



AMICA International Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association Honor Roll

Flora Mora, by Emmett Ford

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Flora Mora, distinguished pianist, teacher, author and Duo-Art piano roll artist was born in New York City, November 24, 1894. Her early musical training was in Luisa Chartrand de Gonzalez's Academy. In 1911 she was presented by her teacher in a recital before the whole corps of music teachers in Havana as an extraordinary model of a student. The recital consisted of forty concert studies.

She went to Barcelona, Spain in the same year of the recital and was enrolled in Granados Academy of Music, Enrique Granados being the founder, director, and also the teacher of Miss Mora. She received the Primo de Honor (first prize). Her composing began at this time resulting in a Habanera and a Barcarole.

In 1914 she returned to Cuba to establish an association under her name, "Asociacion ArtisticicoMusical, Flora Mora" and began to give monthly concerts to present good music to the public. In Cuba at this time there were no societies nor proper environment for giving concerts. To familiarize the public to solo composers she wrote and published a brochure informative of the composer and works performed.

In 1915 the government appointed her its musical representative at the International Exposition held at San Francisco. She gave concerts there and in other cities in California. Miss Mora created a special form of recital with comments which were successfully performed in Europe and America. Complete programs of Granados' music were performed.



In 1916 she formed the "Granados Conservatory," wrote articles for newspapers and acted as judge in the newly created schools. The National Council of Veterans donated her their gold medal.

In her 1917 tour of the Island, concerts were given often in the sugar mills, the only place to perform.

Her American debut at New York was in 1919 at Aeolian Hall. It was in 1920 that she made the Duo-Art piano rolls for the Aeolian Company and G. Schirmer, Incorporated published her Modern Piano Method for Beginners. Another recital was performed in 1920 at Carnegie Hall in New York City. Three concert-conferences were performed in 1924 on the form of the sonata in a style which she created where she was the speaker and the performer.

The National Association of Professors and Pupils of Music was established in 1927 and Miss Mora was elected to Executive Director.

From 1927 through 1928, European tours were made and upon returning to Cuba, Miss Mora commemorated Schubert's Centenary with a concert-performance of his compositions. Miss Mora received a gold medal for her Modern Piano Method For Beginners presented by the Ibero-American Exposition of Seville in 1930. A silver medal was presented to her for the review, Gula, Musical organ of the National Association of Professors and Pupils of Music.

Three graduate pupils of the Granados Conservatory were soloists with a symphonic orchestra, conducted by Miss Mora, a treat at the time for a HispanoAmerican woman artist.

Returning to the United States in 1932 to give concerts, she performed two piano concertos with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Havana, conducted by Amadeo Roldau.

In 1935 Miss Mora was appointed Chief of General Culture of the Ministry of Education and gave several concert-conferences . She worked toward establishing a curriculum for schools to teach music with an educational purpose while for the first time offering free concerts to students. To prove music was essential for the education of the individual, Miss Mora began writing a book, Music and Humanity, along with several articles on the subject which were printed in newspapers.

An appointment as Counsellor of Music in charge of forming the program for music for high schools was in 1939 and in 1940; the book Music and Humanity was published, dedicated to the leaders of nations and to teachers. The book was sent to presidents of the American Republics and to their ministers of state and of education. A trip to the United States in 1941 was to choose records to be used in the music appreciation classes. A Town Hall concert was in 1943 and then a tour was made in Mexico.

Returning to Cuba in 1945, she began her manuscript on Primary Musical Pedagogy. The Granados Conservatory was disbanded due to certain rules dictated by the government and which, in Miss Mora's opinion, were against a regular development of the teaching of music.

Another tour was made in the United States in 1947 where she took a superior course on the English language, another on music and film and the third course on the traditional music for the Bible.

Miss Mora was elected President of the National Association of Professors and Pupils of Music in 1950 when she offered a complete program of concert works by Cuban composers. Her pamphlet Banner and Hymn was published and she was awarded the Commemorative Medal of the Centenary of the Flag.

Librettos on the history of the "Hymn of Bayamo" and "Candelaria Gigueredo" were written in 1952 for radio and TV and performed on channel 6 with the number

and kind of instruments which were used in 1868. The arrangements for piano and orchestra and band were done by Miss Mora. The Municipal Band of Bayamo performed it for commemorative festivities of the Epic Fire and also by the Police Municipal Band of Havana. Lectures on the importance of music in peace were given in 1953. A campaign toward the need to respect the music of the National Anthem as it was written by the author began in 1954. A pamphlet written by Miss Mora, printed in two editions and now out-of-print, regarded how the National Anthem was written by its author. Her campaign started in Bayamo, Santiago de Cuba and other places on the Island and she was awarded homage from the National Association of Reporters by an award of their gold medal and a gold medal and acknowledgement from the Order of Mariana Grajales.

A Mozart program, performed on the piano, was the first and only film short of classical music processed entirely in Cuba in 1956. The Mozart program was premiered August 30, 1956 in Rex Cinema and later at Cine La Rampa.

Miss Mora was Director of Art of Patronato Pro Educacion Audio Visual in 1959. She resigned the post in the Ministry of Education and in 1969 was permitted to come to the United States. Her husband passed away in 1970. Two piano recitals were given later with comments on the compositions and a recital was also given on the music of American composers.

Miss Mora has composed songs, piano pieces and orchestral works and written numerous pamphlets and books. Her Duo-Art piano rolls are of the compositions of Granados along with works of Chopin and other composers.

(My appreciation and thanks to Miss Mora for her cooperation and information to make this article complete. e.m.f.)

From the 1927 Duo-Art catalog:

"Al Suplicio" - Granados - #64327, F. Mora. "Introduction & Valse" (Vales Poeticos #1) - Granados #64336, F. Mora.

"Mazurka, Op. 6 No. 2" - Chopin - #64357, F. Mora. "Porque Eh?" (Cuban Dance #2) - Cernantes - #64346, F. Mora.

FLORA MORA NEW CUBAN PIANIST

By Emmett M. Ford

(The following is a newspaper review of the debut of Flora Mora in Aeolian Hall recital, 1919)

Flora Mora, a Cuban pianist of much ebullient temperament and great technical equipment entertained a fine audience at Aeolian Hall in the afternoon with an important program which commenced with Weber's "Perpetum Mobile" as an exposition of her almost miraculous manual clerity and went to the best of composers and the high limit of Miss Mora's artistry in Chopin's "Winter Wind" Etude and the dazzling "Scherzo" by the same much-patronized wizard. Saint-Saen's "Etude en forme de vals" seems to find the pianist less familiar ground, but she played it with supreme confidence, if not authority, and then made a breathless diversion with a brilliant playing of Granados' "Zapateade." The Wagner-Liszt "Liebestod," Chopin's "Phantasie Impromptu," and the Paganini-Liszt "La Campanella" which concluded the program, were other media for the display of an admirable musicianship made eventful and, sometimes confusing by charming but distracting mannerisms.

FLORA MORA RECALLS RECORDING DUO-ART ROLLS

By Emmett M. Ford

I had contacted the Duo-Art roll recording artist, Flora Mora and asked her to consider becoming an Honorary Member of AMICA and to attend the 1977 San Francisco AMICA Convention. I sent her a list of questions regarding the roll cutting sessions. Her recall of making the rolls is in a question and answer presentation. She was enthused at the recall of the rolls and recognition of her musical life.

Q: The Duo-Art rolls were made when you had your debut in New York City?

A: My debut in New York at Aeolian Hall was on October 19, 1919. I think I made the rolls in 1920.

Q: Were you paid for each roll or did you have a contract to make a certain number of rolls? A: I had a contract and was paid for each roll.

Q: Do you recall how many rolls you made at the time?

A: I made three rolls: "Poetic Valses;" "Allegro de Concerto," "Al Suplicio;" I think I also did Dance No. 7 but I am not sure.

Q: Did you make any Duo-Art rolls after 1920? A: Na they were done the same day.

Q: How long did it take to make a roll? A: The time it took to perform them.

Q: Did you select the compositions to be recorded or were they requested by the Aeolian Company?

A: I don't remember. I played several compositions for the Artist's Manager; his name was Mr. Philips or a similar one. Maybe Lucy Goldsmith remembers. When he heard "Al Suplicio" he was extremely astonished. He remarked, "I would have never imagined this work was written by Granados. Please play it." Possibly he was not familiar with the universal style of music of Granados. (D-A 64327)

Q: Did someone stand by to listen to your playing to edit the rolls? A: I don't remember.

Q: Do you know if your rolls were edited and the person? A: I don't know.

Q: Some very talented and famous pianists coded rolls. Do you know who some were? A: No.

Q: During the recording session, were there other pianists making rolls? A: I don't know.



Q: Did you meet and personally know other pianists who recorded for Duo-Art? A: Yes, but I don't know what has become of them except Granados.

Q: Were the rolls made only once, or did you have to redo some through errors and wrong notes or you were not satisfied with the roll? A: I didn't have to redo any of them.

Q: Did you ever, at the request of the Aeolian Company, go out in public on the concert stage to demonstrate the Duo-Art grand as did Bauer, Grainger, Hofmann and others?

A: No.

Q: Some pianists who made rolls did not care to talk about their rolls. How do you feel about the ones you made? A: They were very good. Some very soft tones did not come out well and they have to be fixed.

Q: Do you think the rolls, like the phonograph, brought good music into the home that otherwise the occupants would never have the chance to hear great pianists in person?

A: Yes, I do.

Q: There was much controversy about the player piano destroying the desire of young people to study the piano. Do you, or rather did you agree with this at the time?

A: There is much to say about this. Music should be heard by every one as an educational element and as a compliment of education for the integral education of the individual. It is not the same to hear good music than to study it in order to obtain from it the physical, aesthetic, psychological and spiritual qualities that may be obtained from music with an educational purpose. I have demonstrated this statement in my book MUSIC AND HUMANITY (Philosophy of Music in regard to education). Parents should be well aware of these facts. They should inform their children they should learn good music in order to develop their sense of hearing and the rest of the mental capacities derived from music study in the same way as reading and grammar are taught in every school although not all of the students are supposed to become teachers or speakers later on. A different advantage may be obtained from the reproducing piano rolls. They can be a help for the enjoyment of good music to those who have not studied music and they can help music students a great deal to become acquainted with master works, to observe the interpretation of different artists as well as their sound and enjoy good music comfortably in their homes. To children in pre-school age they can help to form in them a musical taste instead of hearing the bad quality of music which is so often heard from radios and television transmissions. They may be a stimulant to music students and in every way they tend to the enjoyment of music and music is, in fact the greatest aesthetic pleasure a human being can enjoy.

Q: There is much discussion the rolls were not examples of the pianist's playing, though the Ampico, Welte-Mignon, DuoArt and other mechanics had expression holes in the rolls. What is your opinion?

A: There is a great difference between regular piano rolls or "pianolas" and the Duo-Art, Ampico and Welte-Mignon piano rolls. Instead of my opinion I will quote Granados' opinion from an interview which was taken from him after he made his rolls for the Duo-Art. He said, "It is such a truthful reproduction of my playing, so exact in my performance that on hearing the rolls my own pupils in Barcelona wouldn't be able to notice that I was not seated at a piano. It seems a fairy story which has become true."

Q: Do you wish you had made more Duo-Art rolls? A: Yes.

Q: What composer, if you could now make rolls, would you want to record? A: Mainly Granados and compositions of myself.

Q: Are you enthused the player piano or reproducing piano is making a comeback and being revived by the finding and restoration? A: Yes.

Q: Did the reproducing piano appear in Cuba?

A: Yes. Mr. Jose Ciralt was the agent. He used to advertise the Duo-Art in the back of my programs.

Q: Since the U.S. and Cuba were friendly and trading material and products and the piano makers were heavy on advertising and selling, do you recall who may have owned the player pianos? A: No.

Q: If pianos were bought in Cuba, do you think they still exist after Castro came into power? A: I don't know.

Q: Was the player piano ever used in schools and colleges for music appreciation classes? A: No.

Q: Can you recall any other information about the player piano which would be of interest to AMICAns? A: No.

In Memoriam - Flora Mora

1894 - 1987

I "rediscovered" Flora Mora, who had made Duo-Art piano rolls, in 1976 and offered her Honorary Membership in AMICA. She accepted and a photograph and story of her life was printed in the June/July 1977 AMICA News Bulletin.

She attended three conventions, 1977 San Francisco, 1978 Dayton and 1979 in Philadelphia where she gave excellent piano recitals of the works of her former teacher in Spain, Granados.

Suffering from a series of strokes, she was placed in the Jackson Manor Nursing Home in Miami, Florida. I received no reply to my letters except once when she said she was better and then a card came, and later a letter, indicating she was not in the best of health, which her handwriting indicated. Then letters were returned. I wrote to the Nursing Home and was told she was no longer there and was given the name and address of a woman who had been a piano student of Flora. My letter was not acknowledged so I telephoned and received information that Flora was deceased and there was a room filled with memorabilia, manuscripts, music and the manuscript of a book Flora had tried to get into print. The student was to send me information but none was received. I wrote to the Miami Herald and received a brief obituary notice that Flora Mora had died at the age of 90, and was buried in Coral Gables, Florida (Feb. 8, 1987).

I suggested to the former student to have the memorabilia, music and manuscripts sent to me for indexing and recording and possibly sent to a future AMICA Archive. To date there has been no reply to my suggestion.

Emmett M. Ford