

# WIGMORE HALL

Wednesday 26 June 2024  
7.30pm

Charles Richard-Hamelin piano

Enrique Granados (1867-1916)

Allegro de concierto (1903-4)

Valses poéticos (1894-1900)

*Introducción. Vivace molto • Melódico •  
Tiempo de Vals noble • Tiempo de Vals  
lento • Allegro humorístico • Allegretto  
(elegante) • Quasi ad libitum  
(sentimental) • Vivo • Presto*

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909)

La Vega (1896-7)

*Interval*

Fryderyk Chopin (1810-1849)

Allegro de concert in A Op. 46 (1841)

Waltz in E minor B56 (1830)

Waltz in A minor Op. 34 No. 2 (c.1834)

Waltz in F Op. 34 No. 3 (1838)

Waltz in F minor Op. 70 No. 2 (1842)

Waltz in D flat Op. 64 No. 1 'Minute' (1847)

Waltz in C sharp minor Op. 64 No. 2 (1847)

Waltz in A flat Op. 64 No. 3 (1847)

Waltz in A flat Op. 42 (1840)

CLASSIC *fm*

Wigmore Hall £5 tickets for Under 35s supported by Media Partner Classic FM



SUPPORT OUR AUDIENCE FUND: EVERY NOTE COUNTS

Ensure Wigmore Hall remains a vibrant hub of musical excellence by making a donation today.  
wigmore-hall.org.uk/donate | 020 7258 8220



Join & Support  
Donations

*Wigmore Hall is a no smoking venue. No recording or photographic equipment may be taken into the auditorium nor used in any other part of the Hall without the prior written permission of the management. In accordance with the requirements of City of Westminster persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the gangways intersecting the seating, or to sit in any other gangways. If standing is permitted in the gangways at the sides and rear of the seating, it shall be limited to the number indicated in the notices exhibited in those positions. Disabled Access and Facilities - full details from 020 7935 2141. Wigmore Hall is equipped with a loop to help hearing aid users receive clear sound without background noise. Patrons can use this facility by switching hearing aids to 'T'.*



*Please ensure that watch alarms, mobile phones and any other electrical devices which can become audible are switched off. Phones on a vibrate setting can still be heard, please switch off.*

The Wigmore Hall Trust Registered Charity No. 1024838  
36 Wigmore Street, London W1U 2BP • Wigmore-hall.org.uk • John Gilhooly Director

Wigmore Hall Royal Patron HRH The Duke of Kent, KG  
Honorary Patrons Aubrey Adams OBE; André and Rosalie Hoffmann; Louise Kaye; Kohn Foundation; Mr and Mrs Paul Morgan

Department  
for Culture  
Media & Sport



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



It is a truism of criticism that Chopin was foundational for the later development of pianism, notably in the 'new music' of the *fin de siècle* in both France and Spain. The present programme spells out part of this genealogy, pairing works by Granados and Chopin that share both a title and an opus number, and presenting a selection of waltzes by both composers. Like its Chopin antecedent, **Granados's** *Allegro de concierto* Op. 46, completed in 1904, combines formidable virtuosity – at times more Liszt than Chopin – with a severely classical sonata-form design that may well come as a surprise to those who know the composer mainly from the *Goyescas*. There is no hint of Spanish local colour in this work. Nor do we find it in the earlier set of *Valses poéticos*. This is a suite of eight charming miniatures, in turn sparkling and lyrical, preceded by a duple-time introduction. The cyclicity of the work is strengthened by an extended final waltz (with its own duple-time prelude) that in due course returns us to the music of the opening waltz.

On occasion both Granados and **Albéniz** drew upon, domesticated and emblematised a 'Spanish' idiom that had long been a mark of exoticism in European music. This makes for an interesting chapter in the story of European musical nationalism, but it is not a chapter explored in the present programme. Spain is certainly foregrounded in Albeniz's *La Vega*, a 'musical reflection', as the composer put it, of the plains surrounding the Alhambra, and specific musical characteristics associated with Spain are indeed introduced. But these characteristics are subtle and understated. *La Vega* is really a nature piece, and its delicate, finely-wrought tone painting speaks more of a rather generalised late 19th Century pianism where late-Romanticism shades into Impressionism than of any kind of national emblem. It was originally intended as the second movement of a symphonic suite on the Alhambra, but the full project was not realised, and Albéniz published a revised version of *La Vega* as an independent piano work in 1897.

**Chopin's** two piano concertos were composed during 1830, his last year in Warsaw, and he himself performed them both in the family salon and on the public stage. As this indicates, they could be – and were – performed as solos or with reduced accompaniment as well as with orchestra. It is not so surprising, then, that when he abandoned a third concerto, begun shortly after the other two, he transformed its first movement into a solo piano composition, the *Allegro de concert* Op. 46. This work, preserves a formal distinction between quasi-orchestral *ritornelli* and solo episodes, with the latter hosting some of Chopin's most technically challenging music. It seems likely that the unusual format of the work (effectively a concerto movement for solo piano) has proved an obstacle to its assimilation, for to this day it is a stranger in the concert hall and remains relatively little known by music lovers.

Like the mazurka, the waltz occupied Chopin throughout his creative life. It seems that waltzes were among his earliest, and also his latest compositions, though in both cases the music is not extant. The waltzes are transparently 'not for dancing', as Chopin remarked of his Op. 6 *Mazurkas*, and very much 'for listening'. From Op. 18 onwards the composer was concerned to differentiate the tone of his waltzes (redolent of the salon and of 'the best society') from that of the mazurkas, with which they share some rather obvious characteristics. The connotative values of the two genres were henceforth very different, even though characteristics of the one could occasionally infiltrate the other.

Opus numbers are confusing here. Like the E minor *Waltz* B56, composed in Warsaw in 1830, the F minor Op. 70 No. 2 was not published during Chopin's lifetime, though it dates from as late as 1842. Yet it seems to have been one of his favourites, as there are no fewer than five extant 'presentation manuscripts' inscribed into the albums of the wealthy. 'I should not like it to be made public', he wrote to one of these dedicatees. It should be stressed that not one of the waltzes was styled by Chopin himself as 'grand' or 'brilliant'. Such descriptions were entirely the province of publishers, and in some cases they were blatantly mis-applied. Thus, while the first and third of the Op. 34 *Waltzes*, published in 1838, may live up to Maurice Schlesinger's label *Grandes valse brillantes*, this is hardly an apt descriptor for the second, whose deeply expressive lyricism leans rather towards some of the slower mazurkas.

From 1839 onwards, Chopin did most of his composing during his seven long summers in Nohant, George Sand's country home in Berry. The one summer he missed was 1840, and it is perhaps for this reason that 1840 was not one of his more productive years. It did, however, produce the 3 *Nouvelles Etudes* and the Op. 42 *Waltz*, whose lively cross-rhythms clearly cross-reference the second of the études. Then there was a hiatus until 1847, which post-dates the composer's break with George Sand. In that year he completed the Op. 64 cycle, whose three pieces showcase Chopin's art at its most urbane, drawing the familiar gestures of the earlier waltzes into a miniature compendium of all the most delicate sentiments we associate with this genre. The key word is charm, since this overrides more individual moods: the airy, breezy quality of the D flat major (popularly known as the 'Minute' waltz), the alternating melancholy and abandon of the C sharp minor, the grace and elegance of the A flat major. Familiarity cannot dull these pieces, which somehow retain their freshness and spontaneity across repeated performances.

© Jim Samson 2024

*Reproduction and distribution is strictly prohibited.*