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Cohesion and fracture - trans-Atlantic groove: musical commonalities in Cuban Son and Congolese Rumba

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Trans-Atlantic Beats:

Common ground in Congolese and Cuban dance
music



Dr Sara McGuinness
London College of Music
University of West London
sara.mcguinness@uwl.ac.uk

Kiamfu Kasongo

aka Burkina Faso

aka Mbokalia

Instrumental in development of Congolese popular music

One of the most popular guitarists in DRC



Cuban Son



**‘Returned’ to
Africa**

**Popular dance music of
Cuba**

Cuban Music 'goes back' to Africa

1933 - GV series produced primarily for West African market

Found popularity in the two Congos

In the 50s and 60s Congolese bands required to play Cuban hits as part of their repertoire

Adopted Spanish sounding names

Line -up modelled on Cuban bands with Horn section and percussion

Well nobody understood Spanish. Nevertheless, we took a dictionary and searched for words that would sound good and we used them regardless of their true meaning.

(Franco, Interview with wa Mukuna, 17 March 1983)

Parafifi - Grand Kalle and African Jazz 1957

Congolese music modernises

1970s-90s

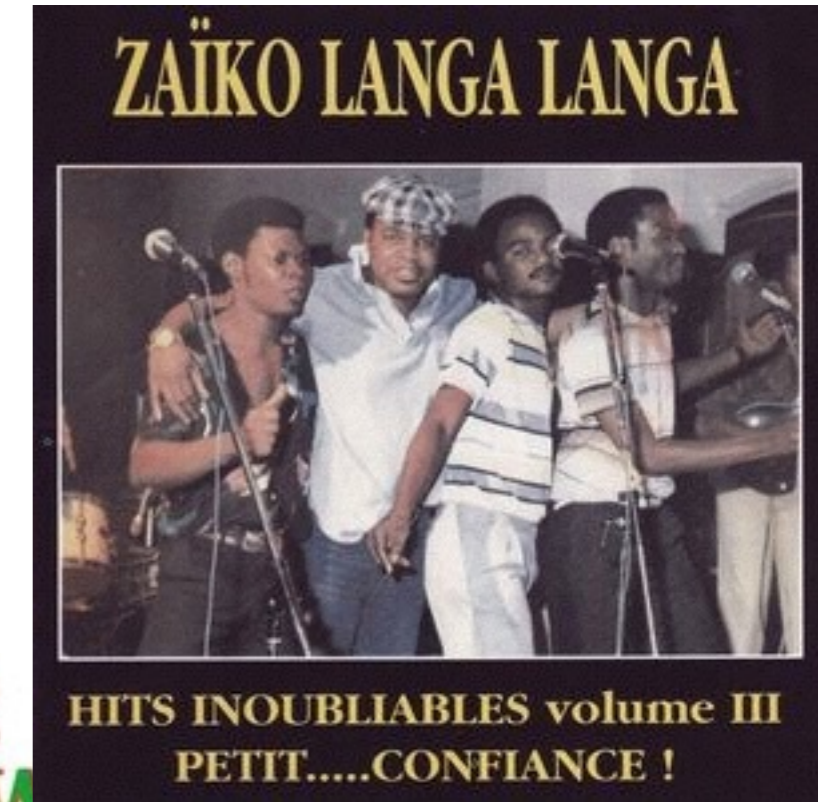
Zaiko Langa Langa

Sandra Lina 1986

4th Generation early 1990s-

Wenge Musica

Koko Madimba 1996



WENGE MUSICA



KIN É BOUGÉ

Rivalries in Congolese music

The School/Village divide

A theme that has run through the history of Congolese popular music

Schooled musicians look down on 'village musicians

While 'village' musicians are proud of their status

Salsa and jazz considered domain of schooled musicians

Burkina Faso firmly situated in the 'village'

Collaboration with artists who are not seated in taught notion of Cuban music

Common Factors in Contemporary Son/Salsa and Congolese Rumba

Structure

Timeline

Musical Organisation and creation of groove

Dynamics



STRUCTURE OF SON

Largo (Verse) Section

Introduction

Verse

Instrumental Interlude

Verse

Link into the Montuno section

Montuno Section

Short repeated chord progression

Call and response vocals with lead improvisation

Change in dynamic, Bongo player changes to Cowbell(Campana)

Instrumental solos

Horn Mambos

STRUCTURE OF RUMBA

Rumba Section

Instrumental Introduction

Verse

Instrumental Interlude

Verse with changed final cadence

Refrain Section

Short repeated chord progression

Harmony chorus' with lead vocal improvisations

Seben

4 Bar repeated major chord progression

Extended instrumental solos

Atalaku - half rapped/half sung vocals

Choreographed dance moves

AUDIO EXAMPLE: Procés Mambika- Wenge Musica 1998

Comparison of Son/Rumba structures

Son



Set length
Narration
Relatively gentle groove

Livelier groove

'Dancing part.'

Groove created by layers of interlocking ostinatos.

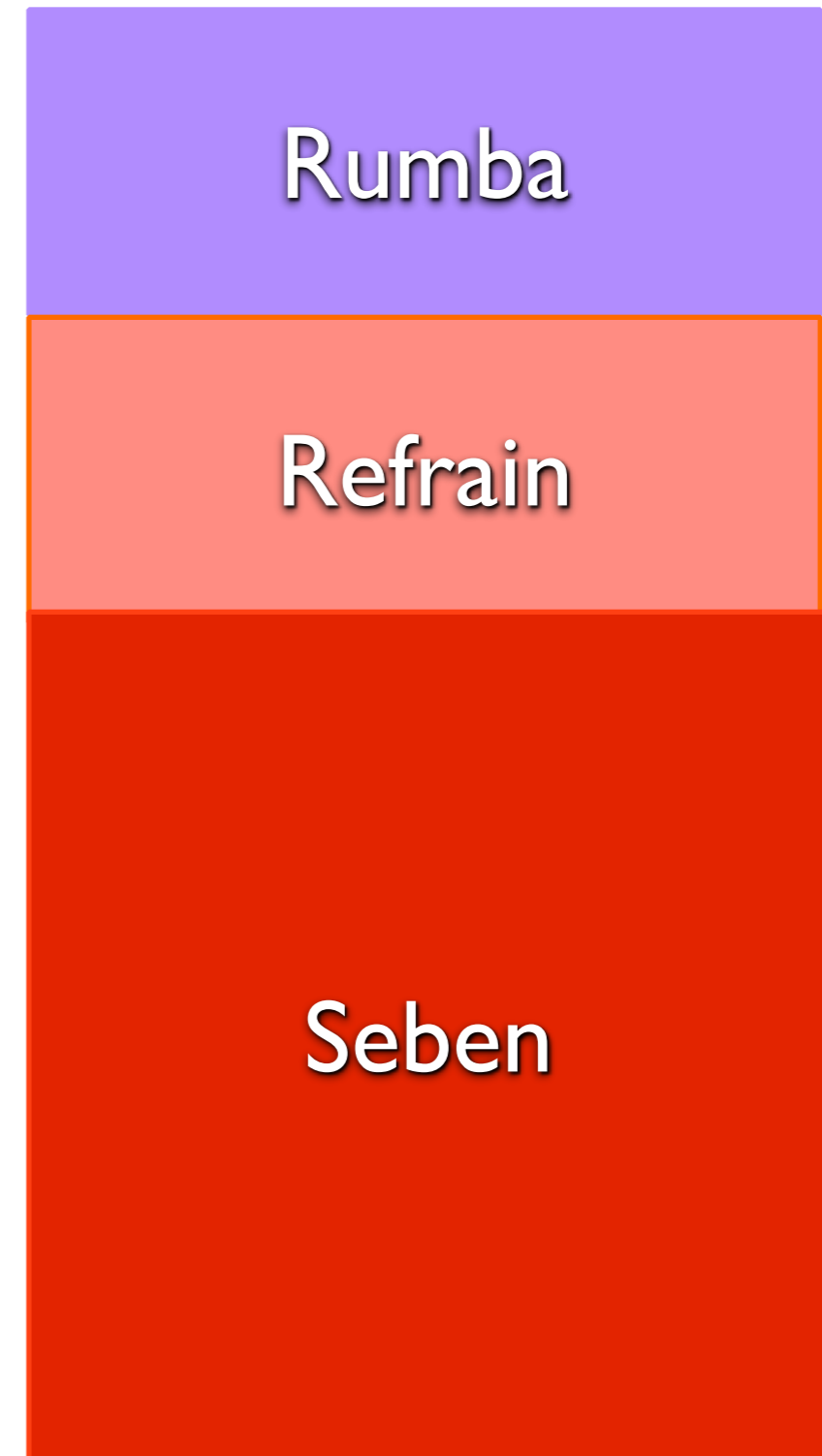
Structure allows for open sections.

Interaction between musicians, dancers and audience.

By far the longest section.

Significantly longer in performance than recorded

Rumba



Rumba

Refrain

Seben

Musical Organisation and Creation of Groove

♩ = 176

Carima y Prende el Fogon

Benigno Echmendis

(extract 3.52-3.57 mins)

Vocals
Ya no-tabuena la-ill - u - sion me voy a co ci - nar con - ti - go

Trumpets

Saxes

Trombone

Piano

Keyboard

Bass

Clave

Guiro

Campana

Timbales

Congas

Heritier Itele

♩ = 118

(extract of seben 5.20-5.25 mins)

Werrason

Atalaku

Le lo - Tape te - e Le lo - du de sert Le fo - lacquã bem he Le fo - du de sert

Lead Guitar

Mi Solo

Rhythm Guitar

Guitar Cocot

Kalimba

Electric Piano

Bass

Clave

Congas

Drumkit

The musical score is written for a 12-piece ensemble. It features a vocal line (Atalaku) with lyrics in French and Fon. The instrumental parts include Lead Guitar, Mi Solo, Rhythm Guitar, Guitar Cocot, Kalimba, Electric Piano, Bass, Clave, Congas, and Drumkit. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 118 beats per minute. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The lyrics are: "Le lo - Tape te - e Le lo - du de sert Le fo - lacquã bem he Le fo - du de sert".

Dynamics

Open and improvised structure

Interaction between musicians and audience

Emphasis on dance

Montuno

Call and response chorus
and lead voice/instrument

Vocal improvisation

Instrumental solos

Horn Mambos/ Breakdowns

Seben

Guitar- lead sections

Interspersed with drum rolls

Call and response - Atalaku, dancers and drummer

Synth Lines/ breakdowns

Conclusion

Significant similarities between Congolese and Cuban music

Two Part Structure

Shared Timeline

Rhythm created through layers of interlocking ostinatos

Open structure allows for interaction with audience

“ I found animation and the two part song structure the most striking thing about Congolese popular dance music”

“-it rarely occurs to them that this special position might be due in part to the music's unique two-part song structure”

White, Bob: Rumba Rules 2008

Obrigada

Dr Sara McGuinness
London College of Music
University of West London
sara.mcguinness@uwl.ac.uk

**COMPARISON OF FOURTH GENERATION CONGOLESE RUMBA
AND CUBAN SON FORMATS**

CONGOLESE RUMBA		SON MONTUNO	
(4th Generation)			
A Instrumental Introduction		A Instrumental Introduction	
B Verse		B Verse	
C Instrumental Interlude	"Solfegge" usually a short lead guitar line	C Instrumental Interlude	Usually a horn line or piano/tres figure
B' Verse with changed final cadence		B' Verse	
D Refrain with call and response vocals		D Link into the Montuno section	Usually a horn line or piano/tres figure
E Seben	Timeline = Cavacha	E Montuno	Timeline = Clave
	Extended lead guitar solos, layered guitar and keyboard parts. Key and chord progression changes and changing guitar lines all separated by rolls, termed "passage" on the drums.		Call and response lead vocal or instrumental and chorus. Typically the first few will be instrumental and then the lead singer will enter. This entry is accompanied by the bongo player changing to play cowbell (Campana).
	Choreographed dance moves in response to cries of the 'Atalaku', punctuated by the drummer.		Extended instrumental solos and horn mambos (repeated interlocking horn lines which build up) often accompanied by percussion breaks.
	Open but highly formalised structure allowing interaction between musicians and audience		Open but highly formalised structure allowing interaction between musicians and audience
	4 bar repeated chord progression. Almost always in the major key, comprising the I, IV and V chords		Short repeated chord progression, may be major or minor, usually on I, IV and V chords.
	Dynamics - created by changes in instrumentation such as shift from guitar to keyboard, lead guitar dropping out, usually in response to atalaku and marked by 'passage' on the drums.		Dynamics - created by instruments dropping out, change in intensity and register played, usually marked by breaks on percussion.
F Coda	Break to end, signalled by Atalaku	F Coda	May be horn figure or return to intro.

Structure

In both musical styles emphasis on the “dancing part” of the music

Son

Congolese Rumba

Montuno

Seben

Both Seben and Montuno sections feature a short repeated chord progression and open and improvised structure