

# An Evening in Spain

Sunday, March 20, 2022 | Holy Trinity Anglican Church

*Program notes by Morgan Luethe*

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*Lamma Bad Yatathana* (Arab Andalusian Muwashshah)

Considered one of the most famous Arabic poems of its era, *Lamma Bad Yatathana* exists today in many versions. A seductive secular text describing the hypnotic sway that a dancing beloved holds over an on-looking lover, the song lilts to a *samai thaqil* poetic meter of ten beats to a bar with accents sounded on the first, sixth, and seventh contrasting with those on the fourth and eight. With the traditional roots of the genre dating as far back as the ninth and tenth centuries, *Lamma Bad Yatathana* is thought to have mostly likely been the work of Ibn al-Khatib (1313–1374), an Arab Andalusian polymath whose poems decorate walls of the palace of Alhambra in Granada.

**Oswaldo Golijov** (b. 1960)

From *Ayre* (2004): Part I, arr. Roberto Occhipinti

II. *Una madre comió asado* (A mother roasted her child)

V. *Nani*

IX. *Sueltate las cintas*

Argentinian composer Oswaldo Golijov's two-part song cycle, *Ayre*, depicts the vibrant intersection of Sephardic Jewish, Islamic, and Christian cultural influences that occurred in Andalusia during the Middle Ages. While the songs are not themselves folk music, as individual works, they're each infused with it and strive to highlight the relatively cosmopolitan atmosphere of pre-Reconquista Spain. Throughout the cycle, Golijov pursues the sense of a musical-poetic heritage shared between the faiths and ethnicities that interacted closely with one another at that time.

While, as a cohesive work, Golijov's *Ayre* captures the essence of a remarkably fertile historical period of cultural exchange, individual songs also seek to penetrate humanity's uncomfortable contradictions. *Una madre comió asado*, the second song of the cycle's first part, is a traditional Jewish lullaby set to a simple, childlike melody that clashes with a text mourning a terrible act of infanticide. Over top of an undulating, harp-like accompaniment, another Sephardic lullaby, *Nani*, frames the sorrowful scene of a mother singing to an infant son while painfully acknowledging that the child's father has taken a lover. *Sueltate las cintas*, contrasting with the other selections, is a brief sultry love song collaboratively contributed to *Ayre* by the composer's colleague and countryman, musician and producer Gustavo Santaollala.

Originally conceived for soprano soloist and small ensemble, these selections from *Ayre* appear in an arrangement for soloist and piano trio accompaniment by Roberto Occhipinti.

**Manuel Garcia Morante** (b. 1937)

From *Forty Canciones Sefardies* (1983)

*A la una naci yo*

*Nani*

*“Morena” me llaman*

*Adios, queridas*

*Ya salió de la mar galana*

Manuel Garcia Morante’s 1983 collection, *Forty Canciones Sefardies*, distills the unique flavour of Sephardic folksong in evocative arrangements that reposition them on the spectrum between folk and art traditions. While at the time of publication, Morante’s volume garnered criticism among scholars on the grounds that the composer had distorted the meanings of songs by altering text and prosody and by setting the songs to evocative accompaniments, understanding *Forty Canciones Sefardies* as a largely original song cycle that draws its melodic inspiration from primary sources in folksong invites listeners to appreciate both the traditional and non-traditional elements of the work. Morante’s treatment of these songs seeks to animate the ancient texts through a lens of haunting harmonic and melodic support from the piano.

**Enrique Arbós** (1863–1939)]

*Tres piezas originales en estilo español*, op. 1 (pub. 1910)

I. *Bolero*

Arbós’ pieces “in the Spanish style,” while drawing inspiration from the Spanish folk music tradition, are original pieces. Composed early in his career, Arbós’ *Three Pieces* date from the late 1880s during his extended in Germany which culminated in a stint as concertmaster for the Berlin Philharmonic. *Bolero*, the first in this suite of pieces, presents a lively yet formal rendition of the popular Spanish ballroom dance style. Leaning heavily on its snappy rhythmic drive, the piece is a charming salon showpiece that pleasantly depicts the romantic 19<sup>th</sup> century Spain of Bizet’s *Carmen*.

**Fernando Obradors** (1897–1945)

From *Canciones clásicas españolas*, Vol. 1

*La mi sola, Laureola*

*Al amor*

*¿Corazón, porqué pasáis*

*El majo celoso*

*Con amores, la mi madre*

*Del cabello más sutil*

*Chiquitita la novia*

A pianist and self-taught composer, Fernando Obradors composed four volumes of *Canciones clásicas españolas* that appeared between 1921 and 1941. A broad survey of classic Spanish poetry, the overarching theme of the song cycle comprising the first volume is love – romantic, platonic, and familial. Obradors draws on the literature of Spain's Golden Age when setting *La mi sola*, *Laureola*, and *Al amor*, vivifying their poetry in accompaniments that variously seek to evoke the excited heartbeats of the infatuated, the jealous skittering of a young lover, and the retreat into oneself after following heartbreak. The most widely known installment of Obradors' project, the first volume of *Canciones clásicas españolas* highlights centuries of diverse poetic and musical influence using a combination of attractive melodic flourishes, harmonic zest, and alluring dance rhythms throughout.

**Joaquín Turina (1882–1949)**

Piano Quartet in A Minor, Op. 67 (1931)

- I. *Lento – Andante mosso*
- II. *Vivo*
- III. *Andante – Allegretto*

Turina, like his countryman and friend Manuel de Falla, numbers among the flock of Spanish artists and musicians drawn into the crackling cultural and artistic milieu active in Paris at the outset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His Piano Quartet in A Minor speaks the impressionistic musical dialect the composer absorbed through his earlier acquaintances with both Ravel and Debussy and derives its thematically linked, three-movement structure. The work opens with a lyrical slow introduction that flowers into a lilting depiction of a Spanish garden or quiet sunbaked countryside. The upbeat middle movement departs from the muted tone of the quartet's opening with a cheerful, dance-like motif while referring to the darker thematic material of the first movement's introduction for contrast. The brief *Andante* of the finale soon gives way to a comfortably paced *Allegretto* that weaves alternating energetic, rhythmically driven passages with more lyrical, perfumed episodes that culminate in the work's stately conclusion.