

cially that which stems from Classical culture. A brutalized population will feel hopeless to oppose the enforcement of IMF policies, the same policies which have bankrupted the economies of nearly every nation on the planet.

Interview: Liz Angela García

'We Are the Nation's Real Educators'

Liz Angela García is the acting concertmistress of the Colombian Symphony Orchestra. She was interviewed for EIR by Javier Almario and Maximiliano Londoño.

EIR: Before being concert mistress of the orchestra, you studied in Germany. How many German orchestras are financed by the State, be it national, state, or municipal?

García: There are 300 state orchestras in Germany. There is at least one orchestra in every city. In Munich, where I studied, there are five orchestras, and of these five, two are immense: the Symphony Orchestra of Munich and the University Orchestra. They are very complete orchestras. In Berlin, there were seven orchestras. Of course, with the unification of East and West Germany, some fused; but in any case, there are still five orchestras in Berlin. As I said, there is at least one orchestra in each city, and all are financed by the state.

EIR: Are there private orchestras in Germany?

García: In Germany, the orchestras are all state-run, although I don't know if perhaps in the past two years, they may have created some private ones. I don't believe so.

EIR: I know it is disproportionate, but how would you compare Germany with Colombia in this regard?

García: In Colombia, there are only two orchestras, the Bogotá Philharmonic and the Colombian Symphony orchestras, which have survived with great difficulties. In reality, there are only these two.

EIR: And if there are only these two, why do they want to do away with them?

García: It is a policy that the State has adopted, following the absurd model of privatization and globalization.

EIR: The first to speak publicly about eliminating the Symphony Orchestra was Rudolf Hommes, former finance minister and adviser to Colombia's President Alvaro Uribe Vélez. What official information do you have on this?

García: Officially, nothing. What happened simply is that



Concertmistress Liz Angela García has become a spokesman for the orchestra, campaigning against its "disappearance."

after Hommes' article came out, some of the musicians of the Orchestra went to the Planning Ministry for information about the budget, and discovered that our budget had disappeared, and had been assigned to other activities. So, it was this information, plus other information we had received that there was a plan to wipe out the Orchestra, that led us to launch this campaign in defense of the Orchestra and culture in Colombia.

EIR: To paraphrase former Colombian President Ernesto Samper, at the most heated moment of the scandal of drug-money financing of his campaign, is this being done "behind the back" of President Uribe, or did he personally make this decision?

García: I'm afraid that the President personally approved this decision.

EIR: Isn't this contradictory, given that the President said he was going to promote the idea of children learning to play musical instruments, because a child who takes up an instrument is a child who will never take up a weapon for any terrorist group?

García: Completely contradictory. It is a problem of defining which way the country is going to go. It is absurd to encourage children to learn music and to play instruments, and at the same time, to close orchestras. The greatest aspiration of a music student is to belong to the Symphony or Philharmonic orchestras. It is very good that the conservatories, the music schools, and the academies generate interest in music, but they also have to produce music at a professional level.

We are 75 musicians, the majority very young, who, with the proper support and publicity, could reach many more people and participate more in the musical education of those children and youth who are training.

EIR: A recurring argument among those who, in the name

of the International Monetary Fund, want to eliminate the budget for Classical music, is that this is so-called “foreign music,” which is not part of our native culture. With that argument, then-President of Colombia Virgilio Barco eliminated the Colcultura Chorus and the Opera of Colombia, and eliminated state financing for opera. That same argument was used by the late minister Consuelo Araujo Noguera, who alleged that nearly all the culture budget was being used to promote “foreign music” like opera and Classical orchestras; and she encouraged the *vallenato* as cheaper, and our “own” music.

García: I think that all music has its place. And we aren’t talking just about the *vallenato*, but also all of our folkloric music: *bambucos*, *pasillos*, *llanero* music, and Indian music. But, in addition to this music, which we consider our own, it is necessary for everyone to discover universality, with the composers and music of other countries—especially music that has transcended to a universality.

Some think that the only thing that is authentically ours is Indian music. But there is also the influence of the population that came from Africa, that came from Spain, and the influence of the other European countries. Our culture is definitely European. In the final analysis, music is universal.

EIR: And the “Indian” music that has been preserved to our time was composed after the Spanish priests explained the diatonic scales, and taught the writing and reading of music, to the Indians. On the other hand, the accordion—so indispensable to the *vallenato*—was brought to the Caribbean by British and French pirates.

In Colombia, violins are produced, but accordions are all imported.

García: And what about the language? We speak and communicate in Spanish, and not in Indian dialects. Our cultural roots are European, with our own Colombian characteristics. The Symphony Orchestra is a Colombian expression of a universal culture, which took a lot of time and effort to come to fruition, and to take the form it has today. It is an effort that requires musicians with good training and very good discipline, who are chosen rigorously and carefully. The majority of the Orchestra musicians are Colombian. We have performed excellent Classical orchestral arrangements of Colombian music, we play for the Colombian people and we perform universal music for a Colombian public.

Nor can we say that the *vallenato* should be encouraged because a lot of people listen to it, and that relatively few people listen to us. We can’t concentrate solely on numbers. Quality also counts. That is what the Orchestra represents; with our quality, we are offering a great example to future generations. The music so popular today is more a phenomenon of the communications media than of musical training.

We are the real educators. With all due respect to Mr. Hommes, he doesn’t know what he’s talking about. Music, culture, and the education of a people are very important for

any nation and for its economy. There are many values that cannot be counted in numbers or in money. The areas of education and artistic expression cannot be closed to our country.

EIR: What do you think the Symphony Orchestra needs, to be able to function better?

García: There are many things that must be done, especially in the area of publicity. Because of such a reduced budget, there is no publicity so that the public knows what the Orchestra is doing. Only rarely are posters printed up to announce concerts and there is absolutely no coverage on radio or television. Another problem is that the Orchestra doesn’t have a home, so the people don’t know how to find us. We perform in one place one day, and in another the next. We are traveling musicians. The result is that we don’t have the public we would like to have. The people who go to our concerts do so because they hear a rumor that the Orchestra is playing somewhere.

EIR: Luis Biava, who was director of the Symphony Orchestra of Colombia, is now the director of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and wrote a letter in defense of the Symphony Orchestra. If the orchestra is shut down, do you think this will encourage a “brain drain”?

García: There already is a very large “brain drain” out of the country. I believe that some of the musicians will try to find jobs abroad, and that this will send a message to youth in training, to the effect that they will have no future in their profession in Colombia.

But I am optimistic, because the public is supporting us, and that public includes influential intellectuals. We are receiving innumerable letters of support. Also, we are going through the best musical period of the Orchestra, given that Maestro Irving Hoffman has done an excellent job.

EIR: You belonged to the Philharmonic Orchestra of Bogotá. Do you think the situation for the Philharmonic is better?

García: I don’t think so. In fact, when I was named assistant concertmistress of the Symphony Orchestra, the place that I left in the first violins [of the Philharmonic] was never filled.

EIR: How do you feel about going from your role as acting concertmistress to political spokesperson for the Orchestra?

García: A little strange. Well, I am not political spokesperson for the Orchestra, but I have had to publicly defend it with arguments, although I would much prefer to contribute to the country with my violin. We have all had to put aside our rather isolated roles as musicians, to talk with congressmen and journalists, improvising speeches and so forth. We have all become spokespersons for the Orchestra. The result of this crisis is that we have all gone through a very accelerated process of becoming more aware, which is a good thing, and I am optimistic that we are going to win this battle.