

***Brazos de niebla* (Arms of Mist) (World Premiere)**

JAVIER ÁLVAREZ

Born May 8, 1956, Mexico City

Composer Javier Álvarez has provided a program note:

A year before I began working on *Brazos de niebla*, I read an article in the Spanish newspaper *El País* that described in considerable detail the plight of immigrants who habitually embark on a perilous journey between Colombia and Panama. I was deeply moved by the article, so much so that by the time I started composing *Brazos de niebla*, I knew I wanted to create a piece which would in some way deal with the calamitous phenomenon of immigration. Things became clearer when I first discussed the idea with my admired friend, the poet laureate Juan Felipe Herrera. Auspiciously, during our conversations we tacitly understood each other; we brain-stormed for a while and finally agreed to focus the project on the depiction of the thoughts and feelings of an imaginary young immigrant child.

Brazos de niebla (Arms of Mist) takes its title from the extraordinary poem that Juan Felipe eventually wrote: a poignant lament of a youngster lost in the haze of circumstances that ignore him, a child mislaid in the solitude, events and delusions that encircle his jumbled experience as an immigrant. In reading the poem for the first time, the line "brazos de niebla" (arms of mist) struck me as a peculiar deep and immensely persuasive image that not only encapsulated the formidable strength of the poem's metaphors but also gave rise to my overall conception of the work. Thus, *Brazos de niebla* is structured in three complete parts, each one organized as a sequence of rhythmic musical "outbreaks" which take place in the course of a fictional (but essentially musical) journey. Though these episodes do not necessarily bear a programmatic intention, they serve as emotional landmarks that allow me to frame the extended middle section where a boy soprano intones Juan Felipe's compelling words. The work also features an instrumental section within the orchestra made up of four of Mexican vihuelas; these small strumming guitars pervade the music with a distinctive color which I trust acts as an additional symbol of the transcultural and transient territories implicit in the poetry.

The work was composed in the spring of 2018 on a commission from the San Diego Symphony Orchestra, to which it is dedicated.