



José Antonio Calcaño Calcaño (1900-1978)

JOSÉ ANTONIO CALCAÑO CALCAÑO, son of Emilio and Pepita Calcaño, was born at Caracas March 23, 1900, and died there September 11, 1978. He was survived by his wife Carmen Aurrecochea whom he married October 29, 1930.

Almost weekly national telecasts during his last decade made him at death a household name among literate Venezuelans. His topics, by no means exclusively musical, instead ranged over the whole gamut of cultural experience. Presented with the amenity, wit, and graciousness of a Kenneth Clark, his television series earned him unparalleled fame among even Caracas taxi drivers and hotel bellboys. Without question, he exceeded every other Western Hemisphere musicologist in reaching both masses and classes of his own nation.

Like his nineteenth-century homonym second cousin José Antonio Calcaño (1827-1897) who shone as a foremost writer, translator, and administrator, our present Calcaño spent long years in the Venezuelan diplomatic service. The former José Antonio Calcaño spent two decades in England, where he began as a consul in Liverpool in 1867. The present Calcaño—who spent 1929 to 1946 in the diplomatic service—held appointments as attaché in Switzerland, consul in Ireland (1936) and in St. Louis, Missouri (1937), and counsellor of the Venezuelan Embassy in London (1939-1940).

Both before and after his diplomatic career, he pursued music. Educated at the Escuela Superior de Música, Caracas, 1910-1918, he continued studying music privately as late as 1936 at his diplomatic post in Berne, Switzerland. While on home assignment he conducted the Coral Polifónica de Venezuela, 1937-1939. Upon leaving diplomacy, he taught music history, harmony, and piano at the Conservatorio Teresa Carreño in Caracas, 1951-1959, and the same subjects at the Academia de Música Padre Sojo, 1959-1977. From 1952, the year of its founding, to 1972 he conducted the Coral Creole, meanwhile continuing to compose prolifically for choral groups.

Excerpted lists of his numerous compositions were published in *Riemann Musik Lexikon Ergänzungsband Personenteil A-K* (1972), 181, and in *Who's Who in the World*, 2nd edition, 1974-1975, and 3rd, 1976-1977 (Marquis Who's Who, 1974, 1976), pages 170 and 139. So far as recent recordings go, the two-disc *Antología del madrigal venezolano* (Caracas: Fundación Mito Juan-Pro Música, 1975) includes two of his part-songs, *Cara bonita* and *Evohé*. In this anthology he keeps company with such other leading Venezuelan contemporaries as Juan Bautista Plaza, Antonio Estévez, Inocente Carreño, Evencio and Gonzalo Castellanos, Ángel Sauce, Moisés Moleiro, Antonio Lauro, and Modesta Bor.

His biography in the third edition of *Who's Who in the World* cites the eight national and four foreign academies or learned associations of which he was an invited

member. His memberships in these organizations stemmed not, however, from his composing or conducting activities, but rather from his musicological accomplishments—especially the now standard history of Venezuelan music that he published in 1958 and that won him in that year the Premio Municipal de Prosa, the Sherover Prize, and a presidential decoration. Surrounding this central achievement of 518 pages, he published a continuous stream of articles, pamphlets, prologues, and books from the 1930's to his death. Walter Guido, distinguished investigator at the Instituto Latinoamericano de Investigaciones y Estudios Musicales "Vicente Emilio Sojo," Consejo Nacional de la Cultura (address Apartado 80806, Caracas 108), announces publication in April, 1980, of a reedition of Calcaño's 1958 magnum opus by Fundarte. The prologue will be written by the eminent critic and composer Rházes Hernández López (*Diccionario Biográfico de Venezuela* [Madrid: Talleres de "Blass, S.A. Tipográfica," 1953], 518-519) and the chronology of Calcaño's career by Guido—who also kindly supplies the information that Calcaño's maiden excursion into Venezuelan music history published in 1939 will later in 1980 be reedited by Fundarte in a volume fleshed out with selected Calcaño articles and an exhaustive bibliography now being prepared by Guido.

A chronological list of Calcaño's publications that in December of 1979 could be verified in UCLA libraries follows. The short reviews accompanying various items are (by permission of the Editor) extracted from the appropriate *Handbook of Latin American Studies*.

Contribución al estudio de la música en Venezuela. Caracas: Ed. Elite, 1939. 127 p.

One of the *Cuadernos Literarios de la Asociación de Escritores Venezolanos*, this work is the publication in book form of fourteen studies dealing with Venezuelan music history, indigenous music, and folklore, which had previously appeared in various journals and dailies. Concise and valuable introductions, designed for popular consumption, but reliable and well written. Contains an example of a *tono* and a *baile de tambor*.

(HLAS 5: 1939 [1940], item 4397, William Berrien)

"Posición del investigador ante la música aborigen," *Acta Venezolana. Boletín Trimestral Publicado por el Grupo de Caracas de la Sociedad Interamericana de Antropología y Geografía*, Tomo 1, no. 3 (January-March, 1946), p. 291-297.

Author deals with the attitude the researcher must assume in relation to aboriginal music and supports Professor Karsten's viewpoint on the role music played among the primitive peoples of America: that among them it was a part of the rituals of communal life. He believes that aesthetic or artistic value was not sought, but that to them music was simply a magical influence in wars, hunting, dancing, love-making, sickness, etc., and therefore that it is not reasonable to value aboriginal music by the expression believed to be felt in it. Even if it were conceived with the same finality as that sought by the European composers, we could never understand it, and that therefore it should not be considered as an art similar to the musical art of the European culture.

(HLAS 12: 1946 [1949], item 3431, Charles Seeger)

"La música aborigen," *El Tiempo* (Bogotá), Año 37, no. 12886 (July 20, 1947), 2d section, p. 2.

[Milinowski, Marta.] *Teresa Carreño . . . Traducción del inglés por Luisa Elena Monteverde Basalo*. 1ª ed. Caracas-Madrid: Ediciones Edime, 1953. xxiii, 427 p. Prólogo by José Antonio Calcaño.

"¿Quién compuso el *Bravo Pueblo*?" *El Farol* [Creole Petroleum Corporation, Caracas] XVIII: 169 (March-April, 1957), p. 18-27.

A well illustrated and detailed history of the Venezuelan national anthem, which especially probes the problem of the song's origin. (HLAS 23 [1961], item 5741, Bruno Nettl)

La ciudad y su música. Crónica musical de Caracas. Caracas: Conservatorio Teresa Carreño [Tipografía Vargas], 1958. 518 p., illustrations.

Musical life in the history of Caracas, with detailed descriptions of performances and emphasis on theater. Many illustrations.

(HLAS 22 [1960], item 5724, Bruno Nettl)

La cultura musical en Venezuela. Caracas: Universidad Central de Venezuela, Facultad de Humanidades y Educación, Instituto de Filosofía, 1959, 18 p.

El padre Sojo, 1737-1799. Caracas: Fundación Eugenio Mendoza, 1960. 62 p. [Biblioteca escolar. "Colección de biografías," no. 36]

"Los músicos y la Independencia," *Revista Shell* [Compañía Shell de Venezuela, Caracas] VIII: 36 (September 1960), p. 26-29, illustrations.

The author, who has done extensive research in the history of Venezuelan music, presents a popular but informative account of the role that some prominent Venezuelan composers played in the struggle for independence.

(HLAS 26 [1964], item 2248, Gilbert Chase)

Academia Nacional de la Historia, Caracas. Biblioteca, vol. 60. *Arca de letras y teatro universal* [por] Juan Antonio Navarrete. Estudio preliminar de José Antonio Calcaño, 1962. 198 p.

The Franciscan friar Juan Antonio Navarrete (1759-1814/1815) although a prolific polymath, was unable to publish any of his writings. Only his manuscript entitled *Arca de letras y teatro universal* survived to be published by the Biblioteca Nacional (800 pages). Selections excerpted from that volume form the nucleus of the present tome.

(HLAS 28 [1966], item 861d, Lino G. Canedo)

"Música colonial venezolana," *Revista Musical Chilena* XVI: 81-82 (July-December 1962), p. 195-200.

A summary presentation, retracing familiar ground more extensively and thoroughly covered by the author in other writings.

(HLAS 26 [1964], item 2247, Gilbert Chase)

400 [i.e. Cuatrocientos] *años de música caraqueña.* Caracas: Círculo Musical, 1967. 98 p., facsim., illus., music. [Colección Círculo Musical, 2]

The author has written extensively on the musical history of Caracas, and this rather elaborate volume merely summarizes what he has written more thoroughly elsewhere. The illustrations, however, are interesting.

(HLAS 30 [1968], item 4654, Gilbert Chase)

Academia Nacional de la Historia. *En torno a la historia de Caracas, Discurso de incorporación como individuo de número del señor Don José Antonio Calcaño. Contestación del académico señor Don Ramón Díaz Sánchez: acto celebrado el día 6 de julio de 1967.* Caracas: [Dirección Técnica del Ministerio de Educación], 1967. 29 p.

Academia Nacional de la Historia. *La leyenda de El Dorado; su historia e influencia en la Venezuela antigua. Discurso de incorporación como individuo de número del señor Don Jerónimo Martínez Mendoza. Contestación del Académico señor Don José Antonio Calcaño. Acto celebrado el día 6 de diciembre de 1967.* Caracas: [Italgáfica], 1967. 66 p.

Manuel Díaz Rodríguez [1871-1927]. *Obras selectas.* Prólogo: José Antonio Calcaño. Madrid-Caracas: Ediciones Edime, 1968. xvi, 1213 p., retrato. [Clásicos y modernos hispano-americanos]

Biografía de el Padre Sojo. Caracas: Ministerio de Educación, Dirección General, Departamento de Publicaciones, 1973. 60 p., 10 illustrations. [Colección biografías escolares, 18]

José Ángel Lamas. [Caracas]: Concejo Municipal del Distrito Federal, 1975. 14 p., illustrations.

"Las maracas y el botuto venezolanos," *Música* (La Habana), 52 (May-June, 1975), p. 23-28.

Data on indigenous instruments extracted from early explorers and missionaries. Reprinted from *Contribución al estudio de la música en Venezuela* (1939). (HLAS 38 [1976], item 9191, Robert Stevenson)

El Atalaya. Nuevos estudios antiguos. Caracas: Monte Avila Editores, 1977. 199 p., bibliography, illustrations.

This anthology of 30 allocutions and essays contains five sections of signal value to musical scholars (the first two for organologists): (1) Las Maracas (2) Los Botutos (3) Las Músicas del 19 de Abril (4) Las Músicas de Ayacucho (5) Páez Músico.

In (3) Calcaño presciently observes that 1810 patriotic songs united the Venezuelan masses as could not the *Gazeta de Caracas*, broadsides, public speeches, or covert assemblies. One revolutionary hotbed was the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, where for a time were secreted papers from the 1797 conspiracy of José María España and Manuel Gual. Small wonder that Padre Sojo's mulatto musicians composed patriotic songs: witness Lino Gallardo's *Canción Americana* (again identified as *Gloria al bravo pueblo*, the well-known song carried along the route from Bogotá to Caracas by Madariaga in 1811). Not only did the 1810 camp of revolutionary minded musicians include the Oratory of St. Phillip Neri mulattoes José Antonio Caro de Boesi, Gallardo, both Landaetas, and Marcos Pompa, but also the European-descended Atanasio Bello Montero, Cayetano Carreño (who composed the music for Andrés Bello's verses beginning *Caraqueños, otra época comienza*), Juan Meserón, and the fiery José Rodríguez. What Spanish-speaking nation boasts a covey of colonial composers more unanimously addicted to independence than Venezuela, rhetorically asks Calcaño. Hence, the long continued favor shown pre-1821 composers in Venezuela, but in no other nations. So far as political leaders are concerned, Simón Bolívar himself on marches "though always somewhat impatient, tried to distract himself by singing patriotic songs [of local origin] in his high-pitched voice."

Calcaño concludes (4) with this important generalization: during independence wars military bands played not so much marches as the popular dance music of the day. At Boyacá during a decisive move the band directed by José María Cansino played a contradanza thereafter dubbed *La Vencedora. Juana Bautista. La Gachupina*, and the *Conga* were other popular dance pieces played by military bands. After Carabobo the four bands then present united to play festive music. At Ayacucho were present at least five bands—those attached to the Voltigeros, Legión Peruana, Número Uno del Perú, Rifles, and Vencedor battalions. Of these five the Vencedor band, comprising only large and small cornets, fifes, and drums, was nonetheless the most popular because of their zestful playing. The night before Ayacucho, General Córdova executed a feint by leading a small group of guerrillas accompanied by two noisy bands. The Spaniards remained on the heights—deceived by the noisy bands into thinking they were about to be attacked in full force. According to General Manuel Antonio López, the Voltigeros band on the morrow played a bambuco during the slaughter of the royalist troops. The most musically knowledgeable band director at Ayacucho was Juan Antonio de Velasco of Popayán, son of a Bogotá cathedral organist. When Simón Bolívar entered Bogotá on November 17, 1826, Velasco conducted his own version of Rossini's overture to *Tancredi* (Venice, February 6, 1813).

"Páez Musico," last of the historical essays in *El Atalaya*, recapitulates several paragraphs published as liner notes for the LP recorded under auspices of the Venezuelan Oficina Central de Información to commemorate the centenary of the death of the first president of separated Venezuela, José Antonio Páez (1790-1873). The LP, entitled *Dos Canciones del General Páez* (PETH-002), rates as a historical treasure—containing as it does the only songs (text and music)

by a nineteenth-century American president (besides writing the liner notes dated "Mayo de 1973," Calcaño played the piano accompaniment for the recorded songs). With wealth of fascinating detail, Calcaño in liner notes and present amplified essay analyzes Páez's two songs composed at Buenos Aires in about 1868—*La Flor del Retiro* and *Escucha Bella María*. Both were copied in the María Eugenia Carranza album now deposited at the Museo Nacional in Buenos Aires. The 1973 recording adheres scrupulously to Páez's manuscript. Evencio Castellanos's choral arrangement of the first song was published by the Venezuelan Ministerio de Educación, Dirección General, Departamento de Publicaciones, in 1973.