

SYMPOSIUM RECORDS CD 1131

The Great Violinists – Volume 5

MANUEL QUIROGA was born on April 15, 1892 in Pontevedra, the capital town of Galicia in North-West Spain. He studied music with distinction at school there, and gave his first public concert on July 12, 1903. In 1904 he received a scholarship to the Real Conservatorio, Madrid where he was taught by José del Hierro (1864-1933). He played an Amati of 1682 belonging to the Conservatory. In 1909 he gained entry to a course of advanced studies under Jules Boucherit at the Paris Conservatoire, being first amongst three hundred candidates. However, it seems that domestic competition obliged him to wait two years before obtaining a *Première Prix*. In 1911 he also won the *Prix Sarasate*, Fauré being the president of the awarding committee. As a soloist in performances with the Conservatoire Orchestra, and in the *Concerts Lamoureux* and the *Concerts Ysaÿe* he achieved immediate recognition which led to successful tours of the main cities of Europe and the United States. He first visited America in 1914, giving concerts with his fellow countrymen the pianist Cubiles and the cellist Casaux, and with the noted French pianist Marta Leman. Then, in 1918, he appeared in the chief concert centres of Spain. The orchestra for his *début* in Madrid was conducted by Pérez Casas. For some years he appeared in Spain during the winter months, and for the remainder of the year abroad. His compatriot, José Iturbi was a fellow student in Paris and this association led to them giving many recitals together.

In 1937 a traffic accident in Times Square, New York, obliged him to retire. The remainder of his life was passed in a sanatorium in Madrid. He died in Pontevedra on April 19, 1961.

In him were allied purity of sound, intonation and technical expertise with emotion and sincerity. With these he communicated with his listeners. For his programmes he preferred the great classics, from Tartini to Beethoven; amongst composers then regarded as modern, he liked to play especially César Franck.

The people of Carunna, capital of Galicia, erected a bust in his honour in 1950, whilst internationally, he, de Sarasate and Manén are a triumvirate of Spain's greatest violinists. The respect accorded him by his colleagues may be judged by his being the dedicatee of Ysaÿe's 6th solo sonata, the others being dedicated to Szigeti, Thibaud, Enesco, Kreisler and Crickboom respectively. Strangely, there is no report of him ever playing the work.

His compositions include several dozen short pieces for the violin and cadenzas for many of the major classical violin concertos.

He also achieved considerable acclaim as a painter, an activity which he was able to continue after his accident.

The records show a more than lordly, if not quite regal, technique. The Pathé discs, being very closely recorded, illustrate this well, everything is clean, the "mechanics" of playing are rarely audible. Perhaps the violin tone is best heard on the Victor records, the brilliance of diamond, in so far as words have any meaning

in such matters, seems an apt description. The recorded repertoire of Quiroga is entirely of drawing-room and encore pieces, albeit many of them written with exquisite mastery of the instrument. There is, alas, nothing, for example, of Bach. An exception might have been the excerpt from the "Devil's Trill" Sonata, but this turns out to be Kreisler's Cadenza for that work. Indeed, Kreisler's name can be closely associated with this issue, for many of the pieces are arrangements by him, and when Quiroga is heard in his own compositions Kreisler is not far away. Drawing-room and encore pieces they may be, but all are played with elegance and vivacity, with charm and style, in a relaxed manner for enjoyment, for that is how such pieces should be played, and he is able to play them thus.

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