

Gabriel Velazquez and Zendra White on “UNA HISTORIA DE AMOR”

An Interview by Jackson Harmeyer

Can you discuss the title of this work—*Una historia de amor*—and how it relates to the movement titles? How is love expressed through this music? I like the symbolism that this work is a gift from you, Gabriel, to your wife, Zendra, who plays the solo. In general, the work is based upon the love story between Zendra and I. It is based upon the first years of our relationship (flirting, laughing, drama, disputes) and the difficulties between understanding each other due to the difference of our cultures.

What is the significance, programmatic or otherwise, in using different sizes of the flute? I used the different flutes (alto flute, C flute, and piccolo) for “colors.” Each flute represents a certain moment or emotion. For example, the alto flute represents sadness and melancholy, and the piccolo, I used for happiness and flirting. For the rest, I used the C flute to express emotion and color.

What is the movement plan of the concerto? Are there breaks between movements? How long is the piece? The first movement is fast, lively, *allegro*. The second movement is slow and melancholy, and includes a cadenza for flute and violin. The third movement is fast/*allegro*. There are breaks between the movements, and the work is a total duration of approximately 20 minutes.

A “concerto” is traditionally for soloist and orchestra. How does your work, for flute and string quartet, relate to and reinterpret this tradition? I originally wrote the work for flute and string orchestra. It was premiered in Merida Yucatan Mexico in 2017 with the *Orquesta de Camara de la Ciudad de Merida in el Teatro Olimpo*. I recently arranged it for smaller ensemble so that it may have the possibility of being performed more frequently. In fact, we will include a string bass (Richardo Ventura) for the performance at the Sugarmill Music Festival. Being that I have arranged it for smaller

ensemble it does make each individual part more demanding. I called it a “concerto” because of the three-movement form and soloist voice in the flute. It includes some traditional elements of the “classical concerto” style all the while pushing the limits toward a more contemporary feel.

Gabriel, did you face any particular challenges in the writing of this piece? When I met Zendra I began writing various ideas and themes, however I was writing them for the violin. I began jotting down ideas on paper representing the emotions I felt for her, and it was originally meant to be a violin concerto (which I still plan to compose). Later, I felt it would be a really great gift for Zendra especially because she loves to play the three different flutes, and there are not many works written for that type of switching. Once I began putting the ideas together it all began to flow quite quickly.

Zendra, what contributions to the creation of this piece have you made as the concerto’s soloist? Have you faced any challenges in learning this piece? Living with the composer was the biggest challenge (Haha). I am so grateful to perform this work again and to have a piece written for me. It is quite personal and exposes our lives in an intimate way (although there are no words). I really love this work because Gabriel has learned to compose very well for the three different flutes. I love playing these flutes. While I was Co-Principal in the Yucatan Symphony I rotated and performed every role, and I often had to switch between the three flutes. I always spoke with Gabriel about how I wished there were more flute works that included the three instruments and switching because I believe it offers more colors and interest to the public (and it is fun for the flutist). I was overjoyed when he presented me with the score and the surprise that we would perform it with the *Orquesta de Camara*. It really is the best gift of all!

Is there anything else that, Gabriel, you would like to say about this piece? I really enjoyed composing the piece. The work began to flow easily as I remembered moments of our relationship. It includes many Mexican roots. It is a little bit based on classical form with a mix of Mexican folkloric music. This performance will be the United States premiere, and I hope it will be enjoyed by all.