

### **Gabriela Lena Frank's composer note on the "Conquest Requiem":**

Much has been written of the violent meeting of the Old and New Worlds that produced the Americas — North, Central, and South — known to the world today. Over the centuries since, key figures have emerged — conquistadores Cristoforo Colombo, Hernán Cortés, and Francisco Pizarro; chroniclers Bernal Díaz del Castillo, the native Garcilaso de la Vega, and the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas — as especially emblematic of the cataclysm that was the Conquest. These men and countless others bore witness and, oftentimes, great responsibility for the death and destruction of entire societies while simultaneously having a hand in the birth of new mestizo (mixed-race) civilizations.

Against such grand historical strokes, the stories of ordinary people are easily swept away but for the efforts of creative imagination, employed here in the Conquest Requiem. This piece is inspired by the true story of Malinche, a Nahuatl woman from the Gulf Coast of Mexico who was given to the Spaniards as a young slave. Malinche's ever-evolving prowess as an interpreter of her native Nahuatl, various Mayan dialects, and Spanish elevated her position such that she would convert to Christianity and become mistress to Cortés during his war against the Aztecs. She would later give birth to their son Martín, one of the first mestizos of the New World.

While Malinche has been conflated with Aztec legends, she has been variously viewed as feminist hero who saved countless lives, treacherous villain who facilitated genocide, conflicted victim of forces beyond her control, or as symbolic mother of the new mestizo people.

In the "Conquest Requiem," Malinche's story is the linchpin for the juxtaposition of traditional liturgical verses from the Latin Mass for the Dead against Nahuatl poetry as chronicled from the mouths of fallen indigenous princes. Newly composed Spanish words from playwright/poet Nilo Cruz round out the text.

— Gabriela Lena Frank