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# A “Special Period in Times of Peace”: Emergence, Exodus, and Evasion on the Cuban Music Map of the 1990s

„Ypatingasis taikos meto laikotarpis“. Iškilimas, emigracija ir laviravimas  
XX a. paskutinio dešimtmečio Kubos muzikiniame žemėlapyje

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## Abstract

The political changes that shook Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991 brought about one of the biggest fractures in Cuba's political and sociocultural life after the triumph of the revolution. Consequently, the Cuban musical map of the 90s was marked by two main events: the boom of timba in popular dance music and the exodus of most of the island's classical composers. As we will see, evasion was a feature shared by both music scenes. In the case of timba, it was manifested in the development of musical and performative resources of radical complexity and social background; while in contemporary classical music, it was manifested in the increasing expansion of the work of its composers in the new spaces of the Cuban diaspora. The effect of this historic moment in Cuban society is evident both in the multifaceted physiognomy that music acquires on the island and abroad as well as in the social and cultural uses music entails as a process of constructing new identities. Deepening these complex dynamics is the main objective of our proposal, which is approached from a sociological, cultural, and musicological perspective by authors such as Frith (1987), Clifford (1988), Bhabha (1994), Hall (1996), Brah (1996), Brazier and Mannur (2003), and García Canclini (2008).

**Keywords:** Special Period, Cuban popular dance music, Cuban timba, Cuban Classical Contemporary music, Identity, Cuban composers of the diaspora, Louis Aguirre.

## Anotacija

Politiniai pokyčiai, sukretę Rytų Europą 1989–1991 m., po revoliucijos triumfo tapo vieno iš didžiausių Kubos politinio ir sociokultūrinio gyvenimo lūžių priežastimi. Todėl XX a. paskutinio dešimtmečio Kubos muzikinis žemėlapis buvo pažymėtas dviem pagrindiniais įvykiais: populiariosios šokių muzikos timbos suklestėjimu ir daugumos klasikinės muzikos kompozitorių išvykimu iš salos. Beje, laviravimas buvo abiejų muzikinių scenų bendras bruožas. Timbos atveju jis pasireiškė radikalaus sudėtingumo muzikinių ir atlikėjiškų išteklių vystymu ir socialiniu kontekstu, o šiuolaikinėje klasikinėje muzikoje – intensyvėjančia kompozitorių kūrybos plėtra naujose kubiečių diasporos erdvėse. Šio istorinio momento poveikį Kubos visuomenei akivaizdžiai liudija tiek muzikos įvairovė Kubos saloje ir už jos ribų, tiek socialinė ir kultūrinė muzikos funkcija naujų tapatybių formavimo procese. Straipsniu siekiama perteikti šią sudėtingą dinamiką, remiantis įvairių autorių (Frith (1987), Clifford (1988), Bhabha (1994), Hall (1996), Brah (1996), Brazier ir Mannur (2003) ir García Canclini (2008)) sociologinėmis, kultūrinėmis ir muzikologinėmis įžvalgomis.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** ypatingasis laikotarpis, Kubos populiarioji šokių muzika, kubietiška timba, Kubos šiuolaikinė klasikinė muzika, tapatybė, kubiečių diasporos kompozitoriai, Louis Aguirre'as.

## Introduction

The political changes that shook Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991 deeply fractured the post-revolutionary history of Cuba, an ideological and economic satellite of the former Soviet power within the Caribbean region. The collapse of the former Soviet Union and The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) together with the tightening of the economic blockade imposed by the United States since the early sixties translated into an unprecedented crisis for the island. According to some experts, “una de las más grandes recesiones económicas del siglo XX [...]”<sup>1</sup> (Fogel 1997: 142).

The radical depression of the economy as well as the island's model of socialist development resulted in a new period called the “Special Period in Times of Peace” (*antesala de un epílogo que se llamaría, a rajatabla, la Opción cero*)<sup>2</sup> (Diego 1996: 212). The levels of individual and social consumption of the people plummeted and the phrases “there is no” and “in the fight” became everyday refrain. The consequences of this crisis, the effects of which can still be seen in the economy of the country, were considerably severe between 1991 and 1993 when the gross domestic product (GDP) contracted between 32% and 36% (Ibarra 2000).

The substantial lack of material resources and basic needs in Cuban society brought about a group of regulations

(ideological and economic reforms) that forced the industry and Cubans' way of life to change. Among these measures we can mention the emergence of self-employment and jobs within the tourist sector, an increase of wired family remittances, free travel to the island for Cubans who had emigrated legally, and decriminalization of the possession and use of US dollars. It was indeed a change in the island's socialist economic structure that challenged the government to face a terrible material crisis.

Modeled after a hypothetical "Special Period in Times of War"—designed decades earlier for the eventuality of a U.S. invasion attempt—the "Special Period in Time of Peace" entailed severe measures to confront a siege-type of situation, and therefore extreme scarcity. [...] Belt-tightening measures were put in place to confront the loss of Soviet bloc subsidies and trade, which up until then amounted to 84 percent of all trade [...]

Stories of people raising pigs in their bathtubs and traveling to rural areas to barter everything imaginable for food were overwhelmingly common. Electricity blackouts of many hours a day and the constant and unpredictable interruption in the supply of all other utilities made quotidian tasks such as cooking and cleaning an ordeal. In Havana the pitch-black, traffic free nights became havens for petty crime. (Hernández-Reguant 2009: 4-5)

However, the most significant and immediate effect was undoubtedly the dramatic exile of Cubans to the United States, which became one of the biggest recorded exoduses in the recent history of the country. From this situation emerged the most dramatic and unique images of the Special Period, which peaked in the summer of 1994.

According to sociologist Ernesto Rodríguez Chávez, Cuba and the United States signed a migratory agreement (December 1984) that favored the annual arrival to the United States of up to twenty thousand Cubans as legal immigrants. Nevertheless,

lejos de servir de instrumento idóneo al desarrollo ordenado y legal de la emigración, se convirtió en factor de presión psicológica: alentaba las salidas legales, pero las impedía al mismo tiempo y conducía el flujo migratorio hacia caminos marginales, como las salidas ilegales por medios propios, los robos de naves aéreas o embarcaciones y el asalto a sedes diplomáticas.<sup>3</sup> (Rodríguez 1997: 104-105)

This critical situation peaked on August 5, 1994, with the Maleconazo uprising, a protest that took place in some streets of the city, mainly the eastern area of the Malecón and the municipalities of Downtown and Old Havana. After intercepting some boats to prevent them from leaving for the States, hundreds of citizens took the streets and fought the police with stones and sticks. The riots caused the destruction of shop and hotel windows and the vandalism of commercial centers. As a result, several people were injured, some were rumored to have died in the incident,

and more than one hundred were detained. The riot only stopped when Fidel Castro personally appeared.

A few days later, on August 12, Cuban authorities decided not to interfere with Cubans fleeing the island by their own means. The above led to the biggest migratory exodus of the period, known as "the rafter's crisis." Thousands of desperate people, among them families with children, "set sail" using precarious home-made means of navigation, which included tractor tires, ropes, and wooden rafts to float off the island. In total, 36,000 people fled the island as rafters between August and September 1994 (Rodríguez 1997).<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, with the breakdown of the usual modes of professional development, many Cuban intellectuals, academics, and artists decided to settle either temporarily or indefinitely in different European countries and those of the Americas. Some were able to achieve this through work contracts with Cuban and foreign enterprises and others by independent means. One of the many strategies devised by the youngest artists, among those who were painters, musicians, writers, film makers, dancers, or actors was fleeing the country legally. These strategies often included applying for international scholarships and participation in festivals, contests, and student exchange programs hosted by various centers and universities of the old and new continent, which often entailed off-the-record balancing and juggling acts and overcoming restrictions. These exceptional opportunities helped many to permanently settle outside the island.

Despite the harsh economic conditions, Cuban culture achieved important results in those years. Among them we can mention the international success known as the Buena Vista Social Club, the "world boom of Cuban salsa," the significant access Cuban writing and poetry published by Western publishing houses, and the first and second Salons of Cuban Contemporary Art (1995 and 1998/1999). It was also an important decade for the Cuban cinema with the movie *Fresa y Chocolate* (*Strawberry and Chocolate*, 1993) directed by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío (Mexican-Cuban-Spanish Coproduction) which won an Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Movie.

Two main events marked the Cuban music scene of those years, which encompassed diverse genres and musical styles such as timba, salsa, hip-hop, rap, trova, jazz, rock, son, rumba, and pop. On one side and within the scope of the island's popular dance music was the boom of timba as a transgressive genre and on the other, the exodus of young Cuban contemporary classical composers who immigrated to Europe, the United States, and Latin America. These events offer a two-sided view of one of the most significant periods of the recent history of Cuban music as well as a privileged perspective of the social and musical events of the largest Caribbean island in a very relevant moment of its socialist history.

The boom of popular dance music, timba especially, on the island and the international market brought substantial changes in the musical discourse. On one side, it became more complex due to its persistent fusion, hybridization, and crossing of performative and stylistic features, and on the other, it led to the emergence of new ethical and social archetypes in the everyday occurrences of popular life. The scope of classical contemporary music, however, reveals one of the most graphic behaviors of Cuban society in the decade of the 90s: the search for new prospects beyond the frontiers of the Caribbean island, which fostered the confrontation of two complementary discourses. One belonged to the old composers of the 60s, 70s, and 80s, which even today persists as reference marker for the music that is composed on the island, and the other belonged to the diaspora composers characterized by new codes, scenes, and identity resources due to their trans-territoriality. Despite their differences, as we will prove in this article, evasion is a feature shared by both music scenes.

The effect of this historic moment in Cuban society is evident both in the multifaceted physiognomy that music acquires on the island and abroad, as well as in the social and cultural uses music entails as a process of constructing new identities. The main objective of this proposal is to delve into the dynamics of these complex processes from a sociological, cultural, and musicological perspective.

### The cuban timba of the new “new man”

Timba (also known as hyper salsa), imposes itself in the 90s as a phenomenon of music-dance expression with urban roots that was extremely popular in the Cuban society of the special period; although “se viene gestando en Cuba desde la década de los 70 aproximadamente”<sup>5</sup> (González and Casanella 2002: 4). It had such a great impact that for many, the term timba “ha servido para nombrar, por convención intuitiva, toda la producciónailable [cubana] de los 90, independientemente de estilos y códigos específicos”<sup>6</sup> (Ibid.: 3). From a commercial point of view, timba is usually “emplear [...] como concepto de marketing, que intenta diferenciar las composiciones nacionales sonero-salseras de los últimos años, de las producidas fuera de la Isla”<sup>7</sup> (Ibid.).

From a musical point of view, timba approaches the characteristic “timbric and functional layers” (franjastimbrico-funcionales) of Cuban music from a different perspective.<sup>8</sup> The extreme fragmentation and counter-accentuation of its sonority has become an undistinguishable feature due to its exacerbated tension, aggressiveness, and emancipation of changing and diverse rhythmical layers. Scholars such as Vincenzo Perna considers timba “[a] result of an innovative fusion of elements drawn from multiple directions [...]” (Perna 2005: 2) in so far as musical style “eclectic and open

to disparate and even contrasting musical influences” (Ibid.: 3). Danilo Orozco highlights the dislocation of elements and inter-stylistic confluences as the definitive feature of this tendency or musical style, falling into the definition of “inter-genre.”

híbrido concreto que se nutre de diferentes géneros (o sus rasgos estilísticos derivados) con una mezcla específica y muy dinámica de elementos yuxtapuestos que se muestran en permanente pugna interna o tensiones, que no permiten precisar, de manera estable, los componentes, lo cual no descarta que sea posible una relativa coherencia a través de uno o más comportamientos musicales.<sup>9</sup> (González and Casanella 2002: 4)

Undoubtedly, timba evidences this behavior in the convergence of characteristic features of son montuno, salsa, rumba, mambo, and the ritual and festive music of Afro-Cuban roots as well as rap, hip-hop, jazz, cumbia, and funk.

This new style within the Cuban music and dance tradition contributes to the use of a wider spectrum of percussion and brass instruments and a tendency to see a progressive acceleration of the musical tempo as an inductive effect of extensive climatic elements (known in the musical jargon of timba as “bomb” or “masacote,” and in dance jargon as “tembleque” or “despelote” [frenzy]). The use of continuous fragmentation in the bass line and the tumbao<sup>10</sup> sonero of the piano, as well as the development of a more solo singing declaimed line alternating with choruses in amore parlando style (influence of hip-hop and rap) were also a part of this style. Its manner of dancing, directly inherited from rumba elements of bantú and abakuá origin, is characterized by brusque, dislocated, and aggressive movements with a sexual connotation.

The main bands of this musical and social phenomenon are numerous and to a great extent composed of a wide range of virtuoso musicians who studied in the professional music school’s system of the island. Among them, José Luis Cortés y NG la Banda stands out, to whom the creation of timba is attributed as well as popular songs such as “Échale limón” and “Santa palabra” (CD *Échale Limón*, EGREM 1993). Also, Paulo F. G. y su Élite with compositions such as “Sofocación” and “Se lo buscó” (CD *Sofocándote*, Areito 1995). David Calzado y la Charanga Habanera with “Nube pasajera” and “El temba” (CD *Pa’ que se entere La Habana*, Magic Music 1996). Manolín, el *Médico de la salsa* (the salsa doctor) with “Una aventura loca” and “A pagar allá” (CD *Una aventura loca*, Caribe 1994). Bamboleo with “Ya no hace falta” and “La tremenda” (CD *Ya no hace falta*, Ahí-Namá Music 1999) and Giraldo Piloto and his band Klimax with “Juego de manos” and “Amor de hospital” (CD *Juego de manos*, Manzana 1997). To the above popular timba bands, other names could be added, such as La Charanga Forever, Manolito Simonet y su Trabuco, Azúcar Negra, Danny Lozada y la Timba Cubana, Carlos Manuel y su Clan, Isaac Delgado y su Orquesta, and Juan Formell y Los Van Van.



Figure 1. Timba dancing (taken from González, Casanella 2002: 2).

Frequently, the lyrics of timba songs refer to the chronicles of marginal neighborhoods and touristic centers (one of its main audiences, together with the European and Asian markets) that portray the Cuban reality of the special period. At the same time, they encourage fun and the pursuit of dreams of fortune.

Los trepidantes cambios en la escala de valores humanos, el retorno de conductas aparentemente anuladas, así como la lucha por la supervivencia encontraron eco en las letras, con un real desbordamiento de lo hasta entonces considerado "marginal".<sup>11</sup> (Casanella 2013: 149)

In these songs, Afro-Cuban religious traditions take a privileged space due to—independently and beyond of their ancestral and ever-growing identity sign<sup>12</sup>—the increase of ritual practices in a context where money transactions prevail; whereas the image of women gains special attention, showing them as objects of desire and moral criticism and making reference to the rebirth of a new prostitution and its practitioners, "las jineteras." It is precisely to this emerging phenomenon of Cuban sexual tourism that José Luis Cortés y NG La Banda dedicated "La Bruja" (CD *La bruja*, Murakami's 1994), one of the most controversial and popular songs of those years.

#### Lyrics of the song *La bruja* (José Luis Cortés y NG La Banda, 1994)

Salgo de la casa aburrido, irritado  
A buscar tu silueta, desesperado  
Me encuentro a mí mismo, solo y cansado.  
La vida es un circo, todos somos payasos  
Pasean los magos, todo me da asco  
Y eso me pasa porque faltas tú.

Tú te crees la mejor, tú te crees una artista  
Porque vas en turitaxi por Buena Vista  
Buscando lo imposible, porque a ti te falta yo también.  
Cambiaste mi amor por diversiones baratas  
El precio del espíritu no se subasta  
Por eso te comparo yo con una bruja.

Coro: Tú lo que eres una bruja  
Solo: Tú eres una loca  
Coro: Una bruja sin sentimientos, Tú eres una bruja  
Solo: Tú lo que eres una loca, una arrebatada, una desquiciada.

... ..

Solo: Tú eres la bruja de la escoba  
Coro: Coge tu palo y vete  
Solo: Por eso contigo no quiero nada  
Coro: Coge tu palo y vete

... ..

Coro: Corre niño que te va a coger  
Solo: La bruja te va llevar  
Coro: Corre niño que te va a coger  
Solo: Oye! La bruja te va a arrastrar

I get out of my house bored and irritated  
searching for your figure, desperate  
I find myself lonely and tired.  
Life is a circus, we're all clowns  
Magicians stroll, everything is disgusting  
And that happens because you're missing.

You think you're the best, you think you're an artist  
Because you take a turitaxi to go around Buena Vista  
Searching for the impossible, because I'm also missing in your life.  
You changed my love for trinket fun  
The price of the soul isn't to be auctioned  
That's why I compare you to a witch.

Chorus: You're a witch  
Solo: You're crazy  
Chorus: A witch with no feelings, you're a witch  
Solo: You're crazy, wild, mad

... ..

Solo: You're a witch with a broomstick  
Chorus: Take your stick and leave  
Solo: That's why I want nothing to do with you  
Chorus: Take your stick and go away

... ..

Chorus: Run boy she's coming after you  
Solo: The witch will take you away  
Chorus: Run boy she's gonna get you  
Solo: Eh! The witch will sweep you along.

Despite its popularity, “La bruja” by José Luis Cortés (El Tosco) was banned in the mass media because, according to official censorship, it sounded more humorous than sententious. In other words, it was publicly sentenced by the political and intellectual elite of the island, since it praised one of the most sensitive and dishonorable issues of the Cuban socialist society of the 90s: prostitution. Curiously enough:

The song makes a reference to turitaxis (dollar-only taxis used by foreigners), but it does not mention prostitutes, jineteras or tourists. In its lyrics, there is virtually nothing reminiscent of the often explicit language of Western pop and rock, or the misogynist showers of words contained in much North American rap. Nevertheless, ‘La bruja’ caused a moral scandal in Cuba: it was banned by radio and met with the solemn condemnation of the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (Federation of Cuban Women, or FMC), a powerful quasi-governmental organization.<sup>13</sup> (Perna 2005: 196)

The linguistic codes used in the lyrics of timba are identified with vulgar and marginal expressions of the language. In them converge dissimilar elements of the traditional, the danceable, and children’s songbooks and the literary and poetic universes as well as Cuban popular and religious lexicon in a constant intertextual dialogue.

Recursos tradicionales como la jocosidad, el choteo, el doble sentido, la ironía, la sátira, la parodia y la hipérbole se utilizaron para abordar temas de aguda connotación social y manifestar la voluntad autoral de censurar y denunciar hechos mediante la mordacidad, la burla solapada pero irreverente o rodeada de una atmósfera que trasmite sus intenciones, tanto o más que el texto mismo.<sup>14</sup> (Casarella 2013: 154)

The aforementioned ostensibly leads to the creation of a new popular phraseology. This fact, and the crystallization of new gestural codes and manners of dressing in Cuban society—a clear reflection of timba’s success and popularity—draws us to highlight that: “Los gustos en la música popular no se derivan simplemente de nuestras identidades socialmente construidas; también contribuyen a darles formas”<sup>15</sup> (Frith 2001: 434). From this same perspective, scholar López-Cano asserts that:

La timba es un factor fundamental en la construcción del arquetipo cultural del “Chico duro de la Habana”, la coraza que abriga a ciertos sectores ante su realidad. La timba no es lamento que llora por lo que pasa, tampoco es hipocresía que niega lo que pasa: es cinismo que colabora a sobrellevar y normalizar la vida en medio de todo lo que pasa.<sup>16</sup> (López-Cano 2005)

The lyrics of this musical and social phenomenon are recognized as “street’s voice”: non-committal but defiant words that subvert the evasion from or absence of official discourse on race, gender, class, and nation. That is the

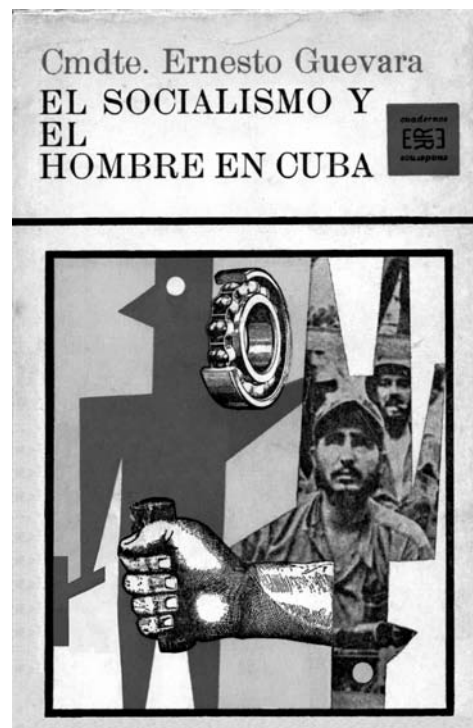


Figure 2. Cover of the first edition of the book *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, Guevara, Ernesto, 1965, Havana: Revolución.

reason why these texts so often became the target of official criticism and censorship.

The combination of all these features lead us to reflect on the possibility of the formation of a new identity: an identity that either on account of the new ideals promoted by the lyrics of timba or by the new archetypes taken after the timba idols—sexy young male singers living an ostentatious lifestyle due to their commercial success—is significantly detached from the revolutionary ideals of that “new man” that Ernesto (Che) Guevara praises in his historic letter “Socialism and Man in Cuba,” initially published in the weekly *Marcha* in Montevideo, on March 14, 1965.

Se corre el peligro de que los árboles impidan ver el bosque. Persiguiendo la quimera de realizar el socialismo con la ayuda de las armas melladas que nos legara el capitalismo (la mercancía como célula económica, la rentabilidad, el interés material individual como palanca, etcétera), se puede llegar a un callejón sin salida. [...] Para construir el comunismo, simultáneamente con la base material hay que hacer al hombre nuevo.<sup>17</sup> (Guevara 1965: 29-30)

el hombre realmente alcanza su plena condición humana cuando produce sin la compulsión de la necesidad física de venderse como mercancía.<sup>18</sup> (Ibid.: 39-40)

la culpabilidad de muchos de nuestros intelectuales y artistas reside en su pecado original; no son auténticamente revolucionarios. Podemos intentar injertar el olmo para que dé peras, pero simultáneamente hay que sembrar perales. Las

nuevas concepciones vendrán libres del pecado original. Las probabilidades de que surjan artistas excepcionales serán tanto mayores cuanto más se haya ensanchado el campo de la cultura y la posibilidad de expresión. Nuestra tarea consiste en impedir que la generación actual, dislocada por sus conflictos, se pervierta y pervierta a las nuevas. [...] Ya vendrán los revolucionarios que entonen el canto del hombre nuevo con la auténtica voz del pueblo.<sup>19</sup> (Ibid.: 49-50)

The new "new man" (post-revolutionary hero)<sup>20</sup> that emerges from the interaction of timba with the scene of social and economic crisis of the special period undermines socialist ethics. Their paradigms talk about a new materialism, about the normalization of a new ethical and social way of life, about the aggravation of vulgarity, about the search for an ideological and spiritual refuge in Afro-Cuban religious practices (pride in Black culture and race), and all in all, the disillusionment with the Cuban Socialist Revolution.

### Cuban classical contemporary composers in the diaspora

Running parallel to the popular dance music scene, the Cuban classical contemporary music of the 90s reveals ambivalent behavior. On one hand, the official discourse of the island insists on empowering the old protagonists of the Cuban musical vanguard of the 60s and 70s as well as the faithful exponents of the post-Romantic and post-nationalist esthetics of the 80s. Among them are Harold Gramatges (1918-2008), Juan Blanco (1919-2008), Héctor Angulo (1932-2018), Carlos Fariñas (1934-2002), Roberto Valera (1938-), Leo Brouwer (1939-)—who indisputably is the most famous Cuban international composer, Guido López Gavilán (1944-), José Loyola (1949-), and Juan Piñera (1949-). Meanwhile, on the other hand, is the striking evasive or escapist reaction shown by younger composers who have recently graduated from the Composition Department of

**Table 1.** Present location of Cuban composers who graduated from ISA in Havana between 1990 and 1999.

Year of graduation	Composer	Presently lives in
1990	Jorge José Maletá Cocina	Madrid, Spain
	Juan Antonio Prada García	Montevideo, Uruguay
	Orlando Vistel Columbié	Havana, Cuba
1991	Louis Franz Aguirre Rovira	Aalborg, Denmark
1992	Julián Antonio Blanco Vega	San Salvador, El Salvador
	Carlos Alberto Puig Hatem	Miami, the United States
	Orlando Gómez Martínez	Matanzas, Cuba
1993	Perla del Carmen Morales Batista	Mexico
	Elio Esteban Villafranca Gómez	New York, the United States
	Keila María Orozco Alemán	New York, the United States
1994	Luvia Denis Naranjo	Miami, the United States
	Alain Perón Hernández	Barcelona, Spain
	Teresa María Núñez Daumy	Havana, Cuba
	Eduardo Morales-Caso	Madrid, Spain
1995	Amed Torrecilla Valera	Madrid, Spain
	Gisell Pérez Quintana	The United States
1996	Ailem Carvajal Gómez	Parma, Italy
	Jorge Martínez Galán	Amsterdam, Holland
1997	Daniel Luis Stable Pérez	Miami, the United States
	Yosleivy Lemes Ulloa	Barcelona, Spain
1998	Yosvany Quintero Monzón	Basilea, Switzerland
	Mónica O'Reilly Viamontes	Guayaquil, Ecuador
	Raquel Rubí Cordoví	Miami, the United States
	Luis Ángel Palomino Tuero	Havana, Cuba
1999	Bárbara María Llanes Zertucha	Havana, Cuba

the Instituto Superior de Artes of Havana (ISA or University of the Arts), the only existing institution in the country.<sup>21</sup>

Immersed in the controversial Cuban reality of the 90s, these young classical contemporary composers also opted for the difficult experience of exile, and with that, the decentralization of their generational group. We should take into consideration that this group, just like many of the young intellectuals of this period, was able to take an active and professional part in Havana cultural life at the end of the twentieth century. However, the abovementioned did not prevent them from falling into the allure immigration posed that permeated Cuban society of the 90s.

During the last decade of the turn of the century, in the idyllic, quasi-extemporaneous environment of the ISA, a considerable number of composers graduated, of which only a small number currently remains on the island. The objective figures of this phenomenon reveal that out of 25 composers who graduated between 1990-1999, only five remain on Cuban soil. For the most part, members of the Cuban diaspora of the 90s today live in European and Latin American countries.

During those difficult years, the students of the composition department of ISA were incited by the generational challenge of facing a cultural and ideological situation plagued by skepticism and radical changes, completely opposite to the experiences and motivations of their professors. During the Special Period, the canon of Cuban cultural policy, up to then defended as a bastion of national expression, does not find in the new generations of artists and intellectuals the same support it did in the past—nor an openly critical stance. Hence, the young artistic manifestation of those years is not assumed as an expression of the nation or as a political-social genealogy.

In the 1990s, most artists chose not to directly collide with revolutionary ideology, strategically insisting instead on the separation of art from politics. It was popular culture, rather, that provided a space for cultural critique. (Hernández-Reguant 2009: 11)

After they left the country—mainly through scholarships subsidized by international universities and conservatoires—the migratory experience of these Cuban composers turned their music into a space of fundamental interest in the recent (unofficial) history of Cuban contemporary classical music. Their proposals are marked by identity cleavage and hybridization, a continuous process of assimilation and utopian return (the “teleology of origin/return”), which encompasses transnational circuits in a constant exchange of cultures and subjectivities (Clifford 1998, 1997). In other words, a dialogical and liminal space in which “diasporic subjects experience double (and even plural) identifications that are constitutive of hybrid forms of identity” (Braziel and Mannur 2003: 5).

Immersed in a continuous process of negotiation, the work of these Cuban composers corresponds to “networks of transnational identifications encompassing ‘imagined’ and ‘encountered’ communities” (Brah 1996: 196), invariably subject to the continuous dynamics of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. As García Canclini states, the two processes (de/reterritorialization) refer to “the loss of the ‘natural’ relation of culture to geographical and social territories and, at the same time, certain relative, partial territorial relocations of new and old symbolic productions” (García Canclini 2008: 229). To summarize, “a conception of ‘identity’ which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity” (Hall 1990: 235).

Some of the classical contemporary composers of the Cuban diaspora include Ileana Pérez-Velázquez (Cienfuegos, 1964-), who has lived in New York since 1993; Eduardo Morales-Caso (Havana, 1969-), who has lived in Madrid since 1996; Keyla Orozco (Santiago de Cuba, 1969-), who lived in Amsterdam from 1996 to 2017 and settled in New York in 2018; Ailem Carvajal (Havana, 1972-), who has lived in Parma since 1997; and as the greatest exponent, Louis Aguirre (Camagüey, 1968-), who has lived in Aalborg since 2004.<sup>22</sup> The careers of these resilient composers unfolded within subaltern spaces in the communities where they have settled down. They had to confront diverse reactions to alterity, namely situations of “cultural difference” or in Bhabha’s words:

A split between the traditional culturalist demand for a model, a tradition, a community, a stable system of reference, and the necessary negation of the certitude in the articulation of new cultural demands, meanings, strategies in the political present, as a practice of domination, or resistance. (Bhabha 1994: 35)

Despite the aforementioned, the music of Louis Aguirre, a composer to whom we will now dedicate our full attention, has been performed in numerous festivals across Europe, the United States, Latin America, Australia, and Asia, which has undoubtedly enriched and reconfigured his previous trajectory, and that of the enclave that welcomed him in Denmark (in 2015 Aguirre was awarded with the prestigious “Three Years Grant” by the Danish State Arts Council). It is questionable whether he would have gained such recognition or international projection immersed in the Cuban isolation of the last decades. Aguirre is a member of the Danish Composers’ Society as well as the council of the Snow Mask Composers’ Group and the artistic director of the Snow Mask Ensemble. His prolific catalogue comprises over 170 oeuvres (90% of them commissioned and premiered). Typically devoted to diverse chamber combinations and solo instruments, Aguirre’s work is characterized by a plurality of creative processes and cultural elements of multiple origins (from the Western musical vanguards, including the “new complexity,” to the

Danish "new simplicity," Carnatic music or classical music from Southern India, and the Gagaku and Kabuki of Japanese traditional music). All the above falls into a saturated aesthetic framework in which his direct relationship with Afro-Cuban ritual practices turns his music into the ideal communicative link with his gods or *orishas*.

Either as a negotiation or identification tool "that lives with and through difference," Louis Aguirre's approach to the African-based religious and cultural universe is, to a great extent, due to his consecration as a palero (practitioner of the Regla de Palo Monte) and santero (practitioner of Santería or Regla de Ocha) in 1999 and 2000. These two Caribbean religious systems derive from African religious practices known as Kongo (originally from Zaire, Congo, and Angola) and Yoruba (originally from Nigeria, Benin, and Togo) respectively. Religion has therefore become one of the guiding principles of his extensive diaspora work.<sup>23</sup>

Aguirre turns the creative space of his Afro-Cuban oeuvres into an essential means of ritual communication and adoration. The composer asserts that:

Y fue mi contacto con el arte ritual afro-cubano lo que me dio la independencia y la posibilidad de construir una obra que no está animada por el consumo, la ligereza y las modas. El rito me dio la fuerza para hacer una obra en solitario, desde la fe y la magia. (Aguirre 2017: 5)<sup>24</sup>

Mi obra se nutre de las ceremonias de la santería, donde la música forma parte integral del contacto con "otros mundos": dioses, deidades, orishas y ancestros; y "otra realidad": trance, posesión y adivinación. En la mayor parte de mi música el sonido es un vehículo de catarsis y significación sagrada. [...] En realidad, fueron mis creencias espirituales las que originaron mi necesidad de lograr un sonido/timbre (klang) capaz de reflejar las sonoridades complejas de los rituales afrocubanos; un sonido susceptible de transmitir la atmósfera violenta, telúrica y brutal de estas ceremonias: su energía, su pavor, su magia [...], los momentos colectivos de trance, donde la respiración cargada, los suspiros, los susurros, el hablar en lengua y los gritos forman partes del sonido mágico que producen los asistentes a las ceremonias [...]. (Aguirre 2014 in Morales 2018: 317)<sup>25</sup>

Unlike the Afro-Cuban tradition that strongly emerged in Cuban concert music during the first three decades of the past century with composers such as Ernesto Lecuona (1895-1963), Amadeo Roldán (1900-1939), and Alejandro García Caturla (1906-1940),<sup>26</sup> Aguirre's proposal marks a moment of deep fracture or inflection. His hyper-Afro-Cuban aesthetic explores the inner and visceral worlds of Black expression, avoiding more external or picturesque means of musical representation. This is evidenced both in relation to the aforementioned Afro-Cuban precursors, as well as the followers of the different generations of composers who, on and off the island, up to they day they died or to the present day continue to use Afro-Cuban aesthetics,

from Argeliers León (1918-1991) and Hilario González (1920-1996) to Eduardo Morales-Caso, Ailem Carvajal, and Yalil Guerra (1973).

Despite being a diaspora composer, Aguirre's Afro-Cuban compositions propose a thunderous and frantic sonority, the purpose of which is to represent the magical-religious universe of African descent, not from the outside perspective, but from the inside, and rejects the nostalgic tone for a Cuban past. Beyond his elitist-bourgeois ancestry, white skin and Western intellectual formation—Harold Gramatges, Roberto Valera, Rafael Reina (1961), Jos Zwaanenburg (1958), Karl Aage Rasmussen (1947), and Hans Abrahamsen (1952), were among his professors—Aguirre's hyper-Afro-Cubanism appropriates the religious and cultural Black elements as object and not as subject. It is but a less picturesque and more heterogeneous (multi-cultural) and brutal proposal that reveals the inner side of Afro-Cuban ritual practices, far away from a romantic and epidermal conception. As a result, it gives rise to a micro-sensorial aesthetic of multiple strategies and identity and creative positioning whose frontiers (re-invention/assimilation), time (past/present), and cultural spaces (local/global) are constantly crossing over.

Aguirre's Afro-Cuban pieces therefore become a field of rigorous timbral innovations, dramatic enhancement, and brusque sound impacts, bringing spectators face to face with a cathartic acoustic experience. By continuously incorporating extended instrumental techniques and new compositional solutions specifically related to Carnatic music, his music falls into a saturated and complex aesthetic framework. Within this creative space, Aguirre hybridizes narrative wefts of ambivalent modernization and traditionalism, densely marked rhythmic structures, microtonal *ragas*, disproportionate timbres, and unconventional mannerisms of performance.

From this perspective, the composer has developed an extremely demanding discourse requiring the utmost in expression and capabilities both from the musical instruments as such and the essentially virtuoso players required to play them. Aguirre's work clearly owes something to the vast tradition of Edgar Varèse, Iannis Xenakis, Luigi Nono, Helmut Lachenmann, and Brian Ferneyhough. It goes from the rhythmic complexity of Carnatic music to the hyperrealist and motley touch of "instrumental musique concrete" and the aesthetic of the "new complexity."

Aguirre's catalogue contains over one hundred pieces that portray this hyper-Afro-Cuban aesthetic. Among them we can mention: *Eshu-Eleggua* (2003) for amplified solo harpsicord, *Oggún (Requiem for solo Organ)* (2004), *Ogguanilebbe (Liturgy of the Divine Word)* (2005) for solo soprano, bass clarinet in Bb, double bass and piano, *Añá (Transmutation Liturgy)* (2005) concerto for solo percussion and ensemble, *Yemayá (Oru)* (2008) for solo



accordion, *Orula (Divination Liturgy)* (2011) for solo amplified flute(s) and three percussionists, *Oru a Yemayá y Obba* 2012/2013 for clarinet in Bb, trumpet in Bb, vibraphone, and 2 pianos (piano I microtonally tuned), *Nsambia Mpungun* (After a painting by Louis Arturo Aguirre) (2012/2014) for solo amplified singer/viola, *Oru de Igbođú III* (2016) for saxophone quartet, *Bembé a Obatalá y Oddúa* (2002-2017) from the Chamber Symphony (1991-2017) for ensemble, *Wemilere a Yemayá y Oshún* (2017) for solo amplified oboe and pre-recorded electronics, *Iyalodde* (2018) concert for two solo percussionists and symphony orchestra, *Oriki a Oggún* (2019) for solo trombone, and *Wemilere a Eleggua y Oggún* (2019-2020) for percussions sextet.

An example to be taken into consideration within this plethora of compositions is his string quartet *Ochosi* (2010),<sup>27</sup> commissioned and premiered by the Arditti String Quartet at the Internationale Ferienkurse für neue musik, Darmstadt, in that same year, which undoubtedly constitutes an unprecedented event in the history of Cuban music and the septuagenarian trajectory of these European academic encounters. We must also mention the fact that one year later (2011), and with this same piece, Aguirre was awarded the first prize of the Martirano Award at the University of Illinois in the U.S.A.

The richness of the compositional resources this chamber piece exhibits, as well as its demanding performative level, makes it easier for the composer to capture in sound form his ambitious Afro-Cuban conception. The first element that stands out is the use of electronic amplification the composer indicated for the performance, which reveals a wide range of expressive possibilities both for the passages of extreme sonority as well as those almost inaudible, which

bring to mind a higher sense of introspection and immateriality. The second is the use of an extremely precise graphic and instrumental notation that appeals to the interpreter's ambivalent performance between maximum control and unavoidable level of uncertainty.

The climax of Aguirre's string quartet (example 1) can be taken as a reference to the abovementioned: the nuances and character *fffff* (*brutale*), which match this instant of unitary texture, entail, among other specific notations, the use of the bow in extreme *sul ponticello al tallone*, and *marcato*, as well as precise details concerning bow directions, together with an incredibly strong pressure of the bow (total scratch sound) and a complex indication of fingers' pressure over the strings that combines the pressure between normal sounds and flageolets. Adding to the above, a sharp profusion of *glissandi* and some suggested or relatively undetermined notes make the performer counterpose extreme registers in a frenzied rhythmic of triplets in thirty-second notes.

A revealing symbolic sense can be inferred from the ritualistic character that defines this moment of expression *brutale*, with its accentuated velocity and resulting timbral saturation, quite close to an electronic sound. It should be highlighted for this purpose that, in the Afro-Cuban world, *Ochosi*, the *orisha* from which the piece takes its name, symbolizes the forces of nature, war, magic, and the hunt and whose symbols are a bow and arrow poised to shoot. Precisely this last image, from an iconic point of view, seems to refer to the graphic conception of this fragment of gestural writing. Likewise, its final cadence transforms into a symbolic gesture of ascending propulsion towards an immaterial, almost inaudible infinite, highlighted by the extremely subtle pressure the performers must use upon the instruments' strings with their bows and fingers.

Example 1. Louis Aguirre String Quartet *Ochosi*, 180-183 bars, Igbođú Edition 072.



Example 2. Louis Aguirre String Quartet *Ochosi*, reference microtonal scale.

It should be explained that in the symbolic conception of Cuban Santería, three positions correspond to Ochosi's bow and arrow: downwards, meaning defense; upwards, meaning war; and horizontal, meaning neutrality. Curiously enough, and as part of the composer's own multiculturalism, we must add that in the Hindu mythology "el arco pertenecza a los atributos de Śiva y Viṣṇu, y que en el *R̥g Veda* el lanzamiento de una flecha se compare con una plegaria" (Andrés, 2012: 191).<sup>28</sup>

One of the components that contributes the most to the aesthetics of this Afro-Cuban string quartet is, undoubtedly, its distorted lyricism, based on a boundless microtonal and timbral conception. In Aguirre's work, the textural density this sonority implies is detached from the superficial search of local color and exotic effects and becomes a key structural factor. In *Ochosi*'s particular case, it must be noted that the organization of sound pitch corresponds to a microtonal scale of 24 sounds, conceived by the composer from his knowledge of *ragas* in Carnatic music (example 2).

Whether the composer does not specifically use the groups of principal *ragas* of Indian music (*janaka ragas* "mother ragas," *janya ragas* "derived ragas," and *bashanga ragas*), their referents are indeed present in the conceptual core of his proposal. This way, Aguirre takes as the organizational principle of his pitch system the subdivision criteria of the seven degrees (or *sorams*) of the Carnatic *ragas*.<sup>29</sup>

Just as we saw in the previous example, unlike these *ragas*, Aguirre adopts his own system of 24 pitches, which allows him to equate his Western thoughts to the Indian structural principles. Considering the norms and specificity of the complex Hindu system, which basically works with rhythmic and melodic aspects, the composer develops in his work an unprecedented way of thinking as well as a hitherto unknown microtonal harmonic notation. This procedure allows him to tackle, from a vertical point of view, his chord constructions in search of a thought that correlates his Western reasoning, besides helping in the projection of transposing principles, and the development of generator or mother cells, and polyphonic resources of microtonal foundations.

In accordance with what was previously expressed, notice that in example 3, the short fragment in which the mother cell of the piece appears in its original form (sa [c], ri 1- [c ≠], ma 2- [f #], pa [g], and ma 2-) for the first time, found in the first violin in the initial beat tempo of bar 42, followed by a cell variation in progressive ascension.

Notice the references appended to the example as previous manifestations of the mother cell in its transpositions and inversions (from *sorams* pa [g] and ri 2 [d]); each has been identified with the same *glissandi* treatment and an extremely fast *vibrato* quite "savage" in character.

Following this same example, notice the joint presentation performed by the lower line of the violoncello, based on a variation of the mother cell in longer rhythmic values and structured from *soram* Ri 2 (d). Also, the pitch that defines the outline of the motif (c#-g≠) remains within a semitone and a quarter tone respectively, just above the fifth that presents the mother cell. Likewise, and as part of the prevailing polyphonic conception of the piece, notice the anticipated presentation on the lines of the second violin and viola (40-42 bars) composed of some elements of the mother cell. In this particular case, over *soram* Ri 2 (d). The setoff marked by the melodic design of these two lines highlights a total range of 5th just over 3 quarter tones, besides the characteristic tritone interval of the mother cell.

The eleven sections that conform the rigorous structural projection of this piece, totally derived from a mother cell of only five pitches, reveal the predominance of a solid cellular composition principle. From a holistic point of view, these sections are organized within a complex dialectical dramaturgical sense, subject to recurrent interruptions of contrasting gestures as well as a horizontal polyphonic concept.

Whichever the case, the aesthetic proposal of Aguirre's string quartet surpasses by far the contributions that were once made by the composer of the Cuban classical music vanguard, with pieces such as: *Cuartetos de Cuerdas núm. 1 y 2* (1963 and 1964) by C. Fariñas, *El Cuarteto* (1966) by R. Valera, or the past and recent quartets by L. Brouwer, *Cuarteto No. 1, "A la Memoria de Béla Bartók"* (1961), *Cuarteto No. 2 "Rem Tene Verba Sequentur"* (1968), *Cuarteto No. 3* (1991-1997), and *Cuarteto No. 4, "Rem Tene Verba Sequentur II"* (2007). Aguirre's compositional leap breaks with the chamber continuity of the island and stands in line with the route traced by the physical qualities and sound perforation of Lachenmann's *Gran Torso* (1972), the micro-timbral, explosive, and piercing sonorities of Julio Estrada's *Ishini'ioni* (1984-1990), and Iannis Xenakis's *Tetras* (1983), or the saturated and "over-expressive" polyphony of Raphaël Cendo's *In Vivo*. This last quartet written by the young Parisian composer, who was a pupil of Fernéyhough and Romitelli, coincided in time with Aguirre's quartet.

Vln. I

Mother Cell, Transp. to Pa (Sol) and Invert., 4-6 b.

Vln. I

SP

IV

*fff* (molto espress.)

Mother Cell, Transp. to Ri 2 (Re), 29-30 b.

Vln. I

X SP

*fff* (molto espress.)

5-6

Vln. II

X SP

*fff* (molto espress.)

Vla.

X SP

*fff* (molto espress.)

Vc.

X SP

*fff*

Example 3. Louis Aguirre String Quartet *Ochoxi*, 40-43 bars, Igbodú Edition 072.

The vast work in Aguirre's catalogue, eager for risk and invention, captures and hybridizes any element within reach of the composer's multicultural restlessness. He represents in sounds his stratified liturgical visions and his "cosmogonic trances" which have Cuban roots but also have universal dimensions. Here, past and present fuse according to a creative experience of sophisticated cosmopolitanism and savage rituality, through a balance of sound expansion and tension whose peak moments are still set aside for the creative maturity of this composer of the Cuban diaspora.

### Conclusions

To conclude, we can assert that the political changes that took place in Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991 deeply affected the Cuban music and society of the 90s. The new codes, scenes, and identity resources which characterized its multifaceted physiognomy on the island and abroad, either in the scope of popular or classical contemporary music, and the practices developed as a result of the socio-economic crisis of the special period, reveal a prominence in

the processes of constructing, negotiating, and transforming sociocultural and collective identities.

Here, the old "new man" cannot find space enough within the musical imaginary of the present generations. Both the "tough boys of Cuban timba" as well as the emigrant composers of the island's classical contemporary music express in their musical work the transgression and conformation of old and new subjectivities. Irony, satire, parody, marginalization, evasion, religiosity, migration, hybridization, virtuosity and de/re-territorialization converge in this "dialogic and liminal space"—non-committed, but defiant—as referents of a new Cuban musical expression. Indeed, a new music identity expression that, although it owes a debt to tradition, subverts and crosses the "nationalist" canon of Cuban cultural policy from both sides of the geographic margins of the island.

Going deeper into this musical and socio-cultural phenomenon with an open, modern, and integrated approach constitutes a more than necessary exercise for the study of the Cuban music of the 90s. It is an unavoidable action to understand, from a more encompassing dimension, the changing interstices of the Cuban reality of the last decades.

## Endnotes

- 1 "one of the biggest economic recessions of the 20th century [...]" (Fogel 1997: 142). My translation.
- 2 "prelude of an epilogue that would be strictly called Zero Option" (Diego 1996: 212). My translation.
- 3 "Far from being the perfect setting for a legal and ordered immigration, it turned into a factor of psychological pressure since it encouraged and at the same time forbade leaving the country through legal channels. It led the flow of immigrants towards marginal roads such as illegal leavings by personal means, hijacking of aircrafts or boats and assaulting diplomatic venues" (Rodríguez 1997: 104-105). My translation.
- 4 See the 2002 documentary *Balseros*. Production House: Bausan Films and TV3. Directors: Catalonians Carles Bosch and Josep M. Domenech. Script by: Carles Bosch and David Trueba. Awards: Oscar nomination to Best Documentary in 2004. Goya (Spain) and Coral (Havana Film Festival) for Best Documentary in 2002 and National Film Award of Catalonia in 2003.
- 5 "it had been brewing in Cuba since approximately the decade of the 70s" (González and Casanella 2002: 4). My translation.
- 6 "has served to refer to, by intuitive convention, the entire [Cuban] dance production of the 90s regardless of styles and specific codes" (González and Casanella, 2002: 3). My translation.
- 7 "used [...] as a marketing concept that tries to differentiate the national son and salsa compositions of recent years from those produced outside the island" (González and Casanella 2002: 3). My translation.
- 8 We are referring to that element of syntactic order and communicative function that Argeliers León, musicologist composer and ethnologist, recognizes as concrete contribution from Africa ("cultural continuity") to the Latin American and Caribbean music (León 1986). In his words: "Timbric bands [layers] (franjas timbricas) are sonorous masses of different textures and tone qualities that are temporally extended. While the European musician might conceptualize the unfolding of music in time as articulated by small units, the African musician conceives of a performance as situated in space, instead of unfolding in time, more like concrete images within a space whose dimensions are shaped by the timbric combinations themselves, and by the very subtle variables in the quality of such timbres. African music thus circumscribes a space whose dimensions and boundaries are intrinsically delineated and easily perceptible as timbric bands" (León 2007: 21-22). Following León's premises, these bands are concretized in three zones or timbric layers distributed in three levels: high (conducting band of stabilizing function), middle (complementary band of referential function), and low (improvising band whose parlando nature gives it the more creative freedom and figurative level of the ensemble).
- 9 "concrete hybrid that is nourished from different genres (or their derived stylistic features) with a specific and extremely dynamic mixture of juxtaposed elements that manifest in permanent internal conflict or tension that cannot be specified in a stable way, which does not rule out that the relative coherence through one or more musical behaviors is possible" (González and Casanella 2002: 4). My translation.
- 10 Danilo Orozco, famous son scholar refers to the term tumbao as "[...] modelo o patrón básico y fundamental—en instrumentos como el tres, bajos, teclados—que dan el carácter y propician sutiles interrelaciones en muchas músicas de son, y se extienden a otras interconectadas" (Orozco 2000: 9). "[...] model or fundamental and basic pattern—in instruments such as tres, basses and keyboards—which gives character and propitiates subtle interrelationships in many son musics and extends to others that are interconnected" (Orozco 2000: 9). My translation. "Also marcha. The term tumbao is perhaps best translated as 'groove.' It refers most often to The basic pulse of a composition, with characteristic aggregate rhythms, pulses, emphases, and syncopations. [...] Alternately, tumbao can refer to the most typical patterns played on particular instruments, especially the conga drum. Tumbao in this sense is the most fundamental rhythm of the instrument that the performer will repeat in endless variation throughout the course of a composition" (Orovio 2004: 215).
- 11 "The fast-paced changes in the scale of human values, the comeback of apparently overridden behaviors, as well as the constant struggle for survival, found echo in the timba lyrics, with a real overflow of what so far was considered 'marginal'" (Casanella 2013: 149). My translation.
- 12 African-based religious practices were brought to the New World in the conditions of a resilience culture through the inhumane flow of enslaved people imposed by the European colonial empires from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Africans were mainly imported to Brazil, Uruguay, Peru, Colombia, the Southern part of the United States and the islands of the Caribbean. However, in spite of the brutal process of acculturation to which these practices were submitted, their extraordinary capacity for adaptation and integration into the new context gave them an important role in the process of identity conformation that took place in these syncretized and trans-cultured territories. In Cuba as well as in many areas of the Spanish-speaking islands of the Caribbean prevail Santería or Regla de Ocha, Regla de Ifá, Regla de Palo Monte, and the Abakuá fraternities. After the triumph of the Cuban revolution (1959) and its consequent assimilation to the Marxist legacy, these religious practices were excluded from the public and official spaces of society. With the arrival of the special period, these latent practices flourished exponentially.
- 13 Founded in 1960, the Federación de Mujeres Cubanas is recognized on the island as a mass organization devoted to the development of policies aimed at achieving the full exercise of women's equality in all spheres and levels of society. From its beginning and until 2007, the Federación was presided by Vilma Espín (wife to Raúl Castro Ruz), who was also a member of the Council of State and director of the Comisión de Atención a la Mujer, la Infancia y la Juventud of the National Assembly of the People's Power.
- 14 "Traditional lexical resources such as jocularly, double meaning, irony, satire, parody, and hyperbole were used to tackle issues of severe social connotation, and manifest the author's will to denounce and censor certain facts through mordacity, through sly and irreverent mock or, surrounded by an atmosphere which conveyed their intentions as much, or more, than the text itself" (Casanella 2013: 154). My translation.
- 15 "taste in popular music does not simply derive from our socially constructed identities. It also contributes to shape them" (Frith 2001: 434). My translation.
- 16 "timba remains a fundamental factor in the construction of the cultural archetype of the "tough boy of Havana" [Chico duro de La Habana]. Such hardness is a kind of shield that protects certain sectors when facing their marginal reality. Timba is neither a wail that cries for what's going on, nor hypocrisy that denies the reality; it is cynicism that helps to endure and normalize life in the middle of everything that is going on" (López-Cano 2005.) My translation.
- 17 "The pipe dream that socialism can be achieved with the help of the battered instruments left to us by capitalism (the

- commodity as the economic cell, profitability, individual material interest as a lever, etc.) can lead into a blind alley. [...] To build up communism it is necessary, simultaneous with the new material foundations, to build up the new man” (Guevara 1965: 29-30). My translation.
- <sup>18</sup> “man truly achieves his full human condition when he produces without being compelled by the physical necessity of selling himself as a commodity” (Guevara, 1965: 39-40). My translation.
- <sup>19</sup> “the fault of many of our artists and intellectuals lies in their original sin: they are not true revolutionaries. We can try to graft the elm tree so that it will bear pears, but at the same time we must plant pear trees. New generations will come and will be free of original sin. The probability that great artists will appear will be greater to the degree that the field of culture, and the possibilities for expression, are broadened. Our task is to prevent the current generation, torn asunder by its conflicts, from becoming perverted and from perverting new generations. [...] Revolutionaries will come who will sing the song of the new man in the true voice of the people” (Guevara 1965: 49-50). My translation.
- <sup>20</sup> See Behar, *La Caída del Hombre Nuevo. Narrativa Cubana del Periodo Especial* (2009).
- <sup>21</sup> Before the exodus of the young composers in the decade of the 90s, we should mention a few more names that belong to previous generations of ISA and immigrated during the decade of the 80s. They are: Carlos Malcom (1945-), Flores Chaviano (1946-), Armando Rodríguez Ruidíaz (1951-), Julio Roloff (1951-), and Guillermo Fragoso (1953-). Unlike the young generations of the 90s, these composers were subject to formative and professional development in former socialist countries.
- <sup>22</sup> See Morales Flores, *Identidades en proceso. Cinco compositores cubanos de la diáspora (1990–2013)* (2018) and “Art Music and Transterritoriality: Reflections on Cuban Migrations to Europe during the 1990s” (2020).
- <sup>23</sup> See Marrodán, “Entrevista a Louis Aguirre: densidad, exceso, ritos: sincretismo cultural para una teogonía afrocubana” (2016)); Morales Flores, “Música, ritual y sacrificio: Una nueva estética afrocubana en *Ebbó*, ópera-oratorio de Louis Aguirre” (2018); Morales Flores, “Neo-afrocubanismo, ritualidad y música carnática: diálogo intercultural en la obra de Louis Aguirre” (2018).
- <sup>24</sup> “And it was my contact with Afro-Cuban ritual art that gave me the independence and the possibility of constructing a work that is not animated by consumption, lightness and fashions. The rite has given me the strength to do a work in solitude, from the faith and magic” (Aguirre 2017: 5). My translation.
- <sup>25</sup> “My work draws from Santería ceremonies where music plays an all-embracing part when in contact with ‘other worlds’: deities, *orishas* and ancestors; and ‘other reality’ trance, possession, and divination. In most of my music, sound works as a means of catharsis and sacred significance. [...] Actually, my spiritual beliefs gave rise to my necessity of achieving a sound/timbre (klang) capable of reflecting the complex sonorities of Afro-Cuban rituals. A sound capable of transmitting the brutal, telluric and, violent atmosphere of these ceremonies, their energy, terror and magic [...] the collective moments of trance in which heavy breathing, sighs, whispers, glossolalia, and screams are part of that magic sound uttered by the attendants [...]” (Aguirre 2014 in Morales 2018: 317). My translation.
- <sup>26</sup> Good examples of these first Afro-Cuban compositions include *Danzas Afrocubanas* (1912-20) and *Rapsodia Negra* (1943) by Ernesto Lecuona; *Tres Pequeños Poemas* (1926), *La Rebambaramba* (1928), and *Rítmicas* (1930) by A. Roldán; and *Obertura Cubana* (1937), *La Rumba* (1927) and *Manita en el Suelo* (1937) by A. G. Caturla
- <sup>27</sup> See <https://soundcloud.com/louis-aguirre> [last checked 2020 09 26].
- <sup>28</sup> “the bow is an attribute of Shiva and Vishnu and in the Rigveda the shooting of an arrow is compared to a prayer” (Andrés, 2012: 191). My translation.
- <sup>29</sup> The names of these *sorams* are: *sa* (I grade), *ri* (II), *ga* (III), *ma* (IV), *pa* (V), *da* (VI), and *ni* (VII) and their subdivisions into two, three, four, or five types of sounds depends on the different *srutis* or pitches (microtonal) that each of them fixedly contains. Likewise, consider that ragas have as guideline the possibility of selecting one or various *srutis* for each degree or *sorams* in their structure. This way, each *raga* contains a different version of basic organization of these seven degrees or *sorams*. For example, *ri*, *ma* and *da* (II, IV y VI) possess four different types of *sorams*, while degrees *ga* and *ni* (III y VII) have five. However, *sa* and *pa* (I and V) will always be fixed *sorams* without any subdivision, therefore, constituting the referent tonic axis of this microtonal system.

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## Santrauka

XX a. paskutinis dešimtmetis tapo stipraus lūžio laikotarpiu porevoliucinės Kubos, sovietinės valdžios ekonominės ir ideologinės satelitės Karibų jūros regione, naujausioje istorijoje. 1989–1991 m. Rytų Europoje vykę politiniai pokyčiai padarė reikšmingą poveikį socialistinės Kubos kultūriniam ir sociopolitiniam gyvenimui. Buvusios Sovietų Sąjungos ir ESPT (Ekonominės savitarpio pagalbos tarybos) žlugimas kartu su griežtesniu ekonominiu embargo, JAV įvestu septintojo dešimtmečio pradžioje, virto precedento neturinčia krize. Tai buvo vadinamojo „ypatingojo taikos meto laikotarpio“ eufemizmas, kurį Karibų jūros salos vyriausybė pasitelkė „nuliniam variantui“ įvardyti.

Materialinių išteklių trūkumas ir negalėjimas patenkinti pagrindinių poreikių Kuboje paskatino griežtas ideologines ir ekonomines reformas, kartu ir tūkstančių kubiečių nepasitenkinimą ir emigraciją. Atsižvelgiant į dramatiškus sunkumus, to kritinio meto Kubos muzikiniame žemėlapyje išsiskyrė du pagrindiniai įvykiai: pirma, timbos kaip padarumo ribų peržengimo žanro suklestėjimas salos populiariojoje šokių muzikoje ir, antra, daugumos Kubos šiuolaikinės klasikinės muzikos kūrėjų emigracija į Europą, JAV ir Lotynų Ameriką. Šių tendencijų pagrindu vienas iš reikšmingiausių naujausios Kubos muzikos istorijos laikotarpių apžvelgiamas dviem požiūriais; taip pat siūlomas išskirtinis žvilgsnis į socialinių ir muzikinių didžiausios Karibų jūros salos gyvenimą ypatingu jos socialistinės istorijos laikotarpiu.

Laviravimas buvo bendras abiejų muzikos scenų (populiariosios šokių muzikos ir šiuolaikinės klasikinės muzikos) bruožas. Timbos atveju jis išryškėjo vystantis radikalaus sudėtingumo muzikiniams ir atlikėjiškiems ištekliams, hibridizacijai ir socialiniam fonui. Šiuolaikinėje klasikinėje muzikoje jis reiškėsi socialinės ir muzikinės veiklos nuosmukiu Kuboje ir, atvirkščiai, intensyvejančia emigravusių kompozitorių kūrybos plėtra naujose kubiečių diasporos erdvėse XX a. pabaigoje ir XXI a. pradžioje. Dėl minėtų istorinių įvykių susiformavusios muzikinės praktikos skatino naujų sociokultūrinių kodų, muzikinių scenų ir archetipų atsiradimą. Poveikį liudija atsiradusi kubietiškos muzikos įvairovė saloje ir užsienyje, taip pat socialinė ir kultūrinė muzikos funkcija senų ir naujų tapatybių formavimo, svarstymo ir transformavimo procese. Tai kelionė per kritinių „ypatingojo laikotarpio“ metų Kubos visuomeninį gyvenimą ir muzikinę kultūrą, kurioje neišvengiamai priartėjama prie kūrybingo ir iššūkių metančio „kietų kubietiškos timbos vyrų“ pasaulio ir detersitorializuotų kompozitorių kubietiškoje diasporoje, daugiausia dėmesio skiriant hiperafrokubietiškai Louiso Aguirre'o muzikai.

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