

## Mp3 Armando Mafufo - Uncle Mafufo's Zig N Zag



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Zig n Zag: Music for bellydance. Middle Eastern doumbek, neys, santur. Tribal, traditional, and ritual music. 14 MP3 Songs WORLD: Belly Dancing, WORLD: Middle East Contemporary Show all album songs: Uncle Mafufo's Zig n Zag Songs Details: Armando, as the multi-talented Mafufo Ensemble, has created a masterful tour of oriental rhythms and outstanding melodies that are sure to inspire each and every dancer. Aka Uncle Mafufo, he has been playing for all types of dancers his whole life, and he brings his array of expertise to create a CD that feels improvised and fresh. In recording for 'Zig n Zag', Armando noted, 'It was my hope to lay a foundation of sound that creates images and space for dancers, helping them to catch a moment where dreams are realized'. All the instruments used for this recording are acoustic, providing a warm and genuine sound; nothing is looped, sampled or synthesized. In Armando's hands any object becomes a musical instrument and he will use anything to achieve the most appropriate sound. With an inherent respect for unusual instruments and the exquisite sounds they produce, he highlights the essential quality of each instrument; ney, saz, santoor, Chinese banjo, Tunisian bagpipe, argool, davul, Turkish spoons, and riq to name just a few. In discussing his work process Armando stated, 'The pieces are very personal, like sketches, and I have the personal luxury of working alone, playing the whole thing throughout'. A melody, often improvised, is played on one track with def and drum on another track to hold the rhythm tight. Other instruments are layered in, keeping the spirit of each song energetic and new. In the variety of compositions there is an honest sense of tradition without the constraints bound to any one specific culture or style. With this CD in particular, I can picture Armando creating music for different spaces, envisioning dancers within pillared halls, vaulted chambers and open corridors. From the very first track 'Entah', I imagine a giant door swinging open beckoning me into an extraordinary world of enchantment. As the drums quicken to a Sahidi rhythm, and the first familiar notes of the flutes call, I feel

as if I'm part of a colorful but dusty procession finding refuge in a cool courtyard with a lively tune that calls out 'Let the festivities begin!' The selection of songs is wonderfully varied. Some of the pieces are short, being a vibrant splash of sound, such as the song 'Walkfast', a smooth up-tempo piece in 6/8 featuring a Chinese banjo with a snakeskin head and sticks rapping on metal. Also, the amusingly titled 'Riqs Place' is a bright display of drum and tambourine just slightly more than a minute long. My favorite piece, and one of the longest compositions on this CD is 'Entre Cortinas', a sensuous ney melody lingering above a rolling 4/4 rhythm. 'A sweet and romantic song inspired by dancers moving behind veils' is how Armando describes this beautiful composition. The strong, compelling beat is produced by a thirty inch def, which Armando made himself, and a baglama saz. The very solid percussion gives weight to the soulful ney, keeping it from being too flighty or loose and the measured pace of this song suggests a languid opulence. This song haunts me; I think of rooms within rooms, heavy tapestries, or a sanctuary where secrets are kept and revealed. Armando has an excellent idea of what dancers can use to challenge and expand their repertoire. He has included several longer drum taxims and more versatile drum solos. '4 Calabazas' was developed as a presentation piece for the Santa Cruz Calabash Award which Armando received in January 2001. It is comprised of four instruments; 2 doumbeks, def, and riq. The changes, from a medium tempo 4/4 (Saadawi Thani) to a fast 2/4 (Karachi) to an intense slow 12/8 (Hale) finally finishing with a faster 4/4 (Maksoom), allow for flowing transitions and strong development with contrasting yet complimentary rhythms. 'Zig n Zag' ends with a delicate piece appropriately called 'Brizas'. With light drum rolls, the bright sound of sticks marking time in a swaying Tsamiko rhythm and a soft easy melody on santoor it is a perfect ending to a delightful adventure. I can imagine a gentle breeze and cool light as I step back into the courtyard where this musical journey began. Generous in its scope, this CD has so much to offer dancers of any style or skill. Armando's approach to music is never dry or dull; rhythms are expanded and ornamented, changes are projected without being predictable. The range of melodies, from dynamic to dreamy convey a breadth of emotion imploring dancers to dance full out and express truly what is closest to their hearts. Claire Wesley

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