



## Reviews

*La Armonía. Órgano de la Sociedad Filarmónica Mexicana* Tom. I. Año I. Números 1 [1.º de Noviembre de 1866], 2 [15 de Noviembre de 1866] through 12 [15 de Abril de 1867], 13 [1.º de Mayo de 1867], each issue 8 pp. (Mexico City, Imprenta de A. Boix á cargo de M. Zornoza. 2ª calle de San Lorenzo número 7). Facsimile edition (Mexico City, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes [CA], Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes [INBA], Centro Nacional de Investigación, Documentación e Información Musical "Carlos Chávez" [CENIDIM], 1991, 104 pp.)

*Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Bd. 14 (1968), column 1171, itemizes eleven periodicals published in Mexico (among mistakes, *Schola Cantorum*, edited by Miguel Bernal Jiménez, was published not at Mexico City, but at Morelia, Michoacán). *The New Grove Dictionary* (1980), xiv, 447, expands the list of periodicals published in Mexico from eleven to eighteen, beginning as does *MGG* with *El violín* (4 nos., 1862), and skipping thence to *Correo musical* (5 nos., 1909). Even so, both *MGG* and *The New Grove* omit *La Armonía*—by far the most significant nineteenth-century Mexican music periodical. Discussing the importance of *La Armonía*, which was the organ of the Mexican Philharmonic Society founded in 1865, Juan José Escorza traces the society's origins to reunions held during the early 1860's in the domicile of Tomás León, paramount pianist of the epoch. The founding members included Alfredo Bablot,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Born at Bordeaux, France, Bablot reached Mexico in 1849. With René Masson he founded in 1850 *El Daguerreotipo* later transformed into *El Telégrafo*. A pronounced liberal, he marched with Benito Juárez and after Juárez's death supported Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada for the presidency (1871). From 1881 to his death at Tzacubaya in 1892 he directed the Conservatorio Nacional de Música.

Antonio García Cubas,<sup>2</sup> Julio Ituarte,<sup>3</sup> Tomás León,<sup>4</sup> Eduardo Liceaga,<sup>5</sup> Melesio Morales,<sup>6</sup> Aniceto Ortega,<sup>7</sup> and Manuel Payno.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The founder of geography as a science in Mexico, García Cubas (1832–1912), a native of Mexico City, completed his studies in the Colegio de Miñeria in 1865. His five-volume *Diccionario Geográfico, Histórico y Biográfico* (of Mexico), published in 1888–91, remains a classic, as does also his autobiographical *El Libro de mis recuerdos* (1904).

<sup>3</sup> Julio Ituarte (1845–1905), born and died at Mexico City, studied with Agustín Balderas and Tomás León. Already at age 21 he ranked as a leading piano virtuoso. Composer of numerous mazurkas, polcas, danzas habaneras, and local color works, he also wrote two highly successful zarzuelas, two-act *Sustos y gustos* (libretto by Ernesto González, produced the end of May 1887; see Enrique de Olavarría y Ferrari, *Reseña histórica del teatro en México*, iv [Mexico City: "La Europea," 1895], p. 31) and three-act *Gato por liebre*. In nationalistic vein he published the brilliant pot-pourri, *Aires nacionales* and *Écos de México*. His pupils included Felipe Villanueva and Ricardo Castro.

<sup>4</sup> A native of Mexico City who died there, Tomás León (1826–1893) was the leading concert piano virtuoso and teacher of his generation. In patriotic vein he composed a *Jarabe-Nacional* for piano. *Cuatro danzas habaneras*, *Flores de Mayo*, and a *Pensamiento poético* illustrate the repertory composed for pupils in his Academia de Música.

<sup>5</sup> Born at Guanajuato in 1839, Eduardo Liceaga died at Mexico City in 1920. Professor of surgery in the Escuela Nacional de Medicina 1867 to 1890, and its director on two occasions, he was president of the Academia Nacional de Medicina 1878 to 1906 and of the Mexican Red Cross to 1911. He taught *acústica* and *fonografía* in the national conservatory 1868 to 1872. In addition to medical publications, he wrote *Mis recuerdos de otros tiempos* ("My memories of other times") published posthumously in 1949.

<sup>6</sup> His later conflicts with younger generation composers have tended to obscure the transcendental importance of Melesio Morales (1838–1908) in his own youth.

<sup>7</sup> Aniceto Ortega del Villar (1825–1875), born at Tulancingo, Hidalgo, entered the Seminario Conciliar (Mexico City) in 1837 and the Escuela de Medicina in 1841. At age only 20 he graduated with the title of physician (*médico*). Like Melesio Morales, Ortega is profiled in leading music lexicons.

<sup>8</sup> Now chiefly famous as a novelist but also illustrious as a poet and





Aniceto Ortega made the suggestion that what had called itself merely a Club Filarmónico adopt formal statutes—transforming itself on January 14, 1866, into a Sociedad Filarmónica Mexicana enrolling 74 members. On January 13, 1867, three officers made a first year-end report published in *La Armonía*, II/6 (January 15, 1867). By that date the Sociedad counted a total of 466 members, Liszt having been the first foreigner to accept honorary membership. His biography, written by Manuel M. [Ortiz de] Montellano occupies *La Armonía*, I/4 (December 15, 1866), 27–28. Montellano mentions Liszt's abandonment of his travelling virtuoso career and his settling at Weimar (where his published writings included a life of Chopin, but where his compositions had been rewarded with *críticas severas al compositor*)—and concludes with Liszt's decision to seek orders at Rome, where Pius IX—after hearing him play parts of his oratorio *Christus*—embraced him, saying, “My son, my dear son, you will be my Palestrina” (*La Armonía*, I/7 [February 1, 1867], p. 56).

Among Mexican biographies in *La Armonía*: Luis F. Muñoz Ledo wrote lengthy eulogies of Luis Baca (I/1, November 1, 1866, pp. 3–5) and Joaquín Beristáin (I/3, December 1, 1866, pp. 21–23). But not every author rhapsodized over happenings in Mexico. Aniceto Ortega, who contributed an article to the first issue, “Música religiosa,” categorized the church music performances in all but two or three *principales templos* throughout Mexico as so bad that they sounded at times like the grunting of animals, while at other times even the solemn *Miserere* and *Stabat Mater* were sung to the air of a tirana. Ortega recommended Mozart among foreigners and Joaquín Beristáin, Cenobio Paniagua, and Antonio Valle among Mexicans as composers whose sacred works merited performance. Displaying his own tastes, Ortega on March 9, 1867, joined with Tomás León in a four-hand performance of the second movement of Beethoven's *Eroica*.<sup>9</sup> On March 16 León and Julio

Iñárrate played a four-hand version of Beethoven's Fifth, first movement (Czerny's arrangement). The same program included an enthusiastically applauded performance of a Chopin *Impromptu* by “la Sra. H. de Wagner.” Operatic fantasies remained, however, the standbys in all the Society's announced programs.

The founding of a conservatory achieved one of the Society's announced aims. Beginning in the first issue with the listing of the faculty, *La Armonía* continued recounting its activities in every subsequent number. On November 22, 1866, Agustín Caballero, its first director, sang a Mass composed by Felipe Larios, its first harmony teacher, at a St. Cecilia Day celebration in Santa Brígida Church (December 1, 1866, p. 24). Its first teacher of *composición teórica* was none other than obstetrician Aniceto Ortega, whose *episodio lírico, Guatimotzín* (libretto by José Cuéllar [1830–1894]) sung by associate member of the Sociedad Filarmónica Angela Peralta (1845–1883) and Enrico Tamberlik (1820–1889) September 13, 1871, was to immortalize his name as the first Mexican composer of an “Aztec” opera.

The first musical composition published as a supplement to the literary portion of *La Armonía*, November 1, 1866, was Tomás León's *bellísimo nocturno* for piano, *Guarda esta flor*. According to the December 15, 1866, issue, page 32, the January 1, 1867, number would be accompanied with a “most beautiful” *Romanza* by Melesio Morales sent from Italy—where he was preparing for a production of *Ildegonda* (further information in the May 1, 1867, issue, p. 103).

In the November 15, 1866, issue, page 16, the lithographer of the “clean and correct” music supplements is identified as [Juan M.] Rivera é hijo, located opposite the Teatro Principal. His product is called not only the best in Mexico but worthy of comparison with excellent European music publications.

Not yet in 1866 “A. Wagner y Levien,” music publishers,<sup>10</sup> the “Sres. Wagner y C.<sup>a</sup>”—already that year located at Zuleta núm. 14—sold pianos of English, French, and German manufacture. As an example, the November 15, 1866, issue contains a notice at pages 14–15, advising the public of a newly arrived Erard vertical that because reinforced with strong iron *barretones* would stay in tune during sudden temperature changes.

journalist, Manuel Payno (1810–1894), a native of Mexico City who died at San Angel, occupied numerous high administrative posts—interspersed with interim periods of disgrace (prisoner in 1863). Upon Juárez's victories, he returned to favor, was elected senator, named consul general in Spain, and again elected senator at the age of 82. His *Los bandidos de Río Frio*, written between 1888 and 1891 in Spain, is a classic novel of intrigue giving inimitable portrayals of early nineteenth-century Mexicans of all classes.

<sup>9</sup> Ortega's *Invocación a Beethoven*, Op. 2, first performed in 1867, was much later published by A. Wagner y Levien, the leading Mexican music publisher active during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Joel R. Berendzen contributed an unsatisfactory article on “Wagner, A.” to D. W. Krummel's *Music Printing and Publishing*

(New York/London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), p. 464. See note 10 below.

<sup>10</sup> [Juan M.] Rivera é hijo remained active as music publisher until at least 1881. A. Wagner y Levien began publishing music methods no later than 1883, but like H. Nagel, another Mexico City music publisher, frequently used C. G. Roeder at Leipzig for sheet music engraving. Eight A. Wagner y Levien catalogs were published 1895–97.