

The Swiss conductor, Ernest Ansermet, came from a musical family; he successively studied the clarinet, violin and brass instruments, which he used in fanfares; later he wrote military marches for the Swiss army which he did not consider important. Besides Music, he studied Mathematics in Lausanne and graduated with a Diploma in 1903; until 1906 he taught at the Lausanne Grammar School, then he decided to continue his studies at the Sorbonne and, at the same time, to attend courses at the Paris Conservatory. After his return to Lausanne, he taught Mathematics for one more year before devoting himself entirely to music.



Ansermet was a particular advocate of the Swiss composers Arthur Honegger and Frank Martin. He conducted the first performances of the following works of A. Honegger: *Horace victorieux* (1921), *Chant de joie* (1923), *Rugby* (1928) and *Pacific 231* (1923), which was dedicated to him, and of the following works of Frank Martin: *Symphonie* (1938), *In terra pax* (1945), *Der Sturm* (1956), *Le mystère de la Nativité* (1959), *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac* (1963) and *Les Quatre Éléments*, which were dedicated to him. Also important were the first performances of Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (1946) and *Cantata misericordium* (1963).

FALLA THE THREE CORNERED HAT LA VIDA BREVE

BERGANZA
L'ORCHESTRE
DE LA SUISSE ROMANDE
ANSERMET



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Part Impressionist, and part neo-Classicist, Manuel de Falla is difficult to peg, but he is widely regarded as the most distinguished Spanish composer of the early twentieth century. His output is small but choice, and revolves largely around music for the stage. Falla's reputation is based primarily on two lavishly Iberian ballet scores: *El amor brujo* (Love, the Magician), from which is drawn the Ritual Fire Dance (a pops favorite, often heard in piano or guitar transcriptions), and the splashy *El Sombrero de tres picos* (The Three-Cornered Hat). He also gained a permanent place in the concert repertory with his evocative piano concerto, *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*.

Born in 1876, Falla first took piano lessons from his mother in Cádiz, and later moved to Madrid to continue the piano and to study composition with Felipe Pedrell, the musical scholar who had earlier pointed Isaac Albéniz toward Spanish folk music as a source for his compositions. Pedrell interested Falla in Renaissance Spanish church music, folk music, and native opera. The latter two influences are strongly felt in *La Vida breve* (Life Is Short), an opera (a sort of Spanish *Cavalleria rusticana*) for which Falla won a prize in 1905, although the work was not premiered until 1913.

A second significant aesthetic influence resulted from Falla's 1907 move to Paris, where he met and fell under the Impressionist spell of Claude Debussy, Paul Dukas, and Maurice Ravel. It was in Paris that he published his first piano pieces and songs. In 1914 Falla was back in Madrid, working on the application of a quasi-Impressionistic idiom to intensely Spanish subjects; *El amor brujo* drew on Andalusian folk music. Falla

wrote another ballet in 1917, *El Corregidor y la molinera* (The Magistrate and the Miller Girl). Diaghilev persuaded him to expand the score for a ballet by Léonide Massine to be called *El sombrero de tres picos*, and excerpts from the full score have become a staple of the concert repertory. In between the two ballets came *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, a suite of three richly scored impressions for piano and orchestra, again evoking Andalusia.

In the 1920s, Falla altered his stylistic direction, coming under the influence of Stravinsky's Neo-Classicism. Works from this period include the puppet opera *El retablo de Maese Pedro* (The Altarpiece of Maese Pedro), based on an episode from *Don Quixote*, and a harpsichord concerto, with the folk inspiration now Castilian rather than Andalusian. After 1926 he essentially retired, living first in Mallorca and, from 1939, in Argentina. He was essentially apolitical, but the rise of fascism in Spain contributed to his decision to remain in Latin America after traveling there for a conducting engagement. He spent his final years in the Argentine desert, at work on a giant cantata, *Atlántida*, which remained unfinished at his death in 1946.



FALLA

THE THREE CORNERED HAT

LA VIDA BREVE

ERNEST ANSERMET & THE ORCHESTRE DE LA SUISSE ROMANDE
MEZZO-SOPRANO VOCALS TERESA BERGANZA

- 1 Introduction 1:36
 - 2 Part 1. Afternoon
 - 3 Part 2. The Neighbour's Dance (Seguidillas) 12:46
 - 4 Part 2. The Miller's Dance (Farruca) 3:16
 - 5 Part 2. Conclusion 12:08
 - 6 La Vida Breve - Interlude & Dance 7:03
- Total Time: 43:47

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