

courtly Spanish melodies into the concerto and took as his stylistic inspiration the busy, clattering little sonatas of eighteenth century Spanish-based composers Domenico Scarlatti and Antonio Soler. But to position this as music of the twentieth century, Falla employed piquant, wrong-note harmonies in the manner of Stravinsky. Indeed, Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* echoes through the snotty first-movement violin part. The harpsichord races into that compact opening Allegro, ignoring the dissonant, cautionary chordal cries of the other instruments. Soon, the flute and oboe try to wrest control of the music away from the hyperactive harpsichord, playing a fifteenth century Castilian folk song in octaves. The various instruments toss this tune around, sometimes spitting it out in staccato bursts and sometimes stretching it out as if to mock the harpsichord's difficulty playing legato melodies. The Lento (*giubiloso ed energico*) begins with rolled chords from the harpsichord -- a lush sound by this instrument's standards -- over which the winds, again playing in octaves, offer an austere melody that initially seems to be little more than a cautious scale. It soon evolves into a motif subjected to a canonic imitation so close that the instruments always seem at harmonic odds. Falla apparently intended to evoke Medieval religious ecstasy with this music; inscribed in the score is a reference to the feast of Corpus Christi. Finally comes the Vivace (*flessibile, scherzando*), a toybox of Baroque effects -- trills and swoops -- piled into a witty, high-spirited, and largely bitonal dance.



MANUEL DE FALLA
Nights in the Gardens of Spain
Harpsichord Concerto
GONZALO SORIANO

Paris Conservatoire Orchestra conducted by
RAFAEL FRÜHBECK DE BURGOS

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.

This spiky neo-Classical Concerto for Harpsichord defies everyone's expectations. Most listeners anticipate the Impressionism of Falla's Nights in the Gardens of Spain or the Romantic Spanish color of The Three-Cornered Hat. Harpsichordist Wanda Landowska, who commissioned the piece, expected a full-blown concerto with the harpsichord having the dominant role. What Falla gave her was, in effect, a sextet in which the harpsichord was only one of six equal partners. Landowska duly gave the first performance in 1926, but bothered to play it only a couple of more times before entirely abandoning it. Knowing that new music for harpsichord would enjoy few hearings in the 1920s, Falla authorized performance of this work on the piano, but only if the pianist tried hard to emulate the harpsichord's sound. Inspired by the harpsichord's antique nature, Falla incorporated old popular, religious, and

Manuel De Falla Nights In The Garden Of Spain Harpsichord Concerto In D Major

Noches En Los Jardines De España

Nights In The Garden Of Spain (25:08)

1 En El Generalife 10:10

2 Danza Lejana 5:27

3 En Los Jardines De La Sierra De Córdoba 9:25

Harpsichord Concerto In D Major (15:07)

4 Allegro 3:05

5 Lento 7:43

6 Vivace 4:19

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info@highdeftapetransfers.ca
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