



Tumbao

Horacio Fernández

Youth Orchestra Performance Module with a
[Teacher Resource Guide](#)

WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

Let's begin by defining our terms:

What comes to mind when you hear the word “contemporary?”

Can our knowledge of music help us to figure out its meaning?

con-tempo-rary we know that **tempo** means “time.”

Webster's Dictionary says it can be an **adjective** meaning “happening, existing, living, or coming into being during the same period of time,” or a **noun** meaning “a person of the same or nearly the same age as another.”

DISCUSSION



What is YOUR definition of a contemporary composer?

Use this space to write your ensemble's definition
of a contemporary composer:

WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

A contemporary composer is someone *living* who is *writing music today*.



Can you name any contemporary composers?

WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**



One great example is **Horacio Fernández**, our featured composer. We'll be learning a piece of his music titled, *Tumbao*.

WHAT IS A **CONTEMPORARY** **COMPOSER?**

Where are some of the places you're likely to encounter the music of a living composer? Let's hear your ideas, then click to see examples!



THE COMPOSER

of TUMBAO is
Horacio Fernández



A composer by day and an [urban music producer](#) by night, Horacio Fernández is a musician who enjoys blending different musical genres and styles in unexpected ways. As a composer, Horacio does this by incorporating the many worlds of Latin-American music into his works for classical ensembles.



What genres of music do you listen to?
What genres of music do you play?

THE COMPOSER of TUMBAO is

Horacio Fernández

Horacio likes to adapt classical music into Latin genres:



[Check out this video of Horacio adapting Grieg into Cumbia!](#)

In our **COMPOSER'S** words:

“When I was younger, I was just a Mexican guy who couldn't dance. Being Mexican, or simply a Latino, not knowing how to dance is among the main capital sins of our people alongside not being able to eat spicy food. I decided to take some salsa lessons, which changed my life and led me to compose pieces such as *Tumbao*.

This symbolizes my discovery and eventual passion for popular music from Latin America.”

THE IDEA behind the composition of TUMBAO

Examining cultural expectations:

All of us come from a blend of cultural traditions, ideas, and customs that make up our **cultural heritage**. Our cultural heritage makes us **special** and **unique**. Embracing one's culture isn't just about traditions, religion, customs, or ethnicity (it could be!), but more about **honoring the stories, values, and identities that shape who we are. We all have cultural heritage.**

Elements of cultural heritage can be really obvious, like a family celebrating a Latin American quinceañera, or dancing at the Hindu festival of Navaratri. But they can be subtle, too, like playing cards every summer with Grandma, camping at the dunes in July, or getting together with the cousins at holiday time. By celebrating our cultural heritage, we not only gain a deeper understanding of ourselves but also contribute to the vibrant tapestry of diversity that makes our world so beautiful.

DISCUSSION



What is something your family does that is unique or special?

What are the identities and values that shape who your family is?

Now, can you summarize elements of your cultural heritage?

THE IDEA

behind the composition of TUMBAO

How do you write Salsa, Bachata, and Reggaetón for Orchestra?

Horacio had an idea to compose a **trilogy** of pieces inspired by the three of the most popular genres of Latin music: **Salsa**, **Bachata**, and **Reggaetón**, where each movement of *Tumbao* would aim to capture the essence of the genre, using common musical motives, rhythms, and instrumentations.

The first movement of *Tumbao* is all about *Salsa!*



THE IDEA

behind the composition of TUMBAO



What is Salsa?

Salsa music, a fusion of Afro-Cuban and Latin influences, is a dynamic genre known for its infectious rhythms and spirited melodies originating from Cuban son, mambo, and cha-cha-cha traditions. Salsa typically features brass instruments like trumpets and trombones, afro-caribbean and hispanic percussion instruments such as congas and timbales, and a rhythm section with piano and bass.

Listen!



THE INSTRUMENTS of SALSA

Click on the icon next to the instrument to hear what they sound like:



Timbales



Cowbell



Congas



Claves



Maracas



Bongos



Here is what it sounds like when you put them all together!



DISCUSSION



Have you seen or heard of any of these instruments before?

What type of music have you heard them in?

THE INSTRUMENTS of SALSA

Salsa is influenced by many cultures and utilizes a whole world of instruments! Here is a video, by our very own composer, exploring *other* instruments you'll hear in salsa music!



DISCUSSION



What kind of emotions or feelings come up when you hear all of these instruments put together?

Turning the **THE IDEA** into **SOUND**

Step into a Latin Music Club:

Imagine the energy, pulsing lights, and infectious beats that make you want to dance. This is what **Horacio** wanted you to feel when you listen to and play **Tumbao**.

Take a moment: Close your eyes and you can almost see the colorful lights, feel the warmth of the crowd, and hear the blend of rhythms filling the air.

Tumbao's three movements are a journey through three distinct styles of Latin Music using the sounds of Latin instruments to reimagine orchestral music. Let's explore how he did it - starting with the **claves**!



Turning the **THE IDEA** into **SOUND**

The heartbeat of Salsa

The clave is the **heartbeat** of salsa music, bringing life and energy to the music. Clave is both a **type of rhythm** and an **instrument** comprised of two wooden sticks that are clapped together. This essential rhythm, a guiding pattern, keeps musicians and dancers in sync.

The word "clave" means "key" in Spanish - it unlocks the groove of the music!



Can you think of another rhythmic pattern or instrument that serves as the foundation in different genres or cultures?

Turning the **THE IDEA** into **SOUND**

The clave beat in TUMBAO:

This is the clave rhythm from Horacio's piece *Tumbao*. See if you can clap it out!

Clave 2:3 ♩ = **100**

Claves

Click to hear!



This is the rhythm that begins *Tumbao*, why do you think Horacio wanted to begin with a clave rhythm?

Turning the **THE IDEA** into **SOUND**



There are many variations on clave rhythms. The one we've just learned to clap (and will play in Tumbao!) is called the son clave. Let's learn the basic salsa dance step that goes with this rhythm. Look below to see how that would be notated in a 4/4 bar!



Why do you think this rhythm is referred to as 2 - 3?

Turning the **THE SOUND** into **MUSIC**

Embodying CLAVE!

This next exercise will help you feel the essential, guiding rhythmic pattern-clave.

1. Without your instruments, stand up, with your feet a little less than shoulder-width apart.
2. All together on the beat in 4/4, step left (on 1), then bring your right foot together with your left.
3. Step right (on 3), then bring your left foot together with your right. Loop 2&3.
4. While stepping, clap your 2-3 son clave pattern, placing it after you step on 1. The 2 will come with your LR, and the 3 with your RL.
5. Try putting clave on on another part of your body, like snapping or patting your chest, to produce different sounds.

If you can step LRRL and perform clave at the same time, you've come a long way toward understanding a KEY element of Latin music, and of the feel of rhythmic drive in Tumbao!

ACTIVITY

Let's see if YOU can find the clave rhythm!

Below are 3 clips of 3 very different Salsa songs. Listen to each clip and see if you can bring back that step left, step together, step right, step together motion. Once that feels comfortable, clap out the clave rhythm!

#1



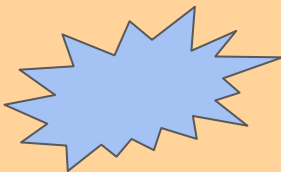
#2



#3



ACTIVITY



Keeping the spirit of **salsa**, take the **clave rhythm** that begins Horacio's piece and see if you can play it on your instrument. Choose a note that is easy for you, and play around with it!

What does it sound like to keep it staccato versus legato? How does it feel to play some notes louder than others? Is it easier to play in on one part of the bow than another? Why?

Once you feel comfortable pick a scale that your ensemble uses to warm-up. Practice one round of that clave rhythm on each note of the scale.

Do you know of any songs with this rhythm?

Turning the **THE SOUND** into **MUSIC**

Adapting to the groove:

As you can see from Horacio's explanation, Salsa is defined by the instruments that it uses. Salsa uses many instruments, but the most important ones are:

Claves	Guiro	Congas	Timbales	Maracas	Cowbell
Bongos	Tumbao	Bass	Piano	Trumpet	Trombone

Horacio had an **idea** - what if a salsa was played by an orchestra? What are the typical instruments in an orchestra?

STRINGS	BRASS	WOODWIND	PERCUSSION	AUXILIARY
Violin I Violin II Viola Cello Double Bass	Horns Trumpet Trombone Bass Trombone Tuba	Piccolo Flute Oboe English Horn Clarinet Bass Clarinet Bassoon Contrabassoon	Pitched Unpitched	Harp Piano

How did **HORACIO** do it?

Look at the performance of the first minute and a half of *Tumbao*. Notice that all the instruments playing together support the Salsa groove. Nothing feels out of place, and every melodic line serves an important role!



Can you hear the clave rhythm
and clap it out?

ACTIVITY

YOU CAN SALSA TOO! [Use this video to learn the basic steps of salsa from Ricardo Loaiza and Elba Garcia.](#)

Let's dance the basic steps to one of the songs from the previous page, then [watch an expert salsa performance!](#)

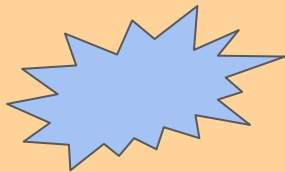
LET'S PLAY

Making the piece dance – an extension for orchestral students:

In this activity, we will try to ***make the music dance*** by moving our own feet to the music ***while we play***.

- 1) Turn to **rehearsal letter L** and focus on measures 267-270.
- 2) Break into groups based on your instrument and see if you can identify which part of the salsa rhythm your instrument plays. Is it **melodic** or **rhythmic**? **Which of the traditional salsa instruments is your line trying to emulate, or is your instrument already part of traditional salsa instrumentation?**
- 3) Take a few minutes to independently play through your line in mm 267-270. **Memorize it as best you can.**
- 4) Once everyone feels memorized and comfortable, play through mm 267-270 **all together**. Remember, if you mess something up, make sure that you keep the groove going and come back in when you remember!
- 5) Once you can comfortably play the 4 bars without looking at the score, stand up and see if you can move your body while playing the section in a **continuous loop**. Start with something easy, like moving your hips or tapping your feet?

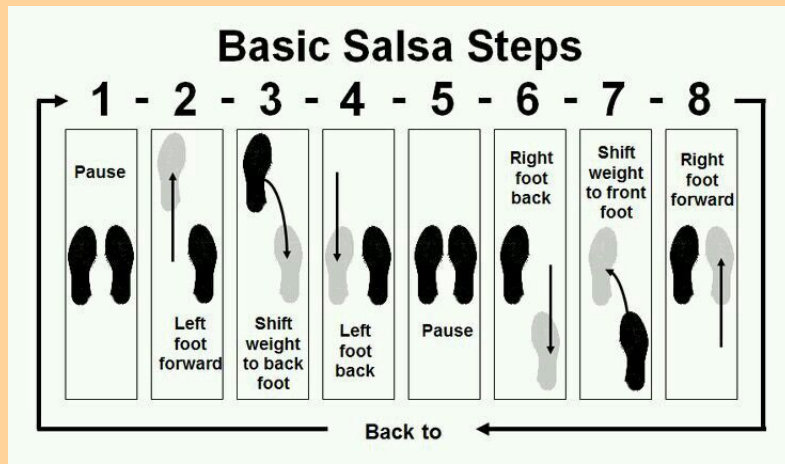
LET'S PLAY



Continued:

6) Can you add the salsa steps in while you play? Start small at first and then build up your confidence from there! It's okay if it gets messy; Salsa doesn't have to be perfect!

7) As you get more comfortable - see if you can **dance around the room** using the basic salsa step groove. Have fun with it: **get into the groove** of your own line, listen to the lines of other instruments, **have a dance off** with your friends!



DISCUSSION



How is movement connected to playing?

What changed about your playing when you *felt* and *moved* to the salsa rhythm?

How will this impact how you play the piece at a concert?

How will this impact how the audience experiences the piece at a concert?

GOING FURTHER

Going back to the trilogy:

Horacio conceived of *Tumbao* being a trio of three movements that represent three popular Latin music styles. You should now be able to play, and dance to a basic Salsa groove, but there are two more genres and dance styles that are explored in **Tumbao**. If you had fun dancing to the Salsa movement, then try out the other two!



GOING FURTHER

Bachata:



Bachata is a music genre and dance from the Dominican Republic, known for its emotional lyrics about love and heartbreak. It combines Latin American melodies with African rhythms, featuring instruments like the guitar and bongos. Bachata has evolved over time, blending with other genres, but it remains a vibrant and expressive style that connects deeply with listeners and dancers.

[Check out this intro video to the basic bachata steps](#)

Suggested 4 bar loop:

Mm 57-60

Suggested extension:

Mm 37-92

See if you can pair the bachata steps with the 4 bar groove!

:



GOING FURTHER

Reggaeton:



Reggaeton is a music genre that originated in Puerto Rico, blending Latin rhythms with hip-hop and reggae influences. It features catchy beats, often driven by a rhythm called "dembow," and lyrics that frequently focus on partying, love, and life in the city. Reggaeton has become a global phenomenon, known for its energetic sound and danceable tracks, making it a favorite in clubs and on radio stations around the world.

Suggested 4 bar loop:

Mm 17-20

Suggested extension:

Mm 1-36

See if you and your ensemble can play these bars and come up with your own dance for Reggaeton!

Thank you for taking this musical
journey with Horacio Fernández and
Tumbao!

There's even more to explore in the
resource section below!



ADDITIONAL VOCABULARY

Tresillo: A 3 note rhythmic pattern that is fundamental in Afro-Cuban music, often heard in the clave

Martillo: A basic conga rhythm typically used to support the clave rhythm, often played on the quinto

Guajeo: A repeated, syncopated melodic or rhythmic phrase, often played by the piano

Cáscara: A pattern played on the shell of the timbales or on the side of the congas and often complements the clave

Campana: The cowbell rhythm played by the timbalero or other percussionists during the mambo or montuno sections of a song. It's an integral part of the overall rhythm

Bombo: A note that falls on the "and" of 2 and 4, giving a distinct push

Montuno: A repeated, syncopated piano or guitar pattern that often locks in with the bass. It can also refer to a song section that features a call-and-response format between vocalists or instrumentalists

Mambo: A lively and syncopated section in a song, characterized by strong brass interjections

Marcación: The basic beat or marking that a player uses to establish a groove

Desplazamiento (Displacement): Shifting the rhythmic emphasis to create different feels while maintaining the clave integrity

LATIN

GENRES
What is Genres, a category or classification of artistic work, such as music, literature, film, or visual arts, that is defined by its distinctive style, form, or content.

What are some other Genres within Latin music & Dance?

Music Genres

Salsa
Bachata
Reggaeton
Son

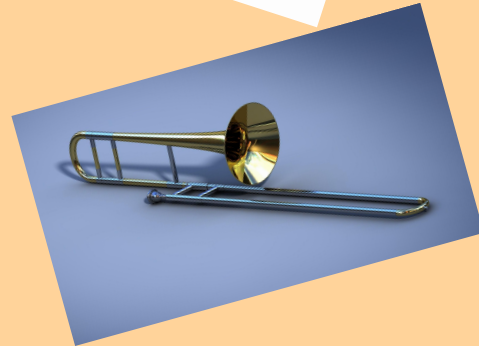
Dance Genres

Cha-cha-cha
Bachata



NON-PERCUSSIVE SALSA INSTRUMENTS

1. [Vocals](#) (salsa singers are typically called soneros)
2. [Piano](#)
3. [Guitar or tres](#) (a Cuban musical instrument similar to guitar)
4. [Trumpet](#)
5. [Trombone](#)
6. [Saxophone](#)
7. [Double bass](#)



WHY ARE THE CLAVES SO IMPORTANT?

In this clip, you can learn about the African roots of the claves from master percussionist John Santos



HISTORY OF LATIN

The Roots of Salsa and The History of Latin Music

Latin music is a fusion of Indigenous, African, and European influences. Salsa emerged in the 1960s and 70s in New York City, and has since become a global phenomenon celebrated for its cultural richness and rhythmic vitality.

Watch this documentary to learn more about Salsa and other Latin music genres!



Tumbao Rhythm

The tumbao rhythm is one of the most fundamental rhythms to be played on the conga and can be traced back to the 1940s

Watch this video to learn more about the tumbao rhythm!



EVOLUTION OF SALSA DANCE

Learn more about how Salsa Dancing has changed over the years and it's Afro-Caribbean origins



ICONIC SALSA SINGERS & SONGS

Hector
Lavoe



Fruko y
sus
Tesos



Grupo Niche



Joe
Arroyo



Sonora
Carruse
les



Celia
Cruz



POPULAR CONTEMPORARY SALSA & FUSION

Marc Anthony



La 33



Gilberto Santa Rosa



CHA-CHA-CHA

Orquesta Aragón



4 Basic Moves of
Cha-Cha Dance



Santana



FUSION OF SALSA WITH REGGAETON

Gente de Zona ft. Marc Anthony



Camila Cabello ft. Ed Sheeran



WHAT IS REGGAETÓN?



REGGAETÓN

Reggaetón originated in Puerto Rico in the late 1990s, blending influences from reggae, hip-hop, salsa, and dancehall. Learn more about how Reggaetón has changed over the years below!

Check out this Video on how to dance to Reggaetón music and compare its similarities to dancing Salsa or Bachata .



ICONIC REGGAETÓN SONGS

Abusadora
– Wisin &
Yandel



La Consolina
– Daddy
Yankee



Pobre Diabla
– Don Omar



Danza Kuduro –
Don Omar



Dile –
Don
Omar



POPULAR CONTEMPORARY REGGAETÓN SONGS

Yo Perreo
Sola - Bad
Bunny



Bailando - Enrique
Iglesias ft. Descemer
Bueno, Gente De Zona



El Chantaje -
Shakira Ft.
Maluma



La curiosidad -
Jay Wheeler ft.
Myke Towers



BACHATA

What is Bachata?

a Latin music genre and social dance that originated in the Dominican Republic. Along with Merengue, Bachata is one of the most cherished and prominent genres originating from the Dominican Republic.

Bachata as a music is known for its instrumentation, sensual and slow beats, and its romantic lyrics. Bachata as a dance is similar to the music in that it is relatively slow and sensual. While the dance is meant to be performed in pairs, it can also be performed solo.

Watch this video to learn more about Bachata!



POPULAR BACHATA SONGS

Te Soñé



Darte Un
Beso



Dejavú



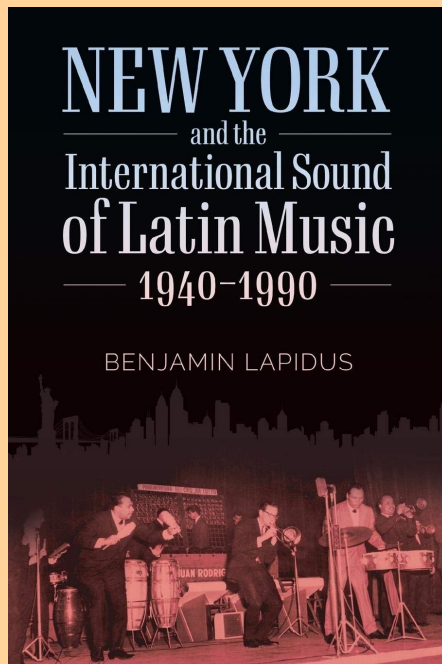
Bachata
en
Fukuoka



NEW YORK & THE INTERNATIONAL SOUND OF LATIN MUSIC

New York and the International Sound of Latin Music, 1940-1990" by Héctor García provides an in-depth exploration of how New York City became a pivotal hub for Latin music during the second half of the 20th century

The book is a significant contribution to the understanding of Latin music's history, showcasing its complexities and its lasting influence on American music culture.



CREDITS

This educational module is produced by the American Composers Orchestra on behalf of and in coordination with EarShot Publishing.

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Thank you to Horacio Fernández for composing *Tumbao* and for creating a work that draws on a rich history to inspire and connect both students and educators alike.

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