

**JOAQUÍN RODRIGO: AN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION  
THE GUITAR AND BEYOND**

**HISPANIC SOCIETY MUSEUM AND LIBRARY**

**December 6, 2018**

**Lecture: 6:30 PM**

**Concert: 7 PM**

**Chamber Music by Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999)**

**Eva León, violin  
Thomas Mesa, cello  
Olga Vinokur, piano**

**Program**

**Set Cançons Valencianes (Seven Valencian Songs)**

Allegretto

Andante moderato

Allegro

Andante moderato e molto cantabile

Andantino

Andante religioso

Tempo di bolero. Moderato

Eva León, violin  
Olga Vinokur, Piano

**Sonata a la breve**

Adagietto

Scherzino

Allegro ma non troppo

Thomas Mesa, cello  
Olga Vinokur, piano

**Rumaniana**

Eva León, violin  
Olga Vinokur, Piano

**Siciliana**

Thomas Mesa, cello  
Olga Vinokur, piano

**Sonata pimpante**

Allegro

Adagio, Allegro vivace, Adagio

Allegro molto

Eva León, violin  
Olga Vinokur, Piano

Approximate Duration: 60 minutes

With the tonight's opening concert of the New York Joaquín Rodrigo Festival in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Spanish composer's death, it gives me great pleasure to address these few lines of gratitude and warm congratulations to the many people involved whose dedication have made this wonderful project possible.

Joaquín Rodrigo is a very well-known and esteemed name in the United States, a country which has presented the World Premieres of many of his best known works. It is especially gratifying that a focus of this event is to highlight the importance of my father's chamber music repertoire which has not always received the attention that it deserves.

I would like to emphasize how much I appreciate the participation of each and every one of the outstanding soloists, a number of whom I have known previously and others of whom I have recently had the pleasure of meeting.

To conclude, my deepest thanks go to Douglas Riva who's enthusiastic and invaluable contribution to this project, not only as a performer, but also as a musicologist and scholar, does me great honor, as I have admired his work for many years.

- Cecilia Rodrigo  
Daughter of Joaquín Rodrigo

### **Artist Biographies:**

#### **Eva León, Violin**

Hailed by critics as a violinist that "has the power to captivate the five senses of her audience" by La Vanguardia (Spain), and described as a "charismatic violinist who possesses, along with her musical talent and tremendous aura, a gift for expression" Neue Press (Germany), Eva León has become one of the most successful Spanish violinists of her generation. A native of the Canary Islands, Ms. León has won all major Spanish violin competitions and several international competitions, including top prize at the Michaelangelo Abbado International Violin Competition, and Laureate at The Maria Canals International Violin Competition. Eva León was also the winner of the 33rd Artists International Annual Debut Prize which led to her New York debut at Carnegie Hall.

Ms. León has performed to great audience and critical acclaim in some of the most prestigious music halls and festivals throughout the world. She has performed as soloist with many orchestras including the Mexico State Symphony Orchestra, Moldavia National Philharmonic, Boston Classical Orchestra, Colombia National Symphony, Champaign-Urbana Symphony, Arthur Rubinstein Philharmonic, Paris Chamber Orchestra, Rockford Symphony, Castilla y León Symphony, Bratislava Chamber Orchestra, Galesburg Symphony, Las Cruces Symphony, Alter Musici Camerata, Gran Canaria Philharmonic, Tenerife Symphony Orchestra, Del Vallès Orchestra, and the Cologne Ensemble Orchestra, among others.

As a critically acclaimed recording artist for Naxos, Ms. León has recorded multiple Naxos albums with music by Joaquín Turina, Xavier Montsalvatge and Joaquín Rodrigo. She has also been recorded for other labels such as Moraleda and Klassic Cat and has made numerous recordings for TV and radio throughout Europe, the United States, Japan and Latin America. An article written by Ms. León about Turina's Piano Trios was featured in the Master Class section of Strings Magazine.

Eva León has recently been named Artist in Residence at the Foundation for Iberian Music, Graduate Center, City University of New York.

**Thomas Mesa**, cello

Cuban-American cellist Thomas Mesa is quickly establishing himself as one of the most charismatic and versatile performers of his generation. He is a Winner of the Astral Artists Auditions (2017), the Sphinx Competition (2016), Thaviu Competition for String Performance (2013), and the Alhambra Orchestra Concerto Competition (2006). Concerto engagements include Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic at The Hollywood Bowl, Erie Chamber Orchestra, Firelands Symphony, and Elgin Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Mesa has performed for the Mainly Mozart Festival, Nantucket Musical Arts Society, Bargemusic, Myra Hess Memorial Concert Series, Columbia University, Carnegie Hall, The Supreme Court of the United States, The Heifetz Institute, Meadowmount School of Music, as well as in universities throughout the United States.

Thomas Mesa was one of the featured instrumentalists on the Crossing Choir's album "Bonhoeffer" that was nominated for a Grammy Award in 2017. With Donald Nally, Director of the Crossing Choir, Mr. Mesa has performed as soloist at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Longwood Gardens, The Winter Garden and the Theological Seminary in New York City and at the Washington National Cathedral.

As a chamber musician, Thomas Mesa has toured with Itzhak Perlman. He is also a member of St. Petersburg Piano Quartet which has performed at Barge Music, Doheny Mansion, Kohl Mansion, Music Mountain and at the Flagler Museum in Palm Beach.

Mr. Mesa is a graduate of The Juilliard School and Northwestern University and is currently at the Manhattan School of Music. He performs on an 1820 Richard Tobin cello.

## **Olga Vinokur, piano**

Olga Vinokur is an acclaimed pianist who is gaining recognition for “the strength and consistency of her artistry” as noted by New York Times. BBC magazine called her “superlative” and the New York Times praised her “exquisite performance.”

She has appeared in US and internationally as recitalist, with orchestra and chamber musician in major venues including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Bargemusic, Merkin Hall in New York, Rudolfinum’s Dvorak Hall and Municipal House’s Smetana Hall in Prague, Shanghai Oriental Art Center in China, King’s Place in London, among many others. Ms. Vinokur was a featured artist in the London Chamber Music Society, EuroArts Festival in Prague, Pour L’Art Music Festival in Switzerland, Prague Chamber Music Society, Young Artist Festival in Russia, Havana Piano Festival in Cuba, International Piano Festivals in Paris and Canary Islands of Spain.

Ms. Vinokur is presented in the film documentary “Women of Music” on Bravo TV station in Canada. She has been heard on WNYC’s “Soundcheck”, BBC, Czech National Radio, Dutch National Radio, French National Radio, Swiss National Radio and Russian National Public Radio.

She has appeared as a soloist with Prague Philharmonic and Moravian Philharmonic Orchestra of Czech Republic, Salome Chamber Orchestra, La Primavera Chamber Orchestra of Russia, Lambeth Symphony of London, Prague Castle Orchestra. Ms Vinokur toured China as a soloist with orchestra where she performed in 11 different cities.

A native of Russia, Olga Vinokur began her piano studies at the age of six, and at twelve was awarded First Prize in the National Young Artist Piano Competition in Russia. Since then she has been a recipient of numerous awards and prizes in National and International competitions. Olga Vinokur received her Bachelor’s Degree and Artist’s Diploma with honors from the Rubin Academy of Music at Tel-Aviv University. She pursued her Master and Doctor of Musical Art Degrees at the Manhattan School of Music in New York.

## **Program notes**

**Joaquín Rodrigo** (1901-1999), one of the major figures in Spanish music, is revered throughout the world for his hauntingly beautiful guitar concerto, *Concierto de Aranjuez*, one of the most popular concertos of all time. In addition, Rodrigo is renowned for his solo guitar music, an innovation when the works were composed, which helped bring the instrument to major concert halls throughout the world. Less known is his enormous catalogue of brilliant and original works for voice, piano and chamber music.

Joaquín Rodrigo was born in Sagunto, Valencia, Spain on November 22, 1901. Rodrigo triumphed against remarkable odds. At the age of 3 diphtheria severely impaired his eyesight and he later went completely blind. Nevertheless,

his music led him to be awarded more prizes and honors than any other Spanish composer in history. In addition, Rodrigo was a noted music critic and for 30 years held the Manuel de Falla Professorship at the Complutense University, Madrid.

He began music study at age 8 at the Valencia Conservatory with Francisco Antich, Enrique Gomá and Eduardo López Chavarri, studying solfège, piano and violin, and later added harmony and composition. By the 1920s he was an excellent pianist and began composing his first works, such as *Juglares* and *Cinco piezas infantiles*. Rodrigo wrote his compositions in Braille and later dictated the score to a copyist for notation in a manuscript. In 1927 Rodrigo decided to continue his studies in Paris with the famed composer Paul Dukas at the École Normale de Musique. Once in Paris Rodrigo met numerous musicians including Manuel de Falla, Mexican composer Manuel Ponce and other Spaniards such as Joaquín Turina.

At the same time Rodrigo met the Turkish pianist Victoria Kamhi and they were married in 1933. Victoria Kamhi was an excellent pianist and decided to give up on her professional career in order to dedicate herself to her husband. The couple first lived in Paris while Rodrigo was studying at the Paris Conservatoire and at the Sorbonne. Subsequently they lived in Germany, Austria and Switzerland before returning to Madrid in 1939. In 1940 Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar and orchestra was premiered in Barcelona. This work brought him world-wide fame. From that point Rodrigo was immersed in composing and also was engaged in numerous artistic activities including the previously mentioned position of Professor of Music History at the Complutense University in Madrid, Head of Music Broadcasts for Spanish Radio, music critic for several newspapers, and Head of the Artistic Section of the Spanish National Organization for the Blind (ONCE).

Joaquín Rodrigo's numerous and varied compositions include eleven concertos for various instruments, more than sixty songs, choral and instrumental works, and music for the theatre, dance and cinema. Numerous distinguished soloists commissioned works from him, among them cellist Gaspar Cassadó, guitarist Andrés Segovia, harpist Nicanor Zabaleta, flutist James Galway, cellist Julian Lloyd Webber and the Romero guitar quartet. His music has a distinctive voice which is refined, luminous and fundamentally optimistic with a distinctive use of melody and original harmonies.

Throughout his life Maestro Rodrigo was honored by governments, universities, academies and other organizations in many different countries. In 1985 he was inducted as a member of the Hispanic Society in New York. In 1991, to celebrate his 90th birthday, Joaquín Rodrigo was raised to the nobility by H. M. Juan Carlos I, King of Spain, with the title *Marqués de los jardines de Aranjuez*. Five years later, in 1996 he was awarded Spain's greatest cultural distinction, the Prince of Asturias Prize, awarded to a composer for the first time. Rodrigo commented: "I like to be an ambassador for Spain." Certainly Maestro Rodrigo brilliantly fulfilled his goal by bringing his unique vision of Spanish music to the entire world.

2019 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Maestro Rodrigo's death and provides a unique opportunity to re-discover and re-evaluate his contributions to the musical world and explore his lesser known masterpieces. The Hispanic Society Museum and Library along with the Foundation for Iberian Music of the Graduate Center at the City University of New York (CUNY) and the King Juan Carlos Center at New York University (NYU) are joining together to organize a city-wide Rodrigo Festival beginning with tonight's concert and continuing throughout 2019. Events include the three concert series organized by the Hispanic Society Museum and Library, a concert at the Morgan Library, an international round table at NYU, an international symposium organized by The Foundation for Iberian Music at CUNY, along with other events in preparation.

### **Set Cançons Valencianes (Seven Valencian Songs)**

*Set cançons valencianes* (Seven Valencian Songs) was composed in 1982 and is dedicated to Agustín León Ara (Rodrigo's son-in-law), who premiered the work with pianist José Tordesillas in May of that year. It is the final work by Rodrigo for violin and piano and, as such, marks the end of an important chapter in the composer's creative life. In addition this work was a nostalgic return to the melodies of Rodrigo's native Valencia.

The simple theme of the first song, *Allegretto*, evolves into unexpected tonal alterations of the melody. Especially notable in the second song, *Andante moderato*, is a quotation in the piano from a famed work by Albéniz, *Asturias (Leyenda)*. Rodrigo scholar Raymond Calcraft noted that this song also contains subtle Sephardic inflections

The third song, *Allegro*, has the vivacity and rough simplicity of a children's song, which is in strong contrast to the serenity of the following song, *Andante moderato e molto cantabile*. The melody of the fifth song, *Andantino*, is accompanied by unexpected harmonies in an intense dialogue between the violin and piano.

The sixth song, *Andante religioso*, is one of the most remarkable of the collection. It opens with the unaccompanied violin playing harmonies in thirds. The piano enters later with bell-like chords, evoking medieval music. The final song, *Tempo di Bolero*, begins with a vigorous theme leading to an energetic and optimistic finale.

### **Sonata a la breve**

*Sonata a la breve* was composed in 1977 as an homage to the great Spanish cellist, Pablo Casals. Rodrigo himself wrote: "In the opening movement, *Adagietto*, there is a low melody that has slight allusions to the popular Catalan song, *El cant dels ocells* (Song of the Birds), so loved by Casals. In the *Adagietto* the melody is interrupted at times by brief episodes in the piano. The *Scherzino* has intervals of fourths played *pizzicato* by the cello which alternate with the piano. The *Allegretto* presents the opening theme of the overture to the

oratorio *El pesebre* (The Manger) by Casals. This theme is later played in varied tonalities in different episodes and the movement concludes with very soft harmonics.”

## **Rumaniana**

Composed as a competition piece for the Madrid Conservatory and completed in June, 1942, *Rumaniana* is dedicated to violinist Josefina Salvador, sister of the noted composer, Matilde Salvador. According to Rodrigo’s wife, Victoria Kamhi, the work is based on Rumanian dance tunes she had heard as a child in Eastern Europe. *Rumaniana* begins with an arresting opening with weighty chords and an impassioned cry from the violin, followed by an improvisatory cadenza, leading to a gentle *Andante* with a plaintive melody accompanied by harp-like chords in the piano. The final section is a *Hora*, a wild dance with insistent rhythms leading to a dramatic ending.

## **Siciliana**

*Siciliana* was composed in 1929 during Rodrigo’s years of study in Paris with famed composer Paul Dukas. The work was premiered in a concert of works by students of Dukas on March 9, 1930. *Siciliana* has a notably Spanish character and reveals the remarkable melodic gifts of the young Rodrigo. The beautiful melody and sensitive piano accompaniment immediately bring to mind the unforgettable and hypnotic melody of the second movement, *Adagio*, of the *Concierto de Aranjuez* which would achieve world-wide fame twenty years later. Raymond Calcraft observed that “as in that masterpiece, Rodrigo here reveals his remarkable capacity to develop a striking musical idea in numerous ways, both emotionally and dramatically.”

## **Sonata pimpante (1966)**

The *Sonata pimpante* (the title might be translated as “lively”, “perky” or “smart”) was composed in early 1966 and is dedicated to violinist Agustín León Ara, who premiered the work with pianist Albert Jiménez Atenelle at the Cercle Gaulois in Brussels on February 25, 1966. Rodrigo commented: “This *Sonata* opens like an iridescent fan in the clear tonality of A Major with intervals of fourths in the violin and murmuring fifths in the piano. The movement is in classic sonata-form and the *pimpante* [and joyous] opening theme gives way to an eloquent melody.” The movement closes with a humorous coda, based on the opening theme. The second movement contains one of the most beautiful slow melodies by Rodrigo. The opening *Adagio* is interrupted by a sparkling *Sevillana* which leads to a return of the *Adagio*. A complete contrast to the previous movements, the devilish *Zapateado en forma de Rondó* (*Zapateado* in the Form of a Rondo) exchanges melodic motives between the violin and piano leading to a brilliant conclusion.