

STEREO ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4065



Carnaval in Cuba

RECORDED BY ANDREW SCHLOSS IN HAVANA AND SANTIAGO DE CUBA, JULY 1980



CARNIVAL FLOATS, PHOTO BY ANDREW SCHLOSS

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4065

SIDE A

1. Mozambique — 3' 33"
2. "Soy Cubano" — 2' 55"
3. "Ahora es cuando es" — 3' 35"
4. "El perico está llorando" — 3' 25"
5. Orquesta Aragon — "Preguntame" — 8' 51"
6. Boys' Duet — 50"

SIDE B

1. Conga de Santiago-Conga de los Hoyos — 8' 42"
2. Los Hermanos Izquierdo — 3" 40"
3. Carabali Olugo — 4' 56"
4. Organo de Manzanilla — 4' 15"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The musicians in Cuba, who were the most open and friendly of any I have met, and Rina Benmayor, Michael Spiro, John Santos, Barbara Schloss, Tovar.

Help with recording in Cuba: Rob Holland, Patricia Vattuone, Akinyele, and others in the *Carnaval* 1980 tour.

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

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CARNIVAL IN CUBA

Recorded by Andrew Schloss[†] in Havana and Santiago de Cuba, July 1980
Introduction and notes on the recordings by Andrew Schloss

HISTORY OF CARNAVAL AND OF SANTIAGO DE CUBA.

Carnaval originated in pre-Christian Europe as a pagan agricultural rite. It was incorporated into catholicism very early, and in fact, the word *Carnaval* comes from the Italian *carnevale*, or the medieval Latin *carne(m) levare* meaning "farewell to meat," because it was practice not to eat meat during Lent. *Carnaval* was the last chance one had, before Lent, to indulge in earthly pleasures. Later the Crown of Spain, during the *Council of Trent* in Italy (1545-1563), deemed that there would be a *Festival of God*, a celebration with masked dancing and theater, in every village of the new world, as well as in Europe. Thus, *Carnaval* in Cuba has a history of over four centuries.

The African influence in Cuba has been prevalent for several centuries; *Carnaval* emerged as a festival of the slaves. In the 16th century the *Festival of God* was abandoned in favor of the *Day of the Kings*, in which the slaves had a day of liberty, and were authorized to go into the villages and request gifts. The *Festival of God* later merged with the *Day of the Kings* and became one huge *Carnaval* determined by the church calendar. The blacks of Haiti also influenced the events, contributing elements of French dances of the 18th century.

Carnaval has a history of mixing and uniting people of different races, and the merriment and participation in *Carnaval* has always transcended class boundaries. In the beginning of the 19th century, *Carnaval* reached a peak in Santiago de Cuba -- it was the most joyful and colorful on the island, exceeding Havana's even in those days. During the repressive years of the Batista regime in the 1950's, *Carnaval* lost much of its gaiety, due to the generally oppressive political and social climate. In those years *Carnaval* became an important agent in the clandestine work of the revolution; people were able to spread news of activities in the Sierra Maestra mountains nearby, where the revolution was developing.¹

After the revolution, as a celebration of the "Triunfo de la Revolución" (Triumph of the Revolution) *Carnaval* was revitalized. It now stands as a celebration and commemoration of the Revolution in Cuba, specifically commemorating the attack of the Moncada Barracks on the 26th of July, 1953. Thus, the date of *Carnaval* is no longer dictated by religious

holidays, but is permanently set for the 26th of July, actually spanning about a five day period before and after that date.

Santiago de Cuba was one of the first two towns founded by the Spanish in Cuba. It was the capital before Havana (until 1558), and because of its protected harbor and fortress, has been a strategic location for centuries, as well as a commercial seaport. Santiago has always been politically important, several times functioning as a center for revolutionary activity. For example, during the 1895 revolution against Spain, weapons and medicines were smuggled inside drums during Santiago's *Carnaval*. The 1959 revolution is considered to have begun there with the assault on the Moncada barracks in 1953. Santiago lies in Oriente province, about 600 miles southeast of Havana.

Many of the musical groups that play at *Carnaval* are not professional, but are people from the various industries and work-places who build the floats and practice during the year to prepare for *Carnaval*. Floats in *Carnaval* no longer represent private social clubs, but rather the country's economic organizations, industries, and work-centers. There is often a competition among the different *comparsas* (street bands) and floats, in which choreography, music and costumes are judged.

The 1980 *Carnaval* was a joyous celebration in the aftermath of the Cuban "exodus" in which 100,000 Cubans emigrated to the United States as part of the "Freedom Flotilla". There was a focus of positive sentiment and solidarity among many of the 9½ million Cubans who remained. The words to some of these songs from *Carnaval* give the listener an impression of the pride and enthusiasm that was maintained by the Cubans during those difficult times; it stands as an important example of the people's commitment to their Revolution. It is difficult for many non-Cubans to imagine such sentiments, because that side of the situation is rarely presented in the national media of countries unsympathetic to the Cuban cause.

¹Based on notes by Alejo Carpentier for *Carnaval Santiago a Cuba* (Le Chant du Monde record LDX A 4250)

SIDE A

COMPARSAS in HAVANA

The first four selections were recorded on floats at *Carnaval* in Havana, which is organized more as a spectator event than in Santiago. In Havana, *Carnaval* consists of giant floats filled with musicians and dancers, which parade down a large avenue with bleachers on either side for the audience; this results in a more sedate feeling, because the people watching the procession are just spectators, not participants. On the other hand, in Santiago, *Carnaval* is happening in the streets and everyone gets involved. The word *comparsa* means "street band", and is a general term for many different ensembles. It is also used to describe the basic rhythm employed here.

1) "QUÍMBARA" 3.5 min.

This rhythm is called *mozambique*. The mozambique rhythm was invented by Pello el Afrokan just after the revolution and is identified with post-revolutionary Cuba..

2) "SOY CUBANO" 3 min.

This is a patriotic song. Behind the repeated refrain "I am Cuban", the singer is referring to Jose Martí and Antonio Maceo, who are Cuban heroes who fought for independence from Spain in the late 19th century.

3) "AHORA ES CUANDO ES" 3.5 min.

This is an old song, done here in *comparsa* style. The words mean "Now is the time."

4) "EL PERICO ESTÁ LLORANDO" 3 min.

"The parrot is crying" -- Note the parrot imitation done through P.A. system with the voice. A virtuoso performance.

ORQUESTA ARAGÓN -- La Trocha, Santiago de Cuba.

Orquesta Aragón is one of the most famous and oldest groups in Cuba. Founded in 1935, they have been playing together for over 45 years, enjoying great popularity in the United States during the 1950's. Orquesta Aragón has typical *Charanga* instrumentation: 3 violins, cello (can't hear it on this recording), bass, piano, wooden and silver flute, timbales, conga, and three singers (playing claves, guiro and cowbell), one of whom is the soloist.

The *Charanga* style is based on the *danzón* salon music of the turn of the century, which was based on the French *danza*, or *contradanza* of the 19th century. In this song, Aragón is playing an old, traditional song (with traditional words), in a modern style, called *cha-onda*. The rhythm is slightly different in this style than in the traditional *Charanga*, and the bass and piano are playing in unison rhythm, which is also a newer style.

5) "PREGÚNTAME" 9 min.

Recorded at La Trocha, Santiago de Cuba.

ANNOUNCER'S INTRODUCTION:

"...de la música cubana,
y que hoy, en carretera del morro
y calle tercera, mas que un placer,
es un orgullo recibir,
a la triunfadora de ayer...
de hoy y de siempre - ¡La Orquesta Aragón!"

"... of Cuban music,
and today, at Morro and
third street, more than a pleasure,
it is an honor to receive,
triumphant in the past,
today, and always - Orquesta Aragón!"

TEXT

"Pregúntame, ¿cómo estoy?"
"¿Cómo estás?"
"Estoy muy bien."
"Pregúntame ¿porque estoy bien?"
"¿Póorque? ¿Póorque?"
"Porque tengo mi casita pintadita..."
"Sin tener la preocupación..."

"Ask me how I am!"
"How are you?"
"I'm very well"
"Ask me why I'm so well"
"Why? Why?"
"Because I have a little painted house..."
"Without having all the worries..."

The repeated refrain: "Manuela no me pelea" means "Manuela doesn't fight (argue) with me". These words are very traditional and old-fashioned. It is interesting to see how Aragon has taken an old standard and given it new life.

6) BOYS' DUET 1 min.

Children's song sung by two little boys at the *Carnaval* in Havana. Some of the little song is made of traditional Cuban *coplas*, or rhyming phrases, and some is entirely original.

De chiquitico marinero fuí (2x)
Me subí el palo,
y del palo me caí (2x)
Y los pecesitos me querían comer (2x)
Y yo de tanto miedo
me ha mandado a correr (2x)
Cáscara de piña,
cáscara de coco (2x) (transition)
Ahí viene Juan el loco,
acabando con los cocos (2x)
Allí en el monte hay una mujer (2x)
Que tiene tres hijos
que son bandoleros (2x)
¡Y por eso les dicen los tres mosqueteros!

When I was little, I was a sailor.
I climbed up the mast,
and from the mast I fell.
And the little fish wanted to eat me...
I was so scared,
I started to run.
A husk of pineapple,
a husk of coconut.
Here comes Juan the crazy man,
finishing the coconuts.
Up in the mountains, there is a woman.
She has three children
Who are bandits,
And that's why they call them
The Three Musketeers!

SIDE B

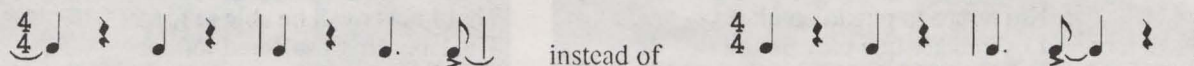
SANTIAGO DE CUBA

1) CONGA DE SANTIAGO 8 min.

Recorded in Santiago de Cuba, July 22, 1980. Played by La Conga de los Hoyos.

The Conga de Santiago is a particular kind of *Carnaval* music, unique to Santiago de Cuba. The instrumentation consists of several thin and wide drums with a deep tone, called *galletas*, played with one hand and one stick, several conical drums called *bokuses*, akin to the familiar conga drums and played with the hands, and brake drums, called *hierros*, struck with metal rods and used as bells for time-keeping and some fast interlocking parts. Peculiar to this ensemble is the *trompeta china*, or Chinese trumpet, whose piercing sound can be heard above the roar of the drums. Actually this instrument is *not* a trumpet, but rather an oboe (musette). It is called the *sona* in China, or the

zurna in Turkey. It was probably brought to Cuba from China in the late 1800's, when large numbers of Chinese were brought to Cuba to work as indentured servants on the sugar-cane plantations and the railroad. The distinguishing rhythmic feature of the Conga de Santiago is that its main accent falls on the offbeat after the fourth stroke, as opposed to the offbeat after third stroke, as in a typical Havana *comparsa* rhythm:



Conga de Santiago

Typical *comparsa*

This particular example of Conga de Santiago is played by the Conga de los Hoyos, who won first prize in the *comparsa* competition in the *Carnaval*. They were evaluated by judges as they paraded down the street. The *comparsa* continues for a long way after it has passed the judges; in this case they played continuously for hours, winding through innumerable streets. Along the way, a chorus formed among people following along the *comparsa*. The lyrics that were sung are presented here, but not translated, due to their obscene nature. The intent of the words is to express extreme ridicule towards those who are deserting the revolution.

"La conga de los Hoyos ahí viene arrollando."

"Barbara se fue por (ca) Marioca" (place from which people left in the 1960's)

"Barbara se fue con la cosa en la boca..."

2) LOS HERMANOS IZQUIERDO 4 min.

Recorded at La Trocha, Santiago de Cuba

Los Hermanos Izquierdo is basically a *Charanga* band (see Aragón description); its roots are Cuban, with the varied influence of popular music from the United States and elsewhere. The new style heard here has been called *Areito*, which refers to a slightly more 'funky' sound than traditionally found in the *Charanga*. For instance, this group includes a trap-set, and an electric bass, whose sounds differ from the original *Charanga* sound.

This song exemplifies the hypnotic character of many Cuban songs. The melody is repeated over and over hundreds of times, but is never boring, because of the rhythmic invention. This song actually lasted over an hour! The "vamp", as it would be called in American popular music, is called a *montuno* in Cuban music.

There were many verses sung by the leader through P.A. system. This verse was chosen because of its poignancy.

Bueno bueno bueno...

Uds. saben que nuestro pueblo
está viviendo momentos heroicos.
Esta es la hora de definirse todo aquel
Que no se haya definido...

Uds. conocen que toda una serie
de elementos antisociales
han decidido abandonar el país.
Pero Santiago como siempre,
Rebelde ayer, hospitalaria hoy,
¡Heroica siempre!

¿Cómo le dice a todos esos elementos
que se quieren ir del país?

¡QUÉ SE VAYA LA ESCORIA!

Good good good...

You know that our people
are living in heroic times.
Now is the time to define everything
which has not been defined...

You know that a whole series
of antisocialist elements
have decided to abandon our country:
But Santiago, as always,
Rebel yesterday, hospitable today
Heroic always!

What do we say to all the antisocialists
who want to leave our country?

Let the scum leave!

3) CARABALI "Africa, Africa" 5 min.

Performed by the *Carabali Olugo*.

Recorded at Avenida Jesús Menéndez, Santiago de Cuba.

The name *Carabali* is derived from the Calabar region of Nigeria. This song is a tribute to "the old country" for those descended from slaves. It is a celebration of Africa and of the ancestors. Although there are few black Cubans who actually remember Africa from their childhood, the song reminisces as if it were possible. One would have to be about 100 years old to have been born there.

Africa, Africa
Africa, Africa
Los tambores me hacen recordar.

Si por siempre he podido lograr
Siendo libre la sangre de mi abuela
Los trabajos que pasé por ella
Eso nunca lo puedo olvidar
Los trabajos que pasé por ella
Eso nunca lo puedo olvidar

Mira bién a tu abuela...
para yeye

Africa, Africa
Africa, Africa
The drums make me remember.

If forever I have been able to succeed.
Feeling free the blood of my grandmother
The labor that I suffered for her
That I never will be able to forget.
The labor that I suffered for her
That I never will be able to forget.

Look carefully at your grandmother...
For your mother. (ye-ye means mother
in Yoruba)

4. ÓRGANO DE MANZANILLO 4 min.

This instrument, the player organ, is quite a curiosity, and is unique to Oriente province, originating in a town called Manzanillo. The music played (programmed) on the organ, stems from the salon music of Europe, but has a distinctive Cuban flavor. Cuban percussion is played "live" to accompany the machine, e.g. *congas*, *timbales*, *claves*, *guiro*, etc. The *órgano* itself is not strictly machine-like, because the person running it can execute any physically realizable tempo, including speeding up, slowing down, or *rubato*, by turning the crank faster or slower. The performance is fascinating to watch because of the skill involved in feeding the music roll into the player organ; for example, any repeated section of a piece is realized by feeding the beginning of a roll back into the organ just at the right moment!

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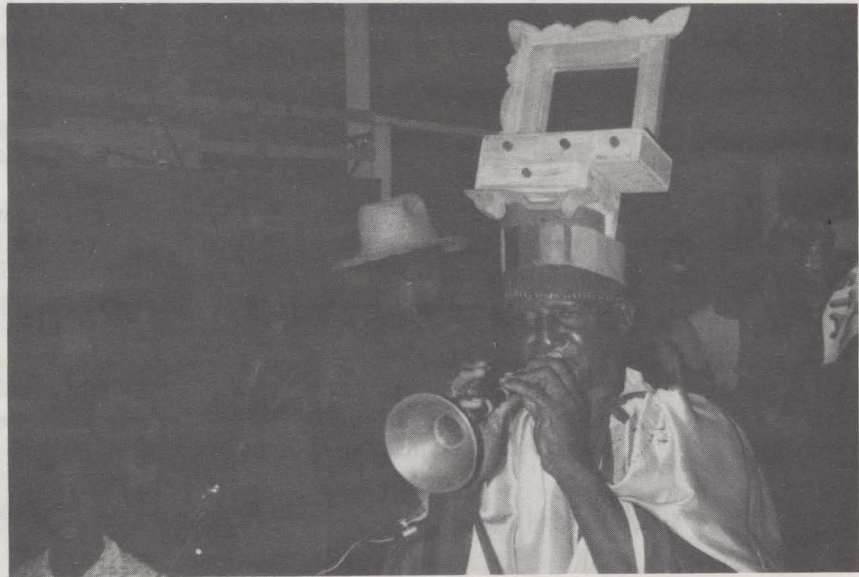
Andrew Schloss
Stanford, California



“Galleta”—bass drum used in Conga de Santiago



Bells used in Conga de Santiago (called hierros)



Trompeta China (Sona) used in Conga de Santiago



Boku drum used in Conga de Santiago



Brake drums used in Conga de Santiago