

# SE QUEMA LA CHUMBAMBA

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# Starter Activity

- Using your homework findings, discuss and develop your ideas by adding them to the relevant sheets on the table.
- What new thing have you learnt about one of the features during the starter activity, that you did not have on your original list?

# Learning Objectives

- To be able to analyse the contextual features of Cuban Son and identify them through: listening and score analysis
- To be able to apply your understanding of Non-Western music through analysis and application of appropriate musical terminology

# Context

- Cuba colonised by Spanish in 16<sup>th</sup> Century
- Slave labour – African slaves
- New musical styles emerged from interaction between African and Spanish cultures
- This song recorded in 1994
- Cuban *son* – style to accompany dancing and foundation on Salsa
- This piece is *son montuno* – son developed by farm workers, characterised by call and response style
- Leader (pregon) improvised phrases to which workers (coro) responded with unchanging refrain

# Performing Forces

- African elements of the song include:
  - Syncopated rhythms
  - Call and response
  - Percussion instruments developed from African models
- Spanish elements of the song include:
  - Functional (limited) chords
  - Minor scale patterns used in melody
  - Cuatro and double bass

# Performing Forces

- All-male vocal group, with a leader (pregón) and a chorus (coro). Pregon improvises verses, coro refrains, in two-part homophony remain fixed.
- Vocal setting syllabic, limited range in all of the vocal parts (minor 6th pregón and diminished 7th coro).
- The cuatro (a form of guitar) plays a mixture of solo melodic lines and strummed chords: octave tunings of four pairs of strings produce thicker sound, brightness of the upper octaves ring through the texture.
- Cuatro: short, repeated melodic pattern acts as an introduction, and as an accompaniment to the singing.
- Cuatro solo, later in the piece, more adventurous, much wider range, including slides, chords and single-line melodies.
- Plucked double bass line, small number of notes, all from dominant or tonic chords.
- Percussion section, typical Latin-American style, continuous maracas quavers, improvised bongo patterns, all held together by characteristic 3/2 son claves rhythm on the claves

# Texture

- Mainly homophonic, with all of the instruments supporting the melody at the top.
- The solo vocal part contrasts with a two-part (homophonic) chorus refrain.
- Call and response texture between vocal parts is integral, and to the *son* in general (as well as to *salsa*, which developed from *son*).
- Textural variety supplied by instrumental solo section, involving Bongo improvisations against main cuatro 'riff'.

# Structure

- Call and response structure in vocal refrains
- After the cuatro introduction, there is a regular succession of 8 bar pregón ‘verses’ (which change each time in detail) and 8 bar (mostly) unvaried coro ‘refrains’.
- This pattern is sometimes slightly varied by the pregón singing a virtually unchanged version of the coro refrain, both with regard to lyrics and melody.
- The lengthy cuatro solo (and bongo improvisation within it) provides variety (120 bars!)



# Tonality & Harmony

- Diatonic G minor throughout
- Mainly harmonic minor scale
- Chords I and V7 in G minor repeated in 4 bar pattern throughout: I (Gm) – V7 (D7) – V7 (D7) – I (Gm) – **chordal ostinato**
- Frequent use of E flat over D7 – richer harmony, implies dominant minor 9<sup>th</sup>
- Cuatro solo – wider range of chords by cuatro – sliding parallel progressions, sometimes major subdominant (C major chord)
- Anticipation bass common in modern *son* and *salsa* – bars 7, 9, 11 – last bass note in each bar belongs to chord in next bar

# Melody

- The main ‘riff’ played in the intron by the cuatro = two related phrases, rising and falling thirds.
- Balanced two- and four-bar phrases major feature of vocal sections.
- The vocal refrain ‘Candela es’ is similar each time it occurs, beginning on either the third or fifth of the tonic chord in the first phrase, to land on an unprepared seventh (c) in the second bar. The second phrase begins on the supertonic, then leaps to the dominant before falling to the tonic.
- Most of the ‘improvised’ pregón phrases begin on the upper dominant (D) followed by E flat.
- The melody of cuatro solo is varied:
  - wider melodic range
  - All the notes of the G harmonic minor scale.
  - Chromatic C# is used quite frequently (chromatic inflection onto the dominant).
  - E naturals and F naturals are used, as the player strays a little further from the harmonic minor pattern of the vocal sections.

# Rhythm & Metre

- Strong feeling of two in a bar, heavily syncopated, beat is sometimes ‘disguised’.
- The rhythms mainly fit the *son claves* 3/2 rhythm (see bars 9 and 10 in the rhythm, which is present or implied throughout, is vital to most Latin-American music and is African in origin – *3 notes in first bar, 2 notes in second*)
- Bass line anticipates strong beat in bar 5
- Silence on first down beat of alternate bars in melodic parts
- Elsewhere bass line places root of the chord on the fourth crotchet beat.
- Cuatro solo varies rhythmic divisions of the beat = triplet, quavers and syncopations.
- Bar 11 of cuatro solo in sync with *son clave rhythm*
- Each vocal phrase begins on the second crotchet of the bar, while the fourth uses three ‘straight’ crotchets to anchor the rhythm to the beat briefly.