

PIANO ESPAÑOL

Jorge Federico Osorio *piano*

Manuel de Falla (1876–1946)

Piezas Españolas (1908) (16:30)

- 1 I. Aragonesa (2:59)
- 2 II. Cubana (4:07)
- 3 III. Montañesa (Paysage) (5:01)
- 4 IV. Andaluza (4:14)

Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909)

Suite Española No. 1 (33:45)

- 5 Granada (Serenata) (4:39)
- 6 Cataluña (Curranda) (2:26)
- 7 Sevilla (Sevillanas) (4:16)
- 8 Cádiz (Serenata) (4:40)
- 9 Asturias (Leyenda) (5:09)
- 10 Aragón (Fantasía) (4:15)
- 11 Castilla (Seguidillas) (2:41)
- 12 Cuba (Notturmo) (5:20)

Padre Antonio Soler (1729–1783)

- 13 Sonata in G minor (Allegretto) (2:39)
- 14 Sonata in D major (Allegro) (2:54)
- 15 Sonata in F-sharp minor (Allegretto) (2:56)
- 16 Sonata in D-flat major (Allegro) (3:49)

Enrique Granados (1867–1916)

Danzas Españolas

- 17 No. 1: Allegro (2:14)
- 18 No. 2: Andante (4:43)
- 19 No. 5: Andantino, quasi Allegro (3:50)
- 20 No. 6: Allegretto, poco a poco accelerando (4:29)

Total Time: (78:30)

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PIANO ESPAÑOL

Notes by Andrea Lamoreaux

A map of the Iberian Peninsula shows its unique geographical position between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, reminding us of the historic seafaring achievements of Spanish and Portuguese explorers who reached India by sailing around the southern tip of Africa, ventured westward to find the Americas, and eventually circumnavigated the globe. Back at home, so to speak, another geographical feature jumps out at us from the map of Spain: it is crisscrossed by numerous mountain ranges, forming natural divisions and barriers which, for many centuries, worked against the formation of a unified country. Even today, Spain remains a nation of distinct regions with their own cultures, including their own musical traditions. The history of Spanish music is woven from many threads, creating a rich and complex tapestry.

A more homogeneous element in Spain's musical history stems from the

strong influence of the Roman Catholic Church, whose cathedrals and monasteries possess vast libraries of sacred music. Among their treasures are the medieval *Huelgas Manuscript*, the *Cantigas of Alfonso the Wise* in praise of the Virgin Mary, the motets of Tomás Luis de Victoria and his Renaissance-era contemporaries, and the elaborate Baroque mass settings whose style emigrated overseas to become part of the heritage of Hispanic-American composers.

Also from early days come innumerable works for the guitar and its predecessor, the *vihuela*, plus instruction books for playing on and composing for them. The quintessential Spanish instrument, used in both popular settings and the elegant surroundings of noble courts, the guitar accompanied singing and dancing, and starred on its own in a repertory of purely instrumental variations and fantasies on tunes old and new.

Though somewhat isolated from the rest of Europe, Spain was hardly immune to influences from across the Pyrenées. By the 18th century, Italian opera had caught on in the principal musical centers: Madrid, the centrally located capital; and Barcelona, the Catalanian metropolis located on the northeastern Mediterranean coast. Two representatives of the Italian instrumental tradition, keyboardist Domenico Scarlatti and cello virtuoso Luigi Boccherini, had major careers in Spain during the 1700s, each in the service of royalty. They brought with them the styles and procedures then current not only in Italy but also in German-speaking lands. At about the same time, there emerged a native Spaniard of great creativity and originality who became one of the major composers and music theorists of his time.

Soler

Antonio Soler (1729–1783) was born in Catalonia the same year that Scarlatti arrived in Spain as tutor and musician-in-residence for Queen María Bárbara. A virtuoso organist who took holy orders, Padre Soler was

trained at the distinguished music school of the monastery in Montserrat, an institution that remains renowned to this day. Naturally, he wrote several masses; he's also credited with over 100 *villancicos*: secular pieces that combine song and dance to tell a story, often associated with Christmas. Despite this considerable output of vocal music, it is almost exclusively for his inventive keyboard sonatas that Soler is celebrated today.

Although it's unclear whether he ever studied with Scarlatti, Soler certainly knew the older man's harpsichord sonatas and was influenced by them. Soler constructed his own works in the genre using the same two-section framework, each section usually repeated,¹ the second portion ending in the same key in which the first portion began. It's not entirely clear whether Soler composed his sonatas primarily for harpsichord or for the newer keyboard instrument of his day, the fortepiano, but, either way, they adapt beautifully to the modern piano.

¹ Mr. Osorio chooses not to play repeats in the two slower sonatas on this recording.

Soler's sonatas moved beyond Scarlatti's in the originality and ingenuity of their key relationships and modulations. Soler's route from home key to home key wanders through both major and minor modes, and even through keys only remotely related to home base. On this CD, the Sonata in D major explores A major, A minor, and G minor before returning, through rapid chromaticism, to D. The D-flat Sonata's rapid figurations touch on several keys at least briefly.

This adventurousness with key relationships reflects Soler's fascination with one of 18th-century music's technical innovations: the tempered, or equalized, tuning of keyboard instruments. Because the relationships between all 12 intervals of the chromatic scale had been evened out to exact half-tones (C to D on the piano is a whole tone; C to C-sharp is a half tone), composers could, for the first time, use near-constant modulation to enrich and enliven keyboard music. Bach's similar fascination with the new tuning system led to his *Well-Tempered Clavier*, one of the great documents of keyboard music: two sets of preludes and fugues in all possi-

ble major and minor keys. In a sense, Scarlatti's and Soler's voluminous collections of sonatas constitute analogous achievements.

Snugged into the northeast corner of the Iberian Peninsula, Catalonia has long been famous for creativity in both poetry and music, and for linguistic individuality. (A Catalan tongue distinct from Spanish survives to this day.) It is therefore perhaps not coincidental that Soler, Albéniz, and Granados were all Catalan, as was Falla's mother (although Falla was born in Cádiz). Yet another Catalan, Felipe Pedrell (1841–1922), was a leader in the revitalization of Spanish music in the late 19th century. A musicologist who catalogued both sacred and secular music, Pedrell helped establish a nationalist tradition in the country's music that merged folksongs, traditional dances, and age-old guitar stylings into the forms and genres of concert music. This nationalist trend in Spanish music paralleled those in many other countries, including Russia, Bohemia, Hungary, Finland, Norway, England, and ultimately the United States. Albéniz and Granados both studied

with Pedrell, who inspired them — and, indirectly, the slightly younger Falla — to celebrate Spanish sounds in their works. All three composers admired Pedrell profoundly.

Falla

Although best remembered for his stage works — *El amor brujo*, *La vida breve*, and especially *The Three-Cornered Hat* — Manuel de Falla (1876–1946) was trained as a pianist at the Madrid Conservatory, made his first public appearances as a pianist, and taught the instrument to earn a living while establishing himself as a composer. In 1907, he moved to Paris, where he renewed his acquaintance with Albéniz and made new friends, including Debussy, whose style influenced him nearly as much as his assimilation of Spanish idioms. Completed in 1908, the *Piezas Españolas* were premiered in Paris the following year by the outstanding pianist Ricardo Viñes, a friend and collaborator of Ravel. They bear a dedication to Albéniz.

While the pieces have descriptive titles, they're not necessarily direct quotations

of folksongs. "Instead of strictly making use of popular songs," Falla wrote, "I have extracted from them their rhythm, their modality, their ornamental motifs, their modulatory cadences." The first piece is labeled *Aragonesa*, from Aragon, a region of northeastern Spain that abuts Catalonia and whose characteristic triple-meter dance is the *jota*, performed traditionally with castanets and guitars. Falla said: "I have not adopted a single authentic *jota*, but I have tried to stylize the *jota*."

We move farther afield for *Cubana*, evoking the recently independent Spanish colony in a part of the world Falla would not visit until years later: he died in Argentina in 1946, having left Spain after its civil war in the 1930s. *Cubana's* rhythm is that of a *guajira*, a dance that shifts between faster- and slower-paced triple meters. *Montañesa* (from the region in northern Spain known as La Montaña), evokes the atmosphere of the Spanish highlands. The concluding *Andaluza* takes us to the sights and sounds of Spain's most southerly region, with strong echoes of flamenco guitar playing and brilliant Andalusian sunshine.

Albéniz

Isaac Albéniz (1860–1909) was a virtuoso pianist through and through, which makes it somewhat ironic that so many of his piano pieces are heard nowadays more often on guitar, and that his monumental keyboard masterpiece, *Iberia*, has become better known in its orchestrated version. His compositions, created mainly for his own performing purposes, translate well to the guitar because most of them were inspired by Spain's guitar-playing tradition. Hearing them on piano, however, demonstrates just how brilliantly they suit their original medium. Likewise, Albéniz's tone colors and rhythms on the piano (an instrument he knew intimately from earliest childhood) can easily be exploited in an orchestral medium to create lush tone poems.

Completed in the 1880s, the movements of *Suite Española* form a kind of musical atlas of Spain. All eight pieces are in triple meters; all except *Cataluña* are in ternary (three-part) form, with two related sections framing a contrasting central portion. In Spanish musical terminology this mid-

section is called a *copla*, originally an improvised sung interlude within a dance piece.

First in the suite, *Granada* is a lyrical instrumental serenade, evoking the great Andalusian city whose history and architecture recall the culture of Spain's medieval Moorish community. "Cataluña," writes critic Lionel Salter, "[is] the only occasion, apart from the later orchestral 'Catalonia,' that Albéniz ever made musical reference to his native region. [It] is a 'corranda,' a somewhat mournful 6/8 dance."

Another great city of the southern Andalusian landscape is Seville, honored in movement three through the rhythms of a flamenco-like dance called *Sevillanas*. Continuing to explore Andalusia, we next visit the southwestern coastal city of Cádiz, for a movement subtitled *Saeta*. This is a type of song, originally improvised, that is sung during religious processions.

With *Asturias*, subtitled *Leyenda* (Legend), we come to perhaps the best-known piece in the suite, particularly popular in transcription as a guitar

solo. When we hear it on the original instrument, however, we're instantly struck by how very pianistic it is. *Leyenda* is a remarkable creation, idiomatic to two very different instruments, demanding in its virtuosity, and producing an extraordinarily atmospheric effect. What the legend is we don't know, but the music tells us clearly that it's a haunting tale. The rapid figurations of the outer sections recall the flamenco tradition, from which comes also the improvisatory, song-like theme of the *copla*.

Now we travel once again, as we did at the start of Falla's suite, to the landlocked northeastern region of Aragon, and hear another interpretation of its native *jota*. Albéniz subtitles this movement *Fantasia*, and explores its themes in a free-form style with many contrasts of mood.

The union of the ancient realms of Aragon and Castille, through the 15th-century marriage of two famous monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella, led (after many centuries) to the foundation of a unified Spain. Movement seven of Albéniz's suite is *Castilla*, and

the dance type is a *seguidilla*, rapidly paced and traditionally accompanied by castanets. The finale of *Suite Española* is Cuba, a land Albéniz visited as a teenage wanderer after he ran away from home and supported himself by playing piano in cafes in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the United States. *Cuba* is subtitled *Capriccio*, a term with no real musical definition, but its analogy to the English word "capricious" adequately describes the mood of the piece.

Granados

Seven years younger than Albéniz, Enrique Granados (1867–1916) likewise studied with Pedrell and, like both Albéniz and Falla, spent significant time in Paris. He won fame as an opera composer as well as for the music he wrote for his principal instrument, the piano. These disparate musical formats are linked through the work most commentators cite as his masterpiece. Inspired by his love for the paintings of Francisco Goya, Granados originally wrote *Goyescas* as a piano suite and later turned it into an opera. The planned premiere at the Paris Opera

was cancelled because of the abrupt outbreak of World War I in 1914. New York's Metropolitan Opera staged the eventual premiere in 1916. Returning to Europe from that event, Granados and his wife died aboard a British ship that was sunk by a German torpedo.

Granados created a large-scale keyboard masterwork before *Goyescas*: he penned his suite of twelve *Danzas Españolas* in the 1890s, initially as four separate sets, but later published all together as his Op. 37. As with Albéniz's *Iberia*, several of the *Danzas* were orchestrated. This CD contains the original piano versions of four of the dances, beginning with the short Minueto in G major that Granados dedicated to his future wife, Amparo Gal.

Dance No. 2, titled *Oriental*, evokes not China or Japan but the atmosphere of Moorish Andalusia. Expelled from Spain in the Middle Ages, the Islamic Moors left strong imprints on Spanish music, art, poetry, and architecture. In its piano version and in its subsequent orchestral arrangement, *Oriental* breathes forth the subtle flavor of Andalusia's exotic erstwhile residents.

Dance No. 5, the most familiar of the set, has been arranged for many different instrumental settings, including (of course) guitar. Once again we are surrounded by the warm, languorous nights of Andalusia and its haunting Moorish echoes. To end, we again hear the bright rhythms and colors of the Aragonese *jota*, this time in D major, starting at a moderate pace but growing ever faster and more intense, leading to a thrilling conclusion.

Andrea Lamoreaux is music director of WFMT-FM, Chicago's classical-music station.



Photo: Arcos-Alcaraz

Jorge Federico Osorio

Jorge Federico Osorio has been internationally acclaimed for his superb musicianship and absolute command of the instrument. He has performed with many of the world's leading orchestras, including the Chicago, Dallas, Detroit, and Seattle Symphonies; the Concertgebouw, French National, Philharmonia, Moscow State, and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras; and the Israel and Warsaw Philharmonics. Osorio has played under the batons of such distinguished conductors as Lorin Maazel, Bernard Haitink, Klaus Tennstedt, Eduardo Mata, and Enrique Bátiz. His concert tours have taken him to Europe, Asia, North, Central and South Americas. His American festival appearances have included the Hollywood Bowl, Ravinia, and Grant Park Festivals.

Mr. Osorio is also an avid chamber musician; he has served as artistic director of the Brahms Music Festival in Mexico, and has performed with the late Henryk Szeryng, the Moscow Quartet, and the Tel Aviv Quartet. Born in Mexico, Mr. Osorio began his musical studies at the age of five. He studied at the conservatories of Mexico, Paris, and Moscow; his teachers have included Luz Maria Puente, Bernard Flavigny, Jacob Milstein, Nadia Reisenberg, and Wilhelm Kempff.

This is Jorge Federico Osorio's first recording for Cedille. His extensive discography on labels such as EMI, CBS, Artek, IMP, and ASV include recent Brahms recordings that have received accolades from *Gramophone*, *American Record Guide*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. Other recordings include Beethoven's Five Piano Concertos and *Choral Fantasy*; concertos by Brahms, Mozart, Ponce, Rodrigo (world premiere recording), Rachmaninov, Schumann, and Tchaikovsky; several Beethoven Sonatas; and solo piano works of Manuel Ponce.