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Mambo On 2:
The Birth of a New Form of Dance in New York City

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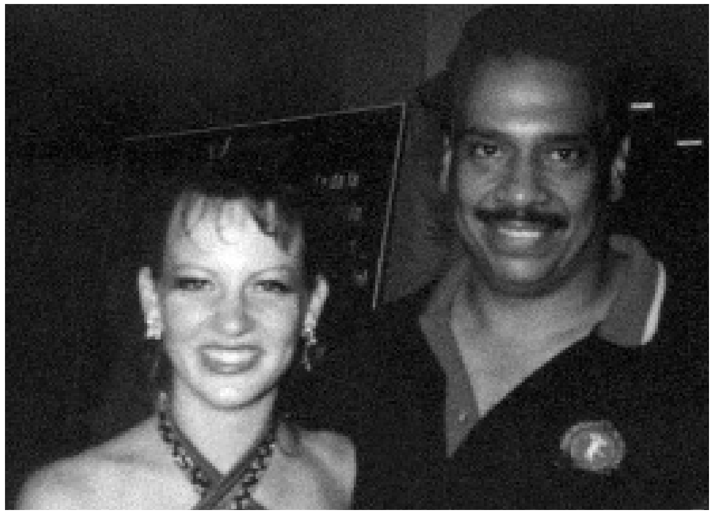
ABSTRACT

As Nuyorican musicians were laboring to develop the unique sounds of New York mambo and salsa, Nuyorican dancers were working just as hard to create a new form of dance. This dance, now known as "on 2" mambo, or salsa, for its relationship to the *clave*, is the first uniquely North American form of vernacular Latino dance on the East Coast. This paper traces the New York mambo's development from its beginnings at the Palladium Ballroom through the salsa and hustle years and up to the present time. The current period is characterized by increasing growth, commercialization, codification, and a blending with other modern, urban dance genres such as hip-hop. [Key words: salsa, mambo, hustle, New York, Palladium, music, dance]

Though much scholarly attention has been paid to the development of salsa music in New York City, academics have so far given little consideration to the dance that accompanies it. Salsa dancers, on the other hand, have given the matter much thought, actively researching their art form's history and, in the process, developing a community-based dance theory. They are fully aware that salsa is a dance music that would not and could not exist without the support of dancers; even the great Tito Puente credited the rise of mambo music, salsa's most immediate precursor, to the dance's "explosion," stating, "without a dance the music cannot be popular" (Feuerstein: "Tito Puente"). Ethnomusicologist Marisol Berríos-Miranda has noted, "Dancing parallels music making in the sense that it is localized or domesticated" (2002: 44): in other words, as local styles of salsa music have been developed in such places as Colombia, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela, so have local varieties of salsa dancing. It is thus unsurprising that a unique style of salsa dance should have evolved in New York City, salsa's place of origin and a hotbed of salsa creativity. What *is* surprising is that so many people are unaware of the history, the creative artistry, and the intricacies of New York salsa and mambo dancing.

Salsa is widely known as a social or "nightclub" dance, but New Yorkers have also developed it into a true art form. Many New York dancers prefer to call their dance "mambo" rather than "salsa," in accordance with Tito Puente's oft-repeated statement, "Salsa is a condiment of food. You eat salsa. You don't listen to it" (Loza 1999: 41). They further delineate the genre by naming it specifically "on 2" mambo, referring to the musical beat emphasized in their basic step. Whereas the majority of salsa dancers worldwide—from Puerto Rico to Cuba, Colombia to Los Angeles or London—start with a step back on beat one or three, immediately changing direction to move forward two steps (see figure 4, page 133), "On 2" dancers "break," or change direction, on count two.[1]



Angel Rodríguez, founder of Razz M'Tazz dance company, with the author after a recent performance in Puerto Rico. Photograph from author's collection. Reprinted, by permission, from Sydney Hutchinson.

While stepping on count one, two, or three may seem at first glance to be an unimportant detail, to New York dancers it makes a world of difference. "On 2" dancers believe that dancing on two ensures adherence to the *clave*, the rhythmic "key" of salsa music (e.g. Carlo 2001; Bello: "Salsa music").[2] They also feel their count enables a superior style and technique, calling the New York style more "relaxed" and "elastic looking" (Espinoza: "What's up"). In fact, many "on 2" dancers either cannot or will not dance with those who dance on "1" or "3" (Navarro 2000). As dancers discuss their "conversions" and "initiations" to the "on 2" style, discourse on the subject even reaches a religious level (see Bello: "How Mike"; Silverio 2002); many see their introduction to the style as a life-changing experience. And even among this already highly specialized group, there is controversy about the "correct" way to dance "on 2." Two principal methods are espoused by Eddie Torres, who begins on count one but breaks on two, and by Angel and Addie Rodríguez of Razz M'Tazz Dance Company, who begin and break on count two (see figures 1 and 3, page 132).

Developed and danced primarily by New York Puerto Ricans, "on 2" mambo or salsa is a distinctively Nuyorican dance genre. (I am using Nuyorican to distinguish diasporic Puerto Ricans born and raised in New York City from those who have grown up on the island.) It is qualitatively different in a number of ways both from its Cuban and ballroom dance predecessors and from other styles of salsa dance currently practiced on the West Coast, in Latin America, and even by untrained dancers in New York. Besides the unusual counting system, several other features distinguish the New York mambo from other types of salsa or mambo dance. First are its stylistic traits. New York dancers young and old place much emphasis on intricate footwork composed of named steps known as "shines,"[3] a feature almost completely absent from typical West Coast, Mexican, Cuban, and South American salsa styles. Turn patterns, most of which are also given names, are longer, more complex, and usually faster than those practiced in other locations. New York mambo has, in the past, been flashier than other styles: New York dancers tended to favor big arm movements and dramatic poses over the subtler body motion of other Latin American popular dances, such as Cuban *son* or Colombian *cumbia*, though young dancers are changing this preference to some degree. In addition, even during uptempo songs New Yorkers maintain a relaxed feel in their dancing, due to the fact that they step slightly behind the beat rather than right on it.[4]

Secondly, New York dancers have an extraordinary dedication to their art form, around which they have created an entire subculture. "On 2" dancers consider themselves artists, "serious dancers" who "have worked very hard to learn this complicated dance" (Shaw and Silverio: "Directory of On 2"). Indeed, reaching a professional level requires an enormous commitment of both time and money—for years of dance lessons, for costumes and shoes, for club and contest entrance fees, for travel to major dance events. Even beginning dancers must attend two- to three-hour workshops up to three times a week, which are usually taught from a "syllabus" or codified list of steps each dance company composes. The intense devotion of all levels of "on 2" dancers has led to the formation of a tightly knit "on 2" community in New York, which maintains its bonds through a multitude of web sites promoting the style (e.g. www.salsaweb.com, www.salsaroots.com, www.planetsalsa.com, www.salsanewyork.com, and dance company sites), online discussion groups, and monthly events called "socials." At the student level this community is formed of New Yorkers of all ethnic groups; at the professional level, it is formed mainly of Puerto Rican New Yorkers. Specialist DJs[5] cater to them, while nightclub owners must make special concessions in terms of music, flooring, and lighting, in order to attract "on 2" dancers (see Navarro 2000; Espinoza: "Club owners").

New York dancers also have a unique dynamic that allows an exchange between the street and the stage, and they maintain a style that lies somewhere between the two. The designation of a style or movement as either "street" or "ballroom" is a contentious endeavor in the salsa/mambo world. Though for ballroom dancers "street" may be a derogatory term used to described unpolished, unschooled dancers, the same term carries a positive connotation for salsa/mambo dancers. "Street" moves are those that arise organically, from "the people," while "ballroom" is often seen as artificial or inauthentic. Because of this, "on 2" dancers occupy a tricky space and must continually negotiate between the two categories in order to achieve their artistic goals while still remaining "authentic." The demanding technique and high level of showmanship clearly set "on 2" dancers apart from "street" or "nightclub" dancers, but it is an art that takes much from the street. While it is hard to imagine a "street" foxtrot or waltz that would influence competitive ballroom dancers, that is exactly the situation that exists in the salsa/mambo world. Many dancers take movements seen in clubs or learned from friends and relatives and adapt them to the stage, and most try to maintain the relaxed, improvisatory feel of "street" dancing.

Finally, the emphasis on counting and rhythm gives New York dancers a unique relationship to their music. "On 2" dancers realize that their dance style requires a particular type of salsa, specifically classic *salsa dura* (hard salsa, an "old school" style made in 1960s–'70s New York) in the classic Nuyorican style that features a tightly locked rhythm section and clearly audible, repetitive percussion patterns (Berríos-Miranda 2002). "On 2" instructors teach their students to listen to specific rhythms; dancers frequently discuss particular songs and rhythms at length and in great detail on web sites devoted to the subject.[6] Such discourse has led to the development of what might be called a community-based dance theory, too detailed to be fully explained here, which explains their perceptions of how dance and music should interlock.

New York mambo draws from numerous other American dance traditions, from jazz, swing, and hustle to tap and ballroom dance. The dance itself bears the record of its brushes with each of these styles: it is an amalgam of Latin hustle turn patterns and "slot" layout (slot dances are those which, like hustle, move back and forth on a straight line), ballroom terminology, swing aerials or lifts, the tap-like "shines," jazzy hands and footwork, and Broadway theatricality. Afro-Cuban dance also played a part in its formation: the basic step resembles the old Cuban son, and "on 2" dancers often employ *rumba* stylings. Nonetheless, when taken as a whole, New York mambo as it is danced today is a distinctly Nuyorican creation, "based on the Puerto Rican experience" (Rodríguez 2003). As Razz M'Tazz Dance Company's Angel Rodríguez explains, the most influential dancers of mambo's early days were New York Puerto Ricans, and their principal contributions were in blending elements of all the various dances with which they had contact into one seamless whole. This cultural blending may be seen as expressive of diasporic Puerto Ricans' life experiences in moving between cultures.

Many stylistic and practical parallels can be found between New York salsa music and dance. They share a history: both originated with Cuban rhythms that were brought to New York and adopted, adapted, reformulated, and made new by the Puerto Ricans living there. Just as Nuyorican salsa music can easily be distinguished from its Cuban antecedents by its expanded percussion and horn sections, "aggressive" arrangements (Waxer 2002: 5), use of traditional Puerto Rican melodic material, driving rhythms (see Berríos-Miranda 2002), and eclectic use of a diverse array of Afro-Caribbean dance rhythms (see Quintero Rivera 1999), New York salsa/mambo dance can be distinguished from Cuban and other regional styles by its rhythmic features, theatrical presentation, expanded repertoire of complicated turn patterns, focus on footwork, and blending of movements from diverse ethnic origins. And while salsa music has long been noted for its "transcendence of geographic and cultural boundaries" (Waxer 2002: 5), "on 2" dancing is just now becoming globalized, as New York instructors bring their style to Los Angeles, Chicago, Italy, France, and Japan. The globalizing, unifying power of salsa dance was a major theme at the 2003 Congreso Mundial de la Salsa (World Salsa Congress) in Puerto Rico. The program for the opening day of the week-long event announced, "In spite of differences of language, salsa dance has become a new common element of communication around the world. . . . Salsa unites the world and the best proof is the World Salsa Congress. What better way than dance for us to communicate" (Delgado 2003—author's translation).

In this paper, I will briefly discuss the history of "on 2" mambo in New York through three generations of dancers. I will relate the dance's development to that of mambo and salsa music in New York. As primary texts, I will use both personal conversations and experiences and dancers' web sites, which are an important means of communication for the "on 2" community. John Storm Roberts contends that "big band mambo [was] the first clearly North American Latin style [of music]" (Roberts 1999: 144), a statement likely to be true if we amend "of Caribbean derivation" or "on the East Coast" to distinguish from the unique musics of Mexican Americans in the Southwest. My examination of New York "on 2" mambo will show that this dance is likewise the first clearly North American style of dance developed by East Coast Latinos, and that it is particular to the Nuyorican community.

Mambo beginnings

The mambo genre began as a section of the Cuban *danzón*, a type of music that itself had evolved from the earlier Puerto Rican and Cuban *danza*. As "a short passage consisting of unison riffs," the mambo section is maintained as a part of salsa music to this day (Leymarie 2002: 113). Several musicians from the Guanabacoa neighborhood of Havana, all members of a *charanga* orchestra (a flute and violin-based group) called Las Maravillas, are responsible for the mambo's growth into a distinct musical form: leader Antonio Arcaño and the brothers Orestes "Macho" (cellist) and Israel "Cachao" (bassist) López (Leymarie 2002: 111–5). Orestes composed a danzón entitled "Mambo" in 1938, the first song to be given that title, and in 1944, Arcaño's "Arriba la invasión" was the first to be called a mambo as a generic label (Leymarie 2002). However, the mambo was not popularized internationally until

Tito Puente and Eddie Torres. Courtesy Eddie and Maria Torres. Reprinted, by permission, from Sydney Hutchinson.

Cuban composer and bandleader Dámaso Pérez Prado brought it to Mexico in the early 1950s. His early mambo recordings, which included "Mambo no. 5" and "Qué rico el mambo," were such hits that he toured the United States and Latin America in 1951, eventually relocating to Los Angeles.

When Pérez Prado and other Cuban musicians brought the mambo to New York, they entered an atmosphere in which the mixing of cultures and music had become commonplace. Ever since the first Latin Americans began to settle in El Barrio or Spanish Harlem and in Brooklyn around the turn of the twentieth century, they had been interacting with their neighbors and exchanging musical styles. Cubans and Puerto Ricans, who dominated New York's Latino community since the early 20th century, worked particularly closely, often playing together in musical ensembles. Even Tito Puente, the great Puerto Rican composer, bandleader, and percussionist, was mentored by Cuban pianist José Curbelo and performed with Cuban singer Frank Grillo's Machito Orchestra in the early 1940s (Loza 1999: 3–4). In addition, though a detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to note that Cuban and Puerto Rican music were closely related since long before their arrival in New York; in fact, musicologist Isabelle Leymarie calls Puerto Rico "Cuba's musical sister" (2002: 3). Many tropical musics became known as "Cuban" only because of that country's dominance of the Latin American recording industry from the 1920s through the 1950s (Quintero Rivera 1999: 100). The exchange of musical ideas between Cubans and Puerto Ricans continued and even increased in New York (see Berríos-Miranda 1999:47–8), but of particular importance to the development of the mambo were both groups' interactions with African-American musicians.

The first collaborations between Latino and African-American musicians in New York date to the time of World War I, which the United States entered shortly after Puerto Ricans were granted US citizenship in March 1917. Later that same year, African-American bandleader James Reese Europe traveled to Puerto Rico in search of musicians to play in his famed military jazz band, the Hellfighters of the all-Black 369th Regiment. He hired a number of talented and highly literate musicians while in the island and brought them to New York; these included the well-known composer Rafael Hernández (Glasser 1995: 55). The collaboration continued after the war and until Europe's death in 1919, as the band toured the US and recorded popular jazz and ragtime tunes (Glasser 1995: 65–6). During the 1920s, Europe's Puerto Rican hires and their compatriots performed both in Broadway pit orchestras and in popular jazz bands. For example, Duke Ellington featured Puerto Rican Juan Tizol on trombone for several years (Glasser 1995: 71).

Around the same time, Cuban New Yorkers were also becoming jazz musicians. Afro-Cuban flautist Alberto Socarrás began to play with jazz orchestras like those of Erskine Hawkins and Benny Carter upon his arrival in New York in 1927 (Boggs 1992: 253). The great Cuban singer Machito spent time at Harlem's Savoy Ballroom in the early '30s (Boggs 1992: 251); his brother-in-law, Mario Bauzá, came to New York in 1930 and played with Cab Calloway, Dizzy Gillespie, and others before becoming Machito's musical director in 1940 (Boggs 1992: 254).

Such collaborations had lasting effects on American popular music and dance, as Americans of all ethnicities began to participate in Latino musics in various ways. African Americans in the 1930s were already dancing to Latin music at the Park Palace on 110th Street and 5th Avenue (Boggs 1992: 254). By the 1940s, numerous jazz musicians, including Dizzy Gillespie and Stan Kenton, were beginning partnerships with Latino musicians (Roberts 1999: 142), giving birth to another new genre: Latin jazz. The Anglo-American appetite for Latin American music and dance did not take long to catch up. Cuban groups had been playing for Anglos in New York since the 1930s, when the Havana Casino Orchestra and Xavier Cugat began performing at prestigious locales such as the Palace Theater and the Waldorf-Astoria (Roberts 1999: 76–86). Desi Arnaz brought Cuban music to Broadway upon his first stage appearance in 1939. Social dancers adopted Latin American dances from Argentine tango to Brazilian *samba* to Cuban rumba and *conga*, changing them to varying degrees to fit American middle class sensibilities. All these factors made the American public eager to listen and dance to the new rhythm of the mambo.

As noted, Pérez Prado was largely responsible for the international dissemination of the mambo, a rhythm that was derived from two Cuban dances: the upper-class danzón and the lower-class son. He moved to Mexico City in 1948, where he produced highly arranged mambos with a large ensemble resembling the swing orchestras then popular in the United States. His recordings were hugely popular among the middle and upper classes in Mexico and began to be played in the US as well; appearances in Mexican movies were another boost to his career and that of the new genre. Pérez Prado came to New York in 1951, where one can assume he hired local musicians both for logistical convenience and because of the requirements of local musicians' unions. New York Puerto Rican musicians quickly adopted the new rhythm and made it their own. Adept and experienced performers and arrangers such as Tito Puente and Tito Rodríguez transformed the mambo by combining inventive arrangements with big band instrumentation and a full Latin percussion section (see Roberts 1999: 129–30). It was there that the most creative and "sophisticated" examples of the new genre were created, since "in Cuba, the mambo never quite caught on" (Leymarie 2002: 161).

Dancers, both amateur and professional, were quick to learn the mambo. The Cuban company Las Mulatas de Fuego introduced some basic steps to the Manhattan public at a 1949 performance that Tito Puente's band accompanied (Leymarie 2002: 161). The well-known African-American choreographer, dancer, and dance ethnologist Katherine Dunham opened a school on 43rd Street and Broadway in 1945, and Palladium musicians including Mongo Santamaria and Tito Puente were frequent visitors (Aschenbrenner 2002: 138). Dunham herself choreographed and performed the dance sequences in the Hollywood film *Mambo* (1954) that capitalized on the dance's popularity. Many Americans were exposed to the mambo through her activities.

The music and dance associated with mambo reached the peak of their popularity in 1954. During that year groups such as Mambo USA, featuring

Miguelito Valdes and Mongo Santamaria, were touring the country;[7] even pop singers were recording mambo tunes, for example Rosemary Clooney's "Mambo Italiano" (Roberts 1999: 130, 136). The dance was so popular that *Downbeat* magazine announced, "Dance schools find these days that a mambo class is as essential as a credit payment plan" (October 6, 1954). The mambo had become a true craze.

Two distinct styles were already in evidence even at this early time. A contemporary *Dance Magazine* article provided a mambo "how-to" that describes them:

> The term Mambo is today used to designate two forms of Rumba which are quite dissimilar in appearance. As a foundation for either the smooth or the hectic style, however, the same or similar basic rhythm and step variations are taught. The outward differences come later, depending on the skill attained, the predominance of smooth or jazzed up band music, conservative or Jitterbug temperaments and a predilection for closed dancing or for opened up fancy steps (Butler 1953: 52).

The distinctions made between these two 1953 styles seem to parallel the differences between modern nightclub or "street" salsa and New York mambo. The "smooth" or "conservative" style is analogous to international nightclub style, while the "jazzed up," "fancy" style seems to describe a precursor to current "on 2" dancing, with its flashiness and focus on open footwork. Further support for the appearance of "on 2" at this stage appears in an Arthur Murray-style footprint chart in the same article which shows the basic mambo step on a 234 678 count.

Such descriptions demonstrate that New York mambo was unlike the Cuban version since the very beginning; they simultaneously offer clues as to its actual origin. Rather than a back-and-forth or a side-to-side partner dance, Cuban mambo was and is a simple step-tap step performed solo, seldom with a partner (significantly, the Cuban dance group Las Mulatas del Fuego, who performed in New York in 1949, was all female, so it could not have included partner dancing).[8] This basic Cuban step is quite similar to a New York mambo shine or freestyle step called "*pachanga* taps" (pachanga was another Latin dance/music craze in NYC during the 1960s). So, although New York mambo music did have a Cuban basis, the new mambo dance seemed to take little from its Cuban predecessors. The basic American mambo step was instead derived from the ballroom-style rumba popular since the 1930s, which resembles "on 2" mambo much more than it resembles actual Cuban rumba. In fact, ballroom mambo dancers of the 1950s wrote that the 234 count was actually the proper one for rumba, as well. It was only that "it [mambo] has taken the jazzed-up version of the Cuban son and a new name to arouse the dance public to an acceptance of a different rhythmic counting" (Butler 1953: 52).

The first generation of mambo dancers: The Palladium

The first generation of mambo dancers are those who were active from 1950 through the early 1960s. During this generation, dancers came from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and incorporated movements from an equally diverse set of dance styles into their mambo. Thus, even though the mambo began as a "jazzed-up" version of rumba or son, it quickly evolved into a different dance altogether. These dancers set the foundations for today's New York "on 2" salsa/mambo, and they were defined by their convergence in a particular location, the Palladium Ballroom at Broadway and 53rd Street in Manhattan. The single most important site in the development of the new, New York dance, the Palladium billed itself as the "Home of the Mambo" after changing to an all-mambo format in 1952.

The orchestras of Tito Puente and Tito Rodríguez were the Palladium house bands from the fifties through the early sixties. Though Cubans such as the great Machito also performed mambo there, it was New York Puerto Ricans such as Puente and Rodríguez who pulled the mambo up from its Cuban roots and planted it firmly in New York, gave it a unique flavor, and made it into a distinctly Nuyorican genre. Puente notes, "We always tried to give our music a bigger, higher rhythmic, harmonic concept, more modern than Cuba" (Stephens and Randalls 2000?): their music was informed by their modern, urban setting that both necessitated and was reflected in their more complex arrangements; by their audience's sophistication; and by the multiethnic personal and professional interactions particular to the New York environment. While in most of the U.S. it was Cuban Pérez Prado who symbolized the mambo, Puerto Ricans Tito Puente and Tito Rodríguez "symbolized [the mambo's] creative achievement" in New York (Roberts 1999: 129). Both men used an instrumentation that combined brass-heavy swing big bands with full Afro-Cuban rhythm sections. Both, too, created complicated arrangements that were much more inventive than Prado's (see Roberts 1999: 129–30). The dancers who came to hear them responded in kind, developing a flashy style and a "reputation for their expressive use of arms, legs, head and hands" (Leymarie 1995: 40), a quality the New York mambo retains to this day. These qualities were further developed by the professional dancers who performed in Palladium shows and the amateurs who took part in the Palladium dance contests each Wednesday.

The Palladium was notable not only for the quality of its music and dancing but for the mixing of races it allowed, which created a social scene unusual for that segregated time. Though it was not the only nightclub playing mambo music in the 1950s—even the Apollo Theater and the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem were hosting mambo nights (Roberts 1999: 131)—it provided one of the only spaces in which people of all ethnicities mingled. Eddie Torres recalls, "Tito Puente always used to say, 'We didn't know anything about ethnic groups!' There wasn't such a word as ethnic [then]" (2003). Angel Rodríguez (2003) further explains:

> The most important thing about the Palladium was that's where all the Jewish and the Puerto Ricans and the Blacks got together without issues—because of this wonderful music that's a mix of everything that we've ever done! . . . That's where [the mambo] actually all got together and fused in the New York way.

This uniquely nondiscriminatory atmosphere allowed for the interchange of ideas and movements across cultural boundaries that were essential to the development of "on 2" dancing. At the same time, contemporary descriptions of the Palladium tend to idealize that place and time, glossing over some realities of the situation, such as the club's predominantly middle-class orientation and the fact that dancers in other clubs, such as the Savoy in Harlem, also influenced the 'Palladium' mambo. However, although the situation was most likely considerably more complex than that described by Torres and Rodríguez, the setting remains central to discourse about "on 2" origins.

The Palladium was as important for musicians as it was for dancers. It was there that Tito Puente earned the nickname, "the King of Mambo." *El Rey* himself commented on the importance of the place:

> It was 'in' to learn to dance the Mambo no matter what part of society you came from. And so here was a place, the Palladium, where everybody could come to dance or learn the Mambo. Dance studios sent their students to the Palladium, where they could learn and see great dancers—ballet stars, Broadway stars, expert Mambo dancers—all in one place. And I geared my music to these dancers.
> (Puente in Feuerstein: "Tito Puente")

Puente's sensitivity to the needs of dancers, perhaps a result of his own background as a ballroom and tap dancer (see Loza 1999: 2), appears to be one of the reasons for the symbiotic relationship that came to exist between mambo music and dance, each feeding off of and growing in relation to the other. For instance, the quick tempo and impressive solos performed by instrumentalists like Puente demanded that dancers improvise more complicated steps. As pianist/arranger Eddie Palmieri recalls, "Back then, the dancers had a communication with the band. It was one on one. You'll never see it again" (Ratliff 2002).

Fans of New York mambo are to this day on a first-name basis with Palladium dancers they have never met; such was their renown. Many of the "show" dancers and contest winners even went on to achieve national fame. Palladium dancers came from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds and were trained in a wide variety of dance styles—a diversity that was possible only in New York. For example, today's dancers are indebted to the cabaret dance team of Augie and Margo Rodríguez[9] for their blending of ballet and mambo (Craddock and Aguilar 2003), use of dramatic Spanish flamenco steps and styling (SalsaRoots: "Eddie Torres"), and acrobatic lifts that came from ballroom dance (SalsaRoots: "Ernie Ensley"). Augie and Margo's distinctive style helped them to land television performances on the Ed Sullivan and Johnny Carson shows (Watson 1999), as well as appearances before three presidents. Jo-Jo Smith was a jazz dancer who created a unique style of "mambo jazz" that influenced Eddie Torres, one of today's most prominent instructors (Torres 2003). Luis "Máquina" Flores was born in Puerto Rico but raised in Spanish Harlem. Flores used moves from Cuban rumba in his style of mambo, but received the nickname of *máquina* or "machine" because of the speed of his footwork (Friedler 1997). Máquina trained a number of notable dancers, including George Vascones, one of the progenitors of the Latin hustle (Rodríguez 2003). Finally, "Killer" Joe Piro, an accomplished dancer in his own right, served as agent for many of these dancers, frequently taking them up to the Catskills to perform (Boggs 1992: 150).

From left to right, Cuban Pete (Pedro Aguilar), Tommy Díaz, and Augie Rodríguez perform as the Mambo Devils in the early 1950s. Courtesy Barbara Craddock and Cuban Pete.

Cuban Pete (center) in a recent photograph with, from left to right, his current partner Barbara Craddock, daughter Denise, former partner Millie Domay, and fellow Palladium dancer Tony "Peanuts" Aubert. Courtesy Barbara Craddock and Cuban Pete.

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Piro also taught the Palladium dance lessons, bringing with him his extensive experience as a Savoy Lindy hop and jitterbug champion, commenting, "I used a lot of ideas from the Savoy at the Palladium" (Stearns 1968: 361). He later became the "king of twist" and demonstrated popular dances on the NBC show, *That Was the Week That Was* (1963–65) (Sagolla 1999). Freddie Ríos, Ernie Ensley, and Horacio Riambau (a noted Cuban rumba dancer) are just a few of the other notable first-generation performers who are still active today.

Possibly the best known Palladium dancers were Pedro Aguilar, better known as Cuban Pete, and his partner Millie Donay. Cuban Pete was actually a Puerto Rican who grew up in El Barrio; his nickname came from the famous song and movie of the same name.[10] Machito was known to call Aguilar *El Cuchillo* (the knife) because of his explosive hand movements (Castro 2002), a stylistic trait that may have derived from his early career as a boxer. Cuban Pete's style was noteworthy for his use of "more traditional rumba and freestyle" (Rodríguez 2003) together with tap, jazz, acrobatics, "and even rock-and-roll dances" (Stearns 1994: 360). He later went on to study with Katherine Dunham (see Feuerstein 1992) and developed a syllabus, or progressive list of steps used for teaching, from 60 of his own dance moves (Rodríguez 2003). Donay, a woman of Italian descent from the Lower East Side, learned to dance from her sisters and had won a number of local Lindy hop contests as a child; she came to Aguilar's attention after winning a Palladium mambo contest at the age of fifteen (Feuerstein 1992). The two were popular performers at Catskills hotels; they also performed with Tito Rodríguez at the Palace Theater and Machito at Carnegie Hall. *Life* magazine profiled the pair as exemplars of the new dance craze (December 1954). Donay later pursued a solo career, performing frequently with Pérez Prado. Cuban Pete was hired as a consultant for the 1992 film *Mambo Kings,* and Millie and Pete can be seen dancing in the film, reunited for one last time (Feuerstein 1992).

Besides such notable soloists, the first mambo dance companies also date to this generation. The mambo choreographic tradition seems to have started at the Palladium, both as a result of the stage shows and contests and because of more informal presentations developed by the dancers themselves. Ernie Ensley remembers that, to the right of the stage, "The guys used to do routines there. We used to stay up all night and do routines which were fashionable at the time. We would do the same steps and the girls would do the same steps. It was like a trend" (Boggs 1992: 148). Though the trend Ensley describes was short-lived, the mambo dance companies were not. A number of the well-regarded dancers already mentioned formed dance teams or companies with one another during the 1950s and '60s. Augie Rodríguez and Cuban Pete teamed up to form the Mambo Devils (Feuerstein 1992). The Mambo Aces, formed in 1951 by Aníbal Vásquez and Joe Centenno and later joined by Mike Ramos, performed for ten years at the Roseland, Savoy, and Tropicana, as well as the Palladium. They were very much involved with the dissemination of mambo across the US, as in 1954 they danced together during an 11-city tour with Tito Puente, Machito, and Joe Loco (Blondet 2002: 13).

Andrew Jarrick, Mike Ramos, and Freddie Ríos later performed with the Cha-Cha Aces (Boggs 1992: 147; Leymarie 2002: 165), a group that became famous for blending tap dance and cha-cha by combining "ballet arm and hand gestures with Afro-Cuban body movement and tap footwork" (Stearns 1994: 360).

The Palladium dancers created a style of dance that, though based on antecedent forms such as swing, jazz, rumba, and ballroom dances, was really a new genre unique to that place and time. (One might also surmise that the soloistic, improvisatory, often acrobatic tradition of bomba dancing may have had an influence.) One Palladium dancer, José Torres, remembers, "There was something fresh and amazing about the dancing [there]" (Boggs 1992: 130). Unusual moves were invented to take advantage of the particulars of the space. For example, since a railing and columns enclosed the dance floor, "One of [the Palladium mambo's] indelible hallmarks was for a male to dance a few steps and to 'fall' against one of these structures with an outstretched arm and [right] himself . . . all the while in time with the music. The smooth execution of this movement was one clear sign that one had mastered the dance" (ibid). Eddie Torres also recalls that Palladium dancers performed more openwork than partner work, which encouraged the inventive hand and arm movements for which they were known (SalsaRoots, "Eddie Torres").

The flashy style these dancers practiced was a product of several factors. First, necessity: in order to be noticed, and particularly in order to make money as dancers in highly competitive New York City, one needed to find a way to stand out from the crowd. Angel Rodríguez explains, "The only way to impress [the other dancers] was to do something jazzy" (2003). Secondly, the New York mambo was strongly influenced by other flamboyant styles such as Broadway theater dance and competitive ballroom dance. This may be partly owed to the Palladium's physical proximity to the Broadway theaters—indeed, Broadway dancers could be seen on its dance floor (Feuerstein, "Tito Puente")—but it probably has more to do with the popularity of movie musicals during the mambo's heyday. Millie Donay remembers, "I went to the movies a lot and musicals were very big then. Each time I went to a musical, I would walk home dancing" (Feuerstein 1992).[11] The integration of so many diverse and demanding dances into the New York mambo ensured that the virtuosity of the Palladium dancers was at the same level as that of the musicians they went to hear.

A whole generation of musicians and dancers were inspired by the energy of the Palladium. Larry Harlow, a Jewish pianist who was to become one of the pioneers of salsa music in the early 1970s, recalls:

> I started to go to the Palladium when I was 15 years old. The owner, being Jewish, let me in even though I was underage. I would stand in front of the bandstand and watch and listen and learn from the newly formed Tito Puente Orchestra. Every time Tito would break a timbales stick I would run and fight for it with the many young fans and budding drummers (Harlow 2000?).

The great vocalist Cheo Feliciano sang on stage for the first time at the Palladium with Tito Rodríguez's orchestra on a dare in 1955 or 1956 (Rivera 2001; Leymarie 2002: 292). Eddie Palmieri, the pioneering salsa pianist, also played the Palladium. Besides such luminaries of salsa music, jazz celebrities such as Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker were known to attend the Palladium, lending impetus to the new fusion genre of Latin jazz.

The Palladium closed its doors in 1966. Its demise has been attributed to a variety of causes, including the flight of its largely middle-class clientele to suburbia and mafia-related troubles (Garcia [n.d.]); the loss of the liquor license and owner Hyman's selling the property for a great deal of money (Boggs 1992: 152–3); and the rising popularity of new dances like the cha-cha (or *chachachá*), which grew out of the mambo. Whatever the reason, the Palladium still left its mark on New York. Angel Rodríguez comments, "[The Palladium] is important because it was the root of New York salsa. And it's more important because that's where our masters were born. . . . Salsa is a Puerto Rican art in the United States. It was Cuban Pete, it was Augie, all the Puerto Ricans. And Cuban Pete says it, 'Mambo on two is as Puerto Rican as you can get'" (2003). In other words, "on 2" mambo would not exist today were it not for the Palladium, the New York Puerto Ricans who danced there, and the mixing of people and art forms the place allowed. The combination of ballroom, ballet, flamenco, tap, Lindy hop, and rumba by dancers such as Cuban Pete, Millie Donay, Luis "Máquina," and Augie and Margo Rodríguez laid the foundations for today's eclectic and ebullient "on 2" style.

Second generation: The Salsa/Hustle years

The second generation of mambo dancers was active from the time of the Palladium's closing in 1966 through the 1980s. The dance was not yet known as "mambo on 2," but dancers of the second generation were already formulating the theories and steps used by today's "on 2" dancers that directly led to the application of the label. Their era was characterized by the decline of the mambo and the development of new styles of Latino music and dance in New York. First was boogaloo, a combination of mambo and soul music that had extraordinary crossover success. Like mambo and Latin jazz, boogaloo was a bridge between African-American and Puerto Rican music, defined by "intercultural togetherness, the solidarity engendered by living and loving in unison beyond obvious differences" (Flores 2000: 82). Though boogaloo was short-lived, it was influential in that it led to a "general reawakening of the African elements within Puerto Rican culture" (Flores 2000: 111) that endured all the way through the hip-hop era. Another fleeting yet influential fad emerged in the 1970s, this one a form of dance called the Latin hustle. This disco-flavored dance was more closely related to swing than to mambo, but it exerted a powerful influence over New York Latino dancers of the time—so much so that they nearly allowed the mambo to die out. However, throughout the era a more enduring music was emerging, building upon the achievements of mambo and boogaloo musicians and dancers and ultimately helping to bring the mambo dance into the next generation. This art form came to be known as salsa.

Salsa, meaning "sauce," appeared on the New York scene in the decade following the mambo's untimely demise; its catchy name was an invention of promoters. Because the term was invented for commercial purposes, its use has angered some musicians. Even Tito Puente, who went from being "The King of Mambo" to "The King of Salsa," has been frequently quoted as complaining, "I don't play salsa, I play Cuban music." However, salsa's uniqueness and Nuyorican genesis have been effectively argued by scholars like Marisol Berríos-Miranda (1999, 2002); in addition, the term lost some of its commercial veneer as the music became increasingly political in New York as well as widely distributed throughout Latin America, where a variety of national and local styles were created. Further exploration of the topic is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to remember that Cubans were no longer present in such force in New York after the United States severed relations with Cuba after the 1959 revolution, effectively ending the era of musical collaboration that marked the early twentieth century. New Yorkers in the 1960s and '70s experimented with a wide variety of musical styles and rhythms—a practice, it has been noted, that Nuyorican musicians had initiated in the early decades of the century.

The New York Puerto Rican musicians who created salsa began with Cuban rhythms like son and *guaracha* and instrumentation like the flute-led charanga ensemble, but they quickly made these their own through experimentation and innovation, "juxtaposition and syncretism" (Berrios-Miranda 2002: 28), in a story that parallels that of the mambo. Just as in the old Palladium, early salsa artists came from a variety of backgrounds, from Jewish New Yorker Larry Harlow, to Panamanian Ruben Blades, to Dominican Johnny Pacheco and Italian-American Jerry Masucci, the founders of Fania Records. However, New York-born Puerto Ricans such as Willie Colón, Ray Barretto, Eddie and Charlie Palmieri, Ritchie Ray, and Bobby Cruz, were the most numerous and among the most influential of this new crop of Latin musicians. Stylistic innovations such as Eddie Palmieri's addition of trombones to the traditional charanga ensemble, Rafael Cortijo's experiments with *bomba* and *plena*, and Willie Colón's use of *jíbaro* music produced a distinct musical genre that lived up to its spicy name. This music sounds much different from its Cuban predecessors and is far different from current Cuban styles such as *songo* and *timba*, and it became an important symbol of Nuyorican identity and culture (see Berríos-Miranda 1999).

Of course, this new music had to have a new type of dance as well. Early *salseros* and *salseras* danced a basic "on 1" three-step with a limited repertoire of simple turns (Rodríguez 2003). This was similar to the basic step still done today in most parts of the world (see figure 4, page 133, and SalsaRoots: "Mambo"), and is still included in its original form (albeit to new timing) on many "on 2" instructors' syllabi as the appropriately named "salsa step." However, in the 1970s talented young dancers were drawn to another, more demanding popular dance. The Latin hustle developed out of swing dancing but became a symbol of the disco years. It is a flashy, performance-oriented dance that features fast spins, "tricks" such as aerial lifts, and distinctive turn patterns that "were longer and more explosive [than in salsa]" (Rodríguez 2003). Angel Rodríguez (2003), founder of Razz M'Tazz Dance Company, recalls,

> The hustle came out of a bunch of Puerto Ricans that didn't want to do salsa. They wanted to [dance] to English music. And they watched TV and saw Gene Kelly and stuff. The basic step came from the Black hustle, which was a three-step dance, and all that influence combined with all the ballroom movies coming out at the time. That created the hustle. It was a definite Bronx street style. Some people actually say George Vascones started it.

The hustle quickly eclipsed Palladium mambo in popularity among dancers, though some, like the Latin Symbolics (a dance company formed in 1976), tried combining salsa and hustle. Rodríguez, who danced with this team, notes, "We were required to learn how to do salsa, mambo and hustle. We danced on 1, we danced on 2, and we danced hustle. It was just required: you had to know how to do both, and distinguish the difference" (2003). He remembers incorporating hustle turn patterns into his salsa dancing: "We had to make up names as we went along, because [the steps] were not in the ballroom system. . . . We created our own crazy names depending on a description of what it is" (2003). Thus began the design of the complicated turns that are a defining characteristic of New York salsa/mambo to this day.

So, by the 1970s, the mambo was no longer being danced. Most Palladium dancers had retired or were simply not interested in teaching (Torres 2003), and young people did not care to learn. By the 1980s, salsa music was in decline, as well. Fania Records had been sold and *merengue*, house, and hip-hop seemed to be pushing the style out of the public eye (Catapano 1999; Washburne 2002: 102). While producers were desperately trying to rejuvenate salsa music (finally succeeding in the late 1980s with *salsa romántica*, a romantic, watered-down style), a handful of dancers kept the memory of mambo alive. George Vascones, a progenitor of the hustle who had learned mambo from Luis Máquina (Ortiz 2001b), taught mambo—both "on 1" and "on 2"—to many dancers at the Hunts Point Palace in the Bronx. However, without Eddie Torres, a dancer who was just a child during the Palladium mambo's heyday, the mambo could never have made its spectacular comeback to become the global phenomenon it is today.

Torres began both playing piano and dancing as a young child, receiving his earliest lessons from his sister. He often went to see Tito Puente play at the Corso, a club that took over as the mambo's home after the Palladium closed, and working with Puente became his dream. Once Torres saw the famous Palladium dance team of Augie and Margo perform with Puente at the Roseland Ballroom, his "vision became very clear" that his contribution to the mambo would be made through dance. After that,

> Every time Tito played there I was right smack dead center, right in front of the bandstand, dancing my heart out with the hopes of him taking notice of me. And I remember once on Sunday night after his set . . . he grabbed me. He says, 'Let me ask you something. Are you ever thinking of doing dance at the professional levels? Because you're here every weekend.' He says, 'I think you should do more with your dancing than just social dancing.' And when he said that to me I was like, Wow! I said, 'Tito, you don't know this, but my life's dream is to one day be good enough and have an act. . . I would love to do that, to work with your band.' He said, 'Well, you know, put an act together—you never know' (Torres 2003).

Though much younger, Torres had much in common with Tito Puente. They were born in the same hospital, both were raised in Spanish Harlem, both had experience in music and in dance, and both had a deep desire to keep the mambo alive. Torres looked for mambo dance classes but could only find those of ballroom schools such as Fred Astaire and Arthur Murray, and the style they taught did not at all resemble the great New York mambo dancers Eddie hoped to emulate (Ortiz 2001). Instead, he learned primarily from watching and emulating other dancers. Eight years later, Eddie went to Tito with his wife Maria and showed Tito two numbers he had choreographed. Tito was suitably impressed, and in 1980, Eddie and Maria began performing with the orchestra as the Tito Puente Dancers.

Again Puente, having been a dancer himself, was a great supporter of mambo dancing and the idea that the music and the dance were a symbiotic pair. While other dancers were warning Torres that he would never succeed as a professional dancer if he did not do the hustle, Puente was simultaneously cautioning other dancers not to abandon the mambo for the hustle. Torres recalls,

> Tito actually used to make a little speech before we would perform. He would say, 'Listen, right now you guys have to get back to the salsa and back to the mambo, back to the dance, and keep it alive, because right now Eddie and Maria are the last of the Mohicans.' He said, 'If this couple retires tomorrow, we may never see professional Latin dancing again.' He said, 'You've got to send your kids to school . . . and we've got to keep this alive. Because the music is dying also, but if the dance dies, it's over and we're going to lose this' (2003).

Meanwhile, Torres teamed up with a ballroom mambo instructor, June LaBerta, who encouraged him to put counts to his dancing, to name his steps, and to come up with a syllabus: an endeavor he compares to "science and poetry coming together" (Torres 2003). It was she who helped him to come up with his famous "on 2" counting system by putting his basic step to a musical count. Aided by his new understanding of music and dance theory, Torres taught mambo classes but remembers that interest was still low: "A full class for me in those days, in the seventies, was maybe three to five people" (Torres 2003). However, around 1983 the Copacabana nightclub began to give salsa nights on Tuesdays, and the organizer made a concerted effort to attract New York's best dancers (Rodríguez 2003). This effort was successful, and shortly thereafter Eddie Torres was hired to give lessons there (Rodríguez 2003).

Torres traces the mambo's revival and the beginnings of the current "on 2" scene to one historic event in 1987. Puente had hired him to choreograph some numbers for a show at the Apollo Theater, a tribute to Machito that would be televised. Torres hand-picked sixty of the best nightclub dancers and put them through four months of training prior to the show, noting, "The real story behind this was the preparation." Torres relates a conversation with the show's costume designer to illustrate his point:

> He said, 'Eddie, you must be out of your mind . . . these are crazy people! Look at them!' He says, 'You're up there trying to teach them to dance and they're smoking cigarettes and they're drinking. . . .' I said, 'You know what, you're right—this is madness. But this has to start somewhere. . . .
> This whole idea of getting this dance to be an art has to begin somewhere, so this is a beginning' (2003).

The show was such a success that Torres subsequently formed a permanent dance company of six couples, the Eddie Torres Dancers, and many others were inspired to follow suit. Soon a group called the Mambo Society, a sort of informal get-together for dancers, began meeting in what is now the East Village on Fourth Street at Second Avenue. Angel Rodríguez and his wife Addie taught there for about two years, among other instructors (Rodríguez 2003). Mike Bello, a popular "on 2" instructor now located in California, recalls that the original shine list from that time contained only about 25 steps which had been compiled by some of Eddie Torres's students (SalsaRoots, "Mike Bello"). Torres and the Mambo Society introduced a whole new generation of dancers and instructors to the mambo.

The approach to the clave rhythm was by this time far different than it was during the Palladium days. Luis Máquina explains, "When this dance [mambo] came out, there was no such thing as dancing on two. You danced on clave period" (Friedler 1997). Angel Rodríguez adds that Freddie Ríos, a Palladium dance legend who was another of his teachers, first counted one, then two, and Cuban Pete does not count at all (2003).[12] However, dancers in the 1970s and 1980s wanted to systematize the dance, thereby creating a "legitimate" and more prestigious art form while also facilitating its teaching. Eddie Torres spearheaded this movement by setting his steps to counts and organizing them into a syllabus. At the same time, Angel Rodríguez formulated the second school of "on 2" thought, and both men also formed dance companies that are still active to this day. As has been noted, this division between "street" and schooled dancers remains a contentious matter.

Eddie Torres's mambo basic is counted 123 567, with the break or direction change occurring on counts 2 and 6; this feature is what makes it a type of "on 2" mambo. This step, called the "New York 2" by some, is markedly different from the mambo of the 1950s (see Butler 1953), but Torres explains that for his generation, the second generation of mambo dancers, "it became our natural way of dancing mambo 1–2–3" (on Ortiz 2001b). He describes his step as the "street version" of mambo (ibid), indicating that by the time he began dancing, this is the way it was being danced in his neighborhood. Torres's has become the most prevalent type of "on 2" mambo: many find his count easier to learn, and his elegant or "classic" style is widely admired.

In 1987, Angel and Addie Rodríguez formed their own "on 2" mambo dance company, Razz M'Tazz (RMT). Their basic step fell on counts 234 678, like Cuban son or the mambo of the 50s; it is sometimes called the "power 2." However, some RMT shines are still danced on 123 567, which Angel calls the "jazz counts" (Rodríguez 2003). Besides the difference in timing, RMT style is quite different, too. Angel had begun his career as a hustle dancer with Fire and Ice and, later, with the Latin Symbolics, so he became known for incorporating hustle turns and styling into his mambo technique. He also danced and taught at Paul Pellicoro's Manhattan ballroom studio, Dance Sport, which is where he began to systematize his approach and devise what would become the Razz M'Tazz system.

The comparative merits of the Torres and the RMT counts are vigorously debated to this day.[13] Among dancers, the most controversial aspects of the debate center around which count best adheres to the clave and which is the "true" mambo, i.e. which is most "legitimate" or "authentic." Though both Torres and Rodríguez have some ballroom training, both believe their methods to have evolved from "street" mambo. The argument can be and is made both ways: the original Palladium mambo was most often danced on the RMT count of 234, so that the count is more legitimate; the ballroom mambo is danced on 234, so it is less legitimate (since most "on 2" dancers see themselves as far removed from ballroom dancers); most untrained or "street" dancers naturally dance on 123, so the Torres count is more legitimate. In truth, the two versions are not so very different since, in practice, Torres dancers actually step well ahead of counts one and five, pushing their count nearly a half-beat closer to a 234:

MUSICAL COUNT:	&	1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&	5	&	6	&	7	&	8
DANCERS' COUNT:	(1)			2		3			(5)			6		7		

Still, these two schools of mambo are different in more ways than timing: style and steps also vary. In addition, each version has its own pedagogical merit. Torres's is easier to begin with since most students find it easier to step on the downbeat than to hold it; it simultaneously forces them into finding the "2" because they must break on it (see figure 3, page 132). The learning curve is steeper with the RMT count, but Angel believes that in the end his students will be stronger dancers who are able to dance with any partner because of their understanding of the music (2003). Both instructors teach their students to listen for the clave and the conga slap in order to find the all-important "2" count, but opinions differ on whether starting the step on count one (as in the Torres method) or on count two (RMT method) best matches with the clave rhythm. The controversy is not likely to be resolved any time soon because of the nearly fanatical dedication some dancers have to one system or the other.

In conclusion, during the twenty-year period from 1966 to 1987, the mambo was in decline and in fact nearly died out. Most Palladium dancers had retired; even those who still performed were not actively teaching. Most performing, teaching dancers were doing Latin hustle instead, or a combination of salsa and hustle. Meanwhile, salsa dancing was purely social and had not yet developed as an artistic, staged dance. The mambo revival did not begin until the late 1980s, following the televised Apollo Theater performance by Eddie Torres and Tito Puente. After that, Eddie Torres and Angel Rodríguez formulated and systematized their two distinct methods of teaching and dancing "on 2" mambo, each eventually incorporating ideas from salsa and/or hustle. This set the stage for the current proliferation of "on 2" dance schools and companies.

Third generation: The "On 2" era

Though the Palladium era dancers laid the kinetic foundations for "on 2" dancing and the salsa/hustle generation laid the theoretical ones, it was not until the current generation of dancers emerged during the 1990s that "on 2" dancing became a genre in its own right and a true "movement," in the sense of having coherence, aim, and numbers. The current generation is characterized by growth, dissemination, commercialization, and codification of the "on 2" style, combined with the ever more demanding technique that is a result of increased competition. The terms "salsa" and "mambo" are now frequently used interchangeably, though the words can still provoke controversy.

From just a handful of "on 2" troupes at the beginning of the 1990s, the phenomenon has grown so much that there are now about thirty "on 2" teaching and performance companies in the New York metropolitan area dancing either Torres or RMT methods (see Shaw and Silverio, "Directory of On 2"; this listing includes only those who perform on the Torres count). Each school teaches hundreds of students each week, so the "on 2" dancing scene in New York is becoming larger and exerting more economic force all the time. As mentioned, many nightclubs now offer special nights or special dance floors just for "on 2" dancers. Specialized DJs satisfy mambo dancers' sonic needs: they must not loop or mix songs, and they should not play too much Cuban music, Latin jazz, or salsa romántica (Shaw and Silverio: "Directory of DJs"). There is even an "on 2" clothing company to supply dancers with mambo-related t-shirts and towels (www.mambofateegz.com).

Though "on 2" dance is closely bound up with New York's culture and history, the "on 2" community is now spreading beyond the confines of the city. Beginning in the mid-1990s, New York instructors began to take their "on 2" dancing to other cities and even other countries. This was accomplished both through aggressive self-promotion via web sites and instructional videos and through the invitations of competitive dancers in other locales who had grown tired of doing the same moves over and over. The dance took off particularly in California, which had already developed its own "West Coast" style of dance strongly influenced by the swing dance revival. So, just as early mambo was likened to jitterbug (Butler 1953: 52), swing is once again exerting its influence on the mambo. New York instructors have also been successful in creating a niche for the dance in Europe; for example, Angel Rodríguez has founded a Razz M'Tazz branch in Milan, Italy, and plans to establish another in Marseilles, France. Japan and Korea have been receptive to the New York style as well (Rodríguez 2003).

The growing numbers of people interested in learning salsa have given the dance a greater economic value, which has, of course, led to increased commercialization. One effect of this process is that the debate over which is the "right" way to dance has become more important, since a teacher or performer's very livelihood may depend on the public's answer to that question. Angel Rodríguez comments, "[People talk about] how 'if you don't do it this way it's not the right way'; 'no one in New York knows how to teach it right.' Which are great business lines, if you're Latino, saying, 'This is the only way'" (2003). These statements imply several things: that many claims of authenticity are made for economic reasons, that public perception is that only Latinos can teach salsa correctly (a belief that persists among many students, despite assertions by both Torres and Rodríguez to the contrary), and that that perception was itself created for business reasons. Secondly, increased interest in teaching the dance has lent impetus to the movement towards codifying it, which began with the 25-step Eddie Torres syllabus used by the Mambo Society in the 1980s (Torres's syllabus today includes approximately 300 shines and 200 turn patterns). Today, each dance company has its own syllabus of steps numbering in the hundreds, organized by level of difficulty and divided into two groups: partner work and freestyle steps or "shines." Finally, competition between dance companies has led to the creation of ever more inventive or even outlandish dance performances. Performances by New York teams at this year's Congreso Mundial de la Salsa had themes ranging from "Salsa Circus" to "The Matrix."

Teaching syllabi have become important documents, both for their economic value, since they ensure that students will keep coming back to learn more, and because they are one way in which dancers have documented the history of their art form. Key moments and figures in the dance's history and development are immortalized there. Eddie Torres's syllabus includes a step called "Millie Donay," which is one of that dancer's characteristic moves. Most, if not all, companies include "pachanga taps" and "pachanga strut," recalling that 1960s dance craze. Both Torres and RMT syllabi contain tap-like shuffle steps, including heel shuffles and triple shuffles. The influence of mass-market pop culture is also felt, as in Torres's "Michael Jackson" and RMT's "Janet Jackson." The more intimate histories of each company also are recorded through steps named by the company members and instructors who invented them. For example, the RMT syllabus includes "Konig's Grapevine" for instructor Carlos Konig and "Addie's Tradition" for company director Addie Rodríguez.

The emphasis on labeling steps extends to an increased concern for the proper labeling of the dance as a whole. As noted, the word salsa has been controversial ever since it was first applied to music in the 1970s. Though most now consider it an acceptable term for the musical genre, it is still the subject of intense debate among dancers. Many, even most, "on 2" dancers prefer to call their style "mambo" rather than "salsa," possibly as a result of Eddie Torres's preference for the former term. Some differentiate between the two, saying that salsa is "on 1" while mambo is "on 2," or that "salsa is the music, mambo is the dance" (Bello: "Salsa music"). To others, either term is acceptable and both refer to the same thing (Espinoza: "Breaking"). In the words of Angel Rodríguez, "For me, it's all the same. Three steps back, three steps forward, and put the kitchen sink in" (2003). These differing opinions are most likely a result of different life experiences—Eddie's a product of his partnership with Tito Puente, who also disliked the "salsa" label; Angel's a consequence of his extensive experience with non-salsa dances like the hustle.

Though the basic steps of New York mambo are the same as in the past, much stylistic innovation is taking place. Shines become ever more complicated as older steps are dissected, speeded up, or recombined in novel ways. In addition, Eddie Torres notes, "Palladium dancers used to do a lot of open work. The second generation of where I came from started to develop a lot of partner work. But now the youngsters who are coming to Mambo are influenced by hip-hop and reggae. . . . [And] I see the new dance groups performing using a specific storyline" (SalsaRoots: "Eddie Torres"). Storyline or themed dances, such as Razz M'Tazz's recent "Mission Impossible" sequence and Cultural Explotion's "Salsa Circus," increase the theatricality of the mambo, while the mixing of hip-hop and reggae moves with 'traditional' mambo steps parallels recent experiments in the fusion of salsa and hip-hop music by groups such as DLG (Dark Latin Groove, now defunct). Thus, the dance reflects the transcultural experiences of the young, New York-born Puerto Ricans who perform it, just as the mambo music of the 1950s reflected the musical exchanges between Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and African Americans during the first half of the 20th century. One scholar has claimed that salsa music is in fact defined by its "free combination of diverse rhythms and genres from the Caribbean" (Quintero Rivera 1999: 89—author's translation); salsa/mambo dancing might also be defined by its free combination of movement vocabularies from the Caribbean and the United States.

Another new development on the scene has been the rise of "socials," get-togethers for "on 2" dancers hosted by particular dance companies or instructors—a practice long observed by ballroom dance studios. These events are where serious dancers go to practice their moves with the best partners available, without the pressures of dress codes or problems created by alcohol. Most attendees wear jeans or workout clothes with sneakers. Socials are usually held at dance studios, which meet both spatial and flooring requirements, and most feature recorded music spun by "on 2" DJs, though a very few have live bands. Dance teams frequently perform new numbers, especially if they are the sponsor of the social. Jimmy Anton, a dance instructor and DJ, began what is now New York's longest-running social in 1993 (Silverio 2000). Dancers from many companies congregate there; many videotape each other in order to learn new moves and evaluate themselves. In spite of the low-key atmosphere, the quality of dancing has made Anton's social, for some dancers, "one of the hottest dance spots in NYC" (Silverio 2000). And just as socials have evolved as the premier location for local dancers to meet, so have *congresos* or congresses become the most important sites for dancers from disparate locations to make contact. These large conventions that often feature both theatrical performances and competitive events are now held in San Juan, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami, Canada, Italy, and many other locations. These events have pushed salsa/mambo dancers to ever greater artistic achievements through the friendly competition and exchange of ideas they encourage.

Though people of all economic classes do mix in a few New York clubs, "on 2" salsa/mambo is increasingly (and somewhat controversially) directed at the urban middle class, to whom most "on 2" clubs and classes cater. Edie Espinoza, a dancer who maintains the online salsa/mambo magazine SalsaWeb, writes:

> Salsa attracts a lot of compulsive/obsessive-type people. The go-getters in life. The type "A" personalities. I'm not surprised, as it is such a challenge to dance. I've met more Doctors, engineers, lawyers, physicians, CPAs and College Professors on the Salsa dance floor than I have [at] any other type of nightclub. (Espinoza: "Breaking"—original capitalization)

One reader wrote back with an apt observation: "This isn't surprising as this is the kind of people that can afford the dance lessons. You will find the same crowds dancing ballroom dancing, Argentine Tango and Lindy Hop" (Espinoza: "Breaking"). Some go so far as to argue that mambo was always a middle-class dance, even in the Palladium era (see García [n.d.]). These arguments state that, although people of all social levels did attend the Palladium, mambo and Latin jazz were popular mainly with the urban, 'hip' crowd while other clubs, such as the Club Caborrojeño, were catering to Puerto Ricans of rural origins by programming jíbaro music.[14] Whatever the case may have been, some instructors are now trying to change things. For example, Eddie Torres and Angel and Addie Rodríguez all frequently teach in schools for students with low incomes; Torres also hopes to start a scholarship program one day.

Even though the dance's style and social atmosphere have changed, continuities can still be found between the mambo scene of the past and that of today. The preferred music for dancing "on 2" mambo or salsa continues to be the "classic" Puerto Rican or Nuyorican salsa of groups such as El Gran Combo, Ray Barretto, Eddie Palmieri, or Conjunto Clásico, just as it was for the previous generation of dancers, while many performances are still done to Palladium-era mambos, such as those of Tito Puente. In addition, though the majority of instructors and performers are of Puerto Rican descent, at the social level it is still a multiethnic art form enjoyed and practiced by Asians, African Americans, whites, and Latinos of all nationalities. In discussing the Palladium, Puente noted, "The mambo sparked romance, defined gender roles, linked cultures, and bridged race relations" (1994), a statement that still holds true for many dancers. Of course, some of the original steps are still maintained as well, both by those Palladium dancers who are still active and by those who have emulated them.

Today's "on 2" community is based not only on a common interest, but also—for some—on nostalgia, and on a nearreligious devotion to salsa/mambo music, dance, and especially the clave that ties the two together. One might expect that dancers who were there would remember the Palladium ballroom with a certain wistfulness, but even dancers who are too young to have any actual memories of the Palladium "remember" it through community discourse. The Palladium seems to represent a kind of utopia, free of prejudice, where a near perfection of music and dance was attained. The style in which dancers write and talk about the Palladium encourages its mythic status. An otherwise straightforward article on early mambo dancers by Alan Feuerstein (1992), a mambo enthusiast who began dancing in the 1950s, opens like a fairy tale with a description of the Palladium:

> It was the early 1950s. The Mambo craze gripped New York City. All the great Latin music, musicians and dancers could be found congregating in one place – The Palladium dance hall on 53rd Street and Broadway. It was called the Home of the Mambo. Although the Palladium no longer exists as a physical structure . . . it remains in people's memories as a spiritual center for all that was authentic and exciting about the best days of the Mambo.

Another dancer wrote a short story on the subject in similarly heightened language, describing an idealized Palladium as "a different world, rich with people, cultures, melodies and rhythms in counterpoint" (Kellin 2001?).

Clave is another subject that is elevated to a magical status in mambo discourse. In describing his introduction to "on 2" mambo, instructor Mike Bello writes,

> I have to say that almost from the moment I was first made really aware of its existence, something rang true and I GOT IT—the truth of the clave as the life force that drives the music and dance. I accepted the truth about clave kind of like one might accept religion, even without 'proof' at the time, because deep down it FEELS RIGHT, and like a religion, I embraced the 'word' of the clave (Bello: "How Mike"—original emphasis).

Such speech seems unusually dramatic, even to enthusiastic dancers. Instructor Rodney López comments, "New York salsa/mambo dancers have an almost religious preference for breaking on two" (in Silverio 2002). However, such discourse is one way in which New York mambo dancers sustain and strengthen their community and their art.

* * *

Conclusion: From local past to global future

From the Afro-Antillean *kalenda* of colonial times to the Indo-Trinidadian chutney of today, the mixing of the music and dance of various cultures and ethnicities has been going on in the Caribbean for a very long time. The appearance of salsa and mambo in New York, which today is a cultural extension of the Caribbean, can be seen as just one more manifestation of this ongoing historical process. On the other hand, New York "on 2" mambo can also be seen as having a unique, local, and particularly Nuyorican identity. The majority of salsa/mambo musicians have been Puerto Ricans throughout the genre's history, and New York Puerto Ricans have naturally left their mark on the dance as well. Berríos-Miranda writes, "It is through dancing that people experience salsa as 'their' music in the most powerful way" (2002: 44); so for many Nuyoricans who identify with salsa music, New York-style "on 2" salsa/mambo has also become an important marker of identity. Dance classes train students to listen to the music in a uniquely Puerto Rican way: the conga drum slap on beat two, which is cited as one of the reasons for dancing "on 2," is nearly always present in Puerto Rican salsa, though in Cuban salsa, improvisation may eliminate it (see Berríos-Miranda 2002). Still, it has always been a form that allows for and takes advantage of ethnic diversity. That is one of its strengths, and it is also one of the qualities that make it a real product of the New York City environment. It is a truly local art form even as it is being spread across the globe and re-localized by its new audiences and practitioners.

Future trends will most likely include additional growth, hybridization, and codification of technique. It is likely that salsa music and salsa/mambo dance will continue to follow a shared evolutionary path, even as salsa romántica and the nightclub-style dancing that accompanies it go in their own direction. Thus, the trend towards globalization that began with the export of salsa music to Europe, Asia, and Africa is likely to result in further dissemination of "on 2" dancing, as well. The dance style will continue to develop and strengthen even as it incorporates fashions that might at first glance seem insubstantial. One dancer explains, "As you move from one [fashion] to the next, the things that were just a fad are going to fall away and the core becomes more solid" (Brown 2003). Current trends include a return to Afro-Cuban style, a movement spearheaded by instructor Frankie Martínez and his Abakuá Dance Company, the combination of "2" and "1" timings by some dancers, and an effort at creating a "street" look through use of hip-hop moves and casual clothing and shoes, in contrast to the glittery, Vegas-style costumes and high heels of the past. Finally, "on 2" mambo seems poised to make the jump from the vernacular to an accepted form of "art" dance, just as African-American jazz dance did in the 20th century. In fact, Eddie Torres has stated this as his goal:

> I would like to see [mambo] be accepted in the classic forms of art and dance, along with ballet and jazz and modern . . . . I tell people, 'Ballet must have started like this; jazz must have started like this. They all had to have a beginning somewhere.' So I won't stop until I actually know that this dance is now right in there with all the classic dances (2003).

Mambo dancers' current focus on technique, timing, and codification suggest that Torres's dream may soon become reality.

For academics, much work remains to be done in the analysis of salsa/mambo dancing. For example, this researcher plans to write further on dance-related discourse and localized dance styles and communities. One hopes that others may also find dance an important lens through which to examine cultural values, continuity, and change, as important as is music to the formation and maintenance of ethnic and other group identities and boundaries. For dancers, no such work is necessary. Their beautiful, inventive, elegant movements already have described Nuyorican history, culture, and artistic achievements more eloquently than can any research paper. Eddie Torres asks, "You know why this dance is so unique? Because you can go out tonight in New York City and find a club and dance the night away. You can do mambo all night, and then tomorrow night you can invite your friend to come see you at the Madison Square Garden. How many dances can actually do that?" (Torres 2003). Equally at home in the club, on the street, or on the stage, mambo is a living art, continually reshaped by its practitioners to fit their new realities. In the mambo, history is being made every day.

FIGURES

Key to figures: Black footprints indicate the inactive foot (no motion); Grey footprints indicate the active foot. The number inside indicates on which musical count the motion occurs; White footprints indicate the previous position of the active foot.

FIGURE 1:
Razz M'Tazz basic step "on 2"

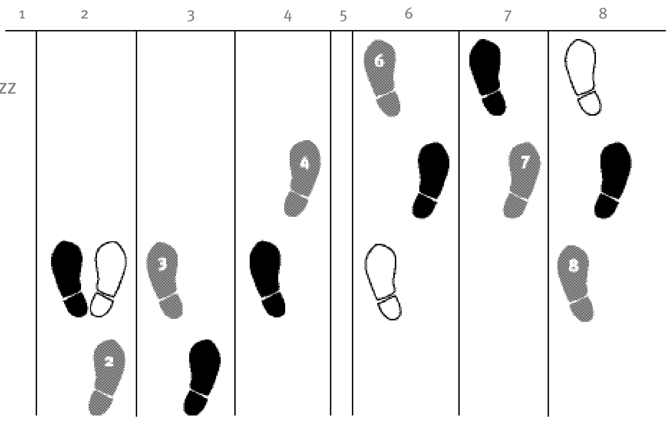
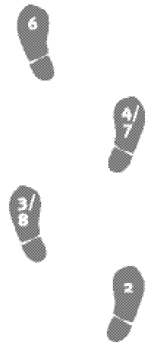


FIGURE 2:
The diamond pattern, shown on Razz M'Tazz count.



In the 1950s, dance instructors called this the "diamond" pattern (see figure 2; Butler 1953). However, the step can also be performed with less forward-and-back motion by placing steps 4 and 8 next to the inactive foot, rather than behind or ahead of it, which produces the same floor pattern used by many nightclub dancers (see figure 4).

FIGURE 3:
Eddie Torres basic step, breaking "on 2"

NOTE:
3 is sometimes placed slightly farther back than 1, and 7 further forward than 5.

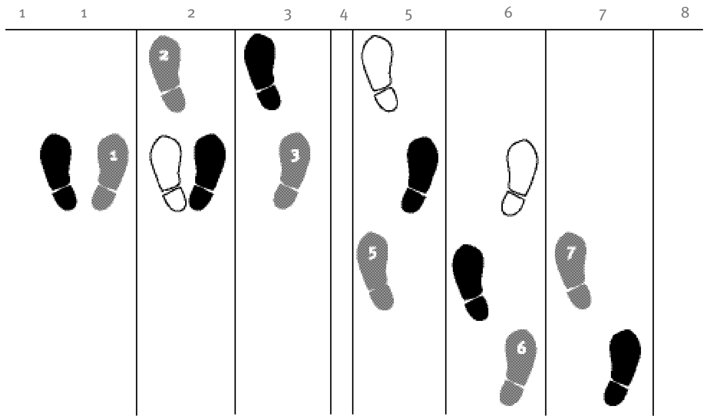
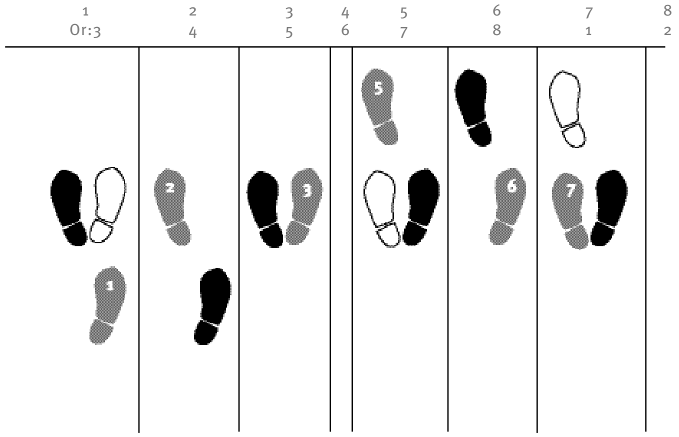


FIGURE 4:
Nightclub salsa.
One popular version, shown on two common counts.

In one variation, a side-step is produced by stepping 1 to the right, 5 to the left. In another variation, both 1 and 5 are stepped to the back, sometimes with a slight turn to either side; this is often called the 'salsa step.'



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NOTES

[1] The author was for 18 months a dancer with Razz M'Tazz (RMT), a Manhattan-based "on 2" dance company headed by Angel and Addie Rodríguez, and she also performs with Ivan Rivera's Matrix Mambo Madness; she has also been a salsa instructor for the past five years. Much of this article is based on her personal experiences and observations as a dancer with RMT and her attendance of the seventh annual Congreso Mundial de la Salsa in San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2003.

[2] Clave is a concept derived from Afro-Cuban music like *son montuno*. It is a rhythmic pattern consisting of two parts (usually written in two 4/4 or cut time measures), one with three beats and the other with two. Either part can be played first, so musicians distinguish between 3–2 and 2–3 clave (dancers usually do not). Each instrument's part is structured around this basic rhythm, written here in time-unit box notation:

2/3 Clave
```
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &     5 & 6 & 7 & 8 &
    X   X           X     X     X
```
3/2 Clave
```
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &     5 & 6 & 7 & 8 &
X     X     X           X   X
```

[3] Shines are named dance steps performed solo rather than with partner that are composed of difficult, often syncopated footwork. The term is said to have come from boys who shined shoes in the street and who would perform tap dancing for a small fee (Rodríguez 2003).

[4] I base this statement on my personal experience. Upon first moving to New York, I experienced a disorienting feeling each time I partnered with native New York salsa/mambo dancers. I constantly felt as if our steps and turns were not going to be completed 'in time,' I always felt as if we were 'late.' I soon realized this was because I had been used to stepping on top of the beat, while my partners stepped behind it. See Monson (1996: 56) for a description of this phenomenon in jazz music.

[5] A listing is available from Shaw & Silverio at www.salsanewyork.com/guide/song_list.htm.

[6] Articles frequently appear on www.salsaweb.com, www.dancefreak.com, www.salsanewyork.com, www.salsacrazy.com, and other sites.

[7] According to Cuban Pete, Mambo USA was a terrible failure because of the integration of white and black performers (2003, personal communication). Though integration was an important factor in the birth of the mambo in New York, when the dance was taken out of its home context it did not go over well with audiences.

[8] The author traveled to Cuba three times during 2000–2001, where she studied popular and traditional dances with the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional, Cuba's official folk dance troupe. They teach mambo as a combination of the step-tap pachanga step and a waltz-like step; Cuban social dancers also perform the step-tap upon hearing a mambo tune. More like "on 2" mambo is the Cuban son, which is taught with the first step on count 4 and a pause on 1, effectively producing the 234 count of New York mambo.

[9] Incidentally, Cuban Pete was Augie's first teacher and was responsible for introducing him to Margo (Craddock and Aguilar 2003).

[10] In addition, "Cuban" seems to have been synonymous with all things Latino for the general American public. Puerto Rican conga player José Calderón, a major progenitor of the boogaloo style that combined Latin and soul musics during the 1960s, was nicknamed "Joe Cuba."

[11] Angel Rodríguez also cites Gene Kelly as an important influence on the Latin Hustle (2003).

[12] Barbara Craddock, Cuban Pete's partner, confirmed in a telephone conversation that he does not count—instead, he dances to the clave. My conversations with Puerto Rican dancers on the island showed that this is the way that most of them conceive of and teach the dance—to the clave, rather than to counts (Pion 2000; Martinez 2000; Ortos 2003).

[13] While many other "on 2" dance companies have contributed unique moves and stylings to the dance, I focus on these two because they have both the longest histories and the most clearly defined musical-choreographic theories.

[14] The movement of mambo from the street to the ballroom and dance studio has certainly resulted in or contributed to its becoming a more middle class dance form. However, this should not be understood as referring to a white middle class. "On 2" students are an ethnically diverse group, though most hold white-collar jobs and belong to or aspire to join the middle class. "On 2" professionals are nearly all New York-born Puerto Ricans, most likely because their identification with salsa/mambo drives them to pursue it more than other dance forms, but also because of subtle pressures sometimes exerted against dancers of other ethnicities who "don't belong" or who are seen by audiences or students as "less authentic."

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