



“Musical Moments” in the Career of Manuel de Falla’s Favorite Friend Federico García Lorca

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ABSTRACT

While still in his teens, Federico García Lorca (born June 5, 1898), Spain’s foremost playwright and poet of the twentieth century, aspired at becoming a professional musician. His penetrating analyses of provincial musical life are followed in this article with characterizations of his New York and Havana musical encounters. Manuel de Falla, his lifetime devotee, wrote a fervent letter to Havana friends, praising Lorca to the skies.

In Cuba Lorca teamed with Adolfo Salazar, who had been his protagonist since 1921. Falla pleaded for his life several hours too late, after his assassination August 18, 1936. The present essay goes beyond all previous chronologies of Lorca’s “musical moments” by virtue of the detailed attention given to their environmental context.

I GRANADA BEGINNINGS

THE PRIVILEGED life of Federico García Lorca, Spain’s supreme modern era poet and playwright, spanned the interval between the Spanish-American War and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Born June 5, 1898, at Fuente Vaqueras, Granada province, he was the first son of a wealthy landowning native of Fuente Vaqueras, Federico García Rodríguez (b. 1859). The poet’s mother Vicenta Lorca Romero, whose father died during her childhood, received her elementary education in a nun’s school for poor girls. Bent on herself becoming a girl’s primary school teacher, she enrolled in the Women’s Teachers’ Training College at Granada in 1888 and upon graduation in 1892 was assigned to the girls’ elementary school at Fuente Vaqueras. Childless, recently widowed Federico García Rodríguez married her on

August 27, 1897. The poet’s siblings, born at Fuente Vaqueras June 1, 1902 and April 14, 1903, were Francisco and María de la Concepción (Concha). Isabel was born at Granada October 24, 1909.

In the autumn of 1909 the future unrivaled poet and playwright began six years of piano lessons with a native of Granada, who was harmony teacher in the local conservatory, Antonio Segura Mesa (1842–1916 [May 26]). The composer of orchestral works and of a zarzuela with lyrics by José Portero Requena, *Dos Telegramas*,¹ premiered in the local Teatro Isabel Católica on February 15, 1877, Antonio Segura laid the foundation of what adolescent Federico dreamed of developing into a lifetime career.

¹ Conserved in the Archivo General de Autores y Editores at Madrid. Biographical study in *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana* [DMEH] 9, 2002: 910.



Granada's most distinguished nineteenth-century musical visitor had been Glinka, supported there by his mother from early December 1845 to March 1846.² While in Granada, Glinka "tried to note down folk tunes, but found it difficult because of the constant variants the singers made upon each repetition of the melody" (Brown, 253). Glinka's cavilings presaged the difficulties that would-be transcribers of *cante jondo*, *primitivo canto andaluz* ("deep song, primitive Andalusian song"),³ encountered when Lorca gave his lecture *El Cante Jondo* on February 19, 1922, in the Centro Artístico at Granada. In company with Manuel de Falla he promoted at Granada June 13 and 14, 1922, a Fiesta del Cante Jondo. The Fiesta para los niños held in the Lorca home on January 6, 1923, included *Los dos habladores* (then ascribed to Cervantes), into which Falla inserted excerpts drawn from Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* and from works by Debussy and Ravel.

However, Federico's musical musings did not begin with *cante jondo*. On April 17, 1917, the year after Segura's death, he published in the *Diario de Burgos* his essay *Las reglas de la música*. After invoking the power of Beethoven's Appassionata Sonata and the tenderness of Chopin's Nocturnes, he credited Rameau with the added sixth and Glinka with priority in the use of whole tones. Continuing, he asserted: "Academicians who worry over consecutive fifths fail to recognize their fascinating uses by Debussy. Nonetheless, for the beginner, the rules are a necessity. Once having mastered them, strong and even weak but inspired spirits refrain from bothering with rules."

Take, for example, Wagner, so looked down upon, but so loved, Ravel, who gives instruments a new sound, and Debussy, with his deep and extravagant melancholy.... Debussy's use of [consecutive] seconds cannot be called or deserve being deemed absurd. What can be affirmed is: "I like it," or "I don't like it."

Federico concludes: "Whenever we confront a musical work that supremely expresses a state of mind, we must remain silent.... Strauss now composes: his *Don Quixote*, so discussed by many—

²David Brown, *Mikhail Glinka: a biographical and critical study* (London, New York; Oxford University Press, 1974): 253–54.

³"El Cante Jondo Primitivo Canto Andaluz," *Obras Completas* [OC], edición del cincuentenario, recopilación, cronología, bibliografía y notas, edited by Arturo del Hoyo (Madrid: Aguilar, 1986) 3: 195–216.

especially its extravagant orchestration—but step by step we learn what he desires conveying."

II YOUTHFUL TRAVEL INSIGHTS

During the week of June 8–16, 1916, García Lorca's first trip in company with his Granada University preceptor, Martín Domínguez Berrueta, took him to Baeza, Bartolomé Ramos de Pareja's "forgotten city." His description of the journey, published in *Letras* (Granada) December 30, 1917, reappears in *Obras Completas* (hereafter *OC*) 3: 65–75. In a missive dated at Granada February 1, 1918, to María del Reposo Urquía, whom he had met at Baeza, he mentions her as a "lover of Chopin" and an "excellent interpreter of his works" (*OC* 3: 689). However, in *Letras* he lamented the poor attempt by a children's group at a canzoneta reminiscent of Schubert's melancholy. The hapless town crier who circled Baeza on a hot summer afternoon sounded anguished. After repeating pitches followed by a burst "worthy of a Wagnerian curse," he strode by exhibiting as ugly a countenance as the ugliness of his cry.

Again under the guidance of his Granada University preceptor and now with five university student companions,⁴ Federico took a trip through Castilla la Vieja, lasting from June 15 to September 1, 1917. His memories confided to his first published book, *Impresiones y paisajes* (Granada: February 1, 1918), dedicated to the memory of his revered music instructor Antonio Segura and "to my beloved teacher Martín Domínguez Berrueta" document his musical sensitivity. They do not always flatter the common folk who journeyed on the same conveyances from Madrid. In the diligence that took them a distance from Burgos, some of the passengers began singing detestable couplets from a current "Madrid idiocy, made worse by the driver's grunting."⁵

⁴Paquito L. Rodríguez, Luis Mariscal, Ricardo G. Ortega, Manuel Martínez Carrión, Rafael M. Ibáñez.

⁵*OC* 3: 35. En vez de una melodía casi gregoriana por su lentitud y sencillez (matiz que tienen muchos cantos de esta tierra) escuché un cuplé espantoso de una fea chulería madrileña, El cochero gritaba las notas de una manera imposible de soportar. Todas mis meditaciones se rompieron.... Solo pensaba amargamente en las detestable y criminal obras de algunos musiquillos españoles.... Haced melodías, pero ¡por Dios y su Madre, no hagáis habaneras de alma grosera y canallesca!



After Burgos, Cartuja de Miraflores, and San Pedro de Cardeña, Federico arrived unaccompanied at the Monasterio de Silos. In his observations of the celebration of High Mass on a feast day, he pays highest tribute to the solemnity and beauty of the Silos monks' singing, accompanied discreetly by organ. His visit occurred when Casiano Rojo Olalla (1877–1931) served as Maestro de Coro (1901–1922). Rojo Olalla was a pupil of Solesmes monk Dom Joseph Pothier (1835–1923), head of the commission appointed by Pope Pius X to prepare a new official Vatican edition of the chant.⁶

Entering the vestibule of the church with its chief altar dedicated to Saint Sebastian, Federico found seated in the president's seat between two rows of monks Abbot Luciano Serrano Pineda (1879–1944), who held office from 1917 to his death.

The monks doffed and donned their cowls with an admirable rhythm and with a tragically solemn theatricality, retaining all the enormous strength of the ancient liturgy (*con una teatralidad trágicamente solemne conservando toda la enorme fortaleza de la liturgia Antigua*). After a short pause the priests entered who celebrated the Mass. Upon arriving at the altar the officiating priests began the formidable and stirring Gregorian chant (*el canto gregoriano formidable y emocionante*). The monks bent over their breviaries. Nothing could have been more austere musically. The melodies seek to lift us above all temporal exigencies; the chant's serene phrases elevate us far beyond human tragedy. Lengthy melismas end in unexpected resolutions. After the Agnus Dei sung to an extremely rare, archaic melody, the monks united in a most beautiful and powerful last togetherness before proceeding to the tomb of Saint Dominic, where they knelt and prayed.

Meeting the youthful organist on a staircase, Lorca found him most gracious in showing the convent's prized relics. Next they spoke of other music. The organist, having entered the convent as a child, knew

⁶Concerning the commission's history, see Ismael Fernández de la Cuesta, "La reforma del canto gregoriano en el entorno del *Motu Proprio* [1903] de Pio X," *Revista de Musicología* 27.1 (June 2004): 57. Author of *Les mélodies grégoriennes d'après la tradition* (Tournai: Desclée Lefebvre, 1880), Pothier left to fellow Solesmes monk Dom André Mocquereau (1849–1930), the imposition of rhythmic signs invented by Mocquereau. The commission that began functioning in April 1904 succeeded in imposing throughout the universal church Solesmes chant versions, aided by Desclée's economic sovereignty. Nonetheless, scientists have never universally bowed low to the romantic Solesmes aesthetic and have always resented Mocquereau's fabricated rhythmic signs.

nothing of symphonic music, had never heard the romantic beauty of a violoncello, nor the sudden fury of brass. Beethoven's name evoked no response. Lorca then continued: "I am a poor musician who may not be able to play anything by Beethoven on the organ, but let us ascend to the organ loft to see whether I can recall something by him."⁷ After ascending the narrow steps to the loft, the youthful organist sang again to his own accompaniment the exquisite Agnus Dei. Then Lorca took his place on the organ bench, and played the opening measures of the second movement of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony; the organist having pulled the stops. Lorca had scarcely begun when the monk who had told him the legendary histories of the convent came up to join him and the organist. After playing as much of the movement as he could remember, Lorca and the organist descended the stairs. On their way out of the sanctuary, the organist exclaimed ¡*Sus cosas!* They passed by an enormous choirbook that had been placed on the *facistol* (choirbook stand).

After supper and the singing of the Miserere, Lorca again encountered the monk who had joined him and the organist in the loft. A prominent man of letters before entering the monastery, he was there visited by such celebrities as Ignacio Zuloaga and Miguel de Unamuno (1866–1936). He had withdrawn from the world's contentions but still acknowledged the power of music such as Beethoven's. Asked why he had withdrawn, he replied "it was dragging me down. It is *lujuria misma* (luxury itself). I advise you to leave it if you wish to escape a tormented life. It breathes falsehoods. Now my only music is Gregorian chant."⁸

Alone at night in the monastery garden, Lorca recalled the history of Gonzalo de Berceo's broken lute.⁹ Born at Berceo (La Rioja) ca. 1196, educated at the Benedictine monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla, he spent his adult life there and in Santo Domingo de Silos monastery. The earliest known poet writing in the Castilian language, Gonzalo de

⁷Soy muy mal músico y no sé si me acordaré de algún trozo de música de esa que usted no conoce, pero, sin embargo, vamos al órgano a ver si recuerdo (*OC* 3: 51).

⁸Yo le doy a usted un consejo: abandónela, si no quiere usted una vida de tormentos. Todo en ella es falso... Ahora mi única música es el canto gregoriano (*OC* 3: 55).

⁹Queda solitaria la huerta. Por un temblor de ranazes cruza la sombra viviente de Gonzalo de Berceo que suspire enseñando su roto laúd... En la iglesia están los monjes rezando sin acompañamiento de órgano.



Berceo demonstrated his profound musical knowledge in the introduction to his *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* and elsewhere—when embracing such terms as canción, cantilena, giga, jocular, letania, laudes, modo natural (canto llano), organar (canto de órgano), organista, órgano, salterio, secuencia, vocero (cantor).¹⁰

In Lorca's last tribute to the monks' singing he recalled the Magnificat sung in the darkness with primary devotion, after which Abbot Serrano blessed the assemblage with holy water, and all retired to their cells in complete darkness. In contrast with the musicality that is shown in Lorca's playing from memory the opening portion of the allegretto in Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, and his absorption of such historic details as Gonzalo de Berceo's travails with a broken lute, Lorca reacted painfully in his Sunday afternoon in a large village (*tarde dominguera en un pueblo grande*, OC 3:113–118). He disapproved utterly of the Sunday afternoon girls' out-of-tune singing of an old romance having to do with war and affection.¹¹

Then, gathered around a central kiosk, the village band began to play. One player lacked a uniform; the uniforms of the rest were in deplorable shape. They started with an habanera from a zarzuela, a melancholy, sentimental, odious piece.¹² The tuba and the bombardins marked the languid rhythm. Now and then they lost their breath and showed their lack of technical proficiency. The clarinet uttered horrible cascades of difficult cadenzas, ending them covered with perspiration. The kettledrummer gave his drum now and then a dry thump, looking around at the public with an air of great satisfaction at what he had done. The middle-aged director moved his arms in an expressive manner, indicating from time to time when the kettledrummer should pound. Near him sat the flutist, an excessively fat tiny man with a sharp gaze around him. He breathed with great puffs, opening his eyes wide even though he played only a few extended passages; the director gazed at him with great satisfaction. And the crowd religiously approved.

¹⁰The *Homenaje a Monseñor Higinio Anglés* (Barcelona, 1958: 211–23) contains Daniel Devoto's "La enumeración de instrumentos musicales en la poesía medieval castellana." Ismael Fernández de la Cuesca's *Historia de la música española 1. Desde los orígenes hasta el "ars nova"* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1983), confronts "Los instrumentos musicales" in his chapter 16: 337–349.

¹¹OC 3: 114. Un grupo de niñas se abrazaron por la cintura y cantaron desafinadamente un viejo romance de guerra y amor.

¹²*Ibid.*: Era cursi y melancólica, y sentimental y odiosa.

Someone sitting beside Federico exclaimed on the merits of the flutist. Federico meanwhile sat horrified that such an aristocratic instrument had fallen into the hands of such a disgusting ball of fat. The habanera went on seemingly forever. Finally, darkness descended and the band mercifully stopped playing while the church bell rang. The band did perform a few more pieces and then quit when the audience dispersed to their homes. Not only did Federico completely disdain the village band's repertory, the players, the director, but also the idiotic crowd that approved of the afternoon's musical stupidity.

The journey through Castilla la Vieja ended in Galicia. At night in the port city of A Coruña he heard a distant pianist playing one of Mendelssohn's Songs Without Words. Beginning slowly amid a delicious rubato it exhaled all the romantic fragrance of the 1830's, wrote Lorca. Describing its passion, he remarked that the treble was answered by a lower voice, a description befitting the Opus 38, No. 6, known as Duetto. The fascination of its glowing sound enveloped the port.¹³

In the spring of 1919 Federico settled at Madrid in the Residencia de Estudiantes, where he remained until 1928. On March 12, 1920, Lorca's first play *El Maleficio de la Mariposa*, *Comedia en dos Actos y un Prólogo* premiered at Madrid in the Eslava Theatre. With La Argentinita (Encarnación López Júlvez) in the butterfly's role, it included dances by her, and musical excerpts by Edvard Grieg.¹⁴ On December 11, 1920, he published in *España* (Madrid) his poems *Madrigal* (written in October 1920 at Madrid, OC I, 78), *Encrucijada* (written in July 1920), and *La Sombra de mi alma* (December 1919, Madrid). The next phase of Lorca's career is covered in an enormous literature signaled in the bibliography appended to Jack Sage's article in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* (1992), in his article augmented by Álvaro Zaldívar in *The New Grove Dictionary*, second edition (2001), 4:529–30, and in the bibliography provided by Emilio Casares Rodicio at the close of his definitive article in the *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana* 5 (1999): 462–64. Yvan

¹³OC 3: 119–20: De un piano lejano llegó la romanza sin palabras... Romanza maravillosa llena del espíritu romántico del 1830... Empezó lentamente con aire rubato delicioso y entró después con un canto rebosante de apasionamientos. A veces la melodía se callaba mientras las graves daban unos acordes suaves y solemnes.

¹⁴OC 3: 1092. This insect play was a failure.

Nommick provided the Federico García Lorca entry in the *Personenteil*, Volume 7 (2002), 527–29 of the new *Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, edited by Ludwig Finscher.

III NEW YORK IMPRESSIONS

From June 1929 through February 1930 Lorca resided chiefly in New York City. Having journeyed there via Paris, Calais (June 14), Dover, London, and Oxford, he embarked at Southampton for New York in the *Olympia*, June 19. He arrived in company with reputed communist Fernando de los Ríos, engaged to teach a summer course at the New School for Social Research. Supported by monthly one-hundred dollar stipends deposited by his affluent father in an account opened in the Coin Exchange Trust Company, University Branch, Broadway 113th Street, Lorca reported living always modestly, without getting into debt.¹⁵

While in New York, he wrote his family twelve letters, dated June 28, 1929, through an unspecified date in January 1930. In his first he called the voyage "prodigious" and rated Paris and London as *pueblitos* (little towns) in comparison with New York City. Meeting him on disembarking were a group of compatriots headed by Federico de Onís (1885–1966), the Columbia University professor who procured his enrollment in the university; among them was Gabriel García Maroto, recently arrived from Mexico City (where he had made "a lot of money as a painter and illustrator of magazines" (*mucho dinero como pintor y dibujante de revistas*)). In addition to summer enrollment, Onís had arranged for Federico to live in a university student residence, where he would be obliged to learn English—which was the ostensible purpose of his New York sojourn. Every aspect of the university, his accommodations, the food, and the students whom he at once began knowing, enchanted him. He instructed his parents to send their letters to "Mr. Federico G. Lorca, Furnald Hall, Columbia University, New York City, U.S.A." He soon decided to teach the summer enrollees in Spanish language the *cachucha*, *Por la calle abajito*. The over six-hundred enrolled in Spanish language and literature courses included Chinese, Japanese, and Indians (from Asia); a sixty-year-old Cuban Ofelia

¹⁵ OC 3: 853. Once he borrowed thirty dollars from Angel del Río to keep his account liquid (3:847).

Díaz Rando was registered with him in the English course taught by Amy I. Shaw—who spoke to them solely in English.

According to him, the most fascinating aspect of the immense metropolis was precisely the mixture of races and the diversity of customs. "I hope to study it all and to provide an account of all this chaos and complexity," he wrote in his letter dated Sunday July 14, 1929. The prettiest girls enrolled were Puerto Ricans (*dos chicas preciosas de Puerto Rico, de donde son las más hermosas mujeres de América*, 3:831). He had met also in early July "a famous vanguard black [mulatto] woman, Nella Larsen, "with whom he had visited the black district, where he had witnessed surprising things." The two communicated with each other in French.¹⁶

Lorca classified Nella Larsen as an exquisite woman with that melancholy both profound and emotionally absorbing, characteristic of blacks. She invited him to a party in her Second Avenue abode, at which only blacks were present. During a second nighttime visit, again with only blacks present, they exhibited themselves in dance and song.

What a marvel their songs! Which are comparable only with *cante jondo*. A small boy sang religious songs. I seated myself at the piano and also sang. I cannot exaggerate how greatly the songs that I sang were appreciated. Among these were *Las moricas de Jaén*,¹⁷ the *No salgas paloma al campo*, and *El burro*, which they made me repeat five or six times. At my leaving they all embraced me and the writer [Nella Larsen] gave me her books with lively dedications, such a gift being considered a great honor, not usually bestowed by her.

Lorca does not specify the titles given him by Nella Larsen, who in 1930 was the first black woman [mulatta] to receive a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship. The first of two books published by Alfred A. Knopf was *Quicksand* (1928), a semi-autobiographical account (preceded by two children's stories published by "Nella Larsen Innes" in *The Brownies' Book*). In May 1919 she had married Dr. Elmer Samuel Innes, a black scientist, whom she

¹⁶ OC 3:831. Con gran asombro mío, yo me entiendo en francés con todo el mundo. Con esta escritora hablamos francés toda la tarde. . . . Esta escritora es una mujer exquisita, llena de bondad y con esa melancolía de los negros, tan profunda y tan conmovedora. Dio una reunión en su casa y asistieron solo negros.

¹⁷ Lorca's harmonization of *Las morillas de Jaén* enters OC 2: 1158–60.





divorced in 1933. Her second novel *Passing*, published in 1929, dealt with a light-skinned mulatta married to a white racist ignorant of her origin.

Because her role was crucial in introducing Lorca to black musical culture, her biography merits summarizing. The daughter of a "colored" father from the Virgin Islands, Peter Walker, a cook, and Mary Hanson, a Danish immigrant, Nella Larsen was born April 13, 1891 at Chicago. She became a stepdaughter when, after her own father's desertion, Mary Hanson on February 7, 1894, married a Dane, Peter Larson, who after moving to a white section of Chicago, changed the spelling of his name to Larsen. In 1907 he sent Nella Larsen to the Normal School of Fisk University, to complete high school. From 1912 to 1915 she took a nurse's training course at New York's Lincoln Hospital. From January 1922 to January 1926 she worked as a librarian at the New York Public Library. Her life history is an absolutely necessary propaedeutic for understanding how unique a navigator she was for Lorca's exposure to black culture.¹⁸

During García Lorca's Harlem visit, guided by Nella Larsen, he encountered a black "woman, the prettiest and most beautiful I have ever in my whole life seen" (*mujer la más bella y hermosísima que he visto en toda mi vida*). Possessor of the most perfect body to match her visage, she "danced alone a species of rumba accompanied by a tam-tam."¹⁹ Again in Nella Larsen's company he visited a black cabaret that reminded him of scenes his mother had seen in films. However, his exposure to the "small boy who sang religious songs" (*muchachillo que cantó cantos religiosos*) did not entice him to visit black churches in Harlem.

Among houses of worship that he did visit, he mentioned in his letter to his parents dated July 14, 1929, having the previous Sabbath visited the Sephardic Shearith Israel synagogue located since 1897 at 70th Street and Central Park West.

I have also been in a Jewish synagogue, of the Spanish Jews. They sang very beautiful things and there was a singer with a voice that was a prodigy, filled with

¹⁸Thadious M. Davis published *Nella Larsen Novelist of the Harlem Renaissance: A Woman's Life Unveiled* (Louisiana University Press, 1994). Ann Rayson contributed her profile to *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁹Bailó sola una especie de rumba acompañada de un tam-tam (OC 3: 832).

emotion.... The rabbi, named [David de] Sola [Pool], had the same pallid complexion as Sola Segura, his probable relative.... What was extraordinary was the singing.... The singing was awesome, filled with pathos.... it was a continuous complaint of impressive beauty.

También he estado en una sinagoga judía, de los judíos españoles. Cantaron cosas hermosísimas y había un cantante que era un prodigio de voz y de emoción.... El rabino se llama [David de] Solá, con la misma coloración pálida de Solá Segura, su probable pariente.... Lo que si era extraordinario era el canto. El canto era terrible, patético, desconsolado. Era una queja continua, de belleza impresionante (OC 3: 833).

This synagogue edifice, fifth in the series dedicated since the Mill Street synagogue was consecrated April 8, 1730, was a magnificent Greek Renaissance-type structure dedicated on Wednesday May 19, 1897, in the presence of President Grover Cleveland, Vice-President Adlai Stevenson, the state governor, city mayor, and other political notables. The dedication was solemnized with music by the Halevy Chorus directed by Leon M. Kramer, who had in 1881 succeeded David Korn as Shearith Israel's music director, and who continued as such until his decease in 1943. Kramer, who had studied at Berlin with the synagogue music authority Louis Lewandowski (1821–1891), chose as selections performed at the dedication, compositions by David Aaron Sola (1796–1860), Solomon Sulzer (1804–1890), Lewandowski, Karl Salomon, H[enry] Pereira Mendes (then Shearith Israel's rabbi), and Sir Joseph Barnby.

Promoter of musical excellence in Shearith Israel's services, H. Pereira Mendes, born April 13, 1852, at Birmingham, England, student at University College, London, 1870 to 1872, was hazzan at Manchester 1872 to 1875; Mendes served as Shearith Israel's rabbi 1877 to his retirement in 1920. Appointed Mendes's assistant in 1907, David de Sola Pool, born at London in 1885 preached his inaugural sermon on December 21, 1907, and preached his last sermon to the congregation on his eightieth birthday, May 15, 1965.²⁰

²⁰At pages 145 to 151 in his meticulously indexed monumental 595-page *An Old Faith in the New World Portrait of Shearith Israel 1654–1954* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955) Rabbi Dr. Pool traced the history of musical usage in Shearith Israel, New York's oldest synagogue. At the dedicated service of Shearith Israel's fourth synagogue structure, on Nineteenth Street, Wednesday September 11, 1860, an eighteen-voice specially-trained choir cost the synagogue \$622. Nineteenth Street heard a melodeon early in 1881. In 1884 instrumental

His one visit to a protestant edifice (denomination not specified, but not a liturgical church) left him amazed at "how there are people who can be protestants" (*como hay gentes que pueden ser protestantes*). "It is the most ridiculous [religion] and the most idiotic in the world" (*Es la más ridícula y la más idiota del mundo* [832]). Think of a church, he writes his family, where in place of a high altar (*altar mayor*) "there is an organ and in front of it a preacher (the pastor) who speaks" (*haya un órgano y delante de él un señor de levita (el pastor) que habla*). After the pastor spoke, "then everybody sings and [exits] to the street" (*luego todos cantan, y a la calle*). But he found even Catholicism quite different—because influenced by the coldness of Protestantism "it has the same coldness" (*tiene esa misma frialdad*). "Philip II, so unjustly treated in history, had the force to keep Protestantism out of Spain" (*OC* 3:833). In his letter dated about September 21, he mentions his preparation for a lecture on *La Virgen en Alfonso X el Sabio y en Gonzalo de Berceo*. Adding a further comment on protestants, he writes: "the term protestant is for me the equivalent of a dry idiot" (*el término protestante para mí es equivalente a idiota seca* [846]).

On September 23 he has matriculated in another English class and audits others. He requests the deposit of his monthly allowance for October in advance. He is now installed in John Jay Hall. On

music joined by organ was permitted at weddings; except during the fast of Ab, organ was therefore customary in Seventieth Street synagogue services.

The hazzan when Lorca attended Sabbath services was James Mesod Wahn (1875–1943) who served twenty years from 1921. Born and reared at Gibraltar, he amassed his fortune in New York City as a cigar merchant until devoting full time to his hazzan duties. At pages 145–51 of *An Old Faith* thirteen chants sung by the Shearith Israel hazzan throughout the year are notated. Lorca heard the Torah chant sung every Sabbath.

No Ashkenazi synagogue was built in New York City until Bnai Jehurun dedicated its first edifice June 30, 1827, at 119 Elm Street. The 1830 Anshe Chesed congregation counted as later offshoots: Congregations Adas Jehurun and Beth-El, the latter a forerunner of Temple Emanu-El. Congregation Bnai Jehurun, while in its Greene Street location, authorized a choir of men and boys cited in the *New York Daily Times* of March 11, 1856, as "a novel feature in the religious services of the Jews of this city." By 1859 Bnai Jehurun, Anshe Chesed, and Temple Emanu-El employed choirs. (Pool, 154). According to Pool, 154, whose authority as rabbi cannot be contested, George Gershwin on departing to take up his residence in Los Angeles bequeathed his organ not to an Ashkenazi synagogue but to Shearith Israel.

October 23 he has received an extra \$140, but assures his parents that he needs less than in Madrid. He visits the Metropolitan Museum to study various early fourteenth-century paintings that he will mention in his Gonzalo de Berceo lecture. On Christmas Eve in company with Federico de Onís, José Antonio Rubio, and other celebrities, he enjoys a surpassing meal, various Christmas festivities, and with them attends the Paulist Church on West 59th, "where was sung a magnificent Mass, celebrated with a boys' choir."²¹

Among those who escorted Lorca to the midnight mass, Mildred Adams had on August 7 (1929) organized a party honoring him. "Belonging to one of the most distinguished New York families, she gathered a large group of extremely friendly guests, and music by Albéniz and Falla was played by a quite good pianist."²² She also introduced Lorca to another midnight mass attendant, Henry Herschel Brickell, nine years older than Lorca, who was literary critic for the *New York Herald*, and an enthusiastic Hispanist. Author of "A Spanish Poet in New York," *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 21 (1943): 386–98, Brickell tells (391), of a party to which he invited Olin Downes, *New York Times* music critic 1929–1955. Downes (1886–1955) had given a lecture at the Madrid Residencia de Estudiantes on June 21, 1929, shortly after Lorca's departure for New York.²³ Before attending Brickell's party Downes had stipulated that no music would be performed. Nonetheless, Lorca sang Spanish folk songs to his own accompaniment, enchanting Downes, who had been apprised of Lorca's fame. (Toward the close of Brickell's party Downes retreated with Lorca into the kitchen, where they conversed in "execrable" French.)

On January 21 Lorca gave at Vassar College a revised version of his lecture "*Canciones de cuna españolas*" first pronounced at the Madrid Residencia de

²¹ Fuimos a la misa del Gallo, a la iglesia de los Paúles, donde cantaron una misa magnífica un coro de niños y oficiaron con una solemnidad sorprendente (*OC* 3: 860).

²² *OC* 3:839. Acudió mucha gente norteamericana simpaticísima. Se tocó música de Albéniz y Falla, por un pianista bastante bueno.

OC 1: 933, contains Lorca's "Epitafio a Isaac Albéniz," *OC* 1: 930, his Soneto de homenaje a Manuel de Falla ofreciéndole unas flores.

²³ Adela Presas Villalba, "La Residencia de Estudiantes (1910–1936): Actividades Musicales," *Música Revista del Real Conservatorio Superior de Madrid* 10 y 11 (2003–2004):94.



Estudiantes December 13, 1928.²⁴ Although dealing chiefly with the lyrics of the predominantly sad cradle songs collected in various Spanish regions—delaying consideration of their melodies until the close of the lecture—he animadverted on the extreme difficulty of confiding them to five-line staff notation. Concerning efforts to reduce them to staff notation, he spoke as follows (*OC* 3: 296):

With some glorious exceptions throughout Spanish folk-song transcription, errors abound. Nothing is more hazardous than getting the rhythm right. Nor is anything more difficult than correctly capturing the intervals of a folk singer that include thirds of tones and even quarter tones that cannot be shown on the pentagram. Now is the time to substitute gramophone recordings for the use of both scientist and music devotee.

During his last week in New York before he left by train on March 4, 1930, for Tampa, Florida, he attended a banquet at Barnard College honoring the paramount Spanish conductor, and orchestrator of *Triana, Fête-Dieu à Séville*, and other Albéniz *Iberia* favorites, Enrique Fernández Arbós (Madrid, December 24, 1863; June 2, 1926).

IV CUBAN SUCCESSES STIMULATED BY MANUEL DE FALLA

On his arrival at Havana March 7, 1930, he was met at quayside by representatives of the Institución Hispano-Cubana, at whose invitation he gave five lectures, March 9, 12, 16, 19, and April 6, the translated titles reading “The Mechanics of Poetry,” “A Paradise Closed to Many,” “Spanish Cradle Songs,” “The Poetic Usage of Don Luis de Góngora,” and “The Architecture of Cante Jondo.” In advance of his arrival, Falla had written an encomiastic letter to the couple located in Havana since 1919, Antonio Quevedo²⁵ and María Muñoz, the latter who had been Falla’s piano pupil in Madrid. Together they had founded the Conservatorio Bach at Havana in 1925 and the periodical *Musicalia* in 1927. In company

²⁴ *Ibid.*: 94. On November 28, 1928, Andrés Segovia illustrated Adolfo Salazar’s *conferencia* “El laúd, la vihuela y la guitarra.” Maurice Ravel performed November 23, 1928, Darius Milhaud April 20, 1929. Olin Downes discoursed on the contrasts between contemporary composition in the United States and in Europe during his June 21, 1929 lecture.

²⁵ Born at Manzanares el Real, Madrid, March 18, 1888; died at Havana February 3, 1977.

with Alejandro García Caturla (1906–1940) they had established in 1930 the Sociedad de La Música Contemporánea. Falla’s letter to them was published in *El Poeta en La Habana Federico García Lorca, 1898–1936* (Havana: Consejo Nacional de Cultura, Ministerio de Educación, 1961: [17–18]). Not present in paramount biographer Carol A. Hess’s *Sacred Passions: the life and music of Manuel de Falla* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)—a biography in which she conjures all Falla’s intimacies, his letter deserves insertion here.

Very dear María and Antonio: According to information from Columbia University in New York, my great friend Federico García Lorca has been invited by a cultural institution to give a series of lectures in Havana. If I tell you that this poet and musician is one of my best friends in Granada, that is but half the truth, because from many concepts he is one of my disciples whom I esteem most highly in every order, and also, referring to popular Spanish music, an excellent collaborator.

When it pleases God that there should arrive an artist of such quality, capable of assimilating not only the technical knowledge necessary for his activity but also of surpassing mere technical expertise (and this is manifest in García Lorca’s harmonizations of Spanish folklore) this is when we comprehend the enormous difference manifest in the result of teaching and what swells in a work of personal musical creation, aided by that teaching.

I do not wish to tell you more about our Federico, except to say that I place him in your hands, and in those of your friends and disciples. He is worthy of whatever attentions you give him as a person and as an artist. I wish you to see in Federico something like a prolongation of myself, and that you will always have very present the affection and gratitude of your friend, Manuel de Falla.

Muy queridos María y Antonio: Según me informan desde la Columbia University, en New York, mi gran amigo Federico García Lorca ha sido invitado por una institución de cultura para ofrecer en La Habana una serie de conferencias. Si les digo que este poeta y músico es uno de mis mejores amigos granadinos es sólo la mitad de la verdad, pues es también, por muchos conceptos, uno de mis discípulos que más estimo en todo orden, y es también, refiriéndose a lo popular español, un excelente colaborador.

Cuando quiere Dios que se logre un artista de tal calidad, no solo capaz de asimilar en lo técnico lo necesario para su trabajo, sino de superar lo que la técnica tiene de mero oficio (y éste es el caso del García Lorca en sus armonizaciones del folklore español), es cuando comprendemos la enorme diferencia entre lo que es producto de



enseñanza y lo que surge por obra de la creación personal, ayudado por esta enseñanza.

No quiero decirles más sobre nuestro Federico, sino que lo pongo en sus manos y entre las de sus amigos y discípulos. Él es digno de cuantas atenciones se tengan con él, en lo personal y en lo artístico. Quisiera que vieran ustedes en Federico algo como una prolongación de mi persona, y que, como siempre, tengan muy presentes el afecto y la gratitud de su amigo, Manuel de Falla.

All five of Lorca's lectures given at the Principal de la Comedia Theatre were sensationally successful. The only adverse comments appeared in one of the Havana newspapers March 10, the day after his first lecture on "The Mechanics of Poetry."²⁶ The presenter who introduced him on March 9, critic Franciso Ichaso, read excerpts from Lorca's *Oda al Santísimo Sacramento del Altar* (OC I: 960–69), an ode dedicated to Manuel de Falla—the history of which begins with publication of the first two parts, "Exposición" and "Mundo" in the Madrid *Revista de Occidente*, December 1928 (OC I:1164–65). Whatever whiffs of heterodoxy may have been scented in excerpts from his ode on the blessed sacrament, Falla's ardent regard never wavered.

Lorca's preserved and published communications to Falla, letters, postcards, and telegrams (OC 3: 791–804) always document the fervor of his devotion to Falla, just as Falla's fervent devotion to him is documented in Falla's letter to the Antonio Quevedo couple (noted above). In a letter from San Sebastián dated May 8, 1923, he exculpated himself for not being able to accompany Falla (then in Paris) to Rome. From Cadaques in April 1923, he wrote Falla, then in Granada, a postcard bespeaking his magnificent Holy Week in Gerona, where he heard the Holy Week offices in Gerona Cathedral.

V ADOLFO SALAZAR'S PATRONAGE

On May 16 (1930) Adolfo Salazar (Madrid, March 6, 1890; Mexico City, September 27, 1958) arrived at Havana ready to give his series of invited lectures. Lorca's close friend and ardent admirer, Salazar had published in *El Sol*, (Madrid), July 30, 1921, on page

1 "Un poeta nuevo Federico G. Lorca," a review of Lorca's first volume, *Libro de Poemas*, (229 pages, 70 poems). The review was followed by correspondence in which Salazar, in a letter dated August 11, 1921, suggested that the puppet play Lorca was writing that summer night became a shared project that would interest Diaghilev. Salazar even envisioned Massine in the role of Don Cristóbal, actor in the upcoming "Tragicomedy of Don Cristóbal y Señorita Rosita." Lorca accepted Salazar's suggestion. In Cuadro Cuarto, lecherous, bombastic, aged Don Cristóbal on the morning of his marriage to Rosita, bursts in upon the barber Figaro, and demands to be immediately shaved. "Right now, right away, yes sir, right now" (*Ahora mismo, sí señor, ahora mismo*).²⁷ Quoting from Salazar's August 11, 1921, letter to Lorca in the Fundación Federico García Lorca Archive at Madrid presently chaired by Yvan Nommick, Ian Gibson in *Federico García Lorca A Life* translated thus: "It is essential that we have two versions, one purely for ballet." The idea foundered. No production of the puppet play, or its dramatic version, took place in Lorca's lifetime, although in 1932 the company of Margarita Xirgú (1888–1969) planned to perform it as a farce. In 1937 players mounted a lean production at Madrid's Teatro de la Zarzuela, directed by Felipe Leuch Garin.

Salazar's friendship with Lorca established in 1921 continued prospering during their month together in Havana, where they saw each other every day until their departure together June 13 on the Manuel Arnús, a steamer that arrived at New York June 18. Telling only a fraction of Lorca's social and critical successes in Cuba, Salazar published "In memoriam: Federico García Lorca en La Habana," *Carteles* (Havana), January 23, 1938: 30–31. When their vessel docked at New York before continuing to Cádiz, Salazar rushed to find Olin Downes. Upon accompanying Salazar to the ship, which Lorca could not leave because his visa had expired, Downes found a party in full swing, with Lorca accompanying girls whom he had taught Spanish songs while enrolled at Columbia. Together they were belting out *Los Cuatro Muleros*.²⁸ Salazar again had an opportunity to pay tribute to Lorca in "Discos, Una colección de canciones españolas antiguas," *El Sol*, Madrid,

²⁶ "La mecánica de la poesía," a revision of "Imaginación, inspiración, evasión," read in previous versions, most recently at Vassar College in a version summarized in *La Prensa*, New York, February 10, 1930 (OC 3: 266–68).

²⁷ OC 2: 140.

²⁸ OC 2:1155; reported by Henry Hershel Brickell, "A Spanish Poet in New York;" *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 21 (1945): 394–95.



November 27, 1931, and in "La Casa de Bernarda Alba," *Carteles*; Havana, April 10, 1938: 30.

After Lorca's return from America on the Manuel Arnús, which reached Cádiz June 30, 1930, a succession of theatrical triumphs, all of which were laced with magical musical moments, lifted his fame to a level not approached by any other nineteenth- or twentieth-century Spanish language playwright. Neither before nor after his North or South American journeys did Lorca consort with any Spanish-born composers except Falla (and if he is classed as a composer, Adolfo Salazar). The sole composers excerpted for atmosphere in his first and last plays produced during his lifetime were Grieg in *El Maleficio de la Mariposa*²⁹ ("The Butterfly's Evil Spell,") and Czerny, whose exercises are played to provide atmosphere in Act 1 of *Doña Rosita la Soltera o el alma de Granada*, ("Doña Rosita the Spinster or the Spirit of Granada," Barcelona, Teatro Principal Palace, December 13, 1935).³⁰

VI CONTACTS AT MADRID WITH FOREIGN COMPOSERS

During his five-and-a-half triumphal months after arriving in Buenos Aires October 13, 1933, Argentina boasted scores of currently performed composers: Felipe Boero (1884–1958), Juan José Castro (1895–1968), Constantino Gaito (1848–1945), Gerardo Gilardi (1889–1963), Athos Palma (1891–1951), and Alberto Williams (1862–1952) as examples. Lorca met none of them. At Madrid, Lorca's complete abstention from any contacts with such Spanish-born contemporaries as Conrado del Campo (1878–1953), Joaquín Turina (1882–1949), Óscar Esplá (1886–1976), Fernando Remacha (1890–1934), or Salvador Bacarisse (1898–1963), strikes home.

The contemporary composers who did enter his orbit at Madrid were foreigners whose unfamiliar biographies deserve résumés. Acario Cotapos (Valdivia, Chile, April 30, 1889; Santiago, Chile, November 22, 1969), son of a wealthy industrialist and a harpist mother, was sent to Santiago, Chile in 1895,

and in 1916 went to New York City, there meeting Edgard Varèse. After further wandering Cotapos, a diehard liberal, settled at Madrid 1934 to 1938, where Enrique Fernández Arbós conducted at the Teatro Calderón a portion of his *Voces de gesta*, inspired by the *tragedia pastoral* of that name (Madrid: Imprenta Alemana, 1911) by Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866–1936). Cotapos's symphonic excerpts received their premiere thanks to the intervention of Lorca, Pablo Neruda, and other liberals.³¹ Cotapos hovered around Lorca until mid-1936. Cotapos's further career (after a 22-year absence from Chile) culminated in his winning the Chilean Premio Nacional de Arte y Música on November 23, 1960 (*Revista Musical Chilena* 15, no. 76 [1961]).

An equally important foreign-born composer with whom Lorca consorted during his last biennium at Madrid was Federico Elizalde (Manila, December 12, 1902; Manila January 1, 1979). After studying with Bartolomé Pérez Casas (1873–1956) and José Tragó (1856–1934) at the Madrid Real Conservatorio Superior, he settled at London in 1921. Two years later he began the study of law at Stanford University. Reverting back to music, he took composition lessons with Ernest Bloch and received conducting instruction from Alfred Hertz. Between autumn 1927 and July 1929 he conducted a jazz band at the Hotel Savoy in London. He recorded his last jazz album in 1933, in that year again settling at Madrid where he chummed with Lorca. Days after arrival, he joined in a banquet organized by Margarita Xirgú, the actress who played the role of Doña Rosita in the Barcelona hugely successful above-mentioned premiere on December 13, 1935, of *Doña Rosita la Soltera*. On January 15, 1936 the *Heraldo de Madrid*, page 9, contained news that Lorca's puppet play *Los Títeres de Cachiporra*³² in an updated version with music by Federico Elizalde and dances interpolated by Rafael Ortega,³³ would be given at the Sevillian actress Carmen Díaz's season inauguration on January 31. However, she substituted a play by Adolfo Torrado and Leandro Navarro. Apparently, no fragment survives of Elizalde's puppet play music.

²⁹ Ian Gibson, *Federico García Lorca A Life* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989): 96, 97.

³⁰ Robert Lima, *The Theatre of García Lorca* (New York: Las Américas Publishing Company, 1963): 249. The Czerny foresees the vacuousness in store for soon-abandoned Doña Rosita.

³¹ Gibson, *Federico García Lorca 2. De Nueva York a Fuente Grande (1929–1936)* (Barcelona: Ediciones Grallalbo, 1987): 333.

³² Originally given in Lorca's Granada residence January 6, 1923.

³³ Gibson, . . . *De Nueva York a Fuente Grande*: 415.

VII ASSASSINATION PRELIMINARIES

Lorca returned home to be with his parents in Granada on St. Frederick's day, July 18, 1936. However, that morning General Francisco Franco broadcast from the Canary Islands the initiation of the National Movement designed to crush and oust the Spanish Second Republic. Lorca, partisan of the republic, was shot August 18, 1936 near dawn on the outskirts of Granada. Shortly before August 18, members of the Falange (a fascist organization, founded in 1933 by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, that captured Granada on July 23, 1936) arrived at the family farm with a warrant for the poet's arrest. Seeking incriminating evidence, the group searched the house and tore apart the baby grand piano looking for a reported secret radio.³⁴

Among charges leveled at Lorca by a longtime personal enemy and that entered a typewritten document presented to the Commandant of the Granada army garrison who gave the order for Lorca's execution, José Valdés Guzmán, were these; he was a spy, and he kept in contact with leftist sympathizers by radio.³⁵ On the afternoon, the day of his execution, Falla, upon learning that Lorca had been arrested, went to the Granada Gobierno Civil, to plead for his life.³⁶ Too late; he had already been shot before dawn.

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