

*SOLO DRUMMING IN THE PUERTO RICAN BOMBA: AN ANALYSIS OF
MUSICAL PROCESSES AND IMPROVISATIONAL STRATEGIES*

By

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Abstract

For over two hundred years, the drumming, dancing and singing of the bomba genre have maintained a vital presence among Puerto Ricans. Bomba reflects a syncretism of African and European musical concepts that have, over the past fifty years, experienced a renaissance and a socio-musical redefinition that have forged a unique contemporary musical culture.

Drumming improvisation, a core musical element of bomba tradition, has never been analyzed in a manner that defines the relationship of phrases to rhythmic structure or that articulates its continual dialogue with an evolving tradition. This study will examine how many of the genre's foundational syncretic elements and techniques evolve in daily practice.

The research undertaken over the past four years involved interviews, intensive fieldwork, participant-observation, historical research, and cross-disciplinary studies. The dissertation begins with historical accounts of bomba and then proceeds to surveys of prior research, identification of important communities, and the establishment of a classification of musical styles, sub-styles and processes. This data informs the analysis of six drum solos drawn from the principal styles and sub-styles that are the central concern of this study. These analyses propose that drumming improvisation in bomba reveals how precise musical processes equip the soloist with specific musical-navigational tools while allowing for spontaneous inspirational moments. The transcriptions give a concise picture of the techniques at play, revealing how rhythmic cells and phrases relate to tradition, experimentation and innovation.

Improvisation in bomba involves a complex network of incoming stimuli that encompasses, among other things, dance steps, song texts, non-musical influences and the diverse expectations of any given audience. Bomba soloing exhibits characteristics that are best examined through intercultural, cross-disciplinary studies of improvisational practice.

Nationalism, identity politics, and an underlying racial ambiguity surface as important factors in bomba's renewal. Their relation to the processes mentioned earlier completes a portrait of the evolution of a musical genre deeply rooted in Puerto Rican society.

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Preface

Following an absence of almost 15 years, I returned to Puerto Rico to begin my investigations for this thesis in November and December of 2002. That visit rekindled memories of my first direct encounter with African heritage on the island.

I attended eight years of elementary and high school at the Academia Santa Mónica in Santurce in the mid to late 1960s. The curriculum at the time required a modest unit on Puerto Rican history and folklore.¹ It was there that I first encountered the Afro-Caribbean poems of authors Fortunato Vizcarrondo and Luis Palés Matos. This collection of poems written in the 1930s-50s, offered the most accessible representation of African heritage available at that time in Puerto Rico. The language was a concoction of place names, drums, rhythms and onomatopoeia that brought to life diverse aspects of black culture. The fact that Palés Matos himself was not black did not escape the notice of later postmodernist intellectuals, yet his appropriation of Afro-Caribbean culture did expose a world that perhaps he and many others could not deny existed.

In spite of an overwhelming English-language teaching environment in the Catholic schools of the capitol region, the limited emphasis on local culture, in particular black culture, had a profound impact on many of us. It brought forth a culture systematically hidden from us and introduced us to a powerful musical current we had been led to believe was inconsequential to modern cultural trends.

“The bomba, was historically and discursively marginalized, erased, and dismissed as *música de negros*” (Aparicio, 1998:27).

¹ Beginning in the 1940s Puerto Rican schools included literary programmes that gradually exposed students to the Afro-Puerto Rican poetry of Luis Lloréns Torres and radio broadcasts featured the distinctive oratorical style of black actor Juan Boria (González, 1989:135).

The social environment of my extended family, like that of many others, leaned towards an upward mobility whose eyes were set on U.S. models of suburban comfort and homogeneity. That homogeneity emphasized our European roots and denied the darker skin tones and clearly mestizo character of our collective look.

When school assemblies were held, we danced and sang the songs of the (equally unfamiliar but at least allegedly white) *jibaro* or participated in formal dances featuring the *danza*. This danza was the music most associated with the elite class and its allegiances to European salon music of the late 18th and 19th centuries. The bomba and its local subculture was a mere footnote relegated to outdoor festivals, museums and the occasional reference in traditional culture curricula until the late 1980s.

The more I returned to the island over the next two years, the more forms of bomba I encountered on countless radio stations, television programmes (commercial and non-commercial stations), newspapers, and in a variety of venues and concerts. I was surprised at how far things had progressed and began to seek out participants willing to share information and point me in useful directions.

Fieldwork in ethnomusicology seeks to utilize relations between social and artistic expressions as a path to the understanding of musical function. Nketia said that “meaning in African music must be regarded not as involving one statement but a plurality of statements derived from different but mutually related phases of investigation. One might more appropriately speak of modes of meaning rather than meaning in general” (Nketia, 1962:5). With this in mind I pursued a practice Chernoff referred to as “participant observation” (Chernoff, 1979:8), an intimate cultural experience wherein

“we weave ourselves (or are woven by others) into the communities we study, becoming cultural actors in the very dramas of society we endeavor to understand” (Barz and Cooley, 1997:18).

To a Western-trained musician/scholar this level of participation may entail an acquired degree of patience and a willingness to participate in their daily lives and family functions. Chernoff spoke of a “gap between experience and how to communicate it” (Chernoff, 1979:11). My immersion into the bomba community’s social life gave me an enhanced understanding of the complexity of that community’s social relations and nurtured the perspective necessary to communicate the field work experience.

To this end I attended festivals, bars, museums, libraries, clubs, senior citizen homes, collector shops, *bombazos* (informal bomba events), summer camps for children, art exhibits, archives, universities, forums, concerts, competitions, even a ballroom dance conference. I visited people in their homes, in bars, in malls, walking down the street, in teaching studios, helped carry their drums, gave them rides, talked to them on their cell phones, in their record stores, late at night and early in the morning. Because conversations were rarely taped or recorded on video, people were quite candid and willing to share all manner of knowledge and no small amount of gossip, often more that I truly cared to know. In those instances where a conversation was to address a very specific topic, I requested permission to record with the proviso that the informant could strike any comment they so wished, by simply saying so. I was able to record a number of rehearsals and portions of performances in order to have material I could compare to the many recordings I employed in assembling the transcriptions.

DEDICATION

It is with great love and affection that I thank my wife Janet, son Jesse and daughter Isabel for their infinite patience, support, genuine interest and for graciously ceding many days, nights and weekends to the pursuit of this dissertation. None of this would have been possible without them.

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Thank you to my parents Salvador and Carmen for it was they who unknowingly stoked the fires of my passion for the music of our heritage by regularly mailing me all those tapes, books and articles.

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Introduction

I first heard Francisco López Cruz's precious 1963 recording of folkloric Puerto Rican music during my undergraduate years away from home in the mid 1970s. In spite of having spent the better part of my youth immersed in Puerto Rican culture, that first exposure, especially the two traditional bombas, surprised me. They brought back a familiar sound and rhythm that I had heard only sporadically. I asked myself why I wasn't more familiar with this music. Why, if it spoke to me so powerfully and so directly, had I not experienced it more intimately? Why did it hurt to listen to it? The answers to my questions emerged slowly and led to an in-depth exploration of my musical heritage.

After many years as a successful percussionist and university instructor in Canada, I finally seized the opportunity to step aside from the rigours of the peripatetic musician's life and pursue a serious study of the Puerto Rican *bomba*.

Three fundamental motivations guide my study:

- The drum-dance dialogue of bomba demonstrates a musical/non-verbal communication between humans that fascinates me.
- The study of bomba's socio-cultural dimensions allows me to examine elements of my native culture that have remained outside my reach.
- I wish to use my examination of bomba improvisation to complement my on-going study of drumming in our contemporary musical society.

Defining Bomba

Though an extensive definition of bomba is contained in Chapter One, this short opening introduction to bomba will be of use to the reader. Bomba is a music/dance/song style developed in the Spanish colony of Puerto Rico as early as the 18th century. Its history is tied to that of the diverse slave groups that were the engine of the colonial economy. Bomba, in existence now for over two hundred years, continues to be a secular recreational musical style in which dancers, drummers, singers and bystanders actively interact.

Songs, sung mostly in Spanish, deal with topical issues of the immediate community, and can be pre-composed or improvised on the spot. Older bombas can feature words or expressions borrowed from former colonial African languages and older Caribbean dialects whose original meanings have been lost. The singer introduces opening verses to which a chorus responds. This in turn initiates the drumming. What follows is a series of call and response interactions over an ostinato of regionally and stylistically specific rhythms on top of which a solo drummer improvises.

The central feature of the bomba is the friendly competition between a dancer and a lead drummer. This exchange has the dancer improvising steps to which the drummer is obliged to respond almost telepathically. In community gatherings, this playful competition has no real winners or losers, although particularly exceptional dancers, drummers and/or singers do achieve recognition.

The traditions evident in bomba drumming are transplanted musical concepts originating primarily in the diverse musical cultures of West and Central Africa. In spite of the fact that these earlier practices have been shaped and drastically transformed

through the experience of slavery and social marginalization, they have survived and flourished throughout the former colonial regions. Bomba shares characteristics with dances and traditions found throughout the Caribbean and on the South American continent. Because of the strong trading relationship between the former French Louisiana colony, other French colonies and Spanish colonies in the Caribbean, dances akin to bomba such as the bambulé and calindá have been identified in New Orleans, Martinique and Guadeloupe (Manuel 1995, Roberts 1979, Sloat 2002, Guilbault 1993).

The contemporary bomba scene differs radically from that of only a few generations ago in that it has achieved a favourable level of social acceptance and integration while still retaining its original musical and choreographic foundations.

My study concentrates on the simultaneous interpretation and elaboration evident in solo improvisation, the methods and thought processes by which drummers, responding to dancers and singers, create solos which are the focus of the performance. The continual introduction of new ideas during improvisations inspires stylistic development and renewal. This study of improvisation as stylistic catalyst for change is taking place as the bomba is experiencing its most explosive period of expansion and renewal to date.

Five questions frame my investigation.

What do we know about bomba today? Although there has never been more documented information on earlier bomba practices than exists today, this documentation exhibits varying degrees of accuracy and rigour. There is a pressing need for comparative studies, and for an integrated volume of research that embraces performer, scholar,

concert presenter, and consumer perspectives. My investigations begin with a general portrait of the known information in order to explore aspects of practice and interpretation.

The bomba, traditionally described as one of three autochthonous musical streams of Puerto Rican culture,¹ has often fallen victim to a nostalgic and imagined history that is at odds with its actual development. Recent writing, especially in the areas of ethnomusicology (Dufrasne 1985, Barton 1995), sociology (Quintero Rivera 1998) and cultural theory (Flores 2000, Aparicio 1998), has helped build a more realistic portrait. These scholars, working in close proximity to the bomba community, have gained a high level of acceptance and been recognized for their contributions to bomba's survival. The personal relationships they nurtured within that community validated and ensured its contribution to national cultural practices. An earlier reluctance to explore non-European musical systems has given way to a fruitful dialogue between performers and the academy. To quote Barz and Cooley, "many now are just beginning to realize that fieldwork is a period of translation" (Barz and Cooley 1997). Fieldwork has enabled scholars to enter bomba's context, access its literal and semiotic language, and subject it to musical analysis.

Among the most significant outcomes of the recent ethnomusicology of bomba is that its recognition within academia has helped secure institutional funding and its mainstream social acceptance. This, in turn, has directly benefited groups, community associations and individual bomba teachers by allowing them to expand the range of their operations and nurture the growth of bomba as cultural practice.

¹ The other two are eclectic forms of *jibaro* (rural peasant) music and the European-modeled *danza*.

Can an insider possess the sufficient perspective to investigate his own culture?

I raised this point with sociologist Quintero Rivera, and he replied:

It's good to have both sides. On the one side, you should be able to be objective about your culture and somewhat removed from it but at the same time it is advantageous to work from within. That would be the ideal, to be inside and imagine it from outside. In that sense you have a privileged position. From that context you can see the bomba in its broader context as an expressive form that exists in many places in the Caribbean. Being inside gives you access to information not readily available elsewhere. But at least it's not as before where you weren't allowed to look at your own culture. (Quintero Rivera, p.c., July 26, 2004)

I had the opportunity to discuss this same issue with ethnomusicologist Bruno Nettl during his visit to the University of British Columbia in 2001. His pragmatic suggestion was that while an insider could do justice to an investigation, it was contingent upon him/her to maintain a careful balance between fact and emotional response to the findings. Nettl addressed this concern in Myers' *Introduction to Ethnomusicology*.

Research is supposed to uncover facts, but the 'facts' can be only somebody's interpretation, and if a multiplicity of cultures is involved, validity of insiders and outsiders is a major issue. In the 1970s and '80s ethnomusicologists became particularly concerned with the contrastive roles of the two. In part it is a matter of ethics: what is the right of a society to control its cultural products and who speaks for such a society?...By now the relationship of insider to outsider, as both scientifically objective and interpretive, are better understood (Myers, 1992:393).

Who were, and who are now the central characters in this music/dance phenomenon? At the centre of bomba history are the anonymous Afro-Puerto Rican labourers and their families to whom this dance music was a central focus of community life. Throughout history, travellers, scholars and commentators occasionally have acknowledged bomba but it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that

prominent exponents of the tradition gained relative status. In the early decades of the 1900s, the bombas hosted by Dominguito Negrón in Cataño, Cruz Ortiz Cirino in Loíza, and the bomba dances organized by Don Chato in Guayama were some of the first examples where bomba practice was identified with specific individuals known outside their communities. In the mid-1950s Rafael Cepeda and Castor Ayala entered the bomba scene determined to secure a permanent place for it among the island's musical practices. This coincided with the commercial success of percussionist Rafael Cortijo and singer Ismael Rivera, whose adaptations of bomba reached mainstream radio and television. The gradual dismantling of racial and economic barriers of the past allowed the next generation to expand the range of bomba practice. The modern bomba generation, mentored by Modesto, Jesús and Petra Cepeda of Santurce, by the Ayala brothers in Loíza, by Isabel Albizu in Ponce and J.E. Dufrasne at the University of Puerto Rico, and others, are directly responsible for its status as a cultural phenomenon rather than a fad.

Most serious writing on bomba has lacked the voice of the bomba protagonist, the practitioner, who should be the central element in any discussion of the music. With the exception of Dufrasne (1985) and Barton (1995), none of the main writers are bomba drummers, singers or dancers capable of bringing a performer's direct knowledge to their written work. J. E. Dufrasne is a trained musician who also has extensive experience in the performance and composition of traditional music. Halbert Barton, an anthropologist, immersed himself in its practice, dances in particular, and wrote his influential dissertation from the point of view of one with a direct connection to the practice. As a performing percussionist and a student of ethnomusicology, albeit from outside the bomba community, I feel able to make a contribution to the understanding of the

musician's perspective on bomba. My exchanges with bomba performers from around the island will offer a first hand introduction to the most significant players. Their perspective on the state of the art will go a long way towards addressing the prevailing lack of a personal voice in bomba musicology.

The dynamic relationships between historical tradition, cultural expressive practice and social/economic environment have been crucial to bomba's survival. However, the nature of these relationships raises other important questions. Bruno Nettl states:

The study of 'survivals' should seek to answer questions about the extent to which the survival of older forms is related to distance from a culture centre, and to what degree it results from the social needs of a culture group surrounded by other cultures—and further, to what extent the stylistic relationships of a music in a new environment affect its retention (Nettl in Myers, 1992:385).

In an interesting twist of events, the rescue of bomba was most active as Puerto Rico began its relentless push for an industrial/commercial status. As the nation pursued a drastic metamorphosis, a parallel cultural movement looked back to tradition to secure the survival of not just a musical genre but of the contribution that the sizable black population had made to the nation.

The efforts of bomba's revivalists were a reaction to the technological shift brought about by modernization. In Puerto Rico, this shift was achieved through Operation Bootstrap, an aggressive tax-concession programme aimed at transforming an agrarian society into an industrial state.

As Nettl has pointed out, older forms survive when their respective societies move farthest from their cultural centre, a phenomenon he described as "marginal survivals" (1992:384). This is precisely what transpired with bomba. During its transition from tradition to revival (and hence survival), it was transformed from a meaningful

music of community recreation to a symbolic music of resistance and identity. The stylistic changes brought about by the revivalists and their eventual disciples forged a new relationship between bomba practice and Puerto Rican identity.

What is the nature of bomba's improvisational drumming language? The elusive art of improvisation in the bomba still needs proper explanation and a concise technical vocabulary to complement the historical accounts that comprise its written literature. To address this I have, over the past four years, visited, discussed, performed, and shared valuable information with leading performers of the genre. My investigations have intrigued modern practitioners who have never viewed improvisation other than as a natural outcome of musicianship. I will show that, like many global improvisational traditions, bomba drummers work in an instinctive rather than intellectual way that enables them to transcend mere playing and function at a heightened level of stimulus response.

Improvisations, as a rule, focus on the immediate and the imminent, but on closer examination reveal much more than an active musical dialogue. To improvise is to enter a complex 'state' wherein the improviser transmits all manner of prior knowledge, including traditional practices, community expectations, and complex musical operations that may involve the introduction of new concepts. The degree to which the bomba drummer balances this exchange of information is a measure of his/her² talent and understanding of the role of that music in their community.

² At the present time there are no professional level female bomba drum soloists in Puerto Rico. In the New York City area two ensembles, Alma Moyó and Yayas, employ women in both accompanying and lead drum roles.

My analysis of bomba drumming will pursue multiple paths to rhythmic analysis to expose a design intended to transmit musical and non-musical messages delivered through improvisation. My methods will employ transcriptions of live and recorded performances, perceptual differences in high/low drum strokes, analysis of stress, temporal relations, and phrasing.

I propose that there are ten distinct *styles* (underlying rhythm patterns) of bomba. Some of these have *sub-styles* that may be tied to regional practices or textual and choreographic elements. The ensemble of styles and substyles comprise a distinct family of rhythms. Brownell refers to a similar phenomenon when he addresses variations in the ‘feel’ of Charleston figures.

Rhythmic patterns that superficially appear to be different or “variations” of one another may, in fact, be more usefully seen as instances of the same timeline from different rhythmic “points of view” (Brownell, 2002:76).

At a surface level, drumming solos derive from multiple variants of core rhythms subjected to diverse rhythmic processes that I will discuss in Chapter Four. At a broader level drum soloists relate simultaneously to superstructures and underlying timelines that guide all of the participants

What is the present state of the bomba in Puerto Rican society? Bomba has finally achieved a status as a recognized musical foundation of much Puerto Rican music. Its integration into a diverse range of activities reflects a level of public identification and participation far beyond its former socio-economic and racial boundaries. The bomba movement is more active, more militant, better funded, and has more access to historical

and contemporary documents and recordings than ever before. This strength further empowers a community that has adopted bomba as a symbol of national pride.

The essence of a community spirit, be it local or country-wide, reverberates ever louder in the modern bombazos and in all the modern adaptations of bomba we see today.

“What is important about music is, indeed, elusive... What musicologists can contribute to the discussion of the politics of popular music is some way of explaining how the powerful moments in music are accomplished, without discrediting the impression that they are exciting, disturbing or pleasurable” (McClary and Walser in Frith, 1990:289).

Historically bomba performances, though firmly rooted in friendly musical exchanges and technical feats, may also be read as texts (in the post-modern sense of the term) of defiance. From this perspective, improvisation, dancing, and drumming, can be seen to play an important role as alternatives to the regularity of traditional industrial and agricultural labour. To play bomba was to be released from the mundane, to tempt fate and to introduce the unpredictable as a means of psychological survival. This spirit of defiance was essential to cope with the overbearing rule of former plantation overlords, factory foremen, and the monotony of manual labour. Today’s oppressors include complacency and the all too easy temptation to buy into a culture of consumerism. To use Quintero Rivera’s term, Puerto Rico still remains a colony, a reality “camouflaged” by its official status as a Commonwealth State of the United States.

On location: San Juan, Puerto Rico

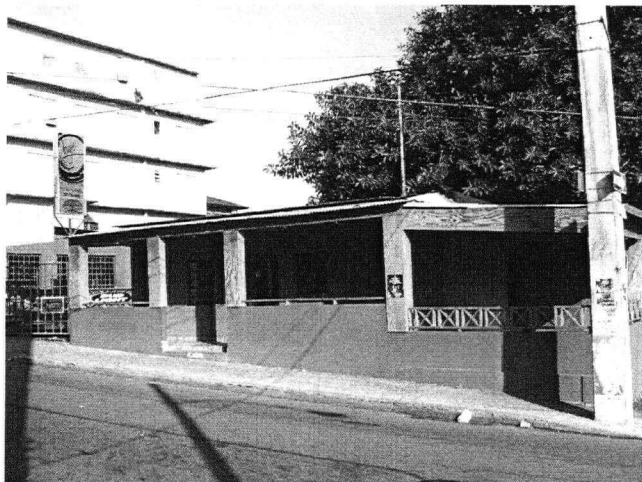
Every Thursday late afternoon drivers begin to line up for parking spaces for the evening’s many entertainment offerings surrounding a refurbished old farmer’s market known as La Plaza de Mercado in central Santurce, a busy sector of the capital city of

San Juan. On the weekends, the narrow streets become pedestrian malls where literally thousands of people congregate to hear music, have a drink out in the fresh evening air and be part of the current “coolest place to hang out” in the San Juan area. Sidewalks become parking lots where SUVs and other vehicles negotiate what is likely their only off-road experience in this densely populated metropolitan area.

Figure I-1 Outdoor stage, Plaza de Mercado, Santurce



Figure I-2 Buyé Restaurant/Bar, Santurce



On the east side of this cluster of bars is located Buyé, a bar specializing in the typical “comida criolla” or creole food staples of rice, beans, plantains and lightly spiced chicken or pork. On Thursday nights, Buyé plays host to the Puerto Rican bomba featuring an ensemble led by Tata Cepeda, a well-known dancer and member of one of the bomba’s most prominent performing families.

This July evening the atmosphere is even more heated than usual as the packed room is full of guest artists who have come down to dance and play bomba and to talk up this coming weekend’s main event. Tata, is celebrating the 4th anniversary of her bomba school with a party that will pay tribute to prominent figures of the traditional bomba scene. People have traveled from around the city, the island and from the U.S.A. to participate in this upcoming celebration of the bomba’s roots and to share stories and styles.

Ángel Reyes, a veteran bomba drummer and a member of Tata’s ensemble, is practically beside himself when he describes to me the excitement at being able to gather some of the old masters of the almost extinct Southern and Western traditions, the legendary singer Isabel Albizu, from Ponce, and Ramón “Papo” Alers from Mayagüez. Ángel fully recognizes the importance of the event and will talk to anyone who may be interested in joining his personal quest to catalogue and document all the stories, the names and the playing styles of the island’s oldest musical tradition.

We’ve got to talk to everybody out there, everybody knows somebody that’s been involved in the bomba, it might be an old uncle, a grandmother, whoever, we want to be able to put together a real collection of stories, a real history of this stuff. This weekend is a big deal and sends a strong message that the bomba is here to stay, we want as many people as possible to get involved (Ángel Reyes, p.c. July, 2004).

As more and more musicians come in and out of this tiny restaurant we see the musicians wave at, yell to, and welcome fellow drummers from the freelance scene in

San Juan. The arrival of Juan Gutiérrez from the famous New York group Los Pleneros de la 21 prompts one of the lead singers to acknowledge him from the microphone.

This is the nature of bomba gatherings: they are a place to enjoy the songs, the drumming, do some dancing and have a drink with friends. The scene is radically different from the overbearing mega bass sound systems of the average dance lounge, far from the spike-heeled, gold chain singles club scene. Folklorist Norma Salazar describes the bomba crowds as “gente sana” or “decent people” of all ages, no drug scene, no drunks, just average folks having a great time together (Norma Salazar, p.c., July, 2004).

The ensemble is engaged to start at approximately 9:30 pm. Everyone here knows starting times are merely a suggestion. The restaurant is probably licensed for 40 patrons, but on Thursdays a hundred can be found there spilling into the outdoor patio dining area. Anyone who comes to Buyé is welcome to participate as long as they know the basic dance steps. There is no set protocol other than to wait until any dancer concludes and leaves the dance floor after acknowledging the lead drummer.³

As the musicians prepare to start, the anticipation is palpable. The crowd closes in on the tiny dance floor where dancers, singers, drummers, and audience members alike are primed and ready to go.

With no prior announcement, the lead singer bursts into the opening lines of the first number, the drummers launch into a pre-arranged unison drum break and then follow up with a driving groove of the chosen style. In a split second Buyé is transformed into a high-energy site of genuine national pride.

As the chorus joins in with refrains, the lead singer navigates through some traditional verses and later moves into improvised soneos (lyrics rhymed and syncopated

³ This will be explained in detail in Chapter One.

on the spot). Once the drums and singing have warmed up the room, a single dancer, male or female, will saunter towards a position in front of the lead drummer. This *paseo* (the initial dance-like walkabout) indicates that he/she is preparing to communicate with the drummer. The dancer then makes a gesture (a nod, a wave, a sway of the skirt, a tip of the hat, etc.) to acknowledge the drummer and signal the beginning of the improvisational dialogue. The drummer reciprocates the salute and begins to mark the dancer's steps. In the Santurce contemporary style, female dancers strap on a long wide circular wrap-around skirt just before entering the drumming area. Women mark their syncopated dance moves and enhance their improvisations with sways, fanciful figures, spins and aggressive pulls of the skirt material. Men rely on arm and foot motions to create their interpretations and movement. At all times the dancers maintain an intense eye contact with the lead drummer, who must respond to their every move, anticipate the dancer's cadences, and at the same time maintain a balance between solo patterns, main rhythm and the sung verses. The audience, meanwhile, is singing along with the chorus and clapping at the end of each dance round. Early in the night, the less experienced bomba dancers, which may include children, have their turn on the dance floor. As the evening progresses, the better dancers come forward and electrify the intense interaction for fellow dancers and drummers.

When the ensemble finally takes a break after over an hour of relentless energy, the highly charged audience is ready for a drink and some visiting. Unlike North American establishments where musicians often keep a distance from their audiences, in these bomba establishments there is no such distance. Musicians mingle and, like Ángel Reyes, are only too eager to talk about the bomba with anyone who will listen.

In bomba performances the drumming and lead singing (rather than collective chorus singing) are the exclusive domain of experienced players. The chorus sings a familiar repertoire of refrains with which everyone is allowed to sing along. As individual dancers persistently challenge the drummers, singers and choruses intensify the experience and unleash a collective energy that draws its inspiration from a deep connection, both physical and social, to this music. This evening's bombas are enhanced by the participation of many of the guest drummers and singers. This night Nuyorican Alex LaSalle, visiting San Juan from Hunter College, is singing some old bombas he had discovered on some old wax cylinder recordings housed at Indiana University. He gestures to the drummers that the song is in such and such a rhythm, sings the opening verse and because this bomba is new to the chorus, he repeatedly sings the chorus lines until they join in and carry on. In another instance, the lead singer, noticing a well-known dancer in the audience, proceeds to welcome the guest by acknowledging him in his improvised verses. Such is the participatory spirit of these events.

It wasn't long ago that this type of evening did not exist. As the practice of older forms of bomba continued to diminish during the early twentieth century, rescue attempts transformed it from a genuine practice within black communities to a "folklorized" stage and festival presentation. The modern bomba scene has seen this latter practice re-emerge within an increasingly diverse economic and ethnic community activity.

The bomba, as this evening's participatory level shows, is experiencing a strong renaissance and claiming an important place in the island's musical identity.

On the analysis of bomba drumming improvisation and transcriptions.

I maintain that there is an improvisational language in bomba that can be defined as a vocabulary of patterns or “cells” employed within the various sub-genres. The soloists combine these cells into phrases of symmetrical and asymmetrical patterns set in similar or contrasting rhythms over the rhythmic ostinati of the accompanying drums. Phrases are influenced by events occurring in the moment of performance, by historical and idiomatic constraints on style and by the soloist’s choice to introduce innovative concepts to her/his rhythmic line. Past, present and future interact in the moment of improvisation. The main patterns of the ostinati in the accompanying drums and song lyrics can embody traditional patterns established during the historical development of bomba. The combinations of these patterns with improvised verses reflect contemporary interpretations of traditional patterns. The solo dance and solo drum improvisations then become the most important paths to the introduction of new ideas and future directions. These solos depart from traditional patterns, are modified by contemporary perspectives and result in improvisations that explore the fullest range of possibilities.

This investigation required the collection, transcription and analysis of a large sampling of live performances, recordings and visual documents of historical and contemporary importance.

The generalities highlighted by this exercise illustrate the palette of patterns available to the drummer and the complex variations to which they are subjected. The analysis of these drumming cells and phrases will explore, among many other things: rhythmic stress, degree of syncopation, emphasis of tone, novelty, relations between patterns and text, and degree of departure from the regular accompanying drum patterns.

This thesis will define a fundamental vocabulary, and, in a sense, a rhythmic grammar for the bomba. It will offer insights into the drummer's playing processes as he/she reacts, inspires, concocts a solo improvisation and co-invents musical moments with dancers and singers.

Outline of the thesis chapters

Chapter One is an overview of bomba defining its practice, tracing the origins of its traditions, and offering a glimpse into the contemporary scene. Addressing both insider and outsider perspectives I demonstrate the range of challenges, support, and opportunities facing today's bomba. Among these are issues of muted racism that continue to burden the representation of bomba and its transnational potential. The chapter concludes with a summary of important literature. Scholars José Emmanuel Dufrasne, Héctor Vega-Drouet, Halbert Barton and José E. Fernández Morales and authors such as Manuel Álvarez Nazario, Maria Luisa Muñoz, and Francisco López Cruz, have articulated bomba's social and musical history through anecdotes, interviews, recordings, collaborations, visual presentations and dissertations.

Chapter Two introduces the island's principal regions and their respective playing traditions, as well as prominent individuals whose participation and/or diligent advocacy is responsible for bomba's survival and present renaissance. Since 2002 I have spent many hours visiting, speaking with, researching and observing members of the bomba community throughout the island.

Chapter Three utilizes historical sources, interviews, published materials and my own classifications to reveal ten principal styles and thirteen sub-styles contained within

the bomba genre. I provide annotations that integrate previous taxonomies, regional distinctions and stylistic cross-fertilizations.

Chapter Four is the core of the dissertation. This nucleus comprises a compilation and analysis of six fully transcribed solos that yield information crucial to understanding solo improvisation and the paths through which change and innovation are assimilated in practice. In this chapter solos are presented in a notational system reducing drum rhythms to high and low tones. These are then segmented into groups related by degree of rhythmic intensity, syncopation, polarity (what part of the beat they tend to emphasize), opening patterns, closing patterns, vamp patterns, etc. My analyses expose how typical musical statements put forth by soloists interact with other musical ideas proposed by fellow drummers, dancers and singers. These feature standard responses and counter patterns that are essential to comprehend how players maintain rhythmic flow. The transcriptions indicate that typical patterns may be either player or style-driven, and that solos indicate a flexible interpretive range open to outside influence and fusion from other regional styles or other compatible musical genres.

Chapter Five, "Improvisation as practice" leads from the previous chapter's comprehensive analysis of improvisational processes to an alternative perspective. I widen the discussion on bomba improvisational strategies and extrapolate from specific processes to general tendencies and on to conceptual approaches. The chapter continues with an examination of contemporary thought on improvisation with a special emphasis on understanding the motivation and decision-making process of the improviser. Analyzing an activity as fleeting as improvisation risks neutralizing the very essence that makes it unique but insights into options available "in the moment" are possible. Like

archaeological work, the study of live improvisational strategies provides field data from which to infer how traditional knowledge-gathering and community interaction shape the wisdom of the experienced soloist.

My consultations with an eclectic group of improvisational artists both within the bomba community and from outside it allow me to position bomba soloing as a sophisticated artistic practice evolving within a conceptual framework that is global and interdisciplinary in scope. Improvisation, understood as a series of artistic interventions, unfolds in a dialectical loop where context informs action, which in turn re-informs context. In this chapter I depict this loop, showing how multiple feedback loops inform improvisations. These, in turn, are modified by complementary psychological and artistic processes involving interaction, spontaneity and intuition.

The concluding Chapter Six is an in-depth look at the contemporary bomba scene as it contemplates its future. The modern bomba has achieved a level of societal integration that would have been unimaginable three generations earlier. The status and presence of the bomba today has empowered individual performers to demand an elevated level of social and institutional support that has resulted in a radical and positive change in perception among average Puerto Ricans. I juxtapose the views of leading writers Zenón Cruz, Quintero Rivera, Flores, Rosado, and Negrón-Muntaner with those expressed by the players and dancers of the modern scene to show their fundamental similarities of outlook.

During my many discussions with bomba players and colleagues it became apparent that this dissertation would be the first to examine and analyze improvisation in bomba drumming as a grammatical, technical and conceptual practice. These valued

contributors have encouraged me and continue to be a source of inspiration and support. I hope that the insights I offer will inspire others to explore this vast field of improvisation and recognize its value as a vehicle of cultural continuity.

If the multiple manifestations of bomba and bomba-derived styles can embody the unconscious desires of a national community, then improvisation may very well be its most authentic voice.

Chapter One

Returning to the roots of the bomba

Defining the practice

The bomba that has been practiced in Puerto Rico since the 19th century comprises a music, dance and song event wherein a group of drummers, prospective dancers, and the general public gather to perform and enjoy songs led by a main singer and chorus. The songs are drawn from a large repertoire of verses, choruses and patterns played and sung by any number of singers, accompanying drummers (usually no more than 2 or 3) and a solo lead drummer. As the singing and drumming unfold, successive dancers step into the dance space in front of the drums to challenge the lead drummer to mark his/her improvised dance moves with a stream of idiomatically appropriate and cleverly placed accents and improvisations. Participation in informal events is usually open to any member of the audience provided they have some knowledge of bomba.

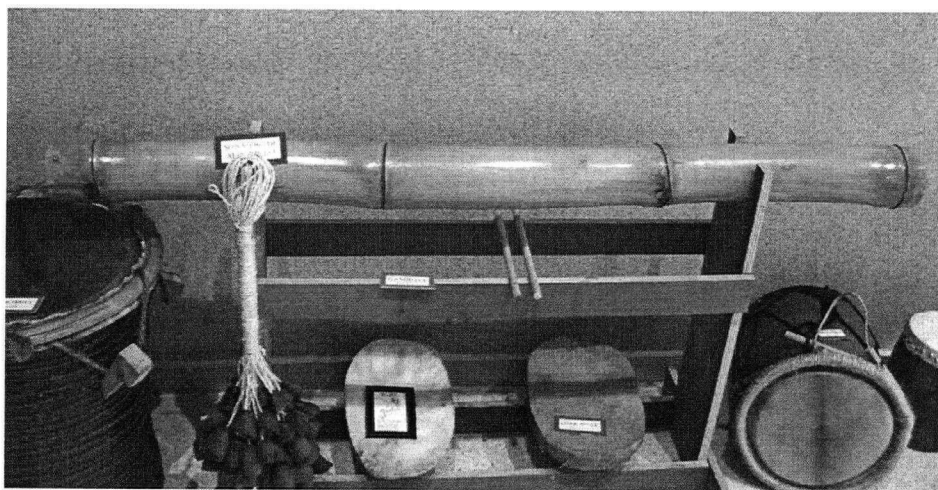
The term bomba refers alternately to a musical form, a dance, and/or a song. The main objective of a bomba is to set a dialogue between dancer and lead drummer. Once all the integrated musical roles such as accompaniment, chorus and soloist are in place, dancers enter the area in front of the player to begin a dynamic interaction where the dancer invents rhythmic accents that must be immediately responded to by the lead drummer. This musical interaction engages specific rhythms in a complex operation involving rhythms, improvisation, accompaniment and song. Meter is either simple duple

or compound. Tempos can vary from 54 to approximately 150 beats per minute, depending upon regional preference and individual interpretation.

The bomba ensemble consists of three instruments, solo lead singer and chorus. Most ensembles have a designated lead vocalist but often will feature another member of the ensemble as main vocalist provided they possess a comparable ability to *sonear* (to sing improvised verses). The three main instruments of bomba are illustrated below. The güiro, though an instrument of bomba in the past, is no longer used.

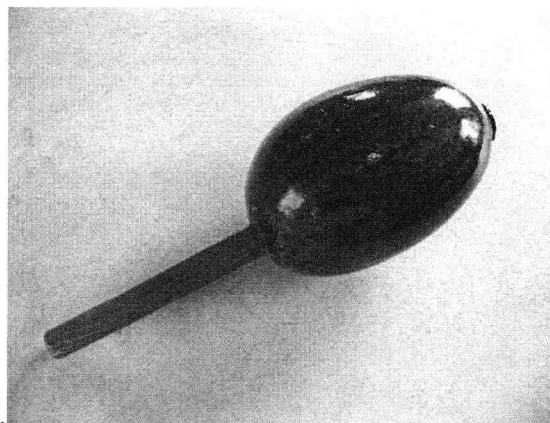
Cuá (Fig.1.1). A *cuá* is a solid, struck idiophone made of bamboo or wood mounted on a stand and played with two hard sticks. In earlier days it was common to play the *cuá* sticks on the side of a *buleador* drum by a player seated behind the horizontal version of the drum (southern tradition) or seated on the floor next to the vertical version of the *buleador* used elsewhere on the island.

Figure 1.1 Bamboo *cuá* on stand. Museo Ambulante Raúl Berríos Sánchez



Maraca. The bomba maraca is a shaken, single body gourd with a handle. This type of vessel rattle contains internal strikers of seed or small stones.

Figure 1.2 Photo of bomba maraca



During earlier times in the town of Loíza, the part now played by the single maraca would have been performed on a *güiro*, a scraped idiophone made from a gourd onto which notches have been cut on one side. The instrument is scraped with a thin fork-line implement. The güiro is the solo percussion instrument of traditional *jibaro* music in Puerto Rico (Dufrasne, 1991:75).

Figure 1.3 Güiro



Barriles or *bulas* (Fig.1.4, 1.5, 1.6). Bulas or barriles are the principal Puerto Rican membranophone of bomba. A goatskin head is mounted on a metal hoop that is fastened to the body of the drum by a number of different systems. The main systems in use today are the rope and peg method seen throughout West Africa, a tourniquet style popular in the Caribbean, and the modern metal hardware with tuning lugs. Bomba ensembles must have at least two barriles of slightly different diameters. The smaller version will play the primo part, the larger the accompanying buleador part.

Figure 1.4 Bomba primo drum (solo drum) from the collection of the Museo Taller Africano

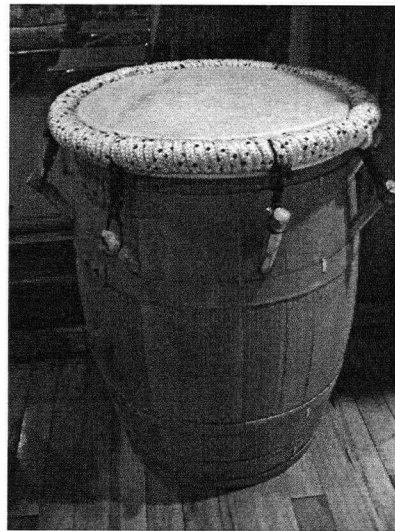


Figure 1.5 Tourniquet style bomba drum from the Museo Taller Africano



Jocelyne Guilbault describes this type of barrel drum in Martinique and Guadeloupe:

The boula is a single-headed drum played by a musician sitting on the barrel and playing with his bare hands, at times using his heel to alter the tension and thus the pitch. The boula traditionally supplies the basic rhythm, a kind of cyclic formula maintained throughout the entire piece (1993:239).

The boula she describes is the same as the bula of bomba. As will be seen later, a number of musical and instrumental similarities among Caribbean nations indicate that national boundaries did not prevent the cross-breeding of cultural elements.

The drums are divided into those that support the basic rhythm, most commonly called *buleadores* or *seguidores* and a solo drum called *repicador*, *primo* or *subidor*. In the Loíza and Santurce styles the *buleador* is accompanied by an identical rhythm played by the *cuá*; in the Ponce styles the *cuá* may play a complementary but slightly different pattern. In duple meter, the *maraca* plays quadruple subdivisions of the beat, whereas in compound time it plays triple subdivisions. The *buleadores* play the basic, repeating underlying style or substyle rhythm, while the *repicador* improvises extended syncopated rhythms. These improvisational lines, which I analyze in Chapters Four and Five, range from widely spaced accentuations to intensive, dense rhythmic inventions. In the presence of a dancer, the *repicador* must mark the dancer's steps with rhythmic responses whereas the same drummer may freely improvise when there is no dancer on the floor. In either case this practice is called to "*subir* or *repicar*".

Figure 1.6 Southern style horizontal position bomba drum from the Museo Taller Africano



Songs are always initiated by the solo voice followed by the entrance of either the chorus or the drums. These songs, in either major or minor keys, are sung with choruses in unisons, parallel octaves, and occasional consonant harmonies, usually in thirds and/or sixths. Singers lead the call and response format generally in eight bar strophic units in “octosyllabic or hexasyllabic verses, texts can be very enigmatic” (Dufrasne, 1994:39-40). Dufrasne is referring here to numerous songs lyrics where absurd refrains simply don’t make syntactic sense or even common sense. In some cases songs utilize foreign words (especially French and African-sounding words) so transformed through centuries of syncretization that the original meaning has been lost. Some old songs used words for their rhythmic qualities alone, beyond any literal meaning they may have possessed.

While the lyrics of the call vary from verse to verse, the chorus remains the same, except in the performance of medleys, where, naturally, different refrains would be sung to the different songs contained in the given medley. Depending on the spirit of the performance, songs can last for as few as three to as long as fifteen minutes.

Individual bomba rhythms and their corresponding song repertoire have customarily held great significance to the communities from which they emerged. Songs often include place names, names of styles, and often of individual persons within the bomba milieu. In the days before widespread literacy, acknowledgement in popular bomba songs was like entering the historical record. Many well-known bomba lyrics such as Cortijo’s “Juan José” and Dufrasne’s “Leró pa’ Cico Manguel” immortalized the contribution of earlier dancers or singers. The village of Loíza, the city of Mayagüez and the names of diverse variants of bomba appear in the lyrics of countless verses and

choruses, thereby ensuring a historical continuity that would have otherwise been subsumed by other more radio-friendly local and imported music.

Figure 1.7 Chorus and dancers of the ensemble Bambalué from Ponce.⁴



In the following examples I illustrate the use of colloquial themes and the depiction of the everyday in song lyrics. These portrayals of local culture, an important element of the lyrics of common *salsa*⁵, *plena*⁶ and Spanish rap songs, perform a dual role as traditional representations and as a public record of their lives.

The first example below acknowledges a common event around Santurce (the neighbourhood of the composer). Friends would drop by each other's houses to enlist

⁴ Photo courtesy of Alberto Galarza.

⁵ Big band format musical style featuring Afro-Cuban, Puerto Rican and Dominican dance rhythms.

⁶ One of Puerto Rico's three main musical genres, believed to have emerged in the early 1920s.

their participation to play drums and dance. The verse also recognizes bomba activity in neighbouring Loíza.

Example 1 Depicting neighbourhood interaction.

*Juan José- (Rafael Cepeda Atilas) from Cortijo y Kako Ritmos Callejeros*⁷

<i>Juan José pasé por tu casa y te llamé</i>	<i>Juan José I passed by your place and called</i>
<i>Juan José como no me oíste te pité...</i>	<i>Since you didn't hear me I whistled</i>
<i>Juan José cuando por Loíza que yo pasé</i>	<i>Juan José when I went by Loíza</i>
<i>Yo te ví bailando un balancé,</i>	<i>I saw you dancing a balancé,</i>
<i>Vente a bailar bembé</i>	<i>Come on and dance bembé</i> ⁸

The following verse comes from the south, where the singer calls for all to play this leró style in praise of Cico Mangual. The imperative tone of the second and third lines is a typical exhortation to participate.

Example 2 Referencing a traditional player from the region.

*Leró pa' Cico Mangual (Emanuel Dufrasne) from Paracumbé Tambó*⁹

<i>Leró, leró, leró pa Cico Mangual</i>	<i>Lero, leró, leró for Cico Mangual</i>
<i>Repícame bien ese cuero</i>	<i>Play me that drum</i>
<i>Repica, repica el cuá</i>	<i>Play the cuás</i>

The third example goes beyond the mere acknowledgement of Pancha (the dancer and subject of the verse) to affirm the authenticity, the status and the value of the Ayalas' style of bomba.

⁷ Cortijo y Kako-recorded 1970, re-issued 1992.

⁸ Bembé, an Afro-Cuban term, refers in this instance to an informal gathering of drummers.

⁹ Paracumbé, 1997.

Example 3 About a town and a particular ensemble.

*La Negra Pancha (Roberto Cepeda) from Hermanos Ayala: Bomba de Loíza*¹⁰

<i>Ya llegó la negra Pancha</i>	<i>Pancha, the black woman has arrived</i>
<i>La bomba quiere bailar</i>	<i>She wants to dance bomba</i>
<i>La bomba de los Ayala</i>	<i>The bomba of the Ayalas</i>
<i>Que es la bomba de verdad</i>	<i>Which is the real bomba</i>
<i>Cuando llegues a Loíza</i>	<i>When you get to Loíza</i>
<i>No te olvides visitar</i>	<i>Don't forget to visit</i>
<i>El batey de los Ayala</i>	<i>The Ayala yard</i>
<i>Pa' que gozes de verdad</i>	<i>To really have a good time</i>

Finally, this example references the western region and acknowledges the lure of the sub-style called *balancé*.

Example 4 Referencing place and the “balancé”, an older form of bomba.

*Siré-Siré (Roberto Cepeda) Viento de Agua Materia Prima*¹¹

<i>Si iré, si iré me voy pa Mayagüez</i>	<i>I'm going, I'm going to Mayagüez</i>
<i>Si iré, si iré porque están tocando</i>	<i>Because they're playing</i>
<i>Mi balancé</i>	<i>my balancé</i>

Defining the parameters of tradition in this dissertation

Given that the earlier repertoire of bomba was developed outside any formal institution, I refer to the practice as a “tradition”. The definition of tradition used throughout this dissertation will then denote socio-cultural practices that have achieved a general level of consensus among people. Because these traditions have evolved outside

¹⁰ Hermanos Ayala, 2001.

¹¹ Viento de Agua, 2004.

both a written history and a notated repertoire they are a direct, unmediated reflection of the expression of a given social class. Tradition may simply refer to a way of doing things over an extended period of time. It has been my experience that the limits of what is deemed “tradition” is often established as a result of the exchange between regular participants and those who seek some understanding of established practices. Local customs that are deeply engrained rarely need defining in order to continue their existence. When scholars, curious amateurs and even interested observers seek precise knowledge of the practices of any given bomba community, they encounter a wide range of often confusing definitions of styles, sub-styles and their defined boundaries. The absence of any historical documentation of different bomba styles and rhythms suggests that either these distinctions were un-important to insiders or that any record of performance practice has been lost.

To most bomba players, the notion of tradition encompasses the way things have previously been done. It defines practices that have been locally developed and are often imbued with extra-musical significance. A community’s music may be associated with historical events, ritual, ideology and/or rites of passage. Recognizing the existence of these multiple meanings, my definition of tradition connotes a musical style in continual development, one that admits shifting influences and is open to subtle changes. When I use the term “traditional” I will be referring to practices originating prior to the 1950s where one can observe the activity as a community social practice within a slave, former slave and/or working class sector.

Bomba: origins and tradition

Puerto Rico, first explored by Christopher Columbus in 1493, was colonized by Spain and remained under its political control until the end of the Spanish American War in 1898. In the early 16th century, Lorenzo de Garrebod was granted the privilege of introducing four thousand duty-free Guinean Negroes to Hispaniola, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Jamaica by Emperor Charles I of Spain. This beginning of the “slave trade” witnessed the arrival of the Wolof from Senegal and Gambia and later the Mandingo. Not long after, these slaves were followed by Fulas and Biafrans from present-day Nigeria (Vega Drouet 1979:8-9).

Although the institution of slavery was firmly established in Puerto Rico, it was still possible for slaves to buy their freedom. By the mid-seventeenth century the island also became a haven for escaped slaves from other colonial possessions.

From the mid seventeenth century, runaway slaves from the neighbouring islands who took refuge in Puerto Rico were declared free by the decision of the Council of the Indies if they accepted baptism and swore allegiance to the Spanish king. This “news” attracted all would-be fugitives, so that it became necessary to supply a place for them to establish themselves. The Negro colony in San Mateo de Cangrejos was a result of this and the refugees became some of the most faithful defenders of the Spanish flag (Figueroa Mercado, 1974:105 in Alleyne, 2002:117).

The subsequent increase in “free blacks” on the island resulted in “a Puerto Rico, which is more culturally homogeneous than other Caribbean societies” (Alleyne, 2002:118).

During this period of settlement and expansion of the slave trade circumstantial evidence in the way of anecdotes, drawings and stories indicate that certain forms of recreational dance and song emerged within the slave population. A number of similar rhythm and dance names appear in areas of heavy slave traffic under Spanish, French and

English rule that imply a type of cultural exchange was also taking place albeit under harsh conditions. As the diverse African ethnic groups were brought together, a synthesis of many different traditions took place. It is from this mixed lineage and this fusion of traditions that bomba emerges.

The first written evidence of a dance called bomba in Puerto Rico is found in an often quoted document titled “Voyage aux iles de Tenerife, la Trinité, Saint Thomas, Saint Croix et Porto Rico.” Botanist André Pierre Ledrú detailed his impressions of local inhabitants dancing and singing popular bombas of the period in 1797.¹²

The type of bomba practiced in Puerto Rico by the mid to late eighteenth century showed strong similarities with the musical practices of African slaves in the mixed racial environment of the West Indian European colonies. While official colonial records confirm that bomba dances were occasionally used to disguise slave insurrections, their more common purpose was as an activity of slaves and labourers during limited recreational time (Vega Drouet 1979, Dufrasne 1985, McCoy 1968). Though very little information on actual practices survived the early colonial years, what did survive was a tradition that began to be documented only in the first half of the twentieth century. This encompassed a set of regional styles, characteristic dance movements and steps, a large repertoire of songs, specific drumming techniques, drum craftsmanship, typical costumes and regular community social gatherings.

The West African Yoruba and Mende arrived from “the late XVIII to mid XIX centuries” (Campos-Parsi, 1981:46) and can be counted among the most numerous African ethnic groups responsible for the transformation of the musical landscape of the Caribbean and South America.

¹² Ledrú, 1797 in Vizcarrondo, 1957.

In 1840 Ciriaco Sabat, a man known as the King of the Blacks of the Congo, requested permission to hold bomba dances on the feast of St. Michael (September 29) and Our Lady of the Rosary (October 7) and reminded the Governor that he had previously granted permission (Vega Drouet, 1979:38).

This letter, while clearly suggesting a precedent for these dances existed also implied some recognition of a civil, if absurdly imbalanced, relationship between the authorities and marginalized blacks. In spite of occasional permits that allowed slaves to engage in limited social events, authorities felt justified in curtailing slave activity given the many recorded incidents of slave escapes. Civilian authorities feared the festivities and concentration of slaves at bomba dances could disguise further slave revolts such as those in Bayamón in 1821 and Guayama in 1822. The persecution of escaped slaves adds a complex further dimension to colonial policy, especially considering the fact that in the previous century the colony had welcomed and given free status to those who fled other adjacent colonies.

The slave trade persisted well into the mid-1800s with new shipments of Africans arriving from both the continent and neighbouring islands. The late 19th century is perhaps the second-most significant period of renewal and evolution in the bomba's history, after the mid-20th century. The accelerated rate of trade coupled with increased inter-island migration saw many new groups arrive on the island, groups that brought renewed vigor to the established musical forms.

Though many freed slaves remained in their original jobs, it was within those that became urbanized that the bomba saw its largest transformation. ...Documents exist confirming bombas played on violins, and the bomba became a salon dance. Here it was danced with frilly dresses and white suits, totally unconnected to the working class. There was then a "rural" form and an urban one (González, 1983:20-21).

Dances with names similar to the bomba appear in historical narratives of the Caribbean islands of Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic.

Paraguayan newspaper articles dating back to 1863 feature a local Asunción journalist rallying support for a ban on a form of African drumming and dancing known then as *gomba*. Edgardo Díaz Díaz addressed these articles in 1986 (Díaz Díaz, 1986:8-14). He maintained that the Asunción journalist described a dance that shared remarkable similarities with the Puerto Rican bomba. For linguist Manuel Álvarez Nazario

etymologically, the term bomba derives from an ancient term describing drum, or *ngwoma*, emerging out of languages from the Bantu and several other related and distant languages (Álvarez Nazario, 1959:61-62).

Margot Leith Phillip's linguistic study of the related "bamboula" in the Caribbean arrives at a similar conclusion (Leith-Philipp, 1989). There seems little doubt that in spite of the severe restrictions imposed on the slaves' expressive forms throughout the Spanish and French colonies, recreational dances and songs continued to flourish and extend beyond political and cultural boundaries.

The principal areas of bomba activity were those regions most associated with plantations in the north and south coasts of the island. Precise official permits and commercial records of slave transactions make it possible to identify slaves by ethnicity and to thereby assemble hypotheses of the unique types of bomba practised.

As bomba continued to evolve in communities and plantations throughout the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, islanders encountered the first writings that addressed the plight of the common rural inhabitant. These were the work of the *costumbristas* (writers specializing in folkloric themes, literally "customs-writers") such as Manuel Alonso's *El Gibaro* ("The Peasant", 1849), Manuel Zeno Gandía's novel *La Charca* ("The Pond", 1894), and Tomás Blanco's *Elogio de la plena* ("Homage to the plena", 1935). This period of Puerto Rican history saw the adoption of the *jibaro* (peasant) as a national symbol. Jíbaros connotes rural peasants, their families, subsistence farmers and

farm hands. The mixed ethnicity of this archetype was construed as overwhelmingly European whereas genealogical records prove otherwise. The social practices and cultural artifacts of these peasants demonstrate characteristics drawn as much from European sources as from African ones. By emphasizing the European roots of this social group, white authorities distanced themselves from any African connections and began a virtual national project aimed at creating a contrived heritage that leaned heavily toward whiter skin tones. This cultural identity project was achieved by gradually removing awareness of the African presence from the consciousness of the elite and consequently, the nation. Afro-Puerto Ricans, whose numbers rivaled and at time surpassed that of whites, were systematically oppressed and rendered practically invisible by the socio-cultural elite. In less than a century, the musical and social contributions were subsumed by an upper class bent on creating a symbolic white peasant rooted to the land and to the mother country of Spain.

Still, the bomba persevered. Quintero Rivera made a compelling case for the survival of African musical practices in rural Puerto Rican music via a phenomenon he termed the “camouflaged drum”. He showed how inland cultures, those populations that chose to live outside the confines of urban or plantation culture, adopted and transformed African music by camouflaging its elements. This “counter-plantation” culture, as he described it, masked the presence of non-Spanish cultural attributes by disguising them and transferring them onto instruments more closely associated with European culture, such as the *cuatro*¹³ of the jíbaro or even the indigenous güiro. Quintero Rivera wrote of this with reference to the *aguinaldos* (traditional Christmas songs) *Si Me Dan Pasteles* and *Aguinaldo Cagueño* (Quintero Rivera, 1992:34-35).

¹³ The ten-string (five double courses) guitar-like instrument of jíbaro music.

The basic melodic phrase of one of the most traditional aguinaldos is structured, in fact, on one of the bomba variants...Another bomba rhythm is present in the melodic prelude of one of the most popular aguinaldos.

McCoy (1968) noted a distinct African influence in the aguinaldo of the jíbaro. Álvarez claimed the secondary melodies and counterpoint lines of the *bombardino* (sax-horn) in the danzas played by military and municipal bands, including the national anthem “La Borinqueña”, are themselves adaptations of drum improvisations in the bomba.¹⁴

The work of the *costumbristas* of the last two centuries fueled the pre-existing racial prejudice towards Afro-Puerto Rican culture to such an extent that these attitudes remained basically unchallenged until the mid-twentieth century. In the mid-1950s the popularity of Cortijo y su Combo and the establishment of the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña or ICP (Puerto Rican Cultural Institute, the island government’s official cultural agency) at last raised awareness of the powerful influence and cultural contributions of Afro-Puerto Ricans.

Campos-Parsi identified three periods of African influence in Puerto Rico.

1. The XVI century, when the African influence is digested indirectly as *colorismo costumbrista*¹⁵.
2. The mid-XVII century, when more authentic expressions are found aided by imported slaves.
3. The XX century, when the cycle closes with the development of commercial forms.

(Campos Parsi, 1981:46-47) [Translation by author]

This assessment fails to recognize the effects of inter-island commercial and political traffic beginning with the Haitian Revolution of 1795-1805 and the impact of policy shifts such as the “Real Cédula de Gracias” of 1815, a Spanish crown edict that

¹⁴ This will be elaborated upon in this Chapter and Chapter Five.

¹⁵ Translates to “local colour”

finally allowed immigration from other Catholic colonies.¹⁶ Campos-Parsi claims the period of African influence ended with the development of commercial forms. He must have presumed, as have other authors and scholars, that bomba practices were in a terminal decline.¹⁷

During Campos-Parsi's third period of African influence, namely, the twentieth century, bomba developed throughout the island. Community gatherings featuring bomba dancing occurred on weekends or holidays when people could afford to spend some leisure time and occasionally travel to participate. During the early part of the century the bomba did not gain popularity beyond the boundaries of working class neighbourhoods and was confined to a social practice among peers, in particular those of African descent. Anthropologist Alden Mason, a disciple of Franz Boas, toured Puerto Rico in 1915-1917 and was the first person to record bomba music (in addition to other regional musical genres) on wax cylinders. The recordings, done under the sponsorship of the island's government surveying office, are housed in the traditional music archives of the University of Indiana and administered by the American Museum of Natural History, Division of Anthropology Archives.

The development of radio and later the inauguration of television service dealt a powerful blow to communal practices. Young audiences could not resist the allure of the many foreign musical imports that found their way on to the airwaves. Fewer locations

¹⁶ Álvarez, <http://rrpac.upr.clu.edu:9090/~laalvarez/Articulos/presenciaNegra/presencia.html>

¹⁷ It is hard to imagine how a renowned figure such as Campos-Parsi could not have been aware at that time that the bomba was on the verge of a renaissance. After all, that renewal had been promoted by the ICP (with which Campos Parsi maintained an active and essential role), the prominent Cepeda, Ayala, and Albizu families and a growing number of young enthusiasts who saw the bomba as a vehicle for cultural pride.

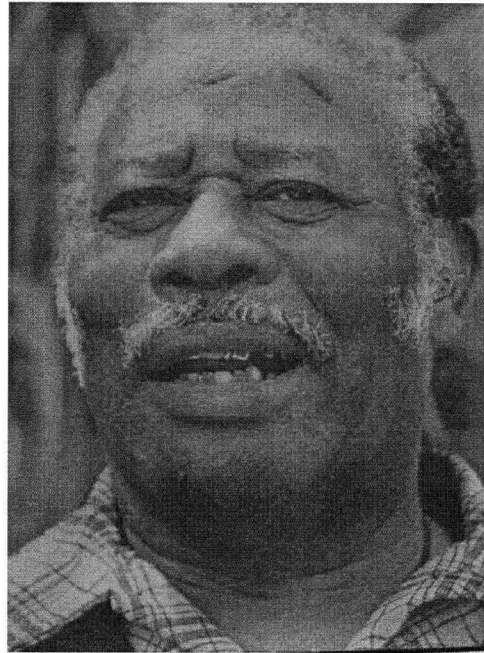
sponsored bomba dances and many potential young drummers drifted towards Cuban, Dominican and other dance-band oriented music.

Bomba since 1950

I propose that bomba after the mid-twentieth century was driven by three principal forces: first, the efforts of Castor Ayala and Rafael Cepeda, secondly, the arrival of Cortijo y su Combo, and thirdly, the support of the ICP. By the early 1950s the bomba truly was in a steep decline, prompting Don Rafael Cepeda to form an ensemble to re-invigorate the community and draw younger people in. Together with a similar move by friend and fellow bomba dancer Castor Ayala¹⁸, this, in my view, represents the beginning of modern bomba history. The accomplishments of these two individuals and the important contribution of their respective family members should not be allowed to obscure the fact that other bomba performers did persevere but did not take any proactive stance in relation to its declining practice. These communities simply continued to hold bomba dances in their localized pockets as they had done for generations.

¹⁸ In the case of Castor Ayala, he formed his group in 1959 in response to a request by television producer Milton H. Lehr who was looking to present some traditional music from Loiza on his programme "Show Time" (Raúl Ayala, p.c., May 2005).

Figure 1.8 Don Rafael Cepeda Atilés¹⁹



By the 1950s public taste for popular music, a rising standard of living and general societal inclinations toward the promises of modernization brought about a shift in favour of musical forms associated with recordings, radio and TV. Cristóbal Díaz Ayala sees the survival of the bomba as nothing short of miraculous given the prejudices that prevented it from thriving.

The bomba doesn't reach the recording studios until the '50s. Why?, because it was black, just like the rumba. It manages to keep alive in marginalized environments, in ex-slave communities, in sugar plantation culture, it manages to survive in non-urban settings like Loíza, and what was then Santurce. To be truthful, it deserves extraordinary merit. This phenomenon falls within what I call the theory of parallels. My theory states that it doesn't matter if a musical style develops in parallel fashion and is heard simultaneously as the original and the stylized, commercial forms. We have groups (commercial groups) that play the bomba, but we continue to see groups that play the traditional and original style. We still have both streams (Díaz Ayala, p.c., July 2004).

¹⁹ Photo courtesy of Jesús Cepeda.

Cepeda's strategy was to assemble a formal ensemble, a group of players that would rehearse regularly, play new compositions, many by him, and make concerted efforts to revive a repertoire in danger of disappearance. His vision was to bring the bomba to what he firmly believed was its rightful place in the musical history of the nation. Rafael Cepeda was partially responsible for bomba's transition from a neighbourhood phenomenon to a stage act and later to an international touring genre.

Like other modern global folk music "pioneers" such as Ireland's Sean Ó'Riada and Zaire's Tabu Ley Rochereau²⁰, Cepeda determined that the survival of bomba could only be ensured through an extraordinary effort and a change of approach. By presenting a stage show that was to be both entertaining and educational, the bomba could stand side by side with the other popular national musical styles such as *danza*²¹ and plena. Bomba had become viewed as a quaint, archaic musical form. Its survival would have to depend on renegotiating its place in the national scene.

Cepeda, Ayala and others had to elevate the level of presentation to standards more in line with professional bands and theatrical shows. While this move presented challenges, these were far less daunting than overcoming the obstacle of racism in the entertainment world. In order to achieve this objective, the general public would have to own up to its well-entrenched prejudices against this music of a lower economic stratum.

Even though black artists have dominated Puerto Rican popular music since its inception, there has been a consistent attempt to play down this disproportion in favour of

²⁰ Sean Ó'Riada and Tabu Ley Rochereau both launched new ensembles that captured the imagination of their respective publics by presenting national traditional or older musical forms in a new ensemble setting and by focusing their efforts on broader horizons than the usual local settings. Both succeeded, Ó' Riada in the early 1960s, Rochereau in the early 1970s.

²¹ An important Puerto Rican musical genre originating in the nineteenth century that blended Caribbean rhythms with European salon-style music. It was played on European instruments, especially piano and strings.

an approach that romanticizes the rural jíbaro and projects his/her image in European skin tones.

Although racial prejudices exist in Puerto Rico, these have been hidden under a discourse of interracial harmony...this has been used to elaborate a myth of racial harmony, where differences are constantly ignored and denied (Rivera, 1997:253).

The history of the bomba demonstrates how the policies of a patronizing elite, bent on distancing black expression from the mainstream, fed common prejudices and maintained arm's-length recognition of black artists until Rafael Cortijo and Ismael Rivera arrived on the scene.

The rescue efforts of Cepeda and Ayala in the mid 1950s coincided with the formation of an ensemble that transformed the local music scene and foreshadowed the development of salsa in the following decade.

Rafael Cortijo, a percussionist who in the early '50s had just returned from military service, joined with singer and childhood friend Ismael Rivera to assemble what was to become a seminal band. The remainder of the personnel, drawn from Santurce area players, joined forces to become "Cortijo y su Combo con Ismael Rivera" in 1954. Cortijo was the first to use the term "combo" in Puerto Rico; other standard dance bands regularly went by the name "orquestas" (Montalvo del Valle, 1978: 43). While there are no parallels to this ensemble's impact on the local imagination, Cortijo was not the first popular musician to "commodify" the bomba into something suitable for the dance hall. That was the work of composer Rafael Hernández and his Cuarteto Victoria as well as bandleader Cesar Concepción (Leymarie, 2002:103). The significance of Cortijo's band to the development of the bomba lay in the fact that a sizable portion of their repertoire consisted of bombas that Cortijo had arranged for a combo format of percussion, piano, two trumpets, two alto saxes, bass and horns.

Los compositores de la música que interpretaba Cortijo y su Combo eran Rafael Cepeda, Benito, y Doña Margarita [Rivera]; gente de barrio, que recogían en sus composiciones el sabor pueblerino y popular (Montalvo del Valle, 1978: 46).

The composers of Cortijo's repertoire were Rafael Cepeda, Benito and Doña Margarita [Rivera, mother of Ismael Rivera]; neighbourhood folk that collected in their compositions a folksy, popular flavour (Translation by author).

Cortijo's band quickly gained popularity and within a short time the ensemble played venues throughout Puerto Rico, New York and Latin America. The band released several successful recordings and brought the bomba (its combo version) into the mainstream.

The popularity of Rafael Cortijo y su Combo around the 1950s becomes the representative icon of the "revolution of the Puerto Rican Black" in the cultural terrain... Cortijo's historical significance lies in the *visual* presence of blacks on television (in his show *La Taberna India*) and in their musical prominence in radio; in other words, they "occupied" the social space of media and entertainment that threatened and contested the "whiteness" of social clubs and dance halls (Aparicio, 1998:35).

That "occupation" of extensive radio airplay and regular TV appearances invigorated the ongoing bomba renewal that had begun with Rafael Cepeda. Furthermore, Cortijo's Combo, being the first black ensemble to perform regularly on TV in Puerto Rico, transcended a significant racial barrier and brought black culture to the masses. His language was that of familiarity and colloquialisms that acknowledged, for the first time in a mainstream popular music, working class neighbourhoods, famous local bomba dancers, and regular townsfolk.

Figure 1.9 Cortijo y su combo (right) Rafael Cortijo and Kako Bastar (left)



Speaking of how the post-50s bomba opened up a representational space after Cortijo, Pablo Luis Rivera explains:

Before the '50s you can see the bomba as a genre particularly of blacks. From that time you see groups like Cortijo that begin to commercialize the genre and obviously to create the promotion of authors of black themes especially the bomba
(Pablo Luis Rivera, p.c., July 2004).

This repertoire was a lens through which one could view a whole segment of society that had, for the duration of the colonial and post-colonial history, been marginalized and suppressed. Cortijo, Cepeda and Rivera made bomba a currency that could be traded in a variety of musical fields and propelled it to a new high of popularity.

The influence of the ICP

The Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, founded in 1955, encouraged and promoted all kinds of national cultural expressions through performances, festivals and publications. The ICP's scholarly research and journal publications featured some of the earliest writings on the bomba and contributed to its academic recognition. This first wave of support was followed by the sponsorship of a network of local groups and community associations willing to engage in the presentation of folklore. The work of local artists such as Rafael Cepeda and Castor Ayala (who was primarily a mask maker in the village of Loíza) was just what the ICP was interested in promoting. This support proved invaluable to the establishment of professional-level performing groups and eventually to a circuit of festival venues willing to present the bomba. The net result of this subsidization of traditional arts was that by the late 1950s and well into the '60s bomba became "folklorized" or professionalized, as formal groups emerged under the auspices of national and municipal government programmes and began to perform outside their immediate communities.²²

²² "Folkloric" was considered synonymous with "traditional" by ethnologists Fernando Ortiz (founder of the Cuban Folklore Society in 1924 and Arthur Ramos in Brazil (1934), later Álvarez Nazario (1960), and others prior to the word's appropriation by government-sponsored cultural institutions.

Figure 1.10 Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP)

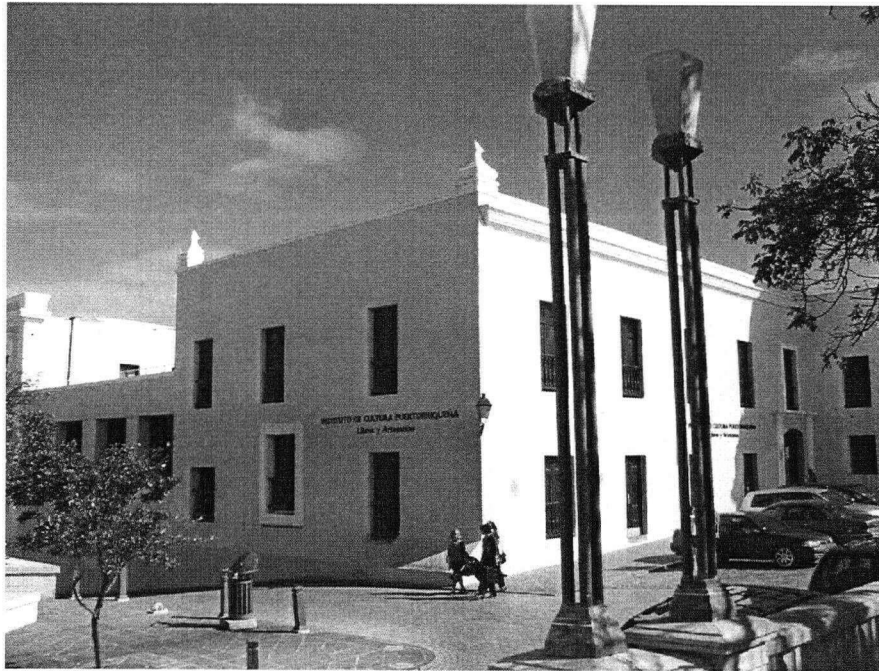


Figure 1.11 Inside corridor of ICP



The movement instigated by the ICP, Cortijo and Rivera and composer/performers such as Rafael Cepeda and Castor Ayala, who as Cortijo said “guardan las llaves de la tradición”²³ (guard the keys of tradition) had a vast influence on the next generation of groups, players and students. This influence simmered until the 1980s as the popular music scene experienced the consecutive musical waves of the Nueva Ola, Salsa Dura, Rock and Salsa Romántica.²⁴

Bomba today enjoys a status unimaginable to its earlier exponents. This contemporary period coalesced during the 1990s and continues to display innovative approaches that bode well for its longevity. This evolution did not follow a linear path but was instead sidetracked by external musical forces and reset on track by an entirely new generation of progressive players.

The bomba festival scene, now over thirty years old, and subsequent forums such as those sponsored by the ICP, and later programmes like Raíces²⁵, have tended to perpetuate idealized images of bomba practice. Rivera recalls statements by the founding Bomba y Plena festival promoter Capitol Clemente:

In the Congress of the Bomba at the Centro de Estudios Avanzados he (referring to Clemente) spoke at length about that, about the fact that groups emerged out of the necessity to present talent at the festival. It does see a wave of interest, but that interest in bomba is within a traditional conception. That is why it didn't really carry on to further generations, people saw it as something traditional, and this is still partially true today (P.L. Rivera, p.c., July 2004).

²³ Rafael Cortijo as quoted in Lydia Milagros González 1983:20.

²⁴ Nueva Ola (New Wave) combined elements of romantic Puerto Rican and other Latino song forms with an updated post-Beatles pop sound. Salsa Dura is a term used to describe the first generation of salsa music that emerged out of Puerto Rico in the mid-1960s and achieved worldwide fame through the astute marketing of the New York-based Fania Records under owner Jerry Masucci. The sound was brassy, the soneos (solo free-form verses) improvised, the forms less structured, the horn lines often improvised.

Salsa Romántica refers to a style of salsa that began to surface in the 1980s. It is distinguished from Salsa Dura by a preference for a produced sound, a softer overall sonority, a reduced role for percussion, non-improvised soneos, and tightly arranged song forms. Purists view this style as artificial and constraining.

²⁵ A 2001 TV production sponsored by the Banco Popular de Puerto Rico that attempted to present a portrait of traditional and contemporary bomba and plena music.

Young performers have limited use for this kind of mediated folkloric stage performance and instead seek more visceral connections with the bomba. This new generation seems poised to relinquish archaic representations in exchange for a contemporary cultural dialogue that embraces a wider social sphere and a more critical ideology. Academicians, scholars and highly politicized artists are beginning to address the redefinitions of racial harmony and cultural values proposed by this newer generation of bomba participants.

The bomba that began on the streets and yards was, by the early 1990s, a professional practice that had by now traveled to festivals and dance competitions in Europe, Central and South America and the United States. The most remarkable shift in this period saw a return to the original conception of the bomba as a community gathering, an informal event among like-minded bomba dancers, singers and drummers.

We get to a point where we begin to see bomba in the homes of people. It emerges as something informal. We had a Fiesta de Bomba in the home of anybody who participated and liked the stuff, everybody brought stuff and we even got into the tradition of ending with a good stew. Everyone participated and from there on it flourished especially among those influenced by the bomba of Santurce. José Emmanuelli, who was one of the leaders of groups like Raíces Eternas, performed with Agueybaná, of Ángel Luis Reyes, his main teacher, he decided then to develop a concept where he integrated the audience with the actual participants in the bomba. It's at that point that we see the arrival of bombazos. That is where the new generation became really engaged. Not only did the bomba go into the plazas where he brought the bomba down off the stage to the ground level, but it eventually ended up in pubs, like Soleil, Rumba, and Mango's Café (P.L. Rivera, p.c., July 2004).

The *bombazo*, the local bomba event in which virtually anyone can participate, is a significant shift in recent bomba development. The bombazo flourishes within a more informed and politicized constituency that sees the bomba as a vehicle for identity and reaffirmation.

Contemporary bomba has been forced to transform and reconstitute itself in order to persevere against the hegemonic forces of musical globalization in post-colonial Puerto Rico. This reconstitution has adopted traditional practices transformed to formal stage performances, the new club scene, bomba schools and innovative adaptations for music therapy, fitness programmes, and education. In spite of a colonial status that disguises itself as the Estado Libre Asociado (Free Associated State)²⁶ Negrón-Muntaner states “most view the survival of a different cultural identity as the greatest *political* victory in the face of colonialism” (Negrón-Muntaner, 2004:4). This victory, though more accurately described as an on-going struggle, continues to gather strength as the bomba discards its pre-existing “otherness” and insinuates itself further into social and artistic practices on the island. Recent attempts at bringing interactive bomba experiences to seniors, children, the disabled, physical education and wellness/recreation programmes have been well received, suggesting the community at large is increasingly eager to embrace a national music/dance form of which they feel a part (González 2003, Cortés 2003, Berrios, 2003).

Bomba's colour codes

Racial ambivalence permeates Puerto Rican's mixed and plural society. Sporadic incidents remind one of the serious repercussions of crossing invisible racial boundaries. In 1988 a proposal was put forth to name the “Centro de Bellas Artes” (the National Fine Arts Centre) after the famous musician Rafael Cortijo, the bandleader who brought the bomba into the media mainstream. A protracted public battle ensued that exposed the

²⁶ This is the official political term describing Puerto Rico's status as a Commonwealth State of the United States of America. The status granted U.S. citizenship to all Puerto Ricans in 1918 (this went into effect following the Foraker Act of 1900) while limiting autonomy to domestic issues other than military protection, foreign trade, taxation, representation and immigration.

serious racial overtones of a continuing class struggle. On one side of the argument stood those who maintained the Arts Centre should be named after a figure representing the loftier European musical traditions such as classical music. On the other side were those who were adamant about naming the Centre after Cortijo, who had earned his place as a musical innovator and as an icon of the working class.

Marie Ramos Rosado discussed this in her article “The Un-burial of Cortijo”²⁷:

Race is a big issue as well. It is high time race becomes a political issue. We must prevent the folklorization of blackness, utilized for political gain and never returned to its origins. Ultimately, whether the Centro is named after him is inconsequential, his place is clearly defined in Puerto Rican culture and on the international scene as musician, composer, humanist and one who never negated his roots (Rosado, 1990-1991:291-294).

Unfortunately, for Cortijo’s admirers, the Arts Centre was named after Luis A. Ferré, a former governor, industrialist and prominent patron of the arts.

The persistent class struggle was again evident (and again related to Cortijo) during a photo exhibit mounted at Plaza Las Américas in the summer of 2004. The show celebrated the 50th anniversary of Telemundo, one of Puerto Rico’s original television stations. Telemundo broadcast some of the most popular entertainment shows in the history of television on the island. Interestingly, while the exhibit featured portraits of blackface comedians such as the popular prankster Diplo, its action shots of “La Taberna India” (India was the beer company that sponsored the show) did not focus on a single photo of Cortijo and his Combo, the main musical act. Another popular show, “El Show de las 12” (The Noon Hour Show) featured the white stars but not “El Gran Combo”, one

²⁷ This is a play on words referring to the title of Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá’s book “The burial of Cortijo” (1983), a narrative on the spectacle of mourning during Cortijo’s public funeral in 1982.

of the main attractions and the central background in practically every camera shot of the live broadcast²⁸.

When traditional cultural expressions are cast into what Appadurai terms the contemporary “mediascape” (Appadurai, 1996:33) they inevitably encounter a gauntlet of social “filters” that modify their content in a quest to reach a broader public. As that public becomes accustomed to modified representations, it often displaces traditional expressions, seeing them thenceforth as unpolished or less sophisticated. In the case of Puerto Rico this cultural transformation is exacerbated by politics and an on-going racial/nationalist discourse wherein pro-statehood (of the USA) forces would prefer to align themselves with the international pop music market of stars such as Ricky Martin and Jennifer López rather than the nationalist echoes of bomba jazz pioneer William Cepeda or the “unplugged” bomba sound of New York’s Viento de Agua. The transformation of bomba from street level entertainment to its present status as a diverse and recognized practice emerged through a process sociologist Raquel Z. Rivera summarizes below:

The term traditional culture is as much a creation of the dominant sectors as the term national culture. Several popular manifestations of the twentieth century that have been described as pillars of national culture were considered vulgar expressions of the lumpen in their time. This was the case with the plena, the son, the calypso, jazz and the blues” (Rivera, 1997:246).

Bomba as a transnational music

Many characteristic elements of bomba can be observed in other African-derived musical genres in the Caribbean. Most common among these is the dialogue between

²⁸ Incidentally, El Gran Combo, formed in 1962 after the first break-up of Cortijo’s band, was essentially Cortijo’s original band with added members. They refined a big band bomba repertoire, were a model for the later development of salsa and continue to play to this day.

drummer and dancer. Musical examples ranging from the rumbas of Cuba to the juba of Haiti feature animated interactions between a single dance soloist and a lead drummer accompanied by an ensemble of supporting voices, drums and small percussion. Other regional similarities include the combination of drums with rattles, dance patterns, call and response formats and the role of music in social interaction. Analogous practices can be observed not only on neighbouring islands but also on the Caribbean coasts of Mexico, Belize, Colombia and Venezuela.

The communication that takes place in “mulatto” Latin musical culture is one that transcends performers and composers and is instead a dialogue with the consumers as well. Unlike much modern popular music in the West where a growing gap is found between music and audience, salsa consumers are rarely passive. They remain in constant communication via clapping the *clave*²⁹, singing the choruses, demanding intensity or “sabor” and above all, dancing. In this way, the Afro Caribbean old traditions are retained such as in the bomba and rumba: that of the essential dialogue between dancer and drummer (Quintero Rivera, 1997:183).

The musics of the Dominican Republic, Haiti and especially Cuba have achieved a transnational status that has made household names of genres such as the *son*, the *merengue* and the *compas*. The traditional bomba, however, has yet to significantly transcend its national boundaries. It remains to be seen whether the appearance of a charismatic popular artist or ensemble will enable it to achieve the kind of global recognition accorded related Antillean styles.

The bomba originated as a transcolonial amalgam of musical styles made possible by immigration, desertion and contraband, starting as early as the 18th century in Puerto Rico. One might be tempted to consider it “intra-national”; a musical genre mainly

²⁹ The *clave* is a two-bar pattern exists in two principal forms, *son clave* and *rumba clave*. The use of *son clave* in the Ayala family is discussed later in Chapter Four. It exists in two rhythmic configurations. The first, called two-three *clave*, consists of a rhythm figure of quarter rest-two quarters-quarter rest-two dotted quarters-quarter. The second form, three-two *clave*, is the same pattern inverted. It starts with the two-dotted quarters followed by a quarter-quarter rest-two quarters and a final quarter rest. This rhythmic figure unifies diverse Afro-Cuban dances by dictating the cadence of certain phrases and *ostinati*.

concerned with a dialogue of regional undercurrents, yet one that is increasingly being embraced by some as truly national. This 'intra' national dialogue has a political dimension that balkanizes the local population into two sides of a racial self-image. Many Puerto Ricans do not see themselves as sharing black heritage and some even resist the intermediate "mestizo" label, preferring instead to self-identify as white. The ruling elite and its bourgeois supporters represent a formidable obstacle to the branding of bomba as a national music. The bomba community, on the other hand, having witnessed the international recognition accorded Rafael Cortijo, Ismael Rivera and later El Gran Combo (albeit with a commercialized derivative of bomba) is asking for nothing less than the recognition that Afro-Puerto Ricans have already forged a national music. All that remains is that it be officially acknowledged. This politicized national dialogue makes bomba's projection onto the world stage problematic but may prove to be the defining catalyst for the arrival of that still elusive international bomba popular icon.

Puerto Rico has had its share of successful stars in other musical genres (Marc Anthony and Jennifer López in Hispanic pop; Tito Puente in Latin jazz; Willie Colón in salsa; José Feliciano in mainstream pop) but these artists project a modified image controlled by their music industry medium.

The influence of New York's large Puerto Rican population has been felt most strongly in the commercial music industry. In spite of the presence of high profile bomba artists living in New York such as Juan Gutiérrez, Ángel Luis Torruellas, Obanilú Allende and others, the island remains the source of the most significant developments in the genre. New York bomba players make regular pilgrimages to recharge their creative energies and to absorb the many changes taking place as a result of the accelerated pace

of bomba development. That being said, the most recent recording by ensemble Viento de Agua, *Materia Prima*, considered by salsa historian Miguel López as Grammy award material, sends a strong message that the New York area bomba performers are poised to assume a leadership role in developing bomba. Perhaps the most striking example of the increasingly assertive role of the expatriate Puerto Rican community is the all-female bomba and Dominican *salve* ensemble Yayas, whose sheer existence challenges the male-dominated drumming tradition.

Figure 1.12 Yayas drummers³⁰



The accelerated growth of bomba in Puerto Rico, while providing inspiration and renewal to Puerto Ricans abroad, seems less concerned with offshore developments and trends than with focusing on securing its place within the island's mainstream music. Its main emphasis, at least temporarily, is on bringing together a society that is often split along racial, musical and economic lines.

³⁰ Photo courtesy of Carmen García.

Literature and the scholarly recognition of bomba

In spite of the fact that the bomba has been a mainstay of Puerto Rican urban and rural community music for practically three centuries it seems unbelievable that there is not a single book devoted to it. Prior to the late 1970s the limited literature on bomba (other than a single dissertation in 1968) consisted of journal articles on styles, African heritage, or language; minor mentions in folkloric studies; peripheral citations in books about popular music and Latin jazz; and mere footnotes in surveys of island culture. Prior to the 1950s there was practically no documentation at all except for some wax cylinder recordings made by anthropologist Alden Mason in 1915-17, isolated photographs, personal anecdotes that appeared in later theses, and some ethnographic film footage.³¹

The bomba community, like most rural communities, has traditionally functioned outside the reach of journalism and academic writing. There is, however, a change underway. The increasing amount of research and recognition as reflected in contemporary scientific, social and literary writing will undoubtedly lead to the production of the first comprehensive monographs on the bomba within the next few years.

The following are the only scholarly dissertations in English or Spanish dealing specifically with the bomba as an artistic and social practice. These works offer diverse perspectives on social context and the bomba's place among other Caribbean and African musical forms.

James McCoy's dissertation *The Bomba and Aguinaldo of Puerto Rico as They Have Evolved from Indigenous, African, and European Cultures* (Florida State

³¹ Some of these ethnographic films, such as the one done in 1948 by the Anthropology department of the University of Puerto Rico unfortunately failed to identify the subjects.

University, 1968) was the first scholarly work to link the rhythms of the traditional bomba and aguinaldo and to suggest that bomba rhythmic idioms had re-surfaced in other traditional musical styles. This study, by a non-Puerto Rican, vindicated the contribution of the bomba community to Puerto Rican music.

Hector Vega Drouet's 1979 thesis *Historical and Ethnological Survey on the Probable African Origins of the Puerto Rican Bomba* (Ph.D. diss., Wesleyan University, Connecticut, 1979) traced the origins of the bomba and ventured further than his predecessor McCoy in proposing that the multiple drum ensembles of bomba, and the drummer/dancer interaction that are at its core, bear close resemblance to a number of West African musical styles. Vega Drouet's research unearthed anecdotal and documented evidence of earlier bomba activity in Puerto Rico. As a native scholar, he raised the profile of bomba and encouraged increased research activity among his colleagues and an upcoming generation of Puerto Rican folk music devotees.

When José Emanuel Dufrasne González submitted his doctoral dissertation *La Homogeneidad de la Música Caribeña: Sobre la Música Comercial de Puerto Rico* (The Homogeneity of Caribbean music: About Commercial Music in Puerto Rico. UCLA, 1985) he built on the research of both McCoy and Vega Drouet and turned his attention to both extramusical and micromusical aspects of bomba tradition. He linked the bomba to a pan-Caribbean practice that took a particular turn in Puerto Rico during the colonial period. While recognizing these broader Caribbean roots he conducted extensive fieldwork in Puerto Rico, identifying and categorizing numerous styles and sub-styles of bomba. Dufrasne's fieldwork uncovered stories and details of earlier practices through a number of important interviews with octogenarian and centenarian bomba practitioners

that have since deceased. Their commentary, and his comparative analyses, added historical depth to what was until then an unwritten history.

Dufasne continues to produce articles on the bomba and popular music in Puerto Rican and American publications. A professor at the University of Puerto Rico, he leads an active career as a member of the bomba community, musical director of the ensemble Paracumbé, and cultural adviser.

Halbert Barton is well known in the Santurce bomba drum community. He arrived as an anthropologist and emerged as a knowledgeable scholar and dancer of bomba. In his doctoral dissertation *The Drum-dance Challenge: An Anthropological Study of Gender, Race, and Class Marginalization of Bomba in Puerto Rico* (Cornell University, 1995) he offered an insider's perspective of the bomba as a living practice. He described aspects of technique and style and gave an updated ethnographic portrayal of the cultural status of the bomba. The bomba had been observed during the early years of the U.S. occupation (approximately 1914-1945) especially by the aforementioned Alden Mason and by photographer/documentarist Jack Delano, but those accounts failed to provide any significant social and musical information from which to establish a clear portrait of the instruments, dances and social context of bomba. Barton provided a glimpse into the bomba event, its social interaction, and the formative steps necessary to acquire the status of an "insider". His contribution is invaluable for his thick description of the central core of bomba relations, namely, that between the dancer and the lead drummer.

José E. Fernández Morales' Master's thesis *Análisis sobre los Cantos de Bomba recogidos en Cataño (1918-1965): Datos y Comentarios sobre la Ejecución del Género*. (Analysis of Bomba Songs collected in Cataño (1918-1965): Data and Commentary

about the Performance of the Genre. University of Puerto Rico, 1999) was done under the supervision of Dufrasne. Cataño, an area just across the bay from the capital city of San Juan, was well known to bomba players around the island. It was here that some of the most popular bomba dances were held during the years specified in the title. Fernández-Morales interviewed older players and assembled a detailed portrait of practices. His analysis of song lyrics helped clarify the origins of some styles, identify individual players and spectators, and provided a complete portrayal of bomba activity in that region before its subsequent decline.

Prior to the publication of these dissertations author/linguist Manuel Álvarez Nazario raised questions about the origins and transformation of Afro-Puerto Rican colloquial speech in his *Notas Sobre el Habla del Negro en Puerto Rico durante el Siglo XIX* (Notes on the Speech of the Negro in Puerto Rico during the XIX Century). This 1959 article paved the way for the re-examination of black culture and its positive influence on national culture. In the following year, Alvarez Nazario published his *Historia de las Denominaciones de los Bailes de Bomba* [The History of the Denomination of Bomba Dances. Álvarez Nazario, 1960) and introduced the most comprehensive listing of bomba styles and sub-styles to date. Of particular importance is his description of a pan-American bomba practice. His research identified similar dance forms from Uruguay, New Orleans, Haiti, French Guyana and Cuba. Although many performers and scholars since have questioned the origin and/or accuracy of some of his material, there is no doubt of its importance to the nascent stages of bomba musicology.

Maria Luisa Muñoz continued where Álvarez Nazario left off and dedicated a chapter in her survey of Puerto Rican music *La Música en Puerto Rico* (1966) to bomba.

She identified the ethnicity of selected slave groups and deepened the linguistic, ethnographic and musicological research of her predecessor. Her book singled out prominent personalities in bomba folklore and credited individual regional performers, thereby shifting the conception of bomba from that of an anonymous tradition inherited from slaves to a living history of active protagonists.

Francisco López Cruz, a notable performer of Puerto Rican jíbaro music, and the influential artist I mentioned in the first line of the introduction to this dissertation, explored the idiomatic differences of regional styles, including the bomba. His book *La Música Folklórica de Puerto Rico* (1967) and his various recordings defined elements of bomba performance practice and brought a few bomba styles (the *sicá* especially) to a broader audience. Because López Cruz was not a member of the bomba community Jesús Cepeda claims his ability to speak to the various sub-styles was limited.

I warned him to not go out there and talk about the bomba styles [referring to a lecture on bomba during an ICP forum in San Juan], unless he could sit down at the drum and play each and every one of those variants. I said, you can speak to general ideas but don't pretend you can talk about bomba as if you were a bombero³² (Jesús Cepeda, p.c., July 26, 2004).

This scrutiny of scholars and folklorists by traditional players is a relatively recent phenomenon that signals a shift to a more empowered subject voice. Jesús Cepeda assured me he had no qualms about López Cruz's contribution to the exposure of bomba but felt strongly, as do many of his contemporaries, that explaining the intricacies of performance practice should be left to practitioners, especially given their availability and willingness to impart technique and style.

³² Bombero: one who plays bomba regularly.

The role of the African in Puerto Rican culture was the central focus of Isabelo Zenón Cruz's influential Master's degree project and later publication, *Narciso Descubre su Trasero. El Negro en la Cultura Puertorriqueña. Tomo I, II*. [Narcissus Discovers his Rear End. Blacks in Puerto Rican Culture. Vol. I, II. Zenón Cruz, 1975). This publication caused considerable controversy as it placed the island's black population at the forefront of most cultural activity. His was not an affirmation of the black contribution to local culture but rather a manifesto conceived to irreversibly alter common perceptions of black culture and declare unspoken truths. One of my bomba informants cited Zenón Cruz as an inspirational force that bolstered his advocacy work. (P.L.Rivera, p.c., July 2004)

The following pages display the covers of monographs and books that have positively influenced perceptions of the contributions of black culture to Puerto Rican music.

Figure 1.13 José Luis González and Isabelo Zenón Cruz

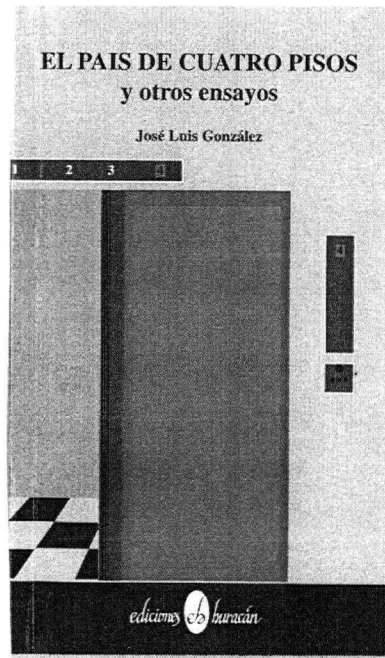
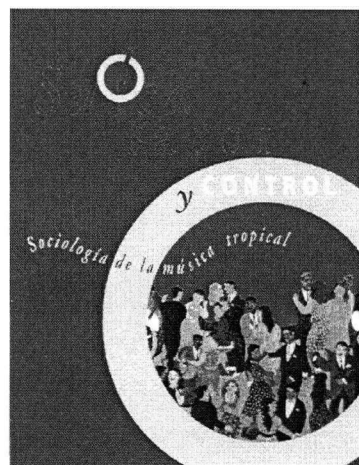
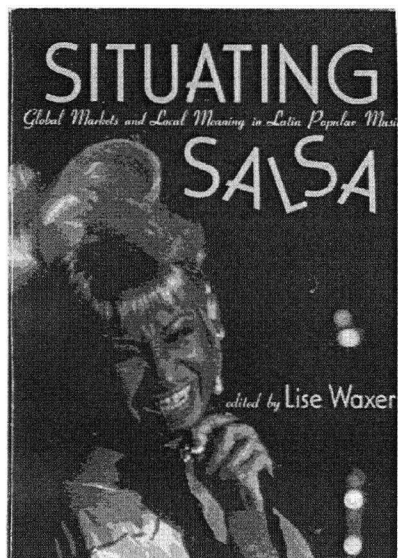
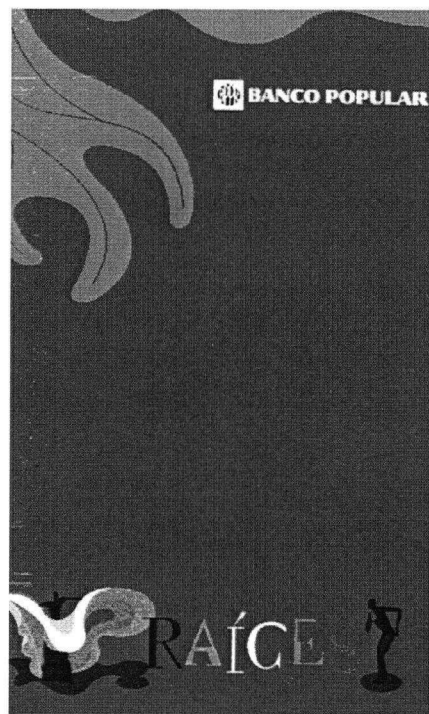
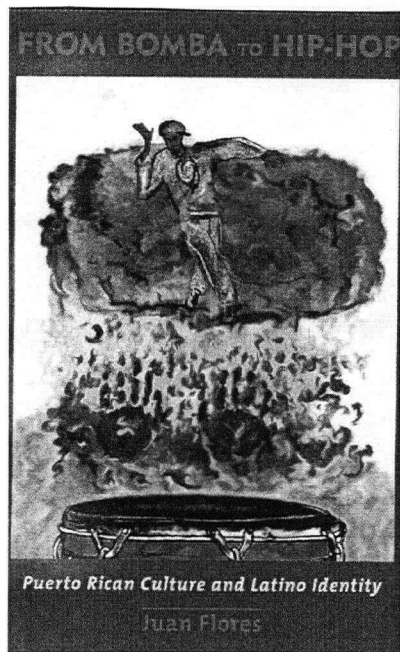


Figure 1.14 Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel
/ Lise Waxer / Ángel Quintero Rivera



Frances Negrón-Muntaner and
Ramón Grosfoguel

Figure 1.15 Juan Flores, Luis Manuel Álvarez (in Raíces, 2001)



Luis Manuel Álvarez (Álvarez, 2001), Dufrasne (1985) and Quintero Rivera (1998) explain how rhythms believed to have originated in the bomba also surface in traditional music in everything from song form to güiro patterns to Puerto Rican cuatro articulations. The presence of African rhythmic elements in the music of the Puerto Rican jíbaro is most convincingly demonstrated in a series of detailed analyses prepared by musicologist Álvarez. The repercussions of such findings go beyond mere theoretical interest; they shatter preconceived notions of the hegemony of jíbaro music and its allegedly purer European heritage. By illustrating precise bomba rhythmic cells that reappear, practically intact, in the melodic patterns of the ten-string cuatro and the rhythms of the güiro, he shows that rural peasants were a more heterogeneous ethnic group than former official accounts indicate.

Quintero Rivera embraces Álvarez's findings and proceeds to reposition and re-contextualize these survival strategies within a broader sociological framework. Quintero Rivera's work on musical camouflage elaborated McCoy's findings and positioned bomba more generally, as a popular music genre. His publication, *Salsa y Sabor: Sociología de la Música Tropical* (Salsa and Groove: The Sociology of Tropical Music, 1999) provides an analysis of Latin American popular dance genres and their symbolic relationship to audiences. These arguments, addressed here in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, will reinforce many of my arguments about improvisational approaches and the grammar of bomba drum solos.

From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity (Flores, 2000) explores Puerto Rican identity and the symbolic meaning of popular and "roots" music. Flores portrays culture in a state of transformation and re-signification in which

contemporary Spanglish rap artists in New York's Puerto Rican community reconcile their urban/emigrant identity with tradition.

In terms of poetic language, Spanglish Rap is embedded in the everyday speech practices of the larger community over the course of several generations, and even echoes in more than faint ways the tones and cadences of lyrics typical of plena, bomba, and other forms of popular Puerto Rican song (Flores, 2000:138).

Academic and critical literature on the bomba, viewed within a greater context of Puerto Rican identity politics, positions the dynamic new bomba community at the centre of cultural affirmation strategies. As a consequence of the self-examination process that political marginalization brought about, the community of bomba performers, writers, intellectuals and disciples can now articulate its cultural location from an authoritative position in which value is assigned by the subject.

As external influences collided with common practices, bomba players manoeuvred the survival of their tradition by negotiating musical exchanges, racial marginalization, identity, and representation. The scholars and intellectuals cited above have increasingly sought out practitioners and effectively shifted the prevailing depiction of bomba tradition from post-colonial models of folkloric artifact to post-modern models of cultural ingenuity.

Chapter Two

The Bomba Community

*El barrio tiene
tu canción metida
hasta la quilla maxima
del hueso...*

*The village has
your song stuck
right to the bone*

*Rafael,
timbero antillano
corazón timbero.³³*

*Rafael,
antillean drummer
drummer by heart*

Félix Córdova Iturregui (Translation by author)

The histories of free blacks, mulattos and slaves of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean are obfuscated by colonial and post-colonial practices that erected obstacles to their attainment of literacy and education, and hence a record of their cultural and social lives. Fortunately, a few distinguished performers, teachers, and scholars preserved first-hand knowledge of bomba history and other information pertaining to earlier practices and performers. The vivid recollections of numerous elders, including some centenarians, sparked a revival that still animates bomba today. Given that slavery was only abolished in 1873, some of these informants had actually been slaves and/or the children of slaves. They provided a portrait of a music community previously unknown to scholars.

Today's bomba players are a diverse lot comprising history graduates, engineers, academics, shop-owners, folklorists, computer programmers, and others from a variety of

³³ Félix Córdova Iturrégui, 1998:85.

backgrounds, some having attended regular drum and dance lessons with experienced practitioners and others who have learned by listening and participating.

In this chapter I introduce the bomba community region by region. Elder players will appear alongside influential younger contemporary players. Both generations remain committed to bomba to the extent that they are willing to suspend value judgements (at least publicly) on each other's distinct practices choosing instead to concentrate their efforts on this period of renewal.

The most significant historical and contemporary centres of bomba practice are the towns or cities of Cataño, Guayama, Loíza, Mayagüez, Ponce, and Santurce.

Communities will be described in alphabetical order by town or city, followed by some historical information and details on prominent individuals.

Seeking the precise origins of musical styles in communities with oral histories is at best a speculative activity. Because bomba players are prone to competition and one-upmanship, claims to ownership of individual styles and the politics of origins will be avoided in this chapter and raised in the context of bomba in contemporary Puerto Rican society in Chapter Six.

Philosopher and neurobiologist Patricia Churchland stated

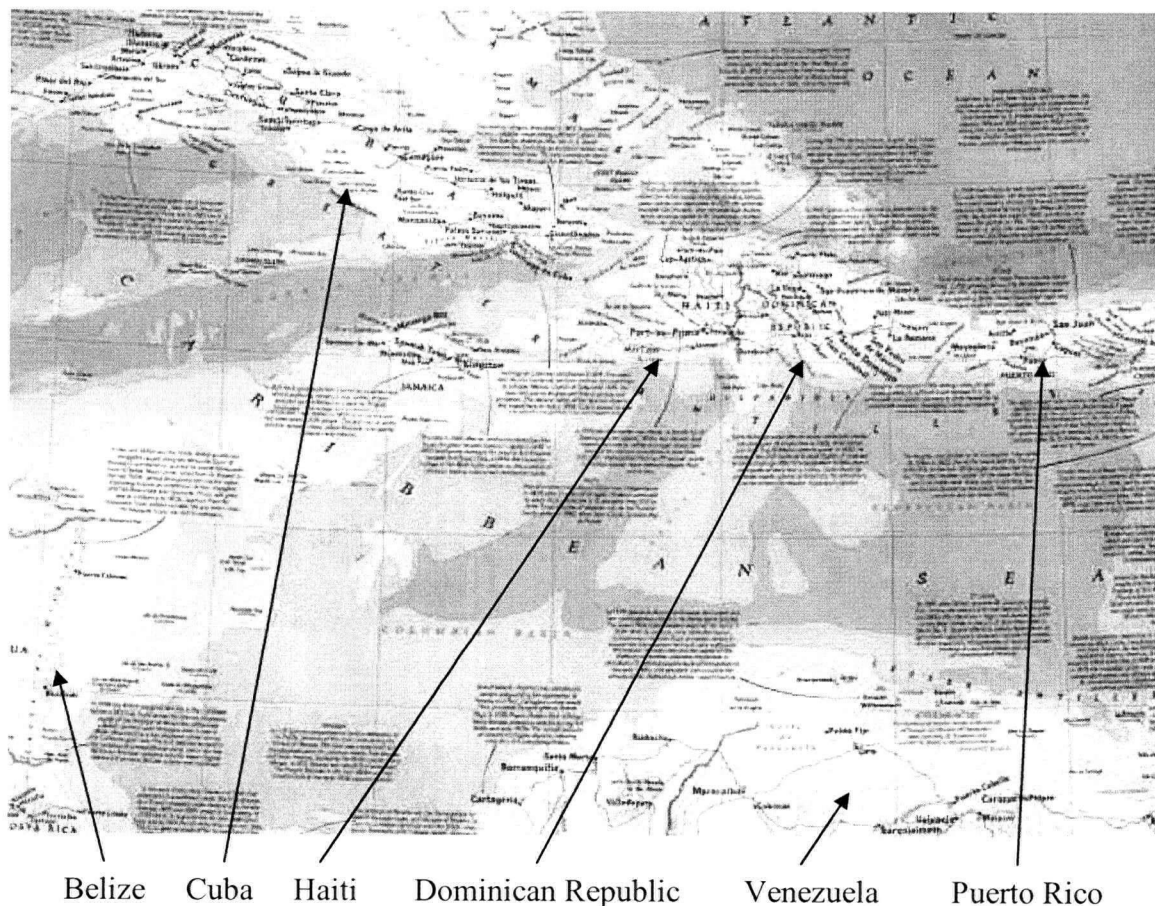
nature is not an intelligent engineer...it doesn't start from scratch every time it wants to build a new system, but has to work with what's already there
(Churchland in Lewin, 1992:164).

Likewise, bomba communities have traditionally developed their repertoire either from an existing collection of songs and dances that are continually rearranged, or by generating new compositions that reinforce existing practices.

Established leaders of individual communities have tended to be drummers, singers and/or dancers who regularly hosted bomba dances or attended and excelled at

these. Bomba communities would choose their leaders according to their knowledge of repertoire combined with the high level of skill in their individual specialty (a given style or dance). Stylistic development was usually driven by the gradual innovations these leading figures introduced. My discussion of improvisation, transcription, analysis and societal norms will be elaborated upon in Chapters Three, Four and Six.

Figure 2.1 Map of Puerto Rico and neighbouring Caribbean and South American nations.³⁴



Used with permission of the National Geographic Society.

³⁴ Hall, 1981:116.

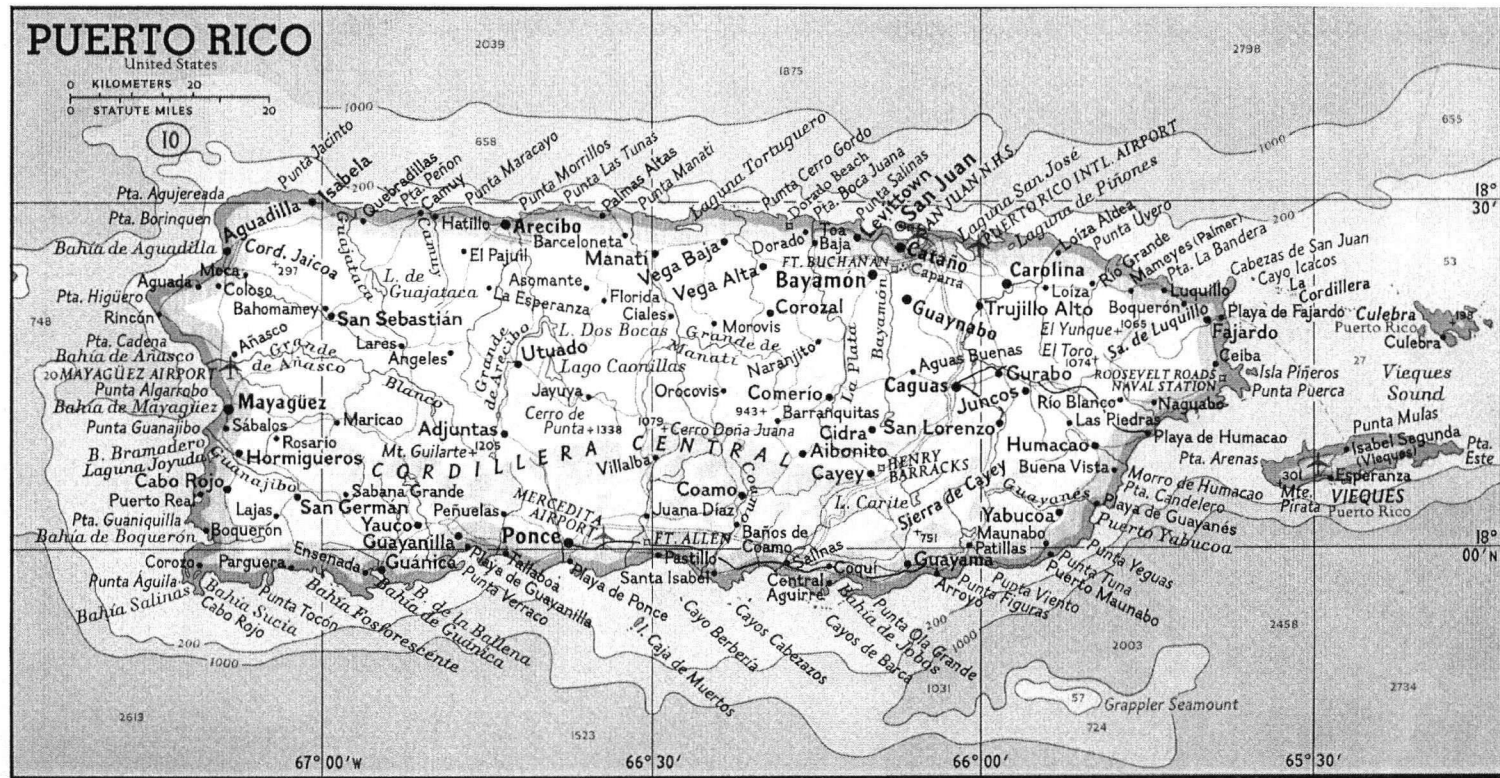


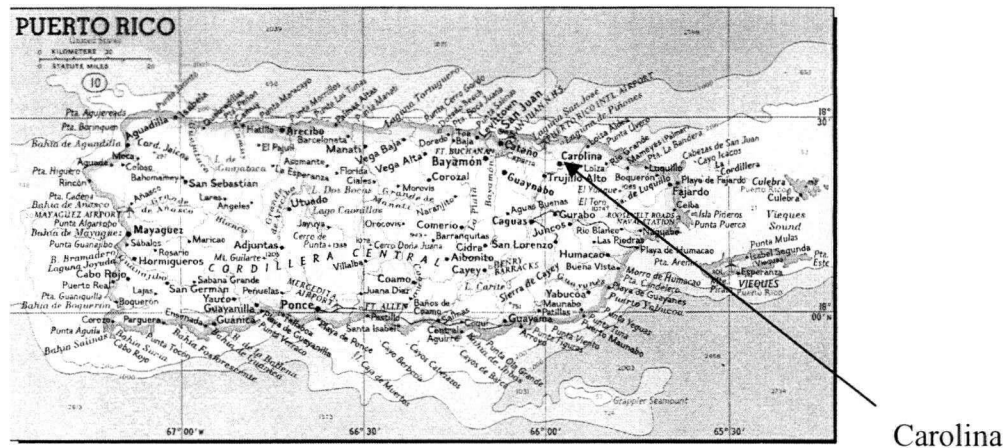
Figure 2.2 Map of Puerto Rico³⁵

This photo and the following reductions in this chapter: Used with permission of the National Geographic Society.

³⁵ Garrett, 224A, 1981.

The bomba communities: locations and outstanding figures.

Figure 2.3 Location of Carolina³⁶



Carolina

The community of Carolina is named after the daughter of one of its founding proprietors, Gaspar Martínez en Andino y Casado. It is bordered on the west by the municipality of the capital city of San Juan (which includes the populous area of Santurce, discussed below) and on the east by Loíza. Carolina was the birthplace of novelist Julia de Burgos, internationally renowned classical pianist Jesús Maria Sanromá, and baseball legend Roberto Clemente. This notable lineage underscores its prominence as an important area of bomba cultural production.

Barton (in Sloat 2002:187) indicates that it was the Almésticas family that brought bomba to Carolina at the turn of the 19th century though little is known or recounted about their activities. Today, Carolina is home to the Fundación Folklórica Don Rafael Cepeda, dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of the bomba styles

³⁶ *ibid*

of Santurce. Dedicated teacher, mentor and member of the prominent Cepeda family, Jesús Cepeda and artist Gilda Hernández, his wife, run the foundation.

Figure 2.4 Fundación Don Rafael Cepeda in Carolina



Cepeda, known in entertainment circles as “el maestro” (the master player and/or teacher), is also a well-known bomba drum craftsman. In an interview in December 2002 Jesús Cepeda admitted he did not engage in the manufacture of drums for commercial purposes,

I don't make drums for money, I'd rather take my time making a drum sound great and then give it to someone whom I know will play it well, it's a way of recognizing that player's commitment to the bomba, to give the drum is to pay respects to that individual (J. Cepeda, interview December 2002).

In March 2003 “maestro” Jesús Cepeda made an official presentation and request to the Puerto Rican Senate to institute the bomba barrel drum and plena *pandero* (small tambourine-like hand drum) as the national instruments of Puerto Rico.³⁷

Figure 2.5 Jesús Cepeda



Carolina is also home to two other prominent drum makers. The first, Iván Dávila, is an experienced drummer most recently associated with ‘Félix Alduén (d. 2003) y sus Tambores’ and other players from both his home city of San Juan and Mayagüez. True to his traditional roots Iván takes great pride in manufacturing barrels in the traditional peg

³⁷ Primera Hora, March 2003.

and rope technique favoured by numerous younger ensembles. One late summer evening in July of 2003, standing outside a jam-packed bombazo³⁸, Dávila delivered a passionate diatribe against the dissonance between the present young generation of players and the older masters.

They're not interested in experience; they're more interested in anything new, in bringing in things that have nothing to do with bomba, in talking about things they have no feeling for; what they're doing now, that's not bomba; it's good, it's strong, maybe it's complex, but it is not true to the older traditions (I. Dávila, p.c. 2003).

Other elder players in the tradition have echoed this same sentiment of resentment or resignation. Implicit in this polarization is a resistance to change and reluctance to cope with the contemporary pace of development.

Another important voice is that of Pablo Luis Rivera, a dancer/drummer who began by attending classes at the “Escuela de Bomba y Plena Rafael Cepeda Atilés” of Modesto Cepeda. Organizer of performances, workshops and community events, Pablo Luis was my connection to a vast network of underground bomba activity in the San Juan and Loíza area. This network, connected by cell phone, websites and a chat group on the Internet, links participants and enthusiasts to a range of bomba activities.

During my visits to Puerto Rico, he would call every few days with another tip, such as “If you have a car and drive to town tonight, you’ll find bomba.” “Where?” I would ask, to which his customary answer was “Just get there and then ask around”.

His work and that of his colleagues in the ensembles Son del Batey and Herederos de Xiorro, while rooted in the Cepeda family tradition of bomba playing, is representative of a new wave of participants. These young middle class fans embrace bomba as an

³⁸ Bombazo: a public event where any community of enthusiasts perform bomba. The dancing takes place in front of and does not feature any special stage. The events deliberately avoid “performance” scenarios but may occur in bars, restaurants and public spaces.

affirmation of identity. They also incorporate rhythms derived from offshore styles such as reggae, hip-hop, funk and others into its repertoire.

Figure 2.6 Pablo Luis Rivera dancing bomba.³⁹



Papo del Valle is the other prominent Carolina drum craftsman. His specialized commission work, used by several groups around the island, is that of oak barrel drums with modern chrome or nickel-plated hardware (for tuning the heads) whereas Cepeda and Dávila's more traditional wooden peg and rope tension mechanisms resemble drum tuning devices that derive from West African and other Caribbean drums.

The “Escuela de Baile de Bomba Doña Caridad Brenes de Cepeda” is a modern school for bomba music and dance run by Margarita “Tata” Cepeda, granddaughter and dancer of the Cepeda clan. She and husband Víctor “Sorpresa” Vélez, are popular performers in the bomba community. Tata, one of the principal dancers of the Santurce bomba tradition, has performed with the Cepeda family in countless national and

³⁹ Photo courtesy of Alberto Galarza.

international presentations and also leads her own bomba ensemble. Víctor Vélez is a busy free-lance performer in diverse Latin American musical styles frequently seen in the San Juan/New York bomba, salsa and plena scene.

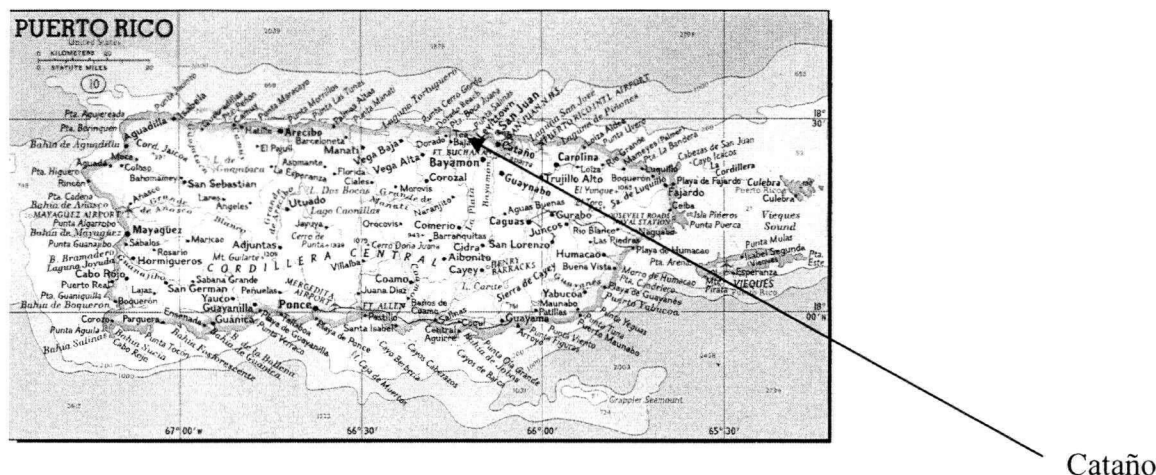
Figure 2.7 Margarita “Tata” Cepeda⁴⁰



While Carolina is home to many bomba practitioners and the site of various bomba-related events, its contemporary musical affiliation is with the Santurce tradition. As its eastern neighbour, Santurce's influence is overwhelming. Although there is no particular rhythmic or choreographic style specifically associated with the town of Carolina, the sheer number of practitioners and the intensity of its bomba activity, especially amongst its young constituency, may well generate a regional variant within another generation or two.

⁴⁰ Photo courtesy of Searchlight Films.

Figure 2.8 Location of Cataño⁴¹



Cataño

This northern port town, first settled by Dr. Hernando de Cataño and his family in the 16th century, is located across the Bahía (Bay) of San Juan from the older fortified city of San Juan. Its original name was San Fernando de Cataño. Colonial customs dictated that any town or community would attach the name of a particular Catholic saint to its original place name upon the establishment of a local parish. The name used was often that of the Catholic saint being celebrated the day the church was consecrated. The declining influence of the church over the last century is apparent in that community names have reverted, at least in practice, to their original secular place names.

Port cities such as Cataño, provided regular employment to large numbers of black dock workers and seasonal employment for numerous plantation workers who migrated there between harvest cycles. Cataño's docks and related warehouses became points of convergence for workers from disparate communities and, in some cases, a

⁴¹ Garrett, 224A, 1981.

radically different cultural heritage. Southern black labourers, who travelled north to production centres such as Cataño, showed strong influences of French and Dutch heritage resulting from the importation of sizable slave groups from those respective colonial possessions to southern regions. This proved to be beneficial to the bomba as many of the migrant workers introduced unfamiliar regional styles to new areas and contributed both to the establishment of the bomba around the island and to its stylistic cross-fertilization.

The presence of the bomba in Cataño may be one of the oldest acknowledged in written history in Puerto Rico. In 1797 the French botanist André Pierre Ledrú observed and wrote of the practice of a music/dance he referred to as bomba. His comments and sketches following the visit suggest that he viewed the old city from what is probably the recently settled area known then as the Punta de Cataño (Fernández Morales 1999:22).

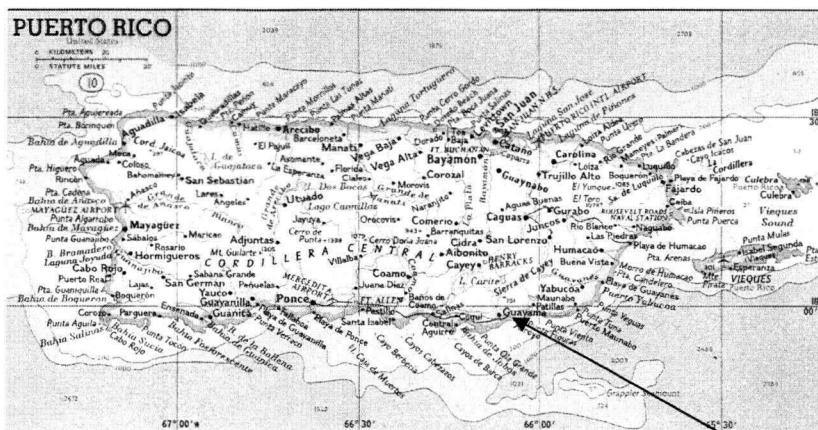
Reliable information about the bomba in Cataño does not surface again until the early twentieth century when word spread of bomba dances featuring a dockworker by the name of Dominguito Negrón. This now legendary interpreter of the bomba would host dances attracting fellow enthusiasts from Santurce, Loíza, Guayama, and even Mayagüez (on the west coast of the island). Dominguito's drummers were Ventura Pizarro and Canario (real name Caín), with Manuel Pizarro, brother of Ventura, playing the cuá. Dances began at around 2 pm and went on well into the early morning hours. Castor Ayala from Loíza and a young Rafael Cepeda from Santurce, two individuals whose own ensembles became hallmarks of the bomba tradition throughout Puerto Rico, were seen frequenting the dances and, as is obvious in their later repertoires, absorbed old songs and stylistic elements. Caridad Brenes, wife of Rafael Cepeda, a specialist in the

yubá, also frequented the dances. There were many other popular characters such as Juan Lague, originally from Mayagüez and a woman who went by the nickname of “La Pulchinella” (Gloria Ramos). Another, Teresa Maíz Mangual, according to Jesús Cepeda, was the subject of a popular song called Golpe Calindá (J. Cepeda, p.c. July, 2004).

Cataño bombas were danced by couples and among the most famous was Tomas Lavative and Petronila Guilbe (also subject of a later song). Fernández Morales’ extensive interviews also yielded the names of such dancers as Facundo Martínez, (who would only dance to Ventura’s drumming), and Ceferina, a famous dancer of *yubá* and *leró* bombas (these will be discussed in Chapter Three).

Cataño’s most popular period as a locale for bomba dances extended from the 1920s up to about 1965 (Fernández Morales, 1999). The rising popularity of salsa among Puerto Rican youth in the ‘60s combined with the winding down of activity among the aging exponents of the bomba led to a gradual decline of gatherings in Cataño.

Figure 2.9 Map of Guayama⁴²



Guayama

⁴² ibid.

Guayama

Guayama means “the large place” in the native Arawak language and refers to an extensive and fertile valley on the southeast coast of the island. Colonial administrators began settling here in 1567 and named it the “Valle de Guayama”.

The southeastern town of Guayama, also known as “el pueblo de las brujas”⁴³ has a long association with African culture. It was the site of large sugar plantations during the colonial and pre-industrial period.

Guayama is the birthplace of poet Luis Palés Matos, an Afro-Caribbean poet whose body of work has become synonymous with Puerto Rico’s deep African roots. Palés Matos crafted a poetic language that alluded to many real and some invented elements of African lore on the island. De Onís claims a recording by Teresa Rodríguez in the 1930s establishes Pales Matos’ inspiration for his famous poem “Falsa Canción del Baquiné” (De Onís, 1959:15-16). The poem evokes the West African Cangá or Mende⁴⁴ language as revealed to him during a wake he was taken to by the house cook, Lupe. This language group originated on the Gold Coast, around Sierra Leone and Liberia. These findings add weight to the significance of Palés’ use of African or Africanized words. Languages originating in these African nations reappear in older (and now incomprehensible) bomba lyrics that still survive in the contemporary Santurce repertoire. Another essential connection between Palés Matos and the bomba is that since the 1950s his poems have been popularized and appropriated by a growing number of

⁴³ “The town of the witches” This moniker alludes to a generally negative view of its sizable and diverse black population as well as to its alleged suspicious religious practices considered heretical by the Catholic church.

⁴⁴ The Mende language is believed to have arrived in the Caribbean via slaves from Sierra Leone. Álvarez Nazario also points out that Cangá became a pejorative expression to describe anything associated with Africans or their language (1959:43).

local artists determined to contribute to this *tercera raíz* (third root or stream) of island culture.⁴⁵

Slaves from the Gold Coast were not the only ethnic group to work the valleys of Guayama. The plantations certainly used Africans brought to the island by Spanish traders but also from several of the neighbouring islands controlled by the French, Dutch, Danish and English colonial authorities. This diversity of rhythmic traditions and languages helped shape the southern bomba. Guayama was later connected by train to other southern communities, which eventually resulted in a fusion of bomba rhythms across the south of the island. The passenger trains, which ran until 1953, played an important role in the dissemination of the bomba by transporting men and women who would travel between communities to attend bomba dances on days off work.

According to Muñoz, Guayama's earliest known dancers included Doña Modesta Amaro, Isabelita Navarro, Pablo Lind, Bruno Cora, Narcisa Godineaux, Amalia Villodas and Damiana Alonso (Muñoz, 1966:84). Professor Dufrasne indicates that Don Adolfo Pica Guadalupe of Guayama witnessed a set of bomba drums made with tourniquets, a style of head tension quite common in other Caribbean islands (Dufrasne, 1985:183).

Fátima Seda's 1996 article "La Última Bomba" confirms Muñoz's observations with several first-hand accounts of Guayama's bomba tradition. According to Seda, the aforementioned individuals did exist, but her interviews with Doña Julia Clavell, 83 years old, add a level of intimacy and detail. According to Doña Julia, dances were always held at the home of Chato (Ricardo Candelario López), who hosted, organized and promoted bomba dances throughout the neighbouring southern communities. Chato employed

⁴⁵ The three traditional cultural roots of Puerto Rico and those that appear on the ICP official seal are said to be the Spanish, the native Taíno and the African.

Pablo Lind to play lead drum (primo), Tolín to play the second drum (seguidor), and

Andrés 'El Comodín' Leandy who played the cuá. He recalled:

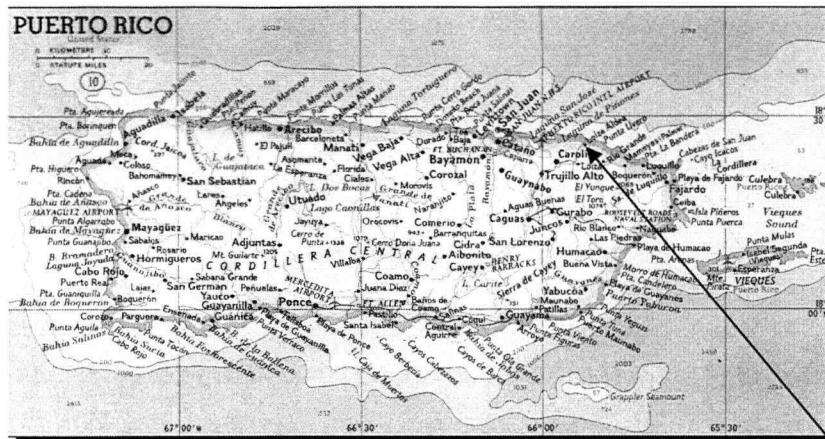
I would host the dances, in Arroyo if I didn't go pick up Pablo Lind, he wouldn't go anywhere...those people organizing the patron saint celebrations would look for me and I would go get the musicians in Salinas, in Guayama, in Arroyo, in the barrios. They'd play from six in the evening to six in the morning, we fed them, paid their expenses, there were times when at ten in the morning people would be crazy still dancing and having a good time (Seda 1996:9).

In the southern bomba traditions of the island women sing the lead vocal. They must also accent the rhythm by playing a single maraca. Chato claimed the best female singers were Maria Texidor, and Salomé Villodas, mother of Seda's principal informant, Julia Clavell (Seda, 1996:9). Candelaria Cusa Díaz was also a popular singer.

Drummer/dancer Don José Miguel Flores Villodas (no relation to the previously named Villodas; this is the most common last name in the area) claims he learned bomba from his wife, aunts, and grandmother. At the time of the interviews Flores Villodas still owned a pair of drums from the heyday of bomba in Guayama and reminisced about the elegance of the dances, couples and activities of their younger days.

The elimination of regular passenger train service among southern coastal communities such as Guayama contributed in no small way to the reduced exchange, isolation and eventual disappearance of the bomba in that area. Of considerable importance is also the impact of hurricanes, whose devastation often ruined plantations and forced local populations to move on to other areas (Dufrasne p.c. July 2003). Clavell stated that the bomba of Guayama ceased to exist by 1979 (Seda 1996:9). This author is aware of a younger generation of independent and practically anonymous Guayaman bomba players who occasionally travel around the island to share their traditions with other practitioners.

Figure 2.10 Map of Loíza⁴⁶



Loíza

Loíza

Loíza is the town most associated with African culture in Puerto Rico. Most famous for a popular summer festival, Loíza has experienced a sizable share of interesting history. It was sparsely settled very early in the period of conquest, 1515, and derives its name from Cacique (Chief) Luísa, who wed one of Juan Ponce de León's African right hand men, Pedro Mexía. (There were only two who regularly accompanied the explorer.) During colonial times the settlement was under continuous attack by the itinerant Carib natives, pirates and the English, who sought a strategic island foothold in the Greater Antilles. Both Mexía and Chief Luísa perished in one such attack. This African presence in Loíza preceded organized slave trade by little over a century.

Loíza is the symbolic birthplace of the northern bomba. Dances featuring the local version of the bomba became very popular during the Feast of St. James (Santiago, as this saint is known in Spanish culture), the patron of that community. The celebration of

⁴⁶ Garrett, 224A, 1981.

this feast intensified after abolition in 1873. It is important, however, to make a distinction between the feast and the dances. There is no religious connection between the two. Dances occur as a peripheral activity to the *fiestas patronales* (patron saint celebrations) in July and are part of their community festival. Today they tend to be held at the homes of the Ayala family and a few other locations in the neighbourhood of Medianía Alta, in a sector called Las Carreras. Loíza players and dancers perform a unique variant of bomba called *seis corrido* and their own version of the *yubá*, known locally as *corvé*. These will be examined in the next chapter. Loíza's African roots are evident in crafts, cuisine, and visual art, but most prominently in dance and music. In spite of the fact that there is limited formalized bomba instruction in Loíza, most musically inclined residents are able to execute its basic dance steps with little difficulty.

Loíza remained a relatively remote coastal community, most easily reachable by a small *ancón* (barge) across the Rio Grande de Loíza until the late 1960s. The construction of a nearby expressway and later a bridge have contributed to its economic growth and to the expansion of the summer festival.

Bomba historians have acknowledged the influence of players and dancers such as Don Presbítero Cepeda Ayala, who organized dances in a clear lot in Medianía Alta. He and Don Cruz Ortiz Cirino, Don Juan and Doña Martina Sabater Picá and her mother Doña Felicia Picá danced and sang bomba there (Dufrasne, 1985, Fernández Morales, 1999). Loíza is the birthplace of salsa's most influential *sonero* (lead singer) Ismael Rivera.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Rivera was admired by Beny Moré, a Cuban master of this art, and nicknamed him "el sonero mayor", the greatest sonero.

Contemporary bomba in Loíza is closely associated with the work of the now disbanded group Los Mayombe de Loíza and the prominent Ayala family. Castor Ayala, the father of the present generation of Ayala bomba players, was a mask maker who specialized in the coconut shell *vejigante* (demon) masks for which Loíza is well known. These dazzling painted masks feature long horns and are worn by brightly dressed festival characters used to escort the image of St. James during the processions of his feast. Castor Ayala assembled a nine member folkloric bomba ensemble made up of his sons, daughters and family friends in the late 1950s to promote local tradition and to secure Loíza's place in the growing number of Puerto Rican folkloric traditions sponsored by the ICP. Today, this expanded group of 18 performers is managed and directed by sons Marcos and Raúl Ayala. The family continues to host the annual bomba dances in the *batey*⁴⁸ of their parent's home on the main road leading from Loíza to nearby Rio Grande. This activity begins in the early afternoon and continues into the following early morning hours with the participation of drummers of all ages, numerous community bomba dancers as well as tourists and other visitors. The Ayala gathering is something of a yearly pilgrimage for bomba players from around the island who all take a turn at the drums or the dancing and pay their respects to the Loíza tradition. Members of the family alternate tending to a small craft shop on the property where many come seeking the masks of Raúl Ayala or information on the Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala and the bomba styles of the area.

⁴⁸ The common word for house yard, a native Taíno word still in use in Puerto Rican Spanish.

Figure 2.11 Batey of the Ayala family in Loíza



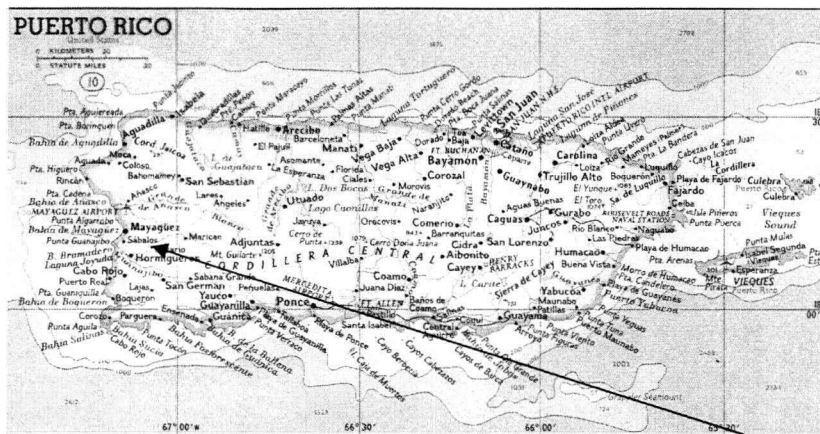
Though not directly associated with the practice of bomba, Samuel Lind is worth mentioning. A popular painter and sculptor, he lives just down the alley from the Ayala family and grew up in bomba culture. His highly sought paintings and sculptures have captured bomba traditions and have animated impressive posters and designs showcasing Loíza's music, dance, masks and cuisine. His first subjects were his own neighbours, the Ayala family, while his more recent abstract representations continue to evoke the deeply rooted musical traditions of his immediate surroundings.

Loíza continues to be the actual and symbolic centre of Afro-Puerto Rican expression. This has been reinforced by the ICP and the media. Loíza still maintains the *seis corrido* style whose fast tempo and peculiar solo improvisations position it at the African end of the bomba stylistic continuum. It has the island's most concentrated black

population, which was relatively isolated until highways and bridges connected to the area were built in the 1960s. Alleyne speaks to the polarity that Loíza's African roots represent,

As long as Loíza Aldea remains a community with a high degree of endogamy (probably forced, since its members are not particularly sought after as mates by other groups), with the most appreciated Puerto Rican festival, and with a generally recognized African-based ethnicity actualized by its music, cuisine and especially its Santiago festival, there will be a focus for the assertion of the notion of an active “black” racial/ethnic pole in a fundamentally bi-polar Puerto Rico (Alleyne, 2002:143).

Figure 2.12 Map of Mayagüez⁴⁹



Mayagüez

Mayagüez

Mayagüex or Mayagoex, in Taíno means “place of waters”. Named after the river that spawned its settlement, the Yagüez, this city was officially founded in 1760. It is located at the western extreme of Puerto Rico, facing the Dominican Republic. Its colourful and sometimes tragic colonial history earned it a reputation for being the most liberal and radical of cities, often the exit point for those escaping anti-independence

⁴⁹ Garrett, 224A, 1981.

persecution by Spanish authorities. Governor Juan Prim banned Mayagüez's first newspaper in the 1840s after only 50 days in circulation. The city, Puerto Rico's third largest, was home to a founding father of the nation, Eugenio Maria de Hostos, musician Simón Madera, and 1960s-70s pop singer Chucho Avellanet. According to Modesto Cepeda, Mayagüez is considered the city from which Andrés Lager, Sergio Nater and Anastasio Genal brought the bomba to the north of the island in the 19th century (Malinow Maceo, 2004:23-24).

Mayagüez has witnessed continuous musical development and a close association with the city of Ponce to the southeast. Félix Alduén, singer and drummer, director of Félix Alduén y sus Tambores, has been synonymous with the Mayagüez bomba. He described the scene in the early part of the twentieth century as very active with the participation of locals and those willing to endure the hardships of dirt road travel to attend the dances. One of those was the grandfather of Rafael Cepeda of Santurce, who gathered his few belongings, among them his bomba drums, onto an oxcart and moved to the town to find work and join the bomba community (Alberto Galarza, p.c. July 2003). Alduén himself frequented the dances in Ponce's famous San Antón, Joya del Castillo, and Bélgica neighbourhoods thereby contributing to the crosspollination of southern bomba genres.

Also famous among bomba personalities are drummer Ramón "Papo" Alers, Juan Nadal, and José A. Millán Alduén, present director of "Alduén y sus Tambores". Singer Ángel Luis Torruellas, now living in New York, has been a popular mainstay of the bomba and plena and has collaborated with an eclectic roster of national artists. Alberto

Galarza, a bomba enthusiast and performer, has contributed to bomba in his capacity as a well-connected civil servant and amateur photographer.

Figure 2.13 Félix Alduén⁵⁰



In Mayagüez the bomba is danced, sung and played mostly by men. Iván Dávila plays down the notion of a distinct style, stating instead that “there is really one bomba in Puerto Rico, outside of some very unique styles like that of Loíza, we all play the same forms” (Iván Dávila, p.c., November 2004). Yet a distinguishing characteristic of their style, according to Jesús Cepeda, is the light touch of the drummers evident in the sound

⁵⁰ Photo courtesy of Alberto Galarza.

produced when Mayagüez drummers play near the outer edge of drum heads, as they do in their version of the *yubá* (Jesús Cepeda, p.c., December 2002).

Figure 2.14 Félix Alduén y sus Tambores⁵¹



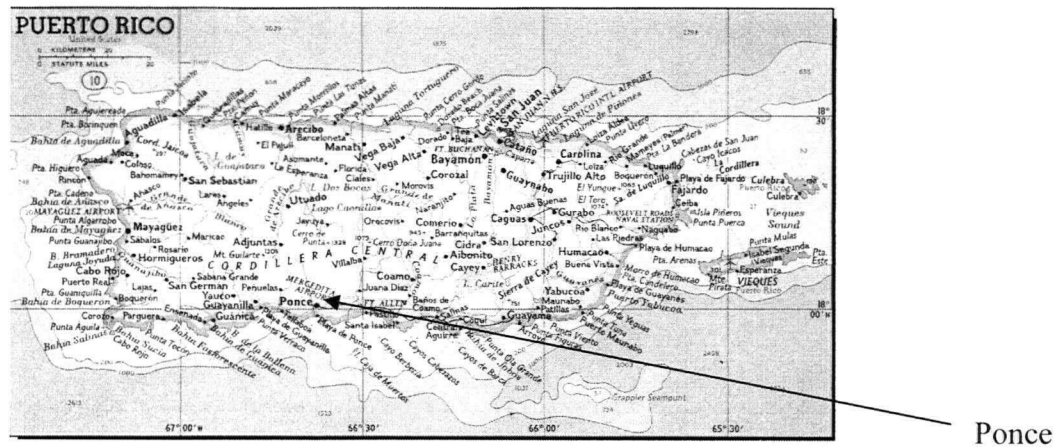
Figure 2.15 Bomba in the streets of Mayagüez⁵²



⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² *ibid.*

Figure 2.16

Map of Ponce⁵³

Ponce

Named after Juan Ponce de León y Loaíza, great-grandson of the conqueror, the city of Ponce, Puerto Rico's second largest, was officially founded in 1692. The city was the birthplace of ardent independence advocate Pedro Albizu Campos, author Maria Teresa Babín, danza composer Manuel Gregorio Tavárez, and the very popular and eclectic singer Ruth Fernández. Ponce is home to one of the largest and most colourful carnivals on the island, and, in a musical sense, is the cradle of Puerto Rico's other important African-derived musical form, the plena. The *holandés*, a popular southern bomba style, features a basic rhythmic pattern almost identical to that of the later plena. Among the notable figures of the early bomba in Ponce are William Archeval López, Domingo Albizu and his wife Teresa Dávila, Juan Nadal, and two bomba players of the Barrio Bélgica, Don Fano and Felín.

⁵³ Garrett, 224A, 1981.

Former Ponce resident “Rey” Ortiz reminisced about his early experiences with the bomba.

When I was a young child I would wander over to a neighbourhood called Bélgica and watch a couple of old black guys called Fano and Felín play bomba in somebody’s yard. My parents didn’t really want me going over there as it was considered a rough neighbourhood. Maybe it was, but I sure had a good time watching these folks dance and party. Sometimes I’d even be given a chance to jump in and play the *cuá*... you had to play on the backside of the drum barrel that Felín sat on. The dances went on for much longer than I was allowed out (Joaquín ‘Rey’ Ortiz Vélez, p.c. August 2004).

For the past 24 years singer Doña Isabel Albizu has maintained her famous bomba ensemble Bambalué, performing and teaching bomba and generating interest for a musical form that locally has suffered a decline at the expense of the more popular and commercially successful plena. The gregarious Doña Isa, as she is known, grew up immersed in a family of bomba players under the guidance of her mother and father Doña Teresa and Domingo Albizu. She has been recognized with homages and tributes (2003 and 2004) for her dedication to the survival of the southern bomba.⁵⁴

I had a chance to spend an afternoon with Doña Isa in July 2004. She graciously sang me a few old bombas from the area. While discussing the origin of a very old song, she recalled:

That’s a great version, my mother sang that--she died at 87--she sang that when she was young, and given the fact that she died about 18 years ago, you tell me, she would say. She was a washerwoman from Tres Rios (Three Rivers, near the city of Ponce), and it was there that they would invent little satires, one would sing to the other, they would wash and gossip, they would sing to one another the gossip about such and such a neighbour, and I, who was always going around with my mother, would go to the river. I would go to school, just until attendance was taken, “Isabel Albizu? Present...” then I would bolt, jump the fence and go join my mother, I was her company, that’s why I like the bomba, everybody at home liked it (Isabel Albizu, p.c., July 2004).

⁵⁴ Albizu was honoured in 2003 at the Fourth National Bomba Day Celebrations, Santurce (Burgos, 2003). I attended her 2004 tribute at the Doña Caridad Brenes de Cepeda Escuela de Baile de Bomba, Carolina.

Figure 2.17 Washing clothes in Ponce 1916.⁵⁵



Octogenarian Ruth Fernández, still one of Puerto Rico's most beloved singers, recounts learning and witnessing southern bomba with her own grandmother Doña Adela Quiñones, an admired bomba dancer and singer. She described the bomba of the south as an elegant and delicate couples dance. She also popularized the phrase that "the bomba is the minuet of the blacks" (Dufrasne, 1991:75). Good intentions notwithstanding, this type of characterization is no longer shared by younger participants who would rather raise the profile of bomba on its own merits than by linking it to an archaic dance of the European colonial elite.

Ponce natives, Dufrasne and singer Nelly Lebrón Robles have done a great service to the bomba in Puerto Rico. Dufrasne's doctoral dissertation continues to

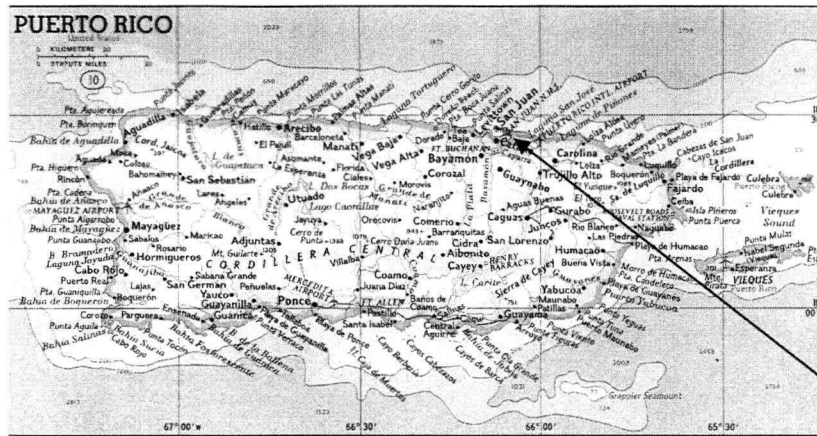
⁵⁵ Photo courtesy of Francisco Medina.

influence writers on Caribbean music authors to this day (Dufrasne 1985). Singer Lebrón Robles performs the traditional southern bomba in which the woman sings the lead voice and plays maraca. She and husband Dufrasne have transformed the southern bomba by infusing its vocal lines with sonorities that set new standards for performance. Their combination of original songs, re-worked older repertoire, more sophisticated part singing, and trained vocal projection techniques gives their bomba a unique character. Lebrón, who is also a bass player, performs and co-directs the San Juan-based southern bomba and plena ensemble Paracumbé with her husband. In an interview with the Latin American Folk Institute on the renewed interest in the bomba Lebrón Robles expressed

this interest in the bomba is related to the resurgence of a national consciousness in the island... Things that make us unique and different are now on the mind of all Puerto Ricans (Carlos Giménez, interview with Nelly Lebrón Robles, *Clave Magazine* October, 1999).

Dufrasne and Lebrón's Paracumbé revives earlier practices and rescues some of the flavour of a distinctive southern style that could easily have been subsumed by the Santurce style with its greater access to media and institutional support.

Figure 2.18 Map of Santurce⁵⁶



Santurce

Santurce

Santurce is the modern name of the bustling commercial, residential and industrial area just east of Old San Juan. Historical accounts of bomba activity in this area will often refer to it by its former name, San Mateo de Cangrejos or simply Cangrejos.⁵⁷ The sparsely populated area served mostly as a rural road between San Juan and the island until it began to be populated in the 18th century. The name Santurce was adopted in honour of Pablo Ubarri, the Count of Santurce, a wealthy land speculator who built the cross-town trolley line that facilitated commercial and industrial development.

Many former slaves and mulattos were offered land and settled in Santurce after being recognized for helping Spanish militia repel an attempted English invasion in 1797. In spite of the fact that some of these lands were expropriated a century and a half later to build an upscale hotel district and residential area, the black population of Santurce remained its most significant cultural resource.

⁵⁶ Garrett, 224A, 1981.

⁵⁷ A cangrejo is a crab, of which the area was a bountiful source.

Santurce was the birthplace and residence of some of the most important bomba personalities. Don Rafael Cepeda and his wife Caridad Brenes settled here and raised what is now arguably the most influential family of the bomba. His family participated in bombas as a regular household activity and has continued to impart the traditions of the bomba through their respective foundations, schools, private teaching, performances and recordings. The Ballet Folklórico de los Hermanos Cepeda family is synonymous with the bomba in Puerto Rico. Major national institutes like the ICP, the National Endowment for the Arts, festivals and educational institutions have supported their appearances and international touring.

Two bomba performers mentioned in my Introduction and Chapter One, Rafael Cortijo and Ismael Rivera, were raised in Santurce. Cortijo and his school friend Rivera spent their formative musical days on the beach and around their neighbourhood playing bomba and carnival rhythms they heard all around. In their later years they went on to form the ensemble Cortijo y su Combo con Ismael Rivera in 1954. This ensemble changed the musical landscape of Puerto Rican popular music with a new instrumental sonority, reconstituted rhythms of the bomba as adapted for public dances and ballrooms, and a repertoire that reverberated with the sounds, characters and customs of everyday Santurce. Rafael Ithier, long-standing music director of the world famous “El Gran Combo”, indicated the bomba played by Cortijo y su Combo (of which Ithier was the original pianist) was

a music of the neighbourhood, written by common folks, and many times was the product of songs that had been passed down from generation to generation (Rafael Ithier as interviewed by Montalvo del Valle, December 1977).

Cortijo himself corroborates this by adding

I played the music I grew up with. I remember my parents and grandparents would get together in the yard on Sundays, with their white suits to sing bomba and plena (Cortijo interview with Montalvo del Valle, November 1977).

Cortijo's legacy was to record that music and finally have it heard in the ballrooms of metropolitan area hotels as well as elsewhere in Latin America and in New York (Montalvo del Valle, 1978:45).

Ismael Rivera, considered one of the greatest soneros of Latin American music, drew on the rich African heritage of this same neighbourhood. Rivera's innovative impulses often clashed with Cortijo's more conservative inclinations. From 1954 to his death in 1987, Rivera introduced elements of soneo incorporating lyrics drawn as much from words as from the interplay of syllables as vocal percussion. He pushed the limits of what was then conventional dance music (this was at least ten to fifteen years before the term salsa appeared). Cortijo, though in a sense just as much an innovator, always preferred to take a more conservative approach so as to not alienate but continue to convert the public to his musical product. Nevertheless, Rivera prevailed and managed to introduce the use of occasional lyrics in Mende or Cangá language that he apparently learned near his home. To a certain extent Cortijo was right in asserting that "the lyrics *had* to be clear and accessible"⁵⁸. Cortijo brought forth a straightforward music that captured the mainstream audiences. Rivera strengthened that connection by linking the music to the African roots of Santurce's black residents.

The lyrics of Cortijo's songs often made reference to personal or place names significant to the history of bomba in Santurce. Don Castor Ayala of Loíza recalls his grandfather taking him to see bomba dancing in rustic establishments such as "El Gato"

⁵⁸ Cortijo as quoted by Jesús Cepeda, a friend and young fan, July 2004.

and “El Chicharo” in the north-central neighbourhood of Bayola, in Santurce, around 1915. Remarkably, live bomba still survives in an area only blocks from there, and can be heard at the Plaza de Mercado (Public Market. Fig. 2.19), an area that is transformed into an entertainment festival on weekends. This would not have been possible without people such as Don Rafael Cepeda, his family, especially sons Modesto, Jesús, Roberto, Marcos, daughter Petra, Rafael Cortijo, Ismael Rivera and Doña Margot Rivera. During a posthumous tribute to Don Rafael in March of 2003, son Jesús called upon the national government to “recognize the plena’s *pandero* and the bomba barrel drum as national instruments of Puerto Rico in order to do justice to our culture”.⁵⁹

Figure 2.19 Plaza de Mercado, Santurce



⁵⁹ Primera Hora, March 2003.

In the late 1940s and early '50s individuals such as "La Polichinela" a dancer (real name Carmen Ramos), Eustacio Flores, and El Negro were the most popular bomba practitioners in Santurce. Bobo (Flores) and Maria Teresa were the subject of the Cortijo hit song "Maria Teresa" (Dufrasne 1985:309). Some of the most popular songs to emerge from that era were written by Doña Margot Rivera, mother of Ismael Rivera and by Don Rafael Cepeda. Many of these songs immortalized these neighbourhood characters and captured the imagination of post-war Santurce.

As Puerto Rico began to reap the benefits of an aggressive industrialization programme begun in 1946, the national government,⁶⁰ as mentioned earlier, established the ICP in 1955. In 1957 Don Rafael Cepeda was apprised of an article stating that bomba was a vanishing tradition on the island. Feeling a certain outrage at the dismissal of a musical practice he was deeply committed to, he assembled a family ensemble. But Cepeda, like Castor Ayala in Loíza, soon realized that he would have to set up a form of folkloric dance company that might be able to secure the support, both financial and moral, from the ICP and stand alongside other traditional ensembles dedicated to jíbaro music or the elegant salon danza. The Ballet Folklórico de los Hermanos Cepeda was a success and eventually travelled to the USA, Spain and Latin America to represent Puerto Rican culture. One of its most remarkable achievements was that the company elevated the status of Puerto Rico's African heritage to a place in the national musical pantheon. Don Rafael's bomba compositions also were recorded, first by Cortijo and later by "El Gran Combo", and quickly became a part of the national repertoire. The popularity of these recordings and their distribution brought the bomba international recognition and

⁶⁰ The national government on the island is known as the Estado Libre Asociado or the Associated Free State (Commonwealth) of Puerto Rico.

linked it indelibly to Puerto Rico, especially in New York and among other Latin American musical communities in Colombia, Venezuela and Mexico.

During the late 1960s and '70s Santurce was a hotbed of salsa activity that distracted some attention from the strides being made by the bomba. As the mainstream music market moved away from the bomba popularized by Cortijo and El Gran Combo, the Cepeda clan and its growing family of students and enthusiasts continued undeterred. While Don Rafael continued his compositional career, his family began teaching bomba music and dance to members of a growing community, thereby setting the stage for its renaissance.

The most significant surge in bomba activity in Santurce came in the 1990s. José Emmanuelli, a student of the Santurce style, began to offer bomba lessons at the studio of Tato Conrad in the Miramar district of Santurce. Emmanuelli was an ardent supporter of the bomba and recognized its compatibility with a generation of students and young people receptive to any form of cultural activity in which they could participate. These classes culminated in the creation of the so-called bombazos. Their success and the proliferation of venues willing to present bomba, on or off stage, led to the formation of several new ensembles and a few new companies.

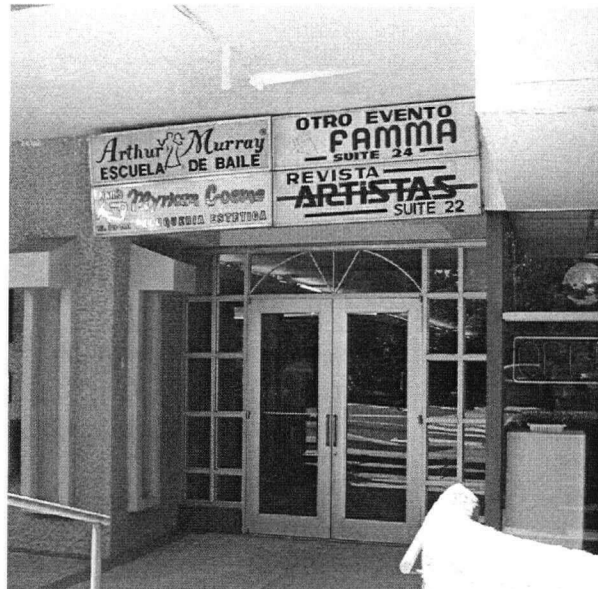
Tato Conrad, Raúl Berríos Sánchez, and their Museo Taller Africano (African Workshop Museum) must be credited with encouraging the growth of the contemporary bomba. Their well-researched and self-financed collection of hundreds of instruments, recordings, annotations, books and visual material is the most comprehensive library of bomba found anywhere on the island. Tato Conrad, who operates the Miramar-based

Arthur Murray Dance School, has opened up his studio to the teaching of classes by non-affiliated groups and continues to be an important source of cultural and moral support.

Figure 2.20 Tato Conrad Studio, Caribbean Office Plaza, Miramar



Figure 2.21 Entrance Arthur Murray Studio of Tato Conrad



The studio of Elia Cortés and her company Taller Tamboricua is situated in the heartland of the Santurce bomba, near the old trolley stop #20. She represents a new bomba generation, raised in the culture of dance classes and bombazos. Her dance company, featuring drummer Victor Emmanuelli, teaches the full range of bomba styles from across the island. In addition, she has pioneered programmes for children, seniors, invented the bombaerobics system, and provided bomba training to developmentally challenged children in local hospitals. Taller Tamboricua has begun to develop partnerships and mentoring programmes in San Francisco, San Diego, and as of November 2004, in Switzerland.

Figure 2.22 Dancer Elia Cortés (far right) and students from Taller Tamboricua.⁶¹



⁶¹ Photo courtesy of Gabriel López-Albarrán

In 2002 Tego Calderón, a Puerto Rican rapper from Santurce's Lloréns Torres housing projects, introduced the hip-hop scene to a very successful and particular brand of Latino rap. What was most remarkable about his release, insofar as the bomba is concerned, is that the recording featured two prominent tracks of authentic bomba with the assistance of an ensemble of his colleagues called "Bataklán". The recording is a refreshing reminder that the bomba, especially Santurce bomba, remains an important component of youth cultural identity.

Santurce's large number of clubs, bars, restaurants, theatres, galleries and public gathering places make it the most cosmopolitan urban centre in Puerto Rico. Constant interaction with visiting artists from around the island and abroad has had a positive effect. Its overwhelming level of activity, however, at times overshadows some of the other important bomba traditions from around the island. This is a point I made earlier in this chapter when discussing Ponce, Paracumbé and their brand of southern bomba. The new generation of bomba ensembles is well aware of this imbalance and makes concerted efforts to teach, host and present the styles of Ponce in the south, Mayagüez in the west and neighbouring Loíza.

The bomba community as a whole is not a large constituency but instead a network of faithful supporters. Regional differences are not seen as obstacles to participation. It is common to encounter young performers attentively listening to anecdotes and stories of the older generations⁶², all in the hope of strengthening a tradition to which they feel entitled. Bomba masters, students and enthusiasts around the

⁶² By older generation I refer to the contemporaries of Rafael Cepeda, Isabel Albizu, Rafael Cortijo and the next generation presently in their forties to sixties. Young bomba practitioners denote practitioners younger than forty.

island recognize the boost in civic confidence that this participation and racial recognition has enabled.

The foregoing can be taken as a précis for what a more comprehensive study of bomba history could achieve. Jesús Cepeda convened the first National Congress of the Bomba in April 2004 in an effort to bring together practitioners, writers, dancers and historians and to formulate common approaches to the problematic of taxonomy and research. This was perhaps the most significant assembly of bomba followers to date. Gilda Hernández and Jesús Cepeda and many volunteer associates will be undertaking the formidable task of compiling and editing the extensive interviews, lectures, discussions and presentations that will lay the necessary groundwork for the publication of a fuller history of the bomba.

Chapter Three

Bomba: Styles and Proliferation

Jesús Cepeda recounts an incident wherein an otherwise respected singer requested he and his fellow drummers

Play a bomba...what kind? I said, you can't just ask me to play any bomba. You start singing, then I'll know what you're looking for, otherwise, tell me what you need, I can't just play something that may not fit your word scheme!
(J. Cepeda p.c. July 2004)

In Chapter One I offered a definition of the bomba⁶³ and described the rhythms and dance. In this chapter I specify the principal drum rhythm combinations as identified by their communities. Many variations of these rhythms can be found throughout the island. Some have developed over years of contact with neighbouring communities and many retain characteristics shared with rhythms from other Caribbean islands.

Style and sub-style: definitions.

Style refers to any of ten main rhythm categories of bomba performance practice that I have defined in consultation with many players. Each one has a distinct rhythmic pattern and together they comprise the most basic rhythm categories known throughout the island. *Sub-styles* are rhythmic patterns derived from the basic styles. They may exist

⁶³ It is not at all clear whether the dance gave name to the drum or vice-versa. In common practice the term denotes drum, dance, style and even the exclamatory "bomba!" excitedly shouted by participants at the end of any given performance of a song. It should be noted that there is another folkloric bomba in Puerto Rico that refers to a poetic verse recited in the midst of a traditional dance called a *seis bombeao*. At a certain predetermined place in a song, the music stops, the crowd calls "bomba!" and then the chosen individual recites his/her line, followed by a resumption of the music until the next instance. This practice is not at all related to the musical bomba that is our subject. However, the practice of calling out "bomba!" at the ends of pieces can be said to have crossed over from the other poetic declamation.

in diverse variations particular to certain regions, communities or families, and may deviate considerably from their parent styles. My classifications are based in part on categorizations and comparisons brought to my attention by traditional players, but in some instances I have had to make my own decisions about which styles are related to which corresponding sub-style based on rhythmic similarities. This was usually because local taxonomies offered no help in this regard, or because players' classifications too strongly contradicted one another. Styles and sub-styles are played on the accompanying *buleador* drums that provide an ostinato over which choruses perform, lead singers *sonean* (create improvised solo verses) and solo dancers and drummers create their improvisations.

In Spanish a bomba style or sub-style is known as a *seis* (in other words, the rhythmic pattern pertaining to any one of them) or collectively as *seises de bomba*. The term *sones de bomba* is synonymous and more common in the south. Fernández Morales (1999) identifies the terms *seis(es)* as referring to the drum rhythm(s) featured in the various styles and defines *son(es)* as being the song lyrics associated with the corresponding rhythms to which they are sung.

One useful categorization of bomba rhythms is by the metre implied by the rhythmic of the style or sub-style. In this listing most rhythms fall within duple meter patterns which I have notated in two-four time. A second and smaller group is in a compound duple time notated as six-eight time; a third single rhythm pattern exists in a four-four time frame; and finally a recent single addition to the bomba style repertoire is notated in three-four time.

Style and sub-style patterns fill a single measure in this notational scheme. The tempo range of similar styles can vary between players or regions. Individual general tempo range is indicated under the particular style or sub-style being addressed.

Guide to the style and sub-style transcription notation.

The notation of the ten basic styles and thirteen sub-styles in this chapter correspond to the precise drum tones played on the buleador drums as indicated in Figure 3.1. In Chapter Four, where the focus is analytical, and played on a solo or primo drum, a different, stripped-down notation is used.

The legend illustrates basic buleador sounds (in English and Spanish). Buleador players employ a more limited range of sounds than primo players. A total of five strokes are produced: the bass, right and left hand open tones, and right/left hand closed tones. Typically, buleadors only use high and low open tones although depending on the style or sub-style the stroke employed to produce these tones may vary. At times the player may rest his/her hand on the drum head for an instant, creating a muffled tone. These are not considered separate sounds but simply modifications of existing ones. The high tone can be produced by an open stroke done with fingers (*dedo*) or a slap tone (*seco abierto*) similar to that used in standard conga playing that employs a slightly muffled cupped hand. Many older players make the right hand high tone sharper by lightly placing a single finger of the left hand on the head while striking the head with the right hand. I illustrate this position in a photograph titled *dedo para crear seco* in Appendix 1. Low tones can be executed by striking the head with an open full palm stroke called *hondo*. The bass (*caja*) tone is produced by right hand open full palm stroke in the centre of the drum. This tone is only used in the balancé sub-style. Left handed players simply reverse

the hand positions of all patterns. For an illustration of the hand positions that correspond to these and other sound used by soloists see Appendix 1 on page 288.

Figure 3.1 Style and sub-style transcription legend



The styles and sub-styles of Puerto Rican bomba

The following is a list of rhythms I have transcribed in my fieldwork since 2002. The list includes styles and sub-styles as explained and demonstrated to me by a number of reliable sources, as well as my own extrapolations (as explained above) (Cepeda 2002, 2004, Conrad 2002, 2005, Dufrasne 2003, Rivera 2003, Berríos, 2004). Because of the on-going discussion among practitioners, some groups see certain rhythms as a separate entity, (i.e. their own style), while others see them as sub-styles.⁶⁴ In a recent conversation, Tato Conrad demonstrated his definitive list of close to 52 different styles and sub-styles which he intends to publish in the near future. This will undoubtedly ignite some serious discussion among traditionalists, historians and progressive players. Jesús Cepeda, who has spent his life immersed in the bomba, claims there are actually 24 styles

⁶⁴ At the end of Chapter Two I summarized how the first Congreso de la Bomba was convened to arrive at common definitions and a standardization of rhythm and sub-style names.

and sub-styles in total. My list of ten aims to strike a balance somewhere between Conrad's and Cepeda's claim.

Large, italicized and underlined fonts indicate principal styles; the smaller and more conventional font, their respective sub-styles. Sub-styles appear under their parent style per the following list:

Style:	Sub-style
1. Sicá	Danué
2. Cunyá	(none)
3. Belén	(none)
4. Calindá	Hoyo Mula
5. Cuembé or Güembé	Balancé, Gracimá
6. Seis Corrido	Bambulé
7. Yubá	Yubá corrido, Yubá cuembé, Leró del sur Leró cangrejero, Yubá masón, Roulé, Corvé, Holandés 6/8
8. Holandés	
9. Clave Tres	
10. Mariandá	

Figure 3.2 Style: SICÁ

Sicá



3-3-2 Pattern



Basic sicá variation



Shown in Fig. 3.2 this is the most common and most widespread style of the entire bomba genre. It is based on the 3-3-2 rhythm pattern found throughout Latin American music that I indicate in the staff below the sicá pattern. According to this pattern, the dancers, drummers and singers listen to the first high and first low drum tones of the sicá and set their pulse based on the low tone up-beat on the second half of beat two. Sicá is universally recognizable to the bomba community. Prior to the 1970s, few followers of Puerto Rican music--whether local or international--were aware that there existed bomba rhythms other than the sicá. It is usually the first and most basic rhythm taught to beginners in the Santurce area. Most Latin Percussion method books and tutorial pamphlets up to the late 1980s erroneously described the sicá as the generic bomba.

Figure 3.3 Sub-style. Danué:



The danué is generally believed to be the transliteration of the French term, Danois or Danish. Denmark acquired control of the French Caribbean island colony of St. Croix from 1733 to 1917 when it was sold to the U.S.A. Presumably this rhythm had its origin in that colony, though any direct connection has proven difficult to establish.

Figure 3.4 Style: CUNYÁ



The written name of this rhythm is very similar to the name of the wooden peg used to fasten drumheads on traditional drums, (i.e. cunya). The difference is that the name of the rhythm has an accent on the last syllable. No relation exists between these two terms to the best of my knowledge. Linguist Álvarez Nazario places the origin of the term in the contraction of the expression “danse congolese” or Congolese dance. (Álvarez Nazario, 1960:70) The rhythm above was identified for me by Tato Conrad in Santurce, April 2005.⁶⁵ It is played in a moderately slow tempo.

Figure 3.5 Style: BELÉN



⁶⁵ In July 2004 Jesús Cepeda played for me a version of cunya that was nearly identical to danué with a grace note on the first stroke. In his version the cunya was a sub-style of the sicá, as was the danué.

This southern style is the slowest and (in Dufrasne's versions) sparsest of all bomba styles. It has been identified, recorded and defined by Dufrasne and his group Paracumbé as well as notated and examined by Conrad. Conrad claims that the term may be a transformation of the French Caribbean term "belé" (p.c. April 2005). Cepeda believes that it may not be a distinct style but instead a simplification of *calindá* or *cuembé*.

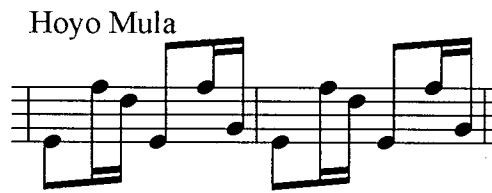
Figure 3.6 Style: CALINDÁ



This name is connected to a number of rhythmic patterns found throughout the Spanish, French and English Caribbean. In Jamaica, under the same name, it is associated with a martial art performed with sticks in a mock battle.⁶⁶ A Puerto Rican connection has never been corroborated by any of my informants. The *calindá* that is known in Puerto Rico is performed as a rhythm style without fighting sticks and can accompany any number of dances. The references to the stick dance go back to the work of Francisco López Cruz (1967). Jesús Cepeda submits that the practice of stick fighting may have existed but that any direct relation to bomba or any other music is unknown to him.

⁶⁶ The practice of musical stick fighting is known in the Caribbean and Brazil. The practice is known as *calinda* in Jamaica and *maculelé* in northeastern Brazil.

Figure 3.7 Sub-style: Hoyo Mula



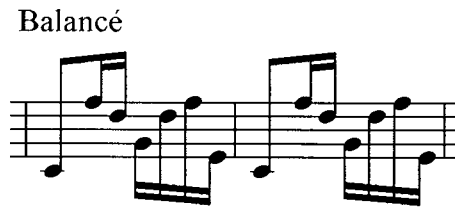
This rhythm has been taught and is associated with Santurce performer and teacher Jesús Cepeda. Hoyo Mula was an old neighbourhood just east of Santurce that was later incorporated into the municipality and city of Carolina. The group Viento de Agua recorded a composition in Hoyo Mula style that makes reference to Mayagüez. This sub-style has a particular high/low pulsation reminiscent of the ostinati of surdos in a Brazilian samba.

Figure 3.8 Style: CUEMBÉ OR GÜEMBÉ



Found in the Santurce, Cataño, Mayagüez and Ponce, this rhythm is known interchangeably as cuembé or güembé (the latter is more common in Ponce). There are no perceivable differences in regional interpretation. Cuembés are usually played at moderate to moderately fast tempo. After the sicá, this is the most common style I observed during my field work experience.

Figure 3.9 Sub-style: Balancé



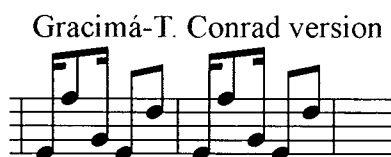
The balancé is a moderate tempo sub-style with another French name (like the danué mentioned earlier). Many styles and sub-styles have French names as a result of the large influx of French colonial influences after the Spanish eased immigration barriers in 1815. Structurally, the balancé closely resembles the cuembé but its first low stroke is played closer to the centre of the drum head to create a deep bass tone.

Figure 3.10 Sub-style: Gracimá



In his encyclopedia of Puerto Rican music, Campos Parsi alleges the term for this variant of the cuembé is a colloquial derivative of the French word “gracieusement” (Campos Parsi, 1976: 52). It is played in moderate to fast tempi. Tato Conrad provided a substantially different version of this sub-style as seen below. In his conception of the styles and sub-styles, the gracimá stood alone as its own rhythm and was not derivative of cuembé.

Figure 3.11 Sub-style: Gracimá (T. Conrad version)

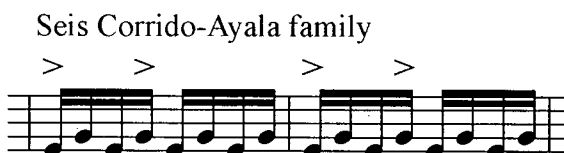


I was not able to find any other ensembles that performed this pattern in this manner.

Figure 3.12a Style: SEIS CORRIDO



Figure 3.12b Style: SEIS CORRIDO-Ayala Family



This is the rapid-fire style of the Loíza tradition. Many variations of *seis corrido* (*corrido* denotes something that is run or played fast) exist but their variants are too minimal to be considered significant. Drummers often vary the first pattern (Figure 3.12a) by adding subtle “ghost” notes ⁶⁷ on the second and fourth sixteenths of beat two, giving the

⁶⁷ Notes that are only lightly struck but act more as filler material between other more significant strokes.

impression that the pattern has eight continuous sixteenths. Seis corridos⁶⁸ are notoriously fast, require considerable stamina to maintain at established tempi and can be difficult to improvise to. Skilled players excel at interpolating sparse and well-placed accents without resorting to playing too frenetically or continuously.

Figure 3.13 Sub-style: Bambulé



Commonly spelled bamboula or bamboulaé, this rhythm was historically found in New Orleans, Haiti, Cuba, and other Caribbean French and Spanish colonies. Nineteenth-century pianist L.M. Gottschalk based his composition “Bamboulé” on rhythms he presumably heard in New Orleans or on his many Caribbean tours. There are clear cultural and linguistic connections between the bambulé rhythms and those of early ragtime in New Orleans. More significantly as concerns Puerto Rico, this rhythm was one of the fundamental combinations adapted by Rafael Cortijo⁶⁹, the man responsible for bringing the bomba out from the streets and onto records, radio and television. Cortijo, always a pragmatist, adapted the bambulé for conga and timbales, which made it more compatible with popular Cuban dance hall rhythms.

⁶⁸ Dufrasne (1985) reminds us that seis was a term used to describe a drum rhythm. In this context the term “seis corrido” literally means a rapidly played seis.

⁶⁹ Cepeda, p.c. August 2004.

Figure 3.14 Style: YUBÁ



This is the most common 6/8 rhythm of bomba. Its variants differ only marginally. It is played at a moderately fast tempo. The yubá is performed throughout the island and is an important component of any ensemble's repertoire. Its compound meter provides players and dancers with alternative rhythmic challenges and performance/movement possibilities.

Figure 3.15 Sub-style: Yubá corrido



This variant is used in faster tempi. The term *corrido* is appended to give the meaning “running yubá” (J. Cepeda, interview July 2004). The insertion of an eighth note on beat six in each bar helps the player keep steadier time at such speeds.

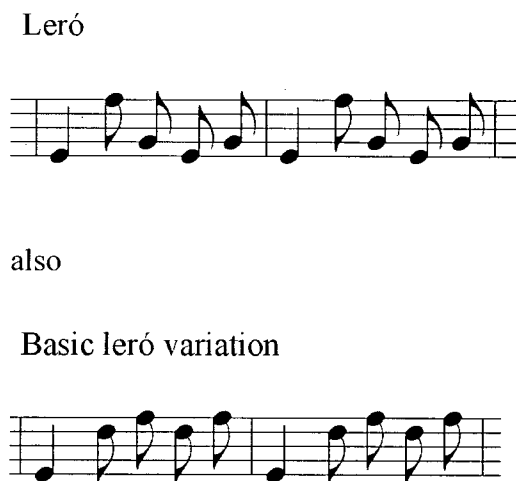
The yubá cuembé is a variant of the yubá corrido pattern. The sole difference is the use of an edge stroke (*dedo*) instead of a slap stroke (*seco abierto*) on the third eighth note of the bar, which is typical of the cuembé.

Figure 3.16 Sub-style: Yubá cuembé



The rhythm in the following example looks identical to that of Fig. 3.15. However, I have notated the figure in single eighth notes rather than beams to further emphasize that they represent different sub-styles. The leró del sur pattern in 3.17 is played at approximately 60 dotted quarter beats to the minute, almost half the tempo of the yubá corrido.

Figure 3.17 Sub-style: Leró del sur



The name of this sub-style translates to “leró from the south”. This sub-style is common in Ponce and surrounding areas. It is believed that its name is a contraction of the French “le rose”, the circle formation dancers once assumed when performing its steps. The leró is played at a slow tempo.

Figure 3.18 Sub-style: Leró cangrejero

Leró Cangrejero



This is the leró form as it is performed Santurce. It is simply a standard yubá rhythm played slowly. Cangrejero denotes people from Santurce, known as San Mateo de Cangrejos until 1880, when the name of the town was changed.

Figure 3.19 Sub-style: Yubá masón

Yubá Masón



This variant of the yubá is best known to disciples of Jesús Cepeda and followers of the Santurce bomba tradition.

Figure 3.20 Sub-style: Corvé

Corvé



In Loíza, the yubá is called corvé and is played as above, with three eighths in the first dotted quarter beat rather than the quarter note followed by an eighth pattern of its parent style. It is consistently played at a fast tempo, as would be expected of Loíza players in

general. Sometimes this rhythm is referred to by the Ayala family as a roulé, though this terminology is likely adopted from a song popular in Loíza.

Figure 3.21 Sub-style: Roulé



The roulé is a variation of the yubá which is also associated with the Loíza region. The term roulé is believed to come from the popular song “Roulé sondá” of the Loíza repertoire. Tato Conrad maintains this example is a genuine sub-style with independent origins and that its name did not originate with the song. Some maintain that it is simply a variant of corvé, a plausible conviction given their structural similarities—the two share the same surface rhythm and differ internally only in the quasi-inversional rearrangement of high and low strokes.

Figure 3.22 Sub-style: Holandés 6/8



This 6/8 version of holandés was introduced to me by Dufrasne, director of Paracumbé, in an interview in July, 2003. The example was transcribed from a 1985 recording by his ensemble. The holandés rhythm in this interpretation is essentially unrelated to the holandés style of Fig. 3.23, resembling a yubá sub-style so closely that I have included it here with the others. The pattern remains the same for 6 bars, changes by one eighth-note

in bar 7 (beat 2) and returns to the original pattern. This sub-style could also be classified under the treatments known as “cuarteao” mentioned below (see Yubá Cuarteao).

The family of yubá, is widespread and has been observed on other Caribbean islands such as Haiti, the Dominican Republic and the Lesser Antilles. Generally speaking, compound meter, such as that in yubá, while very prevalent in many other folkloric and commercial Caribbean and South American musics, is not as popular in Puerto Rico. The most popular musical styles on the island have been overwhelmingly in 2/4 or 4/4 time. The contrast here is particularly evident with Cuba, where compound rhythms have fared better. One might speculate that this is due to the greater dominance of the Puerto Rican colonial elite and their more effective suppression of African cultural elements. It is also possible that popular songs of the era were more compatible with duple time. In any event, the yubá never achieved the crossover success from folkloric style to radio and television play that the formerly mentioned sicá managed in the 1950s.

During an interview in 2002, I asked Jesús Cepeda how the bomba made the transition from street level to commercial airplay; his response shed some light on the absence of 6/8 in much of pop airplay in Puerto Rico. He stressed the importance of giving credit to Cortijo for steering the bomba into the commercial recording environment.

He adopted a generalized rhythm formula for his music that was mostly bambulé, which he immediately began to play. Cortijo commercialized it but did much to publicize it. In fact, he took some tunes from yubá but put them in the bambulé rhythm as people would not have been interested in the yubá six feel, not on records (Jesús Cepeda, p.c. December 2002).

Present music trends in Puerto Rico reflect the powerful influence of salsa, merengue and American hip-hop music that continues to tilt the balance of audience taste farther away from the use of compound meters.

Figure 3.23 Style: *HOLANDÉS* (and two variants)

Holandés



Holandés variation



Holandés variation - J. Cepeda



The holandés, a term meaning “from Holland”, suggests a connection to Dutch slave cultures brought to the southern sugar cane plantations principally from the Caribbean colonies of Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire or perhaps even their earlier settlements on the island now known as St. Croix in the Virgin Islands. This sole 4/4 style is characterized by local syncopation in beat 3 and persistent off-beat accents on the “and” of beats 2 and 4 played by low open tones. The first variant reverses this, introducing strong low strokes on every quarter while maintaining the structure of beat 3. Jesús Cepeda’s version maintains the basic rhythm but moves the low open tones from the “and” on to beats 2 and 4.

Contemporary audiences enthusiastically respond to this style, perhaps because holandés, though much older, is felt to be similar to the very popular plena genre.⁷⁰ Plena rhythms are played by two frame drums called panderos. One plays the bottom notes while the second plays the top pattern with some variations. The perception of similarity is probably due to the rhythm of the third beat of the second plena bar.



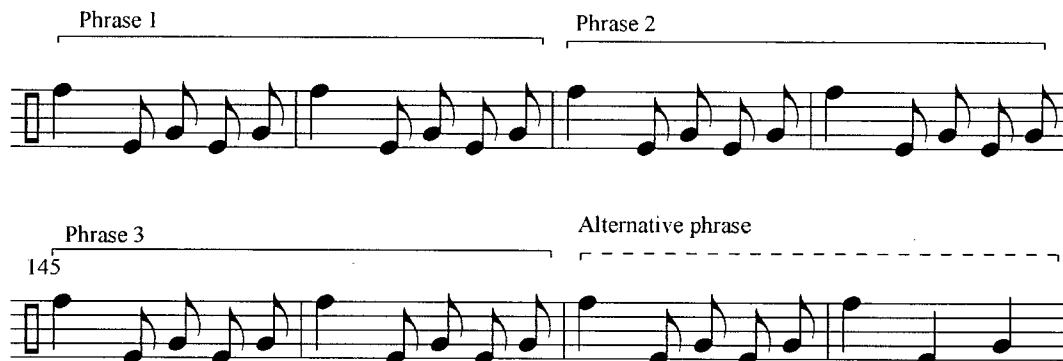
⁷⁰ Although Dufrasne stated Paracumbé's holandés is felt in a compound 6/8 and Tato Conrad has identified other 6/8 variants of holandés, the illustration that follows indicates a strong resemblance between 4/4 holandés and plena. (Dufrasne, interview July 2003, Conrad, p.c. April, 2005)

their existence either (Hernández, p.c., August 2004). Conrad has traced a *babúl* rhythm to Haiti. Given the large movement of people from that country before and after the Haitian revolution of 1795 it is likely that the *babúl* may have migrated to and been performed in Puerto Rico during earlier times (Conrad, p.c., April 2005).

Treatment: Yubá Cuarteao. Before moving on to other aspects of style, brief mention should be made of the notion of treatment. The yubá cuarteao is a treatment of rhythmic material. In bomba events, a lead singer may demand of the buleador drummer (in advance of the performance) a subtle turn of the rhythm pattern to accommodate an alternate line in a verse or emphasize a particular phrase or song lyric, often in the third or fourth line of a quatrain. The variation in the rhythm can come in advance of or after the altered lyric, somewhere in a four-time repeat of a phrase. “Cuarteao” means quartering. At times these treatments are initiated by the buleador player in order to better synchronize with the lyrics of the chorus or soloist.

The following yubá cuarteao illustrates an alternate rhythm in the fourth phrase.

Figure 3.27 Yubá cuarteao



Other Stylistic Differences

Variations in playing position, drum timbre, tempi, accents, the “weight” of the hand on the drumhead, and even traditionally determined gender roles are factors that can add to the distinctions among styles and sub-styles.

Playing position. A notable difference between the Ponce styles and those of Santurce and Loíza is that of the drum positions. In the south (Ponce, Guayama, Salinas), drums are laid flat on the ground, the drumhead faces the audience, and the players sit on the drum as on a saddle (Fig. 3.28). Northern and western drums are played in a vertical position akin to conga drums with the drummers seated on chairs (Fig.3.29). One might, however, see a Santurce or Loíza player sitting on the drum when an exceptional dancer, a “brujo” (one with quasi-magical powers), commands the dance space. The lead drummer may choose to intensify the exchange by moving off his chair or stool and placing the drum in the dance space and engaging in a furious interplay with the dancer. These rare occasions are tremendously exciting for drummers, dancers and audience alike (Fig. 3.30). The term for this action is “caminando el tambor” or walking the drum.

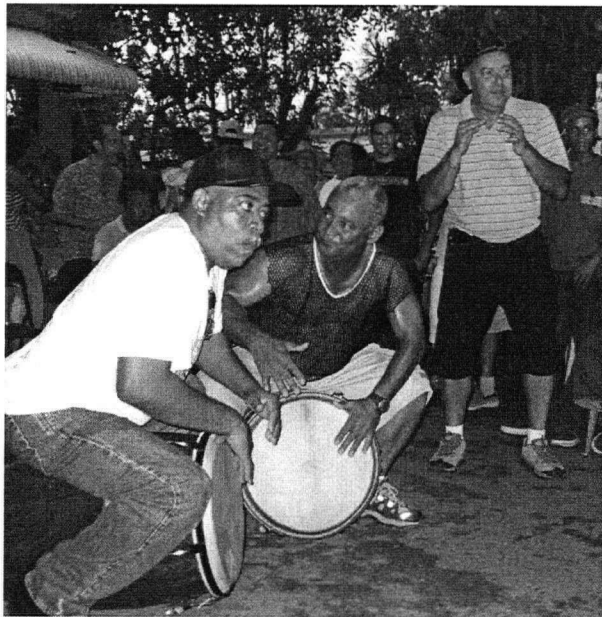
Figure 3.28 Bambalué ensemble from Ponce



Figure 3.29 Example of Loíza players playing drums in vertical position.



Figure 3.30 Ayala brothers mounting the drums in frenzied improvisation



The cuá player in earlier times would squat or sit on a stool in order to play on the rear area of the drum side not occupied by the seated player. Modern ensembles such as Bambalué seen above in Figure 3.28 employ a cuá made of bamboo mounted on a stand. Cuá players from Santurce and Loíza used to play their sticks on the sides of barrels by kneeling next to one of the accompanying drums. This position is uncomfortable for extended periods of time and as a consequence modern Santurce players developed a small headless barrel (same wood construction as the main drums) that is mounted horizontally on a stand and played with sticks either seated or standing. Players in Loíza prefer to use a mounted small trunk of bamboo for the same effect similar to the illustration in Figure 3.28.

Tempi. Certain traditional areas of bomba practice favour slower or faster tempi for their particular repertoire and are sensitive to regional tempo differences when interpreting seises from other areas. In Ponce and the whole southern coastal area there is a tendency to perform a slower-paced bomba, a characteristic some commentators and older participants (from the south) deem more elegant. When played by groups elsewhere, this tempo preference is respected and emulated. Doña Julia Clavell recounts how in the older times,

The women dressed very well. Men delivered some very elegant piquetes [dance moves]. It goes without saying, that was bomba; not that stuff you see around now... (Referring to the Ayala and Cepeda family appearances on television. Seda, 1996:6).

The slower pace may be associated with the earlier dance formations or with a style that simply favoured a less aggressive approach than one finds in some of the northern traditions. Dances in the south acquired a more gentrified character with the arrival of the “bomba de salon” or dance hall bomba, which began to develop some years

after the emancipation of slaves in 1873. These were danced by couples and were more restrained. The bombas incorporated other European popular dance elements⁷² that eventually minimized the intensive dance/drum interaction seen elsewhere and substituted a more restrained and subtle movement. Perhaps the newly freed slaves appropriated the dance comportment of Spanish and French colonialists as a way of performing their own aspirations of social mobility.

Accent. Accentuation of drum strokes can define regional or even family differences within a tradition. Some practically identical rhythms from the Santurce and Ponce areas, such as the cuembé (Santurce)/güembé (Ponce) are distinguished only by the subtlety of a well-placed accent within the patterns or a slight shift where a stroke played on an edge of the drum head may instead be played farther in, thereby significantly changing the sound.

Timbre and Touch. I define timbre as the type of sound produced by the use of various hand positions. Minute changes in the angle of the hand or the amount of finger/palm contact with the drumhead will bring about significant timbral differences. Touch, or the particular weight and pressure with which a stroke is played, is a subtle, elusive and difficult-to-master aspect of any drumming style. In bomba the use of thin goatskins allows a wide range of tones to be produced thereby making proper control of touch critical. In the western city of Mayagüez and the port town of Cataño, styles similar to those of the Santurce and Loíza areas are distinguishable by the lightness of touch. Whereas a northern player may produce an open stroke, produced by striking the drumhead with full fingers and part of the palm,⁷³ a player from Mayagüez or Cataño

⁷² These would include characteristics drawn from rigadoons, quadrilles, mazurkas, etc.

⁷³ For a more precise explanation of drum strokes, see Appendix 1.

may play the exact same rhythm and only engage the forefinger. This causes the drum to produce higher partials and a lighter sound which is not weaker or less driven, but simply gives a different character or “touch”.

Gender roles. Northern and western bomba traditions differ from those of the south in one important aspect relating to women’s participation. In the south, encompassing Guayama, Santa Isabel, Salinas and Ponce, bombas are sung exclusively by a female singer, also playing maraca. At the present time in all other areas in Puerto Rico, women are chorus singers and dancers but rarely lead singers or drummers. The incorporation of women into non-traditional roles such as drumming is taking place gradually but currently in Puerto Rico there are no female bomba groups or male groups with female drummers (there are, however, some in the United States; see Chapter Six). The recent use of female vocal soloists in the north (such as in the groups Son del Batey and Herederos de Xiorro) is shifting the prevailing norms and making north/south distinctions less obvious.

Establishing common standards. The first Congreso de la Bomba was held in April, 2004 in San Juan. This gathering of practitioners and presenters from the island and abroad was convened to address specific issues related to common practices and definitions.⁷⁴ The objective, beside the obvious benefit accrued from a gathering of assorted interpreters and scholars, was simple: try and achieve consensus on a definition of the wide array of styles and sub-styles across the island. Organizers had, prior to the congress, identified the serious difficulties that the lack of standardized names for rhythm

⁷⁴ Gatherings of this sort are not new to the world music scene, Irish organist Edward Bunting was hired to notate the endangered repertoire of Irish harpists at the end of the 18th century (Vallely, 1999). The All India Music Conference began establishing criteria for the cataloguing of ragas and talas beginning in 1927 (Allen, 2004). The Oriental music conference of 1932 had similar objectives, i.e. the classification of musical styles and forms (Labib Rizk, 2003).

and sub-style continues to create in research, writing, teaching and contemporary practice. That made the central agenda of this first congress all the more urgent. Regional ensembles (all the principal groups agreed to appear) presented performances while scholars and journalists offered paper presentations and lectures on important aspects of performance practice, bomba in the diaspora and definitions. The editing, translation and release of these valuable documents will provide much needed clarification on regional variants and stylistic parameters as provided by the most authoritative interpreters of the present. The document that eventually emerges from this national dialogue will have positive repercussions by encouraging the scholarly study of bomba rhythms.

Chapter Four

Transcriptions and Analyses

*"The problems of transcription are the problems of ethnomusicology itself".
(Ter Ellingson in Myers, 1992:146)*

Bomba drumming improvisation animates a dance/drum dialogue that synthesizes experience, context and instinct during performance. An ideal solo embellishes a lyrical/rhythmic relation between melodies and underlying rhythms. The drummer, responding to rhythms proposed by dancers or of his/her invention, must balance tradition and innovation while providing inspiration and continual support. In this chapter I analyze transcribed excerpts that demonstrate characteristic musical techniques employed in the crafting of solos and present these in standard Western European notation.

Because drum soloing remains an aurally acquired art, drummers generally refrain from, or cannot, articulate their improvisational processes. Simha Arom's conclusion that "in oral expression is life, of which writing is only a pale reflection" (Arom, 1991:170) summarizes the obstacles facing scholars attempting to describe a musical practice such as bomba through conventional notational systems.

Soloists are rarely aware of the architectural structure of their playing beyond an instinctive intent to shape rhythm in a manner pleasing to their musical experience or their acquired familiarity. While many players are intrigued when confronted with a notation of one of their solos, they admit these transcriptions are of little use outside the academic study of the subject. Their concerns focus on reinforcing traditions and

developing new connections to performers and audiences. In one instance I tried to demonstrate a transcription to J. Cepeda. Because he does not read music notation, I sang the transcribed rhythms to him. He was impressed that someone would take the time to write down something he had invented on the spot, but his response was to change the subject to the more important practice of listening to and watching everything that is at play in a bomba, including lyrics, drums, dancers, and audience.

On another occasion I showed my transcriptions to a collector and bomba player who can read music, Tato Conrad. He was intrigued by the fact that someone would want to examine fleeting improvisations but quickly turned the discussion towards what he perceived to be the more significant aspects of feel and tone. It became clear to me that my transcriptions would have to embrace multiple aspects of performance (i.e. form, patterns, choice of material, style, etc.) for them to be of use to local practitioners. The following examination of solo patterns proceeds from that premise.

The analyses in this chapter will identify how solo phrases and patterns reveal an improvisational grammar common to all bomba playing. The principles that guide this grammar enable the soloist to achieve immediate musical objectives and perpetuate tradition.

Methodology

This chapter contains six complete transcriptions, analyzed in full at the end. Five are drawn from commercially available releases and one from a performance I recorded. The examples were chosen to demonstrate a wide enough stylistic range to allow one to draw some general conclusions.

The first part of the chapter lays out musical categories, outlines processes, and introduces analytical terminology. I begin by illustrating and classifying the small rhythmic units that function as building blocks of short phrases, cadences, vamps and eventually, of full solos. Examples of each of the different categories and processes will illustrate the principles at work. Once the smaller rhythmic units and their respective categories are identified, I illustrate how these units function within phrase statements contained in the solos. After this, the transcriptions are then presented in full, annotated and analyzed to show how the categories and principles identified function at the level of the entire solo.

The first three solos are in traditional format and the fourth in a recreated and transformed traditional sub-style⁷⁵ (all with drums and vocals). The fifth is in an older combo style with added piano/bass rhythm section, and the sixth uses a contemporary full big band format.

Though each transcription reveals common approaches to rhythmic elaboration that may be found across bomba's stylistic boundaries, I have chosen the six examples to show soloists' individual approaches. In the analyses, the underlying style is sometimes used as a referent, in order to show the tensions, departures and returns the soloist creates between the solo rhythms and the style. On other occasions, reference is made to one of the standard Cuban clave patterns which, while not specifically identical to any bomba styles, nonetheless can constitute an important influence on what soloists hear and play. On still other occasions, I reduce the solo rhythms to an underlying skeleton, highlight

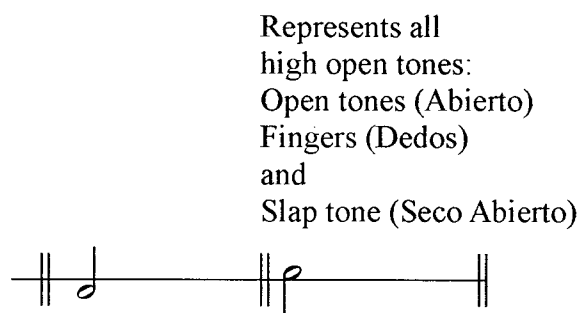
⁷⁵ In this instance I have employed the term "recreated and transformed traditional sub-style" following the lead of the composer and lead drummer of that selection. Dufrasne claims that the true southern tradition of bomba has disappeared and that his work represents a reconstruction of older models assembled for the sheer pleasure of their songs and dances and their inherent heritage value.

important strokes, suggest how they may be organized hierarchically, and focus on their relationships to the meter. While these examples do present a wide range of improvisational approaches it is impossible to provide a comprehensive portrait without omitting some individual or some unique tactic. Instead I offer these transcriptions as exemplary of contemporary and traditional practice.

Notation

Styles and sub-styles are distinguished by rhythmic distribution of the basic high, low and bass tones, as played on the buleador and explained in Chapter Three. In this chapter, bass and low tones are conflated into a single category, and right/left hand stroke patterns do not bear on musical syntax. Correspondingly I adopt a binary notation representing only high and low tones above and below a one-line staff. These are the two fundamental sound categories played on the solo drum (subidor or primo). Though permutations of these sounds (such as slap strokes, muffled tones, edge tones, etc.) are frequent, syntax is contingent upon clearly delineated rhythmic lines shaped by the simple contrast between high and low sonorities. Illustrations of the drum stroke positions can be found in Appendix 1 on page 288.

Figure 4.0 Legend for the solo transcriptions.



Represents all
low open tones:
Low tone (Hondo)
and
Bass tone (Caja)

Improvised binary rhythm combinations constitute small rhythmic cells that combine to become fragments, then sub-phrases, and finally full phrases in chains of events that unfold over the length of solos. When one examines the smaller rhythmic units, categorizes them by property or process and links phrases with functions it becomes clear that the style or sub-style patterns behave as if they derive from what Wade calls rhythmic modes:

a rhythmic mode is a metric structure that also bears particular expressive qualities...each rhythmic mode is defined by the way it is articulated, that is, performed on a drum...In performing music in a rhythmic mode, drummers can make some substitutions or embellishments to the patterns in the interest of timbral and expressive variety, but the mode's defining weighting needs to be maintained. The extent of the embellishment should reflect the overall context in which the rhythm occurs...Options, [meaning substitutions or embellishments-authors note] too, are part of what makes the rhythmic mode qualitative (Wade, 2004:70-71).

Bomba soloists make numerous substitutions and subject the rhythmic modes to extensive interpretations. What makes a "sicá" a "sicá" is not compromised or ignored by the soloist. The options chosen enhance the overall rhythmic experience by infusing it

with individual qualitative contributions. The following processes will elucidate how these options are exercised.

Categorizing Phrases and Processes

Two overarching concepts guide my analysis of bomba solos. *Statement types* are rhythm objects, i.e. combinations of rhythms that have a particular property. There are *opening* and *closing* statements as well as patterns where material is developed. *Statement processes* are characteristic treatments of this material throughout the solo. The various subcategories are introduced in Fig. 4.1.

Figure 4.1. Classification of Statement Types and Statement Processes.

STATEMENT TYPES

Conclusive Patterns

- Opening statements
- Development statements
 - Forward (syncopated) patterns leading to metric accent
 - Static (unsyncopated) patterns primarily on-beat
- Closing statements

Continuing Patterns

- Mid-solo statements
 - Forward (syncopated) patterns *not* leading to metric accent
 - Static (unsyncopated) patterns primarily on-beat but with inconclusive ending

STATEMENT PROCESSES

Organizational processes

- Gradual introduction of material
- Development of rhythmic ideas

Rhythmic processes

- Intensification
- Relaxation of rhythmic density
- Hemiola-like patterns
- Stretto
- Macro-rhythmic patterns

Diversification processes

- Variation of statements by permutation
- Contrasting statements
- Call and response

Cosmetic processes

- Referents
- Mirror imaging

Conclusive and Continuing Patterns

Phrases in bomba solos either conclude on strong beats or are open-ended with no clear cadence. I classify those patterns with definite end accents as *Conclusive Patterns*. Those that do not exhibit definite endings are classified as *Continuing Patterns*.

Conclusive Patterns can be divided further into statements that are used to open solos, those that most often occur somewhere in the development of a solo and those that are common ending statements. There is no structural difference between opening and closing patterns but they are labelled according to where they are deployed. The second

category, *Continuing Patterns*, will comprise those patterns occurring anywhere in a solo whose accentuation suggests a forward impetus without a clear downbeat as well as other patterns played on stable beats but that do not lead to any perceivable cadence.

Conclusive Patterns

1. Opening statements

These patterns, customarily (but not exclusively) found at the beginning of solos tend to be rhythmically direct, avoid extensive ambiguity and usually conclude on metric accents. They are distinguished by the absence of extensive syncopation and generally adhere to rhythmic subdivisions similar to the accompanying drums. Their main function is to either introduce rhythmic combinations drawn from the style or sub-style accompanying patterns, from the common repertoire of rhythms evident in the lyrics and choruses, or from popular rhythms played within particular communities. Phrases commonly introduce some form of statement that resolves on a strong beat. In example 4.2a below, an excerpt from the first transcription (Figure 4.51, page 176), the three bar opening phrase coincides exactly with the sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth figure of the accompanying holandés pattern (Figure 4.2b) on beat three of bar one and on beat one of bar three. The end of the phrase coincides with a metric accent.

There is a general tendency to refrain from extensive syncopation or subdivision to allow for a gradual build up of solo material. Some solos depart from a quotation of the supporting drum pattern. Players generally approach the beginning of their solos with rhythmic figures that suggest possible combinations seen later in the solos. This approach

is shared by solo dancers who introduce any number of *piquetes*⁷⁶ that will be elaborated further into the solo.

The following illustration indicates concordance between the underlying holandés style (Fig. 4.2b) and opening statement 4.2a. Arrows indicate identical rhythms (1) or compatible ones (2). Here the compatibility links the second sixteenth note of the soloist's beat 3 with the corresponding holandés rhythms.

Figure 4.2a. "Lamento" Bars 1-3

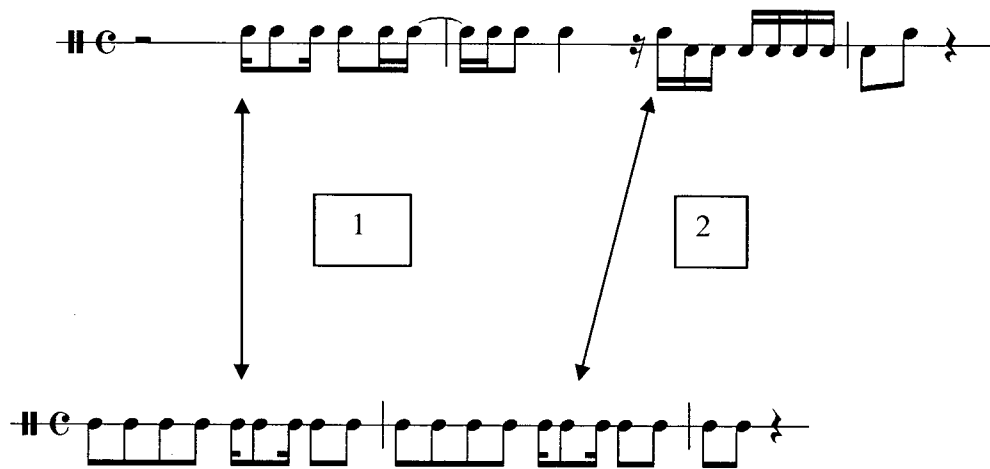


Figure 4.2b. (above) Holandés style pattern

The holandés style pattern is four beats long. In example 4.2a the solo pattern starts on beat three of bar one by introducing a syncopated figure of a sixteenth note followed by an eighth note played four consecutive times concluding clearly on beat two, bar two, followed by a more stable pattern ending on the "and" of beat one. In the

⁷⁶ An improvised sharp dance move that demands an immediate response by solo drummer.

holandés, as in many of the other styles, a player may conclude a phrase on the beat (as in bar two, beat two) or commonly on the “and” of a downbeat (as in beat one, bar three). Either way the phrase conclusion will be seen as strong, which is expected of an opening statement.

Figure 4.3. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 1-6

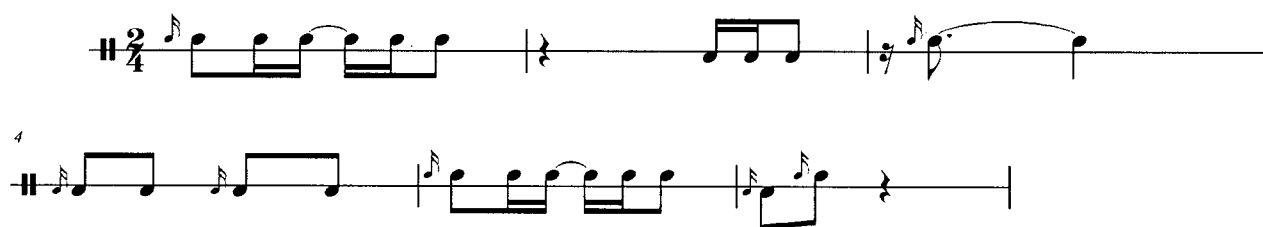


Figure 4.3 from the opening statement of the last transcription, “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” (Figure 4.87, page 213), features a pattern very similar to “Lamento’s” although it develops differently. The statement rhythm contains syncopated patterns that ultimately cadence at beat one of bar six. In general, there is a tendency to make opening solo statements symmetrical by pairing them or linking them in even groupings of 2, 4 or 8 bars consistent with the evenness of chorus verses and the solo singer’s improvised verses or soneos. In this case, however, no vocal is present and the accompanying modern big band context enables this unusual six measure phrase length.

Example 4.4, from “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” (Figure 4.60, page 187) features simple introductory patterns that launch the solo from a quotation of the accompanying style. Beginning at the fourth bar, the soloist departs from the buleador pattern and introduces a statement whose conclusion is not reached until the downbeat of

bar seven. After the initial three bars of quotation, the following four bars constitute an iterated two-bar opening statement.

Figure 4.4. “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” Bars 1-7



Opening statements demonstrate the soloist's awareness that a given amount of time is allotted and that the solo needs to unfold accordingly. The length of the solo determines just how gradual the development will be. Earlier bomba recordings (1950s to 1980s) featured tracks of short duration that required soloists to condense their musical ideas into shorter time frames than would be common in live performance. Likewise, in rapid sub-styles like seis corrido, solos tend to dispense with the notion of gradual development and move immediately towards rhythmic intensification. The introduction of simple patterns allows the listener to be drawn into a rhythmic process while enabling the soloist an opportunity to develop the solo's shape and material. In the accelerated interaction of the seis corrido, on the other hand, the soloist must burst into rapid rhythmic action to complement the high level of energy of the dancers and other supporting drummers.

2. *Development statements*

Development statements are rhythmic figures that occur during the body of the solo. They comprise two sub-groups of rhythmic combinations,⁷⁷ namely forward (syncopated) patterns leading to metric accent and static (unsyncopated) patterns primarily on-beat.

2.a. Forward (syncopated) patterns leading to metric accent. These are statements whose syncopated nature suggests forward momentum. With these the soloist concocts recurring instances of anticipation, rhythmic impetus and cadence. These figures can inspire other rhythmic interaction by an accompanying drummer, an immediate reactionary move by a dancer, or they can propel a singer or chorus to further emphasize the inherent rhythm of a verse.

Patterns such as these combine elements of off the beat “lift” but ensure the listener is reminded of the stronger pulses. Figure 4.5, drawn from Cortijo’s “Juan José” solo (Figure 4.80, page 205), illustrates a simple case. The offbeat placement of the high tone suggests a strong upbeat push on the second eighth in bars 72 and 73. Further use of syncopated high tone strokes in bars 72 through 74 is resolved with the resolution of the high tone on bar 75. In a solo that involves dance, the drummer may introduce these types of patterns to reassure the dancer of the underlying pulse or to conclude a highly active dance sequence.

Simple patterns such as Figure 4.5 could possibly qualify as opening statements, but traditional players tend to favour longer opening patterns to establish a sense of breadth.

⁷⁷ Development patterns don’t by rule exclude material used in opening and closing patterns but rather allow for the more elaborate kinds of processes not otherwise suited for beginnings and endings.

Figure 4.5. “Juan José” Bars 72-75



Figure 4.6 demonstrates offbeat lift occurring in four small units of sixteenth-eighth alternations. This suggests a strong forward momentum that is attenuated by the two eighth notes on beat two of bar 26 and halted on the downbeat of bar 27. This pattern is typical of seis corrido solos of the Ayala family.

Figure 4.6. “Remigio Tombé” Bars 25-27



In Figure 4.7, Jesús Cepeda’s eighth note-two quarter notes-eighth note pattern in 172 offsets the sense of pulse, which is then re-established in the next bar. This same unit reappears in the following two bars. Bar 172 is a very common figure in 6/8 that can be often extended for many bars at a time and that, by offsetting the first quarter note rhythm, is very effective in creating rhythmic tension in preparation for a high-tone resolution at the beginning of the next bar.

Figure 4.7. “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” Bars 172-175



Figures 4.5 to 4.7 show how off-the-beat lift can be achieved in a variety of configurations in simple and compound time. The soloist deploys his/her rhythmic elaborations to manipulate the perception of pulse. Two main considerations guide these statements: rhythmic elaboration and high/low tone contrast. In addition, such short lift statements enhance and elaborate the rhythms suggested by dance movements, which tend to mark the main beats.

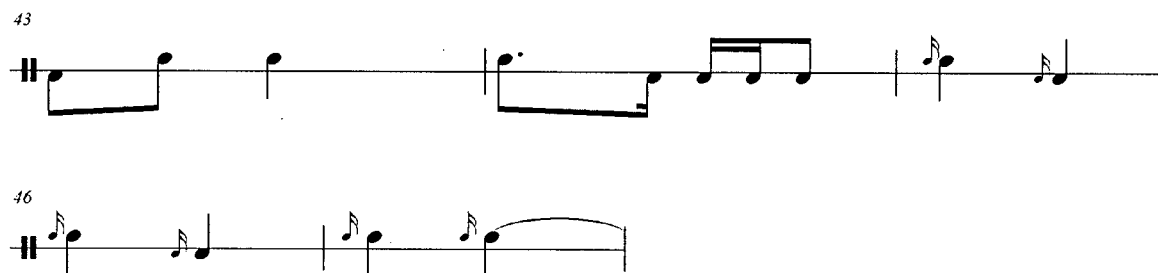
2.b. Static (unsyncopated) patterns primarily on-beat. These are the conclusive patterns one encounters wherein the drummer seeks to simply emphasize, enhance and accentuate the beat. These patterns are commonly repeated rhythms that when juxtaposed with more syncopated supporting drums often give the impression of being more abstract than they really are. It is not uncommon to watch a lead drummer launch into four or five bars of straight quarter notes, dotted quarters or eighth notes with *flams*⁷⁸ in order to emphasize a strong rhythmic pulse. Such patterns may not begin or end on the downbeat of any bar but maintain a clear rhythmic stability.

Figure 4.8a. “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” Bars 117-122



⁷⁸ A flam is a single grace note that precedes a drum stroke. It is an onomatopoeic term that originated in 18th century military drumming.

Figure 4.8b “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 43-47



3. *Closing statements*

Closing statements signal conclusion and, like their corresponding opening patterns, strive for rhythmic clarity by not straying too far from simple rhythmic subdivision. Closing statements usually recall some of the main rhythmic combinations heard earlier in the solo. These are displayed in a cadential process that emphasizes syncopated patterns that ultimately land on a strong, clear beat.

Closing patterns may be employed to finish off sub-phrases or smaller sections of the pieces, as is the case in Figures 4.9 through 4.11. Where closing statements are arranged as part of a more elaborate instrumentation such as a Salsa or Latin Jazz ensemble piece based on bomba, they may often fall outside the parameters of traditional style bomba, and may therefore feature radically different ending patterns.

Figures 4.9 to 4.11 are drawn from the transcription of the Cepeda ensemble's version of “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” found on page 213.

In Figure 4.9 a rhythm that begins as a syncopated figure is stabilized onto regular beats.

31

35

Figure 4.10. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Bars 134-136

134

Figure 4.11. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Bars 189-191

189

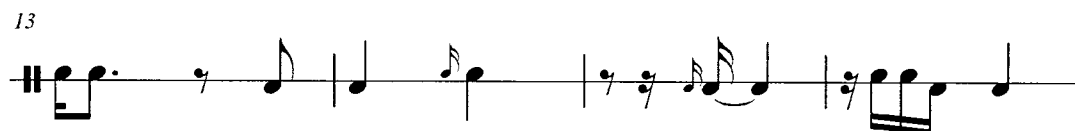
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placing accents on offbeats. Figure 4.12 occurs at the end of the improvisation and 4.13 at the end of an interior phrase.

Figure 4.12. “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” Bars 182-184



Figure 4.13. “Remigio Tombé” Bars 13-16



Continuing Patterns

1. *Mid-solo statements*

During a solo, a drummer may use any number of rhythmic figures appropriate to the musical moment. Where these figures do not lead to on-the-beat cadence or where they are independent of any larger rhythmic formula I classify them as “Continuing Patterns”. Given that these types of figures do not land on metric accents players refrain from using them in opening and closing statements. They play a significant role providing highlighted contrasting material that can raise the level of excitement or settle things down temporarily. Mid-solo statements encompass many rhythmic patterns whose endings are open to continuation.

1.a *Forward (syncopated) patterns not leading to metric accent.* This type of pattern is characterized by syncopated figures that do not conclude on any strong beat.

Oftentimes they are followed by rests that enhance their rhythmic vitality by leaving the listener with a sense that time has momentarily been suspended. These devices also create sharp contrasts with other more grounded patterns.

In the following first example of this type of statement, Cortijo's "Juan José", (Figure 4.80, page 205) the soloist is trying to push the feel of the rhythm forward. By avoiding any strong down beats the sense of lift becomes the principal impetus of the phrase.

Figure 4.14. "Juan José" Bars 114-117



The more complex rhythm of Figure 4.15 from "Mi Marido Quiere" (Figure 4.76, page 200) still retains a similar quality of lift. The sense of downbeat is momentarily suspended in exchange for a feeling of uncertainty. Notice that both Figures 4.14 and 4.15 end on high tones.

Figure 4.15. "Mi Marido Quiere" Bars 10-13



Not all patterns in this group do this, however. Figure 4.16 from “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” (Figure 4.82, page 213) alternates the lifts between high and low tones. In this example the strong sense of lift is achieved in sub-patterns, one beat at a time.

Figure 4.16. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 113-116



In most solos lift statements rely upon patterns that are syncopated at the level of sixteenth note subdivision in 2/4, 4/4 or eighth note subdivision in 6/8. In the case of the 2/4 and 4/4 examples, most lifts occur on the second or fourth sixteenth of the quarter beat, in the 6/8 example they occur on the second or third eighth note of a dotted quarter beat. The effect is to create an enduring feeling of oppositional balance to the beats.

1.b *Static (unsyncopated) patterns primarily on-beat but with inconclusive ending.*

Often, the dancer to which a drummer is responding creates movement patterns that do not align themselves with any particular rhythmic phrase. While they may be “in time” they are not necessarily consistent with musical phrases introduced earlier or may not conform to the rhythms of the *buleadores* and choruses. The soloist may choose to employ simple, isolated strokes to accent the dancer’s *piquetes* but these may not exhibit any overall cadential feel as in Fig. 4.17a. In other instances such as Fig. 4.17b the drummer experiments with rhythmic patterns that defy clear metrical definition. All of

these are acceptable techniques that reveal a more abstract dimension of the soloist's rhythmic repertoire.

Figure 4.17a. "Improvisations on Yubá Corrido" Bars 145-151



Figure 4.17b. "Cuembé Na' Ma'" Bars 162-166



In Figure 4.17c the marked brackets 1,2,3 are examples of stable patterns in non-cadential roles.

Figure 4.17c. "Juan José" Bars 18-29



Statement processes

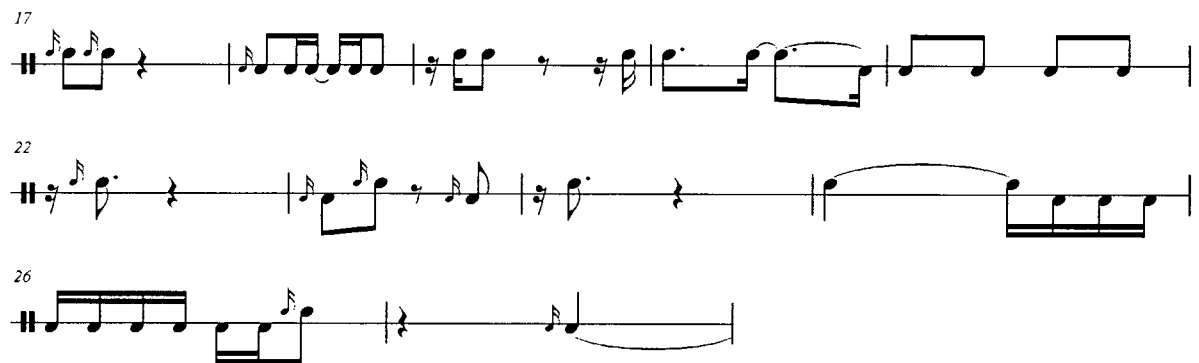
Statement processes manipulate and treat conclusive and continuing patterns through processes described below. They generate and diversify the continuing material of the solo.

1. Organizational processes

1.a. Gradual introduction of material. This is a process by which the soloist draws from the common rhythmic patterns typical of a given style or sub-style. This may include any of the patterns at play in the supporting drum, chorus or lead singer parts.

These patterns signal several elements that will be employed later in the solo. Bar 18, beats 1 and 2 are an exact quotation of the *cuá* pattern for *sicá*. Bars 25-26 feature a continuous run of sixteenth notes such as one would find in *seis corrido*.

Figure 4.18. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Bars 17-27

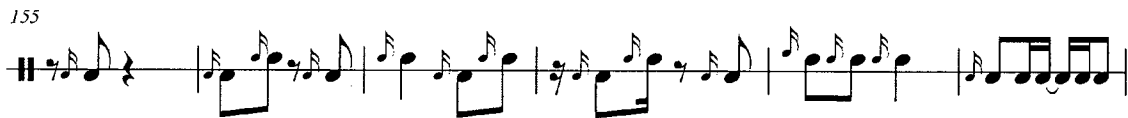


1.b. Development of rhythmic ideas. Here the treatment consists of providing multiple permutations of single rhythmic cells and/or short combinations of cells. The player uses

the basic material introduced in opening patterns or gradual introductions as a point of departure and develops other rhythmic ideas.

Figure 4.19 develops the rhythmic play first presented in bar 23 of Figure 4.18. The soloist extends the playing of alternate high/low tone flams and concludes the variation on bars 160-161 with a reinforced replication of bars 17 and 18 of figure 4.18. In this developed figure the player places a quarter note with a flam onto beat 2.

Figure 4.19. "Cuembé Na' Ma'" Bars 155-160



In the next example of cell development, Fig. 4.20 below, the soloist takes a figure in bar 19-21, (Figure 4.18, page 151), truncates it after one bar and then re-quotes the sicá pattern in the following measure. In bar 94, he again borrows the first beat figure used in bar 19 and responds to it with a derivative of bar 26 (from Figure 4.18) in bar 95.

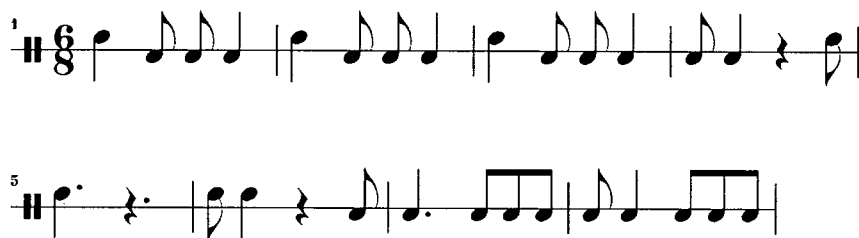
Finally, bars 98 and 99 are an elaboration of Fig. 4.18 bars 21-22. The underlying eighth note feel of the bar is maintained while doubling the rhythm of second half of beat one and adding ornamental flams.

Figure 4.20. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 90-98



The following phrase introduces a number of rhythmic cells that will be placed, altered and arranged throughout J. Cepeda's solo.

Figure 4.21. “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” Bars 1-8



Below are three instances where material from Figure 4.21 has been recombined to create variety and contrast.

Figure 4.22a. "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido"(re-statement of 4.21)



Figure 4.22b. "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido"

Bars 24-26

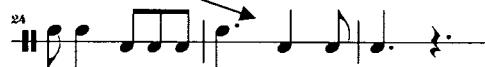


Figure 4.22a. Improvisation on Yubá Corrido" (re-statement of 4.21)

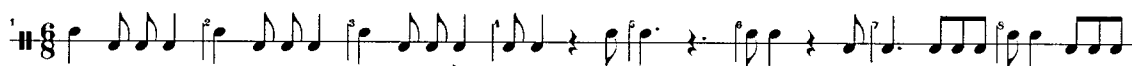


Figure 4.22c."Improvisations on Yubá Corrido"

Bars 110-112



Figure 4.22a. Improvisation on Yubá Corrido" (re-statement of 4.21)

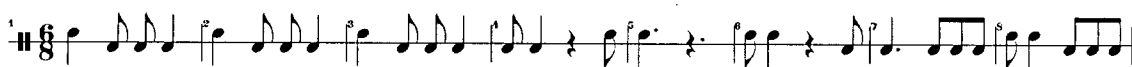
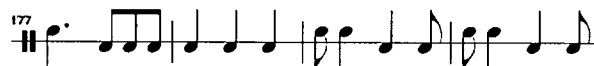


Figure 4.22.d. "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido"

Bars 177-180



2. *Rhythmic processes*

2.a *Intensification*

Intensification refers to increase of density by gradual rhythmic saturation, usually over several bars. The patterns do not usually exceed the rate of four or six strokes to the beat but may be extended over several bars at a time⁷⁹. Intensification may also be achieved through the concentration of tightly assembled short cells of varying durations and rhythms played within relatively short periods of one to four bars.

In Figure 4.23 the intensification of the rhythms develops rapidly and then remains consistent for the duration of the excerpt.

Figure 4.23. "Improvisations on Yubá Corrido" Bars 31-48



The phrase below begins with an open figure consisting of dotted quarters, dotted eighths and a standard buleador pattern that is gradually transformed into an intensified interplay of high-low sixteenth rhythms ornamented with flams on syncopated beats.

⁷⁹ This modest level of subdivision may also relate to the fact that dancers usually refrain from accented phrases reaching high levels of subdivision as this rapid information is difficult to convey visually. Dancers prefer to mark their accents to strong beats up to about the sixteenth note level in 2/4, 4/4 or 6/8 time.

Figure 4.24. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Bars 77-88



Individual players have preferences as to the most effective pace of intensification. In “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” Cepeda chooses to develop rhythmic material very gradually whereas the Ayala family opts for almost immediate intensification once the solo in “Remigio Tombé” is underway.

A final example of rhythmic intensification as performed by Dufrasne is shown below. The level of rhythmic subdivision begins with eighth notes in the first dotted quarter beat of bar 10, progresses to the next generation of subdivision (sixteenths) in the second beat, on to a syncopated gruppetto of flammed sixteenths in bar 11. In the first beat of bar 12 the rhythmic intensification reaches its highest saturation of the beat and then retreats to a quarter and an eighth in bar 13.

Figure 4.25. “Mi Marido Quiere” Bars 10-13



2.b *Relaxation of rhythmic density*

Most solos use some degree of contrast such that busy rhythmic action is interspersed with more limited activity. Relaxing rhythmic density allows a drummer or dancer to collect her/his thoughts or to create open textures that make the resumption of intense rhythmic activity more poignant. These processes also give the listener an opportunity to absorb previous rhythmic information. The relaxation of rhythmic density is most effective once a solo is well underway; its use is avoided in opening and closing statements.

In the following solo from the Ayaldas, the intensity that has been building since bar 7 is relaxed for bars 14-15 as well as bars 18-19 in anticipation of a forthcoming busier pattern.

Figure 4.26. “Remigio Tombé” Bars 7-19



Figure 4.27 illustrates a longer example of rhythmic relaxation. In this case the consecutive single eighth notes in bar 149 through 152 are intensified by creating an

alternation of tones that become the peak of this rhythmic phrase. In bar 157 the action is relaxed to single pulses on down beats of each bar for four bars. This example also shows how the material used to relax the rhythmic intensity is re-intensified in bar 161 to launch a new section of high drumming activity.

Figure 4.27. “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” Bars 149-172



2.c *Hemiola-like patterns*

The juxtaposition of broader rhythmic sub-groups or phrases over a main rhythmic pulse is a common device in bomba. Though most obvious in the compound time solos, they are common in simple time as well. I use the term “hemiola-like” to distinguish these combinations from standard western music hemiolas. Hemiola-like patterns in bomba often exceed the length of standard European hemiolas and repeat

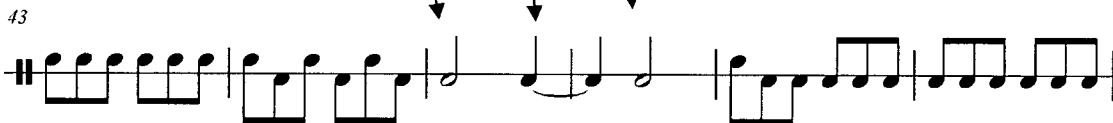
more than the standard three times. Stephen Taylor and other Africanists before him pointed out this same feature among African rhythms⁸⁰.

A common African rhythmic grouping can be observed in J. Cepeda's solo in Figure 4.28. The consecutive eighth note figures of bars 43 and 44 are regrouped in bar 45 and 46 into 3 half note groupings of 4 eighth notes each creating a 4:3 relation of eighth note groups to dotted quarter pulses. This figure is common in yubá improvisations.

Figure 4.28. "Improvisations on Yubá Corrido" Bars 43-48



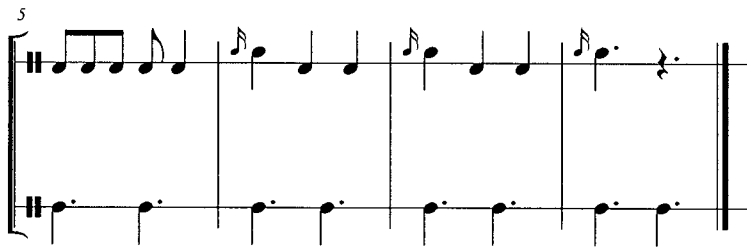
Figure 4.28a. Same figure indicating 3 over 2



⁸⁰ "African rhythms...resemble hemiolas, with different layers of accents occurring simultaneously. But only rarely do these accents fall into the European 2:3 grouping. More often they tend toward 12 beats, divided into 3:4 one level of complexity higher, as it were, than their European counterparts." (Taylor, 2003:88) Taylor is essentially referencing the rhythmic analyses of Sub-Saharan and Central African music previously done by Arom and Ligeti.

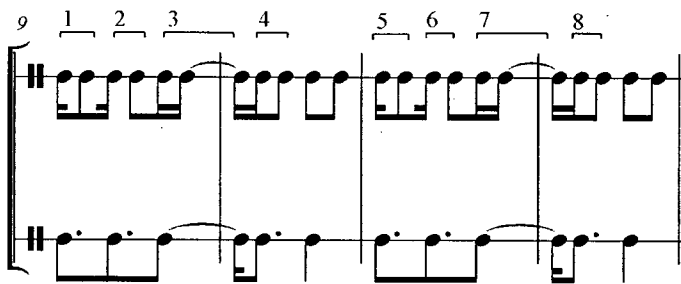
Dufresne uses a more conventional hemiola-like figure to end his solo in figure 4.29 (illustrated below over a dotted quarter pulse). This placement of 3 strokes over the 2 pulses of the leró rhythm halts the previous rhythmic impetus and concludes the solo.

Figure 4.29. “Mi Marido Quiere” Bars 23-26



For an example of a hemiola-like statement in simple time we turn to Figure 4.30. In this illustration the 4 over 3 feel is achieved in bars 9 through 12 by grouping the rhythmic figure of sixteenth-eighth eight semi-consecutive times. The underlying beat suggests the figure is an elaboration of four dotted eighths played over the first three beats of the 4/4 bar.

Figure 4.30. “Remigio Tombé” Bars 9-12



2.d *Stretto*

A term borrowed from European classical music, I use the term to refer to instances of general rhythmic intensification and compression, such that rhythmic patterns that appeared spread out earlier in the solo begin to appear in closer proximity. This device is employed often when solos initiate their final statements or when signaling an upcoming high-energy display of technical prowess.

In the latter section of the last transcription, “Cuembé Na’ Ma” (Figure 4.87) the soloist opens up the texture between measures 86 and 103 by allowing measures of rest or frequent short pauses. These are later contrasted with patterns that are very closely spaced with few rests for several measures at a time as seen in Figure 4.31.

Figure 4.31. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 86-116 Example of stretto

The musical score for Figure 4.31 consists of six staves, each representing a four-measure phrase. The notation is in a single system with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The staves are labeled with their starting bar numbers: 86, 90, 94, 100, 104, and 111. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and slurs, illustrating the concept of stretto.

In the example below, a simpler figure originating in measure 90 (Figure 4.31) is placed adjacent to a busier version of the standard sicá rhythm.

Figure 4.32. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 130-133

The musical score for Figure 4.32 consists of a single staff representing four measures (bars 130-133). The notation is in a single system with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The music features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and slurs, illustrating the concept of stretto.

In the following, material drawn from measures 100-101 is elaborated and rhythmically intensified.

Figure 4.33. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Bars 146-151



The intensification that is the goal of the stretto is bracketed between bars 183 and 191 in Figure 4.34.

Figure 4.34. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Bars 165-191



2.e *Macro rhythmic patterns*

Some patterns display a rhythmic unity that suggests they are unfolding over a slower or longer underlying time span. Players may not be aware of the relation of these patterns to the whole solo but may be guided by them because of a personal conception of the pulse or the fact that chorus/lead singer phrases may be in line with them. Figure 4.35 illustrates two patterns (Figures A and B) that fit the 2/3 son clave notated on the separate stave below.

Figure 4.35. "Remigio Tombé" Two phrases that coordinate with the 2/3 son clave

Figure A

2/3 Son clave

Figure B
 Accents indicate Son Clave at double the rate of underlying 2/3 Son clave

2/3 Son clave at regular time

17

26

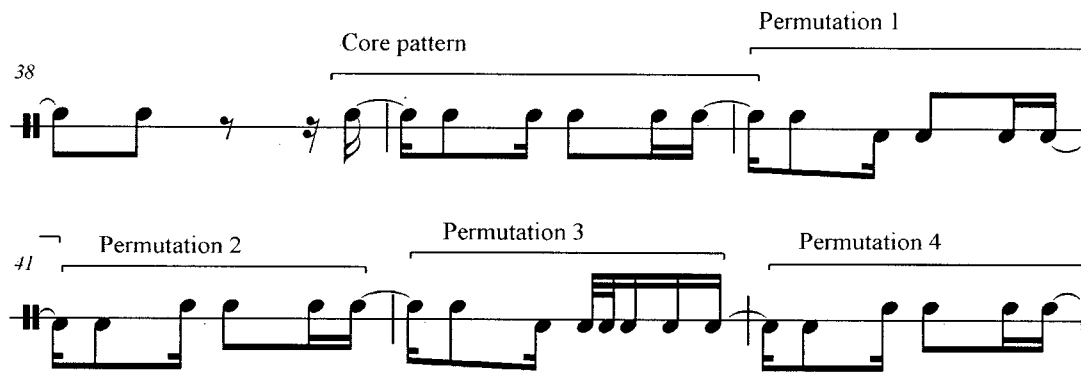
3. *Diversification processes*

3.a *Variation of statements by permutation*

In these patterns variations are derived directly from an established pattern; no other rhythmic combinations are present. This device underscores the inventiveness of soloists as they navigate many of the possible permutations of a rhythm/tone combination in real time.

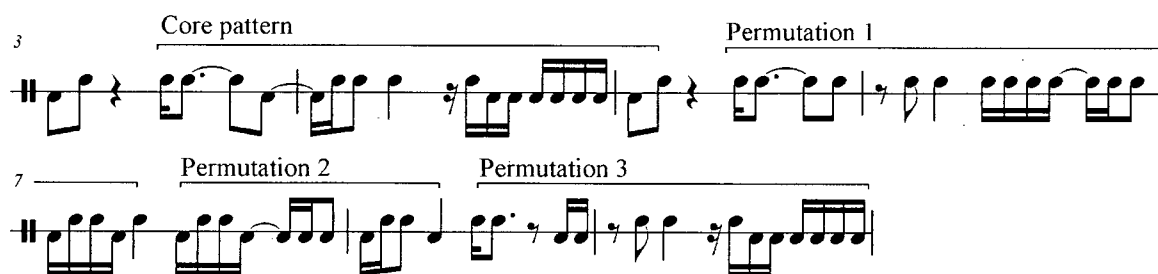
Figure 4.36 uses the material from bars 38-39 to develop four additional permutations of the same pattern.

Figure 4.36. “Juan José” Bars 38-43



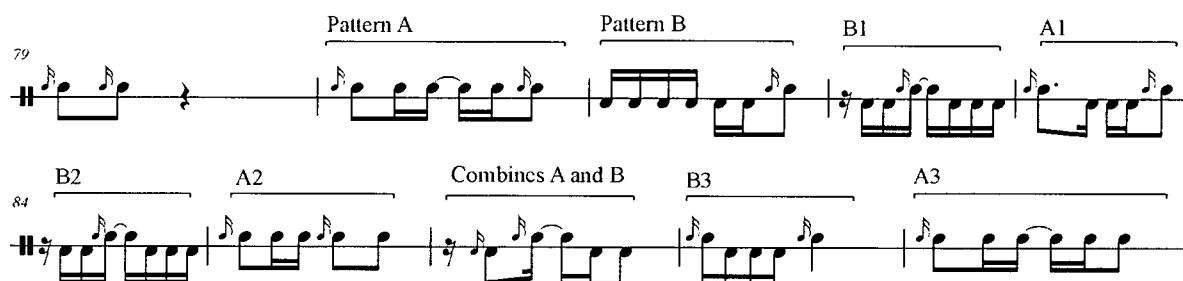
A similar process of permutation variation is seen in Figure 4.37. Here the rhythmic figures that appear in bars 3 and 4 are reassembled in different combinations that create diversity by subtly changing features such as tone contrast, recombining rhythmic cells and isolating individual one or two beat units.

Figure 4.37. “Lamento” Bars 3 to 9



In Figure 4.38 the variations are drawn from two figures. The first is pattern A in bar 80 and the second, pattern B from bar 81. These are reconfigured and fused over the next three bars to create multiple versions of rhythmic cells introduced in the first two bars.

Figure 4.38. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 79 to 88



3.b *Contrasting statements*

These patterns fall into various categories that may include contrasting material that is entirely different from prior cells or phrases, call and response statements, high tone/low tone interplay and dense/sparse textures.

An example of contrasting statements:

Figure 4.39. “Juan José” Bars 54 to 65

Contrasting statements

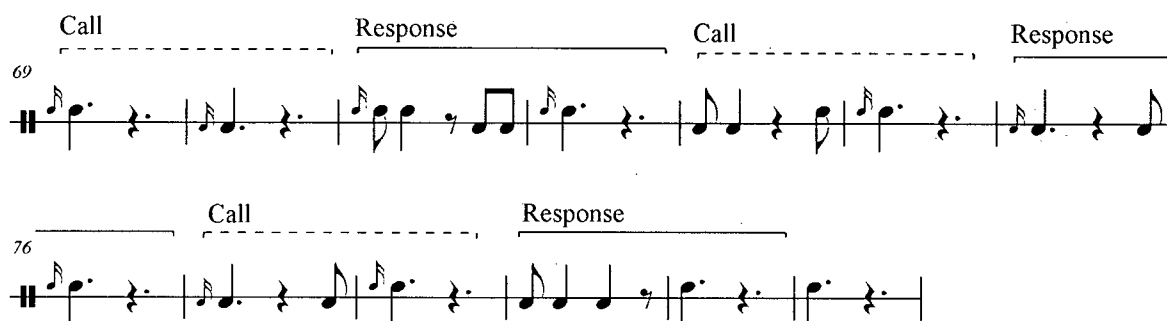
Alternative texture, contrasting material bars 55 to 60 and regular solo

Example of drumming where there is a clear emphasis on continuous alternation of high and low tones

Figure 4.40. “Remigio Tombé” Bars 13-20

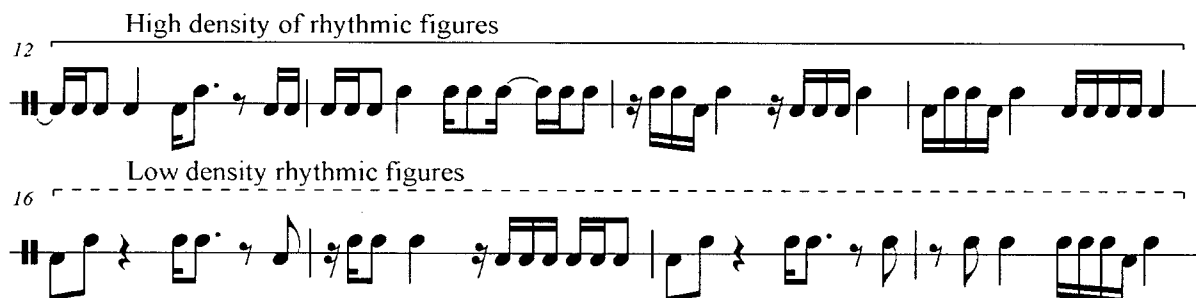
Example of “call and response” or symmetrical phrases that evoke a statement and response format.

Figure 4.41. "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido" Bars 69-81



Example of high density/low density rhythmic interaction

Figure 4.42. "Lamento" Bars 12-19



4. *Cosmetic processes*

4.a *Referents*

Referents are patterns or cells that quote earlier songs, solos, popular regional drum breaks or any such reference to a prior tradition within bomba. These patterns are very common and in these transcriptions are most apparent in the soloing of the Ayala

family and the various salutes to the now almost canonical street patterns popularized by Cortijo and his Combo.

Figure 4.43 is a referent quoting one of these street patterns. One of Cortijo's most popularized versions of this opening drum break (Fig. 4.44), is also found later in this chapter in the full transcription of Juan José (Figure 4.80, page 205). In "Lamento" (Fig. 4.51, page 176), the ornamental upbeats are the only part of the Cortijo referent used yet regular patrons of this music would recognize them immediately as a reference to Cortijo's break.

Figure 4.43. "Lamento" Bars 24-25



Figure 4.44. "Juan José" Bars 1-7



Figure 4.45 is an illustration of the most commonly used solo referent pattern in the seis corrido, especially as performed by the Ayala family of Loíza. The contrasting high and low tones may vary significantly from player to player (even within the family) but the rhythmic sequence is consistent. In this instance the referent quotes a tradition consistently nurtured over the past forty years by the Ayala family. Contemporary bomba

players from other regions are now incorporating this figure as well when performing their own versions of seis corrido.

Figure 4.45. “Remigio Tombé” Bars 9-12



4.b *Mirror image*

Some common rhythmic cells are palindromes and in some instances even solo phrases are inversions of each other. In these mirrors the rhythm is performed and then performed backwards, alternately the rhythm remains the same but the tone contrasts are reversed. This practice may be arrived at through unconscious striving for symmetrical unity and contrast. The following figure illustrates different examples of mirror images as found in “Cuembé Na’ Ma’”. The sicá style pattern, known throughout the Caribbean as a “cinquillo”, is itself a palindrome.

Figure 4.46. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bar 1



In the figure below, bar 7 beat one is a rhythmic mirror of beat two that is further contrasted by alternating the sequence of tones. In bar 8 beats one and two retain the tonal contrast but not the mirror image.

Figure 4.47. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 7 to 8

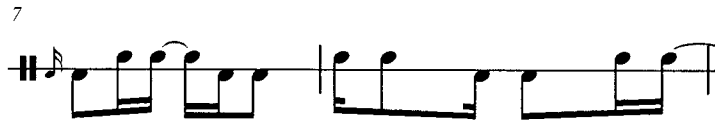


Figure 4.48 from the same work is an example of a tonal mirror that is further treated by appearing first on beats one and two, bar 157 and then on the offbeats of beat one and two of bar 158.

Figure 4.48. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 157 to 158



Figure 4.49 shows a common rearrangement of sixteenth notes demonstrating a rhythmic mirror image. The flam is not a structural part of the rhythm.

Figure 4.49 “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bar 26 appears in reverse order later in Bar 189



In the final example of mirror statements, bars 187-188 invert both the rhythm (the eighth-two sixteenth figure within the bar) and the tone contrasts (from one bar to the next) in a palindrome.

Figure 4.50. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Bars 187-188



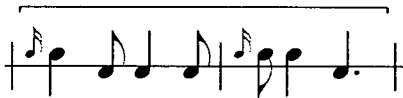
Transcriptions of complete solos

Note on analytical method. Defining the musical intent of any improviser's performance requires the transcriber to formulate general criteria that justify an interpretation. In the transcriptions that follow I group rhythmic statements into phrases of particular lengths based on characteristics such as when an agogic accent suggests phrase articulation, when high-low tone contrasts emphasize tonal shifts, or when rhythmic intensification/relaxation or call and response indicate binary divisions. Few complete rhythmic statements (those that present rhythmic ideas and lead to an internal cadence) contain rests as long as one full measure, therefore another indicator of phrase length is whether a phrase is *followed* by rests longer than a full measure. Ethnomusicologists recognize that transcriptions can evoke widely divergent interpretations both within and outside of the communities examined. Nevertheless I use the above criteria to establish a framework for understanding how a soloist proposes ideas.

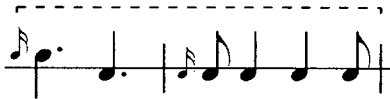
The first transcription, “Lamento” (Figure 4.51, page 176), for example, is presented in its entirety to illustrate a clear case of the concordance between solo drum, supporting rhythm and the underlying time line. “Remigio Tombé” (Figure 4.55, page 182) shows how a seis corrido improvisation can be guided by a son clave time line. “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” (Figure 4.60, page 187) demonstrates how a soloist achieves structural unity and creates effective cadences. “Mi Marido Quiere” (Figure

4.76, page 200) demonstrates complex rhythmic syncopation in compound time. “Juan José” (Figure 4.80, 205) combines and recombines patterns deriving from a style and a sub-style. Finally, “Cuembé Na’ Ma” (Figure 4.87, page 213) combines most of the previous processes in a lengthy solo featuring traditional and contemporary approaches.

Key for the transcriptions that follow:



Brackets enclose phrase statements



Dotted brackets enclose sub-phrases



Angled brackets enclose tags or codas

Selection:	<i>Lamento</i>
Composer:	Isaac Angulo
Style:	Holandés
Sub-style:	Not applicable
Title of recording:	Dancing the Drum
Recorded:	2002
Soloist:	Carlos Cepeda
Drums:	Traditional, rope tension
Ensemble:	Cepeda
Personnel:	Luis “Chichito” Cepeda (Director) Tempo Alomar, Alba Cepeda, Brenda Cepeda, Carlos Cepeda, Luis “Hadji” Cepeda, Margarita Cepeda, Pedro Colón, Ivette de Jesús, Faustino “Cuco” Pomales, Noel Rosada, Micky Sierra, Víctor Vélez

This song is played in the holandés style that is believed to have originated in the south of the island. It has been known in the capital city of San Juan since the early decades of the 20th century. This ensemble comprises sons and daughters of Don Rafael Cepeda, (acknowledged patriarch of the Santurce bomba tradition) and other musical colleagues. The holandés is popular with contemporary young audiences due in part to its similarity to the more commercially successful plena.

Figure 4.51. Lamento Solo phrases and pattern statements
(Solo begins at approximately 3:12 from the beginning of the CD track)

Phrases are numbered,
tags and codas are indicated
to correspond to comments below

Lamento

Isaac Angulo

The musical score for "Lamento" by Isaac Angulo is presented on a single staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The score is divided into numbered phrases (1-11) and labeled sections (A, B, C1, C2, C3, C4, D, E, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, Coda). The solo begins at approximately 3:12 from the beginning of the CD track.

Phrases are numbered, tags and codas are indicated to correspond to comments below

1 A B C1

2 C1

3 C2 D E

4 B C2 D E

5 E

6 Tag (Chorus)

7 A'

8 C3

9 H

10 F G

11 C3

12 C4

13 C1

14 C2

15 J

16 C1

17 C2

18 J

19 C3

20 K L M N

21 C3

22 Coda

23 Coda

24 Coda

This solo features densely packed patterns that explore multiple permutations of a few rhythmic cells introduced early in the solo. Its figures consistently match the syncopated rhythm that appears in the third beat of *holandés*, the accompanying style. The coda alludes to a Cortijo solo break that will be examined later in this chapter.

Among the most common devices used are the extensions of patterns, repeating and transforming fragments of those cells, reversing patterns. These permutations are then positioned to provide a steady alternation of rhythmic tension and relaxation. Phrases are often constructed in binary oppositions where one short statement is responded to by a contrasting one in a different rhythmic configuration. In “Lamento” this takes place primarily in four beat groupings where, for example, sub-phrase A contains syncopated material ending on a high tone followed, in sub-phrase B, by a contrasting figure of sixteenths driving to a low tone on the downbeat of bar 3. This high/low tone interaction, is one of several techniques that create internal call-and-response and structural variety. The binary opposition between high and low tones thus provides both tonal contrast and rhythmic definition.

Figure 4.52. Structural scheme for Lamento by phrase number, sub-phrase letters and beat duration (numbers below)

		<i>Phrase 1</i>		<i>Phrase 2</i>		<i>Phrase 3</i>		<i>Phrase 4</i>		
		A	B	C1	B	C2	D	E	C3	Tag
Number of beats	→	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2
		<i>Phrase 5</i>		<i>Phrase 6</i>		<i>Phrase 7</i>		<i>Phrase 8</i>		
		A'	C4	F	G	H	C1	I	C2	
		4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	
		<i>Phrase 9</i>			<i>Phrase 10</i>		<i>Phrase 11</i>			
		J	K	L	M	N	C3	Coda		
		2	2	4	4	4 (3.5)	6 (5.5)	4 (4.5)		

Figure 4.53 "Lamento"

Structural graph

Complete solo (25 measures)

Part 1 (10 measures)

Tag (2 beats)

Part 2 (15 measures)

Coda (4 beats)

Phrases

1 2 3 4 Tag 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Coda

Sub-phrases (all are 4 beats in length except C3 which is six beats long)

A B C1 B C2 D E C3 A' C4 F G H C1 I C2 J K L M N C3

Combination of source material

Source rhythmic cells A, B, C1

Rhythmic cells derived from A: D, E, F, M, N B: Tag, G, H, I, J, K, L C1: C2, C3, C4

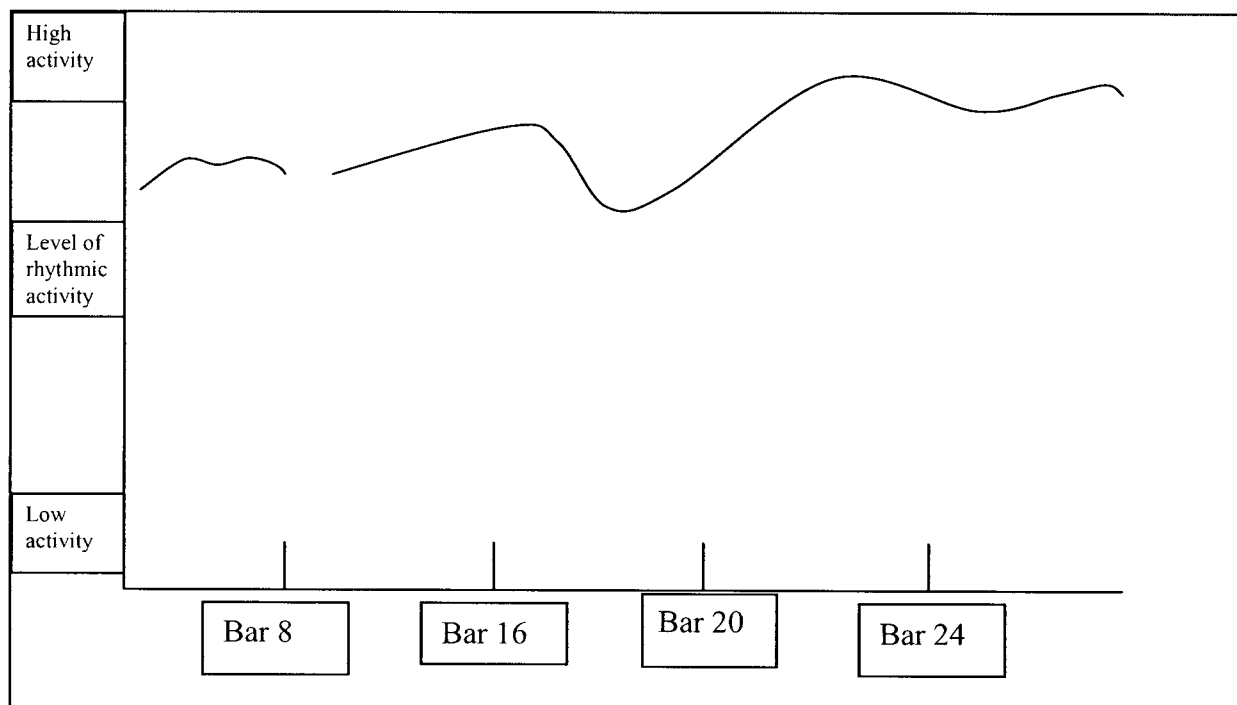


Figure 4.54. "Lamento" Topographic graph

Legend: x = level of intensification (activity) y = time elapsed

The topographic graph illustrates the continuous high rhythmic activity evident in this short solo. The contour indicates the gradual intensification that takes place.

Selection:	<i>Remigio Tombé</i>
Composer:	Traditional
Title of recording:	Hermanos Ayala
Style:	Sicá
Sub-style:	Seis Corrido
Recorded:	2001
Drums:	Traditional, hardware tension
Soloist:	Raúl Ayala
Ensemble:	Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala
Personnel:	Marcos Ayala and Raúl Ayala (Co-directors), Raquel Ayala (Associate Director), Amanda E. Alejandro, Anibal Ayala, Roberto Cepeda, Victor Fuentes, Myra Galíndez, Glory Hernández, Jessica López, Valentín López, Mandy, Marcos Peñaloza, Luís Pizarro, Santa Iris Rivera, Ramón Rosario, Nancy Santos

This recording is in the style traditionally associated with the town of Loíza, the island's most identifiable African culture. The Hermanos Ayala play almost exclusively in seis corrido and corvé. The seis corrido seems to have evolved in, and is only associated with, the practices of the Loíza area.

The seis corrido is played very quickly. In order to project a solo over such busy accompaniment, the lead drummer commonly plays long patterns that extend over several measures of the underlying rhythm or uses short rapid solo figures that stand out as rhythmically isolated. The longer statements are meant to convey complete ideas rather than rhythmic fragments. For example, measures 1-6 are grouped together into phrase 1 because they convey a single complete idea consisting of three short syncopated figures that culminate in four consecutive eighth notes in measures 5-6. The first and third of the

consecutive eighths also coincide with the underlying 2 part of the 2/3 son clave to which the solo is set, providing a cadential kind of rhythmic alignment and stability.

Figure 4.55. Remigio Tombé
Solo phrases and pattern statements
(Solo begins at 1:02 on the recorded CD track)

Remigio Tombé

Hermanos Ayala

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

A

B

C

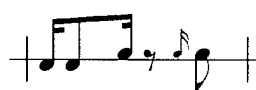
D

E

F

Figure 4.56. “Remigio Tombé” Bars 1, 3, 9-10, 18-20

Bar 3



9

[illegible]


	<i>Phrase 1</i>		<i>Phrase 2</i>				<i>Phrase 3</i>			
	A		B							
Number of beats 	12		4				4	4		
	<i>Phrase 4</i>		<i>Phrase 5</i>		<i>Phrase 6</i>					
			C D E F							
	8		8				4	4	6	6

Figure 4.58. “Remigio Tombé”

Structural graph

Length of all sections is indicated in bracketed numbers

Complete solo (30)

Part 1 (16)		Part 2 (4)	Part 3 (8)		Part 4 (10)
Phrases					
1 (6)	2 (2)	3 (4)	4 (4)	5 (4)	6 (10)
Sub-phrases					
		A (2) B (2)	C (2) D (2) E (2) F (2)		

Drum maker Iván Dávila claims much of the music of the Hermanos Ayala is based on rumba and is played to son clave (Dávila, p.c., July 2003). The common 2-3 of Cuban son (Puerto Ricans employ both son and rumba clave) constitutes a macro rhythmic pattern that is suggested by playing styles but is never played verbatim. Figure 4.59 shows an underlying son clave for Remigio Tombé.

As stated above, figure A is based clearly on the figure of a 2-3 son clave. This figure appears in two different forms in the solo. The first one in figure A is played over eight beats of 2/4 time. The clave is later condensed and embedded into two consecutive four beat phrases in bars 25 to 26. Figure B’s accents condense the eight beat 2-3 clave into a rapid syncopated four beat 2-3 clave segment. Dávila’s observation is unmistakably demonstrated in this example. The Ayalas and many of their disciples in

Loíza use clave as an important unifying element in their seis corrido sub-style; bombas from other regions employ alternate time lines.

Figure 4.59. “Remigio Tombé” rhythm transcription over 2/3 son clave time line

Figure A

2/3 Son clave

9

Figure B
Accents indicate Son Clave at double the rate of underlying 2/3 Son clave

17

2/3 Son clave at regular time

26

Selection: *Improvisations on Yubá Corrido*
Title of recording: Live field recording
Style: Yubá
Sub-style: Yubá Corrido
Recorded: Santurce, July 2004, by author
Drums: Traditional, rope tension
Soloist: Jesús Cepeda on primo with Fermín Llanos on buleador

This recording was done in one take at a dance studio during rehearsals for a theatrical production titled “El Bombón de Elena”⁸¹ featuring bomba drumming. The soloist is improvising over a single accompanying drum.

⁸¹ “El Bombón de Elena” is the title of a very famous plena by Jesús’ father, Rafael Cepeda.

Figure 4.60. Improvisation in Yubá Corrido. Solo phrases and pattern statements

Improvisation in Yubá Corrido

Jesús Cepeda

The musical score is written on ten staves in 6/8 time. It begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 6/8 time signature. The notation includes various musical symbols such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests. Section markers A through G are placed above the staves, indicating specific phrases or patterns. A 'Tag' section is also marked. Measure numbers 7, 14, 21, 29, 37, 44, 51, 58, and 65 are indicated at the start of their respective staves. Fingerings 1 through 11 are indicated above specific notes, suggesting a guitar or similar fretted instrument. The score is a single melodic line.

72 12

79 13 14

87 15

95

102 16

109

116

123 17

130

137

18

19

145

20

21

152

H

I

159

J

K

Tag

22

166

L

M

N

O

23

173

P

Q

R

180

S

Jesús Cepeda's solo demonstrates the instinctive organizational capabilities of an accomplished bomba soloist. The improvisation shows an overall conception of the solo as a chain of musically linked events. The solo begins with a steady reiteration of the accompanying yubá corrido style and very soon launches into a development of material drawn from a limited number of rhythmic cells. Variety is created through clever reworking of prior material. Cepeda manipulates his solo creating numerous musical

moments that reinforce the pulse while offering wide contrasts, a clear rhythmic line and a sense of balance and structural proportion. This structural scheme groups segments of solo material into two categories, A and B, where A denotes those figures that predominantly feature open statements of long note values interspersed with rests. B denotes more intensive statements primarily made up of continuous eighth note runs. Statement lengths are indicated by measure numbers in brackets. The length of statements is indicated in parentheses.

Figure 4.61. “Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” Structural scheme by statement type

1	2	3
<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>A</u>
[1-8] (8)	[8-26] (19)	[27-33] (7)
4	5	6
<u>B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>A</u>
[34-57] (24)	[58-81] (24)	[82-93] (12)
7	8	9
<u>B</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>
[94-105] (12)	[106-122] (17)	[123-138] (13)
10	11	12
<u>A/B</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>A</u>
[139-148] (10)	[148-156] (9)	[157-164] (8)
13		
<u>B</u>		
[165-184]		

Figure 4.62. Structural scheme for "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido" by phrase number, sub-phrase designation (letters) and number of bars duration (numbers below)

	<i>Phrase 1</i>	<i>Phrase 2</i>	<i>Phrase 3</i>	<i>Tag</i>	<i>Phrase 4</i>	<i>Phrase 5</i>
<i>Sub-phrase</i> →			<i>A B C D</i>			
<i>Number of bars</i> →	5	2.5	4.5 4 4 4	1	4	3
	<i>Phrase 6</i>	<i>Phrase 7</i>	<i>Phrase 8</i>	<i>Phrase 9</i>	<i>Phrase 10</i>	
		<i>E F G</i>				
	6	4 3 3	8	6	5	
	<i>Phrase 11</i>	<i>Phrase 12</i>	<i>Phrase 13</i>	<i>Phrase 14</i>	<i>Phrase 15</i>	
	5	8	4	8	12	
	<i>Phrase 16</i>	<i>Phrase 17</i>	<i>Phrase 18</i>	<i>Phrase 19</i>	<i>Phrase 20</i>	
	17	16	4	5.5	5.5	
	<i>Phrase 21</i>	<i>Tag</i>	<i>Phrase 22</i>	<i>Phrase 23</i>		
	<i>H I J K</i>		<i>L M N O P Q R S</i>			
	3 4 2 2	1	2 2 2 2 2 3 2 4			

The first phrase I examine begins in Figure 4.63 on bar 9 and continues to bar 26. The structural scheme is: AAAB CCCD DEDF GGGG HI. The material employed in this phrase is drawn from only three note values, namely, the eighth note, quarter note and dotted quarter note. The combination of these figures seems to provide the soloist with an endless set of permutations that enable him to vary his statements and assemble a solo of musical and structural sophistication.

Figure 4.63. "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido" Bars 9 to 26



In Figure 4.63, bars 9 to 26, Cepeda begins with three bars of an identical pattern and then closes the phrase fragment with a variant of the previous bars. This indicates that the soloist conceived his solo in four-bar, symmetrical phrases. At the same time he is intensifying the underlying rhythmic motion by shortening the distance from the high

tone that falls on the down beat to the appearance of the low tone. This simple shift from two high and four lower ones eighths (sub-phrase A) to one high eighth and five lower ones (sub-phrase B) suggests a structural change that is cadential at the local level.

Figure 4.64. “Improvisation on Yubá Corrido” First fragment of figure 4.63 Bars 9 to 12

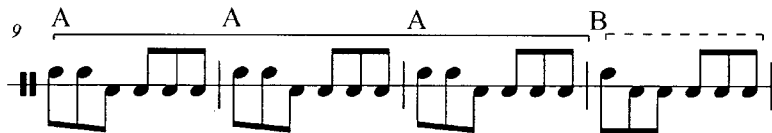
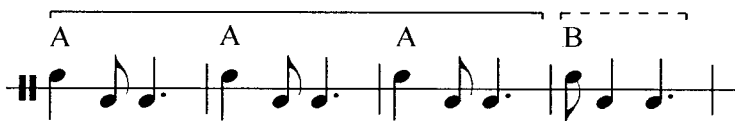


Figure 4.65. “Improvisation on Yubá Corrido” The underlying structure of the above figure with tone contrasts



Adding a low tone to make the shift suggests that low tones have greater weight or finality. But that sense of cadence is only part of the musical strategy. Bar 12 also sets up a strong tonal and rhythmic contrast to the following phrase, which will emphasize high tones in a new way. Contrasting tones and the underlying structure will become more apparent later in the excerpt. Form: CCCD.

Figure 4.66. “Improvisation on Yubá Corrido” Second fragment of Figure 4.63 Bars 13-16



Figure 4.67. “Improvisation on Yubá Corrido” The underlying structure of the above figure.

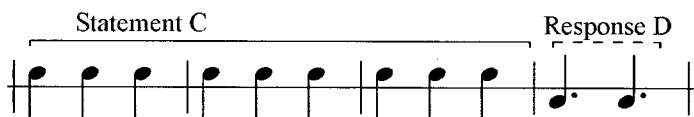
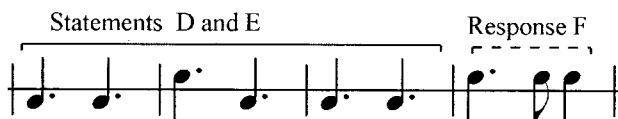


Fig. 4.66 shows contrasting high and low sounds in a continuous stream that creates contrametric intensity. Here again is a mini structure similar to that identified in Fig. 4.64; three identical bars followed by a contrasting ending. Bar 16, it turns out, serves as a transition cadence to a third segment by introducing the repeated low type of pattern that will prevail in the next phrase. This transforms the use of high-low contrast from an eighth note to the dotted half note. At the skeletal level, a feeling of call and response is achieved (Fig. 4.68).

Figure 4.68. “Improvisation on Yubá Corrido” Third fragment of Figure 4.63 Bars 17-20



Figure 4.69 “Improvisation on Yubá Corrido” The underlying structure of figure 4.68



The change in rhythm and tones in measure 20 (Fig. 4.68) points to intensification. The soloist could have chosen to simply play six high eighth note tones but while this would have retained or even propelled the excitement level, it would not

have given the structure a new kind of kinetic propulsion. These are the subtle cues that other players and certainly dancers depend on to develop meaningful dialogues with their musical partners. Cepeda didn't simply choose a suitable cadence for bar 20 (Fig. 4.68); he chose a figure that would transmit an unmistakable message regarding upcoming figures. Dancers and other drummers would perceive the change from steady alternating eighths to an eighth followed by a quarter as a cue for the new rhythm he is about to explore.

The intensity communicated by bar 20's high tones propels the music into the sheer repetition of the figure in measure 21 (Fig.4.70). This insistent pattern strengthens the cadence upcoming at measure 25 (Fig. 4.72).

Figure 4.70. "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido" Fourth fragment of Figure 4.63 Bars 21-24.

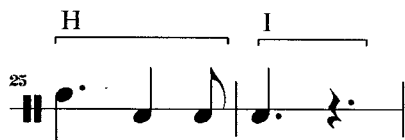


Figure 4.71. "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido" Reduction of measures 21-24



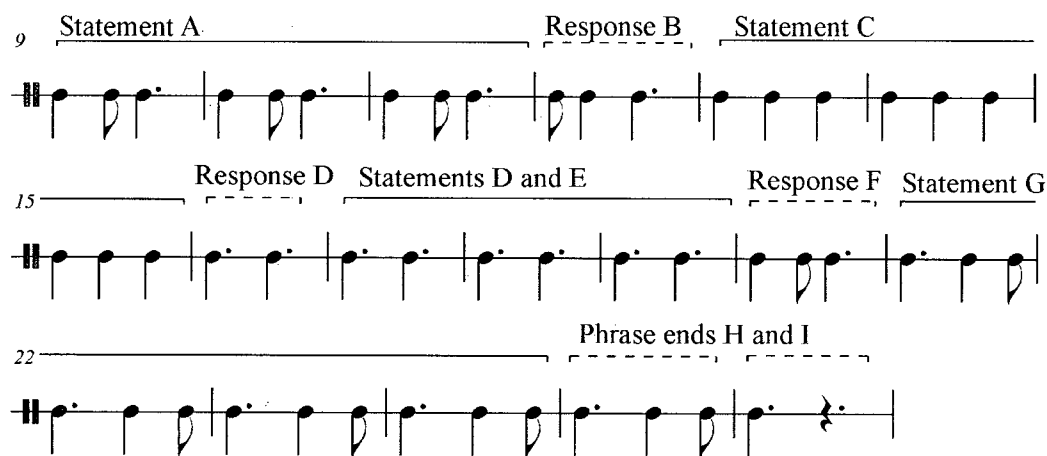
Musically speaking, the final two bar fragment of the whole phrase must contain a rhythmic figure of sufficient weight to give a sense of completion to the whole. In measures 25-26 the rhythm is momentarily simplified and the arrival at 26 substitutes a low tone where there had been high tones in the previous measures.

Figure 4.72. “Improvisation on Yubá Corrido” Final cadence of Figure 4.63 Bars 25-26



The dotted quarter rest in measure 26 signals the end of an 18 bar stream of musical ideas. The use of this cadential figure is unique within this phrase; any other quotation of it would have compromised its impact. The goal of the phrase has been met, the structure has been constructed and its integral parts have achieved a level of symmetrical unity that is the hallmark of any experienced soloist. Figure 4.73 summarizes the structural scheme of measures 9-26 and reveals that each of the four 4 bar units (plus the cadential extension at measures 25-26) has a distinctive underlying rhythm.

Figure 4.73. “Improvisation on Yubá Corrido” Structural scheme of Figure 4.63



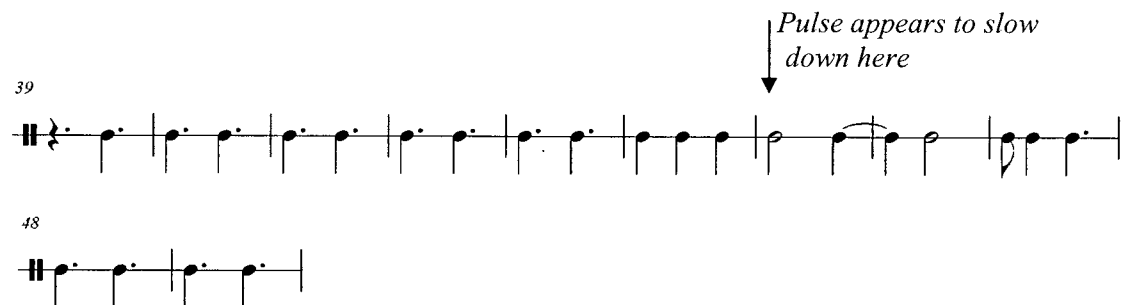
Another example of the use of minimal elements in the construction of a sophisticated rhythmic entity is found in bars 39-49 of Figure 4.60. In this fragment the

development of the rhythmic line juxtaposes groupings of dotted quarters, and a grouping of eighth notes assembled in groups of four. This creates the impression of a large three over four figure (three half notes over four dotted quarters) in bars 45-46.⁸² To the listener this can translate as either an acceleration of rhythmic action or a temporary ritardando of the time line. It is likely not a coincidence that this occurs embedded within a statement of three (before) and two (after) bars of steady dotted quarter pulse. This position allows the listener to establish a clear perspective no matter what the eventual perception of the pattern is. The juxtaposition temporarily departs from the regular time scheme to provide some perceptual variation and contrast.

Figure 4.74. "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido" Bars 39-49 of Figure 4.60 (page 187)



Figure 4.75. "Improvisation on Yubá Corrido" Elongation of the time line pulse
Bars 39-49



⁸² This was also mentioned earlier in this chapter in my description of statement processes

By the arrival of the last fragment, bars 154-184, the soloist has introduced the full range of rhythmic cells to be used. In the final cadential thrust the player calls upon many of the previous musical devices in a rhythmic concentration of beats that includes stretto.

1. Repetition (bars 166-175)
2. High contrast (bars 179-183)
3. The concentration of varied patterns (bars 165-184)
4. The use of dotted quarters, quarters, and eighth notes (throughout)
5. Quarter notes in a three over two feel (bars 145-147)

“Improvisations on Yubá Corrido” demonstrates several challenges that face bomba soloists every time they are called upon to perform. The convergence of experience, context, collaboration, and intent unfolds in a live, dynamic engagement involving performers and audience, each of which bring either a contribution or an expectation to the event. The devices mentioned above are tools and rules that provide the soloist with a solid structure over which to elaborate, thereby freeing the player to exercise the imagination over an ever-changing musical scenario.

Selection:	<i>Mi Marido Quiere</i>
Composer:	J. E. Dufrasne
Title of recording:	Tambó
Style:	Yubá
Sub-style:	Leró
Recorded:	1997
Drums:	Traditional (with tuning lug and bolt), southern style
Soloist:	J. Emanuel Dufrasne
Ensemble:	Paracumbé
Personnel:	J. Emanuel Dufrasne (Director), Nelie Lebrón Robles (lead vocalist), Ana Berriel, Karymar Burgos, Marile Colón, Paola Lebrón Fernández, Dennis Lebrón Heredia, Dennis Lebrón Robles, Julio López, Wildaliz Lozano Trinidad, Ivonne Torres-Roig, Marcelo Rosario, Rhenna-Lee Santiago, Lara I. Serrano

This recording by the ensemble Paracumbé features new compositions and recreations of traditional songs. The drumming and singing styles presented are traditional whereas the arrangements of both tend toward a more elaborate approach not associated with the traditional practices from Ponce.

Note regarding an exception to the binary notation of this chapter:

The first two bars of “Mi Marido Quiere” show a rhythm as a descending line of pitch. In southern seated drumming position the player is able to raise the pitch of the drum by pushing his ankle into the head. In this excerpt the soloist begins with the pitch raised, then slowly lowers it by relaxing the pressure. The descending line notation is a representation of descending pitch levels.

Figure 4.76. Mi Marido Quiere. Solo phrases and pattern statements

(Solo from 2:02 on the recorded CD track)

Mi Marido Quiere

J.E. Dufrasne

The musical score is written on five staves in 6/8 time, marked with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes various rhythmic figures and patterns, with measures grouped by brackets and numbered 1 through 8. The first staff contains measures 1-5, the second staff measures 6-10, the third staff measures 11-15, the fourth staff measures 16-20, and the fifth staff measures 21-25. The score illustrates a progression from simple subdivisions to complex groupings of four sixteenths over a dotted quarter beat.

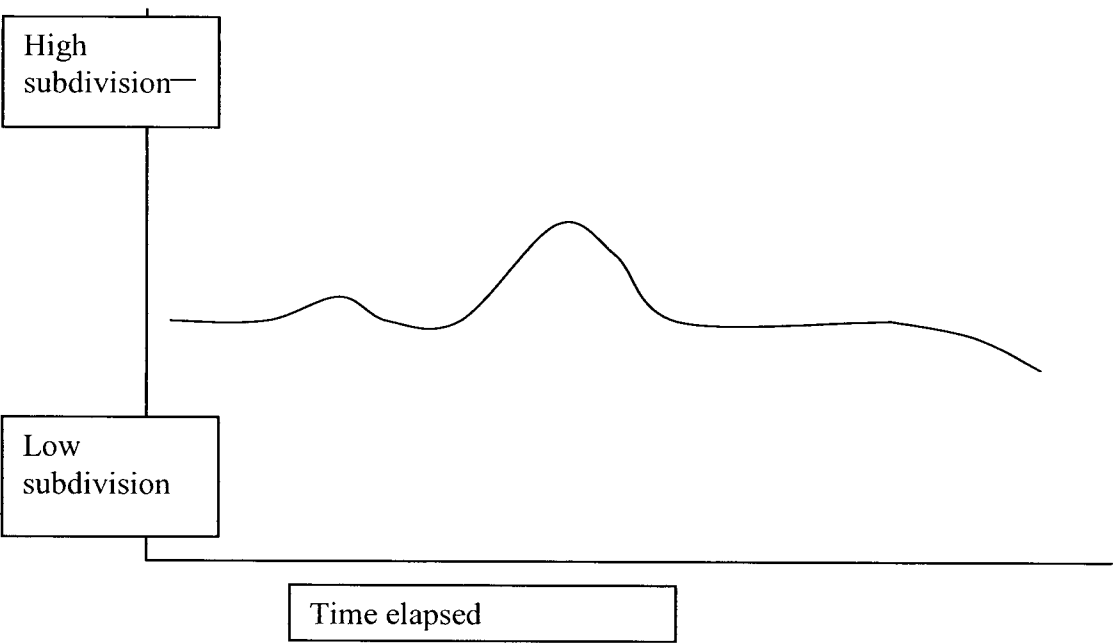
“Mi Marido Quiere” is a conventional 6/8 bomba solo that features some not-so-conventional rhythmic figures. This transcription illustrates a selected segment of the composition in which Dufrasne develops a rhythmic line starting at simple subdivision levels and quickly progressing through to complex groupings of four sixteenths over a dotted quarter beat. The degree of syncopation evident in such a process of development is attenuated by the quick return to more stable rhythmic figures.

Figure 4.77. Structural scheme for “Mi Marido Quiere” by phrase number and corresponding number of beats duration (numbers below)

	<i>Phrase 1</i>	<i>Phrase 2</i>	<i>Phrase 3</i>	<i>Phrase 4</i>
<i>Number of beats</i> →	5	5	5	6
	<i>Phrase 5</i>	<i>Phrase 6</i>	<i>Phrase 7</i>	<i>Phrase 8</i>
	4	5	8	11

Figure 4.78. “Mi Marido Quiere” Topographic graph

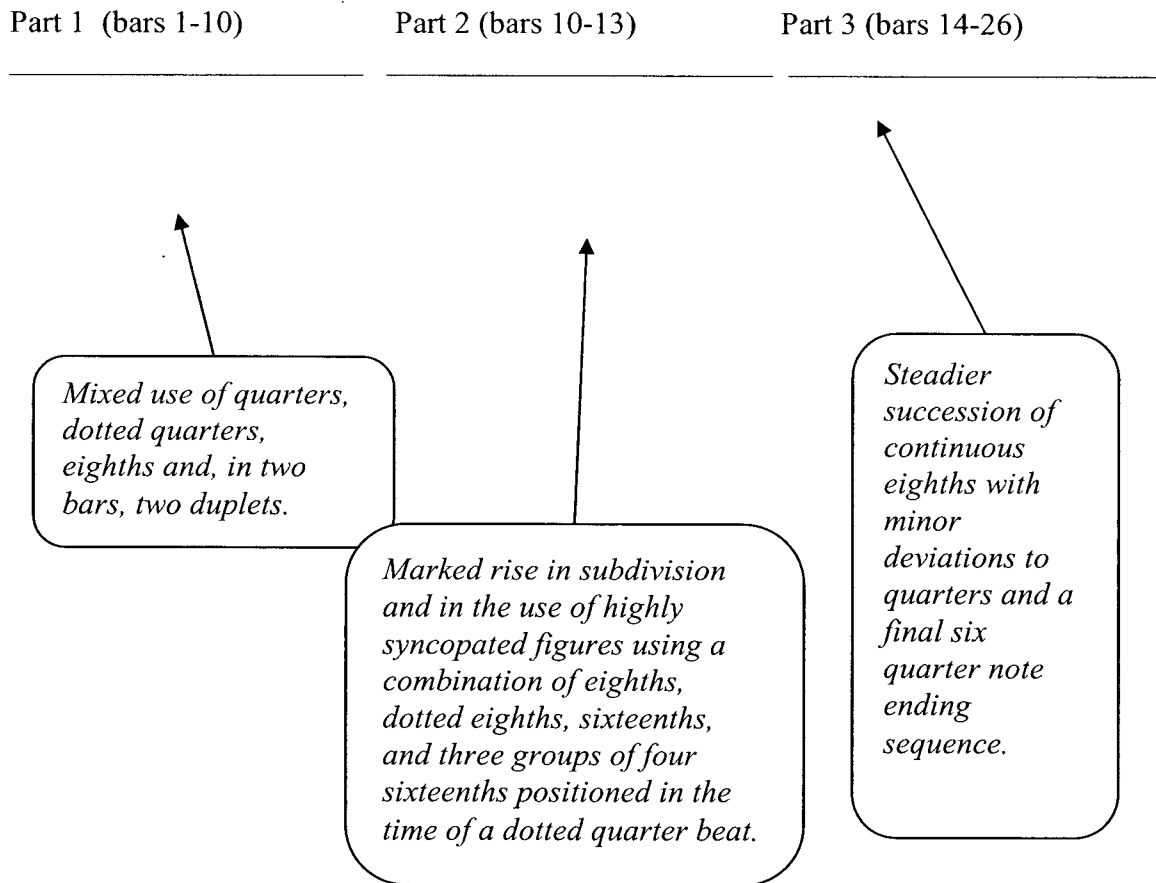
Topographic graph showing how this solo maintains a conservative level of subdivision with two spikes in activity, the first occurring in bar 3, the second between bars 10 and 13.



The solo features three relatively distinct areas of rhythmic activity. The first, bars 1-10, employs mixed use of quarters, dotted quarters, eighths and, in two bars, duplets.

The second segment (bars 10-13) shows a marked rise in subdivision and in the use of highly syncopated figures using a combination of eighths, dotted eighths, sixteenths, and three groups of four sixteenths positioned in the time of a dotted quarter beat. The final segment (bars 14-26) employs a steadier succession of continuous eighths with minor deviations to quarters and a final six quarter note ending sequence.

Figure 4.79. “Mi Marido Quiere” Solo scheme highlighting three distinct areas of rhythmic activity



J.E. Dufrasne is a longtime advocate, scholar and performer of bomba who has a much freer style than many of his contemporaries. The range of rhythms and motives and the extent of rhythmic variation in figure 4.76 is quite wide and falls outside the normal

range for most bombas. Normally the soloist stays close to patterns that underscore the dance or are implied by the singing. Departures from these norms are not that common and when they occur, the innovations come from players who have earned special respect. Dufrasne does not feel bound by tradition in his exploration of ideas. In Figure 4.76, I chose to notate some of his rhythmic statements as groupings of 4 sixteenths over 3 eighths in 6/8 time. The performance uses rubato and accelerando that cannot be easily accommodated within the confines of standard western notation and could have been notated in several ways. Dufrasne's interpretations reflect an eclectic approach to the intensification or relaxation of rhythmic density by introducing elements more common in contemporary European art music, which he has studied. These include units such as groupings of 5, 4 units in the time of 3, pitch inflexion, etc. His more eclectic approach is also partly due to his extensive grounding in other world musical drumming cultures and his work as a radio show host and a commentator on folk and commercial musics. In conversation, he expressed a desire to rescue a dying tradition for the sake of its heritage value and its importance to the roots of Puerto Rican music (Dufrasne, p.c., August. 2003).

The most authoritative bomba soloists in the contemporary Puerto Rican community, such as Jesús Cepeda, Iván Dávila, Omar "Pipo" Sanchez, Raúl Berrios and others are willing to accept innovative rhythm concepts but maintain that experimental or less structured improvisations shift the emphasis away from the dance/drum dialogue and ultimately weaken the tradition.

Selection:	<i>Juan José</i>
Composer:	Rafael Cepeda Atilés
Title of recording:	Ritmos y Cantos Callejeros
Style:	Sicá
Sub-style:	Bambulé
Recorded:	1970
Drums:	Congas
Soloist:	Rafael Cortijo
Ensemble:	Cortijo y Kako
Personnel:	Information not available
Note of interest:	Cortijo, Kako and the band recorded this entire album in one day, Some tracks were the result of single recorded “takes” ⁸³ .

Rafael Cortijo is credited with bringing community style bomba playing into the recording scene. He adapted the bambulé to an ensemble sound more compatible with other popular Puerto Rican and Cuban dance styles. This example demonstrates the stylistic clarity of his adaptation of bomba to a combo format. This musical style is one of Puerto Rico’s most significant contributions to the development of salsa.

⁸³ Miguel López, p.c., 2005

Figure 4.80. Juan José. Solo phrases and pattern statements

Juan José

Rafael Cepeda

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in 2/4 time. It consists of 45 measures, organized into 10 staves. The notation includes eighth notes, sixteenth notes, and rests. The score is divided into eight numbered phrases, each indicated by a bracket above the staff:

- Phrase 1: Measures 1-4
- Phrase 2: Measures 5-8
- Phrase 3: Measures 9-13
- Phrase 4: Measures 14-17
- Phrase 5: Measures 18-21
- Phrase 6: Measures 22-26
- Phrase 7: Measures 27-30
- Phrase 8: Measures 31-45

The score begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure is a whole rest. The melody is characterized by rhythmic patterns of eighth and sixteenth notes, often grouped together. The piece concludes with a final measure containing a whole rest.

49

54

58

62

66

70

74

78

82

86

9

10

11

12

Tag

90

94

98

102

106

110

114

118

122

13

14

15

Λ

B

C

D

E

F

G

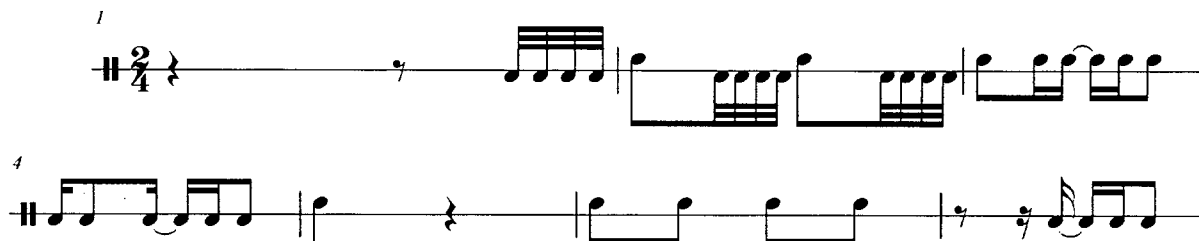
Repeat another 9 times

Figure 4.81. Overall structural phrase scheme for “Juan José” by phrase number, sub-phrases (letters) and corresponding number of bars duration (numbers below).

	<i>Phrase 1</i>	<i>Phrase 2</i>	<i>Phrase 3</i>	<i>Phrase 4</i>	<i>Phrase 5</i>	
<i>Number → of bars</i>	8	6	5	7	5	
	<i>Phrase 6</i>	<i>Phrase 7</i>	<i>Phrase 8</i>	<i>Phrase 9</i>	<i>Phrase 10</i>	<i>Tag</i>
	4	10	8	8	13	1
	<i>Phrase 11</i>	<i>Phrase 12</i>	<i>Phrase 13</i>	<i>Phrase 14</i>		
	10	8	4	7		
	<i>Phrase 15</i>					
	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>C</i>	<i>D</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>F</i>
	5	1	2	2	2	1
						<i>G</i>
						4

The solo playing in “Juan José” also features common quotes of other patterns and well-known breaks. In Figure 4.82 I illustrate the most common drum break of the bomba tradition. The popularity of this break is attributed to Rafael Cortijo although J. Cepeda referred to it as something Cortijo “just picked up around the neighbourhood” (Jesús Cepeda, p.c., July, 2004). This observation is consistent with the title of Cortijo and Kako’s recording from which this transcription is drawn: “Toques y Cantos Callejeros” (Songs and Drum Patterns of the Street).

Figure 4.82. “Juan José” Bars 1-7



In bars 7, 97-98 and 120, shown in Figure 4.83, variations on the sicá style (the root style of the selection) are inserted as solo material and internal reference.

Figure 4.83. “Juan José” Bars 7, 97-98, 120



The rhythms at play in this improvisation combine the sicá, the bambulé, (the adapted sub-style that Cortijo preferred for interpreting bomba in his combo repertoire) and two idiosyncratic patterns shown in Figure 4.84a and 4.84b that the soloist regularly returns to between other phrases in the manner of a secondary accompaniment line. Dispersed among these vamps he interjects soloistic figures in the style of a *sonero* (a singer who inserts improvised verses between choruses).

Figure 4.84a. Additional recurring rhythmic pattern 1 in Juan José



Figure 4.84b. Additional recurring rhythmic pattern 2 in Juan José



The combination of these core patterns sets the stage for continual rhythmic invention over a regularized, minimal rhythmic basis combining conclusive and continuing patterns.

“Juan José” features recurring syncopated figures that create a sense of lift extended over several measures. Though these syncopation figures found throughout the solo create tension with the main pulse of the music, the meter is reinforced constantly by the secondary accompaniment figures and by the playing of periodic downbeats. Structurally speaking, the solo can be divided into two segments. The first one, bars 1 through 75, features numerous permutations of the rhythmic patterns featured in Figures 4.83 and 4.84a/b. The second half (bars 76 through 124) shifts the emphasis of patterns somewhat to more stable patterns cadencing on downbeats.

Figures 4.85a and 4.85b demonstrate two examples of syncopated figures that suspend the sense of downbeat. Figures 4.86a and 4.86b are an example of the more stable type of figure seen in the second half of the solo.

Figure 4.85a. “Juan José” Syncopated figure 1

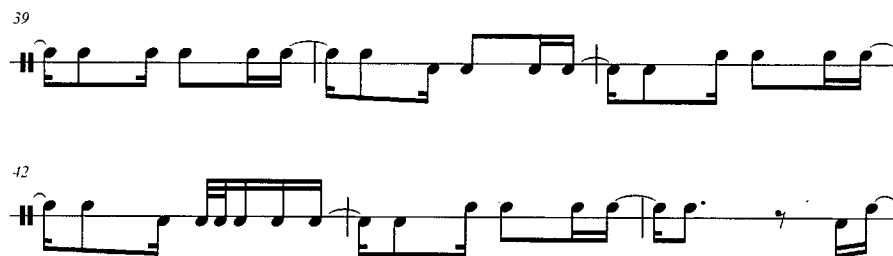


Figure 4.85b. "Juan José" Syncopated figure 2

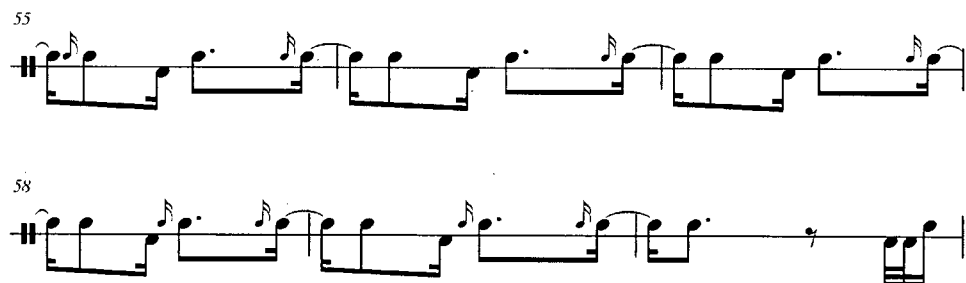


Figure 4.86a. "Juan José" Stable figure 1

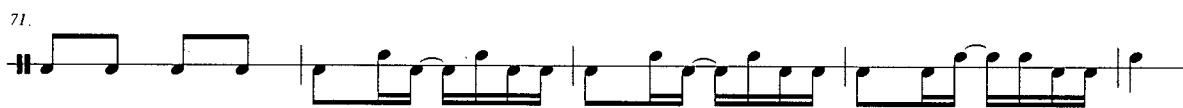


Figure 4.86b. "Juan José" Stable figure 2



Selection:	<i>Cuembé Na' Ma'</i>
Composer:	Rafael Cepeda
Title of recording:	Dancing the Drum
Style:	Sicá
Sub-style;	Sicá Corrido
Recorded:	2002
Drums:	Traditional
Soloist:	Noel Rosada
Ensemble:	Cepeda
Personnel:	Luis "Chichito" Cepeda (Director) Tempo Alomar, Alba Cepeda, Brenda Cepeda, Carlos Cepeda, Luis "Hadji" Cepeda, Margarita Cepeda, Vincente "Cusy" Castillo, Pedro Colón, Ivette de Jesús, Pedro Fuentes, Faustino "Cuco" Pomales, Ricardo Pons, Noel Rosada, Carlos Torres, Toñito Vázquez, Víctor Vélez

This selection is an example of bomba soloing with a large contemporary ensemble. The logic and rhythmic virtuosity of the playing demonstrate a level of sophistication commonly associated with the Cepeda family, especially Chichito, Jesús Cepeda and musical associate Noel Rosada.

Figure 4.87. Cuembé Na' Ma'. Solo phrases and pattern statements

Cuembé Na' Ma'

Rafael Cepeda

The musical score for 'Cuembé Na' Ma' is presented on ten staves. The time signature is 2/4. The score is divided into five measures, each starting with a measure number (1, 4, 8, 12, 16, 21, 25, 28, 32) and a measure number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). The notation includes various musical symbols such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests.

35

39

42

45

49

53

57

61

65

6

7

8

9

69 10

73

76

79 11

82 12

87 13

91

95 14

101

15

104

16

110

17

118

18

126

19

20

134

21

142

22

150

3 3

157

23

164

24

172

25

180

188

Figure 4.88. Structural scheme for “Cuembé Na’ Ma” by phrase numbers and corresponding number of bars duration (numbers below)

	<i>Phrase 1</i>	<i>Phrase 2</i>	<i>Phrase 3</i>	<i>Phrase 4</i>	<i>Phrase 5</i>
<i>Number of bars</i> →	9	8	8	9	7
	<i>Phrase 6</i>	<i>Phrase 7</i>	<i>Phrase 8</i>	<i>Phrase 9</i>	<i>Phrase 10</i>
	4	13	8	8	8
	<i>Phrase 11</i>	<i>Phrase 12</i>	<i>Phrase 13</i>	<i>Phrase 14</i>	<i>Phrase 15</i>
	4	5	7	8	8
	<i>Phrase 16</i>	<i>Phrase 17</i>	<i>Phrase 18</i>	<i>Phrase 19</i>	<i>Phrase 20</i>
	8	8	8	8	5
	<i>Phrase 21</i>	<i>Phrase 22</i>	<i>Phrase 23</i>	<i>Phrase 24</i>	<i>Phrase 25</i>
	10	14	6	11	7

“Cuembé Na’ Ma” is constructed in contrasting sectors of moderate and heavy rhythmic activity. In the following figure moderate/heavy rhythm sectors are identified by letters and their corresponding lengths in measures. Three highly syncopated sectors (*) are contained within four less active sections (+).

Figure 4.89. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Moderate to heavy rhythm activity sectors

+	*	+	*	+	*	+
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
(1-47)	(48-70)	(71-79)	(80-89)	(90-103)	(104-164)	(165-191)

Figure 4.90. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Topographic graph of Figure 4.89

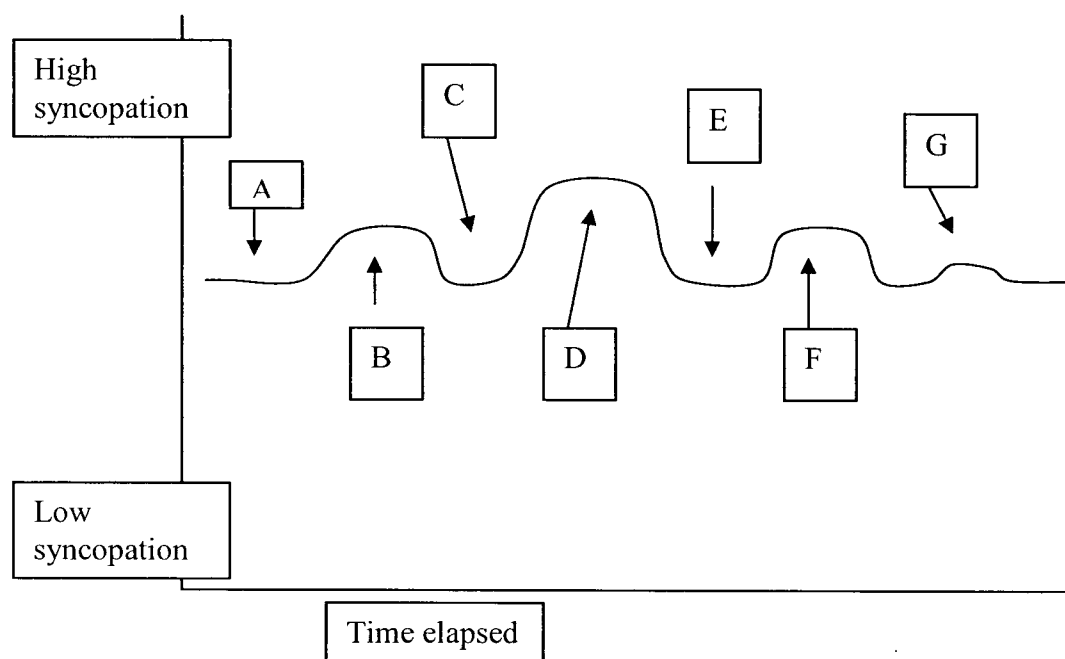
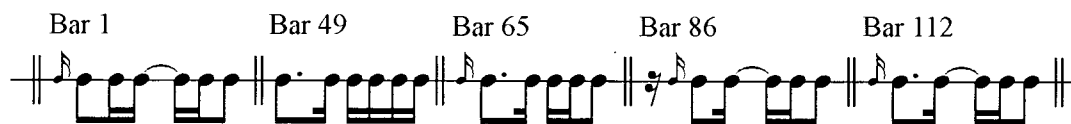


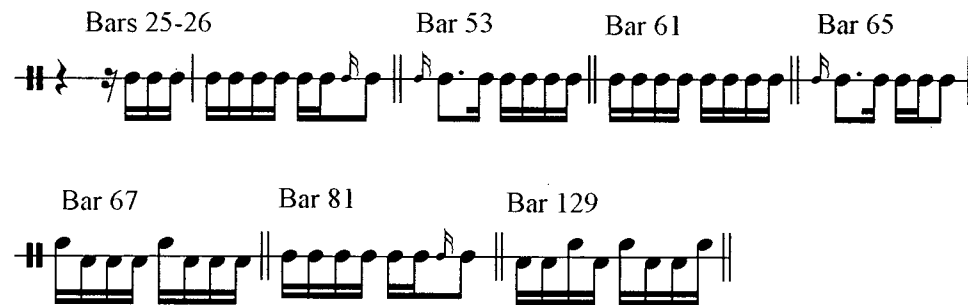
Figure 4.91 shows how the soloist has adapted permutations of the sicá pattern to complement the improvisation. All the figures are derived from literal quotes or small deviations from the standard sicá pattern.

Figure 4.91. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Bars 1, 49, 65, 86, 112



Although the quotations above reference the central rhythmic figure by which most bombas are known, the accompanying patterns of this performance are based on a more active version of the sicá known as sicá corrido (Fig. 3.12a). Elements of this sub-style enable the soloist to improvise along the periphery of sicá and easily cross over into related sub-styles such as bambulé, seis corrido, gracimá, and cuembé.⁸⁴ Figure 4.92. illustrates seven different types of quotations of sicá-related rhythms drawn from the solo.

Figure 4.92. “Cuembé Na’ Ma” Sicá variations used in solo



The intensification of rhythmic patterns seen earlier in the analysis of J. Cepeda’s yubá corrido, reappears in several permutations in this solo as well. Figure 4.93 is a good example of the use of displaced beats and odd number groupings of sixteenth notes to create a highly varied and animated sequence.

⁸⁴ Though cuembé is the part of the title of the selection, it is not the rhythm to which it is played. The name of the title derives from the lyrics that speak of dancing the cuembé.

Figure 4.93. “Cuembé Na’ Ma’” Intensification and variation Bars 77 to 88



The complete transcription (Figure 4.87) also reveals the strong use of ornamental flams, especially on high tones, to propel the rhythm and create a sense of intensification.

“Cuembé Na’ Ma’” is a fitting choice for my last transcription. Its interpretation contains practically all the elements relating to statement types and processes mentioned in the introductory comments of this chapter. These include opening, closing and developments patterns, forward (syncopated) patterns leading to metric accent, those *not* leading to metric accent, static (unsyncopated) patterns primarily on-beat, and others with an inconclusive ending. Also included are process operations such as intensification, stretto, variation by permutation, referents and call and response. Furthermore, on account of it being a recently recorded composition, this example demonstrates how contemporary players are able to introduce constantly evolving musical ideas while reconciling traditional techniques and styles within a broader textural context. In this selection the expanded instrumentation of big band horns and rhythm section do not deter from the central focus of the music, the extensive improvisation of the drum.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated rhythmic strategies that allow the bomba soloist to create a variety of permutations that respond to multiple musical stimuli. As the soloist enters the improvisation scenario he/she brings forth a personal repertoire of pattern combinations that are directly related to the styles and sub-styles in which they are about to be cast. Some styles and sub-styles allow the use of patterns from similar or related groups, others present more challenges. The soloist must bring to the scene a mental and physical conditioning capable of sustaining continuous variation and maintaining energy over long stretches of time. The devices outlined above enable the soloist to prepare, strategize, improvise (usually within accepted patterns of performance practice) and arrive at successful resolutions to immediate rhythmic challenges.

Chapter Five

Bomba: improvisation as practice

*We choose our constraints, as Stravinsky said, to allow the greatest freedom of expression. Set the rules—then play among them.*⁸⁵

During a conversation about improvisation, Canadian percussionist Russell Hartenberger declared “something that is understandable to us in an instant takes a chapter to explain” (Hartenberger, p.c. June 2004). Musical improvisation in bomba embodies a responsibility to propagate tradition, to skillfully reflect the present and to propose possible futures through the intuitive knowledge of instantaneous musical production. In bomba, this musical production is the act of an inspired soloist as well as an experience in which participants and their communities are all stakeholders in an open-ended process.

For medieval theorist al-Farabi,

Only those who have attained the third and highest level of practical musical art are capable of talking coherently about whatever their imagination has conceived...Art does not become knowledge until one can describe not just what happens, but why it happens (al-Farabi in Nettl, 1998:34).

This chapter proposes to explore that “why” by describing intuitive knowledge of improvisation as something tangible, and by detailing how soloists conceive their gestures. I hope to clarify these phenomena without compromising their mystery. The processes engage tradition, cultural continuity, community hierarchy, and deeply

⁸⁵ Rothenberg, 2002:5

embedded philosophy in a bomba performance practice that reflects universal concepts at the local level. But how do these factors influence bomba drummers' decisions?

Bomba drumming and dancing, as an entertaining social activity, is generally a positive event, one in which the reputation of the performers is not intended to be questioned, although it will, in the spirit of a sport, be challenged. Just as there are situations in which the musical integrity of a soloist is tested, there are also safety valves that modify potentially unsuccessful experiences. The improviser has at his/her disposal an unwritten set of signals that can defuse excessively taxing situations or provide for more variety when dance situations become stale. There are implicit codes of etiquette indicating when a dancer has overstayed his/her welcome or a when a drummer is not capable of keeping up with the dancer. In the styles of the north coast, the drummer may choose to "give up" after repeated non-verbal challenges by the dancer and revert back to the main drumming pattern played by the accompanying drums. This indicates that "victory" in this dance/drum duel is conceded to the dancer. If the drummer reverts back to the patterns without the dancer signaling for more *repiques* (solo strokes) the drummer is communicating that it is the dancer who should move out of the circle to allow another—perhaps more capable—dancer in.

Perspectives on improvisation, transcription and analysis

Ethnomusicological analyses of improvisational practices in world music cultures weathered a paradigm shift from ca. pre-1970 transcription and analysis models in favour of studies that emphasize representation, social dynamics, and socio-political interpretations of musical practice. The abstracts for the recent 2004 Society for

Ethnomusicology 49th Annual Conference⁸⁶ reveal a strong emphasis on contextual readings of diverse cultures and a limited representation of musical analytical work. While recognizing the essential role these contextual interpretations play in the overall understanding of an expressive form, they cannot convey the discrete information necessary to an understanding of performance practice. I propose that a more effective examination of musical improvisation proceed from transcriptions and an analytical, systems-based approach that reflects the mechanics of the tradition.

In the twenty plus years since the publication of Derek Bailey's "Musical Improvisation" in 1980, literature on the subject has increased substantially. Sloboda and Pressing (1988), Hall (1992), Nettle/Russell (1998), Racy (2000), Rothenberg (2002) and Love (2003) have all enhanced the field by venturing into such areas as inspiration, symbolism, intuition and cognition studies, which were previously outside the musicology of performance practice. The cross-cultural interviews that were the basis for Bailey's book constituted the first global survey of approaches to improvisation. His interviews with Indian classical sitarist Virek Jasani, Flamenco guitarist Paco Peña, organist Jean Langlais, and saxophonist Ronnie Scott among others, launched a comprehensive investigation of the formerly under-studied art of improvisation.

Bailey raised issues that surfaced in many of my conversations and interviews such as practice, preparation, surrender to a musical/social context and non-verbal communication. Although our opinions on the use of transcription are opposed, we arrive at similar conclusions regarding improvisation's use of what could be described as a vocabulary: a repertoire of rhythmic and melodic units deployed at players' whims in diverse situations. Because it is unrealistic to think that all musical gatherings in any

⁸⁶ Contemplating Borders, 2004.

musical genre will guarantee inspired moments, Bailey suggests players rely on these stock devices to help the soloist endure occasional “blank areas or creative deserts.”

[A]t such times, when other more aesthetically acceptable resources such as invention and imagination appear to be absent, the vocabulary becomes the sole means of support. It has to provide everything needed to sustain continuity and impetus in the musical performance (Bailey, 1980:127).

At times these stock devices can inadvertently instigate new chains of ideas that upend conformity and help the improviser regain momentum.

However, bomba lead drummers are insulated from the threat of these “creative deserts” as they are continually subjected to external stimuli from dancers, singers, other drummers and the audience. The contribution of any participant can affect the overall success of the performance. Bailey describes this phenomenon:

Steve Lacy speaks of a brotherhood of language. Each player affects the pool of language. When you hear a new player—and you make it your business to hear anyone who comes along who has something new—then you have to go back and re-think everything (Bailey, 1980:126).

The improvisational vocabulary is used to construct a chain of events of varying degrees of intensity. The vocabulary is re-used and re-ordered in response to a continuous incoming flow of stimuli. In bomba, the instant the music begins, players are balancing new pattern combinations with older standard patterns, all the time attentive to interjections and other ideas that may be introduced by dancers or singers. Similarly, in jazz,

sense-making occurs appreciatively and retrospectively: as new phrases or chord changes are introduced, the improviser makes new connections between old and new material and adds to the unfolding scheme with the assumption that what is happening will appear purposeful, coherent and inevitable (Barrett in Linstead, 2000:238).

Sloboda’s interpretation of this phenomenon is outlined in the conclusion to his collection of essays titled *Generative Principles in Music*.

The fundamental nature of the improvisation process is considered to be the stringing together of a series of “event clusters” during each of which a continuation is chosen, based upon either the continuing of some existing stream of musical development (called here an event-cluster class) by association of array entries, or the interruption of that stream by the choosing of a new set of array entries that act as constraints in the generation of a new stream (new event-cluster class) (Sloboda, 1988:153).

In essence, Bailey’s ground-breaking examination of improvisation reveals that it can be conceived as a rigorous interplay of internal and external stimuli via a well prepared series of possible interventions that allow for deviation, experimentation, and ultimately inspiration.

For Edward T. Hall (1992) culture is inherited, acquired or learned. He defines two types of cultural transmission. The first one, *high context*, contains information that “is already known to the recipient, while very little is in a coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message or music”. This encompasses traditional musical practices, inherited style, community values, etc. *Low context* transmission, on the other hand, is the domain of an “explicit code” where information acquired over time and shared amongst individuals becomes a vested set of rules (Hall, 1992:229). In this categorization, improvisation is considered high context, and composition low context. This dichotomy falls short of explaining the architectural strategies of improvisers and the instinctual inspirations of composers. Nevertheless his categories enable scholars of improvisation to locate their arguments along a conceptual continuum.

In bomba performance improvisation sends a complex set of implicit messages the codes for which must be familiar to the recipients to acquire any significant meaning. The socio-musical relationship between the performer and the recipient audience/community is intensified by improvisation. Improvisational dialogue between drummer/dancer and audience depends on an internal knowledge that “cannot be taught,

patterns once acquired remain stored in the central nervous system, like an electrical field holding and forming anything entering its space” (Hall, 1992:225). Hall reinforces the belief that these acquired, highly creative and adaptive processes in improvisation position it as a practice within the “domain of experts” (ibid: 233).

Love’s “Musical Improvisation, Heidegger, and the Liturgy: A Journey of Hope” (Love, 2003) is as unlikely a source for understanding bomba practices as one could imagine. However, his conceptualization of the art of improvisation within the framework of philosophical arguments proposed by Descartes, Kant, and Heidegger illustrates how post-Cartesian thought privileged the written work over the improvised. The repercussions of this imbalance fed colonial and post-colonial prejudices that marginalized folkloric arts like bomba. Love suggests that improvisation was led down a path of neglect by the followers of Cartesian philosophy in the 18th century, adding that

the post-Cartesian marginalization of improvisation will be shown to have its roots in the wider marginalization of performance in relation to composition, when performance came to be associated with body within the Cartesian mind-body problematic (Love, 2003:30).

and

Belief that thought could exist without action (*cogito ergo sum*) marginalized the idea that there is such a thing as musical performing intelligence... What was forgotten were such things as the musical decisions required in performance, the skilful adaptation of performances in the light of these decisions, and the ability to evaluate alternative possible decisions during the performance process (ibid: 33).

Love argues further that improvisation “occupies a no-man’s land between composition and performance” (ibid: 33), relegating it to a third zone that Hall’s high/low dichotomy categories cannot easily accommodate. Yet the non-overlapping categories postulated by

Love and Hall preclude the possibility that an improvisation may exist in *all of these* realms simultaneously, alternately and/or intermittently.

Transcription in the Study of Improvisation. Bailey explored how improvisers engaged in their art, focusing principally on music outside notated traditions. He viewed the use of musical notation in the study of improvisation as a limiting device and cautioned that aspects unique to improvisation could not be captured in writing. As a teacher, his experimentation with group and class improvisations reinforced his reluctance. In the introduction to the 1980 first edition of his book he stated

transcription, far from being an aid to understanding improvisation, deflects attention towards peripheral consideration (Bailey, 1980:4).

I argue the opposite. The analysis of the transcribed examples presented in this chapter focus on how musical skills are applied in procedures that could lead to any number of outcomes. They illustrate possibilities and suggest rationales without betraying exploration and chance.

Love also appears to support Bailey's contention that notation cannot accommodate the human expressive impulses evident in improvisation. For Love, "The widely accepted concepts of composition and performance [of notated music] never really impart any sense of what it is to *make music*" (ibid: 46). This same view is echoed by Berliner when he states

However useful they [transcriptions] may be for accomplished musicians who can interpret them, all transcriptions are reductive or skeletal representations of performances and provide learners with little information about stylistic features of jazz (1994:98).

This reinforces my conviction that while notation may not shed light on *making music* as demonstrated in improvisation it can illustrate much of the *how* and even the *why* of particular improvisational musical processes.

In the last chapter I described a series of musical phrases improvised by Jesús Cepeda (Improvisations on Yubá Corrido, Fig. 4.60). The illustration demonstrates *why* he made that particular musical choice in his cadential phrase. The value of the transcription lies in articulating the realm of possible choices and the rationale for certain outcomes. Not all musical choices can be illustrated that clearly but it remains that transcription has a place as an analytical tool.

Ellingson expands beyond my notion of the importance of transcription stating that the trend in cross cultural transcription in the late 20th century “seems to be towards a cognitive or conceptual type...to portray musical sound as an embodiment of musical concepts held by members of a culture” (Ellingson in Myers, 1992:110). He adds “the development of transcription in the late 20th century seem to be towards conceptual transcriptions that seek to furnish a graphic-acoustic definition of the essential concepts on logical principles of a musical system”(ibid:141).

Nettl’s assessment of the study of musical improvisation stresses that its notation must draw “distinctions between what the artist explicitly meant to play and be perceived by the listener as against what is somehow less essential and predictable” (Nettl: 1998:4). His work brought together prominent scholars to address a series of approaches encompassing philosophical, ethnographical, and behavioural questions. The collection of articles also focused on the work of prominent world artists who have influenced our view of improvisation.

Improvisation as a conceptual practice

Improvisation, the heart of bomba drumming, is a communal/creative act, as physical as it is intuitive. The drummer's role is to animate any gathering of fellow practitioners by providing a constant stream of stylistically appropriate patterns that are rhythmically inspirational and performed with physical stamina for relatively long periods of time. The improviser assumes a community responsibility that may, to the outsider, disguise itself as an innocuous exchange of rhythm and movement.

Many of the activities we are called upon to call improvisation are evidently taken for granted as basic obligations of performers towards themselves, toward fellow members of ensembles, and toward patrons or other listeners (Blum, in Nettl 1998:28).

In the bomba, improvisation acquires an added dimension when the solo drummer, already confronted with the challenge of inventing on the spot, is required to correspond and interact with any dancer that approaches the performance area. In this scenario socio-cultural factors such as the age or the experience of the dancer, the venue, the degree to which the ensemble adheres to tradition and the experimental leaning of the group weigh heavily on the lead drummer. The added responsibility often stimulates the soloist to raise the level of the collective musical experience.

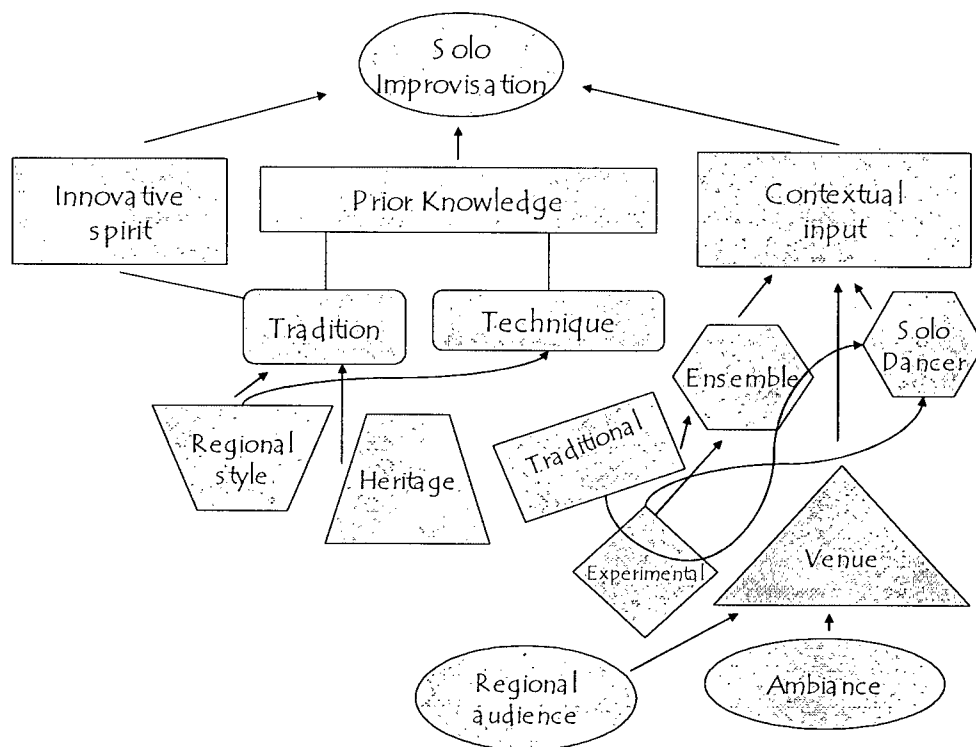
Spontaneity can be a response to stimulus. Stimulus may originate in the player's imagination or can be generated from outside. The interactive relationship of drumming and dance in bomba improvisation suggests very rapid combinations of both internal and external stimuli are at play.

The human brain processes auditory stimulus connecting it to the cerebral cortex in 8-9 milliseconds, a time fragment far shorter than for visual or movement stimulus (Sloboda, 1999:136). Once this information is received by the cerebral cortex it takes the

brain approximately 100-160 milliseconds to react. This high level of receptivity is even more acute at the level of error correction. According to Sloboda, error correction is in the area of 50-60 milliseconds (Sloboda, 1999:137). This draws attention to the incredible rate at which an improviser can process information from his/her immediate surroundings, attempt a response and adjust that response to the variety of factors both musical and psychological raised throughout this chapter and the previous one.

With the above in mind, Diagram 5.1 illustrates the multiple sources of input that inform the soloist prior to and during the improvisational moment.

Diagram 5.1. The bomba solo improvisation and its complex input network.



To further explore these concepts, I sought the experience and perspective of a number of traditional players as well as selected contemporary practitioners whose

innovations have yet to be fully accepted by the bomba community. During my conversations I raised questions regarding improvisational tactics in bomba so I could relate drummers' own perceptions to my observations of their performances. I also spoke with a variety of artists from diverse artistic disciplines in order to broaden the relevance of my investigation. As a result, and in combination with relevant published research, I explore improvisation as a technique, as instantaneous stimulus response and ultimately as ontology.

Diverse improvisers have common experiences. While the medium and the degree of improvisational leeway granted by the traditions varies widely, (my informants included traditional bomba players, an Indian classical musician, a modern dancer, an actor, a jazz pianist, a contemporary music clarinetist, and many others), the ideal conditions for a meaningful improvisational experience show remarkable similarities. Improvisation in world music traditions encompasses a vast expressive field ranging from the subtle turn of a mordent in a Bach sonata to the unpredictability of a John Zorn musical game piece. But the conditions that predispose a positive improvisational moment, such as thorough knowledge of a repertoire, excellent technique, the ability to quickly size up the immediate environment, the willingness to experiment and ultimately to risk challenging convention, were raised by all. This wide improvisational spectrum is also evident in the bomba. Soloists' improvisational techniques differ radically while their performance practices reflect more supracultural approaches.

When a musician improvises he/she surrenders to what Reichling referred to as "an immediate rather than mediated mode of knowing, where sense or reasoning is not needed" (Reichling, 1990:282). This never limits the choices available to the performer.

Seasoned improvisers draw on experience and years of trial and error during which they hone their reflex abilities, recognize possible outcomes and learn to exercise quick judgment.

Clarinetist François Houle explains,

Most of the time I try not to think of what note I'm going to play, I just come in and if I happen to be on a note that is *outside* (author's emphasis) I usually like it a lot because it surprises me, it upsets all my expectations and I have to start from a place I didn't expect and that's usually a good thing, because I know I can trust my experience to weave around it and connect to something rather than take a safe approach (Houle, p.c., June 2004).

Problem solving, as a process that requires apprehension of data and some degree of reflection/reaction is valuable during improvisational training but of limited use to experienced improvisers who accept that not all elements of the situation are within their control.

Experientially, improvisation can seem to be far removed from problem solving. This is particularly so where the goals of the music making are an exploration and process, rather than the presentation of artistic product (Pressing, in Sloboda, 1988:150).

For Pressing, however, problem solving takes on a different dimension where the improviser becomes adept at maneuvering through conceptual limits that force him/her to find creative solutions beyond a strictly musical realm.

In particular, I pursue the idea of improvisation as a system of expertise, examining how improvisers adapt to or circumvent the psychological and cultural constraints under which they inevitably operate in the quest for increased fluency and efficacy of musical expression (Pressing in Nettl, 1998:47).

Experienced improvisers unleash untested ideas that make the instant of inspiration if not intelligible then at least tangible. Quintero Rivera acknowledged these forces at play in the bomba when he stated

Unlike Eurocentric compositional practices, mulatto “compositions”⁸⁷ presume a certain flexibility where there exists a certain amount of collaboration in an open process. Composition is not absolute but presumes the presence of others and a view of music not only as an expression but also as a means of communication. The performer injects an element of interpretation that unleashes the presence of “irreversible processes” in performance (Quintero Rivera, 1999:78).

Because bomba cultural aesthetics, like those observed in its African precursors, rely on open-ended compositional and choreographic approaches, improvisation demands highly evolved practices that when subjected to open-ended scenarios, customarily yield positive creative solutions. Assuming performers possess ample traditional training, flexible compositional forms allow for inspiration, response and reaction.

Intuition plays a crucial role in the outcome of improvisational experiences. It can be described as a state that enables external stimuli to be immediately understood and acted upon, a state that leaves the player open to an inspired, exposed moment.

According to Pressing:

Intuition is the immediate apprehension of basic truths...this stands outside of reason yet it is the only foundation upon which it is built. Knowledge gained through intuition constitutes a set of “justifiable beliefs” which are nevertheless subject to the possibility of error (Pressing, in Sloboda, 1988:147).

The connection between intuition (an internal state of readiness and perception) and inspiration (a state where external input and intuition combine to produce heightened awareness) presumes the improviser’s confidence and willingness to explore. Intuitive players integrate prior knowledge, preparation and trust to achieve what some North American improvisers refer to as being “in the zone”, the immediate realization of a previously unimagined association with the musical structure or interpretation.

⁸⁷ Quintero Rivera refers here to the body of work of Afro-Puerto Rican composers whose heritage, like that of most islanders, is mixed European and African, hence “mulatto”.

South Indian drum master Trichy Sankaran stated that intuition predisposes the inspirational moment.

Intuition is something that is inherent. Oftentimes intuition plays a role in anticipating; anticipation is a part of intuition. We believe in all the vibes that are present on stage and that also influences, but it's like reading another's mind. This has happened to me quite often on stage within and also outside of my traditional music. When I think for a moment, this is what he is going to do next, it's right there. This is deeper concentration and focus and, of course, experience, you know, they're all combined (Sankaran, p.c., June 2004).

Ali Jihad Racy's fifth element of his "12 widely shared perspectives" on improvisation states "improvisation is linked to inspiration" (Racy, 2000:305) suggesting that successful improvisations may be measured by their ability to reach beyond the mere act of playing to a higher level of awareness.

Philosopher Henri Bergson "saw intuition as a way to attain direct contact with a prime reality ordinarily masked from human knowledge" (Pressing, in Sloboda, 1998:148). Bergson's view, while echoing similar beliefs within my own musical community, implies that intuition is a vehicle through which inspiration is channeled. Racy and Pressing outline a more plausible view, one that defines intuition as a dynamic state rather than a catalytic agent or a portal to a higher truth.

A common theme that surfaced during interviews and conversations with informants was the notion of improvisation as an extra-linguistic and multifaceted communication between performers, their audiences and a collective source of knowledge accessible by a certain state of mind and/or conditioning. Improvising makes possible a non-verbal exchange (among musicians or between musician and audience) where the real intersects an otherworldly ephemeral state where life becomes art.

Choreographer/modern dancer Crystal Pite:

I'm not sure I've heard the word mystical used, but I've certainly heard other words of that type, like trance, like you're in the zone, you've got the flow. It's beyond thinking, it's beyond consciousness, it's certainly a state that I would aspire to, if not in every performance, in moments. So much is revealed in a moment like that that is not about thinking or judgment, it's a very present moment (C. Pite, p.c., June 2004).

Actor Barbara Pollard:

Edgar Casey talked about the river of consciousness; something you can tap into that is just there. The more you are open, the more you can tap into that...the amount you let yourself be open to respond to and the amount that you allow yourself to be unbusy in this restricted physical world, the more you can go to that other world. That world is bigger than this little world. That other world is not linear, it's not restricted by time and it's multi-dimensional (B. Pollard, p.c., June 2004).

When Crystal Pite talks about the flow and Barbara Pollard about that other world, they describe a concept shared by many of the artists interviewed. The sense is that inspiration leads to meaningful improvisations when the performer relinquishes a connection with her/his immediate environment and connects to another dimension of consciousness. This phenomenon is reiterated by Herzog, Rothenberg and Cepeda as follows.

Bruno Nettl recounts Herzog's experiences with American native music:

For the Pima people of the south-western United States, on the other hand, songs not yet composed existed in the supernatural world but had to be "unravelling" by humans in order to be realized or made part of human culture (Herzog 1936, 333 in Nettl, 1998:5).

Author David Rothenberg echoes similar sentiments:

Charles Keil calls this the groove and has written that the best music grooves take us up into their world, holding a part of us there even after the sound has ceased (Keil, in Rothenberg, 2002:96).

Bomba dancer Gladys Cepeda claims to have had a special, almost psychic, relationship with her uncle, the now-deceased drummer Chichito Cepeda.

With him, I really get to play. When I put my hand on my skirt, I stretch my arm, he hits it.⁸⁸ I can take my time, it doesn't matter, whatever I do, he hits it. It's like he knows where I am headed... we have this chemistry. (G. Cepeda in R. Singer film "Dancing the Drum", 2000. Translation by author).

Pressing's view of "intuition", Pite's flow, Keil's "groove" and Cepeda's "chemistry" are common terms used to help explain the *how* of improvisation's *what*.

Rhythmic examples as process

The examples below are drawn from several different types of bomba styles and sub-styles. They have been chosen to highlight the process by which soloists develop their material. Solo drummers, bombarded by stimuli in the performance context, improvise by choosing patterns that reflect the multiple inputs illustrated in Diagram 5.1; the patterns in turn trigger a higher level of interaction and communicate referential meaning. The examples are by no means comprehensive but were compiled to illustrate possible outcomes from a given set of basic patterns.

Once the improvisational process begins, the solo drummer begins to relate to the accompaniment, the choruses, the dancer, and the lyrics in a multi-faceted dialogue involving:

The rhythms at play. These are provisional samples of the combinations of rhythms played by the soloist resulting from the simultaneous playing of the accompanying drum patterns, the rhythms of the lead singer, those of the chorus and likely those of the audience members who may clap along.

⁸⁸ A "hit" in this context means that the player plays an accented stroke on the drum simultaneously with the gesture of the dancer.

Figure 5.1. Basic sicá pattern as played by accompaniment drums



Figure 5.2. Sicá pattern with added beats to paraphrase accompaniment



Figure 5.3. Sicá with accents to coincide with clapping or chanting



Rhythms inherent in a particular sub-genre. Every song is set within one of the styles or sub-styles delineated in Chapter Three and soloing must conform to its peculiarities. In some cases soloing patterns can be transferred across similar sub-styles. Examples 5.4 and 5.5 demonstrate cases where the identical pattern may appear in compound or common time. Example 5.6 illustrates a pattern typical to the Loíza region.

Figure 5.4. Solo phrase in yubá



Figure 5.5. Identical solo phrase in common time

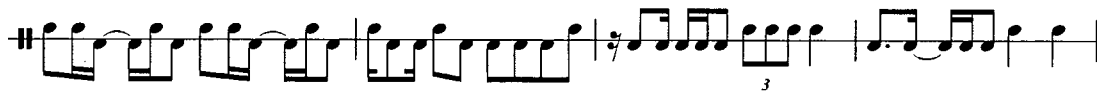


Figure 5.6. Ayala family standard solo figures in seis corrido from Loíza.



Rhythms that impart lower level action and impart a sense of relaxation. These patterns are common rhythmic cells that are very familiar to all soloists and are convenient patterns to revert to between challenging moves suggested by the dancer or more complex rhythmic combinations featured in a solo (in the case of an instrumental interpretation).

Figure 5.7. Common rhythm cells familiar to regular players



Rhythms that bear a personal signature. Each player has a repertoire of “rhythm areas” that they like to explore. These are selectively inserted bearing in mind that their overuse may dilute their effectiveness.

Figure 5.8. Ayala family standard solo pattern in seis corrido

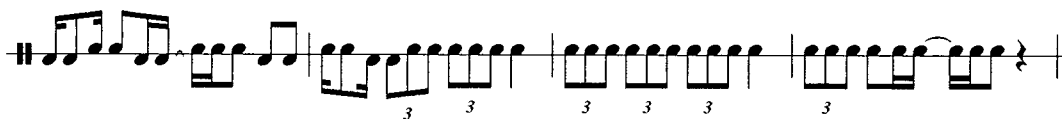
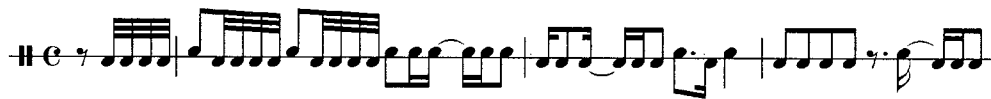


Figure 5.9. J.E. Dufrasne syncopation style in leró.



Rhythms taught or played by previous masters. These are traditional patterns that bear the marks of the mentors that either invented them or made extensive use of them. Regular practitioners share a large repertoire of these. The quotes are meant to reveal that the player is cognizant not only of his/her present practice but also of its legacy. The quotes may function as signifiers of a particular school or may reflect a more eclectic approach to the solo language.

Figure 5.10. Standard bomba break associated with Rafael Cortijo



Rhythms that quote other players or evoke other contexts. This form of referencing is an important component of the continuation of tradition. In this practice, a soloist may play a rhythmic cell that may be recognized by the full assembly of spectators or by only a few insiders. The intended purpose is to make a commentary or acknowledge an incident. In some instances a soloist may introduce a humorous or clever extension of some improvised pattern.

Figure 5.11. Common Cuban rumba guaguancó break



The following chant and corresponding rhythm, known to most Puerto Ricans, is a traditional refrain sung at public events. The call is an onomatopoeic imitation of a drum stroke, the response is a confirmation of the good feeling imparted by that rhythm.

Figure 5.12. Call-and-response carnival chant pattern (Literal translation: Prucutá, prucutá -the going is good!)

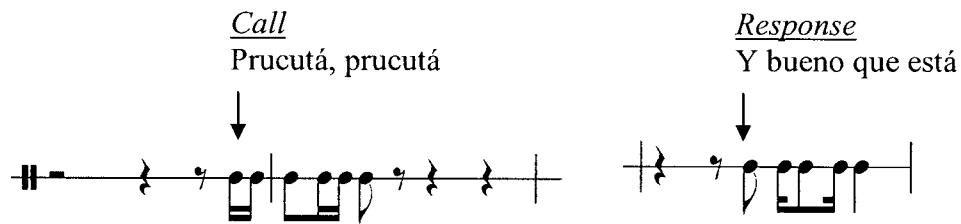


Figure 5.13. Solo drum pattern to accent the call

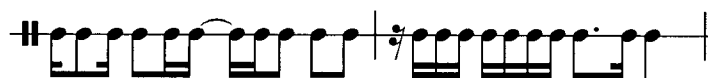


Figure 5.14. Attention-getting ornaments



Rhythms that create expectations. In this type of rhythmic pattern the soloist prepares cadences, sets up transitions or simply intensifies the rhythmic interplay. Most common among these are repeated rhythmic cells with clearly identifiable (to those familiar with the styles) ending sequences that other players and dancers lock into.

Figure 5.15. A common ending sequence for any section in common time



As soon as the entire ensemble is engaged in this solo/accompanist dialogue the singer and chorus enter. Singers may choose to wait until the drumming has reached an acceptable level of intensity or may initiate the customary call and response after only a few verses. At this point the improviser must respond to the text by reinforcing its rhythm or by avoiding clashes that would potentially obscure its clarity. Often the drummer reverts to the main ostinato patterns played by the accompanying drums and then re-establishes a solo line once a verse cedes to a refrain. When the dancer enters the virtual circle in front of the drum, he/she must acknowledge the soloist, engage in visual contact and make a direct connection suggesting a more intense dialogue is about to take place.⁸⁹ The solo drummer may at that point acknowledge the dancer's greeting by a head nod, a smile, or, commonly, by a short rhythmic statement on the drum.

This introductory greeting is normally done in a short dance vamp known as the paseo where the dancer moves about the dance space marking very basic steps of bomba in time to the rhythm prior to commencing the dialogue. The drummer may be aware of the rhythmic vocabulary of this dancer or be encountering them for the first time. In the former case, it is easier to predict from among a set of possible patterns just what the dancer may do. In the latter, the drummer is completely unaware of the possible step combinations other than those that one would associate generally with the style. In any case the drummer has to play accompanist, collaborator and virtual psychic while maintaining a constantly evolving solo that meets the challenges of the dancer and maintains his/her position of authority over the drumming ensemble by performing at a master level in both technique and invention

⁸⁹ Bomba dancer Veronica Valentín lamented the growing absence of this practice in the large Puerto Rican community in New York City. Bomba dancers, she stated, simply approach the dance space with no acknowledgement of the lead drummer, much like they would enter a dance floor in a club or bar.

Earlier I observed how bomba soloists must propagate tradition, skillfully reflect the present and propose possible futures. Bomba soloing requires the player to maintain an eye on the past practices that provide technical support and link the player to the living tradition. The present is represented by the specific improvisational dialogue, the performance context, and current developments in bomba drumming. Finally, future possibilities emerge from the juxtaposition of previous knowledge and experimentation. In the ensuing process the soloist nurtures tradition and perpetuates the relevance of the bomba to its constituents.

Additional issues in improvisational practice

The relation between solo drummers and solo dancers unfolds with a situational phenomenon Barton calls the “drum-dance” challenge, (Barton, 1995); a sport in which the soloists seek respect through innovation and endurance, while challenging and provoking each other.

Some exceptional dancers set out to challenge the drum soloist by introducing unusual dance combinations and asymmetrical phrases that depart from the norm and at times cross the meter of the dance in unusual patterns. The latest generation of bomba enthusiasts is globalizing bomba by introducing dance moves linked to hip-hop, martial arts or other contemporary dance styles.

Does the notion of soloing change as the different songs feature different styles or sub-styles? Soloing is seen as a realization of existing rhythms. This has the effect of establishing a general approach to soloing itself, regardless of the style or sub-style. The drummer does not so much think that he/she is soloing in yubá or holandés but rather just

responds to the inherent pulse of the supporting drums and the verses of the lead singer. When the meter changes from simple to compound, the soloing may follow suit or may temporarily maintain the previous meter to create tension and contrast. Because the player must follow and inspire the dancer, he/she must be able to, in the manner of playing, suggest possible syncopations, movements or cadences.

Who gets to solo and how do they achieve this privileged position? Lead drummers must earn their coveted place in bomba ensembles. A player must prove to colleagues that he/she has undergone a rigorous training period (formal or informal) and demonstrated that they have the technique and rhythmic acumen to follow a dance. Many groups have designated solo drummers or a number of selected soloists made up of the most experienced members of the ensemble. In some cases these soloists were the founders of their ensembles, in other cases they are players that have been sought by other ensemble members for their ability to *subir* or *repicar* (to solo with dancers). Having been tutored from the simplest bomba instruments (the maraca and the *cuá*) to the most sophisticated (the lead drum variously known as *quinto*, *repicador*, *subidor*, etc.) these soloists bring their experience to bear on the rest of the ensemble. Buleador players often refrain from playing lead drum and defer to those that may do better. Not all buleador players aspire to lead drummer status. Therefore the privileged position of lead can come about as much from the aspirations of the player as from recognition by peers.

Jesús Cepeda first learned bomba from crouching next to the buleador to play the *cuá*. When his brothers were confident he could handle the next level he then progressed to the accompanying drum and spent a long period of apprenticeship on that instrument. He believes this to be an effective process through which to integrate experience,

exposure, the social experience (and the collective bomba knowledge gained therein) and technique. To truly know the rhythms one must live the experience (J. Cepeda, p.c., 2002).

Six prerequisites for being a good soloist

As the solo bomba drummer strives to establish leadership through the mastery of improvisation she/he must bring to the situation sufficient preparation to confront the challenges that are put forth by the dancers. This preparation should include:

Extensive physical conditioning. This allows the free play of patterns and combinations unencumbered by technical limitations or fatigue over any normal period of performance duration.

Knowledge of the repertoire of styles and sub-styles. The soloist, by virtue of the trust that is instilled in him/her by the other players, must provide stylistically appropriate improvisations that are rooted in specific musical traditions and its community standards. This knowledge doubles as a credential, what Becker calls an

etiquette... providing for the systematic formal expression of recognized and accepted relations of rank (Becker, 2000:171-176).

Knowledge of the dances. I have encountered very few drummers that do not dance. This knowledge allows them to be able to predict the probable cadence of a step sequence, the relative speed with which any given move may be done or even the possible steps that a dancer is likely to employ. A drummer's dance expertise enhances intuitive knowledge of the dancer's intentions and elevates the possibility of exciting outcomes in performance. In any successful drummer/dancer dialogue, preparation seeks opportunity.

An open mind. The performer must be ready and willing to enter the process without a prescribed outcome in mind. The more flexible the player, the more likely he/she will be able to connect at an intuitive level. This is a key element in the most inspired situations I have observed.

This prerequisite relates to the central notion that in order to enable a successful improvisation the player must have fully mastered drum technique, have a broad knowledge of the repertoire, and a keen understanding of body language. The command of these three elements frees the player from concerns over technique and style and opens a channel for the soloist to connect directly with the dancer or singer by way of subtle cues, stated intentions, or movement.

Knowledge of community styles and performance standard. This knowledge enables the performer to employ a drumming “language” that respects the traditions of the community for which they perform. Players are welcome anywhere, but implicit in the granting of an opportunity to play is a degree of respect that should be accorded the hosting community. This tribute is represented by an adherence to the traditions of that region, which may be evident through selected styles or other musical devices that signal the soloist is at least aware of the music of the immediate surroundings. Soloists are certainly free to perform any music they wish, often reserving their most aggressive playing for those styles they bring from their own communities. In this way a performance becomes an exchange of goods where a player partakes of the local while sharing their own. In this scenario, innovation is welcome, but before being accepted and given “license” by her/his community to establish new patterns, any adventurous player must demonstrate knowledge of tradition.

Audiences and fellow performers assume responsibility for the evolution of tradition. Puerto Rican audiences take their music listening very seriously. Typical spectators can hold strong opinions regarding style and practice, and don't hesitate to share them. This form of quality control, while informal, is a direct manifestation of the kind of community interaction that makes the bomba tradition so significant to its audience. Improvisation, as the crossroads between tradition and innovation, implicates the solo drummer in an exercise of continuity. Knowledge of the values and styles of any particular community is essential to any significant contribution to that continuity.

Ability to interact with dancers of all skill levels. Unlike Gladys Cepeda, the dancer whose experiences with her drummer bordered on a psychic connection, most drummers regularly encounter situations in which they do not know the dancers for whom they perform. There are no rules per se and no limitations in terms of what a dancer may present in the course of a bomba.

Dance scholar Judith Lynn Hanna portrays a challenge facing the average drummer:

Just as a key feature of human speech is that any speaker of a language is capable of producing and understanding an indefinitely large number of utterances never encountered, so, in dance performance, new sequences of movement and gesture never previously encountered may be created by the performer and understood by the audience (Hanna, 1979:34).

Significant pressures face the bomba improviser. The variety of dance moves possible is endless. In bombazos there are no predetermined benchmarks of technique or skill for dancers that may enter the circle and challenge the drummer. It is even common for children to participate in bombazos, and their contributions are valued alongside those of adults. J. Cepeda stated that:

Much is learned from children. They provide new steps and moves that come from a total lack of fear and their extended visual repertory owing to the television and film images they have observed. At times the players watch the kids for new moves that with a few well-advised additions or connecting phrases arrive at meaningful new forms of engagement (J. Cepeda, p.c., 2002).

It should be noted that, from a musical/technical point of view, it is just as challenging to improvise to an accomplished dancer than to a mediocre one. The drummer must continually elevate the musical experience to the best of his/her ability.

Improvisation or composition?

Is improvisation a compositional process in highly accelerated mode? At the moment of inspiration, problem solving, response/reaction, and reasoning all take place at a very high processing rate. Sankaran observes,

Often the dichotomy between composition and improvisation is talked about. Improvisation can be an extension of composition. Mentally we toy with ideas and crystallize them in a composition. Often in my mridangam solos it's very hard to draw a line between composition and improvisation. I once came up with the word "comprovisation". It becomes a part of a composition and we often use it, I may use some pre-composed thing, or a korvai⁹⁰, I may have composed that day which I would want to play in that concert. When I was working on the idea, yes, that was improvisation; a silent improvisation within your own head. We all, as composers, improvise. Composers always improvise in their heads as to what should be the piece and how it can be made into a work (Sankaran, p.c., 2004).

A long time collaborator of Sankaran's, John Wyre expressed his sentiments on this same topic:

There are some similarities between improvisation and composition, maybe not in relation to reaction time. For me to be successful in improvisation depends on my ability to be at one with the music, if I can empty my mind and hear the whole band, and not think about it, intuitively react to it, there's great discovery, there's great spontaneity and there's great interaction with my colleagues. If I do the same with composition, it can be

⁹⁰ Korvai- In South Indian classical music, a korvai refers to pre-composed segments employed in drum solos whereby the soloist(s) conclude a major section of the performance with a cadential formula that is repeated three times or in any number of combinations of three time repeats (Sankaran, p.c., May, 2005).

extremely beautiful, the more I think of it, the less meaningful it is. In order to look for insight or understanding of what's happening I have to be so open to it that I almost don't exist anymore. I'm specifically trying, and this might be a problem in my mind, not to analyze what I'm doing, because if I approach anything with a plan, I'm in trouble (Wyre, p.c., June, 2004).

Pressing arrives at a similar structural framework.

The idea of preparation is very important for improvisation, where real-time cognitive processing is often pushed up near its attentional limits...For improvised performance that aims at artistic presentation, where discrepancies between intention and result must be kept within strict bounds, practice must attempt to explore the full range of possible motor actions and musical effects to enable both finer control and the internal modeling of discrepancies and correction procedures, including feedforward (a higher cognitive control centre biasing lower ones toward anticipated movements) (Pressing, in Sloboda, 1988:136).

In the end, making a distinction between a composed and an improvised work is less important to the understanding of the improvisational process than recognizing the interaction of motor and sensory response and how that is conditioned by preparation, experience and opportunity. Improvisational approaches are filtered through a human physiology that enables virtually instant processing. That processing is pre-wired, so to speak, for intensive action and responds with physical action from the physiological side and calculating strategies from the cognitive side. Action is contingent upon kinesthetic principles that enable the creative mind to exercise its will. It remains essential that we have an understanding of stimulus response and reaction time as a natural complement to our exploration of musical intent and intuition.

To conclude, the improvisational practices, both conceptual and practical, that transpire in a bomba performance inform and guide the outcome of any solo. Navigating this range of possibilities is a multi-dimensional experience involving technical operations and calculations (what the player plays or sets out to play respectively) subject to external stimuli (intuition, inspiration, contextual constraints of style, and musical-

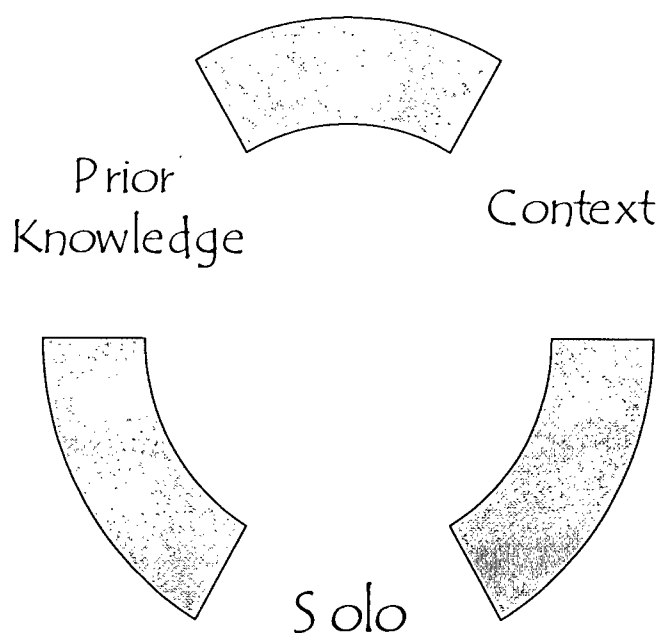
personal challenges from dancers). The end result can be an ecstatic and symbolically loaded performance experience. The improvised drum solo is the medium through which traditional practices and identity struggles are filtered. The filtering process refines expressive performance and reinforces tradition through innovative playing and re-creation. The soloist, acting as a socio-historical conduit, delivers his/her musical message through spontaneous composition.

Diagram 5.2 Improvisation as a cyclical evolution

The improvisational experience illustrated as a cycle in which internal (prior knowledge) and external information (context) influence and inform the solo.

The informational cycle progresses clockwise from left to right to bottom centre.

Improvisation as a cyclical evolution



Chapter Six

The bomba in Puerto Rican society

“The knowing is embodied in the doing”⁹¹

Judith Becker

Over the past five chapters, I have portrayed bomba as a musical genre, a community, a stylistic network, a musical practice both technical and expressive, and as an improvisational vehicle. In this final chapter I position bomba as a catalytic agent in the development of a national artistic expression and as a part of a distinct Caribbean identity; one that has influenced all types of local music making and whose dissemination enriches social and recreational activities throughout the island. At the same time I raise concerns regarding the tensions between diverse local communities, shifting representational perspectives, and a palpable generation gap.

The musical landscape of Puerto Rico has been transformed by the social, artistic and technical contributions of bomba over its two hundred-plus year history. Álvarez and Quintero Rivera’s work on the presence of bomba rhythms in jíbaro cuatro and güiro patterns emphasized the role of the holandés rhythm as a core component of the later Southern style of plena. Rafael Cepeda and Rafael Cortijo took the sicá and the bambulé, and transformed them into dance hall sensations. Even the Puerto Rican national anthem, “La Borinqueña”, though stylistically considered a danza, contains rhythmic elements that can be traced to the same local African sources as bomba.

⁹¹ Becker, 2004:129

Bomba percolates just beneath the surface of all forms of musicking in Puerto Rico today. Its characteristic cadence infuses all other musical genres on the island and shows signs of emerging as a true “national” music. Bomba can be found underscoring the hip-hop productions of Tego Calderón, driving the horns and keyboards of Furto Rios’ experimental jazz fusion, and reflected in the güiro patterns of all jibaro music. There are orchestral works based on bomba dances by Iván Hernández Vizcarrondo and William Cepeda, also television advertisements for the San Juan Star newspaper featuring Son del Batey. There is bomba in the schools and at the university, bomba down in the old working class neighbourhoods and bomba up the street from the cruise ship terminals that yearly pour thousands of visitors into Old San Juan.

Thanks to bomba’s recognition by the ICP, financial assistance for selected ensembles has become available. Other forms of support facilitated the creation of a modest festival touring circuit that allowed bomba to “get back on its feet” during hard times. This form of bridge assistance laid the groundwork for the expansion of contemporary bomba. Today’s renaissance would not have been possible without the moral and financial support of the ICP and the Centro de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe (Centre for Advanced Studies of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean).

Ironically, bomba’s survival also owes much to its former marginal presence in Puerto Rican society. In earlier times, any overt politicization would have been considered seditious and provoked authorities to institute even more repressive measures against it. Seclusion has concentrated its impact and reinforced its power. This concluding portrait will illustrate the extent to which bomba negotiates priorities while allowing for growth and the occasional retreat to rescue endangered traditional practices.

The evolution of the modern bomba

The gradual transformation of bomba from a marginalized rural/communal activity to a recognized island-wide artistic practice is a compelling story that intersects important social and political landmarks and inevitably touches upon more difficult issues of racism and alienation. In spite of a long history as a multi-racial society and consistent claims of racial tolerance, Puerto Rico's wide cultural, economic, and racial gaps have only recently begun to narrow.

The bomba community endured repeated attempts to diminish or negate its roles. Colonial authorities forbade bomba in the mid 1800s for fear it would create public distractions that might disguise slave rebellions. The Catholic Church condemned it on the grounds that its dances were vulgar expressions of lust. Repressive measures that sought to contain the general movement and recreational activities of blacks had a negative impact on the bomba during the entire period of slavery on the island.

The following example, from a not-so-distant past, illustrates the challenges Afro-Puerto Rican traditions have faced. While surveying the extent of island dances in his famous 1849 novel "El Gíbaro", author Manuel Alonso laid out a panorama of European-derived musical traditions and dances. When addressing the traditions evident among the local black population he stated,

Los de los negros de África y los de los criollos de Curaçao no merecen incluirse bajo el título de esta escena pues aunque se ven en Puerto Rico, nunca se han generalizado (Alonso, 1949:38).

The dances of the blacks of Africa, and the creoles of Curaçao, don't deserve to be listed under this survey because, although they can be seen in Puerto Rico, they have never been widely adopted (Translation by author).

Such was not the case. At the time of that publication, bomba *was* widely adopted, and in all areas of the island. The only truth in Alonso's portrayal was that the

elite, and those Puerto Ricans who preferred to identify themselves as non-African, had never recognized it. The dismissal by leading intellectuals of the time limited bomba's appeal and influence across class distinctions.

One obstacle to bomba's popular acceptance that later turned out to be beneficial was the massive labour mobilization brought about by the rapid economic and industrial transformation of post-World War II Puerto Rico. This government-led thrust towards modernization begun in the early twentieth century instigated a radical demographic shift from rural to urban centres. In the long run this shift disrupted traditional community contexts and transferred the focus of bomba activity to the cities. In hindsight, this benefited bomba because newer communities achieved a higher profile by being closer to sources of government funding and media organizations.⁹² The large concentration of urban blacks also provided a critical mass whose response to traditional and contemporary bomba music and dance could hardly be ignored by commercial interests.

Rural inhabitants who migrated into urban centres in search of work after the collapse of viable subsistence farming were not always welcome in their new environment. According to González, workers attempted a degree of social integration that was at odds with new communities willing to accept them. Bomba songs soon began to voice the inherent tension in their displaced new homelands. González illustrates her point with the following anonymous bomba lyric:

⁹² Significant support from government did not materialize until the late 1950s, around the same time as electronic media institutions (namely television and radio) began to establish their highly influential role in national cultural representation.

Figure 6.1 Anonymous bomba song lyrics

*Yo no soy de la ciudad
Yo soy del campo
Y no se por que será
Que gozo tanto.
De la montaña venimos
Para ponerte a gozar
Oye tu bailas en el Casino
Pero yo gozo más.*

(González, 1983:21)

*I'm not from the city
I'm from the country
And I'm not sure why
I have such a good time.
From the mountain we come⁹³
To show you a good time
Hey, you dance in the Casino
But I have a better time.*

[Translation by author]

This sentiment takes on deeper dimensions when we view the issue of alienation not as an internal Puerto Rican phenomenon, but in the context of Puerto Rico's relationship to the United States. Puerto Rico has never experienced complete autonomy since the arrival of colonialism in 1511. Given the overwhelming power of American interests since 1898, both military and commercial, it is unrealistic to believe a political change is imminent. The alienation Puerto Ricans feel with regard to the U.S. forces them to adopt other paths to validate their distinctiveness and affirm their values. Bomba has played an important role in the affirmation of a common Puerto Rican identity. As a genre that contains a multitude of shared musical forms of expression, bomba has served the social and recreational purposes of its participants and helped to define them as a cultural group rather than as just a labour pool. As a link between past and present societies, the bomba also served as an antidote to the educational curricula that, until only recently, systematically undermined the cultural contributions of the island's black inhabitants.

Cortijo and his Combo, Rafael Cepeda, and others only managed to overcome their exclusion from radio and television in the mid to late 1960s. Such was the protracted pace of racial and cultural integration. "Juan Flores has creatively termed this 'Cortijo's

⁹³ This is the opening line from a popular Christmas aguinaldo, a holiday musical tradition of the jíbaro.

Revenge'⁹⁴ in the struggles for discourse and representation that have characterized Puerto Rican cultural history” (Aparicio, 1998:60).

Despite this promising environment, concerns about bomba’s growth and ability to truly represent itself began to emerge as the expanding community attracted more students, enthusiasts, scholars and other outsiders to its fold. Older performers fear that the tradition will end up in the hands of participants whose living knowledge and experience is limited. Some, like Jesús Cepeda, feel that anecdotal or written knowledge alone is insufficient. He and others fear that the considerable representational power that resides with academics and scholars will grant them an unfair advantage as the history of the bomba finally begins to be told and written. Elia Cortés (2004) underscores conservative ambivalence about the growing popularity of bomba and adds that traditional players “must be afraid of losing their control of an important aspect of Afro-Puerto Rican heritage”.

Today, the community looks back on fifty years of renewal and witnesses the genre as a sophisticated multi-functional practice. Recognition by cultural institutions, a high level of public acceptance, the development of regional and stylistic “schools” (with their inherent rivalry) and a concerted effort by those interested in its survival have collectively been responsible for the transformation.

Growth since the early 1990s began with the arrival of bombazos, an alluring new form of social gathering not tied to clubs, formal presentations, or overt commercial sponsorship. The spirit behind bombazos was tied to the notion of community. Embedded within that concept was the desire to strengthen Puerto Rican identity. According to Rivera,

⁹⁴ Flores, 1992.

the bombazos broke the mold of what the bomba was, because it was the actual public that participated, and it was they who were the spectacle...furthermore it was as if the public itself generated the kind of groups it needed (P.L. Rivera, p.c., 2004).

At the same time, the protracted struggle over the adoption of an official bilingual language policy and the concomitant celebrations surrounding the 500th anniversary of European contact in 1992 balkanized the island's population: there were large factions supporting and opposing statehood and a sizable minority promoting independence; and there were deep divisions over whether Spanish or English should be the primary language in education and media. Not surprisingly, bomba followers, already a patriotic lot, seized upon this social polarization as an effective vehicle to encourage nationalist sentiment. Politically speaking, the renewal of bomba, and the rise of bombazos are symptomatic of a communal search for nation. After one hundred and seven years under American rule, Puerto Ricans are continuing to redefine the struggle for nation and embarking upon a realignment of their political/cultural state.

For many Puerto Ricans at home and abroad, the bomba functions much like a logo, a symbol of a national practice unique to that island. The absence of an independent nationality, such as that of the neighbouring island nations, intensifies the attachment to music, especially African-derived music, and enables people to imagine an identity distinct from that of its former colonial overlords while sharing historical and cultural elements common to its independent neighbours. This direct connection with something ultimately autochthonous draws listeners at a level far beyond musical attraction.

Bomba's integration into cultural, recreational and educational initiatives has created a solid base from which to expand and diversify. This integration begins in grade school and in summer camps where children are taught dances, songs and rhythms as a regular part of cultural curricula. At the high school and college levels, bomba serves as a

platform for delivering educational units in history, music, dance, folklore and to develop concepts of teamwork and individual achievement. At the public recreational level, a growing number of physical activities such as aerobics classes and other dance fitness programmes incorporate bomba, and because the public recognizes it as a homegrown practice, the net value of recreational participation is enhanced.

Bomba: representing image, attitude, renewal and youth.

Clothing and context. Old photographs and early documentary film footage suggest that prior to bomba's modern period (post-1950s), there was no common costume associated with bomba. Participants dressed in their most presentable clothing. This included modest but fanciful dresses of varying lengths for the women and suits or dress pants and a shirt for the men. The female tradition of wearing a wide skirt with an embroidered and decorated slip and that of men dressed in white suits was known to have existed in the Ponce and Guayama but its use was neither widespread nor required (I. Albizu, p.c., 2004). In the early 1960s the bomba began to be presented in staged public events sponsored by the recently formed ICP. These presentations sought to bring Puerto Rican rural and marginalized traditions to an increasingly urbanized public unaware of them. Presenters began to incorporate a more sophisticated look for traditional dance and music. The bomba presented by the Ballet Folklórico Areyto⁹⁵, for example, sought to incorporate costumes from diverse parts of the island. The elaborate costume now associated with bomba, which includes the Ponce and Santurce style of wide skirts, head

⁹⁵ Areyto was formed in 1968 by choreographer Irene Jiménez de McLean in collaboration with ICP director Ricardo Alegría.

scarf, and long sleeve blouse for women, and white clothing and white straw hat for the men, were all standardized during this period of bomba revival.⁹⁶

As the bomba continued its transition from stage to street, events in bars, parks and restaurants began to feature more informal attire. The focus of the bomba event experience shifted from the staged spectacle to the intimate and participatory dance-drum interaction. Offstage, male bomba dancers have no particular dress code and one is as likely to encounter jeans, t-shirts and dreadlocks, as to see well-dressed individuals. Male dance in bomba employs extensive arm and leg movement and does not rely on the movement enhancement properties associated with female skirts or dresses. Women's traditional wide fringed skirts, with their corresponding decorated slips, typical of staged bomba, have given way to informal outfits that minimize fashion and maximize movement. In Santurce, women often wear jeans and a blouse to bombazos. When they are ready to dance they pull clothes from their purses or fitness bags and fasten wrap-around skirts overtop whatever their outfit happens to be. The original purpose of the skirts and dresses was to exaggerate movement, to expand the range of bodily gestures and to display a level of fashionable attire usually beyond the means of most rural or urban blacks. Young women who flock to bombazos today show little interest in recreating older stereotypes to which they have little connection. While staged performances of bomba continue to perpetuate the use of traditional costumes, even this level of presentation is beginning to change.

⁹⁶ Tato Conrad (2002) insists the exuberant hand/skirt movement in Santurce styles has no Afro-Puerto Rican roots but is an appropriation from Flamenco and other Spanish dance styles simply adopted to enhance existing styles. To claim it is an age-old tradition is a misrepresentation.

In the celebrated documentary film about the Cepeda family, *Dancing the Drum* (Singer, 2000), Gladys Cepeda wore an outfit that was a combination of bomba skirt with leotard top, resembling modern dance wear. The presentation of bomba's most prominent family in modern dress signals that some contemporary groups favour an image connecting bomba to contemporary society and its future potential rather than to its historical roots.

Generational differences. The relationship between traditional bomba followers and young converts is often fraught with a degree of intergenerational tension felt most acutely by older players. Among the most divisive issues is the younger generation's preference for a more informal context, first evident in the 1970s. Traditional bomba gatherings in the past, regardless of how modest the setting, were seen as significant and semi-formal events worthy of a higher level of decorum than other everyday community events. Men and women would dress up in their best suits and fanciest dresses. Today, bombazos and other bomba performances, elders claim, are relegated to simple entertainment not important enough to warrant fashionable attire. Another common complaint is that the dancing has taken a more performance oriented character rather than the participatory couple's style of earlier times. The term "graceful" is commonly used to describe those earlier times in contrast to what many traditional players call this contemporary "nonsense". Elder dancer Doña Julia Clavell insisted "that stuff you see around there, those things you see on television (like the Cepedas and the Ayalas), that's not bomba!" (Seda, 1996:6). Fellow septuagenarian dancer and drummer José Miguel Flores reminisced about the elegance of the older bomba dances in his native city of

Guayama, adding, “I’ve even tried to dance that stuff I see on television; I can’t, and to add insult to injury they do it in bare feet”. (ibid, 1996:8. Translation by author)

On a number of occasions, Ivan Dávila alluded to the fact that younger players simply didn’t value the broad experience of older players; that they seemed uninterested in collaborating with those older than their peers. Although I was not able to confirm his contention, I did notice that older players working in professional engagements employ a larger percentage of younger players than younger players do of older players. Some of this may be due to the fact that younger players often work for more modest wages than bomba veterans are willing to accept.

The sharpest contrast between new converts to bomba and the older bomba generation (their mentors) is a political one. For the older generation, the challenge was to ensure the genre survive, gain acceptance and shed the weight of racial prejudice. The generation of the ‘50s and ‘60s was too preoccupied with renewal to dedicate much energy and/or resources to reminding Puerto Ricans that this was their music. For many of the younger generation, to engage in the bomba was akin to an act of patriotism. Unlike performances of say, rumba or later reggae, which could be judged by criteria established offshore, the bomba was seen as belonging to its new intergenerational and interracial community.

Shifting attitudes. The shift from folklorized bomba presentation on stage (from the ‘60s to the late ‘80s) to the bombazo (from early ‘90s on) represents a deliberate rejection of the aesthetics of formal staging. This reflects a politically empowered community determined to dictate the terms of its representation. However, if the new bomba is to become the vehicle of national identity to which many of its proponents

aspire, the bombazo community will have to reconcile with communities both in and out of Puerto Rico who do not question the mythical way folkloric presentations portray tradition. It must come to terms equally with Puerto Ricans both at home and abroad to whom bomba does not have any social or historical meaning.

Bomba and Youth. Youth play an important part in the ongoing evolution of bomba. Being a dance that embodies individual expression, it has attracted many young followers raised in the dance intensive environment of hip-hop and breakdancing. Because elements of bomba can be found in all kinds of local, regional and even pop music, younger listeners are easily allured by its familiar rhythms. Contemporary bomba's youth-oriented network of cell phone users, text messaging, personal data accessories, websites and chat rooms reaches a wider community of participants and fans than ever before possible. As the electronic generation reinforces roots, it enables a level of unmediated personal expression with which to assert oneself as an individual, an individual in a musical community, an individual in a national identity group and, lastly, an individual with a secure identity in a globalized musical environment.

The bombazo, a phenomenon embraced by younger audiences, is a contemporary manifestation of individual expression. Within the context of a collective, interactive experience, it can be seen as a metaphor for the struggle of the individual seeking to validate his/her unique contribution to his/her society as a whole.

Judith Becker describes a social/musical phenomenon similar to the collective experience of a bombazo. Though she is addressing the physiology and psychology of human trance and the notion of musical rhythmic entrainment, there are similarities.

Musical rhythmic entrainment can be seen as structural coupling, of a changed interior, personal consciousness in a musical domain of coordination. Many persons, bound together by common aims, may experience revitalization and general good feeling. The situation is communal and individual, music descends on all alike, while each person's joy is his or her own (Becker, 2004:127).

The communal experience nurtured through the bombazo is also a stabilizing force for those seeking self-identity in an often politically ambiguous society.

The political dimension of bomba as an oppositional voice for youth resonates with Bennett's claims that

if contemporary youth is socio-economically contextualized it can be seen to use musical and stylistic resources to actively engage with, protest against and collectively negotiate the particular socio-economic and political circumstances in which it finds itself (Bennett, 2001:161).

Music, being the most expressive cultural outlet available to this group, acquired an alternative function as an oppositional voice.

Symbolically, because the overt cultural Americanization project failed yet US political elites and corporate interests continue to dominate core aspects of Puerto Rican life, most view the survival of a different cultural identity as the greatest *political* victory in the face of colonialism. The condensation of much agency through cultural discourse and interventions in music, art, literature and sports also signifies an unwillingness to contest subordination through terms that are unfavorable to Puerto Ricans and a tendency to participate in joyful social practices (Aparicio, 1998:4-5).

Aparicio's symbolic victory is particularly meaningful to today's local teenagers and young adults. This group's energy and uninhibited sense of participation rejects prior racial, gender and economic limitations, and has appropriated bomba as a vehicle of affirmation and dispatched it in new directions.

Today's bomba responds to an empowered youth that is not content to be treated as a passive consumer target. Although Puerto Rican youth are avid consumers of the most generic international popular music products and commercial consumers of the

highest order⁹⁷, they also have a strong penchant for homegrown music. On any given night, the hosting of a bombazo in an establishment like San Juan's Rumba, Santurce's Buyé or Areyto in Piñones attracts large crowds of young, committed followers.

Many younger bomba enthusiasts have had educational opportunities and access not available to previous generations. They have been raised in an environment in which education and hard work alone are realistic criteria for securing meaningful employment. As a result of this education, and perhaps also of their higher level of economic comfort, they are not willing to accept the limitations of past unspoken segregationist policies or attitudes and feel free to engage in any cultural activity with which they identify. Interestingly, this is reminiscent of the original bomba; a gathering in which rural societies shared a recreational music/dance genre with which they could identify as a distinct group.

The young bombazo community displays the characteristics of a community unified around a central identity-sharing objective. In social groups such as clubs, teams, and even gangs, participation requires the adoption of external symbols or signs (behaviour, fashion, colloquial language, etc.) as a complement to an internal identity that is reinforced by participation in that group. In the case of contemporary bomba, the external signs are not as obvious as they are for, say, country music or reggae. There is no particular form of dress or even a sub-cultural slang⁹⁸. What does exist is an undercurrent of nationalism manifest in various forms. When Pablo Luis Rivera shouts out his typical "bomba!" at the end of any of Son del Batey's songs, his rallying call signals to a

⁹⁷ Plaza Las Américas, San Juan's destination shopping mall, is one of Latin America's largest and most profitable indoor shopping centres.

⁹⁸ One notable characteristic I have been able to observe, and that I believe is further indication of the nationalist sentiment of bomba audiences, is the complete absence of colloquial *spanglish* so common elsewhere in the society. I have not observed its use in any lyrics, and/or performer/audience interaction.

receptive audience that theirs is a ritual of shared identity. Beyond this animated acknowledgement of vigorous drumming, song and dance, Pablo Luis' call is a coded message that fuels patriotic fervor. This same call is echoed by other audience members whose reciprocal voice is important to collective bomba experiences. If bomba followers display any external physical signs of nationalist zeal, those are limited to the more generalized sporting of Puerto Rican flags on jeans, decals, jackets, backpacks and screen savers.

Puerto Rican youth have adopted the bomba and its communal practices as a *de facto* forum through which individuals, brought together by a love of music and dance, debate and reflect their concerns on a full range of vital issues such as national identity, colonialism⁹⁹, race, heritage and diaspora.

No matter how the field of cultural practices is reconfigured in line with political and economic changes, popular culture of the vernacular, community-based kind will continue to be present as a mode of social relations (Flores 2000:28).

Youth seek bomba for its interactive exchange between audience, dance and drum. They pursue interactions that bypass artificial conceptions of heritage and lineage (costume, performance locations, hierarchy) and by doing so directly access the core emotive essence of the genre, the human expression inherent in the music and dance.

Transracial participation. Many audience members over 40 (and especially their older relatives) still display ambivalent feelings about identifying with black roots. Edgardo Soto Torres of *música* magazine even titled his article on Modesto Cepeda "The bomba, the rhythm we still deny"¹⁰⁰. The roots of this sentiment are planted in historically ingrained racial prejudices and fears associated with social mobility,

⁹⁹ In reality, Puerto Rico is one of Latin America's only remaining colonies. To deny this by invoking the island's status as a Free Associated State of the United States would be foolhardy.

¹⁰⁰ Soto Torres, website article June 26, 2001.

persistent colonial and post-colonial notions of the superiority of European stock and the alleged nobility of white heritage. In spite of this, the majority of events I witnessed were attended by transracial audiences from all social classes. Puerto Rico is by no means an idyllic, socially integrated society, but its younger bomba audience seems willing to embrace African heritage as an integral part of a national whole.

Conclusion

Speaking of his bomba renaissance ensemble Paracumbé, Dufrasne said that.

What I am doing is rescuing some strokes and rhythms for the love of patriotism, because I believe them to be an important part of the national identity which can serve as a bit of an antidote against the onslaught of commercial music on radio and television. These are side effects of communications, of the globalization of everything, these things that are creatures of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century. Uniformity diminishes human culture because the more we become similar, the less diverse we become, and the less interesting the human race becomes (Dufrasne p.c., July 2003).

He later emphasized the urgency of his musical mission by portraying the futility of trying to recreate older models, communities and attitudes. “That is why I do this, but if you think I can revive this in the splendour of yesteryear, no, there is no way, no, that would be a fantasy” (ibid).

Like all cultural evolution, the old becomes the new via a gradual process of innovation and distillation rooted in human interaction. Expectations become traditions; traditions become points of departure, and departures raise new expectations.

Improvisation in bomba reflects that cycle by channeling prior knowledge through social and musical filters that emerge as vivid expressions of local cultural dynamics. I have shown that this level of cultural engagement is informed by a long historical tradition recorded in the customs, rhythms, dances and songs of an earlier repertoire. I

have introduced the panorama of practices and practitioners that today comprise the bomba community. By doing so I bring to light a number of important traditional and contemporary performers whose perspectives and ideas have not yet benefited from a published forum. The transcriptions raise awareness of the sophisticated processes underlying bomba performances by analyzing structural and musical characteristics at play. To complement the analytical work on the transcriptions, I offer observations on the nature of improvisation itself and position the drumming practices of bomba alongside those of other world traditions and systems.

I propose that improvisation, in addition to being a musical procedure, mirrors an analogous process in the social development of any musical community. As Puerto Rican society negotiates the gradual development of new ideas through the processes of dialogue, conflict, reconciliation and renewal, improvisation in bomba mirrors these processes at a performance level. My investigation shows how the evolution of those ideas begins at the level of the rhythmic pattern or phrase and culminates at the complete musical expression embodied in the improvised solo.

Throughout this study I have sought to analyze the technique that can engender improvisational moments and examined the motivations for musical response. The mystery of the inspiration remains, as it should, a property of the spirit.

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Raíces. Produced by Banco Popular de Puerto Rico 2001 Director Paloma Suao. DVD

Raíces Eternas. Director Dr. Noel Quiñónez 1985 16mm *

* These documents were unavailable at the times sought but have been included for the purpose of listing potential available sources.

Artist/Author Interviews

(All interviews recorded in Puerto Rico and Vancouver on a Sony mini-disc recorder.
Phone interviews were done from Vancouver and are marked with a double asterisk **)

Isabel Albizu- July 23, 2004 Barrio La Calzada, Ponce

Raúl Berríos Sánchez- August Dec.13, 2003, Santurce, July 21, 2004, Carolina,
April 28, 2005, Hato Rey

Jesús Cepeda- December 11, 2002, Villa Carolina, July 28, 2004 Santurce,
April 30, 2005

Tato Conrad- December 13, 2002, July 22, 2003 April 25-27, 2005 Santurce

Elia Cortés- August Aug.2, 2003, July 28, 2004 Santurce

Iván Dávila- July 26, 2003 San Juan, October-December, 2004, Vancouver **,
April, 2005, Carolina

Cristóbal Díaz Ayala - July 24, 2004, Santurce

J.E Dufrasne- Interview by author, July 27, 2003, Carolina.

Russell Hartenberger- June 26, 2004, Vancouver **

François Houle- June 24 2004, Vancouver

Carmen Lidín- July 20, 2004, San Juan

Miguel López, April 25, 2005, San Juan

Crystal Pite- June 22, 2004 Vancouver

Barbara Pollard- June 20, 2004 Vancouver

Ángel Quintero Rivera- July 26, Santurce 2004

Ángel Reyes- April 28, 2005, Santurce

Pablo Luis Rivera- December 13, 2002, Santurce, July 25, 2003, Santurce,
July 21, 2004, Hato Rey, April 24-25, 2005, Santurce

Omar "Pipo" Sánchez- July 21, 2004, Carolina

Trichy Sankaran- June 2004, May 2005, Vancouver

Javier Santiago- July 29, 2004, San Juan

Norma Salazar- July 29, 2004, San Juan

Fana Soro- June 24, 2004, New Westminster

Verónica Valentín, July 28, 2004 Puerto Nuevo

Wyre, John. June 27, 2004 **

Appendix 1 Hand strokes

The following photographs illustrate the principal hand positions used to produce the basic sounds associated with bomba drumming. The legend for the notation of style and sub-style patterns found in Chapter Three is reproduced here for ease of reference. The legend shown in Chapter Four indicates only high and low tones and has not been reproduced in this appendix as it is meant only as a representation of a range of possible high and low sounds.

Reproduction of Figure 3.1 Style and sub-style transcription legend



Hondo- Open stroke. The stroke requires the hand to strike the head using four fingers and the top of the palm (area under the knuckles). After the initial impact, the stroke is immediately lifted to allow the drum head to ring as much as possible.



Hondo tapao- Muffled open stroke. It can be played by either hand in the same position as above but the sound is muffled by briefly resting the opposite hand on one side of the drum head.



Dedo orilla- Fingers on edge. The stroke produces higher harmonics. This is one of the distinctive sounds of the cuembé style.



Dedo tapao-Muffled finger stroke. This is the same as the finger stroke above with the opposite hand muffling the strokes. This type of stroke produces a very sharp, dry sound.



Caja- Bass stroke. The bass stroke produces a sound rich in low frequency that is most often used by soloists and rarely by buleador players. The stroke can be done with either hand. In this photo the left hand is leaning on the edge of the drum but is not muffling the drum head.



Caja tapá- Muffled bass stroke. This is the same as the bass stroke above except that the stroke is muffled by the opposite hand. Produces a very deep sonority, especially when the drum is slightly raised off the floor as shown on page 295.



Seco abierto- Slap. The technique is somewhat similar to the conga slap. It is used to produce a sharp contrast to open strokes. In the sicá buleador pattern this is the single alternative sound to the open stroke.



Seco tapao-Muffled slap. This is a muffled variation on the stroke illustrated above. The non-striking hand dampens the head.



Dedo para crear seco- Finger muffle to produce slap. The middle finger of the left hand lightly touches drum head to create a higher sonority on the right hand stroke. This is used in conjunction with open and slap strokes by many traditional players.



Chichito side strokes- This unorthodox finger technique has been observed in the playing of Loíza drummer Cruz Ortiz Cirino better known as Chichito.



Dedo- Fingers. Fingers strike the drum head lightly producing a lighter stroke than that produced by the full palm sound.



Drum resting on floor- Bomba drummers tilt their drums forward to project more sound. While the front of the drum rests on the floor, the position of the drum between the player's legs allows the drummer to use the legs to clamp the drum in a slightly tilted position.



Drum raised from floor- This technique is used sparingly by soloists. It allows the drummer to change the timbre of the drum in mid-solo by raising and tilting the drum further than the regular position. This creates a distinct lower tone best applied to open strokes and open bass strokes.



Appendix 2 Glossary

Anaízo- the *anaízo* is a *yubá* sung in Afro or creole French, according to the Cepedas and Fernández Morales.

Ancón- a barge, the vessel used to transport passengers across the Rio Grande de Loíza prior to the building of a more direct highway.

Babúl- bomba-related rhythm believed to have been practiced in Puerto Rico, can still be found in Haiti.

Bailador, bailadora- one who dances bomba, this term refers to the individual that dances in front of and engages the drum soloist.

Bailes de garabato- popular non-African dances of the colonial period.

Baile de figura- refers to the dancer's figure in bomba, in the male version the emphasis is on a composed play of footsteps that guide the drummer's improvisation, in the female version the emphasis is on how the body rather than the steps dictate the drummer-dancer dialogue.

Baile "de orilla"- denotes "dances of the periphery" meaning marginalized dances, usually African-related ones that existed outside the sphere of more established and refined dances.

Balancé- a variant of cuembé, a slower sub-style known in the south, west and north of the island.

Bamboulaé, bambulé- this sub-style of seis corrido has been acknowledged in other Caribbean islands and in New Orleans. It is likely to have developed elsewhere and been brought to the island.

Bastonero- player of the bastón or walking cane that was used to keep time in dances. The practice of marking time with the bastón was also known in Spanish flamenco at the turn of the 19th to 20th century.

Batey- the common word for house yard, a native Taíno word still in use in Puerto Rican colloquial Spanish.

Belén- slowest of the bomba styles, popular in Ponce area.

Bomba- generic name for the overall grouping of a number of music and dance styles and sub-styles associated with Puerto Rico. Considered one of the three main musical genres of autochthonous Puerto Rican music.

Bombazo- an event where bomba is played, danced and sung. Bombazos distinguish themselves from stage bomba because of their informal character, the fact that they are performed off stage and by the fact that anyone can participate, provided they respect the etiquette of the one-dancer-one drummer dialogue.

Bomba de pareja- couples bomba, a practice associated with the *bomba de salón* (see below), wherein couples approach the dance space together, although only one dancer interacts with the drummer at any one time.

Bomba de pellejo- term used to describe the African drum as seen by colonists, pellejo literally means skin, and in this context the term denotes skin-drum.

Bomba de salón- refers to a form of bomba developed after the emancipation of slaves. It was performed in covered spaces, houses, and other somewhat elegant places. Participants, however modestly, sought to distinguish themselves from their slave past by “elevating” the dance from a street and yard activity to something more in line with European models of refinement.

Bomba etíope- generic name to describe an African bomba in the work of author Salvador Brau.

Bomba larga- term denoting the ostinato pattern solo drummers default to when they are unable to keep up with a dancer. Going into bomba larga from the solo signals the drummer has been defeated.

Brujo- the dance virtuoso whose challenges cause a drum soloist to bring down his/her drum to the dance floor for a more intensified repartee or a figurative chase of the dancer.

Bula- the main drum of bomba, usually found in pairs and in two sizes, the larger for accompanying patterns, the smaller for soloing.

Buleador, burlador- the lower drum of the bomba bulas. It keeps the accompanying patterns over which the soloist, singers and dancers perform.

Bureo- another name for the basic drum pattern of bombas, regardless of the style.

Calindá- a style of bomba, not to be confused with the Trinidadian calinda which is a dance done with sticks in a mock battle.

Caminando el tambor- the practice of moving a vertically placed drum (as in Santurce, Loíza and Cataño regions) to a horizontal position in the dance space to figuratively chase after an exceptional dancer, known as a brujo or bruja.

Candungé- Manuel Álvarez Nazario describes this variant of bomba but no other information is available to corroborate his citation.

- Cangá-** Alvarez Nazario states that this term was used to refer to all African languages and later acquired a pejorative connotation.
- Cangrejos-** literally crabs. In early times Santurce was known as San Mateo de Cangrejos because its beaches were famous for their abundant yield of crabs.
- Cantaor (male) or Cantaora (female)-** the solo singer.
- Cataño-** northern port city across the Bay of San Juan from the capital, San Juan, home to much bomba activity until the mid 1960s.
- Chéquere, Chácara-** gourd rattle used by some bomba players.
- Clave Tres-** a recent bomba rhythm devised by Raúl Berríos Sánchez, the meter is in 3/4. Clave Tres is also the name of his ensemble.
- Cocobalé-** a stick dance similar to Trinidadian calindá or Brazilian maculelé, no clear connection to bomba.
- Corvé-** the name given to a sub-style related to the yubá performed in Loíza.
- Cuá-** a wood block, small trunk of bamboo or small barrel (without a skin) on which a drummer plays with a pair of hard sticks, it is used to mark a percussive ostinato to accompany buleadores. In most styles the cuá replicate the pattern of the buleadores, in some styles and sub-styles it plays variations of the buleador patterns.
- Cuembé-** a style popular throughout the island, also known as güembé.
- Curiquinqué-** variant of bomba cited by Zoila Gómez García, Francisco López Cruz and Maria Luisa Muñoz. I have not been able to locate any contemporary player of bomba that can confirm its existence or describe its rhythm.
- Cunyá-** a style of bomba. Popular with Santurce and Carolina players.
- Danué-** a variant of sicá, its name is a French term denoting something of Danish origin. Denmark's colony of St. Croix traded with Puerto Rico and this variant is believed to have originated there.
- Danza-** an important Puerto Rican musical genre originating in the nineteenth century that blended Caribbean rhythms with European salon-style music. It was played on European instruments, especially piano and violin.
- Fandango-** dance in three-four time, originating in Spain. The term is used to denote other generic types of dances as well as dance gatherings.

Floreo- the ornamental playing of a soloist. The word derives from *flor* or flower and refers to the practice of making a rhythm more interesting through soloing.

Gracimá- a variant related to cuembé.

Guayama- port city and historically important site of some of the largest sugar cane processing mills. Home to a sizable African-derived population. Guayama had a highly active bomba scene until the mid twentieth century.

Güembé- a style popular throughout the island, also known as cuembé.

Guiador- another name for buleador.

Güiro- gourd scraper of jíbaro music and early bomba practice. It is played with a scraper and came to be substituted by the maraca around the 1940s.

Holandés- one of most popular styles of bomba. Performed in common time. Seems to have originated with Dutch slaves in the southern part of the island. This is also the core rhythm from which the later plena is said to have emerged.

Hoyo Mula- a sub-style closely related to calindá.

Inspirador- literally an “inspirer”, one who invents poetic or song verses on the spot.

Jíbaro(s)- peasant(s), usually refers to subsistence farmers or farm workers and their families living in the central mountainous regions of Puerto Rico.

Las Carreras- area of Loíza strongly associated with the tradition of bomba during the feast of Santiago in late July.

Leró- slower variant of yubá, its name is believed to be a contraction of the French term “le rose”, referring to the shape of its original dance formation.

Leró cangrejero- the Santurce version of the leró is literally a yubá played slowly. The qualifier “cangrejero” suggests someone from the “cangrejo” (crab) area. Santurce (formerly San Mateo de Cangrejos) was a popular crabbing location before becoming urbanized.

Leró del sur- a term used to denote the leró as played in the south of the island.

Loíza- small town on the northern coast just east of San Juan. Loíza is well known throughout Puerto Rico for its strong African-derived culture and for its Festival de Loíza held in conjunction with the yearly feast of Santiago (St. James) in late July.

Maraca- an idiophone made of a hollowed out dry gourd filled with small seeds or stones. In bomba, the maraca is similar to the standard maracas of Caribbean use although it is generally larger and played as a single instrument unlike the common pair employed elsewhere. In southern styles the maraca is played by the female lead singer. In other areas it may be played by any one of the singers or chorus members.

Marcar- to mark dance steps, or to follow the rhythmic interventions of the dancer.

Mariandá- a compound time variant of bomba associated with jíbaro musical styles.

Marímbula- a lamellaphone used in jíbaro music and early bomba. The Puerto Rican version resembles similar types found throughout the Caribbean. The common assumption is that they all derive from African sanzas or mbiras. This version of the instrument type features large metal tongues mounted on a bridge on the front of a resonating box. The player sits on top of the box and plucks the tongues with fingers.

Masón- variant of *yubá*.

Mayagüez- third largest city in Puerto Rico. According to traditional accounts this is the birthplace of the bomba.

Mende- West African language brought to the island by slaves from Sierra Leone in the late XVIII to mid XIX centuries.

Montar el tambor- to mount the drum, occurs when an exceptional dancer inspires the lead drummer (of the northern and western regions) to move the drum into the dance space, place the drum in a horizontal position and sit on top of it to continue the excited dancer-drummer dialogue.

Musique de maison- “house music” of Haiti and Martinique, shares rhythmic elements with bomba, especially *yubá*.

Pandero or pandereta de plena- a frame drum over which a goat or cow skin is stretched and held by hardware fasteners. This main drum of plena music is played in groups of three, the higher drum solos, the other two keep a complementary accompanying rhythm.

Paseo- the dance-like walkabout of the dancer about to engage in a dialogue with the lead bomba drummer. During this paseo, the dancer makes eye contact with the drummer and acknowledges him before beginning the solo dialogue.

Paulé- a type of sicá associated with the Cepeda clan. The term *paulé* is a variation on the name Paula used in a number of songs. It does not have any particular rhythmic formula.

Pedir la bomba- to request a bomba, similar to *pedir el golpe* below, this motion by the dancer was often executed with the use of a red kerchief to pay respects to the importance of the solo drum in the dance/drum dialogue.

Pedir el golpe- literally to request a stroke, refers to the motion by the dancer to request a dialogue with the lead drummer.

Peplo- the blouse used with elaborate bomba dresses, it is stylistically related to upper class colonial-style fashions. It is not universally acclaimed by modern bomba groups, but is still a feature of staged versions of bomba.

Piquetero- the dance soloist.

Plena- Popular musical genre, originally played on accordion, two frame drums called panderos and güiro. Began to appear near Ponce in the 1920s and still remains a very popular music.

Ponce- second largest city in Puerto Rico, important southern port. Many of the southern bomba styles originate here.

Primer barril- first drum of the bomba pair, meaning the solo high drum.

Primo- also requinto, the higher drum of the bula pair. Its smaller size and higher pitch make it an ideal instrument for soloing.

Puerto de Jobos- a neighbourhood just east of Ponce that was the scene of regular bomba dances.

Quinto- another name for primo, this term may have been borrowed from Cuba.

Repicar- to play a lead drum to a dancer's movements, synonymous with *subir*.

Repicador- the drum soloist in a bomba, one that provides *repiques*.

Repique(s)- stroke(s), the type(s) of stroke(s) that mark the *piquetes* of the dancers.

Requinto- another term for primo, higher drum of the bula pair.

Roulé- practically synonymous with corvé- the name given to a variant of *yubá* performed in Loíza.

Saludar al tambor- to greet the drum, the customary practice of saluting the lead drummer before commencing the bomba dance dialogue.

Santurce- large city contained within the metropolitan area of San Juan. This populous area is the traditional home of the northern styles made famous by the Cepeda family.

Seguidor- another name for *buleador*. Literally means one who follows.

Seguir- to keep a constant rhythmic ostinato to support the lead drum. In Spanish the verb *seguir* means to follow.

Segundo barril- second drum of the bomba pair, denotes the lower drum.

Seis bombeo- a type of jíbaro music featuring periodic stops that allow one of the dancers to recite a verse. When the music stops, the gathered audience shouts “bomba” to focus attention on the recitation of a verse. Upon completion, the crowd shouts “bomba” again and the music resumes until the next participant is ready. The term bomba is not related to the musical genre.

Seis corrido- a bomba style exclusively associated with the town of Loíza.

Seises de bomba, sones de bomba- generic names for *dances of bomba*. The term *seises* originated in early colonial times and referred to dances done during the feast of the Epiphany (the period between Christmas day and January 6, Three Kings Day in Latin America).

Sicá- the most common style of bomba performed throughout the island, commonly associated with the Santurce tradition.

Sonear, soneo- the art of improvising verses inserted between the chorus refrains in a bomba song.

Sonero- the person who improvises the verses mentioned above.

Soberao, subero- dance space immediately in front of the musicians in bomba.

Son de bomba- name given to the songs and dances of the Southern bomba areas.

Spanglish- term denoting a colloquial speech that employs Spanish and English words alternately or interchangeably. Also describes the transformation of English words into Spanish sounding words.

Subir- to play lead drum to a dancer’s movements, synonymous with *repicar*.

Subidor-synonymous with *primo*, the higher drum of the bomba bulas. All soloing and dialogue with dancers is performed on this drum.

Tablero- a wooden dance floor in front of musicians in bomba.

Tambor hembra- literally female drum, the low accompanying drum of the bomba pair.

Tambor macho- literally male drum, the high solo drum of the bomba pair.

Timba- generic term for a drum of the conga type.

Tiño- from French “tigne”, a colonial-era scarf worn over the head to cover all hair.

Tocador- one who plays bomba drums or cuá. *Tocar* means to play.

Tumba Francesa of Oriente- a musical style from Eastern Cuba related to some of bomba's variants.

Vejigante- Festival demon, characterized by a person wearing a distinctive, brightly painted coconut shell mask and coloured garments in the Festival de Loíza.

Voz Laína- common vernacular of country people, refers to the authenticity of the vocal line, or the vocalist.

Yubá- the principal compound time style of bomba. Contains a number of variants in the northern, southern and western regions.

Yubá cuarteao- the practice of creating symmetrical variations on the yubá ostinato. These variations are introduced according to the wishes of the singer or the requirements of the arrangements. In most cases the ostinati play three phrases and introduce slight variations on a fourth phrase, hence “cuarteao” or “quartered”. Cuarteao is a contraction of the Spanish verb for quartered, *cuarteado*.

Yubá corrido- a yubá played very quickly, *corrido* means accelerated.

Yubá cuembé- a hybrid variant of yubá featuring a stroke near the edge of the drum borrowed from the cuembé style.

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John Wyre

Appendix 4 Significant historical and contemporary contributors to bomba in Puerto Rico and the United States.

Hiram Abrante- member of Bataklán.

Jomar Abrante- member of Bataklán.

Carlos Álamo Pastrana- graduate student in sociology at the University of California in Santa Barbara, has authored articles on bomba's gender roles and the politicization of its youth.

Marinievas Alba- member of Alma Moyó and Yayas.

Isabel Albizu Dávila- singer, teacher, director of Bambalué in Ponce.

Félix Alduén (deceased) singer, bomba player, former director Los Tambores de Félix Alduén.

Ramón Papo Alers- well known Mayagüez bomba drummer, member of Los Tambores de Félix Alduén, and director of his own Grupo Yagüembé.

Obanilú Iré Allende- New York-based percussionist, member of Alma Moyó and Yerbabuena.

Luis Manuel Álvarez- author, university instructor, has written about bomba rhythms and their presence in other Puerto Rican folk music.

Manuel Álvarez Nazario- (deceased) linguist, scholar, brought to light much important information regarding bombas roots in other Caribbean and African nations.

Frances Aparicio- author, influential cultural theory expert on Salsa music and Latin American music gender studies.

Aristalco Alfonso- (deceased) legendary figure in the bomba in Mayagüez.

William Archeval López- (deceased) well-known bomba performer from Ponce.

Manuela Arciniegas- member of Alma Moyó and Yayas.

Castor Ayala- (deceased) founder of Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala, recognized master mask maker of the Loiza tradition, father of the Ayala drumming family.

Marcos Ayala- co-director of the Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala, bomba dancer and drummer.

Raquel Ayala- associate director and member of the Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala.

Raúl Ayala- co-director of the Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala, bomba dancer, drummer and Loíza-style mask craftsman.

Hector Barés- free lance percussionist, member of Tamboricua.

Halbert Barton- anthropologist, bomba dancer, published his "The Drum-Dance Challenge" doctoral dissertation on the bomba, co-director of Los Bomberos de Brooklyn.

Pedro Barriera Colón- director Taller de Bomba y Plena Ponce.

Kiko Bastar- percussionist, collaborated with Cortijo on eponymous recording "Ritmos y Cantos Callejeros" in 1970.

Ari Benítez- drummer, member of Herederos de Xiorro.

Ana Berriel- member of Paracumbé.

Marisol Berrios Miranda- Seattle-based Post-Doctoral Scholar University of California, authored several articles on Salsa and the importance of defining regional contributions and parameters.

Raul Berrios Sanchez- percussionist, teacher, collector, bomba scholar, bomba avant-gardist.

Karymar Burgos- member of Paracumbé.

Carlos Caiky Calderón- member of Bataklán.

Caridad Brenes de Cepeda- (deceased) dancer, wife of Rafael Cepeda, mother of influential bomba family.

Hugo Calderón- contemporary free-lance percussionist, member of Seis de Bomba, Directs his own ensemble Yuba Iré.

Margarita "Tata" Cepeda- dancer, director "Escuela de bomba Caridad Brenes de Cepeda", member Noches de Bomba.

Modesto Cepeda- director Cimienta Puertorriqueño, Escuela de Bomba y Plena Rafael Cepeda Atilas, composer, dancer, singer, historian.

Alberto “Tito” Cepeda- member of Los Pleneros de la 21.

Jesús Cepeda- director Fundación Don Rafael Cepeda, director Conjunto Folklórico Hermanos Cepeda, master drummer, teacher, producer.

Luis “Chichito” Cepeda- (deceased) one of the lead drummers of the Cepeda family.

Petra Cepeda- dancer, singer, daughter of Don Rafael Cepeda, member of family ensemble.

Rafael Cepeda- (deceased) bomba player, prolific composer dancer, founder of the present Santurce bomba tradition, received many heritage awards, father of one of Puerto Rico’s most influential bomba families.

Roberto Cepeda- composer, member of Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala.

William Cepeda- jazz trombonist of the Cepeda clan, has experimented with adaptations of folkloric bomba and jazz, toured with Miriam Makeba.

Pedro Capitól Clemente- producer of the on-going Festival de Bomba Plena.

Manuel Carmona- percussionist, member of Tamboricua.

Marile Colón- member of Paracumbé.

Rebeca Colón- singer, member of Son del Batey and Herederos de Xiorro.

Elia Cortés- dancer, choreographer, bomba entrepreneur, director of Taller Tamboricua.

Rafael Cortijo- (deceased) revered band leader, brought bomba to mainstream, directed Cortijo y su Combo, pivotal ensemble in the development of salsa.

Tato Conrad- instrument collector, bomba scholar, author, composer, bomba facilitator, owner Arthur Murray Dance Studio, Miramar.

Juan Crespo- percussionist, member of Son del Batey.

Andrés Cruz Cruz- freelance percussionist, member of Tamboricua.

Iván Dávila- bomba player, bomba historian, drum craftsman.

Papo del Valle- drum craftsman.

Edwin Davis- member of Herederos de Xiorro.

José Emanuel Dufrasne González- director Paracumbé, university instructor, scholar, author, published doctoral thesis on bomba in 1985.

José Emmanuelli Nater- bomba player and historian, spearheaded the beginning of the bombazo concept with Jesús Cepeda, Tato Conrad, and others.

Victor Emmanuelli Nater- free lance percussionist, member Seis de Bomba, Tamboricua.

Felipe “Junito” Febres- bomba drummer, member of Herederos de Xiorro.

Miriam Félix- member of Viento de Agua and Yayas.

José Fernández Morales- authored important Master’s dissertation on the bomba traditions of Cataño.

Edwin Figueroa Berrios- authored early work on bomba in journal of the ICP.

Juan Flores- author, scholar of Puerto Rican studies Hunter College.

Victor “Tico” Fuentes- drummer with Pleni-Bom.

Alberto Galarza- bomba dancer, singer, photographer, member of Yagüembé.

Sandra Garcia Rivera- member of Yayas and Yerbabuena.

Lydia Milagros González- author, sociologist, bomba enthusiast, directed the mounting of the significant “La Tercera Raíz” exhibit on African culture on the island, author of several articles and the book “Elogio de la Bomba” about the bomba in Loíza.

Juan Gutiérrez- percussionist, bomba player, member of legendary group Los Pleneros de la 21 and the more recent Viento y Agua.

Gilda Hernández San Miguel- artist, choreographer, co-director of Fundación Rafael Cepeda, member of Ballet Folklórico Nacional Hermanos Cepeda.

Luz Idalmi Rosa- member of Pleni-Bom.

Alex La Salle- founder of Alma Moyó, a New York-based bomba ensemble, presently undertaking research on western bomba (Mayagüez area).

Paola Lebrón Fernández- member of Paracumbé.

Dennis Lebrón Robles- member of Paracumbé.

Dennis Lebrón Heredia- member of Paracumbé.

Nelie Lebrón Robles-singer, bassist, university instructor, co-director Paracumbé.

André Pierre Ledrú- botanist, first person to acknowledge in writing any existence of a dance called bomba in 1797.

Samuel Lind- well known artist, painter, sculptor, from Loíza, long time association with bomba, has designed many record covers, posters and graphics depicting or promoting bomba.

Miguel López- former director of “Artista” magazine, prolific popular music author and historian.

Francisco López Cruz- folklorist, author and musician, continued the work of Maria Luisa Muñoz and acknowledged previously unknown bomba practices.

Pedro Malavet Vega- popular music historian, published an extensive accounting of all forms of music in Puerto Rico prior to the Spanish American war.

Juan “Richard” Martínez García- member of Viento de Agua.

Alden Mason- (deceased) anthropologist, surveyed Puerto Rico 1915-17, recorded much local music on Edison cylinders.

Hector “Tito” Matos- member of Viento de Agua.

Rafael Maya- drummer, member of Herederos de Xiorro.

James McCoy- wrote first doctoral dissertation dealing exclusively with bomba and its connections to jíbaro music in 1968.

José Millán- director of Los Tambores de Félix Alduén.

Andy Montañez- singer, formerly of El Gran Combo and Venezuela’s Dimensión Latina, has collaborated on numerous bomba recordings and TV productions.

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Juan Nadal- former member of Los Tambores de Félix Alduén, primo soloist Yagüembé.

Domingo Negrón- (deceased) historical figure of the Cataño bomba, hosted weekly dances that attracted players from across the island.

Joaquín Nieves Calderón- artistic director of Guateque Ballet Folklórico de Puerto Rico.

Gabriel Olivarra- record collector, owner Farmacia Parada 19.

Cruz Ortiz Cirino- elder bomba drummer of the Loíza tradition, nickname Chichito.

José Ortiz- member of Alma Moyó.

Edwin Paris- member of Sies de Bomba

Mario Pereira- drummer, member of Herederos de Xiorro.

Luis Pérez- member of Alma Moyó.

Diana Quiñones- member of Alma Moyó.

Martin Quiñones- Cortijo's conga player, played street bomba prior to joining group, went on to become a long time member of El Gran Combo.

Ángel G. Quintero Rivera- author, sociologist, has written extensively about Puerto Rican and Latin American music, collaborated with Luis Manuel Álvarez in the development of the concept of the camouflaged rhythms of bomba in Puerto Rican music.

Joksan Ramos- member of Viento de Agua.

Marie Ramos Rosado- author, university lecturer, director of Calabó Caribeño.

Migdali Ramos- member of Noches de Bomba.

Liliana Raposo- member of Yayas.

Ángel Reyes- bomba player, historian, researcher, member of Noches de Bomba and Escuela de Bomba Caridad Brenes de Cepeda, former director of bomba ensemble Agüeybana.

Otoquí Reyes- bomba player, dancer, member of Noches de Bomba and Escuela de Bomba Caridad Brenes de Cepeda.

Yamir Rios- drummer, member of Son del Batey.

Ismael Rivera- (deceased) internationally renowned singer (sonero), collaborated with Cortijo to bring bomba to mainstream.

John Edgar Rivera- drummer with Pleni-Bom.

Manuel "Yenye" Rivera Pizarro- legendary bomba drummer of the Cataño school. Played well into his elder years. His technique and style was imitated by many drummers of the Santurce tradition.

Margot Rivera- composer, mother of Ismael Rivera.

Pablo Luis Rivera- dancer, bomba facilitator, graduate student in Afro-Puerto Rican studies, director Los Herederos de Xiorro, member Son del Batey, founder of Restauración Cultural.

Raquel Z. Rivera- author, sociologist, member of Las Yaya and Alma Moyó, Tufts University instructor.

Ana Rodríguez Cepeda- elder singer from Loíza.

Ernesto Rodríguez- member of Alma Moyó.

Hector Rodríguez- percussionist, founding member of group Atabal.

Kaimi Rodríguez- drummer with Pleni-Bom.

Kenneth Rodriguez- mask maker, music historian and collector from Ponce.

Roberto Roena- bongo player in Cortijo's band, also grew up in Santurce bomba street scene. Later formed his own ensemble Apollo Sound.

Norma Salazar- folklorist, choreographer, researcher, founding director of PleniBom.

Omar "Pipo" Sánchez- bomba player, member Son del Batey, Seis de Bomba, free-lance percussionist.

Javier Santiago- popular music collector, author and producer, director of the Fundación Nacional para la Cultura Popular.

Rhenna-Lee Santiago- member of Paracumbé.

Maria Luisa Solana- member of Alma Moyó.

Paloma Suao- film director, directed the controversial "Raíces" TV special for the Banco Popular of Puerto Rico.

Sammy Tanco- member of Viento de Agua and Los Pleneros de la 21.

Fidel Tavárez- member of Alma Moyó.

Maria Terrero- member of Yayas.

Carlos “Tato” Torres- founding director of Yerbabuena.

Ivonne Torres-Roig- member of Paracumbé.

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Juan Manuel Usera- member of Los Pleneros de la 21.

Héctor Vega Drouet- scholar, published his doctoral dissertation on the African roots of the bomba.

Víctor Vélez- free lance percussionist, director of Tamboyé Carolina, also of Noches de Bomba, also performs with Seis de Bomba, Yerba Buena, Hermanos Cepeda.

Viento de Agua- New York based bomba and plena ensemble.

Rafael Viera- collector, owner Viera Discos.

Isabelo Zenón Cruz- author whose controversial book *Narciso descubre su trasero* re-defined the African presence in Puerto Rican cultura.

Appendix 5 *A bomba time line*

Christopher Columbus reaches Boriquén (Puerto Rico's aboriginal name), named it San Juan Bautista.	1493
Governor Ovando ordered the halt to immigration of <i>ladinos</i> (Africans brought from Castille or Portugal to the new world).	1503
Crown ordered expulsion of all black slaves from the island.	1506
Colonial authorities reverse previous policy. First Puerto Rican slaves likely arrived with Ponce de Leon from Hispaniola.	1508
Island was conquered by Spanish colonial forces. Pedro Mexía, mulatto assistant to Ponce de Leon dies in Loíza attack.	1511
Laurent de Gouvenot (Baron of Montinay, Steward of the King) known as Lorenzo de Garrebod was granted by Emperor Charles I of Spain (also Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire) the privilege of introducing four thousand duty free Guinean Negroes to Hispaniola, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Jamaica.	1518-1520
First Royal Licence issued for importation of bozales (slaves captured in Africa).	1519
First slaves arrive: <i>Wolof</i> from Senegal and Gambia, later <i>Mandingos</i> . Later yet <i>Fulas</i> and <i>Biafrans</i> .	1520s
Charles I orders aboriginal captives freed from slavery.	1544
All slaves who successfully escaped from the English and Dutch colonies were offered freedom provided they converted to Catholicism.	1663-1680
Important ethnic slave and freed slave groups were the <i>Ashanti</i> and <i>Fante</i> from Ghana, the <i>Carabalí</i> from the southern shores of the Niger and the <i>Congo</i> from various equatorial African regions.	1700-1800s
<i>Yoruba</i> and <i>Mende</i> arrived from the late XVIII to mid XIX century.	1700- mid1800s
Slaves from Mozambique arrive mostly in the XVIII century.	1700s
<i>Yoruba</i> from Dahomey and Nigeria arrive.	Early 1700s
<i>Cangá</i> of Sierra Leone arrive via French Antilles.	1700s
Loíza, occupied as a native Taíno village, ravaged many times by Carib attacks, forces Spaniards to send troops and set up town in 1719.	1719
San Mateo de Cangrejos (later Santurce) becomes a separate municipal district. It was formerly a part of Rio Piedras and Cangrejos.	1773
Danish ships containing contraband cargo of slaves from Dutch Curaçao reported in ports.	1764
Slave population in Puerto Rico triples.	1765-1794
From 1789 and thru to 1866 Spain decreed the slave trade a free commercial enterprise.	1789-1866
Revolution in Haiti deposes French colonial government	1795-1805
Slaves and freedmen from Cangrejos and Loíza were recognized for outstanding duty repelling a British invasion, granted land in San Mateo de Cangrejos in exchange.	1797

André Pierre Ledrú visits near Cataño and Aibonito	1797
Abolitionist movement began in 1812, wins partial success in 1870 by freeing those born on or after 1868.	1812-1870
Curaçaoan presence acknowledged in the south of Puerto Rico in the mid 1800s, holandés style may have developed there.	Mid 1800s
<i>Real Cédula de Gracias al Sacar</i> (Royal Decree) allows immigration from other Catholic colonies).	1815
<i>Angolans</i> and <i>Congolese</i> slaves arrive.	1820s
Slave conspiracy disguised as bomba dance discovered in Bayamón and Toa Baja.	1821
Slave revolts take place in Guayama and Naguabo under the guise of bomba dance events.	1822
Conspiracy between Guayama and Naguabo slaves discovered.	1822
Governor issues the <i>Bando de Policía y Buen Gobierno</i> (Ordinance of the Police and Good Order). Imposes tighter limits on slaves.	1824
Slave rebellion in Ponce	1826
Police Ordinance further restricts already limited slave activities.	1826
<i>Reglamento de Esclavos</i> New code of conduct for slaves enacted.	1826
Revised <i>Reglamento de Esclavos</i> issued.	1828
Pedro Tomas de Córdova writes in <i>Memorias</i> about bombas (in this case drums) and other instruments.	1833
Last large shipment of slaves from the Gold Coast arrives.	1838
Ciriaco Sabat, known as the King of the Blacks of the Congo Nation requests permission of the governor to perform bomba dances on the feast of St. Micheal (Sept. 29) and Our Lady of the Rosary (Oct. 7).	1840
Violent slave uprisings in Guayama.	1843
Neighborhoods of Old San Juan house 300 slaves.	1846
<i>Bando de Prim-</i> most oppressive edict to date restricts right of slaves and free blacks.	1848
Manuel Alonso publishes <i>El Gíbaro</i> , sets the stage for a marginalization of Afro-Puerto Rican dances such as the bomba and the systematic omission of African heritage by the elite.	1849
Council of the Indies welcomes runaway slaves from neighbouring islands.	Mid 1800s
Historical newspaper articles from around 1863 describe a dance resembling bomba, it was known in Paraguay as gomba.	Circa 1863
Similar articles from publications in the 19 th century in San Juan describe the ruling class's disdain for similar events as those recounted in the Paraguayan chronicles.	Late 1860s
Slavery abolished March 22. An estimated 29, 182 slaves freed.	1873
Bombas coreadas (Sung bombas) and Cantos de Naranjito (Melodies from Naranjito), “primitive plenas” situated in nineteenth century Bayamón by Francisco López Cruz.	Late 1800s
Spanish American War	1898
Don Rafael Cepeda born	1910

Foraker Act grants US citizenship to all Puerto Ricans	1918
Rafael Cortijo born in Santurce	1928
Ismael Rivera born in Loiza	1931
Commonwealth State is established by the USA	1932
Luis Palés Matos publishes <i>Tuntún de Pasa y Grifería</i> .	1937
Schools begin to add folklore as part of teaching curriculum.	1940
Fortunato Vizcarrondo publishes <i>Dinga y Mandinga</i> .	1942
Rafael Cepeda and friends form ensemble <i>Trapiche</i> .	1946
Documentary on southern bomba by University of Puerto Rico Anthropology Department.	1949
First commercial recording of bomba by Armando Castro y su Orquesta titled <i>Titia</i>	1950s
End of rail service by <i>Ferrocarriles de Puerto Rico</i> , curtails movement of people between towns, affects itinerant bomba participants.	1953
Maria Cadilla de Martínez publishes <i>La poesía popular de Puerto Rico</i> .	1953
<i>Cortijo y su Combo</i> formed.	1954
Cortijo releases first recording	1954
Ismael Rivera joins Rafael Cortijo's band as lead singer	1955
Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP) is established.	1955
Cortijo and Ismael score their first hit with "El bombom de Elena" by Rafael Cepeda	1955
<i>Nenén de la Ruta Mora</i> (film) released.	1955
<i>La Taberna India</i> on Telemundo Channel 2 features Cortijo y su Combo.	1955-1960
Cortijo makes an appearance in <i>Maruja</i> , Puerto Rico's first feature film.	1959
<i>Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala</i> formed.	1959
Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala make first appearance of bomba on television, Channel 2's "Show Time".	1959
<i>El Gran Combo</i> formed.	1962
El Gran Combo records <i>La Calle Dolor</i> on "Acángana!".	1962
Edwin Figueroa Berrios publishes article <i>Los Sones de la Bomba en la Tradición Popular de la Costa Sur de Puerto Rico</i> . Revista del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. Num. 21 October-December	1963
Connection of bambulaé to son holandés suggested in article in <i>El Mundo</i> in June 1963 by Rosario Guiscafne.	1963
<i>El Show del Medio Día</i> (The Noon Hour Show) begins broadcasting.	1965
Familia Cepeda ensemble emerges from earlier group Trapiche.	Early 1960s
<i>Ballet Folklórico Areyto</i> formed by Ricardo Alegría and Irene Maclean.	1968
Maria Luisa Muñoz publishes <i>La Música en Puerto Rico</i> .	1966
Ismael Rivera and Rafael Cortijo part musical company.	1967
Francisco López Cruz publishes <i>La música folklórica de Puerto Rico</i> .	1967

James McCoy presents his Ph.D. dissertation <i>The Bomba and Aguinaldo of Puerto Rico as They Have Evolved from Indigenous, African, and European Cultures</i> .	1968
Cortijo records with Kako (Bastar), <i>Ritmos y Cantos Callejeros</i> .	1970
Loíza becomes independent municipality from Canóvanas.	1973
First <i>Festival de Bomba y Plena</i> sponsored by ICP October 11,12,13 in Canóvanas.	1974
Modesto Cepeda opens <i>Escuela de Bomba y Plena Rafael Cepeda Atilas</i> in Villa Palmeras.	1974
Ancón (small barge) of Loíza ceases operations after new bridge built to that community.	1975
Modesto Cepeda founds PACEN youth activity group.	1975
Cortijo releases his <i>Cortijo and His Time Machine</i> .	1975
<i>Haciendo Punto en Otro Son</i> , Nueva Trova group formed.	1975
Modesto Cepeda records first LP <i>A mi Padre</i> .	1976
Ballet Folklórico Guateque founded.	1976
Héctor Campos Parsi publishes <i>Música</i> . Vol. 7 of <i>La Gran Enciclopedia de Puerto Rico</i> .	1976
<i>Los Guayacanes de San Antón</i> formed.	1977
Wille Colón and Mon Rivera recorded <i>Esta bomba es diferente</i> .	1978
<i>Paracumbé</i> formed under original name of <i>Los Pleneros del Turey</i> .	1979
Isabel Albizu forms <i>Bambalué</i> .	1978
Hector Vega Drouet presents his Ph.D. dissertation <i>Historical and Ethnological Survey on the Probable African Origins of the Puerto Rican Bomba</i> .	1979
Ángel Reyes forms <i>Agüeybana</i> (disbanded in 1995).	1981
Rafael Cortijo dies.	1982
<i>Atabal</i> ensemble formed.	1983
Edgardo Díaz Juliá publishes <i>El entierro de Cortijo</i> .	1983
Jesús Cepeda and his ensemble ABC records <i>Pa' los Maestros</i> .	1983
Tato Conrad and Raul Berrios establish <i>Fundación para el Desarrollo del Arte Musical y del Museo Africano y Centro de Estudios</i> . (<i>Foundation for the Development of Musical Arts, the African Museum and the Centre for Studies</i>).	1984
Film <i>La Herencia del Tambor</i> (The Heritage of the Drum) released.	1984
Norma Salazar forms <i>Pleni-Bom</i> ensemble.	1985
<i>Paracumbé</i> releases self-titled first recording.	1985
Short 8mm film <i>Baquiné para un maestro</i> (Funeral wake for a master) is produced.	1985
<i>Raíces Eternas</i> film released.	1985
J. Emanuel Dufrasne-González presents his Ph.D dissertation <i>La Homogeneidad de la Música Caribeña: Sobre la Música Comercial de Puerto Rico</i> . (The Homogeneity of Caribbean music: About Commercial Music in Puerto Rico).	1985
Edgardo Díaz Díaz publishes <i>La Gomba Paraguaya: a Document for</i>	1986

<i>the Study of the Puerto Rican Bomba</i> in <i>La Canción Popular</i> journal.	
Ismael Rivera dies.	1987
Jesús Cepeda and ABC record <i>La historia se repite</i> .	1988
Guillermo Baralt publishes <i>Esclavos Rebeldes; Conspiraciones y Sublevaciones de Esclavos en Puerto Rico (1795-1873)</i> .	1989
<i>Grupo Yubá</i> (Chicago) formed.	1989
<i>Segunda Quimbamba</i> original group formed (original name Los Pleneros de la Segunda), name changed in 1997.	1989
Ángel G. Quintero Rivera publishes <i>Puerto Rican Music and Democratic Counter-Culture: The Libertarian Spontaneity of Maroon Heritage in Folklore Americano</i> , no. 49 Jan-June.	1990
Tato Conrad opens up Arthur Murray space for bomba classes.	1990
Jesús Cepeda and ABC release <i>Amor de mascarada</i> recording.	1990
Marie Ramos Rosado publishes <i>The Un-burial of Cortijo: Polemic Heading Towards the Elections of 1988</i> in <i>Homines</i> Vol. 14, Num. 2.	1990
<i>Museo Taller Africano</i> opens.	1991
First <i>Congreso Internacional de la Salsa</i> , Museo Taller Africano exhibits its extensive instrument collection.	1991
Jose Emmanuelli, Tato Conrad begin to hold bombazos.	1991
Japan's Orquesta de la Luz records bomba <i>Flores y Tambores</i> on their release "Sin Fronteras".	1991
Cepeda Family at <i>Festival Mundial de Danza Folklorica en Palma de Mallorca</i> . Place 8 th out of 35 national teams.	1991
Paracumbé participates in <i>Primer Encuentro Continental de la Pluralidad</i> (First Encounter of Plurality) in México and <i>Afroamérica 92</i> festival in Venezuela.	1992
Modesto Cepeda and Cimientto Puertorriqueño record CD <i>Encuentro de Bomba y Plena</i> .	1992
<i>La Tercera Raíz</i> (The Third Root) exhibit opens.	1992
Celebration of the 500 th anniversary of Columbus' journey.	1992
José Emanuel Dufrasne contributes his <i>Los Instrumentos Musicales Afroboricuas</i> in the Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña. <i>La Tercera Raíz: Presencia Africana en Puerto Rico</i> exhibition catalog.	1992
Ballet Folkórico Hermanos Ayala and Ballet Areyto featured at the <i>Fourth International Festival of Dance</i> in Arequipa, Perú.	1994
Paracumbé travels to the Dominican Republic to participate in <i>Carnaval del Caribe</i> and <i>Festival Afrocaribeño de Veracruz</i> in México.	1994
Modesto Cepeda records CD <i>Raíces de Bomba y Plena</i> .	1994
Bombazos begin being held in Loíza outside of the Santiago festival according to Barton.	1994
Doña Caridad Brenes de Cepeda dies.	1994
Halbert Everett Barton presents his Ph.D. dissertation <i>The Drum-Dance Challenge: An Anthropological Study of Gender, Race, and</i>	1995

<i>Class Marginalization of Bomba in Puerto Rico.</i>	
<i>El Roble Mayor</i> recorded by Don Rafael Cepeda and sons.	1996
Modesto Cepeda records CD <i>Legado de Bomba y Plena</i> with Andy Montañez.	1996
Paracumbé releases <i>Tambo</i> .	1996
<i>Fundación Rafael Cepeda</i> formed.	1996
<i>Plena Libre</i> formed, directed by Gary Nuñez.	1996
Rafael Cepeda dies.	1996
Jesús Manuel Centeno presented his Ph.D. dissertation <i>The Political-Musical Phenomenon in Puerto Rico: 1930-1975</i> .	1996
Rafael Cepeda dies.	1996
Ángel G. Quintero Rivera Publishes his <i>Prácticas Musicales y Visiones Sociales: Apuntes Sobre la Sociología de las Músicas Mulatas</i> in La Canción Popular.	1997
Bomba presented at <i>Festival Mundial de Danza Folklórica de Palmas de Mallorca</i> , Spain, Familia Cepeda Place 4th overall.	1997
<i>Viento y Agua</i> formed.	1997
Calle Rafael Cepeda (Street) dedicated.	1997
Viento y Agua release <i>De Puerto Rico al Mundo</i> .	1998
Beginning of the modern bombazo period.	1999
<i>Son del Batey</i> formed.	1999
<i>Tamboricua</i> formed by Elia Cortés.	1999
Ángel G. Quintero Rivera publishes <i>Salsa y Sabor. Sociología de la Música Tropical</i> .	1999
Paracumbé accept invitation to participate in the <i>Festival Internacional del Caribe Veracruz 2000</i> in Mexico.	2000
Juan Otero Garabís publishes <i>Nación y Ritmo: Descargas del Caribe</i> .	2000
Juan Flores publishes <i>From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity</i> .	2000
Margarita "Tata" Cepeda launches <i>Escuela de Baile Caridad Brenes de Cepeda</i> (Caridad Brenes de Cepeda Dance School) in Carolina.	2001
Modesto Cepeda <i>Raíces de Bomba y Plena</i> released.	2001
Brunilda E. Gracia publishes <i>Para Bailar la Bomba</i> in Resonancias.	2001
National Day of the Bomba decreed (3 rd Sat of March).	2001
Hermanos Ayala release CD <i>Bomba de Loíza</i> .	2001
Searchlight Films releases <i>Dancing the Drum</i> featuring the Cepedas.	2002
Lise Waxer publishes <i>Situating Salsa. Global Markets and Local Meaning in Latin American Music</i> .	2002
<i>Herederos de Xiorro</i> formed.	2003
Paracumbé releases <i>Tambó Sabroso</i> .	2003
<i>El Bom-bóm de Elena</i> production debuts under the musical direction of Jesús Cepeda.	2004
Lydia Milagros González publishes <i>Elogio de la Bomba</i> .	2004
First Congreso de la Bomba (Congress of the bomba) March.	2004
Viento y Agua release <i>Materia Prima</i> .	2004

<i>Vejigantes</i> theatrical production debuts, Jesús Cepeda: Music Director, Gilda Hernández: Choreographer	2005
Second Congreso de la Bomba June 18-22.	2005
Grupo Yubá releases debut CD- Chicago.	2005
<i>First Bomba Research Conference</i> in USA-Chicago September	2005

Appendix 6 Contemporary ensembles specializing in or featuring bomba

Ensembles members are identified where the information was available; a single name by the group name denotes the founder or director. Ensembles operating outside of Puerto Rico are identified by a parenthesis indicating their location.

AfriCaribe- (Chicago, Illinois) Tito Rodríguez

Alma Moyó- (New York, New York) Alex La Salle, Manuela Arciniegas, Obanilú Iré Allende, Maria Luisa Solana, Ernesto Rodríguez, Fidel Tavárez, Raquel Z. Rivera, Marinieves Alba, Jorge Vázquez, José Ortiz, Luis Pérez, Diana Quiñones

Areito Borincano- (San Diego, California) Edwin Monclava

Atabal- Peter Torres, Ramon Pedraza, Hector Rodríguez, Medina, Pedro Roque, Juan Carlos Montalvo, Iván D. González

Bambalué- Isabel Albizu

Bataklán- Carlos Calderón, Jomar Abrante, Hiram Abrante

Ballet Folklórico Borikén- (El Paso, Texas) Olga Custodio

Ballet Folklórico de Celia Ayala- (Boston, Massachusetts) Celia Ayala

Ballet Folklorico de Bomba y Plena Lanzo- (Orlando, Florida) Miguel Lanzo

Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Ayala- Marcos Ayala, Raúl Ayala, Raquel Ayala, Roberto Cepeda, Valentín López, Anibal Ayala, Victor Fuentes, Marcos Peñaloza, Myra Galíndez, Nancy Santos, Jessica López, Santa Iris Rivera, Mandy, Amanda E. Alejandro, Luis Pizarro, Ramón Rosario, Glory Hernández

Ballet Folklórico Hermanos Cepeda- Jesús Cepeda, Gilda Hernández San Miguel, Alba Cepeda, Brenda Cepeda, Carlos Cepeda, Luis “Hadji” Cepeda, Margarita Cepeda, Vincente “Cusy” Castillo, Pedro Colón, Ivette de Jesús, Pedro Fuentes, Faustino “Cuco” Pomales, Ricardo Pons, Noel Rosada, Carlos Torres, Toñito Vázquez, Víctor Vélez

Los Bomberos de Brooklyn- (New York, New York) Awilda Sterling and Hal Barton

Borinbomba- (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) Luis Díaz

Calabó Caribeño- Dra. Marie Ramos Rosado

Grupo Cohitre D’el Yunque- Miguel Ángel Carrillo

- Grupo de Bomba de la Escuela Medianía Alta*- Director, Marta Estela Frasier, drummers Víctor (Timo) Pizarro, Antonio R. Cortijo, Juan Carlos De Jesús.
- Grupo Folklórico Experimental Bomba Le Le de los Hermanos Cepeda*- Jesús Cepeda, Roberto Cepeda, Mario Cepeda, Harry Diaz, Mandy Cepeda, José M. Cepeda, Julia C. Cepeda, Hector Robles
- Grupo Folklórico Paulé*- (Oakland, California) Maria Elena Garcia
- Guateque Ballet Folklórico de Puerto Rico*-Joaquín Nieves Caldero
- Grupo Yubá*- (Chicago, Illinois) Eli Samuel Rodríguez
- Herederos de Xiorro*- Pablo Luis Rivera, Felipe “Junio” Febres, Chamille Bonano, Rebeca Colón, Ari Benítez, Xavier Rosario, Rafael Maya, Guest artists: Juan Crespo, Edwin Davis
- Yayas*- (New York, New York) Raquel Z. Rivera, Manuela Arciniegas, Maria Terrero, Miriam Félix, Marinieves Alba, Sandra Garcia Rivera, Liliana Raposo.
- Los Pleneros de la 21*- (New York, New York) Juan Gutiérrez, Alberto “Tito” Cepeda, Juan Manuel Usera, Sammy Tanco
- Los Tambores de Félix Alduén*- José Millán, Juan Nadal, Ramon “Papo” Alers, Iván Dávila, Alberto Galarza
- Modesto Cepeda y Cimiento Puertorriqueño*- Modesto Cepeda, Brenda Cepeda, Gladys Camará, Lucy Clemente, Pedro Colón, Jesus Hernández, Dr. Daniel Martínez, Jenny Mujica
- Noches de Bomba*- Margarita “Tata” Cepeda, Víctor Vélez, Ángel Reyes, Otoquí Reyes, Migdali Ramos
- Paracumbé*- J. Emanuel Dufrasne, Nelie Lebrón Robles, Rhenna-Lee Santiago, Ivonne Torres-Roig, Marile Colón, Karymar Burgos, Dennis Lebrón Heredia, Dennis Lebrón Robles, Ana Berriel, Paola Lebrón Fernández, Julio López, Wildaliz Lozano Trinidad, Lara I. Serrano, Marcelo Rosario
- Pleni-Bom*- Norma Salazar, Bernardo, Víctor “Tico” Fuentes, Luz Idalmi Rosa, John Edgar Rivera, Kaimi Rodríguez, Mayra Galíndez, Olga López, Alexis Rivera, Sandra Santiago, Marien Torres, Juan Rodríguez, Oxil Febles, Carlitos Pedraza.
- Seis de Bomba*- Héctor Calderón, Víctor Emmanuelli, Omar “Pipo” Sánchez, Hiram Abrante, Victor Vélez, Chamille Bonano.

Segunda Quimbamba- (New York, New York) Juan Cartagena, Nanette Hernández, Miriam Félix, Roberto Cepeda, Monica Vega Torres, Lillian Pérez, Iliana Díaz, Jeslin Garcia, Bridget López, Aníbal Alvelo and Francisco Ortiz.

Son del Batey- Omar Pipo Sánchez, Pablo Luis Rivera, Juan Crespo, Felipe “Junito” Febres, Mario Pereira, Rebecca Colón, Yamir Ríos

Tamboricua- Elia Cortés, Victor Emmanuelli Nater, Héctor Barés, Manuel Carmona, Andrés Cruz Cruz

*Tamboyé-*Victor Velez

Viento de Agua- (New York, New York) Juan Gutiérrez, Hector “Tito” Matos, Roberto Cepeda Brenes, Joksán Ramos, Sammy Tanco, Juan “Richard” Martínez Garcia, Miriam Félix.

*William Cepeda y Afroboricua-*William Cepeda, Antonio Martinez, Nelie Lebrón, Roberto Cepeda, Hector Matos, Hector Calderón, Luis Cepeda, Ángel Mujica, Harry Díaz, Victor Emmanuelli.

*William Cepeda y Afro Rican Jazz-*William Cepeda, Ángel Mujica, Rolando Morales, Juan Gutiérrez (guest)

Yagüembé- Ramón Papo Alers, Jose Alers, Rubén Cepeda, Alberto Galarza, Alberto Galarza Jr., Juan Nadal, Christy Alfonso Mangual, Ricky Soler, Kily Vializ

Yerbabuena- (New York, New York) Pucho Álamo, Obanilú Allende, Sandra Garcia Rivera, Carlos “Tato” Torres, Flaco Navaja, Bryan Vargas, Camilo Molina Gaetán.

Appendix 7 Photography credits

All photographs included in this dissertation were taken by the author except:

Figure 1.7	Page 28	Chorus and dancers of the ensemble Bambalué from Ponce Photo courtesy of Alberto Galarza
Figure 1.8	Page 40	Don Rafael Cepeda Photo-From the collection of Jesús Cepeda
Figure 1.12	Page 54	Yayas drummers Photo courtesy of Carmen Garcia
Figure 2.6	Page 74	Pablo Luis Rivera dancing bomba Photo-Alberto Galarza
Figure 2.7	Page 75	Margarita “Tata” Cepeda Photo-still from film Bomba: Dancing the Drum Producer Kathryn Golden
Figure 2.13	Page 88	Félix Alduén Photo-Alberto Galarza
Figure 2.14	Page 89	Félix Alduén y sus Tambores Photo-Alberto Galarza
Figure 2.15	Page 89	Bomba in the Streets of Mayagüez Photo-Alberto Galarza
Figure 2.17	Page 92	Washing clothes in Ponce 1916 Photo-Courtesy of the collection of Francisco Medina
Figure 2.22	Page 101	Elia Cortés Photo-Courtesy of Gabriel López-Albarrán
Figures 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.12, 2.16, 2.18		Maps of the Caribbean Basin and Puerto Rico: National Geographic Magazine. Used with permission of the National Geographic Society.

Appendix 8 Important research collections

Location of instruments, documents, photographs, audio and film recordings and art works

Archivo General de Puerto Rico
Centro de Estudios Avanzados del Caribe
Colección Hermanos Ayala
Colección Fundación Don Rafael Cepeda
Escuela de Bomba y Plena de Modesto Cepeda
Fundación Nacional para la Cultura Popular
Galería Samuel Lind
Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña
Museo Ambulante Raúl Berrios Sánchez
Museo de Nuestras Raíces Africanas
Museo Taller Africano
Universidad de Puerto Rico
 Departamento de Música
 Biblioteca Principal Lázaro
 Colecciones Puertorriqueñas

Appendix 9 Interview questions

32 Questions about Improvisation

1. What is your experience with improvisation?
2. Do you work within a particular style?
3. How much of the experience relies on past performances?
4. How much on past knowledge?
5. Do you work within structure?
6. What is your main movement or musical language?
7. Do you maintain contact with the audience when improvising?
8. Do you react to the audience?
9. Do you react to other performers?
10. How do you deal with the expectations of your peers?
11. What part does improvisation play in your overall output?
12. Do you experience a "sense of mystical or emotional transcendence" in your improvisations?
13. Do you lose touch with your immediate surroundings?
14. What inspires you?
15. Who inspires you?
16. How did you come to be an improviser?
17. Were you ever taught the art of improvisation?
18. Have you ever read about it?
19. Have you written or addressed workshops and/or classes about it?
20. Can you tell of a surprising moment of simultaneity in an improvisational experience?
21. Does improvisation have anything to do with power relationships?
22. Does improvisation connote freedom?
23. Is there such a thing as an "etiquette of improvisation" in your style?
24. Does improvisation draw any particular metaphors in your conception of it?
25. Do you practice your improvising or do you let it just emerge from performance?
26. What happens in your mind?
27. In *Free Play* Stephen Nachmanovitch states that "Michelangelo, in surrendering to the archetypal shapes latent in his stone, did not make statues, he released them." Can you comment on this statement?
28. Do innovative performance practices play a role in developing new, socially responsive forms of community building across national, cultural, and artistic boundaries?
29. In *Sudden Music* David Rothenberg quotes author Paul Bowles in *The Sheltering Sky* stating "the tourist has a planned itinerary, a fixed vacation, and knows where and how long he will be gone. The traveler in contrast, has absolutely no idea where he is going, how long it will take or when, if ever, he will return." Does this sound like a familiar concept?
30. Can improvisation be taught?
31. Should improvisation be taught?
32. Who comes to mind when thinking about improvisation?