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***Bolivia Clásica, Bolivia pending*** – Cergio Prudencio

A few years ago the Bolivian pianist Ana-Maria Vera decided to launch a music education programme in the country, responding to the urgent call of her brother Armando. The tangible result of this initiative is the Bolivia Clásica Orchestra, which in past weeks presented a surprising series of concerts.

Armando Vera is a violinist disenchanted with the mediocre habits of teaching institutions and the lack of rigour in orchestral practices in Bolivia. Nonetheless, he never renounced excellence as an objective. Bolivia Clasica is the evidence of this conviction put into practice, and at the same time a strong appeal to institutions and both official and private music education programmes.

The project is implemented with emphasis on regular instrumental courses encharged to a team of teachers under the guidance of professor Vera. Periodically, thanks to international negotiations by Ana-Maria, top level teachers arrive to offer intensive workshops, forming and strengthening technique and broadening repertoire. And so, like drops of water working away the stone, a solid ensemble of youngsters has been forged who take making classical music seriously without losing any of their freshness and enthusiasm.

Among the feats reached is a homogeneity within the group: all play at a comparable level and with concurrent and solid sonority. Also, most notably, is the intonation, this Aristotelian quality of European music which conditions its practice. No less remarkable is the musicality of the orchestra: that is, the comprehension of the intrinsic codes of musical language, and its expressive transmission to the listener. And as if this were not enough, there is their overflowing interpretive force, which turns the auditive rite into a true celebration.

Additionally, Bolivia Clásica displays other merits no less significant: I refer to the dignity with which they carry out their task. Far from the fallacious discourse of ‘social redemption’ (in which dishonest motives frequently hide), Bolivia Clásica demonstrates that our children and young people are capable of good results in their own right (sonority, intonation, musicality, strength, etc.) transcending by far their supposed ‘disadvantaged’ condition. They simply produce art because they are competent to do so, and do it well. Full stop.

The open question now is how to avoid that these valuable human resources that have been cultivated do not end up emigrating for ever and serving other countries. We need well trained musicians who are committed to the development of their country: we cannot afford the luxury of exporting the little of this material that we produce. And this is where the State and private enterprise must assist in conscience and responsibility, because an investment like Bolivia Clásica makes no sense if not channeled appropriately towards the strengthening of our own infrastructure.

I understand that Bolivia Clasica has attracted resources from various different sources to carry forward their mission, with the support of a foundation by the same name. I understand also (from my own experience) that these contributions don’t resolve the sustainability in the long term. This situation, common to a few music projects in Bolivia, must lead us to develop forms of mixed financing, appropriately structured, where State, private enterprise and international organisms contribute equally to the objective of preserving our production and reinvesting in its growth. But of course, leadership must bring this to the State through cultural policies in accordance with the possibilities of our country and through a propitiatory legislation which society imperatively demands.