

Anchorage Symphony Orchestra

NEWS RELEASE

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Anchorage Symphony Orchestra presents

Latin Vistas

featuring Vanessa Perez, piano

Saturday, January 28th – 7:30pm

Atwood Concert Hall, ACPA

Anchorage, Alaska – January 20, 2023 – On Saturday, January 28th, the Anchorage Symphony is heating up the cold January night with a sizzling concert, *Latin Vistas*. From the urban jungle of New York, to the streets of Mexico, to a piece that includes TWELVE percussionists, this concert is full of passion and dance-worthy rhythms. The evening’s program also features Venezuelan American pianist Vanessa Perez.

“Everything is rhythm,” composer Silvestre Revueltas wrote. “The poet’s language is everyday language. Everyone understands it or feels it. Music alone has to perfect its own language. All of that together is what music is to me. My rhythms are booming, dynamic, tactile, visual. I think in images that are melodic strains, that move dynamically.” He demonstrates that perfectly in his 1939 piece, *La noche de los Mayas*.

Composed for the film of the same name, Revueltas evokes the spirit of the early Mayas while preserving the rhythms of his native Mexico. He accomplishes these things with his colorful use of ethnic instruments added to the percussion section. Not only will audiences see the typical timpani, bass drum, snare drum, and xylophone, Revueltas added bongos, conga, metal rattle, guiro, toms, Teponaxtles (log drum), Huehuetl (Upright tubular wood drum), Tenor drum, Indian Drum, Tam-tam, and Caracol (conch shell).

A generous grant from the Atwood Foundation makes this expanded percussion section possible. The grant allowed the ASO to purchase instruments that give them the ability to perform pieces like *La noche*. And it helped them repair many of the traditional instruments that literally take a beating at every ASO concert and rehearsal.

When asked how her Peruvian background affects her music, American composer Gabriela Lena Frank responded, “Sometimes the Latin influences are quite evident, and sometimes they are quite subtle. And, of course, ‘Latin’ can mean so many different things. There is no one single Latin identity, as any Latino/Latinoamericano would tell you.” In Frank’s *Three Latin Dances* the Latin influences are front and center.

Her *Dances* include: *Jungle Jaunt*, which she calls “an unabashed tribute” to the urban jungle evoked in Bernstein’s *West Side Story*; the melancholic *Highland Harawi* evokes the sounds of the bamboo quena flute of the Andes; and *The Mestizo Waltz*, described by Frank as “a lighthearted tribute to the mestizo or mixed-race music of the South American Pacific coast. It evokes the romancero tradition of popular songs and dances that mix influences from indigenous Indian cultures, African slave cultures, and western brass bands.”

In 2004, the Utah Symphony premiered *Three Latin Dances*. A few days later, they recorded her piece to be released on an album with Bernstein’s *Symphonic Dances* from *West Side Story* and Rachmaninoff’s *Symphonic Dances*.

The evening then moves from the urban jungle of New York to a Spanish garden. In his *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, Andalusian composer Manuel de Falla perfectly evokes a warm evening filled with the scent of jasmine and citrus trees. What started as a set of nocturnes for solo piano became a piece for piano and orchestra.

Falla depicts three gardens in this Hispano-Arabic-inspired piece. They are jasmine-scented gardens surrounding the Alhambra (a palace and fortress complex located in Granada, Andalusia, Spain); an unidentified distant garden in which there is an exotic dance; and set of gardens in the Sierra de Córdoba.

Falla’s mysterious, lush and sometimes sentimental piece premiered in 1916 at Madrid’s Teatro-Real with the Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid. January 28th, is the ASO premiere featuring the bold and passionate pianist Vanessa Perez. Lauded by The Washington Post as “not to be taken lightly,” Venezuelan-American Perez is known for her varied performances. She is just as comfortable in Carnegie Hall as she is in a jazz club.

Perez’s ability to move through the classical, folk, and popular music worlds has become her hallmark as she continues to broaden the definition of the classical pianist. Her most recent venture is the “Americas” program, which premiered in March 2021, headlined by iconic actor Bill Murray. Perez’s new program is inspired by the richness, diversity, and political history of the American continents and includes juxtapositions like Aztec poetry with Messiaen; Simón Bolívar’s last letter with Beethoven; Don Quixote with Antonio Soler; and Jose Martí’s verses with the contagious Cuban hymn Guantanamera, sung in Spanish by Murray.

In recent years, Perez’s more traditional performance highlights have ranged from concerts with the Orquesta de la Juventud Simón Bolívar under Gustavo Dudamel in Caracas and under Diego Matheuz in Puerto Rico’s Casals Festival to the Chopin Festival of Majorca, Spain. She also toured Central America with the Youth Orchestra of the Americas under Carlos Miguel Prieto and Jean Philippe Tremblay. She has played with symphony orchestras in the U.S. from Miami to Minnesota to Vermont and in solo recitals from Manhattan to San Diego. In Europe, as a soloist, Perez has performed at the Palau de la Música in Barcelona, the Montpellier Festival in France, Konzerthaus in Berlin, and the Wigmore Hall in London, among others.

Now a Steinway artist, Perez was raised in Venezuela where she began her cello studies. At 17, she won a full scholarship to London’s Royal Academy of Music and continued her studies in Italy at the renowned Accademia Pianistica Incontri Col Maestro in Imola. She then completed post-graduate

studies at Yale University. A dual U.S. and Venezuelan citizen, Perez currently resides in Manhattan with her husband, pianist-arranger-composer Stephen Buck, and their children.

Most notably known as a percussionist and conductor, José Moncayo also composed a few symphonies, an opera, and a ballet. In 1941, Carlos Chávez (conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Mexico) asked Moncayo to write a piece based on music popular in the Veracruz area on the Gulf of Mexico. A percussionist in the orchestra since its founding, Moncayo accepted the commission, the result being his *Huapango* (a huapango is a family of Mexican music styles).

“Blas Galindo [a fellow composer and colleague] and I went to Alvarado, one of the places where folkloric music is preserved in its most pure form; we were collecting melodies, rhythms, and instrumentations for several days,” Moncayo recalled for one of his students. “The transcription of it was very difficult because the huapangueros never sang the same melody twice in the same way.” He ended up incorporating three traditional Veracruz huapangos. Colorfully orchestrated with an emphasis on instruments typical of the Veracruz style (trumpet, harp, and violins) and driven by the distinctive huapango rhythm has made this an enduring classic.

This evening of hot Latin rhythms goes beyond the concert hall. Audience members are encouraged to come early and enjoy a pre-concert music drum circle and singing in the lobby presented by SoBroSol, whose mission is to empower the Alaska Latinx Community to share culture and stories through the arts (more at www.SoBroSol.org).

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Full Concert Program

GABRIELA LENA FRANK | Three Latin American Dances
de FALLA | Nights in the Gardens of Spain
MONCAYO | Huapango
REVUELTAS | La noche de los Mayas