

About this piece

The *plena* is an early 20th-century Afro-Puerto Rican rhythm from the southern part of the island. The *plena* became very popular among sugar-cane workers at plantations in the coastal regions. The rhythm has its roots in West Africa and is performed with three different sized *panderetas* or hand drums that play interrelated syncopated rhythms. A gourd instrument called a *güiro* keeps a steady rhythm throughout.

The *plena* was known as the ‘sung newspaper’ because of its satirical and humorous social comments on community and historically significant events. Whether narrating events or not, most *plenas* relate a sense of revelry and unadulterated fun. This song is one of those fun *plenas*. It celebrates its contagious rhythm.

The vocal introduction starts with the steady sound of the *güiro*. The pattern of the larger hand drum enters, followed by the simple pattern of the middle-sized drum. Together they form the basic rhythmic pattern of the *plena*.

This arrangement reflects a more modern interpretation of the *plena* with the use of the piano as accompaniment, taking rhythmic motives from *salsa* rhythm, and the voices in the interlude imitating the trumpets from a *salsa* band.

Note: the introduction should not be sung with pitch. Remember that you are imitating a percussion instrument. Accentuate the first and third beats and add a deep sound. You may add a *güiro* player to maintain a steady rhythm throughout. Never slow down. You may also add two different pitched congas playing the following pattern:



Translation and Pronunciation Guide

Plena,
Plena
plɛna

bailemos
let's dance
baɪlɛmɔs

la plena,
the plena
la plɛna

Plena
Plena
plɛna

borinqueña,
Puerto Rican
bɔrɪnkɛɲa

con mucho
with lots
kɔn muʧɔ

sabor.
(of) flavor
sabɔr

Se toca
It's played
sɛ tɔka

con pandero,¹
with hand drum
kɔn paɪɲɛrɔ

con güiro,²
with güiro
kɔn gwɪrɔ

con tambor.
with drum
kɔn taɪmbɔr

Bailemos
Let's dance
baɪlɛmɔs

la plena
the plena
la plɛna

con mucho
with lots
kɔn muʧɔ

sabor.
(of) flavor
sabɔr

Bailemos
Let's dance
baɪlɛmɔs

la plena
the plena
la plɛna

de mi corazón.³
of my heart
dɛ mi kɔraˈsɔn

Plena, plena,
Plena, plena
plɛna plɛna

es un ritmo
is a rhythm
ɛs un riˈtmɔ

bueno²
good
bwɛnɔ

de verdad.⁴
really
dɛ vɛrˈðað

Plena, plena,
Plena, plena
plɛna plɛna

es muy
is very
ɛs mui

bueno
good
bwɛnɔ

pa⁵ bailar.
to dance
pa baɪlar

Tum⁶ para
tum para

pa pao.
pa pao

¹ There are two different pronunciations for “d” in Spanish. This sound will be called the Spanish “d.” The Spanish “d” is a different sound from the American “d.” In Spanish, the actual “d” sound is made by placing the tip of the tongue against the inside of the upper front teeth rather than on the alveolar ridge. The sound that is produced is actually closer to a soft “th” sound. There is no “hard sound” as a result of this change in tongue placement. Sometimes it is simpler to replace the “d” with “th” until singers get the feeling of the Spanish “d” and the sound in their ears.

² The “w” sound in “güiro” and “bueno” is not a hard “w,” but more like a glide from “oo” to “eh.”

³ Be sure that the “z” in “corazón” is not pronounced as “z,” but as “s.”

⁴ The sound “ð” is as “th” in the word “that.” This sound is used when the letter “d” occurs in the middle of a word or breath phrase, or when it follows “n” or “l.”

⁵ “Pa” is short for “para.” It is similar to a contraction—saying “it’s” instead of “it is.”

⁶ The Spanish “t” is unaspirated. There is no small puff of air escaping as in the American “t.”

Plena

SSA and piano
with optional hand percussion*

Music and Text by
Diana V. Sáez

Allegro, ritmico $\text{♩} = \text{ca. 112}$

Soprano I

Tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki

Soprano II

Alto

4

tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki

Tun tun pa tun tun

Tun pa tun pa tun pa tun pa tun ki tun ki

8

tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki

pa tun tun pa tun tun pa tun tun pa tun tun

tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki

Duration ca. 3:15

* See editors notes for suggested percussion usage and rhythms.

© 2011 Roger Dean Publishing Co., a division of The Lorenz Corporation. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

Reproduction of this publication without permission of the publisher is a criminal offense subject to prosecution.
THE CCLI LICENSE DOES NOT GRANT PERMISSION TO PHOTOCOPY THIS MUSIC.

www.lorenz.com

12

tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki

pa tun tun pa tun tun pa tun tun

tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki

15

tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki

pa tun tun pa tun tun pa tun tun pa tun tun

tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki

Piano

19

tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh tsh ki tsh

pa tun tun pa tun tun pa tun tun pa

tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun ki tun

23 *mf*

Ple - na, bai - le - mos__ la ple - na, ple - na bo - rin -

mf

Ple - na, bai - le - mos__ la ple - na, ple - na bo - rin -

mf

Ple - na, bai - le - mos__ la ple - na, ple - na bo - rin -

27

1. que - ña, con__ mu-cho__ sa - bor. 2. *mf* bor. Se to -

que - ña, con__ mu-cho__ sa - bor. bor.

que - ña, con__ mu-cho__ sa - bor. bor.

32

- ca con_ pan - de - ro, con güi - ro, con_ tam - bor. Se to-

mp

Ple - na, _____

mp

Ple - na, _____

mp

36

- ca con_ pan - de - ro, con güi - ro, con_ tam - bor. Bai-

ple - na, _____

ple - na, _____