RENÉE AND HENRY SEGERSTROM CONCERT HALL
October 9, 2015

Friday at 8 p.m.
Preview talk by José Rizo at 7:15 p.m.

Afterparty in the lobby with DJ Caezs Hernandez

Eddie Palmieri Salsa Orchestra

Poncho Sanchez Latin Jazz Band

The Center applauds:

Out of courtesy to the artists and your fellow patrons, please take a moment to turn off and refrain from using cellular phones, pagers, watch alarms and similar devices. The use of any audio or videorecording device or the taking of photographs (with or without flash) is strictly prohibited. Thank you.
**Eddie Palmieri**

Eddie Palmieri, known for his charismatic power and bold innovative drive, has a musical career that spans more than 50 years as a bandleader of Salsa and Latin jazz orchestras. With a discography that includes 36 titles, Palmieri has been awarded nine Grammy® Awards. He received his first Grammy Award in 1975 for his release *The Sun of Latin Music*, which is often considered the most historic, as it was the first time Latin music was recognized by the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences (NARAS). He would win again the following year for *Unfinished Masterpiece, Palo Pa’ Rumba* in 1984, *Solito* in 1985 and *La Verdad* in 1987. He received a Latin Grammy and a traditional Grammy for his 2000 release with Tito Puente titled *Obra Maestra/Masterpiece*, *Listen Here!* in 2006 and *Simpatico* in 2007, a collaborative effort with trumpet master Brian Lynch, for Best Latin Jazz Album. *Simpatico* was also recognized by the Jazz Journalist Association as Best Latin Jazz Album that same year. In 1993 Palmieri was appointed to the board of governors of the New York chapter of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences where he was instrumental in creating a new category for Latin Jazz in 1995. His album *Palmas* was among the nominees in this newly created category, and in 1996 he was nominated once again for his album *Aporte*.

In 1988, the Smithsonian Institute recorded two of Palmieri’s performances for its catalog of the National Museum of American History in Washington DC, a rare public honor. In 1990, he was invited by Paul Simon to serve as a consultant on his release *Rhythm of the Saints*. He was awarded the Eubie Blake Award by Dr. Billy Taylor in 1991 and is among the very few Latin musicians recognized by both the Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico and New York State.

The 1998 Heineken Jazz Festival in San Juan, Puerto Rico, paid tribute to his contributions as a bandleader, bestowing him an honorary doctorate degree from the Berklee College of Music. In 2002, Yale University awarded Palmieri the Chubb Fellowship, an award usually reserved for international heads of state, but given to him in recognition of his work in building communities through music. That same year he received the National Black Sports and Entertainment Lifetime Achievement Award. Other inductees with him were Roberto Clemente, Count Basie, Max Roach, Billie Holiday and Dinah Washington. In 2002, he was recognized by the London BBC, with its Award for Most Exciting Latin Performance.

In 2005, Palmieri received a series of prestigious awards: the Alice Tully African Heritage Award from City College, the Harlem Renaissance Award, and was inducted into both the Bronx Walk of Fame and the Chicago Walk of Fame. In 2003 he was named an NEA Jazz Master. He also received the Lifetime Achievement Award from Urban Latino magazine. He acted as Godfather of the Puerto Rican Day Parade in New York City and received the EL Award from *El Diario* Newspaper. Yet another outstanding achievement that year was the debut of *Caliente*, a radio show hosted by Palmieri on National Public Radio, making him the first Latino ever to do so. The show has been a tremendous success, being picked up by more than 160 radio stations nationwide.

Born in Spanish Harlem in 1936, Palmieri began piano studies at an early age, as did his celebrated older brother, the late Salsa legend and pianist, Charlie Palmieri. For Latin New Yorkers of Eddie’s generation, music was a vehicle out of El Barrio. At age 11, he auditioned at Weil Recital Hall, which is next door to Carnegie Hall, a venue as far from the Bronx as he could imagine. Possessed by a desire to play the drums, Palmieri joined his uncle’s orchestra at age 13, where he played timbales. Says Palmieri, “By 15, it was goodbye timbales and back to the piano until this day. I’m a frustrated percussionist, so I take it out on the piano.”

He began his professional career as a pianist in the early ’50s with Eddie Forrester’s Orchestra. In 1955 he joined Johnny Segui’s band. He also spent a year with the Tito Rodriguez Orchestra before forming his own band, the legendary La Perfecta in 1961. La Perfecta was unique in that it featured a ten-piece section (led by the late Barry Rogers) in place of trumpets, something that had been rarely done in Latin music, demonstrating the early stages of Palmieri’s unconventional means of orchestration. They were known as “the band with the crazy roaring elephants” because of this configuration of two trombones, flute, percussion, bass and a vocalist. With an infectious sound, Palmieri’s band soon joined the ranks of Machito, Tito Rodriguez and other major Latin orchestras of the day. His unconventional style would once again surprise critics and his fans with the 1970 release titled *Harlem River Drive*. This recording was the first to really merge black and Latin styles (and musicians), resulting in a free-form sound encompassing elements of salsa, funk, soul and jazz. What
resulted was a fusion that moved effortlessly from mood, groove, texture and excitement with its multi-dimensional guitar, funky piano riffs, notable brass and unforgettable rhythm section. Led by Palmieri, the group also included his brother Charlie, as well as excellent players from both communities such as Victor Venegas, Andy Gonzales, Bernard “Pretty” Purdie and Ronnie Cuber. Further to this proclivity for creating and performing in funk Latin style, in 1997 he was invited to record by Little Louie Vega in “Nuyorican Soul,” a release which has been a huge hit with dancers and DJ’s in the house music genre.

Palmieri’s influences include not only his older brother Charlie but also Jesus Lopez, Lili Martinez and other Cuban players of the 1940s; jazz luminaries Art Tatum, Bobby Timmons, Bill Evans, Horace Silver, Bud Powell and McCoy Tyner. Says Palmieri, “In Cuba, there was a development and crystallization of rhythmical patterns that have excited people for years. Cuban music provides the fundamental from which I never move. Whatever has to be built must be built from there. It’s a cross-cultural effect that makes magnificent music.”

Eddie Palmieri, a restless, yet instinctive artist, embraces the future of his music by unapologetically blazing a distinctive musical path to the delight of fans across the globe. He has one of the most actively touring Salsa and Latin Jazz orchestras to date, tours of which have taken him to Europe, Asia, Latin America, North Africa and throughout the Caribbean. A true powerhouse of brilliance, known for his astute arranging skills and historic compositions, Palmieri has shown that time is infinite with respect to his repertoire as he continues to thrill audiences throughout the world with his legendary style.

Eddie Palmieri - Piano, leader
Herman Olivera - Lead Vocal
Nelson Gonzalez - Tres Guitar, vocals
Joseph Gonzalez - Maracas, vocals
Jimmy Bosch - Trombone
Ivan Renta - Baritone Sax
Jonathan Powell - Trumpet
Louis Fouche - Alto Saxophone
Luques Curtis - Bass
Vincente “Little Johnny” - Congas
Nicky Marrero - Bongo
Camilo Molina - Timbales
Poncho Sanchez

If music were about pictures, percussionist Poncho Sanchez’s music would best be described as a kaleidoscopic swirl of some of the hottest colors and brightest lights to emerge from either side of the border. At any given show, on any given record, fragments of Latin jazz, swing, bebop, salsa and other infectious grooves collide and churn in a fiery swirl, with results that are no less than dazzling.

All of these sounds and more come together in Psychedelic Blues, Sanchez’s twenty-fourth recording on Concord Records. “The last couple records have gone a little heavy on the soul music, which has gone over really well in our live shows, but we wanted to do more of a straight-ahead Latin jazz record this time—something in the tradition of our earlier Concord records that we made back in the ’80s.”

Along with Synowiec is the same lineup that has backed Sanchez on several records and countless live shows: keyboardist/arranger David Torres; saxophonist Javier Vergara; trumpeter/flugelhornist Ron Blake; trombonist/arranger Francisco Torres; bassist/vocalist Tony Banda; timbalero George Ortiz; and percussionist/vocalist Joey De León. Even a couple alumni from earlier configurations of Sanchez’s band—baritone saxophonist Scott Martin and percussionist Alfredo Ortiz—step back in to lend a hand on Psychedelic Blues. A few of these seasoned players go back more than 30 years with Sanchez, back to some of his earliest gigs as a local fixture in the Los Angeles club circuit.

Although born in Laredo, Texas, in 1951 to a large Mexican-American family, Sanchez grew up in a suburb of L.A., where he was raised on an unusual cross section of sounds that included straight-ahead jazz, Latin jazz and American soul. By his teen years, his musical consciousness had been solidified by the likes of John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Cal Tjader, Mongo Santamaria, Wilson Pickett and James Brown. Along the way, he taught himself to play guitar, flute, drums and timbales, but eventually settled on the congas.

At 24, after working his way around the local club scene for several years, he landed a permanent spot in Cal Tjader’s band in 1975. “I learned a great deal from Cal,” says Sanchez, “but it wasn’t as though he sat me down and taught me lessons like a school teacher. Mostly it was just a matter of being around such a great guy. It was the way he conducted himself, the way he talked to people, the way he presented himself on stage. He was very elegant, very dignified, and when he played, he played beautifully. The touch that he had on the vibes—nobody has that sound. To me, he was—and is, and always will be—the world’s greatest vibe player.”

Sanchez remained with Tjader until the bandleader’s death in 1982. That same year, he signed with Concord for the release of Sonando!, an album that marked the beginning of a prolific musical partnership that has spanned more than 25 years and has yielded two dozen recordings.
Psychedelic Blues, the latest product of that partnership, opens with the simmering “Cantaloupe Island,” a Herbie Hancock composition recast in a Latin jazz groove. A number of soloists step forward here, most notably Torres on trombone and Synowiec on guitar—all weaving effortlessly above a firmly anchored rhythm section.

Premier Latin trumpeter Arturo Sandoval—Sanchez’s friend since their first gig together at a festival in Sardinia, Italy, some twenty years ago—makes a guest appearance via a rendition of Freddie Hubbard’s “Crisis.” The track showcases Sandoval’s respect and reverence for the American bebop maestro who had passed away just a few months before the Psychedelic Blues sessions.

The title track is a fast-moving mambo, originally written by Sonny Henry and arranged here by Francisco Torres, who attaches a surprise at the end of the track. “Francisco really souped it up,” says Sanchez. “The song has some nice horn lines, and some great jazz riffs, and then it ends in a bolero. So the song burns almost all the way through, and then at the end it shifts into a ballad.”

The intriguing centerpiece to the album is a Willie Bobo medley featuring “I Don’t Know” (a Sonny Henry piece commonly associated with Bobo), the laid back “Fried Neckbones and Some Homefries” and the slightly more urgent “Spanish Grease.” All three of these songs merge effortlessly to create a nostalgic nod to the revered Latin and Afro-Cuban jazz percussionist of the ’60s and ’70s.

Further into the set, Sanchez and the band turn “Silver’s Serenade”—originally a swing tune by Horace Silver—into a mambo with personality to burn, thanks in large part to solo work by Francisco Torres. When Poncho himself steps forward to deliver some syncopated conga lines, the net result is an infectious groove.

The salsa-flavored closer, “Con Sabor Latino,” is an old song by Rene Touzet, a native of Cuba who became a well-known Latin bandleader in Los Angeles in the ’50s and ’60s. In many ways, the song is Sanchez’s tribute to some of the musical memories of his childhood. “My older brothers and sisters used to see Touzet play at the Hollywood Palladium,” he says. “Back then, Chico Sesma was the only Latin disc jockey on the radio in Southern California, and ‘Con Sabor Latino’ was his theme song.”

Whether it’s salsa, straight-ahead jazz, Latin jazz, or even elements of soul and blues, the mesmerizing array of sounds and colors from Poncho Sanchez’s youth have telegraphed across the decades and continue to inform his creative sensibilities to this day. “There’s room for a lot of different sounds in our music,” he says. “I think people have come to know that that’s what Poncho Sanchez is all about. We put it all together in a pot, boil it together and come out with a big stew. This isn’t some marketing strategy to sell records. These are the sounds I grew up with. So when I play this music, I’m not telling a lie. I’m telling my story. This is the real thing.”

Poncho Sanchez
Francisco Torres
Ron Blake
Joey De Leon, Jr.
Andy Langham
Rob Hardt
Rene Camacho
Giancarlo Anderson
Larry Sanchez