

Cuarteto Latinoamericano is represented in the United States
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THE ARTISTS:

Cuarteto Latinoamericano is one of the world's most renowned classical music ensembles acclaimed for its performances of the standard string quartet repertoire, and for more than thirty years, the leading proponent of Latin American music for string quartet. Founded in Mexico in 1982, the Cuarteto has toured extensively throughout Europe, North and South America, Israel, China, Japan and New Zealand. They have premiered more than a hundred works written for them and continue to introduce new and neglected composers to the genre. The Cuarteto has won two Latin Grammy Awards for best Classical Album, including their 2016 release "El Hilo Invisible" (The Invisible Thread), ten songs from the Sephardic tradition, performed together with **Mexican singer Jaramar**. The Cuarteto has been recognized with the Mexican Music Critics Association Award, and received the Most Adventurous Programming Award three separate times from Chamber Music America/ASCAP.

Cuarteto members are the three Bitrán brothers, violinists Saul and Aron and cellist Alvaro, with violist Javier Montiel. The Cuarteto has performed and recorded a discography of over 70 recordings, including most of the Latin American repertoire for string quartet. Volume 6 of their complete Villa-Lobos cycle of 17 quartets for Dorian received 2002 nominations for both a Grammy Award and a Latin Grammy for Best Chamber Music Recording. They won the 2012 Latin Grammy for Best Classical Recording for their CD *Brasileiro: Works of Mignone*. Composer Gabriela Lena Frank's *Inca Dances*, recorded with guitarist Manuel Barrueco, won the 2009 Latin Grammy for Best New Latin Composition.

The Cuarteto performs as soloist with important orchestras, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Seattle Symphony under Gerard Schwarz, the Dallas Symphony, Ottawa's National Arts Center Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México, and the Simón Bolívar Orchestra of Venezuela. They made their debut with the Miami Symphony in April 2016, premiering a new Orlando Garcia work. On tour, the Cuarteto plays the world's most distinguished halls and festivals, including Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, La Scala in Milan, Austria's Esterhazy Palace, the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and the Ojai Music Festival.

Collaborations with many of the world's most celebrated artists have included the cellists János Starker and Yehuda Hanani, pianists Itamar Golan, Cyprien Katsaris and Rudolph Buchbinder, tenor Ramón Vargas, clarinetist Paul Meyer, and guitarists Narciso Yepes, Sharon Isbin, David Tanenbaum and Manuel Barrueco. The Cuarteto has performed extensively with Barrueco in some of the most important venues of the U.S.

and Europe, recorded two acclaimed CDs, and together commissioned guitar quintets from Miguel del Aguila, Michael Daugherty and Gabriela Lena Frank.

Under the auspices of the Sistema Nacional de Orquestas Juveniles of Venezuela, the Cuarteto Latinoamericano has created and heads the Latin American Academy for String Quartets in Caracas, a training ground for five select young string quartets from the Sistema. The musicians visit the Academy four times annually. The Cuarteto was quartet-in-residence at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh from 1987 - 2008. Since 2004 the government has awarded them the México en Escena grant given through FONCA (National Fund for Culture and the Arts).

PROGRAM NOTES:

Dan Román (b.1974) has developed a compositional style integrating elements of the folkloric music from the Caribbean, in particular that of his native Puerto Rico, with the mechanics of minimalism and the aesthetics of postmodern art. His music has been performed in Puerto Rico, South America, Spain, France, Austria, Italy, and throughout the United States, including performances in New York City. Dan Román has received commissions to write new pieces for the Alturas Duo, the New World Trio, The Irrelevants, the Connecticut Children's Choir, the Hartford Commissions project, and others. At Trinity College in Hartford CT Román teaches courses in the music of the 20th century, post-colonial Latin America, and music technology. The composer writes: The title of this piece is split in two terms: 'Sonora' meaning aural but also referring to the names of two famous Afro Caribbean musical ensembles, Sonora Matancera from Cuba, and Sonora Ponceña from Puerto Rico. 'Complejidad' is a lingual morphing between Spanish and English, and refers to the inherent metric, harmonic, and structural complexity of the piece. This first movement, 'Montuno Fever', relies on the recognizable pattern of the montuno accompaniment used in the music of the Afro Caribbean, while a twelve-tone row makes a few appearances, riding the rhythm of the "montuno" in multiple and diverse ways.

Manuel M. Ponce is, along with Revueltas, Mexico's most renowned composer. His work as a composer, music educator and scholar of Mexican music connected the concert scene with a usually forgotten tradition of popular song and Mexican folklore. Many of his compositions are strongly influenced by the harmonies and form of traditional songs. In 1812 he wrote the song **Estrellita** (Little Star), which quickly became famous, and subject to numerous arrangements for different instrumentations, and was even borrowed by Ponce himself, becoming the subject of the slow movement of his Violin Concerto (1943). This arrangement for string quartet, made by Alvaro Bitrán, is based on the transcription of Estrellita that Jascha Heifetz made (and recorded), for violin and piano. The **Gavota** was written in 1943, for piano, and this string quartet arrangement was made by Mexican violinist César Quirarte Ruiz.

Costa Rican composer and guitarist **Alejandro Cardona** studied composition with Luis Jorge Gonzalez, Leon Kirchner, Ivan Tcherepnin and Curt Cacioppo. He graduated from Harvard University and has a Master's Degree in Image Synthesis and Computer Animation from Portsmouth University and The Utrecht School of the Arts. For many years he lived in Mexico where he conducted research on popular Meso-American and Caribbean music. Since 1986 he has worked at the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica in the Cultural Identity, Art and

Technology Program and the Music School where he is the founder of the Latin American Composition Workshop. The composer writes: "Echú originated as a piece composed for the Calacas Blues Band, a contemporary Latin American blues-oriented group, and has since been adapted for various instrumental groups. Echu is one of the names given to an important Yoruban Orisha (deity) of Nigerian origin, also known as Elegua, who is responsible for 'opening (metaphorical) doors'. We could say that this piece is a contemporary and Latin-Americanized reinvention of the blues..."

The *Lullaby* for string quartet was written in 1919 while **George Gershwin** was still a student, although he had already had several successes. His first musical, *La La Lucille*, was produced on Broadway that same year. Contrary to the Hollywood-ized image of him, Gershwin was devoted to studying music throughout his all too short life. He was constantly seeking to expand his knowledge and refine his technique. He used the opening theme of the *Lullaby* as part of an aria (*Has Anyone Seen My Joe?*) in his unsuccessful one-act opera of 1922, *Blue Monday*. Though the stage work was a failure, (it was part of "George White's Scandals" and was withdrawn after a single performance), hearing the work caused Paul Whiteman to commission a work for his upcoming Aeolian Hall concert. This work became *Rhapsody in Blue*. The manuscript for *Lullaby* sat on Ira Gershwin's shelf for decades until he showed it to harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler who transcribed it for harmonica and string quartet and presented it at the Edinburgh Festival in 1963. It was then transcribed for harmonica and orchestra. The work was not premiered in its original form until Oct. 28, 1967. It is often heard in a version for string orchestra.

Three-time Grammy nominated Uruguayan-American composer **Miguel del Aguila** was born in Montevideo, Uruguay. He is considered among the most distinctive composers of the postmodern, and has written more than 115 works that couple drama and driving rhythm with nostalgic nods to his South American roots. Aquila's music has been recorded on 32 CDs with worldwide performances in over 60 orchestras, by thousands of ensembles and soloists. His training took place in both the Americas and Europe. In 1978, fleeing Uruguay's repressive military government, he moved to California and soon received a degree from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and then Vienna's Hochschule für Musik. Early premieres of his works in Vienna's Musikverein, Konzerthaus and Bösendorfer Halls introduced his music and distinctive Latin sound to European audiences. His New York premiere was in 1989 at Carnegie Recital Hall with Lukas Foss conducting Hexen with the Brooklyn Philharmonic. He received the Kennedy Center Friedheim Award in 1995, and was music director of Ojai Camerata until 1999. He has received three Latin Grammy nominations and his works are recorded on Naxos, Dorian, Telarc, New Albion, Albany, Centaur and Eroica and published by Peermusic Classical. Originally the last movement of Aguila's String Quartet No. 2, Presto No. 2 has been revised and transformed into a larger, independent work. "...a humorous, ironic and sometimes mocking Latin dance..."

Violeta Parra was a Chilean composer, songwriter, folklorist, ethnomusicologist and visual artist who set the basis for *Nueva Canción Chilena*, a renewal and a reinvention of Chilean folk music. Her most renowned song, *Gracias a la Vida*, was popularized throughout Latin America by Mercedes Sosa and in the US by Joan Baez, and remains one of the most covered Latin American songs. Parra revived the *Peña*, (now known as *La Peña de Los Parra*), a community center for the arts and for political activism. She is considered to be one of the most important and essential former member of Chilean folklore history in collecting, recording and investigating the origins and richness of the native rural music of her country. In addition to the hundreds of

songs she wrote, she composed 5 pieces for solo guitar, which she called *Anticuecas*. These short pieces push the boundaries between folk and contemporary music, combining the basic rhythms of the Chilean *cueca* (national dance) with atonal music, to which Parra was exposed during her years in Paris. This string quartet arrangement of Anticueca No. 2 was made by Javier Montiel.

Francisco Paulo Mignone (September 3, 1897–February 2, 1986), son of the Italian immigrant flutist Alferio Mignone, is one of the most significant figures in Brazilian classical music, and one of the most significant Brazilian composers after Heitor Villa-Lobos. In 1968 he was chosen as Brazilian composer of the year. A graduate of the São Paulo Conservatory and then of the Milan Conservatory, Mignone returned to São Paulo in 1929 to teach harmony, and in 1933 took a post in Rio de Janeiro at the Escola Nacional de Música. Mignone was a versatile composer, dividing his output nearly evenly between solo songs, piano pieces, chamber instrumental works, orchestral works, and choral works. In addition, he wrote five operas and eight ballets. Much of Mignone's music is strongly nationalistic in flavor; influenced by the nationalistic movement of his former schoolmate and teacher, the musicologist and writer Mário de Andrade, Mignone uses the folk and popular melodies and forms of his native Brazil as a basis for his compositions. From 1929 until 1960 his work was most strongly characterized by this nationalism, during which he composed such pieces as the *Fantasia Brasileira* and his ballets *Maracatu do chico rei* and *Leilão*. His solo vocal and piano works of this time earned him particular acclaim for their expression of Brazilian musical styles, such as the choro, the modinha, and the valsas (waltzes) reminiscent of strolling serenaders. In the late 1950s Mignone drifted away from the nationalistic music and toward the then-current trends in academic concert music—polytonalism, atonalism, and serialism—composing works such as his 1958 Piano Concerto. However, he returned to nationalistic writing toward his last few years. At the age of 83 Mignone married Maria Josephina, with whom he frequently played duets; she remains an interpreter of his music to this day.

Javier Alvarez was born in Mexico in 1956. He studied clarinet and composition in Mexico, the US, and England, where he lived since 1981 until 2004, when he returned to Mexico. His short piece, **Metro Chabacano**, was written in 1991 and dedicated to the Cuarteto Latinoamericano. The first performance took place in Mexico City at the grand opening of an enormous kinetic art, in the Chabacano station of the Mexico City's Metro (subway system). The piece was played live for the dedication ceremonies, and then through the PA system continuously for the following three months. Since then it has also been performed in the subways of Toronto and Los Angeles. The piece has a continuous eighth-note movement of driving rhythm from which a melodic solo emerges in turn from each instrument. The repeated notes give a false sense of simplicity: though the piece is brief (and in a single movement) the rhythms, accents, and melodic fragments that emerge from the perpetual motion background are intricately complex.

Carlos Gardel (born **Charles Romuald Gardes**) was a French Argentine singer, songwriter, composer and actor, and the most prominent figure in the history of tango. Gardel's baritone voice and the dramatic phrasing of his lyrics made miniature masterpieces of his hundreds of three-minute tango recordings. Together with lyricist and long-time collaborator Alfredo Le Pera, Gardel wrote several classic tangos. Gardel died in an airplane crash at the height of his career, becoming an archetypal tragic hero mourned throughout Latin America. For many, Gardel embodies the soul of the tango style. He is commonly referred to as "Carlitos", "El Zorzal" (The Song Thrush), "The King of Tango", "El Mago" (The Magician), "El Morocho del Abasto" (The Brunet Boy from Abasto), and "El Mudo" (The Mute).

Astor Piazzolla was born in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in 1921, and grew up in New York City. He returned to Argentina in 1937 and began giving concerts on the instrument for which he was most identified—the bandoneón, a button-operated hybrid of the accordion and the principal instrument of tango music, on which he was an acclaimed virtuoso. Piazzolla began his studies of classical music with Alberto Ginastera, and wrote a symphony for the Buenos Aires Philharmonic, which won him a scholarship to study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger. Although Piazzolla had hopes of becoming a “mainstream” composer like the others who flocked to Boulanger—among them Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, and Virgil Thomson—Boulanger encouraged him to write tangos rather than compose in the more academic European-oriented style. And write tangos he did: the variety of Piazzolla’s 750 works is astonishing, and virtually everything he wrote was based on the tango. His tangos introduced dissonance, chromatic harmony and a much wider range of rhythm than the traditional tango allowed, which caused an uproar among his Argentine countrymen to whom the ‘traditional’ tango was sacrosanct. Piazzolla crossed all boundaries between music genres and sub-cultures. Over the years feature articles and reviews appeared in such diverse publications as *Folk Roots*, *Downbeat*, *Cadence*, *Jazz Magazine*, *Keyboard Magazine*, *Rolling Stone*, *Opera*, and *Village Voice*. In 1988 *Musical America* headlined an article “*Maria de Buenos Aires*, the world’s first tango opera.” ***Four for Tango***, written in 1987, is Piazzolla’s only original composition for string quartet. It is vintage Piazzolla: sharply accented, aggressively sonorous, highly rhythmic, immediately appealing, sophisticated; and a tango. Astor Piazzolla died in Buenos Aires on July 5, 1992 at the age of 71.