

RECENT BOOKS

AMERICANISMO MUSICAL

IN 1939 a dynamic young musicologist from Montevideo named Francisco Curt Lange, of German extraction, made a visit to the United States and zealously preached his doctrine of *Americanismo musical*, making a strong plea for the strengthening of inter-American musical ties. He had behind him the prestige of four volumes of the *Boletín Latino Americano de Música*, an annual publication which he had created in 1935 and which proved an enormous boon to all students of Latin American music. Though one usually thinks of a bulletin as being of modest dimensions, Lange's ideas ran toward the colossal, and his *Boletín* reached vast proportions, the fourth volume containing 861 pages. During Lange's visit to the U.S.A. in 1939 it was decided that the next volume of the *Boletín* would be devoted chiefly to the music of the United States. Charles Seeger, now Chief of the Music Division of the Pan American Union, was chosen as associate editor and entrusted with the task of assembling a series of articles which would give a comprehensive picture of all aspects of musical life in the United States. Mr. Seeger also had the responsibility of selecting compositions by contemporary United States composers to be included in the musical supplement (this supplement, incidentally, was printed separately and copies have not yet reached us). Once the articles were assembled, they had to be translated into Spanish; the cost of publishing such a large volume was a further cause for

delay. Though dated October 1941, Volume V of the *Boletín* did not appear until late in 1942, four years after the publication of Volume IV. Like its predecessors, it is a handsome volume, profusely and artistically illustrated.

To the reviewer this over-sized bulletin presents a real problem of selection, since only a very few of its fifty-seven articles could be discussed in this brief space. The section devoted to the United States includes forty-five pieces, touching on every phase of music, from concert management to musical journalism. Among the contributors are Aaron Copland, Daniel Gregory Mason, Henry Cowell, Theodore M. Finney, Roy D. Welch, Earl V. Moore, Reed Smith, Ernest La Prade, Frances Densmore, Phillips Barry – for the most part writers of authority in their respective fields, but not particularly known for their interest in inter-American affairs. Indeed, three of the most prominent writers on Latin American music in the United States are not represented in the volume. Although Charles Seeger and Henry Cowell touch briefly on the contemporary musical scene in their respective articles, the task of surveying creative musical activity in this country during the past two decades falls upon Friede F. Rothe, whose twenty-five page summary is adequate if not brilliant.

The Latin American section consists of twelve articles, six of which deal with Mexico. These six articles, by Daniel Castaneda, Armando Solorzano, Raúl G.

Guerrero, Vicente T. Mendoza and Otto Mayer-Serra, are of exceptional interest and rank with the best published in previous issues of the *Boletín*. Mayer-Serra's excellent study of Silvestre Revueltas and musical nationalism in Mexico, is here printed in full, with numerous musical examples. The only other article dealing with a modern Latin American composer is María Muñoz de Quevedo's sketch of the late Alejandro García Caturla of Cuba, which leaves much to be desired in the way of analysis and style criticism. On the whole, the emphasis in this section is on folkmusic, which is symbolical of a fairly widespread tendency among Latin American musicians. Other contributors to this section are Josué T. Wilkes and Roberto García Morillo of Argentina, Carlos Isamitt of Chile, Carlos Posada Amador of Colom-

bia, and Lange, who also contributes an introductory survey of inter-American relations in the field of music.

Previous volumes of the *Boletín* appeared under the auspices of the Instituto de Estudios Superiores of Montevideo. This one bears the imprint of the Instituto Interamericano de Musicología, a new organization founded by Lange in 1939 and officialized by decree of the Uruguayan government in 1940. The publication of the first five volumes has been made possible through private and public subsidy. We can hope that another four years will not elapse before the appearance of Volume VI, but the outlook is not too bright. Perhaps a less bulky and more selective publication, appearing more frequently, would stand a better chance in these uncertain times.

Gilbert Chase