

Mireya Ramos

Mireya Ramos. Performing with Charlie and the Tropicales

By John Radanovich



Photo by Kelvin Pagan

The hyper-talented violinist and singer-songwriter Mireya Ramos will be a guest of Charlie and the Tropicales.

Ramos is best known for her soaring vocal duets as one of the *caras lindas* “pretty faces” of ranchera music, the Grammy winning Mariachi Flor de Toloache, the first all-women mariachi group in New York City.

Ramos bathed in the warm Caribbean musical waters her entire life. In New York she discovered jazz violinist Regina Carter, and taught herself to play jazz stylings, to which she adds her own love of the unique and emotive Mexican Huasteca regional style, which is often in 6/8 time, closer to its African origin than European. It’s a style that fits well with the more syncopated rhythms Ramos loves to explore.

Frustrated by a dismissive male mariachi attitude, she convinced singer Shae Fiol (whose background was in soul and R&B, not Mexican ranchera) to form Flor de Toloache in 2008. As an artist with such naturally open musical boundaries, Ramos leads the band while relying on her traditional ranchera and Huasteca musical background, but also jazz, blues, and soul. Mariachi traditionalists were slow to accept (some never did) the group, but New York fans quickly fell in love with them. After a Latin Grammy in 2014 (and nominations since), they appeared on Harry Connick’s television show and worked with Cuban percussion great Pedrito

Martinez (“No one ever did a huapango with batanga in a rap,” she laughs, referring to the title song of “Las Caras Lindas”). Their visit to NPR’s Tiny Desk in 2016 is one of the highlights of the entire series, especially the arresting vocal duet on the completely original “Let Down.”

The Tropicales and Ramos will appear together all over town, continuing to perform her “Dicen” and “Quiero Volver,” the Tropicales exciting and atmospheric version of Los Satelites “Ocaso Marino” cumbia from Jump Up, and the standard “Perfidia.” Expect the collaboration to have the entire Caribbean covered, from New Orleans to the coast of Colombia. And look for Ramos to play for the Midnight Preserves annual benefit at Preservation Hall.