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CLASSICS

**SOUNDS OF
SPAIN &
THE AMERICAS**

**PIAZZOLLA, GRANADOS, TÁRREGA
FALLA, MONTSALVATGE, ALBÉNIZ**

SEBASTIAN SEE-SCHIERENBERG *VIOLIN*
RAMON RUIZ *GUITAR*
SOPHIA LISOVSKAYA *PIANO*

SOUNDS OF SPAIN & THE AMERICAS

[1]	Asturias (Leyenda), Op. 232, No. 1	Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909) Transcribed by Xavier Turull	[4.09]
	Suite Popular Española	Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)	
[2]	El Paño Moruno		[2.22]
[3]	Nana		[3.08]
[4]	Canción		[9.41]
[5]	Polo		[1.28]
[6]	Asturiana		[2.33]
[7]	Jota		[3.07]
[8]	Canción de Cuna Para Dormir a un Negrito from <i>Cinco Canciones Negras</i>	Xavier Montsalvatge (1912-2002)	[2.46]
[9]	Danse Espagnole, No.5 'Andaluz'	Enrique Granados (1867-1916)	[4.11]
[10]	Recuerdos de la Alhambra	Francisco Tárrega (1852-1909) arr. Ruggiero Ricci	[3.56]
[11]	Campaña Andaluza	Sabicas [Agustín Castellón Campos] (1912-1990)	[4.00]
	Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas	Ástor Piazzolla (1921-1992)	
[12]	Primavera Porteña		[4.20]
[13]	Verano Porteño		[4.07]
[14]	Otoño Porteño		[5.07]
[15]	Invierno Porteño		[3.29]
	Total timings:		[51.31]

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SOUNDS OF SPAIN & THE AMERICAS

Asturias (Leyenda)

Isaac Albéniz, transcribed by Xavier Turull

Asturias, (originally titled *Preludio*) written in the early 1890s is one of the best-loved and most recognisable guitar pieces of all time. It was originally composed for piano however and though transcribed by many guitarists (including Francisco Tárrega, who composed the *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* which also features on this recording) it only arrived in its present form after the great Andres Segovia arranged it. We are then fortunate that its journey did not end there and Xavier Turull, a Catalan violinist and composer, arranged a rather fiery version of the piece for violin solo.

The piece appeared in various collections of short Spanish pieces, but it was only in 1911, after Albéniz had died, that the German publisher Hofmeister published a collection called *Suite Española* and changed the name of the piece from *Preludio* to *Asturias (Leyenda)*. The name however is misleading. Although the dramatic character of the piece may indeed evoke the lonely windswept land

and seascapes of the Asturias region in northern Spain, the inspiration for the piece was almost definitely the music of Andalucía in the south of the country, and specifically that Romani/Moorish mixture of music we call Flamenco.

The opening section of the piece immediately evokes the Flamenco guitar with a rapidly alternating pedal note and bass line melody, the rhythm itself suggesting a *Bulerías* – a type of song from the Flamenco repertoire. The theme builds in intensity, punctuated by vicious accented chords and building into a complex double-stopped passage before it gives way to a final flourish that diminuendoes to a high harmonic. This sets the scene for the first slow section, a sparse, religious and solemn melody evoking the music of the Catholic church that seems to transform itself a few bars later into a *cante jondo*, an improvised phrase such as would be sung by a Flamenco singer. Throughout this section the juxtaposition of Christian and Moorish religion and culture on Spanish music is apparent, with unexpected G sharps adding Arabic flavours to the harmony. This leads into a brief dance section written in the style of a *Malagueña*, another Flamenco style, before

returning to the solemn religious theme again. A *Da Capo* follows bringing us back to the first rapid opening section, even more urgent and fiery than before, until the piece closes with a final hymn-like slow section, which again slowly transforms itself into a Moorish-flavoured melody line executed with ricochet bowing. A glissando to a questioning high harmonic finally allows the piece to dissipate into the ether, the last note a single lonely pizzicato.

Suite Popular Española Manuel de Falla

Manuel de Falla was, together with Albéniz and Granados, one of the three great Spanish composers to draw inspiration from and be greatly influenced by the popular music of Spain. Born in Cádiz in 1876, he composed the *Siete Canciones Populares Españolas* for voice and piano in 1914. The original piece consists of a set of seven short songs which takes the listener on a journey through the different regions of Spain. Later, this set of miniatures was transcribed for the violin by Paul Kochanski. The set was renamed in its instrumental version as *Suite Popular Española*, containing six songs of the original seven.

The character of the first movement, 'El Paño Moruno' (the Stained Cloth) originates from the South of Spain, the song inflected with Moorish and Flamenco character and dramatically Gypsy flavoured. The movement alternates between a dark, rhythmic melody passed between the piano bass line and an answering violin pizzicato, followed by intense and almost strained melodic sections that imitate the style of the Flamenco singers of Andalucia.

Following this comes 'Nana', a gentle lullaby marked *Calmo e Sostenuto*, with the violin instructed to play *mormorato*. The accompaniment, slowly turning through cycles of harmony, supports a hushed violin melody which is seemingly calm and yet quietly anxious.

The popular folk song 'Canción' follows, with a gently undulating accompaniment and sunny melodic line. The theme builds into a fortissimo melody of boisterous chords before the movement ends gently.

This prepares us for the shock and high drama of 'Polo' which personifies the fiery character of the Flamenco style of Southern Spain. Rapid note repetitions and syncopated

accented rhythms provide driving energy, and this is overlaid with intense declamatory violin phrases. The movement ends with a violent and dramatic flourish.

'Asturiana' takes us to the far North of Spain, and to the other extreme of the previous movement. Desolate, sparse harmony and melody evoke cold windswept landscapes of the region.

The piece ends with 'Jota', a noisy, colourful and joyful dance from the streets of the Aragon region of Spain. Traditionally the dance incorporates the use of castanets, and marked *Allegro Vivo* the movement is energetic and bustling. Interspersed with slower, romantic and seemingly improvised sections, the piece closes with a warm slow section that gently ends our Spanish journey.

Thoughts on recording Suite Popular Española.

Having lived in Spain for a number of years, and performing the Suite with both piano and guitar accompaniment many times, it seemed a natural step when meeting the wonderful Flamenco guitarist Ramon Ruiz to try and create our own version of this piece.

Playing together we soon realised that approaching the suite would require a special way of working. Flamenco musicians don't like using music, they learn from imitation when very young and constantly improvise. And classical musicians don't like improvising! Our only solution was to spend many afternoons together reinventing this piece through a process of experimentation. One of our many challenges was to highlight and enhance the Flamenco influences in this piece without detracting from what Manuel de Falla so beautifully created already. I think we have at least managed to add something authentic. The vocals that Ramon sings to open the 'Nana' are those that his own Grandmother sang him to sleep with. The Intense Flamenco strumming techniques added in 'Polo' he still uses when performing in the Flamenco venues in Seville. The sparse chords in 'Asturiana' highlight the intense loneliness of the harmony. And the colourful strumming and rhythmic effects we added in the final 'Jota' evoke the castanets and footwork of dancers that you can see performing in the Fiestas of Spain today. Combined with the beautifully played piano part we hope we have managed to bring something new to a piece that celebrates the incredible melting pot of culture that is Spain.

Canción de Cuna Para Dormir a un Negrito
from Cinco Canciones Negras by
Xavier Montsalvatge

The *Cinco Canciones Negras*, or *Five Black Songs* were composed in 1945 and the Catalan composer Xavier Montsalvatge owed much of his international fame to this one outstanding work. Out of the five, the song presented here which can be translated as 'a Lullaby to Sleep a Black Child' is the best known. Originally composed for mezzo-soprano and piano, it was later arranged for voice and orchestra by the composer. The set of five pieces is based on poems, music and rhythms of the West Indies.

Thoughts on recording Canción de Cuna Para Dormir a un Negrito

In a rehearsal at a festival in Spain, overlooking the glittering blue Mediterranean, and with a warm breeze coming through the windows, I started playing along with a pianist who was practising this wonderful piece for a vocal performance later that week. The Lullaby seemed to be almost written for violin, gently warm, swaying, and with one note melting into the next. I have hardly changed the original

notation in this version: the only amendment I made was to put some brief melodic figures an octave higher to create more tonal colour contrast here and there, but not so much as to disturb a sleepy child and his gently singing mother...

Danse Espagnole
Enrique Granados

The *Danse Espagnole* composed by Enrique Granados is the fifth of a set called the *12 Danzas Españolas* Op. 37 which was composed in 1890. The *12 Danzas* were originally composed for piano but this particular movement, carrying the title of 'Andaluza', is commonly transcribed for Classical Guitar and is also played as a duet for violin and piano. The version presented here was transcribed for violin and piano by the great Austrian violinist Fritz Kreisler.

The piece opens with a dark and slow, galloping piano rhythm before the violin enters with a sonorous melody in the lower register. With rubato pulling back and forth between violin and piano, the melody builds to a fortissimo fanfare like passage, before giving way to an innocent and beautifully simple slower section.

The melody is passed to the piano as the violin replies with answering phrases and decorates with gentle bird-song flourishes. The dark piano rhythm then reignites and the violin joins again, this time an octave higher for added intensity. Again the fanfare builds and subsides before finally the tension, with an added G sharp in the last violin chord, relaxes and finally dissipates.

Recuerdos de la Alhambra
Francisco Tárrega, arranged by Ruggiero Ricci

The Spanish composer and guitarist Francisco Tárrega was born on 21 November 1852, in Villarreal, in the Province of Castellón.

He composed *Recuerdos de la Alhambra* (translated as *Memories of the Alhambra*) for guitar in 1896 whilst in Granada, the Andalusian city famous for its magnificent Alhambra Palace and snowy mountainous backdrop of the Sierra Nevada.

The piece is famed for the use of the guitar tremolo technique, wherein a single melody note is plucked by the fingers in such rapid succession that a long sustained melody is created while another bass melody is played with the thumb.

The piece was further arranged by the great violinist Ruggiero Ricci and is known for its fiendish technical demands on the violinist. The tremolo guitar technique is replaced by the equally demanding ricochet bowing technique, where the bow is thrown at the string to create a tremolo effect while the bass line melody is bowed between the groups of ricochet notes.

Campiña Andaluza by Sabicas

Sabicas (Agustín Castellón Campos) was born in 1912 and was a Flamenco guitarist of Romani origin. He was born in the Spanish city of Pamplona, the city famous for its yearly 'running of the bulls'.

Sabicas began playing guitar at the age of 4 and gave his debut performance two years later. During his career he formed important musical partnerships with the leading singers and dancers of the day and was instrumental in introducing Flamenco to audiences outside of Spain. Famed for his technical mastery he not only composed but also innovated on his instrument. This piece, the beautiful and sunny sounding *Campiña Andaluza* demands of the performer a fiendish array of technical

skills. Translated as *Andalucian Countryside* it describes scenes of the southernmost region of Spain which is the home of Flamenco.

Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas **Ástor Piazzolla**

Tango is a musical genre traditionally associated with dance and which originated not just in Argentina, but also in Uruguay. The tango has a large African influence as well as a fusion of different European music styles.

The great Tango Master Ástor Piazzolla was a prolific composer (he wrote over 3,000 pieces) as well as a virtuoso bandoneón player. He was born in 1921 in Mar del Plata, Argentina, of Italian parents. He spent most of his childhood in New York and immersed himself in its multicultural and diverse environments, often hanging around the back doors of Jazz clubs so as to hear the performers inside, and it was the genre of Jazz, combined with the music of Bach which were to become the most important influences on him and the development of his 'Nuevo Tango' style.

His musical path was not without many obstacles and difficulties however. His radical and innovative style faced much opposition and controversy in his home country. He was even labelled by traditionalists as the 'Great Assassin of Tango', and in fact during his lifetime, he enjoyed most success in foreign lands, mainly in Europe and the US.

There is no doubt however that he revolutionised the world of Tango, creating his own unique style and taking Tango out of the dingy clubs and bars and onto the concert platform.

The *Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas*, or *The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*, are a set of four tango compositions which were originally composed at different times but later formed into one suite. The pieces were written by Piazzolla for performance by his own quintet which consisted of violin, piano, electric guitar, double bass and bandoneón. The Seasons have been subsequently arranged for various instruments.

Each movement describes a season in Buenos Aires, starting typically with a faster section followed by a melancholic or Romantic section and then repeating the fast-slow pattern once again. The energetic Primavera Porteña or Spring describes this notoriously windy season in the city, Verano Porteño describes a sultry and oppressively humid summer, the Jazz-inspired Otoño Porteño describes the arrival of the chilly foggy Buenos Aires Autumn, and the cold and dramatic Invierno Porteño describes the city's winter weather that blows in from Antarctica each year, with the first signs of warmth and a new beginning in the last few hopeful bars of the movement.

Notes on recording the Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas

The music of Piazzolla has long held a fascination for me and I remember well when I first discovered his music and attempted to tackle his completely unique technical requirements, including pizzicato drum effects, bow 'whips' and the rasping effect created by playing on the wrong side of the bridge.

Our interpretation here of these tangos for violin and piano duo, as I believe Piazzolla might have approved of, is a 'work in progress' and is so far a result of many hours spent together with my pianist playing, talking, improvising and exploring possibilities and new ideas (as with Manuel de Falla's *Suite Popular Española*). I don't think we have managed to ever play it in the same way twice or even come close to agreeing on a final version of this piece but I hope we have managed to capture some of the excitement, longing, passion and rugged gritty rhythm of this incredible and unique music of Ástor Piazzolla.

Sebastian See-Schierenberg, October 2014

SEBASTIAN SEE-SCHIERENBERG

Consistently described as emotional, beautiful, passionate and idiomatic, the playing of Sebastian See-Schierenberg has moved and touched audiences around the world. Recent performances have included recitals at the Palais des Beaux-Arts Brussels, the Konzerthaus Berlin, and the Luxembourg Philharmonie, a series of concerts with eminent pianist Julian Jacobson, and recitals with Debussy specialist Noriko Ogawa.

Sebastian heads a delivery team that organises and promotes numerous and diverse international projects. In 2014 Sebastian was active in Myanmar (Burma) on behalf of his charity Live4Music and delivered a series of televised concerts in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and the British Council there. He also started a violin programme for blind children from the deprived townships of Rangoon and was invited to lead them in a televised concert at the National Theatre of Rangoon. Sebastian is currently organising a project that will see the first young people's orchestra of Burma being formed. The orchestra will be taken on a country wide tour by him, a



project that will be documented and broadcast to over 3 million people in Burma by BBC Media Action.

Other recent international projects have included recital tours of Taiwan, Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia where he performed in such prestigious venues as the Singapore Esplanade and the Philharmonic Hall and Performing Arts Centre in Kuala Lumpur, a collaboration with the University of the Illes Balears in Spain which delivered an international live-streaming project which resulted in his recitals being broadcast live to thousands of students in universities and schools all over the world, and a live performance of a score which he co-wrote for a production of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* at the historic Strand Hotel in Myanmar.

Throughout his performing career, Sebastian has always been committed to music education and has held teaching posts at the Trinity College of Music, London, Bowdoin Festival USA, Lisbon Orchestral Academy and the Malaysian Philharmonic Music Chambers. He is regularly invited by the leading Universities

and Schools throughout Asia to give masterclasses and recitals.

Sebastian gratefully acknowledges the generous support and sponsorship he has received, particularly from the British Council, HSBC, BP, INTI (Laureate International Group), USM, CESAG University Spain, the British High Commissions in Myanmar, Malaysia and Brunei, and the Sir Vernon Ellis Foundation.

RAMON RUIZ

Born in Granada, Ramón Ruiz is the UK's leading Flamenco Guitarist and Composer. He has performed in Spain's leading flamenco venues, specifically in Seville, and has collaborated with many of the top guitarists in the world.

In 1997 he moved to London and produced his first CD "Flamenco Havana" which was released on Naim Records. He has performed in London's most prominent venues including



the Royal Albert Hall, Southbank Centre and Sadlers Wells. His growing reputation for collaborating with artists from different backgrounds has led him to study Indian, Jazz and Latin American music. In addition to his performing activity he carries out regular Flamenco teaching and guitar workshops and performs with quintet Alcazaba. He has performed live at over 2,000 venues across Europe and his short film featuring his Flamenco group has achieved over 3 million views on YouTube.

SOPHIA LISOVSKAYA

Sophia Lisovskaya was born in Moscow into a family of professional musicians and gave her first public performance at the age of six in Moscow's Museum of Fine Art. Since then she has continued to follow the grand tradition of the old Russian School with a lineage of professors leading directly back to the great figures of Neuhaus, Sofronitzky and Scriabin. Regarding her debut CD released on BIS, the American Record Guide said she was "coming close to the standard set by Sofronitzky and Richter for these pieces" and said they were "outstanding performances."

At the age of 13 she won first prize in the All Soviet Competition 'New Names' performing Chopin's Second Piano Concerto with the former Ministry of Culture Symphony Orchestra. She studied at the Tchaikovsky Junior Conservatoire of Music and in 1994 won a scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music in London. Following this she won a scholarship from the Philharmonia Orchestra (London) in 1996.



Sophia has toured South America performing in Buenos Aires (Teatro de Colon) and venues in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. She has also performed throughout Europe at venues such as St James's Palace, St John's Smith Square and Wigmore Hall (London), the Vasteras Concert Hall (Sweden), and Sala Verdi (Milan, for the Società dei Concerti). Her debut in the legendary Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatoire performing Bruch's Double Piano Concerto with the Moscow State Chamber Orchestra in their Winter Proms season was received with critical acclaim. She has broadcast live on National Swedish Radio, BBC Radio 3 and Moscow Radio. Engagements have also included a concert to open the London Festival Orchestra's 'Virtuoso Pianists' concerto series (performing Schumann's Piano Concerto), a tour of Russia giving several performances with the Novosibirsk Philharmonic Orchestra under maestro Katz for their 50th Year Jubilee Concert, performances with the Queensland Orchestra Australia and performances in Latvia of Shostakovich's Second Piano Concerto.

Her engagements in the UK in 2013 included a performance of Beethoven's Emperor Concerto with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and she will return to China after a successful tour to give further concerts and appear on the major TV channels there.

Profits from the sale of this recording will support the Live4Music violin study programme at the Kyeemindine School for Blind Children in Rangoon, Myanmar (Burma).

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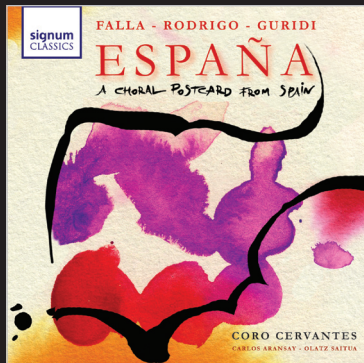
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