

Julian Gerstin

For over 40 years, I have performed and studied a wide variety of music — jazz (from trad brass bands to free jazz); African popular styles such as afrobeat and highlife; Caribbean popular music from salsa to soca, samba to zouk; and the musical traditions of Cuba, Martinique, Brazil, Ghana, and the Balkans. I've also worked in funk, punk, choral music, Mexican son, cajun, zydeco, children's music, and theater and dance accompaniment ... among others.

I perform on a wide variety of percussion instruments: tanbou bèlè, a drum from Martinique; Cuban instruments including conga, bongó, cajón, and shekere; Brazilian samba instruments such as surdo, pandeiro, repinique, timbal and agogo; the tapan drum of Bulgaria/Macedonia; and many others, including washboard and donkey's jawbone.

My current musical projects are:

*Julian Gerstin Sextet*: Original jazz compositions inspired by melodies and rhythms of the Caribbean and Balkans. Many of these compositions feature the tanbou bèlè drum of Martinique. I'm proud to play these songs with some of the area's finest jazz musicians: Eugene Uman piano, Anna Patton clarinet, Don Anderson trumpet or Jon Weeks saxophones & flute, Wes Brown bass, Ben James drumset.

*Iroko Nuevo*: Afro-Cuban traditional music and dance, with five dancers plus eight drummers/singers. Iroko Nuevo is led by dancer Miguel Periche from Holguín, Cuba, and offers a vibrant stage show, dance and music classes, and workshops and demonstrations for schools, community centers and other occasions.

*VT Shakedown*: Afrobeat, ska and classic funk in this band's unquenchable repertoire. A tight rhythm section with ripping horn solos and soulful vocals.

*Bomba de Aquí*: Bomba is part of Puerto Rico's African heritage, brought "here" (Springfield MA) by dancer Brendaliz Cepeda-Peñalosa, drummer Saul Peñalosa, and friends. I'm honored to join this group's celebration of their heritage. The dancing is joyous, the lyrics moving and proud, and the drumming powerful.

*Samba = Joy*: A joint project with Derrik Jordan, who ran this Brazilian percussion group for twenty years. We recently revived it as a community project, to share samba with friends and perform for educational and activist purposes.

As you can see from this mix, I like music that makes me think ... and music that makes me sweat.

Previous performance experiences include:

*Traditional*: bèlè of Martinique with Bel Alians, and Carnival music with Plastic System Band; Cuban music with the Judith Justiz Dance Theater, as well as numerous appearances at *rumbas* in Café La Peña, Oakland; Brazilian samba with Batucada Nana and Batucada d'Leste, and candomble with Oxossí.

*Jazz*: Joel Harrison, Samirah Evans, Eugene Uman; guest appearances with such notables as Charles Neville, Sheila Jordan, Jay Clayton, Mongo Santamaria, Badal Roy, Ray Vega, and Satoshi Takeishi.

*Popular music:* O.J. Ekemode, Kotoja, Zulu Spear (Africa); Green Mountain Mambo, Conjunto Fabuloso (salsa); The Sidewinders, Sundance (soca, reggae); Syncrosystem, Gaslight Tinkers (world beat); Lil' Orphans (cajun, zydeco); Richard Hell and the Voidoids (punk); Tickle Tune Typhoon (children's music).

*Classical, choral, theater:* Sandglass Puppet Theater, River Singers, Greenfield Harmony, Windham Symphony, Brattleboro Community Choir, Brattleboro Women's Chorus, Colombian Ethnic Dance Company, Bill Evans Dance Company, Cornish Institute of the Arts, Danceworks Northwest, The Dance Place, Children's Radio Theater, Bennington College.

My main musical training has been in informal, traditional settings: composition and theory with Jamie Baum, Joel Harrison, Harry Likacs, Eugene Uman; Ghanaian music with C.K. Ladzekpo, Faith Conant and Saeed Abbas; Martinican traditions with Daniel Bardury, Etienne Jean-Baptiste, Siméline Rangon, and Paulo Rastocle; Cuban with Ramón Marques Dominguez, John Amira, Wilson "Chembo" Corniel, Sandy Pérez, John Santos, and Michael Spiro; Brazilian with Gary Harding and Logan Schutts; Macedonia/Bulgaria with Jerry Kisslinger and Helen Marx. These are some of the main people; I have learned from many, many others and am thankful to them all.

My academic interests led to a PhD in Cultural Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1996, based on two years' research in Martinique, where I studied and performed music and dance traditions. This research has led to numerous publications in *Ethnomusicology*, *Black Music Research Journal*, *Latin American Music Review* and other journals and books. I recently retired from a 28-year college teaching career, the longest stretch at Keene State College but also Wesleyan University, Clark University, Marlboro College, San José State University and several others. With Ken Dalluge, I've written *The Musician's Guide to Rhythm*, a comprehensive, practical guide to rhythmic understanding and creativity for players of all instruments.

I've taught private and ensemble music classes most of my life, and continue to teach at the wonderful, non-profit Vermont Jazz Center and the equally wonderful Northampton Community Music School.

Community contributions include serving as President of the Board of Directors of the Vermont Jazz Center (since 2010) and on the Board of Directors of Sandglass Puppet Theater (since 2017).