

FWSO disc 'Inti' brings little-known Peruvian compositions to light

By CHRIS SHULL / Special to dfw.com



Over several years of scholarly research and musical detective work, Miguel Harth-Bedoya has compiled an impressive stash of symphonic music by composers from South America. He has also championed the composition of new works by South American composers.

Under the banner *Caminos del Inka*, which means "Inca Trails" or "Roads of the Incas," Harth-Bedoya performs his South American musical discoveries with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and during guest-conducting assignments around the world.

Now some of this music is available on CD. *Inti* ("sun") features six pieces by Peruvian composers played by the Fort Worth orchestra and recorded at Bass Hall during concerts in 2008. The CD was released this month on FWSO Live, the orchestra's in-house music label.

Spanning three centuries, these compositions are fresh, inventive and full of character — graced with lilting rhythms and picturesque orchestra colors. Each piece brims with the personality of its composer. The works may not always stand up against masterpieces by Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms, but Harth-Bedoya has brought to light music largely unknown to those who live north of the equator. The performances — and this recording — showcase an important cultural legacy.

Every note on *Inti* is polished with Harth-Bedoya's commitment to this music, and his familiarity with its history and idioms. Leading off the CD is Enrique Iturriaga's Sinfonia "Junin y Ayacucho: 1824," inspired by the climactic battle in Peru's war of independence against Spain. The 26-minute work, in four movements, is epic and noble, full of jaunty marches and soaring phrases. Iturriaga, 91, attended the performances recorded here; he was Harth-Bedoya's music teacher in Lima.

The oldest selections on *Inti* are three dances by Baltasar Martinez y Companon from the late 1700s. He wedded a clear classical style to the lively rhythms of Peruvian folk dance; the suite is gracious and charming.

Two compositions represent Harth-Bedoya's commitment to up-and-coming composers. *Elegia Andina* by Gabriela Frank is a dramatic, tension-filled work given a shimmering performance by the orchestra. *Fiesta!* by Jimmy Lopez is full of brassy shouts, bubbling percussion and syncopated full-orchestra rumbles. The music's sound and energy sometimes recall Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* dances. By turns brash and coolly luxurious, *Fiesta!* is vital, vigorous music, exciting and engaging across its four movements.

The CD expands the audience for these live performances beyond Bass Hall and enhances the reputation of Harth-Bedoya and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. More pieces are being discovered; new music is being written; more FWSO Live recordings of South American music will surely follow.