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The Bearers of Sacred Sound Ritual Musicians of Miami

Vicky Jassey

Florida International University

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Cuban Research Institute

Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs



The Bearers of Sacred Sound Ritual Musicians of Miami

Lecture by Vicky Jassey

Friday, May 12, 2017 | 7:00 PM | FIU Modesto A. Maidique Campus | Green Library 220

The making of the first set of consecrated *batá* drums, central to the Cuban religion of Regla de Ocha, in the United States happened in Miami in 1975. Prior to this, the fledgling religious community honored their *orichas* (deities) using *güiros* (beaded gourds), a *campana* (a metal hoe blade), and a conga. At the time only a handful of Cuban exiles knew the sacred rhythms, chants, and ceremonial protocols of a musical tradition that spans centuries and continents. Since the 1980 Mariel boatlift, the number of ritual drummers has continued to grow, as many arrive with the knowledge while others acquire it on U.S. soil. Those in the community estimate that there are now over a hundred ritual musicians and at least fifty sets of consecrated *batá* drums in Miami alone. This lecture reflects on the lived experiences of these professional musicians and the changing landscape of their world. The research presented follows a three-month oral history collection project by ethnomusicologist and performer Vicky Jassey.

Vicky Jassey is a British Visiting Scholar currently affiliated with the Cuban Research Institute and the Digital Libraries of the Caribbean at Florida International University. She completed her M.A. in Performance at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. She was awarded a South West Wales Doctoral Partnership scholarship and is now a third-year Ph.D. student in the Ethnomusicology Program at Cardiff and Exeter Universities in the UK. Her Ph.D. research focuses on gender narratives in Cuban *batá* performance. She has spearheaded Afro-Cuban music in the UK by facilitating a community arts organization, Bombo Productions, which mobilizes artists within the genre to create and support a range of performance and educational events around the UK.

This event is free and open to the public.

For more information and to confirm your attendance, please call (305) 348-1991 or write cri@fiu.edu