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# From Central Park Rumba with Love!

BY BERTA JOTTAR

Central Park Rumba is an internationally known music event. I first heard about it in Mexico City in 1980, described in great detail by Cesar Sandoval, a drummer who had lived in New York and frequented the rumba circle in the 1970s. In San Diego, Central Park (CP) Rumba had been the rehearsal context for some of the Puerto Rican musicians I knew from the late 1980s Latin jazz scene. When traveling to Havana to visit my family in the 1990s, *rumberos* (rumba drummers) and other musicians asked me if I knew their rumba friends from Union

City, the Bronx, and Central Park. I arrived at my first CP Rumba the second week of September 1994, my first week living in the city. There in Central Park, I was told that rumba was addictive. I got hooked! I became a regular to the scene.

Traditional rumba, what is known as *el complejo de la rumba* (the rumba genre), has taught me to understand how performance, music and dance, sound, and gesture function as reservoirs of memory—they transmit history, its future and possible contestation. I am particularly interested in embodiment

as a source of knowledge, and rumba articulates a repertoire of material, historical, and discursive knowledge through the embodiment of gestures, movement, and sound. Rumba has also taught me that while performance is ephemeral, embodiment is not.

## CP: The Rumba Scene

When the temperature reaches 65 degrees on a Sunday afternoon, the southwest corner of Central Park's rowboat lake becomes the destination of New York's *rumberos*. However, the "official" rumba



Unison: rumba chorus. All photos: Berta Jottar

season starts on the second Sunday in May, the day of the Cuban Parade, or *parada* as it's called within the New York Latino/a community. Rumba is an African-based music and dance form of Cuba. Since the 1960s, *rumberos* have gathered at the lake, originally at Bethesda Fountain and more recently at the benches west of the much-photographed Bow Bridge, where they can view the reflected towers of the Dakota, San Remo, and El Dorado buildings, housing New York's rich and famous. Underneath the shading branches of ancient willow trees, the rumba's pulsating rhythms echo the soundscape of New York City's Afro-Latin diaspora: Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, Colombians, Panamanians, and every other ethnicity's drum-playing aficionados gather here. For well over a century, this idyllic park has provided an egalitarian environment, offering tourists from around the world and New Yorkers of diverse classes and ethnicities the opportunity to share cultural experiences. Part of Central Park's rich and inclusive history, the Central Park Rumba also serves as a roadmap for understanding the internal negotiations constituting New York City's rumba community from the 1960s through the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Rumba music can be performed using any surface or material: a plastic container, a wood box, or a bench all serve the purpose. This inventiveness and dexterity is part of the long history of the African diaspora's struggle to maintain its traditional languages, religions, and instruments, with ingenious materials replacing the often forbidden drums. On a good day, however, Central Park *rumberos* bring the entire family of traditional instrumentation: three *tumbadora* drums commonly known as *congas* (the *tumbador* bass drum, the 3/2 drum, and the quinto drum), the *clave* (two wooden sticks that maintain the rhythmic base), and the *catá* or *guagua* (two long wooden sticks that are struck against a wood surface to keep the tempo going). Unlike in Cuba, men dominate the rumba scene in the park—unless Beatriz, a strong, tall Boricua grabs the *tumbador*,



Left to right: Eddy Rodríguez (*tumbador*), Jesús “Tito” Sandoval (quinto drum), and Sado Iwao (3/2 drum).

her favorite drum. But when the afternoon is at its most musical, Cuban women take center stage by dancing the *guaguancó* with Tito, El Tao, Humberto, or Hugo.

The Central Park Rumba is above all a community's family gathering, with hours of socializing, eating, and making new connections on the grassy area uphill from the benches, where a variety of pan-Caribbean drinks and foods are shared and vended. The benches where drummers sit become a stage, and the incline of the grassy area produces a natural amphitheater where those who are socializing can hear the sound of the drums and singers perfectly. The area's acoustics have been analyzed by seasoned singers like Manuel “El Llanero” Martínez Olivera, who have dealt with the inconveniences of singing in an open and humid space: “As a singer, one has to project the voice towards the grass; otherwise, if sent to the opposite direction, the voice gets lost through the lake” (1996).

As soon as a dominant singer like El Llanero, Alfredo “Pescao” Díaz, René Rosales, or Abe Rodríguez arrives at the circle, a call-and-response interaction begins between the singer and the spontaneous chorus made up of anybody interested in participating. As the rumba crescendos, people who are congregated in the area walk more quickly toward the circle, incorporating themselves into the rumba. The rumba is on! *¡Se formó la rumba, caballero!*

### Traditional Cuban Rumba

Rumba is a social event set to polyrhythmic music played on percussive instruments; it is a cultural practice constituted via the embodiment of sound, music, movement, and gesture within a call-and-response structure. It evolved in the nineteenth-century ports of Havana and Matanzas, during lunchtime gatherings of *stevedores* and sugarcane workers. They entertained themselves by playing their





Tao La Onda dancing the rumba columbia, with Tito Sandoval on the quinto drum.

respective traditional rhythms on sonorous boxes—often made from the wood of catfish or candle boxes—using two spoons for the clave. Rumba is a manifestation of transculturation, what Fernando Ortíz identified as the dialectic process of cul-

tural give-and-take that two or more ethnic groups experience in their forced or willing encounter once deterritorialized—outside their native lands. Ortíz's theory of transculturation acknowledges the colonized population's capacity for creative response.

Rather than passively accepting materials from the dominant society (assimilation), they have the potential to transform these new elements into their own (Ortíz 1963). Rumba is the creation of a new form, a synthesis of the ethnic encounter among

the Yoruba (Nigeria), Bantú (Congo), and Carabalí (Nigeria and Southern Cameroon) created in the slave system of Spanish colonialism. According to Alejo Carpentier, rumba was the first modern musical form of the Cuban nation (1993).

The rumba genre has three variants: the rumba *yambú*, the *guaguancó*, and the *columbia*. The *yambú*, the oldest and most cadenced form, is a couple's dance of mimetic moves. The female dancer is the center of attention, and it is mostly performed in theatrical contexts. The *guaguancó* is a dynamic and erotic couple's dance based on playful competition between the two dancers. Its main characteristic, the *vacuna* (vaccination), is a pelvic thrust performed by the male dancer toward the female indicating sexual possession. The *columbia* is the rumba from the countryside of Union de Reyes. Although there are testimonies about the existence of women dancers, like Andrea Baro (Orovio 1994), its contemporary performance is predominantly male. Dexterity and competition between the soloist dancers are its central characteristics; dancers must demonstrate total corporeal control.

### Rumba: Rules and Protocols

The rumba community has established rules and protocols across time that govern rumba's music, sound, gestures, dance, and song. Above all, the *clave* reigns. It is the fixed pulse of the music that defines the correctness of the genre. As Alexis Aragón explained, "I am the prisoner of *clave*, I cannot do anything outside of it" (2000). The *clave*'s rhythm is the music's spinal cord—what holds together the entire ensemble. Every sound, gesture, and song must be in the proper musical relationship to the *clave*. Essentially, understanding the *clave* is what constitutes a *rumbero/a* and sets these musicians apart from those who sing on the "wrong side of *clave*" or dance and play music outside of it.

To be a *rumbero/a* is to be a part of and participant in an acoustic community, with its own secular, religious, and spiritual understanding of sound and gesture. Halting or interrupting the rumba by

suddenly leaving a drum or not finishing a song is particularly disrespectful. Not all *rumbero/a* are active practitioners of Afro-Cuban religions, but those whose skills are respected understand the multiple layers of ancient traditions that must be acknowledged within the rumba's circle. The rumba can be performed on any surface, but the sound of the drum must be respected for its historic religious and spiritual significance. Here are some voices from Central Park Rumba:

You enter CP, and it's as if you have just entered Afro-descendant territory. The drums define the entrance. It's as if you are entering Elegua's space. You have permission to enter, and the drums are welcoming you. . . . Our drums are part of us. We speak through our drums, and they speak through us. We are Africa, in all its entirety. (Brown 2009)

Via the sound of the drum, I put myself in touch with my ancestors—and that is a recognition of myself, my identity, what I am, and where I come from. (Santana 2009)

When you play the drum, you're invoking all those beings who gave us the culture that we have today, and a good rumba cleanses the soul, the heart, and the spirit. (Guerra 2009)

The drum was the first creation of a vehicle to express yourself outside of your body: it represents the heartbeat. . . . The drum has taken me so many places; I've made money from it, I've met people. It's like a spaceship. (Flores Valentin de Hostos 2001)

The power of the drum—its power of convocation—reverberates across a history of prohibition. Its sound is a call that gathers the masses for religious, cultural, and at times rebellious purposes. In the nineteenth-century United States, drumming became the sound of revolt, prohibited by slave laws called the Black Codes. Decades later, Prohibition-era legislation forbade the use of drum sets and other jazz instruments, and in the mid-1990s, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani's "quality of life" campaign attempted to

eradicate the public use of Afro-descendant drums using unreasonable noise and disorderly conduct statutes.

### The Politics of Sound

Within the rumba circle, the foundation of the *rumbero's* acoustic and kinesthetic interactions is based in part on religious affiliations, because Afro-Cuban religious traditions are embedded in rumba's traditional musical form. Less experienced or culturally disconnected drummers are often unaware of these subtleties and overtly or covertly disrespected for their ignorance. In more sophisticated rumba circles, however, the rhythms or songs of the various Afro-Cuban religions coexist, but cannot be mixed. Alfredo Díaz explained, "*No se pueden mezclar los tratados, y los conceptos religiosos de lo que significa cada cosa, cada religion, cada espacio. Son los patrones que se convierten en protocolos*" (2011). [The different religious concepts and treaties cannot be mixed, what each thing means, each religion, each space. These are the patterns that transform into the protocols.]

Because the meaning of sound is diverse, the understanding of sound becomes a type of cultural politic. For instance, the relationship of the Abakuá society (a religious brotherhood of Carabalí origin) toward sound differs from that of the Yoruba Regla de Osha practice or the Palo traditions from the Congo. Within these three religions, the sound of the drum is sacred, but each religious group has its own rhythms, and the religious connotations and functions of sound and gender-specific activity differ for each group. Sound has specific functions within the consecrations and religious ceremonies. If for the Abakuá, the sound of the *ékue* drum is the voice of God, for the followers of Palo Monte, the sound of the *guataca* (spade) is what calls the spirits of the ancestors. The diverse significance, meaning, and attributes of these sounds are revealed but rarely discussed within the rumba's circle, which is essentially secular.



## Rumba's Coded Gestures

Because rumba is the secular synthesis of different African religious traditions' rhythms and movements, the significance of its performance is highly coded. Although rumba is a secular practice, there are particular gestures that serve as religious and secular signs of approval among the rumba participants. The touching of a performer's forehead with the tip of one's fingers means *bendición* (blessing you and your art), as well as artistic approval. Gestures also function at the kinesthetic and sonorous register. Singers and musicians enter the rumba circle by using their index finger to ask permission of those executing the music or song. A singer cannot enter the musical conversation until the performing singer has completed his or her theme. In the same way, the percussionist must ask for the drum to be able to enter the musical conversation.

Asking for permission to enter the rumba circle in any of its manifesta-

tions (music, song, dance) assumes that the individual has the skills to sustain the ongoing conversation. Thus, artistic competition—demonstrating lyrical and physical dexterity—is a central element among performers. But competition also assumes another layer of signification, that of the *puya*: an indirect gesture saying, “I am better than you.” The *puya* assumes an attitude of artistic superiority. When the *puya* between individuals is the result of preexisting conflict, it becomes a provocation.

The significance of gesture is central to rumba's dance. For instance, the rumba *guaguancó*, a fertility dance performed by a couple, mimics the gestures of a rooster following a hen. The male cannot touch the female, but he performs the *vacunao* in an evident or hidden fashion. The *vacunao* becomes a sign of competition and seduction, trickiness, and playfulness. Dancing, the female must protect herself

by covering her parts with her hands or a handkerchief. The “winning” dancer, male or female, continues dancing with the next competitor.

The symbolism of gesture functions only by following the protocols. Musicians, dancers, and singers should not randomly mix the different rumba styles or African traditions embedded within the rumba. For instance, the columbia dancer should not include the gestures of the all-male Abakuá religious society of the Carabalí. Although the columbia and the Abakuá are two male practices, it is a mistake to combine or confuse the two as part of the columbia tradition, which is of Congolese origin.

## Rumba's Routes

New York City is the second home of rumba, in both its traditional and commercial manifestations. In the 1920s, *rumba de salon* (known as rhumba) became an international phenomenon in the Havana, New York, and Paris cabaret circuits. These glamorous cabarets entertained patrons with traditional *conjuntos*, performing *son* or *guaracha* music. These so-called rhumbas were sanitized arrangements of traditional rumba lyrics (for example, “Maria de la O”), rumba choreographies, and rumba uniforms. The popularity of these conjuntos eventually led to the “rhumba craze”—the Afro-Cubanismo aesthetic movement (Moore 1997).

By 1950, prestigious *rumberos* had arrived in New York as part of the musical cross-fertilization between the U.S., Puerto Rico, and Cuba. The legendary Rodríguez brothers, Arsenio, Enrique, and Raul; Cándido Camero; Luciano “Chano” Pozo; Carlos “Patato” Valdes; Ramón “Mongo” Santamaría; Eugenio “Totico” Arango; Armando Peraza; Francisco Aguabella; and Julito Collazo figure as central contributors to the U.S. professional jazz scene. Many of these *rumberos*—Collazo, in particular—participated in building New York's Afro-Cuban religious community. It was in the private homes where Santería and Palo Monte ceremonies took place that traditional rumba flourished.



Silent protest by Leon Felipe during the Giuliani administration.

During the 1950s, traditional rumba knowledge spread in New York through the recordings of these rumberos and the public rumbas spontaneously breaking out in the parks and on the street corners and beaches of East Harlem, the Bronx, and Brooklyn—the barrios the Puerto Rican, Cuban, and African American communities shared. By the 1960s, Paula Ballán, Felix Sanabria, and Bobby Sanabria remember a “drum fever” articulating a cultural pride that was part of the civil rights and black power movements. Central Park was not exempt; it had become a central location where first-generation Nuyoricans (Puerto Ricans born in New York), Dominican Yorks (Dominicans born in New York), and other Afro-descendants met at the rhythm of the drum.

### 1960s and '70s: CP Rumba and the Return to Roots

In the early 1960s, Central Park was one of the most effervescent musical contexts in New York City, and the performance of rumba music in the park brought together a generation of young African Americans, Jews, and Nuyoricans born in the 1950s. Although the park's surrounding barrios had their own Afrocentric drumming circles, Central Park created a social space in which young people from different racial, ethnic, class, and religious backgrounds freely congregated and showed off their musical skills. Paula Ballán remembers the scene:

On Sunday, CP became a different place; from the band shell, to the fountain, to the lake, the park had a totally racially mixed crowd. In the Hispanic community, people worked six days a week, so Sunday was truly unique with their presence. CP was also a perfect example of a New York-style anarchy at its best—the most artistic and free—love, music, movement. It was a kind of stage for rebelliousness for people to be out there. . . . The rumba represented a perfect place where you could interact racially in an acceptable environment. It was a demilitarized zone for a whole generation that was part of the civil rights movement, but needed places where we could interact without being under the scrutiny of the

family we came from. . . . CP belonged to the people of New York, and on Sunday the owners came to check out their property. (2011)

For many Nuyoricans, the tumbadora drum had a significant role in the formulation of their identity. Central Park was a place touched by the civil rights movement, the demonstrations against the Vietnam War, and an era of Puerto Rican ethnic pride typified by both the rise of the Young Lords and the Puerto Rican independence movement. Nuyoricans brought their transistor radios to Central Park, synchronized to Felipe Luciano's radio show *Latin Roots*, broadcasting salsa tunes critical of Puerto Rico's colonial status. Indeed, Luciano's project mirrored his generation's growth of critical and colonial consciousness, while reclaiming African contributions to Puerto Rican culture. Drumming was the galvanizing event for young Nuyoricans and African Americans, as Elio Luis Flores Valentin de Hostos told me in 1999:

In the '70s, there was a cultural revolution in this country. Everyone was going back to their roots, and playing drums in the street and the park was part of that expression, to express your roots and be proud of them. There was a time in our community when you couldn't express any kind of black influence because people would discriminate against you. People didn't want to be discriminated against and were ashamed of their country music, because they didn't want to be labeled as ignorant country hicks.

Indeed, the erasure of Puerto Rico's African presence was part of a larger and complicated history of Spanish and United States colonialism. Although the recordings of Cortijo y su Combo had been central in the development of Puerto Rican pride and race consciousness, these were not traditional *bomba* and *plena* recordings; the recordings of traditional Afro-Puerto Rican music were just unavailable. The availability of rumba recordings produced in Havana and New York by Cuban rumberos,

however, allowed these young Nuyoricans to engage in their own search and experimentation with their African roots. This generation studied the available recordings, including Alberto Zaya's *Guaguancó Afro-Cubano* (1955), and Mongo Santamaría's *Tambores y Cantos* (1955) and *Yambú: Mongo Santamaría y Sus Ritmos Afro Cubanos* (1958). Santamaría's records were the first to explain the different rhythms and their history and significance. Moreover, the isolation of the rhythm sections in some of these recordings provided both “models for learning their execution . . . [and] an impetus to their dissemination” (López 1976, 106–8). But two New York City productions became seminal to this generation's acquisition of rumba knowledge: Mongo Santamaría's *Afro Roots* (1958) and *Patato y Totico* (1968). According to Felix Sanabria, both became “national hymns” for this Nuyoricans generation, which continued the tradition of improving their rumba skills in their homes and in Central Park (1998). For Nuyoricans, rumba's familiar antecedents served as a source to express their identification with Africa; the performance of rumba as roots became their articulation of an Afro-Boricua identity (Jottar 2011).

By the late 1970s, the rumba scene migrated to its present location in Central Park, near Bow Bridge. Some of the musicians who gathered there had already established their own rumba ensembles. The Rumberos All Stars rehearsed at Central Park what made them popular, their rumba breaks (*cierres*), inspired by the record *Papín y Sus Rumberos* (1954). Felix Sanabria, Eddie Bobé, Eddy and Abe Rodríguez, Alberto Serrano, Kenneth Burney, Morty and Mark Sanders, Paula Ballán, and Jesús “Tito” Sandoval were among the core rumba group in Central Park. They cultivated the form and embraced a decisive wave of rumberos arriving in the city, the *Marielitos*.

### 1980s: The Mariel Rule

The 1980 arrival of the Mariel boatlift to the U.S. had a tremendous repercussion in CP Rumba's sound and racial politics. The boatlift brought 125,000 Cuban exiles



Hugo Torres dancing the rumba columbia.

to U.S. territory. As a type of punishment against the U.S. economic and cultural embargo, Fidel Castro permitted a mass departure of inmates from jails and mental institutions and a large number of political dissidents and gays. Unlike their Cuban counterparts in Miami, the Marielitos were black, working class (Portes and Stepick 1993), and included a substantial number of rumberos, Abakuáses, Santeros, and Paleros. If the United States' economic embargo against Cuba had severed the musical exchange between the two countries, the Marielitos' arrival in the New York metropolitan area revitalized the practice of Afro-Cuban religious and musical traditions, marking a new era in Central Park's rumba sound and protocols.

The Mariel brought rumberos to New York who already had a name in Havana, including Tao La Onda, Enrique "Kiki" Chavalonga, Daniel Ponce, Xiomara Rodríguez, Roberto Bolaños, and Alberto Morgan. But two Marielitos transformed the rumba and Santería scene in New York: Orlando "Puntilla" Rios and Manuel "El Llanero" Martínez Olivera. Puntilla transformed the existing Regla de Osha community by teaching his deep knowledge of the sacred *batá* drums. The young generation of Nuyoricans and African Americans—Eddy Rodríguez, Kenneth Burney, Abe Rodríguez, Felix Sanabria, and others—became his direct disciples and collaborators. El Llanero had a tremendous impact in Central Park. He introduced the idea of *un rumbero completo*, a complete rumbero who dominates the entire genre; he could sing, play the drum, and dance. He established the rule of clave and a new repertoire of songs combining Spanish, Yoruba, and Kikongo lyrics. More importantly, he opened the space for female singers, like Paula Ballán and others, who began to participate in the rumba circle. Kiki introduced dance back into the scene with highly acrobatic and dangerous choreographies. The fertile collaboration between El Llanero, Paula Ballán, Felix Sanabria, Abe Rodríguez, Juan "Bamboo" Vega, Roberto Borrel, Juan "Curba" Dreke, and Enrique Dreke launched two folkloric ensembles in the early 1980s: Chevere Macún Chevere (1980) and Los Afortunados (1985).

The Marielitos' African ancestry challenged the popular belief that Cubans were mostly white, upper-middle class, and antirevolutionary—a conservative discourse promoted by Miami Cubans whose identity relies on their condition as exiled victims of the Communist regime. Being black, many rumberos of the Mariel generation acknowledge the Cuban Revolution's egalitarian project of racial inclusion, which included eradicating the rampant illiteracy among Cuba's poor (and mostly black) population that Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship had promoted. The Revolution also institutionalized Afro-Cuban folklore with the 1962 founding of the influential dance

ensemble Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba, which celebrates the contributions of Afro-Cuban culture to the nation. With the arrival of the Mariel in Central Park, "*la rumba no era como ayer*" [the rumba was no longer like yesterday's].

### 1990s: One Rumba, Two Exoduses

While CP Rumba had been the locus of Nuyoric experimentation and identity formation during the 1960s and '70s, by the 1990s, CP Rumba had been claimed by Cuban rumberos, not only from the Mariel, but also from the 1994 *balsero* (raft people) immigration. The *balseros*, the second largest wave of Cuban immigrants to reach the United States, shifted the sound and spiritual interactions of CP Rumba. The *balsero* exodus brought a young generation of Afro-Cuban rumberos who had grown up under the revolutionary regime, including many from the Abakuá revival movement of the 1990s. Under the Revolution's atheist regime, the Marielitos experienced marginalization of Afro-Cuban religious practices, but with the economic depression of the 1990s Cuban Special Period, the government promoted Afro-Cuban culture—including officially sanctioned performances of rumba, Santería, Palo Monte, and Abakuá folklore—as a central part of a new tourist economy.

By the late 1990s, CP Rumba had become the site where Abakuás from both migrations recognized each other through their coded gestures and rhythms. Within the rumba circle, *balseros* like Hugo Torres would spontaneously introduce the gestures of the Abakuá *íremes*, masquerade figures representative of the ancestors. Only those initiated into the religion would understand the layered significance of his choreography, replying with particular Abakuá rhythmic patterns and in their Carabalí ritual language. With the *balseros*, the rumba circle became a space of Abakuá sociality, making evident a series of historical genealogies articulated in sound and movement.

During the second half of the 1990s, the CP Rumba also experienced a series



of challenges as part of New York City's ongoing process of privatization under the Giuliani administration. Under his zero tolerance initiative, CP rumberos were caught between the rubrics of "visual disorder" and "unreasonable noise." The re-Cubanization of CP Rumba by the Mariel and balsero generations coincided with the city's establishment of the Central Park Conservancy and its effort to re-white Central Park. "Zero tolerance was the only way to regain control of this unmanageable anarchy by rebuilding the park and putting people back where they belong," Paula Ballán observed with dismay (2011). Indeed, the Giuliani administration dissolved the rumba scene for two consecutive years. Beginning in 1995, rumberos were fined, and their drums were constantly confiscated under unreasonable noise and disorderly conduct ordinances.

By the year 2000, the zero tolerance regime had galvanized the rumba community. United in their struggle against the police presence in their rumba, some rumberos allowed the police to arrest them; others created walking rumbas to exit the park. Although the rumba community could not keep up with the drum confiscations, it never gave up its established location. For two consecutive years, people stopped bringing their drums to Central Park but continued their rumbas *a capella* or used plastic containers and coolers as their drums. Others created photo and painting exhibits in the same area where the musicians had gathered. Boom boxes substituted for the tumbadora drums, amplifying the newest rumba records. The rumba continued as a cultural celebration without the actual drums. As Humberto Brown stated, "Even if the police physically take our drums away, our bodies are our percussion. We reproduce rumba with or without the official drum. We have proven after five hundred years that it does not matter how much they repress the drums, the drums always resist, always survive, and will always be. We are like our drums" (2001).

Under the zero tolerance campaign, people no longer identified by their country of origin; when the police arrived, people

unified and identified as Afro-Latinos. But like magic, on the first summer Sunday under the Bloomberg administration, the rumberos returned with their drums to Central Park. Although Central Park continues its restoration process, fencing the rumba community out of its traditional location, the rumba is heard every summer at the benches located between Bow Bridge and Cherry Hill. Now a new generation of Afro-Latinas are entering the rumba circle as singers and dancers, challenging the Park's dominant male presence. The rumba continues in New York City. ▼

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Berta Jottar (bjottar@gmail.com) is an independent artist-scholar. She began to document rumba music in New York in 1994, earning her Ph.D. in 2005 from New York University's Department of Performance Studies. She produced a rumba recording, *Rumbos de la Rumba/ The Routes of Rumba* (2008), with Pedro Martínez and Román Díaz, created a video installation in 2009 about Central Park Rumba under the Giuliani administration, and is currently producing a documentary about the history of Central Park Rumba. Berta thanks Paula Ballán for her editorial advice.

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