

NIGHT OUT

Midón's musical melange

By Sarah Haughey
Special to The Examiner

Raul Midón brings a new meaning to the term musical improvisation as he spontaneously breaks into a "trumpet" solo — not with an instrument, but just with his lips.

Inspired by his love of jazz, the musician's technique expresses a complexity that exceeds the confines of singing. Adding a silky tenor and percussive guitar, Midón's sound is truly unique.

The New Mexico native brings his act to Redwood City's Summer Cultural Performance Series on Saturday; the show is part of free programming that also includes art exhibits, dancing and movie screenings.

Midón's creativity conveys the passion of past generations. "I grew up in a different era; modern music is incomprehensible to my generation," he says. "We have this gift and we have the obligation to provide inspiration to others. We largely do this for ourselves, but we can still create feelings through our music."

Since childhood, Midón has gravitated to music as a way of expressing his perspective of the world. Born prematurely, he was blinded after being in an incubator without sufficient eye protection.

Music also gave Midón focus due to limited options. "It was an early life decision for me to play music, and I had to commit myself," he says.

Midón, whose father was Argentinean, gained his distinctive style from his love of roots music and sounds of traditional cultures. "When I go somewhere I want to

hear the music that comes from that place," he says. "I like to combine the old, beginning styles of each type of music."

Upon finishing high school in Santa Fe, N.M., Midón was drawn to the jazz program at the University of Miami. After graduating, he became a backup singer for artists such as Julio and Enrique Iglesias, Shakira and Ricky Martin.

In 2002, Midón moved to New York City to pursue a solo career. While the first year was tough, he quickly made a name for himself, touring the U.S., Europe and Japan until he released his second album, "A World Within a World," in 2007.

He began work on his latest album, "Synthesis," at home using software that makes Windows accessible to blind people. But in 2009, he went to Los Angeles, where the CD came to fruition assisted by producer Larry Klein, who has worked with Joni Mitchell, Herbie Hancock and Peter Gabriel.

Although it might not have huge commercial appeal, the combination of ska, reggae and bossa nova on "Synthesis" reveals a tone and feeling different from Midón's earlier work. It's also a departure in that it is not entirely hopeful, but conveys loss, betrayal and fear.



IF YOU GO Raul Midón

Presented by Redwood City
Summer Cultural Performance Series

Where: Courthouse Square, 2200 Broadway, Redwood City

When: 6 p.m. Saturday

Tickets: Free

Contact: (650) 780-7340, www.redwoodcityevents.com

Note: Additional performances in the series are Jayme Stone on Aug. 22 and Vagabond Opera on Sept. 18.

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