

## Julian Orbon – Orchestral Music (1999)

Written by blueslover

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Danzas Sinfónicas (1957) 15:31 1. *Overtura* 2. *Gregoriana* 3. *Declamatoria* 4. *Danza Final*  
Concerto Grosso (for string quartet and orchestra)  
(1958) 28:11 5. *Moderato* 6. *Lento* 7. *Allegro*  
Tres Versiones Sinfónicas (1953) 22:35  
8. *Pavana* 9. *Organum* 10. *Xilofono*  
Asturias Symphony Orchestra Maximiano Valdes (conductor) Alexandre Vassiliev (violin, 5-7) Hector Corpus Aguilar (violin, 5-7) Oleg Lev (viola, 5-7) Vladimir Atapin (cello, 5-7)

"Born in Avilés, Orbón left Spain with his father in 1940 and both settled in Cuba where he started his musical studies and composed his earliest works such as his Symphony in C of 1945. That same year, he was awarded a grant to study in Tanglewood with Aaron Copland. Back in Cuba, he came to disagree with the Castro régime and went into voluntary exile, first in Mexico and later in the States. He died in Miami in 1991.

Orbón's musical progress roughly falls into three different periods. His early music certainly reflects optimism, and remains tonal, colourful and often folk-inflected under de Falla's influence. The middle period, to which these three pieces belong, is that of maturity. His music, now rather written under Copland's shadow, is less overtly tonal and its emotional scope considerably widens. The final period is that of disillusionment, and the music becomes more austere and introspective.

Tres visiones sinfónicas and Danzas sinfónicas, that are roughly contemporary, have much in common. The music is colourful, often energetic, rhythmically alert; and very often displays Copland's influence, as in the second movement Gregoriana of Danzas which turns a plainsong-like tune into a Coplandesque hoe-down or in Pavana (the first movement of Tres versiones) in which a pavan by Luis de Milan is turned into another Copland romp. The slow

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movements in both works, however, are generally more personal in expression, be it in the powerful Declamatoria (in Danzas) or the beautiful, meditative Organum (in Tres versiones). Both sets conclude with virile, colourful dances.

The Concerto Grosso (for string quartet and orchestra) is undoubtedly a major and substantial work for which I retain an undiminished affection for it is the first Orbón work I ever heard (in Mata's recording on Dorian DOR-90178). This mighty piece in three sizeable movements is clearly the peak of Orbón's middle period. If Copland's influence is still to be heard, especially in the outer movements, one is also sometimes reminded of Martinů's sprung rhythms permeating much of the melodic material. The slow movement is again a most personal utterance, a long slow processional, often of modal flavour and not without grandeur. It contains some of the most beautiful music ever penned by the composer.

Some years ago, Mata recorded both the Concerto Grosso (Dorian DOR-90178) and Tres versiones (Dorian DOR-90179) in fine, beautifully recorded readings. The present orchestra may not be in the same class as Mata's Simon Bolivar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela; but I must say that I really enjoyed Valdés' committed, urgent readings which serve the music well.

I urge you to listen to this most welcome and worthwhile release which will hopefully soon be followed by another all-Orbón disc by the same forces, for this still underrated composer unquestionably deserves serious consideration. Recommended." --- forums.ffshrine.org

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