

# Larrocha Sheds Light In Obscure Corners

By THEODORE STRONGIN

FOR most pianists, it would be risking tedium to play a whole disk of miniature piano sonatas by a relatively obscure 18th century Spanish or any other kind of 18th century composer.

Fortunately, there are a few (very few) gifted performers around with the imagination and skill to illuminate — indeed irradiate — such hidden corners. One of them is heard on a new release, Alicia de Larrocha Plays Antonio Soler (Epic Stereo BC 1389).

Soler (1729-1783) is far from an unknown composer, but he is seldom played in quantity. Now, in our great midcentury early music revolution, a little bit of extra attention is gradually shifting his way. No one has made him seem so worthwhile as Larrocha has on this disk.

The Spanish pianist won extravagant praise for an earlier disk for Epic (B2C-165) on which she plumed the soul of Spanish romanticism by means of Granados's "Goy-

escas." With Soler she is on entirely different territory but the results are just as brilliant.

Soler has been compared with Domenico Scarlatti, but the Spaniard has his own personality. Both composers are very much of their period; Soler, though, is less grand and more buoyant, with provocative glints of his native rhythms and dance forms.

In scaling down to Soler from the mightier Granados, Larrocha has abandoned "big" 19th-century pianism. She pedals less and uses less tone. But she has kept an astounding variety of colors, touches, degrees of emphasis. She applies them with wit and charm. Every moment on the disk teems with life. She doesn't drown Soler in her own personality, she lets him appear through herself. The combination—Soler and Larrocha—is irresistible.

As in the Granados, one of Larrocha's strong points is her rhythm. She is not merely superaccurate or exact. On the contrary, she has the uncan-

ny ability to conquer time, to caress and extend a fraction of a second as though it were a full minute. Her pacing is very flexible. But she easily retains the forward momentum characteristic of 18th century music.

As with Scarlatti, many short passages are repeated, typical of the style. The repetitions are part of the charm of this music, provided the performer knows how to handle them. Larrocha does. The subtlety and variety of her touch on the repeats make one's mouth water. How she ever gets the grand piano, as she often does, to sound as if it had a harpsichord lute stop, is almost incomprehensible.

Everything counts. Her trills and turns are not just decorations, they are the equivalent of facial expressions or changes in tone of voice.

Although obviously from the same pen, the eight sonatas on the album each has a distinct personality. The opening one in D minor, for instance, is wistful. The D-major that follows is a swinging dance. The F-sharp minor is grave and formal. The one in F sharp major is offbeat and striking. Each one has its special graces and sentiments. It need not be added that Larrocha is at home with them all.

*David O'Vine*  
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THE 1968-69 CONCERT SEASON at Fredonia State University College opened Sunday evening with a performance by Miss Alice De Larrocha, pictured. Miss DeLarrocha one of Spain's most talented pianists is also director of the Marshall academy in Barcelona, Spain. The concert was greeted by a full house which followed the outstanding performance with a standing ovation and three encores.—(OBSERVER Photo)

# Hear! Hear! de Larrocha And Fortier

By LOUISA KREISBERG

The year will close the way it opened — with music.

December concert billings list the noted Spanish pianist Alicia de Larrocha with Music for Westchester on Dec. 6 at the Highlands School in White Plains, youth soloists from the Young Concert Artists roster with the Westchester Symphony Orchestra at White Plains High School on Friday, Dec. 13, violinist Young Uk Kim with the Philharmonic Symphony of Westchester in Mount Vernon's Wood auditorium on Dec. 4 and a trio of well-known professionals, violinist Francis Fortier, pianist Walter Ponce and baritone Seymour Schwartzman, in a benefit concert for the Bar Harbor Festival at Rye High School auditorium on Sunday, Dec. 15.

The musical menu planned by Siegfried Landau, conductor of Music for Westchester on Dec. 6 at 8:30 p.m., includes Brahms' "Variations on a Theme by Haydn," Falla's "Nights in the Gardens of Spain" and Britten's "Four Sea Interludes" from "Peter Grimes."

Appearing as soloist for the first time in Westchester will be Alicia de Larrocha who will perform Mozart's Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in D Major, K. 537 ("Coronation") with the fully-professional orchestra.

Miss De Larrocha, who made her first public appearance at age five, had the mantle of the "Granados Tradition" of piano playing passed on to her by Frank Marshall in her native Barcelona, Spain. She is now director of

don, Edinburgh, Geneva, Brussels and Lausanne are but a few of the cities whose audiences have acclaimed her. Miss de Larrocha's fame spread across the Atlantic and in 1955 she was invited to make her U.S. debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra.

She also performed with the San Francisco Symphony, and made her New York debut in a Town Hall recital in April, 1955.

Recognized throughout the world as one of the leading keyboard artists of our day, Alicia de Larrocha returned again to America in the fall of 1966 to perform with such orchestras as the Chicago Symphony in Chicago's Orchestra Hall and New York's Carnegie Hall, the Phoenix Symphony and the Quebec Symphony.

She also was heard last season in recital in major cities from coast to coast, including the Great Artists at Philharmonic Hall Series and at the Frick Museum in New York, where her programs included the music of her native Spain. In September, 1966, she was a judge at the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition in Texas. And in April 1967, she was a featured guest on the Bell Telephone Hour television show taped at the El Prado Museum in Madrid.



Alicia de Larrocha

the Marshall Academy in Barcelona which was founded by her former teacher.

Since 1940, Miss de Larrocha has given innumerable recitals in the music centers of the Iberian Peninsula, in Spanish Morocco and in the Canary Islands, and has been sought after by the leading Spanish orchestras and conductors.

In 1943, she was awarded the coveted Gold Medal of the Marshall Academy, which is given only on exceptional occasions in the tradition of keeping alive a pure Spanish piano school. This was the first of many awards to be showered on the artist including the Spanish Order of Civil Merit, the Harriet Cohen International Music Award Medal and the Paderewski Memorial Medal.

In 1960, she received what is perhaps the most sought after award of her art, the Grand Prix du Disque, for her recording of "Iberia" by Albeniz.

Miss de Larrocha has been heard in concert in the music capitals of Europe since she first began her tours outside of Spain in 1947. Paris, Lon-

## Lively Arts: Music and Art



Alicia de Larrocha at the Keyboard  
... concert scheduled Monday evening

## Pianist Offers Varied Recital

Today's major interpreter of Spanish piano music, Alicia de Larrocha, will make her Greater Miami debut in a concert for members of Community Concert Association in Miami Beach Auditorium at 8:30 Monday night.

For her first recital hereabouts Miss de Larrocha has arranged a traditional program involving the works of only two Spanish composers — the contemporary Carlos Surinach and one of her 19th Century favorites, Isaac Albeniz, who died in 1909.

She will play Three Spanish Songs and Dances of Surinach, a native Barcelonan like herself, and two piano works of Albeniz, an Asturian Prelude and "La Vega."

The first half of the program will involve two major classics, Beethoven's Sonata in A-flat major, Op. 110, and Bach's Italian Concerto. After the Spanish compositions Miss de Larrocha will play three of Debussy's preludes and Ravel's "Alborado del Gracioso." The preludes: "General Lavine — eccentric," "Bruyeres" and "La Puerto del Vino."

Miss de Larrocha made her "second American debut" in December, 1965; her first, 11 years earlier, had been successful, but she had not followed it up. Now, however, she is in enormous demand around the country, both as soloist with orchestra and recitalist.

One of her major feats has been to play the complete four books of Albeniz' "Iberia" as a recital, not only in New York but in Dallas and other centers. When guesting with orchestras she has concentrated on such works as Falla's "Nights in the Gardens of Spain" and Turina's "Rapsodia Sinfonica" for piano and string orchestra.

The artist began studies at four with Frank Marshall, the piano pedagogue who was successor to Granados in his famous piano school in Barcelona, and today she is director of the Marshall Academy in that city. Marshall was a pupil of Granados, with whom Miss de Larrocha's mother also studied.

Her first American debut was made in 1955 with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, her second in 1965 with the New York Philharmonic in a Mozart vehicle.

In April 1967 she was one of the guests on the Bell Telephone TV show taped at the Prado Museum in Madrid.