



Valerie Barber PR

Carlo Rizzi

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with Michael Sanderling and the orchestra, whose approach is almost that of chamber music. There is a full but not overweight complement of strings, and both performance and recording take great care to make Dvořák's beautiful scoring clear and expressive. There is a particularly eloquent first flute: one must particularize the player as 'first', since it is one of Dvořák's characteristics to write with scrupulous care in his symphonic music for both first and second wind instruments, even giving the second oboe a solo phrase here. The cello is notoriously difficult to score for as a concerto instrument, with Dvořák and Elgar the outstanding masters here, and the high register of the cello is beautifully served throughout the work, and this performance and recording, with its flute partner. The second subject of the opening *Allegro*, beautifully matched to the cello's tenor register, is also beautifully played here by both cellist and the excellent first horn. Müller-Schott has a good firm attack for the confident music in the outer movements, and a sensitive ear for the return in the finale of the touching quotation of the song that was a favourite of Dvořák's sister-in-law Josefina, with whom as a young man he had been in love and of whose death he had just heard.

The remaining works in the programme are mainly arrangements: a *Slavonic Dance*; the piano piece usually known as *Silent Woods*; the cello and piano *Rondo* composed for Hanuš Wihan, the concerto's gifted but somewhat interfering dedicatee, and here played in Dvořák's orchestral arrangement; a song (the famous 'Songs my mother taught me'); and the delightful set of four *Romantic Pieces* which began life as a string trio and were then arranged by Dvořák for violin and piano before arriving at their present manifestation. Müller-Schott is a fine artist, and this is an attractive assemblage of some of Dvořák's most charming music as well as one of his masterpieces.

John Warrack

### Falla

New

Noches en los jardines de España<sup>a</sup>.  
Fantasía Bética. El sombrero de tres picos  
– Suite. El amor brujo – Suite.

Luis Fernando Pérez (piano); <sup>a</sup>Basque  
National Orchestra/Carlo Rizzi.

**Mirare MIR219** (full price, 56 minutes). Website  
www.mirare.fr. Producer Jifi Heger. Engineer José  
Miguel Martínez. Dates <sup>a</sup>April 11th-12th and June  
15th-17th, 2013.

#### Comparison:

Larrocha, Suisse Romande Orch/Comissiona  
(Decca Eloquence) 480 7704 (1970, 1973)

Luis Fernando Pérez has made three discs already for Mirare, including two of Spanish music. These have garnered high praise from the French press and hearing this survey of Falla confirms the feeling one has from hearing his Soler (reviewed in January 2010)

and Granados that he is a truly outstanding exponent of the Spanish repertoire. This disc puts together the *Noches en los jardines de España* with three of his most substantial solo compositions – in fact, there are not so many more to choose from, but possibly too much for one disc with the *concertante* work upfront. The sequence is magical: the incredible evocations of the various gardens and the substantial *Fantasía Bética* are interleaved with two dance suites, the second of which has two non-dance movements also, giving subtlety of shape to a concept of remarkable beauty.

The colour of *Noches* is superbly suggested by the orchestration, so at one with its mixture of yearning melody, pungent rhythms and floating mystery. The booklet notes by José Luis García del Busto – in themselves exemplary and full – liken the music to the paintings of the Catalan artist Santiago Rusiñol, whom Falla knew and admired, and the score does seem to draw you into the same world, but in a way that is even more magical. The atmosphere is so sharply present, yet the specifics are all under cover of night – one could imagine anything in a dark of infinite yielding and subtle scents. The whole score is shrouded in a sense of the intangible that shouldn't be analysed but rather given in to. The piano writing is highly original, with very little in the way of harmonic filling in. Often the hands sing their Andalusian *copla* (in the third movement) two octaves apart, giving a brilliance to the sound. Soulful though it is, the music has a harsh element, as one might hear in a language which one nevertheless finds beautiful. There is an astringency, with the piano often used in the upper register with a xylophone-like ping, playing guitar-like figuration which looks like a technical study on the page, or plunging to the depths, but the middle is never filled in with anything remotely Brahmsian.

Where the new recording particularly scores is in giving an infinite resonance to the orchestral palette. The Mirare engineers have released this music in all its colour in a way that makes other recordings seem partial; in fact the 1970 version by Alicia de Larrocha (one of Pérez's teachers, as it happens) doesn't capture the same range – it would have been impossible at that time to do so. With Pérez you hear the Basque National Orchestra under Carlo Rizzi and, not inappropriately, they seem to be pushing a gateway into an amazing wealth of previously unseen foliage. Solos such as the violin in the first movement emerge from the texture without undue highlighting yet are fully audible. The way the piano figuration drifts in to the opening tableau is utterly magical, and superbly played by Pérez.

The scale of the rhapsodic transport is reined in for the more succinct solo works. The dances from *El sombrero de tres picos* open with the charming exuberance of the 'Danza de los vecinos', while the other dances, for



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the miller's wife and the miller respectively, are given with a dangerous rhythmic edge that goes deep to the heart of Falla's inspiration. Apparently someone was driven mad by not being allowed to dance the crazed *farruca* in the London first production of the ballet but being given an advisory role only! You can almost believe it on hearing the projection given to the piece here by Pérez, capturing its uncompromising savagery under the surface. In the other suite, from *El amor brujo*, the corresponding movement is the 'Ritual Fire Dance' made famous by Arthur Rubinstein, but again Pérez is fully equal to its demands and creates a storm of intensity right through to its repeated *fortissimo* chords at the end. The 'Pantomima' with which the suite opens confirms Pérez's ability to sustain the intensity of quiet melodic writing. In the *Fantasia Bética* he completely takes off in a maelstrom of subtle voicing and pedalling. The harshness, the passion, the urgency are all here, brought into focus like the outline of the Sierra de Córdoba that forms the looming background in the second movement of *Noches*.

In short, this recording deserves the highest possible recommendation. It repeats the programme of Larrocha's re-release on Decca, minus the *Cuatro piezas españolas*, but, as I say, the recording quality makes this new version a must-hear.

Andrew Parker