

Felipe Valdes And The Role Of The Cornet In The Cuban Orquesta Típica

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ABSTRACT

The orquesta típica is a Cuban ensemble that performed popular dance music in the early 1900's. This ensemble of winds, strings, brass and percussion was responsible for creating the danzón. This document aims to expand the research on the role of the cornet in danzón by analyzing the music of Felipe Valdés. Felipe Valdés, a skilled cornetist, was the leader of his típica Orquesta Felipe Valdés, which recorded more danzons than any other ensemble. This document draws from Cuban musical writings and historical recordings from 1906-1919 to show how Valdés expanded the role of the cornet. Furthermore, this document discusses the progression of Felipe Valdés's cornet playing, focusing on tone, articulation and improvisation techniques. The analysis of Felipe Valdés's compositions shows how the cornet becomes an immovable voice in Cuban ensembles.

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Introduction

An *orquesta típica*, or *típica*, is a Latin American ensemble that performs popular dance music. While the exact instrumentation varies depending on the country of origin, a *típica* always contains a group of core instruments. The core instrumentation includes violin, cornet, clarinet, double bass, kettle drums, guiro, and the ophicleide, which is a bass bugle with keys. Some of the most famous *típicas* formed in Cuba, and these ensembles created dance genres that garnered success and popularity throughout the Americas. The *típica* is well known for creating the *contradanza* and *danzón*, the popular dances that are the building blocks of *charanga* and the modern *salsa* genres.¹ The cornet was crucial to the instrumentation of the *típicas* Orquesta Faílde and Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. Cornetist and *típica* leader Felipe Valdés was partly responsible for the increased role of the cornet in Cuban music. He formed his *típica* in Havana. This paper discusses the significance of the *típica* in Cuban music, including the historical and musical aspects of this ensemble. The first section of the paper discusses the history of the *orquesta típica*. It begins by discussing the creation of the early *típica* and the instrumentation of the ensemble. Further, this paper discusses the creation of the *danzón* with an emphasis on musical form. The second section discusses the role of the instruments in the *típica*. It will highlight the prominence of the clarinet in the early *danzón* and explain the emergence of the cornet as the main melodic instrument in Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. The final section analyzes Orquesta de Felipe Valdés's music recordings to illustrate the extended role of the cornet.

¹ Serafin Ramirez, *La Habana artística* (Havana: Imprenta del E. M. de la Capitanía General, 1891), 43.

The analysis focuses on recordings of seven songs that furthered the development of cornet music in the *danzón*. Each recording illustrates how Felipe Valdés expanded the role of the cornet. The musical numbers discussed in this paper include excerpts from *Rigoletto*, *La Machicha*, *Alza Colombia*, *El Calvito de O'Reilly '89*, *No Te Mueras Sin Ir a España*, and two items simply titled *Danzón*. Each analysis identifies the form of the *danzón* and the roles of the instruments in each section, with an emphasis on the role of the cornet in the ensemble. This paper demonstrates how the role of the cornet was expanded in Orquesta de Felipe Valdés, which transitioned the cornet from an accompaniment role to a main melodic voice and thus furthered the development of the cornet in Cuban popular dance genres.

There are many scholarly articles, books, and dissertations on the Cuban *danzón* and *contradanza*. However, there are no extensive scholarly works about Valdés or his use of the cornet. Alejandro Madrid and Robin Moore's book on the *danzón* includes a section that discusses the creation of the *típica* around 1850. The section begins by discussing how the *típica* combined woodwinds and strings with Afro-Cuban percussion. Madrid and Moore then discuss the introduction of brass instruments into the ensemble. Finally, they discuss the musical style of the *típica*. Madrid and Moore focus on the *danzón* and how the genre evolved from Cuba to the Americas, which leaves room for further discussion of the *típica*. In addition to Madrid and Moore's book, there are several dissertations on Cuban music that mention the *típica*. For instance, Solomon Mikowsky's dissertation, "The Nineteenth-Century Cuban *Danza* and its Composers, with Particular Attention to Ignacio Cervantes (1847-1905)" discusses the evolution of the *danzón* from the previous genres of *danza* and *contradanza*. As it centers on the composer Ignacio

Cervantes, Mikowsky's dissertation does not cover Valdés or his *típica*. Another dissertation, Ruth Witmer's "Cuban Charanga: Class, Popular Music and the Creation of National Identity," covers early Cuban bands; however, the primary subject is the *charanga*, which is the dance genre that followed the *danzón*. While the ensemble resembles the *típica*, the music is different in form and style.² This dissertation briefly refers to the popularity of the *típica* and the *danzón*, but it focuses primarily on Cuban national identity through the study of the *charanga*. The dissertations by Mikowsky and Witmer, along with the book by Madrid and Moore, provide a good overview of the origins of the *típica* and associated dance genres.

This paper contributes to the literature on the *típica* by concentrating on Valdés and Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. This ensemble is important because the musicians performed with technical prowess. They were also the leading *típica* actively recording their performances. This paper analyzes the cornet style in detail because of Orquesta de Felipe Valdés's extensive recording catalog. The recording technology of the time was advancing further, allowing artists to record longer songs. This paper discusses how Valdés took advantage of the advancing technology and recorded longer *danzons*.

This paper begins with a discussion on the role of the cornet within Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. Then it analyzes music recordings by Orquesta de Felipe Valdés and examines how the cornet interacts with the other instruments. This includes a discussion about Felipe Valdés's incorporation of ornamentation, variation and improvisation.

The discussion on ornamentation begins with Valdés adding grace notes and chromaticism to existing melodies. Ornamentation marks the beginning of Valdés's

² Ruth M. Sunni Witmer, "Cuban Charanga: Class, Popular Music and the Creation of Nation Identity" PhD diss., University of Florida, 2011.

evolution of complex performance technique. The discussion about variation begins with Valdés maturing as a player. Variation occurs in the ending sections of the *danzón*. Valdés established a short melody, then changed the rhythm several times while maintaining the same notes. Finally, this paper discusses improvisation. Improvisation occurs during the later danzons; here Valdés played fast, articulated passages over the melodic material. The improvisation was flashy and brought attention to the cornet voice. This paper also discusses the addition of lyrical phrasing in the cornet material. In the later recordings analyzed here, Valdés experimented with longer phrases and vibrato. This showcased his depth of expression and musical phrasing.

This paper uses writings from the *típica* era to prove that Orquesta de Felipe Valdés was a significant ensemble that furthered the development of Cuban popular music. These writings include books by Emilio Bacardi Moreau and Serafin Ramirez, who reported on the colonial and musical history of Cuba during the *típica* era. Other sources include articles by Gaspar Agüero and Eduardo Sánchez de Fuentes that provide insight into the dance culture of Cuba and the *contradanza*.

This paper highlights the emergence of the cornet as an essential voice in Cuban music. Ensembles during the *danzón* era already used the cornet as part of instrumentation. During the *danzón* era, Valdés expanded the role of the cornet in the *típica* and wrote original works, leading to the emergence of the solo cornet sound in Cuban music. This paper discusses the expansion of melodic material for the cornet during the *danzón* era; this expansion was led by Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. Valdés's contribution to the *danzón* was historically important to Cuban popular music; Valdés's improvisation styles and new techniques became the building blocks of Cuban mambo.

The Cuban Orquesta Típica

The Spanish conquest of Cuba resulted in the introduction of new music. The Spanish introduced wind instruments to the Cuban people through military bands because the bands were a staple of Spanish culture.³ As a result, Cuban composers began to borrow musical ideas from the Spanish culture. According to Francisco Figueras's book on Cuba's colonial evolution, the Spanish brought many slaves from Africa and enslaved many of the Cuban people. The military influence and enslavement introduced these wind instruments to native Cubans over time. As a result, wind instruments were adopted by early Cuban bands, resulting in the *típica*. Most of the musicians who played in the earliest *típicas* were former slaves. Some slaves were able to purchase their freedom due to a royal decree issued by the King of Spain in 1708.⁴ This led to the creation of many musical ensembles. The *típica* performed popular dance music from 1780 to approximately 1930.

The *típica* contained wind and string instruments and the instrumentation was small- to medium-sized (about eight to twelve players). Some *típicas* substituted the flute or trombone for other instruments due to accessibility, and there are examples of groups omitting either the ophicleide or double bass.⁵ Each instrument had a specific role in the *típica*. The lower instruments—the double bass, ophicleide, and trombone—played the syncopated rhythm along with the kettle drums. This group of instruments was responsible for creating the tempo and the style. Stylistically, the lighter the lower

³ Francisco Figueras, *Cuba y su evolución colonial* (Havana: Imprenta Avisador Comercial, 1907), 2.

⁴ Figueras, *Cuba y su evolución colonial*, 13.

⁵ Leonardo Acosta, "Los formatos instrumentales en la música popular Cubana," *Panorama de la música popular cubana* Selección y prólogo de Radamés Giro (1998): 32.

instruments played, the quicker the tempo can flow in the music. The second clarinet and violin filled out the middle harmonies by listening to both the bass and melodic material and used their aural skills.⁶ The musicians understood their role of performing within the ensemble. The lead clarinet, violin, and cornet were responsible for the melodic material. The prominence of each voice varied depending on the *típica*. Since clarinetist Juan de Dios Alfonso formed the first *típica*, the clarinet voice was responsible for most of the prominent melodic material throughout the early *típica* era.⁷ Both Orquesta Flor de Cuba and Orquesta Faílde featured their respective clarinetists. The cornet was important in earlier bands, but it did not rise to melodic prominence until Valdés formed his ensemble.

The *típica* created music genres within the popular dance movement of the nineteenth century. The first *típicas* performed the *contradanza*, a slow dance that was popular in mid-nineteenth-century Cuba.⁸ During the era of the *contradanza*, the *típica* performed mostly in an accompaniment role during musical theater acts and Cuban comedy variety shows. This changed once *típicas* began to perform on their own, typically during dance parties or festivals.⁹ Eventually, the *contradanza* utilized quicker tempos, and rhythm became a significant aspect of this popular dance genre. Since this music was designed to accommodate dancers and be performed at lively tempos, some songs did not have an exact length.

The important *típicas* from this era included Orquesta Flor de Cuba, Orquesta Faílde, and Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. Orquesta Flor de Cuba was the earliest known

⁶ Ramirez, 48.

⁷ Eduardo Sanchez de Fuentes, "La contradanza y la habanera," *Anales de la Academia Nacional de Artes y Letras* 20, no. 16 (January 1931): 142.

⁸ Cristobal de la Habana, "Los bailes habaneros de otros tiempos," *Social* 13 no. 3 (March 1928): 52.

⁹ *Ibid.*

típica, founded by clarinetist Juan de Dios Alfonso in Havana around 1856.¹⁰ An early photo of Orquesta Flor de Cuba in Figure 1 shows the instrumentation of the *típica* .

Figure 1: Orquesta Flor de Cuba¹¹



This ensemble set the core instrumentation for the *típica*. According to Serafin Ramirez's book on Cuban popular music between 1833 and 1907, the only known information about this *típica* is that it was an integrated group that contained a Spanish cornetist and former Cuban slaves.¹² Orquesta Flor de Cuba played dances for popular musical theatre halls and became popular in the middle of the nineteenth century. This group remained popular even after the death of Juan de Dios Alfonso. Soon after, another *típica* surged to popularity in the 1870s. Composer and cornetist Miguel Faílde formed Orquesta Faílde in

¹⁰ Sanchez de Fuentes, 152.

¹¹ Orquesta la Flor de Cuba, 1870, photo, The Diaz-Ayala Cuban and Latin American Popular Music Collection, accessed August 27, 2020, https://latinpop.fiu.edu/discography_photos/jpgO/photo_O_903.jpg.

¹² Ramirez, 45.

1871. During his tenure as leader of Orquesta Failde, Failde created the *danzón*.¹³ In 1879, Failde performed the first *danzón* in Matanzas.¹⁴ Miguel Failde often composed *danzóns* by writing a melody and syncopated accompaniment for piano. As shown in Figure 2, Failde did not write a full score with complete instrumentation. This gives insight into how the *danzón* was performed by an ensemble. The fact that each instrument did not have its own written part meant that the harmonies and melodies were derived from the piano score. Most musicians were not formally trained and therefore did not read music. Parts were not created for the ensemble to read; instead, the musicians learned each song by listening to each other. This was significant because it led to the improvisatory lines that would characterize the *típica*, especially for solo instruments such as the cornet. Orquesta Failde was popular throughout the *típica* era until 1921, when the group disbanded due to Failde's death. During the *danzón* era, composers began to experiment with extending melodic responsibilities to the wind instruments. Composers would eventually give more melodic responsibilities to the cornet voice, especially when the band leaders were cornet players.

The *danzón* was Cuba's first true musical creation, combining the rhythms of the *contradanza* with the syncopated rhythms of the African-Cuban culture of Havana.¹⁵ The *danzón* is a slow partner dance performed in 2/4 time. It requires a set footwork organized around the syncopated beats of the music. The form of the *danzón* is different than the *contradanza*.

¹³ Osvaldo Failde Castillo, "Miguel Failde: Creador Musical del Danzón," *La Habana, Havana: Editora del Consejo Nacional de Cultura* (1964): 20.

¹⁴ Castillo, "Miguel Failde," 32.

¹⁵ Castillo, "Miguel Failde," 28.

Figure 2: Failde, El Malakoff, manuscript.¹⁶



The form of the *contradanza* is AABB, and the *típica* would often repeat sections to lengthen the dance as shown in Table 1.¹⁷

Table 1: Form, contradanza.

First Melody (A)
Repeat (A)
New Melody (B)
Repeat (B)

¹⁶ Miguel Failde, *El Malakoff*, 1882, accessed August 27, 2020, <https://www.encaribe.org/es/Picture?IdImagen=952&idRegistro=411>.

¹⁷ Habana, 58

Eventually, the tempo and AABB form of the *contradanza* were becoming monotonous to the audience. This led to the addition of a C section and creation of a rondo form.¹⁸

Table 2 shows the structure of the early *danzón*.

Table 2: Form, early *danzón*.

Section:	Number of Measures:
Introduction/ <i>Paseo</i>	4
First Melody (A)	16
Second Melody (B)/ <i>Parte de la Flauta</i>	16
Repeat (A)	16
Trio/ <i>Tresillo</i> / <i>Parte del Violin</i> (C)	16

The early *danzón* is an ABAC form. It begins with a four-bar introduction called the *paseo*.¹⁹ *Paseo* is a Cuban word for “walking leisurely,” and when applied to music, it instructs the ensemble to play at a leisurely pace. The *paseo* is then followed by the A section, a sixteen-bar melody in the violin and clarinet. The A section is followed by the B section denoted by the introduction of a second melody. In the early *danzón*, the flute introduced the second melody in the B section. This is why this section is alternately called the *parte de flauta*, or flute part. The A section melody repeats and then the C section emerges.

The C section of the early *danzón* is alternately named the trio or *tresillo*. *Tresillo* is a rhythmic pattern that creates a 3:2 feel, or hemiola. *Danzón* composers typically

¹⁸ Madrid and Moore, 30.

¹⁹ Reynaldo Gonzales, *Contradanzas y latigazos* (La Habana, Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1992), 12.

wrote the *tresillo* in the low brass and double bass. In a typical C section, the low brass and double bass repeated the *tresillo* throughout the entire section, creating an ostinato.

Example 1 shows how the *tresillo* functions in the *danzón*.

Example 1: *Tresillo* rhythm



The *tresillo* rhythm defines the C section. In the *tresillo*, the ostinato in the lower instruments interacts with the melodic material in the upper voices.

The Role of the Cornet in the Cuban Típica

The cornet has a long history on the island of Cuba. During Spanish control of the island, the military imported brass instruments and drums. Bands were essential for military drills and gave men of color the chance to learn instruments. By 1798, the cornet had become a popular instrument on the island and was a staple in popular bands.²⁰ Despite its newfound popularity, the cornet was still not as prominent as the clarinet, flute, or violin, as woodwind and string instruments had established roles in Cuban ensembles before the Spanish infantry began importing other instruments.

²⁰ Gaspar Aguero, "Consideraciones sobre la musica popular cubana," *Revista de la Facultad de Letras y Ciencias* Vol. 32 (1922): 40.

Although the cornet was new, the role of the cornet player in the *típica* was significant because there was only one per group. In *danzón* music, the cornet either solidified the melodic material established by the clarinet, flute, and violin, or served as an accompaniment voice.²¹ It is the only instrument with the versatility to play with the upper-timbre instruments as well as with the low strings and brass. As one of the highest voices of the *típica*, the cornet is crucial because it balanced the timbres of the violin, clarinet, and flute. The interaction between the clarinet and cornet is important in *típica* playing because the cornet accents the clarinet melodic line. Example 2 shows the B section of a *danzón* by Failde, *Las Alturas de Simpson*.

Example 2: Failde, *Las Alturas de Simpson*, section B, mm. 17-21, clarinet and cornet lines.²²

17 ♩ = 80

B♭ Clarinet

B♭ Cornet

In this example, the clarinet has the melody throughout. The cornet has melodic material following the clarinet, but it is mostly the clarinet voice that dominates the song with lyrical passages and fast, ornamented lines. The cornet plays in unison with the clarinet, highlighting the melodic material.

²¹ Acosta, *Los Formatos Instrumentales*, 40.

²² Miguel Failde, *Las Alturas de Simpson*, with La Orquesta Folklórica Nacional Cubana, recorded 1982, Ethnic Folkways Records, compact disc.

The tone of the cornet in the *típica* was brilliant and bright. This sound carried over the ensemble when playing. While the clarinet and violin had contrasting timbres, they tended to blend with the cornet. Even when the woodwinds and strings had contrasting ideas, the cornet's tone had the ability to pierce through the texture when reiterating melodic material. The cornet's ability to lead by sound is one of the reasons Valdés chose to write more material for the instrument. Some band leaders had the cornet blend with the other instruments; however, the well-known *típicas* such as Orquesta Faílde and Orquesta Felipe Valdés kept the cornet as a prominent voice.²³

The use of vibrato is significant because it was not a commonly used technique when the military bands introduced the cornet to Cuban music.²⁴ After the military bands introduced the cornet to Cuban popular music, solo cornet players began experimenting with vibrato.²⁵ In *típica* ensembles, the type of vibrato varied depending on the cornetist. Vibrato is used primarily during improvisatory and melodic lines. When the cornet was playing the accompaniment, the musician stopped the use of vibrato to blend with the other instruments. The vibrato in earlier *danzons* was reserved for the *tutti* sections. Valdés later used faster vibrato during the improvisation sections of his *danzons*.

The articulation in *típica* playing was distinct because it had to fit the rhythmic style of the dance music. As discussed previously, the *danzón* is one of the primary dance genres that the *típica* performed.²⁶ The interlocking rhythms required precision in the articulation of each instrument. To match this style, the *típica* cornetist played with a shorter, pointed articulation. This created a percussive start to each note, thus making

²³ Sanchez de Fuentes, 144.

²⁴ Madrid and Moore, *Danzón*, 111.

²⁵ Acosta, "Los formatos instrumentales en la música popular Cubana," 13.

²⁶ Madrid and Moore, *Danzón*, 112.

notes fit into the quick, syncopated rhythms that are common in the *danzón*. There are often moments when the cornet switched between shorter, pointed articulations and longer lyrical phrases. These moments occur in the trio or C section where the composer introduced a new melody. In the early *danzón* era, improvisation by the cornetist was rare because that responsibility was left to the clarinetist. That changed when cornetists formed their own bands. Table 3 shows what instrument had melodic material in each section of the early *danzón* form.

Table 3: Prominent instruments within early *danzón* form.

Section:	Melodic Instruments:
(A)	Violin/Clarinet/Flute/Cornet
(B)	Solo Flute
(A)	Violin/Clarinet
(C)	Solo Violin
(A)	Violin/Clarinet/Flute/Cornet

The leaders began showcasing themselves by playing melodic material and improvising.²⁷ As a result, versatility became a requirement of the *típica* cornetist. Because Valdés created elaborate music for the cornet, *típicas* looked for advanced

²⁷ Cristóbal Díaz Ayala, “Cuando salí de La Habana: 1898-1997, Cien años de música cubana por el mundo,” *San Juan, Puerto Rico: Fundación Musicalia* (1999): 10.

players. The result was an influx of better cornetists, and the instrument became irreplaceable in Cuban music.

Felipe Valdés the Band Leader

According to Cristóbal Diaz-Ayala, a historian of early recordings of Cuban music and compiler of a recording reference list, Valdés was the band leader who “recorded more *danzons* than any other *típica* in the twentieth century.”²⁸ Further, Valdés composed many new *danzóns* during his tenure as leader of Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. It was Valdés's compositions that transitioned the prominence of the clarinet to the cornet, furthering the development of cornet playing in Cuban popular music. In his observations of the day, Gaspar Agüero mentions that while the clarinet was still prominent around the 1890s, the cornet was on the rise due to the influx of cornetists becoming band leaders.²⁹ There are numerous historical recordings by Orquesta Felipe de Valdés, but information on the composer himself is scarce. Valdés was a cornetist, pianist, and composer from Bolodron, Matanzas, and he was a member of several *típicas* prior to founding his own. Valdés was a gifted cornetist who was often lauded for his performances.³⁰

In 1899, Valdés formed Orquesta de Felipe Valdés with a comparatively small instrumentation of nine players: two violins, clarinet, cornet, trombone, contrabajo, saxophone, guiro, and timbales.³¹ The saxophone became popular in *típicas* by the late

²⁸ Cristobal Diaz-Ayala, “Cuba canta y baila: discografía de la musica cubana 1898-1925,” *San Juan, Puerto Rico: Fundacion Musicalia* (1994): 147.

²⁹ Diaz, 148.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Diaz, *Cuba Canta y Baile*, 148.

nineteenth century. Valdés expanded the group by two members during its recording years. In 1916, he added one violin and one clarinet, thereby expanding the group to eleven members.³² Orquesta de Felipe Valdés was the only *típica* to record under three different labels. It recorded one of the first wax cylinders for the Edison and Columbia label in 1906. It was also one of the first groups to record under the Victor label in 1907.³³ Orquesta de Felipe Valdés recorded approximately 315 songs. This increased the group's popularity in Cuba and throughout the Americas by significantly expanding the accessibility of its performances. Phonographs helped spread music to additional audiences. Valdés's popularity meant that Orquesta de Felipe Valdés was becoming the standard sound for *típicas*. Future groups would name Orquesta de Felipe Valdés as the inspiration for their sound.

In the early years of the group, Valdés adhered to the normal formal structure and sound of the *danzón*. Early *danzons* from the Orquesta Faílde era featured the violin and clarinet as prominent melodic voices. Early songs from Valdés, such as *El Lucumí* and *La Perla* (1906), do not have significant cornet material and adhered to the ABAC form.³⁴ Valdés also did not experiment with the cornet material. The cornet often reiterated existing material the clarinet/violin duo introduced in earlier sections.

The following year, Valdés included more interaction between the cornet and other instruments. In 1907, Valdés incorporated the cornet into the main melodic material. The first example of this occurs in the song *Rigoletto*. The cornet emerges in the

³² Ibid.

³³ Diaz, *Cuba Canta y Baile*, 149.

³⁴ Felipe Valdés, *El Lucimi y La Perla*. Recorded with the Orquesta Felipe Valdés, 1916 Harlequin CD131, 1999. CD

A section with a prominent melody. The cornet and violin have a call-and-response interaction throughout this recording.³⁵

By the 1920s, Valdés had expanded the length of the *danzón*. In a *danzón* as recorded by Valdés's group, the A section is often repeated more than once. Also, each repetition now includes variations of the melodic material with ornamentations in the cornet. Further, instead of the cornet interacting with the violin, the cornet now has call-and-response material with the trombone. The earliest song containing this dialogue between the cornet and trombone is *Alza Colombia*.³⁶ This was the predecessor of melodic improvisation by the cornet. The musician would take a short melody and add ornamentation, and chromaticism. This practice influenced later genres in Cuba and the United States. The expansion of the cornet's role took place gradually throughout the history of Orquesta Felipe de Valdés. Numerous examples reveal when Valdés altered the *danzón* with different creative decisions

The Extended Use of the Cornet in Orquesta de Felipe Valdés

The role of the cornet developed further in the later years of the *típica*. Since Valdés was a cornetist and the leader of the Orquesta de Felipe Valdés, melodic lines for cornet were featured in many of the recordings. The cornet would often replace the clarinet or violin in major sections of the *danzón*. The other significant difference exhibited by Orquesta de Felipe Valdés is that the cornet plays improvisatory solos that

³⁵ Felipe Valdés, *Rigoletto*. Recorded with the Orquesta Felipe Valdés, 1916 Harlequin CD131, 1999, CD.

³⁶ Felipe Valdés, *Alza Colombia*. Recorded with the Orquesta Felipe Valdés, 1916 Harlequin CD131, 1999, CD.

are at least several bars long. In earlier *típicas*, the cornet had few to no improvisatory solos. Valdés's cornet solos were based on new melodic material derived from the piano score, similar to changes in a jazz group. Though the cornet did have sporadic melodic material in earlier groups, it never introduced new melodic material. The clarinet or violin established the melodic material and then passed the melody along to the cornet. Valdés departed from that tradition, and in his songs, the cornet plays the melodic material first before passing it along to other instruments. Table 4 lists the occurrences of significant cornet material in each section of Felipe Valdés's *danzóns*.

Table 4: Prominent instruments within *danzón* form as recorded by Orquesta Felipe Valdés.

Section:	Instruments:
(A)	Cornet/Violin/Clarinet
(B)	Violin/Clarinet
(A)	Violin/Clarinet/Cornet
(C)	Solo Cornet
(A)	Violin/Clarinet
(D)	Solo Cornet
(A)	Cornet/Violin/Clarinet

In Valdés's later *danzóns* the cornet is added to more sections. Valdés even created the D section in order to introduce another solo for the cornet voice. This solo in the D section is an addition to the cornet solo in the C section.

Throughout his tenure as the leader of Orquesta de Felipe Valdés, Valdés became a better cornetist. In later recordings, Valdés had cleaner technique, clearer musical ideas,

and more confidence in his tone. As a result, Valdés experimented further in later compositions. The cornet material expands from the reiteration of melodic material to a full section dedicated to the cornet. Valdés began writing longer, more complex ornamentation and featuring newer techniques such as multiple tonguing, faster arpeggiated passages, and double turns.³⁷

Analysis of Historical Recordings

The evolution of the cornet's role becomes apparent through an analysis of the historical recordings of Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. Each *danzón* selected represents the whole time period during which the ensemble was active. The analyzed examples below include *Rigoletto* (1906), *La Machicha* (1907), *Alza Colombia* (1907), *El Calvito de O'Reilly '89* (1911), *No Te Mueras Sin Ir a España* (1917), and two untitled *danzons* (1919).³⁸ The analysis of each number will show the role of the cornet in each section of the *danzón*. As previously mentioned, this paper will discuss the progression of the articulation, sound, and improvisation technique of the cornet.

Rigoletto (1906)

Historically, the inspiration for many *danzons* was derived from a popular opera or melody at the time of composition. Giuseppe Verdi was popular in Cuba, and *La*

³⁷ A wind instrument technique that requires articulating with both the front and back end of the tongue in order to play faster passages.

³⁸ The year in the parenthesis refers to the date Orquesta Felipe Valdés recorded each song. I used the *Diaz-Ayala Cuban and Latin American Popular Music Collection* historical reference page to find the year of each recording.

Donna è Mobile was a well-known melody across the Americas.³⁹ Valdés capitalized on the popularity of this aria from Verdi's *Rigoletto* and composed one of his first *danzons* with the same name. *Rigoletto* was written in 1906 and included on the first wax cylinder recorded by Orquesta Felipe de Valdés.

The structure of the *danzón* is ABAC. This song contains original material and arranged material from Verdi's *Rigoletto*. The opening material in the woodwinds and strings is from the beginning of Act I, Scene 2 of Verdi's opera. Examples 3A and 3B show the first violin part from Verdi's *Rigoletto* in comparison to the clarinet and violin in Felipe Valdés's arrangement.

Example 3A: Verdi, *Rigoletto*, Act I Scene 2, mm. 1-10.⁴⁰

INTRODUZIONE

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Example 3B: Valdés, *Rigoletto*, section A, mm. 1-4.⁴¹

♩ = 80

³⁹ Aguero, *Considerationes*, 41.

⁴⁰ Giuseppe Verdi, *Rigoletto*, New York: Kalmus, n.d.

⁴¹ Felipe Valdés, *Rigoletto*, with Orquesta Felipe Valdés, recorded 1916, Harlequin CD131, 1999, compact disc.

Example 5: Valdés, *Rigoletto*, section A, mm. 40-44, violin and clarinet melody, cornet accompaniment.⁴³

40 ♩ = 80

Violin

B♭ Clarinet

B♭ Cornet

This is the first instance of the cornet playing the melodic material on its own without the clarinet or violin. The C section historically featured the strings. Example 6 shows the leading melody in the cornet.

Example 6: Valdés, *Rigoletto*, section B, mm. 56-64, cornet melody.⁴⁴

56 ♩ = 80

Valdés' *Rigoletto* breaks from tradition, as the ensemble accompanies this melody during the C section. The ending section of *Rigoletto* begins with Valdés's characteristic experimentation with ornamentations and grace notes. Example 7 shows the interaction between the ostinato and the solo cornet.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Example 7: Valdés, *Rigoletto*, section C, mm. 105-112, chorus and solo

cornet melody.⁴⁵

105 $J = 80$

Violin

Flute

B♭ Clarinet

B♭ Cornet

Trombone

Tuba

109

Vln.

Fl.

B♭ Cl.

B♭ Cnt.

Tbn.

Tba.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

This is the earliest recorded song in which these improvisation techniques occur. The clarinet and strings interlock rhythms with the low brass, saxophone, and kettle drums to create the *tresillo*. The *tresillo* interacts with the cornet melody similar to a chorus and solo voice. Valdés plays turns, grace notes, and variations of the melody. This chorus and solo interaction is significant because it is predecessor to the *coro-pregón* from *mambo* and *salsa*. *Rigoletto* is the earliest song that begins to break from the traditional *danzón*.

La Machicha (1907)

Orquesta de Felipe Valdés recorded a marathon of songs in 1906 and 1907. The next song in which Valdés expanded the role of the cornet is *La Machicha* (1907). *La Machicha* is different from earlier *danzons* such as *Rigoletto* because the cornet is largely absent in the B section and repeat of the A section. This omission seems to indicate Valdés's return to the traditional *danzón* by favoring the clarinet/violin duo. However, that return is ultimately avoided since the cornet plays a portion of the melody without the upper voices in the C section. This is the second recording in which the *parte de la flauta* (flute section) is dedicated to the cornet. After the success of *Rigoletto*, Valdés experimented by expanding the amount of cornet in other sections. In contrast to *Rigoletto*, the extended cornet material in *La Machicha* is mostly confined to the trio and portions of the ending.

Immediately in the A section, the cornet plays the principal melody with the clarinet and strings. The cornet blends with the ensemble rather than taking a leading role. The sound is reserved, and the articulation is not as firm or pointed. The cornet reemerges in the C section. The cornet plays pick-up material into the C section using

staccato articulation, singing vibrato, and ornamentation. Valdés's sound in the C section of *La Machicha* is singing, and he uses vibrato on the longer notes that end the phrase. There is a noticeable difference in the articulation as compared to *Rigoletto*. In *La Machicha*, Valdés plays with more of a soloistic approach. The articulation is slightly longer, and the sound is fuller and not as bright. The length of the phrases in the C section are significant: the cornet solo uses all eight measures of the C section without resting. Earlier *danzons* traded off between the cornet voice and other instruments. Valdés even plays an extended variation of the melody during the ending section of the song. Example 8 shows the longer melody with faster ornamentation, demonstrating that Valdés is maturing and finding his style.

Example 8: Valdés, *La Machicha*, section C, mm. 61-69, cornet melody.⁴⁶

There is varying articulation in the cornet throughout *La Machicha*. The C section melody includes a pointed, dry articulation on the faster passages and contrasting weighted articulation on the longer notes. The weighted articulation has clarity to the

⁴⁶ Felipe Valdés, *La Machicha*, with Orquesta Felipe Valdés, recorded 1916, Harlequin CD131, 1999, compact disc.

beginning of the note with a fuller tone, connecting each note without sounding overly legato.

The leadership role of the cornet continued as Felipe Valdés became confident in his playing and writing abilities. I see *La Machicha* as a maturing or turning point for the ensemble. I categorize both *Rigoletto* and *La Machicha* as belonging to the formative years of Orquesta de Felipe Valdés.

Orquesta de Felipe Valdés recorded extensively after 1907. During this recording period, Valdés continued experimenting with the structure and sound of the *danzón* while also expanding the role of the cornet. The songs he wrote between 1910 and 1918 are evidence of his growth as a musical leader. The cornet's increased presence in each section of the *danzón* became standard for the group. Valdés's playing ability fully matured, and the ornamentation and improvisation in these songs are accordingly extensive and complex.

Alza Colombia (1910)

The first *danzón* that highlights the maturity of Valdés's cornet playing is *Alza Colombia*, which was written and recorded in 1910. The A section of the historical recording provides evidence that Valdés is leading the ensemble with the sound of the cornet. The balance between the cornet, clarinet, and strings in the A section immediately sounds different in comparison to earlier *danzons*.

The cornet leads the melodic material in all sixteen measures of the A section, and interestingly, sixteenth notes are added to the principal melody. Example 9 shows that the

melodic importance of the clarinet and strings has certainly shifted to the cornet. The cornet is normally not as rhythmically involved at the beginning of the *danzón*.

Example 9: Valdés, *Alza Colombia*, section A, mm. 1-9, cornet melody. ⁴⁷



This is the earliest recorded song in which these improvisation techniques occur. The clarinet and strings interlock rhythms with the low brass, saxophone, and kettle drums to create the *tresillo*. The *tresillo* interacts with the cornet melody similar to a chorus and solo voice. Valdés plays turns, grace notes, and variations of the melody. Opening the A section in its entirety is important because it repeats three times in this *danzón*. This ensures that the cornet is always present. In addition to the written material, Valdés leads the group sonically. The cornet sound projects over the ensemble with a brilliant, and commanding tone.

The B section marks another major change in the role of the cornet. The cornet is now trading a countermelody with the clarinet. Perhaps the biggest change is in the style and sound of this section. For the first time, the cornet is playing lyrical phrases, which is

⁴⁷ Felipe Valdés, *Alza Colombia*, with Orquesta Felipe Valdés, recorded 1916, Harlequin CD131, 1999, compact disc.

significant because there was no precedent for this style of playing in *danzons*. All instruments usually played syncopated melodies, as seen in the previous examples. Example 10 shows the lyrical countermelody in the B section that occurs for eight measures in the cornet.

Example 10: Valdés, *Alza Colombia*, section C, mm. 58-65, cornet melody.⁴⁸

The image displays a musical score for two instruments: B♭ Clarinet and B♭ Cornet. The score is in 2/4 time and begins at measure 58. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 80. The key signature has three flats (B♭, E♭, A♭). The B♭ Clarinet part starts with a melodic phrase in measures 58-61, then rests for measures 62-65. The B♭ Cornet part rests for measures 58-61, then plays a melodic phrase in measures 62-65. The cornet melody is characterized by a lyrical, flowing line with grace notes and a final flourish.

The remaining phrase is then passed on to the clarinet and strings, which continue playing on their own during the repeat of the A section. This is somewhat similar to Valdés's earlier *danzons*. The cornet plays the principal melody in the second half of the A section. The new element in this song is that the cornet connects the end of the A repeat to the C section. The harmony and style immediately change. The cornet remains the principal voice for this section, and Valdés begins his improvisation. Valdés emphasizes the turns and grace notes by switching from fast, syncopated material to a lyrical melody, as shown in Example 11. *Alza Colombia* is the first *danzón* recorded by Orquesta de Felipe Valdés that contains a completely new section.

⁴⁸ Valdés, *Alza Colombia*.

Example 11: Valdés, *Alza Colombia*, section C, mm. 49-57, cornet countermelody.⁴⁹



The D section contains a call and response between the cornet and trombone, which then leads into another repeat of the A section before the ending section.

Alza Colombia represents a major turning point for Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. The cornet acts as a solo voice throughout the song. Valdés introduced contrasting styles, added a lyrical melody in both the B and C sections, and established the cornet as the principal instrument in the C section, previously called the *parte de la flauta*. Valdés also pushed the boundaries of recording. The Edison company had recently purchased the patent required to create cylinders from harder wax that used smaller grooves.⁵⁰ This patent increased the maximum recording time from 2 ½ minutes to approximately four minutes. Orquesta de Felipe Valdés capitalized on this development and used all four minutes to record *Alza Colombia*. For the first time, audiences outside of Cuba were able to hear how the *típica* lengthened the *danzón* to keep people dancing. *Alza Colombia* is the longest recording in Orquesta de Felipe Valdés's catalog.

El Calvito de O'Reilly '89 (1911)

The *danzons* after *Alza Colombia* highlight the clarinet and strings but keep the expanded cornet material. The clarinet and violins interact more with the solo cornet in *El*

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Madrid and Moore, *Danzón*, 31.

Calvito de O'Reilly '89. Significantly, this is the first A section of a *danzón* in which the cornet plays the principal melody alone. In addition to having an expanded role, the cornet plays grace notes and ornaments earlier than in previous *danzons*. To establish the cornet further and assert musical leadership, Valdés begins the song. The rhythm of the principal melody is more complex than in any previous *danzón*. Valdés confidently plays the melody as solo cornet. The clarinet and strings are in an accompaniment role throughout the A section. Example 12 shows the cornet melody with grace notes and glissandi in the A section. Valdés draws from the traditional *danzón* structure in the B section of *El Calvito de O'Reilly '89*. The clarinet and strings are now the principal voices, and the cornet is playing a countermelody.

Example 12: Valdés, *El Calvito de O'Reilly '89*, section A, mm. 1-11, cornet melody.⁵¹

The C section of *El Calvito de O'Reilly '89* is particularly important to the expanded role of the cornet. Valdés added another chorus and solo voice interaction in the C section. Similar to *Rigoletto*, the other instruments create an ostinato that sounds like a chorus.

⁵¹ Felipe Valdés, *El Calvito de O'reilly '89*, with Orquesta Felipe Valdés, recorded 1916, Harlequin CD131, 1999, compact disc.

Valdés then sings out a long note with wide vibrato before playing the improvisation material. The clarinets and strings are in charge of the unchanged principal melody; meanwhile, the cornet interjects with fast, articulated material and turns. Example 13 shows the solo cornet improvisation material over the ostinato in the low brass. The cornet interjections are not in previous melodies or sections. This material aims to showcase Valdés’s technical ability as a cornetist.

Valdés introduces new ornamentation in the C section, adding *glissando* and falls in the melodic material. This is a common practice in later Latin music, and its presence in this relatively early work is significant to the progress of cornet music. The ending section of *El Calvito de O’Reilly ’89* contains another call-and-response section.

Example 13: Valdés, *El Calvito de O’Reilly ’89*, section C, mm. 91-102, cornet melody, low brass ostinato.⁵²

The image displays a musical score for three instruments: B♭ Cornet, Trombone, and Tuba. The score is set in 2/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B♭, E♭, A♭) and a tempo marking of ♩ = 80. Measure 91 is marked with a '91' above the staff. The B♭ Cornet part begins with a whole rest in measure 91, followed by a melodic line in measures 92-94. The Trombone and Tuba parts play a consistent eighth-note ostinato pattern throughout the section.

⁵² Valdés, *El Calvito*.

Example 13: (continued)

Musical score for Example 13 (continued), starting at measure 96. The score is in 2/4 time and features three parts: B♭ Cornet (B♭ Cnt.), Trombone (Tbn.), and Tuba (Tba.). The key signature has three flats (B♭, E♭, A♭). The B♭ Cornet part begins with a rest in measure 96, followed by a melodic line starting in measure 97. The Trombone and Tuba parts play a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes with stems up and down, starting in measure 96 and continuing through measure 100.

The cornet plays the response and is slightly more active than in previous versions of Valdés's *danzons*. Valdés introduces new melodic material in the cornet in the ending, continuing a trend of adding more material for the cornet in each new composition.

Example 14 shows the cornet melody and variations. Although the cornet is present in previous song endings, Valdés plays different variations of the melody in each section of this song.

Example 14: Valdés, *El Calvito de O'Reilly* '89, section C, melody mm. 120-121, variations mm. 122-136.⁵³

Musical score for Example 14, showing measures 120 and 129. The score is in 2/4 time and features a single part for the cornet. The key signature has three flats (B♭, E♭, A♭). The tempo is marked $J = 80$. Measure 120 shows the beginning of the melody, and measure 129 shows a variation of the melody.

⁵³ Ibid.

The presence of the cornet in this ending is significant because it is the only instrument playing melodic material. The violin and clarinet are playing syncopated rhythms along with the low brass.

No te Mueres sin ir a España (1917)

Initially, *No te Mueras sin ir a España* sounds as if it could be a *danzón* from earlier recordings by Orquesta de Felipe Valdés. The form, roles of the instruments, and simple melodies resemble the earliest songs of the genre from the turn of the century. The recording is 3 ½ minutes long, only a few seconds longer than the earlier songs in the catalog. The violin and clarinet perform a significant amount of material in both the A and B sections. The cornet is paired with the low brass and occasionally accompanies the melodic material. However, Valdés introduces a completely new idea in the C section. In previous *danzons*, the featured instrument collaborated with the other instruments, exchanging portions of the melodic material. In *No te Mueres sin ir a Espana*, Valdés omits this completely and composes a C section with the cornet playing the melody alone. This is the first melody that does not contain a copious amount of syncopation. It is lyrical, singing, and ornamented in the “Spanish” style. The Spanish style of playing is characterized by chromatic turns and spinning vibrato in the longer notes. Example 15 shows the cornet solo in comparison to the clarinet and violin parts.

Example 15: Valdés, *No te Mueres sin ir a Espana*, section C, mm. 55-71, cornet solo.⁵⁴

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 55-60) includes staves for Violin, B♭ Clarinet, and B♭ Cornet. The second system (measures 65) includes staves for Violin, B♭ Clarinet, and B♭ Cornet. The third system (measures 69-71) includes staves for Violin, B♭ Clarinet, and B♭ Cornet. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 80. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 2/4. The B♭ Cornet part features a prominent solo in measures 55-60 and 65, and a final phrase in measures 69-71. The B♭ Clarinet part provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth-note patterns. The Violin part is mostly silent, with some light accompaniment in measures 55-60.

⁵⁴ Felipe Valdés, *No te Mueras sin ir a Espana*, with Orquesta Felipe Valdés, recorded 1916, Harlequin CD131, 1999, compact disc.

As Valdés became a better player, he added more cornet material to his songs. For example, in the B section of *No te Mueres*, the clarinet and strings become the principal melodic voice but never play over the cornet when it interjects. Another significant change in *No te Mueres* is the omission of the *tresillo* feel from the *danzón*. The low voices are playing on beats one and three for a large portion of the number. The removal of the 3:2 feel allows the cornet melody in the C section to sound relaxed and singing. Valdés is changing the characteristic traits of an entire section in order to highlight the cornet sound. These recognizable traits help determine when Valdés composed each *danzón*.

The last two *danzons* discussed have no titles, and they are both labeled “Untitled” on the Diaz-Ayala historical recording reference page. However, based on Valdés’s development as a composer, it is possible to determine that the two untitled *danzons* were written during the final years of Orquesta de Felipe Valdés.

Untitled Danzón 1 (1919)

Valdés’s first untitled *danzón* contains eight sections. It is an ABACADA *danzón*, and it contains a coda. There are certain characteristics in the *danzón* structure and cornet playing that mark this as a later composition. For example, the confidence of the cornet playing indicates that Valdés has matured as a performer. There are longer phrases and more embellishments, and the vibrato has more control. Furthermore, the composition has both a D section and a coda. The A section of the first untitled *danzón* begins with a declamatory melody from the cornet. The opening statement sounds similar to a fanfare, with pointed articulation and a loud singing dynamic. After the cornet’s opening pick-up

notes, the clarinets and violins continue the melody to finish the phrase. Valdés then ornaments the reiteration of the opening statement. This is the earliest occurrence of ornamentation in any of Valdés's *danzons*. Valdés's sound is brilliant, and he uses a faster, singing vibrato in his tone. Instead of reiterating the opening concert B \flat arpeggio, Valdés plays the entire scale in a quick and flashy manner. This scale showcases Valdés's command of the instrument as well as his clean articulation. Example 16 shows both iterations of the cornet melody in the A section.

Example 16: Valdés, *Untitled Danzón 1*, section A, mm. 1-14, cornet melody.⁵⁵

The image displays two staves of musical notation for a cornet melody. The first staff begins with a treble clef, a 2/4 time signature, and a tempo marking of quarter note = 80. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note B4. This is followed by a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and a sixteenth-note run. The second staff starts with a measure rest, followed by a quarter note G4, an eighth note A4, and a quarter note B4. The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes, including a triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4) and a final scale-like run ending with a quarter note G4 and a quarter rest.

In the B section, the cornet is an accompanying voice and plays interjecting quarter-note triplets with the other brass. The woodwinds and strings carry the lead material at the end of the B section and the first half of the A repeat. The cornet then returns with the opening statement. In this occurrence, Valdés fills in the B \flat arpeggio with chromaticism and faster notes. As the *danzón* develops, the cornet material becomes complex and

⁵⁵ Felipe Valdés, *Untitled*, with Orquesta Felipe Valdés, recorded 1916, Harlequin CD131, 1999, compact disc.

spectacular. In the trio, the cornet is the solo voice. The *típica* plays syncopated rhythms while the cornet plays a long, ornamented melody in the second half of the remaining sections. The C section in this *danzón* showcases Valdés's technique on the cornet. Valdés includes additional grace notes, turns, and fast articulations, as shown in Example 17.

Example 17: Valdés, *Untitled Danzón 1*, section C, mm. 77-92, cornet melody.⁵⁶



The second untitled *danzón* contains a significant change in the sound of the cornet: Valdés introduces a straight mute for the first time in Cuban popular music. Big bands in the United States commonly used straight mutes in the brass section. Occasionally, *típica* musicians listened to music from outside of Cuba for inspiration. The popularity of changing the timbres of instruments inspired Valdés to write a muted cornet solo. The addition of a mute was a seemingly significant change for Valdés because he designated an entire section to premiere the muted cornet.

⁵⁶ Valdés, *Untitled*.

Untitled Danzón 2 (1919)

The second untitled *danzón* is the longest song in Orquesta Felipe de Valdés's catalog. The form of this *danzón* is ABACADAD. The significant change is the addition of a fourth full repeat of the A section and a full repeat of the D section. The cornet begins the *danzón* by playing the principal melody with the woodwinds and strings for the duration of the A section. Previously, the cornet usually played the first half of the A section before switching to accompaniment in the second half. In this *danzón*, the cornet plays all of the A section. In the B section, similar to other *danzons*, the cornet is a more reserved backup voice. The woodwind and string sections have the melodic material while the brass harmonizes, creating contrast. The cornet does not appear in the first A repeat. Valdés reserves the cornet timbre for the trio in the C section. The cornet then becomes the most prominent voice, playing an extensive solo in the first half of the C section.

The most notable feature of this late era *danzón* is in the D section. Valdés changes the tone of the cornet with a straight mute. Example 18 shows the muted cornet melody with the repeat in the D section. The muted cornet in the untitled *danzón* plays a folk melody that the woodwinds and strings introduce in the first half of the D section.

Example 18: Valdés, Untitled Danzón 2, Section D, mm. 125-142, Muted
Cornet Solo.⁵⁷

125 $\text{♩} = 80$ Con Sord

B♭ Cornet

Trombone

Tuba

130

B♭ Cnt.

Tbn.

Tba.

136

B♭ Cnt.

Tbn.

Tba.

142

B♭ Cnt.

Tbn.

Tba.

⁵⁷ Felipe Valdés, *Unknown*, with Orquesta Felipe Valdés, recorded 1916, Harlequin CD131, 1999, compact disc.

The D section cornet solo is also significant because it occurs twice in this untitled *danzón*. The addition of a new section normally occurs once. However, Valdés decides to end the entire song with a repetition of the D section.

Conclusion

Orquesta de Felipe Valdés greatly influenced Cuban music by diligently recording as many songs as they could—an effort that other *típicas* could not replicate. The resulting recordings preserve the evolving sound of the cornet throughout the era. Felipe Valdés's technique on the cornet allowed him the freedom to create innovative ideas. These ideas include new extended material for the cornet, improvisation, and adding a new section to the form of *danzón*. The number of recordings available ensure that listeners associate the lead cornet as an immovable sound in Cuban popular music.

I believe that these advancements in Cuban popular music are partly attributable to Orquesta de Felipe Valdés and the treatment of the cornet in Valdés's compositions. *Danzón* was historically important to Cuban popular music. It would evolve and become the predecessor to the mambo. This occurred because composers after Valdés continued to experiment with and expand the *danzón*. Valdés's new techniques and improvisation would become the building blocks of the cornet in Cuban music. Valdés was the first to expand the role of the cornet using ornamentation, variation, improvisation, longer arrangements and lyrical playing. As a result, improvised material that began in the *típica* later became complex due to the popularity of jazz. For example, the *mambo* era, which immediately followed the *danzón* era, contained ensembles with a section of trumpets.

This was a result of expanding the Cuban *danzón* with the instrumentation of the big band. The group extended its influence in other countries such as Mexico and the United States through its recordings. Orquesta de Felipe Valdés significantly developed the distinct sound, articulation, and improvisation of the cornet, and its influence remains evident in Cuban popular music today.

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