

## PROGRAM NOTES

by Elisenda Fábregas

### *Accents Catalans (Catalan accents)* for Symphony Orchestra (2016) by Elisenda Fábregas

*Accents Catalans for Symphony Orchestra (2016)* was commissioned by *The Bucheon Philharmonic Orchestra*. World premiere by The Bucheon Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Youngmin Park. April 10, 2016, Concert Hall, Seoul Arts Center, South Korea.

*Accents Catalans (Catalan Accents)* is an homage to my native Catalonia, an area in the North-East of Spain with its own language, music and dance, known for its great gastronomy, artistic personalities, and fiercely independent culture. In *Accents Catalans* I represent symbolically some indigenous traits (or *accents*) of Catalonia which inspired me to write this work. They are: 1) ‘playfulness’, represented by the joyful and spirited national dance, *sardana*; 2) ‘magical innocence’ exemplified in the purity of their children’s songs; 3) ‘longing and sadness’ present in the haunting folk songs; and 4) ‘quick mood changes’ from major (happy) to minor (sad) mode in much of the Catalonian traditional music. Another characteristic that greatly appeals to me is the spirituality that transpires in some of the older Catalonian songs, imbued with the ancient sound of medieval Gregorian chant.

All the above traits (or *accents*) can be found in the more overtly ‘Catalonian’ moments present in *Accents Catalans*. These include the beginning mountain call in the piccolo and the flute, referencing the song titled ‘Mountain shepherds’ (*Els pastors de les muntanyes*), accompanied by the Provençal tambourine. Variations of this ‘pastoral call’ reappear throughout the work in the woodwinds, either in its entirety or partially, acting as a musical question, which is answered by a new contrasting section. This mountain call and its variations connect much of the music in this work.

After the initial mountain call section, a new tune, syncopated and in major mode is introduced. This tune is initially played by the French horns and later the whole orchestra, eventually developed and combined with a rhythmic motive  from the final dance (Dance of *Castellterçol*), leading to the *Giocoso* section. ‘The dance of barley’ (*El ball de la civada*) is the main protagonist in this *Giocoso* section, set in a joyous major mode first with the brass and then the whole orchestra in a festive mood. Two variations of this tune, each time faster, lead to an exciting climax. Eventually an abrupt mood change returns with the mountain call and leading to the *Moderato Cantabile*. This is the center of gravity of the work featuring the tune ‘The little boy’ (*El petit vailet*). This tune is a popular Catalonian *sardana* appearing first on the bass clarinet (f# minor) solo accompanied by the *sardana* rhythm () on the Provençal tambourine. The tune reappears dramatically in e minor with the full orchestra (*Con passione*) followed by several variations in triple rhythm. A later majestic entrance of the same tune in F# major occurs in the last section (*Maestoso con spirito*) played by the whole orchestra.

Before the final fast section, a timeless *Incantato* (enchanted) section featuring a Catalan tune ‘Dolls crying’ (*Les ninetes ploren*) send us to a magical world with soft colors of woodwinds, wind chimes, harp, horns and strings. This is a dream world where time stops. But soon enough, the assertive final dance in minor blurts in, with driving syncopated rhythms, strong brass and full orchestra colors. This is based on the (Dance of Castellterçol) *Dansa de Castellterçol*. A couple of *Playful* sections in major mode change for a moment the mood to a child’s play before returning to the overtly rhythmical dance.

*Accents Catalans* is a one-movement work with three overall sections fast, slow, fast. The characteristic interval of perfect 4<sup>th</sup> (so prevalent in Catalonian music) is present in many of the selected tunes, including the initial introductory piccolo/flute call, unifying motivically this work. Rhythmic and melodic motives from all these Catalan folk songs above are used in its original form, as well as varied and developed, resulting in new material that connects the tightly knitted fabric.