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RACHMANINOFF
**RHAPSODY ON A THEME
OF PAGANINI**

RUBINSTEIN
Chicago Symphony
REINER

FALLA
NIGHTS IN THE GARDENS OF SPAIN
*with
San Francisco Symphony*
ENRIQUE JORDA



Fiedler

Rachmaninoff
Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini

More than one famous composer has been attracted by Paganini's fantastic twenty-four Caprices for violin. Among those who have sought to make this music available to the piano virtuoso were Robert Schumann, who furnished two sets of studies fashioned after the Caprices; Liszt, who added to the natural difficulties of the music some terrifying technical problems of his own invention; and Brahms, who composed a series of twenty-eight variations on the last of the Paganini Caprices. All of these works mentioned were for solo piano. Rachmaninoff —whose *Rhapsody* consists of twenty-four variations on the Caprices—involves the orchestra almost as completely as the piano. Only Paganini's incredible variations on his own theme employed more than the solo instrument; he wrote a group of eleven variations—based on his twenty-fourth Caprice—for violin with guitar accompaniment.

Rachmaninoff's *Rhapsody* was composed during a sojourn in Switzerland during the summer of 1934. It was performed for the first time in Philadelphia, with the Philadelphia Orchestra; Rachmaninoff was

the soloist and Leopold Stokowski was the conductor.

The music itself is of such clarity, of such structural simplicity, that analysis would be a distasteful condescension. The macabre humor, the wit, the poetry, the nostalgia, the warm sentiment and the wry cynicism which the composer puts into the work and which the soloist extracts from it are inescapably clear—clear even when so wonderfully varied and elaborated, decorated, expanded and exhausted. One might note the incidence of the *Dies Irae*, a sequence from the *missa pro defunctis* which has appealed to the macabre wit of more than one composer—Liszt, Berlioz, Saint-Saëns among others—and which of course would have attraction for the melancholy and cynical and humorous Rachmaninoff.

Falla Nights in the Gardens of Spain

Few great composers have been less prolific than Manuel de Falla. His entire output consists of only nineteen works, but each of these is a major event in the world's musical literature.

Characteristically, Falla labored over *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* for six years. He began it in 1909 as a set

of pieces for piano solo, but it grew to become a series of “symphonic impressions” for orchestra with piano obbligato. It was first performed in Madrid in 1916. Artur Rubinstein, who was a close friend of Falla, was present on that occasion, and shortly afterward Rubinstein brought the work to the Western Hemisphere, presenting it with the orchestra of the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. This recorded version is doubly authoritative, since both the soloist and the conductor were close to the composer and studied his scores with him.

“If,” said Falla, “these symphonic impressions have achieved their object, the mere enumeration of their titles should be a sufficient guide to the hearer. Although in this work, as in all which have a legitimate claim to be considered as music, the composer has followed a definite design regarding tonal, rhythmic, and thematic material . . . the end for which it was written is no other than to evoke places, sensations, and sentiments. The themes employed are based . . . on the rhythms, modes, cadences, and ornamental figures which distinguish the folk music of Andalusia, although they are rarely used in their original forms; and the orchestration frequently

employs certain effects peculiar to the popular instruments used in those parts of Spain. The music has no pretensions to being descriptive; it is merely expressive. But something more than the sounds of festivals and dances has inspired these evocations in sound, for melancholy and mystery have their part also.”

The Generalife, site of the first movement, is a famous old Moorish villa and garden on a hill overlooking the Alhambra in Granada. The movement might be described as a set of free variations on the motif that buzzes in the violas at the beginning. Thematic elements from the first movement are transformed to provide new material for the second and third. The “Distant Dance” leads without pause into the finale, which reminded John B. Trend, the leading English authority on Spanish music, of an all-night party “in one of those large villas on the hillside above Córdoba,” with entertainment provided by gypsy instrumentalists, singers and dancers. The music—especially the piano part—certainly recalls the ornamented, declamatory Spanish gypsy style known as *cante hondo*; but this party ends very quietly, in the mood of melancholy to which Falla refers.



Rachmaninoff
RHAPSODY ON A THEME OF PAGANINI, Op. 43

Chicago Symphony Orchestra • Fritz Reiner, Conductor

Op. 43

Introduction: Allegro vivace

Variations 1 to 24

Falla
NIGHTS IN THE GARDENS OF SPAIN

San Francisco Symphony Orchestra • Enrique Jorda, Conductor

1-First Movement: En el Generalife

2-Second Movement: Danza lejana

Third Movement: En los jardines de la Sierra de Córdoba

ARTUR RUBINSTEIN, Pianist