



Leonardo Balada and Enrique Graf after the performance on February 12, 2012

A native of Spain, Leonardo Balada graduated from Barcelona's Conservatorio del Liceu and the Juilliard School. Balada's works have been performed by the world's leading orchestras, including New York, Los Angeles, Israel, Philadelphia, the Philharmonia Orchestra of London, and the BBC, and by conductors and soloists including Rostropovitch, Frühbeck de Burgos, Lopez-Cobos, Lukas Foss, Alicia de Larrocha, Narciso Yepes, Andres Segovia, and the American Brass Quintet. Balada has been a faculty member of Carnegie Mellon School of Music since 1970.

He has been commissioned by the Aspen Festival, San Diego Opera, the orchestras of Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Lausanne, National of Spain, Radio Berlin, and others, and has received several NEA awards. He has collaborated with Salvador Dali and Nobel Prize laureate C.J. Cela. A large number of his compositions are recorded including *Steel Symphony* and *Music for Oboe and Orchestra* with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra and Lorin Maazel. Balada's large catalog of works includes the opera *Christopher Columbus* commissioned by the Spanish government for the 5th centennial of the Americas. It was premiered with Jose Carreras and Montserrat Caballe and received international acclaim. His principal publisher is G. Schirmer.

Concerto for Piano Winds and Percussion by Leonardo Balada

This concerto was commissioned by the Carnegie Mellon University Alumni Association. The soloist is in almost perpetual motion, and the two forces—soloist and winds—are more often than not at odds.

The work is in one movement, but there are three sections. The first starts with a “ping-pong” idea taken in a literal sense. The single figure gradually expands into a broken cluster-like texture aided by similar material in the winds and trumpets, which the middle section, slow and open in an almost “Chopinian” Romanticism of free rubatos and dynamics. This is the homage to the 19th century in the same fashion that the first part is in homage to the 20th century of Poulenc and Stravinsky. A melodic idea of four notes presented out of phase leads to the third section with a sudden and staccato hammering by the soloist. The element of repetition is of utmost importance in the work, as is the contrast between the unison and the clusters, intermingled with triadic sounds and other devices that I like to call “recycling” of traditional techniques.