

Cafecito – El Gato CD Practical 07 – Extended Album Notes

A Spanish translation of these notes is available from the Cafecito website www.cafecito.co.uk

Cafecito (a small shot of coffee in Cuba!) is a charanga band from England led by pianist/composer/arranger Janet Sherbourne

The musicians in Cafecito are: Janet Sherbourne – piano, coro and musical director; Jan Steele – flute; Luke Steele – double bass; Jorge Santo – congas; Dave Pattman – bongos, guiro & coro; Nathaniel Steele – timbales & coro - plus Sonia Slany – violin; Sarah Sew – violin; Tim Hawken – viola; Katie Sharp – 'cello (on Giant Steps)

What Is Charanga?

All terms in Cuban music seem to have more than one meaning – certainly the most confusing one must be “Mambo”, which can be a dance; a tune type; a rhythmic feel and a section of a composition (not just of a mambo). Even the original composition “Mambo” was a danzón!

Charanga is almost as confusing a term – it is most likely to be a type of Cuban musical group; but also it is a style, and can be the name of a band that doesn't play charanga style!

But the essence of charanga is that it is based on the line-up of the charanga francesa (flute, violins and rhythm section) as opposed to that of the orquesta típica (brass instruments, clarinets, violins and percussion), and this is what Cafecito is modelled on.

Charanga bands developed in Cuban music in the early twentieth century playing danzón, the beautiful semi-formal partner dance which evolved into the cha-cha-cha. And since it was charanga bands who invented the cha-cha-cha, it was charanga bands who played it during the hey-day of this dance in the 1950's and early 1960's. It was also musicians in charanga bands who invented the mambo and the pachanga.

Famous charanga ensembles include Arcaño y sus Maravillas, Orquesta América, Orquesta Aragón, Orquesta Almendra, Orquesta Ritmo Oriental, and Estrellas Cubanas. There are dozens more.

1. *El Alacran – The Scorpion* - cha-cha-cha (Parmenio Salazar Justiz)

Lyric: Ten cuidado Maria que te pica el alacran - Be careful Maria - the Scorpion may bite you

2. *El Gato Que Tiene Hambre – The Hungry Cat* - danzón-cha (Janet Sherbourne)

Lyric: ...El gato que tiene hambre...

This is my first Afro-Cuban style composition. The title came to me because my cat, Bela, wandered into the room meowing as I was writing it. I knew she wanted more food! Enrique Pla, the percussionist from Irakere, was visiting and I played him El Gato. in the mambo section he started singing the title along with the track – that's how I decided to have the lyric in the cha-cha-cha section.

3. *Frenesí – Frenzy* – cha-cha-cha (Alberto Dominguez Borrás)

An adaptation of the international hit song – best known in the hit version by Artie Shaw. Jorge L Santo takes a solo on this.

4. *Pasos Gigantes - Giant Steps* - cha-cha-cha (John Coltrane)

A very different take on the jazz classic. I always loved the chords to Giant Steps, but like Mary Lou Williams, I liked to play them slowly to savour their oddness. This arrangement gives this unusual chord sequence a chance to stretch out. It's the only piece on the album featuring a complete string quartet.

5. *La Angoa* - danzón-cha (Félix Reina)

Our flautist Jan Steele transcribed this from the version on the Ethnic Folkways CD FW04066 The Cuban Danzón: Its Ancestors and Descendents performed by Orquesta Antonio Arcaño y sus Maravillas - and we have always played this more or less note for note as the recording, with the original flute and piano solos. It's by the composer and violinist of the Orquesta Arcaño - Felix Reina (1921 - 1998). “La Angoa” was the nickname of a very good danzón dancer who always dressed impeccably. He said that women like men who dress well! Although he was known by everyone as “Angoa” his real name was Ricardo Benedit Varela (7 April 1909 – 3 May 2009). He worked as a civil servant, customs inspector, a postman and was a boxer at one time. Later he became a "Babalawo" (a priest of Ifá in the syncretic Yoruba cult of the Orishas). We weren't able to track down the original string score for this piece, so Jan has reconstructed it for our current line-up of three strings.

6. *La Basura – The Garbage Man* - cha-cha-cha (Jorge Zamora Montalvo)

Lyrics: A esconderse que ahi viene la basura - Let's hide the garbage collector is coming

We're not clear about the real meaning of these lyrics! But it's always one of our most popular tunes on gigs.

7. *L'Otoño – Autumn* – bolero-cha (Janet Sherbourne)

Written especially for this album. It follows the form of the danzón-cha but with a bolero instead of the danzón.

8. *Petite Fleur – Little Flower - Pequeña Flor* - bolero-cha (Sidney Joseph Bechet)

The best known composition by the legendary New Orleans soprano saxophonist and clarinetist – drawing out the Latin side of a tune that is usually played in a straight jazz style.

9. *Negra Triste – Sad Black Woman* – afro (Facundo Rivero)

This arrangement is based on the recording by Xiomara Alfaro with Conjunto de Humberto Suárez

10. *Recado's Theme* - charanga (Luiz Antonio/Djalma Ferreira)

Originally a bossa nova which became established as a jazz standard, best known in versions by Hank Mobley and Gerry Mulligan – but here it's Cubanized!

11. *All The Things You Are - Todas Las Cosas Que Tú Eres* - danzón-mambo (Jerome Kern/Oscar Hammerstein II)

This arrangement of the jazz standard is adapted from the version by Peruchin (Pedro Justíz – 1913 – 1977) the pianist from the Benny More band who helped to fuse American jazz with Cuban music, especially on the descargas on the famed Cuban Jam Session recordings by Cachao.

12. *Tin Tin Deo* – afro-swing (Luciano “Chano” Pozo Gonzales/Walter “Gil” Fuller)

This tune, like it's attributed composer - has always been important in the history of Latin Jazz. Chano Pozo (1915-48) was a Cuban percussionist, dancer, composer and petty criminal & Santeria adherent who emigrated to New York in 1947, where he was killed a year later in a fight over a drug deal. In that short time he performed extensively with Dizzy Gillespie and other famous jazz musicians and his fame in the history of jazz began. Originally titled O Tin-tineo, Tin Tin Deo is supposed to be derived from a Yoruba cult song of the Afro-Cuban Santeria syncretic cult. The bridge is suspiciously American though and the co-composer is usually given as Walter “Gil” Fuller. Probably Chano Pozo wrote the melody of the A-section & Gil Fuller harmonized it and wrote a swing bridge. Many early Latin Jazz tunes have a swing section in them - Manteca does the same thing – and since Gil Fuller and Dizzy Gillespie are both credited as co-composers of this with Pozo we guess that it must have seemed a good idea at the time! – but in our opinion it seems flat to go into swing from an initial Afro-Cuban style, so in this arrangement we translate the swing into an Afro-Cuban 6/8. By the way, an Afro is an adaption of a batá rhythmic style, and it first started to be used in Cuban popular music in the 40's.

13. *La Aciano - (Homenaje a Ignacio Cervantes) – The Cornflower – (Homage to Ignacio Cervantes)* - danza (Janet Sherbourne)

A prelude in danza style for solo piano. My interest in Cuban music started at the age of 16 when my piano teacher gave me her copy of a book of danzas by Ignacio Cervantes – they had also been her favourite pieces as a teenager in the 1920's!

Acknowledgements

Recorded at the Royal Academy of Music, London and at Hinton Instruments by Kirsten Cowie and Cary Grace. Mixed by Cary Grace (www.carygrace.com). The piano is the Yamaha S6 donated to the Royal Academy of Music by Elton John.

Mastered by John Etkin-Bell (www.liftmusic.co.uk)

Scores of the three original compositions by Janet Sherbourne on this CD can be downloaded free from the Cafecito website.

Thank you to Steve Sexty, Steve Westons, Mark Rowson, Zafer Associates, Rapport Events

Translation: Jorge Santo and Daniel Santo

Cafecito logo design: Bob Grindrod. Cat logo design: Mary Phelan.

Cover Design: Luke Steele

Pressed by: Mediaplant.

Cafecito can be contacted through their website www.cafecito.co.uk

;Janet Sherbourne can be contacted through her website www.janetsherbourne.com

All Right Reserved. Unauthorized copying, hiring, lending,
public performances and broadcasting prohibited.