

Almadraba

Oscar Peñas

Scenic designer/Producer
Zulema Mejias

Lighting designer
Lucrecia Briceño

DATES: OCT 3—6 at 7:30pm
LOCATION: BAM Fisher (Fishman Space)
RUN TIME: Approx 1hr
no intermission

#oscarpenasjazz
#Almadraba
#BAMNextWave

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ALMADRABA

Composer

Oscar Peñas

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Performers

Guitar, Oscar Peñas

Piano, Marta Sánchez

Bass, Pablo Aslan

Drums/percussion, Richie Barshay

Almadraba Quartet

Violin, Ilmar Gavilan

Violin, Leonor Falcón

Viola, Allyson Clare

Cello, Brian Sanders

Stage Projections/Photos courtesy of:

Alejandro Peñas Martínez
(Oscar Peñas' father)

Francisco José Daza
(*El Ronqueo*, S.L.U.)

Carlos Yebra and Eduardo López
(Área de Cultura y Deportes del
Ayuntamiento de Zahara de los Atunes)

Agustín Conejo Medina

Oscar Peñas' recordings and related
Almadraba merchandise are available at
the GreenLight Kiosk in the lobby of the
Howard Gilman Opera House.



ABOUT *Almadraba*

“Almadraba” is an Arabic word for the eco-sustainable fishing method implemented by the Phoenicians about 2000 years ago and still in practice on the coast of Cádiz, Andalusia.

On the first full moon of May when the bluefin tuna travels from the cool waters of the Atlantic Ocean to the warmer waters of the Mediterranean Sea to spawn (*Traveling Through Water*), the largest of these majestic fishes are caught in a labyrinth of nets (*Calamento*) set up by the fishermen in the waters of the Strait of Gibraltar. Once these gigantic fishes are trapped in the nets, they are pulled out (*La Levantá*) in a monumental process, allowing the release of the smaller tunas (*La Bajá*) to continue their journey. By this method, the sustainability of the species is ensured.

Once on land these largest bluefin tunas are sliced (*El Ronqueo*, the sound of the knives rubbing the fish bones), and the fillets will be auctioned for sale with the most precious pieces flown to Japan (*Oh, Maguro*), the largest consumer of the rich delicacy.

Composer's Note

After I became acquainted with this fascinating Art (with a capital A), I considered that the almadraba should be, at least, as internationally well known as the tauromagia (the bullfight) has been, but for many other good reasons.

The almadraberos (fishermen of the almadrabas) are artists as brave and skilled as the famous toreros or matadores with a few differences that makes them even more heroic. The history of the almadrabas is the history of the survival of the species, the bluefin tuna. These majestic fish in their yearly migration from the North Atlantic Ocean to the warmer waters of the Mediterranean Sea travel thousands of miles to spawn. The almadraberos wait patiently for them after setting a labyrinth of nets and also in their migration back to the north Atlantic. (NOTE: The suite only covers the entrance process and not the exit.) The small tunas will be released and set free to continue their journey.

As the fish become trapped, the almadraberos pull up the nets in a breathtaking visual spectacle with the bluefins in desperate motion, splashing anxiously. Men and nature fight for survival—almadraberos to catch bluefin, one on one, fish trying to survive. Something like the drama of the bullfighting corridas, yet with a nobler goal of a sustainable tradition inherited from the Phoenicians. There is blood, there is fight, there is struggle—at times fishermen get hurt—but there is also beauty, tenacity, passion, and a good dose of ruggedness to keep alive the tradition and the survival of the small villages' business.

Then nets are pulled down and smallest bluefin tunas released; the caught are sliced on land. The most delicious parts of these fillets will travel, this time by plane, to Japan where famous sushi chefs will prepare them.

I became introduced to the almadraba when my dad took a trip to witness the almadraba with the fishermen and sent me pictures and short videos. I was immediately fascinated with the whole story and felt that it needed an original sound track to describe it. I spent most of the winter of 2016 in Brooklyn writing the suite *Almadraba*.

The multi-movement piece is inspired by and dedicated to this tradition and every movement or song is named after some phase of the art to which we are paying tribute here. If this piece helps to bring attention to the preservation of this rich and mesmerizing tradition, I am more than happy to have contributed just a tiny bit.

Almadraba is also a work very close to my heart as I have finally blended together two, at times antagonistic, worlds that I have been exploring during my entire life: the worlds of jazz and classical music filtered through the cadences and rhythms of my native and beloved Spain.

Another dream came true this past May when I recorded *Almadraba* in a Hell's Kitchen studio in New York, along with the Harlem Quartet (led by Cuban violinist Ilmar Gavilan, also playing for you tonight). One of the musicians who generously gave his elegance to this recording was the legendary Ron Carter. The emotion of recording this music is comparable only to the emotion of playing the piece in my favorite venue on earth, BAM. Thank you, Joe Melillo, and thank you all for being here.

—Oscar Peñas

Program

Almadraba is a multi-movement suite. Each movement is titled either after a phase of the fishing art or a subject, real or oneiric, inspired by the journey of the fishermen and the bluefin tunas.

1. Traveling Through Water
2. Ballad of the Fishermen
3. South
4. Oh, Maguro
5. Calamento
6. Almadraba's Waltz
7. Habanera de la Almadraba
8. La Levantá
9. La Bajá
10. El Ronqueo
11. Interlude
12. Bulería de la Almadraba

1. Traveling Through Water

This is the most dreamlike, also the most song-oriented piece of the suite, and it serves as an opening. If it had lyrics it could be a pop song, as the almadraba although an ancient tradition, happens today with upgraded technologies (the tuna are now tracked with GPS). **Traveling Through Water** depicts the journey of these majestic swimmers traveling thousands of miles during their migration to find warmer waters where they spawn.

2. Ballad of the Fishermen

There are multiple sonic combinations possible with having onstage the talented timber of eight instruments. This duo, acoustic guitar and bass, is the smallest group cell of the ensemble. This piece is dedicated to the almadraberos, the brave fishermen and true artists who risk their lives performing their duties like vigorously improvised choreography.

3. South

The story of the almadraba takes place in the warm and welcoming south of Spain, and it couldn't be anywhere else. The piece through its harmonies and Phrygian cadences suggests Andalusia.

4. Oh, Maguro

Life and music have to have some dose of humor. Many of the bluefin tuna caught in the almadrabas will end ironically in some of the most high-priced Japanese sushi restaurants as their meat is considered one of the most delicious and therefore most sought after in Japan. **Oh, Maguro** is titled after the very last stage of the almadraba, the best sushi or sashimi.

5. Calamento

The process to set a labyrinth of nets is called **Calamento**. From April to June, bluefin tunas travel from the cold waters of northern Europe searching for the Mediterranean's warmer waters in order to spawn. In their yearly migration through the Gulf of Cádiz, just as they are about to cross the Strait of Gibraltar, the tuna are trapped in this previously established array of nets. Fishermen only capture the largest fish, setting the smaller ones free to continue their mating journey towards the Mediterranean.

6. Almadraba's Waltz

This lively waltz musically illustrates the beginning of the fishermen's journey. Their day starts sailing from the port at dawn reaching the area where they patiently wait for the swift passage of the bluefin tuna. It is a celebration of the hope of a great and successful journey in which many huge tuna will be caught.

7. Habanera de la Almadraba

Composing intuitively following the Fibonacci sequence means to Peñas that the middle of the suite requires a moment of release to be followed by some tension. Habanera is the genre of this movement and maybe the most lyrical or romantic of the suite. It is also a genre that came to Spain through Cuba where many of the sailors went. It has therefore a nostalgic mood common to many people related to the sea, always on the move but always missing the land.

8. La Levantá

The most energetic phase of this fishing art occurs as the bluefin tuna passes through the complex labyrinth of nets. Almadraberos pull out the nets by hand as the fishes, at times weighing over four hundred pounds, rise to the surface vigorously waving their tails in despair, knowing that they will be captured. The tension and adrenaline generated in this phase is tremendous. Some fishermen who jump into the nets to catch these colossal, shaking fishes have unbelievable skills but at times get seriously injured. It is one of the reasons this tradition may progressively disappear: younger generations are not so eager to follow the oldest. This movement captures that anxiety, conflict, and triumph.

This movement is the longest of the suite. It smoothly integrates compositional approaches and aesthetics utilized in faraway periods of music history ranging from a fusion-like introduction, baroque string contrapuntal textures, an ostinato that introduces a tone-row series, and finishing with a vamp seasoned with reminiscences of Andalusian arabesque sounds.

9. La Bajá

After the big fish have been caught, and before returning to harbor, nets are dropped so younger and smaller tuna can continue their journey to the warmer waters of the Mediterranean, where they will soon spawn. This process is necessary for the sustainability of the species. Aesthetically this movement is the most Debussy-like although any similarity was not intentional.

10. El Ronqueo

Back at the marina after a long and exhausting day, the ronqueo occurs before fish are sold at auction. This term describes a sound produced by the knives when the sharp metal rubbed the spines of tuna as they are gutted and cut into sections. This and the closing piece of the suite are the most Spanish-flavored in terms of tempo, energy, cadences, and rhythm. No doubt that the almadrabas take place in southern Spain.

11. Interlude

A short interlude featuring the string ensemble connecting the preceding climatic movement with a closing: **Bulería de la Almadraba**.

12. Bulería de la Almadraba

This is the most jubilant movement of the suite, reprising the optimistic and festive spirit of this ancient tradition that still survives today thanks to the hard work and heroism of the almadraberos. It is a celebration dedicated to the survival of the species and the art of the almadrabas.

Who's Who

OSCAR PEÑAS
Composer and Guitarist

“Peñas offers a lithe, sparkling solo that displays his deep affection for the music”
Jazziz magazine

“Peñas’ focus on making good heartfelt music is a breath of fresh air.”
JazzTimes

Oscar Peñas uses his unique skills to arrange, produce, and perform his compositions in many of the best venues in the US. His unique blending of two genres that seem antagonistic—jazz and classical—along with the usage of non-traditional instrumentation in either style outlines the sounds of the history that inspires his work. Traditional popular folk music from different cultures and sounds from his Iberian heritage meld with an American jazz base. Peñas most often performs his work as the leader of different small jazz ensembles.

A naturalized US citizen, Peñas was born in Barcelona to a family where traditional, folk, and flamenco music was loved and ever-present. His maternal grandfather was a trumpet player who occasionally played with Xavier Cugat’s orchestra when it was in town. Peñas’ first years of study were devoted to classical music, but he later developed a fascination with jazz and decided to dedicate his career to this genre in the US, where he now lives with his wife. This decision led to this moment in his musical career—a road that crosses cultures and creative ideas, a main genre melded by different grooves. His projects

speak to this; Peñas has expanded his focus to incorporate diverse rhythms and styles.

Peñas creates extraordinary musical experiences that enrich lives and empower individuals through collaboration, innovation, and a passion for artistic excellence. His intuition and ear drive him to an amalgam of melodies that aims for the unexpected and merges multiple styles of music that do not cohere to a single signature style. “I consider myself a multifaceted musician; in my original compositions, ideas and references float freely. I like the mixture of multiple cultures that may seem incongruous as I move fluidly between different traditional genres. I take inspiration from life and pick up energy from my surroundings.”

Since the early 2000s, he has performed, taught, and recorded around the world. He is passionate about community outreach, having offered pro bono teaching clinics and master classes to impoverished children in Panama City and the Dominican Republic through Foundation Danilo Perez and FeduJazz, respectively.

As a performer, Peñas has released four jazz albums with Grammy winners Esperanza Spalding, Gil Goldstein, and Paquito D’Rivera, among many others. He regularly performs with musicians such as harmonist Gregory Maret and trumpeter Jason Palmer in venues across the US, including Cabaret Theater at the Jazz Appreciation Month Series by the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, the Mansion at Strathmore Performing Art Center, Kennedy Center, Atlas Performing Arts Center, the Decatur House, the National Center for White House History, Jazz at Lincoln Center at Dizzy’s Jazz Coca Cola, Chicago’s Old Town, Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia Museum of Art, BAMcafé, BargeMusic, and Burlington Jazz Festival, VT. In Cuba he has performed at Teatro Martí and at the International Jazz Plaza Festival.

Additionally he performs in clubs on the east coast, such as The Sidedoor, Blue Note, 55 Bar, Bar Next Door, and while in Europe he performs at the Parisian Duc Des Lombard jazz club and at the Concert Hall Jamboree in Barcelona.

Relecting his unique cultural prestige, Peñas has received the ASCAP Plus Award every year from 2012 through 2018. An alumnus of both the Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory, as well as a member of ASCAP, Local 802, LARAS and NARAS, and Fractured Atlas, he currently teaches at the 92Y in NYC.
oscarpenas.com

MARTA SÁNCHEZ
Piano

Born and raised in Madrid, pianist and composer Marta Sánchez is actively working in the contemporary creative music scene in NYC and around the globe. Charting a significant path through her innovative and original music, she has reached an international audience, gaining significant global recognition.

After finishing her classical training at the conservatory in Madrid, she began her academic training in jazz and contemporary music at School of Music Populart, earning a grant from AIE (Spanish Association of Musicians) for her exceptional talent in performance.

The first band she created, Zafari Project, was selected by the Spanish agency for youth (INJUVE) as one of the most promising on the Spanish scene, giving them the opportunity to tour around Spain playing in different jazz festivals. This band won the first prize at the international jazz contest Debajazz. She also won first prize at the Jazzargia International Jazz Contest with Javier Moreno Trio and first prize at San Martín de la Vega jazz contest with Natalia Calderon Quartet.

In 2010, she received the AIE en Ruta touring grant from the Spanish Association of Musicians. In 2011, she was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship, which allowed her to continue her studies at New York University where she received an MM degree. During her time there, she also did an international tour to Costa Rica, where her group represented NYU at the famed Costa Rica Jazz Festival.

PABLO ASLAN
Bass

Argentine-born Pablo Aslan is in demand for his skills as a producer, bassist, and educator, and for his knowledge of traditional and contemporary tango. His most recent album as a leader is *Piazzolla in Brooklyn* (Soundbrush Records), a tribute to the late Nuevo Tango master. His previous CD, *Tango Grill* (Zoho Music), was nominated for a Latin Grammy Award for Best Tango Album and a Grammy for Best Latin Jazz Album.

Currently he is a member of the Glass House Orchestra, a multi-national ensemble that performs in Europe and North America, and the Astoria Tango Orchestra. He plays regularly with small ensembles in the New York City area, including a three-year ongoing residence at Zinc Bar with Grammy nominee Emilio Solla.

Aslan recorded *Tango Jazz: Live at Jazz at Lincoln Center* (Paquito Records 2010) with Paquito D’Rivera and toured Europe the following year as music director of D’Rivera’s Tango Jazz Septet. Other recent productions include *Todo Corazon* (Jazzheads) by flutist Mark Weinstein; *Romance* (Soundbrush Records) by pianist/composer Fernando Otero; and *Live at Caffe Vivaldi* and *Te Extraño Buenos Aires* (Soundbrush Records) with pianist/composer Roger Davidson.

Aslan has performed and recorded with Yo-Yo Ma, Shakira, Lalo Schiffrin, Denyce Graves, Osvaldo Golijov, Pablo Ziegler, Frank London, the New World Symphony, and the Philadelphia Orchestra, among many others. He has produced over a dozen albums for the Soundbrush label, including the 2007 Latin Grammy Winner *Te Amo Tango* by Uruguayan bandoneonist Raul Jaurena. He is currently at work on albums by the Glass House Orchestra, Tributango quartet, a CD of original compositions for Soundbrush Records, and a series of electronic tangos for dancers.

An active researcher and educator, Aslan has produced educational programs for Lincoln Center Institute, Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concerts, and Arts Connection in NYC, and lectured and taught at several universities throughout the US, including Harvard, Yale, and UCLA. He served as the artistic director of the Reed Tango Music Institute in 2013—14 and is currently featured artist at the Indiana University Tangueros Conference.

RICHIE BARSHAY
Drums

Richie Barshay began drumming inside kitchen cabinets at an early age and continues banging on things worldwide to this day. Noted for his work with the Herbie Hancock Quartet (2003—07), he has been dubbed “a major rhythm voice on the rise” by *Downbeat* magazine, and *The Guardian* (UK) praised “the arrival of a major innovator who also knows how to have fun.” On tour and recordings his diverse resume includes Hancock, Chick Corea, Esperanza Spalding, The Klezmatics, Fred Hersch, Kenny Werner, Lee Konitz, Natalie Merchant, Bobby McFerrin, and Pete Seeger among others.

Since 2004 Barshay has led outreach projects across five continents as an

American musical envoy with the US State Department. He can be heard on over 75 recordings including his latest release as leader, *Sanctuary* (2014), featuring Chick Corea.

ILMAR GAVILAN

Almadraba Quartet, Violin

New York-based Almadraba Quartet was created for this special occasion by violinist Ilmar Gavilan. Gavilan, a native of Havana, Cuba, has had a remarkable performing career that has taken him all over the world. This fascinating journey has ranged from performing for world leaders such as President Obama at the White House and Queen Sofia of Spain at the Royal Palace of Madrid to performing with top tier artists of diverse styles such as Itzhak Perlman and Chick Corea.

As a soloist, Gavilan has performed concertos with the Atlanta, New Jersey, Baltimore, Detroit, Milwaukee, St. Louis, Hartford, Nashville, Ann Arbor, Santa Monica, Phoenix, Denver, Louisiana, Anchorage, Santa Fe, Havana, Mexico City, and Venezuela Symphonies and played recitals in England, Russia, Spain, and Portugal. An avid chamber musician, Gavilan has performed with Itzhak Perlman, Arnold Steinhardt, Ida Kavafian, Carter Brey, Paul Katz, Fred Sherry, Anthony McGill, and Misha Dichter. Gavilan has participated in numerous chamber music festivals including Tanglewood, Ravinia, and Angel Fire.

LEONOR FALCÓN

Almadraba Quartet, Violin

A native of Venezuela, violinist Leonor Falcón has a very diverse background in performing music of different genres. While in her home country, she was part of the acclaimed chamber music group Virtuosi de Caracas and was a member

of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Venezuela, all the while honing her skills in jazz and improvised music. As a freelance musician she was very active in the local music scene performing with many pop, rock, and Latin groups as well as doing recording session work.

She holds a Bachelor of Music degree from IUDEM (University of Music of Venezuela), studied under Virginie Robilliard at Mozarteum de Caracas, and holds a Master of Music degree from the Conservatory of Geneva, Switzerland, and a Master of Jazz performance degree from Queens College in New York City.

Falcón spends her time performing, teaching, and recording around the city with different projects, which include Latin American, classical, jazz, and original music. Some of her collaborations and performances include Willie Colón’s band, Akua Dixon’s string quartet, Sirius Quartet, Maelo and the Latinoexperimental Project, Karl Berger improvisers orchestra, Mario Castro, John Ehlis Ensemble, Mimi Jones and the Black Madonna Project, Camila Meza and the Nectar Orchestra, and recordings for Christian Howe’s recording company. Most recently, she collaborated with Juanma Trujillo at Antenna and Chama, on new projects of jazz/avant garde music releasing albums in 2015 and 2016. Falcón released her debut album *Imaga Mondo* on 2017 under her own label, FalconGumba Records.

ALLYSON CLARE

Almadraba Quartet, Viola

Allyson Clare is a New York City-based composer, musician, and teacher. She has performed and toured with many notable musicians, Josh Groban and Mario Castro among them. While primarily focusing on classical performance practice, she is well versed in popular music as

well as jazz. She attended New England Conservatory, taught at New England Conservatory Preparatory School, and is currently a member of chamber groups including Route 9 and Bluefox ensembles. Clare has taught at many private music conservatories around the US and most recently at public middle schools in New York City, and Jersey City. She maintains a private teaching studio in North Bergen, NJ, where she imparts many musical and compositional skills to her students, with a particular focus on string instrument training. Clare is also a composer and arranger of music for all instrument groupings, and performs regularly with her string quartet, The Solar Quartet.

BRIAN SANDERS

Almadraba Quartet, Cello

Originally from Madison, WI, Brian Sanders is a versatile performer living in Brooklyn. Well-versed in many different styles of music, Sanders has performed and recorded with a wide range of musicians, including jazz legend Kenny Garrett and indie rock band Emanuel and the Fear, and has recorded cello tracks for more than 80 albums. He performs classical music frequently as the principal cellist and lecturer for Musica de Camara, an organization devoted to teaching students about classical music and premiering new music by Puerto Rican and Latin American composers. As a soloist, he has performed regularly with Musica de Camara and at venues such as the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage in Washington, DC, and the White House. He also plays regularly off-Broadway with the Prospect Theater Company. A graduate of both the Eastman School of Music and Mannes College, Sanders has studied with cellists Steven Doane, Timothy Eddy, and Uri Vardi.

LUCRECIA BRICEÑO

Lighting design

Lucrecia Briceño is a Peruvian artist currently based in Brooklyn. Much of her work has been in association with artists developing innovative and original pieces. Her work includes theater, dance, puppetry, and opera, as well as collaborations in several non-performance projects. Her designs have been presented at such venues as Oxford Playhouse (UK), Arena Stage, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Dallas Theatre Center, BAM, Kennedy Center, Atlas Performing Arts, Berlind Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, La MaMa ETC, Birmingham Repertory (UK), Culture Project, Pregones Theatre, Intar, HERE Arts Center, Soho Rep, Ohio Theatre, Irondale Center, and ArtsEmerson, among many others. Internationally her work has been seen in Caracas, Peru, Turkey, Scotland, Seoul, Bogota, Norway, and England.

Her design work for *Crime and Punishment* was part of the Venezuelan delegation for the 2015 Prague Quadrennial. She is an associate artist with The Civilians, a resident designer with Pregones Theatre/PRTT and La Micro; she has also been a guest artist/lecturer at NYU, Princeton University, Hunter College, and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. She received her MFA from NYU Tisch School of the Arts.

ZULEMA MEJIAS

Stage Design/Producer/Manager

Cuban-born and a naturalized US citizen, Zulema Mejias has been involved in different forms of art since the early nineties. In Havana, Cuba, she worked for the National TV Network as a costume designer for shows for both children and adults. She was also involved in underground

video art productions and documentaries, some of them quite controversial, which ultimately brought her to the US as a political refugee. In New York she switched gears and after graduating with both bachelor and master degrees from Pratt Institute, she has worked in graphic design and also organized exhibitions at BAM and the New Museum.

Her involvement in the music world started in 2007 as artist, manager, and producer working with Buenavista Social Club, Esperanza Spalding, and Oscar Peñas, for whom she served as executive producer of his three last CD's. In 2009 she founded Musikoz with Peñas, their platform for publishing their own projects.

ABOUT MUSIKOZ

Production Company

Musikoz is an independent label, a music management and production company that creates high-quality musical recordings and concerts always looking for a way to express the authenticity of the jazz voice in a personal style that captivates audiences. Oscar Peñas and Zulema Mejias founded Musikoz in 2009. It is an artist-friendly label. It is an extension of our artistic vision to find new pathways to support, document, and disseminate contemporary musical works.

Three previous CDs of diverse projects have been released under Musikoz, two albums by jazz guitarist Oscar Peñas, *From Now On* (2011), *Music of Departures and Returns* (2014); and a third one by saxophonist Javier Vercher, *Wish You Were Here* (2014). Partners in life and business, entrepreneurs Mejias and Peñas enjoy their work and are honest about what they present.



Oscar Peñas

Photo: Rene Arencibia



Marta Sánchez

Photo: Antonio Porcar



Pablo Aslan

Photo: Courtesy of the Artist



Richie Barshay

Photo: Courtesy of the Artist



Ilmar Gavilan

Photo: Courtesy of the Artist



Leonor Falcón

Photo: Courtesy of the Artist



Allyson Clare

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Brian Sanders

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