



Meet the Décima: David Broza & Trio Havana Share the Art of Cuban Music

Transcript

Podcast by Gina Marie Rodriguez

Gina Marie Rodriguez (GMR): (00:03):

This is Gina Marie Rodriguez for my very first Jersey Arts Podcast. Coming up in the month of September, September 17th to be exact, is the long-awaited performance by David Broza & Trio Havana at the South Orange Performing Arts Center. Having been postponed three times now, this show has fallen victim to both pandemics and hurricanes. Mother Nature seems to have been conspiring against our podcast protagonists but after nearly two and a half years of rescheduling, these bandmates are eager to perform for their dedicated ticketholders and hopefully, some new faces as well.

David Broza is an Israeli superstar, and that's putting it lightly. He has been enlivening audiences with his flamenco-infused stylings for nearly 45 years. From flamenco to rock to jazz to Spanish classical, to becoming a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, Broza has been inspiring audiences, in more ways than one, for decades.

Trio Havana is made up of the lovely gentlemen Yuniel Jimenez, Jorge Bringas, and Manuel Alejandro Carro.

GMR (<u>00:58</u>):

"El Guajiro," Yuniel Jimenez is a singer-songwriter, champion of the *décima*, something we spoke about in our conversation today, and a master tres player hailing from Cuba.

Jorge, "Jorgito", Bringas is a bassist who has had the honor of touring with the late Celia Cruz, a Cuban icon, as well as having recorded on a Grammy Award winning album, Albita Llegó.

Manuel Alejandro Carro was not able to join our discussion today, but we made sure he was here in spirit. Manuel is a talented singer, songwriter, and a master percussionist. And according to his bandmates, a really great human being.

Here is just a little taste of what you'll find coming to SOPAC on September 17th.







Music Interlude (01:41):

[Sampling of "Isla Mujeres" by David Broza & Tric	o Havana (live from City Winery NYC 2018 play
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GMR (04:01):

This is my first podcast, which is, I'm really excited about it! And I'm so happy that you are the gentleman who get to join me for it. So thank you for, for being my first <laugh>

David Broza (DB) (<u>04:11</u>):
Okay.
Yuniel Jimenez (YJ) (<u>04:12</u>):
No problem.
Jorge Bringas (JB):
Pleasure.
GMR (<u>04:14</u>):

Well, let's jump right into it here. Um, if you wouldn't mind, please introduce yourselves and just tell me a little bit about who you are and what instruments you play, your vocals and your role within this group dynamic, the David Broza and the Trio Havana.

YJ (<u>04:31</u>):

Maestro, you first.

DB (<u>04:32</u>):

No, no, you first, Yuniel.

YJ (<u>04:35</u>):

Okay. My name is Yuniel Jimenez. I play the Cuban guitar that is called *Tres*. And basically my role in the band is to be playing the tumbaos. And that is for small bands is like the piano function, you know, for big bands. Of course the piano is the one that makes, um, uh, the tumbaos. But for the small bands, like the one that we have is the *tres* and it's the traditional instrument from Cuba. And we have been playing, you know, this, this kind of instrument, uh, since 1900s, little before 19 at the beginning of







1900s. And, and it was like, it's is a, one of the unique Cubans instrument, you know, one of the authentic ones, as well as the, well with the bongos as well. But the *tres* is basically they call it a Cuban guitar, but it's not a guitar it's called *tres*. It has like six strings different like doubles strings. Yeah. That's my function in, in this project and yeah.

DB (<u>05:41</u>):

Yeah. And you sing too.

YJ (<u>05:43</u>):

Yeah, I sing as well. And yeah, I do, you know, all the coros < laugh>

DB (<u>05:49</u>):

No, but in general, in general, Yuniel is also singer a songwriter. He writes beautiful, beautiful stories and he sings really like the real Cuban, the Cuban, uh, romance, uh, storyteller, you know, like "Guajiro" a guy from the country. Tell about - cause this is my fascination with Cuban music and you three, oh, there's only two of you now. You three are the reason this whole thing works. Cause each one of you is an artist in his own right. And your stories are beautiful. Each one of you. So Yuniel, talk about your songwriting, cause this is what people are gonna come to see actually the, the persona.

YJ (<u>06:25</u>):

Sure. Well, I started writing, uh, they were not songs at the beginning. It's called *décimas*. *Décima* is what the, the country boys, people that live in the countryside of Cuba, they create, they make, and normally it's like improvising, improvising, basically between them. They sing one side, the other one answers to this *décima* and it's like that. And it can be for the whole night singing back and forth. And I'm coming from that kind of tradition. And then of course they, one of the instruments that were very close to the *décima*, um, to this kind of, uh, younger there in, in, in, in the countryside in Cuba was the lute and it was the tres. And when I had the chance, when I had the opportunity to learn an instrument, uh, I never doubted, you know, I start, I started learning the, the tres because it was very familiar.

YJ (07:18):

I was very familiar with that instrument as well. You know, then I jumped from the *décima* as I jumped to songs to write songs and yeah, it's like, um, like the topics are kind of social topics and love topics and all these kind of, uh, topics like that. We always write. But yeah, with Broza, I enjoy the, the, the concert







and be part of this project because it's everything together. It's good music and good lyrics as well. That's why we enjoy, uh, being with him and, you know, touring with him everywhere because in top of that, there's a great energy and the best and the most important thing is a great wine, you know, everywhere that we go. <a h

GMR (<u>08:06</u>):

If only we could share the wine through this podcast. I think we'd all, <laugh> be having a really great time. Oh, there it is! Jorge is showing us his wine.

DB (08:13):

Oh yeah? You showed us the wine? I missed that. ¡olé!

JB (08:18):

It's my birthday today.

DB (08:21):

Oh it's your birthday?

YJ (08:21):

Birthday? Happy Birthday.

JB (08:21):

Thank you. Thank you so - that's why wine cannot be out of the- <laugh>

DB (08:29):

Equation. Wow. Happy Birthday, Jorge.

JB (08:32):

Thank you so much. Thank you.

DB (08:33):







Tell us about yourself. Jorge. You play the bass. Wait, I want one last question. I wanna ask Yuniel. At what age did you start playing the, the tres?

YJ (<u>08:41</u>):

At what age? Approximately? When I was 15 years old.

DB (08:43):

And before the, the, the tres, you played an instrument?

YJ (08:48):

No, I was like a director, like a orchestra, but yeah, that's why the tres. I was like, no, no, I, I need to play an instrument. And you know, I decided for the tres because it was very close to the, from my roots, you know, that's why,

DB (<u>09:06</u>):

So I'm sorry, Jorge. Let's give you your time now. You are the birthday boy.

JB (09:10):

Oh no, no, no. Right. My name is, my name is Jorge Bringas. I'm the bass player for the project. Um, I'm a Cuba musician as well. I've been playing the bass since I was 15 years old, before I was playing the guitar. And the rule of the bass, um, is basically to hold the tumbao, which Yuniel is, uh, the lead tumbao in Cuban music. We call it tumbao, which is like basically the, the, the groove that we use. Um, and I usually need to be very tied with the tres so we can have the tie together, the percussion at the same time. So the bass is in between the percussion and the, the harmonization and in this project is very interesting because, uh, the first time we rehearsal with David, um, it was like, uh, super, super, I don't know how to say that word in English, I apologize, but, um, you can say spontaneous, everything, everything, everything went out like, like magic and it was perfect. Uh, so because David have a lot of influence in his music from Spain. So we do too, and, um, is I'm very proud to be part of this, uh, very interesting project with David. And I'm thankful for that.

GMR (10:23):

I can't help, but every time I hear the word tumbao I think of Celia Cruz it. Jorge, did you tour with Celia?

JB (10:29):







Yes, I did. I did. Uh, I was in 2001 until 2003, 2002. Yeah. The end of 2002.

GMR (<u>10:38</u>):
Tell us a little bit about that. Don't hold back!
DB (<u>10:41</u>):
Yeah.
JB (<u>10:41</u>):
She was a wonderful person. Um, you know, very, sometimes she was very tired, you know, you know, because you're traveling you're touring and you say, wow, she's gonna be able to do the, the concert, after flying, you know? And she goes, she was backstage, like super tired and the stage opened and she was like so much energy. Like you couldn't believe it. And she was a beautiful person. And the playing with her for me was like, I mean, uh, like a dream, like a dream. I still dream about it.
GMR (<u>11:12</u>):
Oh, well, that's wonderful. But we won't compare it to David because I think David is a wonderful Maestro. So we will not compare the two.
DB (<u>11:19</u>):
Wait, uh, Gina, where are you from?
GMR (<u>11:21</u>):
Um, well, I'm, I'm from New Jersey. I'm so exciting, but my father is from Puerto Rico. My mother, uh, her family is from Italy. So, I'm learning Spanish. So I can understand a little -
DB (<u>11:34</u>):
Latina. You're a New Jersey Latin.
GMR (<u>11:37</u>):
Yes.
GMR (<u>11:38</u>):







My father is from Manhattan. He always used to say that he's a Latin from Manhattan.

DB (<u>11:42</u>):
Eso!
GMR (1 <u>1:43)</u> :
<laugh>, I don't have a cool rhyme for me. I can't figure out anything from Jersey <laugh></laugh></laugh>
DB (<u>11:48</u>):
Latina. Well, this is for the, this what the <i>décima</i> is for. So now Yuniel has to think, think about a Latina from New Jersey.
GMR (<u>11:55</u>):
All right. So Yuniel, I'm relying on you now.
JB (<u>11:59</u>):
<laugh> ¡Sí Señor!</laugh>
DB (<u>12:00</u>):
Yeah, it's gonna come. It's gonna come.
YJ (<u>12:04</u>):
If you go to the concert, we're going try to improvise something for you, don't worry.
GMR (<u>12:11</u>):
Yay! I'm so excited. You know I'm gonna be there. So September 17th at SOPAC, I am going to be
DB (<u>12:15</u>):
Fantastic. Yes, actually. And, and on the 24th of August, we've made a date to go to the studio and record our first recording. Cause we've only done performances, so we're gonna do, um, something, uh,

of an, of an experiment of, of Yuniel and, and Jorge and, and, um, uh, Carro, Manuel Carro will lead a







Latin, a Cuban vibe, which will lead me to a very old Israeli song; serenade that I sing. And, uh, we'll, we'll do the, the first performance of it on the, uh, on the show. It'll be fun.

GMR (12:50):

That is so exciting.

DB (12:52):

Yeah. We'll, we'll get to see how the Cubanos sing in Hebrew.

GMR (12:55):

Oh my god.

DB (12:55):

And how the Israeli sings in, in, in Cuban.

JB (12:59):

<laugh> ¡Sí Señor! ¡Sí Señor!

Uh, anyway, my, my experience with, uh, with, uh, Trio Havana was, is something that I haven't had enough yet. We, we know we performed for about two years, uh, all over and then COVID came in and we haven't been able to put back the tour on the road again, which hopefully we will very soon, um, or in the next coming year anyway. Um, just because the, the, the way we, um, well, the way I perceive music, the there's so many levels of it. There's the extremely professional and, and official stage and orchestras and lights and audience. And it goes all the way down to meeting in the living room, serving lunch or breakfast, and, uh, starting to play or getting to a restaurant and then pulling a guitar and playing. To me, it's all that journey. There's no, there is it doesn't the, the level of intent doesn't, doesn't go down. And with these guys, we, I was, I was people ask me, so where do you perform?

DB (<u>14:03</u>):

DB (<u>13:01</u>):

We, I said, we start in elevators. And then from there on, we go anywhere again. No matter how small a place is that with the Trio Havana, we can actually mount a concert, you know, while waiting for the, for the, for the suitcases to come out in the airport to everywhere. It's this is, and this is really my way o,f my vision of enjoying the journey of being a professional singer, songwriter, and performer. Without







that I'm, I'm really less and less interested in, in the business. And I always was that way. Always, you know, I just wanna sing for hours without having to worry whether there is the, the people bought a ticket for it, or people are just passing by and enjoying it. It's all the same. And that's kept me going for almost 50 years now on the road.

GMR (14:49):

So you really live on that, that live performance aspect of it.

DB (<u>14:52</u>):

Absolutely. Yet, I've got 45 albums out. So it's not like - I'm writing new stuff, I'm performing new stuff. I'm, I'm arranging, I've got different bands. Like with the Trio Havana, it's it's, as they say, it's a project but it's slowly becoming a family thing cuz we really get to know each other. Although I didn't know it was, uh, Jorge's birthday today, so I still, I'm still learning.

GMR (<u>15:15</u>):

Yeah. We're all learning that together.

DB (<u>15:17</u>):

So we'll, we'll celebrate when he comes back. You should come.

JB (<u>15:20</u>):

Definitely.

GMR (15:22):

Yeah. So Jorge is joining us from Italy. Um, and remind me again, I'm sorry. Jorge, where, where are you in Italy?

JB (15:28):

In a little town called Neive close to Alba in Piemonte.

GMR (<u>15:33</u>):

Are you performing over there or this is a birthday trip?







JB (15:35):

No, no. It's a family. It's a family trip.

GMR (15:38):

That's wonderful. Well thank you for taking the time to,

JB (<u>15:41</u>):

Oh, sure. Definitely.

GMR (15:44):

Uh, so I'm, I'm just so excited to see you guys. I'm a lover of music, but I don't necessarily understand a lot of things about music. Um, if I sing, I would sound like a cat screeching, so you don't wanna hear that. Um, but I would love for you guys to tell me, you know, usually artists, I think they have this defining moment in their life when they realize they found the thing that they've fallen in love with. So do you have that moment from whether it was your childhood or maybe a little older when you realized music is what I need to be doing for the rest of my life?

YJ (16:15):

Well, in my case, uh, uh, it was like since I was four years old, um, in the countryside in Cuba. I was like, there, they, they have this kind of parties every Sunday that is like, um, festivities, like the, and the poet and all these musicians goes there every Sunday and they sing, right? And I was like, you know what? I can do that. You know, people were improvising and people were singing and I told my mom, I can do that. I can do, you know, the same that they are doing. And my mom was, come on, are you crazy? You're four years old, what are you doing? <a href="lau

DB/JB (<u>17:18</u>):

<laugh>

GMR (17:18):







Four years old! Good for you, you knew really early on. I'm still trying to figure it out, guys. <!-- Alright, Yuniel thank you so much for sharing that. David, how about you? Do you remember the time when you fell in love with music?

DB (17:35):

Well, I was, there was music in my house, always. My mother was like, Israel's first folk singer with guitar. Um, but I never wanted to be a musician. I looked at it as something I loved doing. At the age of 12, I started playing guitar and I taught myself and, uh, but I was a painter. I really was never, I really wasn't interested in, in getting on stage and performing. Never played in any school play shows or anything. And, uh, things, things changed for me when I was 22, right out of the army in military, I served three years in the Israeli army and, uh, I had to find a job. Somebody heard me play, offered me a job. And that show that I, I was doing. Um, they asked me to write a song. I wrote a song that became a number one hit. I wrote another song, came number one, hit.

DB (<u>18:21</u>):

Suddenly it was like, maybe I'm missing out on something. Maybe I should give this more time. And, and I stopped painting and I became a musician. It's been 45 years.

GMR

Wow, exactly. Fate. It was fate for you.

DB

Totally, absolutely fate. And also, you know, um, there was some something guided me there. It wasn't, I had no control over it. It was something taking me to the place, you know, to becoming a musician and, and taking it seriously. And I'm, I'm really glad it's become, it's an amazing life, but I'm not taking it for granted. And I'm, I'm constantly working on improving myself and getting into new areas of music and my meeting with, uh, with, you know, with a, with a Cuban musicians, something I've always listened to, but I never had direct contact with or ability to transform my music and dress it up in Cuban in the Cuban sound and vibe.

DB (19:13):

And, uh, this is what we are doing at the show. All the songs have an, an, an exquisite and unique persona when the tres is leading against the guitar and the bass is holding it. And the, the amazing percussion, which, uh, Manuel Carro is just a master of - like all these two guys, it's unreal. And we also have another musician that he does not perform with us at SOPAC, but Itai Kriss who plays this Cuban







flute remarkably. Anyway. And, uh, that leads me to, uh, Bringas. Jorge. Birthday Boy, when did you start?

JB (<u>19:50</u>):

Oh, learning. I start, um, I, um, I saw guitar once, uh, was, uh, in Cuba. I was 9 years old and I said, oh, I want, I want that guitar. But, you know, in Cuba, um, you know, we are usually very poor people. So my, my parents, they said, well, we don't have the money to buy the guitar. You need shoes. We need to buy the shoes. I said no, but I want the guitar. I want the guitar. So he gave me the guitar at the end, because I was, uh, impossible to shut up <laugh> and I said, but you better play it. And I said, okay, now I need to play the guitar. And I started that way. And then when I was 11, I made it to the School of Music, uh, as a guitarist. Yes. And yeah, since that I got the connection with music, uh, it was, uh, just the beginning, you know, it was growing and growing and I still growing. I still growing and still learning. And I think is, I'm never gonna stop learning. It's beautiful. It's a beautiful, beautiful world. It's the best that can happen to someone.

YJ (20:47):

And what happened to the shoes?

JB (<u>20:50</u>):

<laugh> No, no, without shoes, I work without shoes, but with my guitar,

GMR (20:54):

Do you still play barefoot as an homage to your, your origin?

JB (<u>20:58</u>):

Oh, yes. Yes, yes. Yes. Sometimes I do .

DB (21:01):

That brings me to Yuniel. We have to buy – We'll buy Jorge some new shoes.

YJ (<u>21:07</u>):

Yeah.







JB (21:08):

Okay.

DB (21:08):

This is, this will be, this will be what we'll present him at the, at the SOPAC. Your new shoes, blue shoes. We'll get you blue suede shoes.

JB (<u>21:19</u>):

Perfect. Beautiful. Great.

GMR (21:22):

I need to ask you, how did you all find one another? How did this project begin?

DB (<u>21:28</u>):

Oh, it really started, it started with me. Uh, I was trying to do a surprise party for my wife's birthday and, uh, thought about a Cuban band. So somebody recommended that I call this guy, um, uh, Itai Kriss, who was an Israeli, but a master of Latin music, especially Cuban a real maestro. And I didn't know Itai. It turns out I, I kind of did from Israel. I knew his father, but anyway, he said, I'll set you up with a, with a trio and I'll come myself. So it was a great surprise. And as soon as I saw them playing there, wasn't the same exact band. There was a different percussionist, but Jorge, you were there. [JB: Yes.] J I'm not sure. I think Yuniel was there. Um,

YJ (<u>22:15</u>):

Yeah. The first time. Yes, I think.

DB (22:17):

See. So there we go. And that's it. And I said this after that, after the night, which was brilliant, where I also got up and played, and my wife sang with me and they all joined in. Uh, I said, this is, this is exactly what I've been dreaming about. This is it. I don't want anything more than that. Nothing. I don't need anything more. It's the most musical trio and trio, you have to understand, you know, we have a quartet because of Itai but without the flute, to me, trio is the strongest, um, formula for presenting a song. The strongest. You add more, you add piano, you add many, many drums. You add violins yet. It just makes the music more dense. But if you want to really hear the details and feel the passion of the storyteller







and the instruments accompanying it, trio is it. Now I play guitar against the, against the, um, the tres and, and Yuniel has to find a very special way to maintain his presence cause my guitar playing is very busy. So I, I, I make myself sound almost like an orchestra, cause I'm always a lot of times I'm playing alone. So I'm, uh, a little hysterical. I, I really wanna fill the sound, but it's become to me the ultimate presentation of my music.

YJ (<u>23:36</u>):

I have been super good because the energy that's my favorite part of the, of the show. With Broza, is the energy. <a href="cl

YJ (<u>23:52</u>): Having fun.

JB (<u>23:54</u>):

We always have a good time. We always have a good time. And when the pandemic hit and we were supposed to have a lot of, lot of, um, job with Broza and tours and everything. We were so sad for that. Cause [DB: yeah, me too.] You know, we always have a great time with David. Always.

DB (24:13):

We're back on the 17th of September at SOPAC.

GMR (24:16):

Yeah. So is that what people can expect? Like three hours of performance and dancing or what are we expecting at SOPAC?

DB (<u>24:23</u>):

We know when the show starts, we don't know when it ends.

YJ (<u>24:27</u>):

<laugh>

GMR(24:27):







I	love	it.

JB (<u>24:28</u>):

Así es

DB (24:29):

But really it's, uh, very special. And the, and the, the sweet thing about this is that this show has been, uh, postponed three times. So the people are holding tickets already for two and a half years. [GMR: Oh my] [YJ: wow]. Crazy. It's crazy. So I hope that I hope they'll come, you know, I hope they'll hope they're still looking forward to it. Anyway. We're gonna bring a great show no matter what.

GMR (24:51):

Oh, I believe you. I think it's gonna be amazing. And I wouldn't be surprised if you guys go for eight hours after waiting two and a half years to do this.

ΥJ

We're going to be playing until they call the police.

DB (25:05):

We'll just have some rum, you know. Cuban rum passed around the room, the audience, me and we'll have everybody driven home.

GMR (25:11):

I, yes. I think that's the important part. < laugh> This is not sponsored by Uber, but maybe it should be.

DB (25:17):

Yeah, it should be. Yeah.

GMR (5:19):

Well, I am looking forward to it. I can't wait to see you all at SOPAC on the 17th. I'm so grateful that you took the time to speak to me. I do wanna call out um Manuel who isn't with us today. So if anybody wants to speak about him for a moment, yeah. I feel bad that he wasn't able to make it.







DB (25:35):

Well, I'll say a couple of words about him. So Manuel is a real master craftsman of the Cuban percussion. Okay. He's also a drummer, but really when he plays those congas and he plays the clave and he keeps the rhythm and he keeps, it's like four people performing all at once and he's been doing it just like them, the, into music since their very, very young age, as a calling, not necessarily as a, as a instrument that they choose. Now, I don't know where I don't even know where, uh, Jorge and met Manuel cuz though they're all from different parts of, uh, of Cuba.

YJ (26:11):

When I move, when I moved here in 2008, uh, from, from Spain, I used to live in Spain and then I moved here. One of the first people that I met was, uh, was Manuel was playing somewhere. And I was like, okay, this guy is the one that I'm going to call in case that I have a gig, something that I need, the percussionist is this is going to be the guy, because in top of the, that he plays conga, bongos, cowbells, cymbals, at the same time. In top of that, he sings as well.

DB (26:38):

Yes.

JB (26:39):

And he sings amazing. Yeah.

YJ (26:41):

Yeah. And that's why, that's why, why I was like, you know what? You know, I need some kind of octopus like him.

JB (<u>26:47</u>):

<laugh> yeah. Well, we call it the octopus because we call it so many things at the same time.

YJ (<u>26:52</u>):

When you play a lot of instruments, you're like an octopus. You have a lot of tentacles.

DB (26:54):

Amazing.







JB (<u>26:55</u>):

And I only have to say that behind, besides that. He's a great human being a great friend. He's a brother, he's a brother. We are all like brothers in this project. But, uh, mm-hmm <affirmative> yes. He's a beautiful person.

GMR (<u>27:08</u>):

That's wonderful. I'm so glad that we got to shout him out mind. Manuel, we miss you. Sorry that you weren't here. <laugh> but I look forward to seeing all of you together, uh, on the 17th. Uh, if there's anything else that you'd like to say, please do. Um, for me, I'm just really excited and I've fallen in love with all of you. So I'm really looking forward to seeing David Broza and Trio Havana, uh, at SOPAC.

DB (<u>27:31</u>):
Yeah. On 17th, September 17th.
GMR (<u>27:33</u>):
Yes.
DB (<u>27:34</u>):
Thank you, Gina. That's very nice. Great to meet you and, and, uh, congratulations on your first podcast.
GMR (<u>27:39</u>):
Thank You!
YJ (<u>27:40</u>):
Yeah.
DB (<u>27:41</u>):
Thank you
JB (27:42):



Nice to meet you too. Thank you so much.







GMR(27:43):

Thank you. Don't forget. I wanna hear my, my song at, uh, at the performance.

GMR (27:49):

As we were saying our goodbyes. David began an impromptu birthday *décima* for Jorge and I couldn't help, but share it with you. Happy birthday to Jorge and all of our listeners who may be celebrating at the moment.

<Music interlude>

GMR (<u>28:39</u>):

David Broza and Trio Havana will return to the stage at The South Orange Performing Arts Center, SOPAC, on September 17th. For more information, be sure visit sopacnow.org. To learn more about our guests, you can find their individual websites and social media linked in our story notes.

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