

Cyro Baptista

Brazilian performer and bandleader Cyro Baptista has emerged as one of the premier percussionists on the planet, bringing his unique charm and undeniable rhythmic drive to countless stages, performing on numerous Grammy Award-winning recordings, and collaborating with myriad luminaries such as Paul Simon, Herbie Hancock, John Zorn, Laurie Anderson, Yo-Yo Ma, Caetano Veloso, and many others. Described by Thom Jurek of *All Music* as “simply one of the most limitless musicians we have,” Baptista’s many honors include DownBeat Critics Poll Percussionist of the Year in 2013 and 2011, Jazz Journalists Association Percussionist of the Year in 2010 and 2007, Drum Magazine Percussionist of the Year in 2004 and 2003, and US Artists Walker Fellow in 2009/10.

Recent seasons have seen Baptista performing with Zorn’s Masada Marathon, the Nels Cline Singers, Wynton Marsalis, Luciana Souza, Phish lead-singer Trey Anastasio, and many others. In August 2014, Baptista joined Cassandra Wilson for a special concert at Lincoln Center Out of Doors celebrating the 20th anniversary of Wilson’s acclaimed *Blue Light ‘til Dawn* album, on which Baptista played. In September 2013, he joined Yo-Yo Ma and the New York Philharmonic at Lincoln Center’s Avery Fisher Hall for NY Phil’s Opening Gala concert, later aired on PBS’ *Live from Lincoln Center*. Earlier that year, Baptista joined an all-star cast including Jim James (My Morning Jacket), John Oates (Hall & Oates), Larry Graham (Sly and the Family Stone), Zigaboo Modeliste (The Meters) and the Preservation Hall Jazz Band for the Bonnaroo Superjam 2013.

Baptista’s inimitable world music quartet, Banquet of the Spirits, embodies the Brazilian philosophy of anthropofagia, or cultural cannibalism. Described by *All About Jazz* as “a must-listen,” and “a diversity of sounds and colors that can’t be found anywhere else,” the group draws freely from an expansive array of musics from around the globe, combining Afro-Brazilian beats with improvised, experimental jazz trappings. Banquet of the Spirits has performed internationally at such venues as the Newport Jazz Fest, the Andy Warhol Museum, the Village Vanguard, the Wexner Center, Town Hall NYC, SFJAZZ, Salle Pleyel in Paris, the Bimhuis in Amsterdam, SESC Pompeia in São Paulo, the Adelaide Festival in Australia and many more. The group has released three albums on Tzadik, each hailed by critics for their infectious grooves and sheer elemental beauty, most recently receiving a five out of five star rating from *All About Jazz*. In 2012, they recorded Zorn’s *Mount Analogue*, along with vibraphonist Kenny Wollesen, producing an album which was declared by *All Music* “one of [Zorn’s] greatest achievements.”

Baptista’s critically acclaimed, seven-plus-member ensemble, Beat the Donkey, or “Pau Na Mula” (Brazilian slang meaning “Let’s go!” or “Let’s do it!”), performs with the wild, joyous energy of a carnival drum line, fusing music, dance, humor and madcap theatrics into unforgettable events. The project has toured to major venues and festivals including Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Grand Performances in Los Angeles, Detroit International Jazz Fest, Quebec City Summer Fest, the Chicago World Music Fest, the International Festival of Arts and Ideas, the Krannert Center, the Hancher Auditorium, the Walker Art Center, George Washington University, Central Park Summerstage, FloydFest in Virginia, and 92nd Street Y. Beat the Donkey’s self-titled release was selected by *The New York Times*’ Jon Pareles as one of the top ten alternative albums of the year, and by *The Wire* as a top ten Global Music album of the year.

Baptista has performed on hundreds of recordings, composed music for Nickelodeon, and appeared in major motion pictures, including 2008’s “Rachael’s Getting Married” and 2007’s “Across the Universe.” He has performed as guest artist with many major orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and others. As an educator, he has conducted workshops and master classes at The Juilliard School, Berklee College of Music, Mannes College of Music, The New School, New World Symphony Orchestra, Kimmel Center Jazz Camp, and many others.