

Pianist's 'Páramo' project reaches fruition

By **DAVID STEINBERG**
Journal Staff Writer

Mexican pianist Ana Cervantes released an album of music by seven Mexican composers in 2004 and played the compositions around the world. After that extensive touring Cervantes thought it was time to commission music in a new project.

"I began to think about a central axis around which a project might be organized," she said in a phone interview from Valencia, Calif. "So with 2005 as the 50th anniversary of 'Pedro Páramo,' I began to think of Juan Rulfo as my central axis."

Rulfo's novel "Pedro Páramo," a classic of Latin American literature, was published in 1955.

Initially, Cervantes planned to commission 18 composers to write short pieces based on their impressions of elements of the novel. Short, as in four to six minutes, she said.

She sent the composers a Rulfo starter kit — a copy of "Pedro Páramo" in Spanish and an English translation, Rulfo's "The Burning Plain and Other Stories" and a recording of writers, including Rulfo, reading from their work to have that

Ana Cervantes

WHEN: 7:30 tonight

WHERE: Outpost Performance Space, 210 Yale SE

HOW MUCH: \$20 general public, \$15 students and Outpost members in advance at the Outpost, by calling 268-0044 or at the door

as a point of reference.

Though some composers complied with her time restriction, others went over.

At the project's conclusion, Cervantes had work from 18 composers. Because the cumulative time of their compositions was 82 minutes, she said it meant there was too much music for a single CD and not enough for two. She then commissioned work from five more composers to fill out the second album.

The result is two solo piano CDs, "Rumor de Páramo" and "Solo Rumores."

"It was a longer adventure than I thought it would be," Cervantes said.

She will play some of the commissioned compositions in concert tonight at the Outpost Performance Space. Most of the composers Cervantes commissioned

are Mexicans, but there are also five Americans, three Spaniards, one Brazilian, and an Englishman.

The Americans are Laurie Altman, Jack Fortner, Anne LeBaron, Alex Shapiro and Charles B. Griffin.

A minor goal of the commissioning project, Cervantes said, is to get audiences interested in reading Rulfo and in listening to more of the music of the composers.

One Mexican newspaper referred to the commissions as "a titanic project," and this came close, she said.

"It's not just the artistic labor of preparing the music and interpreting the music and getting inside the skin of every piece and recording it. That by itself is a pretty impressive undertaking."

But, she said, there have been other issues she oversaw, such as fundraising, publicity and marketing and designing the CDs.

"I'm already incubating another project," Cervantes said with a small laugh.



Ana Cervantes will perform some of the pieces she commissioned tonight at the Outpost.