

Ernesto Cordero - Caribbean Concertos for Guitar and for Violin (2011)

Written by bluesever

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Concierto Festivo for guitar and string orchestra 1. *I. Allegro elegante* 7:11 2. *II. Adagio con passione* 7:18 3. *III. Energico* 9:49 Insula,

Suite Concertante for violin and string orchestra

4. *I. Paisajes: Andante con anima* 5:01 5. *II. Jajome (Meditacion): Andante affabile* 4:13 6. *III. Las Indieras de Maricao: Andantino misterioso* 3:42 7. *IV. Fantasia salsera: Allegro ritmico* 3:00

Concertino Tropical for violin and string orchestra

8. *I. Yerba bruja (Witch-Herb): Allegro vivace* 5:02 9. *II. Los caobos (The Mahogany Trees): Adagio malinconico* 4:20 10. *III. El colibri dorado (The Golden Humming-Bird) (Moto perpetuo): Energico* 1:16

Pepe Romero - guitar (1-3) Guillermo Figueroa - violin (4-10) I Solisti di Zagreb

Puerto Rican composer and guitarist Ernesto Cordero dedicated his Concierto Festivo to celebrated soloist Pepe Romero, who describes the work as having 'divine inspiration'. These works derive their warmth of expression and rhythmic influence from the composer's native Caribbean island, and the two violin concertos *Ínsula* and *Concerto Tropical* both contain descriptive elements from landscape and nature. *Ínsula* is dedicated to renowned violinist and conductor Guillermo Figueroa, and I Solisti di Zagreb are recognised as one of the world's leading chamber orchestras. ---prestomusic.com

Do not confuse Ernesto Cordero, the writer of these 'Caribbean Concertos', with his older namesake Roque Cordero. I did but not for long. I was first confronted with the music of Roque when a friend from the USA sent me a cassette of his Violin Concerto (1974). It was an interesting work but, as I recall, tough going in each of the two versions. Sanford Allen was the

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soloist and the Detroit orchestra and the NYPO were conducted by Paul Freeman. Roque (1917-2008) was Panamanian and was a pupil of Krenek, Mitropoulos and Chapple. The New York-born Ernesto was brought up in Puerto Rico and thankfully is still with us. He has a special avocation for the guitar. The instrument features in many of his concertante works: Concierto Evocativo (1978), Concierto Antillano (1983) and Concierto de Bayoán (1995). In fact concertos loom large in his catalogue. In addition to those on this disc there is one for string quartet: Concierto Criollo para Cuatro y Orquesta Sinfónica (1986) and several for flute and orchestra. The music is accessible but not facile, tonal but not simplistic. Cordero wastes little time with ornament and the works have an admirable economy of expression.

The guitar concerto – written for and here played by its dedicatee, Pepe Romero - is exciting and draws on the harsh rhythmic bark of violent strumming. There are moments when one is aware of Cordero's debt to Rodrigo but it is by no means immanent. The writing, across all three works, puts me in mind of Piazzolla's Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas but also of Schnittke's super-romantic steely hyper-baroque writing. Casting a benign light across these concertos is a presence I had not expected: that of Vaughan Williams. More than occasionally RVW's characteristic pastoral pentatonic sound comes to mind. It's a foundation or an overlay rather than a facsimile of The Lark Ascending. Even so the two works for violin and orchestra are rather reminiscent of The Lark but perceived through the intensifying lens of late-twentieth century angst. The orchestration is delicate and the ideas often tender. However, when the music becomes animated the style moves towards the stony despair and the metallic exuberance of the Shostakovich violin concertos. The useful liner-notes are by the composer. ---Rob Barnett, musicweb-international.com

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