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# Puerto Rican Music and Cultural Identity: Creative Appropriation of Cuban Sources from Danza to Salsa,"

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## Puerto Rican Music and Cultural Identity: Creative Appropriation of Cuban Sources from Danza to Salsa

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Throughout the twentieth century, the issue of cultural identity has been particularly controversial and active among Puerto Ricans. Puerto Rico's ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, the relatively high political consciousness of its population, its large and self-conscious emigrant communities, and above all, its ongoing colonial status have generated, for over a century, a persistent and explicit concern—occasionally described as an “obsession”—with national identity.<sup>1</sup>

Music has served as one of the most important symbols of Puerto Rican cultural identity. With the growth of nationalism in the latter nineteenth century, when literacy was discouraged by Spanish policy, it was natural that creole music, rather than literature, should come to be celebrated as a quintessential expression of island culture. Music is regarded as a symbol of identity even for Nuyoricans (New Yorkers of Puerto Rican descent) who do not speak Spanish. The cultural prominence of music has continued to the present, with the emergence of salsa as a dynamic expression of Puerto Rican, Nuyoric, and pan-Latin identity, and one which has been dominated for decades by Puerto Rican musicians more than any other group.

Puerto Rican nationalist intellectuals as well as popular opinion have long embraced salsa—for example, as opposed to rock—as a characteristically (albeit not exclusively) local music. Nevertheless, a significant qualification and potential contradiction lies at the heart of the allegedly indigenous character of salsa and its island antecedents, for in stylistic terms, most of the predominant Puerto Rican musics, from the nineteenth-century *danza* to contemporary salsa, have been originally derived from abroad—particularly from Cuba. This aspect of Puerto Rican culture is in some contexts a sensitive

one, and in others it is taken for granted. It remains, however, a fundamental feature of Puerto Rican musical history, and yet one which in Latin music discourse is often obscured or ignored—or, more typically, mentioned in parenthetical, often unclear, and even distorting statements.

The primary intent of this article, however, is not to glorify the Cuban contribution to contemporary Latin music, especially since this contribution is already recognized by knowledgeable listeners. Nor is it to question the validity of the virtually unanimous Puerto Rican conception of salsa and *danza* as local in character. Rather, I intend to explore the process by which Puerto Ricans have appropriated and resignified Cuban musical forms as symbols of their own cultural identity. In some senses, the resignification of Cuban music by Puerto Ricans has involved distortions of historical fact, as I shall illustrate. More importantly, however, it has constituted a *social* process of appropriation by which Cuban musical origins, however once crucial in Puerto Rican culture, have in fact become irrelevant to Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans. This perceived irrelevance itself is the result of a complex process of socio-musical rearticulation which can be seen as a feature of Puerto Rican culture in general—a culture which has consistently been conditioned by a complex, overlapping, and often contradictory set of multiple identities.

In entering the debate on Puerto Rican national identity, I am sensitive to the dangers of inserting myself, as an American, into an extensive and sophisticated body of extant discourse on Puerto Rican identity in which American culture is generally perceived as the primary antagonist, and in which Yankee perspectives are not necessarily solicited or welcomed for their own sake.<sup>2</sup> Such considerations notwithstanding, I undertake this article in the hopes of heightening awareness of the issues involved, to faithfully represent salient aspects of Puerto Rican “emic” discourse itself, and to clarify issues that have generally been treated either only indirectly (as in Duany’s illuminating “anthropology” of salsa [1984]) or else erroneously. Above all, I will argue that Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans are justified in regarding such musics as salsa as having been effectively indigenized, but primarily in a socio-musical rather than historical sense.

### **Cuban Music as an International Phenomenon**

The international popularity of Cuban music over the last two centuries has been quite extraordinary, especially in comparison to Cuba’s relatively small size. In the nineteenth century the Cuban *contradanza* (*habanera*) was widely popular in Europe and, as we shall discuss, became the model for the Puerto Rican *danza*. Twentieth-century Cuban dance music—especially the *son*—enjoyed an exponentially greater international vogue.

While Euro-American rock and its international derivatives have dominated much world popular music since mid-century, it was Cuban music which came closest to enjoying such international appeal in the previous few decades. Thus, the commercial *son* of the 1930s through the 1950s became the dominant urban popular music in much of Africa and in most of the Hispanic Caribbean, while forming the basis for the “mambo craze” in the USA and heavily influencing such genres as the mid-century Haitian *cadence*. In the colonial world, Cuban dance music provided its international audiences with a musical style that lacked direct associations with imperialist metropolises, and that could become a potent symbol of identity for modernizing urban societies. In Africa, Cuban music constituted a significant step in the re-Africanization of professional urban dance music, much of which had been previously dominated by thoroughly Western genres like the waltz, polka, and foxtrot. At the same time; in Africa and elsewhere, Cuban-style music came to constitute a new sort of hegemonic genre, which had to be confronted—whether appropriated, rejected, or syncretized—in the ongoing process of developing national or ethnic cultural identity. In some cases, as in Africa, this process involved growing out of the dependence on Cuban forms, sometimes with the explicit encouragement of political and cultural leaders.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere, as among Puerto Ricans, the process involved actively appropriating Cuban-derived idioms, subtly transforming their style and, more significantly, resignifying them as indigenous expressions.

### **Puerto Rican National Music I: The Danza**

*Cuba y Puerto son de un pájaro las dos alas . . .*

Cuba and Puerto Rico are two wings of the same bird . . .

(Lola Rodríguez de Tió)

Cuba and Puerto Rico have enjoyed a special relationship since the Spanish colonial period. The most important tie, of course, was the fact that they were the only remaining Spanish colonies after the rest of Latin America gained independence in the first half of the nineteenth century. Economic, political, and cultural bonds between Cuba and Puerto Rico intensified in the nineteenth century, as agricultural workers migrated to and fro, commercial and military interaction increased, and shared anti-colonial movements forged a common socio-political bond.

It was such nationalistic sentiments, indeed, that inspired Puerto Rican poet Lola Rodríguez de Tió to pen the oft-quoted lines above, stressing the fraternal solidarity of the two aspiring nations. The two wings, of course, formed a somewhat lopsided bird. Cuba is demographically and geographically several times larger than Puerto Rico, and cultural exchange has

accordingly been mostly (although not entirely) unidirectional; similarly, many Puerto Rican nationalists have historically tended to regard Cuba as a sympathetic big brother, with a traditionally more advanced economy, a full-fledged war of independence, and, after 1898, nominal sovereignty (however much compromised by ongoing American intervention).

The cultural affinities between the two colonies in the nineteenth century were nowhere more explicit than in the forms that musical nationalism took therein. In both islands, a form of creole dance genre emerged which came to be explicitly identified with national ethos and, by extension, anti-colonial sentiment. While the Puerto Rican *danza* is the main focus of our attention in this section, its clear roots in the Cuban *contradanza* (*habanera*)<sup>4</sup> oblige us to outline the latter's evolution and significance.

While the eighteenth-century origins of the *contradanza* are obscure (see Galán 1983), the genre's significance, for our purposes, is its gradual development into one recognized—by its votaries as well as detractors—as a distinctly Cuban entity. As a musical idiom, the *contradanza* was distinguished primarily by its Afro-Latin syncopation. Its choreography was also significant: in its early stages, the dance resembled its original ancestor, the “longway” version of the English country-dance, wherein men and women would line up opposite each other and perform various coordinated, group steps, occasionally following a designated lead couple (somewhat like a Virginia reel), all under the guidance of a “caller”-like *bastonero*. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the *contradanza* gradually lost its communal character, evolving from a collective *danza de cuadro* into a modern-style *danza de figuras*, performed freely by individual couples, with the man and woman loosely embracing each other.

Both the Afro-Caribbean syncopation and the transition to couple dancing were explicitly identified—in Cuba and, later, Puerto Rico—with creole aesthetics and nationalism. Both elements were conspicuously absent in the Spanish *contradanza*, which was accordingly and clearly *not* the source of the Cuban *contradanza*, despite its name. Similarly, both elements were denounced as vulgar by negrophobic, colonial-minded purists, and were celebrated all the more enthusiastically by creole nationalists (see, for example, Galán 1983:59–95, 77, 178, and Mikowsky 1973:37, 51–52). Over the course of the century, the archaic collective portions of the *contradanza* and the dictatorial *bastonero* became increasingly identified with feudal Spanish rule.<sup>5</sup> Thus, in the realm of choreography, Cubans of all classes came to adopt the intimate, informal couple dancing associated with the Parisian bourgeoisie and, closer to home, with the uninhibited and decidedly non-feudal lower-class blacks and mulattos. Similarly, despite Cuban racism, nationalists celebrated the Afro-Latin element in creole culture as the single feature which most unambiguously distinguished it from Spanish culture—

hence, for example, the dozens of *contradanzas* with “exotic” Afro-Cuban titles like *Los ñañigos* and *El mulato en el cabildo* (see Lapique Becali 1979:40, 42). Finally, it should be noted that the Cuban *contradanza*—like the Puerto Rican *danza*— was fervently enjoyed and performed by virtually all social and racial strata (with the evident exception of rural slaves). In bourgeois circles, the *contradanza* flourished as a salon genre, wherein hoop-skirted, bejeweled ladies and debonair gentlemen would dance to the measured strains of a chamber ensemble, engaging in genteel conversation as they strolled arm-in-arm during the *paseo*, and then circling gracefully during the *cedazo* and *cadena* sections. While composers like Saumell and Cervantes penned such pieces for the elite, peasants and urban workers danced to cruder versions of the genre (and often the same compositions), played on ad hoc ensembles of guitar, flute, violin, trumpet, or whatever instruments were handy (see, for example, Galán 1983:158, 263–64).

In the 1840s, the Cuban *contradanza* was exported to Puerto Rico under various names, including *upa*, *merengue*, and ultimately, *danza*. Edgardo Díaz Díaz has concisely chronicled how in bourgeois circles the *danza* and other related intimate couple dances came to displace the archaic semi-collective dances like the *rigodón* and *lancero* (1990); within a few decades the *danza* was being cultivated so avidly as to be lauded as a national genre. While denounced, like its Cuban model, as vulgar by antiquarians of its day (see, for example, citations in Brau 1977:8, 12), it soon became explicitly identified with the contemporary independence movement, which was led by an agricultural elite including many recent Haitian, Corsican, and South American immigrants with no particular fondness for Spanish customs. Angel Quintero Rivera (1986) and Díaz (1990) have insightfully shown how the rise of the *danza* became linked with the emergence of this nationalistic *hacendado* proto-bourgeoisie, which cultivated the support of working classes and petty-bourgeois merchants and artisans. While San Juan was the governmental seat, the southern city of Ponce became the center of this movement, linked as it was to the agricultural export whose expansion was perpetually frustrated by Imperial regulations. Accordingly, while San Juan remained dominated by church and military music, Ponce hosted a more lively and varied cultural scene, in which the *danza*, both in its salon and popular varieties, emerged as a symbol of nationalistic spirit. Thus, it was not coincidental that a vocal *danza*, “La Borinqueña,” became the island’s unofficial anthem.

For the purposes of this article, the significance of the *danza* is in its transition from a Cuban borrowing to a Puerto Rican genre. Two aspects of this transition may be noted here. First, while the *danza* retained (with elaboration) the basic formal structure, distinctive isorhythms, choreography, and pan-social, protean popularity of its Cuban model, it was regarded

as acquiring a distinctively Puerto Rican character (see, for example, Veray 1977a, 1977b). In musical terms, this character is perhaps most apparent in the *danzas* of Juan Morel Campos (1857–96) and his contemporaries, which have a variety and a florid, Chopinesque sophistication quite uncharacteristic of the simpler Cuban *contradanzas*.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, the Puerto Rican appropriation of the *danza* involved a social rearticulation, whereby a borrowed Cuban genre came to be resignified as a national one. The Cuban origin of the *danza* does not appear to have been a matter of embarrassment, nor does it appear to have been regarded as a contradiction in terms of the “national” character of the *danza*. One important fact for contemporary Puerto Ricans was that the *danza* was markedly distinct from the archaic and formal Spanish *contradanza* (not to mention other Spanish genres). Cuba was, after all, a sister colony, another “wing of the same bird,” a partner in the anti-colonial struggle. Thus, Puerto Rico’s amicable relations, and indeed, fraternal solidarity with Cuba appear to have nullified any potential sense of cultural rivalry or inferiority. These aspects of Puerto Rican appropriation of Cuban music, as we will see, foreshadow the process of adopting Cuban dance music in the twentieth century.

With the American invasion of 1898 Puerto Rican colonial history entered a new phase, occasioning a gradual reorientation of nationalistic sentiment. Many Puerto Ricans initially welcomed the Americans, who liberated the island from Spanish economic restrictions, encouraged liberal humanism, and promoted an unprecedented level of economic development. Before long, however, American rule was eliciting nationalist resentment, based partly on the realization that the island was to be exploited as a colony rather than annexed as a state, and on the fear that American culture and language were undermining the island’s own cultural heritage. The *hacendado* class resented the American presence most sharply, especially since Yankee agribusiness was destroying that elite, engendering in its place a more modern, commercial middle class whose fortunes, because of its comprador nature, were directly linked to the United States. The *danza* took on a new sort of nationalistic significance for the declining agricultural elite during this period, in accordance with the fact that for this class, the United States, rather than Spain, was the new antagonist. Hence, if the *danza* had previously been celebrated for its distinctively non-Spanish qualities, it now became a symbol of refined Hispanic island culture, in contradistinction to the cheap American commercial culture which was already influencing the island. Hispanophilic essayist Antonio Pedreira put up a spirited defense of the *danza* in his classic 1934 study of the Puerto Rican cultural dilemma, *Insularismo*, which argued that the *danza* embodied the best aspects of Puerto Rican character—gentility, mildness, and aestheticism—the very qualities threatened by vulgar, crass, commercial, and materialistic Ameri-

canization. Again, the Cuban roots of the *danza* were not regarded as problematic, as the genre had long since come to be seen as a resignified Puerto Rican form. Moreover, Cuba and Puerto Rico remained sister islands, the twin wings of a bird once caged by Spain, and now under the sometimes benign, and often quite rapacious and humiliating dominance of the United States.

By the 1930s, however, most Puerto Ricans were coming to view the *danza* as archaic and quaint. The Cuban *guaracha*, *son*, and *bolero* had taken over all but the most elite dance halls, while socioeconomic modernization of the island was eroding the entire premodern milieu which had sustained the *danza*. Thus, far more prescient than Pedreira's reactionary, if eloquent book was Tomás Blanco's 1935 rejoinder "Eulogio de 'la plena'" ("Elegy to the plena"), which criticized the explicit or implicit racism of *danza*-mongers like Pedreira, and noted that the *danza* was a product of a bygone era. The *danza* has retained a certain niche in Puerto Rican culture until the present: at least one *danza* remains obligatory at weddings, and the genre continues to enjoy a place in the *jibaro* repertoire. But its claim to the status of national music has long been usurped by other genres, to which we will turn below.

We have mentioned that the American invasion of 1898 occasioned a reorientation of Puerto Rican nationalism, in which the United States, rather than Spain, became the colonial metropole. The nature of the new nationalism differed in other significant respects. Nineteenth-century Puerto Rican nationalism was rooted in economic frustration, felt most acutely by the *hacendado* class whose commercial expansion was curtailed by restrictive Spanish regulations. For its part, American rule intensified unemployment, land alienation, emigration, income inequalities, and dependency on the mainland; at the same time, it brought dramatic economic development, raising the average local standard of living to the highest in Latin America. Given such mixed results, economic grievances have been less clear-cut than cultural ones in twentieth-century nationalism, such that many have questioned whether independence from the United States would enhance the island's affluence; an independent Puerto Rico might still be likely to remain wholly subservient to American imperialist interests, while lacking the benefits afforded by commonwealth status. Partly as a result of such misgivings, nationalist sentiment has tended to focus primarily on cultural issues—the imposition of English, the influence of American racism, and above all, the inundation of commercial American culture. In such conditions, from the early twentieth century, music became a contested ground of unprecedented significance and visibility (see, for example, Ortiz Ramos 1991:30). Of course, many Puerto Ricans, if not most, formed their musical preferences without conscious or deliberate considerations of issues of

identity; over the decades, however, cultural nationalism became a visible and influential presence in island life, and one which is found across all political parties, not just the *independentista* left. Many Puerto Ricans came to identify with American values, including musical tastes. To a large extent, however, American musical influence was either resisted or safely compartmentalized by the development of a lively indigenous and Nuyorican musical culture, which borrowed, as never before, from the contemporary sounds emerging from the sister island of Cuba. Before turning to such developments, however, we must consider another set of genres with their own sorts of claims to indigenous prominence.

### **Puerto Rican National Music II: Jíbaro Music?**

The Puerto Rican *jíbaro* (peasant, implicitly white) has always occupied a special place in discourse on national character, being eulogized—or in some cases disparaged—as the personification of quintessentially indigenous traits. Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century aristocratic literature, from Manuel Alonso's 1849 *El Gíbaro* to Pedreira's *Insularismo*, often idealized and praised, however paternistically and nostalgically, the *jíbaro*'s legendary hospitality, simplicity, self-sufficiency, and individuality, his wary evasiveness and dissembling deferentiality in the face of authority, and his complacent, easygoing love of the simple pleasures of fiestas, coffee, idle banter, and nature. The *jíbaro* has often been regarded as representing the core of national identity, and was particularly celebrated as such by Luis Muñoz Marín's *Partido Popular Democrático*, which chose a silhouette of a straw-hatted *jíbaro* as its logo.

Accordingly, *jíbaro* music has enjoyed a certain sort of claim to the status of national music. Its association with traditional *jíbaro* culture is the most obvious argument in this regard. Another argument is that *jíbaro* music is so uniquely and distinctively Puerto Rican in style and character. Of course, certain elements of *jíbaro* music are clearly Spanish-derived, such as the *décima*, the guitar and the guitar-like *cuatro*, and the Andalusian harmonies. Some staples of the *jíbaro* repertoire are also obvious imports, such as the *guaracha*, *vals*, *mazurca*, *polca*, and the occasional *merengue*. Nevertheless, the backbone of the *jíbaro* repertoire—the many varieties of *seis* and *aguinaldo*—is uniquely indigenous (in accordance with the traditional socio-economic autonomy and self-sufficiency of *jíbaros* in general). Cuban influence crops up in modern accompanimental rhythms, as in the use of the bongo popularized by Estanislao “Ladi” Martínez, and in studio recordings featuring anticipated-style bass (the pattern: , in which the final note anticipates the harmony of the next bar). On the whole, however, *jíbaro* music remains quite distinct from Cuban music, eschewing such features as the anticipated accompanimental ostinatos that distinguish the Cuban *son*.

Nevertheless, if *jibaro* music was ever acknowledged as national in status, it certainly has not been so for the last several decades. Commentators like José Luis González (1980:39) have argued that the celebration of *jibaro* culture by the declining *hacendado* elite was infused with xenophobia, nostalgia for the comfortable dominance of the *ancien regime*, and a racist depreciation of Afro-Puerto Rican culture. *Jibaro* music has similarly suffered from an ongoing popular disaffection with *jibaro* culture in general, whose allegedly archetypical characteristics—including passivity and illiteracy—have come to be seen as incompatible with modernization. *Jibaros* themselves have become an endangered species under the inexorable impact of American agribusiness and subsequent urbanization, which has led to over sixty percent of the island's population being urban by 1970. Despite recent attempts to symbolically revindicate *jibaro* culture, most Puerto Ricans, and especially Nuyoricans and the urban young, regard *jibaros* as poor and backwards, and wish to avoid being regarded as such by city sophisticates. *Jibaro* music continues to occupy a place in Puerto Rican culture (for example, in festivals, rural parties, and the music of innovators like Andres Jiménez), and many *seis* and *aguinaldo* lyrics deal with contemporary issues of migration, urbanization, and social change in highly expressive ways, whether poignantly or humorously. Nevertheless, most young Puerto Ricans regard *jibaro* music as quaint and rustic (see, for example, Lopez 1976:106, 108). Certain elements of it, as we shall discuss below, have found their way into some Puerto Rican and Nuyoricana salsa. However, *jibaro* music has not formed the basis for salsa or for any urban popular music in the twentieth century; that basis, instead, has come from Cuban music. Hence *jibaro* music, however “quintessentially” Puerto Rican, has come to occupy an increasingly diminutive niche at the alleged core of island culture.

### Puerto Rican National Music III: Plena and Bomba?

*Báilame la plena, no que la confunda con una guaracha.*

Dance me a *plena*, and don't mix it up with a *guaracha*.

(plena chorus)

The *plena* and *bomba* together occupy another sort of prominence in Puerto Rican national culture and discourse. Both genres are distinctively Puerto Rican creations, whose traditional styles, while not springing from a vacuum, owe little, if anything, to Cuban music. Accordingly, both have been explicitly celebrated as essential components of Puerto Rican musical culture, which deserve recognition and promotion.

The classic, and first significant nationalistic encomium to the *plena* came in the form of Tomás Blanco's aforementioned “Elegy to the plena” (1935), which praised its vibrant rhythms, its fresh and direct topical texts,

and above all, its harmonious syncretic incorporation of elements of Puerto Rico's three racial roots.<sup>7</sup> The *plena* and *bomba* have gone on to be celebrated by cultural nationalists as vital symbols of Puerto Rican musical culture. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the *plena* and *bomba* have failed to achieve the status of national musics, in comparison, for example, to the *son* in Cuba, which has for some sixty years been enjoyed by Cubans of all ages, classes, and races. *Plena* and *bomba* continue to thrive in their limited spheres, but in this century, and especially in a relatively developed and urbanized society like Puerto Rico, to be a "national music" implies mass media dissemination, on the level of a commercial popular music. *Plena* and *bomba*, on the whole, have not achieved such popularity, and the reasons for their failure to do so require some brief review here.

The *bomba* is a product of slave plantation society in the Spanish colonial period. Performed exclusively by lower-class blacks and mulattos, it consists of call-and-response vocals, lively percussion on the *bomba* barrel drums, and dancing, either by a couple or a soloist; in either case, the genre focusses on the spirited interaction between the dancer(s) and the lead *bomba* drummer. Aside from folkloric contexts, *bomba* survives in a few proletarian, predominantly black towns like Loíza Aldea, where it continues to be danced (especially by girls) at parties and fiestas.

The *plena* is believed to have originated in Ponce around the turn of the century. It rapidly gained popularity among the lower and lower-middle classes as a recreational music, often with informal dance, reaching a peak of sorts in the 1920s. Typically, it features topical verses, alternating with simple choral refrains, sung to the accompaniment of *pandereta* (a small, round frame drum), *güiro* (scraper), and a melodic/chordal instrument like concertina or guitar. The *pandereta* (or *pandero*) is regarded as the trademark of the genre (Echevarría Alvarado 1984:31); generally, one or more *pandereros* reiterate a simple binary meter, while another one improvises syncopated patterns. The topical texts are rooted in daily life and are appreciated for their often satirical, spontaneous content.

Around 1910 to 1920 professionalized versions of the *plena* evolved, and the genre took on its own life in the Puerto Rican barrios of New York City (see Echevarría Alvarado 1984:89ff). There and on the island, professional trios and larger groups performed at fiestas and recorded old and new compositions. From this earliest period on, Cuban influence was a concomitant of professionalization, reflected, for example, in the occasional use of *clave* patterns.<sup>8</sup> Most traditional and early *plenas*, however, did not employ *clave*, nor the Cuban-style anticipated vocal refrains and accompanying ostinati (for example, on piano or guitar) which characterize the *rumba*, *son*, and *guaracha*. The genre achieved an enhanced mass media presence when *bolero* singer Canario (Manuel Jiménez) began recording familiar *plenas* in

the mid-1920s. Canario's songs retained much of the street *plena's* flavor, while supplementing the traditionally sparse orchestration with piano, two or three horns, and bass, which often played in the anticipated Cuban style mentioned above.

In the following decade, Cesar Concepción further popularized and diluted the *plena* by incorporating it into a big band format clearly influenced by the "sweet" jazz bands of Benny Goodman and others. Concepción's music embodied in an extreme form the contradictions of the *plena* in relation to insular identity. On the one hand, his music represented a sort of apogee for the *plena*, which, in his idiosyncratic form, resounded in fashionable hotels and salons, acquiring an unprecedented amount of respectability and glamor. Accordingly, the vast majority of his song texts eulogized Puerto Rico and the *plena*, representing a particularly explicit form of nationalism in popular music. His "Plena en San Juan" is typical in this respect:

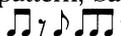
*Que sigan con foxtrots, guarachas y bebops  
que yo me quedo aquí con mi plena en San Juan.*

Let the foxtrots, *guarachas*, and bebop continue  
I'm staying here in San Juan with my *plena*.

At the same time, Concepción's popularization of the *plena* came at the price of Cubanizing the genre almost beyond recognition. His *plenas* employed standard mambo instrumentation and arrangement formats; roughly half of his better-known *plenas* incorporate Cuban-style anticipation in the vocal refrains and bass patterns as well as instrumental interludes. In these respects, and in the conspicuous absence of *panderos*, Concepción's *plenas* became thoroughly Cubanized, losing in the process not only their proletarian flavor, but much of their distinctively Puerto Rican character as well. The evident Cuban influence in Concepción's *plenas* and even those of his predecessors had already elicited the criticism of Tomás Blanco in the conclusion to his aforementioned essay: "Hence, as the *plena* will remain exclusively in the domain of the popular, it would suit our professional ensembles to reproduce it without false sophistication, omitting imitations of exoticisms like jazz and avoiding falling into plagiarizations of alien Cubanisms" (1935).

In the early 1950s a new and revitalized *plena* and *bomba* appeared in the music of bandleader Rafael Cortijo and his vocalist, Ismael ("Maelo") Rivera. While Cuban influence was evident in the standard *conjunto* format of Cortijo's ensemble and in such elements as the piano style, his *plenas* and *bombas* retained an earthy rawness redolent of their proletarian roots. Generally, in his *plenas* the conga would imitate the *pandero* syncopations, while the bass would emphasize the downbeat in a manner uncharacteristic

of the Cuban-derived *guaracha* and *son*. Some of his melodies were derived from traditional *plenas* (such as his “Huy que pote”), and his texts were steeped in everyday barrio life.

Cortijo's *bombas*, like those of his contemporary, Mon Rivera, were a bit farther removed from the genre's roots, especially since the traditional *bomba* was not an informal social dance to begin with, and its traditional melodies, texts, and implicit harmonies, if any, are quite simple. Indeed, the only features really identifying Cortijo's *bombas* as such were the iconic conga pattern and bell pattern, based on the *bomba larga* pattern used in the traditional *sika* style:  (Hal Barton, personal communication). In most other respects (such as the use of anticipated bass), his *bombas* did not differ significantly from the prevailing Cuban dance music. It could be pointed out that the *bomba de salon* and *plena de salon* of Cortijo and others were no further removed from their roots than is the 1950s Cuban *rumba de salon* from its ancestor; a Cuban nationalist might observe, however, that the stylization of the rumba was carried out primarily by Cubans, along relatively indigenous evolutionary lines, while the modernization of the *bomba* and *plena* took the form of a marked Cubanization. Finally, while Cortijo's *plenas* and *bombas* constituted the most distinctive feature of his music, roughly a third of his repertoire—including some of his most popular hits—consisted of *guarachas* in more or less standard Cuban style.

Cortijo's popularity declined in the 1960s, and *plena* and *bomba* ceased to play a significant role in the mass media or in the realm of commercial popular music in general. In 1962 most of Cortijo's group split off to form El Gran Combo, while Ismael Rivera founded a new group, Los Cachimbos; both groups largely forsook *plena* and *bomba* for the Cuban-derived styles dominating salsa in general. With the advent of the salsa boom from the late 1960s, the two genres have remained marginal entities as dance music genres (as I shall discuss further below). They continue, of course, to flourish in urban folk contexts. The *plena*, for example, is routinely performed by meandering ensembles at informal street parties (*trullas*, *asaltos*), by protesting students, and by striking labor unions in front of targeted workplaces. But in the realm of popular dance music and the mass media, they have given up their niches to mainstream salsa, rock, *merengue*, and other contemporary styles.

The failure of *plena* and *bomba* to enjoy lasting success as popular musics would seem to require some explanation. For its part, *bomba* remains largely confined to lower-class black private fiestas, such that most Puerto Ricans have little exposure to it at all. As for the more familiar *plena*, some might think that in musical parameters the *guaracha*, *son*, and rumba are inherently richer and better suited to professionalization and syncretic development as mass mediated genres. A more significant factor appears to have been the negative association of *plena*—like that of *jibaro* music—with

the more backward sectors of local society, at a time when many, if not most Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans sought a more modern, cosmopolitan identity. Latin music savant and producer René Lopez writes of the New York rumba-dominated street drumming vogue starting from the late 1950s:

Looking back at those jam sessions, I cannot remember playing Puerto Rican rhythms. I guess we thought of our parents' music as *jíbaro* (hicky), old fashioned, and not really percussive. I think this impression was formed because popular Puerto Rican music of the '50s was composed mainly of trios, quartets, and popular big bands that were mainly melody oriented. Although we had heard of *Plena* and *Bomba*, they were very vague images because black Puerto Rican music was never given any importance. As a matter of fact, till seven or eight years ago I never knew that *Plena* and *Bomba* were black expressions. In the schools there was no history of Puerto Rico being taught and no music programs that had anything to do with Puerto Rican culture. (1976:108–9)

Nuyorican musician Joe Falcón (of the innovative group Conjunto Unión) expresses a similar viewpoint:

I am going to [explain] why we don't dance the "bomba," the "seis chorreo" of "jíbaro" music in New York. Why? Because the intellectual (and this is directed at Puerto Rico), the Puerto Rican intellectual thinks that the "bomba," the "seis chorreo," and things like that belong to jíbaros, low people, and [intellectuals] have not wanted to bring them to the popular level of the Puerto Rican people . . . I feel uncomfortable playing a music of the forties, melody-wise, harmony-wise, you know. I don't feel genuine when I play the "plena" because I don't come from that time. (CEP 1974:VIII, 76, 60)<sup>9</sup>

A younger Nuyorican *salsero*, Orlando Fiol, explains the prevalent attitude of his parents' generation: "People back then wanted at all costs not to be identified with *jíbaro* culture, so what they liked was the big, brassy, Cuban mambo sound" (personal communication). Cuba, for the generation whose attitudes were shaped in the 1930s–50s, represented a more advanced, developed, and cosmopolitan culture; at the same time it was a fraternal Latin country, with which Puerto Rico enjoyed good relations, and which had its own healthy nationalistic anti-Americanism. Hence, in spite of the admonitions of cultural nationalists and purists like Tomás Blanco, most Puerto Ricans evidently found it natural to adopt Cuban music as their own, whether in place of or alongside American popular music and local folk genres. The turn to Cuban music may have been particularly logical for black and mulatto Puerto Ricans, since Afro-Latin elements in music and culture were so much more pronounced and recognized in Cuba than at home.<sup>10</sup>

Since the 1970s *plena* and, to a lesser extent, *bomba* have been the subjects of a deliberate, folkloristic revival. A handful of quasi-folkloric groups have emerged which perform *plena* at town festivals and, occasionally, at ordinary dance concerts. Such groups as the Pleneros de Loíza, the Pleneros del Quinto Olivo, Plenibon ("*plena y bomba*"), and the New York-

based Pleneros de la 21 have attempted to revitalize *plena* not as a commercial popular music, but as a living urban folk music. Although these groups generally employ horn sections and three-part harmonies, they retain the *plena's* traditional character. The cultural nationalism of some of the new song texts is particularly explicit. The following translated excerpts from Quinto Olivo's repertoire are representative:

"*Una noche se oyó en Borinquen*":  
 One night the ringing *panderos* of the *plena*  
 resounded in Borinquen,  
 The point was that the *plena* is being forgotten,  
 and they are changing our tradition,  
 and because we want to go on singing it,  
 that's why we founded this group . . .  
 How nice it is, how great it sounds,  
 the *güira* and *pandereta* of the bouncy *plena*,  
 Get the *coro* going so that it never dies,  
 and so that Borinquen will go on dancing *plena* . . .

"*Rumbamba*":  
*Rumbamba* in Cuba, calypso in Saint Thomas,  
*rumbamba* in Cuba, and in Puerto Rico, *bomba* and *plena*  
 I like dancing rumba for its charming sweetness  
 But I prefer the *plena* because it's from Puerto Rico<sup>11</sup>

The last verses acknowledge the appeal and Cuban origins of rumba, but affirm a preference for the *plena* on nationalistic grounds.

The nationalistic revival of *plena*, coupled with its ongoing vitality as a living urban folk genre, will surely guarantee its place in Puerto Rican musical culture for some time. Nevertheless, *plena* and *bomba* no longer occupy a significant role in mainstream popular music, which has for some time been dominated by rock and salsa.

### **Puerto Rican National Music IV?: A Note Regarding Trios**

In surveying the Puerto Rican soundscape of the twentieth century, it would be a mistake to ignore the voice and guitar trios, whose music pervaded airwaves, cafes, and clubs in the decades around 1950. Trio music—featuring suave, smooth, three-part harmony accompanied by guitars, *requinto*, and light Cuban-style percussion—was extremely popular throughout the Hispanic Caribbean, with groups from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, New York City, and elsewhere cultivating a relatively homogeneous style and a shared international audience. While the trios' music was too sentimental and too plainly pan-Caribbean to be celebrated as distinctly Puerto Rican, its development and form exhibit some of the same sorts of

borrowing and appropriation evident in earlier and subsequent forms of urban dance music. As with salsa, Cuban urban music provided the backbone of the trios' repertoire; the relevant genre here was not the up-tempo *son*, but the romantic and languid Cuban-style *bolero*, which had evolved in the decades around 1900. At the same time, the remainder of the trios' repertoire comprised a remarkable melange of genres, including old and new compositions in stylized forms of the Mexican *corrido*, *huapango* (*son huasteco*), and *ranchera*, the Cuban *guajira* and *son*, the Cuban-Puerto Rican *guaracha*, the Colombian *pasillo* and *bambuco*, the Panamanian *tamborera*, the Puerto Rican *aguinaldo*, the Venezuelan *joropo*, and even the occasional Chilean *tonada* (see, for example, Ortiz Ramos 1991:177, 309, 320–21, 380). All these genres acquired a certain homogeneity of sound in the music of the trios, yet all were clearly drawn from a broad potpourri of national traditions. Moreover, while dominating the trio repertoire, the *bolero* had undergone considerable refinement outside Cuba. In particular, Mexican groups like the Trío Calaveras had introduced sophisticated three-part singing, which subsequently became the norm throughout the Caribbean (including in Cuba, where it continues to prevail among the trios heard in restaurants throughout the country).

If the trio style owed its foundation to Cuba, Puerto Ricans could justifiably claim trio music as an entity which was as much theirs as anyone's. Puerto Rican composers like Rafael Hernández and Pedro Flores had immeasurably enriched the trio repertoire, with Hernández's "Lamento Borincano" becoming (along with "La Borinqueña") a sort of unofficial anthem. As Ortiz Ramos states:

It is incorrect . . . to assert that the voice and guitar trios are a foreign phenomenon in our country. These groups, like the main genre they cultivated, the bolero, fermented in the Caribbean and were reproduced in different countries maintaining a robust production. Every part of the Caribbean had its own trios with their own variants and particular originality. At the same time, and thanks to this common Caribbean situation, we were influencing at the same time as being influenced. The distinct styles and expressions created and protected by local trios went on being integrated into the dynamic of adopting primary material from all sides: repertoire, instruments, forms, and styles. The trios in Puerto Rico are the most basic groups in the history of our popular music. (Ibid.:390)

Thus, the international roots of the trios' repertoire, rather than diluting its local popularity, lent the music a cosmopolitan pan-Latin sophistication, and completely avoided any influence of commercial Yankee culture. Cuban roots (with subsequent Mexican refinement) thus provided the vehicles for an affirmation of Puerto Rican and Hispanic-Caribbean musical culture.

The music of the trios became marginalized in the 1960s with the advent

of rock and salsa. Nevertheless, the processes of borrowing, synthesis, and creative appropriation in trio music provided a paradigm which was, in some manners, rearticulated in the emergence of salsa, to which we may now turn.

### **Puerto Rican National Music V: Salsa**

Since the late 1960s salsa has emerged as a musical expression of the aesthetics, values, and identity of Puerto Ricans, Nuyoricans, and others. Its aspirations to pan-Latino popularity are explicit in many of its song texts calling for Latino solidarity, and in the statements of musicians and aficionados, who celebrate it as a challenge to the hegemony of Anglo-American music and culture. Salsa's significance as a vehicle for Puerto Rican, Nuyoricans, and pan-Latino identity is also inherent in its appeal across a broad spectrum of Latino nationalities, age groups, and social classes. As a result, I have found that many Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans bridle indignantly at the notion, however rhetorically suggested, that in stylistic terms salsa is essentially second-hand Cuban music.

The process of appropriation of Cuban music has been a complex one, whose nature has, in my opinion, been obfuscated in much of the discourse on Latin music. One may group the standard arguments in support of a pan-Latino, and particularly Puerto Rican nature of salsa into four basic themes, which may be summarized as follows:

(1) Salsa is an internally diverse genre, incorporating not only Cuban-derived styles, but significant amounts of a wide variety of Caribbean musics, including *bomba*, *plena*, *seis*, *merengue*, *cumbia*, reggae, and other genres.

(2) Afro-Cuban dance music has flourished in Puerto Rico since 1900 (if not earlier), such that Puerto Ricans over several generations have come to regard it as their own tradition.

(3) Salsa is stylistically quite distinct from Cuban music of the 1950s, from which it once liberally drew.

(4) Salsa—as opposed to Cuban dance music—is ultimately a product of the New York Latino community, which has interpreted Cuban music in a fresh manner, endowing it with a new significance as a vehicle of that community's own social identity; via such resignifications, salsa has subsequently come to be a symbol of cultural identity for Latinos throughout the Caribbean Basin and elsewhere, such that its ultimate origins in Cuba are essentially irrelevant.

### **Puerto Rican Elements in Salsa?**

Each of these arguments merits fuller discussion. We may commence with the first, which I consider the weakest. Its exponents argue that salsa is pan-Caribbean and pan-Latino in that, far from relying on inherited Cuban

styles, it draws liberally from diverse Caribbean musics; hence, for example, the tendency among Latino musicians to speak—misleadingly, I would say—of the “Afro-Caribbean” roots of salsa. In this article, I do not intend to discuss at length the relationship between salsa and both *merengue* and *cumbia*. Of greater relevance here is the frequently-encountered argument (for example, Duany 1984:198) that salsa has incorporated substantial elements of Puerto Rican musics, such as the *plena*, *bomba*, and *seis*. I submit that such arguments have been grossly overstated, and that the precise nature of Puerto Rican musical elements in salsa merits clarification.

Cesar Rondón, for example, asserts that by the mid-1970s the *bomba* and *plena* became firmly established in salsa, not only in Puerto Rico, but in New York as well (1980:171). With full respect for the erudition of Rondón’s work, I find this statement unsupportable. *Plena* and *bomba*—even in their *salon* varieties—are virtually never heard on New York Latin radio, except perhaps in occasional “oldie” programs featuring, for example, Cortijo’s music. They are very rarely performed in clubs.<sup>12</sup> In the repertoires of mainstream salsa bands, they are so infrequent that it would be a fairly simple matter to enumerate their specific occurrences. *Bomba* and *plena* do not play significant roles in the music of El Gran Combo and the Sonora Ponceña, the two most popular salsa bands based in Puerto Rico—and the bands which are often celebrated as most distinctly Puerto Rican. Finally, as I have noted above, *plena* and *bomba de salon* are themselves heavily Cubanized in style.

Other indigenous Puerto Rican elements in salsa may be somewhat more widespread, although often subtle in nature. The most prominent atavism is the use of the *jibaro* music vocables “le-lo-lai” by Puerto Rican and Nuyorican salsa vocalists. A few salsa songs contain snippets of familiar *danzas* like “La Borinqueña.” Then there is a handful of songs drawing from *jibaro* models, including several of Conjunto Clásico, a number of Willie Colon’s earlier pieces, and such songs as El Gran Combo’s “Si no me dan de beber, lloro,” whose tune is based loosely on *seis enramada*. Another more self-consciously nationalistic example is Conjunto Libre’s “Imágenes Latinas,” which commences with an *aguinaldo*. One also encounters such claims as that of salsero Orlando Fiol, who feels that El Gran Combo’s melodies have a “folksy” and ineffably Puerto Rican quality, quite different from the flavor of Cuban melodies. Fiol also contends that most Puerto Rican singers place less emphasis on *clave* than do their Cuban counterparts (personal communication). Familiar Puerto Rican poems have inspired a few salsa song texts, such as that of “Catalina la O,” which borrows phrases from a poem of Luis Palés Matos. One might also mention the occasional collaborations of *cuatro* virtuoso Yomo Toro with salsa bands, and, of course, the dynamic, if marginal uses of traditional Puerto Rican elements in the musics of groups like Grupo Folklórica y Experimental Nuevayorquino.

Taken as a whole, such incorporations of traditional Puerto Rican music elements into salsa have been common enough that they can be said to lend a Puerto Rican flavor, however subtle, to some contemporary salsa. Nevertheless, they do not alter the fact that mainstream salsa remains firmly rooted in the rhythms, formal structures, harmonies, and instrumental styles of the dominant genres of Cuban dance music, the *son/guaracha/rumba* complex. Indigenous musical forms like the *plena*, *bomba*, and *seis* have not constituted the bases for popular Puerto Rican musics since Cortijo's decline; the popularity of *plena* and *bomba* in the music of Cortijo thus constituted a rather special and unique period in Puerto Rican music history (see Malavet Vega 1988:154–55). This fact, I reiterate, should not be taken to deny the “authenticity” of salsa as Puerto Rican or pan-Latino music; however, that “authenticity,” I submit, is better based on more complex phenomena of socio-musical resignification.

### **Cuban Music as a Home-Grown Transplant**

A stronger case for the Puerto Rican nature of salsa can be based on the second argument suggested above, that since Puerto Ricans have cultivated and enjoyed Cuban dance music for several generations, there should be no contradiction involved in regarding it as Puerto Rican music. As we have discussed, Puerto Ricans had effectively adopted the Cuban *contradanza* and, later, the *bolero*, converting them into symbols of Puerto Rican nationalism. Similarly, the Cuban *guaracha* had already taken root in Puerto Rico in the latter nineteenth century. Brought by Cuban *teatro bufo* troupes and migrant Puerto Rican agricultural workers, the *guaracha* came to be the dominant up-tempo dance genre throughout the island. Originally it differed from the *son* in its earlier evolution, its often bawdy texts and association with houses of ill-repute, its faster tempo, heavier downbeat, and alternating verse-chorus form (rather than the *son*'s bipartite *canto-montuno* form). As in Cuba, however, the *guaracha* came to be heavily influenced by the *son* from the 1920s on, to the extent that the two genres became largely indistinguishable. Perhaps because of the early advent of the *guaracha*, Puerto Ricans have largely continued to use the term *guaracha* rather than *son* to designate their up-tempo Afro-Latin urban dance music. Hence, I have noted that for many Puerto Rican and Nuyorican musicians, “*son*” tends to connote the Cuban genre of the 1920s–30s, whereas for Cubans, the term may also refer to the most contemporary pieces by Irakere or other bands.

Regardless of terminology, it is clear that from the turn of the century generations of Puerto Ricans grew up reared on the Cuban-derived *guaracha*, *son*, and *bolero*, such that they naturally came to regard these musics as their own. Glasser (1990, 1991) has shown that Puerto Ricans in New York, from the 1920s on, became the principal performers and con-

sumers of Cuban-derived musics. Puerto Rican musicians have since the 1930s outnumbered Cuban performers of Cuban-style music in New York (and as studio musicians they have recently come to be outnumbered themselves by Dominicans). More importantly, New York City itself was a crucible for the evolution of the mambo, which emerged as a collaborative product of New York-based Cuban and Puerto Rican/Nuyorican musicians like Tito Puente. Meanwhile, the ultimately Cuban origin of the modernized *son*, *guaracha*, and *bolero* was not perceived as a contradiction, since these genres came to be effectively resignified as pan-Latin musics. A similar process occurred with the traditional rumba itself, which was the primary genre in the roots-oriented vogue of street drumming that developed in the New York and Island barrios from the late 1950s. The *rumba guaguancó*, which now resounds throughout weekends in East Harlem and in places like Santurce's Alto de Cabro, was adopted as a symbol of Puerto Rican, Nuyorican, and pan-Latino solidarity, to the extent that it can currently be said to flourish on a scale at least as large as that of its Cuban heyday in the early twentieth century (see Lopez 1976).

The Cuban origins of these genres are not wholly irrelevant. In the street and competition rumbas I observed in Puerto Rico in 1991, a number of the *coros* performed were from familiar pop songs like Celia Cruz's "Bemba Colorá," suggesting that not only is the rumba imported, but that it has come to Puerto Ricans second-hand, by way of commercial salsa. Similarly, the *guaguancó* of the contemporary street-drumming scene generally does not include dance, which was the focus of the original Cuban rumba, but cannot be transmitted by recordings; the vocal *canto* of the traditional rumba often also seems to be elided, as the emphasis is now primarily on the showy *quinto* (conga) playing.

Accordingly, as some Nuyorican and Puerto Rican musicians realized that their favored genres were primarily Cuban in origin, they took a renewed interest in studying the roots through old recordings. For Nuyorican innovators Andy Gonzalez, Jerry Gonzalez, Oscar Hernández, and others, record collector and musical savant René Lopez was the guide to the Cuban sources, which the avid students could then set out to master and subsequently build upon (Singer 1982:148–49, 157). Lopez's attitude toward salsa imitations of Cuban music is worth quoting at length:

By then I had met most of the band leaders and had all their albums and could then trace the tunes that were on the albums . . . I could trace them especially to Cuba, through these old 78s that I had collected. And I realized that they [contemporary musicians] were just reinterpreting things. And not only that—a lot of the time they would do the same *inspiración* [semi-improvised vocal lines in the *montuno*]. The Cuban one always sounded better, because it was *really* an *inspiración* . . . So I could see the difference between the real

*inspiración* and the copy of it. . . . I saw it differently. I saw the old stuff as good tunes which you should *interpret* your own way, not copy. (quoted in Singer 1982:143)

Statements like that of Lopez suggest two perspectives on the appropriation of Cuban musics by Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans. On the one hand, the *guaracha* had long since flourished among Puerto Ricans in New York and on the island, such that it had acquired a certain life and identity of its own, independent of its Cuban roots. On the other hand, the major lines of its evolution until 1960 continued to be developed primarily by Cubans. The most creative and dynamic modern musicians included those who, like the Gonzalez brothers, at once immersed themselves in the Cuban roots, and transcended them in their own syncretic development of a music expressive of Nuyorican barrio identity.

### **Salsa Style and Cuban *Conjunto* Style**

Before discussing the emergence of salsa as a barrio phenomenon, we should consider the third argument outlined above, regarding the stylistic differences between salsa and 1950s Cuban dance music. I have asserted above that salsa's debt to distinctively Puerto Rican genres like *seis*, *bomba*, and *plena* is overshadowed by its continued reliance on Cuban-derived elements; further, while Cuban genres have been avidly cultivated and enjoyed by Puerto Ricans for several generations, their Cuban origin remains potentially paradoxical in relation to their role as symbols of Puerto Rican identity. According to the third argument introduced above, salsa, as a distinctively Nuyorican product, is stylistically distinct in a number of ways from its primary source, pre-Revolutionary Cuban dance music; therefore, there is no contradiction or paradox in, for example, Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans regarding salsa as their own musical heritage; salsa is not merely recycled Cuban music. In my opinion, there is a fair amount of substance to this argument, which, indeed, is a complex hypothesis that cannot be adequately dealt with in the space of a page or two. This argument, like the previous one, has been stated or implied by a number of commentators (such as Rondón 1980, Duany 1984), but has not to my knowledge been explored analytically in any publication.

Before proceeding, I should clarify that the issue involved is the extent to which salsa—a music identified self-consciously as a genre in itself from the late 1960s on—has departed from Cuban dance music of the 1950s. Thus, where *salseros* and others (for example, in conversations with me on this topic) speak of *son* or “Cuban music,” they are generally referring to music of the pre-Revolutionary period. A false impression which such discussions might create is the notion that dance music in Cuba itself has remained static since 1959. In fact, it has not, as a casual listening to any record by Los Van

Van or Irakere can illustrate. Nevertheless, such groups have had very little influence outside Cuba itself, primarily because the American blockade effectively prevents them from touring in the United States (including Puerto Rico). Thus, for most Latinos outside Cuba, “Cuban music” tends to connote the dance music that flourished in Cuba in what was undeniably a period of extraordinary musical vitality, the 1940s–50s.

We have noted above that the Cuban *son/guaracha/rumba* complex continues to provide the basis for most aspects of salsa style, including rhythm, formal structure, orchestration, and individual instrumental styles. This continuity is of course the case for senior artists like Celia Cruz and Tito Puente, whose musical styles had matured twenty-five years before the coining of the term “salsa.” Hence, Tito Puente has dismissed the term as irrelevant to his music, and Celia Cruz is often described less as a *salsera* than as “reina rumba” (“queen of the rumba”) or as a traditional *guarachera*.<sup>13</sup>

More relevantly, a certain stream of salsa is clearly devoted to perpetuating a *típico* sound essentially based on that of the 1950s-style Cuban *conjuntos* (for example, with a horn section consisting only of two trumpets). Johnny Pacheco and Pete “El Conde” Rodríguez are the foremost exponents of this type of music. Some have argued that such music is not really salsa, especially since several of Pacheco’s hits were simply note-for-note renditions of 1950s songs by Cuban bandleader Felix Chapotín. However, Pacheco himself (a Dominican) was a co-founder of Fania records, the leading salsa label in the 1970s, and is generally regarded as a leading, if conservative *salsero*. For his part, Rodríguez is Puerto Rican, but, like many of his compatriots, was reared so thoroughly on Cuban music that he regards it as his own, and feels no hesitance in singing “Soy hijo de Siboney”—“I’m a son of [Cuban town] Siboney.” Rondón has referred to this brand of salsa as constituting a “Matancerization”—that is, a static, if vital cultivation of the style associated with the Sonora Matancera, a quintessential Cuban group of the 1950s (1980:90). Some salsa and Cuban music aficionados criticize the *conjunto* sound—and in some cases, salsa in general—as dated and mired in nostalgia (see, for example, Cabrera Infante 1981:6, Galán 1983:352–53, and Joe Falcón in CEP 1974:58), but there are many (including myself) who find in it a sort of authenticity uncharacteristic of so much contemporary mainstream commercial salsa, with its slick, plastic sound, its vapid, sentimental lyrics, and the mindless “pretty-boy” image cultivated by its singers.

Regardless of one’s verdict on the *conjunto* style perpetuated by Pacheco and others, it represents only one type of salsa, and not the most widespread one. The remainder, and larger portion of contemporary salsa differs in certain respects from the 1950s Cuban sound. As noted above, these differences have provided one sort of theoretical legitimization for the

Puerto Rican and Nuyorican sentiment that salsa is their own music, rather than just a recycled Cuban genre. Those who have suggested such an argument, however, have mentioned it only in passing, and they have tended to speak primarily in generalities. In fact, most of the significant distinctions between salsa and the fifties Cuban sound are concrete phenomena amenable to more analytical description. Such differences are evident both in the music of salsa innovators like Eddie Palmieri and Ruben Blades as well as “mainstream” commercial artists like Tito Nieves and Eddie Santiago who dominate radio, dance clubs, and steady record sales.

The more significant of these stylistic distinctions can be cited briefly (text content will be addressed further below). As Díaz Ayala (1981:337) has pointed out, the timbales standard in salsa groups was not a standard feature of the Cuban *conjunto*, but was imported into salsa in the 1960s (having been adopted earlier from *charanga* ensembles in the New York-style mambo). Salsa vocal lines, whether in melodies of the *canto* (“song”-like first section), or in *coros* and *inspiraciones* of the *montuno*, tend to be sung at a considerably higher pitch range than was typical of 1950s Cuban singing. Seldom heard are the medium-range *coros* so characteristic, for example, of Arsenio Rodríguez’s music. Salsero and ethnomusicologist Chris Washburne also observes certain differences in instrumental style: salsa *congueros* cultivate a dry, crisp, staccato sound, with relatively little variation, unlike the more resonant tone and looser, more fluid style of Cuban counterparts both today and in the past (personal communication). Similarly, horn styles also differ in certain nuances, perhaps due to the classical—as opposed to jazz—background of many modern Cuban sidemen. It is also possible that scrupulously proper realization of *clave* rhythmic structure in arrangements is becoming slightly less significant, as reflected, for example, in the popularity of songs like the Colombian Grupo Niche’s “Cali Pachanguero” (on Global 9878-1-RL) faulted by annoyed musicians (according to Washburne) for its jumbled (*cruzada* “crossed”) *clave*. Further, popular tastes in Puerto Rico and New York have come to depart not only from 1950s norms but even from each other in certain respects. Aside from the distinct styles typical of Puerto Rican studio musicians, audiences on the island, far from slavishly following New York preferences, have their own favorites. Island hits are generally different from mainland ones, favoring local groups like El Gran Combo and Sonora Ponceña.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, one may make certain distinctions which clearly derive from changes in era and technology rather than style *per se*. In particular, salsa recordings have a dry, clean, slick, and crisp sound, typical of digital or solid-state recording techniques and the practice of overdubbing prevalent in this country as a whole. Recordings of the 1950s, as well as many modern Cuban recordings (especially those done with vacuum-tube equipment), have a

warmer, more resonant and ambient sound, as well as a looser, more spontaneous feel due to being recorded live in the studio, that is, in a single take. Hence, for example, Washburne relates how in a 1991 recording session of a group led by (Cuban immigrant) Daniel Ponce, the artists deliberately attempted to recreate a “Cuban” sound by using old-fashioned RCA microphones, placing them further from the instruments in order to achieve greater ambience, and insisting that the recording be done in a single take, rather than by laying individual tracks (personal communication). Similarly, one may observe that there is much greater influence of jazz in mainstream salsa (as well as in modern Cuban dance music) than in *conjunto* music of the 1950s. Rock harmonic progressions also occasionally occur (for example, beneath the *coro* of Colon’s “Juanito Alimaña”).

How should we assess the significance of these stylistic distinctions? On the one hand, they are mostly in the realm of nuance, in no way altering the continued reliance on the basic style, form, and rhythmic structure of the Cuban *son*. On the other hand, taken collectively, they could be argued to lend salsa a markedly distinct flavor from that of its Cuban antecedents. Rondón’s reference to Ray Barretto’s music as constituting a “modernization of the Cuban *son*” (1980:87) could be taken to apply to salsa in general. As Rondón argues, salsa and 1950s Cuban music are best regarded as “fraternal” musics rather than identical ones (ibid.:137).

### **Salsa as a Contemporary Resignification**

We may now turn to the final argument introduced above, which is socio-musical rather than musicological in nature. In brief, it would resolve the paradox of the continued reliance on Cuban-derived styles by noting that the social significance of these idioms has changed in the salsa context. Salsa emerged as a product primarily of the Latino communities in New York barrios, affirming their growing sense of ethnic and class identity in the face of social, economic, and political marginalization and exploitation. Salsa’s significance as a vehicle for Latino identity has been expressed explicitly in song texts, statements by musicians and listeners, and, less explicitly, in the very fact of its popularity among urban Hispanics in a period of heightened sense of ethnic identity. I have mentioned above, for example, the enthusiasm with which salsa innovators Andy and Jerry Gonzalez immersed themselves in the study of Cuban music; despite such avidity, however, their goals for their own music were quite distinct, involving a combination of Cuban music, modern jazz, and diverse Caribbean genres in a self-conscious attempt to create a music reflective of their own identities as New York-born Latinos (see Singer 1982:213–14).

Some salsa songs, particularly several of Colon and Blades, chronicle the violence and vicissitudes of daily life in the barrios (thereby perpetuating,

it might be said, the Cuban *son's* tradition of referring to people, places, and events). Meanwhile, more commercial, sentimental mainstream salsa appeals to middle-class Latinos who do not identify with barrio subculture. Many listeners in the latter category may like salsa partly because it can be made to cohere (for example, as packaged on Spanish-language MTV) with American bourgeois consumerism. For others, however, salsa serves as a banner for Afro-Latin culture, or for international Latino solidarity in confrontation with American imperialism (see Flores 1991). Accordingly, many songs explicitly stress themes of pan-Latino unity. Even apolitical, commercial, mainstream salsa can be said to affirm Latino identity in some senses. Salsa has thus become an expressive vehicle collectively cultivated and patronized by urban Hispanic communities throughout the Caribbean Basin, and even in several South American cities. It has become identified with a new sense of Latino identity which is at once international, and yet rooted in local community culture. Its emergence in New York City has been intensified by the heightened awareness of Puerto Rican identity that many islanders (including Antonio Pedreira) felt upon migrating to or visiting the city, where they were exposed to racist discrimination, an acute and unprecedented sense of "otherness," and the existence of tight Puerto Rican enclaves. The subsequent emergence of salsa as a pan-Latino idiom has been furthered by the internationalization of capital, reflected, for example, in the emergence of Venezuela as the largest single market for salsa as well as the home of the major salsa label TH (Top Hits).

The development of salsa as a symbol of identity for New York and Caribbean Latinos has been discussed competently elsewhere (Singer 1982, Cortes, Falcón, and Flores 1976, Duany 1984, and especially Rondón 1980). Thus there is little need to reiterate the basic thesis of this phenomenon here, although the paradox involved in resignifying Cuban music is worthy of comment. As we have noted, some Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans have faulted salsa not only for its commercialization, but also, concomitantly, for its perceivedly excessive reliance on borrowed or inherited Cuban styles (see, for example, Joe Falcón in CEP 1974:58ff). Others have responded that Cuban-derived or not, salsa has been experienced by urban Latinos as a positive phenomenon, countering the cultural imperialism of rock, and helping them to outgrow the cultural inferiority complex of the 1930s–50s and discover a new pride in their language and Latino musical heritage. As Frank Bonilla (of the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños) states:

[Cuban music] is very powerful music that is very close to our own. If the whole world was responding to it, why shouldn't we? At the same time, there were always self-affirmations in our music . . . There are just as powerful explanations on the positive side as on the negative end. I prefer a positive interpretation because that's the way I remember experiencing it; a lot of people experienced

it in a very positive way . . . And the music was one of the most powerful things keeping the community together . . . [The music was] a principal point of reference in terms of maintaining self-identity. (quoted in Singer 1982:58)

Similarly, Félix Cortés describes how the adoption of Cuban musical forms in salsa involved not just reiteration and borrowing, but creative appropriation and reformation:

What happens here is that with the development of a community here Puerto Rican musicians interpret [Cuban music] and then take it and add to it their own vision of the world and of their own way of being and adapting it to what is happening in the community. . . . And even in content it changes. It no longer talks about a “dandy” in a community in Havana. It talks about the drug scene here; it reflects the community’s sexism, racism, etc. . . . The Puerto Rican takes ahold of [Cuban music] and incorporates it in his own development here, into a culture that is developing. (CEP 1974:VII, 62)

As Cortés suggests, the significance of salsa as a product of the Nuyorican or urban Latino experience in general—as opposed to the pre-Revolutionary Cuban experience—is most explicit in the realm of song texts. We have noted above how a significant minority of salsa texts do chronicle contemporary barrio life, call for Latino solidarity, and in other ways root themselves in modern urban life. However, the paradox of Cuban derivation also persists in the realm of song texts, many of which invoke tradition in a habitually Cuban form. A few songs quote from or modernize traditional Cuban rumbas (such as Eddie Palmieri’s version of “Consuélate” in “Ritmo alegre”). If any religion is invoked, it is generally the Cuban-derived *santería* rather than Christianity or Puerto Rican *espiritismo*.<sup>15</sup> Most typically, salsa songs, like their Cuban precedents, extol the rumba, the *guaguancó*. In most cases, technically speaking, the songs themselves are not even rumbas, and would not be labeled thusly by musicians, as they lack even the iconic trademarks of the *guaguancó*, the distinctive conga pattern and the rumba *clave*. A typical example—chosen among innumerable possible others—is Tite Curet Alonso’s “La esencia del guaguancó,” whose refrain calls, “Listen to it, the essence of the *guaguancó*.” As Alonso and musicians well know, the song is not in fact a *guaguancó* (but rather a *son*), and the rumba is invoked here more for a general sense of tradition, which happens to be a Cuban-derived one. Of course, as we have noted, the *guaguancó* has come to flourish as a street-drumming genre among Nuyoricans and Puerto Ricans since the late 1950s. Still, references to it in contemporary dance songs must naturally have a deeper resonance for Cubans, in whose culture rumba first emerged and has always persisted as a *fuentes viva*—a “living source”—of inspiration for modern dance music.

The invocation of Cuban tradition as well as the appropriation of the *guaguancó* itself illustrate at once the Cuban roots of Nuyorican and Puerto

Rican music, as well as their resignification. That is, Nuyoricans and Puerto Ricans have borrowed not only the dominant Cuban dance musics, but, however belatedly, they subsequently imported even the ancestral Afro-Cuban roots of these musics. In the process, street drummers and others have resignified the *guaguancó* as a vehicle for the claiming of public space, and as a Nuyoricans, Puerto Rican, and pan-Latino artifact.

Salsa itself, despite its ongoing vitality, will not be able to serve as the sole musical vehicle for a culturally united Caribbean or Latino community, due to its partial cooptation by American commercial interests and to its negligible popularity in the French and Anglo Caribbean. Already other musics are playing their own formative roles in the emergence of such identities, supported by the increasing internationalization and decentralization of the mass media, the globalization of capital, and the ongoing ethnic exchanges in New York City and elsewhere. Hence, for example, Latin (Spanish-language) hip-hop and reggae have emerged as pan-ethnic genres in their own right, constituting one more demonstration of the ability of economically marginal people to rearticulate and cross-pollinate extant musics to serve their own aesthetic needs. As José Luis González has pointed out, Puerto Ricans' command of English, rather than being a sign of their deculturation, may turn out to be an asset in creating new bonds with the Anglophone Caribbean (1980:43).

### **Conclusions: The Appropriation of a Tradition**

The cultivation and resignification of Cuban music by Puerto Ricans illustrate how the process of musical appropriation can take place. On a strictly musical level, appropriation can involve the active alteration, however subtle, of acquired styles, as competent imitation gives way to creative syncretism and further evolution. More importantly, however, appropriation is a socio-musical process, involving the resignification of the borrowed idiom to serve as a symbol of a new social identity. The history of Puerto Rican music as a whole can thus be seen as an ongoing rearticulation involving relatively indigenous genres and those which have been borrowed from abroad, primarily from Cuba. Since the mid-nineteenth century, these borrowed genres have not only become popular and taken root on Puerto Rican soil, but they have, in their own times, been reinvented as local entities and celebrated by cultural nationalists as symbols of Puerto Rican and Nuyoricans identity. Hence, as Duany notes (1984:200), a common Puerto Rican quip states, "La salsa es de aquí como el coquí"—"Salsa is as Puerto Rican as the *coquí*" (a kind of toad unique to Puerto Rico). Paradoxically, while Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans have turned out to be brilliant exponents of Cuban-derived musics, these forms have in many

respects flourished at the expense of more indigenous genres, from the *seis* to the *bomba*.

The Puerto Rican appropriation and resignification of an essentially intact Cuban musical heritage can be seen as one of several possible cultural reactions to a borrowed music. The fate of Cuban dance music in other countries provides contrasting examples, each conditioned by the nature of the host musical culture. In much of Africa, as mentioned, Cuban dance music constituted a hegemonic style, eventually to be wholly discarded in favor of genres like *mbalax* and *soukous* which were at once more rock-oriented and more indigenous. In Spain, Cuban campesino music and the *son* (referred to as *guajira* and *rumba*, respectively) were adopted as light flamenco subgenres, in the process being thoroughly stylized, indigenized, and “flamenco-ized” (*aflamencada*). Meanwhile, Cuban dance music (and later, salsa) has long been popular in the Dominican Republic, but has failed to marginalize the indigenous *merengue*, which, indeed, has become an international genre in its own right. The Puerto Rican reaction to Cuban musical influence—wholesale adoption and socio-musical rearticulation—thus contrasts with other scenarios, such as initial adoption and eventual rejection in Africa, absorption and indigenization in Spain, and coexistence in the Dominican Republic. For its part, the *merengue* may be regarded as a music still in the process of being resignified as local by Puerto Ricans; while it is widely popular among Puerto Ricans, it is still resented and criticized as “foreign” by some cultural nationalists (not to mention salsa musicians).<sup>16</sup>

To those observing a process of appropriation from the outside, and particularly from the perspective of the donor culture, the derivative aspects of the music in question may be far more striking than its new significance. Thus, for example, many Cubans tend to regard salsa as a mere recycling of 1950s-style Cuban music.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Westerners may tend to hear many international genres, from Thai *sakon* to the *nueva trova* of Silvio Rodríguez, essentially as imitations or reiterations of soft rock.<sup>18</sup> To some extent, of course, outsiders may be oblivious to the subtle local elements introduced into derivative genres by those who borrow them; or even when such idiosyncracies are pointed out, outsiders (and a few critical insiders) may continue to regard them as insignificant. However “authentic” such appropriations and resignifications may be, they illustrate how the global soundscape has come to constitute a complex matrix wherein regional hegemonic idioms interact with local grassroots musics, many of which may in turn have their own dialectic relationships with one or more other international genres.<sup>19</sup>

I have shown that the process of musical rearticulation involves historical conditions and issues of social identity as well as purely musical

developments. Until 1959, cultural borrowings from Cuba were facilitated by the ideological, political, aesthetic, and commercial ties between the two sister islands. By the time the American blockade had cut off direct influence, Cuban-style music had already established such deep roots in Puerto Rican culture that it was able to flourish on its own as a locally-cultivated urban popular music; ignorance of Cuban roots, as promoted by the blockade, has further facilitated the process of resignification. Meanwhile, since 1959 the presence of a large, affluent, right-wing, and often resented Cuban exile community in Puerto Rico has added a new twist to Puerto Rican attitudes toward Cubans.

The relationship between salsa and Puerto Rican identity is further complicated by the variety of kinds of cultural identity Puerto Ricans may have, whether these identities are competing and mutually exclusive, or compatible and overlapping. These self-images themselves interact with other sorts of identity—notably, political persuasion and economic interest—in ways which are often contradictory. Now, as before, many Puerto Ricans (especially of the bourgeoisie) identify with American values, political life, and culture, including rock music. Similarly, many Nuyoricans have lost touch with the Spanish language and naturally incline toward more American music and culture. Others might endorse Americanization, but resent their economically and culturally marginal status. As Gordon Lewis has observed, it has been the nature of American colonialism to divide Puerto Rico from the Caribbean and Latin America, while at the same time denying Puerto Ricans full incorporation into American culture (1963:208). Hence it is not surprising that *independentistas*, including the active and vocal Puerto Rican left, have been the most articulate and vehement in denouncing the consumerism, materialism, and Anglicization promoted by colonial status, and the most fervent in celebrating indigenous culture. In this discourse, rock music is often regarded as a primary antagonist—in one nationalist intellectual's words, “a menace to the preservation of Puerto Rican musical and cultural identity” (Díaz Díaz 1985:28). Duany has explored the differing senses of cultural identity of the salsa fans (*cocolos*) and rock music audiences (*rockeros*), noting how they personify opposing stances on the “acculturation/resistance spectrum” (1984:200–201). However, cultural nationalists come in all political stripes, including several ardent opponents of independence. Further, while *independentistas* often seek to embrace proletarian Puerto Ricans as victims of American exploitation and custodians of local culture, many lower-class Puerto Ricans, especially blacks, have traditionally favored statehood, feeling that their lot would be worse in an independent country.

There is little agreement as to what form cultural nationalism should take, just as Puerto Ricans themselves may hold such varied forms of social

identity. There have been those, from Hispanophilic reactionaries like Pedreira to contemporary anti-imperialists like Eduardo Seda, who have advocated promotion of a pure island culture, free of corrupting American commercial influence. Such a position is complicated by the presence of some 2.7 million people of Puerto Rican descent now living on the mainland. While island culture (including musical culture) is not identical to Nuyorican musical culture, it is ultimately impossible to separate Puerto Rican culture from Nuyorican culture. By extension, however, it is impossible to separate Nuyorican culture from that of the many other Latino communities in the eastern United States, and for that matter, in their countries of origin. Correspondingly, many Puerto Ricans think of themselves not only or even primarily as Puerto Ricans, but as Caribbeans, or Afro-Caribbeans, or Latinos. Such conceptions of identity exert their own influences upon extant musical genres, in some cases conditioning their appropriation and resignification in such a way that their original roots and ethnic associations become effectively irrelevant to their new audiences. Thus the history of music, and of culture in general, consists not merely of the evolution of overtly new genres and styles, but of the rearticulation of extant idioms to respond to new social circumstances.

## Notes

1. While assuming full responsibility for the contents of this article, I must acknowledge my debt to illuminating conversations with Hal Barton, Chris Washburne, Delfín Pérez, Orlando Fiol, Juan Flores, Roberta Singer, and Mayra Santos. All references to Washburne, Barton, and Fiol in this article are from personal communications. Special thanks are also due to Edgardo Díaz and Morton Marks for their extensive and insightful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2. For example: "With racist optic, Puerto Rican identity is then seen and evaluated through the optics of the Yankee oppressor, to whom we are a hybrid people and therefore inferior" (Seda 1974:10). Unfortunately, in this article I (a Yankee) am in fact asserting (like most Puerto Rican musicologists) the hybrid nature of Puerto Rican musical culture, although my intent is far from being derisive. Note that I use the term "American" to connote the United States in accordance with Puerto Rican and Nuyorican conventions—although in distinction, to Cuban conventions, for example, which would employ "North American" in such instances, recognizing the entire continent as "American."

3. African musicians like Tabu Ley Rocherau, Makiadi Franco, and Youssou N'Dour have all personified this process in their own careers, whose early stages were devoted to Cuban-style music. Critics of Cuban musical hegemony have included such figures as Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere: "Many of us have learnt to dance the rumba, or the cha cha, to rock and roll and to twist and even to dance the waltz and foxtrot. But how many of us can dance, or have even heard of the *gombe sugu*, the *mangala*, *nyang'umumi*, *kiduo*, or *lele mama* [Tanzanian genres]?" (quoted in Stapleton and May 1990:23).

4. In nineteenth-century Cuba, the terms *contradanza* and *danza* were used somewhat interchangeably to denote the same genre and its variants. Natalio Galán illustrates, however, that the gradual preference for the latter term reflects how it came more properly to denote a latter-nineteenth-century form, distinguished from the *contradanza* proper primarily by its free

couple choreography (1983). The term *habanera* (from *contradanza habanera*, Havana-style *contradanza*) was used primarily outside Cuba. In Cuba itself, *habanera* eventually came to denote a slow, vocal, light-classical song (such as Sanchez de Fuentes' "Tú"). In this paper, I exclusively employ the term *contradanza* for the Cuban *contradanza/danza*, in order to distinguish it from its Puerto Rican relative, which since the 1880s has been invariably and unambiguously called *danza*.

5. See, for example, Díaz Díaz 1990:12, Brau 1977. One need not be a Marxist to draw a correlation between, on the one hand, collective group dances and communal pre-capitalist social economies, and, on the other hand, intimate couple dances typical of capitalist societies wherein individuals or nuclear families are the socio-economic units.

6. Composer Julián Andino wrote in 1924, "The primitive *danza* was of eight measures, like those of Havana. [It] was ordinary music . . . It was I who made it sweeter, more elegant, and more rhythmic" (quoted in Asenjo 1952). Another oft-noted distinction is the rhythmic pattern known as the "elastic *tresillo*": the ambiguously written phrase  which is generally played .

7. In the realm of instruments, for example, *plena* involves the Indian *güicharo* (scraper), the African *tambor* (drum—actually not commonly used), and the various European instruments (concertina, guitar, and so on). Such common references to the island's "tri-racial roots" tend to exaggerate the extent of Indian contribution to Puerto Rican culture.

8. See, for example, 1929 recordings by Los Reyes de la Plena and El Trío Boricua on Harlequin HQ 2075, A:2 and B:5.

9. This illuminating volume is the product of a conference on Puerto Rican identity held at Hunter College. It is printed in eight individually paginated units. Although not named, Juan Flores, Angel Falcón, and Felix Cortes are the primary authors and editors.

10. Thus, for example, mulatto Nuyorican bandleader Guillermo Calderón changed his name to the more catchy and prestigious "Joe Cuba."

11. From Joy LP 1203, B, 1, and B,4, respectively.

12. Trombonist Chris Washburne, who has played regularly in a wide variety and number of New York salsa bands since 1988, states that he has never heard a band play an entire *plena* or *bomba*. (personal communication) For their part, Cortijo's own *plenas* and *bombas* (not to mention those of Concepción or Canario) are not played live in clubs, since cover bands generally play only current hits, while big-name bands perform only their own material.

It is worth noting that Rondón also overemphasizes the role of *plena* and *bomba* in Cortijo's own music, referring to hits like "Quitate de la vía Perico," "El negro bembón," and "Severa" as examples of such genres (1980:171); in fact, they are all *guarachas* (and are labelled thusly on records) played in mainstream Cuban style. Perhaps Rondón's misunderstanding in this regard led him to exaggerate the popularity of *plena* and *bomba*.

13. Puente has been quoted as stating, "The only salsa I know comes in a bottle: I play Cuban music" (quoted in Martínez 1982).

14. Chris Washburne notes that Puerto Rican studio hornmen play markedly softer than do their New York counterparts, and that English-language salsa hits enjoy little appeal on the island. Due to the expense of touring, bands travel relatively infrequently between Puerto Rico and the United States. Only a few major artists, it should be noted, are based in the island.

15. Hector Lavoe's "Todopoderoso" would constitute the best-known exception. In general, one could draw a parallel between the Nuyorican and Puerto Rican appropriation of Cuban music with their adoption of *santería*. The fact that this faith is borrowed from Cuban tradition makes it no less significant for its tens of thousands of Nuyorican and Puerto Rican adherents.

16. I noted that an island journalist denounced a local politician for playing *merengue* over his P.A. system at a December 1991 rally.

17. Hence Monguito's song "No le llame salsa a mi son, díle música cubana" ("Don't call my son 'salsa,' call it Cuban music"). I have discussed Cuban views on salsa in Manuel 1987:69–71. See also Cabrera Infante 1981:6 and Natalo Galán 1983:352.

18. A case in point was a 1970s dialogue between members of a touring Chinese orchestra and a group of Western scholars; to the latter, the music presented by their guests, because of

its orchestration, harmony, and style, sounded like derivative nineteenth-century European symphonic music, with a dash of tame nationalism in the form of pentatonic themes. When such impressions were tactfully suggested, however, the visiting musicians protested that their music was thoroughly Chinese, pointing out that the themes derived from local folk melodies (Fang Kun 1981).

19. Slobin 1992 and Hannerz 1989 provide insightful appraisals of this phenomenon.

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