



Crescendo presents: A Story of Hope in the Voice of the New World

Vibrant dramatic vocal and instrumental music from Colonial Latin America

Crescendo will present a special end-of-December concert with four soloists from Latin America, Europe and the U.S., and an ensemble of period and folk instrument players. The musicians will give voice to forgotten Latin American music that is only beginning to be explored and performed in our current times. It is both sacred and also secular music from two early manuscripts from Guatemala and Peru. The music is a mixture of native folk music and Western European-style compositions, likely by indigenous composers. The two sources are manuscripts from Huehuetenango found in convents of Northwest Guatemala, and the second source is the Martinez Compañón Codex of Northern Peru. On the program are a selection of villancicos, sacred Hispanic Renaissance polyphony, and also lively dances and songs.

Chilean musicologist Paul Gustaf Feller, who is collaborating with Crescendo in this project, talks about the fascinating story of the forgotten musical manuscripts: "The Huehuetenango Collection is a historical puzzle that we are just beginning to unravel. Mayan natives from one of the most secluded areas of Guatemala preserved the 16th and 17th century manuscripts until the 1960s, when they were taken by Maryknoll missionaries. These documents contain devotional music performed at three villages in which only natives were allowed to live. Although these manuscripts include musical pieces of European origin composed by some of the best-known musicians of the early 1500s, it is the unique works that fascinate us today. Evidence points to a series of Mayan native composers as the authors of these villancicos, devotional pieces in the vernacular. Some of these pieces were written in native languages for which we have very little other remains. Adding to the impressiveness of Huehuetenango Collection, these pieces would also represent the earliest and only case of music made by and for Mayan communities in the early modern world."

We chose the title "A story of hope in the voice of the New World", says Crescendo's Founding Artistic Director Christine Gevert, to convey to our audiences the sheer joy that emanates from this repertoire. Similarly to what happened in the U.S., early Latin America became a fusion of cultures through the new society created by the enslavement of the indigenous people, and the African slaves. Despite this tragic circumstance, the unique voice of these musical creations is one of hope, and of a vibrant new identity. The indigenous composers not only mastered the European style, but also transformed it, and infused it with their own new stories and customs, and integrated their musical and poetic elements. We have a responsibility to hear these voices now, and as musicians it is a privilege to be able to access these historic documents and translate them into a performance for our audiences.

The performers are sopranos Rebecca Palmer (Vienna, Austria), and Jayne Segedy (Barcelona, Spain), tenor José Ignacio Lagos (Barcelona, Spain), and baritone José Sacín (Washington DC, Peru), with period violinist and percussionist Job Salazar (Boston MA, Mexico), charango, ronroco and viola player Carlos Boltes (Hartford CT, Chile), period harpist Christa Patton (New York), directed by Crescendo's Founding Artistic Director Christine Gevert on historic keyboards.

Concerts are on Thursday, December 29, 2022, 5:30 pm at Trinity Church, 484 Lime Rock Rd., Lakeville, CT; and on Friday, December 30, 5:30 pm at Saint James Place, 352 Main Street, Great Barrington, MA. For more information, Covid precaution policy, and tickets go to: www.crescendomusic.org, or call 860.435.4866.

Founded by Artistic Director Christine Gevert and local supporters, Crescendo offers an ongoing program of music performance and education for the communities of Connecticut's Northwest Corner, the Berkshires and the Mid-Hudson Valley. With the participation of international performers and teachers as well as non-professionals, Crescendo's choral and instrumental concerts, its lectures and workshops reach audiences of all ages and levels of experience.

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