

**Roberto Sierra** (b. 1953)

***Tumbao from Sinfonia No. 3 “La Salsa”***



Roberto Sierra is a living composer, born in Vega Baja, Puerto Rico. He studied with György Ligeti, and came to the attention of the larger musical community in the mid-1980s with an orchestral work named *Júbilo*. Sierra is currently a professor of composition at Cornell University. His *Sinfonia No. 3*, "La Salsa," was commissioned by the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, an orchestra with which he has had a long association.

The *Sinfonia No. 3*, named "La Salsa" by the composer, was written in 2005. We will hear the "Tumbao," first of the four movements that comprise the complete work. Tumbao is the name of a characteristic syncopated ostinato common in Cuban dance music. This clever, charismatic music blends developmental ideas from many styles and places. It presents music that is both sophisticated and fun.

**Joaquin Rodrigo** (1901-1999)

***Concierto de Aranjuez***

Louis Braille (1809–1852) came from the small town of Coupvray, about twenty miles east of Paris. He was born with sight, but at age three, he injured one eye in an accident with a leather awl from his father's workshop. In spite of the best care in Paris, the eye became infected and the infection spread to his other eye.

During Beethoven's lifetime, he developed the Braille system for reading and writing that is still in common use, almost unchanged, today. It is less known that Braille himself was an amateur musician, and that he developed a system of six-position Braille cells to notate music.



Like Braille, Joaquin Rodrigo became fully blind at age three. Rodrigo subsequently learned to play the piano and learned to use the Braille system of musical notation. He used a special Braille typewriter to create one of the most beloved guitar concertos written in the 20th century.

It is not a simple matter to work with the simultaneities of a modern orchestral score in Braille notation, so as we listen to this miraculous piece we might pause to consider how lucky we are that it was possible at all.

The *Concierto de Aranjuez* is written in three movements. The outer movements are lively and filled with dancing energy. But the concerto is built around its central movement, which is as long as the outer movements combined. Rodrigo described its sound "like the hidden breeze that stirs in the treetops in the parks" in Aranjuez.

**Alberto Ginastera** (1916-1983)

**Two Dances from the ballet *Estancia***



Born in Argentina, Alberto Ginastera's music has had a significant presence on concert stages all over the world. The ballet "Estancia," which means "ranch" in Argentine Spanish was an early work by the composer, written in his mid-twenties. While it was an evocation of Argentinian landscapes and customs, its story of a city boy falling for a country girl on a ranch seemed Coplandesque to the American Ballet Caravan who commissioned the work. But this music comes from a different kind of dance tradition and its engaged metric drives are swirled within the harmonic language rooted in the late 1930s. Innocence and obsession, movement and wonderful lyricism saturate this delightful work.

**Pablo (Pau) Casals** (1876-1973)

***Song of the Birds* (O cant dels ocells)**



Pablo Casals was a multi-talented musician born in Catalonia. He came to the attention of the world as a cellist.

It is hard to imagine that there was a time when the Bach cello suites were considered dry technical exercises. But Casals single-handedly brought them to wider attention beginning in the year 1901. At that time, the 25-year-old cellist had already been quietly working on these challenging pieces for twelve years.

Casals played suites in their entirety so that audiences could hear the sweep of personality and structure in these works that express a world in motion and dance. Casals was also inventing the modern concept of a virtuoso cellist; a cellist who travelled to

perform in recital or with orchestras.

Casals made the first recording of the complete Bach suites. From 1936 to 1939, he recorded each of the six suites in the Abbey Road Studios in London. Casals was there a good thirty years before the Beatles, and only five years after the historic studio had opened its doors for the first time.

Pablo Casals also made several recordings as a conductor. He played an active role in the Marlboro Music Festival in Vermont from 1960 until his death in 1973, and conducted the Marlboro Festival Orchestra.

The work of Pablo Casals both as cellist and as conductor is well-known among music lovers, but fewer folks know that Casals wrote music. He wrote at least 46 works for various mediums including a violin sonata, a collection of six songs for soprano and piano, several choral works, and many works for cello.

Casals closed his recitals with music he wrote based on a Catalan folk song called *Song of the Birds*. The first version was written for cello and piano, but many versions of this popular work exist for ensembles of almost all description.

**Manuel de Falla** (1876-1946)

## ***El sombrero de tres picos, Suites 1 & 2***



Manuel de Falla was born in Cádiz and lived around Madrid, but he spent seven formative years in Paris where, beginning in 1907, he hung around the heartbeat of the new 20<sup>th</sup> century styles being fashioned by that central hub of the musical universe.

He met the impresario Sergei Diaghilev, who had brought the Ballet Russe, and the music of Stravinsky, to international attention. The outbreak of the first world war forced De Falla back to Madrid, and it was here in 1919 that he composed his ballet for Diaghilev called *El sombrero de tres picos* (The Three-Cornered Hat). Pablo Picasso designed the costumes and the sets for the first performance.

The subject of the ballet is a comedy of class distinctions and trickery. It is the kind of story where the working class manipulate, trick, and humiliate those in authority. The miller and his wife trick a magistrate. She dances seductively and afterwards feeds him grapes. She runs away and he chases her—but she leads him to where her husband has been hiding in wait and he thrashes the Magistrate with a stick. These antics and reverse antics occupy the plot, always creating the opportunity for dances, descriptive musical passagework and entertaining, festive framings.

We will hear both suites derived from the ballet for concert performance. After the fanfare for brass and drums that opens the first suite we hear music reflecting the scene itself: seductive and mysterious, always on the edge of dancing. A bassoon cadenza marks the close of this section, which ends in silence. The Dance of the Miller's Wife is an energized Fandango set in guitar rhythms. A solo bassoon cadenza also marks the close of this section. The first suite closes with tender music depicting the seduction of the magistrate, and quick burst of sound in unpredictable configurations that represent "Las Uvas (the grapes)."

The second suite opens with the friendly dance of "neighbors" who engage one another by dancing seguidillas. The miller's flamenco solo follows (called a Farruca), and all culminates in a final jota to close with sonic fireworks.

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