



# Eugenio Pereira Salas (1904–1979): In Memoriam

By Samuel Claro-Valdés

**E**UGENIO PEREIRA SALAS, WHO DIED AT Santiago November 17, 1979, towered among the highest peaks of Chilean intellect. His widely ranging contributions to Chilean historiography were as varied as his multifaceted personality. No less interested in the history of art, of colonial recreations, music, folklore, the theater, and even of cooking than he was in the more conventional subject matter of political and diplomatic history, he also diligently trod the rarefied uplands of pure bibliography. Apart from numerous important articles in *Revista Musical Chilena*, he placed Chilean music in his perpetual debt with two nonpareil books, both published at Santiago: *Los Orígenes del Arte Musical en Chile* (1941) and *Historia de la Música en Chile, 1850–1900* (1957). In acknowledgment of his prolonged primacies, Eugenio Pereira Salas's numerous previous national and international distinctions and merited recognitions were capped in 1974 with the National Prize in History (Premio Nacional de Historia).

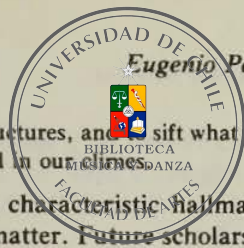
Almost two decades of warm friendship and of continuously close collaboration in numerous projects and institutions—the latest of which was the Chilean Academy of History (Academia Chilena de la Historia), of which he was president—makes his departure a particularly grievous personal loss. His palmary style, his prodigious memory, and his profound knowledge will not soon be duplicated in Chilean intellectual annals.

His constant preoccupation with Chilean musical history, and with Chile's place in the broader Latin American scheme, became abundantly clear in a letter to me dated so long ago as November 5, 1963. In it, after analyzing possible fields for musicological spadework (both in Chile and in Latin America as a whole), and after considering which tasks were the most urgent, he told how to proceed.

What is needed before other work begins are: (1) a methodical bibliography of printed music and musical literature; (2) a systematic survey of unpublished materials already deposited in public and private libraries and archives; (3) the gathering of copies of these varied published and unpublished sources into one center where they can then mutually profit the investigator.

Continuing, he wrote:

Before such a young scholar as you there stretches an inviting perspective. Our generation has put in place the stones of the stairway that you will ascend, by accumulating nineteenth-century manuscripts and imprints. You can now rise above us to discern broad historico-sociological



developments, to study musical structures, and to sift what is American and original in all this European-influenced music created in our climes.

Intellectual honesty was the characteristic hallmark of Eugenio Pereira Salas's writings, whatever the subject matter. Future scholars will continue finding nourishment in them for generations to come, thanks to his unique blend of dedication and talent.

By Luis Merino

**E**UGENIO PEREIRA SALAS, FOUNDING FATHER OF Chilean musicography, published three epochal books at Santiago (1941, 1957, and 1978) under the auspices of the University of Chile—not to mention a host of luminous articles in *Revista Musical Chilena* and elsewhere—that in their generation found no equal. During a lifetime devoted to the widest spectrum of historical studies, he lifted musicography to heights previously unreached in Chile or, for that matter, Latin America as a whole. He himself perceived his exhuming the record of Chilean musical activity as a patriotic duty. As he phrased it: "our artistic process has been almost forgotten not only in our music textbooks, but what is even more symptomatic in general histories of our nation."

*Los Orígenes del Arte Musical en Chile* (1941) explored virtually virgin territory. Beginning with our indigenous heritage and with our folk music related to Spanish precedents he next brought to their first light of day such crucial figures in the shaping of Chilean musical traditions as José de Campderrós, José Zapiola, Isidora Zegers, José Bernardo Alcedo, and Federico Guzmán. His *Historia de la Música en Chile, 1850-1900* (1957) resulted from countless hours of hard labor spent in recovering from newspapers, magazines, and other contemporary sources, the buried documentation of our musical progress during a half-century of national advance in other spheres. His vast Bibliography for this book will serve as a beacon for future explorers. Yet despite the rigor of his method, the book reads as a literary product, replete with happy turns of phrase.

Because of his success in scanning newspapers, periodicals, diaries, commonplace books, travelers' accounts, archival documents, and musical scores, he set a standard. But his publications on music go beyond mere collections of *documentos inéditos*. For him music existed in no vacuum. Rather he saw the art as an integral element in social and cultural history, and as a flower growing on a vine rooted in the hard soil of economic and political realities.

As if his books and constant flow of monographs and articles did not sufficiently place musical historiography in his debt, he compounded our indebtedness by leaving to the Central Library of the University of Chile the uniquely rich personal library itemized in his final masterly book, *Biobibliografía Musical de Chile desde sus orígenes a 1886* (1978).





For Samuel Claro Valdés's review of Eugenio Pereira Salas's *Biobibliografía Musical de Chile, desde los orígenes a 1886*, see *Revista Musical Chilena*, XXXIII/145, 91-103; for his "Recuerdos de Eugenio Pereira Salas," see *El Mercurio*, LXXX/28, 691 (December 2, 1979), E 4.

After traversing Pereira Salas's entire career, Luis Merino's invaluable "Don Eugenio Pereira Salas (1904-1979), Fundador de la Historiografía Musical en Chile," *Revista Musical Chilena*, XXXIII/145, 66-87, concludes with a meticulous listing of articles, books, and reviews by Claro Valdés and others who have discussed Pereira Salas's musical output, followed by an exhaustive bibliography of the decedent's musically slanted 14 books and monographs, 69 articles, and 64 reviews.

Gilbert Chase noticed *Los Orígenes* in the *Handbook of Latin American Studies*: 1941 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942), 545-546 (item 5566). Robert Stevenson reviewed Pereira Salas's 1941 and 1957 volumes in *Hispanic American Historical Review*, XL/2 (May 1960), 293-294.

The three eminent historians Samuel Claro Valdés (in 1980 appointed Executive Secretary of the Fulbright Commission at Santiago, Chile), Rolando Mellafe, and Cristián Guerrero, paid eloquent and informed tribute in "Eugenio Pereira Salas en el recuerdo," *Revista de la Universidad de Chile (Vicerrectoría de Extensión y Comunicaciones)*, No. 160, May 15, 1980, pp. 6-7.