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A la cubana: Enrique Granados's Cuban Connection

RICARDO DE LA TORRE

Abstract

Cuba exerted a particular fascination on several generations of Spanish composers. Enrique Granados, himself of Cuban ancestry, was no exception. Even though he never set foot on the island—unlike his friend Isaac Albéniz—his acquaintance with the music of Cuba became manifest in the piano piece *A la cubana*, his only work with overt references to that country.

This article proposes an examination of *A la cubana* that accounts for the textural and harmonic characteristics of the second part of the piece as a vehicle for Granados to pay homage to the piano *danzas* of Cuban composer Ignacio Cervantes. Also discussed are similarities between *A la cubana* and one of Albéniz's own piano pieces of Caribbean inspiration as well as the context in which the music of then colonial Cuba interacted with that of Spain during Granados's youth, paying special attention to the relationship between Havana and Catalonia.

Keywords: Granados, Ignacio Cervantes, Havana, Catalonia, Isaac Albéniz, Cuban-Spanish musical relations

Resumen

Varias generaciones de compositores españoles sintieron una fascinación particular por Cuba. Enrique Granados, de ascendencia cubana, no fue la excepción. Aunque —a diferencia de su amigo Isaac Albéniz— Granados nunca visitó la isla, su conocimiento de la música cubana quedó plasmado en la pieza para piano *A la cubana*, la única obra en la que hizo referencias explícitas a ese país.

Este artículo propone un análisis que explica la textura y características armónicas de la segunda parte de *A la cubana* como un homenaje a las danzas para piano del compositor cubano Ignacio Cervantes. Se examinan también las similitudes entre *A la cubana* y una de las obras de inspiración caribeña de Albéniz, así como el contexto en el que la música de la entonces Cuba colonial interactuó con la de la metrópoli durante la juventud de Granados, haciendo énfasis en la relación entre La Habana y Cataluña.

Palabras clave: Granados, Ignacio Cervantes, La Habana, Cataluña, Isaac Albéniz, Relaciones musicales entre Cuba y España.

On October 28, 1492, Christopher Columbus landed on a Caribbean island, which he thought was part of mainland Asia, and claimed it for the Crown of Castile and Aragon. The first government in this territory was established in 1511 by Diego de Velázquez and the island—Cuba—remained under Spanish rule for some 400 years until the Spanish-American War of 1898. The port city of Havana served as a major stop for fleets returning to Spain from the continental colonies and became the most important strategic point in the Spanish Caribbean and a central node of commerce between the Iberian Peninsula and the colonies. For centuries, printed music and musical

artifacts were part of this trade. During the nineteenth century, Spanish zarzuela companies performed regularly in Havana, where the genre was widely successful.¹

As ethnomusicologist Peter Manuel has noted, “[i]n the intricate world of circular musical exchanges between Old and New Worlds, those between Cuba and Spain have particular historical depth and richness.”² During the centuries of Spanish rule in the Americas, the continual trade of musical materials between the Iberian Peninsula and the colonies eventually led to the development of specific genres or forms, many of which—Spanish musicologists call them *cantes de ida y vuelta*—became fundamental elements of flamenco music.³

With its strategic location and relevance as a commerce and transit center, Havana was an important catalyzer in the development of these forms. Exchanges in the realm of popular music between Spain and Cuba continued throughout the twentieth century and are still visible today.⁴

The piano repertoire contains numerous examples of the fascination that generations of Spanish composers felt for Cuba and its music. In his *Suite española*, op. 47, from 1886, Isaac Albéniz situated Cuba in the company of Granada, Catalonia and Seville. This is hardly a surprise, since Cuba was part of Spain at the time—an insular Spain like the Balearic or Canary Islands, if slightly more exotic, but Spain after all. Interestingly, Cuba continued to have a sort of irresistible appeal to Spanish musicians even well after its independence. Manuel de Falla, who had a lifelong interest in Cuban music, included a *Cubana* in his set of *Cuatro piezas españolas* (1906-1908),⁵ and his pupil Ernesto Halffter wrote a couple of Cuban-inspired piano pieces in the 1940s. Significant examples can also be found in the work of Xavier Montsalvatge, for whom elements of Antillean music became an integral part of his compositional style, particularly in the 1940s and early fifties.⁶

¹ Zarzuela was a major vehicle for the popularization of genres of New World origin (including habaneras) in the Peninsula.

² Peter Manuel, “The ‘Guajira’ between Cuba and Spain: A Study in Continuity and Change,” *Latin American Music Review/Revista de Música Latinoamericana* 25, no. 2 (Fall–Winter 2004): 137, DOI: 10.1353/lat.2004.0016

³ This term could be translated as two-way or “round-trip” song forms. Some flamenco examples include the guajira and the rumba.

⁴ Cuban researcher Emilio Cueto has found more than one thousand pieces by Spanish composers of art and popular music that refer to the island over the span of four centuries. None of Spain’s other former colonies appealed so much to her musicians. Emilio Cueto, “Los españoles le cantan a Cuba,” in *Madrid Habanece: Cuba y España en el punto de mira trasatlántico*, ed. Ángel Esteban (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2011), 142.

⁵ Having grown up in the Andalusian port of Cádiz—a veritable sister city to Havana—Falla was exposed to Cuban music from an early age. The Spanish composer was fascinated by the island and planned to travel there in the late 1920s in response to an invitation from a former pupil, María Muñoz de Quevedo, who was living in Havana at the time (letter from Manuel de Falla to María Muñoz de Quevedo. July 8, 1927. Archivo Manuel de Falla, 7315-030). Muñoz de Quevedo played an important role in the musical life of the city, particularly in the realm of choral music. The trip never took place due to Falla’s ailing health, however he recommended Ernesto Halffter to take his place. Halffter visited Havana in 1932.

⁶ *Habanera* and *Pregón* by Halffter date from 1945. The second of Montsalvatge’s *Tres divertimentos* is a delightful habanera. The beginning of the third movement of his *Sonatine pour Ivette* also exhibits rhythmic impetus of Caribbean origin.

Often these works offered an idealized view of Cuba as a sort of distant, tropical paradise, culturally close yet vaguely exotic. The Habanera rhythm—that most universal rhythmic pattern found in a variety of musics from around the world that became synonymous with Spanish music for foreign composers—was inevitably used to evoke “a land of tropical breezes, languid afternoons in the hammock and sensual *mulatas*.”⁷

Of course, this was not always the case, as not all music depicting Cuba is languid nor sensuous in nature; rhythmic vitality is an important element, too. In the realm of rhythm, Spanish composers of the period eschew the contributions of African origin to Cuban music in favor of elements of Hispanic origin. Particularly important was the music practiced in the Cuban countryside by *guajiros*, white Cuban peasants of predominantly of Spanish descent. A characteristic element of *guajiro* music—one that is shared with music from other parts of Latin America and the Canary Islands—is the use of sesquialtera or the alternation and/or superimposition of 3/4 and 6/8 meters. Two clear examples of the use of this device in piano music by Spanish composers of this period can be found in Albéniz’ *Rapsodia cubana* and Falla’s *Cubana* from his *Cuatro piezas españolas*.

After 1898, a layer of nostalgia for the lost territory was added to the idealized vision of Cuba. Literature was no stranger to that trend: Rafael Alberti’s poem *Cuba dentro de un piano* is probably the best-known example. Written in 1935, it was later famously set to music by Xavier Montsalvatge as the first of his *Cinco canciones negras*.⁸

Granados’s Cuban ancestry

Born in Lleida, central Catalonia, in 1867, Enrique Granados was Catalan by birth only, not by heritage. His father, Calixto, an officer of the Spanish army, was born in Havana in 1824, as were both his own parents and grandparents. Enrique’s mother, Enriqueta, was a native of Santander with some Mexican ancestry on her father’s side. Her family settled in Havana, where she met and married Calixto. When the Granados family left Cuba for Spain, Enriqueta was pregnant with Enrique and had already given birth to at least one of her children in the island.⁹

While Granados never visited Cuba, he had an early insular experience that may well have influenced his development in a significant way. In 1870, when he was three years old, the Granados family left Lleida for the port of Santa Cruz in Tenerife, one of the Canary Islands, where his father

⁷ Peter Manuel, ed., *Creolizing the Contradance in the Caribbean* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009), 103.

⁸ Alberti, like Falla, was born in Cádiz. During his childhood, he heard Cuban music from his mother’s piano and later developed a close association with Cuba throughout his long life. Translated as “Cuba inside a Piano”, he explained this poem was made by juxtaposing verses from existing Habanera songs. The result captures the nostalgia over the lost colony while criticizing the intervention of the United States in the island’s affairs. Rafael Alberti, “Cuba dentro de un piano,” *El País*, September 21, 1992, URL: <http://www.elpais.com/articulo/opinion/ALBERTI/_RAFAEL/Cuba/dentro/piano/elpepiopi/19920921elpepiopi_11/Tes> (accessed Sept. 10, 2016).

⁹ Not much is known about Granados’s siblings, however, his older brother Calixto—who also served in the military—was born in Havana. For more information on the *Granados*’s family tree, see Walter Aaron Clark, *Enrique Granados: Poet of the Piano* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 185-186.

served as commander for the army for less than two years. As the composer would years later recall, the warm climate, bustling life in the harbor, the sea and the surrounding nature left a strong impression on him.¹⁰ Having shown signs of talent at an early age, the music the young Granados heard and experienced in Tenerife must have had an impact on him.

This would seem like an irrelevant piece of information were it not for the strong ties between the Canaries and Cuba. Tobacco was first introduced in Cuba in the seventeenth century and immigrants from the Canary Islands started to work at the new plantations. By the end of the following century, they had become the principal workforce at Cuban tobacco plantations. Massive immigration waves from the Canaries to Cuba and Puerto Rico occurred during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Most of the incomers were peasants or farmers who established themselves in the Western and Central parts of Cuba.

As previously mentioned, *guajiro* music was primarily practiced in rural settings. At the center of the *guajiro* musical practice lies the genre known as *punto cubano*. The *punto* is usually sung to a *décima*, a ten line verse form popular throughout Latin America and a descendant of Spanish narrative songs from the medieval romance tradition. Although not as commonly found as in Latin American countries, *décimas* are also widespread in the Canary Islands. *Punto* music makes use of a fixed harmonic progression and certain melodic formulas adapted to the particular text being sung.

Musical exchanges between Cuba and the Canaries through population shifts made their musical traditions closely related. The music that Granados might have heard as a child in Santa Cruz was akin to the music of purely Spanish origin practiced in Cuba at the time. Notable Cuban composers such as Ernesto and Ernestina Lecuona and Leo Brouwer are of Canarian descent.¹¹

Cuba and Catalonia

From the early years of colonization until well into the eighteenth century, most of the Spanish inhabitants of the island came from Andalusia and Castile, as immigration from other regions of the Peninsula was forbidden and a strong monopoly of commerce was held by the Crown. Only Seville and Cádiz had privileges as ports of entry for merchandise and precious metals coming from the Americas. As regulations eased over time and trade reforms were introduced by Charles III in the second half of the eighteenth century, immigration diversified and many newcomers from Galicia, Asturias, Catalonia and the Canary Islands came to Cuba, especially during the nineteenth century.

In the course of that century, Catalonia was part of a complex network of commerce that included Spain, the Antilles and the former colonies in the Americas, with incursions to Brazil and the United States (primarily New Orleans).¹² Barcelona became an important point of trade with the

¹⁰ A recollection of this stage of Granados's childhood is contained in Pablo Vila-San Juan, *Papeles íntimos de Enrique Granados* (Barcelona: Amigos de Enrique Granados, 1966), 49, cited in Clark, 13.

¹¹ Ernesto died while visiting the Canaries in 1963.

¹² The cotton necessary for the Catalan textile industry was obtained in Brazil and New Orleans. Wine, paper, textile and industrial exports were later shipped to Cuba, where Catalan merchants would in turn acquire sugar and tobacco.

Antilles and acquired a relevant role as a center for the redistribution of Cuban sugar in the Mediterranean, as well as a platform for the shipping of Catalan exports to Cuba.¹³ The historical and economic ties between Catalonia and Cuba became strong, so much so that the decline in trade that followed Cuban independence had considerable financial repercussions in the region.¹⁴

The biggest wave of Spanish immigration to Cuba occurred—paradoxically—after independence. Unlike the situation surrounding the aftermath of independence wars in other parts of Latin America, most of the Spanish incomers who were already in the island did not flee back to Spain but remained there. Nearly a million new immigrants joined them in the three decades following the 1898 war, more than in the colonial period in its entirety.¹⁵

By the time of Granados's formative years in the late nineteenth century, Catalan immigration to the island was already significant. Cuba was—followed by Argentina—the destination of choice for Catalans who wanted to try their luck in the New World. Catalan immigrants owned numerous textile, grocery, tobacco, and hardware establishments in Havana. Appointed clerics from Catalonia also occupied prominent positions in the Cuban Church.

Like incomers from other parts of the Iberian Peninsula, immigrants from Catalonia formed associations of various kinds and funded the construction or acquisition of buildings to host them as well as newspapers and magazines.¹⁶ Many of the Catalan merchants, travelers and sailors who did not establish themselves there but regularly made the voyage to Havana often returned with habanera songs.

These texted habaneras were meant to be sung and therefore do not belong to the same genre as the piano examples that have been mentioned so far. Their themes almost invariably include

¹³ Not only commodities were involved in this trade, human trafficking was part of it as well. Some Catalan merchants and companies played a significant role in the slave trade involving Sub-Saharan Africa, the Iberian Peninsula and the Antillean colonies. This is a chapter in Iberian history that has not received much attention by scholars until recent times and still awaits widespread examination and reevaluation.

¹⁴ Catalan political and economic elites strongly opposed Cuban attempts at independence and abolitionist ideas in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. Perhaps moved by their own desire of independence for Catalonia, some sectors of the Catalan population—especially the community already in the island—supported the Cuban independence movement. In spite of the losses experienced from the discontinued access to the Cuban market after the war, the return of Catalan capitals based in the island to Barcelona helped the booming that the city experienced in the late nineteenth century. For more information about the commercial relations of Catalonia and the Americas in the nineteenth century, see Carlos Martínez Shaw, “El comercio de Catalunya con América durante el siglo XIX,” in *Las Américas y Catalunya: cinco siglos de presencia catalana* (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 1992), 109-144.

¹⁵ While some of these immigrants did not settle in Cuba and continued on to other countries in Latin America or to the United States, “at least 40% of the half million Spaniards who came to Cuba in the first 20 years of the Republic remained there.” Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 119. Among them was a man from Galicia named Ángel Castro, father of Fidel.

¹⁶ The first Catalan association of mutual help was established in Havana in 1840 and was followed by many others. Some of the Cuban-based, politically oriented Catalan associations promoted independence for Catalonia—a few in an openly radical way—and sponsored publications to disseminate their ideas. One such periodical, *Som Atents* (roughly translated as “We Are on Guard”), inspired *El Somatén*, a corruption of the original Catalan, one of the many contradances for piano by Manuel Saumell (1818-1870). Saumell was one of the most prominent Cuban composers of the time and captured much of everyday life in Havana in his creolized contradances.

the sea, love matters and nostalgic memories of women left behind in Havana. Particularly popular among the fishermen of the northern region of the Catalan coast known as Costa Brava in the province of Girona, the singing of habaneras became a significant tradition in the region.¹⁷

Over time, Catalan habaneras acquired their own distinct characteristics and became a significant part of the background of local musicians to this day. Montsalvatge described them as “an invaluable treasure . . . that can most help the Catalonian composer to develop a truly popular and unique art, readily attainable, freed from narrow localizations, and with a broad, universal resonance.”¹⁸ Although written at an earlier time, it is not surprising that *A la cubana* exhibits certain habanera characteristics.

A la cubana

Although a minor piece in Granados’s catalogue, the composer must have held *A la cubana* in high esteem, for it was part of the initial group of works that he offered Schirmer for publication in 1913.¹⁹ The piece is in two distinct, contrasting parts labelled with Roman numerals. An abridged return of the first part rounds off the form.²⁰

The first section, in E flat major, presents a rondo-like structure. Its refrain brings to mind two previous instances of piano music of Caribbean inspiration in the same key that Granados likely knew: Albéniz’s “Cuba” from *Suite española*, op. 47, and “Sous le palmier” from *Chants d’Espagne*, op. 232.²¹

¹⁷ The singing is frequently accompanied by *cremat*, a warm drink made of flamed rum, the kind that sailors would bring from Cuba. For an excellent summary of the cultural implications of the habanera in Catalonia, see Galina Bakhtiarova, “Transatlantic Returns: The Habanera in Catalonia,” *Quaderns-e de l’Institut Català d’Antropologia*, no. 3 (2004), URL: <<http://www.raco.cat/index.php/QuadernsICA/article/view/51425>> (accessed Sept. 10, 2016).

¹⁸ Enrique Franco, *Xavier Montsalvatge* (Madrid: Servicio de Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, 1975), 21-22; quoted in: Martha Watson, “The Solo Piano Music of Xavier Montsalvatge” (DMA diss., The University of Iowa, 1990), 28.

¹⁹ Dedicated to Silvia de Sa Valle, an acquaintance from Paris, the piece was published by Schirmer in 1914 as op. 36 and likely dates from an earlier stage in his career. In her bio-bibliography of the composer, Carol A. Hess suggests the year 1894. Carol A. Hess, *Enrique Granados: A Bio-bibliography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991), 111. The date seems appropriate given its similarities with other works from around that period such as the 12 *Danzas españolas*. However, in his guide to the composers’ piano works, Antonio Iglesias argues that the structural and harmonic design of the piece indicates it is likely to belong to a “second, more evolved manner” of his style. Antonio Iglesias, *Enrique Granados: su obra para piano* (Madrid: Editorial Alpuerto, 1985), 1:34 (my translation). Granados mentions the work alongside a few others he was preparing for publication in two letters to Ernest Schelling in 1913. Miriam Perandones, *Correspondencia epistolar (1892-1916) de Enrique Granados* (Barcelona: Editorial Boileau, 2016), 405, 410. Both Schelling and Rudolph E. Schirmer were instrumental in bringing Granados to the U.S. a couple of years later.

²⁰ This return suggests elements of ternary form. This poses a question of whether to keep the piece as one continuous work in performance or clearly separate it into two movements. After hesitating, Antonio Iglesias suggests to make a clear division between both parts of the work with the reprise being treated as a reminiscence of the opening habanera design. Iglesias, *Enrique Granados*, 33, 40.

²¹ Since the title *Sous le palmier* does not imply a concrete geographic location, Albéniz might not have been pointing specifically to Cuba. He might have intended the work as a general depiction of the Caribbean or may have been referencing Puerto Rico, which he also visited.

Both *Sous le palmier* and the opening section of *A la cubana* capture the languidness, swaying feel and atmosphere of a distant tropical paradise through the use of habanera-derived accompanying figures in the left hand. Granados even writes the indication *cadencioso* (Ex. 1).²²

The musical score for Example 1 shows the first four measures of Granados' *A la cubana*. The piece is in 2/4 time, B-flat major, and marked *Allegretto*. The dynamics are *p* (piano) and the tempo is *cadencioso*. The right hand part features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure, and a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure. The left hand part features a bass line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure, and a triplet of eighth notes in the third measure.

Example 1: Granados, *A la cubana*, I, mm. 1-4.

Albéniz visited Cuba and concertized widely there as a youngster in 1875 and 1880, although not in the fantastic conditions accounted for in the legends that Albéniz himself helped spread.²³ During his two stays in Cuba, the composer had a chance to experience the music of the island firsthand. It must have left a significant impression on him for he referenced the island or used elements of Antillean origin in at least six or seven works.²⁴

Some similarities between the bass lines and harmonic progressions of *Sous le palmier* and *A la cubana* are apparent (Ex. 2).

²² Iglesias singles out the characteristic habanera alternation of triplets and duple eighth notes in its melodic part as the most prominent feature of the piece (Iglesias, 33). *Recuerdos de Gottschalk*, one of the many *contradanzas* by Saumell, makes extensive use of this pattern to convey a swaying feel. Also in the key of E flat major, this piece could be seen as a Cuban precedent to the first part of Granados' *A la cubana*.

²³ In his groundbreaking biography of the composer, Walter Aaron Clark dispelled the long-held belief that Albéniz ran away from home as a child and made it to the Americas, unaccompanied, playing concerts from Buenos Aires to San Francisco and New York. Walter A. Clark, *Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 31-33.

²⁴ His reminiscences of the Caribbean were portrayed in several piano pieces: *Cuba* from *Suite Española*, op. 47 (1886); *Rapsodia cubana*, op. 66 (1886); *Tango*, from *Spanish National Songs*, op. 164 (1889); *Sous le palmier*, from *Chants d'Espagne*, op. 232 (1892) and the famous *Tango*, from *España*, op. 165 (1890). In addition, he left an incomplete *Guajira* (*Chant populaire cubain*) for mezzo-soprano and orchestra (1905). The *Seis danzas españolas* (1887) make extensive use of the melodic figure comprised of a triplet followed by two eighth notes that is characteristic of the habanera.

The second section of *A la cubana*, in the relative minor, introduces a contrasting mood and texture. Even though it resembles an elegant piece of salon music from the period, it is somewhat unusual, even anomalous by Granados's standards. Much shorter than the first section (only 29 bars long—plus a 16-bar coda consisting of a reprise of the initial section—versus the 76 bars of the first part),²⁵ it presents a series of repeated, insistent G's in the middle of the texture that work as a pedal note. Low G's are also notoriously reiterated in the second half of almost every bar in the bass part. Combined with the pedal note C on the downbeat of the first three measures of the left hand part, they give the impression of too static a harmony, even if the texture is very active on the surface. Most of the interest comes from the rhythm, with the triplets in the left hand and even sixteenths in the right creating a two-against-three effect (Ex. 3).²⁶

Un poco vivo

p molto leggiero

5 *cresc.*

8 *dim.*

Example 3: Granados, *A la cubana*, II, mm. 1-9

²⁵ The work's proportions do not go unnoticed by Antonio Iglesias. The commentator even considers treating this unusual section as one more episode in a possible large-scale rondo structure for the whole piece. Iglesias, *Enrique Granados*, 40.

²⁶ A simple harmonic scheme combined with a more varied rhythmic structure is common in early Cuban contradances. Far from this tradition, Iglesias claims the origin of the left-hand rhythmic design to be found in the *tonadilla*. Iglesias, *Enrique Granados*, 41.

This section extends for sixteen bars before giving way to a twelve-bar rather improvisatory transition that is pure Granados. Scholars and performers have seemed puzzled by the former. Bryce Morrison's remarks in his liner notes for Thomas Rajna's recording of the work represent a case in point of the kind of reaction that a piece like this can elicit from a well-intended commentator—or performer—who might not be thoroughly familiar with the context from which it arose:

A la Cubana [sic] may be everybody's idea of Sunny Spain yet it possesses something of Granados's distinctive touch. The swaying triplet rhythms and sultry elegance also make it a close relation of Albéniz's more familiar Tango. Unable to decide whether to be one or two pieces [,] it is difficult to guess the connection between the frothy figuration of the middle section and the catchy opening proposition.²⁷

Morrison recognizes at once the relation to Albeniz's piece and the depiction of the warm, languid climate in the first section but seems taken aback by the textural contrast introduced next. Some knowledge of Cuban piano music of the nineteenth century, particularly the *contradanzas* of Saumell and *danzas* by Cervantes can help illuminate the matter. Granados's writing was likely informed by this music and, perhaps unintentionally, he offered both the outsider's view of Cuba (in the first part) and a sample of native salon music (in the second) as part of the same piece.

A possible answer for the questions posed by this texture may lie specifically in the music of Cuban composer Ignacio Cervantes (1847-1905), arguably the most prominent and influential musical figure of the second half of the nineteenth century in Cuba.²⁸ The best-known part of his oeuvre is comprised of 40 *danzas cubanas* for piano.²⁹ It is generally accepted that practically all of his *danzas* were composed between 1875 and 1895, dates supplied by Alejo Carpentier in his pioneering study about music in Cuba.³⁰

²⁷ Bryce Morrison, liner notes for *Enrique Granados, Piano Works, vol. 5*, Thomas Rajna, piano. CRD Records 3335. 2008. Compact disc.

²⁸ The atmosphere of the second part of *A la cubana*, so close in its sensuousness to some of Cervantes's music, might be an evocation of the world of the Cuban salon as portrayed in the music of Saumell and Cervantes. The former's contradance *Ayes del alma*, contains a repeated-chord texture and sense of elegance that prefigures much of Cervantes's writing.

²⁹ Forty original, complete *danzas* survive today (in addition, one was completed by his daughter María and five more were arrangements of existing *contradanzas*—all but one have been found). According to Cuban pianist Solomon Mikowsky, it is likely Cervantes composed more *danzas* that were lost or never even notated. In his doctoral dissertation about the Cuban contradance, he attributes this situation to the relative unimportance that Cervantes gave to the *danza* genre in his output. Solomon Mikowsky, "The Nineteenth-Century Cuban *Danza* and its Composers, with Particular Attention to Ignacio Cervantes (1847-1905)" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1973), 320. As a group, these works exhibit an admirable richness of invention within the relatively constricting binary mold of the Cuban *danza*. They range in expression from the joyful and humorous to the elegant and melancholic. The latter are of particular interest to this study.

³⁰ Alejo Carpentier and Timothy Brennan, ed., *Music in Cuba*, trans. Alan West-Durán (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 211. Solomon Mikowsky brought into question Carpentier's assertion arguing it is hard to believe Cervantes would not have written any *danzas* between his return from Europe in 1870 and the year 1875 nor after 1895. Mikowsky, "The Nineteenth-Century Cuban *Danza*," 174.

During Granados's lifetime, editions of Cervantes's music were published in Havana, Chicago, Leipzig, London, Paris and Mexico City, including a couple dozen *danzas* that appeared in Cuba when Granados was young.³¹ Given the commercial and cultural relations between Cuba and Spain and his family antecedents, it is very likely that Granados knew some of Cervantes's music.³² Furthermore, we would like to propose here that not only did he know the Cuban composer's *danzas* but he also liked them enough to pay him subtle homage in his *A la cubana*.

A considerable number of Cervantes's *danzas* is characterized by elegance, refinement and sensuousness. These elements are certainly present in Granados's music and frequently cited by sources describing his playing. Cuban-Spanish pianist and composer Joaquín Nin Castellanos (1879-1949) spoke of the "sensual morbidity" present in Granados's piano playing.³³ It is precisely this kind of morbidity that can be found in such *danzas* in a minor key by Cervantes as *Homenaje*, *La celosa*, *Adiós a Cuba*, *Ilusiones perdidas* or *La encantadora* and it must have appealed to Granados and his esthetic sensibilities.

One can find echoes of the Cuban composer's *danzas* in the texture and harmony of the second section of *A la cubana*, including its internal, repeated pedal notes. In several instances, Cervantes places a similar dominant pedal in the texture of his *danzas*. One such example is evident in *El velorio*, a piece in F minor, in which the pedal note C is presented in the rhythmic pattern known as Cuban *cinquillo* (Ex. 4). This unequal, syncopated "quintuplet" is characteristic of Afro-Cuban music. It permeates much of the musical practices of the island, where it is commonly found as an ostinato, as is the case in this example.³⁴

³¹ Several commentators offer different dates for these early, undated Cuban editions. The first collection, published by *Edelmann y Cía.* might have appeared between 1875 and 1882. The next publication, three books of six dances each, issued by Anselmo López in Havana could date from the period 1888-1890. The dances published by López appeared later in editions in London and Chicago around the turn of the century and in New York in 1917. For more information about the publication history of Cervantes Cuban dances, see Mikowsky, "The Nineteenth-Century Cuban Danza," 320-329; Ignacio Cervantes, *40 Danzas*, ed. by Gisela Hernández and Olga de Blanck (Havana: Ediciones de Blanck, 1959), 95, and Ignacio Cervantes, *Obras para piano* (Havana: Ediciones Museo de la Música, 2005).

³² The international distribution that editions of Cervantes's *danzas* enjoyed in the late 1800s and the first quarter of the twentieth century did not exclude Granados's circles. Ricardo Viñes, the champion of contemporary piano music in the early twentieth century and Granados's friend and fellow student in Paris, owned a volume. David Korevaar and Laurie J. Sampsel, "The Ricardo Viñes Piano Music Collection at the University of Colorado at Boulder," *Notes*, Second Series 61, no.2, (Dec. 2004): 384. DOI: 10.1353/not.2004.0143

³³ Clark, *Enrique Granados*, 22.

³⁴ Even though some editions (and Ex. 4) present what should be the initial eighth note of the *cinquillo* as a rest in the notation, the downbeat chord at the beginning of each measure is perceived by the ear as the first note of the *cinquillo* as well.

Allegro moderato

Example 4: Cervantes, *El velorio*, mm. 1-4

Two more of Cervantes's *danzas* bear a particular resemblance to the Granados's work in question. The turn-like figuration circling around the fifth degree of the scale that opens the second section of *A la cubana*—also found in m. 9—(Ex. 5a) is very similar to the motive that first appears in m.1 of *Ilusiones perdidas* (Ex. 5b)—although circling in the opposite direction. This motive is used throughout the piece (Ex. 5c). *La encantadora* contains a similar device in the section starting at m. 8 (Ex. 5d). The eighth-note pickups to the second sections of both these *danzas* (m. 16 in Ex. 5c and m. 8 in Ex. 5d) are extremely similar, making the two pieces closely related.

Un poco vivo

Example 5a: Granados, *A la cubana*, II, mm. 1-9 with figurations highlighted.

Moderato

mp

5

dim. e rit.

Example 5b: Cervantes, *Ilusiones perdidas*, mm. 1-8

16

p

a tempo

Example 5c: Cervantes, *Ilusiones perdidas*, mm. 16-20

8

2.

mf

13

cresc.

Example 5d: Cervantes, *La encantadora*, mm. 8-16

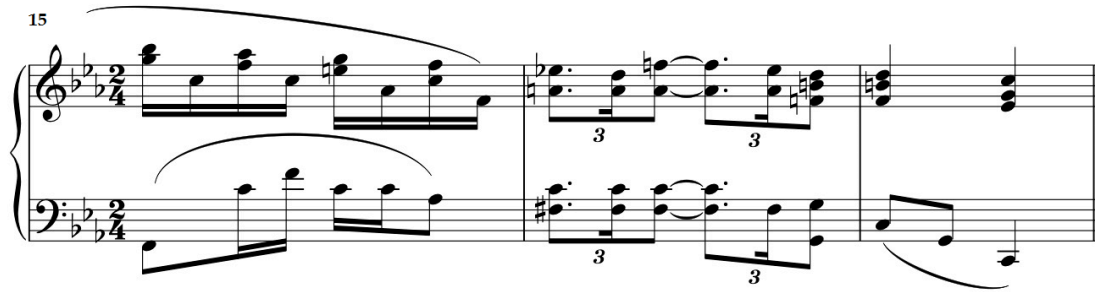
With its chromatic decoration around the dominant note and subsequent harmonic progression, this section of *La encantadora* strongly resembles Granados's *A la cubana*. Moreover, if one transposes this section of Cervantes's piece up a half step to the key of C minor and plays it in immediate succession with the beginning of the second part of *A la cubana*, it could well be the same piece (Ex. 6).

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system, labeled '1', consists of four measures. The upper staff is in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature, and the lower staff is in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. The music is marked 'p molto leggiero'. The second system, labeled '8', also consists of four measures. The upper staff is in treble clef with a 2/4 time signature, and the lower staff is in bass clef with a 2/4 time signature. The music is marked 'mf'. Both systems show chromatic movement and harmonic progression.

Example 6: Granados, *A la cubana*, II, mm. 1-4 and Cervantes, *La encantadora*, mm. 8-11, transposed to C minor.

Shown in the middle measure of Ex. 7 is one more unusual rhythmic element introduced by Granados to close the section being discussed. This rhythm is none other than a modified version of a *cinquillo*. By writing it as two syncopated triplets, the composer has stylized it and softened its effect.³⁵ It is not as immediately recognizable as in Cervantes's *El velorio*, but it represents a rare instance of the use of this Afro-Cuban rhythm in Granados's music.

³⁵ In *Plenilunio*, the second movement of his *Suite cubana*, Mexican composer Manuel M. Ponce (1882-1948) used the exact same form of notation to write a *cinquillo* in the piece's compound meter of 6/8.



Example 7: Granados, *A la cubana*, II, mm. 15-17

This brief study aims at presenting a connection—for the first time in the Granados literature, as far as the author is aware—between his music, represented by *A la cubana*, and the piano music of Cuba during his lifetime, particularly that of Ignacio Cervantes. Granados’s ancestry and family history surely sparked his curiosity and interest in the music of the island. Cervantes’s *Ilusiones perdidas* and *La encantadora*—and, to a lesser extent, *El velorio*—present significant tonal and textural similarities to the section marked as II in *A la cubana*. All three dances were printed during Granados’s youth in collections to which he likely had access.

It is also our wish to encourage pianists approaching *A la cubana* to explore a wider musical context for the work and be aware of a possible connection to original Cuban piano music of the time. Looking at the second section of Granados’s piece through the lens of Cervantes’s *danzas* might help imbue a performance with the necessary *sandunga* to convey the sensuousness and refinement of this music.³⁶

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³⁶ The term *sandunga* is difficult to translate. It refers here to a certain gracefulness, charm or flair. Peter Manuel has raised the issue, citing his communications with Cuban pianist Mirta Gómez, about the importance of avoiding “the monotony that might result from an academic rendering of these pieces.” Manuel, *Creolizing*, 88.