

Tuesday, April 19, 2011, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Afro-Cuban All Stars

Juan de Marcos González, *director*



Glicería Abreu Caron	<i>Afro-Cuban percussion</i>
Glicería González Abreu	<i>keyboards, vocals</i>
Laura Lydia González Abreu	<i>bass clarinet, vocals</i>
Calixto Oviedo Mulens	<i>timbale set</i>
José Espinosa Martínez	<i>congas</i>
José Antonio Moreaux Charon	<i>bongos, cowbell</i>
Gabriel Hernández Cadenas	<i>piano</i>
Alberto Pantaleon Loran	<i>bass</i>
Evelio Galan Castellanos	<i>lead singer</i>
Emilio Suarez Martínez	<i>lead singer</i>
Jose Gil Piñera Leygoniel	<i>lead singer</i>
Alberto Inocente Martínez	<i>trumpet, flugelhorn</i>
Miguel Angel Valdes de la Hoz	<i>trumpet, flugelhorn</i>
Yoanny Pino Facenda	<i>trumpet, flugelhorn</i>
Juan de Marcos González	<i>tres, guitar, vocals</i>

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**T**HE AFRO-CUBAN ALL STARS is a unique orchestra that is devoted to promoting the full range of Cuban music, one that embraces several generations and all musical styles. Over the years, many of the band's musicians have become international stars, including such brilliant performers as Rubén González, Ibrahim Ferrer, Guillermo Rubalcava and Manuel "The Guajiro" Mirabal.

The genesis of the Afro-Cuban All Stars has its roots early in the 1990s. At that time the *son* ensemble Sierra Maestra, headed by Juan de Marcos González, was receiving international exposure. Mr. de Marcos was introduced to Nick Gold, president of World Music Records (then a small, independent world music label). That encounter led to several very successful tours in Europe. Later the group went to London and recorded *Dundunbanza*, considered one of the jewels of the world music scene of the early 1990s. (In retrospect, this recording opened the doors to the boom in traditional Cuban music of the period.)

Months later, Mr. de Marcos got the go-ahead to do an album celebrating the classic Cuban sound of the 1950s and featuring many of the great musicians Mr. de Marcos knew. The plan was to prepare two projects: one featuring a Cuban big band, the other favoring a more traditional sound reminiscent of the acoustic style of Níco Saquito or Portabales. In March 1996, they recorded the album *A toda Cuba le Gusta*, featuring nearly 60 performers. Then, with the addition of such celebrated artists as Compay Segundo, Omara Portuondo, Eliades Ochoa and American guitarist Ry Cooder, the legendary *Buena Vista Social Club* CD was recorded. Finally, with a low budget and simple orchestrations by Mr. de Marcos, they also recorded *Introducing Ruben González*, which became one of the most successful of the "Buena Vista" series of recordings.

During spring 1997 and along with the release in Europe of the three albums, Mr. de Marcos and a select group of stellar musicians started touring all over the continent under the banner of a band christened the "Afro-Cuban All Stars." The original line-up, familiar from the records, included Ruben González and Guillermo Rubalcava (piano), Orlando

López (bass), Amadito Valdés (timbale), Carlos González and Roberto Valdés (bongos), Ángel Terry (congas), Daniel Ramos, Alejandro Pichardo and "Guajiro" Mirabal (trumpets), Alberto "Molote" Martínez and Jesús "Aguaje" Ramos (trombones), and Raúl Planas, Manuel Licea, Pío Leiva, Ibrahim Ferrer and Félix Baloy (lead singers).

After several years of tremendous and unexpected success—including receiving four Grammy nominations, being the subject of several documentaries and films, and being recipients of many other distinctions—the All Stars are certainly the best known and successful Cuban orchestra after Los Van Van and Irakere.

The Afro-Cuban All Stars has also opened the doors to a new generation by bringing young musicians into the band. With the Afro-Cuban All Stars, Mr. de Marcos has developed a concept more than simply creating a band. His approach has allowed him to expand its creative range by incorporating contemporary styles of Cuban music. His fluid approach to the orchestra's line-up, changing or adding musicians as appropriate, has made it easier to best reflect the different styles and periods of music the band performs. The All Stars are the same orchestra that can be seen in the performances captured in the famous Oscar-nominated *Buena Vista Social Club* documentary by Wim Wenders, the Tony Knox documentary *Salon of Dreams*, and the DVDs *Live in Japan* and *Live in The Hague*.

In 2002, Mr. de Marcos founded his own independent label, DM Ahora! Records, on which he has released the Afro-Cuban All Stars' albums *Live in Japan* and *Step Forward* (Grammy-nominated in 2006). He also released Telmary's *A Diario* and Interactivo's *Goza Pepillo*, projects that represent a new generation of Cuban music, one that fuses hip-hop with contemporary Cuban genres. More recently, Mr. de Marcos, along with his wife Glicería Abreu, founded GG and LL, a musical production company based in Mexico City that aims to create a space for the new Latin American Music, especially that interpreted by songwriters.

Current plans for the Afro-Cuban All Stars include the recording this year of the album *Breaking the Rules & Step Backward* documenting Mr. de Marcos's latest project,

for which he has gathered the most remarkable expatriate Cuban musicians from around the world. This new version of the Afro-Cuban All Stars began touring internationally in February 2009, first in the United States, and then in Singapore and Canada.

**Juan de Marcos González**, a central figure in Cuban music for three decades, has set himself a lifetime mission: to show the wealth, diversity and vitality of Cuban music to the world. His work with supergroups and incredible artists such as the Afro-Cuban All Stars, the Buena Vista Social Club, Ruben González, Ibrahim Ferrer, Sierra Maestra and others has had extraordinary success in introducing the whole range of Cuban music around the globe.

Juan de Marcos was born in Havana in 1954 and grew up surrounded by music. (His father was a singer and worked with the great Arsenio Rodríguez, among others.) He studied classical guitar at the Havana Conservatory and privately with the Vicente González and Leopoldina Núñez. He also took courses in contemporary harmony and orchestral conducting. While at university in the mid-1970s, he co-founded the group Sierra Maestra. Styled as a traditional Cuban *septeto* group (*tres*, trumpet, bass, percussion, vocals), the dynamic young band aimed to bring about an appreciation of the Cuban *son* by the youth of the island, who tended to shun such "old fashioned" music. The band achieved great success, recording 14 albums in Cuba, Africa and Europe, touring many countries, and receiving various awards.

Although music was a great love, Mr. de Marcos returned to university to study hydraulic engineering and the Russian and English languages. He worked as a professor at the Agronomic University of Havana, earning his doctorate in 1989. Once again, though, Mr. de Marcos found himself drawn powerfully back to the world of music.

In 1994, he began his association with the London-based record label World Circuit, when his Sierra Maestra band recorded the album *Dundunbanza*. For this recording, the group expanded its line-up to include piano,

congas and a trumpet section. It was a tribute to the legendary Arsenio Rodríguez, whose style dominated the 1940s and 1950s. Following on this success, Mr. de Marcos made a big-band recording in Havana that featured neglected stars from the "golden age" of Cuban music.

Things really took off when Mr. de Marco's signature group, the Afro-Cuban All Stars, released *A toda Cuba le gusta* (Grammy-nominated in 1998). This was the first album to come out of the legendary Buena Vista Social Club sessions, and Mr. de Marcos's band proved to be a springboard for the success that followed. Following the album's release, Mr. de Marcos led the Afro-Cuban All Stars and the Ruben González Ensemble on their debut European and U.S. tours, and directed the Buena Vista Social Club during the only concerts of the original line-up at such theaters as Le Carré in Amsterdam, New York's Carnegie Hall and, more recently, Mexico's Auditorio Nacional.

Never content to rest on his laurels, Mr. de Marcos continues to develop promising new ideas for Cuban music, which is evolving in exciting ways. In 2005, he released the first recordings on DM Ahora! Records and GG and LL Records: *Step Forward* by the Afro-Cuban All Stars (Grammy-nominated), *Goza Pepillo* by Interactivo and *A Diario* by Telmary are at once a snapshot of where one of Cuba's top musical creators is right now and a blueprint for the future of Cuban music. As Mr. de Marcos says: "We have to use all the heritage of Cuban music to create a sound of the future. It's important to have that continuity and to fight for our identity."

During his career, Mr. de Marcos has arranged, conducted, produced or coproduced more than 25 albums. His work with the Afro-Cuban All Stars has been nominated for four Grammy Awards, and the band has been hailed by *Down Beat* for its continued excellence. Mr. de Marcos has been responsible for creating and producing some of the most important and seminal recordings of 20th-century Cuban music. No one has done more to invigorate the revival and growth of Cuban music than the incomparable Juan de Marcos.