

Samba Elégua

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Samba Elégua is a Toronto-based percussion group inspired by the samba school tradition of Rio de Janeiro. At an Elégua show, up to 30 musicians deliver explosive, driving, layered rhythms that compel audiences to stand up and dance. The sound and spectacle of synchronized samba drummers moves people of all ages and musical tastes.

For almost a decade, Samba Elégua has performed for music festivals, community events, parades, black-tie fundraisers, underground parties, television programs, weddings, as well as headlining shows at Toronto venues.

Elégua is also a non-profit, volunteer-run musical community, powered by the passion of its members. It is free to join and open to all, from novices to experienced players. The band supports a range of community-building, social justice and activist causes in the Toronto area.

Elégua plays traditional rhythms on Brazilian samba instruments like the surdo, caixa, repenique, tamborim and agogo bells. On top of that, the group mixes in the high-energy musical styles heard around us in our home city of Toronto, like reggae, funk and hip hop.

The band's musical directors are Itay Keshet, Jon Medow and Jonathan Rothman. **Itay** got his start in samba with the Toronto Samba School and later went on to perform at Rio's legendary Carnival. **Jon** plays with Toronto's master sambistas Batucada Carioca. **Jonathan** also plays with Batucada Carioca and with Brazilian percussion group Maracatu Nunca Antes, and has studied samba music in Brazil.

From the members of Samba Elégua:

“Our community has thrown down hundreds of times, and in the process committed thousands of bodies to the groove of our rhythms. We led the first ever Reclaim the Streets parade from Kensington Market and helped launch Pedestrian Sundays, giving voice to a community that is changing the face of the city.

Every year we mark the beginning and end of summer at the legendary Cherry Beach parties, where frenzied dancers envelop the crowds in clouds of dust. We've played in support of causes and organizations whose beliefs we share; our music has helped community activists draw attention to important issues ranging from the environment and health care to poverty and peace.

We have collaborated with musicians of all kinds: bagpipers, DJs, harmonica players, rappers, saxophonists and punk bands. We have always been inclusive, community-oriented and as diverse as the city we represent. We are an example to all that it is possible to do amazing things with nothing but a dream and chutzpah.”