

02.11.2017

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**Posadas: Sombras CD review – slow reveal of consummately performed mystery**

**Sun/Rosman/Quatuor Diotima**

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Thursday 2 November 2017 15.00 GMT Last modified on Thursday 2 November 2017 22.00 GMT

Pieces for string quartet figure very prominently in [Alberto Posadas'](#) output. The Spanish composer's five-movement Liturgia Fractal is one of the most impressive quartets of recent times, and it is the three movements involving string quartet that provide the framework for the arc-like structure of Sombras, a 75-minute sequence inspired by The Book of Delusions by the Romanian philosopher and nihilist [Emil Cioran](#). A lengthy setting for soprano and quartet of a passage from Cioran's text forms the centrepiece of the work, flanked by brief transitions for soprano and viola, and soprano and clarinet, while the first and last movements feature the string quartet, with the addition of bass clarinet in the finale.

Even without the element of theatricality that's built into live performances, when the soprano sometimes sings from behind screens and the clarinet is first heard from the back of the auditorium, it is a striking, compelling work, and the performance by [Quatuor Diotima](#), with soprano [Sarah Maria Sun](#) and clarinetist [Carl Rosman](#), is typically consummate. The quartet writing, so unremittingly dense and frantic in the first movement, becomes much more fragile when cocooning the evanescent vocal lines in the third, and seems constantly on the point of disintegrating under the assault from the clarinet in the last. Sombras is by no means easy to grasp at a first, or even second, hearing, but it keeps you listening and gradually gives up its mysteries.