

*"...Imaginative, passionate and tasteful, Riu is clearly a livewire on the London music scene..."*

Musical Opinion

*"...Riu's vivacious articulation really shines. A beguiling performance of a unique programme..."*

The Independent

*"All the works are spellbinding in Riu's readings; she brings a concert artist's technique to the business of understatement. It is because each note is so exposed that the integrity of these interpretations is so compelling. Riu's mastery of the all-but-inaudible range is not only wonderful but a rare gift in this era of competition-winners."*

American Record Guide

*"Dazzlingly inspired moments of intense meaning".*

The Pianist

*"... Elena Riu's CD, 'Piano Icons for the 21st Century' was chosen by Gramophone Magazine as one of the best CDs of the year: '...My disc of 2000 is without hesitation Elena Riu's extraordinary CD of 20th century music...'"*

*"... Thanks to a velvety touch, rhythmic subtlety and a veiled delicacy Riu gains access to a private universe of blurred lights. The evident charm and talent of this most personal vision of Soler draws away from stereotypes and awakes interest without unnecessary emphasis or raptures, simply by touching the music's most intimate particles..."*

Scherzo, Madrid July 2003

Elena Riu wishes to thank the Arts Council for their contribution to the *Salsa nueva* project.

Website: [www.elenariu.com](http://www.elenariu.com)

# SALSA nueva



vibrant salsa beats meet  
contemporary classical piano music



commissioned and played by **Élena Riu**

# SALSA NUEVA

**ELENA RIU, Piano**

**WILMER SIFONTES, Latin Percussion**

[1] <b>Ricardo Lorenz*</b> "Worcestershire" (Salsa Inglesa) from Coleccion de Salsas (2004)	4:20
[2] <b>Antonio Estevez</b> <i>Ancestro I</i>	1:04
[3] <b>Diana Arismendi</b> <i>Für Elena</i> (2003-4)	2:49
[4] <b>Roland Perrin</b> <i>One Hand In My Pocket (One Hand on the Wheel)</i> (2004)	2:48
[5] <b>Alonso Toro*</b> <i>CongaBite</i> (2004)	3:05
[6] <b>Tania León</b> <i>Tumbao</i> (2004)	2:31
[7] <b>Douglas Finch</b> <i>Toccata montuna</i> (2003)	2:23
[8] <b>Argeliers León</b> <i>Canto de Bamba</i>	2:43
[9] <b>Alfredo Rugeles*</b> <i>Sal-cita</i> (2003-4)	6:13
[10] <b>Deirdre Gribbin</b> <i>Celtic o salsa</i> (2004)	6:03
[11] <b>Alwynne Pritchard</b> <i>The Barnyard Song</i> (2004) ( <i>Ten in a Bed</i> )	2:03
[12] <b>Antonio Estevez</b> <i>Ancestro II</i>	1:46
[13] <b>Elena Riu</b> <i>La salsita del Sr Ligeti</i> (2004)	2:40
[14] <b>Gabriela Ortiz</b> <i>Suy-muy-key, la exótica del mambo</i> (2004)	4:10
[15] <b>Wilmer Sifontes*</b> solo percussion – <i>Clave</i>	2:13
[16] <b>Adina Izarra</b> <i>Cónclave</i> (2003)	2:43
[17] <b>Federico Mompou</b> <i>Song and Dance VI</i>	3:16
[18] <b>Chick Corea*</b> <i>La Fiesta</i> (arr. Riu/Sifontes)	6:11
[19] <b>Hilda Paredes</b> <i>Recordando a Celia</i> (2004)	3:56
[20] <b>Errollyn Wallen</b> <i>I Wouldn't Normally Say</i> (2004)	2:23
[21] <b>Javier Alvarez</b> <i>Triple enclave</i> (2004)	3:16
[22] <b>Aldo Lopez-Gavilan*</b> <i>Pan con "Timba"</i> (2004)	5:03

**Total duration: 74:57**

**\*With Latin percussion by Wilmer Sifontes**

Tracks 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 19, 21, 22 © 2004 by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd  
Track 20 © 2004 by Hinrichsen Edition, Peters Edition Ltd, London. Copyright Peters Edition.  
Track 10 © 2004 by Deirdre Gribbin

Tracks 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 19, 20, 21 & 22 were commissioned by Elena Riu with funds from the 2004 Dartington International Summer School.

Printed music to tracks 1, 3-7, 9-11, 13, 14, 16 and 19-22 is available in a book entitled *Salsa nueva* published by Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd (further information available at [www.boosey.com](http://www.boosey.com))

Track 17 © Editions Salabert.

SOMM would like to thank Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd for contributing funds towards the recording of *Salsa nueva*.

*montuno*. A type of *son* connected with or coming from the mountains (*monte*). A repeated pattern or groove played by the piano in an ensemble.

*tumbao*. A repeated pattern played by the bass, often accenting beats 2 and 4.

*clave* = *key*. The time line in African music, playing a major role in salsa by providing the rhythmic basis for all the players.

*timbales*. A pair of shallow snare drums, derived from timpani.

*son, song*. *Son* is to salsa as roots are to a tree. It originated in the 1800s in Oriente. The main Cuban musical form, it evolved from the "changü", a music form brought from Africa to Cuba by the slaves.

*descarga* = *unloading*. Used to describe improvised jam sessions.

*Joropo*. One of the most enduring country folk styles – songs and dances – from the Venezuelan plains (Los llanos), in a brisk, catchy 6/8 rhythm.

Our discs are available worldwide from all good record shops. In case of difficulty and for further information please contact us direct: SOMM Recordings, Sales & Marketing Dept., 13 Riversdale Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey, KT7 0QL, UK.

Tel: +(0)20-8398 1586. Fax: +(0)20-8339 0981. Email: [sales@somm-recordings.demon.co.uk](mailto:sales@somm-recordings.demon.co.uk)

Website: <http://www.somm-recordings.demon.co.uk>

**WARNING** Copyright subsists in all Sommm Recordings. Any unauthorised broadcasting, public performance, copying, rental or re-recording thereof in any manner whatsoever will constitute an infringement of such copyright. In the United Kingdom licences for the use of recordings for public performance may be obtained from Phonographic Performance Ltd., 1 Upper James Street, London W1R 3HG



This CD is part of Elena Riu's *Salsa nueva* project and contains twenty-two pieces. These are specially commissioned premieres of salsa-inspired piano works by some of today's most talented composers. They include pieces by composers such as Mompou and Estevez from an earlier era, who have also synthesised folk elements into their compositions. The composers represented here originate in Venezuela, Britain, Cuba, Mexico, Canada and Belize. They were commissioned to write a piece inspired by Salsa. The overall result is an intriguing fusion of styles and genres. "Some of the composers just used a tiny fragment of a famous salsa tune or a rhythm, and turned it round" says Riu; others, like Ricardo Lorenz whose work "Worcestershire" opens the album, plays with the rules of Cuban music and integrates them into a traditional classical structure. The scores of the sixteen commissions on the CD are available in a book entitled *Salsa nueva* and published by Boosey & Hawkes.

Through this CD and the sixteen pieces published by Boosey & Hawkes Riu has re-vitalised the classical-contemporary piano repertoire. Through the Salsa genre she aims to make it accessible to professional as well as amateur pianists interested in classical, jazz and world music. "There are enough "funky" and easy-to-listen-to pieces to entice the salsa *aficionados* as well as more complex, technically challenging and abstract works to suit the keen new music fans", she believes. Listening to the CD is like journeying through the Hispanic diaspora: the styles range from modern salsa to jazz-influenced works incorporating improvisations as well as Afro-Cuban works built around the near-mystical *clave* rhythm pattern (1-2-3, 1-2 and the reverse *clave*, 1-2, 1-2-3).

In some of the pieces recorded here, Elena Riu is accompanied by the Venezuelan percussionist Wilmer Sifontes who lives in London and has been a key player in the UK salsa scene for many years. Sifontes has utilised the full family of Afro-Cuban instruments which are used in a salsa band: the 'nest' of differently tuned conga drums, high-pitched bongos, hard-hitting timbales, and hand percussion – maracas and the guiro (a gourd etched with ridges which are scraped to raise a sharp, rasping beat), which add sharp textures and cross rhythms to the already complex mix. The maracas creating the hissing beat in Chick Corea's *La Fiesta* are the small Venezuelan variety associated with the country's folk music, and immensely difficult to play well. The cajon, a tuned box of the kind once adopted by slaves in South America and the Caribbean is also a key rhythm instrument in *flamenco*. It appears in *La Fiesta* alongside castanets, thus adding to the Andalusian feel. The percussion parts were devised jointly by Riu and Sifontes.

In the salsa world, local varieties exist all over Latin America in response to local traditions. But in every case, improvisation is an essential skill for both instrumentalists and singers (the 'saleros').

The salsero improvises the verses, trading lines with the chorus and never losing the rhythm. However, only the most fast-witted and imaginative will rise to stardom. Riu cites the members of the Buena Vista Social Club, Venezuela's salsa superstar Oscar D'Leon, and the late Hector Lavoe, a Puerto Rican/New Yorker, as models of salsero virtuosity. But she reserves special praise for the late Celia Cruz, to whom tribute is paid in Hilda Paredes's *Recordando a Celia* and Tania León's *Tumbao*. "Cruz was one of the very few women *salseras* to break out of the salsa "ghetto" and to achieve the kind of world-wide recognition and status previously reserved for Hollywood female stars. "Amazingly, given the demands of the music and the complexity of the rhythms and arrangements, salsa was, until recently, perceived in Latin America as low-class music."

Most of the works on this CD were commissioned with funds from the 2004 Dartington International Summer School and premiered in the UK in two concerts during the summer of 2004 at the (World Music) Rhythm Sticks Festival and Dartington's International Summer School.

**Ricardo Lorenz "Worcestershire" (salsa inglesa).** From 'Colección de Salsas' (2004). *A Elena Riu, la reina del piano Inglés*. A pioneering force in the diffusion of Latin American contemporary music in the United States, composer, pianist and conductor Lorenz lectures at the Chicago and Indiana Universities where he is also Associate Director of the Latin American Music Centre. Passionate about cooking, he uses a title which plays on the double meaning of salsa: "Worcester" sauce and dance music. A reflection of his double role as a salsa and jazz pianist working in bands, the piece integrates pivotal salsa rhythms into a classical structure. "Anybody who has been to London will pick out the familiar chimes of *Big Ben* in the coda section!" quips Lorenz.

**Antonio Estevez (1916-1988) – "Ancestro I".** The classical Venezuelan composer Estevez draws together traditional folk elements into his works. *Ancestro I* is a homage to both Saint John and the African ancestors celebrated in popular feasts across Venezuela, such as "Los tambores de San Juan". A line from a poem by Julio Morales Lara is quoted by Estevez in the score: "Noche de San Juan, vino del cañal, un tambor despierta su ritmo ancestral". (*St. John's night, wine from the sugar cane, a drum awakens his ancestral rhythm*).

**Diana Arismendi – "Für Elena" (2003-4).** *To Elena Riu, as always, for her Salsa Nueva*. One of several women composers chosen by Riu for this collection, Arismendi holds a Doctoral Degree (DMA) in Composition from The Catholic University of America, Washington DC, and has received the Premier Prix d'Analysis and the Diplôme Supérieur de Composition at L'Ecole Normale de

Musique, Paris. She is the Executive Director of the Latin American Music Festival in Caracas. Her work possesses a uniquely linear quality and is built around the elegant, late 19th-century Cuban dance called *danzon*, originally led on violins and flute. Hauntingly repetitive unison patterns break into a “quasi cha-cha-cha” in the middle section. “Written in 2003, the work tries to explore both the unconscious roots of the “salsa” in my musical thought and the deep roots of a long friendship and musical collaboration with Elena Riu, to whom this piece is dedicated”, Arismendi states.

**Roland Perrin – One Hand in my Pocket (One Hand on the Wheel).** (2004). *For Elena Riu, with love.* An important member of London’s new jazz clan, and one of Britain’s most respected new young pianists. His piece is a straight-forward collision of salsa and jazz elements which are interwoven through the piece and Roland describes it as “a condensation of the classic New Yorican (Puerto Rican New York), inspired by a salsa form of verse/coro and an attempt to recreate the polyrhythmic swing of a salsa band.”

**Alonso Toro – CongaBite** (2004). Besides writing electronic music, music for chamber ensembles and being a very active record producer, Alonso also writes for films and television and has received many international awards, including First Prize at the Los Angeles Latin American Film Festival, 2001. Brother of Luis Julio (who performs with the leading Venezuelan folkloric group, Gurrufio), Alonso states: “My native musical language is Venezuelan traditional music and Jazz; but I played for nearly ten years in a symphony orchestra. I have always been a fan of non-European music and have become a specialist in Indian music, early European music and many other forms of “exotic” music-making. These influences have seeped into my personal process of creation and have given me an understanding of multiple styles and procedures.” Riu describes this work enthusiastically as reminding her of Scarlatti – “rhythmic, pointillistic and elegant.”

**Tania León – Tumbáo** (2004). *Dedicated to Celia Cruz.* Written by a composer who is currently featured on Univision’s *Orgullo Hispano*; the series that celebrates living American Latinos whose contributions to society have been invaluable. León has been Visiting Lecturer at Harvard University and Visiting Professor at Yale College and the Musikschule in Hamburg. In 2000 she was named the Tow Distinguished Professor at Brooklyn College, where she has taught since 1985. This epic, rhythmic piece is based on the infectiously syncopated relationship between congas and bass, central to traditional Afro-Cuban music, and therefore salsa. The tumbáo is what makes a dance floor move and in León’s words “an idiomatic term in Spanish-speaking countries of the Caribbean. It refers to a popular

expression for a uniquely peculiar walk or sway while dancing. This idea serves as a backdrop to the continuous syncopation and sudden stops that permeate through the entire work.”

**Douglas Finch – Toccata montuna** (2003). *For Elena Riu.* Head of Keyboard at Trinity College of Music, classical/contemporary pianist and composer Douglas Finch was unfamiliar with salsa until now. Riu suggested he listen to numerous great salsa classics including *Los Guaracheros de Oriente*, whose repertoire of early 20th-century country guitar styles, including the *son*, is marked by its emphasis on improvised solos by instrumentalists as well as singers. Finch – a natural improviser himself – was “bowled over” and inspired in the writing of this piece, which Elena describes as “a most unexpected post-Ravelian *montuno* interrupted by the dark undertones of almost brutal, syncopated chord sections which end in joyous, musicbox-like sonorities.”

**Argeliers León – Canto de Bemba** (1918-1988). Cuban composer, León, produced this hypnotically-measured piece as a tribute to the African slaves who worked in Havana’s shipyards. They had, of necessity, to make instruments from whatever materials they could find: in this case, fish crates became tuned drums (*cajones*). A powerfully emotive piece, it is one of the most authentically true in the collection. “Bemba” is Afro-Cuban slang for thick, full lips.

**Alfredo Rugeles – Sal-cita** (2003-2004). *A Elena Riu.* The composer and conductor Rugeles is Artistic Director of the Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra, Director of the Circuito Sinfónico Latinoamericano Simón Bolívar Foundation and Artistic Director of the Festivales Latinoamericanos de Música de Caracas. He composed this piece like a mosaic, using small phrases and quotations from familiar salsa songs and fragments of Latin rhythms. Such fleeting references will trigger recognition in *aficionados* of Latin American music. Rugeles describes it more mundanely as being created like a salsa-sauce – hence “Sal-Cita”, at the same time making a pun with the word “cita” =date.

**Deirdre Gribbin – Celtic o salsa** (2004). Gribbin, an Irish composer and current Artistic Director of the SPNM, deliberately drew Celtic influences through her salsa work. In Gribbin’s words: “salsa has evolved by drawing from an infinite variety of influences from dozens of mostly Latin American countries, to this basic sound. The interplay between Celtic/Irish contemporary music and salsa rhythms reveals its roots in Spanish *son* and creates yet another manifestation of the ever-flexible salsa genre.” Her music fits into a context established by several UK bands, including Edinburgh’s finest, *Salsa*



*Celtica*. The fusion is so successful that it makes one wonder whether there may be a connection between the two cultures.

**Alwynn Pritchard (UK) – The Barnyard Song (2004).** (*Ten in a Bed, or a song in celebration of our great and glorious political allegiances*). “In this piece two traditional folk songs, *The Barnyard Song* and *Ten in a Bed* from two different countries, are inextricably bound together”, says composer and BBC Radio Three *Hear and Now* presenter Pritchard. This is a sophisticated, musically complex piece whose melodies interweave in a tapestry of vivacious articulation punctuated by references to timbales and bongos, bell patterns, *tumbão* basses and rumba *clave*.

**Antonio Estevez – Ancestro II.** *A Monique Duphil*. The second of Estevez’s two “Ancestro” pieces pays homage to the indigenous Venezuelan ancestors who suffered genocide at the hands of the Spanish conquistadors and were replaced in the goldmines and sugar plantations by African slaves.

**Elena Riu – La Salsita del Sr Ligeti (2004).** *To György*. Riu’s ‘small salsa’ is a Cuban *montuno*, which makes references to Chico Marx’s wondrous piano playing in its use of *glissandi*. It is dedicated to Ligeti, whose *L’anfares* étude uses a repetitive pattern which alternates between the two hands.

**Gabriela Ortiz – Suy-muy-key, “la exótica del mambo” (2004).** *A Elena Riu*. Mexico’s Gabriela Ortiz studied at London’s Guildhall School of Music and has recently been commissioned to write music for the Kronos Quartet and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra. Here, she merges elements of traditional Mexican music with mambo – the wild Cuban rhythm which the madly inventive Cuban pianist Perez Prado made world-famous in the late 40s, when he lived in Mexico City. Ortiz says: “The female influence was indispensable for Latin music of the 40s and 50s. These amazons excited, provoked and stimulated the imagination, becoming indispensable both in showbiz and the film industry. This little piece is inspired by all those marvellous divas, “Su-Muy-Key” being one of their stage names.”

**Wilmer Sifontes – Solo Clave.** The performance of the versatile Venezuelan percussionist Sifontes gives this disc an extra dimension. In this solo Sifontes both echoes the various treatments that the *clave* pattern has undergone in the hands of some composers and links back to a more traditional use of both this and other key Afro-Cuban rhythms.

**Adina Izarra – Cónclave (2003).** A member of the Colegio de Compositores Latinoamericanos de with Vic Hoyland. The composer describes *Cónclave* as “a pun on con *clave* (with *clave*), the basic rhythm holding salsa together, and a *secret or confidential meeting*. This work exploits the *clave* rhythm on a variety of metrically modulated versions.” There are certainly memories of Reich and Glass in the repeated small melodies, some only made up of three or four notes. It is a nervy and inspiring work where the *clave* of the title is elusive, secretive and constantly changing.

**Federico Mompou – Song and Dance VI.** (1893-1987). Elena Riu is a fervent champion of the Catalan composer. The underlying melancholy in the “song” is deeply moving and pays homage to the many Catalan immigrants who moved, like her father, to Latin America. Then, in the second part, the rhythms intensify and the piece becomes more folk-influenced, alluding to a far-away ancestral culture.

**Chick Corea – La Fiesta (arr. Riu/Sifontes).** *La Fiesta* is a great example of a successful fusion of Latin and Hispanic elements. Emulating the freedom inherent in jazz improvisation, Elena and Wilmer have taken some of the melodic and rhythmic elements present in Corea’s little *coda* section and have used them in a spontaneous burst of improvisation. Quoting from a famous, typically Venezuelan “gaita” song and using maracas and *Joropó* rhythms they evoke the bubbly atmosphere of Venezuelan folk music.

**Hilda Paredes – Recordando a Celia (2004).** *Para Elena Riu*. Hilda has recently been the recipient of a prestigious J.S. Guggenheim Fellowship. Her works have been premiered by the Arditti Quartet and the Ensemble Modern, among others. Written by the Mexican-born composer who has lived in England for many years, this is yet another tribute to the Cuban legend, Celia Cruz. “It was written in the summer of 2003 at the time when Celia Cruz died in New York”, Hilda says: “I have attempted to use the wide palette of colours offered by the piano, including the option of preparing some of the lower strings, thus introducing a percussive sound quality. Some of the music is played by plucking selected strings inside the piano. The material played inside the piano always makes a direct reference to Celia Cruz.” This piece makes the subtlest of references to basic Afro-Cuban and Latin American music.

**Errollyn Wallen – I Wouldn’t Normally Say (2004).** *For my sister, Karen*. Errollyn Wallen belongs to a talented musical family from Belize (her brother Byron is a trumpeter). Her contribution is very “funky” and danceable and utilises Afro-Cuban rhythms and big chords to create soaring, exhilarating

melodies. Wallen was inspired to write this after visiting Venezuela, where she worked with the Afro-Venezuelan band, *Grupo Madera*.

**Javier Alvarez – Triple enclave.** (2004). *To Alice*. Mexican-born Javier lives in London where he was Artistic Director of SPNM during the 95-96 season. Another word-play on “clave”, this composition juxtaposes three *clave* rhythms against each other in layers, a little like round-singing. The constantly shifting accents build up to increasingly complex textures which explode in a powerful middle section, where the *clave* pugnaciously tries to emerge out from the bass. The *coda* section is announced by the appearance of a suddenly uncluttered, self-asserting *clave* line dissolving into a cheeky rhythmic play towards the end.

**Aldo Lopez-Gavilan – Pan con “Timba”.** (2004). A Trinity College graduate, this Cuban pianist/composer is most interested in improvisation within jazz and classical music. “Pan con Timba” – bread with timbales – incorporates references to Afro-Cuban music and it is the term by which Latin-Jazz fusion is referred to in Cuba. Tinged with Afro-Cuban colours, the melodious middle section, reminiscent of Cuban composers Cervantes and Lecuona, breaks into an infectious *descarga* rounded off by a momentous improvisation by Wilmer Sifontes.

© 2004 Sue Steward & Elena Riu

Pianist, promoter, educator and creative director **Elena Riu** grew up in the Venezuelan capital, Caracas. Through her early studies and the influence of her teacher, Giomar Narvaez, she became unusually committed to Venezuela’s rich and rhythmic folk music. In 1982 Elena won a scholarship to Trinity College of Music, London. In 2001 she was appointed professor of piano at Trinity, where she is currently the Artistic Director of the new cutting edge contemporary music series, *New Quays*.

Whilst studying at Trinity College of Music, Elena became interested in 20th-century music and has championed and premiered works by Spanish and Latin American composers. She is also an avid fan of Sculthorpe, Pärt, Lutoslawski, Ustvolskaya, Gubaidulina, Janáček and Taverner, whose Easter piece, *Ypakoe*, was written for her to premiere in 1999 at the City of London Festival. She is an ardent admirer of the 19th-century Spanish composer Federico Mompou, whose *Song and Dance VI* is included in this CD.

Elena Riu was the brains behind the sold-out multicultural *Spanish Plus Series* at the South Bank Centre and re-launched their *Children’s and Families* Series with her company’s *Resonance*, groundbreaking multimedia projects. A born communicator, her performances combine a rare mixture of lyricism, intimacy and energy. A leading exponent of the Hispano-American piano repertoire championing the music of composers such as Mompou and Soler around the world she has performed widely at major festivals and venues including the Mompou Centenary recital at the Wigmore Hall, in the Montpellier International Festival, Alicante International Contemporary Festival, Dartington International Summer School, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Lichfield, Cheltenham, Broxbourne and Chelsea Festivals and Forfest in the Czech republic. Elena has pioneered collaborative work in the UK and abroad with artists of the calibre of Javier de Frutos, Helen Cowcher, Matthew Hawkins, La Ribot and Kate Blew, among many. She has made many broadcasts for BBC Radio Three, Radio Nacional Española, Czech Television Classic FM and Radio France. Forthcoming engagements include recitals at the Latin American Festival, Royal Welsh Academy of Music and Drama, Royal College of Music, New Quays, the Havana Festival and the Spitz, London.

Venezuelan-born **Wilmer Sifontes** has been a professional percussionist for the last 18 years. Recent appearances include prestigious festivals such as the Womad Festival in the UK, the North Sea Jazz Festival, the Beijing International Festival and Bath International Festival as well as a spectacular performance at last year’s *Carnaval del Pueblo* with his own band, *Conjunto Sabroso*, in front of an estimated audience of 60,000.

Sifontes has worked with various international Latin visiting artists such as Maelo Ruiz, Luisito Carrión, Adalberto Santiago, Henry Fiol, Ray Ramos, Tito Gomez, Willie Gonzalez and Cano Estremera from Puerto Rico; Rodolfo Aicardi and Alci Acosta from Colombia. He has established himself as one of UK’s leading Latin percussionists, popular both with British-based bands and audiences as well as visiting artists. In April 2003 he was asked to play with the Grammy-nominated Colombian rock band *Aterciopelados*, at the Royal Festival Hall. As well as directing his own Venezuelan quartet *Ensamble Criollo*, he also directs two of Britain’s leading Salsa bands, *Conjunto Sabroso* and *Bilongo All Stars*, which has been formed to back Latin visiting artists.