



Summergarden

MILTON CARDONA

SUMMERTIME, The Museum of Modern Art's series of free evenings in the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, continues on August 2 with a performance by the Eya Aranla (Drums and Chants) Ensemble, a group of three percussionists and fifteen vocalists led by Santería priest Milton Cardona. Made possible by a grant from Mobil, the series' sponsor for nine seasons in the seventies, SUMMERTIME takes place each Friday and Saturday night in July and August from 6 to 10 p.m. Every Friday at 8 p.m. short informal presentations of music, dance, or performance art are presented.

The Eya Aranla Ensemble will perform the central ceremony to the Santería religion, called the benbe, which originated among the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The Gods (Orishas) of Santería are believed to represent various aspects of nature. Chorus leader Milton Cardona, who has been described by The New York Times as a "virtuoso Latin percussionist," says that the ceremony is intended "to facilitate communication between the Orishas and the devotees."

An essential element of the ceremony is the Oru del Eya Aranla, a series of chants for each Orisha by a lead singer (akpwon) and chorus (ankori) in a call and response pattern with three batas (double-headed hourglass-shaped drums of varying sizes) playing corresponding rhythms.

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**Friday and Saturday evenings in the Sculpture Garden of
The Museum of Modern Art are made possible by a grant from Mobil**

This series of chants is believed to reunite the worshipers with their guiding Orishas.

The musical style and rhythms of the benbe have influenced Latin American, particularly Cuban, music, as well as American blues and gospel music. Passed on orally for generations, the religious ritual was brought to the Americas by the slave trade. Because of oppression by their Christian captors, the Yorubans were forced to worship secretly and to shroud their Gods with Catholic icons. This disguising of the religion and its customs, combined with the occasional religious celebrations which were permitted by the slave owners, enabled the ceremony to survive.

The Santería religion remained underground in Cuba until 1936 and was first introduced in the United States in New York City in 1962. Due to the recent increase in Cuban immigration, Santería has developed a following among New York-based Cubans as well as other Latino groups and black and white North Americans. Cardona, who is considered a spiritual guide and leader in the Santería community, said, "Our religion is not an exclusive one, nor is it about separation or segregation; we are all God's children." Despite its growing acceptance, Santería remains a little known, seldom-heard musical tradition, since the benbe typically is performed in private homes. The performance at SUMMERTIME offers the public an opportunity to witness the ceremony in its purest form.

Cardona has performed with a wide range of contemporary performing artists including Laurie Anderson, Jack Bruce, Willie Colon, Celia Cruz, El Grupo Folklórico y Experimental Nuevayorquino, Kip Hanrahan, The Jazz Composers Orchestra, Grace Jones, Hector Lavoe, Taj Mahal, Eddie Palmieri, and Harold Wheeler. He has also contributed to many film soundtracks.

On August 2 at SUMMERTIME, Cardona, the Akpwon, will lead the chorus in invoking the Orishas. Hector "Flaco" Hernandez will play the Bata-Iya

193

(the largest of the batas); Steve Berrios, the Bata-Itotele (the middle-sized drum); and Jose Fernandez, the Bata-Okonkolo (the smallest drum). Members of the Ankori (chorus) are Teddy Holiday on Atchere (rattle), and Adetokunbo Owurowa, Yomi Awolowo, Carol Awolowo, Fela (Sandra) Wiles, Obadele Fan, Tima Fan, Neil Clarke, Basha Alperin, Amma Oforiawao Agyapon, Linda Evans, Nirvana Buckley, Denise (Ola) De Jean, Teresa Gomez, and Bess Taylor.

The music of Milton Cardona will be featured on a segment of the noon radio program "Around New York," hosted by Brooke Wentz on WNYC (FM 94), on Wednesday, July 31.

Admission to SUMMERTIME is free on a first-come, first-served basis. Entrance begins at 6 p.m. both Friday and Saturday evenings through the Garden Gate at 14 West 54 Street, between Fifth Avenue and The Avenue of the Americas. In the event of rain, Friday night performances are held the following evening (Saturday) at 8 p.m. Refreshments are available at the Garden Cafe. For visitor information, call 212/708-9880.

SUMMERTIME project director is Andrew B. Caploe; associate project director is Peter S. Pretsfelder.

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Coming to SUMMERTIME:

- August 9 Pooh Kaye's The Eccentric Motions; New York premieres of dances choreographed to music by John Zorn and friends
- August 16 An evening with clown Bob Berky and friends
- August 23 Linda Mussmann's Time and Space Limited: A sound and movement work created especially for the Sculpture Garden
- August 30 The Art Ensemble of Chicago: A performance in celebration of the group's twenty years together (the sole amplified event of the series)

No. 59

For press information contact the SUMMERTIME office at 212/708-9850, or the Department of Public Information at 212/708-9750.