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Reconsideraciones biográficas y aclaraciones al corpus del compositor y violonchelista mexicano Rubén Montiel

***Biographical reconsiderations and clarifications to the corpus of Mexican
composer and cellist Rubén Montiel***

***Reconsiderações biográficas e esclarecimentos ao corpus do compositor e
violoncelista mexicano Rubén Montiel***

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Resumen

La figura del compositor y violonchelista mexicano Rubén Montiel había sido muy poco documentada e investigada hasta hoy; por lo tanto, hemos encontrado referencias incompletas e inconsistentes de dicho compositor en las entradas léxicas de diccionarios especializados, así como en trabajos previos a esta investigación. En este artículo se mostrarán de manera rectificada, los datos biográficos de Montiel; del mismo modo, los correspondientes a su producción musical. Los resultados de este estudio se derivan de una investigación documental y de campo, basada en fuentes primarias y secundarias bajo un enfoque cualitativo; lo que implicó la reconstrucción de determinados hechos históricos a través de la comparación de documentos localizados, organizados e intervenidos musicológicamente. Entre las fuentes primarias que se consideraron para esta investigación, pueden mencionarse fotografías, programas de mano, recortes de prensa, testimonios verbales de familiares, retratos hechos al autor, partituras, borradores, cartas autógrafas y también los apuntes autobiográficos del compositor como una herramienta de inicio. Se verificaron, confirmaron y corrigieron algunos sucesos y datos narrados en otras fuentes, logrando con esto conformar el documento más completo y fidedigno hasta hoy escrito sobre la figura de Rubén Montiel.



Palabras clave: musicología, filología musical, edición crítica, Rubén Montiel, violonchelo, Pablo Casals, música mexicana de concierto, École normale.

Abstract

The figure of the Mexican composer and cellist Rubén Montiel had been very little treated and researched until today; therefore, we have found incomplete and inconsistent references to this composer in the lexical entries of specialized dictionaries, as well as in works previous to this research. This article will show in a rectified way, the biographical data of Montiel; likewise, those corresponding to his musical production. The results of this study are derived from a documentary and field research based on primary and secondary sources, under a qualitative approach; which implied the reconstruction of certain historical facts through the comparison of documents located, organized and intervened musicologically. Among the primary sources that were considered for this research, we can mention photographs, hand programs, press clippings, verbal testimonies of family members, portraits of the author, scores, drafts, autograph letters, and also the composer's autobiographical notes as a starting tool. Some events and data narrated in other sources were confirmed, corrected and clarified, thus achieving the most complete and reliable document ever written on the figure of Rubén Montiel.

Keywords: musicology, music philology, critical edition, Ruben Montiel, cello, Pablo Casals, Mexican concert music, École normale.

Resumo

A figura do compositor e violoncelista mexicano Rubén Montiel foi muito pouco documentada e investigada até hoje; Portanto, encontramos referências incompletas e inconsistentes ao referido compositor nos verbetes lexicais de dicionários especializados, bem como em obras anteriores a esta pesquisa. Neste artigo, os dados biográficos de Montiel serão apresentados de forma retificada; da mesma forma, aqueles correspondentes à sua produção musical. Os resultados deste estudo são derivados de pesquisa documental e de campo, baseada em fontes primárias e secundárias sob abordagem qualitativa; que envolveu a reconstrução de determinados acontecimentos históricos através da comparação de documentos localizados, organizados e intervencionados musicologicamente. Entre as fontes



primárias que foram consideradas para esta pesquisa podemos citar fotografias programas de televisão

manuscrito, recortes de imprensa, depoimentos verbais de familiares, retratos feitos do autor, partituras, rascunhos, cartas autografadas e também as notas autobiográficas do compositor como ferramenta de partida. Alguns acontecimentos e dados narrados em outras fontes foram verificados, confirmados e corrigidos, criando assim o documento mais completo e confiável escrito até hoje sobre a figura de Rubén Montiel.

Palavras-chave: musicologia, filologia musical, edição crítica, Rubén Montiel, violoncelo, Pablo Casals, música de concerto mexicana, École normale.

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Introduction

In this research article we present part of the results obtained in the treatment of the figure of the Mexican composer Rubén Montiel (Stanley, 1980); these results correspond to the specific part of the biographical treatment, carried out as an imperative need for the rescue and critical treatment of his musical production in the context and time in which it was carried out. The bibliographic-hemerographic research was providing concrete information that in many cases differed from that obtained orally by his heirs (Montiel-Ochoa , 2019); therefore, it is prudent to point out that this last oral information was used for all the works and reviews that revolve around the figure of this composer until before the present research. The importance of our work is justified by correcting errors regarding the corpus of musical production and hitherto unknown data on presentations, recitals and specific dates; however, the most important thing is that it has been possible to respond to our working hypothesis, where the figure of Rubén Montiel is repositioned as a "Mexican composer and cellist".

The figure of Rubén Montiel, who has been considered until now mainly as a cellist by the available bibliography, will be valued as a composer in the first order of importance, in light of the documentation kept by the musician's family that is included in this research and that reveals the large number of works produced and their significance in the musical and cultural sphere of his time (Santillán -Varela , 20 22 p.10).

It should be noted that Montiel's cello work is of great importance to the Mexican artistic and cultural sphere of concert music, due to the quality and importance of his work, which generally contains a very well-achieved technical and aesthetic level and which until now has been very little worked on.



Materials and methods

The three main methods used to support this article have been taken from the texts: *Method and techniques in historical documentation. Historical research: theory and method* (Aróstegui, 1995), *Theory of knowledge based on sources. Methodology of history* (Topolsky, 1973) and “Musical biography in the post-neomusicological era” (Waisman, 2009).

As for primary sources, it is worth mentioning that the only work by Montiel that was edited under the supervision of the composer himself is “Cantilena”, which was also recorded by the Mexican cellist Ignacio Mariscal and the pianist Alberto Cruz Prieto; this work has been a compulsory piece in the National Cello Competition that is held periodically in Mexico. The other works for cello and piano are in manuscript and in an edition made by the Secretariat of Public Education of Mexico in 2005 (Salmerón, 2005), except for the “Marcha” which has been recently located. On the other hand, the transcriptions for cello and piano have not yet been published, except for “La pena”, a work composed by Henri Collet (Montiel - Ochoa, 2019), published in 1922 by the prestigious music publishing house “Salabert” in France. The Concertino in its versions for cello-orchestra and cello-piano has not been published to date.

All the original manuscripts of the corpus to be worked on are available; all the editions made to works published prior to this work; more than two hundred photographs referring to the author, as well as portraits made by painters of the time; two books written by him and two memoirs belonging to the "Pablo Casals Competition" in its first and second editions; an article written by the Master Enrique Salmerón (2009) as well as countless reviews and newspaper articles (Santillán -Varela, 2022).

. There are few documented research works that revolve around the figure of Rubén Montiel; however, they provide very important data for the present investigation. In books referring to the history of music in Mexico, mentions of the composer have only been found in reviews of concerts performed by the trio formed by Manuel M. Ponce, Pedro Valdés Fraga and Rubén Montiel; this can be corroborated in the catalogues of art documents (Sandoval, 2015). The three sources located corresponding to research works are cited below, where not only the figure of Rubén Montiel is addressed, but also his work using a chronological ordering criterion:



Firstly, there are the details presented in the research work carried out by Sergio Dorantes Guzmán for the edition of the *Dictionary of Spanish and Latin American Music* (2002), here the author organizes Montiel's work in the following way:

Symphonic music: Concertino, Orq, vlc ; Hymn to Veracruz, Orq .

Instrumental ensemble: Allegro giocoso, vlc, p; Allegro Jarocho, vlc, p; Ave María, vln, vlc, org; Canción de cuna, vln, vlc, p; Cantilena vln, vlc, p; Marcha, vln, vlc, p; Pieza en forma de minueto, vlc, p; Siciliana, vlc, p; Un viejo vals, vlc, p.

Songs: A corpus of forty-one songs is mentioned.

Piano: Andantino, Canción de cuna, Canción sin palabras 1p, 2p; Intermezzo.

Below is the information on the work carried out by Enrique Salmerón (2005), corresponding to the edition of the works for cello and piano by Rubén Montiel, which contains the following corpus:

«Allegro giocoso», «Canción de cuna», «Pieze in the form of a Minuet», «Siciliana», «Un viejo vals»; Salmerón also makes a biographical sketch of Montiel where the following information can be read regarding the organization of his work:

“ Four compositions for piano, eight compositions for cello and piano, a concertino with four movements for cello-piano and cello-orchestra, a Hymn to Veracruz for choir-piano and choir-orchestra/band, a Hymn to the “Saúl Carasso” school for choir-piano, twelve transcriptions for cello and piano and a corpus of forty-three songs ” (Salmerón, 2009) .

Finally, the research work corresponding to the doctoral thesis of Gustavo Martín Márquez, belonging to the National Autonomous University of Mexico (2011, pp. 206-207) is cited. This work includes the creation of a catalogue of works for cello composed by Mexican authors, in which there is data on the work of Rubén Montiel with a corpus of only eight works for cello, which for their organization are labeled in the following way, according to the criteria of the thesis writer:

U: Location

ACO: Personal collection of the composer

AIM: Private collection of Ignacio Mariscal

ED: Editorial

MS: Manuscript

G: Recording



Thus, the organization in the aforementioned catalogue is as follows:

«Allegro jocoso »

U: ACO

ED: Partilab - Government of the State of Veracruz

«Allegro jarocho»

U: ACO

ED: MS

"Canción de cuna"

U: ACO

ED: Partilab - Government of the State of Veracruz

G: The romantic cello in Mexico. Ignacio Mariscal, vc ; Carlos Alberto Pecero, pno . Quindecim , 2000, QP00131.

«Cantilena» (To my dear brothers and nephews)

U: ACO

ED: SEP

G: The romantic cello in Mexico. Ignacio Mariscal, vc ; Carlos Alberto Pecero, pno . Quindecim , 2000, QP00131.

«Concertino for cello and piano»

U: ACO / AIM

ED: MS:

«Pieza en forma de minuetto»

U: ACO

ED: Partilab - Government of the State of Veracruz

« Siciliana »

U: ACO

ED: Partilab - Government of the State of Veracruz

G: The romantic cello in Mexico. Ignacio Mariscal, vc ; Carlos Alberto Pecero, pno . Quindecim , 2000, QP00131.

«Un viejo vals»

U: ACO

ED: Partilab - Government of the State of Veracruz

G: The romantic cello in Mexico. Ignacio Mariscal, vc ; Carlos Alberto Pecero, pno . Quindecim , 2000, QP00131.



Results

Updated biographical sketch

Rubén Montiel Mexican composer and cellist, originally from the city of Xalapa, Veracruz (Mexico), was born on October 7, 1892. From a very young age he worked as organist at the churches "El Beaterio" and "San José", taking his first music studies with his father Maestro Rafael Montiel, who was a music teacher at the Veracruzana Normal School since its beginnings, as well as organist and chapel master of the cathedral of the aforementioned city. At the age of 15 he was sent by his father to the National Conservatory of Music, in Mexico City; in that institution, he began his professional training as a cellist, later earning a scholarship to study this instrument in Europe, continuing his musical career in Paris and soon after he began to perform in the main concert halls of that city, interpreting some of his own transcriptions and works by great masters.

In Mexico he received courses by Marcos Rocha, Rafael Galindo, Julián Carrillo and Manuel M. Ponce, whose artistic and teaching career can be found in magazines such as *Horizontes* (Arias - Sariñana, 1963); not to mention many other great teachers he had during his youth. He belonged to the orchestra of the National Conservatory of Music directed by Carlos J. Meneses. In Europe, his composition teachers include Robert Casadessus and Paul Dukas, in whose chair he coincides with Carlos Chávez (1899-1978) as a classmate (Música en México, 2021). His training as a cellist had two great pillars; the first, André Hekking within L'École Normale de Paris and the second and most important; Pablo Casals, from whom he received lessons for many years and with whom he also established a solid friendship and collaborated on various musical projects such as: premieres of works, management of concerts and presentations, participation as a synod and organizer of the international cello competition "Pablo Casals".

Montiel has performed in several European countries, including France, Spain, Belgium and Portugal, among others, and as a composer he has a catalogue of nine works for cello, which are: «Concertino» in its version for cello-orchestra and cello-piano, «Allegro Jarocho (Allegro Giocoso)», «Canción de Cuna», «Cantilena», «Canzonetta (disappeared)», «Marcha», «Pieza en forma de minuetto», «Siciliana» and «Un viejo vals»; as well as twelve transcriptions for cello and piano: «Canto de la Tarde», «Córdoba», «Granada», «Largo», «Momento Musical», «La Pena», «Nocturno op . 9 No. 2», «Nocturno op . 48 No. 1», «Pantomime », «Rumores de la Caleta-Malagueña», «Tango», «Vals Poético», as well as a



Hymn to Veracruz, four works for piano and more than forty songs for voice and piano with texts by great Mexican poets.

The results shown here have been part of the doctoral thesis *Rubén Montiel (1892-1985), Mexican composer and cellist. Biographical study and critical edition of the original works and transcriptions for the cello* (Santillán -Varela , 2022) , carried out through its specific working dimensions and methodological applications, to meet the general objective set: to produce a scientific document focused on the figure of Rubén Montiel and his work for cello as an object of study.

The first step in its realization was the compilation of the primary sources belonging to the Montiel family in the city of Xalapa, Veracruz, their place of residence; these sources correspond to photographs of the author, published scores, unpublished original manuscripts, photographs of the composer and his living environment, correspondence, autograph written testimonies; as well as verbal testimonies by his heirs; the material obtained was organized and digitalized through technological tools for its conservation and preservation. The documentary research of secondary sources began from the lexical entry corresponding to the Hispano-American dictionary of music and musicians, to establish the main starting point in the research. From the information obtained in the aforementioned dictionary and in other secondary sources consulted, the material contained therein was compared with all the primary sources located, resulting in new considerations of great importance.

Discussion

The period known as “Mexican Romanticism” –to which Montiel’s works belong– is of great importance in the musical and cultural history of Mexico. The year 1910 is considered to have begun, taking as a basis the armed movement of the “Mexican Revolution” that broke out in that year. Although it is known that it is not very precise to attribute exact dates to artistic and cultural periods, this argument was determined through research and texts by various authors who study the musical and cultural phenomenon of the country, such as those by Yolanda Moreno (1989), Otto Mayer-Serra (1996), Guillermo Orta Velázquez (1970), Robert Stevenson (1971) and Aurelio Tello (2010).

In order to situate Rubén Montiel's work in time, we begin by locating the periods of musical creation in Mexico; in this regard, Dan Malmström (2004, p.38-55) places between 1910 and 1928 a so-called "Mexican Romantic" period, which is divided into "Early Romanticism" (1910-1920), and another "Late Romanticism" that presumably covers from



1921 to 1930, and where Carlos Chávez and Manuel M. Ponce are inserted in their first periods of creation. The above is corroborated in two books by Yolanda Moreno Rivas (1994) (1996), although there is still no common agreement among authors to divide the eras of these periods. Certainly, the taxonomic criterion of historical-political events was used, which marked the beginning of the Mexican Revolution of 1910 and the arrival to power of President Plutarco Elías Calles in 1921 as its end.

On the other hand, it can be mentioned, with regard to Montiel's work, that within the secondary sources incomplete information was found in the catalogues contained there, regarding the number and description of the composed and transcribed works. In said catalogues the existence of a work "Canzonetta " (Santillán -Varela , 2022. p.62) is not corroborated, which is missing in score and which, based on the thorough review of the primary sources, is known to have been even performed by the same author; in contrast to the information contained in the consulted sources, it is concluded that "Allegro Giocoso " and "Allegro Jarocho" are the same work but with a different name and not two different works; in the same way, it is included in this work a work ("Marcha") that was missing and was recovered.

Conclusions

As regards the work carried out on the figure of the composer in question, Montiel's creative ideology can be understood through the analysis of the facts of his life; the people he lived with and frequented; the type of work he carried out in music, the teachers he had and the informed knowledge he had of the musical avant-garde present in Europe. In various works previously carried out by researchers on the figure of Rubén Montiel, certain inconsistencies were detected that can now be resolved and made available to the musicological field for future research, reissues and pertinent updates. As regards the treatment of the figure of Montiel, some publications have been located in European newspapers that until now had been unknown, even to the composer's own family; this new information, together with what was already available, allows us to create this single document that studies, defines and deals in depth with the work and figure of Rubén Montiel.

This article contains updated information gathered from various sources, which is compiled to create a complete document, assembled from several pieces that until now had been disjointed, which gives solidity to the object of study. This represents new contributions of knowledge for all scholars of this and other related subjects, and even for the composer's own family.

Future lines of research

The relevant aspects that arise from our present work and that potentially represent a great importance within our direct line of research are: the realization of a specialized biography of the author in question, which will include various axes of work for its realization; on the other hand, the analysis of the critical editions of a limited corpus of the work of Rubén Montiel will be developed and finally the works referring to the rescue, archival cataloging and public edition of his works.



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