



AMERICAN CLASSICS



ROBERTO SIERRA

Cantares

Loíza • Triple Concierto

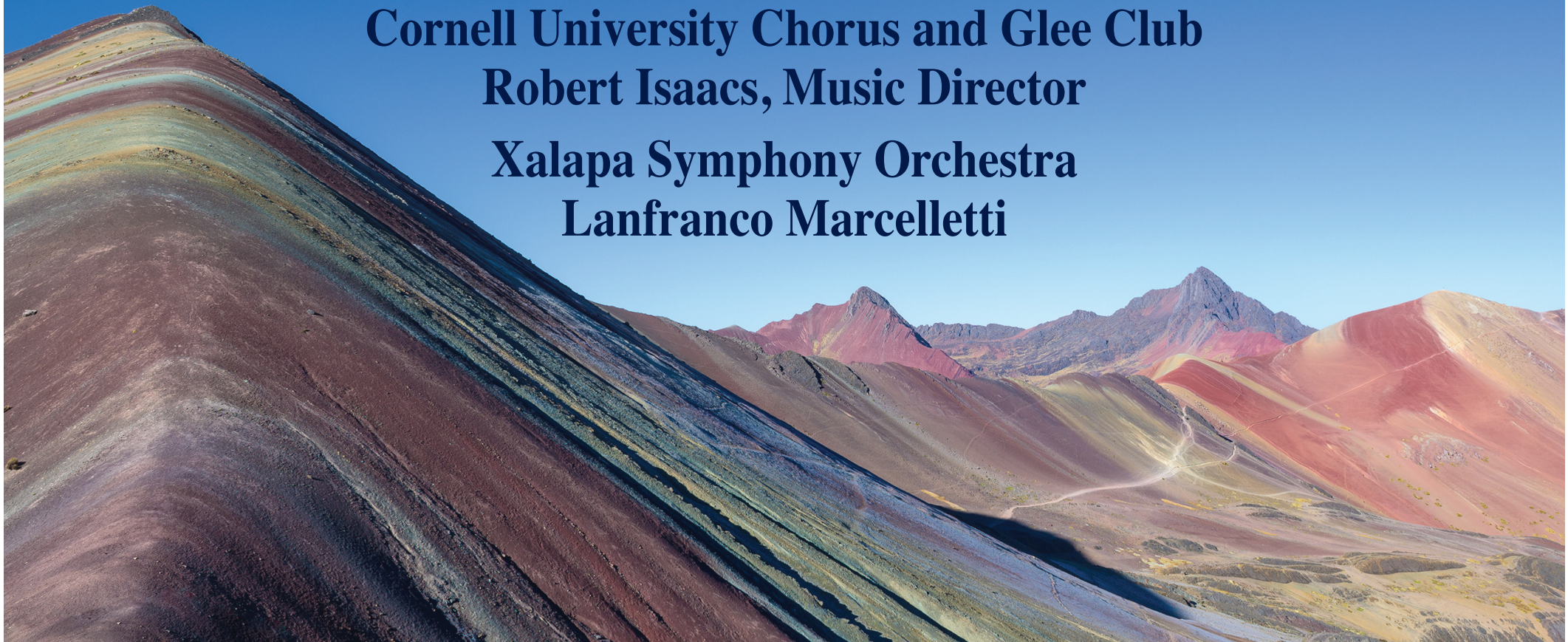
Trío Arbós

Cornell University Chorus and Glee Club

Robert Isaacs, Music Director

Xalapa Symphony Orchestra

Lanfranco Marcelletti



Roberto
SIERRA
(b. 1953)

Cantares (2015)	23:34
(Texts: Anonymous ①-②, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, c. 1495–1584 ④)	
① I. Hanacpachap cussicuinin	6:11
② II. Canto Lucumí	5:40
③ III. Interludio	3:46
④ IV. Suerte lamentosa	7:41
Loíza (2014–15)	10:56
Triple Concierto (2015)	27:58
⑥ I. Enérgico	9:32
⑦ II. Tiempo de bolero	9:17
⑧ III. Veloz, con aire de merengue	9:04

Cantares was commissioned by the Cornell University Chorus and Glee Club, with generous support from Donald and Laurie Peck, Ronald J. Schiller and Alan Fletcher, Joel R. Seligman, Cornell L. Stinson and Troy P. Henninger and Amy Tietjen and Bruce N. Smith.

Loíza was commissioned by the Eugene Symphony Association.

Triple Concierto was commissioned by the BBVA Foundation for Trio Arbós.

Roberto Sierra (b. 1953)

Cantares • Triple Concierto • Loíza

When I was asked to write *Cantares* (2015) my initial impulse was to compose music that would evoke lost voices in time. I searched for texts that dated back in history and memory, and the inspiration for the first movement was drawn from a 17th-century manuscript book of prayers that contains the hymn *Hanacpachap cussicuinin* written in Quechua, and published in 1631 in Cuzco, Peru. This early attempt at musical syncretism is fascinating and triggered in my mind many questions about how this music may have unfolded. In the end I decided not to reconstruct the sound or the way the hymn would have been played, but rather create my own modern reflection on a beautiful text and four voice polyphony written around 400 years ago. The text combines both ideas and concepts from the Quechua culture and the Christian concept of the mother of God.

Canto Lucumí traces its ancestry to Afro-Cuban ritual music of West African origin. The text consists of incantations that have been phonetically transcribed into Spanish. The meaning of the words is sometimes obscure, but what really interested me was how they sounded and their fascinating rhythmic quality. The floating nature of the music and the use of extended vocal techniques of sibilant noise and percussive sounds enhance the mystery already embedded in the original texts.

The orchestral interlude (*Interludio*) is a meditation on the two previous movements and brings together the intervallic structure that has dominated both the melodic and harmonic content of the work. An interval sequence of a minor third and a major second is the seed that generates the musical fabric. This intervallic sequence also determines the central pitch structure for each movement. The idea of three and two also permeates the rhythmic cells used throughout the work.

In *Suerte lamentosa*, a 1528 poem is superimposed to another 16th-century text by the Spaniard Bernal Díaz del Castillo, and recounts the tragic events that occurred during the conquest of the Aztec Empire. These narratives offer two perspectives: one from the viewpoint

of the invader and another from those fighting the invasion. *Cantares* was commissioned by the Cornell University Glee Club and the Cornell University Chorus to celebrate Cornell's sesquicentennial anniversary.

The Caribbean is at the center of *Triple Concierto* (2015); a Caribbean that translates into clear resonances of popular rhythms, which is transformed and disintegrates, and which is revealed in subliminal gestures within the timbres and sound structures.

As expected in a concerto, the work demands great virtuosity not only by the trio as an entity/group, but each member of the trio also faces individual challenges. When composing the piece I wanted to keep the idea of the individual and the collective in continuous play, all this framed within the dual and opposite nature of the soloist's roles (in this case a trio) and the orchestra.

Each of the three movements starts from a different archetype of popular music: the montuno figures of the Caribbean salsa music (*Enérgico*), the Latin bolero (*Tiempo de bolero*) and finally the merengue (*Veloz, con aire de merengue*). While these ideas permeate each movement, they are not static; they merge into the melting pot of my musical language which, as is the case of this concerto, focuses on the use of a symmetric nine-note scale that generates harmonic and melodic material. This scale, with its limited and versatile nature – it includes tonal, non-tonal elements, and whole tones – offers a sound framework capable of expressing those subjective, emotional and referential aspects of the Caribbean, as well as opening the doors to objective and abstract treatments of the musical material. *Triple Concierto* was commissioned by the BBVA Foundation for Trio Arbós.

Loíza (2014–15) also makes reference to the Caribbean, in this case a town in Puerto Rico known for its strong African traditions. Bomba (an Afro-Caribbean dance from Puerto Rico) rhythms are present throughout in constant transformation of phrases that contract and expand and are superimposed, forming polyrhythmic layers and temporal dislocations. Out of these emerge autonomous

character-like musical gestures in this sonic play. The work was commissioned by the Eugene Symphony Association in honor of its 50th anniversary celebration.

Roberto Sierra

Cantares

1 Hanacpachap cussicuinin
(Text: anonymous Quechua hymn from Peru, published in 1631)

Hanacpachap cussicuinin,
huarancacta muchascaiqui.
Yupairurupucoc mallqui,
runacunap suyacuinin.
Callpan nacpa quemi cuinin,
huaciascaita.

Joy from heaven,
I worship you
Precious fruit from the fertile tree
Hope that encourages,
and supports mankind.
Hear my prayer.

Uyarihuai muchascaita.
Diospa rampam Diospa maman.
Yurac tocto hamancaiman.
Yupascalla, collpascaita.
Huahuarquiman suyascaita.
Ricuchillai.

Hear our pleas
White pillar, mother of God
Beautiful iris, yellow and white,
Accept this song,
Help us,
show us your fruit.

2 Canto Lucumi
(Texts/incantations from the Cuban Santería tradition)

Iyá mo dukpe fó ba a é.
Obanlá tobiaro Agogoloná

O ya ya lumba
o ya ya kuanda gangá,
munan finda ton bo gûa ge re ré
munalu tako quasimon so

Iyá mo dukpe ya le yalode
Obanlá tobiaro agogoloná

Mother I am grateful to be near you.
Great King I feel good near you.

This incantation instructs a spirit to go the place of the dead, to perform a task commanded by the person intoning the chant.

Variant of first strand.

4 Suerte lamentosa
Sopranos/Altos: the Aztec perspective, a poem translated into Spanish from the Aztec language (early 16th century)
Tenors/Basses: the Spanish perspective, a description by Spaniard Bernal Díaz del Castillo (late 15th century)

Sopranos/Altos:

Con suerte lamentosa nos vimos angustiados.
En los caminos yacen dardos rotos;
los cabellos están esparcidos.
Destechadas están las casas,
enrojecidos tienen sus muros.

Gusanos pululan por calles y plazas,
y están las paredes manchadas de sesos.

Rojas están las aguas, cual si las hubieran teñido,
y si las bebiámos, eran agua de salitre.

Golpeábamos los muros de adobe en nuestra ansiedad
y nos quedaba por herencia una red de agujeros.
En los escudos estuvo nuestro resguardo,
pero los escudos no detienen la desolación.

Hemos comido panes de colorín
hemos masticado grama salitrosa,
pedazos de adobe, lagartijas, ratones
y tierra hecha polvo y aun los gusanos...

Tenors/Basses:

Desde donde estaban los ídolos,
sonaba un tambor, el más triste sonido
como instrumento de demonios.

Se escuchaban a la distancia
con el sonido de los caracoles, bocinas, y silbidos.

With lamentable luck, we saw each other, anguished.
In the streets lie broken arrows,
the hairs are scattered.
The houses are unroofed,
they have reddened walls.

Worms mill about the streets and plazas,
and the walls are stained with brains.

Red are the waters, as if they had been dyed,
and if we drank them, they were saltwater.

We hit the adobe walls in our anxiety,
and we were left as inheritance a net of holes.
In the shields was our shelter,
but shields do not stop desolation.

We have eaten bread from the colorín tree,
we have chewed salty grass,
bits of adobe, lizards, mice,
and dirt made into dust, and even the worms...

From where the idols were,
a drum sounded, the saddest sound
like an instrument of demons.

It was heard at a distance
with the sound of conches, horns, and whistles.

*Entonces supimos que ofrecían en sacrificio diez corazones
y la sangre de nuestros compañeros
quienes habían capturados cuando ellos capturaron a Cortés,
los llevaban para ser sacrificados.*

*Les hacían bailar frente a los Huichilobos,
con plumas y abanicos en la cabeza
y luego lo colocaron en piedras
donde les cortaban el pecho
para extraer sus corazones palpitantes
como ofrenda a sus ídolos,
pateando los cuerpos por las gradas.*

*Allí los esperaban los indios carniceros
donde les cortaban los brazos y piernas,
y usaban como guantes la piel de las caras con sus barbas.*

*Rojas están las aguas,
la sangre de nuestros compañeros.*

Then we found out that they offered as a sacrifice ten hearts
and the blood of our companions
who were captured when they captured Cortés,
they brought them to be sacrificed.

They made them dance in front of Huichilobos [Aztec god],
with feathers and fans on their heads
and later they put them on rocks
where they cut their chests
to pull out their beating hearts
as an offering to their idols,
stepping on their bodies for stairs.

There the Indian butchers waited for them,
where they cut their arms and legs,
and used as gloves the skin of their faces, with the beards.

Red are the waters,
the blood of our companions.

All texts adapted and translated by Roberto Sierra.

Trío Arbós



Trío Arbós was founded in 1996 in Madrid, and was named after the Spanish violinist, conductor and composer Enrique Fernández Arbós. Awarded the Premio Nacional de Música, the Trio has established itself as one Europe's leading chamber ensembles. Its repertoire ranges from the classical to the contemporary, with specially commissioned works forming a significant part of its concert programs. The Trio regularly appears at prestigious international concert halls and festivals, and has performed in more than 30 countries. The Trio's critically acclaimed discography includes the complete piano trios of Joaquín Turina for Naxos (8.555870), as well as music by Roberto Sierra, Mauricio Sotelo, Jesús Torres and César Camarero for labels including Kairos, Verso, col legno and IBS Classical. Trío Arbós has held a residence at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Its project *Triple Zone* for the creation of new works for piano trio has been sponsored by the Ernst von Siemens Musikstiftung and the BBVA Foundation.

www.trioarbos.com

Cornell University Chorus



The Cornell University Chorus, founded in 1920, has gained a reputation as one of America's outstanding treble choirs. Comprising 60 students drawn from every college and many academic majors, the Chorus performs a repertoire spanning eight centuries and many languages, including Renaissance motets, spirituals, folk song, world music, and a variety of other classical and contemporary pieces. In 2003, the Chorus established an annual tradition of commissioning new works from female composers on non-traditional themes, with the goal of expanding the contemporary repertoire for treble voices. The Chorus maintains a national profile, and has collaborated with professional orchestras under the direction of Nadia Boulanger, Eugene Ormandy, Erich Leinsdorf and other noted conductors on the stages of Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts among others. The ensemble tours regularly, both around the US and internationally, and also performs at many of Cornell University's most significant events. In 2017, the Chorus hosted their first treble choir conference, welcoming over two hundred singers from six different colleges for a weekend-long exploration of music, leadership, and empowerment.

www.cuchorus.com

Cornell University Glee Club



The Cornell University Glee Club is the university's oldest student organization, and widely recognized as one of America's premier tenor/bass ensembles. Since its founding as the Orpheus Glee Club in 1868, the ensemble has become a home to thousands of young singers who have traveled in all walks of life, from music and medicine to agriculture and astronomy. The group has performed the songs of Bernstein on Malaysian television and the songs of Shostakovich in the Moscow Conservatory, logged hundreds of thousands of miles, and brought music to millions of people, from the Ithaca community to rural school children in Taiwan. The Cornell Glee Club is frequently sought out for collaboration with other ensembles and conductors, having performed with the orchestras of Philadelphia, Boston, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, under conductors such as Michael Tilson Thomas, Eugene Ormandy, and Nadia Boulanger among others. The Glee Club performs for major university events, maintains a tradition of annual domestic or international concert tours, and commissions and records new music each year.

www.gleeclub.com

Robert Isaacs



Robert Isaacs is the director of choral activities at Cornell University, a position generously supported by Priscilla E. Browning. He has conducted Cornell choirs in performance at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, and the U.S. Supreme Court, led them on tour to over 90 cities across North America, and prepared them for 19 world premieres. Previously, Isaacs ran choral programs at Princeton University and the Manhattan School of Music, and served as interim director of the National Youth Choir of Great Britain. He has worked as a guest conductor with ensembles on both sides of the Atlantic, including Laudibus, TENET, and the Vox Vocal Ensemble. Isaacs has conducted at the Royal Albert Hall in London, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the Snape Proms, and other venues ranging from Stockholm to the Cook Islands. As a singer, Isaacs toured and recorded with Pomerium, the Vox Vocal Ensemble, and many others. He was nominated for a GRAMMY Award in 2006. He holds degrees from Harvard University (choral music) and Columbia University (creative writing), and spent an equally educational period as a juggler and unicyclist on the streets of San Francisco.

www.music.cornell.edu/robert-isaacs

Xalapa Symphony Orchestra

Founded in 1929, the Xalapa Symphony Orchestra (OSX) exemplifies the cultural commitment of the University of Veracruz – one of the largest and most important public universities in Mexico – and has subsequently become one of the most renowned orchestras in Mexico. The Xalapa Symphony Orchestra has hosted many prestigious conductors and soloists, and has premiered numerous new pieces which, along with more 'standard' works, constitute a strong repertory that has set the standard for other Mexican orchestras. Among the long list of conductors that have performed with the OSX, some of the most prominent include: Hermann Scherchen, Fritz Reiner, Neeme Järvi, Julián Carrillo, Eduardo Mata, Jorge Mester, Hans Zanotelli, José Iturbi, Bruno Campanella, Jorma Panula, Zuohuang Chen and Krzysztof Penderecki. Martin Lebel has been director since January 2020, continuing a successful career in which he has conducted several orchestras from around the world in Europe, Asia, South and North America.

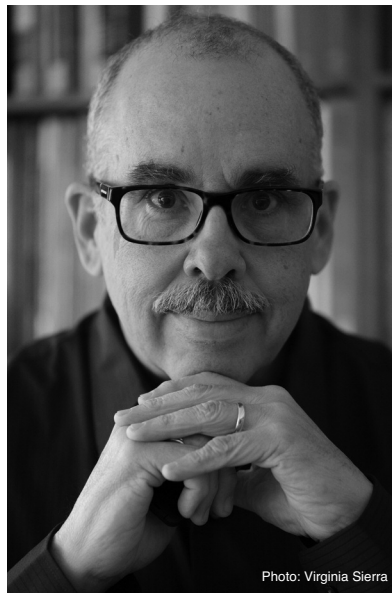
www.orquestasinfonicadexalapa.com



Lanfranco Marcelletti

Conductor and pianist Lanfranco Marcelletti has been recognized as one of the most important Brazilian artists of his generation. His engagements as a conductor have brought him to numerous countries across Europe, North and South America. Marcelletti studied orchestral conducting at Yale University, where he was mentored by Eleazar de Carvalho, piano and composition at the Hochschule für Musik und darstellende Kunst, Vienna, and piano at the Musik Akademie in Zurich. He began his music studies at the Conservatório Pernambucano de Música (Recife, Brazil). From 2012 to 2020 Marcelletti was music director of the Xalapa Symphony Orchestra in Mexico, where he resides. He served as associate director for the renowned Accademia Rossiniana, at the Rossini Opera Festival, and musical director of the social music project Orquestra Criança Cidadã in his native city, Recife. From 1997 until 2011 he was part of the faculty of Amherst College and the University of Massachusetts in the US. During his time in Xalapa, Marcelletti started the Masters Program in Orchestral Conducting at the Universidad Veracruzana.

Roberto Sierra



Roberto Sierra (born 1953 in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico) received an unusually broad education at the National Conservatory in San Juan, the University of Puerto Rico, the Royal College of Music in London, the University of London, the Institute for Sonology in Utrecht, and the Musikhochschule in Hamburg, where his teacher György Ligeti credited Sierra with influencing his own music by introducing him to Afro-Caribbean drumming. Returning to San Juan, he served as chancellor of the National Conservatory until an appointment as composer-in-residence at the Milwaukee Symphony brought him to the mainland in 1989 and launched his career. He was soon named professor of composition at Cornell University, where he is Old Dominion Foundation Professor in the Humanities. Among his awards are the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Music (2003), election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2010), and the Tomás Luis de Victoria Prize 2017, Spain's highest honor to a Spanish or Latin American composer. Sierra's compositions, published primarily by Subito Music, are commissioned, performed, and recorded by major orchestras, ensembles, and soloists in the Americas and Europe.

**Roberto
SIERRA**
(b. 1953)

Cantares

1–4 Cantares (2015)* 23:34

(Texts: Anonymous 1–2,
Bernal Díaz del Castillo, c. 1495–1584 4)

5 Loíza (2014–15) 10:56

6–8 Triple Concierto (2015) 27:58

***WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Trío Arbós 6–8

**Cecilia Bercovich, Violin • José Miguel Gómez, Cello
Juan Carlos Garvayo, Piano**

**Cornell University Chorus
and Glee Club 1 2 4**

Robert Isaacs, Music Director 1 2 4

**Xalapa Symphony Orchestra
Lanfranco Marcelletti**

A detailed track list can be found inside the booklet.

The sung texts and translations are included in the booklet
and may also be accessed at www.naxos.com/libretti/559876.htm

Recorded: 23 January 2016 1–4 and 19 May 2018 5–8
at the Tlaqná Hall, University of Veracruz, Xalapa, Mexico

Executive producer: Robert Isaacs

Producers: Tim Handley 1–4, Roberto Sierra 5–8

Engineers: Juan Switalski, Estela Miller

Editors: Tim Handley 1–4, Juan Switalski 5–8

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AMERICAN CLASSICS

Roberto Sierra's refined compositional voice is subtly combined with contemporary musical techniques and his Puerto Rican heritage in the three works recorded here. *Cantares*, commissioned by the Cornell University Chorus and Glee Club to celebrate the university's sesquicentennial anniversary, evokes ancient Peruvian, Aztec and Afro Caribbean voices lost in time. The virtuoso *Triple Concierto* transforms the popular Caribbean rhythms of salsa, bolero and merengue into complex contemporary expressions, while the polyrhythmic layers of *Loíza* conjure a Puerto Rican town known for its strong African traditions.

www.naxos.com

Playing
Time:
62:32