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JOSE M. OSORIO/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Elblo Barilari, left, and Gustavo Leone, co-artistic directors of the Chicago Latino Music Festival, want “to show the continuity of Latino music across the centuries.”

# A medley of styles

## 11th Chicago Latino Music Festival celebrates diverse voices



**JOHN VON RHEIN**  
*Heard & Scene*

Critic Virgil Thomson’s famous dictum about the way to write American music — “All you have to do is be an American and write any kind of music you wish” — applies just as easily to Latino music. Indeed, there are as many types of Latino musical composition as there are Latino composers. This is particularly true today, when musical style knows no clear ethnic or national identity, and labels are far too confining.

The fact remains that there’s an amazingly rich, diverse body of classical works by Latino composers of some five centuries that’s deserving of much wider exposure than it normally receives from America’s mainstream concert presenters.

And that’s where the annual Chicago Latino Music festivals come in. Each year, these festivals, produced by Chicago’s International Latino Cultural Center, celebrate a broad spectrum of such music, from the Baroque era to the present, at venues across the city, performed by some of Chicago’s leading musicians and ensembles, along with international artists. The mission, organizers explain, is as much about community involvement as it is about cultural enlightenment.

“Our idea is not to create a ghetto of Latin American music, but, rather, to show the continuity of Latino music across the centuries,” says the Uruguayan-born Chicago composer, educator and radio host Elblo Barilari, the festival’s co-artistic director.

In a city where Latinos account for about 30 percent of the population, “we feel it’s vital to expose people to that music and make Chicago’s Latino community feel proud of our musical treasures,” he adds.

Barilari and his colleague and co-artistic director, the Argentina-born Chicago composer and educator Gustavo Leone, have put together another thoughtfully eclectic array of concerts for the 11th Chicago Latino Music Festival, beginning Thursday night with a sold-out concert at the Instituto Cervantes of Chicago by Duo Belcorde, a violin and guitar ensemble.

The 2016 edition will comprise 14 concerts, half of them free events — 10 fewer performances than were given during last year’s 10th anniversary celebration. The cutback was quite intentional on the directors’ part, Leone explains.

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# Latino Music Festival a panorama of styles

Von Rhein, from Page 1

"We reduced the number of concerts with the intention of focusing rather more on our mission and also to be able to promote each concert a bit better," Leone says of this year's festival, which runs to Dec. 1.

Presenting a panorama of styles spanning more than 400 years of Latin American and Spanish music remains the focus — ranging from music from the Spanish colonial period in the New World, to classical string quartets from the 20th and 21st centuries, to solo guitar works, to contemporary works for acoustical instruments and electronics.

Performers include the Avalon, KAIA and Cuarteto Q-Arte string quartets; Mexico's Centro Mexicano para la Musica y las Artes Sonoras; Chicago Arts Orchestra; University of Illinois Orchestra; and classical guitarists Pablo Sainz Villegas and Adam Neiman.

"The partnerships we have with various ensembles and venues in the city, and the fact that many people are contributing to the festivals, are, we believe, changing the perception of classical Latin American music in Chicago," says Barilari, who hosts "Fiesta," a nationally syndicated program of Latin American music on WFMT-FM 98.7.

This year's festival partners include the Ear Taxi Festival, Harold Washington Library, Studebaker Theater, Old Town School of Folk Music, Ravinia Festival and Art Institute of Chicago.

Perhaps the most distinctive highlight is a cultural exchange with Colombia, funded by a \$50,000 grant from the MacArthur Foundation. As part of the exchange, new string quartets were commissioned from Leone and Colombian composer Blas Atehortua. Both works will be premiered by the Avalon and Cuarteto Q-Arte groups in Colombia, under auspices of the Latino Music Festival, before being performed in Chicago.

So well-established are the Chicago Latino Music festivals that recruiting prospective musicians is never a problem — more than 60 applications were received from would-be participants this year. Nor is it a problem devising programs sufficiently varied as to keep each year's event fresh, says Barilari. Some 50 percent of the festival audience is Latino, the rest non-Latino concertgoers, he

reports.

Although the U.S. has other festivals that include Latin American classical music, none is as extensive, wide-ranging or fully professional as Chicago's, according to the directors.

Under Barilari and Leone, past Chicago Latino Music festivals have included up to 70 different works by Chicago-based Latino composers and many more by other U.S. Latino composers. Major funding comes from the Joyce Foundation, which this year awarded the not-for-profit \$75,000, part of a three-year grant.

Thanks to the Chicago Latino Music Festival — now entering its second decade — a genuine community need is being filled, and Latin American classical music is enjoying a presence in the cultural life of Chicago as never before.

For further information, go to [www.latinomusicfest.org](http://www.latinomusicfest.org).

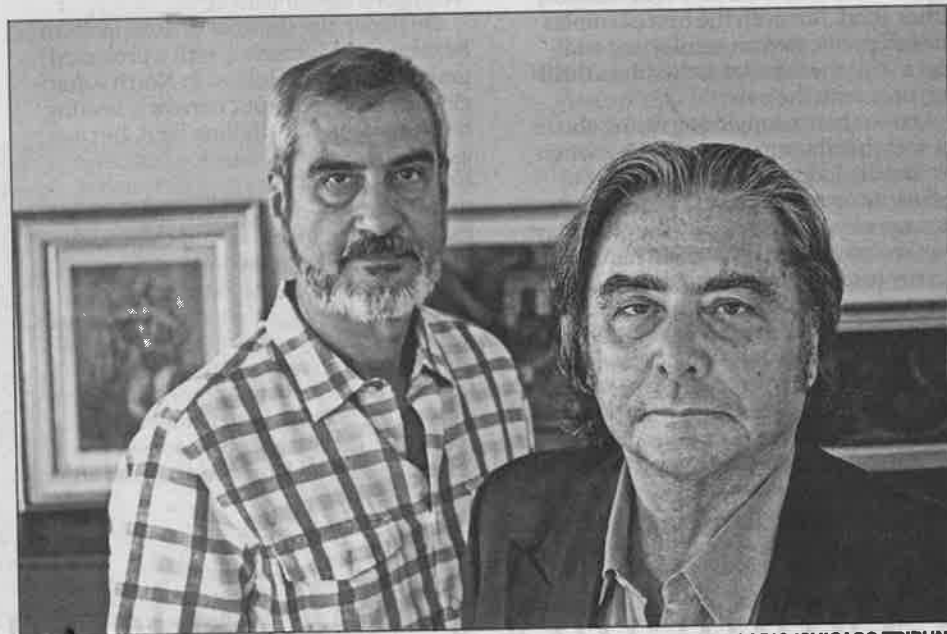
## Highlights of the 11th Chicago Latino Music Festival

■ **KAIA String Quartet.** The festival's ensemble-in-residence performs works for string quartet by Argentina-born composers Alberto Ginastera, Astor Piazzolla and Gustavo Leone (his 2015 String Quartet, world premiere). 6:30 p.m. Oct. 6, Pritzker Auditorium, Harold Washington Library, 400 S. State St.; free.

■ **Chicago Arts Orchestra.** Artistic director and conductor Javier Jose Mendoza leads the ensemble in seldom-performed classical works from 18th-century Latin America. 7:30 p.m. Oct. 15, Studebaker Theater, Fine Arts Building, 410 S. Michigan Ave.; \$35 patron, \$25 general, \$15 students and seniors; [www.studebakertheater.com](http://www.studebakertheater.com).

■ **"San Ignacio."** From the Jesuit missions of Bolivia in the 17th and 18th centuries comes this discovery, a baroque opera on a sacred subject, with anonymous music and text, presented in an edition by Piotr Nawrot and conducted by Emanuele Andrizzi. 2 p.m. Nov. 6, Fullerton Hall, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Ave.; \$10 donation at the door.

■ **Avalon String Quartet and Cuarteto Q-Arte.** The Chicago ensemble shares a program of festival commissions with one of Colombia's leading string quartets, part



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Artistic directors Gustavo Leone, left, and Elbio Barilari intentionally pared back the fest.

of a Chicago-Colombia cultural exchange. The program holds the U.S. premiere of Colombian composer Blas Atehortua's String Quartet No. 6, Leone's Quartet No. 4 and Osvaldo Golijov's "Last Round." 2 p.m. Nov. 13, Fullerton Hall, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan Ave.; free with paid museum entry.

■ **"Don Quixote's Piano,"** with Mauricio Nader, piano, and Welz Kauffman, narrator. The Mexican pianist and Ravinia Festival president collaborate in works from several centuries and cultures tied to the 400th anniversary of Spanish novelist Miguel Cervantes. 6:30 p.m. Nov. 17, Pritzker Auditorium, Harold Washington Library, 400 S. State St.; and 8:30 p.m. Nov. 19, Bennett Gordon Hall, Ravinia, Lake Cook and Green Bay roads, Highland Park; free at library; \$10 at Ravinia (\$45 dinner and concert); [www.ravinia.org](http://www.ravinia.org).

■ **"Havana-Chicago Connections,"** with Victor Alexander. The festival concludes with the Cuban-born, Chicago-based dancer performing his own choreography to contemporary and traditional Cuban music, including pieces by Leone and Barilari, in their world premiere. 7 p.m. Dec. 1, Studebaker Theater, Fine Arts Building, 410 S. Michigan Ave.; \$30 general, \$25 students, seniors and Latino Cultural Center members; [www.studebakertheater.com](http://www.studebakertheater.com).

## Sharps and flats

■ For its 11th concert season, the Chicago-based new music collective Ensemble Dal Niente will present multiple world premieres alongside works by emerging and

established composers.

The 2016-17 season will include major projects with composers George Lewis and Enno Poppe in addition to commissions from composers Julio Zuniga, LJ White, Murat Colak, Joshua Fineberg and others. There also will be performances of large-scale works previously written for the ensemble by Greg Saunier, Katie Young, Raphael Cendo, Natacha Diels and others. Stas Venglevski will perform works for bayan (chromatic accordion).

For further information, go to [www.dalniente.com](http://www.dalniente.com).

■ The musical estate of Italian conductor Claudio Abbado is to reside in Berlin, where he served as chief conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic from 1989 to 2002. The donation to the Berlin State Library will include an extensive collection of scores, handwritten notes, videos, musical-logical literature and letters.

Abbado, who died in 2014, was principal guest conductor of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1982-85 and was considered the heir apparent to Georg Solti, before Berlin made him an offer he could not refuse.

The Fondazione Claudio Abbado was established by the conductor's heirs to preserve his musical legacy and donate it to an institution that would guarantee its archiving and availability on a permanent basis.

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