

Jeff Torchon  
[jtorchon@temple.edu](mailto:jtorchon@temple.edu)  
Temple University  
Philadelphia, PA

Enrique Jorrín and Cha-Cha-Chá: Creation, Historical Importance and Influences on American  
Music Education

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One of the most distinctive musical genres that originated in Cuba over the last century has been Cha-Cha-Chá, which was created by Enrique Jorrín in the 1950s. The popularity of this music has grown considerably since its genesis, evidenced by the vast array of repertoire associated with the style of music, the multitude of bands performing it and its prevalence in popular culture. The music has traveled the world via aural transmission; advances in technology have helped to disseminate Cha-Cha-Chá and have contributed to its prevalence. Very little research—particularly research written in the English language—exists on this genre and its creator. Due to its musical significance and social impact, it is important to understand Cha-Cha-Chá's place in modern Cuba and how it has been preserved over time. The purpose of this study is to discuss Enrique Jorrín's influence on the creation and performance of Cha-Cha-Chá, and to discuss the importance of Cha-Cha-Chá in American music education.

The questions that provide a framework for this study are:

1. Why was Cha-Cha-Chá created?
2. What were the circumstances and musical influences that led Enrique Jorrín to the creation of Cha-Cha-Chá?
3. Other than Enrique Jorrín, who participated in the creation of Cha-Cha-Chá?
4. How has Cha-Cha-Chá grown and developed since its genesis?
5. How does Enrique Jorrín's legacy continue?
6. What is the importance of Cha-Cha-Chá in American music education today?

This study uses historical inquiry to explore the life and work of Enrique Jorrín and the creation of Cha-Cha-Chá. Materials used were derived from a variety of sources including journal articles, newspaper articles, musical recordings, discographies, books, interviews and sheet music. Some of the sources were written in the Spanish language. I also spoke with leading experts in the field of Cuban music. The research process, which included close to forty sources, involved taking notes based on the information I discovered. This created a large collection of material on the Cha-Cha-Chá, Enrique Jorrín and various applications to music education in the United States. After collecting the data, it was coded based on the following categories: Enrique Jorrín, Pre-Creation, Post-Creation, Musical Characteristics and Music Education.

In addition to the life and contributions of Enrique Jorrín, I chronicle the integration and application of Cha-Cha-Chá into the music education classroom in the United States through collaboration between a middle school jazz band and orchestra. Other modes of exploration include the high school jazz band and orchestra, the middle and high school choir, any other instrumental or vocal ensembles present at a school, and elementary and secondary general music classes. Incorporating the historical and musical elements of Cha-Cha-Chá into the curriculum of these classes and ensembles would allow for further cultural sharing between Cuba and the United States as well as the continued creation of global citizens among student populations.

## Applications to Teaching

### All Types of Classrooms

- Teach history of Cha-Cha-Chá to students in order to put the style in context
  - Danzón (precursor to the Cha-Cha-Chá with roots in classical Rondeau form)
  - Enrique Jorrín and the creation of the Cha-Cha-Chá circa 1953
  - Musical Elements of the Cha-Cha-Chá
- Listen to recordings of the Cha-Cha-Chá from Cuba as well as popular music in the United States that utilizes the Cha-Cha-Chá rhythmic groove
- Learn the Cha-Cha-Chá dance and have students dance to a recording of the Cha-Cha-Chá

### General Music

- Create Cha-Cha-Chá rhythmic groove with a strong steady beat utilizing percussion instruments
- Teach a Cha-Cha-Chá melody using aural/oral tradition (same method that is used in Cuba)
- Take an existing song that students would know (ex. Happy Birthday, Mary Had a Little Lamb, etc.) and apply the Cha-Cha-Chá groove to the song
  - Students would sing the song while playing percussion instruments
  - The teacher should ensure the presence of the güiro and bell and make every effort to use similar percussion instruments (Bell, Güiro, Congas, Timbales)

### Middle/High School Instrumental

- Middle/high school orchestra & jazz band
  - Arrange a song in the Cha-Cha-Chá style and perform as a collaboration between these two ensembles
  - Teach historical attributes in addition to arrangement