



ABOUT THE MUSIC

# SPANISH FIESTA

November 8, 9, 10, 2025

Program Notes by Elizabeth Schwartz

## CLARICE ASSAD

### *Baião 'N' Blues*



**COMPOSER:** Born February 9, 1978, Campo Grande, near Rio de Janeiro

**WORK COMPOSED:** 2023. Commissioned by KMFA, Classical 89.5 in Austin, TX, for its 2023 Draylen Mason Composer-in-Residence Initiative. Dedicated to Lou Ann and Bill Lasher, in memory of Draylen Mason.

**WORLD PREMIERE:** Douglas Kinney Frost led the University of Texas Orchestra on September 24, 2023, in Austin, TX

**INSTRUMENTATION:** 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, agogo, bass drum, cabasa, caxixi, crotales, hi-hat, marimba, ride cymbal, shaker, sizzle cymbal, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tam tam, tubular bells, vibraphone, xylophone, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 9 minutes

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

Brazilian-American composer, pianist, arranger, and singer Clarice Assad hails from an illustrious musical family. Daughter of guitarist Sergio Assad and niece of guitarist Odair Assad and singer-songwriter Badi Assad, Clarice's music infuses popular Brazilian culture, Romanticism, world music, and jazz into her unique sound palette. *Latin Jazz Network* hails Assad as "quite simply a phenomenon who has streaked across the world's musical landscape like one of those comets that appears just once in a lifetime." The Grammy Award-nominated composer, celebrated pianist, inventive vocalist, and educator is acclaimed for her evocative colors, rich textures, and diverse stylistic range.

"*Baião 'N' Blues* is an orchestral composition celebrating the vibrant fusion of two diverse musical worlds," Assad writes. "Inspired by Brazilian music's lively rhythms and infused with American blues' soulful essence, the piece explores cross-cultural musical influences. Juxtaposing Brazilian themes with bluesy inflections, the composition presents a seamless and delightful blend of harmonious colors. Throughout the orchestral journey, a sense of lightness and humor permeates the musical landscape, inviting the audience to engage in a spirited dialogue. *Baião 'N' Blues* showcases the power of music to transcend cultural boundaries and connect people through the art of listening."

# JOAQUÍN RODRIGO

## *Concierto de Aranjuez* for Guitar and Orchestra



**COMPOSER:** Born November 22, 1901, Sagunto, Spain; died July 6, 1999, Madrid

**WORK COMPOSED:** 1939. Dedicated to guitarist Regino Sáinz de la Maza.

**WORLD PREMIERE:** November 9, 1940. César Mendoza Lasalle led the Orquesta Filarmónica de Barcelona with soloist Regino Sáinz de la Maza at the Palau de la Música Catalana (Palace of Catalan Music) in Barcelona.

**INSTRUMENTATION:** Solo guitar, 2 flutes (one doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (one doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 2 trumpets, and strings.

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 22 minutes

### ABOUT THE MUSIC

Joaquín Rodrigo's inspiration for the *Concierto de Aranjuez* came from the Palacio Real de Aranjuez, the palace and gardens built not far from Madrid by Philip II in the 16th century and rebuilt two centuries later by Ferdinand VI; only the gardens survive today. Rodrigo lost his sight at age three after contracting diphtheria, and therefore could not perceive the visual beauty of the gardens. Instead, he sought to depict "the fragrance of magnolias, the singing of birds, and the gushing of fountains." Rodrigo added that the concerto "is meant to sound like the hidden breeze that stirs the treetops in the parks; it should be as agile as a butterfly, and as tightly controlled as a veronica [a term from bullfighting referring to a pass with a cape]; a suggestion of times past." Rodrigo's emphasis on "times past" may have been a conscious effort on his part to avoid associations with Spain's present: the turbulent aftermath of the Spanish Civil War, and the rise of Hitler across Europe.

In the *Concierto*, Rodrigo pays particular attention to the orchestration and ensures the solo guitar is never overwhelmed by the orchestra. Much of the accompaniment has the quality of chamber music, as when a single instrument or section partners the soloist. Rodrigo only unleashes the full orchestra when the soloist is silent.

The Allegro con spirito features the fandango, an aristocratic dance of the Spanish court, characterized by rhythmic shifts between  $\frac{3}{4}$  and  $\frac{6}{8}$  time. Victoria Rodrigo's biography of her husband notes that the Adagio reflects both happy memories of the couple's honeymoon and Rodrigo's heartbreak over the miscarriage of their first child at seven months. The yearning beauty of the main theme, heard first in the English horn, expresses both Rodrigo's wistfulness and his pain; Rodrigo once said of the Adagio, "If nostalgia could take form, the second movement would be its tightest mold." Like the opening movement, the Allegro gentile showcases Baroque-style dances with shifting meters and Spanish folk songs.

# MANUEL DE FALLA

## *El sombrero de tres picos* [The Three-Cornered Hat] for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra



**COMPOSER:** Born November 23, 1876, Cádiz, Spain; died November 14, 1946, Alta Gracia, Argentina

**WORK COMPOSED:** 1916-19

**WORLD PREMIERE:** July 22, 1919, in London at the Alhambra Theater with conductor Ernest Ansermet; sets and costumes by Pablo Picasso; choreography by Léonide Massine.

**INSTRUMENTATION:** Mezzo-soprano soloist, 3 flutes (2 doubling piccolo), 3 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, bass drum, triangle, cymbals, castanets, xylophone, tam tam, celesta, piano, harp, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 37 minutes

### ABOUT THE MUSIC

Impresario Serge Diaghilev first brought his Ballets Russes to Spain in 1916. As soon as he arrived, Diaghilev sought out Manuel de Falla about a collaboration on a Spanish-themed ballet. The two men agreed to create an expanded version of Falla's earlier work, a pantomime called *El corregidor y la molinera* [The Magistrate and the Miller's Wife].

At the premiere, reviewers praised the ballet for its "spirit, character and temperament," and hailed Falla's score "as

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national in form and character as anything well could be.” Other critics praised Falla for incorporating “for the first time in Spanish music an [essentially Spanish] sense of humor,” and “a Spanish outlook on [folklore] and ... music in general.”

Falla believed folklore should be an inspiration, but not the sole basis for his compositions: “Music’s essential elements, its sources of inspiration, lie in the nations, in the peoples,” he said. “I am opposed to music founded upon authentic folkloristic documents. On the contrary, it seems to me that the composer must draw sounds and rhythm from natural, living sources and use them according to their substance, rather than in their superficial offerings.”

Trumpets, timpani and castanets set the scene, as a mezzo-soprano soloist warns young wives to beware of the devil. On a warm afternoon, a miller tries to teach a blackbird how to sound the hours (winds shrill various birdcalls); his wife Frasquita eventually succeeds. They feed their chickens together. The magistrate and his wife walk past, and the magistrate ogles the miller’s wife; he later returns to court Frasquita who tells the miller to hide. The music imitates the sounds of the farmyard, and sounds the magistrate’s bombastic theme. Frasquita then performs a flirtatious *fandango* with a heavy Spanish flavor, pretending not to notice the magistrate, who joins her in a minuet. She teases him, offering him grapes; he attempts to kiss her, then stumbles and falls. The miller emerges from hiding, and he and Frasquita help the magistrate to his feet, pretending to fuss over him. The magistrate, realizing they are making fun of him, leaves in a huff, while Frasquita and her husband reprise the sexy *fandango*.

In the second scene, neighbors celebrate St. John’s Eve and dance a graceful seguidilla, whose opening melody, played by strings, flute/piccolo, winds, and the full orchestra, alternates with more passionate interludes. Meanwhile, the miller performs a macho *farruca*, which opens with a flourish of brasses and an English horn solo melody worthy of a snake charmer. The *farruca* has Roma roots and features an emphatic repeating refrain alternating with lyric passages. Suddenly, the magistrate’s men (represented by the opening motive from Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony) burst in and arrest the miller. The mezzo sings of betrayal, signaled by the cuckoo’s cry. The winds, representing both cuckoo and blackbird, sound the nine o’clock hour, as Frasquita waits alone in her house, cradling a pistol. Sure enough, the magistrate returns and performs a self-assured minuet before calling on Frasquita, but his clumsiness overtakes him as he crosses the bridge and falls into the water. Frasquita emerges and tries to send him away, mocking his drenched state, whereupon the magistrate draws two pistols. She points her own gun at him, but eventually runs away, frightened of her own audacity. The magistrate takes refuge in the miller’s bed and sheds his wet clothes. A comedy of mistaken identity ensues when the miller returns, sees the magistrate’s clothes and distinctive three-cornered hat, and assumes Frasquita has been unfaithful. In revenge, the miller dons the magistrate’s clothes and goes off to romance the magistrate’s wife. Meanwhile, the magistrate is left with only the miller’s clothes, which he puts on, and is promptly arrested by his own men, who mistake him for the miller. Eventually, all is sorted out, and the ballet ends with all the neighbors dancing a lively *jota*, a dance from northern Spain. Its victorious, buoyant mood reflects their celebration of the Corregidor’s defeat.

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