

Danzón 2
Arturo Márquez
Born in Álamos, Sonora-Mexico, December 20, 1950

Arturo Márquez studied piano, violin, and trombone as a youth, then concentrated on piano and theory at the Conservatorio Nacional. After studies at the Taller de Composición of the Institute of Fine Arts of Mexico, he studied privately in Paris with Jacques Castérède. Later, on a Fulbright scholarship, he earned his master's degree at the California Institute for the Arts. He currently works at the National University of Mexico, the Superior School of Music, and the National Center of Research, Documentation, and Information of Mexican Music (CENIDIM).

Márquez has written ballets, orchestral pieces, electro-acoustic music, film scores, and chamber music, along with interdisciplinary works that involve photography, actors, or experimental new sounds. Among his numerous works, which have been performed all over the world, his *Danzón 2* is best known, having become a secondary national anthem in Mexico. The various pieces in his *Danzón* series mix twentieth-century urban popular music with elements of classical music with great success.

A *danzón* is a nineteenth-century ballroom dance for couples that shows the influence of the French contredanse from Haiti on the Cuban habanera; Miguel Failde was the first to call a piece *danzón* in 1879. Drawing on this multicultural form, which revels in syncopation and elegant pauses, Márquez wrote a whole series of *danzóns*. He wrote the following description of No. 2, which was first performed in 1994 in Mexico City, conducted by Francisco Savin:

“The idea of writing the *Danzón 2* originated in 1993 during a trip to Malinalco with the painter Andrés Fonseca and the dancer Irene Martínez, both of whom are experts in salon dances with a special passion for the *danzón*, which they were able to transmit to me from the beginning, and also during later trips to Veracruz and visits to the Colonia Salon in Mexico City.

From these experiences onward, I started to learn the *danzón*'s rhythms, its form, its melodic outline, and to listen to the old recordings by Acerina and his Danzonera Orchestra. I was fascinated and I started to understand that the apparent lightness of the *danzón* is only like a visiting card for a type of music full of sensuality and qualitative seriousness, a genre which old Mexican people continue to dance with a touch of nostalgia and a jubilant escape towards their own emotional world; we can fortunately still see this in the embrace between music and dance that occurs in the State of Veracruz and in the dance parlors of Mexico City.

“*Danzón 2* is a tribute to the environment that nourishes the genre. It endeavors to get as close as possible to the dance, to its nostalgic melodies, to its wild rhythms, and although it violates its intimacy, its form and its harmonic language, it is a very personal way of paying my respects and expressing my emotions towards truly popular music. *Danzón 2* was written on a commission by the Department of Musical Activities at Mexico's National Autonomous University and is dedicated to my daughter Lily.”

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