

# A SONG OF LEAVING

Street singer gives anthem to Venezuela's growing diaspora

By **MANUEL RUEDA AND CESAR BARRETO**  
*Associated Press*

LIMA, Peru — A year ago, Venezuelan migrant Rey-mar Perdomo was singing for spare change on jammed buses, struggling to make ends meet while building a new life in Peru's capital.

But her life took a turn when she wrote a heartfelt reggae song about leaving her homeland that went viral on the internet and has brought tears to hundreds in the Venezuelan diaspora that has spread around the globe. Now Perdomo combines her street performances with appearances at concerts and on TV programs, and her song has become the unofficial anthem of Venezuelans who have fled their country's economic implosion.

"This song gives me goosebumps" said Junior Barrios, a Venezuelan migrant who listened to Perdomo perform her song "Me Fui" — Spanish for "I Left" — recently at a busy plaza in Lima. "Leaving your home from one day to the next day isn't easy, and this just makes a whole bunch of emotions surface at once."

According to the International Organization for Migration, more than 3 million Venezuelans have left their country since 2015 as food shortages and hyperinflation became rampant in what was once a wealthy oil-exporting nation. By the end of 2019 that number is expected to grow to at least 5.4 million.

"Me Fui" is Perdomo's retelling of how she left Venezuela reluctantly with her "head full of doubts," pushed by her mother, who insisted there was no other way for her to make something of her life.

The song, which the 30-year-old plays with a ukulele after her guitar broke while busking, talks about how she was robbed and faced other hardships as she had to cross four countries to reach Peru, pressing on while "speaking softly and cry-



In this Dec. 28, 2018, photo, Venezuelan singer Reyamar Perdomo, right, sings with fans who approached her while she was doing a press interview at a park in the Miraflores area of Lima, Peru.

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Reymar Perdomo

ing along much of the way."

"I had lots of mixed feelings about having to leave Venezuela, and felt a lot of pain. And I just needed to express that in order to move on with life," Perdomo said in an interview after performing on the streets of Lima's wealthy Miraflores district.

Her nostalgic song has had more than 2 million views on YouTube thanks to a passer-by who recorded Perdomo singing and posted the video online. It's also gotten a wave of attention on radio and television, helping Perdomo get noticed by famous pop artists around South America who have asked her to be the opening act at their concerts. She has also produced a slicker version that has had 1.3 million views on its own.

In December, Perdomo was invited to Colombia by a popular satirist and Youtuber who had her sing on a bus, surprising her by bringing along Latin Grammy winner Carlos Vives and Andres Cepeda.

Perdomo said she almost fainted as Vives, who was wearing a hat and fake moustache, threw his disguise away and started to sing the chorus of her song.

"That happened exactly a year to the date after I left Venezuela" Perdomo said. "And for me to be there, performing with one of my favorite singers, singing my song, just felt like proof that God exists."

Perdomo used to be a music teacher at a public school in the rural state of Guarico and once participated in a televised talent show. Although she says she never voted for Venezuela's socialist president, Nicolas Maduro, as a public employee she was required to sing at pro-government rallies, something a few online critics have held against her.

Though becoming something of a symbol of the Venezuelan exodus, she still struggles to get by.

Her mother, brother, sister-in-law and year-old nephew

have joined her in Peru and all share a small rented apartment in one of the city's working class districts. Only Perdomo's brother has found a permanent job, working as a bouncer at a nightclub, so the street performer works long days to help sustain her family.

Still, social media fame is opening new doors.

Perdomo says that Vives has invited her to perform on a regular basis at his nightclub in Bogota and that she is speaking with organizations in Colombia about the possibility of recording an album focused on the plight of migrants.

These opportunities have her thinking about moving yet again — this time to Colombia's capital.

"This has been a tough year, but it has also been amazing" Perdomo said. "I think that to help people and do what you love, you don't need a lot of money. You just need to believe in yourself and be willing to work real hard."

## Chamber Series presents intimate concert

LA GRANDE — The Grande Ronde Symphony Association is presenting a concert that features Viet Block, the assistant concertmaster of the Oregon East Symphony, and Zach Banks, the symphony's music director.

Described as an intimate violin and cello concert, the Chamber Series performance is Saturday, Jan. 26 at 7 p.m. at 905 14th St., La Grande. Tickets are \$25 at the door.

"We are so excited to welcome in the New Year with the treat of hearing Zach and Viet performing in the intimate home setting," said Alice Trindle, Grande Ronde Symphony Association president. "The opportunity to hear beautiful classical music presented only a few feet away is an experience that is very different than the concert hall, and one that truly goes directly to your soul."

A violinist, Block enjoys sharing the gift of music with people from all walks of life, especially those who can't easily get to concert halls. She has performed for senior communities throughout Oregon and has volunteered more than 100 hours at the Portland V.A. Hospital.

Banks, who hails from the Midwest, most recently planted his musical roots in the Pacific Northwest. For the last six years, he studied cello performance at Portland State University, earning a master's degree.

For more information, contact grsymphony2@gmail.com or visit www.granderondsymphony.org.

## Fishtrap Fireside features Wallowa County writers

ENTERPRISE — The upcoming Fishtrap Fireside features longtime friends Rick Bombaci and Sara Miller, as well as Enterprise High School student Nodya Papineau.

The free monthly event showcases Wallowa County writers. In addition, audience members will have an opportunity to read from their works during an open mic. The event is Friday, Feb. 1 at 7 p.m. at Fishtrap, 400 E. Grant St., Enterprise. Light refreshments will be available.

Bombaci, who grew up in rural Connecticut, lived briefly in Portland before moving to Wallowa County. He has had various jobs, including with the United States Forest Service, a waiter, a bicycle mechanic, a high school teacher, a computer consultant and a grant writer.

Miller appreciates the opportunity to experiment creatively at Fishtrap. She writes poetry and creative non-fiction.

An aspiring poet, Papineau has participated in various Fishtrap programs for students and young writers. This will be her first time reading at a Fishtrap Fireside.

For more information, contact Mike Midlo at mike@fishtrap.org, 541-426-3623 or visit www.fishtrap.org.

## WHAT TO DO

### FESTIVALS

#### Martin Luther King Jr. March

•Monday, Jan. 21; 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.

•First United Methodist Church, 191 E. Gladys Ave., Hermiston  
No cover. Includes march, music and special speakers from Wake Up Nation.

#### A Tribute to Martin Luther King Jr.

•Monday, Jan. 21; 7 p.m.

•Great Pacific Wine & Coffee Co., 403 S. Main St., Pendleton  
No cover. An evening of music and spoken word to honor King's legacy.

#### Eagle Cap Extreme Sled Dog Race

•Jan. 23-26

[www.eaglecapextreme.com](http://www.eaglecapextreme.com)

•Joseph, Enterprise, Fergi Ski Area  
Free, except banquet (\$20/adults, \$8/ages 5-12). People can watch races, which include Iditarod & Yukon Quest qualifiers; meet-and-greet with mushers at vet checks; Race Central and Kids' Corner.

#### Melonville Comedy Festival

•Friday, Jan. 25; 8 p.m.

•Eastern Oregon Trade & Event Center, 1705 E. Airport Road, Hermiston  
[www.melonvillecomedyfestival.com](http://www.melonvillecomedyfestival.com)  
\$25/advance, \$35/priority seats. Features headliner Reno Collier, featured comedian Andrew Rivers and emcee Thomas Nichols.

#### Prestige Wrestling: Tower of Snakes

•Friday, Feb. 22; 7-11 p.m.

[www.prestigewrestling.net](http://www.prestigewrestling.net)

•Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, 1705 Airport Road, Hermiston  
\$15-\$50. Features King Khash, "Filthy" Tom Lawlor, Simon Grimm, DJZ, Sonico, No Lives Matter, Team C4, Mike Santiago, Julian Whyt and more to be announced.

### ART, MUSEUMS & AUTHORS

#### "ArtWORKZ Junior Art Show & Competition"

•Monday - Saturdays;

10 a.m.-5 p.m.

•Tamástlikt Cultural Institute, near Wildhorse Resort & Casino.  
[www.tamastlikt.org](http://www.tamastlikt.org)

No entry fee. Youths through age 18 are invited to enter artwork in all mediums by Jan. 30. Show runs through Feb. 9 to March 30. (Randy Melton, 541-429-7720).

#### "History in Photos from Wallowa County"

•Monday through Saturdays;

noon-4 p.m.

•Joseph Center for Arts and Culture, 403 N. Main St., Joseph  
[www.joseph.org](http://www.joseph.org)  
Free. Highlights historical photos and photographers in Wallowa County. Runs through Feb. 25.

#### "Parallel Worlds"

•Monday - Thursdays;

9:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

•Betty Feves Memorial Gallery, BMCC, 2411 N.W. Carden Ave., Pendleton.

Free. Features the work of Shea Wilkinson, who creates art quilts using free motion quilting and hand embroidery. Gallery also open by appointment by calling 541-278-5952. Runs through Feb. 7.

#### "Form and Figure"

•Monday-Fridays, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

•Nightingale Gallery, Eastern Oregon University, La Grande  
[www.eou.edu/art/nightingale-gallery](http://www.eou.edu/art/nightingale-gallery)

Free. Features the work of Florida couple Michael and Aneka Ingold. Runs through Feb. 8.

### MUSIC

#### Darci Carlson

•Saturday, Jan. 19; 8 p.m. No cover

•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216,

Mission.

#### Scott Wilson

•Friday, Jan. 18; 9 p.m. No Cover.

•Hamley Steakhouse & Saloon, 8 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

#### Live Music Thursday-JJ Hill

•Thursday, Jan. 24; 7-9 p.m. No cover.

•40 Taps, 337 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton

#### Cory Wilds

•Friday, Jan. 25 Saturday, Jan. 26; 8 p.m. No cover

•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission.

#### Live Music Thursday-Murray Dunlap

•Thursday, Jan. 31; 7-9 p.m.

•40 Taps, 337 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton  
No cover. The La Grande-based band brings rock'n'roll.

#### 24/7 Band

•Friday, Feb. 1; Saturday, Feb. 2; 8 p.m. No cover

•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission

### NIGHT LIFE

#### Saturday Night Trivia

•Saturdays; 9 p.m.

•Midway Bar & Grill, 1750 N. First St., Hermiston  
Free. Show what you know for fun and prizes.

#### Karaoke w/DJ David

•Saturdays; 8 p.m.

•Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla

#### Shriners Charity Pool Tournament

•Saturday, Jan. 19; 2 p.m.

•Midway Bar & Grill, 1750 N. First St., Hermiston  
\$10/person. Hermiston Desert Shrine Club benefit for the Shriners hospital in Portland. Also features a raffle. (541-567-5180).

#### Wino Wednesdays

•Wednesdays, 2-6 p.m.

•Echo Ridge Cellars, 551 N. Thiel-sen St., Echo

#### Karaoke at the Packard

•1st/3rd

Wednesday,

9 p.m.-midnight  
•The Packard Tavern, 118 S.E. Court Ave., Pendleton

No cover.

#### Wine Wednesday

•Wednesday, Feb. 13, 5-7 p.m.

•The Gathering Place at Bellinger's, 1823 S. Highway 395, Hermiston

No cover. Features tasting and music.

#### Thirsty Thursdays

•Third Thursday; 6 p.m.

•Midway Bar & Grill, 1750 N. First St., Hermiston

No cover. Hosts a local brewery offering tastings and food pairings. Jan. 17: Iron Horse.

#### LOL Comedy Jam

•Thursdays; 8 p.m.

•Wildhorse Sports Bar, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, off I-84 Exit 216, Mission.

No cover. Jan. 24: Andrew Rivers, Michael Glatzmair; Jan. 31: Alex Elkin, Ken Hamlett

#### Wine tasting

•Fridays, 4-8 p.m.

•Sno Road Winery, 111 W. Main St., Echo.

#### Karaoke w/DJ David

•Fridays; 8 p.m.

•Riverside Sports Bar, 1501 Sixth St., Umatilla

#### DJ and dancing

•Fridays, 8 p.m.

•The Pheasant, 149 E. Main St., Hermiston

#### Karaoke

•Fridays; 9 p.m.

•Midway Tavern, 1750 N. First St., Hermiston

#### Cimmi's Late Night Martini Lounge

•Fridays; 9 p.m.-midnight

•Virgil's at Cimmiyotti's, 137 S. Main St., Pendleton

No cover. Features martinis, mix-

ology and music.

### THEATER, STAGE, FILM & LECTURES

#### "Aladdin"

•Saturday, Jan. 19; 2:15 p.m.

•SAGE Center, 101 Olson Road, Boardman

[www.visitsage.com](http://www.visitsage.com)

\$5/person. View movie and receive free bag of popcorn with admission. Water is available for purchase.

#### "Smallfoot"

•Friday, Jan. 25; 6 p.m.

•Adams Public Library, 190 N. Main St.

Free. The animated adventure is appropriate for all ages. Features Channing Tatum, James Corden, LeBron James, Danny DeVito and more.

#### Sensory Friendly Movie

•Saturday, Jan. 26; 10:30 a.m.

•Hermiston Stadium 8 Cinema, 355 W. Theater Lane

[www.facebook.com/arcofumatillacounty](http://www.facebook.com/arcofumatillacounty)

\$5.50. In conjunction with The Arc Umatilla County, sensory-friendly screenings with lights up a little and volume down. Doors open at 10 a.m. "A Dog's Way Home."

#### "The Wizard of Oz"

•Feb. 1-2, 8-9, 7 p.m.

•Sunday, Feb. 3; 2 p.m.

•Hermiston High School, 600 S. First St.

\$10/adults, \$8/seniors, \$5/students. Presented by Hermiston High School drama department.

#### "Speakeasy Murder Mystery"

•Saturday, Feb. 9; 6 p.m.

•Pendleton Underground Tours, 31 S.W. Emigrant Ave.

[www.pendletonunderground-tours.org](http://www.pendletonunderground-tours.org)

\$75/21-and-older. Reservations required. Interactive event also features food/beverages catered by Oregon Grain Growers Brand Distillery. (541-276-0730).