

Alejandra Urrutia's baton thrilled the Teatro Municipal de Santiago with a passionate concert that the audience rewarded with a standing ovation.

By José Luis Arredondo

It was a real milestone. For the first time, a Chilean woman conductor took the baton at the helm of the Santiago Philharmonic Orchestra. And from the podium, Alejandra Urrutia led a great concert, with a strong female presence, which the audience rewarded with prolonged and enthusiastic applause.

On Saturday 19 March, the Teatro Municipal de Santiago was rocked by the strength of a woman. Conducting the Philharmonic Orchestra for the first time was a Chilean conductor, Alejandra Urrutia, in a premiere in which she showed concentration, poise and confidence, also demonstrating an excellent chemistry with the orchestra, which always followed her indications attentively.

Alejandra Urrutia's baton is distinguished by her economy of gestures, the precision with which she makes the markings and indications, a profound knowledge and an energetic commitment to the works, all of which was reflected in this auspicious debut.

The programme of this second concert of the season is entitled "Ellas y el Aranjuez" and includes pieces by two outstanding female composers, the French Louise Farrenc (1804-1875), and the Afro-American Florence Price (1887-1953). The concert is rounded off with a performance of the famous Concierto de Aranjuez by the Spaniard Joaquín Rodrigo (1901-1999).

The start is provided by Farrenc's vibrant Overture No. 2 in E flat major, op. 24. This is a short piece, with a solemn beginning and exultant development, which in little more than 10 minutes "squeezes" the orchestra with an agile and brilliant sonority, in which the winds and strings stand out wholesale.

It is a perfect beginning that leaves the audience and the musicians prepared for what is to come, given the energy and agility that Alejandra Urrutia imprints on the piece.

The eternal magic of Aranjuez

Then comes the Concierto de Aranjuez. Here the mastery of the Chilean guitarist Luis Orlandini shines and his intense connection with the musical writing, absolutely in tune with the orchestra, floods the hall with virtuosity and feeling tinged with Spanish 'salero'. It is a moment of delicate expressiveness and beauty, which captivates an audience that follows the music with excited faces. As an encore and after repeated applause, Maestro Orlandini dazzles with a Spanish Dance No. 5, which once again demonstrates his unbeatable technique and profound knowledge of the repertoire.

A brief intermission and the concert moves on to the last part of the programme, Florence Price's Symphony No. 3 in C minor. This is a composition of varied and expansive sonority, allowing each instrumental group to manifest itself clearly within the rich framework. Nothing and no one is neglected here, and the winds, strings and percussion come together like the varied colours and tones of a great tapestry. It is a piece that evokes grandeur and movement, with an orchestra that always expands, even in moments of introspection. A vital piece above all, which Alejandra Urrutia's conducting makes shine in all the possibilities given by its rich orchestration.