



Advance Program Notes

National Geographic Live
Pink Boots and a Machete
Tuesday, March 24, 2020, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.



Pink Boots and a Machete

Mireya Mayor, primatologist

A former NFL cheerleader and daughter of Cuban immigrants who grew up in Miami, Mireya Mayor followed her unlikely dreams. In short order, she became a respected primatologist, audacious explorer, and Emmy Award-nominated wildlife correspondent for the National Geographic Channel.

Mayor's adventures have taken her—armed with little more than a backpack, notebooks, and hiking boots—to some of the wildest and most remote places on Earth. Hailed as a “female Indiana Jones” and an inspiration to young women interested in science and exploration, she has survived poisonous insect bites, been charged by gorillas and chased by elephants—and keeps going back for more. She shares stories, images, and film clips of her adventures in this behind-the-scenes look at the hardships and danger of life in the field, along with the moments of discovery that make it all worthwhile.

Biography

MIREYA MAYOR

A scientist, explorer, wildlife correspondent, anthropologist, author, and inspirational speaker, Mireya Mayor, who received a Ph.D. in anthropology, has reported on wildlife and habitat issues to worldwide audiences for more than a decade.

A former NFL cheerleader for the Miami Dolphins, Mayor grew up in a big city and as the only daughter of Cuban immigrants, she couldn't join the Girl Scouts as a little girl because her family thought it was too dangerous. In spite of this, she went on to become the first female wildlife correspondent for the *Ultimate Explorer* series on National Geographic Television, and has spent more than 15 years exploring some of the wildest and most remote places on Earth, often armed with little more than a backpack, notebooks, and hiking boots. Since then, Mayor has slept in remote jungles teeming with poisonous snakes, gone diving with great white sharks, and been charged by gorillas and chased by elephants—and that's just in the last few months.

Mayor's curiosity and love for animals started very early on as a child. Since she could crawl, she had birds, fish, dogs, cats, parrots, rabbits, turtles, and a little chicken named Maggie. But it was in 1996, while attending the University of Miami, that she realized that her passion for animals could become a career. In order to fulfill a science credit, Mayor wanted to register for a women's biology course, but the class was full. After scrolling down the course list she chose an anthropology course, not entirely knowing what that meant. That choice would forever change her life. Anthropology fascinated her, particularly her professor's stories of chasing monkeys in the wild. After learning of wild animals on the brink of extinction whose most basic behavior and habits were unknown, Mayor, then only 22, applied for her first grant. Though a Miami Dolphins cheerleader and model, she received the grant and went on to spend that summer in the remote jungles of Guyana, one of the most unexplored regions of the world at that time. The following year she journeyed to the wilds of Madagascar into areas so remote that she often found herself surrounded by local villagers who had never seen a foreigner before her arrival. Against all odds, and following in the footsteps of renowned scientists who had tried and failed, Mireya completed the first ever long-term and genetic studies of two of the most critically endangered primates in the world, Perrier's sifaka and the Silky sifaka. Feeling as if she had found her calling, Mayor has spent anywhere from three to 10 months at a time in Madagascar since then.

In 1999 *National Geographic* was doing a story in Madagascar and asked Mayor to say a few words about the lemurs. Impressed by her passion for the subject, down-to-earth delivery of scientific knowledge, and distinct background of NFL cheerleader-turned-scientist, *National Geographic* offered Mayor the opportunity of a lifetime and her dream job: a staff wildlife correspondent position, complete with her own office. She has since gone underwater with six-foot Humboldt squids, scoped out gorillas in Central Africa, swum with great white and six-gilled sharks, and worked with leopards in Namibia (just to name a few projects).

In 2005 Mayor received two Emmy Award nominations for her work on the television series *Ultimate Explorer*. She was later named an Emerging Explorer in 2007 by the National Geographic Society, which selects rising talents, "the next generation of visionaries" who push the boundaries of adventure and global problem solving, inspiring people to care about the planet.

Mayor is now one of the hosts on *Nat Geo WILD!* You can currently catch her series, *Wild Nights with Mireya Mayor*, and her documentary special, *Mystery Gorillas*.

For more than a decade, Mayor has dedicated her life to unlocking the mysteries of the natural world. She ventures into previously unexplored parts of the planet to study rare creatures, working closely with indigenous people in the process. In 2000 Mayor co-discovered a new species of mouse lemur in Madagascar and eventually convinced the African island nation's leaders to declare the new species' habitat a national park. She says, "Television has the power to help people know and connect with these animals and habitats that are disappearing. We may be facing the largest mass extinction of our time, so awareness is crucial. If we don't act now it will be too late."

Biography, continued

Mayor is a Fulbright scholar, National Science Foundation fellow, and published author with a Ph.D. in anthropology from Stony Brook University. She authored her memoir, *Pink Boots and a Machete*, and has written articles for National Geographic's kids magazines *Explorer* and *Extreme Explorer*, and is working closely with National Geographic's School Publishing on videos and textbooks for classrooms nationwide.

Mayor has made numerous appearances on *The Today Show*, MSNBC, CNN, and *Despierta America*, and has been profiled in *People*, *Marie Claire*, *Latina*, *National Geographic Adventure*, *Vanidades*, and *Elle* magazines. She divides her time between research in the rainforests of Madagascar, lecturing at schools and universities, and traveling the world as a wildlife correspondent. Her talks are inspiring for all ages, but she is an especially powerful presenter for student audiences.

When not deep in the jungle or on assignment, Mayor lives in Connecticut and is the mother of five young children. They share their home with an ever-growing menagerie of wonderful creatures.

Engagement Events

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

SCIENCE STORYTELLING HOUR

Science touches everyone's life in some way. Directly preceding the performance, scientists and science-lovers explored this through participatory storytelling. Facilitated by Patty Raun and Carrie Kroehler, director and associate director, respectively, of the Center for Communicating Science at Virginia Tech, this event was co-presented with the Center for Communicating Science.

Tuesday, March 24, 2020, following the performance

SCREENING: *UNDER THE NET*

Directed by Justin Perkinson, assistant professor, School of Performing Arts

Under the Net is the United Nations Foundation's first-ever virtual reality film, created for the Nothing But Nets campaign to fight the global malaria crisis. Launched with Discovery VR and Samsung VR, the film won Best VR Documentary at Cinequest Film and VR Festival, a Gold Medal Shorty Award, and Best Video at the PR News Platinum PR Awards. It was screened for legislators on Capitol Hill during World Malaria Day 2017 and, most importantly, is helping raise much-needed funds for mosquito bed nets distribution worldwide. The film's runtime is approximately 11 minutes. Following the screenings, the filmmaker and representatives from the U.N. Foundation participated in brief Q&A discussions.

Special thanks to Carrie Kroehler, Patty Raun, Justin Perkinson, the Center for Communicating Science, and Lori Blanc

Go Deeper

What episodes in Mayor's adventures did you find most intriguing, harrowing, or inspiring? Why?

In the Galleries

Now on View

FIERCE WOMEN

Chakaia Booker, Guerrilla Girls, Jenny Holzer, Marilyn Minter, and Rozeal

Through Saturday, April 25, 2020

All galleries

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: Chakaia Booker

A nationally acclaimed sculptor, Chakaia Booker is well known for her large-scale, at times massive indoor and outdoor sculptures made out of discarded automobile tires. In a unique and rigorous working process, Booker slices, bends, twists, shreds, and transforms used rubber tires into provocative, highly original works of art. Commanding and at once fiercely aggressive, her masses of cut and mangled rubber, tubes, and metal seemingly seethe with an exuberant, latently explosive energy. However dauntless, Booker's sculptural forms—richly textured with various tread patterns and hues ranging from matte grays to glistening shades of black—are intriguing, even beautiful. Works by Booker are now on view in the Ruth C. Horton Gallery.

Did You Know?

The Fatality of Hope (2007), the largest work on view in the gallery, consists of three panels; weighs over 1,000 pounds; and required a team of eight professionals to install.

GALLERY HOURS

Monday-Friday, 10 AM-5:30 PM

Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

To arrange a group tour or class visit, please contact Meggin Hicklin, exhibitions program manager, at megh79@vt.edu.