

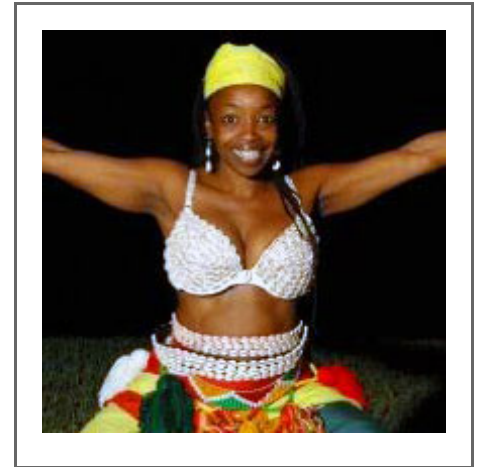
# Do the Djun Djun with Delou Africa's Drum and Dance Festival

By Cultist

Published Fri., Aug. 6 2010 at 1:30 PM

It was the full-bodied movements of those bare-breasted women that first lit Njeri Plato-Dioubate's long-term love affair with West African dance. And it was enough to convince the Trinidad-born performer, who had previously focused on Caribbean folklore dancing, to permanently change course. "It just captured me," says Plato-Dioubate. She remembers marveling at the dancers, thinking, "Wow, this is life."

Give yourself a taste of the exotic this weekend by checking out the inaugural African Diaspora Dance and Drum Festival of Florida. Discover the instruments, join a drumming workshop, learn to sing, and do the downward dog with Plato-Dioubate's [Delou Africa Dance Ensemble](#).





First, learn your instruments. Think of the shekere -- a hollowed-out gourd covered in a netting of seeds -- as an African maraca, and the balafon as a wooden glockenspiel you tickle with padded sticks. As you might have guessed, there'll be plenty of drum-bangin' at this soiree. You'll learn how to make infectious beats on djun djun, djembe, kutiro, and other African percussion. And in addition to drumming workshops, the three-day festival features West African dance and song classes, yoga, and a seminar on holistic health and HIV/AIDS awareness.

Established in 1987, the 18-member dance ensemble has carved out a small but successful niche for itself. "Since 2000, we've been planning in our heads for this," says Plato-Dioubate.

*African Diaspora Dance and Drum Festival of Florida. August 6 to 8, 2010. Little Haiti Cultural Center, 212-260 NE 59th Terr., Miami. Tickets cost \$10-\$16. Call 305-978-3866 or visit [delouafrica.com](http://delouafrica.com).*

-- Kaila Heard