

**EL PASO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**  
**JANUARY 23 & 24, 2026**  
**PROGRAM NOTES**

**Alberto Ginastera**

Born April 11, 1916 — Buenos Aires, Argentina

Died June 25, 1983 — Geneva, Switzerland

**Four Dances from *Estancia***

The modernists from the Americas were a tightly knit group. While the titanic 20th-century composers of Europe were traveling the globe, dazzling and shocking audiences wherever they went, composers born in the West were creating music just as extraordinary.

While American 20th-century composers such as George Gershwin, William Grant Still, Aaron Copland, Charles Ives, and Samuel Barber are frequently explored, their contemporaries south of the border are often overlooked. This is a shameful sin, for modernists like Carlos Chavez, Silvestre Revueltas, and Alberto Ginastera were creating unique orchestral masterpieces that were nothing short of breathtaking.

Alberto Ginastera hailed from Buenos Aires. Although he would study and live in the United States on more than one occasion, his music would maintain a sonic signature unique to him, a trademark of the great Latin American modernists. Lincoln Kirstein, an American author and co-founder of the American Ballet, approached Ginastera in 1941 for a western-inspired ballet. The commission would result in *Estancia*, a thirty-minute love story about the daughter of a farmer and an urban boy. The American Ballet, which at that point was touring North and South America under the name American Ballet Caravan, was attempting to showcase works composed by artists living in the western hemisphere. However, the company dissolved in 1942 due to financial strains brought on by the Second World War. This left *Estancia* un-staged for a decade. To combat this, Ginastera transformed the ballet into a four-movement work for symphony orchestra, which premiered in Buenos Aires in 1943.

*Estancia*, in its original form, eventually would be staged and premiered in 1952. However, *Four Dances from Estancia* is the dominant form the music takes today, seeing regular performance and recording.

**Édouard Lalo**

Born January 27, 1823 — Lille, France

Died April 22, 1892 — Paris, France

***Symphonie espagnole in D minor, Op. 21***

Perhaps the busiest time in music history was the Romantic era, with many dozens of notable figures all following in the creative footsteps of Beethoven's later years. Legendary talent was prevalent all over Europe, and many of today's stalwart classics were born.

A fascinating (and sometimes unfortunate) result of romanticism was the shift of focus away from people and towards their individual compositions. Audiences today are more likely to remember a great "contribution" from the 19th century rather than its "contributor." This has led to more and more composers being recognized for less of their work, no matter how prolific they were.

An example here is Edouard Lalo, one of a healthy number of great French romanticists (Berlioz, Bizet, Debussy, etc.). Although in good company, Lalo stood out via his signature sound, a Spanish-inspired take backed by traditional German orchestration. All of this, combined with a broad catalogue of works, would lead to a composer often programmed and celebrated in the concert hall...or would it? Sadly, no. Lalo would fall victim to romanticism's popularity conundrum. Today, you will most likely hear only two of his works performed live. One is *Symphonie espagnole in D Minor, Op. 21*.

*Symphonie espagnole* is a five-movement violin concerto written in 1874 for Pablo Sarasate, a celebrated violinist of the time and famous today for contributions to the violin repertoire. Apart from seeing regular performance, the work is a frequent choice for competitions due to its combination of technical challenges and lyricism.

### **Ferde Grofé**

Born March 27, 1892 – New York, NY

Died April 3, 1972 – Santa Monica, CA

### ***Grand Canyon Suite***

It is easy to be ignorant of the fact that the performance arts require manpower — and not just the kind you may think. Of course, when you see a symphony orchestra perform, you notice dozens upon dozens of musicians working towards a common goal. Are there other efforts that may not be immediately visible? The answer is a resounding yes—more than you can imagine.

There are personnel backstage in charge of ensuring that the orchestra's setup is exactly right. These are the people who arrive first and leave last. There are the front-of-house attendants who ensure you find your seat and that you are comfortable and safe throughout your visit to the concert hall. These are all examples of people *at the show*. What about what goes on before concert night arrives?

There's upper-level management; administrators who ensure the money is there to keep the orchestra open. There's the librarian, the hardest-working person in the orchestra, who ensures the musicians have all the music they need for every show. Look deeper, and you'll find someone almost no one sees, a musician who sets the final piece of the puzzle. Without them, you wouldn't be at the concert hall at all. They could be living or dead. No. It's not the composer.

New Yorker Ferdinand Rudolph von Grofé was an orchestral arranger. A pianist from a musical family, Grofé's full-time music career began in 1920 as the pianist for the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. Around that same time, he became the ensemble's arranger, turning Whiteman's melodic ideas into pieces audiences would actually be able to listen to. In short, a composer may have the ideas, but the arranger makes them work.

Ferde Grofé's connections didn't end there. George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* is performed regularly today thanks to Grofé's orchestration. Contrary to popular belief, Gershwin first composed the piece for two pianos, *not* piano and orchestra. The orchestra accompaniment we're all familiar with was completed by Grofé.

Although his career at the time was defined by orchestration, Grofé did contribute original compositions. *Grand Canyon Suite*, a five-movement orchestral tone poem, secures his legacy

today. Completed and premiered in 1931, the Paul Whiteman Orchestra gave the work's first performance. The piece depicts five scenes relating to visiting the Grand Canyon: *Sunrise, Painted Desert, On the Trail, Sunset, and Cloudburst*.

To listen to the *Grand Canyon Suite* is to pay respect to what it is to enjoy orchestral music. There is more involved than meets the eye, and they often shine brightly.

**Nathan Black** is the general manager of the El Paso Symphony Youth Orchestras and a section cellist in the El Paso Symphony Orchestra. In addition, he produces and hosts 88.5 FM KTEP's *El Paso Symphony Orchestra Broadcast*, and as of 2022 is the resident lecturer of EPSO's "Opening Notes" series.

