

# *Charangas de Bejucal*

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And looking down the road a bit to the community of Bejucal south of Havana, the town will be celebrating the Charangas de Bejucal. Charangas being popular son-influenced Cuban music that began in the 1940s emphasizing flute, violin and piano orchestra.

Like many other festivals of this type in Cuba, the Charangas de Bejucal are related to Christmas celebrations, when white Catholics and black slaves would take to the streets with their musical instruments to pay tribute to their often syncretized deities.

Eventually, they divided into two groups, which represented the white criollos, freed blacks and even slaves on the one hand and the *Peninsulares* or Spaniards. With the fusion of cultures that characterizes Cuban identity, racial and class differences were lost with time, and belonging to one or another side was simply determined by each person's preference.

Rivalry between both sides today consists in the ability to construct the most colorful and striking floats. The traditional music of the orchestra *The Drums of Bejucal* or *Los Tambores de Bejucal* accompanies this festivity now attended not only by the inhabitants of the town, 20 km from Havana, but by hundreds of visitors who enjoy the fantasy and creativity of designers, engineers, painters, musicians, choreographers, and dancers whose talent guarantees the vitality of one of the oldest popular celebrations in Cuba.



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