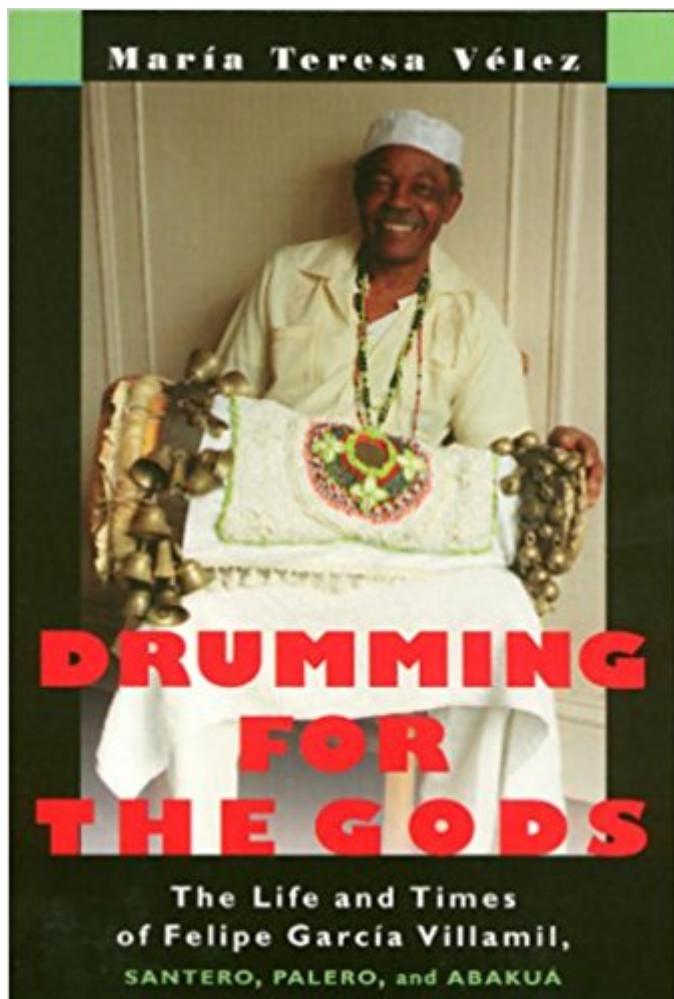


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Drumming For The Gods (Studies In Latin America & Car)



Synopsis

A history of Felipe Garcia Villamil, Afro-Cuban artist and practitioner of sacred drumming, whose music has survived both political and personal upheaval. Through his experiences, it examines the interaction between social, political, economic and cultural forces and the individual's actions.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[This book] documents the musical traditions of the Afro-Christian Santaria cults through the life history of one of Cuba's most esteemed practitioners of sacred drumming."-Institute for Studies in American Music Newsletter "Drumming for the Gods constitutes an impressive accomplishment and includes a great deal of previously unavailable information. It represents a significant contribution to existing literature on Cuban music and cultural history."-Robin Moore, Temple University "This is without a doubt the most comprehensive English language study of an individual Cuban religious drummer."-Steve Cornelius

The world through the eyes of a master religious drummer --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

If you consider yourself a serious drummer in the Afro-Cuban styles (bata, bembé, palo, abakuá, rumba, comparsa, etc.), you must read this book, as you will learn a great deal from it. It is

refreshing to see the music and the culture through the eyes of a musician and practitioner himself (Mr. GarcÃ-a Villamil), a true living legend. Every page is loaded with TONS of information, dating from his Yoruba great-grandfather's time to the present.

The first thing to be said about Ms. Velez' book is that it is written in a disarmingly straightforward style - a rare if not unique occurrence in contemporary scholarly writings. Without shying away from tackling the complexities of an issue (and there are many in the book) Ms. Velez' style allows the reader to concentrate on the content rather than wrestle with tortuous syntax and intricate constructions. It is perhaps for this reason that the author manages so felicitously to blend her cultivated voice with that of the "informer" in a delicately balanced counterpoint. This, in turn, is well suited to the multifaceted role of F.G.V., who play the role of a self-centered first actor as well as that of an anonymous yet ideally representative prototype of a time and a place. Or rather, multiple times and places.

VÃ©lez has produced an outstanding book, and Felipe GarcÃ-a Villamil seems like the ideal choice for an individual study. VÃ©lez collects Villamil's stories, opinions, and experiences into a cohesive narrative with a sensible ordering. Villamil's accounts of his life in Cuba, both pre- and post-revolutionary, both as a child and as an adult, gives the reader a sense of the religious lives of Afro-Cubans that is rare to find in such depth as seen here. Interweaving Villamil's stories with her own commentary, VÃ©lez gives background and context to his memories and thus has created an easily read yet highly informative work. Her historical sections alone serve as well-researched, detailed resources on the three main Afro-Cuban religions (SanterÃ-a, Palo, and AbakuÃ¡). While this book indeed contains explanations of some nuanced and intimate parts of some of the Afro-Cuban religions, it maintains the proper amount of reverence and respect for the traditions and its practitioners. VÃ©lez makes it clear that there are certain rituals and events which are widely considered to be secret and not to be divulged to non-believers, and she abides by her statements, at times commenting that certain aspects of the ritual have been left out of the book for this very reason. (This is most certainly not one of those sensationalist, money-making publications that promises to excite the reader with divulsions of the secrets of certain "mystic" religions. This work is far more mature than that.) Her writing style in general is of the most respectful I have read regarding these subjects. An example of why VÃ©lez is particularly respectful: when the discussion involves a mounted initiate, VÃ©lez simply refers to the orisha who has mounted the initiate, whereas some other authors use a writing style so awkward that it leads the reader to question

whether the author believes that mounting is a real phenomenon. A particularly pleasing feature of Vélez's writing style is that almost all of the technical, academic jargon is omitted in favor of readable English. The few complicated terms and notions that she does introduce are well-explained; there are no long lists of half-defined terms thrown together with other words you didn't know could be adjectives into phrases that span an entire line. In summary, accounts of life experiences as they relate to the Afro-Cuban religions in Cuba, such as Felipe García Villamil's, are hard to come by and provide great insight into all of those involved in or interested in Afro-Cuban religions. Vélez organizes Villamil's anecdotes chronologically and by topic, and gives background information, allowing for Villamil's voice to shine through and illuminate and elaborate on certain issues faced by honest, authentic Afro-Cuban religious practitioners. This is a fascinating book. It should be noted that Santerá is the most discussed religion in this book. Having said that, the Palo and Abakuá facets of Villamil's religious life are not forgotten.

This book is the absolute best available about Afro-Cuban religious traditions, music, and culture that I have ever seen. Vélez writes in a clear style and with great respect for Mr. Villamil's heritage. Finally a book in English has addressed the controversy surrounding lineages and lines within Afro-Cuban religion. Not to mention one of the few books that describes festivals and musical celebrations within these religions instead of 'new age magic'. Secondly, the voice and mannerisms of Mr. Villamil come through the pages as if you were watching a documentary. As a long time (medio asiento) affiliate en La Regla de Ocha this book has truly touched my heart. Instead of spewing out made-up "secrets" it conveys the feeling, culture, and legacy of these little known traditions with utmost dignity. If you enjoyed the book I would suggest seeking out some of Mr. Villamil's CD's under the group Emikike it is amazing. Vélez deserves some kind of award for this work because it is truly astounding.... just when I was about to give up on English books concerning Afro-Cuban culture. Charles Panella ", but you have to keep hammering away there because he was destined for that and I wasn't. This is my religion and I love it with all my heart" FGV

This is truly a unique book. Not only is it informative, but also easy to read. I don't know of any other source that delves as deeply into the life of a single Afro-Cuban religious musician or practitioner as this book does. It is a gold mine of information not only for the serious student of Afro-Cuban culture, but also for any practitioner.

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