

Isaac Albéniz – (1860-1909)

Asturias from *Suite española*, Op. 47

The music of Isaac Albéniz always conjures up images of the Spanish countryside – a music as evocative of Spain as Elgar's is of England or Copland's is of America. The *Suite Española* – is from his middle period, the one most influenced by Felipe Pedrell, composer and teacher - - and as a result, the one that features the most Spanish influences. When Ida Rubenstein wanted a piece commissioned from Ravel with Spanish influences, she had asked that he orchestrate Albéniz' – *Iberia*. Since it had already been done, Ravel turned to writing a work that he called *Fandango* – which he eventually renamed *Boléro*. Along with Bizet's *Carmen* - *Boléro* is as good an example as any, of a French composer drawn towards an intrinsically Spanish style. The Symphony Orchestra of India offers both in this concert, along with *Asturias*..

The *Suite Española* – originally consisted of four pieces that were intended to be a geographical survey of Spain - in musical form. The pieces were *Granada*, *Cataluña*, *Seville* and *Cuba*. After Albéniz's death the editor Hofmeister republished the *Suite* in 1912 adding four more sections, *Cádiz*, *Asturias*, *Aragón* and *Castile*.

These last four pieces appeared in earlier volumes, which were not intended as part of the geographical survey – *Asturias* was originally the prelude to *Songs of Spain*. Its decidedly flamenco style has little to do with the region of Asturias on the Atlantic Coast.

Nevertheless, the whole *Suite* -a gift for the queen of Spain - remains immensely popular and *Asturias* has been arranged for many different instruments, with pleasing effect. Its punchy rhythm, technical panache and Spanish styling make it an excellent vehicle for the virtuoso solo violin, arranged here for Marat Bisengaliev by pianist and collaborator John Lenehan.

Zane Dalal c.2011

Tommaso Antonio Vitali (1663 –1745)

Chaconne in G Minor

Tommaso Vitali, son of Bolognese cellist Giovanni Battista Vitali, was a fine violinist and composer starting an illustrious career at the age of 12. Vitali's compositional style was similar to that of Arcangelo Corelli and his father, who was his teacher. The first two sets of Trio Sonatas written in 1693 were followed by another set in 1695 and a final set for Cardinal Ottoboni in 1703. However, he is known and remembered for a *Chaconne* in G minor, which he certainly did not write.

The Dresden manuscript that contains the piece is written in the musical handwriting of a well known copyist of the Dresden court dating from c.1717. In the margin the copyist has written "Parte del Tomaso Vitalino" – loosely translated as "young Vitali's part". Since the manuscript bears his name in this rather schoolmasterly way, we have come to know this *Chaconne* as Vitali's *Chaconne*.

The distinction between a *Passacaglia* and a *Chaconne* is a cloudy one, both entertaining the same aspects of compositional structure. Whereas a *Passacaglia* has a repeated bass line – the *Chaconne* can be interpreted to have a repeating harmonic progression. Over this harmonic progression is spun an intricate theme and variations. In the case of this *Chaconne*, the harmonic progressions lead through keys far afield from G minor and allow the violin to produce colours and tones that have long appealed to violinists of later centuries.

Jascha Heifetz played the *Chaconne* in New York at his 1920 Queens Hall debut in a demonstrably altered and engineered version, full of his own idiosyncrasies and idiomatic playing. This immediately became the norm for virtuosi, giving great violinists the license to play this *Chaconne* after stamping it with their own personalities. The *Chaconne* you hear this evening is a compilation of all that is best of this tradition - some of it bearing the personal stamp of violin virtuoso Marat Bisengaliev.

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