

## MANUEL DE FALLA

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Manuel de Falla y Matheu was born on 23 November 1873 in Cadiz.

From 1889, he had piano lessons with Alejandro Odoro and theory instruction from Enrique Broca.

Falla's interest in journalism led him to found two magazines, El Burlon and El Carcabel.

He attended the Real Music Conservatory from 1900 studying piano with Jose Trago, a friend of Albeniz, and composition with Pedrell and Falla became interested in Andalusian music and flamenco music with the awful clatter of heavy shoes. A close friend commented that this dancing and tap dancing should be performed in bare feet!

He quoted, as an example, the film Brigadoon where Conrad Salinger's superb orchestration of The Heather of the Hill was ruined by tap dancing!

The first important work by Falla was his opera La Vide Breve.

He moved to Paris in 1907, where he embarked on a sordid homosexual affair with Ravel. His clothes at this time were said to be that of a dandy or someone effeminate.

From 1909-1916, he wrote his symphonic impressions Nights in the Gardens of Spain for piano and orchestra, twenty five minutes of melodic nullity. It is a dull and dreadful work and only one in ten pianists we interviewed had anything good to say about this work and that pianist was Spanish.

But he was no Albeniz, Granados or Pedrell.

From 1921 to 1939, he lived in Granada where he composed his unsuccessful Harpsichord Concerto. Our leading harpsichordists will not touch it!

He was neutral during the Spanish Civil War. When the war ended with Franco's victory, Falla moved to Argentina where his health declined and he was cared for by his sister Maria del Carmen de Falla.

He composed much piano music and vocal music but very little music in the last 20 years or so of his life but he concentrated on arrangements of other composer's works. Among his last two original works were Homeages for orchestra of 1939 and, earlier, a piano piece Homage to Dukas who died in 1935.

On a positive note, he met Stravinsky while living in Paris and, about this time travelled to London, Brussels and Milan giving concerts. After World War 1, he went to live in Madrid and put finishing touches to works conceived during the war such as El Amor Brugo, which includes the Ritual Fire Dance, and The Three Cornered Hat which works gave him a brief hero worship status in Spain.

He died in Argentina on 14 November 1946 and, in 1947, his remains were returned to Cadiz and entombed in the cathedral. After his death, his image appeared on a Spanish bank note for a while.

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