

Wednesday, November 7, 2012, 8pm  
Zellerbach Hall

## Chucho Valdés Quintet



Chucho Valdés *piano*  
Yaroldy Abreu Robles *percussion*  
Dreiser Durruthy Bombalé *batá drum, vocals*  
Rodney Yllarza Barreto *drums*  
Angel Gaston Joya Perellada *bass*

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**A**T AGE 70, with more than a half-century of innovation behind him, **Chucho Valdés** would be forgiven if he chose to sit back and relax. But that's precisely what the renowned Cuban pianist, composer, and bandleader is not doing. Instead, Mr. Valdés—winner of five Grammy Awards and three Latin Grammys—has been touring almost constantly. He has played more dates than at any other time in his career—more than 120 concerts in 2011–2012—touching down in such far-flung locales as Argentina, Australia, Cuba, and Colombia.

All along the way, Mr. Valdés has received plaudits that are usually reserved for cutting-edge artists half his age. In a review of Mr. Valdés's performance earlier this year at Carnegie Hall, *JazzTimes* magazine enthused, "He remains a marvel at the keys, agile and inventive. His solos are virtually flawless, dazzling, and as a bandleader he is assured and commanding—even as he lays back to take in what his cohorts are producing, there is no doubt who is calling the shots...Chucho Valdés is emblematic of the evolution of Afro-Cuban jazz during recent decades, and is still at the top of his game."

Mr. Valdés—who was recently chosen by Carnegie Hall as one of its Artistic Advisors (alongside Gustavo Dudamel, Gilberto Gil, and Osvaldo Golijov) in its month-long celebration of Latin music—will return to the storied venue on December 1. He will perform at Carnegie's Zankel Hall room along with his exciting Quintet: Mr. Valdés (*piano*), Yaroldy Abreu Robles (*percussion*), Dreiser Durruthy Bombalé (*batá drum, vocals*), Rodney Yllarza Barreto (*drums*), and Angel Gaston Joya Perellada (*bass*). The esteemed Latin jazz outfit will perform, for the first time in concert, music that will be included on Mr. Valdés's forthcoming CD.



"Playing in the Quintet, almost all the responsibility is on the piano, which has to become the 'orchestra,'" says Mr. Valdés, "so it's more complicated work for me, but very exciting!" At the upcoming Carnegie show, he says, "We are going to do a wide selection of songs, and the whole show will have a very different sound

because the new musicians play differently, and think differently rhythmically. That has completely changed the sound of the Quintet. The whole feel is more contemporary."

At Carnegie Mr. Valdés will debut his new Sakai piano. He is the first artist to have his own piano line for Sakai; the Japanese company developed the piano with Mr. Valdés's favorite sounds and touch in mind.

Mr. Valdés's new, more contemporary sound will be apparent on his new studio recording, due for release next spring. The eagerly awaited release is the follow-up to 2010's *Chucho's Steps*, which won a Grammy for Best Latin Jazz Album and received universally glowing reviews from the media. The All Music Guide said that the recording "demonstrates the pianist's continuing vitality and invention, along with his reverence for the history of jazz," while *The Washington Post* described it as a "keyboard tour de force."

For the as-yet-untitled CD—to be released by Four Quarters Entertainment in the United States and Harmonia Mundi in the rest of the world—Mr. Valdés will expand his stylistic palette beyond the realm of Latin jazz by moving closer to the roots of Afro-Cuban music (including Yoruba chanting) as well as incorporating elements of flamenco and Indian music. Using a streamlined ensemble—plus special guests Buika and Roy Hargrove—and placing his

piano front and center, Mr. Valdés's new music promises to be some of the most engaging and exciting of his lengthy career.

That career began humbly when Mr. Valdés began taking piano lessons from his father, the pioneering Cuban bandleader Bebo Valdés. Mr. Valdés's natural affinity for the instrument led him to the Municipal Music Conservatory of Havana, where he graduated at age 14. After achieving success with various bands, Mr. Valdés formed Irakere in 1973. The multifaceted group became an international success, winning a Grammy in 1979. Turning solo in the 1980s, Mr. Valdés has remained one of the most popular exponents of Latin jazz in the world, recently receiving an honorary degree from the Berklee College of Music for his impressive body of work. Mr. Valdés presently lives in Spain, where he moved in order to be closer to his ailing father.

With a new album arriving soon, worldwide touring in his past and more concerts booked, and an endless stream of new ideas in his mind, Chucho Valdés enjoys that rare honor of being both living legend and an enduring force of nature.