

Music Commentary

Gabriela at the Station

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Composer **Sebastián Errázuriz** is coming out of an absolutely eventful week, achieving a milestone rarely (or never) reached by another Chilean composer. On Monday he premiered a work in Santiago and, a thousand kilometers away (in Frutillar), the following Thursday he restaged another, renewed for the occasion.

The first took place within the framework of the **“Concierto por la Hermandad”** organized by **Vibra Clásica**, held at **Estación Mapocho** before an audience of **5,000 people with free admission**. As this columnist has highlighted in previous commentaries about this major event—which already counts around a dozen very successful editions—its realization can only be described as something of a miracle. This is because the performance, always large-scale, does not rely on the stable ensembles of any institution; the robust orchestra and choir assembled are the response to a civic call. Because of the enormous effort involved, none of the participants receive payment.

Unlike previous years, when a succession of hits from the symphonic-choral repertoire was offered, this time the organizers took a bold step: they opted to present a **world premiere within the same format**. For that purpose, Errázuriz was commissioned to write a work inspired by the legacy of **Gabriela Mistral**, resulting in **“Raíces y alas” (Roots and Wings)**, an enormous composition cast in **five parts**, for a large orchestral and choral mass with **adult and children’s voices**, a **mezzo-soprano soloist (Javiera Barrios)** and a **narrator (Paulina García)**. The overall direction was by **Alejandra Urrutia**. It is not easy to categorize the piece, as it has elements of both **symphony and cantata**, along with the somewhat disconcerting inclusion of a **very extended fourth section (10 minutes)** in which the narrator slowly walks down the central aisle declaiming a letter by Mistral.

Unrelated to her poetry, that document is a genuine and rather combative **manifesto advocating for the defense and recognition of children’s rights**, forcefully shaping the meaning of the other sung texts in the work. Thus, in **“Raíces y alas”** the pleas of children for justice are heard, revealing the lesser-known activist side of the celebrated poet.

Under **Urrutia’s notable conducting**, Errázuriz’s creation proved very solid in its treatment of adult and children’s voices together with the instrumental writing. Particularly excellent were the prominent **orchestral sections**, including **“Desolación,”** and the grand finale **“El verdadero gozo de la vida” (“The True Joy of Life”)**, enhanced by the addition of **sister choirs clapping their hands**. Hints of southern Chilean folklore gave the piece an attractive Chilean character, within music that is very well orchestrated.