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Puerto Rico Nació en Mi: Tales from the Diaspora

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PROGRAM NOTES

The music for this performance is inspired by the idea of the Puerto Rican experience in the United States, specifically in the area of New York City. I conducted a series of interviews with New Yorkers of Puerto Rican descent, focusing on their experience as second-generation Puerto Ricans. Our conversations can basically be summarized into one single question: What makes a Puerto Rican a Puerto Rican? Is it where you were born? Is it the language that you speak? Or maybe it is how you connect to Puerto Rican traditions? There is, of course, no correct answer to these questions, but the many answers and impressions that came from these conversations eventually served as the main source of inspiration for the music you'll hear tonight. Video images and audio clips from these interviews are meant to interact with the music and to make a case for the fact that identity (in this case national identity) can be multiple and changeable—that in many cases our nationality can be within us, no matter where we're from or the language we speak. The video, by David Dempewolf, was prepared specially for this occasion and expands on these ideas even further.

As a means to represent this unique concept of identity (multiple and changeable) in the music itself, all the compositions explore the idea of multiple rhythmic structures coexisting with each other (e.g., 5 against 7, 3 against 2, 5 against 3). In addition, each piece is meant to be a narrative of the different questions and concerns addressed during the interviews.

Thank you so much for being here, and I hope you enjoy the experience.

—Miguel Zenón

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Miguel Zenón (alto sax), a multiple-Grammy nominee and Guggenheim and MacArthur fellow, represents a select group of musicians who have masterfully balanced and blended the often contradictory poles of innovation and tradition. Widely considered one of the most groundbreaking and influential saxophonists of his generation, he has also developed a unique voice as a composer and conceptualist, concentrating his efforts on perfecting a fine mix between Latin American folkloric music and jazz. His latest Grammy-nominated recording, *Alma Adentro* (Marsalis Music, 2011), is a tribute to the Puerto Rican songbook. He arranges and explores the music of five legendary Puerto Rican composers: Bobby Capó, Tite Curet

Alonso, Pedro Flores, Rafael Hernández, and Sylvia Rexach (whom he considers “the George Gershwins, Cole Porters, and Jerome Kerns of Puerto Rican song”). The recording features his longtime working quartet of pianist Luis Perdomo, bassist Hans Glawischnig, and drummer Henry Cole plus a 10-piece woodwind ensemble orchestrated and conducted by close friend and collaborator Guillermo Klein. This groundbreaking project both honors the music of these masters and exposes it to new audiences.

Born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Zenón studied classical saxophone at the Escuela Libre de Música in Puerto Rico before receiving a bachelor's degree in Jazz Studies from Berklee College of Music and a master's degree in Jazz Performance at Manhattan School of Music. Zenón's more formal studies, however, are supplemented and enhanced by his vast and diverse experience as a sideman and collaborator. Throughout his career he has divided his time equally between working with older jazz masters and with the music's younger innovators, irrespective of styles and genres. The list of musicians with whom Zenón has toured and/or recorded includes Charlie Haden, David Sánchez, the Village Vanguard Orchestra, Guillermo Klein y los Guachos, the Mingus Big Band, Bobby Hutcherson, and Steve Coleman. He has also participated in recent projects with Adam Cruz, Antonio Sánchez, Jason Lindner, Miles Okazaki, Kenny Werner, David Gilmore, and Aaron Goldberg. He is a founding member of the groundbreaking SFJAZZ Collective, a group whose past and current members include Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Lovano, Joshua Redman, Brian Blade, Nicholas Payton, Dave Douglas, and Eric Harland. In 2012, Zenón's association with SFJAZZ will further expand to include his new role as resident artistic director along with Bill Frisell, Jason Moran, Regina Carter, and John Santos.

Zenón's six recordings as a leader (including the above-mentioned *Alma Adentro*) represent not only his growth as a musician but also his ability to constantly evolve and reinvent himself as a conceptualist and producer. His debut CD, *Looking Forward* (Fresh Sound New Talent, 2002), represents a snapshot of the very eclectic musical interests of the then 24-year-old musician and was selected by the *New York Times* as the number one “alternative” jazz recording of 2002. His second recording as a leader, *Ceremonial* (Marsalis Music, 2004), garnered unanimous critical praise and recognition both within and outside the jazz world. *Jibaro*

(Marsalis Music, 2005), Zenón's third recording, was further proof that the critical praise was well deserved. The recording is an exploration of a style of popular Puerto Rican folk music known as *la música Jibara*. The *Chicago Tribune* summed it up best: “The instrumental prowess of Zenón's playing, the vigor of his compositions and the sensitivity of his band to Puerto Rican song form point to new possibilities in jazz.” Like his previous recordings, *Jibaro* was uniformly well received and appeared on many Top Ten lists, including those of the *New York Times*, *Latin Beat*, *El Nuevo Día*, and the *Chicago Tribune*.

Decidedly more personal and introspective, *Awake* (Marsalis Music, 2008) incorporates a string quartet and additional horns to Zenón's core group and brings to the forefront his formidable skills as a writer and arranger. *Awake* caught the attention of the international press, garnering it five-star reviews and top honors in publications like *Jazzwise* (UK), *Jazz Man* (France), and *Jazz Magazine* (France). Zenón returned to his Puerto Rican roots for inspiration in his next outing, *Esta Plena* (Marsalis Music, 2009), which draws from the traditional *plena* music style of his home country and was supported by a fellowship from the Guggenheim Foundation. On it Zenón augmented his quartet to include three percussionists/vocalists and took on the additional roles of both lyricist and vocalist. In addition to being hailed by critics (*New York Times*, *Village Voice*, *El Nuevo Día*, *Downbeat*, *Chicago Tribune*) as one of the best recordings of 2009, *Esta Plena* earned Zenón two Grammy nominations (for Best Improvised Solo and Best Latin Jazz Recording of the year), as well as a Latin Grammy nomination for Best Latin Jazz Recording of the year.

As a composer, Zenón has been commissioned by SFJAZZ, the New York State Council for the Arts, Chamber Music America, the Guggenheim Foundation, Jazz Reach, Montclair State University, and many of his peers. In 2003 he was chosen by the Kennedy Center to teach and perform in West Africa as part of their Jazz Ambassador program. Since then he has given hundreds of lectures and master classes and has taught all over the world at institutions including The Banff Centre, Berklee College of Music, Siena Jazz, Conservatorium van Amsterdam, Conservatoire de Paris, University of Manitoba, Manhattan School of Music, UMass-Amherst, and the Brubeck Institute. He is also a permanent faculty member at New England Conservatory of Music.

Perhaps what best reflects his commitment to education and cements his growing reputation as a “cultural ambassador” is a program that he founded in 2011 called Caravana Cultural, which presents free jazz concerts in rural areas of Puerto Rico. The program makes a “cultural investment” in the island by giving these communities a chance to listen to jazz of the highest caliber (Zenón invites some of the best musicians in the New York jazz scene to perform as guests), while at the same time getting young Puerto Rican musicians actively involved in the concert activities. Starting in February 2011 and continuing through 2013, Zenón will present a concert every four months. Each concert focuses on the music of a specific jazz legend (Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and Duke Ellington, among others) and is preceded by a pre-concert presentation that touches on the basic elements of jazz and improvisation. Over the last six years, Zenón has also personally organized “Jazz Jam Sessions” in the San Juan area as a way of creating a platform for younger jazz musicians to grow and interact with one another.

In 2008 he was selected as one of 25 distinguished individuals to receive the prestigious and coveted MacArthur Fellowship, more commonly known as the “Genius Grant.” Zenón lives in New York City with his wife, Elga.

Agency: Unlimited Myles, Inc., www.unlimitedmyles.com. Management: Mariah Wilkins Artist Management, LLC, www.mariahwilkins.com.

Luis Perdomo (piano), born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1971, was exposed to many musical styles by his father, an avid music fan. A full scholarship to the Manhattan School of Music was the catalyst for his move to New York. After receiving his BA in Jazz, Perdomo earned his master's degree at Queens College, studying with the legendary Sir Roland Hanna. Perdomo's music education was not limited to the classroom. In New York, he quickly established himself as an in-demand pianist, performing with Ray Barretto, Brian Lynch, David Sánchez, Claudia Acuña, Butch Morris, John Patitucci, Jerry Gonzalez, Alice Coltrane, and Dafnis Prieto, among others. As a longtime member of groups led by Miguel Zenón and Ravi Coltrane, Perdomo has made his mark on the jazz world.

His most important role to date has been as a leader. Since 2005, he has released three CDs: *Focus Point* (2005/RKM), *Awareness*

(2007/RKM), and *Pathways* (2008/CrissCross). In 2012 he will be releasing his fourth CD, *Universal Mind* (2012/RKM), featuring Drew Gress on bass and Jack DeJohnette on drums. Each disc represents very distinct and contrasting aspects of Perdomo's musical identity. The *Village Voice* stated, “A rather amazing improviser, the pianist is making a name for himself by feverishly assaulting the progressive edge of mainstream.” This, however, does not mean he does not have reverence for the mainstream; it is clear that Perdomo is equally at ease in both worlds.

Hans Glawischnig (bass) is one of the most in-demand bassists on the New York jazz scene today. Born in Graz, Austria, he started playing violin at age six, then switched to the bass in his early teens. In 1989 he received a scholarship to attend Berklee College of Music and graduated magna cum laude in 1992. Glawischnig then moved to New York, where he received a scholarship to attend the Manhattan School of Music. In 1994 he received his master's degree and began a long string of associations with artists as wide-ranging as Bobby Watson, Maynard Ferguson, and Paquito D'Riviera. Since 1996 he has been active in the Latin jazz arena as a member of Ray Barretto's New World Spirit sextet, as well as David Sánchez's Melaza sextet, an ensemble that has recorded several Grammy-nominated CDs. Chick Corea hired him in 2006 for his Spirit of Mozart ensemble, a project dedicated to the 250th anniversary of the birth of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Glawischnig continues to perform with a wide range of artists, including Ravi Coltrane, Kenny Werner, Brian Lynch, the Mingus Big Band, Billy Childs, Ed Simon, Claudia Acuña, Dafnis Prieto, Dave Binney, and Ben Monder, to name just a few. Glawischnig has appeared on more than 50 recordings. He is a longstanding member of the Miguel Zenón Quartet and has performed on all six of Zenón's recordings, including the Grammy-nominated *Esta Plena* and *Alma Adentro*. Glawischnig is also active as a composer and bandleader and has two critically acclaimed CDs of original compositions, *Common Ground* and *Panorama*.

Henry Cole (drums) emerged in 1999 on the “Old San Juan” music scene while studying classical percussion at the Conservatorio de Musica de Puerto Rico. A few years later, while he was attending Berklee College of Music, Cole's musical trajectory led him to

the jazz tradition. Returning to Puerto Rico, Cole began to play with such Latin jazz luminaries as Giovanni Hidalgo, Paoli Mejias, William Cepeda, and Ramon Vasquez. He also performed with a variety of visiting artists, including Jerry Gonzalez, Claudia Acuña, Danilo Perez, and Branford Marsalis and soon became one of the most in-demand musicians in Puerto Rico.

In the fall of 2003, Cole moved to New York to attend the Manhattan School of Music, where he received a scholarship to study with drummer/composer John Riley. In just a few years, Cole was performing, recording, and touring with such musicians as Adam Rogers, Dick Oatts, Chris Potter, Ed Simon, Ray Barretto, Papo Vazquez, Paquito D'Rivera, and David “Fathead” Newman, among many others. He has toured extensively throughout North America and Europe, and in the fall of 2004, Cole's own quartet was selected to represent the US as part of Jazz at Lincoln Center's The Rhythm Road: American Music Abroad program. Cole is currently touring with the Miguel Zenón Quartet and David Sánchez and can be heard on Zenón's Grammy-nominated *Esta Plena* and *Alma Adentro*.

David Dempewolf (Video Artist) has earned a certificate in sculpture from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, a BFA from the University of Pennsylvania, and an MFA from Columbia University and has been a resident of the Whitney Independent Studio Program and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. He is co-founder and co-director of the Marginal Utility gallery and the *Machete* art-zine in Philadelphia. Dempewolf has collaborated with pianist/composer Jason Moran (2010 MacArthur fellow) on the touring project *In My Mind* and has shown singular projects in various group shows in spaces and venues such as Greene Naftali (NYC), the Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati), Whitechapel (London), and the 2007 Oberhausen and London film festivals.

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Music

Music

Music

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Peak Performances presents:

World Premiere!

Miguel Zenón

Puerto Rico Nació en Mi: Tales from the Diaspora

featuring:

Alto Sax **Miguel Zenón**
 Piano **Luis Perdomo**
 Bass **Hans Glawischnig**
 Drums **Henry Cole**

Alto Sax **Will Vinson, Michael Thomas**
 Tenor Sax **John Ellis, Samir Zarif**
 Baritone Sax **Chris Cheek**
 Trumpet **Seneca Black, Mike Rodriguez, Jonathan Finlayson,
 Alex Norris**
 Trombone **Jacob Garchik, Alan Ferber, Joe Fiedler**

Video Artist **David Dempewolf**
 Sound Design **Paul Bagin**

PROGRAM

- “Overture (De Donde Vienes?)“
- “Identities Are Changeable”
- “Same Fight”
- “My Home”
- “First Language”
- “Second Generation Lullaby”
- “Through Culture and Tradition”

Commissioned by Peak Performances @ Montclair State (NJ).

This presentation of *Puerto Rico Nació en Mi: Tales from the Diaspora* is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Duration: 90 minutes, no intermission.

In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted inside the theater.

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Alexander Kasser Theater
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