

SAN DIEGO SYMPHONY

October 11-12, 2025

CHABRIER ***España, Rhapsody for Orchestra***

LÓPEZ ***Ephemeræ, Concerto for Piano and Orchestra***
Bloom
Primal Forest
Spice Bazaar

INTERMISSION

SCHUMANN **Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61**
Sostenuto assai; Allegro ma non troppo
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Adagio espressivo
Allegro molto vivace

España, Rhapsody for Orchestra

EMMANUEL CHABRIER

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

Died September 13, 1894, Paris

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 so 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. One hundred and forty 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's 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.

***Ephemeræ*, Concerto for Piano and Orchestra**

JIMMY LÓPEZ

Born October 21, 1978, Lima

The composer has supplied a program note for this work:

Fragrances may be amongst the most fleeting and ethereal sensations most sentient beings experience in their daily lives. They come in a myriad of varieties, making them incredibly hard to verbalize and categorize. Although elusive, they are also capable of making lasting impressions, remaining in our memory long after they are gone. The perfume industry has found ways to harness their power by meticulously studying them and classifying them. Michael Edwards' *Fragrance Wheel* is perhaps the most known successful attempt and has become an industry standard.

Divided into three movements, *Ephemeræ* journeys along the whole fragrance spectrum, from the high floral, fruity, and marine tones, all the way to the dark tones of dry and mossy woods. It all begins with a subdued motif on the piano, an oscillating minor second between C and B-natural that starts in earnest, but seems to faint with each passing repetition, like a fleeting scent. After a two-minute expository passage, *Bloom*, the first movement, goes on to evoke both the vigorous act of blooming and the freshness of the scents associated with Spring. It is a splash of orchestral colors mirroring the piano's relentless energy, zest, and effervescence, all of it framed by the ever-present minor second motif.

In *Primal Forest* we explore the lush and dark dwellings of musk and wooden undertones. Here we enter an ancient realm, replete with suggestive aromas, some of which might have long vanished from Earth, but whose eerie and imperceptible vestiges can still be

sensed by an imaginary, and highly sensitive, olfactory device. I cannot overstate how virtually impossible it would have been to conceive this movement had I not been inspired by Javier Perianes' otherworldly touch. Not only is Javier capable of reaching the nether regions that exist beyond pianos and pianissimos—regions which most pianists find impenetrable—he thrives within them and is capable of producing an astonishing variety of tones and timbers. The movement swells into colossal heights only to dissolve again into the thinnest textures. After taking us through an extended transition, the movement does not end per se, but instead leads directly into our last fragrance chamber.

Oriental and spicy scents overwhelm our senses during the first five minutes of *Spice Bazaar*. Sensuous melodies and rhythms seduce us into a trance, blurring our senses and overloading our bodies to the point of abandon and ecstasy. The room fills with an intoxicating mix of cinnamon, sandalwood, incense, patchouli, and jasmine, later fusing with oak moss and lavender. Inebriated, this hypnotic trance comes to an end, leading us into fast and relentless rhythms evoking the first movement but tinged with the darkest colors of the fragrance wheel. With only a few minutes to spare, a cadenza begins, at first diaphanous, but then increasingly gaining in might and power until it reaches symphonic proportions, even though the orchestra remains silent. The last minute harkens back to the first five minutes of this movement, bringing the work to a decisive conclusion.

Ephemeræ is dedicated to Javier Perianes, who I have had the privilege to know for almost twenty years and whose exceptional sensibility and artistry have not ceased to astonish me ever since. Co-commissioned by the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Oslo-Filharmonien, Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo, and Philadelphia Orchestra, *Ephemeræ* received its world premiere performance on January 23rd, 2022 in London by Javier Perianes as soloist and the LPO under the baton of Jonathan Berman.

Symphony No. 2 in C Major, Op. 61

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Born June 8, 1810, Zwickau

Died July 29, 1856, Endenich

Schumann and his wife Clara made a five-month tour of Russia in 1844. Her piano-playing was acclaimed everywhere, but the always-vulnerable Schumann found himself somewhat in the shade, and on their return to Leipzig the composer began to show signs of acute depression: he said that even the act of listening to music “cut into my nerves like knives.” So serious did this become that by the end of the year Schumann was unable to work at all. He gave up his position at the Leipzig Conservatory, and the couple moved to Dresden in the hope that

quieter surroundings would help his recovery. Only gradually was he able to resume work, completing the Piano Concerto in the summer of 1845 and beginning work on the Second Symphony in the fall. Schumann usually worked quickly, but the composition of this symphony took a very long time. Apparently Schumann had to suspend work on the symphony for extended periods while he struggled to maintain his mental energy, and it was not completed until October 1846. The first performance took place on November 5, 1846, with Mendelssohn conducting the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.

Given the conditions under which it was written, one might expect Schumann's Second Symphony to be full of dark music, but in fact the opposite is true – this is one of Schumann's sunniest scores, full of radiance and strength. And, considering the protracted and difficult period of the symphony's composition, it is surprising to find the work so tightly unified. The symphony opens with a slow introduction – *Sostenuto assai* – as a trumpet fanfare rings out quietly above slowly-moving strings. During the earliest stages of this symphony's composition, Schumann wrote to Mendelssohn that "Drums and trumpets (trumpets in C) have been sounding in my mind for quite a while now," so apparently this trumpet-call was one of the earliest seeds of the symphony – it recurs throughout. The introduction gathers speed and flows directly into the *Allegro ma non troppo*, whose main subject is a sharply-dotted melody for violins and woodwinds. This opening movement is in sonata form, and near the end the trumpet fanfare blazes out once again.

The second movement is a scherzo marked *Allegro vivace*. In contrast to some of Schumann's others symphonic scherzos – which can remain earthbound – this one flies. Almost a perpetual-motion movement, it makes virtuoso demands on the violins. Two trio sections interrupt the scherzo – the first for woodwinds in triplets, the second for strings – before the opening music returns and the movement speeds to an exciting close. At the climax of this coda, the trumpet fanfare rings out above the racing violins.

The *Adagio espressivo*, one of Schumann's most attractive slow movements, opens with a long-breathed melody for the violins. This movement is the emotional center of the symphony, and though this music never wears its heart on its sleeve, its composition made such heavy emotional demands on the composer that he had to stop work temporarily after completing it.

The finale – marked *Allegro molto vivace* – bursts to life with a rush up the C-Major scale. Schumann said of the composition of this movement: "In the Finale I began to feel myself, and indeed I was much better after I finished the work. Yet . . . it recalls to me a dark period in my life." The symphony's unity is further demonstrated by Schumann's transformation of the first four notes of the main theme of the *Adagio* into this movement's second theme and then – at

the climax of the entire symphony – by the return of the trumpet fanfare. It begins softly, but gradually grows to a statement of complete triumph, and – with timpani and brass ringing out – the symphony thunders to its close.

Though the Second Symphony may have been the product of a “dark period” in its creator’s often unstable life, it also appears to have been the vehicle by which he made his way back to health.

-Program notes by Eric Bromberger