## Minnesota Orchestra

**Akiko Fujimoto**, conductor  
**Gabriel Campos Zamora**, clarinet  
**Los Alegres Bailadores**, Folklórico dance ensemble

Thursday, August 1, 2019, 7:30 pm | Orchestra Hall

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<td><em>Cuban Overture</em></td>
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<td><em>Congo (Xylofono)</em>, from Tres Versiones Sinfónicas</td>
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| Artie Shaw     | Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra  
*Gabriel Campos Zamora*, clarinet | ca. 10'   |
| Manuel Ponce/arr. Adolf Lotter | *Estrellita* (Little Star) | ca. 5' |
| Zequinha de Abreu/arr. Cliff Colnot | *Tico Tico* | ca. 4' |
| **INTERMISSION** | | ca. 20' |
| Arturo Márquez| *Conga del Fuego Nuevo* (Conga of New Fire) | ca. 5' |
| Astor Piazzolla| *Oblivion*, from *Henry IV* | ca. 4' |
| José Pablo Moncayo| *Huapango*  
*Los Alegres Bailadores*, dance ensemble | ca. 8' |
| George Gershwin| *An American in Paris* | ca. 17'|

Los materiales del programa de esta noche están disponibles en español; solicite un folleto al acomodador.

Profiles of tonight’s performers begin on page 41.

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**George Gershwin**

**Cuban Overture**

In the 1920s and '30s, George Gershwin (1898-1937) became one of the premier names in American music through a string of successes in popular music, theater and the classical concert hall. After a visit to Cuba in 1932, he drew inspiration from the dance rhythms and percussion instruments he had encountered there and composed a work he initially called *Rumba*—later renamed *Cuban Overture*. Its premiere came at a concert of the New York Philharmonic at New York's Lewisohn Stadium on August 16, 1932, which the composer called “the most exciting night I have ever had.” A capacity crowd of 18,000 (5,000 were turned away) witnessed Gershwin conduct a program of his own works.

Gershwin provided the following description of *Cuban Overture*: “In my composition I have endeavored to combine the Cuban rhythms and my own thematic material. The result is a symphonic [overture] which embodies the essence of the Cuban dance. It has three main parts.

“The first part...is preceded by a [forte] introduction featuring some of the thematic material. Then comes a three part contrapuntal episode leading to a second theme. The first part finishes with a recurrence of the first theme combined with fragments of the second. A solo clarinet cadenza leads to a middle part, which is in a plaintive mood. It is a gradually developing canon in a polytonal manner. This part concludes with a climax based on an ostinato of the theme in the canon, after which a sudden change in tempo brings us back to the rumba dance rhythms. The finale is a development of the preceding material in a strettto-like manner. This leads us back to the main theme. The conclusion of the work is a coda featuring the Cuban instruments of percussion.”

**Artie Shaw**

**Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra**

Artie Shaw (1910-2004), one of America's two foremost jazz clarinetists of the Swing Era (the other being Benny Goodman), was a star in the recording business—selling more than 100 million records in his career. His *Concerto for Clarinet*, however, originated not in the recording studio, but on the Hollywood screen. Portraying himself in the 1940 Fred Astaire film *Second Chorus*, Shaw, with his band, played several original selections throughout the film. One was Shaw's *Swing Concerto*, later expanded as the Concerto for Clarinet. It exists in several instrumentations, including the symphony orchestra version heard tonight.

In his program note for the Minnesota Orchestra's January 2019 performance of the concerto, Robert Markow offered the following description: “The ten-minute Concerto for Clarinet bears little relation to classical concerto form. Part I consists mostly of boogie-woogie with lots of schmaltz and glissandos (a Shaw trademark). Part II is introduced by four sustained chords for the band while the clarinet improvises over each chord. Then Shaw launches into a highly energetic clarinet and drum dialogue.”

**Julián Orbón**

**Congo (Xylofono), from Tres Versiones Sinfónicas**

Aaron Copland, who for a time was Julián Orbón's composition teacher, spoke highly of his student's talents, calling him “Cuba's most gifted composer of the new generation.” Orbón (1925-1991), however, didn't belong exclusively to Cuba; born in Spain, he moved with his family to Cuba in 1938, left the island for Mexico in 1960 in the wake of the Cuban Revolution, and finally settled in the U.S. in 1964.

One of Orbón's most popular works is *Tres Versiones Sinfónicas* (literally “Three Symphonic Versions,” sometimes translated as “Three Symphonic Movements”), which dates from 1953. Its first-ever U.S. performance was given by the Minnesota Orchestra, then called the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra, on January 17, 1958. (A recording of that performance can be found on YouTube.) The work's three movements are based on varied sources: the opening *Pavanne* stems from the 16th-century Spanish court dance, the second movement draws on a phrase by 12th-century French composer Pérotin, and the concluding *Congo* featured on tonight's performance is built on a Congolese rhythmic pattern, with xylophone playing an outspoken role from start to finish.

**Arturo Ponce/arr. Adolf Lotter**

**Estrellita (Little Star)**

Although Manuel Ponce (1882-1948) wrote several works in traditional classical forms—including concertos for violin, piano and guitar—his work was focused primarily on songs, many based on folk music of his native Mexico. Ponce described his artistic imperative thusly: “I consider it the duty of every Mexican composer to ennoble his country's music by giving it artistic form, attiring it in the garb of polyphony, and lovingly conserving the popular music that is the expression of the country's soul.”

*Estrellita* (Little Star) is his most famous composition, though there is some debate among musicologists as to whether it is entirely Ponce's original, or based on traditional music. Whatever its origins, the sweet and wistful melody, long since separated from its lyrics, was a favorite encore of 20th-century violinist Jascha Heifetz and has attracted the attention of numerous arrangers, including the Czech Adolf Lotter.
Brazilian composer-performer Zequinha de Abreu (1880-1935) is best known for his 1917 song *Tico Tico no Fubá*—often shortened to *Tico Tico*—the original lyrics of which are about the tico-tico, a local name for the Rufous-collared sparrow. The fast-paced tune comes from the Brazilian choro tradition, a popular genre from Rio de Janeiro characterized by virtuosity, improvisation and subtle modulations, with abundant syncopation and counterpoint. It is heard tonight in an arrangement by contemporary American composer-arranger Cliff Colnot.

**George Gershwin**

*An American in Paris*

The inspiration for *An American in Paris*, Gershwin’s most famous standalone orchestral work with no soloist, arrived during a 1926 stay in the City of Lights, during which Gershwin bought authentic Parisian taxi horns to use in his new composition. Work began in earnest in 1928, and the premiere was given in November of that year by the New York Philharmonic under conductor Walter Damrosch. In an interview prior to the premiere, Gershwin stated that his new piece was “the most modern music I’ve yet attempted...My purpose is to portray the impression of an American visitor in Paris, as he strolls about the city and listens to the various street noises and absorbs the French atmosphere.” A cheery, bustling opening section, punctuated by tap-tap-tapping taxi horns, leads to a wistful blues-infused middle section. Finally the street noises and French atmosphere return in a triumphant close.

Program notes by Carl Schroeder.