CONCERTO FOR HARPSICHORD, FLUTE, OBOE, CLARINET, VIOLIN, AND VIOLONCELLO BY MANUEL DE FALLA: AN (AUTO)BIOGRAPHICAL READING.

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Thesis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Through the many years of musicological research people have been fascinated with the lives of composers and how lifetime events may have affected a given composer's music. Some composers have left collections of letters lending to the investigations of how they lived, while other composers may have written in particular styles that indicate what was going on in their lives. For example, the music of Shostakovich tells of his persecution at the hands of the Soviet government; likewise, Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*, a well-recognized work of the late Romantic period, contains elements of his own hallucinations.

Regardless of what composers have left behind, a great deal of biographical work remains speculative, and this thesis is no exception. I will focus on Manuel de Falla and one of his chamber ensemble works, which through subjective research aligns with specific portions of his

life, particular events and people with whom de Falla was in contract. His *Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin and Violoncello* portrays various aspects of his life in a somewhat chronological format, going from early childhood to the time of the work's conception. This thesis will examine how this work pays homage to people and religious elements, as well as reflects on health issues with which de Falla had been encumbered since his early childhood. Also examined are his compositional techniques and how they are related to particular genres and trends that span centuries of musical composition. This thesis will take into consideration the extent to which de Falla would have intended this work to be understood as an (auto)biography.

Chapters two through four are divided into three sections. The first section will cover biographical information that pertains to specific parts of his life (though these, at times, do not directly correspond to the specific movement of the work). The second section will cover specific information in regards to the movement itself. The final section will bring back biographical information and connect it to the specific movement. I must reiterate that I am in no way saying that the sections

of his life *directly* correspond to each movement, but major events and influences do connect in some way. Furthermore, movements are related to the same events, thus some repetition will be necessary.

Chapter two of this thesis will discuss the early years and influences of de Falla as they relate to the first movement of the work. Early influences include his mother, his gypsy nanny, and his first years of study with Felipe Pedrell. Musical elements included in this movement are the quotation of a renaissance *villancico* by Joan Vasquez, *De Los Alamós Vengo, Madre.* This villancico serves as the basis for the entire work, but is most prevalent in the first movement. Also included in the first movement is an evocation of the Italian Overture form (fast-slow-fast), a nod toward both the Baroque era, and the Neoclassicism of de Falla's own time. This movement additionally summons the Classical period by using the Sonata-Allegro form as its basis, and represents Spanish Nationalism with its folk-like demeanor, which is one of three central types of Spanish music, along with courtly and sacred music.

The third chapter of this thesis will discuss the second movement, which is slow, canonic, and dirge-like,

and thereby offers a striking contrast to what came before. This movement shows directly resulted from de Falla's attendance of Holy Week festivities in Seville, specifically from music that was involved with the ceremonial events. This movement aligns chronologically with the time that de Falla spent in Paris, during the Spanish Civil War, and coincides with the death of his mother in 1919. This movement thus strikingly depicts the sacred element of Spanish music.

The fourth chapter involves the last movement of the concerto, which is, again, in Sonata-Allegro form whose fast tempo, contrasts with the slow middle movement. Chronologically, this movement shows influence of life events that took place later in De Falla's life, and events that were simultaneous to the request by harpsichordist Wanda Landowska for the composition of this work. Characteristics of this movement are harpsichord clichés that are reminiscent of those used by Domenico Scarlatti, whose music Pedrell, teacher of de Falla, advocated studying. This movement points towards the courtly aspects of Spanish music.

Chapter five of this thesis investigates the reception of the piece, and speculate on how the reception affected

the rest of de Falla's life, most notably his friendship with Wanda Landowska. Ultimately this chapter will question the intent of de Falla for this work to be a (auto)biographical and to what extent he would have expected his listening audience to be aware of the nature of the work as such.

I conclude by suggesting that this work is an homage to his country, the music of the time, the music of the past, to the Catholic Church, and to those people whom de Falla was in contact with up to the time of the conception of the concerto.

Other elements that could be included in this thesis would be aspects of neoclassicism and nationalism, elements that are brought forth in this piece by de Falla. However, for the sake of brevity, I will briefly discuss them here.

In Spain, the concept of neoclassicism was extremely avant-garde, which could be attributed to the fact that until de Falla and his contemporaries, there was little growth in the national style. There were various ways that de Falla incorporated neoclassicism into the Harpsichord Concerto. He used the Renaissance *villancico* for thematic material, both nearly whole and in fragmented forms. He

used a smaller ensemble, which allowed more contrapuntal writing and miniature formal structures. Use of a smaller ensemble allowed de Falla to have complete control over the sonorities created in the music, which will be discussed further in chapter five. De Falla also used a more universal style by incorporating impressionistic chord progressions, which were being used by Debussy during the time he spent in Paris. De Falla was also inspired by earlier German composers, such as Bach, Beethoven and Mozart in the purity and objectivity of their music.[1]

Another aspect of this piece involves Nationalism. The Spanish tradition itself is rich in folk-song, national song, folklore and dance. However, these resources were never used in the classical idiom until the late 19th century.[2] For most of the country's history, Spain was very much isolated from the rest of Western Europe. This was connected, in part, to the impact of the Moorish occupation, religious beliefs, and the geographic location of the country.[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Andrew A. Fraser. *Essays on Music: Manuel de Falla.* London: Oxford University Press, 1930: p. 56.

[3] James Burnett

For a long period of time, it was those who were *not* Spanish who wrote Spanish music. Foreign composers used Spanish musical idioms in their works as a superficial way of creating a Spanish ambiance. However, this cannot be considered nationalism, but exoticism. An example of this would be Bizet's opera, *Carmen.* These composers used rhythms from dances, such as the *malaguena, habanera,* and *bolero,* and quoted folk melodies which sound almost mocking of Spanish folk music because of the over exaggeration of sentimentality and forced harmonizations.[4] The true Spanish music consists of simple modulations and subtle mood changes. The emotions in the music were more likely to be conveyed by the text rather than by the music. This tends to work against the text painting which was widely popular in other European text settings. The rhythms are entirely complex, which eluded the foreign composers when they attempted to use the folk music as a basis for their compositions.[5]

De Falla's music was composed around the same time that Béla Bartók, Gustav Holst, and Ralph Vaughn Williams

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[4] David Ewen. *Twentieth Century Composers.* New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1937: p. 131.

[5] Ibid., 131-3.

were collecting folk music of their native countries. De Falla, however, never deliberately went out to collect such music, but used what was familiar to him already. He also generally avoided directly quoting folk-music, though this concerto is an exception. In general, he used the music to instill a Spanish spirit in his compositions.[6]

[6] Douglas Lee. *Masterworks of 20th Century Music: The Modern Repertory of the Symphony Orchestra.* New York: Routledge, 2002: p. 137.

CHAPTER II

DE FALLA'S EARLY YEARS AND THEIR CONNECTION TO THE FIRST MOVEMENT OF THE *CONCERTO FOR HARPSICHORD, FLUTE, OBOE, CLARINET, VIOLIN AND VIOLONCELLO.*

Biographical Information:

Manuel de Falla's full name is Manuel Maria de los Dolores Clemente Ramon del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus de Fall y Matheu. He was born in Cadiz, Spain on November 26, 1876, to José María Falla and María Jesús Matheu, well-to-do merchants from Catalonia. De Falla was the oldest of five children, only three of whom survived infancy. De Falla was thus familiar with death from an early age; also in early childhood, de Falla contracted pulmonary tuberculosis leaving him weak and in poor health for the remainder of his life. This recurring illness caused de Falla to become a

hypochondriac with a deep fear of disease and an obsession to be clean. In his later years, he would implement a strict daily regime of both physical and religious activities.

De Falla received his academic and religious instruction at home, rather than through attending a school or church. His academic studies were placed in the hands of Don Clemente Parodi, while Father Francisco de Paula Fedrinai carried out his religious studies. His father encouraged his interest in music, though he himself had no musical ability of which to speak. De Falla began his piano studies with his mother, who was evidently quite accomplished on the instrument.[7] De Falla may have also studied piano with his maternal grandfather, Manuel Matheu y Parosi.[8]

During his childhood, de Falla had a Moorish Nanny, whom he lovingly called "La Morilla," who would sing gypsy songs to him while he was in his cradle. This may have contributed to his later interest in *cante jondo*, a primitive style of flamenco that is associated with the

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[7] Nancy Lee Harper. *Manuel de Falla: A Bio-bibliography.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998: p. 13.

[8] Gilbert Chase and Andre Budwig. *Manuel de Falla: A Bibliography and Research Guide.* New York: Garland Press, 1986: p.4.

gypsies of Andalusia.[9] Garcia Lorca once commented on the role of de Falla's nanny insisting that her savageness and quintessentially "native" quality instilled upon him through her sharing of folksong and fables:

> The rich boy has a poor nursemaid who gives him her savage milk and infuses him with the essence of his people. These nurses, along with the cleaning women and other humble servants, have for a long time carried out the important task of transmitting ballads, songs, and stories to the houses of the aristocrats and the middle-class.[10]

De Falla had a keen imagination and a penchant for literature, even in his youth. He created his own city, Colón, which would later serve as the basis for his unfinished work, *Atlantidad.* He ran the city as if it were a real thriving metropolis. De Falla served as the city's Maestro, as well as publisher of the monthly newspaper. The city had a town counsel and even tax collectors to ensure that it was running as it should.[11] De Falla was filled with a vivid imagination and immense creativity,

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[9] Ibid. 4.

[10] Ibid, 6.

[11] Ibid. 15.

sensitivity, determination, and a great sense of seriousness. He had a proclivity for paying attention to minute details, which flowered in later life into a strong sense of orchestral color. Like many young children, de Falla was inherently shy and secretive. His strong devotion to the Catholic faith and his love for his native country and its folk music would later be instilled in his compositions.[12]

When de Falla surpassed his mother's piano abilities, he began piano studies with Eloisa Galluzzo, a close friend of his mother. She encouraged him to work on his improvisational skills, which would later become essential in his composing. Soon after de Falla began lessons with Eloisa Galluzzo, she entered a convent, an act which he greatly admired, and de Falla began studying with Alejandro Odero, who would also begin teaching him aural skills and harmony at the Academia de Santa Cecilia. Unfortunately, de Falla did not have much luck retaining piano instructors; Odero passed away and he had to find a new piano instructor, Enrico Broca.

Broca encouraged de Falla to begin working on his compositional skills by teaching him counterpoint and

[12] Harper, 14.

harmony. Broca also had de Falla do analysis of works by the "masters." When de Falla's family moved to Madrid, he began studies with José Trago, one of the foremost composers of Spanish keyboard music of the time, at the Madrid Conservatory of Music and Declamation.[13] During his practicing sessions while living in Madrid, de Falla would play so boisterously that his neighbors would complain of the loud noise.[14]

At age eleven, de Falla was introduced to the music of Beethoven, Bellini, Mozart and Grieg, whose works were particularly popular to study at that particular time. During the same year, he performed with his mother a piano-duet version of Haydn's *The Seven Last Words of Christ*. This took place at the San Franciscan Church where he had been baptized shortly after his birth. De Falla also attended salon concerts in the home of cellist Salvador Viniegra, where he was given the opportunity to perform in front of small audiences.[15]

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[13] Albert Recasens. 'Spain', Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 March 2005), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

[14] Chase: Biobibliography, 15.

[15] Harper, 15.

While de Falla did possess a passion for both literature and religion, he felt that it was his calling to be a composer. During a conversation with Rolando-Manuel, de Falla stated that his abilities fell more strongly with musical composition and he was willing to set aside his other interests to pursue the life of a composer, though he did comment that his religious upbringing and faith had a great deal to do with his desire to compose:

> From this time, at the age of seventeen, something of a conviction both frightening and profound drove me to drop everything to devote myself definitively to the study of composition. That calling was so strong that it even made me feel afraid, because the ambitions it filled me with were well beyond that I believed myself capable of achieving… So, had it not been for the great support of my religious convictions, I would never have had the courage to follow such a foreboding path. Nevertheless, curiously, in my first calling (literature), fear was completely absent, no doubt, because it was simply a childish whim. In truth, unfounded fear has never played a dominant part in my personality.[16]

The First Movement: Overview

There are several connections that can be made between the early years of de Falla's life and the methods that he used to compose the first movement of the *Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin and Violoncello.* Among the people, events, and factors that mark both his

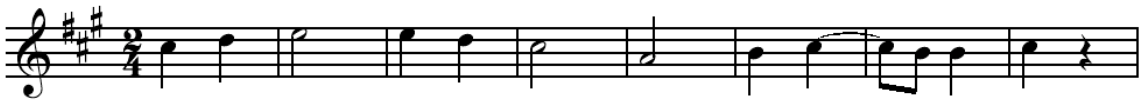
[16] Ibid. 15-16.

youth and the concerto are his Morrish Nanny, his piano studies, and his innate sense of musicality when using a somewhat primitive folk song of Spain. The following links early life experiences to the first movement of the concerto.

The general form of the first movement is Sonata-Allegro form. This dates from the Baroque period Classical periods. I say "general" for de Falla's version of the form is not typical; he begins with a prelude, which he follows with an exposition, development, and recapitulation that ends with a plagal cadence. This movement is based on a single theme, not the usual two or more. This was undoubtedly inspired by de Falla's studies of Domenico Scarlatti with Felipe Pedrell (who will be covered in subsequent chapters).[17]

Without digressing too far from the concerto itself, it is necessary to point out from where the primary theme, on which an extraordinary amount of the work is based, is derived (see Figure 2.1.)

Figure 2.1 Primary Theme



[17] Suzanne Demarquez. *Manuel de Fala.* Trans. Savador Attanasio. New York: Da Capo Press, 1983: p. 160-61.

The theme comes from a Renaissance villancico by Juan Vasquez, *De Los Alamos Vengo, Madre* (I come from the poplars, mother). The term "villancico" itself refers to a rustic song from Spain that was originally a folk-tune. The term villancico is derived from the Spanish word "*villano,"* which means "rustic" or "peasant."

The villancico had many forms and uses. It introduced popular themes and forms of poetry into aristocratic and artistic circles and was popular in the second half of the 15th century in Spain. Many of the villancicos dealt with love, grief, despair, and death. Also included were pastoral themes common in the period's aristocratic poetry.[18] Many times themes of these songs would concern love for a theoretically Moorish girl who was unattainable; "theoretically" for in truth, the only thing Moorish about many of these girls was their names.[19] Villancicos could also be religious. Some would simply paraphrase liturgical texts while later others were chiefly used in religious services. Many of these sacred villancicos were designated

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[18] Sister Mary Paulina St. Amour. *A Study of the Villancico Up to Lope De Vega: Its Evolution From Profane to Sacred Themes, and Specifically to the Christmas Carol.* Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1940: pp. 11-12.

[19] Ibid, 13.

for specific religious holidays, such as Christmas and Easter.[20]

Juan Vasquez's music, in particular the villancico *De Los Alamos Vengo, Madre,* was secular and was typically choral and based on points of imitation. The general structure of his villancicos is ternary with the first section returning at the end, following the structure of the poetry. Melodically, Vasquez's villancicos are diatonic with few leaps beyond the fourth. Leaps that are included are generally in an upward motion and are resolved in a stepwise motion in the opposite direction. This provides evidence that there is a close relationship of the melodies of Vasquez to plainchant in the rise and fall of the melody.[21] Vasquez's melodic phrases are relatively short in nature and precise. This can be related to their poetic form of the same name, for which most of these types of songs were written.[22]

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[20] St. Amour, 36.

[21] Juan Vasquez. *Villancicos I Canciones.* Ed. Eleanor Russell. Madison, Wis.: A-R Editions, Inc., 1995: pp. x-xii.

[22] Ibid., xii.

The following is the text and translation of the *villancico* that de Falla used as the premise of the concerto.

De Los Alamos Vengo, Madre

De los alamos vengo, Madre
De ver como los menea el ayre
De los alamos de Sevilla
De ver a mi Linda amiga
De ver como los menea el ayre.
De Los alamost vengo, madre
De ver como los menea el ayre.

From the poplars I come, mother,
From seeing how the air makes them sway,
From the poplars of Seville,
From seeing my pretty friend
From seeing how the air makes them sway,
From the poplars I come, mother,
From seeing how the air makes them sway.[23]

This text connects to the concerto, but the melody "borrowed" from the villancico is what is most important in regards to the form and theory of the movement. As mentioned before, it was rare that de Falla would actually quote a popular melody in his works, which makes this work a significant exception in relation to the majority of his musical output.[24] The villancico theme is introduced first by the flute and the oboe, an octave apart in the twelfth

[23] Ibid., 76-81.

[24] Burnett James. *Manuel de Falla and the Spanish Musical Renaissance.* London: Victor Gollancz LTD., 1979: p. 112.

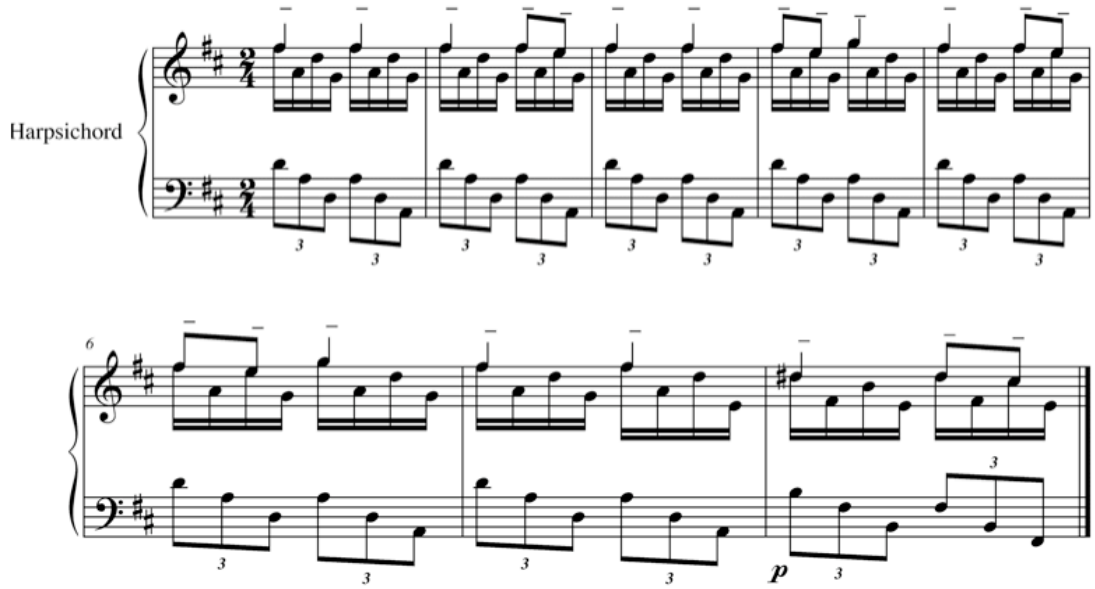
measure of the allegro, or at rehearsal number 3 of the score. De Falla uses a fragment of the last measure of the villancico melody in the introduction as well, but confines it to an interval of a major 3rd. He felt that this interval was an inherent basis for many folksongs. De Falla thought this was attractive and used it frequently.[25] Falla only altered the intervallic structure minimally. The theme appears in its most complete form in the section in which the second theme would have appeared in a traditional Sonata-Allegro form.[26]

The aforementioned fragment stands out in the harpsichord part, which is played in quarter notes and eighth notes coupled with a sixteenth note and triplet accompaniment (See Figure 2.2.)

[25] Demarquez, 161.

[26] Carol A. Hess. *Manuel de Falla and Modernism in Spain, 1898-1936.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001: p. 236.

Figure 2.2 Harpsichord Fragment



The fragment moves from the tonic, which is D, to the submediant, B. This is punctuated by the violin and violoncello which reinforce both harmonic areas simultaneously, thus establishing a polytonality that is further defined by the entry of the villancico in a third key.[27] The flute and oboe are playing in B major, the violoncello in B flat minor, and the Harpsichord in A minor in the right hand and B flat minor in the left hand.[28] De Falla, however, denied any intentional use of polytonality, claiming that these harmonies and tonalities were influenced by a book in which author Louis Lucas discussed

[27] Ibid, 161

[28] J. B. Trend. *Manuel de Falla and Spanish Music.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929: p. 152.

theories of physics that ultimately related to acoustic settings and timbres. [29]

Salazar and Roland Manyel agreed that if you replace the flats with their enharmonics, the multi-tonality of this portion can be reduced to a chord of the 9th of the dominant of B major, which in the 6th measure of this same section is resolved on a ninth of F major and returns to D major, the tonic, by a melodic glissando.[30] Salazar links this compositional procedure to a related painting technique called *velatura*, having to do with the refraction of light. Also included in this portion of the movement is an altered 5th and an appoggiatura of the leading tone, which were common devices used by harpsichordists. This also supports de Falla's claim that there was no intentional use of polytonality.[31] By using these tonalities, de Falla was thus not attempting to weaken the harmonic sense of the piece. These "accusations" of polytonality prompted the same virulent reaction from de

[29] Demarquez, 161.

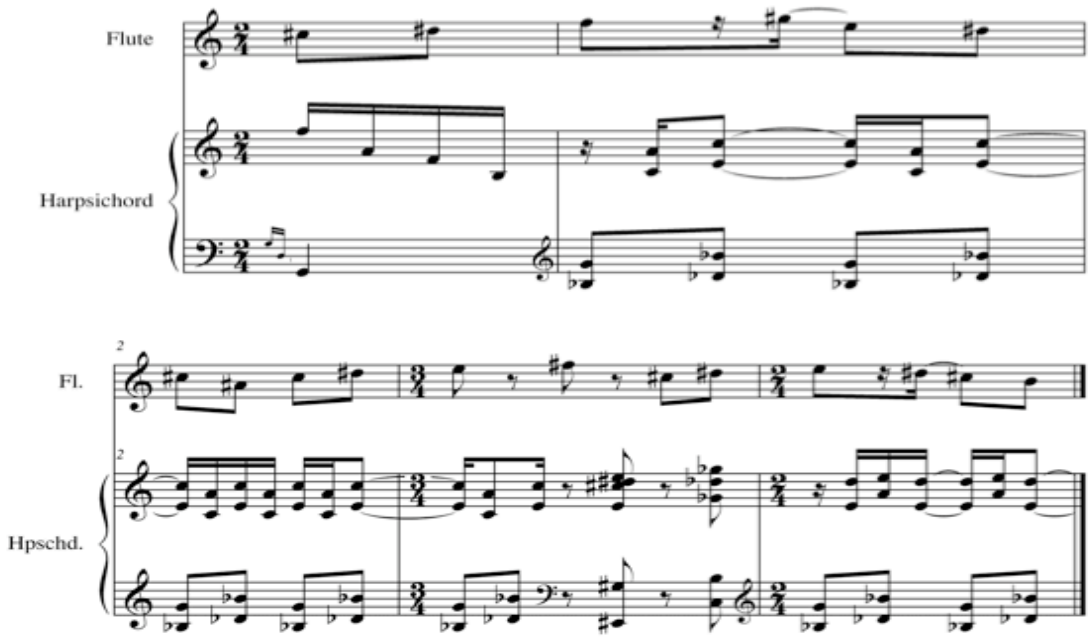
[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 162.

Falla as if someone had called him an atheist, the extreme opposite of his devout Catholic beliefs.[32]

This could be an aural picture of the morning Holy Week procession which Manuel de Falla was in attendance of in Seville in 1922. However, he claimed not to be using this music to create any mental images for his listening audience.[33]

Figure 2.3 Harpsichord and Flute



Rehearsal numbers 4-6 conclude the exposition. This portion includes a percussive passage on the harpsichord, rapid repeating notes in the woodwinds, and harmonics in

[32] Trend, 153.

[33] Demarquez, 162.

the strings, which leads back to the initial idea at number 6 in D major and then B major. At rehearsal number 7, the clarinet, which is doubled at the octave by the flute, brings back the melody of the villancico. Syncopated chords in various meters such as 3/4, 2/4, 4/4, and 7/8 accompany this.[34] At rehearsal number 8, the harpsichord plays an improvisational passage based on the villancico in diminution. The violoncello then responds with small leaps without force or harshness. This occurs one measure after rehearsal number 9.

Between rehearsal numbers 10 and 11, the violin and woodwinds enter. Following this at rehearsal number 12, the solo violin plays a primitive sounding passage. This creates the aural picture of a gypsy improvising the rustic tune on a guitar, actually a more common instrument than the violin with the gypsies. This might be compared to a portion of Stravinsky's *Histoire du Soldat,* specifically to the image created by the "Satanic" violin passage. De Falla was well acquainted with Stravinsky and his music including his use of neo-classical forms and primitive elements. Four measures before rehearsal number 13, the harpsichord plays parallel chords, which further ties the movements

[34] Demarquez, 162.

together as this parallelism is also heard in the second movement of the concerto. The aforementioned parallelism adds a liturgical feeling to this portion of the first movement, which is further implicated by the relation of the Holy Week services which de Falla had attended.[35]

Following the parallel chords is a canon on the villancico motive, which is expounded in augmented form between the strings (3 measures after rehearsal number 13), while the flute and clarinet present the same theme with relatively shorter note values and a quicker tempo.[36] Following this all of the instruments play various fragments of the theme, which creates intricate contrapuntal play. The melody is then repeated in D major, tripled by the flute, oboe and violoncello. This particular passage is marked "intenso" and is accompanied by highly rhythmic accents in the clarinet, violin and harpsichord, the latter of which plays arpeggios. Shortly after this section, the harpsichord plays a new chord progression, which follows a pedal point and a brief reiteration of the villancico theme.

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[35] Demarquez, 162.

[36] Ibid, 162-3.

The final cadence is unexpected. It is a plagal cadence, which again, touches upon polytonality by playing D major over B major in an extended rollantando. These extended cadential passages were common with Bach and Handel during the Baroque period.[37] Also included in the first movement of this piece is a tune, given to the violin, oboe and cello, which appears to be remarkably similar to a tune which is used in de Falla's *Three-Cornered Hat.* The tune is spread through 4 octaves and is accompanied by the harpsichord that plays arpeggios in contrary motion, ascending in the right hand and descending in the left.[38]

Commentary and Influences:

As mentioned before, de Falla was plagued with illness due to childhood pulmonary tuberculosis, of which he never fully recovered. The poplar tree is defenseless against disease and insects due to centuries of genetic manipulation, which frequently inhibits its growth and

[37] Demarquez, 163.

[38] Trend, 154.

shortening his life.[39] The use of the Vasquez's villancico could be a suggestion of his own susceptibility to disease and poor health, which hindered him for the remainder of his life.

In previous works, it was uncommon for de Falla to use a direct quotation of a folk melody. His use of folk-song may be attributed to his friendship with Federico García Lorca, who was a very influential writer, as well as a musician and composer during his lifetime. De Falla met García Lorca in 1919, which was the year of his Mother's death.[40] Garía Lorca collected folklore that he used as a musical and literary basis for his works. De Falla and García Lorca also collaborated on several projects, described in letters between the two.[41] De Falla and García Lorca both had backgrounds in literature, although de Falla, as mentioned in a previously in this chapter, had put his literary prospects aside for musical composition.

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[39] Hui-Lin Li. *Shade and Ornamental Trees: Their Origin and History.* Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996: p. 37.

[40] Jack Sage and Alvaro Zaldívar. "Garcia Lorca, Federico," Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 March 2005), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

[41] Ibid.

Another influence for the use of Folk music in Manuel de Falla's works may have stemmed from his gypsy nanny who sang native folk tunes to him when he was a child. These, however, would have been of the *Cante Jondo* tradition rather than the villancico tradition. *Cante Jondo*, or Flamenco, is generally connected to the Gypsies of the Andalusia region and incorporates dance and guitar.[42] This would partially account for de Falla using the particular instrumentation that he did. Again, García Lorca plays an important role as De Falla and Garcia Lorca had collaborated on a festival and competition, which focused on the Cante Jondo.[43]

Seville and the reference to "Mother" in the villancico text both link de Falla both to Holy Week (which he attended in 1922 in Seville) and his devoted relationship with his mother. De Falla's mother passed away in 1919, which left him devastated. His father had passed away in the same year, but many characterize de Falla's relationship to his father as being rather unstable (similar to the relationship between Beethoven and his

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[42] Ann Livermore. *A Short History of Spanish Music.* New York: Vienna House, 1972: p. 165.

[43] Ibid.

father, to site a famous example). De Falla was so distraught about his mother's unexpected death that he was unable to enter the homestead.[44] He went through grave desolation and even went back through some of his previous works and altered them to reflect his sorrow brought on by his mother's death.[45]

To bring together both interpretations: perhaps the words of the villancico reflect de Falla's acceptance of his mother dying, a mindset he had reached while attending Holy Week in Seville. Conceivably, the reference to the poplar trees, a reminder of human vulnerability in matters of disease and death, could indicate his conviction that after death, disease and illness would no longer plague his mother.

[44] Chase, 21.

[45] Ibid., 22.

CHAPTER III

DE FALLA'S LIFE (1897-1922) AND THE CONNECTIONS TO THE SECOND MOVEMENT OF THE *CONCERTO FOR* HARPSICHORD, FLUTE, OBOE, CLARINET, VIOLIN AND *VIOLONCELLO*

Biographical Information:

In the late 1890s, de Falla came to contact with the Parisian composer, critic and pedagogue, Paul Dukas. He confided in Dukas that he wanted to go to Paris to immerse himself in the Parisian style by working and studying. He wanted to familiarize himself with the technical methods of the modern French School of Music, which he felt would be more pertinent to his perception of music and composition.[46] In 1897, de Falla's family moved to Madrid due to the failure of the shipping industry. De Falla's father was unable to find work, so the entire family relied on de

[46] Guido Pannain. *Modern Composers.* Trans. Michael R. Bonacia. Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970: p. 65.

Falla to support them financially, frustrating his desire to go to Paris to work and study. He tried to obtain fundthrough sponsorship, but his requests were repeatedly denied. He attended the Madrid Conservatory and finished a seven-year course in only two years.[47] In 1901, de Falla began his compositional studies with Felipe Pedrell, a Spanish composer and musicologist. Pedrell was a professor of Music History and Esthetics at the Madrid Royal Conservatory and the Athenaeum. Pedrell believed that it was his obligation to introduce musicians and aspiring composers to the music of the 16th and 17th centuries.[48] This contact would affect the rest of de Falla's life, particularly in his work on the *Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Violin and Violincello.*

Pedrell wanted de Falla to get back to his "Spanish Roots," and to do so de Falla began studying early Spanish polyphony of the 13th century, as well as the folklore of Spain. De Falla studied with Pedrell until 1904, when

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[47] Ibid., 16.

[48] Douglas Lee. *Masterworks of 10th Century Music: The Modern Repertory of the Symphony Orchestra.* New York: Poutledge, 2002: p. 137.

Pedrell was forced to retreat to Barcelona due to poor health conditions.[49]

During his time in Madrid, 1897-1907, de Falla wrote notably dramatic music for chamber instruments and piano. He felt that none of his works published before 1904 had any value, given his ignorance of orchestration and was later flabbergasted when the Union Musical Española of Madrid, a firm of music publishers, published them without his consent.

To make money for his family and to raise funds for study in Paris, de Falla took up the practice of writing *zarzuelas*, a form of Spanish popular musical theatre[50] Also while in Madrid, de Falla garnered prizes in three notable competitions. In the first, held in 1903, he won honorable mention for his *Allegro de Concierto* for solo piano. (The first prize was given to Enrique Granados, Catalonian composer and musician, for a piece of the same name.) The second competition was held in 1904; de Falla submitted *Cantares de Nochebuena,* which was inspired by folksongs of José Inzenga, José Hurtado, Olmeda and Damaso Ledesma Hernansex. It was also at this time that de Falla

[49] Nancy Lee Harper. *Manuel de Falla: A Bio-Bibliography.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998: p. 18.
[50] Harper, 17.

began working with Carlos Fernandes-Shaw on a worked called *La Vida Breve*, which would be submitted for a competition on March 31, 1905. *La Vida Breve* won first place there and de Falla received 2500 pesetas, but a promised performance at Madrid's Teatro Real went unfulfilled.[51] Upon hearing *La Vida Breve* Pedrell said that he was a "modest, ever humble, but remarkable composer."[52]

Regardless of all of his success in the competitions, de Falla was still unable to travel to Paris. In hopes of earning more money, he gave piano lesson for two pesetas an hour, sometimes lowering the price if he feared losing his students. De Falla continued to play concerts, which he felt would supply financial support for his trip. At one particular concert, Juan Carlos Gortazar, the secretary of the Bilbao Philharmonic, was present and offered to organize a concerto tour of Paris and other European destinations the following summer for the composer. Gortazar was the impresario for Paul Kochansky, with whom de Falla had been performing concerts. After the concert, de Falla heard little from Gortazar, so he contacted him and was told that he would be met at the station upon his

[51] Harper, 18.

[52] Ibid.

arrival in Paris. De Falla, with prospective concerts just within his reach, left at once for that city in the summer of 1907. The exact date is uncertain, but it is known that he left with only enough money in his pocket to last him a few days.[53]

De Falla lived in Paris from 1907 until 1914, and made several important contacts during that time. The arranged tour, however, proved to be a disaster. De Falla was originally to have toured France, Belgium, Switzerland and Germany, but only made it through France and Belgium due to financials problems. De Falla returned to Paris where he lived in various hotels, resolving to spend no more than five francs a day on living expenses. Debussy, one of the important contacts de Falla had made while living in Paris, thought it was amusing that the young man would move from hotel to hotel in order to save money. Debussy reportedly quipped: "(Manuel) moved more often than Beethoven."[54] Debussy and de Falla had corresponded during his time in Paris, as well as before his arrival. In a letter dated January 13, 1907, Debussy encouraged de Falla to write a piano interpretation of his *Danses Sacrées et Profanes.*

[53] Harper, 19.

[54] Ibid., 20.

Debussy had faith that de Falla could link both the seriousness and humor of the work without any difficulty because he was a competent musician and composer.

> You must find some way of linking the "seriousness" of the first with the "humor" of the second. For a musician like yourself it should not be difficult and I believe that I can surrender myself to your judgment with complete confidence.[55]

By 1909, de Falla was ready to make Paris his permanent home, but World War I came to the forefront and he was forced to return to his motherland just as he was about to sign a housing lease.[56] Upon his return to Spain, de Falla's family was still in need of financial support. Despite his success in Paris, de Falla was unable to provide such support, so he spent most of 1914-1920 in Madrid struggling to make enough money to keep his family afloat. De Falla began using ideas of folk elements of Frederico García Lorca in his works such as in his *Siete Canciones de Populares Españolas*, which premiered on January 15, 1915. In this work, de Falla used folk song elements for both the vocal parts, as well as for the

[55] Ibid.

[56] Ibid., 22-23.

accompaniment.[57] Shortly there after, de Falla performed a series of concerts with Segismundo Romero in Seville, Cadiz and Granada. Additionally, he took Rosa Garcia Ascot as a piano student upon the request of Pedrell.[58]

Between the years of 1918 and 1922, de Falla suffered a series of personal losses, primarily suffering the deaths of people that were significant to him. Combined with the passing of Debussy in 1918, de Falla lost both of his parents the following year. While never having a strong relationship with his father, he did have a strong connection with his mother. While traveling in London, de Falla received news that his mother was ill, but by the time he returned to Madrid, his mother had already passed away. He was so struck with grief that he was unable to enter the house and remained on the veranda to lament this horrible loss.[59] The following year, in 1920, de Falla met J.B. Trend, an important British Musicologist specializing in Spanish music who would later write extensive books and articles concerning de Falla.[60] In 1920, de Falla wrote his

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid., 26.

[59] Ibid., 27.

[60] Ibid.

only guitar work, *Homenaje, Pour "Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy,"* in honor of his recently passed friend. This is now part of the standard guitar repertoire.[61]

Since he felt no more obligations in Madrid, de Falla, his sister and J.B. Trend traveled to Granada. Due to his poor health, de Falla's sister traveled a great deal with him and served as his caregiver when he was exceptionally ill. Having been entranced with Granada, de Falla took up permanent residence there from 1920 to 1939. While residing in Granados, de Falla suffered the loss of another close friend, Pedrell.[62]

Being devoutly religious, de Falla was involved in Philanthropy. He wrote *Canto a los Remeros del Volga*, for which the proceeds would go to alleviate the hunger of Russian refugees who were under the care of the League of Nations.[63] During the year 1922, de Falla observed Holy Week festivities in Seville, which would later inspire part of *The Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Violin and Violoncello.* The music that de Falla heard

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[61] Ibid., 28.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid., 29.

there was mostly *seatas,*[64] *which, De Falla felt,* had become corrupted by too much influence of *Flamenco.*[65]

Second Movement: Overview

The second movement of the *Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Violin and Violoncello* is in a canonic form. This movement is marked "Giubiloso ED energigo" and is directly related to the experience that de Falla experienced at the Corpus Christi celebration, which was full of religious ceremonies and grandiose processions in all of Spain. De Falla was so inspired by the religiousness of the ceremonies that he wanted to portray them in his music. According to Pahissa, de Falla could not decide what compositional character to attribute to this portion of the harpsichord concerto.[66]

At a meeting of the Madrid Academia de la Historia, de Falla attended a lecture given by Sanches Albornoz on the middle ages. The hall where this lecture was held

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[64] Saeta is a sacred genre, which was highly influenced by Flamenco and is associated primarily with Holy Week. Israel J. Katz. "Neo-classicism," Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 March 2005), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

[65] Harper, 29.

[66] Suzanne Demarquez. *Manuel de Falla. Trans. Salvador Attanasio.* New York: Da Capo Press, 1983: p. 163.

contained pictures of chitarrones, which are large guitars commonly used in Spanish music. De Falla was so struck by these images that he decided to give the second movement a religious theme of a slow moving procession through a Gothic Cathedral, which would be suggested by the melodic lines and the large arpeggios in the harpsichord. In following the folksong element, de Falla included elements of the villancico from the first movement, which resemble the saetas of religious ceremonies, which were themselves influenced by *Flamenco* and *Cante Jondo*.[67]

The movement begins with a prelude, which alludes to a plainchant that can be linked to *Pange Lingua Moro Hispano,* a favorite plainchant for Spanish composers such as Juan Urreda Caeson and Victoria. The plainchant can be heard in staccato notes played by the woodwinds and strings over the opening arpeggios of the Harpsichord. De Falla's allusion to this plainchant can be linked to his desire to present the religious elements that are found in Hispanic music.[68]

The movement begins with lush arpeggios in the harpsichord outlining A Major triads in a triple meter,

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[67] Ibid., 163.

[68] Carol A. Hess. *Manuel de Falla and Modernism in Spain, 1898-1936.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1002: p. 237.

which firmly establishes the key. The first canonic entrance comes at rehearsal number one, which is a triple canon of the original theme, involving all six instruments. The second canonic entrance comes at rehearsal number three, in the mode of F, still presenting the initial theme. This is followed at rehearsal number 4 by the theme in the key of C with the Harpsichord playing a chord of E. At rehearsal number 6 there is an augmented recapitulation of the theme. At rehearsal number 8, the theme is presented in F by the woodwinds, while the harpsichord accompanies in the key of A. At rehearsal number 11, there is a complete recapitulation of the first canon, which is followed by the conclusion in F sharp minor.[69]

The treatment and choice of the theme is significant. The first three notes come from the beginning of the initial theme of the first movement, which appears at rehearsal number 3. It acts as an *estribrillo* or refrain of the *villancico* in a more religious statement. In this movement there are also hints at polytonality with the superposition of C and E, which again de Falla attributes to Louis Lucas. Also accredited to Lucas and not to polytonality is a glissando at rehearsal number 5 which the

[69] Ibid. 164.

remaining instruments join together in the key of E at rehearsal number 6, while the harpsichord plays a large scalar passage through the entire length of the keyboard.[70]

Following the large glissando of the harpsichord is a discordant bell passage that presents a fragment of the first canonic entry of rehearsal number 1. This stops abruptly with a sforzando followed by a long rest, which sets the character of this movement. Several chords beginning at pianissimo in the bass at rehearsal number 7 are followed by a liturgical theme presented by the woodwinds and strings at rehearsal number 8. At the same time the harpsichord repeats the same passage 15 times in A major of the same chords that were heard at rehearsal number 4, or 17 measures before. This is used to create the aural affect of a procession, the same music at different levels or echoes.[71]

The pinnacle of the entire work comes at the point where the strings and winds are playing short staccato chords with appoggiaturas in E major, while the harpsichord plays a somber arpeggiated phrase in C major. This is followed by a short passage, where the soloists and

[70] Demarquez, 164.

[71] Ibid., 164.

accompaniment switch their roles through invertible (double) counterpoint. In repetition, the harpsichord plays a single arpeggio, while the flute violin and cello play the theme that was just played on the harpsichord.[72] In earlier works, it was said that de Falla was not able to write well for harpsichord, but at this crucial point, he was able to produce a remarkable climax for the entire work.[73]

Commentary and Influences:

Ann Livermore attributes some influences on this movement to Ruben Darío, a Nicaraguan Poet who wrote the influential *Canto de Vida Esperanza*, which was published in Madrid in 1905. This may be more than just a general influence. De Falla was inherently receptive to literature, as mentioned before, as well as to other influences. Livermore points out that inspiration for the second movement may have come from reading Darío's work. However, the Harpsichord Concerto could not be further in style and aesthetic from that of *Noches en los jardines de*

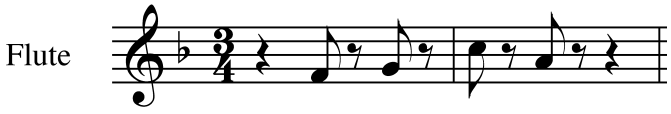
[72] J. B. Trend. *Manuel de Falla and Spanish Music.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf., 1929: p. 155.

[73] Burnett James. *Manuel de Falla and the Spanish Musical Renaissance.* London: Victor Gollancz LTD., 1979: p. 112.

España, also assumed to have been inspired by the writing of Darío. Livermore believes that in the context of Darío's poetry, which portrays the inferno of the Messina earthquake, the message is that man should take fear because hell is never too far from their profane human experiences. Livermore notes that when de Falla himself was performing the Harpsichord Concerto, before the second movement, he bowed his head, folded his hands and closed his eyes as if in prayer.[74]

Carol A. Hess identifies the influence of a Gregorian Chant and Psalm tone, both of which were used by earlier masterminds of music, Mozart and Mendelssohn (as well as others).

Figure 3.1 Gregorian Chant Motive



[75]

The overall dirge-like atmosphere of this movement gives the listener a feeling of mourning. The liturgical nature can be contributed to de Falla's devote religious beliefs

[74] Ann Livermore. *A Short History of Spanish Music.* New York: Vienna House, 1972: p. 196.

[75] Mm. 44-45 HC

which he upheld throughout his life, instilled in him by his mother.

As mentioned before, De Falla had paid tribute to Claude Debussy when writing *Homenaje: pièce de guitare écrite pour "Le Tombeau de Claude Debussy"*, but perhaps this second movement does that as well. De Falla had met Claude Debussy during his time in Paris and Claude Debussy had also encouraged de Falla before and after his time in Paris. Found in this second movement are impressionistic chord progressions in the style of Debussy:

Figure 3.2 Impressionistic Chord Passage

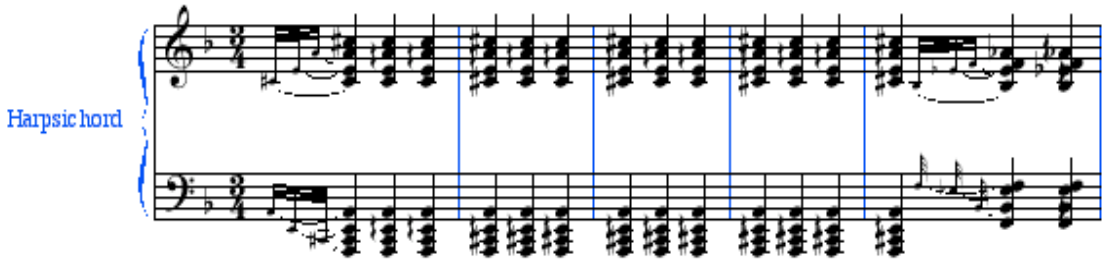
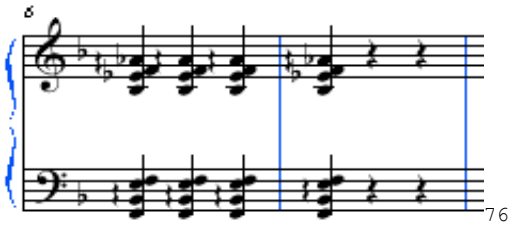


Figure 3.2 Impressionistic Chord Passage Continued



The following inscription is found preceding the second movement:

"A. Dom. MCMXXVI—In Festo Corporis Christi"[77]

According to Hess this signifies that Manuel de Falla completed this second movement while in attendance of the Corpus Christi Festivities with which the aforementioned *Pange Lingua* is associated, as well.[78]

Another influence that may be attributed to this movement is the works of Fuenllana and Milan. De Falla used thematic material from the first movement from the villancico (mentioned in the previous chapter) which became germinal material for the second movement. This can be

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[76] movement II, rehearsal 8

[77] Carol A. Hess. *Manuel de Falla and the Barcelona Press: Universalismo, Modernismo, and the Path to Neoclassicism. Multicultural Iberia: Language, Literature, and Music* ed. Dru Doughtery and Milton M. Azevedo. Berkley, CA: University of Berkely Press, 1999: p. 238.

[78] Ibid.

attributed to Fuenllana and Milan, who were both important guitar/vihuela players from Spain. Manuel de Falla's original inspiration to use the villancico of Juan Vasquez came after hearing a polyphonic transcription of the villancico by Fuenllana for vihuela, found in Fuenllana's *Orphenica Lyra* of 1554, which is one of the most celebrated books of Spanish tablature.[79] Luys Milán was also an important composer of vihuela music during the 16th century, having collected solo vihuela works, which may have been the first preserved examples of vihuela music.[80]

[79] Hess: Modernism, 236

[80] John Griffiths. "Milán, Luys," Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 March 2005), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

CHAPTER IV

DE FALLA'S LIFE (1922-1946) AND THE CONNECTIONS TO THE THIRD MOVEMENT OF THE *CONCERTO FOR* HARPSICHORD, FLUTE, OBOE, CLARINET, VIOLIN AND *VIOLONCELLO*

Biographical Information:

De Falla began his work on the Concerto in 1923, after a commission for the work by Wanda Landowska, a friend and Harpsichordist who was a great proponent in the revival of Baroque Harpsichord technique and repertoire.[81] While de Falla was deeply involved in writing the concerto, he took a break from its composition to write other works and the concerto did not come to completion until 1926, the year of de Falla's 50th birthday. One of the pieces that interrupted his work on the Concerto was *Atlántidad,* a work based on a poem by poet-monk Jacinto Verdaguer. De Falla felt that it was time that he pay direct homage to his

[81] Nancy Lee Harper. *Manuel de Falla: A bio-Bibliography.* Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998: p. 33.

motherland, Christopher Columbus, the lost continent of Atlantis, justice, and moral law. Unfortunately, upon de Falla's death, this work was left uncompleted.[82]

Atlántidad was to be the forerunner of a Mass that de Falla had always hoped to write because of his religious convictions. Unfortunately, health problems stood in the way of de Falla finishing this composition. In a letter written in 1928 to Ernesto Halffter, one of his students, he stated that he had an inflammation of the iris, which severely limited his sight and restricted his ability to read or write. He also suffered from a tubercular infection, as well as hemorrhaging, shortness of breath, and some sort of bone ailment.[83] However, by September of that same year, de Falla was well enough to travel to see the premiere of the Harpsichord Concerto at the International Society of Contemporary Music.[84]

From 1931 until 1939, Spain was in political unrest. There was a great deal of religious persecution going on, and a rather paranoid de Falla felt that is was a personal

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[82] Ibid., 34-35.

[83] Harper., 36. De Falla's sister perhaps dictated this letter.

[84] Ibid.

strike against him, are what caused him to succumb to a "nervous illness." He sought refuge and went to the island of Mallorca, as directed by his doctor. He stayed on the island from February until June of 1933 and again from December of 1933 until June of 1934.[85] While Spain was still under the duress of political unrest, the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936. De Falla was so afflicted with angst that he made out a will, leaving all of his money and any future earnings from the publishing of his works to his heirs. He also specified which of his close friends and family members were to have prayers said for them upon his death.[86] In that same year de Falla suffered the loss of another great friend, García Lorca, who was assassinated on August 19, 1936. This caused de Falla great pain and he secluded himself in prayer and work. In January of 1938, de Falla was appointed president of the New Spanish Institute of Salamanca. However, he wished to leave the country, so he resigned and immigrated shortly thereafter to Argentina.[87]

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[85] Ibid., 38.

[86] Harper, 40.

[87] Ibid., 41.

De Falla and his sister arrived in Buenos Aires on October 18, 1939, where de Falla would spend his remaining years. While there, he conducted several concerts both for live audiences and for *Radio El Mundo*. On November 14, 1946, shortly before his 70th birthday, he succumbed to cardiac arrest in his sleep. A funeral was held in Cordoba on the 19th of November, after which his sister accompanied his body and the incomplete score of *Atlándidad* to Spain. De Falla was buried in the crypt of the Cathedral de Cadiz.[88]

In the last years of his life, ill health and political unrest were said to be the causes of de Falla's lack of compositional productivity. Even during his lifetime and after, only a handful of his works achieved international acclaim. His best known works were those that incorporated folk-song, which dominated his output in the 1920s.[89]

Third Movement: Overview

[88] Ibid., 43.

[89] Carol A. Hess. "*Falla, Manuel de,*" Grove Music Online ed. L. Macy (Accessed 16 March 2005), <http://www.grovemusic.com>

This final movement marks a return to the Sonata-Allegro form as seen in the first movement, as well as a return to the original key of D Major. This movement is based on a single theme that is reminiscent of the music of Domenico Scarlatti and Pergolesi, and is derived from a portion of the *villancico*, *De Los Álamos Vengo, Madre,* which was stated in the first movement. Imbedded throughout this movement are canons and various other contrapuntal devices, which give the movement loftiness, yet an incredible sense of stability.[90] There are numerous outside influences that affected this single movement, most particularly, Wanda Landowska, Felipe Pedrell, and Domenico Scarlatti. All of these influences, however, tie in together in one form or another.

As mentioned before this movement firmly states the tonality of D major. It begins with two sections which are considered the exposition and the counter-exposition, A and A', respectively. The exposition or the A section, is stated in D Major, and reflects intense contrapuntal writing of both the harpsichord part, as well as the remaining instruments with imitation between the woodwind

[90] Suzanne Demarquez. *Manuel de Falla.* Trans. Salvador Attanasio. New York: Da Capo Press, 1983: p. 165.

instruments. The stringed instruments accompany with an ostinato like phrase with the violoncello playing a whole-step progression from the notes F to A. This outlines and reinforces the notion that this movement firmly planted D major, with the G in the violoncello serving as a passing tone. The counter-exposition begins at rehearsal no. 6 and extends through rehearsal no. 10 is separated from the exposition by a short episode which occurs from rehearsal no. 2 through rehearsal no. 5.

The development begins at rehearsal no. 11, marking the development section, which lacks any sort of key signature, but meanders through various keys as the section progresses. Subsequently, prior to the beginning of the B section, the harpsichord drops out while the woodwinds and strings reassert the melodic and harmonic material that was just played by the harpsichord, though slightly altered.[91] At rehearsal no. 13, the movement shifts from 3/4 to 6/8 in order to emphasize the melodic and rhythmic pattern played by the harpsichord. J.B. Trend noted that this alternation of meters gave the movement a livelier feel.[92] This portion

[91] Demarquez, 165 and MdF, Harpsichord concerto, 31.

[92] J. B. Trend. *Manuel de Falla and Spanish Music.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929: p. 156.

is only eight measures longer than the opening exposition and counter exposition, which, combined, are 61 measures in length.

The recapitulation begins at rehearsal no. 22 and lasts until four measures from the end. This again follows the same format as the exposition and the counter-exposition in the original key of D major. However, with the return of the opening material, de Falla shortens its entire length. The movement ends with a perfect cadence, which briefly modulates the subdominant, before a progressing to the dominant then the tonic.[93]

The theme of this movement is given to the harpsichord, while the antecedent is presented in a sequence of descending intervals of a fourth, fifth and sixth, while a diatonic scale is played rising from the dominant, which is G, to the tonic of D by the remaining instruments. This is first presented in the lower register of the flute in the third measure and then doubled, at the octave, by the violin and harpsichord. The clarinet and the bass of the harpsichord play an arpeggiated E flat chord as accompaniment. The consequent, played by the oboe,

[93] Ibid.

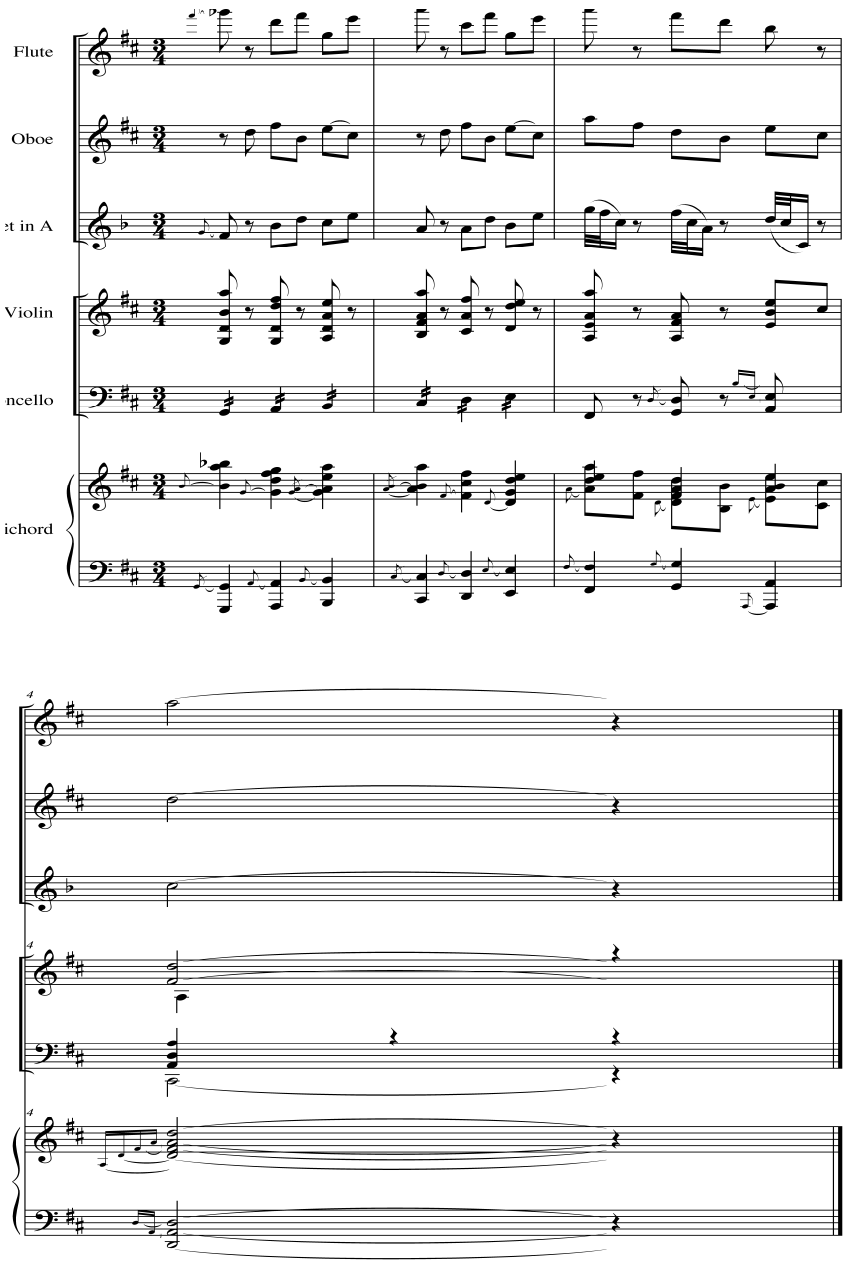
intervenes and leads to the conclusion that is repeated four times and doubled by the harpsichord. [94]

The canonic portions of the movement draw on a Pergolesi-like style that brings out intervals which appear to be almost serial, like in the works of Arnold Schoenberg. These canonic portions begin in the counter-exposition and encompass contrary movement and superimposed imitation before coming to a cadence at rehearsal number 16. Also included in this portion are altered and chromaticized scales which ultimately prepare for the recapitulation. For contrast and intensity, de Falla juxtaposes dynamics from piano to fortissimo. The fortissimo at the end is briefly interrupted in order to set up the coda, which closes the piece. The coda, as mentioned before, repeats previously heard canonic elements before close with a perfect cadence. [95]

[94] Demarquez, 165.

[95] Demarquez, 166.

Figure 4.1 Final Cadence[96]



[96] Last 4 measures of movement 3: coda.

Connection and Influence:

As with previous movements, the third movement reveals an abundance of outside influences. Ann Livermore attributes this movement, if not the entire concerto to the poetic works of Rubio Darío.

Other outside influences include Wanda Landowska, Felipe Pedrell, and Dominico Scarlatti. Perhaps these last three influences can be encapsulated into one influence, as they are all connected in one way or another by chains of precedence from older generations of composers or style techniques. Darío's poetry exhorts men "to make the most of present loving and singing since the bird's song of springtime accompany us all the way if we listen to their voices and the poet's message that they bring," and Livermore hears thie marrage in the final movement. Furthermore, Livermore connects Darío and de Falla via a solo song for voice and harp written by Darío, *Soneto a Córdoba,* which exhibits sonorous words and noble declamation, similar to the second movement of de Falla's concerto in it's sonorous and declamatory nature.[97]

[97] Ann Livermore. *A Short History of Spanish Music.* New York: Vienna House, 1972: p. 196.

The Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Violin and Violoncello was commissioned by, and dedicated to, Wanda Landowska, a polish harpsichord player and friend of Manuel de Falla. De Falla shared her interest in the revitalization of the harpsichord as a performing instrument. This interest in harpsichord repertoire and performance had not been seen since the Baroque period. De Falla wrote this piece in gratitude for Landowska playing the harpsichord part in the premiere of another of his works, *Master Peter's Puppet Show*.[98] This admiration for the harpsichord also comes from his lessons with Pedrell, who pushed his students to learn about music of the past, particularly that of Domenico Scarlatti.[99] In the *Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Violin and Violoncello,* De Falla was thus able to combine his interest in Spanish music with that of the harpsichord.

[98] Demarquez, 157.

[99] Ronald Crichton. *Manuel de Falla; Descriptive Catalogue of His Works.* Londond: Chester Music, 1976: p. 43.

CHAPTER V

AUDIENCE RECEPTION OF THE CONCERTO FOR HARPSICHORD, FLUTE, OBOE, CLARINET, VIOLIN, AND VIOLINCELLO AND CONCLUSION.

General Aspects and Reception of the Piece.

The concerto itself is set for harpsichord as the primary instrument, however, all six of the instruments function as solo instruments throughout the work. This small setting was a step backwards from the large ensembles that the late Romantics were writing for. At the same time as the conception of the concerto, Stravinsky was also reducing his forces in works such as *Histoire de Soldat* and *Ragtime.*[100] Even with reduced forces, de Falla was certain that he could ascertain the same musical sound that Wagner had gained with his large ensembles. He was very specific

[100] Demarquez, 158.

in his notes on performance about how each instrument was to act as a soloist so that the appropriate sonorities would be created as he originally intended. The following is a translation of the notes included in the score of the concerto:

> The harpsichord should be as sonorous as possible. It should be placed in the foreground, the group of winds and bows occupying the second or the third level. The six soloists, nevertheless, should be in view of the listeners. The sonorities of the winds and bows should be regulated according to the sonority of the harpsichord and in a manner that will not overcome the harpsichord, but, well heard, all while keeping the sonorous and expressive intention of the marked nuances while serving itself, as the main soloist of the work, full sonority of the instrument.
>
> In the executions with piano, it will suffice to follow exactly the same dynamic indications. The pianist, nevertheless, will have to obtain the same sonorous qualities as

possible on the harpsichord, for which this work was conceived.

Each performer acts as a soloist and should never be increased in number.[101]

The positioning of the instruments created a courtly feel, perhaps influenced by the sound of the harpsichord itself. J.B. Trend noted the placement of the instruments created a "Noble Sonority," meaning that it resembles the music that came from the royal or noble courts, which were primarily smaller ensembles and focused on the harpsichord.[102] De Falla created this sonority because he favored natural resonance, the natural tones created by acoustics and groupings of instruments creating a raw sound, which reflects his own life and artistic believed during this time.[103]

De Falla's treatment of instruments is frequently unorthodox, historically speaking. In the first two movement, he abandons all typical harpsichord

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[101] Manuel De Falla. *Concerto per Clavincembalo (O Pianoforte) Flauto, Oboe, Clarinetto, Violino E Violoncello.* London: J & W Chester, Ltd., 1928. composers's notes for performance. Translated by C. Burns.

[102] Trend, 151.

[103] James, 110-11.

embellishments, such as trills, mordants, and gruppettos, which were also used infrequently in the third movement. By doing so, de Falla created a sonority of immense extended arpeggiated major chords. The woodwinds are taken out of their normal range which did not complement the normal timbre of the instrument. For example, the flute is playing in the extreme high register, often doubled or tripled by the oboe and clarinet, creating a primitive sounding music. The violin and cello play sustained notes combined with harsh pizzicato emphasizes the dissonance of some of the chords. De Falla used a great deal of terraced dynamics in order to create different shadings of timbre.[104]

As mentioned before, Landowska commissioned the concerto, however she was incredibly upset that the piece was not completed on time. Through 152 pieces of correspondence, Landowska constantly reminded de Falla that she had requested the concerto to be finished for the 1923-24 concert season that she performing performing in. De Falla apologized profusely for not having the concerto finished in a timely manner in the aforementioned correspondence.[105] Upon receiving the final movement of the

[104] Demarquez, 60.

[105] Ibid., 234.

concerto, Landowska could say nothing but praise in regards to the entire work. The following is a letter from Landowska to de Falla, which explains her enthusiasm and great expectations for the concerto:

> My GREAT and wonderful friend:
> Your concerto is a masterpiece. I am trembling with joy and happiness. I work day and night and the only thing I can think about is how to find the authentic and perfect stress to remain faithful to you.
> I will write to you from here in a few days to request some explanations. Meanwhile I will send you these words of thanks for your music which is so human, strong and full of sunlight.
> Your faithful
> Wanda Landowska
> 21 September 1926[106]

Her enthusiasm, however, was short lived when the concerto was met with mixed reviews after the first performance. Landowska was so upset with the first reviews that she quickly offered excuses so that she would be relieved of playing the concerto again. She did, after the piece gained more popularity, play the concerto for its United States premiere without reluctance.[107]

Many believed that the concerto was the culmination of

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[106] Gonzalo Armero and Jorge de Persia. *Manuel de Falla: His Life and Works.* Madrid, Spain: Omnibus Press, 1999: p. 183.

[107] Hess: Modernism, p. 234.

every technique that de Falla had acquired. In taking three years to complete this work, he made the music come to life, though few of the audience members were able to comprehend the work as a whole.[108] Programmed on the same concert as the premiere were de Falla's *El Retablo,* a portion of *El Sombrero de Tres Picos,* and *Noches en los Jardines de España.* Given the style of these other pieces and the style for which de Falla was known for, the concerto seemed markedly out of place, causing critics and Barcelonan audiences to be divided into two camps: Those who thought the concerto must have been a mistake as it was vastly different from de Falla's other works, and those who believed the poor performance was the cause of complaints.[109]

Alfredo Romea of *El Noticero Universal* wrote in an article, proclaiming the composers previous success, yet criticizing de Falla for the concerto. The following review appeared after the Barcelona premiere:

> I leave the Palau, after having attended the Manuel de Falla Festival, which was celebrated with all the honors that correspond to that elevated musical personality, whose merits radiate like a star of the first order, full of

[108] Hess, p. 239.

[109] Ibid., 240.

> confusions, anxieties, vexations, and at the same time self-indignation, because undoubtedly it does not place God, as He would desire, to render me susceptible to certain refinements of our day. And Let it be stated that my anxieties, my vexations, my indignation were motivated neither by the final dance of the *Three-Cornered Hat*…nor by *Nights in the Gardens of Spain.* In the techniques employed are submitted to current manners and possibilities of expression…perhaps the illustrious composer, as it may happen to a huminary of his category, has gone too far, and this causes my intelligence to evaporate. It is a grave danger to remain stationary in matters artistic, but also understand that no folly is so chastised by men as that of trying to venture to far into the future during the present. New music, new music! New techniques, new forms- these constant battle cries of our times are all well and good, but also understand not to forget the beauty of conception and sentiment, not to fall into extravagance. It is said that 'I am not at the level of certain refinements.' I do not worry that this can be said to me. Above all I want to be sincere.[110]

Another critic by the name of Alard, a writer for *El Divulio,* took the view that the concerto was far out of character for de Falla and was quoted to have said that even though de Falla deserves all the respect given to him, the structure and form of the work was not of his popular style. He claimed that the work was too spontaneous and esoteric and blamed the composer for being too willing to cast aside his former works and more traditional writing style in haste to create something that was too new to be

[110] Hess. pp. 240-1.

fully appreciated by an audience.[111] The combination of this new exoticism of Neo-classicism and new tonal language of most of Western Europe and North America were too fresh and avant garde ideas for the audiences of Spain. Ironically, in previous works by de Falla, audiences had been entranced by the novelty of other eclectic combinations such as influences from the East and West.

Pahissa, biographer of de Falla, wrote in a review for *Las Noticias* four days after the premiere that he could not give a fair review because it was obvious that the piece lacked prior rehearsal time. He also pointed out that de Falla lacked the podium experience necessary for a public performance and was unable to attain unity among the performers. He also commented that Landowska may have been constrained due to the peculiarities of the score.[112]

The first performance in Paris, given shortly after the Barcelona premiere, was more successful.[113] However, audiences and critics alike were still skeptical about the concerto. Henry Pruniéres, a critic for *La Revue Musical*,

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[111] Ibid., 241.

[112] Demarquez, 166-7.

[113] De Falla himself performed the harpsichord himself as Landowska claimed to have prior obligations.

commented on de Falla's use of a single theme for the entire work, as well as Scarlattian harpsichord clichés and majestic rhythms. He said that de Falla left behind the elements of folk-music and replaced them with the guitar-like rhythms, embracing ancient Spanish traditions of courtly and sacred music.[114] Those who praised the work were all too quick to point out the amalgamation that de Falla achieved with this work. Emile Vuillermoz stated, "Falla has scored the victories of an ascetic and an anchorite over aural voluptuousness."[115]

It was only when performed for other composers that the work was received with over all enthusiasm. The London premiere of the concerto was in June of 1927, with Stravinsky in attendance. Upon hearing the concerto, Stravinsky pronounced the work to be a complete success. The following year the work had a successful premiere at the International Society of Contemporary Music to an audience who was more accustomed to this type of work.[116]

Conclusion:

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[114] Demarquez, 167-8.

[115] Demarquez. 168.

[116] Ibid., 169.

Although de Falla was a well-known composer of his time, it may not be expected that his audiences would have known the details of his life and how they affected and correlated to the *Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Violin and Violoncello.* However, those who were in attendance were fairly familiar with his previous works and were able to distinguish the differences between the concerto and the works that came before it. Stemming from reviews done by music journalists, one might suspect that this piece was one of his least successful works, however, it did become one of only a few of his works to receive international recognition, both in the world of nationalistic music and in the realm of modern composition.

Laymen audiences may not have known his ties to the Catholic Church, though that fact may have be recognized by the inscription noting his attendance at Holy Week festivities. Audiences may not have been well versed in the works of Domenico Scarlatti to be able to recognize the harpsichord clichés he used nor the impressionistic chord progressions characteristic of Debussy and musical Impressionism.

It is my conclusion that audience members would not have been aware of specific events, in meeting specific

people and trends of the time in de Falla's life and would not have been able to make the connection between the concerto and those events. They would probably not have been familiar with the works of Juan Vasquez to be able to decipher the meaning behind the use of the *villancico* as germinal material for the entire work, nor that the type of folk song was used, and still used in parts of Latin American, as part of the musical repertoire of the Catholic Church. They may not have made the connection between de Falla's teacher Philip Pedrell and the Neo-classical approach to the form and instrumentation of this work, nor the prominent use of the harpsichord as an attempted to revitalize the instrument in the concert setting, prompted by Wanda Landowska.

It is my belief that the *Concerto for Harpsichord, Flute, Clarinet, Oboe, Violin and Violoncello* was an amalgamation of years of traveling and internalization of many styles. It became a mode of self-expression for de Falla, in that he was able to combine Italianate passages with French techniques and Spanish folk-music with the music of the courts and sacred places. It became a

compendium of musical style in both a temporal and a geographic sense.[117]

[117] Trend, 147-148.

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