

performer (who has by far the most lines), and its use of puppets, it is not part of the standard operatic repertoire.

Otto Mayer-Serra has described this opera as a work where Falla reached beyond "Andalusianism" for his immediate musical influence and colour and began the transition into the "Hispanic neo-classicism" of his later works.

In 1919 Winnaretta Singer, aka la Princesse Edmond de Polignac, commissioned from Falla a piece that could be performed in her salon, using her own elaborate puppet theater. (Her other commissions included Igor Stravinsky's *Renard* and Erik Satie's *Socrate*, although neither of those works had its premiere in her private theater.) The work was completed in 1923. Falla decided to set an episode from Cervantes' *Don Quixote* that actually depicts a puppet play. Don Quixote watches a puppet show and gets so drawn into the action that he seeks to rescue the damsel in distress, only to destroy poor Master Peter's puppet theater in the process.

Falla's original plan for the Princess's theater was a two-tiered, play-with-in-a-play approach: large puppets representing Quixote, Master Peter, and the others in attendance, and small figures for Master Peter's puppets. The three singers would be with the orchestra in the pit, rather than onstage. After a concert performance in Seville on 23 March 1923, that is how it was performed with the Princess's puppets in the music room of her Paris estate on 25 June of that year, with Vladimir Golschmann conducting. Hector Dufranne sang Don Quijote (Quixote), Wanda Landowska played the harpsichord (Falla composed his 1926 Harpsichord Concerto for her in appreciation), and Ricardo Viñes and Emilio Pujol were among the artists and musicians serving as stagehands. Also at the premiere was Francis Poulenc, who met Landowska for the first time; she asked him to write a harpsichord concerto for her, and his *Concert champêtre* was the result.



Ernesto Halffter was born in Madrid on January 16, 1905. Self-taught until the age of 18, he composes when he was 6 years old his first work *El Cuco* a short piece for piano and between 1920/21 *Crepúsculos*, three lyric piano pieces. Its first performance in 1922 arouses the interest of the musical world and constitutes his first composition to be regarded as important. In 1923, his String Quartet, *Sonatina Fantasia* also for string quartet and *Dos Bocetos Sinfónicos* reaffirm his generally known precocity.

In 1923, the Spanish musicologist and critic Adolfo Salazar introduces the young Halffter to Manuel de Falla. Greatly impressed by the quality of the works of the young composer, in particular his *Hommages*, little suite for piano trio, piece that deserves a "bravo" written by the Maestro on one page of the manuscript, Manuel de Falla decides to take him as disciple, quite exceptionally, to complete his musical education. The following year, Manuel de Falla entrusts to him the direction of the *Bética Chamber Orchestra* in Seville, which he has just founded and of which Halffter will remain official conductor until its dissolution.

In 1925, his *Sinfonietta* wins the Spanish National Music Prize of the year. This event marks his recognition at the international level.

From that moment on, Halffter continues in Paris his musical studies with Maurice Ravel whilst diffusing contemporary and Spanish music with his orchestra or foreign orchestras like in 1927, in particular, in Paris, conducting the premiere of the stage version of "*El Amor Brujo*" by Manuel de Falla with the Spanish Ballet Company of Madame Argentina (Antonia Mercé) who first danced Halffter's ballet *Sonatina* in Paris in 1928.

In the thirties, Halffter's career is divided between his activities as composer and conductor. His works *Sonata per pianoforte* (1932), the *Espagnolade* for piano (1937) and *Canzone e Pastorella* for cello and piano (1934) were composed in this decade. In 1934, Halffter is appointed Director of the Conservatory of Music in Seville.

Taking up residence in Lisbon from 1935 to 1954 and being appointed professor to the Spanish Institute in the Portuguese capital, composes *Rapsodia Portuguesa* for piano and orchestra (1939), in memoriam Maurice Ravel, several songs based on the traditional Portuguese folklore, *Llanto por Ricardo Viñes* (1943), *Pregón* (1945), *Habanera* (1945), all for piano, *Fantasia Española* for cello and piano (1952) and several film scores.

In 1954, Halffter is asked by the Falla's heirs to complete his cantata *Atlántida* left unfinished at his death in 1946 and between 1957 and 1976 devotes himself, although intermittently, to his task. Its achievement proves that Halffter is the only genuine de Falla's disciple, whose *Siete canciones populares españolas* he had already orchestrated. Along these years he composes religious music : *Canticum in P.P. Johannem XXIII* (1964), *Canticum elegiacum in memoriam Pierre de Polignac Praeclarissimi Principis* (1966), *Psalmi* (1967) and a *Concierto para guitarra y orquesta* (1969). In 1983 he is given for the second time the Spanish National Music Prize.

During his latest years, he writes several piano works : *Sonata. Homenaje a Domenico Scarlatti* (1985), *Nocturno Otoñal. Homenaje a Arthur Rubinstein* (1987) and his *Homenajes* to Federico Mompou, Joaquín Turina and his brother Rodolfo Halffter (1988), remaining active almost until 1989, the year he passed away.

El retablo de maese Pedro (Master Peter's Puppet Show) is a puppet-opera in one act with a prologue and epilogue, composed by Manuel de Falla to a Spanish libretto based on an episode from *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes. The libretto is an abbreviation of chapter 26 of the second part of *Don Quixote*, with some lines added from other parts of the work. Falla composed this opera "in devoted homage to the glory of Miguel de Cervantes" and dedicated it to the Princess de Polignac, who commissioned the work. Because of its brief length by operatic standards (about 27 minutes), its very challenging part for a boy opera

Halffter Sinfonietta

Falla El Retablo De Maese Pedro

Ataulfo Argenta Orquesta Nacional De España

Sinfonietta En Re' Majeur

1 Pastorella (Allegro)

2 Adagio

3 Allegretto Vivace (Minuetto)

4 Allegro Giocose

5 Falla El Retablo De Maese Pedro

Recorded at the Monumental Cinema in Madrid 1957 by Spanish Columbia.
"Halffter's "Minor Symphony" is the last recording conducted by Ataulfo Argenta



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