



A TELLING PICTURES Production

MÚSICA!



Runtime: 72 Minutes

PRESS CONTACTS:

FRANK PR | 646.861.0843

Clare Anne Darragh | Clareanne@frankpublicity.com

Lina Plath | Lina@frankpublicity.com

Stephanie Davidson | Stephanie@frankpublicity.com

Katie Connell | Katiec@frankpublicity.com

SALES AGENT CONTACTS:

Maggie Pisacane | mpisacane@wmeagency.com

Ryan McNeily | RMcNeily@wmeagency.com

Craig Kestel | CKestel@wmeagency.com

TELLURIDE SCREENINGS:

Friday, September 1, 2023 at 3:15 PM MDT, at Masons Hall Cinema

Saturday, September 2, 2023 at 6:15 PM MDT, at Backlot

Sunday, September 3, 2023 at 9:15 AM MDT, at Backlot

MÚSICA!

Logline

Over the course of five years, *Música!* follows four young Cubans who view music as a way of life. Through music, they hope to find success and fulfillment, some choosing to remain in Cuba, and some seeking to venture out into the world beyond.

Synopsis

Music is famously central to the Cuban spirit and way of life. Like the old American cars that fill the streets, the musical instruments Cubans play have weathered decades of humid tropical climate. Without the resources or craft skills to keep them maintained, Cuban musicians hold their instruments together with the equivalent of spit and chewing gum.

In 2011, a US-based group of musicians and instrument artisans created an organization called Horns to Havana to help address this problem. H2H has been sending artisans from the US to Cuba every year since then to repair these instruments and teach young Cubans the skills they need to keep them in good condition.

The story begins as Oscar/Emmy/Grammy-winning filmmakers Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman (*The Celluloid Closet*, *Linda Ronstadt: The Sound of My Voice*, *Taylor Mac's 24-Decade History of Popular Music*) follow a string bass from a workshop in lower Manhattan to Havana, Cuba, and into the hands of 16-year-old Lily.

Lily is a student musician at Amadeo Roldán, the premiere music-focused high school of Havana, and part of a thrilling swinging Big Band orchestra of fabulously talented high school musicians. At Amadeo Roldán we meet two other young musicians and follow them over the next five years through their everyday lives in Havana -- at school, at home with their families, rehearsing at school, performing around town, even embarking on a Musical exchange adventure to Preservation Hall in New Orleans.

What connects these students is their love for music, and their ambition to make it as professional musicians upon graduating.

Música! is an exploration of the power of music and the value of cross-cultural exchange — and the impact they can have on individuals' lives. Within the story of the film, music builds bridges and creates new opportunities for these young people and gives them skills and tools they will need to face the challenging future ahead of them. Horns to Havana aims to help Cuban students and schools overcome constraints enforced by lack of resources, dire economic conditions, politics, and geography. *Música!* shows this struggle in action.

Director's Statement

Like most documentary filmmakers, we're eager to experience people and worlds we haven't known before. So in 2015 we jumped at the chance to tag along with a group of American artisans heading to Cuba, where they were to set up shop and work on musical instruments.

Just as Cubans are still driving the old American cars that were on the streets of Havana before the 1959 revolution, students and professional musicians are still playing the same instruments — now worn down by humidity and salty sea air.

The group of American artisans is called Horns to Havana. Since 2011 they had been making these trips regularly, bringing musical supplies, tools, and their expertise, to help rescue these ailing instruments.

On this first trip, not yet knowing if we would find a film there, we followed the group to Amado Roldán, the premiere music conservatory for high school students in Cuba. There we heard some dazzling young virtuosos perform — and we didn't want to ever leave. We began filming then and there, at first with just an iPhone and a DSLR camera. It felt like we were being offered an opportunity to capture something beautiful: seeing the world through the experiences of these young people, who were so warm, open, and welcoming — and so dedicated to their art. We saw an irresistible opportunity to tell a story imbued with the best of humanity.

Thus began an eight year journey, as we observed these young artists blossom into world-class musicians.

We collaborated with renowned Cuban photographer and cinematographer Roberto Chile and a local crew over four subsequent film shoots in Cuba from 2016 through 2019. On the US side of the story, we worked with our long-time collaborator, D.P. Buddy Squires. Veteran editor Susan Fanshel helped us shape the material into a longitudinal story.

As part of their education, the students traveled to New Orleans, where they had a residence at the legendary Preservation Hall. There they jammed with and learned from seasoned jazz musicians in a vibrant cross-cultural artistic exchange. These moments for us are testaments to the power of art to provide meaning and connection — among individuals, and between cultures. And the music they made together was intoxicating.

As one of the Cuban artisans says in the film, "Without music, happiness is short."

- Rob Epstein & Jeffrey Friedman
August 2023

About The Cast & Crew

(Headshots Linked [HERE](#))

ROB EPSTEIN & JEFFREY FRIEDMAN | Co-Directors

Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman, Oscar-Emmy-Grammy Award winners, have been making ground-breaking movies together for 35 years. Their latest film, *Taylor Mac's 24-Decade History of Popular Music*, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2023 and is streaming on HBO/MAX.

Rob Epstein began his career at age 20 as part of a filmmaking collective Mariposa Film Group that made the landmark film *Word Is Out*, the first documentary about lesbian and gay life made by queer filmmakers. The film had a huge impact when it was released theatrically and aired on PBS in 1977. Rob's next project was *The Times of Harvey Milk*, which won an Academy Award for Documentary Feature and three Emmy Awards. It was also named Best Documentary by the New York Film Critics Association, inducted to the Library of Congress National Film Registry, named one of the most influential documentaries of all time by the Cinema Eye Honors, and is now part of the Criterion Collection.

Jeffrey Friedman came from a film editing background. He apprenticed with some of the most respected filmmakers in the industry on such films as *Raging Bull* and *The Exorcist*. His credits as film editor include two Oscar-nominated documentary shorts and an Oscar-winning documentary feature.

Rob and Jeffrey began working as a team in 1987 when they started their production company Telling Pictures. Their first film, *Common Threads: Stories From the Quilt*, about the first decade of the AIDS epidemic in the U.S., won an Academy Award for Documentary Feature and an Emmy for Bobby McFerrin's all vocal score. Their subsequent work includes *The Celluloid Closet*, a hundred-year history of queer images in Hollywood movies, which won an Emmy Award for directing; *Paragraph 175*, exposing the hidden history of Nazi persecution of homosexuals, which won a Sundance jury award for directing; the Oscar-nominated documentary short *End Game*, exploring new ways of thinking about end-of-life; and the musical biography *Linda Ronstadt: The Sound of My Voice*, which won a Grammy Award for Best Music Film.

Moving into scripted narrative work, their credits include writing and directing the non-fiction narrative feature *HOWL*, about Allen Ginsberg's prophetic poem, starring James Franco, David Strathairn and Jon Hamm, winner of the National Review Freedom of Expression Award; and *Lovelace*, starring Amanda Seyfried, Peter Sarsgaard and Sharon Stone, about the making of the first pornographic megahit *Deep Throat* and the troubled life of its superstar, Linda Lovelace. Both films premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and the Berlinale.

Rob Epstein and Jeffrey Friedman's work has been honored with Oscars, Peabodys and Emmy awards; Rob has received the Pioneer Award from the International Documentary Association and the Legacy Award from the Cinema Eye Honors. Their films have screened in theaters, museums, and on broadcast and streaming services around the world. They have had career retrospectives at Film at Lincoln Center in New York, the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, the Taipei International Film Festival in Taiwan, the Pink Apple Film Festival in Zurich, and the Cinémathèque Québécoise in Montreal.

They are currently developing a documentary about the photographer Peter Hujar.

BUDDY SQUIRES, ASC | Director of Photography (US)

Buddy Squires is an Oscar-nominated filmmaker and an Emmy Award-winning cinematographer. His more than 200 screen credits include two Oscar winners, seven Academy Award nominees, and ten Emmy Award winning productions. Recent credits include *Taylor Mac's 24 decade History of Popular Music* (2023, Tribeca Film Festival) *The US and the Holocaust* (2022, Telluride Film Festival), *Viva Maestro* (2022), and *Muhammad Ali* (2021, Telluride Film Festival).

ROBERTO CHILE | Director of Photography, Producer (Cuba)

Roberto Chile is a renowned writer, director, and cinematographer of Cuban and international films, including *Mariela Castro's March* by Jon Alpert and Saul Landau, *Ghost Town to Havana* by Eugene Corr and Roberto Chile, *Los Hermanos/The Brothers* by Marcia Jarmel and Ken Schneider, and *Castro in Winter* by Oliver Stone. His photographs have been exhibited in Cuba, the US, Germany, Spain, and other countries. Among the honors for his life's work are the award for Distinction for National Culture and the José Martí National Journalism Award. In the words of the famous Cuban historian Eusebio Leal Spengler, "his images make up a universe of faith and spirituality, perceptible to those who, like him, are capable of loving."

SUSAN FANSHEL | Editor

Susan Fanshel is an independent documentary filmmaker and editor. Her own award-winning films include *A Weave of Time*, *Voulkos and Company* and *Made in the Bronx*. She co-directed and co-edited *IRMI* with Veronica Selver. She co-produced, co-directed and co-edited *Nevelson in Process* and *The Odyssey Tapes* with Jill Godmilow. Editing credits include *Robert Capa in Love and War*, *Innocence Lost*, *The Plea*, *Saving Elian*, *KPFA On the Air*, *The Last Queen of Hawaii*, and the PBS series *FDR*. The films she has edited have received the highest honors in broadcast journalism including three George Foster Peabody Awards, two Alfred Du Pont-Columbia Awards, and an Emmy Award.

KEVIN PALAVER | Film Participant

15-year-old Kevin moved with his grandmother from a poor remote village to the outskirts of Havana to study trumpet at the premiere music conservatory in Cuba.

LILY ESPINOSA | Film Participant

16-year-old Lily's career prospects brighten when she receives a donated bass from Havana. Most Cuban students don't own their own instruments.

RODRIGO GARCIA | Film Participant

Rodrigo comes from a family of accomplished and well-known Cuban musicians. At 15, he is determined to carve out his own identity as a pianist, which we witness through the course of the film.

DARIANNA VIDEAUX CAPITEL | Film Participant

When we meet Darianna at the instrument repair shop in Havana, her dream is to study bass in the US. By the end of the film she has realized her dream.

DAVID GAGE & JUDY EPSTEIN | Film Participant

Master luthier David Gage and Judy Epstein own and manage Gage String Repair in New York City. They are founding members of Horns to Havana. We meet them at their shop as David is building a bass to donate to a young music student in Cuba.

HORNS TO HAVANA | Film Participant

The Horns Project/Horns to Havana is a New York City-based nonprofit fostering music education and cultural exchange between the US and Cuba. Through instrument donations, repair services, and training local artisans, they help fulfill dreams of aspiring young musicians, and work to strengthen ties between countries through shared musical traditions.

MUSICAL GROUPS

Amadeo Roldan Jazz Band
Preservation Hall
A Granel
Ceda El Paso
Ninfas
Mixtura Quartet

CREDITS

A film by
Rob Epstein, Jeffrey Friedman, and Susan Fanshel

Directed By
ROB EPSTEIN & JEFFREY FRIEDMAN

Produced By
ROB EPSTEIN
JEFFREY FRIEDMAN
MACHU LATORRE

Edited By
SUSAN FANSHEL

Directors of Photography
ROBERTO CHILE
BUDDY SQUIRES

Executive Produced By
SUSAN SILLINS

Sound Recordists
JORGE LUIS CHIJONA
DAVID HOCS
SERGIO MUNOZ
MARK ROY

Original Music
ISAIAH GAGE

Co-Producers
MARI RIVERA
KENJI C GREEN

CUBA UNIT

Director of Photography and Co-Producer
ROBERTO CHILE

Sound
JORGE LUIS CHIJONA
SERGO MUÑOZ

Additional Photography
ROB EPSTEIN
DENISE GUERRA
MACHU LATORRE

Production Coordinator

CLAUDIA BUENA

Video Assist
ABEL CORREA

Technical Assistant
DANIEL CHILE

Transportation
RAFAEL VALVERDE

USA UNIT

Director of Photography
BUDDY SQUIRES

Additional Photography
ROB EPSTEIN
TOM HURWITZ

Sound
DAVID HOCS
MARK ROY
PETER MILLER
JARED AMES

Assistant Camera
ALEC GLUSTROM

Interviewers
ROB EPSTEIN
JEFFREY FRIEDMAN
MACHU LATORRE

Post Production Supervisor
KENJI C GREEN

Additional Editing
JEFFREY FRIEDMAN

Assistant Editors
DANIEL TOMAN
DAN STEINER
ALEC BARTH

Online Editor and Colorist
ROBERT ARNOLD

Titles Design Animation
MINT LI
PIERCE WILSON

Sound Editor /

Re-Recording Engineer
TOM DISHER
DISHER SOUND

Assistant Sound Editors
SAMPREETH LOKESH
CHASE CARTER

Score Mixer
JOHN SPIKER

Music Supervisors
JANET BILLIG RICH AND LISA MOBERLY
FOR LOUDSPEAKER MUSIC GROUP

Clearance Supervisors
LUKILA BACKSTROM
SARAH MARIA

Legal Services
PAUL BRENNAN
BRUNS BRENNAN BERRY PIKULIN &
JACOBS PC

Production Accountant
DENISE DONOVAN

Publicity
FRANK PR

Original Score Musicians
Double Bass, SOLOMON DORSEY
Guitar/Nylon String Guitar, DREW TAUBENFELD
Clarinet, CHLOE FEORANZO
Trumpet, JORDAN KATZ
Cello, ISAIAH GAGE

Preservation Hall Jazz Musicians
Trombone, RONELL JOHNSON
Bass, BEN JAFFE
Piano, RICHARD MOTEN
Saxophone, RICKIE MONIE
Drums, CLINT MAEDGEN/ BRANDEN LEWIS/ WALTER HARRIS

Consultants
FRANCISCO BELLO
ALISON KIBBE
CATHERINE MURPHY
CATHEROME RIERSON
ADAM SMALLEY

Archival Footage and Photographs
GETTY ARCHIVE

Pond5
YOBAN PELAYO
LUIGI BEVERELLI ©

The filmmakers appreciate the generous support of
BUENAS OBRAS FUND
MION MCEVOY & LESLIE BERRIMAN
BENJAMIN SILLINS
NED STEINBERGER & DENIS SOUCY
JESSICA VAPNEK

SPECIAL THANKS

A Granel

YOUSANDER ESTEVEZ
ZAMIR MUÑOZ
WILLIAM LOPEZ
LUIS ALBERTO HERNÁNDEZ
FRANK BUBAIRE

Ceda el Paso

TANIA HAASE
JORGE SERGIO RAMÍEZ
RAÚL ENRIQUE FERNÁNDEZ
ADNER LÓPEZ

Ninfas

AMANDA MICHELLE
ANA KARLA MOTA
LILY ESPINOSA
KAHILA FRANCHINI
GABRIELA LEANDRA

Ariana Hall
Centro Nacional de Escuelas de Arte (CNEArt)
Conservatorio Amadeo Roldán
David Gage String Instruments
Elizabeth Redleaf & Jon Guillory
Fábrica de Arte
Tanya Haase
Hotel Ecléctico
Greg Lucas
Jana La Sorte
Lily Lombera
Loretta Gargan & Catherine Wagner
Jazz at Lincoln Center
Ministerio de Cultura
Pepe Fabregas
Preservation Hall
Taller de reparación de instrumento musicales
Walker Art Center
Wynton Marsalis

and to
Darianna, Kevin, Lily, and Rodrigo for
sharing these moments in their lives with us.