



HANCHER



Chucho Valdés and the Afro-Cuban Messengers

Friday, February 10, 7:30 pm
Englert Theatre

Chucho Valdés	<i>piano</i>
Mayra Caridad Valdés	<i>vocals</i>
Lázaro Rivero Alarcón	<i>bass</i>
Juan Carlos Rojas Castro	<i>drums</i>
Yaroldy Abreu Robles	<i>percussion</i>
Dreiser Durruthy Bambolé	<i>batá drum and vocals</i>
Carlos Manuel Miyares Hernandez	<i>tenor saxophone</i>
Reinaldo Melián Álvarez	<i>trumpet</i>

Iowa Center for the Arts
The University of Iowa

Chucho Valdés



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inner of five Grammy Awards and three Latin Grammy Awards, Dionisio Jesús “Chucho” Valdés Rodríguez has performed all over the world in such prestigious venues as Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Centre, and the Hollywood Bowl and has shared the stage with such musical luminaries as Herbie Hancock, Billy Taylor, Chick Corea, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Brandford and Wynton Marsalis, Carlos Santana, Grover Washington Jr., Dizzy Gillespie, Taj Mahal, and Tito Puente to name but a few.

Born in Havana, Cuba in 1941, the pianist, composer, arranger, bandleader, and music professor began his musical life at home under the direction of his parents—his mother Pilar Rodríguez, a singer and piano teacher, and his father, the great Bebo Valdés.

At 3 years old, Chucho could already play the melodies he heard on the radio by ear using both hands in any key. And at age 5, Chucho began piano, theory, and solfège lessons with professor Oscar Muñoz Boufartique, finishing his studies at the Municipal Music Conservatory of Havana at the age of 14. All the while, he was taking private lessons in piano and composition with such noted teachers as Zenaida Romeu, Rosario Franco, Federico Smith, and Leo Brouwer.

At the age of 15, he formed his first jazz trio with Emilio del Monte and Luis Rodríguez. He went on to work as pianist in the Deauville and St. John Hotels in Havana and played with the Sabor De Cuba Orchestra directed by his father, accompanying important singers of the time like Rolando Lase-rie, Fernando Alvarez, and Pio Leyva.

Between 1961 and 1963, he worked as pianist at the Martí Theatre, International Salon of the Havana Riviera Hotel, and at the Musical Theatre of the Havana Orchestra. At Leo Brouwer’s recommendation, he simultaneously created his combo that in 1965 added the singer Amado Borcela, better

known as “Guapachá,” paving the way for a new era of Cuban popular music. This combo was like Irakere’s preamble where many of the founders came together.

In 1967, he started with the Cuban Modern Music Orchestra under the direction of Armando Romeu and Rafael Somavilla, and became the group leader before long. In 1970, he debuted his combo in a quintet format at the Jamboree International Jazz Festival in Poland, marking the first time a Cuban group participated in a jazz festival abroad and earning Chucho international recognition as one of the five greatest piano players in the world along with Bill Evans, Oscar Peterson, Herbie Hancock, and Chick Corea.

In 1972, after recording the LP *Jazz Bata* with Carlos del Puerto and Oscar Valdés, Chucho decided to add a brass section and drums to his combo. It was then, in 1973, that he founded Irakere, widely recognized as the most important group in Cuban musical history in the second half of 20th century. An explosive mixture of jazz, rock, classical and traditional Cuban music, Irakere produced a sound that had never been heard before, and that sound revolutionized Latin music.

In 2006, in a ceremony held at the Vatican, Chucho was named Good Will Ambassador by the Food and Agricultural Association of the United Nations. He gives annual benefit concerts in Havana every October 16—World Food Day.

In 2009 he formed Chucho Valdés & the Afro-Cuban Messenger. The group tours internationally and recorded Chucho’s most recent release, *Chucho’s Steps* (2011). ♦

SELECTED PRIZES AND RECOGNITION

- ◆ HONORARY DOCTORATE at VICTORIA UNIVERSITY in CANADA 1997.
- ◆ “FELIX VARELA ORDER” of FIRST GRADE for artistic merits, given by the STATE COUNCIL of the Republic of Cuba, 1998.
- ◆ HONORARY DOCTORATE in ARTS, year 2000, awarded by INSTITUTO SUPERIOR DE ARTE OF HAVANA.
- ◆ DISTINCTION TO PEDAGOGIC MERIT in 2001, awarded by INSTITUTO SUPERIOR DE ARTE OF HAVANA.
- ◆ NATIONAL CUBAN MUSIC AWARD (shared with Leo Brouwer) in its first edition, 2000.
- ◆ Inducted into the LATIN JAZZ HALL OF FAME in LOS ANGELES, in a ceremony with TITO PUENTE, EDDIE PALMIERI and LALO SHIFFRIN in 2000.
- ◆ MUSIC AWARD in SPAIN in JAZZ CATEGORY, 2009 for the CD *Juntos para siempre*, recorded with his father BEBO VALDÉS under label CALLE 54 RECORDS.
- ◆ He has received the Keys to the City in PONCE (PUERTO RICO), LOS ÁNGELES AND SAN FRANCISCO, CA, NEW ORLEÁNS, LA, MADISON, WI and most recently in PANAMA CITY in January 2009.

The Afro-Cuban Messengers

Mayra Caridad Valdés (vocals) is one of the more intense and versatile voices in contemporary Cuban Latin jazz. Born in 1956 to Bebo Valdés, a legendary Cuban jazz pianist, Mayra studied at the National Art School in Cuba and graduated in 1975 with a degree in choral music. In 1980, Harry Belafonte invited her to perform with him at his concert in Cuba. This was the beginning of her professional career as a vocalist. She toured Japan and Europe as a solo vocalist and as a member of numerous groups including Irakere, a group she permanently joined in 1994, and also in her brother Chucho Valdés' quartet. Mayra has shared the stage with international figures such as Gladys Knight, Flora Purim and Tania María. In 2002, she released her debut solo album, *La Diosa del Mar*, a collection of Afro-Cuban jazz standards and traditional folkloric songs. Her second CD *Obatalá Estoy Aquí*, was nominated for the Cubadisco Prize 2008.

Lázaro Rivero Alarcón (bass) was born in Manicaragua, Cuba in 1966. In 1982, he entered The National Art School where he studied clarinet and contrabass. In 1996, he joined the group Otra Vision directed by the flautist and composer Orlando Valle Maraca and performed in numerous jazz festivals throughout Europe. As an instrumentalist he has participated in *Pa los Malos Ojos* and *Malembe* together with Carlos del Puerto, Tata Guines, Emilio del Monte, and Roberto Vizcaino, among many other projects. Since 2000, as a member of the Chucho Valdés Jazz Quartet, he has toured more than 20 countries. Lázaro records for the Blue Note label, sharing discography projects and the stage with international figures such as Bebo Valdés, Concha Buika, and Michel Legrand. He has recorded *Color de la Vida* with Charles Aznavour, *Obatala* with Mayra Caridad Valdés, and *El Último Trago* with Concha Buika.

Juan Carlos Rojas Castro (drums) graduated with honors with a degree in percussion from Cuba's National Art School of Music in 1982. That same year, he began his professional career in the Santa Clara's Modern Music Orchestra in Villa Clara, his home town. Juan Carlos has performed with prestigious Cuban groups: Varadero International Orchestra, All Stars Orchestra with Tata Guines, Frank Emilio, Richard Egúes, and Omara Portuondo, among others. As a member of the group Otra Vision from 1995 to 2006, he participated in various recordings including *La Habana llama* with Miguel Diaz Anga and *Habana Flauta* with Jane Brunet, among others. Juan Carlos has toured the U.S., Europe, and Canada together with Wynton Marsalis and his orchestra. In 2006, he joined the Chucho Valdés Jazz Quartet and appeared at such prestigious musical events as the Sevilla International Festival (Spain), Cape Town Jazz Festival (South Africa), The Blue Note Jazz Festival (Milan, Italy), Orleans Jazz Festival (France), and Canaries Jazz Festival (Spain), among many others. His work as instrumentalist has been reviewed in the magazine *Jazz Hot* and in different editions of *Latin Beat Magazine* in the U.S. The author of a percussion method based on the mixing of drums and timbales, Juan Carlos has taught percussion in Europe, the U.S., and South America.

Yaroldy Abreu Robles (percussion) was born in Sagua de Tanamo, Cuba. He started his professional career in Holguin in 1995 with the group Agua and then went on to form the experimental percussion ensemble Cinco Puntos. He graduated with honors with a bachelor's degree in percussion from the Higher Institute of Art in 2001. While Yaroldy was still a student, Chucho Valdés invited him to join his group Irakere and, in 2001, the Chucho Valdés Jazz Quartet.

Yaroldy has shared the stage and recorded with many musicians inside and outside of Cuba: Muñequitos de Matanzas, Roberto Vizcaino, Jose Luis Cortes, David Sanchez, Giovanni Hidalgo, and Mañenguito (Puerto Rico), Wynton Marsalis, Chico Freeman, Dave Valentin, Sonny Rollins, Michel Camilo and Arturo Sandoval (U.S.), and Tania Maria (Brazil). In 2003, Yaroldy was nominated for a Grammy Award in the category of Best Traditional Tropical Album for Amadito Valdés' *Bajando Gervasio*, and in 2004 he won the Latin Grammy Award in the Latin jazz category for Chucho Valdés Jazz Quartet's *New Conceptions*. A valued teacher, Yaroldy has been invited to teach master classes in Europe and the U.S., and at various music festivals throughout the world.

Dreiser Durruthy Bambolé (batá drum and vocals) was born in Guantánamo in 1977. In 1994, he toured France with the French Young Ballet as part of an exchange program between Cuba and France. In 1997, he entered the Higher Institute of Art in Cuba, where he graduated with a degree in dramatic arts in 2004. He toured the world from 2003 to 2006 with the Carlos Acosta Company. Dreiser appeared on the CD *Afrocuban Jazz Project* with Orlando Maraca Valle and with the Cuba Jazz Sanchez on the CD *Semos*. In 2007, he worked

with Lady Salsa Company and toured Russia, Estonia, Lithuania, Japan, England, South Africa, Germany, Belarus, and Australia. In 2009, Dreiser joined Valdés' Afro-Cuban Messengers and recorded the CD *Chucho's Steps*, on which he both sings and plays the batás.

Carlos Manuel Miyares Hernandez (tenor saxophone) was born in 1980 in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba and started his music studies at the age of seven at the Vocational School of Arts, where he initially studied piano, but then switched to saxophone after four years. He went on to study with Julio Cesar Gonzalez at the Esteban Salas Conservatory, graduating in 1999. Carlos has appeared at various festivals throughout the world and has toured Jamaica, Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Brazil, Switzerland, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, England, Scotland, Luxemburg, Belgium, The Netherlands, Ireland, and Austria. Selected discography: *Chucho's Steps* (Chucho Valdés), *Puertas Liuba* (Maria Hevia), *Full Time* (Jorge Chicoy), *Columpio* (Coro Diminuto), *Amaray* (Ricardo Amaray), *Sentimiento* (Francis del Río), *Beat Cubano* (Manolito Simonet). He has collaborated with Alexis Bosch, Pasaje Abierto, David Álvarez, Juego de Manos, Chala Cubana, Carlos Varela, and many others.

Reinaldo Melián Álvarez (trumpet) was born in 1960 and graduated from Cuba's National Art School in 1982. He gave trumpet lessons at the Music School of Pinar del Rio from 1982 to 1985, simultaneously working with the Cuban popular music band Ireme, with which he went on tour to Russia, Angola, and Tunis. He participated in the recording of musical tracks for films and TV series such as *En Silencio ha tenido que Ser* and *El Regreso de David*. In 1985, he joined Gupo Proyecto, a jazz band directed by pianist Gonzalo Rubalcaba. Working with the band until 1997, he traveled worldwide to various festivals including the Montreal Festival, the Vancouver Festival, the North Sea Jazz Festival (The Netherlands), San Sebastián Festival (Spain), Mont Fuji Festival (Tokyo), and others in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Turkey, Germany, Finland, Russia, Luxemburg, Brazil, Italy, and Norway. Reinaldo has performed at the Blue Note clubs in New York, Tokyo, Osaka, the Yoshi Club in San Francisco, and the Ronnie Scotch in London. During this period, and as part of Rubalcaba's band, he participated in the following projects: *Giraldilla*, *Mi Gran Pasión*, and *4 y 20*. From 1997 to 2009, he worked with Orlando Maraca Valle's Band Otra Vision. In 2009, he joined Chucho Valdés and the Afro-Cuban Jazz Messengers and recorded *Chucho's Steps* with the band. ♦