

Chopin in Mexico



THE DUTCH PIANIST Ernst Lübeck (1829–1876)—fresh from triumphs in South America that he had shared with the Dutch violinist Frans Coenen (1826–1904)¹—played Chopin's *Grande Polonaise brillante*, Op. 22, as a request number at their fourth Mexico City concert in the Teatro Santa Anna Saturday, January 21, 1854.² During the next fifteen years Chopin's Mexican prestige grew to such an extent that in 1869 the theatrical critic Manuel Peredo (1830–1890) could urge all youthful Mexican composers desirous of writing tasteful piano music to take Chopin as their first model—then Liszt.³ Schumann, on the other hand, he recommended (after Haydn and Mozart) as a proper model for those wishing to compose quartets.

CONTEMPORARY CHOPIN DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH AMERICA

In the same decade during which Mexico began hearing Chopin played by visiting foreign virtuosi, the first Chopin work to be printed anywhere in Latin America was published October, 1859, by the Rio de Janeiro firm Filippone e Tornaghi in their musical periodical O Brasil Musical (not itemized in The New Grove, xiv, 446). This long-lived periodical, which began being issued twice monthly in June, 1848 (Música no Rio de Janeiro Imperial 1822–1870, page 72), contained in Number 273 Chopin's Nocturne in G minor, Op. 37, No. 1 (composed in 1838; published simultaneously at Leipzig, Paris, and London in June, 1840). Although the fascinating publishing history of Filippone e C.^{1a} founded in 1847 and expanded into Filippone e Tornaghi in 1855 cannot be attempted here, the Enciclopédia de música brasileira: erudita, folclórica e popular (São Paulo: Art Editora, 1977), I, 353–354, gives a useful résumé. Facsimiles accompanying the present article include overleaf the title page of O Brasil Musical, N.º 273 (courtesy of the Brazilian National Library Music and Sound Archive Section directed by Mercedes Reis Pequeno), followed by the first page of the music.

Concurrently with Chopin's growing fame in Mexico attested in El Renacimiento of November 16, 1869, South American west coast capitals began hearing Chopin played by Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829–1869).⁴ On July 3, 1866, Gottschalk interspersed the Funeral March among predominantly operatic fare at his opener in the

¹Concerning their Lima, Peru, appearances February 12, 25, March 3 and 8, 1853, see Rodolfo Barbacci, "Apuntes para un Diccionario Biográfico Musical Peruano," *Fénix*, 6 (1949), pp. 443 and 471. Coenen played a 1666 Amati.

²Enrique de Olavarría y Ferrari, *Reseña Histórica del Teatro en México 1538–1911*, 3d ed. (Mexico City: Editorial Porrúa, S. A., 1961), I, 545.

³See Peredo's "Revista Teatral" dated November 16, 1869, in *El Renacimiento Periódico literario* (Mexico City: Imprenta de F. Díaz de León y Santiago White, 1869), II, 192: "Si sois pianistas, estudiad como á excelentes modelos las obras de Chopin, Liszt, Prudent, Godefroidy y Schulhoff; si os dedicais á la composicion del cuarteto, los de Haydn, Mozart y Schumann; si al instrumental, seguid la sencillez de Weber."

⁴According to Luis Ricardo Fors, *Gottschalk* (Havana: La Propaganda Literaria, 1880), Gottschalk played Chopin's *Concerto*, Op. 11, at his Parisian début in the Salle Pleyel in April 1845. At pp. 347–349 Fors retails Gottschalk's rhapsodies on "the inspirations of Chopin's divine genius."



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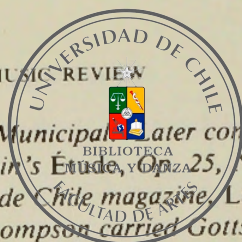
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Santiago de Chile Teatro Municipal. Later concerts through December 9, 1866, at Valparaíso included Chopin's Étude, Op. 25, No. 2.⁶ Two articles published posthumously in the Santiago de Chile magazine, *Las Bellas Artes: Periódico Semanal*, edited by Juan Jacobo Thompson carried Gottschalk's reflections on "La Música, el piano, los pianistas." In the July 24, 1873, issue (II/2, pages 9-10) he praised Chopin's Prélude, Op. 28, No. 9, as a revelation of the Eternal. (It was this prélude that had been the last Chopin item played publicly by Gottschalk at Rio de Janeiro October 5, 1869.) In *Las Bellas Artes* of July 31, 1873 (II/3, pages 18-19), Gottschalk recalled how intensely Chopin had recoiled from the unsympathetic countenances of his auditors in England and Scotland. By contrast, Gottschalk's South American audiences had eagerly accepted every morsel of Chopin's music that he had served them.

Théodore Ritter (1841-1886), who journeyed with Carlota Patti and Sarasate to Chile, played two Chopin waltzes on a Steinway during their inaugural concert in Santiago de Chile Teatro Municipal December 1, 1870.⁸ Giuseppe Ducci Buonarroti, a native of Florence chosen to represent an Italian piano firm in Chile, gave the first documented Chilean performance of Chopin's scherzos in 1877 at concerts in a hall located at Santo Domingo 68.⁹

Scattered notices of Chopin in Mexico City public concerts during the early 1880's include the touring violinist Eduard Reményi's performance of a transcribed Nocturne January 28, 1882; of Josefina Brito's playing January 8, 1883 of a Ballade learned in Europe; and of Albert Friedenthal's inclusion of the *Berceuse* at his September 3, 1884, concert in the Teatro Arbeu.¹⁰

Born in Pomerania and advertised as a pupil of Theodor Kullak, Friedenthal belonged to the company of Henri Herz, Ernst Lübeck, and those numerous others who when touring Latin America after mid-century could not content themselves with one nation, but had to travel the gamut from Mexico to Chile. In 1889 while at Santiago de Chile, Valparaíso, and La Serena, Friedenthal was to play an assortment of Études (Op. 25, Nos. 1, 2, 7, 11), the Polonaise, Op. 53, the *Berceuse*, various Préludes, and the two most popular Ballades.¹¹ A French visitor who billed himself as "Captain Voyer" when playing "delicate compositions of the famous Chopin" at his June 4, 1887, Mexico City début concert,¹² had the preceding year toured Brazil and Chile as soloist with a military band.¹³

⁶Eugenio Pereira Salas, *Historia de la Música en Chile (1850-1900)* (Santiago de Chile: Universidad de Chile, 1957), p. 122.

⁷Robert Stevenson, "Gottschalk en el oeste sudamericano," *Boletín Interamericano de Música*, número 74 (November 1969), p. 22.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 27. Giacomo Orefice transcribed this prélude for the apotheosis ending his four-act opera *Chopin* (Milan: Casa Musicale Sonzogno, pp. 182-185. See below, p. 43, concerning the first production of this opera at Mexico City.

⁹Pereira Salas, p. 132. On his return to Paris, Ritter published an orchestral *Zamacueca, souvenir de Valparaíso* (Paris: Heugel et fils [plate no. H. 6803]), score and parts of which are in the University of California, Berkeley, Music Library.

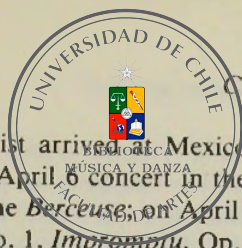
¹⁰Pereira Salas, p. 186.

¹¹Olavarría y Ferrari, II, 1062, 1064, 1110.

¹²Pereira Salas, p. 209. Friedenthal made his Santiago de Chile début at the Círculo Católico.

¹³Olavarría y Ferrari, II, 1195.

¹⁴Pereira Salas, p. 200.



A different breed of touring pianist arrived at Mexico City in April of 1890: Eugen d'Albert (1864–1932). At his April 6 concert in the Teatro Nacional, given conjointly with Sarasate, he played the *Berceuse*; on April 8 the *Polonaise*, Op. 53; on April 10, the *Nocturne*, Op. 48, No. 1, *Impromptu*, Op. 36, and *Ballade*, Op. 23; on April 12, the *Sonata*, Op. 58; on Sunday April 13 at a popular concert, the *Nocturne*, Op. 9, No. 2, and *Ballade*, Op. 47. Still not satiated, the Mexico City public heard him Tuesday night, April 15, play various unspecified Études from Op. 25.

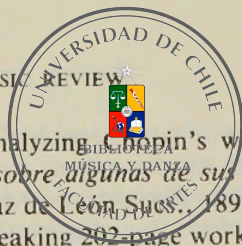
II

Every touring as well as national artist who played at Mexico City during the 1890's made Chopin a specialty. The *danza*-composer Ignacio Cervantes Kavanagh (1847–1905), who on June 26, 1891, joined the Cuban violinist Rafael Díaz Albertini (1857–1928) in a concert at the Gran Teatro Nacional, played Chopin's *Scherzo*, Op. 31, and on July 19, 1891, the *Mazurka*, Op. 24, No. 4. The Mexican pianist and composer Julio Muirón played the *Polonaise*, Op. 40, No. 1, August 24, 1891, in the Gran Teatro. The Spanish virtuoso Alberto Jonás (1868–1943) opened at the Gran Teatro August 6, 1892, with a program highlighted by the *Berceuse*. The Puerto Rican pianist living in New York City, Gonzalo Núñez, emphasized Chopin in 1893 and again on February 9, 1895, at the hall of the Mexico City Conservatorio Nacional. On June 26, 1895, Ricardo Castro—the most acclaimed Mexican pianist of his generation and one of the two or three premier Porfirian composers—played Chopin's *Concerto*, Op. 11, at the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, under the sponsorship of the Sociedad Filarmónica Mexicana. On July 20, 1895, Belgian violinist Ovide Musin (1854–1929) played a transcribed Nocturne at the national conservatory small hall. Taking a cue from the many visiting virtuosos, the Mexican violinist Arturo Aguirre played the *Nocturne*, Op. 9, No. 2, at his Gante Church recital April 26, 1898. The best Mexican young generation pianists in the late 1890's, Luis Moctezuma (1875–1954) and Joaquín Villalobos (both of them Carlos J. Meneses [1863–1929] pupils), won more praise in Mexico City newspapers for their Chopin than anything else that they played.

III

To climax the 1890's decade, Eduardo Gariel (Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico, August 5, 1860; Tacubaya, D. F., Mexico, March 15, 1923)¹⁴ published the first book

¹⁴According to Juan de Dios Peza, "Eduardo Gariel Pianista y compositor mexicano," *El Renacimiento*, 2^{da} época (1894), 251–253, his father—the French-born Dionisio Gariel—provided Benito Juárez with a coach in which to escape from Monterrey to the United States border. His mother was Rosa García of Cadereyta Jiménez. Looking to medicine as a career, the youthful Eduardo studied at the Colegio Civil in Monterrey while concurrently taking piano lessons from Alberto Daumic. He learned harmony from a Paris Conservatoire text, meantime beginning a musical library that by 1893 contained every published edition of Chopin's works and every published Chopin biography or monograph. Among other selections, Peza heard Gariel play the *Ballade*, Op. 23, two *Valses*, Op. 34, No. 2 and Op. 64, No. 2, a *Nocturne*, Gottschalk's *Il Trovatore* and an unspecified *Faust* transcription, original *danzas* that had been reviewed in the *Correo Musical* of New York City, and various other works. In 1900 Gariel moved to Mexico City where from 1908 to 1915 he taught in the Escuela Normal for ladies and from 1915 to 1917 taught harmony and pedagogy in the Conservatorio Nacional. In 1917 he became director of the Escuela Nacional de Música y Arte Teatral at Mexico City. After a government-sponsored visit to the United States to study methods of music instruction, his 56-page *Nuevo sistema de armonía, basado en cuatro acordes fundamentales* was published at New York by G. Schirmer (1916) in parallel Spanish and English editions.



in the Spanish language analyzing Chopin's work—*Chopin La tradición de su música, y consideraciones sobre algunas de sus obras y manera de interpretarlas* (Mexico City: Francisco Díaz de León Suñer, 1895). So great were the international repercussions of this pathbreaking 202-page work that *Rivista Musicale Italiana*, III (1896), 78–91 and 497–513, published translated excerpts entitled “Il ritmo e l'interpretazione nelle opere di Chopin.”¹⁵ In the excerpts, Gariel (who had studied with a pupil of Marmontel, Alberto Daumic, and who in 1885 began teaching music and languages at the Escuela Normal in Saltillo) compared phrasing and expression marks in five editions of the *Berceuse* and of the first two *Ballades*, Opp. 23 and 38.

Praising Gariel's book extravagantly, Felipe Pedrell wrote him a letter dated October 25, 1895, asking permission to publish his portrait and biography in *Ilustración Musical Hispano-Americana*, “now in its ninth year,” along with various extracts from his book.¹⁶

Because of the worthy and elevated contribution that you have made to esthetics and musical literature, you deserve to be enrolled among the most significant talents of your gracious country. I have brought your work to the attention of the director of our National School of Music, who liked it enormously, and we have decided to do all possible for its diffusion among our colleagues.

Mathis Lussy (1828–1910), renowned Swiss-born theorist, wrote Gariel an encomiastic letter dated at Paris November 7, 1895, highlighted by such sentiments as these: “Your book interests me in the highest degree; it is richly documented and it proves you to be a conscientious worker enamoured of our art.”¹⁷ Maurice Kufferath's *Le Guide Musical* (Brussels), issue of December 8, 1896, led the procession of European journals praising Gariel's volume.

What course of events motivated Gariel's book? Dr. Jesús C. Romero Villa (1893–1958) tells the circumstances in his monograph, *Chopin en México* (Mexico City: Imprenta Universitaria, 1950), pages 34–40.

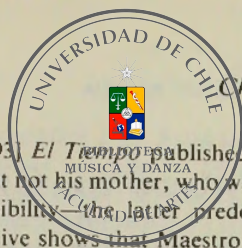
On August 20, 1893, the Mexico City daily *El Tiempo* published Melesio Morales's article “Chopin, su 2º. Scherzo y algunas consideraciones acerca de su música y modo de interpretarla.” Not only did Morales question the French sympathies of Mexico's Chopin idolators in this article but also their exaggerated worship of Romanticism. Beginning his article with an inversion of Chopin's Christian names and the wrong statement that Chopin was born of “French parents,” Morales proceeded to class Chopin as a second-rater in comparison with Beethoven and Mendelssohn.

Contrary to public expectation, Gustavo E. Campa—the acknowledged leader of the Franco-philés—did not make the anticipated response. Rather, the reply came from Eduardo Gariel,

¹⁵*Diccionario de la música Labor*, ed. Joaquín Peña and Higinio Anglés (Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1954), I, 668b, misapprehends the *Rivista Musicale Italiana* translated excerpts as an independent work.

¹⁶Olavarría y Ferrari, *Reseña histórica*, 1961 ed., III, 1726: “desde luego merece usted ser señalado entre los primerísimos de su simpático país que por manera tan digna y levantada han pagado preciosa contribución a la estética y literatura musical; habiendo comunicado al Director de nuestra Escuela Nacional de Música la obra de usted, la cual le ha gustado muchísimo, hemos convenido en hacer por ella cuanto se merece, recomendándola al claustro de profesores; quiero obsequiar a usted y a su obra en mi Revista *La Ilustración*, que va a entrar en el noveno año de su publicación, publicando su retrato, su biografía, un extracto de su libro sobre Chopin, y su Valse o las dos Danzas, si me da permiso para reproducirlas.”

¹⁷*Ibid.*: “Votre livre m'intéresse au plus haut point; il est très documenté et il prouve que vous êtes un travailleur consciencieux et amoureux de notre art.”



located at Saltillo. On September 10 [1893] *El Tiempo* published Gariel's article correcting Morales. "Chopin's father was French, but not his mother, who was Polish. His temperament blended French vivacity and Slavic sensibility—the latter predominating. . . . To qualify Chopin's harmonic progressions as defective shows that Maestro Morales insists on making Pegasus walk in the paths of a pedestrian harmony textbook. Like Beethoven and Bach, Chopin was a genius, well ahead of his epoch. The treatise codifying Chopin's harmonic procedures remains to be written. Would we not therefore do better to join Chopin's harmony teacher, Elsner, and let Chopin follow his own bent? Elsner rightly foresaw that Chopin's achievements would surpass the commonplace, "because his talent surpasses the usual; he makes his own rules, and reveals originality beyond that encountered in anyone else."

Gariel's September 10 article, linking Chopin's Mexican partisans—Meneses, Campa, Castro, and the deceased Felipe Villanueva (1862–1893)—with progress, caused a sensation among Mexican musicians. More especially it did so because Melesio Morales (1838–1908) had long occupied a chief niche of honor in the Mexican music pantheon. Against better judgment, Morales two weeks later returned to the fray with an article published in *El Tiempo* of September 24. After mouthing irrelevancies attacking Darwin's theory of evolution and the derived doctrine of progress, Morales showed his further ignorance when he complained that "Chopin wrote no orchestral pieces, nor did he produce any large work; in contrast with the truly great, he wrote nothing except piano pieces." Continuing, Morales contended that Mexican piano repertoires would suffer no irreparable loss without Chopin's music—which according to him had been thrust down the throats of Mexican audiences against public desire. Showing how partial he could be, Morales then drew up a list of the Mexican pianists whom he considered most in tune with the 1890's. Not one acknowledged partisan of Chopin's music entered his list—Morales omitting even Castro and Meneses.¹⁸

Gariel's riposte in *El Tiempo* of October 22, [1893] contained such sentiments as these: "Morales says he will not discuss, because discussion never persuades. I say that historical truths can persuade the impartial reader. Chopin enthusiasts include such diverse nationalities as Schumann, Rubinstein, and Marmontel. Morales's partiality permits his excluding even Gustavo E. Campa from his list of Mexican notables, because Campa champions Chopin." With this retort, Gariel so wounded Goliath that *El Tiempo* refused to publish mad Morales's next even more caustic letter.¹⁹

IV

Denied any further forum in *El Tiempo*, Morales reversed himself. Now Chopin's friend, he wrote an article for *El Renacimiento*, segunda época (1894), 54–55, entitled "Notación Musical Mexicana," in which he demonstrated how Chopin would have notated his cello *Étude*, Op. 25, No. 7, had he known the Mexican notation system exhibited by its inventor Juan Nepomuceno Adorno (1807–1883) at the Paris Exposition universelle de l'industrie of 1855. Morales did not claim to have himself read Adorno's 39-page tract, *Mélographie, ou Nouvelle Notation musicale* (Paris: Firmin Didot frères, 1855). Instead, he acknowledged that F.-J. Fétis's 625-word article on Adorno published in the second edition of *Biographie universelle des musiciens* (1883), 1, 22, had taught him the system.

¹⁸Romero Villa, *Chopin en México*, pp. 38–39, quoted a letter from the eminent physician and public health official, Eduardo Liceaga (1839–1920), to Vicente Riva Palacio (1832–1896), Mexican minister plenipotentiary to the courts at Madrid and Lisbon. Among Morales's inconsistencies and errors mentioned in Liceaga's letter, Morales pretended that he and Gariel differed merely because they consulted different authorities. But how can Morales brave out the argument when he is so ignorant of Chopin's works as to pretend that Chopin never wrote anything for orchestra, with the concertos at hand to disprove him? continues Liceaga.

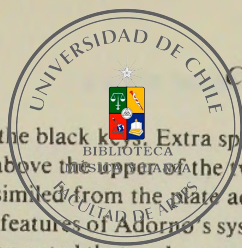
¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 39–40. Ironically, the Banda del Estado Mayor conducted by Nabor Vázquez played Chopin's Funeral March at the memorial for him held at the Conservatorio Nacional May 15, 1908 (Morales died at San Pedro de los Pinos, D. F., May 12, 1908).



TROZO DE CHOPIN

escrito con la NOTACION MEXICANA.

Lento.



The five lines in Adorno's staff represent the black key. Extra space separates the two paired lower lines from the three upper. E goes above the upper of the two lines, F below the lowest of the three. Morales's transcription, facsimiled from the plate accompanying his *El Renacimiento* article, reveals other characteristic features of Adorno's system. Not under any illusion that the system would catch on, Morales lamented that such a worthy invention would have to continue "sleeping in the Pantheon of memory, like its unfortunate inventor," until Mexicans began taking greater pride in their own native-born creative minds.

The same *El Renacimiento* volume containing Melesio Morales's act of reparation includes also chapter I of Gariel's forthcoming 1895 book. In this foretaste of the book to come, Gariel seeks at once to emphasize the subtlety of Chopin's phraseology. Side by side he offers the D♭ middle section of Chopin's C# minor *Valse*, Op. 64, No. 2, and a bowdlerized version. With its ideas in cabined, cribbed, and confined four-bar phrases such as a pedestrian composer would write, all Chopin's perfume vanishes.

V

NOW ACKNOWLEDGED AS A DAVID fighting Philistines, Gariel led the coterie among Meneses's pupils who became the self-appointed guardians of Chopin's Mexican reputation. Having disposed of doddering Morales, the Gariel group next presumed to dictate to all visiting virtuosi just how Chopin should be played. To illustrate: Arthur Frikenscher played the *Fantaisie-Impromptu* at his July 12, 1895, recital in the Teatro del Conservatorio. At intermission, the corridor critics decreed that Frikenscher's interpretation of this posthumous composition traduced Chopin—as if Chopin himself, rather than Julian Fontana, had delivered it to the publisher.^[20]

But the Meneses coterie's much more publicized effort to dictate how Chopin should be played took the form of a critique of Paderewski's first concert in Mexico City's Teatro Nacional Saturday March 10, 1900. This program included the *Ballade*, Op. 47, *Valse*, Op. 64, No. 2, *Berceuse*, *Études*, Op. 10, Nos. 3 and 7, and *Polonaise*, Op. 53. According to César del Castillo in the government controlled daily, *El Imparcial*:^[21] "We noted idiosyncratic tempi and accents in the *Ballade*^[22] and C sharp minor *Valse* that surprised us greatly, because the music does not indicate them, nor have we ever heard them [intruded by other players]. In the E Major Etude the abuse of the pedal muddled two chromatic passages."

Castillo's criticisms brought an immediate outcry defending Paderewski in the daily press of Monday March 12. Because *El Imparcial* was a Porfirio Díaz regime organ constantly alert to possible political repercussions, that same newspaper at once recanted.^[23] In replies by both Gustavo E. Campa and Ricardo Castro published on March 14—replies subsequently reprinted in *Gaceta Musical*,^[24] the house organ of the Mexican music firm A. Wagner y

²⁰A critic who styled himself "Conde Olaff" wrote as follows (*El Mundo Ilustrado*, July 14, 1895): "La ejecución fué discutida entre los conocedores y creo que los que no encontraron en ella lo que deseaban, no han tenido en cuenta la escuela a que pertenece Frikenscher y sobre todo, que nadie ha dicho la última palabra acerca de Chopin, ni nadie sabe al interpretarlo hasta dónde se puede llegar" (Romero Villa, p. 41).

²¹Romero Villa, p. 43: "En la balada y en el Valse en Do sostenido menor, notamos movimientos y acentuaciones que serán muy de su gusto, pero que mucho nos extrañaron por no estar indicados en las obras a que nos referimos, ni habíamos nunca oído. En el tercer estudio . . . creímos notar abusos de pedal que originaron confusión en dos pasajes cromáticos en movimiento contrario." Castillo also complained that Paderewski did not even play his own famous minuet as written.

²²After Parisian study, César del Castillo on April 28, 1908, included this *Ballade* in his Teatro Arbeu recital.

²³On Monday March 12, *El Imparcial* took to task the "virtuosos" who sat in front-row seats, talked instead of listening, and thus broke all known rules of correct concert deportment.

²⁴Olavarría y Ferrari, III, 1990. *The New Grove*, xiv, 447a, ignores the existence of this periodical that continued being published until as late as March 15, 1910 (Olavarría y Ferrari, v, 3241).



Prólento. *1º ritmo de 5 compases*

mf

2º ritmo de 4 compases

6 10

3º ritmo de 4 compases

14

4º ritmo de 4 compases

dolce

18 22

5º ritmo de 4 compases

26 *poco*

6º ritmo de 7 compases

avivando *ri* *lar* *dando* *mf* *mosso*

30

Detailed description: This page contains six systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The first system is marked 'Prólento.' and '1º ritmo de 5 compases', with a dynamic marking of 'mf'. The second system is marked '2º ritmo de 4 compases' and contains measures 6 and 10. The third system is marked '3º ritmo de 4 compases' and contains measure 14. The fourth system is marked '4º ritmo de 4 compases' and contains measures 18 and 22, with a 'dolce' marking. The fifth system is marked '5º ritmo de 4 compases' and contains measure 26, with a 'poco' marking. The sixth system is marked '6º ritmo de 7 compases' and contains measure 30, with markings for 'avivando', 'ri', 'lar', 'dando', 'mf', and 'mosso'.



Piu lento.

1^o ritmo de 4 compases

mf

ritmo de 4 compases

ritmo de 2 compases

dolce

ritmo de 4 compases

3^o ritmo de

4 compases

ritmo

de 4 compases



Levien that was responsible for bringing Paderewski to Mexico²⁵¹—Paderewski was absolved from all lese-majesté against Chopin.

SUMMARIZING THE CONTROVERSY for the benefit of Pedro Valdés Fraga (1860–1938), his son-in-law violinist who was absent in Zacatecas, Juan de Dios Peza (1852–1910), renowned poet, diplomat, and founding president of the Ateneo Mexicano literario y artístico—to whom Gariel had dedicated his landmark book on Chopin, wrote as follows: “I would very much like to tell you something about Paderewski. The classical musicians hereabouts rate him the size of a flea not able to interpret even his own minuet. They discern a thousand faults. He lifts his hand, uses too much pedal, mixes things up, and does not know how to interpret even Chopin. Behold the wise ones of my country, how profound they are! They would like for Paderewski, anointed with universal applause, to have looked them up and learned something from them. What a crime that the grand emperor of the piano didn’t have for a teacher one of them who knows and can do everything!”²⁵⁶

In contrast with the controversy stimulated by Paderewski, the next front-ranking international pianist to visit Mexico aroused nothing but perfervid praise. Teresa Carreño, brought by A. Wagner y Levien, played four concerts at the Teatro del Renacimiento February 26 and 28, March 2 and 3, 1901. Her Chopin (including the Black Keys and Winter Wind studies, D \flat Nocturne, and A \flat Polonaise) earned Ricardo Castro’s extravagant encomiums.²⁷ In tabular form, Chopin performances noticed favorably in the Mexico City daily press during the next seven years read as follows:

1901 Making its début at the Sala Wagner on May 30, the Octeto México plays the A \flat *Valse*, Op. 34, No. 1, arranged by Eduardo Vigil y Robles (1873–1945).²⁸

On November 2, Pedro Luis Ogazón (1873–1929), perhaps the most erudite Mexican pianist of his generation, plays the *Valse*, Op. 42, and *Nocturne*, Op. 27, No. 2, at the Teatro del Conservatorio. On November 16 he plays the *Concerto*, Op. 21 (with conservatory orchestra), *Ballade*, Op. 23, and *Valse*, Op. 64, No. 2, in the same locale.

On November 11, the Second Pan American Congress opens with a Mexican military band’s performance of the A Major *Polonaise*, Op. 40., No. 1, arranged by Glazunov.

1902 On January 1, Pedro Luis Ogazón plays the *Polonaise*, Op. 53, and *Nocturne*, Op. 15, No. 1. On January 11 he bids farewell before leaving for New York City with a concert at the Teatro del Conservatorio that includes the *Valse*, Op. 42, *Polonaise*, Op. 53, and *Berceuse*, Op. 57.

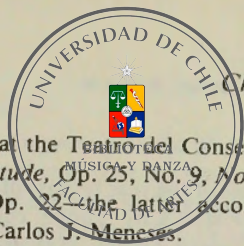
On May 8, Theodore Hansen, prominent Mexico City piano pedagogue who is chargé d’affaires for Russia, plays the *Ballade*, Op. 23, at the Teatro del Conservatorio.

²⁵¹Booking through Paderewski’s New York management (Hugo Goerlitz), A. Wagner y Levien paid Paderewski 3000 pesos for each performance (March 10 and 11) and charged up to ten pesos for seats. When A. Wagner y Levien brought Teresa Carreño to Mexico City for a series of four concerts February 26, 28, March 2, and 3, 1901, the highest priced seats sold for only six pesos. See Olavarría y Ferrari, III, 1988–1989 (Paderewski) and 2042 (Carreño).

²⁵⁶Romero Villa, p. 45: “Tenía yo muchas ganas de contarte algo de Paderewski. Los músicos clásicos de aquí lo vieron del tamaño de una pulga; para ellos no supo interpretar ni su *minuetto* y le encontraron mil defectos; que alza la mano, que pisa mucho el pedal, que es confuso y que no sabe ni interpretar a Chopin. ¡Qué sabios los de mi tierra, tan profundos! Habrían querido que Paderewski, ungido por el aplauso universal, les buscara y les aprendiera algo, pero ¿qué culpa tiene el gran emperador del piano, de no haber tenido por maestro a uno de ellos que lo saben y lo pueden todo?”

²⁷Olavarría y Ferrari, IV, 2042–2043. She also introduced MacDowell to Mexican audiences (his *Étude*, Op. 36).

²⁸Concerning him, see *Diccionario Porrúa de historia, biografía y geografía de México*, cuarta edición (1976), II, 2260.



1903 At his farewell recital on July 19, at the Teatro del Conservatorio before leaving for Europe, Luis Alfonso Marrón plays the *Étude*, Op. 25, No. 9, *Nocturne*, Op. 15, No. 2, and the *Andante spianato* and *Polonaise*, Op. 22—the latter accompanied by the Orquesta Sinfónica del Conservatorio directed by Carlos J. Meneses.

1904 After six years' study at Leipzig, Alberto Villaseñor marks his return to Mexico City with a recital January 9 at the Teatro Arheu attended by Porfirio Díaz and his wife. Opening with the Bach-Busoni D Major Organ Prelude and Fugue, Villaseñor migrates to what by now has become the inevitable Chopin group in any Mexico City piano recital (*Berceuse*, *Nocturne*, *Valse*, *Mazurka*, *Étude*). A year later (January 4, 1905) at the same Teatro Arheu, he adds to his repertory Opp. 22 and 31.

On September 28 (1904) the 25-year-old Asturias-born Spanish virtuoso, Benjamín Orbón, has the temerity to begin his Teatro Arheu recital with the *Étude*, Op. 25, No. 12, followed by Op. 10, No. 12 ("Revolutionary"). He proceeds thence to the *Berceuse*, *Ballade*, Op. 23, and *Polonaise*, Op. 53. On the same program he plays Ricardo Castro's *Étude de concert*, Op. 20. At the Teatro Arheu three weeks later, October 17, Orbón plays his own *Vals-Scherzo*, Op. 2, and concludes his program with Gottschalk's *Tarantella*.

1905 At the Teatro del Conservatorio on August 14 the conservatory orchestra, led by Meneses, opens the final event of the Cervantes tercentenary with Chopin's *Polonaise*, Op. 40, No. 1.

On August 18, A. Wagner y Levien displays at their premises (Zuleta 13/14) an Aeolian Corporation pianola playing Chopin's *Étude*, Op. 10, No. 1. The pianola numbers include also a Ricardo Castro *Caprice-Valse* and Felipe Villañueva's third mazurka.

1906 On January 22 Arthur Newstead plays Op. 53 on a Bechstein brought for D'Albert—whose Mexico City appearances this season have been cancelled.²⁹

On January 26 the Mario Lambardi Company performs Giacomo Orefice's four-act opera *Chopin* (premiered at the Teatro Lirico, Milan, November 25, 1901). This widely performed opera romanticizing Chopin's life³⁰ (libretto by Angiolo Orvieto) levies Chopin's melodies (each specified in one of 142 footnotes).

Returned from the United States, Pedro Luis Ogazón on July 27 plays Tchaikovsky's *Concerto*, Op. 23, at the Teatro Arheu, adding Chopin's *Valse*, Op. 34, No. 1, as encore.

At the commemoration for Rafael Ángel de la Peña (1837-1906; linguist, lifetime secretary of the Academia Mexicana) held at the Teatro del Conservatorio and attended by Porfirio Díaz, Meneses conducts the conservatory orchestra in an unaccredited transcription of Chopin's *Nocturne* in C minor, Op. 48, No. 1.

1907 Pedro Luis Ogazón's Chopin group at the Teatro Virginia Fábregas April 22 includes *Études*, Op. 25, Nos. 3 and 12, *Valse*, Op. 34, No. 1, and *Nocturne*, Op. 15, No. 1.

During a cycle of 24 chamber concerts, the Brussels Quartet uses as pianist the Leschetizky assistant, F. W. Otto de Voss. On July 6 he offers a solo recital at the Teatro Virginia Fábregas that includes the Waldstein Sonata, Handel-Brahms Variations, Liszt Don Juan Fantasia, and Chopin Funeral March Sonata. For encores he plays Liszt's *Tarantella* and *La Campanella*.

No later recital throughout the year, not even Octaviano Yáñez's guitar program at the Academia Metropolitana August 30, is complete without a Chopin group.

²⁹D'Albert's great successes playing Chopin at Mexico City in April 1890 did not prevent the Meneses coterie from opposing his return in the 1905-1906 season. Concerning their intrigues that persuaded the music-loving *ministro de hacienda*, José Yves Limantour (1854-1935), not to subsidize D'Albert's return, see Romero Villa, pp. 49-50.

³⁰Alfred Loewenberg, *Annals of Opera 1597-1940* (Geneva: Societas Bibliographica, 1955), 1, 1237.



1908 The Chopin apotheosis of the year begins with Josef Hofmann's traversal of 42 Chopin works during his eight Mexico City public concerts January 5, 7, 9, 11 (Academia Metropolitana), 12, 13, 15 (Teatro Arbeu), 14 (Salón Panamericano of the Ministerio de Hacienda).¹¹ In descending order, he programs 14 works by Schumann, 10 by Liszt, 10 by Rubinstein, 6 by Beethoven, 5 by Mendelssohn; 3 Schubert transcriptions, 3 Bach transcriptions; 2 Moszkowski pieces and 2 original pieces; single works by Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky. At the head of his Chopin offerings stand the 24 Préludes, the B \flat minor Sonata, the F minor Fantaisie, and A \flat Polonaise.

After vast amounts of lambent prose, the reviewer for *El Imparcial* concludes his account of Hofmann's farewell concert with this comment: "Finally, Hofmann taught us that Chopin should be reserved to consummate techniques, players well nourished in music theory, exquisitely cultivated artists who at the very least know from experience what are a great unhappy love and a great misfortune."¹² Various Mexican pianists resent *El Imparcial's* comparison of Hofmann's interpretations with their own. But after separating Ogazón and Villaseñor from the run of the mill,¹³ the reviewer still insists that paid piano recitals should "from now on" strive after Hofmann's ineffable standards. If average Mexican pianists stop playing Chopin publicly for a time and study him instead, all the better, declares *El Imparcial* reviewer—who in the issue of January 16 declares that "From the vantage of culture in general, Chopin must be classed with Dante, Shakespeare, and the Book of Job."¹⁴

Gustavo E. Campa, head of the National Conservatory from 1907 to 1913,¹⁵ wrote the most ecstatic signed article to appear during Hofmann's January 1908 visit. His article entitled "Josef Hofmann. —Los Preludios de Chopin.— Impresiones" debuted in *El Imparcial* on Sunday, January 12. Three years later he republished it in his *Criticas musicales* (Paris: Libreria Ollendorff, 1911, pp. 325–329). Too lengthy for translation, his reactions must here be merely summarized:

My remarks refer to Hofmann's third program [January 9]. Varied and eclectic, this attractive recital included a grandiose Bach fugue [Bach-Liszt Organ Prelude and Fugue in A minor], Schumann's inimitable, passionate *Études Symphoniques*, and three fanciful things [Moszkowski, *Caprice espagnole*; Mendelssohn *Caprice*, Op. 16, No. 2; Rubinstein, *Barcarolle*, No. 5, in A minor]. Placing them advantageously alone, like a bouquet of fragrant flowers amidst dazzling jewels, he played the enchanting complete [24] Préludes of Chopin. Never could I have believed how I was to be affected. I confess myself both amazed and converted. Amazed by Hofmann's extraordinary technique and immense interpretive ability; converted at the same time to a cult never before embraced by me—the piano. All this will be best understood if I add in all frankness that I have never previously been an addict of this most synthetic and commonplace of instruments, and among the more usual instruments probably the most monotonous and colorless—the piano.

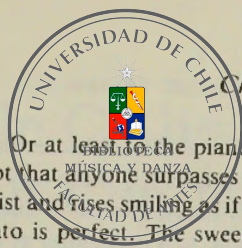
¹¹Olavarría y Ferrari, v, 3005–3006, and Romero Villa, pp. 51–54, disagree slightly on dates and places of Hofmann's Mexico City concerts. Romero consistently misspells Hofmann (Hoffmann).

¹²Olavarría y Ferrari, v, 3007: "Y nos enseñó, por último, que Chopin debe ser autor reservado para técnicos consumados, bien nutridos de teoría musical, exquisitamente cultos y que sepan por experiencia qué son, cuando menos, un gran infortunio y un gran amor desventurado."

¹³Both Villaseñor and Ogazón "learned from Hofmann" during his stay, Villaseñor even "soliciting Hofmann's counsel on various details of technique" (Olavarría y Ferrari, v, 3009).

¹⁴Romero Villa, p. 54: "Desde el punto de vista de la cultura general, Chopin debe leerse como Dante, como Shakespeare, como el libro de Job."

¹⁵Ricardo Castro, while director of the Conservatorio Nacional from January 1907 to his premature death November 28, 1907, had been instrumental in persuading the Casa Wagner y Levien to bring Hofmann to Mexico City. See Romero Villa, p. 50.



Hofmann has reconciled me to the piano. Or at least to the piano, as he plays it during this brief visit. So far as technique goes, I doubt that anyone surpasses him. He conquers the most astounding difficulties as if they did not exist and rises smiling as if not in the slightest fatigued after the most stupendous feats. His legato is perfect. The sweetness of his cantabiles, the transparencies of his polyphonic passages, and his gradation of dynamics, exceed all praise.

All these qualities, and more, he lavished on his interpretation of Chopin's divine *Préludes*. To describe his manner of playing them would be the labor of a bard, not a critic. To tell the truth, no words can comprehend the grateful emotions that his playing of them inspired among everyone present. Hofmann plumbed the depths and scaled the heights in these vast miniatures that are unique in the literature of the piano. These "poems of immense elevation and dramas of unequalled energy," as George Sand categorized them, require for their fulfillment the magic of a genius such as is only Hofmann—the supreme artist of our epoch!

After such panegyrics in 1908, Hofmann's return visit in 1909 seemed less successful only because none of his magisterial feats could any longer startle a public on tiptoe. The high point of his Mexico City visit beginning January 7, 1909, concluding with his Teatro Arbeau farewell January 22, and departure January 25 for San Luis Potosí and Monterrey (where he offered stopover concerts), occurred when everyone present arose during the Funeral March of the Sonata, Op. 35, played at his farewell to honor Alberto Villaseñor—Mexico's foremost Chopin player—who died January 22 [1909] at Orizaba of acute appendicitis. Hofmann also made history when he played during his 1909 visit the last public concert to be given in the Teatro del Conservatorio (prior to its demolition ordered by Eduardo Mancebo).³⁶

VII

On February 22, 1910, the Conservatorio Nacional paid tribute to the centennial of Chopin's birth with a concert preceded by Gustavo E. Campa's discourse³⁷ dedicated to Joaquín D. Casasús (1858–1916), banker, internationally renowned jurisconsult, author, poet, and *maecenas* of Mexican artists—especially pianists. The program, played by conservatory teachers and for its historic interest worthy of reproduction here, read as follows.

Ana Maria Charles: *Nocturne*, Op. 48, No. 1, *Berceuse*, *Préludes*, Op. 28, Nos. 24 and 16; Fernando Peña: *Nocturne*, Op. 37, No. 1, Eolian Harp Étude; Carlos del Castillo: *Mazurka*, Op. 33, No. 4, *Préludes*, Op. 28, Nos. 1 and 17, *Polonaises*, Op. 40, No. 2, Op. 70, No. 1, Op. 40, No. 1; Manuel M. Ponce: *Nocturne*, Op. 30, No. 2, *Études*, Op. 10, Nos. 10 and 5 ("Black Keys"), with *Mazurka*, Op. 30, No. 3, added as encore. Before Ponce's numbers, Sofía Camacho read Chopin's eulogy written by Rubén M. Campos (1872–1945).³⁸

Chopin during the Mexican Revolution gained added acclaim because of his pioneer use of national melodies in his mazurkas, *Grande Fantaisie sur des airs polonais*, Op. 13, and *Scherzo*, Op. 20. On September 9, 1917, Manuel Barajas established an Academia Chopin at his house (Avenida Francisco I. Madero 30,

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 63. The Conservatorio Nacional from its founding in 1867 had occupied the buildings of the extinguished Real y Pontificia Universidad de México (courses inaugurated January 25, 1553; closed in 1833 during the presidency of Valentín Gómez Frías).

³⁷Published in the Wagner y Leven *Gaceta Musical* of March 1, 1910; thereafter as a 12-page separata, and with the dedication omitted, in Campa's *Escritos y composiciones musicales* (Mexico City: Cultura, 1917), pp. 53–68.

³⁸From 1902 to 1915 Campos edited *Gaceta Musical*. See *Diccionario Porrúa*, cuarta edición, 1, 801.

México, D. F.). In June 1933 Luis Hecetzuma read a paper before the Amigos de Polonia at Mexico City published there two years later with the title *La música de Polonia. Chopin*. On January 25, 1935, the Polish legation bestowed on him the Cross of Merit, First Class, in a ceremony at which Ignaz Friedman (1882-1948), the Polish pianist, acted in behalf of his government.³⁹ Uniquely among American capitals, Mexico City still today boasts a 555-seat Sala Chopin that was opened at Avenida de los Insurgentes and Puebla for recitals and plays April 25, 1952.⁴⁰

³⁹Romero Villa, p. 73.

⁴⁰*Diccionario Porrúa*, 1, 616-617. The Ciudad de México *Directorio Telefónico N° 113* (January 1978) gives the address of the Sala Chopin as Álvaro Obregón 302 (y Oaxaca), Zona Postal 7; telephone 553-1380.