

**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
APRIL 2008**

**Ad hoc magic on the South African stage**

Improvisation – the act of composing and performing simultaneously - is the name of the game for classical piano artist Gabriela Montero. Her imaginative interpretations and extraordinary gift of improvising on a vast array of musical pieces have won her world wide acclaim and an ever expanding audience.

South Africans will now have the chance to see Gabriela's magic on stage, as she joins world-renowned conductor and inspirational speaker Ben Zander on his visit to South Africa in August 2008.

Born in Caracas, Venezuela on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1970 Gabriela has appeared with orchestras across the world from South America and the USA, Europe, Japan and the Far East. She made her concert debut aged eight, performing with the Venezuelan Youth Orchestra 'Simon Bolivar'. After being awarded a scholarship from the Venezuelan government she went on to study in the USA. At twelve she won the Baldwin Competition and AMSA Young Artist International Piano Competition, performing the Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto No.1 – the most famous of the three piano concertos performed by Tchaikovsky – with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

A former student of Lyl Tiempo, Andrez Esterhazy and Professor Hamish Milne at the Royal Academy of Music London, Gabriela has been awarded several international accolades, including the Bronze Medal at the 13<sup>th</sup> International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw in 1995.

She works regularly with Gustavo Dudamel and the Venezuelan Youth Orchestra, with whom she has performed all five Beethoven concertos several times.

Other engagements include NDR Hanover, the Boston Philharmonic with Benjamin Zander, the Stuttgart Philharmonic and the Lanaudiere Festival. She has also been invited to participate annually in the 'Progetto Martha Argerich' Festival in Lugano as well as the Martha Argerich's Buenos Aires Festival.

Gabriela, who started improvising at the age of two on lullabies sang to her by her

mother, says improvisation affords her the opportunity to connect with her audience in a completely unique way. Her improvisation skills were something she kept secret until Argentinean pianist Martha Argerich overheard her improvising. Absolutely ecstatic to discover Gabriela's hidden talent Martha persuaded her to combine her career as a serious 'classical' artist with her rather unique improvisation talent.

"Improvisation is such a huge part of who I am", says Gabriela. "It is the most natural and spontaneous way I can express myself."

A typical solo concert performed Gabriela style usually comprises a piece by Bach, Chopin or Scriabin with Gabriela improvising on the particular piece. Later, as part of the encore segment, she will solicit themes from the audience on which to improvise – pieces requested range from the *Star Wars* theme to jazz and pop melodies she has never heard before.

Gabriela's debut album was released in 2005 and consisted of two discs – one with music by Rachmaninoff, Chopin and Liszt and a second consisting of her technically brilliant improvisations. One year later her second album, *Bach and Beyond*, relayed delightful improvisations on themes by Bach and topped the charts for months. A follow up recording of improvisations, *Baroque*, was released in 2007.

Her improvisational skills also feature on NPR's Performance Today "Sing it and Wing It" – a program that invites listeners to call in with melodies for Gabriela to improvise on live on air. Recently, she also started performing improvisations live on the internet from her living room on a bi-monthly basis.

**Released by Symphonia Leadership Development (Pty) Ltd**

For more information contact Marí Lategan

Tel: +27 21 979 1796 or +27 83 304 5004 or mari.lategan@incontext.co.za

Sources:

[www.bach-cantas.com](http://www.bach-cantas.com)

[www.gabrielamontero.com](http://www.gabrielamontero.com)

[www.musicwilliams.edu](http://www.musicwilliams.edu)