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Communications

NEWS RELEASE

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Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture Presents Internationally Renowned Saxophonist/Composer Miguel Zenón In Quartet with Video NYC Premiere of Groundbreaking Project *Identities Are Changeable*

Friday, March 20 at Hostos Community College, Bronx

"This young musician and composer is at once reestablishing the artistic, cultural, and social tradition of jazz while creating an entirely new jazz language for the 21st century." — MacArthur Foundation

"Identities are Changeable is a stoutly ambitious new statement by the alto saxophonist and composer Miguel Zenón...His focus turns here to the Nuyorican experience, interpolating snippets of oral history into his state-of-the-art big band arrangements." — Nate Chinen, New York Times

"Music of extraordinary depth and originality... his most ambitious recording to date."
— Howard Reich, Chicago Tribune

Internationally acclaimed saxophonist/composer **Miguel Zenón** comes to the **Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture** at Hostos Community College on **Friday, March 20** for a performance celebrating his recent CD ***Identities are Changeable***, a groundbreaking project focusing on the cultural identity of the Puerto Rican community in NYC. The performance, which **marks the first time the piece has been performed by the quartet and video in NYC**, takes place at the **Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture**, Repertory Theater, 450 Grand Concourse in Bronx, NY. Joining **Zenón** are drummer **Henry Cole**, pianist **Luis Perdomo** and bassist **Hans Glawischnig**. Video by artist **David Dempewolf** is incorporated into the performance. Tickets to the 7:30 p.m. show are \$15; \$7.50 for students and those under 18. For more information go to www.hostoscenter.org or call (718) 518-4455. After the concert, Zenón will participate in a talk-back, moderated by Soldanela Lopez.

"We are thrilled to host this incredibly powerful group at Hostos," says Hostos Center for Arts and Culture Director John MacElwee. "This concert is especially significant as the College, founded in 1968, was named for the Puerto Rican educator and philosopher, Eugenio María de Hostos, and many of its students and faculty are Puerto Rican or of Puerto Rican descent."

"It is especially significant for us to get the opportunity to perform 'Identities are Changeable' at Hostos, an institution with historically deep ties to the Puerto Rican community in New York City," says Zenón. "We're also very excited to get to perform in the Bronx, an important epicenter for the community and a borough where we rarely get the opportunity to present our music."

Multiple Grammy® nominee and Guggenheim and MacArthur Fellow **Zenón** has expanded his musical and theatrical boundaries with this ambitious project. ***Identities are Changeable*** is a thrilling counterpoint of music, language, and images. Cross-cutting between Puerto Rico and New York, it's all about living contrapuntally, exploring the split focus of Puerto Rican Americans' cultural identity by unpacking foundational forces such as family, language, ritual, neighborhood, and memory. Zenón investigates this dichotomy in composition and arrangements, coupled with his sensuous and soulful mastery of the saxophone. In ***Identities are Changeable***, he scales new heights as cultural guide.

Zenón is one of a select group of musicians who has masterfully balanced and blended the often-contradictory poles of innovation and tradition. Widely considered one of the most groundbreaking and influential saxophonists of his generation, he has also developed a unique voice as a composer and as a conceptualist, concentrating his efforts on perfecting a fine mix between Latin American folkloric music and jazz. Born and raised in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Zenón has recorded and toured with a wide variety of musicians including Charlie Haden, Fred Hersch, Kenny Werner, Bobby Hutcherson and Steve Coleman and is a founding member of the SFJAZZ Collective.

For ***Identities are Changeable*** the alto saxophonist and composer asked his friends the question he had been asking himself:

What does it mean to be Puerto Rican in 21st-century New York City?

That was the point of departure for *Identities are Changeable*, the startlingly original album by Zenón, who grew up in the island's main city of San Juan and came to New York in 1998 to pursue a career in music.

Zenón's experience of moving via the air bridge from the small Antillean island to the landing strip 1600 miles north is something he shares with hundreds of thousands of other "Puerto Rican-New Yorkers." Puerto Ricans are not immigrants in the United States: for nearly a century – since 1917 – Puerto Ricans have, unlike other natives of Latin America, been US citizens, able to come and go as they please between the island of Puerto Rico and the mainland. When they come north, overwhelmingly they go to New York City. After different waves of migration over the decades – most numerous in the 1950s – about 1.2 million "Puerto Rican-Americans" were living in the greater New York area as of 2012.

Zenón did his own fieldwork for the project, interviewing New Yorkers of Puerto Rican descent, focusing on their experience as second-generation Puerto Ricans. The conversations centered on a single question: what makes a Puerto Rican a Puerto Rican. As Zenón notes: "There is, of course, no correct answer, but the many answers and impressions that came from these conversations eventually served as the main source of inspiration for the music on this piece. Video images and audio clips from these interviews interact with the music and make a case for the fact that national identity can be multiple and changeable—that in many cases our nationality can be within us, no matter where we're from or the language we speak."

The resultant work is a song cycle for large ensemble, with his longtime quartet (Luis Perdomo, piano; Hans Glawischnig, bass; Henry Cole, drums) at the center, incorporating recorded voices from a series of interviews conducted by Zenón. Commissioned as a multi-media work by Montclair State University's Peak Performances series, it has a multi-media element with audio and video footage from the interviews, complemented by a video installation created by artist David Dempewolf. It's been performed at such prestigious venues as the New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall in Boston, The SFJAZZ Center in San Francisco, and Zankel Hall in the Carnegie Hall complex in New York City.

Zenón explains: "all of the compositions explore the idea of multiple rhythmic structures coexisting with each other (e.g., 5 against 7, 3 against 2, 5 against 3)." Drummer Henry Cole has his hands (and feet) full holding down the simultaneous time streams, as does Zenón when he conducts the group live. Reviewing the Zankel Hall performance for *The New York Times*, Ben Ratliff writes:

"[The] sound and language didn't directly suggest traditional Puerto Rican music or traditional jazz. Its rhythm was phrased almost completely in stacked or odd meter, with parts of the band shifting into double or half time, and Mr. Zenón's saxophone darting around the chord changes or resting on top, in long tones.

There was drama and momentum in the music's developing harmonic movement; at times a shift to a new chord felt like an event. All the music was deeply hybridized and original, complex but clear."

It's all at the service of Zenón's relentless curiosity, as he writes in the album's liner notes:

When I first came into contact with Puerto Rican communities in this country, I was shocked to meet second and third generation Puerto Ricans who were as connected to the traditions of their parents/grandparents and as proud to be Puerto Rican as the people I knew back home. Where was this sense of pride coming from? What did they consider their first language? Their home? What did it mean to them to be Puerto Rican? What are the elements that help us shape our national identity?

If the music doesn't directly answer these questions, it provides a way into thinking about them. Like Zenón's other music, it's about an entire society, but it's deeply personal.

Identities are Changeable was released November 4, 2014 on Zenon's Miel Music.

About the Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture

The Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture consists of a museum-grade art gallery, a 367-seat Repertory Theater, and a 900-seat Main Theater, presenting artists of national and international renown. It is easily accessible from

Manhattan, Queens and New Jersey and is a mere 15 minutes by subway from midtown Manhattan. Over the years, the Center has presented and exhibited such artists as Rubén Blades, Dizzy Gillespie, Eddie Palmieri, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Ballet de San Juan, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, Ballet Hispánico, Jennifer Mueller, The Works, Antonio Martorell, Faith Ringold, Celia Cruz, Marc Anthony, Tito Puente and Lucecita Benítez.

Support for Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture programs are provided by the Eugenio María de Hostos Community College Foundation, with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Office of NYC Councilwoman María del Carmen Arroyo, the Office of New York State Assemblyman José Rivera, and the Office of New York State Assemblywoman Carmen Arroyo.

About Hostos Community College

Eugenio María de Hostos Community College is an educational agent for change that has been transforming and improving the quality of life in the South Bronx and neighboring communities since 1968. It serves as a gateway to intellectual growth and socioeconomic mobility, as well as a point of departure for lifelong learning, success in professional careers, and transfer to advanced higher education programs. The College's unique "Student Success Coaching Unit" provides students with individualized guidance and exemplifies its emphasis on student support services.

Hostos offers 29 associate degree programs and five certificate programs that facilitate easy transfer to CUNY's four-year colleges or baccalaureate studies at other institutions. The College has an award-winning Division of Continuing Education & Workforce Development that offers professional development courses and certificate-bearing workforce training programs. Hostos is part of The City University of New York (CUNY), the nation's leading urban public university, which serves more than 480,000 students at 24 colleges

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