

## Spanish Rhythms

7.30PM, Thursday 31 July  
Auckland Town Hall

Conductor Pablo González  
Guitar JJJ

# Programme Notes

**Joaquín Turina** (1882-1949)

*Danzas fantásticas* (1919)

- I. *Exaltación*
- II. *Ensueños*
- III. *Orgía*

DURATION: c.24'

Drawing an unexpected link between the rich prose of Sevillian novelist José Más and traditional Spanish dance forms, Joaquín Turina's *Danzas fantásticas* are prefaced with quotes from Más' writings.

The work opens with a lively triple-time jota from the Aragon region, "It seemed as though the figures in that incomparable picture were moving inside the calyx of a flower."

Dreams are referenced in the title of Turina's Basque zortzico, with its destabilising 5/8 pulse, "The guitar's strings sounded the lament of a soul helpless under the weight of bitterness."

Turina saved his native Andalusia for last with a dramatic farruca: "The perfume of the flowers merged with the odour of manzanilla [an Andalusian wine], and from the bottom of raised glasses, full of the incomparable wine, like an incense, rose joy."

**Joaquín Rodrigo** (1901-1999)

*Concierto de Aranjuez* (1939)

- I. *Allegro con spirito*
- II. *Adagio*
- III. *Allegro gentile*

DURATION: c.23'

"A strange instrument, gigantic, multiform and fantastic, an instrument which has the tail of a piano, the wings of a harp, and the soul, in fact, of a guitar. This phantom, this impossible sonority, created by the imagination of the Spanish musician, is what inspires our music," wrote Joaquín Rodrigo, whose guitar concerto *Concierto de Aranjuez* (pronounced Aran-hweth), catapulted him to international fame.

The work's title refers to the gardens of the 16th-century Palacio Real de Aranjuez. Rodrigo, who became blind at three years old, emphasises the aural and aromatic experience of these gardens in the first movement: "birds singing on all sides, the waters murmuring sweetly, the *sepaliers* loaded with delectable fruit and the beds with fragrant flowers."

The beloved theme of the central movement appears first as a melancholy oboe solo before being passed to the guitar in intricate figuration. Rodrigo's wife Victoria said that he composed this theme while grieving the loss of their first child through miscarriage, while he told others that it came to him while waiting for the tram in Paris. Perhaps both are true.

"To say 'dance' is to say 'rhythm', and rhythm in Spanish terms means 'guitar'", said Rodrigo, and nowhere is this more evident

than in the concerto, in the words of the composer, "strong like a butterfly, but as tightly controlled as a veronica, the pass of a bullfighter's cape."

## INTERVAL

**Manuel de Falla** (1876-1946)

*La vida breve*: Interlude & Dance (1904-1905)

DURATION: c.7'

Manuel de Falla's one-act opera *La vida breve* (Life is Short) was the first composition that the exacting composer acknowledged publicly. Despite winning him the composition competition of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes in 1904, he was unable to get the opera performed in Madrid, and it was first performed in French translation in Paris in 1913, where the orchestral Interlude & Dance quickly became popular.

The excerpts are inverted from their positions in the opera, which follows Salud, a woman whose lover fails to tell her he is engaged to another woman. The Dance opens the wedding scene, which an enraged Salud determines to interrupt. The subsequent Interlude foretells the tragic end to Salud's struggle, opening with writhing strings and heavy brass undertones, and gentle references to the music of the winsome castanet-clicking dance.

**Manuel de Falla** (1876-1946)

*The Three-Cornered Hat*: Suites Nos.1 and 2 (1919)

*Suite 1*: La tarde | Danza de la molinera: Fandango | El Corregidor | Las uvas

*Suite 2*: Danza de los vecinos: Seguidillas | Danza del molinero: Farruca | Danza final: Jota

DURATION: c.39'

Manuel de Falla sought to create music which was Spanish at its core rather than merely European with a seasoning of Spanish ornamentation. "I think the *spirit* is more important than the *letter*", he wrote in 1917 while at work on *The Three-Cornered Hat*, a commission for the Parisian Ballet Russes.

He thus avoided the common nationalistic method of simply embroidering his work with borrowed popular melodies. His music instead internalises the "rhythm, tonality and melodic intervals" of Spanish dance and song and crafts them together with the compositional technique refined first in Madrid and later in Paris.

The comic ballet was hugely popular and the suites drawn from it also proved successful in concert. The first suite opens with the playful miller couple, whose light-hearted afternoon is troubled by the unwanted amorous attentions of the corregidor, the town magistrate with his distinctive three-cornered hat. The miller's wife strategically deflects these advances through a teasing dance that ends with the corregidor retreating in embarrassment after tripping on a grape.

## Programme Notes cont.

A seguidilla performed by assembled neighbours opens the second suite and the miller then takes the stage with a farruca, featuring the orchestra thrumming as a giant guitar. The corregidor's second attempt to divide the couple also ends in humiliation, and the assembled company breaks into a flamboyant jota.

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*Notes Fund: Music for this concert has been supported by David Lovell and Jenny & Andrew Smith*