

SECTION
THREE

CONCERTS
CLUBS
CLASSICAL MUSIC

CRITICS' CHOICES

BREEDERS AND IMPERIAL TEEN

Saturday, Metro
Margasak 4

JAGUAR WRIGHT

Wednesday, Skyline Stage
Margasak 18

DJ HELL AND TRAXX

Saturday, Rednofive
Armstrong 20

GEORGE COLEMAN

Friday-Sunday, Jazz Showcase
Tesser 38



Rai singer

RACHID TAHA

Saturday, Empty Bottle
Margasak 40

AMADOU & MARIAM AND D'GARY

Wednesday, HotHouse
Amadou & Mariam also appear
Thursday (7/25), Grant Park
Margasak 42

Christopher O'Riley
plays Gershwin with the
CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Sunday, Ravinia
Shen 44

SPOT CHECK

CORDERO, RUSH, AMAZOMBIÉS and more
Kendrick 6

EXTRAS

Early Warnings 8
Funny Business 13

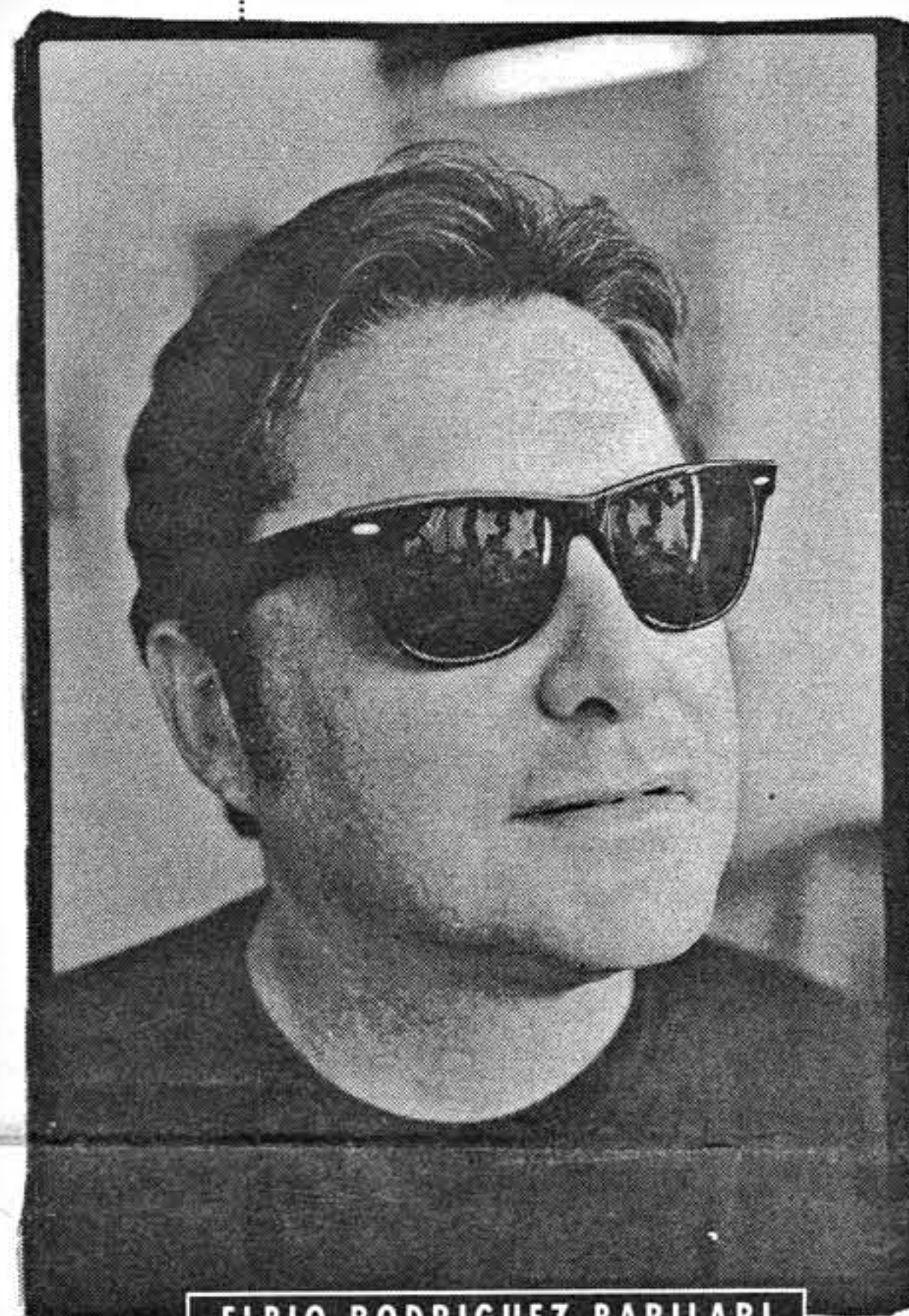
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La Raza's Restless Spirit

In his native Uruguay, Elbio Rodriguez Barilari is known as a columnist for the Montevideo edition of *El Pais*; in Chicago, where he now lives, he's known as the editor of the Spanish-language weekly *La Raza*. But his career as a journalist grew out of his appetite for music. In 1977, jazz bassist Charles Mingus was booked for a concert in Montevideo, and Barilari, a 23-year-old composition student, was just scraping by at an auto parts store. "I went to the entertainment editor of *El Pais* and told him I was a jazz critic but didn't have money to go to see Mingus,"

he says. After attending the Conservatorio Universitario in Montevideo he studied with such important classical composers as Mauricio Kagel, Helmut Lachenmann, and Luciano Berio, and noted Uruguayan composers Hector Tosar and Coriu Aharonian. He also wrote many scores for theater productions, which gave him an opportunity to experiment. "I did music for Tennessee Williams, Homer, different Brazilian writers.



ELBIO RODRIGUEZ BARILARI
Virtuoso Performances

Post No Bills

BY PETER MARGASAK

Barilari recalls. "He told me to go to a press conference for the show, and if he liked my work, I could review the concert." Barilari's profile of Mingus impressed the editor, and within a few weeks the young man was contributing freelance reviews of not only jazz but folk and pop.

Since then Barilari has built a distinguished reputation as a writer and editor, but only last year did Chicagoans get to hear his music. During a May 2001 concert at the Chicago Cultural Center, Dutch classical pianist Marcel Worms performed "Luna de Plata," a piece he'd commissioned from Barilari that explored American blues through ever-shifting meters and polyrhythms. This week the Grant Park Orchestra will perform the world premiere of his latest composition, "Tango Stamps," as part of an all-tango program. Works by Astor Piazzolla, perhaps the greatest tango artist of the late 20th century, dominate the bill, and Piazzolla's sophisticated repertoire, which elevated tango to the level of symphony, was a key influence on Barilari's piece for bandoneon and orchestra. "I feel overwhelmed," he says. "Being part of this tribute to Piazzolla is wonderful, because he was and is one of the more powerful influences on my generation."

Yet Barilari's influences are myriad: he grew up listening to the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and Brazil's genre-bending tropicalistas, like Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil, and as a guitarist, clarinetist, and saxophonist he's played rock, jazz, blues, reggae, and pop. "I was always thinking about using different traditions, putting things together,"

You need to put yourself in different historical periods and different cultures. In my mind I was mixing tango, classical, Xenakis, Stockhausen, and Archie Shepp."

Over the last two decades Barilari has seen a handful of his works performed in Uruguay, but he never expected to make a living as a composer, and unlike many others in the profession he decided against a teaching career. For 25 years now he's been a contributor to *El Pais*; in 1987 he launched a weekly column for the paper that ranged from arts criticism to politics, fiction, and humor, which he continues to write from Chicago. "When I come to music, I come to it clean, with all of my mind and concentration," he points out. "I think that in some cases it is a problem for musicians being only focused on sounds and too ignorant about everything else. One should not only just blow into a horn or put some sounds together, one must also think!" During the mid-90s he expanded into arts administration, serving as an adviser to Uruguay's ministry of education and culture.

His three years in that position left him disillusioned with government bureaucracy and eager for new challenges. "I took a look to my future and I took a look to my past, and it was the same," he says. "It was just like a short story by Borges, a mirror." While covering the Chicago Latino Film Festival for *El Pais*, he'd struck up a friendship with *La Raza* owner Luis Rossi, a fellow Uruguayan, and in 1997 he accepted Rossi's standing offer to become an editor at the Chicago weekly. Within a year of his arrival he'd made an impact with "Arena Cultural," which offers sharp coverage of the

city's vibrant Hispanic arts community, and this past January he joined the board of the Grant Park Orchestral Association.

James Palermo, artistic director for the orchestra, says the new commission came about quite naturally last summer, when he mentioned to Barilari over lunch that he wanted to do a tango program. Barilari "exploded with enthusiasm and he started making all these suggestions. He expressed his interest in helping with no other agenda other than to help. I knew he was a composer, and I suggested that if he were interested we could do one of his compositions." Barilari facilitated the guest performances by Argentinean bandoneon player Juan-Jose Mosalini and vocalist Susana Rinaldi and helped enlist guest conductor Federico Garcia Vigil, who has the understanding of both tango and classical traditions essential to presenting Piazzolla's work.

The program takes place at the Petrillo Music Shell in Grant Park on Wednesday and Saturday, July 24 and 27, at 6:30. "I think I will have more credibility here after the piece is performed," says Barilari. "It's very important for me." His energy shows no signs of abating, either: he's currently finishing up a clarinet concerto for Cuban reedist Paquito D'Rivera, writing an extended jazz suite for pianist Danilo Perez and soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy, and putting together a pan-stylistic jazz band called the Gondwana Project.

Send gripes, leads, and love letters to Peter Margasak at postnobills@chicagoreader.com.

PHOTO/JIM NEWBERRY