

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF FORT WORTH

Hermitage Piano Trio

Saturday 11 October, 2025 - Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

Program Notes by Laurie Shulman ©2025

Trio pathétique in D Minor for clarinet, bassoon, and piano

Mikhail Glinka (1804-1857)

Arranged for piano trio by the composer

You may think you've never heard of Glinka and never heard a note of his music, but the chances are good that you'd recognize his Overture to *Ruslan and Ludmila*, one of the best-loved concert openers in the orchestral repertoire.

Russians consider Glinka to be the father of Russian music. Before Mussorgsky, before Tchaikovsky, long before either Stravinsky or Shostakovich, there was Glinka. Especially through his operas, he bequeathed a substantial legacy to Tchaikovsky and to the group of five composers known as the "Mighty Handful." Glinka also numbered many important Russian writers among his personal friends, including Pushkin, the author of the fairy-tale poem *Russlan and Ludmila* upon which Glinka's most famous opera is based.

As a young man in St. Petersburg, Glinka studied languages and science, acquiring only rudimentary knowledge of music. After graduation in 1822, he delved more deeply into music, performing as a dedicated amateur in the city's cultural salons while working as an undersecretary in the Russian Council of Communications. A seminal journey took place in 1830 when he accompanied the tenor Nikolai Ivanov to Italy. In Milan, he met leading musical figures, including Bellini, Donizetti, and

Mendelssohn; in Rome, he encountered Berlioz. Not surprisingly, his early compositions reflected the influence of Italian opera, as well as French and German classical models.

The Trio, which dates from 1832, is a prime example. It consists of four relatively brief movements played; the first three are played *attacca* [without pause]. Glinka's opening Allegro moderato demonstrates his solid command of sonata form. His thematic material is well-balanced among strings and piano, and Glinka proves to have a pleasing gift for melody. We may think of this trio as an exercise in developing musical facility. As such, it is polished and remarkably self-assured for an inexperienced composer still in his twenties.

In French, *pathétique* means touching the emotions, full of pathos, rather than the “pathetic” of the direct English cognate. The German playwright Friedrich Schiller — the author of the “Ode to Joy” that Beethoven set as the choral finale to his Ninth Symphony — published an essay in 1793 called “Über das Pathetische.” The title is difficult to translate because *pathetische* has various meanings in German, but Schiller's subject was tragedy in works of art, including music.

In Glinka's case, the explanation for the descriptor “*pathétique*” appears to lie in a French epigraph that appeared on the title page when the trio was published in 1878: “Je n'ai connu l'amour qu'à travers le malheur qu'il cause” [I have only known love through the unhappiness it causes]. That quotation has led some writers to believe that Glinka's slow movement — an operatic *bel canto* lament — reflected a love affair gone bad. Jurgenson's 1878 edition, however, appeared more than two decades after Glinka's death and was likely added by the publisher.

Another possible explanation dates from the time of the first performance, which Glinka played in Italy with two musicians from the orchestra of La Scala: clarinetist Pietro Sassistro and bassoonist Antonio Cantù. After first reading through the Largo with Glinka in preparation for the Italian premiere, Cantù reportedly exclaimed “Ma questo è disperazione!” [But this is despair!]. The designation of *pathétique* has persisted, despite the attractive themes of the trio’s first movement and the playful scampering of its Scherzo and Trio. Glinka’s Largo, a heartfelt arioso duo for the string players, is indeed eloquent and melancholy. The finale, however, is impassioned — but not tragic. Its paraphrase of the first movement theme presages the cyclic unity of later works in the Romantic era, while the overall mood is like a revenge aria in Italian opera. Concise and dramatic, it brings the Trio to an exciting close.

“Granada” from *Suite Española*, Op. 47

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)

Arranged for piano trio by Klas Krantz

A biography of Isaac Albéniz reads rather like a turn-of-the-century adventure novel. A child prodigy who performed in public by the age of four, he was touring in Paris and composing by age seven. He ran away from the Madrid Conservatory at nine, spending five years first in the Spanish provinces, then in South America, the Caribbean, and the United States, as both pianist and stevedore! After returning to his homeland, he secured grants to study in Brussels, Leipzig, and briefly in Budapest with the ageing Franz Liszt (1811-1886).

Albéniz finally settled in Paris, but his music never forsook the characteristic flavor of his native Spain. He was a key developer of an indigenous Spanish musical style, drawing his inspiration from the vivid drama of his country’s landscape and culture. *Iberia*, his masterpiece, is a collection of twelve tone

poems for solo piano published in four volumes between 1906 and 1909.

His *Suite española* (1886) consists of descriptive sound-pictures of particular locales and events, usually using Spanish dance rhythms and harmonies. “Granada” is its opening movement. It is a *serenata* in a straightforward A-B-A-B-A form. Albéniz creates the effect of a strumming guitar accompanying a gentle singer: This is a song of love rather than passion.

The Hermitage Piano Trio plays an arrangement by the Swedish musicologist and arranger Klas Krantz.

***Siete canciones populares españolas* [Seven Popular Spanish Songs]**

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)

Arranged for piano trio by Konstantin Maslyuk

Along with his older countrymen Isaac Albéniz and Enrique Granados, Manuel de Falla helped to restore Spanish music to a level it had not enjoyed since Renaissance times. Enormously gifted, he was drawn to music early. He decided on composition after developing a passion for the works of the Norwegian composer Edvard Grieg, vowing to achieve a comparable legacy for Spanish music.

In 1907, at the age of thirty-one, Falla went to Paris, where he benefitted by his association with French composers, including Dukas, Debussy, and Ravel. Falla's voice was original, however, and he learned from his French colleagues without imitating. To the contrary, both Debussy and Ravel were drawn to the sensuous harmonies and compelling rhythms of Falla's native Spain, revealing more of Spain in their French music than Falla did of France in his own.

Falla is best known for his stage works, especially *La vida breve* (1913) and *El amor brujo* (1915), the two orchestral suites *El sombrero de tres picos* (1916-21), and the wonderful *Noches en los jardines de España* for piano and orchestra (1922). His compositions for chamber ensemble are not numerous, and several of them are adaptations of dances from the works listed above. For *Siete canciones populares españolas* (1914) for voice and piano, Falla drew on Spanish folk tunes popular in the nineteenth century, many of which had roots extending back for centuries. His harmonizations emphasized natural overtones.

With its compelling rhythms and distinctive Arab-inflected scale patterns, the cycle soon attracted instrumentalists as well as singers. In 1924, the Polish violinist Paweł [Paul] Kochański arranged six of Falla's seven songs for violin and *luthéal*, a modified grand piano with special dampers and parallel strings capable of producing unusual timbres. He called the collection *Suite populaire espagnole*. Kochański worked with Falla to devise a version for violin and conventional piano. The full set of seven has since been arranged for solo piano, double bass and piano, and mixed chamber ensemble. The Hermitage Piano Trio commissioned this arrangement for piano trio from the Russian pianist and conductor Konstantin Maslyuk, a friend of the trio's cellist Sergey Antonov.

Piano Trio No. 2 in B Minor, Op. 76 (1933)

Joaquín Turina (1882-1949)

Like many early twentieth-century Spanish musicians, Turina began his formal studies in his homeland before succumbing to the lure of Paris, which was then Europe's musical capital. From 1905 to the First World War, he studied and worked there, embarking on a distinguished career as pianist, conductor, music critic, and teacher. Initially he studied piano with the German-born virtuoso Moritz

Moszkowski and composition with Vincent d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum.

Although he met many prominent French musicians during his Paris sojourn, his most significant encounters were with his countrymen Isaac Albéniz and Manuel de Falla. Their influence was crucial to Turina's development as a nationalist, for Falla and especially Albéniz encouraged him to seek his inspiration in Spanish folk and popular music. At the same time, Turina was determined to be accepted as a European musician and strove to master traditional techniques and formal structures.

After his return to Spain, he worked for several years as chorus master at the Teatro Real in Madrid, and he enjoyed many successful performances of his music in both Madrid and Paris. He was appointed to the composition faculty at Madrid Conservatory in 1930.

Turina was no revolutionary. He regarded melody as the foundation of musical inspiration, and his music remained firmly rooted in traditional tonality, although heavily inflected with Spanish sonorities. Although he rarely wrote in large forms, he was the most successful of the early twentieth-century Spanish composers to fuse classical style and form with Andalusian — and specifically Sevillana — flavor.

Turina worked on the Second Piano Trio between July 1932 and February 1933. It is representative of his instrumental music in that it incorporates Spanish elements into traditional forms. The first movement is a sonata structure. While it has three clearly defined theme groups (each one delivered at a different tempo), they are subtly related. The second theme is the most overtly Spanish, but the textures are French. Particularly in the piano part, one hears echoes of Fauré.

Irregular 5/8 meter drives the nervous energy of the second movement, *Molto vivace*. Turina underscores the suspense with muted, rapidly bowed strings against primarily chordal writing for the piano. A brief central *Lento* passage provides contrast in this ternary movement.

The finale, unfolding in seven connected sections, paraphrases and transforms themes from the first movement. In this respect, Turina's technique is related to the cyclic form favored by César Franck and his followers. Throughout the Trio, he tends to treat the violin and cello as a sonic unit contrasting with the piano. When the strings play together, it is in octave unisons, parallel thirds, or parallel sixths. Elsewhere, they are in dialogue or occasional countermelodies. The textural and harmonic underpinning is generally the keyboard's domain.

Tres impresiones (1922)

Mariano Perelló (1886-1960)

Mariano Perelló is likely a new name to most of us. A Catalan violinist, pianist, and composer, he had a remarkable career. At age nine, he participated in a benefit concert organized by Isaac Albéniz in Barcelona; the other performers included Enrique Granados. Both men would prove to be significant mentors. Three years later, in 1898, Albéniz connected Perelló with the Belgian violin virtuoso Mathieu Crickboom, who had relocated to Barcelona. Within a year, Perelló had won a competition, and by 1901, he was performing in chamber music programs and orchestral concerts with the Barcelona Philharmonic Society. He made his début that year playing the Viotti Concerto in A Minor, Op. 22.

He continued advanced study in Belgium with Crickboom, who had returned Brussels. Eventually, he secured an appointment in Barcelona teaching at the Granados Academy. In 1910 he

founded the Catalan Society of Chamber Music Concerts, establishing the Granados Trio with cellist Josep Rabentós and pianist (and composer) Enrique Granados. Abroad, he concertized with the Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes, who premiered many works by Ravel, Falla, Debussy, Satie, and Albéniz. During the war, Perelló's performances were limited to the Iberian peninsula, but his Trio Barcelona, founded in 1911 with Viñes and cellist Joaquim Pere Marés i Gribbin, embarked on an American tour shortly after the armistice in 1918. They would continue to concertize together for twenty-five years until a joint condition in his hand forced Perelló to cease public performance.

Though his list of works is modest, they are of high quality. Upon Perelló's completion of *Tres impresiones* in 1922, the Trio Barcelona incorporated it into their touring repertoire, performing it throughout continental Europe. Although the Trio was published, copies only survived in a few European libraries. Acquiring the printed music required some diligent sleuthing by Marina and Victor Ledin. Hermitage violinist Misha Keylin says, "It really was an adventure to locate the scores for each of the three dances, as one was found by UK, one in Berlin, and the last one in Madrid. It took nearly two years!"

Each movement evokes Spanish (as opposed to Catalan) musical style, and the movements are dedicated to Perelló's trio colleagues Ricardo Viñes and Joaquim Pere Marés. *Pensando en Albéniz* is a tribute to the older Spanish master Isaac Albéniz, adopting the rhythmic patterns and inflected scale patterns of Spanish popular music. *Capricho andaluz* salutes the local traditions of Spain's southernmost region, where flamenco was born. *Escenas gitanas* channels the bold gestures and flamboyant rhythms of Roma culture in Southern Spain. All three movements emulate guitar sounds and provide cameo solos for the three players. Perelló's *Tres impresiones* are vivid snapshots of Spain's rich culture.