

INTER-AMERICAN REVIEWS

ABUNDANCE AND CONFLICT IN MEXICO

Mexico City

MEXICO CITY has no definite concert season. Concerts are held throughout the year with no regular schedule so that some months there is a surfeit of performances, in others hardly one. This year, for example, two opera companies are to perform simultaneously in the same theatre, it being the most appropriate spot for their productions. Not only must both rehearse and perform there, but they must do so without conflict with the Symphony Orchestra programs, also given in the same theatre. This disorder is not the distinction of our musical life exclusively but exists in all other activities. Here, even nature is not clearly defined and the seasons are not delimited as in other parts of the world.

As in all great cities, Mexico hears many concerts given by different academies. There are also isolated programs by Mexican and foreign artists, organized privately or by special associations. The most noteworthy have been presented by the pianist, García Mora, who dedicates himself exclusively to present-day composers, and by the singer, Sonia Verbitsky who, accompanied by the pianist, Salvador Ochoa, performs Russian, French and Spanish-American music, chiefly by modern composers.

The Music Division, a branch of the Fine Arts Department, tries out new methods of teaching in the schools, as does also the Madrigalist Choir which belongs to the same department. Both offer public concerts annually with well-chosen, well-rehearsed programs. These bring musical culture to the Capital, and by short tours also to other cities of the Republic.

The well known Daniel Concert Association introduces both famous interpreters of music and little-known artists. This year one should mention Kleiber, Segovia, Heifetz, Rubinstein, Smeterlin, Brailowsky, Francescatti, Arrau, Odnoposoff, Horenstein, Chavchavadze and Szeryng. They performed in uninterrupted succession from the first of the year until the beginning of the fall. Their programs were for the most part made up of well-known music and some were magnificent. But we must not fail to mention their general lack of interest in modern or little known music. Leopold Stokowski, invited here by the Executive Board of the Palace of Fine Arts, directed six concerts about the middle of the year with an orchestra which was fairly deficient. However certain concessions to the taste of the public, as well as the fame of the director, compensated for this deficiency and he achieved a great success.

The National Opera is made up for the most part of foreign singers.

It offered us a season of the most popular and most played works and we mention only the *Don Juan*, sung by the Mexican bass, Roberto Silva, and the fine performance of *Pelléas and Mélisande* (the latter presented for the first time in Mexico) for their superiority.

The Opera of Mexico, directed by Sir Thomas Beecham, also staffed chiefly by foreigners, dedicated its season with splendid purpose to the presentation of a Mozart festival. They did *Don Juan*, *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro*. The hostile criticism on this occasion was inspired by propaganda for the National Opera and against the Opera of Mexico. A newspaper campaign of the lowest order was undertaken and it provoked a bad situation. The effort was useless however; it succeeded only in confusing the public. This same type of criticism, colored by a great deal of envy, is launched systematically against the Symphony Orchestra, indeed against all activities that do not carry a personal profit for those who take part.

The Symphony Orchestra of Mexico continues to be the most important factor in the musical life of the Republic. Its programs attempt to present the traditional symphonic and chamber music and the most modern. During this last year, besides a complete Beethoven cycle of nine symphonies and a program dedicated to the works of Mozart, we heard two concerts of Debussy and Ravel exclusively, and music by Elgar, Bartok, Williams, Still, Villa-Lobos, Honegger, Stravinsky, Satie, Borodin, Prokofiev and Schönberg. The Mexicans represented were Carlos Chavez, Luis Sandi, Eduardo Moncada and Pablo Moncayo. Struggling against great difficulties, principally economic ones, the Orchestra also toured the most important cities of the Republic. Besides bringing these programs to the provinces, the tour has opened the way to other artists who now are well received. Local music groups and symphonic orchestras are also being more seriously organized.

The absurd division of musicians in Mexico City into two independent unions opposed one to the other is a final complication in our expanding musical life, a threat to the future of symphonic groups. It encourages bare-faced commercialization, which is growing rapidly as well in the movie and radio fields.

Salvador Moreno

A CHILEAN MASTERWORK

IN the *Cantata de los Rios de Chile*, a work singled out for the honor prize at the Fourth Centenary of Santiago, Domingo Santa-Cruz de-