

Marcos Santana

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Rhythm as a language of belonging.



Artist Statement

I was born in Salvador, Bahia, one of the world's great centres of Afro-Brazilian music. Rhythm there is not a subject you study; it is the way a community speaks to itself. For more than twenty-five years I have carried that understanding into concert halls, carnival streets, festival stages and classrooms — first across Brazil, then in London, where I founded Tribo CIC. Whether I am directing a percussion section of eighty players or working with a class of seven-year-olds, the discipline is the same: listen closely, hold the pulse, and make space for everybody to be heard.

A life measured in rhythm.

I was born on 27 July 1977 in Salvador, Bahia, into a family that lived through the arts and Black Brazilian culture. I began learning percussion in the streets of Salvador at the age of eight and played my first professional show, Samba Livre, at twelve. From 1995 to 1998 I played and studied with Pracatum, and from 1998 to 2003 with Timbalada. Through my teens and twenties I toured Brazil with groups of international standing — Olodum, Ilê Aiyê and Timbalada — where I met my mentor and teacher Carlinhos Brown. Carlinhos trained me for four years in the art of the timbal, and it became my instrument of choice. After a technical foundation in computing and two years of Administration and Systems Analysis at Universidade Visconde de Cairu, I decided definitively to follow the path of the artist and began creating my own groups and projects. In December 2005 I founded the Tribo Project in Morro de São Paulo, on the island of Tinharé, Bahia — a place for the children of the island to develop their personalities and talents. Today the work continues in London: regular samba-reggae sessions and drumming workshops, festival stages, carnival, classrooms and community halls — and a bloco that unites people across borders through the same rhythms.

The numbers.

Statistics

25+

Years of professional experience

18+

Years developing music projects in the UK

Founder

Tribo CIC, London

International

Performer, educator, community arts leader

Twenty-five years, one continuous line.

Career Timeline

- 1977** **Born in Salvador, Bahia**
Born on 27 July 1977 into a family living through the arts and Black Brazilian culture, in the city where samba-reggae was being invented.
- 1985** **Percussion in the streets**
Started learning percussion in the streets of Salvador at the age of eight, inside the living tradition rather than the classroom.
- 1989** **First professional show**
Performed his first professional show, Samba Livre, at just twelve years old.
- 1995–1998** **Pracatum**
Played and studied with Pracatum in Salvador, deepening his technique and his understanding of Bahian repertoire.
- 1998–2003** **Timbalada & Carlinhos Brown**
Five years with Timbalada, touring Brazil alongside Olodum and Ilê Aiyê, and four years of training in the art of the timbal with his mentor Carlinhos Brown.
- 2005** **Founding of the Tribo Project**
Founded Tribo in December 2005 in Morro de São Paulo, island of Tinharé, Bahia — a place for the children of the island to develop their personalities and talents.
- London** **Tribo in the United Kingdom**
Regular samba-reggae sessions and drumming workshops in London, introducing students to drumming technique and to Afro-Brazilian and South American Indigenous culture.
- Europe** **Teaching across borders**
Workshops and residencies delivered in Brazil, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Austria, with students convening in the Tribo Bloco to perform at carnivals and events.
- Stage** **Festivals & carnival**
Musical direction and live performance at Notting Hill Carnival, Latino Life in the Park (Joga Bonito Stage) and Sabor Brazil.
- Next** **WaterBear application**
Formalising a lifetime of practice through study at WaterBear, Falmouth University — and building the next chapter of teaching and creative direction.

How the work is held together.

Founder

Established Tribo in Bahia in 2005 and later as a community interest company in London, shaping its structure, funding and long-term direction.

Musical Director

Arranging, rehearsing and leading percussion sections and bands, from small ensembles to carnival-scale groups.

Producer

Bringing performances together end to end — line-up, repertoire, logistics, technical requirements and delivery on the day.

Project Manager

Running multi-partner programmes across schools, community organisations and festivals, on time and within budget.

Workshop Leader

Designing and delivering percussion sessions for children, young people, adults and teaching staff across the UK, Brazil, Switzerland and Austria.

Community Arts Leader

Building long-term relationships with neighbourhoods so that music remains after the performance ends.

Where the work happens.

Notting Hill Carnival

Percussion direction on Europe's largest street carnival, preparing large sections to move and sound as one.

Latino Life

Recurring festival appearances, including the Joga Bonito Stage at Latino Life in the Park.

Sabor Brazil

Curation and musical direction of Brazilian programming for British audiences.

Festivals

Main stages and outdoor programmes across the United Kingdom and Europe.

Corporate events

Bespoke Brazilian sets and interactive drumming for private and corporate clients.

Community performances

Processions, street events and neighbourhood celebrations with participants of every age.

Live music

Percussion and band leadership in venues, cultural centres and clubs.

Brazilian cultural events

Programmes that present Afro-Brazilian repertoire with cultural accuracy and respect.

On stage, in the street, in the room.



Notting Hill Carnival — London



Marseille Pride — July 2026

Selected video work.

Video

- **Tribo CIC project presentation**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-V4mHTtMQuM>

- **Live performance**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19bQce1jr2U>

- **Vocals performance**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WTvtPw6bx4&t=157s>

- **Samba de Raiz — original composition**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XngKVeUnwZs>

Composition

Samba de Raiz — an original composition written, arranged and performed by Marcos Santana, rooted in the samba tradition of Bahia and carried into the UK.

Music that leaves something behind.

Community music can easily become a photograph — a bright afternoon, a lot of noise, nothing that survives the week. I work the other way round. Projects are built on repetition, real parts, real responsibilities and a performance date that matters.

BRAZIL

Bahia youth percussion

Working with young people in Salvador through group percussion — a structure of rehearsal, responsibility and public performance.

UNITED KINGDOM

London community ensembles

Open-access ensembles for adults and young people across London boroughs, rehearsing towards real performances.

UNITED KINGDOM

Families and intergenerational work

Sessions designed so that parents, carers and children play together.

BRAZIL & UK

Cultural exchange

Connecting Brazilian and British musicians and young players so that traditions travel in both directions.

Every child plays a real part.

A child who believes they are not musical will prove themselves right within five minutes. So the first job is never rhythm — it is safety. Give someone a part they can hold, place them inside a group that needs them, and the musicianship follows quickly.

PRIMARY

Whole-class percussion

Curriculum-linked sessions where every child plays a real part from the first lesson.

SECONDARY

Ensemble and cultural context

Deeper repertoire alongside the history of Afro-Brazilian music, arrangement skills and the discipline of playing in a section.

SEND

Inclusive music-making

Sessions built around sensory pacing, clear structure and instruments chosen for accessibility.

WORKSHOPS

CPD, festivals and organisations

One-off and residency formats for teachers, arts organisations and festivals.

One organisation, three commitments.



History

Tribo was founded by Marcos Santana in December 2005 in Morro de São Paulo, on the island of Tinharé in Bahia, Brazil, setting up a place for the children of the island to develop their personalities and talents. Today Tribo also exists in London, with regular samba-reggae sessions and drumming workshops.

Mission

Tribo is an international, non-profit, cross-cultural drumming and dance music project whose philosophy is to educate children and adults by encouraging their creativity. Through the power of music, Tribo makes each individual feel that they can nurture their own creative life force without having to be musically trained or gifted.

Why I am applying.

Almost everything I know was learned by doing — in Salvador's rehearsal yards, on carnival routes, in school halls and on festival stages. That knowledge is real, but it is largely undocumented, and I am aware of how much of it lives only in my hands. WaterBear appeals to me precisely because it takes contemporary practice seriously. An environment built around working musicians, industry context and creative enterprise is where my experience can be examined properly. I also expect to be a useful presence in the room. I bring a tradition, a professional network and two and a half decades of leading ensembles — and I intend to contribute that as generously as I receive.

01 Formalise the practice

Place twenty-five years of intuitive, tradition-based knowledge inside a contemporary academic framework.

02 Deepen creative direction

Develop composition, arrangement and production skills so that my work moves beyond live direction.

03 Build sustainable programmes

Strengthen Tribo CIC's education offer with research-informed practice and evaluation.

04 Teach the next generation

Move towards higher-education teaching and mentoring, so that Afro-Brazilian musical practice is passed on with rigour.

In their words.

"Marcos holds a room of thirty children the way he holds a carnival section — with calm, clarity and complete musical authority."

Primary school music lead

London borough partnership school

"He understands that a festival programme is not only a line-up. It is a piece of cultural storytelling, and he tells it beautifully."

Festival programmer

UK Latin American festival circuit

"The work with Tribo has changed how our young people see themselves. That is not entertainment — that is community development."

Community partner

Youth organisation, London

Organisations and collaborators.

Credits & Collaborators

Notting Hill Carnival	London
Latino Life in the Park	Joga Bonito Stage
Sabor Brazil	Cultural programming
Timbalada	Salvador, Bahia
Pracatum	Music school, Salvador
Carlinhos Brown	Mentorship
Olodum	Shared stages
Ilê Aiyê	Shared stages
Tribo CIC	Founder, London
UK Schools	Primary • Secondary • SEND

CONTACT

Let's make something
that lasts longer than
the performance.

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