

# Don't Quantize: **AUTHENTICIZE!** **Latin Music in Your Jazz Program**

We designed our clinic with the goal of providing an access point for those desiring to educate their students in a way that honors and celebrates the cultures that created the music we play and love so much. The content presented in the clinic and in this handout are by no means comprehensive. As with straight-ahead jazz, it takes time and immersion through listening to internalize and then authentically execute the nuances of style. We hope you and your students enjoy the journey!

We are passionate about this music and about education. If we can be of service to you in any way, please reach out!

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## “So, what Is ‘Latin Music’?”

“Latin” does not refer to a single style concept any more than “African” refers to a single culture/people! It is a gross generalization to think: African + Indigenous + European = Latin. In actuality, Influence from **various** African traditions taken to **various** places with **various** indigenous traditions that incorporated **various** amounts of **various** European traditions resulted in, unsurprisingly, a great deal of **variety**!

Changüi, son jarocho, bambuco, baião, and murga are musical traditions still practiced by many in their home countries of Cuba, Mexico, Colombia, Brazil, and Panama, yet likely are not on the average American musician’s radar when thinking about “Latin” music. Just as there are many music traditions in America (zydeco, bluegrass, blues, etc.), each Latin-American country has its nuanced musical traditions. Thus, “Latin” means SO much more than “bossa” if it’s slow to medium and “samba” if it’s fast!

## “Ok, so what about Latin Jazz?”

This is where it can be very simple to very complex! “Latin Jazz” can be anything in a jazz context played with a Latin feel. Gilberto and Getz’s “The Girl from Ipanema,” Mongo Santamaria’s version of Herbie Hancock’s “Watermelon Man,” and Buddy Rich’s recording of “Nutville” could all qualify, depending on who you talk to.

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Just from that short list, Jobim's classic bossa nova was, arguably, an example of Brazilian pop music when it was released, peaking at #5 on Billboard's Hot 100 list, yet described in its Wikipedia article as a "jazz song." Santamaria's recording is considered by some a prototype for "Latin Boogaloo," also doing well on the pop charts. Still, a pretty faithful "cover" by Poncho Sanchez in 1999 was part of an eventual GRAMMY winning "Best Latin Jazz Performance." "Nutville" was written and originally recorded by Horace Silver. "Song for My Father," a "Latin" tune was written by Silver in honor of his Portuguese father.

So, Latin jazz includes jazz played with intentional Latin elements, however generic. However, since for many people, the broad definition of jazz is satisfied by including improvisation as long as it's not (American) popular or classical (in the Western European art music sense), a HUGE amount of music that began as popular dance music across the Caribbean and the Lower Americas is also Latin jazz. That music represents people, cultures, and traditions that deserve, in our opinion, respectful treatment in an authentic way whenever possible. This is the same approach that we would expect to be taught when differentiating Basie, bop, and the "Down Home Blues." Latin Jazz deserves no less!

### Selected Key Points from the Clinic:

- The point of all the details, nuances, and rhythms is to create an authentic *feeling*! The feel of the music is job 1!
- For most Brazilian music: Think and feel in 2 not 4. The emphasis should be on 2, not 1.
- For samba, have the bass player play their note on the second beat below the first beat (e.g. for a C chord, C4 on one, G3 on two). This helps keep the emphasis on beat 2.
- For most Cuban Music: Clave only goes in one direction and doesn't change. Brazilian music does not have a "clave" in this sense, though many refer to the typical cross stick pattern  as "the Brazilian clave"
- While there are indeed traditional, seemingly "industry standard" rhythmic patterns that define style, musicians in these genres are **creative** and you may hear myriad variations in recorded music; remember to prioritize feel.
- When the arrangement indicates "Latin" look for clues as to what the writer had in mind. These are often rhythmic.
- Not all arrangements are created equal! You will likely come across some mix of elements that may not be "authentic." *Se la jazz!* Prioritize feel and have fun with it anyway! Parsing the various influences present in the music can be a great teaching moment.
- **Every** band member is responsible for aligning with the rhythmic groove/grid.
- Percussion is an important element. If you don't have a second drummer or percussionist in your ensemble, consider having a horn player play a hand percussion instrument in the solo section.

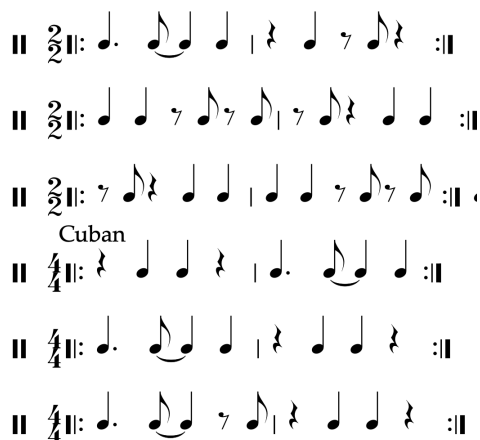
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- That said, use the appropriate percussion instruments when available (e.g. cowbell for Cuban, agogo bells for samba). If they are not available, make doubly sure the rhythms are correct (e.g. *marcha* for Cuban, *quintillo* for Dominican merengue)

### Rehearsal Tips:

- A common characteristic in Latin music is an emphasis on percussive rhythm (this traces back to Africa). There are many types of traditional ensembles whose instrumentation comprises one melodic instrument with two or more percussion instruments. Thus, it is important that **every** member of your ensemble thinks of themselves as part of the rhythm section.
  - One way to get that point across is to have everyone clap and then play some of the key rhythms for the style (try this using scales).
  - Your soloists should work to use these same rhythms as a basis for improvisation.
  - For Brazilian music, an important part of this is getting them to feel the music in 2 rather than 4.
  - For Cuban music, work to respect the clave even while improvising.
- Whenever possible, try not to “mix” rhythmic, or other, elements. Try to avoid things like
  - Playing a montuno piano pattern in a Brazilian style arrangement
  - Playing the stereo-typical “Latin” bass drum pattern  the kick drum under a Cuban style, especially when the cascara pattern is present (it can fit ok under a boogaloo or cha cha like “Oye Como Va”)
  - Playing a typical Brazilian cross-stick  pattern in a Cuban style.
- Try producing (or having somebody produce) a click track (stem, sequence, beat, or whatever you are used to calling it!) to use as a metronome/feel-keeping aid for student practice. Here are some patterns for Brazilian and Cuban styles:.

## Brazilian



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Some touchstones to consider as you investigate this music:

## **Samba**

- The style known today as samba has its origins in the 1920's
- Afro-Brazilian, working class
- Popular music style, carnival, songs, dancing, parties...
- The same way there are several ways of playing "swing" (front side of the beat, laid back, eighth notes straighten out a bit at higher tempos, etc.) there are many types of samba grooves!

## **Bossa Nova**

- Developed in the 1950's
- Tied to Brazilian economic growth
- White middle and upper-class type of samba
- Influenced by samba, jazz, and impressionist classical music
- João Gilberto
- Tom Jobim

## **Cuban**

- "Salsa" was popularized essentially as a convenient way to refer to, and more easily market various Cuban styles of music.
- SOME of the individual styles often referred to generically as "salsa":
  - Son Cubano (literally "Cuban Sound")
  - Son Montuno
  - Mambo
  - Chachachá
  - Boogaloo
- Though those, and other, styles share common elements, there are distinct differences that affect authenticity.

## **Tips for Digging Deeper**

This clinic focused on samba, bossa, and mambo. We encourage you to use a similar approach when teaching other musical styles, whatever their origin!

- Access the source material for the arrangement you're playing (not just a recording of your arrangement)
- Isolate elements that carry the feeling of the music.
- Have every band member practice the rhythmic concepts.
- Use those concepts to interpret the written arrangement and as a framework for improvisation.
- ASK (yourself and then someone knowledgeable about the style) What country/region is it from? What was the social function of the music (usually dance!)

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- You may think of this as “jazz” but the origins are usually folk and popular music
- Seek method books from the original country

Artists to check out:

## **BRAZILIAN**

Moacir Santos  
Antonio Adolfo  
Nelson Faria  
Hamilton de Holanda  
Chico Pinheiro  
Marco Pereira  
Cesar Camargo Mariano  
Egberto Gismonti  
Hélio Delmiro  
Baden Powell  
Ernesto Nazareth  
Chiquinha Gonzaga

## **CUBAN**

Poncho Sanchez  
Machito  
Célia Cruz  
Willie Colón  
Ruben Blades  
Tito Puente  
Luisito Quintero  
Chucho Valdéz  
Cachao Lopez  
Buena Vista Social Club  
Afro Cuban All Stars  
Spanish Harlem Orchestra

Selected Method Books:

Inside The Brazilian Rhythm Section  
by Nelson Faria

Brazilian Music Workshop by  
Antonio Adolfo

Ritmos Brasileiros para Violão by  
Marco Pereira

Salsa, Afro Cuban Montunos  
for Piano by Carlos Campos

Salsa, Afro Cuban Montunos  
for Guitar by Carlos Campos

The Latin Bass Book by Oscar  
Stagnaro and Chuck Sher

Advanced Coordination for  
Drumset and Hand  
Percussion by Rick Dior

