



## Gabriela Lena Frank

### Composer-in-Residence

2022–23 Season



Currently serving as composer-in-residence with The Philadelphia Orchestra under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin and included in the *Washington Post*'s list of the 35 most significant women composers in history (August 2017), composer/pianist Gabriela Lena Frank has always placed identity at the center of her music. Born in Berkeley, California, in September 1972 to a mother of mixed Peruvian/Chinese ancestry and a father of Lithuanian/Jewish descent, she explores her multicultural heritage through her compositions.

Ms. Frank writes: "There's usually a story line behind my music; a scenario or character." While the enjoyment of her works can be obtained solely from her music, the composer's program notes enhance the listener's experience, for they describe how a piano part mimics a marimba or pan-pipes, or how a movement is based on a particular type of folk song where the singer is mockingly crying. A brief glance at her titles evokes specific imagery: *Leyendas (Legends): An Andean Walkabout*; *La Llorona (The Crying Woman)*, Tone Poem for Viola and Orchestra; and *Concertino Cusqueño* (Concertino in the Cusco Style), written for The Philadelphia Orchestra. Her compositions also reflect her virtuosity as a pianist—when not composing, she is a sought-after performer, specializing in contemporary repertoire.

In 2020 Ms. Frank was the recipient of the 25th anniversary Heinz Award in the Arts and Humanities category, which recognized her for breaking gender, disability, and cultural barriers in the classical music industry, and for her work as an activist on behalf of emerging composers of all demographics and aesthetics.

Winner of a Latin GRAMMY Award and nominated for GRAMMYS as both composer and pianist, Ms. Frank also holds a Guggenheim Fellowship and a USA Artist Fellowship, given each year to 50 of the country's finest artists. Her work has been described as "crafted with unself-conscious mastery" (*The Washington Post*), "brilliantly effective" (*The New York Times*), "a knockout" (*Chicago Tribune*), and "glorious" (*Los Angeles Times*). She is regularly commissioned by such luminaries as Yo-Yo Ma, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, the King's Singers, the Cuarteto Latinoamericano, Brooklyn Rider, and Marin Alsop. She has also received orchestral commissions from The Philadelphia Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, the Boston Symphony, the Atlanta Symphony, the Cleveland Orchestra, and the San Francisco Symphony. Before her current residency with The Philadelphia Orchestra, for which she will compose the 40-minute *Picaflor* (Hummingbird) for the 2022–23 season, she completed her four-year tenure as composer-in-residence with the Detroit Symphony in 2017, as well as a second residency with the Houston Symphony, for which she composed the *Conquest Requiem*, a large-scale choral/orchestral work in Spanish, Latin, and Nahuatl, the language of the Aztecs. In the 2022–23 season, co-commissioners San Diego Opera and San Francisco Opera will premiere her first opera, *The Last Dream of Frida and Diego*, utilizing words by her frequent collaborator, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Nilo Cruz.

Ms. Frank is the subject of several PBS documentaries including the Emmy Award–nominated *Música Mestiza*, regarding a workshop she led at her alma mater, the University of Michigan, composing for a virtuoso septet of a classical string quartet plus a trio of Andean panpipe players met during her travels in highland Ecuador.

Civic outreach is an essential part of her work as well as part of the ethos of her Academy. She has volunteered extensively in hospitals and prisons, with her current focus on developing the music school program at Anderson Valley High School, a rural public school of modest means with a large Latino population in Boonville.

In 2017 Ms. Frank founded the award-winning Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music in Boonville, a small rural town in the vineyard-rich Anderson Valley of northern California, where she lives with her husband, Jeremy, on a mountain farm. The Academy offers mentorship with master performers as well as readings-to-premieres residencies to emerging composers from diverse aesthetics and cultural backgrounds. With a strong Alumni Support Initiative, the Academy collaborates with leading performing institutions to offer professional commissions to alumni of its programs. Climate action is also a driving motivation of the Academy's work with programs strategized for a substantially lower carbon footprint, climate action curricula offered to its alums and the larger public, and its novel commissioning program, Composing Earth.

Ms. Frank attended Rice University in Houston, where she earned bachelor's and master's degrees. She studied composition with Sam Jones and piano with Jeanne Kierman Fischer. At the University of Michigan, where she received a Doctor of Musical Arts in composition, she studied with William Albright, William Bolcom, Leslie Bassett, and Michael Daugherty, and piano with Logan Skelton. Ms. Frank has travelled extensively in Andean South America. She is a member of G. Schirmer's prestigious roster of artists, exclusively managed and published.

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*Photo by Mariah Tauger*