

In 1918, almost 14 years after originally composing the work, Maurice Ravel made an orchestral version of Alborada del gracioso (The Jester's Morning Serenade), the fourth of the pieces that make up Miroirs (1904–1905). While the original piano version remains a recital favorite, the orchestral version has enjoyed even greater popularity as a concert-hall staple.

Ravel orchestrated a great many of his own piano works with great success -- most famously, Le tombeau de Couperin, Valses nobles et sentimentales, Menuet antique, Ma mère l'oye, and Tzigane. In Alborada del gracioso, similarly, Ravel is in top form in translating his music from one medium to another. Most of the transcription is rather straightforward, with little in the way of actual recomposition, and the effective use of the percussion section is particularly striking.

The harp and pizzicato strings, which provide a spiky opening, are soon joined in more melodious fashion by members of the woodwind section. Energetic compound-meter rhythms and colorful glissandi in the woodwinds find splendid contrast in the stiller central section, which begins with a plaintive recitativo-like passage for solo bassoon. Ravel's few changes to the original score are subtle; most often, certain passages are elongated for maximal exploitation of coloristic possibilities, as in the woodwind flourishes that wrap around the final glissando.

STOKOWSKI

Debussy • Iberia

Ravel • Alborada Del Gracioso

Ibert • Escales



Debussy wrote *Images oubliées* in 1894 and two sets of other works for piano entitled *Images* between 1909 and 1912. He also composed a trio of orchestral works around the same time under the title *Images* (1905 – 1912). *Ibéria* is its second movement, in spite of the fact that it was completed first. It is also the lengthiest of the three, by far, having a duration more than twice that of either of the other two. Cast in three sections or movements, it is often performed in concert apart from its siblings and has come to be one of Debussy's most popular orchestral compositions. The word *Ibéria*, incidentally, is an archaic name for Spain and has served as the title for other well-known compositions in classical music, such as a collection of piano pieces by Isaac Albéniz.

Ibéria's three sections are subtitled "In the Streets and Byways," "Fragrances of the Night," and "The Morning of a Festival Day." Its scoring is unusual in requiring guitars and castanets, but the exoticism achieved through the colorful instrumentation is always brilliantly atmospheric, never coming across as momentary cheap effects. The first section of Debussy's *Ibéria* opens with striking Spanish colors in its folk-like themes and brilliant instrumentation -- especially brilliant in the imaginative use of the castanets. The music is lively and festive and divulges nothing of Debussy's France. For the most part, it is joyous and sunny, setting the stage for the nocturnal mood that follows. "The Fragrances of the Night" maintains the Spanish flavors in its mysterious and subdued music, but in its delicate instrumentation and descriptive

sense, it sounds more typically Debussyian, if not French. This is the longest section in *Ibéria* and while its music is not deep, it is the most brilliantly and subtly atmospheric movement. The closing panel, "The Morning of a Festival Day," opens slowly, the nocturnal mood from the previous section lingering. The main section is joyous and festive, with lively themes whose rhythmic manner and rich colors exude the Spanish style. This is the shortest section and its virtuosic orchestration and infectious themes make it regrettable Debussy had not carried on a bit longer here.

Jacques Ibert enjoyed a major sensation when his *Escales* was premiered in 1924. As a sumptuous, brilliantly orchestrated work depicting sunny climes in perfect postcard music, Ibert's suite follows in the steps of such predecessors as Saint-Saëns' *Suite algérienne* (1880), Chabrier's *España* (1883), Debussy's *Ibéria* (1905-1908), and Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole* (1907).

In the span of about 15 minutes, *Escales* retraces a voyage Ibert himself might have made while he was in the Navy during World War I, cruising the Mediterranean. The first movement, "Rome-Palermo," evokes the sights and sounds of these major Italian centers with a melody of appropriate regional flavor. "Tunis-Nefta" brings the sailors ashore in Northern Africa; timpani and pulsing strings provide a hypnotic beat while an oboe imitates the chromatic improvisations of local reed instruments. "Valencia," a whirling dance scene, brings the suite to a close with a portrayal of Spanish culture at its liveliest.

Debussy • Iberia Ravel • Alborada Del Gracioso Ibert • Escales

Leopold Stokowski Orchestre National de la Radiodiffusion Française

Ibéria (No. 2 From Images Pour Orchestre)

1 Par Les Rues Et Par Les Chemins 6:40

2 Les Parfums De La Nuit 9:02

3 Le Matin d'Un Jour De Fête 4:12

Escales (Ports Of Call)

Oboe – Jules Goetgheluck

4 Rome - Palermo 6:38

5 Tunis - Nefta 2:20

6 Valencia 5:06

7 Alborada Del Gracioso 7:28T

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