

A NEW GENERATION IN SPAIN

BY ADOLFO SALAZAR

SPAIN in its contemporary music shows the same diversity which is so characteristic of its landscape. Mountains and valleys, fertile fields and desolate plains, sombre stretches and regions smiling under a brilliant sun; this rich variety of scene which is Spain, has been, as Pedrell said, animated by a native music, a popular song similarly rich and varied. How much of all this abundance and variety is known to the foreigner? Certain types of local color and certain types of popular music have attained a privileged publicity and to the outsider pass as the whole Spanish scene and all of Spanish music.

This assumption is unfair but its existence must be recognized. For the greater part of the world Spain is little more than Andalusia; the Spanish, in music, little more than Andalusian songs and dances. To such an extent is this true, that musicians of other provinces, such as Albeniz, are better known for their Andalusian compositions than for all the rest of their work. The Andalusian has, moreover, crossed the boundaries of Spain and has courted the interest of foreign composers.

In other parts of the country there are young musicians who cannot accept this exile from its art, and it would be unjust to deny them the right to use the resources of their own provinces, Castile, for example, or Aragon, the Basque countries, Catalonia, the Levantine coast, the Asturias, Leon or Galicia, for all these regions reveal very marked types and different forms of beauty.

Music derived from Andalusian folk sources has one advantage over the music of other regions; it has been a field for more general experiment; it has been worked over more carefully and is enriched by stronger and more marked personalities. But to value it merely because it is "picturesque" is as false as to reject other

types of Spanish music because they seem less so, especially to the foreign ear.

To a certain extent all contemporary Spanish musicians use nationalistic criteria for their work. But with those outstanding, and most appreciated at home and abroad, nationalism is the beginning only, a basis for their work, but not its motive or reason for being.

Distinguished from these composers, who represent a diversity of tendencies and ideas, there exists a group of hasty spirits who have come to the conclusion that Spain needs a national school. But Spain's modern artistic importance is of very recent date. There has not yet been time to unify tendencies, group different standards and submit them to a purifying criticism from which will emerge one general form.

Such selection and unification is not the task of a single man or a single will. Other nations in Europe, young, musically speaking, for example Hungary, present a similar diversity of forces and cannot yet be said to have a national school.

In cases like this and in our own, two tendencies are in conflict. One is the traditional, the conservative; the other, based on the revivifying principle of nationalism, seeks new methods, new modes of expression more suited to the intrinsic demands of the native music.



Contemporary developments in Spain group themselves about as follows: there are the purely conservative musicians, who rigorously carry on the traditional methods of the conservatories, where German influence has but recently displaced the Italian which has been dominant in Spain since the seventeenth century. Then there are the timid nationalists who would reconcile the technical methods of the schools with the popular music of their respective provinces. Finally there is another group, the most vigorous and of the greatest musical importance, made up of the strongest contemporary personalities.

The last is superior in two respects; it stems from that branch of our national art which presents to the outsider such a peculiarly Spanish atmosphere and it produces at the same time works which are the richest in modern technical methods. It is the most traditional in a profound sense and the most modern in carrying on those traditions. This is the line which, starting with Felipe Pedrell and Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, is followed through Albeniz to Manuel de Falla and his pupils.

Pedrell and Albeniz were the musicians of the middle of the nineteenth century who most profoundly summed up Spanish musical tradition. Pedrell found it in the popular songs of the countryside and in the instrumental works of our seventeenth and eighteenth century lutists. Barbieri found his inspiration partly in these old masters but chiefly in the polyphonic compositions of a non-sacred character of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, partly also in the music of the popular theatre at the end of the eighteenth century and beginning of the nineteenth.

These three aspects of our art, the popular song, the music of the classics, and the music of the theatres, are most significantly concentrated in one work, Manuel de Falla's *El Retablo de Maese Pedro*, the masterpiece of modern Spanish music. With this should be ranked his new *Concerto* for harpsichord and chamber orchestra, written for Wanda Landowska. In him we have the revered master of Spanish youth. The line from Pedrell through Albeniz to Falla foreshadows the general framework of our future school. Granados and Turina belong to this group also, although not playing so significant a role.

Closely allied are musicians of great importance, such as Oscar Esplá, who, accepting the nationalistic premise, discard the methods of Pedrell and Barbieri and begin directly with the popular songs of their locality, treating them in an extraordinarily modern and powerful manner. Oscar Esplá is a Spaniard of the Mediterranean coast, born forty years ago in Alicante. Although still unknown abroad, he will eventually create a deep impression there when audiences are less prejudiced in favor of the picturesque and of fashionable local color. Falla and Esplá represent, among the moving influences in the art of my country, two opposite yet complementary forces.

Let us now consider the composers of the newest generation. Esplá is too young to have formed a group of disciples although there are several young men of Eastern Spain who intend to follow his footsteps and thus create a Levantine school. Catalonia, which belongs to this Eastern section, has a group who show certain common characteristics but whose musical product is still pallid and indecisive. The most interesting is Federico Mompou, antagonistic in tendency and standard to most of his compatriots, who only writes extremely short and evanescent pieces, which are, however, very fine and delicate in feeling.

The Basque provinces produce vigorous musicians who draw much of their inspiration from the popular songs of their country. Together with Usandizaga and Guridi, they are the only ones to write works for the theatre worth mentioning, although the style of Usandizaga shows traces of Puccini, while Guridi's tends toward the Wagnerian.

Castile and Aragon, both with a particularly rich and colorful native music, are nevertheless prolific of works most closely adhering to the great European traditions. Tomas Breton and Emilio Serrano, the late celebrated masters of the national conservatory, employed the popular song in an external, superficial way for its picturesque effects. Breton, who strove all his life to create a national opera will survive in the memory of the people only by his farce, *La Verbena de la Paloma*. Even sadder is the case of Felipe Pedrell whose larger works for the theatre have led a precarious life on the stage or else have never seen the footlights at all. Rupero Chapi, although from the East, belongs by right to this group. These musicians and the large number of musical farce writers contemporary with them, gave expression to the modest, graceful spirit characteristic of our metropolitan muse.

The present-day followers of this metropolitan school are Arregui, Levino and Conrado del Campo. All have written for the theatre but it is not likely that they will have much influence on the future, since their music is either vaguely germano-romantic or externally nationalistic in character. Moreno Torroba, who stands out above the others, has written symphonic works and pieces for the theatre in some of which there is a true reflection of the Castilian folksong.

Falla, who is the chief representative of contemporary music and at the same time the best exponent of both the learned and popular traditions, is also, I believe, the master of the most important and significant musicians of the younger generation. Foremost among these is Ernesto Halffter Escriche of Madrid, who, although he is not yet twenty, has given us a rich product and whose fame is spreading both as a composer and as a conductor. He is the regular leader of the Orquesta Bética de Camera, founded by Falla in Seville two years ago.

Halffter's style is complex, owing much to Bach and Scarlatti, to Ravel and Strawinsky, and, of course, to his master, Falla. Up to the present, his most important work has been the *Sinfonietta* which won the state prize in the last national competition. He has also written pieces for chamber orchestra, for full orchestra, and for piano, and a small work for the theatre, *El Amor Alicorto*. At the moment, he is busy with an important piece for the stage based on a work by Tieso de Molina, Spain's great dramatist of the seventeenth century, arranged for him by Eduardo Marquina, our leading contemporary dramatic poet. As a composer, he has both extraordinary fluency and depth of feeling, as well as vivacity and gaiety which give his music an immediate appeal. In contrast to other Europeans who write music of doubtful taste, Halffter writes only *musica de belleza*. His admirers increase every day, despite his youth, and he himself already has a group of enthusiasts ready to follow his footsteps.

