

ON THE KEYNOTES-Bound by Choral Music

We would like to welcome you to this keynote lecture where we will tell a story and, from there, try to analyze how an experience in choral music can become a model of excellence for professional development and be determinant in the development of long-term brotherhood bonds. We will also allow ourselves to dream and explore if the CUSIB Global Model is sustainable and could be implemented in the future by other similar groups.

Who would have thought, in those times of singing in the rehearsal room at the Student Centre, that several decades later we would be scattered throughout the world, but more united than ever in our desire to continue together, making music and building new experiences?

Although at first it may seem a nostalgic evocation, it is no less true that it calls for analysis. The passage of years allows us to have a real perspective of what this experience, more than 50 years ago, left in us. Many of the young students who one day decided to be part of the choirs of the Simon Bolivar University, in Caracas, Venezuela, intertwined their destinies beyond the soundtracks and maintained contact through the years. We recreated experiences, strengthened ties, and kept the harmony of pianos and fortes, but also, the silences and fugues that allowed us to hear other voices and create the true value of our activity: choral singing, a voice made up of many voices; always under the sphere of influence of Maestros Alberto Grau and María Guinand and as an homage to them

Today, more than 50 years later, the group kept growing by bringing together several generations of choralists from Simon Bolivar University as well as other choirs conducted by Grau-

Guinand in the past. The group materialized in an Association called CUSIB Global, with established projects that reflect the desire to continue sharing and building our dreams for the future.

The challenge lays on the young people today, not only in Venezuela but also at other educational institutions around the world. We wish you to consider and reflect on what you could be doing 50 years from now. We refer to the general scope of you as a human being, beyond your professional and personal development. Your answer could help us identify how experiences today build habits, and also to dream and forge new realities that transcend.

Speakers:

Alina Agüero

Nahyemir Giannotti

Carlos Martínez

Rafael Márquez

Edna Ruckhaus











ALINA AGÜERO

Although I've lived in various countries, my heart remains 100% Venezuelan. I was born in 1956 in Santiago de Cuba, where my family had settled in the early 20th century after emigrating from Spain and France. In 1961, we had to migrate again, this time to Maracaibo, Venezuela, where I grew up. In 1979, I earned my Bachelor's degree in Chemistry, at the Simón Bolívar University. After visiting Europe with my university choir CUSIB, I decided to set my goals of higher education there, and eventually, I chose Strasbourg, France, where I completed my PhD in 1985. My postdoctoral work took me to Canada - a land of spectacular beauty and open arms for immigrants - where I worked in applied R+D mostly focused in materials science. Following love, in a luminous path toward Spain, I arrived in Madrid in 1996, where swift employment awaited me at the National Institute of Aerospace Technology. Leading an applied research group of 15 to 20 brilliant minds, we delve into materials protection for the aerospace industry, renewable energies, and the chemical and petrochemical sectors. My work extends beyond laboratories. As an evaluator and advisor to the European Commission in R&D, I contribute to shaping the future of innovation. But there's more—I discovered an unexpected talent: training dogs. As an Agility

instructor in a local club, I championed Agility's recognition as an official sport in Spain. I also serve on the Board of the Zonta Club of Madrid, dedicated to empowering women and girls through education and action. Across international committees, we weave change for women and girls worldwide. Amid countless moves, I continued to sing. Remarkably, my connection with Alberto Grau exempted me from audition; my past experiences spoke for themselves.

NAHYEMIR GIANNOTTI

I was born in Caracas, Venezuela in 1967. It seems that I was destined to lead a musical life from the moment I was born, following the footsteps of my Father, Emilio Arvelo, a celebrated singer and composer from my natal Venezuela, still famous for the colloquially known "Venezuelan happy birthday song". He was an inspirational figure who highlighted the relationship between my musicianship and my Latin-American roots. I started my formal music education at the age of 5, and it was under the wing of esteemed Venezuelan composer Blanca Estrella de Méscoli that I discovered my passion for the piano and classical music. During my university years, I belonged to the Simón Bolívar University choirs, conducted by the maestros Alberto Grau and Maria Guinand. In 1996, I earned a bachelor's degree in business from the José María Vargas University in Caracas, and I pursued a 19-year-long career in the Venezuelan Banking System, mainly in management positions. In 2006, I emigrated to Australia with my family and established myself in Adelaide, South Australia, where I was trained as an Enrolled Nurse and worked in the health sector until 2015. Later in life, during my nursing years, I decided to restart my piano studies and earned an AMEB (Australian Music Examination Board) Certificate of Performance in Piano, achieved under the mentorship of Pathways Music School founder Daniel Sherwood, with whom I have worked alongside as the first piano teacher to join the Pathways Music School's team in 2016. Since then, I have been involved with every aspect of the school, including being an active member of VIVA Performing Arts productions 'An Evening on Broadway', running the Pathways 'Masterclass' nights for upcoming exam students and serving as Daniel's consultant in both music itself and education. My core belief is that learning an instrument and belonging to a choir is a journey that influences every facet

of a person's life – ultimately contributing to the makings of an enriched individual and well-rounded person.

CARLOS MARTÍNEZ

Among other things, I am grateful that my parents promoted reading, recreational logic games, drawing and music classes and introduced me to the hypnotic and inexplicable beauty of the recordings of Alirio Díaz, the “Quinteto Contrapunto” and the work of Joan Manuel Serrat. This and more, was decisive in what would be my vocational choices. I studied at the Escuela Superior de Música “José Ángel Lamas”, at the Escuela de Música “José Reyna” and at the Instituto de Estudios Musicales (IUDEM), where I graduated as a guitarist, after performing the Aranjuez Concerto, in my degree concert. In 1989 - after three days of qualifying - I performed the Chaconne by J. S. Bach and the Concerto for guitar and orchestra by Antonio Lauro, in the final of the National Guitar Contest, “Antonio Lauro”, obtaining Honorable Mention. The Maestro Alirio Díaz was the president of the jury. A special memory is my first concert after graduating from the IUDEM: it was at the Ríos Reyna Hall of the Teresa Carreño Theater, together with Alirio Díaz, the Montes-Kircher Duo, the Raúl Borges Trio and the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra, conducted by the Maestro Eduardo Marturet. I thank all of this to my guitar Maestros: Leopoldo Igarza, Douglas Esteves, Lorenzo Camejo, Luis Zea and Irina Kircher. In 1990, I received the degree in architecture from the Universidad Simón Bolívar (USB). For 15 years, I belonged to the choral movement. First, with Orfeón de la Universidad Simón Bolívar, directed by the Maestros Alberto Grau and María Guinand and then, with Cantarte Coro de Cámara, directed by the Maestro César Alejandro Carrillo. I thank my choral Maestros for everything I learned and for the opportunity to participate in concerts, tours, recordings, competitions and contribute to winning 2 national awards and 2 international awards. Currently, I am a professor at the Universidad Nacional de las Artes and the Conservatorio “Lino Gallardo”. There, I teach classes in musical forms, music theory, harmony, and counterpoint. In addition, I attend literature workshops, write texts and music to compose choral music, and work as an architect.

RAFAEL MÁRQUEZ

Born in Caracas in 1960, and married to Liliana, I am the proud father of two sons: Alejandro, residing in Berlin, Germany, and Sebastian, based in Toronto, Canada.

My journey into the world of music began in 1979 when I joined the University Simon Bolivar Choir (CUSIB) under the guidance of Maestro Alberto Grau, while pursuing my studies in Mechanical Engineering. Subsequently, I contributed to the Schola Cantorum of Caracas until 1985. In 2003, I co-founded the Ave FENIX Choir, where I continued to indulge my love for music. My professional career has taken me across borders and cultures, providing me with invaluable experiences in various roles within the British American Tobacco multinational corporation. From General Manager to President to Regional Director for a cluster, I have had the privilege of working and living in diverse countries such as Germany, Suriname, El Salvador, Peru, South Korea, Singapore, Colombia, and my homeland, Venezuela. These experiences have deepened my appreciation for cultural diversity and inclusion. Beyond the corporate world, I have also held different positions within cultural foundations. In the early 2000s, I served as Director of the Bigott Foundation, where I oversaw initiatives aimed at celebrating and preserving Venezuela's rich cultural heritage. Later I became the President of the Bigott Foundation from 2011 to 2020. During this time, I spearheaded efforts to promote popular culture through workshops, publications, and research, while also advocating for the empowerment of local artists and artisans. Additionally, I served as President of the Foundation BAT Colombia from 2017 to 2020, facilitating cultural awareness while championing the talents of Colombian artists and artisans.

EDNA RUCKHAUS

I was born in 1955 in Caracas, Venezuela. My parents were European immigrants: my mother was born in Germany and my father in Austria. They arrived in Venezuela in 1953 together with my sister who was born in Israel. I have a musical background, especially from my mother's side where several family members were musicians in the newly founded State of Israel. Music was an important part of my education and when I was a child, I had recorder lessons and played occasionally with the "Orquesta de Música Antigua" conducted by Professor Ruth Gosewinkel. Then I took piano lessons with teachers

Sidonia Stern and Harriet Serr until I joined the Universidad Simón Bolívar (USB). I have a PhD in Computer Science from the Simón Bolívar University in Venezuela, and developed an academic career in Venezuela, both in private and state universities until my retirement in 2015. I am currently a researcher in the Ontological Engineering Group (OEG) from the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid and collaborate in various National and European projects related to the area of Ontologies, Linked Data and Knowledge Graphs. Previously, I was the Academic Coordinator of the Cátedra Alma Tecnológica project, an initiative for the training and employment of young adults with intellectual disabilities. Since April 2022 I am working on the Railway Infrastructure (RINF) data project of the European Railway Agency (ERA). My choral activity has been a very important area in my life, and I have managed to combine it with my work. I sang in several choruses in Venezuela, the United States and Spain.

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ADRIANA BRACHO

I was born in 1960 in Caracas with Venezuelan roots spanning several generations from all four sides. Hence, it seemed unfeasible for me to reside in another country. However, history took a different turn and now I find myself thousands of miles away from “home”. I graduated from USB as a Computer Engineer and worked in the oil industry until 2003. Later, circumstances led me to choose another activity that, like music, had always been working in the shadows but very close to my heart: writing. A couple of years after graduating from USB, I entered UCV to pursue a degree in Literature, a «career» that I traversed with the calm and enjoyment of a

stroll. As a graduate, I worked in several publishing houses until 2012. Since then, I have worked independently as an editorial consultant, content creator, and proofreader. In the year 2000, I won the essay mention award in the 1st contest for the selection of works by unpublished authors from Monte Ávila Editores, with what was my UCV thesis: «In the Shadow of the Soul: Doña Bárbara in Venezuelan work.» While it's true that I haven't kept singing with the same steadiness as some other colleagues, the connection that was born in the '70s is still alive, as the desire of continuing to participate, actively, in this project is.



ELSSEN LOMBÓ

I was born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1963. Spanish father, Venezuelan mother. Graduated in Sociology in the Central University of Venezuela in 1989; Information Services Management Specialist (1992) and Graduate Philosophy course, (2005) in the Simon Bolivar University; and Master in Criticism and Philosophical Argumentation from the Autonomous University of Madrid, in 2012. I had the great fortune of belonging to a family linked to Venezuelan culture and art and for this reason, from the age of 7, I began to attend diverse artistic experiences. Since then, I have continued to enrich my experience as a choralist under the direction of teachers

Alberto Grau and María Guinand, with almost all their choirs in and out of Simón Bolívar University. Thanks to this, I have participated in multiple symphonic choral works, as well as in projects and workshops at world-renowned festivals in Latin America and Europe. My professional career has taken place in different areas from the ICT sector, into teaching at graduate and postgraduate studies in the Central University of Venezuela, promoting and founding academic and entertainment initiative events at GAMEXPO in Caracas, to maintaining and seeking the sustainability of artistic projects, especially related to choral music. This has been an important impetus for the founding of our Global CUSIB Association, of which we are very proud. I emigrated to Spain in 2010 where I develop services in the areas the creation of content and digital marketing and promoting and supporting projects related to the Venezuelan diaspora (Actualy.es and the Association of Venezuelan Journalists in Spain, Venezuelan Press). I currently sing with ConSonante Choir and the Choral Society in Madrid.



PANTELIS PALAMIDIS

I was born in Athens, Greece, in 1954. In 1958, I emigrated to Venezuela with my parents, leaving back the unbearable economic and political conditions that the II World War, and Civil War that followed, brought to Greece. I lived in Caracas until 1991, where I obtained a Degree in Electronic Engineering from the Simón Bolívar University, and a master's degree in business administration and a Bachelor of Arts (Music Major) from the Central University of Venezuela. My professional life started at the newly created National Open University (UNA), 1978 – 1984, designing and installing its nationwide telecommunication network and where I also directed the institution's choir for five years. In 1984, I changed paths and moved to the Venezuelan cultural sphere, as Administration Manager and later General Manager of the National Theater Company of Venezuela, Executive Producer of the National Poetry House of Venezuela, member of the Board of Directors of the Latin American Repertory Theater (Teatrela), and Founder and Musical Director of Aedos – Popular Singing Collective, focused on producing concerts and performances on Mediterranean and Latin American music and poetry. In 1991, I moved to the US where I developed and continue my consulting and global project management career in the pharmaceutical industry. I have composed series of songs on Latin American and Greek poets, as well as soundtracks for twenty theatrical productions in Venezuela. This musical work has been performed in Venezuela, the United States, Greece, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Mexico, and Chile.

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