



GROOVES AND WAVES: Cyclicity and Narrativity in Cuban Timba Piano

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Since the early 1990s, Cuba has developed a popular dance music genre known as timba, incorporating structures, instrumentation and song forms from earlier folkloric and popular genres as well as elements from American jazz and funk. Focusing on the piano in the timba rhythm section, this paper explores how the piano tumbao, on micro and macro levels, can be viewed as an ongoing attempt to reconcile cyclicity with narrativity. Piano parts have assimilated an expanded gestural vocabulary that, when combined with jazz harmonic progressions, create longer montuno cycles than in previous genres. I employ elements of rhythm and meter theory as well as groove music literature to ground a discussion of clave, syncopation, cyclical incongruity and hypermeter, all of which constitute indispensable creative tools for the timba pianist. Finally, I provide a taxonomy of timba's innovative pianistic gestures and methodologies for tumbao creation and variation.

Desde los 1990, Cuba ha desarroyado un género de música popular bailable llamada timba, incorporando tanto estructuras, instrumentación y fórmulas de canción forclorica y popular, como elementos del jazz y funk americano. Enfocándose en el papel del piano como parte de la sección rítmica de timba, este estudio explora la interpretación del tumbao pianístico a macro y micro niveles como una reconciliación actual de principios cíclicos y narrativos. Estos tumbaos han asimilado un vocabulario ampliado de gestos melódicos y rítmicos que, combinados con progresiones harmónicos extendidos del jazz, crean ciclos de montunos durando mas tiempo que sus antecedentes. Apollando una discución de las erramientas creativas del pianismo en la timba: la clave, varios tipos de síncopas, incongruidad cíclica e hypermétrica, utilizo teorías rítmicas y métricas además de la literatura analisando el concepto del "groove" en la música afroamericana. Al final, através de análisis musical, proveo una taxonomía de gestos pianísticos inovativos de la timba, una metodología pragmática para la creación y variación de tumbaos.

Born in Brooklyn, NY in 1972, to a Puerto Rican Italian father and a Dominican mother, Orlando Fiol began showing an interest in and talent for music from an early age. From his first experiments imitating his father's salsa records on Dixie cups to imaginary compositions banged out on an old typewriter, music ran like a leitmotif through his life. His father, Henry Fiol, taught him the basics of Latin percussion: conga, bongo, timbal, maraca, clave and guiro, while his mother, Laura Vidal, fostered in him an appreciation for intricacies of international cuisine and foreign languages. First educated in the Lighthouse's Child Development Program, Orlando quickly learned to read and write literary and mathematical Braille.

Fiol began studying Western classical piano, music theory and composition at the Lighthouse Music School with such distinguished performers and teachers as George Bennette, Norma Varga, Anthony Felaro and Myrna Votta. While immersing himself in Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Debussy and Skriabin, Fiol was also gradually exploring jazz piano on his own, learning Thelonius Monk and Art Tatum solos by ear, memorizing jazz standards and attempting to imitate what he liked of various styles. While in special ed and resource programs in various Queens elementary schools and being an avid radio listener, Fiol developed an interest first in north and south Indian film music and later in principally Hindustani classical music. He met the tabla virtuoso K. Paramjoti at a concert and became his disciple. He studied tabla with Paramjoti and his senior disciple Misha Masud for five years. He also was privileged to take some lessons with Ustad Allah Rakha and his disciple Ray Spiegel.

At age fourteen, Fiol was accepted into the prestigious LaGuardia high school for the Performing Arts, where he majored in voice, explored the Western art song tradition, sang in choirs, analyzed music scores and learned more theory. All the while, he was gaining invaluable experience playing with various professional and informal jazz, classical and Latin music ensembles. Furthering this education were three summers at the Encore Coda music camp in Maine, where he studied more Classical piano, composed classical music, played in chamber groups and jazz combos. In 1986, Fiol began playing in his father's salsa group, touring North and South America, Europe and the U.S., producing and arranging three albums, playing keyboards and conga, and singing backup coro vocals.

In 1987, LaGuardia high school arranged two performances with Orlando Fiol and Stevie Wonder, where they played a Fender Rhodes duet in front of the student body. In 1989, Fiol received the Itzak Perlman award for Disabled Artists from the Very Special Arts organization, which resulted in his participation in a gala concert at Washington's Kennedy center and numerous New York media appearances. In 1990, Fiol received the Board of Education Award for Excellence and Achievement.

From 1991 to 1996, Fiol attended Columbia University, receiving a Bachelor of Sciences degree in music. There, he studied ethnomusicology, Western music history and analysis, literature and poetry, philosophy, feminism, German, political science, Latin American studies and sociology. Although his interests were far reaching, Fiol focused increasingly on music, rekindling his interest in Indian music, resuming tabla studies, transcribing

field recordings and analyzing secular and sacred music from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, as well as twentieth century works. He also began studying bata and Afro-Cuban and Afro-Haitian conga with John Amira, participating in the ensemble that recorded musical examples for Amira's award winning book on bata rhythms.

In 1996, Fiol traveled to Cuba to be initiated to the consecrated bata drums of Pancho Quinto. There, he met and played with many luminaries of Cuban music: Changuito, members of Sierra Maestra, Raices Profunda and the Sexteto Habanero. In 1999, Fiol began studying jazz piano with Barry Harris, attending his weekly New York workshops and accompanying Harris on his annual trips to the Hague for master classes. During the 1990's, living in New York, Fiol played in Latin, rock, jazz and experimental bands, set up his own project studio and recorded many independent artists. In 2000, Fiol was awarded a nine month fellowship from the American Institute of Indian Studies to study dhrupad singing, tabla and pakhawaj in Pune with Pt. Uday Bhawalkar, Manik Munde, Sanjay Deshpande, Bharat Jangam and Vasantrya Ghorpadkar. He also studied tabla making with Nisaar and Zaakir Sheik in Pune and received more guidance from Sanjay Deshpande. He currently studies tabla with Pt. Mrinal K. Pal in Edison, New Jersey, and has taken workshops with Pt. Shamir Chatterjee.

Living in Philadelphia for the past five years, Orlando has performed with mainstays of the Philadelphia latin-jazz scene such as Pupy Legarreta, Marlon Simon, Pablo Batista, Bobby Zankel, Areito, Conjunto 23, Leana's Song, and Ellas y Amigos. He has taught the Latin-American ensemble at Temple University, piano, conga and other latin percussion at the AMLA Music School of the Arts, as well as piano and music theory at the Catholic Institute. He has produced studio projects for Univision and appeared on Diego Castellanos's acclaimed Puerto Rican Panorama. He has also completed a large-scale world music fusion project for Philadelphia's Painted Bride Arts Center, combining Dhrupad singing, tabla, jazz, Western classical and AfroCuban musics.

Recently, Orlando Fiol has been exploring his disparate musical interests and forging a career, privately teaching jazz and Latin piano, improvisation and arranging, Latin percussion, liturgical Cuban percussion and tabla. He has a working jazz duo, trio and quartet, a Latin jazz quartet and an Afro-Cuban ensemble. Since 2008, Fiol has been pursuing graduate studies toward a PHD in ethnomusicology at the University of Pennsylvania.