

**THE CONGA DRUM:
DEVELOPMENT, TECHNIQUE, STYLES, IMPROVISATIONS
AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF MASTER DRUMMER
RAMON 'MONGO' SANTAMARIA**

ALEX PERTOUT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to document the broad development of the *conga* drum or *tumbadora* as it is known in Spanish, a hand drum of Congolese descent which developed in Cuba. The *conga* drum is now one of the most popular rhythmic instruments found in the world today, taking part in a wide range of musical settings. The research includes a historical perspective, a detailed analysis of sounds, hand technique, rhythms and improvisations, with particular reference to the contribution of master drummer Ramon 'Mongo' Santamaria, arguably the most influential player in the history of the instrument. The thesis also contains a detailed examination of personal tuning and set-up preferences, an introduction to the instrumental sticks known as *claves*, an analysis of the *clave* concept, its connection with rhythm and song, as well as a detailed examination of the rhythmic and improvisational evolution of the *conga* drum over the years. The methodology utilised in this thesis includes analysis of musical sound, oral history gathered directly from cultural bearers, as well as transcription of audio-visual material. The essence of the thesis is not only to document the historical development of the instrument as well as Santamaria's musical journey, but it also aims to examine new hand techniques, as well as the wider vocabulary available to the *conga* drummer, in music making today.

DECLARATION

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that:

1. The thesis comprises my original work towards the degree, except where otherwise indicated.
2. Due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all other materials used.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Pertout', enclosed within a large, loopy oval stroke.

Name in full: Alex Pertout

Date: August 2008

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my son,

Julian Alexander Pertout

(b. Melbourne, 20 February 1997)

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INTRODUCTION

The *conga* drum or *tumbadora*, a hand drum of Congolese descent which developed in Cuba in humble settings of folkloric drumming performance, has had an enormous impact in music making worldwide. This thesis aims to document this development by presenting a short history of the drum, investigating the hand technique it incorporates, concepts and new developments in technique associated with hand drum performance, as well as the enormous contribution of master drummer Ramon 'Mongo' Santamaria, arguably the most influential player in the history of the instrument. The methodology utilised in this thesis includes analysis of musical sound, oral history gathered directly from cultural bearers, as well as transcription of audio-visual material. The essence of the thesis is not only to document the historical development of the instrument as well as Santamaria's musical journey, but to also reveal rhythms, improvisations, new hand techniques and the modern vocabulary incorporated by the *conga* drum, in music making today. In this area, the thesis aims to document the changes that have taken place on the technical side of playing the drum. Much of the material played on a *conga* drum today was unimaginable only twenty years ago, now it is an essential part of the language the modern *conga* player incorporates.

Chapter 1 documents the historical background of the *conga* drum, with an emphasis on the various *conga* drummers that have helped its popular advancement, and on the musical genres the drum has embraced. This chapter also investigates the evolution of the construction of the *conga* drum. From its beginnings as a carved solid log tubular or barrel shaped drum, to the advent of the stave drum, to the invention of the fibreglass shell. Apart from the body of the drum, this chapter also looks at the changing phases the playing skin has encountered. Chapter 2 is an overview of the technical requirements for playing the *conga* drum. It presents the basic sounds as well as extended techniques employed. It also investigates the various routes players had to undertake in order to learn to play the *conga* drum, the technical trajectory and the basic *conga* drum rhythm known as *tumbao*. The chapter also incorporates a section on the tuning of the *conga* drum and on various personal *conga* drum set-ups. With the use of illustrations and a table, this section analyses the tuning and multiple *conga* drum set-ups of a selected group of *conga* drummers. Chapter 3 focuses on the instrumental rhythmic sticks known as *claves*. The chapter opens with a historical account, followed by the patterns and connecting patterns they incorporate, and their role in the Afro-Cuban concept or rhythmic

formula known as *clave*. It follows with an analysis of this concept and its connection with rhythms and melodies. This is analysed by investigating the rhythmic connection between *clave* and the Afro-Cuban *guaguanco* rhythm, and the rhythmic connection between *clave* and the melody of a Santamaria song titled *Mayeya*.

Chapter 4 incorporates a short biography of Santamaria's musical life, with personal comments from many of his colleagues and friends, especially interviewed for this thesis. Santamaria's development and contribution as a hand drummer, was closely tied to not only changes in musical directions in contemporary musical styles, but also to the role and playing style of the instrument itself. This chapter incorporates an analysis of Santamaria's technique, musical transcriptions of his style in playing the basic *tumbao* rhythm, his incorporation of sound variations and fills when performing the *tumbao* rhythm and an analysis of an improvisation. The improvisation or solo, is from a live version of his composition *Mayeya*, recorded and filmed at the jazz club Quasimodo in Berlin, Germany. The analysis of the improvisation incorporates the various cells, the sounds the cells incorporate, a table describing the use of the various cells in the improvisation and a score of the complete solo performance.

Chapter 5 investigates the new technical developments on the *conga* drum. This includes an investigation of the *mano secreta* ("secret hand") technique, developed by Jose Luis Quintana, also known as 'Changuito'. This chapter focuses on the emergence of the 'new generation double stroke' on the *conga* drum. A technique developed out of the 'palm-fingers' movement of the left hand, resulting in both hands playing open tones on the edge of the drum head, with a slight rocking motion. This chapter also investigates another new phenomenon, the incorporation of a new vocabulary for the *conga* drummer; the snare drum rudiments. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by analysing the various findings. It arrives at the open ended query of future developments for this one-headed drum. With the emphasis on new techniques as exemplified by the new generation of *conga* drummers, there is much to hope in terms of the future scope for the *conga* drum and *conga* drummer. An extensive bibliography follows, incorporating relevant resources used in the thesis. The listing includes; books, a discography, an electronic publication list, a filmography, liner notes, a list of periodicals, a list of personal interviews and a list of the photographs incorporated.

Appendix I comprises all the personal interviews conducted and transcribed for this thesis. Interviewees included some of Santamaria's band colleagues, some of his percussion contemporaries, new generation colleagues, musicologists, as well as close friends. Interviews

were conducted with: Alex Acuña, a Peruvian born, Los Angeles based session drummer, percussionist; Jack Costanzo, a legendary *bongo* player based in Miami, known for his work with Stan Kenton and Nat King Cole and for the popularisation of the *bongo* drums in the US; Joey De Leon Jr, a Los Angeles based new generation *conga* player and percussionist with the Poncho Sanchez band; Larry Harlow, a New York based pianist, composer and member of the original Fania All Stars band along with Santamaria; Mark Levine, a San Francisco based pianist, composer, author and a former Santamaria band member; Jose Madera, a *conga* player and arranger for Tito Puente; Paoli Mejias, a new generation *conga* player, born in Puerto Rico and based in New York; Graham Morgan, a Melbourne based session drummer and rudimental drumming expert; David 'La Mole' Ortiz, a Puerto Rican based *conga* player, and one of Giovanni Hidalgo's teachers; Armando Peraza, a legendary Afro-Cuban master drummer and personal friend of Santamaria, known for his work with George Shearing, Cal Tjader, Santana as well as with Santamaria; Bob Quaranta, a New York based pianist, composer and a former Santamaria band member; Hossam Ramzy, a London based Egyptian tabla player; Raul Rekow, Santana's *conguero*; Ruben Rodriguez, a New York based bassist and former Santamaria band member; Dario Rosendo, a personal friend of Santamaria from Miami; Daniel Sadownick, a new generation *conga* drummer, percussionist based in New York; Tommy Saito, a personal friend of Santamaria based in Los Angeles; Bobby Sanabria, a New York based drummer, percussionist, musicologist, former Santamaria band member; John Santos, a San Francisco based *conga* drummer, percussionist and musicologist; Marty Sheller, a New York based trumpeter, arranger and former Santamaria band member; and Michael Spiro, a San Francisco based *conga* drummer, percussionist, author.

Appendix II depicts the various *conga* drum sounds, with images showcasing each available traditional stroke as well as extended techniques. Appendix III presents a selection of exercises aimed at developing basic *conga* drum technique. Appendix IV presents a selection of exercises aimed at developing advanced *conga* drum technique. Appendix V contains the Percussive Arts Society's forty international drum rudiments. Appendix VI presents the complete transcription of the Santamaria *Mayeya* chart, analysed in chapter 4. Appendix VII contains a copy of a special relic; a copy of the original manuscript for one of Santamaria's most revered works, *Afro Blue*. The digital copy of the manuscript, was obtained from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, which has now a permanent exhibit on Santamaria's career. Appendix VIII contains a Santamaria tribute poster, by the German

percussion manufacturer Meinl. Appendix IX contains a Santamaria obituary, personally written and published by the The Age in 2003. Appendix X contains the listing of all the audio and visual material contained in the audio and visual data disc that accompanies this thesis. The disc developed in a web-style browser using html or hyper text markup language, contains links to audio and visual clips of the various examples explored in the work presented. The full thesis is also available as a web-style browser html document.

1. THE CONGA DRUM

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE CONGA DRUM

The *conga* drum or its original counterpart, arrived in the Americas with the onset of the slave trade, during the colonisation of the 'new world' as it was then known by the Spaniards. According to Olavo Alen Rodriguez, many historians connect the evolution of the Afro-Cuban *conga* drum directly with the arrival of the African *ngoma* and *makuta* drums, brought to Cuba by the Bantu and Congo people.¹ The African slave trade commenced in the early 1400s. During that time slaves from Africa were transported to Spain and Portugal, as well as to other countries in the European continent. It is estimated that by 1492, thousands of Africans from various regions, were forcefully removed and taken to Portugal and Spain on a yearly basis. These were the first indigenous Africans that were transported to the Americas at the beginning of the Spanish colonization, around 1511-1514. Soon after, it was decided to import slaves directly from the African continent.²

The slave trade in Cuba commenced as early as 1521, and lasted longer there, than in the rest of the American continent. According to Lopes Valdez, in Cuba it continued well into the 1870s.³ The slaves carried to the Americas, were amassed from both coastal and central regions of Africa. It is estimated that the number of slaves that landed in Cuba between 1521 and the 1870s, to be around 1.3 million.⁴ The African ethnic groups that arrived in Cuba varied over the years, with predominantly four major African ethnic groups settling in Cuba. The Bantu from the Congo Basin region, the Yoruba from southwestern Nigeria, the Igbo/Ijo from southeastern Nigeria, and the Fon/Ewe from the Dahomey region and surrounding areas.⁵ With estimates reaching 400,000, the Bantu or Congos as they were also known, were the largest African ethnic group that arrived. The Yoruba were an estimated 275,000, the Igbo/Ijo 240,000, the Fon/Ewe 200,000, and a mixed ethnic group accounting for another 180,000. Of all these ethnic groups, the Bantu according to Velez, were the most influential in Cuba, as well as in all

¹ Olavo Alen Rodriguez, "History of the Congas," Introduction, *The Conga Cookbook*, by Poncho Sanchez with Chuck Silverman (New York: Cherry Lane Music, 2002) 8.

² Ned Sublette, *Cuba and its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*, (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2004) 33-37.

³ Lopes Valdez, "Ethnic Influences in Cuba Resulting from the History of African Slave Trade to Cuba," 2000, *Assata Shakur Forums*, 1 March 2008 <<http://www.assatashakur.org/forum/showthread.php?t=9372>>.

⁴ L. Valdez, "Ethnic Influences in Cuba Resulting from the History of African Slave Trade to Cuba."

⁵ Peter Martinez, "Afro-Cuban Religions," 2007, *Nabble.Com*, 11 March 2008 <<http://www.nabble.com/peter-martinez-afro-cuban-religions-td12014224.html>>.

of Afro-America.⁶ In Cuba, the African slaves preserved their culture by establishing *cabildos*, a type of social center aimed at assisting indigenous Africans from distinctively diverse ethnic backgrounds.⁷ The *cabildos* were established with the permission of the colonial masters. In these settings, drumming also flourished, as instruments were made and played, perhaps from prototypes carried across the ocean, but more than likely by drum makers who constructed African drums from memory. The *ngoma* and *makuta* drums as found in Cuba and brought by the Bantu and Congo people, were constructed in a tubular cylindrical shape and at times in a barrel shape. They were made from a carved solid log, with an open bottom and a single head tacked on to the wooden shell of the drum.⁸

Apart from the *ngoma* and *makuta* drums, in his highly praised set of musical historical volumes titled *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afrocubana*, Fernando Ortiz names and displays many other drums that have historical connections, as well as close resemblance to the *conga* drum in shape and design, as well as in the playing technique applied. Some of these include the *yuka* drums also of Congolese background, the *boku* drums which were connected with the *comparsas* (“carnival parades”) from Santiago and Guantanamo, *tambor de monte* which incorporated a laced skin rather than tacked, *tambor de trinquete* and *tambores de rumba* among others. In his writings F. Ortiz describes some of these types of drums as *tambores de candela* (“candle drums”), as the skin on these drums had to be heated under some type of flame in order to arrive at the specific pitch required.⁹

According to O. Rodriguez many drums influenced the development of the *conga* drum in Cuba. The *conga* drum was not merely recreated in Cuba and/or linked to any specific drum type of African provenance, but rather that it was born in Cuba out of many influences or antecedents.¹⁰ In his writings, Ned Sublette suggests the *conga* drum to be a quintessential Cuban adaptation of a Congo instrument, and explains that it has close cousins such as the *buleador* barrel drum from Puerto Rico and the *atabaque* from Brazil, among other types found in the musical traditions of Latin America, where some shard of the Bantu heritage is

⁶ L. Valdez, “Ethnic Influences in Cuba Resulting from the History of African Slave Trade to Cuba.”

⁷ Maria Teresa Velez, *Drumming for the Gods: The Life and Times of Felipe Garcia Villamil*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press: 2000) 7-9.

⁸ O. A. Rodriguez, “History of the Congas,” Introduction, *The Conga Cookbook*, 8-9.

⁹ Fernando Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afrocubana*, Volumen II, (Madrid: Editorial Musica Mundana Maqueda S.L., 1996) 41.

¹⁰ Nolan Warden, “Thesis: Origin vs Antecedent,” Online Posting, 19 November 2006, Latin Perc Group, 20 November 2006 <<http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/latinperc/>>.

preserved.¹¹ In terms of the subsequent barrel adopted shape, Luis Tamargo observes that the *conga* drum could not have developed in Cuba, without the help of the manufacturing techniques that Europeans brought to the Americas. He suggests that the body of the *conga* drum, was influenced directly by the shape and the actual manufacturing methods employed by Spanish wine barrel makers.¹² At first, *conga* drums were constructed from disassembled barrels of wine or lard, which were then glued back together, adding a stretched hide skin across the top section tacked on to the body of the barrel.¹³ The manufacturing and development of the barrel style stave *conga* drum offered drummers a new creole drum, one born in Cuba out of a mixed background. As the colonial authorities did not permit the playing of African hand drums, this 'new drum' allowed the freedom to execute traditional repertoire, while not playing an authentic but outlawed African hand-drum.¹⁴

Confusion abounds in regards to the internationally adopted name of the drum, its Spanish equivalent and also the names of each particular drum in the family. The drums are internationally collectively known as *conga* drums. In Spanish they are known as *tumbadoras*. There are multiple connotations for the internationally adopted name of *conga*. This can be quite misleading, as it is not only the name given to the drum, but also to a dance style, to a rhythmic style, as well as to the carnival style ensemble that parades and makes use of that instrument. F. Ortiz explains that the word *conga* could have come from the words *ma-ma-kongo* meaning 'chant', or *nkunga* or *ma-kunga* also meaning 'chant' in Congolese. His assumption is that the *nkunga* was a word that could have meant a combination of 'chant-music-dance.' He proposes that perhaps in later years, the descendants started to make use of a Spanish version of the word, by using the phrase 'let's go to the *conga*' instead of 'go to the *kunga*'.¹⁵

In terms of the Spanish name of *tumba*, *tumbador* or *tumbadora*, O. Rodriguez states that those names as used for the drum, can be traced as an Afro-American word meaning drum in general, with the phoneme *mba* being of Bantu origin. He observes that among other things this is one more clue which leads us towards the Bantu group of people, for the historical

¹¹ Sublette, *Cuba and its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*, 266.

¹² Luis Tamargo, "Tumbadora Icons," 1998, *Latin Beat Magazine*, 1 June 2006, <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FXV/is_9_8/ai_53925547>.

¹³ Sublette, *Cuba and its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*, 265.

¹⁴ F. Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afrocaribena*, Volumen II, 44.

¹⁵ F. Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afrocaribena*, Volumen II, 41.

background to this percussive instrument.¹⁶ According to F. Ortiz, the name *tumbador* is for the drum that carries the basic rhythm in an ensemble, and the name used for certain drums in the *rumba* and *comparsa* ensembles.¹⁷ Internationally nowadays, the standard set in the family of *conga* drums or *tumbadoras*, incorporates a set of three drums of diverse circumferential sizes. The highest pitched drum in the set is the *quinto*, with a standard head measurement of 11", the middle size drum is known as the *conga*, with a standard head measurement of 11 ¾", and the deepest pitch drum is the *tumbadora*, with a standard head measurement of 12 ½".

The establishment of the three drum family, as incorporated in some of the *rumba* styles, is fundamentally of Bantu or Congolese background. In their traditions, the rhythms are usually carried by two supporting drums, while the third 'talks' or improvises. According to Sublette, one area that did change with the development of popular Cuban styles, is that while in styles of the African continent the low drum is the one that 'talks' or improvises, in Cuban popular music this has been reversed, with the highest pitched drum, the *quinto*, taking the leading or 'talking' role.¹⁸ Many other names are commonly used for each drum in the family. Regional styles, or the various roles the drums might play in a particular rhythm, may bring forth these changes. In some of the Afro-Cuban rhythmic styles for example the highest pitched drum and also the drum that improvises, the *quinto*, is sometimes also known as the *requinto*, the *repicador*, or the *llamador*. The middle size drum or *conga*, may be called *tres golpes*, *segundo*, *salidor*, *tres por dos*, or *seguidora*. While the lowest pitched drum, the *tumba* or *tumbadora*, is also called *salidor*, or *salidora*.

Most of the information on the development of the *conga* drum, suggests that the first *conga* drums came out into prominence in the Cuban carnival style parades, such as the *conga de comparsa* and *comparsa Santiago*, both carnival parades from different regions in Cuba. However, O. Rodriguez argues that although the instrument must have been played in the travelling rhythms employed in the carnival performances, the real development of the role of the diverse drums, and that of the patterns played, came out of the *rumba* style and directly by the role played by the *cajones* ("wooden boxes") in that genre.¹⁹ Once the *conga* drum was introduced into the *rumba* gatherings, it took the place of the *cajones* and also that of their distinctive role. Even the practice of striking the drum on the side of the body with a couple of

¹⁶ O. A. Rodriguez, "History of the Congas," Introduction, *The Conga Cookbook*, 11.

¹⁷ F. Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afro Cubana*, Volumen II, 153.

¹⁸ Sublette, *Cuba and its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*, 266.

¹⁹ O. A. Rodriguez, "History of the Congas," Introduction, *The Conga Cookbook*, 11.

sticks to carry a pattern, was later adopted on *conga* drums in the *rumba*. It became known as playing *cascara* (“shell”). According to many scholars, this was the genuine beginning of the *conga* drum or *tumbadora* as we know it today.²⁰

In terms of the popular advancement of the *conga* drum in Cuba, it was not characterised by the *rumba* incorporation of the drum or its development in *rumba* gatherings taking place in the *solares* (“inner city slums”), but rather by the incorporation of the *conga* drum into popular dance styles such as *son*, *bolero* and *guaracha*. In the *son* style for example, it was adopted alongside the piano in the ensemble, coming into contact with the population at large. O. Rodriguez observes that Arcaño y sus Maravillas, one of the most popular dance orchestras of that period, incorporated a *conga* player in the line-up from around 1939, in turn influencing the sound of many other ensembles. Tamargo states that the *tumbadora* received its first public performance, when it featured in a concert of Afro-Cuban folkloric styles, directed by the legendary Gilberto Valdes. He also observes that it did not become an essential part of popular Cuban styles, until the early 1940s.²¹ O. Rodriguez reaffirms this, by observing that studies conducted by the Centre for the Study and Development of Cuban Music, has documented that the dance orchestra Renovacion de Jiguani was using a stave style *conga* drum, with a tacked head, as early as 1942, and that in the town of Ensenada de Cortes in Pinar del Río, an ensemble was already incorporating a *conga* drum around 1940. The first band leader credited with introducing the *conga* drums into a *conjunto* (“small group”) was the legendary blind guitarist Arsenio Rodriguez.²²

In the late 1940s, Chano Pozo introduced the *conga* drum to the jazz world by joining Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra for a few short years. This brief but extremely influential stint, revolutionised the music world with the birth of cu-bop, a style that in later years became known simply as, Latin-jazz. Chano Pozo composed and co-composed pieces for the orchestra, sung Afro-Cuban chants and played a tacked head *conga* drum, which was at times slung across his shoulders with a strap. A new chapter in the history of the development of the *conga* drum commenced with the arrival of Ramon ‘Mongo’ Santamaria in the United States. Santamaria recorded the first album of Afro-Cuban percussive folklore there, became an extremely successful band leader, performing an array of styles both traditional and popular, and by

²⁰ O. A. Rodriguez, “History of the Congas,” Introduction, *The Conga Cookbook*, 10.

²¹ Tamargo, “Tumbadora Icons.”

²² O. A. Rodriguez, “History of the Congas,” Introduction, *The Conga Cookbook*, 12.

developing a prolific recording career, had an enormous impact in the continued growth of the *conga* drum. As band leader and musicologist John Santos observes:

I don't think there is much argument that Mongo Santamaria is probably the most influential *conga* player. Some of the greatest recordings of that kind of music and that kind of drumming are by Mongo. So many people were influenced by those recordings, generations, they cross over into rhythm and blues, funk, jazz, all of that.²³

Other master drummers immigrated to the United States, propelling the popular evolution of the *conga* drum internationally. This included Carlos 'Patato' Valdez, who was responsible for highly melodic inventions incorporating multiple *conga* drum set ups; Candido Camero responsible for the development of multiple *conga* drum set ups and technical development; Armando Peraza, who played in Chano Pozo's Conjunto Azul in Cuba and went on to perform with many prominent jazz artists, as well as being in the vanguard of the Latin-rock movement with the San Francisco based group Santana; and Francisco Aguabella, a master drummer who came to prominence touring the world with the Katherine Durham's dance troupe, later performed with Santamaria and Tito Puente, and like Peraza, took part in the development of the Latin-rock movement, with his outstanding work with another San Francisco based group, Malo.

In Cuba *rumba* ensembles such as Los Muñequitos de Matanzas, known originally as Guaguanco Matancero and Los Papines directed by the Abreu brothers, were instrumental in the popularity of the *conga* drum in a traditional percussion ensemble setting. Pedro Izquierdo, known artistically as 'Pello El Afrokan' not only continued the popularisation of the *conga* drum in the 1960s, but was also responsible for the creation of a new rhythm, the *mozambique*. Tata Güines known as the *rey de los tambores* ("king of the drums"), was also highly influential and according to Santos responsible for the entire revolution in technique.²⁴ In the 1970s, Jose Luis Quintana, better known as 'Changuito', developed a personal method he titled *la mano secreta* ("the secret hand"), which contains many hand exercises and movements adopted by the new generation of players at large.

Other influential players who contribute to the popular development of the *conga* drum include band leader Ray Barretto; Jesus 'El Niño' Alfonso with his work with outstanding Latin-

²³ John Santos, telephone interview, 18 May 2005.

²⁴ Santos, telephone interview.

jazz ensemble Irakere in which he incorporated a four, and at times a five *conga* drum set-up; Miguel 'Anga' Diaz who replaced Alfonso in that ensemble; Daniel Ponce who arrived in the United States in the 1980s; and Poncho Sanchez, a Los Angeles based *conga* player who worked with Cal Tjader and leads his own Grammy awarded Latin-jazz ensemble. In the early 1970s, with the emergence of the Latin-rock era and groups like Santana, Malo and Azteca, the *conga* drum took an even greater role in popular music around the world. Original members Michael Carabello and Jose 'Chepito' Areas, along with Armando Peraza, James 'Mingo' Lewis, Victor Pantoja, Raul Rekow influence a new generation of players worldwide. In New York and Los Angeles, recording session players such as Ralph MacDonald, Paulinho Da Costa, Lenny Castro, Luis Conte, Alex Acuña, Manolo Badrena were also highly influential, with their work on records and motion picture soundtracks, continuing the *conga* drum evolution.

Giovanni Hidalgo is currently the most influential *conguero* ("conga player") in the world. He is regarded as the most progressive and advanced player of all time, whose mastery of the instrument and overall contribution to new techniques applied to the instrument has surpassed expectations. The international evolution of the *conga* drum has been nothing short of monumental. Tamargo observes that since the 1940s the *conga* drum has become the most representative Afro-Latin American percussion instrument in music settings. The *conga* drum nowadays takes part in countless musical styles, from the concert hall orchestra to pop, jazz, world and beyond.²⁵

CONSTRUCTION OF THE CONGA DRUM

Many drums influenced the birth and development of the *conga* drum in Cuba. As O. Rodriguez states, the *conga* drum was not merely recreated in Cuba, but it was born in Cuba out of many influences or antecedents.²⁶ It is thought that some of the drums connected with the Bantu and Congo people, were the precursors of the *conga* drum. These drums were constructed from a carved solid log, in a tubular cylindrical or barrel shape. The log had an open bottom and a single head on top, tacked on to the shell of the drum.²⁷ Joseph Howard states that in the Americas, the traditional but lengthy and strenuous method of drum shell making by carving a solid log, was with time replaced by the construction of stave drum shells. This method proved to be faster, and the wood easier to obtain in smaller cuts. The drum in turn became lighter,

²⁵ Tamargo, "Tumbadora Icons."

²⁶ Warden, "Thesis: Origin vs Antecedent," Online Posting.

²⁷ O. A. Rodriguez, "History of the Congas," Introduction, *The Conga Cookbook*, 9.

easier to repair and practically more portable.²⁸ Although many types of drum shells are manufactured these days, some companies though still maintain that a drum made out of a solid piece of wood has far better overall projection. The drum, they declare “breathes and resonates as one piece,” with the solid wood shell delivering a “more balanced sound.”²⁹

It was during the colonial prohibition of African drums in Cuba, that a new drum was born. As drum makers and *toneleros* (“barrel makers”) who had already developed skills in bending staves of wood to make barrels, constructed new instruments out of disassembled barrels of wine or lard, which were then glued back together.³⁰ Tamargo observes that the body of the *conga* drum, was influenced directly by the shape, and the actual manufacturing methods employed by the Spanish barrel makers. He suggests that it could not have developed in Cuba, without the help of the manufacturing techniques they brought to the Americas.³¹ This manufacturing and development of a barrel style stave drum, offered drummers a new creole instrument, one born in Cuba out of a mixed background. And as the colonial authorities continued their oppression and African drum prohibition, this ‘new drum’ allowed the freedom to execute traditional repertoire, while not playing an authentic African instrument.³²

For the stave shell construction, the types of wood in popular use at present include: red oak, North American white ash, North American cherry, Siam oak and Freijin wood among others. The manufacturing process requires the wood to be air-dried, ¾” solid staves are then manufactured and steam bent, joined with glue, and later lathe turned and hand finished to ensure the endurance and long life of the shell.³³ As far as the skin of the drums is concerned, the early drum skins were tacked to the upper body opening. In order to get the desired sound, the player had to place the skin close to a fire, the skin would warm up and tighten, and the pitch would rise. Depending on the atmospheric climate and the changes it would bring to the pitch of the drum, this process had to often be re-applied several times, even during performances. Due to the skin warming method employed, F. Ortiz described these types of drums as being *tambores de candela* (“candle drums”).³⁴ Armando Peraza remembers that period well. His method involved a little kerosene lamp that was put close to the skins to heat

²⁸ Joseph Howard, *Drums in the Americas*, (New York: Oak Publications. 1967) 16-17.

²⁹ Del Cielo Percussion, 20 June 2005 <www.delcielopercussion.com>.

³⁰ Sublette, *Cuba and its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo*, 265.

³¹ Tamargo, “Tumbadora Icons.”

³² F. Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afrocubana*, Volumen II, 44.

³³ Sol Drums, 20 March 2008 <<http://www.soldrums.com/story.html>>.

³⁴ F. Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afrocubana*, Volumen II, 41.

the skin up, in time raising the pitch. Peraza observes that he had to be very careful, as if you ended up too close to the skin, there was a danger of splitting the skin. Although Peraza acknowledges and praises the invention of the tuning hardware for the *conga* drum, he recalls that the heated drums had “a beautiful rich sound that the hardware controlled drums could never duplicate.”³⁵

Fig. 1.1 Tacked skin *conga*.³⁶



Others not only agree with Peraza but further stated that, these changes not only affected the sound projected, but also the physical impact of the hand striking the drum. As Bobby Sanabria observes, when tuning lugs started to be utilised on *conga* drums and skins were tightened to areas certainly not available on tacked heads, players began to encounter physical problems with their hands, due to the impact. He explains that when playing a tacked head, the skin on that drum actually “gives and bounces off,” whether the opposite actually takes place, when hitting a lug tuned head.³⁷ Availability and subsequent care for tacked head drums, was not the ideal scenario for the professional *conga* player. Ray Romero recalls that in order to obtain a *conga* drum in New York in the 1940s, he had to:

³⁵ Luis Ernesto, “A Conversation with Armando Peraza,” *SalsaWeb*, 8 September 2006
<http://www.salsaweb.com/music/articles/peraza_cm.htm>.

³⁶ Tacked skin *conga*, 2006, Latin Jazz Discussion List, 10 March 2008
<<http://launch.ph.groups.yahoo.com/group/latinjazz/photos/view/da63?b=10>>.

³⁷ Bobby Sanabria, email interview, 20 May 2005.

Visit a bakery on 116th and Lenox Avenue. Simon, a Cuban, used to sell all kinds of cakes. And he had his little thing going on with the skins and *bongos* and *congas* coming in from Cuba. You had to stretch the skins on in those days, you know. You had to know how to put them on, wet them, pull them, stretch them all the way around, even.³⁸

Due to the many demands the *conga* drum was attaining in the diverse style it was incorporated in, a new head and tuning system was developed around the early 1950s. This consisted of a metal rim, hooked screws and tuning lugs, which enriched the tuning possibilities of the drum, allowing the *conga* drum to reach high tuning registers not previously available.³⁹

Fig. 1.2. Metal hardware.⁴⁰



According to Peraza, metal hardware was first featured on *bongos*, then on the *conga* drum. He believes that two Cubans, Candido Requena and Severino invented the *bongo* hardware and later Cuban drum maker Gonzalo Vergara developed the hardware for the *conga* drum.⁴¹ Gonzalo Vergara's highly praised Vergara brand of *conga* drums, featured his own metal hardware and stave shells made out of actual Spanish wine barrels, which were then cut down to size. According to Tommy Saito who owns a set of Vergara *conga* drums 'borrowed' by Santamaria for 30 years for his concerts and recordings, "they still smell of wine too."⁴² There have been many new technical designs, as well as aesthetic changes to the existing hardware. One of the most recent and popular changes, has been the incorporation of a different style metal rim, named the 'comfort curve rim'. This rim was requested by players due to the hardness of impact, experienced when the palm of the hand came into contact with the edge of

³⁸ Henry Medina, "A Life In Music: One on One with Little Ray Romero," 1995, *Descarga*, 2 May 2005 <<http://www.descarga.com/cgi-bin/db/archives/Interview11?PWjseasa;;771>>.

³⁹ O. A. Rodriguez, "History of the Congas," Introduction, *The Conga Cookbook*, 12.

⁴⁰ Metal hardware, personal photograph of Alex Pertout, 31 March 2008.

⁴¹ Ernesto, "A Conversation with Armando Peraza."

⁴² Tommy Saito, telephone interview, 3 February 2007.

the traditional metal rim. The rim in the new model, has been rounded off in the upper area, giving the player a far more comfortable landing area, if in contact with the palm of the hand. Although this rim has been promoted as a new development in *conga* drum hardware, Sanabria believes that:

Frank Mesa, who worked in the auto body repair business, was the first to develop the now so called 'comfort curve rim' way back in the late 1950s along with his fibreglass Ecotone drums.⁴³

In discussions conducted with Santana's *conguero* Raul Rekow, he mentioned his use of a garden hose, cut in the middle, to cover the traditional metal rim in order to safeguard his palms when in contact with the metal rim. In some ways, Rekow feels partly responsible for the introduction of the comfort curve rim.⁴⁴ This new rim, has become the standard upper rim in use, with all major *conga* drum companies incorporating it on to their *conga* drum models. Figure 1.3 showcases a comparative look at the two main upper metal rim styles.

Fig. 1.3. Traditional rim and comfort curve rim.⁴⁵



The standard *conga* drum set consists of three drums. The smallest drum known as *quinto*, is 11" in head size, the middle drum, known as *conga* is 11¾" in head size, while the lowest drum known as *tumbadora* is 12½" in head size. Although these are the standard head measurements, many drum manufacturers offer variants to these sizes. Some of these variants include names and sizes such as: *super quinto* 9", *requinto* 9 ¾", *quinto* 10" and 10.5", *conga* or *segundo* 11", *tumba* or *tumbadora* 11.75" and 12", and *super tumbas* at 13.5" and 14".

⁴³ Bobby Sanabria, "Re: The Shape of Tumbadoras," Online Posting, 25 February 2008, Latin Jazz Group. 26 February 2008 <<http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/latinjazz/>>.

⁴⁴ Raul Rekow, personal conversation, 26 February 2008.

⁴⁵ Traditional rim and comfort curve rim, personal photograph of Alex Pertout, 31 March 2008.

Fig. 1.4. *Conga* drum with traditional rim.⁴⁶



Although the international standard height of the *conga* drum is 30", there are popular models available also in 28" and 32" in height. Of the popular 28" *conga* drum, drum maker Martin Cohen states that, oddly enough that particular height did not take place due to artistic or scientific developments, but rather due to mistakes in the manufacturing plant. As he explains, his company had been manufacturing 30" tall drums:

Then one day the molder delivered a shipment of drum shells and upon close inspection they were found to be two inches shorter than usual. When I complained to the owner of the molding facility, I was told that I had better accept the drums or they would stop doing business with me, to his surprise and delight these shorter drums proved to be more comfortable for the seated player.⁴⁷

The 28" *conga* drum became the standard set used by bands in the Latin dance circuit, the drums also "proved to be more comfortable for the seated player." Cohen believes that only when *conga* drummers begun using stands, the 30" tall drum "found acceptance in this arena."⁴⁸ Experiments in shell technology led to the development of a complete fibreglass shell for the *conga* drum. Cohen believes that his company, LP Ventures, were the first to mass

⁴⁶ *Conga* drum with traditional rim, Tony's Conga Adventure, 1 August 2008
<<http://congadr.blogspot.com/2008/06/unknown-vintage-congas-interesting-and.html>>.

⁴⁷ Martin Cohen, "LP Secrets," *CongaHead*, 10 March 2008 <<http://www.congahead.com/secrets.html>>.

⁴⁸ Cohen, "LP Secrets."

produced a fibreglass *conga* drum in 1969, but not the first to produce this type of shell. He acknowledges that the first person to fabricate a fibreglass shell in the United States was Frank Mesa. Although Mesa had a very personal and unique style in making the drum shells, he did not possess the business skills necessary, “toward mass producing and marketing them.”⁴⁹ Peraza on the other hand observes that “the first person to ever manufacture a fibreglass *conga* drum was right here in Berkeley, an auto body repair man named Sal Guerrero.” But he does credit Cohen as “the person who took the *conga* drum construction to a different level.”

Fig. 1.5. Fibreglass *conga* drum with comfort curve rim.⁵⁰



SKINS

The type of rawhide skins employed on *conga* drums varies enormously. Depending on the manufacturer of the drum, the thickness of the skin employed also differs. In the main, the basic raw material used can be steer, cow, mule, bull, water buffalo or horse skin. While the steer skin on a *conga* drum is thicker and projects a warmer and pure tone, the water buffalo skin tends to be thin, projecting a lot more overtones.⁵¹ Santos observes that while examining

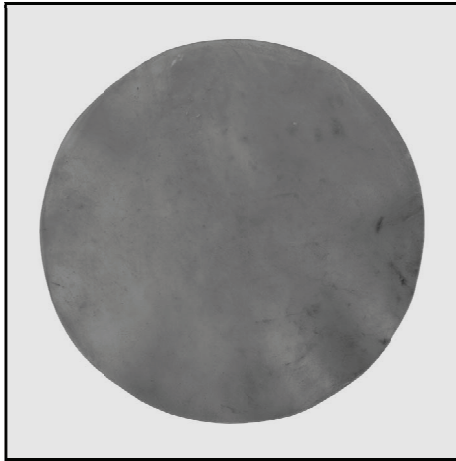
⁴⁹ Carp, David, “A Visit with Martin Cohen of LP Music Group,” 1997, *Descarga*. 22 March 2008
<<http://www.descarga.com/cgi-bin/db/archives/Interview5?IbZoyYmQ;;292>>.

⁵⁰ Fibreglass *conga* drum with comfort curve rim, *Musician’s Friend*, 27 March 2008
<<http://www.musiciansfriend.com/product/Latin-Percussion-LP259X1-Original-Fibreglass-Conga?sku=440613>>.

⁵¹ *Drum Heads & Supplies*, Latin Rhythm Traders, 22 March 2008
<<http://www.latinrhythmttraders.com/html/supplies.html#anchorsteerskins>>.

players in Cuba, most preferred to play on thicker skins.⁵² The skin of the *conga* drum has an enormous impact on the overall sound texture that emerges from a drum. Regardless of the types of shells a drum might incorporate, the warmth, depth, clarity and overall overtone series projected, are in the main dictated by the skin the drum incorporates.

Fig. 1.6. Rawhide skin.⁵³



The traditional method of tucking a skin on a *conga* drum, incorporates several steps in its process. The first is to cut a circular piece of skin, allowing a generous amount of skin to overlap the shell size of the drum, by at least three inches. The second requires the placement of the skin, in a large container of water for several hours. In time, this makes the hard skin flexible and ready to be manipulated. From there, the soaked skin is placed in the centre of the drum head area of the shell. A thin metal flesh ring, which is a little wider in diameter than the drum shell, is then placed on top of the skin. The drum metal rim is then placed on top of the flesh ring forming a lock, with the skin in between.⁵⁴ With the incorporation of pliers, the skin is then pulled over the metal flesh ring and under the drum metal rim. At this point in the process, all hooked screws are connected to the tuning lugs and tension is applied to each lug in small increments around the drum. As the tensioning increases around the drum, the skin is continuously pulled through the flesh ring and under the drum metal rim. This constant skin tensioning, continues until the length between the drum metal rim and the top of the drum skin, arrives at an optimum level of 2 cm. With the help of a craft knife, all the excess skin is

⁵² Santos, telephone interview.

⁵³ Rawhide skin, Mid-East Ethnic Instruments, 22 March 2008
<<http://www.mid-east.com/itemdesc.asp?ic=CF2C&eq=&Tp=>>.

⁵⁴ Howard, *Drums in the Americas*, 22-24.

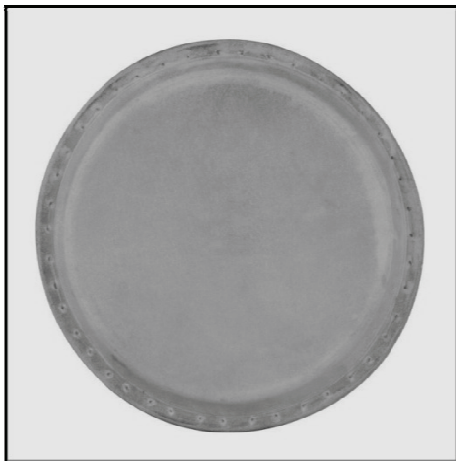
then cut by using the drum metal rim as the marker, while a circled cardboard on the inside protects the inside part of the skin from any accidental cuttings. The mounted skin is then allowed to dry naturally for a few days, before playing or adding any further tensioning.⁵⁵

Fig. 1.7. Mounted skin.⁵⁶



As the process of finding and choosing the correct skin, tucking it, and allowing for the drying process takes several days to complete, drum companies have been manufacturing pre-mounted *conga* drum skins for a number of years now. The pre-mounted *conga* drum skin, is a rawhide skin, which is specifically pre-mounted for the company's particular model, and/or size *conga* drum.

Fig. 1.8. Pre-mounted skin.⁵⁷



⁵⁵ *Tucking Skins*, Volcano Percussion, 20 March 2008
<http://www.volcanopercussion.com/html/tucking_skins.html>.

⁵⁶ Mounted skin, personal photograph of Alex Pertout, 31 March 2008.

⁵⁷ Pre-mounted skin, Musician's Friend, 22 March 2008
<<http://img3.musiciansfriend.com/dbase/pics/products/7/5/5/226755.jpg>>.

The most recent development has been the introduction of a new generation of synthetic skins for the *conga* drum. These new skins, while retaining the actual feel and tone of the rawhide skin, have the added advantage of been able to offer a steady and reliable pitch centre, as atmospheric conditions do not affect them. Santos observes that if you approach synthetic skins, with the same strong attack you approach rawhide skins, you end up overplaying the drum sonics, thus bypassing the threshold where the synthetic skin produces a sweet tone. He explained that by approaching the drum with a lighter touch, with a softer attack, he did arrive at a beautifully round and warm sound.⁵⁸ In experimenting with various synthetic skins in personal settings, the results reached have been extremely pleasing. The New Skin II and the True Skin I developed by Remo, are both excellent substitutes for a rawhide skin.

Fig. 1.9. Pre-mounted synthetic skin.⁵⁹



⁵⁸ Santos, telephone interview.

⁵⁹ Pre-mounted synthetic skin, Mid-East Ethnic Instruments, 22 March 2008
<<http://www.mid-east.com/itemdesc.asp?ic=M7%2D1175%2DN6&eq=&Tp=>>.

2. TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

SOUNDS OF THE CONGA DRUM

In Afro-American drumming styles, the basic sounds are achieved by striking the drum in a very specific manner. Howard states that African and Afro-American drummers use five tones on their drums. He continues by offering an explanation of these particular sounds, which include open tone, closed sound, deep tone, medium tone and a high, brittle, staccato tone.⁶⁰ Although the explanation offers some insight into some of the basic repertoire of sounds available on an Afro American hand drum, it is far too simplistic for the refined art the set of *conga* drum sounds and techniques employed has developed into. One of the major difficulties encountered when discussing the various basic *conga* drum sounds, is that this particular area is yet to achieve consensus. Research in this area has found multiple names in use, for the same sound produced. The palm sound for example is at times referred to as heel. The finger sound as toe, tip, or touch. The muffled tone as mute, or muff. At times, the Spanish names of the sounds are used. Although there is a lot more information on diverse aspects of the *conga* drum, due to the vast new educational based literature released in the last twenty years, the standardization of the name of each sound, is yet to reach universal agreement or format.

In order to achieve a solid *conga* drum technique, eight standard sounds have to be mastered with both hands. The standard sounds are: palm, fingers, bass, open tone, muffled tone, slap, open slap and muffled slap. Although certain technical aspects of the *conga* drum technique have developed enormously, the main sounds remain intact. These hand positions are developed, with the understanding of incorporating as little physical movement as possible, between each sound. Many other sounds can be achieved on a *conga* drum. With the influence of cross-cultural drumming techniques, experimentation and the incorporation of extended techniques, new sound palates have expanded the *conga* drum sonic repertoire. Some of the alternative sound areas are achieved by striking the head with the index fingertip, the nails, the knuckles and a clenched fist. They also include glissandi and pitch bending effects. Other sound sources are also arrived at, with the incorporation of extraneous materials such as a wooden stick. With a wooden stick you can achieve open and muffled tones, as well as 'click' sounds by striking the rim or the shell of the drum.

⁶⁰ Howard, *Drums in the Americas*, 239.

Table 1. Standard *conga* drum sounds.

Sounds:	Method:
Palm	This sound is achieved by striking the drum head with the entire hand in a flat position.
Fingers	This sound is achieved by striking the lower drum head area with the fingertips.
Fingers (alt)	An alternative fingers sound is achieved by striking the center of the drum head area with the fingertips.
Bass	This sound is achieved by striking and retracting the palm from the center of the drum head.
Open Tone	This sound is achieved by striking the edge of the drum head with the ridge of the palm, while the extended fingers are in an elevated closed position.
Muffled Tone	This sound is achieved by striking the edge of the drum head with the ridge of the palm, while pressing the drum head with the extended fingers in a lowered closed position.
Slap	This sound is achieved by striking the edge of the drum head with the ridge of the palm, while the extended fingers in an open position simultaneously strike and grab the drum head.
Muffled Slap	This sound is achieved as per the slap method described above, with the incorporation of the other hand muting the drum head.
Open Slap	This sound is achieved by striking the edge of the drum head with the ridge of the palm, while the extended fingers in an elevated open position, strike then retract from the drum head.

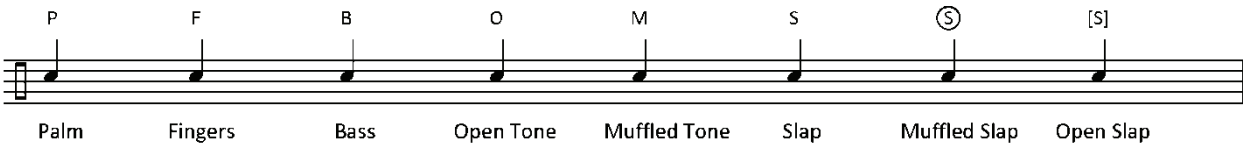
Table 2. Additional *conga* drum sounds.

Sounds:	Method:
Index Finger Tone	A thin high pitched tone is achieved by striking the rim of the drum with the index fingertip.
Nails	A sharp clack type effect is achieved by striking the drum head with the fingernails.
Fist	A deep muffled bass type effect is achieved by striking the drum head with a clench fist.
Knuckles	A crisp and slightly deeper clack type effect is achieved by striking the drum head with the knuckles.
Harmonic	A head harmonic is achieved by striking an open tone, while lightly pressing the middle finger in the center of the drum head.
Glissando	A type of glissando or slide is achieved by playing an open tone, followed by a middle fingertip slide across the drum head.
Pitch Bend	A pitch bend is achieved by playing an open tone, while adding elbow pressure to the drum head.
Open Stick Tone	An open stick tone can be achieved by striking the drum head just below the center with a wooden stick.
Muffled Stick Tone	A muffled stick tone can be achieved by striking the drum head without a rebound, pressing the wooden stick on the drum head.
Rim Stick Tone	A rim click sound can be achieved by striking a wooden stick on the edge or rim of the drum.
Shell Stick Tone	A click type sound can be achieved by striking the side or shell of the drum with a wooden stick.

In order to document *conga* drum exercises, rhythms, and improvisations, it is necessary to include in the music notation not only notes, rests and accents, but also the sounds that the *conga* drum needs to achieve, which *conga* drum in the ensemble will play the note, and the sticking that needs to be incorporated.⁶¹ The method employed in this thesis, includes a capital letter or symbol for each sound, placed on top of the note. Some of the symbols incorporated, such as muffled slap and open slap, are personal developments. The particular sticking for each sound, is placed underneath the note. For the diverse sized and tuned drums, the notation makes use of spaces in the music staff.

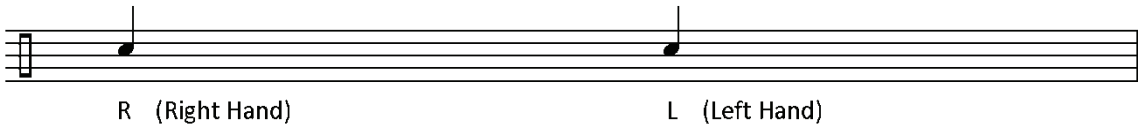
Example 2.1 displays the capital letters employed for each sound played on the *conga* drum. A descriptive for each capital letter employed, is found under each note.

Ex. 2.1. *Conga* drum sounds.



Example 2.2 displays the two sticking options available. The capital letters which indicate a right or left hand strike, are found below the notes.

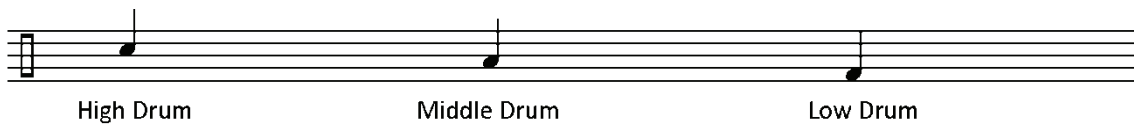
Ex. 2.2. Sticking.



Example 2.3 displays the various pitched *conga* drums found in a particular set-up. The note heads in diverse spaces of the music staff, denote the various pitched *conga* drums in use. The set-up in the example 2.3 incorporates three *conga* drums.

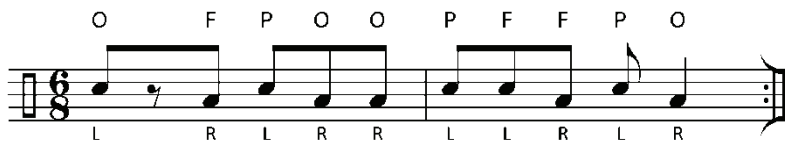
⁶¹ Howard, *Drums in the Americas*, 241.

Ex. 2.3. Various *conga* drums.



Example 2.4 displays a fully notated *conga* drum pattern. The part is written to be played on two *conga* drums, with the pattern being two bars long. The sounds include: open tone, fingers and palm. The sticking employs both single and double strokes. The left hand plays the higher pitched drum, while the right hand plays the low pitched drum exclusively in this particular rhythmic example. The fully notated rhythm presented in example 2.4, is a transcription of Santamaria’s *conga* drum part, from the first studio version of *Afro Blue*. The song was released on his *Mongo* album of 1959, a recording that was subsequently re-released in a packaged two-disc titled *Afro Roots*.⁶²

Ex. 2.4. A fully notated *conga* drum rhythm.



HAND TECHNIQUE OF THE CONGA DRUM

There are many drumming styles and techniques found throughout the Americas, with multiple variants to be found within any one ethnic group. According to Howard, the method of playing a drum with bare hands, or with a stick and a hand, while holding it between the legs, is of African origin. There is no trace of the Amerindians, or for that matter the Europeans, using this particular method.⁶³ The first step in the development of *conga* drum hand technique, incorporates the progressive development of the skin sounds of the *conga* drum. These are obtained by striking the skin with the bare hand, in a variety of positions and shapes. As Howard aptly describes it, the drum is struck in a “definite prescribed manner.”⁶⁴ From there, exercises are drawn which assist the hands in acquiring flexibility, co-ordination, as well as endurance. Once that phase of the development has progressed, it is then that the basic

⁶² Mongo Santamaria, *Afro Blue, Afro Roots*, Prestige, 1972.

⁶³ Howard, *Drums in the Americas*, 11-14.

⁶⁴ Howard, *Drums in the Americas*, 241.

tumbao pattern (“the repeated rhythmic base”⁶⁵), followed by the vast rhythmic repertoire available, begins to unfold. The *conga* drum player’s role covers many areas of the musical landscape. It is in the aspirant’s interest, especially while in the development stage, to consider all the areas and develop them accordingly. Joey De Leon, a player renowned for his impeccable technique, observes that it is extremely important to consider that, “as a player you are judged on certain criteria such as sound, time, musicality, accompanying and supporting skills, as well as on soloing technique.”⁶⁶ Cuban master drummer Tata Güines, regarded as one of the leading developers of the technique of the *conga* drum, suggests that aspiring *conga* drummers should turn to the masters for guidance, Chano Pozo, Candido, Mongo. He observes that that student should spend their energy developing the basics, the fundamental technique, and advises “don't get caught up in the war of I can play more than you, I can play faster than you.”⁶⁷

The formal study of the *conga* drum and its technique has varied immensely over the years. Some players grew up immersed in the environment. Some learned in areas away from the source, by attending live performances and concerts, and observing and analysing players’ hands. Others without that access, had to contend with long-play recordings and cassettes, and learned by transcribing from those recordings. The climate has changed dramatically. Although there are students who are still in an enviable position of developing their skills right in the environment, worldwide we now have greater access to teachers, masterclasses, seminars, colleges, universities, and an ever growing volume of literature available which includes: books, magazines, cds, dvds, as well as vast internet resources. As Romero states, things were rather different in New York of the 1940s. Romero was greatly influenced by Chino Pozo, who was performing at the time with Machito's Orchestra, and was also the cousin of the legendary *conga* drummer, composer Chano Pozo. As far as lessons were concerned though, Romero was not able to organise any with Chino, or with any other player for that matter. Just like many players of his generation, Romero learned to play by “just picking it up by ear and sight,” as the main players were never interested or willing to teach others in a formal setting.⁶⁸ Accordingly Jack Costanzo observes, “I essentially taught myself in Chicago when I was a kid. There were no

⁶⁵ *Latin Jazz Glossary*, 2007, Smithsonian Jazz, 2 December 2007

<http://www.smithsonianjazz.org/latinjazz/latinjazz_glossary.asp>.

⁶⁶ Joey De Leon Jr, email interview, 5 February 2007.

⁶⁷ Chris Theberge, “Percussion Discussion: Changuito and Tata Güines Cuban Conga Pioneers,” *Rhythm Music Magazine*, Spring 1998.

⁶⁸ Medina, Henry, “A Life In Music: One on One with Little Ray Romero,” 1995, *Descarga*, 2 May 2005 <<http://www.descarga.com/cgi-bin/db/archives/Interview11?PWjseasa;;771>>.

bongo players to teach me anything.” Costanzo remembers getting inspired by a touring Latin band from Puerto Rico, that played in Chicago at the time, during a period when Latin music was just starting to gain popularity. “It was the first time I saw *bongos* in person. Then I made a pair of bongos myself and taught myself to play. That’s how that happened,” Costanzo recalls.⁶⁹

Many of the current leading players had similar experiences. In personal conversations with Rekow, he stated that the most influential players in San Francisco at the time, did not give lessons, and that along with percussionist and musicologist John Santos, he learned by transcribing recordings and watching players in concert. Santos observes that although he and others would often approach master drummers in the area, as well as visiting artists such as Santamaria for lessons, they would always decline their requests. Rekow believes that apart from the fact that they didn't feel comfortable teaching, they actually didn't need to.⁷⁰ Santos eventually learned from various master drummers who settled in the San Francisco area, by befriending them and in time gaining their trust. Once Armando Peraza and Francisco Aguabella felt comfortable with him, it allowed him to be part of their inner circle. Thus a friendship began, which led to ideas and comments being shared, eventually leading to learning by observing, and by playing drums with them.⁷¹

Developing drumming skills in Australia in the late 1970s, was a rather more difficult personal experience. First of all, there were no master drummers residing here, and there was only one individual who had some rhythmic knowledge in the art of Afro-American drumming, John Litchen. The developing years were spent transcribing recordings and approaching highly respected players for a lesson, while they were passing by on a particular concert tour. Rekow was one of those, willing to impart his knowledge, while in Australia with Santana in 1979. The ensuing years, between visits or visitors, was continuously active with the development of the material acquired during those very special sessions and ongoing transcriptions. Apart from transcribing recordings by Santamaria, Tito Puente and others, one recording that Litchen would often play to his students was a release by bassist Cachao, titled *Cuban Jam Sessions in Miniature: Descargas*. A landmark recording of Afro-Cuban style ensemble rhythmic improvisation, led by bassist Israel ‘Cachao’ Lopez, which features the illustrious percussion trio of Tata Güines on *conga* drums, Rogelio ‘Yeyito’ Iglesias on *bongos*, and Guillermo Barreto on

⁶⁹ Jack Costanzo, telephone interview, 15 February 2007.

⁷⁰ Rekow, personal interview.

⁷¹ Santos, telephone interview.

timbales.⁷² Güines believes that the modernisation of *conga* drums took a major step forward, with the release of that particular album. Accordingly he stated, “we had no idea that record was going to hit like that. It became a textbook recording that all students of percussion listened to.” Güines also observes that although many bands in Cuba already employed a *conga* drummer in the 1940s, there wasn't lot of evolution or development of technique taking place then.⁷³ Santos believes that it all started with Candido:

Candido is super important, he is another guy with great technique. Actually Candido you know in a lot of ways is the first one. Candido was in New York before the others arrived and he still here. That's something that is really important, he has done a lot of wonderful playing.⁷⁴

Güines states that, after he joined the ensemble Fajardo Y Sus Estrellas *conga* players like himself and Carlos ‘Patato’ Valdez started developing, creating and modernising *conga* drum technique as we know today.⁷⁵ Indeed many agree, according to Michael Spiro “Tata Güines started the technical revolution.”⁷⁶ Santos suggests that the developments Güines is responsible for, marked the beginnings in the new era of *conga* drum technique:

To me it starts with Tata. It goes from Tata to Changuito and from Changuito to Giovanni. That's kind of the way I see that, because Giovanni to me is the greatest of the new generation of *conga* drummers. Giovanni is the product of studying all those masters. And Giovanni was already playing incredibly at ten years of age!⁷⁷

According to Jose Luis Quintana, also known as ‘Changuito’, strong technique has to be developed in order to play in a relaxed manner, without getting exhausted. The hands shouldn't be lifted too high above the drum, even if the nature of striking will direct you in that direction.⁷⁸ Santamaria on the other hand, played with a full arm style of movement and a strong and loud attack, which was extremely tough on his hands. Having performed for many years with Santamaria, Sanabria observes that Santamaria was always “a heavy hitter of the

⁷² Cachao Y Su Ritmo Caliente, *Cuban Jam Sessions In Miniature: Descargas*, (Panart, 1957).

⁷³ Theberge, “Percussion Discussion: Changuito and Tata Güines Cuban Conga Pioneers.”

⁷⁴ Santos, telephone interview.

⁷⁵ Theberge, “Percussion Discussion: Changuito and Tata Güines Cuban Conga Pioneers.”

⁷⁶ Michael Spiro, *The Conga Drummer's Guidebook*, (Petaluma: Sher Music Co., 2006) 67.

⁷⁷ Santos, telephone interview.

⁷⁸ Theberge, “Percussion Discussion: Changuito and Tata Güines Cuban Conga Pioneers.”

skins.” Santamaria wanted his slap, or *golpe seco* (“dry hit”), as he put it, to sound like a gun shot, “those were his words not mine” Sanabria explained. He believes that Santamaria's aggressive conga drum technique, developed as a result of his bongo drum playing days in Cuba, where the instrument was often played with a tremendous slap sound, is “what eventually killed his hands.”⁷⁹ In a recently released interview, Santamaria indeed explained ongoing issues with his hands:

My hands, look at my hands, my calluses are such that when I play sometimes I am laughing and people think that I am having a great time enjoying it, but is just the pain is such (laughs), but one knows that he has to keep going, because that's the work and you can't disappoint the fans that come and see the band.⁸⁰

Quintana observes that one needs to achieve love and sweetness out of each stroke of the skin, to arrive at the correct sonority. He concludes that if one studies the correct technique, developing good open tones and slaps, work will be far more comfortable, and with a proper microphone in ensemble situations, there won't be any need to mistreat the hands.⁸¹

TUNING OF THE CONGA DRUM AND PERFORMANCE SET-UPS

According to Santos, the most influential player and one of the innovators in the area of tuning was Carlos ‘Patato’ Valdez. His use of two, three and four *conga* drums in his set-ups, as well as his highly developed melodic playing was truly unique. Santos also credits Candido in this area, as well as Victor Pantoja, a Puerto Rican *conga* player, who as a member of the band Azteca in the 1970s, incorporated a melodic four *conga* drum style, highly influenced by Valdez.⁸² Although there is a commonly accepted view that in a two *conga* drum set-up, the drums are tuned in fourths, there is no universal agreement on this, with players tuning to pitches either directly related to the key center of the music to be played, or directed by the amount of *conga* drums a set-up might incorporate. The basic *conga* drum set-up consists of two drums. Three and four drum set-ups have been popular for decades now and currently we are witnessing the expansion to five and six *conga* drum set-ups.⁸³ Some players tend to focus distinctively on the

⁷⁹ Sanabria, email interview.

⁸⁰ Mongo Santamaria, *En Vivo*, DVD, (Westside Beat Records, 2007).

⁸¹ Theberge, “Percussion Discussion: Changuito and Tata Güines Cuban Conga Pioneers.”

⁸² Santos, telephone interview.

⁸³ *Giovanni Hidalgo Solo*, 2006, YouTube, 30 March 2008 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kbylv9n_-d0>.

tuning aspects of each drum. Their playing not only embraces the rhythmic aspects, but also contains a wonderful melodic quality. A performance by Don Alias, on Joni Mitchell's *Shadows & Light* release exemplifies this. Alias incorporates three *conga* drums on the song *Dreamland*, playing a strongly 'Patato' influenced pattern, on the three well tuned drums. From the lowest to highest, the tuning is set to E, G# and B, in all an E major triad.⁸⁴

In personal experiments with two diverse three *conga* drum set-up, the preferred note choices of G for the lowest drum, Bb or B for the middle drum, and D for the highest drum, result in either a G minor, or G major triad. With a two *conga* drum set-up the intervals tend to change from minor thirds, or major thirds, to fourths. In personal experiments with a two *conga* drum set-up, the preferred tunings of G or A for the low drum, and C or D for the high drum, both result in a perfect fourth interval.

A popular concept is to tune a two *conga* drum set-up, to pitches related to the low and middle drum parts of the Habana *rumba* style of *guaguanco*. In this rhythm, the two supporting drums perform a call and response pattern, resulting in a fixed melodic fragment, between the open tones of the two drums. While the low drum plays open tones on beat '4' of each bar, the high drum responds with open tones on one bar only, on beats '1' and on the 'and of 2' as illustrated in example 2.5.

Ex. 2.5. Melodic fragment resulting from the two drum parts.



Although there is a perception among *conga* players that this part has a specific connection with a perfect fourth interval, my analysis of various recordings, as exemplified within this thesis, have concluded that the intervals between the drums in this particular rhythm may vary from a major second, minor third, major third, perfect fourth to a perfect fifth. The tuning has also a strong connection with the type of genre and instrumentation, surrounding the *conga* drums. In personal experiences as a studio recording percussionist, the drum tuning was often specifically targeted for the musical pieces that were to be recorded. A suitable pitch area for the *conga* drums, was determined by the overall musical sphere. This led to a personal quest at

⁸⁴ Joni Mitchell, *Shadows and Light*, DVD, (Shout Factory, 1980).

every recording session, to seek the perfect pitch related area in the mix, for the tone quality emanating from the *conga* drum.

The following diagrams display selected tuning preferences and the set-ups of various artists. The circles depicting the drum heads are of varied sizes, illustrating various *conga* drum heads. The pitch descriptions in letters and brackets are based on various degrees of the chromatic scale. The diagrams include a rectangular narrow back piece, which illustrates a stool where the player might sit or the spot where the player stands behind the drums. Figure 2.1 displays the standard tuning for a two *conga* drum set-up. The player sits in front of the smaller and highest pitched drum, while the larger and lower drum is placed to the right of the player. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: a G (tonic) and a C (perfect 4th).

Fig. 2.1. Standard two drum set-up I.⁸⁵

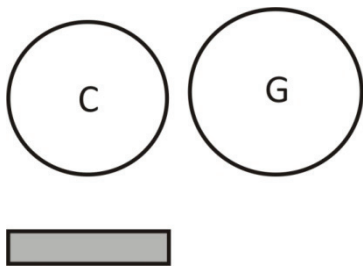
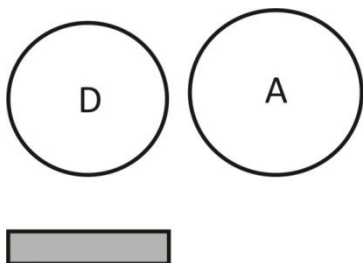


Figure 2.2 displays a personal preference in the tuning of a two *conga* drum set-up. While the interval is the same as the one found in figure 2.1, in this set-up it is a tone higher. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an A (tonic) and a D (perfect 4th).

Fig. 2.2. Standard two drum set-up II.⁸⁶

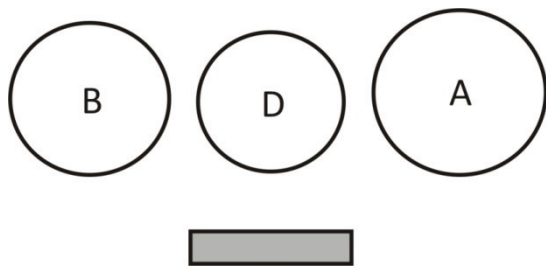


⁸⁵ Standard two drum set-up I, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

⁸⁶ Standard two drum set-up II, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

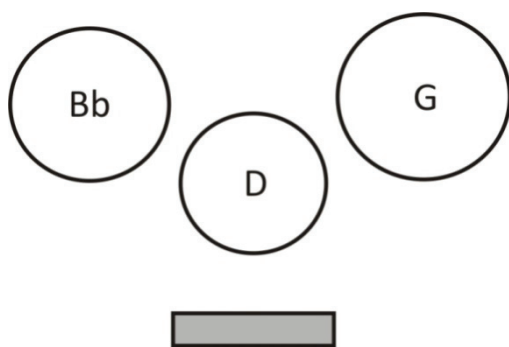
Figure 2.3 displays an example of Santamaria's three *conga* drum set-up and tuning.⁸⁷ This became Santamarias's standard set-up. He would sit in the middle, behind the smallest and highest pitched drum, and would place the middle drum to his left and the lowest drum to his right, all in a straight line. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an A (tonic), a B (major 2nd) and a D (perfect 4th).

Fig. 2.3. Santamaria's three drum set-up.⁸⁸



On a personal level, figure 2.4 displays a preferred three *conga* drum set-up. In contrast to Santamaria, the drums this time are set-up in an inverted triangle shape configuration. The set-up is approached either sitting on a stool or standing, from behind the smallest and highest pitched drum, found in the middle of the set-up. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: a G (tonic), a Bb (minor 3rd) and a D (perfect 5th).

Fig. 2.4. Pertout's three drum set-up.⁸⁹



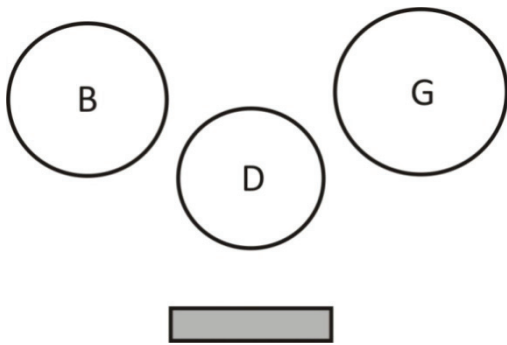
⁸⁷ Mongo Santamaria, *Live at Quasimodo*, DVD, Berlin n.d.

⁸⁸ Santamaria's three drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

⁸⁹ Pertout's three drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

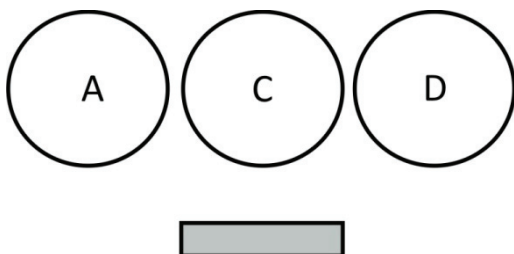
Figure 2.5 displays a three *conga* drum set-up, personally used in the theatre production of *The Lion King*, and as specified in the score. The drums were set-up in an inverted triangle shape configuration. The playing was performed standing in front of the smallest and highest pitched drum, found in the middle of the set-up. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consisted of: a G (tonic), a B (major 3rd) and a D (perfect 5th).

Fig. 2.5. The Lion King's three drum set-up.⁹⁰



In contrast example 2.6 depicts a three conga drum set-up by Candido Camero.⁹¹ Camero incorporates three drums on stands, set up in a line. He plays standing behind the middle pitched drum, places the highest drum to his right, and the lowest to his left. As depicted in example 2.6, Camero makes use of three drums of the exact same dimension.⁹² The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an A (tonic), a C (minor 3rd) and a D (perfect 4th).

Fig. 2.6. Camero's three drum set-up.⁹³



⁹⁰ The Lion King's three drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

⁹¹ *Candido's 82nd Birthday Party at Birdland*. 2003. YouTube. 2 August 2007, <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vADwkPSxh7w&mode=related&search=>>

⁹² Bobby Sanabria, "Candido: Father of Modern Conga Drumming," *Traps* Autumn 2007: 68.

⁹³ Camero's three drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

Figure 2.7 displays a three *conga* drum set-up by Don Alias.⁹⁴ Alias sits behind the smallest and highest pitched drum, with the other two drums to the right, in a triangle shape configuration. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an E (tonic), a G# (major 3rd) and a B (perfect 5th).

Fig. 2.7. Alias' three drum set-up.⁹⁵

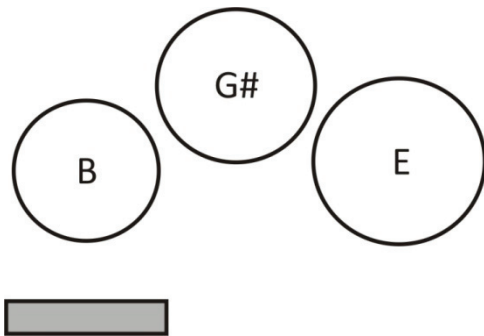
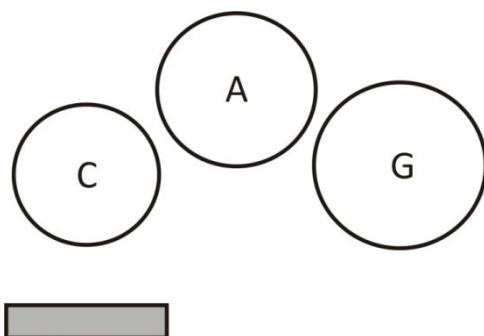


Figure 2.8 displays a three *conga* drum set-up by Raul Rekow.⁹⁶ As in the previous example, this is based on a triangle shape configuration. Although the drums are tuned to the same intervals as Santamaria's (see Fig. 2.3), the physical approach is quite different as the set-up contains two drums to the right of where the player sits, as opposed to a drum on each side of where the player sits. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: a G (tonic), an A (major 2nd) and a C (perfect 4th).

Fig. 2.8. Rekow's three drum set-up.⁹⁷



⁹⁴ Mitchell, *Shadows and Light*.

⁹⁵ Alias' three drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

⁹⁶ Carlos Santana, "Bailando/Aquatic Park", *Blues for Salvador*, (Sony, 1987).

⁹⁷ Rekow's three drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

Figure 2.9 displays a three *conga* drum set-up by Poncho Sanchez, in a triangle shape configuration.⁹⁸ As in Rekow's three drum set-up (see Fig 2.8), Sanchez sits in front of the highest pitched drum, with the next two drums to his right. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an E (tonic), a G (minor 3rd) and a C (minor 6th).

Fig. 2.9. Sanchez' three drum set-up.⁹⁹

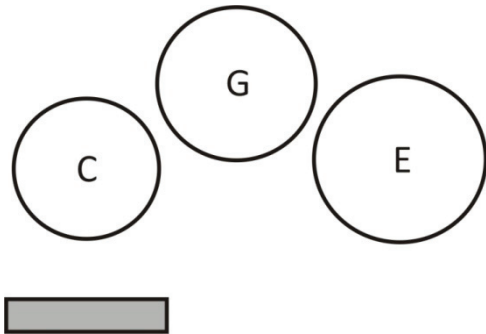
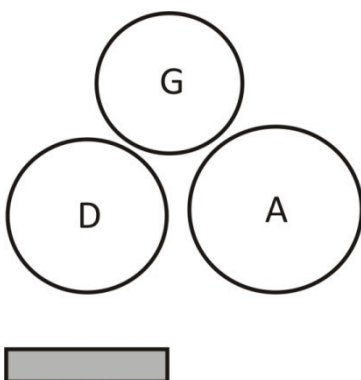


Figure 2.10 displays an unusual but highly effective three *conga* drum set-up by Jerry Gonzalez, in an acute triangle shape configuration.¹⁰⁰ Gonzalez sits behind the middle pitched drum, and incorporates the smallest and highest pitched drum, which is in front of his main drum, for the occasional improvised fills and solo breaks. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an A (tonic), a D (perfect 4th) and a G (minor 7th).

Fig. 2.10. Gonzalez' three drum set-up.¹⁰¹



⁹⁸ Poncho Sanchez, *Fundamentals of Latin Music for the Rhythm Section*, DVD, (Cherry Lane 2005).

⁹⁹ Sanchez' three drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

¹⁰⁰ Tito Puente, *Oye Como Va, Live In Montreal*, DVD, (Image Entertainment, 1983).

¹⁰¹ Gonzalez' three drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

Figure 2.11 displays a set-up by Carlos ‘Patato’ Valdez, incorporating four *conga* drums in a semi-circle configuration. C. Valdez plays behind the smallest and highest pitched drum, with the lowest pitched drum to his left. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an F (tonic), a G (perfect 2nd), a Bb (perfect 4th) and a C (perfect 5th).

Fig. 2.11. C. Valdez’ four drum set-up.¹⁰²

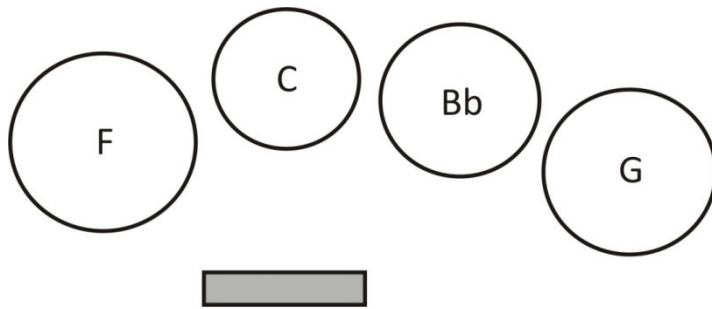
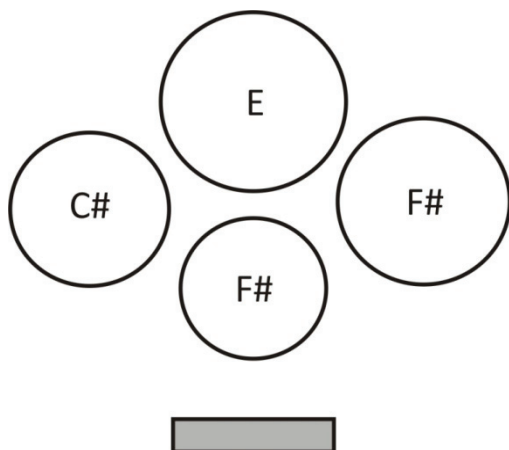


Figure 2.12 displays a four *conga* drum set-up by David Ortiz.¹⁰³ D. Ortiz makes use of a rhombus shape configuration. He sits behind the smallest and highest pitched drum, and places the lowest pitched drum in front of his main drum. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an E (tonic), an F# (major 2nd), a C# (perfect 6th) and an F# (major 9t).

Fig. 2.12. D. Ortiz’ four drum set-up.¹⁰⁴



¹⁰² C. Valdez’ four drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

¹⁰³ *Profiles in Greatness*, David Ortiz, 2006. YouTube, 2 August 2007,

< <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-00lbDB3GA>>

¹⁰⁴ D. Ortiz’ four drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

Figure 2.13 displays a set-up by Samuel Torres, also based on a rhombus shape configuration, with the lowest pitched drum in front of his main drum.¹⁰⁵ The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: a G (tonic), a Bb (minor 3rd), a C (perfect 4th) and a D (perfect 5th).

Fig. 2.13. Torres' four drum set-up.¹⁰⁶

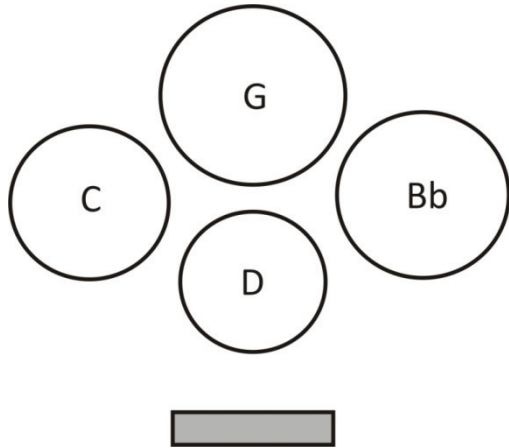
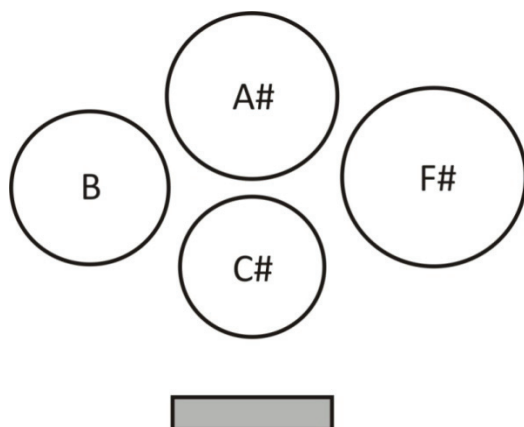


Figure 2.14 displays a variation on the rhombus shape configuration by Lenny Castro.¹⁰⁷ Castro sits behind the smallest and highest pitched drum, with the lowest pitched drum to his right. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an F# (tonic), a A# (major 3rd), a B (perfect 4th) and a C# (perfect 5th).

Fig. 2.14. Castro's four drum set-up.¹⁰⁸



¹⁰⁵ *Drum Solos Revisited*, Various Artists, DVD, (Latin Percussion, 2004).

¹⁰⁶ Torres' four drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

¹⁰⁷ *Lenny Castro*, 2005, Castle Creek Recording, 1 August 2007,

<<http://www.castlecreekrecording.com/video.htm>>

¹⁰⁸ Castro's four drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

Figure 2.15 displays a four *conga* drum set-up by Hidalgo, in a parallelogram shape configuration.¹⁰⁹ Hidalgo sits behind the second highest pitched drum, and as in the style of Gonzalez (see Fig. 2.10), incorporates a small and high pitched drum (on the right), for the occasional improvised fills and solo breaks. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an F# (tonic), an A (minor 3rd), a C (diminished 5th) and a G# (major 9th).

Fig. 2.15. Hidalgo's four drum set-up.¹¹⁰

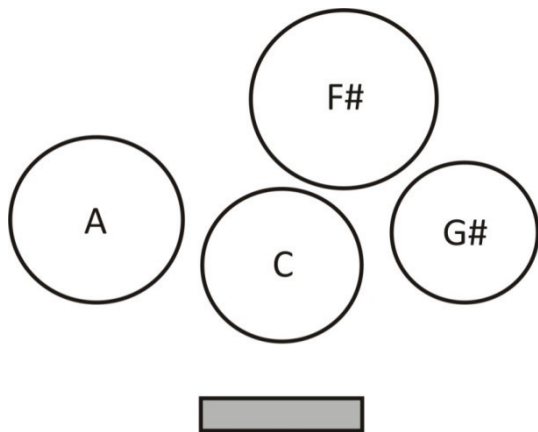
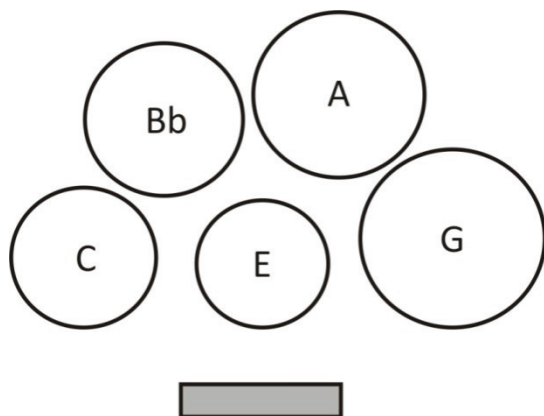


Figure 2.16 displays a five *conga* drum set-up by Richie Flores.¹¹¹ Flores sits behind the smallest and highest pitched drum, with the drums set-up in a trapezoid shape configuration. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: a G (tonic), an A (major 2nd), a Bb (minor 3rd), a C (perfect 4th) and an E (major 6th).

Fig. 2.16. Flores' five drum set-up.¹¹²



¹⁰⁹ Giovanni Hidalgo and 'El Negro' Hernandez, *Traveling Through Time*, DVD, (Warner Bros Publications, 2004).

¹¹⁰ Hidalgo's four drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

¹¹¹ Richie Flores, Masterclass in Peru, DVD, Pedro Barrera, n.d.

¹¹² Flores' five drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

Figure 2.17 displays a five *conga* drum set-up by Raul Rekow. The drums are set-up in a trapezoid shape configuration, Rekow sits behind the smallest and highest pitched drum. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an E (tonic), a G (minor 3rd), an A (perfect 4th), a B (perfect 5th) and a D (minor 7th).

Fig. 2.17. Rekow's five drum set-up.¹¹³

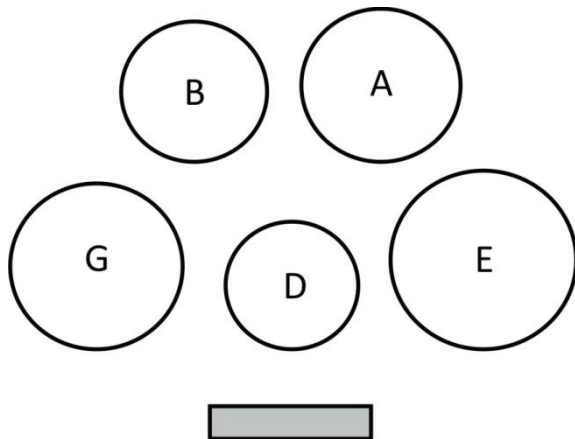
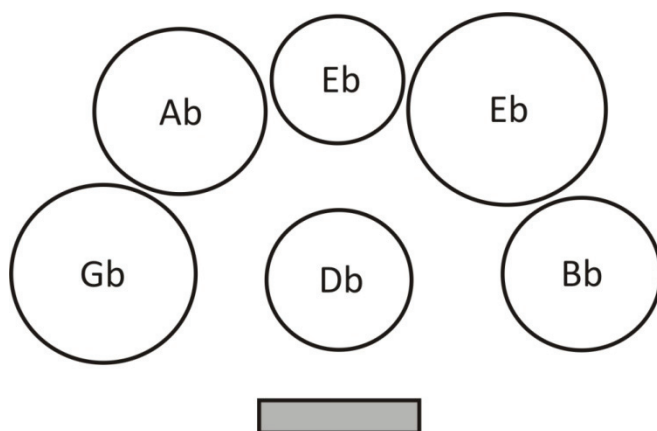


Figure 2.18 displays a six drum set-up by Giovanni Hidalgo.¹¹⁴ Hidalgo sits behind the second highest pitched drum, with the smallest and highest pitched in front of his main drum. The drums are set-up in a trapezoid shape configuration. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an Eb (tonic), a Gb (minor 3rd), an Ab (perfect 4th), a Bb (perfect 5th), a Db (major 6th) and an Eb (octave).

Fig. 2.18. Hidalgo's six drum set-up.¹¹⁵



¹¹³ Rekow's five drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

¹¹⁴ *Profiles in Greatness*, Giovanni Hidalgo, 2006. YouTube, 2 August 2007, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kbylv9n_-d0>

¹¹⁵ Hidalgo's six drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

Table 3 displays all the *conga* drum tunings covered. The first column contains the type of setting or the artist's name, the second column the number of *conga* drums in the set-up, the third column the note the drums are tuned to, from the lowest to the highest drum, while the fourth column contains the numbers for the scale tones of the intervals achieved, according to the chromatic scale.

Table 3. Tuning, intervals and number of drums in the set-up.

Performer	Congas	Tuning	Intervals
Standard two drum set up I	2	G,C	1, 4
Standard two drum set up II	2	A, D	1, 4
Ramon 'Mongo' Santamaria	3	A, B, D	1, 2, 4
Alex Pertout	3	G, Bb, D	1, b3, 5
Alex Pertout – The Lion King	3	G, B, D	1, 3, 5
Candido Camero	3	A, C, D	1, b3, 4
Don Alias	3	E, G#, B	1, 3, 5
Raul Rekow	3	G, A, C	1, 2, 4
Poncho Sanchez	3	E, G, C	1, b3, b6
Jerry Gonzalez	3	A, D, G	1, 4, b7
Carlos 'Patato' Valdez	4	F, G, Bb, C	1,2, 4, 5
David Ortiz	4	E, F#, C#, F#	1, 2, 6, 9
Samuel Torres	4	G, Bb, C, D	1, b3, 4, 5
Lenny Castro	4	F#, A#, B, C#	1, 3, 4, 5
Giovanni Hidalgo	4	F#, A, C, G#	1, b3, b5, 9
Richie Flores	5	G, A, Bb, C, E	1, 2, b3, 4, 6
Raul Rekow	5	E, G, A, B, D	1, b3, 4, 5, b7
Giovanni Hidalgo	6	Eb, Gb, Ab, Bb, Db, Eb	1, b3, 4, 5, 6, 8

3. THE CLAVE CONNECTION

THE CLAVE

One of the foundations of Afro-Cuban music is the *clave*. The *clave* is an instrument composed of two cylindrical round wooden sticks that are struck together, as there are two, they become known in the Spanish plural form as *claves*. The *clave* is also the name of the rhythmic patterns that it employs, as well as a concept or rhythmic formula which provides the foundation in Afro-Cuban musical styles.¹¹⁶ The *Diccionario de la lengua Española* has several and quite distinctive delineations for the word *clave*. First, it tells us that it comes from the Latin *clavis* meaning *llave* (key), then it lists one definition as *codigo de signos convenidos para la transmision de mensajes secretos o privados* (“code of signals organised for the transmission of secret messages or private ones”). There are also two definitions related specifically to music and to Cuba: 1. *Cuba. Instrumento musical de percusion que consiste en dos palos pequeños que se golpean uno contra otro* (“Cuba. Musical percussion instrument that consists of two small sticks that are struck one against the other”), and 2. *Cuba. Persona que toca este instrument* (“Cuba. Person that plays that instrument”).¹¹⁷ On the other hand renowned author Fernando Ortiz believes that the word *clave* derived from *clavijas* (pegs), a word which describes a cylindrical piece of wood that furniture makers use to secure or fasten parts together.¹¹⁸

The background of these two little wooden sticks in musical terms is uncertain, and there are many hypotheses as to its background, as well as to its connections with diverse musical cultures of the world. F. Ortiz who has written many books on Afro Cuban music, devoted an entire volume to the subject in a book titled *The Xylophonic Clave of Cuban Music*.¹¹⁹ In the text he describes the ambiguity of the little wooden sticks background and their charming and colourful place in Afro-Cuban music. F. Ortiz also discussed the changes in the manufacturing style of the instrument over the years. The instrument indeed has a few variations. There is the original version of the *claves*, as the two short sticks made of hard wood with a distinctive high pitch sound. There is another version where one of the sticks, the passive stick that sits on the palm, is of a larger size. This *clave* also contains an indentation at the bottom which gives it added resonance and a deeper pitch. With that type of the *clave* the

¹¹⁶ Charley Gerard, *Salsa: The Rhythm of Latin Music*, (Crown Point: White Cliffs Media, 1984).

¹¹⁷ *Real Academia Española*, 2001, *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 25 July 2007

<<http://buscon.rae.es/drae/>>.

¹¹⁸ F. Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afrocubana*. Volumen I, 114.

¹¹⁹ F. Ortiz, *The Xylophonic Clave of Cuban Music*, (La Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1984).

hand that holds it acts as a sound chamber, by incorporating some space underneath, allowing the passive *clave* to resonate fully. The method for playing *claves* in Afro-Cuban styles requires one of the *claves* to sit across the palm of the left hand with the fingers extended in a semi-cupped position, while the other *clave* held by the right hand strikes it in the middle. There are several patterns that the *claves* play.

Fig. 3.1. The *claves*.¹²⁰



Howard describes the *claves* as, “the best known and probably the most important rhythm sticks in the Americas.”¹²¹ He also asserts that he has no doubt that the name came from a small piece of hard wood, that Spaniard furniture makers used as pegs. In terms of the investigation of its background, Howard points out that there is an instrument in Africa “south of the sahara” as he explains, called the *akoge* which carries a similar role in the music and has a similar sound. It consists of a couple of metal rings that are worn on the thumb and the middle finger. “Whether there is a connection between the two has yet to be proven, but the evidence, the sound and the use of the instrument would certainly lead one to believe so,” he concludes.¹²² The instrument Howard refers to is also called the *frikywa* in Ghana or ‘African iron castanets’, it is made of metal and played in the method he describes.¹²³ One of the most popular patterns for the *claves*, is the pattern associated with the Afro-Cuban *son* style. The

¹²⁰ The *claves*, personal photograph of Julian Pertout, 26 February 2008.

¹²¹ Howard, *Drums In the Americas*, 258-259.

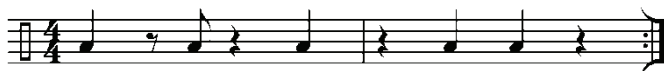
¹²² Howard, *Drums In the Americas*, 259.

¹²³ *Djembe Drums and Other African Instruments*, 2004, Teaching Drums, 4 August 2007

<<http://www.teachingdrums.com/Our%20Shop.htm>>

son, which combines Spanish and African essentials, is one of the most important Afro-Cuban musical forms. It developed in the Oriente province of Cuba, in the latter half of the nineteenth century.¹²⁴ The *son* clave pattern consists of five notes, played across two bars, one bar containing three of the notes, while the other bar contains the remaining two. The *clave* patterns can be played in two directions. There are a couple of popular terms used, to describe the two directions of the *clave* pattern. One popular term examines the number of notes on each bar, then names the bar containing three notes the ‘three side’, and the bar containing two notes, the ‘two side’. Another popular term used, refers to the first bar or the ‘three side’ as the ‘forward *clave*’ side, and the ‘two side’ as the ‘reverse *clave*’ side. The patterns then become known as ‘3-2 *clave*’ when played in the ‘forward *clave*’ or ‘three side’ as depicted in example 3.1, and ‘2-3 *clave*’ when played in the ‘reverse *clave*’ or ‘two side’ direction as depicted in example 3.2.

Ex. 3.1. The *son* *clave* in 3-2 *clave* direction.



Ex. 3.2. The *son* *clave* in 2-3 *clave* direction.



The *clave* pattern in its style of construction showcases an immediate African derived concept; ‘call and response’. As author Rebeca Mauleon writes, “antecedent-consequent, tension-release.”¹²⁵ The two-bar pattern, in conjunction with the responsive style, is the ‘secret’ ingredient in Afro-Cuban music asserts legendary bandleader Tito Puente.¹²⁶ You have to immerse yourself in the *clave*, you have to get to a point where you can ‘feel it’, Puente observes.¹²⁷ Puente also suggests that “if one musician is not playing in *clave*, it disturbs your hearing.”¹²⁸ Noted Cuban musicologist Emilio Grenet, reaffirms this by stating that, playing on the wrong side of the *clave*, “produces such a notorious discrepancy between the melody and

¹²⁴ Rebeca Mauleon, *101 Montunos*, (Petaluma: Sher Music Co., 1999) 30.

¹²⁵ Mauleon, *101 Montunos*, 6.

¹²⁶ Tito Puente and Jim Payne, *Drumming with the Mambo King*. (New York: Hudson Music, 2000), audio example 1-5.

¹²⁷ Puente and Jim Payne, *Drumming with the Mambo King*, audio example 1-10.

¹²⁸ Larry Birnbaum, “Tito Puente, Timbales’ Titan,” *Downbeat* January 1984: 29.

the rhythm, that it becomes unbearable to ears accustomed to our music.”¹²⁹ According to Mauleon, there are a couple of patterns or cells, that had a profound influence in the development of the *clave* pattern. One of these is the *cinquillo*, a syncopated, five note, one-bar pattern, displayed in example 3.3. This pattern emerged from creole interpretations or adaptations of European elements in the Americas. It developed in the Cuban *contradanza*, and with the addition of a second bar, became the “signature pattern of the Cuban *danzon*.”¹³⁰

Ex. 3.3. The *cinquillo* pattern.



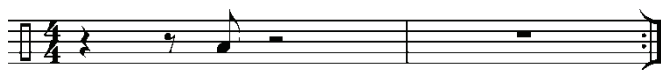
The other pattern or cell to influence the development of the *clave* pattern, is the *tresillo*, displayed in example 3.4. Mauleon believes this pattern to be the basis of the ‘three side’ of the *son clave*. The *tresillo* pattern, developed during the nineteenth century and is a central cell in many African derived styles, according to Mauleon.¹³¹

Ex. 3.4. The *tresillo* pattern.



Of the five notes played in the *clave* pattern, the second note of the first bar in 3-2 *clave* is referred to as the *bombo* (“bass drum”) note. This note falls on the ‘and-of-two’ of the first bar and is the strong accented note the *bombo* plays in the Afro-Cuban carnival *comparsa* rhythm.¹³² Example 3.5 displays the *bombo* drum accent placement.

Ex. 3.5. The *bombo* note in 3-2 *clave* direction.



¹²⁹ Emilio Grenet, *Musica Popular Cubana*, Comision de Agricultura, (Habana: 1939) 28.

¹³⁰ Mauleon, *Salsa Guidebook for Piano & Ensemble* (Petaluma: Sher Music Co., 1993) 51.

¹³¹ Mauleon, *101 Montunos*, 4-5.

¹³² Gerard, *Salsa: The Rhythm of Latin Music*, 16.

The popular Afro-Cuban style known as *rumba*, which within contains a few diverse forms such as *yambu*, *guanguanco* and *columbia*, employs a slightly different *clave* pattern. The change takes place on the 'three-side' of the pattern, the last note moving from beat 4 to the 'and of 4'. Example 3.6 displays the pattern in its 3-2 *clave* direction.

Ex. 3.6. The *rumba clave* in 3-2 *clave* direction.



As in the *son* style, the *rumba clave* incorporates two directions. Example 3.7 displays the *rumba clave* pattern in its reverse or 2-3 *clave* direction.

Ex. 3.7. The *rumba clave* in 2-3 *clave* direction.



By exploring the vast African derived 6/8 patterns found in Afro-Cuban music, we arrived at the antecedents of the *son* and *rumba clave* patterns. Example 3.8 displays a 6/8 pattern played by an iron bell in a variety of Afro-Cuban drumming settings. This pattern is known as the 6/8 bell pattern, also as the 6/8 *bembe* pattern, and at times as the 6/8 *clave* pattern.¹³³ As Sanabria explains:

It doesn't have a set name. It is the basic ride pattern for the bell or *guataca* in 6/8 for *bembe*. If you are dealing with knowledgeable players in the world of folklore and you tell them the rhythm is *guiro* (the name given to the way a *bembe* with *shekeres* is played today) or *bembe*, or if you even say seis por ocho or *guataca*, they will automatically know that they are supposed to play this pattern.¹³⁴

The pattern is found in many Afro-Cuban styles, including the popular 6/8 rhythmic style known as *bembe*, performed with *conga* drums, bells and the beaded gourds known as *shekeres*, at religious celebration gatherings known as *bembes*. Example 3.8 displays the 6/8 bell pattern in a 3-2 *clave* direction.

¹³³ Mauleon, *101 Montunos*, 2.

¹³⁴ Sanabria, email interview.

Ex. 3.8. The 6/8 bell pattern in 3-2 *clave* direction.



By reversing the bars we arrived at the 2-3 *clave* direction of the 6/8 bell pattern, as displayed in example 3.9.

Ex. 3.9. The 6/8 bell pattern in 2-3 *clave* direction.



If we examine the 6/8 bell pattern in a 3-2 *clave* direction as displayed in example 3.8, and omit two notes of the pattern; the note that falls on beat five of the first bar, and the note that falls on beat six of the second bar, we arrive at the 6/8 version of the *rumba clave* pattern, as displayed in example 3.10. This pattern represents the roots of the 4/4 *rumba clave* pattern. Example 3.10 displays the *rumba clave* in 6/8 in a 3-2 *clave* direction, as played by the *ekon* (“bell”), in the popular Afro-Cuban rhythmic style known as *abacua*. Example 3.11 displays the pattern in its reversed format, of the 2-3 *clave* direction.

Ex. 3.10. The *rumba clave* in 6/8 in 3-2 *clave* direction.



Ex. 3.11. The *rumba clave* in 6/8 in 2-3 *clave* direction.



THE CLAVE RHYTHMIC CONNECTION: RUMBA GUAGUANCO

The *rumba* is an Afro-Cuban style that features percussion, singing and dancing, that according to F. Ortiz developed in Cuba in the sixteenth century.¹³⁵ In Cuba and specifically in the inner zone of cities such as Havana and Matanzas, where humble housing and *solares* (“slums”) developed, the word *rumba* was used to describe a party. According to O. Rodriguez, “to make

¹³⁵ F. Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afrocubana*, Volumen II, 123.

a *rumba*, was to throw a party.” In these settings, using common utensils percussively to accompany singing and dancing, the Cuban *rumba* was born.¹³⁶

To this day confusion still prevails as far as the name of the genre is concerned, as the various musical styles known internationally as *rumba*, or at times using the spelling ‘rhumba’, have no connection with the Afro percussive roots of the style, as found in Cuba. The name was adopted by North American music companies erroneously from the 1930s, to promote ‘any style’ of Cuban music in the USA and internationally.¹³⁷ According to Santamaria, many of his contemporaries at the time of his arrival in the USA were affected by this misinformation, and were not able to discern Afro-Cuban styles appropriately. Santamaria recalls working with pianist Noro Morales:

One day he told me ‘we are going to record a *rumba*’ and promptly begun to show me the piece, and I told him that is not *rumba*, that is something else, but that is what they used to call in New York.¹³⁸

There are three major styles within the *rumba* genre, namely *yambu*, *guanguanco* and *columbia*. According to Gerard, the styles are distinguished from each other by the rhythms, the tempos they are performed at, the rhythmic meters, the text of lyrics sung, as well as the choreography of the dance, each style incorporates. The areas they do share in common, include the use of the African derived ‘call-and-response’ characteristic, performed by the lead singer and chorus. The incorporation of a combination of supporting drum parts and a lead drum part that improvises, *claves* and the *palitos* (“little sticks”), the two sticks that play patterns on a wooden surface of some kind, be it the side of a drum, a woodblock or a bamboo log.¹³⁹

The *yambu* is the oldest style known, the slowest in tempo, and it is in the main performed on *cajones*, *claves* and *palitos*, along with the singers. The dance which may involve a couple or a lone dancer, integrates movements which is said to be imitating old and frail individuals. The *guanguanco* is faster in tempo and it is performed on *conga* drums, *claves* and *palitos*, along with the singers. The coupled dance pantomimes a courtship, the attempted

¹³⁶ O. A. Rodriguez, “History of the Congas,” Introduction, *The Conga Cookbook*, 7.

¹³⁷ Gerard, *Salsa: The Rhythm of Latin Music*, 61.

¹³⁸ Cesar Pagano, “Mongo Santamaria,” April 2003, *Latin Beat Magazine*, 11 August 2007 <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FXV/is_3_13/ai_100543890/pg_2>.

¹³⁹ Gerard, *Salsa: The Rhythm of Latin Music*, 62.

seduction of the woman by the male, and her resistance to these advances. The *columbia* is the fastest in tempo, it is based on a compound duple-time signature of 6/8, and it is performed on *conga* drums, *claves* and *palitos*, along with the singers. The dance features a male solo dancer, while the lyrics incorporate predominantly African dialects.¹⁴⁰

Inside the *rumba guanguanco*, two popular variations of the rhythmic style are found; the *guanguanco habanero* (“*guanguanco* from Havana”) and the *guanguanco matancero* (“*guanguanco* from Matanzas”). In the beginning of its development in Cuba the percussive parts in the various *rumbas* were played on wooden boxes such as the *caja de bacalao* (“box of codfish”), a wooden box that was in use to transport codfish, and a *caja de velas* (“box of candles”), a smaller wooden box that was in use to transport candles. The *caja de bacalao* was used for playing the low part, while the *caja de velas* was used to play the high part, the *quinto* or solo part. Two *cucharas* (“spoons”) were used on a wooded surface to play the stick pattern, the *palitos* pattern.

According to F. Ortiz, these parts were later transferred to two *conga* style drums known as *tambores de rumba* (“*rumba* drums”), with *conga* drums eventually superseding their existence.¹⁴¹ In the standard *rumba guanguanco* three *conga* drums are incorporated, as well as *claves* and the bamboo log known as *cata*, which is played with two sticks. The *conga* drums in the set are known by many names. The most popular in use in a *rumba* include: *tumbadora*, *tumba*, *salidor* for the low drum; *conga*, *segundo*, *segunda*, *golpe*, *tres golpes*, for the middle drum; and *quinto* for the highest pitched or solo drum. As in all Afro-Cuban styles, all the patterns played by the percussion instruments adhere to the *clave*.

One of the first *clave* connections a player exploring Afro-Cuban percussion styles develops, is the relationship between the *clave* pattern and the *palitos* pattern played on the bamboo log called *cata* or *gua-gua*, in the *rumba guanguanco*. This pattern is also known as *cascara*, when played on the shell or side of *timbales*. The pattern is a clear extension of the *clave* pattern throughout. There are connections on beats one, the ‘and-of-two’, and the ‘and-of-four’ of the first bar, and on beats two and three, of the second bar. Example 3.12 displays the *clave* and *cata* patterns in a 3-2 *rumba clave* direction.

¹⁴⁰ Gerard, *Salsa: The Rhythm of Latin Music*, 61-68.

¹⁴¹ F. Ortiz, *Los Instrumentos de la Musica Afrocubana*. Volumen II, 123.

In the *guaguanco matancero* style the low drum plays the same basic pulse, while the middle drum plays only one open tone on beat '1' of one of the bars, as displayed in example 3.15.

Ex. 3.15. The *clave* and *conga* drum melody of *guaguanco matancero* in 3-2 *rumba clave* direction.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Clave' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Congas'. Both are in 4/4 time. The Clave part consists of a sequence of notes and rests: a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, a quarter note on beat 4, a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, and a quarter note on beat 4. The Congas part consists of a sequence of notes and rests: a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, a quarter note on beat 4, a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, and a quarter note on beat 4.

The relationship between the *clave* and *conga* drum parts is very particular. This has transformed over the years, arriving at a standard style in which the *conga* drum melody of the middle drum and the *clave* connect, in a 'call and response' style, as depicted in examples 3.13, 3.14 and 3.15. This was not always the case. In analysing Santamaria's early recordings from the 1950s and early 1960s you can clearly distinguish the original approach in which the open tones of the *conga* or middle part were played on the 'three side', matching the *clave* pattern.¹⁴³ Example 3.16 displays this older style of *guaguanco habanero*.

Ex. 3.16. Older style of *guaguanco habanero* as recorded by Santamaria in 3-2 *rumba clave* direction.¹⁴⁴

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Clave' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Congas'. Both are in 4/4 time. The Clave part consists of a sequence of notes and rests: a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, a quarter note on beat 4, a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, and a quarter note on beat 4. The Congas part consists of a sequence of notes and rests: a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, a quarter note on beat 4, a quarter note on beat 1, a quarter note on beat 2, a quarter note on beat 3, and a quarter note on beat 4.

According to Sanabria, Santamaria changed the placement of the *conga* drums in relation to the *clave* in *rumba guaguanco*, after hearing the 'new' styles that were coming out of Cuba. Santamaria was always aware of the latest musical developments in Cuba, and when he heard the *rumba* ensemble Los Muñequitos De Matanzas, placing the "*segunda* drum melody against

¹⁴³ Mongo Santamaria, *En La Habana, Up From The Roots*, (Atlantic, 1972).

¹⁴⁴ Santamaria, *En La Habana*.

the ‘two side’ of the *clave*...he started doing it,” Sanabria observed.¹⁴⁵ Noted drummer and author John Amira, believes that it was the popular way of playing the rhythm before the 1950s, while New York *conga* player Frankie Malabe described it as having to do with regional characteristics within Cuba.¹⁴⁶ The practice of playing the *conga* or middle part, in line with the ‘three side’ of the *clave* is no longer endorsed, and it would be deemed as playing against the *clave* or incorrect.

In terms of the highest drum that improvises, there is a distinctive way of approaching the playing of the *quinto* part for the *guaguanco matancero* that deserves a special mention here. The *quinto* part is approached in such a way, as to develop solo phrases that become an essential part of the rhythmic structure. This style is also known as a type of ‘quinto ride’. The solo drum becomes another voice in the overall structure of the drum voices, interlocking along the way with the low and middle drums.¹⁴⁷

Personal research on this particular approach of playing *quinto*, has confirmed that this is characteristically of the style prevalent in Matanzas only. Transcriptions of performances, in particular by the leading *rumba* group Los Muñequitos de Matanzas, emphasises this point further. In transcribing recordings of Santamaria, this style of *quinto* pattern playing, is not evident. The recordings of *guanguancos* by Santamaria are also all performed in the *guaguanco habanero* style. Example 3.17 presents a particular ‘quinto ride’ phrase, as used by Los Muñequitos de Matanzas in *guaguanco matancero*. It is a two-bar phrase, that the player revisits throughout the piece.

Ex. 3.17. The *clave* and ‘quinto ride’ pattern or phrase in 3-2 *rumba clave* direction.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is labeled 'Clave' and contains a 3-2 clave pattern in 3/4 time. The bottom staff is labeled 'Quinto' and contains a rhythmic phrase in 3/4 time. Above the Quinto staff, there are four circles: the first two are empty, the third contains a circled 'S', and the fourth is empty. The Quinto staff has a circled 'S' above the second bar, indicating a specific rhythmic pattern or phrase.

¹⁴⁵ Sanabria, email interview.

¹⁴⁶ Gerard, *Salsa: The Rhythm of Latin Music*, 67.

¹⁴⁷ Spiro, *The Conga Drummer's Guidebook*, 34.

Example 3.18 displays a longer version of the phrase, this time as a four-bar repeat, as it often takes place. According to Michael Spiro “frequently, during every other *clave*, the drum sounds can also be reversed.”¹⁴⁸

Ex. 3.18. The *clave* and ‘quinto ride’ as a four-bar phrase in 3-2 *rumba clave* direction.

To conclude, example 3.20 displays a complete score for a *guaguanco habanero*, while example 3.21 displays a complete score for *guaguanco matancero*.

The *guaguanco habanero* score as displayed in example 3.20 includes the *clave* pattern as performed by *claves*, the *palitos* pattern as played on the bamboo log *cata*, the high drum part or *quinto* part, which here is marked as improvised based on the *habanero* style, the middle drum part or *conga* part, and low drum part or *tumbadora* part. The *guaguanco matancero* score displayed in example 3.21, as performed by Los Muñequitos de Matanzas includes the *clave* pattern as performed by *claves*, the *palitos* pattern as played on the bamboo log *cata*, the high drum part or *quinto* part in the *matancero* style, which is the ‘quinto ride’ pattern that also improvises, the middle drum part or *conga* part, and low drum part or *tumbadora* part.¹⁴⁹

Ex. 3.19. *Conga* drum nomenclature.

¹⁴⁸ Spiro, *The Conga Drummer’s Guidebook*, 34.

¹⁴⁹ Los Muñequitos de Matanzas, *Cantalo Pero Bailalo Pt 4 (of 4)*, 2006, YouTube, 7 September 2007, < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voAG9P6gNjE&feature=related>>.

Ex. 3.20. The *guaguanco habanero* in 3-2 *rumba clave* direction.

Claves

Cata

Quinto

Conga

Tumbadora

Ex. 3.21. The *guaguanco matancero* in 3-2 *rumba clave* direction.

Claves

Cata

Quinto

Conga

Tumbadora

THE CLAVE MELODIC CONNECTION: MAYEYA

The *clave* pattern is the most important pattern in Afro-Cuban styles. The role of the *clave* pattern in musical terms, serves as the guiding point for all the percussion parts, all the rhythmic parts played by other instruments such as piano and guitar, the construction of melodies and melodic development, the arrangement of the piece and the improvisations that develop. The manner in which it functions is that once it commences, the chosen two-bar *clave* pattern does not stop, it remains fixed throughout the piece. As author Gerard explains, “the *clave* is regarded as beginning as soon as the music begins and continuing without interruption until the last note.” The *clave* pattern is heard and felt in the shape of the melodies, phrases, riffs and patterns, and so the *clave* pattern is the important part of the equation, and not whether someone is physically playing the actual *claves*. The arrangement has to adhere and conform rhythmically to the chosen pattern, whether ‘3-2’ or ‘2-3’ direction. A melody can begin on either side of the *clave* pattern, it all depends on where it might fit best with the five stroke pattern.¹⁵⁰

Pianist Sonny Bravo observes “there’s really no mystery, tunes aren’t necessarily in one *clave* or the other, phrases are.”¹⁵¹ Sometimes though this can be quite ambiguous and the player might hear both sides of the *clave* pattern fitting in. Tito Puente recalls that when he arranged his tune *Picadillo* for the Machito Orchestra, a dispute arose at the rehearsal about the *clave* direction:

I was the arranger, the pianist Rene Hernandez was a terrific arranger too and Jose Pin Madera an arranger, he was also in the band, but on this dispute we all laid out, it was between Machito and Mario Bauza and one felt it 2-3 and the other felt in 3-2. Actually the figure in the band worked in both *claves* so they were both right, some figurations are flexible, they can go with either *clave*.¹⁵²

For writing arrangements, Puente had a method which involved writing the *clave* pattern at the bottom of the score. This would help him immensely, not only making sure that the parts matched the *clave*, but also in case he had to take a break, as even if he forgot what *clave* direction he might have been in, he could always reassume by looking at the bottom of the

¹⁵⁰ Gerard, *Salsa: The Rhythm of Latin Music*, 16.

¹⁵¹ Sonny Bravo, “Re: proper licks in 3/2,” Online Posting, 4 January 2007, Latin Jazz Group, 6 January 2007 <<http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/latinjazz/>>.

¹⁵² Puente and Jim Payne, *Drumming with the Mambo King*, 56.

score.¹⁵³ Johnny Almendra who played *timbales* with Santamaria for over thirteen years had a similar experience, in determining the *clave* direction of a particular piece. Almendra recalls that while rehearsing a tune, he asked Santamaria about the *clave* direction as he was hearing the tune in both *clave* directions:

I said, what *clave* is this in Mongo? He used to hate questions like that. He looked at me funny especially since I was new and said “you have *clave* or you have no *clave*,” that’s what he told me, you feel it or you don’t feel it.¹⁵⁴

According to Mauleon not all the melodies will outline the *clave* so literally, and so the player has to determine this by trying the diverse sides, and also looking for any *tresillo* type figures in the melody.¹⁵⁵ Alex Acuña, a Peruvian born drummer and percussionist, developed his sense and understanding of *clave*, while living in Puerto Rico in the 1960s. While having lessons with percussionist Monchito Muñoz, a former Tito Puente band member, Acuña was told that although he played very well, that he ‘sounded South American’. Acuña recalls that Muñoz played him recordings by Los Papines and Los Muñequitos De Matanzas, and explained the role of the *clave*.¹⁵⁶ As the lessons continued, so did his understanding of directions in *clave*. He would play the standard *The Peanut Vendor* and as he explains:

I use to start on the three (side) and he would say “start on the two (side) which goes with the melody, the other way is like you and the melody are having a fight” and I said wow! I’ve been playing wrong all my life.¹⁵⁷

The following musical examples illustrate the two *clave* directions in two distinctive melodies. Example 3.22 is written in 3-2 *clave* and it is an excerpt from *Para Los Rumberos*, a Tito Puente composition. The A section which is bars 1-8, is sung, and the B section which is the repeated section between bars 9-12, is played by the brass section. As you follow the rhythmic contour of the A section, you can find numerous rhythmical connections with the *clave* pattern. The sung melody is virtually identical in measures 1, 3, 5 and 7, and in measures 2, 4, 6 and 8 it contains one or two extra notes, in the rhythmical structure of the ‘two side’ of the *clave*

¹⁵³ Puente and Jim Payne, *Drumming with the Mambo King*, 56.

¹⁵⁴ Victor Rendon, *The Art of Playing Timbales*, (New York: Music In Motions Films Ltd, 2001) 75.

¹⁵⁵ Rebeca Mauleon, *Salsa Guidebook for Piano & Ensemble*, (Petaluma: Sher Music Co., 1993) 51.

¹⁵⁶ Alex Acuña, telephone interview, 2 April, 2005.

¹⁵⁷ Max Salazar, *Mambo Kingdom: Latin Music in New York*, (New York: Schirmer Trade Books, 2002) 164.

pattern. Similarly bars 9 and 10 of the B section are based directly on the *clave* pattern, while bars 11 and 12 contain variations and extensions, based directly on the ‘two side’ of the *clave* pattern.

Ex. 3.22. *Para Los Rumberos* (3-2 *clave* direction).¹⁵⁸

A

B

In contrast example 3.23 displays the melody of the well known Cuban composition, *El Manisero* (“The Peanut Vendor”) by Moises Simmons. The excerpt presented in example 3.23, contains the ‘riff’ or ostinato figure, which is prevalent throughout the piece, followed by four bars of the verse or A section of the piece. The ‘riff’ found in bars 1 and 2 below, outlines a 2-3 *clave* direction. The syncopated figure in bar 2, outlines the ‘three side’ of the *clave* and also the *cinquillo* pattern. The excerpt from the A section or verse of the piece, features the *cinquillo* pattern in bars 4 and 6, and a melodic ascending run made of eighth notes starting on beat two, the ‘two side’ of the *clave*.

¹⁵⁸ Tito Puente, *Para Los Rumberos*, *Cuban Carnival*, (RCA, 1956).

Ex. 3.23. *El Manisero* (2-3 *clave* direction).¹⁵⁹

Riff

Clave

A [excerpt]

The same methodology applies to melodies and arrangements in 6/8 time. The melodic line can be written or arranged to follow either side. As players tend to get used to the 3-2 *clave* configuration in 6/8, they often make the mistake of using only that direction. Sanabria observes that most players don't understand that in Afro 6/8 styles, the common *clave* direction rules apply. Players have to feel comfortable playing and starting in both *clave* directions. Sanabria arrived at performing in both *clave* directions comfortably, by working on playing the 6/8 *clave* pattern on the *guataca* ("hoe blade"), while singing Yoruba praise songs that started both on the 'three side', and on the 'two side' of the 6/8 *clave*.¹⁶⁰ Sanabria suggests watching a good *akpwon*, the lead singer in the religious *bembe* ceremonies, singing while they play the bell pattern, to arrive at an understanding of where the rhythm of the song falls, within the bell pattern which is outlining the *clave* pattern. "You will be surprised as to how many songs and chants begin on the 'two side' of the *clave* in 6/8." This is also evident in many songs of the *abakua* tradition, he adds.¹⁶¹

In an ensemble context, Sanabria suggests that correct examples of 'in *clave* arrangements' are to be found in the piece *La Cartera*, on Larry Harlow's *Latin Jazz Encounter* release, and in the piece *Manteca*, released on his *Live & In Clave* album.¹⁶² Example 3.24 displays a melody in 3-2 *clave*, in 6/8. The excerpt is from a Yoruba praise chant to the *orisha*

¹⁵⁹ Cuba L.A., *El Manisero*, Various Artists, (Narada, 1998).

¹⁶⁰ Sanabria, email interview.

¹⁶¹ Sanabria, "Re: Afro Blue," Online Posting, 3 November 2006, Latin Jazz Group, 4 November 2006
<<http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/latinjazz/>>.

¹⁶² Sanabria, email interview.

(“guardian spirit”) *Babalu Aye*, titled *Baba Sorroso*. In analysing the rhythmical components you can associate bars 1, 3, 5, 7 and 11 directly with the accents played by the ‘three side’ of the *clave*. Bars 4 and 8, which are the culmination of the four-bar melodic phrase, end on the strong accents of the ‘two side’ of the *clave*, while bars 10 and 12, are variations of those placements.

Ex. 3.24. *Baba Sorroso* (3-2 *clave* direction in 6/8).¹⁶³

Example 3.25 displays a melody in 2-3 *clave*, in 6/8. It is an excerpt from a Yoruba praise chant to the *orisha Elegua*, titled *Agongo Laro*. There is a recurring rhythmical phrase on bars 1, 3 and 7, that outlines the ‘two side’ of the *clave*. The phrase at bar 4, outlines the ‘three side’ of the *clave* by incorporating accents on beats one, three and five. The repeated section between bars 7 and 8, is an ongoing ‘call and response’ between the lead singer and the chorus, with the chorus maintaining the phrase, which relate to the ‘two side’ of the *clave*.

¹⁶³ Milton Cardona, *Bembe*, (American Clave, 1986).

Ex. 3.25. *Agongo Laro* (2-3 *clave* direction in 6/8).¹⁶⁴

As arranger Marty Sheller explains, the *clave* pattern never changes, but as the *clave* pattern is a two-bar measure, the sense of where the ‘one’ or beginning phrase in the music, might change. And so the listener might end up hearing the ‘one’ on the ‘three side’ or on the ‘two side’, depending on the arrangement.¹⁶⁵ If the song requires a change or changes in the *clave* direction, these have to be implemented by a system of adding or omitting bars in the arrangement.

Example 3.26 displays a piece that contains such a change in *clave* direction. The composition is titled *Mayeya*, it was written by Santamaria and recorded on his *Soy Yo* release of 1987. The examples presented include, the *clave* pattern under the melody and chords throughout. The piece opens with a free solo piano improvisation by Charlie Palmieri. At the end of his solo, as he plays a fast ascending line, a two-bar count in is heard. As this is more than likely, a ‘live take’ (with the entire ensemble present), the count in is heard via the open microphones on the piano, as the last phrase played by Palmieri, fades out. The rhythm section then commences the piece in 3-2 *clave*.

The introduction incorporates accents played in unison by the piano and bass, outlining the ‘three side’ of the *clave* pattern, while the rhythm section comprised of *congas*, *bongos*, *timbales* and *claves*, establish the rhythm. The complete ensemble introduction takes 16 bars, from bars 1 to 16.

¹⁶⁴ Cardona, *Bembe*.

¹⁶⁵ Gerard, *Salsa: The Rhythm of Latin Music*, 18.

Ex. 3.26. *Mayeya* 16 bar Introduction (3-2 *clave* direction).

Intro D-

Clave 1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12

13 14 15 16

Example 3.27 displays the next section, the verse or A section of the tune, where the main melody is played by the saxophone on the recording. The rhythm section, as in the introduction, comprises of *timbales* playing the *cascara* pattern, that is playing with a stick on the side of the shell of the small *timbal*, the *conga* drums playing the basic *tumbao* pattern, while *bongos* play the *martillo* pattern, the basic bongo part, with added embellishments and improvised phrases.

An interesting analysis here is also the chord progression of *Mayeya*. The eight-bar repeated chord progression which is established here, is used throughout the piece in different configurations. In the A, B and A3 sections to follow, the chord progression is eight bars long, while in the D section or solo section, the same chord sequence is played in the space of four bars. The A section is 16 bars long, from bars 17 to 32.

Ex. 3.27. *Mayeya* A section (3-2 *clave* direction).

Example 3.28 displays the next section, the B section or chorus of the piece. This section establishes the main melodic theme, played here by the entire woodwind ensemble. The section comprises an eight bar repeated melody, with an added harmony line on bars 43 and 44.

In the B section, as it is customary when the ensemble reaches the *coro* (“chorus”), the rhythm section incorporates an instrumental change. The *timbal* player moves from playing the side shells of the drum, and starts playing a large cowbell, called the *mambo* bell, while the *bongo* player moves from playing the twin *bongo* drums, to a hand held cowbell, called the *bongo* bell. The B section is 16 bars long, from bars 33 to 48. Sections A and B are then repeated.

Ex. 3.28. *Mayeya* B section (3-2 *clave* direction).

Example 3.29 displays the next section in the piece, titled A3 in this analysis. This section is nine bars long, from bars 49 to 57. The section is a basically a repeat of the second half of the A section, with an extra bar at the end, bar 57. In this extra bar, the ensemble plays a unison accent or break, that outlines the first two notes, of the ‘three side’ of the *clave* pattern. This is where the change in *clave* direction occurs. According to Mauleon, the incorporation of the extra bar is a popular arranging method:

A turn-around does not necessarily have to have an entire phrase, a single measure often acts as the pivotal point between two phrases, usually consisting of a specific break played by the entire ensemble or rhythm section.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Mauleon, *Salsa Guidebook for Piano & Ensemble*, 54.

Ex. 3.29. *Mayeya* A3 section (3-2 *clave* direction incorporating an odd amount of bars).

The musical score for Ex. 3.29 is presented in two systems. The first system contains four measures of music. Above the staff, the chords D-, C-, and F7 are indicated. The second system contains five measures of music, with chords B^bΔ, E-7, A7, and D- indicated above the staff. The bass line is marked with bar numbers 49 through 57, showing a 3-2 clave pattern. The melody is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat.

Example 3.30 displays the next section in the piece, titled C in this analysis. The section is four bars long, and it is arranged as a unison phrase, that the entire ensemble plays. The piece now switches to a 2-3 *clave* direction. The rhythm section comes in on bar 60, playing the ascending quarter note triples, leading to bar 61 of the ensemble phrase, which contains a motif that outlines the ‘three side’ of the *clave*, the *tresillo* cell, the basis of the *son clave*. The C section is four bars long, from bars 58 to 61.

Ex. 3.30. *Mayeya* C section (2-3 *clave* direction).

The musical score for Ex. 3.30 is a single system of four measures. The first measure is marked 'Tutti [no chord]'. The second measure contains a 7-measure rest. The third and fourth measures feature ascending quarter note triples, indicated by a '3' over the notes. The bass line is marked with bar numbers 58 through 61, showing a 2-3 clave pattern. The melody is written in a treble clef with a key signature of one flat.

Example 3.31 displays section D which is the *montuno* section of the piece. In this section of an arrangement, the instrumental solos take place, as well as the alternating phrases or ‘call-and-response’, between the lead singer and chorus singers.¹⁶⁷ Interesting to note that in *Mayeya*, the *montuno* chord progression incorporates the same progression as found in sections A and B, but now reduced to a four-bar repeat. On the recording this section commences with a trumpet solo, followed by a piano solo and ends with a *conga* solo by Santamaria. The section

¹⁶⁷ Mauleon, *Salsa Guidebook for Piano & Ensemble Glossary*, 2008, Descarga, 20 July 2008 <<http://www.descarga.com/cgi-bin/db/glossary?7A3ZNk5e;;8>>.

also features female voices singing a chant. The C section although presented below as a four-bar repeated section, from bars 49 to 57, in the recording it is 160 bars long. The trumpet solo is 40 bars long, the piano solo 64 bars long and the *conga* solo 56 bars long.

Ex. 3.31. *Mayeya* D section (2-3 *clave* direction).

D Open Solos

Example 3.32 displays the return to the unison ensemble phrase, which this time ends the composition. This unison phrase is a repeat of the ensemble phrase displayed earlier in example 3.30, that preceded the solo section at letter C. This section is four bars long, from bars 66 to 69.

Ex. 3.32. *Mayeya* E section (2-3 *clave* direction).

E Tutti [no chord]

Table 4 displays data pertaining to the sections, events, number of bars, *clave* direction and overall time duration the piece *Mayeya* contains as discussed in this chapter.

Table 4. *Mayeya* data.

Section	Event:	Amount of bars:	Clave direction:	Duration:
Intro 1	Piano solo introduction	rubato	n/a	0:00-0:38
Intro 2	Rhythm section (accents)	16	3-2	0:39-0:58
A1	Saxophone (verse)	16	3-2	1:00-1:19
B1	Trumpet/Saxophone(chorus)	16	3-2	1:20-1:39
A2	Saxophone (verse)	16	3-2	1:40-1:59
B2	Trumpet/Saxophone(chorus)	16	3-2	2:00-2:19
A3	Saxophone (verse)	9	3-2	2:20-2:30
C Break	Ensemble tutti phrase	4	2-3	2:31-2:35
D1	Trumpet solo w/ chant	40	2-3	2:36-3:23
D2	Piano solo	64	2-3	3:24-4:38
D3	Conga solo w/chant	56	2-3	4:39-5:42
E Break	Ensemble tutti phrase	4	2-3	5:43-5:47

The *Mayeya* examples display a very well written band arrangement, with one change of *clave* direction. According to Bravo, “making the *clave* flow seamlessly is the responsibility of the arranger”, not so much that of the composer.¹⁶⁸ There are pieces that incorporate many more *clave* direction changes. The song *Juan Mayo* for example, written by vocalist Ruben Blades, incorporates seven *clave* direction changes in its arrangement. From verse to chorus, from instrumental sections to solo sections, *clave* changes are ingeniously placed and disguised in diverse configurations. This is the traditional way the system works.¹⁶⁹ If the *clave* changes without the addition or omission of a bar, that is purely by repeating one of its bars, it is thought of improper, ‘out of *clave*’ or as *cruzao*, from the Spanish *cruzado* (“crossed”).

Interestingly even some musical arrangements played by leading artists such as Puente, still do not conform fully to the *clave* system. Sanabria stated that he was astonished when he heard a recording of Tito Puente playing a Latin-jazz arrangement of the standard *Milestones*.

¹⁶⁸ Bravo, “Re: proper licks in 3/2,” Online Posting.

¹⁶⁹ Ruben Blades, “Juana Mayo,” *Antecedente*, (Elektra, 1990).

As he explains, in the performance they play the A section in a mambo style in 2-3 *clave* direction, then they play the bridge in 6/8, but in 3-2 *clave* direction. Sanabria suggests that “they should have played the 6/8 pattern in 2/3 to maintain *clave* integrity, I guess nobody's perfect, but I really can't stand listening to it.”¹⁷⁰

Another case in point is Santamaria's composition *Afro Blue*, a Latin-jazz standard. A new arrangement, with a change of *clave* direction in the B section or bridge, took place in the early 1960s. Arranger and trumpeter Marty Sheller, recalls that Santamaria added the horn section to his band around 1961, and by the time he joined, there was an existing arrangement for *Afro Blue*, which he believes might have been written by pianist Joao Donato. Nevertheless, he was asked by Santamaria to write a new arrangement but as Sheller recalls, “it wasn't a completely original arrangement from my part, because it had already been arranged when I joined the band.” The arrangement which became Santamaria's way of playing the piece for the rest of his life, suffered from ‘*clave* direction’ issues, as the B section consisted of 17 bars, an odd amount of bars. As Sheller recalled:

As far as the *clave* is concerned, in the arrangement we use to play when it comes out of the middle part (the B section) it is actually ‘out of *clave*’, the tune goes back into the tag and it is actually out of the *clave* cycle.¹⁷¹

Santamaria expressed the opinion that although going back to the tag of the first section was incorrect, in as far as the *clave* flow of the piece, that musically it felt correct to leave this way. According to Sheller, Santamaria said “keep it that way and everyone will just adjust to it.” As Sheller observed, “if you wanted to be strict about the *clave*, it should contain an extra bar at the end of the B section, in order to come back properly in *clave* to the tag”. He recalls adding that bar to an arrangement he did for singer La Lupe, for a performance on the Dick Cavett Show.¹⁷²

In recent years though, a new wave of musicians have been incorporating fresh approaches, by not following these stylistic rules rigorously. Juan Formell, leader of Cuban dance band Los Van Van, in explaining that a piece of music shouldn't be sacrificed purely because one had to conform to the *clave* direction told Mauleon, “we Cubans, at least, like to

¹⁷⁰ Sanabria, email interview.

¹⁷¹ Marty Sheller, telephone interview, 7 March 2007.

¹⁷² Sheller, telephone interview.

think that we have ‘*clave* license’ when it comes to this, and don’t feel as obsessed about the *clave* as many others do.”¹⁷³ Similarly Willie Colon stated that, he enjoyed how his ‘out-of-clave’ songs irritated the purists.¹⁷⁴ But this attitude is not favoured by other musicians who have worked hard on developing and maintaining a certain degree of standard, and respect for the tradition of the system. Noted arranger and member of Puente’s band Jose Madera observes, “as far as having license to change or play phrases that are out of *clave* as a lot of the newer Cuban bands tend to do, I find that to be incorrect. Tito Puente would never allow that and neither would I.”¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Mauleon, *101 Montunos*, 16.

¹⁷⁴ Charley Gerard, *Music from Cuba: Mongo Santamaria, Chocolate Armenteros and Cuban Musicians in the United States*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2001) 58.

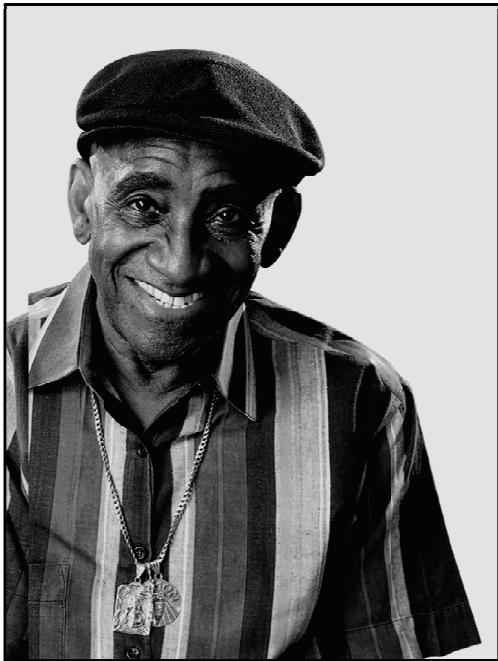
¹⁷⁵ Jose Madera, email interview, 25 June 2007.

4. THE CONGA DRUM AND RAMON 'MONGO' SANTAMARIA

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY AND MUSICAL LIFE OF RAMON 'MONGO' SANTAMARIA

Ramon 'Mongo' Santamaria was born in Havana, Cuba, on the 7th of April, 1917. He grew up in the Jesus Maria district, a working class neighbourhood in Havana with deep African roots. His grandfather was African and although he died when Santamaria was very young, family members remember him as a happy man, always singing and dancing. They also recall that he knew much about Congolese culture.¹⁷⁶ He was brought up by his mother as his father died young, and received the nickname 'Mongo' which he later learned meant 'chief of the tribe'.¹⁷⁷ Due to his mother's insistence he studied the violin for a time, but his love for the drums was such that it became his lifelong passion.

Fig. 4.1. Ramon 'Mongo' Santamaria.¹⁷⁸



Among his early influences was *bongo* player Clemente Piquero 'Chicho' who use to play with singer Beny More and also came from the same suburb the Jesus Maria district of Havana.¹⁷⁹ In

¹⁷⁶ Mongo Santamaria, *En Vivo*, Interview, DVD, (Westside Beat Records, 2007).

¹⁷⁷ *Semblanza de Ramon Mongo Santamaria*, 2003, Herencia Latina, 24 March 2005 <http://www.herencia-latina.com/Ramon_Mongo_files/Ramon_Mongo.htm>.

¹⁷⁸ Ramon 'Mongo' Santamaria, Mein! Percussion, 21 March 2008 <http://mein!percussion.com/products/mein!percussion/congas/artist_series_mongo_santamaria.html>.

¹⁷⁹ *Perfiles: Mongo Santamaria Sonando Cubano*, 2003. Tomajazz, 10 July 2005 <<http://tomajazz.com/perfiles/mongo.htm>>.

pre-Castro Cuba, Santamaria worked in all major nightclubs, places such as the famous Tropicana as well in countless other settings. He took part in a dance review show called Congo Pantera which also included Silvestre Mendez and Chano Pozo,¹⁸⁰ before heading for Mexico in the late 1940s to join an ensemble of dancers and musicians led by Pablito Duarte.¹⁸¹ The ensemble called Pablito y Linon, which also included his long time friend and colleague Armando Peraza, then travelled to the USA and worked primarily in the Latin areas of New York. Once in the USA, Santamaria witnessed the success of Chano Pozo, the legendary Cuban conga player who migrated to the USA and had a brief but remarkable career playing with Dizzy Gillespie, and this inspired Santamaria to seek a similar route. He saw the opportunities and potential a bigger country had to offer, the Cuban music industry was doing well, but was far too small and could not compare to the industry in the USA. As he recalls, Pozo's success "gave me the idea that I could also perhaps one day arrive at the same pinnacle that he had arrived at."¹⁸²

Santamaria travelled back to Mexico to organise his documentation. Soon after he made his move to the USA where he joined Perez Prado's Orchestra and enjoyed enormous success in the 'mambo era' of the early 1950s. He then worked extensively with Tito Puente performing and recording with his band, the highlight being two memorable percussion albums: *Top Percussion* and *Tito in Percussion*. He left Puente in 1957 to join Cal Tjader's quintet in California. This move was to prove extremely important for Santamaria, as he was keen to expand his musical expertise and to perform to new audiences. His work with Puente had been geared exclusively towards dancers, while Tjader's group played for listeners and was featured in jazz clubs, concerts and college campuses.

More people knew me after only three months with Cal Tjader, then in the previous seven years with Tito Puente, with Tito we use to play in places like the Cobo-rojeño and the Palladium, we played, played and played and nothing happened, but when I joined Cal Tjader in California we were playing concerts in front of 10,000 people.¹⁸³

The scope and recognition from the large audiences he was now playing to, was certainly inspiring for Santamaria and he was thrilled by the success he was now achieving. He fondly

¹⁸⁰ Dario Rosendo, telephone interview, 26 January 2007.

¹⁸¹ Aaron Cohen, "Mongo Santamaria," *Down Beat* November 1999: 52.

¹⁸² Santamaria, *En Vivo*.

¹⁸³ Santamaria, *En Vivo*.

recalls that while performing a concert in San Jose, he was told both by the promoter and Cal Tjader “those 8,000 people came to see you.”¹⁸⁴ He started his career as bandleader in the 1960s with his *charanga* band La Sabrosa, which laid some of the foundations for the now popular *salsa* style. In 1963 while recording the Herbie Hancock tune *Watermelon Man*, he coloured his sound with a rhythm and blues tinge and had a hit on the pop charts. The tune reached the Billboard Top Ten Hit list, it was the first major Latin crossover pop hit.¹⁸⁵ Santamaria remembers that soon after he commenced his Latin-jazz ensemble he had a hit. “I had the good fortune of having a hit single with *Watermelon Man* which sold over a million records and even today wherever I go I always have to play it.”¹⁸⁶ According to author Nat Chediak the piece also made *conga* drums a part of pop music in the USA, “after the success of *Watermelon Man* the bulk of the recordings for Columbia Records were covers of top 40 hits of the time and *congas* became a staple of pop.”¹⁸⁷

Santamaria often said that the beauty of his *conga* drumming was in the feeling of ‘skin on skin’, as Kathy Liner noted it was Santamaria’s way of expressing the drum being an extension of himself, his vehicle for self expression.¹⁸⁸ He recorded his first percussion based album *Chango* in 1955 (later re-issued as *Drums and Chants*), and followed that with releases such as *Yambu*, *Mongo*, *Our Man In Havana*, *Bembe* and *Up From the Roots*. These recordings continue to inspire generations. Accordingly noted drummer, bandleader and educator Bobby Sanabria states “the licks that Mongo played are seared in my head and in the head of every drummer who plays Cuban music.”¹⁸⁹

His most famous composition *Afro Blue*, a beautifully crafted tune with a strong 6/8 African rhythmic connection, has become a jazz standard. The piece has been covered several times with some memorable versions recorded by John Coltrane, Dianne Reeves, McCoy Tyner, George Shearing, Tito Puente, Dave Valentin and Cal Tjader. Santamaria possessed unique talents as a percussionist and had a visionary outlook as a band leader. Once he heard *Watermelon Man*, he could see its potential in his own world. Hancock recalls being in a Bronx supper club playing with Santamaria, when all of the sudden was asked by friend Donald Byrd to play *Watermelon Man* for Santamaria:

¹⁸⁴ Santamaria, *En Vivo*.

¹⁸⁵ A. Cohen, “Mongo Santamaria.”

¹⁸⁶ Santamaria, *En Vivo*.

¹⁸⁷ Fernando Gonzalez, “Afro-Cuban Pioneer Dies,” *Down Beat* April 2003: 16.

¹⁸⁸ Kathy McKay, liner notes, Mongo Santamaria, *The Watermelon Man*, LP, (Milestones, 1973).

¹⁸⁹ Gonzalez, “Afro-Cuban Pioneer Dies.”

I started playing it, and then Mongo, he got up and he said, 'Keep playing it!' And he went on the stage, and started playing his congas, and it fit like a glove fits on a hand, it just fit perfectly. Soon all the players joined and the dance floor was crowded, everyone was having a great time, it was like a movie! So after that, Mongo said, 'Can I record this?', I said, by all means. And he recorded it, and it became a big hit. That's how it happened.¹⁹⁰

On the bandstand Santamaria kept to himself and as players recall basically taught by example, "when I first started playing with him," recalls pianist Bob Quaranta, "if I played something he didn't like he would give a devastating look, eventually the looks stopped which was great."¹⁹¹ Sanabria also remembers that look, "have you ever heard of the 'Ray?'" Sanabria asks, it was the name given to the evil stare that Benny Goodman apparently would give his sideman if he was unhappy about something that they had performed, "well unfortunately Mongo inherited that!"¹⁹² His music contains a unique combination of Latin, jazz, soul and rhythm and blues. As band leader he also had an incredible foresight in choosing and encouraging up and coming talents. Some of his former sidemen include pianists Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock, flautist Hubert Laws, trumpeters Luis Gasca and Luis 'Perico' Ortiz, and saxophonist Sonny Fortune.

Santamaria recorded more than seventy albums as leader, and was signed at one time or another to some of the most prestigious record companies in the world including Fantasy, Columbia, Atlantic, Concord, Riverside, Milestones and Fania. He received five Grammy Award nominations and in 1997 his album *Dawn (Amanecer)* was awarded the Grammy for Best Latin Recording.

Santamaria was one of the finest individuals to grace the world of percussion, and as far as *conga* drum playing, arguably the most influential. "No one did more to elevate the status of the *tumbadora* and the *tumbador* than Don Mongo, we are greatly indebted to him," percussionist and historian John Santos wrote.¹⁹³ Players of many generations and of wide cultural backgrounds worldwide always make a mention of Santamaria's profound influence. "I don't think there is much argument that Mongo Santamaria is probably the most influential *conga* player, I don't see how anybody could be more so," Santos stated "some of the greatest

¹⁹⁰ Andrian Pertout, "Herbie Hancock," 1998, *Mixdown Monthly*, 12 August 2007
<<http://www.users.bigpond.com.au/apertout/Hancock2.htm>>.

¹⁹¹ Bob Quaranta, email interview, 8 July 2007.

¹⁹² Sanabria, email interview.

¹⁹³ John Santos, "Mongo," online posting, 4 February 2003, Latin Jazz Group, 5 February 2003
<[http:// launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/latinjazz/](http://launch.groups.yahoo.com/group/latinjazz/)>.

recordings of that kind of music and that kind of drumming are by Mongo.”¹⁹⁴ Bassist Ruben Rodriguez certainly acknowledges this but also broadens the depth of Santamaria’s enormous influence adding “I think he really made his mark was in being a band leader. He took Latin music to the next level commercially speaking. Others did it as well, but he did it with an ensemble not an orchestra. I feel he was the first real ‘crossover’ artist, way before Santana!”¹⁹⁵

When asked how he wanted to be remembered Santamaria simply said “for my music, my sound, my creativity.”¹⁹⁶ He left Cuba determined to make a mark in the international music scene, something he achieved in his lifetime. Ramon 'Mongo' Santamaria died in Miami, Florida on the 2nd of February 2003.

HAND TECHNIQUE AND RHYTHMS AS PLAYED BY RAMON ‘MONGO’ SANTAMARIA

Ramon ‘Mongo’ Santamaria possessed a personal sound on the *conga* drum which one can easily identify on recordings. He was not known so much for his technical prowess but rather for his sound, as Santos observed “his legacy to me is not coming from the technique, Mongo was a hard hitting player with a beautiful sound, he came from an open hard hitting style.”¹⁹⁷ According to Sanabria, a member of Santamaria’s band in the 1980s playing drums and *timbales*, Santamaria’s approach was extremely physical, always hitting the skins with extreme force. He told Sanabria that he wanted his muffled slap, the time keeping slap when playing *tumbao*, to “sound like a gunshot.” As Santamaria commenced his percussive career on *bongos*, he developed a powerful style of playing which incorporated an enormous slap on the high pitch bongo, and as Sanabria observes “that's what eventually killed his hands.”¹⁹⁸

Santamaria played with such hard force on the skin that when asked about the state of his hands, he commented “my calluses are such, that when I play sometimes I am laughing and people think that I am having a great time, enjoying it, but is just that the pain is such (laughs)...” Santamaria as an extremely professional and dedicated musician, felt a sense of duty. With that came a need to keep performing regardless of his physical state, otherwise he would disappoint fans that were there especially to see his band.¹⁹⁹ His powerful *bongo* playing is featured on many releases, but especially on the live recording of *Mazacote*, one of the

¹⁹⁴ John Santos, telephone interview, 18 May 2005.

¹⁹⁵ Ruben Rodriguez, email interview, 6 June 2005.

¹⁹⁶ Santamaria, *En Vivo*.

¹⁹⁷ Santos, telephone interview.

¹⁹⁸ Sanabria, email interview.

¹⁹⁹ Santamaria, *En Vivo*.

stand-out tracks on his *Afro Roots* re-release. The piece, basically a vamp in a *cha cha* style, is arranged as a showcase for his *conga* and *bongo* drumming. He commences with a *conga* drum solo interacting vividly with *timbalero* (“timbal player”) Willie Bobo. The playing based on a strong *tumbao* rhythm, moving in and out of the pattern and delving into 6/8 and double-time passages. As the piece progresses, the interaction with Bobo grows intensely, often catching phrases or ending phrases in unison. Santamaria eventually switches to *bongos*, displaying an exciting soloing style, incorporating some outstanding solo phrases. The piece culminates with an individual loud slap to open tone, two-beat phrase by Santamaria on *bongos*.²⁰⁰ According to Sanabria, the toughness of a very tightly tuned skin also brought players like Santamaria massive hand problems:

Imagine doing that tune (*Mazacote*) every night in those days on tuneable drums. When tuning lugs started to be utilized on *congas* and *bongo*, well that's when people started to have problems with their hands. On a tack headed drum the skin ‘gives’, on a lug tuned drum, it doesn't. I occasionally would play his drums at the band’s soundchecks. The skins he used were thick on both the *congas* and *bongos*.²⁰¹

Santamaria was by far the most influential player in the history of the instrument, due to his successful personal career which he carried for more than fifty years. Accordingly, everyone that was interested in developing their skills on *conga* drums, would search for his recordings and by transcribing, learnt the style. In recounting his own starting point in percussion John Santos stated:

Once my drumming interests started to develop I started searching for those records in the record stores and so I naturally went to the recordings that had Mongo, Patato, Peraza, Aguabella and tapped into the whole world of Afro Cuban music²⁰²

In his career, Santamaria was also interested in experimenting with rhythms from other parts of Latin America. He achieved this, not by studying traditional patterns from other regions, but by adjusting his *conga* drum patterns to suit other genres. As Sanabria conveys, although Santamaria listened to many styles from Brazil and Puerto Rico and beyond, that his forte was

²⁰⁰ Mongo Santamaria, *Afro Roots*, (Prestige, 1972).

²⁰¹ Sanabria, email interview.

²⁰² Santos, telephone interview.

to being able to adapt his *conga* and *bongo* drums to any of the styles the band was playing at the time. “It's one of his greatest contributions as a player. His ability to adapt those instruments, to styles outside of the Afro-Cuban musical world.”²⁰³

The following are some examples of Santamaria's technique, beginning with his style in playing the basic *conga* drum rhythm known as *tumbao*. According to Sanabria his *tumbao* playing “was powerful and very authoritative. In his prime he could really drive a band,” Sanabria added “Mongo also applied a lot of the vocabulary of the *bongo* to the *conga* in terms of keeping time and doing *repiques* (improvisations) within the structure of the *tumbao*.”²⁰⁴ The *tumbao* rhythm incorporates the playing of two open tones and a muffled slap with the right hand, with the flowing motion of the left hand palm-fingers movement, which keeps the rhythm flowing.

Dario Rosendo studied the basic *tumbao* rhythm with Santamaria. Rosendo states that his method of *tumbao* development, incorporated a phrase in Spanish, to support the left hand part of the pattern. As Dario observed:

I asked him about the basic *tumbao* and he explained how to develop the left hand. He had this saying ‘*pura-madura*’ (translates to ‘pure, mature’ in fact nonsensical in this context). He would tell me to make sure my left hand was sounding just like it was saying that, it had to sound like that phrase.²⁰⁵

In the basic *tumbao* pattern in 4/4 on one drum the left hand plays two consecutive strokes with the sounds ‘palm-fingers’, on beats ‘one-and’, Santamaria's ‘*pu-ra*’, and after beat two plays three consecutive strokes with the sounds ‘fingers-palm-fingers’ on beats ‘and-three-and’, Santamaria's ‘*ma-du-ra*’. The basic *tumbao* does require a strong and steady left hand, keeping even palm and fingers strokes throughout. Santamaria always projected that sound when he played. It was always a strong component of his playing. Santamaria possessed an extremely personal approach in both his physical approach to setting the drums and in the projected delivery of sounds from the drums. In audio-visual footage analysed, he holds the highest pitch drum between his legs and has the head of the main drum tilted towards him. This is actually quite unusual. Although most players of the drum hold one of the drums between the legs

²⁰³ Sanabria, email interview.

²⁰⁴ Sanabria, email interview.

²⁰⁵ Rosendo, telephone interview.

when sitting down, the preferred angle for head of the main drum is either away from the body, or to the side of the body, but not towards the body. The other two drums sit on either side of him.

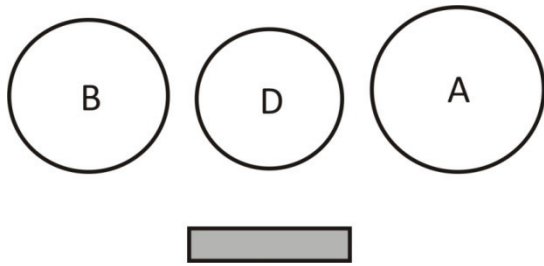
In terms of hand technique, the double stroke movement of 'palm-fingers' which has developed into a perfect one stroke pattern by incorporating a type of rebound after the palm strikes the skin, is played distinctively as two separate strokes on the drum by Santamaria, especially in slow tempi. In his approach the hand plays the palm flat on the skin's surface then the entire hand comes up and strikes the skin with the fingers as a separate stroke. Similarly when the left hand plays three strokes in a row, 'fingers-palm-fingers', Santamaria does not tend to connect them and plays them as independent strokes. His approach to the 'muffled slap' on beat two is also different as the left hand muting the skin tends to stay in a slightly cupped position, with ample space underneath, while the right hand executes the slap.

Santamaria's overall hand approach was radically different to the technical style prevalent today. The contemporary *conga* drummer's approach, calls for all strokes to be played in a flat hand position, and with a relaxed wrist action. There are no cupped hand positions in use today. Particular movements such as 'palm-fingers', which Santamaria played in single stroke movements, are now executed in a flowing line motion, each sound connected to each movement. The approach is also centred on lower arm positions, with a gentler hand attack. The movements, all based on a relaxed and free flowing wrist action. The audio-visual source, from which the following musical examples of Santamaria's fills and variations on the basic *tumbao* rhythm have been transcribed, comes from a live performance of Santamaria and his ensemble, at the jazz club Quasimodo in Berlin, Germany. The piece played is a Santamaria composition titled *A Mi No Me Engañan*. It is a privately made video recording of the performance, with the camera only a few metres in front of Santamaria. The camera angle does not move and stays focused on Santamaria.

In this performance Santamaria incorporates three *conga* drums. He sits and holds the smallest and highest pitched drum in front of him, the middle drum is to his left, while the lowest drum sits to his right, as depicted in figure 4.2. The tuning from the lowest to the highest drum consists of: an A (tonic), a B (major 2nd) and a D (perfect 4th).²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Mongo Santamaria, *Live at Quasimodo*. DVD, Berlin, n.d.

Fig. 4.2. Santamaria's three *conga* drum set-up.²⁰⁷



The following nomenclature has been designed to accommodate the musical examples presented in this chapter. The three *conga* drums occupy the first, second and third spaces of the music stave. Each particular drum sound initial is on top of each note played, while underneath each note you will find the right or left hand 'sticking', as played by Santamaria.

Ex. 4.1. *Conga* drum nomenclature.

The song is titled *A Mi No Me Engañan* or also *You Better Believe It*, and it was part of Santamaria's *Red Hot* release of 1979, a cross-over record he made for the Columbia label at the time, produced by Bob James. The tempo of this live version is approximately 116 bpm. Example 4.2 displays Santamaria's approach in playing the basic *tumbao*. He approaches the palm-fingers movement as separate strokes, with the left hand on the 'and-of-one' of each bar slightly cupped, before the right hand executes the slap on beat two, arriving at a muffled slap. The two lower open tones on the second bar are played on the lowest drum to his right.

Ex. 4.2. Santamaria's basic two-bar *tumbao* pattern.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ Santamaria's three drum set-up, diagram by Alex Pertout, 1 August 2007.

²⁰⁸ Mongo Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 1, *Live at Quasimodo*, Berlin, n.d.

At the beginning of the piece and following every tacet bar, Santamaria commences or recommences the *tumbao* rhythm, with a strong open tone on beat one. What is unusual in his approach, is that he does not follow that stroke with a palm stroke to muffle the skin for the slap. In fact he plays a ‘fingers’ stroke, with the hand ending up in a cupped position before the right hand executes the slap, arriving at a type of muffled slap on beat two, as displayed in example 4.3.

Ex. 4.3. Santamaria’s opening of the basic two-bar *tumbao*.²⁰⁹

The notation for Ex. 4.3 shows two bars of music in 4/4 time. Above the staff, rhythmic symbols are placed: O F (S) F P F O O P F (S) O O F O O. Below the staff, drum strokes are indicated: R L R L L L R R for the first bar, and L L R R R L R R for the second bar. The 'S' symbols are circled, indicating a muffled slap.

One of the beautiful aspects of Santamaria’s *tumbao* style, especially in this tempo, is his ability to constantly change the diverse sounds found in the basic pattern, without straying too far from the actual rhythm. These are variations based on sound replacements, within the eighth note pattern. Example 4.4 displays a tonal change that occurs on beat four of the second bar, where he replaces the customary open tone with a muffled slap.

Ex. 4.4. Santamaria’s *tumbao* variations I.²¹⁰

The notation for Ex. 4.4 shows two bars of music in 4/4 time. Above the staff, rhythmic symbols are placed: P F (S) F P F O O P F (S) O O F (S) O. Below the staff, drum strokes are indicated: L L R L L L R R for the first bar, and L L R R R L R R for the second bar. The 'S' symbols are circled, indicating a muffled slap.

Example 4.5 displays a similar tonal variation, again it is only on beat four of the second bar. This time an open tone on the lowest drum, replaces the open tone on the high drum.

Ex. 4.5. Santamaria’s *tumbao* variations II.²¹¹

The notation for Ex. 4.5 shows two bars of music in 4/4 time. Above the staff, rhythmic symbols are placed: P F (S) F P F O O P F (S) O O F O O. Below the staff, drum strokes are indicated: L L R L L L R R for the first bar, and L L R R R L R R for the second bar. The 'S' symbols are circled, indicating a muffled slap.

²⁰⁹ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 1.

²¹⁰ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 1.

²¹¹ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 1.

In example 4.6, Santamaria plays the open tone on the ‘and-of-two’ of the second bar on the high drum, then plays the next open tone on the low drum. He concludes this variation by playing the last two open tones on two different drums, as on the previous variation.

Ex. 4.6. Santamaria’s *tumbao* variations III.²¹²

Example 4.7 displays Santamaria’s *tumbao* rhythm, incorporating muffled slaps on beat four of the first bar, replacing the open tone, as well as two consecutive muffled slaps, one replacing the finger stroke on the ‘and-of-one’ of the second bar.

Ex. 4.7. Santamaria’s *tumbao* variations IV.²¹³

Example 4.8 displays a *tumbao* variation in which Santamaria omits the customary second open tone played by the low drum, on beat three of the second bar.

Ex. 4.8. Santamaria’s *tumbao* variations V.²¹⁴

At times Santamaria plays the *tumbao* rhythm without adhering to the basic two-bar pattern which incorporates lower drum on the second bar, as depicted in example 4.1. The *tumbao* rhythm then, becomes a one-bar pattern that he varies. Example 4.9 displays a variation incorporating a low drum open tone on beat four, followed by a flam open tone on the high drum and an open tone on the middle drum on the ‘and-of-four’. The flam is a grace note

²¹² Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 2.

²¹³ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 3.

²¹⁴ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 4.

ornamentation, also known as *acciaccatura*, from the Italian ‘to crush’.²¹⁵ The flam is an essential stroke of the drum rudiments repertoire, and an embellishment often used by Santamaria.

Ex. 4.9. Santamaria’s *tumbao* variations VI.²¹⁶

In example 4.10, Santamaria replaces one of the fingers strokes with a muffled slap. This gives the pattern two muffled slaps in a row, while omitting the fingers sound on the ‘and-of-two’. Santamaria leaves a clear space, before recommencing the pattern on beat three of the first bar.

Ex. 4.10. Santamaria’s *tumbao* variations VII.²¹⁷

In example 4.11, Santamaria plays an open tone instead of the fingers stroke on the ‘and-of-two’. He follows this with three left hand bass sounds, concluding the bar with an open tone played by the right hand. When he plays those three bass sounds, Santamaria also lifts the high drum slightly off the ground, with the help of his legs, achieving maximum resonance for those three strokes.

Ex. 4.11. Santamaria’s *tumbao* variations VIII.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ *Dictionary.com*, Lexico Publishing Group LLC, 30 July 2008
 <<http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=acciaccatura>>.

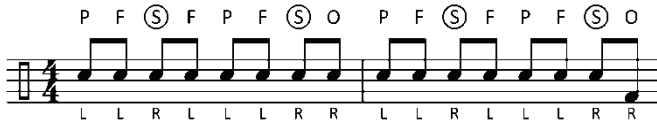
²¹⁶ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 4.

²¹⁷ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 6.

²¹⁸ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 4.

In example 4.12, Santamaria replaces the open tone on beat four of the first bar with a muffled slap. He also replaces the same stroke on the second bar with a muffled slap. He follows that action with the open tone, this time placing that open tone sound on the lowest drum.

Ex. 4.12. Santamaria's *tumbao* variations IX.²¹⁹



Example 4.13 displays the last *tumbao* variation. This time Santamaria replaces the fingers that follow the muffled slap in the first bar, with an open tone on the highest pitched drum, followed by another open tone on the drum to his left. The next two open tones at the end of the first bar, are then played on two drums. On the second bar, Santamaria again follows the muffled slap with an open tone on the highest pitched drum, followed by another open tone, this time placing that sound on the lowest drum to his right.

Ex. 4.13. Santamaria's *tumbao* variations X.²²⁰



The following examples display further changes in the spectrum of the overall basic rhythm, this time incorporating fills. Example 4.14 is one of his popular variations. Here Santamaria plays a sixteenth note open tone, in between beats 'four' and 'four-and' of the first bar.

Ex. 4.14. Santamaria's *tumbao* variations with fills I.²²¹



²¹⁹ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 6.

²²⁰ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 5.

²²¹ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 1.

Example 4.15 showcases the exact same sixteenth note phrase as example 4.14, except this time is played incorporating three drums, and it takes place on the second bar of the pattern. The first bar also contains a slight change. After Santamaria executes the muffled slap on beat two, there is a slight rest, before recommencing the pattern on beat three.

Ex. 4.15. Santamaria's *tumbao* variations with fills II.²²²

P F (S) P F O O P F (S) F P F O O O

L L R L L R R L L R L L L R L R

Example 4.16 incorporates a longer segment. Santamaria adds an open tone flam to the two open tones found on beats 'four' and 'four-and', in turn incorporating the three drums. He then breaks the eighth-note cycle on the second bar, introducing a sixteenth note segment which makes use of palm strokes and open tones. This phrase ends on beat one of bar three where he plays an open tone. Santamaria then omits the fingers stroke on the 'and-of-two', and incorporates the same open tones with a flam figure as found on the first bar, except this time is on two drums only. The last bar reconnects with the basic *tumbao* rhythm.

Ex. 4.16. Santamaria's *tumbao* variations with fills III.²²³

P F (S) F P F O O O P F (S) F P P P O O O O O F (S) P F O O O P F (S) F P F O O

L L R L L L R R L L L R L L R L R L R L R L R L L R R L L L R R

Example 4.17 contains a popular variation of Santamaria, where he plays a muffled slap followed by an open tone flam, this occurs on the first bar, on beats 'four' and 'four-and'. As in the previous example the next bar incorporates a sixteenth note phrase, this time making use of only open tones. The phrase concludes on beat one of bar three. Santamaria then incorporates a slight rest after beat two, by omitting the fingers stroke, concluding the passage with a couple of sound variations on beats 'four' and 'four-and' of bar three and bar four.

²²² Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 5.

²²³ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 5.

Ex. 4.17. Santamaria's *tumbao* variations with fills IV.²²⁴

The notation for Ex. 4.17 consists of a four-bar musical staff in 4/4 time. Above the staff, letters P, F, S, and O indicate specific drum strokes. Below the staff, letters L and R indicate the left and right hands. The pattern includes eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, with some notes marked with a circled 'S'.

The following four-bar segment presented as example 4.18, showcases a long figure in eighth note triplets. Santamaria often incorporates phrases changing from duple to triple time, giving the listener a sense of moving into an Afro-Cuban 6/8 rhythm. The figure concludes with the two open tones at the end of bar three. Santamaria approaches the figure with a sticking comprising a double right hand and single left hand. This segment ends with a minor sixteenth note variation, at the end of the fourth bar over three drums.

Ex. 4.18. Santamaria's *tumbao* variations with fills V.²²⁵

The notation for Ex. 4.18 consists of a four-bar musical staff in 4/4 time. Above the staff, letters P, F, S, and O indicate specific drum strokes. Below the staff, letters L and R indicate the left and right hands. The pattern features eighth note triplets and includes a circled 'S' above the staff.

Example 4.19 is a reprise of the eighth note triplet figure featured in example 4.18, with a slight variation. This time Santamaria incorporates the middle drum to his left, playing open tones once, every two groups of eighth note triplets. Santamaria concludes the phrase by playing four open tones on two drums, beginning on beat three, of bar four.

Ex. 4.19. Santamaria's *tumbao* variations with fills VI.²²⁶

The notation for Ex. 4.19 consists of a four-bar musical staff in 4/4 time. Above the staff, letters P, F, S, and O indicate specific drum strokes. Below the staff, letters L and R indicate the left and right hands. The pattern features eighth note triplets and includes a circled 'S' above the staff.

Example 4.20 is six bars long. Santamaria stops the *tumbao* pattern on beat four of the first bar, with a muffled slap. He then proceeds to play two thirty-second note open tones, which lead on to the sixteenth note phrase in bar two. This phrase is then repeated without the down beat and it is played twice incorporating slaps only. The phrase is then is shortened, crossing the

²²⁴ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 4.

²²⁵ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 4.

²²⁶ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 6.

To conclude example 4.22 displays yet another popular Santamaria phrase. It commences at the beginning of the second bar, on the 'e' of one. It repeats all through bars three and four, concluding on the last three open tones. The phrase is three eighth notes in length, thus it keeps crossing the metric pulse, every second repeat restarting, but in a different position in relation to the quarter note pulse. Santamaria performs the phrase eight times, the last time incorporating diverse sounds, before concluding.

Ex. 4.22. Santamaria's *tumbao* variations with fills IX.²²⁹

The musical notation for Ex. 4.22 is a single staff in 4/4 time. The rhythm consists of eighth notes. Above the staff, the letters P, F, S, F, P, F, S, F, S, O, S, S, O, S, S, O, S, S, O, S, S, O, S, S, O, O, O are written. Below the staff, the letters L, L, R, L, L, L, R, L, R, L, R, R, L, R, R, L, R, R, L, R, R, L, R, R, L, R are written. The letters S and O are circled in the original image. The notation shows a sequence of eighth notes with various rests and accents, corresponding to the letters above and below.

A SELECTED IMPROVISATION BY RAMON 'MONGO' SANTAMARIA

The art of improvisation on *conga* drums, is made up of lucid drum sounds played by the bare hands, a clear understanding of the supporting ensemble and rhythmic repertoire, the ability to incorporate a comprehensible sense of syncopation, the use of imaginative phrasing, the incorporation of highly developed time concepts, creativity, conversation, spontaneity, 'in the moment' development, 'call and response', dynamics, ongoing dialogue, acute listening skills, the use and placement of cells, fragments, phrases or single notes in many areas of the pulse, the use of space, and an understanding of the African rhythmic heritage this style embraces. In the current climate, you would also have to add the incorporation of cells, patterns, and phrases built on and/or heavily influenced by the snare drum rudimental literature, and/or material connected with other world rhythmic traditions. As the thesis will reveal, although this material was not part of Santamaria's rhythmic language, it is an important element of contemporary *conga* drumming.

A personal understanding of improvisation and soloing techniques, was developed by delving into the art of transcription. This self-directed study process, incorporated many methods. Decades ago, the long-play record with its innumerable audio and programming difficulties was the primary source. With the advent of digital technology and state of the art audio software, transcription in current times is a highly sophisticated art form. The transcription process, allows the individual to obtain practice material not otherwise available.

²²⁹ Santamaria, *A Mi No Me Engañan*, clip 6.

Indeed many embrace this process. According to Sanabria, Candido's *Brujeras De Candido*, was the album that Hidalgo "practiced with as a youth, learning Candi's solos note for note."²³⁰ The art of transcription leads to an understanding of the language, cells, fragments, phrases, time concepts, and among many other things, it reveals the particular language within the style.

In his book *The Conga Drummer's Guidebook*, author Michael Spiro devotes a chapter to improvisation techniques demystifying the improvisation end result, by presenting a comprehensive developmental structure for improvisation materials. He explains the method by breaking down the content of an improvisation into 'rhythmic cells' and continues, "if you master and understand these basic cells, you will have material from which to draw inspiration and creativity."²³¹ In delving into other areas of music one finds that similar methods are incorporated in the improvisation development. Jazz educator Jamey Aebersold observes that:

Jazz players use several fundamental ingredients when improvising. If you were to look at any transcribed jazz solo from any era, you would see much evidence of phrases which use scales, chords, diatonic patterns, chromatic passages, leaps, rests, and most all other common musical devices.²³²

In order to reach highly sophisticated forms of improvisation, whether in jazz or in *conga* drumming, the individual needs to be extremely knowledgeable, as well as creatively driven. Derek Bailey observes that in the improvised community at large:

There is a noticeable reluctance to the use of the word improvisation, and some express a positive dislike for it. This is due to its widely accepted connotations, which imply that improvisation is something without preparation and without consideration. Improvisers object to that implication, because they know from their own experience that this is untrue. They know that there is no musical activity that requires greater skill and devotion, preparation, training and commitment.²³³

The following analysis of a Santamaria improvisation, will reveal cells and phrases that form part of a tradition and a certain rhythmical style, with a strong African heritage. It makes use of phrases that connect in simple and compound duple metre, cells constructed in simple triple

²³⁰ Sanabria, "Candido: Father of Modern Conga Drumming," 65.

²³¹ Spiro, *The Conga Drummer's Guidebook*, 54.

²³² Jamey Aebersold, *A New Approach to Jazz Improvisation* (New Albany: Jamey Aebersold, 1967) 1.

²³³ Derek Biley, *Improvisation* (New York: DaCapo Press, 1993) xii.

meter that traverse the simple duple pulse, and wide ranging material that makes use of a highly sophisticated syncopation structure.

The contents of Santamaria's improvisation presented here have been analysed in a variety of forms. To commence, the solo was thoroughly examined, locating the many cells Santamaria makes use of, and which form the basis of this Afro-tinged style. The cells, with the incorporation of repetition or in combination with other cells, form short fragments, as well as elongated wide ranging phrases that may last several bars at a time. In the main, the material presented here comprises of highly syncopated rhythmic cells or phrases, with almost no material that could be classified as static, or to be outlining down beats to be found.

The solo as played by Santamaria is from a concert performance of his composition *Mayeya*. The recording which forms part of the audio-visual component of the thesis, is an excerpt featuring only the *conga* drum solo. It is found in the accompanying data disc, both in audio and audio-visual formats.

Santamaria's *conga* drum solo in *Mayeya* is presented here in 4/4 time. The solo is fifty bars long. It concludes with a four bar ensemble tutti phrase. The length of the solo is directed by Santamaria himself, as he cues the ensemble phrase, concluding the piece. The solo follows on from another rhythmic improvisation, a *timbal* solo by Johnny Almendra. Almendra cues the beginning of Santamaria's solo with a shout of *juega Mongo* ("play Mongo"). The ensemble consisting of *timbales* playing the *mambo* bell, *bongo* bell, bass and piano comping in a traditional *montuno guajeo*, accompany Santamaria. The band members sing the chant *sosa sokere* behind Santamaria's solo.

In order to decipher the material behind Santamaria's improvisation, many steps were necessary. The first step in this analysis was to locate and display the various rhythmic cells the solo incorporates. The following examples showcase all the cells Santamaria makes use of in his solo, in all a total of 8 cells.

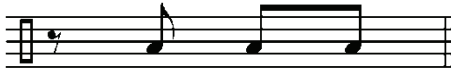
Ex. 4.23. Cell 1 (eighth rest, eighth note).



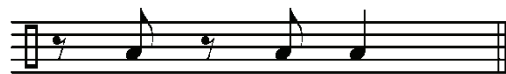
Ex. 4.24. Cell 2 (three eighth notes).



Ex. 4.25. Cell 3 (eighth rest, three eighth notes).



Ex. 4.26. Cell 4 (eighth rest, eighth note, eighth rest, eighth note, quarter note).



Ex. 4.27. Cell 5 (eighth rest, eighth note, quarter note, eighth rest, quarter note, eighth note).



Ex. 4.28. Cell 6 (three quarter note triplets).



Ex. 4.29. Cell 7 (a displaced version of the three quarter note triplets).



Ex. 4.30. Cell 8 (eighth rest, two sixteenths, four eighth notes).



Santamaria makes use of the cells on their own, or in combination with other cells, developing wide ranging phrases, that encompass several bars at a time. The incorporation of repetition and pattern confirmation, is a characteristic of the rhythmic style. In terms of repetition the solo engages cells in various formats.

Table 5 displays data pertaining to the repetitions of the each cell in the solo.

Table 5. Cells and repetitions.

Cell:	Repetitions:
Cell 1	76
Cell 2	6
Cell 3	4
Cell 4	7
Cell 5	4
Cell 6	7
Cell 7	10
Cell 8	3

The second step in this analysis is the display of the phrases Santamaria develops, by combining these diverse cells. The solo incorporates fifteen phrases of varying lengths, combining various cells. The following phrase examples display the structural form of these phrases, in accordance with a two-beat minim pulse per bar.

Ex. 4.31. Phrase 1 (combines two cells, encompasses two pulses).



Ex. 4.32. Phrase 2 (contains one cell, encompasses six pulses).



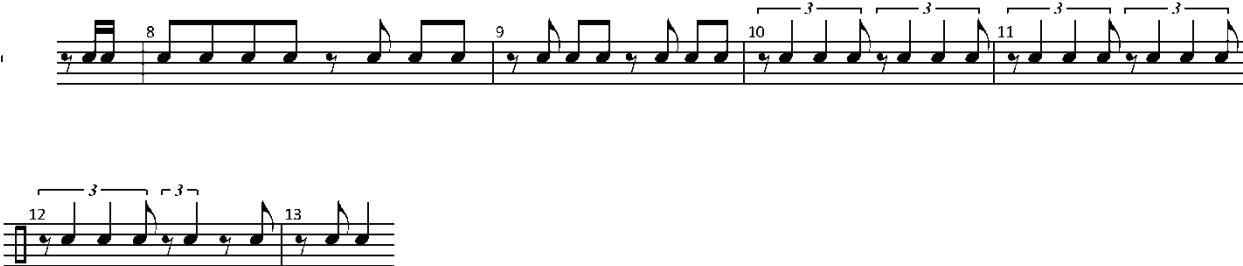
Ex. 4.33. Phrase 3 (combines three cells, encompasses three pulses; the second and third cells incorporate triplet variations of the original cells).



Ex. 4.34. Phrase 4 (contains one cell, encompasses two pulses).



Ex. 4.35. Phrase 5 (combines five cells, encompasses eleven pulses).



Ex. 4.36. Phrase 6 (combines two cells, encompasses five).



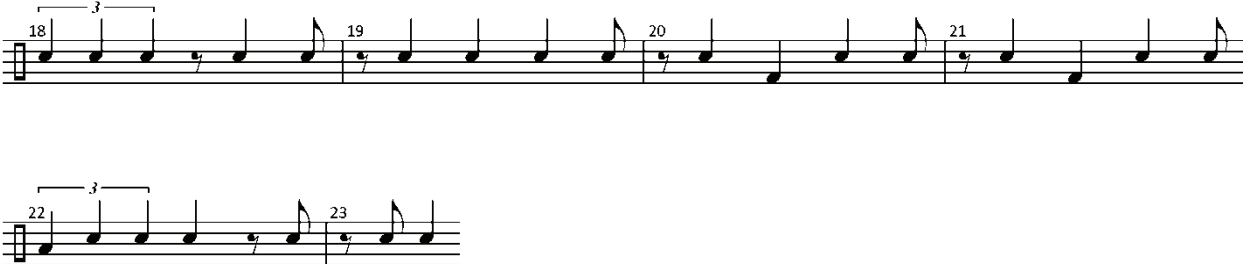
Ex. 4.37. Phrase 7 (combines three cells, encompasses four pulses).



Ex. 4.38. Phrase 8 (combines two cells, encompasses one pulse).



Ex. 4.39. Phrase 9 (combines three cells, encompasses ten pulses).



Ex. 4.40. Phrase 10 (contains one cell, encompasses five pulses).



Ex. 4.41. Phrase 11 (contains one cell, encompasses four pulses).



Ex. 4.42. Phrase 12 (combines four cells, encompasses thirteen pulses).



Ex. 4.43. Phrase 13 (contains one cell, encompasses two pulses).



Ex. 4.44. Phrase 14 (combines two cells, encompasses eleven pulses).



Ex. 4.45. Phrase 15 (combines three cells, encompasses sixteen pulses).



Table 6 displays data pertaining to the amount of cells and the type of cells, that each phrase in the solo contains.

Table 6. Cells in phrases.

Phrase	Cells:	Cell Number:	Minim Pulses:
1	2	Cell 1, 3	2
2	1	Cell 1	6
3	3	Cell 1,4,7	3
4	1	Cell 5	2
5	5	Cell 1,3,4,7,8	11
6	2	Cell 1,5	5
7	3	Cell 1,7,8	4
8	2	Cell 1,6	1
9	3	Cell 1,4,6	10
10	1	Cell 2	5
11	1	Cell 4	6
12	4	Cell 1,4,5,6	5
13	1	Cell 8	2
14	3	Cell 1,3,7	11
15	3	Cell 1,3,6	16

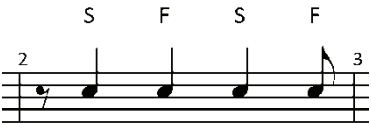
These figures reveal that cell 1, the off-beat eighth note, is by far the most commonly used cell by Santamaria, taking part in eleven of the fifteen phrases. The least used was cell 2, with its three eighth note crossing pattern. The two triplet cells were evenly incorporated on to phrases, as was cell 3, its eighth note equivalent. Apart from their interesting rhythmic qualities, the additional unique sound sources available on the *conga* drum, expand the possibilities of this material significantly. To illustrate this point, the following examples display the various approaches to cell 1, Santamaria incorporates in his solo.

Ex. 4.46. Cell 1.



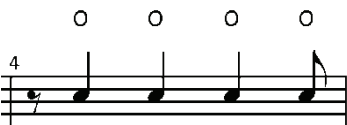
Santamaria’s first approach to cell 1 as displayed in example 4.47, incorporates slaps and fingers sounds.

Ex. 4.47. Cell 1 Approach 1.



Santamaria’s second approach to cell 1 as displayed in example 4.48, incorporates open tones.

Ex. 4.48. Cell 1 Approach 2.



Santamaria’s third approach to cell 1 as displayed in example 4.49, incorporates muffled slaps and open tones on two drums.

Ex. 4.49. Cell 1 Approach 3.



Santamaria’s fourth approach to cell 1 as displayed in example 4.50, incorporates slaps and open tones on two drums.

Ex. 4.50. Cell 1 Approach 4.

S O S O

Santamaria’s fifth approach to cell 1 as displayed in example 4.51, incorporates two right handed slaps, followed by a left hand open tone, twice.

Ex. 4.51. Cell 1 Approach 5.

S S O S S O S

Santamaria’s sixth approach to cell 1 as displayed in example 4.52, incorporates a muffled slap, followed by open tones with the right hand, while the left elbow bends the pitch of the drum where indicated by the asterisk. The bass tones are then played with the left hand, while he raises the drum slightly with his legs.

Ex. 4.52. Cell 1 Approach 6.

Ⓢ O O O O O O O O B B B B

Santamaria’s seventh approach to cell 1 as displayed in example 4.53, incorporates an open tone and a slap with the right hand, followed by fingers with the left hand. The figure is then repeated twice with the same sticking.

Ex. 4.53. Cell 1 Approach 7.

O S F O S F O S F

Similarly the following examples display his approach to cell 7. Santamaria plays open tones and slaps, and approaches the cell alternating hands, starting with the left hand after beat 1.

Ex. 4.54. Cell 7.



Santamaria’s first approach to cell 7 as displayed in example 4.55, incorporates open tones and slaps.

Ex. 4.55. Cell 7 Approach 1.



Santamaria’s second approach to cell 7 as displayed in example 4.56, incorporates open tones on two drums.

Ex. 4.56. Cell 7 Approach 2.



To conclude, here is the complete *conga* drum solo. The solo was transcribed from the audio-video source. The score presented here features the entire solo. It contains not only the sounds and the various drums incorporated, but also in some sections where the film footage allowed, Santamaria’s personal sticking underneath the notes.

Ex. 4.57. Santamaria solo on *Mayeya*.²³⁴

The musical score consists of 32 measures, organized into eight systems of four measures each. The notation includes rhythmic values (quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes), rests, and fingerings (1-4). Above the staff, letters O, S, F, and P indicate specific notes or techniques. Below the staff, letters L and R indicate left and right hand fingerings. Trills are marked with a '3' and a slur. Two circled 'S' symbols are present in measures 19 and 20. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

Measure 1: O O O O

Measure 2: S F S F S F S F

Measure 3: O O O O

Measure 4: O O O O

Measure 5: O O O O

Measure 6: O O O O

Measure 7: O O O O

Measure 8: O O O O F O O F

Measure 9: O O F O O F

Measure 10: O O F S O O

Measure 11: O S O O O S

Measure 12: O O O S O O O S

Measure 13: O O S S S S S S S S S S S S S S

Measure 14: S S S S S S S S S S S S S S

Measure 15: S S S S S S S S S S S S S S

Measure 16: S S S S S S S S S S S S S S

Measure 17: S S S S O O O O O O S F S F S O S O

Measure 18: S S S S O O O O O O S F S F S O S O

Measure 19: S S S S O O O O O O S F S F S O S O

Measure 20: S S S S O O O O O O S F S F S O S O

Measure 21: S O S O O O O O O O S P F S P F S

Measure 22: S O S O O O O O O O S P F S P F S

Measure 23: S O S O O O O O O O S P F S P F S

Measure 24: S O S O O O O O O O S P F S P F S

Measure 25: P F S P F S P F S P F S S S O S S O S S

Measure 26: P F S P F S P F S P F S S S O S S O S S

Measure 27: P F S P F S P F S P F S S S O S S O S S

Measure 28: P F S P F S P F S P F S S S O S S O S S

Measure 29: O S S O S S O S S S O O O S O O O S O O

Measure 30: O S S O S S O S S S O O O S O O O S O O

Measure 31: O S S O S S O S S S O O O S O O O S O O

Measure 32: O S S O S S O S S S O O O S O O O S O O

²³⁴ Santamaria, *Live at Quasimodo*.

33 O S O O S S S S S S S S O O O O O

L R L R R L R R R L R R L R

37 O (S) O O O O O O O O B B B B

R R R * [-R R R R] R R L L L L

41 B O O O O O O O O O S F S F S F

L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R R L R L

45 (S) O (S) F O S F O S F O S F O S O

R R R L R R R L R R L R R L R R L

49 O O O O O O O O O O O O O

R L R L R L R L R R R R R

53 O O O O O O O O O

R L R L R L R R R

5. NEW DEVELOPMENTS

THE SECRET HAND AND THE CONGA DRUM

The effects of globalisation have certainly made an impact in the drumming community worldwide. Styles are changing, shifting or developing, with an increasing evident level of merge of styles, techniques and instrumentation. In a recent conversation with Hossam Ramzy, a colleague who specialises in Egyptian percussion, he observed that as a new generation of players was developing their skills in his particular genre, they were also bringing in many new technical developments, including snare drum rudiments into the playing field.²³⁵ As with the Egyptian *tabla*, this is also the common practice in the current era of *conga* drumming, where a new style of playing and teaching the instrument has also emerged, incorporating all these new elements.

New areas of *conga* drum hand technique have been developing for a few decades now, with the two most notable being the set of exercises developed by Jose Luis Quintana 'Changuito' which he calls the *mano secreta* method, and the incorporation of snare drum rudiments to *conga* drumming, credited in the main to the work of Giovanni Hidalgo. The first encompasses an array of exercises leading to flexibility and independence, involving single and double stroke combinations of palm-fingers, tones and slaps. The second is a set of technique building patterns, originally conceived during the evolution of the military snare drum or side drum in fife and drum corps, and standardised into an internationally recognised set of forty patterns.

Many believe that the development of *conga* drum hand technique and the beginnings of the *mano secreta* method, may be found in the work of one individual, Tata Güines. Santos states that the development of *conga* hand technique came from Tata Güines. Interestingly he also observes that as Güines lived and worked in Cuba, the new generation of *conga* players in Cuba did not have access to master drummers such as Armando Peraza, Francisco Aguabella, Mongo Santamaria, Carlos 'Patato' Valdez or Candido Camero, all of whom had migrated to the United States in the 1950s.²³⁶ According to Spiro, "Güines was the guy that first created it and Changuito took it to another level." Spiro states that in analysing video footage of Güines, he found that although he played palm-finger doubles in the middle of the drum, "once in a while

²³⁵ Hossam Ramzy, personal conversation, 27 July 2007.

²³⁶ Santos, telephone interview.

he would move it back towards the edge.” His presumption is that “Changuito might have looked at that and gone, well if you are going to go that close to the edge, you might as well go a bit further and get an open tone out of it.”²³⁷ Similarly Santos observes that although Changuito’s *mano secreta* embedded left hand development for the right handed player, that Güines had already commenced that development. Santos believes that “Changuito took that concept and developed it further, then passed it to Giovanni.”²³⁸

According to Joey De Leon Jr, the *mano secreta* is “a set of set exercises or ideas of exercises. It involves the development of *la muñeca* (“the wrist”).”²³⁹ The method involves many exercises that in combinations for both hands form a linear approach to drumming. “If you're familiar with the great Berklee drum professor Gary Chaffee and his method, then you're familiar with this kind of approach,” he adds.²⁴⁰ The linear approach in drumming incorporates horizontal single line style exercises, written for various voices or sounds on the drum kit. These exercises are developed incorporating single and double strokes. There is minimal layering involved thus ample coordination is required in order to manage moving from sound to sound.²⁴¹ According to De Leon Jr, by constantly connecting one idea to another, “you start to create this kind of language.”²⁴²

Spiro states that it is a method to help the development of the left hand, “but more specifically to help you develop the playing of double strokes.” A significant issue that Spiro brings to light though, is that he fails to understand why Changuito’s method deals primarily with the left hand. “I can’t explain why he looked at it this way, because in reality every drummer in the world really works hard on developing both hands equally. That’s a question that I can’t answer for you.”²⁴³ A personal conversation conducted with local *conguero* Javier Fredes also confirmed this left hand approach. The material was aurally presented in daily lessons, focusing on the left hand ‘palm-fingers’ movement. Changuito would present different exercises, but did not adhere to conducting the development with both hands equally. Although Fredes never discussed these approaches with Changuito, he suspects that Changuito

²³⁷ Spiro, telephone interview.

²³⁸ Santos, telephone interview.

²³⁹ Joey De Leon Jr, email interview, 5 February 2007.

²⁴⁰ De Leon Jr, email interview.

²⁴¹ Gary Chaffee, *Linear Time Playing: Funk & Fusion Grooves for the Modern Styles*, (Van Nuys, California: Alfred Publishing Company, 1999) 7.

²⁴² De Leon Jr, email interview.

²⁴³ Spiro, telephone interview.

presumes the student will apply the material with both hands.²⁴⁴ According to Spiro there are two different approaches to achieve a double stroke on a *conga* drum. In the first approach the hand strikes the skin twice in single stroke movements, while in the second the palm-fingers movement gives the player the double stroke. “I think the whole point for Changuito was to be able to get the heel-toe (palm-fingers) to become a double stroke,” he added.²⁴⁵ Figure 5.1 illustrate this palm-fingers connected movement: the hand strikes a palm stroke, the fingers lift, then without coming off the drum skin altogether strike the fingers sound.

Fig. 5.1. The palm-fingers movement (double stroke connected movement).²⁴⁶



Figure 5.2 displays the new open tone double stroke movement, incorporating a connected approach, this time performed on the edge of the drum skin. The movement is as follows: the hand strikes the edge of the drum achieving an open tone, then the fingers ‘bounce’ on to the skin, and on the way up achieves a second open tone.

Fig. 5.2. Open tone double stroke incorporating the palm-fingers movement.²⁴⁷



²⁴⁴ Javier Fredes, personal conversation, 12 August 2008.

²⁴⁵ Spiro, telephone interview.

²⁴⁶ The palm-fingers movement (double stroke connected movement), personal photograph of Julian Pertout, 26 February 2008.

²⁴⁷ Open tone double stroke incorporating the palm-fingers movement, personal photograph of Julian Pertout, 26 February 2008.

This stroke is related in the overall approach to the Moeller technique drummers develop. With sticks as with bare hands it incorporates a “multiple motion stroke” as drummer Dave Weckl describes it. In position one the wrist comes down and plays the stroke, while in position two, which occurs on the way back up, the stick strikes for a second time. It all takes place in one movement.²⁴⁸

As Spiro observes, by moving the palm-fingers towards the edge of the drum, a double stroke open tone was developed. This double stroke open tone, differs from the traditional approach as it is performed in one movement. In terms of the approach, David Ortiz observes that the hands have to be as flexible as possible, when attempting this double stroke movement in the palm-fingers style. It has to be approached in a strike-rebound fashion, as in playing a snare drum with a stick, rather than as two separate strokes.

D. Ortiz has a three-step method for the development of open tone doubles in palm-fingers style movement. The first step involves developing each hand separately, with a rest in between, as depicted in example 5.1. The second step, involves connecting the double strokes, followed by a rest, as depicted in example 5.2. The third and final step, involves the development of the movement as a continuous double stroke, as depicted in example 5.3.²⁴⁹

Ex. 5.1. *Open tone* doubles development I.



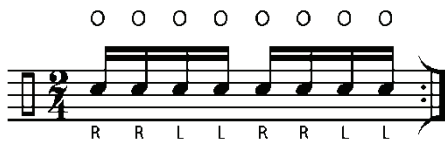
Ex. 5.2. *Open tone* doubles development II.



²⁴⁸ Dave Weckl, *A Natural Evolution: How To Develop Technique*, DVD, (Carl Fisher, 2000).

²⁴⁹ David Ortiz, private lesson, DVD, Pedro Barrera, n.d.

Ex. 5.3. *Open tone* doubles development III.



The material from the *mano secreta* method by Changuito, has been sparingly published. There is no current published instructional material that I am aware of, that contains all the exercises found in his method. In a recent interview, while discussing his mentoring role in Hidalgo's career, Changuito stated, "he came to me when he was only sixteen years old, but he was already fabulously wild. I taught him the 116 rudiments of my *mano secreta* technique."²⁵⁰ Changuito presents a few exercises in both his Warner Brothers published videos.²⁵¹ A few other examples, have been published in two recent book releases by Michael Spiro and Tomas Cruz.

THE SNARE DRUM RUDIMENTS AND THE CONGA DRUM

According to Acuña, the development of *conga* drum hand technique has been astounding, and it gets further and further, every passing day. Acuña believes that Hidalgo, is the individual responsible, as he possesses not only the technique and precision to play intricate rhythmic figures, the well developed sounds on the drum, but also a vital musical ingredient in his performance outcomes, that of possessing *sabor* ("taste"), the ability to play with passion and 'tasteful' interpretation.²⁵² Hidalgo has not only studied traditional sounds, traditional repertoire and the available *conga* drum improvisational language, but he has also embraced and incorporated the standard snare drum rudiments, with bare hands on the conga drum. One of the individuals responsible for guiding the young Hidalgo was D. Ortiz, known as 'La Mole', a Puerto Rican *conga* drummer who was part of Rafael Cortijo's legendary ensemble Cortijo Y Su Combo. D. Ortiz recalls the young Hidalgo arriving at his house:

My first student was a young Anthony Carrillo whom I was teaching as I was playing in a band with his dad. Then Anthony brought his 9 year old friend with him, this was Giovanni

²⁵⁰ Luis Tamargo, "Conversando con Changuito: Desde La Pandilla de la Cabeza de Perro Hasta la Telegrafia sin Hilo," 2006, *Latin Beat Magazine*, 13 April 2008 <<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-154907202.html>>.

²⁵¹ Jose Luis Quintana Changuito, *Evolution of the Tumbadoras*, (Warner Brothers Pub, 2000), *Conga Masters: Changuito and Giovanni Duets*, (Warner Brothers Pub, 1995).

²⁵² Alex Acuña, telephone interview, 2 April, 2005.

Hidalgo. I used to watch young Giovanni incorporating all the drum rudiments which were originally intended for snare drum on *congas*.

The style the young Hidalgo was developing, was already taking shape. D. Ortiz states that his own style developed in tandem with Hidalgo's, as he spent so many years practicing and playing with him, "practically every day." He recalls that Hidalgo "was already there, it was a natural progression for him." D. Ortiz believes that most aspiring *conga* drummers have to work hard on developing each particular drum rudiment, but in Hidalgo's case he felt that it seemed like a "very natural development, almost an easy flow." D. Ortiz states that he ended up following Hidalgo in this 'quest', and that unconsciously he also developed the ability to incorporate the snare drum rudiments on the *conga* drum. D. Ortiz claims that he would often examine the particular stickings that he was incorporating, while playing with Hidalgo. Later, he was "able to break them down and see a paradiddle, a double stroke roll and other rudiments," giving him the ability to incorporate all these techniques with his students.²⁵³

Santos believes that Hidalgo was born with this gift. He remembers witnessing Hidalgo playing *conga* drums at the tender age of 10, with his playing already containing that sophisticated and extremely advanced hand technique. According to Santos, Hidalgo's early training came from his father, the great drummer from Puerto Rico 'Mañengue'. Later he travelled to Cuba and studied with Changuito, developing his *mano secreta* method. Santos believes that Changuito passed the method to Hidalgo, who in turn was able to develop it fluently with both hands. Although Hidalgo tends to lead with his left hand, he is completely ambidextrous, Santos observes.²⁵⁴

Spiro believes that although Hidalgo did not create the original work, he did take it to inconceivable levels. Accordingly he states, "Changuito really developed this and made an entire technique out of this," but it was the young Hidalgo, that with ample time on his hands to practice and develop it, took it to the next level. "Giovanni for example took the heel-toe (palm-fingers) technique and applied it to both hands," he suggests.²⁵⁵ Hidalgo not only developed that method further, but he also incorporated the snare drum rudiments, in turn opening up brand new possibilities for the instrument. At the time, the mere thought of attempting the snare drum rudiments with bare hands, was deemed impractical and an

²⁵³ D. Ortiz, telephone interview.

²⁵⁴ Santos, telephone interview.

²⁵⁵ Spiro, telephone interview.

impossible task. In a personal conversation with Rekow, Santana's renowned *conguero*, he mentioned that in the late 1970s, he tried unsuccessfully to develop a system of playing double strokes on the *conga* drum. He abandoned the idea, as he felt that he was not going to achieve the power or the sound he required.²⁵⁶

The snare drum rudiments are a set of technique building patterns for both hands, that were conceived during the evolution of the military snare drum or side drum, in fife and drum corps hundreds of years ago. Their numerous tasks ranged from marking the various events of the military day, to signalling troops in battle. Over the years several publications documented its evolution. Some targeted for its implementation in the army and navy, and for the use of not only fife and drums corps, but also drum and bugle corps.²⁵⁷

In 1932 William Ludwig of the Ludwig Drum Company, organised a meeting with the most prominent drum instructors in the United States, geared towards establishing a practical system for the development of drumming. At that meeting, the National Association of Rudimental Drummers, also known as NARD was established and embraced a list of *The Thirteen Essential Rudiments* for the development of drumming technique, which along with an additional set of thirteen rudiments, became *The Standard Twenty-Six American Drum Rudiments*.²⁵⁸ As NARD is no longer active, The Percussive Arts Society, also known as PAS have since reorganized them into sets, added an extra fourteen, arriving at the current *40 International Rudiments*.²⁵⁹

The snare drum rudiments as incorporated by PAS, involve the study and development of roll, diddle, flam and drag rudiments. The roll rudiments include several alternating single sticking rolls of different lengths, and several double stroke rolls of different lengths. The diddle rudiments include several combinations of single and double stroke patterns of different lengths. The flam rudiments make use of a single grace note played prior to the main stroke, in combination with several single and double stroke patterns. The drag rudiments make use of a double grace note played prior to the main stroke, in combination with several single and double stroke patterns. As Graham Morgan observes, "the beautiful thing technically with the

²⁵⁶ Rekow, personal interview.

²⁵⁷ *Rudiment History*, The Rudi Pad, 22 March 2008
<http://www.rudi-pad.com/drum_rudiments_history.html>.

²⁵⁸ *Drum Rudiments*, 22 March 2008 <<http://www.music.vt.edu/musicdictionary/appendix/drumrudiments/Drumrudiments.html>>.

²⁵⁹ *Percussive Arts Society International Drum Rudiments*. Percussive Arts Society. 12 June 2007
<<http://www.pas.org/Resources/rudiments.cfm>>.

rudiments, is that it forces the weaker hand, to develop as you have to lead the patterns both ways.”²⁶⁰

This array of single and double stroke rolls as well as flams and drags, has presented the modern conga drummer with advanced rhythmical repertoire, and an opening to technical material that was thought not possible to be developed, with bare hands on a skin. This is the new era of conga playing. Authors Hector ‘Pocho’ Neciousup and Jose Rosa certainly agree, as they observe:

Everything changed with one person, Giovanni Hidalgo, he took conga drumming to levels never seeing before by applying all the snare drum rudiments. In our private classes we teach all of our students to go through Buddy Rich’s *Modern Interpretation of Snare Drum Rudiments*, Charley Wilcoxon’s *150 Rudimental Solos* and Anthony Cirone’s *Portraits In Rhythm*.²⁶¹

Presently, players of all persuasions are developing this material, in countless ways. As New York based percussionist Daniel Sadowick observes:

I practice a lot of rudiments such as single, double and triple paradiddles and mama-dada's as well. I also use the heel-toe movement in both hands to work on speed, dexterity and control. These are exercises that most trap drummers would use as well. I find them very essential to proper development.²⁶²

De Leon Jr agrees, as he also works on similar material:

Singles, doubles, paradiddles, groups of eighth notes, alternating each hand and descending to eventually singles. All kinds of tempos, slow, fast, medium, coming up with diverse stickings to give that idea that is some kind virtual rudiment. And of course I incorporate rudiments one or two at a time, just so I can get a little more involved with it. As far as sound, there is a new template for today's *conga* player.²⁶³

²⁶⁰ Graham Morgan, Telephone Interview, 29 June 2007.

²⁶¹ Hector Pocho Neciousup, and Jose Rosa, *The Book of Contemporary Conga Techniques*, (Denver: Outskirts Press, 2007) 40.

²⁶² Daniel Sadowick, email interview, 27 February 2007.

²⁶³ De Leon Jr, email interview.

It is certainly a 'new template'. As Acuña observes, in Puerto Rico, to the young new generation of *conga* drummers Hidalgo is "a hero, and so the standard is set, and they are starting there, all the youngsters are starting to play in Giovanni's style."²⁶⁴ As this material is open to interpretation on a *conga* drum, there is a certain freedom involved which leads to an inspirational area for personal development. As De Leon Jr observes, "my thought is to be open about it, and find a rudiment and break it down. I make my own sound variations and I feel that most of the new generation players are doing that as well."²⁶⁵

Similarly, *conguero* Paoli Mejias, highly regarded for his technical prowess, states that the entire family of snare drum rudiments and all the possible *conga* drum sound variations "are part of my practice regimen." He explains that although at first he applied the many exercises of Changuito, Hidalgo and others, that over the years, he has been developing many of his own exercises as well.²⁶⁶ This is the new style as Spiro observes, "I think that in today's world, contemporary *conga* players basically are playing drum rudiments, and need to be playing drum rudiments on *conga* drums."²⁶⁷ Acuña agrees and adds, these "new techniques stand out, especially the double open rolls, the paradiddles, the paradiddle-diddles on the *congas*, it's all very beautiful." He also observes though, that in his view, "the drummer helps the *conga* player and the *conga* player helps the drummer," as he explains:

If one applies the *conga* beats to the drum kit, they are very interesting rhythms, and also the drum kit beats and the drum kit technique applied to the *congas* as Giovanni and Changuito have done.²⁶⁸

But some of the elder masters, have not taken well to the application of these techniques on the *conga* drum. According to Güines, "the one thing I am against and will never be in favor of is, to take the technique of the drum set to the *conga* drum." He believes that the *conga* drum is an instrument which in the main, its sole purpose, is to accompany. He states that the proof is evident in all the recordings he has made, and that these documented projects, should serve as a model, for future generations of players. Accordingly Güines believes that up and coming players should develop the fundamental technique of the drum and listen to the masters,

²⁶⁴ Acuña, telephone interview.

²⁶⁵ De Leon Jr, email interview.

²⁶⁶ Paoli Mejias, email interview, 25 February 2007.

²⁶⁷ Spiro, telephone interview.

²⁶⁸ Acuña, telephone interview.

Chano Pozo, Candido Camero, and Mongo Santamaria. “I don't understand anything when these *congueros* are soloing, because there is no base, no rhythmic concept,” he observes and in turn offers the following advice:

Don't get caught up in the war of I can play more than you, I can play faster than you, the speed on the conga drum is something I created, it's in the recordings. I think the most beautiful thing is to do your solo and have the audience understand what you are saying, otherwise it's a machine-gun throwing bullets everywhere.²⁶⁹

Güines is not the only elder master to openly discuss his aversion to these new developments. Of the older generation of players, many others have openly rejected these new techniques, and have gone as far as stating that they are not required. Peraza observes that the new generation of players, have incorporated far too many techniques on *congas*, *bongos* and *timbales*. Peraza argues that:

People play *bongo* and trap drum rudiments on the *congas*, *conga* licks on the *timbales*, and *tabla* licks on everything. I feel they should be played as different, distinct instruments because they are different instruments, each with its own specific and unique voice. But that's just me.²⁷⁰

Similarly Costanzo when asked about current developments in technique states:

It's kind of a little frustrating Alex to be perfectly honest with you. I look on the internet and see tons of *conga* drummers and bongo players playing so free that they forgot the idea of what a rhythm instrument is suppose to play. The *conga* drum is a rhythm instrument.

Costanzo acknowledges Hidalgo's mastery, and praises the overall musical approach Hidalgo adopts in the diverse setting he encounters. In terms of other players though, Costanzo adds:

I feel many of the others are just trying to see how many drum rudiments they can do and when do too many I have to say I am not thrilled by that at all. Some of the solos have no conception of time whatsoever, no conception of any kind of sequence, just how many

²⁶⁹ Theberge, “Percussion Discussion: Changuito and Tata Güines Cuban Conga Pioneers.”

²⁷⁰ Ernesto, “A Conversation with Armando Peraza.”

beats they can play, and that doesn't please me because that is not the way you play. You can't do that in a rhythm section, I don't think.²⁷¹

Although Changuito has spearheaded this technical revolution, it is surprising to note that he himself does not adhere greatly to the snare drum rudiments in *conga* drum performance. Changuito makes a statement to this effect in a conversation with Hidalgo, featured as part of his *Evolution of the Tumbadora* video release.²⁷² Fredes, a student of Changuito's for more than five years, also confirmed this view in a personal conversation conducted recently. Fredes observed that in the time spent with Changuito, he might have incorporated a flam, or a drag or ruff in the style of a 'palm-fingers' double, but never really applied any of the broader set of snare drum rudiments to the conga drum.²⁷³ D. Ortiz on the other hand really appreciates what they have brought to the *conga* drum repertoire, and thoroughly enjoys incorporating them:

For me, they are like the soul, a beautiful complement. And I do teach this to my students. If I do a clinic somewhere and the students are at an advance level I always explain this to them, and we do use them all, flam, doubles, paradiddles, ruffs.

He does however have some reservations, and when discussing technique adds:

I always make sure to tell them though that they need to develop the drum rudiments but that they are not everything in conga playing. The *conga* is like a telephone, it's made up of many *golpes* ("strokes") but it is important to *conversar* ("talk") or play the *conga* in a melodic manner. The drum rudiments are used when you need those extra bullets. I have to tell you in the 1980s I didn't use the drum rudiments. I realised slowly that I was developing them unconsciously. People use to point them out to me, they use to say "you seem to be using doubles," when I heard that I decided to seriously develop them.²⁷⁴

Richie Flores is another exponent of this technical advancement. In video footage from a masterclass in Lima, Peru, he demonstrates various snare drum rudiments on the *conga* drums and states:

²⁷¹ Costanzo, email interview.

²⁷² Changuito, *Evolution of the Tumbadoras*.

²⁷³ Fredes, personal interview.

²⁷⁴ D. Ortiz, telephone interview.

These are various exercises that we are developing to modernise the percussion, the doubles with rebounds are quite hard so you have to practice them fifteen to twenty minutes a day until you achieve the rebound.

For the method of practice, Flores explains that you can develop this material on any surface, and proceeds to demonstrate excellent double strokes on his lap. He concludes by stressing that you have to work solidly, in order to achieve the rebound, “it is a lot easier with sticks” he observes.²⁷⁵ Spiro agrees and further states, “when I teach, I tell my students, if you want to play contemporary *conga* drums you are going to need to know all this,” he concludes by stressing:

You have to remember that your hands don’t bounce and so to make your hands bounce, to actually make this a possibility you can’t do it by practicing an hour a day, you have to practice eight hours a day.²⁷⁶

The following are various examples of the incorporation of snare drum rudiments on the *conga* drum. The first three examples display three double stroke roll rudiments as written for the snare drum. Example 5.4 the five stroke roll, example 5.5 the seven stroke roll, and example 5.6 the nine stroke roll.

Ex. 5.4. The five stroke roll.



Ex. 5.5. The seven stroke roll.

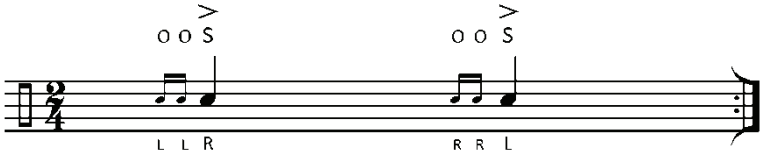


²⁷⁵ Flores, Masterclass in Peru.

²⁷⁶ Spiro, telephone interview.

Example 5.9 displays Hidalgo’s interpretation of the single drag rudiment on the *conga* drum. Hidalgo plays two open tones as the double stroke, followed by a slap.²⁷⁸

Ex. 5.9. Single drag interpretation by Hidalgo.



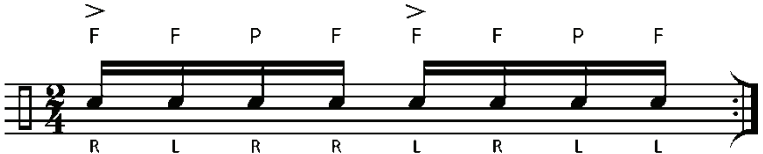
Example 5.10 displays the single paradiddle rudiment as written for the snare drum.

Ex. 5.10. The single paradiddle.



Example 5.11 displays a personal interpretation of this snare drum rudiment. It incorporates two fingers sounds which can be played either in the centre head area or on the lower head area, followed by the palm-fingers movement.

Ex. 5.11. Single paradiddle interpretation by Pertout.



Example 5.12 displays the flam tap rudiment as written for the snare drum.

Ex. 5.12. The flam tap.



²⁷⁸ Giovanni Hidalgo, *Drags clip 1, Conga Virtuoso*, DVD, (Warner Bros Publications, 1995).

Example 5.13 displays a personal interpretation of this snare drum rudiment. It incorporates a palm sound followed by two muffled slaps.

Ex. 5.13. Flam tap interpretation by Pertout.

6. CONCLUSION

The thesis was able to document the development of the *conga* drum from its historical perspective, document the development of the construction of the *conga* drum, gave a detailed analysis of the sounds that the conga drum incorporates, and discussed the basics in hand technique development. By delving into the area of drum tuning and multiple conga drum set-ups, the thesis also analysed an array of set-ups and tuning preferences. As a companion area to the study topic, the instrumental sticks known as claves and their role and concept were discussed, and a section devoted to an in depth analysis of its role in two prominent areas; the rhythmic and the melodic, was presented. The thesis also presented the contribution of Ramon 'Mongo' Santamaria, by documenting his career and achievements, and analysing his work in two fronts; the rhythmic development of Santamaria's tumbao performance with variations and fills, and Santamaria's personal approach to improvisation, a style both revered and imitated. The last section presented a detailed look at the technical evolution of the conga drum, and the new improvisational materials at play in this overall development of the past quarter of a century. The essence of the thesis throughout, was not only to cover the historical development of the instrument, as well as Santamaria's musical journey, but to also reveal rhythms, improvisations and the new techniques and wider vocabulary incorporated on the *conga* drum in music making today.

The thesis research pondered many a question, especially in regards to the state of personal approaches to performance and practice, the concrete results achieved by the research, surpassed personal expectations. The vast material and information uncovered via interviews and transcriptions, opened a new path, a creative path with countless opportunities for personal expression. In relation to the conga drum and its components, its historical development from the log style construction to the state of the art technology of today, is remarkable. The instrument is widely available not only in the market place, but also in educational circles from preparatory school to tertiary university levels. It is also highly visible from the symphony orchestra to pop, jazz, world, folk and beyond. According to personal recollections, this was certainly not the case thirty years ago. Credit must go to artists such as Santamaria, who had a remarkable career and took the instrument from its humble beginnings, to concert stages around the world. He also took the instrument to the recording studio, documenting his journey with numerous outstanding releases. Changes and developments in

the style of playing the *conga* drum have been many, with the most influential being the rise of the new technical style. This technique has allowed the player to perform open tone double stroke rolls in many tempos, with the incorporation of a new rebound style system for the palm-fingers movement, on the edge of the drum. The thesis argued that in Santamaria's early stages, this rebound style was certainly not part of the conga drummer's technical development. Personal analysis of Santamaria's technique by video footage, clearly distinguishes his diverse style in the approach of the palm-fingers technique. Santamaria, as well as other players from his generation, played those strokes as two separate strokes on the drum, no connection is evident, especially when analysed at slower tempos. It is also evident from the research, that Santamaria did not incorporate open tone double stroke rolls of any kind. Many interviewees agreed that Santamaria's profound influence is not connected to his technical prowess, but rather to his "hard hitting style and beautiful sound," as Santos remarked. The thesis reveals that although Santamaria's vast work as a band leader and recording artist influenced generations to play the *conga* drum, the entire development of new *conga* drum technique started with Tata Güines, continued its development with Jose Luis Quintana 'Changuito' and arrived at the new generation of *conga* drum technique with Puerto Rican master Giovanni Hidalgo.²⁷⁹ Writer Javier AQ Ortiz asks, "is there a 'Giovanisation' of conga playing?" There is no doubt that that will take place, as percussionist Babatunde Lea explains, "Giovanni is the Charlie Parker of the conga... the bottom line is that he has raised the bar and musicians will try to reach it anyway, to both good and bad effects."²⁸⁰ As Acuña observed that for the younger generation, Giovanni, is a hero, as the standard is set, they are all starting to play in Giovanni's style, learning all the patterns as well as rudiments.²⁸¹

Despite all the radiance regarding the technical advancements of the instrument, it seems that some basic questions have not been answered as yet. Howard on his *Drums In The Americas* volume of 1967, argues that a special conga drum pattern for jazz has yet to be achieved. In his writings he observed that maybe one day, a new player will emerge, someone with a free spirit, without any particular nationality ties, that will invent a new pattern for jazz time.²⁸² That pattern is yet to arrive. With the incorporation of snare drum rudiments to the

²⁷⁹ Santos, telephone interview.

²⁸⁰ Javier Ortiz, "Babatunde Lea's Soul Pools," October 2003, *All About Jazz*. 9 September 2006 <<http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=448>>.

²⁸¹ Acuña, telephone interview.

²⁸² Howard, *Drums In The Americas*, 282.

arsenal, the contemporary *conga* player has gained a rich tapestry of sounds and colours. As this material has only recently being part of the equation, the player is able to creatively develop countless interesting personal variations, within the range of sounds available on one drum. With the incorporation of multiple conga drums, an infinite range of variations can be achieved. Due to these technical achievements, the playing of intricate combinations of single and double strokes with either hand is now a reality. This opens the future possibilities enormously, especially in the areas of new vocabularies and new repertoire. There are many advanced world rhythmic traditions, and within the area known as 'world rhythms', much of it, is merging. In time, complex material from other traditions may reach the conga drum. It might work similarly to the incorporation of snare drum rudiments. This opens the possibilities to a broader and exciting future in the area of new rhythmic vocabulary. Carnatic rhythmic principles as found in the south of India could be one of the new paths in this development. Another could be some of the repertoire available for the drum kit. The Carnatic tradition offers extraordinary resources. The tradition incorporates an incredibly advanced form of pattern development and odd-time groupings. There is ample scope to incorporate this and other rhythmic repertoire into the vocabulary of the conga drum. Hidalgo's achievements with the incorporation of snare rudiments into the conga drum's vocabulary, is a testament to the possibilities and resulting outcomes.

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The palm-fingers movement (double stroke connected movement). Personal photograph of Julian Pertout. 26 February 2008.

Traditional rim and comfort curve rim. Personal photograph of Alex Pertout. 31 March 2008.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interviews

Interviews conducted for the thesis with Alex Acuña, Jack Costanzo, Joey De Leon Jr, Larry Harlow, Mark Levine, Jose Madera, Paoli Mejias, Graham Morgan, David 'La Mole' Ortiz, Armando Peraza, Bob Quaranta, Ruben Rodriguez, Dario Rosendo, Daniel Sadownick, Tommy Saito, Bobby Sanabria, John Santos, Marty Sheller and Michael Spiro.

Appendix II: Conga drum sounds

Photographs depicting the various *conga* drum sounds, each available traditional stroke, as well as selected extended sound techniques.

Appendix III: Conga drum basic technique

Various exercises for the development of basic *conga* drum hand technique.

Appendix IV: Conga drum advanced technique

Various exercises for the development of advanced *conga* drum hand technique, including *mano secreta* exercises as well as selected snare drum rudiments, for the contemporary *conga* drummer.

Appendix V: Snare drum rudiments

The 40 International snare drum rudiments as presented by the Percussive Arts Society.

Appendix VI: Mayeya basic score

A transcription of the full chart (melody/chords) for Santamaria's *Mayeya*, analysed in chapter 3.

Appendix VII: Afro Blue original manuscript

The original manuscript of Santamaria's *Afro Blue*. The copy was obtained from the music collection at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C.

Appendix VIII: The Age obituary

A Santamaria obituary written by Alex Pertout and published by The Age, on Tuesday 11 February, 2003.

Appendix IX: Meinl tribute poster

A tribute poster to Santamaria produced by Meinl Percussion, Germany, in 2003

Appendix X: Data disc contents

A listing of all the audio and visual material available on the accompanying html based data disc.

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEWS

The following interviews with Alex Acuña, Jack Costanzo, Joey De Leon Jr, Larry Harlow, Mark Levine, Jose Madera, Paoli Mejias, Graham Morgan, David 'La Mole' Ortiz, Armando Peraza, Bob Quaranta, Ruben Rodriguez, Dario Rosendo, Daniel Sadowick, Tommy Saito, Bobby Sanabria, John Santos, Marty Sheller and Michael Spiro, were especially conducted for this thesis.

ALEX ACUÑA

Born in Peru to a family of musicians Acuña joined the great Perez Prado's big band at eighteen. He later played with such diverse luminaries as Elvis Presley and Diana Ross, until he joined the groundbreaking jazz group Weather Report. Since then he has recorded with countless artists including Joni Mitchell, Whitney Houston, Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock. In 2000 Acuña was nominated for a Grammy in for his album *Alex Acuña y Su Acuarela de Tambores: Rhythms for a New Millenium*. I conducted this interview with Acuña via telephone.

PERTOUT: I wanted to start by asking you when you started playing.

ACUÑA: I started playing when I was four years old and professionally and by that I mean with groups and touring when I was ten years old.

PERTOUT: Your family was musical?

ACUÑA: Yes my father was a music teacher and my brothers all played professionally but I must tell you that they didn't really teach me to play.

PERTOUT: Which instrument did your father specialised in?

ACUÑA: My father played a variety of instruments, he was a secondary school music teacher. He played saxophone, trumpet, piano, bass, drums, a little bit of all the instruments.

PERTOUT: And so what instrument did you start playing?

ACUÑA: Always percussion instruments, it was a natural progression for me, and by the time I reached my tenth birthday I took up the trumpet, and then piano which I did to develop my theoretical skills. My brothers used to teach me. I also used to watch my dad teaching them and learned a lot that way.

PERTOUT: And so when did you discover the Afro-Caribbean sounds?

ACUÑA: In reality I always loved those sounds. There was a house close by that had a radio and there was a program from midday to two o'clock in the afternoon that featured Peruvian folkloric music, as well as what it was called then tropical music, and so I got to hear the Sonora Matancera, Celia Cruz as well as jazz and classical music. And so I was exposed to all types of music, and that influenced me enormously. And I enjoyed everything, and to this day I not only play tropical music, but everything. For me music has always been one word only, music. But I have to tell you though that in Peru when I was young and playing, the bands did play a lot of tropical music as it was so popular at dances. In 1963 Perez Prado toured Peru. I got to play with him and then he invited me to go to the US. I ended up with him in Venezuela in 1963 and then on a US tour in 1964 which lasted nine months.

PERTOUT: And so when you played with Perez Prado did you play drum kit or *congas*?

ACUÑA: I had a drum kit set up the way drummers do it nowadays with *timbales* on the side.

PERTOUT: And who was playing alongside yourself in that band?

ACUÑA: At that time there were two *conga* players in the band. Lee Pastora who has since passed on and used to play with the orchestra of Don Ellis and the other was a player who is still around but does not play anymore, his name is Joe Baerga. They were both at that time quite busy in the Los Angeles scene. The Perez Prado band at the time was put together in Los Angeles for the US tour. After the tour Perez Prado went back to Mexico which is where he lived and so I decided to go and lived in Puerto Rico due to my musical interests there and also to continue my US residential visa. And so I arrived in Puerto Rico in 1965. There I found a teacher in Munchito Muñoz who used to play with Tito Puente and actually taught players such as Ray Barretto. He was also the *timbalero* with Tito Rodriguez. And Monchito who heard me in

Puerto Rico told me that although I played very well that I sounded 'South American'. So he took me to his house, gave me the records of Los Papines, Los Muñequitos De Matanzas and started to explain the *clave* and the technique required to play *congas*, *bongos*, *timbales*. He played everything extremely well. I learned so much with him. He was the one that showed me the base of the Caribbean rhythms.

PERTOUT: How influential for you was the work of Mongo Santamaria, did you get to hear much of his work at the time?

ACUÑA: The first time I heard Mongo Santamaria was on a record when I was in Peru. A record that he made with Tito Puente called *Top Percussion*, with Willie Bobo on *bongos* and Mongo on *congas*. And then there was the other one that Tito made called *Tito Puente Con Jazz* also with Mongo. I always liked his sounds and the patterns he played, great player. At that time though, the preferred *conguero* for us was Tata Güines. But because Mongo was in the US, played well and had a great style he was popular. Tata to us sounded a lot more modern, due to his great technique, beautiful sound and strong use of rolls and patterns.

PERTOUT: In talking about *congas* and sounds, what drums do you prefer, fibreglass, wooden?

ACUÑA: I love wooden drums for recordings, for live settings I like fibreglass *congas* and specially with the new heads made of plastic, like the ones made by Evans. I especially enjoy using those skins live, great projection. But I must say that most of the instruments I see around nowadays are very well made. I also feel though that the player is the one that gives the sound through the hands, and via the tuning he or she hears on a particular instrument, the player is the actual instrument in reality.

PERTOUT: And what about the skins, are you meticulous in choosing the type of thickness for example?

ACUÑA: I have never been that particular when it comes to the skins of certain instruments, whether it is a *conga*, *bongo* or *timbal*, as long as they sound well in the tuning one hears I feel it is sufficient. I have never been that meticulous when it comes to this as there are so many variations as well. There are many players who are like this and they end up

carrying *congas* to all sorts of places. Francisco Aguabella for example only plays 'his' *congas*, that's all. I have never been that particular about the skins.

PERTOUT: The popularity of Afro-Peruvian styles around the world is enormous nowadays with instruments like *cajon* found in many genres, do you recall the Afro-Peruvian sound as a popular style when you were in Peru?

ACUÑA: The *cajon* was played in the south, there was a family called Familia Ballembrocio de Inka de Pisco, in reality from Chincha in the south of Lima, and in the north where my father was born in Chiclayo. There they played styles such as *tondero*, and the *marinera* which developed from the Chilean *cueca*. In reality a Cuban was one of the first to record a disc of Afro-Peruvian styles, where Nicomedes Santa Cruz from the family Santa Cruz featured. The rhythms were Peruvian but were played mostly by this Cuban player known as 'El Niño', but the *cajon* was not used that much on that particular recording. Later the Familia Ballembrocio gave the *cajon* to the Familia Campos and they started the ensemble Peru Negro and with that they started to popularise the *cajones* around the 1950s and 1960s. In reality the *cajon* was played in Peru only by the Afro-Peruvian population, it was the real Afro connection. The ensemble Peru Negro started to develop all these styles and the players that joined to play *cajon* had to also learn to play *bongos*, *congas*, learn the *zapateado* and play a little bit of guitar. Nowadays everyone plays the *cajon*, kids, women, and there are many Afro-Peruvian ballet ensembles always developing the styles and also modernising the styles. There are some great *cajoneros* in Peru. Now there is a young Italo-Peruvian player who plays with Eva Ayllon, his name is Leonardo 'Gigio' Parodi and he is possibly the best contemporary player to emerge, very modern and solid. He is featured with Campos and others on my *Acuarela De Tambores* release.

PERTOUT: I wanted to ask you about that release, how did you co-ordinate that project, did you record the Afro-Peruvian tracks in Peru?

ACUÑA: I went to Peru, it was the only way to do it, and if I do it again, I will have to go back to Peru or bring them all over to the US to record, because in reality that Afro-Peruvian sound has not been explored that extensively worldwide as yet, it's so different to the Afro-Cuban sound.

PERTOUT: Was the rest of that particular recording recorded in a studio live setting? Was there anything overdubbed later?

ACUÑA: All of it was recorded together and many of the pieces are improvised with players such as Paulinho Da Costa, Anthony Carrillo and others. It was nominated for a Grammy. I am really happy with it. In a way is part of what the *Top Percussion* legacy is all about. When I was sixteen, seventeen years old I was listening to that record and it was one of the biggest influences for me when it comes to Afro-Cuban percussion, *timbales*, *congas* and *bongos*. In some ways it was like a tribute to Tito Puente.

PERTOUT: In terms of the construction of *congas* what do you think of the development of the instrument in the last twenty years or so?

ACUÑA: It has changed a lot in terms of the look, there are many manufacturers worldwide, I have some *congas* here at home made in the Amazons made from one piece of wood, there are *congas* in Venezuela, Peru, Puerto Rico, in New York companies like the Timba, also drum manufacturers like Pearl and DW are making *congas*, these companies have actually acquired old companies and are developing that product like the old company *Gon Bops* for example. I believe that today the *conga* is an instrument very precious, very musical and will stay on as it can be used in any musical form.

PERTOUT: And how do you feel about the development of the technique on *congas* in the last twenty years?

ACUÑA: It is incredible, every day it gets better, I believe the individual responsible for this development is Giovanni Hidalgo, he has the precision as well as the sound and the 'flavour'. As a matter of fact I am currently recording a disc with Giovanni Hidalgo's teacher. I have to say though that Giovanni had a gift, a divine gift but one of the people that guided him is a man called David Ortiz 'La Mole', he lives in Puerto Rico and I am recording with him. He is a tremendous *conguero* from Puerto Rico, he used to play many years ago with Cortijo Y Su Combo. In Puerto Rico the *conga* drum is an extremely popular instrument. Right now the younger generation admire Giovanni as a hero and so the standard is set, and they are starting there. All the youngsters are starting to play in Giovanni's style.

PERTOUT: The technique has certainly changed, but you were also incorporating double strokes and other non-*conga* techniques long ago.

ACUÑA: Well what I would say is from my point of view the drummer helps the *conga* player and the *conga* player helps the drummer. If one applies the *conga* beats to the drum kit, they are very interesting rhythms, and also the drum kit beats and the drum kit technique applied to the *congas* as Giovanni and Changuito have done, as well as Tata Güines, Patato and Ray Barretto, all great *congueros*, it all helps, I think all of it is a rudiment applied in different manners and in a musical way as well. And that makes it that the new techniques stand out, especially the double open rolls, the paradiddles, the paradiddle-diddles on the *congas*, it's all very beautiful. But what is beautiful about the *conga* drum in reality is the *sabor*. There are many individuals that can play *congas* but if you don't have the feel, the understanding of the Afro-Cuban sound, the sound of the Caribbean, you know it is an instrument that is foremost flavoursome, you have to have the feel with lots of rhythm and taste. Well now with the new techniques that are being developed it all sounds more modern, but Los Papines and Los Muñequitos De Matanzas have been playing in that style for a long, long time.

PERTOUT: And so do you think that Giovanni is the one that has the greatest influence worldwide?

ACUÑA: Yes I would say Giovanni and Changuito, for their perfect technique and *sabor*. Giovanni though has also great sound and velocity, the consistency. Giovanni can play a *rumba* for an hour and is not tired. And you know the *conga* drum is a very physical instrument. Giovanni is one of the top players in that line. In Cuba that must be quite a few that I am not aware of, but with Giovanni is also the musicality, a very melodic player, strong rhythmically, he has all the qualities, not only technique.

PERTOUT: You influenced players around the globe with your work with Weather Report.

ACUÑA: Yes, the beautiful thing is that when I lived in Puerto Rico my diet consisted of Latin music but at the same time I was studying jazz and classical music. And so when I moved to the US I was already prepared for work. I also had strong intentions of playing jazz, with some band like Weather Report, because when I first heard the band I felt so inspired by the compositions, the harmonic language the band was employing and eventually I did get called

and enjoyed a time with them in which the compositions were written for the group and so one had a chance to feature. The combination of musicians was excellent, we understood each other well.

PERTOUT: What type of work are you pursuing nowadays?

ACUÑA: Well I am producing my records. I have a company called Nido Entertainment to produce my own releases. I released a record of Peruvian music called *Los Hijos Del Sol*. A beautiful record, nice melodies and *musica negra*. You know Peruvian music is divided into three areas, *musica criolla*, *musica negra* and the *musica Andina*, and I use them all.

PERTOUT: And who plays percussion with you in the record *Los Hijos Del Sol*?

ACUÑA: In *Los Hijos Del Sol* I play it all! (laughs), I did all the percussion and the drum kit, overdubs.

PERTOUT: And who else does it feature?

ACUÑA: The Stagnaro brothers who are Peruvian musicians, Cocho Arbes another Peruvian musician from the Las Vegas area, my family, my wife, daughter and son who plays the piano, my nephew singing as well, also invited as special guest Wayne Shorter, Paquito D'Rivera, Ernie Watts and Justo Almario, as well as the singer Eva Ayllon, the best South American singer from Peru. I should also tell you that it is Joe Zawinul's favourite record at the moment. Last year he took the group for a week to his club in Vienna because he loved the music so much. Nowadays I am not following a career of going out with groups on tours any longer, I am comfortable here, doing some soundtracks, recent ones include *The Incredibles*. Next week I am to play in *Mr & Mrs Smith*, playing lots of percussion, also because I also play classical percussion, I can read, and so I can cover all the percussion and also work with other percussionists. But what I am dedicating myself more and more is to work on my own productions. I have studio facilities at home and I am about to do a new album called *Latin Gospel*.

PERTOUT: Has the live scene changed a lot for you?

ACUÑA: Well in reality I don't play in clubs any longer. I did it for many years, my life has really changed a lot, I do lots of masterclasses around the world, I also visit lots of churches and help the younger generation of musicians who are developing. There are many incredible musicians coming out in that scene and I enjoy the lyrics and the music which has an r&b flavour. I am developing music in that style along with some Latin sounds. I have quite a few songs which I am about to record. This is what I am enjoying nowadays, more than anything. I also really enjoy the drumming events. I took part recently in an event called Drummers For Jesus, we get together in Dallas, an array of Christian drummers, and we get to put on a concert with a large orchestra, very beautiful event. These are the things that I am really enjoying and I would like to devote my time more and more to these events.

PERTOUT: Are you involved with educational institutions?

ACUÑA: You know I am building a music school in Peru called Alex Acuña, it will be in Lima. I was there recently and I witnessed so much young talent that I felt in my heart a real need to help. I will send many instruments, I was there recently and gave them a couple of drum kits, *congas*, *timbales*, cymbals, and I will continue sending containers of instruments. Peru is such a musical place, when you hear the album *Los Hijos Del Sol* you realise how precious this music is. The music hasn't got a lot of *conga* as I don't want to put those sounds on every production but is beautiful music. I have a group called Tolu with Luis Conte where I get to play more Latin jazz style material, with lots of *congas*, but as I don't want to do the same on every production, too much *conga* tends to sound Afro Cuban and I am in reality not only Afro Cuban. Music for me, as we have discussed earlier, is extremely wide ranging, jazz, classical, South American, ethnic, everything.

Acuña, Alex. Telephone Interview. 2 April, 2005.

JACK COSTANZO

Jack Costanzo introduced *bongos* to the world when he joined bandleader Stan Kenton in 1947. He then went on to work with an array of artists including Nat King Cole, Peggy Lee, Betty Grable, Harry James, Judy Garland, Dinah Shore, Marlon Brando and Elvis Presley among many others. His popularity was such that legendary jazz critic Leonard Feather named him 'Mr Bongo'. I conducted this interview with Costanzo via telephone.

PERTOUT: I wanted to start by asking you how you developed your interested and love for *congas* and *bongos*.

COSTANZO: I essentially taught myself in Chicago when I was a kid. There were no *bongos* players to teach me anything. A band came in from Puerto Rico. Latin music was just starting to show its head a tiny bit, and they had a drummer that played *bongos*. It was the first time I saw *bongos* in person. Then I made a pair of *bongos* myself and taught myself to play. That's how that happened.

PERTOUT: Then you started playing in bands around Chicago?

COSTANZO: I was a dancer then Alex. My wife to be was my dancing partner. We toured and I used the *bongos* in the act. She would do a little solo and I would follow her footwork with the *bongos*. That helped me learn to play.

PERTOUT: And so what inspired you at the time to develop your *bongo* skills further? When did you encounter players like Mongo Santamaria for example?

COSTANZO: Oh, when I saw Mongo I was already in the business. The first *bongo* player I saw was when I went to New York as a dancer. That was Chino Pozo and he was marvellous. I was just a teenager at the time. Chino and Armando Peraza were my favourite *bongo* players. I saw lots of *bongo* players after that, of course, as Latin music came in pretty strong. We are talking now 1940-1941 now.

PERTOUT: Were you primarily playing *bongos* at the time?

COSTANZO: Well, I always played both *conga* drums and *bongos*, but *bongos* is what gave me whatever notoriety I had. The name 'Mr Bongo' has been there like 60 years and so I am kind of married to that. I play *conga* drums much more now than *bongos* and have for many years.

PERTOUT: When did you join Nat King Cole?

COSTANZO: We recorded *bongos* when I first joined the trio in February 1949. We were recording mostly *bongos* on all the songs, but in person I was using *conga* drums. That really helped spread *conga* drums in jazz. At that time there were Latin players, Alex, don't get me

wrong, but there was no one that had the feeling for jazz yet, including Chano Pozo who was with Dizzy when I was with Kenton. He was fabulous, I mean absolutely marvellous but he didn't play on any jazz tunes. He played on the tunes that were compatible with what he had to offer. He was great on *Manteca*, *Tin Tin Deo* and all those tunes but he just didn't seem to have the feeling for jazz.

PERTOUT: How long did you get to play with Nat King Cole and what was that experience like for you?

COSTANZO: I played with him for 5 years. It was marvellous. You know Alex you just never got tired of Nat's singing.

PERTOUT: I always loved some of the arrangements you did with Nat King Cole, for example on *Calypso Blues*, now who came up with the drum and voice idea?

COSTANZO: It was Nat's idea to do *Calypso Blues* with just *conga* drums. I did come up with *Go Bongo* and some insignificant things. Nat pretty much chose what we would play. The trio then adjusted their playing to what Nat had chosen to do.

PERTOUT: I understand that around that period you also travelled to Cuba.

COSTANZO: Every now and then we would have a week or so off and in 1951 I did just that. We were in Miami with a few days off and I flew to Cuba. I also took the opportunity to bring back some *congas* with me.

PERTOUT: What brand of *congas* and *bongos* were you using then?

COSTANZO: I was using the 'Jack Costanzo' model *bongos* made by Valje then. The company has now been taken over by Latin Percussion who gave Armando Peraza my *bongo* model. Martin Cohen, the CEO and founder said "I didn't know it Jack, I swear." By that time, the drums were already made and there was nothing that could be done about it. And Armando is my dear friend, but he is playing my *bongos* and getting the endorsement. The Valje *bongos* were called the 'Costanzo bongos' so I was upset about that. I used those *bongos* for over fifty years, from the last part of Nat King Cole until now. I still have them.

PERTOUT: Would they have been the first *bongos* to incorporate tuning hardware?

COSTANZO: In the USA probably. I bought a pair of tuneable *bongos* when I joined Stan Kenton in 1947 from a guy that came from Cuba. He brought them from Cuba with him. The hardware wasn't great Alex, but they were tuneable. I ended up going back to the *candelas* type, the ones that you would tuck the heads on and then we would heat them to tune them. Eventually, I started using ones with hardware when the hardware was made here. The Valje ones were probably one of the first in the US to incorporate tuneable hardware that I am aware of.

PERTOUT: Was the Valje brand making *congas* as well at the time?

COSTANZO: Yes he made both. He didn't do that well financially as he wasn't willing to mass produce them, so I never took any money either. He would say "I just want to make enough to live". He did marvellous work. His son Ralph, has taken it up now. I think it is a company called Resolution Drums or something like that. I haven't seeing any of the products yet, but I've heard they are very good. He was going to make me a pair of *bongos*. However I am still waiting. That was six months ago (laughs), I don't think he is going to send me a pair!

PERTOUT: What do you use nowadays?

COSTANZO: I use a set of Gon Bops *conga* drums and still my Valje *bongos*. They are not my original pair but before Tommy Flores died, he was the Valje CEO, he made me a special pair. That was in 1975.

PERTOUT: How did you develop your playing at that time, were you always studying by yourself?

COSTANZO: I did hear a *bongo* player, he was in a band called Casino De la Playa. His name was Ramoncito. I got ideas on how to play from the way he played. In those days Alex, now we are talking around 1938, 1939, 1940, when they recorded, not when I was playing, they played a more basic beat, a straight kind of a beat, few off beats. It wasn't like now where everything explodes, they kept it pretty straight. So I was able to hear what he was doing at least. I couldn't see how the hands were, but I could hear the pattern, the *martillo* which is the basic

bongo beat. And so I learn to replicate what he was doing. Of course it didn't give me any ideas on how the off beats went. I learned that part a few years later. In 1947 when I joined Stan Kenton I had only worked for a year and a half as a professional with some Latin groups. And even then I had a lot of work to do to be a good *bongo* player, Latin wise. With Kenton it was easy as I had a feeling for jazz and so we got along great on that.

PERTOUT: Was the material with Stan Kenton very much charted for the entire group?

COSTANZO: They wrote charts, but to this day I am a very poor reader Alex. But players helped me through it. Pete Rugolo would cue me and we got through it okay. There wasn't a lot of real tempo jazz with the *bongos* with Kenton. It was used more for special effects kind of things that later they used for movie soundtracks. Not straight tempo things except for when we recorded *The Peanut Vendor* and *Machito*. Those pieces were rhythm things, but we did a lot of stuff that had nothing to do with rhythm, just hitting the *bongo* here and there somewhere in the arrangement, usually wherever I felt like it and fortunately Kenton liked what I did so that was fine.

PERTOUT: At what stage did you start your own projects?

COSTANZO: My band started in 1956. In the 1960s my wife became the singer in the group and we travelled all over the place. It wasn't a Latin group or a jazz group, but more like a Las Vegas lounge group. We were entertaining but playing dance style music.

PERTOUT: How do you see the new era of technical development in the playing of *congas* and *bongos*?

COSTANZO: It's kind of a little frustrating Alex to be perfectly honest with you. I look on the internet and see tons of *conga* drummers and *bongo* players playing so free that they forgot the idea of what a rhythm instrument is suppose to play. The *conga* drum is a rhythm instrument. I am not talking about Giovanni because he is incredible. When he plays salsa he restricts himself to playing rhythm and he is fabulous. I feel many of the others are just trying to see how many drum rudiments they can do and when do too many I have to say I am not thrilled by that at all. Some of the solos have no conception of time whatsoever, no conception

of any kind of sequence, just how many beats they can play, and that doesn't please me because that is not the way you play. You can't do that in a rhythm section, I don't think.

PERTOUT: It has changed a lot with this new generation of players.

COSTANZO: Yes you have players like Richie Flores he has technique like Giovanni coming out of their ears. That's a different style of playing. Eddie Palmieri loves it, he loves for Richie to go all over the place and play and that's fine. But just because Giovanni and the new generation of players are so fabulous it doesn't make those of us that play straight not. We are not discarded, we just play a different way. Armando doesn't play that way, I don't play that way. Ray Barretto didn't play that way and there is space for all of us. But that doesn't make me not say to you that Giovanni is incredible. You know even today when I play jazz I play one *conga*. I just use one drum because the tones get in the way. Jazz is not like Latin music. Jazz has all those different chords, you don't want to be having all the different tones coming out of all the different *conga* drums, it just doesn't mix with all the jazz chords. For me, that is how I feel, one *conga* drum on jazz.

PERTOUT: You've had a remarkable career, are you playing a little?

COSTANZO: A little bit is a good phrase (laughs). I don't go looking for work. If they call me I go. I just played at the Northsea Jazz Festival and that was fabulous, we had a marvellous time, they gave me a tremendous ovation. I was thrilled to death, I can't tell you. As far as recording is concerned I had a couple of recent releases on the Cubop label but I don't know about Australia Alex, but right now Latin music is quite flat. If I were to record now I would put a couple of Latin things because obviously I am a *bongo* drummer, but I would not record a Latin jazz album. If the company insisted I would do it for them but I would not do it if it were my choice. I want to reach all the people I can reach and I can't reach them if they are not buying those cds. Right now is very slow for all the band leaders, the Latin band leaders are having a hard time. The only one that keeps doing very well are the Spanish Harlem Orchestra and Poncho Sanchez. Outside of that is really hard. But I have been lucky all my life. I liked what I achieved through the years, and I am not talking about my playing Alex, I am talking about knowing people that were great artists and playing with them, that was very exciting to me. I

am getting emails from people from around the world, some of them are very, very rewarding to me. They tell me how I inspire them to play, that really makes me feel good Alex.

Costanzo, Jack. Telephone Interview. 15 February 2007.

JOEY DE LEON JR

Joey De Leon Jr graduated from the Manhattan School of Music in classical percussion where he also won the conservatory's highest award for outstanding musicianship. Since then he has gained credits with an array of international artists including Justo Almario, Joe De Francesco, Jimmy Smith, Banda Bros, Luckman Jazz Orchestra and is the current percussionist with the Poncho Sanchez Latin jazz band. I conducted this interview with De Leon Jr via email.

PERTOUT: What type of exercises do you adhere to in your *conga* development?

DE LEON JR: Singles, doubles, paradiddles, groups of eighth notes, alternating each hand and descending to eventually singles. All kinds of tempos, slow, fast, medium, coming up with diverse stickings to give that idea that is some kind virtual rudiment. And of course I incorporate rudiments one or two at a time, just so I can get a little more involved with it. As far as sound, there is a new template for today's *conga* player. If we take the period of the 1960s and 1970s in terms of the player who took the slap and revolutionised it, that gave us the reason to slap with more intensity, more heart, you would have to say Tata Güines! Before that there was not the emphasis of technique in general, because the *conga* still at that time was more of a primal concept. It had not been academically applied into a more cerebral approach. Then another guy who rose to fame with Irakere, took it from where Tata begun and then added not three, four but five *congas*. He is sorely missed, his name was Jorge 'El Niño' Alfonso. His sound took the *congas* and a concept to new heights, this was in Cuba. In New York, you had guys like the late Frankie Malabe, as well as Tony Jimenez, Eladio Perez, Tommy Lopez, and of course Papo Pepin and Johnny Rodriguez. It is important to note that the West Coast had some formidable figures namely Armando Peraza, my hero, maestro Francisco Aguabella and of course, everyone's hero, Don Ramon 'Mongo' Santamaria. There are so many more names, but I used these guys because of their sound and their impact on me. I think it's important to note that as a player you are judged on certain criteria such as sound, time, musicality, accompanying and supporting skills as well as on soloing technique.

PERTOUT: Did you study with someone in particular who guided you in their particular approach?

DE LEON JR: I guess my first would have to be my father. I'll also say my first *conga* teacher Rene Lopez Jr whose father is a famous ethnomusicologist specializing in Afro-Cuban music. Two other teachers, Jeff Kraus, Jim Preiss, both classical players although Jeff was more influential for the Cuban stuff and Jim Preiss was influential in terms of sound.

PERTOUT: Do you practice hands on the drum, with sticks, or on a *tablita*?

DE LEON JR: Both, since I also play *timbales* frequently, I use both. I like the *tablita*, but use it sparingly, maybe I'll start.

PERTOUT: Do you incorporate all the drum rudiments? Do you find them suitable? Do you incorporate all the *conga* sounds? Do you make up your own hand sound variations?

DE LEON JR: I feel that I have, but it's been awhile since I've dissected it. I think they can be suitable, but whether they translate in a musical way, I don't know about all of them. My thought is to be open about it and find a rudiment and break it down. I make my own sound variations and I feel that most of the new generation players are doing that as well.

PERTOUT: Is the method based on a particular player that you have studied?

DE LEON JR: Giovanni without a doubt! Of course Changuito who introduced Giovanni to *la mano secreta*.

PERTOUT: Could you describe Changuito's *la mano secreta*?

DE LEON JR: Is it a set of set exercises or ideas of exercises. I work on it all the time. It involves the development of *la muñeca*. It involves all kinds of exercises and then combining with the other hand to form a linear approach to drumming. If you're familiar with the great Berklee drum Professor Gary Chaffee and his method, then you're familiar with this kind of approach. Melody and constantly connecting one idea with one another, you start to create this kind of language.

PERTOUT: Are there any other approaches in evidence in terms of hand techniques?

DE LEON JR: Many countries have incredible versions of hand technique. In Brazil, there is a new movement of playing the *pandeiro* which now the thumb is not the dominating force, but rather the whole hand and twisting the instrument with your other hand creating this heel-toe effect, but with both hands.

PERTOUT: Who are the players do you feel that have changed the *conga* drum technique spectrum?

DE LEON JR: Giovanni, Changuito, Anthony Carillo, Richie Flores, Paoli Mejias, Javier Oquendo, Bobby Allende, Marc Quiñones and of course the late Miguel 'Anga' Diaz, may he rests in peace.

De Leon Jr, Joey. Email Interview. 5 February 2007.

LARRY HARLOW

Pianist, composer Larry Harlow was born in Brooklyn, New York where he graduated from the prestigious New York High School of Music and Art. He made a trip to Cuba in the late 1950s intensely studying Afro Cuban music. On his return to New York he was signed by the most important label in the history of Latin music Fania records. For the label he has produced fifty albums as a leader, two hundred and sixty for various artists and thirty as the producer and pianist for the legendary Fania All Stars. I conducted this interview with Harlow via email.

PERTOUT: Could you tell me about your professional experiences with Mongo Santamaria?

HARLOW: I started playing with Mongo Santamaria in the early 1970s at the Yankee Stadium Concert with the Fania All Stars. We also toured Japan, Europe and South America after he replaced Ray Barretto in 1975.

PERTOUT: In which period of his life did you work with him and for how long?

HARLOW: It was off and on for about five years with the Fania All Stars.

PERTOUT: Did you ever discuss which players inspired him?

HARLOW: Yes. Armando Peraza was his childhood friend and they came from Cuba together playing for a dance team. He was said that Armando was the best *conguero* he had ever heard.

PERTOUT: Was Mongo Santamaria a strong player of the drum? How does he measure in terms of sound, rhythmic control and overall creativity to other players you have worked with?

HARLOW: Mongo was a very heavy hitter. He played with drive and force with a great 'slap'. He also possessed very creative 'special licks' that he always played in his solos.

PERTOUT: In your opinion what were Mongo's strengths?

HARLOW: His strength was impeccable time and sound. He was a great leader without ego and encouraged all his band musicians to compose and contribute to the overall band concept and style.

PERTOUT: Was he well versed in explaining his tunes or did he have a musical director?

HARLOW: Mongo always had a music director. Marty Sheller comes to mind and before him Pat Patrick.

PERTOUT: Did you get to play or discuss folkloric styles in your time with him?

HARLOW: Being a *santero* as was Mongo, we sometimes found ourselves at a *toque de santo* together. We often spoke about the *santeria* religion as it was practiced in Cuba.

PERTOUT: How did you develop your understanding of Afro 6/8 patterns? Did you develop drumming skills in order to understand the correct feel, the two pulse?

HARLOW: I was always a frustrated drummer. I always felt 6/8 as a two pulse with triplets. I also spent lots of time listening to many folkloric 6/8 drumming recordings when I was learning Afro Cuban music.

PERTOUT: Do you know how he composed tunes, did he sing melodies to a piano player?

HARLOW: He would sing melodies to his music director or arranger.

PERTOUT: Do you have any touring recollections of Mongo?

HARLOW: Mongo was a perfect gentleman and mild mannered man. One day on a Japanese television show he was sweating a lot and bang off went some special effects, canons shoot out small white styrofoam balls. Within a minute his whole face was covered with white balls, the whole band screamed! He just smiled and continued playing as if nothing had happened.

PERTOUT: Any other aspects you would like to convey in regards to Mongo?

HARLOW: He was the most honest of bandleaders. He would mix great jazz players with Latin rhythms and create his special 'watermelon man' sound.

Harlow, Larry. Email Interview. 12 April 2005.

MARK LEVINE

Pianist Mark Levine has played and recorded with Woody Shaw, Mongo Santamaria, Joe Henderson, Bobby Hutcherson, Freddie Hubbard, Cal Tjader, Tito Puente, Milt Jackson, Pete Escovedo, James Moody, Dizzy Gillespie, Sonny Fortune, Eddie Henderson, Chet Baker and Poncho Sanchez among others. As an educator, Levine authored two extremely successful books *The Jazz Piano Book* and *The Jazz Theory Book*. In 2003 Levine received a Grammy nomination for his release *Isla*. I conducted this interview personally with Levine.

PERTOUT: I wanted to ask you about your experiences with Mongo in terms of his leadership skills.

LEVINE: When I joined the band which was around 1968, *Watermelon Man* had been a hit for several years so the band had already an established protocol. Several players had been in the band for years already. I joined the band at the same time as Sonny Fortune and another woodwind player who didn't stay in the band for very long. But the rest had been there for quite some time, players like Steve Berrios, Julito Collazo and Ray Maldonado. So the band was moving and nothing much changed except for the personnel. Mongo was fairly easy to work for when he was in a good mood, if he was in a grumpy mood I basically stayed out of his way.

PERTOUT: Did he rehearse the band a lot?

LEVINE: No, we had one or two rehearsals at the most when I joined the band, because myself and the two woodwind players were new. I don't recall rehearsing after that at all except when we did the *Afro American Latin* record date as there were a few new charts. The record date was open ended it lasted several hours. At that time if people did a record they did it in one day. Sometimes you did it in three hours.

PERTOUT: Did he explain *montunos* or any other patterns to you at all?

LEVINE: No, maybe to Steve Berrios but you know I knew how to play *montunos* and that was basically what I had to do plus I knew lots of good jazz voicings, so I think I was quite prepared for the gig.

PERTOUT: What about in terms of 6/8 rhythms would he explain the background?

LEVINE: Not really. We played *Obatala* and of course *Afro Blue* and he didn't really tell me of any specific patterns I had to adhere to. I don't think Mongo was a schooled musician in the western sense. He knew Cuban music and some African music backwards and forwards but I don't remember him explaining anything or suggesting anything. I didn't really consider him a teacher to me, maybe he was to the percussionists.

PERTOUT: And in terms of playing with him what are your recollections of his sound?

LEVINE: I remember him as being very, very powerful *conguero*. As far as the *congueros* I have played with he was on a par with Francisco Aguabella, in terms of being able to dominate the band, very powerful player and so powerful that the band revolved around him, not so much because he was the leader but because he was the strongest voice in the band. It was easy to play with him because of that, the time was always there.

PERTOUT: How did he develop his compositions?

LEVINE: I didn't get to play a lot of his pieces when I was in the band, but I know that when Rogers Grant was in the band he would sing a melody to Rogers who would then write it

down and maybe suggest a chord. I don't recall him writing anything down on paper when I was with him.

PERTOUT: And so in terms of repertoire was this during his more r&b tinged period?

LEVINE: Yes, *Watermelon Man* was his big hit, and then the second hit he had was *Cloud Nine* which was a silly tune, so it was that type of Latin jazz. We didn't really play any *salsa*, there were some Latin jazz charts in the band, William Allen, the bass player and of course Marty Sheller who was associated with Mongo for many, many years as a writer had great charts which we played, and they were good writers. He played one chart of mine *Sheila* which became *Linda Chicana*. I don't recall ever playing any *salsa* dance style repertoire, I don't remember ever playing a dance gig with Mongo, we played clubs, television shows, those type of gigs.

PERTOUT: What is your assessment of Mongo's style of ensemble direction?

LEVINE: Mongo's thing was pretty much the same thing every night. As the so called musical director my job was to count off tunes and carry this huge box with all the music, but with all the music in the box we tended to play the same twelve to fifteen tunes, which I found true of Willie Bobo, Cal Tjader and other people I worked with, it's easy to fall into that, the tunes that you play for a while, they tend to play themselves, people know their parts and play well on them and so there wasn't a whole lot of creativity in that direction while I was in the band.

PERTOUT: And the difference with someone like Francisco Aguabella in terms of directing the ensemble?

LEVINE: I was in Francisco's first band, and he was extremely nervous at the beginning, I have seeing him since then as a band leader and he has chilled out quite a bit, when we started rehearsing by the time we played the first gig there were only two original members left because he was so nervous as a band leader that he would replace people if they missed a rehearsal, he was already in his forties but he had never been a band leader before and was extremely nervous about the challenges. His playing was so musical though. We were playing dance music, salsa, all the charts were new, and so there was not set routine in the band, you

know when you play *Watermelon Man* three times a night, and you don't do very much different on it, and Mongo didn't want you to, the people wanted the same sound as the record. But in contrast Francisco's solos to me were the most creative solos from any *conguero* that I had ever played with. Maybe Mongo on a different situation would have impressed me creatively as well. This is not a criticism of Mongo it was the situation, but Francisco was pure creativity, you never really knew what he was going to play, so many rhythms, counter-rhythms, cross-rhythms, poly-rhythms that I have never heard any other *conguero* ever use. Just sheer creativity.

PERTOUT: And what happened to the release of *Afro American Latin*?

LEVINE: Well I think Columbia records were expecting another *Watermelon Man* or *Cloud Nine* and when they heard the opening track *Obatala* they weren't expecting that and that record was shelved for thirty-one years! In some ways I feel that that was one of the most creative records he ever made, certainly in the post *Watermelon Man* era and Columbia records was just not ready for it.

PERTOUT: Do you see Mongo as one of the founders of the Latin jazz movement?

LEVINE: Oh definitely. At the time the Latin jazz movement was headed by Mongo, Willie Bobo and Cal Tjader, and a couple of others, maybe Pucho & The Latin Soul Brothers and others on the lower level but at the top it was definitely Mongo, Willie and Cal. So definitely he was the founding father of the style. And I think he would be recognised even more as a founding father now if Columbia would have released that record when we first recorded it. I think quite frankly that it hurt his career, the fact that they sat on that record. It would have been a little more different, a more creative direction for him.

PERTOUT: What other *congueros* have impressed you in terms of their commitment to the Latin jazz movement?

LEVINE: Poncho Sanchez I feel has been very successful in carrying the Mongo tradition, to me his records are very much like Mongo's, essentially the same style, but I hesitate to criticise Poncho because he is such a great musician, but I don't think he has moved the music forward, but he certainly expanded the popularity base. He introduced a lot of people to Latin

jazz. Another one of course is Ray Barretto, definitely a force for the music. He has done so many styles, *charanga*, *salsa*, he has also played on so many jazz records, he kind of invented that playing, a loose *conguero* style that fits in with jazz. It fitted much better with the swing ride pattern. Not everybody was crazy about it but certainly drummers were very comfortable with his style.

Levine, Mark. Personal Interview. 12 May 2005.

JOSE MADERA

Jose Madera is a respected arranger, conductor, percussionist and musical director. Madera worked with Tito Puente for over thirty-two years, serving for a number of years as Puente's musical director. Madera also teaches percussion and conducts regular big band workshops at the famed Harbor Conservatory for the Performing Arts in New York City, specialising in the music of Tito Puente, Machito, and Tito Rodriguez. I conducted this interview with Madera via email.

PERTOUT: How you did you develop your *clave* knowledge in terms playing the music and arranging in *clave*?

MADERA: Having grown up around the Machito and Puente bands, I learned *clave* from those experiences and it's also something that I feel when I play. It's ingrained in me.

PERTOUT: There is a version of *Afro Blue* played by Tito Puente's Golden All Stars that contains all the correct *clave* changes, are you responsible for this arrangement?

MADERA: I did not have anything to do with the Golden Men cd, I don't know who fixed the tune as far as the *clave* is concerned on that recording.

PERTOUT: In terms of not sticking to arranging in the traditional *clave* sense (adding or subtracting bars to work in *clave*) some contemporary Cuban performers and composers have openly stated "we are Cubans and so we have *clave* license" how do you feel about this?

MADERA: As far as having license to change or play phrases that are out of *clave* as a lot of the newer Cuban bands tend to do, I find that to be incorrect. Tito Puente would never allow that and neither would I.

Madera, Jose. Email Interview. 25 June 2007.

PAOLI MEJIAS

Born in Puerto Rico, New York based Paoli Mejias has worked with an array of artists in both the Latin and jazz fields including Luis Enrique, Marc Anthony, Tito Puente, La India, Seis del Solar, Dave Samuels, Alex Acuña, Dave Valentin, Danilo Perez, David Sanchez, Kip Hanrahan and Paquito D'Rivera. He toured the world with Eddie Palmieri with whom he worked for over eight years and has since formed his own ensemble releasing *Mi Tambor* in 2004. I conducted this interview with Mejias via email.

PERTOUT: What type of exercises do you adhere in your *conga* development?

MEJIAS: All exercises of drum rudiments applied in the *conga*. I run regularly and always exercise and I work with the drum searching for the best sound in creating new patterns.

PERTOUT: Did you study with someone who guided you in their particular approach?

MEJIAS: The development of my technique I learned on my own. My teacher of *bata* was Jose Ramirez.

PERTOUT: Do you practice hands on the drum, with sticks, or on a *tablita*?

MEJIAS: All three!

PERTOUT: Do you incorporate all the family of drum rudiments? Do you incorporating all *conga* sounds to drum rudiments? Do you make up your own hand sound variations to the standard drum rudiments?

MEJIAS: All of the above that you mention are part of my practice regimen.

PERTOUT: Is the method based on a particular model? Giovanni's perhaps?

MEJIAS: At first yes, I applied many exercises of Giovanni, Changuito and other drummers. Over the years I've invented my own exercises as well.

PERTOUT: Have you worked on Changuito's *mano secreta* approach?

MEJIAS: Yes I have, and I've used it to develop other combinations of exercises.

PERTOUT: Are there any other approaches in evidence to you in terms of hand technique?

MEJIAS: I've spent a lot of time working out my own personal sound from my hands. I've taken the time to work and get the sound that I like.

PERTOUT: Who are the players do you feel that have changed this spectrum?

MEJIAS: Giovanni Hidalgo, Tata Güines and Richie Flores in terms of sound and technique.

Mejias, Paoli. Email Interview. 25 February 2007.

GRAHAM MORGAN

Born in Melbourne Australia, Morgan studied with Joe Morello and Murray Spivak in Los Angeles in 1962. His remarkable career has spanned five decades and has taken him from playing on the first Australian ABC television broadcast to recording a live album at Carnegie Hall with Cleo Laine. He was the staff drummer at GTV9 for over twenty years and worked on shows for all the networks. His drumming can be heard on hundreds of albums, soundtracks and radio and television commercials. I conducted this interview with Morgan via telephone.

PERTOUT: The rudiments are an essential component in the development of drumming skills, how did those patterns developed?

MORGAN: Well in the army they use to have drum calls for the various events of the day, such as a drum call for the breakfast call, in the same way later they had bugle calls, this is going back hundreds of years, the drummer in the army was terribly important, they would have an attack drum call for infantry, from that area rudiments developed. For example they had a certain amount of drum rolls that were employed for the breakfast call, and the player had to learn five, seven, nine, ten, eleven, thirteen, fifteen rolls. The various rudiments were

named so they could be audibly heard, they could be transferred by a player to the instrument as they heard it, for example 'pa-ra-di-ddle', the syllables gave you the tapping sound and rhythm, or like 'ra-ta-ma-cue' that is the phonetic sound of a pattern.

PERTOUT: How have the rudiments evolved over the years?

MORGAN: When I first started playing as a young boy, there were thirteen basic rudiments in the National Association of Rudimental Drummers, and that was very quickly boosted to twenty six. They were considered the norm. Since I would say the 1980s the most recognised authority, the International Percussive Arts Society increased the total number to forty. I have the good fortune of being a close friend of Joe Morello and the last time we met he took me to an amazing seminar at Seton University in New Jersey where I heard some innovations that were called '21st Century Drum Rudiments'. These are phenomenally hard to play, complex patterns, for example there is one which incorporates three strokes with one hand and two with the other, we can call it a group of five, but the three is made up of practically one motion, and it's the same motion that is absolutely required for fast jazz playing on a cymbal. There have always been other forms as well, for example in Switzerland in the Basel region for hundreds of years had their own version of rudiments, for example in the Swiss army triplets they had flams before the first note, you also had a five stroke roll with a flam at the beginning. Now a lot of jazz players naturally did things like that, while improvising, players such as Buddy Rich for example. The list of drummers from jazz to pop that incorporate the rudiments is enormous. You can hear them in so many styles from Steve Gadd on *Fifty Ways to Leave a Lover* to Tony Williams using Swiss army triplets on so many of his musical adventures from Miles Davis to the work with his own Lifetime group.

PERTOUT: Do you see the rudiments as essential learning at a starting point in the development?

MORGAN: Yes I do. Personally I didn't have much formal tuition until when I was in my 20s and met Joe Morello. I went to the US and studied with him as well as with Murray Spivak and Jim Chapin in New York. Those players came from a very strong rudimental background. The beautiful thing technically with the rudiments is that it forces the weaker hand to develop as you have to lead the patterns both ways, and what happens in playing many styles on drum kit

be it folk, funk, jazz is that you can easily lead one way only, with the rudimental approach you might play that five stroke roll right, right, left, left, right, but then you have to go left, left, right, right, left.

Morgan, Graham. Telephone Interview. 29 June 2007.

DAVID 'LA MOLE' ORTIZ

Puerto Rican master drummer David Ortiz became known as '*quinto mayor*' ("master of the quinto drum") after his experience as a member of Rafael Cortijo Y Su Combo. He has performed with an array of artists including Eddie Palmieri and with his own ensemble The Omega Drums Project. He conducts workshops and clinics worldwide and his former students include Giovanni Hidalgo, Richie Flores, Anthony Carrillo and Jimmie Morales. I conducted this interview with Ortiz via telephone.

PERTOUT: How did you start playing in Puerto Rico?

ORTIZ: I learned to play with my family since everybody knew how to play the *congas*, we use always have a *rumba* close to where we lived, but when I joined Rafael Cortijo Y Su Combo, that is where I really learned to play, to accompany big bands and to play in a *conjunto*.

PERTOUT: You have a wonderful reputation as a teacher as well.

ORTIZ: I have dedicated myself more at teaching in the last few decades. Since, I have been always aware of the developments of the Cuban players and of course in what takes place here with the Puerto Rican players, I realised that we have arrived at two diverse styles. The manner in which the Cubans and the Puerto Ricans play the *conga* are very different and I teach these differences to my students. I have a list of great students who are practicing professional musicians and I am in the process of featuring all of them with me in short films that I have been putting together here in Puerto Rico and that I have put on the internet at youtube.com.

PERTOUT: You possess wonderful technique, I wanted to ask you how you developed it? How and when did you decide to incorporate the drum rudiments on *congas*?

ORTIZ: My first student was a young Anthony Carrillo whom I was teaching as I was playing in a band with his dad. Then Anthony brought his nine year old friend with him, this was Giovanni Hidalgo. I use to watch young Giovanni incorporating all the drum rudiments which were originally intended for snare drum on *congas*. So my style developed very much like his because I spent so many years teaching, practising and playing together practically every day.

PERTOUT: So a young Giovanni was already developing the drum rudiments on *congas*?

ORTIZ: Yes he was already there. It was a natural progression for him. The majority of people who play the *conga* have taken a look at each rudiment and practiced hard to develop them. I noticed that, with Giovanni, it seemed more like a very natural development, almost an easy flow. I ended up following him in this quest as well and unconsciously developed the drum rudiments on *congas*. Later I would analyse the diverse sticking and was able to break them down and see a paradiddle, a double stroke roll and other rudiments giving me the ability to teach the techniques to my students.

PERTOUT: And so how do you see the technical side of *congas* which has now developed?

ORTIZ: When I analyse it, I realised that only a handful of Cuban players incorporate the drum rudiments in their playing. I know Changuito for example does not incorporate this on *congas* and apparently does not like it either. This was stated also in an educational video where Giovanni and Changuito were talking about this very subject and Changuito said he did not like to use these rudiments. But I really enjoy this new area of *conga* playing. I really like to incorporate them in my playing, for me they are like the soul, a beautiful complement. And I do teach this to my students. If I do a clinic somewhere and the students are at an advance level I always explain this to them, and we do use them all, flam, doubles, paradiddles, ruffs.

PERTOUT: How do you teach *congas*, what is the development you incorporate?

ORTIZ: The method of teaching I use starts with the basics, incorporating sounds, then patterns, then how to accompany, then I look at the diverse styles such as *bomba*, *plena*, *rumba*, if I see that the individual is quite advanced, like the students that you see on my youtube.com videos, then I go into the drum rudiments and show how to develop double strokes in an easier form. I always make sure to tell them though that they need to develop the

drum rudiments but that they are not everything in conga playing. The *conga* is like a telephone, it's made up of many *golpes* but it is important to *conversar* or play the *conga* in a melodic manner. The drum rudiments are used when you need those extra bullets. I have to tell you in the 1980s I didn't use the drum rudiments. I realised slowly that I was developing them unconsciously. People use to point them out to me, they use to say "you seem to be using doubles," when I heard that I decided to seriously develop them.

PERTOUT: When did the method of achieving open double tones by using the 'palm-fingers' technique develop? Who do you feel was responsible for that?

ORTIZ: I can tell you Alex truthfully, that extra-terrestrial being of our local history here is Giovanni Hidalgo. At three years of age he was already playing. With me he developed because we use to play every day, from Monday to Sunday. It was a really serious development time. This is when the method was born, while we were playing. But more and more talented individuals are coming up.

PERTOUT: When did Giovanni meet with Changuito?

ORTIZ: I believe he met Changuito when he went to Cuba in 1981 with the band Batacumbele, Giovanni would have been around eighteen years old as he is now forty-four. Now Changuito is a drummer but does not use drum rudiments on the *conga* drum, he has said he does not like the incorporation of them, but I feel that it is up to the player to look at what to incorporate. Look at Richie Flores he is a little younger than Giovanni and Anthony, but Anthony showed Richie the drum rudiments, Giovanni use to also show Richie little tricks. You know Alex one thing, I always told my students that if they were interested in competitions that they should go to the hippodrome and run with the horses. Here we don't do that, we are blessed with a touch from god and we develop this with time.

PERTOUT: How do you see the older generation of players?

ORTIZ: I admire all the Cuban players. The first time I heard Los Papines I said this is my group, they play *rumba* and do it beautifully. Mongo Santamaria and others of that style I feel that they played in a simpler style. Us, Puerto Ricans are the ones responsible with the development of new techniques on *congas*, 'the modern sound'. Of the younger generation in

Cuba I would have to say Miguel 'Anga' Diaz , may he rest in peace, use to possess quite a bit of technique. Now the young modern Cubans coming up are also incorporating these new techniques, the older generation didn't. Here in Puerto Rico we all use this, I know the Newyoricans use it and so do the players in California.

Ortiz, David. Telephone Interview. 3 July 2007.

ARMANDO PERAZA

Armando Peraza is one of the most important and revered figures in the world of Afro-Cuban percussion. He has performed on hundreds of albums while his compositions have been recorded and performed widely. During his long and prolific career which has spanned more than sixty years Peraza has performed and recorded with such artists as Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Machito, Art Tatum, Mongo Santamaria, Cal Tjader, George Shearing and Santana among many others. I conducted this interview with Peraza via telephone.

PERTOUT: *Señor* Peraza where were you born?

PERAZA: I was born in Havana, Cuba.

PERTOUT: How did you develop your skills, did you study with anyone in particular?

PERAZA: I will be honest with you, no one showed me anything (laughs). I just got a *conga* and started playing. Then a friend of mine said "Armando I need a *conga* player" that was Conjunto Kubavana which at that time was one of the best groups. It was *tipico* Cuban music and after that I left with Mongo Santamaria for Mexico City.

PERTOUT: And who influenced you when you were developing your skills?

PERAZA: In Cuba many. There are phenomenal players like Tata Güines, Chano Pozo. I replaced Chano Pozo in Dizzy Gillespie's band. I use to play *bongos* in Chano's group in Cuba, just before he left for the US and developed that legendary union with Dizzy.

PERTOUT: While in Cuba did you get a chance to play folkloric music as well dance style?

PERAZA: I was involved in lots of areas. And in the US and with Mongo I also got to play and record folkloric styles, you know *rumba* and all those kind of things which we recorded for the Fantasy label.

PERTOUT: When did you meet Mongo Santamaria?

PERAZA: I met Mongo in Cuba. I use to replace Mongo and he use to replace me. Then we went to Mexico City together. We lived in Mexico City together. We stayed in Mexico because there was a Cuban ballet called Las Mulatas Del Fuego, and we use to play for this group. I also got to play with a very famous orchestra at the time, the Perez Prado Orchestra. Then we travelled to New York together and split up when I moved to the West Coast.

PERTOUT: I have read about your trip with Mongo Santamaria from Mexico to the US in the late 1940s could you tell me about that?

PERAZA: Oh it is correct. I was with Mongo in Mexico and we travelled to the US and specifically to New York in 1949. And then in New York I got to record with Machito's band Machito & His Afro Cubans. Then I got the privilege of playing with Charlie Parker and Buddy Rich. I made all these albums, then I recorded a few things with Tito Puente and then I also played with the George Shearing Quintet for many years. I moved to San Francisco and played with Cal Tjader for many years. In Los Angeles I played with Peggy Lee, she was a movie star. I also recorded with Stan Kenton.

PERTOUT: What type of *congas* do you prefer?

PERAZA: Let me explain the way I see it. If you can play, you can play on anything. We use to play often on *cajones* you see the *cajon* in Flamenco styles now, you see? I can play that. I can play on any surface. If you play on wood it actually helps you, then when you play on the skin its nothing. You can control it. To learn to slap for example, in order to develop it properly you should do it on a low *conga*, the *tapao*, the dry sound. If you learn to play on the *cajon* is beautiful, you develop your power. It's better to start on one *conga* and dominate one *conga* first.

PERTOUT: And skins?

PERAZA: I prefer to play on any animal skin. The new synthetic heads are too tough on impact. There is no bounce in your hand, its stiff.

PERTOUT: How do you see Mongo's influence on *congas*?

PERAZA: Well Mongo was one of the top, he was one of the foundations. There is also Francisco who is phenomenal and the folkloric side of Francisco is incredible.

PERTOUT: And how are things for you in San Francisco these days?

PERAZA: Well I am representing LP, they have some signature *congas* in the market place, hope you get to see them over in Australia.

Peraza, Armando. Telephone Interview. 2 July 2005.

BOB QUARANTA

Pianist, composer Bob Quaranta was a member of Mongo Santamaria's band for over ten years. During his tenure with Santamaria he also composed for the band and served as its musical director. Quaranta is a graduated from Philadelphia College of Performing Arts receiving his Bachelor of Arts in Music. He has performed with an array of artists including Dave Valentin, Willie Colon, Ray Barretto, John Scofield, Tommy Igoe and Angel Canales among others. I conducted this interview with Quaranta via email.

PERTOUT: I wanted to start by asking you about your experiences in developing rhythmical skills to be able to play and understand tunes such as *Afro Blue*. Were you always aware of the 6/8 pulse in two? Did Mongo help you in your development of these styles?

QUARANTA: I think I became aware of the 6/8 pulse in two from listening to McCoy Tyner with Coltrane on songs like *My Favorite Things* and *Afro Blue* and other jazz waltzes that Coltrane played emphasizing 2-3. Also, Chick Corea's *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs* recording was a big influence. However, I think playing with Mongo was the biggest influence of all in regard to playing 6/8. He didn't say anything specific but it was mainly from continuous playing. I think that he felt when you joined the band you were ready although I felt like a beginner. As far as the actual patterns it was from a piano *guajeo* that Marty had written for Mongo's version of

Virtue that I first became familiar with the 6/8 bell part in that the piano part that Marty wrote was a melodic version of the *bembe* bell rhythm.

PERTOUT: I am extremely interested in your experiences also in analysing the various sections of the tune in relation to *clave*, was this discuss at rehearsals? How did you develop the tune?

QUARANTA: There was no discussion of the *clave* concerning my role in *Afro Blue*. I was basically following the script. It wasn't until later that I realized that parts of the melody started on the 'three-side' and parts started on the 'two-side'. It was the quarter notes in the main melody in bars eleven and fifteen versus the dotted quarter notes in Coltrane's recording that I had to get used to. Also, I think because of the strict 3/4 character of the bass part I may have initially felt the time more in three than in the 6/8 two bar phrase in two. So at that point *clave* wasn't really influencing me but there was no discussion as far as my part was concerned.

PERTOUT: The first version that I am aware of is the one featured on Mongo's *Afro Roots* album which does not contained *clave* direction changes. The second version is the one Mongo employed with later bands and included a change of *clave* into the B section but not a properly executed change back. Marty Sheller (whom I interviewed) pointed out that it was 'out of *clave*' coming out of the B section but that Mongo said it was right as it felt fine musically, How do you see that? Incidentally in the arrangement that Tito Puente played with his Golden All Stars (which featured Mongo recorded live in NY in the 90s) they actually do add that extra bar after the B, are you familiar with that arrangement?

QUARANTA: The second version of *Afro Blue* is the one that I am most familiar with and this is the version that I played during my time with Mongo and had the opportunity to record with him on *Live at Jazz Alley*. However, around 1985 Marty Sheller put a band together to play for a reunion at Columbia University in New York. This band included: Mongo Santamaria, Ignacio Berroa, Frank Malabe, Andy Gonzalez, Lew Soloff, Barry Rogers, Bobby Porcelli and me. For this occasion Marty did an arrangement of *Afro Blue* which includes the extra bar after the bridge. There is a home video of this gig which I'm hoping to get a hold of and hopefully will include this arrangement. I use this version in my teaching at The Collective in New York. I think Mongo's saying it felt right in the second version without the extra bar reflects, what I assume

is , his sense of *clave* being something that should be felt and not policed. I had a conversation with Lincoln Goines about this subject recently and his view is that the concept of 'in *clave*' was more a result of African folklore coming into contact with European instruments and the need for organisation to create musical arrangements for dancing.

PERTOUT: Where did you learn about *clave* and about arranging and playing in *clave*? Did Mongo help you in this regard?

QUARANTA: Marty Sheller was a big help to me in understanding Mongo's music and Latin music in general and I consider him a good friend and mentor. Playing with Mongo was extremely helpful in learning to play in different styles because the songs were style specific. A song could be a *cha-cha*, *afro*, *guajira*, *mambo*, *son montuno*, *son*, 6/8 both 3:2 and 2:3, and non Afro Cuban rhythms such as *samba*, *bossa nova* and *soca*. Mongo taught me by example. When I first started playing with him if I played something he didn't like he would give a devastating look. Eventually the looks stopped which was great. I last played with Mongo in 1994 and last spoke to him around 1998 but we continued to exchange greeting cards at Christmas time until 2002. He would always ask about my wife and children and when he died it was like losing a family member.

Quaranta, Bob. Email Interview. 8 July 2007.

RUBEN RODRIGUEZ

Ruben Rodriguez has been recognised as one of the leading Latin bass players in the US. He has worked with an array of artists including Mongo Santamaria, Eddie Palmieri, Grover Washington Jr, Roberta Flack, Willie Colon, Dave Valentin, Hilton Ruiz, Johnny Pacheco, Jose Fajardo, Machito, Tito Puente and Celia Cruz. Along with producer Sergio George, Rodriguez has been credited for revolutionising the sound of contemporary *salsa* music. I conducted this interview with Rodriguez via email.

PERTOUT: Could you describe your experiences as a member of Mongo Santamaria's band?

RODRIGUEZ: For me, it was a school. I thought I could play 6/8 but in Mongo's band is where I learned to play the real deal.

PERTOUT: How did he conduct rehearsals? Was he well versed in his explanations of the tunes, or the rhythms employed in particular tunes or was someone else the musical director?

RODRIGUEZ: While Mongo didn't talk too much on stage he was in charge of the music all the time.

PERTOUT: Did you get to play some folkloric styles in your time with him at all?

RODRIGUEZ: I guess I would classify *Afro Blue* as a traditional 6/8 based on folkloric styles. We did some *cha cha cha, son, guaracha*. He had arrangements by Marty Sheller that were always interesting musically. We also played Latin jazz, '*mambo instrumental*' as Tito Puente used to call it, *guaguanco*, along with the r&b and funk elements which John Almendra and I provided.

PERTOUT: Was he a loud player on stage? How does he measure in terms of sound, control and overall rhythmic push compare to other *conga* players you have worked with?

RODRIGUEZ: Well, the late great Bobby Rodriguez, my hero, used to tell me that there was no *conguero* who hit harder than Mongo in his day. He also said that Mongo actually urinated blood after the sets.

PERTOUT: Did you ever discuss traditional styles with him?

RODRIGUEZ: He used to tell stories about back in the days in Cuba and the US, but I can't recall ever having a conversation about this specific subject.

PERTOUT: What about *Afro Blue* did he guide you through in terms of the style required?

RODRIGUEZ: What he wanted to hear on *Afro Blue*, and every other tune we played from me was what was written. I, like everybody else in the band wanted to be creative, after all we were playing creative music. But he wanted the bass to stay on the chart and not deviate from it. It would drive me crazy, so after a year of it, I left the band.

PERTOUT: Was he well versed in some other Afro American folkloric traditions?

RODRIGUEZ: Well, we did play some r&b, funk and soul tunes, but he played them Mongo's way. Once in a while he could groove to those authentically, but he played them his way.

PERTOUT: Did he ever discuss any *clave* direction issues with you? I spoke to Milton Cardona several years ago and he said that he told Mongo that the B section of *Afro Blue* was on the wrong side of the *clave*. I noticed that in the later years Mongo changed the *clave* in the B section (the way you play it on the video) the only problem is when it comes back to the next A it comes in on the wrong side of the *clave* with that arrangement, did that ever bother you?

RODRIGUEZ: Yeah that's right, but who am I to tell Mongo that? We just played it!

PERTOUT: In your opinion what were his strengths?

RODRIGUEZ: Rhythm!

PERTOUT: I read that he studied violin as a youngster.

RODRIGUEZ: I don't know about the violin. I don't think he was schooled.

PERTOUT: How did he compose? Singing possible melodies to a piano player? Was he able to write charts or throughout his career relied on others to do the musical director tasks?

RODRIGUEZ: As far as I know, he sang melodies to arrangers.

PERTOUT: Did you tour with him a lot? What were those experiences like?

RODRIGUEZ: I worked with him less than a year from July 1988 to March 1989. We started with the European tour that included the Quasimodo club performances and a bunch of dates on the West Coast. It seemed like we were there every month.

PERTOUT: I obtained a copy of a performance by Mongo Santamaria at Quasimodo.

RODRIGUEZ: Wow! Quasimodo in Berlin. Haven't played there since, that was in July 1988. That was a good band with Ray Vega, Bobby Porcelli and Mitch Frohman playing horns and Johnny Almendra on drums, Bob Quaranta on piano and I can't remember the percussionist, could have been Eddie Rodriguez. I probably played a solo intro to *Para Ti* it was the only bass feature on Mongo's gig. I would like a copy someday. Anyway, I've got a funny (now!) Mongo story that basically sealed my fate in the Mongo organisation. On my first rehearsal with the band, Mongo calls out *Afro Blue*, so me trying to be funny asked Afro who? now Mongo didn't

have a sense of humour and didn't like mine one bit. From there on it was downhill for my non-comedic self. I left on my birthday (March 6) in 1989 after playing the now defunct Village Gate club in New York.

PERTOUT: Any other aspects you would like to convey in regards to Mongo Santamaria?

RODRIGUEZ: As a *conguero* he was a pioneer. His work in 1955 on *Cuban Carnival* with the Tito Puente Orchestra is to me tasty, creative while always grooving, especially on *Para Los Rumberos*. But where I think he really made his mark was in being a band leader. He took Latin music to the next level commercially speaking. Others did it as well, but he did it with an ensemble not an orchestra. I feel he was the first real 'crossover' artist, way before Santana!

Rodriguez, Ruben. Email Interview. 6 June 2005.

DARIO ROSENDO

Dario Rosendo was born in Cuba and moved to the US in 1961. He knew Mongo Santamaria personally for more than thirty years. He is a *conga* player, a concert and events promoter, radio presenter and an avid *conga* drum collector. He currently resides in Miami. I conducted this interview with Rosendo via telephone.

PERTOUT: When did you get interested in *congas*?

ROSENDO: Back in Cuba there was a lot of *rumba* and in my neighbourhood particularly, and I just got fascinated by it. My father may he rest in peace being from Spanish background, was Galician and didn't understand why a little white boy like me was so interested in the Afro-Cuban styles of drumming. I always loved it though. I developed some things on my own and played as I felt, this was my childhood in Cuba and then we moved to the US around 1961.

PERTOUT: How and when did you commence your connection with Mongo?

ROSENDO: I had seeing Mongo on an Andy Williams television show when I was young and that image and sound stayed with me. Although I was in the US and the rock'n'roll sounds were prevalent and also part of my life, I had this strong Afro-Cuban connection. Later when I was a student in the late 1960s, there was a concert here in Miami featuring an array of artists

including Marvin Gaye and Mongo Santamaria. It was like a soul review type of concert. I went along with friends but had no money and could not afford the entry fee, then I noticed Mongo arriving in a bus. Now I knew he was Latin but didn't really know that he was Cuban. We approached him and asked him if we could him take the gear inside the venue to get in as we didn't have the money to pay. He immediately said you are compatriots, if you can help we'll all walk in together. And that's how my friendship with Mongo started. The next time I saw him was at Miami Dade Community College at a concert there where he also had Armando Peraza with him. Mongo gave me a *conga* lesson right there and then, in front of people after the concert.

PERTOUT: What did he show you?

ROSENDO: I asked him about the basic *tumbao* and he explained how to develop the left hand. He had this saying '*pura-madura*', he would tell me to make sure my left hand was sounding just like it was saying that, it had to sound like that phrase. Then he gave me his number and told me to call him if I ever got to New York. I did and spent many, many times with him. He became like family, as if he was my dad. From then on every time he came to Miami I would tell him not to bring his *congas* as I would take mine to the concerts. I would spend time with him and take him out and around. I spent a long time with him till he died. When he was dying in hospital I was there holding his hand. I loved him like a father, he was an amazing man.

PERTOUT: I believe in the last few years of his life he lived in Miami?

ROSENDO: Yes he was here, but I must say not very happy. He would always tell me that he didn't like the opinions of the exiled Cuban community as they are so right wing. He also felt that they were somewhat racist. As he was a black Cuban man he would often remind me that there were no black Cubans on television in Miami. Racism always bothered him. He suffered a lot when he was young. He would tell me that New York was a really different city, that in New York you could see black Latin Americans on television, that in contrast in Miami they were all white.

PERTOUT: Was he living in Miami with family?

ROSENDO: He was living with Yolanda, a woman who had been at one point in time associated with Joe Frazier, the boxer. He had a club in Philadelphia called The Knockout and Yolanda was the hostess there. Mongo used to play in that club, they developed a relationship and lived together. She used to look after him very well. That was the last eight years of his life. I think Yolanda was very good with him, she was a lot younger and really looked after him. In the last days of his life, Mongo lived alone, however he had family members close by.

PERTOUT: Where was the rest of his family?

ROSENDO: Ileana Santamaria who was his wife lived in New York. I think she worked for the United Nations. Her daughter Ileanita is the one who sings, I met her in nappies, nowadays she is a singer. Mongo was very proud of her. Mongo had six children, Ileanita is the youngest. Nancy is the oldest, then Monguito the pianist, then Felipe, Rosita, Felicia who lives in Los Angeles and then Ileanita. Monguito is in Miami and plays piano, he was with Fania records in the 1970s. He is now rehearsing a new band and trying to do a few things on the back of his father's name. Felipe who is an electrician is also a great *quinto* player, music in his blood.

PERTOUT: Can you tell me about his Vergara *congas*?

ROSENDO: Tommy Saito has the last set of Mongo's Vergara *congas*. He is a Japanese gentleman, who must be in his seventies and lives in California. When Mongo used to play with Cal Tjader, he was a fan of the band and would follow Mongo around. Mongo bought him three Vergara *congas* back when he went to Cuba to record for Fantasy records. The last set Mongo used to play actually belonged to Tommy, because Mongo's original sets had been robbed at The BlackHawk club in San Francisco. The *congas* Mongo has on the cover of *Live At The Village Gate* for example are his Vergara *congas*, the red one as well. Mongo use to often paint some of his *congas* red, as he was a *santero* and believed in *chango*. Sometimes he would leave them in the original wood colour. The ones on that cover of that particular album he had from 1961, he had them until a few months before he died. Then I packed them up for him and sent them back to his owner Tommy Saito. Generally he would paint one red and would say "that one is for *chango*."

PERTOUT: What about the ones on the cover of the *Soy Yo* album?

ROSENDO: Those were made by Jose Garcia. When Mongo bought three Vergara *congas* for Tommy Saito in Cuba he also bought three for Jose Garcia, a Mexican gentleman who now lives close by here. Jose had a relative that worked in fibreglass, he made some fibreglass moulds from Vergara *congas* and then gave them to Mongo as a present in the mid 1980s. I also bought three of those *congas* made by Jose Garcia and one day doing a performance with Andy Harlow in Calle Ocho someone took them.

PERTOUT: Who was behind the Vergara brand?

ROSENDO: Gonzalo Vergara was a Spaniard in Cuba who was not a player but an artisan. He made the best *congas*, like Stradivarius. He made *congas* from the late 1940s, maybe around 1948 to around 1964. He ended up in jail in 1964 and I believe he died there.

PERTOUT: And the brands you see around now like Skin On Skin, Junior, JCR, Matthew Smith, they are all Vergara lookalikes?

ROSENDO: Yes, they are imitating the Vergara *congas*, all based on the Vergara model.

PERTOUT: And what sort of skins do they use?

ROSENDO: In the main they are all using cow skins, as the mule skins are extremely hard to obtain.

PERTOUT: What type of skins did Mongo like on the *congas*?

ROSENDO: First of all don't forget that Mongo was a *bongo* player, he took up the *tumba* later, in Cuba he was known as a *bongo* player. Mongo use to like a very thin skin, he didn't like thick skins, he use to say that it affected the drum. As far as drums, his favourite were the Vergaras. He was endorsed by Meinl and played those *congas*, but his favourite were still those Vergaras, which actually belonged to Tommy Saito.

PERTOUT: As far as Mongo teaching you, what are your recollections?

ROSENDO: He showed me some things, some Afro-Cuban things like *palo* and he helped me with my *tumbao*. He used to tell me that I had a lazy left hand that I had to develop that hence

the phrase '*pura-madura*' that he kept repeating to me to hear the pattern. He would demonstrate that to me. Because he wasn't a schooled musician, he didn't read music or anything like that, it was all taught in that form. I remember meeting the great Kako who did a stint with Mongo and he asked me "did Mongo teach you '*pura-madura*'?" and I said "of course". The really helped me in my development.

PERTOUT: What about in terms of his professional friendships with colleagues in New York?

ROSENDO: At times he would tell me about his dissatisfaction with the Latin community in New York in terms of the adaptation of Cuban sounds and styles under the salsa umbrella. He was often angry about the fact that they used the terms salsa, or the 'New York sound'. To him it was all *mambo, cha cha cha*, it was *guaracha Cubana*, it was Cuban music. He felt that players such as Eddie Palmieri and Ray Barretto had this thing going on like that, Mongo used to say "New York sound? New York sound my ass, that is Cuban music." Ray Barretto really loved Mongo though, loved him, but Mongo never let him get close.

PERTOUT: What did he think of the new generation of players like Giovanni?

ROSENDO: Around 2001 I took him to a drum clinic by Giovanni Hidalgo and Giovanni dedicated the whole night to him. They played *Afro Blue, Para Ti, Come Candela, Mambo Mongo*, all those numbers. He was quite weak around that time already. Later he told me that he had felt like playing that night. He thought Giovanni was the best player around. He also loved Poncho Sanchez very much, Poncho was very sweet to him. Mongo was very proud of Poncho's career but would say Giovanni is in a class of his own. Giovanni loved Mongo as well. On that particular night Giovanni dedicated the concert to Mongo. He said that Mongo was like his father, he came down the stage and kissed Mongo's hands. Giovanni was also part of the Tito Puente Golden All Stars band that also included Mongo as an invited guest.

PERTOUT: Did he talk to you about his influences?

ROSENDO: Yes he would mention Clemente Piquero 'Chicho' who was Beny More's *bongo* player and also played with Septeto Boloña. They were from the suburb where Mongo grew up, the Jesus Maria district of Havana. Mongo replaced him as a teenager when 'Chicho' went to play with the Matamoros group. He was Mongo's idol.

PERTOUT: Was Mongo close to Chano Pozo?

ROSENDO: Yes they were friends, Mongo did play with Chano. Chano had a dance review in a club, it was called Congo Pantera and Mongo played *quinto*. Mongo and Silvestre Mendez were in the ensemble and Chano used to dress as a panther and dance. Mongo also played *bongos* in Chano's Conjunto Azul. Later Mongo and Armando Peraza played with a dance review that was called Pablito Y Linon, they went to Mexico then to the US. When Pablito killed Linon in a jealous rage then killed himself, Mongo and Armando started a duo and called themselves The Black Diamonds in New York. Then he joined Perez Prado and later Cal Tjader before developing his solo career.

Rosendo, Dario. Telephone Interview. 26 January 2007.

DANIEL SADOWNICK

Percussionist Daniel Sadownick earned a Master's degree in Musical Education at New York University, where he also studied composition. He then went on to study privately with percussion masters Andrew Cyrille, John Amira and Frankie Malabe. Since then Sadownick has toured with the Lionel Hampton Orchestra, Michael Brecker, Steely Dan, Nat Adderley, George Coleman, Dianne Reeves, Carl Allen, Dewey Redman among others. He is a faculty member at New York University. I conducted this interview with Sadownick via email.

PERTOUT: What type of exercises do you adhere in your *conga* development?

SADOWNICK: I practice a lot of rudiments such as single, double and triple paradiddles and mama-dada's as well. I also use the heel-toe movement in both hands to work on speed, dexterity and control. These are exercises that most trap drummers would use as well. I find them very essential to proper development. The heel-toe movement is also essential for developing the *mano secreta* techniques that Changuito and Giovanni have innovated. Also, it is important for one to exercise regularly and to stretch the hands and fingers.

PERTOUT: Did you study with someone in particular who guided you in their particular approach?

SADOWNICK: My wonderful teacher was Frankie Malabe, one of the premier teachers in New York City for many years. Not only was he immersed in the traditional folkloric vocabulary, he could also take that information and transform it into totally something new. However, the tradition and the *clave* were always there. He was a great teacher who always inspired me. He was also a dear friend and was like a father figure to me. When he passed away it was a deep loss for me. I also studied with a great percussionist in New York City named John Amira. And I studied drum set with Andrew Cyrille who is an innovator and leader in jazz who played with Cecil Taylor for many years.

PERTOUT: How do you see the family of drum rudiments, do you incorporate all the rudiments?

SADOWNICK: I think that rudiments are great for exercises, warming up and for some musical situations. However, I try not to rely on them too much. And yes, it is always a good thing to take whatever you learn and to come up with variations, especially with rudiments.

PERTOUT: Is the practice method you adhere to based on a particular model? Giovanni's style perhaps?

SADOWNICK: I think most percussionists will admit that Giovanni is a huge influence on their style of playing. I love Giovanni and practice a lot of what he does but I also have a lot of other influences. There are so many great percussionists who I would listen to. And the ones that I am going to mention are very melodic in their playing. There are many percussionists that have incredible speed but they all don't possess the melodic qualities of these great players: Jerry Gonzales, Daniel Ponce, Candido, Mongo Santamaria, Patato, Tata Güines, Poncho Sanchez. And of course I listen to and have been inspired by many drum kit players like Tony Williams, Elvin Jones, Roy Haynes, Andrew Cyrille.

PERTOUT: Could you describe what Changuito's *mano secreta* entails?

SADOWNICK: I became aware of Changuito's *mano secreta* a long time ago but, I was unable to process it and understand it. Later on, I would watch videos of him that were taken very nonchalantly in a hotel room or a classroom where his approach was clearer to me. And then, I would just practice it over and over and very slowly. I thought that I would never be able to get

it but then one day, like magic, after months and months of trying to figure it out, it finally appeared. To this day, I practice it over and over because I am never satisfied with my sound. I always want it to get better. As to what it entails, I could never faithfully describe it in words, it would be much easier for me to show you how it is done. It involves a lot of heel-toe movement but that still is not describing it in a proper way.

PERTOUT: Are there any other approaches in terms of *conga* technique that you admire, the Tata Güines approach perhaps?

SADOWNICK: Tata Güines is an incredible player. Just the sound that he gets from one tone can give you goose pimples. He inspired me to always work on my sound, whether it was one note or a flurry of fast notes. However, once I learned the *mano secreta* I always wanted to develop it into my own sound. You see, every great player has their own identity. You can tell when you hear a recording if it is John Coltrane or Sonny Rollins, they had their own styles. I don't consider myself a great player, I'm still evolving but, I do think that I have my own identity and my own sound. As much as I have my influences, I still work very hard on having my own sound. I try to come up with my own hand techniques and I think I have succeeded in some ways but I'm still trying to get to another level.

PERTOUT: Who are the players do you feel that have changed this spectrum?

SADOWNICK: Beside Giovanni and Changuito I would also say Richie Flores, Pedro Martinez, Raul Rekow, Chembo Corniel, John Rodriguez, Samuel Torres and many others.

Sadownick, Daniel. Email Interview. 27 February 2007.

TOMMY SAITO

Tommy Saito is a Japanese born *conga* player who was a personal friend of Mongo Santamaria. On one of Santamaria's trips to Cuba he bought Saito three Vergara *congas*. When Santamaria's own pair of Vergara *congas* were stolen outside a recording studio in the 1960s, he borrowed the ones he bought for Saito for the next thirty years! He currently resides in California. I conducted this interview with Saito via telephone.

PERTOUT: When did you start playing *congas*?

SAITO: I started in the 1950s. I was an eighteen year old kid, a young Japanese-American playing congas, it was never heard of (laughs). I was hired by a Puerto Rican band simply because a friend of mine told the leader "you see this Japanese kid here? he plays *congas*" and the guy said "you got to be kidding, come out and play." I was very shy, no experience playing and was a tad reluctant but the guy wanted me to play all the time, so we ended up playing ballroom dances and clubs. I learned by watching the great players like Mongo and Wilfredo Vicente. Whatever New York band came I was at the club sitting right in front of the band. I got to learn by watching these great guys.

PERTOUT: I wanted to ask you about your long friendship with Mongo Santamaria and the Vergara *congas* he bought for you in Cuba.

SAITO: Oh you know about the Vergara *congas*! (laughs). When I first met Mongo Santamaria, he and Wille Bobo were sideman in the Tito Puente Orchestra. We became friends and every time he came from New York, he would give me a call and so we became very good friends. Every time he went to Cuba he would go to the trouble of bringing me these 78 rpm records as he knew that I was serious about learning the music. Then when he joined Cal Tjader's band and moved to California I saw him even more, visiting each other's homes and meeting all the family members. That was my friendship with Mongo.

PERTOUT: What *congas* were you playing in those days?

SAITO: There was a company that was just starting out here run by Mariano Bobadilla. The company which was small was to become Gon Bops. This was running in Mariano's garage in the 1950s. The hardware was a bit rough, not as nice looking as they make today. He wasn't interested in big mass production or great looking hardware, he was just making custom congas. I was really interested in *congas*, every time Mongo came to town I was just blown away. I was a big jazz fan, you know Dizzy Gillespie and all that, until a radio program that was playing Latin music came in and I was just hooked. I saw Mongo, I introduced myself, told him I really liked the music. I liked the *congas* he was playing and so I asked whether I could get them somewhere. He then somehow told me that if I really wanted a pair he could get them for me. A few months went by and then I got a call from Mongo telling me that there were some

congas which were going to be sent directly to my house by the guy who makes them, Gonzalo Vergara. And that is how I got a pair of Vergaras, because of Mongo in the mid 1950s.

PERTOUT: And then he borrowed them from you?

SAITO: Yes. Mongo had a set with fibreglass coating on top, they are the red ones on many album covers. He got some guy in Oakland to apply the fibreglass so they would hold better, because he was constantly on the road. He played those for several years. They were in New York City on a recording date and they were moving the equipment from the place to the car. Obviously someone was watching them and not only the *congas*, but everything they were bringing out from the place and they stole everything. Then he called me in a panic and in Spanish, as I speak the language fluently said "*me robaron mis congas ayudame*" ("they stole my *congas* help me"). He then asked if he could borrow my set and how could I say no. My *congas* had the natural look, he then borrowed them for the next thirty years! The Vergara *congas* were based on Spanish wine barrels cut down, all the Vergara *congas* are Spanish wine barrels, they still smell of wine too. The *congas* and the hardware were made by Gonzalo Vergara and I believe his brother. His wife and sister use to make the covers, I still have the original covers for them. I still have the original cases as well. I have two which Mongo returned to me and one of the red fibreglass ones he had, he gave me one of those. The fibreglass is peeling off and I have it in my garage completely stripped of the fibreglass, but some of the staves are open so it needs to be reglued, someday I will get to do that. I love them around. When Gon Bops started I recall Wilfredo Vicente who played *congas* for Tito Rodriguez had Vergara *congas* and used to go to Mariano's garage to show him how those *congas* were made out of cut down barrels. Gong Bops made everything from brand new wood. It had to be dry and sometimes it took a whole year just to dry some wood up.

PERTOUT: Did you see Mongo Santamaria towards the end of his life?

SAITO: Yes as a matter of fact I went to visit him in Miami two months before he passed away. I didn't know he was going to pass. Mongo was very good to me, to my parents. I had lots of respect for him.

Saito, Tommy. Telephone Interview. 3 February 2007.

BOBBY SANABRIA

Inspired and encouraged By Tito Puente, Bobby Sanabria attended and graduated from the Berklee College of Music in 1979. He has since performed and recorded with a veritable who's who in the world of jazz and Latin music as well as his own critically acclaimed ensemble Ascension. His diverse experience includes work with artists such as Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Paquito D'Rivera, Mongo Santamaria, Ray Barretto, Larry Harlow, Candido Camero, Chico O'Farrill and Mario Bauza. I conducted this interview with Sanabria via email.

PERTOUT: Could you describe your professional experience as a member of Mongo Santamaria's band?

SANABRIA: I was with Mongo's band from 1982 to 1984. My responsibility in the ensemble was to play drumset and *timbales*. I was also featured playing *shekere* on *Afro Blue* where I would come out from behind the kit. That said let me explain that this was no easy task. First of all the responsibilities on both instruments were completely different. On the drumset one had to play funk and r&b oriented compositions and arrangements. Occasionally those pieces also had Afro-Cuban and or Brazilian elements in the arrangements so one had to know how to handle those aspects on the kit in an authentic manner. When I had to play *timbales*, it was strictly in an Afro-Cuban musical context and thus one had to know how to play the instrument in an authentic manner, whether it was a *mambo*, *cha-cha-cha*, *guajira*, *danzon*, *son montuno*, *bolero*, etc. At that time there only a handful of players that were versatile enough to do that and in reality there are only still a few today. You could/can literally count them on one hand. By that I mean knowing the traditions and techniques of both instruments and being able to authentically speak on both in regards to the genres they both represent. Most of the drummers that I see/hear play Afro-Cuban rhythms on the drumkit can't really deal with the nuances of the *timbales* because they haven't paid any dues on that axe. It's really a unique instrument. The reverse is also true. There are a lot of great *timbaleros* that don't know the intrinsic qualities of the drumset. After Steve Berrios left for good, Mongo had to literally use two players to cover the chair. One on drumset and one on *timbales*. Then he learned about me through the then musical director Doug Harris, who had heard about me from a bass player who was a student along with me at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, Lenny Bradford around 1980. They had come through town and Lenny had told them about me. I had just graduated and was back in my hometown, the South Bronx in NYC. Doug called and I was just

recently married and was living with my then wife Evita with her parents in the South Bronx till we could get settled. Jack Hook, Mongo's manager then called and asked if I was in the musicians union and had a passport. I didn't have either and they were leaving for Europe. Steve and Mongo reconciled and he did that tour. That gave me time to get those things together and eventually I joined the band later in 1982. I knew the history of the band as well as of Mongo and had always dreamed of doing the gig. Why? Because it would satisfy my need to play drumset in a jazz oriented context and still be close to Afro-Cuban music in the role of a *timbalero*. Till this day there doesn't exist a gig like that.

PERTOUT: How did Mongo Santamaria conduct rehearsals?

SANABRIA: Mongo didn't conduct the rehearsals. The musical director would do that. At the time it was Sam Furnace, Doug had left the band. When I joined the band many times we would rehearse at the Village Gate in New York City. Other times at rented rehearsal studios. I was lucky because as soon as I got in the band we recorded a new album called *Mongo Magic*. That's were Mongo found out that I played *shekere* as well as being versed on the other percussion instruments. On that recording I played drumset, *timbales*, *shekere* and *güiro*. It's also the first time anyone played *songo* on the drumset in the United States. It was on a tune called *Pirana* by Marty Sheller. It has an opening intro in 3/2 *clave*, an asymmetric phrase to go into the two-side of the *clave* and then goes into a fast *mambo* over a twelve bar blues form. To get back to the outro there is another asymmetric phrase. On the intro/outro I play *songo* and on Mongo's solo I also do that. Mongo didn't ever play the *tumbao* of *songo* on the intro. He played New York City style *mozambique*, but I played *songo* on top of that. Since the styles are related in certain ways, it worked. It's on Roulette records. Unfortunately it didn't get much publicity, but it's a great album and it brought me to the public's attention as someone to be on the lookout for. Hilton Ruiz is featured as well on piano as well as Sal Cuevas on bass and the regular working band at the time which was Chris Rogers (Barry Rogers' son) on trumpet, Sam Furnace who was musical director and played baritone, alto sax and flute, Tony Hinson on tenor, soprano and flute, Bob Quaranta on piano, Eddie Resto on bass and 'Mongomery' (Willie Bobo's nickname for Mongo) on *congas*, *bongo* and he even plays *cencerro* on the last tune of the album which was a *bembe* where at the outro he does some riffs that are really fantastic. We did another album before a second European tour called *Espiritu Libre*.

PERTOUT: Was Mongo well versed in his explanations of the tunes, or the rhythms employed in particular tunes?

SANABRIA: As the tunes were always coming from Marty or someone in the band, Mongo just went with the flow and let whoever wrote the tune, explain what was happening with the structure, etc. In terms of myself and Mongo, we would always apply whatever rhythm best fitted the character of the piece in question. I eventually brought in some of my own arrangements and original tunes and the same process occurred. For example, Sam wrote a tune called *Zimbabwe*. It was in 6/8 time. But the tune is tricky because it starts with the bass line in 2/3 *clave* which is really rare in 6/8. I decided to play the drumset instead of the *timbales* so I could have a few more choices in terms of sounds and Mongo decided to just play the low *tumbadora* with the stick. At the time he never explained how to come in on the two-side of the *clave* in 6/8 but he led by example and I picked up on it from what he did which was to mimic the standard 6/8 bell pattern for *bembe* reversed which he played with the stick on the side of the drum. It was a revelation to me because I never knew you could do that in 6/8 because 99% percent of the tunes in 6/8 are in 3/2 *clave*. The key was his open tone on the downbeat of the three-side of the *clave*. It's on the *Espiritu Libre* album.

PERTOUT: Did you get to play many folkloric styles in your time with Mongo or was it more of an r&b, Latin jazz style ensemble?

SANABRIA: It was just everything, funk, r&b and Afro-Cuban jazz. Certain tunes were very *tipico* oriented, for lack of a better term. Examples of that were songs like *Come Candela*, *Bonita*, *Amanecer*, etc. Others were strictly jazz oriented mambos. On the tunes like *Zimbabwe*, *Afro Blue*, etc. we got into what one would call the 'folkloric' side of things. I was heavily involved in *santeria* at the time and Mongo's *Ifa* godmother, Rosa Leyva was my *lyubona*, second godmother. He was really happy that I was familiar with a lot of the sacred liturgical songs and got a kick that I was a Nuyorican and not Cuban and had this type of knowledge. You have to realise the times period we're speaking of. Because of the Mariel boatlift, many knowledgeable Afro-Cubans folkloric musicians, percussionists, dancers and vocalists came to New York City in 1980. In particular, Puntilla, who was the former head of the Grupo Folklórico Nacional de Cuba. He had unique skills because he knew the Matanzas as well as Habana style *bata* systems. He is an excellent vocalist who taught us many Yoruba praise songs that had

never been heard in New York City, or for that matter anywhere else outside of Cuba. Plus, he is a monstrous *rumbero*. Others were Lazaro Galaraga, Roberto Borell, Daniel Ponce and dancers like Eddie Alfonso, Xiomara Lee, to name just the most important ones. Puntilla had a great effect on the New York City Latin music scene because he opened up the whole *bata* culture to everyone. He was/is respected because of his all encompassing overall knowledge. I was one of his apprentices along with people like Felix Sanabria (no relation to me), Eddie Rodriguez (a former member of my group Ascension), Victor Jaroslov (A Jewish guy from Brooklyn), Abie Rodriguez and many others. When I told Mongo that there were Jewish guys playing *bata*, he was shocked. I remember him saying, "*no puede ser!!!*" ("it can't be").

PERTOUT: Did he ever discuss type of heads or drums he liked, was he a heavy hitter, loud on stage?

SANABRIA: We never discussed anything like that because when we got together in a casual setting we just talked about family, life, women, music, etc. and not necessarily in that order. The same things men speak of when they hang out. Mongo played on the bandstand and nowhere else. His quiet time was important to him and I respected that. Mongo was always a heavy hitter. He wanted his *golpe seco* ("time keeping slap") to sound like a gunshot. Those were his words, not mine. You have to realize that he really was a *bongo* player first and the type of aggressive playing in *son* in Cuba demanded the instrument to be played in a *macho* style with a tremendous slap on the *macho* when called for. That's what eventually killed his hands. If you listen to him playing on the recording of *Mazacote* with Cal Tjader you'll hear what I mean. Imagine doing that tune every night in those days on tuneable drums. When tuning lugs started to be utilized on *congas* and *bongo*, well that's when people started to have problems with their hands. On a tack headed drum the skin 'gives', on a lug tuned drum, it doesn't. I occasionally would play his drums at soundchecks. The skins he used were thick on both the *congas* and *bongo*. The *conga* drums he had were old Vergara drums made in Cuba. The ones he originally had were stolen from Marty Sheller's car trunk way back in the 1960s. The ones Mongo had were some drums given to him by a Japanese gentleman by the name of Tommy from San Francisco. Tommy signed his name on the inside of the drums. They originally were covered with red fibreglass coating at a body shop which you see in some pictures from the 1970s. Eventually he had that taken off. Mongo was very hip on what was happening in Cuba at the time and he had the latest recordings. I heard Afro-Cuba (the band, not the folkloric

group) group at his house with tunes such as *Si Preguntas Por Mi* before anyone else had access to them on the street. It was great because we were friends, colleagues and he was a mentor. Knowing his historical importance made it a great privilege to also be his friend. Occasionally he'd call me up and ask me to come over and we'd have lunch at La Rosita, a Cuban restaurant which is now between 109 and 110th st. It used to be on the corner of 109th st and it was a small hole in the wall that only could seat about ten people. I first took him there and no one knew who he was. I had to ask them "do you know who this gentleman is?" After that we were treated like family. I still go there. The new location has seating for about forty.

PERTOUT: Did you discuss traditional styles with him?

SANABRIA: We would discuss all styles when we talked music and would listen to things. He'd make me tapes of the latest things coming from Cuba. He was very proud of the musical advancements being made in his homeland and the impact groups like Irakere were having worldwide.

PERTOUT: What about *Afro Blue* did he guide you through in terms of the style required? Did he ever discuss the background of some of the patterns required for the tune?

SANABRIA: Not at all. You have to understand. If you were in the band in the chair I was in, it was because you had the knowledge required to be in that chair. It was like being in Art Blakey's band. To be there you had to know Mongo's history through his recordings just as you would have to know Art Blakey's history. I knew the history of that tune, as many of us do in New York City, because it's so famous. I adhered to what Willie Bobo played on brushes on the original version Mongo did with Emil Richards on marimba. But when we went to the solo section I switched to sticks and opened it up with some of my contemporary *bembe* orchestrations on the drumset. It was different live because of the horn section whereas the original version was a small combo and subdued. What Willie played comes from the *itones* in *abacua*. I'm sure Mongo taught him that. They were very close. The melody is based on a Yoruba praise song for *obatala*. I knew that because of my studies in *Ifa*. I even learned the prayer Julito Collazo does for *chango* on Mongo's live version from the Village Gate. I did it once when we performed there and he started smiling. He appreciated all that. One thing we did talk about was how John Coltrane recorded it and they mistakenly put on the recording that John

had written it. He showed me the apology letter they sent him from Coltrane's record company which at the time I believe was Prestige.

PERTOUT: In regards to *Afro Blue* I had a conversation with Milton Cardona where he told me that the B section of the tune was in the wrong *clave* and he told Mongo about it.

SANABRIA: Milton was probably referring to the original recording Mongo did with Emil Richards playing marimba.

PERTOUT: On the Tito Puente Golden Latin Jazz All Stars live recording they do put the extra bar and so the B section is in 2-3 but then they also add a bar so that when the A tag comes back it goes back to 3-2, how did you play it?

SANABRIA: I haven't heard that Tito Puente Golden Men of Latin Jazz recording other than the version of *Milestones* I heard on the radio, but if they did it the way you describe it is the correct way to play the tune. The B section is in $2/3$ *clave* obviously in $6/8$ meter. The A section returns/falls rhythmically on the 3 side. Obviously there has to be an asymmetric (uneven number of bars) phrase going in and out of the section to maintain *clave* integrity. This is the way we played it and it was arranged by Marty. The horn back rounds just before Mongo's solo also fall on the 2 side of the *clave*. The version of *Milestones* which they do in a *mambo* style in $2/3$ they play the bridge in $6/8$ but in $3/2$. C.C.C. (*cruzao con cojones*). They should've played the $6/8$ pattern in $2/3$ to maintain *clave* integrity. I guess nobody's perfect, but I really can't stand listening to it. As I stated to you in my answers to your initial questions, most players don't realize that $6/8$ meter adheres to the general rules of *clave* and one must learn to be comfortable in playing/starting in $2/3$ *clave* in the *bembe* style. It's a very common mistake. I really became comfortable with this from singing *Yoruba* praise songs while playing the *guataca* and singing songs that start on the 2 side in $6/8$. Some good examples of this done correctly are the Larry Harlow's *Latin Jazz Encounter* cd on the version of *La Cartera* during the bridge. Another good example is my arrangement of *Manteca* during the bridge on my big band *Live & In Clave* cd.

PERTOUT: In the early recordings with Mongo and Cal the whole thing is 3-2, did you play the brushes as Willie? [x x x . x x | x . x x x .] or did you play the other *abacua itones* part starting before the beat an eighth note earlier [x x . x x x | . x x x . x]?

SANABRIA: Another approach is actually | x . xxx .] xxx . xx | 'Little' Ray Romero showed me that all these rhythms, were to a certain extent, neutral *clave* wise in regards to the *abacua* rhythmic cycles. The first pattern you wrote actually fits perfectly in 2/3 with the *bombo* note of the *clave* lining up perfectly with the second x in the second bar. He always told me that the third pattern I wrote for you (which is the reverse of the first) was the correct pattern to play in 3/2. Most people play the first pattern because a lot, and I mean a lot, of the *abacua* praise songs actually lie in 2/3 *clave*. I sometimes alternated depending on how I felt but later I started to just play the intro beginning with the third pattern, which lies perfectly in 3/2. Remember, the opening of *Afro Blue* is just *congas*, the brushes and then the bass, which plays a neutral *tumbao*. If I started playing ala Willie Bobo, I would always nod to Sam Furnace to cue the horns in on the three-side of that pattern according to 'Little' Ray's philosophy. When we did that for the first time on the gig, Mongo started smiling like if it was an inside joke that no one was in on. After the set, he tapped me on the shoulder and just nodded to me smiling. You have to understand that he was old school regarding *abacua* folklore. No one was really supposed to talk about it in public, reveal anything about it, etc. I learned about it because of guys like 'Little' Ray and Virgilio Marti who was a good friend, *abacua* and taught me a thing or two about that system because we worked a lot and he dug me. Louis Bauzo also taught me a lot about it from, I would say, more of a musical, scientific and analytical perspective. Cal's recording and the version Mongo did with Emil Richards playing the melody on marimba are *cruzao* when it comes to the bridge of the tune, but they both phrased slightly differently on the bridge. Mongo was not that talkative during rehearsals which was a drag at times because you would figure the leader would give some insight or input into the what, how and why of certain tunes. Maybe he was just tired of the leader responsibility and trusted us and the musical director which is good and bad depending on who was in that position. He was a senior citizen when I got into the band and took a variety of medications just to keep going so I would say he didn't want to hassle with too many *pendejadas*. There was one thing that was certain. Have you ever heard of the 'Ray?' This was the name given to the evil stare that Benny Goodman would give his sidemen if he was pissed off about something when they performed. Well, unfortunately Mongo inherited that!

PERTOUT: Bobby in regards to Afro-Cuban 6/8 rhythms, how do you see the *clave*? Do you call 6/8 *clave* the pattern that the bell often plays? | x . x . x x | . x . x . x |

SANABRIA: It doesn't have a set name. It is the basic ride pattern for the bell or *guataca* in 6/8 for *bembe*. If you are dealing with knowledgeable players in the world of folklore and you tell them the rhythm is *guiro* (the name given to the way a *bembe* with *shekeres* is played today) or *bembe*, or if you even say seis por ocho or *guataca*, they will automatically know that they are supposed to play this pattern or its older archetype which is rarely played today except by older players.

PERTOUT: What about the following pattern which is heard on *abacua*, also in *rumba columbia*, do you call this 6/8 *clave*? | x . x . . x | . x . x . . |

SANABRIA: In the world of folklore and religious based music, the actual bell pattern(s) is many times referred to as the *clave* by the players and devotees. It is because it is the actual 'key rhythm' that hold the ensemble together and the actual *clave* pattern is inside the bell pattern(s). Obviously the root of where the *clave* patterns (both *son* and *rumba*) we use in the secular music world come from these ancient bell patterns in 6/8. Remember context is everything. An *abacua* initiate, or someone who is knowledgeable of the *abacua* system of drumming, will automatically know that when given the *ekon* in a ceremony or when using the rhythmic system in say a secular context, they must play what a secular drummer would call the *rumba clave* on the *ekon*. Language is a funny thing. What you call something or someone is a flexible world of variables according to context. My legal name is Robert, but I was known as Roberto by my parents and Bobby by my childhood friends or sometimes just, B. Others have called me Rob or Bob. They are all names I answer to because they represent me, but in different contexts. Bobby is the most familiar name that everyone knows me by and the one that is my favorite. The swing ride rhythm in jazz is also known by old schoolers as 'spang-a-lang', 'shut da door' or as Wynton Marsalis calls it, 'the American rhythm'.

PERTOUT: Did Mongo ever discuss any *clave* direction issues with you?

SANABRIA: Never. I did, with Sam and the others, who really were just getting their feet wet with writing in that style. When Marty would rehearse us, going over his tunes, he would. He is very good at that and well versed in arranging properly in *clave*. Mongo's *clave* sense was very good and he learned new tunes quickly.

PERTOUT: Did he ever discuss any of his early recordings with you? For example did he ever discuss the placement of the *clave* in his early recordings of *guaguanco*?

SANABRIA: Only if I asked. We talked about that because I brought it up. As I said, Mongo was very versed on what was happening in Cuba before and after Fidel Castro. He heard when Los Muñequitos began putting the *segunda* drum melody against the two-side of the *clave* and he started doing it way back when. The Tjader recordings are testimony to that. He probably was the first player to do that in a band oriented context in terms of playing *congas*.

PERTOUT: In many of his ensemble recordings he incorporated songs arranged in other Latin American styles such as *samba*, how much did he know about styles outside the Afro Cuban tradition?

SANABRIA: Nothing really. He didn't play *pandeiro*, *repinique*, none of those Brazilian percussion instruments. What he would do is adapt the *conga* or *bongo* to whatever style we would be doing. He was very good at that and it's one of his greatest contributions as a player. His ability to adapt those instruments to styles outside of the Afro-Cuban musical world. Those types of tunes came from whomever was in the band at the time. For example he did some Venezuelan *joropo* tunes. The roots of that goes back to Frank 'El Pavo' Hernandez who is from Venezuela and played drums and *timbales* with Mongo in the 1960s. He was in the band so he brought his cultural heritage into the group. I'm sure Frank taught him some things and by exposing him to the style. Mongo was able to adapt the *conga* in a complimentary way. That's the root of those tunes like *El Toro*. The tune *Do You Know* that I recorded with my group Ascension on the NYC Ache record was from the period I was with Mongo. Sam wrote it as a *joropo* because he dug that groove and we recorded it for the *Mongo Magic* record. Unfortunately it never made it to the disc. I always liked it and I promised Sam that I would record it someday and we did on *NYC Ache*. The Brazilian things happened the same way. Brazilian Joao Donato was the pianist with him in the 1960s, hence the Brazilian things, *cumbia tipica* came from when Hector Veneros and Justo Almario, who are both Colombians were in the band. The funk, r&b flavoured things came from the African American musicians in the band as well as Marty who loves those styles.

PERTOUT: Was he well versed in some of the Puerto Rican folkloric traditions?

SANABRIA: Not at all, but he liked them and loved Cortijo's recordings.

PERTOUT: In your opinion what were his strengths?

SANABRIA: His *tumbao*, his sound. It was powerful and very authoritative. In his prime he could really drive a band. Plus his knowledge of the *son* and *rumba* traditions as well as Yoruba based music. Just listen to the recordings he did with Tito Puente's band in the 1950s and later with Cal Tjader. On the Tjader dates, because it was a small combo, you can really focus in and analyse how unique it was. Since he was a featured soloist in that group you can hear his distinctive solo vocabulary which was grounded in his *bongo* playing in *son* and his *quinto* playing in *rumba*. Mongo also applied a lot of the vocabulary of the bongo to the *conga* in terms of keeping time and doing *repiques* within the structure of the *tumbao*. He also was one of the few players that would open and close the hole of the drum to change its pitch. An example of this can be heard on Mongo's tune *Tumbao* from the Cal Tjader *Concerts By The Sea* recording when he takes his extended solo. Finally, his open mindedness. He really let the players dictate the musical direction of the band and provided a vehicle for them to express their writing as well as improvisational talents.

PERTOUT: I read that he studied violin as a youngster, was he a schooled musician?

SANABRIA: No. He did try the violin as a youngster but abandoned it for the *rumba* and *son* in the streets. He wasn't a schooled musician in the traditional sense at all. But he was a great musician and very progressive in his thinking.

PERTOUT: How did he compose, singing possible melodies to the piano player? Was he able to write charts or throughout his career relied on others to do the musical director tasks?

SANABRIA: Not necessarily to a pianist, just someone who could notate what he sang. Mongo couldn't read a whole note, but he was a great musician, great composer. So the answer to your question is that yes, he had to rely on a musical director. The person who understood him best, in that respect was Marty Sheller. Marty really could realise Mongo's ideas and vision better than anyone who ever worked with him.

PERTOUT: In which period of his life did you work with him and for how long?

SANABRIA: I worked with Mongo from 1982 to 1984. When I joined the band Mongo was already sixty-eight years old. It was amazing that he could still play the way his hands were. There was simply no callous left and he went through boxes of band-aids. I always joked with him that he should get an endorsement deal from Johnson & Johnson. He told me that his manager Jack Hook at one time tried, but nothing came of it.

PERTOUT: Did you tour with him a lot? What were those experiences like?

SANABRIA: Yes. 99% of our work was on the road. We worked a lot in the USA especially on the West Coast. Also in numerous jazz festivals and clubs and in Europe all of the major festivals. In New York City the first gig I did when I got in the band was a weeklong engagement at the now defunct Fat Tuesday's which was owned by Steve Getz, Stan Getz's son. We also played Mikell's (defunct also), The Village Gate and others in New York City. I had a lot of great experiences during that period. When we were in Europe we were playing at the New Morning club in Paris I heard this black gentleman who had a voice like the cartoon character Popeye the sailor man. Mongo calls me over and says, "I want you to meet my cousin, Pello 'El AfroKan'."

PERTOUT: Did you ever discuss which players inspired him?

SANABRIA: Marcello El Blanco, who is still alive in Miami. He said that the guy was the whitest Cuban you could meet but was the blackest son of a bitch on *bongo*. Armando Peraza says the same.

PERTOUT: Did he have good rapports with his contemporaries, Patato, Candido, Peraza, Aguabella, Collazo, Puente, Bobo?

SANABRIA: Yes. But with Tito it came later because he and Willie left on bad terms with the Puente Orchestra in the late 1950s. When I was in the band and Tito's name would come up he'd get pissed. But because of that they both went with Cal Tjader and the rest is history. Mongo eventually reconciled enough to work together with Tito in the Golden Men of Latin Jazz group. The last concert appearance Willie ever did was at the Hollywood Bowl in 1984 where he sat in with us. That was a big thrill because I played *bongo* while Willie (who was big influence on me) played *timbales* and Mongo played *congas*. He died shortly thereafter from the cancer that was ravaging his body. His voice at the time, because of the cancer, sounded

like Miles Davis. Mongo, Willie and Hubert Laws had a nice reminiscing session backstage and Mongo called me to come over and he introduced me to him. Candido, Patato and Peraza specially were all boyhood friends. As far as Francisco and Julito I believe they met in the US. Francisco is from Matanzas and is not a *Habanero* like Candido, 'Montgomery', Patato and Julito.

PERTOUT: Any other aspects you would like to convey in regards to Mongo Santamaria and his legacy?

SANABRIA: I'm very honoured and privileged to have performed and recorded with him and say that we were friends. His legacy is that he made the *conga* drum a force to be reckoned with in popular culture. Like Arsenio Rodriguez, was when he was alive, Mongo was our living connection to West Africa.

Sanabria, Bobby. Email Interview. 20 May 2005.

JOHN SANTOS

John Santos is one of the foremost exponents of Afro-Latin music in the world today. He has performed, recorded and studied with masters such as Cachao, Dizzy Gillespie, Tito Puente, Lazaro Ros, Armando Peraza, Patato Valdes, Francisco Aguabella, Orestes Vilato and Max Roach. Widely respected as a writer, educator and historian in the field, Santos is a member of the Latin Jazz Advisory Committee of the Smithsonian Institution. He leads the Grammy nominated ensemble Machete. I conducted this interview with Santos via telephone.

PERTOUT: In terms of your background, I know you come from a Puerto Rican background, but were you born and always based in San Francisco?

SANTOS: Yes.

PERTOUT: How did you get involved in Afro-Cuban drumming?

SANTOS: It still came from my Puerto Rican side, although as you are probably aware the Puerto Rican tradition is not nearly as drum heavy as the Cuban, but through Puerto Rican music I first started to become aware of those drums, *bongos* and *congas*.

PERTOUT: So at the time were you involved in Puerto Rican folkloric drumming like *plena* and *bomba*?

SANTOS: The first band I ever played in was my grandfather's band. He was from Puerto Rico and I played *conga* in that band at the age of twelve. We played some *bomba* and some *plena* but it wasn't really a folkloric band. It was a band to play dance music and so we played a lot of Cuban music. We played *guarachas* and *sones*, *cha cha cha*, *bolero* and *mambo* as well as *bomba*, *plena* and *musica jibara*, the kind of typical Puerto Rican music. So from those roots, it brought my attention to the drum and the drums themselves are what brought me to the Afro-Cuban music tradition. I started looking for recordings, anything with those instruments on it.

PERTOUT: And so once you found the *conga*, how did you develop on the instrument? Did you have a teacher?

SANTOS: A friend of my dad was a Puerto Rican, his name was Rene Rivera, he was a merchant seaman. He played *conga* and he came over one day and he gave me one lesson on a *conga* drum and he had to leave on business and he was going to come back and teach me but sadly he was killed while away. So I only had that one lesson, that was the only lesson that I ever had, that was when I was twelve years old. There was another guy, a *conga* drummer by the name of Richie Giraldez. He was a person who had some demons to deal with, he had a hard time dealing with drugs and he didn't go as far as he could or should of. He was very talented. He was also a composer he wrote a tune which El Gran Combo recorded and had a big hit with. He was from Puerto Rico and had been in New York before he arrived in San Francisco. When I met him here he was playing *conga* in my grandfather's band and gave me a few tips. I use to go and watch him play.

PERTOUT: When was that?

SANTOS: That was in the late 1960s, I am talking about 1967 which is when I started playing but of course I had spent my whole childhood watching my grandfather's band with these musicians playing all those rhythms. Also one of the elements that is important is that my grandparents and my parents all had really great record collections and so did my uncle. They had a lot of folkloric music as well as Cuban, and so I got to hear some great stuff. Once my drumming interests started to develop I started searching for those records in the record stores

and so I naturally went to the recordings that had Mongo, Patato, Armando Peraza, Aguabella and tapped into the whole world of Afro Cuban music. This also included the religious music, records like *Yambu* and other *santeria* associated music, all of that because of the drumming I was really attracted to and I started collecting.

PERTOUT: So you were listening to these master drummers on record at the time, did you get to see them in live performances at all?

SANTOS: As soon as I became aware of who they were I did get to see Armando and Francisco a lot because they lived in the Bay Area. Of course I was too young to get into the clubs and so I saw them as much as I could see them. I would see them at festivals, and you know here as teenagers we use to go to the North Beach district and stand outside the clubs just to listen to the music, as we were too young we couldn't get in, but the music would come blasting out of the windows and we would listen.

PERTOUT: Who was Francisco playing with at the time?

SANTOS: Francisco was playing around here with Cesar Ascarruz and also played in Benny Velarde's group.

PERTOUT: So he was playing in dance bands?

SANTOS: Yes the bands were geared towards a dance audience, this was also around the time that he started playing with Malo.

PERTOUT: And what about Armando?

SANTOS: When I saw Armando he had left Cal Tjader, but those recordings he made with Tjader was what we really listened to a lot. A lot of that material was recorded right here in San Francisco and it was very popular here.

PERTOUT: Raul mentioned to me years ago that you guys use to get together daily to transcribe, study recordings and play.

SANTOS: Yes that is true. Once I met Raul which was round 1971 or 1972, he was in Malo at the time, we formed a relationship that was like that. We use to get together and play all the time, and do a lot of studying and playing the park together for several years.

PERTOUT: So were you developing your skills by transcribing or were you able to get lessons with Armando, Francisco or Mongo when he was in town?

SANTOS: Well none of those guys would teach, we use to ask them all the time, they just wouldn't teach, I think it was a combination of them not being comfortable with teaching and also the fact that they didn't need to teach. In the case of Armando at first and then eventually also with Francisco we learned a great deal just hanging out with them. Once they got comfortable with us and allowed us to be in their circle and became friends with us, then they would just share things with us. And so we learned a great deal just been around them and asking questions, listening to their stories, and playing with them, because with Armando as we spent a lot of time with Armando we would go to his house and he would just sit down and play with us.

PERTOUT: And Mongo?

SANTOS: I was never that close with Mongo. I met him Mongo a few times, I use to see him in clubs when he toured the Bay Area and like everybody learned a great deal from his recordings. You know my band Machete opened for Mongo a few times. One of our first gigs which was in 1988 was as an opener for Mongo and since that time we became a little bit closer but I never got to spend that much time around him because he was always on the East Coast.

PERTOUT: How do you see his legacy? In your eyes how influential was Mongo Santamaria?

SANTOS: I don't think there is much argument that Mongo Santamaria is probably the most influential *conga* player, I don't see how anybody could be more so. It's the length of time that he was doing it, the amount of records that he made as a bandleader and sideman and the importance of those recordings. Some of the greatest recordings of that kind of music and that kind of drumming are by Mongo. So many people were influenced by those recordings, generations, they cross over into r&b, funk, jazz, all of that.

PERTOUT: How do you see players like Tata Güines in that respect?

SANTOS: Tata for me holds a special place as well, Tata to me is the beginning of the whole revolution of technique. To me it starts with Tata. It goes from Tata to Changuito and from Changuito to Giovanni. That's kind of the way I see that because Giovanni to me is the greatest of the new generation of *conga* drummers. Giovanni is the product of studying all those masters. And Giovanni was already playing incredibly at ten years of age!

PERTOUT: When do you think Giovanni started thinking about the rudimental material he has incorporated to the *conga* technique? Do you think he was already thinking about at ten years of age?

SANTOS: Oh most certainly. His dad is a great drummer from Puerto Rico 'Mañengue' and his dad started him with that, so he was already playing it. When I saw him play at the age of ten he was already doing a lot of that stuff.

PERTOUT: So in which way do you think Changuito helped him then?

SANTOS: Changuito has some specific things that he developed which you can apply to *conga* technique and in particular to the left hand for the right handed player. But see Tata had already started that technique with the left hand that to me is like the ultimate, the concept of the left hand, and Changuito took that concept and developed it further, then passed it to Giovanni. And Giovanni does it with both hands. Giovanni is completely ambidextrous.

PERTOUT: Where do you see Mongo in that equation?

SANTOS: Mongo to me is not so much coming from that. His legacy to me is not coming from the technique. Mongo was a hard hitting player with a beautiful sound. He came from an open hard hitting style, which is very important and very influential, but in terms of refining the technique to the modern sound, the modern concept, the way to play today, Tata is the one that I think is the starting point, the turning point for that.

PERTOUT: So how do you see new players such as Richie Flores, Anga and others, are they coming from the Changuito-Giovanni development?

SANTOS: I think so. I think is Tata first, because all of them have studied Tata. But it's a little tricky because is hard to place them in order because they all hold a very high place next to each other as opposed to one on top of the other. You know when it comes to those masters all those drummers you mentioned have of course studied all of them. The thing is in Cuba a lot of that new generation did not have any access to players like Armando, Francisco or Mongo they have Tata. Tata is the one. Over here though, we have Tata plus all these other masters. And Giovanni has studied all of them. See if you ask Giovanni he can imitate anyone of them, Candido, Patato, with their sound and their licks.

PERTOUT: Where do you see Candido there?

SANTOS: Candido is super important, he is another guy with great technique. Actually Candido you know in a lot of ways is the first one. Candido was in New York before the others arrived and he still here. That's something that is really important, he has done a lot of wonderful playing. He has also done a lot of pop and more commercial recordings, but there are certain recordings you can really hear Candido, the real root of what he plays, in particular you must know that record called *Brujarias De Candido*, that's one of my favourites.

PERTOUT: What about Patato?

SANTOS: Patato's legacy is with the tuning, but also his sound. When Patato was in his prime, he had an incredible sound, if you listen to the old recordings of him with Machito and with Los Cachimbos and his concept of playing *rumba*, as although he was not a strict type of *rumbero* like some of the other guys we know about, his concept of *rumba* like on that *Patato Y Totico* record is really, really advanced.

PERTOUT: I spoke to Victor Pantoja recently and he mentioned the fact that he was one of the first guys to incorporate four drums in the 1970s in San Francisco, do you recall that at all?

SANTOS: That's right, I saw him playing those drums with Azteca, and he sounded beautiful. I have not seeing him for a long time but I remember been very influenced by his melodic playing with Azteca. It was along the lines of Patato which is logical because Patato lived in Puerto Rico, he still has a home there and Victor who is from Puerto Rico use to see

Patato a lot I think was influenced a lot by Patato the way he plays four drums. Victor's style and sound I think is similar to Patato.

PERTOUT: Is Victor a little younger? Different generation to Patato?

SANTOS: No, not totally, he is younger but not that much younger.

PERTOUT: Francisco on the other hand is coming from the *bata* tradition?

SANTOS: Most certainly. Francisco's main thing is the *bata*. Francisco is to me the most important one out of all of those guys in terms of the folklore.

PERTOUT: This takes me to the film *Sworn To The Drum*, I always wondered how is it that they were able to film Francisco in what looked like religious ceremonies?

SANTOS: I think that things are not exactly the way they were you know fifty years ago and sometimes you know allowances are made. And those occasions when they are playing are not just done for the film. Usually it is not possible to film, but it depends, who you ask, who is in charge.

PERTOUT: When I was in New York in 1994 I studied with Milton Cardona and he would say "oh the drums are here but I can't show you, they only come out for ceremonies," and so on.

SANTOS: Oh yes and that's very real. There are still many people that feel that way and you know it is one of those things. Is like the whole thing of filming, cameras, is still a very modern thing in relation with the tradition of the drums and ceremonies. A lot of people hold on to those traditions and feel that it is not correct to film them and they won't allow you to film them. But some areas are loosening up. As times goes on that loosens up. Maybe if they had approached Francisco to film ten years before maybe it would not have been possible.

PERTOUT: In *Sworn To The Drum* Francisco is the leader of the *bata* ensemble playing the *iya*, is that his usual role?

SANTOS: Francisco is a master of *bata* and several other religious traditions. He really is the foremost of the folkloric drummers here in the United States. He has been here since the

mid 1950s and so he is the first one to come that is that complete of a drummer. He taught a lot of people since then.

PERTOUT: Is his *bata* tradition Havana or Matanzas?

SANTOS: Matanzas which is different to the Havana style, although most of the drummers that play *bata* tradition are learning both areas. He has studied both but he is from Matanzas and that's mainly what he plays, plus is an old style *Matanzero*. It's like everything is evolving and he plays from his era. Francisco also plays other drumming traditions like *arara*, *abacua*, *iyesa*, *congo*, all these things that he is a master of.

PERTOUT: In his *iya* playing does he improvise a lot? How open is that style in terms of improvisation?

SANTOS: Well it depends on the rhythm and also what you would call improvisation there is a degree of that but is not necessarily completely free. In other words there are certain things parameters and certain indications of the *clave*, certain things that they have to keep in mind while they are improvising. What appears to be improvisations often times are actual traditional phrases that are played at randomly or to reach or achieve a certain result like you might be trying to bring the presence of a certain deity in the ceremony. There is a lot of grey area in what is improvisation and what is not and you know again is part of the evolution of the tradition because a lot of the things that are played now that were not played twenty years ago are the result of improvisation and have become part of the style.

PERTOUT: In terms of *conga* drums what heads do you like?

SANTOS: You know I am kind of in a funny phase with that. I've always played *cueros* and been against the plastic but in the past couple of years I've been messing around with the plastic heads by Remo and I am starting to like them. I am enjoying it, I resisted it because I couldn't get a sound, and it took me a while. What finally convinced me is I would see players getting a beautiful sound out of the plastic and I started working with them again and I realised that you have to adjust. I am using the Remo Fiberskin III. You know I found that a lot of it has to do with playing lighter, playing softer, they have a lot of projection a lot of sound, if you

approach it the same way as the *cueros*, you will end up overplaying it and pass the threshold where the sound is sweet.

PERTOUT: What do you think of the thicker heads that were around when Gon Bops were in vogue?

SANTOS: Well is up to the player, a lot of Cubans like the thick heads, Tata plays thick heads, so does Papin who plays super thick heads, it's kind of interesting also because with someone like Papin he is a muscle player, he plays hard, but Tata is not that kind of player. I always thought that the muscle guys would use the thick heads like Raul too, he use to play this incredibly thick heads when he was playing with Malo, he plays hard, like reaching up from the sky, so I always thought if you were a more lighter player you would go into thin heads, that was my assumption by I am proved wrong by Tata. Tata plays the thick heads with this beautiful technique. Changuito also likes the heads kind of thick. I over the years have used thinner heads, Milton likes the thinner heads and he got me playing the thinner heads.

PERTOUT: And what drums do you like, fibreglass, wooden?

SANTOS: I don't really have a preference it depends on the situation. The fibreglass drums are louder, they tend to have a little more of an overtone ring, that's the thing about the plastic heads too they have a ring, that you really need to adjust to. You need to play more *seco*, more dry, have to hold your hands on the head more in order to control the ring. And you have to do that with the plastic heads as well as with the fibreglass drums. And so if you are playing in a real acoustic setting then I prefer the wooden drums. But if you are playing in a setting where is loud and you have to really project then I enjoy the fibreglass.

PERTOUT: I know you were involved with the Valje company for many years have you still got some of their sets of drums?

SANTOS: Yes I have a set of Valje drums which I haven't played for many years. The Valjes that I have they are not loud drums, they are beautiful sounding drums and is from the drum set that I redesigned. Is probably one of the only sets from that period which is when I redesigned the drums a little bit and then we lost the entire place when we had a fire. I use them around the house a little bit, I don't take them out much, also because I am endorsed by

LP, and the ones I have are louder, more durable, as far as taking them and bouncing them around.

PERTOUT: Have you seeing the new Giovanni Palladium congas by LP?

SANTOS: Yes I have, they are beautiful drums but a little impractical. They are so heavy and they are a couple of inches taller as well, they are really big drums, they look beautiful and they sound beautiful. I would have a problem with them as I have an artificial hip, I am fifty years old and I can't be carrying those drums around with me. Good for a strong young person!

Santos, John. Telephone Interview. 18 May 2005.

MARTY SHELLER

Marty Sheller is a trumpeter, composer and arranger who has worked in both the Latin and jazz area of the music scene in the US. He played with Louie Ramirez, Sabu Martinez and Pete Terrace before joining Mongo Santamaria's band in 1962 and although left the band in 1968 remained Santamaria's main arranger until his very last recording. I conducted this interview with Sheller via telephone.

PERTOUT: I wanted to start by asking you about your connection with the arrangement of the tune Afro Blue.

SHELLER: Mongo formed his band with the horn section I think around 1961, by the time I joined the band as a trumpeter they already had an arrangement of *Afro Blue*. I am not sure who did it. When I joined the band I did an arrangement of the tune, I don't remember if he gave me a recording of the song or whether he sang to me what he wanted, but it wasn't a completely original arrangement from my part, because it had already been arranged when I joined the band, I don't remember who did it but it was probably done the same way, by Mongo telling them what he wanted, it was probably done by pianist Joao Donato who was in the first band Mongo had and he might have been the musical director, so it is possible that Mongo might have dictated it to him, and then he did the same with me.

PERTOUT: The first version that I am aware of is the one featured in the *Afro Roots* album which does not contained the *clave* direction changes employed in later versions.

SHELLER: Yes the original recording was done when he was living in California and he was in Cal Tjader's band. As far as the *clave* is concerned, in the arrangement we use to play when it comes out of the middle part (the B section) it is actually 'out of *clave*', the tune goes back into the tag and it is actually out of the *clave* cycle, but Mongo said it was a case that musically it felt as if that it was the way it should be. Now if you wanted to be strict about the *clave* it should contain an extra bar at the end of the B section in order to come back properly in *clave* to the tag.

PERTOUT: As a matter of fact that is the way Tito Puente's Golden All Stars performed the tune in that live album, did you arrange that version?

SHELLER: Yes and I remember that when I did the arrangement I asked Mongo about that because, the musicians are naturally going to recognise that the *clave* was turnaround at that point, but Mongo said that is okay keep it that way and everyone will just adjust to it and that is what we did. And that is what I told Tito Puente before they were going to rehearse and record the tune. I had the same discussion that you and I are having right now. And I said Mongo would like to leave that way and he said fine we will leave it that way.

Note: Marty Sheller was not aware of this but for the live recording Tito Puente did eventually change it adding the extra bar after the B section, as documented on the released cd of the live performance. It is also evident that some of the players notably bassist Andy Gonzalez were used to the original way of playing the tune with the incorrect *clave* in the tag, as after the B section Andy arrives at the tag one bar earlier than the rest of the band. When I pointed this out he was surprised and responded:

SHELLER: Oh I am very surprised about that as I don't recall that taking place as every time I remember the tune being recorded as far as I recall it always done that way. You know I did another arrangement for the singer La Lupe, she did a television show one time, it was the Dick Cavett Show and she sang two songs on it and I did the arrangements for a big band one of them being *Afro Blue* and I added the bar. It was purely for the television show, not available on any record.

PERTOUT: How many recorded versions of *Afro Blue* have you taken part in?

SHELLER: The only ones I can recall are with Mongo's band and there is a studio version and a whole lot of live versions from countless concerts that were released at one time or another and as far as I can recall they are all based on the same arrangement.

PERTOUT: How and where did you learn about *clave* and about arranging in *clave*?

SHELLER: I didn't study formally but I was very lucky in the sense of when I got involved with Latin music I became friendly with two important musicians one was Louie Ramirez and the other was Frankie Malabe. Louie Ramirez was a wonderful arranger, composer, producer, *timbal* player, vibes player and piano player, and Frankie Malabe was a wonderful percussionist whose specialty was the *conga* drum. I met them when I played in a small band that Louie Ramirez had and because we were all interested in both Latin and jazz music I would give them jazz records to listen to from my collection and they would give me records from their collections and whenever there was a query we would all ask each other questions. I spent many afternoons at Frankie Malabe's house where we would sit down and listen to a record and I would ask him questions about what was happening and he would show me like "this is what the *conga* player is doing" and he would play it on my knees so that I could really feel exactly what was going on and through them I got a really good basic foundation in *clave*. This was way before I played with Mongo by the time I played with Mongo's band I already had had the experience of playing with the Louie Ramirez band and with Pete Terrace who had Frankie Malabe and I had recorded as well with the legendary *conga* player Sabu Martinez, we did a Latin jazz album that Louie Ramirez and I put together where we played be bop tunes with a Latin rhythm section. By the time I got to Mongo's band I had a very good knowledge of *clave*.

PERTOUT: So you played trumpet in Mongo's band and then became the arranger?

SHELLER: I stopped playing trumpet in the beginning of 1968. I started working with Mongo's band in November of 1962 and about a year later I became the musical director and then even if I stopped playing with the band every time he recorded after that he had me as the musical director. I would rehearse the band, the new material and then I would conduct in the studio. And I did that till the very end. Even towards the end when I was leaving in New York and he was recording for Concord in California he would fly me over there a week or so before the recordings so that we could rehearse, because he liked to rehearse which I thought it was

great, that way the band would be really tight. Plus often he would play the material live before going into the studio so by the time we got into the studio everything was very much established, everyone was familiar with the music.

PERTOUT: Were you involved in the recording of *Mayeya* which he did for Concord?

SHELLER: I think I did. *Mayeya* was something that Mongo put together, Ileana Mesa probably sung it to Mongo, I did this on several songs Mongo didn't know how to read music, he had a very good ear, and so he would say "Marty I want you to arrange something here is the melody" and so I would get some manuscript as he would sing it I would write the melody down, then we would discuss what kind of intro do you want, and if there was something in particular that he wanted he would say so otherwise he would leave it all up to me, when we got into the melody if there was a certain bass part that he wanted or a certain change of *clave* he would give me as much information as he heard and I would do the rest.

PERTOUT: So he was well aware of changes of *clave*?

SHELLER: Oh absolutely.

Sheller, Marty. Telephone Interview. 7 March 2007.

MICHAEL SPIRO

Michael Spiro is a percussionist, recording artist, and educator based in San Francisco. He has performed on many records, has co-produced and performed on several instructional videos and produced cd releases for ensembles such as Orquesta Batachanga, Grupo Bata-Ketu, Mark Levine & The Latin Tinge, and Grupo Ilu-Aña. As an author he released *The Conga Drummer's Guidebook* in 2006. I conducted this interview with Spiro via telephone.

PERTOUT: I wanted to start by asking your opinions on the development of *conga* drum technique and in particular the *mano secreta* system designed by Changuito, in your experience what does the *mano secreta* aim to achieve?

SPIRO: I think the point of the exercises is to do two things: to obviously develop your left hand but more specifically to help you develop the playing of double strokes.

PERTOUT: And how does the *mano secreta* exercises approach double strokes?

SPIRO: There are sort of two approaches to this. Changuito's approach is that the double stroke is not two open tones, its heel-toe. Meaning that where you put the heel-toe is what gives you the double stroke. As opposed to for example the way Anga used to play his double strokes which were basically as two open tone strokes, just played very fast. And so I think the whole point for Changuito was to learn to be able to get the heel-toe to become a double stroke.

PERTOUT: So do you feel that Changuito is the person responsible for the development of the double stroke open tones by playing them in the heel-toe style on the edge of the drum?

SPIRO: Well I would say it was certainly more Changuito than others. Giovanni was Changuito's student. I think the real question here is whether you could say that Tata Güines was the guy that first created it and Changuito took it to another level. I think that the first guy to do it was Tata Güines, it was just Changuito that took it to a whole new place. If you look at videos of Tata's playing he always tended to play his heel-toes in the middle of the drum but every once in a while he would move it back towards the edge. In other words my presumption is that Changuito might have looked at that and gone well if you are going to go that close to the edge you might as well go a bit further and get an open tone out of it.

PERTOUT: And would you say that after Changuito, Giovanni took it further?

SPIRO: Yes. I don't think at this point you can say that Giovanni created any of this work. You can say that Giovanni took it to a level that nobody had ever done so. Changuito really developed this and made an entire technique out of this, but it was Giovanni that then because he was younger and had nothing to do but practice twelve hours a day, took it to the next level. Giovanni for example took the heel-toe technique and applied it to both hands.

PERTOUT: Do you feel that drum rudiments have become part of the *conga* drum repertoire and development nowadays?

SPIRO: Yes I think that in today's world, contemporary *conga* players basically are playing drum rudiments and need to be playing drum rudiments on *conga* drums.

PERTOUT: In terms of the way Changuito teaches, does he incorporate drum rudiments?

SPIRO: Yes. One of the things I never understood though is that Changuito's thing was that the heel-toe was for the left hand. I can't explain why he looked at it this way, because in reality every drummer in the world really works hard on developing both hands equally. That's a question that I can't answer for you.

PERTOUT: It seems to me that nowadays if you are going to play the *conga* drum you are going to incorporate all these techniques, how do you approach teaching these days?

SPIRO: Yes, that's it, that is all there is now. When I teach I tell my students if you want to play contemporary *conga* drums you are going to need to know all this, but as I state in my book you will need eight hours a day to practice it. I can show you what they are doing but you have to remember that your hands don't bounce and so to make your hands bounce, to actually make this a possibility you can't do it by practising an hour a day, you have to practice eight hours a day.

PERTOUT: And so how did you develop this, practising eight hours a day?

SPIRO: No because I didn't discover this until I was thirty-five years old. By then you are trying to make a living, doing gigs, rehearse and raise a family and so I incorporate all this stuff to varying degrees in my playing but by no means is my playing at that level of speed and facility. I am unfortunately at age fifty-five of a generation that came after Mongo but before Giovanni, which puts me in that 'no man's land' territory of trying to play catch up but never succeeding.

PERTOUT: I know Raul Rekow quite well and I would say that he feels like that as well, I mean he was playing fast and incorporating impressive rolls around the drums but then this new technique came up.

SPIRO: Yes Raul and I are very close in this generation and his rolls and stuff in essence come from an old school of 'muscle the drum', which is very different from this double strokes at a thousand miles an hour.

PERTOUT: So who do you feel is leading this movement, is it Giovanni in your eyes?

SPIRO: Well I think Giovanni is the most famous right now but if you go to Cuba there are six hundred thousand kids playing that stuff. It's a new era and that's what it is now. Giovanni may be the most famous but by no means is he unique anymore.

Spiro, Michael. Telephone Interview. 18 July 2007.

APPENDIX II

CONGA DRUM SOUNDS

The following pages depict the various *conga* drum sounds, showcasing each available traditional stroke, as well as selected extended sound techniques.

PALM

This sound is achieved by striking the drum head with the entire hand in a flat position.



FINGERS

This sound is achieved by striking the lower drum head area with the fingertips.



FINGERS (alternative)

An alternative fingers sound is achieved by striking the centre of the drum head area with the fingertips.



BASS

This sound is achieved by striking and retracting the palm from the center of the drum head.



OPEN TONE

This sound is achieved by striking the edge of the drum head with the ridge of the palm, while the extended fingers are in an elevated closed position.



MUFFLED TONE

This sound is achieved by striking the edge of the drum head with the ridge of the palm, while pressing the drum head with the extended fingers in a lowered closed position.



SLAP

This sound is achieved by striking the edge of the drum head with the ridge of the palm, while the extended fingers in an open position simultaneously strike and grab the drum head.



MUFFLED SLAP

This sound is achieved as per the slap method described above, with the incorporation of the other hand muting the head.



OPEN SLAP

This sound is achieved by striking the edge of the drum head with the ridge of the palm, while the extended fingers in an elevated open position, strike then retract from the head.



ADDITIONAL SOUNDS

Incorporating cross-cultural drumming techniques as well as extended techniques, the following sound palates represent an expansion to the *conga* drum sonic repertoire.

INDEX FINGER TONE

A thin high pitched tone is achieved by striking the rim of the drum with the index fingertip.



NAILS

A sharp clack type effect is achieved by striking the drum head with the fingernails.



FIST

A deep muffled bass type effect is achieved by striking the drum head with a clenched fist.



KNUCKLES

A crisp and slightly deeper clack type effect is achieved by striking the drum head with the knuckles.



HARMONIC

A head harmonic is achieved by striking an open tone, while lightly pressing the middle finger in the center of the drum head.



GLISSANDO

A type of glissando or slide is achieved by playing an open tone, followed by a middle fingertip slide across the drum head.



PITCH BEND

A pitch bend is achieved by playing an open tone, while adding elbow pressure to the drum head.



OPEN STICK TONE

With the incorporation of a wooden stick, further sound possibilities are available. An open stick tone can be achieved by striking the drum head just below the center with a wooden stick.



MUFFLED STICK TONE

A muffled stick tone can be achieved by striking the drum head without a rebound, pressing the wooden stick on the drum head.



RIM STICK TONE

A rim click sound can be achieved by striking a wooden stick on the edge or rim of the drum.



SHELL STICK TONE

A click type sound can be achieved by striking the side or shell of the drum with a wooden stick.

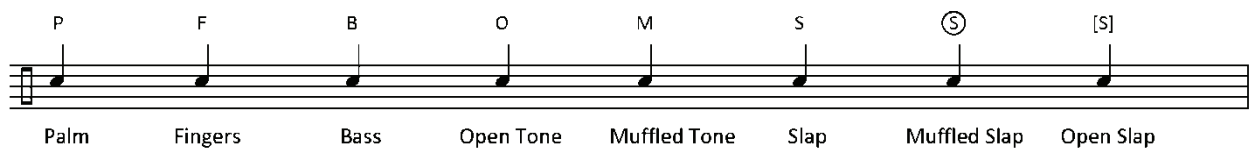


APPENDIX III

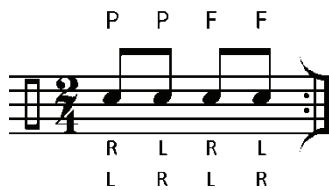
CONGA DRUM BASIC TECHNIQUE

The following examples display practice material for the development of *conga* drum technique. As previously discussed the evolutionary process of the *conga* drum hand technique involves sound development, followed by hand and sound co-ordination development through multiple exercises, and then followed by rhythmic repertoire development. The first four examples are exercises primarily designed for the development of the palm and fingers technique. This particular technique has to be developed in both single and double stroke settings. This is a fundamental area which requires extensive practice, as it is a physically demanding movement. It forms the basis of *conga* drum hand technique.

Conga drum nomenclature:



The palm and fingers on centre head area (separate exercise in single strokes).



The next example displays the double stroke 'palm-fingers' development. This technique is also referred to as 'heel-toe', *baqueteo* or as *marcha* ("march"). Although it is a double stroke, it is developed as one stroke movement by connecting the two sounds. After striking the palm sound the hand then lifts, and without leaving the skin follow through with the fingers stroke in the centre of the head area.

The palm-fingers (connected double stroke movement).



The palm-fingers (connected double strokes exercise).

P F P F

R R L L
L L R R

The next two examples combine a single and double stroke in compound meter in two settings.

The palm and palm-fingers (exercise in compound meter).

P P F

R L L
L R R

The palm-fingers and palm (exercise in compound meter).

P F P

R R L
L L R

The next examples display other sound development exercises. These incorporate combinations of open tones, palms, muffled tones, fingers, slaps and muffled slaps.

The palm and open tone.

P P P P O O O O

R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R

The open tone and muffled tone.

O O O O M M M M

R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R

The open tone and fingers on lower drum head area.

O O O O F F F F

R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R

The open tone and slap.

O O O O S S S S

R L R L R L R L
L R L R L R L R

The open tone, slap, palm and muffled slap.

O S O P (S)

R R R L R
L L L R L

All the exercises then lead to the development of the vast rhythmic repertoire available. The first rhythm the developing student encounters is the basic *tumbao* pattern for the *conga*

drum. The pattern incorporates open tones, muffled slaps as well as the palm-fingers movement with the left hand. This pattern is found in numerous styles, and thus it is paramount that it is mastered, from slow to fast tempi. The first example presented, demonstrates the pattern as played with one *conga* drum, while the second example adds a lower drum in the second bar of the existing pattern.

The basic *tumbao* pattern with one drum.

P F S F P F O O

L L R L L L R R

The basic *tumbao* pattern with two drums.

P F S F P F O O P F S O O F O O

L L R L L L R R L L R R R L R R

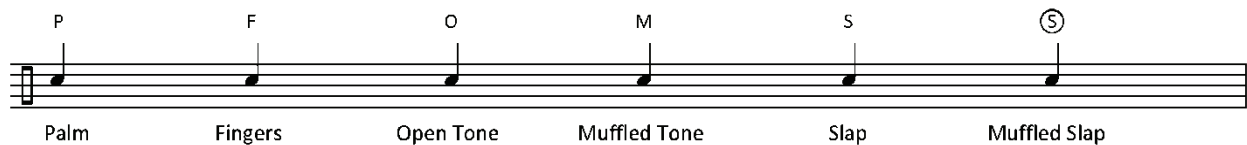
The next step in this progressive development of the basic *tumbao* rhythm incorporates various sound changes to the sounds found in the existing rhythm. These sound replacement techniques in turn bring musical variation to the original pattern. This is followed by the development and addition of ‘fills’ or ‘breaks’ in and out of the pattern (refer to chapter 4, page 76 of the thesis). The material is wide ranging and can include short/long phrases or passages in various rhythmic configurations. This practical method of progressive sound and rhythmic development is applied to all *conga* drum repertoire.

APPENDIX IV

CONGA DRUM ADVANCED TECHNIQUE

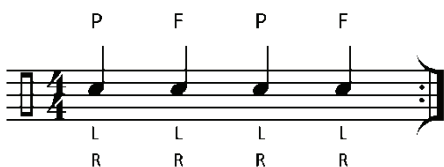
New areas of *conga* drum hand technique have been developing for a few decades now, with the two most notable being the set of exercises from Changuito's *mano secreta* method and the incorporation of snare drum rudiments to *conga* drumming, credited in the main, to the work of Giovanni Hidalgo. The following pages display various contemporary exercises, including a selection of *mano secreta* style exercises. The hand stickings presented here, aim to assist in the development of both hands.

Conga drum nomenclature.



The first exercise below is fundamentally geared towards the development of the rocking motion of the palm-fingers movement, one hand at a time.

The palm-fingers development I.



The next exercise focuses on strengthening the fingers as part of the development of the rocking motion, one hand at a time.

The palm-fingers development II.



The next exercise aims to develop the rocking motion of the palm-fingers movement, by multiplying the notes on each subsequent repeat, one hand at a time.

The palm-fingers development III.

The next exercise incorporates a muffled slap and the rocking motion of the palm-fingers movement. It is developed one direction at a time.

The palm-fingers development IV.

The next exercise is a further development of the previous example with a second bar incorporating the single stroke palm-fingers movement. It is developed one direction at a time.

The palm-fingers development V.

The following open tone double stroke movement exercises are by David 'La Mole' Ortiz. The exercises involve playing open tones in the palm-fingers movement style, on the edge of the drum skin. Here the double stroke has to be approached in a strike-rebound fashion, as in playing a snare drum with a stick, rather than as two separate strokes as the following photographs of the movements illustrate.

The palm-fingers movement (double stroke connected movement).



Open tone double stroke incorporating the palm-fingers movement.



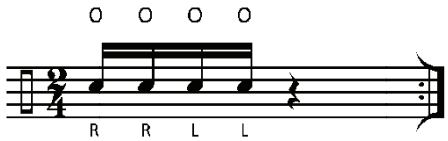
Ortiz makes use of a three-step method, for the development of open tone double strokes in the palm-fingers style. The first step involves the development of each double stroke, separated by a rest.

The open tone doubles development I.



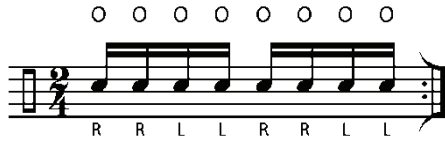
The second step involves connecting the double strokes, followed by a rest.

The open tone doubles development II.



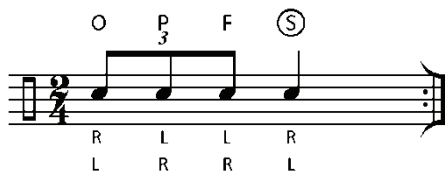
And the third step involves the development of continuous double strokes.

The open tone doubles development III.



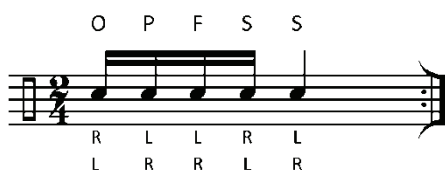
The following examples showcase the Changuito ruff, an eighth triplet configuration which incorporates an open tone, the double stroke palm-fingers movement, as well as a muffled slap. It is developed one direction at a time.

Changuito's Ruff I.



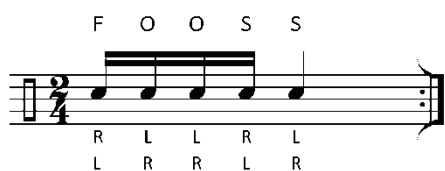
The second version of the Changuito ruff is in sixteenths and incorporates an open tone, the double stroke palm-fingers movement, as well as two slaps. It is developed one direction at a time.

Changuito's Ruff II.



A sound variation of the previous example, it incorporates, a fingers sound, two open tones in the palm-fingers style movement, as well as two slaps. It is developed one direction at a time.

Variation of Changuito's Ruff II.



Independence III.

The next exercise employs the outline of the *rumba clave* pattern with one hand, while the other hand incorporates the palm-fingers movement.

Independence IV.

The next exercise is the compound meter version of the previous example. It employs the outline of the *6/8 clave* pattern with one hand, while the other hand incorporates the palm-fingers movement.

Independence V.

The last two exercises employ the palm-fingers movement with one hand, while the other hand incorporates open tone and slap on beats '1' and '3' of the first bar, and an off-beat palm and fingers movement in the second bar. When applied with both hands, the second bar produces the single stroke palm and fingers movement previously encountered.

Independence VI.

P F P F P F P F P F P F P F P F P F P F

O S P F P F P F P F

The last exercise is the compound meter version of the previous example. It employs the palm-fingers movement with one hand, while the other hand incorporates open tone and slap on beats '1' and '4' of the first bar, and an off-beat palm-fingers movement in the second bar. When applied with both hands, the second bar produces the single stroke palm-fingers movement.

Independence VII.

P F P F P F P F P P F P

O S P F P F P F

The following are examples of exercises incorporating snare drum rudimental material. They are to be developed covering both sticking directions.

The first two examples showcase two diverse sound approaches for a five stroke roll.

Rudiments I – Five Stroke Roll.

P F P F P P F P F P

R R L L R L L R R L

O O O O S O O O O S

R R L L R L L R R L

The next example showcases a sound approach for a six stroke roll.

Rudiments II – Six Stroke Roll.

Musical notation for Rudiments II – Six Stroke Roll. The notation shows a six-stroke roll on a single staff. Above the staff, the strokes are labeled S, O, O, O, O, S, with accents (>) over the first and last 'S'. Below the staff, the hand strokes are indicated as R L L R R L and L R R L L R.

The next example showcases a sound approach for a flam paradiddle.

Rudiments III – Flam Paradiddle.

Musical notation for Rudiments III – Flam Paradiddle. The notation shows two phrases of a flam paradiddle on a single staff. Above the staff, the strokes are labeled P(S), F, P, F, P(S), F, P, F, with accents (>) over the circled 'P(S)' strokes. Below the staff, the hand strokes are indicated as L R L R R and R L R L L.

The last four examples showcase diverse sound approaches for a ratamacue.

Rudiments IV – Ratamacue.

Musical notation for Rudiments IV – Ratamacue, Example 1. The notation shows two phrases of a ratamacue on a single staff. Above the staff, the strokes are labeled P F P, P P P, P P P, with accents (>) over the final 'P' of each phrase. Below the staff, the hand strokes are indicated as L L R L R L and R R R L R L.

Musical notation for Rudiments IV – Ratamacue, Example 2. The notation shows two phrases of a ratamacue on a single staff. Above the staff, the strokes are labeled P F P, F F F, P F P, F F F, with accents (>) over the final 'F' of each phrase. Below the staff, the hand strokes are indicated as L L R L R L and R R R L R L.

Musical notation for Rudiments IV – Ratamacue, Example 3. The notation shows two phrases of a ratamacue on a single staff. Above the staff, the strokes are labeled P F O, O O O, P F O, O O O, with accents (>) over the final 'O' of each phrase. Below the staff, the hand strokes are indicated as L L R L R L and R R R L R L.

Musical notation for Rudiments IV – Ratamacue, Example 4. The notation shows two phrases of a ratamacue on a single staff. Above the staff, the strokes are labeled O O O, O O S, O O O, O O S, with accents (>) over the final 'S' of each phrase. Below the staff, the hand strokes are indicated as L L R L R L and R R R L R L.

APPENDIX V

SNARE DRUM RUDIMENTS




The following pages contain the current *40 International Rudiments*, as presented by PAS, the Percussive Arts Society based in the United States. The snare drum rudiments involve the study and development of roll, diddle, flam and drag rudiments.

PERCUSSIVE ARTS SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL DRUM RUDIMENTS



All rudiments should be practiced: *open* (slow) to *close* (fast) to *open* (slow) and/or at an even moderate march tempo.

I. ROLL RUDIMENTS





A. SINGLE STROKE ROLL RUDIMENTS

1. SINGLE STROKE ROLL * 
RLRLRLRL
2. SINGLE STROKE FOUR 
RLRL RLRL
LRLR LRLR
3. SINGLE STROKE SEVEN 
RLRLRLR
LRLRLR

B. MULTIPLE BOUNCE ROLL RUDIMENTS

4. MULTIPLE BOUNCE ROLL 
5. TRIPLE STROKE ROLL 
RRRLLLRRRLLL

C. DOUBLE STROKE OPEN ROLL RUDIMENTS

6. DOUBLE STROKE OPEN ROLL * 
RLLRLL
7. FIVE STROKE ROLL * 
R R L L L
8. SIX STROKE ROLL 
R L L R R L L R
9. SEVEN STROKE ROLL * 
R L L R R L L R

10. NINE STROKE ROLL *

11. TEN STROKE ROLL *





12. ELEVEN STROKE ROLL *

13. THIRTEEN STROKE ROLL *

14. FIFTEEN STROKE ROLL *












15. SEVENTEEN STROKE ROLL

II. DIDDLE RUDIMENTS











16. SINGLE PARADIDDLE * 
RLRLRLRL
17. DOUBLE PARADIDDLE * 
RLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL
18. TRIPLE PARADIDDLE 
RLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL
19. SINGLE PARADIDDLE-DIDDLE 
RLRLRLRLRLRLRLRL
LRLRLRLRLRLRLRL

*These rudiments are also included in the original Standard 26 American Drum Rudiments.

III. FLAM RUDIMENTS

20. FLAM * 
21. FLAM ACCENT * 
22. FLAM TAP * 
23. FLAMACUE * 
24. FLAM PARADIDDLE * 
25. SINGLE FLAMMED MILL 
26. FLAM PARADIDDLE-DIDDLE * 
27. PATAFLAFLA 
28. SWISS ARMY TRIPLET 
29. INVERTED FLAM TAP 
30. FLAM DRAG 

IV. DRAG RUDIMENTS

31. DRAG * 
32. SINGLE DRAG TAP * 
33. DOUBLE DRAG TAP * 
34. LESSON 25 * 
35. SINGLE DRAGADIDDLE 
36. DRAG PARADIDDLE #1 * 
37. DRAG PARADIDDLE #2 * 
38. SINGLE RATAMACUE * 
39. DOUBLE RATAMACUE * 
40. TRIPLE RATAMACUE * 

APPENDIX VI

MAYEYA BASIC SCORE

The following is the basic score (melody/chords) for the song *Mayeya*, composed by Santamaria. It was recorded for the album *Soy Yo*, released by Concord Picante in 1987. This basic chart, was transcribed from the recording by Alex Pertout.

Mongo Santamaria
Soy Yo
Concord Picante, 1987

MAYEYA

Mongo Santamaria

The musical score for 'Mayeya' is presented in a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two main sections: a 16-measure section and an 8-measure section labeled 'A'. Chords are indicated above the staff, and measure numbers are placed at the beginning of each line.

- Measures 1-4: Chord D- (D minor). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measures 5-8: Chord D- (D minor). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measures 9-12: Chord D- (D minor). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measures 13-16: Chord D- (D minor). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Section A (Measures 17-24):
 - Measures 17-18: Chord D- (D minor). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
 - Measures 19-20: Chord C- (C minor). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
 - Measures 21-22: Chord F7 (F dominant seventh). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
 - Measures 23-24: Chord A7 (A dominant seventh). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measures 25-28: Chord D- (D minor). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).
- Measures 29-32: Chord BbΔ (B-flat major). Melody: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter).

B D- C- F7

Musical staff 33-36: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measure 33: D- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 34: D- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 35: C- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 36: F7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4.

B^bΔ E-7 A7

Musical staff 37-40: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measure 37: B^bΔ chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 38: B^bΔ chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 39: E-7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 40: A7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4.

D- C- F7

Musical staff 41-44: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measure 41: D- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 42: D- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 43: C- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 44: F7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4.

B^bΔ E-7 A7

Musical staff 45-48: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measure 45: B^bΔ chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 46: B^bΔ chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 47: E-7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 48: A7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4.

A3 D- C- F7

Musical staff 49-52: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measure 49: D- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 50: D- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 51: C- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 52: F7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4.

B^bΔ E-7 A7 D-

Musical staff 53-56: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measure 53: B^bΔ chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 54: B^bΔ chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 55: E-7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 56: A7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4.

C Tutti [no chord]

Musical staff 58-61: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measure 58: Tutti [no chord], notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 59: Tutti [no chord], notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 60: Tutti [no chord], notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 61: Tutti [no chord], notes G4, A4, B4.

D Open Solos D- C- F7 B^bΔ E-7 A7

Musical staff 62-65: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measure 62: D- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 63: C- chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 64: F7 chord, notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 65: B^bΔ chord, notes G4, A4, B4.

E Tutti [no chord]

Musical staff 66-69: Treble clef, key signature of one flat. Measure 66: Tutti [no chord], notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 67: Tutti [no chord], notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 68: Tutti [no chord], notes G4, A4, B4. Measure 69: Tutti [no chord], notes G4, A4, B4.

APPENDIX VII

AFRO BLUE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. has a large collection of memorabilia, donated by Santamaria's daughter Nancy Anderson in 2005. Anderson donated an array of items including Santamaria's 1945 Cuban passport, one hundred plus photographs documenting his illustrious career, Santamaria's walking stick, many of his percussion instruments, some garments, a Grammy award, a Gold Record award and two pages of the original manuscript of his composition *Afro Blue*. The following pages contained a copy of the two pages of the original manuscript of *Afro Blue*, purchased from the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

The image shows a handwritten musical manuscript on aged, yellowed paper. At the top center, the title "AFRO BLUE" is written in capital letters. On the left side, the word "TENOR" is written and underlined twice. The manuscript begins with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a time signature of 6/8. A bracketed section is labeled "CONGA SOLO UNTIL CUE:". Below this, the word "CUE:" is written, followed by a musical staff with a circled "1." and a circled "2.". The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. There are several measures with triplets and other complex rhythmic figures. At the bottom of the page, a bracketed section is labeled "FLUTE SOLO INTO PIANO SOLO". The manuscript ends with the words "NEXT PAGE" written at the bottom center.

END OF PIANO SOLO:

Handwritten musical notation for the end of a piano solo. It consists of two staves. The top staff contains a melodic line with notes and rests, including a fermata over a note. The bottom staff is labeled "EVA HIGHER" and contains rhythmic markings, including a "4" and a star symbol.

CONGO SOLO UNTIL CUE:

A section of handwritten musical notation. The top staff is labeled "CUE: Conga plays" and contains rhythmic notation with "x" marks. The bottom staff is labeled "Piano Bass" and contains rhythmic markings, including a "4" and star symbols.

Handwritten musical notation for a piano solo. It consists of four staves. The top staff is a melodic line. The second staff contains rhythmic notation with "x" marks. The third staff contains rhythmic notation with a "DARI" marking and a "2" in a box. The bottom staff contains rhythmic notation with "x" marks and a double bar line.

APPENDIX VIII

RAMON 'MONGO' SANTAMARIA OBITUARY – THE AGE

The following obituary written by Alex Pertout, was published by The Age, a Fairfax Media Publication, Australia, on Tuesday 11 February, 2003.



THE AGE

Obituaries 9

Percussionist who believed the best rhythms came from 'skin on skin'

RAMON "MONGO" SANTAMARIA
CONGA PLAYER, BAND LEADER, COMPOSER
7-4-1917 – 2-2-2003

Alex Pertout

Ramon Santamaria grew up in Havana in a working-class neighbourhood with deep African roots. His father died young and he was raised by his mother and given the nickname "Mongo", or "chief of the tribe".

His mother insisted on him studying the violin, but after a time his love for hand percussion took over and became his lifelong passion. He was inspired by Chano Pozo, the legendary Cuban conga player who moved to the United States and had a brief but remarkable career playing with Dizzy Gillespie.

In pre-Castro Cuba, Santamaria worked all the big nightclubs, including the famous Tropicana, before heading for Mexico in the late 1940s, and then onto the US, where he joined Perez Prado's orchestra, enjoying enormous success in the mambo era of the early 1950s. He then worked and recorded with Tito Puente's band – including two memorable percussion albums, *Top Percussion* and *Tito in Percussion*.

He left Puente in 1957 to join Cal Tjader's quintet in California – an important move in terms of expanding his musical expertise. His work with Puente was geared exclusively towards dancers; Tjader's group played for listeners.

Santamaria became a band leader in the 1960s with La Sabrosa, a charanga group, and laid the foundations for the salsa style. In 1963, his R&B-tinged recording of Herbie Hancock's *Watermelon Man* became a hit – the first big Latin crossover pop hit.

Santamaria often said the best rhythms come from "skin on skin". He recorded his first percussion-based album, *Drums and Chants*, in the early 1950s, followed by releases such as *Yambu*, *Mongo*, *Our Man In Havana*, *Bembe* and *Up From the Roots*.

His most famous composition, *Afro Blue*, a beautifully crafted tune with a strong 6/8 African rhythmic connection, has become a jazz standard, with memorable versions recorded by Tjader, John Coltrane, Dianne Reeves and Dave Valentin.

Santamaria possessed unique talents as a percussionist and had a visionary outlook as band leader. His music contains a rare combination of Latin, jazz, soul and R&B. As a band leader, he selected and encouraged coming talents. His side-kicks included pianists Chick Corea and Herbie Hancock, flautist Hubert Laws and trumpeter Luis Gasca.

Santamaria recorded more than 70 albums as leader, and was signed to the most prestigious record companies. He received five Grammy award nominations, and in 1997 his album, *Amanecer*, was awarded the Grammy for Best Latin Recording.

Santamaria was one of the finest individuals to grace the world of percussion, and arguably the most influential conga player.


Alex Pertout is a percussionist, composer and head of the improvisation department, Victorian College of the Arts.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2003

APPENDIX IX

RAMON 'MONGO' SANTAMARIA TRIBUTE POSTER – MEINL

The following tribute poster with personal comments by Luis Conte, Martin Verdonk, Alex Pertout and members of the Meinl Percussion Company, was produced by Meinl Percussion, a division of Roland Meinl Musikinstrumente GmbH & Co. KG Germany, in 2003.




IN MEMORY OF RAMON "MONGO" SANTAMARIA

"MONGO WAS A TRUE FRIEND TO US
AND ONE OF THE GREATEST CONGUEROS OF ALL TIMES.
HE WILL BE SORELY MISSED."
Your friends at Meinl Percussion, Germany

"MONGO SANTAMARIA WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED.
THERE IS NOT ONE CONGAPLAYER OUT THERE THAT HAS
NOT BEEN INFLUENCED BY HIS UNIQUE SOUND."
Martin Verdonk, Netherlands

"MONGO ALWAYS WILL BE 'EL TAMBOR MAYOR'
IN MY HEART. GOD BLESS YOU MONGO."
Luis Conte, USA

"MONGO SANTAMARIA'S SKIN ON SKIN TOUCH HAS
INFLUENCED GENERATIONS AROUND THE GLOBE.
SINCERELY AND FROM THE HEART. MUCHAS GRACIAS
FOR INSPIRING ME SO MUCH OVER THE YEARS.
MAY YOU REST IN PEACE."
Alex Pertout, Australia



Meinl's Artist Series, "Mongo Santamaria Congas"
will keep his soul and sound alive.

MEINL
ROLAND MEINL
www.meinl.de

APPENDIX X

DATA DISC CONTENTS

SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

To Open -> Double click on file: welcome.html

To View -> Mozilla Firefox, Internet Explorer or Netscape, QuickTime, Windows Media Player.

Optimum Screen Resolution -> 1024 X 768

AUDIO

Cardona, Milton. *Agongo Laro. Bembe*. American Clave, 1989. [excerpt]

— . *Babalu Aye. Bembe*. American Clave, 1989. [excerpt]

Cuba LA. *El Manisero*. Narada, 1998. [excerpt]

Jimenez, Regino. *Guaguanco. Study Guide For Afro-Cuban Percussion*. Private Release, n.d.
[excerpt]

Santamaria, Mongo. *Afro Blue* [conga pattern]. *Afro Roots*. Prestige, 1972. [excerpt]

— . *En La Habana. Up From The Roots*. Atlantic, 1972. [excerpt]

— . *Mayeya* (conga solo). *Live at Quasimodo*. Berlin, n.d. [excerpt]

— . *Mayeya* (intro). *Soy Yo*. Concord Picante, 1986. [excerpt]

— . *Mayeya* (A section). *Soy Yo*. Concord Picante, 1986. [excerpt]

— . *Mayeya* (B section). *Soy Yo*. Concord Picante, 1986. [excerpt]

— . *Mayeya* (A3 section). *Soy Yo*. Concord Picante, 1986. [excerpt]

— . *Mayeya* (break). *Soy Yo*. Concord Picante, 1986. [excerpt]

— . *Mayeya* (solo section). *Soy Yo*. Concord Picante, 1986. [excerpt]

— . *Mayeya* (coda). *Soy Yo*. Concord Picante, 1986. [excerpt]

Puente, Tito. *Para Los Rumberos. Cuban Carnival*. RCA, 1989. [excerpt]

VIDEO

Flores, Ritchie. *Five Stroke Rolls. Private Video of Masterclass in Peru*. DVD. Pedro Barrera, n.d.
[excerpt]

Hidalgo, Giovanni. *Double Strokes* clip 1. *Conga Virtuoso*. DVD. Warner Bros Publications, 1995. [excerpt]

— . *Double Strokes* clip 2. *Conga Virtuoso*. DVD. Warner Bros Publications, 1995. [excerpt]

— . *Drags* clip 1. *Conga Virtuoso*. DVD. Warner Bros Publications, 1995. [excerpt]

— . *Drags* clip 2. *Conga Virtuoso*. DVD. Warner Bros Publications, 1995. [excerpt]

— . *Palm-Fingers* clip 1. *Conga Virtuoso*. DVD. Warner Bros Publications, 1995. [excerpt]

— . *Palm-Fingers+Drag* clip 2. *Conga Virtuoso*. DVD. Warner Bros Publications, 1995. [excerpt]

Ortiz, David. *Open Tone Double Strokes. Private Lesson in Puerto Rico*. DVD. Pedro Barrera, n.d. [excerpt]

Santamaria, Mongo. *A Mi No Me Engañan* clip 1. *Live at Quasimodo*. Berlin, n.d. [excerpt]

— . *A Mi No Me Engañan* clip 2. *Live at Quasimodo*. Berlin, n.d. [excerpt]

— . *A Mi No Me Engañan* clip 3. *Live at Quasimodo*. Berlin, n.d. [excerpt]

— . *A Mi No Me Engañan* clip 4. *Live at Quasimodo*. Berlin, n.d. [excerpt]

— . *A Mi No Me Engañan* clip 5. *Live at Quasimodo*. Berlin, n.d. [excerpt]

— . *A Mi No Me Engañan* clip 6. *Live at Quasimodo*. Berlin, n.d. [excerpt]

— . *Mayeya* (conga solo). *Live at Quasimodo*. Berlin, n.d. [excerpt]

Weckl, Dave. *Moeller Technique. A Natural Evolution: How To Develop Technique*. DVD. Carl Fisher, 2000. [excerpt]