

Latino Music Festival kicks off citywide program

BY ANDREW PATNER

To define Latino music would take as much space or more as an attempt to define the word Latino. From Celia Cruz to

Daniel Barenboim to Paquito d'Rivera, mariachi to tango, Spanish to Creole to Portuguese, Roman Catholic to Jewish to secular, mambo to jazz to salsa, music of native peoples, of the descendants

of African slaves, of European refugees and of the latest 21st century experimentalists and much more all fit under the rubric, even if they might jostle one another when side by side.

Just that sort of jostling is on the agenda for the 2008 edition of the Latino Music Festival in Chicago, which opens this weekend with two free concerts at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance and will present 16 concerts at venues around the city through Nov. 24.

A panel of locally based Latino composers at last year's fest gave some of the idea of the hemispheric-wide variety of sounds, origins and aims. In addition to the many economically driven immigrants here, Chicago also is host to artists and intellectuals who left their na-

tive countries because of right-wing dictatorships (Argentina and Uruguay at various times) and left-wing regimes (Cuba and today's Venezuela), religious or ethnic intolerance (Argentina and Cuba again) or a failure to fully support the avant-garde (Mexico), to give just a few examples.

Festival founder and program coordinator Elbio Barilari is himself from Uruguay. A long-time journalist in his native Montevideo and in Chicago (he was editor-in-chief of La Raza newspaper for many years), Barilari is a composer and an advocate for the varieties of Latino music made in Latin countries and right here in Chicago. He's a dreamer, too, launching the music festival last year, just months after getting a Latino

Chicago Composers coalition off the ground.

The kickoff program for this year's fest, presented by the International Latino Cultural Center of Chicago, is a full-scale orchestral concert led by Costa Rican conductor Giancarlo Guerrero, recently named music director of the Nashville Symphony Orchestra, and featuring soprano Michelle Areyzaga and the Grant Park Orchestra. The program starts with pioneering 20th century composer Silvestre Revueltas, moves on to Chicago Symphony Orchestra's Mead composer-in-residence (and native Argentinean) Osvaldo Golijov, and concludes with works by locals Gustavo Leone, Ricardo Lorenz and Barilari himself.

Leone, born in Buenos Aires, trained at the University of Chicago and now director of music in the fine/performing arts department at Loyola University,



Giancarlo Guerrero



Michelle Areyzaga

serves as music director of the Latino festival. Lorenz, another U. of C. alum, came to the United States from Venezuela and now teaches at Michigan State University.

Later concerts include Chicago jazz trumpeter Orbert Davis and the Ondas Ensemble on Sept. 7 at Ravinia in works related to the upcoming Lincoln bicentennial and a visit by the Orquesta Sinfonica de Michoacan in an all-Mexican program Sept. 16 at the DePaul University Concert Hall in Lincoln Park.

◆ This weekend's concerts are at 6:30 tonight and 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, 205 E. Randolph. Admission is free. For the full festival schedule, visit the Web site www.latinoculturalcenter.org or call (312) 431-1330.

Andrew Patner is critic-at-large for WFMT-FM (98.7).

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