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| Domingo Santa Cruz, Wilson (1899-1987) |
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| Wilson Domingo Santa Cruz was alawyer, composer, and academic. His career was built upon several achievements in formative, artistic, and administrative fields, making him a key figure for understanding 20th century Chilean music. His influence is undeniable today, particularly through his creation of formative musical institutions in Chile. |
| Wilson Domingo Santa Cruz was alawyer, composer, and academic. His career was built upon several achievements in formative, artistic, and administrative fields, making him a key figure for understanding 20th century Chilean music. His influence is undeniable today, particularly through his creation of formative musical institutions in Chile.  In 1917, Santa Cruz studied law at the University of Chile, graduating in 1921. At the same time, he received instruction in composition from Enrique Soro, and composed his first works. From 1922-1923, Santa Cruz traveled to Europe as secretary to the Chilean Embassy in Madrid, where he studied with Conrado del Campo. On his return, he assumed a position in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Chile. There, Santa Cruz led and reformulated the aims of the Bach Society chorus, founded in 1917. Through it, Santa Cruz transformed Chilean musical institutions: namely, the annexation of the National Conservatory of Music to the University of Chile (1928), the creation of the Faculty of Arts in the University of Chile (1929), the National Association of Composers (1935), and the National Symphony Concerts Association (1931-1938).  Santa Cruz’s efforts culminated in the foundation of the Institute of Musical Extension (1940), which meant the recognition of musical culture as part of the State's institutions. This led to the creation of the Symphonic Orchestra of Chile, Choir of the University of Chile, National Ballet, Radio University of Chile, and Chilean Musical Review. Also, through the Institute of Musical Extension, Santa Cruz created the Chilean Music Festival (1947-1969) — the main forum for active Chilean composers and performers.  Between 1928 and 1953, Santa Cruz taught composition in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Chile, where he mentored an entire generation of Chilean composers, including Gustavo Becerra-Schmidt, Miguel Aguilar, Carlos Botto, Alfonso Montecino, and Juan Orrego Salas. In 1932, Santa Cruz became Dean of the Faculty of Arts; in 1944, he was appointed Vice Rector and from 1948-1951 served as deputy Rector. In 1948, Santa Cruz founded the Faculty of Music Arts and Sciences, of which he was Dean from 1962-1968. He was also Vice President for the International Society for Music Education (1953-1955), a member of the International Society for Contemporary Music (1954), President of the International Committee of Music (1956-58), and President in the Chilean Academy of Fine Arts (1980-82). Today, scholars tend to concur that ‘the history of the musical life of [contemporary] Chile is confused with the very life of Santa Cruz’ (Claro 1973: 164).  The institutional model formulated by Santa Cruz favored certain aesthetic criteria over Chilean music during the first half of the 20th century. His work references the Germanic tradition, traced through J.S. Bach, Beethoven and Wagner, as well as post-Romantic, Neoclassical, Expressionist and Impressionist composers. His music also includes medieval and Renaissance polyphonic traditions.  Santa Cruz’s creative life may be divided into three stages: initiation (1917-1929), maturation (1930-1952) and maturity (1952-1987). Except in the first stage, where the composer was guided by exuberance and emotionality, Santa Cruz tended to assigned a structural function to his melodies, favoring polyphonic textures and motivic development. In general terms, the composer uses a modal setting for harmony that, in the horizontal driving and chromatic movement of voices, reaches a sonority close to atonality or even to dodecaphony. Frequent in his music are the gradual movements in melodic and rhythmic cells, motivic recurrences, the resolution of jumps with opposite movement, and the use of irregular rhythms. The thoroughness of his compositional technique is also evident in his use of traditional structures, such as the rondo and sonata. Finally, Santa Cruz’s compositions are concerned more with contrapuntal density than timbre, leaving the instrumental color as a secondary factor in his compositional style.  Santa Cruz's catalog boasts approximately eighty scores, many of them small vocal and choral pieces. Among his most important works are *Cinco Poemas Trágicos* (1929), *String Quartet No. 1* (1930-31), *Cinco Piezas para Orquesta de Cuerdas* (1937), *Variaciones para piano y orquesta* (1943), *Symphony No. 2* (1948) *Égloga* (1949), and *Preludios Dramáticos* (1946) for orchestra, recognized as the most transcendental work of his repertoire. In 1951, the composer obtained the National Art Award in Music.  File: <http://www.memoriachilena.cl/archivos2/audio/MC0063402.MP3> |
| Further reading:  (Claro)  (Comité Editorial)  (Díaz)  (García)  (Leng)  (Merino)  (Salas)  (Santa Cruz)  (Urrutia) |