

BEYOND SALSA PIANO

THE CUBAN TIMBA PIANO REVOLUTION



VOLUME 1 • BEGINNING

THE ROOTS OF THE PIANO TUMBAO

KEVIN MOORE

SAMPLE

Changüí tumbao 6 - tracks 23 & 24

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in the style of: *Tradición de los pueblos*

Tumbao 7a, in the style of *La rumba está buena*, is my personal favorite. It's quite tricky to hear it correctly for 2 reasons. First, the chord progression resolves on the backbeat of each measure. Second, it uses two onbeats in a row. [oXoX – offbeats; XoXo – onbeats] (see Glossary for clarification of terms)

Changüí tumbao 7a - tracks 25 & 26

in the style of: *La rumba está buena*

To understand why this tumbao is unusual, let's break changüí down to individual rhythmic cells:

oXoX – since changüí is based on offbeats, this one is by far the most common

oooX or oXoo – omitting an offbeat

XXoX or XooX – adding a main beat (XXoo is seldom found)

XXXX or oXXX – adding the decorative arpeggio (with or without the main beat)

XoX – this cell, outlined in red in the notation above, is very rare in changüí because it contains 2 consecutive onbeats (underlined). Make a mental note of this because when we get to Volume 2,

SAMPLE

Arsenio made significant innovations in almost every aspect of music: rhythm, instrumentation, form, lyrics, guajeos, bass tumbaos, and, as evidenced by our final two guajeos, harmony.

Son Montuno 24 - tracks 97 & 98



Son Montuno 24 - tracks 97 & 98



in the style of: *Guaragüi* – 1951 – tempo=69 bpm – 2-3 clave – pno: Lili Martínez

Arsenio's use of modal harmonies pre-echoes not only *songo*, *salsa* and *timba*, but *rock* and *soul* as well. *Guaragüi* has not one but two shockingly original chord progressions. **Tumbao 24** is in *D*, but the chord progression is in the *Mixolydian* mode.

I – bVII – IV

D – C – G

This virulently addictive little sequence would remain dormant for 15 years until becoming a pop juggernaut in songs such as *Hey Jude* and *Sympathy from the Devil*. In the early 70s, when Juan Formell of Los Van Van reintroduced it to Latin pop, it sounded like a clear borrowing from rock & roll, but here it is in Arsenio's music when rock and rollers were limited to I – IV – V and I – viii – IV – V and even *Tin Pan Alley* had yet to incorporate modal harmonies.

Included in the *timba.com* Arsenio study, and equally interesting from a harmonic standpoint, is *Guaragüi's* opening progression:

Imi – IV – bVII – Imi

Ami – D – G – Ami

It's the same progression, but in *minor*, with the IV and bVII inverted.

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About the Author



Kevin Moore (with Melón Lewis) – Los Angeles, 2009

Kevin Moore (kevin@timba.com) is the co-founder and music editor for the world's largest Cuban music website, www.timba.com, to which he has contributed the free online multimedia book ***The Roots of Timba***, dozens of book-length articles, discographies, record analyses, interviews and the daily Cuban music blog ***La última***, which is nearing its 10th year of publication.

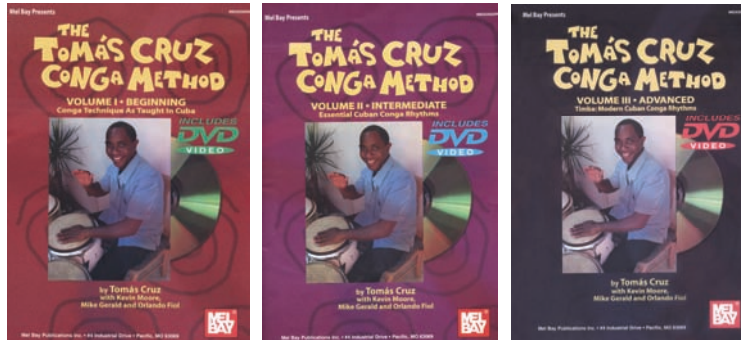
As musical director, composer, arranger and violinist of the California-based salsa band Orquesta Gitano he co-produced the 1998 CD ***Salsa Gitana***.



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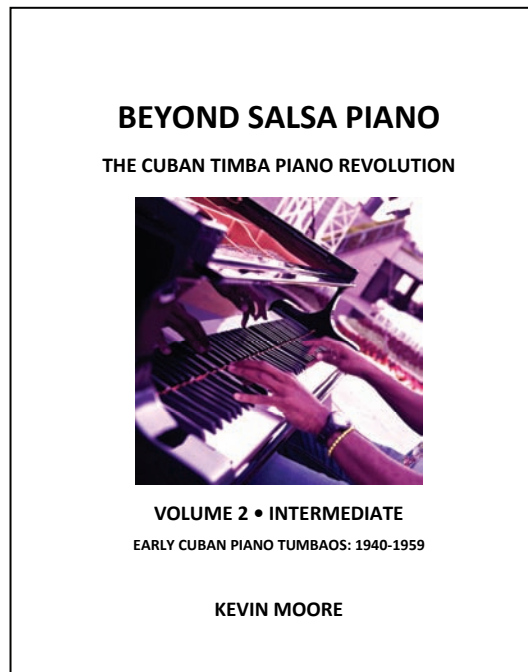
In the early 2000s Kevin co-wrote *The Tomás Cruz Conga Method, Volumes 1-3*, a critically acclaimed method book used as a text at various educational institutions.

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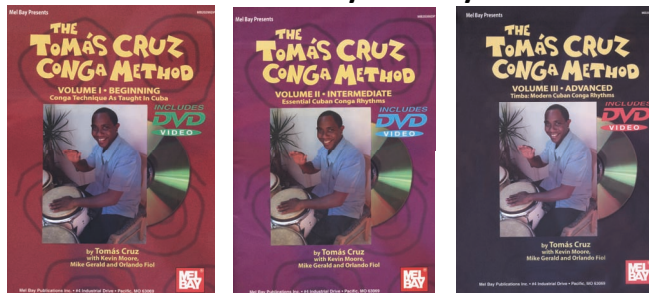
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