

## INTER-AMERICAN REVIEWS

### BELOW THE EQUATOR

THERE is an old Spanish proverb that says dirty linen should be washed at home. It is difficult to report to foreigners on the state of our music. We are embarrassed enough by the state of our international politics without having to rush into print on other aspects of Argentine life.

When speaking of "new music," it is wise, of course, to distinguish between music recently composed and music having the characteristic of a modern or advanced style. As in all countries of the world, plenty of new music is written in Argentina. Very little of it, however, is "new" in the sense of style or form. A series of adverse influences conspire against any renovation of music in Argentina. In the first place there is the smallness of the public educated to understand and enjoy modern music. Then there are the traditionalistic orientation of public and private education, as well as that of our musical activities, which are generally bounded by the music of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Responsible criticism is largely absent from the dailies and reviews. Official stimulation of manifestations of new music and of modern art in general is also lacking because of the lack of culture in political circles, the inertia of performers and most of our professional musicians, and the low commercial value of modern music. The radio stations show no interest in modern music, and the same can be said of concert impresarios. All this means that progress in music is very slow, almost imperceptible from one year to another.

The activities of greatest social – not artistic – weight are centered in Buenos Aires at the Teatro Colón. In this theater, modern opera was recently represented by *Pelléas et Mélisande*, directed by Albert Wolff, and *Ariadne auf Naxos*, directed by Fritz Busch – a very small representation among the many works given.

On the other hand, the ballets and concerts at the Colón offered more modern works. Juan José Castro, whose probity and service to new music are known to the United States public, directed first performances in ballet form of Poulenc's *Aubade*, Stravinsky's *Apollon Musagète*, and *El Retablo de Maese Pedro* by Falla, who now lives in Argentina. In addition, he restaged Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. At the theatre's symphonic concerts,

the same conductor let us hear the suite from Hindemith's *Mathis de Maler* and Castelnuovo-Tedesco's *Concerto for Guitar and Small Orchestra*. Castro also directed Shostakovitch's *First Symphony*, in homage to the heroes of Stalingrad, and has been making preparations to acquaint the Argentine public with the *Seventh*. Albert Wolff also conducted the *First Symphony* of Shostakovitch. Busch gave us fragments of Berg's *Wozzeck*, and Fuerst directed Prokofiev's *The Prodigal Son*.

Of works by Argentine composers heard at the Colón, we can mention only Castro's *Sinfonía Bíblica*, conducted by the composer, and the *Sinfonía Porteña* of Alberto Ginastera. Strong criticism by Juan Carlos Paz stirred up a noisy newspaper quarrel in which everyone concerned took part. Ginastera, a youthful composer about whom any definitive judgment would be premature, is about to present an *Argentine Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, and has written the music for a film called *Malambo*.

Modern chamber music is concentrated in the concerts of the *Grupo Renovación* and *La Nueva Música*. The *Grupo Renovación* has recently made a valuable new acquisition in the person of Washington Castro, brother of the already well-known José María and Juan José. Castro "junior" has been actively at work this year, presenting *Homenaje* (four pieces for piano) and *Variations for Piano*, and preparing a *Sonata for Cello and Piano* to be played shortly. All these works reveal fine sensibility and high good taste. Another member of the group, Jacobo Ficher, has given us an important *Sonata for Piano*, in which he has renounced his habitual asperity for a more fluid and amiable idiom, *Seven Songs* of the most careful workmanship, and *Three Pieces in Popular Argentine Style*. He is, furthermore, completing a ballet called *Golondrina* that is based on Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*. José María Castro, in addition to letting us hear his *Five Poetic Pieces for Piano*, delicate in workmanship and rich in nuances, is now completing a still nameless ballet and a *Concerto for Orchestra*. Honorio Siccardi has finished a *Trio* of novel harmonic structure, and Luis Gianneo has offered his *Five Children's Pieces for Violin and Piano*.

Two auspicious events have taken place for the *Grupo Renovación*. In a contest for new violin concertos held in Philadelphia, Luis Gianneo won second prize, while both Ficher and Siccardi won honorable mentions. Then the Argentine Columbia company will issue an album of works by members of this group. Recordings of Argentine music have, up to now, been dedicated to mediocre pieces. At last, we are to have some works

of higher category.

The concerts of *Nueva Música*, as always, have been animated by Juan Carlos Paz, the most "radical" musician of Argentina, *vox clamantis in desertis*, and indefatigable propagandist for recent music. Paz has just finished composing a *String Quartet*, a *Constant Rhythm for Orchestra*, and a *Concerto for Piano and Brasses*. In the columns of the weekly *Argentina Libre*, Paz writes the country's best criticism, even though he is not without impassioned partiality and takes a rather violent tone. In the *Nueva Música* concerts, the following have been heard: Paz' *Sonatina Opus 17* and *Three Inventions in Two Voices for Piano*, the *Sonata 1939* by Koelreutter, a German composer living in Brazil, a *Sonatina* and *Five Preludes for Piano* by Carlos Chavez, *Four Epigrams for Flute* and a *Violin Sonata* by the Brazilian Claudio Santoro, and a great deal of music from the United States, which I shall mention later.

Another musical institution more traditional in its orientation, the *Sociedad Argentina de Música*, in which are grouped the composers of folkloristic tendency, has given first performances of a *String Quartet* by Gilardo Gilardi, a *Quintet for Piano and Strings* by the young composer Pedro Sáenz, and *Variations for Piano* by Roberto García Morillo. I ought also to mention a *Quintet for Wind Instruments* by Hilda Fanny Dianda, a young girl pupil of Siccardi.

### III

We have heard a large amount of music from the United States. I shall single out just a few titles: a *Trio* and a *Sonata for Violin and Piano* by Walter Piston, the trio *Vitebsk* by Aaron Copland, Roy Harris' *Sonata Opus 1*, *Three Choral Preludes* by Roger Sessions, *Three Ostinati* and *Maestoso* by Henry Cowell, and *Three Pieces for Flute and Piano* by Gerald Strang, a *Suite for Oboe* by Vivian Fine, Paul Creston's *Suite for Saxophone and Piano*, and Nicolai Berezowsky's *Suite for Viola and Clarinet*. Among works by modern Europeans, let me mention the following: Schönberg's *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, Hindemith's *Kleine Kammermusik*, the *Eleven Short Pieces, Opus 83* and *Variations, Opus 79* of Krenek, Schulhoff's *Divertimento*, a *Rhapsody for Cello and Piano* by Goossens, Benjamin Britten's *Suite for Violin and Piano*, Jacques Beers' *Sonata for Flute and Piano*, the *Sonata for Piano, Opus 1* of Berg. Webern's *Variations, Opus 27*, a *Suite* by Arnold Strizek, *Five Sketches* by Paul A. Pisk, and Prokofiev's *Le vilain petit canard*.

In closing, I should not fail to mention the growing support that new

music in Argentina is receiving from publishers in the United States. Through this means, they accomplish an effective work of cultural rapprochement among the countries of America.

*Leopoldo Hurtado*

### BELOW THE RIO GRANDE

**A**FTER the 1942 season had ended in Mexico City, the Symphony Orchestra made its first tour of the principal cities of the country. Up to then its concerts had been heard only in the capital. Carlos Chavez, the conductor, reports a tremendous enthusiasm in provincial Mexico for symphonic music, which is surprising since people in the hinterland have not been educated to appreciate it. It is only since the founding of the orchestra in 1928, that audiences in Mexico City have gradually become familiar with most of the international symphonic repertory.

The orchestra was conducted by Chavez and three other prominent Mexican composers and conductors. One of the most talented in the younger generation is Blas Galindo, who led Mozart's *Symphony in G-minor*. Galindo is known to audiences in the United States for *Sones Mariachi*, heard two seasons ago in New York. Another conductor was Jesus Reyes, cellist in the Mexican Symphony Orchestra since its foundation in 1928 and the regular conductor of the National Conservatory Orchestra. Chavez' first assistant, Eduardo Hernandez Moncada, is also well known to Americans for his collaboration with Chavez in the series of concerts held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1940. Appearing as soloist with the orchestra was the composer Manuel M. Ponce, who performed his own *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, and Lupe Medina de Ortega, known for her interpretation of the "lied," modern music and songs by Chavez and the late Silvestre Revueltas.

A number of new Mexican works were heard for the first time this season. One of the most interesting was Galindo's *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, which contains musical folklore of the State of Jalisco. Moncada's *Sinfonia* is also reminiscent of folkloric music, this time from the Gulf Coast. Songs and dances of the Cora Indians were the foundation of Candelario Huizar's *Fourth Symphony*. Although José Rolon's *Concerto in E-minor for Piano and Orchestra* is Mexican, its themes are not derived from folklore.

The music of two well-known Spanish refugees, now in Mexico, was introduced for the first time this year. Rodolfo Halffter's *Concerto in*