



Joaquín

RODRIGO

Concierto de Aranjuez

Manuel

PONCE

Concierto del sur

Gerald

GARCIA

(b. 1949)

China Sings!

Junhong Kuang, Guitar

Czech Chamber Philharmonic
Orchestra Pardubice

Darrell Ang

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The guitar concerto, where the softer sounds of the classical guitar are combined with the power and strength of the orchestra, has fascinated composers and the public for many years. Since the first part of the 20th century a number of concertos have been written, performed and recorded. Some concertos, even by eminent composers, have been neglected for various reasons after one or two performances. The exception to this was of course Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*, very frequently featured in concerts and recordings. However, even some of the less well-known concertos continue to enthral audiences whenever they are played.

Joaquín Rodrigo was born on St Cecilia's Day, 22 November 1901, in Sagunto in the Spanish province of Valencia. In 1905 an outbreak of diphtheria impaired the young boy's vision and within a few years he lost every vestige of sight. From the age of seven he attended the School for the Blind in Valencia where, his musical gifts becoming increasingly apparent, he played the violin and piano. Later he took composition lessons with Francisco Antich Carbonell, the renowned organist and maestro. Having composed various apprentice pieces, Rodrigo was awarded an Honourable Commendation in 1925 in a national music competition for his orchestral work, *Cinco piezas infantiles*.

In the autumn of 1927, the young composer travelled to Paris to enrol as a student at the École Normale de Musique. His teacher, Paul Dukas, profoundly influenced

Rodrigo, especially in aspects of orchestration. In 1928, the French President awarded Manuel de Falla the National Order of the Legion of Honour and Rodrigo was invited to perform his own compositions at the ceremony.

Around the same time, Rodrigo met Victoria Kamhi, a young Jewish pianist from Istanbul. Despite difficulties, financial and otherwise, they fell in love and were married in January 1933. A year later hardship enforced separation, a dilemma resolved when Rodrigo was awarded a Conde de Cartagena Scholarship, enabling him to study abroad and to be reunited with his wife in Paris. In 1936 disaster struck again when the Spanish Civil War began and the scholarship was no longer available. Rodrigo and his wife were compelled to leave France and to seek refuge for 18 months at the Institute for the Blind in Freiburg. In 1938 they were able to make a brief visit to Spain for a summer school in Santander but, failing to secure appropriate employment, returned once more to Paris. Quite soon after Victoria suffered a miscarriage brought on by exhaustion and poverty. Yet somehow Rodrigo found the strength and will to keep on composing and during this time completed the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, a work which would ensure his international fame.

Rodrigo returned to Spain a few days before the start of the Second World War and was offered posts in broadcasting and the university sufficient to earn a living. After years of deprivation, the tide began to turn with the

premiere in Barcelona of the *Concierto de Aranjuez* on 9 November 1940. On 27 January 1941, the anniversary of Mozart's birthday, Rodrigo's daughter, Cecilia, was born.

Though there were many setbacks over the years, Rodrigo's reputation as a great Spanish composer began to gain global esteem. Throughout his long life Joaquín Rodrigo wrote more than two hundred compositions, comprising a prolific variety of orchestral pieces, concertos, songs and choral works, and pieces for piano, violin, guitar, cello, and other instruments, his music being increasingly in demand and more and more appreciated worldwide.

Concierto de Aranjuez, destined to be the most celebrated guitar work of the 20th century, takes its name from the Aranjuez Palace 50 kilometres south of Madrid. Since its premiere by Regino Sáinz de la Maza, its dedicatee, the work has received hundreds of performances and innumerable recordings, as well as being used for a ballet, in films and jazz contexts. Rodrigo's notes for the premiere envisaged his concerto as being ideally performed by an 'imaginary instrument which might be said to possess the wings of the harp, the heart of the grand piano and the soul of the guitar'.

Each of the three movements creates impressions of the glories of eternal Spain. The first movement, a whirl of colour and excitement, leads on to the soulful *Adagio*, the heart of the work with its intricately ornamented themes, its reflective cadenza, and the superb climax, resolving out of passion into serenity. The final movement is both vigorous and sophisticated, demonstrating many technical devices integrated into a musical structure where soloist and orchestra unite to express the vivacity of the courtly dance.

Manuel Ponce was the founding father of 20th-century Mexican music. His pupil, Carlos Chávez (1899–1978) said of him: 'It was Ponce who created a real consciousness of the richness of Mexican folk art.' Segovia and Ponce met in Mexico in 1923, and from that

time onwards the composer devoted himself to writing many pieces for the guitar, nearly all of them dedicated to Segovia. Of these compositions, which include preludes, suites, a concerto, variations, several sonatas, and works for guitar and harpsichord, Segovia has written: 'Large or small, they are, all of them, pure and beautiful.'

Ponce's *Concierto del sur* ('Concerto of the South'), written at the request of Andrés Segovia, was composed throughout 1940 and completed in January 1941. It is a work of grandeur and substance though the orchestration is light with flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, horn and drums, in addition to a string quintet.

The first movement in sonata form, is evocative of southern Spain, and features an extended cadenza for the soloist. The oboe opens with its melody followed by developments leading to the second theme, played by the guitar over a single cello note. After the recapitulation the second theme returns and a crescendo leads to a gracious finale with the guitar performing on the higher part of the fingerboard.

The *Andante* movement takes us into the atmosphere of Spanish Granada with a pizzicato ostinato in the bass. The final movement in 3/8 time, beginning with the guitar strummed in Spanish style, captures the mood of the dances of the great city of Seville.

Concierto del sur was first performed by Segovia in Montevideo, Uruguay, on 4 October 1941, with the composer conducting.

Gerald Garcia, a graduate in chemistry of New College, Oxford, chose to devote himself to the classical guitar. Encouraged by John Williams to continue his musical ambitions, he made his recital debut at Wigmore Hall, London, in 1979. Since that time Garcia has performed extensively worldwide.

In October 1995 he toured China in a duo with John Williams playing to audiences of tens of thousands of Chinese guitarists and teaching at Beijing and Shanghai conservatoires. He has been invited back to China more

recently with teaching posts at Guangzhou, Beijing and Chengdu. As a performer he has recorded more than 14 albums which have sold more than 50,000 copies and has played for films scored by composers such as Michel Legrand and Stanley Myers.

Gerald Garcia, a prolific composer, has had many of his works recorded by leading concert artists. He has also been a foremost pioneer of guitar orchestras and in this sphere he is musical director of the National Youth Guitar Ensemble, England.

China Sings!, originally written for solo guitar and guitar orchestra, was premiered at the 2013 Iserlohn Guitar Symposium, conducted by the composer. The concerto (original version) was dedicated to the guitar prodigy Junhong Kuang, 12 years old at the time, and his teacher Prof. Xu Bao.

Darrell Ang

Darrell Ang has been the artistic director and chief conductor of China's Sichuan Symphony since December 2016. He regularly conducts the Radio France Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Philharmonia Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the 'Giuseppe Verdi' Symphony Orchestra, Milan, the Munich Radio Orchestra, the NHK Symphony Orchestra, the Queensland Symphony Orchestra, the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, the Singapore Symphony and the Mariinsky Orchestra in St Petersburg. His first album for Naxos was nominated for a GRAMMY Award in 2016 (Zhou Long/Chen Yi *Symphony 'Humen 1839'*, 8.570611). Ang studied conducting in St Petersburg and at Yale. He took all three top awards at the 50th Besançon International Young Conductors' Competition, leading to the music directorship of the Orchestre Symphonique de Bretagne (2012–15) and – as recipient of the Allianz Cultural Foundation Young Conductors' Award – was invited to take on residencies with the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Philharmonia Orchestra, where he was mentored by Lorin Maazel and Esa-Pekka Salonen.

www.darrellang.net

The composer has explained that this concerto is a rhapsody inspired by two popular Chinese tunes, *Dark Sky* and *Silver Clouds Chasing the Moon*. The guitar and orchestra exchange commentaries and reflections on the first theme (*Dark Sky*), leading on to an extended guitar cadenza which introduces a texture of cross string trills. The cadenza gives way to the finale which explores this novel guitar texture and introduces the second theme (*Silver Clouds Chasing the Moon*) played in tremolo after several diversions. After the recapitulation of the first theme the work ends with a triumphant reiteration of guitar trills over full orchestra.

Graham Wade



Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice



Photo:
František Renza

The Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice is valued for its stylistic interpretations and the extraordinary quality of its orchestral sound, and it is rightly ranked amongst the world's leading representatives of Czech musical culture. It often performs at the most prestigious festivals in the Czech Republic and venues throughout Europe such as the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam, the Grosses Festspielhaus, Salzburg, the Herkulessaal and the Gasteig, Munich, the Musikverein, Vienna, the Brucknerhaus, Linz, and the Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg among many others. Outside Europe the orchestra has performed in Japan and toured extensively around America. The first principal conductor, Libor Pešek, quickly raised the orchestra to a high standard, and subsequent principal conductors have included Marco Armiliato and Mariss Jansons. The orchestra has also welcomed numerous world-renowned soloists such as Isabelle van Keulen, Vladimir Spivakov, Ludwig Güttler, Radek Baborák, Gábor Boldoczki and Sergei Nakariakov. Aside from concerts, the orchestra regularly engages in operatic and theatre projects and has recorded dozens of successful albums on record labels including Naxos, ArcoDiva, Supraphon, Classico, Monitor-EMI and Amabile.

www.kfpar.cz

Junhong Kuang

Born in 1999, Junhong Kuang was awarded the top prize in the classical guitar category of the prestigious ARD Music Competition in 2017, along with the Audience Prize and the ifp-Musikpreis, becoming the youngest prizewinner in the ARD's history. Widely recognised as one of the greatest young talents in the world today, he has already given over a hundred concerts. He made his New York debut at Carnegie Hall, and has given recitals in Baltimore and Miami. In China, he has performed at the Shanghai Oriental Art Center and Beijing Poly Theater among others, and in 2014 he was invited to give the opening concert at the International Guitar-Symposium in Iserlohn, Germany. Junhong Kuang has performed as a soloist with orchestras around the world, including the Bavarian Radio, Estonian National and Peabody Symphony Orchestras, and the Xiamen Philharmonic Orchestra among many others. Kuang made his recording debut with an album of music by Bach, Albéniz, Granados, Barrios Mangoré and Mertz, released on Naxos in 2015 to great critical acclaim (8.573432). Kuang began studies at the age of nine with professor Xu Bao in Chengdu, China. At the age of eleven he won First Prize in the Thailand International Guitar Competition, and was accepted into the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University at the age of 15. He is currently studying with Manuel Barrueco.

www.junhongkuang.com



Photo:
Youyu Zhang

Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* is the most celebrated classical guitar work of the 20th century, music that conjures up the colour, sophistication and glories of eternal Spain. The founding father of Mexican music, Manuel Ponce, wrote his *Concierto del sur* for Segovia, and it is a work of vivid grandeur, Sevillian dances and melodic richness. To complete the programme, prize-winning international virtuoso Junhong Kuang plays a piece dedicated to him – Gerald Garcia's *China Sings!* – a rhapsody inspired by two popular Chinese tunes.

Joaquín RODRIGO (1901–1999)

Concierto de Aranjuez (1939) 21:02

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | I. Allegro con spirito | 5:57 |
| 2 | II. Adagio | 10:09 |
| 3 | III. Allegro gentile | 4:53 |

Manuel PONCE (1882–1948)

Concierto del sur (1941) 25:05

- | | | |
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| 4 | I. Allegro moderato | 12:48 |
| 5 | II. Andante | 6:33 |
| 6 | III. Allegro moderato e festivo | 5:39 |

Gerald GARCIA (b. 1949)

China Sings! (version for guitar and orchestra) 11:28
(2013, arr. 2019) *

- | | | |
|----------|--|-------------|
| 7 | I. Dark Sky, Silver Clouds: Tranquillo | 6:27 |
| 8 | II. Silver Clouds across the Moon: Allegro non troppo | 5:01 |

*** WORLD PREMIERE RECORDING**

Junhong Kuang, Guitar

Czech Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Pardubice • Darrell Ang

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