

**NAXOS**

# **SARASATE**

**Music for Violin  
and Orchestra • 1**

**Zigeunerweisen**

**Airs espagnols**

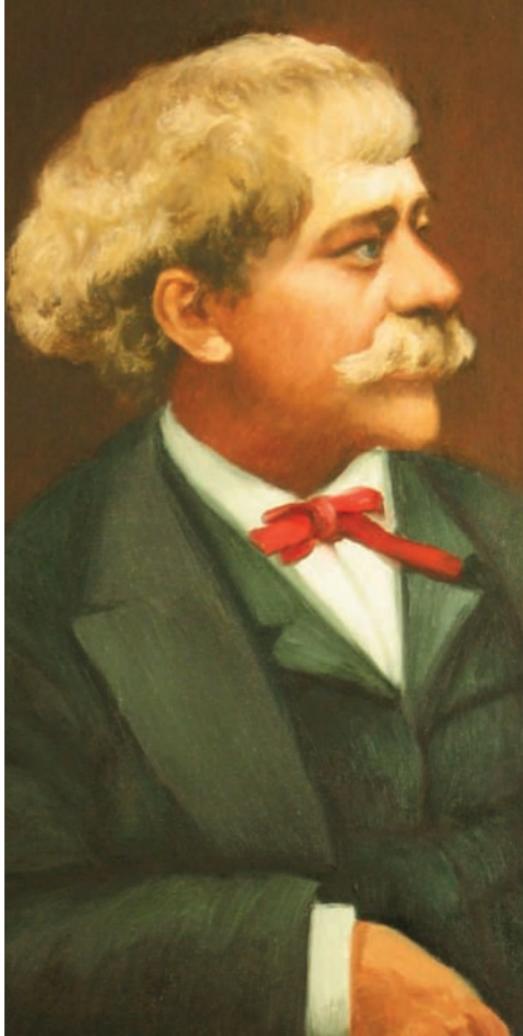
**Viva Sevilla!**

**Tianwa Yang, Violin**

**Orquesta Sinfónica  
de Navarra**

**Ernest Martínez**

**Izquierdo**



## Pablo Sarasate (1844–1908) Music for Violin and Orchestra • 1

Sarasate's folk-music is like "a fresh rosy-cheeked country girl", so declared the famous violin teacher and prolific writer Carl Flesch. His enthusiasm was unbounded in regard to the Spanish flavoured works; less so to the original compositions. With the release of Sarasate's complete works, we have the unique opportunity to evaluate the universality of these pieces for ourselves. Certainly Flesch was correct about the works of Spanish inspiration. I am convinced that he was incorrect about the other works.

Sarasate was born in the Spanish city of Pamplona in 1844. His father, a regimental band-master, moved the young family to the distant city of La Coruña. There he gave the young Pablo his first violin lessons. The son soon eclipsed the father, and thus ensued a lifelong friction. Pablo was sent to Madrid, where the precocious genius earned the sponsorship of Queen Isabella II. Under the royal patronage, he was sent to study with the famous violin professor, Delphin Alard, at the Paris Conservatoire. By 1857 and 1858 Sarasate had won virtually all the first prizes. He then embarked on his artistic career. Being so young and callow, he actually vegetated for a number of years. His role was as an "assisting artist" to famous singers, and as a salon violinist. Later a complete transformation of his musical being resulted in world-wide success. So complete was this transformation that Sarasate became the highest paid violinist of all time, and the recipient of countless musical dedications.

Sarasate was one of only a handful of violinists who actually changed the course of violin-playing. What features of his performance made him so memorable? Among them were a bewitching and glowing tone; novel use of a wider and constant vibrato; the absolute perfection of left and right hand technique; an all-encompassing and ever-extending repertoire; and that he inspired so many composers to write pieces for him, benefitting posterity. The greater part of his artistic life was a continuous series of profitable artistic and financial successes. Public and

critical acclaim shone upon him. He knew only success.

The present recording gives ample opportunity to examine and enjoy Sarasate's abilities as a composer. Beginning with *Zigeunerweisen*, Op. 20, we can declare Sarasate a master of his art. This piece is, quite unashamedly, the greatest gypsy piece ever written. The rapturous first section is without compare in its expressivity. The second section is from Elemér Szentirmay's opera *Der Dorf lump*. The finale uses the same *friska* as did Liszt in his *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 13*.

*Airs espagnols*, Op. 18, is nearly as good a work as *Zigeunerweisen*, and is its Spanish counterpart. Sadly it never achieved the same popularity. The Spanish themes flow, one after the other, with consummate ease. I must note here that Sarasate was a master at blending genuine Spanish folk-tunes with his own Spanish-flavoured melodies. It is sometimes difficult to discern one from the other.

*Miramar – Zortzico*, Op. 42, is one of Sarasate's most bewitching creations. It is one of the pieces he himself recorded in 1904. The melodies are completely original, but completely under the influence of Spanish traditional music. A *zortzico* is a traditional Basque dance in 5/8 metre. The agogic accent falls, like the sarabande, on the second beat. Sarasate's favorite beverage was beer, and this is how he taught the *zortzico* rhythm: "Ein glas bier fur mich!" Yes, he spoke German.

*Peteneras*, Op. 35, is one of the most attractive Spanish concoctions. Parenthetically, the cover of the first edition is equally attractive. The listener is immediately impressed by the spicy orchestration, haunting Andalusian melodies and all of Sarasate's patented violinistic derring-do of pizzicato, harmonics and lightning fast acrobatics. In an instant you are in a gypsy cave listening to a husky-voiced Flamenco singer and a virtuoso guitarist. Sarasate's music can do just that, and more.

*Nocturne-sérénade*, Op. 45, answers the debate over Sarasate's ability really to compose original music. This

piece is Chopinesque in its charm, subtle harmonies and melodic grace. It is certainly superior in its sublime orchestration. Listen in awe, as the flute sets the mood in the two measure introduction. Incidentally, these notes do not appear in the piano version.

*Viva Sevilla!*, Op. 38, epitomizes all that makes Sarasate one of the immortals. Languorous evocative melodies are juxtaposed with the most elegant virtuosity imaginable. Sarasate pulls out all the stops here – electrifying leaps, stunning guitar-like pizzicato effects, flageolet-style harmonics and rapid passage-work are tossed off like child’s play. It is never ostentatious. This is the very essence of artistic virtuosity.

*Fantasia sur La Dame Blanche* is Sarasate’s grandest endeavour. It is based on Boieldieu’s once immensely popular opera of 1825. The fantasy dates from 1866 and is dedicated to Pablo Sarasate’s classmate, musical collaborator friend Louis Diémer. The original opera was the inspiration to many subsequent opera composers, and Sarasate’s fantasy is an inspiration to any music-lover. It is truly *bel canto* violin.

The great American violinist, Albert Spalding, left us a brilliant word-picture of Sarasate the violinist: “His violin sang like a thrush, and his incomparable ease tossed aside difficulties with a grace and insouciance that affected even his gestures”. And so it is with all his music.

**Joseph Gold**

### **Tianwa Yang**

In concert and recital Tianwa Yang, born in Beijing in 1987, is winning unprecedented international reviews as she takes the stage as one of the most impressive young violinists of today. She studied the violin from the age of four and at ten was accepted by Lin Yaoji at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Hong Kong media subsequently described her as “A Pride Of China”. She was awarded the Volkswagen Foundation prize *Star of Tomorrow* by Seiji Ozawa and the *Prix Montblanc 2006*. Her mentors are Jörg-Wolfgang Jahn and Anner Bylisma. International symphonic debuts have taken her to the United States, Europe, Singapore, Taiwan and China. In recital she has performed at the Berlin Philharmonic Hall, and the Wigmore Hall, London. At the age of thirteen she recorded the *24 Caprices of Paganini*, making her the youngest interpreter of this demanding work and in 2004 she began her collaboration with Naxos, recording the first two volumes of seven of the complete works of Sarasate (8.557767, 8.570192).





## Ernest Martínez Izquierdo

Born in Barcelona in 1962, Ernest Martínez Izquierdo has conducted the most important Spanish orchestras and ensembles. Internationally he has worked with such orchestras as the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Ensemble Contemporain de Montréal, Orchestra Comunale di Bologna, Wien Klangforum (Vienna), Beethoven Academy (Antwerp), Orchestre National de Lille (France), Philharmonique de Radio France, Niederösterreichische Tonkünstler (Vienna), Ensemble Modern (Frankfurt), and the Avanti Chamber Orchestra, among others. He has recorded for many record labels, including Telarc, Harmonia Mundi, Col legno, Hyades Arts, Ircam, Stradivarius and Discmediand, and has been awarded the 1995 Critical Eye prize, the 2000 Catalonia Roland Journalism Prize for Classical Music, as well as the 2006 Latin Grammy for an album dedicated to George Gershwin which he recorded with Michel Camilo.

Since 2006 he has been a member of the Catalan Saint George Royal Academy of Fine Arts. He was Chief Conductor of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Barcelona y Nacional de Catalunya (2002-2006), and since 1997 has held the position of Principal Conductor and Artistic Director of the Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra “Pablo Sarasate”.

## Navarra Symphony Orchestra

The Navarra Symphony Orchestra was founded by Pablo Sarasate in 1879, making it the oldest orchestral ensemble still active in Spain. Since 1997 the Principal Conductor has been Ernest Martínez Izquierdo. The orchestra boasts a wide repertoire, collaborates regularly with internationally known soloists and conductors, and is frequently invited to perform in venues and festivals of the highest national and international significance. Concert tours abroad have taken the orchestra to Warsaw, to Dortmund and to Paris, where it has been invited three times to the prestigious Théâtre des Champs-Élysées and to the Théâtre du Châtelet for a concert and a new production of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, featuring



Plácido Domingo in the title rôle. The orchestra has also toured China with Tianwa Yang, giving seven concerts in five different cities with music by Pablo Sarasate. The Navarra Symphony Orchestra receives financial support from the Government of Navarra and the City of Pamplona, and is sponsored by private companies including NH Hoteles, Diario de Navarra, Caja Navarra and Gas Natural Navarra.

19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY  
V I O L I N I S T  
C O M P O S E R S



Her recordings of Sarasate's music for violin and piano (8.557767, 8.570192) have earned the young violinist Tianwa Yang praise for her 'great polish and confidence', American Record Guide describing her playing as 'perfect'. This disc is her first volume of the Spanish virtuoso-composer's music for violin and orchestra, a delightful survey of some of his most bewitching and demanding creations. Albert Spalding's description of Sarasate's playing could well apply to Tianwa Yang's interpretations: 'His violin sang like a thrush, and his incomparable ease tossed aside difficulties'.

Pablo  
**SARASATE**  
(1844–1908)

**Music for Violin and Orchestra • 1**

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|---|--|------|
| 1 | Zigeunerweisen, Op. 20                 | 8:57 |
| 2 | Airs espagnols, Op. 18                 | 9:46 |
| 3 | Miramar – Zortzico, Op. 42             | 3:55 |
| 4 | Peteneras – Capriccio espagnol, Op. 35 | 7:01 |
| 5 | Nocturne-sérénade, Op. 45              | 6:23 |
| 6 | Viva Sevilla!, Op. 38                  | 7:48 |
| 7 | Fantasia sur La Dame Blanche, Op. 3    | 9:39 |



**Tianwa Yang, Violin**  
**Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra**  
**Ernest Martínez Izquierdo**



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