

# A melodic evening with UPR Chorus

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Special to the STAR

The annual "Spring Concert" of the UPR Chorus was given Wednesday evening at the University theater. Once again, the chorus, under Carmen Acevedo's direction, showed itself to be a well-disciplined, well-rehearsed, and musicianly body of singers. As in its "Christmas Concert" last December, the full chorus opened and closed the program, with the middle parts being handled by the eight-member "Choralis Sine Nomine" and the smaller-than-full-strength "Concert Choir." The full chorus started with a set of four "serious" choral works and closed the evening with a selection of "popular" songs from

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Puerto Rico, Latin America, and the United States. Especially noteworthy were the selections by Brahms and Fauré in the first part of the program. Brahms was at his finest in writing for voices, and his "Schaffe in mir, mein Gott, ein rein Herz", for a capella choir, was give a hearty yet sensitive reading. The chorus showed it could manage a difficult contrapuntal "classical" work with aplomb. There were no ragged entrances; intonation was excellent; and as to dynamics the singers responded with one voice to Acevedo's guidance. The same can be said of Fauré's beautiful, flowing "Cantique de Jean Racine," which followed, accompanied very effectively by Teresa Acevedo de López on the piano. After his opening, which included fine renditions, a capella, of songs by Pablo Casals and Jean Berger, the "Choralis Sine Nomine" took over for a spell of music from the sixteenth century, from C. Janequin (born 1472) to Monteverdi (died 1643). I was very impressed when I first heard this group in the Christmas recital. I still am. Specializing in medieval and renaissance music, it

provides a happily contrasting, and instructive, counter-part to the regular choral repertory. The singers communicate an infectious joy and involvement in performing this music. On this occasion they offered, as the final selection in their set, a complex and dramatic work ("La Guerre") of Janequin, which required the services of a countertenor. The part was gallantly and deftly performed by Julio García. After intermission the "Concert Choir" performed Vivaldi's "Gloria," a choral cantata written, I presume, to be accompanied by a small string ensemble and continuo. Here it was accompanied by a typically awkward piano reduction. Teresa Acevedo did a skillful job, but the piano is not congenial to Vivaldi's music. Much of the tonal and harmonic depth of the work was lost in consequence. Nevertheless, the voices from the choir were well-projected and well-balanced throughout. There were some slight dislocations of tone in the soprano sections in the middle parts of the piece, but not enough to detract from the seriousness and effectiveness of the performance.

In the final part of the concert the full chorus sang

unaccompanied and, save in one piece, from memory. I was taken back in time and memory to the good great days of the University Chorus of the forties and early fifties and its founder, Augusto Rodríguez. A couple of Morel Campos' danzas opened the set, and it closed with Rodríguez' ever-popular and nostalgic "El Piragüero," whose tenor solo part was beautifully sung by Alex Castro, complete with costume and an authentic-looking paragua cart. (As an encore the chorus presented Rodríguez' famous arrangement of Rafael Hernández' "Amanece.") An excellent touch was provided by having two student singers, Julio García and Mayra Melecio, conduct two each of the shorter intervening works on this part of the program. They did a fine job. The chorus' rhythmic sense is flawless. The Negro Spiritual "Deep River" was given a poignant and expressive interpretation under Ms. Melecio's direction.

There have been many honors bestowed on Augusto Rodríguez, and there will surely be more to come. But the best tribute of all should be the knowledge that the UPR Chorus — an institution he founded almost fifty years ago — is not only alive and well, but is thriving.