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# music

## A DIFFERENT BEAT

The Providence Drum Troupe takes it to the bridge

BY MAYTÉ ANTELO-OVANDO



PDT hoops and hollahs!

**T**he Providence Drum Troupe uses drums to bring people together in a joyful spirit and to connect in a meaningful way, and when I met members **David Lee Black** (founder/photographer) and **Jamie Lyn Bagley** (performer/marketing and collaboration consultant), I felt like I had been introduced to a magical group of humans. I was lucky enough to interview them as they embark on the adventure of creating space for performers and audience alike to be our whole selves and to heal through the cleansing power of a drumbeat.

**Mayté Antelo-Ovando (Motif):** What is the troupe and how did it come about?

**David Lee Black:** The Providence Drum Troupe (PDT) was born from the pandemic. We combined percussion, dancers, street performers and the healing arts to activate a space with positive interactive energy and to demonstrate that living in harmony with one another is not an antiquated notion. I initially invited my musician and visual art friends to gather and simply play, not unlike a childhood playdate. PDT organically grew from there. Knowing that bureaucracy kills creativity, we have only one rule, "Don't be annoying."

**MA-O:** What's your vision or utmost hope for the group?

**DLB:** As the public interest, gigs

and bookings continue to grow, the vision for PDT remains simple: Connecting creative forces for the greatest good.

**MA-O:** You rehearse/perform at the pedestrian bridge every Thursday. Is there a specific reason to use that location?

**DLB:** The bridge is perfect for the troupe to perform and for the public to interact. Michael Van Leesten was a visionary African American leader and civil rights activist who provided leadership in pursuit of economic and social justice for the citizens of Rhode Island. He also was a friend of the arts. We are honored to play at such a poignant place.

**MA-O:** How did you become involved with PDT, Jamie?

**Jamie Lyn Bagley:** It's been important to me to do things that bring me joy. And one of the things that brings me joy is singing with my drum, and taking my drum and my voice and bringing it to the water as a form of prayer. One night, I went by the pedestrian bridge. I'm sitting by the water by the bridge, and I'm playing my drum and I'm singing. And this man walks by and he [says], "I heard you playing from down the way a bit. We're with a drum troupe, and you're invited to join us at 6:30 tonight." David Lee

Black - that was him. He invited me to join them because he heard me playing my drum. And now I have this big group of people that feel like family. And we perform together, and it's so much fun. We make people happy. And it's just us showing up as ourselves.

**MA-O:** Right, seems so simple and yet...

**JLB:** So simple, because there's alignment there. So other people feel it. You were at a show. How did it make you feel?

**MA-O:** When I was there that day, I was a little bit nervous, just because everything is new right now. And navigating going into crowds of people still feels tricky. But I loved it. I thought it was great and I could feel the community in it. Someone at the back of the crowd did some sort of a chanting or singing at the very beginning and it sounded kind of tribal and beautiful.

**JLB:** That was **Rock Paint**. He has Indigenous roots, and he brings that - we call it, you know, his medicine. We are a mix [of people]. He's got Indigenous roots and it's a very spiritual [and] native thing with him. I fully dig what he brings to the table.

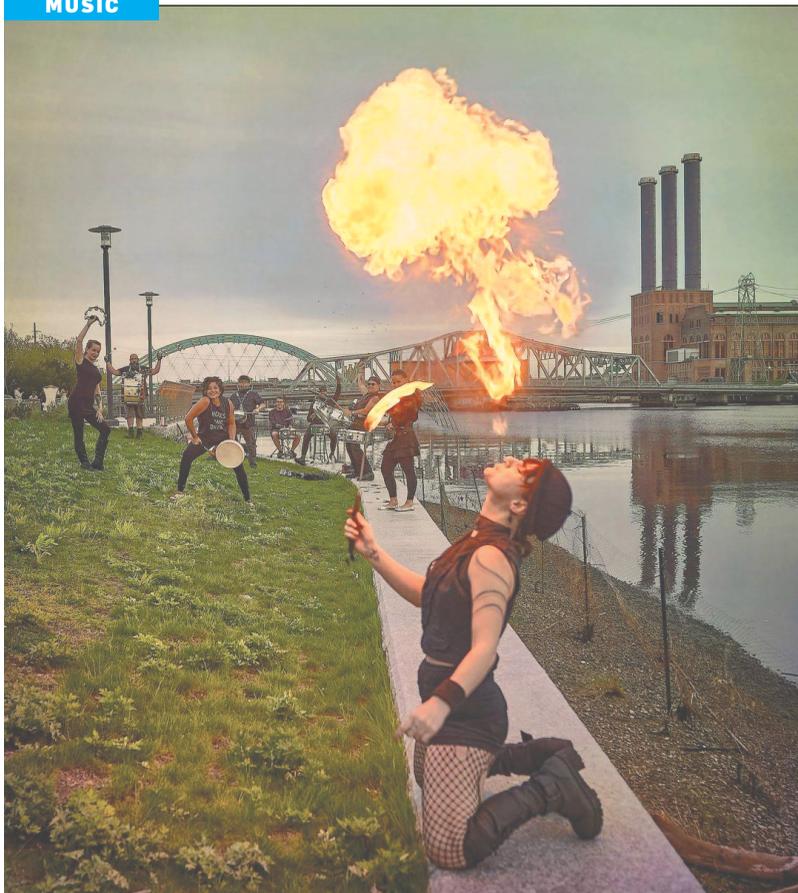
**MA-O:** Is there a vision for what you're bringing together?

**JLB:** Our vision is just that we continue to keep it a representation of unity - different worlds coming together for the greatest good, and it's inclusive. Some people are actual trained

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drummers who have been drumming in bands for a very long time. Like **John Cote** (aka Cocktail Cote). He's the musical

director. It's his job to keep everything tight, to keep the sound tight, when we're doing actual songs. So, David and I, our vision is to maintain the purity of what this is because so easily something like this can turn bureaucratic. It can turn into something where someone has to take control, and then it just



kind of falls apart where it gets too big, and then it stops being like a tight-knit family, or it stops being special, or it stops resonating. He and I both see this as being an activator for not only creativity, but freedom. And the drum is such a good way to connect to your own heartbeat, to get back in the body...

And so, we show up to the river on Thursday night, and that's our rehearsal. It's also a performance. And we're clearing gunk, you know? If you show up, it's almost like, you need it, whether you know it or not, and it doesn't feel like healing. It feels like a party.

that.

**MA-O:** Love that. You're still in the process of becoming.

**JLB:** Yeah. It's important for each of us to feel that way about ourselves and to be open to becoming. Because you may have this idea of what you want or who you want to be. But maybe there's this other thing that's inside and it just wants to come out and play and be listened to.

**MA-O:** What if somebody wants to be a part of you?

**JLB:** We encourage [people] to come check us out on a Thursday night. Then David is the contact person [for those interested in joining].

**MA-O:** I feel like that's an invitation to experience it, rather than to just talk about it or see pictures of it. It doesn't substitute for the actual experience of being there.

**JLB:** That's it. People remember how you make them feel, right? So, you remember how you felt when you were there. And what you felt when you left. And we've gotten a lot of good feedback [from] people who maybe weren't having a great day, and then they came, and then they felt good. And they're like, wow, I'm so glad I came. And you don't get that unless you're actually there. ●

For more information, go to [providencedrumtroupe.com](http://providencedrumtroupe.com) or follow Providence Drum Troupe @ [theprovidencedrumtroupe](https://www.instagram.com/theprovidencedrumtroupe)

**MA-O:** You are also marketing yourselves as a performance group?

**JLB:** Yes. So, we just did an event for Haus of Codec at Dexter Park. We're going to be opening for FringeFest on July 19 at WaterFire Arts Center. That's also part of our vision is to be able to [provide] entertainment. [Though] what we do is beyond entertainment. I think PDT is less of a business right now and more [a group] organically becoming what it's becoming. And we're not limiting



## FOREVER ONWARD

### DESTIGMATIZING EATING DISORDERS AND RECOVERY THROUGH SONG

**DRENT** (Done Right Every Now and Then), a self-described "emotional rapper" from Pawtucket, prides himself on constantly improving and meeting new challenges. He released his video and song, "The Body Keeps the Score II," on May 18 to mark his 30th day of sobriety from food addiction. He has been very open with his family, friends and fans about managing his bulimia, working to stay sober and seeking help when his goal became changing his trajectory. In this second installment in a series of videos, which is an ode to Bessel van der Kolk (renowned psychiatrist and author of the book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*), DRENT's vision was to show growth, highlight that eating disorders are not a gendered issue and prove that recovery is possible.

DRENT says of this song and video, "I think for me, the video was really more about just saying, look, regardless of what you eat, regardless of what bothers you, the point is that whether you overeat, or undereat, it is difficult, it is a complex issue. And it is not something that is easily fixable unless you acknowledge what it is." – **Mayté Antelo-Ovando**

Read our full interview with DRENT at [motifri.com/tbksII](http://motifri.com/tbksII) and see the video at: [youtu.be/o7BvpIjSDI8](https://youtu.be/o7BvpIjSDI8)



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