



Friday | October 14 | 8pm | Berklee Performance Center

**Chucho Valdés: “The Creation”**  
with the  
**Yoruban Orchestra**  
**Hilario Durán and John Beasley** musical directors

**Chucho Valdés** piano, bandleader

**Hilario Durán** conductor, keyboard

**John Beasley** conductor, keyboards

**Dafnis Prieto** drums

**Jose Gola** double bass, electric bass

**Roberto ‘Junior’ Vizcaino** percussion

**Erick Barberia** Santería chants, batá

**Yenisel Valdés** Santería chants

**Yosvani Gonzalez** Santería chants, batá

**Felipe ‘Coki’ Sarria** Santería chants, batá

**Brian Lynch** trumpet, flugelhorn

**Etienne Charles** trumpet, flugelhorn

**Marcus Strickland** alto saxophone, bass clarinet

**Carlos Averoff, Jr.** tenor saxophone, flute

Sections will be announced from the stage.

The program will run about 90 minutes with no intermission.

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## **Chucho Valdés: “The Creation”**

The great Cuban pianist and composer Chucho Valdés presents *La Creación, The Creation*, his new work for large band, Afro-Cuban percussion, and vocals. *La Creación* is a suite in four movements that explores the story of creation according to the Regla de Ocha, the Afro-Cuban religion known as Santería. It is also an extraordinary summation of an extraordinary career.

“This new work represents the accumulation of all my experiences and everything I've learned in music,” says Valdés, who celebrated his 81st birthday last week (October 9). “This is a moment of full maturity, personally and musically, and I feel prepared to do this work.”

If Irakere indicated a turn in his musical quest, leaving large ensembles behind, *La Creación* represents a return to large band sonorities – but “with the experience of the road traveled,” says Valdés. “I felt I could return to this format now and with my own language, take it to a higher level than I had reached.”

Thematically, in *La Creación*, Valdés delves into concerns he has explored in works such as *La Misa Negra*, an early milestone in his career, and *Canto a Dios*, a more recent composition in which he fused jazz with symphonic music.

The beliefs of the Catholic religion and the Regla de Ocha have coexisted in Cuba for centuries. Whether it was a survival strategy or a simple adaptation to a new context, the orishas — the African deities — assumed early on the identities of Catholic saints. “*Canto a Dios* looks at certain themes from the point of view of the Catholic faith,” says Valdés. “*La Creación* focuses on Olodumare, the Creator, God in the Yoruba universe. It's the other part of my roots, of my family, and my history.”

Musically, in his new work, Valdés uses a sonic palette that includes elements of Santería ritual music, African music, the blues, and what he describes as “an atmosphere in the style of Miles Davis' Bitches Brew.”

“This work is very significant to me,” Valdés concludes. “I think it's my masterpiece – so far.”

*La Creación* (“*The Creation*”) was co-commissioned by Adrienne Arsht Center Trust, Inc., the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Symphony Center Presents Jazz – Chicago Symphony Orchestra Association, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Association – Gustavo Dudamel Artistic Director, and Cité de la musique – Philharmonie de Paris.

## **Chucho Valdés piano**

Winner of six Grammy and three Latin Grammy Awards, the Cuban pianist, composer, and arranger Chucho Valdés is the most influential figure in modern Afro-Cuban jazz. In a rich career spanning sixty years, Chucho has pushed boundaries in pursuit of new expressions in Afro-Cuban music. His influence in the genre is immeasurable, his work establishing the standard by which younger generations set out to create their own.

Chucho's musical education includes formal studies and countless nights on the best stages in Cuba as the pianist with his father, Bebo Valdés, and his orchestra Sabor de Cuba, and with the seminal Orquesta Cubana de Música Moderna. Chucho is perhaps best known as the founder, pianist, and main composer and arranger of Irakere, a landmark ensemble in Cuban music. Chucho led Irakere for more than 30 years, but since 2005 he has focused on his personal career, highlighting his work as a pianist and leading small ensembles, like the Afro-Cuban Messengers, Jazz Batá, and his acclaimed Quartet.

Celebrating his 81st birthday in 2022, Chucho's technique and creative output are as prodigious as ever. He is a recipient of a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Latin Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, has been inducted into the Latin Songwriters Hall of Fame, and received a DC Jazz Festival Lifetime Achievement Award, his name joining an illustrious list that includes Kenny Barron, James Moody, Ellis Marsalis, George Wein, and Dave Brubeck.

### **Hilario Durán** musical director

Cuban-born Hilario Durán began working as a professional musician in Cuba's Los Papa Cun-Cun Ensemble and in a variety of musical formats, and later was Chucho Valdés' chosen successor in Cuba's most modern big band, Orquesta Cubana de Música Moderna. He toured worldwide and performed with Dizzy Gillespie and Michel Legrand, among many others, and was part of Arturo Sandoval's band, where he was pianist/keyboardist, arranger, and musical director for nine years. Chucho Valdés has acknowledged Durán as one of the greatest Cuban pianists of the 20th century, calling the Grammy Award-nominated and multiple Juno Award-winner "an unparalleled pianist, composer, and arranger of the first order."

### **John Beasley** musical director

Grammy Award winner and Emmy nominee, John Beasley is a versatile pianist, composer, and arranger who began his career in his 20s backing jazz icons Miles Davis and Freddie Hubbard. Since then, Beasley has performed with a wide range of artists, including Dianne Reeves, Ivan Lins, John Patitucci, Chaka Khan, Christian McBride, and Carly Simon, to name a few. He was music director for international tours with Steely Dan, AR Rahman, and Queen Latifah and serves as co-musical director for Chucho Valdés' *La Creación* tour.

He is music director for the International Jazz Day global gala concerts hosted by the Herbie Hancock Jazz Institute, which in 2016 earned him an Emmy nomination for *Jazz at the White House* hosted by President Obama. Beasley's work as a composer-arranger extends beyond jazz, with many credits in television such as *Star Trek: TNG*, *Cheers*, and *Fame*; and in films scored by 15-time Oscar nominee Thomas Newman *1917*, the James Bond films *Spectre* and *Skyfall*, *Finding Dory*, *He Named Me Malala*, *Shawshank Redemption*, and *Let Them All Talk*.

Recently, Beasley has been working with youth and professional big bands. He was commissioned by Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestra to write a song, *Fête dans la Tête*, for its 2020 program. He wrote a commission for the LA Philharmonic's Youth Orchestra Los Angeles called *A History of Jazz*. Presently, he is working with both Frankfurt's and Stuttgart's radio big bands on programs featuring the music of Chick Corea, Duke Ellington, Wayne Shorter, Weather Report, and Charlie Parker. He helped orchestrate and co-arrange Chucho Valdés' *The Creation* suite, and is on tour with Valdés and the Yoruban Orchestra.

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