

Joan Guinjoan (1931-2019)

Short biography

Born on November 28, 1931 in Riudoms (Tarragona, Spain) and died in Barcelona on January 1, 2019, Joan Guinjoan's various contributions to the world of music have encompassed performance, the dissemination of 20th century music and, fundamentally, composition.

Concert pianist (1955-1960):

He studied piano in Reus, at the Conservatory of Barcelona with the maestro A. Ribó and at the École Normale de Paris where in 1955 he made his debut as a pianist in the Cortot hall. In this first phase, Guinjoan dedicated his musical life to the piano, giving recitals of the great traditional repertoire in Spain, France and Germany.

Conductor and founder of the Diabolus in Musica chamber ensemble. (1965-1986):

In 1965 he founded the ensemble Diabolus in Musica dedicated to the production and diffusion of 20th century music with the collaboration of clarinetist Juli Panyella. During its 20 years of existence, the repertoire of Diabolus in Musica included more than 70 premieres by Spanish and foreign composers. In this concern, it is worth mentioning the first version in Spain of Schoenberg's Second Symphony Op. 38 in 1975, and the premieres of "Improvisation sur Mallarmé" by Pierre Boulez, the percussion work "Interieur 1" by Helmut Lachenmann, as well as the first Spanish version on disc of the orchestral Suite of Stravinsky's The Soldier's Tale.

Disseminator and promoter of contemporary music. (1965-2010):

He spread contemporary music as music critic of the Diario de Barcelona (1967-1975). Also as musical advisor to the Barcelona City Council (1972-1994) he was dedicated to musical initiation in its 9 municipal schools and created and directed the Center for the Diffusion of 20th Century Music. During this same period he created the International Contemporary Music Weeks of the Barcelona City Council. He also created the International Prize of Musical Composition Ciutat de Tarragona (1993-2005), without forgetting the direction of the TVE broadcasts of "Recital" and "Pentagrama Siglo XX" (1970-1975).

Composer (1960-2018):

In 1960 he decided to devote himself to composition, an activity that has crystallized in a catalog of more than 100 scores. He began his composition studies in Barcelona with maestro Taltabull. A year later, backed by the maestro Frederic Mompou and sponsored by Francesc Casas, he furthered his composition and orchestration studies at the Schola Cantorum in Paris with the maestro Pierre Wissmer. In 1964 he obtains the Diploma of Composition and Orchestration with an extraordinary prize. His stay of more than two years at the Spanish School of the Cité Universitaire de Paris allowed him to come into contact with the work of Schoenberg and with the cycles of the Domaine Musical directed by Pierre Boulez in which he got to know works by Berio, Stockhausen, Ligeti, Boulez and Xenakis, among others.

His catalog spans from 1954 to 2018 and includes 10 works for symphony orchestra, 7 works for soloist and symphony orchestra, 2 works for mixed choir and symphony orchestra, 2 works for mixed choir, 1 opera, 1 ballet, 18 works for solo piano, 17 works for another solo instrument, 11 works for instrumental duo, 3 works for voice and piano, 7 works for trio, 6 works for quartet, and 22 for chamber ensemble of five or more instruments. Most of his works have been commissioned by Spanish, French and other countries. His music has been performed internationally by prestigious orchestras, ensembles and soloists; most of these works have been recorded and he has 38 CDs with other composers, 16 monographic CDs and 2 DVDs.

He was guest composer in the United States, France, Germany, Austria, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela for prestigious orchestras, ensembles and soloists. At the same time, he has been composer-in-residence at the Cadaqués Orchestra (1998), at the University of Santa Barbara (California) (1999) and at the Palau de la Música de Barcelona (2012-2013). It is worth mentioning that in 2012 the Orquesta y Coro Nacionales de España dedicated to him an edition of "Carta Blanca", a biannual concert series that has featured composers such as Henze, Dutilleux and Elliott Carter, among others.

Guinjoan received numerous composition awards: Ciutat de Barcelona Prize (Spain), in three editions (1972, 1978, 1999); Queen Sofia Composition Prize of the Ferrer Salat Foundation (Spain) (1983); National Record Prize (Spain) (1982); National Music Prize (Ministry of Culture, Spain) (1990); National Culture Prize (Music) of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Spain) (1995); finalist of the Koussevitzky Prize of the IRCA of New York, and the Ibero-American Music Prize Tomás Luis de Victoria (2004).

He was awarded several distinctions throughout his career: the Gold Medal for Merit in Fine Arts (Spain) the Creu de Sant Jordi (Catalonia, Spain); Doctor Honoris Causa (Universitat Rovira i Virgili de Tarragona, Spain); Commandeur des Arts et des Lettres (France); he was a member and later honorary member of the Board of Directors of the Sociedad General de Autores y Editores (SGAE, Spain), and a member of the Reial Acadèmia de Belles Arts de Sant Jordi (Catalonia, Spain).

His work has been the subject of analysis in 8 monographic studies and a doctoral thesis.