

Cordoba (Issac Albeniz) Narrative; A Parable

(This piece is dedicated to Enrique Morera).

There is some Spanish text on the sheet music itself. The translation is loosely as follows:

"In the silence of the night, interrupted by breezes scented with Jasmin and the sound of the Guzla accompanying serenades floating on the air and the palms against the night sky". (My Spanish is not great).

The Great Mosque / Cathedral of Cordoba has a fascinating but complicated and much debated history but briefly, it was built in 785 by the Muslim emir Abdurrahman 1, founder of the Islamic Emirate of Cordoba, on the site of an ancient Visigoth church. In its heyday as a Mosque it could hold 40,000 worshippers making it the largest mosque in the world at the time. It wasn't just used for prayer though, judges made rulings there, children were taught there and travelling pilgrims were allowed to sleep there. It was the centre of Cordoban life.

The Mosque was converted to a cathedral in 1236, but retained its Islamic architecture and striking décor. Mass is celebrated there every day.

Currently Muslims are not permitted to pray at the Mosque (very disappointing) but the Islamic Council of Spain has lodged a formal request with the Vatican for Muslims to be allowed to pray in the church.

The cathedral is located very near the old Jewish quarter of Cordoba, making this site represent a religious centre dating back to pre-Christian times.

Please refer to the score.

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Bars 1-4	The sound of distant church bells brought by the hot Terral winds rumble across the fields and land upon a village just outside Cordoba at the turn of the 19 th and 20 th centuries.
Bar 13	The Minor key here indicates that all is not well with certain inhabitants of this little village;
Bar 30	Our attention is drawn to the magnificent Cathedral in Cordoba with a series of saintly sounding chords;

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Bars 1-7	The chords in these few bars actually look like ecclesiastical statues looking down from high walls. The passage itself sounds saintly as if we being reminded that this is a devout community;
Bars 8-9	These two bars denote an unfolding story... Are you sitting comfortably? Hold onto your hats, we're in for a bumpy ride!
Bar 10-13	We hear a flick of a Flamenco dancer's skirt and what sounds like the zip and clack of a fan opening. I also hear donkey's hooves clopping.
	However, life is not easy here in this village.
Bars 14-21	A family living here (parents, daughter and son) are all having a discussion about their household finances, which are not in a positive state. They have few options, so they turn to the village council for help.
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Bar 1	The son's voice can be heard here in the melody of the left hand.
Bar 23	The council arrive – the chairman, sporting a large moustache and smoking a cigar fancies himself as something of a politician.
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Bar 7	The teenage daughter speaks up and suggests maybe they visit their magnificent cathedral to pray for inspiration.
Bar 15	The whole village prays fervently for a positive solution.
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Bar 9	They each make their various arrangements with the divine, inspired by the awesome surroundings.
Bar 16	They return to the village and the regular ups and downs of domestic life, trusting they will be guided.
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Bar 17	Once again we hear the flamenco element of the theme and the rapping open of the fan. The scorching winds race over the fields.