

Rodrigo - Concierto De Aranjuez, Fantasia Para Un Gentilhombre (1985)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Concierto de Aranjuez I. Allegro con spirito* 5:59 2. *Concierto de Aranjuez II. Adagio* 10:01
3. *Concierto de Aranjuez III. Allegro gentile* 4:55 4. *Fantasia para un gentile hombre* 21:49
John Williams - guitar English Chamber Orchestra Members of the Philadelphia Orchestra
Eugene Ormandy, Charles Groves – conductor (CBS Masterworks, Great Performances 4)

These are joyous accounts of two of classical music's adored Spanish composer Joaquín Rodrigo's most famous works. John Williams, with his measured, intelligent approach to these beloved standards has brought a sensitivity and surety that illuminates. This record is a welcome addition to my library of Rodrigo gems. ---A. Lehman, amazon.com

The *Concierto de Aranjuez* shot a 39 years Joaquín Rodrigo to fame, at first hailed in his homeland as the greatest Spanish composer, and later recognised worldwide. It draws its title from the royal palace of Aranjuez, a town steeped in history and place of Rodrigo's honeymoon with his wife Victoria.

One cannot listen to the overwhelming sadness of the second movement (*Adagio*) without thinking what tragedy inspired it. Written in 1940, was it the Spanish Civil War, or the impending World War II? Yet when asked about it, Rodrigo would simply shrug his shoulders and say that it was just general thoughts and feelings and the wind in the trees around Aranjuez.

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Like many composers, Rodrigo battled physical adversity. Blind from diphtheria from the age of three, he often said that his disability led him to music. He died in 1999, a national treasure, aged 98.

His confidant, the classical and flamenco guitarist Pepe Romero has since revealed what the Adagio really signified. The Concierto was only half finished when Victoria, pregnant with their first child fell ill, and was expected to die. On being told the news, Rodrigo vented his grief by composing the Adagio at the piano. As it happened, Victoria survived (and was inseperable from Rodrigo until her death in 1997), but the child died.

The Concierto de Aranjuez revived the guitar concerto from obscurity, the last great guitar concerti being written by Vivaldi and Giuliani hundreds of years ago. It successfully weds the guitar to the modern orchestra with Rodrigo's characteristically light, simple but interesting orchestration. Its bright and breezy outer movements contrast stunningly with the profound central Adagio.

The Fantasia para un gentilhombre (Fantasy for a gentleman) was Rodrigo's second guitar concerto and the two form the backbone of his fame outside of Spain. There is a lineage in the Fantasia that links a Renaissance composer by the name of Gaspar Sanz all the way to the soloist on this CD, the Australian John Williams.

Sanz wrote a set of guitar pieces that form the inspiration for Rodrigo's work, in the same way that Respighi's Ancient Airs and Dances are based on Renaissance lute music. The "Gentleman" referred to in the title is Andreas Segovia, the famous Spanish classical guitarist. Rodrigo wrote the work for Segovia, and he gave its first performance. John Williams was "discovered" by Segovia and studied under him for several years.

This is elegant, courtly music breathed new life by Rodrigo's imaginative arrangement. Rarely do we think of guitar music as beautiful, but this proves how delicate, intricate and evocative it can be. Williams' playing is exceptional, living up to the heritage. ---good-music-guide.com

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