

NEWS AND PROFILES CONNECTING THE LATINO AMERICAN COMMUNITY IN MINNESOTA

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**Lili Gil
Valletta**
*Leader
Entrepreneur
Mother*

Lili Gil Valletta - Líder • empresaria • madre

Lili Gil Valletta: From Colombia to New York City An Entrepreneur Making A Difference



Lili is the creator of Dreamers Ventures, bringing together a best-in-class alliance of business experts to search, mentor, and launch products created by Latinos on TV in partnership with HSN.

Lili is an award-winning entrepreneur, recognized cultural intelligence™ expert, A.I. tech innovator and World Economic Forum Young Global Leader. She came to the U.S. at the age of 17 without speaking English after leaving her entire family behind in her native country of Colombia. After a successful corporate career, including a 10-year tenure at Johnson & Johnson where she pioneered various diversity strategies, Lili co-founded CIEN+ and CulturIntel. Her firm is globally recognized as a leader in big data analytics, business and marketing strategies to help global corporations successfully turn cultural trends and inclusion into profits. She is a regular TV commentator seen on Fox News, Fox Business and CNN en Español, and has been featured by Forbes, CNN Money, The Huffington Post, The NY Daily News, and MM&M. She is also the recipient of numerous awards, including the 2018 U.S. Hispanic Businessperson of the Year by the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, 2018 New York Women of Excellence, PR Week's Top 50 Most Influential in Healthcare, among others.



Lili was a member of the "first ever All-Female selection committee" for the Miss Universe 2018 Contest!



Lili with Rick Aguilar at the Health National Conference.



Lili lives in New York City with her husband entrepreneur and former NFL football player Chris Valletta and their two sons John David and Christian.

For her commitment to advancing minority and women business issues, she has advised initiatives at the United Nations and the White House and she currently serves as a board member of the Harvard Women's Leadership Board, National Board of Directors of the YMCA USA, mentor to the Stanford Latino Entrepreneur Leaders Program, and was appointed by New York's Governor Andrew Cuomo to join the New York State Council on Women and Girls and by Mayor Bill de Blasio to join the NYC Tech Leadership Council.

*"Lili is an amazing business leader, a wonderful person and my good friend."
—Rick Aguilar*



On The Cover
Lili Gil Valletta
Leader • Entrepreneur • Mother

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¿Cómo ser una buena persona?



Por Saúl Carranza

Es difícil responder a esa pregunta porque los valores y virtudes que identifican la bondad son diferentes para cada cultura y generación. La descripción de una buena persona que se usaba en los 80s o 90s por ejemplo, ha cambiado mucho en nuestros días. La cultura de fines del siglo XX se guiaba por el modernismo y la actual responde a otra forma de pensamiento llamado la posmodernidad.

Sin embargo, en cada persona siempre debe haber ese deseo de superación y conocimiento propio que nos inspire a ser mejores para nosotros mismos, para la familia y para con todos. Lo difícil de iniciar un proyecto de remodelación de nuestra persona es que debemos saber qué debemos cambiar. El filósofo Heráclito decía “conócete a ti mismo”. El problema es que siempre estamos dispuestos a reconocer lo mejor de nosotros, pero nos cuesta aceptar lo que no nos gusta o sabemos que no es bueno.

Necesitamos entonces una guía que en si misma sea autoridad, que se haya probado por el paso del tiempo y que no se parcialice. Una guía que pueda mostrarnos la bondad en su más pura expresión. Para mí, la Biblia cumple esos requisitos y nos da algunos consejos sanos que pueden ayudarnos a cumplir con nuestro objetivo, Ser mejores personas,

Aunque las áreas a trabajar son muchas y diferentes en cada persona quiero mencionar cinco que la Biblia anota para todos. 1 Dejar a un lado el Egoísmo: “Hebreos 13:16 Nunca se olviden de hacer lo bueno, ni de compartir lo que tienen con los que no tienen nada. Esos son los sacrificios que agradan a Dios.”

How to Be a Good Person?

By Saúl Carranza

It is difficult to answer that question because the values and virtues that identify goodness are different for each culture and generation. The description of a good person that was used in the 80s or 90s for example, has changed a lot in our days. The culture of the late twentieth century was guided by modernism and the current responds to another form of thinking called postmodernity.

However, in each person there must always be that desire for self-improvement and self-knowledge that inspires us to be better for ourselves, for the family and for everyone. The difficult thing to start a remodeling project of our person is that we must know what we should change. The philosopher Heraclitus said “know yourself”. The problem is that we are always willing to recognize the best of ourselves, but it is hard for us to accept what we do not like or we know that it is not good.

We need then a guide that in itself is authority, that has been proven by the passage of time and that is not biased. A guide that can show us kindness in its purest expression. For me, the Bible meets these requirements and gives us some healthy advice that can help us meet our goal, Be better people,

Although the areas to work are many and different in each person I want to mention five that the Bible writes for everyone. 1 Put aside Egoism: “Hebrews 13:16 Never forget to do good, or to share what you have with those who have nothing. These are the sacrifices that please God.” 2 Respect for the laws and authorities: Titus 3: 1 ... remind them that they must

2 El respeto a las leyes y autoridades: Tito 3:1 ... recuérdales que deben obedecer a los gobernantes y a las autoridades del país. Recuérdales también que deben ser obedientes en todo y estar siempre dispuestos a hacer el bien.” 3 Aprender a amar: “1 Corintios 13:4y5 El que ama tiene paciencia en todo, y siempre es amable. El que ama no es envidioso, ni se cree más que nadie. No es orgulloso. No es grosero ni egoísta. No se enoja por cualquier cosa. No se pasa la vida recordando lo malo que otros le han hecho.” 4 Saber perdonar: “Mat 6:12 y perdona nuestras deudas, como también nosotros perdonamos a nuestros deudores;” 5 Ser agradecidos: “1 Tes. 5:18 Dad gracias en todo, porque esta es la voluntad de Dios para con vosotros en Cristo Jesús.

Creo que hacer esto intencionalmente es un buen comienzo en nuestro esfuerzo para ser mejores personas. Por supuesto hay muchas cosas más. Y a veces las demás personas no cooperan con nosotros para alcanzar la meta. Sin embargo, tenemos toda la vida para practicar y obtener el fruto de nuestro esfuerzo. La Biblia es como una lámpara que ilumina nuestra vida y nos muestra lo bueno y lo malo que hacemos. También que en aquello que nosotros solos no podemos cambiar, Dios está a nuestro lado para ayudarnos, Por eso nos dice: Gál 6:9 “Así que no nos cansemos de hacer el bien porque, si seguimos haciéndolo, Dios nos premiará a su debido tiempo”.

Dios te bendiga y ayude a ser hoy mejor que ayer y mañana mejor que hoy. Jesús puede ayudarte a lograrlo, búscalo.

El Rev. Saúl Carranza es el Pastor de la Iglesia Cristo Para Todas las Naciones en Crystal MN. Por favor contáctelo por email a pastorcarranza@gmail.com o llámelo al 7632452378

obey the rulers and the authorities of the country. Remind them also that they must be obedient in everything and always be willing to do good. “3 Learning to love:” 1 Corinthians 13: 4y5 He who loves has patience in everything, and is always kind. The one who loves is not envious, nor believes more than anyone. He is not proud. It is not rude or selfish. Do not be angry about anything. He does not spend his life remembering how bad others have done him. “4 Knowing how to forgive:” Mat 6:12 and forgive our debts, as we forgive our debtors; “5 Be grateful:” 1 Tes. 5:18 Give thanks in all things, for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

I think doing this intentionally is a good start in our effort to be better people. Of course there are many more things. And sometimes other people do not cooperate with us to reach the goal. However, we have all our lives to practice and obtain the fruit of our effort. The Bible is like a lamp that illuminates our life and shows us the good and the bad that we do. Also that in what we cannot change alone, God is at our side to help us, that’s why he says: Gal 6: 9 “So let’s not get tired of doing good because, if we keep doing it, God will reward us in his due weather”.

God bless you and help you to be better today than yesterday and tomorrow better than today. Jesus can help you achieve it, look for him.

Rev. Saúl Carranza is the Pastor of the Church “Cristo Para Todas las Naciones” in Crystal MN. Please contact him by email at pastorcarranza@gmail.com or call him at 7632452378

Preserving the Legacy



Marci Malzahn

By Marci Malzahn

At the time I'm writing this article, my dad, Dr. Orlando Flores Ponce, is 91 years old. He's healthy, however, at his age, every time I see him, it may be my last so I try to enjoy every moment with him. He is an attorney and a composer. He has composed over 400 songs throughout his life since he was a young man. In fact, he won the very first "45-gold record" in Central America for one of his most popular songs "Cocibolca." (Cocibolca is one of the large volcanoes in Nicaragua.) He composes his music on the piano by ear and never learned to read or write music. Therefore, he hired musicians to write his music on music sheets.

Because I want to preserve his legacy, and his music is a crucial part of that, I asked him to give me all the music sheets he had so I could digitize them. But then I found myself with no time to do this huge task. So, I had an idea: Leverage the young people to preserve my dad's legacy! I then hired my twenty-year-old niece (one of his fifteen grandchildren) to help me scan all his music. She was excited to do the project and for her it was easy to do it, plus she earned some extra money during her Christmas break. For my dad, it would have been impossible to do it using and understanding the technology.

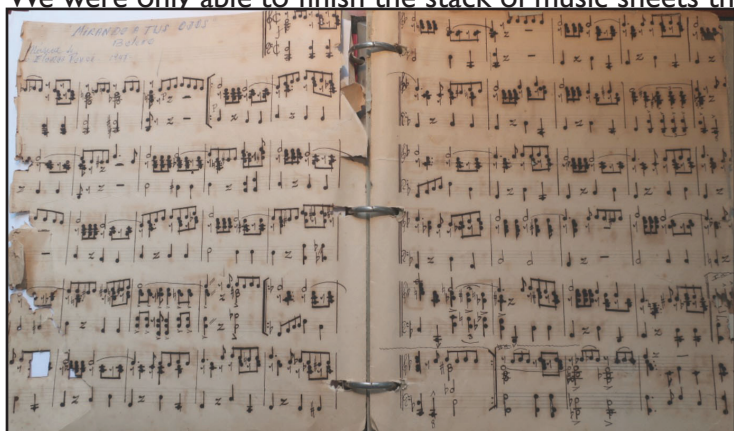
And I didn't have the time to do it so hiring someone was the way to go.

We found some music sheets dating back to 1947 that were almost disintegrating, and we couldn't scan them so I decided to take photos of those documents and preserve them that way. When we were done with all the sheets we had, my niece was happy, I was happy and relieved, and my dad was beyond excited when I told him we were done. He felt valued and appreciated. He also felt relieved knowing his talent will be preserved as part of his legacy for his children, grandchildren, and now, his great grandchildren.



Malzahn's father won the first "45-gold record" in Central America for his songs "Cocibolca."

We were only able to finish the stack of music sheets that my parents gave me the last time they were at my house. I was very excited to discover that they have more music sheets at their home in Nicaragua plus they gave yet another stack of music sheets to one of my sisters to safekeep. So, now I'm looking forward to finishing this amazing project and hope that someday young musicians will play my dad's music. I know that will make him so happy while he's still here with us and later when he's looking down from heaven.



Malzahn's father's music sheets dating back to 1947.

This experience helped me realize two things: 1) The older generation is in great need to preserve their history and thus their legacy. And 2) The young generations are eager to work regardless what type of work it is and they are eager to help. Something as simple as scanning old documents made a huge difference to my niece, to me, and to my dad, in various ways. Therefore, instead of fighting each other in the workplace, let's use each other's talents and leverage each other's skills and needs. Let's all work as a team regardless of our age.

Marci Malzahn is president and founder of Malzahn Strategic (www.malzahn-strategic.com), a community financial institution consultancy focused on strategic planning, enterprise risk management, cash management, and talent management. Marci is also a professional speaker and published author of three books. You can contact Marci for speaking engagements through her website at www.marciamalzahn.com or email her at marcia@marciamalzahn.com. You can purchase Marci's books at www.Amazon.com.

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Multicultural Marketing Conference a Success



Rosemary Ugboajah receiving her award

The 23rd annual Multicultural Marketing Conference & Awards was held on February 21, 2019 at the Wellstone Center in St. Paul. The conference was presented by Aguilar Productions, the leader in promoting the multicultural markets in the U.S. This full-day conference drew an audience of marketing professionals from various organizations and businesses who were treated to an outstanding array of presentations.

Presenters included Rico Vallejos, marketing creative director, Cecilia Stanton Adams, CEO of Stanton Adams Consulting, LLC, Trent Bowman, VP Community Development Officer KleinBank, a division of Old National Bank, Marcus Mays, Specialist – Retail Operations Comcast Twin Cities/Greater KC Region, Rosemary Ugboajah, President Neka Creative and Tom Gitaa, President & Publisher of Mshale, the African Community Newspaper.

Rosemary Ugboajah was honored with the Multicultural Marketing Achievement Award in recognition of her outstanding achievements in the Multicultural Marketing Industry in the United States.

Conference sponsors included: U.S. Bank, Comcast, Minnesota State Parks & Trails, KleinBank, a division of Old National Bank and *Latino American Today*. Thanks for their support of this conference.



Rick with Cecilia Stanton Adams and Marcus Mays



Rico Vallejos, conference presenter and moderator



Tom Gitaa and Rosemary Ugboajah



Conference attendees enjoyed informative seminars and great networking.



Rick with conference sponsors Trent Bowman and Steve Spears, KleinBank, a division of Old National Bank.

Valleyfair to Hire 2,000 New Associates for the 2019 Season

Valleyfair

Valleyfair is looking to hire 2,000 new associates for the 2019 season. A diverse range of job opportunities are available in all areas of park operation. Whether it's rides, food & beverage, security, admissions, EMTs and lifeguards, retail or other positions, Valleyfair has a spot for all job-seekers.

2019 brings an increase in wages, with select positions starting at \$12.00 an hour, and a more modernized dress code that allows originality while working. Benefits include free admission to Valleyfair and all Cedar Fair parks and waterparks, scholarship opportunities, discounts on food and merchandise, employee-only ride nights, and more.

Valleyfair offers 'choose-your-own-hours' scheduling allowing employees to work as many or as few hours as desired. In choosing to make Valleyfair their employer of choice, Minnesotans can develop essential and transferable skills including communication, work ethic, and leadership. Most of the park's seasonal positions are available to applicants who are 16 years and older. A limited number of jobs require a minimum age of 14 years.

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Valleyfair will hold open interviews from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM on February 2, 16, and 23. Feel free to drop by and make this your best summer ever at Valleyfair!

A limited number of positions are available in all departments, and those positions can fill up quickly. Visit Valleyfair.com/jobs to apply for open positions. Valleyfair opens for the 2019 season on Saturday, May, 11, 2019 and the full operating calendar can be found online at Valleyfair.com.

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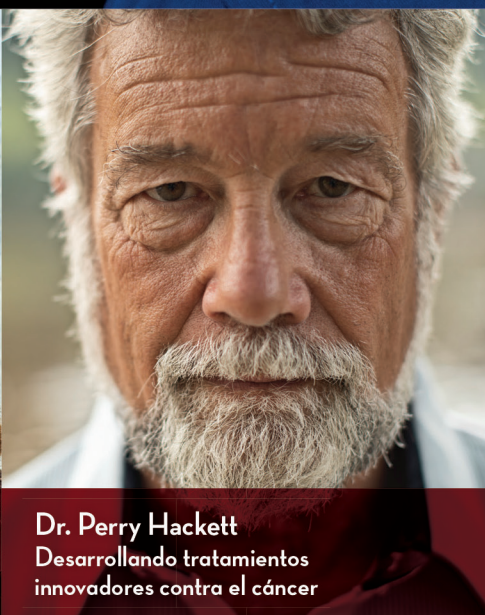
¿Sabes lo que la hace por ti?

Conoces la U de M. ¿Pero realmente sabes lo que la U hace por ti? Desde la lucha contra la crisis de los opioides hasta la detección temprana del autismo, compartiremos historias que impulsan a descubrir el hogar a las puertas de Minnesota. Lleve el descubrimiento a otro nivel en discover.umn.edu.

Dr. Lucien Gonzalez
Luchando contra la crisis de los opioides



Dr. Kathy Draeger
Suministro de desiertos alimentarios a Minnesota



Dr. Perry Hackett
Desarrollando tratamientos innovadores contra el cáncer



Jake Overgaard
Educar a los agricultores con nuevas herramientas

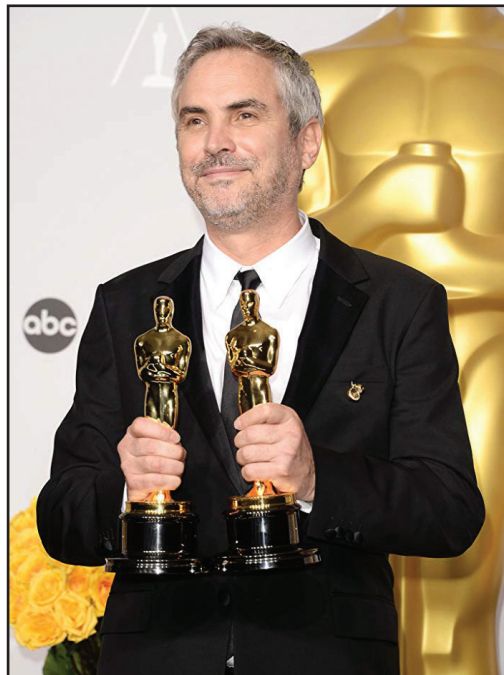


Dr. Maria Gini
Detectando el autismo con anticipación

Mexican Film Director Wins Oscar Again!



The star of **Roma**, Yalitza Aparicio became the first indigenous woman to be nominated for an Oscar and the second Mexican woman nominee.



This year's Oscar winner for Best Director Alfonso Cuarón for the amazing film **Roma**.



Mexican director Guillermo del Toro.



Oscar winning director Alejandro González Iñárritu

A Mexican director has won the Oscar for Best Directing five times in the past six year.

The “three amigos” (Cuarón, Guillermo Del Toro, and Iñárritu,) are proving Mexico to be where the talent’s at.

2013: Alfonso Cuarón - *Gravity* • **2014:** Alejandro González Iñárritu - *Birdman or (The Unexpected Virtue of Ignorance)* • **2015:** Alejandro González Iñárritu - *The Revenant* • **2016:** Damien Chazelle - *La La Land* • **2017:** Guillermo Del Toro - *The Shape of Water* • **2018:** Alfonso Cuarón - *Roma*

Latinos Lead in Movie Attendance



BY MELISSA LOCKER

What movies lack in ticket sales they make up for in statistics, at least that’s the takeaway from the annual Theme Report from the MPAA, which is packed with stats about movies, movie theaters, and moviegoers from 2017.

Last year, audiences identifying as Hispanic/Latino reported the highest per-capita attendance at the movies, going to the movies an average of 4.5 times a year. Audiences identifying as Asians followed in a close second, with 4.3 times. Caucasians, who make up 61% of the U.S. population, bought 55% of the tickets. While Latinxs make up 18% of the population, they buy 23% of the movie tickets sold in the U.S. Outside the U.S., Latin America pulled in \$3.4 billion in ticket

sales, with a 22% growth in sales, the largest of any region in the world, thanks to a 15% surge in Brazil and a 7% growth in Mexico. Will Hollywood actually pay attention to these findings and start hiring more diverse casts in numbers that actually represent the makeup of audiences? Math doesn’t lie, so it seems like a given the industry would heed it, but it probably won’t.

The overall gender breakdown of moviegoers in 2017 was split 50-50 between men and women. That said, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Wonder Woman* were the second and third top-grossing films last year and attracted majority-female audiences at 64% and 52%, respectively. The top-grossing film was *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, which earned 60% of its box office from men, but had a woman in the lead role and several others in prominent supporting roles. So, similar question here: Will Hollywood cast 50% of the lead roles in blockbusters with women? Probably not.

Movie admissions in the U.S. and Canada hit a 10-year low in 2017, falling 6% to 1.24 billion tickets sold. The global box office made up for it, though, hitting a record high of \$40.6 billion in 2017, up 5% from 2016. Foreign moviegoers accounted for nearly three-quarters (73%) of the worldwide box office for all films last year, up from 71% the year before, largely attributed to Chinese movie lovers flocking to the cinema.

The report also found that the top grossing films, including *Spider-Man: Homecoming* and *Wonder Woman* drew the most ethnically diverse audiences. Will Hollywood take this lesson to heart? Sigh. Probably not.

Twin Cities Award-Winning Novelist and Composer Debuts Latest Novel



Minnesota author Roma Calatayud-Stocks

By Rachel M. Anderson, Contributing writer

A Symphony of Rivals, (Calumet Editions, Aug. 2018, \$29.99) is the second historical novel in a trilogy by Minnesota author Roma Calatayud-Stocks. The protagonist, Alejandra Morrison, faces more than a battle of the sexes in her quest to become a symphonic conductor in a male dominated field. She's also up against the upheaval in Europe in the years leading up to World War II. Alejandra travels to Germany in 1933 to pursue her musical studies in the birthplace of her heroes: Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms. And through her training, she follows the footsteps of Brico, Bülow, Mendelsohn, Strauss, Toscanini and Verdi. "One of my passions is to highlight the contributions of many cultures through the arts. These are the arteries that run through all three novels," said Calatayud-Stocks. "Music can inspire and serve as a catalyst for change. Beethoven's legacy was one of the main sources of inspiration. Beyond Beethoven's musical genius was his extraordinary love of humanity. In the novel, Beethoven's spirit serves as a moral compass that contrasts against fascist ideologies during a disturbing time in history."

The author hopes readers will have several takeaways after reading the story. "It's was necessary to address the politics of the era and poignant issues confronted by many of the characters in the story. It is through conflict and crisis where we can measure the character of individuals, and where we hope to see the triumph of human virtues," Calatayud-Stocks said. "Creative expression surpasses time and existence. Events and life happen, war and peace, and history is written. Art is what remains century after century."

Since its release, the novel has been receiving rave reviews. "A Suspenseful bridge to the final volume to a historical fiction series. The novel raises stimulating questions regarding work life balance, and the entwinement of art and politics. The momentum accelerates with the emergence of more serious conflicts, leaving readers with a cliffhanger. And for culture enthusiasts, the author once again offers musical selections corresponding to each chapter," Kirkus Reviews.

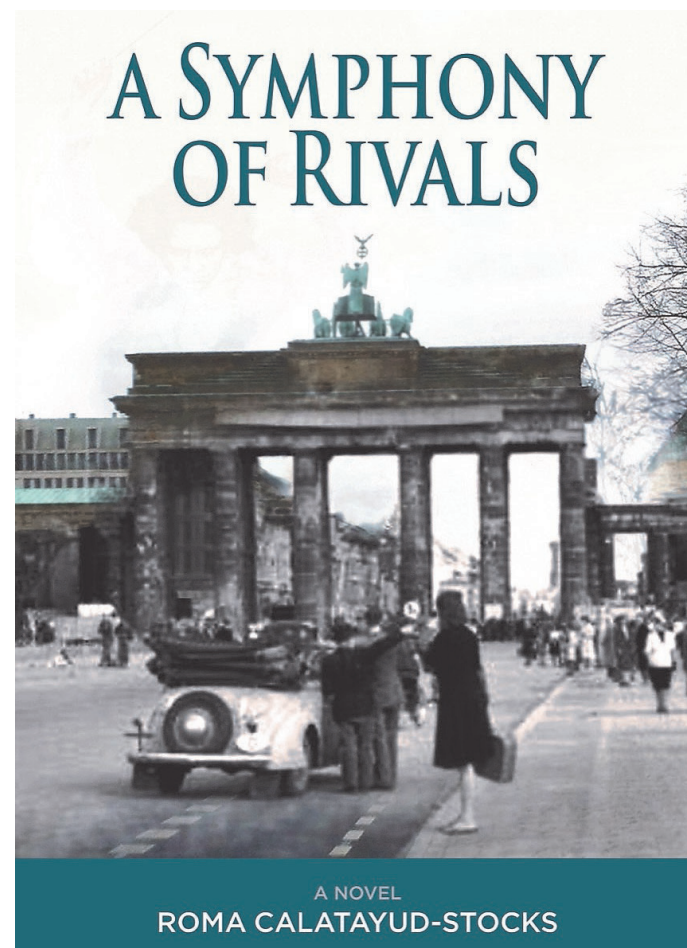
"Music had become a political instrument. The writing is good, exhibiting the kind of inspired genius shown by Alejandra Morrison. The strength of this story is in the bearing witness to the day-to-day process of personal experience whereby civilization loses its way. The overriding value of storytelling such as this is to force one to ask the question—Could it happen here in the United States?" Alan Goodman, the Internet Review of Books.

"A compelling story occurs right at this border between good and evil, between strength and weakness. And that is what makes Roma Calatayud-Stocks such an effective writer—especially in her latest book, *A Symphony of Rivals*," said Howard Lovy, the Alliance of Independent Authors.

A Symphony of Rivals and *A Song in My Heart* are available for purchase at bookstores and online. Author Roma Calatayud-Stocks is currently working on the third book in the series, *An Ode to Joy*. For reviews, awards, media appearances, upcoming events, or to contact the author, go to www.RomaStocks.com or www.CalumetEditions.com.

About the Author

Award-winning novelist and composer Roma Calatayud-Stocks holds bachelor and master degrees in Music and Psychology from the University of Minnesota—Twin Cities and postgraduate studies in creative writing from the University of St. Thomas. Calatayud-Stocks is the author of two historical novels *A Song in My Heart* and *A Symphony of Rivals*, published by Calumet Editions. In line with her life passion and commitment to bring forth the contributions of all cultures through the arts, Roma's narratives, set to music, provide a window to locations across the world, while also addressing poignant issues, politics of the era, and history. Calatayud-Stocks has released two albums "Carnival of Life," and, to accompany her debut novel, "A Song in My Heart." With classical, jazz, and Latin musical influences, the albums showcase her original songs and instrumental compositions. Calatayud-Stocks has twenty years of experience working with various Twin Cities Art organizations. Roma lives in Minneapolis with her husband, Tom.



Top 7 FAQs About Hearing Loss



The National Institutes of Health research shows that nearly 1 in 7 Latino adults has hearing loss.

#1 Is High Blood Pressure Linked to Hearing Loss?

Research is now linking high blood pressure to hearing loss. Some researchers have even called the ear “a window to the heart.” When high blood pressure (130/80 mm Hg and above) is left untreated, it can directly affect your hearing by serving as an accelerating factor in the degeneration of the auditory system. When blood vessels all over the body—including the ears—are injured, fatty plaque builds up and can affect your hearing.

#2 Is Hearing Loss a Sign of Dementia?

Research suggests that age-related hearing loss is associated with cognitive decline and dementia, a condition marked by memory loss and trouble with thinking, problem-solving and other mental tasks. However, one in three cases of dementia could be prevented by maintaining a healthy lifestyle, which could reduce the incidence of dementia by as much as 20 percent. If your ears can no longer pick up on as many sounds, your hearing nerves will send fewer signals to your brain, which increases your chances for mental decline.

#3 What Causes Ears to Ring?

Tinnitus, an audiological and neurological condition, which is often described as a buzzing, hissing, whistling or clicking sound, is primarily caused by environmental and behavioral factors, with noise exposure and hearing loss being the main catalysts. In most cases, tinnitus is a sensorineural reaction in the brain to damage in the ear and auditory system, causing less external sound stimuli to reach the brain. Tinnitus is the brain’s way of filling in the missing sound frequencies it no longer receives from the auditory system.

#4 Can Yoga Improve My Hearing?

Cardiovascular exercise is vital to maintaining hearing health. Whether you are doing vinyasa yoga or jogging, taking just 30 minutes a day to exercise may create the heart rate and level of circulation that could protect your hearing. Certain yoga poses may even help by increasing circulation in your ear and brain, which helps improve nerve function and removes waste and toxins.

#5 Can Prescription Medication Damage My Hearing?

Some medications called ototoxic drugs can damage the ear, resulting in hearing loss, tinnitus or balance disorders. They are far more prevalent than you may have realized. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, there are more than 200 ototoxic drugs on the market. Some of the most common prescription medications known to cause hearing loss are used to treat serious infections, cancer and heart disease.

#6 How Do I Protect My Ears When I Fly?

Takeoff and landing are the loudest moments, when noise levels inside the cabin can reach 105 decibels (dB). On an older plane, noise levels may be closer to 90-100 dB for the duration of the flight, especially towards the back of a plane, where the engine is. Even if you don’t fly too often, you may want to consider wearing hearing protection during takeoff and landing and avoiding the noisier areas of the plane—in the rear of the cabin and near the engines or propellers.

#7 Can Hearing Loss Impact My Retirement Fund?

When you have untreated hearing loss, you are more likely to face hurdles with effective communication, underemployment and mental health issues that may affect job performance. These factors may lead to less money saved for retirement. A survey of 40,000 households using the National Family Opinion panel found hearing loss negatively impacted household income on average up to \$12,000 per year, depending on the degree of hearing loss.

Early detection key to positive outcomes

According to the Hearing Loss Association of America, adults wait an average of seven years from when they first notice symptoms until they seek help for hearing loss. Early detection is key to achieve better results. That’s why the Campaign for Better Hearing and other hearing-focused organizations advocate for early treatment and annual hearing assessments for adults 60 and over.

Spring Is Just Around the Corner at Minnesota State Parks



Minnesota's state flower, the Showy Lady's Slipper, which blooms in the spring.

By Harland Hiemstra, Minnesota DNR

Bone-numbing windchills in January. Record-busting snowfalls in February. Is anyone here ready for Winter to be over yet?

Well take heart, Spring is right around the corner! If you have any doubts, just visit a local state park, where the signs of Spring are starting to show themselves to anyone willing to observe.

Astronomers, and the people who print our calendars, say Spring begins on the vernal equinox: that day in March when the sun is directly over earth's equator or mid-section, and the night is roughly equal in length to the day. This year, that happens on March 20. For meteorologists, Spring begins on March 1, because it's easier to compile statistical data on a month-by-month basis.

Regardless of what the calendar and the weatherman say, the best way to tell if Spring has sprung is to get outdoors and see for yourself. Listen for coyotes howling in the evening as they seek

mates. Hawks also begin their mating season this time of year, complete with acrobatic flights, dives, and piercing screams. Migrating birds return to fill the air with their calls. As ice leaves the St. Croix, Mississippi and other rivers, you can see large numbers of waterfowl. Afton State Park offers some great eagle watching opportunities in the Spring, as does Frontenac State Park between Red Wing and Lake City. Some birds that stick around all winter begin to change their tune when Spring is in the air. The northern cardinal, for instance, switches to a more elongated whistling song in March to establish its territory and attract a partner.

Old-timers would say that when the cardinal and the chickadee start singing their Spring songs, it's time to tap trees for syrup. The same springtime freeze-thaw cycle that gives rise to potholes in Minnesota roads causes the sap to flow in the maple trees, providing the raw material that can be boiled down into tasty maple syrup. Squirrels know all about that. You can often see them on a warm March day gnawing around buds or broken branches to get at the sweet sap. In March, they need the extra calories, because they may be caring for a nest of youngsters. You can learn about making maple syrup through programs offered at many state parks.

Some hibernating mammals begin emerging from their winter slumber as the days lengthen and warm. Racoons, woodchucks and chipmunks all begin waking up in March. Print out a key to common animal tracks from www.mndnr.gov and see how many you can find. There are also commercially available apps that can be downloaded onto a smartphone. A hike around Pike Island at Fort Snelling State Park is a good place to try it out. Watch for deer with only one antler, while you're there, as the bucks lose their horny headgear one-side at a time.

Sure, March might still deliver a few more blasts from Old Man Winter. But if you get outdoors and look around, you'll see that hopeful signs are everywhere: Spring is on its way!



Kao Thao, from the Department of Natural Resources, shows visitors how maple syrup is produced in Ft. Snelling St. Park.

Make Maple Syrup for a Sweet Taste of Spring!



Hundreds of years ago, before there were weather reports or thermometers, Minnesota's Ojibwe Indians kept an eye on the natural world around them to tell them when Spring was on its way. When the crows and eagles started to return from their winter grounds, the people knew that the sap would soon start flowing, and it was time to tap the maple trees around them to make syrup.

Come to one of the many maple syruping events at Minnesota state parks in March and see how it's done. You'll enjoy some hands-on experience, and get to enjoy a sweet taste of Spring.

- **Fort Snelling State Park – March 9, 10, 16, 23, 24**
- **Wild River State Park – March 10, 16, 17, 23, 24, 30**
- **Whitewater State Park – March 9, 16, 23, 30**

The programs are free, but reservations may be required for some of them, and a daily or yearly vehicle permit is required to visit the park. More information at www.mndnr.gov/maplesyrup.

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