

Retablos

It wasn't until I saw this piece in its finished form that the title Retablos ("Retables", a series of religious paintings that are usually based on the same subject matter, e.g. scenes depicting the apparition of a Saint) came to my mind. I had originally planned to write a piece that had something to do with the Mexican "Día de Muertos" (Day of the Dead), but as it often happens, the purely musical materials I began using and the various processes I discovered while manipulating them took me away from my anecdotal beginnings, leaving me with a group of short tableaux which are all based on the same raw material. Retablos is, hence, a collection of altar pieces which, I hope, reflect my deep devotion to what I have come to believe are the only elements music can be made of: sounds and processes.

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In his "Retablos" for 18 musicians, Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez employs a bounty of contemporary devices to establish a fabric of anxious nobility. From the opening, quixotic oboe solo to the final mesmerizing episode in which oboe and clarinet answer one another in off-stage sighs, the work investigates a vital expressive spectrum.

Donald Rosenberg, The Plain Dealer (Cleveland)