

[From Late Editions of Yesterday's TIMES.]

STUDENTS' CHORUS HEARD IN CONCERT

Puerto Ricans Under Augusto Rodriguez Equal Debut of Group 3 Seasons Ago

When Augusto Rodriguez and the Chorus of the University of Puerto Rico made their debut here three seasons ago, their performance was so remarkable that it seemed inexplicable except as a lucky coincidence. A student chorus, like a winning football team, is subject to constant turnover; one's tenors graduate, and one has had it.

Last night at Carnegie Hall, however, Mr. Rodriguez and the current edition of the Puerto Rico Chorus matched their previous fine performances.

Much of the credit evidently belongs to Mr. Rodriguez, a Svengali on the platform. Like most good choral conductors, he uses a highly unorthodox beat. The singers, however, appear to understand it and give him what he wants.

Believing that an unaccompanied chorus ought to sing in tune, Mr. Rodriguez is exacting on this point. He moves among the singers before each number with a pitchpipe. The singers sound the chord almost inaudibly. If a section is sour in intonation, Mr. Rodriguez does not hesitate to make them sound their note again.

Attacks and releases are sharp, incisive and clean. Mr. Rodriguez' expressive hands draw out the subtlest nuances. Complex rhythms like those heard in the Latin-American songs last evening are deftly managed. It is the sort of pliant, supple choral singing that can be obtained only by hard work under a director who knows his business.

Mr. Rodriguez' performance of the Randell Thompson "Alleluia" was a bit hectic and characterized by an over-forceful downbeat. Henry Cowell's "The Irishman Lilts" and William Schuman's "Te Deum" were strikingly effective.

Also heard were religious chants, music of the Renaissance, Spanish

songs and a final group of "Caribbean Moods." The large audience greeted the performance with enthusiasm. J. B.

Concerts And Recital

Puerto Rico U. Chorus

Augusto Rodriguez directed the Chorus of the University of Puerto Rico last night at Carnegie Hall in a choral concert of real magnificence.

The choir contains two or three remarkable young soloists, and the general attack and finesse of the ensemble singing in an exacting repertory was a credit to singers and directors alike.

Clearly Mr. Rodriguez is a first-class musician in every way; his choral conducting is the most precise, dynamic and alive that this reviewer has heard in years; his sense of tension, of nuance, of esthetic mood pattern is perfection. His own "arrangements" are far more than just this; whole original compositions emanate from the very bones, the very marrow of the bones of the chosen folk materials, which is almost without exception of the highest intrinsic quality.

The opening Kyrie and a group of folk pieces originating in Haiti and Puerto Rico were Mr. Rodriguez' own, and shone among the other works for sheer quality and strength.

An American group included two little masterpieces for choir—Henry Cowell's "Irishman Lilts" and William Schuman's "Te Deum." The performance of the Cowell work was little short of miraculous in its clear assymetry and rhythmic life. The conductor's own version of "Shango," a Brazilian Negro number, was repeated amid cheers.

Mr. Rodriguez is one of those rare musicians who can absorb the essence of folk lore and give out a spontaneous modern composition that embodies all of its virtues, puts sophistication in place of simplicity without doing violence to the native musical character. Such composers are invaluable, for they return to current usage rich sources of supply.

P. G-H

Worcester Daily Telegram, Tuesday, April 7, 1953 3

Puerto Rican Chorus Makes Deep Impression

By RAYMOND MORIN, Telegram Music Critic

The chorus of the University of Puerto Rico, directed by Augusto Rodriguez, made such a profound impression at the Little Theater last night that this choral city of Worcester will no doubt rhapsodize about it for a long time to come.

The ensemble of 42 voices was presented to members and friends of the Worcester Association of Church Musicians. Introducing the group, Dr. T. Charles Lee noted that the large audience had been giving for years in their presentations of annual concerts of sacred music, and it was now their turn to receive.

And receive they did. There are so many things that distinguish these young students from any other group heard hereabouts, amateur or professional, that it is difficult to determine where exactly lies their strength.

Without Accompaniment

Certainly one of the most potent founts of their inspiration is Senor Rodriguez himself. He is not a melodramatic director, or one who describes his wishes in exorbitant gesticulation. Until one came to value the results, an interminably long time seemed devoted to establishing pitch. The entire program was unaccompanied.

Tones were set with a pitch pipe over and over again before each number. When it seemed unlikely that there could be any question of the opening chord, the procedure was started again.

But when each number began, it was in tune—undeniably, exactly and confidently.

We have never seen a group of singers who were more intent on their task. Each appeared to assume that he or she was the soloist of the evening, as an integral and absolutely indispensable member of the ensemble.

They had scores in their hands, but rarely needed them. Every pair of eyes was fixed intently on the director and control over facial expressions seemed of complete unimportance. In fact, it was nearly as fascinating to watch them as individuals as to hear them.

The program was in six parts, with duplications of types within them. The singing was in Spanish, Latin, English, Hebrew, Italian and Brazilian and Haitian dialects. All of it was clear and pronounced with ease. Their English, for example, was not pure but completely understandable.

The director's own writings were represented in four works. The opening "Kyrie Eleison" created nothing less than a sensa-

tion with its immaculate attacks and releases of tone, enormous digressions of volume, and the abandon of deeply felt singing.

More piously expressed choruses, like Rodriguez' "Jesucristo Es Tu Solo Rescate," Gretchaninoff's "Credo," and a Puerto Rican "Kyrie" were vocally prayed and produced some exquisite sub-pianissimos.

There was a wonderful array of special sounds, like small shouts at staccato speed in Henry Cowell's "The Irishman Lilts," growls and uninhibited rhythms in the Brazilian chant, "Shango."

Slave Lament

One of the most dramatic of their performances was the Cuban slave lament, "Mavari." The background was a pulsating and unrelenting beat in the basses, embellished with throaty sounds from the women's voices that sounded like gusts of wind, and over this flowed a modal lament.

A Haitian arrangement of the director's, titled "Haiti, Magical Isle" found its roots in the soil. It requires an attitude and feeling that isn't explained in any textbook.

The program also visited Argentina, Mexico, and there were madrigals from the Renaissance—all of them vivid and engrossing. Our own "Old Black Joe," and National Anthem weren't entirely traditional, but they were painstakingly sung and respectfully.

Music from Puerto Rico included the religious folklore mentioned, and works by the director, Campos and Hernandez.

Randall Thompson's "Alleluia" and William Schuman's "Te Deum" were resoundingly sung. And in conclusion the national anthems of Puerto Rico and this country.

As the audience stood, the moment seemed to symbolize what music can accomplish in the interest of two countries.

And in closing, our compliments to these leading soloists who helped distinguish the occasion—Evelia Ruiz, Ivan E. Irizarry, Emmanuel Maldonado and Augustin E. Lara.

NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE, SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 1953 - p. 8 -

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 1953.

CARNEGIE HALL, TONIGHT at 8:30

CHORUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO

AUGUSTO RODRIGUEZ, Conductor

"One of the foremost groups of its kind now before the public. A dynamic conductor with an individual and extremely evocative directorial technique."—Noel Straus, *New York Times*

"A choral group of the first order. Talented conductor."

—Francis D. Perkins, *N. Y. Herald Tribune*

PROGRAM: Religious Chants—Music of the Renaissance—Melodies From Old Spain—Contemporary American—Latin-American Songs—Caribbean Moods