

Colores del sur

Femke IJlstra
Celia García-García



Isaac Albéniz

España, Op.165

1 Tango 2:41

Paule Maurice

Tableaux de Provence

2 Faranduolo di chatouno 2:33

3 Cansoun per ma mio 1:39

4 La Boumiano 1:19

5 Dis Alyscamps l'amo souspire 4:52

6 Lou Cabridan 4:02

Isaac Albéniz

Iberia, Book 1

7 Evocación 5:08

Manuel de Falla

Siete canciones populares españolas

8 El paño moruno 2:06

9 Asturiana 2:32

10 Canción 1:27

11 Nana 1:21

12 Jota 2:45

13 Polo 3:09

	Maurice Ravel	
14	Pièce en forme de Habanera	2:57
	Heitor Villa-Lobos	
15	O canto do cisne negro	2:52
	Jean Françaix	
	Cinq danses exotiques	
16	Pambiche	1:05
17	Baião	1:28
18	Mambo	1:36
19	Samba lenta	1:27
20	Merengue	0:42
	Darius Milhaud	
	Scaramouche, Op.165d	
21	Brazileira	2:32
	Kurt Weill	
22	Youkali	5:08

Total playing time 55m20s

“We take you to the musical south where we sing, dream and dance together in the warm evening light”

Celia & Femke

The sunny south conjures up images, especially for northerners, of bright sunshine, an azure sea and brilliant blue skies, of bright colours, festive dances and enchanting stories, of languid warmth during siestas and nightly dinners in illuminated squares. Even in France, ‘Colores del sur’ and dances from southern Spain, for example, were considered exotic. Since the mid-19th century, the music and dances from Spain have captured everyone’s imagination.

In the 19th century, the Spanish bourgeoisie was mainly charmed by the opera-like zarzuelas. They saw the many Spanish dances as uninteresting folk music and turned their noses up at Andalusian flamenco and cante jondo.

Only in the last quarter of the 19th century did this change, when especially foreigners like Glinka and later Rimsky-Korsakov in Russia and Frenchmen like Lalo, Bizet and Chabrier professed their love for Spanish music so convincingly. In their wake followed Debussy and Ravel, more or less at the same time as in Spain itself Isaac Albéniz and Enrique Granados. Then the writer Federico García Lorca and the composer Manuel de Falla elevated Spanish folk music to the status of national cultural heritage.

Since many Spaniards in the late 19th and a large part of the 20th century worked and often lived in France, the influence has been strong both ways. In fact, Villa-Lobos came to France to look at the art there, but the other way round, Milhaud travelled to Brazil for his work and got to know the ‘couleur locale’ there, which struck him as so colourful and exotic. In short, in Colores del sur, the many cross-links between Spain and France in particular (with excursions to and from Brazil) are discussed in detail, with a multitude of dances and impressions.

Colores del sur

Isaac Albéniz’s most famous composition by far is his *Tango* from the suite

España: Seis hojas de álbum, opus 165, from 1890. What we hear here, by the way, is not the Argentine tango but the (less rapid) habanera. In 1894, Albéniz, by now a world-famous piano virtuoso, moved to France where he became a teacher at the famous Schola Cantorum in 1898. In that time he got to know the music of Franck, d'Indy and Debussy and arrived at a less folksy, more modern and much more colourful way of composing, culminating in the twelve movements of the suite *Iberia* (1905-08). *Evocación* is the first movement of that equally original and complex collection and is based on a combination of a fandanguillo from the Basque country and a jota from Aragón. With his *Iberia*, Albéniz directly influenced Debussy, Ravel and De Falla.

Like Albéniz, Manuel de Falla decided to settle in France for a few years, arriving there in 1907. Until the beginning of the First World War in 1914, he wrote some of his best-known works there, among which *El amor brujo* (1914-15), the *Nights in the Gardens of Spain* (1911-15) and the *Siete Canciones Populares Españolas* (1914). This song cycle consists of artfully arranged Spanish folk songs. The melody of *El paño moruno* comes from the south (once occupied by the Moors); the text seems simple but can be seen as a metaphor for the honour of women before marriage: 'on the Moorish cloth in the shop a stain has fallen, it is now sold for less, for it has lost its value'. The *Asturiana* refers to Asturias in the north. The *Jota* is probably from Aragón, although it is one of the most widespread dances in Spain. *Nana* is a lullaby. The *Canción* is a passionate song with a rather complicated text; is it about a deceived lover or is it about a girl who thinks of her mother and feels betrayed by life? Finally, the *Polo* is a kind of 'cante flamenco', as is still often sung, especially in Andalusia.

The French composer Paule Maurice, who with her husband, the composer and music theorist Pierre Lantier (1910-1998), taught at the Paris Conservatoire for many years, is best known to the outside world for her suite *Tableaux de Provence*. The five movements of this work were created between 1948 and 1955 for the saxophonist Marcel Mule, whose son Pol (later a well-known conductor) studied with Maurice. The Lantier and Mule families spent many years holidaying together in Provence, which inspired the refined and evocative music of the *Tableaux*.

The titles are in Provençal, while the music is in many ways reminiscent of that from Catalonia or Cataluña. The *Farandoulo di chatouno* is a farandole, a round dance, of young girls. The *Cansoun per ma mio* is a song for my beloved. *La Boumiano* describes a bohemian or gypsy woman in this case. *Dis Alyscamps l'amo souspire* means 'the soul of the Alyscamps sighs'. This is the famous Roman necropolis (already one of the most famous in Roman times) just outside Arles. Alyscamps is the Provençal version of the Champs d'Élysées, the eternal fields. *Lou Cabridan* (a hornet or horsefly) is the first written part of this suite.

How different in atmosphere are the *Cinq danses exotiques* by Jean Françaix from 1957/61. Françaix wrote the short pieces in 1957 as part of an eight-part suite for two pianos. Four years later, he arranged five of them for alto saxophone and piano. Each part refers to a Latin American dance, successively the *Pambiche*, *Baião*, *Mambo*, *Samba Lenta* and *Merengue*. This is nice-sounding, easy-going music, in which we have to take the term 'exotic' with a pinch of salt.

Finally, this album contains four separate short works. Firstly, the famous *Pièce en forme de Habanera* by Maurice Ravel, originally a vocalise created during the work on the short opera *L'heure espagnole* in 1907 and then mainly known in the version for violin. Although Ravel's family originated from the Basque Country, it was not until late that he allowed Spanish influences into his music, but then it was an immediate hit, certainly with this 'habanera', but also with *L'heure espagnole* and the *Rapsodie espagnole* and much later the *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*. By the way, this habanera is very similar to Albéniz's tango on this album.

In 1917, Darius Milhaud travelled to Brazil in the service of the Propaganda Department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to work for two years as an ambassador under the leadership of the well-known writer and diplomat Paul Claudel. Here he met Heitor Villa-Lobos and found inspiration for several works that he later composed, including part of the light-hearted incidental music for Molière's play *Le médecin volant* (The Flying Doctor) from 1937. In the same year, he arranged fragments of it for a suite for two pianos under the title *Scaramouche*, which became popular in numerous arrangements (partly by

Milhaud himself). The 'mouvement de Samba' *Brazileira* is the third movement of this suite.

Just as Milhaud left for Brazil, Villa-Lobos decided to travel to France in 1923, partly at Milhaud's instigation. There he achieved success after success with works that he had mostly completed before his departure. Even before Milhaud's visit, Villa-Lobos had studied a lot of French music. This is also evident in the symphonic poem *Naufração de Kleônicos* from 1916, from which a fragment soon became popular in numerous arrangements, *O canto do cisne negro*, the Song of the Black Swan. Saint-Saëns' swan is not far away...

Kurt Weill also loved the tango and habanera, which was very popular in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s in pubs, cabarets and concert halls. *Youkali* is an instrumental 'tango-habanera' from the incidental music for *Marie galante* (1934) by Jacques Deval. The atmosphere betrays the Berlin cabaret in the sombre 1930s, especially in Germany. As the text says: *Youkali* is the land of our desires, of happiness and pleasure. But it is a dream...

Leo Samama, 2022

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Duo IJlstra-García

Gently she lifted her foot off the pedal. The last titillation of the piano's string was muted and made way for that enticing second between music and applause. That moment of silence that shelters eternity. In that same gesture she opened her eyes and saw how her friend relieved her lungs from the emptiness. Their eyes met and sparkled.

It had felt like another journey through time and space, across mythical lands and unearthly paintings. Not a bad big, Femke would say.

That the two of them got on so well, neither had expected. Celia, a pianist with Spanish roots and appropriate passion, and Femke, very blonde saxophonist from the phlegmatic north of the Netherlands.

"Music can be very nasty. There is beauty in that too. I think you're more of a pleaser, Celia." Said Femke to her after a concert.

"Well, I quite like it that you provoke the audience, but I do indeed want people to go home feeling happy. A concert is like a night of storytelling. And yes, a good story does sting a little bit."

"Yes, aggression and madness!" joked Femke.

It had been a little big bang. The origin of their own musical universe. New planets, solar storms, star showers, dark matter... and endless colours. They formed a duo to convert their somewhat odd friendship into sound.

"You are sweet, but sometimes a bit too hectic!"

"Haha! No bullshit, as usual." Celia retorted. *"You are so candid. I appreciate that."*

"Am I too dominant?"

"Nah, you are a sweetheart"

Following that conversation they continued their dialogue, without words, with the saxophone and the piano as eager translators.

Brendan Jan Walsh

TRPTK

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Brendon Heinst founder, recording and mastering engineer at TRPTK

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Microtech Gefell M930

Microphone preamplifiers

Millennia HV-3D-8

AD/DA conversion

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Credits

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