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# Orlando Jacinto GARCÍA

**Auschwitz**  
(they will never be forgotten)

**Varadero Memories**  
**In Memoriam**  
**Earle Brown**

**Florida International**  
**University Concert Choir**  
**Málaga Philharmonic**  
**Orchestra**  
**José Serebrier**

FIRST RECORDINGS

## SLOWLY UNFOLDING SOUNDWORLDS: MY APPROACH TO ORCHESTRAL WRITING

by Orlando Jacinto García

This album includes what I consider to be three of my more important orchestral works; as it is being released during my sixtieth-birthday year, it provides what I hope will be an informative retrospective on my approach to orchestral writing. The works recorded here span three decades and, though they are similar in some ways, they diverge in others. All three demonstrate my continuing interest in writing a music that is created with the intention of changing the perception of time in the listener and creating a static world, although the earliest, *Varadero Memories* of 1988 [2], adopts a more restricted approach to pitch and intervals. This methodology is perhaps not surprising since the works I wrote shortly after my studies with Morton Feldman (1985–87) are mostly based on dissonant intervals and the exploration of silences, and *Varadero Memories* is no exception.

The next work, written six years later, in 1994, *Auschwitz (nunca se olvidarán)* ('Auschwitz (they shall never be forgotten)') [1] – the English translation is interchangeable with the original Spanish title – includes a less restricted harmonic palette but is not necessarily less static. As it was conceived as a meditation for those lost in the Holocaust, a more expressive approach to melody and harmony seemed warranted and thus the more ample harmonic palette, although at the same time it continues my exploration of stasis. I was raised as a Catholic and have my own personal existentialist belief in the numinous, but I have always been very troubled by the Holocaust since becoming aware of it as a youth. When the opportunity arose to make a comment, even something as unemphatic as a meditation for those lost, I took the opportunity to do so and am very pleased with how the work turned out and has been received.

The third and most recent work, *In Memoriam Earle Brown* (2011) [3], was written in memory of an important American composer who was also a personal friend. As Kyle Gann so expertly notes below, I employ several of Earle's techniques in the work while keeping it in my static, slowly unfolding world. At the same time the intervallic content in this work, although perhaps in some ways as broad as that found in my *Auschwitz* piece, is much more clearly centred on a consonant soundworld in comparison to either of the other works on this album.

The **Málaga Philharmonic Orchestra** gave its inaugural concert on 14 February 1991. It was founded under the name of the City Orchestra of Málaga, an association between the Málaga Town Council and the Regional Government of Andalusia, and responded to the conviction that a city such as Málaga ought to have a fine symphony orchestra of its own. Throughout the years it has maintained the commitment to offer the city high-quality music along with the best conductors and soloists on the national and international scenes. In charge of the Orchestra, and of the project encompassing it, five principal conductors have left their personal mark: Octav Calleya, Odón Alonso, Alexander Rahbari, Aldo Ceccato and Edmon Colomer. The list of guest conductors contains some major names: Sergiu Comissiona, Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, Jesús Lopez Cobos and Krzysztof Penderecki, to name but a few. Equally, the Orchestra has been privileged to receive prestigious soloists, among them Joaquín Achúcarro, Carlos Alvarez, Boris Belkin, Montserrat Caballé, Alfredo Kraus and Alicia de Larrocha.

The Orchestra – renamed the Málaga Philharmonic Orchestra after celebrating its tenth anniversary – believes it is essential not to restrict its musical activity to the seasonal programmes and has put forward some exciting parallel proposals. Apart from CD recordings of a wide selection of repertoires, and under the baton of different maestros, special mention should be made of the Festival of Ancient Music as well as the Cycle of Contemporary Music, specially dedicated to Spanish music of our time, which has been steadily growing from year to year. The Orchestra is also dedicated to the task of forming the audiences of the future, and with this in mind it has set up a programme of didactic activities, in collaboration with the Education Area of Málaga Town Council.

The Málaga Philharmonic Orchestra has also achieved success in the most famous theatres and festivals around the country, as well as on a number of tours around Europe which have taken it to the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Slovakia and Sweden.

The **FIU Concert Choir** is Florida International University's premiere choral ensemble, made up of select vocal students in the School of Music, and admission is by audition only. The FIU Concert Choir has performed at state, regional and national music conferences and is recorded on the Capstone and CRI labels. The ensemble performs sacred and secular choral repertoire of all eras from the Middle Ages to the 21st century, as well as arrangements of spirituals and folk-music of various cultures around the globe. In January 2014 the Choir was invited to perform at the annual convention of the Florida Music Educators Association in Tampa, Florida.

In that capacity he commissioned many works, including Elliot Carter's String Quartet No. 4, and conducted many American and world premieres.

Serebrier has made international tours with the Juilliard Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony, Philharmonia Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Toulouse Chamber Orchestra, National Youth Orchestra of Spain and others.

His first recording, of Charles Ives' Fourth Symphony with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, won a Grammy nomination. His recording of the Mendelssohn symphonies won the UK Music Retailers Association Award for Best Orchestral Recording, and his series of Shostakovich's film suites won the Deutsche Schallplatten Award for Best Orchestral Recording. *Soundstage* magazine selected his recording of *Scheherazade* with the LPO as the Best Audiophile Recording. He has recorded with the London Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, Philharmonia, Bournemouth Symphony, Oslo Philharmonic, Bamberg Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, the Scottish and English Chamber Orchestras, Barcelona Symphony, Czech State Philharmonic, Weimar Staatskapelle, the Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras and many others. *Serebrier Conducts Prokofiev, Beethoven and Tchaikovsky*, filmed at the Sydney Opera, has been shown over fifty times on US television. Serebrier conducted at the 2004 Grammy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles, telecast live to 175 countries. Serebrier presently records for Naxos, BIS, Warner Classics, RPO Records, Sony/BMG and, now, Toccata Classics. Having recorded the complete symphonies and concertos of Glazunov for Warner Classics, Serebrier has now embarked on a cycle of the Dvořák symphonies for the same label.

As composer, Serebrier has won most of the important awards in the United States, including two Guggenheims (as the youngest in that Foundation's history, at age nineteen), Rockefeller Foundation grants, commissions from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Harvard Musical Association, the BMI Award and Koussevitzky Foundation Award. Born in Uruguay to Russian and Polish parents, Serebrier has composed more than a hundred works, published by Peer Music, Universal Edition, Kalmus, Warner Music, and Peters Corp. His First Symphony was premiered by Leopold Stokowski (who gave the first performances of several of his works) when Serebrier was seventeen, as a last-minute replacement for the then still unplayable Ives Fourth Symphony; and since then his music has been recorded by a number of other conductors. Serebrier made his US conducting debut at nineteen with the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, performing his Symphony No. 2, *Partita*. His Third Symphony, *Symphonie Mystique*, received a Grammy nomination for 'Best New Composition of 2004' and was premiered at Carnegie Hall in 2005. His *Carmen Symphony* CD, with the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra, won the Latin Grammy for 'Best Classical Album of 2004'. *José Serebrier: Un chef d'orchestre et compositeur à l'aube du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, by the French music-critic Michel Faure was published in 2002 by L'Harmattan, Paris.

Overall, my compositional approach is intended to allow me to create works that, although different from one another in gesture, melodic content, rhythmic ideas and so on, are similar in how the pacing and unfolding of materials takes place. I hope this underlying methodology makes the music readily identifiable as my own.

## ORLANDO JACINTO GARCÍA'S SONIC IMAGISM

by Kyle Gann

Orlando García is one of the most 'imagistic' composers around. By 'imagism' I mean composing directly in sonorities, subjectively placing them next to one another without concern for musical logic. To put that approach in context, the classical music of the nineteenth century is couched in a musical language that has a syntax in which certain chords lead to other chords and create expectations for the listener. In the twentieth century, when many composers abandoned that classical syntax, several types of language were developed in an attempt to replace it, the most widespread one being twelve-tone technique. But a few composers decided that music could do just fine without logic or syntax, and create atmosphere and form through sonorities alone, and their careful placement. Some of Igor Stravinsky's music takes this route (*The Rite of Spring*, *Symphonies of Wind Instruments*). Olivier Messiaen was a major imagist, often repeating large chunks of material and eschewing syntax altogether; similarly, Ralph Shapey.<sup>1</sup> Morton Feldman's quiet continua were imagist in many ways. No one has more fully embraced imagism as an aesthetic than Orlando García.

Born in Havana in 1954, García came to the USA in 1961 and he studied with the much underrated post-minimalist composer Dennis Kam.<sup>2</sup> In the late 1980s García became one of Morton Feldman's last private students, and to an extent he inherited – as so many of Feldman's students did – his teacher's paradigm of timeless, non-logical, almost painterly musical continuity. García subsequently took a teaching post at Florida International University, where he has been extremely active as an organiser and

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Shapey (1921–2002) taught composition at the University of Chicago, where he founded and conducted the Contemporary Chamber Players. The blend of edgy modernism and quasi-Romantic dramatic sweep in his music led to his being christened a 'radical traditionalist', a label he was happy to acknowledge.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis Kam (born in 1942) was head of the Department of Music Theory and Composition at the Frost School of Music of the University of Miami from 1974 until his retirement in 2013 and has been active as a conductor alongside his activities as composer and academic.

administrator of music festivals. Although he grew up with a grandmother who played Cuban music on the piano, played as a teenager in a salsa band himself, and has been widely involved with South and Central American music, it is uncommon for García's music to evince his Cuban background. His pensive, prayerfully sustained music is often performed in Europe, where he is probably heard as stylistically more American than Hispanic, but also quite cosmopolitan.

In *Auschwitz* (*nunca se olvidarán*) [1] García tackled one of the most ambitious and difficult objectives music can face: to embody and do justice to the emotional reaction to one of the most horrific cruelties of all time. García's *Auschwitz* is not violent (except in a few loud bars); instead, it paints a drawn-out atmosphere of mourning with a wordless chorus weaving in and out of the orchestra. Anguished sonorities recur frequently, but they are mostly quiet ones, such as the widely separated tone-clusters at the beginning, which involve extremely low notes in the double-basses and piano and extremely high ones in violin harmonics and the piano. Extreme timbral effects are common, such as bowed gongs and cymbals. At eight moments, a solo instrument or voice interrupts the piece to insert a long, languorous melody in uneven note-values: first the cello, then viola, cello again, solo soprano, violin, solo alto, flute, and trombone. Each solo runs through all twelve notes of the scale in a twelve-tone row always beginning or ending on G. These are the poetic pieces of solo testimony amongst the tensely chromatic but lucid textures that dominate the piece. At two points the chorus breaks from its wordless vocalise to speak the words 'nunca se olvidarán': 'they will never be forgotten'.

*Varadero Memories* [2] was written as a reminiscence of a beach town in Cuba where García spent much time on vacation with his parents and grandparents. The music is only occasionally as gentle as this fact would lead one to expect, but it is one of García's most timeless works: sonic elements disappear and return unchanged, almost as though a static texture were being nuanced by someone at a mixing board bringing various channels in and out. For instance, the rising harp figure that dots the opening measures is the same one that comes back over and over at the end. The curiously Romantic-sounding three-note figure in the lower strings that dominates the first half of the work does have the lulling security of a childhood memory; the brass chords that dot rhythms against it are the first appearance of steady cross-rhythms in repeated notes that will continue to create a sense of superimposed but calmly co-existing time-scales. So pervaded are all the sonorities by a small group of intervals that different parts of the piece hardly feel differentiated except by the momentary absence of certain figures, and the increasing interruption of the continuity by grand pauses toward the end feels like a sad fading away.

In *Memoriam Earle Brown* [3] is an homage to a composer who was a close associate of Feldman's, and whose music often allowed the conductor to improvise, cueing materials on the orchestral score page

that could be played in any order. The elements of García's homage are clear: the metric progression of the piece is at several points brought to a halt by groups of chords (often tone-clusters, and with many pitches echoed among the various orchestral sections) that are cued *ad libitum* by the conductor. Musical time returns to the piece via flocks of echoing melodic motives and four repetitive sections in which changing chords underlie the repeated motives. In the first three sections these motives are all tremolo minor thirds – first on F and D, then D and B, then B and G sharp, moving downward a minor third each time. The final such passage grows from repeated Gs in the mallet percussion, and, in the nature of a memorial, the orchestral texture thins to this pitch alone as it dies away.

It is noteworthy how much these three works, composed in different decades, all belong so much to the same sensibility that it would be impossible, I think, to guess which is the earlier and which the later scores. And yet their sonic images are so diverse, so individual, that it becomes easy to tell them apart after first listening. These facts attest to the focused yet wide-ranging imagination of García's sonic imagism.

Kyle Gann, a composer, is the author of several books on American music, including *No Such Thing as Silence: John Cage's 4'33"* (Yale University Press, 2010) and *Essays After a Sonata: Charles Ives's Concord* (Yale University Press, forthcoming 2015). He is the Taylor Hawver and Frances Bortle Hawver Professor of Music at Bard College.

Grammy-winning conductor and composer **José Serebrier** is one of the most recorded classical artists in history. He has received 37 Grammy nominations in recent years; indeed, all his recent recordings have received multiple Grammy nominations.

When José Serebrier was 21 years old, Leopold Stokowski hailed him as 'the greatest master of orchestral balance'. After five years as Stokowski's Associate Conductor at Carnegie Hall in New York, Serebrier accepted an invitation from George Szell to become the Composer in Residence of the Cleveland Orchestra for Szell's last two seasons. Szell discovered Serebrier when he won the Ford Foundation American Conductors Competition (together with James Levine). Serebrier was music director of America's oldest music festival, in Worcester, Massachusetts, until he organised Festival Miami, and served as its artistic director for many years.

