

**SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
A JACOBS MASTERWORKS CONCERT**

May 15, 16 and 17, 2015

EMMANUEL CHABRIER *España*

ÉDOUARD LALO

Symphonie espagnole, Op. 21

Allegro non troppo

Scherzando: Allegro molto

Intermezzo: Allegretto non troppo

Andante

Rondo

Ray Chen, violin

INTERMISSION

MAURICE RAVEL

Alborada del gracioso

MANUEL DE FALLA

Selections from *The Three-Cornered Hat Suites 1 and 2*

Introduction

Dance of the Miller's Wife (Fandango)

The Neighbors

Miller's Dance (Farruca)

Final Dance

PROGRAM NOTES

España

EMMANUEL CHABRIER

Born January 18, 1841, Ambert, Puy-de-Dôme

Died September 13, 1894, Paris

Approx. 8 minutes

Emmanuel Chabrier was a piano prodigy as a child, and he grew up longing to be a composer. But his parents insisted on a “sensible” career, and Chabrier spent several decades as a minor clerk in the Ministry of the Interior who dabbled in composition in his spare time. Then in the spring of 1882 Chabrier and his wife took a vacation trip to Spain, where – like so many other French composers – he was intoxicated by Spanish music. Back in France, he noted down several characteristic melodies and dance rhythms that he had heard in Andalusia, and from these he fashioned what he called a fantasia for solo piano. When the conductor Charles Lamoureux heard Chabrier play this piece, he urged him to orchestrate it. Lamoureux led the premiere of the orchestral version, now titled *España*, in Paris on November 4, 1883. It was an instant success, and Chabrier woke the next morning to find himself famous. Even now, 130 years later, *España* remains his best-known work.

Chabrier himself noted that he had built *España* on two characteristic Spanish dances – the sultry *malaguena* and the lively *jota* – and he contributed a third theme of his own, a jaunty melody shouted out by the trombones. Much of the fun of this piece lies in its rhythmic vitality. *España* gets off to a steady start that convinces us that it is in 2/4, and just when our ears have adjusted to that, Chabrier shifts the accents in a way that lets us know that this piece is really in 3/8. That sort of rhythmic displacement will occur throughout, and at several points Chabrier experiments with polyrhythmic overlapping – one part of the orchestra will stay in 3/8 while other sections within it are playing in 2/4. (Try beating time along with this piece – it will fool you again and again.)

As infectious as the rhythms are, the colors of *España* are just as memorable. Chabrier writes imaginatively for the orchestra, employing such unusual instruments as cornets and basque tambourine and such effects as *col legno*: requiring the strings to play extended passages with the wood of the bow. The Spanish dances sing and surge voluptuously, and *España* rushes to its close in a great wash of brilliant sound.

Symphonie espagnole, Op. 21

ÉDOUARD LALO

Born January 27, 1823, Lille

Died April 22, 1892, Paris

Approx. 33 minutes

The name of this wonderful music has caused a certain amount of confusion. Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* is neither a symphony (it is in fact a five-movement violin concerto), nor is it by a Spanish composer: Édouard Lalo was from Lille and made his entire career within the varied musical life of nineteenth century Paris. His "Spanish Symphony" is part of that fascination with Spain that seemed to infect every French composer of the era and which would eventually produce such works as Chabrier's *España*, Debussy's *Iberia*, Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole* and *Boléro*. In fact, the premiere of the *Symphonie espagnole* took place in Paris on February 7, 1875, just three weeks before the first performance of the greatest of all French musical evocations of Spain, Bizet's *Carmen*.

But to what extent is Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* "Spanish" music? That question has been answered in curious ways. Some have claimed to hear such overtly Spanish features as *seguidilla* or *malaguena* rhythms in it. Others hear the sound of guitars and castanets in the orchestral accompaniment. Still others point out that Lalo was descended from Spanish ancestry on both sides (though the families had lived in northern Europe for 300 years when Lalo was born.) The answer to the question of national identity is more subtle than these explanations might make it seem. First, Lalo wrote this music for the Spanish violinist Pablo de Sarasate, who had premiered Lalo's Violin Concerto in F Major in 1873 – certainly an awareness of the performer for whom he was writing shaped Lalo's approach. But the real "Spanish" character of this music is more a matter of general atmosphere; easy to sense but difficult to define. Some of this is a result of the music's sultry, impassioned themes; some arises from its frequently snapped rhythms; perhaps more comes from the characteristic rhythmic pattern 3+2, which saturates this music and is often characteristic of the *habanera*.

What is clear is that this is superb violin music. Lalo himself was a fine violinist, and his *Symphonie espagnole* sits gracefully under the hand, is beautifully calculated to bring out both the lyric and brilliant sides of the instrument and balances the solo violin very shrewdly against

the orchestra. The *Allegro non troppo* opens with a great orchestral flourish, which the soloist quickly picks up, and this opening – with its upward leap of a fifth – will shape the vigorous main idea, soon announced by solo violin over powerful accompaniment. The 3+2 rhythm makes its first appearance before the violin sings the melting second subject, a rising-and-falling melody that Lalo specifies should be *dolce espressivo*; this movement – the most classical in the *Symphonie espagnole* – proceeds in sonata form. The energetic *Scherzando* opens with a pizzicato introduction that reminds certain commentators either of guitars or castanets, and the violin glides in gracefully above these figures; the brief center section alternates slow tempos with the pizzicato figure before a close on the opening material.

The central movement, an *Intermezzo*, was – several generations ago – often omitted from performances for reasons not clear now. It has a powerful opening, with the 3+2 rhythm stamped out in different permutations before the violin makes its own brusque entrance on this same material. The music grows more animated in its 6/8 central episode, then returns to the opening material before the massive (and surprising) final chord. The dark *Andante* opens in D minor with a somber introduction for the winds and brass; the violin sings wistfully on its entrance, then turns impassioned and brilliant before the music falls away to the wonderful close. Here Lalo slips into D Major, in preparation for the finale, and sends the solo violin up to high D, where it shimmers like a star high above the orchestra's concluding chords.

The finale has been compared to a *saltarello* (an old Italian leaping dance in 6/8), but this movement is really a rondo that provides an opportunity for some brilliant fiddling from the soloist, who introduces the rondo theme and then has the *appassionato* second subject, whose 3+2 rhythm now does fall into the characteristic stresses of the *habanera*. The music rushes ahead brilliantly at the end – there are some terrific left-handed pizzicatos along the way – and finally sails to the resounding close.

Alborada del gracioso

MAURICE RAVEL

Born March 7, 1875, Ciboure, Basses-Pyrennes

Died December 28, 1937, Paris

Approx. 8 minutes

In the years 1904-05, just as he was finishing his String Quartet, Maurice Ravel

composed *Miroirs* (Mirrors), a set of five brief piano pieces with evocative titles like *Noctuelles* (Night-Moths), *Oiseaux tristes* (Sad Birds) and *La vallée des cloches* (Valley of the Clocks.) The title *Miroirs* may suggest an exact reflection, but listeners had difficulty making out a visual quality or even any distinct action in these pieces, which were admired more as piano music than for their pictorial success. Ravel, however, remained very proud of *Miroirs*, and he immediately orchestrated the third movement, *Une barque sur l'océan* (A Barque on the Ocean.) He waited 12 years, however, until 1918, to orchestrate the fourth movement, *Alborada del gracioso*. This version was first performed in Paris on May 17, 1919, with the Padeloup Orchestra under the direction of Rhené-Baton.

Alborada del gracioso promptly became one of Ravel's most popular orchestral works, but the meaning of its title has proven elusive. An *alborada* (that word means "dawn" in Spanish) has a range of musical meanings: it can be a song sung at morning (the French title for this is *aubade*), it can be a song for the morning of a wedding day or it can be a lively folk-dance in shifting meters. A *gracioso* was a figure from Spanish comedy – a jester or a clown. Ravel's title *Alborada del gracioso* is so mysterious (and evocative) that its standard literal translation into English – "Morning Song of a Jester" – arrives with a prosaic thud. Perhaps some of the charm of that title lies in the fact that it will not translate precisely.

Ravel's mother was Basque, and he was born in Basque territory: Ciboure is a tiny fishing village on the Bay of Biscay, located exactly between Spain's San Sebastian and France's Bayonne. Throughout his life, Ravel was fascinated by Spanish music, as works like *Boléro*, *Rapsodie espagnole*, *Habañera* and *L'heure espagnole* make clear, and *Alborada del gracioso* is one of his most characteristically "Spanish" pieces. It opens with the sound of pizzicato strings imitating the strumming of a vast guitar, and hints of a theme spin out of this rush of energy. Many have commented on the "Spanish rhythms" of this opening section, and Ravel's rhythmic sense here is quite fluid; the fundamental meter of this opening section is 6/8, but he enlivens that with occasional measures in 3/8 and 9/8. Those thematic hints suddenly rush together in a great explosion of sound, subtly tinted by Ravel's use of castanets, tambourine, cymbals and harp. A sharp chord introduces the central episode, in which a solo bassoon sings its lonely song. Ravel's gradual return to the opening tempo is accomplished very gracefully: the 3/4 meter of the central episode is merged into the 6/8 of the opening section as the music works back to its initial pulse. The writing in this final section is particularly brilliant (for the orchestral

version Ravel added four measures of swirling scales not in the piano version), and abrupt trombone glissandos thrust matters to the final chord.

Ravel's original piano version of *Alborada del gracioso* is quite good – the clarity of the writing sets the rhythmic energy of the music in high relief, and the whole thing is a *tour de force* for a good pianist. But *Alborada del gracioso* comes to life in its orchestral version, where colors flicker and blaze and the energy of this music can fully explode.

Selections from *The Three-Cornered Hat Suites 1 and 2*

MANUEL DE FALLA

Born November 23, 1876, Cádiz, Spain

Died November 14, 1946, Alta Grazia, Argentina

Approx. 16 minutes

In 1916-17 Spanish composer Manuel de Falla composed a pantomime titled *El Corregidor y la Molinera* – “The Magistrate (or governor or mayor) and the Miller's Wife” – and this was produced in Madrid in 1917. It attracted the attention of the impresario Serge Diaghilev, who suggested to the composer that it might work better as a ballet, and the two of them planned a revision that would incorporate more Spanish material. The result was the ballet in one act *El Sombrero des Tres Picos* (The Three-Cornered Hat), composed in 1918-19 and first produced in London on July 22, 1919. That first performance was the result of a spectacular collaboration: Diaghilev oversaw the production, Léonide Massine designed the choreography and danced the part of the miller, while Tamara Karsavina danced the part of his wife; Pablo Picasso painted the décor, and Ernst Ansermet conducted the orchestra. It was a great success then, and it has remained one of Falla's most popular works.

The reasons for that popularity are not hard to discover: *The Three-Cornered Hat* is a story full of romance, humor and charm, it is full of the warm atmosphere of Andalusia, and it is told in brilliant music. The plot tells of a miller and his beautiful young wife, their flirtations and intrigues, and the trickery that ensues when a third party comes upon this situation. The couple is visited one day by a corregidor (the magistrate, whose three-cornered hat symbolizes his authority), and he quickly develops an eye for the beautiful young wife. He orders the miller arrested to clear his own path to the wife, but his flirtation ends in humiliation when he falls into a stream. The corregidor lays out his clothes to dry, and the returning miller discovers them and

puts them on, then sets out in pursuit of the magistrate's wife. It all ends happily: the police rush in and accidentally arrest their own magistrate, the miller and his wife swear their mutual devotion and the ballet concludes as the happy townspeople toss an effigy of the magistrate in a blanket.

Falla drew two orchestral suites from the ballet; this concert offers selections from both the first suite and the second suite. *The Three-Cornered Hat* opens with a brief *Introduction*, full of the sound of timpani and trumpet, that functions as a call to order. *Dance of the Miller's Wife* shows her in all her beauty and sexual energy – this dance takes the form of a *fandango*, a dance of accelerating tempo.

The second suite opens with *The Neighbors*, cast in the form of a *seguidilla*, a dance of Andalusian origin. Neighbors gather at the miller's house on St. John's Eve – it is a warm summer evening, and they drink and dance this *seguidilla*. *Miller's Dance* is a *farruca*, an ancient dance of gypsy origin. This one is full of rhythmic energy, and the miller dances it to demonstrate his strength and masculinity to his wife. It opens with solos for French and English horns, but then the music turns rough: full of hard-edged strength, it grows stronger as it develops, finishing with a great flourish of energy. *Final Dance* is a *jota*, a lively dance from northern Spain, often danced to the accompaniment of guitar and castanets. Here it is danced to celebrate the defeat of the corregidor; Falla draws themes from the *Dance of the Miller's Wife* in the first scene and drives the ballet to its close in a blaze of energy.

-Program notes by Eric Bromberger

PERFORMANCE HISTORY/WHY THIS PROGRAM?

Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* is a piece that has unaccountably (and unjustifiably) lost some popularity, perhaps not so much with audiences but, rather, with violinists. That may be due to the length as well as the rhythmic and melodic complexity of the score, but certainly not for the lack of continuing audience enjoyment of the delightful piece. Yehudi Menuhin's famous, early 1930s recording of this (one of his favorite works) with the great George Enescu conducting, popularized it even more. When Menuhin soloed here with the orchestra during the 1970s, I spoke to him and expressed my hope that he would play it when he next appeared, and he promised to do so. However, illness and associated problems interfered, and he never was able to return here. So, as it stands, this orchestra has programmed it only twice for its Masterworks

performances. In the summer of 1968, Robert Emile led the work with Ray Gnievec as soloist. At the time, Gnievec was concertmaster of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. The only other Masterworks series performance was by our own concertmaster, Jeff Thayer, during the 2007-08 season. Jahja Ling commented on the virtuosic demands of the piece, and also pointed out that, unlike many other violinists, Ray Chen will play the entire, five-movement concerto.

The brilliant rhapsody by Chabrier, *Espana*, was introduced to San Diego Symphony Orchestra audiences during the orchestra's 1936 summer season. Nino Marcelli, founder of the modern San Diego Symphony Orchestra, conducted it at the Ford Bowl during the 1936 summer exhibition. Eight more performances followed with the contemporary SDSO, most recently under George Meister in the 1989 summer season. According to Jahja Ling, "This is the perfect piece to open a Spanish-flavored program." Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso* was first played by this orchestra when Earl Bernard Murray conducted it during the 1959-60 season, the orchestra's first winter/indoor season. Jung-Ho Pak conducted its last hearing here, its fourth, during the 1994-95 season. Jahja Ling especially emphasized the composer's instrumentation for this piece, with particularly expressive solos for the bassoon.

Music from Falla's ballet *The Three-Cornered Hat* has been heard here in many forms via excerpts from the two suites arranged by the composer. My records indicate that Meredith Willson was the first to play this music here, during the 1954 summer season. Most recently, Kees Bakel guest conducted the Second Suite during the 1989-90 Masterworks season. In discussing this brilliant piece, our music director mused over a visit to Madrid some years ago, where he saw the finest examples of flamenco he had ever encountered. This reminded him of Falla's music, with its own exciting, yet elegant, cross rhythms. Mr. Ling observed, "the use of castanets in this score is amazing, and the composer's use of the English horn, almost as a commentator, is brilliant and quite original."

-by Dr. Melvin G. Goldzband, Symphony Archivist