

## The Cuban Bolero in Spanish Jazz

Christa Bruckner-Haring

Institute for Jazz Research  
University of Music and Performing Arts Graz  
[c.bruckner-haring@kug.ac.at](mailto:c.bruckner-haring@kug.ac.at)

### Resumo

Desde a sua ascensão no último terço do século XIX, o bolero tem sido uma parte importante e definidora da identidade cultural em Cuba. Além de se ter disseminado pela América Latina, a partir da década de 1940, foi também o primeiro estilo vocal cubano a tornar-se um sucesso internacional, de que são exemplos muito conhecidos ‘Aquello ojos verdes’ e ‘Quizás, quizás, quizás’. A versatilidade do bolero para assimilar elementos de outros géneros musicais facilitou a hibridização musical com o jazz. Em Espanha—onde tem marcado a paisagem sonora desde a década de 1940—o bolero cubano tem sido tocado e interpretado por vários músicos de jazz, misturando elementos tradicionais desse género musical com os do jazz. O objectivo central deste artigo é apresentar as características principais dos boleros escolhidos por músicos de jazz espanhóis, como o pianista de jazz Tete Montoliu e a cantora de uma geração mais jovem, Sílvia Pérez Cruz. Partindo das transcrições da autora deste artigo, foram desenvolvidas análises musicais aprofundadas da estrutura, ritmo, melodia e harmonia, no sentido de revelar elementos musicais inovadores das peças seleccionadas. As técnicas de análise aplicadas têm a sua origem na teoria musical clássica e foram metódica e terminologicamente alargadas para atender aos requisitos do idioma do jazz. Os resultados dessas análises mostram como Montoliu e Cruz combinam elementos do bolero cubano com o jazz, criando assim versões únicas deste género popular e intemporal.

### Palavras-chave

Jazz espanhol; Tradição cubana; Bolero; Análise jazística; Transcrição.

### Abstract

Since its emergence in the late nineteenth century, the bolero has been an important and formative part of Cuban cultural identity. Not only did it spread across Latin America from the 1940s on, it was also the first Cuban vocal style to become internationally successful, with famous examples such as ‘Aquello ojos verdes’ and ‘Quizás, quizás, quizás’. The bolero’s remarkable flexibility has facilitated musical hybridization with many other genres, including jazz. In Spain, for example—where it has been a part of the musical landscape since the 1940s—jazz musicians have grown fond of reinterpreting the Cuban bolero, mixing traditional elements of the song genre with jazz. This paper presents the main characteristics of selected boleros by Spanish jazz musicians, taking as examples the leading jazz pianist Tete Montoliu and a vocalist of the younger generation, Sílvia Pérez Cruz. Thorough analyses of the structure, rhythm, melody, and harmony of the selected pieces are conducted, based on the author’s transcriptions; the analytical techniques stem from classical music theory and are methodically and terminologically augmented to suit the requirements of the jazz idiom. The results of these analyses show how Montoliu and Cruz combine elements of the Cuban bolero with jazz, thus creating unique versions of this popular and timeless genre.

## Keywords

Spanish jazz; Cuban tradition; Bolero; Jazz analysis; Transcription.

## Introduction

SINCE ITS EMERGENCE IN THE LAST THIRD OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, the bolero has been an integral part of Cuban cultural identity. Not only did it spread across Latin America from the 1940s onwards, it was also the first internationally influential and successful Cuban vocal style, with famous examples such as ‘Aquellos ojos verdes’ (Nilo Menéndez and Adolfo Utrera, 1929), ‘Lágrimas negras’ (Miguel Matamoros, 1931), and ‘Quizás, quizás, quizás’ (Osvaldo Farrés, 1947).

The name ‘bolero’ was borrowed from the Spanish dance of the same name, which was imported to Cuba around 1810.<sup>1</sup> However, the Cuban bolero shares no particular musical characteristics with its Spanish namesake.<sup>2</sup> Traditionally performed by *trovadores* (‘troubadours’) who accompanied themselves on the guitar, a central characteristic of the traditional Cuban bolero has always been its lyrical content: With love as the central topic—desire, or the mourning of a lost love—the bolero is usually reflective, sentimental, lyrical and melancholic; *la música por excelencia para romancear* (‘the music *par excellence* for romance’).<sup>3</sup> Since the main focus lay on lyrical content and vocal expression, the performers known as ‘boleristas’ were held in particularly high regard.<sup>4</sup>

The piece ‘Tristezas’, by José ‘Pepe’ Sánchez (1856-1918), a native of Santiago de Cuba, is considered the oldest Cuban bolero. The piece, also known as ‘Me entristeces, mujer’, was composed in 1883 and published two years later.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Spanish bolero developed out of the ‘Seguidilla Manchega’ in La Mancha in the late eighteenth century, and quickly became a popular dance at court, in the theatre, and among the bourgeoisie; it became a widely beloved dance form in the nineteenth century. Since then, however, it has disappeared from the Iberian Peninsula, and can only be found as a part of the traditional music of Mallorca, see Maximilian HENDLER, *Clave del Son: Die Rhythmusformeln in der Musik der Karibik* (Münster, Lit Verlag, 2007), pp. 116-9; Willi KAHN and Israel J. KATZ, ‘Bolero’, in *Grove Music Online* (2001), <<https://doi-org-1000008ya032c.han.kug.ac.at/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.03444>> (subscriber account, accessed at 31 March 2020); and Radamés GIRO, *Diccionario enciclopédico de la música en Cuba* (Havana, Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2007), vol. 1, pp. 141-2.

<sup>2</sup> The primary difference is that the Cuban bolero—in contrast to the Spanish variant—is composed in an even metre.

<sup>3</sup> Joaquín BORGES TRIANA, ‘Ruptura y continuidad del bolero en Cuba: En busca de otros caminos’, in *El bolero en la cultura caribeña y su proyección universal: Memorias del III Congreso Internacional Música Identidad y Cultura en el Caribe*, edited by Darío Tejeda and Rafael Emilio Yunén (Santo Domingo, Instituto de Estudios Caribeños, 2010), p. 182.

<sup>4</sup> Well-known *boleristas* from the 1930s to the 1950s include Rita Montaner, Fernando Collazo, Antonio Machín, Pablo Quevedo and Paulina Álvarez.

<sup>5</sup> Sánchez is considered the *padre de la trova cubana*—the stylistic father of the Cuban *trova* movement in the late nineteenth century—as well as the creator of the bolero. Other well-known *trovadores* who influenced and promoted the bolero in this early period include Sindo Garay, Manuel Corona, Rosendo Ruiz, Alberto Villalón, Emiliano Blez, Patricio Ballegas, Oscar Hernández and Juan Carbonell, see Maya ROY, *Cuban Music*, translated by Denise Asfar and

The bolero is generally structured as a simple two-part song form (AB) and performed in a duple metre (2/4 or 4/4), usually in a moderate tempo and—in contrast to many other popular genres in Cuba—without a specific clave as rhythmic basis. However, rhythmic patterns such as *tresillo* or *cinquillo* may be used in melodies and/or accompaniment. The bolero's rhythmic and structural flexibility, coupled with a melic style that emphasizes the lyrics, facilitates a musical hybridization with other Latin American genres. According to Hendler, the bolero's structure is more variable than most other forms of Cuban music, which led to numerous fusions with other styles: popular hybrid forms include the bolero-son, the bolero-mambo, and the bolero-chá.<sup>6</sup> From the 1920s on, the bolero-son (or son-bolero) fusion—in which the content, vocal performance style, and song form of the bolero were combined with the instrumentation, rhythm, and additional montuno coda of son music—was the most prevalent combination.<sup>7</sup>

The bolero made its way to Mexico in the early twentieth century, where it enjoyed great popularity as a sentimental vocal style in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>8</sup> It also spread to the rest of Latin America, particularly Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic.<sup>9</sup> Quintero Rivera describes the bolero as a central genre of Latin American music, combining song characteristics with Afro-Cuban rhythm and a typically rural guitar accompaniment. The fact that boleros often combine very personal and—usually—sentimental lyrics with danceable rhythms is probably the key to its continuing popularity:

El bolero combinó el protagonismo de la canción [...], el ritmo afrocaribeño (popularizado sobre todo desde Cuba) y el acompañamiento guitarrero de toda la ruralía latinoamericana, logrando niveles de expresión íntima personal en un género a la vez lírico y bailable.<sup>10</sup>

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Gabriel Asfar (Princeton, Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002), pp. 104-5.; and Ned SUBLETTE, *Cuba and Its Music: From the First Drums to the Mambo* (Chicago, Chicago Review Press, 2004), p. 252.

<sup>6</sup> Hendler lists a variety of combinations with other genres: bolero-bachata, bolero-beguine, bolero-blues, bolero-canción, bolero-chá, bolero-cha-chá, bolero-cha-cha-chá, bolero-danzón, bolero-diálogo, bolero-folía, bolero-guaguancó, bolero-guajira, bolero-mambo, bolero-plena, bolero-rumba, bolero-salsa, bolero-son, see HENDLER, *Clave del Son* (see note 1), pp. 119, 122.

<sup>7</sup> Christa BRUCKNER-HARING, *Gonzalo Rubalcaba und die kubanische Musik* (Graz, Adeva, 2015), p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> Alberto Villalón is considered one of the first 'ambassadors' of the bolero in Mexico, see Raúl MARTÍNEZ RODRÍGUEZ, 'Geschichten von Herzblut und Liebeskummer: Der kubanische Bolero', in '*Alles in meinem Dasein ist Musik...*': *Kubanische Musik von Rumba bis Techno*, edited by Torsten Eßer, and Patrick Frölicher (Frankfurt/Main, Vervuert, 2004), p. 232. Another significant figure in this development is the composer and pianist Agustín Lara, who composed 400 works, 60 of which were boleros. For further information on the bolero in México see Pablo DUEÑAS HERRERA, *Bolero: Historia documental del bolero mexicano* (Mexico, Asociación Mexicana de Estudios Fonográficos, 1993<sup>2</sup>).

<sup>9</sup> ROY, *Cuban Music* (see note 5), pp. 104-5.; and SUBLETTE, *Cuba and Its Music* (see note 5), pp. 252-3.

<sup>10</sup> Translation: 'The bolero combined the role of the *canción* [...], the Afro-Caribbean rhythm (popularized mainly from Cuba) and the guitar accompaniment of the rural Latin America, reaching an intimate, personal level of expression in a genre that is simultaneously lyrical and danceable.' Ángel G. QUINTERO RIVERA, *Salsa, sabor y control!: Sociología de la música "tropical"* (Mexico - Spain, Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1999), p. 304.

The international dissemination of the bolero after World War I, via modern media such as recordings (shellac and Victrola records) and radio (e.g., RHC—Cadena Azul, La Habana/Cuba, since 1939; WKAQ, San Juan/Puerto Rico, since 1922) also served to support its popularity.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, publishers in Cuba (such as Anselmo López, J. Giralt & Hijo, V. de Carrera) and North America (e.g., International Music Publication and Peer Compañía S.L.)—with easy versions of boleros for piano and voice, or even simply with lyrics translated into English and chord symbols—had a great impact on the successful international marketing of the genre.<sup>12</sup>

American ensembles (for instance, the Xavier Cugat and Jimmy Dorsey bands) and musicians (particularly Nat King Cole) began including the bolero in their repertoire in the 1940s, and it soon became established in North America as well. Boleros were easily coupled with jazz, which has the same inherent ability to assimilate elements of other musical genres. Modified boleros appeared, with instrumentations and arrangements that were a hybrid of swing stylings and Latin American melody and rhythm; some also featured English lyrics. These proved popular among audiences; some pieces even enjoyed worldwide success, including ‘Quizás, quizás, quizás’ (‘Perhaps, Perhaps, Perhaps’, 1947) by Osvaldo Farrés,<sup>13</sup> ‘Aquellos ojos verdes’ (‘Green Eyes’, 1929), with music by Nilo Menéndez and lyrics by Adolfo Utrera,<sup>14</sup> and ‘Bésame mucho’ (‘Kiss Me Much’, 1941) by Consuelo Velázquez.<sup>15</sup>

The international dissemination of the bolero included—more or less at the same time—Europe. Particularly in Spain, according to García, the bolero has remained a part of the musical landscape since the 1940s, despite fluctuations in its popularity.<sup>16</sup> Tapia Tovar sees the bolero as a part of the cultural identity of Latin America and Spain, cultivated for over 100 years:

El bolero es algo más que música, es una manera de sentir de los pueblos que componen nuestra comunidad hispánica, es una expresión cultural importante de lo que somos y lo que sentimos, es parte de nuestro imaginario colectivo.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> QUINTERO RIVERA, *Salsa, sabor y control!* (see note 10), p. 302.

<sup>12</sup> MARTÍNEZ RODRÍGUEZ, ‘Geschichten von Herzblut und Liebeskummer’ (see note 8), p. 236.

<sup>13</sup> Selected interpretations: Desi Arnaz (1948), Gordon Jenkins and His Orchestra (1949), Bing Crosby (1951), Xavier Cugat and His Orchestra (1953), Nat King Cole (1958).

<sup>14</sup> Selected interpretations: Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra (1941), Gene Krupa and His Orchestra (1941), Xavier Cugat and His Orchestra (1941), Ray Anthony (1953), Nat King Cole (1959).

<sup>15</sup> Selected interpretations: Jimmy Dorsey and His Orchestra (1943), Nat King Cole (1944), Andy Russell (1944), Sydney Bechet and His Trio (1944), Xavier Cugat and His Waldorf-Astoria Orchestra (1948), Artie Shaw and His Gramercy Five (1953).

<sup>16</sup> Authors’s conversation with Jorge García, Valencia, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Translation: ‘The bolero is more than music: it is a way of understanding the people that form our Hispanic community; it is an important cultural expression of what we are and feel; it is part of our collective worldview.’ Evangelina TAPIA TOVAR, ‘Música e identidad latinoamericana: El caso del bolero’ [Conference Paper], *XXVI Congreso de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Sociología* (2007), available at <<https://www.aacademica.org/000-066/967>> (accessed at 6 August 2020), pp. 22-3.

Its popularity in Spain is partially due to the famed Cuban singer and bolerista Antonio Machín (1904-77), who settled in Spain in 1939 after spending several years in the United States and Europe.<sup>18</sup> He recorded numerous boleros, earning him the title ‘el rey del bolero’ (‘king of the bolero’).<sup>19</sup> Since then, musicians working in diverse genres, ranging from classical to pop, have included boleros in their repertoire.

The Cuban bolero has also been performed by various jazz musicians, mixing traditional elements of the song genre with jazz elements. This study focuses on this bolero-jazz fusion, analysing the following boleros as performed by Spanish jazz musicians: ‘Perfidia’, recorded by leading jazz pianist Tete Montoliu in 1973, ‘La gloria eres tú’, a late recording by Montoliu with vocalist Mayte Martín from 1996, and ‘La tarde’, recorded by the young vocalist Sílvia Pérez Cruz with the Javier Colina Trio in 2011.

Taking the music as a primary source, the recordings have been subjected to music-structural analysis, based on the present author’s transcriptions of the selected pieces and the original compositions. The applied analytical techniques stem from classical music theory, and are methodically and terminologically augmented to suit the requirements of the jazz idiom. The primary aim of these analyses is to show how the Spanish musicians have modified elements of the Cuban bolero and combined them with jazz.

### ‘Perfidia’

‘Perfidia’ (‘Perfidy’) was composed by Alberto Domínguez (1911-75) in 1939 and is one of the best-known and most performed boleros. It has been recorded and interpreted by jazz, rock and classical artists such as Xavier Cugat (1940), Glenn Miller (1941), Ahmad Jamal (1951), The Ventures (1960), Charlie Byrd (1995) and José Carreras (2013). The lyrics were also written by Domínguez and concern an ill-fated love affair.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Radamés GIRO, *Diccionario enciclopédico de la música en Cuba* (Havana, Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2007), vol. 3, pp. 49-51.

<sup>19</sup> Selected recordings: *Isabel / A Baracoa me voy* (Shellac Odeón, 1943, C8575); *Mi último canto / De ti me enamoré*, (Shellac Odeón, 1949, 184658); *Lo mejor de Antonio Machín* (CD EMI-Odeón, 1990 rec. 1946-56, IBER-EP-0); *20 éxitos millonarios* (CD Star Music, 1995, Tipyc TED-4501-CD); *50 grande éxitos* (CD Blue Moon, 1995, Alma Latina ALCD-901); *Boleros y canciones* (CD Novoson, 2001, Helix CDNS-780).

<sup>20</sup> ‘Mujer, si puedes tú con Dios hablar, pregúntale si yo alguna vez te he dejado de adorar. Y el mar, espejo de mi corazón, las veces que me ha visto llorar la perfidia de tu amor. Te he buscado donde quiera que yo voy y no te puedo hallar. ¿Para qué quiero otros besos si tus labios no me quieren ya besar? ¡Y tú! ¡Quién sabe por donde andarás, quién sabe qué aventura tendrás, qué lejos estás de mí! Nadie comprende lo que sufro yo, canto, pues ya no puedo sollozar. Solo, temblando de ansiedad estoy, todos me miran y se van’.

Translation: ‘Woman, if you can talk to God, ask him if I ever stopped worshipping you. And the sea, mirror of my heart—all the times that it has seen me cry, the perfidy of your love. I have looked for you wherever I go and I cannot find you. Why should I want other kisses, if your lips don’t want to kiss me anymore? And you! Who knows where you are, who knows what adventure you’ll have, so far from me. Nobody understands what I suffer, I sing because I cannot cry anymore. Alone am I, shivering with anxiety, everyone looks at me and departs.’

The oldest available recording stems from 1939 and was made by the Cuarteto Caney (album *Perfidia*).<sup>21</sup> It was recorded as a bolero-son at 142 beats per minute, with the clave del son as a rhythmic basis from section A onwards; the instrumentation is tres, claves, guitar, bass, an additional trumpet and vocalists. The key is G major; the structure of 'Perfidia' is a three-part ABA song form plus a short introduction, which is also used as interlude and coda. The verse section C (in G minor) is played after the first chorus, and is a *tour de force* for the vocalist, expressing the pain of love with slight deviations in intonation, numerous *portamenti*, rhythmic displacements and a laid-back feeling.

The performance of 'Perfidia' by Tete Montoliu (1933-97) under analysis appears on the album *Temas latinoamericanos* (1973), with Alberto Moraleda (bass), Miguel Ángel Lizandra (drums), and Pedro Díaz (percussion).<sup>22</sup> This version, in the key of D $\flat$  major, starts with a short introduction followed immediately by the C section (in D $\flat$  minor), played *rubato* as a piano solo by Montoliu. The whole ensemble subsequently plays two choruses of the original song form (AABA), ending with a short coda. The tempo of the interpretation, from section A onwards, is 124 beats per minute.

Cuarteto Caney		Montoliu		
Section	Bars	Section	Bars	Special feature
Introduction	4	Introduction	6	piano only, <i>rubato</i>
A	8	C	16	
B	8	A	8	whole ensemble, <i>a tempo</i>
A	8	A	8	
C	16	B	8	
Interlude	4	A	8	
A	8	A	8	
A	8	A	8	
B	8	B	8	
A	8	A	8	2-bar interlude with coda
Coda	5	Coda	4	piano, bass

**Table 1.** Comparison of 'Perfidia' structures by the Cuarteto Caney and Montoliu

The main musical characteristics of Montoliu's version become apparent in section C and the first chorus: from the beginning of section C, played in *rubato* by Montoliu, the original melody of the verse is clearly recognizable. It is played in the upper voice of the right hand, augmented with ornamentations, grace notes and arpeggios (see Example 1).

Harmonically, the basic scheme of the original composition is used (see grey chords in Table 2) but slightly altered according to the jazz idiom: the secondary dominants of the original are omitted,

<sup>21</sup> *Perfidia*, Cuarteto Caney (CD Tumbao, 1939, TCD-038).

<sup>22</sup> *Temas latinoamericanos*, Tete Montoliu (CD Ensayo, 1973, (Sp)ENY-302).

and Montoliu uses jazz chord extensions (such as 9, 11, 13, sometimes altered) and adds harmonies, including additional II-V progressions (bb. 5 and 13), suspended chords (b. 15), tritone substitutions (bb. 2, 7, and 10), chromatic shifts (b. 13) and upper-structure triads (b. 15).

**Example 1.** Section C, bb. 5-8

#### Basic harmonic scheme

<sup>1</sup> Im	<sup>2</sup> Im	<sup>3</sup> IVm	<sup>4</sup> IVm
<sup>5</sup> V <sup>7</sup>	<sup>6</sup> V <sup>7</sup>	<sup>7</sup> Im	<sup>8</sup> Im
<sup>9</sup> I <sup>7</sup> (= V <sup>7</sup> /IVm)	<sup>10</sup> I <sup>7</sup> (= V <sup>7</sup> /IVm)	<sup>11</sup> IVm	<sup>12</sup> IVm
<sup>13</sup> II <sup>7</sup> (= V <sup>7</sup> /V <sup>7</sup> )	<sup>14</sup> II <sup>7</sup> (= V <sup>7</sup> /V <sup>7</sup> )	<sup>15</sup> V <sup>7</sup>	<sup>16</sup> V <sup>7</sup>

#### Harmonies of section C (Montoliu)

<sup>1</sup> Dbm	<sup>2</sup> Ab <sup>7/b13</sup>	G <sup>7</sup>	<sup>3</sup> Gbm <sup>7</sup>	<sup>4</sup>
<sup>5</sup> Ebm <sup>7/b5</sup>	<sup>6</sup> Ab <sup>7/b9</sup>		<sup>7</sup> Dbm    D <sup>7/9</sup>	<sup>8</sup>
<sup>9</sup> Dbm <sup>7</sup>	<sup>10</sup> Ab <sup>7/b13</sup>	G <sup>7</sup>	<sup>11</sup> Gbm <sup>7</sup>	<sup>12</sup>
<sup>13</sup> Em <sup>7</sup>	A <sup>7/#11</sup>		<sup>15</sup> Ab <sup>7/9sus4</sup> Ab <sup>7/b9/13</sup>	<sup>16</sup>
			= Ebm <sup>7</sup> /Ab	= F <sub>Ab</sub> <sup>7</sup>

**Table 2.** Basic harmonic scheme and harmonies of section C (Montoliu), bb. 1-16

Beginning with the first AABA chorus, the most striking element is the change in character (see Example 2): the familiar bolero is then performed as a medium swing piece with ternary eighth notes. The drummer plays a swing rhythm and the bassist plays mostly roots and other chord tones in a rather simple rhythmic pattern. The ‘Perfidia’ melody in the piano is additionally emphasized by its placement in the upper register, beginning in the third octave. From the first chorus on, the harmonic accompaniment consists mainly of typical four-way close voicings in the left hand, often on accented off-beats.

Harmonically speaking, in section A the original I-VIm-IIIm-V<sup>7</sup> progression is used with jazz-influenced alterations until bar six. The following original IV-III-progression (G<sup>b</sup>-F), however, is reharmonized—for instance in the first A section, with Ebm<sup>7/9</sup>-F<sup>7/13</sup>, adding C<sup>7</sup> (plus extensions)

twice as a secondary dominant, then leading with the double dominant and primary dominant back to the tonic in the first bar of the second A section. At this point (bb. 6-8), the density increases, with a harmonic shift from  $G\flat^7-F^7$  (plus extensions 9 and 13) in downward-moving block chords on the off-beats, repeated three times and played at a louder dynamic (see Example 3).

**Example 2.** First A section, bb. 1-4<sup>23</sup>

**Example 3.** Second A section, bb. 5-8

**Example 4.** Section B, bb. 1-4

<sup>23</sup> Abbreviations: p = piano, b = bass.



In addition to these harmonic characteristics, the interpretation features dramatic dynamic effects—for example, the sudden change of volume and delicate articulation at the beginning of section B in the piano, emphasizing the melody. The melodic interpretation also includes additional blue notes, such as the  $b3$  (see Example 4, b. 3), adding a strong jazz flavour.

### ‘La gloria eres tú’

‘La gloria eres tú’ (‘The Glory Is You’) was composed by Cuban José Antonio Méndez (1927-89) in 1946 and is a distinguished example of the *filin*, a bolero variant from the 1940s. The style’s name is derived from the English word ‘feeling’; early *filin* musicians—such as César Portillo de la Luz (1922-2013) and Méndez—placed significant focus on emotion, showcasing personal feelings and emphasizing the sentimental character of the song. ‘*Filin quiere decir sentimiento, pero para nosotros más bien era también algo de la época nuestra, del tiempo que vivíamos*’,<sup>24</sup> explains Méndez. As in a typical bolero, the subject of ‘La gloria eres tú’ (the lyrics are by Méndez) is love—but here, it is portrayed in a less melancholy way.<sup>25</sup>

As in the recording under analysis of ‘La gloria eres tú’ as played by Méndez in 1955,<sup>26</sup> *filin* singer-songwriters often accompany themselves on the guitar. The key of the piece is C major, and the structure is AABA with eight bars per section. Méndez performs the piece in tempo *rubato*; his vocals exhibit fine dynamic nuances, many *portamenti* and a narrow *vibrato*. Influences from jazz harmony, such as chord extensions and shifts, are also audible.

The interpretation of ‘La gloria eres tú’ by Montoliu was recorded with vocalist Mayte Martín (\*1965), Horacio Fumero (bass) and Nan Mercader (percussion); it was released on the album *Free Boleros* in 1996.<sup>27</sup> This version is played in  $Bb$  major and in a rather slow tempo, 62 beats per minute. After the eight-bar solo piano introduction by Montoliu, two choruses with the original AABA structure (still with eight bars per section) are played (see Table 3).

<sup>24</sup> Translation: ‘*Filin* means emotion, but for us it was also something of our age, or the time in which we lived.’ GIRO, *Diccionario enciclopédico de la música* (see note 18), p. 94.

<sup>25</sup> ‘Eres mi bien lo que me tiene extasiado. ¿Por qué negar que estoy de ti enamorado? De tu dulce alma que es toda sentimiento. De esos ojazos negros de un raro fulgor que me dominan e incitan al amor; eres un encanto, eres una flor. Dios dice que la gloria está en el cielo, que es de los mortales el consuelo al morir. Bendito Dios porque al tenerte yo en vida no necesito ir al cielo tisú, si alma mía, la gloria eres tú.’

Translation: ‘You are the good that has me entranced. Why deny that I am in love with you? In love with your sweet soul, which is all feeling. In love with your big black eyes, of a rare brilliance that dominate me and ignite my love; you are a treasure, you are a flower. God says that glory is in heaven, that it is for mortals a consolation for death. Blessed God, with you in my life I do not need to go to heaven because, my soul, the glory is you.’

<sup>26</sup> José Antonio MÉNDEZ, ‘La gloria eres tú’, live recording (1955), available at <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MnPTehgyk0k>> (accessed at 12 June 2012).

<sup>27</sup> *Free Boleros*, Mayte Martín, and Tete Montoliu (CD K-Industria Cultural, 1996, (Sp)007).

<i>Section</i>	<i>Bars</i>	<i>Special feature</i>
Introduction	8	piano only, <i>rubato</i>
A	8	vocalist, band
A	8	
B	8	
A	8	piano solo, band
A	8	
B	8	
A	8	vocalist, band
A	8	

**Table 3.** Structure of ‘La gloria eres tú’ by Montoliu

When Martín sings the lyrics, the accompanying musicians remain in the background, supporting and complementing the vocalist in a restrained manner. Montoliu also plays fill-ins in the vocal breaks, assuming the role of the guitar in a traditional filin.

The piano solo in the second chorus over the first two A sections is representative of Montoliu’s performance: there, as in the rest of the piece, the original harmonic scheme is used, with the repeated addition of the chord extensions 9 and 13. Many diminished chords also appear, often as passing chords. Montoliu’s left-hand voicings describe these harmonies, often in fourths; Fumero’s bass lines support the progressions while maintaining a degree of independence in terms of note choice and rhythm.

The musical score for the piano solo in the first A section (bb. 1-2) is presented in 4/4 time. It consists of three staves. The top two staves form a grand staff, with the right hand playing a melodic line featuring various ornaments and the left hand providing harmonic support. The bottom staff is a separate bass line, primarily consisting of quarter notes. Above the first measure, the chord symbol  $B\flat\text{maj}7/9/13$  is written, and above the second measure,  $E\flat 7/9$  is written. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4.

**Example 5.** Piano solo, first A section, bb. 1-2

Despite the numerous microrhythmic displacements and accented blue notes in the elaborate right-hand lines of the piano solo, fragments of Méndez’s original melody are still recognizable (see Example 5). In the course of his solo, Montoliu plays virtuoso embellishments, arpeggios and swift 32nd-note lines, well-timed over the relatively slow quarter-note pulse; he uses diatonic material as well chromatics and extensions, including the  $\sharp 11$  (see Example 6, b. 6).

In contrast to the fast, wave-like lines in the first A section, the second opens with a rhythmically tranquil passage and a motive with accented seconds, followed by a blue-note motive (see Example 7, bb. 1-2). In bar three, the accented and rhythmically displaced melodic tones A, B $\flat$  and B lead chromatically to the chord Am.

Montoliu uses arpeggios shifting chromatically upwards to lead elegantly back to the vocal B section (see Example 8).

**Example 6.** Piano solo, first A section, bb. 5-6

**Example 7.** Piano solo, second A section, bb. 1-4

**Example 8.** Piano solo, second A section, bb. 7-8

### ‘La tarde’

‘La tarde’ (‘The Afternoon’) is a piece by Sindo Garay (1867-1968), a pupil of José ‘Pepe’ Sánchez and a distinguished composer of numerous popular boleros (e.g., ‘Rendido ya’, ‘Rayos de oro’). The lyrics were also written by Garay and—again—concern the profound pain of love.<sup>28</sup> A lead sheet has been formulated from various recordings of this bolero<sup>29</sup> to convey the basic musical information of the composition.

The basic structure of ‘La tarde’ is a typical two-part AB song form, with each section repeated: section A is in a minor key and consists of 24 bars; section B is written in the major tonic of the same key and consists of 16 bars. The melodic rhythm, as well as the rhythmic basis of some of the interpretations, is based on the *cinquillo cubano* and variations thereof, a common characteristic in Cuban boleros from the late 1920s onwards.<sup>30</sup>

**Example 9.** ‘Perfidia’, section A, bb. 1-2

<sup>28</sup> ‘La luz que en tus ojos arde, si los abres amanece, cuando los cierras parece que va muriendo la tarde. Cuando los cierras parece que va muriendo la tarde. Las penas que me maltratan, son tantas, que se atropellan. Y como de matarme tratan, se agolpan unas a otras y por eso no me matan.’

Translation: ‘The light that glows in your eyes dawns if you open them. When you close them, it seems that the afternoon is dying. When you close them it seems that the afternoon is dying. The pains that hurt me are so many that they overtake each other. They seem as if they would kill me but they crowd one another, that’s why they don’t kill me.’

<sup>29</sup> The different recordings of ‘La tarde’ were taken from: *Canta a dos, tres y cuatro voces: Canciones cubanas*, Borga, Esther Borga (CD Egrem, 1955, 6868076); *Cuba: The Trova*, Trio Yagua (CD, 1998, NI 5565); *La perla marina: Canciones y boleros de Sindo Garay* (CD Bis Music, 2002, CD-060); *Glorias de la canción cubana: Sindo Garay*, Dúo Cabrisas-Farach (LP, N.D., Panart LP-3032).

<sup>30</sup> GIRO, *Diccionario enciclopédico de la música* (see note 1), pp. 141-2.



**Example 10.** ‘Perfidia’, section B, bb. 13-4

The selected performance of ‘La tarde’ was recorded by the young Catalan vocalist Sílvia Pérez Cruz (\*1983) and the Javier Colina Trio for the album *En la imaginación* in 2011.<sup>31</sup> The ensemble consists of Javier Colina (\*1960) on bass and vocals, Albert Sanz (\*1978) on piano and Marc Miralta (\*1966) on drums. In this rather brisk arrangement (half note = 72), the original two-part structure is played in an ABAB sequence; section A is in D minor, the B section in D major (see Table 4).

<i>Section</i>	<i>Bars</i>	<i>Special feature</i>
Introduction	9 (8+1)	band
A	24	vocalists, band
B	16	
A	24	piano solo, band
B	17 (16+1)	vocalists, band

**Table 4.** Structure of ‘La tarde’ by Pérez Cruz and Javier Molina Trio

This version makes only minor modifications to the original melodic and harmonic scheme, such as passing diminished chords and other chromatic movement (see Example 12, b. 7). As usual for a bolero, the vocals are clearly in the foreground, with the accompanying instruments supporting them: the piano provides the harmonic basis, playing restrained, rhythmically and harmonically simple but effective voicings. The bass accompaniment is also uncomplicated, consisting mainly of roots, fifths and other diatonic chord tones. Interestingly, the drummer keeps to a simple rhythmic figure—the *cinquillo cubano*, or variations of it.

The vocalists sing the ‘La tarde’ melody mainly in thirds and sixths; the lead vocals by Pérez Cruz are significantly louder than the second voice sung by Colina (see Example 11). Both vocal parts use elements common to a bolero: *vibrato*, *portamenti*, microrhythmic displacements and—occasionally—slightly varying intonation. A trained singer, Pérez Cruz uses finely nuanced timbres and subtle dynamics in her rhythmically precise vocal lines.

<sup>31</sup> *En la imaginación*, Sílvia Pérez Cruz, and Javier Colina Trio (CD ContraBaix, 2011, (Sp)KAR723).

1

voc *mp* *p* La luz que en tus o-jos ar-de, si

p Dm A<sup>7</sup> Dm F

b

d

**Example 11.** First chorus, section A, bb. 1-4<sup>32</sup>

5

voc *p* tan-tas, que se a-tro-pe llan. Y

p A<sup>7</sup> C<sup>#7</sup> D

b

d

**Example 12.** First chorus, section B, bb. 5-8

Sanz's piano solo (in section A of the second chorus) keeps to the basic harmonic scheme of the original, with rather simple harmonies consisting mainly of triads and four-voiced chords (eschewing extensions such as 9, 11, 13) in the left hand. However, the phrasing—including the basic swing feel, articulation, attack, and rhythmic conception in both hands—is clearly jazz-influenced. Sanz uses numerous off-beat accents and some rhythmic anticipations, but tends to play in a laid back style, even in the first seven bars of the solo, where the melody circles around G and A.

<sup>32</sup> Abbreviations: voc = vocals, p = piano, b = bass, d = drums.

**Example 13.** Piano solo, bb. 1-8

Generally, the melody consists mainly of diatonic material with chromatic passing tones; the accented tones are often chord tones—the third, fifth, seventh and occasionally ninth degrees. The piano solo ends with a I-VIm-IIIm-V turnaround, leading back to D major, the tonic of section B.

**Example 14.** Piano solo, bb. 21-4

## Conclusion

The Cuban bolero was the first Cuban vocal genre to achieve international popular and commercial success. This cosmopolitan, emotional song style seems never to go (completely) out of fashion, as evidenced by modern interpretations by musicians from various genres and re-releases of bolero classics. To this day jazz, in particular, provides fertile ground for hybrid performances.

This study of selected bolero performances shows that the Spanish musicians have hewed close to the original versions of the songs; the structure, melody and harmonic schemes of all three arrangements are based on the original compositions. However, the pieces have been unquestionably transformed with the use of elements of jazz.

Melodic influences borrowed from jazz include phrasing, articulation, rhythmic displacement, off-beat accentuation, melodic variations, ornamentation and blue notes (♭3, ♭7). In the vocal performances, as in traditional boleros, the content is emphasized by the vocalist, using similar techniques—*portamenti*, *vibrato*, variable intonation and dynamic shadings.

Harmonically speaking, the original progressions are often reharmonized using elements borrowed from jazz, including alterations, chord extensions (9, 11, 13), chromatic shifts, tritone substitutions and diminished chords.

The pieces have retained a good deal of their character in the new versions—though some have been altered more than others, such as the swing version of ‘La gloria eres tú’. In ‘La tarde’, however, the musicians make no major changes to the original bolero, opting to simply interpret the lovesick lyrics in their own restrained and introverted manner. The drummer follows suit, confining himself to the original rhythmic figure.

On the whole, these performances represent unique, modern interpretations of a traditional genre, evidence of the timelessness and musical flexibility of the bolero—a genre that has retained its international significance well into the twenty-first century.

**Christa Bruckner-Haring** obtained her PhD in Musicology at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz (KUG), with a specialization in Jazz and Popular Music Research; her dissertation on Gonzalo Rubalcaba’s musical style was published as *Gonzalo Rubalcaba und die kubanische Musik* (Graz, Adeva, 2015). She has worked as a researcher at the KUG Institute for Jazz Research since 2008; in 2009 she was also a visiting scholar at the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey. From 2010-2013 she was the Austrian associate of the HERA-funded research project *Rhythm Changes: Jazz Cultures and European Identities*. In 2016, she was named Deputy Director of the Institute for Jazz Research and became a co-editor of its publication series, *Jazzforschung / Jazz Research*, *Beiträge zur Jazzforschung / Studies in Jazz Research*, and *Jazz Research News*. Bruckner-Haring’s research focuses primarily on musical transcription, jazz and popular music analysis (concentrating on American and Cuban music), and jazz



cultures in Europe. She is internationally active as a lecturer; her work has appeared in such publications as *Jazz Research Journal*, *Beiträge zur Populärmusikforschung*, *The Cultural Politics of Jazz Collectives*, *Anklänge*, *European Journal of Musicology*, and the encyclopedia *MGG*.

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