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LA CATRINA QUARTET

DANIEL VEGA-ALBELA, violin

SIMÓN GOLLO, violin

JORGE MARTÍNEZ-RÍOS, viola

JORGE ESPINOZA, cello

2:30 PM, Sunday, October 9, 2016

Faye Spanos Concert Hall

University of the Pacific

EDUARDO GAMBOA CAÑAMBÚ (1996-7)
(b. 1960)

JAVIER ÁLVAREZ METRO CHABACANO (1988)
(b. 1956)

ÁSTOR PIAZZOLLA SUITE DEL ÁNGEL (1962-65)
(1921-1992) Milonga Del Ángel
La Muerte Del Ángel
La Resurrección Del Ángel

— *INTERMISSION* —

ANONYMOUS MARIA CANELA (ARR. JORGE ESPINOZA)

PAQUITO D'RIVERA WAPANGO (1975)
(b. 1948)

ALBERTO GINASTERA STRING QUARTET NO. 1, OP. 20 (1948)
(1916-1983) Allegro violento ed agitato
Vivacissimo
Calmo e poetico
Allegramente rustico

LA CATRINA QUARTET appears by arrangement with Lisa Sapinkoff Artists
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ARTIST PROFILE



Since its founding in 2007, **La Catrina String Quartet** (LCSQ) is recognized as the new vanguard for contemporary Latin American string quartet repertoire. Their mission is three-fold: a deep commitment to the cultivation of new works by living composers throughout the Americas; the programming of existing Latin American works rarely performed in the U.S. and abroad; and bringing fresh interpretations to classical, romantic and twentieth century masterpieces. Hailed by Yo-Yo Ma as "wonderful ambassadors for Latin American music," LCSQ members are from Mexico (Daniel Vega-Albela, Jorge Martínez-Ríos), Venezuela (Simón Gollo) and Chile (Jorge Espinoza). Their rich cultural origins convey an unparalleled stylistic authenticity and artistic vision in their performances, collaborations and recordings. It is this unique balance of core Latin American repertoire with American and European classical traditions that characterizes both the diversity of their concert programs and appeal to multi-cultural audiences.

Collaborations featuring American composers and artists include Richard Boukas, Zae Munn's commission "Our Hands Were Tightly Clenched" and a groundbreaking recording of contemporary and Twentieth Century American music with tuba player James Shearer. LCSQ plans to release a multi-disc recording project to document and distill their championing of Latin American repertoire over the course of several years and more than five hundred performances. LCSQ is currently string quartet-in-residence at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces. A significant part of their educational mission includes outreach programs whose primary goal is to cultivate and expose a new emerging generation of young listeners to the traditional string quartet literature as well as to the evolving multi-cultural face of contemporary chamber music.

Modern Latin American Music

Today we are treated to a concert of contemporary music from Latin American composers ranging from the popular to the contemplatively classical. Our journey includes works by composers born in Mexico, Cuba, and Argentina. *¡Esperamos que todos ustedes tienen un gran viaje!*

Gamboa: *Cañambú*

A graduate of Trinity College of Music in London, Mexican composer Gamboa's work includes both chamber and symphonic as well as a vast output of music for film and theater. Trained as a composer under the tutelage of maestro Joaquín Gutiérrez Heras, his music has been recorded and included in dozens of albums, both concert music and soundtracks.

Gamboa lived for a while in Cuba, where he wrote music for many films. He has received awards and distinctions, including the Ariel given by the Academia Mexicana de Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas (the Mexican Academy Award) for the original music for the film *Zurdo*, directed by Carlos Salces. He also received the Mayahuel award at the Guadalajara International Film Festival for original music for the film *Ciudades Oscuras*, directed by Fernando Sariñana.

Cañambú is the name used in Cuba to refer to certain bamboo cane, which grows in Manigua Oriental, within Santiago province. This cane is different from sugar cane and caña brava. In the beginning of the 1940s, sonero (songwriter and performer) Aristides Ruiz came up with a way to use cañambú as a percussion instrument that would replace the bongos. The cañambúero (cañambú player) holds one segment of the cane in each hand, each one a different size thereby achieving both a treble and a bass sound. Holding them in vertical position he strikes them against a small wooden bench.

Rhythmically, this piece is extremely challenging. It has beautiful melodies but underneath everything it has a motor rhythm that is always driving the piece. Listen for the sound of percussion instruments represented in Cuban rhythms as portrayed by the quartet.

Álvarez: *Metro Chabacano*

Javier Álvarez Fuentes is a Mexican composer who is known for creating works that combine a variety of international musical styles and traditions that often utilize unusual instruments and new music technologies. According to composer John Adams, "The music of Javier Álvarez reveals influences of

popular cultures that go beyond the borders of our own time and place." Álvarez is one of the best-known Mexican composers of his generation and many of the works in his prolific oeuvre combine music technology with diverse instruments and influences from around the world.

After 25 years living in England he returned to Mexico where he became the founding director of the Musical Arts Department of the Escuela Superior de Artes de Yucatán. After a period serving as Dean of the Conservatorio de Las Rosas in Morelia, Michoacán, he is now living in Mérida, in Yucatán, combining activities as a freelance composer and project animator.

Metro Nativitas, Metro Taxqueña, and Metro Chabacano are stations belonging to one of the lines of the vast Mexico City subway system. These pieces, however, do not seek to portray any particular sonic or visual aspect of the subway. Rather, you should hear these pieces like short imaginary cyclical journeys across fleeting urban landscapes.

Metro Chabacano has a continuous eighth-note motto of moderately driving speed from which short melodic solos from each instrument materialize in turn. The recurrent notes give a false sense of simplicity for, although the phrases are generally cyclic, the rhythms, accents, and ephemeral melodic fragments convolutedly contradict the flow of perpetual motion.

Piazzolla: *Suite Del Ángel*

Of all Latin American composers, the most widely performed today in classical circles is surely Astor Piazzolla, who has achieved something resembling pop status within the past two decades. Piazzolla was an Argentine tango composer, bandoneon player and arranger. His works revolutionized the traditional tango into a new style termed "nuevo tango", incorporating elements from jazz and classical music. A virtuoso bandoneonist, he regularly performed his own compositions with a variety of ensembles. Upon his death, American music critic Stephen Holden described Piazzolla as "the world's foremost composer of tango music."

In 1925 the Piazzolla family moved to Greenwich Village in New York City, which in those days was a violent neighborhood inhabited by a volatile mixture of gangsters and hard-working immigrants. At home he would listen to his father's records of the tango orchestras of Carlos Gardel and Julio de Caro, and was also exposed to jazz and classical

music, including Bach. He began to play the bandoneon after his father spotted one in a New York pawn shop in 1929 and purchased it for \$19.

Piazzolla wrote the five works that have subsequently been gathered together and dubbed the "Angel Series" over a span of years in the 1960s. This series contains two of his most popular compositions. At about the same time, Piazzolla wrote another series concerning a devil, known as the "Diablo series." These much more severe works have not gained similar popularity.

Not originally conceived as a suite, three of the five "Angel" pieces we hear today were collected and arranged by Emilio Colón. "La Muerte Del Ángel," was written in 1962 for a play by Alberto Rodríguez Muñoz entitled "El Tango Del Ángel." The other two, "Milonga Del Ángel" (which became the title track of a Piazzolla album three decades after it was composed) and "Resurrección Del Ángel" were written separately three years later.

The Rodríguez Muñoz play focuses on an angel who shows up to wash clean the souls of the residents of a squalid apartment block in suburban Buenos Aires, but ends up murdered in a knife fight. The drama's overall course is tracked in the three pieces: from the serene hopefulness of the milonga (a kind of proto-tango dance), to the rising force of the death scene, and on to the otherworldly and ultimately glorious culmination, presenting the angel resurrected.

"Milonga Del Ángel" is a tender, sentimental piece. The milonga is a precursor of the tango, with a similar rhythm but is lighter and gentler. This milonga has one of Piazzolla's prettiest melodies. "Muerte Del Ángel" is a startling example of the manner in which Piazzolla was pressing the limits of the traditional tango. It is a three-voice fugue with a propulsive bass line. The angel is attacked and, although it defends itself, it is killed in the knife fight. The rhythms and harmonies are severe and obdurate; the piece itself is exhilarating. Unmistakably to make a concert suite with a happy ending, in 1965 Piazzolla added to these two pieces a new composition called "Resurrección Del Ángel." In this highly striking work, a very joyful, bounding theme alternates with added development of the original milonga theme representing the angel.

Anonymous: *Maria Canela*

Inti-Illimani are an instrumental and vocal Latin American folk music ensemble from Chile. The group, formed in 1967 by a group of university students and led by founder Horacio Salinas, acquired widespread popularity in Chile for their song *Venceremos* (We shall win!), which became the anthem of the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende. Inti-Illimani were on tour in Europe when the 1973 Pinochet-led Chilean coup occurred and their music was banned by the ruling military junta. They were unable to return home and took up residence in Italy. They ended up on the "longest tour in history" that finally ended 15 years later when they were finally permitted to return to Chile.

While in Europe their music took on a character of great variety, incorporating elements of European baroque and other traditional music forms. Combining this into their rich and colorful Latin American rhythms created a distinctive fusion of modern world music. "Maria Canela" is a very well-known tune that was popularized by Inti-Illimani and here arranged for string quartet by La Catrina member Jorge Espinoza.

D'Rivera: *Wapango*

Paquito D'Rivera, a saxophonist, clarinetist, and composer, has won 14 Grammys and is celebrated both for his artistry in Latin jazz and his achievements as a classical composer: He is the only artist ever to have won Grammys in both Classical and Latin Jazz categories.

Born in Havana, Cuba, he was a child prodigy who became a professional musician at age 6, performed with the National Theater Orchestra at 10, studied at the Havana Conservatory of Music and became, at 17, a soloist with the Cuban National Symphony.

Written in 1975, *Wapango* is one of D'Rivera's most recognizable works for small ensemble. Originally written for woodwind quintet, it has also been performed by saxophone and string quartets and is featured on two albums by Yo-Yo Ma. This composition is a perfect example of D'Rivera's ability to meld varied musical traditions into a cohesive whole. He has taken his inspiration from a lively Afro-Mexican folk dance, the Huapango. Listen as he uses his virtuosic skill to link connections between traditional and current forms, broadening the rhythmic and harmonic scope of the source material and balancing old and new with great panache.

Ginastera: *String Quartet No. 1*

Alberto Evaristo Ginastera, born in Buenos Aires to parents of Catalan and Italian descent, was an Argentine composer of classical music. He is considered one of the most important Twentieth-Century classical composers of the Americas because he developed an art that was a profound synthesis of national and contemporary elements.

Ginastera studied at the conservatory in Buenos Aires, graduating in 1938. As a young professor, he taught at the Liceo Militar General San Martín. During a visit to the United States in 1945–47 to escape the frequent scrutiny from the Perón regime, he studied with Aaron Copland at Tanglewood. He returned to Buenos Aires and was appointed professor at La Plata and Dean at the Catholic university of Argentina. He held a number of teaching posts, including head of the Center for Advanced Musical Studies in Buenos Aires, and among his notable students was Ástor Piazzolla, who studied with him in 1941.

Ginastera himself grouped his music into three creative periods. The first, "Objective Nationalism" (1934–48), saw the use of Argentine folk music directly using the multicultural fabric of Native Indian, African, European, and "Criollo" (Latin American) peoples' music. He was particularly attracted to the music of the Pampas, what you would think of as Argentine cowboy music. *Estancia* (1941) is his most famous work from this period and reminds of Aaron Copland's *Rodeo and Billy the Kid* in quotation of actual folk tunes.

His second period, "Subjective Nationalism" (1948–56), the period of the *String Quartet No. 1* that we hear today, has the composer using rhythms and creating folk-like melodies without actual quotation, very much akin to the later work of Kodály and Bartók.

The third period, "Neo-Expressionism" (1957–83), saw Ginastera embrace twelve-tone serialism. The most prominent compositions of Ginastera's Neo-Expressionist period are the *Quartet No. 2 for Strings* (1958) *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* (1961) and the operas *Bon Rodrig* and *Bomarzo* (1967), the latter a potpourri of "sex, violence and hallucination" that Newsweek dubbed the "topless opera" was actually banned in Buenos Aires for five years.

Ginastera's prolific output comprises four operas, orchestral works, several concertos, choral and solo vocal pieces, a wide range of chamber and instrumental compositions, eleven film scores and incidental music for half a dozen dramas.

In composing his first string quartet, Ginastera commented that "it was time to drop ethnic realism in favor of the creation of an imagined folklore," and so this is an early example of his Subjective Nationalism period. The opening movement begins with an introduction, forceful and dramatic in effect, conjuring rhythmic and melodic aspects of folk music of the Gauchos (cowboys). It is a demanding, discordant and diverse language, but it evolves to a contrast with spare, quiet music evoking sounds of the night. Do you sense a similarity with Bartók and Stravinsky?

Movement two is dazzling and suggests the animated *malambo*, a rural dance of the pampas lasting several hours in which two men contend aggressively in a display of dance prowess. The movement is a spectral scherzo: listen for rapid repeated-note figures, technically intricate string effects, accumulated trills, unusual bowing effects, nervous rhythms and interaction of parts that suggest guitars accompanying the dance contest.

The third movement, a nocturne that is the emotional center of the quartet, finally disrupts the aggressive temperament with a lyrical melody for violin that gets passed to the cello. This entire movement is based on the composer's characteristic "guitar" chord comprising the tones of the six open strings of the instrument (e-a-d-g-b-e played all together), a construct he used frequently in other works. Listen as this device determines the harmonic development of the entire movement.

The finale, returning to the high energy of the first movement, is a rondo in the flavor of Argentine rural dances, featuring distinct episodes. Two distinct themes interchange in varied tonal coloration: listen for one theme to again evoke the open guitar strumming while the second is derived from the Criolla folk song tradition. There are swiftly shifting time signatures expressing blazing tension that at last resolves in the exultantly frenzied climax.

While the rhythms and melodies of Ginastera's first string quartet have their roots in Argentinian folk music, the writing is austere, the musical language is erudite, and the effect is striking.

—notes © Dr. Michael Spencer

61ST SEASON 2016-2017

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Windsync

2:30 PM Sunday, September 11, 2016

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La Catrina Quartet

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1. *Shakespeare*
2. *Für Elise*
3. *His cat*
4. *Felix Mendelssohn*
5. *South Park*
6. *East Side Story*

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