

Romanian pianist Clara Haskil began her career as a child prodigy at the Bucharest Conservatory under Richard Robert at age 7, making her debut at the age of 10. Haskil ultimately graduated from Alfred Cortot's class at the Paris Conservatoire at 15 with the Premier Prix to her credit. By the age of 18, however, Haskil was forced to endure the first of many physical setbacks that would hold back her career, in this case an attack of meningitis that kept her in a body cast for four years. Haskil did recover, making her New York debut in 1924 and her London debut in 1926. Although it was late in her career that her name was inextricably linked with the Mozart piano concerti, at this stage Haskil was associated with Romantic literature. Her performances of the Schumann concerto in Philadelphia with Leopold Stokowski were widely praised.

With the outbreak of war, Haskil was trapped in occupied Paris, but was able to escape to Marseilles. There she survived a surreptitious surgical procedure to remove a tumor from her optic nerve, and was then smuggled to Vevey, Switzerland, where Haskil settled for the rest of her days. With war's end she resumed her career yet again, and thereafter enjoyed her greatest successes with a busy concert and recording schedule that took her around the world. Despite her amazing stamina, she proved unable to survive a fall she suffered in a Paris railway station in 1960, and died one month short of her 66th birthday.

With Haskil, musicianship came first and technical matters were irrelevant; she had enormous hands and could play a 12th in her left hand with a fingering of 2-5. Haskil reputedly had an amazing memory, and could accurately play back a piece of music she'd heard only once, even after the passage of several years, without ever having seen the score. The Clara Haskil Prize, awarded once every two years in Vevey, Switzerland, was established in 1962 as a memorial to the pianist.



CLARA HASKIL

CHOPIN
PIANO CONCERTO NO.2
IN F MINOR, OP.21
FALLA
NOCHES EN LOS JARDINES
DE ESPAÑA
ORCHESTRE DES
CONCERTS LAMOUREUX
CONDUCTOR
IGOR MARKEVITCH

The Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor of Polish composer Frédéric Chopin was actually composed before his Piano Concerto No. 1 in E minor. The F minor was begun in autumn 1829 and premiered on March, 3, 1830, while the E minor was begun shortly after the premiere of the F minor. The F minor is a less popular and more derivative work than the E minor; there is the sense that Chopin, having heard the F minor, decided to move beyond his models. The opening *Maestoso* movement of the F minor is clearly modeled on the concertos of Mozart's pupil, Hummel. The central *Larghetto* is based almost literally on the Piano Concerto in G minor composed in 1820 by Ignaz Moscheles and the closing *Allegro vivace* is the most original movement of the three, a stylized Polish folk song. Within the movements, all the standard concerto principles are obeyed: an orchestra exposition of the main themes before a piano exposition of the same material, the usual contrast between the tonic minor and the relative major for the principal and subordinate themes, a lyrical slow movement in the relative minor, and a rondo-form finale in the tonic major. While Chopin's piano writing is idiomatic and highly personal -- the lyrical melodies and their ornamentations could have been composed by no one else -- his orchestral writing is at best competent. This, however, is less a fault than a decision: Chopin, the greatest composer for the piano of his age, would never let anything obscure the brilliance of his piano writing.

Nights in the Gardens of Spain, Spanish *Noches en los jardines de España*, a set of nocturnes for piano and orchestra by Manuel de Falla. Almost but not quite a piano concerto, it treats the keyboard instrument as a member of the orchestra rather than making a soloist of it. The piece premiered in 1916.

Nights in the Gardens of Spain is Falla's first strictly orchestral piece, produced after he had spent a decade writing stage music and chamber works. While working on Nights in the Gardens of Spain, Falla had completed the ballet *El amor brujo*, heard most often in the 21st century as an orchestral suite. Both pieces were strongly flavoured with Spanish rhythms and effects. Nights in the Gardens of Spain also showed the influence of Maurice Ravel, who had befriended the Spanish composer during Falla's extended musical sojourns in Paris. Ravel had himself written several Spanish-flavoured works for orchestra and for piano. Falla set out to see what he could produce in the same vein.

Many of the rhythms of Nights in the Gardens of Spain derive from the folk music of Andalusia, where Falla was born. Because Andalusia forms the southernmost region of Spain, it was a crossroads of many cultures and hence yielded a rich and exotic musical style.

Falla determined to present a sequence of three nocturnes portraying nightlike scenes and titled each movement to suggest what had inspired him. He later asserted that

The end for which it was written is no other than to evoke places, sensations, and sentiments.... The music has no pretensions to being descriptive. It is merely expressive.

In the first movement, "At the Generalife," Falla refers to the hillside gardens near the Moorish Alhambra palace complex in Granada. The second movement, "Distant Dance," conjures less a specific site than the passion and intensity of flamenco; the second movement leads without pause into the third, "In the Gardens of the Sierra de Córdoba." The final movement recalls the Moorish-influenced gardens near ancient Córdoba.

Chopin Piano Concerto No. 2 De Falla Nights In The Gardens Of Spain

Piano – Clara Haskil

Igor Markevitch, Orchestra Of The Concerts Lamoureux

Chopin: Piano Concerto No.2 in F minor, Op.21

- 1. Maestoso 13:45**
- 2. Larghetto 8:50**
- 3. Allegro vivace 8:45**

de Falla: Nights in the Gardens of Spain

- 1. En el generalife 9:58**
- 2. Danza lejana 4:35**
- 3. En los jardines de la Sierra de Cordoba 7:45**

Recorded by Philips Records 1960



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