

BEYOND SALSA PIANO

THE CUBAN TIMBA PIANO REVOLUTION



VOLUME 7: Iván "Melón" Lewis, Pt. 2

NOTE FOR NOTE TRANSCRIPTIONS

by Kevin Moore

photography by Tom Ehrlich

cover photo subject: Iván "Melón" Lewis

audio and video companion products available at www.timba.com/piano

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Chapter 1: *Por qué paró* and The Art of Controlled Improvisation

Por qué paró

The first album Melón recorded with Issac Delgado, *El año que viene*, contained three classic tracks that went on to become long-term staples of the group's concert repertoire. The first two, *No me mires a los ojos* and *La vida sin esperanza*, are covered in detail in Volume 6 of this series. We begin Volume 7 with 13 separate transcriptions from the third, *Por qué paró*, the vehicle for some of Melón's most extraordinary improvisational tumbao playing.

We'll begin with three tumbaos that Melón used during the cuerpo portion of the arrangement. The next seven tumbaos will delve deeply into Melón's "controlled improvisation" over the main chord progression. Finally, as we did with *La vida sin esperanza*, we'll examine the use of *muela* gear in *Por qué paró*'s open montuno section.

Por qué paró 1 - tracks 1 & 2

Por qué paró 1 - tracks 1 & 2

Por qué paró 1 could be thought of as the counterpart to *No me mires a los ojos* 1 and *La vida sin esperanza* 1 – a “hook” tumbao featured prominently in the cuerpo and the fixed montuno section.

This tumbao makes for a fascinating comparison between the styles of Melón and another hugely important pianist of the 1990s who will be the subject of two later volumes in this series: Juan Carlos González (no relation to Melón González), who played and arranged for Charanga Habanera and later for Danny Lozada y su Timba Cubana. Two years earlier, J. C. González created the following tumbao for *Para el llanto*, based on the exact chord progression that *Por qué paró* would use:

Chapter 2: Luz viajera

Melón's second album with The Issac Delgado Group, *Otra idea*, introduced two arrangements – *Luz viajera* and *Deja que Roberto te toque* – which proved so timeless, flexible, and extendable that they're still part of the group's concert repertoire today, with many great musicians having added their contributions and personal touches over the years. Like Miles Davis, Issac changed musicians more often than he changed songs, allowing each new rhythm section to extend and personalize the arrangements so that songs like *No me mires* and *Luz viajera* took on lives of their own.

The history of Issac Delgado's pianists reads like a Who's Who of Cuban music. In addition to Melón, Tony Pérez, Pepe Rivero, Yaniel "El Majá" Matos, Roberto Carlos "Cucurucho" Rodríguez, Rolando Luna, and Tony Rodríguez are all worthy of volumes in this series. These will illustrate vastly different approaches to many of the songs and tumbaos in the current volumes on Melón.

Like Joaquín Betancourt's epic *La vida sin esperanza*, Melón's arrangement of *Luz viajera* provides a long and extremely satisfying cuerpo and fixed montuno section. Before moving to the open montuno section, let's take a breather and cover two famous (and easy to play!) passages from this classic arrangement.

Luz viajera 1 is the introduction to the rubato first verse, played with sustain pedal on each chord.

Luz viajera 1 - tracks 29 & 30

The musical score is presented in three systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble clef and a bass line in the bass clef. The second and third systems continue the melodic and bass lines, with the bass line featuring sustained chords indicated by a horizontal line under the notes. The word "LATINA" is written in a stylized font on the right side of the page.

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About the Author

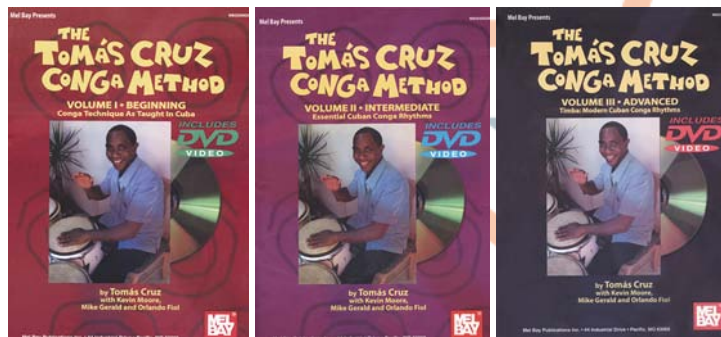


Melón Lewis, Kevin Moore – Los Angeles, 2009

Kevin Moore (kevin@timba.com) is the co-founder and music editor for the world's largest Cuban music website, www.timba.com, to which he has contributed the free online multimedia book *The Roots of Timba*, dozens of book-length articles, discographies, record analyses, interviews and the daily Cuban music blog *La última*, which is nearing its 10th year of publication.

In the early 2000s Kevin co-wrote *The Tomás Cruz Conga Method, Volumes 1-3*, a critically acclaimed method book used as a text at various educational institutions.

The Tomás Cruz Conga Method – Volumes 1, 2, and 3



Published by Mel Bay

As musical director, composer, arranger and violinist of the California-based salsa band Orquesta Gitano he co-produced the 1998 CD *Salsa Gitana*.

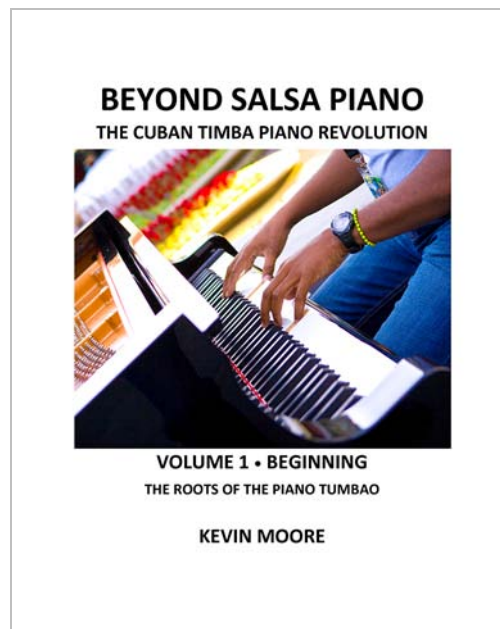


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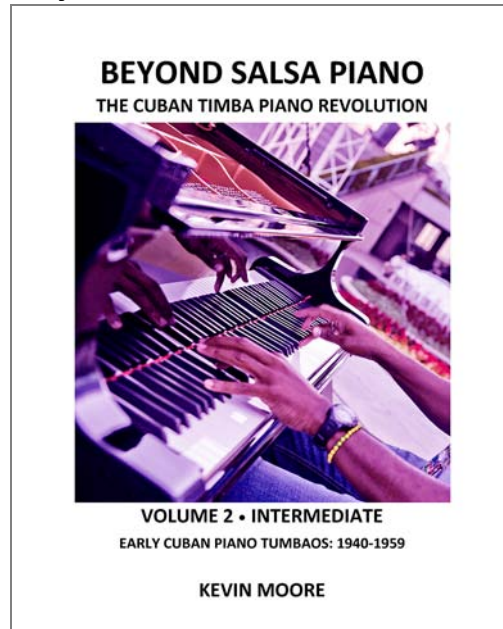
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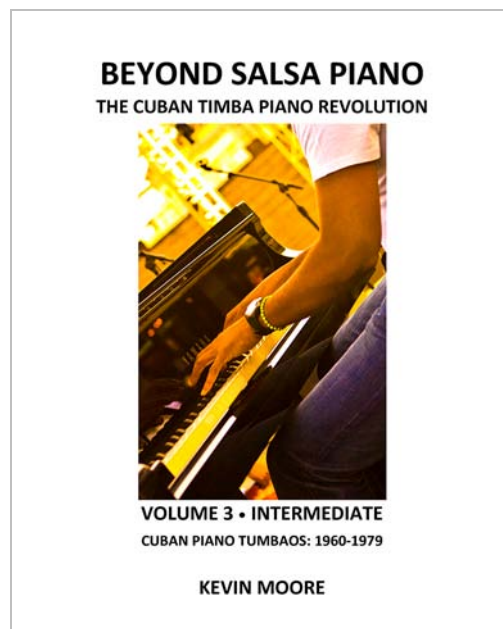
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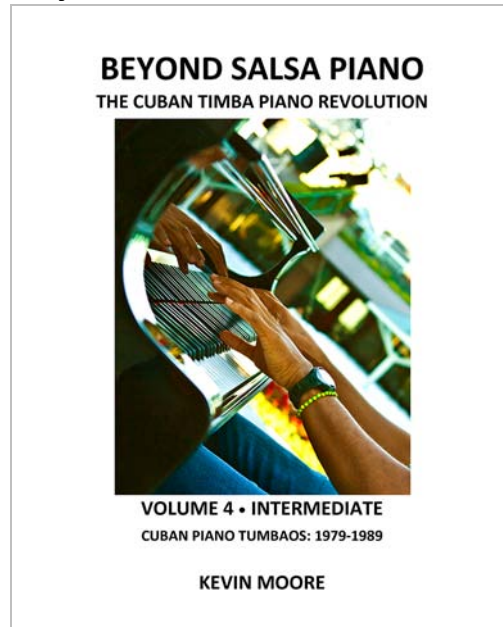
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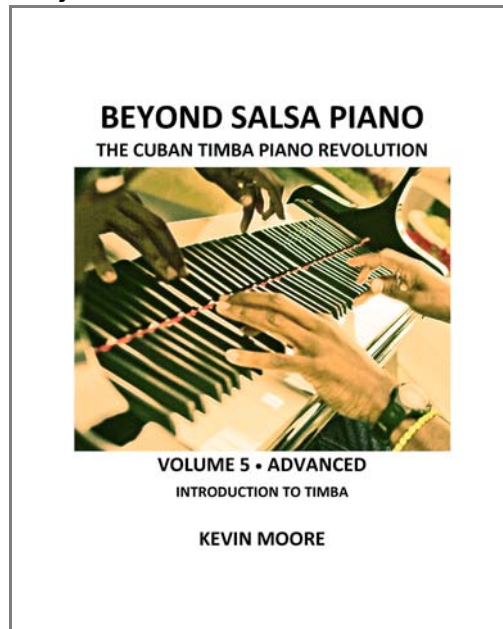
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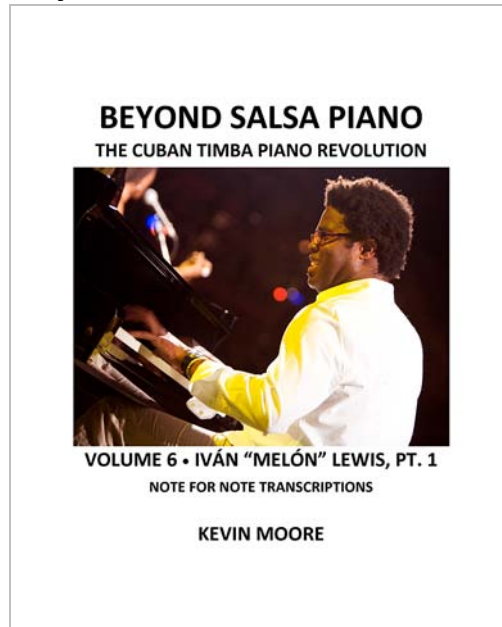
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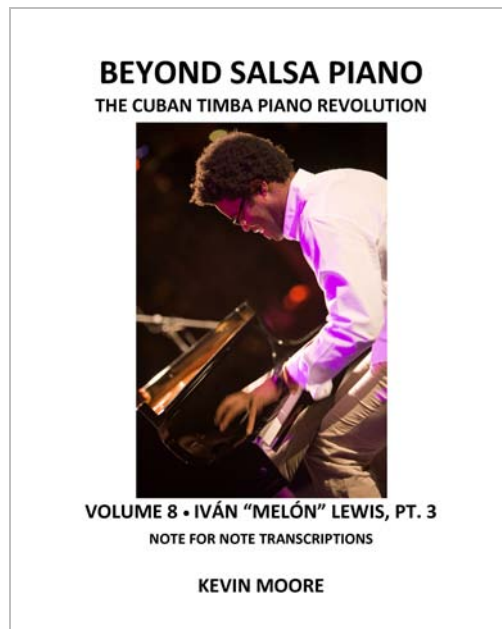


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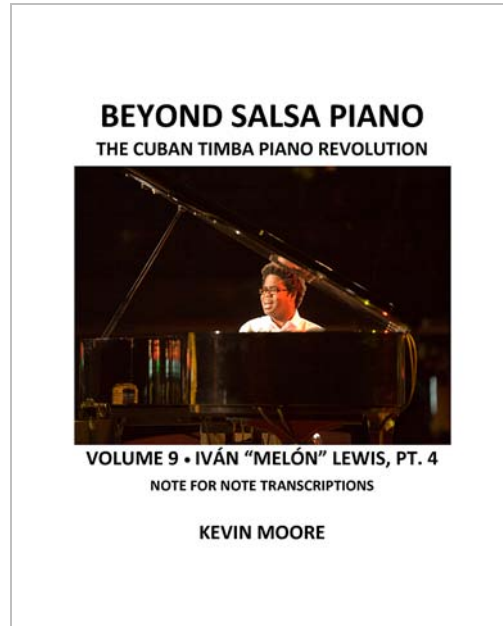
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