

# Cultural divide confronted through music

## Dance troupe bring sounds of Caribbean to Zorn Arena

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Zorn Arena will come alive tonight with Caribbean percussion and vocal music in ¡Retumba!, the year's first event in the Artists Series.

"I'm excited. I think it's going to be really interesting; I've never really seen anything like this before," said freshman Kristin Borski, who began dancing at a young age and has also studied Spanish for the past five years. "I definitely appreciate this kind of art."

¡Retumba!, which is Spanish for "resound," is an all-female music and dance troupe based in New York City, whose dancers claim various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds.

Six of the 14 members will perform at 7:30 p.m. at Zorn Arena tonight to "celebrate the beauty of Caribbean music and dance," said Yvette Martinez, a ¡Retumba! co-founder, choreographer and dancer.

Though ¡Retumba! performs various types of world folk music, today's show will focus on Caribbean culture, and will open with an African piece to demonstrate the roots of Caribbean music.

"That's part of why I'm looking forward to seeing it," said freshman Oakley Moser, who enjoys listening to Caribbean music. "I hope this will be enjoyable also. I'm not exposed to (Caribbean music) much in Wisconsin."

Borski and Moser will be attending the performance with their Spanish professor Eva Santos-Phillips, who is also the Latin American Studies Coordinator. Santos-Phillips is bringing two sections of her first-year-experience Spanish 202 language classes to ¡Retumba! this evening. She said she plans to discuss the performance with her students in tomorrow's class.



¡Retumba!, an all-female, multi-ethnic music and dance troupe from New York City, will be performing Caribbean music at 7 p.m. tonight in Zorn Arena, as the first event in this year's Artists Series. ¡Retumba! is a highly entertaining and culturally educational performance, said co-founder Yvette Martinez, who is pictured above at left, with co-founder Nancy Friedman.

"School isn't just going to class, but learning through activities like the Artists and Forum Series," Santos-Phillips said, adding ¡Retumba! extends the experience of Hispanic culture her students are learning.

The show is both highly entertaining and educational, Martinez said, and includes various opportunities for audience interaction. She said the ensemble will teach the audience a few of their songs, and will also invite audience members to dance with them on stage. ¡Retumba! encourages singing, dancing and clapping along during the performance, she said.

The Caribbean's 30 members include the Latin American nations of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, as well as the shores of eastern Mexico, northern Colombia and Venezuela.

"I think that people and students may have preconceived notions of the Caribbean," said senior Betsy Lorenz, Santos-Phillips' student mentor and a Latin American Studies major. "Bringing in a cultural group like this shows how people from the Caribbean actually define themselves."

Martinez said the group's goal is to demonstrate both the similarities and unique qualities among world cultures through music and dance.

"The similarities are way more than we realize," she said. "We're one world, one human race. All of us can make a better world by sharing our music and dance, and respecting (each other). In terms of learning and understanding different cultures, it breaks down the barriers of fear."

Santos-Phillips said it is important to learn about all cultures, but she is especially interested in attending ¡Retumba! since it teaches both African and Hispanic music and culture, and also demonstrates women's strength in leadership roles.

"We live in a very small world and to be able to communicate and understand (others) we need to know how they tick, what makes them happy," Santos-Phillips said. "The more we know about each other, there are less opportunities to misunderstand each other. I think that brings a lot of discord when we (misunderstand) and are afraid of each other."

The ensemble is also unique in the sense that the women play percussion instruments, an idea that has slowly been gaining acceptance in countries such as Cuba, Martinez said. ¡Retumba! first performed in 1981 for a Women's History Day event and organized as a company after overwhelming requests for additional performances.

Santos-Phillips said she feels the members of ¡Retumba! will act as positive role models for the 90 percent of her students who are female, especially since most of the cultural music groups that have visited the university in the past were male-dominated.

"It's enlightening ... to see women in a different light," Martinez said. "It's also empowering (for men) to encourage women - their partners or daughters."