

be to see her daughter so familiarly treated, and still more to witness the obliging manner in which the freedom is returned by the females." Ravel's charming, suave and sophisticated waltz movements are not likely to lead to the downfall of even the most innocent. Of course, they are not for dancing, but they do embody in a highly elaborated and urbane style the essential qualities of grace and dignity, of tender feeling, of aliveness that we find in a waltz movement, and that Burney and his contemporaries found so sinful.

The Valses were initially written for piano, but if Ravel was writing for that noble instrument, he must have been thinking of the orchestra; and his transcription, though not incredibly complicated, is utterly convincing and ingratiating as an orchestral work in its own right and, though of a different genre, worthy of consideration along with the waltzes of Johann Strauss, the Rosenkavalier waltzes of Richard Strauss, the waltz movements of Tchaikovsky, and Ravel's apotheosis of the waltz, La Valse.

### **Ravel Alborada del Gracioso**

An "alborada" is akin to an "aubade" – a serenade in the morning—and it embodies within it a good deal of the disillusionment and cynicism that a morning love song might be expected to reveal. The "morning after" can be charming or lovely or horrible or disillusioned, and the Alborada del Gracioso suggests all these, plus a certain rueful mockery. One is reminded that the assumption that Spanish music is all languor and sweetness is quite far from the truth, just as is the assumption that Spaniards are romantic, dreamy fellows instead of the practical, remorselessly logical and bitterly humorous people that most of them are.

This piece is one of five written originally for piano, elaborated and transcribed for orchestra by the composer under the general title, *Miroirs*.



## **Debussy Iberia (Images pour orchestre No. 2)**

The painter Degas defined the purpose of the Impressionist artist: "To observe his models through the keyhole." The art of Debussy, the most eminent practitioner of the Impressionist cult in music, requires a somewhat more generous view of the subject. However, essentially the definition still holds: the composer would convey a quick but inclusive impression of his subject, comprehensive but not detailed, softly colored and blurred like the half-remembered images of a dream. Debussy had little more than a "keyhole image" of Spain; he had spent only a few hours in that country. From the brief impression of that visit, and perhaps from associated ideas conveyed by writings and pictures and such Spanish music as he had heard, Debussy, as Manuel de Falla observed, "created spontaneously such Spanish music as might be envied him—who did not know Spain—by many others who knew her only too well." Iberia is the second of three Images pour Orchestre (Gigues and Rondes de Printemps), initially written for piano and later transcribed by the composer into orchestral terms. It is divided into three sections:

### **PAR LES RUES ET PAR LES CREMINS**

(In the Streets and Byways)

Musicological probings, at least with respect to his own work, were quite repugnant to Debussy and certainly are not consonant with the purpose and nature of Impressionist music. But there is pleasure in anticipation of the burning colors in which the music is first disclosed; of the nimble rhythms, accented by the hard click of castanets, that energize this music; of the lovely songs given to various instruments; and finally, of the bewitching effect when so many of the details are combined in a gorgeous, barbaric, hotly colored fabric of tone.

LES PARFUMS DE LA NUIT (The Fragrance of the Night) Sometimes Spanish nights are dark and warm, pulsing and languorous and bewitched by murmurous shadows. Muted strings suggest the almost tangible and fragrant darkness, vibrant with aromatic airs from a thousand Hidden gardens; fugitive glints of celesta, tambourine and xylophone, like faint stars in a black sky, make the night darker. The scented night palpitates with secret ardours and passionate wooings, and "avec une grande intensite dans l' expression," the orchestra moves to a brief climax; then the movement ends with mysterious communings of stopped brass, woodwinds and solo violin, and there is a distant drowsy sound of bells.

### **LE MATIN D'UN JOUR DE FETE**

(The Morning of a Festival Day)

The night has come and gone, brightening imperceptibly into the fierce sunlight of a Spanish summer. Where are the fantasies of those enchanted hours? Where the longing, where the pain? The music recalls them mockingly, the glaring light mercilessly exposes them, and the cynical Spanish eye looks upon their distorted recollection with a shrug and a sneer. Now for the life and swift activity of the day; now for processions and games and feasting.

## **Ravel Valses nobles et sentimentales**

The waltz was not always considered as respectable as it is today. Lord Burney, the indefatigable musicologist and critic, called it "riotous," and writing in Rees' Cyclopaedia (1805), said: "Waltz: The verb waltz en, whence this word is derived, implies to roll, wallow, welter, tumble down, or roll in the dirt of mire. What analogy there may be between these acceptations and the dance, we pretend not to say; but having seen it performed by a select party of foreigners, we could not help reflecting how uneasy an English mother would

# Debussy Iberia & Ravel

## Fritz Reiner / Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Debussy Iberia - "Images" Pour Orchestre No. 2

1 I. Par Les Rues Et Par Les Chemins 6:44

2 II. Les Parfums De La Nuit 8:56

3 III. Le Matin D'un Jour De Fete 4:29

4 Ravel - Valses Nobles Et Sentimentales 16:00

5 Ravel - Alborada Del Gracioso 7:08

Producer – Richard Mohr    Recorded By – Lewis Layton

Recorded RCA on March 4, April 13, and April 15, 1957



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