

With the disappearance of Bonifacio Gil García Spanish folk music has lost one of its most energetic and enthusiastic of present-day scholars.

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(translated by Norman Fraser)

VICENTE T. MENDOZA

Vicente T. Mendoza, one of the foremost Western Hemisphere folklorists of his generation, was born in Cholula, State of Puebla, on January 27th, 1894, and died at Mexico City on October 27th, 1964. So continuously did he publish through the very year of his death that Gilbert Chase's review of Mendoza's last book, *Lírica Narrativa de México: El Corrido* (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1964, 419 pp.), appears in the same *Yearbook*, I, 1965 (pp. 132-134), of the Inter-American Institute for Musical Research with the necrology written by Chase (pp. 11-12). Similarly, the review that Mendoza wrote of Salomón Kahan's *Fascinación de la Música* (1964, 480 pp.) appears in the same *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, XXXIV, 1965 (pp. 103-104) with his portrait, an accompanying obituary by José Rojas Garcidueñas (p. 99), and an eulogy by Dr. Justino Fernández, director of the Institute (pp. 100-101).

The several necrologies issued to date extol Mendoza as not only the most renowned but also the most productive scholar in his field during the last quarter-century. An informative biography appeared as long ago as 1947. Although contributed by the paladin of Mexican musicology, Dr. Jesús C. Romero, it was sealed away from wide international attention in an article "El Folklore en México," published in the periodical little read outside the country, *Boletín de la Sociedad Mexicana de Geografía y Estadística*, LXIII/3 (May-June, 1947), pp. [778] 781-786. Romero's biography enjoys the advantages not only of tracing Mendoza's career step by step and of giving many otherwise unobtainable dates, but also of placing him in his *ambiente*. The indispensable "Bibliografía de Vicente T. Mendoza," published as Suplemento Núm. 2 of the *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas*, XXX, 1961 (pp. 49-76) lists 334 articles, books and reviews published through 1961. Fifteen more items swell his complete bibliography through the year of his death to 349 items. Even so, 188 of these had appeared before Romero wrote "El Folklore en México." Moreover, Mendoza had already in 1940 been elected president of the newly-founded Sociedad Folklórica de México, a position that he was still holding in 1947. Romero's biography is therefore the more useful because he wrote it when Mendoza was already the culminating figure in the field.

Mendoza's career cannot be easily reduced to any few lines because he was active in too many spheres. He spent his youth in San Martín Texmelucan, State of Tlaxcala, and in the city of Puebla. Although he received early musical instruction from his father, it was as a student of drawing that he enrolled at the Academia de San Carlos when in 1910 he went to the capital. His training as an artist was to prove extremely advantageous later when the time came for him to provide the musical illustrations for his copious articles and books. However, it was his studies at the National Conservatory of Music with such composers as Julian Carrillo and Carlos Chávez that prepared him for his appointment (1930-34) as solfeggio and theory teacher in the Conservatory.

Folklore came later. His first articles in the newspaper *Excelsior* (1920, 1930) and in *Armónico Séptimo* (1925) dealt with Beethoven's symphonies and Debussy,

or with Carrillo's microtonal theories (*Sonido Trece*). Only in 1926–28, with the first national folklore congresses in Mexico, did he turn to the field in which he was to win his best renown; and it was not until Ralph Steele Boggs came to Mexico in 1938 that Mendoza began serious study in the Escuela Nacional de Antropología. In the same year was founded at Boggs's suggestion the Sociedad Folklórica de México —of which Mendoza was elected secretary at the first session, August 30th. A grant from the Rockefeller Foundation took him next to the United States for further study. In 1939 appeared his first book, *El romance español y el corrido Mexicano: estudio comparativo*; this set a fashion for his later books by containing 400 musical examples. In 1947 he published *La décima en México*, in 1951 *Lirica infantil en México*, in 1956 *Panorama de la música tradicional de México*, in 1957 *Glosas y décimas de México*, in 1961 *La canción Mexicana*.

Dr. Romero classed Mendoza as an "encyclopedic" folklorist. Certainly the range of his interests was vast. Such an article in two parts as "Música Indígena Otomí" (*Revista de Estudios Musicales* [Mendoza, Argentina], II, 351–530; III, 221–246) far exceeds the length of any article that a European journal might publish. Also it treats the subject in such depth as to discuss the other indigenous arts of the Otomíes, their tribal history, art-music in their area, and even the geography of their territory. No narrowly prescriptive definition of folklore appealed to Mendoza. Instead he endowed the term with such life and breadth that Sahagún's *Cantares*, Zuola's Cuzco songs, Martínez Compañón's Trujillo dances, Rosas's *Sobre las olas* and Ponce's *Estrellita* all fall under its protective mantle. Among his Mexican colleagues he enjoyed the reputation of having absolute pitch, and of therefore feeling able to dispense with field recordings. His method was instead to transcribe on the spot whatever his informants gave him. His *Cinquenta romances* (1940) and *Canciones Mexicanas* (1948) contain his own harmonizations. A composer of merit, he left a string quartet, dances for orchestra, and numerous original choruses and songs.

His wife Virginia Rodríguez Rivera collaborated with him and was co-author of *Folklore de San Pedro Piedra Gorda, Zacatecas* (1952). The University of New Mexico (Albuquerque) awarded him an honorary master's degree, and in 1955 the National University of Mexico gave him the Master of Musical Sciences degree. At his death he was one of six Mexican corresponding members of the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid, and belonged to thirty-two scientific and artistic societies.

ROBERT STEVENSON

JUAN BAUTISTA PLAZA

The year 1965 began sadly for music and culture in Venezuela due to the death of the composer and musicologist, Juan Bautista Plaza Alfonzo, who had seen the New Year in with his family in seemingly good health and spirits.

Plaza's disappearance robs Venezuelan music of one of its strongest pillars, not only as a composer who is not yet sufficiently known and appreciated, but also as a teacher who was fully aware of the times in which he lived and who took an interest in everything musical which these times brought his way.

Plaza listened to and analysed all new works with the open mind of a contemporary. His studies in astronomy caused him to take a keen interest in all new sidereal discoveries, and he considered that music should expand in a similar way, but of composers he demanded an absolute sincerity of purpose. Thus, he once