Realizing Diversity through Afro-Cuban Music

A look at playing, improvising, and teaching
Afro-Cuban music on orchestral instruments.
Presented by Jesus Florido and Matthew Manweiler

Latin American Music comes from an incredibly diverse culture that spans two continents. It is a melting pot of influences that includes European melodies and harmonies, as well as African rhythms.

Even though we have many Latin American and Black students in our schools, the styles of music that come from their cultures are massively underrepresented in our orchestras. Our goal is to open the door to these rich styles and begin to equip you with tangible resources. This will enable you to incorporate diverse music in your orchestras and studios, and better include students who are black and hispanic.

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The Clave- A binary rhythm that anchors a style

The Clave is a rhythm, but <u>be careful</u>! It is more nuanced that it first appears. The clave is also a foundation to groove and a binary form. Afro Cuban music is built on the interaction between both sides of the clave, which informs other musical choices, such as melody, phrasing, and/or other accompaniments. Afro Cuban musicians always need to be aware of which beat they're on in the measure as well as what side of the clave they are in.

In this session, all notated music will be in 4/4 time when not indicated.

2-3 Clave (Son Clave)

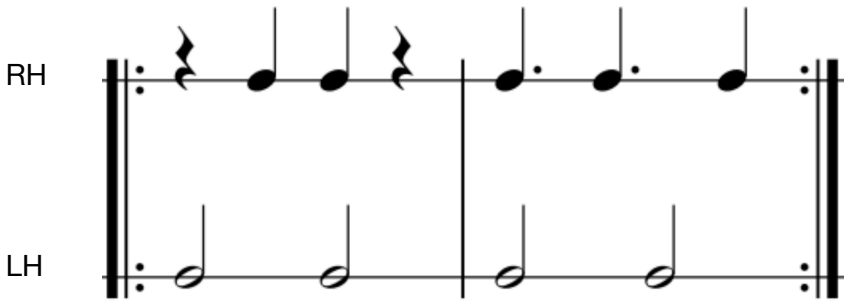
3-2 Clave (less common)

2-3 Rumba Clave

3-2 Rumba Clave

Rumba Clave is a popular Clave variation. When you are listening to the Rumba clave, be aware - the delayed eighth note on the 3 side is closer to the 2 side of the clave, and can fake out people not familiar with the groove - that note can sound like a down beat for a 3 side, as opposed to the end of a 3 side.

<u>INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #1- clap both the beat and 2-3 clave together-</u>



<u>STRING ORCHESTRA EXAMPLE #1- CLAVE</u>

Bossa Azul by Bert Ligon is a well-written piece that uses a pizzicato 2-3 Clave. Playing it can be a great way to teach students about Clave when the rhythm is isolated. I recommend

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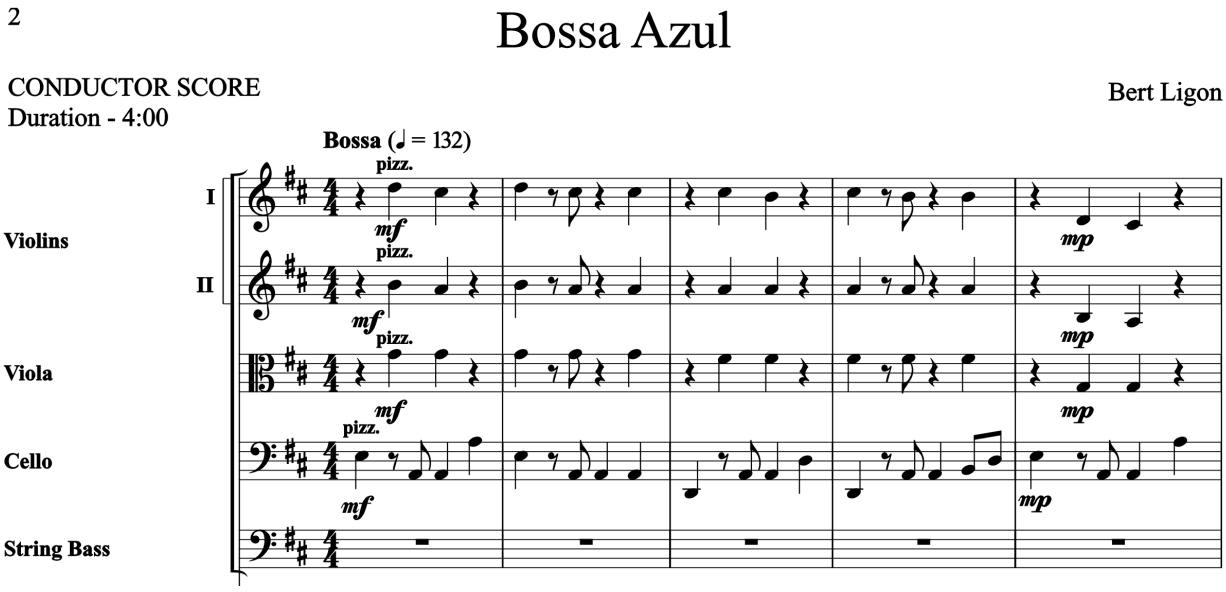
having students tap their feet to the half note pulse when playing pizzicato.

Note: The notation on the 3 side is slightly different than our example. There are many variations on notation for the clave when it appears.



Bert Ligon's Latin compositions are some of our favorite options for school orchestras, but rate at grade level 2.5+. Check out https://www.bertligonmusic.com/ on where to find his music, as his music is available from several publishers.

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Before we move any deeper, an *incredibly* quick primer on the Strum Bowing technique is needed.

"In classical music, strings are primary melodic instruments. We're not accustomed to functioning like a rhythm guitar player in the rhythm section. But playing rhythm is fun! it makes people want to dance. Luckily, the bow is an incredibly versatile tool capable of a limitless world of rhythmic sound."

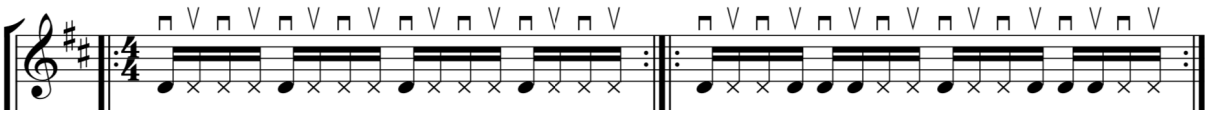
-Tracy Silverman

Strum Bowing is an approach that uses physical subdivision in the bow arm with ghost notes to visualize the tiniest subdivision in the groove. This physical subdivision allows the groove of the music to focus on the common simplicity of the music- instead of the complexity of the rhythm. Remember rhythm guitarists, and how they strum subdivisions- the right hand is always moving!

INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #2- Strum Bowing- Building Ghost and Accent Notes

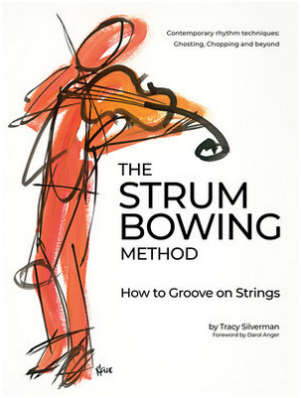
1- **Play or air-bow** moving from all notes to all Ghost Notes

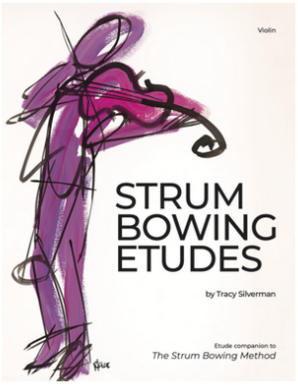
2- **Play or air-bow the subdivision or The Grid** (the grid can be eighths or 16th notes)



3- **Play or air-bow** the same rhythm with left hand muting. Move to the note "E" one the D string. It may be helpful to say the bowing directions out loud.

If you are brand new to Strum Bowing, Please check out strumbowing.com. Tracy Silverman has a plethora of resources to help you and your students learn bow techniques that will make grooves easy to play and sound authentic!





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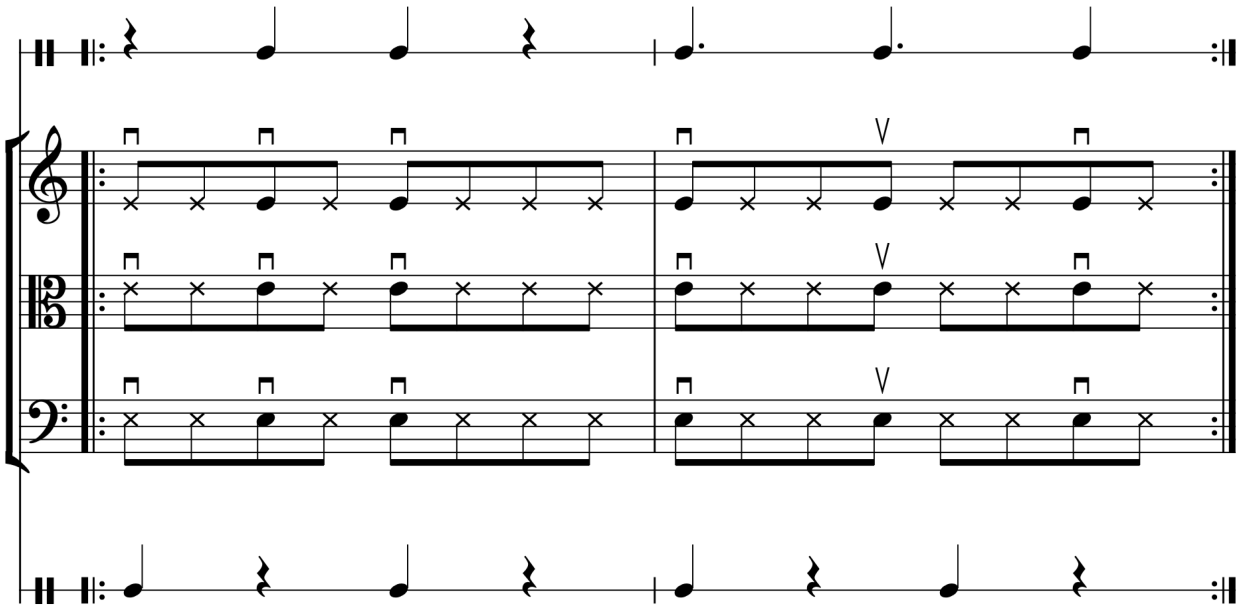
INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #3- The Clave with Strum Bowing

1- **Say the Bow Directions** as you air bow or ghost as you tap your foot to the beat

2- **Strum Bow the Clave** with ghost notes and LH finger muting as you tap your foot to the beat. It is important to be short and crisp on the notes



3- **Don't be afraid start slow!** It takes time to build the feel of all of these different new rhythms and bowing techniques. It is more important to have rhythmic accuracy with short and crisp notes than to go too fast too soon.

We recommend that you play all of the parts in this presentation with both a normal metronome as well as a metronome that plays the clave. Metronomes that have clave can be found here:

- Dr. Beat Metronome DB-90
- Tonal Energy App (takes a little programming of a 2 measure loop)
- Clave Metronome app
- Irealpro an app for MacBooks and iPads- also has other percussion
- YouTube search "clave metronome". Unless there is a musical reason, you probably want to start with 2-3 Son Clave, which is the main clave we are presenting in this workshop.

Pro Tip!
If you occasionally alter your normal metronome practice with a clave metronome on scales and other technical warmups, it will help you and your students internalize the tension that exists between melodic parts and the syncopation of the Clave.

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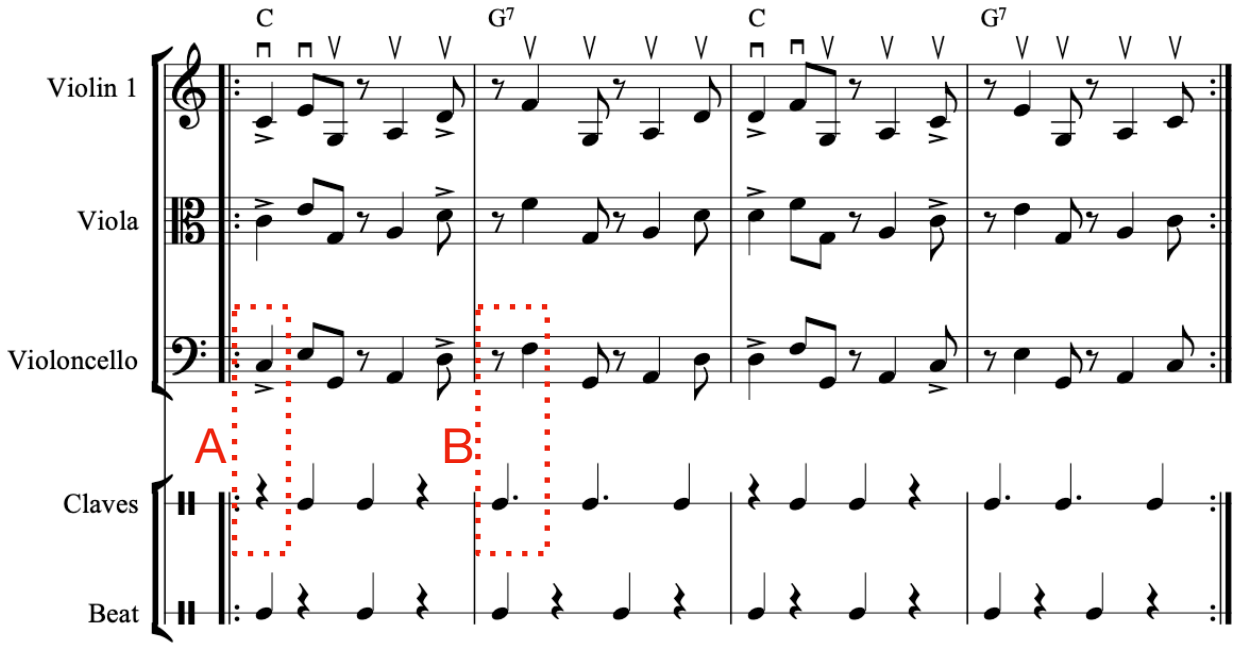
Montunos-

The montuno is a common syncopated ostinato that outlines the harmony in Afro Cuban Music. The montuno usually outlines a simple chord progression such as | ii V :|| or | I IV V I :||. Usually the down beat of a montuno is syncopated opposite from the clave. When the clave has a rest on the downbeat in the 2 side, the Montuno usually plays a strong beat (See A highlighted below). The roles flip on the down beat on the 3 side when the clave plays a strong beat. The montuno generally rests and plays eighth note syncopation against the clave's strong downbeat (see B highlighted below). Compare the highlighted areas in the clave and montuno below.

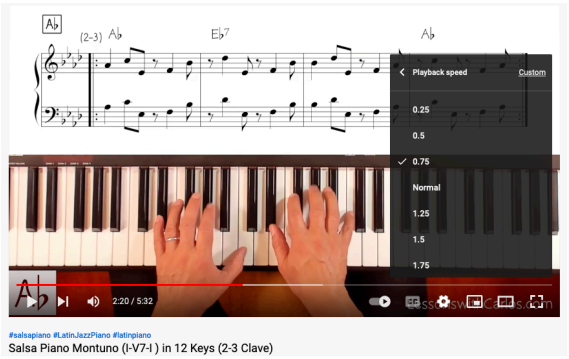
INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #4 The Basic Son Montuno

1- **Play the Montuno** with strum bowing. Work up to a fast tempo.
2- **Sing the Rhythm** as you clap or tap clave.
3- **Play the Montuno** with strum bowing as tap your foot to the clave. Start slowly!



A good place to practice the basic son montuno in all 12 keys with is this YouTube video: www.o0o.st/aSuFGo (sadly no alto clef).

YouTube videos can be slowed down to 75% or 50% to practice!



Pro Tip!

There should be an accent on the Down beat and the +4 beat of the two side of the montuno (notated above). From here on out this accent will not be notated, but should be always present!

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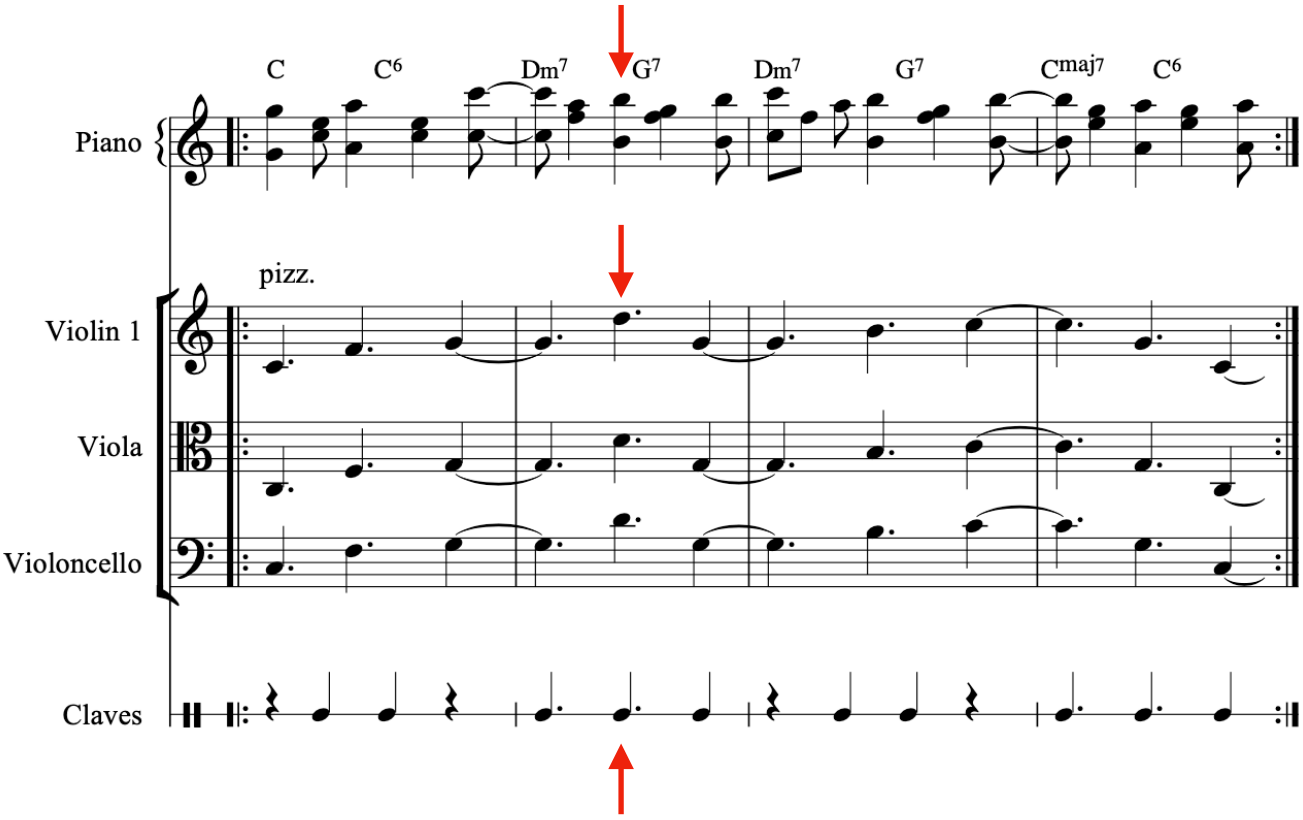
The Tumbao-

While many bass rhythms are possible, the most common one in Afro Cuban music is the Tumbao. Note how syncopated the bass line is, and how it only lines up with the clave at the end of the 3 side.

INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #5 The Tumbao
from 101 Montunos by *Rebeca Mauleon used with permission*

1- **Play the Tumbao** pattern pizzicato with the recording.
2- **Play the Tumbao** pattern pizzicato with the recording while tapping the 2-3 Clave.



Pro Tip!

The tumbao rarely lines up with a down beat, and only lines up with the clave on the last two hits of the 3 side. The only place the clave, montuno, and tumbao line up is the +2 beat of the 3 side (marked above). This beat is called the bombo (or bass drum), and is usually reinforced by an accent on a lower pitched conga. Listening for the bombo accent is one way to find where you are in the clave groove. Practicing the 3-3-2 tumbao pattern with no tie is another great way to begin to feel the bass line if you or your students are not able to play it as presented above.

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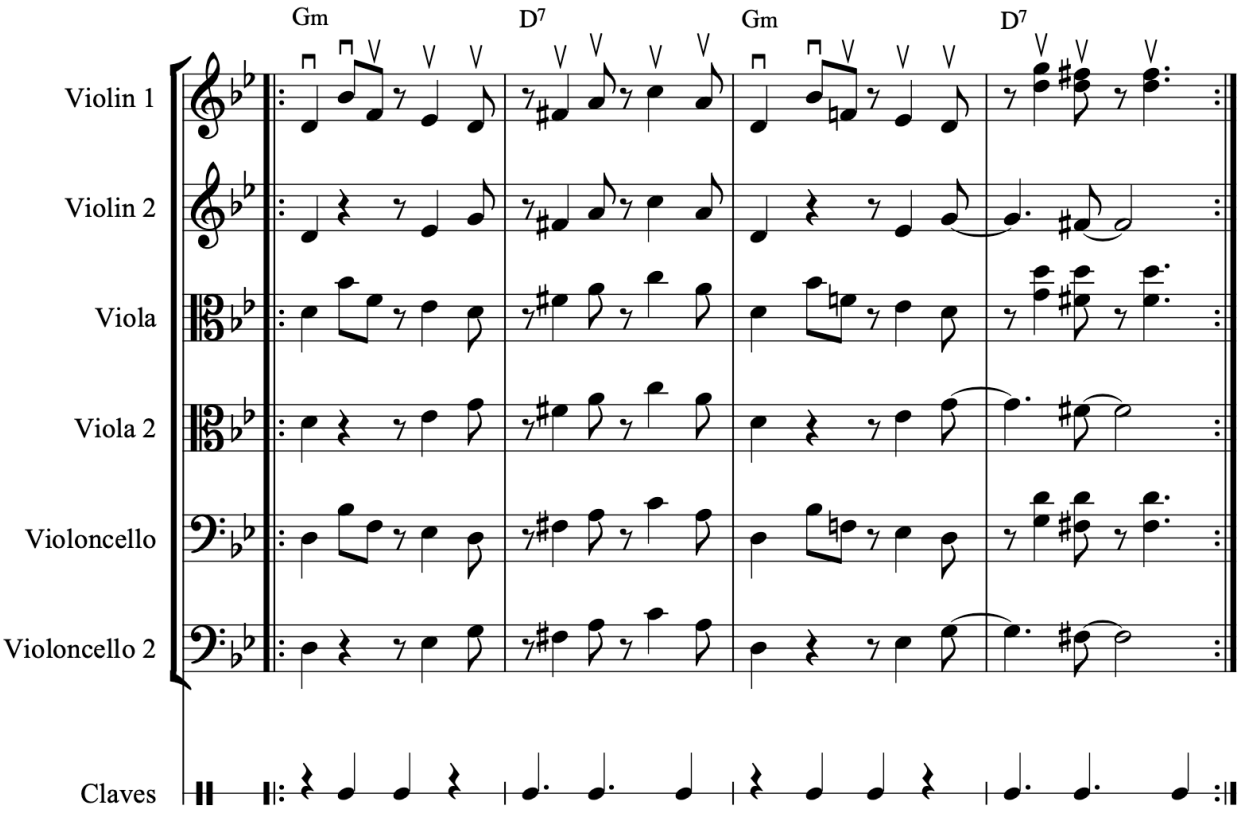
INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #6- More Advanced Montunos

1- **Clap the 2-3 Clave** along with the recording
2- **Play the Montuno** parts with strum bowing
3- **Play the Tumbao** pattern and tap your foot to the clave

Sabroso Como Guarapo No. 16 *from Latin Violin by Sam Bardfeld*

used with permission, rewritten to include alto and bass clef



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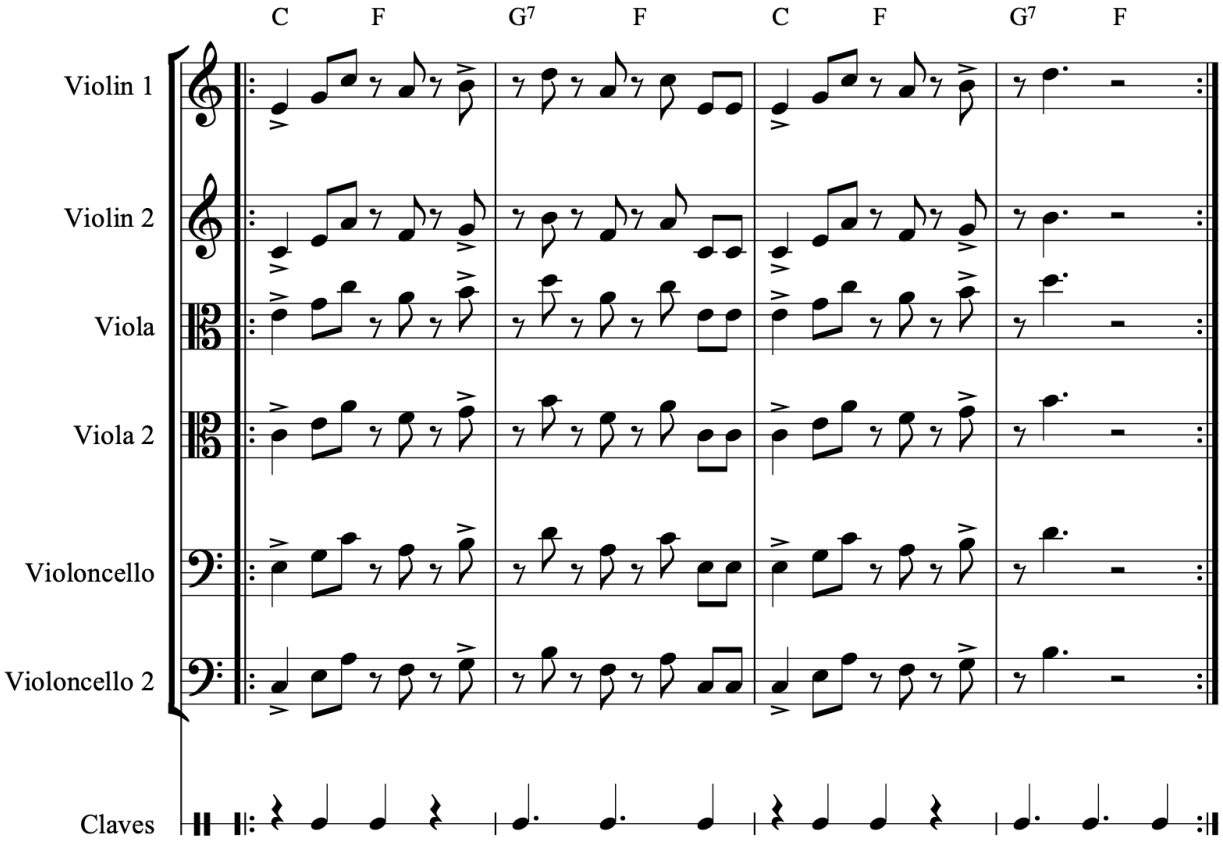
Sam's Montuno No. 17 *from Latin Violin by Sam Bardfeld*

used with permission, rewritten to include alto and bass clef



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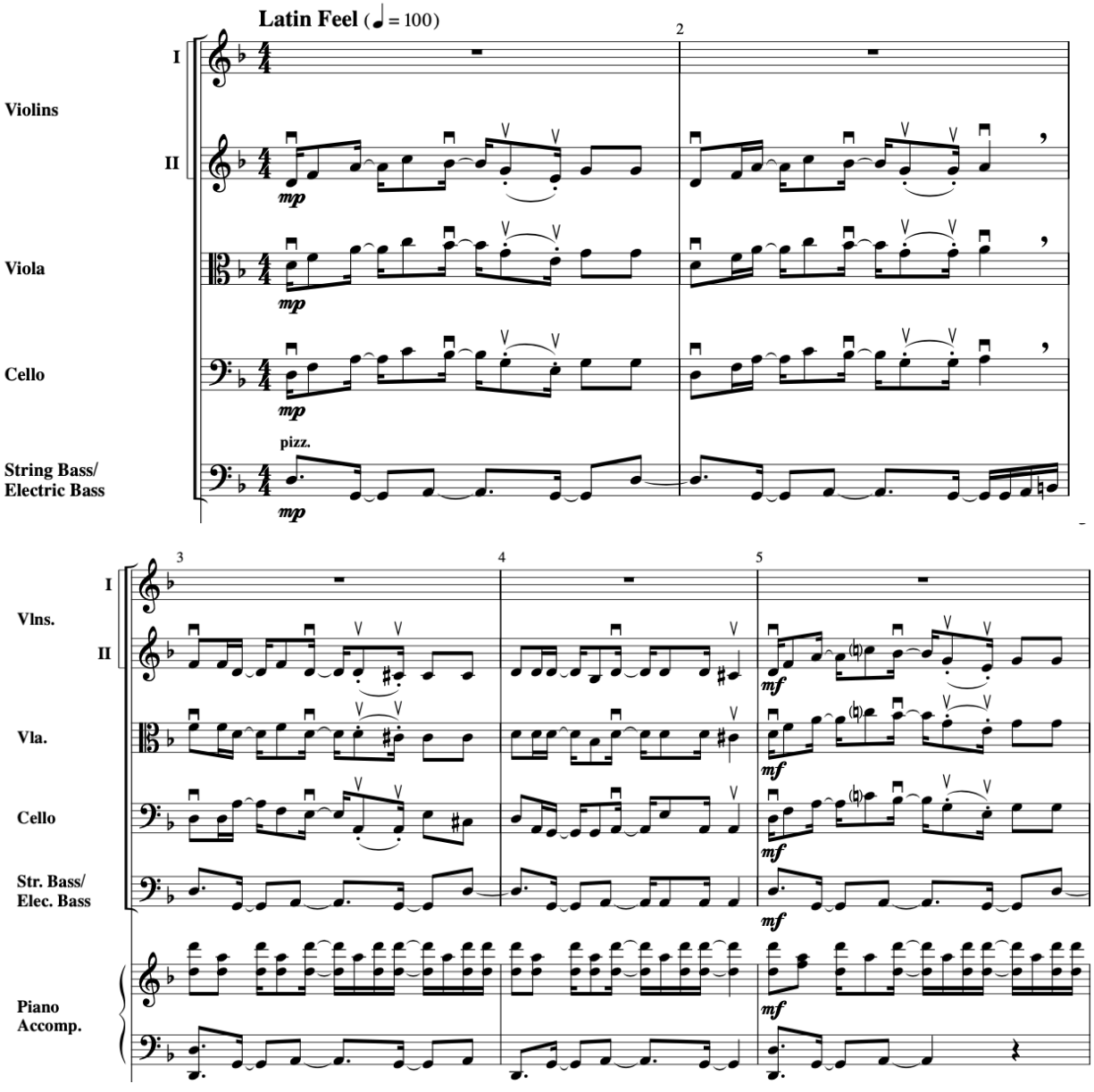
STRING ORCHESTRA EXAMPLE #2- MONTUNO with a Venezuelan influence
This song is currently out of print, but is available directly from Jesus Florido.

Mi Negra

(a term of endearment meaning "My Dear")

CONDUCTOR SCORE
Duration - 3:20

By Jesus Florido
Arr. by Belford Hernandez
and Jesus Florido



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INTERACTIVE EXERCISE #7- Improvise over Montunos and Claves

For the remainder of the clinic we will have an interactive exercise working with some improvisation tips that are critical to playing this style authentically. A lot of the instruction and tips will be given via call and answer. If you don't have your instrument, please sing along!

A few tips that we will cover

-Don't play on the down beat of the 2 side of the clave. Let your melodic phrase breathe!

-Learn to identify and follow the percussion patterns such as Cascara, Congo, and Bongos. It is common for a melodic line to quote these rhythmic elements in their solos!

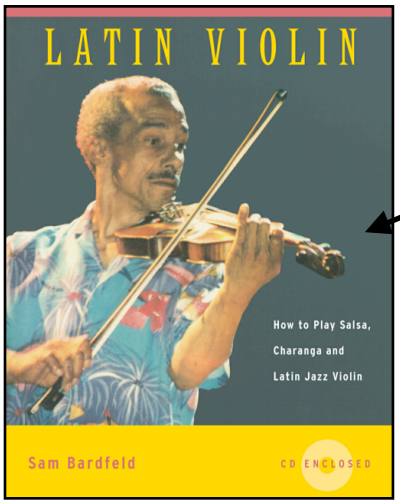
-Use Pentatonic scales. They are very common. It is also ok to repeat 3 or 4 notes several times in a row and create a new ostinato with your pentatonic scale.

-Identify harmonic patterns in the chords. Afro-Cuban music is not complex harmonically. Emphasize the chord changes with simple patterns as you learn to follow the chords.

Notes:

Our Favorite Resources

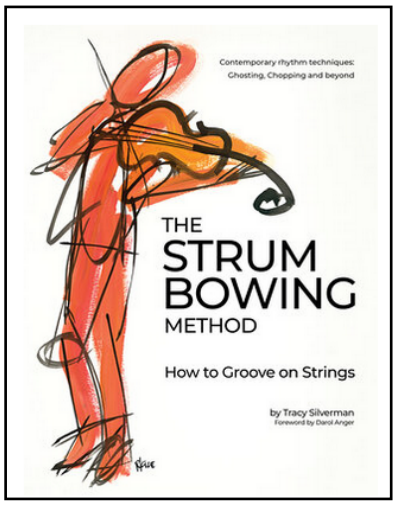
Latin Violin- by Sam Bardfeld
(out of print physically, available on Kindle)



Start Here if you are brand new to Latin!

This book should be in your library!

The Strum Bowing Method
strumbowing.com
by Tracy Silverman



1- 101 Montunos
2- Salsa Guidebook: For Piano and Ensemble
by Rebeca Mauleon-Santana

Dancepapi-
A wonderful resource on how to play latin percussion authentically, and how to learn some Salza dancing basics.
https://www.youtube.com/c/Dancepapi

Bert Ligon- One of the best orchestra arrangers for this style. https://www.bertligonmusic.com/

Recordings/ Artists that are worth exploring!

Frank Emilio Flynn- Y Sus Amigo 1996 (Afro-Cuban)
Jesus Florido- Heading North 2003
Harlem Quartet- http://harlemquartet.com/

Other Youtube/ practice videos that we find helpful
www.o0o.st/aSuFGo Montunos in all 12 keys
www.o0o.st/y6Vwad Clave Metronome

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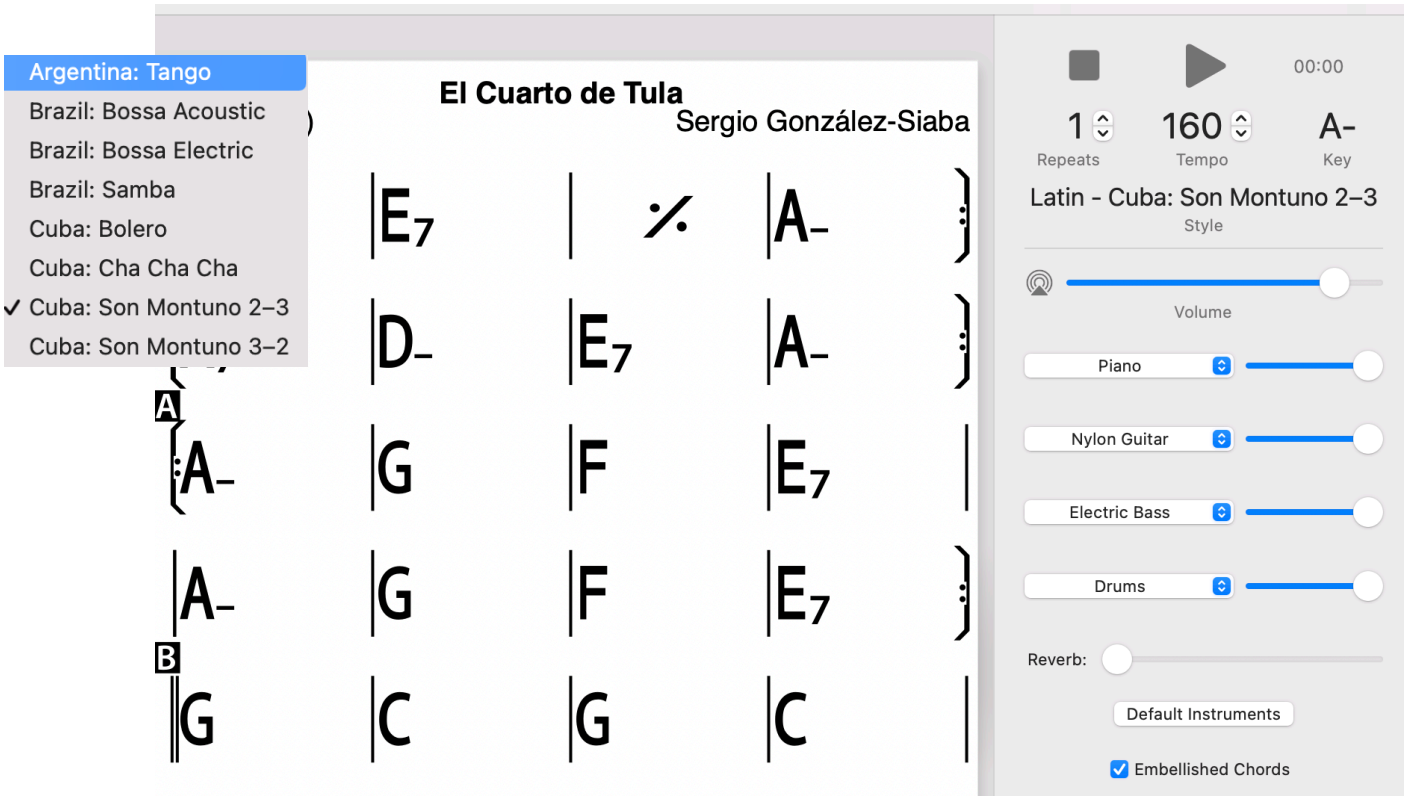
SOFTWARE

Irealpro is an amazing software accompaniment and practice tool that allows you to program chord charts. The quality is high enough to use for concerts to back up an orchestra, if you are careful to set up the files to match the measures on your piece. This works especially well with only percussion instruments turned on. It has a Latin expansion pack that includes multiple different styles (shown below). There is a free library with hundreds of Latin songs already programmed.

Irealpro can also be used to export practice mp3s for students, or even midi, when one needs a quick arrangement of backup parts for guest percussionists or piano players.



It can feel overwhelming when venturing into new musical territory. You are not alone! We want to see you succeed! As such, we welcome questions and are available for workshops and masterclasses to support you as you incorporate Latin music in your orchestras. We specialize in residencies that teach Latin music to classically trained students of all experience levels that culminate in a side by side performance with students.

Jesus Florido jf@jesusflorido.com
Matt Manweiler matt@jesusflorido.com

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