

# Clave

Katherine Hagedorn

<https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2248920>

**Published in print:** 26 November 2013

**Published online:** 16 October 2013

Rhythmic concept. The *clave* is the main rhythmic organizing principle in much sacred, folkloric, and popular music throughout the Americas and the Caribbean, similar in function to a sub-Saharan rhythmic timeline, from which it originated. *Claves* are played in duple and compound meters, though felt in duple rhythm. This entry focuses on Cuban *clave* patterns, to which the other *claves* are related. *Clave* patterns determine how dancers move to the music, and how musicians participate in the ensemble.

Below are the main Cuban *clave* types (“X” = stroke, “.” = rest). The first set, in duple and compound meter, defines the “rumba complex” of music and dance:

Clave
<i>Guaguancó clave</i> : [[X . . X ... X . . X . X ...]]
<i>Yambú clave</i> : [[X . . X X . . X X . X . X ...]]
<i>Columbia clave</i> : [[X . X . X X . X . X . X]]
<i>Condensed Columbia clave</i> : [[X . X . . X . X . X . .]]

The second set, all in duple meter, defines Cuban popular music:

Clave
<i>Son clave</i> : [[X . . X . . X ... X . X ...]]
<i>Salsa clave</i> (“3-2”): [[X . . X . . X ... X . X ...]]
<i>Salsa clave</i> (“2-3”): [[. . X . X ... X . . X . . X . .]]

## More on this topic

Clave (jazz) <http://oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/gmo-9781561592630-e-2000766600> in Oxford Music Online <http://oxfordmusiconline.com>