



# The Latin American Music Educator's Best Ally: the Latin American Musicologist

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THE WORLD AT LARGE needs to know that Latin America enjoys an illustrious musical lineage. European music needs no advertisement. Already everyone knows that before Messiaen France boasted Debussy, Berlioz, Rameau, and a string of prior geniuses stretching back to Machaut. Similarly, everyone knows that before Stockhausen in Germany, before Berio and Nono in Italy, and before whomever else one might choose to name in Spain, England, Austria, Scandinavia and the Soviet Union, flourished national geniuses promulgated in every textbook.

But what of Latin America? Granted, the world at large knows that before Manuel Enríquez, before Mario Lavista, and before Héctor Quintanar, Mexico boasted a Carlos Chávez and a Silvestre Revueltas. Even so, do not Mexican geniuses flourishing before 1900 tend to pale in the limelight of history? To date, Latin American musicologists have had considerable difficulty in communicating their findings to music educators, so much so that even in the most advanced circles, literati still fail to recognize the names of many of the truly great composers born in Mexico before Chávez, Revueltas, and Blas Galindo Dimas. Every literate Latin American at least knows who Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz was. But how many know even the name of that superlative composer, born and educated at Mexico City (where he died in 1674), Francisco López Capillas? Or the name of Manuel Zumaya, likewise born and educated at Mexico City (but buried at Oaxaca where he died in 1754)?

Here then musicologists and music educators must join hands: first to make more widely known the names of the past musical geniuses of Latin America and second to integrate the music of those prior national stalwarts into the curricula of national conservatories. To meet these goals, a revolution is needed. Away with the blind worship of European divinities, and in its stead a healthy respect for the achievements of Latin America's own musical forefathers!

True, some contemporary Latin American composers may prefer to ignore the musical past of their own nations. What they fear is that their own works will be neglected when orchestras and choral societies begin delving too deeply into the music of dead Latin American composers. Also, they may fear that their own statures will diminish, if they are compared with previous musical giants in the land that gave them birth. These are legitimate qualms. No one can deny that all subsequent Nicaraguan poets suffer by comparison with Rubén Darío. Nor can one deny that Mistral and Neruda tend to eclipse all later Chilean writers. To carry the case to music: was not Carlos Chávez's worldwide reputation enhanced because important New York critics such as Paul Rosenfeld and Herbert Weinstock mistakenly believed that before him Mexico was a mere musical nullity? Transferring ourselves to South



America: were not the immigrant composers Andrés Sas and Rodolfo Holzmann aided in their bids for international fame by the widespread belief that Peru was before them a mere musical vacuum? What does any contemporary Venezuelan composer have to gain by the resuscitation of José Ángel Montero (1832-1881), or any contemporary Puerto Rican by the rebirth of Felipe Gutiérrez Espinosa (1825-1899)?

The resuscitation of any of these pre-1900 Latin American composers requires a great outlay of time, energy, and cash. Let no one think that the present-day revalidation of even so much a world celebrity in his own epoch as the Sevillian Cristóbal de Morales (ca. 1500-1553) occurred by spontaneous combustion. The time, energy, and cash needed to rediscover and republish his works in the *Monumentos de la Música Española* series, beginning in 1952, have been prodigious. Going back to the beginning of our own century: the eight handsome volumes of Tomás Luis de Victoria's so-called complete works published at Leipzig by Breitkopf und Härtel between 1902 and 1913 were as much monuments to Felipe Pedrell's unique zeal, perseverance, and genius at obtaining publication subsidies as they were a testament to Victoria's unique creative glories.

During the 1960s and 1970s the other Iberian nation that has been successful in reviving past musical glories has been Portugal. Why? Because the Armenian oil tycoon Calouste Gulbenkian (1869-1955) who spent his last years in Lisbon bequeathed a major part of his enormous fortune to a Foundation specifically endowed to support Portuguese cultural enterprise. What would not be the blazing musical glory of Mexico were Pemex to devote similar millions to the advertisement of past Mexican cultural triumphs! The name of the game in any cultural explosion is money to feed luxurious publications, beautiful sound recordings, congresses glowingly advertised in the press, and other types of expensive publicity.

Ask for a recording of any Mexican opera. None thus far exists, at least to my knowledge. No matter that so fecund an opera composer as Melesio Morales successfully mounted four of his operas. Where can a recording of any of António Carlos Gomes's operas be found? The Brazilian Foreign Ministry did subsidize in 1976 the publication at Milan of Gomes's Italian letters extracted from Italian archives. But the world at large cries for opulent recordings of *Il Guarany* (1870), *Fosca* (1873), *Salvator Rosa* (1874), *Maria Tudor* (1879), *Lo Schiavo* (1889), and *Condor* (1891) to compare with succulent recordings of Verdi, Ponchielli, Boito, and Puccini operas now available in any record shop. Only because Venezuela's splendid opera composer José Ángel Montero was tirelessly propagated by the perceptive contemporary paladin of Venezuelan music criticism Rhazes Hernández López (born Petare, 1916) was Montero's operatic masterpiece *Virginia* (1873) recorded at INCIBA expense in 1976. Only because of the patriotic zeal and faith that moves mountains of that remarkable Puerto Rican diva Camelia Ortiz del Rivero was Felipe Gutiérrez Espinosa's superb opera *Macías* rescued from the Biblioteca Real at Madrid and for the first time mounted with resounding success at the Teatro Tapia in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in August of 1977.

All this labor of rescuing the Latin American musical past from undeserved oblivion implies not any single swooping gesture but rather long-range, carefully drawn plans of cultural action. What steps are for instance needed to rescue for the blazing light of fame that they presently deserve the two most talented and genial native-born composers in Guatemalan history, Manuel José de Quiroz (died 1765) and Rafael Antonio Castellanos (died 1791)—both with huge repertoires of fascinating ver-

nacular festive pieces to their credit? First, convince political powers that national institutes of fine arts should include well subsidized musicological sections that can edit sumptuously the works of national heroes; next convince university authorities that musicological chairs should be filled by patriots such as Luis Merino and Samuel Claro Valdés in Chile; then find in every Latin American nation as beautiful and transcendent a soul as Esperanza Pulido to publish a magazine so uniquely useful and idealistic as *Heterofonía*; and finally convince textbook and dictionary writers that the musical youth of Latin America deserves an opportunity to know their own musical forefathers: then, and only then, will the battle for musical recognition of Latin America on a worldwide basis begin being won.

Another musicological task that sorely needs attention is the conscientious appraisal of popular music purveyed everywhere in Latin America by radio and TV. Brazil's pleiad of popular artists—including personalities as diverse as Antônio Jobim, Dorival Caymmi, Caetano Veloso, Elza Soares, Wilson Simonal, Jair Rodrigues, Roberto Carlos, Gal Costa, Chico Buarque de Holanda, and Milton Nascimento, to name only ten in random order—has been better covered than the reigning commercial music stars of any other Latin American nation. Even so, reliable facts concerning even Brazil's stars are not easily come by. Ethnic music will hopefully continue enjoying the matchless attention and leadership of such brilliant captains as Dra. Isabel Aretz and Luis Felipe Ramón y Rivera. Popular urban music, just because it is currently popular, needs no less meticulous attention from musical scientists. Codify the results of popular music investigations, bring the biographies and dated works lists of the reigning stars into reliable categories—these are proper musicological tasks. To go still further down the same alley, where are any scholarly investigations of Latin American film music to be found? Who writes the music for the jingles advertising soft drinks, detergents, toothpaste, deodorants heard over the radio and TV throughout Latin America?

Our true present-day musical ambience needs constant minute musicological attention. Wonderfully diverse and stimulating are the current tasks reaching out their arms to welcome the Latin American musicologist! When musicologists begin coping, music educators will at once gladly throw wide open their arms to those authorities who can tell inquisitive youth what really interests them—from the "how, why, and who" of current popular music to the "how, why, and who" of those beautiful musical ancestors who give every Latin American the right to call himself an hidalgo.