

THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 WEST 53RD STREET, NEW YORK

TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900

From: Herbert Barrett
Columbus 5-4640
5/7/40
Re: Mexican Music Program

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AZTEC, YAQUI, INDIAN, FOLK BALLAD AND MODERN MEXICAN
MUSIC IN CARLOS CHAVEZ ORCHESTRAL PROGRAM FOR
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

The program of Mexican music, arranged by Carlos Chavez, Mexico's foremost composer and conductor, will be inaugurated Thursday evening, May 16, in the auditorium of the Museum of Modern Art. For the first time the Museum directly sponsors a musical program, which, in combination with the exhibition of Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art, presents a comprehensive view of Mexico's great cultural tradition.

The program is divided into nine major groups, each representing an important period in Mexican history, and ranges from a special arrangement of music for Aztec instruments of the 16th century to the popular Huapangos, the gay love songs of the Mariachi, the popular Corridos Mexicanos and the traditional Yaqui music. Listed for first performance is an 18th century Mass by Don Jose Aldana, discovered in April of this year in the archives of the National Conservatory of Music in Mexico City.

An orchestra and chorus especially assembled for the series has been formed by Mr. Chavez. The first three evening concerts, May 16, 17 and 18, will be conducted by Mr. Chavez, and the series will continue for two weeks with two performances daily, at 2:30 p.m. and 8:45 p.m., including Sunday.

In his task of selection and synthesis of the music, Mr. Chavez enlisted the services of Mexico's most eminent composers, musicologists and specialists. They included Eduardo Hernandez Moncada, composer and conductor, who will assume direction of the Orchestra following Mr. Chavez' appearances; Blas Galindo, full-blooded Indian composer from the state of Jalisco; Vicente Mendoza, a distinguished authority on Mexican folk music; Candelario Huizar, Professor at the National Conservatory of Music; Luis Sandi, Chief of the Department of Music in the Secretariat of Public Education; and

Gerónimo Baqueiro, musicologist and critic, who has made an extensive study of huapangos from the state of Vera Cruz.

The first composition of the program is called "Xochipilli-Macuilxochil," and was written by Carlos Chavez in an attempt to recapture the Aztec musical culture known through actual discovery of instruments and through the Florentine codices. The orchestral ensemble will include the sea-snail shells; the teponaxtle, a cylindrical piece of wood hollowed out to produce a sound box; the huehuetles, great Indian drums; the omichica-huaztlis, wooden and bone rasps; a score of other percussion instruments like rattles, rasping sticks and drums of various sizes; and finally flutes of which there are many examples in the National Museum of Mexico.

"I sought in this composition," said Mr. Chavez, "to penetrate the totality of Indian culture. It is, of course, an experiment. But the Aztec musical tradition was strong, complete and deeply rooted and even today the pure indigenous music is still sung in various remote places in Mexico. In great religious processions we may still hear Indians playing the 'huehuetle,' the 'Teponaxtle' and their little flutes.

"But I should say that the Indian music which best preserves its purity in Mexico is not what remains of Aztec culture, but that of the more or less primitive or nomad tribes like the Yaquis and the Seris. They have preserved an almost archaic culture."

Luis Sandi, who has arranged the Yaqui music group, has tried to keep as close to the original as possible. The music is vigorous and dramatic and the orchestras have an astonishing variety of percussion instruments, including drums, water drums, rasps, bunches of dried butterfly cocoons, called "capullos de mariposa." In Yaqui music the melody is carried by a flute and each percussion instrument keeps up a distinct rhythm which changes from measure to measure.

In like fashion, many of the traditional Pre-Conquest hymns still prevail and Mr. Chavez used one of them in the final dance of his ballet, "Los Cuatro Soles," a ritual dance of adoration to Centeotl, Goddess of Maize. This ballet, written in 1925, represented a turning back to Mexican legend and art as a source of musical inspiration. Two of its dances make up the final group of the Museum program.

But the Conquistador did bring into Mexico a real wealth of

new music, new instruments, new melodies, new forms.

"This torrent of music," continued Mr. Chavez, "began little by little to usurp the place of the aboriginal music and it necessarily forms an important part of our program. In the first place there is the religious music, which follows the same course in Mexico as in other parts of the world. The 18th century Mass by Aldana, which we shall play, is a fine example of religious music of the late Colonial period, and the composer was undoubtedly familiar with the styles of Handel, Haydn and Mozart, although not in any sense imitative." The Mass was edited and arranged for the Museum program by Candelario Huizar.

Also introduced by the Spaniards was popular peasant music, such as "Jarabe," Huapango and many others. The program will include "La Paloma Azul," typical of the genre of peasant sentimental song, very much influenced by the Italian aria and romanaza. Italian opera was widely cultivated in Mexico during the 18th and 19th centuries, but the Mexican songs retained, however, a very special flavor of their own.

Finally, there is a group devoted to the Mexican Corrido, in many remote parts of Mexico the equivalent of newspaper, magazine, radio and newsreel. The Corrido singer is a modern troubadour, whose songs deal with crimes, natural catastrophes, railroad wrecks, wars and even the international monetary crisis. Frequently as part of their performance, brightly colored handkerchiefs containing the words and primitive illustrations of the events narrated are sold for a few centavos to the audience who read them as the singer proceeds. Corridos are quite common among the Mexicans in California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. Included in one group of marches, waltzes and songs, selected by Mr. Chavez, as typical popular music of the Mexican Republic is the famous Corrido "La Adelita," an anonymous ballad of the 1910 Revolution.

Tickets for the concerts, for either afternoon or evening performances, are one dollar, which includes admission to the exhibition of Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art. Tickets for the first three evening concerts, conducted by Mr. Chavez, are priced at \$3.00 each. Reservations may be made at the Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York City.

MEXICAN MUSIC PROGRAM

Arranged and Directed by Carlos Chavez

Auditorium of the Museum of Modern Art

Conductors: Carlos Chavez - First Three Evening Concerts,
May 16, 17, 18 at 8:45 P.M.

Eduardo Hernandez Moncada - Friday and Saturday
afternoons, May 17 and 18 at 2:30 P.M. and
2 performances daily, 2:30 P.M. and 8:45 P.M.
from May 19 through May 29, including Sunday.

- I. Xochipili-Macuilxochil Carlos Chavez
Music for Pre-Conquest Instruments
(16th Century)
- II. Sones Mariachi arranged by Blas Galindo
For Orchestra
(18th and 19th Centuries)
- III. Corridos Mexicanos arranged by Vicente Mendoza
For Orchestra and Chorus
(18th, 19th and 20th Centuries)
- IV. Mass by Don Jose Aldana arranged by Candelario Huizar
For Orchestra, Organ and Chorus
(18th Century)
- V. Marcha, Vals, Cancion arranged by Carlos Chavez
For Orchestra and Chorus
(19th Century)
- VI. Huapangos arranged by Geronimo Baqueiro
For Orchestra
(19th and 20th Centuries)
- VII. La Paloma Azul arranged by Carlos Chavez
For Orchestra and Chorus
(19th and 20th Centuries)
- VIII. Yaqui Music arranged by Luis Sandi
For Orchestra
(Traditional)
- IX. Two Dances from "Los Cuatro Soles" Carlos Chavez
For Orchestra and Chorus