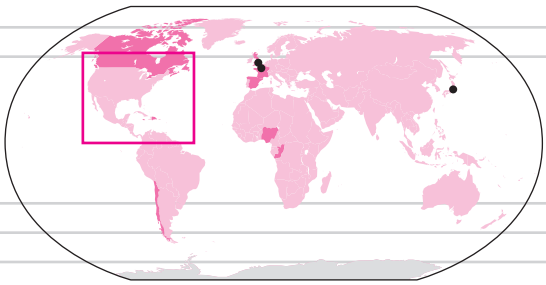
chapter eleven

"Oye Como Va":
three generations in the life of a classic **Latino/American** dance tune



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timbales (teem-BAH-lays)

Tito Puente (TEE-toh PWEN-tay)

Los Angeles. 1988. The lights dim. The curtain rises. A crowd of a thousand-plus Latin music fans cheers wildly, for there, standing center stage behind a battery of drums and other percussion instruments called the **timbales** is The King—*El Rey*—of Latin music: Tito Puente.

This is a king who wears many crowns: king of the timbales, king of **salsa** music, king of Latin jazz. Like Elvis Presley in rock-and-roll, Louis Armstrong in jazz, and Ludwig van Beethoven in Western classical music, Puente is an icon. He is a musician whose artistry and persona essentially define the musical tradition with which he is identified.

Tito immediately takes command of the band, locking in tightly with the other members of the **rhythm section** (pianist, bassist, percussionists)

Tito Puente playing the timbales.

and "kicking" the rhythms and **riffs** of the **horn section** (trumpets, trombones, saxophones) with a barrage of drum fills and accented "shots." The energy his playing and presence generate is extraordinary, and the rest of the band rises to meet it.

Over the course of this magical night of music making, Tito Puente wows the audience with his dazzling timbales solos, his lyrical playing on the vibraphone (an instrument whose use he pioneered in Latin music), his bandleading skills, showmanship, charm, and humor. They take it all in, loving every minute, crying out "Tito, we love you!" at various points. There are many great moments, but there is one that unquestionably tops the rest as far as the response of the audience is concerned. When Tito and the band launch into an arrangement of "Oye Como Va," the most famous piece he ever wrote, the entire crowd rises from their seats as one, swaying and dancing to the **cha cha chá** beat of this classic **Latino/American** tune.

Introduction

This chapter presents a story of **Latin dance music** viewed through the lens of the musicultural history of the song "Oye Como Va." According to ethnomusicologist and Tito Puente biographer Steven Loza, "Oye Como Va" is "an international anthem," "the most played Latin tune in the world," and a song which, in 1970, turned the worlds of rock and pop music "upside down" when it was recorded by the **Latin rock** band Santana and became a commercial mega-hit the likes of which had never been seen before in the domain of Latin music (Loza 1999:45, 73, 44).

The chapter begins by placing "Oye Como Va" in the contexts of Latin dance music and Latino/American culture. We then move through a survey of the key developments in Latin dance music history—especially those rooted in traditional Cuban dance music styles such as the **rumba,** the **danzón,** the **danzón-mambo,** the cha cha chá, and the **mambo**—that prefigured the musical style and social significance of "Oye Como Va." The second half of the chapter builds around Guided Listening Experiences based on three important and influential recordings of "Oye Como Va":

rumba (ROOM-bah)

danzón (dan-SOHN [last syllable in-between English "sun" and "sewn"])

- The original Tito Puente recording from his 1963 album *El Rey Bravo*.
- Santana's enormously popular, rock-infused version from the hit 1970 record *Abraxas*.
- A hip-hop and techno-inspired dance mix version from a 2004 Tito Puente Jr. CD entitled *Tito Puente, Jr.: Greatest Club Remixes*.

Each of these recordings tells its own tale of the form and substance of *pan-Latino cultural identity* at a particular historical juncture. Each also reflects on a broader musicultural history of interrelationships between the United States, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. It is the musical products of this history that account for most of the major styles of popular Latin dance music: mambo, cha cha chá, salsa, Latin jazz, Latin rock, and a plethora of newer styles identified by umbrella labels like Latin pop and Latin rap.

This chapter, then, takes a specific piece of music, "Oye Como Va," as its focus musical element, and looks at that composition in terms of the musicultural history of pan-Latino culture and society. A variety of topics and subjects emerge along the way. Five are of central importance:

- The Cuban cha cha chá: its musical and cultural roots and its historical transformation.
- Puerto Rican and **Newyorican** (New York/Puerto Rican) society and musicultural life.
- The life and career of Tito Puente (1923–2000).
- The musical tradition of Latin dance music (defined below).
- The integral connection between Latin dance music and the commercial music industry.

"Oye Como Va" and Latin Dance Music in Context

We begin with a deceptively simple question: Where does the song "Oye Como Va" (which basically translates as "See how she moves") come from? A simple answer: the United States, New York City specifically. New York is where Tito Puente was born and raised and where he based himself throughout his professional life. It is where the song was first performed and recorded. And it is almost surely where Puente wrote the tune in the first place.

So then, strictly speaking, "Oye Como Va" is an American song from New York (i.e., with "American" meaning "United States-ian" to be precise). That is not all there is to the matter, however. Though Puente was a lifelong New Yorker and a patriotic American citizen who served in the U.S. military during World War II, he identified himself, ethnically and culturally, as a Puerto Rican first and foremost. "Oye Como Va," and Puente's body of work overall, belongs to a grand legacy of Latino musical culture that developed principally among Puerto Ricans and Americans of Puerto Rican descent in both the United States (especially New York) and Puerto Rico. Perhaps, then, "Oye Como Va" is best described as an example of Puerto Rican music.

Alas, there is a catch to this theory, too. In terms of its fundamental *musical* identity—its core style, form, and structure—"Oye Como Va" is neither principally American nor Puerto Rican, but rather Cuban. It belongs irrefutably to the musical legacy of the cha cha chá, a Cuban dance-music genre that emerged around 1950 in the Cuban capital of Havana before being developed and gaining wide popularity in North America, Europe, and elsewhere. Furthermore, Tito Puente himself, throughout his life, insisted that his own musical identity was principally Cuban rather than Puerto Rican or American. By these measures, "Oye Como Va" would seem to be a Cuban song, or at least a song of Cuban musical extraction.

There is at least one more possibility to throw into the mix as well. "Oye Como Va" may have its musical basis in Cuba, its cultural essence in Puerto Rico, and its geographical point of origin in New York, but for millions upon millions of people around the world, it is, pure and simple, an American "classic rock" tune by Santana. Relatively few people who know and love "Oye Como Va" have any idea who Tito Puente was, let alone that he wrote and was the first to record this famous song. Nor do they know that Santana closely modeled his recorded version after the Puente original (though Santana never made any secret of that fact). Even among his legions of fans, Puente was not necessarily known as the composer of "Oye Como Va." Wherever in the world he would play, he used to report, people would come up to him and say, "Tito, could you please play Santana's tune, you know 'Oye como va'?" (Puente, quoted in Loza 1999:44). This brings us back full circle. Maybe "Oye Como Va" *is* an American song after all, but for different reasons than those outlined earlier.

The fact of the matter is that there is no single right answer to the question, Where does "Oye Como Va" come from? It comes from many different places, and in its eclectic musicultural admixture brings to bear an even more complex question: Where does "Latin dance music" come from? And by extension, who, and what, does it represent?

Latin dance music defined

"Oye Como Va," in its many incarnations (at least the ones we deal with in this chapter), belongs to the realm of Latin dance music. This is one of those terms that can mean any or all of a number of different things, so let us establish from the outset what it is assumed to mean here.

World events		Music events
European discovery of Cuba (Christopher Columbus)	1492	
First Spanish settlers to Cuba	1511	
Taino and other indigenous peoples all but wiped out in wake of Spanish conquest		
Height of slave trade in Cuba	1790–1860	
	Late 19th century	Creolized dance-music forms: *contradanza, danzón*
	1920s	Danzón essentially becomes national dance of Cuba
		Afro-Cuban *son* emerges and challenges danzón in both popularity and nationalistic significance
	1923	Tito Puente born to Puerto Rican immigrant parents in Spanish Harlem, New York City
	1930s	Xavier Cugat dominant figure in so-called Latin dance music in U.S.
	1940	Formation of Machito and the Afro-Cubans
	1947	Carlos Santana born in Mexico
	1949	Pérez Prado's "Mambo #5" achieves major commercial success
	1950	Cha cha chá originates in Cuba (Enrique Jorrin)

The "Latin" in Latin dance music refers to Latin America. Geographically, Latin America is a large and culturally diverse region of the world encompassing all of South America and the various nations and territories of Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean. In its broadest sense, Latin American music—or Latin music, for short—is any music originating from anywhere in this vast region; and in this broad sense, too, musics of diasporic Latino communities in the United States, Canada, Europe, and elsewhere also may be included (e.g., salsa music, a genre of Latin music that was "invented" in New York City). (Visit the Online Learning Center at www.mhhe.com/bakan1 for information and resources on diverse traditions of Latin American music.) The "dance" in Latin dance music, of course, refers to music intended to accompany dancing. Thus, Latin dance music, in the broadest and most literal sense, is any and all music identified with Latin America that is intended for dancing.

This, however, is *not* the sense in which the term "Latin dance music" is used in this chapter. Instead, our scope will be far more narrow and specific. As used here, the term refers specifically to *a host of popular dance-music genres that originated in or derived from the island of Cuba; that have experienced significant histories of development in the United States and/or Puerto Rico; and that have histories of transmission closely tied to the U.S./international commercial music industry and mass media distribution.* New York City has been the main U.S. hub of Latin dance music's

World events		Music events
	1950s	Big band mambo and "mambo craze" in U.S. (Puente, Tito Rodríguez, Machito)
		Latin dance music scene dominated by a combination of Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Newyorican bandleaders and musicians
Fidel Castro comes to power in Cuba, which becomes a socialist state	1959	
Pan-Latino movement emerges and develops in U.S., and eventually internationally	1960s–1970s	
	1963	Original Tito Puente recording of "Oye Como Va" released on *El Rey Bravo*
	1970s	Birth and rise to popularity of salsa music ("salsa explosion")
	1970	Santana's Latin rock version of "Oye Como Va" released on *Abraxas*
	1971	Tito Puente Jr. born in New York City
	1996	"Oye Como Va" released on *Guarachando,* by Tito Puente Jr. & the Latin Rhythm Crew
	1999	Carlos Santana releases Grammy award-winning album *Supernatural*
	2000	Death of Tito Puente
	2004	Tito Puente Jr. releases *Tito Puente, Jr.: Greatest Club Remixes* (including remix version of "Oye Como Va") and *En Los Pasos De Mi Padre* (In My Father's Shoes)

development and popularization, though other cities—Miami, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and to some extent Paris, London, and even Tokyo—have played key roles as well.

A Latino/American phenomenon

The musicians responsible for shaping the history of Latin dance music (i.e., as defined immediately above) encompass a diverse and confluent range of ethnic, national, and musical backgrounds. There are the Cuban and Cuban-American pioneers: Israel "Cachao" López and Orestes López (the López brothers), Enrique Jorrin, Mario Bauzá, Machito (Frank Grillo), Pérez Prado, Arsenio Rodríguez, Mongo Santamaría, Celia Cruz. There are also the Puerto Rican and Puerto Rican–American bandleaders like Tito Rodríguez and Tito Puente, whose impact, as we shall see, has been particularly decisive. African-American jazz musicians including trumpet great Dizzy Gillespie have made seminal contributions too, as have a Panamanian salsa superstar, Rubén Blades, and a Mexican-American (Chicano) rock guitarist, Carlos Santana.

Enrique Jorrin (En-ree-kay Horr-EEN)

Mario Bauzá (MAH-ree-o Bow-SAH)

Machito (Ma-CHEE-toe)

Altogether, the history of Latin dance music has been, and remains, categorically multicultural and multidimensional. More specifically, Latin dance music has been fueled by an ongoing mutual feedback loop between Latin American nations and the United States. Thus, it is appropriate to categorize this diverse matrix of Cuban-derived Latin dance music as a Latino/

insights and perspectives

Creolization and Syncretization

Creolization is defined as "the development of a distinctive new culture out of the prolonged encounter of two or more other cultures" (Manuel 1995:14). It is a term that is essentially synonomous with syncretization but is more widely used in discussions of Caribbean cultures. This is why it is used in this chapter.

American phenomenon, the slash between "Latino" and "American" implying "and/or" in the widest sense. We now explore one slice of the large pie of this musical phenomenon via a journey through, first, the historical roots and, second, the actual history of "Oye Como Va."

Cuba, Creolization, and the Roots of Latin Dance Music

The roots of the Cuban dance-music styles that gave rise to the cha cha chá and, in turn, to the song "Oye Como Va," take us back to Spain and West Africa. Centuries ago, Spain colonized Cuba (as well as Puerto Rico) and instituted slavery there, bringing millions of African slaves to the island. It was through the blending of musical elements of Spanish and West African derivation—their syncretization or *creolization,* in the hands of first African slaves and then their African-derived and *mulatto* ("mixed race") descendants especially—that the distinctive forms of Afro-Cuban (African-Cuban) music that form the basis of all of the popular Latin dance music genres we will discuss were born.

An understanding of Cuban dance music and the popular Latin dance music styles that grew from it begins with an understanding of the creolization of African-derived (principally West African) and European-derived (principally Spanish) musical culture in Cuba.

Afro-Cuban roots of Latin dance music

Taino (TAH-EE-no)

The European discovery of Cuba occurred in 1492, when Christopher Columbus and his Spanish fleet arrived on the island. The indigenous population of Cuba was comprised of Amerindian peoples such as the Taino, who, tragically, were all but wiped out in the wake of the Spanish conquest. Spanish settlers began arriving in Cuba in 1511. They established large sugar cane plantations. African slaves were brought to the island in huge numbers—an estimated five million in all—to work the plantations. They came from many different African nations and ethnic heritages, but most were of either Yoruba (the largest ethnic group in western Africa; the majority of modern-day Yoruba live in Nigeria) or Congolese descent.

A very large majority of the slaves arrived between 1790 and 1860, much later than their counterparts in British colonies of the Caribbean and in the United States. (Importation of slaves to the British Caribbean colonies ceased in 1804, and the U.S. slave trade also greatly declined around that time.) This relatively late arrival of slaves in Cuba helps to explain why, even today, much Cuban music sounds distinctly more "African" (and, more specifically, Yoruba- or Congolese-derived) than other African-derived musics of the Americas (e.g., American blues, Jamaican reggae).

Other factors account for this difference as well. Due to differing approaches and attitudes toward the institution of slavery on the part of slave owners, traditional African-rooted forms of worship, music, and dance were retained in Spanish colonies such as Cuba to a much greater extent than they were in British colonies (e.g., Jamaica, Trinidad) or in the United States. Additionally, it was easier for Cuban slaves to buy their freedom than it was for their counterparts in Jamaica, Trinidad, or the United States. Thus, large communities of free blacks were established

Batá drums being played during a Santería ritual. This photograph was originally published by the Associated Press. Although photography is generally not permitted during Santería (Orisha) rituals, terms are sometimes negotiated by photojournalists that render the taking and publishing of photos such as this one permissible.

in Cuban towns and cities by the early 18th century, and they, together with slaves in these same areas, celebrated religious and social occasions in ways that were largely consistent with the practices of their African forebears. These conditions fostered an environment that "favored the dynamic flourishing of neo-African music in Cuba" (Manuel 1995:20).

Two types of traditional, neo-African music in Cuba would prove especially influential to the later development of Latin dance music: ritual drumming associated with the Afro-Cuban religion of **Santería** (a.k.a. Orisha religion) and the secular, social dance music of traditional Cuban rumba.

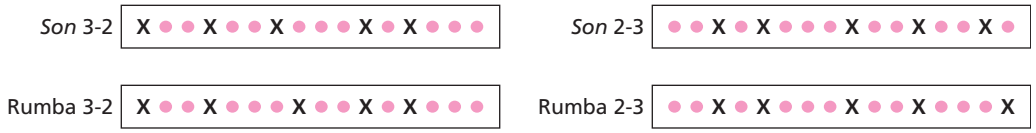
Santería (San-te-REE-yah)
batá (bah-TAH)
conga (KOAN-gah)
clave (KLAH-vay)

Santería ritual drumming is traditionally performed on a set of three drums called **batá.** Each drum is of a different size and pitch (low, medium, high). Stringed bells attached to the lowest-pitched, lead drum enhance its timbre, providing an idiophonic element to the sound. The drums are played in an intricate, interlocking style of complex polyrhythms (see Amira and Cornelius 1992). The lead drummer's part involves much improvisation, whereas the two other drummers' parts are mainly based on recurring rhythmic patterns (ostinatos). In ritual contexts, the batá drums often accompany sacred songs, such as the one heard on **CD ex. #3-1.**

Conga drums and claves.

The music of rumba also features a set of three drums—low-, medium-, and high-pitched—played in a complex, polyrhythmic style. The modern, barrel-shaped **conga drums (congas)** used by many contemporary Latin and popular music groups are descendants of the original rumba drums (called *ngoma*). Rumba drummers today usually play the music on congas.

All of the rhythms in rumba music in a sense derive from a single rhythm called **clave,** which is played on an instrument,



The four versions of the clave rhythm.

FIGURE 11.1

the **claves,** that consists of a pair of thick, round sticks that are struck together. Indeed, the clave rhythm, of which there are actually four variants (see Figure 11.1, corresponding to **Online Musical Illustration #25**), is the rhythmic basis of virtually all forms of Latin dance music, including cha cha chá tunes like "Oye Como Va." Clave is so fundamental to Latin dance music that it is often not even actually played; rather, its presence is simply *felt,* by the musicians, dancers, and listeners alike.

In traditional rumba performances, the percussion instruments (the three conga drums, the claves, and an additional wooden idiophone called *palitos* that usually plays an embellished version of the clave rhythm) accompany songs sung by a lead singer and a group of background singers (the *coro,* or chorus). The singers interact with each other in call-and-response style. The music accompanies dancing. The dance associated with the style of rumba music heard in **CD ex. #3-2,** called *rumba guaguancó,* is performed by a man and a woman who engage in what ethnomusicologist Peter Manuel has characterized as "a pantomime game of coy evasion on the woman's part and playful conquest on the man's" (Manuel 1995:25).

guaguancó (wah-wahn-KOH)

Man and woman dancing to the accompaniment of the Cuban group Rumba Morena.

Spanish-Cuban roots of Latin dance music

The other half of the story of traditional, creolized forms of Cuban dance music that preceded modern Latin dance music styles as represented in songs like "Oye Como Va" has to do with European, especially Spanish, musical influences.

Creolized dance-music styles blending African (especially Yoruba and Congolese) and European (especially Spanish) elements became highly prominent beginning in the latter part of the 18th century. Prior to that, white urban Cuban society had relied mainly on European genres such as the waltz, the minuet, and the mazurka for their dance entertainment. Increasing disenchantment on the part of the white Cuban establishment with economic restrictions and governmental corruption and inefficiency issuing from Spain led to a rejection of these cultural symbols of the European past. New, distinctly Cuban hybrid dance-music forms emerged as Cuban musicians—primarily of Afro-Cuban or mulatto descent—grafted rhythmic and other elements of African-derived traditions onto adapted European dance-music forms. These new, creolized styles, such as the *contradanza* and the danzón, became important symbols of an emergent Cuban national identity that arose in the late 1800s in connection with a strong, anti-Spanish rule nationalist movement. They reflected a shift toward a more inclusive notion of what constituted Cuban identity, one in which whites, blacks, and mulattos all had a place (though full racial equality was by no means achieved). Some of the creolized dance music styles also achieved international popularity, setting the stage for the dominance of Cuban-derived musics in the international Latin dance music culture of later periods.

By the 1920s, the danzón had essentially become the national dance of Cuba. Danzón music was mainly performed on a type of "sweet-sounding" ensemble called a **charanga.** Charanga instrumentation usually featured a wooden flute and two or more violins backed by a piano, a string bass, a *güiro* (wooden scraper idiophone), and a pair of drums that were the forerunners of the modern timbales. Maracas (shakers) were often used as well.

Around this same time, however, in the 1920s, the danzón's status as the reigning form of Cuban national dance music was challenged by the emergence of a new, more heavily African-influenced style called ***son.*** Yet despite the dramatic ascent of *son,* both in popularity and as a symbol of Cuban national consciousness (see Moore 1997; Manuel 1995, for more on this subject), the danzón and the charanga did not fade away. Rather, they rallied to meet the challenge. The charanga danzón groups, "with their quaint yet soulful flute-and-violin sound, were surviving by changing with the times and making their music hotter and more Afro-Cuban" (Manuel 1995:41). This led to the emergence of a new dance-music style, the danzón-mambo (Gerard 2001:68), and in turn to the Cuban cha cha chá style in which the direct musical ancestry of "Oye Como Va" is rooted.

Güiro and maracas.

charanga (cha-RAHN-gah)

güiro (WEE-ro)

***son* (sohn [in-between English "sun" and "sewn"])**

Arcaño y sus Maravillas (Ar-CAH-nyo ee soos Mah-rah-VEE-yas)

timbalero (teem-ba-LAY-ro)

The Danzón-Mambo

The danzón-mambo was a highly Afro-Cubanized version of the earlier danzón. The principal charanga group responsible for its development was Arcaño y sus Maravillas (or Maravillos). This group was led by the flutist Antonio Arcaño, but two other members of the band, the brothers Orestes López and Israel "Cachao" López, were the principal innovators of the danzón-mambo style.

Elements of Afro-Cubanization were present at multiple levels in the danzón-mambo. Conga drums were added to the standard charanga percussion section of timbales, güiro, and maracas. The complex and syncopated rhythms played on the congas added a strong imprint of Afro-Cuban rhythmic character to the music. (This imprint reflected influences from *son* especially.) Additionally, a cowbell was added to the percussive arsenal of the timbales player (*timbalero*), paving the way for the development of the standard "drum kit" setup of modern timbaleros like Tito Puente (consisting of two or more metal-sided timbale drums, cowbells, woodblock, one or more cymbals, and sometimes additional instruments—see the photo on p. 218).

These various elements of Afro-Cuban musical influence were most prominent in the so-called *mambo sections* of danzón-mambo arrangements. These mambo sections highlighted rhythmically exciting music with lots of repetition and textures featuring layered ostinatos. Even the violins, whose function in earlier danzón styles had been almost entirely melodic, took on a largely rhythmic function in the danzón-mambo, playing syncopated ostinato figures that complemented the Afro-Cuban character of the percussion parts. Soaring, improvised flute solos were another signature element of style.

The historical importance of the danzón-mambo is twofold, since its influence fed directly into the two most successful and influential Latin dance-music phenomena of the early 1950s, **big band mambo** and cha cha chá. These two genres, in turn, would coalesce in the original Tito Puente version of "Oye Como Va."

Enrique Jorrin and the Cuban Cha Cha Chá

While the López brothers moved the danzón in an increasingly Afro-Cuban, *son*-influenced direction through the late 1940s, another alumnus of Arcaño y sus Maravillas, the violinist and

bandleader Enrique Jorrin, took the music in another direction altogether beginning in 1950. It was in that year that Jorrin recorded a composition entitled "La Engañadora" (The Beguiler) with his own charanga group, Orquesta América. This was the first cha cha chá ever recorded. It represented a fusion of older danzón sensibilities with the retention of certain elements that had come into the music via the danzón-mambo, such as the use of conga drums.

As interesting as the musical synthesis itself in cha cha chá was its underlying motivation. More than anything, Jorrin wanted to devise a Cuban dance-music style that would appeal to non-Cuban dancers, especially Americans. He was reportedly first inspired to compose "La Engañadora" after watching a group of American dancers struggle to keep up with complex Cuban rhythms on the dance floor (Fairley 2000:389).

The key to creating accessible Cuban dance music, Jorrin reasoned, was rhythmic simplification. Thus, he dispensed with the syncopated rhythm of the timbales part heard in danzón and danzón-mambo arrangements and replaced it with a "four-square rhythm" in which the steady beat was crystal clear (at least by Latin dance music standards). Tempos were kept in a comfortable, medium range, so as not to tax the dancers' feet or aerobic conditioning too much. Even inexperienced, non-Cuban dancers were able to keep pace with the relatively simple "one - two - cha-cha-chá" footwork required. The rhythmic foundations of cha cha chá music are illustrated and explained in the Musical Guided Tour for this chapter. The transcript on page 227 corresponds to the audio Musical Guided Tour. As you listen to this tour at the Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/bakan1), follow along with this transcript.

Another distinctive feature of the Jorrin-style Cuban cha cha chá was the role of the singers. Singing, which had either been entirely absent or used sparingly in the danzón-mambo style, became an identifying feature of the cha cha chá. However, the harmonized vocal textures and involved patterns of vocal call-and-response found in earlier Cuban musics such as rumba and *son* were here substituted for by simpler, mainly unison singing textures.

"El Bodeguero" (El Bo-day-GAY-ro)

Following the success of "El Engañadora," Jorrin released other popular cha cha chá recordings. One of these was "El Bodeguero" (The Grocer). **CD ex. #3-3** is an excerpt from a recording of "El Bodeguero" performed in a modern charanga arrangement that for the most part remains true to the original Jorrin style (though electronic keyboard instruments are used and there are no violins). A contemporary Cuban group, Grupo Cimarrón de Cuba, is featured. As you listen, take note of the accessible dance rhythm (which is anchored by the same types of percussion instruments and rhythmic patterns demonstrated in the Musical Guided Tour), the unison group singing texture (up until 1:20, after which the vocal parts are harmonized), and the prominent role played by the flute.

Couple dancing the cha cha chá in the 1950s.

The "Cuban light" appeal of the cha cha chá, as represented by the music of Enrique Jorrin and a host of other musicians influenced by him, proved highly marketable internationally. The dance swept across North America and Europe in the 1950s, aided greatly by the advent of two new technologies, television and the LP (long-playing) record. By mid-decade, it "had become the vogue among aficionados of Latin music in the United States and abroad" (Loza 1999:142).

Cha cha chá fizzled out after a few years, however, at least as an international mass culture phenomenon. Its decline was most certainly hastened by the rock-and-roll explosion of the mid- to late 1950s (e.g., Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard), but cha cha chá was also a victim of its own unabashedly populist, commercial appeal; its "commercial-

Latin Percussion Rhythms of the Cha Cha Chá

In a standard cha cha chá, the timbalero (timbales player) marks out a basic beat of steady quarter notes in a four-beat meter on a small cowbell, like this [♪]. Sometimes extra notes are added between the main cowbell beats to embellish the rhythm. Here is an example of what that sounds like [♪]. This embellished version of the cowbell rhythm is reinforced by the wooden scraper-type idiophone called the güiro, whose part sounds like this [♪]. Another timbral layer is often provided by the maracas (shakers), which play a rhythm of steady eighth notes, like this [♪]. The cowbell, güiro, and maracas together, then, create this rhythmic texture [♪].

Another percussive layer of cha cha chá rhythm is furnished by the conga drums, with their signature, syncopated rhythmic pattern called *tumbao* (toom-BAH-oh). Tumbao is a rhythm that can be traced back to traditional rumba styles (and that also finds parallels in ritual batá drumming). It came into the cha cha chá via the influences of *son* and the danzón-mambo. Alone, tumbao on the conga drums sounds like this [♪]. Together with the cowbell, güiro, and maracas, it sounds like this [♪]. An additional layer of rhythm furnished by a small pair of drums called the **bongó** (bon-GO [as opposed to the English pronunciation BAHN-go]) may be incorporated as well [♪], resulting in this overall sound and rhythmic texture [♪].

Though the clave rhythm is often not actually played in a cha cha chá performance, its presence is clearly implied by the tumbao rhythm of the conga drums. We will now play tumbao on the congas together with clave rhythm played on a pair of claves; notice how the conga part seems to trace the shape of the clave rhythm while at the same time filling in the rhythmic spaces between clave strikes [♪].

Finally, here is the full percussion section—including the claves—playing as they would in a standard cha cha chá arrangement [♪].

Bongó drums being played.

ization and Arthur Murray-style dilution . . . guaranteed its decline" (Manuel 1995:41). "A few years of lumpy rhythm sections, mooing sax section [*sic*], and musicians raggedly chanting CHAH! CHAH! CHAH! were enough" (Roberts 1979:133; c.f. Manuel 1995:41).

Yet the cha cha chá did not die. In fact, it took on new life and a new sound in the hands of the same great New York–based Latin bandleaders who had blazed the trails of the other major Latin dance craze of the early 1950s, big band mambo. For these bandleaders and their audiences, cha cha chás provided a nice contrast to the hot rhythms, fast tempos, heavy syncopations, and trenchant Afro-Cubanisms of the mambos that otherwise dominated their set lists. The four-square rhythm of the cha cha chá possessed an elegantly funky quality all its own and gave the denizens of the Latin dance ballrooms of New York and other places a chance to slow down and get acquainted between tear-it-up mambo numbers. Yet while it represented a contrast to the big band mambo style, the new style of the cha cha chá that yielded tunes like "Oye Como Va" was musically influenced in important ways by big band mambo, to which we now turn our attention.

Mambo (Big Band Mambo)

The musician commonly credited with the "invention" of the mambo (from a Congolese word meaning "chant") was the Cuban bandleader Pérez Prado, who spent the majority of his career touring and recording in Mexico and elsewhere outside of Cuba. It was Prado who had the first international mambo hit, "Mambo #5," in 1949.

Yet while Prado may have crystallized the mambo into a distinctive genre, it was the bands of a group of bandleaders in New York City known as the **mambo kings**—Machito and the Afro-Cubans and groups led by Tito Puente and Tito Rodríguez—who took mambo to its most sublime heights. Fusing the Prado-style mambo with other popular Cuban dance music elements, a deeper entrenchment in Afro-Cuban percussion and rhythm, and abundant use of borrowed elements from American jazz and mainstream American popular music of the day, they created something profoundly new and different. "For the first time," writes Cuban music scholar Charley Gerard, "a new Cuban style originated outside of the island" (Gerard 2001:2).

Mambo, as developed by the big New York Latin dance bands of Tito Puente and his contemporaries beginning in the early 1950s, was a musical genre defined by the following features:

- **Big band instrumentation.** This was adopted and adapted from the model of American big band swing and jazz of the era. The typical lineup included sections of anywhere from two to five players each on trumpet, trombone, and saxophone; plus piano, bass, and three or more percussionists (with singers possibly in addition, depending on the arrangement). The percussion section featured the three types of drums also used in Cuban *son* bands: the timbales, the conga drums, and the bongó drums, plus the additional, idiophone-type Latin percussion instruments (cowbells, claves, güiro, maracas, etc.).
- **Musical textures featuring layered ostinatos throughout the band.** All of the instrumentalists—the percussionists, pianist, bassist, saxophonists, trombonists, and trumpet players—were assigned short, recurring patterns (ostinatos, or *riffs*) that were repeated over and over, often with variations, and layered one atop the other during the course of a mambo arrangement. These layered ostinato textures, which were reflective of influences from the earlier Cuban *son* and danzón-mambo styles, created "a tight, composite rhythm that had a unique drive and an electrifying appeal to dancers" (Manuel 1995:37).
- **Driving, Afro-Cuban percussion rhythms.** The syncopated, interlocking rhythms of the percussion section in mambo, all growing from the root rhythm of clave and reflecting the characteristic Cuban rhythmic styles of rumba and *son,* served as the engine that drove the music.
- **Jazz influences.** Beyond the big band instrumentation, influences from American jazz were reflected in the harmonies (chords and chord progressions), rhythms, and arrangements of mambos, and also in the highlighting of extended, improvised instrumental solos.
- **Fast tempos and highly energetic playing.** The tempos of the mambos were upbeat and the music exciting, energetic, and eminently danceable (though not *easy* to dance to, unlike the cha cha chá).
- **Absence, or at least limited use, of singing.** Compared to related Cuban forms like *son,* there was relatively little emphasis on singing—and in turn on song texts—in mambo. "With its emphasis on short, often meaningless vocal interjections, it was the perfect style for an audience who didn't speak Spanish" (Gerard 2001:2–3). This was important, since mambo was designed to appeal to Latino and non-Latino audiences alike (and succeeded in doing so).

The big band mambo sound outlined above is well illustrated by a short excerpt from the mambo "Sambia" (**CD ex. #3-4**), a classic recording by Machito and the Afro-Cubans. Listen especially to the section of the excerpt beginning at 0:19, which follows the heavily jazz-inspired introductory section of the opening. First the saxophones present a riff (0:19–0:26), then they repeat it with the trumpets and trombones "answering" between phrases in call-and-response fashion (0:27–0:35), and finally an intricate texture of layered riffs is created by saxo-

Machito and the Afro-Cubans.

phones, trumpets, and trombones together (0:36–0:52). All the while, the driving Afro-Cuban rhythmic base of the rhythm section pushes the music along with propulsive force and energy.

Tito Puente, the Newyorican Connection, and Latino/American Music Culture in New York City

Despite its principally Cuban musical lineage, the culture of Latin dance music in New York in the 1950s and beyond represented a complex mixture of ethnicities and cultures. Of the leading mambo bandleaders, Machito and Mario Bauzá were from Cuba, but Tito Rodríguez was from Puerto Rico, and Tito Puente, as was mentioned earlier, was a Newyorican, born and raised in New York of Puerto Rican descent. The personnel of the bands were likewise ethnically diverse. The percussion section of Machito and the Afro-Cubans, for example, featured drummers from Cuba as well as Newyorican percussionists who were intensely devoted to mastering the Afro-Cuban styles (these included a young Tito Puente at one point—see p. 231). All of this reflected larger demographics of Latino/American society during this period. As Gerard explains, "Afro-Cuban music developed its stateside [U.S.] home not in Cuban neighborhoods, which . . . were primarily white, but in Puerto Rican neighborhoods, where Afro-Cubans mixed with dark-skinned Puerto Ricans" (Gerard 2001:13). Primary among these Puerto Rican neighborhoods in both size and cultural influence was Spanish Harlem in New York City, otherwise known simply as the *barrio* (the neighborhood).

Tito Puente was born in the barrio of Spanish Harlem in 1923 to Puerto Rican immigrant parents. He grew up there, absorbing the myriad influences of traditional Puerto Rican music, Afro-Cuban music, American popular song, African-American jazz, big band swing, even Western art music. All of these were integral parts of the rich, living soundtrack that surrounded him in his native musical environment and formed the fabric of his eclectic and syncretic musical range.

"The background of the perennial bandleader," Gerard says of Puente, "is a perfect metaphor for what made him a central figure in stateside Cuban music. He grew up speaking English on the street and Spanish at home. As a young man, he learned big band [jazz] drumming. As a

insights and perspectives

Machito and the Afro-Cubans in the History of Latin Dance Music

Machito and the Afro-Cubans, the band featured in "Sambia" (**CD ex. #3-4**), was one of the most important and influential of all Latin dance bands. It was this group, more than any other, that formed the seminal link between Cuban dance music in Cuba and Cuban-derived dance music in New York, ultimately leading to the profusion of modern, international styles of Latin dance music that would emerge.

Machito and the Afro-Cubans was formed in 1940, two years after Machito moved to New York from his native Cuba at the invitation of his longtime musical collaborator (and brother-in-law) Mario Bauzá. Bauzá had settled in New York several years earlier. In the late 1930s, so-called Latin dance music in the United States was dominated by the syrupy, sanitized Latin sound of the Spanish-born, Cuban-raised popular musician Xavier Cugat. Like Enrique Jorrin with the cha cha chá, Cugat opportunistically set out to create a style of Latin music that would have broad popular appeal beyond the Latino market, but he went considerably farther in this direction than did Jorrin with the original cha cha chá. "To succeed in America," Cugat once said, "I gave the Americans a Latin music that had nothing authentic about it" (Roberts 1979:87; c.f. Manuel 1995:69).

Publicity shot of Desi Arnaz.

Cugat's formula proved immensely successful. He became a perennial New York high-society favorite, playing "for Anglos in swanky lower Manhattan ballrooms" (Manuel 1995:69). He and his orchestra also appeared in numerous Hollywood films, introducing mainstream America to the ostensibly "Latin" dance-music sound. Cugat's popularity paved the way for later popular Latin bandleaders who worked in an essentially similar idiom, such as Desi Arnaz of television's *I Love Lucy* fame.

Bauzá and Machito, "disgruntled with the watered-down rhythms of Latin society bands" like Cugat's, launched Machito and the Afro-Cubans in response. They forged an innovative musical approach that was rooted in the classic *son* style of Cuban masters like Arsenio Rodríguez, but that also incorporated the sonic force of the jazz big band and the influences of jazz improvisers like Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker, the future founders of bebop jazz. "With powerful horns and a hell-fired rhythm section, the band immediately captured the attention of the Latino community in New York" (Leymarie 2002:4).

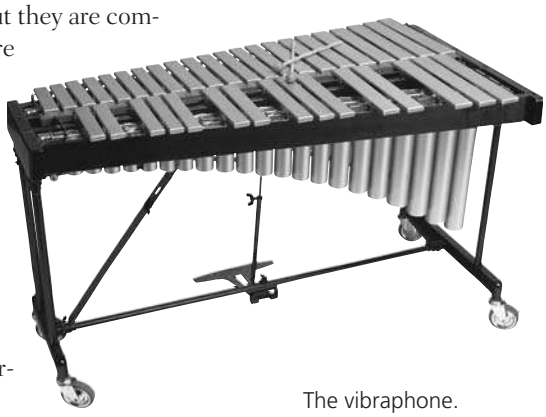
teenager, he joined Machito's orchestra and learned how to play Cuban popular rhythms. Later, he made it his business to acquaint himself with Afro-Cuban culture. A trained musician [in Western art music] who read music fluently, he took the study of the oral tradition of Afro-Cuban folkloric music seriously at a time when many musicians thought that if you weren't from an Afro-Cuban *barrio* you could never master the idiom" (Gerard 2001:2).

This multicultural upbringing and eclectic musical background would profoundly shape Tito Puente's multifaceted conceptions of his own identity throughout his life. As we learned earlier in the chapter, he identified himself principally as a Puerto Rican even though he was born and raised in New York:

> Wherever I go . . . they ask me, "What are you?" I say "I'm Puerto Rican" . . . But I am international, too. I play for all kinds of people, and they dance to my music and I have all kinds of a following; so I don't want to tag myself . . . but when they ask me who I am, I represent Puerto Rico. (Puente, quoted in Loza 1999:224–25)

Yet when asked about his *musical* identity, his standard response, despite his greatly varied musical experience, was simply, "I play Cuban music" (Puente, cited in Manuel 1995:74).

These different types of self-identification may seem paradoxical, but they are completely consistent with the larger history of Latin dance music culture in New York City. According to Manuel, Newyorican and Puerto Rican immigrant musicians who had mastered and in a sense reinvented traditional Cuban music styles were dominating the city's Latin music scene by the 1940s (Manuel 1995:67).



The vibraphone.

Tito Puente joined Machito and the Afro-Cubans in 1942 but was drafted into the U.S. Navy shortly therearter. (He played drums and saxophone with the Navy band.) Returning to New York in 1945, he reestablished his career as a dance band musician and also enrolled at the prestigious Juilliard School. He studied conducting, orchestration, music theory, and percussion at Juilliard, and became especially interested in playing the vibraphone during this period.

The post–World War II era brought massive migration of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. mainland, the majority coming to New York. This created a growing market for dance bands that played Cuban-derived Latin music, which had long been popular in Puerto Rico. An influx of important new arrivals from Cuba, including the great percussionists Chano Pozo (who developed an important association with Dizzy Gillespie) and Mongo Santamaría, altered the musical landscape as well. They brought with them the authentic rhythms of Cuban batá drumming and rumba, and these were absorbed into the musical fabric of bands like Machito's. Puente became an avid protégé of Mongo Santamaría, in particular, soaking up all he could about Afro-Cuban drum styles, music, and culture.

The year 1949 proved to be a pivotal one for Puente and Latin music. It was in this year that Pérez Prado's first big hit, "Mambo #5," launched what would soon come to be known as the *mambo craze* of the 1950s. It was also in 1949 that Max Hyman purchased New York's Palladium Ballroom and quickly transformed it into the epicenter of the burgeoning mambo world. Riding the wave of mambomania, Tito Puente formed his first Latin dance band that same year, and within short order was playing the Palladium and other top venues and rivaling the likes of Machito and Tito Rodríguez for top billing as the reigning king of mambo. His band was as hot and as innovative as any, and included conga player Mongo Santamaría and bongó player Willie Bobo alongside Puente on the timbales in what today is remembered as perhaps the greatest Latin dance band percussion section of all time.

Buoyed by his star status at the Palladium, Tito Puente went from success to success, touring widely with his band and making many records. By the time he released his most popular song, "Oye Como Va," on the 1963 album *El Rey Bravo,* he had almost 40 albums as a bandleader to his credit, including big sellers like *Dance Mania* (1958). By this time also, "mamboized" cha cha chás like "Oye Como Va" were a staple of his repertoire. We now turn our attention to this classic recording.

guided listening experience

"Oye Como Va," Tito Puente (1963)

- CD Track **#3-5**
- Featured performer(s)/group: Tito Puente band, with Tito Puente (timbales)
- Format: Excerpt
- Source recording: *El Rey Bravo,* by Tito Puente (Tico/Sonido TRSLP-1086)

insights and perspectives

The Palladium Ballroom

The Palladium must have been an amazing place to be during the heyday of the mambo. Battles of the bands between top groups like Puente's and Machito's were a highlight of the entertainment format, and audiences delighted in the sizzling results of these informal contests as each band tried to outdo the other. The Palladium was also interesting as a hotbed of multicultural interaction, its audiences often casting off the shackles of racial and ethnic division to meet out on the dance floor. "The audiences that began to form in the Palladium and other dance halls," explains Steven Loza, "were, like those of jazz, highly integrated, notwithstanding the elements of discrimination and segregation that still existed in a large part of the society" (Loza 1999:222). For noted Latin music historian Max Salazar, the mambo and the Palladium scene were nothing less than agents of profound social change in American society: "The Palladium was the laboratory. The catalyst that brought Afro-Americans, Irish, Italians, Jews. God, they danced the mambo. And because of the mambo, race relations started to improve in that era. What social scientists couldn't do on purpose, the mambo was able to accomplish by error" (Salazar, quoted in Loza 1999:68). The Palladium was also a great venue for celebrity watching. Entertainer Sammy Davis Jr., painter Jackson Pollock, beat poet Allen Ginsberg, and movie stars Marlene Dietrich and Marlon Brando were all patrons. Brando was even known to sit in on the bongó drums with the Machito Orchestra on occasion!

Tito Puente and his band performing at the Palladium.

The original Tito Puente recording of "Oye Como Va" is essentially a cha cha chá with big band mambo instrumentation, textures, and stylistic elements. Comparing it to the more traditionally Cuban cha cha chá style of "El Bodeguero" (**CD ex. #3-3**), one discovers both similarities and differences. While the basic groove and feel of the conventional cha cha chá dance rhythm are present in both, the tempo of "Oye Como Va" is slightly faster, giving it an edge and intensity that contrasts with the more relaxed feel of "El Bodeguero." Additionally, and more importantly, the organ and bass riffs of "Oye Como Va" that swirl around the foundational cha cha chá percussion groove (which is first introduced just by clicked sticks and handclaps and is then reinforced by the full complement of timbales, congas, and güiro from 0:15 on) offer the Puente performance a deliciously funky and syncopated rhythmic flair, generating a kind of swagger that finds no parallel in "El Bodeguero." (The use of the organ itself was a novel feature introduced into Latin dance music with this recording.)

The minor key of "Oye Como Va" (A minor) also creates a contrast with "El Bodeguero," which, in common with the majority of traditional Cuban cha cha chás, is a tune in a major key. Compared to the cheerful, lighthearted quality of brightness created by "El Bodeguero," "Oye Como Va" comes off as a bit more hard-nosed and gritty, an effect at least partially attributable to its minor key.

At 0:15, the entrance of a big band–style horn section (saxophones, trumpets, and trombones) along with the full Latin percussion section puts the instrumentation squarely in the camp of big band mambo. The improvised, solo playing of the flute, however, forms a clear link to the charanga instrumentation of Cuban-style cha cha chá. Reminiscent of traditional cha cha chá,

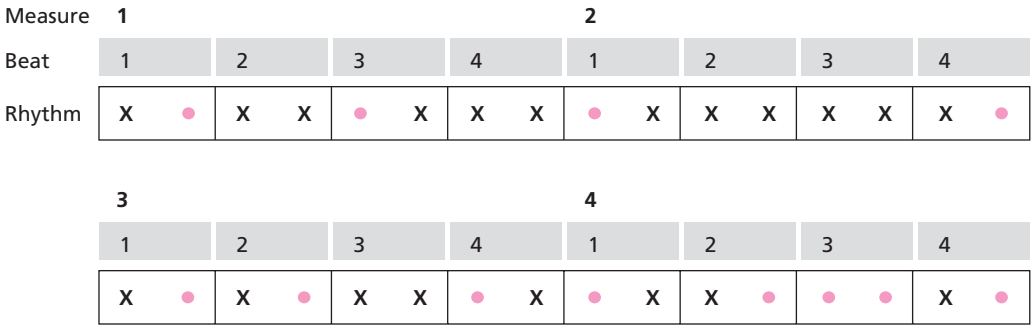


FIGURE 11.2

Signature unison figure, "Oye Como Va."

too, is the singing in "Oye Como Va" (0:46 –1:04, 1:56-2:18), which features a group of male vocalists who are also the instrumentalists in the band (as opposed to designated singers) singing a short and simple tune with a single-line Spanish text in which a *macho* protagonist boasts about the potency of his "groove" to a *mulatta* dancer. It should be noted, however, that the vocal texture is more harmonized here than in more conventional cha cha chá fare (compare to the first 1:20 of "El Bodeguero"), suggesting other musical influences.

At 0:38, just before the singing begins, the entire band joins together in the playing of a syncopated, unison figure that is highly compelling. Its rhythm is sketched out in Figure 11.2. This unison figure, which returns intermittently at different points in the arrangement, has over time become a recognizable musical signature of this famous song.

Following a partial return of the signature unison figure at 1:01, the band launches into the first of two instrumental mambo sections—that is, mambo sections set to a cha cha chá rhythmic groove—beginning at 1:05. The texture builds in progressively layered riffs (ostinatos) in the horn section that grow overtop a continuing cha cha chá groove in the rhythm section. As in Machito's "Sambia" (**CD ex. #3-4**), the saxophones start things off, repeating their riff over and over from 1:05 forward. Next come the trombones at 1:20, whose riff plays off of and complements the saxophone part. Then comes the trumpet riff at 1:36, providing a third musical layer that enhances the polyphonic richness and density all the more. Occasional interjections of "uh-huh" from one of the musicians, along with a whistle or two and sporadic moments of flute improvisation, are thrown into the mix as well.

Following a partial return of the signature unison figure, a second singing of the "Oye Como Va" tune, and an exciting crescendo that builds through the whole band, the second mambo section arrives at 2:19. In this mambo, the saxophone, trombone, and trumpet riffs are more syncopated and complexly related than in the first mambo. The flute soloing is more animated here, too, and sporadic singing, vocal shouts, and whistling create a partylike atmosphere. Then, like a precision knife cutting through thick brush, the signature unison figure returns one final time at 3:06 to close out the excerpt.

guided listening quick summary

"Oye Como Va," by Tito Puente (CD ex. #3-5)

INTRODUCTION (INSTRUMENTAL)

0:00–0:45

- Piece begins with syncopated organ riff over straight cha cha chá rhythm (the latter initially marked out just by clicked wooden sticks and handclaps).

- Full percussion section and horn section enter at 0:15 (following a lead-in played on the timbales): timbales, congas, and güiro play standard cha cha chá rhythmic patterns; horns (saxophones, trombones, trumpets) double organ riff rhythm.
- Flute takes main melody beginning at 0:23 (charanga-esque).
- Signature unison figure played at 0:38.

SINGING OF MAIN TUNE, FIRST TIME

0:46–1:04

- "Oye Como Va" tune sung by group of male singers (unison/harmonized vocal texture; cha cha chá groove).
- Partial return of signature unison figure at 1:01.

FIRST MAMBO SECTION (MAMBO I)

1:05–1:55

- Saxophone riff (1:05), trombone riff (1:20), trumpet riff (1:36).
- Another partial return of signature unison figure (1:51).

SINGING OF MAIN TUNE, SECOND TIME

1:56–2:18

- As before, but ends with big instrumental crescendo (2:11) leading up to second mambo section.

SECOND MAMBO SECTION (MAMBO II)

2:19–end

- More syncopated and complexly related horn riffs than in first mambo section; building intensity.
- Flute, vocal shouts, and whistling create partylike atmosphere.
- Excerpt concludes with full statement of the signature unison figure at 3:06.

New Sounds, New Times: "Oye Como Va," the Santana Version

When "Oye Como Va" was released in 1963, Tito Puente was already well established as the king of Latin music. He was as famous and as respected as any Latin dance bandleader and was credited with numerous important innovations and achievements, musical and otherwise. "Oye Como Va" helped make *El Rey Bravo* Puente's second best-selling album up to that point (after *Dance Mania*) and became an audience favorite everywhere he played. But no one, least of all Puente himself, could have predicted the impact that "Oye Como Va" would ultimately have on the future of Latin dance music and Puente's own career.

In 1970, Santana, a San Francisco–based rock band with a Latin dance band twist, recorded a rock-infused cover version of "Oye Como Va" and included it on their second album, *Abraxas*. The album became a mega-hit, selling millions of copies. "Oye Como Va" was one of two hit singles to come out of *Abraxas* (the other was "Black Magic Woman"). It rose to #13 on the *Billboard* rock charts, an unprecedented achievement for a recording of a tune that had been taken "right out of the Latin catalog" of standard dance band numbers (Loza 1999:65). With "Oye Como Va" and *Abraxas,* Latin rock, a genre invented almost single-handedly by Santana and one that remains even today principally identified with that band and its leader, guitarist Carlos Santana, was cemented into the lexicon of Latin dance music. Beyond its own success, Santana's

"Oye Como Va" also would have far-reaching effects on the career of Tito Puente, the "salsa explosion" of the 1970s, and the consolidation of a new and cosmopolitan pan-Latino identity that was closely tied to Latin dance music.

The rise of Santana and Latin rock

Carlos Santana was born in Mexico in 1947. He grew up listening to various kinds of music, especially American rock-and-roll and the recordings of Chicano (Mexican-American) musicians such as Ritchie Valens, who had the first major Latino rock crossover hit with "La Bamba."

Santana took up the guitar as a child and by his early teenage years was gigging regularly in Tijuana area nightclubs. When he was 15, he moved to San Francisco. There he encountered and became enamored of an array of musics that were new to him. This was the early 1960s, and San Francisco was host to a booming, multicultural music scene. The closest thing to a West Coast New York (albeit with a very different cultural mix and urban flavor), San Francisco teemed with concert venues, nightclubs, and record stores. The city also was taking shape as ground zero for the youth counterculture movement that would revolutionize the American cultural, societal, and political landscape in the late 1960s (see also Chapter 8, pp. 120, 141–44).

Cover of Santana's *Abraxas.*

In this urban cauldron of cultural richness, Santana discovered the new jazz sounds of Miles Davis and John Coltrane (**CD ex. #2-13**). He got deeply into the blues of Muddy Waters and B.B. King, and indeed had already established himself as "an avid exponent of the blues before his Latin-rock innovations" (Loza 1993:282). As the decade progressed, he witnessed and became an integral part of San Francisco's own thriving rock music scene, where he shared the spotlight with the likes of Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and Sly and the Family Stone.

All of these experiences shaped Santana's musical vision and his unique and ultimately influential approach to the electric guitar. But the two elements that largely set him and his music apart were his Latino identity and the pervasive influence of Latin music on his musical style. This Latino musical imprint was present in the influences he had absorbed from his childhood in Mexico. Even more important, however, were the influences of leading New York–based Latin dance bands that he became familiar with through recordings by Tito Puente, Machito, Willie Bobo, and others.

insights and perspectives

Carlos Santana and Prince

As an innovator on the electric guitar, Carlos Santana has been a major influence on legions of younger guitarists, including Prince. Rock critics have often noted a close similarity between Prince's guitar style and that of Jimi Hendrix, inferring that Hendrix was Prince's main influence on the guitar. Prince himself denies this, however.

"It's only because he's black," Prince has said regarding such comparisons with Hendrix. "That's really the only thing we have in common. He plays different guitar than I do. If they really listened to my stuff, they'd hear more of a Santana influence than Jimi Hendrix" (c.f. Starr and Waterman 2003:400).

Santana, featuring guitarist Carlos Santana (right), performing at Woodstock, 1969. The band's bassist, Dave Brown, is on the left.

SANTANA, THE BAND In 1968, Carlos Santana joined forces with several other up-and-coming young San Francisco–area musicians to form the band Santana. They came from working- and middle-class backgrounds and collectively represented something of a microcosm of American cultural diversity at the time: Latino, African-American, Euro-American. Their musical range was at least equally diverse. The group's unique sound coalesced as a synthesis of rock, blues, jazz, rhythm-and-blues, soul, Mexican, Chicano, Afro-Cuban, and contemporary Latin dance musics.

Santana's big break came when they were invited to perform at Woodstock, the historic 1969 rock music festival that would come to define an era and a generation. Santana was a little-known, upstart band at the time, but their Woodstock performance created a sensation. It launched their ascent to rock superstardom and also established their compelling Latin rock sound as a staple of American youth counterculture identity at a decisive historical moment. Tens of thousands of people moved to the groove of Santana at Woodstock, and millions more soon came to know the band through the film version of the festival, *Woodstock,* which was released not long after the actual event. As Ben Fong-Torres explains,

> [Santana] turned an also-on-the-bill stint at the Woodstock festival into a mesmerizing mini-set, and when they appeared in the Woodstock film, they galvanized audiences the way Janis Joplin had at Monterey Pop [another major rock festival of the late 1960s]. On tour, town by town, they exposed fans to their revolutionary fusion of Afro-Latin rhythms and rock and roll and got them dancing—and running off to the record store. And it got fellow musicians and producers listening—and taking notes. (Fong-Torres 1998:2)

Santana played Woodstock in August 1969. The band's debut album, *Santana,* was released on Columbia Records in the fall of that same year. It was a major commercial hit, thanks largely to Santana's Woodstock triumph. *Santana* sold more than two million copies and produced a major hit single, "Evil Ways." "Evil Ways" was, in essence, a rocked-up version of a standard Latin dance band–style cha cha chá that had been composed and first recorded by the New York Latin bandleader, and former Tito Puente band percussionist, Willie Bobo. Santana mixed the traditional Latin percussion instruments (timbales, congas, güiro) and conventional cha cha chá groove of Bobo's original with elements of rock-style drumming (played on a drumset) to create the song's distinctive Latin rock rhythmic foundation. Above this rhythmic base, the tune was delivered in a highly electrified style, with the signature solo voice of Carlos Santana's electric guitar soaring atop the texture. The rock-ified cha cha chá sound of "Evil Ways," with its promi-

nent electric guitar part and fused Latin and rock rhythms, introduced to the world the sound of Latin rock. It also set the stage for "Oye Como Va," in which Santana applied a similar musical formula in its treatment of the Tito Puente original.

***ABRAXAS* AND "OYE COMO VA"** *Abraxas,* Santana's second album, was released a year after their debut album, *Santana.* It produced the two hit singles mentioned earlier, "Oye Como Va" and "Black Magic Woman," and became the band's best-selling album ever. It is often described as the finest album Santana ever made and regularly appears on "greatest rock records of all time" lists.

Abraxas was created "under the stress of success" (Fong-Torres 1998:1). In the wake of Woodstock and *Santana,* Carlos Santana would recall many years later, "you had a bunch of kids who, next thing you know, were going to New York and hanging out with Miles Davis and all these incredible musicians, coexisting with Jim Hendrix, Janis Joplin, and The Who" (quoted in Fong-Torres 1998:2).

Such notoriety certainly had its upside, but it came with the price of pressure to follow up with an album that was not just as good as *Santana,* but even better. *Abraxas* met the challenge. It sold millions of copies and spent 88 weeks on the *Billboard* charts, holding down the #1 spot for six weeks. The singles it yielded, "Oye Como Va" and "Black Magic Woman," have both become enduring classics of the American popular music repertoire.

guided listening experience

"Oye Como Va," Santana (1970)

- CD Track **#3-6**
- Featured performer(s)/group: Santana, with Carlos Santana (electric guitar), Gregg Rolie (Hammond B-3 electronic organ)
- Format: Complete track
- Source recording: *Abraxas,* by Santana (Columbia/Legacy CK 65490)

In most respects, Santana's "Oye Como Va" is a straight-up cha cha chá modeled after the Tito Puente original version of 1963. In comparing the two, Steven Loza states: "Santana replaced the flute and horn riffs with his guitar to great effect. Otherwise, however, Santana's arrangement is basically a duplicate (minus some extra *coro* [chorus] and horn sections in Puente's arrangement) with a different instrumental texture and a fused rhythmic base of rock-R&B and cha-cha" (Loza 1999:196). Loza is correct, at least technically. Here is a list of basic musical features that remained intact from Puente's version to Santana's:

- The "Oye Como Va" tune itself.
- The key (A minor).
- The tempo.
- The simple, one-line, Spanish-language song text.
- The singing style (unison/harmonized vocal texture; group of male singers).
- The underlying cha cha chá groove.
- The basic sequence of the arrangement.

The main areas where Santana departs from Puente are in

- The absence of the solo flute part and the horn section, both of which are essentially replaced by, and in some cases absorbed into, Carlos Santana's rock- and blues-inspired electric guitar playing.

- The embellishment of the traditional cha cha chá rhythmic groove with rock-style drumming (played on a drumset).
- The highly prominent role of the Hammond B-3 electronic organ (played by Santana keyboardist Gregg Rolie) as a solo instrument, and the heavily blues- and rock-influenced style of the improvised organ solo.
- The substitution of the horn riff–dominated mambo sections of the Puente original by improvised electric guitar and Hammond B-3 organ solos in the Santana arrangement.

Listed dryly on the printed page, the above list of differences between Puente's and Santana's versions of "Oye Como Va" may not seem like they would add up to much, but the whole is greater than the sum of its parts in terms of distinctive musical effect. These differences largely explain the rock anthem–like character of Santana's version, which is quite a dramatic departure from the mamboized cha cha chá character of Puente's rendition.

Listen now to Santana's "Oye Como Va" and make your own subjective comparison to the Tito Puente original explored earlier. How would you describe the similarities and differences, not just in terms of instrumentation and such, but also in terms of how they make you *feel*, what thoughts and images they bring to mind, perhaps even the different ways they make your body want to move? This is an excellent exercise for exploring how seemingly "technical" musical elements—changes in instrumentation, use of different technologies, subtle modifications in rhythm, different approaches to solo improvisation—can combine to transform a largely "set" musical composition and arrangement into something very different than it once was.

On your second listening, follow along with the time-line of the Guided Listening Quick Summary in the box below and listen for the elements and features identified.

guided listening quick summary

"Oye Como Va," Santana version (CD ex. #3-6)

INTRODUCTION

0:00–0:37

- Opens with the standard "Oye" organ riff (as in Puente original), but the Hammond B-3 organ's timbre is very different from that of the organ in Puente's version; also, no clicked sticks/clapping groove here, and the bass part is more prominent in the mix.
- Standard cha cha chá groove established with entry of percussion section at 0:08; no horns; opening flute melody of Puente version is played here on electric guitar (by Carlos Santana) and some bluesy melodic embellishments in the guitar part give the music a different character.
- Signature unison figure arrives at 0:30.

SINGING OF MAIN TUNE, FIRST TIME

0:38–0:56

- Singing is similar to that heard in the Puente version, though the vocal timbre is different.
- Partial return of signature unison figure at 0:53.

FIRST IMPROVISED SOLO (ELECTRIC GUITAR)

0:57–1:44

- Played by Carlos Santana; *electronic distortion* enhances the basic timbre of the instrument.
- Replaces the first mambo section (Mambo I) of the Puente arrangement in terms of formal design.
- Though horn section is absent, Carlos Santana's guitar solo actually builds mainly from lines adapted *from* the original Puente horn riffs (enhanced by occasional bluesy riffs at the ends of phrases).

The Hammond B-3 Organ and "Oye Como Va"

The Hammond B-3 organ, as heard in Santana's "Oye Como Va," represents one of the emblematic sounds of rock music of the 1960s and 1970s. (Another band of the period that featured the instrument prominently was The Doors.) The B-3 was invented in 1935 by Laurens Hammond and became a popular instrument in the hands of jazz organ masters like Jimmy Smith before being adopted into rock.

As was noted earlier, an organ also was used in Tito Puente's original version of "Oye Como Va," but that organ's tone and timbre lacked the punch and fullness of Gregg Rolie's B-3. It is interesting that in later recordings of "Oye Como Va" made by Tito Puente after the Santana version was released, the organ is dispensed with altogether and a piano is used in its place. It is possible that in making this substitution, Puente was trying to extricate the musical identity of *his* composition from the widespread public perception of "Oye Como Va" as a Santana tune.

- Percussion instruments played more freely here than in Puente (e.g., improvised drum fills in conga and timbales parts) and more of a rock feel is evident in the rhythmic groove, though a cha cha chá foundation still predominates.

INTERLUDE/TRANSITION #1

1:45–2:07

- First, return to opening organ riff (over cha cha chá rhythmic groove).
- Second, contrasting section (1:53) with very different mood and style.
- Third, dramatic crescendo at 2:04 (essentially an abridged, altered version of the big crescendo at the comparable point in the Puente arrangement).

SECOND IMPROVISED SOLO (HAMMOND B-3 ELECTRONIC ORGAN)

2:07–2:47

- Played by Gregg Rolie; note distinctive timbre of the Hammond B-3.
- Replaces second mambo section (Mambo II) of Puente arrangement in the form.
- Rolie immediately rips into a heavy, rock- and blues-style solo that takes the piece far from its Latin roots and into new musical territory.

INTERLUDE/TRANSITION #2

2:48–2:58

- Shorter than first Interlude/Transition section.
- Partial return of signature unison figure at 2:56.

SINGING OF MAIN TUNE, SECOND TIME

2:59–3:21

- Sung as before.
- Singing followed by an extended crescendo build-up at 3:14 (again reminiscent of the Puente recording).

THIRD IMPROVISED SOLO (ELECTRIC GUITAR)

3:22–end

- Played by Carlos Santana.
- Begins like the first guitar solo, but then ventures further afield into rock-blues territory; as solo progresses, Santana shifts back and forth between Latin, rock, and blues styles, creating a highly effective and fluid blend of stylistic elements.
- Performance concludes with a final full statement of the signature unison figure at 4:06.

Beyond the Music: Santana, "Oye Como Va," and Pan-Latino Identity

For Carlos Santana, the decision to include "Oye Como Va" on *Abraxas* was "a natural." In his own words, "I thought, this is a song . . . that when you play it, people are going to get up and dance, and that's it" (quoted in Fong-Torres 1998:6).

That *was* it, and perhaps it still *is* it, but there is more to consider as well. Santana's "Oye Como Va" did not only turn the rock world upside down. It also helped to galvanize Latin dance music and its culture; became a symbol of an emergent pan-Latino identity; and brought newfound renown, wealth, and professional opportunities to Tito Puente himself.

Santana's "Oye Como Va" and Tito Puente

Tito Puente, as the composer of "Oye Como Va," made more money from Santana's recording of the tune than he did from any of his own recordings, much more in fact. "That was the one recording that Puente could have retired on," Latin music producer and radio personality Lionel "Chico" Sesma told Steven Loza in an interview. "He probably made more money off the royalties of that Santana recorded success than he had made in his entire life before that. That must have galled him to no end" (Sesma, quoted in Loza 1999:98).

Galled him perhaps, but it also revitalized Puente's career and the Latin dance music scene more broadly. Prior to Santana's "Oye Como Va," Latin dance music had been in a state of progressive decline in terms of "mainstream" commercial popularity. The rock-and-roll explosion of the mid-1950s had squashed the mambo and cha cha chá crazes in the United States and internationally. Beatlemania and the flourishing of a plethora of new rock and pop styles in the 1960s pushed Latin dance music even further out of the spotlight. The Latin dance bands of Tito Puente and others managed to stay in business and even to thrive, but their market narrowed, being confined mainly to sectors of Puerto Rican–dominated Latino communities and some other areas. Even within U.S. Latino communities, members of the younger generations gravitated away from the Latin bands and toward rock. Exacerbating the situation was the United States' tense relationship with Cuba, which had become a socialist state under Fidel Castro in 1959 and had been largely shut off from the U.S. since the early 1960s. Though Latin dance music was rarely being marketed as Cuban music by this time, the fact of its core Cuban root identity remained. The dint of Latin music's historical association with Cuba did little to advance the music's cause in the United States in a tense political climate.

The success of Santana's "Oye Como Va" helped swing the pendulum of commercial viability back in the direction of Latin music. It brought youth culture and Latin dance music back together in a unique transformation and opened the door to a new age of Latin music culture beyond Santana's distinctive brand of Latin rock music itself. In a review of *Abraxas* in *Rolling Stone* magazine, reviewer Jim Nash wrote, prophetically, "The major Latin bands in this country gig for $100 a night, and when you see them, you can't sit still. If Santana can reach the pop audi-

ence with *Abraxas,* then perhaps there will be room for the old masters like . . . Puente to work it out at the ballrooms" (Nash, quoted in Fong-Torres 1998:6).

In the wake of Santana's hit, Puente did indeed get to "work it out" as never before, not only at the ballrooms, but eventually at major music festivals and on concert stages worldwide as well. Nevertheless, the scope of his fame never approached Santana's own. As Puente told Steven Loza in a 1994 interview, Santana's "Oye Como Va" recording "really helped me a lot to get that recognition with the people, because when he does his interviews, you know he mentions it, and his interviews are twenty times bigger than mine. All over the world, and the people that he caters to, they're twenty, thirty, forty thousand people in a stadium. I cater to a few hundred people in a ballroom. It's quite different than the music that I play" (Puente, quoted in Loza 1999:45).

The king of salsa

In another of the seemingly endless paradoxes that define the modern history of Latin dance music, Tito Puente's revitalized image as a Latin music icon occurred in connection with neither the mambo, the cha cha chá, nor any other style key to his initial rise to fame. Rather, he was reconfigured as the king of a "new" kind of Latin dance music that took shape in the 1970s, *salsa,* itself a New York (largely Newyorican) musical "invention" with decidely strong musical roots in the Afro-Cuban *son.*

Salsa, Loza explains, "basically adheres to the traditional structure and instrumentation of Afro-Cuban dance forms, but with significant embellishments, adaptations, and new formats and influences. Among the various artists spearheading this movement were Eddie Palmieri, Johnny Pacheco, Ray Barretto, and Willie Colón. Artists such as Tito Puente and Mongo Santamaría, who had been performing the same basic musical forms for the previous thirty years, adapted well and opportunistically to the new popular format . . ." (Loza 1999:16).

The timing of the "salsa explosion" of the 1970s was no coincidence. Though it was by no means the whole story or even necessarily the main part of it, the success of Santana's "Oye Como Va" in 1970 had a signficant impact. The huge spotlight of international attention that burned down on Santana was large enough to cast its light on the emerging stars of salsa as well, and the catchy marketing term *salsa* itself made for a more commercially viable product than, say, "Latin dance music."

Tito Puente had little use for the name salsa *per se,* but he recognized its promotional value and pragmatically accepted his title as the music's *de facto* king. "Salsa," he once told an interviewer, "means sauce, literally; it's just a commercial term for Afro-Cuban dance music which was used to promote the music. My problem is that we don't play sauce, we play music, and Latin music has different styles; cha-cha, mambo, guaguancó, and son. Salsa doesn't address the complexities and the rich history of the music that we play. But it's accepted now and it helped get the music promoted" (in Loza 1999:16; c.f. Sanabria and Socolov 1990:23).

"Oye Como Va" and the emergence of pan-Latino identity

Santana's "Oye Como Va" not only launched the band to new heights of fame and popularity, revived and redirected the career of Tito Puente, and helped ignite the salsa explosion of the 1970s, but also played an important role in the forging of a new Latino social consciousness rooted in the concept of pan-Latino identity. Santana's symbolic eradication of the boundaries between Latin music and rock music served as a powerful symbol of a conception of Latino/American-ness that insisted on inclusion while demanding distinctiveness of identity, and that recognized the uniqueness of different "Latin" (Latino) nationalities and cultures while building bridges between them.

And Tito Puente, both as the composer of "Oye Como Va" and as an iconic figure of Latin dance music generally—of a music that was now being held up as a unifying symbol of pan-Latino culture—also found himself at the center of the pan-Latino social movement. His fame and notoriety, combined with his multiplex identity, musical and otherwise—Puerto Rican,

insights and perspectives

Salsa, Latin Jazz, and Tito Puente

The modern realm of "Latin music" of the type dealt with in this chapter (i.e., Cuban-derived and developed largely in the United States) is today divided between two principal genres with much overlap between them. These are salsa, which emphasizes singing, is geared toward providing music for dancing, and is most popular among Latino audiences; and Latin jazz, which emphasizes fully (or almost fully) instrumental textures, extended solo improvisations, and jazz-inspired musical forms and textures, and caters largely to non-Latino audiences.

Tito Puente was and remains, even after his death, the leading figure in both areas, certainly in terms of popularity. "An inspection of any contemporary major record store," writes Loza, will reveal that ". . . the bins of Puente's recordings will predominate the various Latin jazz artists included in the collection; additionally, Puente will predominate the collection of the salsa artists. Two worlds and two markets have thus largely become associated with Tito Puente's music: the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Americas. Added to this cultural matrix are the extended geographies of Puente's popularity, including Africa, Asia, and Europe" (Loza 1999:xvi).

Newyorican, master of Cuban music, innovator of Latin music, fervent musical traditionalist and tireless musical experimenter, savvy and industrious entrepreneur, World War II veteran—made him an obvious choice as a symbol of pan-Latino pride. At a time when there was little Latino representation in U.S. political institutions, star musicians like Puente, not to mention Carlos Santana, became flashpoints around which to galvanize political mobilization and ethnic pride movements. As Loza explains,

> Throughout the midseventies, another factor that profoundly affected Puente's role as a master musician was that of a growing and expanding pan-Latino identity in the United States. Young Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Cubans, Dominicans, Central Americans, and other Latin Americans who were living in the country began to unite in a political, social, and cultural momentum that constantly sought symbols, leaders, and common expression in the arts. The salsa movement was in full drive, and younger musicians and artists, as had Carlos Santana, looked to Puente for inspiration and leadership. (Loza 1999:175–76)

The roots of this pan-Latino movement that crystallized in the 1970s had already begun to take shape in the 1960s, and Puente was an important figure then, too. While many Latino youth were moving away from Latin dance music in favor of the Beatles and other popular non-Latin bands, some, like Carlos Santana himself, were "discovering" the likes of Puente and Machito at the *same* time that they were discovering the Beatles and the blues, and seeing no need for selecting one over the other. For progressive-minded young Latinos like Santana, it was hip, not backward, to be into the "old" music of an artist like Tito Puente. This was the logical entry point for the formation of a new, pan-Latino musical—and in turn social, cultural, and political—identity.

In the post-1970s era, Puente and Santana have remained enduring emblems of pan-Latino identity on many levels, their distinct identities and personae bound together by the single song with which *both* of them are most closely identified, "Oye Como Va" (though, for younger generations of listeners, Carlos Santana is perhaps more closely identified with his later work, such as the Grammy Award–winning 1999 album *Supernatural*). Santana, in keeping with the tenor of his times, has been more overt in his political activism as a musical statesman of pan-Latino causes than Puente was. But Puente's role was no less important, and the longevity of his significance as both a musical and social figure has been quite remarkable.

Rubén Blades in performance.

"Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of Puente," Steven Loza wrote shortly before Puente's death, "is that he became enmeshed with various generations—the adults, the children, and the babies of the forties through the nineties. Race and intercultural relations have taken different courses during these years, but Puente has attempted to adapt to each era. It can be said that he has taken more of the multicultural versus nationalistic course, consistently emphasizing the international popularity and charisma of his music and himself. At the same time, however, he has often been active in the artistic and political solidarity of the Latino community in the United States" (Loza 1999:224).

The pan-Latino movement that arose in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s now encompasses not just diverse Latino communities in the U.S., but nations throughout Latin America, from northern Mexico to southern Chile and throughout the Caribbean. Salsa, a Cuban-derived music developed in New York, has become an international Latino music and identity emblem. The Latin rock phenomenon intitiated by Santana has inspired or given rise to myriad commercially oriented popular Latin dance music styles. Perhaps no artist has so fluidly bridged the gap between musical artistry and activism on behalf of pan-Latino causes than the Panamanian salsa star Rubén Blades. Beyond being an exceptional musician with a rare gift for infusing his songs with poignant social commentary, Blades is also a lawyer, a politician, and an actor who has appeared in several Hollywood films (*The Milagro Beanfield War, The Super*).

Directly or indirectly, the legacies of Tito Puente, Santana, and "Oye Como Va" are carried on in a great many spheres of the Latino/American musicultural world. Their convergence, however, is nowhere more clear than in the music of our final Guided Listening Experience, Tito Puente Jr.'s version of "Oye Como Va."

"Oye Como Va": The Next Generation

Since 1970, "Oye Como Va" has been recorded in myriad versions by everyone from muzak maestro Percy Faith to rapper Mr. Capone-E (Table 11.1). Of all these many renditions, the one that has arguably generated the most public attention is that of Tito Puente's own son, Tito Puente Jr., the self-anointed Prince of Latin Dance music.

TABLE 11.1 **A sampling of other recordings of "Oye Como Va."**

Artist	Year	Description
Percy Faith	1971	Easy listening, orchestral ("muzak")
The Ventures	1971	Straight cover of Santana version
Fattburger	1996	Smooth jazz, melody played by flute
Michel Camillo	1997	Progressive jazz
Kinky	2004	Electronic/Latin Dance
Groove Society	2005	A cappella (unaccompanied vocal group)
Mr. Capone-E	2005	Rap/hip-hop

Tito Puente Jr. in performance.

Tito Puente Jr. was born in New York City in 1971, just as Santana's "Oye Como Va" was climbing the charts. He is 24 years younger than Carlos Santana, 48 years the junior of his late father. He grew up "feeling the rhythms of [Latin] music before he could walk or talk" (Puente Jr. 2004). His first instrument was percussion. As he writes on his Web site, "I had no choice; there were 50 sets of timbales in the garage" (Puente Jr. 2004). He would later study piano, songwriting, and record producing as well—mostly under the tutelage of his famous father—and performed from an early age with his dad and with other Latin music legends, including the late, great Cuban-American singer Celia Cruz.

As a young adult, Puente Jr. moved from New York to Miami. This move took him closer, culturally and geographically, to the source of the Latin dance music traditions that made his father famous, Cuba. It also placed him in the milieu of a city that today rivals New York as the Latin music capital of the United States, if not the world. With the possible exception of New York, Miami is the most ethnically and culturally diverse "Latin American city" anywhere. The Cuban presence—culturally, politically, and musically as well—is especially pervasive, but it is just one large piece of the city's very large pan-Latino cultural pie. "I'm thrilled with the many faces and sounds of Miami," says Tito Puente Jr. "The opportunity to listen to music from Mexico, South America, the Caribbean and other parts of the world has allowed me to expand my own musical horizons, so my music can reach more people" (Puente Jr. 2004). The pan-Latino musical mosaic of Miami is embedded in his music, much as the rich multicultural musical mosaic of New York City was embedded in his father's.

***Guarachando* (wa-ra-CHAN-doh)**

Puente Jr. acknowledges his father as his single greatest musical influence. The year 1996 saw the release (on EMI Latin) of *Guarachando,* the debut album of Tito Puente Jr. and the Latin Rhythm Crew. The album featured an innovative arrangement of "Oye Como Va" by Puente Jr. The sound of this "Oye Como Va," and of *Guarachando* generally, was at once eclectically (and electrically) contemporary and solidly grounded in the Latin dance music tradition of the elder Puente. Puente Jr. identified the style of this music as **Latin Dance** (not to be confused with the generic label "Latin dance music" used throughout this chapter). Latin Dance is essentially a hybrid of diverse contemporary music styles—pop, rock, hip-hop, techno, Latino pop—"laced with influences of Mambo, Cha Cha and [Dominican] Merengue" (Puente Jr. 2004). This is a music that is pan-Latino—Latino/American—in a very broad sense. Puente Jr. describes Latin Dance as "a new explosion of authentic music created from the streets," but it is just as surely a novel synthesis of modern dance club music and earlier styles of Latin dance music. Echoes of his father's musical legacy resonate powerfully in Tito Puente Jr.'s work, as do the influences of later Latin music icons such as Carlos Santana.

guided listening experience

"Oye Como Va," Tito Puente Jr. (2004)

- CD Track #**3-7**
- Featured performer(s)/group: Tito Puente Jr. group, with Tito Puente Jr. (timbales, percussion, vocals), Tito Puente (Sr.) (timbales), La India and Cali Aleman (vocals)
- Format: Complete track
- Source recording: *Tito Puente, Jr.: Greatest Club Remixes* (TPJR Productions)

Tito Puente Jr.'s *Guarachando* performed well on the *Billboard* dance music charts, largely on account of the popularity of "Oye Como Va." The album also was honored with a prestigious Latin Music Award. The version of "Oye Como Va" included on your CD set is not the original 1996 recording from *Guarachando,* but is, rather, a remix version of that recording that was released on *Tito Puente, Jr.: Greatest Club Remixes* (2004). This later version is the one preferred by Tito Puente Jr. himself (personal correspondence with the author, 2006). Among other differences, it puts the virtuosic timbales artistry of his famous father on more prominent display. Also featured here are the singers Cali Aleman and La India. La India is regarded as one of the great Latin music female vocalists of the post–Celia Cruz era.

In Tito Puente Jr.'s "Oye Como Va," the traditional cha cha chá rhythmic groove and many other features of both the original Tito Puente and Santana recordings are present. They undergo various types of transformations in this novel, Latin Dance musical context, however. For example, there are instances where synthesized or digitally sampled reconfigurations of the sounds of traditional Latin percussion instruments, a mambo horn section, and even a Hammond B-3 organ (sampled directly from Santana's "Oye Como Va" recording of 1970) replace the original instruments. On the rhythmic level, a relatively conventional cha cha chá groove established at the beginning (0:07) is first embellished by the simple addition of an off-beat, eighth-note rhythm "played" on electronic hi-hat cymbals beginning at 0:15. But from 1:06 on, the basic cha cha chá feel, while never disappearing entirely, is subjected to a variety of rhythmic and timbral manipulations that move the music in a progressively more funky and technoesque direction.

A new melody that provides an interesting counterpoint to the main "Oye Como Va" tune is introduced by La India at 1:19 and becomes a central feature of the arrangement henceforth. Many of the horn riffs from the original Tito Puente version are interpolated into the arrangement as well, but now they are rendered mainly in digitally synthesized tones that give this music a very different character. And topping everything off is the brilliant timbales soloing of Tito Puente (Sr.), which increasingly becomes the driving force of the music from 2:44 to the end.

Altogether, Tito Puente Jr.'s "Oye Como Va" is a fun and creative take on this classic Latin dance tune. It succeeds in balancing tradition, transformation, and innovation, at once remaining grounded in the historical legacy from which it springs and pushing that legacy forward toward new musical vistas reflective of the time of its making (see Table 11.2 on p. 247). Listen to it now, while following along with the Guided Listening Quick Summary in the box below.

guided listening quick summary

"Oye Como Va," Tito Puente Jr. version (CD ex. #3-7)

INTRODUCTION

0:00–0:06

- Begins with the standard "Oye" organ riff, this time in the form of a heavily processed digital sample of the Hammond B-3 organ from the Santana recording (*note:* the key is A♭ minor, in contrast to the Puente [Sr.] and Santana versions, which were both in A minor).
- Electronically processed güiro timbre, along with other digitally sampled and synthesized Latin percussion sounds.

SINGING OF MAIN TUNE, FIRST TIME

0:07–0:24

- Standard singing style (unison/harmonized texture; male singers); electronically enhanced cha cha chá groove (especially from 0:15).
- Partial statement of signature unison figure at 0:22.

FIRST MAMBO SECTION (MAMBO I)

0:25–0:43

- Melodic material derived from horn riffs of Tito Puente's original version (sometimes including bluesy embellishments, *à la* Santana), but with simpler, shorter riffs and use of synthesizer timbres in place of actual horns.
- Section concludes with partial statement of signature unison rhythmic figure; call-and-response vocal exclamation "Everybody say WHOA-paaa!" laid over top (0:39–0:43) as groove continues underneath.

SINGING OF MAIN TUNE, SECOND TIME

0:44–1:05

- Off-beat electronic hi-hat cymbal rhythm (like that heard earlier, at 0:15) fortifies cha cha chá groove; some solo timbales improvisation interspersed.
- Return of signature unison figure (complete) at 1:58.

FUNK/CHA CHA CHÁ SECTION

1:06–2:17

- Cha cha chá groove radically transformed by funky, electronic percussion/bass groove.
- New melody introduced by female vocalist, La India, at 1:19 ("Ritmo Latino"); this eventually becomes a kind of countermelody to the main "Oye" tune.
- Main "Oye" tune sung again as heavy funk/cha cha chá groove continues at 1:35; syncopated interjections by La India between phrases.
- From 1:49, mambo-like riffs from synthesized "horns," group of male singers; La India continues.
- Short, improvised timbales solo (2:04–2:10), leading directly back to the signature unison figure (complete) at 2:11.

2:18–2:43

- Contrast provided by introduction of new "bass" synthesizer ostinato, then heavy, steady-beat bass drum pattern under a return of the main sung tune (at 2:25); texture changes again briefly at 2:33.

2:44–end

- Improvised timbales solo by Tito Puente (Sr.) adds energy and excitement as the music builds to a climactic unison ending, which is based on the crescendo build-up material also heard in Puente (Sr.) and Santana versions.

Tito Puente Jr.: Into the future, back to the past

Since the death of Tito Puente in 2000, Tito Puente Jr. has dedicated his career to honoring his late father by carrying on his musical legacy. A second album of his from 2004, *En Los Pasos De Mi Padre* (In My Father's Shoes), is the most explicit tribute to his father's memory to date. It is a retrospective production, including classic Puente tunes from the mambo kings days of the 1950s and the salsa explosion years of the 1970s.

"I am now performing the music of Tito Puente," explains Puente Jr. "I think it's very important that the youth of today understand the music of my father, la música de ayer [the music of yesterday], la música del Palladium. It's timeless music—music that makes you dance . . . Carrying the torch and the tradition of my father's music to a whole new generation of fans has been a lifelong dream of mine" (Puente Jr. 2004).

This carrying of the torch took an interesting twist in the early 2000s when Tito Puente Jr. became co-director of a band called The Big 3 Palladium Orchestra. His collaborators in this ven-

TABLE 11.2 Summary comparison of Tito Puente, Santana, and Tito Puente Jr. arrangements of "Oye Como Va."

	Tito Puente	Santana	Tito Puente Jr.
Year	1963	1970	2004
Album	*El Rey Bravo*	*Abraxas*	*Tito Puente, Jr.: Greatest Club Remixes*
Instrumentation	Big band horn section (saxophones, trumpets, trombones); layered ostinato horn riffs	No horn section, though horn riff figures are worked into electric guitar solo	Simplified horn riffs played on synthesizers
	Male voices	Male voices	Male voices plus female solo vocalist (singing contrasting melody)
	Main solo instrument: flute	Main solo instruments: electric guitar, Hammond B-3 organ	Main solo instrument: timbales (no melodic instrument solos)
	Organ	Different type of organ (Hammond B-3)	Digitally sampled B-3 with heavy electronic processing
	Bass	Bass	Bass
	Latin percussion; cha cha chá groove	Drumset plus Latin percussion; cha cha chá groove reinforced by rock-style drumming	Timbales, etc., plus digitally sampled/synthesized percussion; funk/electronic grooves mixed with cha cha chá
Style	Mamboized cha cha chá	Latin rock/cha cha chá	Latin Dance/cha cha chá

ture were none other than "Machito" Grillo and Tito Rodríguez. No, not the famed mambo kings of the 1950s, but their musician sons who bear their names. Puente Jr., Grillo, and Rodríguez, all fine musicians in their own right, joined forces to initiate "a lush and fiery rebirth of the music made famous by their fathers" via this most interesting project (Puente Jr. 2004). More recently, Puente Jr. has been heading up his own large Latin dance band, The Tito Puente Jr. Orchestra, a group he formed for the explicit purpose of introducing the great music of his father to new generations of listeners and reintroducing it to earlier generations of Tito Puente admirers.

Summary

Like the great gharanas of India (see Chapter 8), the great lineages in the history of Latin dance music have produced their own formidable legacies. In this chapter, we traced one such legacy, as defined by the modern history and musicultural roots of a particular song, "Oye Como Va." We chronicled its path from Afro-Cuban ritual music, to Afro-Cuban rumba, to creolized Cuban dance-music styles such as the danzón and the danzón-mambo, to the cha cha chá and big band mambo styles of the 1950s, to the original 1963 Tito Puente recording of "Oye Como Va," to "Oye Como Va" as re-created by Santana (1970) and Tito Puente Jr. (1996/2004).

Comparing and contrasting the three versions of "Oye Como Va" explored in the second half of the chapter offered a revealing view of processes of musical tradition and transformation. Musically, commercially,

socially, and even politically, each of these distinct yet related interpretations of the same song speaks both to the times and conditions of its own emergence and the historical and cultural legacy to which it belongs. "Oye Como Va" *is* an article of tradition, and like all articles of tradition, it is at once both perpetually ripe for creative transformation and possessed of the inherent capacity to remain resolutely itself regardless of the types of change to which it is subjected. Like the legacy of Afro-Cuban music, or the legacy of Tito Puente, "Oye Como Va" endures at the core of its many surfaces and interpretations.

As for Tito Puente himself, his spirit and musical legacy are being carried forward today by many great musicians, including his own talented son. Though promotional in nature, the following passage from Tito Puente Jr.'s Web site captures an essence that is real and true, and that offers a fitting point of closure for this musicultural journey through Latin dance music:

> Natural heir to the throne of El Rey, he is unmistakably the son, physically, spiritually and musically of Tito Puente, seminal bandleader, percussionist and legendary good will ambassador of Latin music.
>
> Young Tito's heart is rooted deep in the musical soul of his father. But he is staking out a future in the affectionate response of those who want a modern edge added to the sensuous music that runs through all Latin lives. Puente Jr. is taking his own eclectic sound and like his father before him—is making history and moving generations.
>
> Certainly his father is there in the wide grin, the wild timbales and the charisma that rushes past the footlights and tells the world that this is the music that moves your feet, your soul and your spirit. (Puente Jr. 2004)

Key Terms

riffs
timbales
salsa
rhythm section (piano, bass, percussion)
horn section (saxophones, trombones, trumpets)
cha cha chá
Latino/American
Latin dance music (1. generic; 2. as Cuban-derived tradition)
Latin rock
rumba
danzón
danzón-mambo
mambo
Newyorican
Santería
batá
conga drums (congas)
clave (rhythm)
claves (instrument)
charanga
son
big band mambo
bongó (bongo drums)
mambo kings (Machito, Tito Puente, Tito Rodríguez)
Latin Dance (as contemporary dance-music genre)

Study Questions

- What three recordings of "Oye Como Va" were explored in this chapter? Who was the featured artist/band on each? What years were they recorded and on what albums did they originally appear? What similarities and differences were there between them? How was each a reflection of Latino/American music and identity at the time it was recorded?
- How was the term *Latin dance music* applied in a relatively specific and delimited way in this chapter? What does that same term mean when used in more broad and generic terms?
- In what senses might Tito Puente be described as an individual of complex, multiple ethnic/musical identities?
- What are batá drums? In what type of religious ritual context are these drums used?
- What is involved in the performance of rumba and what kinds of instruments are used?
- Describe the following instruments: timbales, congas, bongó, claves, güiro, maracas.
- What is the clave rhythm and why is it important?
- Define and discuss the following dance-music genres: danzón, danzón-mambo, *son,* cha cha chá, salsa. Note musical features and important historical points.

- Who were the mambo kings?
- What were the six defining features of big band mambo listed in the chapter?
- What were defining features of Santana's novel Latin rock style? How were these manifest in the Santana version of "Oye Como Va"?
- In what ways has Tito Puente Jr. carried on his father's musical legacy? In what ways has he introduced innovations that extend the range of Latin dance music? How is his recording of "Oye Como Va" representative of this merging of tradition and transformation?

Discussion Question

- Latino/American dance music is integral to the basic fabric of musicultural life throughout the Americas. Outside of what you have studied in this chapter, what kinds of Latino/American music have you encountered in your daily life? How is this music used to reflect and express ethnic and cultural identity, and how has it shaped your own impressions or experiences of Latino culture?

Applying What You Have Learned

- Visit a local record store and browse through the "Latin music" section. Take note of what items are in the CD bins and document a representative sample of the different musical styles, artists, countries, and cultures represented. If there are listening stations in the store, take some time to listen to some of the recordings. Write a brief report chronicling your experiences. What did you learn about the diversity of Latino/American music? About musical tradition and transformation? What kinds of images and impressions does viewing Latino/American culture through the lens of this experience generate for you?
- Numerous theatrical movies and documentary films featuring Latin dance musics of the kinds discussed in this chapter are readily available for library borrowing, rental, or purchase on video and DVD. Access a copy of *The Mambo Kings, Buena Vista Social Club,* or *Calle 54* and watch it. Write a film review, integrating your observations of the film with what you have learned from this chapter and the listening skills you have developed.
- Beyond the recordings of "Oye Como Va" included in this chapter, there are dozens of other ones available. Do an Internet search to find different recorded versions. Listen to as many as you can. Create an annotated list describing the styles and other notable features of the different versions you hear. What does this exercise teach you about tradition and transformation in Latino/American music? In music generally?

Resources for Further Study

Visit the Online Learning Center at **www.mhhe.com/bakan1** for learning aids, study help, and additional resources that supplement the content of this chapter.