

# SPANISH MUSIC, A BRILLIANT, UNEXPLORED FIELD, DECLARES ARTHUR RUBINSTEIN

Polish Pianist, Returning Here After Twelve Years' Absence, Brings with Him New Manuscripts from That Country—The Great Hope in Paderewski—Musicians as Diplomats—Concert Managers in the Land of the Don

OF LATE several of our learned authorities have been writing long theses expounding our ignorance of Spanish music. Having convinced us absolutely of our lack of knowledge, however, they have made but feeble attempts to cure us of this unfortunate ignorance, and have left us nursing an intellectual vacuum. In this naïve and humble state we addressed ourself to Arthur Rubinstein, the Polish pianist who has lately come to America, and who has behind him a long experience in Spain and South America.

Mr. Rubinstein arrived here last week after an absence of some thirteen years. War, that strange juggler, which in return for the thousands of young men now in Europe has sent to us so many matured artists, is partly responsible for his coming.

"My first appearance in Spain came by accident—as most of my experiences have come. In 1916 I was requested to give four piano recitals in Spain in place of an artist who had been taken ill. Going there from London, where I had my home and was then appearing, I gave the recitals. From these I was asked to give twenty-three, and subsequently I played some 146 times in Spain in the next two seasons.

"The concerts took me throughout Spain, enabling me to see much of the musical habits of the country. The great cities of Spain, of course, are extremely musical, showing an extreme culture in their choice. In Madrid and Barcelona music is constantly heard, the former city with its 700,000 inhabitants supporting some three orchestras constantly.

In the smaller towns of Spain, however, not much outside music is heard, and in many of these I gave the first piano recital that had ever been played there. In one of the cities in which I appeared an amusing story is told of a famous pianist. Several years ago he was making a tour in Spain and was scheduled to appear in this town. The owner of the theater was the same man who owned the arena, but apparently he found playing the bulls a gentler game than piano concerts. For when the grand piano arrived the owner immediately became alarmed. "This instrument will not go into my theatre," he said. "I don't care how much money I lose; you can't bring that in." And they didn't. However, things are not as bad as that now.

#### Spanish Managers Co-operate

"The cities of Spain, it seems to me, have a far superior method in arranging their concerts than have we. Some twenty-two cities in Spain have organized together to give what they call subscription concerts. Thus an artist is contracted for these twenty-two cities at once. Dates are arranged which shall follow each other conveniently, the pianist is spared much of the wearying detail of travel, and always finds himself greeted by large, sympathetic audiences. For these are all subscription concerts, open to no outsiders, but always having the same capacity house of subscribers.

"In regard to the music of Spain, one must say that human nature is not very different there than elsewhere, and the people have not sufficiently appreciated their heritage. The Spanish attitude



Arthur Rubinstein, Noted Polish Pianist, Who Returns to America After Twelve Years' Absence—Attired as a "Toreador" in the Land Where He Made Many of His Successes

practically drove out the native musicians, though, in truth, now they are going back. Often outsiders have likened the Spanish to the Arabic music, and claimed that the latter formed the background for the Spanish. I rather disclaim this. For a long time I had with me in my travels *gitanos*, and heard much of the native music. Besides this I was in Morocco and Algiers and heard also the Arabic art. Their relation is not so marked. One sees a greater intimacy between the Spanish music and the Russian folk music. There is no music that the Spaniards grasp more quickly than the Russian. They love and understand it, and absorb its content eagerly, far more so, perhaps, than any other people. The Castilian musical taste is most decided and marked. For instance, the Spanish are passionately fond of Beethoven, there is a very craze for him in Spain; but Brahms they detest and refuse to listen to."

"What of Laparra, Granados, Albéniz and the rest of the composers we think of as Spanish?"

"I don't believe Laparra has ever been heard in Spain. Granados is very popular in his own section of Spain, but is not heard much elsewhere. Albéniz, however, is loved. When I played the Suite 'Iberia' everybody became mad with enthusiasm and the king constantly declared that only a *Madrileño* could write such music. Pablo Casals requested me to give this suite in Spain, and in some cities it was the first time it was given. I had the honor of playing it on the Island of Majorca for Mrs. Albéniz and her daughter, and they seemed very much affected, telling me it reminded them of their father. There is another Spanish composer, however, that has never, I believe, been heard here—Manuel Falla. At present he is in Paris, and formerly he studied with Debussy. With me I have brought some of his manuscripts. One of them, for orchestra and piano, is an exquisite thing entitled 'Nocturnes in the Gardens of Spain,' absolutely Spanish in idiom and of beautiful musical texture. In my recitals I shall probably play some of his piano pieces also, but these are earlier works,

and don't show him to advantage. In general, I believe it is a tremendous fallacy to exploit a man's earlier works, as they rarely do him justice. Incidentally at this point I may also mention that I have made an agreement with Stravinsky to give some of his new works in manuscript, and I have obtained the manuscript rights of these for the next three seasons."

Turning from the subject of Spain the pianist then talked of the condition of his own native Poland.

#### Joy Over Poland's Freedom

"I was wild with joy when I heard of the change in the status of Poland and of Paderewski's work there. We have great faith in Paderewski. Somehow, it seems to me that we musicians have a very intimate knowledge of politics. With constant traveling and mixing with persons of high political prominence we are able to note the subtle trend of popular feeling throughout the countries far better than does the commercial or other traveler. As to Paderewski, it was my fortune to meet him when I was very young and spend some time with him at his home in Switzerland. I had been sent to him by my friend and benefactor, Joachim, who paid for the greater part of my education. Strangely enough, the two greatest aids in my life have been violinists, Ysaye and Joachim. And yet I have never taken to the violin. When I was a little boy and they gave me fiddles to play with I would break them. I seemed to prefer the more polyphonic instrument, the piano.

"Am I glad to be back in America? Yes, I must say I am. The last time I was here, in 1906, I was a very young boy and probably very stupid. It was my first tour. I had gone to Paris,

rather to study its social advantages than to do serious work, when my manager closed the contract for me to make an American tour. Even this time I must say my coming was rather unexpected. I had been making a nine months' tour through South America. As mails and transportation are extremely difficult, owing to the war and various other causes, I had not heard from my manager since May.

"In the meantime I toured Brazil, Chile, Argentina and the other South American countries. This was my second tour there in two seasons. I gave a great number of concerts, giving as many as fifteen in one month in the Municipal in Rio. Of course this was something of an undertaking, especially as in South America a concert is considered a real *funcion*. The women like to come in their best, and the programs must be long, with many entr'actes, and so the affair lasts until about 12.30. There is much gratification, however, in playing for the South American audiences, as one finds them extremely enthusiastic.

"After this tour I came up to Havana to give several concerts there, and in that city I found waiting for me many messages. Among them was one from Mr. Johnston, my manager, saying that he had signed me for a tour with the Boston Symphony. I canceled several concerts I had in Cuba and came up, only to find that I was several days late. The Boston Symphony had started their tour, substituting Mr. Rachmaninoff as the soloist. Instead, however, I shall give a recital here on Feb. 20, followed by an appearance with the New York Symphony."

And so another of Europe's artists has joined the august company now gathered on our shores.

F. R. GRANT.

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