

# Silvio Cebrian

SILVIO CEBRIAN is a composer and arranger who has been writing popular songs since the late 1940's. He was born on September 16th, 1937 in the district of Belén, Municipio de La Habana Vieja in the city of La Habana, Cuba. Belén was situated in the historic center of the capital, and enjoyed a period of success and popularity during the early part of the twentieth century.

By the late nineteen thirties and throughout the forties the barrio of Belén had become famous for its colorful characters and charismatic musicians, the most iconic of which was Miguelito Valdés. It was a predominantly black neighborhood and the sounds of rumba were everywhere. There is no doubt that young Silvio was enraptured by these genres, and in later years his love for Afro Cuban street music would be manifested in his compositions. Above all, he would master the art of writing son montunos and the boleros.

Silvio emigrated to the US while still in his teens, and in 1956 joined the US Navy. After serving a tour of duty in the Navy he developed a love for traveling, and continued working as a merchant marine, choosing New York City as his home base. It was during this work period that Silvio began writing seriously. At sea, he bunked with another popular Cuban composer, Marcelino Guerra and together they traveled the world, meeting wonderful people and writing songs in their spare time.

It was around this time that his first compositions were recorded. During his many trips to Mexico, he met numerous Cuban artists and was introduced to saxophonist Carlos Roman, who recorded two of his first songs, Ding Dong and Cucumay. Subsequently, Veracruzian pianist Pepe Arevalo recorded a novelty tune by Silvio titled Que Pacho? He would go on to write many other songs during this period, and although many of them were not immediately recorded, they would surface during the following decade. After some 17 years as a seaman, Silvio began working in the construction business as an interior decorator. It was a lucrative trade and he enjoyed doing it, but his main love was writing music.

After giving up a care free life as a merchant marine, Cebrian decided that he would master the art of writing music. He did not wish to be a musician, but rather he sought to open up his mind to the concept of creating music, unravel its mysteries if you will, and ultimately take it to the next level, which was arranging. He studied theory, solfeggio and piano privately with Luisa Guzman, Alfredo Rodriguez, Manolo Albo and Rafael Solano. He also studied with one of the pioneers of Afro Cuban Jazz, the legendary Mario Bauza, who opened up the world of harmony and orchestration to him. In Mario he also found a kindred spirit. They developed a warm and personal relationship that would last until the very end of the bandleader's life.

In 1972, Silvio enrolled at Juilliard School of Music, where for the next two years he furthered his studies in orchestration. Things really started to click for him when he was signed to an exclusive contract as composer for the Caytronics Mericana family of labels. A wave of popular hits came his way, among

them Wichisnavi, La Tierra Del Sabor, Sigo Siendo, La Gallinita and Y Yo Lo Se, all for the newly signed conjunto of sonero Roberto Torres. These were followed by Papa Fritas, which he wrote for the dynamic percussion duo Los Jimaguas, featuring the only known US recording by sonero Mariano Sanchez. For pianist Rey Roig he penned Cali Cose, Monseur o La La, Loco Loco and Yo Se Que Tu Me Extrana.

His Tributo a Roberto Clemente was recorded in Puerto Rico by Carlo Camacho and Tempo 70, with Tito Lara and Allegro 72. At this time a relatively unknown Philipino vocalist by the name of Serafin recorded Esta Noche, Avanzando, En Ti, Imelda, No Dudes Mas and Mi Borinquen. In Mexico the legendary Mariano Merceron recorded Cemento y Arena and in Puerto Rico vocalist Joe Quijano recorded Que Fue Lo Que Te Dijo.

Late in the decade, just as his contract at Caytronics was coming to an end, he started freelancing, then scored big at TR Records, where he penned his most famous tune, Ansias, for bongosero Ralphy Santi. He was writing almost exclusively for the label, and every bandleader in town was after him to write another romantic up tempo bolero number, in the vein of Ansia. He gave the controversial Angel Canales Faro De Luz and En Ti, and tresero Nelson Gonzalez recorded Y Soy Feliz and Tijerita. Also, Orchestra Sublime did a nice version of Que Lindo El Campo. The seventies had been good to him, but a new era was dawning.

During the following decade Cebrian wrote a lot of straight ahead Cuban dance music for the Caiman/Guajiro labels, penning such themes as En la Campiña, Imelda and Mi Sentir, all for trumpeter Chocolate Armenteros. In addition, Silvio succeeded in jump starting the career of his old friend and mentor Mario Bauza, after a long hiatus from the recording studio. The former musical director for the Machito band came up with a monster album titled Afro Cuban Jazz, in which he introduced Dices Tu, a beautiful bolero sung by Graciela. Also on Guajiro Records was Conjunto Candela, a group led by bongosero Ralphy Marzan. They recorded the swinging My Son y Yo and Enamorada Guajira.

Another album by Serafin was released, in which a bolero version of Ansia was featured, along with Enseñame a Querer, Con Una Mirada, En Ti, Mi Sentir, Paisaje Guajiro and A Tu Lado. An independent release by famed Dominican pianist and composer Rafael Solano yielded the following selections: Santo Domingo, No Te Preocupes, Que Te Olvide and Dime Que Si. Flautist and arranger Gonzalo Fernandez and sonero Miguel Quinana did a very nice version of Cherie Amor, while Monguito El Unico turned out some great versions of Vera Cruz, Mexico Lindo, Que Bella Es and Con El Chimbómbó. Sandwiched somewhere in between was a recording by guajiro singer Ramoncito Veloz that included Colombia Divina.

During his long career as a composer and songwriter Silvio Cebrian has written music for the Caytronics/Mericana, Montilla, TR, Baron, Combo, Kubaney, Top Ten Hits and Fania labels. On the latter, two exceptional compositions were recorded by the legendary Sonora Matancera. They were Como Te Estoy Queriendo and Confesion which featured the great Yayo El Indio on lead vocals. Also worthy of mention is the swinging guaracha Asi Lo Entiendo, recorded by Justo Betancourt.

Meanwhile, back in Mexico Pepe Arevalo was busy recording Sin Montuno No Hay Salsa, Loco Loco, Chimbombo, Ingrata, Santo Domingo, Esta Noche, Chrangueando, Nuestro Romance, Se Fue Jose, No Te Preocupes and La Cosita. La Sonora Veracruz turned out fine interpretations of My Son y Yo, Tributo A Arsenio and Oigan Mi Pregon, while Yimbóla Combo did a remake of Que Pacho? Many of Silvios compositions have appeared in Mexican films, featuring such renowned artists as Sacha Montenegro and Resortes.

For the last 27 years Silvio Cebrian has worked as a correspondent, writing features articles for "El Bohemio" in San Francisco. His column titled "Desde NY En Sol Mayor" has been a regular feature in that publication.

Although Silvio has been a New Yorker for almost his entire adult life, one of his favorite haunts is Hudson County, New Jersey, where artists such as Raphael Cruz, Paquito D'Rivera and Papo Ortega reside. Ortega by the way, has recorded a number of Silvios songs, featuring them on both of his albums.

The main vocalist on Papo's first album "Recordando A Cuba" was veteran sonero Chico Alvarez, with whom Papo had been playing with since he was a teen. Chico too had been a fan of Silvio's work and for many years he had expressed a desire to record one of his compositions. So it was only fitting that for his latest album - an ambitious big band recording - Chico featured "Esta Noche", a mambo cha cha chá that had been originally recorded by the Filipino vocalist Serafin. Although "Esta Noche" had already been recorded (more than once) Chico wanted to see what he could do with it. His big band version featured diverse soloists, adding a totally new dimension to it. It quickly became Chico's signature piece, as well as the opening theme for his radio show "New World Gallery". It is included on his album "Country Roots, Urban Masters".

Meanwhile, a Texas based bolero singer by the name of Freddy Garcia was busy recording some of Silvio's compositions, as were percussionists Geovanni Arencibia and Papo Pepin here in New York. All three have recently released albums featuring Cebrian's material.

During the last two years Silvio has managed to keep a busy schedule, traveling and writing new material, although mostly instrumental music. Some of that new music can be sampled on his website: [www.silviocebrian.com](http://www.silviocebrian.com), which includes a catalogue of unreleased melodies available for use. While this list is not conclusive, it does provide an overview of those songs and their associated tempos.

While Silvio Cebrian's music still remains quite popular within the Latin American market (his most famous hit, "Ansias", has recently been re-recorded by Ralphy Santi, the same artist who originally made it popular) he is also seeking to promote and expand his repertoire to a broader audience, via international markets such as Japan, Eastern Europe, Africa, New Zealand, Scandinavia and The Middle East. In fact, many of his melodies feature lyrics that are not only in Spanish.