

8/11/2010 11:53:00 AM

Torres aims to take salsa to a 'higher level'

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Sub-Editor

Grammy Award winning musician Willy Torres will be getting into the swing of island life to keep the tradition of **salsa** alive.

The 34-year-old will be providing nightly live music at the Lido Complex at Elbow Beach hotel from tomorrow.

The Puerto Rican musician will be sharing his 20 years in the **salsa** world alongside Cuban pianist Ariacne Durran.

The nightly live music is part of a week-and-a-half long festival to celebrate all things **salsa** "from its - cultural genesis to its diverse modern fusions."



Grammy Award winning musician Willy Torres will be providing nightly live music at the Lido Complex at Elbow Beach hotel from tomorrow. *Photo supplied

Salsa Mania Productions has organized live music, beach parties, classes, social dancing and the popular Mambo Nights show takes place on Friday and Saturday this weekend.

The multi-talented Mr. Torres has clocked up an impressive resume. He is a much-loved regular on the New York Latin session scene as not only a vocalist, but also an arranger and producer.

Mr. Torres, who has received seven Grammy nominations, says **salsa** is "the best way to communicate between people"

He says **salsa** gives you confidence, makes you happy and sends adrenaline through his body.

Mr. Torres, who sings with the Spanish Harlem Orchestra, says he wants to help take **salsa** music to "a higher level."

Speaking to the Bermuda Sun from New York, he said: "I'm a **salsa** addict! **Salsa** is my passion, my love, my life.

"How **salsa** differs from other genres of music is that it's a way of life.

"It has been adapted by people all around the world, it has brought people together.

"Everyone should know and respect **salsa** music."

Mr. Torres has visited Bermuda several times saying the island "makes him feel at home."

He said: "I love Bermuda, it's awesome. If I had my way, I would be living there!

"It's a beautiful place, the people are so nice, I'm really excited about being there again.

"I've been all over the world and it continues to amaze me how such a small island can have so much swing.

"Bermuda has a great **salsa** community, even the people who don't dance enjoy themselves by watching."

However, he is particularly looking forward to performing with Ariacne Durran who he calls "a super, amazing talent." Mr. Torres says they always have "so much fun" when they team up together.

They will play "something for everyone" including unplugged pieces, original tracks, Mexican music, some pop songs and plenty of **salsa** music to dance to. Mr. Torres himself says he may also show off some of his fancy footwork.

Mr. Torres' parents were both professional musicians. He began singing at the age of four and playing congos at the age of seven.

When Mr. Torres and his family relocated to New York in the mid 1980s, he started playing alto sax in high school concerts and jazz bands and at just 16-years-old he was recruited as a member of the Latin Legends Orchestra.

For five years from 1993 Mr. Torres toured the world as a back up singer for Sony recording artists Victor Manuelle, then went on to perform with Rey Ruiz and Carlos Ponce.

He continued to sing backup for stars such as Ricky Martin and became musical director for Joe King and Rey Ruiz.

He is praised for his "talent and versatility" and his "professionalism and knack for creating vocal arrangements on the spot."

He currently sings vocals as he tours and records with the Spanish Harlem Orchestra and continues to arrange and produce projects for artists.

He has released an instructional video called Singing **Salsa** with Willy Torres and is currently working on a book on singing Latin vocal styles.

He was awarded a Grammy for his work with The Spanish Harlem Orchestra in 2004 and for best topical album producer of the year in 2006.

Mr. Torres, who is a father-of-two, insists he is simply "living the dream" as he is doing what he loves to do.

He admits that "salsa just keeps on calling me" and he is determined "to keep the tradition alive across the world."

He also hopes to return to school to get a Phd in music therapy. His long-term plan is to "give back to the community" and open a non-profit organization to teach music to children with disabilities.

*For the full line-up of **salsa** events and workshops over the next couple of weeks visit www.bermudasalsa.com*

Salsa Mania Live

- Free live Latin music at the Sea Breeze Lounge, Lido Complex, Elbow Beach Hotel.
- Every evening from tomorrow (Thursday, August 12) until Sunday, August 22. Live music from 6pm to 11pm and DJ and dancing from 11pm to 1am.
- Featuring Grammy award-winning artists Puerto Rican percussionist Willy Torres and Cuban pianist Ariacne Durran.
- There will also be August Mambo Nights shows on Friday, August 13 and Saturday, August 14 at the Mid-Ocean Amphitheatre, Fairmont Southampton Resort. This year's show is called 'Latin Beat: The Evolution of Mambo.'
- For more information visit www.bermudasalsa.com, email info@bermudasalsa.com or phone 799-6616.