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GUINJOAN Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra

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Born in 1931, Joan Guinjoan is one of Catalonia's most distinguished composers, having been part of the establishment of what was then the avant-garde in Spain after his studies at the Schola Cantorum in France and founding the group Diabolus in Musica to that end. What was once avant-garde no longer seems so, of course; rather, Guinjoan is a representative of an established high-modernist tendency in Spain. This disc provides us with a survey of recent work.

His music is beautifully written, his facility with the orchestra (one of classical dimensions here) and his rather Gallic sense of colour evident at every turn. The Percussion Concerto plunges us into swathes of densely scored sound, from which single lines emerge intermittently, only to be swallowed up again, the timpani a constant, threatening presence, to be replaced by a wider variety of instruments, including marimba and vibraphone, when the mood changes - though the sense of threat does not abate. The central movement is mysterious and there is a reluctant lyricism in the solo writing that begins to infect the orchestra near the end; there is certainly a sense of a journey having been travelled, though still unfinished. Whether the final movement resolves that ambiguity is difficult to say. It is initially festive in feeling but gets caught up in yet another journey, complete with a cadenza that Miquel Bernat dispatches with magnificent aplomb, as he does the rest of the concerto, before rather suddenly deciding that it has run its course and coming to a buzzing close.

In tribulatione mea invocavi Dominum is scored for choir and orchestra but the two are nothing if not equal partners. It is quite different in character from the Percussion Concerto, with far more melodic character. In any event, it has resulted in a striking work that more than occasionally glances backwards to parts of Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms*. The Cor de Cambra del Palau and the Orfeó Català are the choirs in this recording, and they do a superb job.

The style of *Pantonal* for orchestra, on the other hand, is initially more reminiscent of that of the Percussion Concerto but it gradually acquires an engaging dance-like character. A disc worth investigating; *In tribulatione* in particular is a hugely impressive work by a composer at the height of his powers.



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Concerto for Percussion and Orchestra

In tribulatione mea invocavi Dominum

Pantonal