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Guitarist Daniel Bolshoy delivers the sun-drenched flavours of Spain

By Lloyd Dykk

With the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. At the Orpheum Theatre on Saturday, March 12

The piano, the violin and, if we're lucky, the cello are almost always the solo instruments we hear in a concerto—the guitar, almost never.

It was a pleasure to hear things reversed in Saturday's Musically Speaking concert at the Orpheum when the young Canadian guitarist Daniel Bolshoy took his seat in front of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra in an all-Spanish concert. Or at least it was Spanish in theme; Emmanuel Chabrier and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov weren't exactly Iberian.



One work was as drenched in the flavour of Spain as a Sevillian orange. Is there a finer work for guitar and orchestra than Joaquin Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*? The blind Rodrigo wrote the work in 1939 but never played the guitar for fear that it would interfere with his fantasies of what the instrument might be capable of, which may be the key to the piece's beauty. He said, "It is meant to sound like the sudden breeze that sways the treetops in the parks."

Bolshoy, a very gifted musician, produced hardly so much as a fret noise and gave the concerto a distinct feeling of that indefinite Spanish term *duende*, whose nearest definition is "soul". He also produced a superb response to the exquisite slow movement that inspired many musicians, Miles Davis among them. This section is a direct echo of the Moors who once ruled Spain, its ornamentation as evocatively Arabic as a muezzin's melismatic calls from a minaret. And there was some beautiful work from English-horn player Beth Orson.

The main composers missing from the program were Isaac Albéniz and Enrique Granados, two men who were much more extroverted about Spanish display than Manuel de Falla, whose justly included *The Three-Cornered Hat* was commissioned by Ballets Russes' Sergei Diaghilev (with a set designed by Pablo Picasso).

The playing of this artful piece of music was everything it should have been. In fact, the whole program was precise in its all-important rhythms and saturated with colour.

The American guest conductor John Morris Russell, a fun guy if there ever was one, was the right choice for it and he got great playing from this remarkable band.

The last piece, Chabrier's *España*, was the right way to end the night and it got cheers. Now if only I could get the rhythm out of my head: one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two, one-two, one-two...

<http://www.straight.com/article-381454/vancouver/guitarist-daniel-bolshoy-delivers-sundrenched-flavours-spain>