

# The *Reader's* guide to **World Music Festival Chicago**

The festival's *11 free concerts*, spread out over ten days and 11 venues, offer more than inspiration and fun—they invite us to forge *new bonds of community and care*.

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# World Music Festival Chicago

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## WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL CHICAGO

Full schedule on the back cover of this guide.  
*Friday, September 30, through Sunday,  
October 9, various times and venues, all concerts  
free, many concerts all ages*

**T**he term “world music” has never been adequate to the task we’ve set it—even in its most benign reading, it implies a division between the listener and the rest of the world. And if that listener is in the United States, our country’s global hegemony in popular music colors the term’s meaning too.

Americans don’t have to listen outside our borders to participate in an influential, relevant, up-to-the-moment musical culture. Much of the rest of the world does—or, more accurately, much of the rest of the world is made to feel as though it does. When it comes to music, we export much more than we import.

Looked at in such a light, “world music” represents an opportunity for Americans to recognize our privilege in this area—and to level the playing field, at least between our own ears. The World Music Festival exists to encourage this sort of curiosity, empathy, and connection.

After shutting down for the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Music Festival is returning to Chicago in 2022, with 11 concerts at 11 venues between Friday, September 30, and Sunday, October 9. While the aspiring fascists in the Republican Party escalate their campaign to turn nonwhite foreigners into targets for fear, resentment, and hatred, our city welcomes artists from India,

Colombia, Cuba, Mali, Mexico, Bolivia, and beyond. No other event gives so many of Chicago’s diverse populations the joy of a concert that says “home.”

Founded in 1999, the World Music Festival is organized by David Chavez and Carlos Cuauhtémoc Tortolero of the city’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, with Brian Keigher of People of Rhythm partnering with Tortolero on Ragamala, the marathon of Indian classical music that’s opened every fest since 2013. Though we can be grateful the festival is happening at all, the pandemic still got its licks in—DCASE wasn’t able to begin preparations till February, when the city decided that the risk of COVID-related cancellation was low enough. Ordinarily work on the next festival starts as soon as the previous one ends.

Given the length of the visa process for overseas artists, losing four months meant losing many opportunities to book those artists. As a result, more than a third of this year’s acts are from Chicago—a huge increase from 2019, when their share was closer to one in seven. That doesn’t seem so much like a compromise with circumstances, though, when you consider that the local music on the bill includes the gritty East-West fusion of the Arab Blues, the Peruvian-flavored jazz of Juan Pastor Chinchano, the updated Mongolian and Tuvan folk of Tuvergen Band, and the rambunctious, hard-rocking ska en español of Malafacha.

The lineup of out-of-town artists is even more exciting, in part because DCASE chose to book a larger number of emerging acts instead of splashing out on a headliner big enough for Pritzker Pavilion. Millennium Park shows are great, sure, but so is the chance to see such a dazzling variety of music, all for free, in a little more than a week. La Dame Blanche (Cuba by way of France) pairs her fierce rhymes and dramatic flute with colossal beats from across the African diaspora; Paolo Angeli (Italy) turns his cleverly modified Sardinian guitar into a percussion engine; Gili Yalo (Ethiopia by way of Israel) honors the jazzy, funky grooves that his homeland made immortal in the 60s and 70s; and Kaleta & Super Yamba Band (Benin and Nigeria by way of New York City) fuse Afrobeat and juju for a driving, danceable sound that’s as cheerful as it is aggressive.

By some metrics, the festival is smaller than in 2019—there were 18 concerts then, not 11, and they were spread out over 17 days rather than ten. But the total number of artists has stayed about the same, at around three dozen—the big change is that this year 16 of those artists appear at two big events, Ragamala and the Global Peace Picnic.

For 2022 DCASE has booked a slightly larger share of the festival’s shows at conventional music venues (as opposed to city buildings or parks), which Tortolero says was intended in part to help those venues survive pandemic losses. The city covers every expense—artist

fees, hotels, transportation, staff and production costs, back-line rental, rider fulfillment—so that all revenue the venue makes from bar sales and other sources stays in-house. In return, the city benefits from the venues’ established audiences and marketing operations.

The festival’s use of conventional venues presents an accessibility issue—none of them admits concertgoers of all ages, and they’re mostly on the north side. But they provide better sound than you’d get in any park setting that isn’t Pritzker Pavilion, and they’re less dependent on good weather.

More important, World Music Festival concerts don’t put up barriers of their own—neither the literal fences that surround a public park when it’s occupied by a for-profit fest nor the metaphorical hurdles created by cover charges and tickets. We’ve all paid for this programming already, and it’s for everyone.

That might be the best thing about the fest. Decades of right-wing depredations have endangered the idea of a common good, replacing the connecting threads of our society with “Fuck you, I got mine.” But the World Music Festival was created for no other reason than to make us happy and bring us closer together—and it’s expressly designed to do that for as many different people as possible. In that way, it’s a lot like music itself. **PHILIP MONTORO**

# World Music Festival Chicago

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## FRIDAY30

**RAGAMALA: A CELEBRATION OF INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC** Presented in collaboration with South Asia Institute, South Asian Classical Music Society-Chicago, and People of Rhythm Productions. This event continues into the morning of Saturday, October 1. Fri 9/30, 6 PM-8 AM, Preston Bradley Hall, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, third floor, all ages

This year closes the first decade of **Ragamala**, the largest overnight Indian classical music concert in the country—it debuted as part of the World Music Festival in 2013. Think of it as a sophisticated and inspiring slumber party, and bring your cozy accoutrements—thermos, pillows, snacks—so you can take in as much of this experience as possible. Ragamala offers a thrilling variety of performers in the genre's two main styles, Hindustani (northern) and Carnatic (southern). To arrive at a deeper understanding of these traditions and of what to expect at Ragamala, the *Reader* spoke with two of this year's most innovative performers, Hindustani sarangi player Suhail Yusuf Khan and Carnatic vocalist Roopa Mahadevan.

Hindustani and Carnatic music both consist of vast, elaborate systems of melodic structures (variously called raga, rag, or raag) and rhythmic cycles (tala or taal). "These ragas are your muse," Mahadevan explains. "What is the essence of the raga? What does it look and feel like?"

The two styles differ somewhat in their approach to interpretation. "Carnatic relies more heavily on songs as the center—any improvisation you're doing is around a particular song," Mahadevan says. Hindustani tradition, by contrast, encourages improvisation as the focal point of a performance. "Unlike Western classical music, the interpretation of com-

positions in Hindustani music has nothing to do with how the composer composed it," Khan says, "but the way an artist's individuality allows for expression."

"Designation of rags according to different times of the day [is part of] the Hindustani music system," Khan adds, so all-night concerts such as Ragamala "bring out a flavor of rag music otherwise hard to experience."

"Concerts are getting shorter, people are marketing via social media, smaller clips," Mahadevan says. Meanwhile, Ragamala provides a space to slow down and luxuriate in the opulence of Indian classical music. Mahadevan has performed at Ragamala before, and she describes the vibe as a "one-stop shop—people can just show up and there's something intimate, like you're in someone's living room."

Mahadevan also treasures what Ragamala offers her as a musician. "It's a really heartwarming experience to see the number of people sitting there at [3 AM]," she says. "Like, oh yeah, art does really mean something for a lot of people!"

**LESLIE ALLISON**

**6-7:15 PM PURBAYAN CHATTERJEE, RAKESH CHAURASIA, AND OJAS ADHIYA**

Ragamala kicks off with an unstoppable Hindustani trio of **Purbayan Chatterjee** (sitar), **Rakesh Chaurasia** (bansuri flute), and **Ojas Adhiya** (tabla drums). Coming off an August performance together at Carnegie Hall, these artists are deeply attuned to one another. Themes bounce among them with kinetic spontaneity as the bansuri sculpts the air, the tabla molds the earth, and the sitar performs a metallic alchemy between them.

Chatterjee, a Mumbai-based sitarist, has performed on almost every continent, solo and with ensembles Shastriya Syndicate and Stringstruck. His exploratory, incisive playing guides you on an

unfolding path through waving fields of microtones and crisply elaborated structures. In September 2022, Purbayan released the album *Saath Saath* in collaboration with Chaurasia, his friend of two decades.

Chaurasia's bansuri radiates a warm cloud of melody, husky and smooth. He maneuvers the North Indian bamboo flute from a lilting, swooning dance into a meditative hum. He believes that the aesthetic beauty of Hindustani music is inseparable from its healing and spiritual powers. "While performing... I feel as if I am praying in a temple," he said in a 2016 interview for the Darbar Festival. "The notes have to do something within your system so it affects your chakras and your mind frame." Tabla player Ojas Adhiya engages with his collaborators fully, shifting like a hunter between loose, open focus and lightning-fast forward propulsion. His expressive face silently exchanges detailed musical information with his collaborators as the syncopated pitches of his paired drums ring out from under his agile hands.

This all-star trio will immerse you in the sounds and sensations of twilight, helping you sink into alignment with the present moment—and preparing your state of mind for the night ahead.

**LESLIE ALLISON**

**7:45-9 PM ROOPA MAHADEVAN, SRUTI SARATHY, AND ROHAN KRISHNAMURTHY**

Bay Area-based vocalist **Roopa Mahadevan** is a torchbearer for the evolution of Carnatic singing in the diaspora. Her performance—the only vocal set at Ragamala—is a must-see. Mahadevan presents the lyrical canon with charisma, thoughtfulness, and joy. Her lithe and nuanced melodies and her rich, grounded timbre are evocative on their own, but she adds extra dimensions by "pushing the Carnatic concert format," as she puts it, to include "what

Purbayan Chatterjee (left) © COURTESY THE ARTIST  
Rakesh Chaurasia (center) © COURTESY THE ARTIST  
Ojas Adhiya (right) © COURTESY THE ARTIST





# World Music Festival Chicago



Roopa Mahadevan © COURTESY THE ARTIST



Sruti Sarathy © SANDRA HERCHEN



Rohan Krishnamurthy © COURTESY THE ARTIST

## continued from 3

these compositions mean to us, to bring a new lens to the music.”

Mahadevan performs in art-world and popular-music contexts, leading the crossover jazz and soul ensemble Roopa in Flux as well as a choir called the Navatman Music Collective. She also sings for Bharatanatyam and modern dancers, and this connection shapes her practice: “I love moving,” she says. “So much of Indian music is how you play around with space, how the notes glide and connect; it means a lot to me to be able to gesture and respond to that with my entire body. That’s the aliveness of it—it brings all of you to the performance.”

Mahadevan and violinist-composer **Sruti Sarathy** are currently creating new pieces exploring contemporary themes using Carnatic forms. “In some ways, the cultural ethos of the Carnatic music world is at odds with what we care about in the diaspora,” Mahadevan says. “But we don’t want to give up on the beauty of the tradition, the complexity it has to offer. So we asked, ‘Are there ways we can do both?’” Their original album advancing the Carnatic repertoire will be released in 2023. Mahadevan’s Ragamala set, with Sarathy and mridangam player **Rohan Krishnamurthy**, will draw on the three musicians’ long-standing collaboration.

For Mahadevan, “the singing of these songs is transformative.” Listeners will be transformed as well. **LESLIE ALLISON**

**9:30–10:45 PM ANUPAMA BHAGWAT AND AMIT KAVTHEKAR**

The sitar is the most familiar Indian instrument to

American ears, but its incredible range and power can still startle even an experienced listener—especially in the arms of **Anupama Bhagwat**. She deftly plies the shiny loom of her sitar’s silvery strings to weave a three-part cloth: vibrant melody plays out against a backdrop of echoing drones, all draped in a shimmering veil of sympathetic vibrations. Though Bhagwat improvises and interprets in the Hindustani style particular to her musical lineage, she leads with the commanding presence and side-smiling coolness of her own artistic voice.

Bhagwat’s sitar speaks a cogent language that awakens the emotions and stimulates the imagination. On up-tempo compositions, her momentum is magnetic as she alternates vigorous cascades of rapid melody and swirling eddies produced by bending her strings. On chiller jams, her melodies pulse through a mist of resonance, as though moving in a dream. Simply put, she shreds.

Bhagwat, now living in Bangalore, has earned her reputation with more than 25 years of beguiling performances across India, Europe, and the States. At Ragamala, her sitar will converse with the rounded pitches and burbling rhythms of the tabla, played by energizing and innovative Boston-based master **Amit Kavthekar**. Alongside its virtuosity, Kavthekar’s playing also delivers a distinctive, winking charisma. From the multilayered phrases of his drums, emotive expressions surface—jokes, questions, murmurs, retorts.

In a 2021 interview with the Suromurchhana Music Festival, Bhagwat explained how the fluctuating emotions evoked by each rag shape the music’s interpretation. The rag communicates with the vocabulary of the unconscious, she said: “The rag will take over, and the musician becomes one of the

listeners.” In this set, two inquisitive artists will carefully listen and channel what the rags wish to tell us. **LESLIE ALLISON**

**11:15 PM–12:30 AM INDRAJIT BANERJEE, RUPAK KULKARNI, AND HINDOLE MAJUMDAR**

Sitarist **Indrajit Banerjee** occupies a prestigious position in the venerated Maihar gharānā (a performance community of northern Indian Hindustani music), and he’s also collaborated with all kinds of global artists—similar to the approach of another Maihar gharānā musician, Ravi Shankar. (Banerjee’s uncle and teacher, Kartick Kumar, was one of Shankar’s top students.) Banerjee’s family legacy includes a commanding technique, particularly in the way he finesses lead lines while drawing resonance from his instrument’s sympathetic strings on pieces such as “Aahir Bhairav: Alap.” His music has also been included in a short film on Hindu rituals titled *Cloth Paper Dreams*. Like his predecessors, Banerjee teaches the traditions of the sitar to emerging generations of musicians, specifically at the Antara School of Indian Classical Music in Austin, Texas. He has also combined his instrument with electronic keyboards on the aptly titled “Sitar Ji Chill,” available on Soundcloud. Banerjee has previously worked with jazz guitarist Fareed Haque and saxophonist Jeff Coffin, but at Ragamala he’ll perform in a traditional format with **Rupak Kulkarni** and **Hindole Majumdar**. Kulkarni is a virtuoso on the bansuri, a bamboo flute that’s been integral to Hindustani music for centuries. He sounds especially vibrant in a fast-paced combo with an equally dextrous percussionist—someone like Majumdar. Based in Mil-

waukee, Majumdar is a tabla player who’s mastered numerous complex rhythms (talas) from across India. He’s also a teacher, and he founded the Hindole Majumdar School of Music and Dance in Wisconsin. **AARON COHEN**

**1–2:15 AM SARASWATHI RANGANATHAN, SRUTI SARATHY, AND ROHAN KRISHNAMURTHY**

Chicago-based musician **Saraswathi Ranganathan** has brought the veena—specifically the long-necked South Indian lute used in Carnatic music—to a wide array of collaborations. Several of them feature her original compositions, such as the quietly inspirational “Ennai Azhaithaen—I Embrace Me,” a multilingual song commissioned by the Chicago Humanities Festival. Her cross-cultural meetings also include accompanying a Buster Keaton silent film, engaging with hip-hop rhythms alongside Colorado-based singer Sofie Reed, and helping bring together musicians from across Europe, Asia, and Africa as founder of the Surabhi Ensemble (who perform at the World Music Festival later in the week). But Ranganathan remains dedicated to her instrument’s traditions and legacy—she studied primarily with her mother, Shantha Ranganathan, in Bangalore. She’s a Ragamala veteran, and her set at the 2018 event highlighted her devotion to that history as well as her striking technique. Ranganathan shares a universalist perspective with the other members of this trio: violinist **Sruti Sarathy**, also a composer and singer, has been immersed in the Carnatic tradition since childhood, but she’s also worked in Hindustani music and collaborated with Japanese taiko drummers and Romani artists; mri-



# World Music Festival Chicago

dangam player **Rohan Krishnamurthy** has branched out from Indian classical to play jazz and funk.

Indian violinists Mysore Manjunath and Mysore Nagaraj, originally scheduled for this slot, canceled their tour due to visa problems. **AARON COHEN**

## 2:45-4 AM **SUHAIL YUSUF KHAN AND AMIT KAVTHEKAR**

**Suhail Yusuf Khan** is a versatile and sensitive performer, and you can trust him to carry you through the darkest hours of early morning. In the Hindustani system, performances are a duet between the rags and the time of day: "Rags are structured melodies designed to evoke certain feelings and heighten the emotional state of the mind," Khan explains. "My rags for this concert will be selected according to the time allotted." If you've ever lain awake at 3 AM, wondering what it all means, this is an exceptional opportunity to delve into that mystery.

Khan carries forward the legacy of his grandfather, who was likewise a master of the North Indian sarangi—a type of bowed viol carved from a single block of wood. He's been absorbed in Hindustani music culture since childhood, and he's also a composer and an ethnomusicology scholar who has written extensively about the sarangi and the contemporary transformations of Indian classical music. He relishes expanding the scope of his instrument.

"Sarangi's ability to be inclusive is what I love the most!" he says. "It can be tuned to any key, fit into any genre, and still maintain its own unique sound." That luscious, distinctive sound blends the bowing of the melody and drone strings with subtle reverberations emitted from a large complement of sympathetic strings (anywhere from 11 to 37). Thanks to the cavernous, almost aromatic resonance of these sympathetic vibrations, the sarangi stands out among folk instruments for its resemblance to the human voice.

In **Amit Kavthekar's** second set of the night, the tabla player will entwine his grooves with Khan's rags. These two musicians have been collaborating since 2015, and their connection onstage is palpable. Combined with the soulful journey of Khan's sarangi, Kavthekar's fresh and responsive playing will swirl out into your senses and linger there.

**LESLIE ALLISON**

## 4:30-5:45 AM **RAMAN KALYAN AND ROHAN KRISHNAMURTHY**

**Raman Kalyan**, also known as V.K. Raman and "Flute Raman," comes by his nickname honestly. A long-standing master in the Carnatic bamboo flute, the venu, Kalyan has released more than 80 albums, performed for hundreds of commercials and films, and composed many scores for dance and theater productions. Kalyan breathes a living complexity into his instrument, and he does it with lively charisma and a twinkling eye.

The venu looks simple, but Kalyan can draw an astounding diversity of textures and pitches from it. His melodies seem to escape the confines of the performance, skittering across the water, rumbling



Anupama Bhagwat COURTESY THE ARTIST



Saraswathi Ranganathan COURTESY THE ARTIST



Indrajit Banerjee, Rupak Kulkarni, Hindole Majumdar COURTESY THE ARTIST



Natty Nation M.O.D. PHOTOGRAPHY



# World Music Festival Chicago

continued from 5

in the soil, zigzagging through the forest canopy. Whether bouncingly buoyant or thickly rooted, the irresistible tones of Kalyan's flute crackle irresistibly with an unpredictable, playful electricity.

Kalyan has devoted his career to advocating for Carnatic music. He's the founder of the Indo American Academy of Classical Music, an institution based in Virginia that also offers free online instrumental and vocal lessons. For his ongoing project 1000 Ragas @ 1000 Locations, he performs ragas in places he feels match the energy of the piece, often playing outdoors and, charmingly, for nonhuman audiences—whether peacocks in someone's yard or a bayou landscape buzzing with insects. He records

music for meditation and sound healing, and he collaborates with ensembles across global traditions—an expansive approach that's also audible in the openhearted enthusiasm and fun of his playing.

At Ragamala, Kalyan will summon the spirits of dance and devotion with mridangam accompaniment by **Rohan Krishnamurthy**, in his second set of the event. Krishnamurthy is a percussionist and composer based in the Bay Area, and in his trio the Alaya Project, he integrates Carnatic music, jazz, and funk. He's developed a hybrid drum kit that bridges the practices of playing with sticks and by hand, and he's patented a novel drum-tuning system. His inventiveness also comes across in the epic narratives of his mridangam lines, wide in dynamic

range and deep in rhythmic power. **LESLIE ALLISON**

**6:15-7:30 AM MANIK KHAN AND HINDOLE MAJUMDAR**

There's no finer way to clear out the night's dreams, collect your thoughts, and welcome the morning sun than with the sarod, a lutelike Hindustani stringed instrument with a calm, pure sound. **Manik Khan's** treatment of the sarod is confident, warm, and soothing, and his phrasing creates a relaxed and spacious environment for the tabla to unfurl its tendrils of rhythm.

Khan's father, Ali Akbar Khan, a member of Hindustani music royalty, trained him in sarod and in-

tiated him into the world of performance by having him play on tour alongside him. Now an esteemed solo musician in the Bay Area, Khan builds on his lineage through traditional performances, crossover collaborations, and educational programs and partnerships with local symphonies and school youth orchestras.

For this final Ragamala set, tabla master **Hindole Majumdar** will make his second appearance of the event. In addition to being a dedicated teacher, Hindole has toured the world as a soloist and accompanied renowned dancers and instrumentalists. Though he's also trained in mridangam, he'll play tabla in this duo with Khan using his contemplative, exhaling lines to help cast the spell of the morning rags.

As sunrise pours down through the stained glass of the Cultural Center, congratulate yourself for experiencing an absurd amount of world-class art for zero dollars. Then get yourself home, rest, and digest the revelations of the past 14 hours.

**LESLIE ALLISON**

## SATURDAY<sup>1</sup>

**GLOBAL PEACE PICNIC** *This mini festival features eight acts on two stages. Sat 10/1, 1-7:30 PM, Humboldt Park Boathouse, 1301 N. Sacramento, all ages*

**Global Stage, 1 PM TAMBURICA HAUS BEND**

The word "tamburica" (spelled several ways in English, including "tamburitza") refers to a family of stringed instruments widespread throughout Eastern and Central Europe, particularly the countries of the former Yugoslavia and other Balkan nations. These long-necked lutes are close kin to the Indian tamboura and the Persian tambura by way of the Silk Road and the Ottomans, and they belong to the same family of instruments as the viola-like kontra. Large formal tamburica orchestras have existed since the 19th century, but the instrument is more commonly played in a small string band with a bass, as it is in Chicago's **Tamburica Haus Bend**. This format is closer in size and spirit to a traditional village ensemble that plays for community occasions both festive and somber.

For seven years, the Tamburica Haus Bend have been playing together at festivals and other events throughout the Chicago area. The ensemble is slightly unusual in that bassist Zoran Miletic, tamburica player Joe Kirin, and kontra player Bob Persa are joined by an accordionist, Zoran Radovanovic. They get a great deal of sound out of such a small group of players, bringing a joyful, infectious energy to a raucous and bittersweet repertoire that comes from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, and other nearby countries. I reached Kirin for an online chat, and he described two of his favorite songs from the band's usual set: the upbeat, clap-along dance number "Evo Banke" ("Here's the Bank") refers to the



Suhail Yusuf Khan, Amit Kavthekar © COURTESY THE ARTIST



Raman Kalyan, Manik Khan © COURTESY THE ARTIST





# World Music Festival Chicago



Tamburica Haus Bend © COURTESY THE ARTIST



Sones de México Ensemble © HENRY FAJARDO



Shanta Nurullah © LAUREN DEUTSCH

tradition of audience members showering Romani musicians with money when they're moved by the music, while "Moja Mala Nema Mane" ("My Girl Has No Flaws"), made famous by Croatian band Zlatni Dukati, is a playful love song with a slightly sinister denouement. The Global Peace Picnic is an excellent setting to experience the Tamburica Haus Bend live; their music is ripe for dancing and for celebrating the persistence of culture and community through adversity. **MONICA KENDRICK**

## **iSúbelo! Stage, 1:30 PM SONES DE MÉXICO ENSEMBLE**

Formed in Pilsen in 1994, the **Sones de México Ensemble** have made it their goal to promote traditional Mexican son, a centuries-old form of folk music that fuses elements from Spanish, African, and Indigenous cultures. The Chicago group's mastery of regional Mexican musical styles has been central to their mission, and they've spent the past three decades performing live shows, self-releasing albums, collaborating with dance companies, and holding classes and workshops. Their passion runs deep, and it overflows on their records. On their 1996 debut album, *iQue Florezca!*, they cull from huapango, mariachi, and more, creating a palpably jubilant mix. "iQue Florezca la Luz!" overflows with cheerful group vocals in beautiful harmony, while "Xipe" highlights how easily the group can make simple percussion feel life-affirming. The celebratory vibe continues on 2002's *Fandango on 18th Street*, where even the song titles ("Polkas," "Boleros") affirm the group's desire to deliver joy through as many genres as possible. Sones de México took more liberties on *Esta Tierra Es Tuya*, tackling Bach, Led Zeppelin, and the Woody Guthrie song that gives the album its title; here, more than on any of their other works, they aim to capture the Mexican immigrant experience in its infinite variety. The Sones de México Ensemble's two most recent albums, 2010's *iViva la Revolución!* and 2013's *13 B'ak'tun*, both respond to specific events. The former celebrates the Mexican Revolution on the 100th anniversary of its beginning; it features music from the early 20th century and ends with a sprawling four-part suite that ranks among the group's most epic recordings. The latter came shortly after the Mayan calendar completed one of its many cycles on December 21, 2012, and includes an especially beautiful recording called "Xochipitzahuatl," named after the traditional marriage song and dance. Listening to the Sones de México Ensemble is to experience the richness of Mexico's musical history. **JOSHUA MINSOO KIM**

## **Global Stage, 2:30 PM SHANTA NURULLAH**

When **Shanta Nurullah** left the U.S. for India in 1969, she wasn't aware that she was joining a wave of musicians looking eastward for inspiration. A native Chicagoan, she'd joined a study-abroad trip to escape a lonely winter at her small Minnesota college, where she was one of only a handful of Black



# World Music Festival Chicago

continued from 7

students on campus. She fell in love with the sitar shortly after arriving in Pune, in the western state of Maharashtra, and she spent the next six months absorbed in learning to play it. “It was just what I had to do,” Nurullah recalls. Still, she left India feeling discouraged because she’d been told that she’d have to practice eight hours per day for at least five years before she’d be a decent player. But when she returned to Chicago after graduation and began collaborating with Phil Cohan of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) at his Black music workshops, he encouraged her to think beyond Indian classical music and even wrote some new material for her. “That was all the permission I needed,” Nurullah remembers. She began to find a voice, employing the sitar’s distinctive timbres and textures to re-create spirituals and other songs as well as to improvise. In 2015, Nurullah formed Sitarsys, a Chicago-based collective informed by her decades-long career as a musician, storyteller, and teacher. On their 2016 recording, *Sitar Black*, the group uses a variety of instruments, among them oud, trumpet, mbira, guitar, bass, voice, and percussion (including the madal, a Nepalese hand drum). They play blues, jazz, and traditional tunes and also perform group improvisations, an eclectic approach that allows the musicians “to express who we are and what’s important to us as

citizens of the world,” says Nurullah. **KELLEY TATRO**

## iSúbelo! Stage, 3 PM **AFRICARIBE**

**AfriCaribe’s** bomba performances create a celebration for the eyes and ears. The ensemble’s many members converse with one another in a complex interplay: A semicircle of women in white blouses, headscarves, and long, colorful ruffled skirts dance and sing a call-and-response melody. Two hand drummers accompany them, with the primo drummer following the lead dancer’s improvised movements and the buleador drummer keeping a constant bass rhythm. A third percussionist accompanies on cuá (a wooden barrel on its side, played with two sticks) while one of the singers plays a maraca.

Bomba is a Puerto Rican folk music, dance, and song with West African origins. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, the Spanish empire enslaved tens of thousands of Africans to work on sugar plantations. These Africans and their descendants helped shape Puerto Rican culture, including its art and music. Bomba was also influenced by the traditions of the Taíno people native to the island and by European dancing.

Evaristo “Tito” Rodríguez founded AfriCaribe in 2000 “to celebrate the African influence in Puerto Rico and other Caribbean lands.” The Chicago nonprofit maintains not just a bomba ensemble but

also a production company and a cultural center at 2547 W. Division, where it holds all-ages classes and other community activities. Before the pandemic hit, AfriCaribe had hosted monthly “bombazos” for more than 18 years.

The AfriCaribe ensemble, which ranges from eight to 15 members, consists of volunteers and focuses on education. Its activities, according to Rodríguez, include performances, lectures, demonstrations, workshops, and residencies; it also develops curricula for teachers. “Bomba has always been part of the history of Latino music,” he explains. “We would listen to salsa groups of the 1950s and ’60s without realizing that some of those rhythms were based on bomba.”

The pandemic “really did a number on us,” Rodríguez acknowledges. “We tried on a few occasions to do the virtual thing, but it’s hard to perform in front of a camera. It’s not dishing out any kind of energies,” he says, laughing. “Bomba is very communal.” **JACOB ARNOLD**

## Global Stage, 4 PM **NATTY NATION**

**Natty Nation** are a Madison institution. In 2010, the alt-weekly *Isthmus* named the reggae band’s second album, 1998’s rootsy *Earth Citizen*, the 24th-best pop album to come out of Madison; in 2008, Natty Nation had begun a 12-year run of Black Friday

shows at the High Noon Saloon, a streak that might still be going if it weren’t for COVID-19. More than two dozen musicians have passed through the lineup since the band began in 1995, and they’ve weathered the loss of a cofounder, vocalist-guitarist Jeffrey “J-Maxx” Maxwell, who died in 2001; bassist-vocalist Demetrius “Jah Boogie” Wainwright is the sole remaining original member. Natty Nation have maintained a solid base in classic reggae grooves and themes (Rastafarianism, peaceful lifestyles, radical equity) while expanding their sound. The 2008 album *Reincarnation*, for example, stitches in elements of hip-hop, enlisting a handful of outside producers to add light boom-bap beats, dubby samples, and snatches of rapping that highlight the soulfulness of Natty Nation’s reggae. On the group’s most recent full-length, 2016’s *Divine Spark*, their relaxed melodies highlight reggae’s great capacity for transcendent repetition. “I’ve been into meditation for a while,” Wainwright told *Isthmus* after the release of *Divine Spark*. “We’re picking up people through that.” I have no trouble believing him, since these guys prefer to reach fans by playing live—and they’ve had nearly three decades to perfect their hypnotic reggae riddims. **LEOR GALIL**

## iSúbelo! Stage, 4:30 PM **LA DAME BLANCHE**

Flutist, singer, and percussionist Yaite Ramos Rodri-



AfriCaribe's bomba ensemble © COURTESY THE ARTIST



# World Music Festival Chicago

guez, aka **La Dame Blanche**, was born in 1979 into a musical family in Pinar del Río, the westernmost province of Cuba; her father, Jesus “Aguaje” Ramos, is a trombonist and musical director of the Orquesta Buena Vista Social Club, and her uncle Mayito Rivera spent more than two decades as the front man for legendary Cuban band Los Van Van. She began conservatory training in classical flute at age eight, then relocated to Paris in the late 90s. After making her mark as backup singer with French-Spanish punk raggauffin band Sergeant Garcia, she began developing her own musical persona as La Dame Blanche. Ramos Rodriguez’s stage name is meant to evoke a fearsome yet benevolent mythical figure—a witch, sorcerer, and healer—as well as to reflect her beliefs as a practitioner of Santería (an Afro-Cuban spiritual system with roots in Yoruban beliefs). Her tunes inject traditional sounds—notably batá drums, used in many religious ceremonies—into a compelling, ultra-danceable fusion of styles from across the African diaspora, including rumba, reggae, dancehall, cumbia, and moombahton. Masterfully backed by French sound engineer and beat maker Marc “Babylotion” Damblé, La Dame Blanche spits fierce feminist calls to power and pride in the face of sexist violence, her rhythmic flow marked by flavorful Cuban slang; she also punctuates her vocals with dramatic flute lines that reflect the Latin-jazz grooves she explored at Havana’s Escuela Nacional de Arte de Cuba. La Dame Blanche’s buoyantly creative performances feel as if they map out the road from rumba to rap. **CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON**

## Global Stage, 5:45 PM **JINA BRASS BAND CHICAGO**

The newly established **Jina Brass Band Chicago** shares DNA with a New York group founded in 2005 under a similar name—they’re both baraat brass bands, named for the groom’s processional in a South Asian wedding, and they capture the energy and excitement of that celebration with traditional baraat songs, classic Punjabi tunes, and upbeat Bollywood numbers. Both bands also get support from New York-based percussionist Sunny Jain, leader of the group Red Baraat: the son of Punjabi immigrants, he runs a company called Jainsounds that supplies live music for weddings. The local version of Jina Brass Band is led by one of his many Red Baraat collaborators, Chicago-based tubaist Akshat Jain, who also teaches at the Merit School of Music and plays principal tuba in the Chicago Composers Orchestra. He’s joined in the core lineup by trombonist Catie Hickey, who cofounded the workshop Taller de Trombones de Panamá in 2014, and percussionist Kabir Dalawari, who released a jazzy debut album in March 2022 called *Awareness*. Jina Brass Band Chicago fills out its lineup with a shifting cast of musicians, so that its complement of instruments always includes sousaphone, trombone, trumpet, saxophone, and percussion—including the double-headed dhol, a drum long associated with rambunctious bhangra beats and other forms of South Asian folk music. Akshat Jain is also part of

party-happy marching band Mucca Pazza, so you’d better believe he knows how to keep a crowd on its feet. **LEOR GALIL**

## iSúbelo! Stage, 6:15 PM **BAZURTO ALL STARS**

Colombian band the **Bazurto All Stars** build supremely danceable grooves upon the musical pillars of champeta, a vibrant Afro-Colombian musical style and dance that originated along the country’s Atlantic-Caribbean coast—particularly in the urban centers of Cartagena (where the All Stars are based) and Barranquilla. Rooted in the music of the descendants of the free Black communities who populated the region in the 18th century, champeta jelled into its contemporary form in the late 70s and early 80s. U.S. audiences caught a glimpse of its fancy, hip-shimmying footwork and irresistible beats when Shakira (who’s from Barranquilla) brought it to the Super Bowl stage during her 2020 halftime performance.

The Bazurto All Stars seamlessly blend classic champeta with rhythms from many of the African genres that helped inform it, such as Congolese soukous and Ghanaian highlife. They also veer into Caribbean grooves from Jamaica and Haiti, adding dollops of reggae as well as hip-hop and reggaeton. Four of the group’s seven members are vocalists, and they often come together in tight, fluid harmonies. One of those vocalists, Jeison Guerrero, is also an accomplished rapper, and his rhymes accentuate the band’s party-time themes.

Champeta songs typically flow from an introduction and chorus into the genre’s most lively element, a repetitive passage called the despeluque. In Caribbean slang, the term has come to refer to letting your hair down in the wildest way and is now synonymous with partying. In the despeluque, the guitars and bass pull back, and the percussion—in the Bazurto All Stars, conga and drums—lays a foundation for simple chants that facilitate audience participation. For example, a 2020 single about traveling with or without a visa is called “Pa’Lante,” a contraction of “para adelante” that usually means “go ahead,” “onward,” or “go for it”—and its repetition in the chorus echoes its use throughout the Americas as a popular chant in rallies advocating for social and political change. The Bazurto All Stars are putting out the call: pa’lante Chicago, with a major moment of despeluque! **CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON**

**LA CHICA, BEATS Y BATERIA, DJ FANITA BANANA** Sat 10/1, 10 PM (doors at 9 PM), Martyrs’, 3855 N. Lincoln, 21+

**La Chica** is the creation of French-Venezuelan artist Sophie Fustec. Born in Paris, she began playing music at age six—first violin, then piano, which became her instrument of choice. Fustec visited Venezuela often while growing up, and at age 19 she decided to split her time between Europe and South America while studying classical piano and analog synthesizers. In 2010, when she was in her late 20s, she joined Bastien Picot, Florent Mateo,



Jina Brass Band Chicago © MARK HALE



Bazurto All Stars © COURTESY THE ARTIST



# World Music Festival Chicago

continued from 9

and Anthony Winzenrieth to form French electro-pop band 3SomeSisters.

In 2015, Fustec debuted her solo work as La Chica, which combines R&B, pop, classical, electronic music, and other contemporary sounds. And she doesn't just sing, she roars—manifesting her femininity and Latinidad as well as the healing powers of music. La Chica's first EP, *Oasis*, dropped in 2017, followed by *Cambio* in 2019.

"I love rhythm. I grew up with Caribbean percussion, so it naturally shows in my music," Fustec says. "I usually build everything from the beat, even if it's implicit. I need to feel a pulse to be able to create the rest. The colors in my harmonies come from many different inspirations, but the biggest is prob-

ably my love for Debussy, on one side, and the UK scene with the Beatles, Radiohead, and James Blake on the other."

Fustec's latest release, 2020's *La Loba*, is dedicated to her late brother, Pablo, who died in summer 2020 after trying to rescue one of his dogs from a scalding hot spring. She fondly remembers Pablo as her companion on the road and in art, and their bond may explain the urgency in her voice throughout *La Loba*—it channels pain, sorrow, and rage. But with this record, Fustec has transformed these emotions into poetic vignettes of hope. "I've composed those songs to heal," she explains. "It's an ongoing transformation." **SANDRA TREVIÑO**

**Beats y Bateria** are too eclectic for the mainstream

spotlight, but that variety also makes this global-music trio unpredictable and interesting. The Chicago band's far-reaching vision combines century-old folk tunes and ancient rhythms with a modern electronic sheen, informed by the members' diverse backgrounds: vocalist Ana Everling (see below) is Moldovan, and draws from her homeland's music as well as jazz, fado, samba, and other styles; drummer Daniel Crane loves salsa, jazz, Afro-Brazilian music, hip-hop, house, and more; Cuban DJ and producer AfroQbano, aka Harold Gonzalez Medina, worked as a house and hip-hop DJ in Havana clubs and developed a taste for the rhythms of Afrobeat, funk, and bhangra.

After moving to Chicago, Medina joined Beats y Bateria as well as Latinx music and arts collec-

tive Future Rootz, and he's shared stages with the likes of Mos Def, Pete Rock, Antibalas, and Hypnotic Brass Ensemble. He tied for runner-up in the Reader's 2016 Best of Chicago poll for "Best DJ." Crane picked up drums at age 11 and started playing professionally at 16. He took his first tour of Europe at 18, and after college (where he studied jazz, Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian, and West African rhythms) he traveled to São Paulo to learn more about Brazilian drumming. Everling became part of the Chicago scene in 2015, joining projects playing jazz and pop as well as Latin American and Balkan music. She has also added her vocals to Amada, Alfonso Ponticelli & Swing Gitan, and La Peña Orchestra, and her newest group is Taraf de Chicago, a folk ensemble that specializes in old Moldovan peasant songs.

Everling sings in several different languages, underlining the wildly hybridized nature of Beats y Bateria's sound—the lyrics on their most recent single, "Carolina" (from summer 2020), are in Portuguese. The tune starts like a traditional ballad, but then electronic textures begin to ebb and flow as the track morphs to encompass jazz, house, disco, bossa nova, and more. Beats y Bateria say they're close to completing their first full-length album, which ought to be out in late 2022 or early 2023. They also plan to drop another single in time for their World Music Festival performance. **STEVE KRAKOW**

## SUNDAY<sup>2</sup>

**PAOLO ANGELI, SURABHI ENSEMBLE**

Additional support for Paolo Angeli provided by the Italian Cultural Institute of Chicago. Sun 10/2, 5 PM, Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, 915 E. 60th, all ages

Plenty of critics have suggested that the age of guitar music is over, but they must be thinking of somebody besides **Paolo Angeli**. The Sardinian musician, vocalist, and ethnomusicologist might be one of the world's most innovative guitarists, judging not just by his experimental compositions but also by the instrument he's created to play them: a prepared chitarra sarda ("Sardinian guitar," a large-bodied baritone) that he's outfitted with hammers, pedals, propellers, additional strings, and more, morphing it into a hybrid between guitar, cello, and percussion section. Angeli's influences include traditional Sardinian music, postrock, jazz, and flamenco, and the techniques he's mastered are just as varied: he strums and plucks (sometimes with a giant metal plectrum), he uses a bow, he taps out percussion with his bare feet, and he processes everything through a battery of effects pedals. His music is avant-garde, but it rarely feels abstract: the warmth at its core and its cinematic qualities make it supremely approachable. In 2019, he released *22.22 Free Radiohead*, where he refracts ten Radiohead songs through his vision—and in a low-key power move, he recorded them with no overdubs. Angeli's



La Chica  COURTESY THE ARTIST



Beats y Bateria  COURTESY THE ARTIST



# World Music Festival Chicago

latest album, *Rade*, came out earlier this year, and its fusion of breezy Mediterranean atmospheres with lush instrumentation feels like it reveals more secrets on repeat listens. **JAMIE LUDWIG**

The **Surabhi Ensemble** create a cross-cultural fusion that includes Indian raga, Spanish flamenco, Mexican folk, and Arab maqam. These Chicago-based musicians, dancers, and artists work to demonstrate the commonalities among cultures—a mission they took on the road for a 2019 tour of Vietnam, Senegal, Portugal, and Spain—and they're developing a new performance piece that draws on their collective experience of the pandemic. The show is sung in Arabic, Spanish, and Hindi and includes traditional and folkloric styles such as son jarocho, flamenco, and salsa, as well Rajasthani and Bharatanatyam dances. It also features poetry, mantras, meditations, and stunning visuals captured during the group's travels to Oaxaca and Tahiti.

The Surabhi Ensemble consists of about a dozen artists, who bring a diversity of cultural backgrounds into the fold. Though this new performance highlights traditional music and dance, it's not an exercise in aesthetic purism, says Surabhi member Carlo Basile, also of Las Guitarras de España.

"Yes, there are many traditional aspects in the show, but there is much more going on," Basile explains. "This isn't so much about the dances or music being traditional, because they morph throughout the performance—it is more about us as human beings."

COVID-19 and the uprisings following the police murder of George Floyd colored the production from the start. "We had a big workshop about all the different feelings that we encountered, not just personally, but collectively as a society, maybe, through the pandemic," Basile says. "Things we went through as protocols, and what we went through with grief, and the loss, obviously, is astounding. All of these things came out in different sections [of the performance] that we're calling vignettes or scenes from the pandemic."

At a concert this summer, the Surabhi Ensemble put out a limited-edition prerelease version of their forthcoming album, *Un Respiro Libre*, which contains those pandemic songs. Some of that material, along with tunes they haven't shared yet, will appear in their set at this World Music Festival showcase—and they're hoping to have a final version of the album ready too. **SANDRA TREVIÑO**

## MONDAY3

### GILI YALO, JUAN PASTOR CHINCHANO

Additional support for Gili Yalo provided by the Consulate General of Israel to the Midwest. Mon 10/3, 7 PM (doors at 6 PM), Constellation, 3111 N. Western, 18+

When singer-songwriter **Gili Yalo** was four years old, he and his family were airlifted from Sudan with

thousands of other Ethiopian Jews, who'd immigrated to escape the mid-1980s famine in their homeland and ended up caught in the middle of Sudan's civil war. The crisis prompted the Israeli government and the CIA to launch Operation Moses to resettle this vulnerable population in Israel. Yalo was lucky to survive the perilous journey—many children did not—but he still found it challenging to adjust to his adopted home. African immigrants faced discrimination, and because few Israelis understood Amharic, he had to learn to speak Hebrew. He got his start in music by singing in an army choir, pop cover bands, and a dub group, but then he went back to his Ethiopian roots. Yalo's self-titled 2017 album, released when he was 36 years old, asserts his identity in an eminently danceable way, highlighting the

beats, horns, and keyboards of the Ethiopian funk and jazz that emerged in the 1960s (documented on the ongoing *Éthiopiques* series of albums released by French label Buda Musique). His songs use Ethiopian pentatonic scales (he began with the most common, called "tezeta," and branched out from there), but he's shifted some of their East African rhythms to fit with reggae grooves. Yalo returned to Ethiopia to shoot the 2017 video to "Selam," which depicts him surrounded by children—many of whom are around the age he was when he first left the country. Two years later, Yalo recorded the 2019 EP *Made in Amharica* with the team of producers at Texas studio Niles City Sound, highlighting rock-based song structures and electric guitar leads. His recent singles, whose lyrics mix Amharic, Hebrew,

and English, embrace a variety of international sounds and some reliably universal themes: the latest, this summer's ballad "Yom Ehad Yavo" (Hebrew for "The Day Will Come"), is a plaintive cry for lost love. **AARON COHEN**

If Peruvian traditional music can be visualized as overlapping spheres of influence—indigenous Andean instruments, Spanish colonial dances, African rhythms—then drummer **Juan Pastor** sits at the intersection of nearly all of them. In the years since he moved to Chicago in 2006, lured by the city's jazz tradition and the university program at DePaul, he's added even more elements to that nexus. Pastor got his start learning folkloric percussion from family members and other musicians



Surabhi Ensemble @ COURTESY THE ARTIST



Paolo Angeli @ COURTESY THE ARTIST



Gili Yalo @ MICHAEL TOPYOL



Juan Pastor, drummer and bandleader of Chinchano @ COURTESY THE ARTIST



# World Music Festival Chicago

## continued from 11

in Lima, where he grew up, and when he heard jazz for the first time, he was “amazed.” As he recalls in the liner notes to *Juan Pastor Chinchano*, his 2014 recording debut, “I knew I wanted to learn to play it.” That album inaugurated his band of the same name, **Chinchano**, whose core lineup is now Pastor on drums and percussion, Stu Mindeman on piano, Matt Ulery on bass, and Dustin Laurenzi on tenor saxophone. On Chinchano’s new album, *Carlitos*, dedicated to Pastor’s late father, they’ll be joined by saxophonist Greg Ward, trumpeter Victor Garcia, and percussionists Javier Quintana and Flavio Donoso (all based in Chicago except for Donoso, who’s from Lima).

“Chinchano” refers to someone from Chinchu province, south of Lima, or from its capital city, Chinchu Alta, where Pastor first learned to play the box-shaped drum called the cajón (literally “crate” or “drawer”). The cajón is a cornerstone of Afro-Peruvian music, with roots both deep and bloody. Enslaved Africans in Peru repurposed wooden crates to circumvent bans on percussion instruments, which slaveholders feared could encode insurrectionist messages. (Here in the United States, the patting juba—a dance that uses the body as percussion—was born out of a similarly draconian ban.) Pastor has never left the cajón, and it’s become a central part of Chinchano’s sound: Pastor often steps out from behind his drum kit to solo on it or to lead the band from his perch atop it.

HANNAH EDGAR

## TUESDAY4

**SEFFARINE, THE ARAB BLUES** Tue 10/4,  
7 PM (doors at 6 PM), *Sleeping Village*, 3734 W.  
Belmont, 21+

Genre fusion is sometimes seen as a relatively new

phenomenon, accelerating as technologies such as radio, television, streaming, and social media have lowered the barriers between communities. But humans have been mixing and matching sounds and influences basically since they started making music. Led by vocalist Lamiae Naki and flamenco guitarist and oud player Nat Hulskamp, **Seffarine** participate in that age-old tradition, connecting people by threading the needle between past and present. Based in Portland, Oregon, they’re named for an ancient square in Naki’s hometown of Fez, Morocco, famous for centuries for its metalworking (a tradition her family continues today). Much as Motown songwriters borrowed from the noises of Detroit’s automobile factories, Seffarine take some of their rhythms from the sounds of artisans at their craft. Their 2015 debut album, *De Fez a Jerez*, is rooted in the historical ties between Fez and Andalusia, Spain, where Hulskamp has studied music—especially the period between the ninth and 15th centuries, when people, culture, and ideas flowed relatively peacefully between the two cities via the Strait of Gibraltar. The group function as a duo with guests in the studio, but when they play live they’re joined by Damian Erskine on bass, Madagascar-born Manavihare Fiaindratovo on percussion, and Iranian multi-instrumentalist Bobak Salehi on kamancheh, sehtar, tar, and violin. Seffarine’s music can melt the coldest hearts—the gorgeous, plaintive “Une Autre Chance” perfectly balances melancholy and romance. And their performances reach even greater emotional heights when cajón player Manuel Gutierrez, who’s also a celebrated flamenco dancer and choreographer, lights up the stage with his moves. **JAMIE LUDWIG**

Egyptian percussionist, DJ, and dancer Karim Nagi is a ubiquitous presence on the Chicago music scene. He performs solo concerts, which include dancing and storytelling; he leads Huzam, a quartet of Arab American musicians who play original compositions in traditional forms; and he plays in

the **Arab Blues** project developed by Rami Gabriel, who’s not just a musician but also a professor of psychology at Columbia College. Gabriel switches between electric guitar, oud, and buzuq, while Nagi accompanies on riqq (a small tambourine-like frame drum), tabla (a goblet-shaped hand drum, often called a “darbuka” in the West), or an unconventional trap kit assembled mainly from traditional instruments (for a bass drum, he sometimes uses a box drum). Like the name says, the Arab Blues seek connections between the Middle Eastern compositional and improvisational canon—called the turath—and the Western traditions of blues and jazz. This isn’t an entirely new approach, and in the duo’s sets you can hear occasional echoes of earlier East-West hybrids, such as Dick Dale’s surf-rock workout on the Eastern Mediterranean folk song “Misirlou” or Rabi Abou-Khalil’s oud fusion classic “Blue Camel.” The Arab Blues’s synthesis is accessible, gritty, and exhilarating, and Nagi is a born performer—he always seems to be having the time of his life onstage. He and Gabriel create a sound that’s sometimes graceful, sometimes bracingly noisy, like a Middle Eastern garage band. **NOAH BERLATSKY**

## WEDNESDAY5

**EVA SALINA, ANA EVERLING** Wed 10/5,  
7 PM (doors at 6:30 PM), *Schubas*, 3159 N.  
Southport, 21+

In the United States, the general populace knows Romani music mostly via Spain and the flamenco guitar. But Romani traditions are much broader than a single country or instrument. New York-based singer **Eva Salina** has spent the past decade using her flexible voice and considerable intelligence to explore the wide range of Balkan Romani traditions. Her self-released 2013 debut, *Solo*, consists mainly of a cappella renditions of hymnlike songs—

even Salina’s breathing becomes part of the performance, and her powerful keening vocals evoke Middle Eastern performers such as the great Oum Kalthoum. On the marvelous 2016 album, *Lema Lema: Eva Salina Sings Šaban Bajramović*, by contrast, she twines her melismatic lines around Balkan brass-band arrangements—it’s party music for extroverted flirtation. Her most recent record, 2018’s *Sudbina*, takes another left turn; Salina and Romani accordion player Peter Stan collaborate on a set of fleet, polka-tinged dance tunes and heartbreak ballads associated with Vida Pavlović, a Serbian singer known as “the Queen of Roma Music.” (Macedonian singer Esma Redžepova, a contemporary of Pavlović’s who also earned that epithet, is much more famous in the West.) A highlight of *Sudbina* is “E Laute Bašalen Taj Roven,” a jaunty tune whose rhythms suggest a waltz on a pitching ship deck and whose lyrics (by historian Milan Vasić) describe the torture and murder of Romani people in the Nazis’ Banjica concentration camp. Salina’s career so far is testament to an admirably restless aesthetic—she’s helped shine light on a repertoire whose true extent is mostly ignored even in traditional- and world-music circles. Stan has become a regular collaborator, and he’ll be accompanying Salina at the World Music Festival. **NOAH BERLATSKY**

Moldovan-born singer and guitarist **Ana Everling** moved to Chicago in 2010, and since joining the world music scene here in 2015, she’s grown into a mesmerizing artist. She adapts her clear, lucid voice deftly to multiple styles, singing jazz, fado, bossa nova, and various Eastern European genres with equal ease. In 2016 she collaborated with bassist Jerry Fuller and guitarist Jarvis Raymond on *Under Paris Skies*, a tribute to more than 100 years of music from France’s most iconic city. In 2018 she released *Soleira*, a duo album with guitarist Carolina Folmer that’s full of heartfelt renditions of works by Spanish and Latin American composers. She also does a dazzling Middle Eastern-inflected rendition



Lamiae Naki and Nat Hulskamp of Seffarine © COURTESY THE ARTIST



Rami Gabriel and Karim Nagi of the Arab Blues © COURTESY THE ARTIST



# World Music Festival Chicago



Eva Salina DEBORAH FEINGOLD



Ana Everling COURTESY THE ARTIST



Al Bilali Soudan COURTESY THE ARTIST



Tuvergen Band SUSIE INVERSO

of Duke Ellington's "Caravan."

Everling's latest release, from early August, is a collaboration with guitarist David Onderdonk called *The Music of Guinga*. It celebrates the work of underappreciated Brazilian composer and guitarist Guinga (aka Carlos Althier de Souza Lemos Escobar), who has collaborated with the likes of Sergio Mendes and Clara Nunes and had his songs recorded by Elis Regina, Chico Buarque, Cauby Peixoto, and many others. For decades, he also held down a day job as a dentist. Guinga has a light touch with his eloquent rhythms and melodies, and Everling and Onderdonk are a perfect duo to bring his compositions to elegant life.

Everling is also a member of Beats y Bateria, who play a World Music Festival show at Martyrs' on Saturday, October 1 (see above). **MONICA KENDRICK**

## THURSDAY6

**AL BILALI SOUDAN, TUVERGEN BAND** *This concert is part of the Old Town School of Folk Music's Ojald! series, supported by the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art. Thu 10/6, 7 PM (doors at 6 PM), the Promontory, 5311 S. Lake Park Ave. W., 21+*

Performers such as Tinariwen, Mdou Moctar, and Bombino have popularized and internationalized the Tuareg guitar sound of the West African Sahel, a fiery mix of desert blues and traditional Middle Eastern-tinged melodies and rhythms. Malian band **Al Bilali Soudan** stick closer to the music's acoustic roots than most of their peers, but they have as impressive a pedigree as anyone in the genre. Abellow Yattara, the 69-year-old group leader, learned to play from his father when he was seven and appeared on the early 1970s cassette recordings of Ali Farka Touré; one of his uncles was a member of Le Mali des Sables, who were included in the series of 1971 LPs that German label Bärenreiter-Musicaphon claimed as the first recorded anthology of Malian music. Abellow formed Al Bilali Soudan with his uncle Aboubacrine Yattara, and they're accompanied by their sons Mohamed ag Abellow and Ibrahim "Tchiale" ag Aboubacrine. The core of their sound is an instrument known in the Tamasheq language as the tehardent, a fretless three-string precursor to the banjo (better known in the West by its Bambara name, "ngoni"); for percussion they use the calabash, a hollowed half gourd.

Al Bilali Soudan's self-titled acoustic debut album (released in 2012 by Clermont Music) is mesmerizing and absolutely essential listening for anyone interested in Tuareg music—few recordings give you such a stark sense of the style's ancient origins, with its jagged rhythms, stabbing runs of notes, and chanted phrases. The band go electric on their 2020 album, *Tombouctou* (also on Clermont Music), but even with amplification they remain distinct from their more Western-leaning contemporaries. You can hear parallels with the deep blues of Son House or Charley Patton, but they seem more like

convergence than influence, and the hints of Hendrix or Van Halen in the psychedelic solos of Mdou Moctar are almost entirely absent. Rather than adapt to the electric sound, Al Bilali Soudan simply perform as they always do while plugged in. The result is soulful, loud, and gloriously raw. This is the band's first North American tour. **NOAH BERLATSKY**

By some counts, Mongolia's horses outnumber its humans, and the country enshrines its long history of equestrianism in its music. The cello-like morin khuur, whose two strings and bow are traditionally made with horsehair, is the most recognizable symbol of Mongolian musical culture. The neighboring Tuvan republic, now part of the Russian Federation, has its own analogue: the igil, similar to the morin khuur but occasionally made with goatskin, stretched over the face of the sound box banjo-style. Because of the figurative carvings that often adorn the instruments' scrolls, both are colloquially called horse-head fiddles.

You'll spot both instruments in **Tuvergen Band**, a Chicago-based trio that derives its name from the Mongolian word for "galloping." Tamir Hargana and Naizal Hargana (no relation) lived in Inner Mongolia before moving to the U.S. for university, and they bring some of the country's most distinctive sounds to Tuvergen, including a variety of folk lutes (the Tuvan doshpuluur, the western Mongolian tovshuur) and a style of overtone singing native to Inner Asia called khoomei, which allows vocalists to layer one or more additional notes atop the fundamental—it creates instantly recognizable combinations of buzzing, rumbling, and whistling tones. Tuvergen's take on Mongolian and Tuvan folk music frequently uses the ancient horseback rhythms of those styles, but it also roves as widely as their name implies, reflecting the band's self-description as "modern nomadic music." Much of Tuvergen's fusion twist comes via American percussionist and ethnomusicologist Brent Roman. He plays five continents' worth of instruments to evoke and augment the sounds of traditional Mongolian ensembles—including the Irish bodhrán (a frame drum, usually played by hand but here mounted on a kit), the Afro-Peruvian cajón (a box drum, which doubles as Roman's seat), and the Indigenous Australian didgeridoo, whose overtone-rich drone complements Tamir's khoomei singing. **HANNAH EDGAR**

## FRIDAY7

**SON ROMPE PERA, MALAFACHA, DJ KINKY P** *Fri 10/7, 9 PM (doors at 8 PM), Reggies Rock Club, 2105 S. State, 18+*

**Son Rompe Pera** are youthful, energetic, cosmopolitan, and muy chilango—very much of Mexico City. The five-piece band, founded by three brothers nicknamed Kacho, Kilos, and Mongo Gama, have built a driving, danceable sound around the marimba. The brothers learned the instrument from their



# World Music Festival Chicago



Son Rompe Pera MARC VAN DER AA



Malafacha COURTESY THE ARTIST



Kaleta & Super Yamba Band COURTESY THE ARTIST



Occidental Brothers Dance Band International COURTESY THE ARTIST

## continued from 13

late father, who made a living as a musician in Nautcalpan, on the outskirts of Mexico City. In their teen years, they left the marimba behind to play punk, rockabilly, and ska, and now that they've returned to it, their style carries the stamp of that musical journey—as well as a history of migrations upon migrations that can make your head spin. The marimba's long journey tells of the forced relocation of African people to the Americas, but its presence in Mexico City provides evidence of 20th-century arrivals from the country's rural south (especially Chiapas and Oaxaca, where marimba music is most established) who came to the burgeoning megalopolis in search of opportunity. Son Rompe Pera add to these associations a dizzying array of border-crossing sounds, including cumbia (likewise a well-traveled genre, and one of the band's most beloved), a cover of a ska classic, and a remake of

Lalo Guerrero's "Los Chucos Suaves," which recalls the comings and goings of the 1940s subcultural figure of the pachuco. The band's play with history coexists with street-savvy humor and a style that reflects Mexico City's love affair with rock, punk, and metal—at Chicago's Mole de Mayo festival earlier this year, the crowd even got a circle pit going for a couple of numbers. Son Rompe Pera's combination of irresistible intensity, impish iconoclasm, and deep musical roots ought to get your mind working, and it'll definitely keep your feet moving.

### KELLEY TATRO

Twenty-two years ago in Pilsen, two sets of brothers—Ezequiel and Alejandro Cruz and Ivan and Moises Bello—formed the Latin rock-ska cover band Pirámides. In 2003, having become popular doing that, they decided to add more musicians, start writing original music, and change their name to

### Malafacha.

Malafacha are now reaping the rewards of staying together for almost 20 years, though the band have had about that same number of musicians come and go around the Cruz and Bello brothers. "It's much easier now to put your music out there and get gigs, because there are so many festivals, so many venues, and so many more opportunities than we had when we began," says Moises Bello. "I believe it's because many who were involved since the beginning of the [Latin rock] scene in Chicago are still involved, but on a larger scale. For us to have seen these changes, from when there was nothing to now having options, it's been amazing."

Malafacha's exuberant sound combines ska, alternative rock, metal, and punk en español, and their lyrics protest injustices, especially those directed at immigrants. Their music draws out the youth of the community while continuing to appeal to listeners

who grew up with the band—at their vivacious performances, their original fans still turn out, while those fans' children are now the ones fueling the mosh pit. In 2014, Malafacha helped launch the Chicago Ska Collective to support bands from across the city and organize shows for touring bands.

In addition to the brothers—Moises and Ivan Bello on lead vocals and lead guitar, respectively, and Ezequiel and Alejandro Cruz on bass and drums—Malafacha now also includes keyboardist Carlos Gutierrez, guitarist Roberto Carlos Tovar, trumpeter Jesse Escobar, and saxophonists Angel Lorenz and Ramón Esparza. This fall, Malafacha plan to release a new album produced by two heavyweights in regional Mexican music: Kevin Villalpando (Alacranes Musical) and Armando Terrazas (Los Horóscopos de Durango). They've already put out the advance singles "Muy Temprano" and "Enterrados en la Historia." **SANDRA TREVIÑO**



# World Music Festival Chicago



Cha Wa PATRICK NIDDRIE



Héctor Guerra COURTESY THE ARTIST

## SATURDAY8

**KALETA & SUPER YAMBA BAND, OCCIDENTAL BROTHERS DANCE BAND INTERNATIONAL, DJ MWELWA** Sat 10/8, 10 PM (doors at 9 PM), Chop Shop, 2033 W. North, 21+

If it's true you can tell a musician's personality by their playing style, then Leon Ligan-Majek, aka **Kaleta**, is a man of contradictions. His fleet guitar picking feels almost introspective, weaving an intricate, subtle web of rhythm, but when he opens his mouth all hell breaks loose—his guttural holler demands your full attention. When Kaleta and his jaggedly

funky New York-based band, **Super Yamba**, recorded live at *Paste* magazine's New York studio in 2018, he caught the host off-guard with a loud grunt before she could even introduce the group.

Kaleta was born in Benin, and during his adolescence his family moved to Lagos, Nigeria, where Fela Kuti had just fused West African highlife with American soul and funk to create Afrobeat. Kaleta began performing in church in the late 70s, then spent a few years backing juju star King Sunny Adé before joining Fela's band Egypt 80, where he got his grits with a long stint in the 80s and 90s. Psychedelic rock was also a huge influence on him as a young man, and you can hear that too on his debut album with Super Yamba, 2019's *Mèdaho*, which

places him in the lineage of his powerful mentors. The band has since made appearances (sometimes virtual, for obvious reasons) at several important music festivals, and two songs from *Mèdaho* were licensed for Zoë Kravitz's 2020 Hulu series *High Fidelity*.

Because *Mèdaho* came out only a few months before the pandemic, leaving little opportunity for touring, Kaleta's live shows today are especially cathartic. He and Super Yamba have recently resumed playing in-person shows after a two-year absence, and they feel it acutely. Their music was urgent already, and with this extra drive it's ready to explode like a split atom. **JAMES PORTER**

Guitarist Nathaniel Braddock first convened the **Occidental Brothers Dance Band International** in 2005 as an instrumental four-piece with alto saxophonist Greg Ward; they played mostly covers, focusing on the vintage West African styles that Braddock had begun teaching at the Old Town School of Folk Music. As the combo added members, their repertoire shifted. Their self-titled debut CD, released in 2006, consisted of sparse instrumental showcases for sweet reed melodies and lilting guitar picking, but its successor, *Odo Sanbra*, consisted mainly of high-energy dance tunes from Ghana that showcased the extroverted vocals of Kofi Cromwell, who was aboard from 2006 till '08. By the time Congolese singer Samba Mapangala began his stint with the group in 2009, they were playing mostly originals. The Occidental Brothers' performance schedule has waxed and waned over the years as musicians have moved in and out of town; Braddock relocated to Australia for a couple years in 2014 and currently lives in Cambridge, and Ward was based in New York for six years before returning to Chicago in 2015. But it has nonetheless persisted, taking on a series of collaborative endeavors, not just with Mapangala but also with Zambian vocalist Mathew Tembo and Brooklyn-based choreographer Edisa Weeks. Sometimes the band still get back to their instrumental roots, and that's how they'll appear for their first Chicago gig since February 2020. Besides Ward and Braddock, the Occidental Brothers Dance Band International will include longtime bassist Joshua Ramos and returning drummer Daniel "Rambo" Asamoah, formerly Cromwell's bandmate in Ghanaian highlife group the Western Diamonds; he played on *Odo Sanbra*, and he's filling in here for regular drummer Greg Artry. **BILL MEYER**

## SUNDAY9

**CHA WA, HÉCTOR GUERRA** Sun 10/9, 3 PM, Lake Stage, Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand, all ages

With the Neville Brothers and the original Meters both long out of commission, the group now carrying the torch of New Orleans street music are **Cha Wa**. They named their 2016 debut album *Funk 'n'*

*Feathers*, and its sound combines the call-and-response chants of Mardi Gras Indians, wild brass-band revelry, and raw New Orleans funk. Cha Wa pay homage to those three traditions, and they do the job well. Their 2021 release *My People* (Single Lock), the band's latest album, overflows with earthy grooves, rowdy group singing, syncopated second-line rhythms, smooth neosoul, and sophisticated horn arrangements. Many of their songs engage with social-justice concerns: the title track addresses homelessness, and a cover of Bob Dylan's "Masters of War" turns it into a mournful lament. But Cha Wa aren't just rehashing the spirit and glory of past New Orleans masters; both their feet are in the present. Touches of rapping and sampling and an appearance by New Orleans singer Anjelika "Jelly" Joseph (a touring member of Tank & the Bangas) give the songs a playful lift. The band's recordings can transport a walking parade into your living room, and their restless onstage energy and swagger will bring a crowd to its feet. But even a strictly cerebral listener will get something to think about from Cha Wa. **MARK GUARINO**

**Héctor Guerra's** mestizo fusion has a Pan-Latin shamanic cumbia vibe, flavored by his Bolivian Andean and Andalusian Spanish background as well as his time living in Mexico with Indigenous artists and healers. In 2000, while still a teenager, he cofounded Pachamama Crew, a collective inspired by Public Enemy but rooted in Latine style, whose music reflects the struggle of Latine immigrants in Spain. He began developing his own beats in 2003, and at 18 he toured as an opener for DJ Lord (a late-career member of Public Enemy). After Pachamama Crew's sole full-length album in 2011, he moved to Mexico and began a solo career with the 2012 release *Amor*. His compositions, originally centered on rap, have evolved with the addition of cumbia, tropical bass, and Mexican folkloric music, along with reggae and dancehall. During his time in Mexico, Guerra collaborated with rockers such as Café Tacvba's Rubén Albarrán and spent time with Indigenous people around the country, including the Comcaac in the northwestern state of Sonora. The pandemic shutdown brought about his latest album, 2021's *Perreo Cósmico*, an ode to sexual liberation created in collaboration with a transatlantic roster of producers and musicians; its danceable grooves fit solidly within the global bass movement, sliding among trap, Afrobeats, reggae, hip-hop, dancehall, and cumbia. ("Perreo," from the word for "dog," is a dance popularized in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, characterized by rhythmic grinding with one dance partner facing the back of the other.) Now living in Bolivia, Guerra continues on a globe-trotting musical path that more intentionally highlights the Andean flavors of his paternal heritage. His upcoming album, *Cumbiando el Mundo*, features Bolivian folk maestro Donato Espinoza, and on Spanish-language Bolivian podcast *Lo Que Dice un Jilguero*, Guerra described it as "cumbia for bettering the human experience."

**CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON**

# The Complete Schedule of World Music Festival Chicago

## FRIDAY<sup>30</sup>

**RAGAMALA: A CELEBRATION OF INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC** *This event continues into the morning of Saturday, October 1. 6 PM-8 AM, Preston Bradley Hall, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, third floor, all ages*

**6-7:15 PM PURBAYAN CHATTERJEE, RAKESH CHAURASIA, AND OJAS ADHIYA**

**7:45-9 PM ROOPA MAHADEVAN, SRUTI SARATHY, AND ROHAN KRISHNAMURTHY**

**9:30-10:45 PM ANUPAMA BHAGWAT AND AMIT KAYTHEKAR**

**11:15 PM-12:30 AM INDRAJIT BANERJEE, RUPAK KULKARNI, AND HINDOLE MAJUMDAR**

**1-2:15 AM SARASWATHI RANGANATHAN, SRUTI SARATHY, AND ROHAN KRISHNAMURTHY**

**2:45-4 AM SUHAIL YUSUF KHAN AND AMIT KAYTHEKAR**

**4:30-5:45 AM RAMAN KALYAN AND ROHAN KRISHNAMURTHY**

**6:15-7:30 AM MANIK KHAN AND HINDOLE MAJUMDAR**

## SATURDAY<sup>1</sup>

**GLOBAL PEACE PICNIC** *This mini festival features eight acts on two stages. 1-7:30 PM, Humboldt Park Boathouse, 1301 N. Sacramento, all ages*

**Global Stage, 1 PM TAMBURICA HAUS BEND**

**iSúbelo! Stage, 1:30 PM SONES DE MÉXICO ENSEMBLE**

**Global Stage, 2:30 PM SHANTA NURULLAH**

**iSúbelo! Stage, 3 PM AFRICARIBE**

**Global Stage, 4 PM NATTY NATION**

**iSúbelo! Stage, 4:30 PM LA DAME BLANCHE**

**Global Stage, 5:45 PM JINA BRASS BAND CHICAGO**

**iSúbelo! Stage, 6:15 PM BAZURTO ALL STARS**

**LA CHICA, BEATS Y BATERIA, DJ FANITA BANANA** *10 PM (doors at 9 PM), Martyrs', 3855 N. Lincoln, 21+*

## SUNDAY<sup>2</sup>

**PAOLO ANGELI, SURABHI ENSEMBLE** *5 PM, Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, 915 E. 60th, all ages*

## MONDAY<sup>3</sup>

**GILI YALO, JUAN PASTOR CHINCHANO** *7 PM (doors at 6 PM), Constellation, 3111 N. Western, 18+*

## TUESDAY<sup>4</sup>

**SEFFARINE, THE ARAB BLUES** *7 PM (doors at 6 PM), Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, 21+*

## WEDNESDAY<sup>5</sup>

**EVA SALINA, ANA EVERLING** *7 PM (doors at 6:30 PM), Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, 21+*

## THURSDAY<sup>6</sup>

**AL BILALI SOUDAN, TUVERGEN BAND** *7 PM (doors at 6 PM), the Promontory, 5311 S. Lake Park Ave. W., 21+*

## FRIDAY<sup>7</sup>

**SON ROMPE PERA, MALAFACHA, DJ KINKY P** *9 PM (doors at 8 PM), Reggies Rock Club, 2105 S. State, 18+*

## SATURDAY<sup>8</sup>

**KALETA & SUPER YAMBA BAND, OCCIDENTAL BROTHERS DANCE BAND INTERNATIONAL, DJ MWELWA** *10 PM (doors at 9 PM), Chop Shop, 2033 W. North, 21+*

## SUNDAY<sup>9</sup>

**CHA WA, HÉCTOR GUERRA** *3 PM, Lake Stage, Navy Pier, 600 E. Grand, all ages* 