**Rodrigo, Joaquín** (b Sagunto, 22 Nov. 1901; d Madrid, 6 July 1999 ).

Alyson Payne

Spanish Composer. Blind from age three as a result of diphtheria, Rodrigo came of age during Spain’s *Edad de Plata* (Silver Age), an artistic Renaissance that lasted from approximately 1900 to 1936. He wrote some of his best-known works after the Spanish Civil War. His *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar (1940) and his *Fantasía para un gentilhombre* for guitar and orchestra (1954), written for Andrés Segovia, have achieved enduring success.

**Life:** After the diphtheria outbreak in Sagunto, Rodrigo’s family moved to Valencia, where Rodrigo 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 move to Paris to continue his musical training. By 1927, Rodrigo had enrolled at the the École Normale de Musique to study with Paul Dukas. In Paris, Rodrigo mingled with various artists who had come to enjoy this creative center, including Valencian painter Francisco Povo and Mexican composer Manuel Ponce. 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. He held that position for almost thirty years. Rodrigo received numerous honors during his lifetime including the Gran Cruz de Alfonso X el Sabio (1953) from the Spanish government and the Légion d’Honneur (1963), awarded by the French government. He has also received many honorary doctorates.

**Works:** Rodrigo composed prolifically, leaving around one hundred and seventy piece that span many 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 as well as including nationalistic elements. The piece’s second movement, *Adagio*, features a haunting melody that many musicians have since covered, most notably Miles Davis. Kamhi stated that Rodrigo drew inspiration for the concerto from their honeymoon, spent walking in the gardens of the Palacio Real de Aranjuez, outside of Madrid. She also hinted that the melody represented Rodrigo’s response to the couple’s miscarriage.

Rodrigo next composed two other concertos, the *Concierto heroico* for piano (1942), which received the Premio Nacional de Música, and the *Concierto de estío* for violin (1943). 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 harp virtuoso Nicanor Zabaleta. Later in his career, performers sought him to create pieces suited to their talents. Flautist James Galway commissioned the Concierto pastoral (1977) and 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 second best-known composition. He composed the work for Andrés Segovia and 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. Rodrigo also earned acclaim for his numerous songs, and his excellent piano works.

**References and Further Reading:**

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**Web Resources**:

<http://www.joaquin-rodrigo.com/>