

XAVIER CUGAT AND HIS ORCHESTRA



Rumba Rumbero



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Recorded 1940 - 1942	1. Auto Conga (X. Cugat).....	2:20
Vocals:	2. Calentito (A. Escobar).....	3:25
Miguelito Valdés (4 - 12)	3. Bim Bam Bum (Camacho - Morales).....	3:06
Machito (1 • 2)	4. Blen, Blen, Blen (Chano Pozo).....	3:03
Tito Rodriguez (3)	5. Macurije (Julio Gutierrez).....	3:18
	6. Rumba Rumbero (M. Valdés).....	3:00
	7. Nueva Conga (X. Cugat - M. Valdés).....	2:37
	8. Tunare (X. Cugat - C. Bauza).....	2:38
	9. Cinco Hijos (Osvaldo Farrés).....	2:54
	10. Guaira (Armando Orefiche).....	3:08
	11. Mi Conga (X. Cugat - C. Bauza).....	2:27
	12. Elube Chango (Alberto Rivera).....	3:11

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Xavier Cugat, one of the best representatives of Latin-American dance music, was born on January 1st in 1900 in the Catalan city of Gerona, Spain, and his family later moved to Cuba and settled in Havana when he was three. When still only twelve years of age, Cugat made the journey alone from Cuba to New York, where he enrolled at the Frank Damrosch School where Franz Khiesel was his teacher, then at eighteen years married the Cuban singer, Rita Montaner. In New York she soon became the star of a Broadway show entitled 'A Night In Spain' which ran for more than eighteen months; meanwhile, when Caruso needed a talented violinist between recitals, he hired the young Cugat, and they made tours together. In 1921, Xavier and Rita divorced, and at Caruso's insistence, Xavier continued his musical studies in Berlin, where he also played some concerts with the Berlin Symphony Orchestra. In 1924, on his return to New York, Xavier played with great success at Carnegie Hall. The public's reaction was very enthusiastic, but the young Cugat, reading the newspapers the following morning, felt a great sense of disillusion. Well aware that he would never rub elbows with giants such as Heifetz, Kreisler, and Elman, he was not prepared to be second-best, so decided to give up his career as a concert soloist. The rumours circulated that he was intending giving up music completely to dedicate himself to other things, but right there in the city was an orchestra directed by his friend Vincent Lopez, who offered him the first violin chair.

Cugat remembered saying that *"I had never ever played popular music, because I'd immersed myself totally in the great classics. I told him that it was quite possible I couldn't interpret the popular songs of the day at all, but Lopez said to me that his orchestra could become a kind of half-way point between popular and classical music. Lopez was a very persuasive man and, what's more, offered me a very high salary. So I accepted."*

But at bottom Cugat wasn't satisfied, and didn't really like the music that he was playing. It was at that moment when he took up an offer that a businessman of Spanish origin had made him, and which at the time had seemed excessive. *"He offered me the chance to sell on the American market*



a collection of Spanish antiques; and they were real artistic treasures. He had sold almost all the stock that he'd been holding in New York, and considered Los Angeles was the most appropriate place to sell the rest."

Opening day was a great success, and the astute Cugat, who had placed alongside the paintings and objets d'art a collection of caricatures he himself had made of the most celebrated Hollywood personalities, was offered a position as the official caricaturist of Hollywood artists at the prestigious newspaper the Los Angeles Times.

One day Cugat was asked to do a caricature of the celebrated Mexican actress Dolores del Rio, but his surprise was great when the lady seated before him confessed that she wasn't Dolores, but her double, Carmen Castillo. Carmen had studied singing and had appeared in a few minor films, but was soon transformed into his first lady and because of her, Xavier Cugat made a positive return to music. In his stubborn search for fame, Cugat discarded the artist's brush in the same way that he had relinquished the violin. In 1927, after a period of work as music composer for a motion picture studio, Cugat decided to try his luck forming his own band, specialising in Latin and Spanish rhythms. At the time, this kind of music was almost unknown by the North-American public, and as Cugat recalled: *"It was she who insisted that I should organize a Latin-American band suitable for popular dancing. Our first night was at a Hollywood night club called Montmartre, and our theme tune for the presentation was the song 'Estrellita', and it was immediately obvious that the music and rhythms we were playing was getting through to the public, because the applause was so spontaneous and enthusiastic."*

Fifty years later, we too can still be uplifted by his music...

