

Stars in the Classics to visit Latin & South America March 26

by Daniel Hathaway



Well-known in the last decade and a half for its intimate Salons and Garden concerts, M.U.S.i.C. — Stars in the Classics — will perform on a wider stage this weekend with a Spring Festival of Music from Latin and South America on Sunday afternoon, March 26 at 3:30 pm at the Church of the Western Reserve in Pepper Pike. Tickets are available [here](#), and a reception will follow the concert.

I spoke with artistic director Jodi Kanter by telephone to find out more about this weekend's program. The former fiber artist's life and career changed dramatically fifteen years ago when a sideline turned into something of an obsession. "Peter Takács got me started. We were friends, and he mentioned that he wanted to play chamber music

in people's homes. I knew people with large homes so I started helping him," she said. Then the Oberlin piano professor immersed himself in recording Beethoven's complete piano sonatas.

"I kept the program going and kept meeting musicians who wanted to perform. Then, people wanted to make donations, so I decided to start a non-profit with the help of students in the Case Law School who needed experience in that area."

Kanter also gave up her art studio after forty years, during which she fulfilled commissions from all over the country. "I needed something different. It became repetitive and it wasn't new anymore." Such activities as fundraising, promotion, and program design *were* new. "My art school background served me well," she said.

In the early days, she continued recruiting performers from Oberlin, then from other area music schools. "I can't remember how I got involved with CIM students. "They just

started coming to me.” So did pianists from the Cleveland International Piano Competition and Cuba. “It just grew. Last year, I think we employed 54 different musicians in 13 programs, totaling over 200 performances.”



At first, Kanter’s programs didn’t follow unifying themes like ‘Movie Music,’ or ‘Music by Latin and South American Composers.’ “That came later, but choosing a theme gives us a starting place, and I ask musicians what they’re working on that might fit.

“For this weekend’s concert, I proposed a piece by Leo Brouwer to our guitarist, Andy Poxon. He made the counter proposal of a work by Ramades Natali that he had already arranged for chamber ensemble, then I assembled the rest of the musicians. Our Argentine pianist Gaston Friedman, who is studying at CIM, proposed several works from his country. Alexa Lopez, our Cuban American vocalist who studies in the Baldwin Wallace theater music program, suggested a song by Leucona.

“Then we commissioned a piece by Julian Fueyo who was a student at CIM and just graduated from Yale. He just finished his piece two days ago. And we have a 19 year-old violinist who studies at CIM named Maude Couthier who can play anything.” Kanter notes that she looks for performers who can really engage their audience.”

The audience on Sunday can also look forward to the kind of post-concert reception that distinguishes STARS' concerts. Kanter, her niece, and "a couple of volunteers" cater those events. "I feel like it's part of a whole package," Kanter said.



Still to come: a musical salon in May featuring two-piano music. "We're lucky to have a house with two big Steinways. Then we'll move outside for summer garden concerts. We always have a fun Halloween event. There's no 'season,' just thirteen different programs every year."

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