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GABRIELA MONTERO PIANO

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7:00 P.M., MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2023
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MINERÍA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF MEXICO
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Kauyumari

Gabriela Ortiz (b.1964)

Symphony No. 2, *Sinfonía India*

Carlos Chávez (1899–1978)

Concierto Latino for piano and orchestra

Gabriela Montero (b. 1970)

- I. Mambo
- II. Andante moderato
- III. Allegro venezolano

INTERMISSION

La noche de los mayas

Silvestre Revueltas (1899–1940)

- I. Noche de los mayas
- II. Noche de jaranas
- III. Noche de Yucatán
- IV. Noche de encantamiento

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PROGRAM NOTES

Gabriela Ortiz (b. 1964)
Kauyumari

Baalkah. Denibée-Yucañana. Huítztl. Yanga. Téenek. In the titles of these works by Mexican composer Gabriela Ortiz, as well as in their conception and musical content, her deep interest not only in exploring various aspects of aboriginal cultures but also to contrast these aspects with certain elements of the modern world become evident. In this sense, it could be said that a significant part of Ortiz's production tends to settle into the domain of syncretism, without pretending to solve the conflicts and dichotomies implicit in her musical utterance. *Kauyumari*, for orchestra, clearly belongs in this group of works. The ancestral legend of *Kauyumari* embodies the essential elements of the *Wixaritari* (the Mexican aboriginal people usually called the Huichol), *Wirikuta* (their sacred land) and the *hikuri* (the peyote's traditional name), all mingled in an inseparable symbiosis. Gabriela Ortiz has written these words on the interaction of these elements, in musical terms, in her work *Kauyumari*:

"Among the Huichol people of Mexico, *Kauyumari* means 'blue deer.' The blue deer represents a spiritual guide, one that is transformed through an extended pilgrimage into a hallucinogenic cactus called peyote. It allows the Huichol to communicate with their ancestors, do their bidding, and take on their role as guardians of the planet. Each year, these native Mexicans embark on a symbolic journey to 'hunt' the blue deer, making offerings in gratitude for having been granted access to the invisible world, through which they also are able to heal the wounds of the soul.

When I received the commission from the Los Angeles Philharmonic to compose a piece that would reflect on our return to the art stages following the pandemic, I immediately thought of the blue deer and its power to enter the world of the intangible as akin to a celebration of the reconvening of live music. Specifically, I thought of a Huichol melody sung by the De La Cruz family—dedicated to the recording of ancestral folklore—that I used for the final movement of my piece, *Altar de muertos (Altar of the Dead)*, commissioned by the Kronos Quartet in 1997. I used this material within the orchestral context and elaborated on the construction and progressive development of the melody and its accompaniment in such a way that it would symbolize the blue deer. This in turn was transformed into an orchestral texture which gradually evolves into a complex rhythm pattern, to such a degree that the melody itself becomes unrecognizable (the imaginary effect of peyote and our awareness of the invisible realm), giving rise to a brass chorale while maintaining an incisive rhythmic accompaniment as a form of reassurance that the world will naturally follow its course.

While composing this piece, I noted once again how music has the power to grant us access to the intangible, healing our wounds and binding us to what can only be expressed through sound.

Although life is filled with interruptions, *Kauyumari* is an understanding and celebration of the fact that each of these rifts is also a new beginning."

To further document Gabriela Ortiz's closeness to ancestral cultures, it is worth noting that the *Altar de muertos* mentioned in her text on *Kauyumari* is part of her ongoing and abundant series of altars for different mediums, the most recent of which is *Altar de bronce* ('Brass Altar') for trumpet and orchestra, to be premiered during 2023. The title of the movement in *Altar de muertos* mentioned by the composer is *La*

calaca ('The Skull'), and it is worth quoting again from the composer's words to emphasize the relationship between the two works:

"*La Calaca*. Syncretism and the concept of death in modern Mexico, the chaos and richness of multiple symbols, where the duality of life is ever present: the sacred and the profane; good and evil; night and day; joy and pain."

From the explicit link between *Altar de muertos* and *Kauyumari*, not only in their musical content but also in the conception of both works, the idea of ritual clearly emerges. The strictly musical result of all these elements is a lively, luminous, rhythmically powerful piece, written in an openly tonal language.

Kauyumari's world premiere took place on October 9th, 2021, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Gustavo Dudamel. The same performers gave the work's Mexican premiere at the National Auditorium, on October 22nd, 2022.

Baalkah. Denibée-Yucañana. Huítztl. Yanga. Téenek. En los títulos de estas obras de Gabriela Ortiz, así como en su concepción y su contenido musical, se hace evidente el profundo interés de la compositora por explorar no sólo diversos aspectos de distintas culturas originarias, sino también por contrastar esos aspectos con ciertos elementos del mundo moderno. En este sentido, podría decirse que una buena parte de la producción de Ortiz tiende a instalarse en los terrenos del sincretismo, sin pretender resolver las pugnas y las dicotomías implícitas en sus propuestas musicales. *Kauyumari*, para orquesta, pertenece claramente a este grupo de obras. La ancestral leyenda de *Kauyumari* tiene como elementos esenciales a los *wixaritari* (el pueblo llamado huichol), a *Wirikuta* (su tierra sagrada) y al *hikuri* (nombre tradicional del peyote), en una simbiosis inseparable. Gabriela Ortiz ofrece estas palabras en las que expone la presencia e interacción de estos elementos, en términos musicales, en *Kauyumari*:

"*Kauyumari* significa para el pueblo huichol de México "venado azul" y representa su guía espiritual, que en un largo camino de peregrinaje se transforma en peyote, cacto alucinógeno que le permite a los huicholes comunicarse con sus ancestros y cumplir su voluntad, asumiéndose así como guardianes del planeta. Cada año estos indígenas mexicanos emprenden un peregrinaje simbólico para "cazar" al venado azul, al cual le hacen ofrendas como agradecimiento por permitirles el acceso al mundo de lo invisible, desde donde logran además curar las heridas de su alma. Cuando recibí el encargo por de la Orquesta Filarmónica de los Ángeles para escribir una pieza que reflejara el regreso a los escenarios después de la pandemia, inmediatamente pensé en el venado azul y en su poder para acceder al mundo de lo intangible y celebrar la reapertura de la música en vivo. Concretamente pensé en una melodía huichol cantada por la familia De La Cruz, dedicada a grabar folklore ancestral, y que utilicé en el último movimiento de mi cuarteto de cuerdas *Altar de muertos*, encargado por el Cuarteto Kronos en 1997. Utilicé este material dentro del contexto de la orquesta y trabajé en la construcción y desarrollo progresivo de la melodía y su acompañamiento de tal manera que la melodía simbolizara el venado azul. Ésta se transforma en textura orquestal, la cual a su vez se convierte gradualmente en una rítmica compleja, a tal grado que la propia melodía se vuelve irreconocible (efecto imaginario del peyote y el reconocimiento del mundo de lo invisible), dando paso a una sección coral con los metales, sin dejar de lado un incisivo acompañamiento rítmico que nos reafirma que el mundo seguirá su curso naturalmente. Al escribir esta obra afirmé, una

vez más, cómo el poder de la música es capaz de permitirnos acceder al mundo de lo intangible, de curar heridas, de vincularnos con aquello que no puede más que expresarse a través de los sonidos. *Kauyumari* es entender y celebrar que, si bien la vida está llena de interrupciones, cada una de estas rupturas es también un nuevo comienzo."

Para documentar un poco más a fondo la afinidad de Gabriela Ortiz con las culturas ancestrales, cabe resaltar que el *Altar de muertos* al que se refiere la compositora en su texto sobre *Kauyumari* forma parte de su ya abundante serie de altares, para diversas dotaciones, cuya adición más reciente es *Altar de bronce*, para trompeta y orquesta, a estrenarse en 2023. El movimiento del *Altar de muertos* que menciona la compositora lleva por título *La calaca*, y bien vale la pena citar de nuevo a la compositora para enfatizar la relación entre ambas obras:

"*La Calaca*. Sincretismo y el concepto de la muerte en el México moderno, el caos y la riqueza de múltiples símbolos, donde la dualidad de la vida está siempre presente: lo sagrado y lo profano; el bien y el mal; la noche y el día; la alegría y el dolor."

De la liga explícita que hay entre *Altar de muertos* y *Kauyumari*, no sólo en el contenido musical sino también en la concepción, se deriva la presencia evidente de la idea del ritual. El resultado estrictamente musical de todos estos elementos es una obra orquestal vivaz, luminosa, rítmicamente pujante, escrita en un lenguaje abiertamente tonal.

El estreno absoluto de *Kauyumari* se llevó a cabo el 9 de octubre de 2021 con la Orquesta Filarmónica de Los Ángeles dirigida por Gustavo Dudamel. Los mismos intérpretes hicieron el estreno en México, en el Auditorio Nacional, el 28 de octubre de 2022.

Carlos Chávez (1899–1978) Symphony No. 2, *Sinfonía India*

It can be said, in a more or less straightforward way, that Carlos Chávez's *Sinfonía india*'s singular profile comes from three fundamental elements, fully interdependent: original indigenous melodies, rhythmic complexity, and the use of certain pre-Hispanic percussion instruments. Regarding, the autochthonous melodies, it is worth noting that this is not the only work in which Chávez approached such musical sources; indigenous melodies are also present in such works as *Los cuatro soles* and *El fuego nuevo*. The composer said that this was the first music he ever heard, and that this music had nourished his musical sense and his musical taste. In particular, the *Sinfonía india* has at its core three melodies originating in three Mexican ethnic groups: the Seri and the Yaqui from Sonora, and the Huichol from Nayarit. The *Sinfonía india*'s rhythmic complexity is partly anchored in the composer's respect for the rhythm patterns of the melodies he utilized. Thus, a quick glance at the score will reveal, in the first five pages alone, the following time signature changes: 5/8, 2/4, 5/8, 2/4, 5/8, 3/4, 5/8, 3/4, 5/8, 2/4, 5/8, 2/4, 5/8. The rest of the work is built on a rhythmic layout as irregular as that of the beginning, and further on Chávez displays other combinations of these patterns with pulses in 7/8, 3/2 and 2/2. From the combination of all these rhythmic patterns arises a forward thrust that is undoubtedly one of the main assets in the whole Mexican symphonic repertoire. It is also worth noting that, after such an irregular beginning, Chávez introduces in its final pages, by way of contrast, a forceful and relentless ending built upon a long episode in a constant rhythm. At number 88 in the score, where Chávez indicates *Poco piu vivo-Sempre giusto* ('A bit livelier – Always steady'), the work's coda begins, 126 bars in an unchangeable 6/8-time signature. Brass instruments are especially

prominent in this bright episode, the trombones' brief but powerful *glissandi* adding a remarkable touch of energy to the symphony's finale.

The symphony's orchestration includes, on the other hand, a series of indigenous percussion instruments which, if the originals should be unavailable, can be substituted by their contemporary equivalents: indian drum, *tlalpanhuéhuatl*, water gourd, *güiro*, maracas, clay rattle, metal rattle, *raspador*, *tenábaris*, *teponaztli*. And alongside these indigenous instruments, the more conventional orchestral percussion, such as tympani, tenor drum, cymbals, xylophone, and claves.

In the winter of 1935–1936, Chávez paid one of his many visits to the United States, and the *Sinfonía india* was born from an invitation to conduct a concert for the Columbia Broadcasting System. The work was written in New York between the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936 and was first performed by Chávez himself conducting the CBS Orchestra on January 23rd, 1936. A few months later, on April 10th and 11th of that year, Chávez conducted his *Sinfonía india* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The work's Mexican premiere took place on July 31st, 1936, also under Chávez's baton, during one of the Orquesta Sinfónica de México's season concerts; the work was repeated on September 18th.

To emphasize the *Sinfonía india*'s undeniable telluric drive, one can recall the remarkable resemblance of its final bars to the last pages of the *Malambo* that rounds off the Estancia ballet suite by Argentinean composer Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983). Here we find the best of musical nationalism, closely linked with the earth and its oldest sounds.

Among the first (of many) famous international conductors who soon took up Chávez's *Sinfonía india*, special mention should be made of Leopold Stokowski, who wrote a letter to the composer asking for the score only five months after the work's premiere. It can be said without exaggeration that Carlos Chávez's *Sinfonía india* is the best known and appreciated Mexican symphonic work in the United States.

De un modo más o menos simple, puede decirse que la *Sinfonía india* de Carlos Chávez toma su peculiar carácter sonoro de la combinación de tres elementos fundamentales, plenamente interdependientes entre sí: las melodías indígenas originales, la complejidad rítmica, y el empleo de ciertos instrumentos prehispánicos de percusión. En cuanto a las melodías autóctonas, hay que mencionar que no fue ésta la única obra en la que Chávez acudió a tales fuentes musicales; en partituras como *Los cuatro soles* y *El fuego nuevo*, las melodías indígenas están presentes también. El compositor afirmó que esa era la primera música que había oído, y que era la que más había nutrido su gusto y su sentido musical. En particular, la *Sinfonía india* tiene como materia prima tres melodías surgidas de otros tantos grupos étnicos mexicanos: los seris y los yaquis de Sonora, y los huicholes de Nayarit. Respecto a la complejidad rítmica de la *Sinfonía india*, es claro que nace, en parte, del respeto que Chávez tuvo por los patrones rítmicos de las melodías que utilizó. Así, un vistazo a la partitura de la obra nos permite apreciar, tan sólo en las cinco primeras páginas, los siguientes cambios métricos: 5/8, 2/4, 5/8, 2/4, 5/8, 3/4, 5/8, 3/4, 5/8, 2/4, 5/8, 2/4, 5/8. El resto de la obra progresa sobre un esquema rítmico tan irregular como el del inicio ya que más adelante, Chávez plantea otras combinaciones de estos patrones rítmicos con pulsos de 7/8, 3/2 y 2/2. De la combinación de todos estos patrones rítmicos emerge un impulso motor que es sin duda uno de los más grandes aciertos de todo el repertorio sinfónico mexicano. Dentro del ámbito rítmico de la obra cabe señalar también que, como contraste con el inicio tan irregular, el final de la *Sinfonía india*, pujante e inexorable como pocos, está construido sobre un largo episodio de ritmo constante.

En el número 88 de la partitura, donde Chávez hace la indicación de *Poco piu vivo-Sempre giusto* ('Un poco más vivo-Siempre justo'), se inicia la coda de la sinfonía, construida en 126 compases de ritmo inalterable de 6/8. En este brillante episodio los metales llevan una parte de capital importancia, en especial los trombones, cuyos breves pero poderosos *glissandi* dan una soberbia pincelada de energía al final de la sinfonía.

En la instrumentación de la sinfonía hallamos, por otra parte, una serie de instrumentos indígenas de percusión que, en ausencia de los originales, pueden ser sustituidos por sus equivalentes contemporáneos: tambor indio, tlalpanhuéuetl, jícara de agua, güiro, maracas, sonaja de arcilla, sonaja de metal, raspador, tenábaris, teponaztlí. Y acompañando a este instrumental indígena, los instrumentos de percusión orquestal más convencionales: timbales, tambor tenor, címbalos, xilófono, claves.

En el invierno de 1935-1936, Chávez realizó una de sus múltiples visitas a los Estados Unidos, y de una invitación a dirigir un concierto para el Columbia Broadcasting System nació la *Sinfonía india*. La obra fue compuesta en Nueva York entre el fin de 1935 y el principio de 1936 y fue estrenada por el propio Chávez con la Orquesta de la CBS, el 23 de enero de 1936. Poco tiempo después, los días 10 y 11 de abril de ese mismo año, Chávez dirigió su *Sinfonía india* con la Orquesta Sinfónica de Boston. La obra fue estrenada en México el 31 de julio de 1936, también bajo la batuta de Chávez, en uno de los conciertos de la temporada de la Orquesta Sinfónica de México, y se repitió el 18 de septiembre de ese mismo año. Por cierto, en el programa del día del estreno de la *Sinfonía india* en México figuraban también obras de Vivaldi, Bach, Haydn y Debussy. Para documentar el innegable impulso telúrico de esta *Sinfonía india* no está de más señalar la asombrosa semejanza de sus compases finales con las últimas páginas del *Malambo* con que concluye la suite del ballet *Estancia* (1941) del compositor argentino Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983). He aquí el nacionalismo musical vinculado directamente con la tierra y con sus sonidos más antiguos.

Gabriela Montero (b. 1970)

Concierto Latino for piano and orchestra

- I. Mambo
- II. Andante moderato
- III. Allegro venezolano

Among the good news about Gabriela Montero: in 2015 she was awarded a Latin Grammy for Best Classical Album for her first recording with orchestra. It is an Orchid Classics CD in which Gabriela Montero is featured, alongside the YOA Orchestra of the Americas under Carlos Miguel Prieto, in her triple role as composer, pianist and improviser. The album includes Rachmaninoff's Second piano concerto, her own work *Ex Patria*, and some of her improvisations. While it is true that improvisation is more frequently associated with pianists belonging to the realms of jazz and popular music than with concert pianists, it is worth noting that a substantial part of Gabriela Montero's well-earned prestige comes, precisely, from her great gift as an improviser. On that subject, she has stated:

"I connect with my audience in a unique manner, and the audience connects with me. Since improvisation is a big part of who I am, it is the most natural and spontaneous way for me to express myself."

Thus, Gabriela Montero frequently improvises pieces not included in the program, but she also sometimes includes her improvisations as part of the "official" repertoire in the program. Proof positive is the content of her above-mentioned CD. Especially interesting is the fact

that Maestra Montero often asks the audience to provide a theme to improvise on. Furthermore, her first CD, *Bach and Beyond*, contains her improvisations on different pieces by Johann Sebastian Bach, and remained for several weeks at the top of Billboard classical lists. In any biographical sketch, it is worth noting that Gabriela Montero is an artist that, beyond her ample and varied musical profile, is also an artist publicly committed to important political and social issues of her time.

Several commentators said that it was only a matter of time before Gabriela Montero wrote a piano concerto of her own, and she finally did it with her 2016 *Concierto Latino*. The work is structured in the usual scheme of three contrasting movements, which might seem very traditional; the composer, though, sets forth some interesting variants of this structure. After a pensive introduction by the solo piano with harp accompaniment, the saucy initial *Mambo* is developed in a manner combining Latin, jazz, and tropical elements, although it contains a few passages that are more restful and reflexive. The *Andante moderato* begins, once more, with piano alone and establishes a cyclical structure expressed mainly in an attractive dialog between clarinet and piano introduced shortly after the movement's beginning and repeated just before the end. At the center of this nocturne-like *Andante moderato* there are a few moments that are more rhythmical and accented. The *Concierto Latino's* concluding *Allegro venezolano* is like an explosion of popular song and is rhapsodic in character. In some of the movement's passages, harmony is more decidedly tonal than in the rest of the work, although it also contains moments of a more austere inclination, sometimes reminiscent of Argentinean composer Alberto Ginastera's (1916-1983) music. It is worth noting that, although the *Concierto Latino* contains a few episodes for solo piano, Gabriela Montero has not written out the usual formal cadenzas. The concerto is, then, a highly individual work, potently expressive, with a complex and demanding solo part and a solid and effective orchestration.

On the occasion of the *Concierto Latino's* premiere, critic Peter Korfmacher published a review in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* in which he mentions as possible influences or guiding posts the music of composers such as Chopin, Schumann, Ravel, Villa-Lobos and Piazzolla.

Gabriela Montero wrote the *Concierto Latino* on a joint commission from the Ruhr Piano Festival, the German radio station MDR (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk) and Mexico's National Symphony Orchestra. Montero herself was the soloist in the concerto's world premiere at the Leipzig Gewandhaus's Grosser Saal, with the MDR Symphony Orchestra conducted by Kristjan Järvi, on March 20th, 2016. On that occasion, in keeping with her personal style, the pianist-composer presented the audience with one of her traditional improvisations, this time on the Harold Arlen / Yip Harburg song *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* (suggested by the public), which is widely known as part of the soundtrack for *The Wizard of Oz*, the film directed in 1939 by Victor Fleming. Especially noteworthy was her foray into the contrapuntal domains of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750).

Entre las muchas y buenas nuevas recientes sobre Gabriela Montero: en el 2015 obtuvo el Grammy Latino al Mejor Álbum Clásico por su primera grabación con orquesta. Se trata de un CD del sello Orchid Classics en el que Gabriela Montero se presenta, con la Orquesta YOA de las Américas y la batuta de Carlos Miguel Prieto, en su triple faceta de pianista, compositora e improvisadora. El disco incluye el Segundo concierto para piano de Rajmaninov, la obra *Ex Patria* de Montero, y algunas de sus improvisaciones. En el entendido de que

el asunto de la improvisación suele ser asociado más con pianistas populares y de jazz que con pianistas de concierto, vale la pena resaltar que una parte sustancial del merecido prestigio de Gabriela Montero tiene que ver precisamente con sus grandes dotes de improvisación. Ella misma se refiere a la improvisación con estas palabras:

Me conecto con mi público de una manera única, y el público se conecta conmigo. Como la improvisación es una parte tan grande de lo que soy, es la forma más natural y espontánea en la que puedo expresarme.

Así, Gabriela Montero improvisa con frecuencia fuera de programa, pero también suele incluir sus famosas improvisaciones como parte "oficial" de su repertorio. Prueba de ello, sin ir más lejos, el contenido de su galardonado CD mencionado líneas arriba. De particular interés, el hecho de que en ocasiones la maestra Montero pide al público que elija algún tema para improvisar sobre él. Más aún: su primer CD, titulado *Bach and Beyond*, contiene sus improvisaciones sobre diversas piezas de Johann Sebastian Bach, y estuvo durante varios meses a la cabeza de la lista clásica de Billboard. En cualquier trazo biográfico de Gabriela Montero se hace indispensable destacar el hecho de que además de su muy variado y completo perfil musical, se trata de una artista que también se compromete públicamente con los asuntos políticos y sociales importantes de su tiempo. Diversos comentaristas apuntaron recientemente que era solo cuestión de tiempo que Gabriela Montero compusiera un concierto para piano, y finalmente lo ha hecho, presentando en 2016 su *Concierto latino*. La estructura de la obra, en tres movimientos contrastados, es aparentemente tradicional, pero la compositora propone algunas variantes atractivas al interior de este esquema usual. Después de una introducción contemplativa a cargo del piano solo con acompañamiento del arpa, el Mambo inicial transcurre sabrosamente en un ámbito que combina lo latino, el jazz y el ambiente sonoro tropical, aunque en su interior hay algunos pasajes más tranquilos y reflexivos. El Andante moderato inicia, de nuevo, con el piano solo y presenta una estructura cíclica que se percibe, sobre todo, en un atractivo diálogo del piano con el clarinete que se presenta poco después del inicio y poco antes del final. En el centro de este Andante moderato con cualidades de nocturno, hay momentos de una expresión más rítmica, acentuada y cadenciosa. El Allegro venezolano con que concluye el *Concierto latino* es como una explosión de aires populares y tiene algo de rapsódico. Este movimiento presenta algunos pasajes en los que la armonía es más declaradamente tonal que en el resto de la obra, aunque también contiene momentos más austeros, algunos de los cuales recuerdan fugazmente la música de Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983). Es interesante notar que, si bien el *Concierto latino* tiene algunos pasajes para el piano solo, Gabriela Montero no ha escrito cadenzas propiamente dichas. En suma, se trata de una obra de una personalidad muy individual y de notable potencia expresiva, con una parte solista compleja y demandante, y una orquestación sólida y eficaz. Resulta interesante apuntar que, con motivo del estreno del *Concierto latino*, el crítico Peter Korfmacher escribió en el diario *Leipziger Volkszeitung* una reseña en la que menciona como posibles influencias y/o puntos de comparación de la obra a Chopin, Schumann, Ravel, Villa-Lobos y Piazzolla. Gabriela Montero compuso su *Concierto latino* para piano y orquesta gracias a un encargo conjunto del Festival de Piano del Ruhr, la radiodifusora alemana MDR (Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk) y la Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de México. Ella misma fue la solista en el estreno absoluto de su *Concierto latino*, el 20 de marzo de 2016 en la Gran Sala de la Gewandhaus de Leipzig, con la Orquesta

Sinfónica de la MDR dirigida por Kristjan Järvi. Muy a su estilo, la pianista-compositora obsequió al público como encore una de sus ya tradicionales improvisaciones, en esa ocasión sobre la canción *Somewhere over the rainbow* de Harold Arlen y Yip Harburg (sugerida por el público), muy conocida como parte del soundtrack del filme *El mago de Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939). Especialmente asombrosa fue la parte de su excursión improvisatoria en la que llevó la canción a los terrenos contrapuntísticos de Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750).

Silvestre Revueltas (1899–1940)

La noche de los mayas

- I. Noche de los mayas
- II. Noche de jaranas
- III. Noche de Yucatán
- IV. Noche de encantamiento

In his fascinating (and indispensable) *Documentary History of Mexican Film*, historian Emilio García Riera offers important facts for a comprehensive approach to *Night of the Mayas* (*La noche de los mayas*), a film directed in 1939 by Chano Urueta. Firstly, the author refutes those who considered this film as a reformist work, quoting the oft-mentioned element of "the goodness of all that is natural versus the evil of all that is artificial," condensed in the disturbing penetration of the white man into the "pure" habitat of indigenous peoples. In this idea's context, the film is rife with racism, paternalism, equivocal legends and, most important, this statement by García Riera:

"Rather than to the knowledge of the indigenous soul, the film points towards an anthropological populism that was in vogue in the 1930s: the ghost of Eisenstein still gravitated over Mexican cinema."

In the same review, in another paragraph, García Riera mentions the elements that back then gave the film a certain prestige, among which is, understandably, "the excellent Stravinskian music by Silvestre Revueltas." Regarding the music Revueltas wrote for *Night of the Mayas*, music critic José Antonio Alcaraz has said that "it remained ignored for a long time as mere sound scenography to the petrified film directed by Chano Urueta." Considering this statement, it seems particularly appropriate to also quote film critic Jorge Ayala Blanco, who mentions *Night of the Mayas* as "an ambitious monument to the petrified camera." The coincidence in terminology between both critics is certainly significant. The fact is that the musical fragments written by Revueltas for Urueta's film remained dispersed and unknown until, at the beginning of the 1960s, conductor José Ives Limantour edited them in four big blocks, two of which are particularly interesting. The first one, *Night of the Mayas* (*La noche de los mayas*), in which the work's general mood and thematic content are synthesized; and the third, *Night of Yucatán* (*Yucatán Night*), that includes a well-known pre-Hispanic melody, *Konex, konex*, a Mayan song that many of us have been exposed to, in various guises, in some pseudo-nationalistic musical initiation class or in the musical soundtrack for a folkloric ballet. This marks one of the relatively few occasions in which Revueltas actually quoted pre-existing music materials. The last movement of the suite unleashes a powerful percussion avalanche in which there is ample room for improvisation.

It is perhaps less interesting to speculate about Ives Limantour's fidelity to Revueltas' original intentions than to recognize the true value of this music which today, fortunately, has a solid place in the concert hall. It is worth noting, by the way, that in 1939, the year *Night of the Mayas* was produced, a National Committee of the Film Industry was formed, with

the wise and respectable mission of handing out all manner of prizes. As it was clearly predictable, *Night of the Mayas* was awarded several of them: it was voted the year's best film, Isabela Corona was named best actress, Gabriel Figueroa was selected for his cinematography, Emilio Gómez Muriel got the nod in editing and, yes, Silvestre Revueltas' music was also recognized. While it is true that *Night of the Mayas* and *Redes* ('Nets') remain to this day the best known among Revueltas' film scores, with frequent appearances in symphony programs, it must be remembered that he also wrote music for other films: *Vámonos con Pancho Villa* (Fernando de Fuentes, 1935); *El indio* (Armando Vargas de la Maza, 1938); *El signo de la muerte* (Chano Urueta, 1939); *¡Que viene mi marido!* (Chano Urueta, 1939); *Los de abajo* (Chano Urueta, 1939); and *Mala yerba* (Gabriel Soria, 1940). It has been said, by the way, that his score for *Mala yerba* was Revueltas' last composition, finished shortly before his death. It is certainly significant that Revueltas being such a paramount figure in Mexican musical history, little or nothing is known about these other films scores of his. Undoubtedly, this is due to the fact that film music is a genre that has been shamefully ignored in Mexico. Finally, it is worth quoting José Antonio Alcaraz one more time; there is an interesting proposition in his analysis of *Night of the Mayas*:

"There is nothing in this music of the approving fanfares to the acrobatic sentimentality of a film industry that, through its escapism, seeks only manipulation and submission."

This statement is fascinating, among other things, because it lends itself to extrapolation; it relates to a 1939 film, but it could well be applied to several eras in Mexican contemporary film, which time and again has been implacably destroyed in many ways, and of which very little is known or divulged. José Ives Limantour's version of Revueltas' score for *Night of the Mayas* was premiered, under his baton, on January 31, 1960, by the Guadalajara Symphony Orchestra.

En su fascinante e indispensable Historia documental del cine mexicano el historiador Emilio García Riera aporta datos importantes para una aproximación cabal a la película *La noche de los mayas*, dirigida en 1939 por Chano Urueta. Para empezar, el autor refuta a quienes consideraron a esta película como una obra renovadora, citando el muy reiterado elemento de la contraposición entre la bondad de lo natural frente a la maldad de lo artificial, que está resumido en la perturbadora penetración del hombre blanco en el hábitat "puro" del indígena. A partir de esta premisa, hacen su aparición en la película el racismo, el paternalismo, el equívoco de las leyendas y, puntualmente, esta afirmación categórica de García Riera:

"Más que al conocimiento del alma indígena, la cinta nos remite a un populismo antropológico de moda en los años 30: el fantasma de Eisenstein seguía gravitando en el cine nacional."

En otro párrafo de la misma crítica, García Riera cita los elementos que en su momento le dieron cierto valor a la película, y entre ellos está, como era de suponerse, "la excelente música stravinskiana de Silvestre Revueltas." Al respecto de la música que Revueltas escribió para la película *La noche de los mayas*, el crítico musical José Antonio Alcaraz ha afirmado que "permaneció largo tiempo soslayada como escenografía auditiva del producto cinematográfico petrificado que dirigió Chano Urueta." A la luz de esta afirmación, no deja de ser muy interesante citar también al crítico cinematográfico Jorge Ayala Blanco, quien se refiere a *La noche de los mayas* como un "ambicioso monumento a la cámara petrificada." No cabe duda de que la coincidencia de los

términos empleados por ambos críticos resulta muy significativa. En efecto, los fragmentos musicales de Revueltas para el filme de Urueta permanecieron dispersos y desconocidos hasta que al principio de la década de 1960 el director de orquesta José Ives Limantour los editó en cuatro grandes bloques, de los cuales dos resultan especialmente interesantes. El primero, *Noche de los mayas*, que sintetiza la carga atmosférica y el contenido temático de toda la obra; y el tercero, *Noche de Yucatán*, que contiene una conocida melodía prehispánica titulada *Konex*, *konex*, un canto maya que muchos de nosotros nos hemos encontrado, más o menos alterado, en alguna clase de iniciación musical de corte pseudo-nacionalista, o en el montaje musical de algún ballet folklórico. Esta es una de las escasas ocasiones en que Revueltas citó literalmente materiales musicales ya existentes. En el último movimiento de *La noche de los mayas* se desata una potente avalancha de percusiones en la que hay amplias opciones de improvisación.

Especular sobre la fidelidad de la edición de Ives Limantour a las intenciones originales de Revueltas resulta quizá menos interesante que reconocer el valor de esta partitura que por fortuna tiene hoy un lugar firme en las salas de concierto. Vale la pena mencionar, por cierto, que, en el año de 1939, año de producción de *La noche de los mayas*, se formó un Comité Nacional de la Industria Cinematográfica, dedicado a la sabia y respetable tarea de otorgar premios a diestra y siniestra. Como era predecible, *La noche de los mayas* obtuvo varios de ellos: fue designada como la mejor película del año, Isabela Corona fue la mejor actriz, Gabriel Figueroa fue premiado por su fotografía, Emilio Gómez Muriel por su edición y, claro, Silvestre Revueltas por su música. Si bien *La noche de los mayas* y *Redes* son las dos partituras cinematográficas de Revueltas que hoy se escuchan con alguna frecuencia en los programas sinfónicos, es preciso recordar que también escribió música para otras películas: *Vámonos con Pancho Villa* (Fernando de Fuentes, 1935); *El indio* (Armando Vargas de la Maza, 1938); *El signo de la muerte* (Chano Urueta, 1939); *¡Que viene mi marido!* (Chano Urueta, 1939); *Los de abajo* (Chano Urueta, 1939) y *Mala yerba* (Gabriel Soria, 1940). (Se dice, por cierto, que su partitura para la película *Mala yerba* fue la última obra de Revueltas, terminada poco antes de su muerte). Si se considera la importancia mayúscula que Revueltas tiene en el medio musical mexicano, es muy significativo el hecho de que poco o nada se sepa de estas otras músicas suyas para el cine. Ello se debe, sin duda, al hecho de que en México la música cinematográfica es un género vergonzosamente ignorado. Para finalizar, es posible citar una vez más a José Antonio Alcaraz, quien en su análisis de *La noche de los mayas* ofrece una interesante proposición:

"Nada hay en esta partitura de la fanfarria aprobatoria de las acrobacias sentimentales de un cine cuyo escapismo sólo busca la manipulación y el sometimiento."

Afirmación desde luego fascinante por sus posibilidades de extrapolación: se refiere a una película de 1939, pero bien pudiera aplicarse a varias etapas del cine mexicano contemporáneo, un cine que ha sido destrozado tan implacablemente que, entre otros muchos desastres, ha visto denigrada, olvidada e ignorada la música que es su complemento natural y de la cual desconoce y se divulga poco o nada. La versión de José Ives Limantour a la partitura de *La noche de los mayas* fue estrenada, bajo su dirección, el 31 de enero de 1960, por la Orquesta Sinfónica de Guadalajara.

— Juan Arturo Brennan

BIOGRAPHIES



Photo by Anders Brogaard

■ **GABRIELA MONTERO'S** visionary interpretations and unique compositional gifts have garnered her critical acclaim and a devoted following on the world stage. Anthony Tommasini remarked in *The New York Times* that "Montero's playing had everything: crackling rhythmic brio, subtle shadings, steely power...soulful lyricism...unsentimental expressivity."

Montero's 2023–2024 season will feature performances of her own "Latin Concerto" on an extensive US tour with Mexico City's Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería and Carlos Miguel Prieto, as well as with the New World Symphony (Stéphane Denève), Polish National Radio Symphony (Marin Alsop), Antwerp Symphony (Elim Chan), and National Arts Centre Orchestra (Alexander Shelley), the latter with which she continues a flourishing four-year Creative Partnership through 2025. In May 2024, Montero also makes her highly anticipated return to Los Angeles to work with the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and Jaime Martín.

Montero's other recent highlights include a European tour with the City of Birmingham Symphony and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, as well as debuts with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, Zurich Tonhalle Orchestra, New Zealand Symphony, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, and the Minnesota Orchestra, where "Montero's gripping performance...made a case that she might become the classical scene's next great composer/pianist" (*Star Tribune*). Other recent highlights include residencies with the São Paulo Symphony, Prague Radio Symphony, Basel Symphony, and at the (partially COVID-disrupted) Rheingau Festival; debuts at Carnegie Hall's Zankel Hall, New York's 92nd Street Y, Paris's Philharmonie and La Seine Musicale, and the London Piano Festival at King's Place; and the launch of "Gabriela Montero at Prager", an ongoing artistic residency established at the Prager Family Center for the Arts in Easton, Maryland.

Celebrated for her exceptional musicality and ability to improvise,

Montero has performed with many of the world's leading orchestras to date, including: the New York, Royal Liverpool, Rotterdam, Dresden, Oslo, Vienna Radio, Naples and Netherlands Radio philharmonic orchestras; the Gewandhausorchester Leipzig, NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg, NDR Radiophilharmonie Hannover, Zürcher Kammerorchester, and Academy of St Martin in the Fields; and the Yomiuri Nippon, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Detroit, Houston, Atlanta, Toronto, Baltimore, Oregon, Dallas, Vienna, Barcelona, Lucerne and Sydney symphony orchestras; the Belgian National Orchestra, and the Cleveland Orchestra, orchestra of the Komische Oper Berlin, and Residentie Orkest.

A graduate and Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in London, Montero is also a frequent recitalist and chamber musician, having given concerts at such distinguished venues as the Wigmore Hall, Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Vienna Konzerthaus, Berlin Philharmonie, Frankfurt Alte Oper, Cologne Philharmonie, Leipzig Gewandhaus, Munich Herkulesaal, Sydney Opera House, Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Luxembourg Philharmonie, Lisbon Gulbenkian Museum, Manchester Bridgewater Hall, Seoul's LG Arts Centre, Hong Kong City Hall, and the National Concert Hall in Taipei, and at the Barbican's 'Sound Unbound', London Piano, Edinburgh, Salzburg, SettembreMusica in Milan and Turin, Enescu, Lucerne, Ravinia, Colorado, Gstaad, Saint-Denis, Violon sur le Sable, Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, Rheingau, Ruhr, Trondheim, Bergen, and Lugano festivals.

An award-winning and bestselling recording artist, her most recent album, released in autumn 2019 on the Orchid Classics label, features her own "Latin" Concerto and Ravel's Piano Concerto in G Major, recorded with the Orchestra of the Americas in Frutillar, Chile. Her previous recording on Orchid Classics features Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2 and her first orchestral composition, *Ex Patria*, winning Montero her first Latin Grammy® for Best Classical Album. Others include Bach and Beyond, which held the top spot on the Billboard Classical Charts for several months and garnered her two Echo Klassik Awards: the 2006 Keyboard Instrumentalist of the Year and 2007 Award for Classical Music without Borders. In 2008, she also received a Grammy® nomination for her album *Baroque*, and in 2010 she released *Solatino*, a recording inspired by her Venezuelan homeland and devoted to works by Latin American composers.

Montero made her formal debut as a composer with *Ex Patria*, a tone poem designed to illustrate and protest Venezuela's descent into lawlessness, corruption, and violence. The piece was premiered in 2011 by the Academy of St Martin in the Fields. Montero's first full-length composition, Piano Concerto No. 1, the "Latin Concerto", was first performed in 2016 at the Leipzig Gewandhaus with the MDR Sinfonieorchester and Kristjan Järvi, and subsequently recorded and filmed with the Orchestra of the Americas for the ARTE Konzert channel.

Winner of the 4th International Beethoven Award, Montero is a committed advocate for human rights, whose voice regularly reaches beyond the concert hall. She was named an Honorary Consul by Amnesty International in 2015 and recognised with



Photo by Lorena Alcaraz/Bernardo Arcos

Outstanding Work in the Field of Human Rights by the Human Rights Foundation for her ongoing commitment to human rights advocacy in Venezuela. In January 2020, she was invited to give the Dean's Lecture at the Harvard Radcliffe Institute and has spoken and performed twice at the World Economic Forum in Davos. She was also awarded the 2012 Rockefeller Award for her contribution to the arts and was a featured performer at Barack Obama's 2008 Presidential Inauguration.

Born in Venezuela, Montero started her piano studies at age four, making her concerto debut at age eight in her hometown of Caracas. This led to a scholarship from the government to study privately in the USA and then at the Royal Academy of Music in London with Hamish Milne.

■ Widely regarded as a leading ensemble and musical institution in Mexico, the **MINERÍA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA OF MEXICO** remains at the musical forefront through eclectic programming, collaborations with renowned soloists and composers, and staunch advocacy of community and educational development. Founded in the 1970s, the Minería Symphony Orchestra boasts a legacy of excellence that attracts leading international conductors and artists including León Spierer, Peter Maag, Carmen Moral, Nicanor Zabaleta, Renata Scotto, Maxim Shostakovich, Philippe Quint, and more, solidifying its goal of providing a platform to showcase the highest caliber of national artistry.

The Minería Symphony Orchestra advocates for the music of our time, cultivating new works through composer collaborations that regularly share the stage with canonical composers from Beethoven and Brahms to Takemitsu and beyond. Their domestic

efforts regularly support Mexican composers, resulting in world premieres by composers Gabriela Ortiz, Carlos Sánchez Gutiérrez, Luis Herrera de la Fuente, Manuel Enriquez, and many more. Recording activities are common ground for Minería, and in 2010, under the baton of Carlos Miguel Prieto, they recorded works by the Austrian composer Erich Korngold for the Naxos label, incorporating Korngold's Violin Concerto with soloist Philippe Quint. The recording received two Grammy nominations, including in the "Best Solo Performance with Orchestra" category. Recent recordings include a highly acclaimed CD for Cedille featuring Carlos Chavez's Piano Concerto with pianist Jorge Federico Osorio, and a CD for Avantclassic featuring works by Bruch, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn. In celebration of their thirty-fifth anniversary, Minería released a twelve-DVD set of live recordings of the complete symphonies of Gustav Mahler.

Carlos Miguel Prieto is preceded by three influential directors. In 1978, the Minería Symphony Orchestra was founded by Jorge Velazco with the support of over one hundred founding members. Luis Herrera de la Fuente furthered the institution from 1985 to 1995, hosting important guest conductors such as Peter Maag and Carmen Moral, and a number of decorated international soloists. Velazco returned to bring Minería through the turn of the century, and German conductor Carlos Spierer led them from 2003 to 2005. Amongst their many accolades, Minería received the Las Lunas Award from the National Auditorium for "Best Classical Show," and in 2016, their musical contributions were recognized further by the Legislative Assembly of Mexico City, which bestowed the Medal of Merit in Sciences and Arts for their "great career and contributions to the culture of Mexico."

■ Known for his charisma and expressive interpretations, conductor **CARLOS MIGUEL PRIETO** is an influential cultural leader, educator, and a champion of new music. He starts his tenure as Music Director of the North Carolina Symphony at the beginning of the 2023–24 season, alongside his roles as Music Director of Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería since 2008, Music Director of Orchestra of the Americas since 2011, and Conductor Laureate of Louisiana Philharmonic. Prieto appears regularly with ensembles such as the Chicago Symphony, Minnesota Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, New World Symphony, Toronto Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra (D.C.), London Philharmonic Orchestra, NDR Elbphilharmonie, Frankfurt Radio Orchestra, the Hallé Manchester, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Bournemouth Symphony, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, and Spanish National Orchestra. In summer of 2023, he made his BBC Proms debut at Royal Albert Hall with the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain. Renowned for championing Latin American and new music, he has conducted over 100 world premieres of works by Mexican and American composers, many of which were commissioned by him. Prieto places equal importance on championing works by Black and African American composers such as Florence Price, Margaret Bonds, and Courtney Bryan, among others.

With an extensive discography spanning the Naxos and Sony labels, recent recordings include Rachmaninoff's Piano Concerto No.2 & Études tableaux Op.33, with Boris Giltburg and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra RSNO, which won a 2018 Opus Klassik award and was listed as a Gramophone's Critics' Choice; and his 2017 recording of Korngold's Violin Concerto with violinist Philippe Quint and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería received two Grammy nominations. His recording of the Elgar and Finzi Violin Concertos with Ning Feng was released on Channel Classics in November 2018.

Prieto was recognized by Musical America as the 2019 Conductor of the Year. A graduate of Princeton and Harvard universities, Prieto studied conducting with Jorge Mester, Enrique Diemecke, Charles Bruck, and Michael Jinbo.

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