



Michael Skinkus

January 27, 2026

MICHAEL SKINKUS was born outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1969 and had an early desire for syncopated music since he was very young. He was an educator, master percussionist, teacher, son, brother and friend to many. His early musical endeavors include private guitar lessons until 6th grade. Although he started on guitar, Michael found his true love in the world of percussion. In 1987, Michael moved to New Orleans to attend Tulane University and to engross himself in the city's music. In 1999, he began traveling to Cuba to study the Bata drums and Congas with the late master percussionist Regino Jimenez.

In addition to Cuba, Michael also visited Haiti, Brazil and Puerto Rico on what he called "study trips." He studied with the great Aliou Diouf from Senegal and learned the drum patterns specific to that region of Africa. In 2003, Michael earned a Master's Degree in Latin American Studies and Ethnomusicology at Tulane University. His skills as a musician and educator made him a diversified and much called upon artist on the New Orleans music scene. He had an arsenal of drums in his bag, including Bata drums, Congas, Timbales, Shekere, Bells, and much more.

More than twenty years ago, Michael started the band Moyuba with Sula Spirit and Margie Perez on vocals which centered on traditional Yoruba Orisha chants, Bata drums and his own musical arrangements. Moyuba has proudly

opened the Jazz Fest for the past 20 years and will have a tribute show to Michael at this year's Jazz Fest 2026. Michael has also played with great bands like The Radiators, Dr. John, Irma Thomas, Johnny Adams, Chuck Davis, Michael Ray and the Cosmic Crew, Tom McDermott, Freddie Omar con su Banda, Gabriel Velazquez, Bill Summers, Kumbuka Dance Troupe, Kenyatta Simon, Curtis Pierre, Otra, Vivaz, Helen Gillet, Iris May Tango, Los Vecinos, Mas Mamones, Margie Perez, Muevelo, Hart McNee, David Sobel, Sam Price, Scott Messersmith, Brent Rose, Smilin' Myron, Tom Worrell, Alexey Marti, Seguenon Kone and Ensemble Fatien, Steve Masakowski, and so many other musicians too many to list.

In addition to his musical genius, Michael was also a beloved teacher and educator. He taught 5th grade at the Country Day School and Young Audiences where he influenced many students to be their greatest selves. Teaching was his passion. He was also an adjunct professor at Delgado University.

Since moving to New Orleans in 1987, Michael Skinkus has been an integral part of the local Latin, African, Jazz, Afro-Cuban and Popular music scenes. Michael is joined now in the ancestral realm with his parents Diane Selwood and John Skinkus. He is survived by his stepmom Dorie Skinkus and her husband Mike Anderson, sister Valerie Skinkus, sister Dani Jupina, her husband Mike Jupina, their children Madeline and Benjamin Jupina, his former partner Jimena Urrutia with whom he remained close, plus a host of loving friends, relatives, musicians and community members. He will be deeply missed by all.

Michael loved his family, playing music with his friends, and the city of New Orleans. May we speak his name with love daily so he will never be forgotten. Michael Skinkus may your soul ascend to the highest point of heaven and may you be playing music with the greats on that side. We say farewell for now...until we meet again.

Relatives and friends of the family are invited to attend a Memorial Service honoring the life of Mr. Michael Skinkus at D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Ave., New Orleans, LA 70125 on Saturday, February 21, 2026 at 2:00pm. Please join us by live stream by visiting www.D.W.RhodesFuneralHome.com/live. Arrangements entrusted to D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Ave. New Orleans, LA. Please visit www.rhodesfuneral.com to sign the online guestbook, share memories and condolences to the family.

Cemetery Details

Private

Previous Events

Memorial Service

FEB 21. 2:00 PM (CT)

Rhodes Funeral Home - Washington Avenue
3933 Washington Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125
(504) 822-7162
<https://www.rhodesfuneral.com>

Tribute Wall



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Michael Skinkus.*



February 21 at 12:16 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Michael Skinkus.

February 21 at 12:16 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Michael Skinkus.*



February 21 at 12:51 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Michael Skinkus.

February 21 at 12:51 AM