

31 July  
City Recital Hall

# JAVIER PERIANES IN RECITAL



Presenting Partner

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# WELCOME

Welcome to the International Pianists in Recital series for 2023, and to this concert, Javier Perianes in Recital.

The Sydney Symphony has been able to develop deep and exciting creative relationships with many outstanding artists – and the dynamic and trail-blazing pianist Javier Perianes is one such artist.

An acknowledged master of the Romantic, in this recital we will hear him traverse the contours of his native Spain, with a program of music by composers Albéniz, Falla and Debussy.

He will also perform *Goyescas* by Enrique Granados – a truly exceptional work based on the paintings of Goya. There is no artist closer to the heart of Spaniards than Goya, and this is bound to be an exceptional experience.

All of us at Theme and Variations are very proud to be the Presenting Partner of the 2023 International Pianists in Recital series, a year in which we also celebrate 21 years of partnership with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra.

The Orchestra brings the world's most charismatic pianists to the concert stages of our city, and it is an honour for us to provide specialised piano tuning and preparation of the magnificent instruments on which they perform.

Together, the Sydney Symphony and Theme & Variations offer unsurpassed musical excellence to musicians and audiences alike.

We hope you enjoy the uniquely brilliant Javier Perianes in recital.



Ara Vartoukian

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ara Vartoukian".

**Ara Vartoukian OAM**

Director, Theme & Variations Piano Services

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&  
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The logo for Theme & Variations Piano Services, featuring the text "THEME & VARIATIONS" stacked vertically, with a stylized ampersand and a silhouette of a piano keyboard to the right. Below the text is the phrase "PIANO SERVICES".

**INTERNATIONAL PIANISTS IN RECITAL**  
Monday 31 July, 7pm

City Recital Hall,  
Angel Place

# JAVIER PERIANES IN RECITAL

SCENES FROM SPAIN

## **MANUEL DE FALLA (1876-1846)**

*Homenaje (from Le tombeau de Claude Debussy)*  
*Serenata andaluza*

## **CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)**

Preludes, Book II – iii. *La Puerta del Vino*  
Preludes, Book I – ix. *La Sérénade interrompue*

## **ISAAC ALBÉNIZ (1860- 1909)**

*Iberia*, Book 3  
i. *El Albaicín*  
ii. *El Polo*  
iii. *Lavapiés*

## **MANUEL DE FALLA**

*Fantasia Bætica*

INTERVAL

## **ENRIQUE GRANADOS (1867-1916)**

*Goyescas*

Book 1:

- i. *Los Requebros (Flattery)*
- ii. *Coloquio En La Reja (Conversation At The Window)*
- iii. *El Fandango Del Candil (Fandango By Candlelight)*

Book 2:

- i. *Quejas o la Maja y el Ruiseñor (Laments, or the Maiden and the Nightingale)*
- ii. *El Amor y la Muerte: Balada (Ballad of Love and Death)*
- iii. *Epílogo: Serenata del Espectro (Epilogue: Spectre's Serenade)*
- iv. *El Pelele: Escena goyesca (The Puppet: Goya Scene)*

## **PRE-CONCERT TALK**

By Sam Weller in  
the Function Room on  
Level 1 at 6.15pm.

## **ESTIMATED DURATION**

Homenaje – 4 minutes  
Serenata – 5 minutes  
Puerta del Vino – 4 minutes  
Serenade – 3 minutes  
Iberia – 19 minutes  
Fantasia – 13 minutes  
Interval – 20 minutes  
Goyescas – 52 minutes

The concert will run for  
approximately 2 hours

## **COVER IMAGE**

Javier Perianes  
Photo by Igor Studio

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# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## JAVIER PERIANES piano

The international career of Javier Perianes has led him to perform in the most prestigious concert halls, with the world's foremost orchestras, working with celebrated conductors including Daniel Barenboim, Charles Dutoit, Zubin Mehta, Gustavo Dudamel, Klaus Mäkelä, Gianandrea Noseda, Gustavo Gimeno, Santtu-Matias Rouvali, Vladimir Jurowski, and François-Xavier Roth.

The 2022/23 season features an array of high-profile concerts. Perianes makes debuts with Dallas Symphony and Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, and returns to Budapest Festival Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Konzerthausorchester Berlin, Luxembourg, Comunitat Valenciana, Barcelona and Royal Philharmonic orchestras. With Juanjo Mena, Perianes tours with Orquesta Sinfonica de Madrid to perform at Carnegie Hall. Later in the season he returns to the US to appear with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and at the Mainly Mozart Festival. Further plans include residencies with Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia and Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, and a return to Australia where Perianes makes his first appearance with Melbourne Symphony Orchestra and continues a multi-year complete Beethoven concerto cycle with Sydney Symphony Orchestra and Simone Young.

Perianes frequently appears in recital across the globe, and is also a natural and keen chamber musician, regularly collaborating with violist Tabea Zimmermann and the Quiroga Quartet, and appearing at Festivals such as the BBC Proms, Lucerne, Salzburg Whitsun, La Roque d'Anthéron, Grafenegg, Prague Spring, Ravello, Stresa, San Sebastian, Santander, Granada, Vail, Blossom and Ravinia.

Career highlights have included concerts with Wiener Philharmoniker, Leipzig Gewandhausorchester, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Washington's National, Yomiuri Nippon and Danish National Symphony orchestras, Oslo, London, New York, Los Angeles and Czech Philharmonic orchestras, Orchestre de Paris, Cleveland, Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal and Philharmonia orchestras, Swedish and Norwegian Radio orchestras, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Budapest Festival Orchestra and Rundfunk-Sinfonieorchester Berlin.

Recording exclusively for harmonia mundi, Perianes has developed a diverse discography ranging from Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schubert, Grieg, Chopin, Debussy, Ravel and Bartók to Blasco de Nebra, Mompou, Falla, Granados and Turina. Recent albums pay tribute to Claude Debussy on the centenary of his death with a recording of the first book of his *Préludes* and *Estampes*, and *Les Trois Sonates – The Late Works* (with Jean-Guihen Queyras), which won a *Gramophone Award* in 2019.

He was awarded the National Music Prize in 2012 by the Ministry of Culture of Spain and named Artist of the Year at the International Classical Music Awards (ICMA) in 2019.



Javier Perianes  
Photo by Igor Studio

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

It is often – far too often – said that the best Spanish music was written by French composers. The tired old gag possibly has its roots in the eternal popularity of Bizet's opera *Carmen*, but not unreasonably was the source of considerable pique among Spanish composers. Enrique Granados, whose masterpiece *Goyescas* concludes this program, went so far as to say that 'the musical interpretation of Spain is not to be found in the tawdry *boleros* and *habaneras* in *Carmen*, in anything accompanied by tambourines and castanets. The music of my nation is far more complex, more poetic, and more subtle'. To which we might add that, as this program shows, 'Spain' is of course a rich amalgam of diverse kingdoms, cultures and languages, and that many of its constituent regions have and maintain distinctive cultural traditions.

That being said, many French composers after Bizet maintained a fascination with Spanish music, and Spanish composers looked to France. In 1907 Manuel de Falla was preparing to perform Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane* (Debussy sanctioned a transcription of the harp solo for piano) in Madrid, wrote to the composer for advice and received a generous response. Later that year Falla left his native Spain in some frustration. Two years before he had won a prize for his opera *La vida breve* ('Life is short'), a work in which he established the principles of working with distinctly Spanish sounds and forms, but when the promised production failed to eventuate, the composer went to Paris for a short break that lasted seven years. There he got to know Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Paul Dukas and Igor Stravinsky and absorbed some of their stylistic idioms, to the extent that when he returned to Spain with the outbreak of World War I his 'ballet with songs', *El amor brujo* (Love, the magician) was criticised as sounding too French.



Manuel de Falla

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

After Debussy's death in 1918 the editor of the *Revue Musicale*, Henry Prunières, commissioned ten composers to write works, for various instruments, in Debussy's memory. Among them were Ravel, Erik Satie and Stravinsky, and Falla contributed his **Homenaje** for guitar, though in the event the first performance in 1921 was given by Marie Louise Henri-Casadesus on the harp-lute, a hybrid instrument popular in early 19th-century Britain. A month later guitarist Miguel Llobet premiered the original work. Falla himself made the arrangement for piano, taking great care to preserve the atmosphere and sound-world of the guitar by the use of detailed markings for articulation and tone colour. The effect is a spare, restrained by melancholy piece, powered by a quiet but persistent habanera rhythm punctuated by falling arpeggio figures.

Falla was born in Cádiz, in Spain's southernmost region, Andalusia, a province known to the Romans as Bætica and much later to the Umayyads as Al-Andalus. Much of Andalusia's distinctive culture has roots in its Islamic history, including what Debussy called the 'stark beauty of the old Moorish cantilenas' and, of course, the whole tradition of flamenco. Despite his parents both being from other parts of Spain (his mother was from Catalonia and his father from Valencia), Falla's first works are steeped in Andalusian traditions. His **Serenata andaluza** is a case in point, and dates from 1900 when Falla had moved to Madrid for further study; around the time that he resolved to give up a career as a pianist and to devote himself to composition. This short, charming piece, like much Andalusian music, uses repetition of rhythmic ideas, such as the dotted rhythms at the start, before releasing a long 'Moorish cantilena' that is contrasted soon enough with a passage whose debt to Chopin is obvious. More 'Andalusian' sounds emerge, leading to a reprise of the opening and some gently emphatic development of the material.

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

The story goes that Falla once sent Debussy a postcard depicting the Puerta del Vino, or 'Wine Gate' of the Alhambra palace in the Andalusian city of Granada. (The Spanish name is probably a mistranslation from the Arabic, as wine would hardly have been publicly acknowledged in Muslim Spain).

Debussy hated hearing his music described as 'what imbeciles call impressionism, just about the least appropriate term possible' and preferred his work to be compared with literature rather than visual arts, especially Symbolist poetry. But visual imagery nevertheless plays an important role in his imagination. His two books of Preludes for piano, completed in 1910 and 1913 respectively, each contain works that adhere to certain recurrent ideas in Debussy's work – ancient mythology and 'the mysterious correspondences between Nature and Imagination' which Debussy found in *Symbolisme*. Those of the first book are more conventionally 'poetic' than the second, in which Debussy experiments with a sometimes ironic style. Significantly, though, Debussy put the titles of his preludes at the *end* of each piece, in brackets, as if to forestall too 'visual' an interpretation. There is nothing to suggest that Debussy intended either book of Preludes to be played only and ever as a set. Scholar and pianist Roy Howat notes that the timbre and colour of the different pieces often suit quite different pianos, and that each of Debussy's pieces has a strong character, often contrasting with its neighbours.

Falla's postcard almost certainly inspired Debussy's prelude ***La puerta del Vino*** from Book 2, and the piece contains several parallels with Falla's *Homenaje* for Debussy: we hear similar guitar-derived sounds, such as the downwards strum, carefully etched rhythms in the lower register (notably the habanera rhythm) against freer flourishes in the right hand, and the use of the 'Moorish' scale. The piece is driven by what Debussy calls 'abrupt contrasts of extreme violence and passionate sweetness'.



Claude Debussy

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

Similarly, Book 1's ***La sérénade interrompue*** (The interrupted serenade) is initially marked 'quasi guitarra', and uses 'Spanish' dance rhythms and 'Moorish' Phrygian-mode melodies. It too is full of contrasts, though here the stress is less on abrupt changes than on gradual ones.

Debussy's direct contemporary Isaac Albéniz was born near the French border in Catalonia, and showed prodigious talent at the piano as a child. He began performing in public at the age of nine, and, able to travel widely with his father, a customs official, performed in numerous places outside of Spain while still a teenager. He was accepted by the Paris Conservatoire but was too young to go, and unlike Falla, decided on further study in Leipzig and Brussels rather than Paris. From the early 1880s, Albéniz, like Granados and, later, Falla, was profoundly influenced by the Madrid-based composer and musicologist Felip Pedrell, who persuaded him to cultivate distinctly Spanish idioms in his music.

By the 1900s Albéniz was based mainly in London and Paris, where he died in 1909 at the age of 48. Among his late works is his magnum opus, the 12 character pieces that form his *Iberia*. Writing in 1913, Debussy noted that Albéniz 'was the first who knew how to make use of the rich melancholy and the special sense of humour peculiar to his century of origin.' *Iberia* is grouped into four books of three pieces, each a musical depiction of a particular place. In ***El Albaicín*** we return to Granada in Andalusia, specifically to that quarter of the city where moriscos – Muslims forced to convert to Christianity after the reconquest by Christian monarchs – created a distinctive culture and architecture. Debussy writes of this piece that here

one finds all the atmosphere of those carnation-scented Spanish evenings...the muffled sound of the guitar lamentingly playing all the night, with its sudden upsurges and nervous somersaults. Without using actual popular tunes he is the kind of person who has them in his blood. They have become so natural a part of his music that one barely distinguishes a demarcation line.



Isaac Albéniz



# ABOUT THE MUSIC

One might have said the same about Falla's relationship to popular tunes, except that his magnum opus for piano, the ***Fantasía Bætica*** is both deeply infused with the sounds of vernacular music, but is also a hugely abstract and substantive piece. It is, moreover, not 'pianist's music', despite Falla's own brilliant technique, and presents many challenges to the player, which may account for its not having achieved the repertoire status of *Iberia* or the *Goyescas*. The piece came about when, in 1919, Falla's friend Stravinsky was in financial difficulty – marooned, as it were, in Western Europe owing to the revolution in Russia. Falla contacted the pianist Artur Rubinstein who proposed commissioning a work from Stravinsky, (who composed *Piano-Rag Music*) and this work from Falla, which, sadly, didn't meet with Rubinstein's approval.

The title refers to the Roman name for the province more or less contiguous with modern Andalusia, and is Falla's love-song to his native land. It is also a compendium of musical influences from further afield, including the music of Debussy and Granados, both of whom had died recently at the time the work was conceived, and that of Stravinsky and Bartók, Fauré and Ravel. As well as featuring material derived from flamenco, the piece, according to pianist and scholar Nancy Lee Harper contains echoes of Indian and north African musics.

But it is flamenco, and the sound of the guitar, that dominates the writing, as Harper points out, identifying 'punteado — guitar plucking; rasgueado -guitar strumming; copla (poetic interludes); falsetas — guitar 'coplas' that introduce or are played between the vocal parts of the lead singer. Chords based on tuning of the guitar strings are frequently found.'

The piece is broadly symmetrical in form, using in the outer sections a mosaic of strongly-profiled sections, including passages in dance rhythm that gain force from repetition rather than development, but which are subjected to variations once the blocks of material have been stated. And there is Falla's love

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

of the *canto jondo*, the unique ‘deep song’ of flamenco that informs his lyrical writing. At the work’s heart is a deceptively simple ‘intermezzo’ in 3/8, a kind of barcarolle, before the work revisits the driving material of the first half leading to a thrilling close. Such a work supremely demonstrates Granados’ view about ‘tawdry *boleros* and *habaneras* and anything accompanied by tambourines and castanets.’

Catalan composer Granados is remembered principally for his two books of piano solos inspired by the paintings of Goya, and he himself regarded the works as ‘something important’. But his interest in Goya also extended to creating an opera (also called **Goyescas** and based on some of the piano’s material) along with ten other works for the stage, as well as a respectable amount of chamber and orchestral music. But he was also a great player. According to pianist Alicia de Larrocha, whose mother and aunt had been taught by him, Granados ‘brought the technique of the harpsichord [particularly that of his beloved Scarlatti] to the romantic, virtuoso piano repertoire of the day’. Sadly Granados died relatively young, drowning in the English Channel while trying to save his wife after their ferry had been torpedoed.

Following that of the great painter, Granados’ work, subtitled ‘The *majos* in love’, creates magical portraits of the *majos* and *majas* – the stylish, young, bohemian aesthetes native to Madrid. Like Albéniz, Granados divided his work into ‘books’ (In this case two) of three pieces each. (A seventh piece, *El Pelele* – the Straw Man – is sometimes appended.)

The first piece, ‘Flattery’, is Granados’ response to Goya’s *Capricho, Tal para cual* where a young couple – she is in a dark dress with a lace fan, while he is in a tricorne hat, though it’s not quite clear who is flattering whom – are being watched and pointed at by two sinister nuns in white habits. The thematic material is derived from the eighteenth century composer Blas de Laserna and is a set of variations in the form of a *jota*, a lively dance.



Enrique Granados

# ABOUT THE MUSIC

Other pieces in the set have no definitive relation to specific works of Goya, (and the temptation to 'read' the pieces based on the libretto of the subsequent opera is unhelpful) but nevertheless conjure the spirit of his art. 'Conversation at the Window' begins amorously and builds in passionate intensity. Musicologist Michael Christoforidis has noted that 'the quasi primitivist rhythmic dynamism of [Falla's] *Fantasia Baetica* is also suggested in passages from *El fandango de candil* (Fandango by Candlelight).

Possibly Granados' best known piece, *Quejas o la maja y el ruiseñor* (Laments, or the *maja* and the nightingale) is a dialogue between the girl and the bird. A set of variations (on a folk song from Valencia) the work grants the nightingale an ornate cadenza to represent its song. Christoforidis points out that this movement and the first may have influenced Falla where he emulates *canto jondo*.

The longest piece in the set is *El Amor y la Muerte: Balada* (Ballad of Love and Death), which is technically taxing and explores some advanced harmonic and rhythmic writing, particularly in what we might take to be the 'death' bits.

Death, in the form of the Spectre in the final piece, is a slightly comic figure, plucking his guitar, sounding his horn and occasionally hearing bells toll (the score is very detailed about these timbres.)

*El Pelele* (The Straw Man) adds further humour in a glittering dance in 3/4 time that depicts a game painted by Goya, where an effigy in straw is tossed in a blanket.

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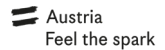
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