

Luzmila Carpio

Part of FLAWA

Start time: 7.30pm

Doors: 7pm

Luzmila Carpio: 7.30pm

Ends: 9pm

Approximate running time: 90 minutes, no interval

Please note all timings are approximate and subject to change.

Rebecca Wilson spoke to Luzmila Carpio to discuss how the natural world influences her art.

Dubbed 'the voice of the Andes', emblematic Bolivian singer, songwriter and charango player Luzmila Carpio was born just outside of one of the world's highest cities, Potosí. Her characteristic soaring soprano tones reflect these altitudes and the songs of the birds native to the Andes altiplano region. Carpio began playing music here as a child, while her mother worked in the mines that give the mountain its nickname 'Cerro Rico', or 'rich mountain', where silver, copper and tin has been extracted for centuries. Luzmila's message to society is clear: we must listen to and take care of our earth.

Cultures of the Quechua-Aymara nation Carpio belongs to deeply inspire her songwriting. This will translate on stage at Carpio's Barbican performance as part of the Festival of Latin American Women in Arts (FLAWA), with traditional instrumentation, a unique singing style and lyrics sung both in Spanish and Runasimi (Quechua), the pre-Columbian language most widely spoken in the region.

In Potosí, singing and making music is aligned with the agricultural cycles. Different rhythms are played to celebrate the solstices, sowing time, flourishing time and harvest time. In winter, a moment of rest for Mother Earth is commemorated and wind instruments like the siku are played to celebrate the cold. 'My songs talk about the earth where I was born, the air we breathe', Carpio explains. Her music channels the sounds and textures of the land, embellished by pan flutes, hand drums, chirping charango strings, hand clapping, speech, whistling and birdsong. 'I'm always receptive to the sounds of nature – the sound of the wind; the sounds of the waterfall; the songs of the birds bringing us their messages; the little animals that help us to understand tenderness. This all inspires me in my writing process.'

Dubbed 'arguably South America's most prolific Indigenous artist' by *Rolling Stone* magazine, Carpio promotes her culture and heritage worldwide. She's shared the stage with musical icons like Susana Baca, Gilberto Gil, Lila Downs and Julieta Venegas, released 25 albums and even served as Bolivian ambassador to France from 2006 to 2010. She has been honoured by the French government as a Grand Officer of l'Ordre National du Mérite and was invited to sing at Chilean ex-president Michelle Bachelet's inauguration. Imitating the seagull's call, Carpio sang 'El canto a la gaviota' to express Bolivia's hopes of recuperating the coastline lost to Chile's army almost 140 years ago in the War of the Pacific.

Yet it has been her groundbreaking collaborations with electronic producers like Chancha Via Circuito and Nicola Cruz that have brought Carpio's contemporary and traditional rhythms from the Andes to dance floors, radio stations and streaming platforms worldwide. 'I liked the idea of young people dancing to my songs in new circles and getting to know my culture, my musical universe,' Luzmila explains.

A standout record in Carpio's catalogue is *Luzmila Carpio Meets ZZK* – a collection of remixes of Carpio's compositions by the leading folkloric experimentalists of ZZK Records. The album includes remixes by French-Ecuadorian producer Nicola Cruz, arguably the most famous Andean-electronic artist making music right now, British-born downtempo producer El Búho, and King Koya, El Remolón and Chancha Vía Circuito, Argentine pioneers of digital cumbia. This record undeniably changed Carpio's career and put her music on a map of experimental, environmentally conscious Latin American artists.

It was back in 2001 that Luzmila first ventured into international collaborations. Spurred on by French musicologist Martina Catella, Luzmila joined five French artists to collaborate on the album *El Canto de*

barbican

la Tierra y las Estrellas, dressing Luzmila's songs with new textures, using the double bass, octobass, guitar, crystal organ and bansuri flute. This musical encounter based in mutual respect and reciprocity opened a door into multicultural partnerships. 'We achieved a musical balance free from condescension between cultures. I think this was the signal that encouraged me to open up my compositions – which before were based strictly on respect for my tradition – towards more and more artistic collaborations.'

As well as channelling respect for mother earth, Luzmila's collaborations have brought important social messages to wide audiences. Collaborating with Bolivian metal group Alcoholika La Christo, Luzmila wrote 'Warmikuna Yupaychasqapuni Kasunchik' (Las Mujeres Debemos ser Respetadas, or Women Deserve Respect). Recently she's collaborated with the independent label Almost Musique, curating the double-vinyl disc *Yuyay Jap'ina Tapes*, a collection of compositions written in the 90s in defence of an education in Quechua and Aymara. 'Thanks to the fresh vision of the producers, the album reached young people in all corners of the world,' Luzmila explains. She is clear that music is an indispensable medium for transmitting social messages: 'Music is the sister of the people, the melody sensitises our hearts.'

For this very special show, Luzmila will perform from across her repertoire, accompanied on stage by Leonardo Martinelli (a.k.a. Tremor, a ZZK Records pioneer) on arrangements, guitar and percussion, and Matias Romero on violin. They'll play stripped back classics, favourites from the *Luzmila Carpio Meets ZZK* remixes album and some glimpses of the new record *El Retorno al Sol* (Return to the Sun). This new album is dedicated to Tata Inti, the Quechua sun god, and is the fruit of the last few years of composing. 'These songs aim to show the youth that in a world that's ever more connected, spirituality and reconnection with Mother Earth and the Cosmos – through sounds and vibration – is more important than ever. I had this thought in a dream and we made it a reality. I hope from my heart that it's received well by my beloved audience.'

The Festival of Latin American Women in the Arts (FLAWA) is an exciting new festival showing the perceptions of women from Latin America in film, music, literature and arts through multiple events in a range of London venues.

Performers

Luzmila Carpio vocals

Leonardo Martinelli arrangements, guitar, percussion

Matias Romero violin

Produced by the Barbican

Part of FLAWA

Supported by the Arts Council England



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