

FORECAST AND REVIEW

MUSIC IN MEXICO, 1934

OF a country like mine it is possible to speak only in the flexible idiom of art. Its popular industries are rather art than industry, rather the expression of emotions than the satisfaction of needs. The landscape lives in each man, the landscape in all its complexity: mountains lonely on a strangely beautiful sky, cacti and ferns, rocks and plateaus, the gleaming altars in churches of beautifully worked rose-colored stone, slavery, and a modern socialist organization of the workers.

The Mexican artists who express themselves in art because of a need for expression, and not because of a simple desire to need it, offer a synthesis of Mexican truth, geographic, ethnic, and economic.

I believe it is fair to juxtapose Silvestre Revueltas and Jose Clemente Orozco, Carlos Chávez and Diego Rivera. Silvestre Revueltas this year presented a new work, *Roads*. Previously he had written *Windows*, *Maguey-Plants*, *Street Corners*. All his work is characterized by the titles he has chosen, factors of popular reality. Carlos Chávez wrote the composition which was given at the opening of the Palace of Fine Arts: *Llamados, a Proletarian Symphony*.

Chávez moves frequently between two extremes, seldom resting in the middle: either he produces abstractions mysterious to everyone but himself, or he writes works of popular flavor. *Llamados* (calls) belongs to the latter. Written to a text used by Diego Rivera as a legend for the frescos on the third floor in the second patio of the Secretariat of Public Education, this composition is brother to the murals: an invitation to rebellion and a chant of hope for the oppressed classes. The same desire created

another of his works: *The Sun, A Proletarian Song-Narrative*. Chávez constructs theories to justify or determine the majority of his acts: art must be useful, its utility must stimulate the growth of noble qualities and destroy noxious and morbid feelings. I believe the *Sonatina for Piano* is among his best works to date. Perfectly balanced, always spontaneous and noble in melody, it is constructed powerfully, with sure effect.

In addition to these two well-known composers, there are many others in a group formed under the influence of the Music Section of the Department of Education, which has charge of the musical education of children, adolescents, and primary-school teachers. These composers, Angel Salas, Eduardo Hernández Moncada, Julio Bacmeister, Vincente T. Mendoza, Salvador Contreras, Manuel León Mariscal, Roberto Téllez Oropeza, Daniel Ayala, and José Ríos, have produced works needed for the realization of the State's plan of musical education. Among these compositions are some which have, in addition to their educational value, real esthetic merit.

For a long time it was believed that the only possible Mexican music was the mixed Indian-Spanish of which the characteristic type is the *jarabe tapatío*. Autochthonous music, that is, Indian music composed of truly indigenous musical elements with no admixture of foreign elements, was unknown, its very existence was denied. The studies undertaken during the past few years by the National Conservatory and the Music Section, of the music of various native types have brought to light vocal and instrumental works of admirable qualities. These have been heard in concerts organized by the Music Section, and have inspired three works played by a really Mexican orchestra in the last of the series: *U Kayil Chaac* by Daniel Ayala, an invocation for rain, with a Mayan text, a work of great rhythmic power and fresh, primitive melodies; *Song of Mexico* by Carlos Chávez, a purely instrumental piece, with a first section of archaic Mexican character, sober and severe, in which a reed flute, a *chichahuaxtli*, a *huehuetl*, the *teponaxtles*, and the timbrels assume the roles which they played during the days of Aztec splendor, and a second part which is an Indian-Spanish dance, a *huapango*; and *The Stag*, a vocal and instrumental work that

I wrote on Yaqui themes, in which as in the native dance of the same name (one of the most admirable in the whole world) the movements of a stag-hunt are described.

Manuel M. Ponce has produced three new works: *Dance of the Ancient Mexicans*; *Chapultepec*, and *Music and Scene for The Suspicious Truth* by Juan Ruiz de Alarcón. The first two were given by the Symphony Orchestra of Mexico under the direction of Chávez.

There is, as always, another group—surely more numerous than the one I have been discussing—which is occupied in producing music, but its technic and ideology are not of this epoch. Its members ingenuously believe it possible, in our time, to write music as it was composed in the days of Beethoven or of Chopin. They go on writing classic symphonies, romantic waltzes, and operas *à la* Donizetti. I suppose that these things are happening in every country. In Mexico, where the revolution is in full cry, all the counter-revolutionary complexes are exhibited in the field of art. But this cannot continue to be so for long. The attitude taken by the State must soon assure victory to one side or the other.

Luis Sandi

FESTIVAL AT PITTSFIELD

IF this writer is correct in feeling that Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge's festivals of chamber music are admirable barometers of the musical weather, her festival at Pittsfield, Massachusetts, on September 19, 20, and 21 indicates that the neo-classical trend of recent years has passed the tentative, experimental stage, and has come to something like maturity. All but one of the new works presented in the five concerts reflected this trend in one way or another, and both the best and worst novelties reflected it most strongly.

It was at its worst in Ottorino Respighi's *Concerto a Cinque*, a concerto grosso for five solo instruments and string orchestra, an incongruous mixture of polyphony and operatic sentimentality, of cheap lyricism and classical structure. It was at its best in Roy Harris' *Trio*, with its fine bold line, its clear forceful