

# ARTIST PROFILE

## Afro Urbanity

Creative Electric Afro-Cuban Jazz Unit

The most distinctive feature of 'Afro Urbanity's sound is its foundation in traditional music that is derived from Cuban roots music.

Utilizing electronic instruments, this group explores a meticulously experimental arrangement that blends multiple genres uniquely, featuring distinctive and unique vocal work in Spanish and Yoruba.

Their original compositions, akin to instrumental pieces, showcase a unique Japanese delicacy.

Founded in 2017 by two core members, sound creator Michiko Abe, known for her work in numerous TV commercials, stage music, and jingles, and Nana Cantarina, a vocalist celebrated for her Afro-Cuban music performances and active as a singer-songwriter across various genres.

The other members who support both of them are all talented performers of respective generations, ranging from veterans to up-and-coming young talents in Japan's jazz-fusion and Latin-Cuban music scenes.



The group is known for its 360-degree immersive live performances, where the audience surrounds the musicians, offering a vibrant live experience rich in improvisation and strong grooves. This approach has been well-received by fans of not only Cuban-Latin music, but also those who love jazz, fusion, and Afro music alike.

After various experimental live shows, their fully prepared first album "Afro Urbanity" was released in September 2019. They are now expanding internationally, with releases in Japan and abroad simultaneously through Beige Records, based in France and Canada.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, they produced collaborative works with Afro-Cuban dancer YASUJI, shakuhachi player Kenji Endo, and globally renowned dancer and singer with roots in Nigeria, Jeffrey Daniel (Shalamar), releasing three singles and conducted recording and video streaming of performing live in studios and theaters without audiences.

They also engaged in live collaborations with the Latin fitness program "BAILA BAILA," Afro-Cuban drum units, horn sections, and string quartets. On October 22, 2022, they released their second album "Desde Tokio."

In 2023, they invited Mr. Balodia Rodriguez, former lead dancer of the Cuban National Folk Dance Troupe (Conjunto Folklórico Nacional de Cuba), to hold the second event in the ROOTS OF AU series, which experimented with the fusion of contemporary sound incorporating programming, among various other events.

Their recent activities, including having their music "DESDE TOKIO" featured on JAL's international flight JAZZ channel in January and February 2024, highlight their expanding possibilities and new ventures.

### Discography: Release Information

[Afro Urbanity] NSCD-1209 (CD released on September 22, 2019)

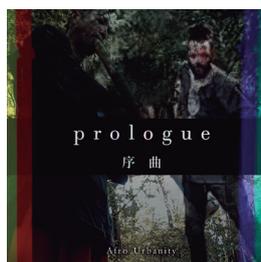
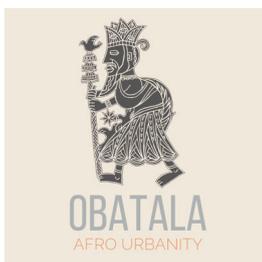
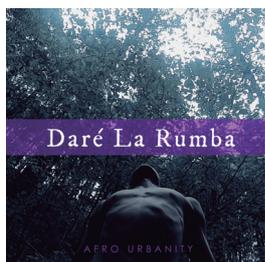
[Daré La Rumba] (released online on September 1, 2020)

[OBATALA] (released online on September 21, 2020)

[Prologue] (released online on November 11, 2020)

[Desde Tokio] NSCD-1215 (released online on October 22, 2022)

[Desde Tokio special edition] NSLP-2301 Vinyl (released on June 1, 2023)



[Official Japanese Website] [www.nsrecordsjapan.com/afro-urbanity](http://www.nsrecordsjapan.com/afro-urbanity)

[Official Overseas Website] <https://afroubanity.bandzoogle.com/home>





### Michiko Abe

Keyboard/Compose  
Arrangement/Programming

She is a sound creator involved in the production of TV soundtracks, commercials and stage music. Her musical style ranges from acoustic sounds to electronic music. In her twenties, she started out playing percussion, and in recent years, she has been leaning towards Afro-Cuban music, giving concerts and working on productions.



### Nana Cantarina

Vocal/Lyric/Compose  
Chorus Arrangement

She is a unique Latin singer-songwriter who sings Afro-Cuban music, a rarity in Japan. She has been invited to the Feria International "CUBADISCO" (Cuba) in the past and is a talented artist. She also has a talent for design and is active as a multi-creator, producing music, design and videos.



### Hiromichi Tsugaki

Keyboard

Leading keyboard player in Japan. Participated in the "Naoya Matsuoka Group", which played both in Japan and abroad. Until 1993, he was active in jazz festivals, tours and albums. His playing style ranges from orthodox to avant-garde. His synth sound is overwhelming.



### Tetsuo Koizumi

Bass

One of the few authentic salsa and Cuban music Latin bassists in Japan. He has played in various bands and live shows, including "Palma Habanera" and "SON Shiro". He is active not only in Cuban Latin music, but also in touring, sessions and recording, performing with various artists such as Lisa Ono, Bread and Butter, Dodeca Cordon and many others.



### Juasa Kanoh

Drums

He played extensively in L.A. and joined groups such as Shannon McNally, Dale Fielder, Rafael Moreira and Red Young. After returning to Japan in 2000, he began performing in Japan with the Takehisa Tanaka Trio. Since then, he has played with groups such as Pink Bongo, Getao Takahashi and Crystal Jazz Latino. Known for his creative drumming and solid technique, he is active in sessions, live performances and recordings in a variety of styles.



### Issei Yoshiba

Timbales

He studied in Cuba for two years under percussionist Changuito. After returning to Cuba, his playing style was not only limited to Latin music, but he also participated in STUDIO APARTMENTS and BlueMan Group, with his original sense of style in addition to the techniques he acquired in Cuba. Participates in live performances and recordings of Japanese pop artists such as "Def Tech" and "double"



### Kouta Seki

Bata Drum/Congas  
Small Percussions

After graduating from a music college in Japan, he studied in Cuba and Senegal, where he deepened his knowledge of roots music. He was the first foreigner to win the 2015 fiesta del tambor (cuba) in the batadrum category (solo performance). He is currently actively performing Afro-Cuban music and conducting workshops in Japan.



# ARCHIVE 01

Performances at Shibuya SARAVAH TOKYO



2018

2019



Performances at Shibuya SARAVAH TOKYO



Collaboration with Afro-Cuban dancers and AcroYoga



2020



Studio live at ON AIR OOKUBO STUDIO TOKYO

## SOUND AND IMAGE



◆ Studio Live Performance 2020 | Digist Movie

<https://youtu.be/KnruoJvYNk>

◆ Theater live performance 2021 | Digist Movie

<https://youtu.be/cU0MQ7p1fOM>

Collaboration with aerobic, Latin and street dance presenters at DDD Aoyama Cross Theater Tokyo

2021



Live performance at the DDD Aoyama Cross Theatre Tokyo

MoonRomantic Tokyo, Japan "ROOTS OF AFRO URBANITY"

Live performance at Shibuya JZ Brat with a string quartet as guests to celebrate the release of the album

2022

Electric Night at Mandara in Kichijoji, Tokyo





Session Live at Mandara, Minami-Aoyama, Tokyo

## El Callejon de MANDALA

GUEST MUSICIANS

IZPON (Perc/Programing/Vo) Madokoro Naoya (Perc)

Takaya Saito (Piano/Keyboard)



# 2023

## ROOTS OF AFRO URBANITY vol.2 ~dance to the music~

Guest Performers

Balodia Rodriguez (Dance) IZPON (Perc/Programing/Vo) Madokoro Naoya (Perc) Takaya Saito (Piano/Keyboard)  
Tomohisa Ishikawa (Trombone) Yuta Ishii (Saxophone) Hiroto Takase (Trumpet)

Digest Movie: <https://youtu.be/1sYyZoQTPDU?si=jvpgaWMEZD0v0lx>

