

TALES OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS IN SPAIN

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to this evening's program entitled, Tales of the Arabian Nights in Spain. Tonight through a selected program of music, Kevin and I are going to take you on a very special journey to Spain. Our journey begins in the 8th century with the arrival of the Arabs and ends in the 15th century with their departure, when the last King of Granada, defeated and in chains, was sent into exile from Spain accompanied by a band of faithful followers.

Our journey will include a very brief overview of the time period and as well, we'll tell you about some of the Arabian kings and we'll also take a peek inside 3 of the main palaces that were constructed during that time period and tell you some Tales of Arabian Nights in Spain.

In 711 A.D. a Berber chieftain from Africa and his Syrian army of 12,000 crossed a narrow body of water and landed without opposition not far from the place where the Pillars of Hercules had once stood. The enormous rock where the landing took place still bears the chieftain's name, Gibraltar.

Following Tarik's initial advance, a second larger body of men joined him and gradually one region of Spain after another succumbed to the Arabian invasion, almost without a struggle.

We are going to open this evening's program with the *Cancion arabe* by Enrique Granados. The music reflects the kind of musical influences the Arabs brought with them to Spain while the sound evokes the austere Arabian desert, vast and lonely. Here is the mysterious *Cancion arabe*.

In 758 A.D. the first Arabian Dynasty was established in Spain at Cordoba. The king who ruled this Dynasty was Abdur Rahman I. When Abdur was a young man of 20, his grandfather's dynasty at Damascus was overthrown. The entire family was murdered except for he and his brother who were not in the palace at the time. Hunted from village to village, the two boys were finally trapped at a river's edge. They had jumped into the river to swim to safety but Abdur's younger brother was persuaded to return to shore where he was captured and beheaded. Abdur managed to swim across the river and escaped his assassins. Eventually he made his way to Spain where he

established his Dynasty and became its King. His greatest contribution was to bring a degree of unity between the Arabian states that had already been set up in Spain.

Storytelling was a highly polished art amongst the Arabs. It was always an important part of the evening's entertainment at the Palace. The storyteller who could keep the king's interest was assured of a rich purse. On the other hand, if he did not keep the king's interest he could just as easily lose his head or be clapped into prison for a very long time.

Many of the legends and stories that surrounded certain castles and towers in Spain, especially in Andalucia, were later set to music. One such legend that was set to music had to do with a castle called the Castle of the Moors. Those who passed by this castle seemed to mysteriously disappear. Here is the legend.

“Once upon a time there was a travelling lute player who came upon a very old castle somewhere in Andalucia. As he draws near to the castle, he hears a moaning sound. At first he thinks it is the wind. He looks up at the castle parapets to discover where the sound is coming from but he sees nothing.

Strumming his lute less bravely than before, he decides to cross the drawbridge which has been let down silently and mysteriously. As he approaches the massive wooden doors, they begin to open slowly. He hears the moaning sound again and this time it pierces his Soul.

He enters the courtyard. His heart is pounding. The courtyard is empty. There is no one there. He has heard strange tales about this castle and now he is beginning to wonder if he should have stopped by at all to ask for hospitality.

Suddenly the courtyard is filled with soldiers carrying sharp scimitars. The people come out from behind their doors and surround him. They are yelling and shouting at him in a language he does not understand. He breathes a silent prayer to Allah to give him courage to face his fate.

Then to his astonishment, instead of being dragged to the castle parapets and thrown over them to his death, he is shown warm hospitality and invited to join the castle festivities.

All too soon, he must take his leave and as he sets off down the dusty road strumming his lute once more, echoes of the sad saeta and castle festivities can still be heard in the distance.

Here is the *Legend of the Old Moorish Castle*.

Under Arabic domination, Spain continued to prosper. The most outstanding expression of this prosperity was the Kingdom of Cordoba. During the 9th and 10th centuries, the city of Cordoba had 200,000 homes, 900 public baths and 600 mosques. The streets were paved and there was piped water. Houses were whitewashed on a regular basis and each home had an airy, sunlit patio that was filled with fountains and flowers. Both of these traditions still continue today in Andalucia.

One of the kings who ruled Cordoba during this time period was Abdur Rahman III. His palace, built just outside the city for his favourite wife, was sumptuous. During his reign, the Great Mosque of Cordoba begun by Abdur Rahman I now boasted 21 doors and 1,293 columns carved from marble, jasper and porphyry. The mosque itself was lit with hundreds of lamps made from silver.

During the 9th century, a famous musician from Baghdad came to Cordoba. His name was Ziryab. Like Abdur Rahman I he too, had had to flee his home because of a jealous rival. In this case, the jealous rival was his music teacher.

In addition to the Arabian oriental musical influences that he had brought with him, Ziryab introduced many new innovations to the court of Cordoba. For the ladies, he suggested colouring their hair with henna. He further suggested that they change their garments, from the heavier, dark-coloured ones they usually wore all year long, to lighter textured, pastel coloured clothing that would be more suitable for the hot Andalucian summers. Guests were astonished when they were invited to sit at table with him to find fine dishes, cutlery and crystal glassware. He was an excellent chef and delighted in preparing his special cake for his friends. The Ziryab cake is still made in Toledo by the Ziryab family. His greatest contribution was the establishment of a music conservatory at Cordoba. His principles are still followed as many of the conservatories of music throughout Spain.

Let us go now to Cordoba. In the silence of the night, the fragrances of orange blossom and jasmine float on the air. The palm trees sway gently in the evening breezes. In the distance, a lonely guitar begins its melancholic song. Here is the profound *CORDOBA*. by Isaac Albeniz.

The oriental influence soon found its way into the dance. The graceful arm movements and gentle hip movements of the Arabian dance were combined with the slow turns and serpentine-like movements of the oriental dance. Accompanied by little finger cymbals and sometimes a kind of primitive stringed instrument that could produce its own harmony, the oriental dance became the most exotic dance to be performed at the Arabian palaces. The Caliphs adored it and like storytelling, it was always an important part of the evening's entertainment.

There will be a brief pause while we go and see if the camel has arrived with the exotic dancer and her musician. *DANZA ORIENTAL* by Isaac Albeniz.

Following the Arabian custom to build near water, another kingdom was established at Sevilla. Like Cordoba, Sevilla was also a beautiful city. The streets were lined with graceful, date-bearing palm trees that the Arabs had brought to Spain. The plazas were tiled in their favourite colours of Moroccan green and Tunisian blue. Overlooking the city was the Giralda, a famous tower that strongly reflected the Arabian architectural influence.

Sevilla was as well, a city of culture and learning and attracted many Arabian poets who loved the warm climate and indolent lifestyle. Their poetry made an enormous contribution to the existing Spanish culture especially in music and dance.

One of the kings who ruled Sevilla around 1068 was King Mu'ta'mid. Like many of the Arabian kings, he was an excellent poet. His verses reflected the new genre called Andalusian Love Poetry that the Arabian poets had introduced to Spain.

Let us go now to the secluded palace of King Mu'ta'mid. The evening meal is in progress. Huge platters of fruits and vegetables cooked in olive oil are being brought in. A fine, amber-coloured Spanish wine is being poured into golden goblets. This evening, guests will dine from delicate porcelain dishes and use cutlery instead of their fingers, following the custom at the Cordoba court.

There is an air of expectancy and anticipation among the guests. Tonight the king will recite his latest love poem *Night By the River* written for his favourite concubine. If the King is in a good mood and the new wine has pleased him, he may even recite one or two more of his verses. In just a moment now, guests are to be entertained by a beautiful Spanish dancer who will perform an Ancient Andalucian dance and accompany herself with some little wooden clappers. Here is *SEVILLA* by Isaac Albeniz.

And now Honoured Guests, King Abdullah Obeid!

Granada lay at the foot of Spain's massive mountain range, the Sierra Nevada and was bordered by an extraordinary fertile plain the Arabs called La Vega. It had been settled as early as the 5th century B.C. by the Romans. It was then taken over by the Visigoths who lost it to the Arabs in 711 A.D. It remained a small, unimportant settlement until 1241 when the Kingdom of Granada was established by the Nasrite king, Mohammad V. It became the richest, most opulent Arabian kingdom ever to be established in Spain.

At the heart of the kingdom was the great Arabian palace, the Alhambra. Constructed of shimmering red stone, the Alhambra known as the Red Palace reflected the fine artistic style of the Nasrites as well as their marvellous architecture. The Palace had two Royal courtyards. Each courtyard contained a large, tiled pool that was filled with water and surrounded by an exquisite garden. Inside the Palace, upon the richly decorated stucco walls, were some verses that had been inscribed by the Poet of the Alhambra, Ibn Zamrak. Highly polished and greatly artistic, the verses of this fine poet still adorn the Palace walls.

Let us go now to the Alhambra. It is evening. Somewhere in the palace, behind heavy curtains, a lute is softly playing. The gentle night breezes from the nearby Sierra Nevada are blowing through the arched windows and open doors, cooling the Palace down after a day of intense Andalucian heat. The sound of water melodiously trickling into the courtyard pools can be heard. Outside the Palace, in the Square of Wells, the last of the wine merchants are trying to persuade obstinate camels to pass through the Gate of Wine so that they too may go home for the evening. Here is *EN LA ALHAMBRA* by Isaac Albeniz.

Adjoining the Palace were the exotic gardens called the Generalife. The gardens contained all kinds of different species of flowering, trees, plants and shrubs that the Arabs had brought to Spain from various parts of the world. They were a peaceful and harmonious haven for the Caliph and his harem who spent their leisure hours strolling along the garden paths amid cascading fountains and quiet pools.

Let us go now to the Generalife. In the cool of the evening, some of the women of the harem are enjoying a stroll in the gardens. They are of course, wearing long diaphanous robes and are completely veiled as they are outside of the Women's Quarters. The midnight blue sky shimmers with stars. In the distance a guitar strikes up the rhythm for the ancient Andalucian dance called El Polo. In spite of its strong rhythm, the dance is very sombre and tonight it will be performed in traditional burial robes. Here is the *GENERALIFE* by Joachin Turina.

The Palace at Granada was famous for its Night Festivals. In time, the Night Festivals were to become the Evening Party that was so popular in Spain during the 17th and 18th centuries. Eventually the Night Festival found its way to Europe and became the soiree.

Tonight at the Palace, there is to be a competition for the Zambra. The dancer, male or female, who can perform this sensuous dance the most gracefully and beautifully will be richly rewarded. The King has promised a heavy purse. Here is the *ZAMBRA* by Joachin Turina. (To be danced by Barbara Solis and accompanied by Barbara Solis at the piano via tape if the King so wishes).

The Arabian influence came to a close in 1492 when Granada finally surrendered to the Spanish monarchs, Isabella and Ferdinand. Boabdil, son of the last King of Granada, had been captured by the Christians. In return for his freedom, he promised his captors access to his father's lands. With this momentous act of betrayal Arabian domination ended in Spain. Our closing piece will be the *SERENATA ARABE* by Isaac Albeniz.

King Mu'ta'mid who ruled Sevilla during the 11th century, like many of the Arabian kings, was an excellent poet. Although some of his actions were considered excessively cruel, his poetry was by contrast, exquisite.

SEVILLA

Let us go now to the secluded palace of King Mu'ta'mid. The evening meal is in progress. Huge platters of fruits and vegetables cooked in olive oil are being brought in by slaves. A fine Spanish wine is being poured into the golden goblets. This evening the guests will eat their meal on delicate Chinese porcelain dishes following the custom at the Court of Cordoba and will use golden cutlery in place of their fingers.

There is an air of excitement for tonight the King will recite one of his new poems entitled *Night by the River* written for one of his beautiful concubines.

In just a moment the guests will be entertained by a beautiful Spanish dancer who will dance the ancient *Seguidilla* and accompany herself with some little wooden clappers called castenets.

The Kingdom of Granada was established in 1238 and was considered to be the richest and most opulent of all the Arabian Kingdoms ever to be constructed in Spain. The great Arabian palace known as the Alhambra was in itself, an architectural marvel. The Arabs had, by this time, learned exceedingly well how to balance the heavier masses on top of narrow, delicate columns. Constructed from brick, it was richly decorated with stucco.

The palace also had two Royal courtyards. Each courtyard contained a tiled pool filled with clear water and surrounded by exquisite gardens. Inside the palace upon the walls, the Poet of the Alhambra, Ibn Zamrak, had inscribed some of his verses. His poetry was highly polished and greatly artistic. Today, most of the words of this outstanding poet from Granada, still adorn the inside walls of the Alhambra.

EN LA ALHAMBRA

Let us go now to the great Arabian palace. It is evening. Somewhere in the palace, behind heavy curtains, a lute is softly playing. The gentle night breezes blow through the arched windows and open doors, cooling the palace down after a day of intense Andalusian heat. The sound

of water melodiously trickling into the pools can be heard in the outer courtyards. Here is *En la Alhambra*.

Adjoining the palace were exotic gardens called the *Generalife*. The gardens contained all kinds of different species of flowering shrubs, trees and plants from various parts of the world which the Arabs had brought with them. They were a peaceful and harmonious haven for the Caliph and his harem who spent their leisure hours strolling along shaded paths amid cascading fountains and quiet pools of water. Thanks to the Arabian influence in Spain, the secluded garden or *carmen* as it was known, became a very important part of the Andalusian style.

GENERALIFE

Let us go now to the *Generalife* where some of the women of the harem are enjoying an evening stroll in the gardens. They are of course wearing long diaphanous robes and are veiled because they are outside of the women's quarters. In the distance a guitar strikes up the rhythm for an ancient Andalusian dance called *El Polo*. The ancient dance in spite of its rhythm is very somber and tonight it will be performed in burial robes. Here is the *Generalife*.

ZAMBRA

The Palace of Granada was famous for its Night Festivals. In time, the Night Festivals were to become the Evening Party which was so popular with the Spanish people especially during the 17th and 18th centuries. Eventually it found its way to Europe and was called the *soiree*.

Tonight, at the Palace, there is to be a competition for the *Zambra*. The dancer male or female who can perform this sensuous dance the most gracefully and beautifully will be richly rewarded. The King has promised a heavy purse.

SERENATA ARABE

The Arabian influence ended in Spain in 1492 when Granada finally surrendered to the Catholic monarchs, Isabella and Ferdinand. Boabdil, son of the last Arabian king of Granada had been captured by the Christians. In return for his freedom, he promised his captors access to his father's lands. This momentous act of betrayal ended the Arabian domination in Spain.

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A famous Arabian musician named Ziryab had also come to Cordoba from Baghdad during the 9th century. Like Abdur the I, he too had had to flee his native home because of a jealous rival, in this case the jealous rival was his music teacher. In addition to Arabian-Oriental musical influences, Ziryab brought with him many innovative ideas which he introduced at Court.

For the ladies, he suggested colouring their hair with henna. He also suggested changing the heavier, dark-coloured garments which were worn to lighter textured, pastel coloured ones, especially during the intense Andalusian heat of the summer months. Guests were astonished when they were invited to sit at table with him to find fine dishes, cutlery and crystal glassware. He was an excellent chef and a special cake he introduced is still made today at Toledo. Ziryab's most important contribution was the establishment of a music Conservatory. His principles are followed even today at the various conservatories of music throughout Spain.

CORDOBA

Let us go now to Cordoba. In the silence of the night, the fragrances of jasmine and orange blossom float on the air. The palm trees sway gently in the evening breezes while in the distance, a lonely guitar begins its melancholic song.

DANZA ORIENTAL

The oriental influences which Ziryab brought with him to Cordoba soon found their way into the dance. Gentle hip movements and graceful arm movements of the Arabian dance were combined with the slow turns and head movements of the Oriental dance. Accompanied by cymbals and sometimes a kind of primitive stringed instrument which could produce its own harmony, the *Danza oriental* was one of the most exotic dances to be performed at the Arabian courts.

Following the Arabian custom, another splendid palace was built at Sevilla. Like Cordoba, Sevilla was also a beautiful city with streets lined with graceful palm trees the Arabs had brought, tiled plazas and the Giralda, its most famous tower. Sevilla too, was a center of culture and learning and drew many Arabian poets. Their poetry not only enriched the city's history but made an enormous contribution to the existing Spanish culture especially through its music and dance.

hears a moaning sound. At first he thinks it is the wind. He looks up at the castle parapets but he sees nothing.

Strumming his lute but with much less bravado he decides to cross the drawbridge which has been let down silently and mysteriously. He hears the moaning sound again.

As he approaches the massive wooden doors they begin to open, slowly. He enters the courtyard. His heart is pounding. The courtyard is empty. There's no one there. He has heard strange tales about this castle. He begins to wonder if he will be received graciously or thrown over the castle walls and left to die like others before him.

Suddenly the courtyard is filled with people, soldiers carrying sharp carved scimitars, musicians, singers and dancers. He breathes a silent prayer to Allah, he is going to be shown warm hospitality. All too soon he must take his leave. And as he sets out once again down the dusty road, strumming his lute he can still hear the echoes of the sad saeta and castle festivities.

Here is the Legend of the Old Moorish Castle.

Abdur's greatest contribution was to bring a degree of unity to the Arab states that had already been established in Spain.

Under Arabic domination Spain continued to prosper. The Kingdom of Cordoba was the most outstanding expression of this prosperity.

During the 9th and 10th centuries, the city of Cordoba had 200,000 homes, 900 public baths and 600 mosques. The streets were paved and there was piped water. Houses were whitewashed on a regular basis. This is still a traditional custom in Andalucia especially in the smaller villages. Each home had an airy, sunlit patio filled with flowers and fountains. This tradition too, has continued.

The palace of Abdur Rahman the III built just outside of the city was sumptuous. By this time the Great Mosque of Cordoba begun by Abdur the I boasted 21 doors and 1,293 columns carved from marble, jasper and porphy. The mosque was lit with hundreds of lamps made from silver.