Rosa Marquetti Torres, *Chano Pozo: La vida (1915–1948)*. Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente / Baranquilla: La Iguana Ciega. 2018. 358 pp. (Paper n.p.)

Chano Pozo was a troublemaker who smoked marihuana, sniffed cocaine, and spent a great deal of his life with gun bullets in his body. He was also the greatest *conguero* of Cuba of all times. In 2001, Jordi Pujol issued the CD box *Chano Pozo: El tambor de Cuba* (Tumbao TCD 305) with a 143-page booklet. It constitutes a landmark in the research on Chano. Now Rosa Marquetti extends our knowledge about the legendary *tumbador* a great deal further.

She sets the mood with a description of Chano Pozo, the dandy, in fancy stage clothes and with his best conga drum. By 1942, he had completed his look—expensive and extravagant suits (he had 23), fancy shoes, outrageous hats, and flashy jewelry. Chano was obsessed with clothes. After rising to fame, he was never short of money, but what came in was spent immediately. At the same time, he stuck to his origins. He continued to live in a *solar*, a tenement building with one-room apartments and common kitchen and toilet, though in his case it was furnished in style. Chano was a man of contradictions. He also drove a red Cadillac convertible, rolled in bills on his bed and spent those that stuck to his body. He epitomized the myth of the triumphant Cuban musician.

Marquetti narrates Chano Pozo's life in a lively, fluent, easy-to-read style—from his humble beginnings through his reform-school teens, his subsequent rise to fame in Cuba as a composer, drummer, and *rumbero*, his apogee on the vanguard of Afro-Cuban jazz in the pathbreaking big band of Dizzy Gillespie in “Nuebayol” and his catalytic role in it, to his violent death in New York in 1948, at the age of 33 and his posthumous larger-than-life reputation. She traces the history of the introduction of Cuban percussion and Cuban music in general into American music, inserting Chano into a wider musical perspective, not only the contemporary one but also broader Cuban musical history, and the intersection of North American and Cuban music which took place at the same time as the bebop revolution in jazz.

While jazz fans are familiar with the short period that Chano spent in the United States—less than 20 months—their knowledge of his Cuban background usually leaves a lot to be desired. Marquetti fills the gap, providing the necessary knowledge, without which it is impossible to understand who Chano was, where his music came from, and what he represented. She deals with his musical activities, his regular appearances in *comparsas* (parading song and dance groups) during the carnival season, his hit compositions and his cabaret career, not least the part related to Rita Montaner, Cuba's most famous singer, whom he accompanied regularly in a variety of contexts between 1942 and 1946.

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She also sheds more light than earlier studies on the 1948 European tour of the Gillespie band.

Marquetti stresses that Dizzy Gillespie and his musicians perceived Chano not merely as Cuban but as authentically African as well. They were right. Chano was a member of a secret abakwá (ñáñigo) society, and he sang in Abakwá on *Cubano Be*, *Cubano Bop*, becoming a stellar figure in Dizzy's orchestra. The story of the composition of *Manteca* is told at length. Limited on record to the usual three-minute format, in live performances it could extend to 45 minutes with Chano soloing, singing, and dancing, stealing the show. Dizzy and his orchestra adjusted to Chano. He could not be tamed. The musicians in the band had to learn rhythmic patterns unknown to them—it was hard on the rhythm section—but Chano also adapted to jazz.

Marquetti is not afraid of exploding myths. The conventional wisdom has it that Chano was murdered while dancing to *Manteca* in the Río Café on Lenox Avenue. Marquetti doubts it. The Río may not even have had a juke box. She writes with confidence, based on a variety of source material—interviews, statements of Chano's contemporaries, Cuban newspapers and magazines of the time, musicians' biographies (not least Dizzy Gillespie's), analyses by other musicologists, and even U.S. immigration information sheets. She is meticulous with recording dates and orchestra line-ups, not taking conventional wisdom for granted.

Altogether, the book is a fun (yet serious) full-scale portrait of Chano Pozo, reading almost like a suspense novel toward the end. A list of Chano's compositions and a good discography, both of other musicians' recordings of Chano's compositions and of records with Chano himself, are provided. I cannot think of a better introduction to the life, music, and tragic fate of Chano Pozo.

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