

Concerts of September 30 and October 1, 2011

Notes on the Program by Ken Meltzer

***Capriccio espagnol*, Opus 34**

Composed in 1887

Premiered on October 31, 1887 in St. Petersburg, Russia with the composer conducting the Orchestra of the Imperial Russian Opera House

NIKOLAI RIMSKY-KORSAKOV

Born in Tikhvin, Russia, on March 18, 1844

Died in Lyubensk, Russia, on June 21, 1908.

The first performance of this work by the Charlotte Symphony took place on April 10, 1951 with James Christian Pfohl conducting in the auditorium of Piedmont Junior High School (now Middle School). The eleventh and most recent performance took place on November, 4, 2006 with Richard Cormier conducting in the Belk Theater of the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov composed his brilliant *Capriccio espagnol* in the summer of 1887. According to Rimsky-Korsakov: "I composed the *Spanish Capriccio* from the sketches of my projected virtuoso violin fantasy on Spanish themes. According to my plans the *Capriccio* was to glitter with dazzling color, and manifestly, I had not been wrong."

Rimsky-Korsakov selected the melodies of the *Capriccio espagnol* from a collection of songs and dances, edited by the 19th-century Spanish composer José Inzenga y Castellanos. The five movements are played without pause.

I. *Alborada. Vivo e strepitoso*—The *Capriccio espagnol* opens with a scintillating *Alborada* (an *aubade*, or morning serenade). The sparkling introduction leads to playful solos for the clarinet and violin.

II. *Variations. Andante con moto*—The horns introduce a languid, *dolce* theme that serves as the basis for a series of variations, showcasing the orchestra's wide range of colors. The movement concludes with a cadenza for the solo flute.

III. *Alborada. Vivo e strepitoso*—The third movement offers a repetition of the opening *Alborada*, now transposed from A to B-flat Major.

IV. *Scene and Gypsy Song. Allegretto*—A roll of the snare drum introduces a series of cadenzas for the horns and trumpets, violin, flute and clarinet, and harp. A vibrant Gypsy song dominates the latter part of the movement, gathering impressive momentum as it proceeds directly to the finale.

V. *Fandango of the Asturias*—The final movement opens with a *fandango*, a lively dance in triple meter. The Gypsy song briefly returns, as does the opening *Alborada*, bringing the *Capriccio espagnol* to a dazzling *Presto* conclusion.

The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, harp, triangle, snare drum, tambourine, castanets, cymbals, bass drum and strings.

Duration: c. 15 minutes

ZIGEUNERWEISEN FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA, OPUS 20 (GYPSY AIRS)

Composed in 1878

PABLO DE SARASATE

Born in Pamplona, Spain, on March 10, 1844

Died in Biarritz, France, on September 20, 1908

The first and most recent performance set of this work by the Charlotte Symphony took place on April 8-10, 1980 with Leo Driehuis conducting at Byrnes Auditorium at Winthrop University and Ovens Auditorium.

The Spanish virtuoso, Pablo de Sarasate, was one of the greatest violinists of the 19th century. Sarasate's extraordinary artistry inspired such composers as Max Bruch, Edouard Lalo, Joseph Joachim, Henryk Wieniawski and Antonín Dvořák to write concert works for him.

Sarasate, too, was an accomplished composer who fashioned many works he played to rapturous acclaim in his legendary concerts. Sarasate frequently called upon Spanish themes as the basis for many of his most popular concert pieces. This concert features two such compositions.

Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs), Opus 20 (1878), cast in the traditional slow-fast structure of Gypsy music, showcases throughout the virtuoso talents of the soloist.

In addition to the solo violin, the score calls for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, triangle and strings.

Duration: c. 10 minutes

FANTASY ON BIZET'S CARMEN FOR VIOLIN AND ORCHESTRA, OPUS 25

Composed in 1883

These are the first performances of this work by the Charlotte Symphony.

Carmen, by French composer Georges Bizet, premiered at the Paris Opéra-Comique on March 3, 1875. *Carmen's* graphic depiction of a torrid (and ultimately fatal) love affair between the opera's title character and the soldier, Don José, shocked the Paris audience and critics. As a result, the premiere was a fiasco. Bizet, who died three months later at the age of 36, was never able to enjoy the immense popularity that *Carmen* soon

achieved. Today, of course, Bizet's *Carmen* maintains its status as one of the most beloved of operas.

Bizet's *Carmen*, set in and around Seville, employs numerous Spanish motifs and musical forms, many of which are found in Sarasate's adaptation for solo violin and orchestra. Sarasate's Fantasy on Bizet's *Carmen* opens with the vibrant music that serves as the Entr'acte to the opera's fourth and concluding act, set outside the bullring in Seville. Next is Carmen's sultry *Habanera*, in which the Gypsy offers her philosophy: "Love is a rebellious bird that no one can tame... If you do not love me, I love you, and if I love you, beware!" Carmen's taunting of the officer Zuniga, as well as the motif of the fate that binds Don José to Carmen, serve as a bridge to the next main section. It is based upon Carmen's *Seguidilla*, the moment when her seduction of Don José is complete. Sarasate's *Carmen* Fantasy concludes with the breathless *Gypsy Dance*, from the opening of the opera's second act.

In addition to the solo violin, the score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, two cornets, three trombones, timpani, harp, tambourine and strings.

Duration: c. 12 minutes

SUITE NO. 2 (THREE DANCES) FROM *THE THREE-CORNERED HAT*

Composed in 1919

Premiered on July 22, 1919 in London, England, with Ernest Ansermet conducting

MANUEL DE FALLA

Born in Cádiz, Spain, on November 23, 1876

Died in Alta Gracia, Argentina, on November 14, 1946

The first performance of this work by the Charlotte Symphony took place on November 2, 1959 with Henry Janiec conducting at Ovens Auditorium. The eighth and most recent performance set took place on May 13 & 14, 2005 with Roberto Minczuk conducting in the Belk Theater of the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

Spanish composer Manuel de Falla long contemplated a musical setting of *El Sombrero de Tres Picos* (*The Three-Cornered Hat*), a popular novel by Pedro de Alarcón, in turn based upon a beloved folk-tale. Originally, it was one of three subjects Falla considered for an opera, but he finally decided upon *La vida breve* (1904-5). Later, Falla composed music as accompaniment to *El Corregidor*, a pantomime based upon Alarcón's novel, first staged in Madrid on April 7, 1917. The production was a great success, and *El Corregidor* was staged throughout Spain. Sergei Diaghilev, Director of the famous Ballets Russes, attended one of the performances and convinced Falla to adapt the music for his company.

Falla was a marvelous exponent of Spanish folk music in his concert works. *The Three-Cornered Hat*, as befits its folkloric subject, abounds with Spanish dances and melodies.

The orchestration—with its prominent use of percussion and frequent guitar-like sonority—reinforces the infectious Spanish flavor of the score.

The story of *The Three-Cornered Hat* concerns a Miller, the Miller's Wife and the Corregidor (the Governor, whose hat provides the source of the ballet's title), who has designs on the beautiful young woman.

This concert features the Suite No. 2, featuring three dances from Falla's original ballet score.

I. *The Neighbors Dance (Seguidillas)*—The opening of the ballet's Second Part takes place at evening. It is St. John's Night, and the Miller and his Wife join their neighbors, who celebrate with a leisurely dance.

II. *The Miller's Dance (Farruca)*—The Miller's Wife thanks her friends and then asks her husband to dance. He responds with a *Farruca* that builds in intensity.

III. *Final Dance (Jota)*—The ballet's concluding scene is a whirlwind of activity and mistaken identities. The confusion builds as the people of the village gather to celebrate St. John's Night. The Corregidor is defeated, and the people use a blanket to toss the humiliated man in the air. The crowd's joyous celebration concludes Falla's *The Three-Cornered Hat*.

The score calls for two piccolos, two flutes, two oboes, English horn, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, three trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, triangle, cymbals, castanets, xylophone, tam-tam, piano, celeste, harp and strings.

Duration: c. 12 minutes

BOLÉRO

Composed in 1928

Premiered on November 22, 1928 in Paris, France with Walther Straram conducting.

MAURICE RAVEL

Born in Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, France, on March 7, 1875

Died in Paris, France, on December 28, 1937

The first performance of this work by the Charlotte Symphony took place on December 6 & 7, 1934 with Guillermo S. de Roxlo conducting at Alexander Graham Middle School. The thirteenth and most recent performance set took place on April 30 & May 1, 2010 with Albert-George Schram conducting in the Belk Theater of the Blumenthal Performing Arts Center.

Composers are often bemused, if not downright frustrated, when one of their works achieves popularity disproportionate to other creations of equal or greater merit. Maurice Ravel was far from complementary about his *Boléro*, one of the most hypnotic and well-known works in all of concert music. Ravel once referred to the piece as “orchestral

tissue without music.” He also confided to fellow composer Arthur Honegger: “I have written only one masterpiece. That is the *Boléro*. Unfortunately, it contains no music.”

Despite these comments, it is clear that Ravel was not entirely dismissive of his achievements in *Boléro*. The composer told more than one interviewer that it was only in *Boléro* that “I completely succeeded in realizing my ideas.” Ravel insisted on being present when, in 1930, conductor Piero Coppola recorded *Boléro*. Coppola recalled that Ravel, “was afraid that my Mediterranean temperament would overtake me, and that I would rush the tempo.” In fact when, toward the conclusion of the piece, Coppola “increased the tempo by a fraction,” “Ravel jumped up, came over and pulled at my jacket: ‘not so fast,’ he exclaimed, and we had to begin again.”

Ravel composed *Boléro* at the request of his friend, the dancer Ida Rubinstein. He initially called his new ballet *Fandango*, subsequently changing the title to *Boléro*. Ravel completed the ballet in five months’ time. The premiere of *Boléro* took place at the Paris Opéra on November 22, 1928, with Rubenstein dancing the lead role. Ravel conducted the Lamoureux Orchestra in the first concert performance, which occurred on January 11, 1930.

The ballet scenario for *Boléro* takes place in a Spanish Inn. A woman surrounded by male admirers dances seductively on a table. As the dance continues, the passions of the woman and her entourage increase. The men accompany the woman’s fiery dance with the clapping of hands and stamping of feet. Toward the conclusion, a violent quarrel breaks out among the men.

The score calls for piccolo, two flutes, two oboes, oboe d'amore, English horn, E-flat clarinet, two clarinets, bass clarinet, two bassoons, contrabassoon, soprano saxophone, tenor saxophone, four horns, four trumpets, three trombones, tuba, timpani, snare drum, cymbals, tam-tam, bass drum, celeste and strings.

Duration: c. 13 minutes