

Salón Latino Chamber Music Series: Music by Afro-Latin American Composers

Nov. 18, 2020 | 8 PM | Auer Hall

Tonight's Salón Latino celebrates the music of Afro-Latin American composers and showcases a sampling of their rarely performed chamber works, including new arrangements. This concert is just one of many events offered to the IU community through the Afrolatin Coalition in the Arts Series, a month-long interdisciplinary initiative coordinated and sponsored by Indiana University's Latin American Music Center (LAMC), Latino Studies Department (LATS), Graduate Mentoring Center (GMC), and Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies (CLACS). The series has sought to highlight the richness and diversity of Afrolatin cultures and demonstrate multiple approaches to understanding, studying, representing, embodying, and promoting them. Tonight's concert turns the focus of this series to the world of art music and offers a diverse sampling of pieces written by four composers who address Afrolatin culture in their works.

The program opens with a prayerful offering, **"Oh Yemanja" (Mother's Prayer)** by Cuban-born **Tania León**. A native of Havana, León first studied music in Cuba before coming to the United States in 1967 and settling in New York, where she has been a key figure in many important arts organizations, including the Dance Theater of Harlem, Brooklyn Philharmonic, American Composers Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic. She has taught at both Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY). "Oh Yemanja" is an arranged excerpt from León's 1994 chamber opera, *The Scourge of Hyacinths*, which sets a libretto based on a radio play of the same name by the Nobel Prize-winning Nigerian poet and author Wole Soyinka. Set in 12 scenes, the opera centers on a young man imprisoned for his political beliefs and his deeply devout mother who prays for his safe escape. Of writing the opera, León remarked that she was reminded of her own childhood and the important women who shaped it. Yemanja, an orisha and water spirit in Yoruba religious practices, played a part in León's own heritage, and during a visit to León's home in New York, her mother even sang a few words of what she remembered from a call to Yemanja. The music of "Oh Yemanja" is one of León's more lyrical and easily accessible settings and caught the interest of Dawn Upshaw who brought it international attention through its inclusion on her album *The World So Wide*. In this aria, the voice navigates a wide compass, in awe of the powerful, percussive waves in the piano and the fluid, sympathetic cello that suggests Yemanja is listening.

The selections by Haitian composer **Ludovic Lamothe** represent two of his best-known works and were some of the few published during his lifetime. Born in Port-au-Prince to a musical and literary family, Lamothe studied both piano and clarinet in his home country before obtaining a scholarship to study at the Paris Conservatory in 1910. Upon his return home to Haiti, he received praise for his performances, and the local audiences commonly

compared him to Chopin. His compositions are highly pianistic and quite virtuosic in character and—similar to Chopin—Lamothe developed a keen interest in the music of his native country.

As a composer, Lamothe received the most recognition during his lifetime for ***La Dangereuse*** and ***Nibo***. *La Dangereuse* is a melodic composition in *rondeau* form where the characteristics of the Haitian *méringue*—especially the ambiguity between a syncopated *quintolet* rhythm and the squarely divided two-beat measure—are present throughout. The upbeat *Nibo* was a prize winner in the 1934 Port-Au Prince city council *méringue* competition. The piece became an important musical symbol of the celebrations taking place as power was transferred back to Haitians after a 19-year occupation of their country by the US.

Both works were composed initially for solo piano but form part of a larger repertory of Haitian music adapted for guitar solo and chamber ensemble by Espen Jensen. Many of these arrangements stemmed from his dissertation, which focused on style in Haitian music and its influence on surrounding areas. For Jensen, whose self-described fascination with Haiti developed during his doctoral studies, the act of transcribing piano works for guitar initially served as a tool to know the works on a more intimate level and understand their essence and compositional intricacies. These transcriptions participate in a long tradition of adapting keyboard music for guitar and greatly enhance coverage of Afro-Caribbean art and popular music within guitar repertoire.

One of the foremost figures of the *Afrocubanismo* movement was Cuban poet **Nicolás Guillén**, whose works often drew from his own mixed Spanish and African ancestry while addressing socio-political realities within. His poem “**Caminando**” (Walking), from his 1934 published collection *West Indies, Ltd.*, tells the story of someone overcoming hardship and walking aimlessly and relentlessly. In 1937, Guillén traveled to Mexico participate in a Congress sponsored by the Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios (League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists) as a key speaker. Following his address, he obliged the gathering and read some of his poems, including “Caminando.” It was through this gathering that Guillén met the Mexican composer **Silvestre Revueltas**, who soon set three of Guillén’s poems, one of which was “Caminando.” The inherent musicality of Guillén’s poetry undoubtedly made it an attractive text to set, but Revueltas and Guillén also formed a friendship due to their shared political activism and concern for the human condition. The connection between the two is perhaps best known from Revueltas’s setting of Guillén’s *Sensemaya*, a poetic account of an Afro-Caribbean chant performed during a snake-killing ritual. The orchestral setting, completed in 1938, of this text became one of Revueltas’s most celebrated and canonical works. Composed a year earlier, the more intimate “Caminando” is a sensitive setting of a poem detailing the hardships and resilience of its protagonist. The piano imitates the uneven and labored footsteps, reinforcing the physicality of the poem and the narrator’s persistence.

In contrast to Guillén, composer **Roque Cordero** shied away from any labels that categorized him as anything but Panamanian. Born in Panama City, Cordero studied composition and conducting in the United States before returning to Panama to lead its

National Institute of Music from 1953 until 1964 and its National Orchestra from 1964–1966. He returned to the United States, where he joined the composition faculty at Indiana University and helped lead the newly established Latin American Music Center (1966–1969) before taking a position at Illinois State University.

Despite his extended stay in the United States, Cordero never identified as Panamanian-American, as he made clear in a 1989 interview with Bruce Duffie in which he explained:

I am a man from Panama. I represent my country. I am very proud of being a Panamanian. I resent it when somebody writes and says ‘Afro-Panamanian’. I am not Afro-Panamanian, I am Panamanian. ... I have studied the music of Panama, so I can feel the emotion of that music. I know the technical element that I could draw from there, to make my language universal, and yet Panamanian. I speak with an accent, and I have to. Even if I could speak English without any accent, I would refuse to be taken as an American. I am not American, I am Panamanian, and I always sign my letters as a Panamanian composer.

Cordero’s musical legacy lives on not only through his many compositions but through his students and writings as well. His *Curso de Solfeo*, a solfege textbook first published in 1975, has served as the basis for modern music education in a number of Latin American schools and conservatories. Additionally, as part of its archive, the LAMC maintains a collection of Cordero’s personal items, which were donated to the center by Mrs. Betty Cordero and Mr. D.J. Cordero.

Cordero’s **Soliloquio No. 6** demonstrates his interest in writing universal music with a Panamanian accent. The work was composed in 1992, during which time he suffered the sudden loss of a close friend and colleague. Bookended by two movements with characteristically Panamanian rhythmic patterns and energetic movement, the second movement, *Largo e Tristo*, is a reflective and plaintive respite, though consistent with the other two movements in its inclusion of elements of Panamanian folk melodies. Cordero’s work inhabits his native Panamanian folkloric tradition within the context of a serial language. The movement is organized by rhythmic and melodic patterns that echo and respond to one another, producing a true soliloquy, a questioning lament in which the cellist is in dialogue with oneself.



Roque Cordero (left) with LAMC founder Juan Orrego-Salas

Tres mensajes breves (Three Brief Messages) dates from 1966, the year Cordero joined Indiana University and the LAMC. Although the piece makes use of rhythms found commonly in traditional Panamanian music such as the *punto* and *mejorana*, Cordero remarked that he made no attempt to imitate anything specifically. The work utilizes the then-fashionable twelve-tone technique, uniting the three movements with a singular row.

PERFORMER BIOS

Featured Performer:

A native of Norway, **Espen Jensen** moved to the US in 1998 and earned a master's, diploma, and doctorate degrees in guitar performance from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.

From 2005 to 2013, Espen co-directed the Latin American Popular Music Ensemble at the Jacobs School. This period included variety of performances with guest artists such as Pablo Ziegler, Jorge Gomez, Adam del Monte, Gonzolo Grau, Nuccio D'Angelo and others. As part of the LAPME, he also started a regular guitar ensemble, which later was included as a permanent feature of the curriculum.

Espen is also active as a composer. His compositions include many solo guitar pieces and also many chamber pieces for rare instrumental combinations such as his 2015 piece "Seconds" for guitar and bassoon and his 2017 piece "Wicked Skyline Rhapsody" for soprano saxophone, cello, and guitar. Both pieces have received acclaim during the yearly tours of the Norwegian contemporary chamber group "Agder Camerata." As a performer, he has also championed new music for the guitar and has premiered solo and chamber compositions by Egil Kapstad, Kjell Marcussen, Vidar Kristensen, Hans-Magne Græsvold, John Supko, Justin Merritt, Eddie Bass, and others.

Espen's doctoral studies focused on music of Haiti, particularly the Haitian genre of méringue. His work illuminated Haitian music as an important incubator of many of the musical characteristics found throughout the Caribbean. In the process, he transcribed and arranged a large number of Haitian songs and compositions for solo guitar as well as for chamber ensembles. In 2019, he received the Individual Advancement Grant from the Indiana Arts Commission, making it possible to record a selection of his arrangement of Haitian music. This led to the 2020 release of "Choucounne-Music of Haiti" with solo arrangement of music of Haiti. "Choucounne" is Espen's third solo album, alongside "Nocturnal Variations" and "Elogio de la danza y la canción," both re-mastered and re-issued in 2020.

Espen currently enjoys a multipronged musical life as a performer, composer, and arranger. He also leads student recruitment for the world-renowned Indiana University Jacobs School of Music where he serves as Director of Admissions and Financial Aid.

Pianist and musicologist **Paul Borg** is Professor Emeritus from Illinois State University. There he taught various music history courses for the School of Music and was presented with the College of Fine Arts Outstanding Teacher Award. Recently he has served as coordinator for the Latin American Music Center (LAMC) of the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, where he earned his Ph.D. in musicology. His research interests include Latin American music and, in particular, the music of colonial Guatemala. Active as a pianist, Borg performed as faculty and guest artist at Illinois State, Indiana, Western Illinois, Illinois Wesleyan, Northwestern, Roosevelt, and Millikin universities. In 1995, he performed the world premiere of Roque Cordero's Three Poetic Meditations for piano. Borg currently teaches the graduate course Music of Colonial Latin America for the LAMC.

Mireia Frutos Fernandez entered the Doctorate in Collaborative Piano program in Fall 2020, working with Professor Anne Epperson and Prof Kevin Murphy. Born in Madrid, Spain, Mireia Frutos Fernández earned a Master of Music degree at the Liszt Academy in Budapest in Piano Performance, and a Bachelor of Music Degree at the Superior Conservatory of Aragón.

She has performed in Australia, Malaysia, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, France, Hungary, Israel, and the United States, both as a solo pianist and collaborating with a wide variety of music ensembles, as well as a soloist with orchestra. Dedicated to contemporary music, she has premiered works by Paul Elwood, Abraham Tena Manrique, Tazul Tajuddin, Óscar Piniella, David Pellejer and Philippe Lamouris, among others.

Mireia has been awarded first prize in several competitions, such as the Musical Youth of Spain Competition, Marisa Montiel piano competition, and the Hazen Competition. Her performance with orchestra of Mendelssohn's Second Piano Concerto for the Award Ceremony of the "Acordes Caja Madrid" Competition was broadcast on the Spanish National Television.

She has been awarded the Mutua Madrileña Foundation scholarship, the Musical Youth of Madrid scholarship and the Rotary Club grant for the continuation of studies after her Bachelor of Music degree.

Esteban Hernández Parra finds joy in sharing sounds and learning about our interactions around them. He consciously became a musician thanks to his mother's passion for music education, his father's dedication as an instrumentalist, his partner's love for ethnomusicology, and the generosity of his students, family, teachers, friends, colleagues, and cats.

His viola and violin students around the world are fundamental to him. Esteban continues learning *with* them through online interactions between Kenya, Colombia (where he is from), and the USA, supported by Tunaweza Kimuziki, IU String Academy, Monroe County Community School Corp., Filarmónica Joven de Colombia, InCrescendo, and Batuta.

Esteban has performed with the Ensemble Barroco de Bogotá, the Orquesta Filarmónica de Bogotá, and the Bloomington Bach Cantata Project. He played G. Uribe-Holguín's viola concerto as a soloist with the Orquesta Filarmónica de Medellín, and G.P. Telemann's Violetta concerto with the IU Baroque Orchestra. In 2019 and 2020 he received the ICOPR Young Artist Fellowship to teach, perform, and engage in outreach activities throughout Puerto Rico.

He studied viola with his father, Ricardo Hernández Mayorga, Aníbal Dos Santos, Stephen Wyrzynski, and Karen Ritscher. He is pursuing a doctorate in viola performance with a music education minor at IU JSoM mentored by Mark Holloway, Mimi Zweig, Brenda Brenner, and Emilio Colón.

Esteban currently makes part of the IU Mariachi Perla del Medio Oeste and the Efferus String Quartet.

Alex Lavine has been a regular participant in the Four Seasons Chamber Music Festival and was a performer in the “Homage to Laurence Lesser” concert at the Orford Arts Center. As a prizewinner of the American Protégé International Strings and Piano Competition, he gave his Carnegie Hall debut in Weill Recital Hall in April 2017. Alex has been a prizewinner of the 2018 Southern Division and NC MTNA Young Artist Competitions and was a recipient of the Benjamin Kilgore Gibbs Award, which gave him the opportunity to perform the Elgar Cello Concerto with the Raleigh Symphony Orchestra in February of 2019.

During the summer, Alex has studied at the Meadowmount School of Music and was a participant in the Summit and Zodiac Music Festivals, the Orford Arts Center, and the Four Seasons Summer Chamber Music Institute, where he has worked with members of the Tokyo, Cleveland, Amernet, and Cooperstown quartets and the Zodiac Trio.

A native of Greenville, North Carolina, cellist Scott Alex Lavine studies with Eric Kim at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University, where he is a recipient of the Premier Young Artist Award and the Music Dean’s and Eva Heinitz Scholarships. He has also worked extensively with Julia Lichten, Emanuel Gruber, and Bonnie Thron; and studied chamber music with Menachem Pressler, Peter Stumpf, and the Pacifica Quartet.

Alejandra Villarreal Martinez, soprano, is from Southern California. Hailed as a “major voice,” “consistently rich and beautiful,” and capable of “tremendous fervor,” Ms. Martinez recently made her Anchorage Opera debut with *Frida*. Other favorite roles include La Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Salud (*La vida breve*), and Margarita Xirgu (*Ainadamar*). With Long Beach Opera, she played the role of Branghien in Frank Martin’s *The Love Potion* and lent her voice to Steve Reich’s documentary-opera, *Three Tales*. A champion for new works, Ms. Martinez will help create the role of Teta Elzbieta in John William Griffith II’s *The Jungle* with New Voices Opera this Spring and will perform in the premiere of P.Q. Phan’s new opera, *What the Horse Eats!* this summer. Concert credits include Orrego-Salas’ *Ash Wednesday*, Beethoven’s Mass in C with Joseph Flummerfelt, and Penderecki’s St. Luke Passion. This Spring, she will premiere David Dzubay’s new concert work, *Autumn Rivulets*. Ms. Martinez has received awards from the National Society of Arts and Letters, the National Association of Teachers of Singing, as well as the Indianapolis Matinee Musicale. In 2021, she will debut as Cio-Cio-San in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera West! Learn more about Ms. Martinez’s upcoming projects at <https://www.soprano-alejandra-martinez.com/>.

Cellist **Hannah Scarborough** is a student of Peter Stumpf in the Performance Diploma program at Indiana University. Hannah sat principal cello of IU’s Philharmonic Orchestra in 2019, performing Wagner’s Parsifal among other notable concerts. Hannah was a 2020 fellow with the Colorado College Summer Music Festival, attended the Academie Domaine Forget in 2019, and sat assistant principal cello of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, with which she performed in the Berlin Philharmonie and Amsterdam Concertgebouw on their 2015 European tour. As a chamber musician, she has played in masterclasses for the Emerson Quartet and Alexander Quartet, studied with the Pacifica Quartet, performed as a part of the Wylie House concert series in 2019, and was a member of the award-winning Trio Volare with the San Francisco-based program Young Chamber Musicians. She is a recipient of the Pleasanton Cultural Arts Council’s Youth Excellence in Arts award and was a winner in the Etude Club of Berkeley’s Young Artist Competition. Hannah completed her undergraduate degree at the Jacobs School as the recipient of the Premier Young Artist Award and Janos Starker Memorial Scholarship.