

## Carmen Helena Téllez

Venezuelan-American conductor Carmen Helena Téllez has been called “a quiet force behind contemporary music in the United States today” by the New York-based award-winning online journal *Sequenza21*. A unique and multifaceted artist, she takes a comprehensive approach to new music performance, and has devoted special attention to vocal-instrumental and staged genres, involving interactions with other arts, digital media and musical scholarship, in an approach that *The Washington Post* has called “immersing and thrilling.” She is currently the Director of Graduate Choral Studies and the Director of the Latin American Music Center at the prestigious Jacobs School of Music of Indiana University, where she also directs their Contemporary Vocal Ensemble. She is also the artistic co-director of Aguavá New Music Studio, an artists’ group with which she records and tours internationally. She has been previously the resident conductor of the Chicago Contemporary Chamber Players and the music director of the National Chorus of Spain.

Carmen Helena Téllez has been responsible for the commission and world premiere of many works that have garnered the highest critical praise. In 2008 she produced and conducted the video-opera *Unicamente la verdad*, by the extraordinary Mexican composer Gabriela Ortiz and distinguished video artist Rubén Ortiz. In 2006 she conducted the world-premiere of James MacMillan’s *Sun-Dogs*, a work she co-commissioned for the Indiana University Contemporary Vocal Ensemble with the Netherlands Chamber Choir, the Three Choirs Festival and Soundstreams (Canada). Mario Lavista’s *Missa ad Consolationes Dominam Nostram*, Cary Boyce’s *Ave Maria* and Ingram Marshall’s *Savage Altars* are among the works commissioned and premiered by Carmen Helena Téllez that have established themselves among the most distinguished choral compositions of the last few years.

Carmen Helena Téllez has also brought important contemporary works to audiences in the American Midwest for the first time. In October of 2007, she presented the collegiate premiere and first Indiana performance of Osvaldo Golijov’s opera *Ainadamar*, to rave reviews. In the summer of 2006 she prepared the vocalists and coached the forces of the Grant Park Festival in the Chicago premiere of Antonio Estévez’s iconic Venezuelan masterpiece *La Cantata Criolla*, performed at Frank Gehry’s Pritzker Pavilion. She has also conducted the Midwest and collegiate premiere of John Adams’s opera-oratorio *El Niño*, as well as the American premiere of Ralph Shapey’s oratorio *Praise*, originally composed for the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the foundation of Israel. With Aguavá New Music Studio she brings her commissions and premieres to the professional circuit. She has toured the United States, Mexico, Colombia and Israel with Aguavá’s ensemble, also producing and conducting their recordings.

Born in Caracas, where she completed conservatory studies in piano and composition, Carmen Helena Téllez obtained a Doctor of Music degree *summa cum laude* at Indiana University in 1989. Her document “Musical Form and Dramatic Concept in Handel’s *Athalia*” won the ACDA Julius Herford National Dissertation Award in 1991, and was the first study to propose the influence of Racine on the development of the modern oratorio. In 1992, she joined the faculty at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music in Bloomington, one of the most important centers of musical learning and performance in the world. Along with contemporary masterpieces by Schnittke, Xenakis, Lutoslawski, and many others, she also has conducted the canonic symphonic-choral repertoire, and became the first woman on record to conduct the monumental Requiem by Hector Berlioz in 2000.

Carmen Helena Téllez is known for interdisciplinary concepts of concert presentation. She is scheduled to conduct a multimedia performance of Orff’s *Carmina Burana* as a commentary on the artist and fascist society in Sao Paulo in September 2009, Brazil; and she is completing an art-video installation based on Pulitzer composer Shulamit Ran’s *Credo*. Her video “The Bells of Leopardi”, based on a staged performance of a composition by Yehuda Yannay, can be viewed in YouTube. As an outgrowth of these explorations, Carmen Helena Téllez has returned to composition, and will include some of her own works in Aguavá’s 2010-11 season. She is also preparing a new book on Latin American Choral Music for Oxford University Press.

**For more information, please visit [www.carmentellez.com](http://www.carmentellez.com)**