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| Rodrigo, Joaquín (b Sagunto, 22 Nov. 1901; d Madrid, 6 July 1999 ). |
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| Joaquín Rodrigo was a Spanish composer. Blind from age three as a result of diphtheria, he came of age during Spain’s *Edad de Plata* (Silver Age), an artistic Renaissance that lasted from approximately 1900 to 1936. His best-known works were written after the Spanish Civil War, and his *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar (1940) and *Fantasía para un gentilhombre* for guitar and orchestra (1954), written for Andrés Segovia, achieved enduring success. |
| Joaquín Rodrigo was a Spanish composer. Blind from age three as a result of diphtheria, he came of age during Spain’s *Edad de Plata* (Silver Age), an artistic Renaissance that lasted from approximately 1900 to 1936. His best-known works were written after the Spanish Civil War, and his *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar (1940) and *Fantasía para un gentilhombre* for guitar and orchestra (1954), written for Andrés Segovia, achieved enduring success.  After the diphtheria outbreak in Sagunto, Rodrigo’s family moved to Valencia, where he began studying piano. He immersed himself in the city’s musical life, and in 1924 the Valencia Symphony Orchestra premiered his *Juglares*. These early successes encouraged Rodrigo to continue his musical training in Paris. By 1927, Rodrigo had enrolled at the École Normale de Musique to study with Paul Dukas. In Paris, Rodrigo mingled with a range of artists including Valencian painter Francisco Povo and Mexican composer Manuel Ponce. There, he also met Turkish pianist Victoria Kamhi, whom he married in 1933. They remained married until her death in 1997. The Rodrigos spent the Spanish Civil War in France, returning to Spain in September 1939. Shortly thereafter, Rodrigo’s *Concierto de Aranjuez* premiered, earning the composer new accolades. He held various positions during the 1940s, including music director of Radio Nacional. In 1947, the Complutense University of Madrid created a special position, the Manuel de Falla Chair of Music, to which Rodrigo was appointed, which he held for almost thirty years. He received numerous honours during his lifetime including the Spanish government’s Gran Cruz de Alfonso X el Sabio (1953) the Légion d’Honneur (1963), awarded by the French government, while also receiving a host of honorary doctorates.  Rodrigo composed prolifically, producing around one hundred and seventy pieces spanning a variety of musical genres. Rodrigo is best remembered for his concertos, of which he wrote eleven. His first concerto, *Concierto de Aranjuez* (1940), exemplifies his musical style, which focused on simplicity and nationalistic elements. The piece’s second movement, *Adagio*, features a haunting melody since covered by many musicians, most notably Miles Davis. Rodrigo’s wife Kamhi has suggested that their honeymoon spent walking in the gardens of the Palacio Real de Aranjuez outside of Madrid inspired the concerto, while also hinting that the melody represented Rodrigo’s response to the couple’s miscarriage.  Following the *Concierto de Aranjuez,* Rodrigo composed the *Concierto heroico* for piano (1942) ( which received the Premio Nacional de Música), the *Concierto de estío* for violin (1943) and, in 1949, he wrote the *Concierto galante* for Spanish cellist Gaspar Cassadó. Rodrigo often wrote with specific performers in mind, eager to test their abilities. He composed his *Concierto serenata* (1952), for instance, for harp virtuoso Nicanor Zabaleta. Later in Rodrigo’s career, performers sought him to create pieces suited to their talents — Flautist James Galway, for example, commissioned the Concierto pastoral (1977), while cellist Julian Lloyd Webber commissioned the *Concierto como un Divertimento* (1982). After *Aranjuez*, *Fantasía para un gentilhombre* for guitar and orchestra (1954) is Rodrigo’s most well-known composition — a work composed for Andrés Segovia, which used dance themes from the collected works of Spanish composer Gaspar Sanz (1640-1710) to form much of the material. Rodrigo composed his last concerto, *Concierto para una fiesta* (1982), for legendary guitarist Pepe Romero. In addition to his wealth of concertos, Rodrigo earned acclaim for his numerous songs, and his excellent piano works. |
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