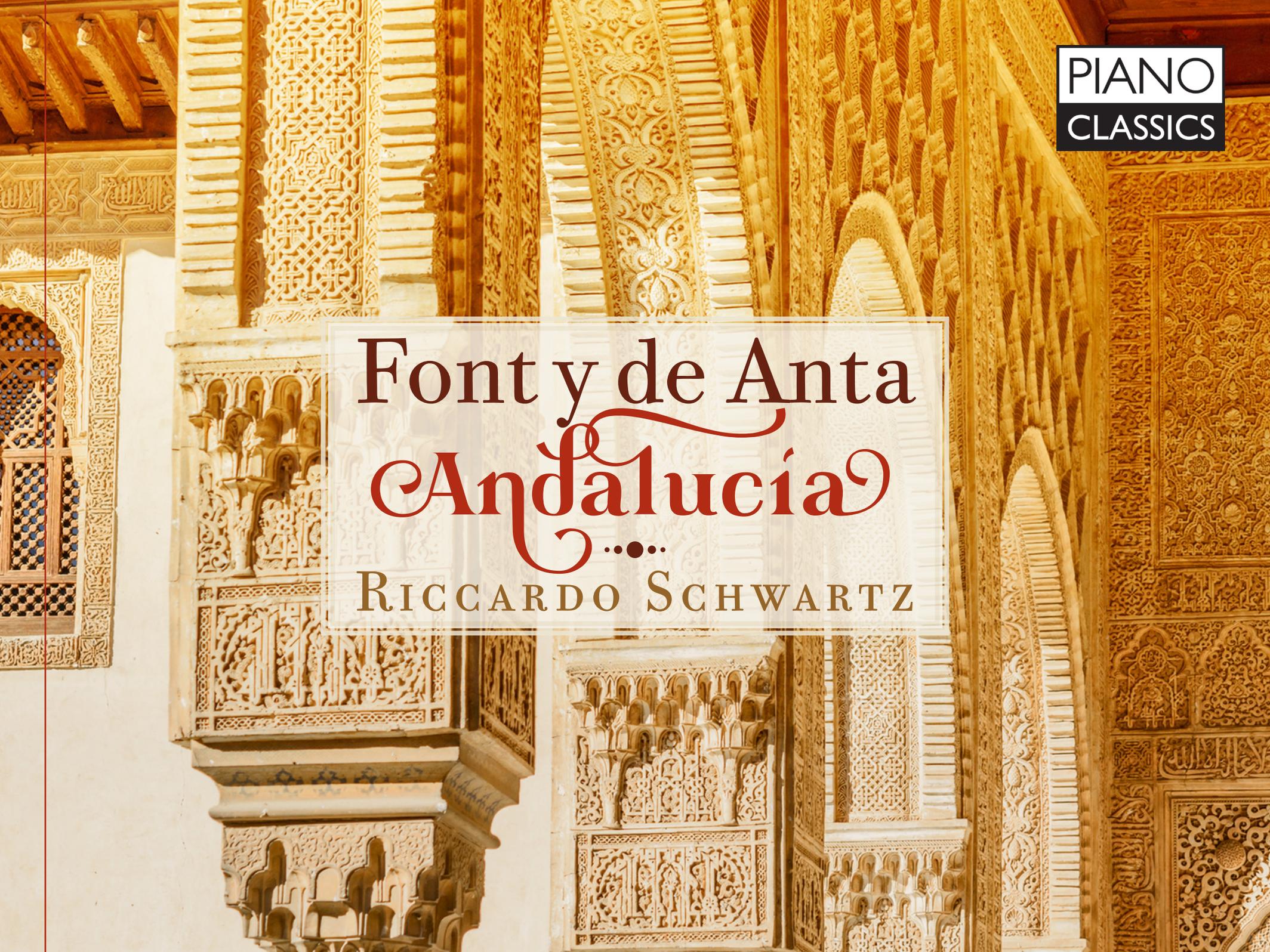


PIANO  
CLASSICS

Font y de Anta  
*Andalucía*  
...  
RICCARDO SCHWARTZ



## MANUEL FONT Y DE ANTA 1889 – 1936

### ANDALUCÍA

#### I Cuaderno

1. En el parque de María Luisa 9'35
2. Macarena 6'54
3. En la Alameda de Hércules 7'05

#### II Cuaderno

4. Alhambra 6'40
5. El barrio de la Viña 9'31
6. Perchel 10'54

#### III Cuaderno

7. En la Mezquita 6'06
8. En un patio sevillano 8'02
9. En los Toros 6'08

Riccardo Schwartz *piano*

#### Manuel Font y de Anta: “Andalucía”

“Andalucía” by Manuel Font y de Anta is a marvellous piano cycle, that should be considered part of the greatest piano repertoire, nevertheless this recording is the world premiere.

I am proud of bringing it to the attention of the public and of musicians, through my interpretation: the discovery of a true masterpiece is a rare event in the history of music. To describe the beauty, the artistic and spiritual depths that are brought out listening to “Andalucía”, it is necessary to trace an arch that brings us from the novelty that this work offers, to the wisdom that it gives in the end.

Font y de Anta's “Andalucía” can be considered at the same level of Albeniz's Iberia and Granados' Goyescas, as one of the three major poetical cycles of Spanish piano literature, known until today. The stream of consciousness that seems to permeate the cycle is often an illusion, floating below the surface there are powerful laws of tension and distension and a sense of roaming together with a will of direction, a sense of purpose together with the desire of being aimless.

The three different “Cuadernos” that form the whole “Andalucía”, are put into a sequence that goes from spontaneity, through a deep central part, the second “Cuaderno”, and to a conclusion of high poetry, in which the marvellous “En un patio sevillano” crowns the work as a pearl of pure beauty. Elements characteristic of Spanish tradition and folklore, such as dance, singing and guitar sounds, brought from the popular folk tradition, are used to create a hymn to the glory of the land of Andalucía.

Each piece was written abroad (mostly between 1913 and 1914, except for two pieces of 1918 and 1921) as both a sign of nostalgia and a dedication to the beloved region. The order of the three “Cuadernos” suggests a hot summer day, from dawn to dusk, in which the first “Cuaderno” is set in the morning

(fresh ideas and new life come to mind), the second “Cuaderno” is set in the heat of the afternoon (full of passion and sensual spirit) and suddenly the third “Cuaderno” brings some shadow on the music, to refresh the poem.

All the titles, given by Font y de Anta, are evocations of neighbourhoods of the cities of Andalucía (Seville, Cordoba, Malaga, Granada and Cadiz). Under the titles evoking the atmosphere of these cities, there is the profound vision by Font y de Anta of human nature, that goes towards the highest aspirations, rebels with the bitter taste of sadness and endeavours to live fully, notwithstanding the shades of despair that are so vividly connected to the heights of love. It is possible to conceive the cycle both as a very juvenile cry of enthusiasm and at the same time as a retrospective lullaby for that time that is gone, a Barcarole, that rocks the boat from one side to the other of a sea of distance. This feeling of longing is present everywhere and it is represented in different ways.

The first piece, “En el parque de Maria Luisa”, is about a hidden yearning for something secret, or for someone secretly loved. In this sense, the alternation of melody and dance, of soft tones, almost secret atmospheres, and outbursts of passion, evokes the striving for resolution. “Macarena”, a neighbourhood of Seville, is a fresh dance, with elements of internal turmoil in the middle part. “En la Alameda de Hercules”, a square of Seville frequented by children, describes the same aspiration, with a glimpse of a fairy-tale world, such as childhood. It is very significant in this sense the fanfara-like motto almost in the opening.

The weight of the first “Cuaderno” is on the first piece, with a touch of great delicacy, such as a watercolour painting, on the other two.

In the second “Cuaderno”, that presents scenes with strong feelings, depths in which the gitane soul can lose the sense of logic, the emphasis is on the second and third pieces, two great poems.

The first piece of this “Cuaderno”, “Alhambra”, is a beautiful evening

description of a love scene, in the famous palaces of Granada, very soft, with a sense of solitude; it presents in music the distance between the lover and the balcony of the beloved, a sort of Romeo and Juliet scene.

The following piece, “En el barrio de la Viña”, is a Barcarole, in the frame of two wild dances. It’s a miracle of music when the dance stops and the feeling of being cradled starts pervading the music.

The third, “Perchel”, is even more complex, it is a labyrinth of musical allusions and thoughts, very hot in the spirit and with a structure in the form of free variations, that allows the feeling of flitting from a branch to the other to come out.

Even if the final section concludes with a forte, there is a sensation of vanishing into thin air. The first piece of the third “Cuaderno” is called “En la Mezquita”, the Mosque of Cordoba. With its artistic beauty it brings a sense of restoration, like a cloud covering the sun. The use of counterpoint and of a smoother cantabile gives a great sense of rest, just like walking into a cathedral during the noon day heat.

“En un patio sevillano” is the poetic coronation of “Andalucía” and it is based on a very free cantabile, fresh and luminous, and at the very same time very nostalgic and profound.

The last piece, “En los Toros”, is the perfect ending for this cycle. With the tone of a legend that is going to fade away, it has the simplicity required to let the listener go without forgetting the message of the previous pieces.

Every single piece of this cycle is a masterpiece, in the form of a musical poem. The length is the one of a ballade, between 6 and 11 minutes. The wide dimensions and the broad complexity of “Andalucía” put it above other achievements of Spanish composers, going beyond the concept of piano miniature and opening a new window on a splendid way of being and feeling, a very strong piece of music to be introduced and played in concert halls.

A last thought is about the feeling of ecstatic contemplation that one has at the end of this monument. It fills us with new life, a new way of perceiving and a new love for passing days and dreams.

My interpretation is the outcome of a study of great intensity, and it is the union of high respect for the score and of a further comprehension given by looking at the depths of this awe inspiring music. My recording has been based on the strong desire of diffusing the work of Font y de Anta, such beautiful music that deserves to be played and admired.

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## RICCARDO SCHWARTZ

Since 2006, when Riccardo Schwartz played with Gustav Kuhn Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto, and was described by the great conductor as a "pure talent with an uncanny quest and research for the most subtle beauty", he started searching alternative paths to express a magnificence beyond normal perception. The lessons with Paul Badura-Skoda with the heritage of the artistic credo of Edwin Fischer were a source of deep reflection, as well as the encounters of the Academy of Imola, with the cosmopolitan vision of different masters, studying with the excellence in Italian piano teaching (Riccardo Risaliti, Leonardo Leonardi, Annibale Rebaudengo), and being a member of the "Accademia di Montegral", under invitation of Gustav Kuhn himself.

In these years Schwartz is a leading figure in concertism and in the expression of this hidden quest of profound beauty, his interpretation of Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas, live, has been considered a new poetical way of expressing Beethoven's spiritual message.

Schwartz performs Recitals and Piano Concertos in important concert venues, such as Venice, Teatro la Fenice or Paris, Salle Gaveau, always bringing the audience, according to the description of critics, to a deep penetration of music and to a further comprehension of musical genius.

