Minnesota Orchestra
Roderick Cox, conductor
Elena Urioste, violin

Saturday, July 20, 2019, 8 pm | Orchestra Hall

Manuel de Falla
Suite No. 2 from The Three-Cornered Hat
The Neighbor’s Dance (Seguidillas)
The Miller’s Dance (Farruca)
Final Dance

José White
Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in F-sharp minor
Allegro
Adagio ma non troppo
Allegro moderato
Elena Urioste, violin

INTERMISSION

Ludwig van Beethoven
Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Opus 55, Eroica
Allegro con brio
Marcia funebre: Adagio assai
Scherzo: Allegro vivace
Finale: Allegro molto

Los materiales del programa de esta noche están disponibles en español; solicite un folleto al acomodador.

Roderick Cox’s profile appears on page 41, Elena Urioste’s on page 44.

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This Minnesota Orchestra concert is being recorded for a future broadcast on stations of Classical Minnesota Public Radio, including KSJN 99.5 FM in the Twin Cities.
he ballet *The Three-Cornered Hat* by Spaniard Manuel de Falla (1876-1947) debuted in London on July 22, 1919, the product of an amazing collaboration. Overseeing the production was the impresario Serge Diaghilev, who had asked the composer to develop an earlier work into this ballet for his troupe; Léonide Massine designed the choreography and danced the lead role, while Tamara Karsavina danced the part of his wife; Pablo Picasso painted the décor; and Ernest Ansermet conducted the orchestra. It was a great success then, and it has remained one of Falla’s most popular works.

**Humor and Intrigue**

The reasons for that popularity are not hard to discover: *The Three-Cornered Hat* is a story full of romance, humor and charm; it breathes the warm atmosphere of Andalusia; and it is told in brilliant music. The plot involves a miller and his beautiful young wife, their flirtations and intrigues, and the trickery that ensues when a magistrate, whose three-cornered hat symbolizes his authority, develops an eye for the beautiful young wife. Fortunately, all ends happily, with obstacles surmounted and the miller and his wife swearing their mutual devotion.

Falla drew two orchestral suites from the ballet. The first includes music from the initial scene, while the second, heard in these concerts, consists of the three major dances from the final scene, each being a characteristic dance from a specific region in Spain. *The Neighbors’ Dance* is a *seguidilla*, a dance of Andalusian origin, and depicts neighbors gathering at the miller’s house on a warm summer evening (St. John’s Eve), drinking and dancing together. *The Miller’s Dance* is a *farruca*, an ancient dance of gypsy origin. This one, danced by the miller to demonstrate his strength and masculinity to his wife, is full of rhythmic energy. After opening with solos for French and English horns, the music turns rough and hard-edged, growing more powerful and finishing with a great flourish of energy. *The Final Dance* is a lively *jota* from northern Spain, often danced to the accompaniment of guitar and castanets. Here it celebrates the defeat of the magistrate: Falla draws themes from the dance of the miller’s wife in the first scene and drives the suite to its close in a blaze of energy.

**José White**

Concerto for Violin and Orchestra in F-sharp minor

Premiered: 1867

The name José Silvestre White Lafitte—often shortened to José White—may be unfamiliar to audiences today, but in the 19th century White was a virtuoso violinist whose playing was admired by Rossini and who established a brilliant career on three continents. So great was White’s fame that in its obituary notice *Le Figaro* referred to him as “the Cuban Paganini.” Not surprisingly, the story of his life is an interesting one.

**A Globetrotting Composer-Violinist**

Born in Cuba to a Spanish father and an Afro-Cuban mother, White learned to play the violin from his father, an amateur violinist. White quickly became so expert a violinist that when he gave his debut recital at 18, he was accompanied by the great American pianist Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Gottschalk recognized the boy’s talent and raised the money to send him to Paris, where he continued his studies at the Paris Conservatory. His success there was immediate: at age 22 he won the Conservatory’s first prize in violin and embarked on a concert career that took him throughout Europe, North America and South America.

White was also a champion of his contemporaries: he gave the French premiere of Saint-Saëns’ Second Violin Concerto. In 1875 White made his debut in the United States, performing in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, and then settled in South America, where he served as director of the Imperial Conservatory in Rio de Janeiro from 1877 to 1889. In 1891, at age 65, White returned to Paris, where he spent the rest of his life. He continued to teach during his years in Paris; among his students there were Jacques Thibaud and George Enescu. White died in Paris in March 1918, just a few days before Debussy died in the same city.

White (whose name was sometimes anglicized to Joseph White) also composed. His most famous work, the charming habanera *La bella cubana*, is performed today in a variety of arrangements and has been recorded many times. White composed his Violin Concerto in F-sharp minor in Paris in 1864, when he was 28 years old and teaching at the Paris Conservatory, and he gave the première three years later. His concerto is very much in the manner of Bruch’s First Violin Concerto and Wieniawski’s Second Concerto, both composed at exactly the same moment as White’s: all three feature appealing melodies, beautifully idiomatic writing for violin, and plenty of excitement.
the virtuoso’s concerto
White’s Violin Concerto is compact—its three movements span just over 20 minutes—and it is composed in quite traditional forms: a sonata-form opening movement, a ternary form central movement, and a rondo-finale.

allegro. The opening Allegro is based on two themes, both introduced within the first minute: the violins’ flowing, somber opening melody, followed almost immediately by the solo clarinet’s long and stately second idea. The solo violin makes its entry on the opening theme, and the writing for violin gives us some sense of how fine a violinist White must have been—he emphasizes the lyric side of the instrument, but the music is also full of technical challenges like fingered octaves and spiccato thirds. At the climax of the movement White offers his soloist a cadenza that is accompanied very discreetly by the orchestra before the movement powers its way to the close.

adagio ma non troppo. Rather than ending in a blaze of excitement, however, the music proceeds without pause into the second movement, marked Adagio ma non troppo. Here the violin sings the sweet main theme, which gives way to a turbulent central episode full of octaves and other fireworks. The opening material returns to bring the movement to its close, which has the solo violin sustaining a shimmering high note far above the subdued orchestra.

allegro moderato. The concluding Allegro moderato is the most virtuosic and extroverted of the three movements. Its rondo theme dances vigorously (White demands some tricky high-position work here from his soloist), and that opening gives way to beautifully lyric episodes along the way. The excitement of the rondo theme always returns, however, and the concerto flies to its emphatic conclusion on a blazing coda.

Ludwig van Beethoven

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<th>Symphony No. 3 in E-flat major, Opus 55, Eroica</th>
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In May 1803, Beethoven confided to a friend: “I am only a little satisfied with my previous works. From today on I will take a new path.” Over the next six months, he sketched his massive new Third Symphony, a revolutionary work of art that dumbfounded early audiences at private performances and the public premiere on April 7, 1805.

Nearly everyone knows the story of how Beethoven had intended to dedicate the symphony to Napoleon, whose reforms in France had seemed to signal a new age of egalitarian justice. But when the composer learned that Napoleon had proclaimed himself emperor, he tore off the score’s title and angrily blotted out Napoleon’s name. When published in 1806, the title bore only the cryptic inscription: “Sinfonia eroica—dedicated to the memory of a great man.”

a symphony of unparalleled drama

allegro con brio. The Eroica explodes to life with two whip-cracks in E-flat major, followed immediately by the main idea in the cellos. This slightly-swung theme is simply built on the notes of an E-flat major chord, but the theme settles on a “wrong” note, C-sharp, and the resulting harmonic complications will be resolved only after much violence. This violence releases what Beethoven’s biographer Maynard Solomon calls “hostile energy” into what had been the polite world of the classical symphony. This truly is a “heroic” movement—it raises serious issues, and in music of unparalleled drama and scope it resolves them.

marcia funebre: adagio assai. The second movement is a funeral march, something else entirely new in symphonic music. Violins announce the grieving main idea over growling basses, and the music makes its somber way along the tread of this dark theme.

scherzo: allegro vivace. The propulsive scherzo erupts in its center section on a series of brilliant, hunting horn calls.

finale: allegro molto. The finale movement is a theme-and-variation style, and Beethoven transforms this old form into a grand conclusion worthy of a heroic symphony. After an opening flourish, he presents not the theme but a bass line played by pizzicato strings. Once the theme appears, it travels through a series of dazzling variations before reaching a moment of poise and reflection, and then a brief pause gives a breath as the Eroica hurls to its close.

The Eroica may have stunned its first audiences, but audiences today run the greater risk of forgetting how revolutionary this music is. What seemed “lawlessness” to early audiences must now be seen as an extraordinary leap to an entirely new conception of what music could be. It is no surprise the composers over the next century would make full use of this freedom. Nor is it a surprise to learn that late in life—at a time when he had written eight symphonies—Beethoven named the Eroica as his own favorite among his symphonies.

Program notes by Eric Bromberger.