

THE BEAT AND THE PULSE

SANDY SILVA: BODY PERCUSSIONIST/DANCER

BY MELODY BERGER & DANIELA MUHLING

Montreal-based percussive dancer Sandy Silva draws upon dance and music traditions from all over the world when she throws down the beat. She got her start in traditional American old time country and folk genres where there aren't usually any drums at all. The rhythmic drive comes from the acoustic instruments themselves and people playing "the feet". She has since traveled the world studying percussive dance of many cultures and incorporating the diverse traditions she encounters into her own personal rhythmic vocabulary. Drawing upon influences as diverse as Hungarian czardas, Spanish flamenco, gigue Québécoise (French Canadian step dancing) as well as the African-American and Appalachian dance traditions she began with, Silva has developed her own highly expressive style. Her moves are intense and involve full on body percussion. She not only uses her feet to pound out a rhythm but keeps her hands flying all over her torso and legs as well - becoming a veritable percussive whirlwind. In performance she doesn't see herself as a dancer moving to musical accompaniment, but a member of the band making sounds to accompany and enhance the music she moves to.



Originally an anthropology major, she discovered her calling while studying traditional American folk culture. In her words "After landing at a festival and witnessing a session of buck-dancing and guitar playing, step-dancing and fiddling, I was hooked. I traveled to the sources where music takes place as an integral part of the culture, in kitchens or on the porch with family, friends and visitors. I felt welcomed in these communities as they knew I was so enthusiastic about their traditions. The goal for me now as an educator is to connect people to their bodies through rhythm, movement, music and listening to each other and how the traditional sources come into play."

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