

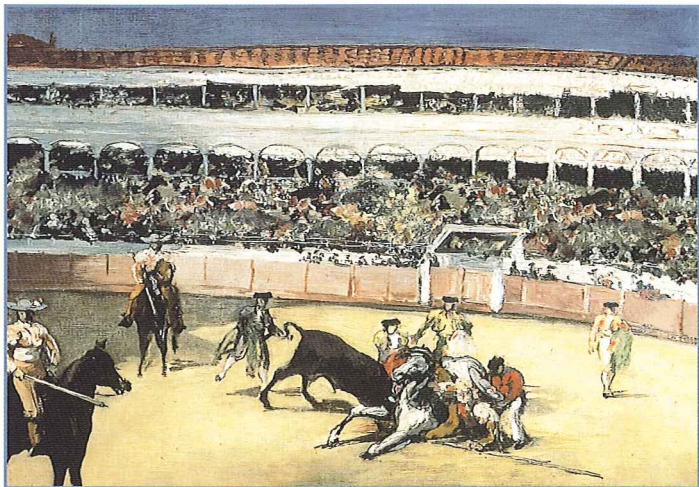
# CHABRIER

España

Fête polonaise • Joyeuse marche

Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo

Hervé Niquet



## Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894) Orchestral Works

'My first concern is to do as I please; seeking above all to give rein to my individuality; my second is not to be a damned bore'

*Emmanuel Chabrier in a letter to his publisher, Costallat, 1886*

'A man of exquisite gentleness and sudden exuberance', 'the soul of a sentimental girl in the body of a water carrier', Emmanuel Chabrier is the great forgotten man of French music. With a passion for poetry and painting as much as for music, among his friends he could count Verlaine, Edmond Rostand, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Manet (whose canvasses he was one of the first to buy), Fauré, Duparc and Chausson. Beneath the laughing, chubby exterior there dwelt a roguish tenderness, an infinite passion for music: 'No artist will ever have worshipped music, nor striven to honour it more than I, none has suffered more for it and I shall suffer for it eternally', he wrote to Charles Lecocq.

Emmanuel Chabrier was born at Ambert, in the Auvergne, on 18th January, 1841. The only child of Jean Chabrier, a lawyer, and Evelina Durozay, he showed an early aptitude for music and at the age of six was taking piano lessons with the town's teacher, Manuel Zaporta, a Carlist refugee who perhaps created in him his taste for Spain. However, Emmanuel had to follow the family way and study law, devoting all his free time to his musical education. At the age of twenty, following his father's wishes, he went into the Ministry of the Interior. Civil servant by day, artist by night, he frequented the clubs and salons of Paris. From this period came nine unpublished melodies, pieces for piano, two operettas based on Verlaine's librettos which were never finished and a plan for the opera *Jean Hunyadi*. 1869 was marked by the death of both his parents within a week. He had always been very close to them, but now only his former governess, Nanine, was

to watch over the destiny of 'Mavel' and his future family. Following the enforced movements of the Ministry during the Franco-Prussian War, he had little inclination to compose and it was not until 1873 that there came an *Impromptu* for piano dedicated to Manet's wife. In the same year, Chabrier married Alice Dejean. Two sons were born of this happy union.

Alice soon had eye problems, gradually losing her sight. It was at the time, in 1874, that Chabrier wrote *Lamento*, a relatively short symphonic piece which remained an unpublished manuscript until its rediscovery a few years ago. Chabrier, who used to revise his work time and time again, seems to have written it in one go, with no subsequent alterations; according to Yvonne Tiennot, it was performed at the Société Nationale that year, then the manuscript seems to have been lost. Hervé Niquet describes the extraordinary effect of this poignant work as the equivalent in sound of gradually deteriorating sight, the tones becoming thinner, the mass of sound fading away by degrees. A year later, Chabrier wrote a *Larghetto* for horn and orchestra which was performed in 1878 at the 'Société des compositeurs'. True recognition came in 1877 with the success of his operetta *L'Etoile*. Thereafter Chabrier was acknowledged by his peers. In 1880 he finally resigned his post at the Ministry of the Interior to devote himself entirely to music.

Two years later, Chabrier and his wife visited Spain, a four month stay which had an appreciable effect on the composer's life and which is the source of his most well known orchestral work: *España*. His letters are full of exuberant wit, cheerfulness and

mundane delights. 'In the evening we are forever in the *bailios flamencos*, both of us surrounded by *toreros* in town clothes, with black felt hats split down the middle, hip-length jackets and tight trousers showing off sinewy legs and the shapeliest of buttocks. And the gypsies singing their *malagueñas* or dancing the tango, and the *manzanilla* which is passed from hand to hand and which everybody is obliged to drink.' (21st October, 1882). Later he writes again 'I don't need to tell you that I've made notes on lots of things; the tango, a way of dancing where a woman imitates a ship's pitching with her behind is the only one in duple time; all the rest, everything, is in 3/4 (Seville) or 3/8 (Malaga and Cadiz); in the North, it's different, there's a very odd 5/8 one. The tango's 2/4 is always of the habanera type...' Performed on 4th November, 1883 at the Société des Nouveaux Concerts founded by Charles Lamoureux, the rhapsody *España (Allegro con fuoco)* is conceived for a full, colourful orchestra where the harp takes on melodies, the horns, trombones and tuba sing, the woodwind dazzle. All is contrast and delight. 'The musical qualities of both north and south are mingled or superimposed.' Chabrier used the rhythms and motifs noted in Spain without ever seeking to copy them exactly.

In 1895, he again took inspiration from Spain and from this very distinctive habanera rhythm for a short piece for piano which he later orchestrated felicitously. Dedicated to Marguerite Lamoureux, the conductor's daughter, *Habanera* was first heard at Angers on 4th November, 1888.

After the unfortunate interruption of the performances of *Gwendoline*, an opera steeped in Chabrier's profound admiration for the Wagnerian, the composer from the Auvergne turned to light opera. *Le Roi malgré lui* was completed in 1887. The Opéra-Comique fell victim to fire a week after the première. The *Fête polonaise* opens the second act. Brilliant, with irresistible momentum, it takes us into the ball where

Count Laski, plotting to depose the king, has assembled his conspirators. The rhythms of mazurka and waltz are interlaced in a whirl of daring harmonies. Somewhere between a mazurka and fast polonaise, *Danse slave* appears at the start of the third act.

The concert of 4th November, 1888 staged by the Angers Association Artistique had seen not only the first performance of *Habanera*, but also that of the *Suite pastorale*, the *Prélude pastoral* and the *Joyeuse marche*. Chabrier had conducted with his customary fire and the success was instant. The four scenes of the *Suite pastorale* are taken from *Dix pièces pittoresques* composed for piano in 1881. As was often the case, Chabrier next created an orchestration full of subtlety and vividness for certain pieces: *Idylle* (No. 6 transposed up one tone) with the flute's translucent limpidity, *Danse villageoise* (No. 7) which switches between minor and major, *Sous-bois* (No. 4) with its softened nuances and *Scherzo-Valse* (No. 10) with its utterly rustic exuberance and joy. The *Prélude pastoral* is, according to the review in the *Patriote de l'ouest* of the day, 'a superb piece whose Wagnerian tones in no ways diminish our esteem for the French master's very individual powers'.

Chabrier considered his *Joyeuse marche* (originally entitled 'Marche française' then 'Marche joyeuse') 'idiotically comical; the musicians were in stitches'. Dedicated to Vincent d'Indy, this 'masterpiece of high fantasy' is, according to Debussy, filled to overflowing with bold and colourful innovations, and with the good-natured humour characteristic of Chabrier. Let us hope that the audacious harmonics, the novel and quirky instrumentation, the almost grotesque consistency of sound, the constant rhythmic invention, at last do justice to this composer loved and admired by his peers and misunderstood by the public at large.

Isabelle Battioni

Translation: Wil Gowans

## Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo

Since its foundation in 1856, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo has enjoyed a brilliant history, working with such legendary figures as Arturo Toscanini, Richard Strauss and Sir Thomas Beecham, and more recently Leonard Bernstein, Zubin Mehta, Sir Georg Solti and Lorin Maazel. Its musical director is currently James DePriest, who is succeeded in 2000 by Marek Janowski. The orchestra has consistently played a vital rôle in the cultural life of Monte-Carlo in the

fields of opera, ballet and orchestral music by composers ranging from Berlioz, Saint-Saëns and Fauré to Krzysztof Penderecki, Aulis Sallinen and Elliott Carter. The Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo has toured throughout Europe, Asia and the United States, taking part in major international festivals, and has won a variety of prizes for its acclaimed recordings.

## Hervé Niquet

Hervé Niquet follows the example of Baroque musicians in his versatility. In addition to his ability as a keyboard-player, conductor and composer, he also studied singing and from the age of seventeen turned his attention to the establishment and direction of choirs. In 1980 he was appointed *chef de chant* at the Paris Opéra National. In 1985 he was commissioned by Princess Caroline of Monaco to write an orchestral work and ballet inspired by a novel of Stefan Zweig for the re-opening of the Monte Carlo Ballet. Shaped by participation in the principal Baroque ensembles, Hervé

Niquet has developed an affinity with the French *grand motet* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and to revive this still relatively little known repertoire he established in 1988 Le Concert Spirituel, thus bringing to life again one of the most famous musical institutions of the reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI. Increasingly in demand as a conductor, Hervé Niquet has appeared at the Baroque Music Festival of Lamèque in Canada and at the Lufthansa Baroque Festival in London, in addition to other engagements as a conductor in France.

Playing  
Time  
60:42

Emmanuel  
**CHABRIER**

(1841-1894)

Orchestral Works

Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo • Hervé Niquet  
Jean-Marc Jordan, cor anglais †

- |    |   |              |
|----|---|--------------|
| 1  | <b>España</b>   | <b>6:39</b>  |
|    | <b>Suite pastorale</b>  | <b>17:25</b> |
| 2  | Idylle  | 3:40         |
| 3  | Danse villageoise   | 4:28         |
| 4  | Sous-bois   | 4:25         |
| 5  | Scherzo-valse   | 4:53         |
| 6  | <b>Habanera</b>   | <b>4:37</b>  |
| 7  | <b>Danse slave from the<br/>opera, "Le Roi malgré lui"</b>    | <b>5:11</b>  |
| 8  | <b>Fête polonaise from the<br/>opera, "Le Roi malgré lui"</b> | <b>7:53</b>  |
| 9  | <b>Lamento</b> †  | <b>7:59</b>  |
| 10 | <b>Prélude pastoral</b>                                       | <b>6:31</b>  |
| 11 | <b>Joyeuse marche</b>   | <b>3:47</b>  |

Born in France, Emmanuel Chabrier was employed as a high-ranking government official until the age of 39 when he devoted himself full-time to composition. Inspired by a visit to Spain in 1882, the brilliantly coloured *España* brought his name into the classical composer's hall of fame. The *Joyeuse marche* was described by Debussy as 'a masterpiece of high fantasy' and is filled with good-natured humour characteristic of the composer. The *Fête polonaise* opens the second act of the opera *Le Roi malgré lui*, the rhythms of mazurka and waltz interlaced in a whirl of daring harmonies.

Recorded at the Auditorium of the Centre de Congrès, Monte-Carlo,  
on 21st and from 23rd to 26th June, 1997.

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