

FULL BIO

Francisco “Fran” Vielma born and raised in Mérida, Venezuela, a multicultural college town where arts are part of the daily life of its citizens. Encouraged by his mother Maritza Vielma, a music lover, he started in the musical world by singing, playing Venezuelan Cuatro, and taking core music courses at The Andes University Arts Center (CUDA).

His drumming journey began as a teenager with Caribbean and orchestral percussion, which he developed in parallel at Youth Symphonic Orchestra – “El Sistema” and playing in local Salsa bands. He later became a member of “Kimbandú” – a research music ensemble that traveled around the country to study and document musical expressions of Venezuela.

Before moving to Caracas early 2000’s, created “Nuevas Almas” World Jazz Ensemble along with drummer/composer Diego Maldonado to play their original compositions and arrangements. The ensemble put out the album “Inesperado” in 2009 under the label Cacao Music along with renown artists such as Horacio “El Negro” Hernandez, Jose Quintana “Changuito,” and Negróni’s trio among others.

In Caracas Fran kept a busy schedule performing, recording, and touring nationally and internationally with regarded jazz, salsa, pop, electronic, and traditional Venezuelan music artists. And became faculty at the renowned “Taller de Jazz Caracas,” where also performed duties as Percussion Chairperson. Additionally, was founding member of the music collective “Movida Acustica Urbana” (MAU) that released a live album in 2009 (MAU EN VIVO).

He attended the Arts University (UNEARTE) for composition, and “Cátedra Libre de Percussion de Caracas” directed by Miguel Urbina and Jhony Rudas.

Fran Vielma was awarded by a scholarship to finish his Bachelor’s in Performance and Jazz Theory at Berklee College of Music, and a Master’s in Jazz Studies at New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, MA.

He was awarded the DC Commission on the Arts and



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Humanities Fellowship 2022 and won the New Jazz Works commission by the prestigious Chamber Music America in 2021 – he has also been Jazz Road Tours Grantee by South Arts.

Fran has been featured artist for the Hispanic Heritage Celebration Concert of the prestigious United States Army Blues Band, having performed his compositions and arrangements.

He has toured around the continent with his start-stud Venezuelan Jazz Collective; “Tendencias,” his latest release, includes Vielma’s original works and arrangements featuring world-renown Miguel Zenón, Michael Rodríguez, and Luis Perdomo. It was included in the Best of 2018 lists by Downbeat, Latin Jazz Network, & NYC Jazz Record.

As an in-demand performer, he has shared stages around the world with John Medeski, George Garzone, Paul Winter, Simon Phillips, Antonio Sanchez, Miguel Zenón, Sean Jones, Michael Rodríguez, Mango Blue, Eguie Castrillo, Chuchito Valdés, “Los Van Van,” “Yoruba Andabo,” and Luis Enrique to name a few. He’s a current member of Cesar Orozco & Kamarata Jazz and has featured in the last two releases.

Vielma is currently a Jazz Department Faculty of Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University and has been World Music faculty at Salem State University, MA, artist resident at Florida University, “Conservatorio de Música de Puerto Rico,” Baltimore School of Arts, and Maryland Classic Youth Orchestra among others. Additionally, directs the Hidden Treasure Music Workshop.

Fran Vielma endorses Meinl Percussion, Vater Drums Sticks, Istanbul Mehmet Cymbals and Africatedra Venezuelan Percussion.



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