

# Sticks to Latin

## Music for Latin Percussion Ensemble

### By Rolando Morales-Matos

My intention with this series is to create a Salsa Band scenario.

SALSA! = Souse

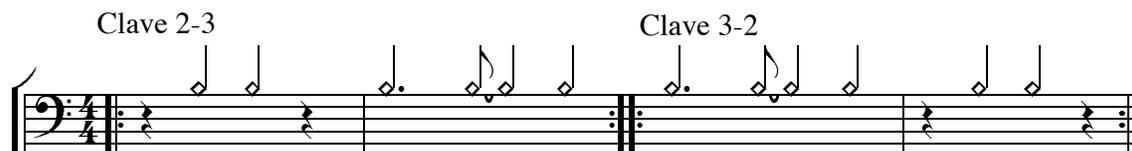
It is a term that very well describes the musical style because the bands often include a variety of rhythms that have been developed all over the Caribbean, Virgin Island, Latin America and Europe. Some of the most popular styles are: Mambo, Merengue, Bolero, Cha- Cha-Cha, Cumbia, Guaguancó, Bomba, Plena, Jíbaro (A Caballo), Songo, Reggae, Sóca, Bossa Nova and Samba.

Each of these rhythms or styles of music are the ingredient to a powerful and an energetic Salsa music. It is very common to combine some of the rhythms to create a change in character throughout the music.

Because the arrangements are written in the traditional style of Salsa, it is important to understand the concept of the Clave - Clave, not as the instrument claves which in this case is what is used to play the rhythm, but as the TWO BAR PHRASE RHYTHM PATTERN IN WHICH THE MUSIC IS WRITTEN UPON!

The Claves used in these arrangements are Clave 2-3 and Clave 3-2.

The numbers represent the amount of beats played in each bar.



The claves can and should be played through the arrangements if enough players are available. The melodic phrases and the rhythms start and end with the clave. When counting off the music section, e.g. ON CUE, it's important to have the clave in mind so that the phrases lay smoothly on the rhythms. Also, the timbale and bongo players must pay attention to their parts since they are, at all times, establishing the clave through their patterns.

### Cascara Pattern

Musical score for the Cascara Pattern in 4/4 time. The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line. The first measure is labeled "Clave 2-3" and the second "Clave 3-2". The score consists of four staves. The top staff shows the clave pattern with diamond-shaped notes. The second staff contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The third and fourth staves show rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes, including rests marked with 'x'.

### Mambo Bell Pattern

Musical score for the Mambo Bell Pattern in 4/4 time. The score is divided into two measures by a double bar line. The first measure is labeled "Clave 2-3" and the second "Clave 3-2". The score consists of four staves. The top staff shows the clave pattern with diamond-shaped notes. The second staff is labeled "Mambo Bell" and contains a rhythmic pattern with eighth and sixteenth notes and rests marked with 'x'. The third and fourth staves show rhythmic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes, including rests marked with 'x'.

Being aware of the different amount of students in each school, the arrangements can be modified accordingly.

The arrangements are scored to an average of 13 + players. However, they can be performed with a few as 3 players on Mallets (Bass Mar., Vibes 2 and solo Vibes or Marimba).

These are my recommendations for the instrumentation of a reduced ensemble:

**# of Players Instrumentation**

4 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Bass Mar., Congas. (if no conga drums then Mar.1)

5 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Mar.1, Bass Mar., Congas

6 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Mar.1, Bass Mar., Congas, Timbales

7 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Mar.1, Mar.2, Bass Mar., Congas, Timbales

8 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Mar.1, Mar.2, Bass Mar., Congas, Timbales, Bongos

9 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Mar.1, Mar.2, Xylo, Bass Mar., Congas, Timbales,  
Bongos

10 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Mar.1, Mar.2, Xylo, Bass Mar., Timpani, Congas,  
Timbales, Bongos

11 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Mar.1, Mar.2, Xylo, Glock, Bass Mar., Timpani,  
Congas, Timbales, Bongos

12 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Mar.1, Mar.2, Xylo, Glock, Bass Mar., Timpani,  
Congas, Timbales, Bongos, Drums

13 Vibes 1, Vibes 2, Mar.1, Mar.2, Xylo, Glock, Bass Mar., Timpani,  
Congas, Timbales, Bongos, Drums, Djembe

If you have more students, you can double any part at your own discretion.

## The Origin and Forms

**Bomba** is a traditional rhythm from Puerto Rico traced to the end of the 19th Century. The rhythm was born in the coastal areas of the island by the African slaves who were brought there by the Spaniards. This music was the way of communication (story teller) at the end of the day through drumming, singing and dancing. At least 3 drummers and a Cuá player. Cuá, like the clave, is the name of the instrument as well as rhythm, usually played on a smaller barrel or hollow tree trunk or even on the side of the barrel drum and maracas. The drums were made of rum and or wine barrels with a goat skin head, called Barriles.

There are many different rhythms of Bomba. The most popular and use by music arrangers are:

**Bomba Sicá**, a moderate to a medium fast tempo in 4 / 4.

**Bomba Cuembé**, medium slow to a moderate tempo in 4 / 4.

**Bomba Yubá**, moderate to a fast tempo in 6 / 8

The music usually starts with a choral section (A) in which the subject of the song and dance is presented. Solo vocal (B) who will sing the story. These two sections will go back and forth for a while. In the middle section (C) the drummers becomes more active while the solo drummer will improvise complementing the solo dancer who, with the steps, would also tell the story. Some- times it would turn into a challenging match between the drummer and the dancer. In this section can be added some vocals, singing a shorter version of the previous choir (D). Then, back to the main choir and solo vocal repeating this for a shorter time and ending with the choir and a percussion break.

**BOMBA E** follows this form. The Barriles drums are replace by conga drums. The conga pattern should be double as many times as the number of students will permit it. Tune the drums at about a whole step difference. The solo conga drum should be tuned the highest so that it can be identified among the others.

**Plena**, is another traditional rhythm from Puerto Rico. Traced to the beginning of the 20th century. Born in the south of the island and adopting African, European, and native influences, Plena was the news teller (troubadour style) of the towns. Very satirical, Plena would announce subjects that include from the neighbors to the governor. The drums were like the tambourine but without the jingles, called Panderos or Panderetas. The group would consist of; Three drummers, a guiro and or maracas player, and guitarists. Later a trumpet would be added to the group.

The music usually starts with an instrumental section (Intro) choral section (A) in which the subject of the song and dance is presented. Solo vocal (B) who will sing the story. These two sections will go back and forth for a while. In the middle section (C) the drummers becomes more active while the solo drummer will improvise complementing

the solo dancer who with the steps would also tell the story. Also in this section it would turn into an instrumental solo. Vocals were added with shorter versions of the previous choir (D). Then, back to the main choir and solo vocal repeating this for a shorter time and ending with an instrumental section, many times the (Intro) and a percussion break.

**PLENA LINDA**, follows this form. The Panderos drums are replaced by the conga drums. One player can play the Plena pattern while another can play short improvisation using the plena pattern as reference.

**Mambo**, originated in Cuba. Traced to the early 20th Century. Its origin comes from the Son Montuno (song from the mouton). Like the Plena, it was a way of communication in a satirical way but much more direct to a point of creating controversy. This music was played by Tres, a three stringed guitar, string bass, claves, guiro, maracas and bongo drum. Later trumpets and saxes were added. The music usually starts with an instrumental section (Intro), solo vocal (A). Another instrumental section (B). In the middle (C) a choral section alternating with the solo vocal. In this section the soloist shows his or her ability of improvisation on the subject that it's being sung about. Then a short instrumental interlude (D). Also in this section it would turn into an instrumental solo. Vocals were added with shorter versions of the previous choral section. Then return back to the main choral and solo vocal section (C) repeating this for a shorter time and ending with an instrumental section, much like the (Intro), and a percussion break. This form influenced America, Latin America, and later, the whole world

**HELLO YOUNG LOVERS, CAN YOU FEEL THE LOVE TONIGHT, WHAT A CHA-CHA** and **TONIGHT I CELEBRATE MY LOVE** follow this form:

All of the arrangements have an **open for solo** section that alternates back and fourth with the choral parts (choral parts should be sang as well as played in the instruments). The length of these sections (solo-choral), is determined at the conductor's criteria and the ability of the soloist improvisation skills (great way to develop improvisation skills). The **ON CUE** sections, which are played between solo sections can vary in length as well as the order. For instance; There are usually at least two **ON CUE** per arrangements, so after the solo-chorals count **ON CUE 1**, then back to solo-choral section, then count off to the **ON CUE 2**. Now you can decide to go for more solo-choral section or count off to end the song or if you choose to do more solo-choral section, you can go back to **ON CUE 1** or **ON CUE 2**.

In the case of **Tonight I Celebrate my Love**, the **ON CUE** actually goes to the end of the song. The solo section (**LETTER G**) is built with a pyramid effect, so it is the entrances of the different parts that the conductor can manipulate. For instance; let the music build to the maximum, then stop Mar. 1 and 2, Xylo and Glock, let the Vibes 1 take a solo then you can start to bring the parts from the bottom up until its back to the full ensemble. You can also cue the last two bars before this section were everybody is

playing the rhythm break and then let the percussion play for a while then build the pyramid again. There are many possibilities with this one arrangement.

On the Jazz tunes (**Side By Side/ Come Back**), the **ON CUE** are played over the Solo. There are no choral sections in the Jazz tunes.

I hope that you will have fun putting these arrangements together and performing them. They have the ingredients to make a great concert and should make faces smile and bodies dance... Para Bailar y Gozar!