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Al-Andalus

CONCERT FOR GUITAR AND ORCHESTRA. IN MEMORIAM PACO DE LUCÍA By Juan Manuel Cañizares

CLASSICAL MUSIC AND FLAMENCO. AN EMBRACE BORN FROM SORROW

'Al-Andalus', concert for guitar and orchestra, is Juan Manuel Cañizares's latest composition, written as a tribute to Paco de Lucía. This is a special piece for many reasons, particularly the almost instinctive blend of classical music and flamenco, so natural that it seems as if the two genres embraced; as if they had come from the same roots. In addition to this, the descriptive nature of the work faithfully conveys the sorrow of the artist; the anguish for the loss of the friend; the nostalgia for lost things; but also the happiness for that intimate, valuable and deep artistic experience which emerges uncontrollably with the hope and the joy that, without falling into the arms of a deceitful euphoria, pervades the third movement.

It is no surprise, then, that the final result is loaded with emotion. Cañizares combines classical training with a flamenco spirit in order to create and recreate like no one else: his music is unique and unclassifiable.

Both as a guitarist and as a composer, Cañizares has now attained unprecedented levels of creativity, expressivity and originality. He freely circles between the top tiers of flamenco and classical music, treading both grounds with the easy step and familiarity of one who feels fully at home. This is what makes the embrace of 'Al-Andalus' such a natural, coherent one. But it is not enough. The author, the interpreter, always wants to explore further. Serenely, like a sailing ship, he abandons the worlds that he knows so well in order to enter unexplored universes. This is his defining feature.

Cañizares and Paco de Lucía partook in ten years of work and intimacy; a long decade in which they shared stages all over the world: Europe, America, Asia and Africa. Their friendship will stand, the everlasting flame of a deep, intellectual rapport which not even the death of the master from Algeciras, two years ago now, was able to quench. 'Al-Andalus' springs from this loss; the longing for the master and the friend. This concert had been brewing inside Cañizares for a decade, even as he was unaware of it.



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THREE MOVEMENTS, THREE EMOTIONS: BULERÍA, FUNERAL MARCH AND TANGUILLO DE CÁDIZ

The news of the death of Paco de Lucía reached Cañizares as he was beginning to write, and the work inevitably developed into a vehicle for remembrance, for all those shared moments, now gone forever. Creating ‘Al-Andalus’ thus became a painful and complex progress. A brutal transition which is particularly well reflected in the second movement, a funeral march which stands in sharp contrast with the bulería (such a signature genre for Paco de Lucía) that precedes it. This second movement expresses Cañizares’s desolation, the hitherto unknown pain of carrying Paco de Lucía’s coffin on the left shoulder, a weight that made every step harder than the previous one.

The coffin entered the church under a leaden sky, but by the end of the service the sun was out again, open like a smile. In this evolution from sadness to joy, Paco could be felt filling the day and the hearts of those present with happiness. This transition is clearly reflected in the third movement. The taranta that links the second and third movements becomes a tangillo de Cádiz (Paco de Lucía’s hometown). In the last movement Cañizares wished to remember his master and friend with several references to two of his most famous compositions: ‘Río ancho’ and ‘Entre dos aguas’. Paco de Lucía and his essence are thus present in every note of ‘Al-Andalus’, embedded in the fine perfume that characterizes