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| **Sojo, Vicente Emilio (1887-1974)** |
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| Vicente Emilio Sojo was born in Guatire, Miranda State, on 08 December 1887, a son of Francisco Reverón and Luisa Sojo. He was a self-taught composer, conductor, choirmaster and pedagogue, and arguably the most influential figure of the first half of the Venezuelan twentieth century. |
| Vicente Emilio Sojo was born in Guatire, Miranda State, on 08 December 1887, a son of Francisco Reverón and Luisa Sojo. He was a self-taught composer, conductor, choirmaster and pedagogue, and arguably the most influential figure of the first half of the Venezuelan twentieth century. In 1896, he undertook his first music studies with Henrique León (1854-1895) and Régulo Rico (1878-1960). While studying and performing, Sojo also worked as a tobacco producer and house painter due to difficult economic conditions.  In 1906 he relocated to Caracas, and in 1909 he auditioned for the School of Music and Declamation (today José Angel Lamas Music School) where he studied solfège, music theory, harmony, composition and violoncello with Ignacio Bustamante (¿-1921), Andrés Delgado Pardo (1870-1940) and Eduardo Richter (1874-1912), respectively. In the meantime, he acted as Choirmaster for the San Francisco Chapel and the Caracas Cathedral. In 1921 he started his teaching activities at the School of Music and Declamation, where he was later appointed as Headmaster in 1936 and will hold such position until 1964. On 23 March 1926 he was married to Efigenia Montero, until her early death in 1932.  On 24 June 1930, along with Vicente Martucci (1879-1941), Sojo presented, as cofounder and conductor, the opening concert of the Venezuela Symphony Orchestra; he would carry out this activity for nineteen years. On 15th July of the same year, along with José Antonio Calcaño (1900-1978), and again as cofounder and conductor, he offered the opening concert of the Lamas Chorale, which he continued to do for thirty years.  One of Sojo’s most important life achievements was his rescue and compilation of the music and archives of the preceding Venezuelan composers of the Colonial period and the nineteenth century. This labour came to fruition through numerous transcriptions of religious works as well as arrangements and harmonisations of popular songs, folk tunes and especially Christmas melodies better known as *aguinaldos*, the Venezuelan equivalent for the Spanish *villancico*.  Sojo was also strongly committed to Venezuelan politics: A founder of the Social Democrat Party in 1941, he was elected member of the Constituent National Assembly in 1945; Senator of the Congress in 1958, and re-elected in 1963.  Between 1944 and 1964, nineteen of his students graduated as Composition Masters, including some of the most relevant musical figures of the second half of the twentieth century. This plethora of disciples is still known as *Escuela de Santa Capilla* (School of Santa Capilla), referring not to the physical space in which they studied but to the musical style that they developed and that can be observed in their diverse and plentiful compositions. In 1951 he was granted the Music National Award as an acknowledgment for his work.  The majority of Vicente Emilio Sojo’s musical output –which comprises nearly 140 works, according to Claudio Garcia Lazo– belongs to the vocal genre: sixty-five religious pieces including seven masses, and forty-six secular works including a cappella choral songs, madrigals, children’s songs, and art songs for voice and piano. The rest is constituted by works belonging to the symphonic and chamber repertoire, as *Meditación y Treno* (Meditation and Threnody, 1911-1912) and *Cuarteto de Cuerdas en re mayor* (String Quartet in D major, 1913). Even though Sojo is considered the ‘father’ of Nationalism in Venezuela, in his religious choral music one can detect the fusion between a national style and a free treatment of the melody, with the late discovery of the impressionistic features of Debussy and Ravel, which associates him with Neoclassicism. His secular works, on the other hand, exhibit the elementary use of polyphonic techniques: Imitation at the intervals of fourth, fifth and octave, which gives them an almost puerile simplicity.  Among his most important works are the *Misa Cromática* (Chromatic Mass, 1924), for three-part male chorus and orchestra; the *Requiem in memoriam Patris Patriae* (1929), dedicated to Simon Bolivar, for soli, male chorus, organ and orchestra; the Christmas Cantata *Hodie super nos fulgebit lux*, (1935) for soli, four-part mixed chorus and orchestra, and the *Misa en honor a Santa Cecilia* (Mass in Honor to Saint Cecily, 1954), for male soli, three-part male chorus and orchestra.  He died in Caracas on 11 August 1974. |
| Further reading:  (Acuña)  (García Lazo)  (Ramón y Rivera)  (Sangiorgi)  (Slonimsky) |