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JOSE ROLON:
A STUDY OF HIS
LIFE AND MUSIC

R i c a r d o M i r a n d a - P é r e z M A.

PhD. Dissertation,
City University
Department of Music
April, 1992

020252507

To Nelly.

To Enrique

But flowers distill'd,
though they with winter meet,
Leese but their show;
their substance still lives sweet

W. Shakespeare

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Please note that the poor reproduction of some of the material listed above is due to the precarious state of the originals. This applies in particular to Cuauhtemoc and Zapotlan, -whose text is taken from a microfilm- as well as for some of the songs, which are mostly in manuscript form.

For the purpose of reference to the text of the Piano Concerto (chapters VIa and VIb), the reader may consult the copy held at Skinner's library (ref. RRL 4262).

A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s . -

When I first decided to study Jose Rolon's work not only did I know that the help of many persons would be required but also, that its success was in direct relation to the help received. Thus I would like to express my gratitude to those who have made this work possible.

First of all to my supervisor at City University, Professor Malcolm Troup, whose advice, support and always stimulating comments proved an invaluable guide. At City University I also had the advice of Richard Langham Smith, who kindly initiated me into the mysteries of musicological research in Paris. My thanks also go to Mr. Leslie R. Baldwin, of the City University Library who helped me with all the requests I had.

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In dedicating this work to Nelly Ben-Or, I wish to acknowledge her precious guidance as a teacher as well as her friendship and enthusiasm for my work, all of which I have been fortunate to enjoy for the past six years. Unfortunate circumstances move me to offer this work as well to the memory of Enrique Pérez Díaz, an irreparable loss to my life.

London, 1992.

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A B S T R A C T

This work is the first study on the life and works of José Rolón (1876-1945), a Mexican composer of paramount importance. It includes a general account of his life and music as well as a more detailed description of his most important works, such as the Piano Concerto (1935), the song cycle Dibujos sobre un Puerto (1936), and his two Estudios for piano (1935). It includes a catalogue of the composer's works and writings and in the last chapter, an account of his style, aesthetic position and place within Mexico's musical history.



José Rolón

I n t r o d u c t i o n .

The study that follows -the first of its kind- need not be introduced by a series of justifications if only because it belongs to an area which, to the best of my knowledge, has not benefited from any serious form of study. Apart from a few general works or small articles, Mexican composers have not been the object of any major research. I also believe that the potential a musicological work has -when carried through appropriately- of shedding some light on such an important aspect of human life as music, would seem to be of more consequence than any amount of justifications. It is common knowledge how scientists work from the premise that the explanation of a particular, limited phenomenon could eventually lead them to a whole theory of the universe. Whether this is true or not of the macrocosm is another matter but it would appear that musicology could follow a similar premise, this time in relation to man, the microcosm. With these ideas in mind, it should be understood that the following description of the circumstances which prompted me to undertake this work is only offered with the aim of inducing a better understanding of its characteristics and overall form.

General knowledge about music in Latin America, or in Mexico in this particular case, leaves much to be desired even among my fellow musicians. It seems quite extraordinary that such an important work as Rolon's Piano Concerto remains unknown, despite the fact that it represents the pinnacle of a century of piano music by Mexican composers. This at once leads to a much broader issue: Why is not the whole of Rolon's oeuvre better-known? During the time I have been studying Mexican music, I have encountered many works whose oblivion seemed inexplicable. I have also witnessed how a composer such as Ernesto Elorduy can be totally underestimated and set aside by reputedly "specialized" scholars. However, Rolon's case seemed even more perplexing. Here was a composer whose works could easily be compared to the best of his contemporaries and whose contribution to the evolution of Mexican music was beyond argument. Nevertheless, not only does his music remain both unheard and unheard of but, as with the rest of Mexican composers -with the exception of Chavez- this situation is linked to a total absence of research into his music.

Another extraordinary fact is the underestimation of Rolon's place in the history of Mexican music. In a letter to his daughter Rolon said:

Everybody is going crazy with
so many "isms": atonalism,

bitonalism, polytonalism,
dodecaphonism, serialism ..".*

To a contemporary reader, apart from their immediate meaning, these words of Rolon would seem to convey an unconscious abridgement of the times through which Rolon lived. Indeed, Rolon's life-span -from 1876 to 1945- seems to cover a period of incessant change. The October Revolution, the Mexican Revolution, two World Wars and, in musical terms, the appearance of Debussy, Schoenberg, Bartok, Stravinsky and others are all events and people that will alter the general evolution of both history and music. Rolon, by living in the midst of all these changes, found himself in a unique position. He did not start any change, any "ism", but it can be justly said that his evolution as a composer constitutes the biggest single leap experienced by Mexican music, hence his singular position and merit.

In Spanish, we have a meaningful saying which goes "Every stick has two ends". In attempting to do a study of Rolon's music this seems to be particularly true. While the lack of research meant that I had a free hand in choosing which work I wished to analyse or what aspects of Rolon's life to study in depth, the same lack of research meant the confrontation of more or less impossible situations. Only a few editions of his music

* Rolon, M. (1969). Please note this is a text by the composer's daughter.

are available -seven out of some fifty titles- to be more precise. No complete catalogue of his music exists. Of all the books written about Mexican music not a single one dedicates even half a chapter to his music. The main source of information about his life is found, besides his daughter's short account, in a series of small articles or dictionary entries, which either copy or contradict one another. This scenario prompts a crucial question: is his music not played because it is not worth playing or is it not played because it is not available? Perhaps those who know where to find Rolon's music think that, since no one plays it, its lack of availability is not important. At least this seems to be the attitude of some institutions in Mexico which are not even prepared to say whether they have access or not to the music. It is my cherished hope that the effort this work represents, however inadequate or incomplete, may help to change this situation and thus promote the performance of Rolon's music.

The study of the music by an artist like Jose Rolon brings to the surface a series of questions relating to the evolution of Mexican art in general and of music in particular. And it would seem that there is not a better time to attempt a revision of the evolution of music in Mexico than the present one. The celebrations for the five hundred years of Christopher Columbus' voyage are about to take place and still there are so many aspects

of the life and culture of Latin America that remain to be truly discovered not only by Europeans but -as in the case of its music- by Americans themselves. The implication of all this in analysing music from an aesthetic point of view will be explained as we proceed. What is clear is that it is about time for America to stop being an "imaginary invention" -as Edmundo O'Gorman has called it *- and instead undertake a true discovery process!

What follows is by no means an exhaustive study of Rolon's music. Such a task would require the effort of a team of musicians and the use of several resources which, needless to say, I have not had access to. For example, Rolon's archives in Mexico City would require to be classified and listed, so that easier access to them could be arranged. Rolon's family are willing to open their home, but the fear of theft or mishandling of their valuable material is more than justified. The original score of Cuauhtemoc, for instance, has been spirited away. This is the only score that contains the full text since other copies have missing pages. While this is perhaps the most significant loss to the archives, many letters, programmes and other such material have similarly gone astray.

* O'Gorman (1958) has revised the whole history and conception of the American continent. The implications of his ideas are far reaching and will be briefly described in due course.

It must also be said that I have deliberately foresworn -insofar as this was possible, of course- to write a biography of Rolon. His life will be recounted in a comprehensive way but relatively minor events will only be mentioned if they bear any connection to the music. For example, affairs such as his resignation as Principal of the Conservatory or his second marriage to Ana de la Cueva I consider either irrelevant to the music or too personal to be treated by a musicologist. My immediate aim, it must be stated, has been to describe Rolon's maturation as a composer, to highlight the contributions and implications of such a process and to propose a description of his style and aesthetic standpoint. It would have been impossible to do the latter without a rather detailed look into Nationalism in Mexico, and so it follows that, in defining Rolon's style, a new perspective from which to view Mexican Nationalism also emerges.

I believe -with anyone else who has looked at the matter- that Rolon's best work was his Concierto para Piano. Being a pianist myself has only strengthened this conviction and explains why I have given it considerably more space than any other of his works. Its analysis, as with all the other works, is intended to show, rather than to explain, its most important aspects. It is my hope that if I succeed in revealing even a few of the superlative features of this piece, it may encourage

others to explore the rest of his output and, ideally, prove me wrong in my charge of neglect! While attempting to analyse Rolon's scores, I found that its music demanded the application of a variety of analytical techniques. A Schenkerian, semiological or any other such approach would neither cover by itself the totality of the aspects that I wished to draw attention to, nor be appropriate for what I have here set out to do bearing in mind that this is the first study of its kind. Therefore, I adopted a more descriptive kind of analysis, rather than conform to one system too rigidly. At the same time, I have aimed not to fall into the simplistic traps of Mexican musicology of which I despair. It is high time for Mexican music to be analysed in a more efficient way and to leave off being satisfied with the one-dimensional treatments that have so often been palmed off in the past.

It may well be that many people who listen to Rolon's music may not share my enthusiasm for it. It may also be true that Rolon's music is unable to generate an "esthetic process" -as semiologists would have it- or has nothing to contribute for non-Mexican ears. Although I do not harbour any such doubts, nevertheless these questions have unfortunately emerged and been put forward during the time this work was being completed. Their appearance only makes even more imperative the study and performance of Rolon's music. The mine must be

explored before deciding if it contains any gold. We must tackle what follows, then, in the spirit of a musical adventure with what poor maps I am able to supply.

I. T h e E a r l y Y e a r s

To open the door into somebody else's life always proves to be a difficult task, and although it is clear that this is only done for the sake of a better understanding of the man and his music, the line that divides essential from unnecessary biographical data becomes less clear at some points. In Jose Rolón's life, such a point seems to appear at the very beginning.

Immediately, the researcher into Jose Rolón's life meets a curious difficulty which relates to the composer's date of birth. All biographies, dictionary entries, articles, etc., concur in giving June 22nd, 1883 as the correct one (1). However, during the course of this research, two facts aroused my suspicion about this date. The first of these concerned the rather short life-span Rolón would have enjoyed, having died in 1945. The second, a more improbable one, would have made him

1.- Not a single one of the authors listed in the bibliography who give Rolón's date of birth seemed to have cast even the smallest doubt on the trustworthiness of this date. The only exception is Jose Antonio Alcaraz, who in a recent article about Nationalism in Mexico (Proceso, 1991) gives the correct date when mentioning Rolón's name in passing.

sixteen years of age in 1899 when he got married and made his incredible journey on horseback to Mexico City in order to hear Paderewski. Nevertheless, there was no reason to believe that these events could not have taken place and in a preliminary essay about his work, as well as in my previous work concerning the evolution of Mexican piano music, I had to settle for the year of 1883.

It was not until I started research in Mexico City that the question arose once again, due to two different causes. Firstly, when I saw the original score of his piano Mazurka -composed in 1895 and named after his wife-to-be, Mercedes- it seemed extraordinary that a piece by a twelve-year old would be done in such an elegant style and, furthermore, showing such a talent for poetry, even if the theme of a birthday was not particularly transcendent. Secondly, the pianist Miguel Garcia Mora -Rolón's pupil and the only pianist to have seriously studied his work- pointed out to me that Rolón's date of birth could have been purposely altered for reasons that shall be discussed later.

There are two ways in which the date of birth of any Mexican citizen can be checked with a certain degree of accuracy: his birth certificate -which is a civil document whose presentation is compulsory in almost

every important procedure- and his baptismal certificate, which is a religious document of no relevance except for one's own religious marriage. However, even nowadays, it is not impossible to alter the contents of a birth certificate for one's own benefit so under the circumstances it seemed easier and more reliable to look at the archives of Zapotlan's church.

Garcia Mora's indication suggested -without any proof other than his knowledge of Rolón and his life- that Marialuisa had changed the date when Rolón married the pianist Ana de la Cueva back in 1937 in order to make it look as if her father was younger than he actually was. Marialuisa Rolón's own monograph on her father -a key text for any research into his life and music- conspicuously avoids any mention of Rolón's date of birth and only mentions briefly his second marriage, not even stating the name of Rolón's second wife. However, a few essential facts and dates slip through her text that permit a more accurate reconstruction of Rolón's life. For instance, we learn that Rolón was eighteen when he conducted the premiere of a Zarzuela, and that this took place before his marriage to Mercedes Villalvazo in 1898:

"Jose Rolón was then twenty years old and Mercedes eighteen" (2).

Thus, Rolón would have been born in 1878 and not in 1883, and with this perspective in mind, he would have been twenty-one when he travelled to Mexico City and his Mazurka the first fruit of a 17 year old in the midst of his first love.

Not only did these dates seem more realistic but I found amongst Rolón's own papers a copy of his baptismal certificate, which is a literal transcription of the original document made at Rolón's own request. In it, it is said that

"José Paulino de Jesus Rolón Alcaráz was presented for baptism at the main church of Zapotlán, state of Jalisco by his parents Don Feliciano Rolón and Doña Eduwiges Alcaraz de Rolón after eight days of being born, the 29th day of June, 1876" (3).

As there is no ground to believe that this document is either altered or false it would seem that Marialuisa's concern for the reputation of her father made her conceal certain facts about his life and work. It is possible therefore to conclude that Rolón's exact date

2.- Rolón, M. (1969). Also note that the different spelling of Rolón's daughter's Christian name was changed later. The double-name Maria Luisa was merged into one and so it appears on the above mentioned text.

3.- The words quoted are transcribed from Rolón's own copy, which due to its precarious state was not possible to photocopy.

of birth was June 22nd, 1876 and not 1883 as everybody believes.

José Rolón's childhood was spent in his native town of Zapotlán. It is not difficult to capture the atmosphere in which he grew up for even the geography of the place is well known for its beauty: a town by the lake of the same name, alive with dark herons and with the majestic Colima snowy peak standing on the far side. Rolón himself, a propos his symphonic poem named after his native town (composed in 1925), quoted this description of Zapotlán by the writer Guillermo Jiménez:

"The landscapes shiver, covered by the rain and a dense veil spreads over the houses of my town. There is the cathedral, which fades as if looked at through a crystal; there, the Seminary's palm tree swings its branches with the weariness of a dream, over there the shape of a forgotten garden can be guessed at. In the profile of the mountains, the silhouette of the pines cutting through the clouds..." (4).

Rolón's father - himself of French origin (5)- was a well-off man, administrator of both his and his wife's ranches. He was also one of the town's most capable musicians and it was through him that José learned the

4.- Quotation taken from the programme notes of Zapotlan's performance by Silvestre Revueltas conducting the Orquesta Sinfonica de Mexicanos, Mexico, 1938.

5.- Gabriel Saldivar and Orta Velázquez coincide in mentioning the French origin of the surname. Saldivar refers to the father as Feliciano Rollon.

first musical rudiments as well as a love for country life, with its disciplined work. His mother Eduwiges had received a strict religious education and must have cultivated a life where religion had an important place. It is probable that due to this atmosphere and the kind of upbringing it represents Rolón developed his introverted personality -a feature that, needless to say, sometimes placed him at a disadvantage.

Inside Rolón's household there were three instruments: a piano, a small portable organ and a harp that his mother used to play. Perhaps in the process of accompanying his mother on the piano, Rolón started to develop an interest in harmony and modulation. His parents, being aware of his talent, decided to find a teacher for their son. Thus it was that Arnulfo Cardenas, the church organist, started to give the boy music lessons, introducing him to more substantial music than those operatic transcriptions and salon pieces which he heard and played at home. Bach's little preludes and fugues, the two-part Inventions and some symphonies by the classical composers arranged for four hands opened the door for the child to richer musical horizons.

Around 1893 Arnulfo Cardenas died and without the prospect of continuing his musical studies, Rolón's interest in music declined and would only re-emerge when

a small Zarzuela company was created by his father a few years later. But the lack of a teacher, combined with the insistence of his mother that he should become a priest prompted Rolón to enter the town's seminary. There he developed a keen interest in mathematics, astronomy and literature. He read Homer and with it an interest for learning Greek and Latin also appeared. Fate, however, had other plans for the young seminarian who was to gain his first experience of conducting when his father fell ill and he was forced to take over all the Zarzuela performances -much to the acclaim of the whole town. Shortly after this, his mother died. Rolón decided to abandon the seminary along with any musical studies and look after his father's ranch. In 1898, Rolón married Mercedes and a year later a girl named Marialuisa was born. This was to be the first event of a transcendental and dramatic year in Rolón's life. It was also in 1899 that Rolón learned of Ignaz Paderewski's presentation in Mexico City. He decided straightway that he would attend the concert and two weeks after Maria Luisa's birth he set off to travel by horse the four hundred miles which separate Zapotlan from Mexico City accompanied by three of his sisters and brothers-in-law and three other men to help with the luggage, food, feeding and change of horses, and all such requirements that a trip of this nature demanded. The impression made by the Polish pianist on these musical pilgrims was so

overpowering that Rolón decided thenceforth to dedicate his life to music, leaving Zapotlan and going to Guadalajara, Jalisco's capital. However, three months later Feliciano Rolón died and once more Jose's future seemed uncertain. He was just starting to re-organize his life when in 1900, his wife died giving birth to a second daughter named Mercedes.

Needless to say, Rolón -with no brothers or sisters, no parents, no wife and two girls to look after- found himself in an impossible situation. Fortunately his godfather, Jose Garcia, travelled to Zapotlan to express his condolences and brought with him new hope. He, being a wealthy man and director of the bank of Jalisco, offered Rolón the post of manager of one of the bank's branches. According to his daughter, Rolón refused so the godfather made an even more tempting offer: to sell all of Rolón's properties, to administer the moneys from the sale and, with any profits, to sustain Rolón's musical career. Rolón agreed to this immediately and arranged for his daughters to be looked after by his sisters-in-law. In November, 1900 Rolón settled in Guadalajara, where he promptly enrolled in the piano class of Francisco Godinez -Arnulfo Cardenas's teacher- and in the harmony course given by Benigno de la Torre. He also had the opportunity to conduct more Zarzuela and operetta performances thus gaining further orchestral

experience.

Rolón himself considered his lessons with Francisco Godinez a crucial event for his development. Late in his life (1942) he wrote an affectionate account of his teacher, whom Rolón admired both as man and as musician. It is worth quoting some extracts from it as it gives an opportunity to learn about both teacher and pupil:

"His real artistic merits were supported by the opinion of his teachers, Eugene Gigout, Theodore Dubois and Alex Guilmant, all of whom dedicated to him significant works... On the other hand, his personal conduct was in accordance with his professional merits. A gentleman without fault, a rara avis nowadays, his charity and civic virtues were well known and he was respected and loved by all.

I went to him following my father's wish, and his influence in my formation was so decisive that I can say without any doubt that my vocation and my present musical orientation was determined by my contact with him... A passionate -almost fanatical- admirer of J.S. Bach, he knew how to kindle in his pupils a veneration for the greatest genius of counterpoint.

I can still remember his peculiar way of teaching, giving a cheerful class despite his severe character. An extremely careful teacher, he never allowed any errors, however insignificant. Least of all, he never permitted any sign of interpretative licence or bad musical taste. He was a sworn enemy of the frivolity born out of a false romanticism, a feature so strong and common at the end of the century. This was -to my understanding- one of his greatest merits as a teacher. On the other hand, this attitude had a perfect

explanation: Godinez was -by his temperament and inclination- a perfect classic" (Rolón: 1944).

Having described the course of Rolón's life up to the beginning of our century it is interesting to dwell on a few points of this period that later on were to affect his life and work. The special atmosphere of Zapotlan must be stressed. Of all the Mexican states, Jalisco is undoubtedly one of the regions that have contributed most to the creation of what is regarded as Mexico's cultural image. The Mariachi, (6) that group of musicians that seems to contain in its music the quintessence of Mexico, comes from Jalisco and Rolón must have heard its music endless times. He must also have heard the primitive sounds of another kind of folk-music, that of the native inhabitants, descendants of the Prehispanic tribes. Not only in the music, but in every other aspect of Zapotlan's life, that mixture of cultures which characterizes Mexico must always have been present in a distinct manner. Most certainly, this atmosphere left a mark in Rolón, giving him an almost innate sense of what it meant to be Mexican, a sense born out of the impressions -colours, sounds, tongues

6.- The name Mariachi is used nowadays to define an ensemble which performs a particular kind of popular music. Originally conceived as a voice and stringed instrument group (violins, guitarrón and vihuela), today it also includes trumpets and double-bass (always played pizzicato). Its musical style, easily identified by its singing in parallel thirds, its unmistakable cadence and its timbre, has become national symbol, being one of the few kinds of popular music to be enjoyed throughout the country.

and traditions- enjoyed by him during his early years. Rolón would later on refer to his need to express what was "his own" and this need is surely related to his upbringing in such a wholly Mexican milieu.

Rolón's quick progress must have been what prompted his teacher to suggest that he should go to Europe to further his studies. Jose decides to follow this advice and

"returns to the house of my grandmother, just to say good-bye. He suffers and doubts, his paternal love and a feeling of pity consume his heart. In this state Rolón abandons forever his land, his ranch, and his town Zapotlan" (Rolón: 1969).

Rolón's determination to leave for France not only was in accordance with the advice of his teacher but also with a conviction shared by most Mexicans that France -or to be more precise, Paris- was the centre of the world. It was this conviction which made it a foregone conclusion that if anybody wished to learn anything outside Mexico, this could only be done in France. At that time, French culture was the cynosure of all eyes -and ears- in Mexico as elsewhere. Admiration for its music reigned supreme amongst Mexican musicians, methods for music teaching were imported from France and titles of musical works could not be in other language than French.

Since the abandonment of the Italian taste -as propagated by Melesio Morales (1838-1908) and other Mexican composers of the nineteenth century- French music had become an all-prevailing model. The fin de siecle Mexican pianists such as Gustavo Campa (1864-1934), Ricardo Castro (1864-1907), Felipe Villanueva (1862-1893) and Ernesto Elorduy (1853-1912) developed a style of composition in which this influence was ubiquitous. Thus Mexican music and musicians wholeheartedly followed what they received as, and believed to be, French music, and if Rolón wished to learn any further musical skills it could only be from the French! Of course, Debussy had already produced several important works, but none of these were known in Mexico until later. This is worth remembering because it helps to explain what ideas Rolón himself had about what he ought to learn while in France.

Rolón arrived in Paris in 1903. He immediately sought out the organist Guilmant for whom he came equipped with a letter of introduction and who advised him to try and study with Moritz Moszkowsky, who was at that time one of Europe's best-known pianists, even though a problem of arthritis in one of his fingers had forced him to abandon the concert platform. Thus Rolón became Moszkowsky's student for the next two and a half years

besides enrolling in some of the courses on offer at the conservatoire: harmony and counterpoint, fugue, history of music and aesthetics.

Little is known about this period of Rolón's life. Not only did he pursue all the courses mentioned but he listened to as many concerts as possible, as well as attending different lectures and classes on subjects other than music. In 1904 he began a relationship with Eugenie Bellido, herself a pupil of Moszkowsky and a highly educated lady, in which love, music and a thirst for culture were mixed to the great benefit of Rolón. With her, he went to museums, the opera, exhibitions, the Comédie Française and all the cultural attractions which a place like Paris could offer. "Mimi" -as Rolón used to call her affectionately- is described by Maria Luisa as:

"An extraordinary woman (...) well educated, refined and sensitive (who) modelled the character of my father, gave to his life a new breath, injected his spirit with curiosity and reawakened his capacity for love..." (Rolón: 1969).

Once Rolón had completed his studies with Moszkowsky, the Polish pianist wanted his pupil to start a career as a concert pianist. Rolón refused to contemplate this, in view of his modesty of character, and perhaps sensing that an introverted personality like his would not be

able to cope with the demands and pressures of the concert platform. Instead he determined to teach, and Moszkowsky appointed him his assistant.

Thus Rolón achieved the first success of his musical career. And life at last appeared to have taken a happier turn. He made plans to marry Mimi, to bring Mercedes and Maria Luisa to France, and to continue in his post as teacher at Moszkowsky's side. Unfortunately, such a promising scenario was abruptly cut short by an incident which once again forced Rolón to change the course of his life: his daughter Mercedes died. So it was that after three most rewarding years in Paris, Rolón returned to Mexico in 1906 still entertaining the idea of returning to Mimi and France as soon as possible.

II. The Boundaries of Romanticism.

When Rolón arrived back in Jalisco, many problems were awaiting him as far as his personal circumstances were concerned. The turmoil caused by his daughter's death and his own return meant the total abandonment of his plans, largely due to the opposition of his father-in-law. His commitments to both Moszkowsky and Eugénie Bellido had to be sacrificed and the only thing for him was to settle again in Guadalajara.

The fact that he was, to a certain extent, forced to stay in Mexico after such a profitable time in Europe must have been the origin of Rolón's strong wish to create around himself an atmosphere that resembled as much as possible that of Paris. From France he had returned with a considerable improvement in his piano playing and a disciplined knowledge of such musical wherewithals as harmony and counterpoint. Rolón had also been in contact with a rich and progressive musical scene, the absence of which he must have resented.

In order to compensate for this sense of loss, Rolón started what proved to be a long and flourishing career as a teacher, not only with the aim of passing on to others what he had learned in France

but also with the idea of creating in Guadalajara the circumstances necessary for a vital musical scene. In order to do this, Rolón gathered around him a team of the most distinguished musicians that Guadalajara had to offer at the time, such as the violinist, Felix Bernadelli, the pianist, Jose Godinez, and his old harmony teacher, Benigno de la Torre. Thus the Academia Rolón opened its doors in December 1907, later on changing its name to that of Academia de Musica de Guadalajara.

Rolón's activities during the period 1907-1927 were mainly centred around his school and the promotion of music in a town that previous to his return had only enjoyed ephemeral bursts of musical life, with touring opera and zarzuela companies that came and went or the occasional appearances of some minor artist. However, the results of Rolón's work over a twenty-year period changed this situation forever. Out of Rolón's school, a small student orchestra emerged. With this ensemble, whose rehearsal room was the patio of Rolón's own house, he performed for the first time many piano concertos of the standard repertoire. As the school grew, new talented musicians emerged and joined in the musical activities.

Even though the Revolutionary movement had emerged in 1910, the turmoil caused by it did not seem to have

affected Rolón overmuch. He continued to work during the years of Revolution (1910-1920 approximately) and his life in Guadalajara appears to have suffered little, despite the dramatic moments through which the country was passing. Perhaps because of his academy, he found it easier than others to continue his work. Amidst the revolution, in 1916, his little orchestra, economically supported by certain individuals -notably the Caro Fernandez family- became the Orquesta Sinfonica de Guadalajara and, as such, carried on working until 1923. The school was also renamed, this time as Escuela Normal de Musica de Guadalajara. By the time this came to pass, the school is reported to have catered for some 1,300 students. Bearing all these facts in mind, it is by no means pretentious to claim that music in Jalisco could be spoken of as "before" or "after" Rolón's extraordinary contribution.

It is noteworthy that, although Rolón had studied the subject in Paris under André Gedalge, up to the creation of the Cinco Piezas para Piano op.12, Rolón's interest in composition played only a secondary role in his musical interests. Thus his development as a composer started at a relatively late moment of his life and progressed at a slow pace. Those works composed before 1911 cannot be said to be anything but occasional pieces written with the mere intention of capturing fleeting and unassuming musical thoughts. To this group belong

his already mentioned Mazurka (1895), a small Danza, the three salon dances called Bosquejos (Sketches), the Cinq Petits Morceaux and the Valse Intime, both composed in 1910.

Bosquejos, composed in 1909 and dedicated to Mimi Bellido, is made up of three short dances Coqueta, Amorosa & Risueña all written in 2/4 using triplets to produce the impression of a 2/4 6/8 time (ex. 2.1). This kind of rhythm had been a favourite of many composers of



Example 2.1. Excerpt from Bosquejos.

dances before Rolón copied it, notably of Felipe Villanueva (1862-1893), whose model -particularly that of his Danzas Humorísticas- Rolón probably followed although he did not match the invention and taste of his predecessor.

The Cinq Petits Morceaux op.3 (1910) -Historiette, Traumerei, Petite Mazurka, Canzonetta & Menuett- are much more elaborated works than their predecessors. Even though the originality of style which defines every composer was yet to emerge, these little pieces show a more organized musical mind at work. Perhaps the Petite Mazurka, Traumerei and the Canzonetta rank as the most interesting of the set. Their harmonic treatment shows that Rolón was quite fluent in handling the standard romantic progressions. However, the most striking feature about these pieces is that they reveal -besides their obvious French influence- an admiration for Robert Schumann's music which becomes audible through the way in which Rolón handles his harmony. Needless to say, the refinement of the former's music is a far cry from Opus 3, but in listening to these pieces one cannot fail to recognize that Rolón must have been familiar with works such as Kinderscenen, Waldscenen, and Album fur die Jugend. Example 2.2 aims to illustrate some aspects of this by presenting an excerpt of Rolón's Canzonetta together with two brief extracts from Schumann's Traumerei, a title which, needless to say, Rolón borrowed for another of his Morceaux.

The Valse Intime (1910) shows, in the opening legato and the ornaments a la Chopin (ex.2.3), a more pianistic approach to composing. The fact that the piece was dedicated to one of Mexico's most distinguished pianists

16
leggiero

m.g.

à tempo sfz sfz

♩ = 100 (72)
p

(pp) ri - tar dan - do

Ex. 2.2. Excerpts from Canzonetta by Rolón, and Robert Schumann's Traumerei, (from Kinderscenen).

and teachers of the time, Pedro Luis Ogazón, with whom Rolón had a close friendship, may have had something to do with this.



Example 2.3. Excerpt from Valse Intime.

Next in Rolón's production comes another set of piano works, Cinco Piezas para Piano. In these pieces, Rolón started to consider more carefully what the process of composition demanded from an author. If compared with their predecessors, they emerge as something totally different. Not only does the music command a more idiomatic style but the way in which it is crafted heralds the exuberant and complex pianistic writing which was to appear in later works as well as the willingness to explore and develop the use of certain musical devices -rhythm and modulation in particular- which were to become leading landmarks in Rolón's style. The fourth piece, for instance (ex.2.4), is written in a 5/4 time-signature while the title of the third piece, Valse Chromatique, speaks for itself. These pieces were the first to use all that Rolón had learned in Paris.

Animato assai

Piano

p legato sempre

Ex. 2.4. Excerpt from Prelude (Five Pieces for Piano)

The dedications of the pieces are worth a passing glance: the Prelude is dedicated to Laurent Ceillier, one of Rolón's teachers at the Conservatoire whom Rolón always remembered with affection and gratitude. The Arabesque is dedicated to Ramon Serratos, one of his favourite piano students who later became a renowned piano teacher at the Conservatory. The Mazurka is dedicated "A son cher maître, Moritz Moszkowsky" and is undoubtedly the most interesting of the set from a pianistic point of view as the filigrees from example 2.5 clearly show. It also represents Rolón's most ambitious contribution to the Mazurka repertoire, a significant fact, given the extraordinary development that Chopin's model enjoyed in the hands of Mexican composers. And whereas in Bosquejos Rolón did not surpass previous models, this mazurka seems to evolve

from, rather than copy, those by Felipe Villanueva (1863-1948) and Ernesto Elorduy (1853-1912), being also a parallel work to the Mazurkas written by Manuel Ponce (1882-1948), who was perhaps the one who produced the best Mexican Mazurkas of all (see ex.2.6).

It was precisely Manuel Ponce to whom Rolón dedicated the Valse Chromatique, this dedication being an early testimony of the friendship of these two musicians. It is difficult to know how and when Rolón and Ponce met for the first time. A likely possibility is the year 1903 when Ponce visited Guadalajara to give a piano recital. A later possibility is that they met through their close mutual friend, Pedro Luis Ogazon, after 1909 when Ponce was back from his first trip to Europe. Whichever the exact date and place, the encounter of these musicians developed into a strong, life-long friendship (1).

Even though Rolón was five years older, it is by no means a mistake to consider him and Ponce as belonging to the first generation of nationalistic composers.

1.-The relationship between Ponce and Rolón -in both musical and biographical contexts- has not received any serious treatment. Dan Malstrom in his work on Mexican music (Malstrom: 1977) says:

"(Rolón) lived in Paris (...) it is probable that he was in contact with Ponce who lived in Paris 1925-1932".

Since Rolón and Ponce met in Mexico several years before they met in Paris again, to speak of a "probable" encounter only betrays a lack of sources. Although other authors are not as ill-informed as Malstrom, no one gives its due importance to a relationship that will continue to be explored throughout the course of this work.

Example 2.5. Excerpt from Mazurka (Five Pieces for Piano).

Piu **Piu** *lento*

M. M. PONCE

Con profondo dolore

Example 2.6. Excerpt from a Mazurka by Manuel Ponce.

Furthermore, they have often been lumped into a group that also includes Rafael Tello (1872-1946) and Julian Carrillo (1875-1865). But even if it is true that these composers contributed to producing a change in the evolution of Mexican music, the forms that such contributions took were quite different one from another. Nevertheless, in order to understand more accurately Rolón's position amongst his contemporaries, it is worth stopping to analyse, however briefly, what these contributions were.

Tello, being the elder, was the most conservative. In his music he failed to incorporate any of the new musical elements developed elsewhere after 1900 (2). However, his contribution to the field of opera cannot be overlooked. He realized the need for a truly Mexican opera where not only the subject should be closer to Mexican culture but the music as well- instead of continuing slavishly to copy French and Italian models (3). These ideas led him to the creation of Nicolas Bravo (1910) which, together with his fourth and last opera El Oidor (1924), were to be the last important operas written by Mexican musicians for a long time.

2.- The fact that Tello did not embrace any innovations may be due to the fact that out of the four, he was the only one who did not travel abroad for study purposes. Carrillo went to Germany and later on visited many countries while Ponce went to Bologna and Berlin for his first foreign studies.

3.- Operas such as Atzimba by Ricardo Castro (1863-1907) or Guatimotzin by Aniceto Ortega (1823-1875) had already dealt with Mexican subjects but the musical style remained undoubtedly foreign.

After these, Mexican opera sank into oblivion, never regaining the importance it previously had enjoyed (4).

Carrillo was obviously the most radical of the four, believing as he did that only a new language could produce new music. His search led him into microtonality, attractive from a technical point of view even if its aesthetic base could be disputed (5). In the end, Carrillo's ideas seemed to die with their creator, largely due to the inadequate context into which they were put in practice.

Ponce and Rolón could be said to be the most similar of this group. Indeed, they shared many common experiences and underwent similar processes in their musical experience. Nevertheless, the differences are as important as the similarities. In their earlier years, Ponce was the one who realized what was needed. By 1912 he had already published his Canciones Mexicanas opening the way for a nationalistic school of which he was undoubtedly the pioneer. Despite Rolón being the elder and despite the two residing outside the capital before their almost parallel -as regards time and

4.- Opera during the Nationalistic period (ca. 1910-1958) was hardly cultivated and major figures such as Ponce, Rolón, Revueltas and Huizar did not produce any. Only later composers went back to producing operas, notably Pablo Moncayo (1912-1958) and Miguel Bernal Jimenez (1910-1956).

5.- Julian Carrillo's exploration of microtonalism still remains a remarkable achievement, not only because no other Western composer before him had undertaken such work but because Carrillo produced a whole systematization of his theories, which also comprised a new manner of notation and the construction of pianos capable of producing microintervals.

motives- first trips to Europe, it was Ponce who first expressed in sound an authentically Mexican style for Mexico's music to follow.

That Rolón never became as prolific a composer as Ponce constituted a fundamental difference between them. While the kind of music that Rolón wrote up to 1912 has been described (6), Ponce's output up to the same year includes works such as the Tema Variado Mexicano (1911) and the first Rapsodia Mexicana (1912) which signal a much earlier sortie into nationalism than those of Rolón. But by then -due to Ponce's unequivocal vocation as a composer- he had already produced a few successful works such as his Gavota and a series of Mazurkas (ex.2.6) which nevertheless made him keenly aware of having reached the ceiling of the romantic style which both he and Rolón had cultivated until then.

How Rolón and Ponce underwent the same evolutionary process was described by Ponce himself. In his words a propos Rolón, he summarizes the raison d'être and importance of these works in a way that could only have been done by somebody who knew such a process from the inside:

"Rolón received the romantic legacy with open arms. Those were times of non-lucrative artistic reaction, of

6.- Rolón had already arranged some of his favourite Mexican songs for piano solo before 1912. These have never been published. cf. Chapter V, pages 105-107.

acute sentimentality; those were moments when love, pain, happiness, sadness, took hold of the artist in a violent manner, making his creative imagination conceive poetic, plastic or musical works which nowadays still conserve their emotional charm..." (Ponce: 1945).

A few more years were to pass before Rolón followed Ponce's nationalistic example, although he did so not only because of his friend nor because of the influence of other intellectuals and artists, but because he had arrived at the conviction that this was the way his music should develop. However, before this could happen, Rolón had to concern himself with other aspects of his development as a composer. After the relative success of his Cinco Piezas, it seemed only natural that he should attempt writing for other media than the piano and thus the next work to emerge was the Piano Quartet Op.16, composed in 1912 (7).

The Cuarteto op.16 is sometimes referred to as the "Romantic" Quartet, a name used not only to describe its style but to differentiate it from the String Quartet, op.35. Rolón's first attempt in writing for a medium other than the piano could not have been more successful. The score's careful craftsmanship reveals

7.- Cf. Catalogue of works for a discussion about Rolón's opus numbers.

Violin *f* *rit.* *a tempo*

Viola *f* *rit.* *a tempo*

Violoncello *f* *mf* *robusto* *a tempo*

Piano *f enérgico* *rit.* *p*

Violoncello *V* *sf*

Piano

Example 2.7. From Piano Quartet (1st Movement).

Violin *ff* *f* *piu mosso*

Viola *ff* *f* *piu mosso*

Violoncello *ff* *f* *piu mosso*

Piano *f* *piu mosso*

Example 2.8. From Piano Quartet (1st Movement).

First system of musical notation, consisting of four staves. The top two staves are in treble clef, and the bottom two are in bass clef. The music features various rhythmic patterns and melodic lines across the staves.

Second system of musical notation, consisting of four staves. This system includes dynamic markings such as *sf* (sforzando) and *fff* (fortissimo). It also features articulation marks like accents and slurs, and includes some triplets. The notation is more complex, with many beamed notes and slurs.

Third system of musical notation, consisting of four staves. This system continues the piece with dynamic markings like *sf* and *fff*. It includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and rests. The bottom two staves show dense chordal textures.

Example 2.8. (cont...)

the work of an accomplished musician, even if the style cannot be defined as new. The first feature to capture one's attention in this piece is the balance, which is not shared between the four instruments but rather between the piano on the one hand and the strings on the other. This helps the piece by allowing the creation of a continuous flow throughout which has its origin in the smoothness with which the piano part is written. The piano, by producing this flowing quality, also becomes the agent which provides support and colour to the melodic lines. In this respect, a look at both beginning and end of the first movement is most revealing. At the former (ex.2.7), the piano accompaniment descends an octave using arpeggiated chords while at the latter (ex.2.8) both harmony and texture become richer by the appearance of both accidentals and chords. Thus the theme remains but its colour is changed.

The second movement is perhaps the most accomplished of the four. Here, Rolón carries on with the soft flow generated by the piano and adds to it affectionate parts for the strings. The way in which strings and piano merge together is particularly well-thought-out as in example 2.9, where the cello joins the viola at the end of the phrase to gallantly underline its end. The texture of the movement gradually becomes richer and reaches moments of certain density (ex.2.10) while always maintaining the magnificent interaction between

Example 2.9. Rolon: Piano Quartet.

Example 2.10. Rolon: Piano Quartet.

Molto vivace

Example 2.11. Rolon: Piano Quartet.

the strings.

A sense of Classicism can be particularly observed in the scherzo, not only in its form but also in the way in which the parts are written. The theme, for instance, is started by the piano but ended by all the instruments in a typical Schubertian fashion (ex.2.11). But if the Scherzo momentarily breaks off the characteristic flow, this is reinstated in the last movement -a theme with variations. Its affectionate style does not differ from the preceding movements, and it closes in a Molto Vivace in which full chords are used to create an effusive ending.

In descriptions of the Piano Quartet, facile comparisons with the likes of Fauré, Franck, Tchaikowsky or Grieg have become a commonplace. However, it would be doing the work an injustice to seek only for such stylistic similarities while ignoring the circumstances in which the work was composed. It is true that Rolón was experimenting and learning, but he was also convinced that the style he adopted was the best suited for his time and circumstances. The Quarteto allows us to see the desire of the composer to communicate as well as to acknowledge that ripe romantic tradition which he prized so highly.

The year now is 1913. Nine years are to go by before the

first important works, Zapotlan and El festin de los Enanos emerge. During the course of these nine years Rolón's production is going to find its way towards a style of its own. With the Cuarteto out of the way, the composer next turned his attention to a piano work, the Scherzo de los Enanos (the Dwarf's Scherzo) in which he used for the first time a theme from a popular song - a children's tune, to be more exact. However, something interesting must have happened in the course of composing this piece, since Rolón never gave it a final form. This fact seems to allow us a certain insight into Rolón's thought-processes at the time. On the one hand, there is no doubt that what he really wanted to do was a symphonic work. On the other hand, perhaps he sensed that the material of the Scherzo could be used to greater effect, as indeed happened (8). Also, his desire to write for the orchestra must have been related to his role as conductor of the Guadalajara Symphony Orchestra.

Thus, the priority became a technical, rather than a stylistic, one. And this is clearly appreciable in his output between 1918 and 1920, when three symphonic works were created. First came the Andante Malinconico, composed in 1915 and performed for the first time at the Arbeu Theatre in Mexico City by the Italian conductor Gaetano Babagnolli (9). This was followed by a Sinfonia

8.- See catalogue of works for a comment on the date of composition of this Scherzo.

en Eb (1918- 1919), which Rolón himself conducted for the first time at the Degollado Theatre in Guadalajara in 1923; and by the Obertura de Concierto composed in 1920. The state of these works (10) as well as the general dearth of information, particularly acute in this period of Rolón's life, make it difficult to give a rounded picture of them. Nevertheless, a look at the Obertura may prove illustrative. After all, it seems that it was the most successful of the three -the last to be composed and the first to be performed. Julian Carrillo gave its first performance at the Arbeu Theatre in Mexico City, in April, 1921. This Obertura seems to be a symphonic equivalent of the Cuarteto. The Romantic style is once again heard throughout, and the piece betrays a certain partiality for the overtures of Verdi. It starts with a Grave introduction played by low register instruments in unison, followed by a fast

9.- The title of the Andante Malinconico is quite important. Malinconia is a term widely used by Ponce and Rolón in several compositions and is almost enough to conjure the Mexican romantic style as used by these composers. The Andante Malinconico was entered by Rolón in a composition contest organized by the City Council of Mexico City. The date of this contest is in dispute. Luis Sandi (1984) gives the year 1933. Baqueiro Foster (1949) does not offer any particular date but his words imply that this took place before the performance of the Sinfonia in 1923. Nicolas Slonimsky (1972) gives the year as 1923, which seems a more likely possibility. The first prize was awarded to the composer Juan Leon Mariscal (1899-1972) and the second place to Rolón. Taking into account Leon Mariscal's notable musicianship it is probable that the technical merit of the latter's work won the day. Nevertheless -as it will be seen in chapter VII- Rolón would win another contest which also included a work by Leon Mariscal.

10.- While the manuscripts of both the Andante Malinconico and the Sinfonia are in a precarious state and in need of careful editing, the Obertura's text only exists in the form of orchestral parts. Hence the nature of the examples and the difficulty in describing these works.

section where the strings seize the initiative with the support of the whole orchestra (ex.2.12). The overall style, with its lush harmonies and conventional orchestration once again reflects -as in the Cuarteto- a strong desire to take possession of his romantic patrimony to the full.

With the performance of the Obertura in 1922, Rolón must have felt that his dalliance with high Romanticism was more or less at an end. He had thereby gained a valuable insight into orchestration thus paving the way for the greater works to come. However, the search for a personal style of his own was as yet nowhere near completion and this fact accounts for the composition of the Valse Caprice op.14. In this piece, Rolón used the theme of the waltz Sobre las Olas by the Mexican composer Juventino Rosas (1868-1894). This waltz, which has "vied with the Blue Danube in popularity" -as Robert Stevenson puts it- is indeed a piece that has become a symbol of the time in which it was written. In Rolón's hands, however, the theme is used to effectively round off a chapter in the history of Mexican piano music of which the Rosas waltz was a typical product. Indeed, Rolón's is the last grand piano work of the Mexican romantic tradition, a true descendant of Ricardo Castro's Valse Caprice of 1900, a piece which is the purest quintessence of fin de siècle -a magnificent flowering of the seeds planted by Tomas Leon (1826-

Fagots *Obertura de Concerto* *J. Rolon*

Grave *adu* *Allegro*

Violin I *Obertura de Concerto* *J. Rolon*

Grave *dolce* *Allegro molto con brio* *f* *energico*

Example 2.12. Obertura de Concerto (excerpts from Bassoon and Violin parts).

VALESE CAPRICE



JOSÉ ROLON
Op. 13

A capriccio
f deciso
ff
S...
pizzicatis
cres
con do
f
ff
M.G.
Tempo di Valse
p con eleganza

Example 2.13. First page from Valse Caprice

Poco meno

pp armonioso e marcato il canto

due Red. Red. simil

M.G. M.G. M.G.

m.d. m.g. m.d. m.g. m.d. m.g.

m.d. m.g. m.d. m.g. M.G.

M.G. M.G. m.g.

M.G. M.G.

1^a 2^a

Example 2.14. Excerpt from Valse Caprice.

1893), Julio Ituarte (1845-1905) and others. Not only the title but even the structure itself was copied by Rolón from Castro's work. A brilliant introduction (ex.2.13) is followed by a presentation of the theme in a rather simple form. The body of the piece is built by embellishing the main theme and by the use of another theme, both of which generate virtuoso passages (ex.2.14). Nevertheless, Rolón's work also uses harmonies that announce the arrival of a more up-to-date language (as in the harmonies that accompany the theme itself), however tentative this announcement might be. And it is precisely this greater harmonic freedom as well as the use of an already popular theme that announce a coming-of-age in Rolón's attitude towards composing: the boundaries of Romanticism have been reached. Rolón has started to find his own style.

III. T h e S e a r c h f o r "l o p r o p i o" (1).

It is impossible to continue with this account of Rolón's life and works without first considering the important events that took place in Mexico and elsewhere before the year 1925. In order to do so, it is necessary to go back to the year 1910.

The implications of the Mexican Revolution in the country's art have been widely discussed elsewhere. From the perspective of nearly a century after, one of the facts which become clearer is that not all the arts were affected by the Revolution in the same way. Literature and the Muralistic movement seem to be the forms that were more directly influenced. It is true that a discovery of Mexico by its artists occurred, but this discovery by no means took similar guises. Politics, cultural changes and a different aesthetic understanding make of the term Mexican Nationalism a wide and meaning-evasive concept. A discussion of Rolón's first incursions into Nationalism is the main subject of this chapter.

It was previously mentioned that Rolón cultivated the

1.- "Lo Propio", is an expression taken from the composer's notes to his symphonic poem Zapotlan, and quoted later on in this chapter (see page 68).

friendship of two important musicians: the pianist Pedro Luis Ogazon and Manuel M. Ponce. It seems that it was contact with the main changes in the Mexican music scene. However, living in Guadalajara meant he could not always be in touch with, or indeed participate in, as fully as he might have wished, the developments that occurred in Mexico City. Needless to say, this situation had both its advantages and disadvantages. Guadalajara benefited by having Rolón as its musical architect while at the same time Rolón himself benefited from being able to put into practice his ideas away from the more competitive and politicized atmosphere of Mexico City. At the same time, the vast majority of those who forged the culture of Mexico during and after the Revolution lived in the capital. Thus, Rolón was influenced by his contact with such men, rather than an influence on them.

In 1907 while Rolón was still in Paris, a group of young distinguished Mexican artists and intellectuals started to question the development that the country was undergoing. Two years later this group became the nucleus of the Ateneo de la Juventud, an institution whose members significantly contributed to Mexico's culture. The list of members, as given by Jose Vasconcelos in 1916, contained a true elite of important artists. Amongst these, the names of Julian Carrillo and Manuel Ponce are familiar. But other acquaintances of Rolón in the Ateneo included Jose Vasconcelos himself

and the writers Pedro Henriquez Ureña and Enrique Gonzalez Martinez (2). From this it is possible to infer that Rolón was indirectly connected with the Ateneo and that he agreed with the ideas developed within that group. The achievements of the Ateneo need not be discussed here, although it is important to quote some of them, if only because of their indirect relation to Rolón's own development. As Carlos Monsivais expresses it, the members of the Ateneo:

"induce the return to humanism and the classics (...) represent the apparition of rigueur in a country where improvisation was an everyday occurrence (and) renew Mexico's cultural and scientific sense (...)"'. 'It is not for nothing', says Alfonso Reyes, that the Revolution awakened there...'" (Monsivais: 1976).

Rolón's wish to perfect his compositional tools -as seen in the last chapter- links directly with the idea expressed above concerning the apparition of rigueur. On the other hand, the renewal of Mexico's cultural sense and the awakening of the Revolution, do not appear to have affected Rolón so directly. For him, the immediate questions were not so far-reaching although,

2.- The list is as follows: The writers Alfonso Reyes, Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Julio Torri, Enrique González, Rafel López, Joaquín Méndez, Antonio Médez Bolio, Martín Luis Guzmán, Carlos González Peña, Isidro Pabela, Manuel de la Parra, Mariano Silva, José Vasconcelos; the philosopher Antonio Caso; the architects Jesús Acevedo and Federico Mariscal; the painters Diego Rivera, Roberto Montenegro, Ramos Martínez and the composers Manuel M.Ponce and Julian Carrillo.

nevertheless, he acknowledged the need for such changes. In his everyday life there was only one important and pressing question to solve: how to go on? Ponce's example had already provided the answer. What Rolón in his own words needed to do was "to proclaim that which is my own"!

In order to do that, however, an understanding of what constituted "my own" was essential. With this in mind, Rolón started to work on two similar works, El Festin de los Enanos and Zapotlan, subtitled Suite Sinfonica 1895, in reference to Rolón's own reminiscences of that year while living in Zapotlan. There is a certain confusion as to which of these works was done first. At the foot of Zapotlan's frontispiece a small note in Marialuisa's hand writing says that the work first saw the light in Guadalajara in 1926 and was orchestrated in Paris in 1929 (3). While it is certain that Rolón revised the work with Dukas, the style of Zapotlan indicates that its composition began before 1925, when El Festin was created. Perhaps Zapotlan might even have been finished after El Festin in order to avoid taking to France any incomplete works.

Rolón himself had this to say about Zapotlan:

3.-The subtitle "1895" is also deleted in the manuscript. This has led to many misinterpretations, which also include the belief that Rolón wrote the work in 1895 and only re-orchestrated it in 1925. When the work was premiered- on June 15th with Silvestre Revueltas conducting the Orquesta Sinfonica de Mexicanos- the title given appeared in the programme as "Zapotlan". Suite Sinfonica (1895).

Allg. Mod. = 120

1a
2a
3a
ob
CI
-lin A
-lin B
Fg
C
Fa
Temp.
Tronb
Tub
Trea
Bomb
Arpa
VI 1o
VI 2o
Viola
V.Cello
C.B

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the opening of 'Zapotlan'. The score is written on multiple staves, each corresponding to a different instrument or voice part. The instruments listed on the left are: 1a, 2a, 3a (likely flutes), ob (oboe), CI (clarinet in B), -lin A and -lin B (clarinets in A and B), Fg (fagotto), C (corni), Fa (fagotto), Temp. (timpani), Tronb (trabucco), Tub (tuba), Trea (tromba), Bomb (bomba), Arpa (arpa), VI 1o (violin I), VI 2o (violin II), Viola, V.Cello (viola and cello), and C.B (contrabasso). The score is written in a dense, handwritten style with various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The tempo is marked as 'Allg. Mod. = 120'. The score is divided into measures, and there are some annotations and markings throughout, such as 'FA, SOLB, SI, RE, MI' on the Arpa staff. The overall appearance is that of a working manuscript or a score prepared for rehearsal.

Example 3.1. Opening of Zapotlan.

"This work reflects a vision of my province in those times; an ordering of some musical themes, from the fields and from the town, which impressed me most during my adolescence. My nationalistic tendency is stimulated by the constant evocation of the romantic atmosphere of my ranch and my town, an evocation which forces me to repeat what is my own and what is near, rather than what is alien and distant" (Rolón: 1938).

Zapotlan consists of three movements: Campestre (Pastoral), "Gallo" Romántico (Romantic Serenade) and Fiesta. As Rolón himself says, these movements aim to depict a certain scene and this is achieved by using popular melodies as their basis. Campestre uses two such melodies, the first of which is subjected immediately to a process that was to become a favourite of Rolón, i.e. the use of a popular theme in the context of a work with a different time signature. Thus the theme, originally in 6/8, is used at the very beginning in 4/4 (ex.3.1). While providing the piece with a brisk, rhythmical start, the use of the fermata on the last crotchet does not allow for the whole theme to be heard. And when this happens, another change of time signature occurs, this time to 2/4 (ex.3.2):

C1.
C2

Example
3.2.

The presentation of the theme by the clarinets is significant, since the wood winds play a key role throughout the piece as indeed they do in some forms of Mexican popular music such as "Town Bands" or Bandas de Pueblo. In Rolón's score they are constantly used, either leading the orchestra or creating an ostinato in the background as in example 3.3:



Example 3.3.

It is also the clarinets and bassoons who introduce the second theme in a quiet counterpoint that once again brings to mind the Bandas which one often hears in the towns of Mexico (ex.3.4).

The second movement, Gallo Romántico, is inspired by the tradition of serenading one's beloved. Rolón used here what was probably a song dear to him, not only because he made an arrangement of it for piano and voice (see chapter 5) but because it will appear once more in the first movement of the Piano Concerto. The song, entitled Ingrata (ungrateful), tells the story of an abandoned lover, and is heard in Zapotlan (ex.3.5) just as it would have been sung originally, with two singers

Allegro 8 $\text{♩} = 160$

The image shows a handwritten musical score for Example 3.4. At the top, it is marked 'Allegro' with a tempo of 160 beats per minute and a section number '8' enclosed in a box. The score consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes staves for Clarinet (Cl), Flute (Fg), and Guitar. The second system shows a more detailed view of the Clarinet and Flute parts. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings such as 'p' and 'f'.

a third apart and with guitar accompaniment. Once again, the clarinets are given the lead while both harp and two guitars provide the accompaniment (4).

4.- It seems that, if not the first, Rolon is at least one of the few composers who have used guitars as part of a symphony orchestra. Paganini and Sor had used guitars as part of chamber music, but as far as I have been able to ascertain, Rolon was the first to use them in a symphonic context.

Handwritten musical score for Clarinet in C and Guitars. The Clarinet part is marked "Solo" and "P dolce". The Guitars part is marked "H" and "H". The score is in 3/8 time and consists of four measures.

Example 3.5. Ingrata (with corresponding guitars accompaniment).

During the Fiesta, many of the previously described features reappear. Once again, the use of another folk song -this time quoted literally- provides a rhythmical flavour that permeates the movement. This particular melody is -as many of its kind- in a 6/8 time that fluctuates continually between that and its hemiola. The theme (ex.3.6) is presented by the strings supported on

The image shows a musical score for two instruments: Timpani and Violins I. The Timpani part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. It features a series of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The Violins I part is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. It features a series of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The score is divided into measures by vertical bar lines.

Example 3.6. Excerpt from Zapotlan.

timpani, except at the fourth bar, where they carry on while the violins end their phrase in a manner reminiscent of the beginning of the first movement (cf.ex.3.1).

Once again, the wood-wind section is used to provide colour and, in doing so, the texture becomes quite dense at some points (ex.3.7). The constant movement of the instruments in this example suggests that of the Chirimias, a wind instrument of prehispanic origin. In another part of the description of Zapotlan by Guillermo Jimenez (quoted in the first chapter and included in the programme notes for the first performance of Zapotlan), the Chirimias are mentioned:

The image shows a page of handwritten musical notation for a symphony orchestra. The score is written on multiple staves, with dense notation including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The notation is somewhat chaotic and overlapping, suggesting a complex or dense musical texture. The dynamic markings 'mf' and 'f' are visible on the left side of the score. The overall appearance is that of a working draft or a composer's sketch.

Pic.
 Fl.
 Ob.
 Cor
 Anglaise
 Cl in B
 Bass Cl.
 Bassoon
 Horns 1 2
 3 4

Example 3.7. Excerpt from Zapotlan.

"...Desires, O Zapotlan!, (...) to dance with the rapture and the worship of a 'sonajero', to dance without pause to the beat of the drums and the native chirimias, and then to shout; and to let my shout rebound on the snowy peak, and curl the blue waters of the lake, to let it awake the sleeping herons and make these fly aghast and blinded with light!; Zapotlan!" (Jimenez: 1938).

It was by no means a surprise that Rolón's first nationalistic work was one in which he set out to capture the romantic atmosphere of his own home-town. One could not think of a better way for a composer like him to enter into the Nationalistic movement, yielding to the call of a certain romantic idealism. However, once this step was taken, the road was open for new, more adventurous explorations.

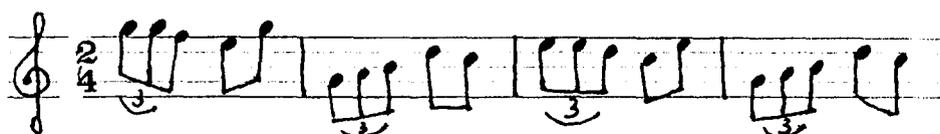
The years which followed the end of the Revolution saw an unprecedented ferment in Mexico's musical scene. Most composers, teachers and performers were trying to garner their ideas with the common aim of giving Mexico a new, progressive musical environment. In 1919, Manuel M. Ponce and Ruben M. Campos founded the Revista Musical de Mexico with the aim of promoting nationalism. A Facultad de Musica was created at the National University in 1929, following the efforts of a group of teachers at the Conservatory who, contrary to Carlos Chavez -the conservatory's new principal, favoured the annexation of Mexico's foremost music school to the University, so as to free it from any government interference, a measure which Chavez considered unnecessary.

As part of this general upheaval, a National Congress of Music took place in 1926. The objectives of the Congress were to discuss a) the lack of a Nationalistic attitude in composers, b) the despotic attitude towards Mexican folklore, c) the promotion of musicological research and d) the system of musical education. Submission of papers was requested in the areas of music theory and composition, musical pedagogy, folklore, "organography", and musical acoustics. The Congress also called for musical works to be submitted for a competition.

The importance of this Congress cannot be overstated. Many distinguished papers were submitted, notably the Historia Critica de la Musica en Mexico by Jesus C. Romero, and Pedro Michaca's El Nacionalismo Musical Mexicano. The repercussion of the ideas put forward in the Congress as well as the example set by the award-winning works was unparalleled, making of the Congress a landmark in the evolution of musical nationalism in Mexico. So, which were the winning works? The third place was awarded to Imagenes, a Symphonic Poem by Candelario Huizar (1883-1970). The second place was declared void and the winning work was Rolón's El Festin de Los Enanos (The Dwarf's Feast).

El Festin de los Enanos is without doubt a key work in the annals of Mexican music. But before discussing its historical importance let us describe a few aspects of

the work itself. Rolón found his inspiration for it in the eponymous tale by the writer Alfonso Gutierrez Hermosillo, which tells the story of a group of dwarves who take over an empty house at which there is a splendid table set with food and drinks (5). However, El Festin is not only inspired by a children's tale, but by children's music as well. Its main theme (ex.3.8) comes from a popular song:



Ex. 3.8. The "Dwarf's theme", a popular children's song.

Rolón himself acknowledged this to be true as well as being a certain influence from Paul Dukas's (1865-1935) l'Apprenti Sorcier (1897). Indeed, not only is there a

5.- The original manuscript has the story written in its last page:

"It's the old legend....

.... and they came in furtively, when the night meant protection and silence for the mansion. There were embroideries of forests outside and wines and food inside.

They knew it...

And when they came in, hiding themselves, the table was a crystal river and the forest a miracle of life...

There was great comradeship and joy at the bachannale. It was crazy like a summer wind and joyous like an early morning.

But there was unrest in their small smiles.

They could not have guessed it...

A huge giant came from above and landed in the middle of the feast...

And he groaned..

And the crazy ones refused at first to leave, but they left in the end, sadly, and not knowing where to go...

What to do next?

Laugh, laugh, even if it was about themselves.

And they exploded in laughter when the danger was gone".

resemblance in the basic conception of the two works, but the influence of Dukas is also betrayed in the many parallels to be drawn between them from a musical point of view. To make this clearer, it would be enough to recall the beginning of l'Apprenti with its pizzicato strings and compare it to Rolón's (ex.3.9); or the

Musical score for the beginning of "El Festin de los Enanos". The score includes parts for Arpa, Violini I and II, Viola, Violoncelli, and Contrabassi. The tempo is marked "Vivace ma non troppo" with a metronome marking of 116. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score features various dynamics including *pp*, *ppp*, *pizz*, and *p*. The Arpa part is in the upper register, while the strings play a rhythmic pattern. The Violini parts are marked *ppp* and *pizz*. The Viola part is marked *pizz* and *p*. The Violoncelli and Contrabassi parts are marked *pp*.

Example 3.9. El Festin de los Enanos (beginning).

Musical score excerpt from "El Festin de los Enanos". The tempo is marked "Poco meno". The score includes parts for Violini I and II, Viola, Violoncelli, and Contrabassi. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The score features various dynamics including *p*, *pp*, *ppp*, *f*, and *sf*. The Violini parts are marked *can duos* and *can duos*. The Viola part is marked *Sord* and *can duos*. The Violoncelli part is marked *Sord* and *p*. The Contrabassi part is marked *Pizz* and *pp*.

Example 3.10. Excerpt from El Festin de los Enanos.

ending, where a sudden interlude on the strings evokes both the sadness of the apprentice (ex.3.10) and that of the dwarves having to abandon the feast, before a quick, brisk ending brings each to a close. The parallel characters of Sorcerer and Giant are also portrayed in like manner. Worth noticing are the debts that both works owe to Richard Strauss and not only to Till Eulenspiegel. Rolón's orchestration of example 3.11 clearly brings to mind Der Rosenkavalier.

However, the most important feature that Rolón seems to have borrowed from his teacher-to-be, Paul Dukas, is the use of a motivic cell as the prima materia for the creation of his work. Dukas' famous theme and the use to which he puts it are strikingly similar to the way in which Rolón treats his main theme. Interestingly enough, it is here that the main feature of Rolón's work emerges. Whereas Dukas's theme is subjected to many variations, in Rolón's case it is the constant repetition of the cell which sets it apart. Variation there may also be, but repetition remains the salient feature.

There is a crucial difference between Dukas's apprentice theme and the dwarf's song. The former is a construction of three-bar units whereas the latter is a one-bar unit -a unit that is repeated, almost ad infinitum, in all sorts of registers, harmonies and instrumental

combinations. Since its introduction at No.1 (ex.12) its main transformations are related to changes of register rather than to variations. When the theme is presented (preceded by its abstracted rhythm) (ex. 3.13) it is only the melody that is new but nonetheless the repetition carries on unaltered for another 32 bars. Thus El Festin is the first Mexican symphonic work to use repetition as its cornerstone and thereby break new ground. Even if the repetition is not handled with the inventiveness which other composers such as Revueltas would bring to bear subsequently, it nevertheless introduces a feature that was to become a constant element in the style of some Mexican composers, notably Carlos Chavez (1899-1978) and Silvestre Revueltas (1899-1940). However, Rolón's use of repetition also raises the first question relating to the evolution of nationalism in Mexico. It is usually claimed that Chavez and Revueltas aimed to portray the indigenous culture of Mexico and that one of the musical devices which most helped them to achieve this was repetition (after all, the Sinfonia India (1935) by Chavez is completely based on repetition). But then, Rolón used repetition without aiming to relate it to Prehispanic Mexico. To put it in other words: does repetition emerge in Mexican music as a device to recall Prehispanic music or does it belong also to the Cultura Mestiza? (6). As will be seen later,

6.- Cultura Mestiza: the culture that followed the encounter and subsequent merging between the Spanish and the local native cultures.

the raising of such questions only points towards a misconception as to the diverse styles employed by different composers. Repetition in itself does not create a Prehispanic atmosphere, nor does it make a piece of music Mexican. It is nevertheless, as mentioned above, an important feature which has been acknowledged to be a sine qua non for all such nationalist music. And in its use, Rolón anticipated Revueltas, Moncayo (1912-1958) and many other Mexican composers.

Rolón's success with this work was to have a pronounced effect on his future. His nationalistic position, so welcomed by many of his fellow musicians, gave him the assurance that his evolution as a composer was headed in the right direction. Overnight he became one of Mexico's foremost composers. But success also meant the reappearance of that nagging -but nevertheless crucial- question for any composer: where to go now?

The answer did not elude him for long. There was a need to be in contact with the musical advances which were taking place elsewhere. There was also a need for his style to mature and take on definition. Rolón must have felt that his career was by no means guaranteed to carry on in the ascendancy as it had done for the past twenty years. Once again, the example of his friend Ponce must have been the decisive one. Ponce had left for Europe -for the second time- in 1925 in order to study with

Paul Dukas; Rolón decided he could do no better. His personal circumstances only served him to make up his mind the quicker. Since his arrival from France, the relationship between father and daughter had grown considerably and strong bonds attached them to one another. After Eugenie Bellido, Rolón had not developed any serious relationship, except for a woman named Leonor Rivera. Their affair ended in a dramatic manner when Leonor became mortally ill; in order not to increase her attachment to Rolón and vice versa, as well as to spare him any emotional upheavals, she suddenly disappeared from his life altogether. Not surprisingly, Marialuisa thereafter became Rolón's chief companion and mainstay. But in 1926, Maria Luisa Rolón herself announced her marriage and Rolón found himself almost alone.

In 1927 -when Rolón was 51- he took what his daughter described as a sudden decision: to marry for the second time. A family crisis ensued. Maria Luisa was opposed to the marriage of her father to his piano pupil Ana de La Cueva, who was considerably his junior (she died in October, 1975). This was the reason which must have prompted Rolón's daughter to change her father's birth certificate -as discussed in chapter I- and thus give rise to the belief in that 1883 was the year of Rolón's birth. However, Rolón was not only determined to marry but also to abandon Guadalajara. The School, supported

by him during all those years, collapsed with this announcement. Many of Rolón's colleagues at the School also abandoned Guadalajara. Rolón set sail for Paris once again, and with his departure a chapter not only of his life but of Guadalajara's musical life comes to a close.

IV. L'ignorance acquise.

Rolón, together with Ana de la Cueva arrived in Paris in 1927. His friend Manuel Ponce was already there and helped Rolón to find his place in a city which was enjoying a golden era as far as artistic life was concerned. Rolón began his musical activities by joining the Ecole Normale de Musique, where Paul Dukas (1865-1935) held a composition class.

Thanks to a letter to his daughter we are able to share Rolón's impressions of both the encounter with a lively musical environment and with Dukas himself:

"Everybody is going crazy with so many 'isms': atonalism, bitonalism, polytonalism, ultrachromaticism, dodecaphonism. I must tell you that, as far as I am concerned, all of them attract me but should we listen to the chanting of so many mermaids? I don't know. However, I believe we must know them all and choose the one that is better suited to our tradition and idiosyncrasy. The French musical ideal likes to keep some distance between feeling and the musical work. Would this be the way towards a universal Mexican music? I wish to create music that will reveal us to the world." (1)

1.- Letter by Rolón quoted by his daughter Marialuisa (Rolón:1969). Please note that the following two quotations come from the same source.

Rolón also quotes Dukas's view on such questions:

"You are not a man that can be easily impressed. However, I shall give you a single advice: let us do a careful revision of aesthetics and techniques, from the Greeks to our days. (Nadia) Boulanger will efficiently help you to analyze all tendencies, both past and present. And when you have revised all styles, all techniques, all tendencies; forget them all and be yourself. This I call l'ignorance acquise".

The impact on Rolón of councils such as these can be judged by the following letter to his daughter:

"Believe me that when I left Dukas's studio, l'ignorance acquise was buzzing in my mind. What a profound philosophy for a modern musician is enclosed within these words! To learn everything in order to forget it all and be oneself, authentic and free. I believe this is the path to follow".

These extracts reveal much about Rolón's ideas and feelings, not only while in Paris but about his music in general. It is obvious that he was overtaken by the diversity of currents that were emerging on the European musical scene. It is also interesting to see how Rolón set himself to work on Dukas's proposal rather than attempting slavishly to follow any of the new "isms" in particular. L'ignorance acquise seemed a more challenging process to go through rather than simply imitating any of the currents then in vogue.

Paul Dukas's class at the Ecole Normale was made up of a

select group of students of which the names of Joaquin Rodrigo and Manuel Ponce stood out above the rest. It is the latter's pen which once again allows us to have a first-hand description of these lessons:

"His course was of advanced composition and critical analysis. Seated in front of the piano, surrounded by his students who formed a tight international group, he corrected and criticized diverse works: a fragment for piano, a sonata, a fugue, a quartet... Reserved in his praise, when he said "it is not bad" it had more value than an admiring article, such as one reads everyday in the papers... He advised pianists to forget their favourite instrument when writing a symphonic work, since he believed it was necessary to possess a second ear, that is, the faculty of listening inside oneself to the musical work before writing it down ... He did not tolerate ignorance. He did not believe in geniuses who did not know counterpoint: "it is dangerous to come close to the geniuses that appear every so often in the land of music" he said.

The second half of the lesson was spent in analysing the most beautiful works from the musical literature. The course of 1927 finished with a complete study of Beethoven's Quartets... here are some of his comments made at these lessons:

"Before starting any composition it is necessary to have a plan of attack. In this, Beethoven and Napoleon coincided".

"If an avant-garde composer managed to produce a chord formed by eighty-eight sounds, what will follow?" (Ponce:1948).

Thus Rolón worked with Dukas and Boulanger, doing some amount of composition but above all undertaking the exercise as proposed by Dukas. Works by Rolón from this period include En passant par Lorraine, Gavotte e

Mussette for string orchestra and others in an unfinished state. In May 1928, when Dukas' students were asked to present some of their works, Rolón chose his Trois melodies pour Piano et Chant, two of which were sung by Clema Maurel, Ponce's wife. The fact that these works were featured in the recital and later on edited by Max Eschig seems to indicate that the songs are the most representative work of this period and therefore worth looking into. What these songs betray is not only a clarity in the compositional process -after all, a feature taken for granted in a pupil of Dukas- but also an exploration of the techniques developed by Claude Debussy (1862-1918).

The opening of the first song, Consentement provides an excellent example of how Rolón pursued Debussy's example in the handling of harmony and text. This song opens with a piano accompaniment made up of a sequence of fourths to which a f# is added (ex.4.1) and which is quite effective in establishing an atmosphere of subtle nuances; just what is required for a poem about music, clouds, gardens, death... a poem whose obvious model is Les fleurs du mal by Baudelaire. Looking at these songs, and in particular at their harmonic language, one can understand why Rolón found Debussy's music so fascinating: here was a way of composition which took tonality further than Rolón would have imagined. For a composer whose main feature had been so far a taste for

CONSETEMENT

Musical score for the beginning of 'Consentement'. The score is for voice and piano. The voice part is in the upper staff, and the piano part is in the lower two staves. The tempo is marked 'Très modéré' and the dynamics are 'p dolce'. The piano part is marked 'legato' and 'p una corda'. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 3/8. The score shows the first few measures of the piece.

Musical score for the beginning of 'Consentement' with lyrics. The score is for voice and piano. The voice part is in the upper staff, and the piano part is in the lower two staves. The tempo is marked 'Très modéré' and the dynamics are 'p dolce'. The piano part is marked 'legato' and 'p una corda'. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is 3/8. The lyrics are: "si que je veux que tu ber ces mones." The score shows the first few measures of the piece.

Example 4.1. Consentement (beginning).

modulation and stretching of tonality, Debussy's example must have acquired the status of an ideal.

Of course, Rolón's admiration for Debussy goes back way before his second stay in Paris. Shortly before his departure from Guadalajara he gave a recital and talk, the text of which survives. In it, Rolón's understanding of Debussy and his music becomes clearer:

"Our concept of life has undergone a deep and radical metamorphosis... everything looks for new paths to follow. Dealing with this problem of absolute transformation we find the most powerful genius, perhaps the greatest that has emerged in music: Claude Achille Debussy" (Rolón: unpublished lecture).

If Rolón went as far as considering Debussy the greatest musician of all times, by the time of his Paris sojourn he had not produced many works in which this admiration was obvious. A few songs (with texts by French poets) could be said to be influenced by the impressionism, but not until the Trois melodies does this influence manifest itself openly.

Examples of how Rolón assimilated the new landmarks of that current abound, particularly in relation to new harmonies. To underline the wind's effect on the roses, Rolón opts for a chromatic passage, the likes of which has not appeared in his works before (ex.4.2). The opening of Cloches (song no.2) also reveals a newly discovered language where the combination of sounds is directed by the search for an appropriate atmosphere, rather than by classical rules (ex.4.3).

No attempt to understand the music of the impressionists would have been complete without a look into the fascination that Spain produced in so many artists. For somebody like Rolón this represented an easier task, and even the critic from the Revue Musicale praised Iberia as the most accomplished of the three songs when presented in a concert:

"The melodies by his fellow countryman (the critic is talking about Joaquín Rodrigo) Monsieur Jose Rolón, are directed towards a more educated public,

Dans le jar-din les ro-siers — saignent des pé-tu-los

Aux choes — du vent —

poco rit. ff a Tempo

Example 4.2. Excerpt from Consentement.

Lento . p con malinconia

CHANT

Cloches aux voix — douces et brè-ves — Cloches de l'an-ge .

PIANO

pp quasi campana lontano

Example 4.3. Cloches (beginning).

without this meaning that they are not musical... Iberia is the one that I preferred because of its straightforwardness..." (Samazeuil: 1928).

The misunderstanding as to Rolón's nationality is no doubt the result of misinformation rather than a case of certainty of nationality through the listening of a song! However, Rolón's invocation of Spain was accomplished with great effect. To achieve this, Rolón used features like a rhythmic configuration often found in Granados or Albeniz, brilliant chord sequences, unusual indications (maliciousement) or the moorish like effects of singing on the monosyllable "ah" (ex.4.4).

Anybody examining Rolón's output during his stay in France can observe a division into two groups. It is not difficult to conclude that this division had its origin in the impact caused on Rolón by the music of the impressionists on the one side, and on the other, by the developments which Rolón observed in the surrounding atmosphere. Apart from such inveterate nationalists as Ponce or Rodrigo, Rolón counted among his acquaintances Heitor Villa-Lobos, Leopold Stokowsky, and Ricardo Viñes. Such a circle gave Rolón every opportunity to be in contact with the latest musical developments. In his article Sobre Musica Americana Rolón describes a soirée at Villa-Lobos' apartment which gives an idea of this atmosphere:

"Meanwhile, those present talked with animation in small groups through the room. Around Leopold Stokowsky, Oskar

Nous sommes au fond de Gre . na . de Mon cœur vers Lola prend son

vol — Et le rit sous le pa . ra . sol — Et dé . cla . me à la canto .

poco rit.

na . de — Car son tu . teur un gros vieux fol — Ai .

a Tempo *p malicieusement*

p scherzando

ma . ble comme une mé . na . de Me donne . rait — la baston . na . de s'il en ten .

daît mon mi be . mol — Ah!

Ex. 4.4. Excerpt from Iberia.

Fried, Henry Prunières (director of the Revue Musicale) and Edgar Varèse talked about the scandal produced by the première of the symphonic poem Americas...Not far, Lucie Delarue Mardrus, together with Alejo Carpentier, the pianist Gaillard and the singer Madeleine Baillat were talking about the visit to Paris of the Bayreuth company, to perform The Ring at the Theatre des Champs Elysées..” (Rolón: 1945).

Rolón passes from the description of those invited to the discourse offered by the host, and of which Rolón no doubt approved wholeheartedly:

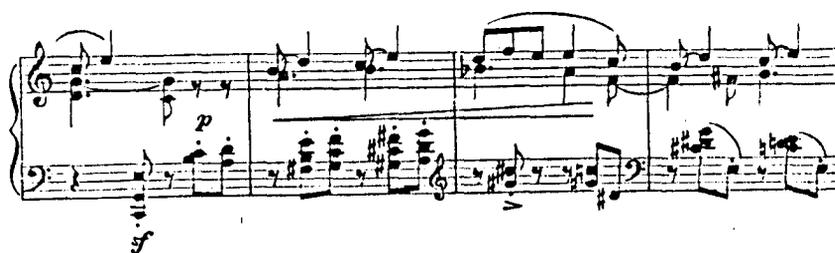
“I -said Villa-Lobos- make the following classification of composers: traditionalists (fortunately a few); moderns (unfortunately many) and individuals. I count myself among the latter... My country's music is highly personal both in its rhythms and melodies... I am told that there are extraordinary things amongst the Mexican Indians and I would like to visit them and immerse myself in their music. Would you come with me, dear friend Rolón, if one day I manage to go there? I nodded, saying it would be a pleasure to do so” (Rolón: 1945).

In accordance with these and similar ideas which Rolón shared with his colleagues and having received through Nadia Boulanger a unique first-hand insight into Stravinsky's music, Rolón was ready to round-off the process of informed ignorance as recommended by Dukas. In the course of the last chapter, a comment on Stravinsky's impact on Rolón will be made. For the time being, it is only important to stress that Rolón received from Boulanger an experience not enjoyed by any

other Mexican composer, an insight into the ideas and techniques of the Russian master which proved essential to Rolón's own musical formation. The immediate result of all this was a reconsideration of the way in which folk material could be used. After El Festin de los Enanos, Rolón had left well enough alone. But having grasped -through Stravinsky's example- a new approach to the incorporation of such material, he was ready to renew his labours.

The original material for the Tres Danzas Indigenas (Jaliscienses) (Three Indigenous Dances [from Jalisco]) came from an anthology by the Mexican musicologist Ruben Campos. Rolón took three simple dances and elaborated on them, making use of musical devices not heard before in his music. These dances are marked by the balance existing between their "simple" melodies and the elaborate harmonies that support them (ex.4.5). The use of folk material in this manner raises a question as to the validity of such a process. Do the melodies lose any of their innate characteristics by being covered with such a costume? The discussion of this issue would not be solved by analyzing one work. But it cannot be denied that in this particular case the melodies do not sound monotonous in spite of their repetition within a "classical" work. (2).

2.- In the course of Chapter V, the use of folk material in Rolón's works will be further discussed.



Example 4.5. Passage from Danza Indigena Jaliciense (no.2).

The relationship between harmony and rhythm is a key point of these dances. The harmony employed by Rolón is of a modern, dissonant character, the latter characteristic being enhanced by a constant use of off-beats (ex.4.6). There are however, passages where due to the use of more conventional harmonies, the essence of the native material is reaffirmed. This gives birth to contrasts which are quite effective, as in example 4.6 where a passage in sixths leaves no doubt as to the "Mexican" source from which this music comes.

This is definitely music of contrasts. Simple melodies and complex harmonies, moments of soft consonance and brilliant dissonance, -and in its pianistic approach- moments of simplicity followed by bursts of percussive, brilliant passages; written with an accomplished pianist

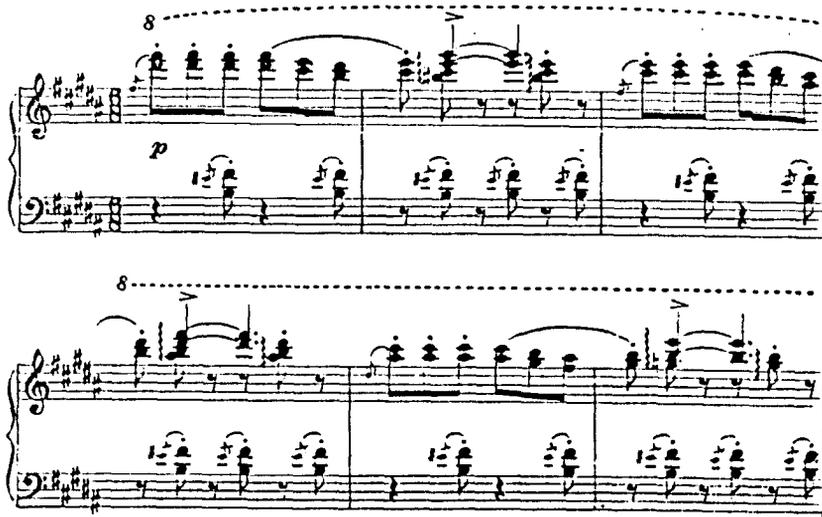


Example 4.6. Passage from Danza Indigena Jaliciense (no.2).

in mind (3). Contrast is also present in the registers used, thus obtaining passages of distinctive sonorities as in the middle section of dance no.1 (ex. 4.7). The use of contrast as a means whereby folk-material becomes a departing point rather than the basis of a work, was perhaps the biggest achievement of Rolón in these Danzas Jalicienses. They are a key work in the evolution of his style, not only because of the above mentioned feature, but also because the idea of contrast is deeply linked to Rolón's ideal: In order to create any music that would reveal Mexico to the world, that revelation must

3.- The Dances were dedicated to the Catalonian pianist Ricardo Viñes (to whom Debussy dedicated many works which he performed for the first time). There is not any proof as to whether or not Viñes played Rolón's Dances.

portray the immense contrasts present in our history and culture. If any characteristic can be pointed out as belonging to what is Mexican, it is precisely the encounter of our contrasting origins -the Prehispanic world on one side and the European world on the other-. And no doubt, it is this reference to contrast what gives these dances their unmistakably Mexican flavour.



Ex. 4.7. Passage from first Danza Indigena Jaliciense.

Ana de la Cueva performed these dances in Paris in 1929.

These were some of the comments made by the press:

"The "Danzas Jalicienses" on indigenous themes, created by the great composer Jose Rolón, were a delight, both because of the intrinsic value of these curious pieces and because of the way in which they were performed by Mme. Rolón..."

Echos du Mexique

"We follow with interest the musical movement in Mexico and testify to its ascending pace thanks to the work of some artists. One of these is Jose Rolón

whose "Danzas Indigenas" -full of rhythm and strange melodies- are a true model of what pieces based on indigenous material should be..."

Revue de l'Amérique Latine

"Most interesting and curious were the "Danzas Indigenas" by Jose Rolón. They possessed an exotic atmosphere and their harmonization was done in an abrupt and yet strangely refined manner..."

Le Figaro (4).

The composition of these dances marks a change: Rolón has passed from a simple form of nationalism to the arising of a more personal style. To paraphrase his quotation of Dukas, Rolón has "forgotten everything and become himself". Of course, the success of these pieces needed to be taken further and during the last months of his stay in Paris Rolón began to work on two of his most important works, the symphonic poem Cuauhtemoc and the Piano Concerto. The Concerto however, was not finished until 1935 whereas Cuauhtemoc was finished in 1929 and performed for the first time in 1930 (5).

Cuauhtemoc -Rolón's largest and most ambitious work- is written for a full size symphony orchestra and chorus. It is divided into four parts which narrate Cuauhtemoc's life: Cortejo y Coronación (Procession and Coronation), Defensa Heroica (heroic defence), Tormento de Cuauhtemoc

4.- These extracts (with their source indication) appeared in the programme notes of the Orquesta Sinfonica de Mexicanos, when Zapotlan was performed for the first time (1932). The dates of these comments are not provided in the programme.

5.- The Symphonic Poem takes its name -which means "descending eagle"- from the last Aztec emperor and hero of the resistance against the Spanish conquerors. Legend has it that when captured, Cuauhtemoc endured agonizing tortures by not revealing where was his father's treasure hidden. His figure has come to embody not only heroism but also bravery, courage and nobility.

(Cuauhtemoc's torture) and a fourth part without title in the original (6). Rolón followed for his portrayal of Cuauhtemoc's life a literary argument by the writer Agustín Loera Chavez. In the first part, after a sombre introduction which portrays the procession with a rhythm introduced by the piano, Cuauhtemoc's theme is heard. The theme is played by the Horns (con sordina) and accompanied by an ostinato played by the piano (ex.4.8). Through a development of this theme, an invocation of the emperor's coronation is made.

The second part aims to describe the uneven battle endured by the Aztec people under the command of their emperor. It employs two themes, the first of which was taken from la danza de los cuchillos (the knives's dance), a popular dance from Jalisco's mountains. (Ex.4.9). The second theme is Rolón's and is played by the tubas. Needless to say, these themes represent the two sides fighting. They are sometimes juxtaposed and their subsequent development brings the movement to an effusive close. The third part begins with an Andante which announces the defeat of the Aztecs and the

6.- Otto Mayer Serra in his article on Rolón (1947) gives different titles for the various parts of the poem plus a title for the last one. These are: La Consagración del Sacrificio (the Consecration of Sacrifice), La Defensa Epica" (the Epic Defence), El Suplicio Heroico (the Heroic Torment) and Himno a la Glorificación (Glorification Hymn). Although Mayer Serra does not give the source of these names, they might well have come from one of the different scores of the piece. For this work, I have used a microfilm from the score sent by Rolón to the Free Library of Philadelphia on Nicolas Slonimsky's request. This copy, as well as the one guarded by the composer -now in his archives, has some pages missing from the third part. The whereabouts of the complete score can only be guessed at, so unfortunately the score requires a lot of work before a performance can be contemplated.

1º

2º

3º

4º

Senza div.

Piano

Example 4.8. Excerpt from Cuauhtemoc.

Example 4.9. Danza de los Cuchillos from Cuauhtemoc.

destruction of their city. A dialogue between different wind instruments leads into a second section which depicts Cuauhtemoc's ordeal. This part is followed without interruption by the last movement, Allegro pomposo. In it, the sadness of the last part gives way to a glorious fugal finale in which Cuauhtemoc's theme is heard combined with a rhythmic theme played by woodwinds and strings.

A striking feature of this work is the way in which the choir is employed. In its first appearance, to sing Cuauhtemoc's torture, Rolón made use of a resource not employed before him by any composer of the New World: the sprechgesang or spoken chant. The words spoken by the chorus come from a poem by Ramon Lopez Velarde. La Suave Patria (The Gentle Fatherland) is his last and most famous poem. In it, Lopez Velarde sings to Mexico, a country perceived by the poet as an intimate -as opposed to historic- reality. The only hero whose deeds cannot be ignored, are those of Cuauhtemoc:

"Unico heroe a la altura del arte..."
(Unique hero at the level of art).

Lopez Velarde's poem is divided into two acts with an interlude entitled Cuauhtemoc (7). It is the words from this interlude to which Rolón set a soft instrumental background (ex.4.10). In contrast, the choir's

7.- It is precisely this part whose pages are missing in the original, so the only available example comes from the last bars.

Fl. *mf*
 Ob. *f*
 C. *mf*
 Fg. *mf*
 C. *mf*
 C. *mf*
 V1 *f*
 V2 *f*
 Vla *f*
 Vc/cb *f*

al adorno del templo...
 ...
 ...
 ...

Example 4.10. Spoken Choir from Quauhtemoc.

10

Picc.
Fl.
Ob.
Cl. C
Cl. C
Cl. B
Fg
C Fg+
C
Trpt
Tuba 1
3
C
O
R
O
Vi. 1
2
V. 2
2
Violon
2
V. C
2
C. B

Example 4.11. First page from Cuauhtemoc's last movement.

intervention in the last movement consists of a contrapuntal section which has no words to it and which once again reveals Rolón's unorthodox use of the choir, this time as a means of sonority and texture rather than a vehicle for any narrative (ex.4.11).

In a letter to his daughter, Rolón gives an account of the impressions which the symphonic work caused in Dukas:

"I have finished with Dukas the revision of Cuahtemoc. He suggested some modifications to the way in which I use timbre. Dukas judged as extraordinary the chiaroscuro which I gave to Cuahtemoc's torment. He said simply: "Very original themes, Rolón, and a good sense of the musical material, a very good work in the spoken choir and in the final fugue" (Quotation taken from Rolón: 1969).

With the composition of Cuahtemoc, Rolón's style had been reaffirmed. In a certain way, Rolón condensed in this work all of those features on which he had previously worked and which by this time had become his own. Rolón established a taste for non-definition of tonality, for the richness of the vernacular rhythms, the transformation of folk melodies and for the use of contrast as a means of musical expression. Thus the composer came back from Paris in 1929 having achieved all this, and furthermore, ready to create more works in which to portray a country that he had come to understand in musical terms.

V. S k e t c h e s i n S o u n d .

"Tu voz es un verso
que se canta..."

Ramón Lopez Velarde (1).

It could be said that the songs by Rolón form a parallel stream to that of his other works. Their variety reflects the composer's own evolution, representing at the same time a different aspect of Rolón's style altogether. In them, the exuberance of the symphonic or piano works is substituted by an intimate and simple character.

The study of Rolón's songs presents a few obstacles. The exact date of composition of many songs is difficult to establish. Many manuscripts are lost and a number of songs is only known through later copies which in most cases are not in Rolón's own hand. Not only does this situation make it difficult to give the songs a chronological order, but also makes it quite impossible to give their exact number.

In broad terms, the songs can be divided into three main groups: the songs on French texts, the folk songs and the songs on Mexican texts. The latter group is indeed the most interesting and includes some of Rolón's major

1.- "thy voice is a verse which is sung..."

works, such as the two poems by Carlos Pellicer (for voice and chamber ensemble) and the cycle on José Gorostiza's Dibujos sobre un Puerto (Sketches of a Harbour).

It seems that the group of folk songs transcribed by Rolón constitute his earliest adventure in this form. As stated before, it is difficult to establish the date of these works, but it is likely that Rolón, following the example of Ponce, became interested in folk songs around 1914-15. Ponce had already used folk-songs as a basis for some of his works and, in doing so as well as in publishing his arrangements for piano solo of some of these songs, broke new ground in Mexico's musical history. Rolón, who at that time found himself pondering over the direction that his style and technique should follow, must have sensed the need of returning to popular music and the potential wealth which it guarded. His transcriptions of popular songs, such as Ay no me digas (don't tell me), Ingrata and Ufrasia are made in much the same way as those of Ponce. The melody is presented without any alteration and supported by a simple harmony which is written in a plain and somewhat academic way. Ingrata, as we have seen, was a favourite song of Rolón. In its original form it differs little from the way in which it is heard in Zapotlan's Gallo Romantico (ex.5.1) but it will reappear later in the Concierto para Piano in a different light indicating how

Example 5.1. Excerpt from Ingrata.

Rolón's attitude towards the use of such material evolved. As with Ponce's songs, Rolón's also include a touch of chromaticism which was added in order to make of the transcription more than a mere notational exercise. The melodic line of these songs must have appeared too precious to be tampered with so the enrichment of harmonies was the only change done to them when presented to a more sophisticated public. Ufrasia's manuscript is most eloquent in this respect: one can see how the bass already contained a certain degree of chromatic harmonies (as in the ninth bar of ex.5.2), and how Rolón added at a later stage an extra voice, seeking a more elaborate harmonic texture.

Nationalistic composers have been much criticised for their use of folk songs and it is worth discussing to

Example 5.2. Excerpt from Ufrasia.

what extent Rolón's attitude towards such material relates to that of other composers. But let us first define more exactly the nature of this criticism. Gerald Abraham gives an excellent abridgement of it:

"A folk-song is a complete musical entity (...). To break it up into its constituent motives is not only vandalism but useless vandalism, for the beauty of a folk-tune generally lies in its phrases as wholes... To dress it up with gorgeous ornamentation or instrumentation... is like putting a peasant into a brilliant uniform. In fact, almost the only thing you can do with a folk tune once you have played it, is to play it louder (Abraham: 1974)".

There is no doubt that the adaptation of a popular melody often robs it of its integrity, however well instrumented it may be. However it would be difficult to

sustain the above judgements with reference to the works of composers such as Ponce. A popular melody -as many of the latter's piano works conclusively prove- can be altered and incorporated into a musical text without having to lose its essence. When a popular theme occurs in Rolón's music, it is indeed repeated with slight variations in its harmony or instrumentation. But Rolón's use of such material did not stop there. His knowledge of popular music provided him with an accurate idea of some of the musical configurations which endow the folk-songs with their particular character such as the regular appearance of sevenths in the melodic line, the use of thirds and sixths and the change from 2/4 to 3/4 time.

Rolón seems to have given great importance to the knowledge of folkloric material. As late as 1931 he was still collecting and transcribing songs. A notebook for this year contains the transcription of four folk songs: Papaganga, a purepecha song from the state of Michoacan, Sheparen, a "son" from Michoacan; Cori Maniguame, another indigenous song from Jalisco (for two flutes, voice and drum) and Tule taile, also from Jalisco (ex.5.3). Rolón's choice is most revealing because these are not popular songs, but rather songs of the Purepechas which exemplify in a simple manner what Rolón was to portray in his main works: the co-existence

4. Tule tail? Canción del Palo a largo Tuxpan Jalisco F.

Flauta

Voz

Violonchelo

Armonio

15

14

13

12

11

10

9

8

7

6

5

4

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2

1

0

1

2

3

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of two worlds and their interaction in the formation of a new culture.

By writing songs with French texts -a language that, needless to say, the composer spoke fluently- Rolón was aiming at similar goals as when he wrote his first piano works: the development of harmony, the distillation of his musical ideas and, in this particular case, the evocation of atmospheres and the use of extramusical material as points of departure for creating a musical work. The evocativeness and Rolón's harmonic language are the most noteworthy features of these songs. Of course, these characteristics go hand in hand in most cases. Take as example the passage from Nocturne shown in ex. 5.4.

Of all the songs, the ones with French texts are the most difficult to date. What makes this so is, on the one hand, the early date of some of them (Larmes's manuscript is dated 1917); on the other hand, the harmonies of some of them (Simple Conte, Nocturne) which seem quite advanced if compared to those works composed before 1925. A cadence like the one shown on ex.5.5 (from Simple Conte) does not resemble any from the Symphony in Eb or even El Festín de los Enanos. However, I think Rolón would not have composed to French texts after Reynel's Trois melodies, if only because the evolution of his style called for a different approach

Handwritten musical score for a song. The top system shows a vocal line with lyrics "te" and "Oubane fleur, et qu'une toi... le" and a piano accompaniment. The bottom system shows a vocal line with lyrics "Mon a-mour" and "Mon a...mour et ta beau" and a piano accompaniment. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamics like "pp".

Example 5.4. A passage from Nocturne.

to the one manifested in these songs (2). Therefore, I would allocate the period 1917-1924 as the most likely for the composition of these songs.

After the Trois Melodies and the composition of songs on Mexican poetry, Rolón's style underwent a significant change. This is why the songs that Rolón composed to texts by modern Mexican poets occupy a special place in his production. To appreciate their style it is

2.- See previous chapter for a description of Trois Melodies.

es le nuit a nuit d'ef bien rer les cor des

Example 5.5. End of Simple Conte.

necessary to look at them in the general context of Mexican music as it evolved in the years following the Revolution. In this respect I would like to refer to my own article on Pablo Moncayo's Muros Verdes:

"In the process of analyzing the music produced by Mexican nationalist composers, common features emerge, despite the fact that each had his own ideas about the path Mexican music should follow. These features include the use of pandiatonicism, an open search for economy in musical expression, the constant change of time-signatures and the use of

repetition" (Miranda:1990).

The origin of these features as well as the reason why they were adapted by so many composers are not difficult to trace back. The richness of the folk rhythms, and the search for a means whereby the Pre-hispanic world could be recovered, account for all of these features with the exception of what I call the search for economy in the musical expression. In my previous work on Mexican piano music (Miranda: 1989), I have explained the origin of this tendency in a detailed manner. For our purposes, it is enough to recall that a taste for small pieces and for variation as opposed to development as a means of expansion are all characteristic features of the music of the nationalistic period. Indeed, the use of small forms in which several musical statements are presented was a favoured custom amongst Mexican musicians even before the revolution. Composers would create- for instance- an extraordinary number of Mazurkas with two or three themes in each of them, rather than write a sonata or other form that implied the development of an idea. And, as we have seen, Rolón's early works fall within this generalization. Nevertheless, as has also been explained, Rolón's evolution led to the exploration of bigger forms, starting with his early symphonic works and culminating with the Piano Concerto. However, his songs seem to recapture the unconscious taste for economy and develop it in a more conscious and modern form, Dibujos sobre un Puerto being the utmost

expression of this aspect of his style.

In fact, it is most revealing that Rolón chose this set of poems amongst those by José Gorostiza. It is as if he deliberately searched for the shortest possible lines. This, combined with his taste for the poetry of his fellow countryman must have made of Dibujos the ideal text. Before going into the music, it is worth quoting the seven poems of the set:

El Alba

El paisaje marino en pesados
colores se dibuja.
Duermen las cosas.
Al salir, el alba parece
sobre el mar una burbuja.
Y la vida es apenas un
milagroso reposar de barcas
en la blanda quietud de las
arenas.

La Tarde

Ruedan las olas frágiles
de los atardeceres
como limpias canciones
de mujeres.

Nocturno

El silencio por nadie se
quebranta y nadie lo
deplora. Solo se canta a la
puesta del sol, desde la
aurora.
Mas la luna, con ser de luz
a nuestro simple parecer,
nos parece sonora cuando
derraman sus manos ligeras
las agiles sombras de las
palmeras.

The Dawn

The view of the sea is
sketched in deep colours,
veiled in sleep. Then,
the dawn appears over the
sea like a bubble.
And life is merely a
heaven-sent shelter for
boats in the snugness of
the sands.

The Evening

As evening approaches the
fragile waves sound like
the clear singing of a
woman.

Nocturne

Nobody breaks the silence
and nobody minds.
The singing is done at
setting of the sun, until
the dawn.
Even the moon, which
lights up our very being,
sends tinkling harmony
through the agile shadows
of the palm fronds.

Elegia

A veces me dan ganas de llorar, pero las supe el mar.

Elegy

Sometimes I want to cry, but the sea cries for me.

Cantarillo

Salen las barcas al amanecer No se dejan amar, pues suelen no volver o solo regresan a descansar.

Little song

The boats sail at daybreak. They do not like to be loved, for at times they do not return or only return to rest.

El Faro

Rubio pastor de ovejas pescadoras.

The Lighthouse

Red shepherd of fishing boats.

Oración

La barca morena de un pescador, cansada de bogar sobre la playa se puso a rezar: ¡Hazme señor, un puerto en las orillas de este mar!

Prayer

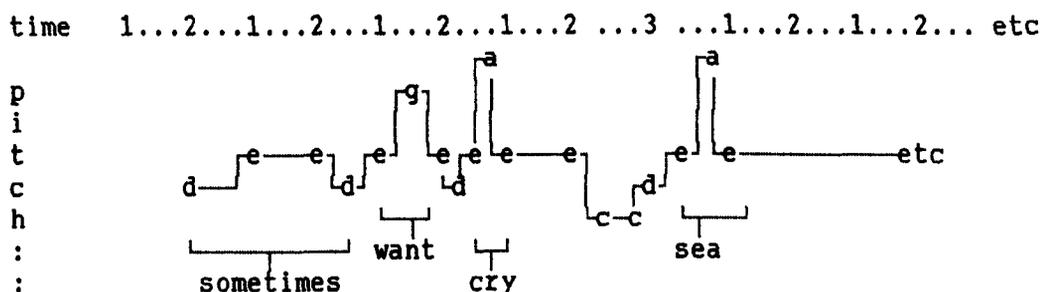
A fisherman in a brown boat, tired of rowing, pulled onto the beach and prayed: Make me, oh Lord, a harbour at the edges of this sea!

There is a definite link between all the poems, not only because of their common setting but also because, until the very last phrase, nobody speaks except the poet. This gives the poems a certain coherence which Rolón matched by using similar modal scales (caps. denote Dominants):

trans—g	a	bb	c	D	e	f	g	elegia
———d	e	f	g	A	b	c	d	el alba / oracion
	e	f	g	a	B	c	d e	la tarde
				a	b	c	d E f g a	El faro / cantarillo

Thus, the basic material is the Dorian mode used for the opening poem. The Aeolian is used for El faro and Cantarillo while the Phrygian mode for La Tarde starts

A good insight into the other poems is also gained by continuing to look into the melodic intervals. In Elegia, for example, there is another instance where the sense of the poetry is captured very accurately in the melodic design. The urge to cry is depicted in a simple sequence in which the same interval is expanded in accordance with the poem's own unfolding:



If in Elegia Rolón portrays so much in a few bars, in El Faro, the economy and simplicity of the poetry is depicted even more concisely. To do so, Rolón abandons his use of the syllable = note formula and indulges in a melisma, with the indication Quasi recit -almost spoken- (ex.5.6).

Dibujos is a unique example of musical economy amongst Rolón's output. The other songs which he wrote with Mexican texts do not pursue this line to the same extent, if only because the poetry itself is not as concentrated.

Quasi recit

Ru-biops - - tor de bar-cas pesca-do - - - ras..

longa

f

Example 5.6. "El Faro" from Dibujos
Sobre un Puerto.

Many are the other songs by Rolón set to Mexican words among which the two poems by Carlos Pellicer (1897-1977) occupy a special place if only because of their instrumentation calling as it does for voice and wind quintet (flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon). Needless to say, such an ensemble lends itself to the creation of textures which admirably serve the poetry's images. In El Segador, for instance, a tremolo in both flute and clarinet accompanies the trees "whose dance they set to swing..." (ex.5.7).

Música lenta. Se ar... bolos pu... sie-ron su danza me... por...

This musical score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with lyrics underneath. The piano accompaniment is spread across five staves, including a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and three individual staves. The music is in a minor key and features a variety of rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.

Example 5.7. Excerpt from El Segador.

Poco animado. ma... no. El com-pañero-que don-tro to... no y! se... labo-rado mas al...

This musical score consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single staff with lyrics underneath. The piano accompaniment is spread across five staves, including a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and three individual staves. The music is in a minor key and features a variety of rhythmic patterns and melodic lines.

Example 5.8. Excerpt from El Segador.

In a passage from El Sembrador the poetry says "y el cielo ha volado mas alto..."(and the sky has flown even higher). Once again, both flute and clarinet capture the poetic image by playing a quick sequence of fourths (ex.5.8).

In El Sembrador, the archaic character of the poem is echoed in the music by Rolón's characteristic use of tonality, which in this case becomes a means of colour. Thus the unsophisticated tonality of the beginning (ex.5.9) gives way to the chromaticism of the middle section (ex.5.10) The wind ensemble allows Rolón to unfold these works horizontally, and dialogue between the different voices appears continually (see previous example).

Although these works are not the last songs which Rolón composed, they represent perhaps his most adventurous works in this genre. Their style is similar to other songs such as Deseos (1931), Quien me compra una naranja (1932), Poema (1932) or Incolor (1936). In his later songs, the style is altered slightly, giving way to less gentle harmonies as a passage from No le Hableis de Amor (1937) illustrates (ex.5.11).

Perhaps the most important feature of the songs composed by Rolón is that all of them served him as vehicles for the expression of more intimate ideas. In this respect,

Mod.^{to} P Semplice.

Voz *El Sembrador sembró la*

Flauto

Oboe

Clar.

Corno en Fa

Fagot

p *con sord.* *senz. sord.*

Example 5.9. Beginning from El Sembrador.

Poco a poco

Voz

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

C.

Fg.

V.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

C.

Fg.

p *mf*

Example 5.10 Excerpt from El Sembrador.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "No le hableis de amor". It consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The score is written on multiple systems of staves. The vocal line includes lyrics in Spanish: "Es tan pálido el rosa de sus labios", "Es tan dulce el aroma de sus labios", "Cayó en el ministerio de los viejos", and "No le hableis de amor". The piano accompaniment features chords and melodic lines. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *p*, and performance instructions like "lento". The piece concludes with a double bar line and the number 12.

Example 5.11. Page from No le hableis de amor.

Rolón shared the ideas of his friend Lopez Velarde, who made a clear distinction between working with what is intimate and what is not:

"Yo que solo cante de la
exquisita partitura del
intimo decoro,
alzo hoy la voz a la
mitad del foro... para
cortar a la epopeya
un gajo".

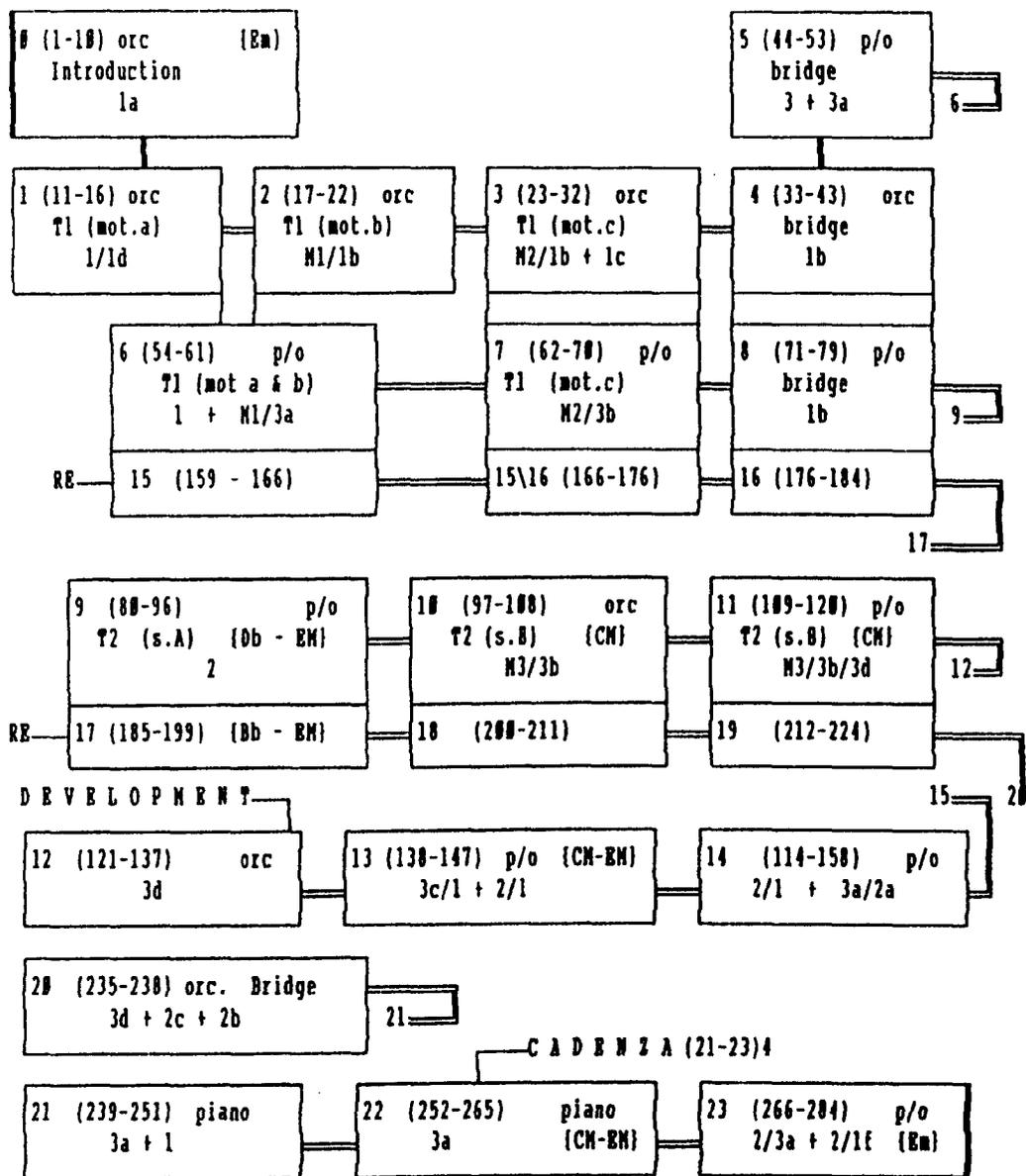
"I who only sang from the
exquisite score of the
intimate modesty
raise my voice today in the
middle of the square.... to
cut a slice from the
epopee".

Rolón's songs are also -and this must be stressed- works in which poetry and music co-exist rather than subjugate one another. With a few early exceptions, all the poems stand on their own and their musical setting never interferences or destroys their original merits. Quite the opposite -as with all great songs- thanks to the music the words acquire a new and inefable dimension.

VI a. T h e E x p e r i e n c e o f
" l o p r o p i o " .

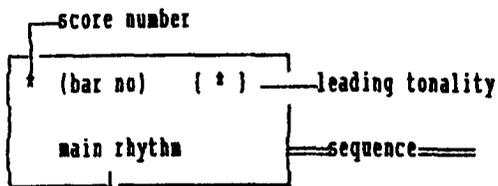
Rolón finished the score of the Concierto para piano y orquesta in 1935. Despite his prestige and notwithstanding his post as director of the music department at the National Institute of Fine Arts, he found it difficult to have it performed in Mexico City perhaps due to reasons which shall be discussed at a later stage. Thus he arranged for it to be performed in Guadalajara in 1936 by his wife with himself conducting. After this, Rolón revised the orchestral score and it had to wait until September 1942 for a repeat performance by the National Symphony Orchestra. Carlos Chávez conducted with Salvador Ordoñez -Rolón's friend, Principal of the Conservatoire at the time and a piano pupil of Manuel Ponce- as soloist. Before attempting to discuss the work, the reactions it produced and its place in the context of Mexican musical evolution, it seems appropriate to consider the work from a musical point of view.

The first movement, Allegro Energico, follows the classical double exposition in its structure (see diagram 6.1.). However, and herein lies Rolón's first achievement, such a predetermined structure does not impede Rolón from pouring into the score an admirable



This diagram illustrates the classical structure of the movement. Abbreviations are as follows:

T.- theme
 s.- subject
 mot.- motive
 orc.- orchestra
 p/o.- piano & orchestra
 †.- plus later
 RE.- re-exposition



see diagram 6.3. (2/3a = rhythm 2 on rhythm 3a, etc.)

Diagram 6.1. Estructure of Rolon's Piano Concerto 1st movement, Allegro Energico.

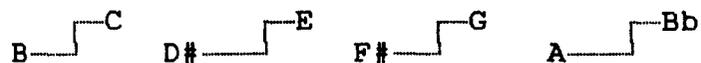
degree of invention and musicianship. In the opening bars a decisive element is immediately presented when, for the first ten bars, the interval of a ninth is constantly sustained -by the violas and timpani- as a pedal. Being an interval whose characteristics are unequivocal, i.e. being formed by a dissonance whose resolution is its same root, its presentation announces the lines along which the movement is going to proceed.

The question of tonality is the first important point to concern us since Rolón chooses to define the work's predominant key of E minor in an extremely subtle fashion. The introduction of the minor third in b.2 which together with the B in the bass could be described as "Ic" in E minor, is by no means clearcut. This formation has a secondary role for the definition of tonality even if the whole thing is considered as a juxtaposition (Ic/V9). On the other hand, the use of the ninth to form a V9 appears to be of more significance if we follow Schenker's definition of such a chord having its origin in the three univalent chords that occur in the diatonic scale (v7 - vii^o - vii7). Thus begins that manipulation of tonality and modulation which Rolón found an indispensable ingredient of his style, in which tonality may be perfectly defined yet hardly ever be openly stated. As to the question of the Tonic of E minor appearing at the beginning, its secondary character is further clarified when in bar 11 Rolón

stops using the E-G minor third and brings in the missing components of the V9 chord as part of the theme in both first and second motives, the latter being a melody whose centre is D# and which is repeated sequentially a third above (F#). This horizontalization of the V9 provides the first clear signal of the tonality since V9 does not appear in a full, vertical way until bar 29. Rolón goes on to sustain V9 as his gravitational centre for most of the exposition.

The use of the opening ninth as a formative element is apparent from the very first bars, where the use of 2nd -9th -7th intervals as interchangeable structures is announced, a feature that prevails throughout the work. For instance, in the first bar of the theme, the E, previously used as the root of the juxtaposed chord (b.2) becomes the ninth of D# (D# -E = B -C) [see bar 11 with its series of 2nds and sevenths]. Moreover the first ostinato is built on an interval of a second where A, as the seventh of the dominant is combined with the third of the juxtaposed Em chord [see also bar 11 and bar 21].

When the first bridge to link the orchestra with the piano entrance appears (No.4) another way of using the dominant ninth chord is exploited, this time bearing in mind the concept of the ninth being an unresolved octave. By projecting the whole chord a ninth:



a new chord is obtained [as in bars 32,33 etc] and these two chords are used to harmonize the last three notes of the theme (G,F#,D#). This process is repeated several times throughout the passage that follows with some changes in the harmony, although the construction remains almost the same, thanks to the composer's not having changed the notes from the theme and to the underlying second ostinato to which the above described projection was so well adapted. It is also interesting to note how just before No.4, the bass moves by thirds from B to G to E and thence back to B in this lengthy dominant prolongation.

In the process of repeating and developing the motivic cell described above certain harmonic changes occur, notably the introduction of chords which have a Neapolitan relationship to the dominant and provide an enharmonic flavour of Db (No.4 m.35-41). Of course, it is not a move towards another region but a dramatic leap that adds colour and sharpness to the passage. It is more appropriate to understand this as a mere enharmonic spelling of the dominant chord (B D# F# = Cb Eb Gb as in bar 39). However it is important to signal this now as these harmonies will reappear later on.

Such a point occurs in the first bar of the soloist's

entrance (No.5). While sustaining the V9 in the orchestra as well as in the piano's left hand, the right plays two chords that contain five flats, even though the Gb is always sounded after the G and could be said to be a mere enharmonic of F# as witness the Gb Eb spelling against the orchestral chords which are unequivocally F# D# etc. This is followed by an arpeggio in which the dominant ninth chord and its transposition are once more used, this time played interval by interval, alternating their appearance by making the right hand start before the left with the left anticipating the right an octave lower.

So far, the aspects described above have been related to the idea of E minor as the tonality of the piece. And although this is correct, there is a significant proportion of what might be described as polytonality although never quite reaching the extent that such a term implies in, say, the works of Milhaud or Revueletas. The best way to appreciate this in operation is by observing the way in which certain accidentals occur and recur throughout Rolón's score.

Bar No.12 provides an interesting starting point. The interval A -Eb (3rd beat) is in fact a disguised writing of E minor's tritone. And although it is clear that Rolón substitutes flats for sharps and viceversa for easiness of writing, it is also necessary to point out

that this is not always the case. The fact that E and Bb share the same tritone (A-D# A-Eb) allows Rolón to introduce notes from Bb and further flatwards as in No.2 where an Ab appoggiatura is used or when the same counterpoint is repeated (bars 19-21) and the Bb becomes Db. The use of tritones is of primary importance since it gave Rolón a clearer harmonic scheme to follow and at the same time surrounds the movement with a tonal indeterminacy which avoids a full and uneventful settling into E minor.

Besides the tritone described above, Rolón also uses B-F and C-F#. Their appearances are scattered (the former's first appearances being in bars 18, 25-27 and 37) and are used to increase tension when the sense of tonality is strong. However, these tritones seem to indicate as well the source of Rolón's harmonies. From e minor's neighbouring regions Rolón takes E major, (or rather the possibility of having G and D sharps) and G major, whose tritone is -in any case- contained in its minor scale. G major's closeness to C makes it easy for him to take the latter tritone as well. Furthermore, its appearances quietly herald the tonality of the second theme. And with these sounds at hand -not forgetting the previously discussed access to Bb- Rolón created a harmonic framework that allowed him to built complex chords as well as sequences like that of No.3, where he mixes E and C major to form a phrase that far from being

resolved in either way goes on to include a few B flats before it leads into No.4 where the tension created by trying to establish E minor's dominant gives birth to a passage of rich harmonic density.

The way in which the exposition ends smoothly and blends into the development section deserves our attention. No 12 in the score appears to indicate the beginning of the development but the material used (from No.10) has already undergone some transformation since it has moved to Db, the Neapolitan of the broad C major second subject announced at No.10, or more accurately to its dominant. Also, for the first time, the piano has shared with the orchestra its presentation of the theme (bars 113-118). Once in No 12, Rolón creates the development on a sequence moving from the dominant of Db to the dominant of E with the bass then climbing a two octaves chromatically from B to B (bar 135). This is followed by a change of F# for F natural (No.13) thus moving into the dominant of C major. This is an important move, since the climax of the movement is reached with this harmony sustaining it at bar 142 (where the piano plays material from No.10 while the orchestra plays the first theme). Then, the bass moves towards B again, although it first goes to C# using once more the tritone previously mentioned. Needless to say, the arrival of the bass line to B is also the arrival to the Recapitulation. But before going any further, it is

necessary to discuss an important point about the exposition.

This section rigorously follows the classical Sonata form, complete with double exposition, at least until No.9 when further important material is introduced. It would appear that the second theme does not start until No.10, when another lyric passage in thirds is introduced, and thus No.9 might be described as a bridge passage made with different material from that of either theme, rather than a theme on its own. However, one is tempted to assign it greater importance despite appearances. Not only does it introduce a tonal change but it also presents a new rhythm, whose variation process as well as whose appearance in later parts -such as in the cadenza and above all, at the pinnacle of the development section- are fundamental to the work's evolution. Perhaps rather than defining No.10 as the entry of the second subject, it might be more appropriate to take the two themes together as components of what Tovey called a second subject group, a term which implies that the section is made up of various themes defined by their function and tonality. Thus subject A refers to the first "theme" (No.9) which is used by Rolón both because of its contrasting harmony (it starts with two bars of Db/C# followed by E major) and melodic character. This theme, helped by its rhythmic repetition constitutes an ideal buffer between

the lyricism of the themes that surround it (Nos. 10 & 7) and the dynamic and rhythmical movement of the beginning.

Once into the Recapitulation, the piano seizes the initiative. The exposition, no longer double, incorporates material from both orchestral and piano expositions heard previously, along with changes of key in both parts of the subject group. Thus No.17 (second subject A) starts in Bb major. It is here that the contrasting nature of this subject A is better appreciated since it creates a space with no tension, much helped by the piano markings, that is in direct connection with the previous appearance of the material at the climax. Subject b is presented in E major and at No.20, after four last bars with the piano before the cadenza, the orchestra start a passage in which an ostinato is subjected to successive diminutions, gradually rising in tutti until the start of the soloist's cadenza.

With such a range of material on which to draw, the Cadenza emerges as a more elaborate part than might be expected. It is divided clearly into three sections. In the first of these (No.21), Rolón draws on the first theme, which is played by the piano and reinforced by the timpani. In the second part, the piano's brilliant entry at No.5 is recalled with the same descending major

sevenths and a last appearance of the rhythm of the first theme is heard. In the final section, subject A from the subject group appears once more, closing the movement in an ostinato in crescendo and diminution, which finishes with the same minor ninth chord with which the movement began only now, compounded as it is of leading note and tonic, with all ambiguities removed and, what is more, finishing squarely on the tonic of E minor, although an abrasive tonic from which the mediant has been filleted.

Other aspects of this movement such as phrase and rhythmic structure also deserve comment. Despite the orthodoxy of the treatment, there are some interesting irregularities as the following diagram (No. 5.2) illustrates. In it, the exposition is divided according to the rehearsal numbers, showing the bar length of each phrase.

The way in which the first theme is laid out reveals a strong sense of balance and symmetry. In their first appearance, both motives a & b as well as the bridge are respectively longer than motive c (no.3), but when the piano presents the same material the former become shorter while c remains the same, all receiving in the end 20 bars each.

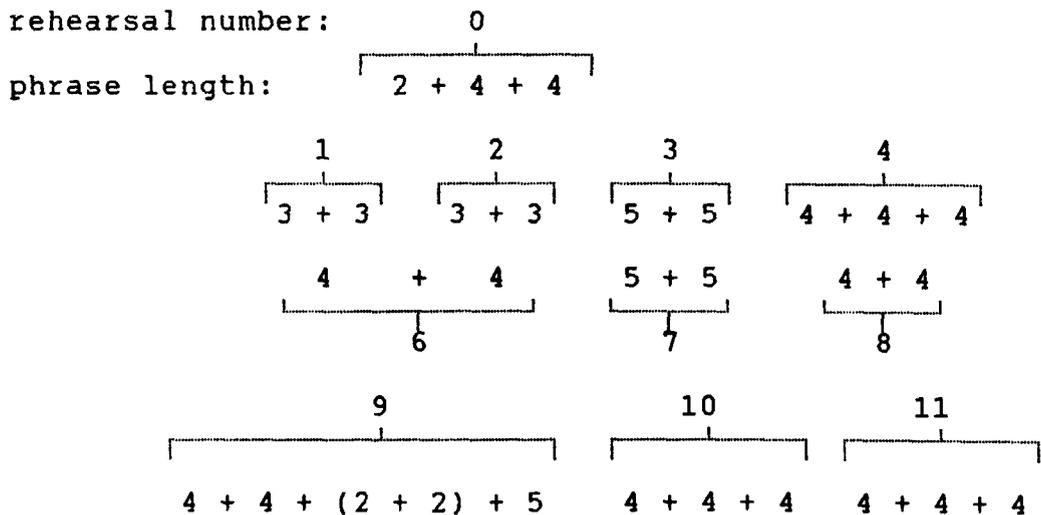


Diagram 6.2.- Phrase structure of Exposition.

It is important to indicate the above in order to draw attention to the way in which Rolón creates his balance. At the beginning (No.1), the two-bar phrase that the piano plays at No. 6 has an extra bar which comes about by the use of the ostinato. Since the latter does not appear as such in No. 6, a third bar does not arise in the soloist's presentation.

The unusual five-bar length of Nos. 3 and 7 calls for an explanation. The melody Rolón used is based on a folk song entitled Ingrata (the ungrateful) which -as we have seen- was a favourite of Rolón (see chapter V, p.105 for a description of this song). It is obvious that Rolón did not wish to quote the song in a literal way, so he altered the melodic line, and harmonized it in a suitable manner for it to follow the opening of the Concierto. However, he kept two of the main features of the song which account for its essence not having been

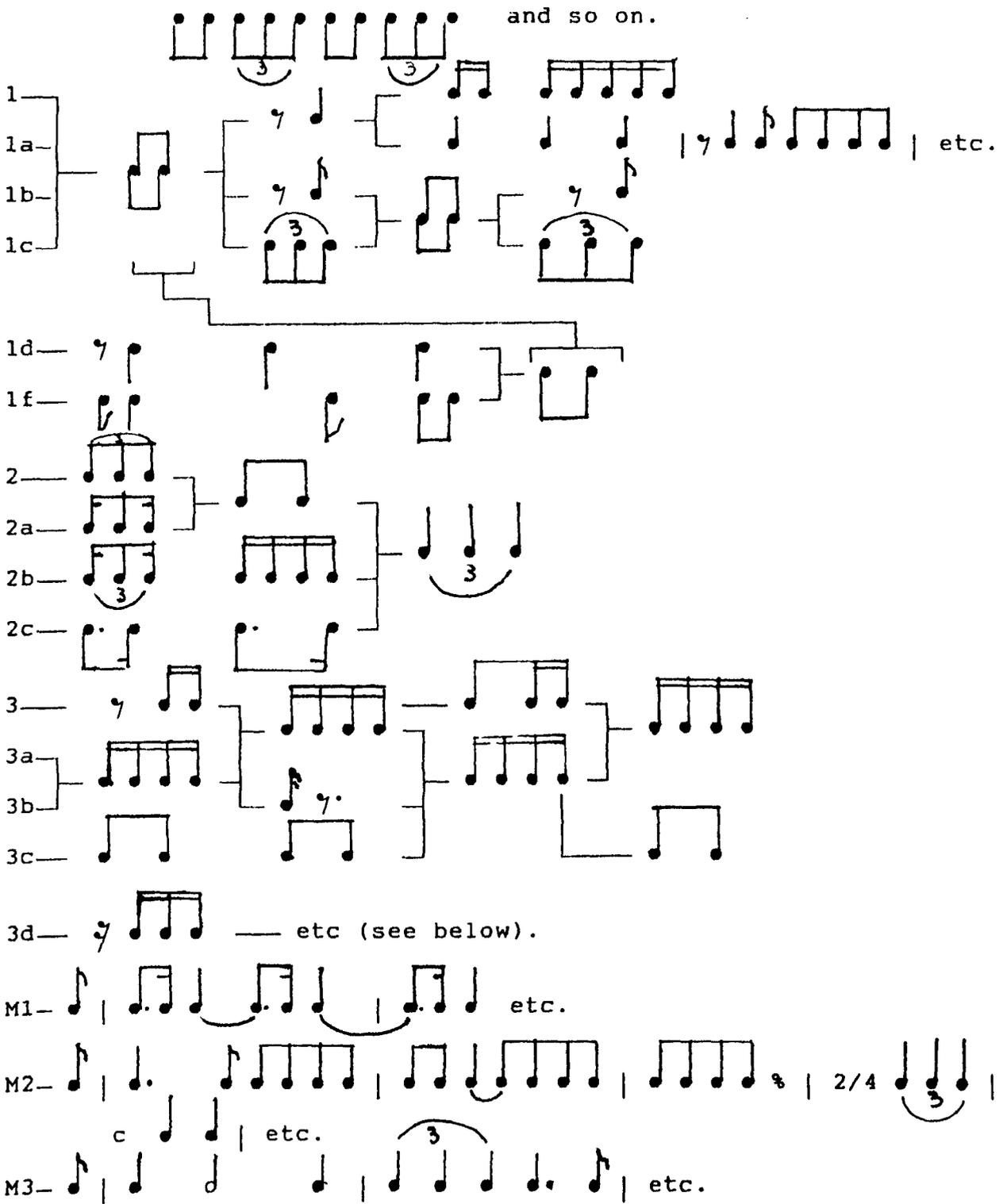
lost once it was deposited in the middle of such a work. Like so many of these folk songs, Ingrata reaches its climax immediately after the second half of the song begins by introducing in its melody a seventh interval and making both a ritardando and a fermata. Rolón kept this feature -which goes well with the Concerto movement, given its framework- and elaborated on it. He also kept the rhythmical sense without changing to a triple time signature. This explains not only the unusual phrase length but also the accent in bar 24 (and 63) and the brief time-signature change to 2/4 with a triplet in it.

One of the most important features, as utilised by several composers when aiming to depict a "Mexican" atmosphere in their works was the use of rhythmic variation, so it does not come as a surprise to find Rolón employing this feature extensively. Diagram 5.3 shows three groups of rhythms which adumbrate the variations used in the first movement.

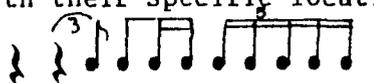
The way in which these rhythmic configurations are permuted and combined throughout the work to give birth to intricate patterns as from bar 142 onwards, where Rolón mixes two different configurations, is one of its principal glories. By having at hand different variations of the same rhythm, a kind of unifying ostinato with variations runs through the piece,

Diagram 5.3: Rhythmical groups and variations

This diagram shows the main rhythmic structures of the Concerto's first movement divided into three groups. They are arranged so that only one figure is written and by following the lines, the whole structure can be seen. Thus 1c reads:



Rhythms marked "M" indicate those that come from a melodic sequence. This diagram contains all the patterns used throughout the movement except those which are not used regularly. The group below contains some of such rhythms with their specific location in brackets:



[b.12] answer to rhythm 1.



[No.9] used as background to rhythm 2.

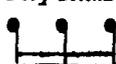
The following structures relate to the ending of M2, the first one being used as the basis for no.4 as well as other parts:



[No.4, b.77, etc]. From the last three notes of M2.



[b.72] obtained by diminishing M2 plus the above structure.

In addition to the above, the substitution of the accented note of 3a (No.5) for a semi-quaver rest gives birth to a whole series of different rhythms identified here as 3d. These include any structures that begin with  followed by any other combination (as seen in bars 115,119,121 &123).

Finally, there are two rhythms that relate to 2a. The first of these reads:



By merging the two lines  from 2a is obtained. This variation is used at bars 111-114, 117-118, 214-217 & 231 onwards.



[b.150] is used as a counterpoint to 2a.

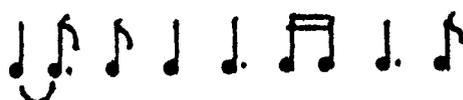
Finally, it should be noticed that the similarities of some of the variants in different groups are very important as they give cohesion to the work.

Rhythms, however, are not only subject to variation but to development as well, particularly in No.13, where the combination of rhythm 3c (played by the trumpet and marimba) with the piano playing the first theme followed by sextuplets is combined with a rhythmic commentary by the strings whose purpose is to include off-beat

accents. The way this is achieved is most unusual. The 32 quavers of the four bars (138-141) are divided unevenly. First, into two -almost identical- structures of 9 quavers:



Thus the first of these groups starts on the first beat of the bar, but the second starts on the second quaver of the second bar. The next structure starts likewise on the third quaver, but this time with a figure lasting 7 semi-quavers and continuing irregularly until the last quaver:



This development continues two bars later (144) until No.14.

Before dealing with the second movement, one final point calls for attention from an aesthetic as well as semantic perspective. The opening indication, Allegro Energico, seems to have very an importance which goes beyond the mere wish of the composer to suggest mood and tempo to his performers. It would appear that he also used this term perceiving in it the struggle, rather than the co-existence, of the movement's two components. The climax occurs when two themes are played

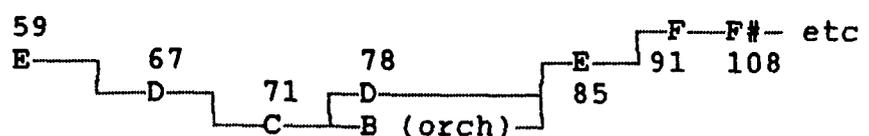
simultaneously: the piano, with subject A from the second subject group, is accompanied by the orchestra playing the first theme from the first subject group. The piano part reads Con Allegrezza, with gladness, while the orchestra's part indicates Energico. Thus the maximum level of tension can be heard at this point in the juxtaposition of these themes with their different rhythmical structures, in their appearance in C major and in the emphatic contrasting character which they portray. A few bars later, the themes are swapped between orchestra and piano and thus Rolón seems to indicate the resolution of their differences through the time-honoured device of Stimmtausch. The significance of this climactic point will be further discussed, but for the time being it is enough to have described it in musical terms.

While the first movement is a rigorous exercise in the classical concerto form, the second movement is quite the opposite. It is in fact a binary piece formed by a short poco lento and an andante whose main materials come from the previous movement. This connection is indicated straight away by the horn, which sustains an E from one movement to the next. The establishment of tonality is temporarily eluded by the use of the Aeolian scale, making of E a dominant point. Not surprisingly, this device lends the section an air of archaicism which, underlined by the rhythm of bar 5, evokes the

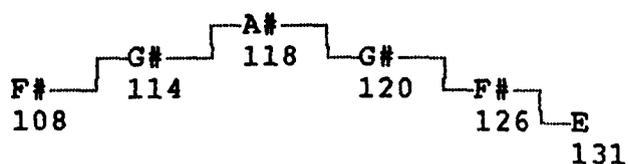
Prehispanic world. The appearance of d# on bar 9 starts a modulation and consequently, a change of mood which leads into the Andante (No.2). At this point, a temporary change into Lydian mode takes place, with its dominant announcing the C major tonality used thenceforth.

The movement's theme is presented by the horns at No.2. However, when the piano presents it at No.4, as well as in subsequent appearances, the theme is transformed by the incorporation of the same rhythmic configuration used at the beginning of the movement (see bar 5). Of course, this rhythm is directly related to rhythm 1b of the first movement. Another link with the first movement can be observed in the appearance of ninth-chords that support the theme throughout No.4.

The overall quietness of the movement is not only achieved by the use of the harmonies described above but also by the general horizontal movement that the theme takes. Once the piano takes the theme at No 4, subsequent repetitions (at bars 67, 71, 78, etc) follow a tranquil line marked by their starting pitch (with their respective thirds) and which is sometimes interwoven and continued by the orchestra (numbers refer to bars):



As the line moves away from E, particularly after 92, tension increases and some other changes take place. The expansion from F to F# is achieved by a series of ascending cells (bars 94-98) followed by a passage that moves between C and Eb (D#) first in the piano and then -in an extended version- in the orchestra. The arrival to F# (bar 108) is followed by a brilliant presentation of the theme which inverts the balance used at the opening of the Concerto. Thus the orchestra presents the theme which is underlined by chords and octaves by the soloist, all using harmonies which reinforce the departure from E to F#. To come back to E -and to close the movement- the line used is also one without big gaps or jumps:

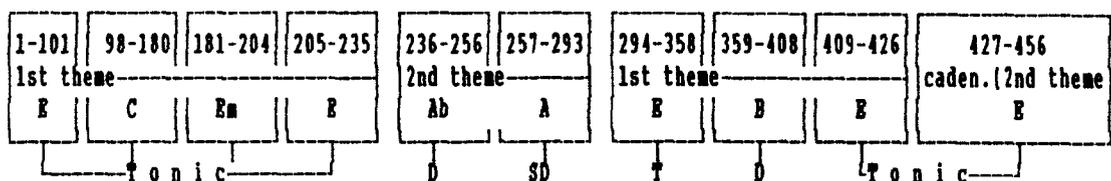


The points marked by G# and A# do not have the same status as those of the previous line (which led to F#) since their existence is both supported by F# harmony -rather than one of their own- and is much shorter. Nevertheless, the unfolding of this melodic movement clearly reveals the basis for the Andante's sense of tranquility, a most necessary quality to create a respite between the energetic outer movements, while the bass inexorably descends with only minor deviations from E to B.

The way the Andante ends deserves particular mention. From bar 118, the piano is immersed in a series of continuous configurations which gradually descend the length of the keyboard. This is one of the most impressionistic passages of the whole work and one in which -as in Ravel or Debussy- the main feature is an ethereal chromaticism. The movement trails off on an inconclusive 6/3-6/4 chord on a B.

The attacca indication at the end of the second movement leads into the third movement which starts exactly as the first one did i.e. with the same ninth in tremolo which has already been hinted at by the pianist's right hand in the closing bars of the previous movement. This is another element by which Rolón creates a sense of continuity, giving the Concerto a high degree of cohesion.

The form of the movement is a ternary A -B -A which ends with a cadence whose flashing scales and octaves are finally wedded to a triumphal repeat of theme B. Throughout this framework, Rolón develops his themes mainly by means of harmonic changes, the outline of which is not difficult to follow. The movement is divided into ten main sections, marked in the score by a change of thematic material or key signatures:



A closer look at the first of these sections reveals some further intricacies which in fact are used in those parts in which the theme re-appears. The latter is heard after four bars of an orchestral ostinato. The way in which it develops is primarily harmonic and as such is an excellent example of Rolón's chromaticism. It is important to notice that a pedal B is held throughout No.1 until bar 39. On top of this note and with different harmonies, the theme is presented three times. The absence of D sharps would seem to cast a doubt as to the movement's tonality. However, the piece ends in E Major and, bearing in mind the fact that the beginning of the movement is the same as that of the first movement (in E minor), the predominance of G does not necessarily indicate the movement's tonality. After all, it is quite natural to move to the relative major as Rolón so often gives the impression of doing while presenting the movement's theme. The essential clue, however, is the aforementioned bass pedal on the dominant B which continues sounding through all the polytonal vicissitudes, before relapsing onto the Subdominant.

The second presentation of the theme (bars 13-16) is

done with the same superimposed V9 and E minor chord as in the opening bars of this movement (and also at the beginning of the Concerto). The third time the theme is presented (No.1) the bass B becomes the ground for a diminished chord followed by previously used V9/. This is alternated with two bars of Db *. This is important, since this last sequence will re-appear later on. At No.2, the piano presents the theme with the bass having moved down to A. In fact the theme continues to circle around B until the orchestral restatement of [2] at [3]. Yet again, this passage bears testimony to Rolón's liking for defining tonality by non-obvious means.

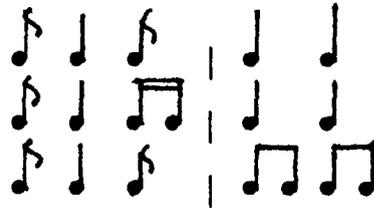
The combination of the above harmonies, namely E, Bm and C forms the basic background against which Rolón builds the first section of the movement. And when the theme is moved to another tonality, a similar pattern is kept. Thus, for instance, the second section (b.98-180) in C major also resorts to the use of harmonies from C to Em and B as exemplified by bars 132 to 141, where a detour is made through these keys to return to a modal treatment of E at 147.

Besides all the harmonic changes which the theme undergoes, its rhythm is also slightly altered through the course of the piece, and the variation of its

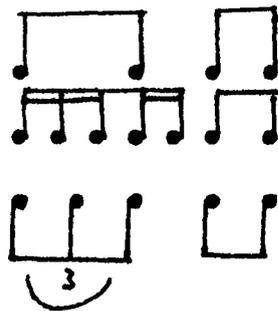
*The use of Db here is obviously related to the use of the same harmonies in the first movement (subject A from subject group).

rhythmic configuration is very similar to the variations of the different rhythms in the first movement. Thus we have a basic rhythm that is altered in two different ways, by changing an element of the basic rhythm (group A) or by diminution (group B):

group A



group B

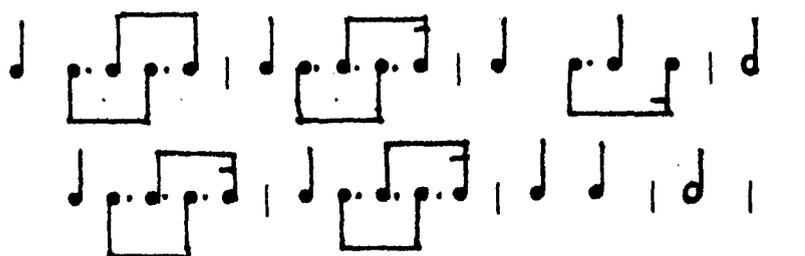


To the above, a third group might be added in which these two rhythms would be included:



Whereas with the first two groups of rhythms, the way they are used is clear, the same cannot be said of the last pair, which come about through a less simple process. In the first rhythm, the second note of the original theme (2nd and 3rd quavers) is expanded while

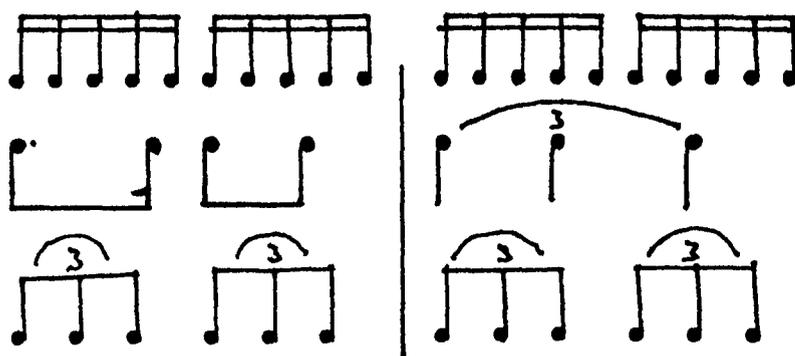
the third is abridged. The 3/4 time signature allows for a further beat to fall between the third and last notes of the original configuration. The second rhythm (from No.10) could in fact belong to group A since it is a variation on the original. However it is worth noticing that this rhythm is interwoven by another one, creating an intricate pattern:



The second theme of the movement is initially presented by the soloist in Ab (No.12) and repeated in AM by the orchestra (No.13). Its a priori contrasting character -as one would expect it to be- is somewhat elusive, since like its predecessor, its rhythm is also a marked and distinctive one. The difference lies mainly in two facts, namely, the less complex harmonic treatment it receives and its treatment as a non-concertante unit, that is to say, in the fact that it is not presented by piano and orchestra in concerto (a feature that is reserved for the cadenza). However, besides these musical differences, the second theme is also different in that it is the most easily identifiable as being popular or Mexican. Its rhythm not only appears in many popular songs -either as a 2/4 with a triplet over a whole bar or as part of a 2/4 3/4 time signature- but it

had been used many times before Rolón to convey a popular or Mexican character, Villanueva's Danzas Humorísticas or Ponce's Balada Mexicana being just two of numerous examples. A further feature of the theme should be observed: it bears the indication con allegrezza which relates it to the theme bearing the same indication in the first movement.

The Cadenza (No.23), as indicated above draws on the second theme, which is played by the orchestra while the pianist plays a series of scales which are only briefly interrupted by a series of octaves. The rhythmical density of this part is produced by the piano playing quintuplets on top of the already irregular 2/4 of the second theme:



Harmonically, the section is undoubtedly in E major since its beginning. However, seven bars before the closing phrase (bars 444-449) the pianist is entrusted with yet another series of chords which ensure that the tension remains at a fever-pitch until the last moment.

Having described the Concerto and some of its details, a few comments seem appropriate about its overall features, particularly as regards orchestration and the use of the piano. The former has been the subject of some controversy -as will be seen in the next chapter- and a discussion about it is part of the second of this dissertation's appendices. The pianistic features of the work will also be discussed in the following chapter. For the present, it is enough to underline that in the Concerto, certain features to be found in many of the works discussed in previous chapters which had become hallmarks of Rolón's style, are not only present, but perhaps more developed and assimilated than in any other of his works. The descriptions of this chapter have aimed to remain at a neutral level -even if this has not always been the case- so that they can serve as the basis for a later discussion about what semiology would call the esthetic process. However, one feature should be stressed. As in so many other great works, nothing in the Concerto obeys to chance and, in fact, its inner structure betrays everywhere the multi-level discourse of a true musician.

V I b. T h e E x p e r i e n c e o f
" l o P r o p i o " .

"Don Quixote tells us that being modern is not a question of sacrificing the past in favour of the new but of maintaining, comparing and remembering values we have created, making them modern so as not to lose the value of the modern".

Carlos Fuentes (1988).

No other work by Rolón attracted so much interest as the Concerto, either at the time of its two performances or after the composer's death. In the programme notes of the 1942 performance, Francisco Agea comments:

"The Concerto by Rolón is his most recent symphonic work. Its mature style, its vitality and its advanced musical language perhaps make it the most important of his production. The atmosphere is absolutely Mexican despite the composer not using any folkloric material except for a motive ... used as a secondary theme in the last movement. The piano part is treated with virtuosity but the work could be considered to be a symphony with piano obbligato, given the importance of the orchestra and the equilibrium between both parts" (Agea: 1942).

When the Concerto was premiered in Guadalajara, a similar comment was made:

"This Concerto is a true symphony with piano ... Its themes -strengthened by a modern rhythmicity and based on sevenths and ninths- reassure us that we are listening to a truly contemporary work which expresses something in the language of our century (...) The motives of the work are Mexican but do not fall into any concrete colloquialism that might diminish its universality. The impression on the audience was

profound, forcing each single listener to take a definite stand. Adverse opinions were expressed but they coincided in one point: no one knew we had such a good orchestra. This wasn't entirely because of Rolón's baton but also because the public found something that, without defining itself touched the most sensitive and common fibres in all of us: the "Mexican fibres"... The Russian-style orchestration selected by Rolón, possibly subconsciously, was a good choice since there are great similarities between our popular plasticity and that of Russia..." (Diaz Morales: 1942).

Before carrying on to examine other commentaries, it seems appropriate to talk about the actual performances. Diaz Morales reports a good performance by Ana de la Cueva and a better one by Rolón himself, who obtained from the orchestra a quality not heard before. However, Rolón was not happy with his orchestration and this is perhaps the reason why the performance of 1942 (Ordoñez/Chavez) came to be considered its first properly speaking. Miguel Garcia Mora comments:

"In 1937 the National Symphony Orchestra was to be conducted by Ernest Ansermet during July and August. In the season's programmes it was announced that the Concerto by Rolón with Ana de la Cueva as soloist -who had already performed the first non-definitive version in Guadalajara- was to be played. However, instead of the Rolón Concerto, she played the Symphonic Variations by Franck. It was not until 1942, when the Mexican Symphony premiered the Concerto with Salvador Ordoñez, Chavez conducting, that I heard it on that occasion and recall it as being chaotic..." (Garcia Mora: 1991).

Adolfo Salazar was also present at the 1942 performance

and, on his enthusiastic account also comments on the poor standard of performance:

"The pianistic difficulties which the Concerto contains are only accessible to great pianists with a modern orientation... Salvador Ordoñez was chosen to fulfill this important task and Carlos Chavez shared with him the haphazard and almost impossible performance, since Chavez only dedicated two rehearsals to a work which could only have been properly performed with ten rehearsals at the least. However, this did not affect the triumph of the great musician that José Rolón is..." (Salazar: 1942).

A parenthesis should be made at this point to reconsider Adolfo Salazar's view as to the pianistic demands of the Concerto. Admittedly, the score presents to its performer a series of "pianistic difficulties", as he terms them, which call for an accomplished pianist. However, it must be said that the Concerto is not a virtuoso work, if one understands by virtuosity the excessive display of the pianist's abilities per se. It is true that the same could be said of many of the modern piano concertos, but if virtuosity could be measured against the works of Ravel, Bartok or Prokofiev, Rolón's piece would still score a low mark, even by these standards. On the other hand, there is a great deal of truly pianistic writing, passages that not only reveal an accurate idea of the instrument's sonorities, but also of its technical possibilities. Examples of these two aspects, either single or combined, abound. Amongst the former, the use of

The image displays a musical score for piano, divided into three systems. The first system shows the right hand (RH) with a glissando in the treble clef, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a slur. The left hand (LH) plays a rhythmic accompaniment. The second system continues the glissando in the RH, with a *gliss.* marking above the notes. The third system shows the glissando in the RH, with a *gliss.* marking above the notes. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The first system is marked with a first ending bracket (I) and a second ending bracket (II). The second system is marked with a first ending bracket (I) and a second ending bracket (II). The third system is marked with a first ending bracket (I) and a second ending bracket (II). The dynamics range from *f* to *mf*.

Glissandi from first and third movements.

glissandi should be particularly noticed. Far from being a facile effect, they are used to enrich the overall sonority in a carefully thought-out fashion as the passage of No.18 of the first movement illustrates. Glissandi likewise become also an accompaniment to the theme in a rather unique passage in the third movement (see previous page).

The cantabile and percussive possibilities of the modern piano are well exploited by Rolón. The contrast between the powerful chords of the theme at the first movement's cadenza and the delicate flow of the second movement could not have been more arresting. It is worth noticing how, in the latter case, the change of style does not interfere with the fluency which Rolón had previously shown himself capable of obtaining from his instrument. For this second movement, like the larger part of the Piano Quartet, features a continuous flow, which results in the quasi-impressionistic use of the keyboard which Rolón intended for this movement (see next page).

The history of the Concerto's performances can easily be traced since unfortunately not many performances have occurred since. Garcia Mora has been the only pianist to have played it after Rolón's death and he has himself given a brief resumé of his experience (1):

"(Rolón) was not a very skilled orchestrator and it has been signaled many times that in the Concerto there is

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of two staves for the violin parts (labeled I and II) and two staves for the piano accompaniment (labeled I and II).
- **System 1:** The violin parts feature three measures of sixteenth-note runs, each with a slur and a '12' marking. The piano accompaniment includes a measure with a '5' marking and a half note, followed by a long sustained chord.
- **System 2:** The violin parts feature three measures of sixteenth-note runs, with slurs and '12' markings. The piano accompaniment consists of a series of chords.
- **System 3:** The violin parts feature three measures of sixteenth-note runs, with slurs and '12' markings. The piano accompaniment consists of a series of chords, including one with an accent (>).
The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

A fragment from the second movement.

too much orchestra, too many duplications which, despite the work of Eduardo Hernandez Moncada, have not been totally eliminated. There were also some passages left with doubts hanging over them because he was a composer who liked to elaborate his works over a long period of time and he left out some final details... I played the Concerto in 1959, and have played it since on a few occasions with inadequate orchestral material. I decided not to play it any more until E.M.M. (Mexican Music Editions) convinced me to do a revision" [see appendix for a discussion of the different versions of the work] (Garcia Mora: 1991).

Despite its unfortunate antecedents, the Concerto by Rolón has always been pinpointed as a key work, not only within his production but also as concerns the evolution of Mexican music. Amongst the reactions it sparked in 1942, Adolfo Salazar's is particularly valuable:

"I analysed the score of the Concerto, since my spirit and attention were aroused by the vigorous musical youth of Rolón as it comes across in this work. The novel way in which he handles the rhythmical presence of drums and percussion, the unfinished songs of nostalgic flutes and wood-winds, and that unspeakable turmoil of the piano, renouncing its traditional "European" virtuositities so as to transform itself into a vehicle for atmospheric and trembling sensation; all this dissipated my doubts: Stravinsky, Hindemith and Bartok are foreign to this work... The contents of their works drew on different sensitivities and just as Stravinsky is modern and Russian, and Ravel is modern and French, Rolón is in

1.- A recent performance was given by Mexico's National Symphony Orchestra with Garcia Mora's revised score. The performance though, left much to be desired since there were many misreadings and the tempo indications were not taken with care.

the same way modern and Mexican..."
(Salazar: 1942).

With all these commentaries, it would seem that there is little to add about this work. And indeed, due to the lack of performances, recent commentaries contribute scarcely anything to what has already been said. Some authors like Jose Antonio Alcaraz, have attempted to place the piece within the context of Mexican music:

The Concerto by Rolón is up to now, together with the Concerto (1938-1940) by Carlos Chavez (1899-1978), the most important work for piano and orchestra written in Mexico during the first half of the twentieth-century. Its appearance signals a new concept of the relation between the soloist's instrument and the orchestra, full of brilliant vitality" (Alcaraz: 1990).

Another interesting comment is that by Yolanda Moreno:

"The Concerto denotes perhaps in a larger measure than in his other works, the tension between his aspiration towards the traditional forms, the modernization of the language and the strict handling of genuine or manufactured popular themes...(Moreno: 1989).

There are many more such reactions which we might go on to report were it not necessary to stop and take stock of what has been said so far. It is clear that everybody agrees to the fact that this was Rolón's most accomplished work. However, it is also clear that there is not a consensus as to the features of the work which make it so. First of all, there is the question of the

possible influences. It is imperative to remember that Rolón started to write the Concerto in 1929. As Jose Antonio Alcaraz has pointed out, it would be difficult to speak about an influence from Ravel, since the latter was also working on both his concerti in the selfsame year. Bearing this in mind, the use of intricate rhythmic configurations and of certain pianistic textures (as in the case of the glissandi) would appear to be common devices associated with both composers.

To argue an influence by Bela Bartok on Rolón would also not take us very far. Once again, what is noteworthy are the similarities in the process which both composers underwent. An absorption in folk material and the percussive use of the instrument would seem to be common ground. However the comparison can be extended far deeper, since Rolón's understanding of tonality seems to be very similar to Bartok's although Rolón's ideas never reach the extent of what might be called a system.

Bartok's concept of tonality, which some of his students -notably Erno Lendvai (1983)- have elevated into a whole system requires a brief explanation. A cornerstone of this system is the concept of poles and counterpoles within the circle of fifths. In simple terms, this means that one of the three main harmonic functions (T,SD,D) is allocated to the whole of the circle of fifths.

Therefore, the fundamental of a key not only has the fifth degree as its dominant but also what traditional harmony would brand as the fundamental's major third and minor seventh. Since these are also the next overtones to appear after the Dominant these are described by Bartok and Lendvai as "Overtone Relations". Applying the above ideas to the first or third movements of Rolón's Concerto some facts emerge which reveal a surprising similarity in the treatment of tonality as between these two composers so widely separated by geography and by tradition.

When speaking of the first movement, it was observed that the definition of tonality was carried out in an almost surreptitious manner, since no unequivocal E minor chord is to be heard until the very end. However, the use of some specific tritones, namely

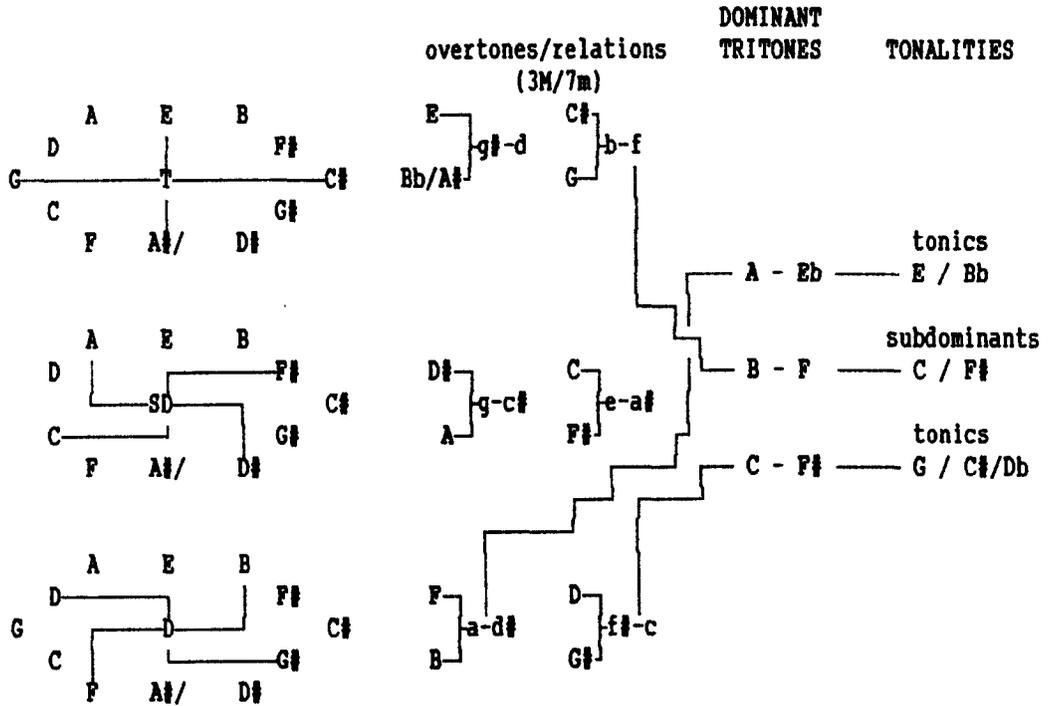
a - eb

b - f

c - f#

was a characteristic feature of the movement. The use of these tritones is very significant since, according to Bartok's ideas, Rolón's tonal structure could not have been more clear. Of the above intervals, the top and bottom ones belong to one of the two pairs of Tonics. In other words, a - eb/d# is the tritone of E and its counterpole Bb, whereas c - f# is the tritone of both G and C#/Db. The following diagram aims to explain the

above in a graphic manner:



Here is, then, another way to look at the important change in No 9 (bars 75 onwards), when the first subject of the second theme appears in something resembling Db, that is, in the "paired" Tonic key. This is a procedure commonly found in Bartok's music -one only needs to recall the opening bars of the Allegro Barbaro with its C major key signature and an opening succession of f# chords (f# being a tonic counterpole of C)-. On the other hand, the third movement of Rolón's Concerto presents a similar case on a larger scale when it presents the second theme not on its dominant, but in Ab which, according to Bartok's ideas, would be one of four Dominants -the other three being its counterpole (D), B and F.

Without a doubt, the key feature in Rolón's musical development lay in his use of tonality and modulation. Not only his music but his Prontuario de Modulación (Rolón: 1940) bear witness to his expertise in this quarter. It remains an extraordinary achievement that he developed ideas as advanced as any of his better known contemporaries. This marks an historic phase in Mexican music which experienced through Rolón's music its maximum stretching of the tonal system. After him, composers either broke with tonality, following the example of their European contemporaries, or went in for less complex tonal structures, pandiatonicism being the most widely used.

While it is relatively easy to illustrate and to prove or disprove comments made about the Concerto as regards its influences or its main musical and pianistic features, there remains a most important question to discuss. Is this really a "Mexican and modern" work, as Adolfo Salazar seemed to believe? Is it a work that really touches the "Mexican fibres" as Diaz Morales claims?

There is no doubt that the language of the Concerto is modern, not only because of the similarities discussed above or any other musical features, but because as it has been seen, no sacrifice of previous values -as

pointed out by Carlos Fuentes- is made. Quite the opposite -nationalism, tonality and classical form are all expanded, they are "made modern so as not to lose the value of the modern". And the work is unmistakably Mexican, not only because of its distinctive musical features but because these serve as a medium for portraying a crucial aspect of Mexico and its culture: the coexistence of two different, contrasting ways of life within the country, its culture and its individuals. It was in fact Nadia Boulanger who first observed the work's most crucial achievement:

"The Mexican school gambles with its own life in the ferocious struggle between the universal form and the native material that gives life to your Concerto...[which] has all the elements: variety of form, of thought, of rhythm and a great contact with your native land which both surprises and excites one. In this work is revealed the great sensitivity, the great culture and the mastery which you now possess" (Boulanger, quoted in Rolón: 1969).

It is indeed the struggle of seemingly contrasting elements that provides the Concerto with its unique life and character. But it is also the remarkable way in which this struggle is realized. It is not the "aspiration" -as Moreno Rivas would have it- towards form, or the strictness by which the material is handled, rather it is the very fact of being able to contain such an historic and national struggle within a strict musical form that makes of this work so consummate a masterpiece. And, as we shall have occasion

to observe in our last chapter, the expression of this struggle in music constitutes a unique musical achievement not only for Mexican music but for Mexican art as a whole.

V I I . - F u r t h e r E x p e r i e n c e s a n d t h e F i n a l Y e a r s .

Before describing Rolón's final works it seems pertinent to mention, however briefly, some events of his life since his return from Paris until the performance of the Piano Concerto in 1942.

The thirteen years between 1929 and 1942 were, without any doubt, Rolón's most prolific. Not only did he compose many important works during this period but also became a prominent figure in the musical life of Mexico. Even during his absence, interest for his works had been increasing. In 1928, El Festín de los Enanos was performed by Silvestre Revueltas, a fervent admirer of Rolón's music. Revueltas left a brief testimony in this respect which is worth quoting in its entirety:

"It is redundant to talk about Rolón as one of the few artists who, with a solid preparation, work for the improvement of our musical scene. Rolón's serene attitude -in such an agitated atmosphere as ours- constitutes a distinguished example for us younger musicians. A nonsensical custom makes us apply the term Maestro to false apostles, who have nothing to do with guiding our youth. On the other hand, Jose Rolón is the personification of a true Maestro and

deserves to be called by such a name because of multiple reasons. Not only is he a wise teacher, but he teaches with modern and new criteria. He is a Maestro because he sustains his own ideas, without relinquishing them when faced by empty cliches, and he is a Maestro because he has accumulated a representative output, destined to survive him. As an example of the importance of the music by this great musician from Jalisco, there is that jewel which he has named Zapotlan, as well as all his works for orchestra. All in all, a strong production, full of merits and which is destined to figure among the best produced by us Mexican musicians". (Revueltas: date unknown).

During all these years Rolón's works received quite a few performances, both in Mexico and abroad. Cuauhtemoc, for instance, was performed for the first time in 1929, with the Mexican Symphony Orchestra under Carlos Chávez. His performances, however, appear to have been characterized by a lack of rehearsal time and although a chronicle in a newspaper reports that

"The composer has listened to the rehearsals of his Poem and is satisfied both with the orchestra and with the interpretation that Chávez obtains from his work" (Excelsior).

Rolón later on complained about the lack of rehearsal time as well as of the poor quality of the performance. However, Cuauhtemoc was also performed abroad. The Funkstundeorchester of Berlin made a broadcast of the work on June 6th, 1932. The conductor was Bruno Seidler and the broadcast was one of Rolón's most conspicuous successes. The German press gave ample testimony of

Rolón's achievements:

"An special success was obtained by the Symphonic Poem Cuauhtemoc by the Mexican composer Jose Rolón. This concert has been broadcast by short-wave radio and it has been possible to listen to it in Mexico. This Symphonic Poem deserves comment because of its strong ideas but also because, through it, Europe can listen to the musical language of a new continent..."

(Berliner Börsen-Zeitung).

"The Funkstunde Orchestra has shown itself capable of performing music from other musical worlds in a commendable manner, a music which has made us look at the landscape and history of Spanish-speaking America. Better than the other composers, Jose Rolón produced in his Symphonic Poem Cuauhtemoc a rebirth of the rhythms and harmonies of the native American people"

(Der Tag).

"The Poem Cuauhtemoc by the Mexican composer Jose Rolón is both dramatic and wild. It has melodies and rhythms of great exotic force... The participation of the choir without text was quite original. The Mexican musician has shown tremendous security when using the resources of modern music. Stravinsky is for Rolón more natural than the German composers and this poem would not have been possible without the Sacre..."

(Der Deutsche).

Cuauhtemoc was not the only work of Rolón to be performed abroad. Leopold Stokowsky conducted Rolón's ballet El Fanfarrón Alucinado in 1941 and, a year before, Zapotlan had been performed by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra under Jacques Singer. In what turned out to be Rolón's last trip abroad, the composer attended this performance where his work earned the praise of both public and critic:

"Mr Singer, chief conductor of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, has introduced us to an interesting and beautiful Mexican work: Zapotlan by the Jalisco-born composer Jose Rolón... Zapotlan is an exciting work, full of charm and freshness..."

(The Dallas Courier).

In Mexico, Rolón's life was somewhat less successful, even though he was recognized by many as the distinguished musician that he was. As we have seen, Manuel Ponce and Silvestre Revueltas held him in great esteem. With Carlos Chávez, Rolón enjoyed an amicable if not exactly intimate relationship with both composers respecting each other's works. Chávez, for instance, was so impressed by the sprechstimme of Cuauhtemoc that he decided to use the same technique in his ballet Los Cuatro Soles. When Rolón arrived from Paris, the post of composition teacher at the Conservatory was vacant. The Principal was Carlos Chávez, and it was he who chaired the jury which selected the new teacher by a competitive system:

"Yesterday, Carlos Chávez told me after giving me the first prize: "Maestro Rolón: let me congratulate you for this most interesting work. In the contest there was not a "gallo" for you" [an expression referring to the cockfights, meaning there was nothing for Rolón to compete against). Later, he showed me the five scores which were judged besides mine and I was truly amazed at the technical handicaps they had. Besides Tello's [Rafael J. Tello], there was one by Gabrelli [?], one by Miramontes [Arnulfo Miramontes], one by Mariscal [Juan Leon Mariscal] and one without a name but which they attributed

to Carrillo [Julian Carrillo] (because it had 1/4 tones in the viola part)..." (Rolón: 1930).

Thus Rolón started his composition class at the Conservatoire, with the approval and admiration of Chávez. However, as time went by, it appears that Chávez did not do all that was possible for him -he was chief conductor of the Mexican Symphony and Director of the Fine Arts Institute- to promote Rolón's works. One may conclude this not only because of the careless performances that he conducted of both Cuauhtemoc and the Piano Concerto, but also because of a curious situation revealed in a letter sent to Rolón by Ernest Ansermet.

In 1934, Ansermet was a guest conductor of the Mexican Symphony by invitation of Chávez. His successful appearance was repeated a year later, when Ansermet conducted El Festín de los enanos in September, 1936. However, in the interim, a split in the musical scene had taken place. Since 1935, Estanislao Mejia promoted the creation of a state-dependent orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra, to counterbalance Chávez's monopoly of concerts with an orchestra funded by private means. In that same year, Revueltas -assistant to Chávez- had problems with the latter, and their collaboration and friendship was broken. Thus, the new National Symphony invited Revueltas to become its conductor.

Chávez's Mexican Symphony, despite its private funds, received a subsidy from the government. However in 1936, Chávez announced that difficulties in obtaining this subsidy were to blame for the cancellation of the appearance of major figures such as Ansermet. However, Ansermet had another version of the events. In a letter from Göteborg, Sweden, dated 8th March 1936, he says:

"I have just received your letter from February 20th. What you tell me I have learned from Chávez himself who wrote to me saying that because of "different reasons" the "orchestra" did not wish to contract any guest conductors. I suppose that the situation is as clear to you as it is to me. For two years now, under the influence of Señor Barros, a subsidy of 50,000 pesos has been given to the orchestra with the implicit condition of contracting a guest conductor. While Señor Barros was in the government, Chávez could not do otherwise...But now, Chávez has unmasked himself and wants to take advantage of a situation created by others... it is what I deserved for having placed my trust in Chávez... The question now is to know whether the orchestra is an institution for the fulfilment of Chávez's own goals or whether it is a cultural institution with aims different to his, and which he has to serve and not profit from...

I do not think that Revueltas can do much, because it is Chávez who has the money. What he can do is wait. Chávez's twenty-four concerts is a tremendous stroke! He forgets, as usual, that the concerts are made for the public and not the other way round..." (Ansermet: 1936).

Rolón's interest in this affair and his subsequent

correspondence with Ansermet has an obvious reason: Ansermet had planned to conduct more works by Rolón, which was now not possible. It is likely that Chávez, without actually breaking his links with Rolón, did not approve of the latter's sympathies towards Revueltas, Ansermet and those who did not approve of Chávez's diktat over all musical matters. Nevertheless, in 1937 Ansermet returned to Mexico City, invited by the National Symphony. A performance of the Piano Concerto, with Ana de la Cueva as soloist and Ansermet conducting was announced but did not take place. The only reason for this appears to have been the changes which Rolón wished to implement after its Guadalajara performance.

1938 was a conflictive year. The National Symphony found it a difficult one to survive. However, under the different name of Orquesta Sinfónica de Mexicanos, it offered a programme in which Revueltas conducted three of his works: Musica para Charlar, Janitzio and Sensemaya. The program was completed by the Symphonic Suite, Merlin, by Ponce and by Zapotlan. It is difficult not to attach a symbolic character to this concert, since it gathered together works by the three great nationalist composers and performed by an ephemeral orchestra -a dream which could not survive Mexico's return to "universality".

1938 also marked the end of Rolón's career as a teacher.

After eight years of teaching, he was offered the post of Principal of the Conservatory. Rolón accepted and took charge of the school, only to resign after nine months. According to Rolón, the interests of a group of people inside the Conservatory saw in Rolón's honesty an inconvenient attitude whatever the beneficial changes it might have brought about. Nevertheless, Rolón's years as teacher left their mark on his students. The most illustrious of these were Salvador Moreno and Blas Galindo (1916-), the latter of whom remembers Rolón as:

"... a very good teacher. He was very strict when it came to stylistic exercises, although in our personal works he allowed a certain licence. He was extremely careful with his work and did not like to argue or discuss. He taught us that the composition of music was a matter of imagination..." (Galindo: 1990).

After being forced to resign, Rolón abandoned the musical scene almost completely. Some of his articles and reviews continued to be published, but his life seemed to be on the decline. The last important event of his public life was the 1942 performance of his Piano Concerto, an event which has been previously described.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, it was during the period between the years 1929 and 1942 that Rolón composed his most important works. Besides those already mentioned, should be included the Symphonic suite Baile Michoacano, three ballets, the two Estudios

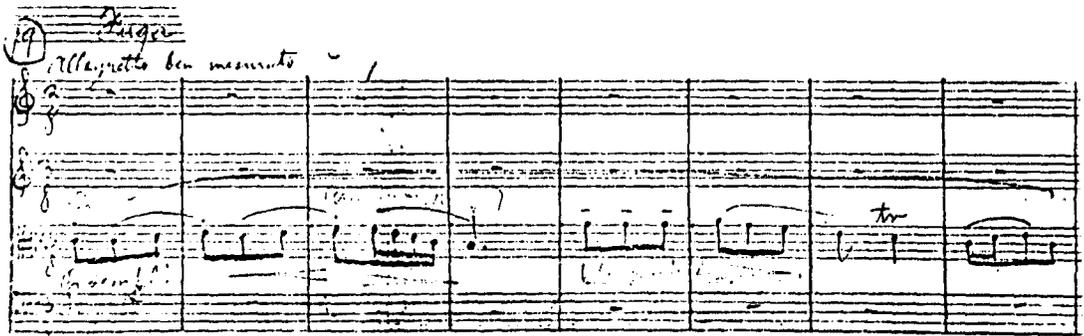
for piano solo and the String Quartet op.35.

One can observe, throughout Rolón's development as a composer, a constant preoccupation with the composition of chamber music. He had attempted new works in this genre to build on the achievements of his Piano Quartet, but only the Songs for voice and wind ensemble were actually finished. However, there are some fragments which reveal what might have been: Drapeain, for piano and string quartet and a few sketches for string quintet (En Passant par Lorraine, Magal, and Le Roi), the titles of which suggest that these were conceived during Rolón's second stay in France. There is also an Allegro and Fugue for string quartet in which Rolón used a well-known theme from the Mexican popular music repertoire: El Jarabe Tapatio (ex.7.1). For the fugue, he used another popular theme, which in this case comes from one of the many songs which emerged during Mexico's war against France (1887) (ex.7.2). Looking at this work, and observing its conventional harmonic language and its strict use of form, one can conclude that Rolón composed it before departing for France in 1925. The use of a popular theme -as in El Festin de los Enanos- would seem to support this assumption, which could find further evidence if one remembers that Rolón had -during the years he spent in Guadalajara- access to a string quartet.

Allegro e fuga



Example 7.1. Theme from Prelude & Fugue for Strings.



Example 7.2. Subject from Prelude & Fugue for Strings.

With all these antecedents, it is not difficult to understand Rolón's wish to compose a string quartet in which to continue -within the framework of this genre- the evolution of the style which he had come to develop since his return to Mexico. 1935 was the year in which he completed his String Quartet op.35. While still in Paris, Rolón had confided to his daughter:

"Despite all these compliments, I am not satisfied yet. I am not happy with

something in Cuauhtemoc which, however, I am not willing to sacrifice.

I am working -on Dukas's suggestion- on a String Quartet and a Piano Concerto. Perhaps I shall attain in them everything I wish for..." (Quoted by Rolón: 1969).

Being a more introverted work than the Piano Concerto, the Quartet can be said to complement the exploration of those aspects of composition which particularly interested Rolón. Foremost among these is the careful and extensive use of counterpoint, a feature which becomes a generative source of his unusual and personalized harmonies. The use of certain intervals -seconds for instance- is in this case the result of linear writing (ex.7.3) and not a pre-conceived harmonic feature as used in the Estudio en Segundas for piano (see examples. 7.10 onwards).

The first movement, Allegro moderato, has a subdued atmosphere, which is attained by Rolón's characteristic use of tonality. Although the piece is in C minor, from the very beginning this notion is challenged by the introduction of chromatic alterations (see ex.7.3). Another familiar feature is the extensive use of off-beats (as in the fugue's subject [ex.7.8]). However, what distinguishes the Quartet, and its first movement in particular, is the quasi-polytonal character of its resulting harmonies. As shown in example 7.4, the use of these in climatic moments provides the piece with an

Allegro moderato

José Rolón

Musical score for String Quartet (beginning). The score is in G major, 4/4 time, and consists of four staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The key signature has one flat (F major). The Violino I and II parts begin with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Viola part begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The Violoncello part begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and is marked 'pizz.' (pizzicato). The score shows the first four measures of the piece.

Example 7.3. String Quartet (beginning).

Musical score excerpt from String Quartet. The score is in G major, 4/4 time, and consists of four staves: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, and Violoncello. The tempo is marked 'Allegro moderato'. The key signature has one flat (F major). The score shows measures 5 through 8. The Violino I and II parts are marked 'molto sonoro' and 'ff'. The Viola part is marked 'molto sonoro' and 'ff'. The Violoncello part is marked 'molto sonoro' and 'ff'. The score shows the first four measures of the excerpt, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The Violino II part has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 6. The Viola part has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 6. The Violoncello part has a triplet of eighth notes in measure 6. The score shows the first four measures of the excerpt.

Example 7.4. Excerpt from String Quartet.

unexpected force.

The second movement, Allegro vivace, has a brisk and lively first theme (ex.7.5). In the movement's middle section, another theme is introduced. Its rhythm and overall character clearly resemble the middle section of the Piano Concerto's last movement, both because of its rhythm and its contrastingly folk taste (ex.7.6). The third movement is an air with variations, the theme of which Rolón took from a popular song. This, however, has been altered in order to place it within the context of an ultra-chromatic work (ex.7.7).

The final fugue is built on a highly rhythmical subject (ex.7.8). This, treated in a strict manner throughout the movement, lends a dynamic and austere character to the piece. Towards the end of the movement, the fugue is wound up and an extensive coda is built on material taken from the subject (ex.7.9).

One can only speculate as to whether Rolón fulfilled in this Quartet that which he did not wish to sacrifice and which was not present in Cuahtemoc. The Quartet is definitely Rolón's most "modern" work as far as musical features are concerned. Perhaps what Rolón did not achieve in Cuahtemoc and which is present in the String Quartet is a greater freedom from tonality and -up to a certain point- a more intensive use of counterpoint.

Example 7.5.
String Quartet
(second movement).

Musical score for Example 7.5, String Quartet (second movement). The score is in G major (one flat) and 3/4 time. It shows a four-staff system. The first two staves are mostly empty. The third staff (viola) has a rest followed by a note marked *mf*. The fourth staff (cello) has a note marked *mf*, followed by a series of eighth notes with a *p* dynamic marking.

Musical score for Example 7.5, String Quartet (second movement). The score is in G major (one flat) and 3/4 time. It shows a four-staff system. The first two staves have notes marked *mf* and *p*. The third and fourth staves have notes marked *p*.

3 Scherzando

Musical score for Example 7.6, Excerpt from String Quartet. The score is in G major (one flat) and 3/4 time. It shows a four-staff system. The first two staves have notes marked *p* and *sf*. The third and fourth staves have notes marked *pp* and *pizz.*

Example 7.6. Excerpt from String Quartet.

p semplice poco vibrato

Example 7.7. String Quartet: theme from third movement.

IV

Fuga

Allegro energético

Violino I

Violino II

Viola

Violoncello

Example 7.8.
String Quartet:
last movement

Example 7.9.
String Quartet:
beginning of final coda.

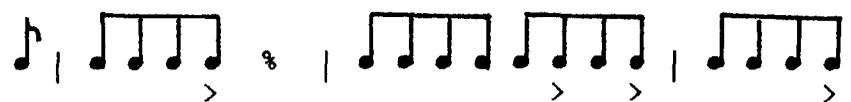
Next in Rolón's production come the two studies for piano solo -in seconds and fifths respectively- which occupy a place of their own in his output. In more than one way, they are closely related to the Piano Concerto -they were also composed in 1935- but, at the same time, they are without doubt, Rolón's most personal works. By looking at these pieces it is not difficult to conclude that they were -to a certain extent- the spin-off of the same musical ideas as went into the writing of Concerto. The use of intervals and their impact on the tonal scheme, the exploration of the instrument's sonorities and the variation of rhythm were three of the main features developed in the Concerto and these were likewise to be the musical devices which Rolón used for the composition of his studies.

The Estudio en Segundas has a basic ternary form, marked in the score by a change of key. However, the distribution of the thematic material is slightly different:

section	A	B	A	
tonality	Cm	F	C	
themes	A	B	A'	A
bar. no.	1	39	58	80 95 117

"A" in this case, consists of a section with a marked percussive character. The regularity of its phrase structure is disturbed by the abruptness of its rhythm, a feature heard from the beginning in both the

introduction (bars 1 to 8) and the first theme:

intr.  etc...

theme  etc...

By way of contrast, theme B has a melodic character. In this passage, more than anywhere else in his production, Rolón appears to take on the pianistic colours of the French impressionists. The dynamic indications, the una corda marking and the portamenti on the melodic line result in a sonority which largely resembles Debussy or Ravel (ex.7.10).

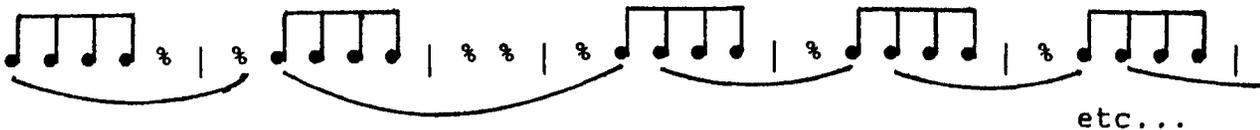
In the middle section, the impressionistic character is somewhat attenuated, but certain features betray Rolón's debt to that school. For instance, the way in which harmonies "hang" from the upper line (as in some passages of Debussy's scores) as also the way in which these lines are interwoven are both present in this Study. Bars 60 to 64 provide an excellent example. The bass line reads:

Eb F D Eb F G

followed by a descending line to land on F. However, the sequence F - E - D... F occurs in the top part of the left hand, and "hanging" from it, a chromatic series of tritones gives birth to another line which meets with

the previous one on bar 64 to form once again an interval of a major 2nd, the prima materia of the whole Study (ex.7.11).

The Estudio en Quintas is quite similar to its companion-piece. It has the same form, although in this case, both of its themes are of a melodic nature. The first theme has a regular rhythm, even though the phrasing tells a different story:



This irregularity leads into a section where the strong beat is the 2nd beat in bars 9 to 14.

The second theme of this Study bears the indication con malinconia, an old favourite of Rolón, recaptured in this case with a delicate use of E minor. Thanks to its chromatic progressions (ex.7.12) and the sense of spaciousness produced by the sustained chords of the second part of the theme, this section has a character which clearly contrasts with the first part.

A feature to notice in this Study is the careful use of the diminished fifth interval. Despite the abundance of chromatic accidentals, none produces a tritone until bar

Example 7.10.
Excerpt from
Estudio en Segundas.

First system of musical notation for Example 7.10. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand provides harmonic support. The key signature has two flats. The dynamic marking is *pp una corda*. The word *Sopra* is written at the end of the system.

Second system of musical notation for Example 7.10. The piano accompaniment continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns. The dynamic marking *pp* is present at the end of the system.

Third system of musical notation for Example 7.10. The piano accompaniment continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns.

Example 7.11.
A passage from
Estudio en Segundas.

First system of musical notation for Example 7.11. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand provides harmonic support. The dynamic marking is *p sf*.

Second system of musical notation for Example 7.11. The piano accompaniment continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns. The dynamic marking *mf* is present at the beginning, and *poco rit* and *p a tempo* are present later in the system.

First system of musical notation for Example 7.12. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass clef. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents. The left hand provides harmonic support. The dynamic marking is *p*. The instruction *Con malinconia* is written above the staff.

Example 7.12.
Second theme from
Estudio en Quintas.

Second system of musical notation for Example 7.12. The piano accompaniment continues with similar melodic and harmonic patterns.

22, where the Em of the second part is heralded. The C# in this case begins a modulation through G and into E minor. Hence the appearance of the C - F# interval (bars 24 to 26) and of D# - A in bar 27 onwards (1) (ex.7.13).

In Rolón's case -as in that of so many other composers- the term "study" implies, more than a didactic work, a certain style of writing. The performance of these studies calls for an ability to cope with technical demands such as series of fifths played legato or scales of chromatic seconds, but this is by no means their only purpose. On the contrary, they are independent musical



Example 7.13. Excerpt from Estudio en Quintas.

1.- In accordance with these ideas, I believe a question mark should be placed on bar 11 of the edition of the studies. Is C- Gb/(F#) an ephemeral appearance of G's tritone? Or is the flat a printers mistake? Perhaps neither possibility can be discarded while the manuscript remains lost.



Example 7.14. Glissandi from Rolón's Piano Studies (in seconds and fifths respectively).

creations which exploit the instruments possibilities to a high degree. Once again -as in the Piano Concerto- the pianistic treatment reveals the born virtuoso inside Rolón (2). Even in the most demanding passages, the keyboard layout of his ideas bespeaks the master strategist. From another point of view, these studies recall the Piano Concerto's characteristic use of glissandi. (ex.7.14).

Before directing our attention to Rolón's final years, another important aspect of his production should be

2.- The Study in fifths was dedicated to Ygnaz Friedman. As in the case of Ricardo Viñes and the Danzas Jaliscienses, no evidence exists as to whether Friedman performed these studies or not.

noted. Rolón, unlike some of his contemporaries, was by no means a prolific composer. To the contrary, he seems to have mulled over every note before releasing a piece to the public. Consequently, repeating himself in the compositional process is not one of his failings. Quite the opposite, every work explored a new avenue in a careful and comprehensive way.

Rolón's life after his abandonment of the Conservatory's direction became very quiet indeed, particularly after his separation from Ana de la Cueva. The following description by the composer's grand-daughter captures something of these last years:

"In effect, the combination of what happened with Ana de la Cueva -which of course affected him enormously- and his illness, made of his last years a subdued period. Financially, he was never rich but, with his simple customs, he had no great requirements for his daily life. He had a small capital and gave piano lessons nearly until the end..." (Martinez Sotomayor: 1990).

With his deteriorating health, Rolón must have found it more and more difficult to compose anything. However, between 1938 and 1939 he composed two ballets: Piñatas and El Fanfarrón Alucinado(3).

3.- These are again titles whose translation into English is difficult. Piñatas are those figures made of papier maché which are filled with sweets and fruits, only to be broken by children at parties, particularly birthdays and during the christmas celebrations. These figures are always changing, and range from popular characters or heroes to the traditional star shape. They are usually found in markets, hanging by the fruit stalls.

The complete title of the other ballet is Los Paraísos Artificiales o el Fanfarrón Alucinado, a title whose impossible translation into English would read something like "The artificial heavens, or the Mad Hatter".

It was not as if he were experimenting with this genre for the first time. In 1930 he had composed his ballet Los Gallos (The Cocks), from which he himself arranged a symphonic suite. In this work -which tells the story of a fight between liberals and conservatives during the nineteenth century in the context of a local cock fight- Rolón had gone back to the procedures used in Zapotlan and El Festin de Los Enanos, namely, the use of folk material for melodic purposes. Of course, there Rolón's attitude -somewhat in contradistinction to his later works- was justified by the narrative itself: thus to identify the Chinacos (4), Rolón used a popular theme (ex.7.15).

Example 7.15. Excerpt from Los Gallos.

4.- "Chinacos" was the name given to the people who fought against the French during Napoleon III's war against Mexico. Maximilian of Habsburg and his wife Charlotte of Belgium crowned themselves "Emperors of Mexico" with the support of Napoleon and other European crowned heads. They were overthrown by Mexico's liberal president Benito Juarez. Charlotte left Mexico in 1857 but Maximilian was executed in the same year before his flight from Mexico could be arranged.

Although more modern than their predecessor as far as harmonic language is concerned, the two later ballets follow a similar procedure in the use of folk themes. The score of Paraisos Artificiales goes so far as to include a soloist who sings a humorous song:

"Juana, Juana, prende la vela, mira a ver quien anda por la carretera, no sera la vaca, no sera mi suegra" (5).

In Pifatas, these paper characters come to life and participate in a dramatic story, in combination with their human owners (6). The ballet opens with another well-known folk piece, the Marcha de Zacatecas (ex.7.16). When not using literal folk themes, their character is retained in a simple but effective manner, as in the dance of the maiden (ex.7.17).

Apart from the ballets, the few remaining works -all for piano solo- reveal that a new search had begun, in which the simple form of Nationalism -as in the Ballets- or the use of his more elaborate style -as in the Piano Concerto- were both dropped. What succeeded can best be described as the beginning of a Neoclassical tendency.

5.- Translation: "Juana, Juana, light the candle, go and see who's wandering in the road, it might be the cow, it might be mother-in-law...".

6.- Pifatas is a story on two levels: the first and last scenes portray the market where these are sold. In the middle scenes, while the humans sleep, a pifata in the shape of the Devil comes to life. He awakes another pifata (representing Death) and together they give life to three other pifatas: a maiden, a Toreador and a soldier whose brief life gives birth to a triangle of passion. The maiden dies while the others fight and both Death and Devil rejoice at the mischief they have caused.

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the opening march from *Piñatas*. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef staff with a tempo marking 'All.^o' and a bass clef staff with a dynamic marking 'f'. The second system continues the piece with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music is in 3/4 time and features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests.

Example 7.16. Opening march from Piñatas (transcription from piano score by the author).

The image shows a handwritten musical score for 'The Maiden's dance' from *Piñatas*. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef staff with a tempo marking 'p' and a bass clef staff. The second system continues the piece with a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The music is in 3/4 time and features a melodic line in the treble part and a bass line in the bass part.

Example 7.17. The Maiden's dance from Piñatas.

In the Fuga de Tono, Rolón explored the strictness of this form using conventional harmony, a procedure found also in his Canon. The same applies to the most representative works of this period, a Fugue and the Suite all'antica which consists of six movements: Prelude, Bourrée, Sarabande, Gavotte I and II and Gigue. It is enough to look at the opening Prelude to appreciate the change that was taking place (ex.7.18).

Suite All'Antica

Example 7.18.

Prelude

J. Rolón

Lento

tr.

p espress.

tr.

tr.

tr.

rit.

poco cres.

poco rit.

a tempo

poco pif

tr.

(4)

tr.

cres.

cres.

cres.

What do these works represent? Are they merely antiquarian exercises or deserving of attention in their own right? The Suite's score is preceded by a written line: de tiempos idos ("From times gone by), a phrase that does not tell us much about what Rolón had in mind. At least in the case of the Suite, we have some justification in concluding that it was a work which Rolón took quite seriously (7). To my mind, the above questions cannot be answered but, on the contrary, another question emerges: Was to a Mexican neoclassicist about to see the light of day? Once again, a definite answer eludes us.

Rolón's health deteriorated acutely during the final months of 1944, forcing him to abandon his own house and move into his daughter's. It was there that he died on February 3, 1945. Although many expressions of condolence were conveyed only a few people can have known exactly what this death represented. A distinguished teacher, a remarkable musician and one of Mexico's foremost composers died amidst the modesty and underestimation which had marked his life and his extraordinary work.

7.- One arrives at this conclusion by considering the carefully copied score as well as the fact that there are two versions of the Gigue.

V I I I A M u s i c o f E s s e n c e

One aspect of Rolón's production which has been deliberately set aside for this chapter is what the composer had to say about the intention behind his works. It is a discussion of this, besides the analysis of Rolón's output as described in previous chapters, which forms the basis for attempting a definition of both Rolón's style and the place occupied by him within Mexican music.

Rolón's music, however isolated or unique it may be, is still bound to be considered as a part of some more general categorization. Is it Mexican? Is it Latin American? What exactly do these terms mean? While there is no doubt that Rolón's music, like that of other similar composers, falls into the framework of Western music, there is at the same time a certain separation between Latin American music and the rest of what J.J. Nattiez has accurately described as the "Western, North American-European context" (Nattiez: 1990). Nattiez's description is particularly valuable since he arrives at it by recognizing that music outside this context cannot

be analyzed, let alone judged, by the same systems used inside the context, rather than by dismissing music such as that from Mexico as of a lesser kind. Of course, the differences have been acknowledged for quite some time now but the discussions on this subject have only been concerned with the existence or non-existence of such a separation in context -few have gone further to establish what the differences are.

For long, artists and historians have pointed out the different circumstances which have led to the use of certain art forms in Latin America. Fortunately, it is not any more a question of justifying such use since these forms belonged to our ancestors for at least as long as to their European counterparts. And yet Mexican art, with the possible exception of folk and Prehispanic art, has always been judged in relation to Western European models. For this reason, it is necessary to stop and consider the influences which can be appreciated in Rolón's music.

Immediately, a list of names comes to mind: Ponce, Dukas, Debussy, Ravel, Bartok and Stravinsky, all of whom could be said to have influenced Rolón. However, as we have seen, this was not quite the case. The parallel dates of composition of Ravel's and Rolón's Piano Concerti for example, would argue against any influence by the former. Indeed, with the possible exception of

Stravinsky, it is not so much influence as the use of resources common to those musicians and by no means belonging to them exclusively.

Stravinsky's case is slightly different since he became a model for many composers in one way or another. And rather than any direct influence -which, through Boulanger, was to a certain extent inevitable- Rolón acknowledged the importance of Stravinskian aesthetics. To define this in a more precise manner, it is necessary to talk about Rolón's friend, the philosopher Samuel Ramos, whose work El Perfil del Hombre y la Cultura en Mexico (A Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico) was a key work for the evolution of Mexican aesthetics and philosophy. In his essay on Stravinsky, he provides us with a key to a better understanding of this process of acknowledgement:

"In order to be Nationalistic, it is not necessary for the artist to seek his themes from the outside if his creativity is in tune with the style of his people. He can find inside him those same forms created by the collective art... (Stravinsky) is of course, one of the few European musicians whose transcendence is due to an intelligent use of a national tradition from which he did not borrow the raw materials but their technique, their formal essence.

All artists must understand that it is more important to go together with life, to be contemporary, rather than to go ahead of life. The essence of such attitude lies in a connection with the spiritual will of the times and not in the reproduction of insignificant

exterior characteristics." (Ramos:1928).

Having clarified the question of influences, we can proceed to discuss the aforementioned relation between intention and result in Rolón's oeuvre. Perhaps Rolón's position can be best appreciated in his own words, in which he refers to the "reflection of the national soul", a phrase borrowed from Ponce's writings:

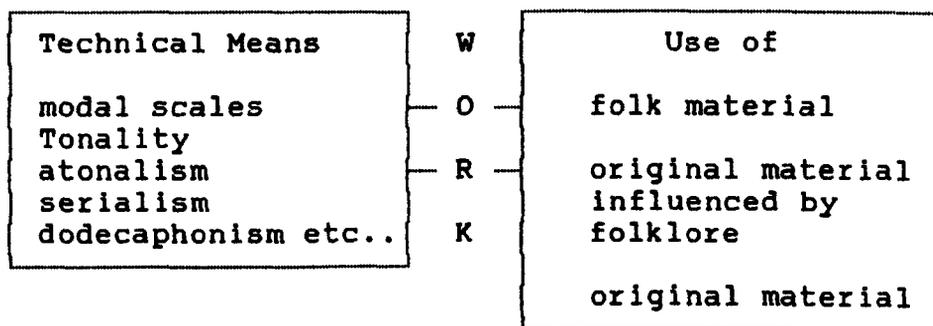
"No effort by any Mexican musician would be more commendable at this time, than that which would be directed towards unifying a style of our own, a faithful reflection of our national soul...

For what reasons do the arrangements of our popular songs lose their perfume, their taste? To my mind, there are two main factors which cause the above: the vitiating translation of their rhythmic and the inadequate harmonic lexicon which is used... Rhythm has such an importance in our mariachis and sones that any omission of its off-beat accents, let alone a change in its essence, produces a total loss of character.

Fate took me recently to a town nearby Guadalajara where I was fortunate to find a group of indigenous musicians. I absolutely marvelled at listening to them... Here lies -I said to myself- the true source of perennial beauty. Whoever succeeds in capturing these rhythms and whoever finds a harmonic language which, while keeping those simple chords in the background, could carry a certain musical interest, that would be the greatest Mexican musician. He would have translated -in a language able to surmount oceans and frontiers- the national soul..." (Rolón: 1930a).

A composer like Rolón, who lived during the first half of this century, had in front of him an array of

possibilities on which to draw for the composition of his works. The following diagram aims to illustrate in a graphic manner some of the different sources available to such a composer, regardless of whether he was Brazilian (Heitor Villalobos), Argentinian (Alberto Ginastera) another Mexican (Ponce, Chávez et al) or, indeed, from anywhere else:



For many composers who belonged to emerging nations or regimes, there was an obvious reason to use folk or folk-influenced material whereas for composers from countries with a long musical tradition the situation was the opposite. The younger countries -or regimes, as in the case of the ex-Soviet Union or Mexico- were struggling to find their cultural image. Rolón, far from being an exception, considered -as we have seen- that his music had to reflect what he called the "national soul".

Did Rolón achieve this? The analysis of his works would seem to indicate an affirmative answer. However, what

Rolón calls "the translation of the national soul" is a concept which needs to be clarified. The idea of what is "Mexican", and the influence of the Revolution in settling such aesthetic questions, are all related issues which need to be looked at in detail.

It is generally accepted that nationalism in Mexico appeared as a consequence of the Revolution which started in 1910. Indeed, the Revolution seems to have revealed an unknown or overlooked country with distinctive cultural characteristics. This is why -after the Revolution- Mexico was in search of its own identity, much as it had been a century before, when the newly born country sought to create a distinctive image to present to the outside world.

In the field of music, it was clear that composers realized the futility of aiming to create works of art merely by aping foreign fashions, even if these were exemplary. What other explanation could be offered for Julian Carrillo's extraordinary departures? Not only did he decide not to follow the musical techniques proper to his Germanic upbringing, but to abandon the twelve-note scale altogether (1). However, it soon became evident that such a radical repositioning could not bear all that was expected of it because it did not correspond to

1.- Julian Carrillo's work on microintervals was developed independently of the parallel work being carried out by Aloys Haba; although the composers exchanged ideas at a later stage.

the culture from which it emerged.

The explanation of this seemingly contradictory situation lies in the course which music in Mexico had followed before 1910. Imported models -Italian, French, German- had been copied by composers not with the aim of creating anything new but of creating something as close as possible to their European counterparts. This situation created a lack of continuity since attempts to create something new were seldom embarked upon. It is this difference of approach which provides the clue as to the correct understanding and evaluation of the music produced in Mexico before the appearance of Nationalism in Ponce's works.

The 1910 Revolution brought with it the opposite attitude: now it was a question of finding the authentic, not the imitation. Finding the authentic did not mean the abandonment of Western art forms and their techniques for it was clear that Mexico, despite being a crucible of cultures, belonged to the Western camp. Thus, the tradition of a workmanlike technique and the change of attitude towards the country and its cultural heritage brought about one of Mexico's most glorious periods of artistic creation.

However, the understanding of the above situation was quite different from one artist to another. This is why

a generalization as to works and composers under the term "Mexican music" becomes quite impossible, a situation which applies to the other arts as well. About poetry, for instance, Carlos Monsivais has said:

"In literature (and particularly in poetry) the adjective indicates the nationality of the authors and the successive denial and affirmations of a tradition (always redefined). It is not possible to find -because it does not exist- what is specifically national... If there is Mexican Poetry, there are not Mexican poems or very Mexican poems" ... (Monsivais:1979).

In the musical field, this situation is particularly present. 1935, for instance, was perhaps the greatest year for musical creation in Mexico. Besides Rolón's Piano Concerto, that same year witnessed the creation of Xochimilco by Julian Carrillo, Redes by Silvestre Revueltas, Sinfonía India by Carlos Chávez and Amatzinac by Pablo Moncayo. An unavoidable question arises: are all these works Mexican and, if so, how many Mexicos are there? For one composer, the portrayal of the conflict of cultures was the key issue. For another, like Chávez, "Mexicanization" was to be found by the recapturing of our lost Prehispanic heritage. For Revueltas -as for Rolón- Mexico lay within ourselves:

"Why should I put on boots and climb mountains for Mexican folklore, if I have the spirit of Mexico deep within me?" (Revueltas:1974).

From this, it may be concluded that any attempt to define what is "Mexican" would call for a much wider discussion -a discussion which, for that matter, might well lead nowhere.

It is worth remembering, however briefly, that these same issues about nationalism, identity and musical means were being confronted by musicians in a similar situation to Rolón's. Aaron Copland, for instance, also felt the need for the creation of a musical language truly reflecting the United States of America:

"Copland found a 'powerful', 'exhilarating' teacher in Nadia Boulanger... Wishing to be as recognizably American as Mussorgsky and Stravinsky were Russian, Copland applied some syncopated and polymetric rhythms and some 'blue' intervals in his next works, most memorably in the suite Music for the Theatre (1925) (Austin:1980).

Indeed, these words could be applied as fittingly to Rolón, who also sought to find a Mexican identity, a process largely encouraged and accelerated through his studies with the same Boulanger, who served as a catalyst to so many composers embarked on this suprapersonal quest.

The problems of creating national music, from the use of textual references to the more distilled use of certain features, are by no means unique to Rolón's output. Another Latin American musician who underwent much the

same process was Alberto Ginastera:

"Ginastera's objective nationalism is characterized by the presentation of Argentine traits and themes in a direct, overt manner... Ginastera's subjective nationalism began from the String Quartet No.1 (1948) and continued for the next six years. He stated that the Quartet contains "rhythms and melodic motifs of the music of the Pampas", but they are not explicit. The same is true of the Piano Sonata (1952) where Ginastera "introduces in the thematic texture rhythmic and melodic motives whose expressive tension has a pronounced Argentine accent". As this expressive "tension" is perceived by the composer but not necessarily by the listener, it remains in Ginastera's terms, "subjective".

The ideal of strict construction combined with the essence of subjective feeling is impressively achieved in the works of the third period, that of Neo Expressionism. (Chase:1980).

This complex process of creating a music with national connotations was further complicated by the relation between the artist and the political situation of the time, an issue which played a key role in the artistic life of Latin American culture during the first half of our century. In Brazil, for instance, Villa-Lobos became at one point the official musician during Getulio Vargas's government:

"While the Bachianas Brasileiras reflect the successful application of nationalist principles to concert music and are the most significant single achievement of Villa-Lobos's many activities during the years of Getulio Vargas's government, by far the larger part of his energies in that period

[1930-1945] was concentrated on the composition of educational music, for nationalistic propaganda..." (Wright: 1992).

In Mexico, the key political event was obviously the 1910 Revolution. The relationship between art and revolution was so symbiotic that it could be said to have surpassed that of its subsequent October, 1917 counterpart. Says Octavio Paz:

"Without the Revolution, those artists would have adopted other forms. Likewise, without the work of the muralists, the Revolution would not have been what it was. The muralist movement was, above all, a discovery of Mexico's past and present..." (quoted by Monsivais: 1976).

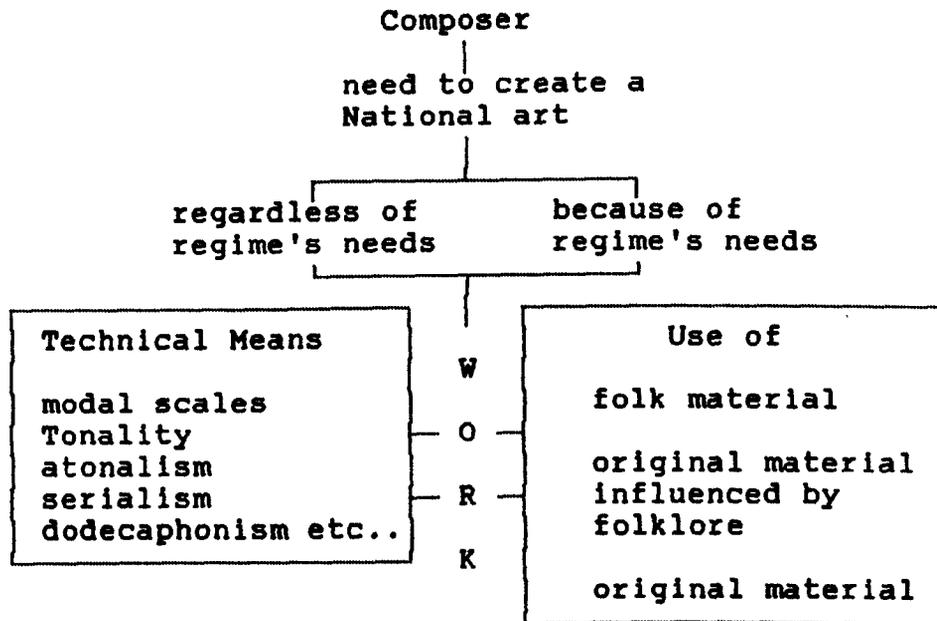
I have come to conclude -after a careful study of Mexican music during the years that followed the Revolution and up to 1958- that the quest for a Mexican art has been overwhelmed by the political implications of such a quest. I am not the first to notice this in the realm of the arts, although no other musicologist has made such a claim in the specific sphere of music. Once again Carlos Monsivais says:

"The role of the Revolution's culture has been, for most of the time, to legitimize the regime in office by contributing a flexible and adaptable atmosphere to go with the diverse political circumstances" (Monsivais: 1976).

And, as he further says, in doing so this political alignment has been able to move from the exclusive

approval of a single "official" style to the simultaneous support of opposite currents or styles.

Therefore, we can add a series of steps which determined the sources used by composers in their creative tasks:



As can be seen, there are several possibilities implied in the above diagram. Indeed, politicised and non-political works could follow identical paths, as indeed happened, even within the production of one composer as typified in Villa-Lobos's example.

There is no doubt that in Mexico, the idea of Nationalism -as found in the murals of Rivera and Siqueiros or in the nationalistic works of Chávez- contributed to depicting the revolution -and by consequence the regime which emerged from it- as the

country's most important and valuable historical achievement. And if this image -particularly during Jose Vasconcelos's period as minister of education- allowed a certain flourishing of the arts, it allowed no room for what I would call more immediate or "essential" expressions of Mexican art. However, as time goes on, a reconsideration of Mexican art from this period must inevitably take place and I believe that such a reconsideration will find that the closer a work of art succeeded in expressing what Rolón called "lo propio" the further it was from justifying any line of political thought. This is not to say that there was a lack of ideology. What was at stake was the meaning which the Revolution had for the artists whose lives it affected. And it is extraordinary that for men with opposite backgrounds, such as Francisco Goitia -who had a direct contact with the Revolution- and Jose Rolón -who only contemplated the movement from the comfort of the city- the movement was not primarily a political one, but rather a phenomenon which highlighted the cultural reality of Mexico, its glory and its failures.

Julian Orbon has said -in relation to Chávez's symphonies- that the Revolution was a unique act of justice towards our past, particularly towards our Prehispanic heritage. No doubt Chávez and many others aimed to claim this heritage as their own. But this act of repossession appears to have been a mere external

process which only accounted for one aspect of ourselves. And once again, if justice to our past was to be done, it was only because the political line demanded it. However, a closer, more internalized form of Mexican art emerged in the works of other artists who did not pursue the keeping up of appearances -of masks- but rather the portrayal of our feelings and of ourselves. In short, Mexican art was faced with a crucial choice at this juncture as between outward style and innermost essence.

"Essence" is a term whose use implies some risks, so a definition seems pertinent. For this, it is necessary -first of all- to remember that essentia meant being, and it is understood as an opposite of personality, (from persona [mask]). I shall not attempt a new classification of music in two groups with these characteristics. Nevertheless, it is possible to differentiate between elements which are essential from those which are not.

As an example, we can draw on the case of the fallen Eastern European states. Estonian born composer Arvo Pärt is an excellent example. Whereas one knows about his music -which draws on religious sources which the dominant ideology aimed to destroy- nothing is known about other Estonian composers. In fact it was Part's refusal to accept this state of musical oblivion which

prompted his departure for Western Europe. His is a case of contrasting elements: the "personality cult" of state culture set aside for the use of "essential" sources, religious music in this particular case.

It is in the deciphering of these meanings that the answer to a few of the questions relating to Mexican nationalism may be found. Accordingly, the works of Rolón, like the paintings of Francisco Goitia, by being concerned with the depicting of essence, may prove to be more Mexican than those of Chávez or Rivera, not only because they did not set out to justify any party line but because by not doing so, these artists were free to go beyond the surface of the external forms. This also explains why, to the European, Rivera and Chávez are better known than Ponce or Rulfo. The former pair's technically flawless expression of "exotic" characteristics and their pronounced political orientation have proved a successful combination which nevertheless remains an external, if not incomplete, portrait of Mexico and its culture.

If the definition of what is Mexican requires careful consideration, how much more so would any statement as to the Latin American quality of Rolón's music.

There is an important notion implied in the term "Latin American", one whose discussion -on the eve of America's

quingentenary- cannot be evaded and which Edmundo O'Gorman was the first to address. O'Gorman (1958) concludes that America's history is the history of how the possibility of creating a New World, a New Europe, has been actualized and that this actualization can only take two forms. Either the new circumstances are adapted to the old model or the old model is adapted to the changed circumstances, in other words, taking Europe's model as an archetype or as the starting point for an independent line of development. It is the latter position which O'Gorman brands as true Americanism, from which it can be concluded that "American" is not that which imitates. From this it follows that a sine qua non for the contribution to a tradition is the avoidance of imitation per se, which only repeats artistic models with no relation to America's own circumstances.

We can conclude also, that tradition within Latin American music is the renewal of technical means in relation to the cultural context. In a country like Mexico, whose musical evolution is mainly hindered by the imposition of foreign -and mostly meretricious- musical models, the strengthening of a rich musical tradition seems, at this point, a much needed feature. However, it should be noticed that tradition can only act as a two-way avenue: It is only by contributing to its evolution, that the musician -whether composer, performer or musicologist- can find that individuality

which appears to be the force behind the quest for universality and the discovery of the "new".

Taking into account all that has been said, I cannot end this work without delivering myself of a personal judgement regarding Rolón's music and its importance. His music is "essentially" Mexican, and by extension, Latin American in the strict sense of these concepts. It is this which further distinguishes his music from that of other Latin American-born composers. There is also another element which gives cohesion to his work: his life-long commitment to searching out the values which would transfigure his music and that of his country. As we have seen, Rolón at the beginning of his career picked up the trail of a declining romanticism. By the end of his life he had succeeded like Villa-Lobos or Ginastera, in redefining the Old World in terms of the New. The distance which separates -for instance- his Piano Quartet from his Piano Studies, is one of the most far-reaching to be found in any composer. At the same time, it stands as a measure of the giant evolutionary step which Mexican music accomplished in his person. It would be difficult to find another work like the Piano Concerto, to which the adjectives of "Mexican", "universal", and "contemporary", could be applied with equal justice and without any reservation whatsoever. And it is because of all the ideas which it succeeds in bringing together that the study of Rolón's music seems

to me to be of the utmost importance.

There is a further issue to be acknowledged. In this respect, Carlos Monsivais's words on Jose Clemente Orozco could just as fittingly be applied to Rolón:

"Orozco seems not to have any definite answers about Mexico's history or people when he paints. On the contrary, his paintings could be said to constitute a question as to this and other fundamental issues" (Monsivais: 1976).

Indeed, Rolón's work is not about giving answers, neither about Mexico's history nor about its people. If anything, his music is a mirror in which our contradicting history and origins are reflected. Hence the contrasting nature of his themes -as in the first movement of the Piano Concerto or in the Piano Studies: the intensity of his rhythms - as in El Festin or Cuauhtemoc, and the careful use of musical forms, all of which allow Rolón to successfully reflect our "national soul", our essence. And it is no coincidence that these elements -namely strict use of form, intensity of rhythm (repetition) and contrast- were the three main concepts developed by our Prehispanic ancestors'art as appreciated in what few remains have been found. The latter:

"arrived at a symbolic Form, to which elements from reality were incorporated to intensify, through contrast, the effect. Subject to law, order, rhythm, Form itself became an instrument of

magic formulae" (Westheim: 1972).

By finding an expression of our essence through the "magic" of such elements in so masterly a form, Rolón's music -while remaining profoundly Mexican- constitutes a forgotten treasure for the whole of mankind.

A p p e n d i x I .

O n t h e d i f f e r i n g s c o r e s o f R o l o n ' s P i a n o C o n c e r t o

As indicated in chapter VIa, there are a number of discrepancies between the different scores of the Concerto. The origin of these scores lies in the diverse versions and post-script alterations which the composer made after the 1936 performance (Rolon/De la Cueva).

The orchestration of the Concerto has been the subject of much criticism, an attitude which the composer apparently seemed to acknowledge since he made several alterations to the score. However, composer and critics do not agree in what is not efficient. It is usually claimed that the orchestral score is full of unnecessary repetitions (clarinets and Violas playing the same scales, for instance). This results in an orchestral texture which in certain passages makes it difficult for the soloist to be heard. However, I personally find it difficult to believe that Rolon would have made radical

changes in his scoring after he had discussed it with both Dukas and Boulanger.

Before continuing, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by differing scores. There are in fact four main versions of the Concerto. The first of these, henceforward called "early version", is the one which Rolon conducted in Guadalajara in 1936. A second version was prepared by the composer for the 1942 performance. This score is marked by the dense orchestration for which the composer has been criticized. After the composer died, and noticing several mistakes in the parts, Miguel Garcia Mora and the composer Eduardo Hernandez Moncada made a revision of the score, nowadays known as the "green score" because it is bound in that color. A second revision has been recently finished by Garcia Mora himself. This last version he considers to be the best, since it incorporates the correction of further misprints and a further simplification of the orchestral parts. Thus we have an early version, the 1942 version, the Hernandez/Garcia revision and the Garcia Mora revision.

During the course of this work, I had the opportunity to discuss with Garcia Mora those aspects of the score which had been altered in one way or the other. It must be said that the work of Garcia Mora was badly needed. Corrections in the piano part as well as in the

orchestra due to copyist's mistakes have been spotted and corrected. On the other hand, all the work carried out was made on the 1942 version since access to the earliest version was not possible for him.

A fact which escaped García Mora as well as Hernández Moncada was that Rolon himself had sent to Philadelphia, on Nicolas Slonimsky's request, a score of his concerto to be copied and stored there. This score, which Rolon apparently sent before 1942, appears to be the one which he used in Guadalajara. The score is dated October, 1936 and the title given for the work is Concerto Op.42 for Piano and Grand Orchestra. The adjective used for the orchestra in this version would seem to betray what the intention of the composer was as far as orchestral sound was concerned.

A look at the different scores shows in fact a tendency to enrich the overall texture. It is in this aspect where the differences between these four versions lie. For the 1942 score, as it has been said, Rolon filled many spaces in the instruments' parts by doubling passages. The Hernández/García version deleted some of these parts with almost excessive care. The result was a score which did not solve the problems signaled for the 1942 score.

Thus, it is the differences between the first 1936

version and the last revision which are most important. Surprisingly enough, the differences are not many. In fact, García Mora, in many of those passages on which he worked, arrived at an identical text to their 1936 counterparts. So it appears that the orchestration issue has been solved on a practical level. From a musicological point of view, however, it seems to me that a further question must be answered: was Rolon not a very good orchestrator?

Looking at other scores, even those such as El Festín which he composed before his second stay in Paris, it is difficult to believe that he would not have been at pains to preserve the balance between orchestra and soloist. A more plausible hypothesis is that Rolon was forced to re-inforce his orchestration in view of the not so good orchestras which he had at hand. The fact that many of those passages which have been subjected to revision have ended up being identical to their 1936 counterparts would seem to confirm my argument.

As an example of what has taken place with all these revisions, one can look at the second motive of the first theme (first movement). The examples here included show the theme as it appears in the 1936 version (in both exposition and re-capitulation) and in the late García Mora version in which we observe that there is a different treatment in the recapitulation. The first

part of the motive is played by the orchestra and continued by the soloist, something which does not appear in the later versions. On the other hand this may be related to Garcia Mora's omission of the pedal G in the left hand. He argues two reasons for this change: a) the G pedal is lost in the orchestral context and b) its actual performance means an unnecessary pause to move the hand to play the ostinato configuration which goes with it.

Discrepancies and technical questions like the one above, can only be resolved in the heat of actual performance. That is why it was said in the introduction that only when musicology and performance combine forces to promote the cause of works such as Cuauhtemoc, and the Piano Concerto will his music gain the place which it rightfully deserves.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Bs.

Tr.

Tb.

Tu.

PIANO

V.I.

V.II.

Vi.

C.

Cb.

7

7

mp

p

f

MALTA

mp

p

Counterpart of No. 7, 1936 version

A handwritten musical score for a piece titled "Counterpart of No. 7, 1936 version". The score is written on multiple staves, with a circled number "16" appearing at the top center and in the middle of the lower section. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like "p". The score is organized into systems, with some staves containing handwritten numbers (e.g., 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100). The score is written in black ink on a white background.

García Mora version, No. 7.

This is a handwritten musical score for guitar and piano. The score is organized into systems of staves. The top system includes a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and two additional staves. The middle system consists of two staves. The bottom system includes a grand staff and two additional staves. The score contains various musical notations, including notes, rests, and dynamic markings. Key markings include "Solo", "mf", "Rit.", "Tfo", "p", "p_c", "Rit", "Tfo", "cresc", "con calore", and "Ped.". There are also some boxed numbers, possibly indicating measures or sections. The handwriting is in black ink on white paper.

A p p e n d i x I I .

R o l ó n a s P i a n i s t .

This work would not be complete without looking, however briefly, into Rolón's pianistic development. Throughout this work a few comments have been made, particularly in reference to Rolón's having studied with Moszkowsky and about the pianistic virtues of his piano works. Despite the fact that he hardly ever played in front of an audience, it is not difficult to imagine that he was a most capable pianist, perhaps one of Mexico's most accomplished.

One important aspect of Rolón's pianistic career has to do with teaching. Heir through Moszkowsky to a distinguished piano school, he formed, during the time of his activities in Guadalajara, a group of pupils who succesfully carried on his teaching. Otilia Figueroa and Ramón Serratos were perhaps his most distinguished pupils. Figueroa -who was, according to the composer's daughter, Rolón's favourite pupil- gave the first performance of Rolón's Valse Caprice. Ramon Serratos went on to become one of Mexico's most famous piano teachers, and was head of the piano department at the National Conservatoire for many years.

Although not much survives to help us appreciate what Rolón's ideas were in relation to piano teaching, there is an important document which can certainly throw some light on the matter. This is his translation into Spanish of Issidore Philipp's Quelques Considerations sur l'enseignement du piano, which Rolón made for Durand & Cie in 1928. It is not difficult to conclude that Rolón appreciated this work both for its technical ideas as for its emphasis on discipline. Here are some fragments:

"Of all the qualities of a pianist, the most precious one is the beauty of sound. This is the point towards which all the teacher's efforts must be directed from the very beginning, monitoring with attention the pupil's ear. Why does one hear often dry and strong playing? Because that habit is acquired through practising loudly. It is much better to practise piano, or at least mezzopiano".

"Whoever aspires to become a good pianist must convince himself from the beginning, that progress is only going to happen little by little and that it is necessary to play everything as perfectly as possible. Spirit and muscles must be coordinated and thought must anticipate action. Pure mechanical repetition of a passage only tires without any results. A premise to follow must be: maximum progress with the minimum of effort (1)".

Other documents which testify as to Rolón's preferences

1.- See list of works for details of Rolón's translation

are his articles on pianists. These were mostly written after his return from France in 1929 and usually were published before the performer in question appeared on the Mexican scene. There were three such pianists whom Rolón particularly admired and the following are some extracts from his articles. About Arthur Rubinstein he said:

"If my memory does not fail me, I think I met and heard Rubinstein for the first time at one of the soireés of the Societe des Concerts Lamoureux at the end of December, 1904... What was my surprise when I saw a child with a secure and serene air walking onto the stage... by the end he had revealed himself as a true virtuoso with all the characteristics which the term implies: complete artistic understanding, a technique able to solve the most demanding problems, a perfect sense of proportion and an overflowing temperament.

A few days later, Rubinstein confirmed the qualities described at a concert at the Salle des Agriculteurs. I still recall clearly the way in which he performed Chopin's Sonata in B minor, the first Scherzo, and the Mazurka in A minor No.51. The account of these works was remarkable in every way but nothing reached his performance of the difficult Variations on a theme of Paganini by Brahms, which he performed in an absolutely extraordinary manner..." (2)

Also singled out for special mention was Jose Iturbi, whose technique, according to Rolón, was as nothing

2.- Excerpt taken from Rolón's article on Rubinstein (undated).

compared to his faithfulness to the text, interestingly enough an issue considered fundamental by Rolón:

"One of the least noticed aspects when describing the work of a virtuoso is the state of professional honesty, which consists ... in being a faithful translator of the text and of the aesthetic emotion which emanates from it... This is the case of Jose Iturbi. It is enough to listen to him playing any work to convince oneself immediately of the amount of attention and carefulness with which he serves the score, both in its preparation and its presentation before an audience. Who could deny this after hearing him perform the delightful Scarlatti sonatinas (sic) or any Mozart sonata interpreted with care and respectful of all ornaments?

"I am not a pianist, say that in your newspaper" I heard him telling to a reporter. And he was absolutely right. He has stopped being a pianist to become a true musician, one of those whom one can count on the fingers of one hand" (3).

Another pianist of whom Rolón had excellent memories was Hofmann:

"More than fifty years have passed but I still recall it as if it were yesterday. One morning on which I had my customary lesson with Moszkowsky, I arrived at his study at the rue Neuvelle, and found him in excellent spirits. Once I had finished my task, Moszkowsky -who had great imagination and because of that was a good conversationalist- started his customary talk about the different aspects of Parisian artistic life. Suddenly he asked me: have you heard Hofmann? To that -ashamed of not

3.- Excerpts taken from Rolón's article on Iturbi (undated).

even knowing the name, I answered negatively. "It is necessary -he said- that you listen to him as many times as possible, because in my opinion, of the new generation of pianists -the year was 1906- he is the only one who is truly a genius". This indication was followed by his account of how some years ago, he had himself marvelled when he met Hofmann in Berlin -still a child- and how he had produced some extraordinary variations on a theme that Moszkowsky himself had given him.

A few days later I received a letter from Pedro Luis Ogazon dated in New York in which he informed me that Hofmann was about to sail for Europe in order to give a series of recitals in Paris. After expressing his admiration for so great an artist, he exhorted me not to miss any of his concerts since, according to him, there was not a better model in the world... Soon, I had my wish and I will never forget the impression made upon me by the first work which I heard him play. This was the Prelude and Fugue for organ by Bach, transcribed by Liszt.

Twenty-eight years have elapsed since. In that time, humanity has witnessed tremendous disasters which have transformed the world. There have been radical transformations in the concept of life and as a result, a new way of thinking and feeling has been brought about.

These transcendental events, which have left a deep mark in my spirit, changing the aim of my aspirations and artistic taste have not achieved, however, the slightest fading, let alone destruction, of those musical perspectives which Hofmann opened for us in the domains of musical aesthetics.

Young Mexican musicians will be fortunate enough to hear Hofmann in a few days time. They shall hear in him the pianist par excellence, the

extraordinary virtuoso in every sense, whose strong and deep art has all the qualities of equilibrium and thought, qualities which are only found among the truly great artists" (4).

The story of the piano and its performers in Mexico remains to be written. But there is no doubt that Rolón occupies a place of honour in it, not only because of his enrichment of the Mexican repertoire but also because of his distinguished teaching mission.

4.- Extracts taken from Rolón's article on Hofmann, entitled "How I met Hofmann in Paris" (undated).

A p p e n d i x I I I .

O n R e p e t i t i o n .

During the course of this work, several references to repetition in Mexican music are made (see chapter III, pages 79-80 and chapter V, pages 112-113). Therefore, a description of this issue's relevance in the field of Mexican music seems appropriate.

Although repetition is usually a procedure taken for granted in any composition, it acquired a particular relevance during the years which followed the Mexican Revolution. Some form of ostinato, or the repetition of a motivic cell as the basis of a melody, appears time and again in the Mexican music of this period. Revueltas's Sensemaya, Chávez's Sinfonia India Moncayo's Huapango and many other important works use repetition as the basis of their musical development. The need to re-create the destroyed Prehispanic music, reinforced by the influence of Igor Stravinsky's and Béla Bartók's music, made this device a key concept in the evolution of Mexican music.

However, the use of repetition was questioned by Carlos Chávez in 1958, when he devoted one of his Charles E.

Norton Harvard lectures to this subject. In this lecture (published in 1959), he declared the use of repetition to be out of date, giving birth to a controversy which still can be observed in Mexican music. Chávez declared that no one could improve on the model created by Beethoven in his Symphonies Op. 67 and Op. 68 and therefore proposed -not only in his lecture but in his Invención for piano and, later on, in Soli- the abandonment of such compositional tools and the search for "new directions". This new search -derived from a questioning of repetition- meant in fact the abandonment of nationalism. Thus, the year 1958 is generally regarded as the end of the Nationalist period in Mexico, both because of this change of direction called for by Chávez, and because of Pablo Moncayo's death.

Some parts of Chávez's lecture illustrate well his position:

"Somehow we cannot help thinking that we owe more to the genius of man than to the procedures he was historically compelled to follow... and, indeed, once convinced of that fact, I am not going to deny the infinite possibilities that still may lie in repetition... the idea of repetition and variation can be replaced by the notion of constant rebirth, of true derivation: a stream that never comes back to its source, a stream in eternal development, like a spiral, always linked to, and continuing, its original source, but always searching for new and unlimited spaces..." (Chávez:1959).

Over thirty years after the postulation of these ideas, the evolution of music seems to contradict Chávez's thoughts. The important contribution of composers like Phillip Glass or Steve Reich -to name but the most obvious ones- seems to indicate that music could not separate itself from repetition. And ironically, this is precisely what Leonard Bernstein said in 1973 when it was his turn to deliver the Norton lectures at Harvard:

"The idea of repetition is inherent in music even when the repetition itself is not there at all. In other words, the repetitive principle is at the very source of musical art (and poetry)" (Bernstein: 1973).

It has been argued by many Mexican composers that repetition's importance lay in its relation with "primitive" music, making of it a most appropriate musical device to portray Prehispanic music, nothing of which survives. Nevertheless, as shown by Rolon's El Festin, the use of repetition is not only linked to a portrayal of our lost musical inheritance. Repetition is part of folk music, and above all, repetition is a means of creating a sense of intensity (1).

1.- This text is based on the article "Muros Verdes and the Creation of a New Musical Space" (Miranda:1990) Latin American Music Review, Volume 11, Number 2.

Chronology.

(dates of composition unless otherwise stated)

1876	Jose Rolón is born.	Opening of Bayreuth: first complete performance of <i>The Ring</i> .
1878		Dvorak: Slavonic Dances.
1879		Smetana: <i>Ma Vlast</i>
1882	birth of M.M. Ponce.	Wagner: <i>Parsifal</i> .
1883	death of Angela Peralta.	death of R. Wagner.
1887		birth of H. Villa-Lobos. Faure: <i>Requiem</i> .
1888		Mahler: <i>Symphony No.1</i> . Satie: <i>Gymnopédies</i> .
1890		Debussy: <i>Suite Bergamasque</i> .
1891		Wolf: <i>Italienisches Liederbuch</i> (1p)
1892		Sibelius: <i>En Saga</i>
1893		Debussy: <i>Prelude a l'apres midi d'un faune</i> .
1895	<i>Mazurka</i> (a Mercedes)	
1896		Strauss: <i>Also Sprach Zarathustra</i> .
1898		Strauss: <i>Ein Heldenleben</i> .
1899	birth of S. Revueltas, C. Chavez & E. Hernandez Moncada	Elgar: <i>Enigma Variations</i> (1p).
1900	Ponce: <i>Malgre Tout</i> .	Sibelius: <i>Finlandia</i> . Puccini: <i>Tosca</i> .
1901	Campa: <i>Le Roi Poete</i> .	
1902		Debussy: <i>Pelleas et Melisande</i> .
1903		Rachmaninoff: <i>10 Preludes Op.25</i> . Strauss: <i>Salome</i> .
1904	Castro: <i>Piano Concerto</i> .	
1905		Debussy: <i>Images</i> .
1906		Albeniz: <i>Iberia</i> .
1908		Ravel: <i>Ma mere l'Oye</i> . Webern: <i>Passacaglia</i> . Ives: <i>The Unanswered Question</i> .
1909	<i>Bosquejos</i> . Ponce: <i>Scherzino Mexicano</i> .	Schoenberg: <i>Drei Klavierstücke Op.1</i> . Ives: <i>Concord Sonata</i> .

- 1910 Cinq Petits Morceaux. Tello: Nicolas Bravo. Strauss: Der Rosenkavalier.
Valse Intime. Ponce: Canciones Mexicanas. Mahler: Symphony No.9.
- 1911 Cinco Piezas para Ponce: la Rapsodia Mexicana. Stravinsky: L'Oiseaux de Feu.
piano. Bartók: Allegro Barbaro.
Ravel: Daphnis et Chloë.
- 1912 Cuarteto para piano. Ponce: Piano Concerto. Granados: Goyescas.
Tema Variado Mexicano. Shoenberg: Pierrot Lunaire.
- 1913 Stravinsky;: La Sacre du Printemps.
- 1914 Scherzo de los Enanos. Vaughan Williams: London Symphony.
- 1915 Andante Malinconico. Ponce: Balada Mexicana. Holst: The Planets.
- 1916 Ponce: Sonata 2. Nielsen: Sympony No.4.
Delius: A Pagan Requiem.
- 1917 Stravinsky: Les Noces.
Satie; Sonatine Bureaucratique.
- 1918 Sinfonia en Mi menor. Miramontes: Anahuac. Stravinsky: L'histoire de Soldat.
Bartók: Bluebard's Castle.
- 1919 Falla: El Sombrero de Tres Picos.
- 1920 Obertura de Concierto. Villa-Lobos: Suite Indigena Brasileira.
Stravinsky: Pulcinella.
- 1921 Ponce: Chapultepec. Janacek: Katia Kabanova.
Chávez: El Fuego Nuevo. Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No.2
- 1922 Valse Caprice. Carrillo: Preludio a Colon. Berg: Wozzeck.
Vázquez: Citlali. Falla: El Retablo de Maese Pedro.
- 1924 Gershwin: Rhapsody in Blue.
- 1925 Zapotlán (1895). Gershwin: An American in Paris.
El Festin de los Enanos.
- 1926 Villalobos: Rudepoema.
Puccini: Turandot.
Janacek: Msa Glagolskaja.
- 1927 Ponce: Preludios Encadenados. Stravinsky: Oedipus Rex.
Carrillo: Concertino. Kodaly: Hary Janos.
- 1928 Danzas Indigenas Huizar: Imagenes. Schoenberg: Variationen fur Orchester.
Jaliscienses.
- 1929 Trois Melodies. Ponce: Quatre Pieces pour Villa-Lobos: Choros.
Cuauhtemoc. Piano.
- 1930 Baile Michoacano. Huizar: Symphony No.1. Mompou: Cants Magics.
Revueltas: Cuahnahuac.

- 1931 El Segador.
El Sembrador. Revueltas: Ventanas. Bartók: Piano Concerto No.2.
Ravel: Piano Concerto in G.
Mignone: la Fantasia Brasileira.
Varese: Ionisation.
- 1932 Dibujos Sobre un Puerto. Chávez: H.P. (Caballos de vapor). Prokofiev: Piano Concerto No.5
- 1933 Ponce: Canto y Danza de los Antiguos Mexicanos. Vaughan Williams: Piano Concerto (1p).
Huizar: Pueblerinas.
Revueltas: 8 x Radio.
- 1934 Ponce: Tres poemas de Mariano Brull. Hindemith: Mathis der Maler
- 1935 Cuarteto de Cuerdas Carrillo: Xochimilco. Stravinsky: Concerto for two Pianos.
Concierto para Piano Chávez: Sinfonia India. Berg: Lulu.
Dos estudios para Piano. Revueltas: Redes. Violin Concerto.
Noncayo: Amatzinac.
Halfter: Don Lindo de Almeria.
- 1936 Huizar: Oxpantitli. Webern: Variationen Op.27.
Revueltas: Homenaje a Garcia Lorca.
- 1937 Chávez: 10 Preludes for Piano. Ginastera: Danzas Argentinas.
- 1938 Piñatas. Huizar: Symphony No.3. Prokofiev: Aleksndr Nevsky
Revueltas: Sensemaya.
- 1939 Los Paraisos Artificiales Ponce: 20 Piezas Faciles. Bartók: Divertimento.
Revueltas: La Noche de los Mayas.
- 1940 Bernal-Jimenez: Tata Vasco. Schoenberg: Piano Concerto.
Chávez: Piano Concerto.
Ponce: Ferial.
- 1941 Noncayo: Huapango. Ginastera: Estancia.
Bernal-Jimenez: Noche en Morelia.
Ponce: Guitar Concerto.
- 1942 Huizar: Symphony No.4. Hindemith: Ludus Tonalis.
Tello: El Oidor.
Hernandez Moncada: 1st Symphony.
- 1943 Ponce: Violin Concerto. Bartók: Concerto for Orchestra.
- 1944 Suite all'antica. Copland: Appalachian Spring (1p).
- 1945 Rolón dies. Galindo: Violin Sonata. Britten: Peter Grimes.
Noncayo: Sinfonieta. Villa-Lobos: Bachiana Brasileira No.5.
Bartók: Piano Concerto No.3.
Honegger: Symphonie Liturgique.

José Rolón
Catalogue of works

This catalogue has been compiled after research on Rolón's personal archives and includes all the works found in them. The only exception has been the omission of fragments which either have no title or are too small or fragmentary. It also includes other works guarded at the libraries of the Conservatorio Nacional and in the Centro Nacional para la Investigación Musical (CENIDIM) both at Mexico City.

Dates in brackets [1936] are given when the date does not appear in the manuscript but a circa date can be suggested. Other abbreviations are as follows:

d/u- unknown date. The date of composition does not appear in the manuscript.
lp- First performance.

A final section with comments on some works -mostly those not mentioned in the main text- has been added. Works on which a comment is made are marked by a number in brackets [*].

P I A N O M U S I C

MAZURKA	1895
DANZA	d/u
BOSQUEJOS	1909
Coqueta	
Amorosa	
Risueña	
CINQ PETITS MORCEAUX	1910
Historiette	
Traümerei	
Petite Mazurka	
Canzonetta	
Menuet	
LES PAPILLONS BLANCS	d/u [1]
VALSE INTIME	1910
CINCO PIEZAS PARA PIANO op.12	1911
Valse Chromatique	
Arabesque	
Berceuse	
Prelude	
Mazurka	

SCHERZO DE LOS ENANOS	1914 [2]
VALS CAPRICHIO "SOBRE LAS OLAS" OP.14	1922
TRES DANZAS INDIGENAS JALICIENSES	1928
LOLY BAILA	1934 [3]
ESTUDIO EN SEGUNDAS	1935
ESTUDIO EN QUINTAS	1935
CANON	1935
FUGA DE TONO	1944
FUGA A CUATRO VOCES	1944
SUITE ALL'ANTICA	1944

C H A M B E R M U S I C

PIANO QUARTET IN Eb op.16	1912
EL SEGADOR (voice, flute, oboe, clarinet horn & bassoon)	[1931]
EL SEMBRADOR (as above)	1931
STRING QUARTETT op.35	[1935]
ALLEGRO & FUGUE (string quartet)	d/u

S O N G S

UFRASIA	[1917]	folk song [4]
¡AY! NO ME DIGAS	[1917]	folk song [5]
INGRATA	[1917]	folk song [4]
LARMES	1917	Andre Rivoire
Y ELLA ME "DICIA"	1918	folk song [6]
UNA MAÑANA region.	d/u	Song from the Tapalpa

NOCTURNE	[1922]	Villiers d'ile Adam
BEAUX PAPPILLONS	[1922]	Théophile Gautier
SI TU PARLES	[1922]	Camille Manclair
MYSTERE	[1922]	Camille Manclair
MYSTERE	d/u	Ricardo Le Fertee
EPIGRAMA	1928	Ronaldo de Carvahlo [7]
SIMPLE CONTE	d/u	Jean Cocteau? [8]
TROIS MELODIES POUR PIANO E CHANT Consentement Cloches Iberia	1929	Pierre Reynel
CUATRO CANCIONES INDIGENAS Papananga Sheparen Corimaniguame Tule Taile	1931	[9]
¿QUIEN ME COMPRA UNA NARANJA?	1931	José Gorostiza
DESEOS	1931	Carlos Pellicer
EL SEGADOR	1932	Carlos Pellicer
POEMA	1932	Carlos Pellicer
DIBUJOS SOBRE UN PUERTO El alba La tarde Nocturno Elegía Cantarcillo El faro Oración	1932	José Gorostiza
CANCION DE LA NOCHE	[1932]	Rodolfo Usigli
MI TRISTEZA ES COMO EL ROSAL FLORIDO	[1932]	Enrique González Martínez
INCOLOR	1936	Xavier Villaurrutia
NO LE HABLEIS DE AMOR	1937	Amado Nervo

NAUFRAGIO	1937	Salvador Novo
JUNTO A TU CUERPO	[1937]	Salvador Novo
RETRATO	[1937]	Xavier Villaurrutia
BREVE ROMANCE DE LA AUSENCIA	[1938]	Salvador Novo
MI VIEJO AMOR (four parts)	d/u	After Alfonso Esparza Oteo [10]
INSOMNIO (four parts)	d/u	Efraín Rebolledo
LA BORRACHITA (four parts)	d/u	folk song
ESTRELLITA (four parts)	d/u	after Manuel Ponce.
A UNA MUJER	d/u	
YA ME VOY, YA ME VOY Canon in three parts	d/u	
SAINTE	d/u	after Maurice Ravel
THE WILLOW SONG & AWAKE SWEET LOVE (four part arrangements)	d/u	

S Y M P H O N I C M U S I C

ANDANTE MALINCONICO	1915
SINFONIA in EM	1918-1919
OBERTURA DE CONCIERTO	1920
ZAPOTLAN Suite Sinfonica 1895.	1925
EL FESTIN DE LOS ENANOS	1925
GAVOTTE e MUSSETTE	1928
CUAUHTEMOC Poema Sinfonico	1929
BAILE MICHOACANO	1930 1p. [11]
LOS GALLOS (Ballet)	1930
ESCENAS MEXICANAS Op.33	d/u
CONCIERTO PARA PIANO Y ORQUESTA	1935
PINATAS (Ballet)	1938

EL FANFARRON ALUCINADO 6
LOS PARAISOS ARTIFICIALES (Ballet) 1939

O T H E R W O R K S &
I N C O M P L E T E W O R K S

ENSAYO	1922
DRAPEAIN (Piano Quintett, Incomplete)	[1926]
EN PASSANT PAR LORRAINE, MAGAL & LE ROI. (arrangements for string quintett 14, 16 & 18 bars respectively)	[1926]
2 TROZOS DE LECTURA A LA VISTA	1933
LIED (Cello & Piano)	1936
MINUETTO & (Gavotte) (fragments for piano)	d/u
SOBRE LAS OLAS (incomplete arrangements for two pianos and four hands)	d/u
SOBRE LAS OLAS (incomplete version for piano and orchestra)	d/u
SYMPHONY IN A (one incomplete movement)	d/u
SEXTET (incomplete sketches)	d/u

(see note 12 for a comment on opus numbers).

C o m m e n t s o n m a r k e d w o r k s .

1.- LES PAPILLONS BLANCS was a French song which Rolon liked. He arranged it for piano and also for piano and cello (entitled LIED).

2.- A catalogue of works which accompanies Rolon's piano works, edited by the Government of Jalisco, gives the name of SCHERZO DE LOS ENANOS to a piano piece based on material from El Festin. However, the date must be treated with some reserve as it is possible that Rolon composed this piano work after his symphonic work.

3.- Says Rolon's granddaughter Marialuisa in a letter

sent to this author: "My Grandfather wished to dedicate to us a piece of music, so he had the idea of naming it after my sister (Lorenza Martinez Sotomayor) and of dedicating it to me". This charming piece is the only example of a work for children written by the author.

4.- These two songs bear the dedication "To Tata Nacho, que si sabe de estas cosas". (To Tata Nacho, who knows about these things). Tata Nacho was a well known popular singer.

5.- Dedicated to Manuel Ponce.

6.- It is worth noticing that Y ella me "dicia..." (and she used to tell me...) is dedicated to "Mrs. Clema Maurel de Ponce". This was perhaps one of the first songs that Clema Ponce would sing for Rolon. The song was published by Breitkopf & Hartel's representative, Enrique Munguía, Ponce's publisher in 1923. He must have known Rolon quite well, not only because he published some of his works but because the Guadalajara office of the publisher was situated in Lopez Cotilla street, where the Rolons lived.

7.-This song was a favourite of Rolon. It exists in two versions: the first, dedicated to his daughter Marialuisa and the second, as part of a little booklet held at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (cat. no. Mel 20. MS 19732). The little manuscript book has no title or cover but bears on its first page the following inscription:

"Hommage des eleves de la
classe de Paul Dukas a
Nadia Boulanger".

The contents of the booklet, in which each composer included his piece, are as follows:

Epigrama	Jose Rolon
Berceuse de printemps	Joaquin Rodrigo
Gavotte	Lubo Pipkoff
Poeme pour l'interieur de Maeterlinck	Indy Cintea
Prelude	Romeo Alexandresco
*** (lent)	Manuel Ponce.

8.- I have been unable to conclude whether the poem for this song is by Cocteau. The manuscript (and its copy) give the name "Jean Cocteu".

9.- These songs are for guitar or flutes and percussion accompaniments.

10.- In a concert given in 1930, conducted by Rolon's friend Justino Camacho Vega, some of these songs appear.

However, this is not enough to establish a date of composition for them.

11.- This is the only score from this catalogue which I have not been able to study. No mention of it occurs in the composer's archives. Unless the score is in an unidentified place, I would take as a likely possibility that this Baile Michoacano, and the symphonic suite from Los Gallos are one and the same work.

12.- Rolon's opus numbers present certain difficulties. The early opus 3 (from Bosquejos) is quite accurate. But to name as opus 12 a set of works composed a year later seems quite unrealistic. The opus 14 from the Valse Caprice is also difficult to understand. Does this suggest that the work was composed before the Piano Quartet, which has an opus 16 number? Then again, El Festin is numbered opus 30 and Ballet de los Gallos opus 32. But in between there are many important works, such as Cuauhtemoc, the Three piano dances the Trois melodies and Zapotlan. After the Ballet de los Gallos, however, the numbering begins to make more sense. Escenas Mexicanas -although not dated- has an opus 33 number. Opus 34 could be the group of songs on Mexican poetry, and thus we arrive at the String Quartet's opus 35 number. However, it could be argued that the chamber songs are a different set of works. Personally, I think these numbers should be taken with caution.

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& R e f e r e n c e s

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C .- D i s c o g r a p h y :

There have been a few recordings of Rolón's music, none of which are readily available, with the exception of the recording of El Festin de los Enanos by the Jalisco Philharmonic Orchestra.

DANZAS MEXICANAS performed by Miguel Garcia Mora (MCD-3005). Includes Tres Danzas Indigenas.

CARLOS BARAJAS, PIANIST (MCD-3028) Includes Tres Danzas Indigenas.

POEMAS PARA CANTO Y PIANO (MCD-3029) Includes Dibujos Sobre un Puerto.

CUARTETO PARA INSTRUMENTOS DE ARCO (MCD-3056) Performed by Manuel Enriquez (violin), Vladimir Vulfman (2nd violin), Gilberto Garcia (viola), Sally van den Berg (cello).

CUARTETO ROMANTICO OP.16 (1912) (MCD-3040) (performers as above).

VALSES MEXICANOS performed by Miguel Garcia Mora (MCD-3001) Includes Valse Caprice "Sobre las Olas".

MUSICA MEXICANA PARA PIANO (I.D.number unknown) performed by Jose Kahan. Includes Tres danzas Indigenas.

CONCIERTO PARA PIANO Y ORQUESTA (I.D. number unknown). performed by Miguel Garcia Mora (piano) and the Orquesta Sinfonica Nacional conducted by Luis Herrera de la Fuente.

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