

## ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

# eye

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## eye Music

# OneBeat's music buffet is set on a multicultural table

By Andrew Gilbert  
Correspondent

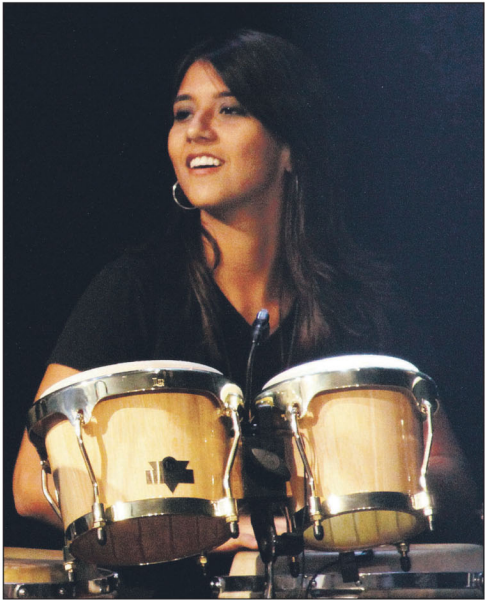
At the height of the Cold War in the 1950s, the U.S. State Department dispatched jazz masters like Dizzy Gillespie and Louis Armstrong on international tours, seeking to deploy the democratic ethos of their music in the struggle for hearts and minds.

More than half a century later, the State Department still sends American musicians out into the world as ambassadors, but these days, marshaling the soft power of American culture means bringing far-flung musicians here as well. For much of October, "here" is Villa Montalvo, where 25 young artists from 17 different countries are busy figuring out ways to create and perform music together as part of OneBeat, which describes itself as an "incubator for music-based social entrepreneurship."

The centerpiece of the residency is a series of free performances on Sunday staged throughout Montalvo's grounds and buildings. Guests are invited to mingle among the musicians as they perform, and later gather in the Garden Theater for a culminating ensemble performance.

"It's quite a formidable task meeting 25 people from very different traditions, speaking different languages," says OneBeat co-director Elena Moon Park, a fiddler, mandolinist, trumpeter and singer who also tours with Dan Zanes and Friends (she'll be bringing some OneBeat participants to Bing Concert Hall on Saturday for Stanford Live's Dan Zanes concert, <http://live.stanford.edu/>).

"Since there's a short pe-



COURTESY OF LARA KLAUS

"I love the interchange between so many musicians. If I could, I would spend the whole year traveling and meeting people," say Brazilian drummer Lara Klaus.

### ONEBEAT

**When:** 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Oct. 19

**Where:** Montalvo Arts Center, 15400 Montalvo Road, Saratoga

**Tickets:** Free, [montalvoarts.org/events/onebeat](http://montalvoarts.org/events/onebeat), 408-961-5800

riod of time to meet and create music we try different methods," Park adds. "People bring in original songs, folk tunes, and there's a lot of improvisation. It's a real mix, and it's always unpredictable."

An initiative of the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, OneBeat is pro-

duced by Brooklyn's Found Sound Nation, a collective of artists and musicians associated with the new music organization Bang on a Can. Launched in 2012, OneBeat took place on the East Coast the first two years. In its initial foray West, the program is seeking to tap into the innovative connectivity of Silicon Valley.

Some of the artists are already well-versed in forging international collaborations. Blessing Chimanga is a drummer and marimba player from Harare, Zimbabwe, who has performed around Europe with Zimbo-Ita, an ensemble he created in 2012 with two Italian musicians.

"I want to learn from the other fellows, learn their culture and what made them who they are," says Chimanga, 23, who's in the United States for the first time. "I also want to share myself, my experience, what I've been through and heard and my culture. At the end of the day, I want to create long-lasting friendships and collaborations. I would love to see OneBeat painting a picture that different musicians can work together, that music is the universal language."

Brazilian drummer Lara Klaus, who hails from the culturally vibrant northeastern city of Recife, is similarly sophisticated. She's toured in the U.S. and has accompanied top Brazilian artists like Elba Ramalho and Emílio Santiago. She learned about

OneBeat from a friend, and applied to the program, eager to jump into cross-cultural collaborations.

"I love the interchange between so many musicians," says Klaus, 28. "If I could, I would spend the whole year traveling and meeting people."

"I brought some sheet music and some rhythms, but I don't have any songs. I need people to know and develop with me. There are other percussionists and drummers here, and we're already going crazy together."

While Brazil boasts one of the most lively and diverse music scenes on the planet, OneBeat also draws musicians who have far fewer opportunities to perform. Vocalist and composer Sher-reen Abdo hails from Cairo, where "the music scene is very limited, with few venues and few chances to mix and blend with other cultures," she says.

Trained as a journalist, Abdo made the leap into

performing in the midst of the Arab Spring, and she's sought out interesting musical settings wherever she can find them, from jazz combos to metal bands. She discovered OneBeat while doing Internet research on fellowships that would provide access to musicians outside of Egypt.

"Music is a worldwide language," says Abdo, 29. "I don't have to understand the lyrics. I just have to feel the vibe. I have a passion for every kind of music. I have to listen to everything and try it, and this is one way of finding my own sound."

Ambitious and resourceful, Abdo fits the OneBeat profile as an artist who is likely to build on the connections she makes in the program. How does OneBeat measure success?

"A primary goal is to create connections that will last beyond the life of the program," Park says.

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