## Musical Silhouettes Drawn by José Martí (1853–1895)

Among Latin American independence movement heroes, only José Martí y Pérez stands tall as a literary giant. Killed at Dos Ríos, Oriente, May 19, 1895, during a thwarted invasion of Cuba, he remains the sole independence martyr who gives his name to a Latin American national library. Summarizing his literary importance, Gerald Martin called him among Spanish writers "one of the greatest poets of all time," one of the "great prose stylists of the period," and the "supreme journalist" of his generation (The Cambridge History of Latin America, IV [1986], 457).

The first child of Mariano Martí y Navarro (born October 31, 1815 at Valencia, Spain) and Leonor Pérez y Cabrera (born December 17, 1828, at Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands),<sup>2</sup> the future "apostle" of Cuban independence was born at Havana January 28, 1853.<sup>3</sup> Taken to Spain in mid-

<sup>1</sup>For a history of Martí's ascent to literary fame, see Manuel Pedro González, ed., Antología crítica de José Martí (México, D.F.: Editorial Cvltvra, 1960), especially the editor's "Evolución de la estimativa martiana" at pp. xi-xxix.

<sup>2</sup>Concerning Martí's parents, see Ezequiel Martínez Estrada, Familia de Martí (Havana: Editorial Nacional de Cuba [Cuadernos de la Casa de las Américas, 1], 1962); "Don Mariano: soldado y obrero," Bohemia, año 54, no. 38, Sept. 21, 1962, pp. 10–11, 106–107, 113; and "Doña Leonor, Mater Dolorosa," Cuba (Havana), año 1, no. 6, Oct. 1962, pp. 46–49. Thirteen years younger than Mariano, Leonor resided at Havana when in February 1852 she married the soldier Mariano.

<sup>3</sup> Baptized February 12, 1853, at Santo Ángel Custodio church, Havana, he was then given the added name of Julián, the saint's day on which he was born.

1857, where the family remained until their return to Havana in June 1859, Martí on January 15, 1871, again boarded ship for Spain, where on May 31, 1871, he solicited entrance to the Universidad Central at Madrid. On May 17, 1873, he petitioned the Rector of the Universidad Central for the privilege of transferring to the Universidad de Zaragoza. At Saragossa he proceeded Licenciado en Derecho Civil y Canónico June 30, 1874, Licenciado en Filosofía y Letras October 24, 1874.

On February 8, 1875, aboard the ship *City of Mérida* (after stopovers at New York, Havana, and Campeche) he arrived at Veracruz and on March 7, 1875, published his first contribution to the Mexico City archliberal *Revista Universal de Política*, *Literatura y Comercio*.<sup>4</sup>

In May 1875, now a member of the editorial staff of the *Revista Universal*, he began publishing a series of eight articles narrating events of the Africandescended José White's stay in Mexico. 5 On Friday May 21 he thus announced White's arrival and his

<sup>4</sup>His parents awaited him at Mexico City with the news that his favorite sister Mariana Matilde had died the previous January 5, 1875, aged 18, of an affliction brought on by the high altitude of Mexico City (where father Mariano had found work as a tailor). See Alfonso Herrera Franyutti, *Marti en México*. Recuerdos de una Época (México: A. Mijares y Hno., 1969), p. 18, for Martí's funerary poem in his sister's memory.

<sup>5</sup>In his error-ridden and inept article, in two parts, "Martí y la música," *Bohemia* (Havana), año 61, nos. 44 (Oct. 31, 1969), pp. 98–100 ["White en la vida de Martí"] and 47 (Nov. 21, 1969), pp. 101–102 ["Agramonte en la vida de Martí"], Nicolás Cossio gives White's birth date as December 31, 1835 (should be January 17, 1836) and cites the May 23, 1875, issue of the

concert in the Teatro Nacional Sunday night: "The great [Cuban] violinist now with us is supremely outgoing. Report has it that with his bow he can make one weep and with the strings [of his violin] stir all the soul's emotions." On Sunday May 23, date of the first concert, Martí reminded readers that some weeks previously White's biography translated from French had been published in the Revista Universal and more recently in the competing newspaper El Federalista. Among items that White's inaugural concert at the Teatro Nacional would include, Martí signalled White's original Styrienne<sup>7</sup> and Carnaval de Venecia. In Martí's 950-word review published Tuesday May 25, he praised White to the skies, contending that the public's wild enthusiasm and frenetic applause proved how compellingly beautiful and brilliant was every item on the program.8

At White's second concert Sunday night May 30, he repeated his *Robert le Diable* fantasy and his *Carnaval de Venecia*. Assisting artists now included the two most eminent Mexican concert pianists of the epoch, Julio Ituarte (1845–1905)<sup>9</sup> and Tomás León

Mexico City Revista Universal as the first in which Martí mentioned José Silvestre White y Lafitte. Although not profiled in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (1980), José White does enter Riemann Musik Lexikon, Ergänzungsband Personenteil, L-Z (1975), ed. Carl Dahlhaus, p. 905, and Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, 7th edn. (1984), ed. Nicolas Slonimsky, p. 2488, both of which dictionaries give his correct birthdate.

<sup>6</sup> Obras Completas [28 volumes, Editorial Nacional de Cuba, 1963–1973]. vi (1963), 208: "White está en México... el gran violinista es sumamente simpático. Se dice que con su arco hace llorar; se dice que sabe le manera de agitar con sus cuerdas todas las conmociones del alma."

<sup>7</sup>According to Franz Pazdirek, Universal-Handbuch der Musikliteratur aller Zeiten und Völker, VIII, 354, the Parisian publisher Eugène Fromont issued White's Styrienne, violin and piano, as his Opus 11. Heugel published his Valse-caprice and Troisième Romance sans paroles, both for violin and piano. Durdilly published an Hélas! Valse lente, piano solo, Hayet his La Belle Cubaine (Bella Cubana). His only work in Pazdirek not published at Paris was Isabel valsa (Rio de Janeiro, Napoleão).

<sup>8</sup>On the other hand, Enrique Olavarría y Ferrari, in his Reseña histórica del teatro en México, 3d ed. (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1961), π, 910, countered that "although the public certainly did not deny applause, the number who attended White's concerts was extremely limited" (no le negó ciertamente sus aplausos, pero los concurrentes a sus conciertos fueron escasísimos).

<sup>9</sup>On Saturday night, May 22, Martí had already heard the "beautiful music" (bella música) offered by Ituarte and the premier Mexican violinist of the epoch, Eusebio Delgado, at the (1826–1893). <sup>10</sup> In Martí's 880-word review published June 1 he assured readers that these two played a *Norma* fantasy<sup>11</sup> in so "singularly notable" a manner—avoiding all vulgar display—that the public justly encored them.

In enumerating the Mexican pianists' merits, Martí revealed his own musical preferences.<sup>12</sup>

[Ituarte] and León played Norma, avoiding any disagreeable outbursts, anything that could be condemned in their

opening session of the Colegio de Abogados (Obras Completas, v1, 209). A pupil of León, Ituarte composed virtuoso fantasies, the most famous of which, Écos de México (Aires nacionales), rivals Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies in brilliance. Number 15 among his 23 Composiciones musicales para piano (México: H. Nagel, n.d.), Écos de México—labeled a Capricho de concierto (pp. 75-87) immediately follows Ituarte's transcription of Melesio Morales's grandiose Salve à la patria, Sinfonía-Himno (pp. 61-74). Well worthy of facsimile republication, Composiciones musicales includes Ituarte's opera fantasias (Aida, Carmen) and zarzuela arrangements (Arrieta, Chapí).

Two of his own zarzuelas reached the Mexico City stage, Gato por liebre (3 acts) and Sustos y gustos (2 acts). Martí characterized 30-year-old Ituarte as "a notable and most conscientious master" (un maestro notable y concienzudo). He continued thus (vi, 211-212):

The desire for brilliant execution all too often snuffs out the soft glow of pure feeling that is so much lovelier than useless, commonplace agility. Ituarte commands brilliance without sacrificing sentiment. His interpretations combine an accuracy, delicacy, good taste, and tenderness rarely met in even very advanced music talents. Well indeed did Ituarte merit the audience's warm applause.

El afán de brillar en la ejecución, apaga por lo común en los pianistas el germen suave del puro sentimiento tanto más bello que una inútil y común agilidad. Ituarte ha alcanzado ésta sin que aquél se haya extinguido; hay en su manera de ejecutar una seguridad, una delicadeza, un buen gusto, una ternura que rara vez logran vivir vida común en muy aventajados ingenios musicales. Bien mereció Ituarte los aplausos calurosos que la concurrencia tuvo para él.

<sup>10</sup> Tomás León, one of the three judges who awarded Jaime Nunó first prize in the competition for a national anthem, founded a Club Filarmónico that in 1865 became the Sociedad Filarmónica Mexicana—welcoming Liszt as its first honorary member with a diploma (in Spanish) dated December 1, 1865 (Inter-American Music Review, VII/2 [Spring-Summer 1986], p. 23). His published compositions ranged from Jarabe nacional and Cuatro danzas habaneras to the salon pieces Flores de Mayo and Pensamiento poético. Benito Juárez esteemed him as Mexico's paramount virtuoso pianist (Inter-American Music Review, VII/2, 23).

<sup>11</sup> Norma received its Mexico City first performance (in Italian) February 12, 1836. Maria Albini de Vellani (b. Modena, 1808) sang the title role. Lauro Rossi directed the visiting Italian opera company, which continuously incensed Santa Anna.

12 Obras Completas, v, 297:

[Ituarte] y León tocaron Norma, sin que un acento desagradable hiriese

most notable interpretation. Neither did these distinguished interpreters ever embrace any of those violent and abusive gestures that kill all beauty, and lessen and disfigure attempts at merit.

Theirs is no ordinary dazzle. Their intelligence prevents sweetest music from becoming raucous sound. Instead, theirs is an elegant lightness, a simplicity, a naturalness, appropriate to tastes of those who know that the soul secretly craves tenderness, hours of tranquility and peace, and is wounded by every smarting and cruel blow.

According to Martí, Ituarte accompanied White in the violinist's *Martha* fantasy with the "faultless mastery and beautiful, good taste for which everyone knows him." White—repeating "on request" his *Robert le Diable* fantasy and *Carnaval de Venecia*—earned even more applause than the week previous, and his *Martha* fantasy, new to the public, surpassed all praise: "Every note was deeply felt and its beauty caused tears to flow." Ending his review, Martí foresees White's joining other leading local artists in a forthcoming chamber music concert to be given in the Teatro del Conservatorio.

On Sunday, June 6, Martí announced that a large company of admirers promised to join White at 7 on the morrow, when his train left for Puebla. 14 Five days later, having returned to the capital, White gave the first performance of Bach's Chaconne heard in Mexico. At Madrid Martí had heard Jesús de Monasterio y Agüeros (1836–1903), who in company with Sarasate 15 ranked as the supreme Spanish violinist of the epoch. He had also heard three other noted concert violinists during his European so-journ. 16 None came close to White, whose performance of the Chaconne inspired Martí to what still

remains an unsurpassed panegyric of Bach's Chaconne in the Spanish language.<sup>17</sup> Before Martí's arrival at the concert, Ituarte and León had played a four-hand sonata by Hummel (Op. 57 or 92) and White had joined two unnamed others in playing Mendelssohn's Trio in D minor, Op. 49. After the Chaconne, White joined the Puerto Rican Gonzalo Núñez<sup>18</sup> in a performance of Beethoven's violin and piano sonata in C minor, Op. 30, No. 2, the program concluding with Mozart's G minor Quintet, K. 516.

On Thursday June 3, White returned to the Conservatory with another chamber concert during which he repeated the Chaconne. "And what a Chaconne! during which genius and the instrument met each other in a beautiful combat!" reported Martí the next day in the Revista Universal. Núñez again participated, "and from his first notes he intelligently displayed his notable abilities." A lady of excellent taste sitting beside Martí, summed up Núñez's virtues: "precision, lightness, and security" (precisión, ligereza y seguridad). 20

After a second farewell Sunday June 13,<sup>21</sup> White went north to New York City, where during the 1875–1876 winter season he appeared repeatedly at Steinway Hall beginning Tuesday October 19 (he played with Ignacio Cervantes again on October 21 and 26<sup>22</sup>), performing an unprecedented two times with the Philharmonic Orchestra (December 11, 1875 and March 18, 1876), appearing at Chickering Hall Tuesday April 18, 26, and June 12, and at various locales in Brooklyn November 22 and February 23.<sup>23</sup>

el oído, sin que pudiera condenarse nada en aquella ejecución notabilísima, sin que los artistas distinguidos hubiesen empleado esos recursos de ejecución violentos y gastados, en los que muere toda belleza, y todo mérito real se amengua y desfigura. Y ellos encuentran manera de hacer brillar su destreza no común: pero no se convierte en el ruido desagradable, es una ligereza elegante, sencilla, natural, como conviene a quienes saben que el alma tiene secreto amor por las ternuras, y todo aquello la hiere que no sea suave y apacible, —horas de paz tranquilas que revelan una era de paz nunca acabable.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., "acompañó la Martha Julio Ituarte con la maestría irreprochable y el bello buen gusto que todos le conocen."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> In his January 13, 1890, letter to the Editor of *La Nación* at Buenos Aires he reported that all the young ladies in New York had that month gone crazy over Sarasate (que es idolo de las damiselas locas este mes; *Obras Completas*, xIII, 457).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>O. C., v, 300: "Yo he oído a Jehin Prume y a Monasterio, yo he ido a Fortuny y a Sarmiento."

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Gonzalo Núñez, Puerto Rico's most notable 19th-century concert pianist, settled at New York in 1877, playing his début at Steinway Hall December 11, 1877. Concerning his New York and Brooklyn appearances in 1877 and 1878 see George C. D. Odell, Annals of the New York Stage (Columbia University Press, 1938), x [1875-1879], 497, 502, 503, 518, 530.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Obras Completas, vi, 223. Announced as his farewell, White was implored to stay longer: "El público de México no se cansaría nunca de oírlo," claimed Martí.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>O. C., v, 302. "Manaña sábado, White nos dice adiós."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Again in New York in 1892, Cervantes made a speech reported by Martí in *Patria*, May 7, who called him *monstruo* de las octavas. In addressing his compatriots, Cervantes professed only two reasons for esteeming himself: he was born in Cuba and won first prize at the Paris Conservatoire (Obras Completas, IV, 399).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> James Monroe Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1878), accompanied White's

The Cuban pianist Emilio Agramonte who accompanied White April 18 and 26, 1876, much later inspired two articles published in Martí's patriotic organ, *Patria*, the first Saturday April 30, 1892, celebrating him as a pianist substituting for an orchestra in accompanying his voice students in single acts from Pacini's *Sappho* and Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, the second September 23, 1893, commending Agramonte's conservatory located on East 23rd Street.<sup>24</sup> A fervent Wagnerite, Agramonte converted Martí into corresponding enthusiasm, if the number of times Martí in his journalism alludes to Wagner serves as any indication.<sup>25</sup>

Martí mentions Lohengrin as the darling of New York high society during the winter season of 1888–1889.<sup>26</sup> In the spring of 1889, Anton Seidl, "the fanatical Wagnerite, repeated without interruption before a rapt public Wagner's music which is only grateful and revelatory of its supreme power when heard without voices." But nonetheless so excessive was the fervor, that fanatics "wished to kiss in the streets the tenor who enacted Siegfried in Götterdämmerung."<sup>27</sup>

How many of Wagner's operas Martí actually saw may be debated. But he did certainly see Ambroise Thomas's *Hamlet* given in Italian March 17, 1881, at Lisbon's San Carlos, a theater which he characterized as equal to the most magnificent opera house in Europe.<sup>28</sup> He rates Victor Maurel, the 32-year-old French baritone who sang Mephistopheles in an 1880 production of *Faust* as so potent that Gounod changed parts of his chief work to accommodate him.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, in his undated *Cuaderno*,

(notebook), No. 3, Martí condemned Julián Gayarre's falsetto as overdone in a Faust that he had heard with sublime Christine Nilsson in the heroine's role. 30 L'Africaine with Jean de Reszke, Lassalle, and Gayarre, roused Martí to such heights that he was even willing to place Meyerbeer in the company of Michelangelo and Shakespeare. "Isn't perhaps the fourth act of L'Africaine the most moving and perfect piece of music this far known?" he asked. 31

In New York he heard Adelina Patti open heaven's doors in a *Lucia* aria.<sup>32</sup> Her *Martha* sung there November 26, 1884, ended with an extravagant procession, four white horses drawing her carriage.<sup>33</sup>

Paderewski's conquest of New York occupies Martí in a letter dated at New York December 7, 1891, to *El Partido Liberal* (Mexico City). Superlative adjectives praising Paderewski's celestial pianism crowd an entire paragraph. No more perfervid testimony to the enchantment exerted by Paderewski's art during his first American appearances can be imagined.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, Martí took no pleasure in what now is denominated ethnic music. Earlier in 1891 he attended a Chinese funeral. What he heard gave him no comfort.<sup>35</sup>

On March 4, 1891, he pronounced at New York a funeral elegy commemorating Nicolás Ruiz Espadero (Havana, February 15, 1832; Havana, August 30, 1890) in which he recalled how strong an impression Espadero's Canto del Esclavo had left when first performed at Madrid. In the April 30, 1892 issue of Patria Martí commended Agramonte for not subordinating the voice to piano as was Rubinstein's custom; and in the August 20, 1892, issue went beyond Cubans to salute the Puerto Rican pianist Ana Otero, in whose honor he added the music of the Boriqueña. In Patria, September 23,

portrait with an account of his New York triumphs (which were climaxed by his performance of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto, Op. 64, and Bach's Chaconne at the Philharmonic concert of December 11, 1875, followed by his playing of the Vieuxtemps *Ballade et Polanaise* Op. 38, and a repeat of the Bach Chaconne "by request" at the concert of March 18, 1876). Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, x, 62, 108ff, 113, 116, 133, 135, 162, 169, specifies White's appearances.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Obras Completas, v, 307-309.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> O. C., v, 408; ix, 301, 313; x, 48, 102, 131, 271, 388; xi, 164; xii, 124, 193, 223, 384; xiii, 342, 353, 355, 367; xiv, 221; xxii, 150; xxiii, 145.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>O. C., XII, 105.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 193-194.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> xIV, 349; in a letter published in *La Opinión Nacional*, at Caracas, February 7, 1882: "No tiene teatro alguno europeo más majestuoso teatro real que el de los reyes portugueses."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> XV, 221.

<sup>30</sup> xxi, 124: "Gayarre abusa del falsete, pero aun éste es correcto y limpio. —Canto melodiasamente sin el canto italiano."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 112. Faccio directed the performance heard by Martí, who asks rhetorically, "¿No es tal vez el 4° acto de *La Africana* el trozo más imponente y perfecto de música que se conoce?"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>O. C., 1x, 493. Letter to La Nación (Buenos Aires) written at New York, December 21, 1883.

<sup>33</sup> O. C., x, 130.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> O. C., xii, 503: "Nuevo York entero quiere oir a la vez al famoso Paderewsky, que no trae corona de aires, ni mal humor de genio, sino una amable, buena crianza, y un gusto en dar gozo, por lo que el público se le apega y encariña.... él deja ir las manos serenas sobre el teclado, manos que evocan más que tocan, y su arte libre es todo de luna y melancolía."

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 80.

1893, he listed the faculty teaching in Agramonte's New York School of Opera and Oratorio.

Himself the eternal teacher, Martí published at New York in four instalments during 1889 La Edad de Oro, a compilation of cultural essays for Spanish-speaking children. The second instalment (August 1889) contains a section entitled "Músicos, Poetas y Pintores," in which the youthful precocity of Handel, Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Weber, and Mendelssohn stimulates Martí to the usual anecdotes that continue even today informing music appreciation texts. He mentions Mendelssohn's Die Hochzeit des

Camacho written at age 16 and Reformation Symphony at age 23. True to his admiration for one opera composer not now included in the usual appreciation course, he cites as his last and culminating musical hero Meyerbeer, whose Jephta's Gelübe was produced at Munich in 1812, but whose fame awaited Robert le Diable, premiered at Paris in 1831.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup>Shaving off some dates to make Meyerbeer's feats seem more precocious, Martí translates all German and French titles into Spanish.

## SUR LA TOMBE.

DE

## L. M. GOTTSCHALK.

N.R. ESPADERO.



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