

# Symphony disappointing in its Latin program

By CRAIG REYNOLDS

Latin America sweeps through two hemispheres, with contrasts and wonders as vast as the size of its symphonies ought to be as rich as the landscapes of cultures and nations.

That was the expectation before attending the Meadow Brook Music Festival concert Saturday night, an expectation that disappointed in its programmatic music which evoked three images of Saturday movie numbers: the plains and forests south of the Rio Grande.

Conductor Eduardo Mata from the National Symphony in Mexico City led the Detroit Symphony Orchestra through five compositions by three South American and one emigrant Spanish. Each composer had taken small musical ideas and blown them out of symphonic proportions to stabilizing effect.

The first warning note was sounded as Mata led the orchestra through four national anthems. This was an honorable gesture, but it also showed how very ordinary and uninteresting an overload of such music can be.

FIRST UP came Alberto Ginastera's *Pampeana* No. 3, the Argentine composer's orchestral rendering of Pampa, the grassy plain which stretches flat and free from the Atlantic Ocean to the Andes.

Ginastera's musical treatment added very little to that simple topography, his minor chords sounding much like experiments by Charles Ives. Juan Pablo Torres Venegas' *Sinfonias* at least evoked some symphonic energy the middle of the three versions exhibiting a pleasing extension from a 19th-century French theme into a distinctive but somewhat hackneyed Latin style.

The versions before and after sounded interest in presenting their own Western musical consciousness through the Hollywood.



In the second half of the Meadow Brook concert, some strong, arduous music was put out in three works by Carlos Chavez of Mexico and Heitor Villa-Lobos of Brazil.

CHAVEZ' EL SOL was wisely relocated to the penultimate spot on the program. A short choral work, El Sol is highly chromatic, slow but group past the "round, red sun, bright as a copper pitcher." The work did have a primitive Indian flair, though it was difficult to sort out the choral from the symphonic harmonies as they blew through the festival amphitheater. The main attraction for the concert was a Villa-Lobos entry, not his larger *Choros* No. 19 for Chorus and Orchestra, but the compact, moody first half of *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5 for Soprano and Eight Cellos.

Here was a work that combined exotically a very familiar but freshly extended melodic line from the classical tradition with an undercurrent of sulky, half-wild rhythms. Topped by the excellent soprano voice of Irene Gutierrez, the *Bachianas Brasileiras* No. 5 was the aromatic treat of the evening.

The concert closed with the Villa-Lobos *Choros* No. 18, a selection that demanded attention, with themes handed off from French horns to the violins and returned over the smoky forestal sound of the cellos.

The Meadow Brook Festival Chorus performed valiantly for both the Chavez and Villa-Lobos works. MATA CONDUCTED energetically, even brashly, bringing out an unbounded sound from the less distinctive works as if intending to fling the music straight up to the last patron on the Meadow Brook lawn. For Villa-Lobos, Mata's efforts brought forth a very mature sound, closing phrasing in the *Choros* No. 18 often sounded agreeably like the great, sighing resonances of a fine cathedral organ.

## Hit group returning

Who'd believe that four fellows from Lakeland and a sidekick from Franklin, Pa., could set Motown on its ear with the likes of "Mammy," "Dues," "Sunshine" and "It's a Grand Old Flag." And the leader with a master's degree in musical comedy.

It happened last spring when Fancy Music made its debut in Detroit. Now the group has returned to play a month through Aug. 28 at Top O' The Pouch in the Hotel Pontchartrain. They play show sets and dancing sets Tuesdays through Saturdays, 7:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. in the 25th floor, glass-walled supper club.

All in their 20s, the group members play music of the 20s and 30s with a contemporary, upbeat twist. They may play some George M. Cohan music in a show set, and then go to a disco series in a dance set.

We were packed the two weeks they were here in the spring, and a lot of local followers have been calling for reservations. And Ole Christensen, director of food and beverage for the hotel. Leader of the group and lead singer is Tom Egan. Gene Houston plays drums, Lowery Hicks, bass, and Stewart Reid is lead guitarist. Keyboards are played by Paul Kepple of Franklin, Pa.

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