



Claudia Corona - Piano

Música Latinoamericana

CD Release Presentation “Mexican Piano Concertos”

Conducted by Dr. Ricardo Miranda, Musicologist.

October the 19th 2013, at Xalapa, Veracruz (México). [Excerpts]

« What I am about to say is based in two very well known phrases [...] one is ‘the pink elephant’, the second ‘the raised glove’.

‘Pink elephants’ are the fictional characters and the cause of a primary school boring joke and story [...] the man that is told: “listen, has the guy of the pink elephants arrived yet?”, “no, why? ”, “because they are parked out there already”.

But later I understood it is a universal joke [...] I realized that it has a broader meaning than I thought, besides, it has an interesting connotation, I mean, we name pink elephant to what is there, we know it is there, it is evident it is there, but no one wants to take care of it.

Well, (José Rolón) Piano Concerto is the pink elephant of the Mexican musical repertoire.

And that, of course, has two pretty features:

1) It is without any doubt, the best score ever written in México on the twentieth century and,
2) It has the little problem, that it needs a pianist to perform it. A pianist is to be understood as someone capable of confronting some horrific difficulties, adjust to the orchestra ensemble, it has some polyrhythmic problems so, it is such a complex score that I believe is only equivalent to let’s say Bartok’s 3rd Concerto or some of the Shostakovich’s... well, a very difficult score, and this has brought about its turning on to become a pink elephant. We know it is a masterpiece, in its time it was described as the masterpiece of Mexican music, and many of us had repeated that, but it doesn’t matter. Neither the orchestras, nor Mexican pianists have turned to face the pink elephant. They are forgiven; it is a score dreadfully hard to play.

But that does not take the elephant out of the room. The elephant has been there. Our picture of Mexican music is quite poor and much an unfinished one if we don’t have this central, wonderful, canonical, (Rolón) Piano Concerto score up front.

Well then, having explained that, now thanks to Claudia Corona, things have changed radically. They have changed in many ways. I believe first of all it is worth of a celebration that a Mexican pianist have taken these matter so seriously and achieved the restitution of this twentieth century music canon’s central work. With a German orchestra besides, and a splendid director, a very clear version, immaculate and carried out very well. A reason that calls for celebration the way she did it -as she put it forward- in this first version of 1935, that Rolón himself had to modify, partly because what he had right in front of him was not the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra. [...]. Guadalajara’s Symphony Orchestra was at that point, little more [than a small town orchestra]. So Rolón was disappointed, this is not working he said, this is not good, the violins sound is not right, and the violas, I don’t know. The clarinet guys... he wrote the whole thing again, because he didn’t want to realize that the problem was the orchestra he was going to do the premiere with, not the work itself.

Henceforth, this second version that Salvador Ordóñez would premiere later, conducted by Carlos Chávez in the 1940’s, was produced. In a given time, this could be taken as a praise, a great Latin American pianist was going to perform in the concerto’s revival: Claudio Arrau, well and as Claudio Arrau didn’t show up on time, now we got Claudia Corona.

That's the first thing. Second is that now we have within reach, a recording of this wonderful work, and here the contribution is tremendous, because we are building up a better image of what Mexican music is. Us who are devoted to it are tired, maybe not the public yet, but we are. Enough, enough... please! Listen to some more Sones de Mariachi, and another Huapango, and yet another Sinfonía India, and another Bachianas Brasileiras... I am positive that Villa-Lobos has got other works more than just the Bachianas Brasileiras [...].

But it happens with Rolón, with Ponce, with Acario Cotapos, with all great Latin American composers. So, it is very important that we set the sight of our programs' repertoire and of our knowledge on this repertoires that are just there, and that will give us a better insight of our true powers, not only those of Latin American music in general, but in this case inside Mexican music and in the great place that José Rolón holds as one of the great Mexican canonic composers of the Mexican repertoire.

To this we can add the splendid version of *El Festín de los Enanos / Feast of the Dwarfs*, that the CD delivers.

El Festín de los Enanos is a symphonic poem, it was considered emblematic on its time, as the work that better depicted the yearnings of México, regarding symphonic music. A crucial work from which we had several recorded versions, each with its problems [...]. Maestro Manuel de Elías, conducting the Symphonic Orchestra of Jalisco, had recorded the first. A beautiful recording, not available anymore, an old LP paid by the State government, now impossible to get. Then, a terrible thing happened, a record appeared in the market labeled "Mexico City's Philharmonic Orchestra, Luis Herrera de la Fuente conductor". But, not at all! As it happened to be that the recording company have no clue of the recordings they stored, so that the real conductor of the recording was Eduardo Díaz Muñoz. That started a disagreement and a quarrel. The record since had gone through a very devious path.

Well, then the third opportunity came. Jalisco Philharmonic Orchestra made a record again directed by Guillermo Salvador... no further comments about this recording.

And now we have it... finally! [an "El Festín de los Enanos" version, included on Claudia Corona's record]. Wonderfully played, very well it is to say, the same, wondrous, very, very important.

José Rolón, the composer that has not enjoyed -it appears to me- all the attention he shall deserve. Although today, is not the day to mention this. Today, it is a day to confirm that, as Karl Haroldblum put it once, "The aesthetic power prevails at the end". Rolón's work possess aesthetic strength, an undeniable merit, and it doesn't matter if generations of Mexican musicians don't want to see the pink elephant in the room, the music will win out in the end, and so much it will win out that [...] now it turns out that in addition, this record delivers the notes in Japanese as well. It seems to me, that no other important Mexican composer has ever had a record with notes translated into Japanese, let out recorded in Germany so, we are improving.

The '*Rolonian Party*', of which I am the lifelong President, and is formed by me and hereby by Claudia Corona, is delighted. This is the best thing that ever happened to us in the galaxy.

'The raised [...] glove' has to do with the concerto's performance.

There is also a closing circle [...] Rolón had written the concerto for the love of his life Ana de la Cueva, a young lady, a pretty 'tapatía' pianist [ladies born at Guadalajara, are called 'tapatías'] that was the first to perform it at Guadalajara in 1935. After that, they had a tremendous project; they were going to do it again in Mexico City with Ernest Ansermet conducting, and Ana de la Cueva (who premiered it at Guadalajara in 1935) as a soloist. But both Carlos Chávez and Estanislao Mejía, made sure this didn't happen. So here is the closing circle, [being Claudia Corona, also a female pianist and a young lady].

What happen afterwards? I am coming to it. Well, one of the emblematic Mexican pianists, a

leading figure to whom we long ago owe a great homage, Maestro Don Miguel García Mora, was precisely who raised the hand and picked the torch, so to say, he was the next great pianist after Salvador Ordóñez -who as I've told you- was going to revive the concerto, directed by Chávez in the 40's decade- Maestro García Mora, took the torch, and was the first who recorded it. They made a recording, this time truly under Luis Herrera de la Fuente's baton with Rodolfo Halffter as a technical supervisor. Well, you might say, cool! No! Halffter knew very little about recording [...] recording has its hitches not to mention its cut offs.

Anyway, García Mora played the concerto all his life, loved the score. I was fortunate to have the chance to talk many times with him about the subject, to sit down and discuss it, to spend the whole afternoon let's say, over about every matter related to this work.

After this, following generations had find it hard to raise the glove, because Rolón presents a tremendous challenge with this concerto, a challenge as I have mentioned, that is technical, is musical as well, the complex language is not as accessible, let's say when heard for the first time. It will be Fernando García Torres of all pianists living, who will take the torch. Fernando has played the concerto on several occasions, [...] and sadly this work didn't take- that performance, that work – to the recording studio.

So it is Claudia who raises her hand now on behalf of Mexican pianists and take this challenge, and she instated a new validity, a new generation, she did it splendidly. I cannot exaggerate this statement.

Mexican pianists tend to resign to play the same repertoire ever, Ponce's Intermezzo... all these things. We hardly ever see on record a Mexican piano concerto. [...]. Each generation [...] has to reinvent its classics. Therefore it is very important for each of these generations to deliver a new version. This is why I celebrate not only double, but also triple, because finally there is a Mexican pianist that takes this work seriously and that has recorded this CD. [...]

Here is the case of a young Mexican pianist that plays the most difficult concerto of the Mexican repertoire, that made it with a German orchestra, it is a professional recording, that is a standard, it is a high level –as I said a while ago- that except for Jorge Federico Osorio I wouldn't know where else [I can find it] [...].

As for the rest, well, I invite you to listen to this wonderful music, to get to know the music of Rolón, to appreciate the brilliant performance of Claudia and well, congratulations! Thank you very much».