



# SPANISH CLASSICS



Joaquín  
**RODRIGO**

## Chamber Music with Violin

Sonata pimpante • Set cançons valencianes • Capriccio  
Serenata al alba del día • Dos esboços • Rumaniana

Eva León, Violin

Olga Vinokur, Piano • Virginia Luque, Guitar

## Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999) Chamber Music with Violin

Joaquín Rodrigo is internationally renowned as the composer of the most celebrated guitar work of the twentieth century, the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, premièred in 1941. It remains one of the perennial masterpieces of the last century, universally admired and loved by an immense audience. But over recent years the public has become increasingly aware that Rodrigo was not just the composer of one popular concerto. He was actually a prolific artist, writing almost 200 compositions which comprise a variety of orchestral pieces, concertos, songs and choral works, as well as pieces for piano, violin, guitar, cello and other instruments. The magnitude of his musical achievement and his total contribution to Spanish culture are still being assessed. In recent years almost his entire output has been recorded, while new scholarly and biographical studies reveal his life and work to be of absorbing interest and international relevance.

In the twentieth century, Spain was often regarded as culturally apart from northern Europe. Certainly most leading Spanish composers such as Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), Joaquín Turina (1882-1949), Federico Moreno Torroba (1891-1982), and Federico Mompou (1893-1987), as well as Joaquín Rodrigo, ignored the atonal approaches to composition of the Viennese School of Schoenberg, Berg and Webern, so often academically regarded as the main focus and identity of 'twentieth-century music'. Most Spanish composers continued to write in traditional styles, laying emphasis on melodic lyricism, tonal harmony, and impressionistic or romantic philosophies. In this they may have missed opportunities for certain kinds of development, but at the same time they avoided the false turnings and blind alleys that characterized various composers of other nationalities during these years of frenetic modernism that frequently alienated concert-goers.

Awareness of Rodrigo's music was for decades subject to some distortion, viewed almost entirely through the prism of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*. The composer was also misunderstood in terms of his life and personality. It is now

apparent that his apprenticeship years were a time of struggle and deprivation, aggravated by the fact that he was blind from the age of three. Thus in the first half of his long life, he experienced disability, poverty, rejection, hardship, displacement through civil and imminent world war, virtual exile, uncertainty and desperation. The road to his personal summit was difficult almost beyond belief. Yet, with courage and the inspiration of genius, Rodrigo overcame all obstacles heroically and achieved his artistic destiny.

This recording of Rodrigo's chamber music for violin reveals significant elements of his compositional styles in more intimate recital contexts than his many concertos. In his own fashion the composer seems often both experimental and progressive, each time exploring genres and musical textures with his own unique musical vocabulary. His music for violin is profoundly original. It is certainly extremely virtuosic and clearly imbued with Spanish intensity. Each work is distinct and varied, presenting severe challenges to the performer. The scope of his imagination is well demonstrated here in works that span almost the entirety of his creative life.

*Sonata pimpante* ('Swish' or 'smart' Sonata) for violin and piano (1966) was dedicated to Agustín León Ara, the composer's son-in-law, who premièred the work at the Cercle Gaulois, Brussels, on 25th February, 1966. Following *Tonadilla* (1959) and *Sonata giocosa* (1960), this was the third sonata to adopt the form of the classical sonata, *allegro, lento, and rondo*.

The composition opens with rapid quintuplets from the piano over which is played the 'pimpante' theme. This virtuosic melody, which begins in the violin's high register, is heard three times, interspersed with increasingly elaborate *Andante moderato* episodes in stark contrast. The movement ends with a sparkling coda.

The second movement, *Adagio*, is 'interrupted' (as Joaquín Rodrigo commented) by 'a witty *Sevillana*', the popular dance of the great city of Seville. This is followed by a further *Adagio*, one of those 'beautiful slow movements'

such as occurs in the composer's *Concierto de Aranjuez*. The finale movement is a 'devilish' *Zapateado*, in *rondo* form in which both violin and piano are kept extremely busy in a perpetual motion of ecstatic energy.

*Set cançons valencianes* (Seven Valencian Songs) (1982) were also dedicated to Agustín León Ara, who gave the first performance with José Tordesillas (piano) in May 1982. This, the final work in Rodrigo's compositions for violin and piano, represents the end of a significant chapter in his creative life, as well as a nostalgic return to the melodies of his native Valencia. Clearly the violin has a less complex task in these arrangements than in, for example, *Sonata pimpante*. The statements of the themes are generally straightforward without embellished departure from the melodic foundation.

The simple theme of the first song, *Allegretto*, accompanied on the piano by descending octave patterns, evolves into unexpected tonal alterations of the melody while the violin part progresses from the lower register to very high notes. It has been observed by the Rodrigo scholar, Raymond Calcraft, that *Andante moderato* has subtle Sephardic inflections from time to time. For the second appearance of the theme the accompaniment quotes Albéniz's *Asturias (Leyenda)*.

The third song, marked *Allegro*, has the vivacity of a children's song, the violin performing vigorous three-part chords against a rhythmic staccato accompaniment. *Andante moderato e molto cantabile* is a serene theme against a gently rocking accompaniment which between statements of the theme imitates the chiming of church bells. *Andantino*, the fifth song, in six-eight time, takes us through ingenious tonal progressions against an agitated rhythmic accompaniment. The violin and piano weave intense patterns of dialogue with contrapuntal repetitions of the melody following the violin's lead.

The sixth song, *Andante religioso*, opens with the violin playing intervals of thirds and occasional fourths. The piano accompaniment, when it enters, features strong bell-like chords evoking ecclesiastical processions. The final movement is a *Tempo di Bolero (Moderato)*, with a jaunty theme backed up by a virtuosic accompaniment.

*Capriccio (Ofrenda a Sarasate)* (Tribute to Sarasate)

(1944), Rodrigo's only composition for solo violin, was written at the invitation of Radio Madrid to commemorate the centenary of the great violinist Pablo Sarasate (1844-1908). The work was dedicated to the Spanish violinist Enrique Iniesta (1906-1969) who gave the first performance in Madrid in January 1946.

In an introduction to *Capriccio*, the composer comments that he was interested in whether it 'was possible to write an attractive violin piece' without being restrained by 'the heavy halter of its mentor, the piano, getting in the way'. Thus he 'opened the book of the old magical charms of the guitar, with its eternal cabalistic formulas of Spanish music' and transferred those elements to the violin, an instrument like a sprightly horse without harness now unimpeded by its heavy rider, 'the cold and noble piano'.

*Serenata al alba del día* (Serenade to the Dawn) (1982) was dedicated to and edited by Jifi Knobloch (1931-2012), Czech guitarist, luthier, composer, and producer of fine guitar strings, who settled in Munich, Germany. The work was premièred at the Ambassador Auditorium, Los Angeles in December 1983 by Agustín León Ara and Pepe Romero.

The first movement, *Andante moderato*, begins with a gentle guitar accompaniment with lyrical snatches of melody alternating with staccato single notes. The violin, when it enters, presents a ballad-like theme contrasting with sudden bursts of staccato flourishes. *Allegro* opens with staccato guitar chords alternating with the violin's rhythmic octaves. The main theme then comes in, a lively dance tune. A middle section has bell-like scale passages where the two instruments come together. The coda reverts to Spanish style chords supporting the violin's arabesques.

*Dos esbozos* (1923) (Two Sketches), dedicated to the violinist and composer Abelardo Mus (1907-1983), was the only work to be given an opus number (Opus 1) by Rodrigo. The first of the two, *La enamorada junto al pequeño surtidor* (The Young Girl in Love beside the Little Fountain) depicts a young girl's emotions set against the sound of water from a fountain. This was written as a memory of the Parterre gardens in Valencia, where

Rodrigo played as a child – ‘Everything I sensed in those gardens – fountains, jasmine – was expressed in this piece’. *Pequeña ronda*, the second composition, has the characteristics of a lively folk dance.

*Rumaniana* (1943), dedicated to the Spanish violinist, Josefina Salvador (1920-2006), is based on Rumanian dance tunes. The work begins with weighty chords and an impassioned cry from the violin, followed by a quasi-improvisatory cadenza passage. The violin continues to sing the high notes until a gentle *Andante* section introduces a plaintive theme, with harp-like chords from the piano. This is followed by *Hora*, marked *Allegro vivace*, a wild dance with multiple trills, slides, and pounding rhythms. The work ends with declamatory, triumphant chords from both instruments.

**Graham Wade**

Graham Wade is the author of *Joaquín Rodrigo, A Life in Music*, *Joaquín Rodrigo, Concierto de Aranjuez*, *Distant Sarabandes: The Solo Guitar Music of Joaquín Rodrigo*, and *Joaquín Rodrigo: A Portrait, His Works, His Life* (Naxos).

Grateful acknowledgements are due to *El arte de Joaquín Rodrigo* by Antonio Gallego and to *Joaquín Rodrigo: Voice & Vision* by Raymond Calcraft and Elizabeth Matthew.

## Olga Vinokur



Photo: Boris Gnip

Olga Vinokur is an acclaimed pianist and a dynamic performer on the classical and contemporary music scene. She has appeared in the United States and internationally as recitalist, with orchestra and chamber musicians, in major venues including Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall, New York, the Rudolfinum, Prague, King's Place, London, and the Shanghai Oriental Art Centre. She appears in the film documentary *Women of Music*, a classical music series on the Bravo TV station, which features interviews and performances with today's top classical performers from around the world. She has been heard on WNYC's *Soundcheck* in New York, the BBC, the Israeli *Voice of Music* radio station, and Russian National Public Radio, among others. She is the recipient of numerous awards and prizes, and has appeared as a soloist with many orchestras, and has toured China with the Manhattan Symphony Orchestra where she performed in the major concert halls of eleven different cities.

## Virginia Luque



Photo: Anthony Scarlati

A native of Algeciras, Virginia Luque began playing the guitar when she was four, started formal training when she was six, and gave her first concert at the age of seven. After hearing her play, the legendary Spanish guitarist Andrés Segovia invited her to study privately with him. She received her Master's degree in Spain and at Segovia's suggestion went to America, taking a Master's degree at The Juilliard School in New York City. She has been awarded First Prize at several international competitions including the Manuel de Falla Competition for Classical Guitar in Granada, and has received the Lincoln Center Scholarship, among other awards. She has performed Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* with a number of orchestras and recorded it with the London Symphony Orchestra. She has also performed her own *Concerto* with the Alexandria Symphony. Recitals have included venues such as Carnegie Hall, Town Hall, The Metropolitan Opera House and The Frick Collection, New York City, and numerous concert halls throughout the United States.

## Eva León



Photo: Lisa Mazzucco

A native of the Canary Islands, Eva León has become one of the most successful Spanish violinists of her generation. She has won the major Spanish violin competitions and several international competitions, including top prize at the Michelangelo Abbado International Violin Competition and Laureate at the Maria Canals International Violin Competition. She was the winner of the 33rd Artists International Début Award in New York, which led to her début at Carnegie Hall. Eva León has successfully appeared on tour in some of the most prestigious concert halls and festivals throughout the world, both as a chamber musician and as a soloist with numerous orchestras. She has recorded two critically acclaimed albums for Naxos, one with music by Joaquín Turina (8.570402) and the other with music by Joaquín Montsalvatge (8.572621). She currently lives in New York City.

For more information, please visit [www.evaleon.com](http://www.evaleon.com).

Joaquín Rodrigo is best known for his *Concierto de Aranjuez* [Naxos 8.555841], but the fame of this great work has eclipsed a prolific output of almost 200 works including the rarely heard and profoundly original works for violin that span almost his entire life as a composer. The timelessly beautiful *Adagio* from the *Sonata pimpante* is indeed comparable to that of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, and all of these pieces are captivating in their intense lyricism and originality, from Rodrigo's only piece for solo violin, the *Capriccio*, to the vivacious and nostalgic *Set cançons valencianes*.

## Joaquín RODRIGO (1901-1999)

<b>Sonata pimpante (1966)</b>	<b>17:01</b>	<b>9 No. 6. Andante religioso</b>	2:46
<b>1 I. Allegro</b>	6:18	<b>10 No. 7. Tempo di Bolero (Moderato)</b>	1:55
<b>2 II. Adagio – Allegro vivace – Adagio</b>	6:48	<b>11 Capriccio (Ofrenda a Sarasate) (1944)</b>	<b>7:45</b>
<b>3 III. Allegro molto</b>	3:55	<b>Serenata al alba del día (1982)</b>	<b>4:43</b>
<b>Set cançons valencianes (1982)</b>	<b>16:21</b>	<b>12 I. Andante moderato</b>	2:54
<b>4 No. 1. Allegretto</b>	2:43	<b>13 II. Allegro</b>	1:49
<b>5 No. 2. Andante moderato</b>	2:00	<b>Dos esbozos (1923)</b>	<b>4:18</b>
<b>6 No. 3. Allegro</b>	1:38	<b>14 No. 1. La enamorada junto al pequeño surtidor: Andantino</b>	3:07
<b>7 No. 4. Andante moderato e molto cantabile</b>	3:36	<b>15 No. 2. Pequeña ronda: Allegro</b>	1:11
<b>8 No. 5. Andantino</b>	1:43	<b>16 Rumaniana (1943)</b>	<b>6:07</b>

### Eva León, Violin

**Olga Vinokur, Piano** 1-10 14-16 • **Virginia Luque, Guitar** 12-13

Recorded at Adam Abeshouse Recording Studio, New York, USA, from 11th to 13th May, 2015  
Produced, engineered and edited by Adam Abeshouse • Publisher: Ediciones Joaquín Rodrigo  
Booklet notes: Graham Wade • Cover: *Fountain* by Feverpitched (Dreamstime.com)