



A F R O C U B A N R O O T S

Fusing Afro-Cuban roots with jazz, folk and global rhythms in songs about immigration, resistance and love, OKAN takes their name from the word for heart in their Afro-Cuban religion of Santeria. With vocals in Spanish, English and Spanglish, OKAN is led by the Cuban-born violinist and vocalist Elizabeth Rodriguez and percussionist and vocalist Magdelys Savigne, both Grammy and Latin-Grammy nominees.



Having recently worked with Bomba Estereo, Lido Pimienta, and Dayme Arocena, OKAN's

Juno-winning sophomore release *Espiral* debuted in first place on Canada's *!Earshot* charts and was included in NPR's top 10 Alt Latino and CBC Music's top 20 of that year.

Passionate advocates for freedom of expression, queer rights and gender equality, OKAN has gained a reputation for their powerful live performances, which showcase their incredible harmonies, virtuosic musicianship, potent lyrics as well as an unfailing ability to connect with audiences on a deep emotional level.

Embracing genres that have not historically fostered women artists outside of the role of singer, OKAN co-leaders have faced many challenges. Magdelys talks about the obstacles she faced in pursuing percussion in her native Cuba and how "coming out as a percussionist" to her family was as big a deal as coming out as queer. Part of the next wave of Cuban women composers and multi-instrumentalists, Elizabeth and Magdelys bring a fresh perspective to Latin and world jazz fusion through their powerful harmonies, elevated musicianship and provocative but playful lyrical content.

Born in Havana, Cuba, Elizabeth Rodriguez is a classically trained violinist who served as concertmaster for Havana's Youth Orchestra. Magdelys Savigne hails from Santiago de Cuba and graduated with honors in orchestral percussion from Havana's University of the Arts.

Called "lush and vibrant, urgent but specific and deeply intentional" by CBC Music, OKAN's second album *Espiral* delved deeper into the group's rich Cuban roots, finding renewed inspiration in this powerful musical heritage. The Santeria influences are most evident in the title

track, which uniquely blends guajira, the folk genre of Eastern Cuba, with Santeria-derived chants.

A new album, *Okantomi*, to be released in the fall of 2023, includes special guests as classical violinist Lara St. John, leading figures in Cuban jazz, Dayme Arocena and Elmer Ferrer as well as the legendary Afro-Cuban percussionist Amado Dedeu.

Official showcases at SXSW, Folk Alliance International, Mundial Montreal, Contact East, Folk Music Ontario, Pacific Contact, Ontario Contact and Global Toronto have led to invitations to perform across Canada and the U.S. with stops at The Kortright Centre (Vancouver), The Grand (Calgary), Hermann's (Victoria), Passim (Boston), Old Town School of Folk (Chicago), Cal Performances (Berkeley), as well as the Blue Skies, Mariposa, Toronto Jazz, Exit Next, Nuit D'Afrique, Harrison and Middlebury festivals, to name just a few.

