

# An Introduction to Conga Technique

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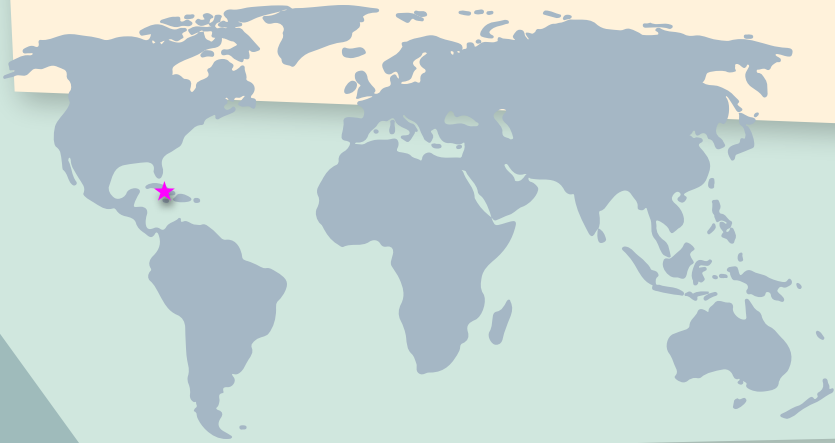
Adjunct Professor of Percussion - Shaw University

Tuesday, November 1, 2022 - 2 pm

Washington State University



# A Brief History of the Conga Drum



- Origin: Cuba, late 19th - early 20th century
- Role of the Transatlantic Slave Trade
- Common Names
  - High: Quinto, Cachimbo, Niño
  - Middle: Conga, Tres Golpes, Tres per Dos, Segundo, Mula
  - Low: Tumba(dora), Salidor, Caja

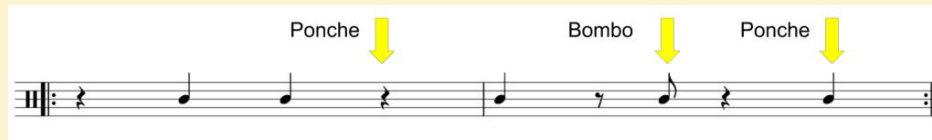
# The Concept of Clave

- 2 sided, back and forth rhythmic pattern
- Origins in West African bell patterns
- Sides/Directions of Clave
- Types of Clave
  - Son Clave
  - Rumba Clave
- Uses in non-Cuban music
  - Bossa Nova Clave?



# The Concept of Clave

- Why is this important?
  - Almost all Afro-Cuban music is oriented within this system.
  - Phrases tend to have 2 sides; tension and release.
- Terms for Parts of the Clave:
  - Bombo
  - Ponche



# The Instrument & Set-Up

- **Angle of the Drum & Body Set-Up**
  - Angle the drum forward
  - Keep wrists straight & engaged
  - The angle of your wrist determines the sounds/tones
- **Seat Height**
  - Adjust height if possible
  - Allow separation between the chest cavity and the elbow

# Important Terms to Know

- **Contact Point:** where the hand makes contact with the head of the drum
- **Bearing Edge:** where the head of the drum comes in contact with the shell of the drum

# The Essential Tones: Open, Muff, Slap, & Bass



## OPEN

Wrists straight

Fingers together

Contact Point: middle  
of the fingers

Move (mostly) from  
the wrist

Rebound

## MUFF

Wrists straight

Fingers together

Contact Point: middle  
of the fingers

Move (mostly) from  
the wrist

NO rebound!

## BASS

T-Rex arms

Contact Point: full flat  
palm

Relax & let go!



## SLAP

Wrists bent

Fingers naturally  
curved

Middle of palm on  
bearing edge

Contact Point: finger  
pads

## Notation Key

O M S B H T  
open muff slap bass heel toe

## Alternating 8's (chapoteo)

O O O O O O O O M M M M M M M M S S S S S S S S B B B B B B B B H H T T H H T T  
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

## Alternating 8's (double stop heel-toe)

O O O O O O O O M M M M M M M M S S S S S S S S B B B B B B B B H T H T H T H T  
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L both hands



# 8 On A Tone

**Staff 1:** 4/4 time signature. Measure 1: 8 eighth notes (O O O O O O O O), R -->. Measure 2: 8 eighth notes (O O O O O O O O), L -->. Measure 3: 8 eighth notes (M M M M M M M M), R -->. Measure 4: 8 eighth notes (M M M M M M M M), L -->. Measure 5: 8 eighth notes (S S S S S S S S), R -->.

**Staff 2:** Measure 6: 8 eighth notes (S S S S S S S S), L -->. Measure 7: 8 eighth notes (B B B B B B B B), R -->. Measure 8: 8 eighth notes (B B B B B B B B), L -->. Measure 9: 8 eighth notes (H T H T H T H T), R -->. Measure 10: 8 eighth notes (H T H T H T H T), L -->.

# Tone Paradiddles

**Staff 1:** 4/4 time signature. Measure 1: 8 eighth notes (O O O O O O O O), R L R R L R L L. Measure 2: 8 eighth notes (M M M M M M M M), R L R R L R L L. Measure 3: 8 eighth notes (S S S S S S S S), R L R R L R L L. Measure 4: 8 eighth notes (B B B B B B B B), R L R R L R L L.

# Tone Paradiddles: Variation 1

0 0 0 0 0-->      0 0 0 0 0-->      M M M M M-->      M M M M M-->

R L R R L R L R L R L R    L R L L R L R L R L L      R L R R L R L R L R L R    L R L L R L R L R L L

5      S S S S S-->      S S S S S-->      B B B B B-->      B B B B B-->

R L R R L R L R L R L R    L R L L R L R L R L L      R L R R L R L R L R L R    L R L L R L R L R L L

## Heel Toe 4's

Musical notation for Heel Toe 4's in 4/4 time. The notation consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The melody is composed of eighth notes, with each pair of notes (Heel and Toe) beamed together. The sequence of notes is: H H T T, H H T T, H H T T, H H T T, H H T T, H H T T, H H T T, H H T T. The rhythm is: R L R L, R L R L, R L R L, R L R L, L R L R, L R L R, L R L R, L R L R.

## Heel Toe 3's

Musical notation for Heel Toe 3's in 12/8 time. The notation consists of a single staff with a treble clef and a 12/8 time signature. The melody is composed of eighth notes, with each pair of notes (Heel and Toe) beamed together. The sequence of notes is: H T T, H T T, H T T, H T T, H T T, H T T, H T T, H T T. The rhythm is: R R L, R R L, R R L, R L R, L L R, L L R, L L R, L R L.

# Extended & Combination Strokes

## *Heel*

Same as the 'bass'  
tone

\*technique shift when  
tempo increases\*

## *Toe*

Palm & fingers move  
down as a unit

\*technique shift  
when tempo  
increases\*

## *Touch Tone*

Quiet stroke that  
only YOU can hear

Used for  
timekeeping

# Essential Styles & Where to Go From Here

- **Musical Styles & Concepts**
  - Clave - both styles & directions (rumba & son, 2-3 & 3-2)
  - 12/8 Bell Patterns - traditional, modern, & variations
  - Salsa
  - Rumba
  - Cha-Cha-Cha
- **Listening to Recordings & Attending Performances** - rhythmic language and vocabulary
- **Historical Context** - instrument, musical styles, rhythms, melodies, cultural context, and more are essential

Questions?



# Thank You!

If you have any additional questions, feel free to email/DM at the links below:

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