



>> Narrator: To make a new home, in a new country can be frightening. Neighbors are replaced with strangers in a land surrounded by a border.

But music has a way of erasing these boundaries, a concept the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra had in mind when it contacted Gabriela Frank to compose a new work.

>> Gabriela Frank: They wanted somebody who could spend time in the community on multiple visits and write a musical composition based on those experiences. In the actual writing of the music, I went through some many blueprints and just tossed them out that I didn't think were worthy of specific faces that I met. I said would this speak to this person, would they feel proud to have participated that this is a representative artistic message of their experience.

>> Narrator: Her experiences with them became music inspired by them. This is their story.

>> Announcer: This program is made possible by a Joyce Award from the Joyce Foundation and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

>> Gabriela Frank: When I was first approached I got a call from the representative of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra that and they told me they were interested in commissioning new work.

>> Beth Outland: I've been with the symphony 18 years and in my time there I've never seen a project of this depth in the creation of a new commission. And so there weren't really any precedents to follow so we were sort of inventing the process as we went.

(Music)

>> Narrator: The project would focus on welcoming the growing Latino population into the world of orchestral music.

(Music)

>> Gabriela Frank: I was surprised coming to Indianapolis how diverse it was. Didn't expect it. In fact, to me, it seems to me like a very Latino city.

(Music)

>> Gabriela Frank: This is my first day in Indianapolis. So we just jumped right in the water and got our feet wet with visiting La Plaza which is a community, a Latino community center.

(Speaking in Spanish)

I think what's happening in Indianapolis is happening everywhere and it's thrust upon us. We're racing toward being a very mixed society. And what art does it makes people come together and talk about such things.



>> Narrator: At its very start, the project had already drawn the interest of a few area Latinos who had stories to tell about making Indiana their new home.

>> Gabriela Frank: They even asked you know why are you here, what can music do for this? I'm explaining well we have this very idealistic project, we're going to take a couple years to do this and would you want to include your story in a piece of music then it's really a *regalo*, a present for you at the end of the two years. Already I'm getting ideas about how to proceed ahead. We'll start focusing in very quickly on how to make this work.

>> Narrator: Following this first step would be a flurry of activity that would take an outsider inside the lives of Indiana's modern day pilgrims or *peregrinos*.

For Gabriela, this wasn't only about creating a new piece of music, it was about getting to know people and their stories in a down to earth way.

(Music)

>> Gabriela Frank: Can I hear more? They're not too tired? I would love that.

>> Narrator: Gabriela wanted to truly know about the Latino community in Indianapolis. On each visit, sleep was something she saved for the flight back to California. With a loaded schedule, Gabriela made quick work of forging strong relationships through meeting —

(Speaking in Spanish)

>> Narrator: Meals, festivals, and performances.

>> Gabriela Frank: Pleasure to meet you.

>> Beth Overland: Thank you. Thank you so much.

>> Narrator: It seemed that around every corner was the promise of a possibility where a community could come together if only for a moment to enjoy a classical composition that told their story.

(Music)

>> Narrator: The story of people trying to make life better for all. Throughout her journey she witnessed many examples of the uniting power of music. In this small classroom, many students who had struggled with their studies are now putting in extra hours after school. Students from immigrant families often face special challenges that others may not.

>> Pavel Polanco Safadit: So it's a place where you can learn and you can be safe. What music can do is it can take you somewhere. Music can take you somewhere. You can submerge in music and forget about many things. Time goes by anyways. You better do something. You don't want to look back 20 years from now and see you know what, I had opportunities in the past.

>> Narrator: Programs like this one at George Washington are a vital part of a child's educational experience as well as an opportunity for fellowship with others in similar situations.

>> Pavel Safadit: It's becoming something that brings people together.

>> Narrator: Published by G. Schirmer and recently awarded the prestigious Guggenheim, Gabriela is one of the country's most sought after composers, regularly collaborating with such luminaries as Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, Grammy-winning cellist Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble, Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Nilo Cruz and major orchestras and chamber music groups around the world. Her work often sets the stage for many crossover projects.



(Music)

>> Narrator: Soon, the music, resonating throughout the city, began working its magic, pulling more and more like-minded people together to plan for the future.

(Singing)

>> Narrator: With each visit she made, artistic expression brought Gabriela closer to those she spent time with. And each time she left, more of Indiana followed her home.



(Waves crashing)

>> Narrator: On the west coast, where the population is so diverse, it isn't hard for Gabriela to keep identity at the core of everything she does. She herself has a very diverse fusion of cultures in her life. Gabriela's mother, Peruvian and Chinese, her father Jewish and Lithuanian.

>> Gabriela Frank: This is my grandfather. You feel like you have direction in your life, that you're part of this long conduit, this long migratory path. For me that's amazing because it makes me feel like I have push forward with my own experience, with my own stories. It does pertain to the stuff going on in Indianapolis too with the Latinos there because they're asking a lot of the same questions. In our household we're all very creative. My brother has artistic talent with my mom.

>> Sabina Frank: She started playing the piano because my son Marcos he wanted to take some piano lessons. He might have been, how old was he? What like, three or three and half, so she was eight years old. Gabriela just used to go to the piano just to entertain herself when she got bored playing her dolls, she went to the piano. The sound that she makes for me was just noise. And of course you know she used to go over there and make all this noise. And the grandmother said one of the times that she—

>> Gabriela Frank: My dad's mother.

>> Sabina Frank: Yeah, my husband's mother said to me, now this girl has talent.

>> Narrator: As she writes, she remembers, keeping her heritage close to her heart, the inspiration beginning to take shape.

>> Gabriela Frank: After I've done it on pen and paper I'll bring it



here. I'll spend a lot of days, a lot of hours inputting it into the computer, mainly because my handwriting is so bad that I can't read it. This is primarily a graphic layout program. So although you can hear music on it, really it's meant to do something like this. We're entering in different notes. You want to hear the music, you can see this happening here.

(Music)

>> Gabriela Frank: So, all my trips to Peru, all the experiences I have in Indianapolis, there's a story already running all I have to do is throw notes into the mix and it gets caught up in it.

>> Narrator: With a defined story in place, it would soon be time to bring her music back to Indiana where those who inspired it could enjoy it.



>> Gabriela Frank: One of the groups of people that I was able to get to know consistently throughout the residency is the Latino Youth Collective.

>> Man: We're going to try this. Are you ready?

>> Gabriela Frank: Oh I'm *nerviosa*. Ok.

>> Group: Be honest. Leaders don't make excuses they make improvements.

>> Narrator: The Latino Youth Collective of Indiana began as a dropout prevention program and has since developed to provide resources and opportunities for youth to engage in personal and community development. The LYC has become an extended family for its fifty plus members in grade school through graduate school.

>> Felipe Vargas: For me, just being a part of this experience is life changing. Institutions like the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra aren't usually tied to Latino based organizations and so for us it was, we still have not really realized the importance and the significance of that partnership and collaboration.

>> Gabriela Frank: I was blown away and almost intimidated when I first met them. They have something called *testimonios*. And for them a *testimonio* stands for testimony. It's a way for the young people to come up and to speak publically about something in their life.

>> Man: (singing) I say fly away home.

(speaking) Nine years ago when I was crossing the border, I would have never thought that I could make it this far.

(singing) I say fly away home.

>> Boy: Sometimes I just wish I was born here. I'm sorry.

>> Man: (singing) I say fly away home.

>> Girl: *Peregrinos* do exist. They want to be seen.

>> Man: (singing) I say fly away home.

>> Who am I?

>> (Speaking in Spanish)

>> Gabriela Frank: This is not as easy as it might sound for young Latinos, many of them who did not grow up perhaps with the encouragement toward education, the encouragement that their opinions mean something. So I witnessed these *testimonios* in practice, and I decided to craft my own composition, instead of calling them movements, I called these movements *Testimonios*, reflecting the many stories that members of the Latino Youth Collective, as well as all the other Latin-Americans I met here in the city, told me. These are their *testimonios*. It just became of course so much more real, and in a way, scary as a result. It was about so much more than a career move. It was about so much more than satisfying my own nerdy little ideas, things I wanted to try like two clarinets against piccolo, or you know, specific things like that. With this one, I went so much deeper than I had ever gone before.

(Orchestra playing)

>> Gabriela Frank: The first experience you always have is as you're going to the rehearsal, is wishing you weren't there – especially if it's the first time that they're getting a chance to touch it.

Yeah, no, no, no. The ending though is not important, but if you can start on the same note. That's the only thing that's important.

>> Concertmaster: Absolutely. Great.

>> Gabriela Frank: What you hear coming in from the backstage is all the hard licks being disintegrated and played and practiced. So it's like your piece got cut up, and shaken in a bag, and just blaahh and



thrown out at you! It's awesome! I love it, because you never get to hear it done like that. They're never going to waste rehearsal time and play things haphazardly like that. They're trying to lock it in, not open it up.

(Orchestra warming up)

>> Gabriela Frank: I also was right in guessing what would be the licks that were hard. The first *testimonio* is called *Arbol de Sueños*.

>> Narrator: *Dream Tree*. The end product of a mind-opening workshop put on by the Theater of Inclusion.

>> Dante Ventresca: Can you tell me about this word? To know who you are and to not forget.

>> Narrator: A symbol inspired by scenes from the devastation of the Gulf Coast hurricane Katrina.

>> Dante Ventresca: What we found there, it just looked like scenes from a – atomic blast. Rebecca was very quiet and I turned around, and she was filming a tree. They've got these oak trees?



>> Rebecca Hutton: I think they're the old trees there. Beautiful huge trees.

>> Dante Ventresca: These massive trees. And they actually withstood the storm, but they also caught everything that was moving around in the water. It's like one of those moments when you realize you're looking at

something that you're always gonna remember, and you can't quite wrap your head around it. How can we use the structure of that symbol and convert it into a symbol of hope.

>> Gabriela Frank: The *Arbol de Sueños* is a very simply constructed laundry rack with these arms and branches that come out to which they tie neon colored ribbons, and you can write on them. Very, very simple. It's almost laughably simple. And yet Dante and Rebecca are able to get people to open up.

>> Rebecca Hutton: And our dreams grow throughout our lives, just like a tree.

>> Gabriela Frank: So the outer movement is inspired by that, and it's the most ostensibly Latin sounding of the music.

Arbol de Sueños, Dream Tree in Spanish and English also figures well in Latin-American mythology. There are often creation myths or creation trees or trees that carry dreams. And so I felt like this was a really nice coincidence. And so we go in on a message of hope, and we leave the piece on a message of hope.

Inside, the three movements tell darker stories for the most part. Most of the *testimonios* that I heard were about difficult experiences. And that was something that I had to really confront. It would be safer to do a piece that was maybe a bunch of *merengues* and *salsas* and *cumbias* and *quechuas* and huayños. Beautiful song forms, but didn't really speak to what was happening here, especially the difficult experiences.

(Speaking in Spanish)

>> Gabriela Frank: The second *testimonio* is called *Hero Brothers*, and you cannot talk about Latin-American issues here in the United States without talking about immigration. And despite where you might stand about what we need to do regarding undocumented inhabitants of the United States, I think we can all agree the laws



need to be addressed. So *Hero Brothers*, the name of the second *testimonio*, refers to two young brothers I met. The older brother, he's now 13, and he was just barely 11 when I first met him. He's undocumented. His younger brother by a couple of years is documented, was born here in the States, and as a result, has a lot of doors open to him that may not be open to the older brother. And he carries tremendous guilt about this. But the bond between the two of them is tight. It's just tight. They goof off, you know, the quiet affection that's between them. It's really wonderful almost like a ballet. I thought of it, what if there were dancers for this telling the story for *Hero Brothers*. It's vivacious, I



I think of almost fight music in some way. I think of it, the moments where you hear pizzicato just do, do, do, do (imitating sound of music). Those are the brothers just walking along.

The third *testimonio* is called *Fireflies*. And this is inspired by the story of a young woman who told me the story of how she crossed the border illegally. When she crossed the border, she was stuffed in the back of

a car with three other women and was trapped like that for many hours and at night was let out. And when she was let out, her vision was not there, because she had been in the

darkness for so long. And just like when you rub your eyes, and you open your eyes and the vision doesn't come back in yet. But then it shimmers in, and sometimes the vision comes this way and the shimmer still stays on the out – and then you can see again. But for her, when the shimmer started, it just wouldn't go away. It wouldn't go away for her. And then she realized she was seeing fireflies that were in the night air. And they were dancing over the tombstones of the cemetery. And the image was so striking for me and horrifying. And she suffers from anxiety dreams.

The moment is a tone poem of this. You hear church bells that come in, and you hear the movement of the fireflies. And it's fleet. It's quick. It's dazzling. And the percussion comes in. And the last thing you hear is the last firefly going out of the picture and church bells in the distance.

The fourth *testimonio* is called *Devotional for Sarita Colonia*. And Sarita Colonia is *de Peru*. So she's from Peru. And she's a saint. And I did not know about her existence. And even though my mother is of Peruvian descent, I had never heard of Sarita Colonia. But a young Peruvian woman here actually told me about her. She's considered particularly a saint of the immigrants. And so the movement is a devotional. And it's very religious sounding, and it's about Sarita Colonia. You have the presence of the harp trying to convey the Andean harp sound. And you have double basses playing very, very high up on – we call it harmonics where you don't depress the string normally. You touch it lightly and it produces harmonics of the overtone. It's not a normal sound to double basses. It makes them play high. And it sounds a bit like panpipes to me. And so I colored this over the harp, and then I have shimmering around as if it's Sarita Colonia coming down from the mountain.

(Orchestra playing softly)

>> Gabriela Frank: And it has a very brilliant ending in which you hear also a fadeout of the shimmer and the last call of a panpipe.

(Orchestra playing)

>> Gabriela Frank: And then we end, because all throughout the residency there was always this underlying theme of humor and hope and friendship and strength and not losing sight of a better future running through all the difficult stories, all the difficult *testimonios* that I heard. I wanted to go in on a positive note of the *Dream Tree* and to end on a positive note. And that way I felt secure in telling some difficult stories in between.

It is just moments after the premiere and it couldn't have gone better. It went better in performance than it did in rehearsals, which is exactly when you want the peak to happen. The conductor just came off beaming and smiling, and we got a marvelous response from the audience. We got a standing ovation and several bows. And I could



hear some cheering in the audience too which is great, you know. All the performers are smiling as well, and I hope this good feeling lasts for a while. And I'm rather speechless. This is what we hoped for.

>> Javier Barrera: In the end it's gonna be seen for a lot of people. For a long time, we have been seen as the bad guys, the bad people all the time on TV. And the stereotypes are really horrible about how we are, and the way we behave, the way we work. But now it's great that we're gonna have the chance for people to see what we actually are.



(Orchestra playing softly)

(Applause)

>> Gabriela Frank: This whole project had expanded what it means to me to be a composer, a writer, a poet, a sculptor, or a dancer, anyone in the business of creating and communicating to others. I don't think it's a coincidence that this project unfolded during a time when there's been such great historical change in our country, whether you're talking economically, or racially, or politically. We're at too important a moment of history to not look for connections in the community. The artists have so much training and so much skill and so much talent and there are powerful ways to put them to use if we just kind of have the courage to look. In Indianapolis, so many people opened their hearts to me, told me about their experiences, both happy and not so happy, making a new life. And these will be with me when I write my next piece, and my next piece, and the piece after that. When I'm looking at my own truth and my own *humanidad*, my own humanity, that I try to keep on with creating music and with everything that I've got to tell a story that really resonates.

>> Announcer: Visit InstantEncore.com/IndianapolisSymphony to listen to the world premiere of *Peregrinos*.



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