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¿REVOLUCIÓN CON PACHANGA? DANCE MUSIC IN SOCIALIST CUBA

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Abstract. This article explores the social history and role of dance music in Cuba, before and after the Revolution. While most socialist policy makers viewed party music as escapist, a form of “ideological diversionism” and false consciousness, they also recognized that Cubans loved dance bands and that restrictive policies could potentially foster a negative or puritanical image of the new state. Analysis suggests that tepid official support for this repertoire led to a drastic reduction in dance music activity, a trend offset only by the gradual emergence of new forms of composition such as *nueva trova* and the broader dissemination and performance of classical and folkloric arts. The contrast between Cuban dance music and forms that would later evolve in New York is also highlighted.

Résumé. Cet article retrace l’histoire et le rôle de la musique de danse au sein de la société cubaine, avant et après la Révolution. Si la plupart des décideurs de politique socialistes considéraient la musique de danse comme une forme d’évasion, de diversion « idéologique et d’égarement de conscience », ils n’ignoraient pas le culte voué par les Cubains aux orchestres de danse et qu’une politique restrictive en la matière risquait de donner au nouvel État une image puritaine ou négative. L’analyse semble indiquer que la tiédeur de la politique officielle envers ce genre musical se traduisit par une forte perte d’influence de la musique de danse, tendance qui fut uniquement compensée par l’apparition progressive de nouvelles formes de composition, telles que la *nueva trova*, et par une plus vaste diffusion et de plus nombreuses auditions d’œuvres classiques et folkloriques. Cette étude propose également une analyse des différences entre la musique de danse cubaine et les formes qui devaient apparaître plus tard à New York.

At the dances I was one of the most untiring and gayest. One evening ...
a young boy took me aside. With a grave face, as if he were about to

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announce the death of a dear comrade, he whispered to me that it did not behoove an agitator to dance. Certainly not with such reckless abandon, anyway. It was undignified ... My frivolity would only but hurt the Cause.

I grew furious at the impudent interference ... I did not believe that a cause which stood for a beautiful ideal ... should demand the denial of life and joy.

— *Emma Goldman*¹

Introduction

When Ernesto Guevara described Cuba in the early 1960s as having given rise to a revolution with *pachanga* (the ambience of a party), he perhaps unknowingly touched upon a subject that has generated controversy for many years: that of fun, humour, sensuality, and their place within the lives of concerned socialists. Marxist leaders often strike the public as somewhat stern and puritanical; the society they strive for, while humane, is not necessarily one in which fun plays much of a role. Marx himself considered leisure in any form a vice of the affluent, and labour—albeit of a rewarding and creative nature—to be the proper and activity of all people.² Perhaps for that reason, Marxist scholars have tended to be distrustful of music or other forms of expression that do not have an educational purpose. Marxism involves dismantling of what are considered outmoded ways of thinking and disseminating new ones. For this reason, the artistic activities it supports tend to be ideologically charged: they are intended to “edify.” Such educational efforts are important but tend to restrict the use of art for pleasure or entertainment.

Marx and Lenin were both attracted to the potential of art yet distrusted the emotional responses that it evoked in them. Marx began life as a poet and novelist but eventually burned all such work after deciding that it represented “formlessness, chaos, and danger.”³ Lenin believed that the effort to create communism demanded tremendous sacrifice and did not allow for “orgiastic states” induced by music.⁴ The proletariat needed no distractions from the drive to create heightened class consciousness, he argued; if they consumed art for pleasure alone they ran the risk of indulgence, the avoidance of more pressing political concerns.

One evening in Moscow ... Lenin was listening to a sonata by Beethoven being played by Issai Dobrowen, and said: “I know nothing which is greater than the *Appassionata*; I would like to listen to it every day. It is

marvelous superhuman music. I always think with pride—perhaps it is naïve of me—what marvelous things human beings can do.!”

Then screwing up his eyes and smiling, he added, rather sadly: “But I can’t listen to music too often. It affects your nerves, makes you want to say stupid, nice things, and stroke the heads of people who could create such beauty while living in this hell. And now you mustn’t stroke any one’s head—you might get your hand bitten off. You have to hit them on the head, without mercy, although our ideal is not to use force against any one. H’m, h’m, our duty is infernally hard!”⁵

Thankfully, the neuroses of particular leaders, even those as prominent as Lenin, did not find favour with most politicians. And yet the decades immediately prior to the Cuban revolution gave rise to the social realist movement in Soviet art, an era of homage to “great men” and monumental acts of the government spearheaded by Zhdanov and Radek. Their conception of art led to a pronounced decline in playfulness and humour as well as a tendency towards prudishness and the avoidance of sexualized or corporeal expression of any sort.

Ambivalence towards the classical arts has rarely been evident in socialist Cuba, but controversy over dance repertoire did surface in the late 1960s. Leaders recognized that dance bands did not always serve as an effective vehicle for the dissemination of revolutionary ideology.⁶ They associated such music with the extravagant nightlife of the 1950s and thus considered it antiquated, a throwback to times of decadence, inappropriate in a society rethinking itself and its values. At best, dance music was unimportant to policy makers, at worst it represented a form of escapism and false consciousness. Under Soviet influence and in the throes of the cold war, the government made decisions that resulted in the decline of the dance music tradition for a time before its resurgence in the mid-1980s as “*timba*.”

This essay analyzes the regulation of dance music in Cuba during the socialist period. The first section discusses early decisions by revolutionary leaders affecting performance in nightclubs and documents the gradual decline of such activity in the late 1960s. The second section discusses the histories of two groups, Los Van Van and Irakere, in order to illustrate the changes in dance band activity as of the 1970s. It comments on the musical innovations of Cuban groups at that time and on the differences between Latino dance music in New York and Havana. The third section describes the controversies that the international “salsa” phenomenon has generated within Cuba as well as on the revival of dance music activity there in the mid-1980s. It considers how the realities of

present-day Cuba have been represented lyrically by modern dance bands and comments briefly on the *Buena Vista Social Club* phenomenon.

Dance Music in the Early Years of the Revolution

As mentioned, artistic activities of many kinds flourished in Cuba during the first years of socialism. By 1961 a national arts school had been established for the training of musicians, dancers, actors, and visual artists.⁷ Many band leaders studied at this institution in the 1960s or abroad at the invitation of other socialist countries. By 1962 the government began to sponsor festivals of popular music on a national scale. The initial event, held in the Teatro Amadeo Roldán and in the Ciudad Deportiva of Havana, is said to have involved the participation of over 1,300 artists including the bands of Beny Moré, Enrique Jorrín, the Septeto Nacional, the Conjunto Chappotín, and the Orquesta Aragón.⁸ Greater fiscal accountability among municipal officials and the provisional government's desire to raise the standards of living of poorer Cubans resulted in higher salaries for most musicians and more frequent opportunities to perform at this time.⁹

The large casinos and cabarets on the island, in which many orchestras performed, represented the worst of capitalist excess to Castro and his followers; they associated them with rich investors who had supported Batista and with mafia kingpins from the US (Meyer Lansky, Santo Trafficante). As a result, the new government outlawed gambling entirely and forced many establishments to close their casinos as early as October 1959. These included gaming rooms in the Sans Souci and Río Club as well as in major hotels such as the Montmartre and Hotel Nacional. The Tropicana nightclub and Capri and Havana Hilton Hotels passed under the direct control of the government at this time.¹⁰ The state kept admission prices to nationalized venues artificially low in order to allow greater access to poorer citizens.¹¹ Smaller cabarets and clubs continued to offer musical entertainment under private ownership as before until approximately 1966, at which time the government nationalized all private enterprises. Surprisingly, the closing of gambling halls actually contributed to the expansion of musical activity because casinos in the big hotels were converted into additional dance areas. The new space in the Riviera Hotel was named the Salon Internacional, for instance; the Nacional's was called the Salon Libertad.¹² Major theatres also came under government control during the first years of the revolution; the Blanquita in Miramar, for instance—later renamed the Carlos Marx—actually served as a political prison following the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961.¹³

Otherwise, dance music performance continued uninterrupted in 1959 and 1960 more or less as it had under Batista. In hotels, casinos, nightclubs, and the scores of *sociedades de recreo* across the island Cubans continued to party, viewing political change as a reason for celebration rather than solemnity. Beginning in 1961, with the Bay of Pigs invasion in April and the missile crisis in October, a reduction in nightlife occurred for a time. University students and younger professionals who had attended dance shows in large numbers began to devote themselves to political concerns. Many joined military or civilian militia groups as a safeguard against further aggression from the CIA or Cuban exiles; others volunteered in the national literacy campaign. As of 1963, political tensions receded once again, and cabaret life continued unabated for another four years.¹⁴ The mid-1960s gave rise to several prominent dance crazes, most notably the *mozambique*, invented by Pedro Izquierdo (Pello el Afrokán), derived from the *comparsa* music of carnival, and the *pilón*—also a rhythm and dance style—invented by *santiagueros* Pacho Alonso Fajardo (1928–??) and Enrique Bonne (1926–??).

In the context of socialist revolution, the cabarets and nightclubs on the island represented a dilemma of sorts for policy makers. On the one hand, the most famous of them were elitist, catering primarily to the upper middle classes and wealthy foreigners. They were often racially segregated and the entertainment they provided was apolitical in the extreme. For all these reasons, party officials considered them undesirable. On the other hand, the Cuban public loved dance music, was enamored of its performing artists and cabarets, and had come to expect television shows, specialized magazines, and other forms of media that featured them. Additionally, by 1962 the state had already outlawed private social organizations such as the *sociedades españolas* and hundreds of other recreational groups based on ethnic origin or work centre. These had served as major centres of dance activity across the island. Cabarets and clubs thus represented an especially important space—one of the few remaining—for dance entertainment. Severe policies that threatened this facet of the music industry had the potential to anger the public and foster a negative image of the revolution.

In the rarefied political environment of the 1960s, fun-loving dance bands continued to receive support and airplay in the state-controlled media. Increasingly, however, the directors of radio and television called upon performers to express openly their sympathies with socialist issues through their lyrics or in live verbal segments between songs. It became increasingly difficult to remain neutral, unassociated with the Commu-

nist Party or with political issues of the moment, while remaining a viable entertainer. As codified a decade or so later in position papers of the PCC, government leaders pressured artists to link art with “the lives of the masses and their most vital interests” and the rejection of “outdated, antihumanistic literary or artistic manifestations derived from capitalism.”¹⁵ With media in the hands of officials, one either conformed to Party guidelines or lost access to airtime.

Pressures brought to bear by Party officials on performers to politicize musical presentations, combined with attempts to regulate performer salaries and royalty payments, led eventually to an exodus of artists from Cuba. This was especially common for major stars of the 1950s. The average musician lived precariously on 20–30 pesos a month and welcomed salary adjustments under socialism as these resulted in higher standards of living, often as much as an eight- to tenfold increase. Headline artists, by contrast, earned between \$500 and \$3,000 a month in the 1950s and had little to gain from salary regulation; typically they received only a small fraction of their former salaries as state employees.¹⁶ Entertainers who opted for exile—at least partially in response to salary adjustments—included Celia Cruz and the Sonora Matancera, José Antonio Fajardo, La Lupe, Israel “Cachao” López, and Chocolate Armenteros.¹⁷ Government policy called for the repudiation of musicians who chose to leave and a ban of their songs in the media.¹⁸ Many entertainers living in exile, especially those with anticommunist political views, continue to be controversial today and are rarely heard within Cuba. Through the early 1990s officials referred to exiles as *gusanos* (worms) or *escoria* (scum) because they were perceived to have betrayed the revolutionary cause.

Under socialism, dance music has often been used as a means to reward those who support revolutionary ideals and endeavours. For example, one of my first experiences at a neighbourhood dance event was a government-sponsored party thrown for factory workers. They had been selected for the relatively high output and quality standards they had maintained over a period of months. Ministry officials provided a band for them as well as a meal of rice, fish, and weak beer in wax paper cups. Dance music is also used to ensure public turnout for important socialist holidays, especially when a strong youth presence is desired. Food and music are part of outdoor block parties celebrating the anniversary of the founding of the *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* (CDRs—Committees in Defense of the Revolution)¹⁹ each fall. Dance music may be organized for those volunteering in agricultural work brigades or as part of

the annual sugarcane harvest.²⁰ David Calzado suggests that Communist Party members do not have a high opinion of dance music—often they consider it low-class (*música baja, sin nivel, de la hampa*), crude and vulgar, as well as something associated primarily with Afrocubans (*cosa de negros*)—but nevertheless recognize its utility as a tool to further particular ends.

Popular Cuban [dance] music has always been a marginal music. What happens is that it has been strongly supported [by the masses]. It has endured because the public wanted it that way. If you want to have an assembly in the Plaza of the Revolution, or a mass rally of the national UJC, well if you don't invite Paulito and his Elite, the Salsa Doctor, the Charanga Habanera, or Los Van Van, or others that I haven't mentioned, no one will attend. That's reality. Our work as musicians has been recognized only because [the government] was obligated to do so.²¹

Calzado's comments underscore the fact that while performers are subject to oversight, their repertoire is still determined in part by other factors. One might suggest that dance music represents an oppositional space of sorts within socialist Cuba, one in which politics and Marxist ideology are generally de-emphasized, and pleasure, physicality, and other factors predominate.

The Decline of the Tradition

In general, the period extending from the 1960s through the early 1980s was not a particularly vibrant one for Cuban dance music. Various factors impeded its development even after the exodus of major performers tapered off. The constant shuffling and reorganization of musical events under new centralized agencies as well as abrupt shifts in government policy towards culture inevitably led to disruptions in output. A lack of access to replacement parts from abroad with the onset of the US embargo meant that when recording or amplification equipment broke down it could not easily be repaired. The mass mobilization of workers in an attempt to boost sugar production in 1969–70—the *zafra de los 10 millones*—resulted in a slump in all artistic production for a time. The onset of the *ofensiva revolucionaria* (revolutionary offensive) from the late 1960s through the mid-1970s similarly proved detrimental to creative activity across the board.

Perhaps most important, policy-makers chose to lend their strongest support to music with overtly politicized lyrical content. This led to entirely new sorts of composition: military marches dedicated to the 26th

of July or the departure of the *Granma*, traditional *sones* discussing agrarian reform, and choral works calling for socialist unity. This same tendency eventually led to support of the *nueva trova* movement with compositions denouncing the US war in Vietnam, colonialist aggression, and similar outrages. The widespread promotion of this form by musicians like of Silvio Rodríguez, Pablo Milanés, and Vicente Feliú eclipsed other styles for a time. Ideological pressures convinced even many dance band leaders to play tunes that reflected the political goals of the Castro government. As of the 1970s one finds happy, up-beat dance recordings whose incongruous lyrics make reference to civil war in Angola (“De Kabinde a Kunene un solo pueblo” by Los Karachi) or to the revolutionary campaign of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua against the Samoza dictatorship (“El son de Nicaragua” by the Orquesta Chepín) in order to conform to the demand of the times.

Along with support of political song, one notices more openly negative attitudes in the (state-controlled) press toward cabaret nightlife as of the late 1960s. In a *Bohemia* article from 1967 authors refer to the cabaret as “a commercial structure designed to exploit frustrations and vices ... a mere ostentatious exhibition of butts and thighs.”²² The article stresses that nightclub entertainment is characteristic of a “society of exploitation” (i.e., capitalist) in which art serves as an opiate, keeping the public from thinking about more important issues. “In a society that, on the contrary, tries to elevate not only the economic but also the moral and cultural level of its members,” it suggests, these establishments lose their meaning. “Because in such a society—like ours today—it is important that the people think deeply about things.”²³ Frederick Starr has observed similar phenomena in the Soviet Union of earlier decades. He notes that jazz gained popularity among the public precisely because it was associated with sensuality, release, and diversion. The Communist Party there also viewed jazz lovers’ “passion for amusement” as an impediment to the goals of the nation.²⁴

In addition to ideological concerns, broader economic trends played a role in the decline of Cuban nightlife. The government’s decision to nationalize small businesses and various well-intentioned but misguided agricultural efforts such as the attempt to develop the *cordón de La Habana* further aggravated the state of the economy and resulted in a significant drop in GNP in the late 1960s.²⁵ As Cuba struggled with its finances, reducing support for nightlife seemed more justifiable. Officials closed down most clubs at this time, partially to keep the people focused on the mammoth sugar harvest of 1970.²⁶ The few clubs that remained were

forbidden to serve alcohol which, in turn, reduced attendance significantly. After the harvest, most venues never reopened, a devastating blow to the entertainment industry.

Dance venues closed after 1968 and that's when the big crisis began. The Tropical and Polar beer gardens, almost all the places where they offered big dances were shut. After [the harvest of 1970] the Salón Mambi opened to one side of the Tropicana. It was the only place that presented shows continuously after that time. Even it was a mess ... shows inevitably ended in fights, arguments, police intervention. Almost the only nightlife left [in Havana] was in Vedado in the high-profile spots, and in the Tropicana.²⁷

Musicians as well as the public suffered from these changes. Acosta notes that during the early 1970s, approximately 40% of all popular entertainers had nowhere to perform. They continued to receive their salaries, but remained at home idle without viable work options.²⁸

During this crisis, the feature artists associated with the Wim Wenders documentary *Buena Vista Social Club* were in their thirties or forties and still actively performing.²⁹ The film has generated considerable controversy within Cuba, among other reasons because of Ry Cooder's assertions that he "discovered" musicians living in anonymity, essentially forgotten. Commentator María Teresa Linares bristles at this charge, suggesting that all led full, productive careers and had simply retired at the appropriate age. She attributes their lack of international recognition to the effects of the US embargo rather than local factors.³⁰ Others such as García Espinosa counter that a underestimation of and lack of support for popular dance music has been endemic in socialist Cuba for decades.

Certain facts are undeniable: Rubén González's home piano had been eaten away by termites prior to his promotion by Wenders, and thus he was rarely able to practice. Cooder found Ibrahim Ferrer shining shoes in order to supplement a meagre government pension.³¹ However successful their earlier careers, these individuals had effectively lost all contact with the music industry. They and other dance entertainers tended to "disappear" after 1970 because the government systematically closed down the neighbourhood clubs in which they used to perform. These were working-class individuals without much experience touring or establishing foreign contacts. As the environment changed around them, becoming less supportive of dance bands, they gradually stopped playing and instead settled into retirement or pursued alternative careers.³²

Recording proved difficult for dance bands as well. Melquiades Fundora Dino, a member of the Orquesta Sublime and the Sensación (established in the 1950s) remembers that although his group received government recognition under the socialists and continued to perform regularly, they were unable to make records for almost 16 years beginning in the late 1960s.³³ Tellingly, the record they finally produced in the 1980s resulted from the efforts of a West German entrepreneur, not the support of the Empresa de Grabaciones y Ediciones Musicales (EGREM—Enterprise for Music Recording and Publishing).³⁴ Overall, domestic Cuban LP production has declined since 1959; one might attribute a lack of dance releases to shortages of materials, equipment failure, or other macro-economic problems rather than a lack of interest in such repertoires. However, Cuban commentators themselves recognize that ideological factors have played a role.³⁵ Similar attitudes have marginalized dance bands from television appearances in many cases.³⁶

The Cuban education system has received recognition for excellence in various fields, and music is no exception. Almost all band leaders involved in popular music since the 1970s received free, high-quality training at the Escuela Nacional de Arte (ENA), Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA), or an institution of similar calibre. Musicians already performing professionally as of the late 1950s also had opportunities to return to school and improve their skills. Many learned to read music in specially designed Escuelas de Superación Profesional (Schools for Professional Advancement). The technical skills acquired by younger and older players in settings such as these, as well as their expanded understanding of harmony, theory, and musical form, have contributed to the development of a surprisingly sophisticated and virtuosic pop tradition in recent years.³⁷

Less recognized than the high quality of music education is the relative marginalization of popular traditions from schools. Through the late 1980s it was virtually impossible to study dance music within Cuban academic institutions. One had to do so informally, with family members, with neighborhood acquaintances, or through private lessons with professionals.³⁸ Socialist schools offered exclusively classical repertoire and performance instruction, for several reasons. First, many teachers came from Eastern Europe to develop Cuba's conservatory program. As might be expected, they had little or no understanding of Cuban music. Second, the close associations between popular dance music and the working-class Afrocuban community contributed to a feeling among middle-class professionals that this type of music was vulgar and unsophisti-

cated, not as worthy of attention as Mozart. In addition, instructors desired to expand the horizons of their students and considered classical music the most valuable repertoire to which they could expose their pupils. The good intentions of teachers were clearly influenced by ignorance and elitism as well as racist presuppositions about the island's Afrocuban heritage. To be sure, in so saying, we should recognize that music institutions in North America commit, if anything, worse abuses of this kind and that even today they turn a blind eye to a majority of national traditions.³⁹

While attitudes among instructors varied within Cuba, the overall tendency at the ENA and ISA was to discourage students from playing popular music, even in their spare time.⁴⁰ In some cases teachers told students directly not to play popular music because they believed it would hinder their technical progress with more "important" repertoire. In others the prohibitions were more implicit; students known to be playing in dance bands would be assigned additional classical pieces to learn in the hopes that they would be forced to abandon other pursuits.⁴¹ Classical repertoire always remained the official focus of aspiring musicians; if they performed other styles, they did so after mastering their assignments. Older professionals in the Escuelas de Superación learned to perform light classical repertoire as well in ensembles such as the Orquesta de Conciertos "Gonzalo Roig" regardless of their individual preferences.⁴²

David Calzado remembers that in the ENA of the 1970s "you could only talk about Beethoven, Bach, Mozart, you couldn't even mention popular music. If they found someone playing Cuban pop at school they could be expelled because [the teachers] thought of it as a cheap music, a third-class music." This rigidity lasted at least through 1978, when he graduated. Calzado notes that he and his friends actually felt the need to hide in order to play dance music together.⁴³

Perhaps the most unfortunate result of the exclusively classical emphasis in the ENA's curriculum is that countless individuals graduated throughout the 1970s and 80s lacking a basic familiarity with or ability to play Cuban popular music.⁴⁴ They had admirable technical skills and a strong foundation in symphonic repertoire but knew next to nothing about the *son*, *comparsa*, or mambo. Thankfully, others continued playing dance repertoire on their own and were able to combine traditional grooves and a penchant for improvisation with their newly acquired classical technique. But the lack of direct exposure to the popular performance style of the 1940s and 1950s resulted in radical stylistic changes in dance repertoire after 1970. Socialist educational policy, though perhaps not the *gran*

*disparate*⁴⁵ in the sense some have suggested, resulted in the decline and eventual transformation of a tradition. The style of performance personified by pianist Rubén González, *timbalero* Orlando López, trumpeter Félix Chappotín and others ceased to be a dominant model after the mid-1970s. It was left to younger performers graduating from conservatories to reinvent Cuban dance music in conformity with their own experiences and tastes.

The Emergence of a New Generation

The history of Los Van Van, one of the first new dance groups to emerge as of the mid-1960s, is indicative of other innovative ensembles of the period. This band, created by bassist Juan Formell in 1969, might be considered the “Rolling Stones of Cuba” given its longevity and enduring popularity. Its name derives from slogans on TV at the time suggesting that the country would attain its goal of producing 10 million tons of sugar in a single harvest: *los diez millones van, señores, van...* (the 10 million go, men, they go).

Orchestra leaders Rafael Lay and Enrique Jorrín recognized Van Van early on as one of the first bands to develop a sound different from that of previous generations.⁴⁶ Its members were part of a vanguard whose experiments helped shape the sound of *timba*, modern Cuban dance music. In the early 1970s Van Van experimented continuously with new rhythms and instrument combinations; one of the first songs to incorporate them was the hit “El buey cansado” (“The Tired Ox”).⁴⁷ This and other pieces represented a conscious break with pre-revolutionary repertoire, blending rock and funk influences with the *son*. The most well known rhythm popularized by Van Van, *songo*—the word itself a fusion of *son* and “song”—is said to contain influences from Yoruban folkloric drumming.⁴⁸ More recently, the band has experimented with rap elements. Van Van lyrics tend to be light-hearted; Formell attributes much of the group’s success to this fact and emphasizes that humour has not always been effectively used by socialist entertainers.⁴⁹ References to wild dancing are a common theme in their songs, as are bawdy subjects as in “La fruta,” which discusses a *fruta bomba* or papaya—synonymous with “pussy” in Cuba—or “La titimanía” (“Tit Mania”). Particular pieces (“La Habana no aguanta más,”—“Havana Can’t Take Any More”) have addressed social concerns more directly, in this case related to urban housing shortages, as have others valourizing Afrocuban heritage (“Soy todo,” “Appapas del Calabar”).

As should be clear, Cuban dance music of the socialist period is

characterized by a tendency towards experimentation derived largely from the emphasis on extended formal study, self-improvement, and the widening of one's aesthetic horizons in arts curricula. Perhaps no band epitomizes this tendency more than Irakere, founded in 1973 by Jesús "Chucho" Valdés, son of Tropicana pianist Bebo Valdés. The name "Irakere" is Yoruban, meaning "jungle" or "lush place."⁵⁰ The band's cadre of amazingly virtuosic musicians (Valdés himself, trumpeter Arturo Sandoval, saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera, guitarist Carlos Emilio Morales, percussionist Enrique Pla, collaborations with composers Leo Brouwer, etc.), its creative, playful repertoire, and its overall excellence have long been recognized internationally. Valdés completed his musical education prior to 1959 in the Municipal Conservatory of Havana, but most other members studied in the socialist schools. Some have defected—D'Rivera in 1980 and Sandoval in the 1990s—but new talent of similar calibre continues to join the ensemble.

Though composed of skilled and creative performers, Irakere did not receive formal recognition from the government for several years. During this period they received little promotion or compensation for their shows and were rarely able to record. The fact that Irakere's music was influenced by styles from the US, especially funk and jazz, and that not all members had strong socialist convictions complicated the approval process.⁵¹ They first performed wherever they could: in vocational schools, off-nights in the Club-Rio with the help of friends, and for dancers in the Salon Mambí.⁵² The politics of the 1970s obliged them to play sites outside Havana as well and in some cases to modify their repertoire. "We had to play in many *escuelas al campo*, for 'voluntary' work efforts, to record songs dedicated to Commander [Juan] Almeida, accompany political activities, and to write music dedicated to the gains of the revolution as in the case of a lovely *danzón* composed by Chucho, 'Valle de Picadura,' inspired by an agricultural plan of [Raúl Castro]."⁵³ In 1976, Irakere traveled to Bulgaria and Poland as well as to neighboring Jamaica as part of Carifesta. The latter trip came about after the election of leftist Michael Manley to the presidency, which prompted improved relations between the two islands.⁵⁴ In 1977 under the Carter administration (1976–80) band members took part in jazz concerts with North Americans in Havana, and in 1989 played an even larger event in the Karl Marx Theatre with Héctor Lavoe, Rubén Blades, Roberto Roena, the Fania All-Stars, and others.⁵⁵ Contacts made at these festivals resulted in a record contract with CBS (for which they later won a Grammy) and invitations to New York and to the Montreaux Jazz Festival.

Salsa versus Timba

As is commonly known, “salsa” is a marketing term developed in 1960s New York to denote certain kinds of Cuban-derived dance music. Within Cuba, the term has never been used widely in the press and, until perhaps the late 1980s, would not even have been understood by a majority of the public. What New Yorkers and most of Latin America refer to as *salsa* is usually described on the island as *son*, *timba*, *música bailable*, or perhaps *casino* (the latter referring primarily to dance). Much of the discrepancy in terminology has to do with the fact that New York *salseros* received little or no airplay in Cuba until recently. The isolation of Cuban performers from the bulk of the international market, in conjunction with the cultural policies described above, has resulted in the emergence of a dance tradition similar to but distinct from that of other countries. Its difference derives from the sound of the music itself, its functions and contexts, and its lyrical and discursive meanings.

New York City has been an important centre for the development and especially the dissemination of Cuban music since at least the 1940s, but its importance increased dramatically in the aftermath of the US trade embargo imposed on Cuba in 1961. The emergence of salsa in New York and its ties to various immigrant communities there are beyond the scope of this article. I would only emphasize that many of the Latin dance crazes sweeping Europe and the United States prior to 1959—ballroom rumba, chachacha, mambo—derived from Cuba itself rather than New York. The rupture of economic ties with Cuba created an artistic vacuum in North America and elsewhere, with countless enthusiasts unable to purchase the music they loved. This unfulfilled consumer demand paved the way for the pre-eminence of Fania and other North American musical enterprises as of the late 1960s.

Salsa music in New York—considering primarily the “classic” pieces of the 1970s and 80s—is associated with a number of distinct musical characteristics that distinguish it from dance music in Cuba. The incorporation of *bomba* and *plena* rhythms in many pieces, as well as those from Colombia and other countries; the use of *güiro* patterns derived from Puerto Rican *seis*; the foregrounding of instruments such as the Puerto Rican *cuatro*; the development of hybrid genres incorporating influences from North American pop of the 1960s (bugaloo) and more recently African-American style vocal melisma; and a preference for particular timbral/orchestrational blends emphasizing strident percussion and prominent trombone riffs represent only a few examples. These significant factors notwithstanding, the essence of the musical style is derived from

the Cuban *son* and specifically the *conjuntos* of the 1940s and 50s. Features derived from Cuba include characteristic percussion instruments (*clave*, bongo and conga drums, timbales, cowbell), rhythms (e.g., the basic *tumbao* pattern on the conga; *cáscara* rhythms derived ultimately from Cuban rumba, interlocking bell rhythms performed on the *timbal* and bongo bells; the *clave* rhythm itself), anticipated bass figures, and piano *montunos* derived from melodies on the *tres*.

At least as striking as the aural differences between Cuban and *newyorrican*⁵⁶ dance music are the conceptual differences between the two repertoires. Salsa in New York became popular during a moment of unprecedented grassroots activism on a national scale. In the context of anti-Vietnam protests, Black Power, the Young Lords movement, and a general politicization of minorities, salsa emerged as a symbol of a new pan-Latino identity. Bombarded with mainstream American commercial culture and living in an environment frequently inhospitable to their traditional musics, Latinos embraced salsa as an assertion of self, a form of resistance. This is the context that led to the development of biting social commentary in the compositions of Willie Colón, Rubén Blades, Eddie Palmieri, Tite Curet Alonso, and others. It has also led to distinct trends among New York artists in more recent years. Some continue aggressively to adopt influences from mainstream African-American genres and to experiment with crossover compositions featuring blends of rock, R&B, and rap with salsa.

The experience of popular musicians within Cuba, by contrast, is quite different. They are not directly threatened by an overarching mainstream Anglo culture. On the contrary, most are unable to travel as much as they'd like and tend to associate external musical influences with an international community of which they aspire to be a part. For this reason, instruments such as the drumset have become standard fare in modern bands.

At the same time, musicians form part of a cultural environment that has not been disrupted through foreign emigration or the constant onslaught of first-world media. In addition to performing *son*-based music, dance musicians play in *comparsa* ensembles, are exposed to and/or involved in African-derived ritual traditions of *Santería* and *Palo Monte*, play in informal rumba events, listen to *vieja* and *nueva trova*, and are frequently members of *abakuá* societies and other groups with distinct and vibrant forms of music, as well as performing classical music. This environment is vibrant enough to absorb foreign elements and Cubanize them rather than to be dissipated by them.

Present-day Cuban dance bands have an eclectic sound, drawing widely from international influences (jazz, rock, funk, pop) and local folklore, the latter much more heavily supported under socialism than in earlier times. Performers have effectively refashioned older dance styles in conformity with new experiences, in this case reflecting a heightened interest in foreign genres and greater familiarity with local African-influenced traditions.

Other factors distinguishing *timba* from salsa relate to non-musical factors such as the relation of artists to the media. Cuba is a country in which the media are less extensive than in the United States. There are fewer television channels (in fact only two) and thus they afford less airtime to performers. There are fewer billboards, magazines, newspapers, and less formal promotion of artists. For these reasons, image and marketing have been less central to domestic music-making than in other countries. As a result, topical or catchy lyrics, musical skill, and stage presence during live shows are the primary factors determining a band's success. Villafranca suggests that Ricky Martin, Mark Antony, and others are talented singers but owe much of their success to the fact that they are "pretty boys" who profile well on MTV.⁵⁷ Until very recently, Cuban artists did not have the option of appearing in videos and so the criteria determining their popularity were different. For years, lyrics in Cuban dance music related closely to local events, capturing emerging sentiment in playful imagery. Songs might involve references to syncretic religion, to economic need, to tourism, or any number of related topics.

Finally, the dance style accompanying Cuban music is recognizably different from that of salsa dancers in New York, Puerto Rico, or South America. Puerto Rican salsa dancing usually emphasizes fast successions of complicated turns and spins that focus attention on couples' arms. When dancing apart, couples execute kicks and slides reminiscent of the lindy and other mid-twentieth century couple dances from the US. Cuban *casino* dancers, by contrast, tend to turn less frequently and quickly, placing more emphasis on round, independent motion of the hips and shoulders. In this sense their motion strikes the observer as more directly linked to West African dance. Cubans dance individually rather than in couples more often than Puerto Ricans, especially as part of *despelote* exhibitionism associated with the "breakdown."⁵⁸ *Rueda*, perhaps the most distinct form of Cuban choreography, consists of a kind of Latin square dancing in which multiple partners stand in concentric circles, men typically on the outside and women on the inside. Designated leaders call out the names of particular moves which are then executed simultane-

ously by all participants. Turns often involve men passing their partner to a neighbour so that the women gradually rotate around the ring.

The Salsa Controversy

The emergence of commercial salsa music in New York inspired controversy from the beginning, coming as it did only a few years after the onset of the US-imposed economic embargo against Cuba and in the context of CIA assassination attempts against Castro, extreme tensions between Cuban nationals and the exile community, and the height of ideological radicalism among socialist leaders. The alteration (in some cases) and remarketing of traditional Cuban genres as “salsa” by Fania and other record labels without clear recognition of the music’s origins angered musicians. Many, including Antonio Arcaño, Rafael Lay, and Rosendo Ruiz, denounced the term immediately.⁵⁹ More than a few suggested that salsa was an “imperialist plot” designed to further marginalize and disenfranchise socialist artists.⁶⁰

While probably not as carefully crafted a policy as these criticisms suggest, salsa as an economic phenomenon does raise troubling issues. The combination of an embargo policy prohibiting Cubans from selling their music abroad and the simultaneous marketing of the same music by entrepreneurs in the US seems unethical. Manuel notes that,

Since the United States has made a particular effort to isolate Cuba economically, diplomatically, culturally and ideologically, the commercially successful recycling of Cuban music under the “alienating and mystifying slogan” of “salsa” is seen as especially duplicitous.... Cuban musicologist Dora Ileana Torres ... regards the phenomenon as a typical instance of North American ... exploitation wherein a “primary product” (in this case, musical style) is extracted without due compensation from an under-developed nation and is then packed and marketed as a North American product.⁶¹

Others might suggest instead that the Cuban government created much of the problem for itself by refusing to recognize international copyright agreements as of the early 1960s. This left the legal door open for Jerry Masucci and others to record songs with little or no compensation offered to their authors. The Cuban government’s overall lack of support for dance music beginning in the late 1960s undoubtedly contributed to the decision of foreign businesses to market Cuban music as well. Even without the US embargo, less Cuban music would have been available

after that time. Responding to the demand, companies like Fania simply provided what consumers wanted.

Quite apart from the way that state policy may have reinforced the process of appropriation without compensation, many of the complaints of the Cuban leadership are legitimate. US firms amassed a fortune in salsa revenues during the 1970s and 80s by banning the works of Cuban artists and then brazenly appropriating the same music for their own commercial gain. Access to widespread networks of distribution has allowed Fania, RMM, and other companies to dominate the international Latin music trade even when their artists are not the original composers of the music they promote. Frequently, producers in the US print only the letters "DR" (*derechos reservados* or "copyright reserved") after particular titles as a means of claiming legal rights while avoiding Cuban composers' names and thus allusions to the origin of the music.⁶² In other cases, the pieces are brazenly copyrighted under entirely new authors and titles. José Antonio Méndez's composition "Decídete mi amor," for example, is attributed to Edgardo Donato on a recording by Héctor Lavoe from the 1970s⁶³ and retitled "Déjala que siga."

Cristóbal Díaz Ayala offers what is perhaps the most credible explanation of how the term "salsa" came to be substituted for *son* or "Cuban music" in New York City. He believes that the term was consciously developed by Jerri Masucci as a means of obscuring the roots of the music, but not for political reasons or with the intent of unfairly exploiting Cuban artists. Rather, adopting the term "salsa" allowed him to avoid references to Cuba during a politically volatile period and to sell his product with relative ease to right-wing exiles in Miami as well as socialist sympathizers at home or in Puerto Rico.

It is ironic given the heated controversy surrounding salsa among critics on the island (especially in the 1970s and 80s) that most Cubans remained oblivious to both the term itself and the artists associated with it. An entire generation of radio listeners grew up without ever hearing names like El Gran Combo, the Sonora Ponceña, the Fania All Stars, or Pete "El Conde" Rodríguez. This was primarily due to a policy of media censorship on the island—the "autoblockade"—that excluded salsa from domestic airplay.⁶⁴ Such prohibitions, despite their impact on the lives of millions of listeners, have never been publicly acknowledged. The informal ban began in the late 1960s and extended through the mid-1980s. During that time, party ideologues even prohibited the use of the term "salsa" in the media or by musicologists.⁶⁵

Prohibitions against salsa music from abroad applied not only to the

media but extended to the use of music in private homes. Radio journalist Cristóbal Sosa remembers that for years one risked denunciation by local CDR members and possible harassment and/or jailing by tribunals merely for playing an LP of the Miami Sound Machine—whose lead singer Gloria Estefan had open anti-Castro sympathies. Similar risks were associated with listening to the music of other artists. “The ‘salsa’ music from New York, of Eddie and Charlie Palmieri, all that, was considered the enemy.”⁶⁶ Music by New York *salseros* never appeared on television and could not be purchased in state-owned music stores. It could only be obtained clandestinely through networks of friends willing to make or lend bootleg recordings. Gloria Estefan herself first appeared on Cuban television only in the late 1990s in conjunction with her performance during the Atlanta Olympic games. In earlier years she would simply have been edited out of the program.

Beginning in the late 1970s, government policy began to move from a position of absolute intolerance towards a more open but confrontational stance vis-à-vis salsa music and then eventually to reconciliation with some artists. It may be that the strong popularity of salsa abroad forced policy-makers to re-evaluate the importance of dance music on the island and to produce more recordings of it. In the late 1970s, EGREM created an ensemble known as the “Estrellas de Areíto” or “Areíto Stars,” deriving their name from the regional state-owned recording company in Havana. This group represented a direct response and challenge to Jerry Masucci’s “Fania All-Stars.” It attempted to draw attention away from foreign artists and to underscore once more the fact that “salsa” came from Cuba.

Policies of engagement with Cuba under the Carter administration (1976–80) contributed to a gradual thawing of the cold war over salsa. This is the period that saw the re-establishment of consular ties between the two countries for the first time since 1961 and a new allowance for cultural exchange. CBS records invited Irakere to record in the US in 1978 as well as to participate in the Newport and Montreaux jazz festivals. At roughly the same time, the Fania All-Stars themselves visited Cuba for the first time. Politically oriented salsa compositions by Rubén Blades and others sympathetic to socialist issues eventually caused those in charge of Cuban cultural policy to review their long-standing biases.

The changing attitudes of Party officials towards salsa may also have been shaped by their desire to foster stronger relations with other Latin American countries. Many remember Venezuelan Oscar de León’s visit to Cuba in 1984 as a watershed moment in terms of diminished radio censor-

ship. León, the first internationally recognized *salsero* from the developing world to perform in Cuba, had always acknowledged his debt to performers such as Beny Moré, Barbarito Diez, and the Trío Matamoros; for that reason, his presence was less controversial. Mid-level bureaucrats interpreted the decision by the Central Committee to air and promote his music as an implicit signal that some salsa could now be played on the radio; this remained true even after statements he later made against socialism in Miami generated new controversy.

Dance music aired on Cuban television continues to be performed largely by national rather than international artists. Since 1989, popular music of all types has received greater support from the government. This repertory is promoted heavily as a means of generating foreign currency during the current period of economic crisis. It is also attractive to musicians who recognize the possibilities for travel and economic gain that it can provide. At present, performing in tourist venues or abroad offers Cubans potentially higher salaries than they could hope to achieve in virtually any other way.

Dance Music of the 1980s–90s

The period extending from the late 1970s through 1989 gave rise to a number of campaigns of rectification within Cuba, both economic and ideological. These had important implications for dance repertoire. New policies of decentralization, including the creation of independent musical *empresas* designed to direct and promote dance orchestras, proved beneficial to performers. Older groups such as Van Van and Irakere began to record more frequently and to perform in more attractive venues, while new groups formed and rose to prominence. Beginning in the 1990s, the popularity of dance band music skyrocketed, driven by strong international interest and the importance of dance entertainment within the new tourist economy. For the first time since the mid-1960s, the amount of dance music rivals that of the Batista era.

It is interesting to compare *timba* lyrics with those of *nueva trova*, the youth music of a generation earlier. *Timba* songs derive from the black working classes and are written in the parlance of the street, while *nueva trova* lyrics are mostly written by white, college-educated performers. *Timba* does not often allude, at least not directly, to subjects frequently found in *trova*: socialist struggle, international politics, or existential issues. *Timba* lyrics are much more grounded in local experience, often including slang words and phrases from marginal neighborhoods. Despite their uncouth associations, younger commentators consistently

cite *timba* lyrics as fundamental to the genre's popularity. In the early and mid-1990s, especially, the lyrics discussed subjects of interest to the public that did not appear in the news: illegal business deals, the effects of tourism, and the lack of consumer goods, to mention only a few. For this reason the songs could often have greater relevance than the more cosmopolitan, conceptual *trova* of Silvio Rodríguez.

Timba songs of the mid-1990s demonstrate a critical aspect that can't be found in songs of the preceding decade with any frequency. They discuss the problems of everyday Cubans, reflecting with characteristic creole humour, sarcasm, and wit on the lives of common people. That quality is something that isn't as apparent in dance music anymore, unfortunately.⁶⁷

Government reaction to *timba* lyrics has varied widely, from acceptance to indifference to a calculated suppression of particular pieces. Censorship was most common in the early and mid-1990s prior to the music's popularization abroad. Compositions taken off the air entirely or suppressed include Juan Formell's "Socio por mi negocio" because of its allusion to black market dealings and José Luís Cortés' "La bruja" because of its perceived objectification of women.⁶⁸ Recently the government has taken a different approach, letting songs that generate high sales revenues circulate freely at home, within limits. Of course, dance music choruses tend to be short phrases, metaphorical in nature, and can be interpreted in a number of ways. Their implications may derive as much from the manner in which they are interpreted as what the author(s) intended to say. One classic example is the Fernando Rodríguez composition "Este hombre está loco" from 1988, not written with subversive intent but repeated on the street as an indictment of Castro. Conversely, apparently "normal" lyrics may have political connotations. Stubbs notes that Irakere's "Bacalao con pan" (Codfish and Bread) was charged with significance because at the time little else besides codfish was available to eat in Havana.⁶⁹ Artists are still far from free to voice their concerns on many issues, but the veiled references to politics in *timba* have proven more effective in disseminating their message than similar attempts in literature, visual art, or other forms of music.

Increasing government support for dance music has resulted in the reopening in the 1990s of many clubs that had been closed since 1970. Radio and television broadcasts feature dance music constantly, and interest in *timba* has led to the release of scores of new recordings. The

domestic prominence of dance music has been mirrored by growing interest in the United States and Europe. All styles have experienced a boom in sales since the early 1990s, from the most contemporary to historical recordings re-released on CD. Major recording artists such as David Byrne and Ry Cooder have manifest their interest in Cuban dance music through their promotion of the Cuba Classics anthologies, *Buena Vista Social Club* performers, the Cubanismo ensemble, and others.

The “Buena Vista phenomenon” deserves special mention because of its almost unbelievable success and the relatively subdued response to the same releases within Cuba. Discourse about the film by Cubans and international critics tell us a great deal about all parties involved. They underscore earlier shortcomings on the island in terms of support of traditional repertoire and also the naiveté of many foreign commentators.

Cuban critics have been critical of *Buena Vista* since the film first appeared in 1999. Some attacked Ry Cooder as ignorant of Cuba, of its music, and of Spanish itself; they considered him a poor choice as the film’s central figure.⁷⁰ Others expressed concern over the lack of political references in the film and the fact that no one mentioned the negative impact of the US embargo on artists.⁷¹ Historian María Teresa Linares took offense at scenes that depicted dilapidated buildings in Havana but only the most pristine and well-maintained sections of New York’s business district. Various individuals have questioned why Wenders and Cooder chose to represent pre-revolutionary artists, with no attention given to recent performers, groups, and musical innovations. Foreign anthropologists have taken this last critique a step further, suggesting that *Buena Vista* evokes what might be described as “imperialist nostalgia” for pre-revolutionary Cuba. It recreates colonial past devoid of political and economic inequalities and the role of the United States in perpetuating them. By focusing on only selective aspects of Cuban history, the film evokes an image of the country that Americans choose to remember—not one of right-wing dictatorships, American weapons, and bloodshed, but of smiles, music, *mulatas*, and cigar-smoking peasants.⁷²

These commentaries illustrate how cultural forms can perpetuate misrepresentations of particular groups as well as the ideologies that give rise to them. By the same token, however, more vehement Cuban nationals might be critiqued as selective in their own analyses, ignoring the complicity of domestic cultural policy in the decline of pre-revolutionary dance music. Performers of the 1940s and 50s were consistently undervalued and underpromoted for years. They could rarely record or perform on television and the clubs in which they established their careers

were forcibly closed. EGREM's catalogue undoubtedly contains better and more representative recordings of Cuban dance traditions than those selected by Wim Wenders and Ry Cooder, but administrators never chose to market them abroad until recently. As a result, the Rubén Gonzálezes of Cuba have remained in obscurity unless "discovered" by performers such as Ry Cooder. If the Cuban intelligentsia is unhappy with *Buena Vista*'s representation of Cuban artists, then it is obligated to create documentaries of a similar nature and to let the voices of musicians be heard.

Conclusion

Dance music in Cuba since 1959 has been part of all the major trends, policies, and repercussions of the socialist experience. Dance musicians have fled into exile, performed in front of tank columns on May Day, volunteered in literacy campaigns, cut sugarcane, and entertained soldiers in Angola. If we consider that *guarachas* by Comandante Juan Almeida, such as "Dame un traguito," continue to be popular repertoire, we can even confirm that dance musicians fought alongside Castro in the Sierra Maestra.

Dance traditions under socialism never disappeared, but they have undergone radical changes as the result of revolutionary arts policies. Beginning in the late 1960s, much of the support for apolitical dance entertainment gradually disappeared. Those interested in studying and/or performing traditional *son* struggled within a new cultural reality, one that emphasized close government involvement in the arts, promoted classical music instruction, and demonstrated a preference for performers whose works contained overtly socialist political messages. After 1970 the government drastically reduced the numbers of performance venues for dance music and chose not to promote bands heavily. In the late 1970s, leaders modified this policy and once again began to support dance music more actively, often as a means of drawing crowds for political events.

Since 1989, dance repertoire has again become the most commonly heard music on the island, just as in the 1950s. Because of its international appeal and its ability to generate hard currency, it has prevailed over other forms. Dance musicians now are freer to express themselves in ideological and musical terms and more active abroad than at any time in the past 40 years. They have combined influences from US pop, traditional Cuban *son*, and folklore into a unique synthesis. In the same way, however, that *nueva trova* peaked in the mid-1980s and gradually lost popularity in subsequent years, many suggest that *timba* has oversaturated

the domestic market. Bands remain popular but increasingly compete for attention with other styles—rock, folkloric groups, rap, reggae—and are perceived as being more commercially focused, less grounded in local issues.

The history of Cuban dance music teaches lessons about the importance of allowing for fun, humour, and sensuality in any successful form of popular culture, including those in socialist countries. As early as the 19th century, Engels himself denounced “moral prudishness” in socially concerned poets such as Freiligrath.⁷³ Emma Goldman’s voice, advancing the same arguments in the twentieth century, has been echoed by Cubans Juan Formell and Alejandro “Virulo” García.⁷⁴ The latter have struggled within an at times highly restrictive context to keep Cuban music playful and irreverent. They recognize that its value to the people lies in the pleasure it brings them in various ways, and that such pleasure cannot be compromised without negatively affecting the vitality of the medium.

John Fiske’s distinction between “cultural products” circulated by those in control of the media and truly “popular” forms of expression embraced by the public speaks to this issue. To Fiske, pop culture is inherently carnivalesque; it functions to liberate people from social restraints of various kinds, at least temporarily or symbolically. Rather than viewing dance music as escapist, therefore, as dogmatic socialists have been prone to do, we might conceive of it as a form of wish fulfillment, a realm of fantasy distinct from reality but deriving its meanings from the practices of everyday, lived experience.⁷⁵ Whether the music includes lyrical or stylistic references that might be interpreted as “subversive” or whether it merely helps create and sustain a space for personal enjoyment beyond the bounds of state control, its liberating qualities are fundamental. From this perspective, popular music is political even if its lyrics discuss only the *fruta bomba* or *rompiendo cocos*.

Cuban dance band musicians, in the final analysis, perpetuate a grass-roots tradition. In general they reflect the interests of the people rather than those of the government and are by no means puppets of the Communist Party. Performers must constantly negotiate for freedom of expression and overall autonomy. They compete for equipment, performance space, travel opportunities, and media access in a politically tense environment. It is unfortunate that they are often perceived by exiles as spokesmen for Castro rather than as individuals caught in a complex situation and facing difficult decisions. Cuban dance bands continue to generate controversy when they play abroad, and until recently even the airing of their recorded music in Miami resulted in bomb threats called in

to offending radio stations. Since the commercial success of dance music within Cuba eventually led to more favourable attitudes towards it among the Cuban leadership, perhaps the new visibility of Cuban bands abroad will also contribute to a more balanced view of socialism from the international community.

Notes

1. Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (New York: Knopf, 1934), p. 56.
2. Louis Dupré, *Marx's Social Critique of Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 285.
3. Maynard Solomon, ed., *Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 4. Some have noted nevertheless that much of the power of Marx's writing, even on economics and history, derives from his use of poetic imagery and metaphor.
4. Lenin, as quoted in Solomon, *Marxism and Art*, p. 164.
5. Gorki, as quoted in *Ibid*, p. 164. Gorki's description is not anecdotal; Solomon quotes Lenin using almost exactly the same words himself shortly thereafter.
6. Tzvi Medin, *Cuba: The Shaping of Revolutionary Consciousness*, translated by Martha Grenzback (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990), p. 125.
7. Ministerio de Cultura, ed., *La cultura en Cuba socialista* (La Habana: Editorial Arte y Letras, 1982), pp. 72, 75.
8. Odilio Urfé, "La música folklórica, popular y del teatro cubano," in Ministerio de Cultura, ed., *La cultura en Cuba socialista*, p. 166. The Urfé article contains a much fuller listing of participating artists.
9. Interview with Melquiades Fundora Dino, 18 February 2001 in Havana, Cuba.
10. Cristóbal Díaz Ayala, *Música cubana del areíto a la nueva trova* (Miami, FL: Ediciones Universal, 1981), pp. 268–269.
11. *Ibid*, p. 284.
12. Interview with Leonardo Acosta, 6 February 2001 in Havana, Cuba.
13. Armando Valladares, *Against All Hope*, translated by Andrew Hurley (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), p. 89.
14. Interview with Acosta, 2001.
15. Partido Comunista de Cuba, *Plataforma programática del Partido Comunista de Cuba: Tesis y resolución* (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1978), p. 90.
16. Interview with Fundora Dino, 2001.
17. For a more complete listing of the dozens of Cuban artists choosing exile at this time, as well as press and entertainment industry executives, see Díaz Ayala, *Música cubana*, p. 267.
18. Censorship of this type is not merely a phenomenon associated with the early revolution. In 1981, for example, officials within the UNEAC chose to exclude all references to artists living outside the country in Helio Orovio's *Diccionario de la música cubana*. Similarly, one of the definitive histories of jazz in Russia from the socialist period, *Jazz: A Historical Sketch* by Alexei Batashev, excluded the names of all artists who had emigrated. See S. Frederick Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of*

- Jazz in the Soviet Union*, 2nd ed., (New York: Limelight Editions, 1994), p. 305.
19. These community-based organizations have existed on virtually every city block of urban areas in the country since the 1960s. They provide many useful services to residents, but also act as anti-revolutionary watchdogs, the eyes and ears of the state.
 20. Interview with Fundora Dino, 2001.
 21. Interview with David Calzado, 9 October 1996 in Havana, Cuba.
 22. Muñoz-Unsain, "El cabaret, ¿también cultura?" *Bohemia* año 59, 5 (3 February 1967): 34. "[E]structuras comerciales para explotar frustraciones y vicios ... una mera exhibición-ostentación de glúteos."
 23. *Ibid.*, p. 8. "En una sociedad que por el contrario trata de elevar el nivel, no sólo económico sino también moral y cultural de sus integrantes, ese fructífero esquema pierde su razón de ser. Porque en una sociedad así—como la nuestra hoy—se trata de que la gente piense."
 24. Starr, *Red and Hot*, pp. 10–11.
 25. Interview with Enrique Patterson, 19 October 2000 in Miami, FL.
 26. Paquito D'Rivera, *Mi vida sexual* (Puerto Rico: Editorial Plaza Mayor, 1998), p. 120.
 27. Interview with Acosta, 2001.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. The film is named after an actual black social club that existed between 1932 and 1962 in east Havana. However, not all the artists featured in the film belonged to the club or played in it, nor did they represent a cohesive artistic group prior to being contacted for participation in the documentary. Interview with José "Pepe" Reyes, 21 February 2001 in Havana, Cuba.
 30. Ambrosio Fomet, et al., "*Buena Vista Social Club* y la cultura musical cubana," *Temas* 22–23 (July–December 1999): 166.
 31. *Ibid.*, p. 164; Interview with Reyes, 2001.
 32. Interview with Reynaldo Fernández, 21 March 1999 in Philadelphia, PA.
 33. Interview with Fundora Dino, 2001.
 34. Initially directed by Medardo Montero, this is the name of the state company that oversees all music recording and distribution in socialist Cuba. It was established in 1962.
 35. For many years after its creation in the early 1960s, EGREM's directors did not keep records of whom they produced, when they recorded, how many LPs were made, or how many were sold. Beginning in the late 1960s, they began to keep some records, but it remains difficult for foreign researchers to gain access. I have not yet been granted access and cannot provide more statistical evidence here, only outline major trends.
 36. Interview with Fundora Dino, 2001.
 37. Interview with Lino Neira, 19 September 1996 in Havana, Cuba.
 38. Interview with Elio Villafranca, 6 June 2000 in Philadelphia, PA.
 39. Sammie Ann Wicks, "America's Popular Music Tradition as 'Canon-Fodder,'" *Popular Music and Society* (1999): 55–89.
 40. Interview with Neira, 1996.
 41. *Ibid.*
 42. Díaz Ayala, *Música cubana*, p. 319.

43. Interview with Calzado, 1996.
44. Ibid.
45. Fomet, et al., "*Buena Vista Social Club*," p. 175.
46. Rosa Elvira Peláez, "Los Van Van: Al asalto de la tercera generación," *Granma* (8 August 1988): 5.
47. Minerva Salado, "Cara a cara con Juan," *Cuba Internacional* 2 (1985): 71.
48. Ibid.
49. Ibid, p. 72.
50. Yvonne Seguin, "Cuban Jazz Conversations" (Unpublished manuscript, 1997), p. 44.
51. Interview with Helio Orovio, 26 September 1996 in Havana, Cuba.
52. D'Rivera, *Mi vida saxual*, p. 194.
53. Ibid, pp. 182–183.
54. Ibid, p. 199.
55. Ibid, p. 212.
56. The term *newyorrican* is used to describe a person of Puerto Rican heritage who lives in New York.
57. Interview with Villafranca, 2000.
58. Dawn Drake, "Timba: The 'new' salsa from Cuba" (Unpublished manuscript, 1992).
59. Leonardo Acosta, "¿Terminó la polémica sobre la salsa?" *Música cubana* (1997), pp. 27–28.
60. Interview with Leonardo Acosta, 1 September 1996 in Havana, Cuba.
61. Peter Manuel, "Marxism, nationalism and popular music in revolutionary Cuba," *Popular Music* 6, 2 (May 1987): 170.
62. Diaz Ayala, *Música cubana*, p. 339.
63. Héctor Lavoe, *Tributo a Héctor Lavoe, "La voz" con Los Titanes*, Discos Fuentes compact disc #11072 (Miami, FL: Miami Records, 1990).
64. Acosta, "¿Terminó la polémica?" p. 28.
65. Interview with Helio Orovio, 1996.
66. Interview with Cristóbal Sosa, 1 October 1996 in Havana, Cuba.
67. Alexis Esquivel, personal communication.
68. Interview with Calzado, 1996.
69. Jean Stubbs, *Cuba: The Test of Time* (London: Latin American Bureau [Research and Action] Ltd, 1989), p. 78.
70. Fornet, "*Buena Vista Social Club*," p. 172.
71. Ibid, p. 165.
72. Ariana Hernández-Reguant, "The Nostalgia of *Buena Vista Social Club*. Cuban Music and 'World Marketing' " (Toronto, ON: Paper presented at the conference Musical Intersections, November 2000).
73. Maynard Solomon, ed., *Marxism and Art: Essays Classic and Contemporary* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 70.
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