Siento una Flauta: Improvisational Idiom, Style, and Performance Practice of Charanga Flutists in New York from 1960 to 2000

Jessica Lynne Valiente
Graduate Center, City University of New York

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Siento una Flauta:
Improvisational Idiom, Style, and Performance Practice of Charanga Flutists in New York
from 1960 to 2000

by

Jessica Valiente

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts, The City University of New York

2015
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music to satisfy the dissertation Requirement for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Benjamin Lapidus

__________________________

Date

__________________________

Chair of Examining Committee

Norman Carey

__________________________

Date

__________________________

Executive Officer

Stephen Blum

__________________________

Peter Manuel

__________________________

Danilo Lozano

Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
SIENTO UNA FLAUTA:
IMPROVISATIONAL IDIOM, STYLE, AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE OF CHARANGA FLUTISTS IN NEW YORK FROM 1960 TO 2000

Advisor: Professor Stephen Blum

The charanga, the Cuban dance music ensemble consisting of flute, strings, piano, bass, timbales, congas, and güiro, and vocals, underwent five decades of evolution in Cuba, beginning in the early 20th century. It was the breeding ground for two significant popular dance music genres, the mambo and the cha-cha-chá, before being transplanted to New York City in the mid-1950’s. Charangas came to New York when the popularity of the mambo and the chachachá was well-established there. Once in New York, the charanga gave birth to another dance craze, the pachanga, securing its position in the Latin dance music scene, New York City’s popular culture, and social life.

This dissertation traces the musical evolution of the charanga in New York City from 1960 to 2000, through all of the developments in Latin popular dance music in which it participated, with definitions and examples of those music genres. Discussions of the growth and development of the Latino community in New York during that time period, the charanga’s commercial and social significance, and the entrance of professional women instrumentalists into the field of charanga and Latin dance music are included. Special attention is given to the role of the flute as the lead instrument, the flute’s improvisational idiom, and to organological questions of the traditional French five-key simple system flute vs. the modern Boehm-system flute used today. Performance practice analysis describes the contributions of seven major
artists: Belisario López, José Fajardo, Johnny Pacheco, Eddy Zervigón, Andrea Brachfeld, Karen Joseph, and Connie Grossman. 19 full-length transcriptions of recorded improvised solos by these artists are included with commentary for practice and study. An appendix includes a summary of the work of two additional artists, Alberto Socarrás and Rolando Lozano, with ten additional solo transcriptions.
For my father,
John Mariano Valiente,
my greatest supporter,
and for Max Salazar,
my mentor and friend.
Acknowledgements

A large task usually requires the help and participation of many people, and so it was with this thesis. First and foremost, this project was made possible through a generous grant from the American Association of University Women. Without their funding in the form of an American Dissertation Fellowship, I could never have dreamed of returning to graduate school to finally complete my long-overdue dissertation while I still had school-aged children at home. But the AAUW gave me much more than money. During my dissertation year, I had the wonderful opportunity to meet and get to know members of AAUW-NJ, and local branches in Nutley, Greater Wayne Area, Mountain Lakes, and Summit in New Jersey. These astounding women provided me with encouragement, support, and occasionally some much needed rest and recreation, while their own stories gave me inspiration. I am particularly grateful to Shana Sabbath and Theon Ford in the Grants and Fellowships office, as well as Sally Goodson, Mary Graves, Candace Shanks, Lorraine LaShell, and Neela Pushparaj.

The expertise, integrity, and persistence of all of the members of my dissertation committee made this project more veracious than I could have done on my own. Stephen Blum, Peter Manuel, Danilo Lozano, and Benjamin Lapidus all approached my work with dedication and rigorous attention to detail, and for this I am very appreciative. I am particularly thankful to Stephen Blum, my dissertation advisor. His high standards for academic excellence inspired me throughout my entire doctoral program. I have never met a scholar or educator whom I have admired more. And I am also very grateful to Danilo Lozano, whom I consider to be a
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The most profound influence on the content of this work came from the late Latin music historian Max Salazar, and from record collector Harry Sepulveda of Times Square Record Mart. Both of these men were incredibly generous with their time and vast knowledge of charanga and Latin music in New York.

Numerous friends and colleagues, particularly those who had gone through this process before me, gave invaluable advice, on everything from the fellowship application to committee selection to research and writing. I would like to thank all of the following Ph.Ds. and D.M.As: Mark Weinstein, Gerald Meyer, Kyra Gaunt, Teresita Levy, Catherine Siemann, Pauline Alama, Edina Renfro-Michel, Lisa Hazard, and Elizabeth Wollman. My colleagues in the world of flutes also shared their knowledge and expertise on numerous topics that were particularly helpful in putting together the more technical chapters on organology and style. I am grateful to Andrea Brachfeld, Karen Joseph, Connie Grossman, Eddy Zervigón, René Lorente, Osvaldo R. Benavides, Hector Nieves, Peter C. Noy, Ardal Powell, Michele Smith, Guillermo Hernandez, Jem Hammond, Rick Wilson, Terry McGee, Daniel Deitch, Phillipe Alain-Duprés, Francis Dozin, Keith Freeman, and Michael Lynn.

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Older generations of my family lived so much of this history and inspired this project and my entire career: first, my mother, Candida Macaya Valiente, who started it all decades ago when I was an undergraduate music student in New York City. Always strapped for cash, she said to me (more than once), “Why don’t you do some Latin gigs and make some money?” Thus began the journey. She and her siblings – Giovanna, Elisa, and Santos – filled in the rest, with stories of my great-grandparents and grandparents dancing to danzones; the girls dancing at The Palladium on Friday and Saturday nights; my mother sneaking out to the uptown and Bronx clubs where they were not allowed to go; my grandmother entering every pachanga contest (in her 40’s!) and winning them all; all three girls making their little brother learn the steps to mambo, son-montuno, chachachá, and pachanga (but not letting him lead); and my mother dancing the pachanga all night at Giovanna’s wedding with a broken pinkie toe in stiletto heels. All of these stories made the history contained in this project very real and alive for me. I am also very glad that my mother was able to provide me with a quiet place to work away from home, in the form of my old room, and with occasional help with the children.
At this point in history, we are in an age where friends and communities interact with one another in cyberspace via ever-changing forms of social media. That being the case, I think I would be remiss if I did not thank a large and supportive community of friends on Facebook. Their support and encouragement helped me through many long, late nights of writing and over many frustrating obstacles.

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## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Musical Examples</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Solo Transcriptions</td>
<td>xx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Purpose and Scope</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Current State of Research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Methodology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1: A Brief Summary of the History of Charanga in Cuba</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What Is Charanga?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “French” Music in Cuba in the 19th Century: The Contradanza</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Danzón</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Charanga in Cuba, 1900-1950</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The 1950’s in Cuba: The Chachachá and the Descarga:</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2: The Latino Community and Charangas in New York</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Before 1960</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Charangas and the Mambo and Chachachá Era in New York City</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1959-1965: The Pachanga Dance Craze</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Boogaloo Era</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Salsa, Charanga Salsera, and the 1970’s</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Charanga in the 1980’s</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Charanga Renaissance</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3: Music and Dance Genres</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Danzón</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Danzón-Mambo</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Basic Son and Guaracha</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Chachachá</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The Descarga</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• The Pachanga 82
• Boogaloo 88
• Charanga Salsera 90
• Songo 91
• Recommended Reading 95

Chapter 4: Organology, the Five-Key Flute and the Boehm-System Flute 96

Chapter 5: Style, Method, and the Solo Transcriptions 110
• Style 110
• Purpose and Interpretation of Rhythmic Notation in the Transcriptions 114
• Method: Developing Technique for the Típico Style of Charanga Flute-Playing 116
• The Solo Transcriptions 119
  o Belisario López 119
  o José Fajardo: 127
  o Johnny Pacheco: 136
  o Eddy Zervigón 144

Chapter 6: Charanga Women 150
• Women Instrumentalists in Latin Popular Music in New York 150
• Performers on Modern Flutes 156
• The Solo Transcriptions 158
  o Andrea Brachfeld 158
  o Karen Joseph 169
  o Connie Grossman 174
• Women Instrumentalists Working in Latin Music in New York City in 2015 183

Conclusion 184

Appendix: Additional Solo Transcriptions 188
• Alberto Socarrás 188
• Rolando Lozano 195
• Johnny Pacheco (additional solos) 204
Select Discography  210
List of Interviews  218
Bibliography  219
## List of Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Electric upright bass, or “baby” bass</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Timbales, or pailas criollas</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Cuban güiro</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Congas, or tumbadoras</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Five-key flutes used in charanga, French manufacture</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Modern, or “Boehm” flute</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Tone hole placement in Boehm flute (body only)</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Tone hole placement of D1, C2, and C#2 tone holes</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Baroque one-key flute</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## List of Musical Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.14  2-3 son clave  72
3.15  Guajeos from “Almendra” and from Orestes Lopez’s “Mambo”  73-74
3.16  Danzón-mambo, timbales  74
3.17  Güiro pattern for chachachá  74
3.18  Mambo bass patterns  75
3.19  Conga tumbao  75
3.20  Piano guajeo, guaracha or son  77
3.21  Violin guajeo, guaracha or son  77
3.22  Bass tumbao, son or guaracha  78
3.23  Piano guajeo, chachachá  79
3.24  Bass, rhythmic pattern options for chachachá  79
3.25  Bass, realizations of rhythm option 2  80
3.26  Violin guajeos for chachachá  80
3.27  Timbales, paila examples  81
3.28  Mambo bell pattern  82
3.29  “La Pachanga,” piano guajeos  83
3.30  “La Pachanga,” bass patterns  83
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>“La Pachanga,” conga pattern</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>“La Pachanga,” timbales and güiro patterns</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>“El Chivo,” piano introductions and guajeos</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>“El Chivo,” bass introduction and accompaniment patterns</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>“El Chivo,” conga pattern (tumbao variants)</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>“El Chivo,” timbales</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>“Oyeme mulata,” piano guajeos</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>“Oyeme mulata,” bass tumbao variants</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>“Oyeme mulata,” conga tumbao variants</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>“Oyeme mulata,” timbales patterns</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>Common son montuno piano guajeos</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>“Boogaloo Blues,” piano guajeo</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>“Boogaloo Blues,” bass line</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>“Suaviloo,” piano and bass patterns</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>Martillo</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>Bongó bell pattern</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>“Changuito’s especial”</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.48  basic drum set patterns for songo  
3.49  sample conga patterns for songo  
3.50  bass sample, “El Buena Gente”  
3.51  bass sample, “La Resolución”  
3.52  piano guajeo, “Sandunguera”
**List of Solo Transcriptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcription</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belisario Lopez:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Yo vine pa’ve”</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “El camarón”</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Pachanga bum bum”</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>José Fajardo:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Guajireando”</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Güiro en charanga”</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Vengo diferente”</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johnny Pacheco:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Chechere”</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “El chivo”</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Sabroso como el guarapo”</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddy Zervigón:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “You’re Looking Fine”</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Isla del Encanto”</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Brachfeld:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Pita camion”</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Andrea Brachfeld, cont’d.)

- “Pare cochero” 163
- “La flauta de Andrea” 166

Karen Joseph:

- “Yo seguiré” 170
- “Como se goza en el barrio” 173

Connie Grossman:

- “Los Sitios llaman” 176
- “Mi charanga” 179
- “El chivo quiere que le den candela” 181

Alberto Socarrás:

- “Masabi” 190
- “Componte cundunga” 193
- “Sobando el son” 194

Rolando Lozano:

- “Tres Lindas Cubanas” 197
- “Los tamalitos de Olga” 200
- “Mambo de cuco” 202
Johnny Pacheco (additional):

- “El agua del clavelito” 204
- “Masacote” 206
- “Cumbaye” 208
- “Recuerdos de Arcaño” 209
Siento una Flauta: Improvisational Idiom, Style, and Performance Practice of Charanga Flutists in New York from 1960 to 2000

Introduction

The charanga – the Cuban dance-music ensemble consisting of a solo flute lead, vocals, violins, piano, bass, congas, and timbales – has a history that reaches back 100 years. During its first 50 years of development in Cuba, the charanga performed popular dance music for Cuba’s elite classes and urban residents, and gave birth to two internationally-influential popular dance crazes, the mambo and the chachachá. In the 1950’s, the charanga’s popularity achieved international status, with the genre’s major artists touring in the United States, Mexico, Europe, and Japan. During this decade charangas established themselves in New York City and have intermittently been an important part of New York’s Latin dance music scene since then and through the late 1990’s. Throughout its history, the charanga has been the training ground for many of Latin music’s most influential artists.

Despite the charanga’s importance to the development of Cuban popular music and Latin dance music, the field of charanga research is small. No scholarly research devoted specifically to charanga existed before 1987. Since then, a few studies covering social, historical, musicological, ethnographic, and performance practice topics in charanga have appeared in the United States; there is now a fledgling field of charanga research. Most of the existing studies have been rightly focused on charanga’s origins and its development in Cuba. But now that the field is growing, it is time to address the second most significant locale and era of charanga’s development: the charanga in New York in the second half of the 20th century.
Purpose and Scope:

The purpose of this project is to move the field of charanga research forward to the second half of the 20th century and to address its development in the second most significant region where it flourished, New York City.

Since the founding of the first New York-based charangas in the late 1950’s, they have participated in and even given birth to major popular Latin dance music movements. This thesis will survey the history of the most significant bands in New York and their contributions to major developments of the genre. It will also analyze the work of the top New York-based flutists active during that time, their individual improvisational styles and their contributions to the evolution of charanga flute improvisational style as a genre. Written transcriptions of recorded flute solos are included for the purpose of practice and study by flutists utilizing this project. The scope of this project will be limited to charangas and charanga flutists based in New York City after 1960.

The Current State of Research:

Before 1988, there were no published scholarly works devoted to charanga. Many scholarly works on the history of Cuban music mention charanga, and some devote significant space to its definition and history. Most notable among these is Iconografía del danzón, published in Cuba in 1967, but many dictionaries, encyclopedias, and histories of Cuban music contain

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1 Ezequiel Rodríguez, Iconografía del danzón (Havana, Cuba: Archivo de la Delegación Provincial, 1967).
sections on charanga. Latin music journalism in popular, fan, and industry magazines, offers a wealth of published knowledge on the history of charanga and charanga musicians. For the earliest researchers on charanga, articles in popular literature have been the largest and most detailed resource. Although the limitations of space in such publications do not allow for in-depth exploration of a large topic, when taken as a whole, this arena represents a thorough treatment of the history of charanga. Among these, Latin music historian Max Salazar amassed the greatest volume of work, contributing dozens of articles on the genre over his decades-long career. The available body of criticism and journalism intended for the general public includes profiles of the major ensembles, and flutists’ biographies in *Latin New York, Latin Beat, Descarga.com*, and other industry and fan magazines in both the United States and in Cuba.

In 1988, John P. Murphy wrote an ethnography of three major New York City charangas as his master’s thesis at Columbia University. With a very specific scope of time and place, this unpublished thesis is an excellent snapshot of the charanga scene in New York at the midpoint of its history. In 1990, flutist Danilo Lozano, son of legendary Cuban charanga flutist Rolando Lozano, wrote a master’s thesis which is, to date, the most thorough treatment of charanga’s history, scholarly or otherwise. Although the primary purpose of his thesis is a discussion of charanga as a representation of Cuban creole nationalism and identity, he also makes major contributions to ethnography, musicology, and performance practice. Lozano’s analysis of charanga arrangement and flute improvisation focuses on his father’s work with Orquesta

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Siento una Flauta: Introduction

Aragón in the early 1950’s. Aragón has been the most significant and long-running charanga in the genre’s history (active since 1939), and Lozano’s seminal recordings with them in the 1950’s established their place of predominance. So far, Lozano’s thesis remains unpublished.

In 2011, ethnomusicologist Ruth M. Witmer completed her doctoral dissertation on charanga, class, and identity at the University of Florida.⁴ Although this work says less about charanga and Cuban identity than Lozano’s master’s thesis, she provides a more detailed description of the evolution of charanga as an instrumental ensemble than any other author in English had done before. She also makes a unique contribution to the field with her discussions of flutist Pancho El Bravo, certain dance genres in post-revolutionary Cuba, and the charanga music scene in south Florida. She also includes a number of valuable full-scores and flute solo transcriptions.

In 2014, British musicologist Sue Miller published her 2010 doctoral thesis on charanga under the title Cuban Flute Style: Interpretation and Improvisation.⁵ Miller also addresses the history of charanga in Cuba. She has added to the available scholarly work on charanga with more detailed discussion of early danzón-era flutists, the florear style of melodic embellishments, some elementary discussion of practical method, and analysis of her transcriptions of improvised solos by Cuban flutists José Fajardo and Richard Egües. Miller

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⁵ Sue Miller, Cuban Flute Style: Interpretation and Improvisation (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2014).
Siento una Flauta: Introduction

chronicles her own studies in charanga flute playing as a form of personal ethnography in addition to her discussion of pedagogical method.

Until now, no academic study of charanga has addressed the geographical region and period of time discussed in this project. This will be the first comprehensive study of the history of charanga in New York City from 1960 to 2000. Additionally, this project will add transcription and analysis of solo performances by major flutists whose work has not been discussed in print, specifically, Johnny Pacheco, Belisario López, Andrea Brachfeld, Karen Joseph, and Connie Grossman. Finally, no study of charanga, Latin music, or Latin music and gender has given detailed attention to the contributions of women instrumentalists in charanga (few even mention them). The final chapter of this thesis will take a close look at the careers and contributions of three pioneering women in charanga in New York City at the end of the 20th century.

**Methodology:**

The historical portions of this dissertation were researched via secondary sources, supplemented by personal conversations with audience members and dancers, radio personalities and collectors, and the artists themselves whenever possible. The analytical portions were accomplished by transcribing from recordings made in New York after 1960. Basic rhythm section foundation patterns were transcribed or realized for genre style and harmonic and rhythmic context, and entire recorded improvised solos from the major flutists of this era were transcribed. Transcriptions were analyzed for elements common to the
Siento una Flauta: Introduction

traditional charanga flute improvisation style, which are highlighted in the commentary preceding each transcription.
Chapter 1: A Brief Summary of the History of Charanga in Cuba

What Is Charanga?

Writing in 1981, Cuban musicologist Helio Orovio defines the term “charanga” as:

Tipo de agrupación llamada también (charanga) francesa. Surge en los primeros años del siglo XX, como derivación de la orquesta típica o de viento. Interpreta principalmente danzones, aunque a partir de la irrupción del chachachá (1951) es vehículo idóneo para este nuevo género. Originalmente estuvo formado por la flauta, violin, piano, contrabajo, timbal o paila criolla, y güiro; se le ha incorporado la tumbadora, otros dos violines, y tres cantantes.¹

[A type of ensemble also called “charanga francesa.” It arises in the first years of the 20th century as a derivation of the “orquesta típica,” or wind band. It performs mainly “danzones,” although from the eruption of the chachachá (1951), it is a suitable vehicle for this new genre. Originally formed by the flute, violin, piano, upright bass, “timbal” or “paila criolla,” and güiro; it has incorporated the “tumbadora,” two more violins, and three singers.]²

While new research shows that it is not likely that the charanga francesa is a “derivation of the ‘orquesta típica’” (they seem to have evolved simultaneously),³ this is a good, practical definition of the charanga instrumentation and the dance genres associated with it during the first half of its history in Cuba. Most Americans who are familiar with Latin dance music would recognize the music played by this ensemble as belonging to the same complex of rhythmic

² This and all translations from Spanish to English in this thesis are my own.
³ In her 2011 dissertation, Ruth Witmer traces the evolution of Cuban indoor ensembles (woodwinds and strings), outdoor ensembles (brass and percussion added), and the nomenclature used to describe them. Both ensemble types seem to have parallel trajectories of development during roughly concurrent time periods. See Ruth Witmer, “Cuban Charanga: Class, Popular Music and the Creation of National Identity,” PhD diss., University of Florida, 2011, 72-89.
dance genres as the mambo and salsa, performed by a Latin rhythm section, but with a more
light and elegant instrumental combination of a flute lead with a string section, as opposed to
brass instruments. Cuban-American flutist and musicologist Danilo Lozano quotes his father,
legendary Cuban flutist Rolando Lozano, on the sound and the appeal of the charanga:

…the charanga is special because it is a soothing dance music. It is very beautiful to
listen to. It doesn’t blow the listener’s ear drums off. To the dancer, it is the perfect
dance music. You can dance to it all evening comfortably. You can enjoy the music and
the dancing simultaneously, unlike other types of popular music where the music is just
geared to make you dance, but its sound is not particularly graceful to the ear.4

The charanga instrumental format as it evolved in New York after 1960 is usually not very
different from the classic instrumentation that was established around 1900. The classic
charanga ensemble included a rhythm section that is similar to the rhythm section found in a
typical salsa conjunto. It includes upright bass (which was eventually supplanted by the
electrified upright bass, or “baby bass,” in the late 1960’s, see figure 1.1), piano, a pair of
timbales (a single-headed membranophone with an aluminum body, roughly the size and shape
of a snare drum, see figure 1.2), and a Cuban güiro (a dried, hollow gourd with wide grooves
and scraped with a stick, see figure 1.3). The tumbadora drum (a tall, narrow, single-headed
membranophone, played with both hands, known in English as the conga or conga drum, see
figure 1.4) was added to the rhythm section in 1938. The classic charanga utilizes only one
conga, although since the 1970’s in New York City, nearly all charangas use two congas, a larger
and a smaller, tuned to an interval of a perfect fourth.

Fig. 1.1: Electric upright bass, or “baby” bass.

Fig. 1.2: Timbales, or pailas criollas.

Fig. 1.3: Cuban güiro

Fig. 1.4: Congas, or tumbadoras
Apart from the rhythm section, the classic charanga ensemble included a string section of varying size and instrumentation. Some early charangas included only a single violin, but two or three violins quickly became more common. A few charangas, particularly in New York, have cello. Viola is extremely rare, but not unheard of. In general, most charangas have two or three violinists, but one to seven string players includes the extreme options.

Charangas have also included vocalists since the late 1920’s, but the most prominently featured instrument is the flute. During the first 35 to 40 years of the charanga’s evolution, the flute took the lead melodic role (although melodic duties were also given to the piano and to the string section, for variety). Even in its very earliest days, some exceptional charanga flutists were known to improvise frequently, and at length, but this was the exception. Beginning in the late 1930’s, the flute took on an increasingly important role as a lead improvising instrument as a general rule of the genre.

The history of the charanga proper can be traced, as Orovio states, to the early years of the twentieth century, but its antecedents extend back another century. Although this project is focused on charanga bands in New York City after 1960, a brief historical background on urban, elite dance music in Cuba in the nineteenth century is necessary for a thorough understanding of what was to come.

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6 Charanga’s antecedents and early history in Cuba has been treated very thoroughly in Lozano, “The Charanga Tradition in Cuba,” chapters 1 and 2. Also see Miller, “The Cuban Charanga” in Cuban Flute Style.
“French” Music in Cuba in the 19th Century: The Contradanza

Many styles of light classical and popular music that arose in the Americas in the 19th and 20th century can trace their origins to the English country dance in the 17th and 18th centuries. In addition to the Cuban danzón, the subject of this chapter, the Puerto Rican danza, Dominican merengue, Haitian meringue, the beguine from Martinique, Brazilian choro, American ragtime, and many more can claim some relationship to the country dance. Translated phonetically as the contredanse in French, the contradanza in Spanish, and back to English as the “contradance,” its dissemination throughout the western hemisphere shaped the future of music in the Americas in ways that are uncanny.

The story of the contradanza, its arrival and effects in Cuba has often been told in a linear fashion, summarized as follows: in the final years of the 18th century, there was a large wave of immigration from Haiti to Santiago de Cuba (a province at the far eastern end of the island). These immigrants were French creole plantation owners and their slaves. The refugee planters brought all of the trappings of their privileged home lives with them, including music and dance. Typical of slave-owning societies throughout the Americas in the 18th century, music for entertainment was performed for the white slave owners by their African slaves. One of the ballroom dance-music genres they brought with them was the contredanse.

While this Franco-Haitian connection on the far eastern end of the island has some significance for the development of charanga, we can gain a more helpful and complete understanding of the spread of the contradance if we view its dissemination not as a linear progression (England to France to Haiti to Cuba), but more like the spreading of wildfire. From
England, the country dance radiated out in all directions to other parts of Europe, spread to the western hemisphere via invasion and colonization, and occasional embers were carried by the wind and started new blazes in unlikely places. Both Peter Manuel and Ned Sublette cite England and Spain as sources of transmission of the contradance to Havana, on the opposite side of the island, in the mid-18th century. Numerous authors cite New Orleans as a source of transmission or reinforcement of the contradance in Havana at the same time of the Franco-Haitian migration to Santiago in 1803. Max Salazar also mentions a later migration of French refugees from South America to Havana in 1830, bringing a style of contra dance that was distinct from the Franco-Haitian one that had come to Santiago.

More important than the source of origin of the contradanza in Cuba is the way it was played once there, and how this affected the development of other genres which followed. In this regard, the Franco-Haitian migration is an important source. In Haiti, prior to this grand exodus, it is highly likely that the contra dance had already undergone some transformation—a process of Africanization in the hands of the slave musicians who staffed the orchestras. Although these orchestras performed European music on mostly European musical instruments (in this case, flutes, clarinets, sometimes other winds, and strings), they presumably interpreted the music through their own habits of Afrocentric performance practice, and the music evolved, particularly with respect to rhythm. These rhythmic transformations are not evident in printed

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contradanzas of the 19th century, but it is likely that they were a part of the way the music was interpreted live, first by black musicians in the Franco-Haitian orchestras, and later by the Cuban musicians of color who followed them. We can understand how these pieces were rhythmically altered and how Cuban audiences responded from reports of the time. Also, Ned Sublette says that New Orleans composer Louis Gottschalk left posterity with an excellent representation in his piano piece, “Ojos Criollos,” in which he tried to capture the essence of the Afro-Cuban sound in the contradanza. 10

In Cuba, as the contredanse caught on with the Cuban creole middle and upper classes, the process of creolization and Africanization begun in Haiti continued. 11 Rhythmic figures that are now strongly associated with Latin American music in general and Cuban music in particular arose from this continued transformation (see examples 1.1 – 1.3). The French orchestras in Santiago adopted some Cuban creole percussion instruments, the paila and the güiro, for more lively emphasis and performance of these rhythms.

Ex. 1.1: tango rhythm, or habanera rhythm

Ex. 1.2: amphibrach

10 Sublette, Cuba and Its Music, 150, 299.
Ex. 1.3: cinquillo rhythm

*The rhythm pictured in figure 1.1 was originally known as ritmo de tango in Cuba, prior to the development of the Argentinian tango. It eventually came to be known as the “tango” or “habanera” rhythm internationally.*

The contradanza not only became enormously popular, but also rose to the level of importance of a cultural and nationalistic symbol.\(^{12}\) It continued as a dance music genre played by the private woodwind-and-string orchestras in the homes of the elite (mentioned above). It also became a popular genre for piano parlor music composition, epitomized by creole Cuban composers such as Manuel Saumell.\(^{13}\) The contradanza did not remain confined to the private homes of the urban elite for long. Soon it was taken up by a popular wind band type of dance ensemble known in Cuba as the *orquesta típica*.

The orquesta típica in Cuba resembled other wind-and-percussion ensembles that were found in cities throughout the African diaspora at the turn of the 19\(^{th}\)-to-20\(^{th}\) century. Brass bands or woodwind and brass bands were common in Puerto Rico, Brazil, Suriname, Colombia, and New Orleans and the American south, in addition to Cuba. These generally included brass instruments of various ranges, clarinets (and some eventually included saxophones), ophecleides, and percussion instruments that varied, depending on the region. As brass

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\(^{13}\) Alejo Carpentier, *Music in Cuba* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001), 148, 191.
instruments and percussion are quite loud, these ensembles generally performed outdoors, often for public entertainment. The Cuban orquesta típica included one or two clarinets, one or two violins, one or two cornets or trumpets, trombone and/or ophecleide, upright bass, timpani, and güiro.

**The Danzón**

In the last quarter of the 19th century, Miguel Faílde, an orquesta típica bandleader in Havana, transformed the contradanza to an extended dance music genre. While retaining the rhythmic vocabulary established by Manuel Saumell in his contradanzas for piano,¹⁴ Faílde extended the contradanza’s short AABB form¹⁵ to a rondo format of AABBACCA. This practice of extension had begun to take place as early as 1855, according to Cuban musicologist Radamés Giro,¹⁶ and Faílde began his first similar experimentations in 1877. However, his 1879 composition “Las Alturas de Simpson” (“Simpson Heights”) is generally cited as the first to appear in this new format.¹⁷ Certainly, it was the first to be widely accepted by the public and to have a lasting impact. This new, extended structure was dubbed the danzón. It was a tremendous success with the public, and its popularity spread quickly. The new, extended format was more enjoyable for dancing, as the multiple repetitions of the contradanza’s two

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¹⁷ Max Salazar, "Two Centuries of Charanga," 12.
sections could be monotonous, but the danzón contained a greater variety of interesting material in the larger number of sections.

The astonishing success of the danzón can largely be attributed to its embodiment of creole Cuban ideals; it included instruments of both European and Antillean origin, and musical characteristics that represented Cuba’s European and African heritage. It was a musical symbol of a process of creolization that had been taking place since the early days of colonization, and now it was being disseminated through more social classes of Cuba.

Throughout this time period of the popularity of the contradanza and the danzón, the private orchestras continued to perform contradanzas and other ballroom dance genres in the homes of the elite, particularly in Santiago de Cuba. As the popularity of the danzón grew, the elite wanted to have it performed at their home soirées as well, but the sound of the orquesta típica was not suitable for indoor performances. So, the popular danzones were adapted for performance by their private, indoor, string-based orchestras. Some moderate changes were made to the instrumentation of these orchestras at this time, approximately 1899. The clarinet was eventually eliminated and percussion was added. The percussion included the güíro – so essential to the characteristic sound of the danzón – and the paila, which substituted for the much larger European timpani. Alongside of these were the flute and strings, and this was the format of the “charanga francesa.” In 1910, pianist Antonio Maria-Romeu formed his own charanga, and charangas have since included piano.

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The origins of the term “charanga” are not completely proven, but Ruth Witmer surveys many of the term’s earliest uses throughout Spain and Latin America, giving us a notion of its long history and varied meaning. Its meaning for Cubans is simple: charanga refers to a band or ensemble, and the implication is that it may be small or informal, sometimes with a dismissive or pejorative connotation. In the first decade of the 20th century, when orquestas típicas and the flute-piano-and-string based ensembles existed side by side, Cubans often referred to both ensemble types as charangas, but “francesa” was descriptive of the latter. The reason for the description “francesa” may seem obvious after the discussion of the role of the Franco-Haitian orchestras, but it is still the source of some debate, so a review of the evidence can be illuminating.

The immigrants who came from Haiti a century before were still known as franceses in Santiago de Cuba in the early 20th century, whether they were white, black, or mixed. Everything about them, including their music, was considered to be “French.” This offered some advantage to former slaves and free people of color, because to be either black, or worse, Haitian, was a serious and even dangerous disadvantage in any slave-holding society after the Haitian revolution. Even a century later, their descendants continued to call themselves and to be known to other Cubans as French. But the French association does not end there. Both Ned

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19 Lozano, “The Charanga Tradition in Cuba,” 10. Some plausible theories are also presented in Miller, Cuban Flute Style, 3-4.
20 Witmer, “Cuban Charanga,” 72, 75-78.
22 More on the “French” community in Santiago de Cuba can be found in Carpentier, Lozano, and Miller.
Sublette and Sue Miller quote seminal flutist and bandleader Antonio Arcaño as stating that the flute, strings, and piano ensemble was called *charanga a la francesa* because the French distinction indicated that it included a piano; the first piano in Santiago de Cuba arrived from Paris in 1810. The term “francesa” distinguished them from the orquestas típicas, (remember, both were sometimes called charangas), because those did not have pianos. Flutist José Fajardo reinforced the Haiti-to-Santiago connection by explaining that the charanga francesa evolved out of a small, stripped-down version of the French refugee ballroom orchestra called the *quinteto haitiano*, consisting of flute, violin, piano, bass, and güiro. On the western part of the island, these quintets came to be known also as *bungas*, a term of African origin.

Sue Miller mentions another French connection that deserves more attention, and that is the particular kind of flute used in the charanga francesa. Much more is said about the French flutes used in Cuban charanga in chapter four, but a few highlights are relevant here: 1) from its very beginnings, the charanga francesa has always used a particularly French design, rather than the English and German designs that were much more common everywhere else in Europe and the Americas in the early 20th century; 2) this particular design was current at the turn of the 18th to the 19th centuries, precisely when the Haitian Revolution and the Franco-Haitian migration to Cuba took place; 3) although this particular design of flute had not been used anywhere, not even in France, for half a century by the time the charanga francesa evolved, Cuban flutists in the charangas insisted upon using the precise style of flute.

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24 Miller, 4.
26 Miller, *Cuban Flute Style*, 4.
that came to Cuba with the Franco-Haitian migration of 1803, and they continue to insist on using flutes only by French makers; and 4) the flute was prominently featured in the charanga francesa (as it is in the modern charanga), and many of the bandleaders were flutists, creating a strong association between the flute itself and the ensemble. All of this evidence may be more circumstantial or coincidental than probative, but it is not logical to ignore it.

**The Charanga in Cuba, 1900-1950**

The orquestas típicas were soon eclipsed by the charangas, which began to perform in public as well as in private settings. One of the compositional characteristics that contributed to their success was their fondness for medleys of excerpts from opera and operetta, symphonies, musical theater, folksongs and popular songs, movie musicals, jazz, and anything that was a favorite with audiences, in the rondo format. This approach had tremendous public appeal; the dancers could hear many of their favorite songs in a single evening of dancing. The charangas’ and danzones’ popularity continued unchallenged, until approximately 1920, when rural ensembles came to the cities from the eastern provinces, performing a style of music called the son. The son, whose popularity and impact continue to this day throughout the globe, took the cities by storm, and the charangas could not compete. Charanga bands gradually made stylistic changes so that their performances would resemble the son somewhat, and they would

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27 The importance and the impact of the Cuban son cannot be overstated, both with regard to its impact on the development of popular music within Cuba, and with regard to the development of Latin music throughout the world. Authors and works on the son are too numerous to mention, but some relevant ones can be found in the bibliography.
retain some audience appeal. The son’s song structure included an open-ended vamp section at the end, called the “montuno,” and so the charangas added an extended vamp in a “D” section at the end of the original rondo format of the danzón. Supposedly, the first occurrence of this was in bandleader Jose Urfé’s composition, “El Bombín de Barretto” (“Barretto’s Derby Hat”) in 1910.28

The charangas referred to this “D” section as rumbeada. This should not be taken to mean that it bore any resemblance to the urban, Afrocentric street genre of percussion and voices known as rumba. Rumbear is also a slang expression that means “to party.” “Rumbeada” may simply mean that now we have arrived at the fun part. In both the montuno of the son and the rumbeada of the danzón, the section consisted of a combination of a short harmonic cycle performed by the strings, piano and bass, over rhythmic foundation patterns played by the percussion. In the son conjuntos, this provided an opportunity for the lead singer to improvise short phrases (sonear or inspirar), alternating with a refrain (estribillo) provided by the background singers (coro). In the charanga bands, the flute would usually take the role of improvisation, although sometimes the pianist was given an opportunity to improvise, for variety.

The next adaptation came when charangas added vocals, which helped them to compete with the increasing popularity of the son ensembles. The son conjuntos had vocals, and vocals have strong audience appeal. Aniceto Díaz’s “Rompiendo la Rutina,” written in 1929, is often cited as the first danzonete.29 Throughout the 1930’s, the danzonete created the careers of...

some significant Cuban vocalists, including Joseíto Núñez and Barbarito Díez. Additionally, flutist Belisario López spent the first fifteen years of his long and successful career performing and recording danzones and danzonetes (see chapter five for more regarding the career of Belisario López).

With the addition of vocals, the rondo structure of the instrumental danzones became impractical, and the format was shortened to simply sequential sections or strains: ABCD (the D section was still the montuno or rumbeada section).

In the latter half of the 1930’s, a number of significant musical changes took place that transformed the sound of the charanga to something that resembled the emerging national Cuban musical style much more closely. Most of these changes took place in the charanga of Antonio Arcaño, at the hands of his cellist and bassist, brothers Orestes and Israel Cachao Lopez. Arcaño’s charanga appeared frequently alongside the son conjunto of Arsenio Rodríguez, and the cross-fertilization between the two bands evidently inspired the Lopez brothers to make changes.\(^{30}\) One was that the piano’s role in the rumbeada section changed. Previously, the pianists had read from the string parts, and played static chordal pads to support the flute melody and improvisation. But the piano then adopted a rhythmic/harmonic foundation pattern, called the puntillo when performed by the tres in a son conjunto. In the hands of the pianist, it came to be called the guajeo. This change made the D section much more rhythmically active, more Afrocentric. Next was the harmonic transformation of the rumbeada section from some variant of alternation of the I and V chords (sometimes with the

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IV chord, sometimes not), to a single, extended V7 chord that never resolves. The López brothers called this the *mambo*. During the same era, Arcaño added a conga to his ensemble, after Arsenio Rodríguez had done the same with great success. The final change, which followed quickly, was the shortening of the danzón structure so that it was no longer a rondo. There was simply an instrumental introduction (which was usually composed of original melodic material; the new short form was not a good vehicle for medleys of cover melodies), which segued directly to the mambo. This new format was called the danzón-mambo. These changes were initially disparaged by the upper classes, but the general audience prevailed, and the popularity of the danzón-mambo continued, albeit second to the popularity of the son, throughout the 1940’s. With all of these changes that made the charangas more “son-like,” they were able to perform not only danzones, danzonetes, and danzón-mambos, but all of the genres that had become popular with the Cuban public by the 1940’s, including guarachas, guajiras, boleros, and the son.

*The 1950’s in Cuba: The Chachachá and the Descarga*

At the end of the 1940’s, Enrique Jorrín, a violinist in the charanga band Orquesta America, had begun to notice that the fast tempos and rhythmic challenges of the mambo made it difficult for some of the dancers to learn. He wanted to create something simple and appealing, in which the tempo was more moderate, the rhythm section parts were less syncopated, and the steps were easier for the dancers to follow. He called the dance that came out of this *el chachachá*, an onomatopoeic interpretation of the sound made by the dancers’
feet. The chachachá was an enormous success, both in Cuba, and internationally, helped largely by the Spanish-language film industry. Its popularity continued through the 1950’s.

Alongside the chachachá, in the musical environment created by the success of the mambo, Cuban musicians launched another trend that drew artists from both the charangas and the large mambo orchestras. The Cuban record label Panart released a series of recordings that they called *descargas*, which translates as “jam sessions.” The descargas were different from other musical trends in Cuba, in that they were not necessarily intended for dancers. Cuban musicians had been exposed to American jazz musicians for three decades, and were inspired to create their own musical sphere in which the primary focus was the improvisational ability of the musicians. The most well-known participating artist was the bassist Israel Lopez Cachao (from the charanga of Antonio Arcaño), but flutists from the realm of charanga were also involved. Cachao’s legendary descarga records included Richard Egües, flutist in Orquesta Aragón (replacing Rolando Lozano) from 1954-1984. José Fajardo also recorded a series of descargas for Panart, with an all-star rhythm section and no violins. The participation of distinguished charanga flutists in the jazz-influenced descarga movement led to a new direction in flutists’ improvisational style. This new direction would have a great impact on the style of emerging New York charanga flutists.

By the end of the 1950’s, what was popular in Cuba became popular in other parts of the world, particularly in New York. New crazes came along, like the pachanga at the end of the 1950’s. By this era, it’s time to head north to New York, because the charanga had arrived, and was there to stay.
Through the decades of the 20th century, Americans were exposed to a series of popular Latin dance music styles that spawned dance crazes in this country. Beginning with Americans’ first taste of the “rhumba” in the 1930’s, mambo in the 1940’s, cha-cha-chá in the 1950’s, and salsa in the 1960’s and 70’s, Americans participated in one Latin dance craze after another. Many non-Hispanic Americans, particularly residents of large urban centers on the east coast, are now conversant with the terms “mambo,” “conjunto,” and “salsa,” are familiar with their rhythms, and enjoy dancing in those styles. Less familiar to most Americans (even to many avid fans of Latin dance music) is the term “charanga.” But while the majority of Americans may not know what a charanga is, many have felt its impact. We have charanga bands and charanga musicians to thank as the innovators of nearly every one of the popular dance music styles listed above.

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31 The music and dance genre known as “rhumba” in the U.S. should not be confused with the neo-African percussion and vocal urban street dance music genre known as *rumba* in Cuba. The American rhumba is closer to a highly stylized version of the Cuban son, discussed in more detail later.
Chapter 2: The Latino Community and Charangas in New York

Before 1960

When the first charangas formed in the 1950’s in New York City, they sprouted in a Latino community and a Latin music scene that had been taking shape for 50 years. During the first half of the 20th century, as the charanga was evolving and entertaining dancers in Cuba, New York was a very different city from what we know today. Prior to the United States’ acquisition of Puerto Rico (and of Cuba, temporarily) in 1898 at the end of the Spanish American War, there were few Hispanic immigrants living New York City. The Spanish-speaking population in the latter 19th century consisted of a handful of Spaniards, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans, and the majority of these were professionals, semi-professionals, skilled workers, and political dissidents. However, after the acquisition, the population of Puerto Ricans in New York City began to grow. Migration from Puerto Rico to New York City increased slowly in the first years of the 20th century, but more rapidly after the Jones-Shafroth Act was passed in 1917 (granting U.S. citizenship to all Puerto Ricans), and exponentially in the two decades following World War II.

Between 1910 and 1930, the Puerto Rican population of New York City increased nearly a hundredfold, from 554 to 45,000,\(^1\) and tenfold between 1940 and 1960 (from 61,000 to 612,000).\(^2\) Most of those who came were rural peasants and urban working class. Those who came during the 1920’s and 1930’s were escaping economic devastation and widespread

\(^1\) Leymarie, *Cuban Fire*, 83.
unemployment on the island at a time when European immigration to New York City was declining. Puerto Ricans became a new source of cheap labor for a variety of New York City industries that were experiencing labor shortages as a result of this decline. Many of the Puerto Rican migrants moved into neighborhoods that had previously been occupied by European immigrants, but were now being vacated by their upwardly-mobile children and grandchildren. Others moved into neighborhoods where the residents were primarily African-American, especially Harlem. In either case, the housing conditions were usually abysmal; indifferent landlords allowed deterioration and decay, ignoring their tenants’ concerns. Apartments were overcrowded, as networks of low-wage earning family members and friends roomed together to be able to afford the rent. Migration from Puerto Rico to New York increased sharply after World War II, due to the failure of “Operation Bootstrap” to improve the economy of and increase employment on the island, and also to both U.S. and New York City policies designed to facilitate the relocation of Puerto Ricans to the city as a supply of cheap labor. The problems of poor housing and low wages continued to increase in Puerto Rican neighborhoods.

Despite disheartening employment and housing conditions, discrimination in education and labor unions, and political disempowerment, Puerto Ricans in New York in the first half of the 20th century created vibrant neighborhoods and close-knit communities that provided mutual

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3 Operation Bootstrap was an economic initiative authored by the United States government and supported by Puerto Rican governor Luís Muñoz-Marín. The goals were to improve the economic health of the island through industrialization while supplying cheap labor for American industries. However, many mainland companies were able to use loopholes to avoid fulfilling their obligations of the arrangement. Thus, the agricultural sector of Puerto Rico was decimated through development, but unemployment did not improve.
support in many capacities. Puerto Rican-owned shops and businesses, religious organizations, political organizations, home town clubs, Spanish-language news and literary publications, and trade guilds all worked together to recreate the culture of their homeland as fully as possible. These organizations also helped the community to work together for political recognition, for progress on issues that confronted them both in New York and in Puerto Rico, and to provide one another with relief in times of need. By 1960, New York had large, well-established Puerto Rican neighborhoods in Manhattan’s East Harlem, Lower East Side, West Side and Upper West Side, as well as in the South Bronx and South Brooklyn. Crime and poverty were part of these neighborhoods, but so was a strong sense of community and cultural identity. The ethnic demographic of New York City had transformed in half a century. In New York, “Latin” became synonymous with “Puerto Rican.”

Music was an important element of the Puerto Rican supportive network and subculture. Both live and recorded music were central to Puerto Rican daily life and social life. Family and community celebrations were nearly always accompanied by live music, and Puerto Rico had a long and proud tradition of cultivating well-trained and versatile performers.\(^4\) Performers and composers were stars within their own communities. Families who could boast a musician or two were very fortunate, as playing for weddings, birthdays, baptisms, rent parties, etc., was one way a family member could supplement the income from a low-paying day job. These celebrations often took place at home or in neighborhood social clubs, but beginning in the late 1930’s, night clubs and Spanish-language theaters began to appear in Spanish-speaking

neighborhoods, especially in Harlem. The growing number of presentations of operas, zarzuelas, and dance bands uptown during this time contributed to a growing professional scene, offering work to well-trained Puerto Rican musicians who had come to New York City hoping to earn a living. The flourishing of uptown professional venues also created a night club and theater scene that made it possible for the neighborhood Latino population to hear live Latin music performed by professional musicians with full bands. These were years when midtown clubs were still segregated, admitting whites only. Puerto Ricans and Cubans with dark skin were not allowed to patronize the midtown clubs.

Puerto Rican performers continued to play the rural, traditional styles that were unique to Puerto Rico, but a combination of their own versatility and the ignorance of American A&R personnel made them welcome in every style of Latin music that was commercially viable at the time. During the 19th century, Puerto Ricans were exposed to Cuban genres through Cuban traveling theater troupes, and in the 20th century, heavy promotion of Cuban styles in Puerto Rico by American record companies via record sales and radio made Puerto Rican musicians well-versed in Cuban styles such as the bolero, the guaracha, and the són.

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6 Ibid.  
7 Leymarie, *Cuban Fire*, 85.  
8 Glasser, 123.  
9 Ibid., 86.  
10 Ibid., 22-23.  
11 Ibid., 135-136.
Within the Puerto Rican and Latino community, the Latin record store was as central to the Spanish-speaking neighborhood as the bodega.\textsuperscript{12} Columbia, RCA, and Decca were recording Cuban performers in the 1920’s.\textsuperscript{13} The first Latin record stores began to appear after 1927, and Latinos began to establish their own record labels in the 1930’s.\textsuperscript{14} The typical model was a small shop that sold RCA, Decca, and Columbia records of Cuban son sextetos, septetos, and boleros in front, while Puerto Rican trios and quartets recorded music for the store’s own label in the back (the larger American record companies did make a few recordings by seminal Puerto Rican artists such as Rafael Hernández, but the number is quite small compared to their output of Cuban genres).\textsuperscript{15} By 1960, some of these Spanish music store labels had grown to be the economic backbone of a thriving Latin music scene.

While the Cuban population in New York did not grow in number the way the Puerto Rican population did in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Cubans exerted an influence on the city’s growing Latin music scene that was vastly disproportionate to their numbers. Even before the turn of the century, there were a handful of Cuban musicians living in New York City, working in classical music and the theater.\textsuperscript{16} As the recording industry grew in the early years of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, more and more Cubans came to New York City, either to live or in their travels. Before the mid-1940’s, Cuba had no recording industry, so Cuban musicians often came to New York to record. While in New York, they had the opportunity to meet and network with local

\textsuperscript{12} Virginia Sánchez-Korrol, \textit{From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City} (Berkeley: U of California, 1994), 80.
\textsuperscript{13} Leymarie, \textit{Cuban Fire}, 88.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 85-86.
\textsuperscript{15} Glasser, \textit{My Music Is My Flag}, 138-143.
\textsuperscript{16} Leymarie, 84.
musicians. As some relocated here permanently and others took intermittent work for their stay, a community of Cuban musicians in New York began to grow, working in jazz bands, theater pit orchestras, and establishing Latin bands. Among these musicians was one flutist, Alberto Socarrás, who made significant contributions to the development of jazz and Latin music in New York as a bandleader, composer, and arranger, and introduced jazz musicians to the emerging charanga improvisation style as a flutist (see appendix, 190-191).

Along with the growth of music within the Latino community in New York City before 1960 came the increasing influence of Latin musicians on the development of mainstream dance music and a rise in popularity of Latin dance styles among non-Hispanic Americans. The first of the Latin dance crazes in the U.S. was the tango, introduced to American audiences in 1910, and at least indirectly Cuban in origin. Not long afterwards came the rhumba. The rhumba’s popularity resulted from increasing American tourism in Cuba, and the commercial success of Trio Matamoros’s recording of “El Manicero/The Peanut Vendor” (which is really a son), released in the U.S. in 1931. The term “rhumba” was applied to a large variety of musical styles that were Latin in flavor, but the accompanying ballroom dance was more clearly defined. A few years later came the conga craze, which began in 1936. The conga in the U.S. was a simple dance which roughly imitates the traditional carnival parade dance of the same name, practiced in Santiago de Cuba. These three genres defined Latin social dancing until the beginning of the mambo and chachachá era in the late 1940’s.

Since these dances were so popular with non-Latino audiences, there was a demand for the music to be performed outside of Latino neighborhoods. Art D’Lugoff, owner of the Village Gate, stated in an interview that from the 1920’s through the 1950’s, the ability to “dance
Latin” was essential to American social life, regardless of one’s ethnicity. Dance bands and big bands added rhumbas and congas to their repertoire. Xavier Cugat enjoyed solid patronage from mainstream New Yorkers, directing the society band at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel from 1931 to 1948.

Beginning in the 1940’s, Hollywood also kept Latin music in the eye of the American public. Hollywood propelled Xavier Cugat’s popularity to a national level, and his guitarist, Desi Arnaz, also appeared in feature films in the 1940’s, bringing fame to himself and to his orchestra. Even South American stars, such as Carmen Miranda, performed Cuban music in American movies. Most Cuban music produced for consumption by the mainstream American public was often simplistic, sentimental, and stylized. In 1942, however, the first English-language radio show featuring Latin music also appeared on the airwaves in New York City, Dick Sugar’s “Tico Tico Time” on WEVD. His show presented more authentic Afro-Cuban and Puerto Rican traditional and Latin jazz artists. These new developments in the media gave mainstream New Yorkers a greater appetite for Latin music.

Charangas and the Mambo and Chachachá Era in New York City

Prior to 1947, charanga had no relationship with either of the Latin dance crazes that had taken place in New York City, but the mambo and the chachachá changed that. As mentioned in chapter one, the mambo was created in the charanga of Antonio Arcaño, by his cellist and bass player, Orestes and Israel Cachao López. Of course, what New Yorkers recognized as

17 Vernon W. Boggs, Salsiology: Afro-Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City (New York: Greenwood, 1992), 173. This remembrance was verified by every one of my family members over the age of 70.
mambo did not closely resemble what the López brothers had created in 1937. The mambo that New Yorkers knew developed in the 1940’s and solidified as a genre in the early 1950’s. It had much more in common with the són, Cuban street rumba, and American jazz. It was performed by large mambo orchestras that had very similar instrumentation to American big bands. This style of mambo was popularized by jazz-influenced Cuban artists such as Francisco “Machito” Grillo, his brother-in-law, Mario Bauzá, Damaso Pérez Prado, and Beny Moré, as well as Puerto Rican bandleader Tito Rodríguez, and New York-born Tito Puente. It is worth noting that two of the above-named musicians spent the early years of their careers in charangas. Mario Bauzá performed with the charangas of Antonio Maria Romeu and Belisario López, and Pérez Prado directed his own charanga in Cuba before moving to Mexico to form his mambo orchestra. Thus, charanga gave birth to the mambo, the most significant Latin dance craze in American history, and also was the training ground for many Latin musicians in mambo and subsequent Latin genres.

The flip side of the mambo craze was the chachachá craze, which occupied the decade of the 1950’s almost exactly. As mentioned in chapter one, the chachachá is another Cuban music and dance genre that was born in a charanga. The result of these two dance crazes taking place simultaneously was that, throughout the 1950’s, Latin clubs and Latin dance events presented a mix of mambo and chachachá numbers. This created an opening for charangas in the New York City Latin dance scene.

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18 For a thorough and detailed discussion of the two streams of mambo, charanga vs. big band, see Lozano, “The Charanga Tradition in Cuba,” 69-79.
Beginning prior to the chachachá craze and continuing longer, the mambo era in New York is defined as being roughly concurrent with the dates of operation of Latin nights at the Palladium Ballroom. The legendary dance club, located on Broadway at the corner of W. 53rd Street in midtown Manhattan, operated as a Latin dance club from 1947 to 1966. The explosive success of the Palladium led to the opening of other Latin dance clubs in midtown Manhattan, and inspired existing hotels and ballrooms to add Latin nights to their schedules. The Palladium and other midtown clubs attracted patrons of every ethnicity and age group. Charangas played alongside mambo orchestras for New Yorkers and tourists from all around the world. The charanga was becoming a regular part of New York City social life.

Throughout the 1950’s, Cuban charangas traveled to New York City to perform. The most prominent charanga leaders were already familiar with the city, having come there to record, and having connections to Cuban colleagues who had settled in New York. During that decade, José Fajardo, Antonio Arcaño, Belisario López, and Orquesta Aragón all had successful performances at the Waldorf Astoria, the Palladium, and other Latin clubs in New York. The time seemed right for the city to have its own, resident charanga.

In 1952, Cuban flutist and composer Gilberto Valdés founded the first charanga in New York City. Valdés was highly respected among Cuban musicians from every area of music – folkloric, classical, and popular – and he was able to compile a band with the most outstanding Latin musicians living in New York. Included in the lineup were Papi Pagani on timbales, Rogelio Valdés on bass, Alberto Iznaga on violin, and Willie Bobo on conga. Unfortunately, the band lasted for only about a year, and some Latin music historians consider this to be an indication of failure. However, none have put forth any evidence that Valdés disbanded because the band could not
generate enough interest or find enough work. The widespread assumption is that New Yorkers had not yet developed enough of an appetite for charanga to support a resident band. However, Valdés was performing regularly at the Tropicana in The Bronx during the short time that they were together. This fact, taken with the healthy popularity that the chachachá enjoyed in the 1950’s, and the success of touring charangas in the midtown clubs, makes it seem unlikely that the reason Valdés disbanded was that he could not keep his band working. It is more likely that he did so because better opportunities were on the horizon. Shortly after his charanga disbanded, he gave his first concert of his own works at Carnegie Hall (1954), which was followed by a position as musical director of Katherine Dunham’s dance company, an opportunity which included international touring.

The second charanga to form in the United States was founded not in New York City, but in Chicago. In 1946, Cuban percussionist Armando Sánchez immigrated to the U.S. and settled in Chicago. Ten years later, when Cuban flutist Rolando Lozano became available, Sánchez formed a charanga and asked Lozano to come to Chicago and take the flute chair. Lozano had been the flutist of the esteemed Cuban charanga, Orquesta Aragón. He is the flutist on their seminal recordings of 1953 and 1954, which sealed their position as the preeminent charanga in Cuba of that time. In 1954, Lozano left Cuba for Mexico City, where he spent two years giving live performances and recording soundtracks for chachachá movies. He came to the U.S. in 1956.

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19 García, Arsenio Rodríguez, 90.
Sánchez called his charanga Orquesta Nuevo Ritmo de Cuba, and the personnel he gathered included musicians who would go on to become some of the most influential artists in Latin music in America. In addition to Lozano on flute, the band included Rudy Calzado, Leonel Brevet, and Pellín Rodríguez on vocals, Elizardo Aroche and Pupi Legarreta on violins, Victor Venegas on bass, René Hernandez on piano, and Sánchez himself on conga. The band had an excellent run for three years, with a successful performance at The Palladium in 1959, and an album, *The Heart of Cuba*, released the same year and which included the hit, “Tumba la Caña.” They disbanded abruptly at the end of 1959, when Sánchez suddenly moved to New York City, and some of the band members faced immigration issues. They were not gone forever; they would reform two years later, with nearly identical personnel, a new bandleader, and a different name. But by that time, the pachanga had arrived in New York, and the popularity of the charanga skyrocketed to an unprecedented level.

**1959-1965: The Pachanga Dance Craze**

In 1959 in Cuba, Eduardo Davidson, vocalist with the charanga Orquesta Sublime, composed a song and called it “La Pachanga.” It had a much brighter tempo than any of the musical genres typical of the charanga repertoire. Rhythmically speaking, it resembled Dominican merengue more closely than it resembled other Cuban popular dance genres of the time. The

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song was a moderate hit, and so other charangas, like those of José Fajardo and Belisario López, covered it, and Orquesta Sublime recorded other songs that they called “pachangas.”

Meanwhile, in New York City, the first charangas with a relatively long lifespan had formed. In 1958, the New York-born Puerto Rican pianist Charlie Palmieri was living in Chicago and leading his quintet in a steady hotel engagement with a long contract. While he was there, he had the opportunity to hear Orquesta Nuevo Ritmo de Cuba, and became inspired. He decided then that, when he returned to New York, he would form a similar group. His goal was to pattern the sound of the band after Orquesta Aragón. When he returned to New York in 1959, he met the Dominican multi-instrumentalist Johnny Pacheco. At the time, Pacheco was playing in the society band of Dioris Valladares, who had earned a reputation as “The King of Merengue” in New York. Palmieri heard Pacheco practicing his flute in the kitchen at the Monte Carlo, where Palmieri and Valladares performed alternating sets. Palmieri invited Pacheco to join his band as the timbales player, until the time was right to move in the direction of charanga. When Palmieri’s trumpet player moved to Puerto Rico, he switched Pacheco to flute soloist, hired four violinists, and named his new ensemble Charanga La Duboney. Together they recorded a single album for United Artists, Let’s Dance the Charanga! There are a handful of pachangas on the album, including “Tema la Duboney,” “Mack the Knife,” and “Descarga de Pacheco.” In late 1959, Palmieri and Pacheco parted ways (some sources say over business differences, others say over musical differences). Pacheco formed his own charanga and began recording pachangas for Alegre Records in 1960. Shortly afterwards, Palmieri left his

contract with United Artists to also sign with Alegre Records, and continued to record with Rod Luís Sánchez in the flute chair.

The title of La Duboney’s first album raises the issue of the terms “charanga” and “pachanga,” and their relationship in the minds of the New York City dancing public. Before the advent of the pachanga, New Yorkers had been hearing charanga bands for a few years in the lineup at the Palladium and other dance clubs, but this was in conjunction with mambo orchestras, who were the true draw. A small charanga crowd was beginning to grow in New York, but most of the city’s Latin music fans were not familiar with charanga history or terminology. However, when the pachanga came onto the New York City Latin dance scene in 1960 and the demand quickly became very great, Latin music fans began to be more conversant in the language of charanga. Radio DJ’s were aggressively pushing pachanga recordings on their programs, and newspapers and billboards were advertising pachanga contests and charanga appearances. The two similar-sounding words were in the air, and in the minds of many New Yorkers, their meanings began to meld.24 For New Yorkers, charangas and the pachanga had an almost exclusive association with one another,25 and they frequently confused the terms. Because New Yorkers were erroneously using the terms interchangeably, in 1961, two musicians in the scene decided to clarify them for audiences. Charlie Palmieri and vocalist/bandleader Joe Quijano were working together in a song-writing session that summer,

24 I have noticed that my mother and her sisters use the terms “pachanga” and “charanga” completely interchangeably.
when they penned the music and lyrics to “La Pachanga Se Baila Así.” The lyrics of the song were as follows:

Hay una discusión en el barrio
de cómo se baila la pachanga
hay una confusión en el barrio
se creen que charanga es pachanga.
Una charanga es la orquesta que está de moda
Y una pachanga es el baile que se baila ahora
ahora no hay discusión en el barrio
se sabe lo que es una charanga
ahora no hay confusión en el barrio
se baila lo que es una pachanga.  

[There’s an argument in the neighborhood
About how to dance the pachanga
There’s a confusion in the neighborhood
They think that charanga is pachanga.
A charanga is the orchestra that’s in fashion
And a pachanga is the dance they’re doing now
Now there is no argument in the neighborhood
They know what a charanga is
Now there is no confusion in the neighborhood
What they’re dancing is the pachanga]

Later that year, Joe Quijano recorded this song with his own band, which was one of the first charangas to modify its instrumentation to include brass (two trumpets) alongside flutist Bobby Nelson. The song was a hit. Unfortunately, it did not completely accomplish its purpose.

The dance created the pachanga’s popularity more than any stylistic novelty in the music did. The pachangas recorded in New York were different from the pachangas recorded by Orquesta Sublime in Cuba. The pachangas of La Duboney and of Johnny Pacheco’s charanga did not

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26 Lyrics by Joe Quijano, copyright 1961.
resemble merengue musically, but rather, were more like very up-tempo son or guaracha, which were genres that had been included in the charangas’ repertoires in Cuba since the 1940’s. For audiences in New York, the sound of the pachanga distinguished itself by the instrumentation of the charanga (as compared to the mambo orchestras), but rhythmically speaking, it was not remarkably different from the mambo. In fact, the rhythms were more or less familiar to the mambo dancers, allowing for similar excitement and creativity on the dance floor. Cuban musicologist Cristóbal Díaz Ayala described the pachanga as such:

...un chachachá mas libre, más abierto, más proclive a paso diferentes y por ende, más popular por más bailable.\(^27\)

[...a chachá that is freer, more open, more conducive to new steps, and therefore, more popular and more danceable.]

The genesis story of the pachanga as a dance takes place in New York City, specifically, in the Bronx. According to Al Santiago, the founder of Alegre Records, Johnny Pacheco was performing at the Triton Club in the Bronx. He mistakenly counted off a number at a much quicker tempo than he intended. The dancers stood there, mystified, unable to dance at that breakneck speed. Pacheco’s hasty save was to grab a handkerchief, and he began dancing and twirling the handkerchief over his head.\(^28\) The dancers seized on it and began to imitate him.\(^29\)


\(^{28}\) This action of twirling a handkerchief while dancing can be found in many traditional dances throughout Latin America. Pacheco, who was born in the Dominican Republic and lived there until age 11, may have encountered it observing *fiestas de palos*, or parties that featured Afro-Dominican traditional music. Other Latin American authors on the pachanga have likened it to similar traditions in their own countries, such as the cumbia in Colombia or marinera in Peru.

\(^{29}\) Boggs, *Salsiology*, 222-223.
Soon, the dance evolved to include hops, slides, and funky improvisation as the dancers (and often the band) shouted “¡A caballo!”

The pachanga was such a popular success that, in 1961, Johnny Pacheco and Charlie Palmieri shared the number one spot on the Latin music charts, displacing mambo bandleader Tito Puente, who had held that position for nearly a decade. The demand for charanga was greater than the existing New York City charangas could meet, and it was an excellent time for charanga musicians in Cuba to relocate to New York.

The start of the pachanga craze in New York City coincides with the revolution in Cuba. In the early years of the revolutionary regime, before travel in and out of Cuba became impossible, there was a brief but large wave of Cuban immigration to the New York City area. The new immigrants included many Cuban musicians who subsequently became very influential in the New York Latin music scene, and among those were several charanga musicians. Flutists José Fajardo and Belisario López came to New York and re-formed their charangas. Bassist Cachao López moved to the city and began working with many charangas as well as mambo orchestras and budding conjuntos. Eduardo Davidson, the inventor of pachanga, also left Cuba for the U.S. Up-and-coming flutist Eddy Zervigón came to New York with his twin brother Rudy (violin), and brother Kelvin (vocals; Kelvin joined the twins in New York after living in Florida for a while), and founded Orquesta Broadway in 1963. Orquesta Broadway is the oldest charanga in existence in the United States, performing throughout the world to this day. Some Cuban expatriates who were already living here joined these new charangas. Mongo Santamaría

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gathered Rolando Lozano, Willie Bobo, and nearly all of the other former members of Orquesta Nuevo Ritmo and reformed a new charanga under the name La Sabrosa. All of these bands recorded many pachangas and enjoyed success during the first half of the 1960’s. Belisario López and José Fajardo gave Johnny Pacheco stiff competition for the title of the King of Pachanga. The pachangas and other numbers recorded by Charanga La Sabrosa had an unmistakable jazz influence, as all of the members of that band were quickly becoming major players in the Latin jazz scene.

Musicians were not the only ones to leave Cuba and move to the New York City area. Along with them came dancers and fans who had grown up during the charanga’s heyday in Cuba. This created a new audience and new opportunities for charanga in New York City, New Jersey, and Florida. The Latin music scene in America could now support a large roster of charanga bands.

Puerto Rican and Nuyorican bandleaders began to join the ranks of Palmieri and Pacheco and formed their own charangas. Another bandleader in New York who contributed significantly to the development of charanga was New York-born Puerto Rican conguero, Ray Barretto. In 1961, after distinguishing himself as a sideman with Tito Puente and various jazz artists, and working as a successful studio musician for a number of record labels, he formed his Charanga La Moderna. He performed and recorded with them until 1965 with a few noteworthy flutists coming through his band, including José Canoura and Art Webb. The enormous crossover hit, “El Watusi,” made La Moderna the first American charanga to have a song at the top of the mainstream charts.
Barretto’s charanga, at various times, included saxophone and/or brass. He was not the only New York pachanga-era charanga leader to experiment with the traditional instrumentation. Joe Quijano and his group with flute and trumpets, Conjunto Cachana, has already been mentioned. In 1962, Charlie Palmieri’s younger brother, Eddie, formed La Perfecta, an influential charanga, or “trombanga” as Charlie dubbed it, with two trombones substituting for the violins, and featuring George Castro on flute. The motivation for this experimentation was twofold: first, New York Latin music fans had always shown a decided preference for louder groups with brass, even during the pachanga era, and second, musically adventurous bandleaders wanted the flexibility to experiment with all of the current Afro-Cuban formats, including son conjunto and Latin jazz in addition to charanga. In fact, Eddie Palmieri moved more in the direction of having the option of recording some conjunto numbers and some charanga numbers. On his recordings, the trombones do not, in fact, function so much as substitutes for the violins in a charanga, but rather, they are used more the way trumpets would be in a conjunto, and on alternating numbers he features the flute on more charanga-like arrangements.

These charangas in the early 1960’s were only the beginning of decades of hybridized charangas with brass. Latin music historian Luis Tamargo sums up the attitude of American charanga leaders thusly:

Es preciso aclarar que las charangas estadounidenses no se dedicaron simplemente a imitar el modelo cubano. En los años sesenta, ciertas charangas transcendieron los confines de la pachangas al incorporar elementos del jazz, permitiendo que el format conceptual de flauta y violin realizara
intercambios improvisadores con trompetas, trombones, y saxofones.\textsuperscript{31}

[It’s necessary to clarify that the American charangas did not simply dedicate themselves to imitating the Cuban model. In the 1960’s, certain charangas transcended the confines of the pachangas to incorporate elements of jazz, allowing the conceptual format of flute and violin to realize improvisational exchanges with trumpets, trombones, and saxophones.]

During the pachanga era, many of the New York City charangas performed or recorded with some combination of saxophone(s) and/or brass added to the lineup, and with or without violins. The charangas who moved in this direction in the first half of the 1960’s included these most notable ensembles: Joe Quijano and Conjunto La Cachana, Charanga La Duboney, La Sabrosa, La Perfecta, and La Moderna. Conversely, because of the strong association of charanga and pachanga, some of the mambo bandleaders, not to miss out on an opportunity, modified their instrumentation to include at least a flute, and sometimes violins, and released their own pachanga albums. Machito’s band released a pachanga album,\textit{The New Sound of Machito} (1963, Tico) with Panamanian flutist Mauricio Smith. Tito Puente released a few pachanga albums as well,\textit{Pachanga in New York} (Gema, 1963) and\textit{Pachanga con Puente} (1961, Tico). This album includes the track “¡Pachanga Si, Charanga No!” which was another attempt to educate the dancing public regarding the difference between “pachanga” and “charanga.” In the years that followed the pachanga era, during the boogaloo and salsa waves, the new, flexible charanga instrumentation would continue to the point that nearly any Latin ensemble that included a flute would be considered to be some kind of charanga.

**The Boogaloo Era**

As part of the lexicon of American popular music, the term “boogaloo” has varied meaning. In certain circles, it refers to a dance style popular in the African American community during a time period roughly concurrent with the musical genre that is the subject of this section. At least one author has actually used the term to refer to the entirety of African American popular music, from the 1920’s onwards.\(^{32}\) For this section, the term “boogaloo” will only refer to the r&b/Latin music fusion that became popular in the middle 1960’s.

In 1965, as the pachanga began to cool, a new musical movement was growing among Latino youth in New York City. Since World War I, a large portion of Puerto Ricans migrating to New York had found housing in historically black neighborhoods such as Harlem, as Puerto Ricans of color learned to cope with the strict binary nature of American racism. By the 1960’s, three decades of second and third generation Puerto Rican children had been growing up alongside the children of African Americans, who were the other large population in these neighborhoods. In her 1975 dissertation, Adelaida Reyes-Schramm sheds light on the evolution of both the African American community and the Puerto Rican community throughout the 1960’s in East Harlem, which was the largest and most significant Latino cultural enclave in New York at that time. Census records from 1970 show that the balance of Puerto Ricans and African Americans in East Harlem tipped in both directions, ranging from 20% of one and 70% of the other, depending on the neighborhood block (African Americans were increasingly dominant further north and west, and Puerto Ricans were the dominant population further

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south and east). School population records for District 4 (East Harlem) in 1972 reflect the same population trends.³³ Reyes-Schramm demonstrates that, while both formal and informal music making among adults remained mostly divided along ethnic lines, the one place where unavoidable mixing was sure to occur was in school. New York City’s public school children were exposed to a variety of musical styles from the dominant culture and neighborhood ethnic groups through both school-based programs and from socializing with their peers. Puerto Rican teenagers in the 1960’s were listening to rock and roll, r&b, and doo-wop as much as they were listening to their parents’ music, perhaps more. In addition, adults were not completely immune to the influence of exposure to their neighbors’ music; African American audiences, after 15 years of devotion to the mambo bands at the Palladium, hired Latin bandleaders to perform at clubs in their neighborhoods, but often asked the bands to mix some “soul” sound into their numbers.

The convergence of these two social phenomena resulted in the creation of a variety of Afro-Latino musical fusion which came to be known as “boogaloo.” For Puerto Rican teenagers, this African-American/Latin music fusion reflected their bilingual, bi-cultural identity. Among the African-American community, it created an even larger audience for Latin music or Latinized music.

The boogaloo movement had a polarizing effect in the Latin music community. The older mambo bandleaders were highly critical. They insisted that it was destructive and did not

respect tradition. The up-and-coming young boogaloo stars accused the older musicians of being jealous and competitive, and of trying to stifle their musical individuality. The charanga bandleaders, not really part of either community, responded in a variety of ways. After all, boogaloo is only tangentially related to the development of charanga. As will be mentioned later, a couple of charanga bands had crossover hits with numbers that are often categorized as boogaloo.

Because the boogaloo craze swelled as pachanga cooled, some of the lesser-known charangas disbanded. Without the commercial predominance of the pachanga, the lower-quality ensembles were not finding work. Some of the charanga bandleaders embraced the movement, changed their instrumentation, and even became major figures in the boogaloo movement. In fact, for the best among them, this was only their first demonstration of an adaptability which helped them to stay at the top of their field with every change in Latin music throughout their lifetimes. These include Ray Barretto, Mongo Santamaria, and flutists Rolando Lozano and Mauricio Smith. It is also worth mentioning that one of boogaloo’s biggest stars, Johnny Colón, directed his own charanga (not often remembered today) before he earned his fame as a performer in the boogaloo scene.

One of the earliest examples of boogaloo performed by a charanga comes from the creator of the pachanga dance craze and best-selling bandleader himself, Johnny Pacheco. First, in 1961, he recorded “Suaviloo” on *Pacheco y Su Charanga: By Popular Demand* (Alegre), three years before the boogaloo phenomenon had begun to attract attention outside of Harlem. This track is a charanga-style boogaloo with an infectious swing and a short, catchy coro of vocables. Next, in 1963, Pacheco shifted his emphasis from performance to production and founded
Fania Records. One young artist he signed was Willie Colón. Colón is now widely known for the tremendous impact he had in the salsa world in the 1970’s, but his first two releases for Fania included boogaloo tracks.

The best of the classic charangas remained in the scene, offering a traditional sound. After all, many older Latinos preferred the classic sound, and there was a new audience of Cuban expatriates who were completely devoted to charanga. The bands who successfully maintained the traditional format and style and work steadily were Orquesta Broadway and the charanga of José Fajardo. But even Orquesta Broadway cut a couple of boogaloo or English-crossover tracks. “You’re Looking Fine” and “I Dig Rock and Roll Music,” are both on Prueba, Mi Amor (Tico, 1968).

The boogaloo did not continue to be popular beyond the 1960’s. The cooling of boogaloo’s popularity allowed bandleaders working in more traditional Latin genres to make a comeback with the 1970’s Latin phenomenon, salsa.

**Salsa, Charanga Salsera, and the 1970’s**

The 1970’s brought difficult changes for the Latino community in New York City. There was a steady decline in manufacturing jobs, and many Puerto Ricans, after years of being underserved in public education, were not prepared for jobs in other sectors. The city of New York was not able to provide relief with increased services or job training, as it was headed into a colossal budget crisis. Unemployment, poverty, crime, and deterioration increased in Latino neighborhoods.
Interestingly, the Puerto Rican community responded by reinforcing cultural ties and reaffirming their cultural identity. By this time, many community organizations had been in existence for over 50 years, with greater organizational sophistication and a clearly defined sense of purpose. Grass-roots mobilization for more equal participation in education, politics and legislation, labor unions, and social change became a greater part of everyday life among the Puerto Rican community.

The musical community also participated in this wave of cultural affirmation. Latin music was often not acknowledged by music critics in mainstream newspapers, so Puerto Rican producer and promoter Izzy Sanabria founded the magazine *Latin New York* to bring attention to the goings on in New York City’s tropical music scene. He also produced two concert film/documentaries about current Latin music: *Cosa Nuestra/Our Latin Thing,* and *Salsa,* in conjunction with Johnny Pacheco and his Fania All-Stars. In 1975, Izzy Sanabria established the *Latin New York Music Awards.* In 1977, the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences added a Latin music category to the Grammy Awards, the result of a long and vigorous campaign on the part of the Latin music community.\(^{34}\) Latin musicians moved away from fusion style of boogaloo, and returned to more roots-infused creativity with the latest development in the scene, salsa.

Salsa has its origins in the Cuban conjunto, with regard to both song genres and instrumentation. Son, son montuno, guaracha, and guajira form the foundations of the repertoire. The core of the instrumental ensemble includes congas, bongó with cowbell, and

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\(^{34}\) Leymarie, *Cuban Fire,* 276.
bass. Maracas and tres are frequently used, with a vocal lineup of a lead singer and two coro
singers. Salsa bands also have some instrumentation that comes from the mambo orchestra,
with piano (in place of guitar), timbales, and a larger brass section than was usual for a
conjunto. Salsa bandleaders had a fondness for trombones, virtually unheard of in a Cuban
conjunto. Baritone saxophone is often added to the brass. Even some influence from rock and
r&b is present in the form of amplified instruments, with a preference for electric keyboards
over acoustic piano, and use of electric bass guitar or electric upright bass instead of acoustic
upright bass. Some salsa bands went so far as to include electric guitar. Eddie Palmieri’s
conjunto in the 1970’s included tresero Harry Viggiano, who played electric guitar on some
tracks, and Fania Records’ Fania All-Stars frequently featured electric guitar with Jorge Santana.

Izzy Sanabria, who is credited with coining the term “salsa” as a genre label, says that the
influence of jazz and New York City’s energy, along with the larger brass configuration, give
salsa its distinctive sound and identity. The distinguishing elements of salsa are not strictly
musical: cultural context and lyrical content that make it very different from Cuban rural son.
As a result of diminished contact with Cuban musicians since shortly after the Cuban revolution,
Puerto Rican New Yorkers were the dominant voice in the salsa world. The lyrics of salsa sang
of a Nuyorican experience from a Nuyorican perspective. Salsa was one of the greatest symbols
of Nuyorican cultural identity of the decade.

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35 Robert L. Doerschuk, “Secrets of Salsa Rhythm: Piano with Hot Sauce,” in Salsiology: Afro-
Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City, ed. Vernon W. Boggs (New York:
Greenwood, 1992), 323.
36 Boggs, Salsiology, 188.
Salsa’s popularity within the Latino community in the 1970’s cannot be understated; by the late 1970’s, there were some 30 Latin music clubs operating throughout the city, all of them presenting primarily salsa, but also some charanga.\(^{37}\) Popular support for this thriving scene came almost exclusively from the Latino community, and eventually began to spread overseas to all of Latin America. In New York, non-Latinos abandoned previous Latin music crazes for disco, which had overwhelmed the city.

Although new Cuban immigrants had virtually ceased to arrive in New York after 1962, Cubans had not disappeared from the greater New York Latin music scene. In fact, in the latter half of the 1970’s, New Yorkers had more contact with musicians from Cuba than they had had in the previous decade. Tensions between the United States and Cuba relaxed a little under President Carter, who allowed some cultural exchange with Cuba. Castro granted return visitors’ visas to a few Cuban expatriates, and some Cuban ensembles came to perform in New York (however, both The Village Gate and Avery Fischer Hall at Lincoln Center received bomb threats when they planned performances of Orquesta Aragón). A few prominent musicians in the salsa scene managed to maintain contacts with musician and family friends in Cuba, and could occasionally get materials such as recordings. Traditional music in Cuba was receiving support from Castro’s government, so interested musicians began travel there to study with

veteran performers. Some charangas recorded numbers that were based on these older, traditional Cuban folk genres, such as rumba guaguancó.

Experimentation with Cuban folk genres was an artistically interesting direction, and a successful one on some charanga recordings. But in order to book live performances, charanga leaders began to understand that they needed to resemble salsa bands as much as possible.

The recent pachanga era had inspired many young flutists who aspired to careers in Latin music. But the pachanga era was unmistakably over by 1968, and in the 1970’s, salsa was so enormously popular that club owners were afraid to book anything else. The prevailing opinion among venue owners was that audiences were no longer interested in the charanga’s quaint, old-fashioned sound. So, charanga bandleaders began to take steps to make themselves look and sound more like salsa bands. These innovations included the addition of brass in a variety of configurations (a trend which, as mentioned previously, was already underway in the 1960’s), a bongó/cowbell player, and harmonized vocal arrangements (as opposed to the traditional three-voice unison of charanga).

Leymarie, *Cuban Fire*, 245.

For example, “Barrio del Pilar” from Orquesta Broadway’s *Isla del Encanto* (Coco Records, 1977). This is not the only example of Orquesta Broadway’s use of folkloric traditions in their recordings.

Tamargo, *Desarrollo y evolución*, 11. Critical reception of “Barrio del Pilar” and *Pasaporte* was overwhelmingly positive. *Pasaporte* is often cited as Orquesta Broadway’s most celebrated recording.

Concessions to the salsa craze were not limited to changes in the charanga’s instrumentation. Stylistic adaptations were made, and charanga rhythm sections began to sound more like salsa rhythm sections. The 1970’s witnessed a boom in the creation of new charangas with salsa-like adaptations. Cristóbal Díaz Ayala coined the phrase “charanga salsera,” to describe the new, hybrid ensembles. The term became so flexible, that it came to describe virtually any Latin dance music ensemble that featured a flute. Among these new charanga salsera ensembles in New York City were Conjunto Libre, Orquesta Típica Novél, La Típica Ideal, Charanga ’76, Charanga America, and Son Sublime. These new charangas were vehicles for the talents of many of the new flutists who came on the New York Latin music scene in the late 1960’s and 1970’s, for example, Gonzalo Fernandez, Mauricio Smith, Sr., Nestor Torres, Dave Valentín, Pupi Legarreta, Lou Pérez, Andrea Brachfeld, and Karen Joseph.

Some of the greatest veteran Cuban artists in New York maintained lively careers, especially in charanga. Two of the major figures in charanga’s history, José Fajardo and his charanga, and Eddy Zervigón with Orquesta Broadway, played weekly battles for packed houses every Sunday afternoon at The Roundtable in midtown Manhattan for several years. Business was thriving for Orquesta Broadway, as they averaged 15 gigs per week throughout the 1970’s. Part of their continued popularity was owed to the Cuban expatriate community, many of whom did

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43 Orquesta Típica Novél was actually founded in 1961, but they did not record until 1967, and then released a flurry of recordings beginning in 1973. For this reason they are often categorized with prominent charangas of the 1970’s.
not like New York salsa, and preferred charanga, which they perceived as more Cuban. On the other hand, Puerto Rican residents’ appreciation for charanga increased, as their conscious quest for music that reaffirmed their cultural identity drove them away from fusion genres like Latin soul and towards more traditional styles, including charanga. For all Latinos in New York, whether Puerto Rican, Cuban, or part of the growing community of Dominicans, patronage of traditional music was a means of pushing back against the music of the dominant culture, as the disco craze swept over the city like a tidal wave. With their album, *Pasaporte* (Coco, 1977), Orquesta Broadway had a tremendous hit with the track, “Isla del Encanto” (a nickname for Puerto Rico). The album was produced and the song arranged by trombonist Barry Rogers, who was a house musician for Fania Records and a member of the Fania All-Stars. Luís Tamargo credits this particular song’s success with forming a bridge between a very Cuban band and the Puerto Rican community, and even the Latino community as a whole, which was becoming more diverse as the 1980’s approached. Other Latinos began to think of charanga as something that was not just “Cuban,” but also “ours.” The success of this album set the stage for a minor charanga boom that would take place in the early 1980’s.

**Charanga in the 1980’s**

In the 1980’s, the composition of the Hispanic community in New York City underwent dramatic changes. First, it swelled to an unprecedented size. Between 1980 and 1987, one

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46 Boggs, *Salsiology*, 189.
million people emigrated legally from Latin America to the United States. Of those, 250,000 settled in the greater New York area, and 67,000 of those took up residence in New York City proper. Unlike the era of the Great Migration of Puerto Ricans, this wave of Latino immigration came from all parts of Latin America. Immigration from the Dominican Republic had been increasing slowly since the early 1960’s, following the death of the Dominican dictator, Rafael Trujillo. The pace of Dominican immigration increased more dramatically in the 1980’s, a result of severe economic collapse in the Dominican Republic in the middle of the decade. The international debt crisis of the 1980’s led to similar economic instability and devastation in other Latin American countries. Central and South Americans came to New York looking for employment and opportunity. These new communities carved out new ethnic neighborhoods in Washington Heights (Manhattan) and Jackson Heights, East Elmhurst, Woodside, and Corona (Queens). While Miami and South Florida absorbed most of the impact of the Mariel Boatlift of 1980, some of the new Cuban refugees did come north to the greater New York area, settling in established communities in New Jersey and creating new communities in Astoria and Elmhurst in Queens.

With the new Hispanic communities came new Latin music clubs. For charanga, this was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the timing of Orquesta Broadway’s surge in popularity

50 Ibid.
in the 1970’s coincided well with the arrival of fresh audiences and the opening of new clubs in
the early 1980’s. Other charangas that had been active in the 1970’s were able to ride this
wave of prosperity. Típica Novél, Charanga America, Charanga ’76, and José Fajardo were all
able to take advantage of the great availability of work. Some skillful and talented young
flutists emerged on the charanga scene at this time, including Connie Grossman and Hector
Nieves. However, the second half of the decade saw a steady decline in gigs, not only for
charanga bands, but for nearly everyone in the salsa scene. In an interview with Larry
Birnbaum, bassist Andy Gonzalez attributed the shrinking of the Latin music economy to the
widening of the income gap in the 1980’s.\textsuperscript{51} No doubt this was a contributing factor; this was a
time when working-class Latinos had little disposable income for entertainment. But there
were other factors. First, many of the newcomers were interested in hearing the popular music
of their own countries presented in their local clubs. Dominican merengue and Colombian
cumbia developed their own followings in New York, and they were often booked in the same
clubs that booked salsa and charanga. Many of the new Latino musicians in the city could play
salsa in addition to the traditional and popular musics of their own countries; they could satisfy
their own communities’ interest in salsa (by then an international phenomenon) and also offer
them the popular music from their own countries. This created a new kind of competitive
environment in the Latin professional music scene in New York. Second, a combination of
widespread anti-immigrant sentiment\textsuperscript{52} and the war on drugs\textsuperscript{53} led to the closing of many Latin

\textsuperscript{51} Larry Birnbaum, "A ‘Bottom Man’ Speaks Out: Andy Gonzalez, Bassist," in \textit{Salsiology: Afro-
Cuban Music and the Evolution of Salsa in New York City}, ed. Vernon W. Boggs (New York:
Greenwood, 1992), 293.

\textsuperscript{52} Baver, "New York’s Latinos and the 1986 Immigration Act,” 302

\textsuperscript{53} Leymarie, \textit{Cuban Fire}, 287.
clubs at the end of the decade. With each closing, musicians lost valuable opportunities for employment. For example, between 1984 and 1988, Orquesta Broadway’s average weekly engagements dropped from 15 per week to between 5 and 10 per month, largely because there were fewer places to play. Finally, the dominance of “salsa romántica,” most of which was not produced in New York, erased classic salsa and charanga from the airwaves. Without the support of radio, the local artists were not likely to be hired in clubs. In the late 80’s, most of the charangas that came along in the 1970’s fizzled, or actually disbanded.

Musically speaking, the movement with the greatest commercial impact in Latin music in the 1980’s was the development of salsa romantica, or salsa sensual. Salsa romantica was similar to the classic salsa of the previous decade in that it used the same instrumentation and it was rhythmically similar. But frequent use of electronically programmed instruments created a rhythmic feel that was quantized and lacking in character. Seemingly minor rhythmic alterations resulted in music that was less syncopated and rhythmically more rudimentary. Die-hard salsa fans would describe the salsa romantica as bland and monotonous. Where the lyrics of New York salsa in the 1970’s sang about Puerto Rican identity and a New York experience, the lyrics of salsa romantica were sentimental and similar to bolero lyrics. These resonated with female audiences, particularly from South America and Central America.

Salsa romantica followed a commercially streamlined production model. There were few bands, in the traditional sense. The usual business paradigm of Latin ensembles before the 1980’s was to seek a record deal in order to record, record in order to secure airplay, and

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airplay would then generate live performances. Their record deals came from small, independent labels, such as Alegre and Fania. These smaller labels would sign an entire band as a unit. Salsa romantica followed a business model that had been practiced by the larger American record labels since their earliest days: a record label would focus on the marketing of an individual singer-star and manage his career. Label staff would write the songs, hire studio musicians for the backing instrumental tracks, handle every aspect of record production, and finance costly promotional campaigns to achieve maximum airplay and record sales. Airplay and record sales became the final goal, much more than live performance.

Of the few salsa romantica bands that existed, none were based in New York. A few were based in Puerto Rico, and most were based in South America, particularly in Colombia. Production activity for the solo singer-star type albums primarily took place in Florida. Non-stop rotation of salsa romantica on the Spanish-language music stations in the New York area in the 1980’s did nothing to secure live work for salsa or charanga bands local to the city.

Some optimistic charangas endeavored to compete in this market. Most notable was Charanga ’76, who had romantic hits as far back as the mid 1970’s. Although many of Charanga 76’s compositions featured more traditional charanga styles, they regularly produced a few romantic numbers.

The 1980’s saw no other significant musical developments in charanga in New York, in contrast to Cuba, where charangas were innovating new genres throughout the decade. Some charangas attempted some very adventurous programming, but it was generally met with resistance on the part of both record labels and audiences. The corporate mentality that
dominated much of American life in the 1980’s infiltrated not only mainstream popular music, but the Latin music scene as well. Record label executives, radio stations, and club owners all demonstrated a conservative preference for previous models of success, and were not willing to take risks on innovation. Concurrently, charanga audiences became willfully nostalgic. Audience response to musical innovation demonstrated that they perceived any major stylistic change as a threat to tradition and even to cultural identity. Some charanga musicians, particularly younger musicians, resented the reactionary attitude. There was an exodus of young talent from the charangas to other realms of music (realms that were not necessarily more commercially successful, but that allowed them greater artistic freedom, such as Latin jazz). The super-star charangas, José Fajardo and Orquesta Broadway, continued to perform in New York throughout this prolonged dry spell that lasted into the 1990’s, because of their stature as the most respected elder-statesman of the genre. But even they had to make concessions to the narrow and conservative stylistic realm that the audiences demanded. In an interview with John Murphy, Eddy Zervigón makes it clear that the stylistic variety that was possible from the 1950’s through the 1970’s was no longer possible. Charanga audiences insisted that all songs, even new ones, conform to the description of “típico.”

Even the permissible range for tempi had become very narrow:

The decreasing distinction of genres as a result of a uniform fast tempo was highlighted when I asked Mr. Zervigón to supply a genre designation for each tune in the band’s current repertoire. “Let me tell you something,” he said, “all of them are the same...because now you are recording everything fast. Everything is a mambo. Everything is a guaracha. It’s not

56 For more detail, see Murphy, 16. Murphy defines “típico” as very traditional and not Americanized.
This state of affairs would not change until the middle 1990’s, when events in commercial media inspired a charanga renaissance for the beginning of the new millennium.

**The Charanga Renaissance**

In the middle 1990’s, the digital and technological revolution changed the music industry and Americans’ leisure habits forever. As a result, when discussing trends in charanga after 1995, it is no longer a conversation about a dance “craze” or a commercial success on the level of the mambo, the chachachá, or the pachanga. It is strictly an artistic discussion.

The late 1990’s saw the beginning of one of the most creative periods in the history of charanga in New York. Three major musical developments occurred in charanga in the late 1990’s: one was forward-looking, one was retroactive, and the third involved fusions of styles.

First, the new sound in charanga for Americans was songo. Songo was a rhythmic concept that began in Cuba in the early 1970’s, but it did not take root in New York for over two decades, as a result of the United States’ embargo against Cuba. The style was created by Cuban bassist Juan Formell, the director of the celebrated Cuban charangón, Los Van Van. He and his drummer, José Luís “Changuito” Quintana, created a rhythmic style that incorporated elements of American funk and r&b, was rhythmically more fluid than classic charanga or son...

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58 Literally a “giant charanga,” Los Van Van’s lineup is flute, three singers, three violins, three trombones, two keyboards, bass, drumset, congas, and güiro.
styles, and allowed the percussionists more freedom of interaction and improvisation. Some New York Latin music fans had gotten a small taste of it in the early 1980’s, after Típica ’73 made a famous and infamous trip to Cuba to take in the current styles and to record with some of Cuba’s top performers.59 When they returned, they began to incorporate some songo influence into their sound. Charanga ’76 successfully incorporated some subtle aspects of songo drum set style by use of a hybrid “timbales-kit” as early as 1976. But in the 1990’s, Los Van Van themselves were able to come to the United States for some performances, and their cutting-edge rhythmic approach left a tremendous impression on certain charanga musicians. It had an undeniable influence on the arranging of some charangas that were established in the late 1990’s or reunited at the turn of the century.

The retroactive movement in charanga had to do with its 75 years of history in Cuba, as well as Cuban music’s history in New York, which was now stretching over half a century. As the pioneers of the New York City Latin music scene were aging or passing away, mambo, charanga, and salsa were approaching the status of cultural artifacts. Older audiences had nostalgic sentiments about these musical genres, and parents and teachers wanted to educate young people about them as a means of preserving their cultural identity. More and more presentations of Latin music were taking place not in clubs, but in concert halls, colleges, and cultural institutions. Even the Smithsonian Museum recognized the cultural and historical value of Latin music in America by creating permanent, special, and traveling exhibits and institutes.

59 Although they are primarily a salsa band, Típica ’73 made some forays into charanga with flutists Gonzalo Fernández, Mario Rivera, and Dick Mesa at different points in the band’s career. Their charanga recordings were critically praised and well-received by audiences.
Siento una Flauta: Chapter 2

on Latin jazz, Latino popular music, and folk music in Latin America. At this time, some of the charangas that became active in the late 1990’s delved into the charanga’s oldest popular genre, the danzón. Some made new recordings of classic danzones from the 1920’s to the 1940’s, and some wrote new danzones.

Concrete inspiration for this retro-fashion came from two sources. The first and was a tribute project undertaken by Cuban-American actor Andy García. García discovered that, throughout the 1980’s into the 90’s, the legendary Cuban bassist, Israel “Cachao” Lopez (who, as mentioned, played with Antonio Arcaño y Sus Maravillas in Cuba in the 1930’s and made many important contributions to charanga throughout its history), was living in Florida in relative obscurity, performing only for small clubs and Latino weddings and private events. García assembled a full charanga and horn line-up of the most historically important Cuban musicians living in the United States (and a few Puerto Ricans), and produced a documentary, Como Su Ritmo No Hay Dos (1993), and two albums, Cachao Master Sessions, Volume 1 (1994) and Cachao Master Sessions, Volume 2 (1995). The albums included three classic danzones, “Isora Club,” “Mambo,” and “El Progreso,” and featured Puerto Rican flutist Nestor Torres. The two albums were a tremendous critical success. They inspired a new revivalist movement of Cuban traditional music in the United States, which included a new fascination with the danzón.

The second and perhaps more significant source of the retro/historical movement was the overwhelming critical and commercial success of both the album The Buena Vista Social Club (1997, World Circuit Records), and Wim Wenders’s documentary film of the same title (1999). The album and film showcased the talents of historically-important Cuban artists and brought them to a larger American audience. Together, they inspired an interest in antiquated Cuban
traditions (including the danzón and the danzonete) that crossed even into the American mainstream. Dance schools and dance clubs experienced a surge in new clientele coming from outside the Hispanic community. This surge lasted several years into the new millennium.

The third trend was a creative wave of experimentation with the fusing of styles into the charanga band. Many artists in charanga were also well-established as musicians in other fields, including jazz, Latin jazz, American popular dance styles, and classical music. The charanga was an appealing vehicle for exploring fusions of these styles. The charanga repertoire demands a high level of musicianship, and the participating musicians often have a very broad skill set. The late 1990’s saw the release of charanga albums with string quartet (Nestor Torres), classic r&b vocals (Johnny Almendra y Los Jovenes del Barrio) and with jazz and Latin jazz (Bongo Logic).

During these years, Nuyorican percussionist Johnny Almendra had begun a charanga workshop at the Harbor Center for the Performing Arts, known as “Boys Harbor,” in New York City’s Spanish Harlem. Almendra, né John Andreu, was a percussionist who grew up during the mambo era and established himself performing for many years with salsa greats such as Willie Colón, and in the charangas of José Fajardo, Orquesta Broadway, Orquesta Típica Novél, La Típica Ideal, and Charanga ’76 in the 1970’s. As Almendra’s career expanded to include teaching and he joined the faculty of Boys Harbor, he saw a need for an educational ensemble where he could demonstrate the historical traditions and the students could experience their appropriate use. The group evolved to become a professional, working group, Los Jovenes del Barrio. Los Jovenes featured Karen Joseph on flute and a host of New York City’s most outstanding Latin musicians. They took a unique artistic turn when they began to include
Almendra’s wife, Jillian Armsbury, as lead vocalist. Jillian was a classically trained r&b virtuoso session vocalist. The combination of Armsbury’s artistic personality as a performer and her compositional contributions created an r&b fusion that was more successful than anything that had ever been attempted during the boogaloo era or since. On the band’s three studio albums, *Evolucionando* (1996), *Reconfirmando* (1998) and *¡Es Diferente!* (2000), they feature a host of arrangers and styles. In addition to the r&b/Latin fusion already mention, they explore cumbia, blues, songo, as well as charanga salsera and traditional danzones. Los Jovenes del Barrio, and Bret Gollin’s Bongo Logic on the west coast, featuring flutist Art Webb, inspired a bi-coastal charanga revolution which reinvented the charanga as a choice vehicle for new creativity, experimentation, and traditional revival.

These groundbreaking new charangas inspired others that had disbanded or been dormant to reform or become more active. Since 2000, Charanga ’76, Charanga America, Orquesta Típica Novél (now known simply as Orquesta Novél), Steve Colon’s Siglo 20, and Son Sublime have been actively performing, touring, and recording in the last 15 years. Orquesta Broadway, revered as the elder statesmen of New York City charanga, has also seen a recent surge in activity, both locally and internationally.
This chapter presents musical examples from the music and dance genres commonly performed by charangas in New York City after 1960. Each genre discussion includes musical samples of the harmonic-rhythmic foundation patterns played by each instrument in the rhythm section; these patterns essentially define the genres. This chapter is not intended to be an in-depth discussion of structure, harmonic analysis, or the history of any of these genres. Rather, its purpose is to supply technical information for performers and arrangers wishing to work in charanga, and to provide context for the solo transcriptions in the chapters that follow. At the conclusion of the chapter, there is a list of recommended reading for those who wish to delve deeper into the social and historical development or theoretical analysis of these styles.

Some of the most respected performers in the field of Latin music have published method books that address the rhythmic patterns necessary for competency in all Latin dance genres, including those played by charangas. Methods by Rebecca Mauleón (piano), Carlos del Puerto, Silvio Vergara, and Oscar Stagnaro (bass), Victor Rendón (timbales), and Sam Bardfeld (violin) were cited or consulted for selecting or creating the musical examples contained here. Their books are also listed in the recommended reading section.

Each of the examples is the most basic representation of the foundation pattern. In practice, each pattern has numerous variants and the performer, led by inspiration and governed by taste, is also free to occasionally abandon the pattern to *repicar* (improvise or fill). That being said, Cuban dance music is highly formalized and Cuban musicians demand adherence to the
rules. To improvise tastefully within the defining constraints of each genre requires a wealth of experience and depth of understanding of the roles not only of one’s own instrument but also of the other instruments in the charanga.

As in the rest of Latin America, Cubans prefer to notate duple-meter dance genres in 2/4 time, with eighth notes and sixteenth notes as the predominant note values. However, since this project is primarily concerned with music in New York, all of the examples in this chapter are notated in 4/4 time, with quarter and eighth notes as the predominant note values. This is the common practice among American musicians working in dance and commercial music. The exception is the transcription taken from Danilo Lozano, who has notated all of his examples in 2/4 time, according to conventional Cuban practice.

**Danzón**

Although the danzón’s rightful place, for charanga, is the first half of the 20th century, it was an important part of charanga’s nostalgic renaissance in the 1990’s. Today, every charanga is expected to demonstrate mastery of the classic danzones.

A telltale characteristic of the danzón is its complex of stock rhythmic patterns. Some of these rhythms were presented in chapter one, and they include the cinquillo, tresillo, the habanera or tango rhythm, and amphibrach. Some or all of these rhythms appear in the accompaniment patterns of every instrument in the rhythm section as well as in the melody and counter-melodies:
Ex. 3.1: cinquillo

Ex. 3.2: tresillo

Ex. 3.3: habanera

Ex. 3.4: amphibrach

Through the A, B, and C sections of the danzón, the timbales and the güiro carry the essential rhythm of the danzón, the cinquillo, often in alternation with a bar of four quarter notes, but not strictly so. The güiro’s interpretation of this danzón rhythm is strict and simple:

Ex. 3.5: danzón rhythm, güiro
The timbales’s interpretation of the danzón rhythm is more complex, a combination of rim clicks, muffled tones, and open tones known as baqueteo:

Ex. 3.6: baqueteo

\[ \text{(Δ = rim click; } \times \text{ = muffled tone; } \cdot \text{ = open tone)} \]

Often the two-bar alternation of cinquillo and quarter note bars is interrupted by a chain of three cinquillo bars followed by a concluding bar of an unsyncopated variant:

Ex. 3.7: Transcription, timbales ("paila") and güiro from “Fefita” by Odilio Urfé

The upright bass’s accompaniment pattern also makes use of the cinquillo bar/quarter note bar alteration. In *The True Cuban Bass*, Carlos del Puerto demonstrates this as being played in opposition to the timbales pattern:

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1 Taken from the transcription of the full score in Lozano, “The Charanga Tradition in Cuba,” 99-100.
Ex. 3.8: basic danzón bass pattern

\[ \text{bass} \]

\[ \text{Timbales} \]

In actual practice, the bass can play either in opposition to or coordinated with the timbales.

In Cachao’s clarinet and bass duo adaptation of Ignacio Cervantes’s contradanza, “Los Tres Golpes,” he improvises a bass line based on Cervantes’s original piano score. Cachao makes use of all of the above-named stock danzón rhythms, and of “straight” bars (four quarters or two halves). As a major figure in the history of danzón, Cachao’s improvisation is an excellent example of bass accompaniment in that era:

Ex. 3.9: Cachao’s bass line, “Los Tres Golpes,” mm. 5-9

\[ \text{straight 2} \quad \text{tresillo} \quad \text{straight 4} \quad \text{habanera} \]

\[ \text{amphibrach} \]

\[ \text{Israel Cachao Lopez, Cachao: Master Sessions, Volume 2 (Crescent Moon/Epic EK 67319, 1995), compact disc.} \]
Ex. 3.10: Cachao’s bass line, “Los Tres Golpes,” mm. 47-52

For classic danzones (before the danzón-mambo), the role of the piano was less rhythmic than is common in Latin dance music today. Before 1938, charanga pianists did not usually read from a dedicated piano part. The pianists usually read the first violin part, which may have included cues for the flute and for breaks. The pianists were expected to improvise their accompaniment based on the violin part. This accompaniment included chordal pads, counter-melodies that complemented the flute part, and improvised fills. This realization of a pianist’s interpretation of the violin part at the opening of Abelardo Valdés’s “Almendra” shows some choices that a pianist might make:³

³ Arrangement courtesy of Rick Faulkner.
Ex. 3.11: The piano accentuates and harmonizes elements of the violin part at will.

Like the piano’s, the role of the violins before the advent of the danzón-mambo was much less rhythmic than now. The strings played chordal pads, harmonizations, and countermelodies to support the flute line, and in certain sections took over the melody entirely, for obligatory textural variety:

Ex. 3.12: “Almendra,” mm. 5-8. The flute melody is supported by pads and harmonization in the violin section.
Ex. 3.13: “Almendra,” mm. 49-52, countermelodies between flute and violins in the C strain

\[\text{Flute} \quad \text{Violin 1} \quad \text{Violin 2} \quad \text{& 3}\]

**Danzón-Mambo**

Danilo Lozano describes the innovation of the danzón-mambo, or the *danzón del nuevo ritmo*, as a greater Africanization and creolization of the charanga and the danzón.\(^4\) For audiences, it was hotter and had more swing. This was accomplished in three ways. First, the role of the piano and the string section changed from providing orchestral-style accompaniment to an active rhythmic accompaniment. Second, the conga, an instrument with strong Afrocentric associations for Cubans, was added to the rhythm section. Both of these innovations were inspired by the son conjuntos (Arcaño added a conga to his charanga because Arsenio Rodríguez had added one to his son conjunto a year before), as the charangas tried to compete with the son’s popularity. The third factor is harmonic: the entire section is played over an unresolved dominant seventh chord, creating a heightened feeling of tension. All three of these innovations are applied only to the mambo section (last section) of a danzón-mambo. For the A, B, and C sections of the danzón, the instruments’ roles were no different from what they had been in the era of the classic danzón.

More important than any of these innovations for the future of Cuban dance music was the imposition of the strict, binary alternation of the clave. This is another borrowing from the son. The clave is the two-bar timeline that runs through nearly all Latin dance music and provides the rhythmic “key” or cipher to all rhythmic activity around it. The importance of the clave in the son and its descendants cannot be overstated. In many genres associated with charanga, however, the presence of the clave is lighter. The clave is there, but it is not as central. This is true in the danzón-mambo, which will be evident in the proceeding examples, and it is also true of the chachachá and the pachanga of subsequent decades.

Previously, in the classic danzón, the timbales and güiro vacillated between cinquillo (a syncopated bar) and straight quarter bars more freely, judging by their own taste. In the mambo as in the son, however, the alternation of a tresillo bar (derived from the cinquillo) and a straight bar is strict and immutable.

Ex. 3.14: 2-3 son clave

In example 3.14, the clave is shown as the straight bar first, the syncopated bar second, or “two-three,” as it is commonly known. The clave can also be reversed: syncopated bar first, straight bar second (“three-two”), but whether a piece of music begins “on the two-side” or “on the three-side,” once it has begun it must not be changed. Every rhythmic foundation pattern played by every other instrument must relate to the clave. For simplicity, all of the following examples have been given in two-three clave, but the performer should be aware that they all have reverse (three-two) counterparts.
The piano’s rhythmic accompaniment was taken from the harmonic-rhythmic patterns played by the tres in a son conjunto. These patterns, called the *puntillo*, provided an active, moving rhythmic foundation pattern as well as arpeggiated harmonic support. When played by the piano, the method books referenced for this chapter call this pattern the *guajeo*, which is a term that seems to be commonly used by Cuban musicians. However, this is a term seldom used by musicians in New York City’s Latin music community. More frequently, musicians living in New York (even some of the Cuban ones, occasionally) call this pattern a *montuno*. The montuno is the structural section where this and other such foundational accompaniment patterns are played to support improvisation by the lead vocals and instruments. Over decades of practice, this term has come to signify both what is played and when it is played. Because this study is focused on music in New York, we will use the local common terminology most of the time.

The role of the violin changed similarly, and so the violin’s arpeggiated rhythmic accompaniment pattern is also called a guajeo or montuno. In the early days of the danzón-mambo, the violins doubled the piano’s montuno and played pizzicato. Today, the violin guajeo is expected to complement the piano guajeo and not duplicate it, and pizzicato is rare, reserved as a special effect.

Ex. 3.15: guajeos from “Almendra” and from Orestes Lopez’s “Mambo”

“Almendra”

[Music notation image]
In practice, the pianist has the option of playing the violin guajeos shown in example 3.14 in octaves with both hands in single or double octaves and with or without harmonization.

In the mambo section, the timbales player would change from the danzón pattern to four quarter notes played on the bell, with an alternation of closed and open hand strokes on the low drum on the second and fourth beats of each bar. This pattern has more rhythmic drive than the danzón pattern. The güiro pattern changes here to the quarter-eighth-eighth, quarter-eighth-eighth (ONE two-and THREE four-and) pattern that became common in nearly every genre of Latin dance music that was to follow:

Ex. 3.16: danzón-mambo, timbales; the stick pattern is played on the bell, and the left hand pattern is played on the low drum.

Ex. 3.17: güiro pattern for mambo, chachachá, etc.
The bass pattern in mambo is quite distinctive. In fact, many Latin music arrangers would agree that the bass pattern is the most important defining characteristic of the mambo. The bass can play either a single-bar pattern of two quarters on beats three and four in every bar, or it can play a two-bar variation with a syncopated pick-up on the three side:

Ex. 3.18: mambo bass patterns

With the mambo, the use of the conga in charanga was completely new. It plays a simple pattern that emphasizes the second and fourth beats of the bar. This pattern is known as *tumbao*:

Ex. 3.19: conga tumbao (3-2 clave)

Basic Son and Guaracha

If a typical fan of Latin dance music is asked to name the song and dance genres associated with charanga, it is not likely that he or she will include the son – or its faster cousin, the guaracha – among them. Yet, at a typical charanga performance at a dance club today, perhaps seven out of ten numbers will actually be a son or a guaracha. This has been true since the
1940’s, when charanga bands began to cover son repertoire in order to remain viable. Indeed, the mambo itself includes significant borrowings from the son. The influence of son on the entire trajectory of Latin popular music history is so far reaching that there is no shortage of materials for anyone who wants to learn the mechanics of son (some are listed in the recommended reading section). Without duplicating too much of the excellent work that is already out there, a few basics of the son as they relate specifically to charanga are presented here.

Harmonically, the repertoire of son and guaracha include more variety than that of the mambo. Besides the endless dominant seventh, son makes use of many repeating harmonic cycles, most of which are two- or four-bar patterns. Here is a list of some of the most common ones, but there are many possibilities:

1.) |: I  IV | V  IV :|

2.) |: i  iv | V  iv :|

3.) |: I  V  V  I :|

4.) |: V  I  I  V :|

5.) |: I  I  V  V :|

6.) |: V  V  I  I :|

7.) |: i  VII  VI  V7 :|

Progressions 3, 4, 5, and 6 all have minor key variants.
The piano and violin montunos found in the mambo are derived from the son. There are no significant rhythmic differences in how the violins and piano play in mambo or son, but there are countless variants. What they all have in common is an emphasis on the downbeat of the two-side of the clave, and syncopation nearly everywhere else:

Ex. 3.20: piano guajeo, guaracha or son

Ex. 3.21: violin guajeo, guaracha or son

The percussion patterns do not change between mambo and son in a charanga. The timbalero still plays a series of quarter notes on the bell, and the güiro plays the single-bar pattern that developed in the danzón-mambo, making the presence of the metric/syncopated alternation the clave less pronounced in charanga than it is in a son conjunto. The conga pattern was taken directly from the son, but this can also be modified as a one-bar pattern. This particular matrix of rhythmic foundation patterns played by the combination of the timbales, güiro, and conga in the mambo was to become the characteristic sound of the charanga across multiple genres.

Like the mambo, the distinguishing characteristic of the son played by a charanga is the bass pattern. It is taken from the bass or marimbula pattern in a son conjunto. Like the conga
Siento una Flauta: Chapter 3

pattern, this is also known as *tumbao*. The significant features of the bass tumbao are the upbeat of beat two (the *bombo*), the fourth beat (the *ponche*), and the conspicuous absence of any attack on the first beat ever (except for the first bar of the song):

Ex. 3.22: bass tumbao, son or guaracha

```
\textbf{bombo} \downarrow \textbf{ponche} \downarrow
```

The *Chachachá*

The chachachá came a decade after the danzón-mambo, and some years after many charangas were performing some of the son repertoire, including son-style vocals. The chachachá was born out of a wish to simplify the mambo for the dancers. Enrique Jorrín altered the foundation patterns in the piano and bass to eliminate syncopation and provide a strong downbeat to each bar. Like the charanga son, the chachachá included vocals, but rather than the two-part harmony typical of son, Jorrín’s arrangements featured three voices singing in unison. This arrangement device became the signature sound of the classic charanga.

Between the danzón-mambo and the chachachá, the patterns did not change in the percussion section. In the mambo, the timbales were already playing a strong, unsyncopated, steady series of quarter notes on the bell, and the güiro also plays a strong metric pattern, with a heavy emphasis on the first and third beats of the bar. The subtle emphasis of the second and fourth beats provided by the conga and the left hand of the timbales player lends a gentle backbeat swing to alleviate the relentless straight four of the bell and güiro.
To complement the light, subtle nature of the percussion section in the chachachá, the songs are nearly always in a major key. From our earlier list of possible chord progressions in the son, progressions 1 and 3 through 6 are very common.

The piano’s montunos in the mambo had been heavily syncopated. Many piano montunos in mambo have the piano playing on the beat only once every other bar (on the downbeat of the two-side of the clave). Jorrín created a new piano montuno that played heavily on the first and third beats of every bar:

Ex. 3.23: piano guajeo, chachachá

![Piano guajeo example](image)

The mambo bass pattern could be very confusing for novice dancers. The first half of the bar is silent, and the bass player plays on beats three and four. To the inexperienced dancer, the third beat could sound like the beginning of the bar. In the chachachá, the bass can play a variety of rhythmic patterns that emphasize the first and third beats:

Ex. 3.24: bass, rhythmic pattern options for chachachá

![Bass example](image)

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Likewise, the guajeo of the violins avoids syncopation:

Ex. 3.26: violin guajeos for chachachá

---

The Descarga

Although the term *descarga* generally means a jam session, the descarga evolved as a movement and a genre in Cuba in the mid-1950’s. The descarga is an opportunity for the instrumentalists, particularly the percussionists, to indulge freely in improvisation, without regard for the wishes of the dancers. A descarga may or may not include vocals, but when it does, it is a simple coro (refrain) at the outset; there is never a full verse. Performed live, additional coros may be improvised over instrumental solos.

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Rhythmically and harmonically, the descarga is most akin to the mambo, but usually it is faster and hotter, in fact, too fast for the dancers, requiring them to take a break and listen. Many descargas take place over a dominant seventh chord, like the mambo, but all of the montuno progressions from son are common as well, along with a few jazz-influenced progressions, such as $| I \quad vi \quad ii \quad V7 \quad |$. Most of the rhythmic foundation patterns are the same as the son, but since the descarga movement began when the New York mambo craze was well underway, the timbales player borrows from the busier and more exciting vocabulary used in mambo. Besides the straight-four bell pattern of the danzón-mambo and the chachachá, the timbales player can also choose from a complex of patterns known as *paila*. Example 3.27 shows the two most basic variants:

Ex. 3.27: timbales, paila examples

Another possibility for the timbales player is a bell pattern known simply as “mambo bell.” This is played on a bell that is larger and louder than the chachachá bell. In a band fronted by a flute player, the mambo bell should be used judiciously:
Ex. 3.28: mambo bell pattern

The Pachanga

From the danzón-mambo onwards, most of the genres associated with charanga bear some rhythmic resemblance to the basic son. The pachanga is an exception; usually it has little in common with the son; New Yorkers will feel that the pachanga has more in common with Dominican merengue or a Puerto Rican rhythm known as caballo. The pachanga usually uses the three-voice unison vocals that became standard in the chachachá, but sometimes the vocal changes to alternation of lead singer and coro in the montuno section.

Danilo Lozano includes the pachanga with a complex of post-chachachá rhythmic genres from post-Revolutionary Cuba, such as the pilón, the pacá, and the guapachá. These genres that arose in the late 1950’s and early 1960’s were an attempt to capitalize on the success of the chachachá by creating other styles that were more “metric” (less syncopated) and easier for the dancers.7

Cuban renditions and New York renditions of the pachanga are not quite the same. Transcriptions of Eduardo Davison’s “La Pachanga” (La Pachanga, Panart, 1959) demonstrate that the Cuban version resembles the Dominican merengue most strongly, with a clear two-feel

7 Personal communication.
in the bass, a tresillo-derived montuno in the piano, a bell and güiro pattern that resembles the basic merengue güira pattern or a Puerto Rican caballo pattern, and a conga pattern that is completely distinct from the son. The pattern changes for each instrument do not necessarily coincide.

Ex. 3.29: “La Pachanga,” piano montunos

Ex. 3.30: “La Pachanga,” bass patterns

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8 I am very grateful to the following people for transcribing rhythm section instruments of all three pachanga recordings for this section: Chiemi Nakai, piano; Rick Faulkner, bass; Yasuyo Kimura, congas and güiro, Víctor Rendón, timbales.
Ex. 3.31: “La Pachanga,” conga patterns (P = palm, synonymous with “heel”)

Ex. 3.32: “La Pachanga,” timbales and güiro patterns

Johnny Pacheco’s “El Chivo,” from *Johnny Pacheco y su Charanga* (Alegre, 1960) is still very metric, but has one son element. After the introductory unison/octaves figure, the piano montuno and the bass tumbao place a heavy emphasis on the downbeat and on-beat playing, and the bell pattern in the timbales is still related to caballo or to the güira pattern in merengue. The conga pattern is pure son:
Ex. 3.33: “El Chivo,” piano introduction and montunos

Ex. 3.34: “El Chivo,” bass introduction and accompaniment patterns
The third and final example is “Oyeme mulata,” from the same album as the previous example. This selection is simply a son played at a quick tempo, but it was typical for the dancers to dance the pachanga when this song was played.\textsuperscript{9} The fact that this number can be

\textsuperscript{9} Personal communication from numerous senior friends and family members.
musically identified as a són, but that dancers associate it with the pachanga, is evidence that the pachanga is a term more strongly indicative of a dance genre than a musical one.

Ex. 3.37: “Oyeme mulata,” piano guajeos

Ex. 3.38: “Oyeme mulata,” bass tumbao variants
Ex. 3.39: “Oyeme mulata,” conga tumbao variants

**Pattern 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congas</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>L</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Pattern 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Ex. 3.40: “Oyeme mulata,” timbales patterns

**Pattern 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timbales</th>
<th>♩</th>
<th>♩</th>
<th>♩</th>
<th>♩</th>
<th>♩</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Pattern 2**

| (muffle tone) | ♨ | ♩ | ♩ | ♩ | ♩ | ♩ | ♩ | ♩ | ♩ |

---

**Boogaloo**

The boogaloo is a fusion of American jazz and r&b with the Cuban son-montuno (a moderate-tempo genre, similar to chachachá, but more syncopated, frequently played over an open dominant seventh chord or a repeated ii-V7 progression, however, other progressions are possible):
The American element is manifested by the use of drum set instead of or in addition to timbales. The drum set’s primary function is to provide a heavy backbeat, frequently underscored by the addition of handclaps on beats two and four. Other characteristics such as English lyrics, blues-infused melodic vocabulary, and the presence of brass and saxophones (in the charangas of Ray Barretto and Mongo Santamaría, for example) also important identifying markers in boogaloo.

In the following piano example from Johnny Colón’s “Boogaloo Blues” (*Boogaloo Blues*, Fania, 1967), the simple addition of a bluesy grace note changes the flavor of this montuno from something strictly Cuban to something more African-American:

The bass example from “Boogaloo Blues” – borrowed from Mongo Santamaría’s “Mazacote” (*Mongo*, Fantasy, 1959) – has a strong, well-prepared downbeat on the first bar of every pair in...
two-three clave, but preserves the across-the-bar line motion of the Cuban bass tumbao between the clave bars. These two elements typify the Cuban/r&b fusion of boogaloo:

Ex. 3.43: “Boogaloo Blues,” bass line.

The following examples from Johnny Pacheco’s “Suaviloo” (Johnny Pacheco y su charanga, *By Popular Demand*, Fania, 1966) give us a glimpse at boogaloo in the context of a charanga:

Ex. 3.44: “Suaviloo,” piano and bass patterns

*Charanga Salsera*

Because the salsa genre evolved largely from son, charanga salsera is not rhythmically very different from charanga renditions of son, which had been common since the 1940’s. Making charangas sound more like salsa bands was accomplished by the addition of harmonized vocals, and instruments associated strongly with son and salsa conjuntos. Besides the addition of brass to some charangas, many added bongó and cowbell (traditionally played by a single percussionist), an instrument integral to the son since its earliest days.
The role of the bongó in son and salsa is almost constant improvisation. It does have a foundation pattern known as *martillo*. Martillo is always played under the verse of a song, and is a default pattern for the performer for occasional rest:

Ex. 3.45: martillo

When the bongó player changes to cowbell during the montuno sections of a song, its bell pattern, along with the mambo bell pattern of the timbales, gives salsa its characteristic rhythmic drive:

Ex. 3.46: bongó bell pattern

**Songo**

Songo is less a specific musical genre defined by a specific set of rhythmic foundation patterns, and more a concept or approach to playing. It would be possible to present twenty examples of songo patterns for each instrument in the rhythm section, and an intuitive performer could then invent twenty more, and they would all still be songo. The concepts that describe songo are 1) an edgy, rock influence that is apparent in the use of drum set and electric instruments; 2) liberal, creative use of timbales accessories in the treble range, such as woodblock, cymbal, and multiple bells; 3) influence from rumba; 4) busy, active basslines that
are influenced by American funk bass styles, and; 5) chord progressions in the montuno section
that are not typical of the son, or that are derived from son, but contain one “surprise” chord
that is not related to the key. The piano and bass examples are transcribed from recordings by
Los Van Van. Los Van Van’s musical director, Juan Formell, together with his drummer, José
Luís “Changuito” Quintana, are the creators of songo. These, along with the percussion
transcriptions by Rebecca Mauleón, below give insight to the flavor of songo, but should not be
construed as defining or confining:

Ex. 3.47: timbales with added bass drum, songo double bell, also known as “Changuito’s
especial”\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Rebecca Mauleón, *Salsa Guidebook for Piano & Ensemble* (Petaluma, CA: Sher Music
Company, 1993), 94.
Ex. 3.48: basic drum set patterns for songo\textsuperscript{11}

Ex. 3.49: sample conga pattern for songo\textsuperscript{12}

Ex. 3.50: bass sample, “El Buena Gente” (*La Habana Sí*, Areito, 1985)\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 217.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Stagnaro, *The Latin Bass Book*, 133.
Ex. 3.51: bass sample, “La Resolución” (*La Habana Sí*, Areito, 1985)\(^\text{14}\)

Ex. 3.52: piano guajeo, “Sandunguera” (*Songo*, Mango, 1988)\(^\text{15}\)

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\(^{14}\) Ibid.

Recommended Reading:

More in-depth discussion of the genres presented here, as well as more detailed advice for arrangers and performers can be found among the works in this select bibliography:


Chapter 4: Organology, the Five-Key Flute and the Boehm-System Flute

Of interest to many flutists working in charanga is the kind of flute that is commonly associated with the genre. Charanga has a characteristic that distinguishes it from most other western music styles that utilize the flute today. Charanga flutists play in an extraordinarily high register, inhabiting the third and fourth octaves most of the time, seldom venturing down into the second octave. This is because charanga developed at a time before sound amplification. As the lead voice, the flute must be heard over a large ensemble that includes at least two percussionists. The high register cuts through the din. Unfortunately, conventional flutists today are not usually aware of the fingerings for notes more than a whole step into the fourth octave. Charanga flutists have had to create the necessary technique via experimentation. Until recently, tutors with the fingerings covering the necessary range did not exist.¹

The flute that is historically associated with the charanga is a wooden flute with five keys (figure 8). This is a design that was common in France in the 19th century. This design was invented possibly before 1800, and was the “standard” flute in France by the 1820’s. We can estimate that this flute was invented some 20 to 50 years before the modern system, or “Boehm” flute made its first appearance in Europe. These five-keyed flutes continued to be

¹ For performers on the modern (conventional) flute, prior to the digital age, adventurous flutists such as Robert Dick published fingering charts that extended the range up to F#4 or even G4. See Robert Dick, The Other Flute, Volume 1 (New York: Edu-Tainment, 1978). Today, online fingering charts abound, with multiple fingering options up to G4 or G#4.
made well into the 20th century and to be used by flutists in many arenas of music in both Europe and the Americas.

So far, the charanga literature says little about the history of these older flutes. Explanations for why charanga flutists prefer them are highly subjective and often speculative. Information that can be found in charanga or Cuban music studies is incomplete and occasionally inaccurate. Authors on charanga are usually accomplished charanga flutists, historians of Cuban music, or both, but they do not usually have a background in historical flutes. Experts in the field of historical flutes can tell us a great deal, but they tend to confine their interests to the music that was written at a time and place when these flutes were current (in this case, 19th century France). They may have a passing interest in charanga as a novelty, but for most of them, this has not resulted in any serious research. Occasional mentions of charanga in historical flute literature are nearly always inaccurate or incorrect. The one exception among historical flute experts would be Peter Noy, an historical flute maker residing in Seattle. He has spent a great deal of time studying historical flutes played by charanga flutists, and has designed a flute uniquely and specifically suited to the expectations of the genre.

Today, the great organological question about charanga is whether the five-key flute is actually more suited to the demands of the music, particularly the high tessitura, than the modern flute.

The modern, or “Boehm” flute (figure 4.2), which is now used in symphony orchestras, chamber music, jazz, contemporary popular music, etc., was invented in 1847 by the German flutist/engineer, Theobald Boehm. It is built on an acoustic principal that is entirely different
from all previous European classical flutes, including the five-key flute. The Boehm flute has a separate tone hole drilled for each of the 12 chromatic pitches of the first octave (and a few extras for intonation in upper registers figures 4.3 and 4.4). Since we don’t have enough fingers to cover them all, there is a complex system of closed and open keys, with rods, pins, springs, and levers to make it possible to activate all keys and open and close all holes.

While its initial reception was mixed, the Boehm flute became the instrument of choice among professional flutists in Paris around 1860, and in England shortly after that. However, it did not catch on so quickly everywhere. Germans resisted adopting the Boehm flute well into the 20th century. At the turn of the 19th to 20th centuries, both older flutes and Boehm flutes were available in the Americas, including in Cuba, but the transition to Boehm flutes there happened at an uneven pace, depending on a few factors. The striking difference in price between Boehm flutes and older style flutes leads one to believe that if Boehm flutes were preferred by professional symphonic flutists and wealthy amateurs, professionals working in less high-brow spheres of music and middle-class amateurs continued to use older flutes for quite a long time.

The traditional charanga wood flute with 5 keys operates on a different principal from that of the Boehm flute: it is built on a much older design that was the basis for most flutes throughout the world until the 19th century. It has often been mistakenly referred to as a “Baroque” flute, which it is not. Among other differences, the Baroque flute has only one key (see figure 4.5), but the Baroque flute and the five-key flute have something very important in
Fig. 4.1: five-key flutes used in charanga, French manufacture. © 2003-2008, 2011 Richard M. Wilson. Used by permission.²

Fig. 4.2: modern, or “Boehm” flute.

Fig. 4.3: tone hole placement in Boehm flute (body only). © 2003-2008, 2011 Richard M. Wilson. Used by permission.³

Fig. 4.4: D1, C2, and C#2 tone holes are not visible from above because they are drilled on the underside. Drawing shows where these tone holes are located. © 2003-2008, 2011 Richard M. Wilson. Used by permission.⁴

Fig. 4.5: Baroque one-key flute.

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⁴ Ibid.
common: they are both “simple system” flutes, which have six primary open holes that are covered only by the flesh of the fingers (index, middle, and ring finger of each hand). When all holes are closed, the note sounded should be a D (flutists call this lowest D “D1,” for D in the first octave), and as the fingers are raised one at a time from the furthest end to nearest the embouchure, it should sound a D major scale. A simple system flute may have any number of keys – from none to 13 or more – but none of those keys may close the six primary holes covered by the fingers. The keys exist to facilitate pitches outside the D major scale (although these are still possible without the keys via forked fingerings, half-holing, and manipulation of the embouchure), and they are also used to provide alternate fingerings and facilitate trills. In the case of the five-key flute used by charanga flutists, the keys are used for low D# (right-hand pinkie), Bb (left-hand thumb), G# (left-hand pinkie), F⁵ (right-hand ring finger), and a “trill” key⁶, or C₂ key⁷. It is possible to play any simple system flute, including the charanga flute, without ever touching any of the keys. This is not possible on a Boehm flute. On simple system flutes, use of the keys is optional. This means that all keys on a simple system flute (if any) are closed-

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⁵ Lozano, *The Charanga Tradition in Cuba*, 145. Lozano refers to this key as an F# key. However, Peter Noy and other flute historians call the same key an “F” key (personal communication). The discrepancy in purpose and nomenclature likely results from the large number of alternate fingerings available for five-key flute players, as well as shifts in intonation that may result from the kinds of alterations that charanga performers make to the French instruments.


⁷ Ibid. This has also been confirmed by personal communication with Peter Noy. Although it is, indeed, a C₂ key, its use for C₂ is barely necessary (the simple system C₂ fingering is a forked fingering that works well). The key does come in handy for trills, accounting for the difference in nomenclature.
standing. This is also not the case with the Boehm flute. The Boehm flute has both open- and closed-standing keys.

As stated earlier, the flute known as a “Baroque flute” has a single key. This one-key flute is frequently referred to as “Baroque” because it first appeared in about 1670, nearly three quarters of a century into the Baroque era. However, flutes with more keys began to appear as early as 1720 (still at the height of the Baroque era), and conversely, one-key flutes continued to be the flute of choice for professionals well beyond end of the Baroque era (in fact, to the end of the 18th century, and among amateurs, beyond that). Perhaps it’s not very accurate or descriptive to refer to all one-key flutes as Baroque flutes. They do have other names, such as “one-key flute,” “flauto traverso,” and simply “traverso.” But actual Baroque one-key flutes have other features that distinguish them from one-key flutes from later periods: they come in a wide variety of pitches, but most often they are at a lower pitch than the modern standard (usually falling in a range of A=435 down to A=390) and have a wider bore than 19th-century French flutes (including the five-key “charanga” flute). The sound of Baroque one-key flutes is wholly different from the sound of later one-key flutes.

By the early 19th century, at the time of the Franco-Haitian migration to Santiago de Cuba, a variety of keyed flutes were available, many of them coming out of England and Germany, and most of them featuring a C foot joint (middle C as the lowest note, rather than D, which was the

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9 Ibid


most common throughout the 17th and 18th centuries). But the French flutist François Devienne, professor of flute at the Conservatoire de Paris, was dissatisfied with the tone of the C foot.\textsuperscript{11} Thus the C foot did not catch on in France during his tenure, nor was it taught under his successor. A French-designed flute with a D foot and five keys remained the official flute of the Conservatoire de Paris until 1860, and the standard among professionals and amateurs throughout France for much of the 19th century. This feature of a D foot as opposed to a C foot is not only what distinguished the French flute from other popular European simple-system flute designs, but it is also one of the most significant defining features of the flute of choice for charanga flutists. Although other five-key simple system configurations were more popular in Europe and the Americas, only the French five-key, D-foot design is acceptable to Cuban flutists.

So far, it is not possible to state with assurance precisely when this particular design of flute was invented,\textsuperscript{12} but charanga research can help flute historians establish its age. There is documented evidence another type of five-key flute of French design appeared in 1782, but it has a C foot,\textsuperscript{13} so this is not the same flute. We can establish, via records from the Conservatoire de Paris, that the five-key D-foot flute was widely used in France by 1820. Upheaval from the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars made evidence from prior to that date (the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries) difficult to locate; France was conspicuously absent from the European conversation on flute experimentation at that time, as a result of

\textsuperscript{11} Powell, \textit{The Flute}, 124-125.  
\textsuperscript{12} Peter Noy, personal communication.  
\textsuperscript{13} Powell, \textit{The Flute}, 125.
political conflict and turmoil. Cuban history can be helpful here. These French-made, D-foot, five-key flutes were the flutes available for and used in the orchestras of the plantation owners in Haiti, and then Santiago de Cuba, at the time of the Franco-Haitian migration to Santiago de Cuba, the bulk of which took place in 1803. Colonial French refugees brought as much as they could with them, including musical instruments and slaves to play them. In Santiago de Cuba, as they continued to rely on European imports to maintain their lifestyle in their new land, flutes available from France continued to be the five-key type. In this light, flute historians can be reasonably confident that the origins of the five-key D-foot French flute go back at least as far as 1803.

Even after the Conservatoire de Paris officially adopted the Boehm flute in 1860, French manufacturers continued to make five-key flutes (and other simple system flutes) for many decades. Professionals outside of Paris, and amateurs everywhere in France, also did not make the switch so quickly. A catalog dated 1930 from the Parisian flute maker Couesnon (one of the French makers preferred by Cuban charanga flutists)\(^\text{14}\) lists a variety of styles of five-key flutes, alongside one-key flutes, other early keyed flutes, and Boehm flutes. Price possibly played a role in the slow transition to Boehm flutes. This may not have been the deciding factor for Cuban flutists hoping to buy a flute imported from France, but affordability could not be ignored. The same Couesnon catalog mentioned above offers 5-key flutes ranging from 72 to 190 francs, and Boehm flutes from 760 to 2035 francs.\(^\text{15}\) Even the top charanga flutists in

\(^{14}\) Miller, *Cuban Flute Style*, 30.

Havana, at the height of charanga’s popularity, were paid very poorly. Most could not have bought a Boehm flute even if they wanted one. The five-key flutes cost about one-tenth what the Boehm flutes cost, or even less. Add to this the factor that many budding charanga flutists in Cuba relied on the availability of previously-used, older flutes in order to be able to obtain one. Five-key flutes circulated, creating and perpetuating the tradition.

Some flutists say that the five-key flute’s design makes it easier to achieve the notes in the fourth octave. On the surface, it seems that the five-key flutes used by charanga flutists can produce notes in the fourth octave a whole step to a minor third higher than the Boehm flute can. But this is not true of five-key French flutes off the rack. Charanga flutists are able to do this only by making drastic physical changes to the headjoint’s design. They widen the embouchure hole a great deal, and they push in the head cork until it is extremely close to the embouchure hole. Similar adjustments to a Boehm flute can increase its high range as much as a whole step. It is worth noting that, with no adjustment whatsoever to either flute, the range of the Boehm flute is actually the higher of the two.

Some flutists and charanga bandleaders say that the properties of the five-key flute (small, conical bore, wood, small tone holes) give it the “right” sound. Without doubt, acoustic factors such as the diameter of the bore, tone holes, and embouchure hole have a great impact on the volume and tone color of an instrument, but my research shows that the desired tone can be attributed much more to the flutist than to the flute, and flute makers concur. For Boehm

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16 Leymarie, *Cuban Fire*, 111.
17 Wilson, *Historical Flutes Page*.
18 Personal communication, several flute makers and historians of Yahoo Groups Early Flute group, including Rick Wilson and Terry McGee, 2001.
flute performers, tremendous control of embouchure and air pressure are required to mimic the sound of the charanga flute. Yet there are performers who do it. Today, many of the top Boehm flute charanga performers produce a tone that is indistinguishable from the sound of the wood flute, and some performers who are proficient on both have succeeded in matching the tones of their two flutes completely.

It has also been suggested that, in the earliest decades of charanga, Cubans perceived these five-key flutes as more desirable because they are French, and that there were certain social and cultural conditions that existed that made the performers wish to appear as “French” as possible (as opposed to “black”). But the Boehm system flutes available to them could also have been French, as they were available from the same makers who made their five-key flutes.\(^{19}\)

A preponderance of all these rationales, justified or not, have created a culture in which the traditional five-key flute is preferred, but the Boehm flute is accepted. Continuity, availability and affordability are the verifiable practical reasons. But many performers would cite advantages of tone and/or technique as their own reasons, even if these cannot be supported by evidence. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that all charanga musicians, flutists, bandleaders, and fans, of every generation, consider the five-key flute to be more traditional and authentic.

Authenticity does not seem to be enough of a force, however, to halt the march of time. Over the last 40 years, especially in New York, the Boehm flute has been gradually replacing the

\(^{19}\) Couesnon et Cie, *Catalogue Ilustré 1930-31.*
five-key flute in charanga, because of the scarcity of the instruments. In fact, the list of five-key wooden flute players today is very short. As with any musical tradition, some of the younger musicians are committed to the more modern instruments. And even some of the senior charanga performers who began their careers on five-key flute transitioned to Boehm flute by choice. Still, many of the notable New York City-based, Boehm-flute charanga performers would choose to play a five-key wood flute if they could find a good one.

The scarcity of the French five-key instruments is striking if we understand how recently these instruments were widely available.\(^{20}\) Because of the widespread use of Boehm-style woodwind instruments in the United States to the nearly complete exclusion of all others, it can be difficult for American musicians to imagine that this was not the case everywhere, even very recently. Among the list of French flute manufacturers preferred by Cuban flutists – Tulou, Buffet, Couesnon, Thibouville, Martin Frères, Lefevre, Selmer, Prosper Colas, and Godfroy – a few of them continued to be manufactured into the middle of the 20\(^{th}\) century. Although some of the best ones, such as Tulou or Godfroy, were not made beyond the 19\(^{th}\) century and they command a high price, some manufacturers moved to mass production as industrialization increased, and prices decreased. Even in the 1940’s, new five-key flutes were manufactured by some of these companies, and the price was always a fraction of the price of a Boehm flute. After the widespread manufacture of these flutes ceased in the mid-20\(^{th}\) century, many of them

\(^{20}\) I am very grateful to the members of the Early Flute chat group on Yahoo.com for their expertise and valuable insights regarding French five-key flutes and their availability in the 20\(^{th}\) century, especially Daniel Deitch, Phillipe Alain-Duprés, Francis Dozin, Keith Freeman, Terry McGee, and Michael Lynn, Curator of Instruments Emeritus of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music.
came onto the market via auction houses, and with the exception of the most rare and high
quality 19th century makes (Tulou and Godfroy), they went for very low prices. Some historical
flute experts have quoted very low prices for five-key flutes that they purchased in the 1970’s
or later. These flutes were not always in good condition, so the price of repair had to be
factored into the expense of acquiring a playable instrument. But the cost of repair would also
have been folded into the cost of alterations to make the instrument ready for the demands of
charanga. That these instruments quickly became very scarce in a couple of decades is a
testament to the multiple vogues that charanga enjoyed in the 1970’s, 80’s and 90’s.

In New York City’s professional Latin music scene, many new charanga flutists come into this
world from careers as classical flutists. If they intend to perform on the five-key flute, after
acquiring one, the challenge is to adapt to the differences between the instruments. A 19th-
century tutor designed for the fingering system and particular challenges of the instrument is
the best way to begin. The most common method of study used by five-key charanga flutists
has always been the *Méthode de flûte,*\(^{21}\) written in 1835 by one of the strongest advocates of
the simple system flute in the 19th century, Jean-Louis Tulou. Tulou was François Devienne’s
successor, professor of flute at the Conservatoire de Paris from 1829-1856. He was also a
partner in a flute manufacturing business, and it has been mentioned above that he made some
of the highest quality flutes that are the most sought-after by charanga flutists. A Spanish
translation of Tulou’s method, *Méthode de Flauta,* published in 1910 by Henri Lemoine, is used
by flutists in Cuba.

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\(^{21}\) Jean-Louis Tulou, *Méthode de flûte progressive et raisonnée* (Mainz: Schott, n.d. 1835?)
Tulou made some “improvements” in keyed flutes himself, and so it is important to be sure to have the right edition. Tulou’s first edition, published in 1835, was written for our five-key flute, and is available at IMSLP.org. Editions published in 1842 and afterwards were written for his 12-key “flute perfectionée,” which he introduced in 1840. The exercises and etudes contained in the later editions are still useful, but certain things in the fingering charts do not apply.

In either case, the fingering charts found in all editions of Tulou’s *Méthode de Flûte* end with C4 at the top extreme. Obviously, charanga flutists cannot rely on it for fingerings for notes in the all-important 4th octave. Through the 19th century, the repertoire performed by French flutists only required them to play up to B3. Fingerings for the remaining upper range for charanga have supposedly been worked out by the Cuban flutist Octavio Alfonso (1886-1960). But this supposition must be qualified. Simple system flutists have always had a preponderance of alternate fingerings available to them, and a great willingness to experiment. It is a concept that is difficult for most modern-day woodwind players to imagine. Simple system flutists will keep trying fingering options until they find something that works. This is essential because there is great variety from one maker to another, and even from one flute to another by the same maker. Fingerings from one chart may not all work for the flute at hand, and often they must be worked out individually by the performer. Simple system flutes vary.

Interestingly, although most 18th-century flute fingering charts stop at A3, and most 19th-century simple system flute fingering charts stop at B3, there are a couple of fingering charts

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22 Wilson, *Historical Flutes Page*.

23 Miller, *Cuban Flute Style*, 35.
from the 18\textsuperscript{th} and early 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries for one-key and five-key flutes that go as high as D\textsubscript{4}, D\#\textsubscript{4}, and even E\textsubscript{4}. Given the era, we can assume that these should work without the widening of the embouchure or driving in of the head cork, the way charanga flutists do to prepare a French flute to play Cuban music. This may change a lot of what we know about what instrument is suitable for the music. As the rule goes, a solid E\textsubscript{4} is high enough to work in charanga.

Charanga performed on the one-key flute would be quite a feat!

Some Boehm flutists in charanga can produce a reliable F\textsubscript{4}, and today, five-key flutists are expected to produce an F\#\textsubscript{4}. Quite a few can play G\textsubscript{4}, Michele Smith, a student of Panamanian Boehm flutist Mauricios Smith (no relation) reported that he was able to produce the G\textsubscript{4}, as he had a custom-designed headjoint with a specially cut embouchure.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{24} Personal communication.
Chapter 5: Style, Method, and the Solo Transcriptions

Style

In a conversation with flutist Andrea Brachfeld, she recounted her earliest experiences in charanga as a young conservatory student in the 1970’s. During her first forays into the genre, she quickly learned that everyone is expected to “play the same,” which she related with slight dismay. It is true that, for newcomers to any improvisational music genre, there may appear to be a sameness about the music. This is partially attributable to clearly defined foundation patterns that define each genre, as discussed in chapter three, but it is also the result of a predictable and definable vocabulary or idiom for improvisation. In charanga as in jazz and so many other improvised music genres, over time a lexicon of stock licks and phrases and a clear approach to improvisation develops and becomes part of the genre’s identity.

In Cuban Flute Style: Interpretation and Improvisation, Sue Miller devotes a chapter to “signifying,” the practice of referencing and preserving a shared musical vocabulary for reinforcing unity and continuity within a culture. She illustrates her point not only with charanga and Cuban examples, but also across several musical cultures in the African diaspora. If anything can be added to Miller’s thorough treatment of this topic, it is a discussion of the vital importance of this practice to immigrant communities.

For a marginalized immigrant community such as the Latino community in New York in the second half of the 20th century, recognizable, familiar music and musical traditions provided a

1 Miller, “The Thieving Magpie,” chap. 6 in Cuban Flute Style.
bulwark against the sense of racial or cultural inferiority we experienced in the face of the dominant culture. Sociologists Virginia Sánchez-Korrol and Jorge Duany have each summarized different facets of this experience:

Music proved remarkably vital for internalizing and externalizing the attitudes of the migrant population...Essentially summarizing the feelings and attitudes of frustration, nostalgia, unrequited love and homesickness...music also provided a crucial bridge between the island and the mainland communities.²

Although Duany refers specifically to salsa, his remarks can be applied to the whole complex of Cuban and Puerto Rican dance music in New York:

When a group of [Puerto Rican] youngsters gathers to sing, dance, and listen to salsa, it is celebrating and recreating the values, beliefs and practices of its cultural heritage...they are expressing and reaffirming a staunch collective will not to assimilate, not to lose themselves within the Anglo-Saxon cultural orbit.³

Salsa provides models of behavior for facing the realities of economic dependence and social marginality of the barrio.⁴

The comforting and reaffirming effect of Latin dance music upon the Latin community comes from a shared collection of musical characteristics that is often referred to by both musicians and audience as the típico (traditional) style. In his definition of the típico style, John Murphy describes these musical characteristics as the traditional harmonic and rhythmic language of Puerto Rican and Cuban music before it manifested any influence from American

² Sánchez-Korrol, From Colonia to Community, 77.
⁴ Ibid., 84.
jazz. It is harmonically simple, without the chromaticism or enriched chords found in jazz, is defined by an even-eighth-notes feel (as opposed to the swing feel of eighth notes in jazz), and contains a collection of familiar stock phrases and rhythmic motives.\(^5\)

Like Murphy, many American musicians, particularly those with a jazz background, tend to define the típico style of Latin dance music, charanga included, by what it lacks, rather than by what it has: an absence of flatted notes or vocabulary associated with the blues, and an absence of the chromaticism and extended harmonies typical of bebop (incidentally, with respect to descargas, this is much less true). While this may be striking to those who are expecting to hear such things, it is better to define a tradition by what it has than by what it does not have.

The most salient feature of most Latin improvisation is the use of short, harmonic-rhythmic cycles, often referred to as the *montuno*. These cycles are two bars at their shortest and eight bars at their longest. Ten of the most common montuno progressions can be found in chapter three, but there are many others. Most of the common progressions are a binary vacillation between the I and the V chord (or the i and the V chord), creating a swaying effect, or in the case of the montuno progressions that pass through the IV chord between I and V, a loop or a cycle effect.

Because of this very basic, triadic, tonic-subdominant-dominant harmony, Latin improvisation, particularly in charanga, is certainly diatonic. It is unusual to hear any use of notes outside of the key. Because of the harmonic cycles’ frequent return to I, it is possible to play scalar, diatonic passages without regard for particular chord of the instant (this is less

successful in montunos with a strict, binary alternation between I and V). Thus charanga flute solo improvisation includes a preponderance of arpeggiated and step-wise or scalar melodic motives, often in sequential repetition. This is a practice that is well-suited to the strengths of the instrument. Some of these sequenced scalar melodic motives have an unmistakable 18\textsuperscript{th}-century or Mozartian provenance, reflecting the background in the Classical repertoire typical of most charanga flutists’ training. This is particularly true of Cuban flutist Richard Egües, whose work is not discussed in this project, but who has had a tremendous influence on many of the flutists whose work is discussed, particular those from the younger generation. In this same vein, trills, turns, and other ornaments typical of the flute’s Baroque and Classical style, as well as displays of virtuosity with passages of rapid double- and triple-tongue articulation are common.

Besides drawing from classical motivic vocabulary of their own literature, flutists also look to other instruments in the Latin dance music family for inspiration. Melodic realization of rhythmic phrases common in percussion improvisation is a typical device in charanga flute improvisation. Many flutists insert stock licks from bongó, conga, and timbales vocabulary, including rhythmic ostinati to create hemiolas and isorhythms against the rhythmic foundation supplied by the rhythm section. Quotation of melodic material from the verse, coro, lead singer’s inspiration, and many other sources is also an important method of cultural referencing that is appreciated by audiences.

The character of tone in the charanga flute style is high in register, as discussed in the previous chapter, as well as crisp and percussive. Legato is seldom used, and when it is, only in small doses. In the occasional lyric passages that may appear in the verse of a song, older
Cuban flutists used a rapid, guttural vibrato, typical of flutists throughout Latin America and across genres until the mid-20th century. Charanga flutists born after 1950 have abandoned this antiquated, fast vibrato, reflecting the aesthetic change that took place in classical flute vibrato technique at about that time.

Within this clearly-defined tradition, it is still possible for an individual flutist to create an individual style. Each of the flutists discussed in this chapter can be identified by personal performance characteristics, such as a preference for some of the above-named devices over others, use of certain pet phrases strongly associated with the individual performer, or the introduction of other devices not typical of the genre. In this way, all of them, including Andrea Brachfeld (discussed in chapter six), have succeeded in making charanga their own with a unique, individual style.

The analysis of these solos is not highly detailed. Passages that clearly illustrate the aforementioned characteristics of charanga flute style have been highlighted and described, but the primary intent is for the transcriptions to be of practical and pedagogical use to flutists. The flutist should listen to the recordings (discographic information precedes each transcription) and follow along, practice them, and play them along with the recordings. The transcriptions are here and available for the purpose of a closer analysis, should future researchers wish to conduct such a study.

**Purpose and Interpretation of Rhythmic Notation in the Transcriptions**

With regard to rhythmic notation, in charanga, as in many genres of improvised music that have African origins, it is common for the solo performer to create rhythmic tension by pulling against the drive of the rhythm section, and by manipulating the timing within the beat. One
aspect of this practice is referred to as “laying back,” but this only refers to one aspect of such rhythmic manipulation. “Lay back” is an expression in common parlance in the field of jazz, and American instrumentalists working in jazz, dance, and other commercial musics are familiar with the term’s use. It is still considered a slang expression, but the academic field of musicology has yet to offer a term that is more technical yet equally apt and succinct. The Columbia University Center for Jazz Studies defines “lay back” as “to create an effect by falling behind the rhythm.”6 Laying back and other manipulations of time on the part of the soloist are akin to rubato in western art music, with one significant difference. In Western art music, if a performer chooses to slow down or accelerate, any accompanying instruments must do the same to stay with the primary performer. In charanga as in jazz, however, the rhythm section instruments continue to play a steady rhythm because a steady, reliable groove or pulsation is essential to the nature of the music. Thus, the soloist stretches the note values slightly (or sometimes not so slightly) in order to lay back, or condenses them for the reverse effect; (pushing or playing ahead of the beat). Rhythmic tension is created between the soloist and the accompaniment, and this contributes to the emotional and dramatic impact.7 In Cuban Flute Style, Sue Miller discusses the use of rubato extensively,8 with detailed attention to its use in the florear style of improvisation in the danzón by early 20th century Cuban flutists, creative

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8 Miller, Cuban Flute Style, see chapters 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8.
improvisation in danzón-mambo, and in her analysis of recordings by flutists Richard Egües and José Fajardo. Miller’s analysis of rubato, laying back, and rhythmic tension in the solo transcriptions is exhaustive. The greatest benefit to be gained by studying her transcriptions comes from listening to the relevant recordings.

In studies of improvisation in such genres, there have been two approaches to notation of this rhythmic flexibility. One approach has been to notate the rhythms as precisely as possible. While this has analytical value, such hyper-specific notation can be distracting and confusing to the performer. Another approach has been to notate the rhythms in the closest basic and elementary way, as Berliner, Miller, and Monson have done. In this way, the performer studying these transcriptions understands what to practice, which is their primary purpose.

The flutists whose work is presented in this chapter are Belisario López, José Fajardo, Johnny Pacheco, and Eddy Zervigón. They were chosen because of their long and auspicious careers in charanga, large output of recorded music, and their far-reaching influence on the generations of flutists who came after them.

**Method: Developing Technique for the Típico Style of Charanga Flute-Playing**

The purpose of the transcriptions is to aid in the technical and stylistic development of aspiring charanga flutists. Quite a few of the charanga flutists I have met, particularly those born in the second half of the twentieth century, tell me that their first step in studying the style was to transcribe charanga flute solos from recordings. This is a valuable tool not only for

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charanga, but for students of many styles of improvisation. Practicing and studying these transcriptions will give the aspiring flutist a head start, but the act of transcribing itself is highly beneficial and should not be skipped. The discography at the end of this project will help flute students find excellent resource material for transcription.

Before approaching the transcriptions themselves, however, a flutist may wish to address the more basic elements of tone and attack, as these are essential to cultivating the characteristic charanga sound and style. Students of a French approach to tone and articulation\textsuperscript{10} will have an advantage over others, as some members of the older generations of charanga flutists have mentioned to me and to other researchers that their early training was based on French methods.\textsuperscript{11}

Tulou’s \textit{Méthode de flûte} is a good resource for students playing on a more elementary level, but it is important to transpose his exercises an octave (or two!) higher wherever possible, to develop the necessary range for charanga. More advanced students can refer to French method books from their earlier training, including Marcel Moyse’s \textit{De la sonorité}\textsuperscript{12} and \textit{Tone Development through Interpretation},\textsuperscript{13} but again, the exercises must be played at the highest

\textsuperscript{10} Although Ardal Powell disputes the notion that there is a clearly definable “French School” of flute playing (see Powell, \textit{The Flute}, 208-224), American flutists generally acknowledge that there is specific approach to embouchure, tone production, attack, and articulation that is decidedly French. This approach was introduced in the US by Marcel Moyse and Philippe Gaubert in the first half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. Moyse especially claimed to be teaching principles that he had inherited from Paul Taffanel at the Conservatoire de Paris. Prescriptions for this approach can be found in the above-mentioned tutors.

\textsuperscript{11} See chapter four, 110. Also see Miller, \textit{Cuban Flute Style}, 34-35, and Lozano, \textit{The Charanga Tradition in Cuba}, 139.

\textsuperscript{12} Marcel Moyse, \textit{De la sonorité: art et technique} (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1934).

\textsuperscript{13} Marcel Moyse, \textit{Tone Development through Interpretation}, 9\textsuperscript{th} ed. (New York: McGinnis & Marx Music Publishers, 1986).
possible octave, for development of range and endurance. Flutists should not shy away from playing E4 and F4 at every opportunity. The third and fourth register tone that charanga flutists should strive to develop should be clear and pure without being harsh or shrill.

In addition to tone, the style of attack and articulation is essential to the charanga style. Again, a French approach is necessary. The attack of the tongue should be strong, short, crisp, and incisive. Practicing from Taffanel and Gaubert’s *17 Grands exercices journaliers*\(^{14}\) and again, playing every exercise with this type of articulation (all *detaché*) and at the highest possible register will develop the necessary skills of attack and articulation. Filas’s *Top Register Studies for Flute*\(^{15}\) are also useful, but the slurs should be ignored and the students should play each exercise completely *detaché*.

For development of a motivic vocabulary for improvisation, the transcriptions are most useful. Any phrases that please the student can be transposed and practiced so that he or she can play them over that progression in any key. Additionally, students can create their own pattern by inventing scalar and/or arpeggiated sequential patterns excerpted from the transcriptions and adapting them to fit the more common chord progressions (see chapter three).


Belisario López is the most senior among the flutists included in this project. Born in 1903 in Cardénas (Matanzas Province) in Cuba, he is nearly a decade older than Antonio Arcaño, who is considered to be the grand patriarch of charanga flute style by most flutists in New York. In fact, his career began about a decade before Arcaño’s, when he joined La Orquesta de Neno González in the mid-1920’s. He left in 1928 to form his own charanga, which he actively maintained until his departure from Cuba in 1960. La Orquesta de Belisario López’s long and illustrious career included a twenty-year recording contract with RCA Victor and a voluminous output, and nearly continuous public dances (one year they gave 325 public performances) and radio broadcasts; all while López maintained a double life as a successful tax lawyer.

At the time of López’s entrance into the field of charanga, flute improvisation consisted of ornamentation and embellishment of the written melodic line. The practice of spontaneously creating new melodic material (in which Arcaño was a major innovator) did not begin in charanga until the late 1930’s, by which time López was a mature performer and a senior participant in the field. Nevertheless, López embraced every change in style as they came, and he became an improviser whose style, while not elaborate, was clear and direct, with well-developed melodic motives and precise articulation of the harmonic motion.

Shortly before leaving Cuba permanently for the New York City area (he lived in New Jersey), López recorded a cover of Eduardo Davison’s “La Pachanga,” positioning himself to take advantage of the pachanga craze that was taking hold of the city. Once in New York, López

formed a new charanga, had successful performances at the Palladium and the Waldorf Astoria (among other prestigious venues), and began recording for the Ansonia label. His recordings for Ansonia include numerous pachangas, several of which were hits. López continued to work with his charanga in New York up until the day before his death in 1969.

All three of our transcriptions were taken from his 1961 recordings for Ansonia. In the first, “Yo Vine Pa’ Ve’,” he demonstrates repetition and variation of a melodic idea (solos with coros 1, 2, and 3), percussion-style rhythmic ostinato (extended solo, mm. 1-12), ornamental turns around the 2\textsuperscript{nd} scale degree (mm. 15-19), and putting all of these ideas together neatly for the conclusion of the solo.

López’s solo in “El Camaron” is different from the other two in that, in his first inspiración, he creates an entirely new eight-bar melody to complement the melody of the coro, complete with balanced antecedent-consequent phrases. It is as well-crafted as a penned composition. The subsequent phrases develop melodic fragments from this eight-bar melody. In his extended solo, he combines these ideas with a stock phrase in bars 5-6, 9-10, and 13-14.

In the third solo, “Pachanga Bum Bum,” López displays more virtuosity, adding passages of rapid triple-tonguing (extended solo, mm. 7-9) to other ideas, similar to those described in the other transcriptions.

Thorough development of a melodic idea, with sequence, repetition, and adaptation to harmonic changes, characterizes Lopez’s unpretentious style. He is also a master of sewing his ideas together neatly in a final statement.
"Yo Vine Pa've"

Artist: Belisario Lopez
Belisario Lopez y su Charanga

Album Title:
A Bailar la Pachanga
Ansonia Records, 1961

Quarter=134
(2-3 clave)

F (pno.)
Bb
C
Bb
F
Bb
C
Bb

(bass)

(coro)

Yo vi-ne pa' ve - e yo vi-ne pa' mi-ra
Yo vi-ne pa' ve - e yo vi-ne pa' mi

1

2

3
"El Camaron"

Artist: Belisario Lopez
Belisario Lopez y Su Charanga

Half-104-108
(2-3 clave)

E7          Ami

D7          G

(coro)

Yo vivo en el agua como el camarón a
nadie le importa como vivo yo (Yo)

Solo changes:

E7          Ami          E7          Ami

D7          G          D7          G

1

3
Siento una Flauta: Chapter 5

2

3

(vib.)

4

2
José Fajardo:  

Born in 1919, José Fajardo is a patriarchal figure, mentor, and inspiration for virtually every charanga flutist that followed him. His career began in the early 1940’s when he took over the flute chair in Arcaño y sus Maravillas, while Antonio Arcaño continued to lead the band (although he could no longer play). In 1949, after a falling out with Arcaño, Fajardo formed his own charanga, Fajardo y sus Estrellas. Fajardo’s charanga was so successful, that in fact, he had three bands under the same name, so that he would not have to turn down any of their many offers for engagements. They toured internationally, and in the 1950’s, Fajardo had legendary successful performances at the Palladium, the Waldorf-Astoria, and other New York City venues. Fajardo was at the forefront of every innovation in charanga. He took Arcaño’s concepts of original improvisation and brought them to new levels of virtuosity, setting the bar very high for charanga flutists. He made numerous descarga recordings, bringing a jazz-like edge to improvisation that influenced every charanga and Latin jazz flutist in New York. He was famous for arranging complex, extended rhythmic breaks for percussion and flute over a suspenseful tremolo in the violins. This became a standard dramatic device in charanga arranging.

Fajardo left Cuba permanently in 1961. He reformed his charanga, which was one of only two bands to weather every ebb and flow of charanga’s popularity over the next four decades. Fajardo’s popularity never waned, and nearly every charanga flutist in New York names him as one of their primary influences.

The first two transcriptions are from an album Fajardo recorded for Panart in Cuba, shortly before moving to New York. Although these recordings pre-date 1960, their influence on the
style of flutists in New York City after 1960 makes them worthy of discussion. Fajardo’s stylistic
development in the 1950’s introduced an approach that shaped the style of New York flutists
who followed him, and who were less attached to early styles of charanga flute improvisation.

Fajardo is perhaps the most rhythmically sophisticated of the four flutists discussed in this
chapter. He is fond of quarter-note triplets, quintuplets, and sextuplets, both on the beat and
off-set. He is capable of laying back quite far behind the beat and is a master of sensitive
rubato. While he accomplishes all of this in dance numbers at any tempo, it is abundantly
apparent in the solo from the slow, seductive “Guajireando.” “Güiro en charanga” is
rhythmically more straightforward, but Fajardo introduces a new device, which is the use of
chromatic passing tones (mm. 5-6 and 9-11). He concludes with a rhythmic ostinato.

“Vengo Diferente” is from a recording made in New York in 1980 for Fania Records. The
style is nueva onda, sometimes called onda areito. This is one of many new fusion styles that
arose in post-revolutionary Cuba. Ritmo Oriental is credited with inventing this style, but it was
embraced by Orquesta Aragón, who released several nueva onda tracks. Harmonically, “Vengo
Diferente” is akin to a descarga, performed over an open D7 chord. The nueva onda groove
contributes to the track’s descarga-like edge. Because an improviser may think more like a jazz
musician in a descarga, Fajardo takes a bitonal approach, sometimes outlining A minor and
sometimes C major against the D7 played by the rhythm section. This is a common
improvisational device in modal jazz, and here it creates exciting tension. Beginning in the third
bar of his fourth solo, he quotes “Mona Lisa, Girl of my Dreams,” which became a popular
quote for charanga flutists who followed him. Even at this bright tempo (208 to 211 beats per
minute), Fajardo displays his usual rhythmic virtuosity, with laid-back phrases that defy precise
Flautists are encouraged to listen to this track several times before playing through the transcription, and to play through the transcription with the recording, to emulate the subtleties of Fajardo’s timing.
"Guiro en Charanga"

Artist: Jose Fajardo
Fajardo's All-Stars

2-3 Clave
Half = 89

Album title: Cuban Jam Session
Panart Records
(N.D.)
"Vengo Diferente"

Artist: Jose Fajardo

Onda/descarga
2-3 Clave
Quarter ~211

Bass (for coro/solos)

Coro

Lo que trai-go se tie-ne'ambien-te yo ven-go di-fer-en-te

(loays back)

(loays back)
Johnny Pacheco:

Like so many charanga musicians, Johnny Pacheco is a multi-instrumentalist from a large family of musicians. Born in the Dominican Republic in 1935, he studied clarinet, accordion, violin, and a variety of percussion instruments before coming to the flute as an adult. Pacheco’s family moved to New York when he was 11 years old. As he matured, he studied percussion at The Juilliard School and worked with a variety of Latin dance bands in New York. In 1954, Gilberto Valdés gave Pacheco his first flute. By 1959, he had advanced so much as to impress Charlie Pamlieri, who hired him into La Duboney a few months later.

Pacheco’s contributions to the field of Latin dance music go far beyond his work as a flutist in charanga. He is possibly the most prolific instrumentalist, composer, arranger, producer and musical director of the last 60 years, with over 150 compositions to his name, 49 albums as a leader, 27 albums as producer, four as a side musician, he has written the music for four feature films (appearing in two of them), has nine Grammy nominations and ten gold records.17 He has a keen ear for talent; as the founder of Fania Records, he had a greater impact on the course of Latin music’s development than any individual since.

Undoubtedly, Pacheco’s experience on other instruments, particularly percussion, informed his approach to flute improvisation. Quite a bit of his professional work in the early 1950’s was as a timbales player, and this is evident in his flute solos. His rhythmic execution is both impeccable and incisive, as reliable as a timbalero. He prefers to use a lot of percussion vocabulary in his solos, more than any of the other flutists mentioned, but he is also capable of displays of virtuosity with rapid passage work when he chooses.

“El Chechere” was recorded in 1963, when his band, Johnny Pacheco y su Charanga, was at the height of its popularity. This track was a considerable hit. Pacheco’s articulation of the rhythm and harmonic cycle is simple and direct, and he includes isorhythmic passages (extended solo, mm. 14-18 and 19-21) that are taken from the solo vocabulary of the timbales.

In “El Chivo,” another pachanga-era hit for Pacheco, he constructs a new melody with repetition and variation of melodic motives and balanced antecedent-consequent phrases, reminiscent of the style of Belisario López.

“Sabroso como el guarapo” is a slow guajira, like “Guajireando” in the section on José Fajardo. However, rather than using the slower tempo as an opportunity for rhythmic elasticity and rubato, Pacheco fills the slower tempo with athletic double-time passages, turns, and ornaments. He also makes liberal use of rhythmic manipulation from the percussion vocabulary, found in the fourth measure of the first solo, the third and fourth measures of the second solo, and measures 1-3, 9-10, and 17-23 of the extended solo. The first passage in the extended solo is particularly challenging technically and rhythmically complex.
"Chechere"

Album Title: Suavito Vol. IV
Alegre Records, 1963

Artist: Johnny Pacheco
Pacheco y su Charanga

son montuno (2-3 clave); quarter = 156

Bass  C  G7  (coro enters)

Coro

Cam-bie'el pa-so  che-che-re  cam-bie'el pa-so

1

2
"El Chivo"

Pachanga (2-3 clave)

half = 112

C7 | bass/piano intro | F

(same changes for song & montuno)

Ten-go'un chi-vo  yo  ten-go'y man-ten-go'un chi-vo
Siento una Flauta: Chapter 5

[Musical notation image]

2

141
"Sabroso Como el Guarapo"

Artist: Johnny Pacheco
Pacheco y su Charanga

charanga (guajira) 2-3 clave
coré = 140  bass - intro

Gm bass w/coro  D7

Coro 1

Con las mano'en la cintura guarapo

Con las mano'en la cintura guarapo

Coro 2

Sacando guarapo y'haiendo me-

la o Sacando gua
Eddy Zervigón

Born in 1940 in Güines in Cuba, Eddy Zervigón is the youngest among the flutists in this chapter. His career began in 1960, substituting in some well-known charangas, including Ritmo Oriental and Estrellas Cubanas. He came to the United States with his twin brother, violinist Rudy Zervigón in 1962 (their younger brother, Kelvin, was already living in Miami). By the end of the year, they had assembled their charanga, Orquesta Broadway, and made their debut early in 1963. More than 50 years later, Eddy and Rudy continue to tour nationally and internationally with Orquesta Broadway, the oldest charanga still in existence in the United States.

A generation younger than great Cuban charanga flutists such as Lozano, Fajardo, and Egües, Zervigón benefited from his youthful experiences listening to them on the radio. In fact, Egües introduced Zervigón to his first flute teacher, and two years later, Zervigón went on to study with Egües’s father. Ultimately, this musical education resulted in a prodigious technique. Zervigón is also the youngest of the great five-key flutists. As the 1970’s approached, more and more flutists entering the field performed on Boehm flutes.

The transcriptions that follow represent two genres that have not yet been addressed in this chapter: boogaloo and charanga salsera. “You’re Looking Fine” is a boogaloo, complete with English lyrics and handclaps on the second and fourth beats of each bar. Although Zervigón is usually a very virtuosic soloist, in this instance he takes a simple approach, choosing to play solo phrases from the percussion vocabulary, often on the fifth scale degree (this is often a good default improvisational technique: when in doubt, play the fifth scale degree and be rhythmically interesting). Because boogaloo is a Cuban/African-American fusion, Zervigón
attempts to add a touch of the blues, using the flatted fifth, sixth and seventh scale degrees (mm. 21-23 and 29-30).

“Isla del encanto” was an historic success for Orquesta Broadway. The entire album, *Pasaporte*, received broad critical acclaim. The producer, Fania All-Stars trombonist Barry Rodgers, was credited as having produced the most successful marriage of charanga instrumentation with salsa-style arranging ever seen. Critics singled out “Isla del encanto” for particular praise, and if there were still any Puerto Ricans in New York City who were not charanga fans, this number won them over. Zervigón plays in a straightforward manner on this song as well, articulating the binary alternation between the i and V chords very clearly, and adding flutter-tongued notes for excitement.
"Isla del Encanto"

Artist: Eddy Zervigon
Orquesta Broadway

Album title: Pasaporte
Coco Records
(1977)
2-3 Clave
Quarter = 182
Bass (coro/solo)
Chapter 6: Charanga Women

Women Instrumentalists in Latin Popular Music in New York

Scholarship on women in Latin music has focused largely on the dearth of female performers working in Latin popular music. In particular, women instrumentalists are few, and those few have been left out of most histories of Latin music. To quote Frances Aparicio:

This historical veiling, moreover, has been coupled with the discriminatory practice of restricting women’s participation to that of mostly vocalists, rather than opening up other roles such as instrumentalists, composers, arrangers, and most important, directors of groups.¹

Indeed, Aparicio herself has devoted little page space to chronicling the accomplishments of women instrumentalists in Latin music. In Salsiology, Vernon Boggs attempts to set this situation to rights by devoting a chapter to women in Latin music.² Still, he reinforces this truth by naming only one instrumentalist among the seven individual women he names (he also mentions a band, Anacaona, and the rest are vocalists, of course). In all fairness, this is an accurate reflection of the ratio of women instrumentalists to singers working in Latin popular music at that time (1992).

An absence of female instrumentalists is not exclusive to the realm of Latin music. The same is true in many musical genres across many cultures. However, the reasons for this

absence may surprise American readers; sexism in Latin America has not taken the same forms as sexism in the United States. In North America, discrimination against women in the workplace has historically been carried out via active exclusion by men; women apply, men refuse admittance. In Latin America, rigid gender roles and the particular position that neo-African musics have occupied (charanga included) have resulted in women willingly excluding themselves. Citing René López, Boggs explains:

> Historically, Afro-centric music (Cuban, jazz, etc.) has been viewed negatively as well as its practitioners...the music has been equated with savagery, drug addiction and sexual lasciviousness.³

He pairs this with the traditional Hispanic ideal for good behavior in women:

> The role of women in Hispanic society is that of a model of virginity, obedient wife and good mother...Women are expected to behave like a human “Goddess.” They should comport themselves well at all times and avoid casting aspersions on the family honor...Given the mobile nature of entertainment, any woman who was a member of a band would be expected to travel with the mainly all-male group wherever it went. This, then, would afford her the opportunity to engage in all types of unsupervised behavior and succumb to temptations and thereby become a “spoiled woman.”

Given these confining rules of behavior, few women would willingly open themselves up to such stigma. And yet, the kinds of generalities made about women and history are often not as true as they might seem. Women instrumentalists have not been entirely absent from Latin popular music, and a few scholars have tried to bring their stories to light.

One of the curious results of the stigmatization of the music profession in the Spanish Caribbean has been the creation of large families or clans of professional musicians among people of color. While white Cubans and Puerto Ricans may have considered the music and entertainment professions beneath them, black Puerto Ricans and Cubans saw music as an opportunity to lift themselves up from agricultural and manual labor at a time when white collar professions were still off-limits.\(^4\) Parents passed musical knowledge on to children, in hopes that music would make it possible for them to have a profession. Girls were trained in music as well as boys, and the many youth bands and orchestras of the 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries also admitted both girls and boys. Ruth Glasser tells us that, as adults, while most of these women were not able to perform in public as instrumentalists, they played the important role of educating the children in solfeggio, theory, composition, and instrumental music at home. Additionally, there were always certain areas where it was acceptable for a woman to hold a job performing as an instrumentalist in public (especially as a pianist). Church was one of these areas, as were the silent movie orchestras.\(^5\)

A few women have held positions of influence in music. An example well-known to many New Yorkers is the story of Victoria Hernández, the sister of the legendary Puerto Rican pianist and composer Rafael Hernández. She was herself a prodigious pianist. After arriving in New York, understanding the realities of her limited opportunities, she invested her time and energy into teaching and into managing her brother’s career, booking engagements, hiring musicians, negotiating contracts, and more. She opened a music store in Harlem in 1929,

\(^5\) Glasser, My Music Is My Flag, 32.
Almacenes Hernández, the first Puerto-Rican owned music store in the United States, and founded her own record label. In time, every male Puerto Rican musician in New York City understood and respected her influence and importance.⁶

Another phenomenon that has kept some women instrumentalists in the public view is the all-female ensemble. Since the 1980’s, a handful of studies have been devoted to the popular success of a few all-female salsa bands, but all-female bands existed in the Spanish Caribbean long before that time. Anacaona, the all-female dance orchestra in Cuba, founded in 1932, has gained world-wide recognition, yet they are only one among many such orchestras. They are the most well-known, successful, and long-running all-female band in Cuba, and they are professional, but in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic, all-girl and all-women ensembles are a common sight, even if many of them are student and amateur organizations. In their day, Latino audiences viewed them as a curiosity, but participation in a chaperoned, all-female ensemble gave many women and girls the opportunity to perform as instrumentalists while avoiding the social stigma. In charanga, very early in its history, a few women even led their own ensembles. These include Edén Habanero, Irene Herrera Laferté, “Paulina” (Raimunda de Paula Peña) Alvarez, and of course, pianist/vocalist/composer María Cervantes, daughter of the legendary Cuban pianist and composer, Ignacio Cervantes.⁷

These stories describe the small inroads that some Latin American women were able to make before the feminist movement of the mid-20th century. Eventually, ideas of women’s equality spread to Latin America and Latino neighborhoods in the United States, especially after

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⁷ Leymarie, *Cuban Fire* 71-72
1970. Today, Hispanic girls and young women benefit from three generations of grassroots agitation in our own communities and legislative change on a larger scale (Title IX, etc.). The results of such change began to manifest themselves in the 1970’s, with the first female participants in charanga and other areas of Latin popular music. In the 1980’s Latina instrumentalists began to enter the field, and today, it is possible to construct a long list of professional female instrumentalists working in charanga in New York and other areas.

By the mid-1970’s, men’s thinking had changed enough that the first women in charanga entered a scene that was prepared for their arrival and welcoming. The three women who are the focus of this chapter began performing with charangas in New York beginning at that time. Andrea Brachfeld entered the field in the mid-1970’s, Karen Joseph followed her in the late 1970’s, and Connie Grossman joined the scene in the early 1980’s. In our conversations, all three reported reasonably pleasant experiences, without incidents of harassment or discrimination. Their male bandmates were collegial and the male bandleaders were happy to have such capable flutists on board.

In my conversation with Andrea Brachfeld, she described conditions in the late 1970’s that seemed to indicate that it was an ideal time for women to find opportunity in the field. Charanga was experiencing a boom (see chapter two), and the most capable bands had busy performance schedules. At the time, it was very unusual for a band member to miss or try to send a substitute performer to a job. The availability of substitutes was small, so such an action could create chaos for a bandleader. Thus, it was not likely that a new bandleader could poach

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8 None of these three pioneering women in charanga is Hispanic. As far as I can tell, I am the first Latina professional woman flutist in charanga in New York City, having entered the field in 1994.
a flutist from an existing charanga. A new band forming would have to cultivate its own flutist. This meant that a highly-skilled flutist would be welcomed, and any other arbitrary criteria (like gender) was not likely to exclude them.

This is not to say that these women’s experience of work in this field was not different from a typical male experience; for instance, two of these three women have children. Each of these performing mothers reported that after the birth of her children, her performance career slowed down considerably (a choice each made willingly so that she could spend more time with them). Only very seldom have I heard a male musician report a similar choice.

This choice connects to another factor that prevents many women instrumentalists from embarking on careers in Latin music, even in the 21st century. In chapter two, it was mentioned that few Latin musicians, even among the most successful, have earned all of their living as performing musicians. Throughout the history of Latin popular music in New York City, the majority of the participants have had daytime work as their primary income. Even among those who have earned their full living from music, performance income has often been supplemented by teaching, administration, production, retail sales, instrumental repair, etc. For most male musicians, going out to perform in the evening is their second job, their second shift. For women instrumentalists who have daytime work in other professions, returning home to care for the house and children is their second job or their evening shift (this is true of nearly every working mother in America, not only in music fields). Going out in the evening to a music engagement is often not an option. This is not to say that fathers who are musicians do not participate in household duties or child-rearing activities after work; we have come much further than that. But many women musicians will actually turn down offers of engagements
because of home responsibilities, and their male counterparts, by and large, will accept every offer, and assume that the mother will manage at home.⁹

Today, we can say that, while the small number of female instrumentalists in charanga is not necessarily a result of deliberate exclusion by men, it is often due to the kinds of life choices women make, based on persistent gender expectations. Nevertheless, at this time in New York City, we can find more professional female instrumentalists working in Latin music in general, and in charanga in particular. At the end of this chapter, there is a list of female instrumentalists currently working in Latin music in the New York City area.

**Performers on Modern Flutes**

All three of the flutists discussed in this chapter perform on silver Boehm system flutes, whereas all of the flutists discussed in chapter five perform or performed on five-key flutes. What became apparent in the process of transcribing these solos is that the Boehm system flutists inhabit a tessitura that is slightly lower than the typical range of the five-key flute. Although all of them play in the same complete range as the five-key flutists, they play in the peak of the range less often, and they also dip lower in the flute’s range than the five-key flutists would usually allow themselves to do. This is true not only of the three flutists discussed here, but also of most charanga flutists playing the modern flute since about 1970.

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⁹ I say this from my professional experience as the owner of a music booking and contracting agency. Quite a few of my roster artists who are mothers will not accept any engagements on a school night for precisely this reason. Conversely, no artist on my roster who is a father has ever turned down a job offer from me because of his children.
On average, the Boehm system flutists remain about a major third to a perfect fourth lower than the five-key flutists. This is not the mark of any technical deficiency, and it is not technically more difficult to play one flute or the other in the extreme top range (it is very difficult on both instruments). This is an artistic choice that stems from certain tonal characteristics of the Boehm flute in its low range. The Boehm flute was designed to have a richer, more powerful first and second register than the simple system flutes of the 19th century. Conversely, the modifications that Cuban flutists make to the five-key flute’s design renders the lowest register even thinner and weaker than it was originally. It seems that charanga flutists who perform on Boehm flutes choose to avail themselves of this fuller, richer low-register sound occasionally. Also, with modern amplification, the flute can be heard in every register, even in a full, ten- or eleven-piece orchestra that includes three percussionists. Playing in the third and fourth register is now a matter of adherence to tradition rather than a practical necessity. Modern flutists can afford to stretch the permissible range from time to time.
Andrea Brachfeld is the first female professional charanga flutist in the United States. As such, she has left quite an impression on both performers and audiences in charanga. Every other woman working in charanga knows that any conversation with a fan may eventually lead to the question, “Do you know Andrea Brachfeld?” and she is expected to dutifully recite Ms. Brachfeld’s recordings and accomplishments.

Brachfeld first encountered charanga while she was a student at Manhattan School of Music in New York City. She had come there after pursuing jazz studies through Jazzmobile, winning the Louis Armstrong Award for outstanding Jazz student from Jazz Interactions, and graduating from Music and Art High School as a flute major. At Manhattan School of Music, she studied classical flute performance with Harold Bennett and Andrew Lolya, but continued her involvement with jazz via the two ensembles the school had to offer (before the school developed a full-fledged jazz studies program the following decade). Panamanian flutist Mauricio Smith introduced her to the charanga field, and while still a full-time student, she began performing with such noteworthy charangas and conjuntos as Charanga ‘76, Charanga America, Típica New York, Conjunto Libre, Joe Quijano, and more. Today, Brachfeld continues to perform with these and other ensembles, and to perform and record with groups that she has assembled. Her discography as a jazz musician is at least as long as her discography in Latin music.
While Brachfeld is a very traditional performer in the charanga style (she cites Richard Egües as her favorite and her greatest influence), her personal style reflects her long connection to jazz. She uses subtle variations in accent and articulation, much the way a bebop player would do. This is not to say that she plays swing eighths, which is not part of the Cuban dance music style; but she varies length and attack in such a way as to accentuate the contours of her lines, and to emphasize certain rhythmic aspects of the way the line swings. This is not something that can be expressed in notation. Again, flutists are encouraged to listen to the recordings several times before playing along (complete discographic information is available at the top of each transcription).

In the first of the three selected solos, we hear a very young Andrea Brachfeld, who had quickly absorbed the charanga style before her first recording with Charanga ’76 in the year 1976. She demonstrates prodigious agility in the extreme upper register on their cover of Johnny Pacheco’s “Pita Camion.” The following two solos are from her own 2003 release as a leader, Back with Sweet Passion. “Pare Cochero” is her own innovative arrangement of the Orquesta Aragón classic, with influences of songo, funk, and jazz. “La Flauta de Andrea” is her original charanga-style son, with further ventures into contemporary Latin jazz in the arrangement.
Siento una Flauta: Chapter 6

Album title: Charanga "76"
TR Records
(1976)

"Pita Camion"

Artist: Andrea Brachfeld
La Charanga '76

2-3 Clave
Quarter = 200
Siento una Flauta: Chapter 6
"Pare Cochero"

Artist: Andrea Brachfeld

Album title:
Back With Sweet Passion
(2003)

2-3 Clave
Quarter = 208
Bass

\[\text{D} \quad \text{G} \quad \text{A} \quad \text{G} \quad \text{D} \quad \text{G} \quad \text{A} \quad \text{G}\]

Coro

\[\text{Co-che-ro} \quad \text{pa-re} \quad \text{pa-re} \quad \text{co-che-o} \quad \text{co-che-ro} \quad \text{pa-re} \quad \text{co} \]

\[\text{fl.} \]

3
"La Flauta de Andrea"

Artist: Andrea Brachfeld

2-3 Clave
Quarter = 208

Ami  D7  Bmi  E7  Ami  D7  G  E7

Coro

La flauta que toca'Andrea que rico'y sabrosa

La flauta que toca'Andrea que rico'y sabrosa
Karen Joseph

Karen Joseph’s early charanga career followed closely on the heels of Andrea Brachfeld. In the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, Joseph replaced Brachfeld in many of the charangas she had played with immediately before. In addition to playing in Charanga ’76 and Charanga America after Brachfeld moved on, Joseph has also performed with Steve Colon’s Siglo 20, and the Fania All-Stars. In the mid-1990’s, she became the flutist in Johnny Almendra’s seminal charanga, Los Jovenes del Barrio. Today, she performs with YeraSon and Eddie Palmieri’s La Perfecta II.

Like Brachfeld, Joseph was immersed in both classical music and jazz as a high school student and in conservatory, and she was introduced to the charanga scene by a male colleague who worked in both jazz and Latin music. In Joseph’s case, her contact was Art Webb (now a west coast musician, but who played flute with many of the great names in charanga, including Ray Barretto, Charlie Palmieri, and Eddie Palmieri). Joseph also has an impressive classical lineage, having studied with Harold Bennett, Samuel Baron, and John Krell.

Joseph’s early introduction to jazz helped her to develop a keen and sophisticated sense of rhythmic flexibility. Like many great jazz musicians, she has a fluid sense of time, and is capable of a variety of manipulations within the beat and yet still comes out precisely on the beat when she chooses. In this regard, Joseph has taken similar characteristics found in Brachfeld and Fajardo and brought them to a new level. In “Yo seguiré,” she plays long passages of attacks exclusively on upbeats, like a samba player. In Los Jovenes del Barrio’s cover of the Arsenio Rodríguez classic, “Como se goza en el barrio,” the moderate tempo of this hard-grooving son montuno is a perfect vehicle for this kind of rhythmic elasticity.
"Yo Seguire"

Artist: Karen Joseph
La Charanga '76
Siento una Flauta: Chapter 6

2

...
"Como se Goza en el Barrio"

Artist: Karen Joseph
Los Jovenes del Barrio

2-3 Clave
Quarter = 135

E7

(lay back...)

(lay back)
Connie Grossman

Connie Grossman is the youngest of the three women flutists in this chapter. As a teenager, she was on her way to a promising career as a classical oboist, but the prospect of a future of shaving reeds inspired her to change to an instrument that did not require woodworking skills. She quickly caught up to her peers in the classical flute world, studying with Harold Jones, Harold Bennett, Thomas Nyfenger, and Keith Underwood. Her introduction to Latin and Brazilian music came in the early 1980’s, shortly before she graduated from SUNY Purchase as a flute major. She names Cuban flutist Pancho el Bravo as her first major influence in Cuban music, but she also benefitted from spending time with Andrea Brachfeld, Karen Joseph, and Eddy Zervigón. Grossman worked for many years with New York City charangas such as Charanga ’76 and Charanga America, Charansón (New York City), Steve Colón’s Siglo 20, the charanga of José Fajardo, Jr., and more, before founding her own all-female charanga, Pasión, in the mid-1990’s. At the end of the decade, Pasión disbanded and Grossman joined SonSublime. All of Grossman’s transcribed solos in this chapter are taken from SonSublime’s three CDs, Irresistible, Gran Reserva, and ¡Bailando con Sonsublime!

Grossman’s own work listening to and transcribing the solos of her predecessors gave her a thorough training in the charanga flute improvisation tradition. This, coupled with her fiery technique, has made her one of the most virtuosic improvisers in the field. Connie’s rhythmic approach is usually straightforward, but her ability to double-time and to use triple and double-tonguing is tireless. An exception is the classic danzón, “Los Sitios Llaman,” where the slower
tempo allows for more rhythmic flexibility. Most flutists will take advantage of the opportunity to pull and push against the rhythm section,¹ as Grossman does here.

¹ See chapter 5, 115-117.
Siento una Flauta: Chapter 6
Siento una Flauta: Chapter 6

[Music notation image]

2
**Women Instrumentalists Working in Latin Music in New York City in 2015**

**Flute:**
- Andrea Brachfeld
- Connie Grossman
- Karen Joseph
- Hadar Noiberg
- Anna Povich de Mayor
- Jessica Valiente

**Bass:**
- Dawn Drake
- Mimi Jones
- Cherina Mastrantones
- Anna Milat-Meyer
- Dassi Rosenkranz-Cabo
- Jennifer Vincent

**Violin:**
- Wilma Almestica
- Regina Carter
- Betsy Hill
- Mireya Ramos
- Lisa Crowder Yeras

**Percussion**
- Annette Aguilar
- Wilma Almestica
- Mayra Casales
- Bonnie Devlin
- Nancy Friedman
- Yasuyo Kimura
- Robyn Lobe
- Yanet Montero
- Alda Reuter
- Jessica Rodríguez

**Piano:**
- Naomi Bloch-Schwartz
- Nicki Denner
- Ariacne Trujillo Durán
- Amy Millán
- Chiemi Nakai
- Vashti Sivell

**All-Female and Mostly-Female Latin Dance Bands:**
- Anaïsa
- Annette Aguilar and Stringbeans
- CocoMama
- La Noroeste (defunct)
- Los Mas Valientes
- Pasión (defunct)
- Retumba
- 809 Ladies
Conclusion

When two-thirds of this project was complete, news media outlets announced that President Obama was entering negotiations with Cuba to resume normal diplomatic relations and bring an end to the half-century-long embargo. As of this moment, the process for travel to Cuba for special, allowable circumstances has already been made more streamlined, and permission to travel there for pleasure is expected to be a reality very soon.

If any one event has had the greatest impact on the presence and course of charanga in America, it is the Cuban revolution of 1959 and the subsequent severing of relations between our two nations. Events in the immediate aftermath of the revolution led to the relocation of important charanga artists to New York. The embargo prevented American audiences and musicians from hearing developments in Cuban charanga for twenty years. There may still be important work to be done in the historical and musicological study of charanga as it exists so far, but what is so much more exciting now is the future of charanga. American and Cuban charangas took such divergent paths after 1960 that the free and frequent meeting of the two in the future will surely result in many exciting fusions and collaborations.

The reopening of relations between the U.S. and Cuba will also facilitate the research that awaits both Cuban and American researchers. Much more can be written about the development of charanga in Cuba after 1960. Access to historical resources in Cuba and direct study with Cuban musicians will enrich our understanding.

With regard to charanga in New York City, this project has only scratched the surface of what can be said about charanga flutists and charanga flute improvisation. In addition to the nine
flutists represented here, there are many flutists who have produced great recorded work that can be investigated. These flutists include Don Gonzalo Fernández, Pupi Legaretta, George Castro, Mauricio Smith, Sr., Mauricio Smith, Jr., Bobby Nelson, Gene Jefferson, Ray Luís Sánchez, José Canoura, Dave Valentín, Dave Santiago, Jr., Nestor Torres, Willie Hernández, Hector Nieves, and Hadar Noiberg. In particular, the work of Don Gonzalo Fernández, who was a virtuoso without equal, and of Dave Valentín, who reinvented flute playing so far as to constitute his own genre, deserve their own book-length, dedicated studies.

There are other areas of the United States with their own active charanga scenes. Miami and southern California both have charangas who have produced seminal work, in particular Bongo Logic in Los Angeles, with flutist Art Webb, and Charanson in San Diego, led by violinist Anthony Blea. In south Florida, flutist René Lorente (flutist with Orquesta Aragón, 1984-1990) is developing a small cadre of charanga flutists on both five-key and Boehm system flute. More exploration of the development of these other American charanga scenes is warranted.

Outside of the U.S. and Cuba, there is a need for historical research into the Spanish language film industry and dance music scene in Mexico City in the mid-20th century. Mexican cinema was instrumental in the dissemination of Cuban music, including charanga, to the rest of Latin America and to Latinos in the United States.

Theorists of improvisation and musicologists may wish to engage in a much closer reading of these and other transcriptions, for discussion of flute improvisation and clave/rhythmic theory or to connect them to other studies on improvisation in short harmonic-rhythmic cycles. Charanga is still a field with room for many researchers before the list of available topics is exhausted.
One hoped-for result of this project would be the production of a pedagogical work on charanga, complete with tonal exercises for the fourth register, fingering and alternate fingering charts for passage work in the fourth register, patterns for improvisation (in the pedagogical style of David Baker or Oliver Nelson), and transcriptions for study and practice. This thesis, with its historical context, explanation of genres, and 30 transcriptions, can be a bridge to such a practical work. If such a method can help American flutists understand the expansive technical, tonal, and improvisational benefits of studying charanga flute literature, technique, and style, then much will have been accomplished to advance flute performance studies and to connect performers across cultures.

Another goal was to add charanga to the discussion of the role of Latin dance music in American social life. Charanga was the breeding ground for so many social dances that Americans knew and loved, and the training ground for the most influential musicians in Latin American dance music. Research such as this can bring charanga from the obscure and enigmatic position it occupies to the forefront of our appreciation of Latin popular music. This work has brought me into contact with other researchers who share these goals. Ernesto Fernandez, a doctoral student at the University of Miami Frost School of Music is writing a doctoral dissertation on technical issues of comparative organology, “From the Five-Key Flute to the Boehm Flute: Exploring Their Structural Differences and Recreating the Idiomatic Performance Characteristics in Cuban Charanga-Based Genres.” Numerous journals for flutists and flute historians have planned publications on the five-key flute and its use in Cuban music. Andrea Brachfeld is currently touring the U.S., presenting lectures on the history of the French five-key flute in Cuba and the evolution of charanga style. This current eruption of interest in
charanga research, timed so neatly with the re-opening of relations with Cuba, foretells of an exciting time for flutists, dancers, and appreciators of Latin dance music. Indeed, it is an exciting time for Americans and our Cuban neighbors, as increased mutual understanding, through research and cultural exchange, replaces mistrust with goodwill.
Appendix: Additional Solo Transcriptions

Alberto Socarras:

Strictly speaking, Alberto Socarrás was not a charanga flutist, but he is one of the most important flutists in Cuban history. He is also one of the most important figures in early jazz and Latin popular music in New York; his influence as a bandleader, composer, and arranger helped to shape the direction of the early development of Latin popular music in New York. As a result of his extraordinarily long career in New York, many Latin flutists in New York City claim him as a major influence.

Born in 1908, he is a contemporary of Belisario López and Antonio Arcaño. He left Cuba and moved to New York City in 1927, and immediately fit into the city’s nascent jazz community. Socarrás is remembered by jazz musicians as the performer of the first ever recorded jazz flute solo (“Shooting the Pistol” for Paramount label, 1927). This is no small feat, as a tradition for improvisation on flute in both jazz and in Cuban music was as yet practically non-existent. The birth of a tradition of creative improvisation on the flute in Cuba was still a decade in the future.

What is remembered about Socarrás today is not nearly as striking as what has been forgotten. A classically trained flutist, Socarrás played a Boehm-system silver flute, to suit his career in symphonic, commercial, and theater music. His skill as a classical flutist earned him the praise and respect of the patriarch of French classical flute school in America, Georges Barrère. He became a virtuoso multi-instrumentalist, performing professionally on alto and soprano saxophones and clarinet in addition to flute. In his day, he was one of the most
successful and sought-after composer/arrangers in New York City and led the most popular society band after Xavier Cugat. Handsome and well-dressed, his professional and personal life was the stuff of celebrity gossip columns; everyone in New York wanted to know what Socarrás was wearing, where he was dining, where he was performing, and who was on his arm. He was in every sense what we would call a rock star or a pop star today.¹

The first solo transcription is from “Masabi” (Brunswick Records, 1935). In the mid-1930’s, a tradition of flute improvisation in Latin music, other than melodic embellishment, was still yet to come. In Socarras’s simple improvisation, the seeds of three fundamental concepts of Cuban flute improvisation are beginning to sprout: rhythmic manipulation, sequencing and repetition of motivic ideas, and displays of virtuosic articulation (rapid double tongue). The other two transcriptions (“Componte cundunga” and “Sobando el son”) are from a pachanga-era recording with Tito Rodríguez and his orchestra. In “Componte cundunga,” Socarrás articulates the clave overtly, with a strict, two-bar alternation of metric and syncopated phrases. “Sobando el son” does something unusual, pairing flute and timbales in a duo solo. Socarrás takes advantage of the setting, opening with an isorhythmic ostinato straight out of the timbales players’ handbook.

¹ Salazar, *Mambo Kingdom*, 52-57.
"Masabi"

Recorded NYC, 1935
Brunswick 7443

Artist: Alberto Socarras
Alberto Socarras y su Orquesta Cubanacan
Siento una Flauta: Appendix
Siento una Flauta: Appendix
Siento una Flauta: Appendix

Album title: Charanga Pachanga
United Artists
Recorded February 28, 1961
Pachanga (2-3 clave); half note = 113

"Componte Cundunga"

Artist: Alberto Socarras
Tito Rodriguez & his Orchestra

(bass) C7

F

1

2

3
Siento una Flauta: Appendix

"Sobando el Son"

Album title: Charanga Pachanga
United Artists
Recorded February 28, 1961

Artist: Alberto Socarras
Tito Rodriguez & his Orchestra

2-3 clave
Half=103

Bass:

A

D

(duo solo w/timbales)

1

2

194
Rolando Lozano

The only reason that the work of Rolando Lozano is not an integral part of this project is that he never made New York City his home for a long time. After moving to the United States from Mexico City in 1956, Lozano lived in Chicago and New York at various times, but the majority of his life was spent in southern California. However, Lozano’s influence on New York flutists as a recording artist cannot be overstated.

Most flutists and fans of Latin music will point to Lozano’s work with Orquesta Aragón in Cuba in 1953 and 1954 as the most significant part of his career, but he went on to do many great things that influenced Latin flute playing in America. Lozano was a member of the first charanga based in the United States, and subsequently went on to work with Mongo Santamaría in La Sabrosa on innovative recordings that shaped the direction of boogaloo, Latin jazz, pachanga, and charanga salsera in their wake. In his long and illustrious career, he performed and recorded with Latin jazz greats such as Cal Tjader, Tito Puente, and George Shearing. His ability to perform with ease and virtuosity in the chromatically complex world of jazz on a simple-system, five-key Cuban flute puts him in the same league as such great historical flutists as Barthold Kuijken and John Solum.

Of his own playing, Lozano described his concept as that of a great sonero:

My style is more street oriented, more rhythmical than Richard [Egües’s] melodic fluidity. I’m more of a sonero...the musical ideas coincide with the rhythmic scheme of the moment versus phrases that are linked together melodically. In regards to my playing, I’m more concerned with the flow of the music, much like those practitioners of the son...²

The first two transcriptions are from his legendary sessions with Orquesta Aragón in 1953 and 1954. In these he demonstrates a rhythmic fluidity that would increase as he matured, and a phrasing concept that includes space between phrases for give and take with the rhythm section. This is in keeping with his description of his own style in comparison with Richard Egües’s, whose concept included more long, uninterrupted lines of sequential repetition. By 1961, the date of the third solo (with Mongo Santamaría and La Sabrosa), his keen sense of timing had reached a high level of sophistication. He moves easily from liquid and laid back phrasing to the incisive precision of a timbalero, all while performing at a high level of virtuosity.
Siento una Flauta: Appendix

("Vaya!") Hierro: (Stock phrase w/percs)

("Vaya!") Hierro:
"Los Tamalitos de Olga"

Artist: Rolando Lozano
Orquesta Aragon

Album Title:
Mambo Inspiracion:
Primeras Grabaciones 1953-1955
(reissue)
Cha-cha-cha
Quarter=146
Johnny Pacheco (Additional Solos)

Album title: Pacheco y su Charanga
Alegre Records, 1961

"El Agua del Clavelito"

Artist: Johnny Pacheco
Pacheco y su Charanga

descarga (2-3 clave) quarter = 172

Coro 1

Toma el agua del clavelito

Coro 2

Toma el agua del clavelito toma

Toma el agua del clavelito toma

Toma el agua del clavelito toma

Toma el agua del clavelito toma
"Masacote"

Album Title: Suavito Vol. IV
Alegre Records, 1963

Pachanga (2-3 clave), quarter = 206

Bass -- intro

G

Bass -- coro/montuno

C

Coro

Que bonito y como baila me fascinaa

lcar contigo al ritmo de

mi tu ma - sa - co - te yo quiero bail

1

2

Artist: Johnny Pacheco
Pacheco y su Charanga
"Cumbaye"

Artist: Johnny Pacheco
Pacheco y su Charanga

Danzon/mambo - mambo section only
2-3 clave quarter = 112

Bass

Bass for solos

Chorus

cum-baye ye cum-baye mea-sus-te cum-ba-

ye ye cum-baye ye cum-baye

1

Album Title: Suavito Vol. IV
Alegre Records, 1963
"Recuerdos de Arcano"

Artist: Johnny Pacheco
Pacheco y Su Caharanga

Suavito Vol. IV
Alegre Records, 1963

Son Montuno (2-3 clave)
quarter = 165

Bass
G7sus

Coro

Re-cuer-dos de'Ar-ca-no
como pas-an los a-nos bon-co

1

2

3
Select Discography


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Siento una Flauta: Bibliography


222


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Siento una Flauta: Bibliography


