Abstract:

The study of Afro-centric music is an intrinsic study into the various cultures that were influenced by African based music. The African musical heritage in most styles from the Caribbean is based on several concepts: collective participation, emphasis on rhythm (especially polyrhythms), improvisation, and call & response. All of these elements are represented in the folkloric rumba styles of the Havana and Matanzas regions in Cuba. It is with these concepts that I plan on learning more about the folkloric tradition of the Cuban rumba – a style of music that is inherently African, yet can act as a vehicle for deeper understanding and learning of Cuban culture and musical styles from the Caribbean.

My goal is to study with Michael Spiro, an Afro-Cuban music specialist, who has done years of research on these musical cultures and is willing to share his experiences with me during the summer of 2012.

Michael Spiro is internationally known for his experiences as an Afro-Centric musician and educator. Known specifically for his work in the Latin
music field, Michael Spiro is an internationally recognized percussionist, recording artist, and educator, whose career is remarkably multi-faceted.

**Budget:**

I requested $4000 in total for salary and expenses for travel to Arcata, CA to study with Michael Spiro.

**Results:**

This SAIF grant made it possible to travel to northern California during the summer of 2012 to study with several Afro-Cuban musicians, including Jesus Diaz and Michael Spiro, and to study Afro-Cuban Folkloric music.

Activities and research included learning a variety of styles of music inherent in Afro-Cuban culture (i.e., Makuta, Bembe, and Matanzas Rumba) as well as the various drumming patterns that are associated with this indigenous music. Some of the results of this research are presented here in this final report and are utilized in MUSIC 1190 – *World Rhythm Rudiments*, which is an introductory rhythm course offered in the fall semester at the University of Wisconsin-Platteville. Along with the study, I was exposed to a variety of performances, recordings, and readings to further my research in Afro-Cuban Folkloric music.

I felt that the results were beneficial as a performer as well as an educator. This SAIF grant allowed me to focus solely on Afro-Cuban music and to further my personal and professional development as a musician and pedagogue in percussion.
Bibliography (limited):


Samples of the material used in MUSIC 1190:

Below are sample pages taken from a course packet that I constructed at the end of the summer in 2012 in order to share with the students enrolled in MUSIC 1190 – *World Rhythm Rudiments*. 
**Terminology**

**Rhythm:** Movement in time. In music, this movement is marked by the regulated succession of strong and weak elements

**Beat:** The basic unit of time in music.

**Subdivisions:** A secondary pulse that divides the beat into equal units

**Duple Subdivisions:** Where the beat is divided into two equal units

**Triple Subdivisions:** Where the beat is divided into three equal units

**Duple Groupings:** Grouping of two or multiples of two beats

**Triple Groupings:** Grouping of three or multiples of three beats

**Quadruple Groupings:** A common duple grouping of four beats to form a musical period

**On Beat:** Where the attack of a sound is simultaneous with the primary pulse

**Off Beat:** Where the attack of a sound does not coincide with the primary pulse

**Tempo:** The rate of speed of the beat

**Polyrhythm:** The simultaneous sounding of two or more independent rhythms
Sub-Saharan African Music Concepts

**Interlock:** The concept of fitting one idea (pitch, rhythm, etc.) into the spaces left open by another idea, in order to create a great whole.

**Call & Response:** The alteration of leader and chorus parts, or of a vocal and instrumental part. Corresponds to one of the basic concepts of human communication as well as basic musical forms (verse-chorus). Pervasive element in many Afro-centric musics that exist today (blues, gospel, rock, jazz, and the various extensions from these styles).

**Dense Overlapping Textures:** Polyphony, harmony, and the use of buzzy timbres (bells on drums or wrists of drummers).

**Cyclical & Open Ended Forms:** Where the music has no true beginning or ending, but utilizing ostinatos (repeated rhythmic/melodic patterns) as the basic foundation for performance. Long repetition allows everyone to hear the music; participation is valued and encouraged.

**Rhythmic Complexity:** Quite often you will find both duple and triple rhythmic patterns performed simultaneously. One can hear and feel the music in several different ways.

**Core v. Elaboration parts:** The individual parts in this music are based on a core part (foundation) and an elaboration of the core part (variations, improvisations).
Each time signature can be classified into a certain \textit{meter}.

Terms like \textit{duple}, \textit{triple}, and \textit{quadruple} refer to the number of beats in a measure. The term simple means that each of these beats can be broken down into two notes.

For example, 2/4 time is classified as \textit{simple duple}.

\textit{Duple"} refers to the two beats per measure.

\textit{Simple"} states that each of these beats can be divided into two notes.

2/2 & 2/8 are also classified as \textit{simple duple}.

\textbf{Simple Triple}

\textbf{Simple Quadruple}

What are some other examples of \textit{Simple Duple}, \textit{Simple Triple}, and \textit{Simple Quadruple}?
Compound Meter

While beats in simple meter are divided into two notes, beats in compound meter are divided into three.

Notice that the six eighth notes can either be divided into two beats (compound duple) or three beats (simple triple).

Since the simple triple pattern already belongs to 3/4 time, 6/8 is compound duple.

Notice that each beat in 6/8 is a dotted quarter note. In fact, all compound meters will have some dotted note as its beat.

9/8 time is classified as compound triple.

There are three beats (three dotted quarter notes), thus making the meter triple.

Finally, 12/8 time is classified as compound quadruple.

There are four beats, thus making the meter quadruple.

What are some other examples of Compound Duple, Compound Triple, and Compound Quadruple?
Makuta

By Lázaro Galarraga

It is widely believed that Makuta rhythms and dances were played in ancient festivals, perhaps during the coronation of Congolese kings. While Makuta may have once been sacred, it no longer has religious significance and is now performed in public performances and other secular settings.

Makuta Drums have a barrel shaped body with a single head on top. The head is attached with tacks on the shell and tensioned with heat. The Makuta drums were thought to be the predecessor of the conga drum.

Three drums are used, one person on each drum:

- **Kachimbo** (high drum)
- **Mula** (middle drum)
- **Caja** (low drum)

Timekeeping instruments include the **Ngongui** (hoe blade or cowbell), **Gua Gua** (two sticks on a wooden shell, bamboo block, or woodblock), and the **Nkembi** (gourd rattle, wrist rattles).

The rhythm is in 4/4 with a strong beat on the ‘one’ of each measure. The bell provides further structure by playing a pattern often referred to as ‘quintillo’ common to Afro-Cuban 4/4 rhythms. The Caja (low drum) improvises within this pattern before resolving back to the ‘one,’ usually with an open tone.
Makuta

Ngongui (bell)

Gua gua

Kachimbo

Mula

Caja
Bembé

The word Bembé can be used in two different ways: 1) it is a public musical ceremony used in Santería that honors the orishas with the use of conga-like drums, shaker, and iron bell; and 2) it is used as a generic term to describe the toque (or the rhythm or beat) of the music typically played during this ceremony. A more formal presentation would be with three batá drums (double-headed hourglass shaped drums).

Bembé is a religious rhythm played for Yoruba deities called Orishas. With many similarities to Greek mythology, the Yoruba believe in one supreme being (Olodumare), with a number of gods/goddesses (Orishas). One of the many similarities to Greek mythology is that the Orishas take on human characteristics.

Each subgroup in Yorubaland worshipped their own local Orisha, with their own dedicated rhythms, songs, and dances. Slavery brought the Yoruba (and all of their subgroups) together in Cuba and intermixed with Spain’s Catholicism. The religion later became known as the worship of saints (Santería) as each Yoruban deity corresponded with a Catholic saint. Ogún = Saint Peter; Changó = Saint Barbara.

Bembé drums are either double-headed or single-headed cylindrical drums with heads attached to the shell with nails, rope, or metal tuning lugs. Very similar names as Makuta (Kachimbo, Mula, Caja); these drums can be played either with sticks, hands, or a combination of both. The bell is usually played on a hoe blade or cowbell and utilizes the most common 12/8 African timeline (aka, 12 bell or 12/8 bell).

Source: The Music of Santería by John Amira and Steven Cornelius.
Heel-Toe Exercises

One of the more difficult techniques to master, the heel-toe (also referred to as marcha) is a necessary component in a conga player’s sound. The heel-toe is used in many forms of Afro-Cuban music such as Bembé and Rumba as well as most Afro-Cuban influenced Popular music.

RH and LH separately and together

*This one is really helpful for playing the segundo in guaguancó!

Try starting with your Right hand as well

*This 12/8 exercise is helpful for Bembé; try changing up different sounds on the third subdivision of each beat (i.e., slap, bass, open, muffled tone, etc.)
Bembé

Guataca (bell)

Kachimbo

Mula

Caja

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Guataca (bell)} \\
\frac{12}{8} \\
1 & \& a & 2 & \& a & 3 & \& a & 4 & \& a \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Kachimbo} \\
\frac{12}{8} \\
O & S & O & S & O & S & O & S \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Mula} \\
\frac{12}{8} \\
H & T & S & B & O & O & H & T & S & B & O & O \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Caja} \\
\frac{12}{8} \\
O & B & B & B & B & S & H & T & B & B & S \\
\end{array}
\]
The Afro-Cuban Rumba

The word rumba usually refers to street music performed by percussion and voices, usually in accompaniment to dance. It originated in the barrios outside of Matanzas and Havana, and developed in a secular context (unlike the batá for Santería). One of the main stylistic differences is that the lead rumba drum is the highest pitched drum (quinto) and the lower pitched drums take over the ostinato patterns (possibly an influence of European music).

The rumba is interpreted in three forms: yambú, rumba Columbia, and guaguancó. Yambú is performed at a slow tempo in 4/4 and is often thought of as an old couples dance. Dancers’ gestures may mimic old age and the difficulty of daily tasks (walking with a cane, holding one’s back, etc.). In Yambú, the drummers use boxes called cajones instead of conga drums. The rumba Columbia is a male solo dance that features many acrobatic and virtuosic movements.

The guaguancó is a medium to fast tempo couples dance and is the most popular of the rumba forms. Couples dance apart with the man pursuing his female partner who attempts to turn away and cover herself. The dance climaxes in an act called el vacanao; which is a pelvic thrust symbolizing the sexual act. The text of the guaguancó deals with a variety of everyday topics and is usually sung by lead singer. The lead singer opens the song with an improvised section called La Diana; where the key is set using nonsense vocables. The singer than proceeds to el canto and then eventually the montuno with a call-and-response with the coro.

Source: Caribbean Currents: Caribbean Music from Rumba to Reggae by Peter Manual
Rumba Guaguancó
Matanzas Style