

Guardian of the Horizon

Concerto Grosso for Violin, Cello, and Strings.

Duration: ca. 15'

One of the greatest joys one can have as an artist is for one's art to make a difference. Sphinx's core mission does exactly that; it inspires and empowers young talented artists to fulfill their full potential, artists who, because of the color of their skin, might otherwise be at a disadvantage when it comes from benefitting from opportunities in the classical music field. As a Latino composer myself, I am proud to join in celebrating Sphinx's 20th anniversary and in doing so, I pay homage to the symbolism behind the name of the organization itself.

Guardian of the Horizon is a metaphor for Sphinx, which is associated with strength, wisdom, and resilience. It seemed to me like the most logical choice, albeit the most challenging, but as I was about to embark on the composition of this piece, tragedy struck me in a way which turned this into one -if not the most- personal piece I have written to date. My father, Javier, a staunch supporter of my music since my early childhood, and the most loving and generous man one could ask for a father, passed away on December 4, 2016. In light of this enormous loss, the figure of the Sphinx gained an even greater significance. I began to think of Greek Mythology and Oedipus (hence the title of the first movement) but then I started to think of it the way ancient Egyptians did, as a manifestation of Hathor, Goddess of birth and death, or as "Horus in the Horizon", guarding the rising and setting sun, and finally, as holding the keys to the gates of wisdom. In my work, the Sphinx guards the passage to the afterlife, but the aspiring soul must first answer a *Riddle*, and only then can it be allowed into *Crossing the Threshold*. As I got to work, it felt more and more like I was writing a companion piece for my father's transcendental journey, a journey that we will all have to undertake some day.

As its subtitle suggests, this piece pays homage to a type of baroque musical composition called the concerto grosso, and what could be more appropriate to honor this form than an ensemble of strings: the family of instruments which reached perfection during baroque times, well in advance of all the others (woodwinds, brass, percussion, etc.). The violin and cello are treated as equals, at times joining forces in order to become a super instrument, and at others behaving like rivals in a competition of dexterity and endurance. The string ensemble does not limit itself to the role of accompanist; it is an active participant, constantly interacting and challenging the soloists, while soaring to ever greater heights.

This piece is a labor of love. Few things in life have the power to touch us so deeply; the loss of a parent being one of them. But this piece is also meant to celebrate life, the life and talent of those young artists whom you will see on stage, because they represent the best and brightest, regardless of race or color. We must remember that no matter how dark the times may seem, our path will always lead us *Into the Effulgent Light*.