THE NATIONAL AUDITORIUM WAS AT HIS FEET

Martha Cora Eliseht (Photos courtesy of the National Directorate of Permanent Ensembles)
At just 17 years old, the Argentine violinist Pilar Magalí Policano is not only an exceptional performer, but also one of the many young Argentine talents who are succeeding abroad. Currently based in Liechtenstein, she continues to refine and improve her skills to incorporate...

Martha Cora Eliseht

(Photos courtesy of the National Directorate of Stable Ensembles)

At just 17 years old, Argentine violinist Pilar Magalí Policano is not only an exceptional performer but also one of the many young Argentine talents

achieving success abroad. Currently based in Liechtenstein, she continues to refine her skills and continually improve, incorporating the great concertos composed for the violin into her repertoire. She returns to Argentina regularly to perform with the country's leading symphony orchestras. She appeared as a soloist last week with the San Juan Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Wolfgang Wengeroth, and last Friday, October 31st, at the National Auditorium of the Domingo F. Sarmiento Palace, she performed with the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Emmanuel Siffert.

The program consisted of the following works:

- *Kikimora, Op.63*- Anatoly LIADOV (1855-1914)
- *Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35* - Pyotr I, Tchaikovsky (1840-1893)
- *Ballet Scenes, Op.* 52 - Alexander Glazunov (1865-1936)

After the traditional instrument tuning by *concertmaster* Daniel Robuschi, Emmanuel Siffert took his place on the podium to begin the concert with the first work. Composed in 1910, *Kikimora* is a symphonic poem based on a legend from Slavic mythology. *Kikimoras* are female spirits that inhabit houses, hiding behind walls, and are protective when the house is in order; otherwise, they make noises, break dishes, and are very difficult to get rid of. They appear in nightmares as beautiful women who torment men with their desires (coincidentally, in English, the term *nightmare* derives from this root, as does *cauchemar* in French). The work begins in a minor key in the lower instruments until the introduction of a typically Russian melody played by the English horn, which alternates with a second theme played by the strings in *tremolo*, flute, and bass clarinet. The alternation of these two themes creates the atmosphere of suspense and mystery described earlier, culminating in an *Allegro giocoso* reminiscent of Paul Dukas's *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* . In this instance, thanks to the conductor's great sensitivity, a remarkably precise and expressive version was achieved, rich in nuances, soundscapes, and instrumental entrances, which was met with enthusiastic applause.

The celebrated *Violin Concerto in D major* was the only one Tchaikovsky composed for that instrument, in 1878 during his stay in Clarens, Switzerland, where he was working on a piano sonata after suffering a depression following

his failed marriage to Antonina Miliukova. He lacked sufficient inspiration until he received a visit from one of his composition students, the violinist Iosif Kotec, who suggested they play a transcription for violin and piano of Édouard Lalo's (1823-1892) *Symphonie Espagnole* . Tchaikovsky was so captivated by the work that he decided to abandon his sonata and began composing his violin concerto under Kotec's guidance. It was finished in just one month, and he wanted Kotec himself to premiere it, but Kotec didn't feel confident enough to do so. For this reason, it was offered to the talented Leopold Auer, but he rejected it, considering it *"untouchable* ," which is why another soloist had to be found. The choice finally fell on Adolf Brodsky, who premiered it in 1881 in Vienna. However, the critics were unfavorable due to a lack of rehearsal and its extreme complexity. It wasn't until 1888 that the work gained popularity thanks to Karel Halíř's memorable performance.

When Pilar Policano introduced herself alongside Emmanuel Siffert before taking their places on stage, the audience erupted in cheers and applause. Following the orchestra's majestic introduction to the opening *Allegro moderato* , Pilar Policano surprised everyone not only by performing it from memory, but also by her remarkable professional growth. She delivered a sublime and exquisite rendition of this famous concerto thanks to her impeccable phrasing, with excellent musicality in the *cadences* and *cascading* passages in the technically demanding high notes of the opening movement. The orchestra's accompaniment and dialogue were superb, while the soloist stood out for delivering a distinctly Romantic sound in the second movement *(Canzonetta: Andante)*, very precise and full of subtle nuances, before transitioning abruptly *(* without interruption, suddenly) to the impetuous final *Allegro vivacsimo* . Here, Tchaikovsky inserts a *drushba* as the main theme, leading into the introduction of the second theme *(Poco meno mosso)*, which then grows in intensity as the soloist accelerates the tempo *(Poco a poco stringendo)* to the monumental final coda, where there was a more than perfect dialogue between soloist and orchestra. A perfect correspondence between conductor and soloist was evident throughout, even in the exchange of a gesture or a glance. It should be remembered that Siffert is a violinist and, therefore, was perfectly attuned to the work, in addition to possessing a perfect knowledge of it. A packed National Auditorium gave her a standing ovation at the end of her performance. After such sustained applause, the violinist thanked not only the conductor and the musicians, but also offered an *encore*

with the orchestra: a magnificent and beautiful version of Astor Piazzolla's *Oblivion* , where Pilar Policano proved herself a brilliant tango interpreter. The audience rose to their feet once more, prompting Policano to offer an *encore* for solo violin: *Applemania*, by the Austrian composer Alexei Ibudesman—a new sound for the local audience—where the soloist shone once again, showcasing her mastery and interpretive skills. Another standing ovation crowned an unforgettable evening.

Scenes from Ballet, Op. 52 by Glazunov is a seven-movement orchestral *suite* composed in 1894 that—despite its title—was not intended as a choreographic work. It features an orchestral section including strings, harp, piano, celesta, three woodwinds, four horns, two trumpets, three trombones, tuba, and abundant percussion—including xylophone, bass drum, *glockenspiel* , and others. It opens with a brilliant *fanfare* by the brass, followed by a melody with certain Italianate influences, while the second movement opens with a *glissandi* for *piccolo*, harp, xylophone, and triangle that achieves a sound similar to that of a music box, followed by the strings. The third is a *mazurka* , and the fourth, a *fugue* for the horns, woodwinds, and strings in ascending and descending scales, masterfully developed and culminating in a gentle ending. The fifth scene is a beautiful *adagio* that begins with a lyrical and romantic theme played by the harp and later developed by the orchestra, while the sixth is characterized by a serenade played by the *pizzicato strings*, featuring two exquisite solos by the oboe and English horn, respectively. The final scene is a *waltz* with a lovely melodic line, showcasing the strings, harp, and woodwinds with great soaring. Finally, the work closes with the opening theme, brilliantly developed in a *polonaise/mazurka* rhythm by the entire orchestra, culminating in the opening *fanfare* played brilliantly by the brass in the *coda* and final capitulation. The performance was masterful, with Emmanuel Siffert demonstrating absolute dedication, body and soul, in his interpretation and the orchestra's inner melody. The orchestra was very well tuned and cohesive, and all the soloists in the principal instrumental groups shone brightly. A rarely performed work, but with an exquisite melodic line to bring a magical night at the National Auditorium to a close.