

Brahms's Reception in Latin America Mexico City: 1884–1910*

BRAHMS'S NAME FIRST surfaces in a concert program dated at Mexico City September 3, 1884, when the Theodor Kullak pupil Albert Friedenthal (*b* Pomerania) closed Part I of his piano début at the then ten-year-old Teatro Arbeu with two Hungarian Dances; Part II ended with Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody, No. 2 (Olavarría y Ferrari, 1110). In uncredited orchestral transcriptions, Hungarian Dances, Nos. 5 and 6, entered a program August 12, 1892, at the Gran Teatro Nacional that included Anton Rubinstein's violin concerto, Op. 46, played by Alberto Amaya (*b* Durango 1856; *d* Zacahuiso, D.F. 1930); the program continued with a generous dose of Gustavo E. Campa's orchestral works; and concluded with the *Tannhäuser Overture* (1408). Arthur Fickenscher played two unspecified Hungarian Dances at the Jockey Club salon July 10, 1895—his other offerings including Liszt's *Waldeisrauschen* and *La Campanella* (1682).

President Porfirio Díaz, his wife and daughter, attended a ceremony at the Teatro del Conservatorio February 27, 1899, during which Campa prefaced the Mexican National Anthem with two orchestral Hungarian Dances (1971). At his March 6, 1900, Mexico City début, violinist Hjalmar von Dameck offered a Hungarian Dance as an encore after tumultuous reception of his Bruch Concerto, No. 1,

played in the Wagner y Levien salon at Calle de Zuleta, número 13 (1984). Advertised as a pupil of Joachim, Maria Schumann played an unidentified Hungarian Dance in the same salon August 25, 1901 (2209).

This monotonous confinement to Hungarian Dances (usually nos. 5 and 6) was at last broken in 1902 when violinist Luis G. Saloma (*b* Huexotzingo, Puebla, 1866; *d* Mexico City 1956), in company with violinist Fla-Chebba, violists Álvaro Cerda and Ignacio Del Ángel, and cellists Luis David and Hitzig, began each of their three concerts December 1, 3, and 5, at the Sala Wagner with Brahms's First String Sextet, Op. 18 (composed 1858–1860; published 1862). Schubert's String Quintet in C, Op. 163 (D956, published 1853) closed the December 3 and 5 programs (2388). At a benefit concert September 12, 1904, for the family of the singer in Mexico since 1886, Pablo de Bengardi (= Paul de Bengard; *d* August 14, 1904), violinists Nicolás de Lorenzo and E. Freund, violist Maurice Meerloo, cellist David, and pianist E. Heinz gave at the Teatro Arbeu the first performance at Mexico City of Brahms's Quintet, Op. 34 (2600). On July 6, 1907, at the Academia Metropolitana, Leschetizky pupil F. W. Otto de Voss played the first Mexico City performance of the Handel-Brahms variations, Op. 24 (2928). The 90-member Orquesta del Conservatorio Nacional conducted by Carlos J. Meneses (*b* and *d* at Mexico City, 1863–1929) gave the first Mexican performances of a Brahms orchestral work, the *Academic Festival Overture*, Op. 80 (1880), August 11, 15, and

*All data in this résumé not otherwise credited derive from Enrique de Olavarría y Ferrari's five-volume *Reseña histórica del teatro en México* (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, 1961). Each of the page-numbers in parentheses specifies the location in Olavarría y Ferrari of the program data that immediately precedes the parentheses.



September 1, 1907, at the Teatro Arbeau (2947) Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony entered the first two concerts, his Fifth Symphony the third.

Luis G. Saloma and precocious pianist Alberto Villaseñor (*d* January 22, 1909, at Orizaba) gave the first Mexico City performance of the Sonata, Op. 78, at newly opened Bucareli Hall, July 6, 1908 (3059). At the small theater in the Conservatorio Nacional soprano María Luisa Deboges offered a "Concierto histórico de la canción" July 23, 1908, that interspersed Brahms's *An ein Veilchen*, Op. 49, no. 2, in a program that began with Lully and closed with Debussy (3082).

Villaseñor, the first Mexican pianist to essay Brahms's Sonata, Op. 5, gave it May 6, 1908, at the inaugural Bach-Beethoven-Brahms concert in the Sala Bucareli (3047). His pupil Carlos Lozano played the *Ballade*, Op. 10, No. 1 ("Edward") in a recital at the Sala de Conciertos, calle San Felipe de Jesús 572, September 23 and 27, 1908 (3088). Adela Verne (1877-1952), English-born "pupil of Paderewski," dazzled her public at the Sala Wagner July 31, 1909, with the Schubert-Tausig *Marche Militaire* and Rubinstein's *Staccato Etude*, but also then gave the first performance in Mexico of the Brahms Schumann variations, Op. 9 (3191); on May 1, 1910, she played his Sonata, Op. 5, at the Teatro Colón (3279).

None of the world-acclaimed pianists Eugene

D'Albert (first concert April 6, 1890, conjointly with Sarasate), Ignace Jan Paderewski (two concerts March 10 and 11, 1900), Josef Hofmann (eight recitals, January 5-15, 1908), Josef Lhevinne, nor Teresa Carreño, played anything by Brahms. Paderewski's sonatas were the *Waldstein* and the *Appassionata*. Fritz Kreisler closed Part I of his third concert at the Teatro Arbeau May 17, 1908, with an unidentified Hungarian Dance transcribed by Joachim and Part II with Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*, Op. 20 (3040).

If the world's most famous touring virtuosos did Brahms no favors at Mexico City, not surprisingly elsewhere in Latin America he remained a mere name before 1900. His brother Fritz failed him utterly at Caracas. Eugenio Pereira Salas, author of the *Historia de la música en Chile, 1850-1900* (Santiago: Universidad de Chile, 1957),⁴ encountered newspaper notices of Hungarian Dances performed in 1883 and 1890; but nothing more substantial until 1899 when *Die Mainacht*, Op. 43, No. 2, and *Feld-einsamkeit*, Op. 86, No. 2, entered a song recital at Santiago.

During the last two Porfirian decades the contemporary composers who surfeited the Mexico City concert-going public were the ilk of Rubinstein, Chaminade, and Moszkowski. Their reception histories invite a reappraisal of concert life in a halcyon economic epoch when for a time the Mexican peso exceeded the value of the United States dollar.