

# The Miami Herald

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE | Posted on Fri, Jan. 31, 2014 | Article Page 1 of 2

## Galicia's Carlos Nuñez, 'the Jimi Hendrix of the bagpipes,' plays here Wednesday

By Fernando Gonzalez | Special to the Miami Herald

Carlos Nuñez is far more than "the Jimi Hendrix of the bagpipes," or the "the seventh Chieftain," an honorary member of the legendary traditional Irish band.

But if you happen to be the modern master of the gaita, the bagpipe of Galicia, a region in the northwest corner of Spain, maybe such barker's calls help make new audiences stop and look.

The truth is richer.

Nuñez is a classically trained multi-instrumentalist. (He also plays flute, recorder, whistles and a number of traditional instruments.) And he is both a traditionalist and an innovator, playing a key role in preserving the gaita, an instrument that is a symbol of Galician culture yet was once fading to extinction.

His collaborations speak to the universality of this instrument and the possibilities for its future. Over the years Nuñez has collaborated with The Chieftains, Ry Cooder, Compay Segundo, Mike Scott of The Waterboys and Japanese composer Ryuichi Sakamoto as well as flamenco guitarists and Sufi singers from Tangier. His 1996 debut recording, *A Irmandade Das Estrelas* (The Brotherhood of Stars), an improbable platinum seller in Spain, featured more than 50 guests.

"Collaborations are my modus operandi," says Nuñez who begins his new North American tour at the Coral Gables Congregational Church on Wednesday night. "It's a philosophy that comes from traditional music — especially Celtic music. We don't have that sense of the author, alone with his creation. Instead, in traditional music the idea is that music is a collective creation."

It's also a way of doing things that, he says, has allowed him "to learn a lot."

"Galician music is a music of ida y vuelta [roundtrip] with Latin America just as Irish and Scottish music have it with North America," he says. "And through these collaborations, I've been able to reconnect those magical threads."

For Nuñez this is not just an intellectual exercise or a professional strategy. It is also personal.

He was born in Vigo, the exit port for so many Galicians who emigrated to the Americas, one of whom was his great grandfather. And these connections speak to how culture travels, how it's absorbed, re-interpreted and re-signified.

Nuñez once noted that the impact of the Galician presence in Mexico was such that some Mexican-American audiences thought *A Rianxeira*, an old Galician song to the virgin of Guadalupe, was actually Mexican. (Nuñez recorded it under the name *Guadalupe* with Linda Ronstadt and Los Lobos.) According to his research, the bagpipe was the first European instrument heard in Brazil, and its sound can still be heard in the music of Brazil's northeast.

Conversely, Nuñez says that when he started playing he would talk with the old gaiteros (gaita players) of Vigo. "And they would tell you that ... in the 1930s they had actually heard Mexican music and Cuban son played in gaitas. And that's why the drumming in Vigo has a tumbao [a Cuban swing]. It's not like the Irish or Scots would play it. It's the ida y vuelta, brought back by the immigrants."



Carlos Nuñez plays the gaita, the bagpipe of Galicia.

# The Miami Herald

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE | Posted on Fri, Jan. 31, 2014 | Article Page 2 of 2

Núñez and his quartet, featuring Stephanie Cadman on violin, vocals and step-dancing; Pancho Alvarez on viola (“Not the typical Spanish guitar but an instrument that comes from the time of the troubadours. We actually found it in Brazil,” he says) and his brother Xurxo Núñez on percussion, will be presenting music from his new album *Inter-Celtic*, which explores the expressions of Celtic music in Galicia, Ireland, Scotland and Brittany.



“The great Scottish scholars determined that the bagpipes arrived to Scotland from Galicia, by the Atlantic corridor,” Núñez says. “Before there were roads, there were highways of the seas and there was a corridor for commerce in the Atlantic. The Scottish bagpipes and the [Irish] Uilleann pipes are descendants of the ancient Galician pipes, which we received from Mediterranean and Eastern cultures hundreds and hundreds of years ago.

“The ancient *Lebor Gabala Erenn* [The Book of Invasions], written by monks, tells the story of Ireland and talks of the coming of the Milesians [Iberian Celts],” he says.

“When the Irish were conquered by the British, many escaped to Spain and from the days of Philip II and Charles V, the kings of Spain gave Spanish nationality to the Irish because they were considered Galicians. I remember joking with the President of Ireland [Michael D. Higgins] who is also a poet and came to one of our concerts: ‘Anything but being British, eh?’ ”

Wednesday’s concert will also feature local guests.

“We have invited the gaiteros of Miami,” he says. “In every city in the United States there are pipe bands. We know there is one here. The Coast Guard has one.”

Núñez was just 4 years old in 1975 when the death of dictator Francisco Franco opened an extraordinary period of democratization in Spain and with it a reassessment of regional and national identities. As a symbol of Galician identity, the *gaita* had been repressed by Franco, himself a Galician. Flamenco was promoted by the central government as the music of Spain.

Núñez, who started playing the *gaita* in 1979, found himself “in an explosion to reaffirm everything that had been forbidden and suppressed. There was this incredible energy all around and a cry: ‘Hey! We exist! We are not dead.’ To be a *gaitero* was not just being a musician. We had a mission. We went around elementary schools, middle schools, universities to make sure the *gaita* would not die.

“Today we have more than 15,000 pipers,” he says proudly. “I have fantastic students, both men and women. The *gaita*, our music tradition, our language, will not be lost. Now we are in the next step: to explore the Galician connections with all those places around the world where we Galicians have traveled to for centuries.”

Núñez was performing at Brittany’s Festival InterCeltique when he first heard The Chieftains. Their paths have been intertwined since. While many of his generation arrived at roots music after exploring rock, Núñez took the inverse path, discovering rock in 1994, when he was invited by The Chieftains to join them at a concert in Carnegie Hall celebrating the birthday of Roger Daltrey of The Who. It was his debut in the United States.

“So there I was with Roger Daltrey, Alice Cooper, Pearl Jam, The Spin Doctors, Sinéad O’Connor — and I was happy because I was with my idols, The Chieftains. I had no idea who these other guys were,” he says.

“That’s when I discovered rock. And the beautiful thing since is that my relationship with American rockers has been always as peers, as traditional musicians raised and educated in different traditions. For them, that’s their natural music. For me, it’s Galician music. ”

# CARLOS NÚÑEZ



“Pipe music as if played by a Coltrane or Hendrix” – The Guardian

“Overflowing with natural charm, Núñez has become quite the showman as well as the brilliant instrumentalist on just about every woodwind instrument you can imagine.” – The Times (UK)

“The Jimi Hendrix of bagpipe.” – BILLBOARD

“If it’s possible to become a pop star playing traditional music on bagpipes and recorder, Núñez could be the man. He is handsome and performs with kinetic flair and his playing had the presence and sense of freedom and vitality that are qualities of all exceptional musicians.” – Los Angeles Times

“One of the world’s most exciting and most serious musicians.” – BBC Radio 2

“The new King of Celts.” – El Pais (Spain)

“The world’s only bagpipes star.” – Liberation (France)

“Núñez is a warm and energetic musician, his fingering and virtuosity reach the impossible and he is followed close by his brilliant musicians!” – Perfil (Argentina)

“Núñez proved he is a unifying musical force and I have rarely seen the communality of music so brilliantly displayed and an audience so entranced.” – The Guardian

“The Carlos Núñez Band, led by the charismatic Galician pipes and whistles star, was the toast of last year’s Celtic Connections, and returned this time in no less dynamic form, an eight-piece outfit including fiddle, accordion, bouzouki, double bass and guitar, plus two percussionists alongside Núñez himself. Individual and ensemble playing were a sheer delight big Pete Townsendish bouzouki licks, mellifluous Spanish guitar, saucy dancing fiddle, all dappled with the liquid sunshine of Núñez’s whistle, or the fiery pulse-quickenning squeal of his pipes. No tricks, no safety net, just sheer bone-deep musicianship.” – The Scotsman (UK)

“Carlos is a scorching piper and flautist: his sound has a pristine quality which hones into the core of a melody’s emotion without any overplaying or sentiment. The band is tight and confident, setting a pace, blasting to the front of the stage en masse at high points. It’s quite wonderful and the public of all ages

can’t get enough of it.” – Froots (Folk Roots UK)

# Carlos Núñez, Philip Pickett and Musicians of the Globe – review

Queen Elizabeth Hall, London



---

**Robin Denselow**

The Guardian, Sunday 3 February 2013

---

This was a rare and often thrilling performance by one of the world's greatest folk instrumentalists. Carlos Núñez is a piper and whistle player from Galicia, the Celtic region of north-western Spain, who has collaborated with The Chieftains, Ry Cooder and Montserrat Caballé, but mysteriously hasn't toured England since the late 90s. He has returned for a new collaboration with Philip Pickett, the English early music specialist who also plays recorder, whistle and pipes. Their aim was to find common musical ground by reviving the Celtic songs that became popular in London in the 16th and 17th centuries, and – as Núñez explained – to create a dialogue between Celtic and baroque styles. That may sound a worthy but dry and academic approach, but they were determined to prove otherwise.

Smartly dressed in a suit and flanked by Galician guitar and percussion, Núñez was constantly mobile, twisting on his stool as he faced Pickett and four members of his Musicians of the Globe. They started gently, with Núñez playing dance tunes and exquisite, swirling Celtic ballads, choosing from an array of wooden whistles on a table by his side. The English contingent responded, with sturdy and elegant solo work from Pickett and Penelope Spencer on violin. Núñez's playing became increasingly passionate. He switched to gaita, the rousing Galician bagpipes, and bantered with Pickett about the 1702 sea battle outside Vigo, his home city, as if it had just taken place. After Pickett had sung an English victory song about the event, Núñez and his trio stomped across the stage with a furious bagpipe workout, illustrating how music from Vigo had travelled to Latin America. "Follow that," said Pickett. The now noisy and excited Spanish contingent in the hall insisted that they did, with a far more lengthy series of encores than had been planned.



## ***From Northern Spain, Carlos Nunez Brings Galicia's Little-Known Celtic Culture To U.S. Audiences With New 2 CD Set "Discover" Available On September 25***

New York, NY (Top40 Charts/ Sony Masterworks) If you think Spain is just flamenco, you are about to make a most amazing discovery. From Galicia in the northwest corner of Spain comes a surprising music with ancient Celtic roots and modern Spanish energy, a tradition repressed during the Franco dictatorship that is now enjoying a joyous renaissance. All this and more is embodied in the music and career of Galicia's most successful musical export: Carlos Nunez in his Sony Masterworks debut: Discover, a 2-CD released on September 25th, followed by his first major North American tour.

Discover showcases the range and depth of this groundbreaking instrumentalist, who has taken Galician music to all corners of the world. Proof is in the stunning list of guests that appear on Discover, including Linda Ronstadt, Los Lobos, Jackson Browne, Ry Cooder, Waterboys frontman Mike Scott, Sinéad O'Connor, Laurie Anderson, The Chieftains (who launched Nunez's career), flamenco singer Carmen Linares, Irish accordionist Sharon Shannon, Scottish accordionist Phil Cunningham, flamenco guitarist Vicente Amigo, Brazilian star Carlinhos Brown, Early Music master Jordi Savall, Spanish soprano Montserrat Caballe, and Buena Vista Social Club members Omara Portuondo, Compay Segundo and Cachaito.

Nunez is one of Galicia's most revered artists, undisputed as the tradition's greatest piper. He is also enormously popular across the rest of Spain and throughout Europe and Latin America. He had a Number One hit and his records regularly attain gold and platinum status in Spain, while worldwide he has sold over a million albums. He is already known in Irish music thanks to his early "adoption" by The Chieftains (so close was his musical and personal connection he was dubbed "The Seventh Chieftain"). He played on many of the acclaimed Irish group's CDs including Treasure Island, The Long Black Veil, the Grammy-winning Santiago (inspired by Galician music), Mexican project San Patricio, and their latest release, Voice of Ages.

Nunez then launched his own solo career and built on his long list of collaborations. His own releases featured a who's who of international performers, starting with his 1996 debut, the aptly titled Brotherhood of Stars, which had over 50 guests (80 performers appeared on his 1999 release, Os Amores Libres). With platinum sales in Spain, Brotherhood was a remarkable breakthrough for both Nunez and Galician music. Nunez followed with Mayo Longo (2000), Todos Os Mundos (2002), Finisterre: The End of the Earth (2003), Carlos Nunez in Concert (2004), Cinema Do Mar (2006) and Alborada Do Brasil (2009).



His first performance in the U.S. was with The Chieftains in the record-breaking 1994 Carnegie Hall "Daltrey Sings Townshend" concert. ("Quite an introduction," he laughs.) He also toured the U.S. with The Chieftains and did a few solo dates in 2005; then his career took off in Europe and Latin America.

Nunez could not have picked a better time to launch his new voyage to America. Following a decade in which Spain has focused its resources on promoting flamenco around the world, it's now time to look beyond this narrow definition of Spanish culture and explore the fascinating Celtic traditions of Galicia.

"Galicia," Nunez explains, "is the magical part of Spain." A region both beautiful and mystical, it has a culture and music all its own. Galicia was shaped by an ancient history (tied to the Celts who inhabited that corner of the country over 2500 years ago). At the western-most part of Spain, perched on the Atlantic coast, Galicia is a land connected to cultures from across the globe, not only from their own seafaring history but from a constant influx of Christian pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela. Then, during the dictatorial Franco regime, flamenco was promoted as the "national music," while other regional arts, languages and cultures faced severe repression. Now, Galicia is undergoing a modern day renaissance, as its music and culture blossoms and spreads beyond its borders to growing acclaim.

Carlos Nunez was born in 1971 in Vigo, the port that connects Galicia to the world -- Vigo is where Hemingway first set foot in Spain; it remains today much as found it. Nunez started playing the gaita at the age of eight. He studied recorder and Baroque music at Madrid's Royal Conservatory. At the age of 12, he performed at Brittany's Festival InterCeltique (it was there he first heard The Chieftains).

Nunez's music draws on influences that range from ancient and contemporary Celtic (with a unique Spanish swing) to Medieval and Baroque, and also borrows from the sounds and styles of the places where Galicians have settled, including Cuba, Brazil, Argentina, even the United States.

He's the undisputed master of Galicia's signature musical instrument, the gaita, or Galician bagpipes. "What the flamenco guitar is to the south, the gaita is to the north," he explains. "The pipes have been here for over a thousand years. They are the oldest in the world. Everyone knows Scottish bagpipes and Irish uilleann pipes, but they are the descendants of the Galician pipes." The gaita is musically more flexible than its Irish and Scottish relations, and in the hands of Nunez -- who also plays pennywhistle, ocarina, Jew's harp, tin whistle and flute -- an exciting and funky 21st century instrument. "People say I play the pipes like the electric guitar!" he says.

Another Nunez trademark is his unique ability to work so effortlessly with so many different artists and traditions, something he also attributes to Galician culture. "We are like chameleons. We always mix with the cultures of the places where we go and then we make a new melting pot, a new mix."

His most recent collaboration is with the modern Brazilian dance group Grupo Corpo, who commissioned Nunez to write music for their new work *Sem Mim*, which debuts Nov 1-3 at BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music). Inspired by the songs of Martin Codax, the medieval troubadour from Vigo whose songs are the oldest written love songs (the manuscripts are preserved at New York's Morgan Library), Nunez's original soundtrack for the program features the legendary Milton Nascimento on vocals.

Now, with the release of *Discover* and his first major tour, Carlos Nunez is bringing Galicia's Atlantic coast traditions to our own shores. Says Nunez: "America changed my way of seeing music. I met so many amazing musicians, people like Ry Cooder, Jackson Browne, Ricky Skaggs and Emmylou Harris. They were so open, so generous. I know American audiences will hear their influence on my music."



Cindy Byram PR

201-400-4104

[cindybyramPR@aol.com](mailto:cindybyramPR@aol.com)

[www.cindybyram.com](http://www.cindybyram.com)

## CARLOS NUNEZ – “Discover” CD + Oct 2012 Tour / Vigo

Press report Oct 25, 2012

### NEW:

**KDNK-FM (Colorado)** – CD called “Biggest Surprise” in new releases

<http://www.kdnk.org/newmusic.cfm>

**KPFK-FM**

<http://www.kpfk.org/programs/108-globalvillagetues/6493-the-global-village-with-betto-arcos-playlist-for-tuesday-october-23rd-2012.html>

**CNN ESPANOL** – live interview for “Encuentro” news program

<http://on.cnn.com/P3ym1O>

### PREVIOUSLY CONFIRMED:

**WNCW-FM** (North Carolina) – airplay on “Celtic Winds” program

**KMUW-FM** (Wichita, KS) – airplay on “Global Village”

**PERCEPTIVE TRAVEL** – tour feature with Vigo photos

<http://perceptivetravel.com/blog/2012/10/10/northern-spain-music-of-carlos-nunez/>

**WUTC-FM** Chattanooga, TN (NPR) airplay

<http://wutc.org/programs/saturday-morning-sunrise-wutc>

**KGGV-FM** (Guerneville, CA) airplay on Sept 30

**KNUV-AM 1190 Phoenix** – live interview on morning show “Mujeres Unicas”

Oct 18 at 8:13am

**PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS** – concert pick ran 10/2

[http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/entertainment/music\\_nightlife/172282682.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/blogs/entertainment/music_nightlife/172282682.html)

**SLIPCUE.COM** – CD review

[http://www.slipcue.com/music/international/newreviews/2012/04\\_world-2012.html](http://www.slipcue.com/music/international/newreviews/2012/04_world-2012.html)

**WGBH-FM (NPR)** posted video footage of his Boston concert on their website

<http://www.wgbh.org/articles/Celtic-Wonder-Carlos-Nunez-Visits-Somerville-7306>

**MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE** – Critic's pick for concert

<http://m.startribune.com/entertainment/?id=173728381&c=y>

**TIME OUT CHICAGO** – Critic's Pick

<http://timeoutchicago.com/music-nightlife/music/15752686/carlos-nunez>

**CHICAGO SUN TIMES** – preview feature Oct 13 w/Vigo photo

<http://www.suntimes.com/entertainment/music/15714119-421/carlos-nunez-the-hendrix-of-the-bagpipes-embarks-on-first-us-tour.html>

**OAKVILLE BEAVER** – preview feature

<http://www.insidehalton.com/what's%20on/article/1515676--spanish-bagpiper-carlos-nunez-plays-for-arthouse>

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC WORLD MUSIC** – first posting on Vigo trip is a 15-photo gallery of Carlos preparing for his tour

[http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/gallery/content.gallery/carlos\\_nunez/en\\_US](http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/gallery/content.gallery/carlos_nunez/en_US)

**IRISH ECHO** – confirmed feature on Carlos, to run Oct 17

**EVENTOS VIP PRESS** – backstage photo gallery of DC show

<http://eventosvippass.com/2012/10/oct-04-carlos-nunez-wolftrap/>

**TELEMUNDO TV – DC NOTICIAS** - new item on Carlos's DC show



<http://www.tvwfdc.com/noticia/2012/10/02/421717-entreteneamiento.html>

**CHICAGO REMEZCLA NEWSLETTER + CONTEST**

<http://chi.remezcla.com/2012/latin/carlos-nunez-old-town-school-of-folk-music-chicago/>

**GLOBO TV – online news item w/click-on ID for Vigo photo**

<http://ela.oglobo.globo.com/blogs/nova-york/posts/2012/10/06/um-galego-apaixonado-pelo-brasil-invade-america-468878.asp>

**WASHINGTON EXAMINER**

<http://washingtosexaminer.com/the-spanish-piper-of-joy-and-energy/article/2509749>

**EL TIEMPO LATINO - story on DC visit w/ Vigo photos**

<http://eltiempolatino.com/news/2012/oct/05/gigante-de-la-gaita-visita-washington/>

**also:**

<http://eltiempolatino.com/videos/2012/oct/05/777/>

**HUFFINGTON POST – 15 minute video blog posting by world music video blogger Michal Shapiro, recorded at Cervantes NY**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michal-shapiro/carlos-nunez-celtic-music\\_b\\_1941742.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/michal-shapiro/carlos-nunez-celtic-music_b_1941742.html)

**PHILA CITY PAPER - concert review**

<http://www.citypaper.net/blogs/criticalmass/CONCERT-REVIEW-Carlos-N.html>

**PRI THE WORLD – national “Global Hit” feature, aired on 300+ stations across the U.S. and Caribbean**

archived as mp3 download at

<http://www.theworld.org/2012/10/celtic-superstar-carlos-nunez/>

**CHICAGO SUN TIMES – feature preview on CD & tour w/ Vigo photos**

**WBAI-FM (NY) – airplay, promoting NYC contest with CD giveaways**

**TIME OUT NY – preview blurb**

<http://www.timeout.com/newyork/music/carlos-nunez-drom-october-6-2012>

**WESM-FM** – entire show of Carlos’s music on Sept 30  
<http://www.wesm913.org/programs/radio-mundo>

**IMPACTO NEWS** – feature story ran 10/3  
<http://www.impactony.com/2012/10/carlos-nunez/>

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MUSIC** – Editor Tom Pryor will write an online feature on his Vigo trip this week.

**IRISH ECHO** – ¼ page Vigo ad runs in Oct 3 issue

**WFUV-FM (NY)**– Vigo radio spots ran during Celtic programs on Sept 29 & 30,  
largest audience for Celtic music in the U.S.  
Web ad is online for entire month of October  
[www.wfuv.org](http://www.wfuv.org)

**REMEZCLA.COM** – ticket giveaway to NYC show  
<http://ny.remezcla.com/2012/latin/carlos-nunez-drom-nyc/>

**LA VOZ (HOUSTON CHRONICLE)** –major online feature w/ Vigo highlights  
<http://www.lavoztx.com/news/2012/sep/27/carlos-nunez-el-gaitero-revolucionario-viene-estad/>

**WGBH-FM Boston** – promoting heavily on their Celtic program (show now sold out)

**KPFK-FM Los Angeles** – secured 10 tickets to Santa Monica show for giveaways on Global Village show.

**WORLD MUSIC CENTRAL** – online feature with video embeds  
<http://worldmusiccentral.org/2012/09/26/carlos-nunezs-melting-pot/>

**EXAMINER LOS ANGELES**  
<http://www.examiner.com/article/carlos-nunez-brings-celtic-and-galician-culture-to-los-angeles-oct-18>

**WESM-FM** preview of radio feature w/Vigo photo and credit  
<http://www.wesm913.org/post/carlos-n-ez-barns-wolf-trap>

**EL TIEMPO LATINO** online preview gave incorrect photo credit – fixing now  
<http://eltiempolatino.com/news/2012/sep/21/llegan-sonidos-celtas/>

**KPFK GLOBAL VILLAGE (Los Angeles)** – feature interview + CD to be featured promotion for this NPR station’s fall fund drive.

**HUFFINGTON POST VIDEO BLOG / LINK TV** – taping performance and interview at Cervantes Oct 1 for video blog, will mention Vigo

**NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC WORLD MUSIC** – feature online now, mentions Vigo as tourist destination  
[http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/article/content.article/carlos\\_nunez\\_new\\_album/en\\_US](http://worldmusic.nationalgeographic.com/view/page.basic/article/content.article/carlos_nunez_new_album/en_US)

**NY1 NOTICIAS** – interview taping Oct 1 at 1:30pm to air once each hour Oct 5; will include 15 sec, of Vigo promo video

**LA TUNDRA UK** – confirmed feature for London monthly for Jan issue w/ Vigo photo

**VANIDADES MAGAZINE** – new item in Oct issue os Spanish version of Vanity Fair, will highlight Seattle events and CD

**KDVS (Davis, CA)** – confirmed airplay on CD

**WORT-FM (Madison, WI)** – confirmed airplay on CD



## Popstar and recorder

*"It is possible to become a pop star playing traditional music on the bagpipes and recorder." This is how The Los Angeles Times outlined the exciting career of Carlos Núñez.*

Carlos Núñez was born 30 years ago in the Atlantic region of Galicia in north-western Spain. At an early age he started to make music. Discovered as a virtuoso bagpipe player by the legendary Irish folk band "The Chieftains," he toured as a member of the band through Europe, Japan, Australia, and the United States and recorded three CDs with them, also meeting and performing with other famous musical artists on stage. His own awarded-winning CD projects combine different musical styles and explore new musical directions from folk to pop-rock, all linked to Celtic music. Besides the bagpipes, Carlos frequently uses all kinds of fipple flutes, and, most notably, he introduced the recorder into the world of popular music in the unique performance style of a celebrated artist. Today he is touring with his band abroad and working on a new album.

In his interview from 2004 with **Nik Tarasov**, he discussed his passion for the recorder for the first time with a reporter.

### **Windkanal: What is your first musical remembrance?**

**Carlos Núñez:** It is said that I sung in my cradle. But I believe I just cried with style. Well, I personally recall looking at an album of old photos of my family, especially one picture, which shows a man with an instrument in his hands. My father explained that this was my great father, who was a musician conducting a little brass band, but at the same time he had cows. This mixture of two jobs was quite usual at that time in rural Galicia. When his cows were in the mountains, he used to playing music while sitting under a tree. When he was thirty years old, he went to Brazil for performing, but suddenly disappeared and never came back. This impressed me very much when I was small. I also remember the melodies of the church bells from my home town, Vigo, as a big impression. In Galicia, like in all Celtic countries, we used to say that everything is connected. So, since you are a child you believe that life is like an opera between many things like music, images, ethnography, food. This is also pictured in our legends. Music is an important part of this great traditional opera play manifested in the Galician country.

### **So, the bells do not just simply mark the time, but there is a melodic tradition of performing on bells, like on a carillon?**

And not just even melodies! Later I discovered special bell-rhythms, old true rhythms of dancing, like an Irish jig. These are used as signals saying "the party is starting", or so. There are also codes in the bells, for example, you realize when someone has died. When I was small, I just adsorbed these sounds subconsciously. But when I first touched a musical instrument, it was these codes, signals, rhythms and melodies that came out. So I played that all on a little recorder. I not imitated the music from the radio but the sounds of my Celtic environment.

### **How did you come across the recorder? Is it a common instrument in Galicia?**

In a special way I must say yes. Now, in every school children learn the recorder basics. Today there is also a renewed tradition of the so called native "pito", a folk recorder but with the fingerings of bagpipes. This instrument starts with a semitone, means do sharp, and the tonic is on the second of the lowest fingers. There also is a thumbhole. But I began with the recorder when I was eight. With ten I took up the bagpipes, the gaita, the most traditional instrument in Galicia. Years later, when I was 16 years old, I discovered that many boys now start with the traditional pito to continue later with the pipes.

### **Why didn't you start with the pito, which seems to be much more connected to the traditional music of Galicia?**

I did not have this instrument when I was small. I started at school with a true German plastic recorder, which fascinated me through and through. This new alien object in my world smelled kind of strangely, and I dreamt away and imagined how Germany must possibly be. I learned very fast, and my teacher suggested buying a wooden flute, again from Germany - that was psychologically a big step. The sent of the wooden instrument pushed me the more. At that time, information from Germany was quite difficult to get, but for my imagination they have been very important. I then had a recorder teacher and we played a lot of traditional Galician music on our instruments, but also a lot of medieval music, like the Cantigas de Santa Maria. First by ear and in the second year from written notation.

### **So you didn't put the recorder away for the gaita!**

I continued instinctively. But indeed, at that time started for me a permanent question between two different musical worlds. The gaita came for me in a time of cultural explosion: it was the end of the Franco regime and the beginning

of democracy. The gaita, formerly prohibited under Franco as a traditional instrument from the revolting provinces, like the Basque, Galicia or Catalonia, touched in me the Aristotelian side, while to the recorder I discovered more Platonic love. But the recorder was also something to defend. When I entered the Conservatory with ten, a woman asked me, why I want go on with the recorder as the obviously most "easy" instrument. I was shocked, and insisted, as I was sure, that my instrument was a "real" one, absolutely equal to the piano or the flute. I was sure I was right, it was "my instrument", and that's all. But I was only allowed to learn gaita at the Conservatory and had to continue the recorder on my own through ordering baroque music scores from Germany, which have been hard to get at that time. So I also played medieval music from Spain, like the Martin Codex, Cantigas de Amigo and de Alfonso X, and so on.

### **Wasn't it hard to learn to play the recorder without a real teacher?**

Sure. Especially as I was becoming quite well known and popular on the gaita and nobody cared for my secret side, the recorder. A very important moment was a weekly radio series called "La Flauta de Picco." Here the recorder teacher Alvaro Marias from Madrid presented music performed in such an expressive manner by Frans Brueggen. I suddenly understood that there is a whole world waiting for me with the recorder. For more, I went with 16 to the Conservatory of Madrid. As I was still in school, that meant traveling eight times a month by train. Each time it takes you 9 hours to go there. I took the night train and slept all through the night. Now I had a real recorder teacher named Mariano Martin. And he taught me not only to be a musician, but also to be an artist. Means not only playing perfectly in the English or French style on the recorder but also to emotionalize and to communicate with the people. He had respect for me also being a bagpiper and for my way of playing the recorder with the fingers of a piper.

### **How do the pipes train the fingers to play in a special way?**

It means, for a piper, everything goes through the fingers. The tone repetition, the ornamentation (like French-like battements), the vibrato. There is no articulation possible with the tongue - you have to cut notes with the fingers. On the other hand, like the transverse flute player Wilbert Hazelzet said, a lot from Baroque French music comes from the old French musette tradition.

That brings good old Jacques Hotteterre le Romain to my mind, who played the baroque pipe-like musette, flute and recorder and wrote his famous instructive treatise on how to play French music.

This relaxed me much, because it is clearing from the impression that traditional bagpipe music and traditional recorder music were two different worlds. One could suppose that in Baroque time the musette (or pipe) playing technique inspired the new French performing style on the flute or recorder, like flattements, grace notes. There has been a fusion between folk and artificial music.

### **So you decided to play the recorder more like a pipe?**

I played a lot in legato, but also in combination with the different period articulation techniques of the tongue. The result was a special expressive sound. And there is another aspect: the pipes are a very loud instrument, not so the recorder. But you can make it loud easily with a microphone. I was always used to do that, because I play in my childhood in a didactic group which traveled around to introduce people to traditional music. In Celtic music it is very normal to use a mike. The first time I played the recorder in public with a mike - I was maybe 12 years old - that gave us all the positive impression that it is a huge instrument. After some time, I learned how to make expression with the mike and to use it even like an instrument. My later masters continued to support me with that idea. Look at the Chieftains: Mat Molloy, who plays the Irish flute in that famous band, has a perfect sound through his mike, which makes him able to perform with the loud pipes. I stand very close to the mike; sometimes I use the big Neumann mike - the same tool that Elvis Presley was using. Recorder works always with the microphone. With the pipes it is much more complicated to get out a good amplified sound.

### **But formerly in traditional Irish music there was no place for the recorder. Everybody would take up the whistle instead. Was it you who introduced the recorder into that music with a new sound that combined techniques from classical and traditional elements?**

I play whistle as well. But I love the recorder far too much, and I never could say bye-bye to it. It is my personal instrument. So I tried to build the recorder into Celtic music, and I clearly realized that this was a new effort. I realized that recorders have other possibilities than Irish flutes do not have. First it was all intuition: within the concerts, I change all the time between different instruments. From a big wooden whistle to a tenor recorder, from an ocarina to a soprano recorder, and so on.

To play an Irish reel is easier with the open fingering on a tin whistle, because on the recorder you would have some finger positions that are not so fast. It is simply easier and faster to play the typical grace notes on a whistle. For example, for Galician music recorder is much better: there you have a mixture of Celtic music with a Latin sense of melody.

And then, the whistle is very much explored by very good musicians. With the recorder, you have a corner of your own, you feel absolutely free. Breton and Scottish music on the recorder works fantastic. It is also very fine in Flamenco and when you play Tango on it.



**So you left your former "baroque musical world" and took the recorder in the world of the pipers and traditional Celtic music.**

I once learned consciously the way to play the explored Baroque music on the recorder. I also learned how to do the grace notes traditionally on the gaita, but the thing that makes the music today is the fusion.

What is it, besides playing on the recorder with the fingers of a piper?

I do it like this, but I also mix in all different things from the classical recorder world. Like, in old Italian music it is very normal to play double-tonguing. But it is not in traditional Ireland. It is sensational when you speed up Irish triplets by tonguing like on the recorder. "de-ge-de, de-ge-de." Then you can use secondary positions in the fingering permitting you make new combinations with grace notes on the recorder. On the whistle there is just one fingering: you may play half close a hole but you would use fork fingerings on the recorder. The best ground scale on the gaita in Galician music is B natural. If you want to follow that on the recorder you can simply take up a recorder in C pitched in 415.

**What was your strongest motivation to forge a new way with the recorder?**

I did not want to imitate musical styles of a past culture anymore. In Galicia, the folk music is a part of our lives, is much closer and so much more authentic. The feeling in traditional music is so strong.

I guess in Central Europe the rediscovered Early Music has become a part of people's lives. You recognize special titles, you can hear it daily in the radio. It is quite normal to play Telemann or Mozart at home today.

In all countries with an important history of classical music traditional music nearly disappeared! The opposite: countries without a strong classical music culture have an important sense for folk music, like Ireland or Spain. If it happens to a country that its opera of previous traditional elements disappear, this hole is filled by false folklore and their organized codification. Previous modal systems, different tunings and rhythmical codes mostly lose their identity in folkloric simplification.

I think where I live traditional music is closer to people than classical music, although everyone remembers classical music from the school.

**So, for us the recorder is often regarded as a simple instrument for musical beginners. You were discovered and introduced to the folk music scene by the Chieftains as a gaita player. How did people find it when you also took up the recorder in your music concerts?**

Very simple: it always happens to me that people were saying "we love that instrument!" I believe everyone has a part in his heart for the recorder. It is maybe the most universal instrument. Everyone knows it on this planet. It has a common language. Everyone tries at least once in his life to play on

it. When people hear it again in an energetic concert, they always remember something from their childhood.

Recorder is a very personal, intimate instrument. Mat Molloy and Paddy Maloney - both big Irish whistle players - were amazed by the instrument. When I went with the Chieftains to Cuba to

meet Ry Cooder (before he did the Buena Vista Social Club-Project), what did I play: the recorder! I even played Tango in Argentina, and people like it so much. I performed on the recorder with some well-known Rock 'n Roll musicians, like Sinéad O'Connor, Roger Daltrey from The Who, Bob Dylan in

America, and many more. With a microphone, the recorder's pure voice sounds fantastic and becomes a powerful instrument!

**But sometimes you say, unlike the gaita, the recorder is a Platonic instrument.**

The pipes have always the drone. Means, it has contact to the earth ground. All that is musically happening is in the relation of the earth.

With the recorder you can fly like a bird. You can play the same music, but the feeling is turning into flying.