

Mexicans demand Classical music for all children

by Hugo López Ochoa

Nearly 3,500 Mexican citizens participated in one seminar and four concerts in Mexico City and in the state of Baja California, organized in mid-October by the Schiller Institute and the well-known Schola Cantorum choir, under the theme “Classical Music and Educational Excellence,” thereby giving birth to a national movement to restore Classical musical education in Mexico’s primary and secondary schools.

The project was originally proposed by Lyndon and Helga LaRouche, founders of the Schiller Institute, with the intent of encouraging a cultural renaissance based on Classical music. The idea took off following the historic concert of the St. Thomas Boys Choir of Leipzig, Germany, held on Feb. 7, 1998 in Washington, D.C. That concert, which drew 8,000 people, represented an uninterrupted history of 800 years; among its directors were J.S. Bach and Felix Mendelssohn. On the same weekend as the concert, the Schiller Institute also sponsored a seminar entitled “Excellence in Education through Music.”

In evidence at the Mexico City seminar on Oct. 10 was the same revolutionary spirit emerging worldwide in the face of the disintegrating international financial system. The 220 guests, including teachers and students of the most important musical institutions in the country, parents, and members of the Schiller Institute, concluded the concert with an enthusiastic rendition of the emotional “Va Pensiero,” from Giuseppe Verdi’s opera *Nabucco*, as a kind of proclamation against the International Monetary Fund’s dictated budget cuts—one of the main obstacles to restoring Classical musical education in the schools.

The great thirst for a cultural renaissance, reflected in the response of both the audience and the guest speakers, provides an opportunity to challenge the grip which Mexico’s culturally and sexually perverted “music mafia” has maintained

over Mexico’s cultural life for years. The Schiller Institute argues that great Classical music should uplift the population—“above the belt”—instead of plunging them into the pit of “sexual alternatives.”

The speeches that follow, by this author and by Marivilia Carrasco, reflect the views of the Schiller Institute, which has led the campaign internationally for a return to Verdi’s lower tuning of A=432 Hz, as argued in its textbook *A Manual on the Rudiments of Tuning and Registration*, Book I, which has appeared in English, German, and Italian editions. As Marivilia Carrasco explains in her presentation, citing the work of the Schiller Institute’s Jonathan Tennenbaum, the tuning is not a question of arbitrary “taste,” but of science. We also include the remarks of other guest speakers who have joined the institute in the effort to launch a cultural renaissance, but who do not necessarily agree with the institute on specifics of musical pedagogy.

Youth in harmony

On Oct. 11, seven hundred people attended a “Youth in Harmony” concert, presented by children and adolescents, singers and instrumentalists, all from Mexico’s leading music schools. The sensitivity, discipline, and concentration of the children served as counterpoint to the strong desire to transform education through Classical art shared at the previous day’s seminar. Youth from the National School of Music opened the concert with polyphonic works from Salazar, Pergolesi, and Vivaldi; the children of the Yuriko Kuronuma Violin Academy had a profound impact on the audience, especially one five-year-old who played “The Happy Farmer” by Schumann. A seven-year-old played a “Bourée” in G Major by Handel, and other Classical pieces were performed by 9- and 10-year-olds. The performances concluded with varia-



Maestro Alfredo Mendoza conducts a concert of Los Niños Cantores de Schola Cantorum, for the Mexico City seminar on Classical Music and Excellence in Education, on Oct. 11.

tions on a delightful theme by Mozart, which the precocious violinists played together in two parts.

The festival continued with 12-year-old clarinetist María del Carmen Flores, who played “Piece in G Minor” by Gabriel Pierni, followed by 12-year-old pianist Diana Sánchez Castro, pupil of the National School of Music’s Paolo Mello, who demonstrated great sensitivity in her performance of Mozart’s Sonata in F Major; and David E. Mirón Corral, a 15-year-old violinist who played the first movement of J.S. Bach’s Violin Concerto in A Minor, under the direction of Rosendo Monterrey.

The concert concluded with the Schola Cantorum children’s choir, led by Maestro Alfredo Mendoza. The polyphonic beauty of their voices was lent to the “Domine Deus” of J.S. Bach’s *Mass in G*, “Der Vogelfänger” (“The Bird-Catcher”) from Mozart’s opera *The Magic Flute*, Schubert’s “Widerspruch” (“Contradiction”), and “Canción” (“Song”) from Arturo Valenzuela’s “Alma de Niño” (“Soul of a Child”), among others.

At the concert’s conclusion, with the audience still on its feet in ovation, Maestro Mendoza proposed that the New Year be celebrated by holding “a monumental concert in favor of a New, Just International Economic Order,” an idea which was greeted with resounding applause. Verdi’s “Va Pensiero” was sung again, with Maestro Mendoza explaining that it became “the anthem of freedom of the Italian people against the Austrian occupation, and became a song forever associated with the establishment of sovereign republics.”

‘Only the best for the children!’

The preceding seminar addressed the challenge of creating a new renaissance, and of organizing a nationwide battle to assure that all of Mexico’s children, “including from the most humble of homes,” can have access to Classical education, and especially a musical education.

The slogan “Only the best for the children!” proved an explosive one, now that the Mexican government has decided to eliminate music entirely from secondary school curricula. Music teachers are aware that this threatens not only their own livelihoods, but the very existence of civilization. Forty music inspectors from the National Institute of the Arts, the supervisors of Mexico City’s 1,200 primary and secondary school music teachers, responded to the Schiller Institute’s seminar announcement by distributing literature among their networks.

“Humanity is the victim of a moral and cultural decadence which expresses itself in the tragic inability of governments to resolve the worst economic and financial crisis in history. We face a crisis of values and of civilization comparable only to the economic and cultural collapse of fourteenth century Europe, the century of the Black Plague,” the invitation to the seminar declares. “Nations suffer the imposition of brutal forms of colonial looting. . . . In the name of democracy and of tolerance, the universal principles of truth, justice, and beauty are being degraded. . . . Our challenge is to create a new cultural renaissance.”

In the seminar’s keynote address, Hugo López Ochoa de-