

ARTISTS' PROGRAMMING VISION AND MUSIC NOTES

The works I have selected to perform for you are from three different musical eras widely separated in time. It may seem strange to place Beethoven between two Spanish composers. But in my mind and heart, what connects the works and the composers on tonight's programme is their passion, emotion and exuberant humanity.

Antonio Soler (1729-1783) was a Catalan composer who studied with Domenico Scarlatti. They are both known today mainly for their keyboard sonatas, many of them reflecting a strong Spanish influence. Some Soler sonatas are soulful and melancholy laments.



Others exhibit an uninhibited playfulness and unabashed exuberance. As he himself wrote: "What good does it do if a work is well written but stirs no feelings in the listener?" Tonight I provide four contrasting examples which were selected to display the full range of Soler's emotional effects.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) completed his **Appassionata Sonata** in 1806. Its subtitle was an invention of his publisher with no evidence of the composer's approval. Because the music throbs with intense emotional excitement, the name stuck. There are moments of great intensity

and drama, explosive outbursts, whispered phrases and thunderous replies, calm self-possession and great ardour and excitement. The finale is a highly spirited movement that drives forward with an irresistible vitality, never losing its propulsive energy. So much is known about Beethoven's life and his emotional turmoil that this work seems to me a marvelous reflection of his great humanity, serving almost as a musical biography of his soul.



Isaac Albeniz (1860-1909) was, like Soler, from Catalonia. This concert season marks the one-hundredth anniversary of his death. Albeniz started life like Mozart as a piano prodigy, making his debut in Madrid at the age of four. His father so mercilessly exploited his gift that he ran away to South America when he was thirteen(!) and eked out a living playing piano in the bars and dance halls of Buenos Aires, Costa Rica, Havana, and New York. He was found and shipped home within a year.

Following studies with Liszt and Felipe Pedrell, and years of writing what he himself felt were poor operas and potboilers, he began to get recognition when **Suite Española** was first published in 1886 with only four of the eight pieces included; the remainders were added posthumously by his publishers. In its present eight-movement format, the

suite comprises a sequence of exquisitely fashioned impressionistic tone poems each complementary to the others -- a unique colouristic palette for each piece. What ties them together is their lyric charm and strong folkloristic character with rhythms rooted in dance and melodies which feel as if born out of improvisation.

I adore the combination of freedom of expressivity and a meticulous rhythmic integrity which requires rubato while demanding rhythmic severity. I love the richness of texture and the almost painful soulfulness of the harmony. It is challenging to strike just the right balance to achieve an elegant effect. (*Alma Petchersky*)

