

## **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra September 22 and 25 programme complementary content**

Swap Liverpool for the sunny climes of Southern Europe in this pair of concerts which take listeners on a marvellous musical adventure to the shores of the Mediterranean.

Spanish pianist Javier Perianes joins Chief Conductor Domingo Hindoyan and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra for a programme which evokes the warmth, and fragrant aromas, of the Continent.

In addition, this companion page draws together a range of complementary content that we hope will help shine further light on the pieces, the people who composed them and the performers bringing them to life here in Hope Street.

### **Domingo Hindoyan**

Domingo Hindoyan was born in Caracas in 1980 to a violinist father and a lawyer mother. He started his musical career as a violinist in the ground-breaking Venezuelan music education programme, El Sistema.

He studied conducting at Haute école de musique in Geneva, where he gained his masters, and in 2012 was invited to join the Allianz International Conductor's Academy, through which he worked with the London Philharmonic and the Philharmonia Orchestra, and with conductors like Esa-Pekka Salonen and Sir Andrew Davis.

He was appointed first assistant conductor to Daniel Barenboim at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin in 2013 and in 2019, he took up a position as principal guest conductor of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra.

In the same year, he made his debut with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and was appointed as successor to Vasily Petrenko in 2020, taking up this position last September.

### **Javier Perianes**

Multi award-winning pianist Javier Perianes started his musical career playing clarinet in a marching band at home in Nerva, southern Spain.

Perianes – who has been described as “a poet at the keyboard” – has played alongside many of the world's leading orchestras and conductors, and has appeared at festivals including Lucerne, San Sebastian and the *BBC Proms*. He also regularly plays in recitals and is a keen chamber musician, collaborating with violinist Tabea Zimmermann and the Quiroga Quartet.

In 2012 he received the National Music Prize from the Spanish Ministry of Culture, and in 2021 he was awarded the Granada Festival Medal of Honour.

He records exclusively for harmonia mundi and has developed a diverse discography, featuring everything from Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Chopin to Blasco de Nebra, Falla, Granados and Turina.

Forthcoming engagements include concerts with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Budapest Festival Orchestra, and recitals in Madrid and Barcelona.

## Jacques Ibert

French composer Jacques Ibert was born in Paris in 1890. His father was a businessman and his mother was a talented pianist.

The young Jacques was 20 when he escaped the family business to attend the Paris Conservatoire, funding his studies by teaching and even working as a cinema pianist.

Many of his compositions would later find their way on to the big screen.

Ibert, who served in the French Navy during the First World War, won the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1919 but went on to dismay its august organisers by spending much of his time in the Italian capital composing light-hearted music.

He wrote for almost every genre but perhaps his key works include the operas *Angelique* (1926) and 1937's *The Young Eagle* (written in collaboration with former Conservatoire classmate Arthur Honegger), the brilliantly witty *Divertissement* (1930) and the 1935 ballet *Le Chevalier Errant*.

But his early calling card was his sumptuous and sunny orchestral suite *Escales* – or Ports of Call – which takes its listeners on a Mediterranean voyage from Rome to Tunis to Valencia.

**Did you know? Jacques Ibert was a member of the jury at the Cannes Film Festival in 1951 and again in 1954.**

## Manuel de Falla

Andalucian-born composer and pianist Manuel de Falla may have lived and worked in Paris – and later, after Franco's rise to power, in Argentina – over his career but his music remained infused with the scents of his Spanish homeland.

In the 1890s Falla, who had originally trained as a pianist, studied composition with Felipe Pedrell who also taught Albéniz and Granados and would exert a huge influence on his music.

His pupil developed an interest in Spanish music, particularly the flamenco of his native Andalusia, although his style would also later be influenced by French composers like Ravel and Debussy.

*Nights In The Gardens of Spain* was composed between 1909 and 1915, following Falla's time in Paris. It started life as a set of nocturnes for solo piano but evolved into his first strictly orchestral piece.

## Maurice Ravel

Maurice Ravel created work inspired by Spain and Spanish settings throughout his career.

Perhaps that should come as no surprise. His mother was from the Basque region and had met Ravel's father, a railway engineer, in Madrid. Their son was born in Ciboure on the outskirts of Saint-Jean-de-Luz (just a stone's throw from the Spanish border), and although the family moved to Paris soon after, the baby Maurice would drift off to sleep to the sound of Spanish lullabies.

This concert features several Spanish-themed pieces including his symphonic poem *Rhapsodie espagnole* (which arrived hot on the heels of his 1907 opera *L'heure Espagnole*), *Alborada del gracioso* with its use of castanets, and *Boléro* whose insistent, famous repeated melody came to Ravel as he holidayed on the French Basque coast.

## **About the Music**

### **Jacques Ibert (1890-1962): *Escales***

Composed: 1922

First Performed: 6 January 1924, Paris, Lamoureux Orchestra cond. Paul Paray

*Escales* ('Ports of Call') has turned out to be the most enduringly popular piece by the French composer Jacques Ibert, not least, one suspects, because it is so obviously the product of happy times. Having just won the coveted Prix de Rome, Ibert set off with his new wife Rose-Marie on a Mediterranean honeymoon cruise. The three movements of *Escales* are musical picture postcards from places the newlyweds visited. In the first movement, the sounds of Palermo's native tarantella dance contend with the heavy swell of the sea. The teeming, colourful life of two Tunisian cities (listen out for the snake-charmer!) is evoked in the second, while the finale is saturated with the rich Latin-Arabic sounds of Spanish folk music.

### **Manuel de Falla (1876-1946): *Nights in the Gardens of Spain***

Somewhere between a piano concerto and a fabulously atmospheric tone poem, Manuel de Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* actually started life quite modestly as a set of nocturnes for solo piano. It was the Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes who saw the hidden potential and suggested Falla enlarge them into a substantial concert piece, celebrating one particular glory of the composer's native Andalusian lands. An enduring legacy of the Islamic occupation of Spain in the Middle Ages is a profusion of beautiful gardens, all enhanced by exquisite decorative work – they're visually gorgeous during the day and release intoxicating scents at night. *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* conjures up three different kinds of garden. First we enter the Generalife, the jasmine-perfumed gardens surrounding the Alhambra palace in Grenada. The distant, dreamlike sounds of dancing in an unnamed garden are portrayed in *Danza lejana*, and finally we experience the oasis-like beauty of the gardens of the mountainous Sierra de Cordoba. Falla himself was a somewhat austere man, pious and chaste in his everyday life. But in music he was a magician, vividly conjuring up the sensuous magic of his country's nocturnal life, and nowhere more so than in *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*.

### **Maurice Ravel (1875-1937):**

#### **Rhapsodie espagnole**

Composed: 1907

First Performed: 15 March 1908, Paris, cond. Édouard Colonne

#### **Pavane pour une infante défunte**

Composed: 1899 (solo piano version)

First Performed: 5 April 1902, Paris, Ravel (piano). Orchestral version published 1910

## **Alborada del gracioso**

Composed: 1905 (solo piano version)

First Performed: Paris, 1906, Ricardo Viñes (piano). Orchestral version premiered 1919

## **Boléro**

Composed: 1928

First Performed: 22 November 1928, Paris Opera, Ida Rubinstein (dancer)

Although Maurice Ravel is often portrayed as quintessentially Gallic, his mother was of Basque extraction, and he remained intensely proud of his ancestral roots in the Iberian Peninsula. Ravel often returned to Basque or Spanish themes in music and it seems that, like several central European artists before him, he saw Spain – so near to his birthplace, yet so hard to reach across the challenging Pyrenean Mountains – as an exotic, almost dream-like land full of primal magic and sensuous allure. That's certainly the focus of *Rhapsodie espagnole*, Ravel's first major orchestral work. Stravinsky compared Ravel's fastidious mind to that of a Swiss watchmaker – a bit extreme, perhaps, but for all the gorgeous exoticism and the refined tapestry of sound, you always feel that the composer is completely in control, even in the boisterous carnival scenes of the finale *Feria*.

The full title of Ravel's famous *Pavane* translates as 'Pavane for a dead princess' – a pavane being a popular dance at the old Imperial Spanish court. Ravel insisted later that he'd only used the title because he liked its slightly tongue-twisting sound. But this intensely private composer was rather fond of making self-distancing remarks, and there's a strange, haunting sadness behind the elegant manner of this slow dance. It could easily be an elegy.

*Alborada del gracioso* means 'Aubade' or 'Dawn song of the clown' (a 'gracioso' is a traditional comic figure in Spanish popular culture). This explosively colourful piece falls into three parts: two wild, rhythmically slightly unpredictable dance sections framing a slower, more plaintive song led by bassoon – a reminder, perhaps, that clowns have souls too? It all ends with what one critic aptly described as 'a grand and glorious racket.'

The popularity of *Boléro* seems to have brought Ravel no pleasure at all. In fact, he went on to describe it rather sniffily as 'a piece for orchestra entirely without music'. Behind the self-deprecation, however, there's an interesting point. *Boléro* is a masterly study in how to make a substantial musical work with very little material. In essence, it's a steady build-up based on a repeated side-drum rhythm and a long, sinuous melody – apparently Ravel based it on a memory of a Sufi dance tune. What holds the ear throughout – apart from the mesmeric effect of the repeated rhythm – is the way Ravel varies the orchestral colours, sometimes with stunning subtlety, so that each time we hear it, the tune seems the same but not the same. Eventually the intensity builds to such a level that the music seems to erupt, volcano-like, then collapse spectacularly.