

The Three Cornered Hat, Suite No. 1

Manuel de Falla (1876–1946)

Written: 1918–1919

Movements: Four

Style: Spanish Impressionism

Duration: Ten minutes

As a young man, the Spanish composer Manuel de Falla wrote *zarzuelas*, a type of Spanish operetta. In 1907, he went to Paris to broaden his horizons and study the techniques of other great European composers. While there, he rubbed shoulders with the French impressionists Debussy and Ravel who, at the same time, were experimenting with the exoticism of Spanish music. Falla's studies in Paris enabled him to combine melodies and rhythms of his native Spain with the fantastic colors and harmonies of French impressionism.

Back in Spain, Falla wrote *The Three-Cornered Hat* as incidental music for a pantomime. Serge Diaghilev saw the production and convinced Falla to rewrite it as a ballet—and enlisted Picasso for the sets and Léonide Massine for the choreography.

The Three-Cornered Hat is about a miller and his lovely young wife. At the beginning of the ballet, they are joyfully tending their grapes. The *Corregidor* (governor), wearing the sign of his office, a three-cornered hat, approaches. He flirts with the miller's wife, but the happy couple sends the old man on his way.

That evening, the *Corregidor's* bodyguards come and arrest the miller. Unable to follow, the miller's wife retreats to her bedroom. The *Corregidor* heads for the miller's house, but in the darkness falls into some water. He goes into the miller's house, takes off his wet clothes, and climbs into the miller's bed.

Meanwhile, the miller escapes. He comes home, finds the *Corregidor's* clothes, and in a fit of rage exchanges them with his own clothes. He leaves a note: "I'm off to avenge myself. Your wife,

too, is very handsome.” The *Corregidor* finds the note, puts on the miller’s clothes, and is promptly apprehended by his own bodyguards. Now the miller’s wife enters, sees who she thinks is her husband, and attacks the bodyguard. The miller enters and sees his wife defending the *Corregidor*! Not to worry – this is ballet after all. All ends well as the couple is reunited and the *Corregidor* is tossed up in a blanket.

The music extracted from the ballet for the suites from *The Three-Cornered Hat* is as fun as the story. It combines traditional Spanish dances with orchestral writing that is some of the most colorful and masterful of the Spanish school.

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Concierto de Aranjuez for Guitar and Orchestra

Joaquin Rodrigo (1901–1999)

Written: 1939

Movements: Three

Style: Contemporary Spanish Nationalism

Duration: 22 minutes

Joaquin Rodrigo was born in the Spanish province of Valencia and was the youngest of ten children. A diphtheria epidemic caused him to lose his sight when he was only three. He received his first music lessons at the Valencia school for the blind when he was four, started studying piano and violin when he was eight years old, and turned to harmony and composition when he was sixteen. (Rodrigo had to write all of his music in Braille and then later dictate it to a copyist, a slow and laborious process.) Like many Spanish composers of the previous generation (most notably Manuel de Falla), Rodrigo went to Paris. There he studied with Paul Dukas (composer of the orchestral showpiece *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*). After returning to Spain in 1939, he divided his time between composing and teaching music history at the University of Madrid.

Rodrigo wrote his most famous guitar concerto, the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, in 1939. Aranjuez is an old palace—called “the most beautiful and most cheerful of all the Spanish royal residences”—located between Toledo and Madrid. Rodrigo said that the concerto “is meant to sound like the hidden breeze that stirs the tree tops in its parks; it should be only as strong as a butterfly, and as dainty as a [flower] *veronica*.”

The first movement begins with the guitar playing alone, strumming out the underlying rhythm of the piece—an alternating two- and three-beat pattern. Soloist and orchestra then take turns at playing and ornamenting two themes. It ends as quietly as it began.

The English horn begins the second movement with a serene melody. The guitar repeats and ornaments the melody and then gives way to the English horn for the second half of the melody. The

orchestra and guitar continue to trade leading roles until the guitar gets a solo cadenza. At the very end, the orchestra enters with a passionate restatement of the opening melody. The guitar ends the movement quietly.

Rodrigo describes the third movement as “a courtly dance in which the combination of duple and triple time maintains a taut tempo right to the closing bar.” The melody that the guitar plays at the beginning acts as the basis for the entire movement. Orchestra and soloist toss the theme to and fro, varying it all the while; and then, suddenly and very softly, the piece simply ends.

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Three Latin American Dances for Orchestra

Gabriela Lena Frank

Written: 2003

Movements: Three

Style: Contemporary

Duration: Seventeen minutes

Identity has always been at the center of Gabriela Lena Frank's music. Born in Berkeley, California, to a mother of Peruvian and Chinese ancestry and a father of Lithuanian and Jewish descent, Frank explores her multicultural heritage most ardently through her compositions. Inspired by the works of Bela Bartók and Alberto Ginastera, Frank is something of a musical anthropologist. She has travelled extensively throughout South America; and her pieces reflect and refract her studies of Latin-American folklore, incorporating poetry, mythology, and native musical styles into a western classical framework that is uniquely her own.

"There's usually a story line behind my music; a scenario or character," Gabriela Frank writes. To enhance the listener's experience, she has provided the following program notes to *Three Latin American Dances*:

I. Introduction: Jungle Jaunt. This introductory scherzo opens in an unabashed tribute to the Symphonic Dances from *West Side Story* by Leonard Bernstein before turning to harmonies and rhythms derived from various pan-Amazonian dance forms. These jungle references are sped through (so as to be largely hidden) while echoing the energy of the Argentinian composer Alberto Ginastera who was long fascinated with indigenous Latin American cultures.

II. Highland Harawi. This movement is the heart of *Three Latin American Dances*, and evokes the Andean harawi, a melancholy adagio traditionally sung by a single bamboo quena flute so as to accompany a single dancer. As mountain music, the ambiance of mystery,

vastness, and echo is evoked. The fast middle section simulates what I imagine to be the "zumballyu" of Illapa ~ a great spinning top belonging to Illapa, the Peruvian-Inca weather deity of thunder, lightning, and rain. Illapa spins his great top in the highland valleys of the Andes before allowing a return to the more staid harawi. The music of the Hungarian composer, Bela Bartok, is eluded to.

III. The Mestizo Waltz. As if in relief to the gravity of the previous movement, this final movement is a lighthearted tribute to the "mestizo" or mixed-race music of the South American Pacific coast. In particular, it evokes the "romancero" tradition of popular songs and dances that mix influences from indigenous Indian cultures, African slave cultures, and western brass bands.

Gabriela Frank attended Rice University in Houston, Texas, where she earned both a B.A. (1994) and M.A. (1996). She studied composition with Paul Cooper, Ellsworth Milburn, and Sam Jones, and piano with Jeanne Kierman Fischer. At the University of Michigan, where she received a D.M.A. in composition in 2001, Frank studied with William Albright, William Bolcom, Leslie Bassett, and Michael Daugherty, and piano with Logan Skelton.

A 2009 recipient of the prestigious John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship to assist in research and artistic creation, Frank's recent premieres include a new work for the band *Huayucaltia* and the Los Angeles Master Chorale; a cantata for The Berkeley Symphony, soprano Jessica Rivera and the San Francisco Girls Chorus; and *Raíces* for the Annapolis Symphony. A frequent collaborator with artists in other disciplines, Frank has developed a number of projects with the Pulitzer Prize-winning Cuban playwright Nilo Cruz. Frank's compositions also reflect her virtuosity as a pianist — when not composing, she is a sought-after performer, specializing in contemporary repertoire.

***Primavera Porteña* from “*Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas*” (Spring from “*The Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*”)**

Oblivion

Astor Piazzolla (1921–1992)

Written: 1970, 1984

Style: Contemporary

Duration: Ten and six minutes

On November 28, 1971, the *Buenos Aires Herald* reported that “Last week a genius of jazz was playing to full houses in one of the largest cinemas of Buenos Aires . . . Duke Ellington. Everyone raved about him. Half a mile away, someone arguably as great as Ellington has been playing to half-empty houses in one of the smallest theaters of the capital: Astor Piazzolla.” Acknowledged worldwide as one of Argentina’s greatest musicians, Astor Piazzolla was often more reviled than feted in his home country.

Piazzolla was born in Mar del Plata, Argentina, to a family of Italian immigrants. His father moved the family to New York City when Astor was just four. When Astor was eight, his father bought him a bandoneon, a sort of button accordion that is prominent in the *orquesta típica* (the group that plays that steamy Argentine dance, the tango). In spite of a natural affinity for the instrument, Astor was a reluctant student. “In my head I had Bach and Schumann and Mozart, and very little tango,” he said.

The Piazzollas moved back to Argentina when Astor was sixteen. He began to play in dance bands and actually formed his own *orquesta típica*. He studied composition with Argentina’s most famous composer, Alberto Ginastera, and eventually won a scholarship to study in Paris with the famed Nadia Boulanger. She criticized the modernist music that he wrote for her as being “well-written but lacking feeling.” Coaxing Astor into playing one his tangos for her, she exclaimed, “*This is*

Piazzolla! Don't ever leave it!"

Back home in Argentina, Piazzolla infused elements of jazz, tonal dissonance, and rhythmic complexity into the tango and called it "Nuevo Tango." He offended the tango traditionalists, which might explain his lack of popularity in his own country.

Piazzolla wrote *Oblivion* for the 1984 film *Enrico IV (Henry IV)*. In the film, an actor playing Henry IV falls off his horse and, because of the resulting head injury, believes he really is Henry IV. The actor's nephew spends the next twenty years providing the ruse that allows the uncle to live out his fantasy. This is one of Piazzolla's most famous tangos.

Piazzolla's *Cuatro Estaciones Porteñas (Four Seasons of Buenos Aires)* may have a title like Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, but there the resemblance ends. They are more ensemble pieces than concertos. He wrote them for his quintet, but all sorts of arrangements have been made for various groups. Each of Piazzolla's *Four Seasons* is a highly rhapsodic and colorful evocation of the sultry tango. *Spring* begins with a fugue using an angular theme with additional insect-like noises. The central section is slower, lush, and melancholy. There is a not-quite-exact return to the beginning.

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Suite from the ballet "Estancia," Op. 8a
Alberto Ginastera (1916–1983)

Written: 1941

Movements: Four

Style: Contemporary

Duration: Twelve minutes

In the pantheon of South American composers—most of whom are woefully unknown in this country—Alberto Ginastera stands at the apex. He made his mark early on in his own country of Argentina, and by the time the 1960s came along, he was something of a worldwide phenomenon.

Ginastera received almost all of his musical education in his native Argentina. He entered the National Conservatory of Music when he was twenty, and barely a year later, an orchestral suite from his ballet *Panambi* received its first performance. In 1941, Lincoln Kirstein (the choreographer who commissioned Copland's *Billy the Kid*) asked Ginastera to write a "Ballet in One Act and Five Scenes, based on Argentine country life." This became his second ballet, *Estancia*. He began teaching at about the same time, but when the Perón regime forced his resignation in 1945, he came to the United States. While here, he became friends with Aaron Copland who became an influential advisor. Upon his return to Argentina, he continued to hold various teaching posts while he continued to compose. He also started travelling to Europe and was an important figure in various musical societies, including the International Society for Contemporary Music. Continued run-ins with the Perónist government meant more job losses for Ginastera, so he supplemented his income by composing for the films. In 1962, he became the head of the Latin American Centre for Advanced Musical Studies, which promoted avant-garde techniques in music. His opera *Don Rodrigo*, selected by the New York City Opera to open its new hall at Lincoln Center, established Ginastera's reputation as a major opera composer. In 1971, he moved to Switzerland and devoted the rest of his life entirely to composition.

Ginastera divided his musical output into three periods. He called the first period "objective nationalism," in which he concentrated on including Argentine folk elements in his music. The second period he called "subjective nationalism" in which folk elements, while still present, were less obvious and his music gained a more personal style. Ginastera's third period mixed avant-garde styles (including twelve-tone techniques) with surrealism.

Estancia comes from Ginastera's first period. Much like Aaron Copland's *Rodeo* and *Billy the Kid*, the plot of *Estancia* revolves around the cowboy. (A *gaucho* is an Argentinean cowboy and an *estancia* is the vast grassy ranch where he worked.) For the plot, Ginastera relied on the epic poem *Martín Fierro* by José Hernández. The action of the ballet takes place in one day, from dawn to dusk. It tells the story of a city boy who tries to adjust to life on a ranch while also trying to win the heart of a girl. She rejects him in favor of the other *gauchos*, but the boy eventually beats them at their own game.

Although Ginastera wrote *Estancia* in 1941, the ballet wasn't performed until 1952. However, in 1943, he compiled four sections of the ballet into the orchestral suite you are hearing tonight. *Los trabajadores agrícolas* (The Farm Labourers), takes place in the morning and portrays the fearlessness of the ranch-hands. *Danza del trigo* (Wheat Dance) is a quiet interlude. *Los peones de hacienda* (The Cattlemen) again portrays the machismo of the main characters. The *Danza finale* is a *malambo*, a sort of jousting dance (the last one standing is the winner). Relentless in energy, and with a constant, driving rhythm, it leaves the listener almost as exhausted as the dancers themselves.

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