

JOAQUIN RODRIGO

(b. 1901)

THE COMPLETE MUSIC FOR PIANO

Disc One • BCD 9027A • Solo Works
Gregory Allen, piano

	Suite pour piano (1923)		(9:18)
1	Prélude	[1:23]	
2	Sicilienne	[2:18]	
3	Bourrée	[0:58]	
4	Menuet	[2:08]	
5	Rigaudon	[2:17]	
6	Preludio al Gallo mañanero (1926)		(3:00)
7	Zarabanda lejana (1926)		(4:19)
8	Pastorale (1926)		(1:47)
9	Bagatela (1926)		(1:39)
10	Serenata Española (1931)		(5:00)
11	Sonada de Adiós (1935) (Hommage à Paul Dukas)		(3:57)

	Tres Danzas de España (1941)		(4:20)
12	Rústica	[1:20]	
13	Danza de las tres Doncellas	[1:30]	
14	Serrana	[1:29]	
15	Danza de la Amapola (1972)		(1:37)
	Tres Evocaciones (1980-81)		(12:00)
16	Tarde en el Parque	[4:22]	
17	Noche en el Guadalquivir	[4:53]	
18	Mañana en Triana	[2:45]	
19	Preludio de Añoranza (1987)		(3:23)
	Cinco Sonatas de Castilla, con Toccata a modo de Pregón (1950-51)		(25:35)
20	Toccata	[2:33]	
21	Sonata #1 in F# minor	[4:20]	
22	Sonata #2 in F# minor	[5:31]	
23	Sonata #3 in D Major	[3:42]	
24	Sonata #4 in B minor (como un tiento)	[5:00]	
25	Sonata #5 in A Major	[4:08]	

Total Time, Disc One: 76:52

All contents © and © 1991, Bridge Records, Inc.

Disc Two • BCD 9027B • Solo and Duo Works

Gregory Allen, piano

Anton Nel, piano 2 in duo works

Cinco Piezas Infantiles (1924) (10:50)

(Two pianos)

- | | | |
|----------|----------------------|--------|
| 1 | Son Chicos que pasan | [1:30] |
| 2 | Después de un cuento | [3:07] |
| 3 | Mazurka | [1:43] |
| 4 | Plegaria | [1:53] |
| 5 | Gritería final | [2:20] |

6 Berceuse de printemps (1928) (1:59)

7 Berceuse d'automne (1923) (3:29)

8 Air de Ballet sur le nom d'une Jeune Fille (1930) (3:11)

El Album de Cecilia (1948) (7:17)

(Seis Piezas para manos pequeñas)

- | | | |
|-----------|---------------------------------|--------|
| 9 | María de los Reyes (Sevillanas) | [0:41] |
| 10 | A la jota — Jota de las Palomas | [1:12] |
| 11 | Canción del Hada rubia | [1:06] |
| 12 | Canción del Hada morena | [0:37] |
| 13 | El negrito Pepo | [1:58] |
| 14 | Borriquillos a Belén | [1:26] |

Sonatina para dos Muñecas (1977) (7:17)
(piano, four hands)

- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------|--------|
| 15 | Empieza el día | [1:21] |
| 16 | Alegres peripecias | [1:29] |
| 17 | Recogimiento | [2:15] |
| 18 | Vuelta del cole | [2:03] |

19 Gran Marcha de los Subsecretarios (1941) (4:23)
(piano, four hands)

20 Atardecer (1975) (5:40)
(piano, four hands)

21 A l'ombre de Torre Bermeja (1945) (4:25)

Cuatro Piezas (1936-38) (11:32)

22 Caleseras — Homenaje a Chueca [1:45]

23 Fandango del Ventorrillo [1:19]

24 Plegaria de la Infanta de Castilla [5:43]

25 Danza Valenciana [2:34]

Cuatro Estampas Andaluzas (1946-52) (15:10)

26 El Vendedor de Chanquetes [2:03]

27 Crepúsculo sobre el Guadalquivir [3:57]

28 Seguidillas del Diablo [3:51]

29 Barquitos de Cádiz [5:09]

Total Time, Disc Two: 76:07

All contents © and © 1991, Bridge Records, Inc.

THE PIANO MUSIC OF JOAQUIN RODRIGO

Since the premiere in 1940 of his *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar and orchestra, the name of Joaquín Rodrigo (b.22 November 1901) has been known the world over. This hauntingly beautiful work, which Francis Poulenc called "a masterpiece from the first note to the last," has truly become a classic, pervading our musical culture not only in numerous concert performances and recordings, but also in anonymous arrangements heard in film scores and elevator Muzak. Rodrigo subsequently wrote a number of other concertos with attractive titles such as *Concierto Heroico* (for piano), *Concierto de Estío* (for violin), *Concierto Galante* (for cello), etc., but none of these ever caused the sensation of the *Aranjuez*.

Joaquín Rodrigo was born in Sagunto, a city on the Mediterranean coast in the province of Valencia. At the age of three he lost his eyesight as a result of an epidemic of diphtheria. In 1906 his family moved to Valencia where from 1917 to 1922 he studied harmony and composition with Francisco Antich; he also received valuable advice from Eduardo Lopez Chávarri and Enrique Gomá.

In 1927 Rodrigo went to Paris to enter the composition class of Paul Dukas at the Ecole Normale; by making this journey, he was following in the footsteps of his countrymen Albéniz, Granados, Falla, Turina and Mompou, all of whom made the pilgrimage to Paris. During this period he began to have his first successes as a composer, and became engaged to the Turkish pianist Victoria Kamhi; they were married in 1933. Victoria sacrificed her own ambitions as a pianist to help further her husband's career, and has been invaluable through the years by proofreading, editing and performing his works; she also wrote the texts for a number of his songs, as well as the scenario for his ballet *Pavana Real*.

In 1934 Rodrigo returned to Spain, becoming a professor at the College of the Blind in Madrid; in the same year he received from the Association of Fine Arts in Valencia the first of his many awards, for his orchestral tone poem *Per la flor del lliri blau*. Shortly thereafter, by way of a grant, he was able

to return to Paris for further studies in musicology with Maurice Emmanuel at the Paris Conservatory, and with André Pirro at the Sorbonne. In 1939, after the Spanish Civil War, he and Victoria settled permanently in Madrid.

Following the success of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, Rodrigo became widely known and respected as one of the leading composers of the post-Falla generation, and was the recipient of a great many honors and awards—among them, the French Legion of Honor, membership in the French Academy of Arts and Letters, the Spanish Cross of Alfonso the Wise, and honorary doctorates from the Universities of Madrid, Valencia, Salamanca, Alicante, and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles; the Manuel de Falla Chair was created for him at the University of Madrid in 1947; and in 1953 a commemorative plaque was installed at his birthplace in Sagunto.

Rodrigo's musical style, an attractive and immediately recognizable blend of elements from his Spanish heritage and his French training, had fully evolved by around 1930; his output thus naturally divides into two periods. The earliest works, which predate his studies in Paris, clearly demonstrate his awareness of various contemporary trends in music—particularly the pared-down, austere neoimpressionism of late Debussy, the deliberately naive, simplistic neoclassicism of Satie and 'Les Six', and Stravinsky's modernistic treatment of traditional folk music. Most of these apprentice works, including those written during his period of study with Dukas, were first published in Paris, with French titles. Unlike Falla and Albéniz, whose early music is already suffused with Spanish idioms, Rodrigo's first attempts only rarely give a clue to his national heritage. He was, however, deeply absorbed in the study of early Spanish art music, and the influences of Renaissance and Baroque composers such as Victoria, Cabezón and Scarlatti can be felt in much of his music. With the encouragement of both Dukas and Falla (as well as his publishers), he began to incorporate more of the distinctive features of Iberian folk music; this addition of the native vernacular to his already secure and disciplined craft provided the final ingredient in the synthesis of his mature musical language. Aside from a latter-day trend toward a more objective, less obvious

use of folk-oriented materials, his style has remained essentially unchanged through the years.

The single most identifiable feature of Rodrigo's music is his particular treatment of non-harmonic dissonance. This typically takes the form of major and minor seconds (or ninths) in accompanying parts, supplying spicy counterpoint to the otherwise plainly diatonic melodies and harmonies. (Occasionally the principal melodic lines are also decorated with parallel seconds.) This compositional fingerprint is apparent even in his very earliest works. Despite the constant background dissonance, however, the music is always refined, direct and economical, making its effect with never a wasted note; an almost Mozartean clarity and simplicity of the musical thought characterizes nearly all of his work.

As a sightless musician, Rodrigo's highly-developed aural imagination and keen sensitivity to sonority and timbre are perhaps to be expected; but his ability to project *visual* images in sound is really quite astonishing—the words 'colorful' and 'picturesque' are often the first that come to mind in describing his music. Clearly an incurable optimist, Rodrigo's love of nature, fondness for children, and good-natured sense of humor come through in many of his works, while those which explore darker, more interior emotional states round out his musical persona with a dimension of sincere humanistic dignity.

The music for piano occupies something of a medium position in Rodrigo's overall catalog; certainly his fame rests more on his works for guitar, orchestra, and voice. Inexplicably, however, the piano music has been largely overlooked, even by Spanish pianists such as Alicia de Larrocha. (The composer himself recorded a single disc in 1958, with the participation of his wife in one of the four-hand works.) The present recordings represent the first complete collection of Rodrigo's original piano music for two and four hands, omitting only a few transcriptions and lost early works.*

* The works not included are 1) *Cinco Piezas del Siglo XVI*, (1937) a group of fairly literal adaptations of lute (vihuela) originals by Cabezon, Luis de Milan and other 16th-century composers; 2) *Aranjuez, ma pensée* (1968), an over-simplified arrangement of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*'s second movement; 3) the first version, for left hand alone, of *Crepúsculo sobre el Guadalquivir* (1946); 4) a group of works, mostly from his earliest period, which were never published and are considered lost by the composer himself. There is also a work for harpsichord, *Prélude et Ritornelle*, dating from 1978.

DISC ONE

Rodrigo's first published piano work was the **Suite pour Piano**, composed in 1923. This five-movement cycle, an updating of the Baroque dance suite, shows the influences of Ravel, Satie and Stravinsky; it is based on a four-note motto, B-E-D-E, which appears in various guises in each movement. (According to Antonio Iglesias, noted Spanish pianist and author, it was written in Valencia while the composer was studying the cyclic forms of Vincent D'Indy.) This work was submitted as Rodrigo's audition for admittance to Paul Dukas' composition class, along with the 1926 *Zarabanda lejana*; the great Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes gave the first performance of the *Suite* in Paris in 1928.

- 1 The **Prélude** is a whispery, enigmatic poem which uses the black-key/white-key layout common to much French piano music of the 1920s. Its parallel lines one half-step apart (actually an augmented octave) immediately announce the composer's penchant for surface dissonance—though the usage here is not quite typical; the piece also contains a rare flirtation with whole-tone harmonies.
- 2 The **Sicilienne**, dedicated to the Spanish composer Oscar Esplá, uses a retrograde form of the basic motive, E-D-E-B, in characteristic dotted-note rhythmic patterns. Ravel's influence is notable in the chromatic inner voices, the modal parallelisms, and the hint of jazz harmonies in the second half. The tiny **Bourrée**, which owes something to Chabrier, is dedicated to the composer Ernesto Halffter. Here the motive is inverted to E-B-A-B; Rodrigo avoids the dance's traditional four-measure groupings with upbeat, using instead an asymmetrical phrasing, in a charming music-box sonority which winds down abruptly in the remote key of C-sharp.
- 3 The **Menuet** has an austere tone reminiscent of Satie; it features a section with a left-hand accompaniment in parallel ninths—the first real example of the true Rodrigo sound. The last movement of the *Suite*, **Rigaudon**, is dedicated to Amparo Iturbi. The opening theme has the traditional features of the

rigaudon, with the basic four-note motto extended into elegant long phrases over a walking bass. This develops into an unusually think-textured climax in which the motto is trumpeted *fortissimo*, followed by a brief epilogue which seems to disappear into thin air.

6 The year 1926, just prior to Rodrigo's first trip to Paris, saw the production of four diverse works for piano; of these, the **Preludio al Gallo Mañanero** ("Prelude to the Morning Rooster") is by far the most radical experiment in modernism among his piano music. It seems strange, given the work's virtual atonality and dynamic vehemence, that it became something of a signature piece for the kindly composer, who wrote, "This work [has] so many and such pleasant memories for me. . . It is a composition of great difficulties, written in two tonalities, F-sharp major and G major. In it there is an abundance of onomatopoeias and clashes of major seconds, which communicate an incisive and flashy character." It is indeed a technically daunting, virtuoso showpiece, which covers both extremities of the keyboard in its depiction of the barnyard antics of hens and roosters—now clucking aimlessly, now flaring up into wild skirmishes, and ending with "Papa Gallo's terrible Cockadoodledoo." In this extraordinary work, the composer has contributed a unique specimen to the genre of ornithological pieces by composers such as Daquin, Couperin, Rameau—and Messiaen, who would surely never have thought to include such vulgar poultry in his rarefied aviary! The *Preludio* was dedicated to Ricardo Viñes; the premiere, however, was given by the composer in Paris in 1928 (at a ceremony in which Manuel de Falla was awarded the French Legion of Honor).

7 **Zarabanda lejana** ("Distant Sarabande"), originally written for guitar, was arranged first for piano, followed by a 1927 version for string orchestra (which in turn was paired with a newly-composed *Villancico* in 1930). The dedication 'a la viheula de Luis Milán' seems to connote something more than a simple tribute to the 16th-century Valencian musician; the piece's remote, ancient quality—the title surely implies a

distance of time rather than space—conjures up the occult notion of psychic dictation across the centuries. Yet Rodrigo's voice is still evident, in the unpredictable shifts in the sarabande rhythm, the asymmetrical phrase lengths, and the unusual harmonic colorations. (The parallel chords in fourths and fifths are particularly striking, as is the bluesy sound of the diminished octave.)

8 The **Pastorale** is a simple and unassuming miniature, with an ingenuous folk-song quality similar to the *canción* style of Mompou. Here again the composer emphasizes the music-box sonority of the extreme treble registers, and at one point a pair of cuckoos add a genteel obbligato. The piece was later arranged for chamber orchestra as the first of *Tres viejos aires de danza*. The last of the 1926 pieces, the **Bagatela** is an energetic scherzo in a compacted rondo form; its whirling exuberance builds up a momentum which virtually spins off the top of the keyboard at the end.

10 The **Serenata española** of 1931 marks the turning point in Rodrigo's pianistic output; as his earliest recognizably Spanish work, it is the first truly representative example of his mature style. Turbulent, mysterious and passionate, it bears many of the hallmarks of the authentic folk music of Andalusia—modal harmonies, imitations of *rasgueado* and *pulgado* guitar techniques (strummed chords and the strong thumb technique of the flamenco style), a darkly lyrical *copla*, and a suggestion of the *zambra* in the form of brusque, savage chords which evoke some nocturnal gypsy ritual. This strikingly effective piece was dedicated to and premiered by José Iturbi.

11 Rodrigo's next piano work, the **Sonada de adiós** ("Song of Farewell"), was written as a memorial tribute to his teacher and close friend Paul Dukas, who died in 1935. Set in the unusual key of A-flat minor, this piece achieves a level of emotional and spiritual depth previously untapped in his piano music. Antonio Iglesias notes that the work's austere mournful tune bears a resemblance to the "prisoner wives" theme from

Dukas' opera *Ariane et Barbe-bleue*; the hypnotically undulating accompaniment in half-steps, however, is pure Rodrigo. The *Sonada* was written in Salzburg, and received its first performance in Paris by Joaquín Nin-Culmell, also a student of Dukas; it was originally published in the musical supplement of *La Revue Musicale*, May-June 1936. (That issue, entitled "Le Tombeau de Paul Dukas", also contained musical homages by eight other composers, including Falla, Messiaen and Florent Schmitt.)

The **Tres Danzas de España**, composed in 1941, were inspired by the book of poetry called *Danzas viejas* by Victor Espinós. The first piece, **Rústica** ("The Peasant Woman"), is based on the poem "Los trigos verdes" ("The green wheat fields"); this tranquil dance evokes the peaceful country life of old Spain, depicting the swaying of the wheat and featuring the sound of a small drum (obviously suggested by the poem's use of the word "tan-taran-tan"). **Danza de los tres doncellas** ("Dance of the three Maidens") was inspired by the poem "La gallarda" and dedicated to the famous Russian pianist Nikita Magaloff. Though the poem speaks of a "dark, elegant, graceful" dance, Rodrigo's rather heavy minuet contains some of his most pungent dissonances—implying perhaps that these seemingly refined young girls are in reality somewhat coarse and homely. **Serrana** ("The Woman of the Mountains") is based on the poem called "Del sí y del no", which speaks of a young man neglected by a maiden who dances with everyone but him. This boisterous peasant dance radiates an atmosphere of clear, brisk mountain air, alternately portraying the acrobatic leaps of vigorous youths and the delicate trceries of the ladies; it concludes with a charming canon in music-box sonorities.

Written over thirty years later, the distinctly Scarlattian **Danza de la Amapola** ("Dance of the Poppy") clearly demonstrates Rodrigo's stylistic continuity, as well as his masterly use of sparse textures—with the exception of one eight-measure phrase, the piece is entirely in two voices. Its

structure resembles a miniature sonata-rondo form, while its dance character contains elements of the *zapateado* and the Valencian *fandango*. The piece was written for the composer's six-year-old granddaughter Cecilia; its considerable pianistic challenges—fast repeated notes and quick leaps—would suggest that it was perhaps intended for her to dance to rather than play.

The **Tres Evocaciones** (1980-81) comprise a cycle of impressionistic pictures of Seville; in the manner of Debussy's *Iberia*, Rodrigo presents a chronological sequence (*tarde, noche, mañana*) which is played without pause. The cycle bears the subtitle "Homenaje a Joaquín Turina", indicating an aesthetic kinship with the Sevillian composer, who wrote a number of similar descriptive cycles for piano. **Tarde en el parque** ("Evening in the Park"), with its constantly swirling arabesques, conveys the sensation of a gentle breeze wafting through the trees, punctuated intermittently by bold guitar figures which remind us that we are definitely in the heart of Andalusia—specifically, one presumes, in the famed Maria Luisa Park in Seville. **Noche en el Guadalquivir** ("Night on the Guadalquivir"—Seville's famous river) uses the same mysterious ostinato as the *Sonada de adiós* (it is also seen in "Crepúsculo sobre el Guadalquivir", from *Cuatro Estampas Andaluzas*). A dark, plaintive chordal melody floats quietly above the undulating bass, interrupted eventually by deep, watery bells reminiscent of Debussy's *La Cathédral engloutie*. A distant clock chimes 5 a.m., signaling the birds to begin their morning song (which is also borrowed from "Crepúsculo"); this bright interlude is suppressed by the recurrence of the bells. As dawn finally breaks, we find ourselves in **Triana**, the famous gypsy quarter of Seville, where the bustling energy of a new day is conveyed in a bravura showpiece, the keyboard style of which owes a great deal to traditional 19th-century virtuoso techniques.

Preludio de Añoranza ("Nostalgic Prelude") is the most recent of Rodrigo's piano works, written in 1987. Its slender, childlike thematic material includes a poignant reminiscence of a nursery tune; the

emotional tone, however, is untypically vulnerable and melancholy, seemingly expressive of some deep regret of the composer's advancing age.

This first volume closes with what is perhaps Rodrigo's finest and most tightly organized group of pieces, the **Cinco Sonatas de Castilla con Toccata a modo de Pregón** ("Five Sonatas of Castile with Toccata in the manner of a Proclamation"), which were written in 1950 and 1951. The composer's inspiration is rather more abstract and objective here than usual; these pieces display a purer, more 'modern' neoclassicism, with little reference to extramusical subjects. The introductory **Toccata** is a piece of crunching dissonances and driving rhythms; the central section builds up a two-voice *fugato* in a Shostakovian manner, preceded and followed by a mechanical pounding that suggests a message in Morse code—presumably this represents the *Pregón*.

The five Sonatas are direct descendants of the keyboard music of 17th and 18th century Castile; the influence of Scarlatti is especially distinct in many passages. **Sonata 1** is in the typical Baroque binary form, with both halves repeated. Its basically wistful character, expressed in harpsichord-like sonorities and a swinging 6/8 rhythm, is spiced with the usual piquant dissonances and sparkling descending cascades; its second half presents some intriguing motivic development. **Sonata 2**, dedicated to Antonio Iglesias, suggests a medieval religious procession, austere and somber, with a dynamic climax of unexpected anguish. Based on a simple three-note motive, this piece exhibits Rodrigo's ability to construct an expansive, deeply affecting work using a minimum of material. **Sonata 3**, the most brilliant and technically challenging of the set, is also the sole example of a fully-developed, "textbook" sonata form among Rodrigo's piano works. Here the emphasis is on colorful keyboard orchestration—the sounds of trumpet, tuba, piccolo, drums, castanets, and of course the composer's favorite music-box are all unmistakable. The piece is filled with whimsical touches, from droll understatement (e.g., the absent-minded second theme in canon between

flutes and bassoons, and its Mariachi-band transformation in the development) to outlandish satire (the clumsy *fugato* in trombones and trumpets)—one might easily think of this Sonata as the product of a Spanish P.D.Q. Bach. **Sonata 4** is dedicated to Frank Marshall, the famed student of Granados and teacher of Alicia de Larrocha. Bearing the subtitle "like a *tiento*", it is a tenderly expressive piece written almost entirely in two-part counterpoint. (The *tiento* is a 16th century Spanish form similar to the Italian *ricercar*.) Ending on a suspended half-cadence, the *tiento* leads directly to **Sonata 5**, an energetic, bouncing peasant dance. (Iglesias makes note here of a quote from the zarzuela "*La Revoltosa*" by the composer Ruperto Chapí.) Its constant, abrupt changes of character and rhythm again create many colorful and humorous effects, bringing the cycle to a delightfully noisy conclusion.

DISC TWO

Throughout his career, Rodrigo has composed a substantial amount of music for and about children; like Ravel, he has a rare instinct for capturing the innocent joys of childhood. This second disc of piano music presents a group of these charming works, beginning with the **Cinco Piezas Infantiles** of 1924. These were originally conceived in a version for full orchestra; the composer's own transcription for two pianos, made in 1928, is an effective and idiomatic reinterpretation of the music, and a most worthy addition to the two-piano repertoire.

1 **Son chicos que pasan** ("Children are passing") evokes the sounds of the playground, with noisy but mostly well-behaved youngsters playing with toy soldiers and drums. One may detect Stravinsky's influence in the repetitive treatment of simple, narrow-ranged melodic cells; the biggest climax of the piece strongly resembles a passage in *Petrouchka*.

2 **Después de un cuento** ("After a story") is closer to Ravel, with a warm,

3 harmonious wash of sound enveloping spun-out melodic phrases which emphasize major and minor thirds; the piece suggests the imaginative fantasies of a child after being told a fairy tale. The **Mazurka** has a rather stiff, heavy-footed quality which connotes a dance of two wooden dolls. A squabble develops when the boy doll decides he prefers a good strong march, while the girl doll continues stamping out the mazurka rhythm—

4 they clearly end up knocking each other down. **Plegaria** (“Prayer”) is a touchingly poignant picture of a child at bedtime; its brevity and sparseness are reminiscent of Satie. In the final **Gritería** (a word variously translated as ‘clamor, uproar, shouting’) the children are no longer so well-behaved; based on the march theme previously introduced in the third movement, this is a cacophonous piece which displays considerable keyboard virtuosity. In reviewing this work, Enrique Gomá makes an aptly-worded comment which applies to so much of Rodrigo’s music: “The command of the melodic line never pales among the bumps and collisions of the aggressive intervals with which Rodrigo plays.” This two-piano version of the *Cinco Piezas* bears the dedication “To Mademoiselle Vicky Camhi”, who the composer first met in the same year, 1928.*

6 Rodrigo’s habit of transcribing his works from one medium to another is also apparent in the two **Berceuses**; unlike the *Cinco Piezas*, however, these were originally piano pieces which were then orchestrated in 1933. Much later, in 1957, they were integrated into a symphonic tone poem called *Música para un Jardín*. Though the principal themes share certain common features (a fact which is brought out in the symphonic poem), these two *Lullabies* offer a striking study in contrasting moods: while the

7 **Berceuse de printemps** of 1928 is bright and cheerful (with the typical music-box texture), its seasonal opposite, the 1923 **Berceuse d’automne** is brooding and melancholy. (These qualities seem to reflect the emotional state of the parent more than that of the child in the cradle.) The slowly rocking accompaniment which pervades the entire “Autumn

* The Spanish spelling of Victoria’s Turkish surname, Kamhi, substitutes ‘C’ for ‘K’.

Lullaby” presents the performer with an absurd difficulty, a chord which requires the left thumb to play a white and black key together, *pianissimo*, seventy-one times! This piece, dedicated to the ill-fated French composer Pierre-Octave Ferroud, was premiered by Ricardo Viñes in 1927; the “Spring Lullaby” was dedicated to Nadia Boulanger, who was at that time assistant to Paul Dukas at the Ecole Normale.



8 The next group of pieces on this album commemorates three generations of young ladies in Rodrigo’s immediate family. The first, dedicated simply “To Vicky”, is the **Air de Ballet sur le nom d’une Jeune Fille** (“Ballet Air on the name of a Young Girl”), which was written during a 1930 return visit to Spain. The French publisher Eschig arbitrarily coupled it with the *Zarabanda lejana*, issuing the pair as *Deux Pieces pour Piano*, though there is no apparent connection between them. The *Air de Ballet* is in a minuet and trio form; Antonio Iglesias notes that the main theme is an example of the ancient compositional process known as *soggetto cavato*, “carving” a musical theme from a name. (Famous examples include the many works which use the letters B-A-C-H, Schumann’s *Carnaval* and *Abegg Variations*, and Shostakovich’s musical signature D-S-C-H.) In this case the name, not surprisingly, is that of the composer’s then-fiancée, Victoria Camhi. With so few letters in the name corresponding to musical notes, Rodrigo seems to have resorted to some obscure code to arrive at the following theme:

V I C T O R I A C A M H I
D C C B D G C A C A A B C

This subject is also used in the trio section, where it appears in the minor mode with drone effects in the bass. Much of the charm of the piece derives from the unpredictable alterations of the minuet’s regular rhythms, suggesting perhaps that the budding ballerina may occasionally be afflicted with two left feet.

The Rodrigo’s only child, Cecilia, provided the impetus for the next

work, a suite of little pieces “for small hands” entitled, appropriately, **El Album de Cecilia**. These six pieces, written entirely in the treble clef and arranged in order of progressive difficulty, combine solid pedagogical values with Rodrigo’s usual charm and immediate appeal. Cecilia herself gave the first performance in 1949, at the age of eight.

9 **María de los Reyes** (the name of one of Cecilia’s childhood friends) is a *sevillanas* in two voices, a series of varied phrases each with the same droll ending. Next comes a **Jota de las Palomas** (“Jota of the Doves”), a lively dance of Aragón with a lyrical, rhythmically flexible *copla* section. (From a pedagogical standpoint, this would seem an unusually early stage to be introducing such controlled *rubato*.) **10** **Canción del Hada rubia** (“Song of the Blonde Fairy”) presents a soft and tender melody in long phrases, with the introduction of chromatic alterations in the accompaniment; **11** **Canción del Hada morena** (“Song of the Dark Fairy”) is a vivacious, rollicking *bulerías* which employs a greater variety of articulations and rhythmic figures. **12** **El negrito Pepo** gives a winsome portrayal of a little black boy named Pepo, whose carefree shuffle momentarily breaks into a frisky cakewalk; this piece, the first of the set in a duple meter and the first to venture away from C major, requires a smooth finger legato and careful pedaling. **13** **Borriquillos a Belén** (“Little

Burros of Bethlehem”) is based on a popular Spanish Christmas carol; it describes the slow, bumping gait and comical braying of the donkeys, with a whimsical use of Hanon-style five-finger exercises.

[An interesting feature of “El negrito Pepo” is its key signature, one sharp; though the piece is clearly in D major (which should have two sharps), its pentatonic melody consistently avoids the note C, making the C-sharp superfluous—furthermore, both melody and accompaniment keep gravitating toward E, which produces an exotic, Lydian-mode coloration.] As a whole, the *Album de Cecilia* represents a distillation of Rodrigo’s seemingly effortless ability to imbue the simplest music with subtle, sophisticated imagery, achieving a genuinely childlike viewpoint

without a hint of condescension.

Little Cecilia eventually grew up, of course (she became a dancer rather than a piano prodigy); she married the violinist Augustín León Ara in 1963. Their two daughters, Cecilita and Patty, inspired *abuelo* Rodrigo to compose another work for small hands, this time for four of them at one piano. The **Sonatina para dos Muñecas** (“Sonatina for two Puppets”), written in 1977, was given its premiere by the two girls, who were then nine and twelve years old. Less overtly didactic than the *Album de Cecilia*, and far less technically demanding than the earlier *Danza de la Amapola* (written for Cecilita), the *Sonatina* gives the impression of having been written just for fun. The first movement, **Empieza el día** (“The day begins”), has an amusing off-beat rhythmic figure with “wrong” notes, accompanying a heavy, stilted dance tune—like the *Mazurka* (written fifty-three years earlier!), this clearly depicts the stiff ges-tures of wooden puppets. **15** **Alegres peripecias** (“Happy Misadventures”) is a bouncing scherzo characterized by unpredictable phrase lengths and sudden *forte* interjections; its imitations of pipes and drums and drone effects suggest a jolly peasant dance. **16** **Recogimiento** (“Meditation”) has an unexpectedly somber march quality which is reminiscent of Mahler (!); its somehow-familiar tune is richly harmonized in thirds and sixths. The finale, a buoyant, skipping dance called **Vuelta del cole** (“Return from school”), is almost entirely in canon between the two parts, interrupted now and then by loud drum strokes. **17**

18 Unique among Rodrigo’s works, the **Grand March of the Subsecretaries** is the musical equivalent of a political cartoon, a sharply satirical piece which evokes a parade of pompous, puffed-up bureaucrats; considering the date, 1941, one may reasonably presume that the barb is aimed at the underlings of the newly-installed Franco government. These real-life puppets are made to look ridiculous by means of a number of humorous devices: the frequent breakup of the solemn, measured tread into a jaunty, strutting quick-step, the frantic scurrying **19**

to get back into formation before the start of the next phrase, the absurdly exaggerated leaps and squats, and the confused attempt to get everyone back in step during the grandiose final fanfare. The composer's wit, usually so cheerful and benign, is here transformed into an instrument of deliciously wicked social commentary.

20

Atardecer ("Dusk") is another of Rodrigo's magically atmospheric nocturnes; composed in 1975 and dedicated to Victoria, it is his most serious four-hand work, suggesting a state of rapt contemplation of nature at day's end. The muted opening section has the listless, drowsy quality of a hot summer afternoon, with a monotonous, circular ostinato. As the light dims and the temperature cools, a flurry of brilliant sonorities evokes massed choruses of birds as they circle their nests before nightfall; a distant clock chimes as the last glimmer of sunlight fades into darkness. (The "Big Ben" motive, E-C-D-G, is cleverly embedded in the opening ostinato figure.) Dark and desolate (though not as morose as the *Preludio de Añoranza*, written twelve years later), *Atardecer* can be seen as the aging composer's personal allegory of the twilight years of life.*

21

If the *Cinco Sonatas de Castilla* which concluded Volume One are Rodrigo's finest piano works in the abstract mode, the remaining pieces of Volume Two represent the highlights of his output in the subjective genre of descriptive Iberian "postcards." **A l'ombre de Torre Bermeja** ("In the Shadow of the Torre Bermeja"), a vigorous, bravura piece with a zestful Andalusian flavor, was written as an homage to Ricardo Viñes, who died in 1943. (A memorial album published by Editora Nacional de Madrid in 1947 included this piece, as well as a work by Ernesto Halffter, *Llanto por Ricardo Viñes*, and Federico Mompou's *La Canción que tanto amaba*.) The Torre Bermeja (literally the 'crimson tower')

[A note about this recording of the *Grand March* and *Atardecer*: though written for piano duet, i.e., two pianists at one piano, both pieces pose difficult performance problems in that format—awkward hand crossings, contradictory pedal requirements, etc. When played on two pianos, as here (with a few minor distribution changes), the independence of the musical layers projects with far greater character and clarity.]

is a part of the structure of the Alhambra in Grenada; it is also the title of a piano piece by Albéniz which Viñes loved to play. Rodrigo states, "*A l'ombre de Torre Bermeja* is a kind of paraphrase of [the Albéniz piece]. . . a sonorous transposition of the famous Torre Bermeja and its poetic climate. The composition is in three parts, with an introduction in rapid pianistic figurations that will serve as coda in a double finale, in which one also hears *pianissimo* the theme of the [central] trio, and in which sounds the grave bell of the tower; the work ends with the two notes characteristic of the finales of Albéniz in his suite *Iberia*." Antonio Iglesias speculates that the mixture of French and Spanish in the title is perhaps intended to reflect the fact that Viñes spent much of his career in Paris; he also cites two amusing variations on the title which appeared in actual concert programs: "*Al Hombre de Torre Bermeja*" ("To the Man of the Crimson Tower") and "*Al Toro Bermejo*" ("To the crimson Bull").

The **Cuatro Piezas** of 1936 have an unusual publication history. According to Iglesias, they were to have been issued by the French publisher Max Eschig; this plan was thwarted by the Spanish Civil War and World War II, and they remained in manuscript until 1945, when Editora Nacional de Madrid published them as *Cuatro Danzas de España*—with the order of the pieces reversed (the composer's original intention). When the Eschig edition finally appeared in 1948 (as *Quatre Pièces*) they were in the order used in this recording. (To complicate the issue still further, Rodrigo's own recorded performance uses yet a different sequence.)

22

The first piece, **Caleseras**, refers to the aristocratic ladies who rode in *calesas* (horsedrawn carriages) in Madrid at the turn of the century. An alternation of wistful elegance and ebullient vitality characterizes the piece, which is designated as an homage to Federico Chueca (1846-1908), a celebrated composer of *zarzuelas*; Iglesias notes that Rodrigo has consciously imitated certain elements of Chueca's style. (One may also notice that the melodic contour of the second theme is identical to a line in Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*.)

23 The **Fandango del ventorrillo** ("Fandango of the little Tavern") is another of Rodrigo's masterly exercises in two-part counterpoint. Featuring the repeated-note upbeat typical of the Valencian *fandango*, this tiny piece is full of unexpected quirks: offbeat accents, overlapping phrases, vehement interruptions, mercurial harmonic twists—and a diabolical little drumroll. While one would not normally describe Rodrigo's music as eccentric, this *Fandango* bears a surprising resemblance to some of Charles-Valentin Alkan's bizarre inventions.

24 The **Prayer of the Princess of Castile** is perhaps the most inspired and moving of all Rodrigo's piano works. Nominally another of his pieces about children, it is in reality a deeply soulful expression of great emotional and spiritual maturity. As in the *Sonada de adiós* and the second of the *Cinco Sonatas*, the composer employs an austere, archaic musical language to create a dramatic *tableau* in which a young Renaissance princess struggles with the eternal questions of life and death, faith and hope. Her prayer, at first humble and demure, grows increasingly fervent as doubts and uncertainties challenge her religious convictions; in the end the mysteries of existence are left unanswered, and her last lingering question trails off into silence.

25 Following such an intensely private meditation, the last piece of the set, **Danza Valenciana**, provides a welcome sense of relief. A bright, cheerful dance related to a specific *jota valenciana* called "El U y el Dos", it is the most pianistically extroverted of the *Cuatro Piezas*. Toward the end of the first section the tonality takes an unexpected turn to F-sharp, preparing the slower *copla* section in which the opening theme is transformed into a pensive f-sharp minor—the key of the preceding *Prayer*; this backward glance contributes a satisfying psychological continuity to the cycle (thus strengthening the argument in favor of the Eschig sequence).

To non-Spanish listeners, the folk music of Andalusia, the home of flamenco and the *cante jondo*, has always been most closely identified with the quintessential Spanish spirit. Though Rodrigo has generally

tended to favor the Valencian and Castilian genres (quite assiduously so in the preceding *Cuatro Piezas* and the *Cinco Sonatas*), he has nonetheless also done some of his best work in the Andalusian style, e.g. the 1931 *Serenata* and *A l'ombre de Torre Bermeja*; the **Cuatro Estampas Andaluzas**, which conclude this album, unquestionably belong among his most appealing and effective works for piano. Written separately at various times between 1946 and 1952, these "Andalusian Impressions" form a cohesive group of vivid portraits-in-sound in the best tradition of Albéniz, Granados, Falla and Turina.

26 The first piece presents the song of a poor street-vendor selling *chanquetes*, a type of fried fish snack which is a local specialty in the port city of Málaga. Full of the usual spicy half-steps, the piece alternates a sprightly little *malagueña* with a plaintive vocal refrain; in the final section the dance suddenly takes on a rather sinister character, with an erratic juxtaposition of duple and triple rhythms.

27 According to the composer, **Crepúsculo sobre el Guadalquivir** ("Twilight on the Guadalquivir") was originally written in 1946 in a version for left hand alone; he later produced this far more effective two-hand revision for inclusion in this set. *Crepúsculo*. . . is the earlier of Rodrigo's marvelously impressionistic portrayals of Seville's famous river—both in the year of composition and in the time of day depicted; as noted previously, the second of the *Tres Evocaciones* ("Noche. . .") borrows some of the material from this piece: the hypnotic murmur of the river, the deep, tolling bells, the quiet chirping of the birds. (*Atardecer*, though it does not share any actual musical materials with the two Guadalquivir pieces, evokes the same kinds of images. One can readily sympathize with the blind composer's obvious fascination with the night. . .) Here, however, the music suggests that there is life in Seville after dark—as the sun sets, distant guitars strike up a breezy *sevillanas*; a mixed chorus of birds and crickets joins in, and the scene appears illuminated by the magical flickering of fireflies. Children run past, laughing and

joking; as they dash off, the guitars are heard again, strumming three final chords.

28 The **Seguidillas del Diablo** ("Sequidillas of the Devil") is less specific than the others in terms of its locale, but is no less vivid in its pictorial representation. It was written at the request of a well-known dancer named Udaeta, who performed a choreographed version in 1951. As the title suggests, it is a dance of furious, diabolical intensity, full of grinding dissonances and stiletto-sharp rhythms; the sounds of skeletal castanets and lightning whipcracks punctuate the devil's fierce gallop on his wild black steed. Even the seductive melody of the *copla* is cloaked in cruelly twisted harmonies. This pianistic *tour de force* displays yet another unforeseen aspect of Rodrigo's fertile imagination, and takes its place in the gallery of Satanic musical portraits by Liszt, Scriabin and Prokofiev.

29 For the final piece the scene shifts to the harbor at **Cádiz**, on the Atlantic coast near Gibraltar. A profound and mournful sarabande evokes the eerie calm of the hours before dawn, with slow, serpentine lines in the piano's lowest registers; as the waves begin to surge the harsh clang of a warning bell is heard. The mood of dark foreboding is dispelled as day breaks, and the pace of the music quickens into a gentle *polo gaditano*. (It is surprising to note that, out of all of Rodrigo's piano works, this is the only section which makes use of the *sesquialtera*, the alternation of 6/8 and 3/4 meters which typifies so much Spanish music.) The rhythmic energy gradually increases, leading inexorably to a dazzling *rasgueado*-style display of keyboard fireworks.

—Notes by Gregory Allen and Linton Powell

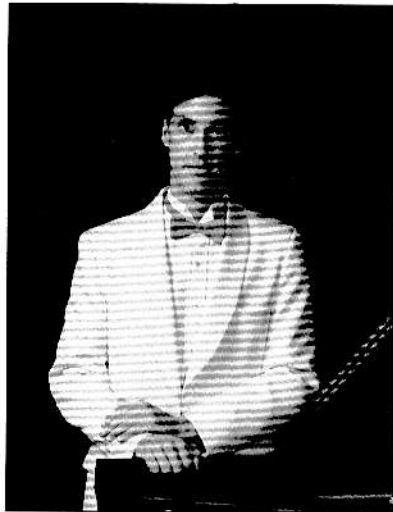
SOURCES

- Iglesias, Antonio. *Joaquín Rodrigo: su obra para piano*. Ediciones Conservatorio de Orense, 1965.
Kamhi, Victoria. *De la mano de Joaquín Rodrigo: Historia de nuestra vida*. Fundación Banco Exterior, 1986.
Sopeña, Federico. *Joaquín Rodrigo*. Dirección General de Bellas Artes, 1970.
Powell, Linton E. *A History of Spanish Piano Music*. Indiana University Press, 1980.

Gregory Allen, Grand Prize Winner of the 1980 Arthur Rubinstein International Piano Master Competition in Tel Aviv, was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming in 1949. In 1978 he won the second prize in the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels; he has also earned top honors in the Los Angeles Young Musicians Foundation, Gina Bachauer, and Washington International Competitions.

Mr. Allen holds degrees from the Oberlin Conservatory and the Peabody Institute; his principal teachers were Leon Fleisher, Jerome Lowenthal, and John Perry. His concert engagements have included appearances with the New York, Los Angeles and Israel Philharmonics, as well as the orchestras of San Francisco, San Diego, Baltimore, Houston, San Antonio and Austin. He has been a professor of piano at the University of Texas at Austin since 1973.

Mr. Allen recently completed a unique recording project devoted to the many 20th century piano works which were written for and dedicated to Arthur Rubinstein. These recordings, which include a number of world premieres, are available in three volumes on the Musical Heritage Society label.



"Gregory Allen's recording of my works for piano is excellent. His magnificent technique and his authentically fine interpretation satisfy me completely."

—Joaquín Rodrigo, Madrid, 1991

Considered to be one of the outstanding pianists of his generation, **Anton Nel** has been acclaimed for his versatility as soloist, recitalist and chamber musician throughout the United States, as well as in various parts of Canada, Europe and Africa. Winner of the First Prize in the 1987 Walter W. Naumburg International Piano Competition in New York, he has been featured soloist with the symphonies of Chicago, Seattle, Cincinnati, and the Academy of London, to name a few, in addition to appearing in major concert halls as recitalist, and as a guest artist at music festivals. Also winner of the 1986 Joanna Hodges International Piano Competition in Palm Desert, California, as well as a prizewinner in the 1984 Leeds International Piano Competition in England, Mr. Nel holds degrees and diplomas from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa (his native country), and the University of Cincinnati. Currently professor of piano at the Eastman School of Music, Mr. Nel has recorded for Virgin Classics and the Musical Heritage Society. His teachers include Adolph Hallis, Bela Siki, and Frank Weinstock.



Producers: Gregory Allen and Robert Warren
Recording Engineers: Robert L. Roberts, Ray Fishel
Produced at Media Services Studios, College of Fine Arts,
University of Texas at Austin.

Piano Technician: Charles Ball

Liner Notes: Gregory Allen and Linton Powell

Mastered by David Starobin and Paul Zinman

Co-ordinator, Bridge Records: Becky Starobin

Design: Brighton Typography, Ltd.

Recording dates, venues, and pianos:

Disc One: **1-6, 8-14, 16-18**; Disc Two: **7, 8, 21-29**

June 11-14, 1990; Bates Recital Hall, U.T. Austin; American Steinway,
Disc One: **7, 15**; Disc Two: **6**; August 2-4, 1989; McCullough
Theatre, U.T. Austin; Hamburg Steinway.

Disc Two: **1-5, 15-20**; August 15-16, 1989; McCullough Theatre;
American Steinways.

Disc One: **19-25**; Disc Two: **9-14**; January 11 & 28, 1991, Jessen
Auditorium, U.T. Austin; Hamburg Steinway.

All compositions are ASCAP

Publishers: Schott (Suite, Gallo, Bagatela, Serenata, Tres Danzas, Tres Evocaciones, Sonatas de Castilla, Piezas Infantiles, Torre Bermeja); Max Eschig: (Zarabanda, Sonada de Adiós, Pastorale, Air de Ballet, Cuatro Piezas); UME: (Amapola, Album de Cecilia, Gran Marcha, Cuatro Estampas); Rouart: (Berceuse de printemps and Berceuse d'automne); Real Musical: (Sonatina); Composer's Edition: (Añoranza and Atardecer).

**JOAQUIN
RODRIGO**

**THE
COMPLETE
MUSIC
FOR PIANO**

**GREGORY
ALLEN**

with

**ANTON
NEL**

