



The OFCM Offered a Weekend Program That Blurred All Borders

This weekend, the Mexico City Philharmonic Orchestra (OFCM) joined the commemoration of the 700th anniversary of the founding of the great Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Mexica empire, with a program in which the borders between times, geographies, cultures, and languages were blurred.

With Eduardo García Barrios as guest conductor, the program included the world premiere of *Codex mexicana: La Pasión* by the young Mexican composer Cristóbal MarYán, as well as a performance of *Chinampa y trajinera* by Enrico Chapela, one of the benchmark composers of national concert music today, and *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky, one of the great innovators of Russian music from the Romantic period.

In the first of the two concerts, on Saturday—the other was offered yesterday—the audience in the Silvestre Revueltas Hall of the Ollin Yoliztli Cultural Center took part in a joyful musical feast where the mood and emotions were heightened by the vigor and power of those works.

The session opened with the piece by Chapela (Mexico City, 1974), an enjoyable sonic stroll through the canals of Xochimilco in which, supported by a mix of contemporary language and tonal Mexican music, the composer showcases the richness of folk music from various parts of our country that can be heard in this megalopolis.

Premiered in 2021 in Germany, it is a piece with a contemporary and energizing, rhythmic sound from start to finish, which begins with a kind of reverie. Throughout its nearly 15-minute journey, it's impossible not to notice the melodic roots that are so uniquely our own.

Suddenly, the lively singing of a marimba emerges, evoking Chiapanecan music; then, the sound of the harp, which refers to the sparkling boldness of *son jarocho*; later, the languid violins associated with the *huapango huasteco*; and the festivity of the mariachi, with the celebratory brilliance of the trumpets, could not be absent. An impetuous ending to which the audience reacted enthusiastically. Present in the hall, Chapela took to the stage amid applause and shouts of "bravo!"

Then came the absolute premiere of *Codex mexicana: La Pasión*, a piece that was accompanied by the projection of an animated short film directed by the composer himself, in which he narrates the historical passages that make up the musical story with images.

Cristóbal MarYán (Mexico City, 1992) wrote this work in 2021 on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the fall of Tenochtitlan. However, due to the pandemic, its premiere

was postponed, and it was recorded online that same year by the Orchestra of the Americas, in parts, and then assembled in post-production. The cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the violinist Johnny Gandelsman were invited as soloists for that project.

Conceived as a symphonic codex that tells the story of the fall of Tenochtitlan and the rebirth of modern Mexican civilization, and what has become a template for contemporary Latin American identity, it is a narrative and daring score with unconventional sounds that refer to animal onomatopoeia, ancient Middle Eastern and Andalusian music, pre-Hispanic percussion, and ritual atmospheres; in short, a sonic melting pot that transitions from the whispers of fear and surprise to the stridency of war, from the inherent majesty of an emperor to the lament of defeat.

With the participation of Inna Nassidze on the cello and Wilfredo Pérez Gaydos on the violin, the piece is just over 15 minutes filled with sensations and emotional outbursts that the listener cannot help but connect with and feel exalted by. At the conclusion, the audience reacted with thunderous ovations.

Interviewed at the end of the concert, MarYán explained that in this piece he uses the musical form of The Passion to visit various episodes of that historical Mexican passage: "It's an artistic experiment in which I spliced the Passion of Christ with the fall of Tenochtitlan: what would have happened if (the Passion) had taken place here? What symbols would we find?"

The evening concluded with Pictures at an Exhibition by Mussorgsky, in the orchestral version by Maurice Ravel, in which the OFCM showcased the splendid balance and cohesion between its sections, with an impeccable performance. After it concluded, and faced with generalized acclaim, Eduardo García Barrios was compelled to repeat the last of the 15 pieces of that suite, The Great Gate of Kiev, which the guest conductor dedicated to the great Russian and Ukrainian people, who were once one.

Ángel Vargas 17/02/2025

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