

Manuel de Falla's *Homenajes* for orchestra

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Manuel de Falla's *Homenajes* suite for orchestra was written in Granada in 1938 and given its first performance in Buenos Aires in 1939 conducted by the composer. It was Falla's first major work since the *Soneto a Córdoba* for voice and harp (1927) and his first for full orchestra since *El sombrero de tres picos*, first performed in 1919. In the intervening years Falla worked on *Atlántida* (1926-46), the unfinished work which he called a scenic cantata. Falla died in 1946 and the *Homenajes* suite remains his last major original work. The suite consists of four previously composed pieces: *Fanfare sobre el nombre de Arbós* (1933); orchestrations of the *Homenaje 'Le tombeau de Claude Debussy'* (1920) for solo guitar; *Le tombeau de Paul Dukas* (1935) for piano; and *Pedrelliana* (1938) which was conceived directly for orchestra. Very little has been written about the work and there has been no study of its historical and musical contexts.¹ The drawing together of some of these threads illustrates that the *Homenajes* suite is not a fixed musical entity and that while writing it Falla was still concerned with the composition of *Atlántida*.

By the mid-1920s, Falla was an international figure, conducting or playing his music at home and abroad. He had studied composition in Paris with Dukas and Debussy and in Spain with Felipe Pedrell. Among his most popular works were the ballets *El amor brujo* (1914-15) and *El sombrero de tres picos*. The Spanish conductor Eduardo Fernández Arbós helped to popularize these works by frequently performing the orchestral suites derived from them. After this point Falla's career was less spectacular, partly due to the more restricted appeal of *El retablo de Maese Pedro* (1919-22) and the *Concerto* (1923-26), and to his obsession with *Atlántida*.

Falla was greatly upset by the violence of the Spanish civil war, particularly the associated anti-religious activities.² His already precarious state of health deteriorated further as did the compositional impasse which he faced with *Atlántida*. In 1938, Falla received an offer to conduct a series of concerts in Buenos Aires and

accepted the offer hoping that conditions in Argentina would be more conducive to work than in war-torn Spain. So that he could present a new work at these concerts, Falla worked steadily on the *Homenajes* suite before leaving for Argentina. On the arrival of Falla and his sister María del Carmen in Buenos Aires on 18 October 1939 the suite was still not complete.³ After a period of revision and rehearsal, the suite was premiered on 18 November 1939 at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires. Falla and María del Carmen subsequently remained in Argentina where Falla died on 14 November 1946.

Three factors may have motivated Falla to combine these four *Homenajes* into an orchestral suite. He may have assembled the suite in order to give a premiere performance in Argentina. A first performance of *Atlántida* would have been out of the question, because despite twelve years work it was still far from complete, due to the frustrations of poor health and war. Falla may have conceived the *Homenajes* suite as an opportunity to work with larger orchestral forces. Not since *El sombrero de tres picos* had Falla written for large orchestra and the works of the intervening years employed smaller resources. The *Homenajes* suite is scored for the largest orchestra Falla had ever used and it is possible that he saw this as an opportunity to hone his orchestral technique in preparation for *Atlántida*, the work that he saw as the culmination of his career. He made numerous revisions to the score until his death, most of these changes being details of orchestration.⁴

The four pieces are similar in that they are all homages to other musicians. However, the eighteen-year period (1920-38) in which the pieces were composed, and the widely contrasting styles and forms that Falla used, gives little basis for musical unity within a suite. Falla allowed for separate performances of pieces from the suite and on at least two occasions he conducted performances of only one or two of the movements from the suite.⁵

The *Homenajes* for orchestra opens with the *Fanfare sobre el nombre de Arbós*. Enrique

Fernández Arbós travelled extensively as a violin soloist but it was as a conductor that he made his most significant contribution to Spanish musical life.⁶ In 1904 he was appointed conductor of the Madrid Symphony Orchestra, a position he was to hold until the outbreak of civil war in 1936. Arbós was instrumental in having modern music performed in Spain and he was a champion of Falla's music. He conducted the premiere of *Noches en los jardines de España*, and the first Spanish performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* in 1932. Arbós and Falla corresponded regularly and there are no less than 135 letters and telegrams to Falla during the period 1916 to 1924.⁷

Falla wrote his *Fanfare sobre el nombre de Arbós* on the island of Mallorca in response to a request for a fanfare in honour of Arbós's seventieth birthday.⁸ Falla received the invitation to compose the fanfare on 4 January 1934 and wired Arbós on 24 March that the piece was on its way to Madrid for the premiere, scheduled for 28 March.⁹ Pieces by Falla, Julio Gómez, Gustavo Pittaluga, Ernesto Halffter, Julián Bautista, Oscar Esplá, Joaquín Turina, Salvador Bacarisse, Adolfo Salazar, Conrado del Campo, Facundo de la Viña, Rodolfo Halffter and Fernando Remancha, a virtual who's who of Spanish music, were written for this occasion. Falla derived a seven note scale from Arbós's name to form the pitch material of the *Fanfare*:

E.	F.	A	R	B	O	S
PITCH: E F A D(re)Bb C(do)G(sol)						

These notes form a D aeolian scale. The piece is scored for four horns in F, three trumpets, timpani, military drum and muffled drum. The *Fanfare* was enthusiastically received by Arbós who remarked that it carried the mark of Falla.¹⁰

This piece was not Falla's only fanfare. He included fanfares in *El sombrero de tres picos*, the unfinished *Atlántida* and in *El retablo de Maese Pedro* where they announce or punctuate the drama.¹¹ Like the *Fanfare sobre el nombre de Arbós* these fanfares are mainly scored for brass and percussion. In his thesis on *Atlántida*, Andrew Budwig observed that the four passages of fanfares in *El retablo de Maese Pedro* and *Atlántida* are

closely related to a thirteen-bar fanfare Falla composed in August 1921 for the British magazine *Fanfare*.¹² Both the *Fanfare sobre el nombre de Arbós* and *Fanfare pour une fête* (1921) are characterized by three features: fourths in the bass line provided by the timpani, a limited range of notes, and alternating duple and triple rhythms in the upper parts.

Immediately after the *Homenaje* to Debussy, the second piece of the suite, Falla inserted a nine bar reprise of the initial fanfare which ends on a C major chord with a D added. This sonority facilitates the transition from the A minor tonality of the *Homenaje* to Debussy to the F minor tonality of the following *Pour le tombeau de Paul Dukas*.

Falla's *Homenaje* to Debussy was written for and dedicated to the Catalan guitarist Miguel Llobet. The two Spaniards met and developed a friendship after Falla moved to Paris in 1907. The idea of writing a homage to Debussy was suggested to Falla by Henry Prunières, who was preparing an issue of *La Revue Musicale* entitled *Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy* and requested an article on the musical influence of Debussy on Spanish music and of the Spanish influence on Debussy's music. Falla's article 'Claude Debussy and Spain' was published in *La Revue Musicale* on 1 December 1920.¹³ The *Homenaje* to Debussy was included in a musical supplement to this issue which also contained homages by Dukas, Roussel, Malipiero, Eugene Goossens, Bartók, Florent Schmitt, Stravinsky, Ravel and Satie.

Falla's arrangement of the *Homenaje* to Debussy for orchestra is very different from the version for piano which he arranged in August 1920. The piano version is a straightforward transcription of the guitar work without any changes of register or the addition of pianistic devices. On the other hand, the orchestral version is full of details and subtleties reminiscent of Debussy's orchestral writing. It is possible that Falla was paying homage yet again to Debussy and he knew most of Debussy's orchestral works well and kept annotated scores of a number of them.¹⁴ In 'Claude Debussy and Spain' Falla makes special mention of Debussy's *Ibéria*.¹⁵ With reference to this work Falla wrote: '... our incessantly active imagination is captivated by a music intensely expressive and rich in nuances'.¹⁶ Falla's annotations on the



Example 1a. *Les parfums de la nuit*, Fig. 37, bar 2. Harp.

score of *Ibéria* clearly show his interest in the way Debussy achieved these effects, especially through orchestration. The most heavily marked of the three movements is the second, *Les parfums de la nuit*. Amongst his points of interest written inside the back cover of the score, Falla noted the use of pizzicato 'cellos and basses and single note mordents in the harp part (Example 1). The *Homenaje to Debussy* is full of such mordents and pizzicato effects, some of which are unique to the orchestral version. He also marked Debussy's use of celesta and harp. Of special interest are the references to the harp rhythm in Example 2a with its insinuations of the habanera, and the use of a



Example 1b. *Homenaje to Debussy*, Fig. 1, bar 6. Harp.

repeated note figure in the celesta part in Example 2b which Falla marks 'quasi guitarra'. The celesta plays a very similar figure from bar 38 until bar 42 of the *Homenaje to Debussy*, the first two bars of which are given as in Example 2c.

Falla knew Debussy's harp music well and performed arrangements of the *Danses sacrées et profanes* for harp and orchestra and the *Sonate pour flûte, alto et harpe*. In these arrangements Falla played the harp part on piano. Falla's orchestration of the *Homenaje to Debussy* achieves guitar effects on the harp, such as *pizzicato* and strummed chords, and in turn, the orchestral version of the *Homenaje to Debussy* is subtitled *Elegía de la*



Example 2a, *Les parfums de la nuit* Fig. 42, bar 4. Harp.



Example 2b, *Les parfums de la nuit* Fig. 64, bar 5. Celesta.



Example 2c, *Homenaje to Debussy* Fig. 6, bars 1-2. Harp and celesta.

guitarra.

The orchestral version of *Le Tombeau de Paul Dukas* uses the largest orchestra of the suite. This may be an additional homage to Dukas, who was renowned for his expertise at orchestration. Dukas taught Falla composition and orchestration and was the first composer Falla met after his arrival in Paris. At their first encounter Falla played Dukas his opera *La vida breve* on the piano. At the conclusion Dukas reportedly exclaimed: "That's good enough to be put on at the *Opéra Comique!*"¹⁷ Dukas and Falla became good friends and corresponded regularly until Dukas's death in 1935.

Falla was asked to write a piece, *Le tombeau de Paul Dukas*, which, as with the *Homenaje* to Debussy, was to be included in a musical supplement to the May-June 1936 issue of *La Revue Musicale*. Nine unpublished piano pieces were included in the supplement to this issue, composed by Falla, Florent Schmitt, Gabriel Pierné, Guy Ropartz, Joaquín Rodrigo, Julien Krien, Olivier Messiaen, Tony Aubin and Elsa Barraine, all friends or pupils of Dukas.

Falla wrote the *Le tombeau de Paul Dukas* for piano in Granada and dated it December 1935. The orchestral arrangement made in 1938 has a subtitle: *Spes vitae* (hope of life). Throughout this piece the strings play almost continuously, with the brass and woodwinds used in many differing combinations, showing that Falla made the most of the orchestral palette he chose to work with.

Further changes to the homage to Dukas were made even after Falla had completed most of the work on the *Homenajes* in Granada during 1938. Midway through 1946 Falla wrote to Juan José Castro: "... please do me a big favour and direct the copyists' attention to the small modifications I had to make to the material, among those the final chord of the *Dukas*, I think I have it, finally! I have found it. . ."¹⁸ This reference relates to the orchestration rather than the harmonization of the final chord. The final orchestration he chose is strings, timpani, tam-tam and clarinet.

Among Dukas's scores known by Falla were *La perle* and *L'apprenti sorcier*. Inside his copy of the latter, on a blank page, Falla wrote a detailed harmonic analysis of the work. Elsewhere there are numerous references to orchestral groupings and doublings. Although there are no obvious

references to things Falla may have used in his homage to Dukas, it is certain that he studied and held Dukas's music in high esteem.

Pedrelliana, the last piece of the *Homenajes* suite, is based on themes from works by Felipe Pedrell, one of the most important figures in Spain's musical renaissance in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Pedrell was more than a scholar and showed his students, including Falla, Granados and Roberto Gerhard, the way to a Spanish national art by his example as a composer and musicologist. His music illustrated how popular elements in musical culture could become personal inspiration. Falla wrote an article for *La Revue Musicale* after Pedrell's death in 1922, noting that 'through his doctrine and with his example, he led Spanish musicians towards a profoundly national and noble art'.¹⁹

Falla made a number of orchestrations of Pedrell's music. In 1937, while in Granada, Falla arranged a march by Pedrell, *Himno marcial*, for voice, piano and drums.²⁰ After the completion of the *Homenajes* suite and the revision and arrangement of a number of choral pieces by Victoria, Falla also revised three works by Pedrell.²¹ These were done in 1941 in connection with the centenary of Pedrell's birth. Two of these are from Pedrell's opera *Los Pirineos*, the motet *Glorys al senior*, and *Canción de la estrella*, which Falla orchestrated for soprano and orchestra. *Romance de Don Joan y Don Ramón* was revised by Falla for a concert in honour of Pedrell and is for a mixed choir of six voices.

Pedrelliana is constructed from themes taken from Pedrell's opera, *La celestina*, written while Falla was studying with him. Particular reference is made to the *cacería* (hunting) scene from *La celestina* which Falla quotes throughout *Pedrelliana*. Pedrell wrote to Falla on 21 January 1919 that his pupil Roberto Gerhard would send him a transcription of this scene and adds that Falla would remember this scene perfectly. Falla constructed a mosaic-like structure from Pedrell's themes and retains the nineteenth-century flavour. *Pedrelliana* was performed separately in a concert of Spanish music conducted by Falla at the Teatro Rivera Indante de Córdoba in Argentina on 28 October 1945. Also on the programme were an orchestral version of *Dos tonadillas* by Granados,

a piece by Albeniz, and Falla's *Noches en los jardines de España*. *Pedrelliana* is more successful as an independent work than as part of the suite and Falla was happy with it in its own right. In a letter dated 8 February 1946 Falla wrote in reference to *Pedrelliana*: 'what you feel when you hear this is not only due to the love I've put into this but to the pure beauty of the music—most of which is by Pedrell'.²² When he wrote *Pedrelliana* Falla was referring to a vocal score of the work. Although Falla used thematic material from *La Celestina*, he had the task of orchestration. The orchestra consists of a full complement of woodwinds, four horns, timpani and strings. As for the other *Homenajes*, this work shows close attention to details of orchestration—details which Falla was constantly revising.

A feature of Falla's character throughout his life was that he was drawn to composers and figures he admired. His penchant for pieces in homage to other composers or musicians, whether they be arrangements or not, shows that he was constantly renewing his influences. Falla struggled with problems of style and form during his last years and with a disciplined approach was always open to carefully selected outside influences.

A consideration of some of the issues pertaining to the *Homenajes* suite highlights Falla's preoccupations at the time. The difficulties involved in completing *Atlántida*, which seemed to grow each year, were exacerbated by Falla's ill-health and the civil war. The suite presented Falla with an opportunity to return to some fundamental principles of orchestration and also to the musical figures that had been so important in his musical development. The catalyst for the composition of the suite was an invitation to direct a series of concerts in Buenos Aires. The *Homenajes* suite is a direct product of Falla's personal situation which helps us to understand his musical thinking at a time when he had reached an impasse in the composition of *Atlántida*.

NOTES

¹ In preparing the historical part of this article Jorge de Persia's *Los últimos años de Manuel de Falla* (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores de España, 1989), the most comprehensive study of Falla's last years, has been an important source. The assistance of Michael Christoforidis

who is currently preparing the Falla entry for the *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana* has also been invaluable.

² Andrew Budwig and Gilbert Chase, *Manuel de Falla: A Bibliography and Research Guide* (New York: Garland, 1986), p. 39.

³ Persia, *Los últimos*, p. 59.

⁴ Persia, *Los últimos*, p. 73.

⁵ Persia, *Los últimos*, p. 73.

⁶ Arthur Jacobs, 'Arbós, Enrique Fernández', in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, ed. Stanley Sadie, (London: Macmillan, 1980), Vol. I, pp. 545-46.

⁷ These are held in the Manuel de Falla Archive in Granada.

⁸ Persia, *Los últimos*, p. 76.

⁹ Budwig and Chase, *Manuel de Falla*, p. 179.

¹⁰ Persia, *Los últimos*, p. 76.

¹¹ Falla also used fanfares in his incidental music for *El gran teatro del mundo* (1927) and *La vuelta de Egipto* (1935).

¹² Budwig and Chase, *Manuel de Falla*, p. 69.

¹³ Manuel de Falla, *Musical Writings*, trans. John Thomson and David Urman (London: Marion Boyars, 1978), p. 22.

¹⁴ These scores are at the Manuel de Falla Archive and include annotated copies of *La Mer*, *Ibérica* and *Nocturnes*.

¹⁵ Falla, *Writings*, p. 44.

¹⁶ Falla, *Writings*, p. 44.

¹⁷ Jaime Pahissa, *Manuel de Falla: His Life and Works* (London: Museum Press, 1954), p. 42.

¹⁸ Persia, *Los últimos*, p. 82.

¹⁹ Falla, *Writings*, p. 54.

²⁰ Antonio Gallego, *Catálogo de Obras de Manuel de Falla* (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1987), p. 254.

²¹ Gallego, *Catálogo de Obras*, pp. 272-76.

²² Persia, *Los últimos*, p. 77.