

this month

The pick of classical music on radio, TV and in your area

Events

Our selection of the best concerts, festivals and opera around the country this month, listed regionally

MUSIC IN THE SPANISH ARTS FESTIVAL 28 Feb-10 Apr

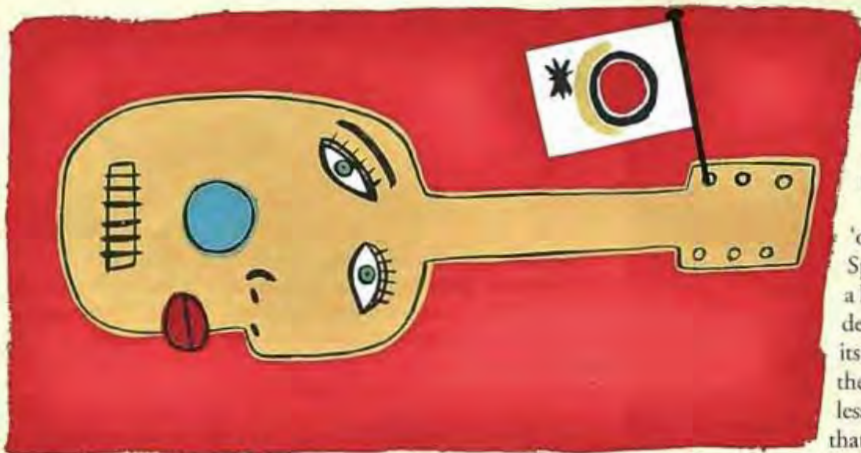
An overdue cultural exposé

As a major Spanish Arts Festival opens in London, Alfredo Aracil argues that, despite the repressive Franco years, the country's music has remained part of a wider European scene

Spain may have opened its gates to the world in the last two years for the Olympic Games and World Expo '92, but its own contemporary culture has so far received little exposure. For many people, 'Spanish arts' means only tired Flamenco clichés, Ravel's *Boléro*, Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* and the bull fight. However, London now redresses the balance by hosting a festival of Spanish arts, which includes an exploration of music since the repressive nationalism of the Franco regime.

Alfredo Aracil, a 39-year-old composer whose work has been likened in its tranquillity and accessibility to that of Tavener, will have his music featured in this festival. Here he gives an insider's view on how his country's music has been affected by the same factors which have dominated music in the rest of Western Europe.

NIGEL ROBINSON



After the death of Franco, Spain began a process of transition towards democracy at home and integration into the international community. It began without us knowing where the limits of this adventure would be. Luckily there were no limits.

The new political situation paved the way for large and positive changes in attitudes towards culture in general. Composers welcomed their renewed freedom which swiftly resulted in a considerable increase and diversification of music being written. The public, too, became more receptive, and now the

growth in education and training of musicians is beginning to bear fruit, as will be heard in the Soloist Recital series at the Wigmore Hall.

As far as artistic creation is concerned, I believe the changes have been quantitative but not necessarily qualitative. The number of composers has definitely gone up, partly because there are more training centres and more channels for the spread of their work. This should mean that the average level of quality has been raised, although I don't think one can make any specific links between aesthetic changes in contemporary music and

recent political transition – with the exception of some nationalist tendencies.

The artistic 'opening up' of Spain happened a little over two decades ago and its evolution since then is more or less in line with that throughout Western Europe.

We have all shared and brought about the change in musical sensibility from that which dominated the Fifties and Sixties. At that time objectivity, or the search for what was supposedly 'essential' or 'authentic' were considered to be basic values in a work of art. In music this was not only the case in composition but also in its interpretation.

Composers systemised the use of chance, or invented methods of organisation based on laws of maths or physics. At the same time a group of musicians established new ways to interpret early music. It was neither a widespread whim, nor a coincidence

TOWARDS THE MILLENNIUM: THIRTIES 22 Feb-23 Apr

Thirtysomething

Once again, Birmingham, London and Cardiff play host to *Towards the Millennium*, Simon Rattle's 10-year spring festival covering the arts of the 20th century. Now in its fourth year, the event celebrates the culture chiefly of Europe and the Americas from 1930-39, and encompasses music, drama, dance, film, art and photography.

The Thirties saw the invention of nylon, the electric razor and television broadcasts; the rise of fascism in Europe; the abdication of Edward VIII, abolition of child labour in the UK and successful transatlantic flights. Pioneering ideas evolved against a backdrop of political extremism, and, as this festival will show, diverse musical developments continued at an astonishing pace.

The CBSO, London Sinfonietta and BBC SO are the main performers, showcasing such significant works as Berg's *Lulu* (see *Broadcast article*), Stravinsky's *Perséphone*, Varèse's *Ionisation* and Britten's *Les illuminations*. Smaller bands outline the growth of jazz from Gershwin to boogie and the tea dance.

Box offices: Birmingham (021 643 2514); Cardiff (0222 371 236); London (071 928 8800)



among composers and musicologists, but instead an artistic sensibility of the age.

Today, after the crisis of this alleged 'authenticity', expressivity and the manipulation of the sensory and structural elements of music have once again become desirable, or at least valid, aims for many Spanish composers and players.

Although there are works featured by both Manuel de Falla and Roberto Gerhard, pioneers of Spanish contemporary music, the festival stretches right up to the present day. Evidence of this can be seen in the debuts planned for the Almeida Theatre in the New Music

series. We will hear new chamber music from some 'almost old' masters (Josep Soler, Tomás Marco and Luis de Pablo) and some younger ones (David del Puerto, Manuel Hidalgo and Enrique Macias). There will also be my monodrama *Prospero: Scena* based on a text by Sanchis Sinisterra and extracts from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

We will discover all of this – the new rhetoric of the last decade – and perhaps also its opposite. We live in a period in which the theoretical beliefs seem to be less intransigent and more tolerant than those of the past. That is not to say that 'anything goes', but rather that 'everything can be of value'.

Main music events: 28 Feb-10 Apr

Spanish New Music series at the Almeida Theatre

Soloist Recital series at the Wigmore Hall

Various Spanish and UK ensembles in Spanish programmes at the South Bank Centre, St John's Smith Square and St Giles in the Barbican

'Lorca: an Evocation in Words, Song and Dance' presented by Trader Faulkner, musicians and dancer;

'Sueños Flamencos' presented by Christina Hoyos. Both at Sadler's Wells

Festival box office: 071 396 4777; information line with facility to purchase tickets: 0891 888 780 (0891 calls cost 36p per minute cheap rate, 48p per minute all other times)

March Highlights

A choice of classical music events in London, throughout the UK and Eire

LONDON

Key to venues

Barbican Centre

Silk St, EC2 (071 638 8891)

London Coliseum

St Martin's Lane, WC2 (071 836 3161/240 5258)

Royal Festival Hall (RFH) Queen Elizabeth Hall (QEH) Purcell Room

South Bank Centre, SE1 (071 928 8800)

Royal Albert Hall (RAH)

Kensington Gore, SW7 (071 589 8212)

Royal Opera House (ROH)

Covent Gdn, WC2 (071 240 1066/240 1911)

St John's

Smith Square, SW1 (071 222 1061)

Wigmore Hall

36 Wigmore St, W1 (071 935 2141)

CONCERTS

1-3 Electroacoustic Festival

Annual festival with works from Canada, Mexico, Europe and the US
7.30pm New Hall, City University, Northampton Sq, EC1 (071 477 8284)

1, 5 & 8 Nash Ensemble

20th-century music series encompassing chamber music from Strauss to Poul Ruders
8pm Purcell Rm £7-£10

2, 15, 25 & 29 Discover American Song

With baritones Thomas Hampson (2 Mar) and Kurt Ollmann (15 Mar); sopranos Roberta Alexander (25 Mar) and Dawn Upshaw (29 Mar)
7.30pm Wigmore £6-£18

3-30 Women in Music

Festival embracing female composers and performers. With mini operas, chamber music, film screenings and recitals. Artists include Capricorn Ensemble and Bingham String Quartet
Venues include: ICA, The Mall, SW1; Union Chapel, N1; Leighton House, W14.
Info: 071 837 2511

4 Towards the Millennium: Thirties

Simon Rattle conducts the CBSO in Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, Roy Harris's *Symphony No. 3* and Copland's *Billy the Kid*. András Schiff plays Bartók's *Second Piano Concerto*
7.30pm RFH £5-£25

5 Luciano Pavarotti

The tenor joins soprano Nina Rautio and others plus the Bouremouth SO and World Festival Choir in Verdi's *Requiem*
8pm Wembley Arena (071 240 7200 or 081 900 1234) £35-£95

5 & 6 Puccini's La bohème

Michael Tilson Thomas conducts a concert performance with the LSO and Chorus. Plus soloists Barbara Frittoil (Mimi), Francisco Araza (Rodolfo) and Thomas Hampson (Marcello)
7.30pm Barbican £6-£29

6 London Philharmonic/Welser-Möst

Mitsuko Uchida is soloist in Schumann's *Piano Concerto*. Plus Haydn's *Clock Symphony* and Elgar's *Enigma Variations*
7.30pm RFH £5-£28

6 & 20 Sunday Concerts at Blackheath

Endymion Ensemble (6 Mar) and Chilingirian Quartet (20 Mar) play Mozart and Schubert
11am (6 Mar); 3pm (20 Mar); Blackheath Concert Halls, 23 Lee Rd, SE3 (081 463 0100) £7.50

7, 14, 21 & 28 BBC Lunchtime Concerts

Amanda Roccoft joins the City of London Sinfonia in a memorial concert to Arleen Auger (7 Mar); Carmina Quartet plays Haydn and Brahms (14 Mar); Kalichstein/Laredo/Robinson Trio plays Beethoven and Shostakovich (21 Mar); Talich Quartet plays Erwin Schulhoff and Schubert (28 Mar). Broadcast live on Radio 3
1pm St John's £5

7 Vienna Boys Choir

All-Bach programme with Academy of London and men of the Academy of London Chorus
7.30pm St John's £6-£16

8 & 23 International Piano Series at the Wigmore

Andreas Haefliger plays Beethoven, Schumann, Gubaidulina, Scriabin and Rachmaninov (8 Mar); Rudolf Firkušný plays

Schubert, Janáček and Smetana (23 Mar)
7.30pm Wigmore £6-£15

9 RPO/Temirkanov

John Lill plays Brahms's *First Piano Concerto* (see also 20 Mar). Plus Prokofiev's *Fifth Symphony*
7.30pm Barbican £5-£27

Towards the Millennium: Thirties

London Sinfonietta in works by Copland, Weber, Varèse, Cage and Schoenberg. With Sebastian Bell (flute) and Stephen Richardson (bass)
7.45pm QEH £5-£18

9, 12 & 16 Vogler Quartet of Berlin

Haydn, Schumann, Zemlinsky, Kurtág and Lutoslawski
7.30pm Wigmore £6-£12

10 Towards the Millennium: Thirties

Simon Rattle conducts the CBSO in Varèse's *Ionisation* and the Fourth Symphony by Shostakovich. Gidon Kremer is soloist in Berg's *Violin Concerto*
7.30pm RFH £5-£25

Verdi's Ernani

Marcello Viotti conducts the ECO and Pro Musica Chorus of London and soloists
7.30pm Barbican £8-£28

11 Chamber Orchestra of Europe/Harnoncourt

Nikolaus Harnoncourt (see feature) conducts Schumann's *Symphony No. 4* and Brahms's *Symphony No. 1*
7.30pm Barbican £7.50-£28

Towards the Millennium: Thirties

Andrew Davis conducts a concert performance of Berg's *Lulu* (see *Broadcast article*). With BBC SO and soloists Patricia Wise and Ryszard Karczykowski. Broadcast live on Radio 3
6.30pm RFH £4-£9

12 Stravinsky's Le rossignol and Bizet's Djamilah

Chelsea Opera Group presents concert performances of Stravinsky's tale of a Chinese Emperor and Bizet's one-act about an Indian princess
7.15pm QEH £7.50-£15