



AMICA International

Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association

Honor Roll

Former Honorary Member Jose Echaniz

by Emmett M. Ford, from the AMICA Aug/Sept 1983

Jose Echaniz was born in Gaunabacoa, Cuba, June 4, 1905. His father was his first music instructor. He attended the Falcon Conservatory in Havana and at the age of fourteen was awarded the title Professor of Piano.

His U.S. debut was in Town Hall in New York, 1922. Tours were made with the Italian tenor, Tito Schipa, in joint recitals and Mr. Echaniz also made solo appearances.

From 1924 to 1932 he had a studio in Havana where he taught and also held, for twelve years, a professorship at the Conservatory of Music at James Milliken University in Decatur, Illinois. Later he joined the faculty of the Eastman School of Music in a full-time teaching position but continued to be active as a recitalist in the U.S., Europe and the Caribbean and with major orchestras under such conductors as Frederick Stock, Vladimir Golschmann, Sir Eugene Goosens, Dmitri Mitropoulos, Rudolf Ganz, Howard Hanson, Erick Leinsdorf, Paul White, Guy Fraser Harrison, Theodore Bloomfield, Massimo Preccia, Gonzalo Roig and Laszlo Somogyi.



Mr. Echaniz appeared with the Valencia Symphony Orchestra in Spain with Jose Iturbi conducting.

Mr. Echaniz was the conductor of the Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra in Michigan in the seasons from 1948 to 1954. He was soloist with orchestras in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Portugal and Spain in the winter/spring season of 1966.

His first phonograph recordings were in the early days of electrical recording for Columbia and in the 1950's he made his famous series of Spanish keyboard works for Westminster. Recent phonograph recordings were made for the Musical Heritage Society. An all Liszt recital was recorded by Mr. Echaniz in a single "take" - a feat virtually unparalleled in today's recording practices. It was released by MHS.

Mr. Echaniz was also active in clinics and music workshops in the U.S. during the regular academic year and was also active in the summertime Lake Placid Chamber Music Festival and School, which he founded at the resort in 1963. He was its director until his death. He was the pianist for the Lake Placid Trio.

On September 2, 1969 he and his wife, Dulce, celebrated their fortieth wedding anniversary.

On December 1968 he was scheduled to give his first New York recital in eleven years but was so ill from what was described as Hong Kong flu he was able to perform only the first half of the program on the stage of Philharmonic Hall in Lincoln Center. His scheduled appearances and the Kilbourn Hall recital in celebration of his twenty-fifth anniversary on the Eastman faculty were cancelled.

ESM director, Walter Hendl, in a gesture of honor, gave a dinner for Mr. Echaniz with some two hundred guests attending. The dinner was held in the Hutchinson House, November 4, 1969 in honor of Mr. Echaniz's twenty-fifth anniversary at the school.

His death was December 30, 1969 in his Pittsford home. He had suffered from cancer for several months, cancelling what would have been his most active season in several years. He is survived by his wife Dulce, a daughter, Maria and two sons, Jose Jr. and Carlos and grandchildren.

His musicianship commanded admiration and his warm personality inspired a spontaneous and genuine affection on the part of those who knew him. He had sponsored for a decade the Cuban pianist, Luis Gonzales Rojas, now on the faculty of the School of the Ozarks. Though Mr. Echaniz was known for his recordings of Spanish music, he was an interpreter of Mozart and Liszt and believed in the value of a thorough grounding in the classical repertory. It was not uncommon for his pupils to undertake the entire "Well-Tempered Clavier" of Bach, or as a class, the two dozen plus concertos of Mozart.

In the early 1920's, Mr. Echaniz recorded the works of Cergantes and Vogrich for Duo-Art² and for Ampico one of his own piano works plus those of Cervantes and Soro. He also recorded his arrangement of the works of Larregla ~Viva Navarra~ and del Valle (Zapateo Cubano).

"Twelve Spanish Dances - Granados Westminster WL 5181. This lp recording is the first complete version of Granados' "Spanish Dances" available for a good number of years. Recorded 1953 and highly recommended for his interpretation.

ZIn a letter to me, Mrs. Echaniz states: "I don't know if you are aware of the fact that these Duo-Art and Ampico rolls were made by my husband when he was 15 or 16 years of age - at the age when most music students are not even undergraduates in their conservatories."

Note: My thanks to Mr. Lawrence Naukam of the Local History Division of the Rochester Public Library and to Mrs. Dulce H. Echaniz for reading, correcting and adding to this sketch. Her interest and kindness is truly appreciated. e.m.f.