

Odaline de la Martínez

Long Biography (1150 words)

[Updated: October 2020]



COMPOSER

A prolific composer, Odaline de la Martínez obtained her MMus in Composition at the University of Surrey in the UK, working under Reginald Smith Brindle, following studies at Tulane University in New Orleans, USA, where she read Music and Mathematics. She subsequently studied Piano and Composition under Else Cross and Paul Patterson at the Royal Academy of Music in London, where she was recently featured in the exhibition *Hitting the Right Note* as one of 20 most outstanding composers to graduate from the RAM since its foundation in 1822.

Martínez' works have been showcased across some of the world's most prestigious classical music venues, including Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre, St John's Smith Square and the Royal College of Music, amongst many others. Martínez' output traverses a wide range of formats, from solo and duo works, to larger-scale chamber ensembles, electronic music and a variety of vocal, choral and orchestral combinations. A special and enduring affinity with opera was initiated in 1984 with the composition of *Sister Aimee: An American Legend*, which was premiered at Tulane University in the same year, followed by two other productions at the Royal College of Music in 1987 and at Marin County College, California in 1995.

In 2006, Martínez wrote 'Imoinda', the first Part of her epic opera trilogy, *Imoinda: A Story of Love and Slavery* - an exploration of Afro-Caribbean culture set to a libretto by Joan Anim-Addo, commissioned by the Caribbean Women Writers' Alliance of the United Kingdom (CWWA), with funds from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Part II, 'The Crossing', followed in 2012, commissioned by Tulane University with a grant from the Sophie Newcomb Institute, and premiered in New Orleans in April 2013 with the Tulane and Xavier University choirs, soloists, and the Louisiana Philharmonic, while at Tulane as Composer in Residence. The work was premiered in the UK in a semi-staged version in November 2014 at the 5th *London Festival of American Music*. In 2016, Martínez received composition grants from the USA Cintas Foundation and the British PRS Foundation for Music, allowing her to complete the third and final Part III, 'Plantation'. The complete trilogy received its world premiere in 2019 on February 27th and 1st and 2nd of March, also at the 7th *London Festival of American Music*. A grant from Opera America enabled the filming of a video production of selected scenes from 'Imoinda' (featured below). The film opened the 6th *London Festival of American Music* in November 2016.

A complete list of Martínez' works is available at odalinedelamartinez.com.

Odaline de la Martínez is published by Composers Edition:

<http://composersedition.com/odaline-de-la-martinez/>

CONDUCTOR

Since the 1990s, Odaline de la Martínez has enjoyed a demanding conducting schedule, working with some of the world's elite orchestras and ensembles. She was the first woman to conduct a BBC Prom at the Royal Albert Hall in 1984, and has returned to conduct several concerts there since - most notably in 1994, with a special BBC Proms performance of Dame Ethel Smyth's opera *The Wreckers*, which was recorded by Conifer Records in the UK and released by BMI records in the United States.

In 1976, whilst studying at the Royal Academy of Music, Martínez founded her own ensemble, Lontano (lontano.co.uk), with whom she has performed and broadcast all over the world, whilst also working as resident conductor of the London Chamber Symphony and the European Women's Orchestra.

Martínez is also much in demand as a guest conductor, appearing frequently with leading orchestras worldwide and throughout Great Britain, including all the BBC orchestras and ensembles (BBC Symphony, BBC Philharmonic, BBC NOW, BBC Scottish, BBC Belfast, BBC Concert Orchestra, and the BBC Singers). She has also conducted, amongst many others: the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, and New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, the Australian Youth Orchestra, the Natal Philharmonic (South Africa), the Aarhus Symphony (Denmark), the Orquesta Filarmonica de Cali (Colombia), the Canberra Symphony Orchestra, Radio-Television Orchestra of Brazil, the Kansas City Symphony, the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, the Kitchner-Waterloo Symphony (Canada), the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, Orquesta Filarmónica de la UNAM, Mexico City, and the Vancouver Chamber Orchestra.

In addition to frequent broadcasts for BBC TV and radio, Martínez has recorded over 40 CDs for her own record label, Lorelt (Lontano Records), which she founded in 1992, as well as appearing on other major labels such as Summit, BMI, and Albany Records in the United States; Chandos, Metier, Retrospect Opera, SOMM, and Conifer Classics in the UK; and Da Capo in Denmark.

Martínez is a Trustee of the Mornington Trust, which has been responsible for community and educational work in London boroughs since 2000. The charity was involved in an eight-year project working with Roma, Gypsy and Traveller communities in the East of London.

PRODUCER & CURATOR

Alongside her work as a composer and conductor, Odaline de la Martínez has developed a reputation as a visionary curator of eclectic programmes, concerts and festivals. She currently runs the biennial London Festival of American Music (lontano.co.uk), now in its 8th year, with the aim of bringing to London the music of composers well-known in the States but less well-known in Europe. In January 2020 she co-curated Juilliard's *FOCUS Festival of Trailblazer Women Composers* in New York. Other previous highlights include co-directing *VIVA*, a festival of Latin American music at London's Southbank Centre in 1989; her appointment as Artistic Director of the 1994 Cardiff Festival; co-directing the University of Arizona's 2014 Festival of Latin American Music.

As a record producer, Martínez is the founder of the classical label, LORELT (Lontano Records), which, since 1992, has concentrated on music traditionally neglected by other recording companies; in particular, contemporary composers, women composers and Latin American composers. lorelt.co.uk

AWARDS

Odaline de la Martínez is the recipient of a long list of awards, prizes, grants, scholarships and fellowships from some of the world's most prestigious arts foundations and institutions. This includes a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Villa-Lobos Medal from the Brazilian Government, a Doctor Honoris Causa from the University of Surrey, a Gold Badge from the Ivors Academy (previously the British Academy of Composers and Songwriters), and a LUKAS Lifetime Achievement Award for her contribution to music as a woman and a member of the Latin American community. In 2018, the Royal Academy of Arts recognised her as one of the UK's most pioneering-ever female musicians, as part of their on-going touring photographic art exhibition, *First 100 Women*.

Martínez has also received awards for her education and outreach work by organisations such as the Becky Skau Fund. Regarded as a distinguished pedagogue, Martínez' many artistic and educational residencies include the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2011), Tulane University (2013), the University of Arizona (2014), MIT and SUNY Binghamton (2015), and *Echoes Festival of Latin Classical Music* in London (2019). Together with Lontano, she occupies a permanent residency at King's College, University of London, working with composers throughout the academic year.

For a full list of prizes visit odalinedelamartinez.com

SELECTED PRESS QUOTES

'Energy crackles around the Cuban-born conductor and composer like an electric field.'
SUNDAY TIMES MAGAZINE

'We find musical Britain inconceivable without her, and not just because she brings a gust of Latin energy and a warmth to the frequently staid groves of usical academy...'
TIME OUT LONDON

'The highlight of the event...was Odaline de la Martínez' *Canciones de Lorca*, a set of four sensual yet intense, even obsessive settings of Federico García Lorca poems. Sung with keening clarity...the songs gained tension and mystery from the interplay between repetitive riffs on the piano and softly insistent percussion.'
NEW YORK TIMES

'Intensity and economy of utterance... Conductor, Odaline de la Martínez, drew deft playing.'
THE INDEPENDENT

'...de la Martinez's compositional impulse is sure and secure even where she works in modest time frames. Nowhere is this more clearly audible than in the two song sets, *Canciones*, setting four early texts by Lorca; and *Cantos de Amor*, using four poems by the less-well-known *Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer*. In both, de la Martínez's skill as a word-setter is very evident, wringing every nuance from the relatively short, straightforward poems in songs of direct appeal and communicability, with the accompaniments adding additional dimensions.As one would expect, production values on Lorelt's disc are superb... Most importantly, the performances and sound are first rate, as indeed are the compositions. This is to my mind the finest of the discs in this collection and, as a portrait of de la Martinez's creative persona is long overdue.'
TEMPO MAGAZINE

'There's no doubting it. [Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers*] is very powerful work, now gloriously recorded and sung in a performance of commitment and understanding that has done the work and the composer proud... All this superbly realised by Odaline de la Martínez in an outstanding performance...'
CLASSIC CD MAGAZINE (UK)

'It was her conducting, and her galvanising personality, that made...a striking impression. New York is full of top-notch ensembles that play contemporary music accurately, even brilliantly. But the level of pointed, sinuous musicality that Ms. de la Martínez elicited from the Music Today players was unusual.'
NEW YORK TIMES

'...Conducted with impassioned lucidity by Odaline de la Martínez.'
THE TIMES

'...Needle-sharp precision under the decisively assured direction of Odaline de la Martínez.'
THE OBSERVER