

THE EXOTIC MUSIC OF SPAIN

The exotic sound of Spanish music and its unique style can be attributed to the particular result of the fusion which took place between the Ancient Music of Andalucia and the various cultures that passed through Spain over a period of several centuries. This evening, through a selected program of music, we are going to take a very brief look at one or two of the cultural influences that did pass through Spain and as well at some of the concepts and characteristics of Ancient Andalucian Music which have had a profound impact on the music of Spain and have imbued it with its mystery, exoticism and its unique style.

Now, to put you in the mood for our Evening of Exotic Music from Spain, I should like to open the program with the Preludio from the Suite Espana by Isaac Albeniz in which we shall hear both Arabian and Ancient Andalucian musical influences.

One of the most important cultural influences that passed through Spain was the Arabian influence. The Arabian influence began in Spain with the arrival of the Arabs during the early part of the 8th century. This influence continued to exert itself on all aspects of Spanish life and culture for almost 9 centuries. When the Arabs finally did depart from Spain, they had bequeathed a rich legacy to Ancient Andalucian Music. Part of this legacy was Arabian melody.

The Cancion Arabe which will be performed this evening strongly reflects the Arabian melodic influence. It is characterized by such Arabian melodic elements as the prominent use of the interval of the 5th which gives to the sound the quality of mystery and exoticism. It is further characterized by such Arabian melodic elements as pauses, rests and changing time signatures. These elements were to become an important part of the unique style of Spanish music as it evolved over the centuries.

SEGUIRIYA

The Ancient Music of Andalucia was first known as Primitive cante andaluz. Primitive cante andaluz evolved to become Ancient cante andaluz or the Ancient Song of Andalucia. Today in Spain, there are 3 old and pure

song forms whose roots may be traced back to Ancient cante andaluz. One of these was the *Siguiriya*.

In its original form the *Siguiriya* was called *A Song of Tears* or *Lament*. It was sometimes referred to as the *Weeping Song*. It began with a high pitched scream signifying the Soul's Defiance against its Fate or Destiny. Then it gradually descended into the depths of despair and deep sadness with the realization that that Destiny or Fate was unalterable. The atmosphere and emotional content of the *Siguiriya* have remained unparalleled over the centuries and have contributed greatly to the unique style of Spanish music.

Turina's *Seguiriya* reflects many elements of the ancient *Siguiriya*. For the most part the melody is imbued with a deep sense of sadness and at times it seems almost as if it is sobbing. But it does end defiantly – the Tragedy of Life will not be given into. This concept was an important element in the evolution of the *Siguiriya* and came from the gypsies.

ANDALUZA

One of the great Spanish composers of the last century to be influenced by Ancient Andalucian Music was Enrique Granados. The influences of both Ancient Andalucian Music and of other cultures that passed through Spain are reflected in Granados's music and enabled the composer to create a style that was unique, elegant and unmistakably his own.

The melody for Granados *Andaluza* is thought to have originated with the *Siguiriya*. Deeply sad, it begins rather introspectively, builds to a moment of defiance and anger then retreats once again into the resignation of hopeless despair and that which cannot be changed.+

ZAMBRA GRANADINA

Another important cultural influence that was brought to Spain and fused to the Ancient Music of Andalucia was the Arabian Oriental influence.

This influence was brought to Spain in the 9th century by a famous Arabian musician named Ziryab. The Arabian Oriental influence had an enormous impact on the music, dance and poetry of Ancient Andalusia and gave to each of these arts the exquisite veiled mysteriousness associated with the Far East and rich exoticism of the Arabian world which had already been brought to Spain in the 8th century.

The *Zambra Granadina* was first danced at the Court of Granada in the 13th century and was immensely popular with the Arabs. The dance was performed barefoot and was accompanied by little finger cymbals. It was characterized by graceful, flowing arm movements and very gentle hip movements, typical of Arabian dance. It was further characterized by head movements and slow turns, both typical of Oriental dance.

Some of the Arabian Oriental musical elements that were fused to Ancient Andalusian music and which may be heard in the *Zambra Granadina* include the use of double notes, chromaticism and a repetitious rhythmic motif. A distinguishing feature of Ancient Andalusian Music, the Primitive Oriental influence, is also represented in the *Zambra Granadina* with its constantly shifting modality and deep sadness. The combination of both these influences, Arabian Oriental and Primitive Oriental, give to the sound the quality of veiled mystery and rich exoticism.

ASTURIAS

A specific characteristic of Ancient Andalusian Music was the obsessive repetition of a sound. In Spain, obsessive repetition of a sound was first linked to the magic and incantation rituals of the early Iberians around 15,000 B.C. Obsessive repetition of a sound was also a specific characteristic of the Shamanistic belief in which the entire gypsy culture was rooted.

When the gypsies came to Spain in the first part of the 1400's they brought with them their Shamanistic beliefs. This particular element became very significant in the evolution of cante jondo from ancient cante andaluz. In later centuries some Spanish composers were greatly influenced by this specific characteristic. One such composer was Isaac Albeniz.

In the other sections of his *Asturias* he uses the obsessive repetition of one note to evoke the idea of the ancient magic and incantation ritual. As well in the outer sections we hear chords preceded by an octave in the left hand. These 8vas function as unresolved appoggiaturas which in ancient Andalusian music symbolized violence. The octaves must be played in such a way so that they sound as if they are literally attacking the chord.

Asturias also reflects the influence of one of the four distinguishing features of Ancient Andalusian Music, the sound of the guitar. The central section offers us a beautiful contrast with its exotic Arabian melodic influence.

PART II

MYSTICISM

In addition to the various cultural influences that passed through Spain, another major factor that contributed to the exotic sound of Spanish music and its unique style was Peninsular Mysticism. Mysticism abounded in Andalusia. Magic, incantation and the casting of spells were all commonplace in the religious rituals of the ancient peoples. There was also something called duende.

Duende was a mysterious power that could be felt but could not be seen and was peculiar only, to that part of Spain known as Andalusia. Duende was, as well, one of the most powerful concepts of the Ancient Andalusian mystical belief system.

Mysticism was perceived by the ancient peoples as a Conflict between Positive and Negative Forces. The negative forces were known as the Dark or Tragic Forces – the duende – and for the ancient Andalusians, the duende existed in everything and was everywhere.

Furthermore, the Ancient Andalusians believed that the Soul had to participate in this Conflict and that it was the Soul's harsh, unalterable Destiny to struggle with the duende. The struggle was perceived as Fate and absolutely had to take place. Through the acceptance of its Fate, the Soul could then attain Perfection.

It was also believed that the transcended Soul could go to special places in Andalucia to carry out its Spiritual Battle. For this reason, the Ancient Andalucians attached a mystical significance to each of their cities. The 3 great mystical cities of Andalucia were Sevilla, Cordoba and Granada.

SEVILLA

Sevilla was for the transcended Soul a veritable Island of Joy. Known as the Queen of Andalucia, she was a place of elegance, grace, with and brilliance. She oozed alegre, warmth and indolence. She dazzled and she charmed.

Yet this Queen of Andalucia like the Soul was also overshadowed by the duende and constantly had to struggle against the Dark and Tragic Forces that lurked within her city walls and sought to destroy her.

CORDOBA

Cordoba was another mystical city to where the Soul could go when it needed solitude and a time to reflect upon its Destiny. *Cordoba* was far off and lonely. The road to *Cordoba* was dangerous and held many obstacles. Only the most courageous ever survived the journey. Here is a cante jondo poem by the great Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca about *Cordoba*.

CORDOBA

Cordoba.
Far off and lonely.

Coal black mare and big full moon;
Olives in my saddle bag;
Even though I know the roads,
I'll never come to Cordoba.

Along the plain, along the wind
Coal black mare and blood red moon,

Death's always watching me now
From the towers of Cordoba.

Cordoba.
Far off and lonely.

GRANADA

The mystical city of *Granada* was for the transcended Soul a place of great tragedy. Granada was the place the Soul went when it had to remember the Remote Past, a place where the Soul would rather not have had to go. The Remote Past was filled with fears, violence and tragedy. It was a place where emotion and intuition overcame all sense of reason. All the cisterns, fountains and pools of *Granada* were the Soul's fallen tears. Yet it was to *Granada* the Soul came when it wanted to remember the Love in which it had been created and the Sorrow that began with its endless Earthly Sojourns, its once beautiful existence a mere dream.

CANTO MAGICO #4

Mysticism was not only part of the religious ritualism practiced by the Ancient Andalucians, it was also an outstanding characteristic of their music. The music was thought to have been linked to their religious rites through the elements of magic, dance and incantation.

In Mompou's *Canto Magico #4* we hear the influences of all three of these elements. As well, we also hear the sound of bells. Bronze bells were used as part of the religious rites practiced on the Iberian Peninsula and date back to the Neolithic Age.

LA DANZA RITUAL DEL FUEGO

El amor brujo from which our next selection comes, is an excellent example of how Falla used some of the concepts of Ancient Andalusian Music in his own work and in so doing, created a new musical language

which was both unique and exotic. Certainly it was unlike anything that had been previously written by Spanish composers.

It is midnight, the Spectre of a dead gypsy has just come again to terrorize a beautiful gypsy woman named Candelas. She is determined to free herself from his obsessive love by casting her own magic spells. The clock strikes twelve in the distance. The other gypsy women return to the Andalucian Cave on Sacred Mountain. They are carrying their oil lamps, tambourines and cauldrons. The ritual fire is lit. Candelas tosses aside the cards she has been reading and rises. She begins to dance the Fire Dance. She takes a handful of incense from her cauldron and throws it onto the fire. Smoke and flames billow upward to the top of the cave. The midnight rites have begun.

TORRE BERMEJA

Torre Bermeja means Tower of Red Earth. It took its name from the colour of a particular type of red clay that was used in its construction during the time the Arabs were in Spain.

The Arabs had built many such towers along the southern coast of Andalusia which were used mostly for defense purposes.

In *Torre Bermaja* we hear a most beautiful melody which evokes the sadness that was so characteristic of Ancient Andalucian Music. We also hear the influence of one of the distinguishing features of Ancient Andalucian Music, the unmistakable sound of the guitar.

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