

# VERNACULAR SPECTACULAR

AN IMMERSIVE JAZZ DANCE EXPERIENCE – 11TH TO 14TH APRIL 2024 – CAT'S CORNER, MONTRÉAL

WITH

CHESTER WHITMORE  
NATASHA POWELL  
SARAH ELOLA

AND THE SPECIAL PARTICIPATION OF  
RAOUL WILKE

MUSICAL DIRECTION BY  
MICHAËL S. LEGACY BAND



COMMUNAUTÉ DE DANSE  
SWING, JAZZ, TAP & BLUES

# THE VISION

Vernacular Spectacular is an event that explores the origins of jazz dance and music: in the multitude of black cultures, in their expressive and participatory nature, in the importance of complicity and mutual dialogue between dancers and musicians.  
A vernacular dance. A spectacular dance.



An annual event: We believe that Jazz dance cannot live in a vacuum. It needs outside influences to realize itself, to develop, to be a living culture and dance. The choice of our guests reflects this audacity to seek out artists who have found a way to anchor their dance in its history while expressing its meaning and individual expression in its present time and in a larger world..



Objective: This workshop weekend will explore several fundamental aspects of dance: oral transmission, the world of jazz in its culture of origin, social dance, participatory performance and the central importance of music. Open to all levels of experience, this weekend of workshops will be an experience that will remain in your memory. We look forward to seeing you there!



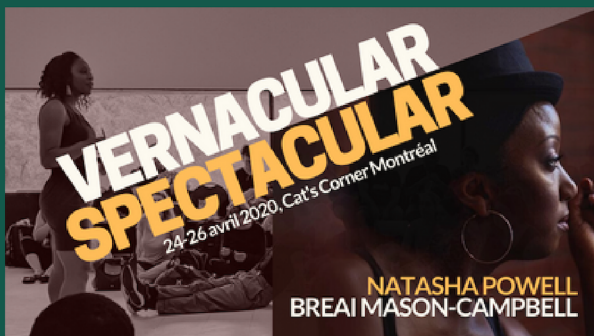
Prerequisite: Have the desire to learn, to listen, to watch, to feel and to let go of your dance in its musicality and presence. Jazz is for everyone. Jazz is for you.

# THE STORY



The idea for Vernacular Spectacular was born out of the desire to broaden the rather limited understanding of Jazz language and culture in our communities.

Inspired by the work of others, namely Oliver Menicot, Angela "Cookie" Andrew and Emile "Miles" Hounbossa, the event seeks to center the blackness of Jazz by connecting the dance form to other black social dances; and enabling a space for fruitful exchanges between dancers.



The attention to live music and the participatory nature of the form in class and on the dance floor are some of the key elements to creating a celebratory happening throughout the weekend workshop.

The originality of the event might reside in the search for guest artists and educators who are culture bearers, fluent in both jazz and other dance forms, and creative visionaries who've matured their artistic vision. Some of them are active advocates for social justice. We tend to call back the same artists a year to the next, to deepen our relationships over time.

Those have been essential elements setting the vision for the event since 2019.



# THE ARTISTS



## CHESTER WHITMORE

A legend, kind hearted, sleepless and inimitable artist, educator, producer, entertainer and story teller.

Chester Whitmore learned and collaborated with some of the greatest jazz artists of all times and other superstars of the showbusiness, as a dancer, musician and martial art stuntman, if you can believe it. He catches the listener's attention in a blink of an eye and takes them to a theatrical world of excitement. He is the technicolour genie in the television, creating the spectacular in the vernacular with the knowledge of an encyclopedia. In other words, he embodies the spirit of our event. We couldn't be more excited to welcome him again in Montreal!

## NATASHA POWELL

Natasha Powell is a Toronto native who has been working in the dance industry for 17 years. Her soulful approach to movement that transcends genre can be seen and felt in her dancing, choreography, and teachings. Growing up in a Caribbean home, dancing has always been in her life. Bringing flavour to her every step, as a dancer she has made appearances in film and television. Inspired by social dances such as jazz, hip hop, and house dance, Natasha shares her love for movement through teaching dance classes and workshops in Toronto and across Canada. She helps individuals find their personal groove, make breakthroughs in their dancing, and ultimately experience joy in their bodies.



## SARAH ELOLA

Sarah Elola was born of blended contrasts. She spent her first 15 years in kaleidoscopic African tones both rural and urban, traditional and modern, grounded in innumerable customs and cultures. It was in the savannah of the Land of Honest Men, in her native Burkina Faso –where, when one can walk, one can also dance– and in the Ivory Coast that she took her first steps, and grew up with this organic integration of rhythm, dance, song and music in daily life. Today she is an awarded dance artist and solo choreographer in contemporary African dance, former member of the troupe Nyata Nyata. She's been involved at Cat's Corner training a group of dancers on Foundations of Black dances since October 2023. We are excited to share her magic with the crowd of Vernacular Spectacular this year, with a special workshop!

# THE ARTISTS

## RAOUL WILKE



A multifaceted Dora Award winning artist, Raoul "Jiggyman" Wilke is the co-founder of The Moon Runners dance crew and the CEO of FeedYourSole. His choreographic work extends into film and theatre, artistic directing and coaching for artists. As a black emerging artist, his accolades within these different communities opened doors for new collaborations.

As a leader of the street dance community within Canada, he has mentored various companies and dance schools over the years, on the importance of the historical context, within these vernacular street forms and the value of themselves. Raoul is currently Faculty at Ryerson Dance School, educating students on these vernacular dance forms. As a student of dance, he continues to live by the quote: "See the music, Hear the Dance" by Balanchine. A stellar and impactful participant of Vernacular Spectacular 2023, we invited him to contribute to the 2024 edition!

Based in Montreal since 1998, Ivorian multi-instrumentalist Gotta Lago was awarded the Prix de la diversité culturelle in 2016. Since 2004, he has led the Gotta Lago Project, fusing traditional African music with blues and modern world music. Always wearing a scarf with pan-African motifs, he also wears many hats: guitarist, pianist, percussionist, singer and storyteller. Deeply involved in teaching, Gotta Lago leads percussion workshops in schools and teaches African singing. He hosts storytelling evenings and collaborates with painters, actors and dancers, notably as a choreographer for contemporary dance performances. In 2014, he released his solo album "Carnets de route Soweto- Marrakech", a musical journey that takes its source in South Africa and ends on the shores of Morocco. He continues his exploration of the African continent and is preparing his second album entitled "Conversations", to be released in 2024.

## GOTTA LAGO



## MICHAEL SREY



From an early age, Michaël was exposed to jazz music and the art of performing. Classically trained, it was after joining his hometown big band as a pianist that he opened the door to jazz. Since then, he's had many musical adventures in France and Quebec: as a musician in various formations (New Orleans, combo, Big Band), as an arranger for jazz or Soul-RnB groups, or as a composer for stage plays. He has recently accompanied Montreal singer and dancer Sam i Am Montolla on several occasions. Band leader and arranger of the Michaël Srey Legacy Band, he was musical director of Vernacular Spectacular in 2023. Without a shadow of a doubt, we've asked him to return to the musical production of the 2024 edition, to continue developing together the festival's spectacular experience.

# THE ARTISTS



## SAM I AM MONTOLLA

Sam I Am Montolla is an artist in motion. She started with dance at a young age and her love of music led this Montreal independent artist to singing and songwriting. Brought up with Caribbean parents, exposed to Hip Hop culture through dance, singing Gospel for a number of years and a lover of Soul, R&B and Funk, this Montreal songstress with all this diversity has made it apparent in her style. With multiple albums under her belt as a solo artist, she has worked with Shashu, Monk-e, Emcee Originate, Waahli, the Narcicyst, Jai Nitai Lotus and is a staple member of Kalmunity. A known Hip Hop dancer and Waacker, she has contributed to the culture in Montreal and internationally. She has taught dance, competed and judged in Dance Competitions, as she is one soulful freestyler. A part of THE CHAPTER, she is under the alias Princess Shayla. Since 2023, she is the new curator for CCOV and a board member at Communauté Cat's Corner!

## DJÜNGLE

Our invited DJ for the Spectacular Saturday!



# THE MUSICIANS



## FRIDAY NIGHT

Band leader / Piano : Michaël Srey  
Trumpet : João Lenhari  
Saxophone : Alex Ambroise  
Bass : Summer Kodama  
Drums : Aaron Dolman

## SATURDAY WORKSHOPS

Saxophone : Alex Ambroise  
Piano : Michaël Srey  
Bass : Summer Kodama  
Drums : Aaron Dolman

## SATURDAY NIGHT

### MICHAËL SREY'S SWING LEGACY

Band leader / Piano : Michaël Srey  
Trumpet #1 : João Lenhari  
Trumpet #2 : Joseph Machak  
Trombone : Margaret Donovan  
Saxophone alto and tenor / Clarinet #1 : Jeremy Joe Sandfelder  
Saxophone alto, tenor and soprano / Clarinet #2 / Flûte : Alex Ambroise  
Guitare / Banjo : Andy Mac  
Bass : Summer Kodama  
Drums : Aaron Dolman



### MICHAËL SREY'S SOUL LEGACY

Band leader / Piano : Michaël Srey  
Singer : Sam I Am Montolla  
Trumpet : Scott Bevins  
Trombone : Margaret Donovan  
Saxophone : Alex Ambroise  
Guitare : Ryan Nadin  
Bass : Fred Doston  
Percussions : Aron Boutin  
Drums : Paulo Max Riccardo

# THE PERFORMERS

## COOL CATS COLESLAW COLLECTIVE

COACHS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS : MEGHAN GILMORE & DAVIS THURBER

Claire Edrington

Ellen Fowler

Guillaume Desjardins

Gustavo Esteves

Koorosh Goodarzi

Megan Sydiaha

Peter Watt

Rain Kimp

Sabine Chauvet

## CHORUS LINE PROJECT

COACH AND CHOREOGRAPHER : MEGAN SYDIAHA

Caroline Lang

Claire Edrington

Kahini Ajmera

Maria Mastorakos

Marika Drapeau

Megan Sydiaha

Nelly Plante

Ola Grignon

Stephanie Bui

Sybille Camlan

Youlia Rainous

## VERNACULAR SPECTACULAR PROJECT

MAIN FORMATION : SARAH ELOLA, IN ARTISTIC PARTNERSHIP WITH ANAÏS SÉKINÉ  
AND THE SUPPORT OF MICHAËL SREY

Anaïs Sékiné

Anne Wascheul

Ariane Proteau

David Tétreault-La Roche

Gabrielle Kern

Geneviève St Laurent

Emilie Lesage

Megan Sydiaha

Robyn Penney

Sarah Elola

Youlia Rainous

## TAP PERFORMANCE

Nicholas Tran

## LINDY HOP PERFORMANCE

Maude Frenette-Roy and Michel Mauzerolle

## JAZZ AND STREET PERFORMANCE

Tayo Odueke, Ramsès Ntibushitse and J Sam Jm Qno





# SCHEDULE

Thursday

8.30 - 10.30PM

## JAZZ DANCE FOR STREET DANCERS

100 LUX INTELLIGENT SESSION with Chester Whitmore

**Espace Sans Luxe** 6502 avenue du Parc

NOT INCLUDED IN THE EVENT PASS - FREE FOR 100LUX MEMBERS  
VISITORS : REGISTER ON SITE AT 100 LUX (10\$)

Friday

5.45 - 7.15PM

## TAKING RISKS ON THE DANCEFLOOR

with Chester Whitmore OR Natasha Powell (two rooms)\*

7.30 - 8.30PM

## INTRO TO LINDY HOP / JAZZ DANCE

with Chester Whitmore and Natasha Powell

8.30 - MIDNIGHT

## FRIDAY NIGHT DANCE

with Michaël Srey Legacy Quintet

Saturday

10 - 11.30AM

## TRAINING IN JAZZ DANCE

with Chester Whitmore

11.30 - 12.45PM

## LUNCH AND DISCUSSION

with Chester Whitmore and Natasha Powell

12.45 - 2.15PM

## INTERPRETING THE MUSIC

with Chester Whitmore OR Natasha Powell (two rooms)\*

2.15 - 4.15PM

## DANCING WITH MUSICIANS

with Michaël Srey Legacy Band's quartet

7.30PM - 1.30AM

## SPECTACULAR VERNACULAR PARTY

« Getting the party started » with Natasha Powell and Raoul Wilke then five sets with Michaël Srey Legacy Band

Sunday

11.30AM - 1.30PM

## THE MUSICAL BODY IN BLACK DANCE

with Sarah Elola and Gotta Lago's music

1.30 - 3.00PM

## LUNCH AND DISCUSSION

with Chester Whitmore, Natasha Powell and Sarah Elola, moderated by Raoul Wilke

3.00 - 4.30PM

## DANCE CIRCLE

with Chester Whitmore OR Natasha Powell (two rooms)\*

4.30 - 6.00PM

## LAST JAM FACE OFF

with Chester Whitmore, Natasha Powell and Raoul Wilke

Buy food on site! Saturday evening, enjoy the bar and dine at Cat's Corner with Shandma's, Haitian bistro, so you'll be there when the social dance begins at 7.30PM.

\* There are two learning levels for the weekend workshops. Advanced workshops will be held upstairs. Don't hesitate to ask our volunteers where your workshops will take place. To respect the schedule, please arrive a few minutes early for the workshops you wish to attend.

# OUR ESSENTIALS

*Thanks!*

## ORGANIZATION

Anaïs Sékiné and Meghan Gilmore

## CONCEPTION AND ARTISTIC DIRECTION

Anaïs Sékiné

## COORDINATION OF FOOD, BOOKLET, SPONSORS

Hélène Bernardot

## RECEPTION

Gustavo Esteves  
Kseniya Smaryanakis  
Megan Sydiaha  
Sybille Camblan

## FRONT DESK

Andréanne Léveillé  
Ariane Proteau  
Bree Vought  
David Tétrault-La Roche  
Gustavo Esteves  
Ida Toft  
Katia Hughes  
Lu Maldonado  
Maria Mastorakos  
Mary Chin  
Moïa Jobin Paré  
Natalya Gomez  
Philippe Holas  
Robyn Robichaud  
Sean Goldfarb  
Tayo Odueke  
Théo Mekondongo

## ARTISTS HOSPITALITY

Adrian Warnock Graham  
Anne Wascheul  
Guillaume Desjardins  
Mélanie Leblanc  
Ricardo Lima  
Sylwia Bielec

## HOUSING COORDINATION

Alcina Chiu

## BARTENDING

Bree Vought  
Erica Harris  
Mélanie Leblanc  
Moïa Jobin Paré  
Robyn Robichaud  
Philippe Gauthier

## PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Alain Wong  
Caroline Dufour  
Léa Richard  
Miha Matevzic  
Thomas Allen

## SOUND

Gabrielle Kern  
Mariana Mejia Ahrens

## DJ

Adrian Warnock Graham  
Gabrielle Kern  
Junior « DJungle » Dorsaint

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Moon Ruiz  
Youlia Rainous (création de contenu vidéo)

## SPONSORS

Brasserie Avant Garde  
Distillerie les Subversifs  
Le Seltzer

## PARTNER

100lux

## FOOD

Bistro Shandmas  
Restaurant Yogi  
Sandwiches Cao Lanh  
Served by Andréanne Léveillé, Katia Hughes and  
Hélène Bernardot

# CODE OF CONDUCT

We consider that it's the responsibility of all Cat's Corner staff to participate in the creation of safe spaces at our venue and within the activities we organize. We also believe that it takes a village to sustain and stand by values of mutual respect and inclusion. We invite everyone to be active participants in making everyone feel safe, seen and heard.

## ZERO TOLERANCE

We do not tolerate any form of harassment or violence, may it be physical, verbal or emotional. We put a great care in creating a hospitable space for all. However, we won't allow any expression of hate, discrimination or disrespect. \*No racism. \*No sexism. \*No homophobia. \*No transphobia. \*No ageism. \*No ableism.

## CONSENT

Consent is at the heart of all our relationships. You are allowed to refuse and invitation or to communicate your discomfort to your dance partners. If for any reason, you do not want to act on your own, you are highly encouraged to ask for support to a friend or to any of our staff members. We will do our best to act as mediators or find more adequate support depending on the context. At any given time, we invite everyone to deescalate an issue using non violent communication and kindness.

## PERSONAL HYGIENE

Social dancing involves getting in physical proximity. We ask you to care for your personal hygiene so the experience is enjoyable for everyone: shower, brush your teeth, bring a change of clothes, freshen up regularly in the bathroom.

## ALCOOL AND DRUGS

We reserve the right to refuse access to our venue or to ask someone to leave the premises, for as long as we will judge it necessary. We will enforce this rule when someone is intoxicated, disorderly and causing discomfort to the members of the community or any other reason at our discretion.

## WALKING HOME ALONE

Although Montreal is generally a safe city, there are many reasons why you might not want to walk alone at night. Do not hesitate to communicate with our staff and we will help you find a crowd to walk with or a ride home.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT OUR WEBSITE:  
[HTTPS://WWW.CATSCORNER.CA/CODE-OF-CONDUCT/](https://www.catscorner.ca/code-of-conduct/)

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT DANCE AND LAND

We believe dance to be a spiritual experience.

It is an opportunity for everyone stepping onto the dance floor to connect to something greater than themselves.

We dance to music created a hundred years ago that expressed a time and place in human history. We enact the movements of a dance form that was fiercely expressed by a people, at a specific time and place in human history.

This dance form was ahead of its time. It paved the way for equal say between partners, for self-determination, for reclaiming body and soul, for defiant joy.

Jazz emerged within the black experience of the middle passage. It reflects the experience of exile, annihilation, resilience, hope, and the coming together of individuals, sharing in good and bad time, perfecting a craft, elevating it. Jazz is eloquent, sophisticated, profound, emotional, multifaceted. A form that is free and disciplined, building on what came before and adding anew. A living cultural testimony of human creativity and genius against all odds.

As time has passed, leading toward some changes and victories for social justice. But struggles and violence still remain, taking on new forms.

"My humanity is bound up in yours." – Desmond Tutu.

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."  
– Audre Lorde

We dance so we can connect. Therefore we must know and actively stand up.

It is natural then that we must open our eyes to what we benefit from and not take for granted what seems given.

The land that we dance on also has a history and a present. It is more than ever the center of ongoing struggles. First Nations, Inuit and Metis people are going through some of the most devastating consequences of human imperialism, thirst to conquer, to control and possess. Beyond truth and reconciliation, there is a fight for one thing:

Let us meditate for a moment on this thought and reality, and imagine what our lives would be like if this reality were ours. The way forward demands the price of our comfort. And that goes with all forms of participation toward social justice for all.

We begin with the invitation to a ritual. In a land acknowledgement, we acknowledge the physical territories, the names of the lands as they were and are called by their first inhabitants. We acknowledge the name of the people and what those land allowed them to do. Before Jacques Cartier, the Christopher Columbus of Canada, Montreal was known as Tio'tià:ke (Joh-jah-Gé) by the Kanien:keha'ka nation and as Mooniyang by the Anishnaabe nation. It was a site of meeting and exchange amongst these Indigenous peoples. It is since not only a land, but also cultures, languages, social structures that have been ripped away from them.

We must not remain indifferent. One by one, we learn the names, we make space within ourselves to create a relationship. We honour those who came before us on this land, and we seek ways to reconcile our heritage and our existences.

It is our commitment.

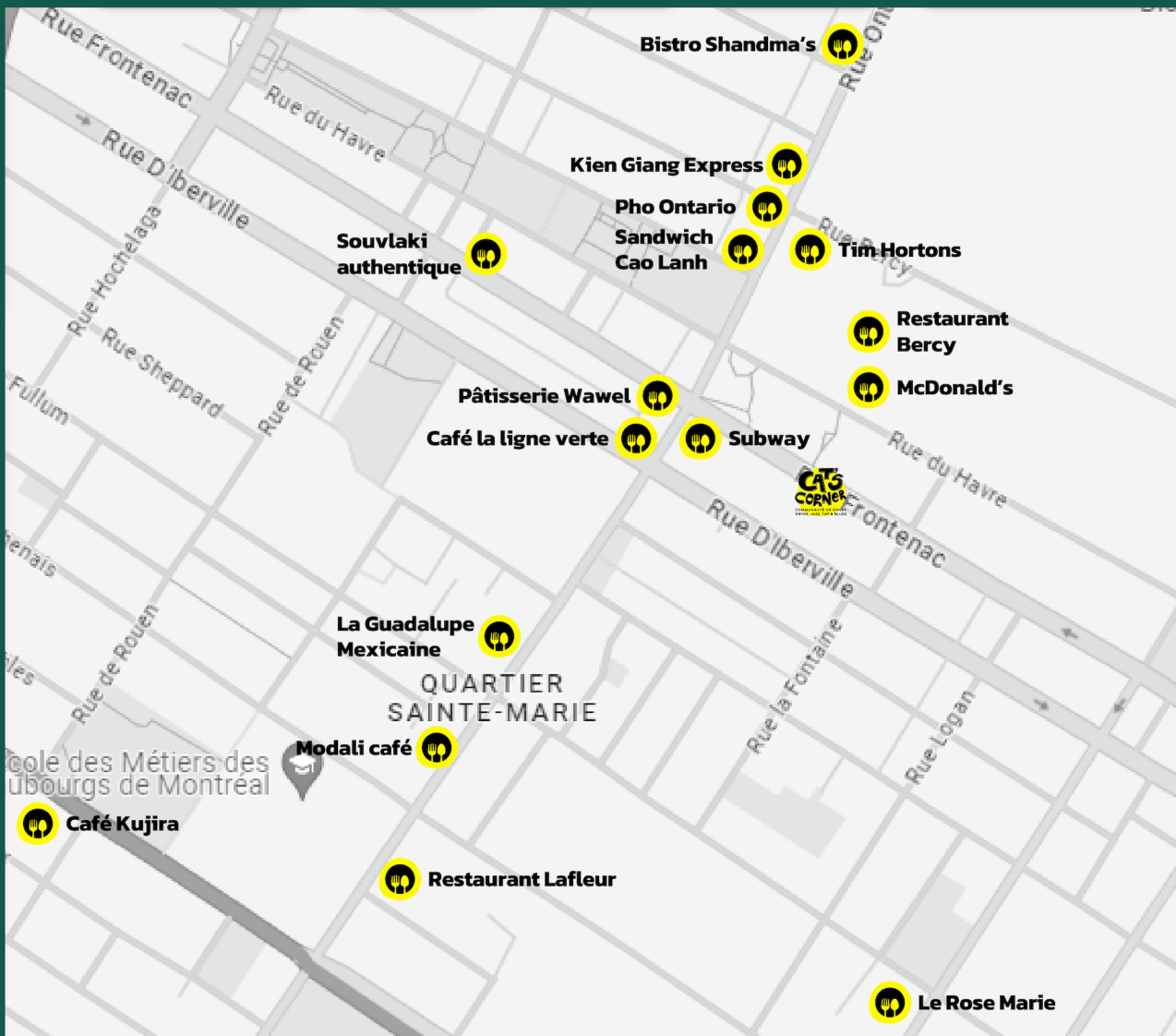


COMMUNAUTÉ DE DANSE  
SWING, JAZZ, TAP & BLUES

# WHERE TO FIND US

**Cat's Corner Community** – 1956, rue Frontenac, Montréal (QC) H2K 2Z1  
(514) 874-9846 – [info@catscorner.ca](mailto:info@catscorner.ca)

To respect the schedule, please arrive a few minutes early for the workshops you wish to attend. There are two learning levels for the workshops. Advanced workshops will be held upstairs. Don't hesitate to ask our volunteers where your workshops will be held.



# WHAT TO EAT

Buy your food on the spot! At lunchtime (Saturday and Sunday), the Cat's team will serve you delicious banh mi (Vietnamese sandwich) to buy on the spot so you don't miss anything from the cultural conversations with our guests. Quantity will be limited.

**Saturday evening, enjoy the bar and dine at Cat's Corner with Shandmas, a Haitian bistro.**

Samosas will be available for purchase mid evening to keep you going all night Bring change!

You can also bring your own lunch.



## **SATURDAY EVENING MENU (FROM 6-7:30PM)**

**STICKY RICE AND GRIOT - 11.99\$ +TX**

**PLANTAIN AND GRIOT - 11.99\$ +TX**

**STICKY RICE AND FRIED CHICKEN - 11.99\$ +TX**

**PLANTAIN WITH FRIED CHICKEN - 11.99\$ +TX**

**STICKY RICE AND VEGETABLE RATATOUILLE (VEGETARIAN) - 11.99\$ +TX**

**PLANTAIN (4) - 9\$ +TX**

**MARINADES (4) - 8\$ +TX**

Payment on site to the caterer

Order and pick up your meal at the upstairs bar between 6 and 7.30PM.

Haitian specialties served by Bistro Shandmas