

ABOUT OUR COURSE: THE INDISPENSABLE COMPOSERS

In-di-spens-a-ble (ɪndɪˈspɛnsəbəl) Adjective meaning necessary or essential or incapable of being disregarded or neglected.

The idea for *THE INDISPENSABLE COMPOSERS* came to me as I looked through the season lineups of several of our musical organizations, encountering several composers' names that appeared again and again in their programs. Along with those I encountered some glaring absences.

Composers from Spain or Latin America were hardly represented whereas the works of German and Austrian composers were up over half of the names on the concert programs. In the case of one major symphony orchestra, there were one French and one English composer represented among the dozens of mostly contemporary composers' names. Among the Slavic composers there were the usual suspects Tchaikovsky and Shostakovich, but no Rimsky-Korsakoff no Borodin no Mussorgsky no Cui no Balakireff no Glinka anywhere in sight.

In our course we have made every effort to include most if not all the *indispensables* of the 19th and 20th centuries. Here you will find the Americans George Gershwin, Samuel Barber, and Aaron Copland in the company of England's Gustav Holst, Benjamin Britten, and Ralph Vaughn Williams. You might discover here great composers from Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Cuba - none of whom perhaps you may have ever heard of but still indispensable to 19th and 20th century concert music.

Here you will find a chapter titled *Indispensable Film and Theatre composers*, in which we salute the great Hollywood and Broadway giants from the 1930's and 1940's along with two geniuses closer to our time: John Williams and Stephen Sondheim.

***The Indispensable Spanish Composers: Isaac Albéniz, Enrique Granados, Joaquín Turina,
Manuel de Falla, Joaquín Rodrigo***



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## SPANISH MUSIC: WHY IS IT INDISPENSABLE?

From 711 to 1492 Spain was occupied by the Arabs. They exerted enormous influence on the Spanish language, and the culture and the arts of Spain, and Spanish music became deeply rooted in Arabic music. The music of Spain has had world-wide influence: Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov in Russia with *Capriccio Espagnol*, In France Claude Debussy with *Ibéria*, Maurice Ravel with *Rapsodie Espagnole* and *Bolero*, and Bizet with *Carmen*, and in Italy Rossini with *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (*The Barber of Seville*) have all found inspiration in Spanish music.

Spain's *Jota* (pr: hoe-tah) from the Basque Country, the *Seguidilla* (pr: se-ghee-dee-yah) from Murcia, the *Copla* (pr: coe-plah) from Seville, the *Habanera* (pr: ah-bah-neh-rah) imported from Cuba to Spain, the *Sardana* (pr: sahr-dah-nah) from the Catalan autonomous region, and the Gypsy *Cantejondo* (pr: kahn-the-hohn-doe) have all played a part in Spanish concert music.

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THE MUSIC IN THIS LECTURE

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909) – *Cádiz* and *Triana*

Enrique Granados (1867-1918) – *La Maja de Goya* and *Oriental* from *Danzas españolas*

Joaquin Turina (1882-1949) – *Lavapiés*

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) – *Ritual Fire Dance* from *El Amor Brujo*

Joaquin Rodrigo (1901-1999) – *Concierto de Aranjuez*



Jota from the Basque Country



Seguidilla from Murcia



Sevillians singing *Coplas*



Célestine Galli-Marié, the original Carmen and the singer of the *Habanera* from that opera



Sardana from the Catalan autonomous region



Gypsy *Cantejondo* is a form of improvised singing,



Isaac Albéniz(1860-1909)

Isaac Albéniz (pr: Ee-sak Ahl-beh-neeth) is one of the foremost composers of the Spanish Romantic era, best known for his compositions for the piano. Inspired by the rhythms of Spanish folk songs and dances, many of his piano pieces were later transcribed for the guitar.

Listen to **Cádiz** (pr: kah-deeth), a joyous homage to the seaport in southwestern Spain that is the capital of the autonomous community of **Andalusia** (pr: ahn-dah-loo-see-ah):



Julian Bream plays Cádiz <https://youtu.be/2L0sdZ3TbJ8>

*“The music of my youth, with its little sins and absurdities... appears to me like the carvings in the Alhambra - those peculiar arabesques that seem to say nothing with their curlicue turns and shapes, but which are like the air, the sun, the blackbirds, and the nightingales in the gardens, the true Spain. There are among my compositions a few things that are not completely worthless. My music might be a bit childish, plain, and spirited, but so are the Spanish people! Spaniards continue to be moved by **Córdoba, Mallorca, Sevillanas, Serenata, and Granada** - compositions of mine in which there is not much musical science, but plenty of color and sunlight...”* **Isaac Albéniz**

Iberia (pr: ee-beh-ree-ah) is Albéniz's masterpiece. It is composed of four books of three pieces each. A complete performance lasts about 90 minutes. The writing, while completely original in its melodies, evidences influences from other composers, notably the immense pianistic challenges inherited from **Franz Liszt**. Written during the last years of Albéniz' life, **Iberia** sums up all that is Spanish in music: the *Moorish*, the *Jewish* and the *Christian*.

Albéniz first performed at the age of four, and at seven he passed the examination for piano at the Paris Conservatory, but he was refused admission because he was too young. His concert career began at the age of nine when his father toured both him and his sister, throughout Spain, Latin America, the United States, England, and Germany.



Cristina Ortiz plays *Triana* (pr: tree-ah-nah) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6cjb7zcZac>



Enrique Granados (1867-1916)

In 1911 **Enrique Granados** (pr: Ehn-Ree-Keh Grah-Nah-Doss) premiered *Goyescas* (pr: go-yess-kass), a suite for piano. On an American tour he was invited to perform a recital for **President Woodrow Wilson**. By accepting the invitation Granados and his wife missed their boat back to Spain. Instead, they took a ship to England, and there boarded a passenger ferry for France. That ferry was torpedoed by a German submarine; both Granados and his wife perished in the attack.

Granados left behind an enormous body of work, including the composition that we will now hear, one in which the composer gives voice to the tunes and dances of his native Spain, finding further inspiration in Goya's famous painting of the naked *Maja*, (pr: mah-ha) later modestly dressed to avoid trouble with the Catholic authorities.



Andres Segovia plays *La Maja de Goya* (pr: lah-mah-hah deh- goh-yah) <https://youtu.be/gSlnhvYTB14>

Flamenco (pr: flah-men-koh) perhaps the most characteristically Andalusian genre of music and dance, is influenced by the traditional music and dance of the Romani people. Here it is rendered played in an old recording by the composer himself at the piano:

Granados plays *Oriental* from *Danzas españolas* (pr: dahn-thass ess-pah-nee-oh-lass) https://youtu.be/Q4_l0fNT7N0



Joaquín Turina (1882-1949)

Joaquín Turina (pr: Hoe-ah-keen Too-ree-nah) was a pianist of awesome technical ability, and in *Lavapiés* (pr: lah-vah-piess) he wrote music of such difficulty that at one point he almost burned the manuscript fearing that he had written something unplayable! The musical motifs packed into roughly seven minutes are a pianistic minefield of random dance rhythms and popular café ditties all mixed into a colorful, raucous medley that celebrates the simple joys of the people of the capital's inner city.

Turina was born in Seville in 1882 and lived in Paris from 1905 to 1914, where he studied composition and piano, and where he met composers Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy, whose music he loved.

Turina then returned to Madrid in 1914, where he continued to compose, play the piano, and conduct. In 1931 he was made professor of composition at the *Royal Conservatory*. Here's how the composer describes his music in his own words: *"The perfume of the flowers merged with the scent of sherry, and from the bottom of raised glasses, full of the incomparable liquor, happiness emanated like incense..."*



Sally Christian plays *Lavapiés* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3cW3uMO5YMY>



Manuel de Falla (1876-1946)

The music of Manuel de Falla (pr: Mah-Noo-El Deh Fah-Lyah) was influenced by the French composers **Claude Debussy** and **Maurice Ravel**, assimilating the harmonies of Debussy and the orchestrations of Ravel, and making them 100% Spanish.

El amor brujo (pr: el-ah-more brew-hoe) (*Love, the Magician*) is a ballet for which de Falla composed the music. He later arranged it as a concert work, with no need for dancers. The work features the celebrated ***Ritual Fire Dance*** played here by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by **Daniel Barenboim**

In *El amor brujo* (*Love, the Magician*) a gypsy woman whose love for a fellow gypsy is unrequited resorts to black magic to win his heart, and after a night of enchantments, recitations, and ritual dances, awakens his love as Falla's music proclaims her triumph.



About the Romani:

The **Romani** colloquially known as *Gypsies*, are a traditionally nomadic people, living throughout Europe. Linguistic and genetic evidence suggests that the Romani originated in the northern regions of India. Most of the Spanish Romani are Christian of religion and speak both Castilian Spanish and a patois that incorporates words from their ancient language.

Ritual Fire Dance <https://youtu.be/auRUxPPqDcQ>



Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999)

With the well-known *Concierto de Aranjuez* (1939) (**pr**: cohn-thee-ehr-toh deh ah rahn **whoeth**) **Joaquin Rodrigo** (**pr**: Hoe-ah-keen Roh-dree-goh) turned to the past, specifically to the music of the Spanish *Renaissance*. The blind composer took as his inspiration for the *Concierto de Aranjuez* the historic Palace of Aranjuez, summer home of the Kings of Spain. It was a site that the composer could not see, but that he could envision in his mind's eye.

The work is in three movements: the first is an *allegro* (lively) in which the music establishes a dialogue between the solo guitar and the flute, and between the oboe and the muted trumpet. In the second

movement, Rodrigo assigns the main melody to the often-misnamed as “anglaise” (English) *cor onglais* (pr: core-on -**glay**) onglais French for ‘angled’. The melody is then taken up by the guitar, then back it goes to the *cor onglais*, then the orchestra picks it up, and midway there is an extended solo passage for the guitar.

The final movement is playful, with its alternating 2/4 and 3/4 rhythms replicating the dancers’ steps in a regional dance, in a pattern of cross-rhythms. It is a pattern that we hear in Spanish and Latin American music again and again: **one-two-one-two-three**...



Palace of Aranjuez



cor onglais

Pepe Romero plays *Concierto de Aranjuez* <https://youtu.be/-oxH-7VklBI>

Much of the music that we have been listening to was written in Spain during the years between or even during the two world wars of the 20th century, reflecting none of the violence that plagued Europe during those tumultuous years. Instead, Spanish music looked to the past, as if holding on to a once-great Spain that no longer was.