

Sergei

Symphonic Dances op.45

RACHMANINOFF

The Miraculous Mandarin op.19

Béla BARTÓK

Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun

Claude DEBUSSY

Ángel Huidobro & Pascual Jover, *pianos*



E391HR

BÉLA BARTÓK (1881-1945)

1. *THE MIRACULOUS MANDARIN op. 19 Sz. 73*.....29:21

SERGEI RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943)

SYMPHONIC DANCES op. 45 *

2. *Non Allegro*.....11:43
3. *Andante con moto-Tempo di Valse*.....9:20
4. *Lento assai-Allegro vivace-Lento assai. Come prima-Allegro vivace*.....13:00

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

5. *PRELUDE TO THE AFTERNOON OF A FAUN L.86*.....8:49

T.T:72:16

Ángel Huidobro (piano I*, piano II)

Pascual Jover (piano I, piano II*)









This recording offers a kaleidoscopic perspective through three composers, three works and three clearly differentiated compositional aesthetics, which nevertheless share certain similarities: they are works conceived for symphony orchestra and, in turn, reduced for two pianos by the authors themselves. Such transcriptions are frequent and, at times, predate the symphonic version, since they stem from sketches in which all the musical ideas, their harmony, rhythm and texture are already present in embryo. Sometimes they are intended for concert performance (Rachmaninov, Debussy), while in other cases, as with ballets (Bartók), they are conceived for dancers' rehearsals and choreographic work.

In this recording, and always on the basis of the original text for two pianos/four hands, the performers have added, wherever it was materially and pianistically possible (without resorting to double-track recording), ossia as indicated by the composer and/or musical elements drawn from the orchestral versions. All of this has been incorporated after in-depth analysis, seeking to preserve as much as possible the richness of the musical content of the works and trying to compensate the sonic disadvantage that exists between two pianos and a large symphony orchestra. Listeners will be able to discover these details as they listen. Versions for two pianos, like many transcriptions, allow us to rediscover the works and offer the opportunity to enjoy them from other angles. All three composers were great pianists, and their musical thinking often emanated from that instrument (Rachmaninov and Debussy composed seated at the piano, while Bartók wrote at a desk but immediately checked what he had written at the piano). It is therefore not surprising that, as in the case of Ravel, Stravinsky and others, there are often several versions: for piano, for two pianos, for orchestra...

Sergei Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* are his final composition (1940). This is an orchestral suite in three movements whose original titles were Noon, Twilight and Midnight, symbolizing the stages of life. The triptych was to have been entitled *Fantastic Dances*. He combines his late Romanticism with a deep nostalgia for his native Russia and the use of Orthodox liturgical chants. The work was premiered by the Philadelphia Orchestra under Eugene Ormandy in 1941, and the version for two pianos dates from the same year it was composed, 1940, receiving an informal performance in 1942 by Rachmaninov himself and Vladimir Horowitz at a private party in Beverly Hills.

The First Dance, *Non allegro*, contains a distinctive arpeggiated and rhythmic motif that permeates everything, and is built on repeated chords with strongly marked accents (a reference to Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*?), giving way to a central section of nostalgic beauty with Russian-style melodies, before subsequently returning to the initial rhythmic drive.

The Second Dance, *Andante con moto*, is a kind of dance macabre, with a decadent and melancholic touch. The elegance of the themes predominates; they are presented with contrapuntal variations and great harmonic refinement.

The Third Dance, *Lento assai-Allegro vivace alla breve*, like the first, has a tripartite form, with a rhythmic and vital section of great virtuosity, followed by a slow central section dominated by chromatic and sophisticated harmony, with themes of great lyricism, succeeded by an apothecotic conclusion. Particularly noteworthy in this dance are the typical harmonic progressions of Orthodox liturgy and, unmistakably, the presence of the *Dies Irae*, so recurrent in some of Rachmaninov's works.

Béla Bartók's *The Miraculous Mandarin* was composed between 1918 and 1919 and completed in 1923. This expressionist and avant-garde ballet, based on a story by Melchior Lengyel, was premiered at the Cologne Opera in 1926 under Eugen Szenkar, causing a major scandal because of the work's subject matter, which combined prostitution and explicit violence—ingredients that clashed with the sensibilities of the time. Bartók himself described his own score as "diabolical." In this recording, the complete version is performed, although the work is more commonly encountered in the form of a Concert Suite. The premiere of *Mandarin* at the Teatro Real in Madrid does not take place until 2025, given by the Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid under Gustavo Gimeno, with the performers on this disc at the piano and celesta.

The version for piano four hands (performed in this recording on two pianos, which allows independent pedalling and bigger polyphonic possibilities) was arranged by the composer in 1924, and its premiere took place in Budapest in 1926, with Béla Bartók himself and György Kósa as pianists. The compositional language of this work is highly modernist and enormously complex. One of its characteristics is sonic violence and primitivism, which it shares with Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (1913). As in that work, the use of ostinati as a compositional resource is very evident. The work is so rich and luxuriant that only an attentive and repeated listening over time allows all the treasures it undoubtedly contains to emerge.

Claude Debussy's *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun* was premiered in 1894 by the Orchestra of the Société Nationale de Musique in Paris under Gustave Doret, with such success that he was compelled to repeat the performance of the work. It is a symphonic poem based on Stéphane Mallarmé's poem of the same name, and a model of orchestral refinement, with subtle treatment of instrumentation and a vaporous harmony that opens the doors to the twentieth century (Manuel Carra dixit). Indeed, the chromatic flute introduction, creating a certain tonal indeterminacy from the outset, has become a milestone in the history of music. In 1912, Nijinsky adapted the work for ballet, and his choreography caused a great stir because of the evident eroticism displayed in its movements.

In 1895, Debussy arranged the piece for two pianos. The result for this formation is highly effective, since Debussy expresses himself with great fluency in this medium. Surprisingly, the arrangement excluded the harp interventions in the opening bars. The performers on this recording have chosen to include them, as well as other subtle elements drawn from the orchestral score, which listeners will be able to discover throughout this and the other pieces on the album.

Ángel Huidobro



ÁNGEL HUIDOBRO VEGA

He completed his musical training (Piano, Classical Accordion, Counterpoint and Composition with Manuel Carra, Elio Boschello, Daniel Vega and Antón García-Abril, respectively) at the Professional Conservatory of Music of Valladolid, the Royal Conservatory of Music of Madrid, the Municipal Superior Conservatory of Music of Barcelona and the Scuola di Musica "Luciano Fancelli" in Venice.

His concert activity has taken him throughout Spain, Andorra, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Costa Rica, Chile, China, Egypt, the United States, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Russia and Switzerland, performing in such prestigious venues as the Auditorio Nacional de Música in Madrid, the Teatro Real in Madrid, the Teatro Monumental in Madrid, the Palau de les Arts "Reina Sofia" in Valencia, the Chopin Society in Warsaw, the Bolshoi Theatre and the Tchaikovsky Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, as well as David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall in New York.

He has made recordings for radio and television, appearing on numerous programmes; he has released and distributed more than 30 CDs on the labels RTVE Música, Fundación Autor, Banco de Sonido, the RCSMM record label and, above all, Tañidos, in which he gives Spanish music a prominent role. Notable recordings include the complete Guridi songs (complete works for voice and piano), with María Aragón; Spanish music for piano four hands (the complete Joaquín Rodrigo), with Juan Manuel Consuegra; Spanish music for cello and piano (three volumes), with Eduardo del Río; Zarzuela in chamber format (sextet with piano) (13 volumes), with the Ensemble de Madrid; and the complete Goyescas by Granados and the complete piano works of Falla. He is currently an artist with HR RECORDINGS.

Nevertheless, within his concert and recording career, special mention should be made of his performance of Isaac Albéniz's Suite Iberia at the Auditorio Nacional de Música in Madrid to commemorate the centenary of the composer's death (2009). He had recorded it on CD in 2004 to great critical acclaim (it was chosen as "Album of the Week" by "El Cultural" of "El Mundo"), on the Tañidos label, and on DVD (2014, the first worldwide recording of the complete work in this format, on the QTV label).

Also noteworthy are his complete recording of F. Liszt's "Poetic and Religious Harmonies", presented in the Great Red Hall of the Teatros del Canal (Community of Madrid), the complete Bach organ chorales transcribed for piano by Busoni, Debussy's First Book of Preludes, twentieth-century piano sonatas, and two albums devoted to twentieth-century music for two pianos with Pascual Jover, as well as two albums of tango for two pianos with Jorge García.

His recordings are available on the main digital platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, iTunes, etc., and he has taken part in the soundtrack of the films *Días de Corpus Christi* (David Recio Gil, 2009), *Yocasta* (Alexa Fontanini, 2013) and *Hemingway*, a mini-series (Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, with Jeff Daniels and Meryl Streep, 2021). His recording of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* for two pianos with Pascual Jover was selected by MoMA (The Museum of Modern Art, New York) to be included among the musical tracks on its website. He has been a répétiteur at the Teatro Real in Madrid and has regularly collaborated with the Madrid Symphony Orchestra as principal pianist since 1999. He has also performed with other ensembles such as the Spanish National Orchestra, the Orchestra of the Community of Madrid, the RTVE Orchestra, the Orfeón Donostiarra, the Spanish National Choir and the RTVE Choir.

He has performed chamber music with groups including the Ensemble de Madrid, of which he has been a member since 2000, Modus Novus, Cámara XXI, various chamber ensembles of the RTVE Orchestra and the OSM, and the Ensemble Iberoamericano, among others, and with performers such as Pedro Corostola, Marçal Cervera, Marc Coppey and Sung-Won Yang, all of them professors at the prestigious "Música en Compostela" course, where he has collaborated as a teacher for 25 years.

Currently he teaches Counterpoint and Fugue as Professor of Composition at the RCSMM.



PASCUAL JOVER ASURMENDI

He began his piano studies at the "Joaquín Maya" and "Pablo Sarasate" conservatories in Pamplona with teachers José Luis Gimeno and Maite Asunce. He moved to the Royal Conservatory of Music of Madrid to undertake advanced studies in Manuel Carra's class, receiving the End-of-Degree Honor Prize. He later completed his training over four years at the University of Alcalá de Henares with the Hungarian pianist and professor Imre Rohmann.

He has appeared as a soloist with the Orchestra of the Royal Conservatory of Music of Madrid. He has also collaborated with the Madrid Symphony Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonia of Galicia and the Navarra Symphony Orchestra. He has given concerts as a soloist and in chamber ensembles in numerous Spanish cities, sharing the stage with renowned musicians such as Ángel Huidobro, Luis González, Pacho Flores, Carlos Gil, Diego Arbizu, Pablo García, Inés de Madrazo and Andrea Jiménez among others. He has won prizes in national piano competitions such as "Marisa Montiel", "Pianos Royale" and "J. F. Iribarren".

Together with violist Pablo García he gave the premiere of Josep Soler's Sonata for viola and piano and recorded the CD "Mediterranean Sonatas for Viola and Piano". He has also recorded two albums of twentieth-century music for two pianos with pianist Ángel Huidobro, including the first recording in Spain of Bartók's Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion.

He collaborated for four years with the "Música en Compostela" International Courses as a piano accompanist. For eleven years he was a piano teacher at the "José Iturbi" Municipal Conservatory in Valencia, and since 2010 he has held the same position at the "Pablo Sarasate" Professional Conservatory in Pamplona.

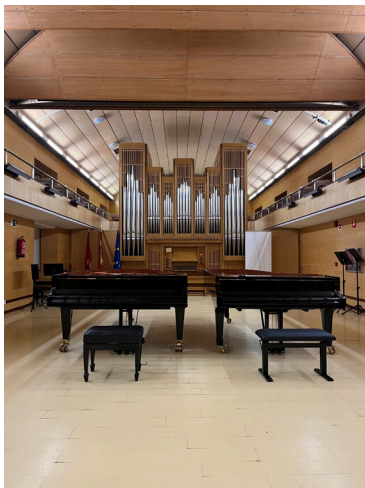
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(Madrid, Royal Conservatory of Music)
Madrid, May 15th and 16th, 2026
Soundfield microphone
Steinberg AXR4

Tuning master: Javier Alonso
Artistic production: Ángel Huidobro & Pascual Jover
Executive producer: Agustín Maruri
Pianos: Steinway & Sons D - Bösendorfer Imperial

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