



Grupo Cha Cha

# Grupo Cha Cha



Lise Gilly, a native of Washington DC and dual citizen of France, came to Chicago via Miami, Florida, in 1994. She quickly began performing Classical music with chamber groups and local symphonies.

Seeking a different musical outlet with a flute focus, she founded Grupo Cha Cha in 1998. Since then they have performed freelance shows all over Chicago and released their first critically acclaimed CD, *Direcciones*, in 2005. Their second CD, "This is The Life", was released in Summer 2012 with glowing reviews and enthusiastic audience response. Both discs are available on Amazon, CDBaby and iTunes.

Members Alberto Arroyo, percussion, and Brett Benteler, bass, have been fixtures on the Chicago Latin scene for 15 years. Darwin Noguera, piano, Victor Garcia, trumpet, and Nythia Martinez, vocals, are fast rising stars in Chicago collaborating together in the Chicago Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble(CALJE). Jean Leroy, drums, and Janet Cramer, percussion, bring their unique style of Latin rhythms to the band displaying their passion for Cuban bata music. Sultry Colombian singer, Diana Mosquera, and up and coming pianist, Adrian Ruiz, round out the band on the newest tracks.

Grupo Cha Cha has been featured on the Marshall Vente Jazz Festival, the Lakeview Street Festival, US Cellular Field, Chicago Botanic Garden Jazz Series and Navy Pier's Latin Nights Series. They are very proud to have been selected to perform at the Chicago Latin Jazz Festival.

Grupo Cha Cha is regularly broadcast on 90.9 WDCB Chicago's Home for Jazz, and Latin Internet stations all across Europe. Grupo Cha Cha is truly international with members representing America, Canada, Colombia, France, Mexico, Nicaragua and Puerto Rico together creating their unique vibrant sound.

You can find Grupo Cha Cha performing in all the major Latin venues in Chicago as well as at private and corporate events. Be our friend: [www.facebook.com/grupochacha](http://www.facebook.com/grupochacha) and online for upcoming dates and breaking news: [www.musicbylise.com](http://www.musicbylise.com) and [www.grupochacha.com](http://www.grupochacha.com)

# Photos



# Press



Don't let the name fool you: there's plenty more than "cha-cha-cha" to the music that Lise Gilly and her band have crafted for this album. The rhythms stretch clear across the Latin Jazz landscape, from choro to son to mambo and rumba and beyond, to form a scintillating fusion of jazz, Afro-Cuban traditions, and the dance sounds of salsa. This percussive foundation underlies the band's eclectic collection of memorable melodies, arranged with bold craft to maximize the colors of the ensemble. And when you throw in brilliant solos from young jazz giants Darwin Noguera on piano and Victor Garcia on trumpet – not to mention the crystal-hued song of Gilly's own flute – then yes, This Is [indeed] The Life.

But for all that – the neon tropical hues, the surprising range of compositions, the sudden blast of the occasional vocal – you can't get away from the rhythms. And that's how it should be; if you're going to name a band after the cha cha cha, you'd better make sure that the music does indeed dance.

Lise Gilly has been worshipping at the altar of Latin jazz for more than 15 years, ever since she started Grupo Cha Cha back in 1998. But the Washington, D.C. native's musical activities stretch far and wide, from classical music – she founded the Chicago chamber ensemble Musica Pacem in 1996, and still plays in the Kenosha (WI) Symphony – to her ongoing work in music education. She currently chairs the Performing Arts Department at Chicago's prestigious Lincoln Park High School.

GRUPO CHA CHA CD REVIEW  
"This Is The Life"  
---Neil Tesser,  
Examiner.com;  
author, "The Playboy Guide to Jazz"

In Grupo Cha Cha, she works with some of Chicago's most skilled "bilingual" musicians, in the sense that they excel at not only jazz and but also the various Latin idioms; indeed, it is this broad range of experiences and interpretive abilities that enables the band to purvey such a wide swath of the musical spectrum.

Darwin Noguera and Victor Garcia have achieved notice separately but especially as co-leaders and arrangers for their Chicago Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble (CALJE), one of the country's most exciting and innovative Latin-jazz big bands. Classically trained bassist Brent Benteler has music in his DNA: he is the son of the legendary Chicago bandleader Franz Benteler, renowned for having provided light classical music to the city's most prestigious events for more than a quarter-century. The band's regular keyboardist, 25-year-old Adrian Joel Ruiz, studied with the noted Chicago pianist Willie Pickens and started playing professionally while attending premed classes in college.

Nythia Martinez directs the high-school choral and musical theatre programs at Northside College Prep in Chicago, and also created and directs the Chicago Puerto Rican Community Chorus. Her fellow cantante de salsa, Diana Mosquera, was born in Colombia, moved to Chicago at 13, and studied classical music until discovering salsa and Latin jazz under the tutelage of Chicago pianist Samuel del Real.

They're all buoyed by the superlative rhythm section comprising Cramer, conga wizard Alberto Arroyo, and Jean Leroy, a master of pan-American and Afro-Latin drumming. And, of course, those audience members who can't help but clap or stomp or beat their hands against the table when Grupo Cha Cha moves them to do so.

So buckle up and prepare for an ear-grabbing journey of Latin Jazz – but Latin Jazz Chicago style, all the way down to its multi-culti roots. In this case, that translates into Caribbean rhythms recorded in a city nowhere near the sea, led by a Jewish high-school music teacher of French heritage, who happens to have married a blues musician from western Canada. Cha-cha-cha.

To read the complete review [CLICK HERE](#) or go to [GrupoChaCha.com/Press](http://GrupoChaCha.com/Press)

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## GRUPO CHA CHA CD REVIEW

"This Is The Life"

--- Bill Tilford, Timba.com

This Is The Life is the second CD by Chicago-based Grupo Cha Cha, an eclectic group that plays Latin Jazz as well as Salsa and Brazilian dance music. The band was named after the nickname of one of the original (and since-departed) co-leaders of the group, which is now led by Lise Gilly. The project was locally recorded in Chicago and Evanston and features many of the city's best Latin jazz musicians. The songs are a combination of covers and originals.

The opening track, Peruchin, is a Mambo Jazz number that features the percussion towards the end of the piece. Bedroom Eyes is a 60s/70s-style Latin Soul - Cha Cha number with English and Spanish lyrics. The title track, This Is The Life, is a Samba jazz composition by Lise, and it features some of the highlights of the recording with nice solos by Victor Garcia (trumpet), Adrian Ruiz (keyboards) and Lise (flute). Que Te Pedi opens as a beautiful, old-school bolero and later segues into a cha cha. Vamos a la Playa is the album's Salsa track and features some beautiful vocal harmonies. Danzon Para Pedro, another original, is a danzón dedicated to Tchaikovsky and is another of the recording's highlights with some excellent trumpet and flute work in the later movements. Haresah is a laid-back 6/8 Jazz piece that is one of our favorite tracks on the recording. Minorian features cameo appearances by Phillippe Vieux on clarinet and Rob Block (who also wrote the piece) on guitar. Pa' Gozar is an Afro-Cuban descarga by Aristides Soto that evokes the Cuban Jam Session recordings from decades ago with Walfredo de los Reyes, Fajardo, Cachao etc. The closing track, Elegua, begins with a standard Afro-Cuban percussion/vocal pattern and segues into an uptempo merengue.

Overall, when this recording settles into a groove, it does it really well, and a lot of the solo work is beautiful as are the solos and harmonies in the vocal tracks. It's laid-back without becoming boring, and I would especially recommend it to fans of groups like Bongo Logic or some of Art Webb's other projects as well as people who enjoy Mongo's or Poncho Sanchez's more eclectic, laid-back and less conga-focused projects (there is no Mongo or Poncho equivalent here, but the rhythm section still puts out in spite of that). I would also call this a must-buy for flautists and listeners who are really into flutes in this music (such as fans of charangas for example), because it's a great example of how to use that instrument effectively in front of this type of ensemble.



# Contact Us

E-mail - [lise@musicbylise.com](mailto:lise@musicbylise.com)

Phone - 773.497.8211

Facebook - [www.facebook.com/grupochacha](http://www.facebook.com/grupochacha)

Web - [www.musicbylise.com](http://www.musicbylise.com)  
[www.grupochacha.com](http://www.grupochacha.com)

*"WARNING: Make sure your feet are unconfined when listening to this disc. Grupo Cha Cha strikes a lovely balance (and a lively one) between meticulously rendered Latin dance music and heartfelt, infectious jazz." —Neil Tesser, Author and Jazz Critic ("The Playboy Guide to Jazz", The Chicago Reader)*

*"What a set! They set the bar very high for the evening, primarily with original spirited selections from their CD entitled Direcciones. One exceptional moment was the cameo appearance of guest vocalist/harmonica player Nigel Mack who joined forces with Nythia Rivera for a splendid Latin-tinged blues number entitled "Bedroom Eyes." This left the large crowd ecstatic." —James Walker Jr., Photographer and Reviewer (Jazz in Chicago)*

