

The Woodlawn Cemetery and Conservancy Launches Legacy Lecture Series

The series is officially announced on the birthday of Johnny Pacheco, a Dominican musician and record producer who established himself as a salsa legend.

BRONX, NY, UNITED STATES, March 25, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Woodlawn Cemetery and Conservancy](https://www.einpresswire.com/2025/03/25/the-woodlawn-cemetery-and-conservancy-launches-legacy-lecture-series) is thrilled to announce the launch of its Legacy Lecture Series, a new program that will give the public a chance to learn more about the historic Woodlawn Cemetery and the noble figures interred there. The in-depth lectures will focus on a variety of topics from the history of Woodlawn Cemetery's development to funeral architecture and art. In addition, the talks will share the stories of the



Johnny Pacheco and his wife Maria Elena Pacheco

individuals buried at Woodlawn and their critical contributions to art, literature, business, and more. The series will kick off on Sunday, June 1, 2025 at 2:00 PM with a lecture focused on El Maestro Johnny Pacheco: The Man and his Music. The event will be held in the Woolworth Chapel at the Woodlawn Cemetery. Tickets are \$25 for adults and \$20 for students, seniors and members. Parking is available on-site. [Click here](#) to purchase tickets.

Juan Pablo Pacheco Knipping (March 25, 1935 – February 15, 2021), known as Johnny Pacheco, was a Dominican musician, arranger, composer, bandleader, and record producer who established himself as a salsa legend in New York and around the world. Johnny is buried at Woodlawn, not far from his dear friend and musical partner, Celia Cruz.

The lecture will feature Mrs. Maria Elena Pacheco, the wife of Johnny Pacheco, and Herman Rodriguez-Bajandas, President of Fonico, LLC. The conversation will be moderated by Judge Jeanette Ruiz (ret.), who is a Woodlawn lot owner, Conservancy Director, and a friend of the Pacheco family.

“There are many stories and histories at Woodlawn Cemetery that need to be told and exchanged, and I am delighted that we will be expanding our programming at the Conservancy to include a platform for lot owners and their descendants, preservationists, historians, artists, and veterans to share their memories and expertise with the larger public,” said Dr. Aramina Vega Ferrer, Chair of the Woodlawn Conservancy Board of Directors.

The Legacy Lectures will be held at the Woolworth Chapel at Woodlawn Cemetery twice a year.

About the Presenters:

Maria Elena Pacheco has been a Woodlawn Cemetery lot owner since 2015. Her husband, the iconic Johnny Pacheco, was laid to rest at Woodlawn in 2021, in close proximity to the gravesite of their close friend, the renowned Celia Cruz. Maria Elena and her family came to NYC from Cuba in the early 1960s. After completing her education, she worked at her family-owned business. In the mid-seventies, her life took an unexpected turn when she joined the staff at Fania Records. It was there that she first met Johnny Pacheco, who was then the co-owner of Fania Records and a premier producer, composer, and recording artist. As Johnny’s music spread, Maria Elena managed his bookings and traveled extensively with him throughout the U.S., South America, Europe, Asia and Africa. In her own right, Maria Elena was instrumental in Johnny Pacheco’s career and his success in introducing salsa music internationally. Johnny Pacheco went on to become the founder and leader of the largest and most prestigious salsa band, the Fania All Stars. Over time, Maria Elena helped her husband manage Fania All Stars and became their booking agent. Maria Elena (a.k.a. Cuqui) is widely known and well respected in the Latino music industry, an industry she has been devoted to for over 40 years.

Herman Rodriguez-Bajandas was born into a family involved with Latin entertainment, politics, and social work. His musical career began as a songwriter with songs recorded by top Latin artists. He has written or translated songs with or for several famed songwriters and musicians. Herman’s written or published songs are on Grammy nominated and RIAA Latin certified Gold and Platinum discs. He has also worked with legendary Latin music artists and estates: Celia Cruz, Tito Puente, Machito, Johnny Pacheco, Willie Colon, Larry Harlow, Mario Bauza, Cachao, Ray Barretto, Richie Ray, Bobby Cruz, Ismael Miranda, Cheo Feliciano, Marc Anthony, and La India. As Operations Manager for RMM Records & Filmworks, the leading Tropical Latin music label in the U.S., he worked closely with founder Latin impresario Ralph Mercado and its 48 artist roster. Herman co-founded Nuevo Mundo Music, an independent Latin label and publisher along with famed entertainment attorney/business manager and investor Michael Tannen and iconic music producers Phil Ramone and Johnny Pacheco. In 2016, Herman founded Fonico, LLC, (formed from NM assets) a music publishing, administration, artist services company servicing the Latin music market. Among his clients are a growing roster of well-known Latin music artists and estates.

Hon. Jeanette Ruiz is a retired family court judge and a director of the Woodlawn Conservancy Board of Directors. She has been a lot owner at Woodlawn Cemetery since 2017 when her beloved husband, Mario A. Torres, was laid to rest there. Mario was well known in NYC music circles as a promoter for a diverse range of Latino musical artists and genres in public venues, and President of his own MAT Productions. Judge Ruiz and her late husband were dear friends of the legendary musician Johnny Pacheco. Today, Judge Ruiz and Mrs. Maria Elena Pacheco remain close friends and often travel to Woodlawn Cemetery together to visit the gravesites of their interred spouses. Judge Ruiz was first appointed to the Family Court bench in 2007. She served until 2012 as a trial judge in Kings County Family Court and Bronx County Family Court, where she presided over juvenile delinquency and child protective cases. In 2012, she was appointed Supervising Judge of the Kings County Family Court and, in 2015, Deputy Administrative Judge, citywide. Later that year, Judge Ruiz was appointed as an Administrative Judge of the NYC Family Court. She retired from the bench in October 2021 and is currently an adjunct professor at the New York City College of Technology where she teaches family law.

About The Woodlawn Conservancy:

The Woodlawn Conservancy is the 501c3 not-for-profit support organization for the Woodlawn Cemetery. The primary purpose of the Woodlawn Conservancy is to preserve and interpret the Woodlawn Cemetery (est 1863), a 400-acre National Historic Landmark and Level II Arboretum. Our mission is accomplished through a robust schedule of public programs and the use of the cemetery as an outdoor learning lab. The Conservancy's signature program is Bridge to Crafts Careers, a workforce development initiative where young people 16-24 are introduced to careers in historic preservation, with intensive training that leads to entry-level positions in masonry and landscape restoration and maintenance. Throughout the year, the Conservancy hosts concerts, author's talks, and a series of thematic tours designed for students, affinity groups, and the general public. These programs celebrate the legacy of the individuals in Woodlawn's care, the inventory of trees, and the architects and artisans that created the significant memorials on our grounds. For more information, visit www.woodlawn.org.

About The Woodlawn Cemetery:

Established in 1863 and spanning 400 acres, The Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx, New York, is one of the nation's most distinguished historic cemeteries and a certified Level II Arboretum. In 2011, Woodlawn was designated a National Historic Landmark for its singular importance in the history of the nation and New York City. Woodlawn is also an active cemetery with ongoing burials and funeral services, and more than 310,000 individuals are memorialized on its grounds. Woodlawn is one of the nation's finest examples of a 19th-century garden cemetery. Its monuments represent some of the best memorial art and architecture in the nation, including nearly 1,300 private mausoleums designed by some of the most prominent architects of the

20th century. The Woodlawn Cemetery is open to the public free of charge 365 days a year from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm. For more information, visit www.woodlawn.org.

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