

Odaline de la Martínez

Short Biography (500 words)

[Updated: October 2020]

Born in Cuba and brought up in the USA, Odaline de la Martínez is now based in the UK where she has become a formidable force on today's classical music scene, pursuing a busy career as an award-winning composer, conductor, record producer and event curator. Working with everything from Mozart symphonies to the latest contemporary music, she has acquired an illustrious reputation for her versatile and eclectic vision, with a longstanding commitment to contemporary music, women composers and Latin American composers in particular. Amongst her many achievements, Martínez was the first woman to conduct a BBC Prom at the Royal Albert Hall in 1984.

Martínez enjoys a demanding schedule as guest conductor with leading orchestras worldwide and throughout Great Britain, including all the BBC orchestras. In addition to frequent broadcasts for BBC TV and radio, she has recorded over 40 CDs with Lorelt (Lontano Records, which she founded in 1992), as well as appearing on other major labels such as Chandos, Summit, Albany, Metier, Conifer Classics, DaCapo and BMI. She founded her own ensemble, Lontano, in 1976, with whom she has also performed and broadcast all over the world.

Martínez studied Composition at the University of Surrey, Tulane University and the Royal Academy of Music, where she was recently featured in the exhibition *Hitting the Right Note* as one of 20 outstanding composers to graduate there since the school's foundation in 1822. Published by Composers Edition, her works have since been showcased across some of the world's most elite classical music venues, including Carnegie Hall, Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre and St John's Smith Square, amongst many others. Her output traverses a wide range of formats, from intimate solo, chamber and electronic works, to large-scale choral and orchestral pieces. A special affinity with opera was initiated in 1984 with the composition of *Sister Aimee: An American Legend*, culminating in the 2019 premiere 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.

Known also for her exciting productions of unique and imaginative events, Martínez runs the biennial London Festival of American Music (now in its 8th year) and has curated bespoke programmes for major venues and festivals such as Southbank Centre and Cardiff Festival; most recently co-curating Juilliard's FOCUS Festival of Trailblazer Women Composers. Regarded as a distinguished pedagogue, Martínez' many artistic and educational residencies include a permanent post at King's College, London, alongside dedicated outreach work as a Trustee of the Mornington Trust.

Martínez is the recipient of a long list of awards from some of the world's most prestigious arts institutions, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Villa-Lobos Medal from the Brazilian Government, a LUKAS Lifetime Achievement Award, and a Doctor Honoris Causa from the University of Surrey. In 2018, the Royal Academy of Arts recognised her as one of the UK's most pioneering-ever female musicians, as part of their itinerant photographic art exhibition, *First 100 Women*.

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 Martínez'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 Martínez'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