An antidote for the winter blahs is close at hand, with multiple opportunities this quarter for the UW and greater Seattle community to experience the exhilarating Afro-Puerto Rican music and dance form known as bomba.

Amarilys Ríos, the School of Music’s Community Artist-in-Residence for
winter quarter, plans a robust schedule of appearances, workshops, and performances both on and off campus during her residency with the UW Ethnomusicology Program during Winter Quarter 2019.

A percussionist, singer, and dancer who studied percussion formally at the Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico, Ríos's education in bomba has come mainly from drummers and dancers outside of the academy, and she is quick to credit her “bomba professors”—San Juan-based percussionist Victor "Vitito" Emmanuell and dancer Margarita "Tata" Cepeda foremost among them—for their guidance and inspiration. Along with performing and recording with world-class Latin percussionists (including Paoli Mejias, who currently tours with recording star Carlos Santana), she leads an all-female band called Emina, serves as musical director for Tego Calderón—one of Puerto Rico's most important reggaetón artists—and teaches classes at Taller Tambuyé, a dance school in San Juan, Puerto Rico directed by dancer Marién Torres.

But what, exactly, is bomba? UW Ethnomusicology professor Shannon Dudley explains that it's an Afro-Puerto Rican music and dance tradition in which dancers challenge the drummer to sound out their improvised movements. “The dancer creates rhythmic phrases that the lead drummer marks sonically,” he elaborates, “creating an improvised play between sound and movement, accompanied by call-and-response singing and supporting percussion.”

Students in Ríos's UW class this quarter meet twice per week for an ensemble class to practice techniques as well as taking a weekly private lesson in drumming. Students may opt to focus on drumming, dance, or singing and will participate in a final performance with Ríos and special guests on March 14 at the School of Music, as well as attending community workshops and classes throughout the quarter.

Ríos's residency at the UW is through the Ethnomusicology Visiting Artist Program, which since the early 1960s has brought top musicians from around the world to teach and perform at UW. “These visiting artists have always helped the Ethnomusicology Program to connect to local communities,” Dudley says, “but in the last decade we have worked more intentionally to designate certain visiting artists as Community Artists in Residence, collaborating with other departments and with artists and arts organizations off campus.” In addition to her UW class, Ríos leads and participates in a range of community and UW activities related to her residency both on and off campus including:

Union Cultural Center and Latino Arts Scene
Ríos leads weekly bomba workshops at the Union Cultural Center in Seattle's International District, which is run by Brazilian capoeira master Silvio dos Reis and his wife, Leika Suzumura. “There is a local community of people who practice bomba who will participate in these workshops,” Dudley says, “and we hope to attract some new people as well. In general, we hope to tap into a dynamic Latino arts community in Seattle, including people involved in Movimiento Afrolation de Seattle (MAS) and the Seattle Fandango Project.” Workshops and events that Rios leads in the community also provide UW students (both those enrolled in Ríos' own class and in Professor Dudley's "Music and Community" class) the opportunity to experience bomba in a more dynamic context outside the classroom.

Interdisciplinary Collaborations
In addition to her work in the local community, Ríos will be involved in collaborations with several UW departments and programs. Ríos is featured in a February 23rd Women in Percussion event alongside percussionists from diverse disciplinary and artistic backgrounds: School of Music Assistant Professor Bonnie Whiting; Latin American and Caribbean Studies assistant director Monica Rojas; Gender Women and Sexuality Studies graduate student Iris Viveros; and UW alumna and Pacific Lutheran University percussion instructor Miho Takekawa. The UW's Latin American and Caribbean Studies program is funding travel for a guest artist to participate in Ríos's March 14 Visiting Artist concert and a March 15th bombazo(a community bomba celebration) at Union Cultural Center. Ríos also is scheduled to direct a bomba workshop for students of Dance Professor Juliet McMains and will participate as a featured artist in the Women Who Rock event March 16 at Seattle's Centro de la Raza, coordinated by GWSS Professor Michelle Habell-Pallán and American Ethnic Studies Professor Sonnet Retman.

“The Community Artist in Residence program creates bridges between campus and community, and is also a sort of force multiplier for us to teach about music,” Dudley says. “Amarilys Ríos's diverse experience enables her not only to provide inspiring and expert instruction, but also to connect her students and our program with local artists and groups in ways that lead to lasting and productive relationships.”

EVENTS
First Saturdays at Pam’s Kitchen
Feb. 2, 2019
March 2, 2019
Amarilys Ríos joins Dingolay—Shannon Dudley and Obe Quarless on steel pan, Marisol Berrios-Miranda on keyboard, and Ricardo Guity on drums—for live Carribean music at Pam’s Kitchen, a restaurant in Seattle’s Wallingford neighborhood.
Pam's Kitchen, 1715 N 45th St, Seattle, 7 to 9:30 p.m., No cover. Details here.

Bomba Workshops at Union Cultural Center
Sundays January 20-March 10, 2019
Amarilys Ríos leads community bomba workshops at Seattle's Union Cultural Center on Sundays from January 20 through March 10, 2019, noon to 1:30 pm. Workshops are open to the public on a suggested donation basis.
Union Cultural Center, 803 S. King St., Seattle, WA 98104. Cost: Suggested donation of $5 $10 helps to pay UCC and supporting drummers. More info here and here.

Women in Percussion Event
Sat. Feb. 23, 2019
This event will feature performances and conversations with five female artists who represent diverse experiences and traditions. They will discuss the challenges and opportunities that have faced them as women in their respective art forms, and the way they engage with communities on and off campus through music. The afternoon's activities will also include a performance by the UW Steelband, a bomba workshop with Amarilys Ríos, and refreshments. Free and open to the public.
University of Washington, Meany Room 268, 2 to 5 pm. Free and open to the public. Details here.

Women Who Rock
Saturday, March 16, 2019
Amarilys Ríos participates in a workshop and discussion with campus and community participants in this conference hosted by the UW's Department of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies.
Centilia Cultural Center, 1660 S Roberto Maestas Festival St, Seattle, WA, 98144. Details here.

Ethnomusicology Visiting Artist Concert
March 14, 2019
Amarilys Ríos is joined by special guests and her UW students in this concert of Puerto Rican bomba music and dance.
University of Washington School of Music, Brechemin Auditorium, 7:30pm. Admission is free. Details here.

Community Bombazo
March 15, 2019
Amarilys Ríos participates in a community bombazo.
Union Cultural Center, 803 S. King St., Seattle, WA 98104. Details to be announced.

People Involved: Shannon Dudley Bonnie Whiting Marisol Berrios-Miranda
Related Areas of Study: Ethnomusicology Percussion
News Category: Community Impact Performances and Events Program Innovation Visiting Artists and Scholars

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