

THE ORIGINAL SPANISH STUDENTS.

THE IVORY SPOON,

THE EMBLEM THAT THE SPANISH STUDENTS WEAR.

SOMETHING ABOUT THE LATEST MUSICAL NOVELTY.

FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE TROUPE IN AMERICA.

From the Boston Herald, June 30, 1880.

The company of Spanish Students, concerning whom so much has been written and said, and whom Manager Abbey engaged to appear with his "Humpty Dumpty," combination, and have been anxiously waiting for the past fortnight, arrived from New York over the Old Colony route yesterday morning. They reached New York from London, Thursday afternoon, after a long and exceedingly rough voyage of twenty-two days, including four days in which they were fog-bound in the Thames. Their names are as follows: Saivino Lapuent, Jose Rodriguez, Jose Garcia, Jose Fernandez, Melquized Hernandez, Antonia Carmona, Manuel Gonzales, Miguel Lopez, Eugenio Anton, and Laureno Hernandez. The students come from families who move in both the middle and upper classes of Spanish society, and all are graduates of some college at Madrid. About seven years ago they formed a musical organization, on the same plan in their own land, and that the Harvard Glee Club adopted in this country, and gave a number of concerts in Madrid that not only furnished them with recreation and amusement, but proved popular with the people. Their families were well-to-do in the world, and it was hardly necessary for them to adopt the mode of living which they have followed for seven years; but they determined to perfect the organization and travel through Spain, their only recompense, whereby to pay their expenses, being such amounts as they could collect from the crowds that gathered to hear them. This mode of life they followed until a little over two years ago, when they planned a visit to the Paris Exposition. They walked the entire distance from Madrid to Paris, and in each town or city, as they passed through, delighted the natives with specimens of their wonderful skill. After a brief visit to the exposition, it was their intention to return at once to Spain; but they took Paris by storm. Their playing excited unbounded enthusiasm. They were patronized by the nobility, received flattering offers of engagement on every hand, and they determined to remain on the concert stage. The result is that they have not, from that day to this, made their return trip to their native land. The knowledge of their skill as musicians spread far and near, and, since their appearance in Paris, they have played in Italy, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, France, Russia, Hungary, Belgium, Prussia, Austria and England, and in all these countries they met with the greatest success, immense audiences assembling to hear them. Their last engagements, prior to leaving for this country were in London.

WHAT THEY PLAY AND HOW THEY LIVE.

Their instruments consist of guitars and mandolins, all of which have double the number of strings of ordinary instruments, the guitars having fourteen and sixteen strings, and the mandolins twelve. The oldest of the troupe is 37 years of age, and the youngest 20. When off the stage they wear ordinary English clothing, but when publicly engaged in their profession, their costume consists of a black velvet blouse, a cloak of the same material thrown over the right shoulder, velvet knee-breeches, black silk stockings, shoes with large silver buckles, regular student hats of black felt, fastened to which are ivory spoons, the emblem of the Spanish students. For ages it has been the custom for Spanish collegians to wear a spoon on the hat, as an indication that they belonged to the educated classes, and this troupe have brought that custom to this country. They are all single men and in deportment are perfect gentlemen, inclined to be rather quiet and dignified in the presence of strangers, yet having among themselves, that degree of joviality and fun-loving disposition usually found among fellow-students. They endeavor to follow as closely as possible the Spanish mode of living, but exhibit a persistent and universal desire to know the manners and customs of the countries through which they pass. Their principal object in coming to America is not so much to obtain money—for probably they could make as much in Europe as in the United States—but it is to satisfy an earnest desire to see our institutions and learn our ways and customs. They do not ask many questions, but prefer to see and learn for themselves. Their repertoire is extensive and varied, and comprises, besides a vast number of Spanish airs, waltzes and national dances, the overtures and selections from many Spanish, Italian and French operas. Nearly every member of the troupe is a composer, and it has been their custom, in each of the countries they have visited, to compose and play in public a piece of music dedicated to that nation.

THEIR FIRST PERFORMANCE

was given, last evening, before a crowded house, the theatre being packed from orchestra-rail to the back row of the gallery, hundreds of people coming in to take their chances after the sign "standing room only" was placed in the lobby at 8 o'clock. The curtain rising after the second act of "Humpty Dumpty," disclosed the troupe seated in three rows, pyramidal fashion, upon the stage, and in their quaint, dark costumes, enlivened by a knot of ribbons of the national colors at the shoulder, they presented a very picturesque group. They had a cordial welcome, after duly acknowledging which they at once began their performance. It is safe to say that nothing like it has ever been heard here. All moved as if actuated by the same impulse, and the time was perfect. The music is most difficult to describe. It is reminiscent of the harp, yet differs greatly in many respects from that produced by that now little-used instrument. In forte passages, the volume of tone is far greater than one would naturally expect, and it is free from the disagreeable vibratory "twang" hitherto regarded as inseparable from a guitar played loudly. In the lighter

passages the effects are exquisite; to coin a phrase, they are like musical lace, delicate, yet firm, in which every fine thread of melody combines with its fellows in the most beautiful of designs. All four of the selections played last night were given with a marvelous degree of expression, the delicacy of shading being really wonderful, considering the number of the performers and the intractable nature of the instruments; and it is no exaggeration to say that orchestral effects were produced with a fidelity scarcely conceivable. This was best illustrated by the performance of the overture to "Martha," which was the second number on the programme, and which, with the exception of a Spanish waltz, received the heartiest applause of the evening. The great audience was hushed to perfect stillness during each piece, and, at its close, rewarded the students in the most enthusiastic manner.

From the New York Herald.

Abbey's Spanish students first met a New York audience, at Booth's Theatre, last night. These dinky young musicians had been often alluded to by us prior to their appearance in America. Their first appearance in this country was made in Boston, several weeks ago, and upon that occasion they repeated the triumphs already achieved at home. The style of work performed by them is exceedingly unique and striking. They play upon mandolins and guitars, and the music thus produced is wholly indescribable. Their training has been marvelous, and every vibration of the strings is in such perfect accord that one finds it difficult to believe more than one instrument is touched. The most delicate shading is accomplished with a dexterity that is simply wonderful, and there is among the students a magnetic sympathy which finds complete expression, more especially in the weird melodies of their native land. There is an earnestness about their work and a complete absorption of what they are accomplishing which commends them at once to all musicians. It is an intensity of passion which is not found among instrumentalists of colder climes. So that, aside from the merely mechanical merit of their performances, they present a novelty in conception. They are certain of long popularity wherever they may appear, and their engagement by these managers was a brilliant business stroke.

From the Brooklyn Eagle.

The great feature of the entertainment, however, is, unquestionably, the concert given by the Spanish Students. The instruments are mandolins and guitars. The combinations of sound produced by these instruments could not be imagined until they were heard. The movement of the Spanish airs is most intoxicating, the music is weird and strange in its general character and, at times, irresistibly recalls "Carmen." But what is more astonishing than anything is the perfect promptitude and precision with which these instruments are stricken. Thomas' orchestra, at its best, cannot excel the Spanish Students in accuracy of tone, and the effect of the strings, as handled by them, is something indescribable. The first selection brought down the house, and it seems as though the audience would not consent to let them go, as indeed it did not, until, having played some of our own and the Russian national anthem, it consented to illustrate the "Babies on our Block." The success of the students was instantaneous and overwhelming.

From the New York Times.

Perhaps the most meritorious and charming feature of all was when the Spanish students came upon the scene in their darkly picturesque attire, performing melodies in which the true soul of music was perceptible. It was this that raised the performance out of the level of mere fun to gaudy splendor.

From the Philadelphia Times.

We have reserved a space for special mention of the Spanish Students, whose musical entertainment is so meritorious as to make it the great feature of the exhibition. These artists have become so well known through the furor created by their long engagement in New York, following an extended European Tour, that their appearance last evening was eagerly and curiously awaited. Curiosity gave place to unqualified admiration when they touched the strings of the mandolin and guitar, and the weird Spanish music fell upon the ear. Late as it was, the audience was spellbound, and when the first number was concluded, another and another was demanded with enthusiasm. In responding to re-calls, the Students played a potpourri of national airs, and finally delighted parquette and galleries with an apotheosis of "The Babies on our Block." It is impossible to give any idea of the extended and eulogistic press notices the Spanish Students have everywhere received in this country. It is the same enthusiastic story every where.

Programmas.
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