

One of the 20th century's greatest violinists, Leonid Kogan was less widely known than his somewhat older contemporary David Oistrakh, but no less a first-tier artist. More concentrated in tonal focus and with a quicker vibrato than Oistrakh and others of the Russian school, Kogan was avowedly a man of his time. His espousal of the four-octave scale for exercises assured the infallibility of his technique by strengthening his fingering hand in the upper positions. Although he died at age 58, he had amassed a discography that remains as a commanding legacy. Although his were not especially musical parents, Kogan conceived a fascination for the violin by age three. At six, he began lessons with Philip Yampolsky, a pupil of Leopold Auer. When Kogan's family moved to Moscow when he was ten, he began studies with Abram Yampolsky (no relation to Philip, but another Auer disciple). Kogan progressed through the Central School of Music, then the Moscow Conservatory, where he trained from 1943 to 1948. Postgraduate studies at the conservatory occupied him from 1948 until 1951. At age 12, Kogan was heard by violinist Jacques Thibaud, who predicted a great career for him. Although his parents resisted exploiting their son as a prodigy, Kogan made his debut at 17 and performed in many Soviet venues while still a student. Wider recognition came when Kogan shared first prize at the 1947 Prague World Youth Festival. In 1951, he won first prize at the Queen Elisabeth Competition in Brussels. Oistrakh, who was a member of the jury (along with Thibaud), thereafter came to regard Kogan as a colleague, while Kogan closely observed his elder associate during the latter's evening classes for other students. After teaching at the Moscow Conservatory and playing a busy schedule of concerts in the Soviet Union over the next few years, Kogan made his first appearances in Paris and London in 1955, following those with a tour of South America in 1956 and another of the United States in 1957. Less gregarious than Oistrakh, Kogan was not as aggressively promoted abroad by the Soviet government. After being named People's Artist in 1964, Kogan received the Lenin Prize in 1965.

**LEONID
KOGAN**

**LALO
SYMPHONIE
ESPAGNOLE**

**TCHAIKOVSKY
SERENADE
MELANCOLIQUE**

**KYRIL KONDRASHIN
PHILHARMONIA
ORCHESTRA**



This concerto-like work is one of the favorite large-scale violin works of the Romantic era. Its colorful Spanish quality and its flowing, attractive melodies, along with its copious display of violin tricks, have kept it before a public that has largely forgotten the other works of its composer.

Stimulated by Pablo de Sarasate's playing of his First Violin Concerto in 1874, Lalo decided to write another concerto, this time paying tribute to Sarasate's Spanish nationality and his own Spanish descent. Lalo tailor-made the new *Symphonie Espagnole* to fit Sarasate's playing style, which was innovative for stressing a bright, light attack rather than the powerhouse style that had characterized earlier violinists. It is likely that Sarasate collaborated with Lalo in the details of the violin part, for it features the singing line and effervescent arpeggio and scale work that was a trademark of his playing and which are featured in Sarasate's own recital music. Sarasate played it for the first time in Paris on February 7, 1875. It immediately pleased the audience, and happened to hit in the middle of a vogue for Spanish music recently touched off by Bizet's opera *Carmen*.

It has frequently been said that it is not a concerto or a symphony at all, although it does have elements of symphonic form. It is really a suite, whose five movements add up to the dimensions of a symphony, about 30 minutes.

The first movement, *Allegro non troppo*, opens with a full-orchestra statement of a theme that stresses a typical 2/4 + 6/8 Spanish rhythm. The violin then states a main theme in triplets. The soloist also introduces a second subject, which is the main material for the development, where it acquires the triplets of the other subject. The coda has a brief development of the first subject.

The second movement, *Scherzando; Allegro molto*, is a sparkling fast Spanish waltz, which follows an introduction featuring bright pizzicato writing for the orchestral strings. The outer portions of the three-part form are in the Spanish rhythm called the *seguidilla*. The middle part of this movement is rhapsodic, with frequent shifts of tempo.

Lalo made the symphony a five-movement work by adding an *Intermezzo* as the third movement after the premiere. It is, in effect, a second scherzo, though in a slower tempo. It has a nice use of the contrast between minor and major modes. Unfortunately, for some years many violinists adopted the practice of omitting this movement. That is a shame, for the sultry second subject is one of the nicest themes in the symphony.

The true slow movement is the sultry and romantic fourth movement, *Andante*, with a dark and soulful mood.

The finale is a rondo whose main subject sets off a series of dazzling episodes. Lalo begins the movement with a nice trick to raise anticipation: he repeats an accompaniment many times until the violin inserts the theme. After that the movement continues in dance-like mode until the brilliant conclusion.

The single-movement *Sérénade mélancolique* is of diminutive proportions compared to the Violin Concerto. A large three-part (ABA) form is at work in the piece. In the opening strains of the first section (*Andante*) the violin sings a quiet tune entirely on the G string. A second theme appears (*Pochissimo più mosso*), related to the woodwind introduction and hinting at the realm of D flat major, but never actually manages to make a cadence to that key before the middle section proper takes off with its *agitato*-running eighth notes. Two massive *Largamente* outbursts in E and B flat major make for a rousing climax, but soon things dissolve away into a brief and very subdued violin cadenza, which in turn moves without break of any kind into the reprise of the opening section, now played with the addition of shimmering flute tremolandos. The opening bars of the piece come back at the end of the brief coda, just before the violin reflects once more, almost despondently, upon the melancholy theme of the first section, and draws the whole affair to a triple *pianissimo* close.

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Lalo Symphonie Espagnole 30:55

1 I. Allegro Non Troppo

2 II. Scherzando (Allegro Molto)

3 III. Intermezzo (Allegro Non Troppo)

4 IV. Andante

5 V. Rondo (Allegro)

6 Tchaikovsky - Sérénade Mélancolique, Op. 26 9:16

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