

NAXOS

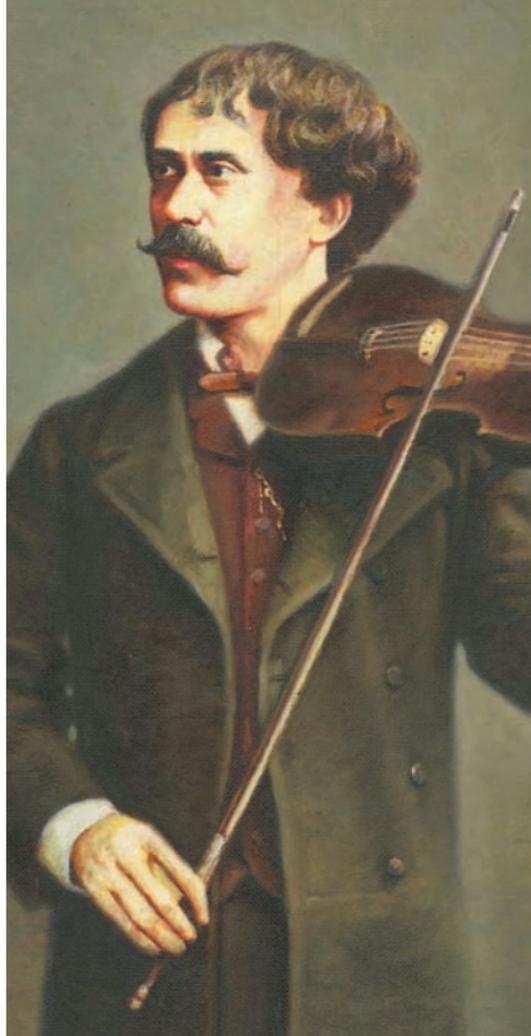
# SARASATE

Music for Violin  
and Orchestra • 2

Fantasies on  
Carmen and  
Roméo et Juliette

Tianwa Yang, Violin  
Orquesta Sinfónica  
de Navarra

Ernest Martínez  
Izquierdo



## Pablo Sarasate (1844–1908) Music for Violin and Orchestra • 2

The great Spanish violinist Pablo Sarasate was born in Pamplona in 1844, the son of a military bandmaster. After study in Madrid with Manuel Rodríguez Sáez, a pupil of Jules Armingaud, the leader of the quartet of which Edouard Lalo was a member, he entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of twelve, with the aid of a scholarship from Queen Isabella and the Province of Navarre. Here he became a pupil of Jean-Delphin Alard and also embarked on the study of composition. He won first prize for violin in 1857 and the following year for *soffège*, and in 1859 for harmony as a pupil of Henri Reber. By the age of fifteen, however, Sarasate had launched himself on a concert career, at first winning a reputation in Spain and France, before more extended tours to North and South America and throughout the rest of Europe. Composers who wrote for him included Saint-Saëns, Bruch, Lalo, Wieniawski and Dvořák, and he

### Fantasies on *Carmen* and *Roméo et Juliette*

Sarasate's music can be classified under six different headings: opera fantasies and reminiscences, transcriptions, compositions based on Spanish folk-lore, fantasies and melodies originating from other European countries, completely original compositions and, finally, cadenzas to concertos.

As a young man, Sarasate was justifiably labelled a musical lightweight. Under the guidance of such luminaries as Saint-Saëns, however, he matured rapidly into a towering international figure, the most successful violinist in history. The more profound Joseph Joachim often lamented being relegated into second place, both in the public eye and, more importantly, in the matter of fees. Wieniawski, who was a friend of both, minced no words in explaining to Joachim why he was second.

How Sarasate matured is best exemplified in his opera fantasies. The first attempts were callow indeed. But with his masterpieces *Roméo et Juliette*, *Op. 14*, (or, according to Julio Altadill, *Op. 5*) and *Carmen Fantasy*, *Op. 25*, Sarasate had truly arrived. Opera was the most popular form of music during the nineteenth century. In order to capitalize on this, virtuoso composers vied with each other to write fantasies

remained distinguished for the purity and beauty of his tone, perfection of technique and musical command. He refused, however, to play Brahms's *Violin Concerto*, claiming that the only proper melody in the work was given to the oboe. His playing was in contrast to that of his older contemporary Joseph Joachim, who represented a more characteristically German attitude to performance. For his own use Sarasate wrote a number of works for violin and piano or violin and orchestra, including, as might be expected, compositions based on Spanish themes and rhythms. Among these one of the best known is his *Zigeunerweisen* (Gypsy Airs), together with his *Spanish Dances*. Following the common practice of his time, he also wrote concert fantasies based on themes from popular operas of the day, of which the best known remains his *Carmen Fantasy*.

**Keith Anderson**

using the most popular tunes. Sarasate was one of the greatest masters of this form. He always selected the themes with great care. The *Carmen Fantasy* is the most famous of Sarasate's compositions derived from opera. The themes flow seamlessly from one to the other and feature exclusively those of the tempestuous protagonist, Carmen herself. Sarasate performed his *Carmen Fantasy* more often than any of his other operatic fantasies. Older colleagues have told me that Sarasate played the variation section of the *Habanera* (track 2) *più mosso*, and he added a little E major arpeggio cadenza in the *Lento* movement (track 3).

The *Roméo and Juliette Fantasy* is completely different from the *Carmen Fantasy*. It is pure *bel canto* and is derived from Charles Gounod's immensely successful opera of 1867. So successful was this musical setting of Shakespeare's tragedy that it was parodied almost immediately; "*Rhum et eau en juillet*" or in English "Rum and water in July". Sarasate's setting is disarmingly beautiful. Everywhere he shows his mastery of violin writing, compositional proportion, and not least, orchestration. This is a fabulous work, and sadly neglected. It is dedicated to Mme. Lassabathie, the woman who actually raised Sarasate and whom he called "mother".

Sarasate was extremely popular in Russia. *Canciones rusas*, Op. 49, might be considered a paean of thanks to his faithful audiences there. This piece is actually a setting of two Russian folk-songs, and credit is given on the title page to Kashine and Gurileff. Who could not be moved by these musical expressions of Russian pathos? The opening, with its fabulous orchestration, is reminiscent of the song “*Along the Peterskaya*”. The balalaika effects in pizzicato lend an even more folkloric authenticity. It might be suggested that *Chansons russes* is equal, at least, to Tchaikovsky’s offerings in the same genre.

*Canto del ruiseñor*, Op. 29 (Song of the Nightingale), is an entirely original *morceau de concert*. It is a virtuoso piece, without doubt, but filled with longing and nostalgia, and with an ending worthy of O. Henry. Eduard Lalo liked the piece so much that he orchestrated it. Sarasate’s violin imitates the nightingale, but our nightingale is elevated to an operatic *prima donna assoluta*.

*La chasse*, Op. 44, is dedicated to the great Belgian virtuoso César Thomson. This famous violinist was known to have played Paganini’s *Moto perpetuo* in fingered octaves. If this stupendous feat were not enough, Thomson liked to show off by standing not on his head or his hands, but on his thumbs. In deference to his own technique, Sarasate includes no fingered octaves. He does, however, write a consummate piece. The dramatic introduction is filled with suspense.

Ominous overtones bring to mind the music of Delibes and César Franck’s *Le Chasseur maudit* (The Accursed Huntsman). Was Glazunov inspired by *La chasse* when he composed his *Violin Concerto*? Be sure to listen to the special bowing in the finale. Sarasate used this brilliant and difficult technique in only one other piece. He also displayed it to stunning effect in the 32nd note (demi-semiquaver) variation in Beethoven’s *Kreutzer Sonata*. Its effect caused every audience to rise and demand an encore. I remember seeing Jascha Heifetz accomplish the same thing. Sarasate’s virtuosity, like that of Heifetz, was all the more amazing because of the effortless ease with which the difficult passages were tossed off.

*Jota de Pablo*, Op. 52, concludes this delightful overview of Sarasate on a personal note. While he composed a number of *Jotas*, this one he composed for himself, as the title declares. It is a superb example of a *Jota*, and one of the most imaginative. *Jota de Pablo*, like a Fabergé Imperial Easter Egg, contains a surprise. It concludes *con sordino* and *pianissimo*. Only a certified genius could think of something so brilliant.

Lay to rest, then, any preconceptions and prejudices about Sarasate as a lightweight and superficial composer. His fame and success were well deserved.

**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, Ernesto 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 Academie (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, Colegno, Hyades Arts, Ircam, Stradivarius and Discmediand, and has been awarded the 1995 Critical Eye prize, the 2000 Catalonia's 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 Ernesto 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 is invited every year to both the prestigious Théâtre des

Champs-Élysées and to the Théâtre du Châtelet. 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.



Dazzlingly virtuosic fireworks, spirited passion and astonishing technique combine in the youthful Chinese violinist Tianwa Yang who leaves the critics grasping for superlatives whenever she plays. In this second volume of Naxos's cycle of Sarasate's complete works for violin and orchestra she again teams with the orchestra founded by the legendary Spanish violinist-composer in 1879 to present two of his orchestral masterpieces, the famous *Carmen Fantasy* and the sadly neglected *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy*, as well as several other utterly delightful, and fiendishly difficult, concert pieces.

Pablo  
**SARASATE**  
(1844–1908)

Music for Violin and Orchestra • 2

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|---|--------------|---|--------------|
| <b>Fantasy on <i>Carmen</i>,<br/>Op. 25</b>                     | <b>13:46</b> | <b>6</b> <b>Concert Fantasy on Gounod's<br/><i>Roméo et Juliette</i>, Op. 5</b> | <b>12:00</b> |
| <b>1</b> <b>Introduction: Allegro<br/>moderato (Aragonaise)</b> | <b>3:03</b>  | <b>7</b> <b>Canciones rusas, Op. 49</b>   | <b>8:41</b>  |
| <b>2</b> <b>Moderato (Habanera)</b>                             | <b>3:48</b>  | <b>8</b> <b>El canto del ruiseñor,<br/>Op. 29</b>                               | <b>8:37</b>  |
| <b>3</b> <b>Lento assai</b>                                     | <b>2:07</b>  | <b>9</b> <b>La chasse, Op. 44</b>   | <b>8:50</b>  |
| <b>4</b> <b>Allegro moderato (Seguidilla)</b>                   | <b>2:04</b>  | <b>10</b> <b>Jota de Pablo, Op. 52</b>  | <b>6:00</b>  |
| <b>5</b> <b>Moderato – Animato<br/>(Gypsy Dance)</b>            | <b>2:44</b>  |   |              |



Tianwa Yang, Violin  
Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra  
Ernest Martínez Izquierdo



Recorded at the Concert Hall, Orquesta Sinfónica de Navarra, Pamplona, Spain,  
1–2 November 2009 (tracks 1–5), 2 July 2009 (6), 3–6 November 2008 (7–10)  
Producers & Editors: Sean Lewis (1–6), Andrew Walton (7–10)  
Engineers: Sean Lewis (1–6), Phil Rowlands (7–10) • Booklet notes: Joseph Gold, Keith Anderson  
Cover painting: Portrait of the composer by Chai Ben-Shan

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Playing Time  
58:22



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