



Musical Activity in 1983 at Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Cochabamba, and La Paz, Bolivia*

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EXACTLY 75 YEARS AGO died the native son of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, who still remains a chief paladin of Bolivian culture, Gabriel René-Moreno (1834-1908). According to him: "A society that fails to exalt intellectual activity and that ignores artistic creations vibrant with imagination and emotion, a society that devalues precious historic conquests of the human spirit, can by no means call itself a progressive society."

With this quotation in mind, the question arises: what cultural activities in 1983 are earmarks of "a progressive society" at the birthplace of Bolivia's most renowned nineteenth-century spokesman? At least a partial answer to that question is attempted in the present report of a month-long visit to Santa Cruz de la Sierra (founded in 1561, present population in excess of 300,000), which was followed by stopovers en route back to Peru at Cochabamba (Bolivia's third largest city, 230,000 inhabitants), and at La Paz.

Fifteen years ago, without governmental or official support, was founded at Santa Cruz de la Sierra the Casa de la Cultura "Raúl Otero Reiche." Because not blown aloft by winds of changing political régimes, but instead supported by private largesse, this autonomous cultural institute has during the past decade been able to sponsor numerous enthusiastically received instrumental and choral concerts, ballets, educational courses, and other uplifting events, all of which have been programmed in a well-equipped, up-to-date theater that is air conditioned. Thanks to an invitation from the Casa de la Cultura "Raúl Otero Reiche," the author of this report gave in January 1983 a 30-day historical music survey for teachers, and during the same period an introduction to ethnomusicology. Both courses were attended by more than one hundred diligent students.

Aida McKenney presides over the Casa de la Cultura "Raúl Otero Reiche." Mario Estenssoro, formerly a member of the Lima National Music Conservatory faculty, serves as consultant. As sequel to my courses, field recordings made throughout Santa Cruz de la Sierra department are now being transcribed, classified, analyzed, and deposited at the Casa de la Cultura "Raúl Otero Reiche."

The rich traditional music of the Moxos who inhabited eastern Bolivia has already in the recent past inspired several studies, outstanding among which are the two publications by Rogers Becerra Casanovas. Not heretofore registered in the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* edited by the Library of Congress, Hispanic

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Division, Washington, D.C., Becerra Casanovas's *Reliquias de Moxos: Tratado histórico sobre el origen y significado de las danzas y de la música beniana* (La Paz, Inti, 1959 [ix + 75 pp., including 10 pp. of music]) was expanded eighteen years later into an impressive volume endorsed by Samuel Claro Valdés, *Reliquias de Moxos: danzas, música, instrumentos musicales y fiestas costumbristas del Beni con un epílogo sobre los silvícolas Sirionó y Moré, el Mamoré y Las Sublevaciones Indígenas contra los Blancos* (La Paz: Proinsa Empresa Editora, 1978 [Casa Municipal de la Cultura "Franz Tamayo," 328 pp., including Suplemento Musical, pp. 269-307, and 73 music notations; 24 pages of plates, extensive bibliography]).

The impressions left on English-speaking tourists by everyday musical life within the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra are thus summarized in *The 1983 South American Handbook*, 59th annual edition (Bath, England: Trade & Travel Publications, 1982), page 200: "Cruceños are famous for their gaiety—their music, the *carnavalitos*, can be heard all over South America. Of the various festivals, the merriest one is Carnival celebrated for 15 days before Lent with fife, flute, drum, violin and guitar music in the streets, dancing, fancy dress, and the coronation of a queen." In view of such impressions, the challenges now facing ethnomusicologists certainly include these: (1) classifying Santa Cruz *carnavalitos* within categories, (2) tracing their origins and history, (3) separating those that are traditional from those that were composed, and above all, (4) determining the characteristics that give them their cachet throughout the rest of South America.

After courses at Santa Cruz de la Sierra, an invitation to deliver several lectures took me next to beautiful Cochabamba (founded in 1542, Bolivia's city with the most agreeable year-round climate). Cochabamba citizens boast two cultural institutions that march side by side: (1) the Centro Pedagógico y Cultural "Portales," which is sponsored as one enterprise of the Fundación Simón I. Patiño, and which is presently directed by Dr. Richard Bauer and his able assistant, Max Munckel; (2) the Instituto Nacional de Educación Integral y Formación Musical "Eduardo Laredo" founded and directed by architect-composer Franklin Anaya Arze (born Cochabamba, October 14, 1912). While the "Portales," with its excellent library, promotes serious reading, sponsors radio programs, and organizes concerts, expositions, drama festivals, and lectures, the "Laredo" institute on the other hand seeks to integrate music instruction from basic to advanced with the other subjects that lead to a *bachillerato* in humanities. The disciplined conduct of the "Laredo" institute students speaks well for the philosophy of its founder-director, whose distinctions include international prizes in architecture (Montevideo, 1940) and in composition (UNESCO, 1955).

Cultural institutions at La Paz include the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional, the Orquesta de Cámara, and the Coral "Nova" conducted in 1983 by Ramiro Soriano. These organizations sporadically visit other Bolivian cities. At the time of my stop-over, Dr. Fernando Cajías headed the Instituto Boliviano de Cultura (Plaza Abaroa 2463; telephones 30-0304, 37-3298), under whose aegis function the Conservatorio Nacional de Música (Avenida Argentina 1905; 37-3297, 37-0258) and the Museo de Etnografía y Folklore (Calle Ingavi 916; 36-3065). The Departamento de Etnomusicología y Folklore was headed by Marcelo Thórrez López, author of *El huayño en Bolivia: estudio etnomusicológico en base a materiales fonogramados en los Departamentos de Potosí, Oruro y La Paz en 1942* (La Paz: Instituto Boliviano de Cultura, 1977 [76 pp., illustrations, music notations]).

The Biblioteca Nacional is located at Sucre, but the Biblioteca Municipal at La Paz has rich music holdings. In early 1987 both the Centro Boliviano Americano (Parque Zenón Iturralde 121, 35-1625, 34-2582) and Instituto Cultural Boliviano Alemán (Avenida 6 de Agosto 2118, 37-4453) continued sponsoring musical programs by local and visiting artists.

Despite the acute problems posed by political and economic turns of events, the institutions mentioned in this brief report deserve warmest tribute for conscientious attempts to fulfill their assigned cultural missions. All these entities know that the economically least advantaged in Bolivia deserve musical enrichment no less than the financially privileged. Rather than dwelling exclusively on the darker clouds so dear to the international media, the outside world can help assure a brighter Bolivian tomorrow by taking favorable notice of the cultural rays that shine today.