# Groove Aesthetics in Afro-Cuban Jazz: Towards an Empirical Aesthetic Theory

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If we understand music as an aesthetic phenomenon, our conceptions of aesthetic quality have an impact on how we assess music. This article explores the aesthetic quality of contemporary Afro-Cuban jazz, drawing on ethnographic interviews with Cuban jazz musicians and selected musical analyses discussed in light of traditional aesthetic theory. On a theoretical level, I draw on a debate regarding aesthetics between Kant and Herder as an interpretive framework for my analysis. By discussing Afro-Cuban jazz aesthetics through the lenses of Herder's and Kant's arguments I discuss how traditional aesthetic theory is relevant for analysing contemporary non-western music. On an empirical level my aim is descriptive and exploratory, and my focus is on the following key question: what characterises groove aesthetics in Afro-Cuban jazz? Discussing groove[1] in Afro-Cuban jazz implies a focus on the rhythmic and repetitive qualities of the music. I have divided this question into the two interrelated sub-research questions: i) What characterises the groove aesthetic experience of Afro-Cuban jazz? ii) How is this aesthetic experience sonically constructed through central groove structures? In my discussion of how the aesthetic experience is sonically constructed, I will thus analyse central musical structures through which aesthetic pleasure is experienced. By exposing theoretical aesthetic models through an empirical analysis of groove in Afro-Cuban jazz, my overall aim is to shed light on the validity of traditional aesthetic theory as a lens through which to understand contemporary Afro-Cuban jazz.

In contrast to Herder, Kant's and Hegel's writings on aesthetics have had the greatest impact on later understandings of aesthetics and have paved the way for distinctions between fine art and popular art, aesthetic theory as a discipline, canon formation with-

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in the arts, and the institutionalisation of the arts (music conservatories, for example) in modern societies. Consequently, this has resulted in the reluctance of scholars and musicians to carry out aesthetic analyses and descriptions of popular and non-western music. In the following, I critically examine Herder's and Kant's notions of aesthetics in order to develop a conceptual framework of aesthetics that includes bodily experiences and experiences of rhythmic qualities in music.

I begin with a theoretical discussion concerning how to theorise aesthetics based on a debate between Kant and Herder in the late eighteenth century. I then discuss the presented arguments in light of recent research on groove aesthetics, before I outline the two methodologies that I will draw on in the present analysis, involving ethnographic interviews and musical analysis. In the section that follows, I discuss groove in Afro-Cuban jazz, drawing on ethnographic data and selectively targeted musical analysis. In the last section, I bring together my empirical findings and theoretical arguments and highlight implications for future music research.

## UNDERSTANDING AESTHETICS: A DEBATE BETWEEN KANT, BAUMGARTEN, AND HERDER

Aesthetic discussions involving the various arts, such as music, poetry, literature, and painting, have engaged cultures everywhere. In the West, Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten was the first to attempt to define the term itself. In his dissertation on poetry from 1735 he writes, "[aesthetics is] a science of how things are to be known by the senses."[2] In his later and more famous work, *Aesthetica* (1750), Baumgarten elaborates on his notion of the new discipline and terms it an empirical science – since aesthetics is conditioned upon the perceptions of emotions and affect in the experience of the arts: "[Aesthetic] experience shows that our art can be demonstrated, it is clear a priori, because psychology etc. provides certain principles."[3] [4]

Baumgarten's interest in sensory perception and empirical research on the experience of the arts earned Kant's repudiation, as a quotation from the introduction to Kant's *The Critique of Pure Reason* demonstrates:

> The Germans are the only people who presently have come to use the word *aesthetics* to designate what others call the critique of taste. They are doing so on the basis of a false hope conceived by that superb analyst Baumgarten [...] as far as their principal sources are concerned, those supposed rules or criteria [Baumgarten's theory of aesthetics] are merely empirical.[5]

Kant developed aesthetics into a philosophical theory of taste, moving beyond the empirical emphasis on sensations and perceptions outlined by Baumgarten, which he calls

a false hope because of its emphasis on empirical research into our sensory appreciation of arts. Kant composed his third major work, *The Critique of Judgment*[6 7] in order to redefine aesthetics as a theory of good taste structured around the *disinterested* experience of the beautiful. Crucial to this effort is his central argument about the differentiation of interest-based and interest-free judgments of taste, in the chapter entitled "Moment of Quality".[8] Here, he categorises experiences of taste as (1) *the pleasant* (pleasantness),[9] (2) *the good*, and (3) *the beautiful*. Kant suggests that while the experience of either the pleasant or the good implies *interest* of one sort or another in the aesthetic object, the experience of the beautiful is characterised by a lack of interest:

> Everyone must allow that a judgment on the beautiful that is tinged with the slightest interest is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste. One must not be in the least prepossessed in favor of the real existence of the thing, but must preserve complete indifference in this respect, in order to play the part of judge in matters of taste.[10]

This kind of disinterested experience and "free delight"[11] is reserved only for the experience of the beautiful: Kant defines pleasantness, on the other hand, in terms of how the aesthetic object is able to "please the senses":[12]

> Now, [the observation] that a judgment on an object by which its pleasantness is affirmed [in turn] expresses an interest in it is evident from the fact that through sensation it provokes a desire for similar objects.[13]

In Kant's aesthetic theory it is exactly this lack of interest that makes it possible to provide a contemplative judgment during the experience of the beautiful. Interest in an aesthetic object, related to pleasantness and pleasure (*angenehemen*), on the other hand, makes it impossible to provide a pure judgment.

Johan Gottfried Herder, a student of Kant, developed a strong critique of his teacher's theory on aesthetics while returning to elements from Baumgarten's presented notion of aesthetics. Herder's theory of aesthetics focused in particular on pleasure, sensations, and, above all, feelings in the experience of art: "What is properly aesthetic is feeling; not concept, even less judgment of taste; and least of all its rule."[14] In one of his most famous works, *Kalligone* (1800), Herder offers several analyses of the aesthetic experience in the course of revisiting (and rejecting) Kant's critique of the pleasurable (*angenehemen*). Herder, in fact, places the pleasurable at the centre of the aesthetic experience:

> The poets of paradise, the painters of that Elysium, what do they offer our feeling? [...] Pleasurable breezes cosset the blessed [...] joyfully and freely [...] the pleasurable does not merely gratify, rather the inmost-

> pleasurable empowers, strengthens my existence; the most inmost pleasurable is my living felt existence itself.[15]

Herder argues that such aesthetic experiences are central to our being in the world, or our "being in pleasure [*Dasein und Wohlsein*]."[16] In contrast to Descartes's famous phrase "Cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am), Herder argues that aesthetic perceptions give the strongest evidence for our being in the world by stating "Sentio ergo sum" (I feel, therefore I am),[17] thus also anticipating later phenomenological philosophy.[18] From this perspective, then, Herder challenges Kant's argument that beauty must be without interest:

> Beauty however has *interest*; indeed everything good has interest only *through* it. For what does the word mean? . . . If something does not concern [*beriffi*] me, how could I find satisfaction in it? In order to please, the poet, the artist, indeed nature itself must first be interesting to us; otherwise everything that they offer goes past us like unseasoned fare, like empty husks. Interest is the soul of beauty [. . .] No beautiful work of art or of nature shall therefore be without interest for us.[19]

Claiming aesthetics to be, in fact, an empirical discipline after all, Herder then criticises Kant's arguments in *The Critique of Judgment* as "blind intuition [. . . ], empty-spelling-words, so-called transcendental ideas and speculations."[20] He further accuses his mentor of jumping to a priori conclusions and concludes: "Sensation without object […] is a contradiction in human nature, [and] therefore impossible."[21] All aesthetic experiences, Herder argues, are conditioned upon the perception of aural or visual objects, and it is this meeting between human subjects and various objects and structures in art experiences that makes strong sensations of pleasure possible: "The feeling is not a cramp but the widening of our breast, raising our view and aspiration, elevation of our being."[22] By positioning sensations, feelings, and pleasure at the very heart of the aesthetic experience, I argue that Herder becomes a pioneer of cross-cultural aesthetics. He even locates this relationship in the rhythmic aesthetics of African drumming and its relation to the body, as, for example, demonstrated in his description of African drumming:

> Since the tones are temporal vibrations, they animate the body, the rhythm of their expression expresses itself through its rhythm [. . .] Strongly moved, natural man cannot abstain from it; he expresses what he hears [. . .] through swings of his hand, through posture and flexing.[23]

In a culture dominated by racially prejudiced views on aesthetics,[24] especially in relation to the pleasures of African rhythm,[25] Herder's description represents an important

precursor to recent research on the aesthetic experience of the music of the African Diaspora, and elsewhere. Among other important points to be taken from Herder's theory on aesthetics is his emphasis on the development of methods for the analysis of our experience of the arts. Jochen Schulte-Sasse describes Herder's aesthetic methods as follows:

> As "physical analysis" aesthetics first demanded the investigation of the basic elements of the empirical field of objects that fell within its purview; it stipulated, in other words, the decomposition of art works themselves in order to reveal their basic ontological constituents. Second, such a philosophy of aesthetics necessitated exploring the fundamental psychological and physiological processes that determined our understanding of artistic objects. Only after part of the aesthetic experience had been resolved into absolutely clear and distinct concepts, only after all intellectual phenomena had been submitted to an exhaustive analysis, could one discover the hidden principles that organized and directed these various elements.[26]

To summarise, Herder's arguments call for an acknowledgment of art's ability to generate unique experiences of pleasure that go beyond the capacity of other experiences. With this in mind, he then develops methods of analysing aesthetic phenomena such as music, poetry, painting, and so on, in order to explain how the structures of different aesthetic phenomena might induce sensations in the perceiving subject. As stated, this represents a repudiation of Kant's aesthetic theory.

Nevertheless, Kant's aesthetic theory, together with Hegel's notion of the fine arts, have had the strongest impact on later understandings and usages of the term *aesthetics*. This Kantian/Hegelian tradition of aesthetics gave rise to the emergence of the disciplines and departments of the philosophy of aesthetics as well as musicology in both universities and music conservatories, and to the notion of aesthetics as disembodied and, as such, mainly relevant to the Western arts.[27] This in turn paved the way for the common scholarly tendency to view non-Western aesthetic experiences (and Western popular music) as a product of cultural and social practices rather than as aesthetic experiences and practices with their own aesthetic qualities.[28] In the midst of this, Henry Louis Gates Jr. lamented: "What has been most repressed: close readings of the [aesthetic] text itself."[29] The last two decades, however, have seen a renewed interest in arguments such as those put forward by Herder and Baumgarten in musicology, the philosophy of aesthetics, and other related fields. One example is Shusterman's theory of "somaesthetics" (body-aesthetics)[30] in which he argues that a body-oriented understanding of the aesthetic experience necessarily invites a more global perspective that embraces popular aesthetics (for example hip-hop aesthetics),[31] non-Western aesthetics,

and Western aesthetics. Emergent empirical research on arts and music in neuroscience also paraphrase Herder's arguments and underscore the role of pleasure, interestedness, and the body in aesthetic experiences.[32] Following Herder's argument that an empirical aesthetic theory requires a specific lens of analysis, I will take heed of his comments in my conceptualisation of a groove-aesthetic framework for analysing musical pleasures in Afro-Cuban Jazz.

## TOWARDS A HERDERIAN GROOVE-AESTHETIC FRAMEWORK

Contemporary research on musical aesthetics and on how music grooves underscores the importance of how specific musical structures of rhythms invite the participant into unique forms of presence and pleasure in experience, thus paraphrasing key arguments in Herder's aesthetic theory.[33] Danielsen offers an example of this in her attempt to empirically ground broader descriptions of aesthetic pleasure by analysing our experience of central rhythmic structures in funk music:

> A main question in this book concerns the relationship between the experience of being in a funk groove and the rhythmic qualities of funk: What is it in the sounds or their organization that brings the participant into the state of being in the groove? . . . Academic discourses often fail to address the phenomenological qualities linked with music—that is, how things are when they happen.[34]

Danielsen proposes the notion of "being-in-the-groove"[35] as a phenomenological lens of understanding aesthetic qualities of presence and pleasure in the grooves of James Brown and Parliament. She further calls this mode of listening the "groove mode of listening,"[36] thus highlighting the interaction between sounding grooves and the listeners/dancers who are enjoying them. In my own groove research,[37] I point to an analytic distinction between groove as a noun and groove as a verb as relevant for studying groove. Analysing *one groove* as a noun implies a description of the rhythmic structures that constitute *the groove*. Analysing *to groove* as a verb implies a more aesthetic and normative description of the groove experience and how the *music grooves.*[38]

Although the notion of groove is rare in Cuban music language, Cuban musicologists have a long tradition for emphasising aesthetic notions linked with groove, bodily sensations, and pleasure and feelings.[39] Alejo Carpentier describes the aesthetic qualities of Afro-Cuban music, distinguished by the experience of his notion of the *modo ritmatico* from 1950, in the following way:

> When this happens [experiencing the rhythms of Afro-Cuban music], and it is frequent, we are in the presence of a *modo ritmatico*, with specific

> accents that have nothing to do with our common notions of strong and weak beats.[40]

Carpentier's notion of *modo ritmatico* is not a "rhythmic mode" as such; the specific Cuban associations with *ritmo* and *ritmatico* in Cuban language instead suggest the groove experience of a specific rhythmic fabric.[41] We might translate it, then, as a "mode of groovyness" in which all of one's senses are directed towards the groove (analogous to Danielsen's being-in-the groove). Fernando Ortiz gives a more poetic description of this *modo ritmatico* in Afro-Cuban music:

> Afro-Cuban music is fire, tastiness and smoke, syrup, sensual flavor [sandunga], comforts/relief [alivio]; it is like a sonic rum that you drink through your ears, that brings the people together, making them equal and bringing forth life through the senses. It is impossible to deny the intense musicality of the Cuban people.[42]

Both Ortiz's and Carpentier's examples illustrate the rich tradition of addressing the aesthetics of groove-based music in Cuban music traditions. However, the most fundamental term in Cuban music aesthetics is the notion of *sabor*,[43] which refers both to the taste and the flavour of the music in terms of the sensuousness of the aesthetic experience. Inspired by the Cuban musician Mario Bauza's observation that Cuban people "walk with rhythm, talk with rhythm [...] eat with rhythm", Raul Fernandez argues that Cuban music could be viewed collectively as an expression of "the aesthetics of Sabor."[44] He even views *sabor* as the aesthetic *raison d'etre* of Cuban music and claims: "A musician who does not play with sabor cannot play Cuban music well."[45] The notion of *sabor* is present in thousands of Cuban song lyrics, in journalism, and academic studies about Cuban music, in everyday talk about Cuban music, and in the names of various groups, songs, and albums.[46] Following Fernandez, *sabor* presents itself as an overarching aesthetic characteristic that connects Cuban musical styles both historically and geographically by foregrounding the pleasure of dancing to Cuban grooves, and the physicality and energy those grooves and their *modo ritmatico* afford.

The related notions of *modo ritmatico* and *sabor* firmly position Cuban music within a Herderian tradition of aesthetics as well as in dialogue with recent research on groove aesthetics and somaesthetics. In the following, I will draw on Danielsen's notions of "being-in-the-groove" and the "groove-mode of listening", my distinction between *a groove* as a noun and *to groove* as a verb, together with Carpentier's notion of *modo ritmatico* and Ferndandez's concept of *sabor,* as an analytical apparatus for my empirical analysis of groove aesthetics in Afro-Cuban Jazz. However, recalling Herder's insistence on the need for developing methodologies for empirical aesthetic research, I will first

briefly describe the two methodologies used in the present analysis: i) ethnographic interviews with Cuban jazz musicians; ii) clave-based groove analysis.

## METHODOLOGIES AND DATA SOURCES

The following analyses draw on ethnographic interviews with six Cuban jazz musicians and selected musical analyses of clave-based grooves in Afro-Cuban Jazz. Firstly, I will describe the procedures for the interviews, including the presentation of key informants and how the interviews were conducted and analysed. I will then present key concepts with regards to the music analyses.

I conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews[47] with established jazz musicians in Cuba. The semi-structured interviews were designed to address key issues, although the discussions also followed leads from the informants along the way. All of these interviews were based on a common interview guide that was themed around the following four key questions: i) How do Cuban musicians understand aesthetic quality in Afro-Cuba jazz? ii) How do Cuban jazz musicians understand the term Afro-Cuban jazz? iii) What characterises phrasing and melodies in Afro-Cuban jazz? iv) How does the clave inform musical production? These questions were formulated beforehand. On occasion I did not ask all of these questions as interviewees often spoke freely about the main issues and sometimes anticipated my questions. In other instances the statements of the interviewees opened up for the discussion of other topics of interest in Afro-Cuban jazz and musical aesthetics. All interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed immediately afterwards.

### *Sample and informants – selecting informants for the interview-analysis*

Six Cuban jazz musicians from Havana's jazz scene were selected as key informants for this analysis: The trumpeters Mayquel Gonzales and Yasek Manzano, pianist Harold Lopez Nussa, bass-player David Faye, and the drummers/percussionists Ribeiro Mendoza and Giraldo Piloto. Apart from Piloto (56 years old), all informants form part of the young generation of Cuban jazz musicians and at the time of writing are between 26 and 34 years old. Because of Giraldo Piloto's position as one of the most acclaimed and renowned musicians within Afro-Cuban jazz[48] I also wanted to include his voice in my analysis. To give a balanced representation of Afro-Cuban jazz (where the most commonly used instruments are horn, piano, bass, and drums/percussion) I have included trumpeters, a pianist, percussionists, and a bassist. All interviews were carried out in Havana during Autumn 2006 and spring 2007. Most of the interviews lasted between 20 minutes and one hour. While the majority of the interviews comprised one on one discussions, the interview with Manzano, Faye, and Mendoza was a group interview. This interview had a more open character. The informants sometimes followed and elaborated on each other's responses and I did not lead the discussion as I had done

in other interviews. The four key questions have served as structural themes for analysing the data. The analysis summarises general findings across and throughout my interviews and can be described as "meaning condensation."[49] In the representation of this data I refer to myself as K while the informants are referred to by their surnames.

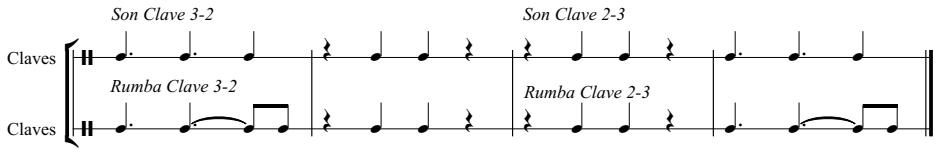
*A method of clave-based groove-analysis – ways of listening in Afro-Cuban Jazz*

Methodologically, my musical analyses involved close and repeated listening to Afro-Cuban jazz, guided by the perspectives of the informants, and are intended to single out musical structures of significance within the sounds, such as particular rhythms, melodies, or the interaction between these. When the informants have sung or played phrases in order to exemplify their arguments of aesthetic quality in Afro-Cuban jazz I have also used music transcription to represent their arguments.

My groove analysis is based on musical transcription and focuses on how the clave rhythm shapes the rhythmic structures of the multilayered groove, an approach reciprocal with existing research on Cuban music. Clave rhythms involve a cyclical pattern that consists of five strokes spread over two bars in the relationship 2-3 or 3-2. Thus, the two bars that make up the clave rhythm are often termed the "3-side" and the "2-side" of the clave. To illustrate these patterns, I have followed the transcription method of *a la breve* representation, which is both straightforward and consistent with the analyses of other researchers[50]. The use of *a la breve* notation is a pragmatic choice that can enhance the readability of the music transcriptions by converting what may sound like sixteenths to eights, and eights to quarters in the transcribed grooves.

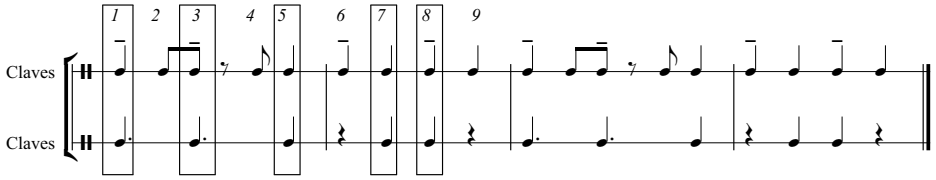
Typically, one distinguishes between a 2-3 and a 3-2 clave depending on the bar that begins the pattern. The rumba clave differs from the son clave by delaying the last stroke on the 3-side by one-eighth note, as below:

Figure 1: Son clave in 3-2 and 2-3 above and rumba clave in 3-2 and 2-3 below, in a la breve.




Musicologist Robin Moore describes how the clave rhythm shapes other structures in Cuban grooves by terming these structures "claved",[51] as the following example of the cinquillo rhythm in danzon illustrates:

Figure 2: The clave pattern is here aligned beneath the cinquillo rhythm. The numbers in the squares likewise describe the presence of the son clave within the sub-structure of the cinquillo rhythm.




As shown in Figure 2, the clave is present in the substructure of the cinquillo pattern on the first, third, fifth, seventh, and eighth notes.

Later clave research by Chor,[52] Washburne[53] and Klette Boehler[54] further suggests that many clave-organised grooves tend to be structured in a binary system of rhythmic tension and release over two bars, in which tension and release is generated by varying levels of syncopation. Higher frequencies of syncopations, eliciting tension, tend to be performed on the more syncopated 3-side while the 2-side of the clave is less syncopated, relatively speaking, as Chor argues.[55] This theory is illustrated in the example above (Figure 2), in which the 2-side of the clave correlates with four strokes on the beats while the 3-side of the clave correlates with a more syncopated pattern.

In addition to focusing on the clave, I will also pay specific attention to the accentuation of beat 4 and 4& in the groove, which are called the ponche (4) and ponche pa arriba (4&), since these parts of the rhythmic fabric are considered central to the groove.[56] My clave-based groove-analysis of Afro-Cuban jazz also gives emphasis to the tumbao patterns in the music, such as piano-tumbaos and bass-tumbaos, both of which repeat a rhythmic riff that makes up the groove and interlocks with the clave.

Drawing attention to the outlined elements of clave, ponches and tumbao-patterns in my analysis of Afro-Cuban jazz, I hope to empirically explicate parts of the mechanism that invoke aesthetic pleasures in the music experience. This analytical approach is in line with Herder's arguments for developing specific theoretical notions and methodologies derived from empirical research on aesthetic experiences. As such, my suggested methodological framework can be considered a means of analysing how experiences of what Herder termed "being in pleasure [Dasein und Wohlsein],"[57] and what Fernandez and Carpentier termed *sabor* and *modo ritmatico*, are sonically constructed in musical structures of significance.

## UNDERSTANDING AFRO-CUBAN JAZZ: KEY AESTHETIC CONCEPTS AND CLAVED GROOVES.

### *Aesthetic ideals in Afro-Cuban jazz*

In light of the previously presented sample of six primary informants I have identified two concepts that are central to understanding aesthetic quality in Afro-Cuban jazz. Terms like *sabor* and *bomba,* were commonly used by Cuban jazz musicians to answer questions such as, "What is a defining aesthetic quality in Afro-Cuban jazz?" As will be elaborated, the two terms were given local meanings in the context of Cuban music. However, the two notions can be roughly translated as follows to give preliminary definitions for the discussion: *sabor* (taste/flavor); *bomba* (rhythmic beauty related to intensity). Cuban percussionist Osniel Melengo describes the musical meanings of *sabor* and *bomba* in the following:

> K: What does it mean to play with *sabor* and *bomba*?
>
> O. Melengo: Playing with *sabor* means playing with good flavour, while playing with *bomba* is a term we use on the street to describe how to play with the heart. *Sabor* and *bomba* mean playing with a human feeling. One must feel the rhythms; a computer cannot feel the rhythms. The best timbaleros [timbalis specialists] for example, play with their human sensibility. This makes the music interesting. We call this playing with soul, heart and taste.[58]

Melengo describes how *sabor* and *bomba* can indicate the degree of personality and flavour in the performance of a rhythm. For Melengo, a central criterion for aesthetic quality in groove-based Afro-Cuban music is performing the rhythms with a personal sensibility. According to Melengo the notion of *sabor* and bomba referred to a specific way of feeling, perceiving, and performing the rhythms. This emphasis on feeling in the perception and production of Cuban rhythms can be linked to Herder's aesthetics, as structured around the experience of pleasure, emotions, and well-being in the perception of arts. Melengo's emphasis on rhythmic flavour can be furthered situated within Danielsen's notion of a groove aesthetics, Ortiz's description of Cuban music as "drinking a sonic rum" as well as Carpentier's concept of *el modo ritmatico*. For Melengo, what gives quality to the music is the rhythm's ability to produce sensations and feelings in the listening subjects.

When I discussed similar questions with Cuban jazz musicians, they commonly elaborated on the notion of *sabor* as a central concept for understanding aesthetic quality. The three aforementioned jazz musicians Manzano, Faye, and Mendoza, emphasised how *sabor* was a key term in Afro-Cuban jazz. However, when I asked Manzano to define *sabor* he had trouble giving a precise answer:

> K: Can you try to explain to me what is a good groove [in Afro-Cuban jazz]?
>
> D. Faye: It is a group that sounds strong (*fuerte*) and coherently together.
>
> R. Mendoza: Yes, it is a group that sounds strong (*macho*).
>
> Y. Manzano: And the important thing is that the good musicians have *sabor*, a lot of *sabor*.
>
> K: What is *sabor*?
>
> Y. Manzano: Ohhh, coño!, *Sabor*, Ahhh. [He takes a pause and his body language reveals that sabor is very difficult to explain. After half a minute he breaks the silence.] Ok, this is *sabor*. *Sabor* is when your mother has cooked your favourite bean soup with rice and grilled pork, and you are really hungry, sit down and take a bite and say: Goddamn! So delicious! It's the same in the music. *Sabor* is the ability people have to perceive Afro-Cuban music with *sabor*. [...] The most important aspect of *sabor* is that the music gives you a *sabor* that makes you want to dance and feel good. That's the way to play a rhythm.

After first hinting at the inexplicable nature of *sabor* as such, Manzano compared the aesthetics of *sabor* in Cuban music with the flavour of a delicious meal, specifically the traditional Cuban meal of bean soup, rice, and grilled pork. Through this comparison Manzano underscores the physicality of the *sabor* aesthetic and its closeness to the bodily sensation of tasting delicious food. Such a physical view on aesthetic quality in music echoes Herder's description of aesthetics as an empirical science that explores "the fundamental psychological and physiological processes that determine our understanding of artistic objects."[59] Contrary to Kant's view of the dis-interested, Manzano's description underscores the need for the development of methods and modes of analysis for examining how aesthetic pleasure is produced in the physical perception of arts.

This understanding of *sabor* is, on the one hand, difficult to explain (Manzano first called out "Ohhh, coño!, *Sabor*, Ahhh" and had to ponder the question for 30 seconds before he could give an explanation), while at the same time references to clearly defined physical sensations and experiences featured in several of the interviews with jazz musicians. In order to generate groove experiences, a specific groove had to be played and felt with *sabor*. While most musicians related to the *sabor* term, whether the musicians understood the notion of groove varied. The following sequence from the interview with jazz pianist Harold Lopez Nussa illustrates this challenge in groove research. Only after I had translated "to groove" to the local understanding of a "rhythm with sabor" (*Ritmo con sabor*) did he understand my question:

> K: Can you tell me what "to groove" means for you? Why does a rhythm have *sabor*?
>
> H.L. Nussa: Why it has *sabor*, Ok! Ajjjjjjjj. [...] This is a rather complicated question. I don't know how to answer this. Why a rhythm has *sabor*? I don't know. [...] There are many factors that influence the *sabor*. The way the composer creates the music, how the musicians interpret it in their playing. The musicians must know the style they play. For example, if you play son, then you must know the son style. The *sabor* is in the specific instruments, piano, cascara etc., and how you play the rhythmic patterns. You have to know how to play a rhythm with *sabor*.
>
> K: What is *sabor*?
>
> H.L. Nussa: Yes, it is something mysterious. Something that one cannot learn an evening. Some people have *sabor* inside, while others don't. There are percussionists who play with extraordinarily good *sabor*, but who have never learned music at the school, because they carry it within, from birth. I don't know how to explain this.
>
> K: Do you think a rhythm should be played with a perfect meter?
>
> H.L. Nussa: I dont think *sabor* is there. The point is not to play a rhythm completely in perfect meter like a computer. The rhythms of the computer have no *sabor*. It cannot feel the rhythm like a man can.

It was only after understanding groove as "a rhythm with sabor" that Lopez Nussa finally understood my question about groove. However, when confronted with the notion as such, Lopez Nussa had difficulty explaining *sabor*. According to him it was something mysterious that cannot be taught in one night. Still, some musicians associate *sabor* with more specific groove qualities in the music. An example can be found in how the drummer Piloto understands it:

> K: Can you tell me what to groove means for you in Afro-Cuban jazz? What characterises a rhythm with *bomba* and *sabor*?
>
> G. Piloto: I think that the groove is created by the *orquestas* (ensembles with between 6 and 20 musicians playing groove-based Cuban music) and also by the instrumentalists. In Cuban music there is a general groove, which I call *la timba*, and another particular groove related to each *orqu-*

> *esta*. This particular groove is for example what distinguishes Los Van Van, Adalberto Alvarez and Klimax, to give you an example. On this level, the different pianists and drummers contribute with their own groove. I understand the groove as the way you play, style of playing, a personal playing style, a personal *sabor*. This groove is what characterises the *orquestra*, or musicians, or a song. It can, for example, be a *tumbao* in the bass, or a *tumbao* in the piano. In the *montuno* section of a song, for example, it is important to have an authentic groove that characterises each group. This groove is created in two ways. One way is defined by the composer and secondly, by the musicians and their own way of playing.[60]

We see that Piloto's understanding of *sabor* differs from the other descriptions, as he relates *sabor* to more concrete musical terms. This response suggests that aesthetic research on *sabor* might be developed through trying to map out how linguistic descriptions of aesthetic pleasure are sonically constructed in specific musical structures. Paraphrasing Herder, it calls for the development of empirical methods that enrich our understanding of how aesthetic pleasures are constructed in our perceptions of specific musical structures. It underscores the importance of developing methods such as clave-based groove analysis in order to shed light on the music-structural aspects that give rise to aesthetic pleasure in music.

Having gathered these various interpretations of how to play with *sabor* and *bomba*, rooted in Cuban music culture, I asked my Spanish teacher and philologist Marcia Moron about what these terms really mean, and what they tell us about Cuban musical culture:

> K: Can you tell me what it means to play with *sabor*?
>
> M. Moron: It's playing with sensitivity, playing with all of your emotions. You must use all your five senses. With head, hands, body, everything, play with everything. Playing with everything you have inside you, with all your sensitivity.
>
> K: What does it mean to play with *bomba*? And what is the difference between *bomba* and *corazon*?
>
> M. Moron: *Bomba* is the popular, vernacular way of saying *corazon*, meaning heart. *Corazon* is that which pumps blood in your body. *Bomba* is a motor.
>
> K: But when you say playing with *bomba*, does it mean playing with this human motor / pulsating effect?

M. Moron: Right, to play with the top of your engine.

K: But the engine, what does it mean in this context?

M. Moron: A device that starts something. It is a metaphor that tells you to play with everything you have. Give life to the music.[61]

Moron's emphasis on the bodily senses shed further light on how Afro-Cuban jazz aesthetics can be framed within the presented approaches to embodied aesthetics, including Herder, Baumgarten, "groove aesthetics", *sabor* and Shusterman's notion of somaesthetics. These approaches highlight the role of the body in the experience of the arts and music. To summarize, *bomba* and *sabor* underscore the importance of playing with a personal sensibility that involves all the senses and which adds expressive power to the music. The terms refer to the possession of a bodily and mental presence while playing music.

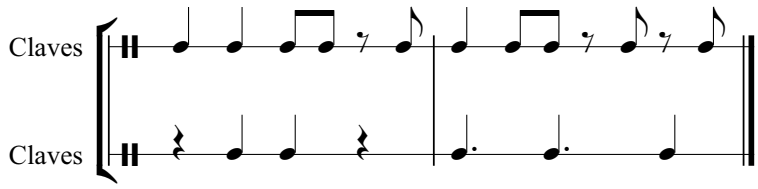
### *Analysing groove in Afro-Cuban Jazz*

Despite different understandings of how to define Afro-Cuban jazz, all my informants related it to a mixture of Afro-Cuban music styles and North American jazz music from the 1940s onwards. The Cuban trumpet player Mayquel Gonzales describes it in the following way:

K: What is Afro-Cuban Jazz?

M. Gonzales: For me, it is like a syncretism between the influence (el peso) from the harmonic development in the Jazz history from the 40s and until today, and the mixed Afro-Cuban music traditions that developed through the different rhythms (ritmos afro-cubanos), and in particular the *batá*-tradition, and all the music that the slaves brought with them. For me, Afro-Cuban jazz has still not developed so much in Cuba. You can say that the degree of mixing different musical styles that may exist between these two broader styles still can be developed much more. Because the idea of Afro-Cuban jazz, with focus on Afro-Cuban rhythms is still very much concealed (escondido). Afro-Cuban jazz is still very raw. [To illustrate more typical Afro-Cuban jazz Gonzales sings the following cascara-pattern in fast tempo over a 2-3 clave pattern, roughly quarter at 200 bpm:

Figure 3: Cascara rhythm and son clave in 2-3.

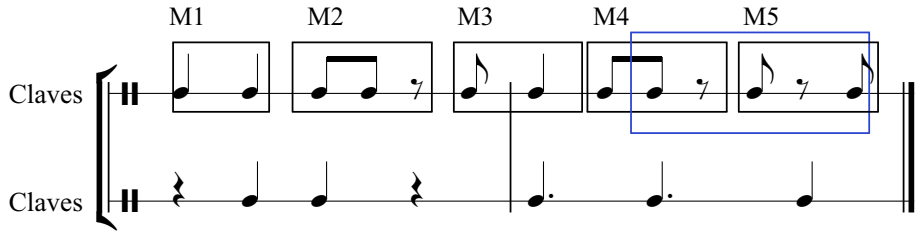



> [After having sung this rhythm Gonzales continues:] And then you improvise over this, but it is as if we still have not been sufficiently able to ignite in the sense of creating Afro-Cuban jazz. Afro-Cuban music is not only this pattern [He sings the cascara-pattern again.] One could say that the musical language within this fusion could be more subjective and nuanced."[62]

To give an example of how Afro-Cuban jazz draws on Afro-Cuban music traditions, Gonzales sang a common cascara rhythm over a 2-3 son clave and described how much Afro-Cuban jazz is based on improvisations over such rhythms. Cuban music scholar Peter Manuel describes the mentioned cascara pattern as "a basic composite rhythmic pattern"[63] across various types of Cuban popular dance music. The cascara rhythm is a defining rhythmic element in Cuban grooves and is commonly played during the verse section of songs on the sides of the timbalis, called the cascara (the shell), the hi-hat or the rim of the snare. It is found in both contemporary Afro-Cuban jazz and timba grooves as well as in older son styles from the first half of the twentieth century.[64] The cascara rhythm is a driving element, characteristic of the groove that invites to movement and a sense of forwardness with its changing syncopations. Gonzales's response demonstrates the relevance of combining music transcription and words as a means of addressing the quality of Afro-Cuban jazz. Thus, Gonzales's response to my question paraphrases Danielsen's view above that a combination of structural musical analysis and aesthetic description, together, can enrich our understanding of how music grooves. The selected musical transcriptions allow us to zoom in on musical structures of significance and discuss how these sonic aspects generate aesthetic interest and pleasure in a Herderian sense.

Focused listening to the cascara rhythm allows us to split its ten accents into five smaller motifs, each consisting of two accents, which may illuminate the structure of its changing syncopations:

Figure 4: Close reading of the cascara rhythm grouped in 5 smaller motifs.




Listened to with syncopations in mind, we hear how the rhythmic design of the small motif constantly changes and makes up the rhythmic narrative of five variations. Besides M2 and M4, the motifs are made of different rhythmic structures. However, since M2 is accentuated on a third beat while M4 is on the second beat in the latter bar, even these two rhythmic motifs differ from each other and strengthen a sense of the desired rhythmic tension. Heard in this manner, the cascara pattern also outlines a narrative of rhythmic tension and release through the alteration between non-syncopated and syncopated accents. This can explain why the pattern illustrated is in 2-3 clave. A sense of release and relaxation is produced on the 2-side of the clave by the two on-beats in M1. Then a sense of energy is introduced by M2 through two eights; however, the accentuation of the third beat (the first of the two eights in M2) further strengthens the un-syncopated, established feel. Then a new rhythmic relation is introduced in M3 with a pick up from the 4& to beat 1, before M4 and M5 introduce new rhythmic colours that alter the syncopated feeling. Particularly, the last three off-beat accents in the cascara pattern (see the blue square) strengthen the degrees of syncopations and thus correlate to the 3-side of the clave that is commonly played out in a more syncopated manner. All in all, the analysis shows the development from rhythmic release to rhythmic tension within the rhythmic structure of a cascara pattern in 2-3 clave. Taken into account that this rhythm constantly repeats throughout the groove experience in much Afro-Cuban jazz, the analysis outlines how rhythmic tension and release generates forward motion in the music. This observation underscores how a rhythmic narrative of tension and release between the syncopated and the non-syncopated is articulated in many claved grooves, thus referring back to the arguments presented regarding clave-based musical analysis above.

Rhythms similar to the cascara rhythm are also found in related Afro-Cuban music styles such as the *catá* rhythm in tumba francesa[65] and the *guagua* rhythm in rumba guaguancó.[66] Through the example of the cascara rhythm, Gonzales (the interviewee) illustrates how grooves in Afro-Cuban jazz are closely related to Cuban popular and folk music of past and present.

However, even though the cascara rhythm has a central position in Afro-Cuban jazz, Gonzales also argues that the notion of Afro-Cuban jazz as a style was still underdevel-

oped. For him the rich traditions of Afro-Cuban music, such as the *batá* music within Cuban Yoruba traditions, provided musical elements that could be used for the further development of Afro-Cuban jazz through new forms of musical mixtures.[67]

*Afrocuban jazz and la clave*

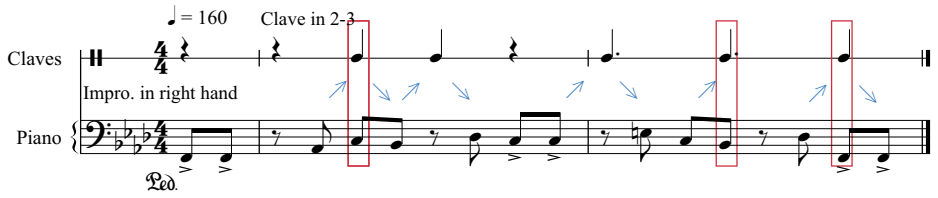
Along with elements from rumba, several of my informants pointed out the importance of clave in Afro-Cuban jazz. They see the clave rhythm as a fundamental principle of organisation within the rhythmic fabric of the music that also shaped melodic production. The following interview with one of Cuba's best younger jazz pianists Harold Lopez Nussa illustrates the importance of the clave in composing and improvising in Afro-Cuban jazz.

> H. L. Nussa: The clave is a rhythmic element that is fundamental for the music. […] Today most of the music is in line with the clave. For example, when we played on the album *Charly in Havana* with Carlito [Carlos Sarduy], they said, no, no, no this is wrong with the clave. [Lopez Nussa refers here to how the groove lines they played in the horns, piano and bass imply a different clave direction than what was defined in the basic rhythmic elements that make up the groove. Thus, they needed to either adjust what they were playing, or the groove, in order to not play a 2-3 clave over a 3-2 clave.] Because if you don't play with the clave, it doesn't work. The clave is like the ABC.
>
> K: Do you always feel the clave when you play?
>
> H.L. Nussa: Yes, in a way yes. You always carry the clave within you.
>
> K: Also when you improvise?
>
> H. L. Nussa: Yes, also when you improvise, you have it within you even though you don't think about it consciously.[68]

Most recent recordings of Afro-Cuban jazz, and closely related genres such as timba, maintain a clearly defined clave feel. In many recordings, the clave feel of the song is both expressed in the rhythmic fabric as well as in more melodic elements in the horn section, thus illustrating Lopez Nussa's argument that it is a basic constituent of the musical alphabet. Lopez Nussa's description underscores the need for defining the aesthetic quality on pre-discursive musical terms in the music itself. It underlines the fruitfulness of defining aesthetic methods, such as clave-based groove analysis that can support aesthetic judgments with empirical data, rendering aesthetics the empirical discipline envisioned by Herder and Baumgarten.

An example of how the clave inspires musical creation in the performance of Afro-Cuban jazz is found in Lopez Nussa's live jazz piano concert from the Montreaux Jazz festival in 2006. After having won the prestigious jazz piano competition the year before, Lopez Nussa played a solo concert at the festival while accompanying himself with a 2-3 son clave played on a woodblock with his left foot, using a bass drum pedal. The clave rhythm is repeated throughout the concert and functions as an ostinato and a rhythmic background from which syncopated melodies gain aesthetic value. Together with the clave rhythm Lopez Nussa plays a piano tumbao from traditional son music that interlocks with the clave. The following piano tumbao and clave rhythm makes up a rhythmic signature of the music that repeats throughout the concert.

Figure 5: Transcription of Harold Lopez Nussa's clave rhythm tapped on the foot and his playing of an interlocking piano tumbao in the left hand. The video from the concert is available at the following youtube link (2:42-3:10): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CCtnKeIJl-c (26 July 2013)




As we see in the squares, the first accent on the 2-side of the clave is marked in the piano tumbao while both the second and third clave accents are marked in the piano tumbao on the 3-side. It is also important to notice in the rhythmic design of the figure how the two ponches (ponche, the 4 beat, and ponche pa arriba, the 4& beat) are accentuated in each bar, providing a sense of forwardness to the groove. The clave and the piano tumbao interlock and generate a complementary stream of eighths that are only silenced on beat one in the first bar and beat three in the second bar (see arrows). This rhythmic design contributes to making a piano tumbao in clave.

The renowned drummer, percussionist, and composer Giraldo Piloto painted a more complete picture of the rhythmic function of la clave by describing how it shaped the design of other rhythmic structures. In order to groove in the right manner, Piloto argued that it was important to understand how the clave shapes the design of the whole rhythmic fabric:

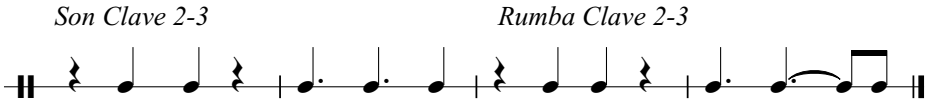
> K: [...] What is the role and function of the clave?
>
> G. Piloto: The clave is determined as the most basic (*lo primario*) in *la música cubana*. If you are familiar with the clave, you know *la música cu-*

> *bana*. If you don't know of the clave you can still play it, but without understanding the music. Because the clave is the secret of the true flavour (*sabor*) in *la música cubana*. Through the clave you can distinguish between how a Cuban band playing *la música cubana* sounds unique and distinctly correct as opposed to a group from another country that plays *la música cubana*. In the old [African-based] folk styles and rumba guaguancó, the clave is very important and clearly defined. These are the roots [*raizes*] of all Cuban music. [...] In order to play these styles in the right manner, such as, for example, the rumba guaguancó, you have to play along the clave. [He sings a groove in clave while tapping the clave (2-3) with his right hand to illustrate. Then he sings the same groove while playing the clave the wrong way (3-2).] If you play like this, [referring to the last sung example in wrong clave], you think it is right, but it is wrong. After learning how to understand the clave, you learn how to play the right way and about the roots of our musical tradition.
>
> K: When you play with Klimax [known timba band led by Piloto], does everything have a relationship to the clave?
>
> G. Piloto: Always (*siempre*).[69]

Through the statement, "The clave is the secret of the flavour (*sabor*) in la música cubana", Piloto emphasises the importance of a clave perspective in performing, appreciating and analysing groove-based Cuban music. Piloto also echoed the presented arguments that the rhythms of the present have to be understood in relation to the rhythms of the past within Afro-Cuban music traditions, such as rumba guaguancó. However, inspired by Piloto's answers, I inquired more specifically about the role of the clave in comparison to the role of an underlying pulse:

> K: Could you explain more exactly the function of the clave and what it is? Is it a pulse? Or is it a metrical unit?
>
> G. Piloto: It depends. For percussion it has one meaning, for piano it has another meaning, for the bass another meaning, for the horn section it has another meaning, while the singers have another relation to the clave. Each specific instrument has its own relation to the clave. [He sings several common piano, bass and percussion patterns to demonstrate while tapping the clave along. He switches between the following son and rumba clave in 2-3 in his hand tapping]:

Figure 6: Son clave in 2-3 (first two bars), rumba clave in 2-3 (last two bars).




> G. Piloto: But did you noticed how important it is with the clave […]? You need to feel the clave in order to know where to play the bass drum and where to play the snare. One must also understand the clave when you are playing the breaks in order to make it sound right. […] You have to know the clave and *rumba guaguancó*, in order to understand where to place the accents. That is why it is so important to know the clave. Particularly for percussionists and pianists. […] Every tumbao you play should be clearly aligned with the clave. Sometimes I write songs where the tumbao in the piano, or the bass tumbao, defines the clave because if I only play the drum groove it could be either one of the two claves. Within what I will call *los grooves generales*, the general groove that distinguishes a band as such, I often let the bass define the clave. In order to let the audience understand the music I choose to define the clave in the bass.

Piloto points out how the clave works as a rhythmic guide for piano, bass, horns, singers, percussionists and drummers. In short, the clave was an organising principle within groove-based, Afro-Cuban music, which could define the difference between the aesthetically pleasing and the non-aesthetic within this field of music. However, Piloto also pointed out how many groove structures had a neutral clave direction with no emphasis on 2-3 clave or the 3-2 clave. In these cases, Piloto defined the clave in the bass tumbao to give the audience a clave reference. Pilolto's and Lopez Nussa's descriptions suggest that specific aesthetic models designed for Afro-Cuban jazz should be expanded by addressing the complex web in which clave constrains and informs musical production. Examining claved grooves provides one way in which what is aesthetically pleasing can be distinguished from the non-aesthetic, by pointing out structural aspects of the rhythmic organisation. Linking this clave structure with the feeling of being in the groove, pleasure, and physical engagement can further bridge the gap between the prediscursive qualities of music (for example a clave rhythm or a piano-tumbao figure) and their linguistic representations (for example *sabor* and the *modo ritmatico*).

In addition to Piloto's detailed clave descriptions, bassist David Faye elaborated on how the clave orchestrated the groove by pointing out the importance of the last beat on the 3-side of the clave (beat 4 in son clave and beat 4& in rumba clave). According

to Faye, this accent is commonly weighted as the strongest and the most accentuated across the rhythmic fabric.

> D. Faye: The clave is a reference point. [...] It might be compared with the use of swing eights in North American jazz and the Brazilian samba clave because of its emphasis on off-beat [*contra-tiempo*]. All the accents are important in the clave but I think the most important is the third accent in the 3-side on beat 4 or 4& depending on the clave. [He sings to illustrate.] But I don't like to distinguish between 2-3 or 3-2 clave. Clave is clave. The clave is like a basic melody in our music. The clave should not be understood as a mathematical rhythm that can be divided into 2-3 or 3-2 like Rebeca Mauleon is arguing[70]. She does a great oversimplification when she describes the clave in such a cold and insensitive way.

When I asked how the musicians felt the clave while they played, they had difficulties giving specific explanations. Several of the musicians pointed out that it was impossible to explain in words how they phrased with clave. It could only be understood musically by playing and listening. Playing with clave was beyond the language of words. It was not possible to explain it. Trumpeter Yasek Manzano refers to it in the following way:

> K. Can you explain, how you feel when you play in clave?
>
> Y. Manzano: I cannot explain this. It is beyond words. Wynton Marsalis asked me the same question [when Manzano studied jazz at Juilliard School of Music in Boston, USA, via a talent scholarship – he had Marsalis as his teacher] and I cannot explain it. I don't know how to explain this. I was born here, in Cuba. I know how we play music here. It's like talking. How can one explain the intonation of a singer, or how a child learns to talk? How can one explain the distinction between those who manage to keep in tune and those who cannot? It is impossible to explain intonation to a non-musical person.
>
> D. Faye: These are cultural processes and come from a shared experience, for example the ways in which the clave is a reference point. Something that may explain this is the Afro-Cuban culture. Afro-Cuban culture has always been transmitted orally. The music should be viewed as an oral language. [...] You have read many texts on this. I have still not found a book that could explain this.

> R. Mendoza: Since I was little, I always played rumba, but I cannot explain this. It is like a language I learned. It is a language I feel, but that I cannot explain.
>
> K: Don't you consciously think about how to phrase or design the syncopated phrases you play?
>
> D. Faye: The great musicians say that the moment one thinks about what one is doing, there is a problem. When you just play what you feel, and not think about what you play, then you are on a linguistic level (*nivel de lenguaje*). That's when we talk about the genuine music experience.

Manzano, Faye, and Mendoza argued that phrasing with the clave, and feeling the music through the clave, are impossible to explain in words. Feeling and playing music through the clave is part of the Cuban culture and history into which they were all born. Faye criticised existing clave research and analysis for breaking a complete clave rhythm into pieces, by conceptualising it as 2-3 or 3-2. In Faye's view this is a misunderstanding. The clave should be understood as a complete rhythm. Breaking it up into 2-3 or 3-2 for analytical purposes compromises a more complete understanding of the clave concept. However, Faye implicitly favoured some sort of clave analysis by arguing that some accents in the clave rhythm were more important than others. In this sense, my informants both showed an analytical understanding of the clave by also insisting that it was almost impossible to explain: "La clave es la clave". Interestingly, this last comment illustrates a challenge to aesthetic research: on one level the music resists explication since posterior analyses can destroy the initial feeling of musical pleasure there and then – in the perception of the groove. On the other hand, the presented analysis also demonstrates various examples through which aesthetic pleasure can be empirically grounded in specific musical structures of significance. I will now synthesize the presented arguments and discuss the findings from the empirical analysis in light of the presented aesthetic theory.

## WHAT IF THEORIES OF AESTHETICS STARTED WITH HERDER AND NOT KANT? CONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION

The presented analysis of aesthetic quality in contemporary Afro-Cuban jazz supports Herder's arguments for an empirical aesthetic theory grounded in pleasure and perceptions. Kant's notion of dis-interested aesthetic experiences and his critique of empirical aesthetics and pleasure do not seem to explain aesthetic quality in Afro-Cuban jazz. Herder's aesthetics do, however, provide a conceptual framework for an empirical and cross-cultural aesthetic theory that can be used for studying both Western art music

and non-Western music across historical periods. Following this argument, a common understanding of aesthetics as a philosophical "theory of beauty"[71] should be replaced by a broader embodied aesthetic theory of pleasure and wellbeing that can account for the diversities of aesthetic meanings in music and the arts. Rating pleasure as equally important as beauty has vital implications; it allows pleasure oriented groove-based music traditions (for example, drum and bass, hip hop, samba, etc.) to become objects of aesthetic research in the same way as the melodies and harmonies of Western art music. The findings in this article, regarding the role of clave in Afro-Cuban grooves, the claved design of musical structures of significance (for example, cascara rhythm), and the importance of local musical pleasures expressed through *sabor* and *bomba*, are central characteristics in Cuban groove aesthetics. Discussing these findings through comparative research on musical aesthetics can increase our understanding of aesthetic pleasure more broadly. If we commence from the premises stated at the beginning of this article, that music is an aesthetic phenomenon, a Herderian aesthetic theory calls for empirical research on the diversities of musical aesthetics, and how pre-linguistic musical structures of significance (for example, specific grooves, melodies etc.) translate into cultured pleasures among the participants in experience. This theoretical position demands investigation of the close interplay between our senses and feelings in aesthetic research, and thus brings contemporary aesthetic research in musicology and ethnomusicology into dialogue with research within the field of music psychology, music perception and cognition studies. More importantly, it allows us to carefully address the aesthetic qualities of global popular and folk music, which have mainly been analysed according to their socio-cultural, discursive, and political constructs,[72] often at the cost of their aesthetic qualities. Although the music of Ludwig van Beethoven, Michael Jackson, and Louis Armstrong are all situated in multiple discursive, political and socio-cultural contexts, we also listen to the grooves, melodies, and harmonies of this music. Maybe the musical structures in "Smooth Criminal" (Michael Jackson 1987), "A Wonderful World" (Louis Armstrong 1967) and Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony" (first performed 1808) are equally important for the production of aesthetic pleasures? As in any theory, stated premises and assumptions presuppose certain arguments and findings. Taking Herder's aesthetic principles as a point of departure, rather than the dominating theories of Kant, might well lead to changes in our thinking, feeling, and perception about the arts and music and contribute to bridging artistic divisions to a much greater degree.

## Notes

1 See for example Anne Danielsen, *Presence and Pleasure* (Middletown Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2006); and Charles Keil and Steven Feld, Music Grooves (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

2 Baumgarten, quoted in Paul Guyer, "The origins of modern aesthetics: 1711-1735" in *The Blackwell Guide to Aesthetics*, ed. Peter Kivy (Blackwell: Black Blackwell Pub, 2004), 15

3 Baumgarten, quoted in Mary J. Gregor, "Baumgarten's 'Aesthetica'," *The Review of Metaphysics* 37, no. 2 (1983): 372

4 Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Aesthetica* (1750), § 10. [Original in Latin: "Aesthetica . . . est experentia, patet a priori, quia psycologia suppeditant certa principia"]

5 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2010), 44 A 21

6 Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Judgment* (Adelaide: The University of Adelaide, 2008)

7 As Kant declares in his introduction, he conceived of this work as a bridge between *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of Ethics*.

8 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 70–93

9 Although the translator in this edition of Kant (2008), Creed Meredith, chose to translate Kant's term *angenehmen* as "agreeableness", I find "pleasantness" closer to my understanding of Kant's intention. This is supported by translations of the term as *det behagelige* in Norwegian, a North Germanic language (Kant [Hamre] 1995). The rationality underpinning agreeableness (that is, to agree) clashes with Kant's invocation of a specific bodily enjoyment and interest in the aesthetic object, which I seek to give recourse to using "pleasantness" (to please). I have also followed this translation in my reading of Herder and in addition sometimes add the related term "pleasurable", which in my view better illustrates why Herder wished to re-establish the term *angenehemen*.

10 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 75 § 3 B1

11 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement,* 81 § 5 B1

12 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 83

13 Kant, *The Critique of Judgement*, 84 § 3 B1

14 Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Werke Johann Gottfried von Herder,* (Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, 1985 [1763]), I, 20–30. [Original German: "Das eigentlich Aesthetische ist Gefuhl; nicht Begriff; noch weniger Urteil, des Geshmacks; und am wenigstens seine Regel."] In continuation, I will not include the original German and instead quote predominantly from Paul Guyer's translation.

15 Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Kalligone* [1800: 665–667] in Paul Guyer, "Free Play and True Well-Being: Herder's Critique of Kant's Aesthetics," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 65, no. 4 (2007), 359–360

16 Herder, *Kalligone*, 712

17 Herder in Jochen Schulte-Sasse, "Enlightenment Philosophy and the Problem of Method: The Origins of Herder's Aesthetic Theory" in *Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment*, ed. R. Norton, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1991), 42

18 Such as Martin Heidegger, *Væren og Tid,* (Oslo:Pax, 2007 [1927]), 73; and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, (London:Routledge, 2005 [1945])

19 Herder, *Kalligone*, 730 in Guyer, "Free Play," 360

20 Herder, *Kalligone*, 644 in Guyer, "Free Play," 357

21 Herder, *Kalligone*, 688 in Guyer, "Free Play," 361

22 Herder, *Kalligone*, 688 in Guyer, "Free Play," 358

23 Herder in Edward A. Lippman, *Musical Aesthetics: A Historical Reader* (New York: Pentragon Press, 1985), 36

24 See for example Anne-Britt Gran, *Hvite Løgner/ Sorte Myter – det etniske på modernitetens scene*. (University of Oslo: Unipub, 2000), 5–35; Ronald M. Radano and Philip V. Bohlman, "Music and Race" in *Music and the Racial Imagiantion,* ed. Ronald M. Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: The University of Chiago Press, 2000), 1–57; and Ronald M. Radano, "Hot Fantasies: American Modernism and The Idea of Black Rhythm" in *Music and the Racial Imagination,* ed. Radano and Bohlman, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 459–483

25 See for example Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Forelæsninger over historiens filosofi,* (København: Gyldendal forlag, 1997), 142

26 Schulte-Sasse, "Enlightenment," 48

27 See for example Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness* (Cambridre, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 76; Joseph Kerman, *Contemplating music: chal-*

*lenges to musicology* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 11; and Radano, "Hot Fantasies," 19

28 See for example Anne Danielsen, "Estetiske perspektiver på populærmusikk" in *Populærmusikken i kulturpolitikken*, edited by Jostein Gripsrud (Oslo: Norsk kulturråd, 2001); and Anne Danielsen, "Aesthetic value, cultural significance and canon formation in popular music," *Studia Musicologica Norvegica* 32, no. 1(2006). In broad strokes, the emergence and development of ethnomusicology and popular music studies in the Anglo-American world embody this drive by drawing much from anthropology and sociology.

29 Henry L. Gates jr., *Figures in Black: words, signs, and the "racial" self,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), xix

30 Richard Shustermann, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Liing Beauty Rethinking Art* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000); and Richard Shustermann, *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulnes and Somaesthetics.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

31 see Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, 207

32 See for example Steven Brown and Ellen Dissanayake,"The Arts Are More Than Aesthetics: Neuroaesthetics as Narrow Aesthetics" in *Neuroaesthetics,* ed. Martin Skov and Oshin Vartanian (New York: Baywood Pud, 2009), 43–50; Elvira Brattico and Thomas Jacobsen, "Subjective Appraisal of Music," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1169, no. 1 (2009); and Laura Fedrizzi, "Beauty and its perception: historical developments of concepts, neuroaesthetics, and gender-differences," *Rendiconti Lincei Scienze Fisiche e Naturali* 23, no. 3 (2012)

33 See for example Danielsen, *Presence and Pleasure*; Mark Butler, *Unlocking the Groove: rhythm, meter and musical design in electronic dance music.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); Hans T. Zeiner-Henriksen, *The PoumTchak Pattern: Correspondences Between Dhythm, Sound, and Movement in Electronic Dance Music* (University of Oslo, 2010); and Charles Keil and Steven Feld, *Music Grooves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

34 Danielsen, *Presence and Pleasure,* 11–12

35 Danielsen, *Presence and Pleasure,* 16

36 Danielsen, *Presence and Pleasure,* 147–150

37 Kjetil Klette Bøhler, *Sabor y la Polirritmia,* (University of Oslo, 2008), 90-93

38 A related discussion is also found in Keil and Feld, *Music Grooves* (2005); however, most of their analysis deals with the music groove as a verb, focusing less on an analysis of groove as a noun and the design of the rhythmic structures that make up the groove and facilitate these aesthetic experiences.

39 [Spanish original: "Cuando esto se produce—y es frecuente—estamos en presencia en un modo ritmatico, con acentos propios que nada tienen que ver con nuestras nociones habituales del tiempo fuerte y tiempo débil."]

40 Alejo Carpentier, *La Música en Cuba,* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1979), 239, my translation. [Spanish original: "Cuando esto se produce—y es frecuente—estamos en presencia en un modo ritmatico, con acentos propios que nada tienen que ver con nuestras nociones habituales del tiempo fuerte y tiempo débil."]

41 see also Danielsen, *Presence and Pleasure,* 43–61

42 Fernando Ortiz, *La africanía de la música folklórica cubana,* (La Ciudad de Habana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 2001 [1950]), 13, my translation. [Spanish original: "La música afrocubana es fuego, sabrosura y humo; es almíbar, sandunga y alivio; como un ron sonoro que se bebe por los oídos, que con el trato iguala y junta a las gentes y en los sentidos dinamiza la vida. No se puede negar la intensa musicalidad del pueblo cubano"]

43 Raul Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz.* (Chicago: Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College, 2006), 42–57; and Radamés Giro, *Panorama de Musica Popular Cubana* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1999), 9

44 Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms,* 42–57

45 Fernandez, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms,* 42–57

46 There is, for example, the important Cuban orchestra "El Sabor de Cuba" by Bebo Valdez, as well as Paulito FG's lyrics "I bring you sabor" (from "Un Poquito de Todo," 2003).

47 Here I use Kvale's description of semi-structured qualitative interviews in Steinar Kvale, *Interviews: an Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing* (Thousand Oaks, Claifornia: Sage Publications, 1996), 5-6

48 see Kjetil Klette Boehler, *Grooves, Pleasures and Politics: The Musicality of Cuban Politics and the*

*Politics of Salsa Cubana,* (University of Oslo, 2013)

49 Kvale, *Interviews*, 1996

50 see for example Ed Uribe, *The Essence of Afro-Cuban Percussion and Drum Set* (Miami: Warner Bros. Publishing, 1996); Rebeca Mauleón, *Salsa Guidebook for Piano and Ensemble* (Petaluma: Sher Music Co, 1993); Rebeca Mauleón, *101 Montunos* (Petaluma: Sher Music Co, 1999); and Christopher Washburne, "Play It 'Con Filin!': The Swing and Expression of Salsa," *Revista de Música Latino Americana* 19, no. 2 (1998)

51 Robin D. Moore and Alejandro L. Madrid. *Danzón: Circum-Caribbean Dialogues in Music and Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013)

52 Ives Chor, "Microtiming and Rhythmic Structure in Clave-Based Music: A Quantitative Study" in *Musical rhythm in the Age of Digital Reproduction,* ed. Anne Danielsen (Ashgate, 2010)

53 Washburne, "Play it 'Con Filin'"

54 Klette Boehler, *Sabor y Polirritmia;* and Klette Boehler, *Grooves, Pleasures and Politics*

55 Chor, "Microtiming"

56 see, for example, Klette Bøhler, *Grooves, Pleasures and Politics*; Klette Boehler, *Sabor y Polirritmia*; and Orlando Enrique Fiol, "Grooves and Waves: Cyclicity and Narrativity in Cuban Timba Piano," *Latin American Music Review* 33, no. 1 (2012)

57 Herder, *Kallegonia,* 712

58 Interview in Vedado, Havana, 11 March 2006

59 Herder in Schulte-Sasse, "Enlightenment," 48

60 Interview with Piloto at his home in Miramar, Havana, 10 January 2007

61 Interview at ISA, Playa, 21 January 2007

62 Interview with Maykel Gonzalez, Playa, Havana, 15 February 2007

63 Peter Manuel, "The Anticipated Bass," *Latin American Music Review* 6, no. 2 (1985), 252

64 For the presence of the cascara pattern in contemporary Cuban timba and Afro-Cuban jazz, see Vincenzo Perna, *Timba: The Sounds of the Cuban Crisis* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005); Robin D. Moore, *Music and Revolution: Cultural Change in Socialist Cuba* (Berkely University Press, 2006), 106-134; Kevin Moore, *Beyond Salsa Piano – The Cuban Timba Revolution* Vol. 5 (Santa Cruz, California, 2011); and Klette Boehler, *Grooves, Pleasures and Politics*. For the presence of the cascara pattern in more traditional Cuban son music such as the *conjunto* and the *septeto* format during the first half of the twentieth century, see Eric Ferguson, *Afro-Cuban Son Trumpet in the Septeto Period: Performance Practices and Historical Context* (Los Angeles, 2009), 51; David F. Garcia, *Arsenio Rodriguez and the Transnational Flow of Latin Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Mauleón, *Salsa Guidebook*; and Mauleón, *101 Montunos*.

65 Olavo Alén, "Rhythm as duration of sounds in tumba fransesca," *Ethnomusicology* 39, no. 1 (1995)

66 Klette Boehler, *Grooves, Pleasures and Politics*

67 By the term Cuban Yoruba traditions I am referring to Yoruba Lucumí and the practice of Yoruba in Cuba as described by Lydia Cabrera in Lydia Cabrera, *El Monte* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1975); and Lydia Cabrerra, *Vocabulario Congo: el bantu que se habla en Cuba: español-congo y congo-español* (Miami: Ediciones C.R.,1984).

68 Interview with Harold Lopez Nussa at his home in Vedado, Havana, 19 February 2007

69 Interview at Piloto's home in Miramar, Havana, 1 October 2007

70 He is referring to pianist and scholar on Cuban music Rebecca Mauleon and her books *101 Montunos (1999)* and *Salsa (1993)*.

71 Examples of how scholars often translate aesthetics into a philosophical "theory of beauty" are found in many books. See for example Stephen Coburn Pepper, *Aesthetic quality: A contextualistic theory of beauty* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970). During the conference of systematic Musicology in Jyväskylä, Finland in 2010, Marc Leman was invited to give a lecture on whether aesthetics had a place in empirical systematic musicology. Interestingly, he entitled his lecture "Does beauty have a place in systematic musicology?" (Marc Leman (2010). He discussed the role of beauty in systematic musicology and the field of embodied music cognition and cited the relevance of Kant's notion of disinterestedness; however, he refrained from mentioning Herder's or Baumgarten's aesthetic theories.

72 Klette Bøhler, *Grooves, Pleasures and Politics*; and Danielsen, "Estetiske Perspektiver"

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## Summary

In this article, I argue that Herder's aesthetic theory provides a conceptual apparatus for empirical research on aesthetic expressions across cultural contexts and historical epochs. Contrary to common approaches to understanding aesthetics as "a theory of beauty" – that can be traced back to Kant's idea of the dis-interested and Hegel's notion of fine arts – Herder's focus on aesthetic pleasure and his idea of aesthetics as an empirical discipline can enrich our understanding of music as an aesthetic phenomenon within distinctions such as popular music, world music, and art music. By recognising all musics as potentially aesthetic phenomena, Herder provides the basis for a less elitist, and thus a more democratic and empirically sensitive understanding of music aesthetics. The arguments presented in this article suggest that Herder's overall emphasis on pleasure in the aesthetic experience resonates well with Cuban jazz musicians' understanding of *sabor* (musical flavour, often related to expressivity and rhythms) and *bomba* (referring to rhythmic beauty and intensity). The analyses further suggest that these aesthetic pleasures are sonically constructed in the perception of specific groove-structures. By outlining central groove-structures, such as the role of the clave in Afro-Cuban jazz, I argue how aesthetic pleasure can be defined in specific musical terms.

## Keywords:

Groove, aesthetics, clave, Afro-Cuban Jazz, Pleasure

## Biography

Kjetil Klette Boehler is a Research Fellow in the Department of Musicology at the University of Oslo. In October 2013 he defended his PhD thesis entitled *Grooves, Pleasures and Politics in Salsa Cubana: The Musicality of Cuban Politics and the Politics of Salsa Cubana*. His thesis investigates how Cuban popular dance music reflects, inflects and contests changing revolutionary values in Cuba today. He has also recently published the article "Rhythmical Politics: Salsa Cubana and the rise of Cuban Nationalism" (2013) in which he explores how Cuban music has taken on political signification during the change from Marxist politics towards nationalism in Cuba.

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