

ALUM SNAPSHOTS

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Dinorah Márquez

FLYING ON THE WINGS OF MUSIC

When Dinorah Márquez wanted to evoke the sounds of a rainforest for the play "On the Wings of a Mariposa," she returned to her native Mexico. There, she found the pre-Columbian instruments that make the play's pivotal scene chirp and sway with haunting authenticity.

"I was just taken away," says Alvaro Saar Rios, the UWM associate professor who wrote the play for Milwaukee's First Stage children's theater and brought Márquez into the project. "She definitely has the instincts of a composer."

Márquez is new to composing but not to music. She earned a master's degree in viola performance and string pedagogy from UWM, and she created and directs the Latino Arts Strings Program at Milwaukee's United Community Center. That award-winning youth group, which once played for former President Barack Obama, performed the play's score.

Márquez immigrated to Texas with her family when she was 10 years old, and music became more than a refuge. "Music saved my life," says Márquez, and she wants it to do the same for others. She proposed a strings program to the UCC after seeing "a bunch of little kids like me, either children of immigrants or immigrant children for whom I knew music could make a huge difference."

Her program celebrates Latino heritage through the study of diverse musical genres, including classical European and Latin American music. Márquez's teens now play the same rancheras, parrandas and tangos their parents know and love, keeping their culture vibrant. 🌺 — Silvia Acevedo

"On the Wings of a Mariposa" runs Oct. 18 through Nov. 10 at First Stage. For more information, visit firststage.org.

Rios photo courtesy of Joe Mazza - Brave Lux



Alvaro Saar Rios