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Sagrados son los que vienen a ver sus muertos:

An exploration of Gabriela Lena Frank's *Conquest Requiem*

A supporting document submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts

in Music

by

Kelly S. Newberry

Committee in charge:

Professor Isabel Bayrakdarian, Chair

Professor Benjamin Brecher

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March 2021

The supporting document of Kelly S. Newberry is approved.

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December 2020

Sagrados son los que vienen a ver sus muertos:

An exploration of Gabriela Lena Frank's *Conquest Requiem*

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I'd like to thank Dr. Gabriela Lena Frank for her generosity of time and spirit. It's rare when you meet one of your personal heroes and they are even more wonderful than you could have ever imagined. Thank you for believing in me and for being the artist that you are. This has been a very special collaboration that I will never forget.

Thank you to my committee at UCSB for supporting my wild idea! Dr. Katz, I will always appreciate the "dissertation therapy" and your gentle guidance. Thank you, Professor Brecher for always being game. Lastly, thank you to my voice teacher and fiercest advocate, Dr. Isabel Bayrakdarian, for everything. I have learned so much from you, Dr. B.

Thank you to Dr. Sprigge's dissertation workshop- reading through your papers and listening to your thoughtful discussions was inspiring for this singer! Thank you to Ally Smither for introducing me to Gabriela and for helping me proofread. Thank you, Eric, Tyler, Michael and Lois, for helping me clean up my paper.

I acknowledge that this paper is written from the perspective of an American cis-gendered white-presenting Latinx female. My viewpoints come from my perspective and cannot fully encompass all the nuanced concepts of Indigenous culture, mestizaje, Latinidad, and the black experience during the time period discussed. There is always more to learn.

Vita of Kelly S. Newberry, mezzo-soprano

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ABSTRACT

Sagrados son los que vienen a ver sus muertos:

An exploration of Gabriela Lena Frank's *Conquest Requiem*

By Kelly S. Newberry

The purpose of this DMA document is to provide contextual, biographical, and historical information as a resource for those interested in performing and learning about the *Conquest Requiem* by Gabriela Lena Frank. The composition of the *Conquest Requiem* was the culmination of Gabriela Lena Frank's tenure as the Houston Symphony Orchestra's resident composer in 2017. It is scored for full orchestra, chorus, baritone soloist, and soprano soloist.

Chapter one describes the artistic team that created the piece: Frank and her librettist Nilo Cruz. Chapter two gives a historical overview of Mexico's conquest, focusing on the history of the Aztecs and the main subjects of the piece: La Malinche, Hernán Cortés and their son Martín. Chapter three contains information about the process of creating the *Conquest Requiem*, as well as an exploration of the libretto's relation to the music. Chapter four is about the politicization of requiems, using Britten's *War Requiem* as a key piece for comparison, and how performing the *Conquest Requiem* celebrates the concept of *mestizaje.*

I hope that this paper will help performers to generate more nuanced performances of the *Conquest Requiem* by providing context and insights from the

composer, from the historical context of the piece's subject, and from the perspective of a professional musician.

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Blessed are those who come to see their dead.
- In Paradisum, *Conquest Requiem*

Introduction

The *Conquest Requiem* was the culmination of Gabriela Lena Frank's tenure as the Houston Symphony Orchestra's resident composer in 2017. It is scored for full orchestra, chorus, baritone soloist, and soprano soloist. The piece is in the form of the requiem mass, with dramaturgy by Gabriela Lena Frank and Spanish text by Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Nilo Cruz.

The soprano soloist plays the role of La Malinche, a complicated figure in Mexico's history, most often depicted as a traitor to the Aztecs, as she served as a translator for the conquistadors. I will explore the different viewpoints of La Malinche's character within the piece and how *mestizaje*[1] is celebrated and challenged through the baritone soloist's part in particular. The baritone soloist in the music plays Martín Cortés, the son of La Malinche and the conquistador Hernán Cortés, also known as "the first *mestizo*."[2] Of course, he was not the first child born of an interracial relationship between a European man and an Indigenous woman. He was however the first to be recognized as a full citizen of Spain- not just the "child of a slave" or a "bastard," which gave him recognition from historians.

Gabriela Lena Frank uses the concept of *mestizaje* in her music both thematically and aesthetically:

[1] *Mestizaje* is a Spanish term meaning "mixture", referring to the blending of indigenous, African, and European peoples in the Americas over time, and by extension to their hybrid cultural form.
[2] A mestizo is a person of mixed parentage; usually, in Spanish America, of mixed European and indigenous descent

"I'm intensely interested in recasting traditional folk music of South America using the resources of Western classical instruments and forms." In a more general sense, mestizaje, in which cultures exist in harmony, "is something that everybody needs to think about," she notes, "because we're all living in a *mestizo* society now." [3]

The *Conquest Requiem* is of great value to the musical canon because it is an excellently crafted piece that provides commentary on a moment in history that has shaped North and South American society today. Not only that, the work has Latin, Spanish, and Nahuatl texts, which pays homage to the decimated Aztec and the native population of Mexico, already making it an act of *mestizaje* without hearing a single note. The piece looks at both the future and the past, creating a relevant and culturally fertile piece, all while being musically excellent. I believe that works like these about minority cultural identities will continue to grow in popularity because they speak to people not typically recognized in the often performed canon. Representation matters in terms of audience building.

I also chose this subject because I am a modern-day *mestiza* and I have a personal connection to the *Conquest Requiem* as a woman of Latin American, specifically Peruvian, descent. Gabriela Lena Frank's musical output is almost always identity-driven or ethnographic, so researching this composer's compositional and personal perspectives has been very fulfilling for me. It has created a space for me to consider my own identity as a biracial Latinx woman, and I hope that this work and others by Frank may do the same for others. Frank, her ideals, her initiatives, and her

[3] Hayes, *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music*.

music are the highest examples of an excellence that challenges and expands the canon as we know it now. When Frank discusses her multi-racial background, she expresses it with pride and grace:

> **“They feel that my personal story as a multi-racial woman is distinctly American, and not an odd fringe cultural experience. My story, and many others like it, is expected to add to the society’s 200-year legacy” - Gabriela Lena Frank**

Chapter One: The Creators of *Conquest Requiem*

Biographical information on Gabriela Lena Frank

Gabriela Lena Frank is an American composer who holds numerous awards and accolades including a Latin Grammy, a Guggenheim Fellowship, a USA Artist Fellowship and the Heinz Award in Arts and Humanities. She is the artistic director of her academy for composers, the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music. Her works are commissioned regularly by luminaries such as Yo-Yo Ma, Dawn Upshaw, the King's Singers, the Kronos Quartet and conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin of the Philadelphia Orchestra and Metropolitan Opera, as well as by leading American orchestras including the Chicago Symphony, the Boston Symphony and the San Francisco Symphony.

Frank calls herself an "American *Mestiza"* and explores the concept of *mestizaje* in her compositional output because of her own mixed heritage: Frank's father is an American of Lithuanian and Jewish descent, and her mother is Peruvian with Spanish, Chinese and indigenous Quechua roots. To better inform herself on the musical traditions she uses in her compositional output, she is continually researching Latin America's music and traditions. Although she claims to have gone about it, in her modest opinion, "haphazardly," she has become quite the practical ethnomusicologist, specializing in the sounds of Latin American instruments and musical forms. Frank's music deftly embodies a cross-cultural mindset, integrating traditional vehicles of the Western canon with "Latin" musical archetypes. Frank speaks in this way about the intentional popular appeal of her music:

"He [Mark Twain] was the first great American writer to use the everyday speech of ordinary people in his stories, and this doesn't come at the expense of tremendous craft, profundity, and heart. His stories are so modern and immediate, and decidedly not "academic" although there is a lot there that is ripe for academic study. I think he concentrated on telling a good yarn that was rich with commentary of the human condition, and to tell this story with skill. I'm trying to do something similar." [4]

Gabriela Frank's "cross-cultural" music adeptly incorporates *mestizaje* in several ways, including the use of Spanish or Indigenous words as the titles of her pieces, as well the usage of non-European musical forms, archetypes and aural landscapes. Although it is not absolutely necessary to seek the cultural backstory in order to perform Frank's music, since her ability to translate her intentions into a universally playable format is formidable, doing so will enrich the performer's interpretation.

Gabriela Lena Frank was born in 1972 in Berkeley, California. Her father, Michael Barry Frank, was an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan and was stationed in Perú during his service for the Peace Corps. There he met Gabriela's mother, Sabina Cam Villanueva, a stained-glass artist. Michael brought Sabina to the United States, where they were married and had two children. They relocated to Berkeley because Michael became a Cal graduate student. He is a Mark Twain scholar and an editor at the University of California's Bancroft Library.

[4] Jennifer Kelly, *In Her Own Words: Conversations with Composers in the United States*, New Perspectives on Gender in Music (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2013).

Gabriela Lena Frank was born with high-moderate hearing loss, which didn't stop her from wanting to play the piano at two years old when she saw her brother taking piano lessons. She was fitted with hearing aids in kindergarten. Her piano education was, according to her, "pretty standard." She studied with a South African woman named Babette Salamon, who allowed her to improvise while playing standard European repertoire. In 1988, when Frank was sixteen, she decided to dip her toes into the world of composition at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music's preparatory program.[5] With this sojourn into composition, Frank was "hooked." She decided to take on composition as her vocation and hasn't turned back since.

Her compositional and performance training is rooted in Western performance practice: mainly the study of Romantic, post-Romantic and modernist works and traditions. She continued her compositional studies at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in composition in 1994, and two years later received her master's degree in composition from Rice. Her composition teachers were Paul Cooper (1926-1996), Ellsworth Millburn (1938-2007), and Samuel Jones (1935-). Her piano teacher Jeanne Kirman Fischer was tremendously important, introducing Frank to the works of Alberto Ginastera (1916-1983) and Béla Bartók (1881-1945) - both composers noted for incorporating folk and traditional music into their compositions. Until that introduction, she had not yet fully realized the possibility of cross-cultural classical music. Studying Bartók and Ginastera was somewhat of a revelation.[6] She diligently built her skills at Rice: she was active as a

[5] Hayes, *Women of Influence in Contemporary Music*.
[6] Hayes.

pianist, accompanist, chamber-music player and composer. She was able to familiarize herself with each instrument she composed for since she was workshopping and writing music for some of the finest musicians in the United States, who also happened to be her friends in school.

Frank went on to earn her Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A) degree in composition from the University of Michigan in 2001. Her teachers were William Albright (1944-1998), William Bolcom (1938-), Leslie Bassett (1923-2016) and Michael Daugherty (1954-), and piano with Logan Skelton. She studied with Leslie Bassett for a short time, which she described as a "fortuitous mentorship."[7] Leslie Bassett was quite famous in the world of classical music composition and gave Frank tools that she considers essential to her own composition practice. Bassett was also an influential and meaningful mentor for her, and Frank went on to record a CD of his works to thank him before he passed away in 2016. Logan Skelton was a big influence on Gabriela as well. With him, she went deeper into her study and love of Bartok as Logan is a Bartok pianist and scholar himself. He is also a composer, and he encouraged Gabriela to do "such outlandish" things as entering the school's annual concerto competition, and to write her own concerto. She went on to be one of the winners, and she thinks that belief and audacity from him strengthened her resolve in so many ways. "A great man," in her words. Frank studied with William Bolcom over a more extended period, and he was the one who encouraged Frank to travel to South

[7] Hayes.

America. Bolcom is a master of incorporating the cultural vernacular into his own music, and his guidance “had a big effect” on Frank. [8]

During her years in school, Frank created a focused body of work and even found time to learn Spanish. Her life in academia “did not feel academic,” as she spent her hours playing with musicians, writing for them, workshopping her music, transcribing music, traveling in Latin America, memorizing scores and beginning to develop her voice as a composer.

In 2000, Frank made her first visit to the Peruvian Andes. This was a life-altering trip for her, as she finally experienced being in a country she had only heard about in her mother’s stories. Frank composed the piano piece *Sonata Andina* after that seminal experience, and it was that piece that was most significant in furthering her career. The sonata won the 2000 Search for New Music Award from the International Alliance for Women in Music and received excellent reviews. Just two years later, she gave an impromptu performance of the sonata’s last movement at an ASCAP reception in New York City, which contributed to G. Schirmer’s decision to sign her onto their roster.[9] Frank has always been a diligent and thorough musician and was quite prepared for the opportunity when it presented itself.

Frank was diagnosed with Graves’ Disease shortly after being signed with G. Schirmer. Luckily, Schirmer kept her on the roster, even if her first commissions had to be delayed or canceled due to her health. After several surgeries and treatments,

[8] Hayes.
[9] Hayes.

Frank has been able to live a relatively normal and extremely productive life, despite the issues that came with her condition.

Despite a sea of commissions from the United States' most prestigious music organizations, Frank still finds time to educate and volunteer, including founding an academy for student composers in 2017. Urgently invested in the future of the art form and its diversity, Frank mentors young composers and performers of new music regularly at the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music. The program also focuses on "climate citizenship" by addressing the ethics of a classical music career and continuing the search to solve these issues. For example, classical musicians travel all around the country and the world to get to gigs, and all of this air travel contributes to the burning of fossil fuels. One way GLFCAM has addressed this issue is by working with video and streaming services, reducing the number of travelers and creating broader access to performances and seminars. [10]

Frank is a composer who realizes her potential as an artist, activist, and educator. In one candid interview, we get a glimpse of what a kind and down-to-earth person Gabriela is as well:

> **"I'm a hippie gringa-Latina who still marvels, every single day, that I "get" to claim a place within Peruvian culture, albeit across a continent or two. I spent a great deal of time trying to understand this exotic land from my mother's stories while growing up in Berkeley, CA in the seventies and eighties, and it's from this place of imagination (bolstered by trips to Perú begun in my twenties) that I write my music. It's totally subjective, personal,**

[10] "Gabriela Lena Frank."

messy, and wholly mine. And I always hope that the message of exploration and wonder resonates with my musicians, my audiences, my students, and my family. I feel that when I go to Perú and view a festival or two, or visit a tiny museum tucked away in the Andes or a coastal fishing village, or eat sweet picarones bought from a vendor in the street, pieces of the puzzle are both added yet moved around to new places. New revelations and connections are made, and I pour all of this into music, the perfect receptacle. I consequently feel so very lucky that my job is one that constantly allows me to get closer and closer to myself.[11]

Biographical Information on Nilo Cruz

Nilo Domingo Cruz was born on October 10, 1960, in Matanzas, Cuba. When he was nine years old, he and his parents left Cuba for the United States on a Freedom Flight, leaving his two sisters behind in Cuba. He is the 2003 Pulitzer Prize winner in Drama for his play *Anna in the Tropics.* Cruz's win was historic for two reasons; he was the first Latino to win the prize, and his play was chosen as a winner even though none of the jurors had seen it live. The only time that had happened before was for Robert Schenkkan's *The Kentucky Cycle* in 1992. [12]

Cruz grew up in Miami and attended Miami-Dade Community College's Wolfson Campus, and in 1993, earned an MFA in playwriting at Brown University.

[11] Dunn, "5 Questions to Gabriela Lena Frank (Composer)."

[12] Teresa Marrero, "Cruz, Nilo," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Latinos and Latinas in the United States* (Oxford University Press, 2005), http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195156003.001.0001/acref-9780195156003-e-201.

Since then, he has held numerous teaching posts, including at Brown University, New York University, Yale University, and the University of Iowa. He is the recipient of multiple awards and fellowships, including two NEA/TCG National Theatre Artist Residency Grants, a Rockefeller Foundation Grant, San Francisco's W. Alton Jones Award, and a Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays Award.

Nilo's foray into opera occured when he was partnered with two composers of Peruvian descent: Jimmy Lopez and Gabriela Lena Frank, for their own respective operas. Nilo wrote his first opera libretto for Jimmy Lopez's Lyric Opera of Chicago commission, *Bel Canto,* which premiered in 2015. According to an interview I had with Frank, an opera company had asked her to write an opera about Frida Khalo and Diego Rivera, and she was searching for a librettist. Gabriela and Nilo were introduced to each other by their agents, and they hit it off and have collaborated several times since. Their opera *El Último Sueño de Frida y Diego* is slated to premiere in 2022. Below is a list of Frank's compositions for which Nilo Cruz has written text:

- *La Centinela y la Paloma* (2 versions), songs for soprano (2010), or for mezzo (2019)
- *Honey* (2013), songs for mezzo, soprano, and piano
- *Journey of the Shadow* (2013), for narrator and ensemble
- *Saints* (2013), songs for mezzo, soprano, and chamber orchestra
- *La Cinco Lunas de Lorca* (3 versions), for chorus and piano (2016), for baritone and tenor (2016), or SATB with countertenor (2020)
- *Conquest Requiem* (2017), for soprano, baritone, chorus, and orchestra

- *El Últimо Sueño de Frida y Diego* (2019), opera

During the creative process for the *Conquest Requiem,* Gabriela came to Nilo with material and ideas for how the piece would play out, meaning that Nilo took a different role than he usually does in their collaborative process. He usually writes the text for Gabriela first, and they workshop it together. Yet for the *Conquest Requiem,* Nilo wrote the text in Spanish and helped organize the piece's themes and the dramatic arc that Gabriela had already provided. The *Conquest Requiem* was met with standing ovations every night it was performed. It would appear that no matter how they go about their process, their collaboration is quite effective.

Chapter Two: The cataclysmic event known as the Spanish Conquest

The *Conquest Requiem* contains roles for soloists singing the parts of La Malinche (soprano) and Martín Cortés (baritone), and therefore it is imperative to know who these people were, as well as their history, when performing this work. La Malinche was a native Nahua woman in Mexico during Aztec rule, and Martín was the son she had with the conquistador Hernán Cortés. At first enslaved by Hernán Cortés, she used her linguistic abilities to aid Hernán in the conquest of Mexico, and later became his advisor and mistress. This chapter serves as a brief overview of the history around the time of La Malinche and Hernán Cortés, as well as a biography of Martín and the effect the Conquista had on Mexico. Since La Malinche is a central character in the *Conquest Requiem* and has been largely ignored as an important historical figure, the biographical information that supports her significant role in the conquest will be highlighted in this chapter.[13] The chapter will be split into the history of Mexico before, during, and after colonization; also including the biographies of La Malinche, Martín Cortés, and Hernán Cortés.

The status of the Aztec Empire before the conquest

In order to understand La Malinche's story and the conquest of the area we now know as Mexico, it is necessary to contextualize the political undercurrent of the

[13] The original source that is generally regarded as the most extensive and the most accurate is Bernal Diaz del Castillo's narrative, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España,* as he worked for Cortés during the *conquista*. Diaz unequivocally credits La Malinche's knowledge of native customs, of the country, as well as her courageousness, loyalty, and genius as being inestimably valuable to the conquistadores. He argues that without the help of La Malinche, they would have not understood the language of New Spain.

Aztec Empire during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Moctezuma's (II) regime (1502-1520) was plagued with internal conflict, making it ripe for the picking by the conquistadors. Frustration was pervasive among the subjugated native tribes under Aztec rule due to excessive taxation, and even the religious sacrifice of human lives. While this discontent among the subjugated tribes was from before Moctezuma's reign, Moctezuma continued the tyrannical practices of his predecessor, Tlacaelel, which included extreme class stratification. The Aztec Empire under Moctezuma was vulnerable to the Spaniards due to the constant rebellions caused by Moctezuma's oppressive rule, as well as his indecisiveness in dealing with the Spaniards. He did not immediately try to destroy the recently arrived Spaniards, as he and the rest of the Aztec Empire believed that the appearance of the white men was an omen marking the return of the deity Quetzalcoatl's return. Moctezuma's extreme vacillation, fueled by mysticism, made him an ineffective leader, leaving his Empire vulnerable. [14]

La Malinche before Cortés

La Malinche was born around 1502 in the Mexican Province Coatzacoalcos. She was named Malinal after *Malinalli*, the day of her birth in the Aztec calendar.[15] The excerpt below is from an online Aztec Calendar that describes the significance of *Malinalli.*

[14] Cordelia Candelaria, "La Malinche, Feminist Prototype," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 5, no. 2 (1980): 1–6, https://doi.org/10.2307/3346027.

[15] While looking for a date in 1502 that would match Malinalli, I found July 31st, 1502. I'm not sure that an Aztec calendar generator can be used to prove her birthday, but the meaning of her birthday in the calendar is quite descriptive of her life.

> **Day Malinalli (Grass) is governed by Patecatl as its provider of tonalli (Shadow Soul) life energy. This day signifies tenacity, rejuvenation, that which cannot be uprooted forever. Malinalli is a day for persevering against all odds and for creating alliances that will survive the test of time. It is a good day for those who are suppressed, a bad day for their suppressors.[16]**

Malinal was sold by her mother to traders who eventually sold her in turn to the ruling *cacique*[17] of Tabasco, a province on the Yucatán coast. She lived in Tabasco until Hernán Cortés arrived there in 1519. After being sold into slavery at a young age and traveling far from her home, Malinal had become bilingual. Malinal spoke both Nahuátl, the Aztecs' language, and the Mayan dialects of her enslavers. Her mastery of these two languages is important because Yucatán and Coatzacoalcos were far from each other, meaning that fluency in these two dialects was rare. When Cortés took over Tabasco in 1519 he was given twenty maidens from the *cacique* to serve as "domestic laborers," including Malinal. [18]

Hernán Cortés before his arrival in Mexico

Cortés reached Española in 1504 at the age of 19, after choosing to leave Spain to seek his fortune in the New World. Due to his personal connections, once he

[16] "Aztec Calendar: Sunday July 31, 1502 in the Aztec and Maya Calendar," accessed September 5, 2020, https://www.azteccalendar.com/?day=31&month=7&year=1502&datesys=julian.
[17] An indian chieftain, usually hereditary.
[18] Candelaria, "La Malinche, Feminist Prototype."

arrived, he received *an encomienda*.[19] Owning an *encomienda* included the responsibility of Christianizing the natives and providing them with "protections," and in return, the owner could use their labor. Cortés served as a clerk for the conquistador and later governor, Diego Velázquez, during the expedition to conquer and settle Cuba. Velázquez commended Cortés' bravery by granting him another *encomienda*. Cortés dedicated his time in Cuba to exploiting his *Indios* and to trade, later leaving Española with a thirst for more conquest. In 1517, a coastal trading expedition that had reached Yucatán returned to Cuba with word of the wealthy and prosperous Aztec empire. Governor Velázquez sent his cousin, Juan de Grijalva, back to the land that would become Mexico with a large and well-equipped force to retrieve the riches that were said to be there. The expedition was not very successful, but they did attain enough gold to demonstrate the land's wealth. An emissary of Moctezuma, who had come into contact with the explorers during their raid, warned the emperor of the white men in their lands. Moctezuma took these men's appearance as an omen that the return of the god Quetzalcoatl was imminent.[20]

Due to the poor results of Juan de Grijalva's expedition, Velázquez decided to appoint Cortés as the leader for a third expedition. Cortés was a charismatic man with a good reputation built-on the well-known stories of previous expeditions. He persuaded a group of over five hundred men to go with him. Velázquez feared disloyalty from Cortés because of his popularity and was considering removing Cortés from command. Cortés caught wind of the impending order by Velázquez and decided

[19] An *encomienda* is a grant of power over a group of *Indios* (natives) and ownership of a plot of land.
[20] Mark A Burkholder and Lyman L Johnson, *Colonial Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

to cut preparations short and set sail early. Cortés's expedition set sail on February 18th, 1519, with over five hundred men, eleven ships, and sixteen horses.

La Malinche, Cortés, and the fate of Mexico

Malinal was bestowed with the honorific "-tzin" by her compatriots, who recognized that she was part of the Aztec ruling class, being the daughter of a *cacique,* even if she had become enslaved. The common understanding is that the name "Malinche" came from being called Malintzin by her peers, and "Malinche" was how the Spaniards pronounced it. She was christened "Marina" by the Spaniards, and after gaining their respect and reverence, she was "Doña Marina." Due to her translating abilities, she was also called "La Lengua," which means "The Tongue." She may have had many names, but she is most recognized by the title "La Malinche" in Mexico and will be referred to as such from now on unless otherwise specified. [21]

Within weeks of his arrival in Mexico, Cortés had the good fortune to meet two translators. The first was Jerónimo Aguilar, a Spanish victim of a 1511 shipwreck, who had learned the language of the Mayas from his unplanned residence in Yucatán. The second was Malintzin (Malinal), an "Indian" woman gifted to Cortés who spoke Maya and Nahuatl. Translating in tandem with Aguilar, Malintzin was able to aid Cortés in negotiations with the natives, in many cases saving his life and the lives of the other men on the expedition.[22]

[21] Burkholder and Johnson.
[22] Burkholder and Johnson.

Aztec Social Order

The Aztec social order was built upon a class system that became increasingly defined and rigid as the tribe gained mastery over other tribes in the region. Originally the tribes were organized into *calpulli* (clans) with democratic lines of responsibility and power. With the Aztecs' conquest of several tribes came the emergence of a central ruling class that led to divisions among the empire. The nobility became the wealthiest and most powerful class, while commoners performed labor needed to sustain the new order.[23] Eventually, the nobility developed class strata. Only members of the highest and smallest level could be emperors. Conformity was achieved by the cultural norm of obedience and by fear of human sacrifice. Aztecs interpreted sovereignty and religion as one. Conformity and habits of obedience were reinforced in tandem by religious faith and fear of punishment.

Not unlike in most cultures past and present, the actions of Aztec women were strictly controlled by men. Although daughters of the nobility were given an education and women maintained property rights, Aztec society remained patriarchal. The Aztecs' adherence to patriarchy is important to remember when La Malinche became involved in militaristic affairs, which were often only reserved for men. La Malinche eventually took on very “masculine roles” such as going into the center of battle with

[23] What is known about the native people and their culture in Mexico comes primarily from the work of Franciscan scholars like Olmos, Motolinia, and Sahagún, who is responsible for the Florentine codex, which is where most pre-Columbian scholarship rests. The secondary sources that were used, especially the Candelaria essay that is often cited in this section, refers to these sources.

Hernán Cortés and taking on the role of his advisor during important military planning, reflecting her strength and intelligence. Her value to the Spaniards was not just linguistic, and her interpretation went beyond translating idioms, as she was also an advisor on native customs and beliefs. It is possible that her least significant role was as Cortés's mistress since that was unfortunately expected of female slaves by their owners.

The capture of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec Empire's capital, was completed by August of 1520, a year and a half after Cortés arrived. He and his small number of troops managed to cross rugged terrains riddled with hostile native tribes with relative ease, thanks to La Malinche's knowledge of the landscape and ability to negotiate with the tribes. With La Malinche, Cortés was able to communicate two important messages to the tribes: the Europeans could release them from their subjugation to the Aztecs, and the white men's appearance was divinely fated and foreshadowed the inevitable conquest of Mexico. Cortés received aid from some of the tribes to defeat Moctezuma and eventually kill Cuauhtemotzin, the last Aztec king. These encounters and defeats signaled the ultimate downfall of the Aztec Empire.

For the sake of brevity, it is necessary to condense the history of the colonial period. Still, critical moments during the conquest of the Aztec Empire are noted in this section, especially those in which La Malinche played a major part. The path to conquering the Aztec Empire was almost entirely linear. First, Cortés and his troops gained the alliance of the Cempoalans and the Tlaxcalans. La Malinche's translation skills and knowledge of native customs saved the Europeans from death on several occasions. She was instrumental in Tlaxcala, as she was the whistleblower in an

Indigenous conspiracy against Cortés. The natives in Tlaxcala were astounded by the Europeans' readiness against the Tlaxcalan plot, which made them believe that Europeans were deities. Their readiness for the attack intimidated Tlaxcala's people into an alliance allowing thousands of warriors to take over the capital.

Similarly, when nearing Cholula, Malinche's friendship with an old woman in the area allowed her to learn of the attack Moctezuma was planning against the invaders. Cortés changed their route, thus avoiding the attack, further "proving" the magical powers that the natives thought the Europeans had. Not only did the Spaniards avoid personal disaster, but they also massacred six thousand residents in Cholula, which caused Moctezuma to finally take these invaders seriously. In an attempt to satiate the invaders upon their approach to the capital, the Aztecs welcomed the Europeans into the capital and presented them with gold, spices and other luxuries. Unfortunately, this gesture had the opposite effect and caused the Europeans to become even more greedy, and Cortés audaciously subjugated Moctezuma in his own palace.

Once Cortés had control of Tenochtitlan, he immediately began to promote Christianity aggressively. La Malinche was a part of this process; according to *Obras Historicas* by Bernal Diaz, "La Lengua" ('the tongue,' meaning La Malinche) was charged with establishing the Christian faith among the *Indios.* She was "very important in the conversion of the Natives and the promulgation of the catholic faith." [24] All was going well for the Spaniards until Cortés got word that a Spanish expedition loyal to the governor was on its way to Mexico. Cortés left a garrison under the control

[24] Candelaria, "La Malinche, Feminist Prototype."

of Pedro de Alvarado as he left to deal with the expedition. While Cortés was gone, and during a large religious celebration, Alvarado ordered his troops to attack an unarmed crowd in the center of Tenochtitlan, which in turn caused a large native uprising. When Cortés and his troops returned from a successful final encounter with the rival expedition, the Spaniards were attacked, and the natives managed to penetrate the palace walls. Cortés and the rest of the Spaniards packed as much gold as they could with them and made an escape in the middle of the night. This event is infamously known as “La Noche Triste.” Half of the Spaniards lost their lives during their escape; Moctezuma was killed in the scuffle, and Cortés was injured.

While La Malinche nursed Cortés back to health, she was also on the council for moving forward with the conquest. According to Bernal, “Doña Marina was involved in all these negotiations, and her activities did not cease until the conquest of the great Tenochtitlan was realized.”[25] The Spaniards still had the forces of the Tlaxcalans on their side as they returned to conquer Tenochtitlan once again. In addition to starving the isolated city out, the Spaniards had an unexpected ally: smallpox. One of the soldiers carried smallpox from Spain, which ravaged the native population. On August 21,' 1521, the Spanish breached the capital, and the remaining warriors surrendered. Cuauhtemoc, Moctezuma’s younger brother and successor, was executed, ending the line of Mexica (Aztec) rulers.

The individual fates of Cortés, La Malinche, and Martín, their son.

[25] Díaz Del Castillo, Bernal. *The Memoirs of the Conquistador Bernal Diaz Del Castillo, Vol 2 (of 2) Written by Himself Containing a True and Full Account of the Discovery and Conquest of Mexico and New Spain*. Project Gutenberg, 2010.

La Malinche

La Malinche remained at Cortés' side even after the domination of Tenochtitlan. She was his advisor, translator and mistress, even when Cortés's wife had arrived. Cortés' high regard for his interpreter and mistress is easily confirmed by his actions. La Malinche bore Cortés his first son, whom Cortés named after his own father. To name an illegitimate son this way was an act of considerable magnitude among Europeans of that time. She was given land by him, an action usually reserved for the Spanish ruling class. Lastly, before Cortés left for Spain, he arranged a proper marriage for La Malinche to a Spanish nobleman named Don Juan Jaramillo. This was the highest possible honor that Cortés could offer an *India*. She was given a Spanish way of life, which was the best thing a Spaniard like Cortés could have offered. While his letters to the king are inherently biased in his favor, his actions- La Malinche's marriage, their child, and her land appropriation -were emblematic of her value to him. The relationship between Cortés and La Malinche spawned a new race, both literally and symbolically. When Cortes left New Spain in 1527, La Malinche's public life was no longer on record, and he left with their son, Martín. There is testimony that she died in 1527 or 1528 due to smallpox. [26]

[26] Candelaria.

Martín

Although Martín's role in *Conquest Requiem* is not as extensive as La Malinche's, it seems prudent to include a brief biography of the second of the two named characters in the piece. In 1523 Martín Cortés was born to La Malinche in a former Aztec palace in Tenochtitlan, and was Hernán Cortés' firstborn son. Martín Cortés is known as "el *Mestizo*" because he was the first recognized son of a Spanish man and a native woman. His birth marked the official beginning of a new race made up of half native and half European peoples called *mestizos*. Hernán Cortés claimed Martín as his first heir, even if he was born out of wedlock with a native woman.

When Martín was two years old, Cortés and La Malinche left on an expedition to Honduras, leaving Martín in the care of Juan Altamirano. That was the last time that Martín saw his mother, as she had remarried and was given land of her own. Cortés took Martín, who was about four years old, to go live in Spain with him. At his father's request, Pope Clement VII legitimized Martín as a proper heir of Cortés in 1529. Martín lived in the royal court during his adolescence and became a page under Phillip II of Spain in 1537. Martín was well educated, allowing him to become a Knight of the Order of Santiago, a religious and military order founded in the twelfth century and given the charge of expelling non-Christians from Spain. He also fought to gain Algiers for Charles V.[27]

Unfortunately for Martín, Hernán Cortés remarried an aristocratic woman in 1530, Doña Juana de Zúñiga, and had children with her. Her firstborn was named Martín as well, but due to his aristocratic bloodline, he was referred to as *Don* Martín.

[27] Anna Lanyon, *The New World of Martin Cortes*, 1st Da Capo Press ed.. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004).

This title made him heir to everything Martín the *mestizo* had been promised, which caused strife in the brothers' relationship. When Hernán died in Spain in 1547, Don Martín was named the heir to the title of Marquis of the Valley of Oaxaca instead of Martín, the son of Malinche.

Martín died in Spain during exile, as he and his brothers were considered political threats to the viceroy in England after the battle of Saint Quentin. Several accusations, death threats and torture fell upon the Cortés brothers in the name of the Spanish crown while they were in Mexico. Eventually after much strife, Martín and his brothers were exiled to Europe. Martín ended up in Spain, near Granada, and married Doña Bernandia del Porras. They had two children, including his son Ferdinand, who relayed what is known about the death of Martín. Martín Cortés, the "first *mestizo*" died in Spain and not in his place of birth, Mexico. [28]

Hernán Cortés

After the capture of Tenochtitlan in September 1523, Cortés was appointed the governor and captain general of New Spain. Cortés made sure that the natives who aided him received *encomiendas*, much to the king's chagrin. Cortés wanted Mexico to be populated by Spaniards and natives, rather than abused and eventually destroyed like the rest of New Spain, so he sought protections for natives and made it a law that only slaves could work in the mines. Owners of *encomiendas* had to protect their *Indios* and provide them with food, agricultural work and religious

[28] Anna Lanyon, *The New World of Martin Cortes*

instruction. Cortés wanted New Spain to be inhabited by Spaniards, so he decreed that once a Spanish settler arrived, he had to stay in New Spain for eight years if granted with an encomienda. Not only that, the Spanish settler either had to bring his wife from Spain or get married within eighteen months.

At this point, Cortés was the richest and most powerful man in New Spain, which was a threat to the crown in Europe. In response to this threat, Charles V sent a few aristocrats whom he had provided with new governmental positions superior to Cortés', in order to distill the conquistador's power. Cortés left for Honduras to quell a rebellion started by his own subordinate, and while he was gone these aristocrats loosened some of Cortés' laws, which led to the vicious abuse of natives. This caused rebellions and power struggles in the new colony. Despite the state of affairs in New Spain, Cortés sailed to Spain in 1528 to present himself to the king, in response to allegations that Cortés was trying to appoint himself as the king of New Spain. Emperor Charles did not reinstate Cortés as the governor of New Spain, due to his rebellious tendencies. Instead he was given the title of captain-general and the ennoblement as the Marquis of the Valley de Oaxaca, granting him what would have been the largest *encomienda* of all time in perpetuity.[29] As his first marriage was childless, Cortés was remarried in 1530 to a Spanish noblewoman. It is rumored that he murdered his first wife in cold blood in Mexico, but like many things that happened during the conquest, cannot be completely verified.[30] Hernán's second wife bore him a son, to whom he also gave the name of Martín. When Hernán Cortés returned to

[29] Burkholder and Johnson, *Colonial Latin America*.
[30] Lanyon, *The New World of Martin Cortes*.

Mexico, he realized that the land where he had been appointed Marquis of was not actually anywhere near the center of political activity. An *audiencia* had come together in his absence. An *audiencia* was a regional court of appeal and administrative tribunal in colonial Spanish America, meaning that effective ruling power was truly out of Cortés' grasp. For two decades, Cortés fought against the bureaucratization of colonial government. He presented himself to the king for a third time in 1544, and as he was preparing to sail back to Mexico in 1547, he died of dysentery in Castilleja de la Cuesta, a small town outside of Seville.

Mexico after the conquest and mestizaje

In the years immediately following the fall of the Aztec Empire, Tenochtitlan, Mexico's capital, became a conqueror's city-state loosely under the control of Charles V. The population of *Indios* declined steeply as different groups of Spaniards sought to exploit them. As resources like land were taken over by *encomenderos*,[31] the Nahua peoples were driven to live in *pueblos.* These *pueblos* were autonomous, and by law were not to be interfered with by Spaniards, in order to prevent native uprisings.[32] As Spanish settlers moved North, they placed their haciendas in predominantly pre-Columbian areas. Haciendas were countryside estates in which crops were grown where *Indios* could work. Local native communities learned to live with these settlers and even began to depend on them mutually. *Indios* were both producers and

[31] Owners of *encomiendas*

[32] Brian R. Hamnett, *A Concise History of Mexico*, 2nd ed., Cambridge Concise Histories (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511809736.

consumers in this economy. Although the 'Indian' way of life changed drastically due to the impact of conquest, colonization, and legislation, the Indian presence in contemporary Mexico remains "real and pervading".[33]

It is an understatement that the conquest of Mexico changed the fate of Latin America, and ultimately the world. Native populations were decimated by slavery, exploitation, disease, and other abuses brought in by the Spaniards. It is perhaps because of these drastic changes and further subjugation of the natives of Mexico that La Malinche begs for forgiveness in the text of *The Conquest Requiem.*

This timeline excerpted from Hamnett's "A Concise History of Mexico" highlights the important chronology after Mexico's conquest by the Spaniards. The timeline serves an overview of Mexico's history, along with European dates of importance until this century.

1521	**Fall of Tenochtitlan to Spanish and Indian alliance.**
1524	**Arrival of first Franciscans**
1535	**Antonio de Mendoza, first Viceroy of New Spain, to**
1550	
1592	**High Court of Indian Justice is established**
1615-35	**Peak of Zacatecas silver production**
1620s	**Indian population down to an estimated 1.2 million**
1635-1675	**Contraction of New Spain's mining economy**
1670s-1790s	**Recovery and flourishing of silver mining in New Spain**
1700	**Extinction of the Habsburg dynasty in Spain.**
1701-15	**War of the Spanish Succession**
1759	**Accession of Charles III**
1808	**Collapse of the Spanish Bourbon monarchy**
1810-16	**September, outbreak of the Mexican Insurrection for Independence-day led by Friar Miguel Hidalgo, parish priest of Dolores (Guanajuato)**
1813	**Spanish Cortes abolishes the inquisition**
1814	**October, Mexican Insurgent Constitution of**
Apatzingán	
1815	**Execution of Vicente Guerrero Morelos, main rebel**
leader	

[33] Hamnett.

1820	**Military rebellion in Spain restores the 1812 Constitution and ends the first absolutist rule of Ferdinand VII. Second constitutional period in Spain, 1820-1823**
1821	**21 September Iturbide's entry into Mexico City, which was the first stage in the independence of Mexico. End of the viceroyalty in New Spain.**
1822-23	**First Mexican Empire**
1824	**First federal constitution. First Federal Republic 1824-1835**
1836	**Secession of Texas from Mexico and establishment as an independent Republic**
1846	**April, outbreak of war between the United States and Mexico over the question of US annexation of Texas.**
1846-53	**Second federal republic**
1848	**Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Mexico loses Upper California and New Mexico to the USA**
1858-61	**Civil War of the Reform**
1858-72	**Benito Juarez, President**
1863-67	**Second Mexican Empire**
1867-76	**Restored Republic**
1884-1911	**Personal rule of Diaz- seven re-elections**
1907	**Recession**
1910-11	**First phase of the Mexican Revolution overthrows Diaz and secures election of Francisco I. Madero**
1913-1916	**Second phase of the Mexican Revolution: success of Carranza and Obregón; defeat and marginalization of Villa and Zapata**
1920s	**Main period of mural-painting in public buildings by Diego Rivera**
1924-34	**Supremacy (Maximato) of Calles**
1938	**Nationalization of petroleum industry**
1940s-1960s	**Economic expansion: Mexican predominantly urban**
1982	**Beginning of long debt crisis**
1993	**February, re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Roman Catholic Church, ruptured in 1967. Five papal visits by John Paul II, 1979-2002.**

Clearly this is not a fully fleshed out timeline of all of the important political events surrounding Mexico's history, but it does provide a clear picture of the many political upheavals in Mexico. The people of Mexico suffered and continue to suffer governmental instability from issues with rule rooted in the conquest. European rulers were fighting among themselves as their empires rose and fell, leading to Spain's poor economic position by the 1640s. Mexicans finally tried to take charge of their own

country by rebelling against Spain's viceroyalty in 1810, and eventually succeeded by 1821. The separation from Europe was not easy, and many unstable governments took power in Mexico. Mexican people have fought for their independence while the country continues to endure interference and exploitation from the United States in its quest for global dominance. Malinche's assistance to Cortés greatly affected the fate of the Aztec Empire, and was a deciding factor among the several stories of European conquest in the Americas.

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Chapter Three: Dramatic exploration of the *Conquest Requiem*

Brief Background of the Requiem Mass

In the Roman Catholic tradition, the requiem mass is a mass to commemorate the dead. It may be sung on the day of the burial and succeeding anniversaries. The title ”Requiem” comes from the first word of the most well-known of the introits: *Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,* meaning “Eternal rest give unto them, o Lord”.[34] From the tenth to the fourteenth centuries the texts were sung in Gregorian plainchant. Eventually there were polyphonic requiem masses during the Renaissance, and solo vocal parts and instrumental interludes were added around the early seventeenth century. It seems that by the seventeenth century the purpose of the musical requiem mass was to commemorate the nobility in the courts and capitals of southern Europe.[35] In the late seventeenth century, leading operatic composers like Lully and Cimarosa extended the solo movements and made them more elaborate. Later important or well-known examples include the Requiems by Michael Haydn (1771), Mozart (1791), Berlioz (1837), Brahms (1867), Verdi (1874), Fauré (1893), and

[34] “Requiem Mass,” Grove Music Online, accessed October 7, 2020, https://www-oxfordmusiconline-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000043221.

[35] Many requiem settings of the period were the result of a wish or obligation to commemorate the high-born deceased of the courts and capitals of southern Europe, and can thus be dated with reasonable confidence. Following Kerll's requiem of 1689, which marked the death of the Emperor Leopold I, there are those of Jommelli (1756, for the Duchess of Württemberg), J.G. Schürer (1757, for the Electress Maria Josepha of Saxony), J.A. Hasse (1763, for the Elector August of Saxony), Jean Gilles (performed for Rameau in 1764 and for Louis XV in 1774, superseding the traditional royal setting by Du Caurroy), C.A. Campioni (1766, for the Emperor Franz I, and 1781, for the Empress Maria Theresa), Michael Haydn (1771, for Sigismund von Schrattenbach, Archbishop of Salzburg), and Salvador Pazzaglia (1781, also for the Empress Maria Theresa).

Duruflé (1947). All these differ in respect to the liturgical bounds, orchestra, and chorus sizes.

Composing Conquest Requiem

Frank was in the third and final year of her residency as the composer for the Houston Symphony when she composed and premiered *Conquest Requiem.*[36] The unprecedented 2016 election of Donald Trump was an emotional watershed moment for Frank. The fall of 2016 and winter of 2017 would go on to be a complex and devastating, yet fruitful period in her compositional output. Her frustration about the election initially led to poorly-timed writer's block, as she had many commissions to complete, including *Conquest Requiem*.

> **"I was exactly the type of person he [Trump] was trying to silence. I'm a disabled, brown, and Latina hippie artist from the west coast. When I made this realization, I became angry and refused to be silent. That was how I broke out of my writer's block, the first time I'd ever experienced creative fear. I was able to write again, and this piece was partially born out of that awakening." -10/15 zoom interview with Gabriela Lena Frank**

Some of the major compositions she premiered and composed during this period were *Walkabout: Concerto for Orchestra* (2016) for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra as well as *Apu: Tone Poem for Orchestra* (2017), commissioned by

[36] Wei-Huan Chen, "Houston Symphony Debuts Gabriela Lena Frank's Multicultural 'Conquest Requiem,'" HoustonChronicle.com, May 6, 2017, https://www.houstonchronicle.com/entertainment/music/article/Houston-Symphony-debuts-Frank-s-multicultural-11126772.php.

Carnegie Hall for the National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America. Even though the *Conquest Requiem* was a massive undertaking, Frank began to lay the foundation for the Gabriela Lena Frank Creative Academy of Music, marking an extremely busy season for her.

In a radio interview, Catherine Lu from the Houston Public Media raised the question, “Why a requiem?” To summarize, Frank quickly responded that even though she's “technically an atheist”[37], she’s fascinated by the mythology behind religion, as well as by the beauty of religious texts. She went on to say that the conquest is one of the most cataclysmic events in world history.

Frank, Nilo Cruz, and millions of other *mestizos* are a product of that period. It continues to exert its influence on the lives of billions of people, even those who are not of Latinx or Indigenous descent. Frank pointed out that people often become overwhelmed or combative when trying to process a controversial or challenging theme, so she and Nilo thought that the story of a specific person, Malinche, who was a mother, was a more effective conduit for the pain caused by the conquest. La Malinche’s story encapsulates many complex themes, including gender politics, enslavement and rape culture, as well as the overarching horrors of colonization and genocide. Frank continued by saying that her requiem exists as a challenge to the living, as well as for *mestizos* dealing with their violent colonial past; in that respect, the requiem is forward-thinking. She could have used the titles “memoriam” or “tribute,” but to convey the importance and gravitas of the subject matter, the only

[37] Zoom interview 10/15

suitable choice was a Requiem. “I only have one ‘Requiem’ in me” is what she has often said when talking about the work.

La Malinche’s role in the conquest, both as the translator for the Conquistadors, and as the symbolic mother of the *mestizo* people, is a story that is powerful enough to hold the weight of the requiem form on its shoulders. The racial conflicts of today have deep roots in the past; Frank’s requiem uses La Malinche’s story to make listeners reckon and identify with this violence. Frank and her librettist Cruz used the narrative of a pained mother in the *Conquest Requiem* to deliver the story of the violence of the conquest in a personal way. The name Malinche has become synonymous with the word “traitor” in Mexico, yet this telling of her story is sympathetic to her life choices and humanizes her. The Malinche that we hear in the piece is remorseful of her actions and distressed about what she has done to her people. Her son, Martín, is confused and pained by both the beauty and the horror of his genesis. [38]

Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem* (1961) was especially influential in the composition of the *Conquest Requiem*. In interviews, Frank explicitly recalls the influence and effect performing as a chorister in the *War Requiem* during her time at Rice had on her. The *War Requiem* is of a different category from the aforementioned requiems. It is not strictly liturgical, but rather uses the Requiem form as an homage to lives lost in World War I. In the piece, typical mass texts are interwoven with poetry by Wilfred Owen, an English poet and soldier in the First World War. It is this idea of the "evolved Requiem" that Frank latched onto during her composition of the

[38] “The Sound of History—A New Requiem by Gabriela Lena Frank,” *Houston Symphony* (blog), April 18, 2017, https://houstonsymphony.org/gabriela-lena-frank-conquest-requiem/.

Conquest Requiem. By mixing Spanish prose by Nilo Cruz, ancient Nahua poetry, and some lines from the original mass text, Frank was able to compose a requiem that spoke to her and was trilingual, like Malinche herself. Frank explained her choices by saying: “Every composer has their own way of handling text and picking which texts speak to them.”

The Nahua poetry in *Conquest Requiem* came from a collection of poems by fallen Aztec princes. Frank was aided in Nahuatl pronunciation and translation by Cuauhtemoc Quintero Lule, who was a graduate student at the University of California Davis at the time. The Nahuatl texts are mostly sung by La Malinche and by Martín. Cruz wrote the Spanish texts, stringing them together with the Nahua poetry and liturgical Latin. The narrative in Spanish centers around pain, guilt, and ultimately, hope. The blending of Spanish, Nahuatl, and Latin is consistent throughout the piece, which Frank felt gave her even more liberty to be free with the rearrangement of traditional Requiem texts. La Malinche’s and Martin’s thoughts are lost to the past, and this requiem is a reimagination of their relationship with the Nahua people. [39]

Analysis of Conquest Requiem, by movement

The *Conquest Requiem* is 38 minutes long, with an SATB chorus, a soprano soloist, a baritone soloist, and an orchestra comprised of 3 flutes (3rd doubling on piccolo), 3 oboes (3rd doubling on English horn), 3 clarinets in Bb (3rd doubling on bass clarinet), 3 bassoons, 2 horns in F, 2 trumpets in C, 2 trombones, tuba, and

[39] Catherine Lu, “Gabriela Lena Frank And Nilo Cruz On The World Premiere Of ‘Conquest Requiem’ And More,” Houston Public Media, May 5, 2017, https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/arts-culture/2017/05/05/199856/gabriela-lena-frank-and-nilo-cruz-on-the-world-premiere-of-conquest-requiem-and-more/.

percussion, which includes marimba, suspended cymbal, piatti, tubular bells, snare drum, bass drum, tamtam, thunder sheet, and triangle. When approaching the Houston Symphony with the idea, she had a much larger, operatic scale for the piece in mind, similar to her the requiems of Verdi and Britten. But, as budgeting and time constraints were put on the composition, it developed into a shorter, leaner, but still powerful 38-minute piece.

This analysis will highlight tools the composer used to propel the drama and *mestizaje* of the piece, as well as personal commentary and interpretation of the music and libretto. Below are the liner notes included in the score.

> *Composer note:*
>
> *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 Nahua 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 Nahua 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

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Analysis of Movement I. *Introit: Cuicatl de Malinche (Song of Malinche)*

The libretto is here provided to the reader in the text and musical analysis. Texts and translations will be provided movement by movement for ease of reference:

Table 1. Text and translation of I. Introit: Cuicatl de Malinche

I. Introit: Cuicatl de Malinche	I. Song of Malinche
Choir Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine.*[40]	**Choir** Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord.
Soprano (Spanish*)*	**Soprano**
Tenochtitlan, mi ciudad, ¿te habré maldecido?	Tenochtitlan, my city, have I put a curse on you?
De tantos nombres que me han dando, solo un nombre me quedan: La Malinche, por traicionar a mi pueblo.	Of all the names I've been given, only one name remains with me. La Malinche, for betraying my people.
Tenochtitlan, mi ciudad, habré entregado tu tierra por amar al enemigo?	Tenochtitlan, my city, have I handed over your land for loving the enemy?
Choir Lux perpetua luceat eis.*	**Choir** Let perpetual light shine upon them.

[40] * Indicates original requiem mass text. This movement's text is specifically from the Introit and the Kyrie.

Soprano (Nahuatl) Ah ca no chichic teopoulhqui tenahuac ye nican?	**Soprano** Are bitterness and anguish the destiny of the people on this earth?
Choir Kyrie eleison. Christe eleison. Kyrie eleison.	**Choir** Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.
Soprano (Spanish) Lloro.	**Soprano** I cry.

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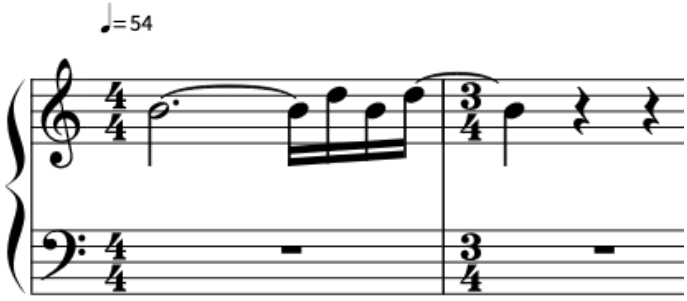
The first movement, entitled “Introit: Cuicatl de Malinche (Song of Malinche)” enters the listener into La Malinche’s judgment day. La Malinche names her sins: the betrayal of her city and people. Her guilt is very deep. She put the fate of Mexico into the hands of the Europeans in order to survive; this movement begins the journey of her guilt and, ultimately, her redemption.

The movement begins with the bassoon, sounding like a primordial hum and setting a B minor tonality. Within four bars, the piece draws the audience into a *mestizo* soundscape as the choir sings on the word “requiem.” Their sound combined with the flutes oscillating between chant and panpipe playing. The ambiguous opening quickly introduces the listener to the delicate dance between the Latinx/Indigenous and the European musical traditions. These are key characteristics in many of Gabriela’s compositions, even if the musical material is completely from her imagination. This choral part, sung in unison by all of the voice parts, introduces one of the central motifs of the piece, used throughout the *Requiem.* The “thirds motif” is illustrated here:

Figure 1. Unison choral line, Movement 1, Measure 2.



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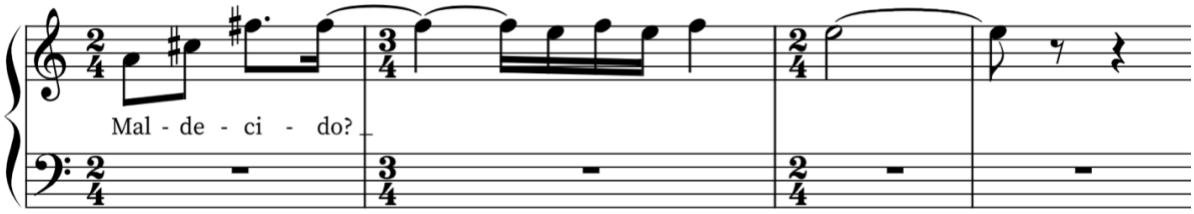
"Requiem aeternam, dona eis Domine," are the usual requiem texts from in the requiem mass, but considering that this is a requiem dedicated to the souls lost in the conquest, it invokes the question: who are we remembering?

Starting on measure 6, the choir sings on "Mm" on the beats one and four. They sound like the echo of church bells, aided by the large orchestral bell having rung directly before. The composer again mixes the sound of the voice and orchestra to create a theatrically effective environment The soprano soloist, who represents La Malinche, enters in measure 8 onto this bed of music, on the word "Tenochtitlan," the ancient Aztec capital that was sequestered by Hernán Cortes and the conquistadors; it is now known as Mexico City. In measure 12 she cries "Ah" on a tenth from a D4 to an F#5, a substantial interval, the first of many large intervals in the vocal line throughout this piece. Gabriela's usage of large intervals, especially in the vocal solo lines, are of note because they are such dramatic gestures, almost always indicative of the singer's heightened emotional state.

The "thirds motif" in the chorus alternates with cries by Malinche. The suspense is built by the choir returning a semitone higher each time. The choir becomes louder,

staunch in their relentless “thirds motif:” they are immovable, like an angry judge sentencing Malinche, the guilty traitor of her people. The word that is repeated most by the choir is “Requiem.” this repetition could be interpreted in many ways, in addition to the usual translation, as “we know what you did,” and “we will remember.” Once again, La Malinche cries in her high register, now on the words, “have I perhaps betrayed you?” During this moment, when she sings the word “maldecido” (betrayed), we hear a tool Frank uses very often for sobbing or laments, but this time, it is melded with the choir’s rhythmic pattern, as in the following example, where the last syllable “do” is held out and goes back and forth between G#5 and E5.

Figure 2. Soprano solo line, Movement 1, Measures 41-43



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In measure 50, church bells ring at the fortissimo dynamic. They usher in the choir, who are mirroring the effect of the bell with the heavily used “thirds motif” that has transformed into an ominous sounding tritone instead. This dramatic change in the repeated motif signals a change in the choir’s passive character to a more judgmental one, intensified by the threatening way “Domine” is set on the downbeat, like the strike of a church bell. The choir has gained power in this moment, and the rise in emotional temperature indicates that the choir is not listening to Malinche’s

pleas. The choir fades into the new “tempestuoso” (tempestuous) section, in which the orchestra’s chaotic sounds are at the forefront. This highlights Gabriela’s modernist aesthetic and theatricality; one could almost imagine the flames of hell licking at Malinche’s feet. With their reverence now behind them, the choir punctuates the downbeats with a judgmental “mm,” sounding angry. During this moment, Malinche’s solo line sits in the top of the staff and ends near the bottom, her extreme range evoking the sounds of conflicted groans and screams.

The next section, marked “ansioso” (anxious) and demarcated by a huge thump of the bass drum, is where Malinche reenters and reveals the name history has branded her with: “La Malinche.” In her upper register, she sings her name in the "thirds motif," as if she is lamenting the very sound of her name. The choir is quick to respond with a scathing and mocking repetition of her name. This moment is interesting, as it is the first time the choir sings a word that isn’t Latin. They are responding to her. Because of this, it is possible to interpret that the choir and La Malinche are having a conversation, albeit an unpleasant one.

La Malinche goes on while the choir continues their judgmental “mms” until measure 135, when the choir goes silent at Malinche’s confession, “I did this for loving the enemy.” In that line it is made clear that Malinche was in love with Cortés, which is a dramatic choice by the librettist. We will most likely never know how she felt about Hernán Cortés, but her love for him in the piece gives an excuse for her faults. The orchestra builds to a climax, and once again is silenced by a bass drum, punctuating this revelatory dramatic moment.

While the tempo relaxes, most of the orchestra cuts out except for the percussion and trumpets. Malinche lets out a cry in measure 146, revealing a new color in the movement. The choir starts the requiem text once again on “Lux Aeterna,” in the same rhythmic pattern as in the previous section where they mocked Malinche. This time the voices are in a heavenly sounding cluster chord. These sections are tied together and are reminiscent of each other mainly by the repetition of rhythmic motifs.

As she laments in Nahuatl, asking if “bitterness and anguish are the destiny of the people on earth,” the orchestra and the choir, first her aggressors, seem to soften upon hearing Malinche speak her native language. The marking “in reverence” begins at measure 163, and the music once again becomes peaceful and evocative of the mountains. The piece moves to F# major, reminiscent of the B key where it started. The choir sings the words “Kyrie” in the “thirds motifs” and the orchestral parts resemble the beginning. The choir goes on to sing three repetitions of the “Kyrie eleison” as in a regular Catholic mass. This can be interpreted in a myriad of ways however, including, “have mercy on those who were murdered and enslaved,” “have mercy on the monsters that were driven by greed,” and “have mercy on La Malinche, for her transgressions against humanity” this last being my own personal viewpoint. This sympathetic view of a great mind, mother, and enslaved person forms the heart of this piece. The last dynamic gesture in this movement is the soprano solo line floating to a high A, bringing the movement to a peaceful close in A major. This serene ending provides a heavenly respite before the fiery “Judex ergo.”

Analysis of Movement II*. Judex Ergo cum sedebit*

Table 2. Text and translation of II. *Judex Ergo cum sedebit*

II. Judex Ergo	II. Judex Ergo
Choir	**Choir**
Judex ergo cum sedebit*[41] quidquid latet apparebit, nil inultum remanebit	When therefore the Judge takes His Seat whatever is hidden will reveal itself, nothing will remain unavenged.
Quis denique Martia orimus arcus voluscresque sagittas ignivit et edidit iras mortes stabilivit amaras**	Whoever fashioned first the bow, and flight of arrows, swift, secure, launched anger on the air and made the bitterness of death more sure.
Ingemisco tamquam reus.*	I groan like a guilty man.
Qui spicula cudit in usus, conflavit in incude funus**	Who tempered spearheads for their work, he breathed upon the anvil death.
Culpa rubet vultus meus.*	Guilt reddens my face.
Iamne tenuavit et ictus, ventris vacuaret ut hastus.**	He hammered out the slender blade, and from the body crushed the breath.
Ingemisco!*	I groan!
Solo baritone	**Solo Baritone**
Supplicant parce, Deus*	Spare a supplicant, O God

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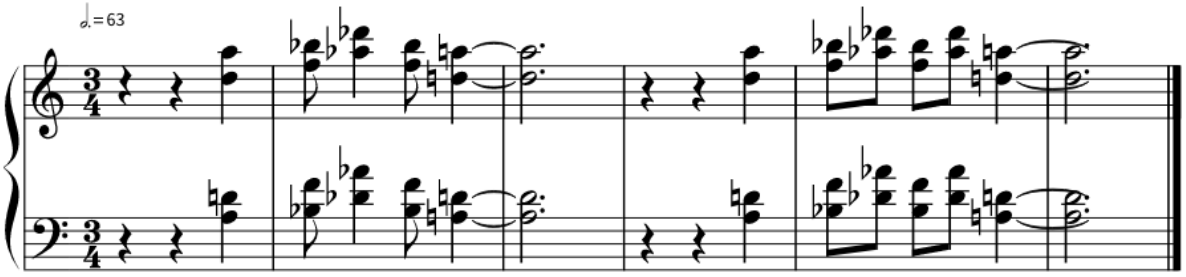
The initial orchestral melody in the woodwinds and xylophone consists of minor thirds and syncopated rhythms over a constant bass drum, reminiscent of war music, and repeated throughout the movement in variations.

[41] *Requiem Mass text, specifically from Liber Scriptus- skips to Ingemisco
**From Eugenius Vulgarius - 10th Century, 3&4 out of 5 verses “O Trista Secla Prioria”

Figure 3. Reduction of woodwinds and piano part in measures 8-13.



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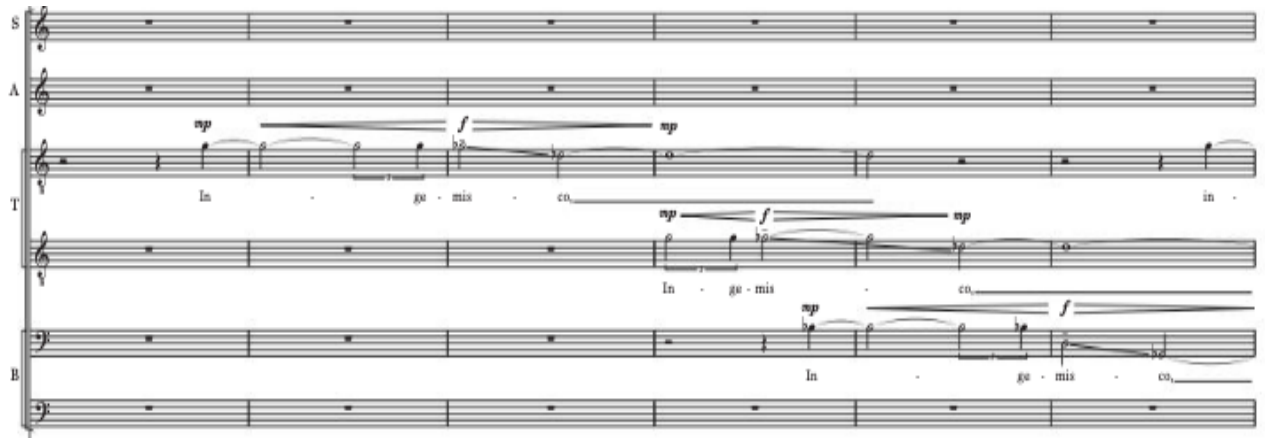
There are several “battles” that this movement could be about: reconciliation and the violence of conquest, war and peace, men and women, and Martín’s internal struggle, to name a few. The Latin text in this brisk movement is derived from two sources: the Dies Irae portion of the requiem mass, and tenth century texts by Eugenius Vulgaris from his poetry collection, “O Secla Prioria.” According to Frank, this was Cruz’s idea. The texts have a strong anti-violence sentiment and are interwoven with the requiem mass text to create a narrative of judgement upon those who commit violent acts. Looking at the piece as a whole, we can consider the subject of this judgement to be the conquistadors, the Spanish crown, the Spanish settlers, and others who supported the rape and subjugation of the Indigenous people of Mexico. The bass and tenor voices sing the requiem mass text about guilt and fear of the Judge, while the treble voices sing the Vulgaris text, which is condemning those who are violent and condone pain inflicted onto others. Frank sets these texts similarly and, if one is not familiar with the Requiem Mass, it can be very easy to miss that the texts are not from the same source. This choice of the treble voices singing the anti-violence Vulgaris text supports the trope of the pained mother, they represent the voice of a woman condemning the senseless acts of violence to mankind. In contrast,

the Catholic requiem texts are sung mostly by men, invoking the violent presence of the mostly male conquistadors.

The soundscape created by the xylophone, timpani, and bass drum is menacing, almost how one could imagine the judgement room hot seat might feel. The choir comes in, guns blazing at the “energético” (energetic) section at measure 40, singing the “judex ergo” text. Their entrances are staggered one beat off of one another, giving the sound of even more voices crying out in shame and guilt. This kind of choral writing is also present in the Mozart and Verdi requiems, much to the same effect. The section is repeated at measure 110; this time with the treble voices singing a similar musical passage with different text.

At measure 174, the woodwinds begin to introduce a new section in a flurry of triplet cadenzas that continue while the tenor and bass voices sing “Ingemisco” at measure 182, sliding to sound like a groan, as seen below:

Figure 4. Tenor and baritone lines, movement II, measure 182



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The women's voices return at measure 204 in the same fashion as they did before, but they are interrupted by the male voices singing "culpa rubet vultus meus" (guilt reddens my face). The male and female choruses combine, singing the same music from the previous sections, and the same text by Vulgarius. It seems the voices are responding to one another, no longer fighting each other to be heard. They all sing "ingemisco" together as Martín enters, singing in Latin, in his highest range, as if he was born screaming out of the earlier struggle, yet his first words are an apology to God. The baritone voice comes ringing out of the noise, begging to be spared, as he is already in despair. There is no pause between this movement and the next.

Analysis of movement III. *Dies Irae*

Table 3. Text and translation of III. *Dies Irae: Cuicatl de Martín*

III. Dies Irae: Cuicatl de Martín	Song of Martín
Choir	**Choir**
Dies irae,	Day of wrath,
dies illa solvet saeclum in favilla.	that day will dissolve the earth in ashes.
Quantus traemor est futurus	What dream there will be
quando judex est venturus	when the Judge shall come
cuncta stricte discussurus	to judge all things strictly
Mors slopebit et natora	Death and Nature shall be astonished
Cum resurget creatura	When all creation rises again
Judicanti responsura.	To answer to the Judge.
Baritone (Nahuatl)	**Baritone (Nahuatl)**
Ya neli cococ ye otimalihuico	Sorrow has sprung up
in motloc, monahuac, in Ipalemohua	near You and at your side, Giver of Life.
Choir	**Choir**
Yayyo, yyhue	Yyao, yyahue

Baritone
…Xochitecatl, Amaztecatl,
Tequantepehua, Chiltepehua!

Baritone (Spanish)
Poco a poco sin un horizonte,
voy conociendo el mundo.
Yo soy Martín Cortes,
el primer mestizo,
hijo de La Malinche, la traidora,
y Hernán el impostor.
(Nahuatl) Oc ceppa nozaloloz?

Choir
Quid sum miser tunc dicturus

Baritone
Quen quinequi noyollo,

Choir
quem patronum togaturus,

Baritone
Ipalnemohuani?

Choir
cum viz Justus sit securus

Baritone
…Xochitecans, Amxtecans,
Tecuantepecans, Chiltepecans!

Baritone
Bit by bit without a horizon,
I get to know the world.
I am Martín Cortes,
the first mestizo,
son of La Malinche, the traitor,
and Hernán, the deceiver.
Will I as a frieze have a place in existence?

Choir
What then shall I say, wretch that I am,

Baritone
How do you decide your heart

Choir
What advocate entreat to speak for me,

Baritone
Life Giver?

Choir
when even the righteous may hardly be secure?

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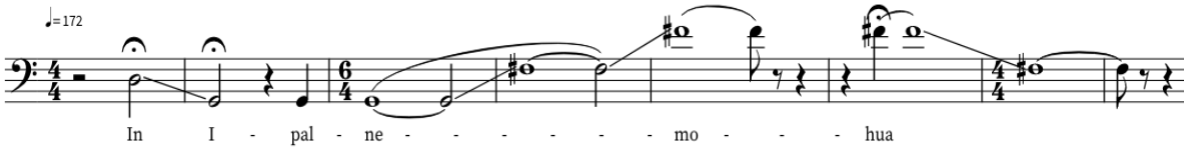
A hit of the bass drum begins a steady ostinato line of marimbas, sounding like a dramatic chase scene from a Hollywood film. The woodwinds ascend and accent the offbeats, which gives the “chase scene” music a suspenseful and agitated tone. The instruments join together in a large buildup, until the music arrives at the “brillante” section in measure 37, climaxing with the blaring of horns, signaling change. The “chase scene” music dissipates, and the music suddenly resembles that of a grand, palatial setting. Since this is the “Cuicatl (song) de Martín,” this music could signify Martín’s travel to the afterlife, and his arrival to the place of judgement. The staccato

attacks on the downbeats provide a chilling uncertainty as to what will happen next, and in measure 46 the choir sneaks in on a quiet dynamic and quickly builds with a strong crescendo at the end of the phrase.

The choir's hushed entrance is quite different from the choral line in the Verdi *Requiem*, which contains what is likely the most well-recognized *Dies Irae* in music history, yet Frank's version contains all of the menace and fear of Verdi's version. Frank's *Dies Irae* portrays a contained anger and judgement, and the anxiety within the movement is created by the snare drum and choir, which sings at the speaking register all in unison, like people chanting. The snare drum becomes prominently bone-chilling through the playing of a rhythm known as the drumroll pattern of an executioner while the choir's rhythms pick up in speed. The tension is temporarily relieved by the vocal entrance of Martín, singing in Nahuatl, even though the choir hisses some judgmental "Yyao, yyhues"[42] under his plea. [43] As Gabriela told me in our interview, Martín's vocal range, much like La Malinche's, is extreme, indicating the tension within his identity as a *mestizo,* a seen below:

Figure 5. Baritone Soloist, movement III, measures 103-110



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[42] An untranslatable Nahua interjection- very close to a judgmental "mhm".

[43] This is interesting, because there is no evidence of Martín ever actually speaking Nahuatl in his adult life. It is possible his mother spoke to him in Nahuatl, but he did not see her after he left for Spain with his father when he was 5 years old. It is symbolically important that he speak Nahuatl in this piece, to further identify him as a mestizo.

Martin continues to sing in Nahuatl while the choir takes a more passive and pleading tone, as if they are soothed by hearing the Nahuatl language, echoing back to when Malinche sang in Nahuatl in the first movement. The character of the choir could be seen as the personification of the murdered Native Mexicans. If that was the intention, it is curious that they do not sing the Nahuatl text.[44] Just as the Mexicans adopted the Spanish language and religion, it seems like the choir, these "souls of the dead," have been stripped of their culture. It is a harsh reminder of the cultural genocide that occurred and continues to occur in the wake of the conquistadors' actual genocide of the Native Mexican population.

The repetition of "Ipalnemohuani" (life giver) at the end by Martín gives us space consider all of his "life givers:" the native Mexicans that died because of his mother and father, his conquistador father, his abuse-surviving mother, and his Catholic and Native gods. Martín names some of the decimated tribes from the conquest, and the music surges in energy, the choir and orchestral regain their angry color. The "chase music" begins again, this time with Martín speaking of his creators and questioning his place in history. The choir's "Dies Irae" music returns on the verse starting with "quid sum miser tunc dicturus", and the interchange between the choir and Martín in this final section of the movement seems to impose a direct challenge to the audience. To reiterate the translation of the verse, the choir sings: "What then shall I say, wretch that I am, what advocate entreat to speak for me, when even the

[44] Composer's note: "I actually decided to do this first for practical reasons – I felt that, if necessary, I could work with the soloists on the pronunciation, which might be harder for me to do with the choir for limited access. But if this Requiem had been, say, an evening-length requiem rather than a half-evening's length, it is quite possible I would have included movements in Nahuatl for the choir."

righteous may hardly be secure?" Meanwhile, Martín sings "Will I as a frieze have a place in existence? How do you decide your heart, Life Giver?" If we interpret the choir as murdered Native Mexicans in this movement, it appears the choir is asking Martín (and the audience by proxy) to listen to and defend marginalized voices. Martín is at the crux of his emotional journey at this point. As a *mestiza*, this piece provokes me to ask myself: what is my responsibility, since I am born from this conflict, and how has it affected how I live my everyday life?

Analysis of Movement IV. *Recordare*

Table 4. Text and translation of IV. *Recordare*

IV. Recordare, Jesu Pie	
Choir	**Choir**
Recordare, Jesu pie, quod sum causa tuae viae. Ne me perdia ilia die.	Remember, blessed Jesus, that I am the cause of Thy pilgrimage. Do not forsake me on that day.

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After the Dies Irae, this brief movement is a moment of reflection and solace for the listener. Much like the *recordare* movements in the Verdi and Britten requiems, only the treble voices are used, and as Gabriela said in our interview, "the higher voices are closer to the angels in heaven."[45] The pentatonic scale in the harp solo at the opening is evocative of quasi-Andean music. The flutes and the clarinets trill and sound like the quena, an Indigenous flute. This meditative opening allows space for the sopranos to float in, like a choir of angels. Their three lines are delivered over the

[45] Zoom interview 10/15

same musical material, except that with each new line of text the music is a step higher, as if the choir is ascending to heaven. La Malinche sings the last line, below the staff, perhaps indicating that she is not ready to ascend to heaven with the angels and still needs time to work things out on earth. Heaven is disrupted with another attacca to the next movement.

Analysis of movement V. *Rex Tremendae:*

Table 5. Text and translation of V. *Rex Tremendae:* El aullido de Malinche

V. Rex Tremendae: El aullido de Malinche	**The Howl of Malinche**
Soprano (Spanish) ¡Si solo pudiera cegar mis ojos! Yo, la Malinche, he sido testigo del rapto, del robo de mi tierra. ¡Tenochtitlan, mi ciudad!	**Soprano** If only I could blind my eyes! I, La Malinche, have witnessed the rape, the theft of my land. Tenochtitlan, my city!
¡Si solo pudiera retraer mis pasos! En barcos, se llevan el oro, y dejan atras un remolino…	If only I could retract my steps! In vessels, the bandits take the gold and leave behind a whirlwind…
Choir Rex tremendae…	**Choir** King of awful…
Soprano …de humo…	**Soprano** …of smoke…
Choir …majestatis…	**Choir** …majesty…
Soprano …y ceniza.	**Soprano** …and ash.
Choir …qui salvandos salvas gratis, Salve me, fons pietatis.	**Choir** …who freely savest the redeemed, save me, O fount of goodness.

Soprano (Spanish)	**Soprano**
Venid a escuchar el silencio! ¿Cómo pueden mirar a su Díos después de ver esta tierra arada por la traición?	Come hear the silence! Who can gaze at their God after seeing this land plowed by treason?

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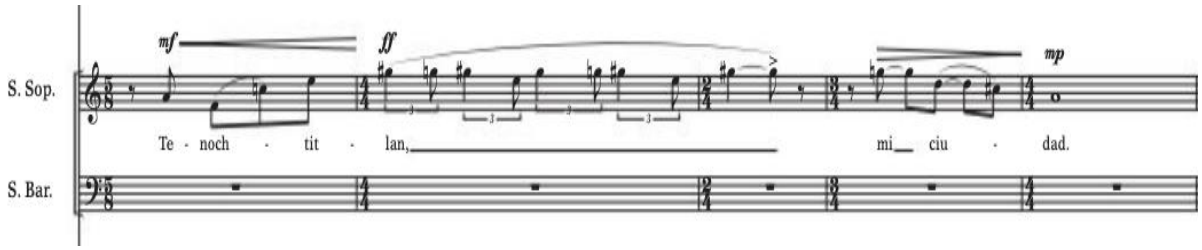
The woodwinds descend from the previous movement back to the range of the human voice and then much below it, signaling a dark emotional state. In this “Rex tremendae,” there is no “king” to be spoken of in sight; only Malinche and her guilty conscience tormenting her. The tempo marking “abandonada” in measure 6 gives a clue about Malinche’s mental state during this movement: she is abandoned, unwilling to go on to the underworld, and unwilling to find peace in the afterlife, because of her guilt surrounding her transgressions against humanity. This aria-like opening is when she is truly coming to grips with the absolute damage that she helped to bring about. This is a marked contrast from the first movement, where she simply was questioning her guilt. The heavy vocal line is contrapuntal with the bass clarinet, bassoon, French horn, and trumpets all in the same range, mirroring her depressed mood, while strings punctuate and heighten her melody. Once again the composer uses extremities in range to signal personal conflict.

As her line becomes more dramatic and higher in the register, Malinche cries out “Tenochtitlan” using the sobbing rhythm, as seen blow:

Figure 6. Movement V. Rex Tremendae, Soprano Solo line Measures 20-24



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In measure 44, the choir enters singing “rex tremendae,” which in this libretto has been translated to “king of awful” instead of the usual “king of tremendous majesty.” This “king of awful” could refer to the Spanish royalty, or to the unnamed king and conqueror of the new world, Cortés. In this movement, the choir appears to represent Malinche’s subconscious, as they are asking to be saved while she toils in her own guilt. Yet as she says “listen to the silence”, the choir repeats her words instead of responding, showing how alone she truly is. Like the echo of a sound in a room, the choir mocks her by whispering and repeating the last syllable “ción” of the word *traición* (betrayal). The movement ends quietly with some curious and light percussion, suspending the energy. It would seem that there is no resolution to Malinche’s problems quite yet.

Analysis of VI. *Confutatis Maledictis*

Table 6. Text and translation of VI. *Confutatis Maledictis*

VI. Confutatis maledictis	VI. Confutatis maledictis
Choir	**Choir**
Confutatis maledictis flammis acribus addictis, voca me cum benedictis.	When the accursed have been thwarted and given over to the bitter flames, call me with the blessed.
Baritone	**Baritone**
Oro supplex et acclinis	I pray in supplication on my knees

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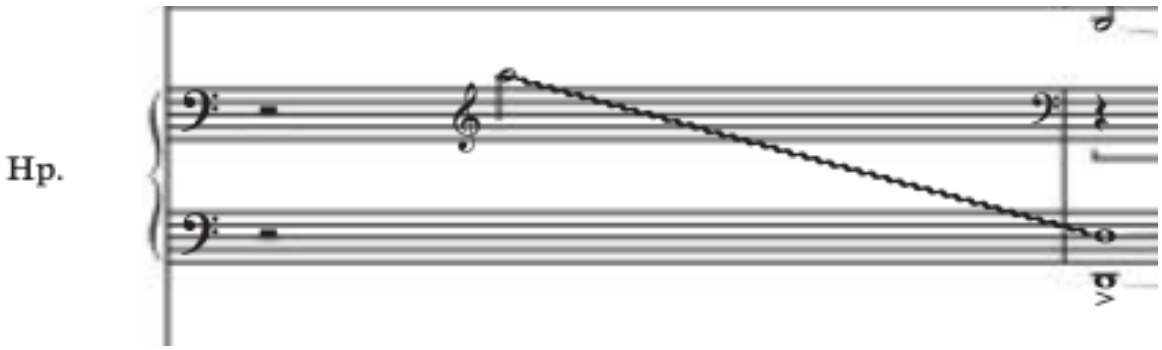
This sixth movement, “Confutatis Maledictis,” is the shortest, and segues directly into the final movement. The texture of the first measure is sparse, yet suspended on the string section’s held chord, creating a mysterious mood. The choir sings in unison like a responsorial, as the music erupts into sudden nothingness. There are two waves of these pianissimos and sudden fortissimos in the orchestra and choir, sounding like a captured beast that still has some fight left in it. At the choir’s third entrance on the words “flammis acribus” Gabriela’s sweeping vocal writing returns with large intervals and harmonies, breaking away from the Gregorian “liturgical” sound evoke the effect of fire and brimstone. The large intervals played by the harp in the opening measures of this movement soon appear in many places, especially in the vocal line:

Figure 7. Movement VI. Measure 16-17 harp



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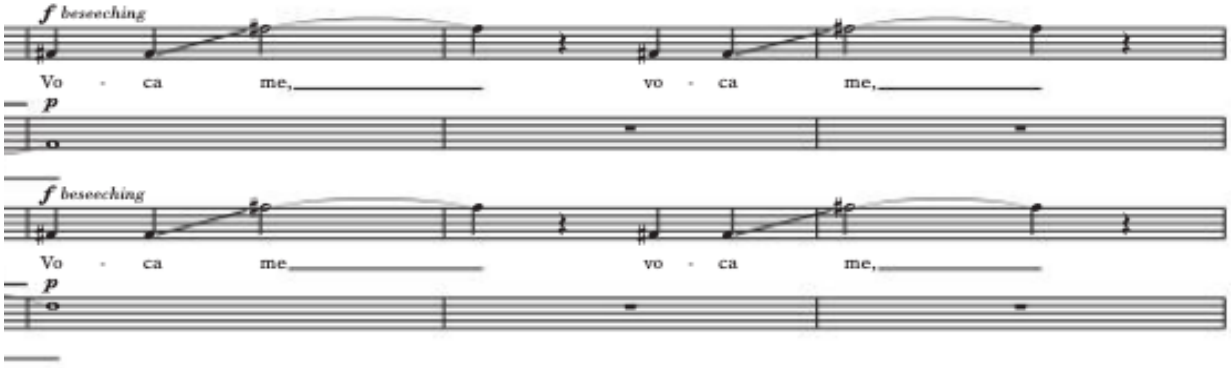
In Figure 8. measures 21-22, the soprano and tenors sing “vocame” in unison, in a huge gesture sweeping up, marked “beseeching.”



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The music seems distant while the choir cries out, begging to be called. Martin enters singing “oro,” very similarly to Malinche in the previous movement; except this time Martín is speaking Latin, where “oro” means “pray,” while Malinche’s “oro” meant gold. This movement is about forgiveness thwarting bitterness. Divine redemption could be possible, even for La Malinche and. The choir seems to continue to portray

the character of the murdered, and Martín bows down to them in supplication. Attacca to the next movement.

Analysis of VII. *In Paradisum*:

Table 7. Text and translation of VII. *In Paradisum*

VII. In Paradisum: Bendición de Malinche y Martín

Baritone and Soprano (Spanish) Sagrados son los que vienen a ver sus Muertos.	**Baritone and soprano** Blessed are those who come to see their dead.
Choir In paradisum deducant te angeli.	**Choir** May the angels lead thee into paradise.
Soprano Vienen con la Lluvia con los labios heridos por el nombre del enemigo.	**Soprano** They arrive with the rain, with their lips wounded by the name of the enemy.
Baritone (Nahuatl) Tel ca chalchihuitl no xamani, no teocuitlatl in tlapani.	**Baritone** Even jades fracture even gold ruptures.
Choir Requiescant in pace.	**Choir** Rest in peace.
All Amen.	**All** Amen

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The piece ends like a traditional Requiem mass on a version of “In Paradisum." The marimbas gently emerge out of sync with one another in F# minor, and La Malinche and Martín sing the same text, echoing one another and repeating the words “vienen” and “aver.” The back-and-forth repetition of “aver” sounds very much like the

word “ave,” as in “Ave Maria,” and sounds like a shared prayer between La Malinche and Martín. This text, “blessed are those who come to see their dead,” seems evocative of Día de los Muertos. This would be appropriate as Día de los Muertos is a day for remembering and honoring one's ancestors. In the opening, Martín and La Malinche sing accompanied by only soft percussion. The choir and the rest of the orchestra softly enter in measure 33, the choir singing on “mm’s”, emulating the sound of gentle raindrops, and then moving on to sing the “thirds motif,” which brings the piece full circle. In measure 43 La Malinche sings, “they come with the rain, their lips wounded by the name of the enemy”, after that the choir begins to sing their Latin text. This beautiful moment appears to be an homage to the purity of nature and to the Nahua people, who worshipped nature and were the ones wounded by their enemies

This movement relays an offering to the lives lost in the conquest, so that they will never be forgotten. It marks the first time La Malinche and Martín are singing together in this piece, indicating a change in setting, even if the opening “thirds” motif and the general music material from the first movement are being used. Since we have returned to musical material from the first movement, there is a sense of a completed journey, almost like a successful transition to the afterlife. After a lifetime of being apart, Martín and Malinche, mother and son, are united at last, which is a heaven in itself.

The choir’s angelic character seems to arise in response to Martín and Malinche’s reunion. A mother and a son together again have risen to remind the audience of their devastating chapter in this world’s violent history. The piece’s commentary on the conquest and on greed comes through in Martín’s lines in

measure 56, where he says in Nahuatl, “Even jade fractures, even gold ruptures.” This line quite blatantly rejects the material greed of the conquistadors and the Spanish crown that funded them. This piece could be considered a metaphor for many things: countries and dynasties becoming wealthy by decimating their poor, the greedy destruction of the earth and nature, and all destruction done in the name of profit.

Chapter 4: *Mestizaje*, Britten and ethics

This final chapter reflects on the *Conquest Requiem*'s usage of poetry in combination with the requiem text and compares it to Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem.* Further, I argue that this mixture of poetry in the *Conquest Requiem* is an act of *mestizaje* in adherence to the ideas of the Peruvian novelist, poet and anthropologist José María Arguedas (1911-1969). Frank's compact requiem draws from many musical, historical and ideological influences, yet her distinct creative voice lends to a robust and individual interpretation of the requiem.

Frank's requiem is not simply titled "Requiem" with an added dedication inscribed to lives lost in the conquest. The piece is purposefully titled *Conquest Requiem.* Its title precisely sets precedence for an open interpretation of what a requiem is. Intended for a concert premiere with the Houston Symphony,[46] the *Conquest Requiem* contains the Latin texts from the requiem mass in combination with other texts, along with the idea of a requiem. This means that that the piece was not intended for ceremonial purposes or to memorialize a contemporary figure, as was the case in the Britten and Verdi requiems. Due to the requiem mass texts being combined with Nahuatl and Spanish poetry, the piece cannot be used and was not intended for liturgical use.

It seems that there is an assumed universality about the idea, title, or texts of a requiem that lends a particular power to such a piece, especially if it is connected to

[46] Wei-Huan Chen, "Houston Symphony Debuts Gabriela Lena Frank's Multicultural 'Conquest Requiem,'" HoustonChronicle.com, May 6, 2017, https://www.houstonchronicle.com/entertainment/music/article/Houston-Symphony-debuts-Frank-s-multicultural-11126772.php.

a political context.[47] In general, there seems to be a tradition of using the requiem as a marker of national or language identity, a famous example being Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem.* In the twentieth century, with Britten and others, as well as in the twenty-first century in the case of the *Conquest Requiem,* it seems that the requiem has often been used as a political work in the concert setting. Gabriela Frank draws from the significance of the requiem title and texts to commemorate the Aztecs, La Malinche, and the symbolic nature of Martín the *mestizo* in the *Conquest Requiem.*

Frank draws on Britten's influence, specifically the biting use of Wilfred Owen's poetry in his requiem, through her combination of different languages and texts. The main difference here is that Frank added a third poet and language - the Spanish prose by Nilo Cruz. Each language takes on a different role in communicating with the audience. The Nahuatl text seems to be about virtue or truth, the Spanish text is generally about remorse, and the Latin is the neutral canvas that mirrors the lines with which it is juxtaposed, revealing similar sentiments or, at times, stark irony.

In the first movement, the Latin transliteration of the Greek text directly following the lines "Are bitterness and anguish the destiny of the people on this earth" (sung in Nahuatl) is "Kyrie Eleison. Christe Eleison. Kyrie Eleison", which appears to be a direct response to the previous line, as it is a plea for salvation, perhaps from the fate of bitterness and anguish mentioned right before.

In movement five, "Rex Tremendae: El aullido de Malinche," La Malinche cries in Spanish, "If only I could blind my eyes! I, La Malinche, have witnessed the rape, the theft of my land. Tenochtitlan, my city!" This clear expression of guilt is answered by

[47] This notion was brought up by my advisor, Dr. Derek Katz.

the chorus singing lines from the rex tremendae section of the requiem, “King of awful...majesty...who freely safest the redeemed, save me, O fount of goodness”. Their response is ironic, as nothing, not even guilt, can save and redeem the city of Tenochtitlan, although the choir is simply reciting the text from the requiem. This masterful collocation of texts is present throughout the requiem and brings the drama to a head.

The words of Owen, “All a poet can do is warn,”[48] prove relevant when examining Frank’s use of the ancient Nahua poetry by Aztec princes in the piece, in particular the lines from movement one: “Are bitterness and anguish the destiny of the people of the earth” and from movement seven: “Even jades fracture, even gold ruptures” contain references to societal issues of racism and violence caused by greed, which are still extremely relevant today. It is as if these ancient poets were cognizant of the future issues that would arise from the conquest; further, it is possible that we could apply those same lines as warnings about contemporary issues such as systemic racism and climate change caused by industrial greed.

Mestizaje

In his essay *Britten’s Dubious Trysts*, Lloyd Whitsell states that “the choice of a major establishment genre in which to couch the powerful message of pacifism might be explained as a strategy, perhaps unconscious, to gain acceptance” for, in short, Britten’s sexual identity.[49] I use the same logic to argue that Frank uses the idea

[48] “Wilfred Owen,” Oxford Reference, accessed November 27, 2020, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780191843730.001.0001/q-oro-ed5-00008073.
[49] Whitesell, Lloyd, “Britten’s Dubious Trysts - ProQuest,” accessed November 21, 2020, https://search-proquest-com.proxy.library.ucsb.edu:9443/docview/936459.

of a requiem and the texts of the requiem to uphold the intimate yet separate encounters between the three languages of Spanish, Nahuatl and Latin, and does so in order to display the ethical force of the *mestizo* perspective. According to José María Arguedas, *mestizaje* refers to a positive cultural hybridization that maintains individual differences in peaceful coexistence.[50] This definition is prevalent in the synthesis of influences of Gabriela Frank's compositions, especially the *Conquest Requiem*.

> **"Arguedas argued for a reconceptualization of the nation as mestizo and the valorization of traditions inspired by native culture. Politics, identity and the discourse of *mestizaje* are thus closely linked in his intellectual project of redefining the nation, advocating social justice and emphasizing the innovative cultural developments that lend to a nation a specificity situated between western and autochthonous cultures. "[51]**

In the following quote below by Gabriela, we can see how Arguedas' philosophies feed into her own:

> **"I realized that I had found my mission… I wanted to, in a very general way, be as *mestiza* in my music as I was in my person: I'm multiracial, I'm multicultural, and I think that that's something**

[50] Richard A. Young and Stephen M. Hart, *Contemporary Latin American Cultural Studies*, xiii, 348 p. (London : New York: Arnold ; Distributed in the United States of America by Oxford University Press, 2003), //catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/004376591.
[51] Young and Hart.

deeply American. I love my country, and I'm surrounded by daughters and sons of immigrants that contribute and work hard — that was uppermost in my mind then, and in the course of recent events in our country it's uppermost in my mind now. It's something that has become more urgent in my work as a musician, not less so." [52]

Gabriela's trilingual homage to the genocide of the Aztecs, the subjugation of La Malinche, and Martín the *mestizo*'s birth is in itself an act of *mestizaje,* because the text from the requiem mass is combined with Indigenous poetry and Spanish written word from contemporary *mestizos*. Although the piece ends on a relatively hopeful note, the work as a whole does not encourage amnesia of the horrifying past and the still colonized circumstances of most Indigenous peoples in Mexico and elsewhere, since it constantly references the severe damage La Malinche's assistance to Hernán Cortés caused an entire population.

Another factor in this requiem's *mestizaje* are the movement titles, which are a conflation of the three languages, setting a steady precedent for the mixture of cultural and musical language. Another clear example of cultural mixture lies in the piece's European symphonic orchestration, which is bejeweled with syncopated dance rhythms associated with Afro-Latin music and tonalities borrowed from Indigenous music. The success and beauty of this piece proves that, in deft and responsible

[52] Dayton Hare, "Life Outside the Golden Cage: Composer Gabriela Lena Frank in Profile," The Michigan Daily, accessed April 9, 2020, https://www.michigandaily.com/section/arts/life-outside-golden-cage-composer-gabriela-lena-frank-profile.

hands, a unique and beautiful art form can come from the harmonious relationship between several cultural influences. Gabriela's years of study in both the Western European classical compositional school, as well as her own personal ethnographic work, allow her to tap into several musical and cultural influences in order to create her own unique musical language.

The conquest was a tragedy in its genocide of an entire group of peoples including Aztecs and Incas. The message of positivity within the piece comes not from erasure, but from an attempt to make peace with what has already happened, and to find a silver lining. The silver lining is the creation of a new culture of peoples, the mestizos, who in general, are those with Indigenous and European descent. According to Arguedas, *mestizaje* is positive, in contrast with indigenists who rue the day the conqueror ever set foot on Indian land. Arguedas often mentioned that the *mestizos'* position allowed them to develop innovative practices in music, dance, and the visual arts.[53] The consequences of the conquest were severe, but *mestizaje* can teach us to accept all parts of our backgrounds in order to create a more beautiful and interesting world. A good example is Gabriela, who relies not only on her Peruvian roots as a cultural landscape to draw upon musically, but on her general Latinidad as well as her Chinese, Lithuanian, and Jewish roots to establish herself as a citizen of the world. It is important to note that having genetic connections does not preserve culture- community and scholarship do.[54] Frank uses her ethnic background as a

[53] Young and Hart, *Contemporary Latin American Cultural Studies*.

[54] Nicolas Lell Benavides, "Out of Context #8: Privilege and Creative Consequence," Text, I CARE IF YOU LISTEN, August 26, 2020, World, https://www.icareifyoulisten.com/2020/08/out-of-context-8-privilege-and-creative-consequence/.

starting point to learn about, preserve, and promote the things she has gathered for the betterment of herself and those around her.

Irony/Reappropriation

The irony of the *Conquest Requiem* using a traditionally Catholic ritual as a model is quite interesting, as a large part of the cultural genocide during the conquest included not only murder but also religious indoctrination. During my interview with the composer, I brought up this point, to which she replied that yes, it is ironic, but the *Conquest Requiem* is a reappropriation of the requiem mass. Catholicism is the main religion of the *mestizos* and *Indios* in Latin America today, Latinxs making up 40% of the world's Catholic population.[55] From 1900-1960, 90% of Latin Americans identified as Catholic.[56] Not only are many Latin Americans Catholic, but certain groups within Latin America have slightly changed their interpretation of the Catholic religion by combining some of their own pagan traditions into worship, such as the practices of Santeria and the veneration of La Virgen de Guadalupe.

Mestizaje is a form of pacifism that stands in direct opposition to the violence and cultural genocide of the conquest. Through their actions the conquistadors made clear that they believed that everyone's cultural identities could not coexist, so they subjugated *Indios* by indoctrinating them into Catholicism. Perhaps the use of the Catholic ritual is a rebuff of the ritual itself: the religion that *Indios* were forced to

[55] 1615 L. St NW, Suite 800 Washington, and DC 20036 USA202-419-4300 | Main202-419-4349 | Fax202-419-4372 | Media Inquiries, "Religion in Latin America," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), November 13, 2014, https://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/.
[56] NW, Washington, and Inquiries.

convert to has now been reappropriated to memorialize the indigenous peoples of Mexico by the use of their own native language. In movement three, the *Dies Irae,* Martín names “princes who perished,” which were the “Xochitecans, Amaxtecans, Tecuantepecans, Chiltepecans!” The memorialization of Mexican indigenous peoples within the *Conquest Requiem* goes beyond the Aztecs, as Martín names specific tribes, some of which were subjugated by the Aztecs themselves.

Frank dramatically critiques the position of La Malinche, who played a key role in the success of the conquest yet offers her reconciliation after death by reuniting La Malinche with her son. This reconciliation after the grave is another similarity between *Conquest Requiem* and the Britten *War Requiem,* as the enemy soldiers reconcile with one another in the afterlife. The way the piece is constructed commemorates La Malinche and Martín, naming them as soloists in the score and centering their characters’ journey throughout the requiem. Given that La Malinche and Martin are not widely mentioned in historical documents surrounding the conquest, this piece extends the history of their lives to those who listen to the piece. As a result, the *Conquest Requiem* also serves as a memorial for them. La Malinche is forgiven by her people, the *Indios*, who are represented by the choir during the majority of the piece. This is similar to the two enemy soldiers who see themselves in one another and reconcile after death in the Britten *War Requiem*.

It can also be noted that a central belief in the Catholic religion is the forgiveness of past transgressions to live in eternal peace after death. *Conquest Requiem* is a dramatic retelling of La Malinche’s past and afterlife. The piece takes creative license to imagine what she may have thought about her role in the conquest.

La Malinche, who was a victim of slavery and sexual abuse, and her son Martín, the *mestizo,* are both forgiven after death in the piece, while Hernán Cortés is not even present. Malinche's redemption and assumed ascension into heaven sets a precedent for the audience: One can make mistakes and still be forgiven. It is interesting to note that this very Catholic ideal is at the heart of this piece, even though the piece is not intended to be part of a religious ritual, per se.

Martín's role in the piece, much like his *mestizo* heritage, is quite fluid. Most of Martín's Spanish text is about indecisiveness or guilt. He is given importance in the piece because he is the symbol of the new *mestizo* race, even if in his actual life he lived as an upper-class Spanish aristocrat with his father, with no mention of taking pride in his Indigenous roots. Martín left for Spain as a toddler, and never heard from his mother again, and historical documents do not mention anything about him being able to speak in Nahuatl; yet in the *Conquest Requiem,* he is able to speak it. It seems that it is important that he speaks Nahuatl in the piece, to establish his connection to La Malinche and his Indigenous roots. Martín's seemingly tortured character within the piece lies in the line of the *Dies Irae,* sung in Nahuatl, "How do you decide your heart, Life Giver?" His own "Life Givers" were paternally a rapist and enslaver and maternally an enslaved woman turned deceiver and traitor. Martín acts like a guilty man in the requiem, begging for forgiveness even in death. This may be attributed to his parents, including the mother he only knew in infancy. His tortured soul is reminiscent of a figure like Jesus, belonging to both the heavens and the earth. Martín could be a representation of Jesus, as Martín belongs to both the Nahua people and the "sinful" Spanish conquistadors.

Conclusion

The history behind this composition must be wrestled with; there is no simple salve of adding Latinidad to a composition in order to gain cultural recognition within the classical music canon. This composition and the performance of it, is a form of protest against the ideals of white supremacy and of greed. It is a rebuttal to those who believe that some groups of people are above others, and that people should be subjugated to serve the greed of the conqueror.

This piece is a testament to the horrors caused by the conquistadors, including the genocide of the Indigenous peoples of Mexico, yet it also related to broader issues facing society today. The conquest accelerated the industrial revolution, as Europe gained an entirely new enslaved workforce as well as material goods now at their disposal. This can be regarded as the first seeds of our current climate crisis. In several interviews, Frank has mentioned that the responsibility of the artist, especially the composer, is to be a cultural witness. Frank wrote about a moment in history when morality was swept under the table to get some gold and some sugar cane, and the American election of 2016 is another iteration of this moral failing. The composer has set out a warning for the audience by writing the *Conquest Requiem.*

The piece, although about a heavy and complex subject, does not end on a "doom and gloom" note. It ends in a peaceful major tonal center, which invites the listener to reflect. With the final lines, "blessed are those who come to see their dead", the piece strikes me as an invitation to the listeners from the lives lost in the conquest saying, "do more". On the website www.icareifyoulisten, a student of Ms. Frank's,

Nicolas Lell Benavides, mentions several inequities in the classical music sphere and beyond that exist right now, in 2020:

> **According to The Institute for Policy Studies, households of color will reach majority status by 2043, yet the median white family today has $116k in assets compared to the median Latino family's $2k and the median Black family's $1.7k (which is on track to have *zero* by 2053). Black and Hispanic children are five and eight times as likely, respectively, as white children to be hospitalized for COVID-19. The total number of orchestral players of color combined at elite institutions amounts to less than 15%.**[57]

I mention this quote with the intention of stating the obvious: there is much more to be done in terms of racial, social, and economic equity. Gabriela Lena Frank is an artist who has empowered other artists through her music, her institute, and her mentorship, guiding them in making this world a more beautiful and equitable place.

Reception and closing thoughts

Below are a few of the highlighted quotes from WiseClassical's list of reviews for the premiere of the *Conquest Requiem:*

> **"Frank's music in this mostly somber, brooding work is predominantly tonal and punctuated with striking rhythmic and coloristic touches and**

[57] Lell Benavides, "Out of Context #8."

instrumental combinations.”- William Albright, Classical Voice North America, 14th May 2017

“Frank's "Conquest Symphony," with a libretto by Pulitzer Prize-winner Nilo Cruz, took Latin American culture beyond a mere theme or niche. It was, if not political, grounded in the belief that history must be wrestled with.” Wei-Huan Chen, Houston Chronicle, 7th May 2017

“The music shows a brilliant musical mind seeking an ideal combination of sounds to express emotions or to illuminate the text. The variety of the scoring is both fascinating and captivating…” -Lawrence Wheeler, Texas Classical Review, 6th May 2017 [58]

Although it was programmed before intermission, the *Conquest Requiem* was received with standing ovations the three times it was performed during the weekend of May 5th, 2017. The soprano soloist, Jessica Rivera, was lauded for her poignant and masterful performance. The baritone soloist had to pull out due to illness after the world premiere, so his solos were split and performed by talented choristers of the Houston Symphony Orchestra. The piece would have been professionally recorded by the Nashville Symphony in March 2020, but the recording has been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

When this piece is performed again[59], it is my wish that its message of optimism for the future through decisive action continues to resonate. I hope that people are

[58] “Conquest Requiem | Gabriela Lena Frank,” accessed May 27, 2020, https://www.wisemusicclassical.com/work/56843/Conquest-Requiem--Gabriela-Lena-Frank/.

[59] I half-jokingly mentioned to Gabriela that performing this piece yearly as a “Thanksgiving tradition” would be a wonderful way to commemorate the “holiday”. She laughed and agreed.

inspired to research further into their colonial history, and to do their best to keep history from repeating itself.

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October 27, 2020

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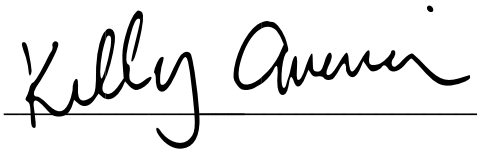
By: 

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