**Sierra, Roberto (1953--)**

Born 9 October 1953 in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico

Marysol Quevedo

Puerto Rican contemporary classical music composer. Studied music at the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico(1969-76), the University of Puerto Rico (1971-76), the Royal College of Music and the University of London (1976-78), and the Institute for Sonology in Utrecht (1978-79). He furthered his studies in composition at the Hochschule für Musik in Hamburg, Germany under György Ligeti (1979-82). Sierra’s worked received wide acclaim after *Júiblo*, his first major orchestral composition, was performed by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra at Carnegie Hall in 1987. Another critically acclaimed work was Sierra’s *Missa Latina*, which was premiered in 2006 at the Kennedy Center and conducted by Leonard Slatkin. He returned to Puerto Rico in 1982, occupying administrative positions as Director of the Cultural Activities Department at the University of Puerto Rico and as Chancellor of the Puerto Rico Conservatory of Music. Since 1992 Sierra has been teaching composition at Cornell University.

Sierra has completely commissions for several American and European ensembles, and his music has been performed by internationally renowned orchestras, including the New York Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the Royal Scottish Orchestra, the BBC Orchestra and several orchestras throughout Spain. He has also been composer in residence for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra and the New Mexico Symphony.

His approach to composition is eclectic, combining modern compositional techniques, with music elements from Puerto Rican and Latin American folk and popular music, such as salsa and African-derived rhythms, as well as jazz. This fusion results in elaborate textures, achieved through rhythmic play and instrumental combinations. He follows in the footsteps of earlier twentieth-century Latin American composers by incorporating traditional music instruments, mostly in the percussion section, into the fabric of orchestral and instrumental writing. This use of traditional instruments and musical elements is subsumed into a modernist international contemporary musical language, using dissonant melodies and harmonies.

Awards: Sierra has received numerous awards, including the Academy Award in Music by the American Academy of Arts and Letters (2003), the 2004 Kenneth Davenport Competition for Orchestral Works for his *Sinfonía No. 1*, member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2010).

**Works list:**

*El mensajero de plata,* opera (1986)

*Golsas*, piano concerto (1986)

*Júbilo,* orchestra (1987)

*Tríptico* for guitar and string quartet (1989)

*Tres homenajes húngaros*, for two guitars (1995)

*Concierto Barroco*, concerto for guitar and orchestra (1996)

*Cancionero Sefardí*, soprano, flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano (1999)

Concerto for Saxophone and Orchestra (2000)

*Fandangos*, orchestra (2000)

Sinfonía No. 1 (2002)

*Folias*, concerto for guitar and orchestra (2002)

Sonata No. 1 for flute and piano (2003)

Sinfonía No. 2 (“Gran Passacaglia”) (2004)

Sinfonía No. 3 (“La Salsa”) (2005)

*Missa Latina* for chorus and orchestra (2006)

*Bongo-O,* concerto for solo percussion and chamber orchestra (2006)

*Güel Concert*, for chamber orchestra (2006)

*Carnaval*, for orchestra (2007)

*Variations on a Souvenir*, solo piano and orchestra (2007)

*Concierto de Cámara*, wind quintet and string quartet (2008)

Sinfonía No. 4 (2009)

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‘Roberto Sierra's Tres Homenajes Húngaros for two guitars’, *Chamber Music* 25, no. 6 (November 2008): 52-57.

Scharrón, E. (2004) ‘'Folías', a concerto for guitar and orchestra composed by Roberto Sierra’, *Soundboard* 30 (2), 32-33.

Lozada, A. L. (2008) ‘Roberto Sierra's compositions for solo clarinet’, (D.M.A., Univ. of Nebraska - Lincoln, 2008).

Thompson, D. (1984) ‘La música contemporánea en Puerto Rico’, *Revista Musical Chilena*, 38 (162), 110.

Rivera, J. (2007) ‘Roberto Sierra's 'Missa Latina': Musical analysis and historical perspectives’ (Ph.D., Florida State Univ., 2006).

Evans, G. (2009). Roberto Sierra: SALSA PAPA VIENTOS (1983), for flute, B-flat clarinet, English horn, bassoon, horn in F. *Chamber Music*, *26*(5), 115.

Pitcher, J. (2012). Sierra: Sinfonia No. 4. *American Record Guide*, *75*(4), 25-26.

Cherson, S., & Thompson, D. (2002). ‘A twentieth-century opera’, In , *Collected Work: Music in Puerto Rico: A reader's anthology. Pages: 95-98.*

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