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Havana, Oct 19 (RHC) The musical universe in Cuba mourns the death today at the age of 85 of the notable Cuban percussionist and vocalist Oscar Valdés.

Originally from Havana, the outstanding performer was born on November 12, 1937 into a family of great musicians, including his father Oscar (percussionist), his uncles Marcelino (percussionist), Alfredo and Vicentico Valdés (singers).

He began in the music world in 1949 with an emerging talent which he perfected thanks to important teachers, who showed him the path of batá sounds, the construction of abakuá drums, batá and chekeres.

Defender of the Timbal, an instrument he embraced until he mastered it at the Alejandro García Caturla Conservatory, Valdés joined the Band and Choir of the Rebel Army after 1959, and in turn he gave prestige to the CMQ, Icert, Benny Moré and Cubana de Música orchestras with his virtuosity. Modern.

When the popular band Irakere was created in 1972 under the guidance of Chucho Valdés, the performer became part of it as a singer and percussionist, being in charge of creating the lyrics and rhythmic ideas of the format, the folkloric elements and the use of batá.

With this group, winner of a Latin Grammy in 1979, he transferred his mastery to the most important jazz festivals around the world, and on those stages he shared with high figures such as Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea, among others.

In 1993 he worked with his sons Diego (bassist) and Oscarito (drummer), until he found the Diákara group in 2000, a defender of jazz and folkloric roots. This allowed him to perform contemporary music with the use of Afro-Cuban instruments and with the help of three drummers.

With Diákara he performed at important nightclubs in Havana such as La Zorra y el Cuervo and the Jazz Café. He also composed, recorded and offered his experiences in the sound medium. Likewise, he made arrangements for important compositions such as *Lágrimas Negras*, *Mamá son de la loma*, *Rompiendo el Coco* and *Xiomara*.

In 2000 he taught at universities in France and Argentina, and a year later he toured Spain and other countries in Europe and Israel, where in addition to working with his group in clubs and festivals, he offered courses and conferences.

His production *Leyenda Viva*, under the Bis Music record label, won the 2010 Cubadisco Special Prize.

At the time of his death, he was a member of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba. (Source: PL)



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