

## KEY VOCABULARY

### Geography and Culture Vocabulary

**Spain** – One of the largest and most western countries in Western Europe. Starting in 1492, Spanish conquistadores were some of the first European conquerors and explorers in the Americas. Spain colonized the majority of the Americas including parts of the present-day United States and extending to the southern most point of South America.

**Spanish** – The primary language of Spain that is spoken by many people in the Americas as a result of Spanish conquest and exploration. The roots of the Spanish language are primarily in Latin, but Arabic and other languages have enriched Spanish vocabulary. Today, nineteen countries have Spanish as their official language.

**West Africa** – The Western coastal region of Africa from which millions of African people were captured and sold into slavery to work in the plantations of the Americas. The regions and countries from which West African people were brought to Cuba include the following: Nigeria, Congo, Benin, Cameroon, Angola, Liberia, Senegal and Mozambique.

**Congo** – A large Western and Central African region that is centered around the Congo River. The Congo is home to people of many ethnic groups who primarily speak Bantu languages such as Congolese.

**Congolese** - A language from the Bantu language group spoken by many African peoples from the Congo region brought to Cuba as agricultural slave laborers during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Few Cubans speak Congolese today, but Congolese is still heard in traditional folkloric music (Makuta, Yuka, and Rumba Columbia) and religious ceremony (Palo Mayombe).

**Cuba** – The largest island in the Caribbean Sea and former Spanish colony, it is now home to the only Socialist government in the Americas. Cuba was one of the last Spanish colonies to begin large-scale agriculture in the early 1800's. This shift in industry led Cuban landowners to import large numbers of African slaves from West Africa to work in sugar, coffee and tobacco plantations. Cuba is known throughout the world for its wealth of traditional and innovative music and dance.

**Havana City, Havana Province** – Havana is Cuba's largest city and its capital. Havana is the center of Cuban society, commerce, arts, and culture. During Cuba's history, rural people from throughout the island have come to Havana seeking opportunity and bringing their ways of life, music and dances.

**Matanzas, Matanzas Province** – One of Cuba's smaller cities, Matanzas is the home of many of Cuba's finest Afro-Cuban folkloric groups such as Los Munequitos de Matanzas and Afro-Cuba de Matanzas. In the past, Matanzas was a major agricultural port and has become an important center for Afro-Cuban cultural traditions and religions.

**Santiago de Cuba, Oriente Province** – Santiago is Cuba's second largest city, former capital, and is considered the Cultural Capital of the Caribbean. Santiago is known for its Carnival celebrations full of Comparsa parades and Conga music. Santiago is also the birthplace and hometown of Cuban Son music. Like all of Eastern Cuba, Santiago was profoundly enriched by the immigration of French and African Haitians at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Music Vocabulary

**Call-and-response singing** – A style of singing in which a lead singer first calls out songs for other singers to repeat as a response until the lead singer calls a new chorus. Once the chorus is established, the lead singer improvises in the space between each chorus. Call-and-response singing is one of the major West African musical features that is found in most Cuban music.

**Clave** – 1. Two cylindrical pieces of hard wood that are struck against each other to mark the Clave rhythm. 2. Clave is the African-derived two-sided rhythmic key and point of reference for all Cuban music. The Clave consists of a "strong" measure containing three notes (also called the tresillo), and a "weak" measure containing two notes, resulting in patterns beginning with either measure, referred to as "three-two" or "two-three." There are two types of clave patterns associated with popular (secular) music: son clave and rumba clave. Another type of clave, 6/8 clave, originated in several styles of West African sacred music.

**Makuta** - Makuta is the name of a complex of song, music and dance of Bantu origin, that is to say, from the Congo, that is played for popular (secular) gatherings and celebrations. Makuta music is traditionally played on three drums that were initially made from hollowed logs with cowhides nailed or strung on.

**Makuta drums** – Single-headed drums of Congolese origin that were initially made from hollowed logs with cowhides nailed or strung on. Contemporary tumbadoras (conga drums) were originally derived from Makuta drums.

**Caja** – The largest and lowest pitched of the Makuta drums. The caja is played with one stick and one hand. The caja is the drum that improvises most during Makuta ensemble performance.

**Mula** – The second largest and middle pitched Makuta drum. The mula is played using two hands.

**Cachimbo** – The smallest of the Makuta drums. The cachimbo is played using one stick and one hand or two sticks.

**Rumba** – An Afro-Cuban musical form comprised of drumming, call-and-response singing, and dance. There are three forms of Rumba: Yambu, Guaguanco and Columbia.

**Yambu (Rumba de Cajones)**– A form of Rumba traditionally performed on the cajones (wooden box drums) that is sometimes also played on tumbadoras. It is a slow to medium tempo style and is danced by male-female couples but does not include the Vacunao of Guaguanco.

**Guaguanco** – One of the Rumba styles, it is a medium to fast style played on the tumbadoras or cajones along with the clave, palitos, bombo, and shekeres. It is danced traditionally by a male and a female depicting the “pursuit” and “capture” of the female by the male with a thrust called the Vacunao.

**Columbia** – One of the three Rumba styles, it is played in 6/8 time, sung with a combination of Spanish and African lyrics, and traditionally danced only by men in a dance often depicting a challenge to each other. Played with tumbadoras, campana, clave, and sometimes shekeres and bombo.

**Cajones** – Resonant wooden crates of various sizes (originally crates to box and transport codfish) played with both hands that are used to play the early forms of Rumba. They are traditionally the drums played in the Rumba Yambu (Rumba de Cajones).

**Tumbadora**– A single-headed Cuban drum derived from Congolese Makuta drums. Also known as the Conga Drum, it originated as a solid, hollowed log with a strung or nailed-on skin. Eventually, tuneable hardware was added and today, tumbadoras are made out of fiberglass as well as wood.

**Tumba (Salidor)** – The name for the largest and lowest pitched drums used to play Rumba style. This drum is also known as the Salidor (the one who comes out) because it typically begins the playing and calls the other drums to begin playing.

**Segundo (Tres Golpes)** – The name used to describe the second or middle drum in the set of three used in the Rumba styles. The Segundo and the Tumba typically maintain the melody of the Rumba while the Quinto improvises.

**Quinto** – The smallest, highest pitched and lead drum of the three drums used in the Rumba styles. Its role is an improvisational one as it interacts with the singers and the dancers.

**Gua-Gua** – 1. Latin American slang term used for a bus or a van. 2. The term used for the hollowed bamboo piece that is mounted and used to play the Palitos patterns. The Gua-Gua is said to drive the ensemble.

**Palitos** – 1. Pair of sticks traditionally used to play the Gua-Gua (wood block) that accompanies the Rumba styles. 2. The name of the patterns played on the Gua-Gua. In non-traditional settings, the patterns can be played on any wood sounds.

**Clave** – 1. Two cylindrical pieces of hard wood that are struck against each other to mark the Clave rhythm. 2. A two-sided rhythmic pattern that is the musical key and point of reference for Rumba. (see Clave definition above)

**Shekere** – Calabash gourds of various sizes strung with beads. The Cuban shekere produces two main percussive sounds when played: the rhythmic shaking of the net of beads and a tone when the bottom of the gourd is struck with an open hand.

**Carnival (Carnaval)** – The Christian pre-Lent celebration usually lasting from three days to a week celebrated throughout the Americas. These celebrations are typically massive celebrations full of music, dance, and revelry that precede the quiet, contemplative period of Lent (preparation for Easter). Today, Carnival celebrations are held during many different times of the year depending on local customs and traditions.

**Holy Week parades** – European Christian processions and parades held during Holy Week prior to Easter. During these parades, most of the community took to the streets and paraded floats with images of Catholic saints throughout their town or city.

**Día de los reyes (Day of the Kings)** – A festival day in Cuba when the African slaves were allowed to dress in the costume of their ancestors, dance, play drums and sing the music of their African heritage. Groups of African descendants would parade through the streets with members of their ethnic group or Cabildo. These processions are one of the predecessors to the Carnival Comparsas.

**Cabildos** – These mutual aid societies brought together people of African heritage in Cuba since the 17th century. They mixed social, cultural and religious functions. These societies contributed to keeping the African traditions alive. In Cuba, Cabildos are the origin of the Comparsas playing in the streets, similar to the best-known Brazilian samba schools.

**Comparsa** – A group of dancers who are usually connected with a neighborhood, region or city. The Comparsa parades together with the Conga musicians during the carnival using coordinated choreography and costumes.

**Conga** – 1. The musical instrumentation and style that accompanies the Comparsa. The Cuban Conga was originally a carnival dance-march from Santiago de Cuba. Sometimes the style is referred to by regional interpretation – as in Conga Habanera or Conga Santiaguera. 2. The biggest and lowest pitched tumbadora and drum part played in the Conga style.

**Rebajador** – The medium sized and middle-pitched tumbadora and drum part played in the Conga style.

**Salidor** – The smallest and highest pitched of the three basic tumbadora parts in the Conga style.

**Bombo** – The big bass drum used in Rumba, Comparsa, and other folkloric rhythms.

**Campana** - Also known as the cencerro, the campana is a cowbell with the clapper removed. Usually played with a piece of wood, the strong and rustic bell makes several different tones according to the place where it is struck.

**Sartenes** – This makeshift version of African agogo bells is made of two old frying pans fixed to a board by the tails. The board is then suspended around the neck so that the Sartenes can be played while walking to play percussion with a Conga Comparsa. Sticks or large nails are typically used to play a set of Sartenes

**Coroneta China (Coroneta Chino)** - This variant of oboe, with its piercing sound, was brought to Havana by Chinese emigrants. It arrived in Santiago de Cuba in soldiers' packs and later was incorporated in the carnival instruments.