

# Quincy Symphony Orchestra

NOVEMBER 21, 2009

## PROGRAM NOTES

### **Danzón No. 2..... Arturo Márquez (b. 1950)**

Arturo Márquez came from Alamos in Sonora, Mexico, studied piano and music theory at the Conservatory of Music and at the Institute of Fine Arts in Mexico City. Márquez was inspired for *Danzón No. 2* while traveling in Malinalco in 1993 with painter Andres Fonseca and dancer Irene Martinez, both dance lovers. The pair brought Márquez to dance halls in Veracruz and the popular Salón Colonia in Mexico City. About *Danzón No. 2*, Márquez cites it as a “tribute to the environment that nourishes the genre. It endeavors to get as close as possible to the dance, to its nostalgic melodies, to its wild rhythms, to its form and to its harmonic language. It is a very personal way of paying my respects and expressing my emotions towards this truly popular music.”

*Danzón No. 2* opens with a clarinet solo over rhythmic claves, piano, and pizzicato strings. The clarinet is soon answered by oboe, while brass pulse underneath, and the entire ensemble is pulled into the dance. The work becomes increasingly frenetic, and sections with prominent solos or groups of instruments above the ever-present claves, are contrasted with an all-out dance mania. A lyric central section, introduced by the piano, features beautifully lush strings and a duet for clarinet and flute. Then brass assert the main dance theme again, and the work builds to a dramatic foot-stomping close. *Compiled by Dr. Lavern Wagner*

### **Concierto de Aranjuez..... Joaquin Rodrigo (1901 –1999)**

The upheavals of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) left Joaquin Rodrigo stranded outside his native country, forcing him to seek refuge first in Germany and then in France. While living in Paris, he received a request from his old friend, the distinguished guitarist Regino Sainz de la Maza, to write a concerto for guitar. Rodrigo’s interest was piqued and a few months later he surprised his wife with the last two movements already written. Incidentally, in her memoirs Señora Rodrigo mentions that she had a miscarriage at this time, and that her husband consoled himself by playing on the piano the famous soulful melody that would become the second movement of the concerto.

By the fall of 1939 the Civil War had ended, Señora Rodrigo’s health had recovered, and completed guitar concerto in hand, the Rodrigos moved back to Spain. The premiere of the work in Barcelona in November of 1940 was a spectacular success and proved to be a milestone not only in Rodrigo’s career but also in the history of Spanish music. The war-torn country was hungry for cultural heroes and the authentic Spanish flavor of the new work helped to rekindle interest in the native style which had been lost before the war. Rodrigo’s fame would spread quickly, and with the death of Manuel de Falla a few years later in 1946, he would inherit the mantle of Spain’s leading composer.

*Concierto de Aranjuez* takes its name from the royal palace located some 90 miles from Madrid, on the road to Andalusia. Rodrigo has said that his aim was to evoke the spirit of Spanish courtly life at the turn of the nineteenth century. The opening movement, in the composer’s own words, “is animated by a rhythmic spirit and vigor without either of the two themes contained within it interrupting its relentless pace.” The jaunty irregular rhythmic effect heard throughout the movement which alternates the feeling of 2-to-a-bar with 3-to-a-bar is a variant of an ancient and honorable device known as hemiola, common in European music of the fourteenth century as well as baroque music, and these days often heard in Latin folk and popular music.

In the slow movement, a deeply emotional melody soars over a deep steady pulse reminiscent of a heartbeat. The composer’s wife has said that the music “was an evocation of the happy days of our honeymoon when we would walk through the parks of Aranjuez; at the same time it was a song of love.” Melodies as expressive as this have a way of entering the popular culture; it has often been used on television and in film, and was set in jazz style on a recording by Miles Davis.

Rhythmic irregularity returns in the last movement, with a constant fluctuation between two and three counts to a bar. Rodrigo has written that he is here recalling a courtly dance which “maintains a taut tempo right to the closing bar.” by *Daniel Maki, Elton Symphony Orchestra*

### **The Three-Cornered Hat ..... Manuel de Falla (1876 – 1946)**

Falla composed this score in 1918 and 1919 as a revision of the pantomime *El corregidor y la molinera* (composed 1916-17). The first performance was given in 1919, in London's Alhambra Theater by Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, with costumes and décor by Pablo Picasso, and Ernest Ansermet conducting.

Before Manuel de Falla, the most widely known Spanish music was written by French and Russian composers. In the second half of the nineteenth century, when a fascination with Spain reached fever pitch, many musicians were attracted to the exoticism, romance, and local color of the Iberian peninsula. By the time Falla began to compose, in the first years of the twentieth century, works like Rimsky-Korsakov's *Capriccio espagnol* and Bizet's *Carmen* defined the Spanish sensibility to the man on the street more than any other works of art—even though Bizet, for one, had never set foot in Spain. Spain itself was not without its own accomplished composers, but neither Isaac Albéniz nor Enrique Granados, Falla's older colleagues, had a significant impact on the greater European mainstream—even though they both studied abroad and had their music widely performed.

When Manuel de Falla moved from Spain to Paris in 1907, he encountered a city intoxicated with music evoking his homeland. But only Debussy, in Falla's opinion, had probed beneath the alluring surface of Spain's rich culture to create something more significant than colorful musical postcards. During his years in Paris, Falla arrived at a new understanding of how to compose music that evoked the spirit of a place but, at the same time, conveyed a deeper message in a universal language.

*The Three-Cornered Hat*, which is one of music's great international collaborative efforts, began life in 1916 as a modest pantomime called *El corregidor y la molinera* (The magistrate and the miller's wife). based on the 1875 novel by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón. Sergei Diaghilev and his Russian Ballet were visiting Madrid during the initial run of *El corregidor*, and the impresario asked Falla to transform it into a ballet, expanded and rescored for large orchestra. In no time Diaghilev had put together an extraordinary cast of characters for Falla's ballet, with Leonide Massine as choreographer and Pablo Picasso as designer.

To help devise the choreography, Massine took flamenco lessons from Felix Fernando Garcia, a phenomenal dancer whom Diaghilev persuaded to join the company as the star of the new ballet. Shortly before the premiere, Garcia took ill and Massine had to take over his role. On the afternoon of the first performance, Falla was summoned by telegram back to Madrid to his mother's deathbed, and Ernest Ansermet stepped in to conduct. *The Three-Cornered Hat* was a triumph, and Massine later said that of his more than one hundred ballets, it was the one of which he was most proud.

*The Three-Cornered Hat* begins with the brief introduction—a minute or so of pounding drums and sizzling castanets as trumpet fanfares and shouts of "olé" set off a young woman's song of warning.

**Afternoon.** The miller tries to teach his pet blackbird to imitate the striking of a clock. (The bird resists until the miller's wife bribes him with grapes.) The miller draws water for the garden (the wheel squeaks noisily in the piccolos and violins). A dandy passes by and flirts with the miller's beautiful wife. The corregidor, wearing the huge three-cornered hat that is his badge of office, now enters.

**Dance of the Miller's Wife.** Pretending not to notice the corregidor, she dances a fandango. He bowing to the ground (a low-lying bassoon solo). She curtsies, to seductive string chords.

**The Grapes.** The miller's wife teases the corregidor with a bunch of grapes held just out of reach. Humiliated, he storms off while the miller and his wife continue the fandango.

**The Neighbors' Dance.** That evening, Saint John's Eve, the neighbors celebrate by dancing a seguidilla (Falla refashions a gypsy song from Granada).

**The Miller's Dance.** The miller begins to dance. A knock at the door—parodying the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony—announces soldiers who have come to arrest the miller, on the corregidor's orders. Once again, a female voice sounds a warning. The cuckoo clock strikes nine (answered by the learned blackbird).

**The Corregidor's Dance.** The corregidor, thinking himself a true Don Juan, approaches and dances a courtly number. In the dark, he falls into the mill stream. The miller returns to find the corregidor's clothes hung

up to dry, misconstrues the evidence, puts on his rival's outfit, and sets off to try his luck with the corregidor's wife.

**Final Dance.** The finale, propelled by mistaken identities and general confusion, eventually ends happily, with the miller and his wife reunited. The villagers toss the corregidor into the air, and everyone joins in the jota, a wild dance from Aragon. *Notes by Phillip Huscher, Chicago Symphony Orchestra*