



# Williams Conducts Wagner

THE FIRST ARGENTINE-BORN CONDUCTOR to venture an all-Wagner orchestral program at Buenos Aires was then 32-year-old Alberto Williams (1862–1952) at the Teatro de la Ópera October 22, 1894. A decade earlier, while studying at Paris on an Argentine government grant, he had written a letter published in the Buenos Aires daily *El Diario* praising Wagner without stint. As republished in Jorge O. Pickenhayn's *Alberto Williams* (Buenos Aires: SEC, MCE, Ediciones Culturales Argentinas, 1979), page 31, Williams's Englished comments included these:

[Wagner] lets loose a flood of dissonances, all of which can be logically explained, and a torrent of new combinations, all of which can be rationalized. These novelties are perhaps the most eloquent manifestations of his high flying imagination and portents of his genius.

Williams's all-Wagner program given on Liszt's birthday, 1894, began with the now-inevitable *Tannhäuser* overture and march, continued with the *Tristan* prelude, various excerpts from *Die Meistersinger*, the *Siegfried* idyll, the introduction to Act III of *Lohengrin*, and concluded with the Ride of the Valkyries. Reviewing Williams's concert of May 1, 1895, at which he conducted the overture to *Der fliegende Holländer* and excerpts from *Die Walküre*, the pseudonymous *La Prensa* critic underlined Williams's success in breaking down the Buenos Aires public's resistance to Wagner's music, "which a short while ago terrorized most of our listeners but now completely gratifies them."