in bars in the hopes of being “discovered,” feel that if they work hard enough, they could easily become the next Ibrahim Ferrer. Others, like “Sinsonte” Balmaseda, are frustrated by the inequities and the seemingly haphazard nature of commercial success. Regardless of their attitudes, many percussionists have sharpened up their bongó skills, while guitar players have switched to playing tres. Playing in a son band is the surest way to make a few extra dollars at the end of the week, and a little bit goes a long way.

The impact of tourism has hardly been even across the country. While Varadero beach and Old Havana have been transformed into tourist havens, complete with tour packages, cabaret shows, five-star hotels, and music on every corner, many other regions have been literally left in the dust. Viñales, a scenic village in the western province of Pinar del Río, has become an international backpacker stop; food and other goods and services are sold exclusively in dollars, and at international market prices. Meanwhile, in the neighboring town of Minas de Matahambre, what little food there is at the local cantina can be had for 10 pesos per person.

The Importance of Regional Identity

Cuba’s tourist industry is centered around Havana and Varadero beach, in the western part of the island. Although Pozo Fernández (1993) includes Santiago de Cuba as another site of developing tourism, it remains clear that most tourist trips start and end in Havana. In 2004, Varadero was

one of the only tourist areas that accepted euros as well as dollars, and Varadero and Havana combined have at least three times the number of hotels as Santiago, Cuba's second largest city (*Cubatrazel* 2005). As Andrés Cardona of Cañambú explained, all the tourists arrive in Santiago or other parts of Oriente already sick of hearing the same songs, since they've all started in Havana (Cañambú, interview).

The sense that Havana has become the center of tourist income has made regional identity in music more than a simple point of pride. In the eyes of Santiagueros, tourists seeking traditional music should start in Santiago, not Havana. Greater recognition of Oriente-style son could bring a greater tourist crowd and bolster the economy of Santiago.

As both the interview material and the stylistic analysis confirm, regional differences in son styles are of central importance to musicians. The hegemonic centrality of Havana, both in cultural and economic terms, is frequently contested by musicians in Santiago. Although Oriente is rhetorically credited as the son capital of Cuba, Orientales with ambitions of greater national and international success, such as Adalberto Álvarez, have had to move to Havana. Musicians in Oriente complain that most of the hit bands are led by Orientales, but their successes in Havana mark them for the world as Habaneros (Palacios, interview; Moneda Nacional, interview).

Regional and class identities (i.e. *de monte*, a player who is "from the mountains") are defended by musicians who feel they have a greater connection to and understanding of son than the countless university

graduates who have reluctantly turned to the genre in recent years. Treseros like Godón and Cos use techniques such as *doblando* and eschew more modern, jazz-influenced styles to assert their authenticity as traditional players.

Meanwhile, *Habaneros* acknowledge their debt to *Oriente*, but feel that the tradition of *son* has been to expand and incorporate other musical styles (Balmaseda, interview; Brito, interview). For them, the Havana sound is a cosmopolitan, “modern” sound. In this sense, their aesthetic approach to *son* is much closer to that of *timba* bands like *La Charanga Habanera*, embracing a wide range of musical styles.

The competition among several different traditions has real significance in tourist contexts, since it is through approval in the eyes of tourists that most groups make their bread and butter. If a certain style is established as the most recognizably authentic to tourists, bands able to perform in that style will stand to improve their quality of living immensely. In the meantime, *empresas* make decisions about what styles to promote through national competitions like the *Festival Nacional de Septetos*; the winners represent the judges’ and the *empresas*’ notions of market-worthy traditional *son*.

Internal and External Audiences

Identifying the criteria by which different audiences judge musical performance highlights the complex nature of musical interaction in tourist settings. Performers who stick too closely to traditional styles might not stand

out enough from the competition, while those who sound too “modern” might be rejected by the local empresa and not even get a chance to perform.

Finite stylistic differences such as those mentioned above and in Chapter 4 might not be generally recognized by tourists. In this sense, they form an iconic communication reserved for internal audiences. For example, most Cubans, whether or not they have been to a traditional rumba performance, will recognize rumba elements like the guaguancó clave, the composite melody of the tumbadoras, and the diana. They will also recognize references to contemporary styles, like bomba-style breaks or elaborate guajeos that make the tres sound like a piano. Those interested in music might also recognize regionally specific elements, like the doblando picking style of the tresero.

The empresas form a part of the local audience that serves as a crucial intermediary between tourists and musicians. The attitudes of the local empresa representatives have a great impact on what bands are hired by which venues. As Leyva pointed out, many bands receive official empresa representation, but fewer are offered to the non-musical hiring agencies (like hotels, tourist agencies, etc.) as fit for tourist consumption.

Much of the time, according to Leyva and Santor, empresas are bound by practical considerations. But what about the decisions between groups who perform in identical formats but in extremely different styles? According to Santor, “years of experience” indicates that tourists prefer “traditional” Cuban music (Santor, interview); no doubt empresa officials are just as

subjective in their attitudes about what constitutes good “traditional” son as are the other members of the local audience. Even though tourists might not distinguish between a band that sounds very “Santiaguero” or very “Habanero,” their choices are limited, to some degree, by listeners who do make those distinctions.

National competitions like the one held at the Festival Nacional de Septetos are instances in which these distinctions are made very clear. The host of the festival, Havana’s Empresa Ignacio Piñeiro, named Moneda Nacional the winners, implicitly supporting a more conservative interpretation of son than that heard in the groups of Ilián Torres, César Brito, and “Sinsonte” Balmaseda. For some Santiagueros, Moneda Nacional’s win constitutes a victory for the whole region. Others might view it more skeptically, since Moneda Nacional is much more of a contemporary sounding group than Cañambú or even Septeto Machín. Nonetheless, the statement made by the empresa is clear: Moneda Nacional’s sound is the sound it will sell to tourists.

Tourists arrive mostly oblivious to this internal conflict. Except for the most die-hard aficionados, most tourists’ expectations are probably molded by World Music networks. Compilations like those marketed by *Putumayo*, *Luaka Bop*, and *World Circuit Records* form the foundation of tourists’ preliminary experiences with Cuban music.

Thousands arrive in Havana and request their favorite traditional Cuban number, “Chan Chan,” from the trio on the corner, the band at the

hotel café, and everyone in between. The BVSC still stands as an icon of Cuban son, and informs tourists' notions of authenticity. As noted in Chapter 1, these expectations on the part of tourists have real consequences for musicians, and support a narrow definition of traditional music that is not universally held by musicians or local, internal audiences.

However, tourists' tastes are often far more eclectic than what's expected of them by the likes of Andrés Santor. As Yurina Martínez Galán of EGREM Santiago pointed out, the best paying groups were often just as likely salsa and timba bands as son groups. While Santor may be right to assume that tourists like traditional son, he goes too far in the assumption that they might dislike other styles.

The lack of communication among musicians, tourists, and employers seems consistent with similar problems faced for decades by EGREM records. Given the assignment to preserve all Cuban music, EGREM proceeded according to academic values rather than relying on feedback from local and national audiences (Robbins 1990a: 180-85). Obviously, a system of musical production based entirely on market value has its own problems, as musicians and audiences in the U.S. can readily confirm, but its focus on consumers rather than producers seems more appropriate for the tourist industry. As noted in Chapter 1, tourists often have the impression that the Cuban government is targeting only one kind of tourist (the kind that will pay top dollar for luxury accommodations), and the sense that tourists are a

homogeneous group with uniform tastes pervades the tourist music performance as well.

Tourist Songs: The Importance of Style

As I have demonstrated, style in traditional Cuban son is of fundamental importance. In interactions with tourists as well as *empresas*, stylistic choices have direct impact on employment opportunities, tips or gifts, and other forms of success. Style also reflects the changing demographic of son performers, as musicians of increasingly varied backgrounds join septetos. This in turn is a direct result of the economic turmoil affecting the lives of all Cubans.

The musicians I interviewed and recorded have many common goals and many common obstacles as well. They share the new experiences of son's sudden re-commoditization in the last ten years. They are all caught between a desire to perform fulfilling, meaningful music, to meet the expectations of multiple internal and external audiences, and to simply survive in a time of hardship. As Cubans performing for tourists, they represent a unique group of performers who have spent decades making music in a socialist system and who must now develop a "commercial sense" (Villafranca, in Quiñones 2003) while continuing to live under socialist rules as well.

Obviously, there is no one strategy that guarantees success for any of these performers. Those who have already fulfilled some of their goals consider themselves lucky, and those who still have work to do hope for a bit of the same luck. For musicians, musical style negotiates national, regional,

and personal identity. Each group strives to develop a *sello* (stamp, or signature sound) that will make them stand out while affirming those aspects of national and local culture that they represent. For the ethnomusicologist, examination of musical style offers the opportunity to discover these negotiations and their impact on the lives of the performers. Jazz harmonies and *doblado* picking technique can reveal some small part of the lives of the musicians who play them.

Future research

This volume represents only a small part of the possibilities for future study of Cuban son in contemporary settings. In the process of writing this, many questions arose that my research could not answer. For instance, it appears in many cases that racial characteristics associated with son are at times present, and at times not. It is possible that old-time son, like U.S. rock-and-roll, has lost its earlier racial character, or that this character has shifted or transformed. Also, issues of gender in son groups are not adequately discussed in this study. Although female figures in Cuban dance music have typically been singers, I met several bass players and bongoceras. Have they found new opportunities or changing gender dynamics as a result of the greater demand for soneros? These questions merit further ethnography.

Also, I feel it necessary to investigate the impacts of the son boom on musicians who perform other genres, such as rock, rap, and jazz. Have they been pushed out of the limelight by the success of BVSC? Do they continue to enjoy popular support? What about support from *empresas*?

This last point brings up another issue: the need for a more thorough analysis of changes in music institutions during the 1990s. Moore (2005) addresses some of these issues, but a thorough study in the vein of Robbins' "Making Popular Music in Cuba" (1990) has yet to be written.

There are many issues worth investigating further. It is my hope that this work will spark interest in continued research in this area, and in the area of music and tourism in general.

Appendix A: Musical Examples

Musical examples transcribed from recordings include measure numbers relative to the entire piece, rather than just the excerpt. Each transcription can be heard on the compact disc accompanying this volume (CD track information can be found in the table of contents as well as in the subheading of each musical example). In the case of sound clips excerpted from longer pieces, two time-readings are noted. The first, found in the subheading of the example, refers to the occurrence of the clip within the original recording. The second time-reading is found under the last staff of each system, and refers to the time relative to the sound clip on the accompanying compact disc.

In bongó and tumbadoras notation, noteheads on lower lines indicate attacks on a second, lower drumhead. Normal noteheads indicate open tones, “x” noteheads represent slaps, and slash noteheads represent notes that are not played as strongly. The bongó bell, when played at the same time as the bongó, is notated above the staff; higher “x” noteheads represent attacks on the closed end of the bell and normal noteheads represent the more resonant open end.

1: José "El Chino" Incharte ("Aquella Boca," Sexteto Habanero 1927)

Tumbao Cuban Classics TCD-009, 2:16-2:30
CD Track #1

♩ = 168

73 F C F

Voice

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

0:01

Ay—

77 F C F

Voice

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

0:06

Ma - rí - a que te ví bai - lan - do bai - lan - do con la puer - ta a bier - ta

1: "Aquella Boca" Cont'd.

81 F C F

Voice

Ma - ri - a que te ví bai - lan - do bai - lan - do con la puer - ta a - bier

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

0:12

2: Introduction to "A La Cuata Co y Co"
(Sexteto Boloña 1926)

Tumbao Cuban Classics TCD-060, 0:00-0:24
CD Track #2

$\text{♩} = 142$

Clave

Tres

0:01
(0:07)

5

0:15

3a: Introduction to "Suavecito" (Septeto Nacional 1930)

Arhoolie Folklyric CD 7003, 0:00-0:12
CD Track #3

1 ♩ = 136

Clave (implied) 

Tres 

3b: Introduction to "Caballeros, Silencio" (Sexteto Habanero 1927)

Tumbao Cuban Classics TCD-009, 0:00-0:13
CD Track #4

1 ♩ = 140

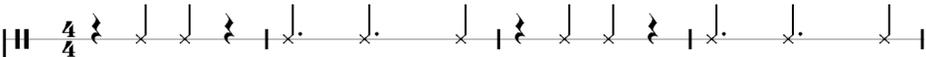
Clave (implied) 

Tres 

3c: Introduction to "Vitico" (Isaac Oviedo 1998)

Rounder Records CD5055, 0:00-0:13
CD Track #5

1 ♩ = 170

Clave (implied) 

Tres 

4: Bass Patterns

Bolero bass pattern C G^7 C
 Tresillo bass pattern
 Anticipated Bass

5: "Alza Los Pies, Congo" (vocal melody) Sexteto Habanero 1928

Harlequin Records HQCD-53, 0:47-1:07
CD Track #6

$\text{♩} = 146$

$\text{♩} = 146$
 27
 el 0:03 ca - be zón_____ el ca - be - zón_____ (0:15)
 31
 no tie - ne com - pa - ra - ción_____ cuan - do yo le bai - lo el son_____ el

6: Bongó martillo and bell patterns

Clave (implied) $\frac{4}{4}$
 Bongó bell (cencerro) $\frac{4}{4}$ closed end of bell open end of bell
 Bongó $\frac{4}{4}$

7: Standard 2-bar piano patterns

Clave

Basic 2-bar pattern

Typical variation

Piano

8: Son and Guaguancó claves

Son clave

Guaguancó clave

9: Composite melody in guaguancó*

Guaguancó clave

Segundo
(middle-pitched drum)

Tumbadora
(lower-pitched drum)

Composite melody

* This pattern is known as "Havana style" guaguancó.
In "Matanzas style," the second tone in the segundo part
is often omitted.

10a: Guaguancó diana ("Mi Arere," Los Muñequitos de Matanzas 1988)

Qbadisc QB-9005, 0:13-0:43
CD Track #7

♩ = 146

17
Clave

Lead singer
(and second voice)

8

a la la la^{0:05} la la la la a la la la

20
T.

8

la la la la_— 0:08

25
T.

8

a la la la^{0:11} la la la la a la la la la la la la la

29
T.

8

0:15

33
T.

8

0:18 a la la_—

Detailed description: The image shows a musical score for a Guaguancó piece. It consists of five systems of music. Each system includes a Clave rhythm line (top) and a vocal line (bottom). The Clave line is marked with 'Clave' and a double bar line. The vocal line is marked with 'Lead singer (and second voice)' or 'T.' (Tenor). The music is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 146 beats per minute. The key signature has four flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat, D-flat). The lyrics are 'a la la la' and 'la la la la'. Time markers are provided for the vocal lines: 0:05, 0:08, 0:11, 0:15, and 0:18. The score starts at measure 17 and ends at measure 33.

10b: Son guaguancó diana ("La Gente del Bronx," Arsenio Rodriguez 1951)

Tumba Cuban Classics TCD-022, 0:00-0:28

CD Track #8

♩ = 152

1

Clave

Trumpets

0:01

5

Fm

0:07

9

B^b7

0:13

13

E^b

0:20

11: Timba piano pattern ("La Bola," Manolín, el Médico de La Salsa 1996)

Ahí-Namá Records CD1002, 0:00-0:33

CD Track #9

♩ = 200

Clave

Piano

0:00
(0:09)
(0:19)

5

0:05
(0:14)
(0:23)

Points where the montuno lines up with the clave are marked with an "x."
An "a" designates a moment of resolution that supports the clave but does not emphasize it strongly (i.e.: a series of straight eighth notes on the 2-side).

12: Bass and vocal unison lines ("La Expresiva," NG La Banda 1990)

Qbadisc QB-9002, 0:00-1:01

CD Track #10

♩ = 184

32

Lead Singer

0:40

Ay, mi ra que bo - ni - ta es - tá ay, pe - ro mi ra que bo - ni - ta es - tá

Piano

Electric Bass

0:40

Clave

Conga

Drum Kit

hi-hat

kick drum

0:40

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins at measure 32. The vocal line is in treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is in grand staff. The electric bass line is in bass clef. The percussion parts include Clave, Conga, and Drum Kit (hi-hat and kick drum). The lyrics are: "Ay, mi ra que bo - ni - ta es - tá ay, pe - ro mi ra que bo - ni - ta es - tá". Chord symbols D⁶ and A⁹ are placed above the vocal line. Time markers "0:40" are placed at the start of the vocal, electric bass, and drum kit staves.

13: Bomba Break ("No Se Puede Tapar El Sol," NG La Banda 1990)

Qbadisc QB-9002, 5:11-5:40

CD Track #11

♩ = 194

252

Lead Singer
And Coro

si tu no bailas con mi - go — Y el sol te da Si tu no medas un

Electric Bass

Clave

Conga

Drum Kit
hi-hat
low tom
kick drum

0:06

257

L.S.

be-si - to ma - mi Y el sol te da O - ye! Si tu no mue

Bs.

C.

Dr.

0:11

14: Félix Godón's solo on "El Traguito" (excerpt)

June 18th, 2004, Havana.

CD Track #12

161 $\text{♩} = 220$

Clave (implied) $\frac{4}{4}$

Tres $\frac{4}{4}$

2:46

165

G

2:51

169

G

2:55

The brackets indicate Godón's phrasing. Beginning at bracket "a," the phrase outlines the 3rd, 7th, and 9th of a D7 chord. Godón resolves to the root, 3rd, and major 6th of the tonic at "b," but the rhythmic tension continues through until "c," when the 3rd falls on the first stroke of the clave.

15: Bomba break in "El Traguito" (Félix Godón)

June 18th, 2004, Havana.

CD Track #12

264 ♩ = 228

Bongó bell

Coro

Tres

Bass

G Am7 D7 G

u- nacer - ve za un dai qui - ri por lo menóun mo - ji - to

4: 37

16: Bomba break in "Harina de Maíz" (Cuarteto Rumí)

June 19th, 2004, Havana.

CD Track #13

124 $\text{♩} = 212$

Coro

Ha - ri na de ma - íz cri - o - lla

Bass

thumping side of bass

Clave (implied)

Bongó

woodblock
low drum
2:24

127

Co.

Ma - yam - be - ro Ha - ri - na de ma íz cri - o - lla

Bs.

Cl.

Bo.

2:27
(2:31)
(2:35)

17: Ilián Torres' guajeo in Dm

June 24th, 2004, Havana, 23:37-24:11.

CD Track #14

1 $\text{♩} = 180$

Clave (implied) $\frac{4}{4}$

Tres

0:02

5

0:07

9

0:11

13

0:16

Brackets indicate terniary phrasing. Points where accents fall on a stroke of the clave are marked "X." Accenting the "and-of-four" before the 3-side of the clave ("a") and playing "straight" (i.e. emphasizing strong beats) on the downbeat of the 2-side ("b") also serve as points of rhythmic release.

18: Introduction to "Se Quema Pueblo Nuevo" (Septeto Machín)

June 23rd, 2004, Havana, 0:00-0:19.
CD Track #15

1 $\text{♩} = 164$

Trumpet

Tres

Electric Bass

Clave

0:02
(0:08)

20: Mambo in "Me Quédé Con Juana" (Son Soneros)

July 2nd, 2004, Havana, 1:49-2:26

CD Track #17

$\text{♩} = 152$

68

Trumpet

Bm E7 Gmaj7 F#7

Voices

0:05 (0:17)

za

Tres

Acoustic Bass

Clave

Bongó

bell (closed)
bell (open)

0:05 (0:17)

73

Tpt.

Am7 D7 Gmaj7 F#7

Voice

0:11 (0:23)

ba da da da

A. Bass

Bongo

0:11 (0:23)

21: Trumpet riffs in "Saca la Mano, Antonio" (Son Soneros)

July 2nd, 2004, Havana.
CD Track #18

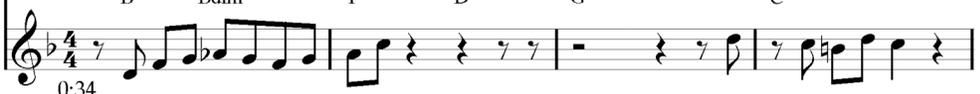
♩ = 190

25

Clave



Trumpet



0:34
(0:52)

B^b Bdim F D⁷ G⁷ C⁷

29

Cl.



Tpt.



0:39
(0:57)

B^b Bdim F D⁷ Gm⁷ C⁷ F

Detailed description: This block contains two musical systems. The first system, labeled '25', features a Clave rhythm (represented by vertical stems with 'x' marks) and a Trumpet riff. The Clave has a 4/4 time signature. The Trumpet riff is in 4/4 time, starting with a quarter rest followed by eighth notes. Chords B^b, Bdim, F, D⁷, G⁷, and C⁷ are indicated below the staff. Time markers 0:34 and (0:52) are shown. The second system, labeled '29', features a Clarinete (Cl.) rhythm and a Trumpet (Tpt.) riff. The Clarinete has a 4/4 time signature. The Trumpet riff is in 4/4 time, starting with eighth notes. Chords B^b, Bdim, F, D⁷, Gm⁷, C⁷, and F are indicated below the staff. Time markers 0:39 and (0:57) are shown.

22: Bridge in "Saca La Mano, Antonio" (Son Soneros)

July 2nd, 2004, Havana, 1:01-1:33

CD Track #18

♩ = 190

47

Trumpet

Lead Singer
And Coro

1:02 (lyrics unintelligible)

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

1:02

Gm⁷ C⁷ F

51

Tpt.

L.S.

1:07 que no es un jue - go yo soy can - de - la

Tr.

Bs.

Cl.

Bo.

1:07

Am⁷ D⁷ Gm⁷ C⁷ F

22: "Saca La Mano, Antonio" cont'd.

55

Tpt.

L.S. 1:12 (lyrics unintelligible)

Tr. Am7 A^bm7 Gm7 C7 Am7

Bs.

Cl.

Bo. 1:12

59

Tpt.

L.S. 1:17 que no es un jue - go Y la ni - ña ¡Can - de

Tr. D7 Gm⁹ C7 Bmaj⁹

Bs.

Cl.

Bo. 1:17

22: "Saca La Mano, Antonio" cont'd.

63

Tpt.

L.S. *sfz* 1:21 *la!* que no es un jue - go

Tr. *sfz*

Bs.

Cl.

Bo. *sfz* 1:21

67

Tpt.

L.S. *sfz* 1:27 y la ni ña can - de - la

Tr. *Gm F#dim C F*

Bs.

Cl.

Bo. 1:27

23a: Mozambique percussion patterns

Transcription courtesy of Robin Moore.

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of four measures. The instruments and their patterns are as follows:

- Guaguancó clave (on bell):** A rhythmic pattern of quarter notes with rests, specifically: quarter rest, quarter note, quarter note, quarter rest.
- 2nd Cowbell:** A pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes with rests, including some notes with 'x' marks indicating specific sounds.
- Lead conga drums:** A pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes, often with 'x' marks.
- Supporting conga drums:** A pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes, often with 'x' marks.
- Bombo (bass drum) #1:** A pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes with rests.
- Bombo #2:** A pattern of quarter notes and eighth notes with rests.

23b: Mozambique quote in "Saca La Mano, Antonio" (Son Soneros)

July 2nd, 2004, Havana.

CD Track #18

♩ = 196

165

Trumpet

Coro

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

bell (closed)
bell (open)

3:26
(3:37)
(3:46)

¡Mo - zam - bi - que!

170

Tpt.

Co.

Tr.

Bs.

Cl.

Bo.

Gm7 C7 F D7

3:32
(3:41)
(3:51)

An - to - nio - Sa - ca - la

3:32
(3:41)
(3:51)

24: Scat-style soneo in "Ahora Te Pido, Sonero" (Son Soneros)

July 2nd, 2004, Havana, (2:43-2:52)

CD Track #20

$\text{♩} = 126$

75

Lead Singer

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

0:03

0:03

Fmaj⁶ G⁷ Gm⁶ C⁷^{b9} C⁷^{#5} Fmaj⁶

25: Bomba break in "Lágrimas Negras" (Son Diamante)

July 30th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba, 8:03-8:22
CD Track #21

285 $\text{♩} = 184$

Coro

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

0:02

0:02

Cm G7

Que ri - co que ri - co que

289

Co.

Tr.

Bs.

Cl.

Bo.

0:07

0:07

G7 Cm Cm G7

ri - co que ri - co que ri - co que ri - co que

26: Choral "mambo" in "El Que Siembra Su Maíz" (Perlas del Son)

July 26th, 2004, Havana.
CD Track #22

195 $\text{♩} = 240$

G D7 G D7

Coro

El que siem bra sus ma - i - ces el que siem bra sus ma - i - ces

Tres*

3:34

Bass

Clave

Bongó

3:34

199 G D7 G D7

Siem - - bra - a - a - ya e -

Co.

el que siem bra sus ma - i - ces el que siem bra sus ma - i - ces

Tr.

3:39
(3:47)
(3:55)

Bs.

Cl.

Bo.

3:39
(3:47)
(3:55)

26: "El Que Siembra Su Maíz" cont'd.

203 G so no lo pue - des ol - vi - dar G D7

Co. el que siem - bra sus ma - i - ces el que siem bra sus ma - i - ces

Tr. 3:43 (3:51) (3:59)

Bs. 3:43 (3:51) (3:59)

Cl.

Bo.

* The tres on this recording is almost completely inaudible. This transcription includes the most likely tres part, given the context and my memory of how this tresera played.

27: Introduction to "Sabor A Caney" (Perlas del Son)

July 26th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba, 0:00-0:35.

CD Track #23

1 ♩ = 104

Coro

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

0:01

0:06

0:01

0:06

7 ♩ = 232

Co.

Trai-go mi son d'o-rien - te de la lo - ma del ca - ney Si

Bongó

hand claps:

0:15
(0:19)

15

Co.

quie-res yo te en-se - ño pa - ra que lo a - pren - das bien

Bongó

0:23
(0:28)

(2nd X only)

28: Rubén Blades quote in "El Que Siembra Su Maíz" (Perlas del Son)

July 26th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba.
CD Track #22

♩ = 240

125

Coro

La siem bra te da sor - pre - sa sor - pre - sa te da la siem - bra *

E⁷ Am⁷ D⁷ G

Tres

2:24

Bass

Clave

Bongó

2:24 3 3 3

*This coro is repeated, alternating with soneos, until 3:23.

29: Daniel Cos' guajeo in Am

August 1st, 2004, Santiago de Cuba, 5:06-5:22.
CD Track #25

♩ = 200

Clave (implied)

Tres

0:03 (0:08) 0:05 (0:10)

30: Introduction to "Si No Te Vea" (Moneda Nacional)

July 1st, 2004, Havana.

CD Track #26

$\text{♩} = 194$ 1

Flute

Coro

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

Tumbadora

Cm D/C $\text{D}^{\flat}/\text{C}$ Cm

Ah ah ah ah

(2nd x only)

(0:02) (0:07)

(1st x only)

9

Fl.

Tr.

Bs.

Cl.

Bo.

Tum.

G7 Cm G7 Cm Fm^7 $\text{B}^{\flat}7$

bell:

0:12 0:16

30: "Si No Te Vea" cont'd.

14

Fl. Eb Abmaj7 Dm7b5 G7#5 Cm

Tr.

Bs. 0:21

Cl.

Bo. 0:21

Tum. 0:21

Detailed description: This is a musical score for a jazz ensemble. It consists of six staves: Flute (Fl.), Trumpet (Tr.), Bass (Bs.), Clarinet (Cl.), Saxophone (Bo.), and Tympani (Tum.). The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 4/4 time signature. The Flute part starts at measure 14 and features a melodic line with a trill at the end. The Trumpet part has a similar melodic line. The Bass part provides a steady accompaniment with eighth notes. The Clarinet part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Saxophone and Tympani parts have rhythmic patterns with accents. The score includes a key signature change from two flats to one flat (B-flat) at measure 14. Chord changes are indicated below the Flute staff: Eb, Abmaj7, Dm7b5, G7#5, and Cm. A trill is marked above the final note of the Flute part. The number '14' is written above the first measure of the Flute staff. The number '0:21' appears below the Bass, Saxophone, and Tympani staves, likely indicating a rehearsal mark.

31: Son guaguancó diana in "Si No Te Vea" (Moneda Nacional)

July 1st, 2004, Havana.
CD Track #26

49 $\text{♩} = 194$

Flute

Lead Singer

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

Tumbadora

53

L.S.

Tr.

Bs.

Cl.

Bo.

Tum.

La que es ver- dad no es men - ti ra — A la la la la

1:01

1:05

1:07

1:05

1:07

Cm

a

a

bell: x

Fm⁷ B^{b7} E^b A^b

32: Introduction to "La Raya Rumbero" Moneda Nacional

July 1st, 2004, Havana.

CD Track #27

♩ = 236

13

Flute

Coro

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

0:18

0:18

G G^b Am D7^{b5} G D⁷

za ba da dam da da dam da da dam da dat

17

Fl.

Tr.

Bs.

Cl.

Bo.

0:21

0:21

D⁷ G

33: Classic-style vocals in "La Raya Rumbero" (Moneda Nacional)

July 1st, 2004, Havana.
CD Track #27

♩ = 236

46

Flute

Coro

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

0:53

0:53

G

Edim⁷

Se - ño - ño - res - res

51

Fl.

Co.

Tr.

Bs.

Cl.

Bo.

0:59

0:59

G

Se - ño - ño - res - res

34: Introduction to "Aquella Boca" (Cañambú)

July 30th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba, 0:00-0:14.

CD Track #28

♩ = 134

1

Tres

Bass

Clave

Bongó

Bajo Percutivo

G

Detailed description: This musical score is for the introduction of 'Aquella Boca'. It features five staves: Tres (treble clef, 4/4), Bass (bass clef, 4/4), Clave (percussion, 4/4), Bongó (percussion, 4/4), and Bajo Percutivo (percussion, 4/4). The Tres part starts with a first-measure repeat sign and a tempo of 134. The Bass part has a G chord indicated. The Clave, Bongó, and Bajo Percutivo parts provide a rhythmic accompaniment.

35: Montuno in "¿Que Está Pasando?" (Cañambú)

July 30th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba.

CD Track #29

♩ = 218

71 D Em A7

Voices

Tres*

Acoustic Bass

Clave

Cañas

Bajo Percutivo

bell:

1:15

Que es - tá pasan - do — se - ño - res, que es - tá pasan - do

Detailed description: This musical score is for a Montuno section of '¿Que Está Pasando?'. It features six staves: Voices (treble clef, 4/4), Tres* (treble clef, 4/4), Acoustic Bass (bass clef, 4/4), Clave (percussion, 4/4), Cañas (percussion, 4/4), and Bajo Percutivo (percussion, 4/4). The tempo is 218. The key signature has one sharp (F#). Chords D, Em, and A7 are indicated above the voice staff. The lyrics are 'Que es - tá pasan - do — se - ño - res, que es - tá pasan - do'. A first-measure repeat sign is present in the Tres* part. A 'bell:' annotation is in the Bajo Percutivo part. A time signature of 1:15 is shown at the bottom.

36: Manuel Alemán's bongó cañambú solo (Cañambú)

July 30th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba, 0:00-1:41
CD Track #30

1 $\text{♩} = 200$

Tres 0:01

Acoustic Bass

Clave

Bongó Cañambú
top of stool
front of stool

Bajo Percutivo 0:00

5

A. Bass 0:04

Perc.

B. D. 0:04

36: Bongó Cañambú solo cont'd.

7

A. Bass

Perc. side of stool:

B. D.

0:08

11

A. Bass

Perc.

B. D.

0:13

15

A. Bass

Perc.

B. D.

0:17

Appendix B: Photographs



1. Armando Hernández with *corbata bajo* (neck-tie bass), June 15th, 2004, Havana. Photo by the author.



2. The Innova timbal. June 15th, 2004. Photo by the author.



3. Playing the *timbal con teclas* (timbal with piano keys) June 15th, 2004. Photo by the author



4. Maria Elena & *Guitarra con teclas* (guitar with piano keys) June 15th, 2004. *Photo by the Author.*



5. Estrellas del Son with Tamara André, wearing their new "band t-shirts" for Carnaval. July 28th, 2004, Santiago
Photo Cécile Dessertenne



6. Above: Moneda Nacional at the Festival Nacional de Septetos, July 1st, 2004, Havana. *Photo by the author.* 7. Below: Perlas del Son, July 26th, 2004, Santiago *Photo by the author.*





8. Antonio Ayala Torres and Ramón Suárez (left) at Casa de Las Tradiciones, July 30th, 2004, Santiago. *Photo by author.*



9. Manuel Alemán's bongó cañambú solo. July 30th, 2004, Santiago. *Photo by the author.*



10. Manuel Alemán's crowd-pleasing "on-the-back" move. July 30th, 2004, Santiago. *Photo by the author*

Sources

Interviews Conducted by the Author:

Almenaris, Alejandro. July 30th, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Balmaseda, Angel Lu s. June 26th, 2004. Havana.

Brito, C sar. June 30th, 2004. Havana.

Ca amb  band members. August 2nd, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Caroline and Gisl ne. July 25th, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Castro, Ram n. June 29th, 2004. Havana.

Cos, Daniel. August 1st, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Dolores. July 22nd, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Estrellas del Son band members. July 21st, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

God n, F lix. June 18th, 2004. Havana.

Graciela, Jos . June 19th, 2004. Havana.

Innova band members. June 16th, 2004. Havana.

Julia. July 3rd, 2004. Havana.

Leyva, Joaqu n. July 24th, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Mart nez Gal n, Yurina. July 29th, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Michel. July 22nd, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Moneda Nacional bandmembers. August 1st, 2004.

Palacios, Miguel and Jacinto Chill n. July 20th, 2004.

Perlas del Son band members. July 27th, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Richard, Ignacio. June 19th, 2004. Havana.

Rodríguez, Chanel. June 30th, 2004. Havana.

Rodríguez, Julio. July 31st, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Santor, Andrés. July 28th, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Son Soneros band members. July 2nd, 2004. Havana.

Torres, Ilián. June 24th, 2004. Havana.

Típico de Sones band members. July 27th, 2004. Santiago de Cuba.

Field Recordings

All field recordings made by author on a Sony MD Walkman (MZ-R70) with a stereo microphone.

Cañambú. July 30th, 2004, Havana.

Cuarteto Rumí. June 19th, 2004, Havana.

Godón, Félix, and trio. June 18th, 2004, Havana.

Moneda Nacional. July 1st, 2004, Havana.

Perlas del Son. July 26th, 2004, Havana.

Septeto Machín. June 23rd, 2004, Havana.

Son Diamante. July 30th, 2004, Santiago de Cuba.

Son Soneros. July 2nd, 2004, Havana.

Torres, Ilián. June 24th, 2004, Havana.

Written Sources:

Acosta, Leonardo. 1993. "¿Quién inventó el mambo?" *El Mambo*. Radamés Giro, ed. Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas.

----- . n.d. "On generic complexes and other topics in Cuban popular music," Forthcoming in *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 17 (2).

Alemañy, Jesús. 2001. Interview by Ned Sublette. *BOMB Magazine*. Dec 2003, <<http://www.bombsite.com/cubanismo/cubanismo.html>>

Alén Rodríguez, Olávo. 1992. *Géneros musicales de Cuba: de lo afrocubano a la salsa*. San Juan: Editorial Cubanacán.

----- . 1998. *From Afrocuban Music to Salsa*. Berlin: Piranha Records.

Anderson, Benedict. 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London; New York: Verso.

Aoki, Takashi. 2003. "The Role of Cultural Tourism for Sustainable Development: The Case of Music in Cuba." M.A. Thesis: Dalhousie University.

Berríos-Miranda, Marisol. 2002. "Is Salsa a Musical Genre?" *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*. Lise Waxer, ed. New York: Routledge.

Betancur Álvarez, Fabio. 1999. *Sin clave y bongó no hay son: Música afrocubana y confluencias musicales de Colombia y Cuba*, 2da edición. Medellín, Colombia: Editorial Universidad de Antioquia.

- Bettelheim, Judith, ed. 2001. *Cuban Festivals: A Century of Afro-Cuban Culture*. Princeton, NJ: Marcus Wiener Publishers.
- Blanco, Jesús. 1992. *80 años del son y soneros en el caribe*. Caracas: Fondo Editorial Trapykos.
- Blum, Joseph. 1978. "Problems of Salsa Research," *Ethnomusicology* 22(1) 137-49.
- Brown, Ernest D. 1990. "Carnival, Calypso, and Steelband in Trinidad," *The Black Perspective in Music* 18(1/2) 81-100.
- Bruner, Edward. 1994. "Abraham Lincoln as An Authentic Reproduction: A Critique of Postmodernism," *American Anthropologist* 96(2)397-415
- Bruner, Edward and Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. 1994. "Maasai on the Lawn: Tourist Realism in East Africa," *Cultural Anthropology* 9(4)435-70.
- Cantor, Judy. 1997. "Bring on the Cubans!; The Castro government is marketing music, and the whole world is buying. Except Miami." *Miami New Times*, June 19th, Features Section.
- . 1998 "Isla de la Música: The biggest surprise at Havana's Cubadisco '98: A burgeoning retinue of Americans hoping to cash in." *Miami New Times*, 28 May, Features Section.
- Carpentier, Alejo. 1946. *La música en Cuba*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica [1979].
- Clifford, James. 1997. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

- Cohen, Erik. 1988. "Authenticity and Commoditization in Tourism," *Annals of Tourism Research*. 15(3)371-86.
- Cuba XP Website. 2005. "Travel & Tourism: Cuba Bets on Growth in 2005." April 2005, <<http://www.cubaxp.com/modules/news/article-1231.html>>
- Cubanacan. "Juan Almeida Bosque." April, 2005, <<http://www.cubanacan.cu/ESPANOL/almeida/BIOGRAFIA.htm>>
- Cubatravel. 2005. April 2005, <<http://www.cubatravel.cu/client/home/index.php>>
- Davies, Rick. 2003. *Trompeta: Chappottín, Chocolate, and the Afro-Cuban Trumpet Style*. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- de Holán, Pablo Martín and Nelson Phillips. 1997. "Sun, Sand, and Hard Currency: Tourism in Cuba," *Annals of Tourism Research*. (24) 4, 777-95.
- de la Fuente, Alejandro. 1998. "Race, National Discourse, and Politics in Cuba: An Overview," *Latin American Perspectives* 25(3) 43-69.
- de Marcos González, Juan. 2000. "The Afro-Cuban All Stars Present: Felix Balóy, 'Baila Mi Son:' An Interview with the musical director, Juan de Marcos Gonzalez." Dec 2003, <<http://www.salsasf.com/features/interviews/jdemarcos01.html>>

- . 2001. "Juan de Marcos Gonzalez: Keeping It Classic." *Mundo Afrolatino*. Dec 2003,
 <<http://mundoafrolatino.com/english/juanmarcos.htm>>
- Del Puerto, Carlos and Silvio Vergara. 1994. *The True Cuban Bass (El verdadero bajo cubano)*. Petaluma, CA: Sher Music Co.
- Díaz Ayala, Cristóbal. 1994. *Cuba Canta y Baila: discografía de la música cubana*. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Fundación Musicalia.
- . 1998. *Cuando salí de la Habana, 1898-1997. Cien años de música cubana por el Mundo*. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Fundación Musicalia.
- . 2003. *Música cubana: del areyto al rap cubano*. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Fundación Musicalia.
- Duany, Jorge. 1984. "Popular Music in Puerto Rico: Toward an Anthropology of 'Salsa,'" *Latin American Music Review* 5(2) 186-216.
- . 1995. Review of *De lo afrocubano a la salsa: géneros musicales de Cuba*, in *Latin American Music Review* 16(1) 93-95.
- Évora, Tony. 1997. *Orígenes de la música cubana: Los amores de las cuerdas y el tambór*. Madrid: Alianza Editorial.
- Fornet, Ambrosio, et. al. 2000. "Buena Vista Social Club y la cultura musical cubana," *Temas* no 22-23 (July- December), pp. 163-179.
- García, David F. 2003. "Arsenio Rodríguez: A Black Cuban Musician in the Dance Music Milieus of Havana, New York City, and Los Angeles." PhD. Diss.: City University of New York.

- Ghertner, Robin. 2003. "Hoy La Rumba: Local, National, and International Actors." B.A. Thesis: Wesleyan University.
- Godfried, Eugène. 2000. "Buena Vista Social Club. Critics, self-criticism, and the survival of the Cuban Son." February 2005,
<[http://www.afrocubaweb.com/ecugenegodfried
buonavistacritics.htm](http://www.afrocubaweb.com/ecugenegodfried/buonavistacritics.htm)>
- Grammy.com*. "Awards." January 2005,
<<http://www.grammy.com/awards/>>
- Hagedorn, Katherine. 2001. *Divine Utterances: The Performance of Afro-Cuban Santería*. Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- Hernández-Reguant, Ariana. 2000. "The Nostalgia of Buena Vista Social Club. Cuban Music and 'World Marketing.'" Paper presented at the conference Musical Intersections, Toronto, Canada, November 2000.
- . 2004. "Blackness with a Cuban Beat," *NACLA Report on the Americas*. 38:2 (Sept-Oct), 31-36.
- Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger, eds. 1983. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hodge, G. Derrick. 2001. "Colonizing the Cuban Body: The Growth of Male Sex Work in Havana," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 34(5) 20-28.
- Jenkins, Gareth. 1992. "Beyond Basic Needs: Cuba's Search for Sustainable Development in the 1990's," *Cuba in Transition: Crisis and Transformation*. Sandor Halebsky and John Kirk, eds. Boulder: Westview Press, 137-54.

- Johnson, Heather. 1999. "'Social Club' Delivers Sassy Salsa from Forgotten Greats," *University of Virginia Cavalier Daily*. September 7th (U-wire edition)
- Kaeppler, Adrienne and Olive Lewin, eds. 1988. *Come Mek Me Hol' Yu Han': The Impact of Tourism on Traditional Music*. Papers presented at the Fourth International ICTM Colloquium, on "Traditional Music and Tourism," in July of 1986. Kingston: Jamaica Memory Bank.
- Katerí Hernández, Tanya. 2002. "The Buena Vista Social Club: The Racial Politics of Nostalgia," *Latino/a Popular Culture*, Habell-Palán, Michelle, and Mary Romero, eds. New York: New York University Press.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. 1995. "Theorizing Heritage," *Ethnomusicology* 39(3)367-80.
- . 1998. *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lapidus, Benjamin L. 2002. "An Examination of the Changüí Genre of Guantánamo, Cuba." Diss. City University of New York.
- Lau, Frederick. 1998. "Packaging Identity Through Sound: Tourist Performances in Contemporary China," *Journal of Musicological Research*. New York: Gordon and Breach. 17 (2) 113-34.
- León, Argeliers. 1984. *Del Canto y el Tiempo*. Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas.

- , 1991. "Notes toward a Panorama of Popular and Folk Musics,"
Essays on Cuban Music: North American and Cuban Perspectives. Peter
Manuel, ed. Lanham: University Press of America.
- Linares, María Teresa. 1982. "El sucu-sucu: un caso en el area del Caribe."
*Ensayos de música latinoamericana: selección del boletín de música de la Casa
de las Américas*. Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas.
- MacCannell, Dean. 1976. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. New
York: Schocken Books.
- Manuel, Peter. 1985. "The Anticipated Bass in Cuban Popular Music," *Latin
American Music Review* 6(2) 249-261.
- , ed. 1991. *Essays on Cuban Music: North American and Cuban
Perspectives*. Maryland: University Press of America.
- , 1998. "Improvisation in Latin American Dance Music." *In the Course
of Performance*. Bruno Nettl, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
127-48.
- Mariner, Craig. 1999. "Social Club Reunited: Wenders films Ry Cooder's trip
to Cuba," *San Francisco Examiner* Thurs., May 6th, Page C.
- Mateca Productions. 2003. "For Immediate Release: Innova." September 2004,
<www.mateca.com/press/>
- Moore, Robin D. 1997. *Nationalizing Blackness: Afrocubanismo and Artistic
Revolution in Havana, 1920-1940*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh
Press.

- . 2002. "Salsa and Socialism: Dance Music in Cuba, 1959-99," *Situating Salsa: Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*. Lise Waxer, ed. New York: Routledge.
- . 2005. *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Muguercia, Alberto. 1985. *Algo de la trova en Santiago*. Havana: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí.
- Murray, Elisa. "The Sound of Son," *Seattle Weekly*, 1 April, 1999, p. 53.
- Music Week*. 2004. "Essential World Title for Retail: The Buena Vista Social Club." (March 6th, 2004) 8.
- Neustadt, Robert. 2002. "Buena Vista Social Club versus La charanga habanera: The Politics of Rhythm," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 14 (2) 139-162.
- Núñez, Theron. 1963. "Tourism, Tradition, and Acculturation: Weekendismo in a Mexican Village." *Ethnology* 2(3) 347-52.
- Orozco, Danilo. "Procesos socioculturales y rasgos de identidad en los géneros musicales con referencia especial a la música cubana," *Latin American Music Review* 13(2) 158-78.
- Ortiz, Fernando. 1952. "La transculturación blanca de los tambores de los negros," *Archivos venezolanos de folklore* 1(2) 235-65.
- . 1965. *La Africanía de la Música de Cuba*. Havana: Editora Universitaria.

- Pacini Hernández, Deborah. 1998. "Dancing with the Enemy: Cuban Popular Music, Race, Authenticity, and the World-Music Landscape," *Latin American Perspectives*. (25) 3 110-25.
- Padilla, Félix. 1990. "Salsa, Puerto Rican and Latino Music," *Journal of Popular Culture* 24(1): 87-104.
- Padura Fuentes, Leonardo. 2003. *Faces of Salsa: A Spoken History of the Music*. Washington: Smithsonian Books.
- Palma, Odal. 2004. "Las Perlas Son de la Loma," *La Jiribilla* 177(9), April 2005 <http://www.lajiribilla.cu/2004/n177_09/177_10.html>
- Pérez Sanjurjo, Elena. 1986. *Historia de la Música Cubana*. Miami: La Moderna Poesía, Inc.
- Perna, Vincenzo A. 2001. "Timba: the sound of the Cuban crisis. Black dance music in Havana during the Período Especial." Doctoral thesis: University of London.
- Pineda, Reinaldo Cedeño and Michel Damián Suarez. 2002. *Son de La Loma: Los Dioses de La Música Cantan en Santiago de Cuba*. La Habana: Editora Musical de Cuba.
- Pozo Fernández, Alberto. 1993. *Cuba y el Turismo: Actualidad y Perspectivas de Nuestra Industria Turística*. Havana: Editora Política.
- Quiñones Ortiz, Javier Antonio. 2003. "Elio Villafranca: Schoenberg's Cuban Street," *All About Jazz* website. April 2005, <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=437>

- Rasmussen, Ljerka. 2002. *Newly composed folk music of Yugoslavia*. New York: Routledge.
- Recording Industry Association of America. 2003. "Gold and Platinum Awards." April, 2005, <<http://www.riaa.com/gp/default.asp>>
- Rees, Helen. 1998. "'Authenticity' and the foreign audience for traditional music in southwest China." *Journal of Musicological Research*. New York: Gordon and Breach. 17 (2) 135-61.
- . *Echoes of History: Naxi Music in Modern China*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Robbins, James. 1989. "Practical and Abstract Taxonomies in Cuban Music," *Ethnomusicology* vol. 33 no. 3 (Fall 1989), pp. 379-390).
- . 1990a. "Making Popular Music in Cuba: A Study of the Cuban Institutions of Musical Production and the Musical Life of Santiago de Cuba." PhD dissertation, Univ. of Illinois at Urbana.
- . 1990b. "The Cuban *Son* As Form, Genre, and Symbol." *Latin American Music Review* vol. 11 no. 2 (Fall/winter 1990), pp.182-200.
- Roberts, John Storm. 1975. *Salsa! The Latin Dimension in Popular Music*. New York: BMI.
- Rondón, César Miguel. 1980. *El libro de la salsa: Crónica de la música del Caribe urbano*. Caracas: Editorial Arte.
- Roy, Maya. 2002. *Cuban Music: From son and rumba to Timba Cubana and the Buena Vista Social Club*.

- Sarkissian, Margaret. 1998. "Tradition, Tourism, and the Cultural Show: Malaysia's Diversity on Display," *Journal of Musicological Research*. New York: Gordon and Breach. 17 (2) 87-112.
- . 2000. *D'Albuquerque's Children: Performing Tradition in Malaysia's Portuguese Settlement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Scruggs, T.M. 2003. "Not Such a Buena Vista: Nostalgia, Myopia, and the Buena Vista Social Club Phenomenon," paper presented at SEM Conference 2003.
- Schwartz, Rosalie. 1991. "Tourism: A History Lesson," *Cuba Update* (Spring 1991) 24-27.
- . 1997. *Pleasure Island: Tourism and Temptation in Cuba*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Smith, Valene L., ed. 1977. *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Sublette, Ned. 2004. *Cuba and its Music*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, Inc.
- Thigpen, David E. 1999. "Forget Me Not: At 72, Ibrahim Ferrer at Last Finds Fame," *Time*. Aug. 9th, 1.
- Travel & Tourism Intelligence. 1996. "Cuba," *International Tourism Reports*. No. 3. London: Economist Publications, 5-23.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). 2005. "World Heritage Sites." April 2005, <<http://whc.unesco.org/pg.cfm?cid=31>>

- Valdés-Rodríguez, Alisa. 1999. "Pop Beat: Who's Buying Cuban Phenom?: It's Not Latinos Responsible for Buena Vista Social Club's New Rise," *Los Angeles Times*. Aug. 14th, 1.
- Washburne, Christopher. 1998. "Play It 'Con Filin!': The Swing and Expression of Salsa," *Latin American Music Review* 19(2) 160-85.
- Waxer, Lise, ed. *Situating Salsa. Global Markets and Local Meanings in Latin Popular Music*. London: Routledge.
- Wenders, Wim and Donata Wenders. 2000. *Buena Vista Social Club: The Companion Book to the Film*. New York: te Neues.
- Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Williamson, N. 1999. "Ry Comments," *Folk Roots* 193, July, 21-27.
- World Tourism Organization. 2005. "Tourism Market Trends." April 2005, <<http://www.world-tourism.org/facts/tmt.html>>

Commercial Music and Video Recordings

- 'Are'are people of Malaita Island. 1997. *The Solomon Islands: the Sounds of Bamboo*. Multicultural Media MCM 3007.
- Blades, Rubén. 1978. *Siembra*. Fania Records 537.
- Byrne, David. 1991. *Dancing with the Enemy*. Luaka Bop 9 26580-2.
- Cooder, Ry. 1993. *A Meeting by the River*. Water Lily Acoustics WLA-CS-29-CD.
- . 1994. *Talking Timbuktu*. Rykodisc HNCD 1381

- . 1997. *Buena Vista Social Club*. World Circuit/Nonesuch Records
WCD-050.
- de Marcos González, Juan, and the Afro-Cuban All-Stars. 1999. *Distinto,
Diferente*. Nonesuch Records 79501.
- . 2000. *Baila Mi Son: Afro-Cuban All Stars Present Félix Baloy*. Tumi
Records 100.
- Ferrer, Ibrahim. 1999. *Buena Vista Social Club Presents: Ibrahim Ferrer*.
Nonesuch Records 79532.
- González, Rubén. 2000. *Chanchullo*. Nonesuch Records 79503.
- Izquierdo, Pedro. 1996. *Pello el Afrokán y Su Ritmo Mozambique*. Bis Music BIS-
114.
- Manolín, El Médico de la Salsa. 1996. *Para Mi Gente*. Ahí-Namá Records
CD1002.
- Muñequitos de Matanzas, Los. 1992. *Rumba Caliente 88/77*. Qbadisc QB-9005.
- NG La Banda. 1992. *En La Calle*. Qbadisc QB-9002.
- Oviedo, Isaac. 1998. *Routes of Rhythm Volume 3*. Rounder Records CD5055.
- Piñeiro, Ignacio. 1992. *Ignacio Piñeiro and his Septeto Nacional*. Tumbao Cuban
Classics TCD-019.
- Portuondo, Omara. 2000. *Buena Vista Social Club Presents Omara Portuondo*.
Nonesuch Records 79603.
- Rodríguez, Arsenio, y Su Conjunto. *Como se goza en el barrio*. Tumbao Cuban
Classics TCD-022

- Segundo, Compay [a.k.a. Francisco Repilado]. 1998. *Lo Mejor de la Vida*.
Nonesuch Records 79517.
- Sexteto Boloña. 1995. *Échale Candela*. Tumbao Cuban Classics TCD-060.
- Sexteto Habanero. 1991. *Son Cubano*. Tumbao Cuban Classics TCD-001.
- . 1992. *Los Raices del Son*. Tumbao Cuban Classics TCD-009.
- . 1995. *1926-1931*. Harlequin Records HQCD-53.
- Strachwitz, Chris and Michael Ávalos, eds. 1992. *Sextetos Cubanos, Vol. I*.
Arhoolie Folklyric CD 7003
- Various Artists. 1956. *Bamboo-Tambo, Bongo and Belair*. Cook Records
COOK05017.
- . 1995. *Sextetos Cubanos, Vol. II*. Arhoolie Folklyric CD 7006
- Wenders, Wim. 1999. *Buena Vista Social Club: The Movie, directed by Wim
Wenders*. Artisan DVD 10176.