

Clarice Presents
OKAN



Thursday, February 20, 2025 • 8PM

KOGOD THEATRE

AT THE CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND

Clarice Presents

OKAN

Program selections to be announced from stage. Selections may include:

Sombras
Espiral
1000 Palabras
Oriki Oshun
A Solas Contigo
Okantomi
Mercedes
La Reina De Norte
Kumba

This performance is supported in part by the Maryland State Arts Council, The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation and FACTOR Canada.



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THE FOUNDATION ASSISTING CANADIAN TALENT ON RECORDINGS
 WITH SUPPORT FROM CANADA'S PRIVATE RADIO BROADCASTERS



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TO THE CLARICE TODAY!**

OKAN

Charged with the profound power of their Afro-Cuban ancestry, OKAN alchemizes Lacumi chants and rhythms from their Santeria religious practice with virtuosic jazz and classical performances and indie-pop hooks.

Exploring themes of immigration, justice and love, OKAN takes its name from the word for “heart” in Santeria. With vocals in Spanish, Yoruba 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 performed and recorded with Bomba Estereo, Lido Pimienta, Symphony Nova Scotia, Hilario Duran and Dayme Arocena, OKAN’s 2023 release *Okantomi* was awarded the Juno for Best Global Music Album, earning mentions in NPR Alt Latino, Le Monde, and CBC Music’s “Best of 2023” lists and garnering critical praise from Songlines UK, Billboard, Pop Matters and JAZZIZ. The album also charted on the Transglobal Music and WMEC charts, reaching number one on iEarshot international and NACC Latin charts as well top rank on at least 8 North American community stations.

Building on their Juno-winning sophomore *Espiral* (2020) and the Juno-nominated debut *Sombras* (2019), *Okantomi*, passionately advocates for freedom of expression, queer rights and gender equality through what CBC Music calls “joy as a form of resistance.”

Magdelys and Elizabeth’s mesmerizing harmonies, virtuosic musicianship and potent lyrics, as well as an unfailing ability to connect with audiences on a deep emotional level, are earning the duo a dedicated audience worldwide.

Part of the next wave of Cuban women composers and multi-instrumentalists who embrace 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 significant as revealing her sexual orientation in a culture that was very homophobic.

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.

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 Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, Winter Jazzfest in NYC and Cal Performances in Berkeley, CA, as well as The Calgary, Canmore and Mission Folk Festivals. Recent highlights include opening for Snarky Puppy at the Toronto Jazz Festival, and featured performances at Montreal, Rochester and Atlanta Jazz Festivals.

ENGAGEMENT ON CAMPUS AND IN THE COMMUNITY

The OKAN artists were very generous with their time this week. Yesterday, they performed for a group of 800 K-12 students from Prince George’s County in the morning and then for 300 University of Maryland students enrolled in ethnomusicology courses. On Saturday, they will be hosting an interactive workshop for families at the North Brentwood Community Center as part of the center’s Black History Month festivities. The event is free and open to the public! Learn more: GO.UMD.EDU/OKAN_BHM

CLARICE PRESENTS
24/25 SEASON

at The Clarice Smith
Performing Arts Center

Tickets Now On Sale!

MOONLIGHT BENJAMIN

Thursday, March 27 • 8PM



A mix of Caribbean folk, garage rock, the grit of
Desert blues and 70s arena anthem hits.