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**Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture presents**

**Contemporary Latin Jazz Double-Bill**

**NEW CUBAN EXPRESS**

**&**

**STEVEN KROON LATIN JAZZ SEXTET**

**Saturday, May 5, 2018, 7:30 PM**

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(Bronx, NY) – The Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture presents the New Cuban Express and the Steven Kroon Latin Jazz Sextet as part of a Latin jazz double bill in the Repertory Theater of Hostos Community College, 450 Grand Concourse in the Bronx, on Saturday, May 5, 7:30 PM. Tickets (reserved seating) are \$20 with student tickets at \$5 and can be purchased online at [www.hostoscenter.org](http://www.hostoscenter.org) or by calling (718) 518-4455. The box office is open Monday to Friday, 1 PM to 4 PM and will be open two hours prior to performance.

**New Cuban Express**, led and founded by the Cuban-born pianist **Manuel Valera**, features saxophonist **Yosvany Terry**, bassist **John Benítez**, percussionist **Mauricio Herrera**, and drummer **Mark Whitfield, Jr.** According to Valera, “New Cuban Express is deeply influenced by the experiments of Cuban artists from the 70s and 80s. While inspired by artists Irakere, Emiliano Salvador, and AfroCuba, the band creates a unique and distinctive style that mixes elements of jazz, R&B, fusion and funk with Cuban music styles.” The group has released three recordings, including *Expectativas*, which was nominated for a Grammy Award.

After a long career as a first-call Latin percussionist in the recording industry for pop, jazz and Latin artists, **Steven Kroon**, who also appeared regularly with Luther Vandross, including on his seven platinum albums, and jazz bassist Ron Carter, has been focusing on his own music. “At this point in my life, I have chosen to devote my time and creativity to pursue my own career.” Kroon just released in sixth recording, *In Your Dreams*, with his Latin Jazz Sextet this month. In addition to the leader on congas and percussion, the group includes: Igor Atalita on keyboard, Donald "Spider" Nicks on bass, vibraphonist Bryan Carrott, flutist Craig Rivers and Diego López on drums.

## Bios

Raised in New York City, Grammy nominated artist, pianist and composer **Manuel Valera** was born and raised in Havana, Cuba. Since arriving in NYC, he has become well known in the modern jazz scene, garnering national reviews and lending his talents as a pianist and composer to such notable artist as Arturo Sandoval, Paquito D’Rivera, Brian Lynch, Dafnis Prieto, Jeff “Tain” Watts, John Benítez, Samuel Torres, Joel Frahm, Yosvany Terry among many others. Valera is also the leader of his working band the New Cuban Express, a project deeply influenced by the experiments of Cuban artists from the 70s and 80s. In addition, Valera has been awarded several grants for composition, most notably Chamber Music America’s New Jazz Works and the ASCAP Young Jazz Composer Award. Valera has travelled the world performing in over 30 countries at some of the biggest international venues and festivals His most recent recording, *The Planets*, with bassist Hans Glawischnig and drummer EJ Strickland, was released this month.

Born into a musical family in Camagüey, Cuba, **Yosvany Terry** went on to classical music training in Havana at the prestigious National School of Arts (ENA) and Amadeo Roldán Conservatory. After graduating, he worked with pianists Chucho Valdés and Frank Emilio, and the celebrated nueva trova singer/guitarist Silvio Rodríguez. From his earliest days in New York, Terry has been welcomed by the jazz and contemporary music community; playing with Branford Marsalis, Dave Douglas, Steve Coleman, Roy Hargrove, Jeff “Tain” Watts, and Gonzalo Rubalcaba. Among the recent commissions he has received as a composer are the Yerba Buena Garden Festival commission for the suite “Noches de Parranda,” for 12 piece ensemble, and Harlem Stage to write the music for the opera *Makandal* which was presented in 2014. Among his many recordings include *Today’s Opinion*, *Metamorphosis* and *New Throned King*. In 2015, Terry was appointed Director of Jazz Ensembles and Visiting Senior Lecturer at Harvard University.

Bassist/composer/arranger **John Benítez** was a widely acclaimed musician in the jazz, R&B, and Latin scenes in his native Puerto Rico by the age of 19. He studied at the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music with master bassist Federico Silva. He also studied in NYC with legendary acoustic bassist Ron Carter and electric bass guitarist Anthony Jackson. A Grammy Award-winning musician, Benítez has performed with many top American and Latin artists including Lucecita Benítez, Batacumbela, Justo Betancourt, Wynton Marsalis, Cuco Peña, Tito Puente, Hilton Ruiz, Dave Samuels, Chucho Valdés and Bobby Watson. Benítez has also recorded with numerous performers such as David Sánchez, Eddie Palmieri, and Roy Hargrove's Grammy Award-winning Crisol Band. Benítez is the author of his own bass method book. In 2011, he released his album *Purpose* which features pianist Manuel Valera, guitarist Tom Guarna, alto saxophonist Will Vinson, and John’s son, the drummer Francis Benítez.

Born in Holguín, Cuba, **Mauricio Herrera Tamayo** is a drummer, percussionist, vocalist and educator. Taking his first musical steps with the violin at the age of 7, he began studying percussion by the age of 14; graduating from the José María Ochoa Conservatory in Holguín and moving to La Habana to broaden his horizons, where he played, toured, and recorded with Cuba’s greatest artists. Herrera is currently based in New York City pursuing numerous recording and performance projects with such artists as David Sánchez, Stefon Harris, Nicholas Payton, Christian Scott, Lila Downs, Gonzalo Rubalcaba, Richard Bona, Manuel Valera and the New Cuban Express, Alfredo de la Fe, Bryan Lynch, Luís Perdomo, Ignacio Berroa, Steve Coleman & Five Elements, Jacky Terrasson, Lew Soloff, Marc Ribot, Cándido Camero, Yerba Buena, Robby Ameen, Yosvany Terry, Afrocuban Roots and many others.

**Mark Whitfield, Jr.** is a drummer from Brooklyn. He made his first concert appearance at age two as a guest drummer with his father, guitarist Mark Whitfield, and clarinet legend Alvin Batiste at the Varsity Theater at Louisiana State University. At four, he appeared with his father's quartet on the *Good Morning America* 1994 Thanksgiving Day broadcast, and he would continue to perform with his father throughout his early years. Whitfield has opened shows for the likes of Peter Cincotti and Chris Botti, and performed at the Newport, Duke Ellington, and Monterey Jazz Festivals. He was enrolled on a full scholarship at Berklee, where he studied with Hal Crook, Joe Lovano, Terri Lyne Carrington, and Ralph Peterson. Whitfield continues to play with his father and brother, pianist Davis Whitfield, in the Whitfield Family Band in addition to performing and/or recording with Joey Alexander, Sean Jones, Charnett Moffett, Manuel Valera and many others.

**Steven Kroon** was born in Spanish Harlem to parents who had moved to New York City from their native Puerto Rico. His surname comes from his grandfather, who emigrated to La Isla del Encanto from the Dutch-speaking Caribbean island of Curaçao. At the age of nine, the family moved to Queens, where the youngster's interest in music was further sparked by the presence of many noted jazz artists who were neighbors including Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis and Lester Young. He studied Afro-Cuban percussion with Tommy López, Sr. and later Brazilian rhythms with Dom Um Romão. Kroon soon became a first-call percussionist for recording sessions that required a wide range of talents. Over the years, such diverse artists as Diana Krall, Aretha Franklin, Roberta Flack, The Temptations, Bill Cosby, Kenny G, Spyro Gyra, Bette Midler, Gary Bartz and Paul Butterfield have engaged Kroon for their projects. In addition, he had two decade-long professional associations with R&B crooner Luther Vandross and renowned bassist Ron Carter. Steven Kroon has six CDs as a leader to his credit, his latest *In Your Dreams*, released this month.

### **About the Hostos Center for the Arts & Culture**

Founded in 1982, The Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture, based at Hostos Community College of the City University of New York, serves the cultural needs of residents of the South Bronx and similar inner-city communities who do not have the means or inclination to attend arts events in mid-town Manhattan. The Center, which includes a 900-seat theater, a 367-seat theater, and museum-grade art gallery, creates forums in which the cultural heritages of its audiences are affirmed and nurtured. The Center's programming consists of a performing arts presenting series; a visual arts exhibiting series; periodic festivals promoting cultural traditions, especially Afro-Caribbean; The Hostos Repertory Company; and an individual artists' program with commissions and residencies.

[www.hostoscenter.org](http://www.hostoscenter.org)

### **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 for nearly half a century. Since 1968, Hostos has been 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. Hostos offers 27 associate degree programs and two certificate programs that facilitate easy transfer to The City University of New York's (CUNY) 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 CUNY, the nation's leading urban public university, which serves more than 500,000 students at 24 colleges.

<https://www.hostos.cuny.edu/>

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**What:** New Cuban Express (Manuel Valera, Yosvany Terry, John Benítez, Mauricio Herrera, Mark Whitfield, Jr.) & the Steven Kroon Latin Jazz Sextet

**When:** Saturday, May 5, 2018, 7:30pm

**Where:** Repertory Theater, Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture, 450 Grand Concourse, Bronx, New York 10451

**How much?** Reserved Seating: \$20 (\$5 for students and Under 18)

**Phone Number:** 718-518-4455

**Box Office:** Window hours are Mon. – Fri., 1 PM to 4 PM and 2 hours prior to performance.

**Website:** [www.hostoscenter.org](http://www.hostoscenter.org)

**Subway/Bus:** IRT Trains 2, 4, 5 and Buses BX1, BX2, BX19 to 149th Street and Grand Concourse.