

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

**I**N 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-

votes himself to the conquest of the sonorities of the large orchestra. His chamber works had already established his preference for the use of a contrapuntal language. The *Cantata*, in fact, unfolds in a style of such great polyphonic complexity that the resultant confusion of sounds can quite justifiably be criticized.

But in his new *Variations for Piano and Orchestra*, the tendency works out all to the credit of the composer. Here the musician chooses the form of a Passacaglia, a species which by its very nature demands a horizontal treatment. Even though he has taken special pains to show that the binary tempo is not the rhythm appropriate to the ancient passacaglias, in its structure and content the composition conforms to the old form of contrapuntal variation.

To make the theme more clear in its thirty variations in the first movement, and its participation in the second and third, he first states it in unison in the low register of the orchestra. The piano appears as simply one of the instruments of the orchestra, one which more frequently, to be sure, than the others, introduces the thematic line. Only in the last movement, titled "en forma de Concerto" by the composer, does the piano become a real solo part. Thus Santa-Cruz has avoided the title *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*, since the piano is no more a concerted instrument. However it must not be assumed that the piano is not accorded the treatment worthy of its resources. On the contrary, this is a work in which all the instruments seem to be handled with a consummate knowledge of their technical physiognomy.

The first movement is dominantly intellectual. Here the composer expresses all his technical ability, his indisputable contrapuntal powers. The second movement surrounds the theme, which served as the base of the variations of the first, with poetry; it might be considered as yet another variation, but of a dramatic character. The creation of a sonorous atmosphere is extraordinary, not as one might suppose "in the French manner," but rather in keeping with the tendency that Hindemith represents in our period. Through the entire second half of this movement the piano carries the dramatic commentary, anticipating thus the moment when it will definitely take first position in the work. This occurs in the third movement; the theme develops with great irony, cleverness, and an energy which flows from the solo part from beginning to end, the orchestra serving to make occasional grotesque comments around the basic idea. A fugato initiated by the woodwinds, on the theme revamped in the guise

of a grand chorale, concludes the work.

The *Variations for Piano and Orchestra* is not only a work of vast proportions in the musical history of Chile, but also a sort of résumé of this composer's wide experience. Although still dominated by a desire for technical investigation, which at times interrupts the flow of his musical language, with this work, and the *Cantata*, Santa-Cruz has advanced to the front rank, and perhaps to a position of singular importance among the composers of the contemporary world. Here is a mature technic at the service of lucid and expressive ideas, which range from the most temperate dramatic pathos to an expression of grace and force.

Juan A. Orrego

### ARGENTINA FEELS WORLD WAR EFFECTS

Buenos Aires

WHILE the international situation has brought on a noticeable decline at the Colón, where the absence of good singers is now keenly felt, the number of symphonic concerts, on the contrary, has increased and shows a great improvement in quality. Significant too, is the new tendency of local interpreters to include the work of contemporaries on their programs, particularly of Argentines. Up to this time native, short pieces have been used chiefly as program-fillers; now this emphasis is a favorable symptom. It should attain more importance in the future.

The Colón gave us, last season, one hundred and seventeen performances. Sixteen of these were symphony concerts, sixty were operas, nineteen were dance programs, sixteen were solo recitals, and six educational. Albert Wolff directed the following by Argentine composers: *Second overture* by A. Williams, *El Yuquerí* by R. Rodríguez, *Gaúcho with the New Boots* by G. Gilardi; *Estilo y Cueca* by Troiana-Bandini, a *Concerto Grosso* by José Maria Castro, a first performance of *Concerto aymará* by L. Gianneo for violin and orchestra, based on pentatonic scales, *La noche* by C. Suffern inspired by the *Aeneid* and marked by an impressionist tendency, and *Dinamismo* by C. Viacava, which is very youthful and reminiscent of Dukas. José Maria Castro also performed several fragments of a native ballet, *Estancia*, by A. Ginastera.

An all-Spanish program under the direction of César de Mendoza Lassalle presented the works of Usandizaga, Turina, Albéniz-Arbós, the *Rapsodia portuguesa* by E. Halffter, *Heraldos* by S. Bacarisse and *Amusement Park* by Blancafort.

Among the operas there were a number by Argentines: *El matrero*