A Public Chat with Local Latin American Artists

Brief bios

Wednesday September 18, 2024 / Caffe Fantastico (965 Kings Rd. and Quadra, Victoria)

Pablo Cárdenas is one of the best Cuban pianists of the jazz scene and a world class musician. His versatility and high technical preparation make his music very rich and full of different influences from Afro-Cuban, Latin Jazz to Fusion, and Classical music.

He studied at the National Schools of Arts and the Superior Institute of Arts in Havana, Cuba. Since arriving in Canada in 2010, he has performed at the best festivals and venues around and collaborated with some of the most accomplished musicians of the country like Dee Daniels, Denzal Sinclair, the Victoria and Vancouver Symphony Orchestras, Okan and many more.

In 2011 he created his most renowned project in the area called the West Coast Cuban Orchestra, with the purpose of keeping the roots of Cuban music alive in North America, while adding the influence of other musical tendencies like jazz fusion and African rhythms and sounds. He also wanted a diverse line up with members from different cultural and musical backgrounds to enrich even more the sound of the project. Although Pablo's artistic priority was his experimental jazz projects, he has continued to develop West Coast Cuban Orchestra. once he has made Canada his main area of residency in the last few years, and saw that the project kept having a high level of demand performing at the most important festivals and venues of the region.
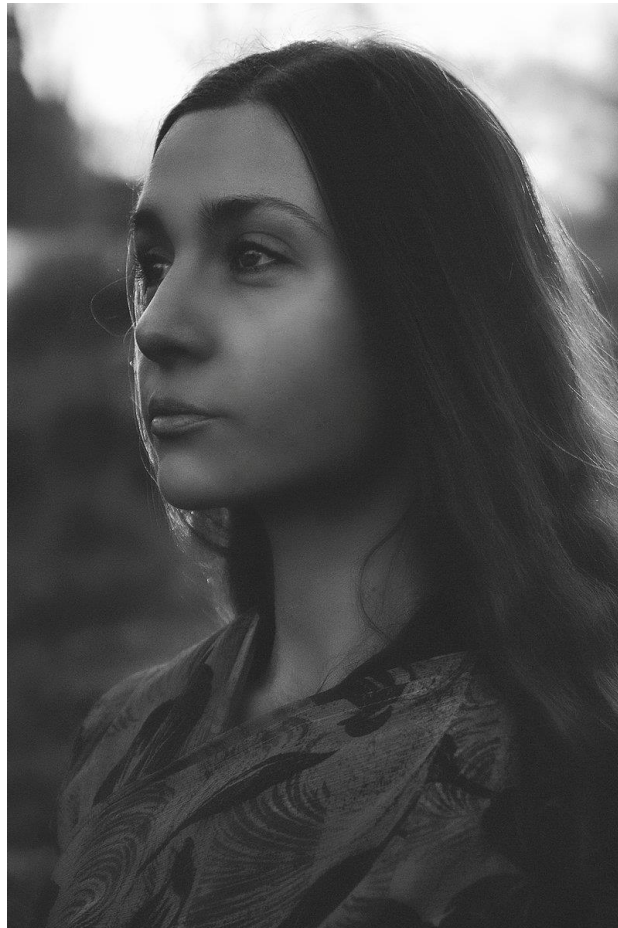
Pablo Diemecke is one of Canada's finest violinists. He has been concertmaster and soloist with the Guanajuato Orchestra, Mexico State Symphony, National Symphony, Xalapa Symphony, Flint Symphony Orchestra, Colorado Festival Orchestra, and the Victoria Symphony, Canada. At the present he is the concertmaster of the Flint Symphony Orchestra. His solo engagements have taken him throughout North America, South America, Europe and Asia. His recordings include concertos by Prokofiev, Mozart #2, 3 and 4, Dvorak, Carlos Chávez, "Música Latina Selecta" and The DieMahler String Quartet in Concert, volumes 1 and 2.

He is a Grammy Award Nominee for the 2002 "Best Classical Album" with the Carlos Chavez Violin concerto, a live recording with the National Symphony of Mexico. Recent presentations include the Krasnoyarsk Festival as soloist, and a tour in Macao with recitals and master classes.

Mr. Diemecke produced a series of concerts featuring all five Mozart violin concertos in 2006. He is Music Director of the DieMahler Ensemble and String Quartet. This year is celebrating 14th anniversary of the "DieMahler Chamber Music Series". He has several live recordings with his "DieMahler String Quartet". He has recorded for CBC Radio Canada, Mexico, USA and Latin America.

Mercedes Bátiz-Benét (she/her) is a Mexican-born multi-disciplinary artist, writer, and award-winning director privileged and grateful to live, work, and create on the unceded traditional territory of the Lək̓ʷəŋən, WSÁNEĆ, and Wyomilth peoples of the Coast Salish Nation. Known for her emotionally potent and surrealist style, she has written, co-written, and directed numerous plays that have toured nationally and internationally. In 2014, Mercedes won the Canadian Stage Award for Direction at the SummerWorks Festival in Toronto with her play *El Jinete – A Mariachi Opera*, in 2015 she was chosen as the Distinguished Alumna of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the University of Victoria, and in 2020 she directed *Fado, The Saddest Music in the World* (Firehall/Puente), which won the JAYMAC Award for Outstanding Production at the Greater Victoria Regional Arts Awards. In 2021 she was chosen as one of the Playwrights Theatre Centre's 2021-2024 Associates, and in 2022 she was honoured with the PARC Retirement Mid-Career Artist Award at the Greater Victoria Regional Arts Awards. Mercedes is the artistic director of Puente Theatre where her mission is to advocate for the inclusion, representation, and development of immigrant, IBPOC, and culturally diverse voices.

Described as one of Cuba's most highly regarded trumpet players of his generation, **Miguelito Valdes** carries a rich history of performing with many of Cuba's top performers, including the Cabaret Tropicana Orquesta, Pablo Milanés, Isaac Delgado, Mayito Rivera, Klimax, Chucho Valdes, and has participated in award-winning recordings such as "La Rumba Soy Yo", which won a Latin Grammy in 2001.

In 2000, he began playing with Omara Portuondo (Diva singer of Buena Vista Social Club) with whom he traveled around the world for 6 years. He has also played with important jazz musicians abroad, including Michael Brecker, Herbie Hancock, John Patitucci, Danilo Perez, Wayne Shorter, and many others. Miguelito was part of the renown orchestra Afro Cuban All Stars from 2009 until he joint the Canadian forces as part of the Naden Band in 2012. Since making Victoria his home, he has become involved in the local music scene.

Originally from Chile, **Lina de Guevara** is an actor, theatre director, drama teacher and storyteller. She studied History and Geography in Chile, and also graduated as actress and instructor of drama in the mid-1960s. In Canada, she upgraded her training attending workshops with instructors such as Augusto Boal, Richard Fowler, Ralph Cole, Annie Skinner, Bisia Belina and Judith Koltai. She's a specialist in the techniques of Transformational theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed and Commedia dell'Arte. To create and produce plays about the immigrant experience she founded PUENTE Theatre in 1988 and was its Artistic Director for 23 years. Her director's credits include "I wasn't born here," "Crossing Borders," "The House of Bernarda Alba," "Canadian Tango", "Chile con carne," "The pilgrimage of the nuns of Concepción," and many more. She's directed and worked with several one-woman shows, such as "Emergence', "Uthe/Athe", and "Patriot in search of a country." Her most recent stage performance was as Alice, in "Alice's gift" written and directed by Elizabeth Wagner

LINA DE GUEVARA