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CSO resident composer Osvaldo Golijov is a past winner of a MacArthur "genius" grant.

MUSIC REVIEW

Latino fest spans time, borders

By John von Rhein

TRIBUNE CRITIC

It is good to see Chicago's Latino composers coming into their own. On Friday night, the Grant Park Music Festival kicked off the third annual Latino Music Festival, a 16-concert celebration that will span six centuries of Latin-American classical music, performed by local and visiting artists at various venues through Nov. 24.

And a strong start it was. The Grant Park Orchestra under Costa Rican conductor Giancarlo Guerrero presented symphonic works by five Latin-American composers, three of them living in Chicago, at the Harris Music and Dance Theater.

CSO resident composer Osvaldo Golijov's "Last Round," for string orchestra, is an homage to the Argentinian tango master Astor Piazzolla. Jagged outlines of tango melodies jab at one another as if in a boxing ring; darkly lyrical mourning music closes the slow second section.

Gustavo Leone's "Mundo," for voice and orchestra, draws its vocal text from the Popol Vuh, the sacred book of the Mayans, evoking a sense of pre-Columbian culture. Its lush, movie/music-like scoring, laced with jungle drums and soaring vocal lines, reminds one of the Brazilian Heitor Villa-Lobos' "Forest of the Amazon." It's an un-



Elbio Rodriguez Barilari

abashed crowd-pleaser, and soprano Michelle Areyzaga threw herself into it with rapturous expression and body language to match.

Antiquity—the Mayan ruins at Machu Picchu in Peru as depicted in Pablo Neruda's poetry—also inspired Elbio Rodriguez Barilari's pictorial tone poem, "The Heights of Machu Picchu." His canny ear for late-romantic string sonority is evident in the

first section, while the energetic second part, which simulates the timbres of indigenous instruments, suggests a native celebration at the site.

The least folkish-sounding work was Ricardo Lorenz's "Pataruco," which shares its slick popular appeal with the Leone piece. If the idea of a concerto for maracas sounds outlandish, the composer teases up a convincing array of hot colors and sizzling riffs. Soloist Edward Harrison, for whom the work was written, shaken, rattled and rolled, producing an astonishing array of effects, including a full-fledged cadenza near the end.

The thoroughly capable Guerrero and the orchestra deserved immense credit for working up five demanding new orchestral pieces so well on such limited rehearsal.

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