

April 10, 2025

Dear Friends of the Latin American Music Center,

As we approach Holy Week, a sacred time of reflection, renewal, and gratitude, we pause to honor the transformative power of art and faith in our lives. Inspired by this season's invitation to contemplate beauty, legacy, and spirit, our Spotlight Series is dedicated to the esteemed composer and scholar **Dr. Carlos Alberto Vázquez**, a visionary artist whose work has made lasting contributions to the contemporary Latin American music scene.

A prolific composer across multiple genres—including symphonic, choral, chamber, theater, and electronic music, Dr. Vázquez has crafted some of the most ambitious works in Puerto Rican musical history. His opera **La Mina de Oro** and **Requiem Domesticus** stand as milestones of artistic innovation, merging tradition with modernity to tell deeply resonant stories through music.

With a career spanning over five decades, his compositions have been performed across the Americas and Europe, earning him recognition as a leading voice in Latin American contemporary music. His contributions extend beyond composition; he has been a dedicated educator, researcher, and advocate for musical development, fostering new generations of composers and musicians through his leadership in organizations such as the Caribbean Composers Forum and the International Electroacoustic Music Sample.

Dr. Vázquez's work embodies the rich complexity of our musical heritage while pushing the boundaries of artistic expression. We celebrate his invaluable contributions and invite you to explore his extraordinary legacy as we continue our mission at the Latin American Music Center.

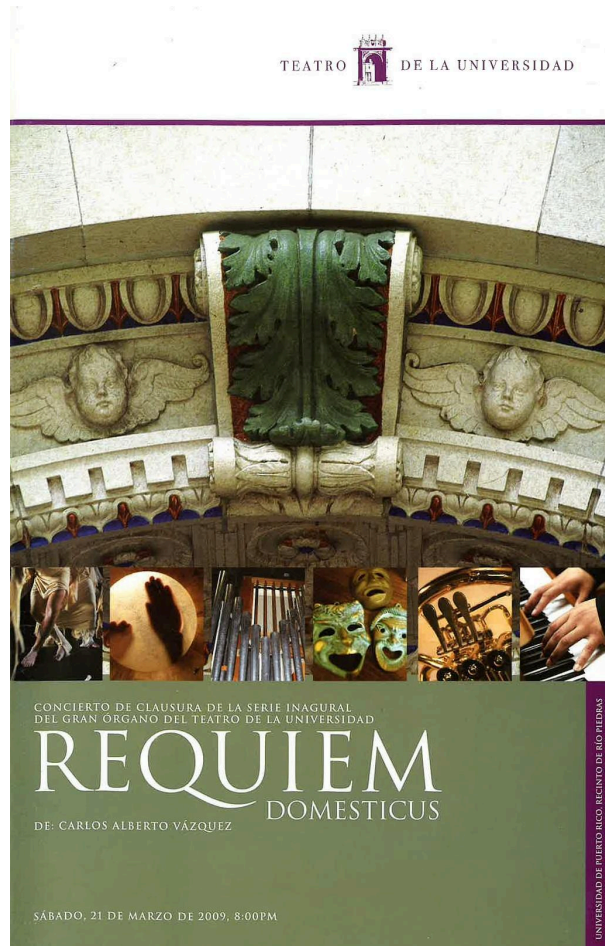
Thank you for being part of this journey. May this Holy Week bring peace and renewed inspiration to you and your loved ones.

God bless,
Gustavo Ahualli
Director of the Latin American Music Center

Carlos Alberto Vázquez



Carlos Vázquez is a symphonic, solo, choral, chamber, theater, and electronic music composer and one of the most outstanding contemporary Latin American composers from the Caribbean basin. He has composed and presented two of the most ambitious works ever produced in his country: the opera *La Mina de Oro* and *Requiem Domesticus*.



Born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, Vázquez studied music at the University of Puerto Rico, the University of Pittsburgh, New York University, and La Sorbonne in Paris, where he earned a doctoral degree. Under the sponsorship of the Rockefeller Foundation, he attended a seminar on new computer music techniques at Stanford University in 1995.

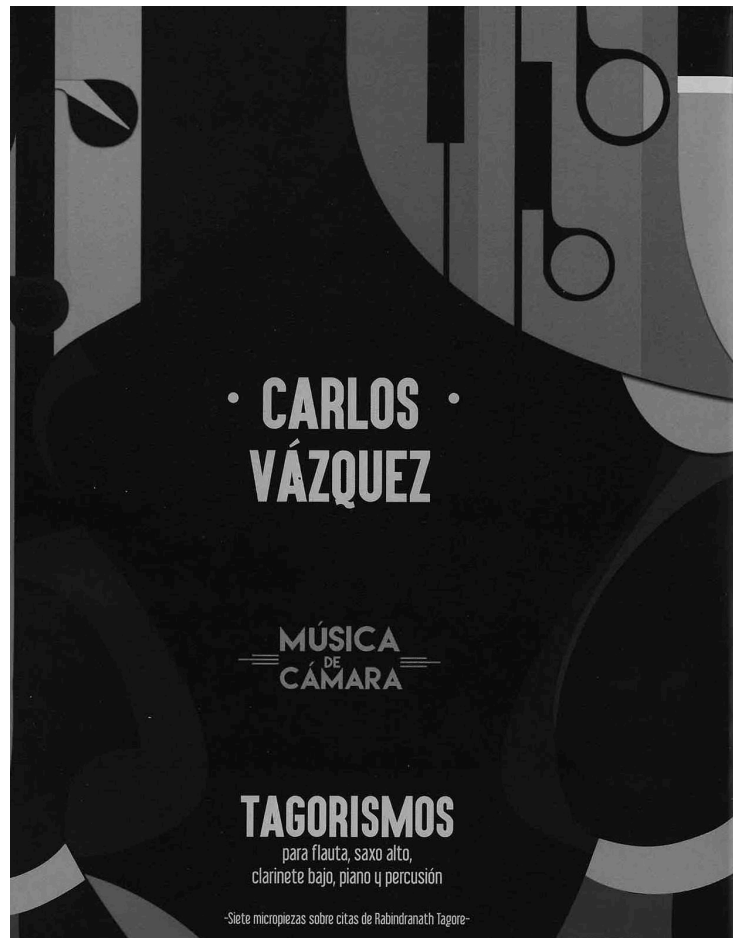
Since 1972, his works have been premiered and performed across the Americas and Europe. He has been invited to numerous international events, including the First Latin American Contemporary Music Festival (Venezuela, 1977), the Charles Ives Center (1983–85), the International Electroacoustic Music Festival of Varadero, Cuba (1985, 1987, 1989, 1991, and 1993), the II and VI Caribbean Composers Forum (Costa Rica), the IV Caribbean Composers Forum (Venezuela), the VII Caribbean Composers Forum (El Salvador), the V, VII, IX, and XI Latin American Music Festival of Caracas, the XII Festival of Contemporary Music of Havana, and the II International Contemporary Music Festival of El Salvador.



He has received commissions from the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra (twice), the Inter-American Music Council of the Organization of American States, the University of Puerto Rico Choir, and the Casals Festival, among others. As a guest composer at LIEM, Madrid's electronic music center, he created a multimedia work that premiered at the 2000 International Contemporary Music Festival of Alicante, Spain.

Dr. Vázquez has also been an active organizer, producer, lecturer, and editor. He was the founder and first president of Puerto Rico's National Association of Composers. Currently, he serves as Executive Director of the Caribbean Composers Forum Organization and Musical Director of the International Electroacoustic Music Sample. He was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Iberian-American Music Council, based in Madrid.

As a scholar, he has lectured in Latin America, Spain, and the United States on topics including electronic music and Puerto Rican traditional and contemporary music. He was an Artist-in-Residence at Kean University (1993), the Bogliasco Foundation in Italy (2007), Fundación Valparaíso in Spain (2011), and CMMAS in Mexico (2014).



He has organized seven international festivals, produced six contemporary music concerts, and edited two books on Caribbean music—one featuring scores and the other a collection of articles. Additionally, he was the producer, writer, and narrator of five radio programs highlighting Puerto Rican and Latin American music.

His works have been performed by prestigious orchestras such as the Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Mainz, the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra, Orquesta Simón Bolívar, Orquesta Sinfónica de Panamá, Orquesta de EAFIT, Orquesta Sinfónica del Valle, and Orquesta Nacional de El Salvador, among others.



He has been a guest lecturer on composition at the Gerhart Munch workshop at the Conservatorio de las Rosas in Morelia, Mexico, the Jornadas de Informática y Electrónica Musical in Madrid, the Seminario de Composición de Costa Rica, and UNEAC in Cuba. From 1978 to 2013, he was a professor at the University of Puerto Rico Music Department, where he founded and directed the Electronic Music Lab. He is also a founding member of the Colegio de Compositores Latinoamericanos de Música de Arte. Now retired from UPR, he resides in McLean, VA, USA.

Compositions by Dr. Vázquez

Dr. Vázquez has composed numerous symphonic, chamber, and electronic works that have been premiered and performed in prestigious venues across Latin America, the United States, and Europe. His music has been celebrated for its innovation and emotional depth, with fourteen of his compositions featured in commercial recordings, showcasing his diverse range and impact on the contemporary music scene.



Chamber Music:

- *Don Antonio*. Bassoon solo. 1980
- *Strings Quartet*. 1984.
- *Dos Piezas* for clarinet. 1986
- *Sonata Boricuetica*. Clarinet and piano . 1992
- *Variaciones centenarias*. Brass Quintet. 1992
- *Un Catalán en Borinkén*. Cello solo. 1996
- *Cuatro Boleros Innobles*. Harp 1998
- *Trio*. Piano, violin and cello 2001 -
- *Imágenes Caribeñas II*. Sax Quartet 2002
- *Trio Deleites*. Clarinet, bassoon and piano. 2003.
- *Fantasia cíclica*. Percussion ensemble (6 players) 2005
- *Cuatro sombras de una Palma*. for viola, clarinet and piano. 2007
- *Cuadros sin exhibición*. Chamber ensemble. 2008
- *Interioridades*. Flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano. 2011 -
- *Tagorismos*. Flute, bass clarinet, alto sax, percussion and piano. 2011
- *Suite Concertante: eternos amantes*. Flute and organ. 2013
- *Canción y Descarga*. viola y piano. 2015

- *Tejidos*. Violín, chelo y piano. 2015
- *Trellesianas*. Viola and guitar. (after six pictures by Trelles). 2016
- *Five Pieces* for Alto Recorder and Violin. 2016
- *Divertimento Tre Colori*. Oboe, clarinet and bassoon. 2016
- *En la vida todo es ir*. String Quartet 2018
- *Feminalogie II*. Flute, clarinet & sax (one player). 2018.
- *Seven Haikus*. Oboe solo. 2019.
- *Érase aquel tiempo*. String trio 2021
- *Contrastes I*. Violin and piano. 2023
- *Contrastes II*. Bassoon and piano 2023
- *Contrastes III*. Oboe and piano 2024

Piano Music:

- *Imágenes Caribeñas*. Piano. 1993
- *Rapsodia Acquamarina*. piano. 1999.
- *Yagrumos en Serenata*. piano 1999.
- *Brisas del Caribe* . Piano 2009.
- *Ludios*. 2014
- *Azote, congoja y esperanza*. 2019

Orchestral Music:

- *Flamboyán*. 1983.
- *Brisas del Caribe*. Symphonic Suite. 1986.
- *Sinfonía de la Nacionalidad*. Orchestra with soprano 1992. -
- *Virtualmente Serenata*. String orchestra 1997.
- *El Desterrado*. Symphonic poem. 2004
- *Fiesta Rugeliana*. For orchestra 2006.
- *Éxodos*. Orchestra 2016
- *Lino, el torito furioso*. Children's musical story. Narrator and orchestra. 2017
- *Sinfonietta: trópico añorado*. Voice, electronics and orchestra. 2021

Orchestral Music with soloist:

- *¡Ecuajey!* Piano concerto. 1986.
- *Sinfonía de la Nacionalidad*. Orchestra with soprano 1992.
- *Concierto Festivo*. Guitar and orchestra. 2003
- Concerto for cello and orchestra. 2005
- *Caribbean Echoes*. Bass (voice) and orchestra. 2011.
- *Concert Comtal*. Violin and orchestra. 2019.

Major vocal genres:

- *Requiem Domesticus*, soprano, mezzo, tenor, bass, chorus, children choir, organ and orchestra. 2008
- *La Mina de Oro*. Opera in 3 acts. 2012

Guitar Music:

- *Tres Añoranzas*. Guitar. 1978.
- *Capricho*. 1982
- *Preludios Amistosos*. Guitar. 2010
- *Balada*. 2019

Choir Music:

- *Serenata*. Choir. 1983.
- *Cantos Africanos*. Choir. 1998
- *Tres piezas* for mixed choir. Text by Félix Rivera Guzmán. 2006

Voice Music:

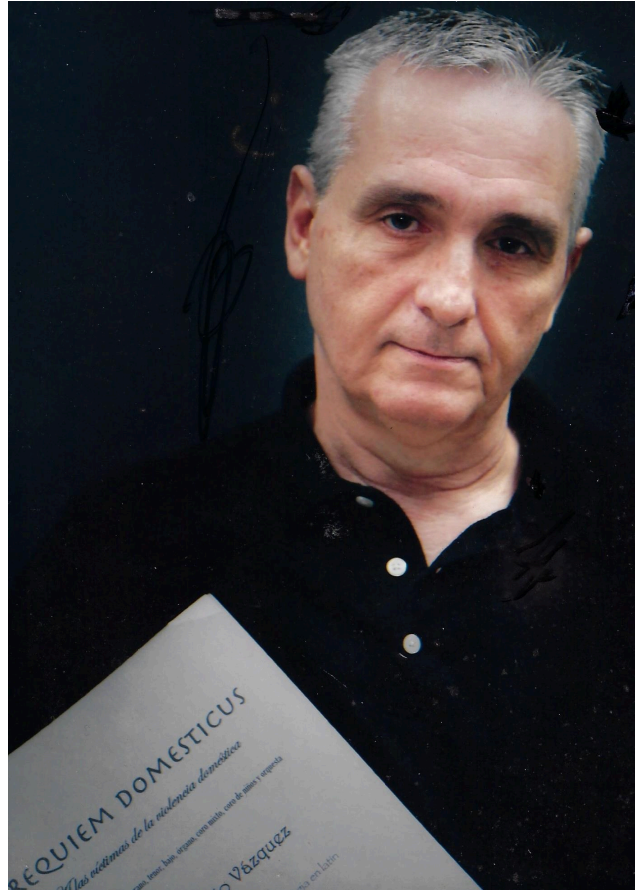
- *Cantos de los pueblos*. 9 songs. Primitive poetry. Soprano, piano, cello and percussion. 1982.
- *Canciones de Bogliasco*. Soprano, flute and piano. 2009 texts by Jennifer Compton
- *Cantos Medievales*. Soprano and alto recorder. 2010.
- *Feminalogie*. Soprano. 2015
- *Dead Poets Songs*. Voice and piano. 2020

Electronic Music:

- *Mágica Antillas*. Tape. 1991
- *El Encanto de la noche tropical*. Tape or CD. 1993
- *Saxofonía*. Alto Sax and tape 96
- *Mascarada*. Soprano, tape and images. 1999.
- *Variaciones On Line*. Tape piece. 1999
- *Un Boricua en Madrid*. multimedia. 1999
- *Esa medalla me quema el pecho*. Tape 2000
- *Tzintzuntzan*. Bass clarinet, marimba, violin, double bass, electronics recorded sounds, live electronics and images. 2001.
- *6 Cuadros sonoros*. Marimba and tape 2002 Aquel Album. Tape 2002.
- *La vuelta al mundo en 80 flautas*, for flute and multimedia. 2004.
- *La ira de Aquileo*. Electronic work. 2005.
- *La sangre de la Madre Tierra*. Ensemble and electronics. 2014
- *Hommage à Varèse*. Tape 2018
- *Simple and Free*. 2019 Ensemble, electronics and images.

Percussion:

- *Esta es mi fantasía*. Solo percussion. 1981
- *Fantasia Cíclica*. Ensemble 6 percussionist. 2005
- *Conversaciones*. Marimba & 3 percussionists. 2013



Interview

1. Tell us about your discovery of composition as a career path. How did your journey as a composer begin?

Well, as I approached my teens, I became more and more interested in music. First, I was given a toy accordion, and I started with a little book playing traditional songs. Then, with the boom of rock music in the mid-60s, I turned to the electric guitar, all of this by ear. I skipped my senior year, so I entered college when I was just 17. With long hair and torn jeans, I joined other friends in doing some jamming. Shortly after that, I began taking piano lessons and learning to read music. By my second year at the University of Puerto Rico, I entered the Music Department. I immediately immersed myself in formal music studies, initially thinking I would become a music teacher, then a musicologist. However, as I started taking more advanced theory courses, such as harmony and counterpoint, my mind shifted to composition. As I pursued graduate studies in composition, that conviction grew stronger. From that moment on, creating music has been a fundamental part of my life; it's like a vital necessity.

2. **Your compositions span multiple genres, from symphonic and choral music to electronic and theater works. What inspires you to explore such a wide range of musical styles?**

Mostly, the challenge of facing something new and different that requires me to prepare myself extra, do research, learn about the historical repertoire of that specific genre, and, in my best way, contribute to it with a fresh, authentic, and diverse version.

3. **You have presented two of the most ambitious works in Puerto Rico's musical history—La Mina de Oro and Requiem Domesticus. Can you share the creative process behind these pieces and what they mean to you?**

In both cases, these were works I had in mind for a long time, waiting for the right moment to turn them into reality. The University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus, received a donation for the installation of a new organ for its recently renovated theater. A distinguished Puerto Rican musician expressed in a local newspaper that this instrument should be inaugurated with a new work by a local composer. In a conversation with the Dean of the Humanities Faculty (I was already a Full Professor in the Music Department), who was also the president of the Theater Board, this suggestion came about, and it was decided that I was the person to compose that work. So, UPR-RP commissioned the piece. Well, my idea of a requiem could now be a reality. A requiem for whom? I asked myself. No person came to mind. Suddenly, something struck me— all the cases I was reading about domestic violence, not only in Puerto Rico but also internationally. No further thoughts about it; a requiem for all victims of domestic violence. Of course, it had to be a requiem with an organ, and because of that, I knew I would also need a full orchestra. Would I use a chorus? Yes, it is a genre that requires it. But it came to my mind that children are so often victims of that atrocity, so a children's choir too, and the four traditional vocal soloists. Text? Well, the mass for that occasion has a diversity of texts, but I discovered that not all composers use them all. So, I had to do my own selection. Not completely satisfied, I felt that the work also needed texts related to the dedication. I found in the person of Elidio Torres Lagares, poet and fellow in the Humanities Faculty, who wrote the most profound and impactful words the piece needed. What I had in my hands now was a big and important task for which I started doing research on historic requiems, on organ music (I even consulted with the organ builders, Casavant Frères from Canada, and had an exhibition of the National Cathedral organ) and conceived such a complex work. On March 21, 2009, the 80-minute-long Requiem Domesticus became a reality, with more than 200 people on stage, allowing me to honor these special victims.

[Requiem Domesticus Video](#)

My house in Puerto Rico was in what could be considered the countryside. It's common in these areas to have a bar where all sorts of neighbors meet in the most joyful and friendly atmosphere. The one I started attending is called La Mina de

Oro (Gold Mine). It came to my attention that all sorts of singular characters from very different social statuses mingled there. One night, I just sat down and wrote a story related to those characters and others, mixing and adjusting them to positive ideals like motherly and couples' love, friendship, but also to social problems like drug dealing, the violence it produces, as well as political and police corruption, etc. Dr. José Luis Ramos Escobar, the Dean I mentioned earlier, is a playwright, and when I told him of my story for an opera, he agreed to do the libretto. Ten years after I wrote the story, and as part of UPR's 110th Anniversary and inserting the project in the International Arts Festival, La Mina de Oro was presented in two performances in September 2013. UPR Theater was the producer, but we did it without the participation of any opera company. Twenty characters, including a mute, three acts, and three hours of music with a full orchestra and theater achieved something new in Puerto Rico: a full-scale contemporary opera. It was hard work, but the satisfaction of what was accomplished with these two works is beyond words.

[La Mina de Oro Video](#)

- 4. Your music has been performed across the Americas and Europe. How has international exposure influenced your work, and how do you see Puerto Rican and Caribbean music evolving on the global stage?**

Puerto Rico is a small island, and as such, we're in some sense isolated. Having our music go beyond our borders is something not only very satisfying but also necessary. By having my works performed first in Latin America and then elsewhere, I had the opportunity to know and understand the different approaches that each culture has toward the arts in general. These contacts and relations surely widened my scope as a creator, but what I enjoy the most is not only my personal satisfaction but the idea that a composer from a small country had the opportunity to expose his work internationally—the fact that someone from that tiny place could make it, with its own voice abroad. As Director of the Caribbean Composers Forum and a member of the Colegio de Compositores Latinoamericanos de Música de Arte, I can say without any doubt that the contemporary music of the region, with its own way of expressing itself in all kinds of genres, has nothing to envy from other regions.

- 5. As a composer, educator, and organizer, you have played a key role in promoting contemporary music in Latin America. What advice would you give to emerging composers looking to make an impact in this field?**

A composer should never be just that. Besides the financial need for a secure income, the role of educator, for me, is almost an obligation for a composer. Transmitting the knowledge and education one has earned, the experience gained through all the creative processes, and all the things one has learned with each premiere and through travels to festivals and forums should be a commitment. Yes, besides teaching, I've been involved in producing student and professional concerts, directing international festivals and forums, producing radio programs

on Puerto Rican and Latin American music, lecturing on a wide variety of subjects, and offering master classes in different countries. I do this out of a need to share whatever I've achieved, and it gives me pleasure.

Young composers should be aware that composing is not easy; it requires a lot of concentration, physical, emotional, and even spiritual energy. But at the same time, it should also be something to enjoy, to feel that unique pleasure. They have to be extremely sincere about what they're doing, not just doing things because intellectually or academically they are in or right. It takes time, but they have to find their own voice and, at the same time, be their most critical judge.

6. With a career spanning decades, what has been the most defining moment of your musical journey? What new projects or ideas are you currently exploring?

I can say that every stage in my 50-plus years of career has had its own reward. From the very first piece that was presented when I was just a student to the big works, from the short ones to the long ones. Of course, there are those that took a lot of effort; these, in a sense, are very special. But my motto is to learn from each of them. I always have lots of projects, either in my mind or taking shape: music and composing are my life, so you'll find me at all times composing, recording, doing interviews, teaching classes, etc. At this moment, I'm involved in composing a big symphony.