

Program notes (spoken)
Echoes from the Past
2 Oct 2005
St. Cabel's

INTRODUCTION TO LORCA

Federico Garcia Lorca was one of Andalucia's greatest poets. Known as the Poet of Death, more than anyone else he understood Andalucia and was able to capture the essence of its drama through his poetry.

Music was also an intimate part of his life. He played both the piano and the guitar exceedingly well. His fascination with the guitar led to studies with a professional gypsy flamenco guitarist and later the guitar became one of the major motifs in his poetry. Musically he cast the instrument in the role it had always known, to evoke atmospheres and provide backgrounds for the arts in which it took part.

The guitar was an inspiration for many of Spain's composers. In tonight's concert we are going to hear how its influence enabled them to express the true essence of Spain through their music just as Lorca had done through his poetry.

1. PRELUDIO (CANTOS DE ESPANA) ISAAC ALBENIZ

One of the composers who was greatly influenced by the guitar was Isaac Albeniz. Not only was he a brilliant pianist, he was also a prolific composer and could play a mean guitar. He often entertained his friends late into the night on the instrument at his favourite, local bar. Albeniz was so intrigued by the sound of the guitar, he wrote much of his keyboard music as if it were for the guitar, thus making some of it exceedingly difficult to play.

In our opening piece Albeniz guitar motif returns us to a primal world of magic and mystery. Through the obsessive repetition of one note and an ancient Andalucian guitar technique whereby the chord is viciously attacked by the appoggiatura, he evokes an atmosphere of ritual violence in the outer sections.

In the central section, haunting fragments of melody with their sensuous contours evoke the sadness and sorrow of an exotic realm that once dominated Spain for almost nine centuries.

2. SPANISH DANCE #1 ANTON BILOTTI

In his early poetry, Lorca perceived the guitar as the golden god Polifemo, who like the mythical god, Cyclops, had only one eye.

Its six strings were dancing maidens. Three were made from catgut and these represented the treble register. The other three were made from silver and represented the bass register. Together, they danced over the sound hole of the single eyed god.

But the maidens were not free to go in search of their dreams because they were the beautiful captives of the golden god, Polifemo. Here is Lorca's poem about this god. TURN LIGHTS DOWN PLEASE

En la redonda

Encrucijada

Seis doncellas bailan.

Tres de carne

Y tres de plata.

Los sueños de ayer las buscan

Pero las tiene abrazadas

Un Polifemo de oro

La guitarra LIGHTS UP

Lorca's mythical imagery of the guitar was astonishing. The ancient Andalusian guitar was made from cypress and when the wood was highly polished, it gave off a golden glow.

3. DANZA DE MOLINERO MANUEL DE FALLA (THREE
CORNERED HAT)

The guitar left a profound impact on the great Andalusian composer, Manuel de Falla. He often said that the orchestra was for him, one great big guitar and wrote his music accordingly.

In the piece you are going to hear, Falla's guitar motif introduces us to a special technique for the guitar called *rasgado*. On the guitar, the player viciously strums the strings in such a manner that it sounds as if they are being brutally attacked. The resulting dissonance evokes an atmosphere of fire and passion that makes one feel as if one is standing on the edge of a volcano that is ready to erupt.

The mystical imagery of both Falla and Lorca with respect to this special technique suggests that the sound hole of the guitar is the heart of the beloved being mortally wounded by five swords which are the fingers.

4. FIESTA DE LAS CALDERAS (CINCO DANZAS GITANAS) JOACHIN TURINA

Every Andalusian village had its witches and in spite of the black picture history has painted them they were highly skilled in the arts of healing and para psychology. If you had a problem that could not be solved by traditional sources you went to see your local witch. Generally they kept to themselves. Their rituals were secret as were the laments they performed for the dead. In his poetry, Lorca perceived his mythical witches as angels who always seemed to be on hand after a bloody knife fight between members of a clan or a deadly skirmish between two clans.

Deep in the forest, carrying small cauldrons filled with specially prepared herbs and potions that were to be used in their secret rituals, they came to a sacred place. Divesting themselves of their clothing they gathered branches from a special tree and began switching one another. Following the switching rite, still unclothed and by the light of the full moon, they performed their dance rituals. Both the switching ritual and nude dancing were of great mystical significance and were not the obscene barbaric events often written about by untutored authors.

5.

~~5.~~ EL VITO JOACHIN NIN

Without doubt the bullfight was Lorca's most powerful motif in his poetry. His profound Lament, recounts the tragic death of the great Andalucian bullfighter and his personal friend Ignacio de Sanchez in the ring.

On the day of a bullfight anywhere in Andalucia, the air is charged with a special electricity, anxiety and fear. The special electricity marks the arrival of the duende, a mysterious unseen force that is unique only to Andalucia.

As the late afternoon sun slants menacingly against the Andalucian houses haphazardly emphasizing their stark whiteness, a guitar can be heard in the distance. At first the lament begins slowly and profoundly. Gradually the sound increases it becomes louder, raspier. Its cruelty speaks of the blood of the man or the bull that will be spilled onto the ground at five in the afternoon. TURN LIGHTS DOWN AS FAR AS THEY WILL GO

At five in the afternnon

It was five in the afternoon.

A small boy brought a white shirt

At five in the afternnon

A basket of lime was already prepared,

At five in the afternoon.

Everything else was death and only death

At five in the afternoon.

I can't stand to see it

Tell night to fall.

I don't want to see the blood

Of Ignacio on the sand.

TURN LIGHTS UP

6. EN LA ALHAMBRA (SPANISH SKETCHBOOK) ISAAC ALBENIZ

Another recurring motif in Lorca's poetry was his mythical Andalusia. Lorca's mythical Andalusia had only three cities, Granada, Cordoba and Sevilla and he always wrote about them in that order.

The body and design of much of his poetry reflected the architecture of the great Arabian palace, the Alhambra. It emulated the intricate patterns of the graceful arabesques that had been sculpted on the interior walls of the palace.

Lorca perceived both the Alhambra known as the Red Palace and Granada as places of great beauty and sorrowful guitars. This was mainly due to two events that took place in Granada's history. In 1492, after a ferocious struggle between the Christians and Arabs and in spite of promises and treaties by the Catholic Monarchs, Granada was destroyed because they feared its beauty and power.

Later in Granada's history, under the promptings of the Inquisition the Spanish Monarchs decided to forcibly expel anyone from Granada who was not a true Spaniard. This meant two thirds of the population.

Just before he was murdered, Lorca was asked what he thought about the fall of Granada. He replied, "*a disastrous event, an admirable civilization, poetry, astronomy, architecture and unique sensitivity, all*

lost to make room for an impoverished, defeated city and a miser's paradise."

In the piece you are going to hear, Albeniz use of the guitar motif sounds as if distant lutes are playing softly somewhere deep in the palace. Comingled with this figure, is a sad melody that evokes the cries of love and passion heard behind heavy, muffled curtains in the stillness of the blue Andalucian night.

7. CORDOBA (CANTOS DE ESPANA) ISAAC ALBENIZ

Lorca's Cordoban verse was both mysterious and suggestive. It mirrored the stoicism and sennequismo of the Roman essence that dominated Andalucia from 400 to 200 B.C. Seneca was a famous Cordoban philosopher who lived during the time of the Emperor Nero and was his tutor. One of Seneca's philosophies was that anyone who arrived in Cordoba if in fact he arrived at all, was obliged to accept something called the "Stranger's Fate." The "Stranger's Fate" decreed that all new arrivals had to submit themselves to a higher deity or power as recognized by Rome and to face death with dignity. Here is Lorca's mysterious poem entitled *Cordoba*. LIGHTS DOWN

*Cordoba.
Far off and lonely.*

*Black horse and big moon
And olives in my saddlebag.
Even though I know the road,
I'll never get to Cordoba.*

*Across the plain and through the wind
Black horse, red moon.
Death's always watching me now
From the towers of Cordoba.*

*Ay! How long the road,
Ay! My valiant horse,
Ay! Death waits for me
Before I get to Cordoba.*

LIGHTS UP
*Cordoba.
Far off and lonely.*

8. SEVILLA (SUITE ESPANOLA) ISAAC ALBENIZ

Lorca perceived Sevilla as the Queen of his Andalucia.

Graceful, witty and brilliant with a carnation between her teeth, she too, did not escape the shadows cast by the birds of ill omen.

In the piece you are going to hear, Albeniz guitar motif evokes the gaiety and rhythms of the sevillanas a dance of Sevilla of which the first six steps embody the entire birth, love and death idiom of the Andalucian gypsy.

9. DANZA DEL FUEGO (EL AMOR BRUJO)
MANUEL DE FALLA

Falla worked closely with Lorca to preserve the true essence of the ancient arts of Andalucia. In our closing piece, Falla creates an atmosphere that evokes the deep mysteries of the ancient Ritual Fire Dance. The dance is both earthy and mystical. Primitive elements inform it through Falla's use of accents, authentic ancient Andalusian rhythms and the imitative sounds of the tambourine, drum and guitar.