

NAXOS

Celebrating Sacred Rhythms

ARIEL RAMIREZ

Misa Criolla • Navidad Nuestra

GUIDO HAAZEN: Missa Luba

Christal Rheams, Alto • Manuel Melendez, Tenor

José Sacin, Tenor • Pablo Talamante, Tenor

The Choral Arts Society of Washington

Joseph Holt



Celebrating Sacred Rhythms

Ariel Ramírez: Navidad Nuestra (1964)

Folk Drama of the Nativity, based on the Rhythms and Traditions of Hispanic America

| | | |
|----------|---|--------------|
| | Manuel Melendez, Tenor; José Sacin, Tenor; Pablo Talamante, Tenor | 18:58 |
| 1 | La Anunciación (The Annunciation) | 2:30 |
| 2 | La Peregrinación (The Pilgrimage) | 3:40 |
| 3 | El Nacimiento (The Nativity) (José Sacin, Tenor) | 3:36 |
| 4 | Los Pastores (The Shepherds) | 2:38 |
| 5 | Los Reyes Magos (The Three Kings) | 2:54 |
| 6 | La Huida (The Flight) | 3:40 |

arr. GUIDO HAAZEN: Missa Luba (1958)

Mass in Congolese Style for Mixed Chorus with Soloist and Percussion (based on an improvisation by Congolese chorus Les Troubadours du Roi Baudouin)

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------------|--------------|
| | Christal Rheams, Alto | 15:33 |
| 7 | Kyrie | 2:20 |
| 8 | Gloria | 3:11 |
| 9 | Credo | 4:51 |
| 10 | Sanctus | 2:56 |
| 11 | Agnus Dei | 2:16 |

Ariel Ramírez: Misa Criolla (1964)

Folk Mass based on the Rhythms and Traditions of Hispanic America

| | | |
|-----------|---|--------------|
| | Manuel Melendez, Tenor; José Sacin, Tenor; Pablo Talamante, Tenor | 22:15 |
| 12 | Kyrie | 4:11 |
| 13 | Gloria | 6:26 |
| 14 | Credo | 4:36 |
| 15 | Sanctus | 2:29 |
| 16 | Agnus Dei | 4:33 |

Conductor's Note

As world music, the chamber choral works featured in this recording are wonderful gems incorporating folk idioms. Colorful, exuberant, joyful, poignant, dramatic, soulful, vibrant, reflective, haunting – these are just a few of the many qualities found in these works. Highlighting the inherent folk elements and reflecting a down-to-earth approach became my creative response as this music is, after all, music of the people, written for the people, and the performances should speak directly and honestly. The poignant depiction of the nativity story in *Navidad Nuestra* creates a beautiful tableau that unfolds with indigenous flair; the call and response format with ostinato drum patterns found in *Missa Luba* suggests open air religious celebrations in central Africa; and the embracing and highly personal approach to the Mass expressed in *Misa Criolla* promotes involvement on a spiritual level. The invitation for participation is intoxicating and pervasive throughout all three works.

Featured in our performances are soloists and instrumentalists who specialize in this repertoire and we are indebted to their immeasurable creative efforts. Arranging the score was mostly a collective effort and it was a personal joy to weave the musical tapestry with such a dedicated group. It will be of special note to aficionados of the Ramírez works that tenors Manuel Melendez, José Sacin and Pablo Talamante constantly shift parts throughout, highlighting their individual vocal colours. The choice of a soloist to sing the challenging solos in *Missa Luba* was a difficult one until hearing performances by Mercedes Sosa of *Misa Criolla* and *Navidad Nuestra*. The idea for a female soloist as opposed to the original tenor became reality by engaging Christal Rheams, alto, who lends her unique voice and improvisational abilities to create a novel approach to *Missa Luba*. And, speaking of improvisation, the drum solos as conceived and performed by Luis Garay are a marvelous creation to behold.

The Choral Arts Society of Washington normally comprises 200 singers performing large-scale symphonic works, and from this ensemble we created smaller chamber choruses which better reflect the folk nature of these works. Their performances, focusing on rhythmic colour and dynamic harmonies while maintaining textual clarity, bring to life the spirit and essence of each work.

The journey starts with *Navidad Nuestra* and culminates with the final expressions evoking peace and consolation in *Misa Criolla*. For us as listeners, the worlds created by Ariel Ramírez and Guido Haazen are beguiling and invite us to revel in their vision of beauty. It is my hope that our performances might offer a glimpse of those worlds.

Joseph Holt

Ariel Ramírez (b.1921): Navidad Nuestra • Misa Criolla
arr. Guido Haazen (20th century): Missa Luba

Like the *Misa Criolla*, Ariel Ramírez composed *Navidad Nuestra* (Our Nativity) in 1964. For the six episodes of this Creole tableau with Spanish texts by Félix Luna (b.1925), the composer availed himself of dances and songs of Argentine musical traditions that are indicated in the score. From the characteristic melodic 6/8 rhythms in the dance types *chamamé* in *La Anunciación* and the *chaya riojana* in *Los Pastores*, to the gracious lyricism of the *huella pampeana* in *La Peregrinación* and the *vidalas* from Catamarca in *El Nacimiento*, Ramírez evokes a wide range of expressions from traditional Argentine music. Luna's six poems narrate the universally known episodes of the Christmas story from the annunciation through the birth to the flight to Egypt from Herod's sacrifice of children. Far from the original Bethlehem, Luna locates the story in the north of his native Argentina, alluding in particular to the moon of the Rioja in the poem about the adoration by the shepherds. The text, in Castilian, interpolates words in the indigenous *guaraní* language; in *La Anunciación*, for example, the Virgin Mary is described as *la más bonita cuñatai* (the most beautiful of all maids) and the angel Gabriel arrives *caté* which translates roughly as 'sharp-looking'. Other native elements in the text portray the country people to whom the work is dedicated. Telling examples are the offering by the Three Kings of a *poncho blanco de alpaca real* (a white poncho of the finest alpaca) and the references to local instruments such as the *cajas*, guitars and *bombo legüero*. As well, there are three references to drinks made from the *algarrobo blanco* tree – *aloja* (beer), *añapa* (a non-alcoholic beverage) and *arroke* (a thick, sweet syrup).

Ramírez's original instrumentation includes harpsichord or piano, guitar, bongos, tenor and baritone solos, chorus, jingle bells or *cascabeles*, high drums with sticks and low drums with hands. The arrangement for this recording incorporates two violins in the first

two movements, three guitars, percussion and bass throughout, three tenors in the first, fourth and sixth movements with José Sacin singing the solo in the third movement, and a featured performance in the fourth movement by Carmen de Vicente, one of the world's only concert castanet performers.

In 1954 Father Guido Haazen, a missionary established in the Belgian Congo, now Democratic Republic of Congo, created the chorus *Les troubadours du Roi Baudouin*. Four years later, based on the performances of these African singers, Haazen arranged *Missa Luba* from their improvisations. This composition adapted traditional Congolese melodies and rhythms to the five movements of the ordinary of the Mass (Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei) with the text in Latin.

Missa Luba is scored for tenor soloist, mixed chorus, and three percussionists playing the African native drums *djembe*, *congas*, and *ngoma drum*. The *guiro* replaces the gourd or African *sakasaka* in this recording. As the sole instrumental force in *Missa Luba*, the percussion carries forward the incisive rhythmic ostinatos that sustain the melodic discourse, often in responsorial form between the male and female voices. Reflecting African popular expression, the musical outcome invites corporal movement during worship. Equally idiosyncratic is the improvisational character of the work, despite being notated, which challenges performers in the Western tradition. As noted in the preface to the published score, 'if desired this written version of the Mass may be used as a suitable springboard for those who will venture upon their own new creation of this original African Mass.' For the version heard in this recording, an alto replaces the tenor solo with her unique improvisations, the choral arrangement incorporates different combinations of voices, and the final improvisations in the *Agnus Dei* are achieved with all voices creating an inspirational

chant conceived at the moment. The score indicates improvisational passages for percussion in the *Credo* which are brilliantly performed by the percussion ensemble.

The accomplishment of Ariel Ramírez with *Misa Criolla* is beyond comparison; over forty years after its creation in 1964, this Mass is considered one of the utmost expressions of popular music in Argentina, and has transcended borders to become appealing to audiences worldwide. Even Ramírez, a composer of a long-standing career, could not have foreseen that *Misa Criolla* would become his most famous work among a vast output comprising compositions for chorus, voice and piano.

Musically speaking, *Misa Criolla* falls into a category somewhere between strict academic music and urban popular music but, ultimately, Ramírez's composition does not intend to preserve folklore but to achieve an artistic recreation of folk-derived traits within a personal compositional style. *Misa Criolla* consists of musical settings of the Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus, and Agnus Dei with liturgical texts in Spanish and is one of the first Catholic Masses to be composed in a language other than Latin. Each part of the Mass is based on either traditional Argentine dances or songs: the *vidala-baguala* for the Kyrie, refers to the lyrical vocal form of Bolivia and northern Argentina. As customary in performances of *bagualas*, the Kyrie in *Misa Criolla* is accompanied by two tenor drums, corresponding to the *bombo argentino*. In a livelier mood, the Gloria uses the *carnavalito-yaraví*, a dance from the Andean region. The same dance, the *carnival cochabambino* (variant form from Cochabamba, Bolivia) sets the mood for the Sanctus. The Credo uses

a dance, the *chacarera*, and for the Agnus Dei Ramírez draws on the emotionally charged song type from the Pampas, the plains of the province of Buenos Aires, named as *estilo pampeano*. The balance of the five settings is achieved through the use of two lyrical forms for the more introspective opening and closing parts of the Mass, Kyrie and Agnus Dei respectively, and three dances for the dynamic middle section (*Gloria*, *Credo*, and *Sanctus*). The Mass is written for tenor, mixed chorus, percussion, Andean instruments, double bass and harpsichord or piano. It should be noted that Ramírez is considered today the first within the 'nativist' tradition to introduce the piano in the performance of traditional music in Argentina. In this recording, however, the *charango*, a small guitar made of an armadillo shell, and the guitar have replaced the keyboard part. The Andean notched flute, *quená*, and the panpipes, *siku*, which are also featured in this recording, follow the Argentine *criollo* tradition where they usually accompany the *charango*, the guitar and the *bombo*. The popular character of *Misa Criolla* inspires different interpretations: in this recording, a breath-taking improvisation is played by Luis Garay on the *tumbadoras*, two tom-toms in the Credo as a moment of dramatic reflection between the phrases *seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty and from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead*. Scott Hill and Gonzalo Cortés created a very beautiful and haunting introduction to the Agnus Dei, setting the mood for this plaintive and soulful movement.

Esperanza Berrocal

Sung texts with English translations can be found at
www.naxos.com/libretti/navidadnuestra.htm

Manuel J. Melendez

The tenor Manuel J. Melendez, a native of New Mexico, has performed throughout the United States, Europe, and Latin America in concert, oratorio and operatic performances. Appearances include the Tanglewood Music Festivals, Smithsonian Chamber Orchestra, Roswell Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra. Operatic appearances include the Florida Opera Association, Santa Fe Opera, The Wolf Trap Opera, and the Washington National Opera. He has been acclaimed for performances of the music of Spanish *Zarzuela*, the classic popular songs of Mexico and folk Masses from Latin America. Oratorio appearances as a soloist include the New Dominion Chorale, Arlington Metropolitan Chorus, University of Virginia Choral Union, the Fairfax Choral Society and The Choral Arts Society of Washington.

José Sacin

The Peruvian tenor José Sacin has performed with the Washington National Opera, the Caramoor International Festival, Brevard Music Festival, Opera North, Belcantanti, the Annapolis Opera, The Choral Arts Society of Washington, the Pan American Symphony Orchestra, Opera Camerata of Washington, Catholic University of America Hartke Theatre, Maryland Opera Studio, the Washington Bach Consort and the In Series, among others. Most recently he has appeared in recital at the Rachmaninov Hall in Moscow, Montclair State University, the Costa Rica Music Festival, the Department of State, Montpellier Cultural Arts Center, Corcoran Gallery of Art and the Kosciuszko Foundation in New York City. José Sacin was a finalist in the Mid-Atlantic Metropolitan Opera National Council Competition 2001-2002 and a study grant recipient in the 2002 Licia Albanese-Puccini International Vocal Competition.

Pablo Talamante

A native of Sonora, Mexico, the tenor Pablo Talamante made his operatic début with Kentucky Opera's production of *Salome* as the Third Jew. Since then he has sung many roles on a variety of stages in both concert and opera throughout the United States and Mexico, and has been in high demand for Ariel Ramirez's *Misa Criolla*. He currently serves as the Latin American representative of Hispano-American music to the United States Army Band (Pershing's Own) and Chorus, as well as one of their soloists. The ensembles perform for many dignitaries and high ranking officials including the President of the United States. His musical education comes from the University of Louisville and the Catholic University of America where he is currently finishing his master's degree in Latin American Musical Studies. He currently studies voice with Jaques Trossell. Pablo Talamante recently released his first album entitled *ERES TU*, which has been very well accepted in the pop-opera genre, and another full album released in December 2005. He is also on the rosters of Stachi Modeling agency and Gala Hispanic Theatre in Washington, DC.

Christal Rheams

The alto Christal Rheams, a native of Raleigh, North Carolina, has performed on the same stage as Wayne Newton, Ricky Martin, and Trisha Yearwood. In addition she has had the pleasure of singing backup for many pop, country and R&B superstars. She attended the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and is a prominent vocalist with the United States Army Band (Pershing's Own), and can also be seen as a featured vocalist in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area music scene.

The Choral Arts Society of Washington

Norman Scribner, Artistic Director • Debra L. Kraft, Executive Director

Now in its 40th Anniversary season, The Choral Arts Society of Washington, under the leadership of founder and artistic director Norman Scribner, is one of the country's major symphonic choruses. Made up of 200 professional-calibre, volunteer singers, few choruses equal Choral Arts for its combination of size, scope and outreach. Choral Arts produces a national radio programme reaching over seventy million listeners, maintains a discography of fourteen recordings and regularly participates in presidential inaugurations, national holiday concerts and telecasts. Since 1971 Choral Arts has presented its own subscription series at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and other Washington venues, with standard repertoire, numerous world and Washington premières, and commissioned works. Choral Arts was recognised for its cutting edge programming with the ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming. In addition to regular performances with the National Symphony Orchestra, the chorus has appeared with the orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, New York, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Cracow, Israel and Paris Opéra, under the direction of Rostropovich, Bernstein, Conlon, Frühbeck de Burgos, Leinsdorf, Rudel, Temirkanov, Kunzel, Maazel, Shaw and Dorati. Choral Arts has enjoyed triumphant successes with engagements at Carnegie Hall, Avery Fischer Hall, the Spoleto Festival, Grand Teton Music Festival, Evian Festival, and the Proms Festival. In keeping with Choral Arts' dedication and commitment to the community, the Society formed a partnership programme, artsACCESS: Arts For Children Creates Educational Success in Schools. This programme introduces music as a critical tool in cross-curricular learning including artist visits throughout the school year. In 2005, Choral Arts celebrated its 17th Annual Choral Tribute to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Each year a host of fabulous area performers, guest conductors, celebrities and composers come together to create a celebration of artistic diversity and expression dedicated to Dr. King's memory.

Joseph Holt

Joseph Holt, Associate Conductor of The Choral Arts Society of Washington, enjoys a wide-ranging musical career as pianist, chamber music performer, educator, conductor and arranger. He was Director of Choral Activities at the American University in Washington, DC, and Head of Accompanying at George Mason University in Virginia. He currently serves as the principal pianist for The United States Army Chorus. Joseph Holt made his Choral Arts début conducting *Misa Criolla*, is artistic director of the organization's Family Concerts, and conducted during the ensemble's England tour at the Chester Music Festival. He is also the executive producer for the acclaimed national radio series, *Celebrating the Choral Art*. During the millennium celebrations he was one of ten conductors who prepared a chorus of 2000 voices for a world première by Maury Yeston with the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Leonard Slatkin at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. Unusual highlights of his musical career include coordinating and conducting the Wolf Trap Filene Center Orchestra for a gala performance featuring premier comedian Victor Borge, compiling and directing the music for *Prodigy*, a children's play about Mozart at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, assisting in the development of the National Music Conservatory in Amman, Jordan, and producing a series of multi piano concerts for the US Army Band at the Kennedy Center. He holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music, Sheandoah Conservatory and the Catholic University of America.

Navidad Nuestra

Chorus

Soprano

Ellen Bachman
Anuradha Banerjee
Jennifer Becker
Kelli Burke
Dara Canzano
Marie Colturi
Mickey Fuson
Annie Garibaldi
Julie Smith Gilmore
Carrie Morris
Rebecca Parker
Darlene Myer Rhodes
Elizabeth Romig
Ann M. Stahmer
Peggy Blake Wilson
Nancy Witherell
Vera H. Ziemann

Alto

Patricia A. Byram
Lizabeth Flood
Mary Lu Fuson
Kate Goodrich
Barbara W. Greene
Anne B. Keiser
Elizabeth Miller
Patricia Pickard
Joanna Roberts
Kate Sawyer
Cindy Spears
Patricia Yee

Tenor

Guillermo Almada
John Clewett
O. Andrew Garibaldi
Harold Isaacs
Joseph E. Jones
Paco Martinez-Alvarez
Phyllis Muir
Michael Parker
John E. Rhodes
Hugh W. Smith

Bass

Charles Cerf
Linus Y. Chen
Ron Davies
Raymond C. Hart
William E. Hartung
Larry Kolp
Douglas Lapp
James L. McHugh
John Pickard
William Schultheis
Howard R. Spindelov

Ensemble

Laura Knutson, violin
Janette Wilkinson, violin
Edgardo Malaga, bass
Michael Bard, guitar
Ricardo Diaz, guitar
Carmen de Vicente, castanets
Luis Garay, bombo legüero
and percussion

Missa Luba

Chorus

Soprano

Sharon N. Albrecht
Ellen Bachman
Janice O. Childress
Erin C. Gantt
Dorothy Gould Gerber
Julie Smith Gilmore
Amity Hall
Deborah Henderson
Susannah Hoffman
Margo Melissa Johnson
Sharon Nichols
Rebecca Parker
Emily Hill Petty
Darlene Myer Rhodes
Ruby M. Robertson
Donna Simonton
Ann M. Stahmer
Hannah Steele

Alto

Sara Kauffman Aksar
Patricia A. Byram
Elaine R. Clisham
Norma Brawley Dugger
Lizabeth Flood
Cita Furlani
Patricia George-Houser
Barbara W. Greene
Elizabeth Miller
Beth Nyhus
Cindy Speas

Tenor

Kenneth Bailes
Joanna Cayford
John Clewett
Jason Gottshall
Jerry Hagg in
Harold Isaacs
Joseph E. Jones
Jay M. Kirsch
Michael Parker
John E. Rhodes

Bass

Charles Cerf
Ron Davies
Jeffery S. Hart
Raymond C. Hart
DeVere Henderson
Douglas McAllister
Paul Nyhus
Joseph H. O'Leary
Bob Schiff
Howard R. Spendelow

Ensemble

Luis Garay, djembe, congas,
ngoma drum and percussion
Wilbur Wood, ngoma drum
Leon Khoja-Eynatyan, guiro
and percussion

Misa Criolla

Chorus

Soprano

Mickey Fuson
Annie Garibaldi
Julie Smith Gilmore
Deborah Henderson
Marie Hyder
Julie Kearney
Jenny Nordstrom
Rebecca Parker
Lisa Joy Sommers
Ann M. Stahmer
Alison Valtin
Vera H. Zieman

Alto

Denise Brandenburg
Mary Lu Fuson
Patricia George-Houser
Robin Hellier
Nell Jeter
Priscilla Colón Marsh
Lisa Mitchell
Rebecca Nielsen
Virginia L. Pancoe
Catherine Piez
Laura S. Pruitt
Joan Reinthaler
Joyce Ann Stephansky
Patricia Yee

Tenor

Joanna Cayford
O. Andrew Garibaldi
John Peter Hazangeles
Jay M. Kirsch
Matthew L. Klein
E. Bernard Leung
Phyllis Muir
Michael Parker
David M. Petrou
Harlan Rosacker
Hugh W. Smith
Michael M. Wolyniec
Matthew Zarcufsky

Bass

Charles J. Baker
Ron Davies
Raymond C. Hart
William E. Hartung
DeVere Henderson
Todd Kim
Larry Kolp
George Krumbhaar
Jay Labov
Joseph H. O'Leary
John Pickard
Bob Schiff
Howard R. Spendelow

Ensemble

Carlos Boltes, charango
Ricardo Diaz, charango and guitar
Michael Bard, guitar
Scott Hill, guitar
Richard Marlow, guitar
Gonzalo Cortés, quena and siku
Edgardo Malaga, bass
Luis Garay, bombo legüero and percussion

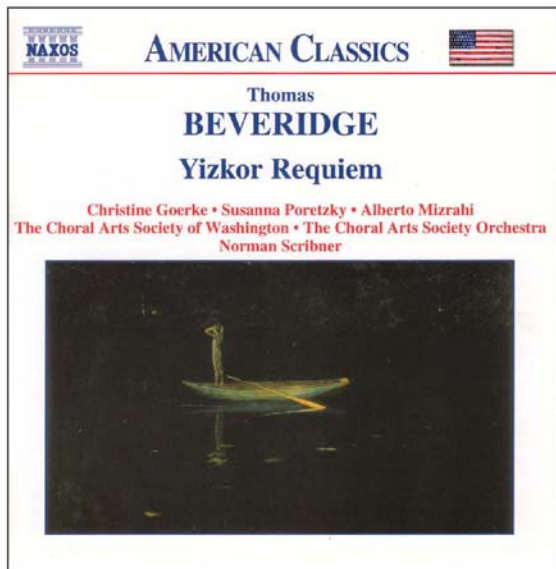


(Photo: Debra L. Kraft)

(From left): Composer Ariel Ramírez and conductor Joseph Holt attending a Choral Arts Society performance at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 1st August, 2005

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Song texts with English translations can be found at
www.naxos.com/libretti/navidadnuestra.htm
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Argentine composer and pianist Ariel Ramírez is widely acclaimed throughout South America for his unique synthesis of popular and liturgical styles. The *Misa Criolla*, based on South American folk music, is a setting of the traditional Mass texts, in Spanish, to the accompaniment of a variety of Andean instruments. The folk drama *Navidad Nuestra*, set in the north of Argentina, is a poignant depiction of the Mystery of the Incarnation. *Missa Luba*, which adapts traditional Congolese melodies and rhythms to the Latin texts of the Mass, has been described by its creator, the missionary Father Guido Haazen, as a 'collective improvisation'. It includes a prominent and exciting part for African percussion instruments. The *Sanctus* is also well known for its inclusion in the soundtrack to the 1960s cult film *If*.

Ariel
RAMÍREZ
(b.1921)

Misa Criolla • Navidad Nuestra

- [1]-[6] Navidad Nuestra (1964) – Folk Drama of the Nativity,**
based on the Rhythms and Traditions of Hispanic America
(Manuel Melendez, Tenor; José Sacin, Tenor; Pablo Talamante, Tenor) **18:58**
- [7]-[11] arr. GUIDO HAAZEN: Missa Luba (1958) –**
Mass in Congolese Style for Mixed Chorus with Soloist and
Percussion (based on an improvisation by the Congolese chorus
Les Troubadours du Roi Baudouin) (Christal Rheams, Alto) **15:33**
- [12]-[16] Misa Criolla (1964) – Folk Mass based on the Rhythms and**
Traditions of Hispanic America. Arrangement by Jesus Gabriel Segade,
Alejandro Mayol, Osvaldo Armando Catena
(Manuel Melendez, Tenor; José Sacin, Tenor; Pablo Talamante, Tenor) **22:15**

Instrumental and Percussion Ensembles
The Choral Arts Society of Washington • Joseph Holt

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Producers: Joseph Holt and Norman Scribner • Associate Producer: Jeffery S. Hart
Recording Engineer: Curt Wittig • Editing and Mixing Engineers: Curt Wittig and Joseph Holt
(Assisted by Mary Gottlieb) • Cover Illustration by Celia Anderson, based on a painting by Nivia Gonzalez