Salsa Trumpet Study Guide

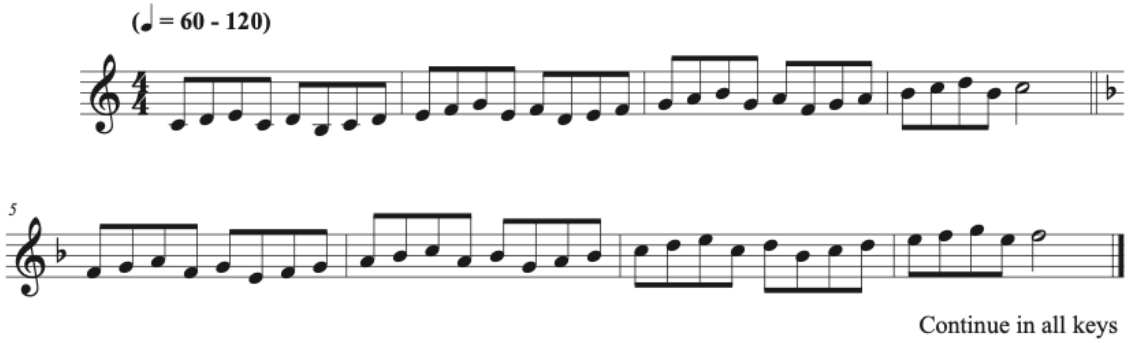
The lead trumpet or 1st trumpet role is to be the leader of the band and to create a rhythmic and stylistic connection with the drummer; in the case of Salsa music, it would be the Timbales. The lead trumpet's ability to lock in with the rhythm section is of utmost importance because the rest of the horn section will look to the lead trumpet to set the stylistic standard. It falls on the lead trumpet player's shoulders to interpret a chart correctly and consistently so that a band can follow its lead. The following guide aims to provide a framework of study for a lead trumpet player interested in playing big band music with stylistic accuracy. There are eleven stylistic elements that any lead player must account for: time, tone color, phrasing, articulations, dynamics, vibrato, shakes, glissandos, falls, bends, and scoops.

The process is as follows:

1. Select a recording or lead trumpet player that you would like to study. Listen to said recording until you can sing the part perfectly with octave adjustments if needed.
2. If possible, obtain a printed copy of the lead trumpet part of said recording. If a chart is unavailable, transcribe the part with the highest possible accuracy.
3. Observe how the lead trumpet player places the musical figures within the musical time. Note the locations where they push or pull the time and how it relates to the rhythm section and the rest of the band. I use the following exercise to help me develop my time feel: I use a metronome and practice Exercise 1, listed below in all keys and tonalities, with the metronome clicking on varying beats. I also use a metronome app called Tempo for iOS that turns the metronome off and then on again in random succession. I find that working on maintaining consistent time is essential in the role of lead trumpet, and I aim

to maintain that consistency no matter where I place the melodic line within the beat. This helps bandmates to be able to follow your leadership, as stated before.

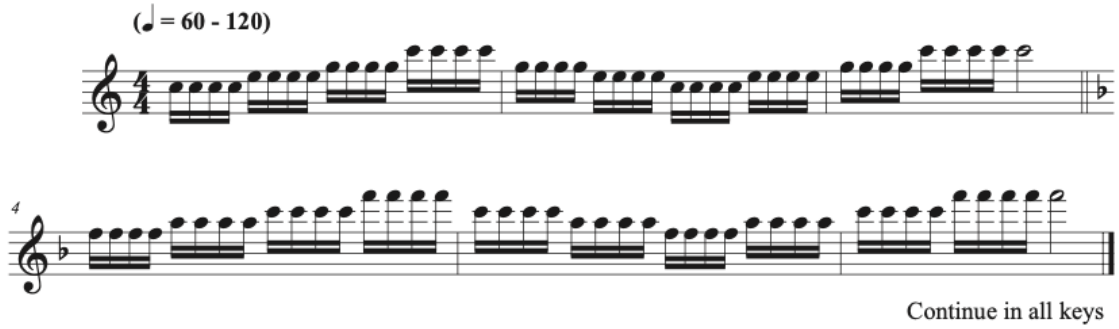
Musical Exercise 1: Keyed Time Drill



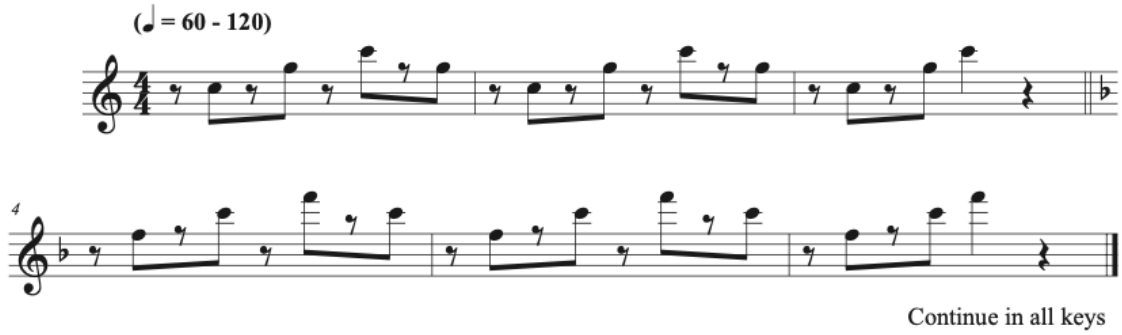
4. Observe how their tone sounds: is it laser-like? Is it broad and warm? Is it raspy or played with a growl? Make a note of this on the part. If it is raspy, identify if a growl is being applied by either flutter tongue or growling in the throat while playing. I work on my tonal color by playing familiar melodies in all keys. I think it is essential to emulate our favorite sounding trumpet players in what they play and how they play it. Observe the points where they break or extend the phrase, take note of this within the part. Pay special attention to how they phrase to include rests and breaks in the melodic line. I work on my phrasing by practicing long melodies and playing them in all keys and styles. Phrasing gets overlooked because it is synonymous with all forms of music. However, know that it is what separates professionals apart from others. I feel like I can continually refine my approach to phrasing through singing and listening to others.
5. Observe all articulations; this is a time-consuming process but an essential one. Listen to how and when they articulate. Take note of any articulations that are emphasized or different from others. There generally are four different articulation markings within a chart, but many shades within these markings. The first is (-); this dash above the note

means legato, and a longer note is usually a "doo" like articulation. The second is (>); this is an accent and is traditionally played with a "ta" like articulation. The third is the marcato or "housetop" accent (^), which is played with a "dot" like articulation. Lastly is the staccato articulation (.), usually played with a "dit" like articulation. These articulations have many shades and are one of the most personal trademarks that a lead player uses and is determined by the era. I use the following Exercise 2 and Exercise 3 in all keys and tonalities to work on my articulations. I vary my articulations to include all the mentioned articulations. With Exercise 3, I will also change the rhythm to work on my specific needs. Be creative in your practice and compose the exercises that target your weaknesses.

Musical Exercise 2: Articulation Range Study

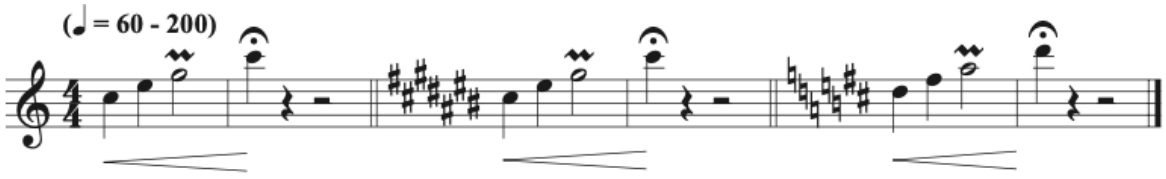


Musical Exercise 3: Syncopated 5ths through the horn



6. Observe the use of vibrato, and focus on the speed, width, and where it occurs. More rapid vibrato is generally used on more extended notes in the 1950s - '70s styles. The note is established in the said eras of music, and then the vibrato is added, take note of this nuance. In more modern pieces, vibrato is slower, wider, and frequently not there. I work on vibrato by playing the same melodies or tunes and making them sound like they are from different eras. For example, I would play a melody and make it sound like it was from Colombia with faster narrow vibrato and then play it again and stylize it like it was from Cuba, where vibrato is less prevalent.
7. Observe the use of dynamics, and focus on how the dynamics are shaded with the phrasing. Take note of any overdramatized dynamics, and listen to how the lead trumpet dynamics are locked in with the comping of the rhythm section. I work on my dynamics when playing melodies in all keys and styles.
8. Observe all shakes, and pay attention to speed, width, and occurrence. In general, shakes in older styles, just like vibrato, the notes are established, then a fast narrow shake is applied. Notice how the shake informs the time being played. In more modern era charts, note the shake's width and speed and how it changes as the shake goes on. The way that I work on my shakes is with the following Exercise 4. I do these shakes, both narrow in width and wide in width. I transpose these into all keys and tonalities throughout the range of the horn.

Musical Exercise 4: Shakes Narrow and Wide



9. Observe any falls or glissandos, the duration, and the velocity. These may be added beyond the notated part and come in various shading. Take note if a ½ valve sound is present. I add falls and the other effects to melodies that I practice in all keys to become comfortable with their usage musically. I also use Exercise 5, listed below, to help me discover the range needed to execute the physicality of the glissando effect. I do this exercise 3 times for each set of glissandos at three dynamic levels. I play this exercise C through G above, the D through A above, and continue this pattern as high as possible.

Musical Exercise 5: Glissandos

10. Observe any bends/scoops that are applied and take note of the intended overall effect. Note if the pitch is being established and then bent or the note is bent into the center of the pitch. Notice when a valve is used to achieve this effect or executed with the embouchure. I add bends and other effects to melodies that I practice in all keys to become comfortable with their usage.
11. The last step is to play and sing along with the record matching all these nuances. Being able to reproduce these nuances without the reference of the recording is the actual test.

Repeat this process with as many charts as possible. After studying multiple lead players, you will develop your stylistic approach rooted in this music's history, making your stylistic interpretations accessible to the informed listener.

The tables below outline the stylistic nuances and the differences between each studied group and the stylistic performance of each lead player. This is a reference table; it does not outline all the eleven stylistic elements that any lead player must account for: time, tone-color, phrasing, articulations, dynamics, vibrato, shakes, glissandos, falls, bends, and scoops, but it does provide an at a glance tool for performance practice when playing the music of these groups.

Salsa Music Sub-styles: 1930-1950	Time feel:	Articulations:	Shakes:	Vibrato:
Charanga	On top of the beat, do not swing	Short	N/A	Not very much at all
Danzon	On top of the beat, do not swing	Less short, a little longer, except when playing syncopated rhythms	N/A	Not very much at all
Conga	On top of the beat, do not swing	Short and punchy	Minor third's and in time	Not very much at all
Rumba	On top of the beat	Short, more Spanish Flamenco style than Cuban	N/A	No Vibrato
Son Montuno	A little behind the beat	Legato but punchy, solo parts are more staccato	Minor third's and in time	Not very much at all, if any, only on the emphasized part of the musical line
Guaguanco	On top of the beat	Short and punchy	N/A	Not very much at all
Bolero	On top of the beat	Short	N/A	Not very much at all
Cha-Cha-Cha	Laid back	Short staccatos and longer notes when not notated	Minor third's and in time	Fast and only to add resonance at the end of a note

Mambo Music Era Sub-styles: 1950-1970	Time feel:	Articulations:	Shakes:	Vibrato:
Mambo	On top of the beat, do not swing	Very short	Minor third's and in time	No vibrato
Guaracha	On top of the beat, do not swing	Less short, a little longer, except when playing syncopated rhythms	N/A	Not very much at all
Bomba	On top of the beat, do not swing	Longer like jazz articulations	Minor third's and in time	Not very much at all
Plena	On top of the beat	Short, more Spanish Flamenco style than Cuban	N/A	No Vibrato
Pachanga	Almost rushing	Very short	Minor third's and in time	No Vibrato
Mozambique	On top of the beat	Longer like jazz articulations unless notated short then very short	N/A	Not really any
Merengue	Almost rushing	Very short	N/A	Not very much at all

Modern Salsa Music Sub-styles: 1970 - 1990	Time feel:	Articulations:	Shakes:	Vibrato:
Latin Rock	On top of the beat, do not swing	Longer like modern jazz	Varied lengths depending on tempo	Not very much at all
Salsa	On top of the beat, do not swing	Less short, a little longer, except when playing syncopated rhythms	Varied lengths depending on tempo	Not very much at all
Cumbia	On top of the beat, do not swing	Short and punchy	N/A	Not very much at all
Songo	On top of the beat	Less short, a little longer, except when playing syncopated rhythms	Minor third's and in time	Not very much at all
Latin Pop	A little behind the beat	Punchy, with varied lengths that mimic all top 40 music	Varied lengths depending on tempo	Not very much at all

The following recommended listening lists contain artists that all are available on modern streaming music platforms. This list is not a complete list of artists to be familiar with, but it is a good start for any trumpet player interested in Salsa music.

Key Trumpeters of Salsa: *(This is a partial list)*

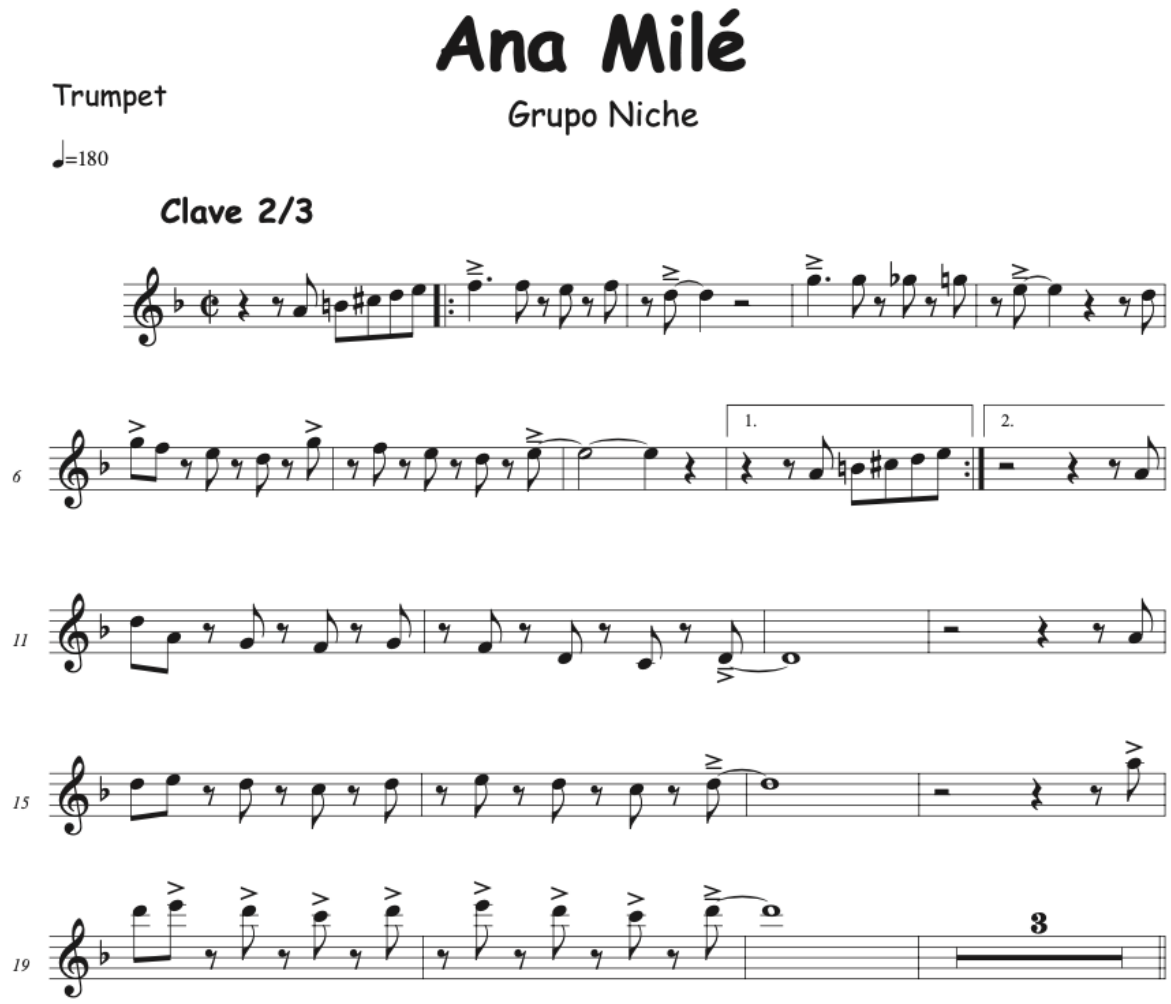
- Alejandro “El Negro” Vivar
- Alfredo “Chocolate” Armenteros
- Arturo Sandoval
- Bobby Rodriguez
- Bryan Lynch
- Chano Pozo
- Charlie Sepulveda
- Chico O’ Farrill
- El Guajro Mirabal
- Felix Chappotin
- Jerry Gonzales
- Jesus Alemany
- Jorge Varona
- Luis “Perico” Ortiz
- Luis Gasca
- Luis Valisan
- Mario Bauza
- Michael Philip Mossman
- Piro Rodriguez
- Ray Vega
- Sal Cracchiolo
- Teddy Mulet
- Victor Paz
- Willie Colon
- Yaure Muiniz

Recommended Salsa Artists: *(This is a partial list)*

- Adalberto Santiago
- Celia Cruz
- Cheo Feliciano
- Eddie Herrera
- Eddie Palmieri
- El Gran Combo De Puertro Rico
- Fina All Stars

- Frankie Ruiz
- Gilberto Santa Rosa
- Grupo Niche
- Guayacan Orquesta
- Hector Lavoe
- Isaac Delgado
- Ismael Miranda
- Jerry Rivera
- Joe Arroyo
- Joese Feliciano
- Johnny Pacheco
- LA India
- La Verdad
- Lalo Rodriquez
- Luis Enrique
- Luis Florez
- Marc Anthony
- Oscar D'Leon
- Pete Rodrequez
- Ray Barretto
- Rey Ruiz
- Roberto Roena
- Ruben Blades
- Santos Colon
- Tito Puente
- Tito Rodriguez
- Tony Succar
- Tony Vega
- Victor Manuelle
- Wilie Rosario
- Willie Colon

Salsa Music Excerpts for Study and Practice:

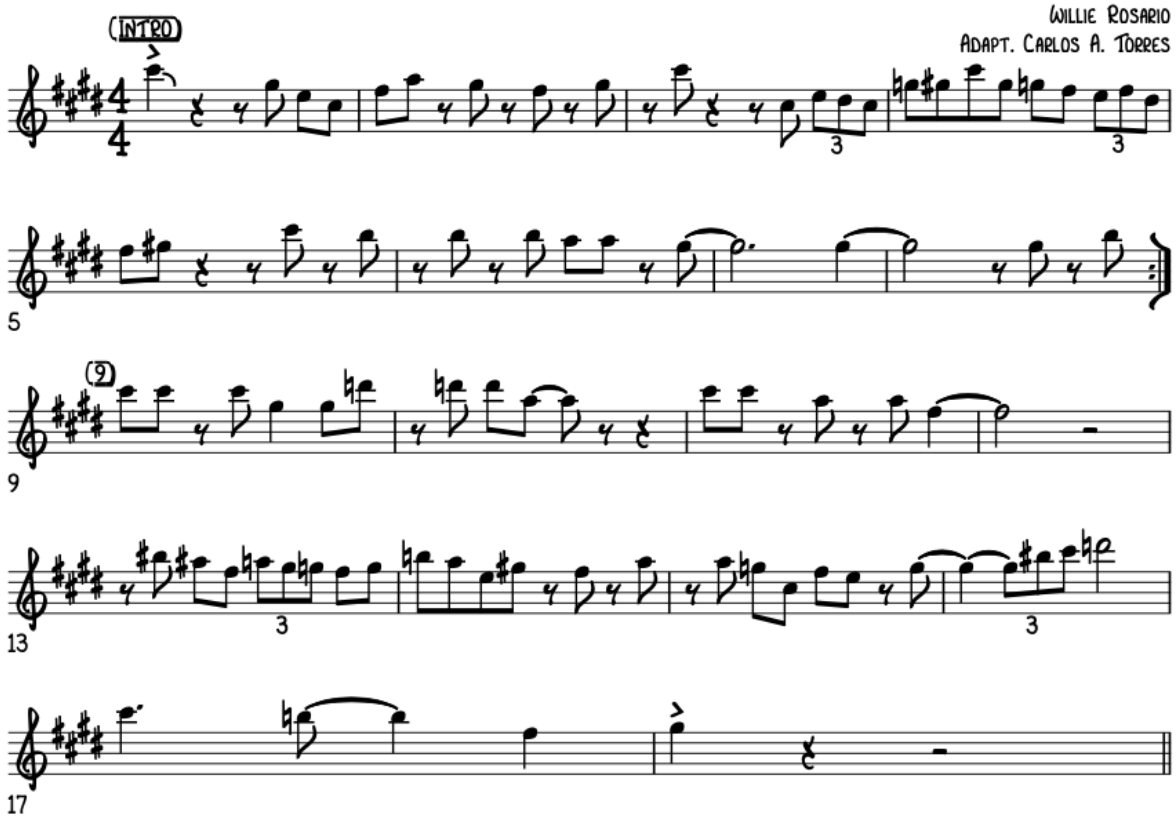


Performance Notes: Eighth notes on up beats should be short, accented, and punchy.

1ST TRUMPET

LLUVIA

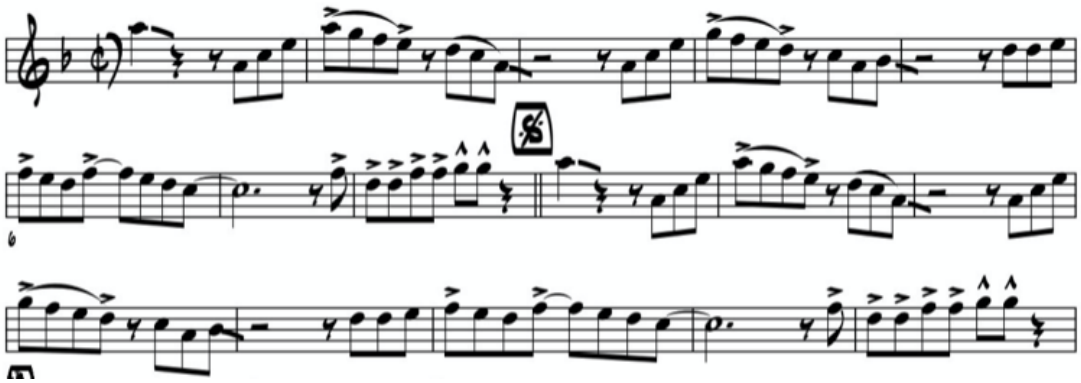
Willie Rosario
Adapt. Carlos A. Torres



Performance Notes: Eighth notes should be long and connected except when on up beats surrounded by rests like in measure two.

NO DIGAS QUE NO

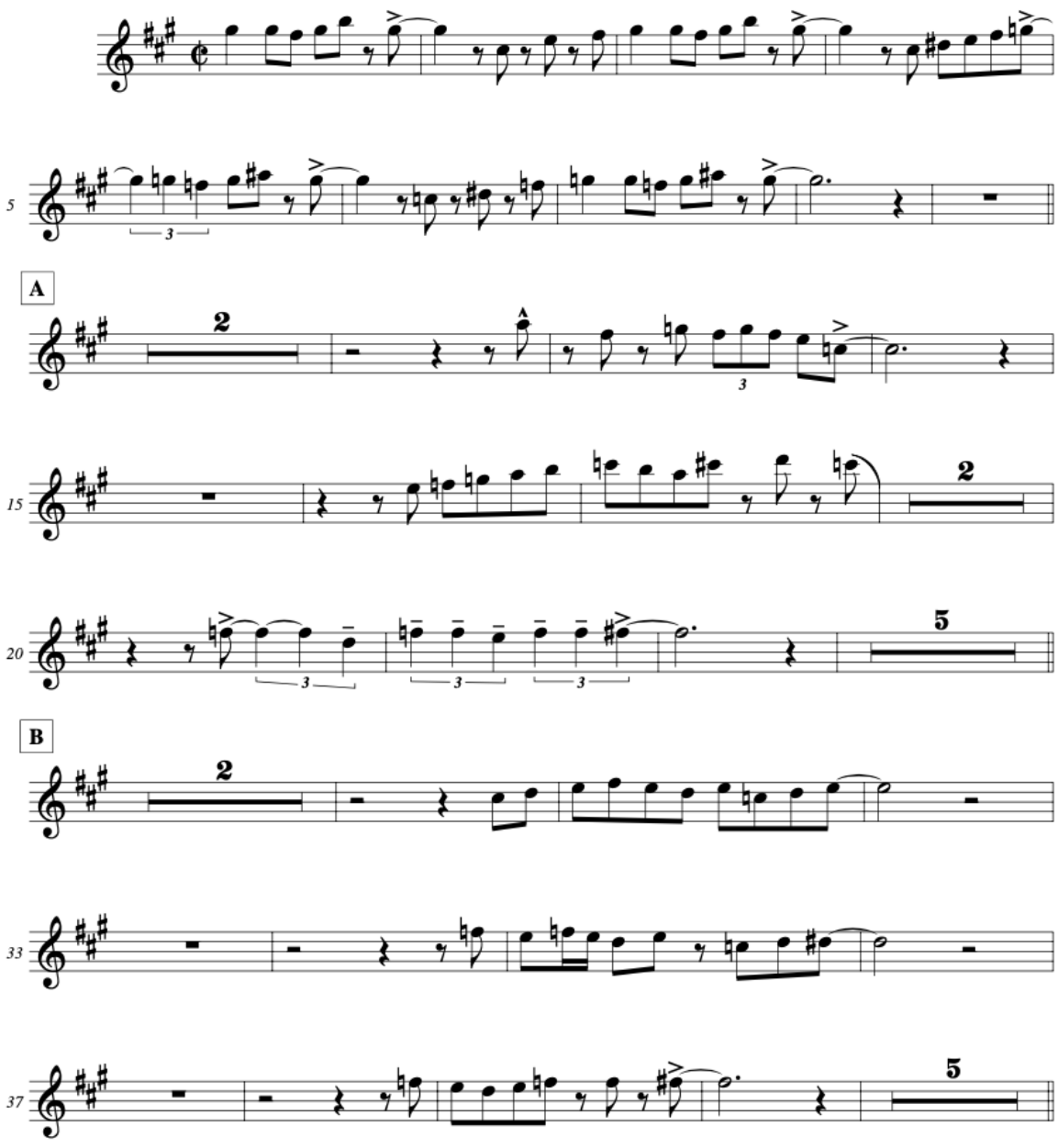
TROMPETA 1 EL GRAN COMBO DE PUERTORRICO COPY: CRISTHIAN CUELLAR



Performance Notes: All notes are connected and flowing in a lyrical sense except for accented eighths on the second line.

El que se fue

Trumpet in B♭



El que se fue

Trumpet 1

C

2

52

2

57

D

65

Coro y Guía

69

8

MAMBO

77

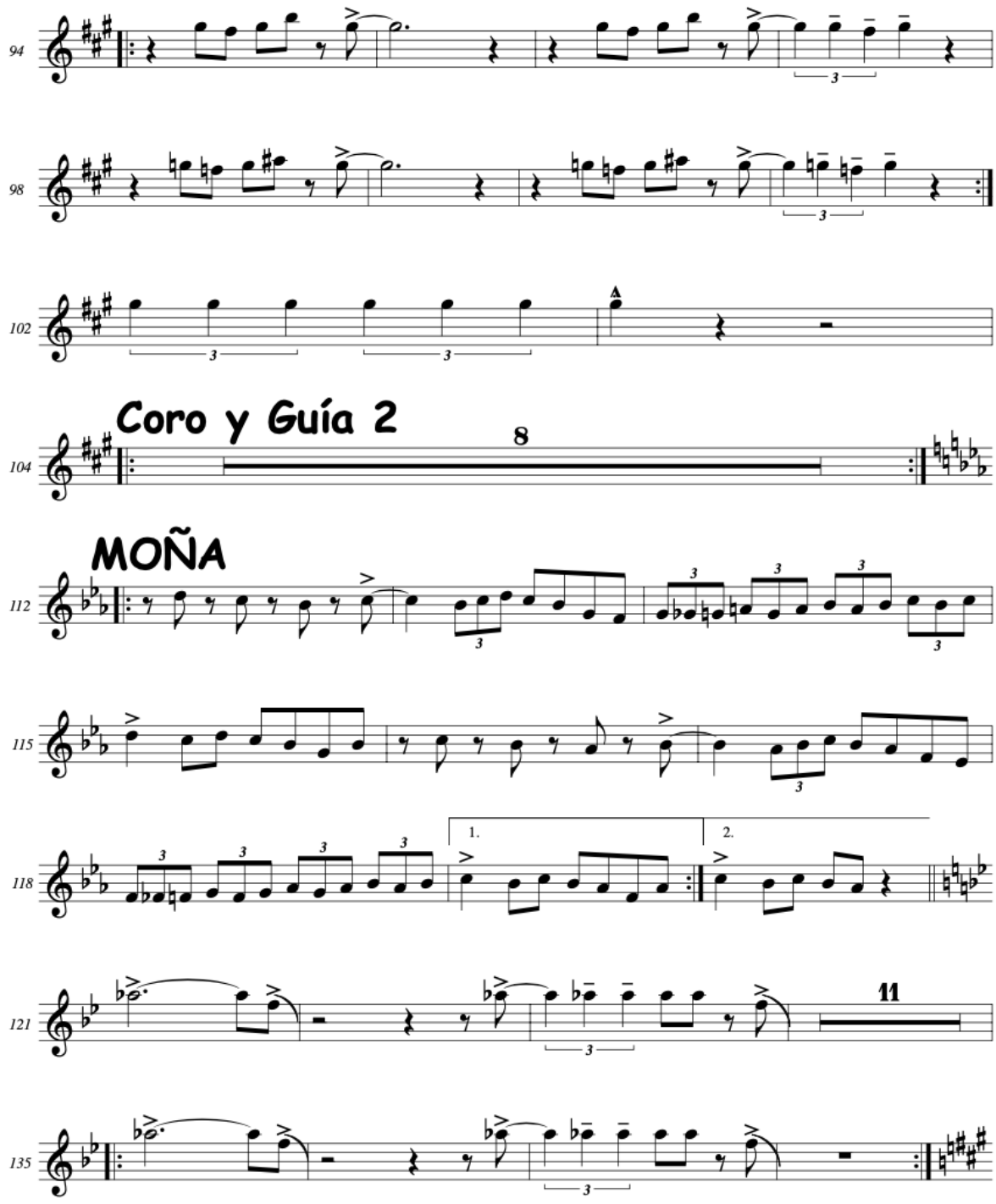
82

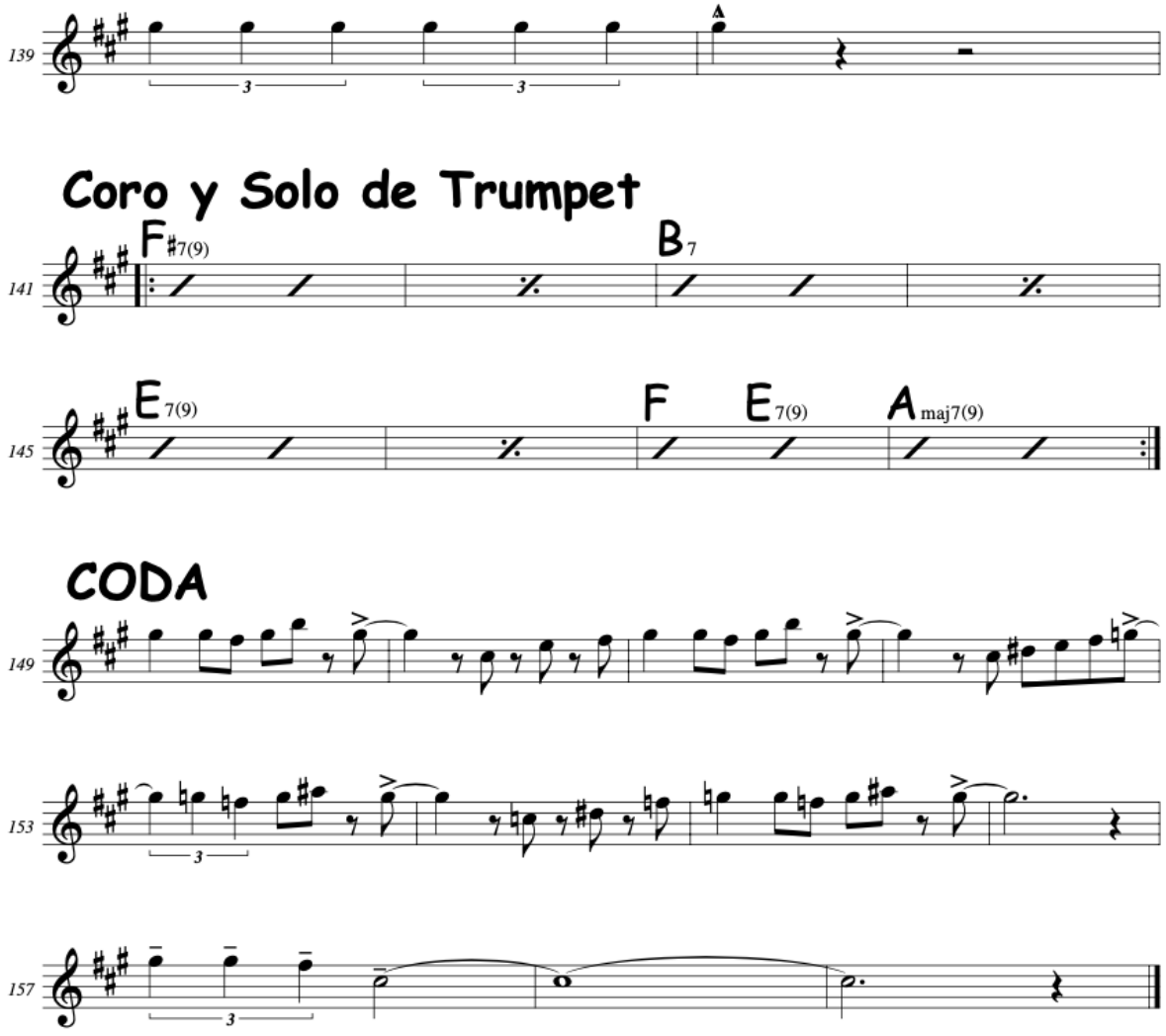
1.

2.

86

8


94
98
102
Coro y Guía 2
8
104
MOÑA
112
115
1.
2.
118
11
121
135



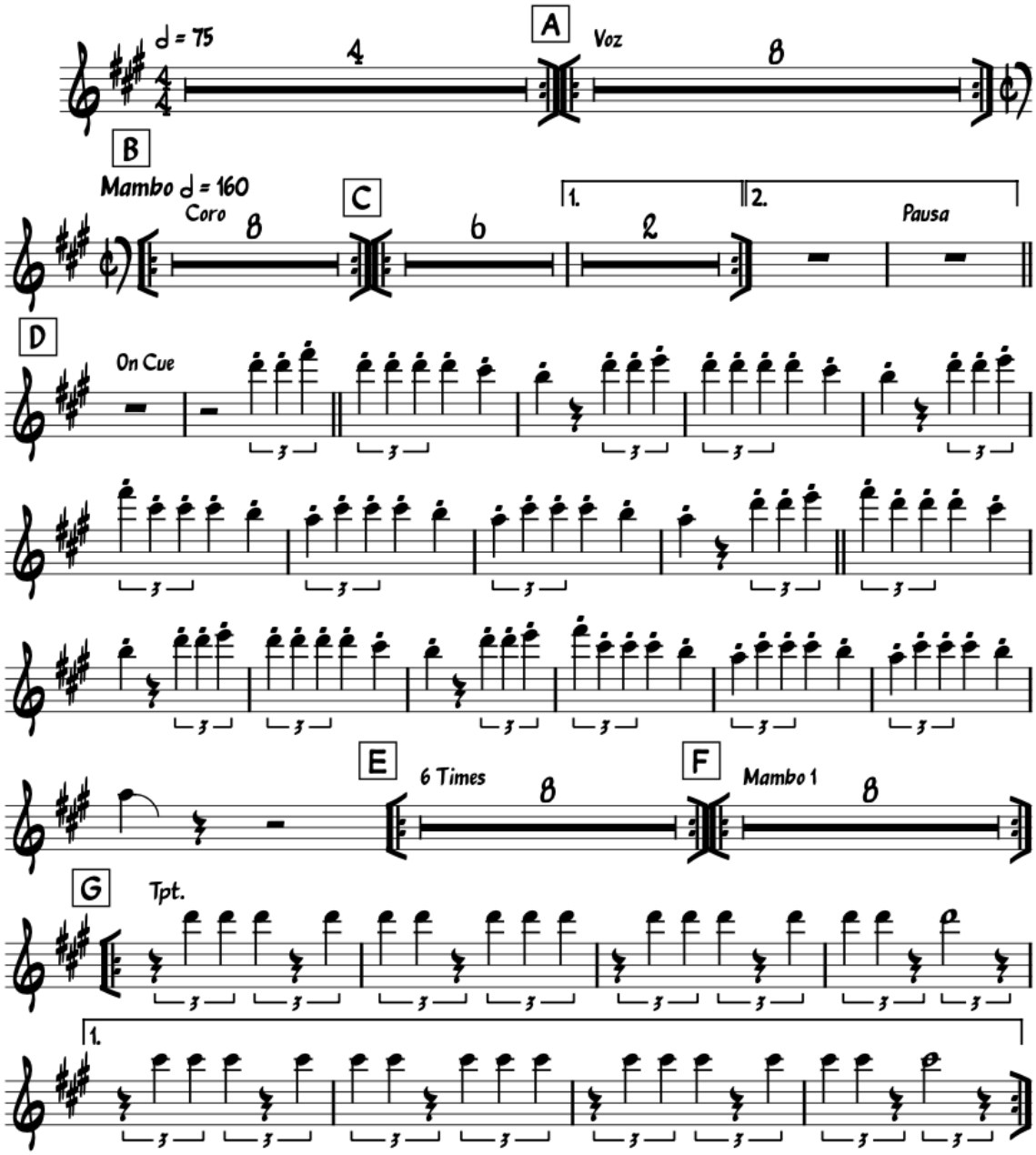
Performance Notes: Quarter notes are short and not long. Eighth notes on up beats are short and punchy. Triplets are long and legato. This is an example of the typical song form of a salsa chart. Intro, melody A-D, Coro with Guia response, Mambo, Coro and Guia 2, Mona, Coro with solo trumpet response, Coda aka ending. Some charts vary these details, but the essential elements are all represented. It is not marked here, but usually, the mambo is four times and always starts with bone and sax with the trumpet the last two times. The last time is usually 8va. Coro y solo de trumpet; means Coro and solo the trumpet. It is a call and response and can be as intricate of a call and response as imaginable but usually is trading four measures.

Trumpet 1

Después de la Playa

"Bad Bunny"

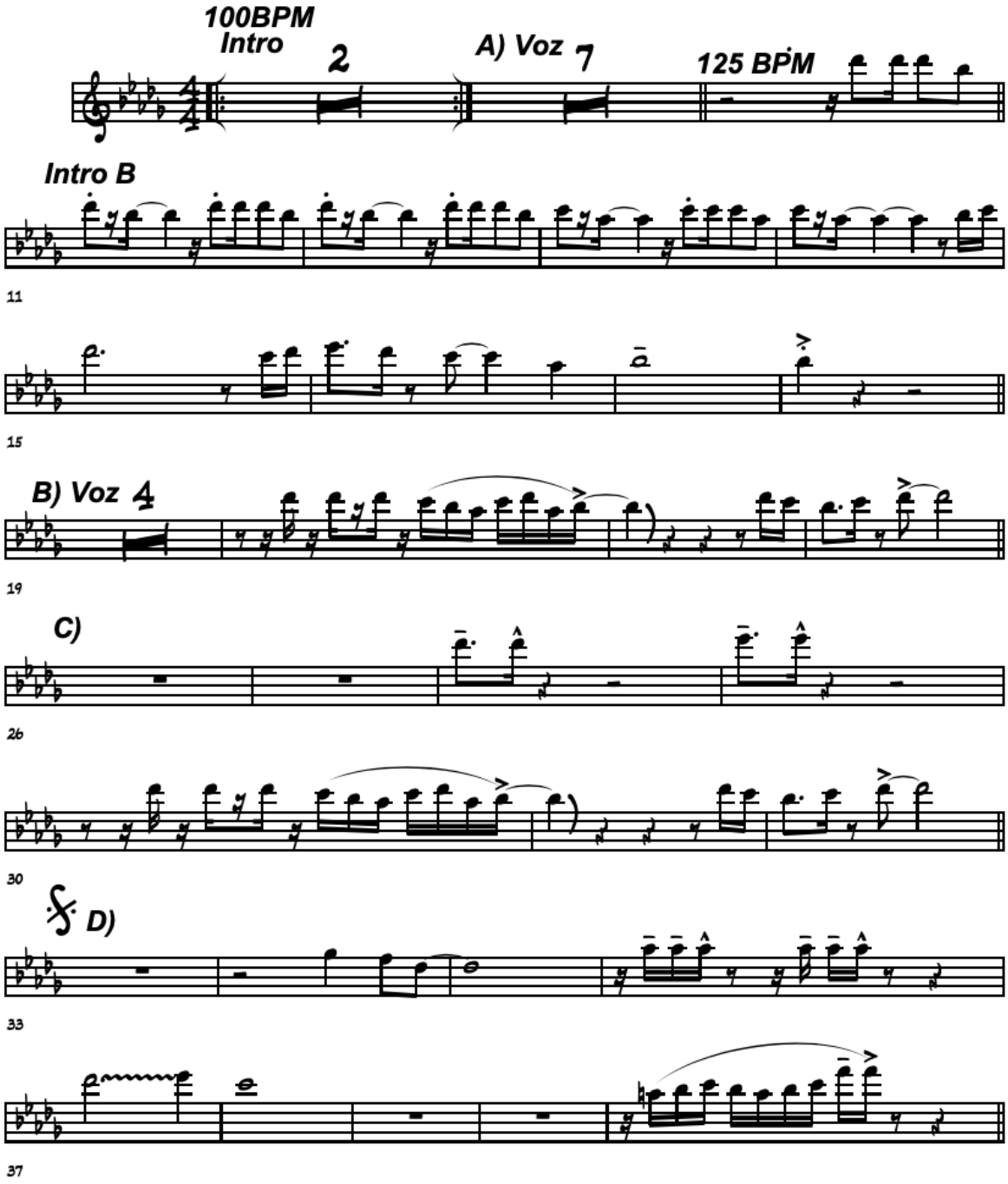
Arr. *DAHIÁN EL APECHAO*
Transc. *ORLANDO I. RIVERA*



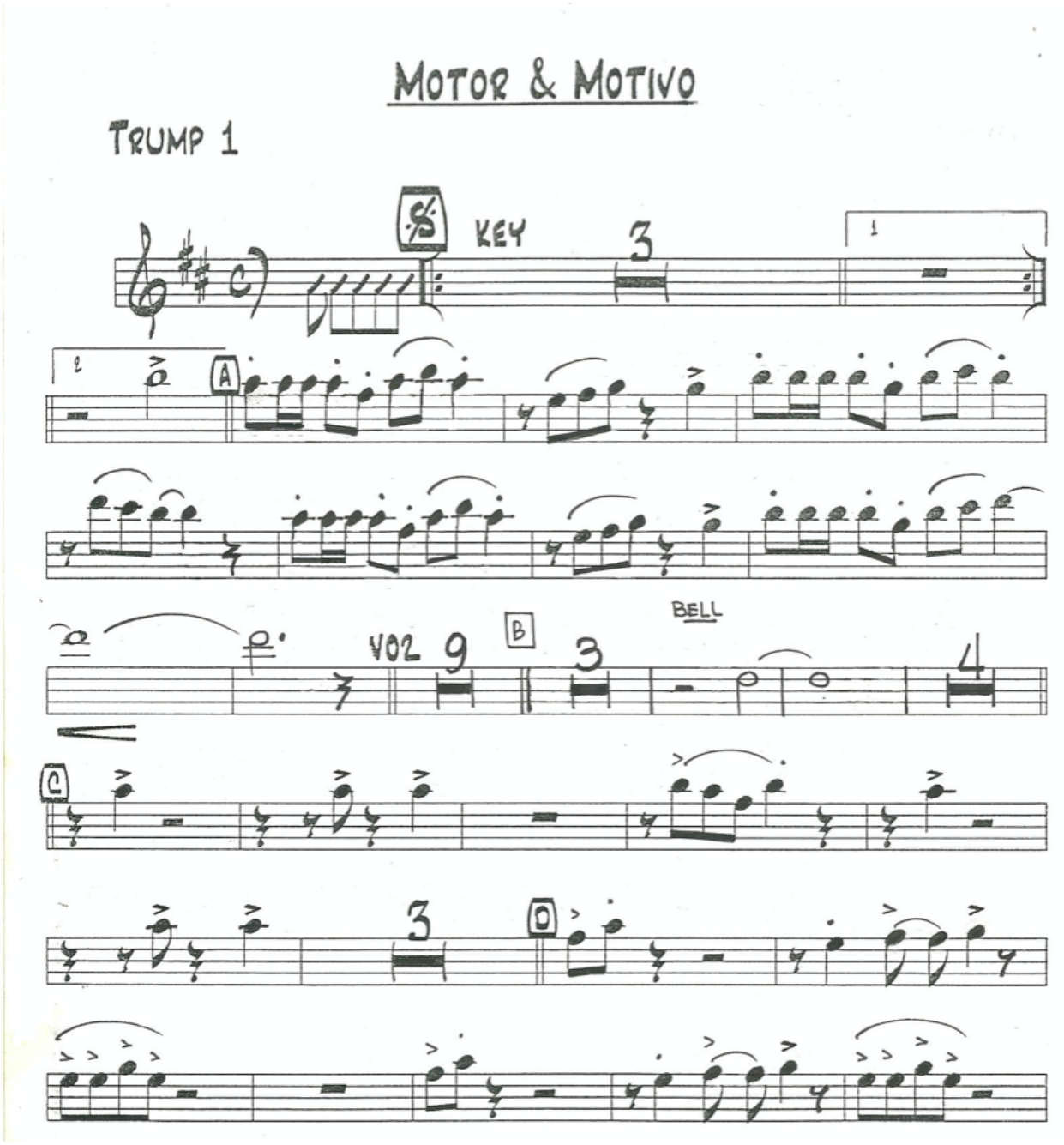
Performance Notes: These Merengue and most Merengue charts feature staccato notes that cannot be played short enough. The triplets are accented quarters of medium length.

Trumpet in B♭ 1

Torero



Performance Notes: This is another Merengue the 16th is very short, along with the 8th notes. The falls are fast, and the shake at 37 is a minor third and fast.



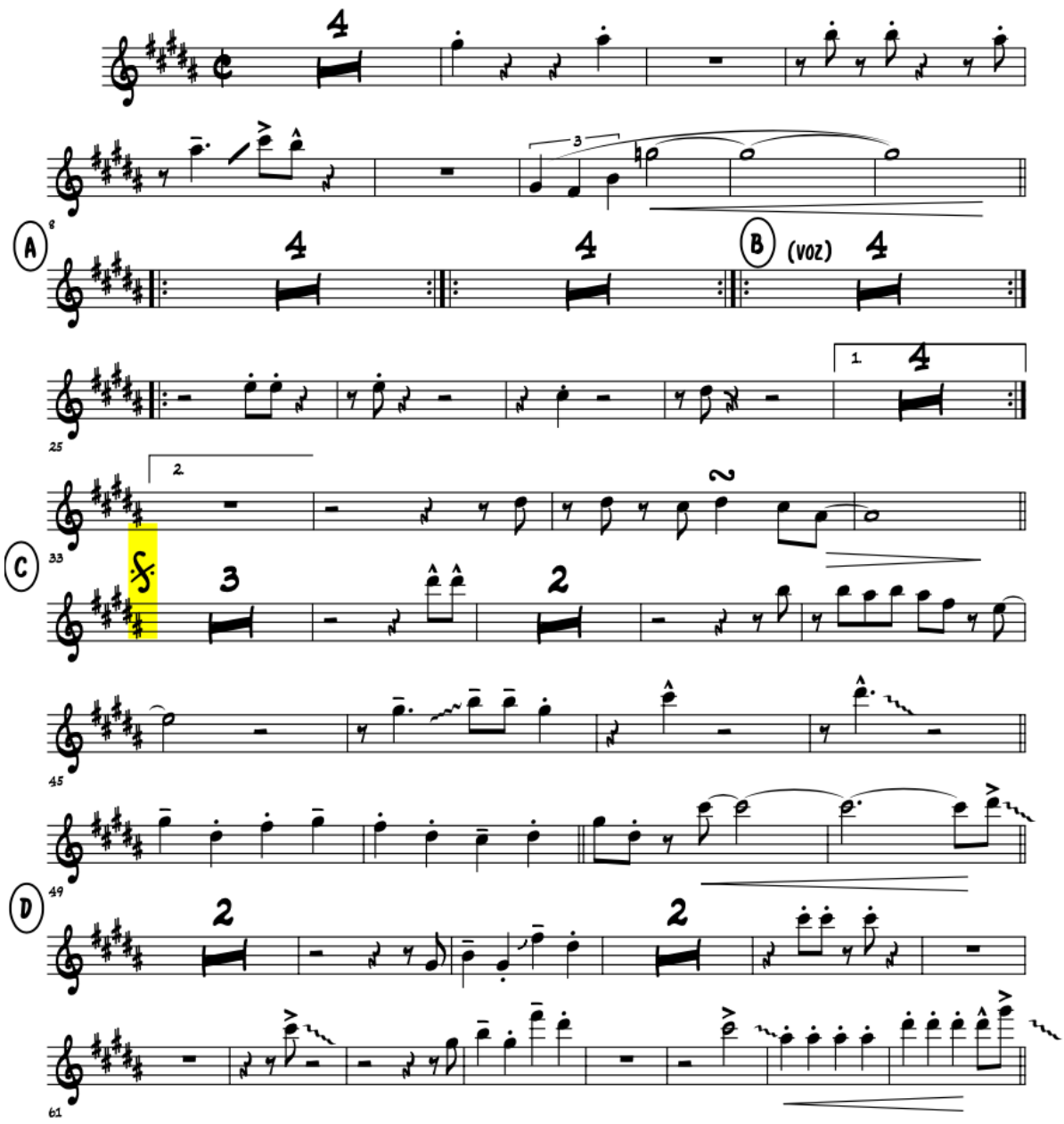
Performance Notes: The A section and all 16ths are double-tongued and played almost like Mariachi with firm, short articulation. The syllables Ta and Ka should be used. There is vibrato on the long notes; it is narrow and fast.

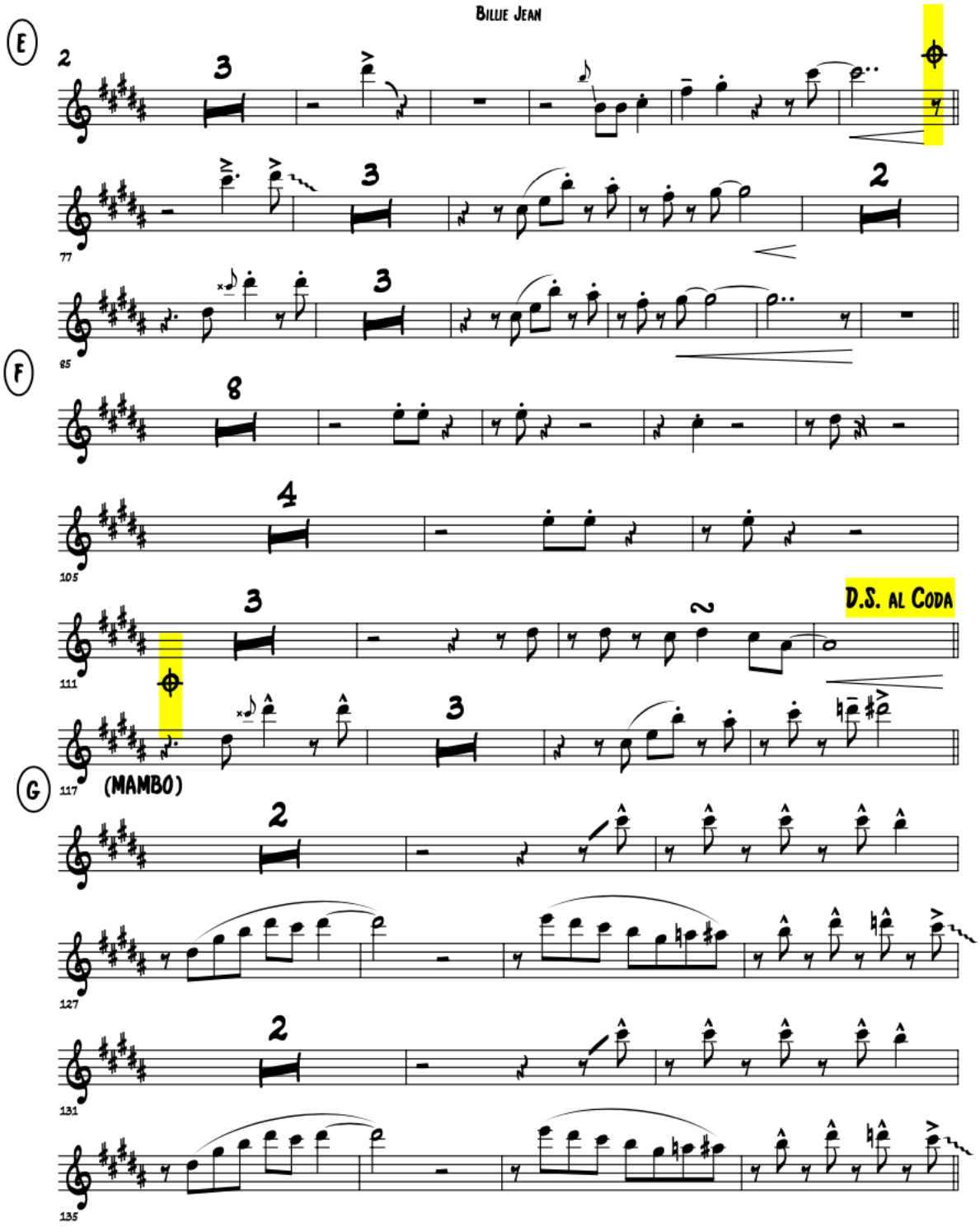
Billie Jean

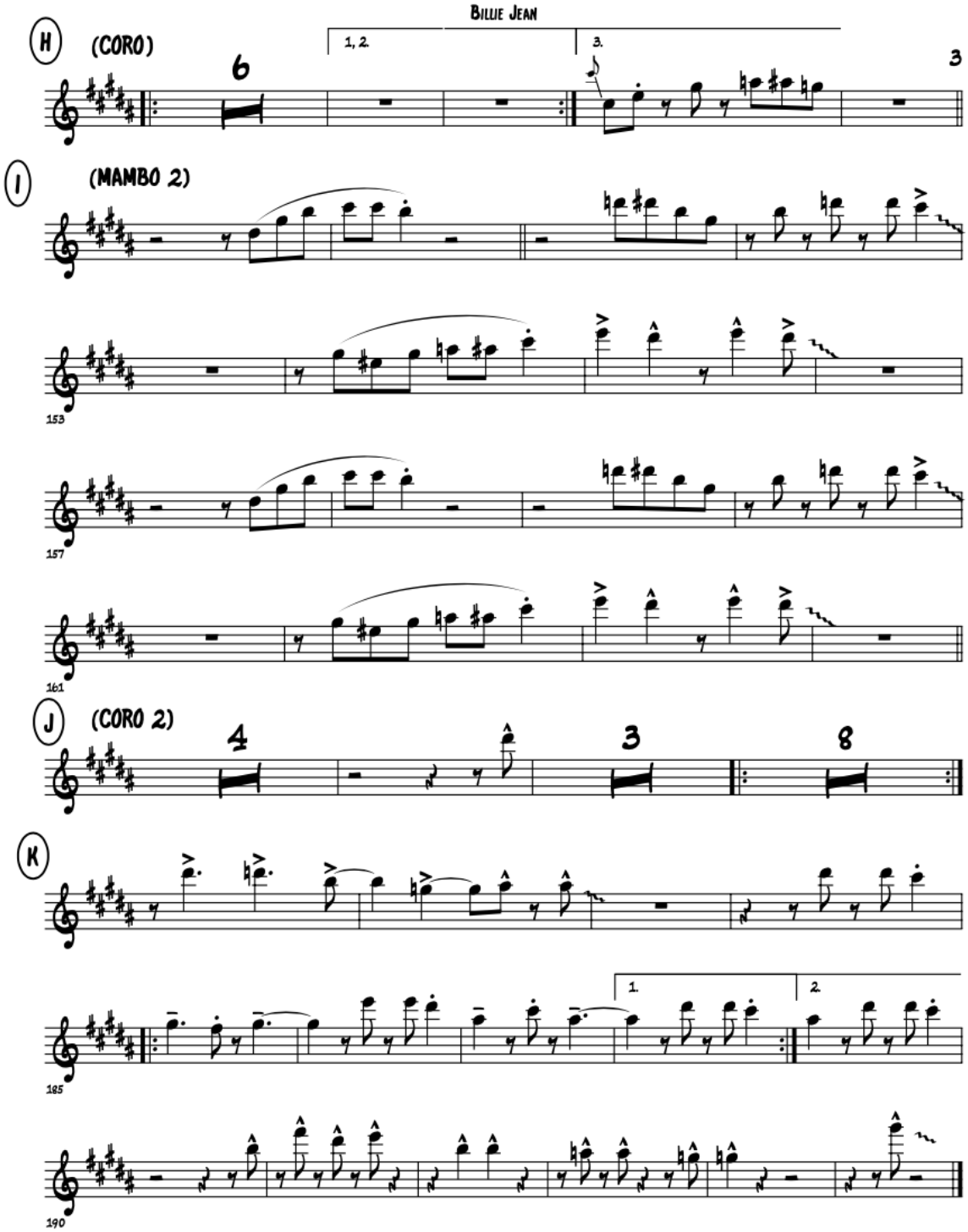
Trumpet in B♭ 1

Michael Jackson
Arr. Tony Succar

Salsa ♩= 220




Billie Jean
E
F
G
D.S. al Coda
(MAMBO)



Performance Notes: Salsa music, like other genres, has crossed over and collaborated with other genres. Tony Succar's unity project mashes the traditions of Michael Jackson and Salsa Music.