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Robert Bonfiglio

Elvis & Gershwin: A Celebration of American Music

October 19, 2024 • 8 PM | Robinson Fine Arts Center

Héctor Guzmán, Conductor

Robert Bonfiglio, harmonica

Concert dedicated to the memory of Dr. Betty Muns

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MEET OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR, HÉCTOR GUZMÁN



Maestro Héctor Guzmán has celebrated 41 years at the helm of the Plano Symphony Orchestra, and is one of the most respected and admired conductors in this country and abroad.

His leadership of not only the Plano Symphony Orchestra, but that of the Corpus Christi Symphony Orchestra, Irving Symphony, the San Angelo Symphony, and as Conductor Emeritus of the Jalisco Philharmonic in Mexico, have placed him among the most important musical figures on the podium today.

He has been a frequent guest conductor of an array of prestigious ensembles: **Mexico:** National Symphony, Mexico City Philharmonic, UNAM Philharmonic, Xalapa Symphony, Bellas Artes Chamber Orchestra, Vivaldi Orchestra of Mexico City, and State of Mexico Symphony. **United States:** Dallas Symphony, San Antonio Symphony, Wheeling Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, and the Chicago Sinfonietta.

Dominican Republic: National Symphony. **Czech Republic:** Collegium Orchestra of Prague. **Poland:** Rzeszow Philharmonic. **Japan:** Japan Philharmonic. **South Korea:** Masan Philharmonic, and Gangsam Symphony. **Italy:** Amadeus Orchestra, Sinfonia Venetto, Milano Classica Orchestra, Bari Symphony, San Remo Symphony, and

Pomeriggi Musicale Orchestra of Milan. **Spain:** Sinfónica de Murcia, Joven Orquesta de la Comunidad de Madrid, and Excelentia Orchestra. **Panamá:** National Symphony. **Vietnam:** Ho Chi Minh Opera & Ballet Orchestra and **Germany:** Herzer Orchestra among many others.

In addition to a spectacular career as a conductor, he continues to enjoy international success as a concert organist, performing in venues such as the Meyerson Symphony Hall in Dallas, the Spivey Hall Distinguished Artist Series in Atlanta, the Olivet Nazarene recital series in Illinois, the cathedrals of Morelia, Guadalajara (Mexico) and Chartres (France), and the International Music Festivals in Toledo, Spain and Zamora, Mexico. Maestro Guzman holds degrees from: The Conservatory of Music in Mexico City, the University of North Texas (BM), and Southern Methodist University (MM).

His teachers include his mentor Anshel Brusilow, former concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra and former music director of the Dallas Symphony, as well as internationally renowned conductors Helmuth Rilling (University of Oregon) and Carlo Maria Giulini (Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy). He was also a protégé of the late Maestro Eduardo Mata, music director of the Dallas Symphony. In his native Mexico, Héctor Guzmán achieved an impressive reputation as an organist, under Prof. Victor Urban, by taking first prize in the "Chamber Soloists" and the "Manuel M. Ponce" national organ competitions. In the United States, while a student of world-famous master teachers Dr. Robert Anderson and Alfred Mouldous, he earned further distinction by winning solo competitions at Southern Methodist University, the University of North Texas, and he was the first Latin-American ever chosen as a finalist in the "Grand Prix de Chartres," the world's most prestigious international organ competition celebrated in France.

He is also the recipient of the "Mozart Medal," Mexico's highest musical honor, presented by the embassy of Austria and the Mozart Academy in Mexico City, as well as the 2012 "Lifetime Achievement Award" of North Texas, and the 2014 Sigma Alpha Iota National Arts Associate award.



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ELVIS & GERSHWIN: A Celebration of American Music

Héctor Guzmán, Conductor

Featuring:
Robert Bonfiglio, harmonica

October 19, 2024 | Robinson Fine Arts Center | 8 PM

PROGRAM

William Tell Overture...G. Rossini

An American in Paris...G. Gershwin

INTERMISSION

Concerto for Harmonica and Orchestra...H. Villa-Lobos

Allegro Moderato *Andante* *Allegro*

Mr. Bonfiglio, harmonica

Elvis Lives Medley...Arr. Knight

Mr. Bonfiglio, harmonica



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MEET OUR FEATURED ARTIST



Called "the Paganini of the Harmonica" by The Los Angeles Times, ROBERT BONFIGLIO has dazzled audiences at Carnegie Hall, the Hollywood Bowl, the Gewandhaus, Teatro Colón, Teatro Massimo, Teatro Amazonas, Kennedy Center, Boston Symphony Hall, Lincoln Center and throughout the world with his ability to play : Harmonica Concertos and turn right around and "sizzle" on the 'Blues'.

Robert has appeared on "CBS Sunday Morning," "CBS Morning Show," "Live with Regis and Kathy Lee," "Larry King," "The Jim Bohannon Show" and Garrison Keillor's "American Radio Show." He has had feature stories and reviews in the New York Times, the Boston Globe, the Los Angeles Times, the Washington Post and the Chicago Tribune. BONFIGLIO performed recent debuts with the Pittsburgh Symphony, the National Symphony at Kennedy Center, and the Louisville Orchestra. This season includes the Villa-Lobos Harmonica Concerto with the Galicia Symphony under Enrique Diemecke plus a tour with Musica Vitae in Sweden and the Rockford Symphony in the USA.

This season also includes a Lincoln Center performance of the Henry Cowell Harmonica Concerto with the American Symphony Orchestra under Maestro Leon Botstein. He performed the world premiere of the Henry Cowell Harmonica Concerto with the Brooklyn Philharmonic under the great Lucas Foss and the West Coast premiere with David Alan Miller and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He has also premiered works by Rodrigo, Arnold Black, Richard Einhorn, Eric Knight and Sir George Martin. Robert Bonfiglio has appeared as a soloist with Skitch Henderson and the New York Pops at Carnegie Hall, John Williams and the Boston Pops on PBS, John Mauceri and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, with Fabio Luisi and the MDR Orchestra at the Leipzig Gewandhaus and Theo Alcantara and the Buenos Aires Philharmonic at the Teatro Colón. At City Center he performed Vilem Tausky's "Concertino" for Harmonica and Chamber Orchestra while ballet stars Cynthia Gregory and Fernando Bujones danced the pas de deux choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett.

BONFIGLIO has been a concerto soloist with leading orchestras around the world including the Minnesota Orchestra, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Orchestra of the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, the Luxembourg Philharmonic, the Leipzig M D R-Radio Symphony, the Hong Kong Philharmonic, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, the Madrid Radio Television Española Orchestra, Real Orquesta Sinfónica de Sevilla, the Estonia National Symphony, Edmonton Symphony, the Mexico City Philharmonic, as well as the Milwaukee Symphony, the Indianapolis Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Utah Symphony and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

He has worked under such great conductors as Fabio Luisi, Fabio Mechetti, Giancarlo Guerrero, Lucas Foss, Eri Klas and Pinchas Steinberg, Gerard Schwarz, Lucas Vis, Jorge Mester, Theo Alcantara, Robert Bernhardt, JoAnn Falletta, Maximiano Valdes, Andrew Sewell, Bruce Ferden, Gisèle Ben-dor, Christopher Wilkins, Enrique García Ascencio, Andrea Quinn, Kirk Trevor, Juan José García Caffi, Peter Jaffe, Arthur Fagen, David Alan Miller and Marvin Hamlisch. His first RCA recording, with Gerard Schwarz and the New York Chamber Orchestra, featuring the Villa-Lobos Harmonica Concerto, was released to critical acclaim; he has performed this Concerto over 350 times with major orchestras worldwide. Bonfiglio has recorded on the RCA, Arista, CBS, Sina Qua Non, High Harmony, and QVC Labels. He performed on the Grammy winning recording, "Ragtime." Robert has played chamber music with Ani Kavafian, Jeffrey Solow, Milton Thomas, Colin Carr, Kenneth Cooper, Benny Kim, Evan Wilson, Nathaniel Rosen, Clare Hoffman, the Mendelssohn, Lark and Miami String Quartets.

ROBERT BONFIGLIO is playing contemporary music as well with American Composer, Paul Moravec, who just won the Pulitzer Prize for Composition, writing an American Harmonica Concerto for him. Lowell Liebermann is also writing a Harmonica Concerto to premiere in with the Minnesota Orchestra.

He got his Masters degree in composition from Manhattan School of Music. He studied harmonica with Chamber Huang and was coached for 12 years by Andrew Lotya, the first flute of the New York City Ballet, during which time he studied the major works for harmonica and orchestra. Robert studied composition with Charles Wuorinen and Aaron Copland.



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MEET THE MUSICIANS OF THE PLANO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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Szemi Jobbagy, Associate Concertmaster
Mevlan Mecid
Claudia Holm
Allie Miller
Jessica Jo-Tzu Yang
Molly Hines
Christine Binzel
Leihlani Garcia Tamez
Julia Brandenburg

Violin II

Hubert Pralitz*
Saejin Seo
Klaudia Cop
Claudia Jones
Diego Campos
Crissanti Garcia Tamez
Andres Bravo
Lucas Raulino Silva
Santiago Ariza Rodriguez
Miranda Porras

Viola

April Kondrat*
Monika Nierychlo-Fryklund
Bo Landefeld
Monika Idasiak
Iris Messinger
Steven Juarez
Iva Raykova
Lyndsey Walker

Cello

John Landefeld*
Alexander Paradis
Dan Totan
Shengni Rubiano
Noemie Golubovic
Creed Miller
Ya-Chen "Jessy" Lee
Kyungjin Yoo

Bass

Jack Unzicker*
Graham Eubanks
Nestor Zayas
Ben Mitchell

Flute

Lisa Nickl*
Erin Nguyen
Jennifer Wheeler (Piccolo)

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Steve Pettey*
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HARMONICA IN THE CONCERT HALL

AN AMERICAN COMPOSER'S PERSPECTIVE ON GERSHWIN, VILLA-LOBOS, ROSSINI & ELVIS

© Robert Xavier Rodríguez

With his usual flair for innovative programming, Maestro Héctor Guzmán has created an evening that unites classical and popular musical styles. There are two pairs of contrasting works: American (Gershwin) followed by Brazilian (Villa-Lobos); then, Italian (Rossini) followed by American (Elvis). Each half features a solo harmonica, which is an instrument not often heard in the concert hall. Chinese in origin, the harmonica came to Europe by way of an 18th-century French Jesuit, and its use became widespread during the 19th century, first in Germany and, later, in the United States.

There are many types of harmonicas. The best known are the simple "mouth organs" which are often heard in films showing lonely cowboys on the plains and soldiers in the battlefield, particularly during the American Civil War. There also exist many more complicated models with built-in capabilities for playing a three-octave range in all keys with pitch bending and employing the instrument's characteristic quivering vibrato sound quality. The harmonica is a favorite in folk music, blues and rock, but it has also attracted the interest of symphonic composers such as Ralph Vaughan Williams, Malcolm Arnold, Darius Milhaud, Arthur Benjamin, Henry Cowell and tonight's featured composer, Heitor Villa-Lobos.

I.

If we Americans put pictures of composers on our money instead of politicians, then George Gershwin (1898-1937) would be on the one-dollar bill and Aaron Copland (1900-1990) would be on the five. Gershwin's unique combination of classical complexity and popular appeal makes him --- like Kurt Weill, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim -- one of the few composers whose music is admired equally by lovers of classical music and popular music.

Gershwin became a star composer both on Broadway and in Hollywood, but his life-long ambition was to transcend the popular realm in favor of what he considered the more respectable and meaningful world of classical music. To that end, he approached the legendary French teacher Nadia Boulanger for composition lessons. Boulanger did not want him to change his musical personality by emulating academic models, so she refused, explaining later that, "By then, he was already Gershwin." Gershwin also asked Maurice Ravel for lessons. Ravel told him, "Why be a second-rate Ravel, when you can be a first-rate Gershwin?" Ravel then asked Gershwin how much money he made in a year. Gershwin answered, "\$100,000," to which Ravel replied, "I should study with you!" Ravel actually helped himself to liberal doses of Gershwin's style, particularly in his jazzy Piano Concerto in G.

Gershwin based his *An American in Paris* (1928) on a trip to Paris, which at that time was the Mecca of modernism. The music represents Gershwin at his full musical maturity. The commissioner was Walter Damrosch, who conducted the premiere with the New York Philharmonic. According to Gershwin's own notes, as relayed to Deems Taylor, "My purpose here is to portray the impression of an American visitor in Paris as he strolls about the city and listens to various street noises and absorbs the French atmosphere." Gershwin specifies automobile horns in the score, and he brought actual taxi horns from Paris to New York for the premiere. Midway in the score, the energy winds down, a solo violin gets sentimental, and a muted trumpet plays a bluesy tune backed by a chorus of saxophones to show that, as Gershwin puts it, "our American friend ... has succumbed to a spasm of homesickness." But, since "nostalgia is not a fatal disease," the American visitor quickly recovers his joie de vivre and once again becomes "an alert spectator of Parisian life." At the end, the "blues" theme and the

French atmosphere and street noises merge in a triumphant synthesis.

II.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) was and remains Brazil's most important composer. Like his contemporary Gershwin, he deserves to have his picture on his country's currency. Also, like Gershwin, he journeyed to Paris. Villa-Lobos worked there for six years and soaked up the artistic atmosphere from the likes of Edgard Varèse, Pablo Picasso, Leopold Stokowski, Darius Milhaud and Aaron Copland.

His music brings together the European classical tradition with the folk music of Brazil, which has both Portuguese and African roots. His prolific output of over 2,000 compositions includes operas, orchestral and choral works, chamber music, guitar music and piano music, with his works in the latter two categories encouraged by his friends and musical champions Andrés Segovia and Artur Schnabel. Among his best-known compositions are his two series of characteristically Brazilian works, each scored for a different combination of musical forces: the fourteen *Chôros* and the nine *Bachianas Brasileiras*, inspired by the music of J.S. Bach. Particularly well-loved is the enchanting No. 5 for soprano and eight cellos.

Villa-Lobos's Concerto for Harmonica and Orchestra was the result of a commission from the American John Sebastian. Sebastian gave the work its premiere in Jerusalem in 1959, shortly before the composer's death. It is lightly scored, with seven winds, timpani, harp and strings.

The first movement, *Allegro moderato*, opens with a quietly bustling orchestral background over which the solo floats in like a lonely onlooker. The style has echoes of Stravinsky's Neo-classicism, but with a Latin flavor. Since the sound of the harmonica is similar to the Argentine bandoneon, one can also hear hints of what was later to come from tango master Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992). There are three main themes which the composer develops, with a return to the opening material at the end. The harmonica writing includes a rich assortment of octaves and

parallel sixths.

The second movement, *Andante*, is a mournful arioso with gentle string accompaniment and featuring poignant interchanges between the harmonica and the solo woodwinds, with harp colorations. The movement ends with a breathtaking, long high A that effectively shows off the range of the instrument and the dynamic control of the player.

The finale is a jaunty "singing Allegro" which returns us to the optimistic Neo-classical character of the opening movement. The music is highly sequential, with "ear worms" abounding. Midway, the composer stops to give the soloist an extended cadenza which is a showcase for the rich variety of sounds which the harmonica can produce: chords alternating with single notes, tremolos, parallel sixths and thirds, an impressive exploitation of the highest and lowest registers and, at the end, a flashy glissando for both harmonic and orchestra that signals the brilliant ending.

III.

Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868) was the greatest Italian composer of his generation. He achieved what other composers only dream of: he won great fame and wealth early in his career, he retired at 39, and he spent his old age living in luxury in Paris, enjoying repeated productions of his operas and holding court as an international celebrity to receive the greatest musicians of the day. A gourmand as well as a gourmet, he was the inspiration for Tournedos Rossini, a French dish that in its richness perfectly characterizes the composer's zest for life: filet mignon, served on toast and topped with pâté de foie gras, fried in butter, covered with a Madeira demi-glace sauce, garnished with slices of black truffles and washed down with fine champagne. His music, likewise, deliciously gratifies the senses: bubbling over with wit, brimming with catchy tunes and always topped off with his irresistible, signature musical buildups that earned him the nickname, *Il Signor Crescendo*.

William Tell (1829) was Rossini's last opera. The story is based on legends of the Swiss archer who fought to free his country from Hapsburg domination. In French and lasting over four hours, the opera is rarely performed, mainly due to its length and to the difficulty of the vocal parts. The overture, however, is an often-performed chestnut of the orchestral repertoire. There are four sections, played without pause, for which the composer provided programmatic subtitles:

"Dawn," in E major, is a lyrical depiction of the sunrise over the alps. It is delicately scored for the cello section, including five soloists, accompanied by the double basses and timpani.

"The Storm," in E minor, quickly builds to the sudden explosion of a storm for the full orchestra. Rossini was fond of musical storms, and he found an excuse to include one every chance he got, most notably here, in the operas *Cenerentola* and *The Barber of Seville* and in the last movement of his earlier *La Tempesta* for strings.

"The Call to the Dairy Cows," in G, depicts the calm after the storm as the English Horn and the flute join in a bucolic depiction of a herdsman playing the traditional Swiss Alpenhorn over a peaceful meadow.

The finale ("March of the Swiss Soldiers"), back in E major, is not really a march, but more of a cavalry charge, in which the trumpets and horns dramatically announce the Swiss cavalry galloping through the scene. Audience members of the "baby boomer" generation will remember the use of Rossini's cavalry music as the theme for the famous 1950s television series *The Lone Ranger*.

IV.

Continuing with musical memory nuggets for boomers, the concert will close with a tribute to singer-actor Elvis Presley (1935-1977). Presley had a rich baritone voice, and the songs he sang represented a fusion of musical styles, including blues, rock & roll, country and gospel. He accompanied himself

on the guitar, backed up by a small combo; he wore a pompadour hairstyle with long sideburns; and his performances were characterized by suggestive hip swaying; people called him, "Elvis the pelvis." As "the King" himself put it, "Some people tap their feet, some people snap their fingers, and some people sway back and forth. I just sorta do 'em all together, I guess...The first time I appeared on stage, it scared me to death. I really didn't know what all the yelling was about. I didn't realize that my body was moving. It's a natural thing to me. So, I said to the manager backstage, 'What'd I do? What'd I do?' And he said, 'Whatever it is, go back and do it again!'"

Maestro Guzmán has provided the following commentary about the work we are about to hear: "Elvis Lives! is a collection of songs made famous by Elvis Presley, arranged and orchestrated by Eric Knight (1933-2022) and dedicated to harmonica virtuoso Robert Bonfiglio. The arrangement uses a full symphony orchestra and includes some of Elvis' most recognized songs, including *Heartbreak Hotel*, *Can't Help Falling in Love*, *Hound Dog*, *Blue Suede Shoes*, *Love Me Tender*, *Are You Lonesome Tonight* and many others. The arrangement effectively combines the sound of the symphony orchestra with the peculiar sound of the harmonica in a delightful tribute to the 'King of Rock.' This arrangement was premiered in 1997 at the Bilbao Music Festival in Spain. I am sure the PSO, our audience and I will be 'rocking' along!"

Robert Xavier Rodriguez has served as Composer-in-Residence with the Dallas Symphony and the San Antonio Symphony. His music is published exclusively by G. Schirmer (Wise Music). He holds the Endowed Chair of Art and Aesthetic Studies and is director of the Musica Nova ensemble at the University of Texas at Dallas.



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Coral Glass
Diane Gluskin
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Betsy Hicks
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Charlene Kulkarni
Judy Lain
Lorraine and Paul Landefeld
Dorothy Lane
Sung-Hee Lee
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Grace Lovrien
Bruce Magnuson
Sally Magnuson
Rangoli Mathur
Lori and Rick Maucieri
Donna McElroy-Carpenter
Sarah Meyer
Bing Naumann
Karol Omlor
Amy Perez
Randi Ross-Quick and Jeffrey Quick
Janella and Bruce Rayburn
Monica and Jose Rivera
Judy Roach
Estela Rodriguez
Juliette Buchanan and Mark Rutledge
Jay Schleder
Janet Schramm
Sandy and Mike Simpson
Nancy Sisler
Christine Taylor
Claudia and Horace Taylor
George and Nancy Trout
Beth and Frank Turner
Cindy and Chip Vineyard
Ann Vu
David Waite
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Judy Willcox
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Linda and David Young
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Hui Zhou

In-Kind

AlleeOops Photography
Dallas Morning News
H-E-B | Central Market
Kenny's Restaurant Group
Medical City Plano
Plano International Festival
Renaissance Dallas Richardson Hotel
Signs by Tomorrow
SoloShoe Communications
Steinway Hall Plano
Tom Venner

Honors Circle

In Memory of Marie A. Moore
In memory of Dr. Betty Muns,
Dr. Christopher Parr, and Ed Coyle
Given by Sandy Nachman
In memory of Dr. Christopher Parr,
Buzz Kolbe, and Jay Forte
Given by Alice and Bill Hobbs
In memory of Dr. Betty Muns and Dr. Christopher Parr
Given by Janie and David Orr
In memory of Dr. Christopher Parr
Given by Carol and Bill Tempest

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