

Concerto premiered in new hall

By John H. Harvey
Staff Writer

The formula looked excellent — a gifted Spanish composer writing a piano concerto for a lifelong friend and countrywoman who is one of the world's great pianists.

Such formulas don't always pan out, but this one did Wednesday night in Orchestra Hall, Minneapolis. Carlos Surinach's new piano concerto, given its world premiere by Alicia de Larrocha with the Minnesota Orchestra under Stanislaw Skrowaczewski, proved a fine contemporary addition to the genre. And a crowd-

pleaser to boot. There was no mistaking the genuineness of the enthusiasm with which the audience applauded the work, the solo performer and the 59-year-old composer.

The work, following the traditional three-movement layout in contrasting tempi, is based on an eight-note flamenco scale functioning to an extent as a tone-row. It has other flamenco characteristics as well in rhythms, melismatic passages, reiterated notes and angular melodic sequences, all without being "local color" music.

It combines these with a

good deal of time-honored features of virtuosic piano writing — abundant arpeggios, rapid chordal passages up and down the keyboard, octave runs, glissandi, and the like. And it must be said that Miss Larrocha executed them all with power and brilliance remarkable even for her.

The piano part is well imbedded in an orchestral web which also follows the traditional concerto principal of give-and-take. The scoring is powerful and full of colors ranging from the dark and somber to razor-sharp brilliance. The only apparent problem—and this may well be one of Orchestra Hall's acoustics—is that both the bass end of the piano and the lowest orchestral sonorities occasionally had undue emphasis.

The concerto's overall effect is much like that of the lean, sharp, athletic

dynamism of flamenco dance.

The concert began with Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G minor, and it was an auspicious beginning. Skrowaczewski led a performance of unhurried tempi which imparted spaciousness and aeration to the textures of the music and allowed full expression of both its deep inner agitation and the controlled euphony in which the feeling operates.

Charles Ives' "The Unanswered Question" came off beautifully in Orchestra Hall, with perfect clarity and balance among its antiphonal forces—the questioning trumpet on an upper tier of the balcony opposite, and the strings supplying the soft, steady wash of "silence" on the stage between.

Less languor and more lilt might have been in order of the performance of Ravel's "Valses Nobles et Sentimentales" but the colors, the sensuous atmosphere and the excitement of his "Rapsodie Espagnole" were excellently dealt with. And the definition of the wind playing was superb.

Queridísimo Juan:
Gracias por su afectuosa carta de 18/11/74. Si; fue un triunfo. Lástima no estuvieras presente para verlo; Alicia tocó con un gusto y una "stamina" increíbles. Y tener el valor de salir a tocar una obra completamente desconocida de memoria! El tercer día hubo una "standing ovation" total, con un total de 7 salidas al escenario.

Mil abrazos a Alicia, Kito y otros Santos para tí. También felicidades a tí.

Carlos
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