

GABRIELA ORTIZ

Composer

The Ortiz-Torres combine has taken the story first used in a corrido, a Mexican folk song of one Camelia la Tejana, who killed her betraying lover after they had smuggled drugs across the border. Is the tale fiction or real? Is Camelia figment or fact? That's what this "videopera" explores, Camelia's path in public perception from make believe to corporeality and to myth, to larger-than-life status. That in no way invalidates the project, which, regardless of the shape it has or what one calls it, is gripping. The libretto holds power and poetry. The music, ranging stylistically from exotic avant-garde to lyrical, fits the subject marvelously. The visual elements called for provide an atmosphere at once real and surreal.

— Peter Jacobi, August 11, 2008

Gentle-voiced, gracefully flowing...her music is fiery, rhythmically pointed and occasionally pugilistic.

—The New York Times. Allan Kozinn, March 19, 2009

The concert had opened with a substantial work by Gabriela Ortiz. The composer's note evokes the geometrically decorative eagle designs in certain Mexican fabrics. With the full ensemble in action, we were indeed offered some sharply angular textures; we then moved into lively rhythmic territory vaguely reminiscent of Stravinsky before slowing and finally reconnecting with the feeling of the opening section. There was a solid story-telling here as well as passages of strong design. (Concorde at the Irish Museum of Modern Art).

— The Journal of Music, February 15, 2009

Gabriela Ortiz's work *Altar de Muertos*, which made up the second half of the program, was a more sophisticated blend of Mexican influences and art music. This was a highly listenable work with some vibrant rhythms, some lovely lyric melodies and moments of intensity.-

— J. M. Bailey, San Francisco Classical Voice, November 2, 2002

Altar de Muertos celebrates the altars dedicated rather joyously to the departed, this piece is a brilliant staged musical composition leaning on her nation's rich heritage. The half-hour-long piece is fascinating, alluring for its multidimensionality as it weds distant cultures to Western instruments. *Altar de Muertos* is an ambitious piece, with its theme aspects of the celebration of the Day of the Dead, from pre-Hispanic to modern times. Though frequently colored with Mexican ethnicity, including a directly quoted folk song, her basic idiom seems rooted in the third and fourth quartets of Bartok. Since these pieces are some of the absolutely greatest music of the twentieth century it was an excellent choice of model -- and Ortiz boldly takes us where Bartok left off.

— Paul Hertelendy, artssf.com, November 2002

Altar de Piedra has an appealing poetic inspiration from *Los pasos Perdidos* by Alejo Carpentier, from which Ortiz has taken beautiful images, represented by interesting sonic effects in the orchestra.

— Mark Swed, The Los Angeles Times, January 2003

Gabriela Ortiz's 20-minute concerto for percussion ensemble and orchestra, bearing the subtitle 'Altar de Piedra' (Altar of Stone), throbbed with indigenous rhythms and grand banging on gongs, vibes, drums and the like. More than that, however, it is a work of genuine depth: two splendidly energetic movements framing a slow movement full of iridescent orchestral effects and languorous harmonies.

— Alan Rich, Variety.com, January 23, 2003