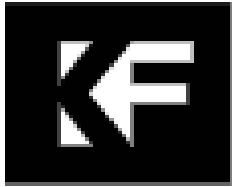


LATIN FOLK, BAROQUE STYLE MIX IN UNIQUE FASHION

DECEMBER 10, 2014 BY [GREGORY STEPANICH](#)

Rumbarocco.

This week, we go back to the Baroque for two events: Runmarocco and *Messiah*.



**KNIGHT
FOUNDATION**

Rumbarocco What do you think of when you hear a musical ensemble described as “Latin-Baroque fusion”? If it takes a while to get a sound picture in your head, then you can fill that out Saturday night at St. Martha’s in Miami Shores, when the

Boston-based Latin folk band Rumbarocco gives a concert in the church’s ongoing music series.

Central to the mission of the ensemble, which made its debut during the Boston Early Music Festival in the summer of 2013, is to celebrate the melding of cultures found in so many parts of the Ibero-Latin world. It’s something its founder, Laury Gutiérrez, a Venezuela-born scholar and musician adept at the viola da gamba and the popular song of her native country, comes to naturally.

“I wanted to bring together all the cultures that are within many South Americans’ DNA,” Gutiérrez said. “When you do a study of my DNA, I have 60 percent European, 17 percent indigenous, and the rest African. So it’s all mingled...”

“Because we study classical music, we know the contemporary repertory, the classical repertory, the romantic repertory. But at the same time, we have all this background and music that we still hear in our folklore,” she said. “And that folklore comes from the mixing of European music and indigenous music.”

Practically speaking, it means the use of Renaissance and Baroque guitars, ancient instruments such as the viola da gamba and violone, and Latin folk instruments such as the bandola, cuatro and maracas, vital to such iconic South American styles as *cumbia* and *joropo*. Saturday’s performance will feature nine performers, including singers and instrumentalists.

Rumbarocco is an offshoot of another Gutiérrez project called La Donna Musicale, an Early Music group devoted to the performance of work by women composers, such as that of 17th-century Italian Barbara Strozzi, famed in her day for her vocal writing. Both projects are very much in the spirit of engaged scholarship, in which digging up or reviving obscure scores and performance practices are only half as fun as actually playing them.

“Sometimes when we study, we get a little forgetful about what the mission of music is,” Gutiérrez said. “And so I tell my musicians, ‘If it’s not fun, I don’t want to do it.’”

Saturday’s holiday-themed performance will include pieces from three of the *cancioneros*, which are large collections of Renaissance songs and instrumental pieces collected in Spain and Portugal, and *aguinaldos*, which are the folk Christmas songs of Venezuela. There also will be music by the Portuguese cleric and composer Gaspar Fernandes, who worked in Guatemala and Mexico in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. But Fernandes didn’t write music in the high church style; he wrote church music using the dialects and popular forms around him, including a charming Christmas song, *Xicochi*, in the Nahuatl language of the Aztecs.

“Depending on the public, we might even have an encore piece for Hanukkah,” she said.

Gutiérrez said she feels “honored to playing with such good musicians,” and that the Rumbarocco concert should be enlightening to devotees of older classical music and fans of Latin American folk music alike.

“This music is beautiful and enjoyable and will put you in great spirits,” she said, and it also will allow listeners from both sides of the spectrum to come together. “That is the most rewarding thing for me: to bring audiences to an experience where you are going to have in the room people who otherwise would never have met because they go to different kinds of concerts.”

Rumbarocco takes the stage at 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, December 13th at St. Martha's, 9301 Biscayne Blvd., Miami Shores. Tickets are \$10-\$20, and can be purchased by calling 305-751-0005 or visiting www.saintmarthaconcerts.com.

Messiah

The tradition of the sing-along *Messiah*, in which concertgoers would show up at a Christmas-season performance of George Frideric Handel's great oratorio, seems to be rarer and rarer these days, which is something of a shame.

I remember quite a few of them when I was a younger person; surely there is something generational going on there, and probably something to do, too, with the disappearance of general music education in schools. So it's worth noting when one of these events takes place.

This Friday night, the Master Chorale of South Florida invites one and all to its performance of *Messiah* in Pompano Beach, and further invites them to bring their scores. "If you don't sing, come to enjoy being surrounded by this exquisite music," the chorale writes on its website.

The music will be accompanied by organist Daniel Beckwith, and features three very fine soloists: Soprano Nadine Sierra, mezzo-soprano Amanda Crider and tenor Javier Abreu. The chorale's music director, Brett Karlin, will lead the assembled forces (which could include you).

Messiah is an exceptional work by almost every measure, from purely musical to its popular reception. Into it, Handel poured all the experience he'd had as a master composer for the theater to illustrate Charles Jennens' collection of Bible verses, and the result was an immediate sensation. Although we think of it as a Christmas piece, it was written for Easter, and since its first performance in April 1742 for a hospital benefit in Dublin, it has never left the repertory.

Handel himself led performances of the work every year thereafter until his death in 1759, and so great was the influence of Handel, and of this piece, on the subsequent years of British music-making that composers who came after him were expected to write in his style, or at least understand that the summit of any composer's achievement would be to write an oratorio. Even the work of Edward Elgar, more than 150 years later, was measured at home by the strength of his oratorio, *The Dream of Gerontius*.

Messiah also is one of the most accessible pieces of Baroque music, right up there with Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*. It is filled with wonderful tunes, sparkling choral and instrumental writing, and an overall directness and optimism that never fails to lift the spirits. Handel, as I mentioned, was a man of the theater, and his sense of timing is perfect: he knows exactly when to change the mood and how to change it, and build a long dramatic arc out of it.

The Master Chorale performs at 8 p.m. on Friday, December 12th in the First Presbyterian Church, 2331 NE 26th Ave., Pompano Beach. Tickets are \$15, and can be purchased at the door or by calling 954-641-2653.

<https://knightfoundation.org/articles/latin-folk-baroque-style-mix-in-unique-fashion/>