

HAYDÉE MILANÉS

Haydée Milanés

Journey To The Heart Of A Song

One of the finest voices of her generation, Haydée Milanés set out to record her first album in exile. She is the daughter of Cuban singer-songwriter Pablo Milanés, a towering figure throughout the Spanish-speaking world. He was a principal architect of Nueva Canción, the politically engaged movement born of the Cuban Revolution, and the composer of some of his era's most enduring ballads. Haydée is a rightful heir to the great Milanés tradition—a legacy that reaches beyond her father's own compositions to embrace, with enduring affection, the musical history of Cuba and the wider Americas.

Haydée was born in 1980 and raised in revolutionary Cuba, where longstanding restrictions curtailed the cultural exchange between the island and the United States that had flourished through the 1950s. The resulting isolation affected the music of both countries. By the time Haydée arrived in the United States in 2022, decades had passed—and she had much to discover.

Popular music waits for no one. Haydée wanted to record an album of love songs—boleros—but she also knew that the Golden Age of her father's generation, and those before it, had passed. Many classic boleros, whether written by men or women, cast women as victims—a perspective that now belongs in the past. Haydée needed to shape a contemporary persona: an empowered woman who has lived and loved fully while remaining open to whatever the future may bring. We explored a vast repertoire of exceptional songs from Latin America and Spain, ultimately selecting the ten that felt most relevant to Haydée and to this album.

In the twenty-first century, love songs have become not only bolder and more risqué, but also more intimate in their interpretation. Rather than always belted to the back row, a contemporary love song may be whispered into a listener's ear -a private revelation shared in confidence. Given the nuance and expressive range of Haydée's voice, she chose this intimate approach, drawing attention to harmonies that had largely gone unexplored until now.

We avoided the bombast of brass and soaring strings, choosing instead a small, handpicked ensemble whose playing surrounds and supports Haydée's voice. These musicians are among the finest jazz sidemen. We translated the lyrics for them, and now for you, the listeners, so they could engage more deeply with each song. By giving them room for their own inspired contributions, we strengthened their musical connection with Haydée and brought fresh dimensions to these classics.

John Di Martino, one of America's finest piano accompanists, was the ideal arranger for our concept because of his deep experience in both jazz and Latin music. Although the newest song in our repertoire is more than half a century old, we wanted to avoid creating a musty journey into the past. The album needed to sound like today—and, if possible, like tomorrow. The ensemble reflects that forward-looking spirit: bassist Ryoma Takenaga had just turned 21, drummer Anton Kot was 24, and the equally brilliant tenor saxophonist Julian Lee was 30. For a touch of Americana, I turned to Patricia Barber's guitarist, Neal Alger, whose inspired playing provides the subtle dislocation we were seeking. There is not a Latino among them. That choice is deliberate: this is an album shaped by exile, not merely by music from long ago.

We had no desire to pretend we were in some distant Havana nightclub, because we were not. Rather than rely on traditional Afro-Cuban percussion, we drew the songs 'rhythms entirely from the drum kit. We allowed ourselves the freedom to do an album Made in USA, confident that the moment Haydée began to sing, the cultural identity of our journey would be unmistakable.

There are many paths to the heart of a song. This is ours.

'NOCHE AMERICANA' (2026)



Recorded at Samurai Hotel in Astoria, NY on April 18 & 19, 2026 by Jim Anderson with Ulrike Schwartz
Mixing Engineer: Jim Anderson
Mastering Engineer: Ulrike Schwarz

Haydée Milanés, vocals
John di Martino, piano, arrangements, music director
Ryoma Takenaga, acoustic bass
Anton Kot, drums
Julian Lee, tenor sax
Neal Alger, steel-string guitar

Produced by Nat Chediak

Executive Producers: Fernando Trueba, Nat Chediak

Time: 45:04

- 'Envidia' 4:13 (Gregorio García Segura, Alfredo García Segura)
- 'Añorado Encuentro' 4:55 (Giraldo Piloto, Alberto Vera)
- 'Algo Contigo' 4:34 (Chico Novarro)
- 'Solamente Una Vez' 3:51 (Agustín Lara)
- 'Realidad y Fantasía' 4:16 (César Portillo de la Luz)
- 'Soy Lo Prohibido' 4:44(Roberto Cantoral, Dino Ramos)
- 'Contigo Aprendí' 5:04 (Armando Manzanero)
- 'Cuando Vuelva A Tu Lado' 4:54 (María Grever)
- 'Vieja Luna' 3:47 (Orlando de la Rosa)
- 'Mi Mejor Canción' 4:41 (José Antonio Méndez)

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Contratación
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