

exquisite awareness of style.

Ostensibly polite drawing room fare evoking pleasant country scenes, the first number of the Suite pastorale, "Idylle," on the keyboard, demands, sans pedal, a Lisztian legato for its fetching melody, simultaneously accompanied by two motoric parts in Alkanesque staccato. Though the pianistic allusions are lost, the superb and constantly varied resourcefulness with which their effects are transferred to the orchestra demonstrates the implicitness of Chabrier's orchestral imagination in one of his most pianistic pieces. After the quietly percolating animation of the Idylle, the "Danse villageoise" has all the rumbustious vigor of a rustic clog dance. Turning raucous in its orchestral guise, it is set off by a fleet trio whose additions of instrumental color shade its spirited frolic with winsome grace. As in the first two pieces, the undulating charm of the gently ecstatic "Sous-bois" provides a foil for high-kicking gaiety in the concluding scherzo-valse. In their alternations of boisterousness and tendresse, we have the essential Chabrier.

Too often, such distinguished composers as Berlioz, Fauré, and Chabrier -- quintessential Parisians all -- were forced to seek recognition in the provinces or abroad. Chabrier orchestrated the Suite pastorale for a Chabrier festival offered by the Association Artistique of Angers, which he conducted November 4, 1888, with his Habañera, the Joyeuse marche, Prélude pastoral, and España. During rehearsals under his direction, the orchestra caught on immediately to his rollicking style and were convulsed with laughter, while the critics, though generally approving, felt obliged to comment on Chabrier's "Wagnerism" -- an astounding charge as nothing could be further from the heavy metal solemnities of Wagner's scores than these scintillant, often coruscating, dialogues between subtlety and éclat.



# CHABRIER

## DETROIT SYMPHONY

### PAUL PARAY

ESPAÑA / DANSE SLAVE / FÊTE POLONAISE  
SUITE PASTORALE / GWENDOLINE OVERTURE



From July to September 1882, Emmanuel Chabrier and his wife traveled in Spain, starting out from San Sebastián and winding up in Barcelona. Chabrier was enthralled with everything he saw and heard in Spain, and his impressions are recorded in an abundance of letters sent from the Iberian Peninsula by the composer to friends. In one such letter addressed to conductor Charles Lamoureux, Chabrier boldly states that "my rhythms, my tunes will arouse the whole orchestra to a feverish pitch of excitement; and you too will feel obliged to hold [your assistant] in your arms, so voluptuous will be my melodies." These were strong sentiments indeed, for up to this time Chabrier had been known primarily as a ne'er-do-well amateur composer of unsuccessful operettas.

All of that would change when the finished work, *España*, was given at the Concerts Lamoureux in Paris on November 4, 1883. It was immediately encored, and afterward routinely requested (and played) at Lamoureux Concerts and elsewhere for weeks afterward. The tunes were whistled in the streets of Paris. *España* made Chabrier an overnight celebrity in Paris, and he would reap the benefits of its fame to the end of his days. The work's single movement is in the shape of a Spanish dance in three beats, with a rhythm suggesting the strumming of a guitar.

*España* was written as a piano piece, and in later years Chabrier made something of a specialty out of it, pounding it out on bad pianos in cafés to the astonishment of onlookers. Of the work Chabrier himself said that "it is in F major and consists of nothing else." In this laconic statement there is a grain of truth; the primary melodic ideas that drive *España* are neither terribly original nor substantive. It is the tremendous rhythmic energy of the piece, combined with Chabrier's colorful orchestration, that puts the piece over. And it did have impact on other musicians for long afterward; Stravinsky, perhaps half-consciously,

echoes the central trombone part of *España* in the final tableau of his *Petrushka* (1911). The work's delightful melody became a hit song in the 1950s under the unlikely title "Hot-Diggity."

While most experts do not hold Chabrier's *España* in the same exalted regard that they do his other orchestral works, such as *Marche Joyeuse* or *Bourrée fantasque*, the piece is still Chabrier's best-known composition as far as the public is concerned. It is worth noting that *España* did not do as well in Germany, where Chabrier's operas had already proved successful in German translations. In Spain, where the Spanish-flavored music of French composers such as Ravel, Debussy, and Bizet have long been respected and played, the Chabrier is yet looked upon as a weak sister of the zarzuela overture. Chabrier's realization of the Spanish idiom was so close to the "real thing" that in Spain it seemed too familiar. Although this might be seen as something of a backward compliment to *España*, it also echoes the sentiments of French musicologist Louis Bourgault-Ducoudray, who wrote shortly after the 1883 premiere, "Emmanuel Chabrier belongs to that school of pioneer composers who copy Nature and are above all concerned to respect the truth."

"Without hesitation," Poulenc wrote, "I declare that the *Pièces pittoresques* are as important for French music as Debussy's *Préludes*." Only seven of the ten were given by Marie Poitevin at their Société Nationale premiere, August 9, 1881 -- according to Cortot -- though among them were the four numbers Chabrier would later orchestrate as his *Suite pastorale*, and for which he seems to have had an especial fondness. But to speak of them merely as piano music, or of the *Suite pastorale* as a pianist's music orchestrated, as is sometimes done, is to miss Chabrier's distinctive compact richness and his

# CHABRIER

## DETROIT SYMPHONY - PAUL PARAY

- 1 España 6:06
- Suite pastorale
- 2 I. Idylle 4:05
- 3 II. Danse villageoise 4:27
- 4 III. Sous-bois 2:57
- 5 IV. Scherzo-valse 4:39
- 6 Fete polonaise 7:37
- 7 Gwendoline: Overture 8:44
- 8 Danse slave 5:21

Recorded by Mercury 1961

Engineer [Associate] - Robert Eberenz    Engineer [Chief] - C. Robert Fine  
Recording Supervisor [Recording Director] - Wilma Cozart  
Supervised By [Musical Director] - Harold Lawrence



For more info e-mail us:  
[admin@highdeftapetransfers.com](mailto:admin@highdeftapetransfers.com)  
or visit our website:  
[www.highdeftapetransfers.com](http://www.highdeftapetransfers.com)