

**Icon of Afro-Cuban Jazz
Chucho Valdés,
Brings his band to play tracks from his newest release
Jazz Batá 2 at The Soraya**

Saturday, October 19 at 8PM

(Los Angeles, CA) September 13, 2019 – Winner of six Grammy and three Latin Grammy Awards, Cuban pianist, composer and arranger, **Chucho Valdés**, is the most influential figure in modern Afro-Cuban jazz. Now, he will be performing tracks from his 2018 release *Jazz Batá 2*, inspired by his seminal record *Jazz Batá*, at the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts on Saturday, October 19 at 8pm.

Tickets for [Chucho Valdés Jazz Bata](http://www.TheSoraya.org) start at \$39 and are available at www.TheSoraya.org or by calling (818) 677-3000.

About Chucho Valdés Jazz Bata

The new *Jazz Batá* band is comprised of Valdés, piano; Ramon Vazquez, acoustic bass; Yaroldy Abreu Robles, congas; and Dreiser Durruthy Bombalé, on batá and voice. Batá is the sacred, hourglass-shaped drum from Cuba and West Africa, and the traditional beats of both cultures permeate Valdés' piano solos throughout the album. The subject matter of both records is the folklore and religious beliefs of the Yoruba slaves shipped to the Caribbean between 1770 and 1840.

Jazz Batá 2 was released to mark the centenary of the birth of Ramón “Bebo” Valdés, Valdés' late father and teacher. The two giants of Cuban music shared a birthday on October 9. “Between the two of them, they’ve exercised a massive musical influence since the 1940s,” *Latin Jazz Network* noted. *Jazz Times* calls *Jazz Batá 2*, “Utterly contemporary, no matter how far into the past (or the future) it may probe...effortlessly melding genres, generations, and cultural motifs into a new and fully realized whole.”

About Chucho Valdés

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.

A protean performer, as comfortable offering solo performances as leading small and large ensembles, his most recent project, *Jazz Batá 2*, is an exceptional work in which he revisits an idea he first explored in 1972: a piano jazz trio featuring batá drums in place of the conventional trap set. The batá are the sacred, hourglass shaped drums used in the ritual music of the Yoruba religion, better known as Santería. Released on November 16, 2018, *Jazz Batá 2* marks Chucho's debut on Mack Avenue Records. A few days earlier, on November 13, Chucho received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Latin Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences™ in a ceremony held during Latin GRAMMY week in Las Vegas.

Chucho was also inducted in 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. Also, Chucho enjoyed another type of honor, personally satisfying as pianist and performer, as he debuted in the historic Tchaikovsky Concert Hall in Moscow, last March.

Finally, in August, Chucho and pianist, composer and educator Rebeca Mauleón presented "Decoding Afro-Cuban Jazz: The Music of Chucho Valdés & Irakere" (213 pages, Sher Music Co.) This tome includes an overview of Cuban music; biographical information; and a history of Chucho's Irakere, a band that, with its bold fusion of Afro-Cuban ritual music, popular Afro-Cuban music styles, jazz and rock, marked a before and after in Latin jazz. The book also includes lead sheets of 11 of Chucho's most notable compositions, including classics such as "Misa Negra," "Mambo Influenciado," and "Bacalao Con Pan," and a glossary of terms and Afro-Cuban rhythms.

A very active performer, in early 2018 Chucho completed a two-year tour with *Trance*, a two-piano duo project. *Trance* represented a dramatic change of sound for Chucho, as it followed the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the birth of Irakere, a group that for all intents and purposes, suggested a small big band. The extensive tour was highlighted by a live recording, *Tribute to Irakere: Live at Marciac* (Jazz Village / Comanche Music), which won a Grammy for the Best Latin Jazz Album in 2016.

Born in a family of musicians in Quivicán, Havana province, Cuba, on October 9, 1941, Dionisio Jesús "Chucho" Valdés Rodríguez, has distilled elements of the Afro-Cuban music tradition, jazz, classical music, rock and more, into an organic, personal style that has both, a distinct style and substance. His first teacher was his father, the great pianist, composer and bandleader Ramón "Bebo" Valdés. By the age of three, Chucho was already playing the melodies he heard on the radio at the piano, using both hands and in any key. He began taking lessons on piano, theory and solfege at the age of five and continued his formal musical education at the Conservatorio Municipal de Música de la Habana, from which he graduated at 14. A year later, he formed his first jazz trio and in 1959 he debuted with the orchestra Sabor de Cuba, directed by his father. Sabor de Cuba is considered one of the great orchestras in modern Cuban music history. As it turns out, Chucho is perhaps best known as the founder, pianist and main composer and arranger of yet another landmark ensemble in Cuban music: Irakere (1973-2005). Not well known outside Cuba, Irakere was discovered by Dizzy Gillespie, who was visiting Havana on a jazz cruise, in 1977. The following year, producer Bruce Lundvall, then president of CBS, went to Cuba on Dizzy's advice, heard the band live and signed it on the spot.

The same year Irakere debuted, unannounced, as "surprise guests," at Carnegie Hall as part of the Newport Jazz Festival. Selections from that performance were later included in *Irakere* (CBS), the band's debut recording in the United States. The album won a Grammy as Best Latin Recording in 1979. That original band featured future global jazz stars such as Paquito D'Rivera and Arturo Sandoval, but over its rich, long life, Irakere became a rolling university of Afro-Cuban music while also featuring influential

musicians such as the late Miguel “Angá” Díaz; Jose Luis Cortés (who would later found NG La Banda) and Germán Velasco.

Chucho stayed with Irakere until 2005. Through the many changes the band experienced over the years, he remained the one, essential constant. But Irakere’s success had its personal costs, as Chucho’s talent as a pianist was largely obscured by his responsibilities as a leader.

In 1998 — having won his second Grammy the previous year for Habana (Verve), this time as a member of trumpeter Roy Hargrove’s group Crisol — Chucho launched a parallel career as a solo player and small-group leader.

An enormously fruitful period followed, highlighted by albums such as Solo Piano (Blue Note, 1991), Solo: Live in New York (Blue Note, 2001) and New Conceptions (Blue Note, 2003), as well as quartet recordings such as Bele Bele en La Habana (Blue Note, 1998), Briyumba Palo Congo (Blue Note, 1999) and Live at the Village Vanguard (Blue Note, 2000), which won a Grammy for Best Latin Jazz Album. Since, Chucho also won Grammys for Juntos Para Siempre (Calle 54, 2007), the duet recording with his father, Bebo; and for Chucho’s Steps (Comanche, 2010), which introduced his new group, the Afro-Cuban Messengers.

Calendar Listing for Chucho Valdés - Jazz Batá

Date: Saturday, October 19 at 8PM

Venue: Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)
18111 Nordhoff Street, Northridge, CA 91330

Tickets:

Prices: Starting at \$39. Prices subject to change.

By Phone: (818) 677-3000

Online: TheSoraya.org

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About Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts (The Soraya)

The 2019-20 Season marks the ninth year for the award-winning Younes and Soraya Nazarian Center for the Performing Arts which has quickly become one of the cultural jewels of the greater Los Angeles region. Under the leadership of Executive Director Thor Steingraber, The Soraya continues to expand its programming and outstanding multidisciplinary performances. The Soraya presents a wide variety of performances that not only

include new and original work from the Los Angeles region but also work from around the world appealing to all of LA's rich and diverse communities.

Located on the campus of California State University, Northridge, The Soraya's season offers a vibrant performance program of nearly 50 classical and popular music, dance, theater, family, and international events that have served to establish The Soraya as the intellectual and cultural heart of the San Fernando Valley, and further establish itself as one of the top arts companies in Southern California. The award-winning, 1,700-seat theatre was designed by HGA Architects and Engineers and was recently cited by the Los Angeles Times as "a growing hub for live music, dance, drama and other cultural events."