

España



ARGENTA

THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

FULL FREQUENCY
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ESPAÑA



CAPRICCIO ESPAGNOL
Rimsky Korsakov

ANDALUSIA
Granados

ESPAÑA RHAPSODY
Chabrier

SPANISH DANCES
Moszkowski

ATAULFO ARGENTA

Conducting
THE LONDON
SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

¡ E S P A Ñ A !

CAPRICCIO ESPAGNOL, Op. 34

(Rimsky-Korsakov)

First Movement: Alborada

Second Movement: Variazioni

Third Movement: Alborada

Fourth Movement: Scena e canto gitano

Fifth Movement: Fandango asturiano

ANDALUSIA—Danza española No. 5 in E minor, Op. 37

(Granados)

ESPAÑA - Rhapsody

(Chabrier)

SPANISH DANCES, Book 1, Op. 12

(Moszkowski)

No. 1 in C major

No. 2 in G minor

No. 3 in A major

No. 4 in B flat major

No. 5 in D major

ATAULFO ARGENTA

conducting

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It is a tribute to the inexhaustible vitality and individual quality of Spanish folk-music that its rhythms, turns of phrase and colors have at all periods exercised a fascination on composers of other countries who have come into contact with them. Domenico Scarlatti, who spent a large part of his working life in Spain, was profoundly influenced by what he heard around him—the dance forms, guitar effects and peculiar dissonances common in his keyboard sonatas are testimony—and Boccherini, some half a century later, similarly reflected the rhythms and something of the spirit of Spanish folk music. It was in the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, when musical nationalism everywhere was getting into its stride, that the exotic coloration of Spanish styles began to make its greatest appeal to musicians in other parts of Europe.

Two of the first to fall under its spell were Liszt, whom a concert tour in Spain in 1845 inspired to write a *Fantasy on*

Spanish themes (and later, partly on the same material, a *Spanish Rhapsody*), and Glinka, who visited Spain later the same year and who was swept off his feet in Granada by the gypsy dancing and singing he heard (and, incidentally, by some of the female singers and dancers). He wrote two works based on Spanish dances—the *Capriccio brillante* on the *jota aragonesa* and the *Night in Madrid* overture on the *seguidillas manchegas*—and his example was followed by various members of the Russian “mighty handful” of composers (the first being Balakirev with an *Overture on a Spanish march theme*).

However, to the world at large the Spanish idiom seemed to be most successfully captured in two works, both first heard in 1875, by French composers, Lalo’s *Symphonie espagnole* for violin and orchestra owed what national character it had to his own Spanish descent and to the influence of the virtuoso Sarasate,

for whom it was written: Bizet's *Carmen*, performed a month later, was for generations considered truly representative of Spanish style. Yet, as in all the Hispanically-influenced works of this period, the Spanish flavour is largely superficial: *Carmen* indeed, though remarkable enough when it is remembered that its composer had never visited Spain and had written to a libretto by Frenchmen based on a story by a French author, proves on analysis to contain only two adaptations of existing Spanish compositions, a few characteristic harmonic and rhythmic touches, and an imitation *seguidillas*.

In Moszkowski's *Spanish Dances* (1876), originally published for piano duet, we again find conventional pseudo-Spanish writing; the music relies for its effect mainly on a certain picturesqueness, on melodic charm and on vivacity, and neither in harmonic idiom nor in lay-out gets far from the composer's native Germany. No. 3 is

more like a waltz than the *jota* which it seeks to imitate, and though No. 5 is labelled a *bolero*, it is rhythmically and harmonically more akin to a *polacca*. However, the suite made Moszkowski famous, and was enthusiastically taken up in drawing-rooms throughout Europe: its success led him not only to write further pieces with a Spanish flavor but to compose an opera (*Boabdil*) on a Spanish-Moorish subject, the ballet music from which achieved great popularity.

The first orchestral work to win unanimous praise of experts for genuine-sounding Spanish style was Chabrier's *España*, produced with enormous success in 1883. No less a person than Falla wrote, "I venture to say that no Spaniard has succeeded better than Chabrier in giving us, with such authenticity and genius, the variety of *jota* shouted by the country folk of Aragón". Chabrier had visited Spain the previous year, and his letters—

and vivid, like his own personality—show how completely captivated he was by the flamenco dancing he witnessed: he filled notebooks with melodies and rhythms he heard, though he declared that the *malagueña* was impossible to note down accurately. It was nevertheless the *malagueña* and the *jota aragonesa* which he chose for the main material in his rhapsody—only the trombone tune heard halfway through was completely original—and though he includes little suggestion of the guitar (an instrument of which he said that one had to spend fifty minutes tuning in order to play on it for ten), his brilliant orchestration, original and exotic at the same time, and his rhythmic subtleties, help to conjure up an altogether convincing atmosphere.

It was in 1887, during a break in his joint task with Glazunov of completing and orchestrating Borodin's opera *Prince Igor*, that Rimsky-Korsakov composed his *Capriccio espagnol*. His original idea had been to write a virtuoso fantasy on Spanish themes for

violin and orchestra, and indeed traces of this design are abundant in many solo passages, not only for the leading violin (including harmonics, triple stops, flying arpeggios and all the other tricks of the virtuoso) but also for various wind instruments. The work fully lives up to the composer's desire that it should "glitter with dazzling orchestral color", though the orchestral effect is "the very essence of the composition, not mere ornamentation"; and having spent a mere three days in Spain as a youth, he admitted readily enough that, for all the attraction of Spanish melodic and rhythmic figures, the *Capriccio* was a "purely external" work. It has five movements, but the first three are linked, forming an ebullient *Alborada* into which are introduced variants of a slower lyrical phrase first given out by the horns: then, after a resounding fanfare and some elaborate cadenzas, follows a fiery Canto gitano (including some guitar imitations), leading into a *Fandango asturiano*, which whirls to a

finish with a return of the *Alborada* subject.

The first native Spanish composer of modern times to win wide recognition outside his own country was Grenados, who became famous with his *Danzas españolas* for piano written in the early 1890's—particularly with No. 5, which was originally entitled *Playera* (the title was afterwards changed to *Andalusia*). With its alternations of passionately accented rhythm and quieter *cantabile* passages, and of minor and major tonality, it is a most effective piece, and though Granados did not (as Falla inside, and Debussy outside, Spain later did) reach into the very heart of the Andalusian spirit, his music, on a less profound level, is unmistakably genuine in idiom.

LIONEL SALTER

Ataulfo Argenta was born at Castro Urdiales (a province of Santander). He began his musical career as a pianist. After studying at the Madrid Conservatoire, and gaining numerous first prizes, he went to Belgium and then to Germany, in order to widen his musical knowledge. It was at this time that he was appointed professor of the piano at Cassel Conservatoire and made several recital tours.

In 1944, he made his debut as a conductor, directing the Madrid Chamber Orchestra, which had just been formed. His success in leading this orchestra earned him, in 1946, the appointment of principal conductor of the National Orchestra of Spain. Ataulfo Argenta then began a brilliant career, which led to appearances with many of the leading orchestras of Western Europe. Today he is considered one of the most gifted of the younger generation of European conductors.

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