

Gabriela Lena Frank—*Elegía Andina* (“Andean Elegy”)

A world of sounds can be heard in the music of Gabriela Lena Frank. Born in California in 1972 to a Peruvian/Spanish/Chinese mother and a Lithuanian/Jewish father, Frank grew up immersed in a rich stew of cultural influences. “Our early days were filled with Oriental stir-fry cuisine, Andean nursery songs, and frequent visits from our New York-bred Jewish cousins,” she recalls. “As a young piano student, my repertoire included not only my own compositions that carried overtones from Peruvian folk music but also rags of Scott Joplin and minuets by the sons of Bach.”

Today, the world is discovering the sounds of Frank’s music. Her work has been commissioned by renowned musicians and ensembles including the Kronos Quartet, the Cleveland Orchestra and Yo-Yo Ma’s Silk Road Ensemble. She’s been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship and a Latin Grammy for Best Classical Contemporary Composition. She’s been twice profiled in documentaries on PBS. The list goes on.

Much of her renown traces back to her first composition for orchestra, *Elegía Andina*, which she composed in 2000 while she was a doctoral student at the University of Michigan. Dedicated to her older brother, Marcos Gabriel Frank, the eleven-minute piece provides a colorful reflection of the influences that saturate her music.

“It is probably inevitable then that as a composer and pianist today, I continue to thrive on multiculturalism,” she wrote. “*Elegía Andina* is one of my first written-down compositions to explore what it means to be of several ethnic persuasions, of several minds. It uses stylistic elements of Peruvian arca/ira zampoña panpipes (double-row panpipes, each row with its own tuning) to paint an elegiac picture of my questions. The flute part was particularly conceived with this in mind but was also inspired by the technical and musical mastery of Floyd Hebert, principal flutist of the Albany Symphony Orchestra. ... I can think of none better to dedicate this work to than to ‘Babo,’ my big brother—for whom Perú still waits.”