

Janka Nabay and the Bubu Gang

Ancient rhythm, good vibes bash



NORTH ADAMS, MASSACHUSETTS — Claiming the holy trinity of Bob Marley, Michael Jackson, and God as his primary inspirations, Sierra Leonean singer **Janka Nabay** has almost single-handedly revived the ancient tradition of Bubu, updating a form with 500-year-old roots in magic-infused folk ceremony into frenetic, hypnotic dance music with flourishes of electronica. Nabay, a recent pick-up by David Byrne's record label, brings the fun to MASS MoCA on **Saturday, March 11, at 8pm** — seating is limited, but there's lots of room to get groovy.

Bubu music, an ancient Sierra Leonean call-and-response style of folk music influenced by the 18th-century regional introduction of Islam, was all but forgotten before Nabay brought it back to life in the

mid-'90s. A native of Sierra Leone, Nabay enjoyed widespread popularity with his Bubu music that incorporated traditional bamboo flutes and metal pipes with electronic instrumentation in the first instances of recorded Bubu music. When civil war broke out in Sierra Leone, Nabay used his music to speak out against the spiraling violence, but when it was co-opted by rebels during their campaigns of destruction through rural villages, Nabay left his homeland behind and sought refuge in the United States.

After an embattled musical stint in Washington D.C., Nabay took to local stages throughout New York City, inspiring an eclectic group of musicians to fall in love with his frenetic style of Bubu-infused dance music. "We speak one language now," Nabay says of collaborating with stars of the Brooklyn indie-rock scene who make up the Bubu Gang. A full band, comprised of members of stalwart New York bands Chairlift, Skeletons, Highlife, and Saadi, grew out of his spreading popularity.

In 2012, the band signed to Byrne's label Luaka Bop, releasing *En Yah Say* that year. The label has just announced a new album in 2017, *Build Music*, that is more studio focused, further bringing electronic and modern influences to the fore. Since Janka Nabay and the Bubu Gang's first performances in 2010, the group has been infusing polyrhythmic folk tunes with high-octane psychedelia in shows characterized as "...the beat, fast and skeletal and driven by bell taps, was unstoppable, demanding wider dissemination" (*The New York Times*). While Nabay has evolved into a bandleader and MC in the tradition of James Brown and Fela Kuti, his poly-cultural sound draws as much from Nabay's traditional Bubu as it does from the sunny energy of Ghanaian highlife, the extended improvisations of '70s Miles Davis, the hypnotic rhythms of classic Afro-beat, and the swirling shredding guitars of '60s and '70s psychedelia.

Join us for good vibes and a night of dancing with **Janka Nabay and the Bubu Gang** on Saturday, March 11, at 8pm. Lickety Split, MASS MoCA's café, serves up crisp salads, hearty soups, and lip-smacking pub fare before the seated theater show. A full bar serves Bright Ideas Brewing beers and Berkshire Mountain Distillery spirits throughout the performance. Tickets are \$10 for students, \$16 advance, \$22 day of, and \$28 preferred. Tickets for all events are available through the MASS MoCA box office located on Marshall Street in North Adams, open 11am to 5pm every day except Tuesdays. Tickets can also be charged by phone by calling 413.662.2111 during box office hours or purchased online at massmoca.org.

Images

High-resolution images of MASS MoCA's winter/spring 2017 events are available through this link: bit.ly/MMWinterSpring2017.

About MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest (and largest) centers for making, displaying, and enjoying today's most important art, music, dance, theater, film, and video. MASS MoCA will nearly double its gallery space in spring 2017, with artist partnerships that include Laurie Anderson, the Louise Bourgeois Trust, Jenny Holzer, the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, and James Turrell.

Gallery admission is \$18 for adults, \$16 for veterans and seniors, \$12 for students, \$8 for children 6 to 16, and free for children 5 and under, through May 21, 2017. Members are admitted free year-round. The Hall Art Foundation's Anselm Kiefer exhibition is open seasonally, spring–fall. For additional information, call 413.662.2111 x1 or visit massmoca.org.

Hours

11am to 5pm, closed Tuesdays