

Antonio Aguilar, Mexican Star, Brings Garden a Tuneful Rodeo

By McCANDLISH PHILLIPS

The star of the show that opened at Madison Square Garden last night is Antonio Aguilar.

"Who is Antonio Aguilar?" It is a question only a gringo could ask. One gringo turned to a Spanish-speaking spectator before the overture and asked it this way: "This Aguilar—is he a kind of Gene Autry?"

Reproach swam into the gentleman's eyes and for a moment he searched for words adequate to clear up that terrible misimpression. "He is a combination of Frank Sinatra and John Wayne together. In one," he said.

There was hyperbole in this, but not a great deal. Mr. Aguilar is, perhaps more accurately, five parts Wayne with two parts Sinatra.

He is a cowboy balladeer of ample girth who has appeared, so far, in 103 Mexican and Spanish motion pictures. He enjoys a following among the city's Spanish-speaking population, several thousands of whom turned out last night to watch him in a show of uncertain title.

The Garden is billing it as the National Mexican Festival and Rodeo; the cover of the program calls it the National Mexican Festival Rodeo and International Horse Show, or Festival Charro y Jarpeo de Lujo.

Call it what you will, it is a musical horse show with rodeo sequences thrown in to change the pace. There are some moments of superior horsemanship and fine showmanship in it. The whole presentation is done to the accompaniment of an eight-piece mariachi band, which is a little like putting a chamber music orchestra in the Grand Canyon.

It is bilingual virtually throughout, the narration is first in Spanish, followed by English with a Spanish accent.

After singing some Spanish songs on horseback, Mr. Aguilar did "Home on the Range" and "America the Beautiful" in English.

The program opens with the massed flags of the Americas streaming into the arena, borne by costumed riders on prancing horses. The flag of Puerto Rico drew far the strongest burst of applause.

The star came on at 8:39, and after walking his horse backward around the arena more than once, while singing, he took his own applause and then asked a round for his mount, which was lying on its side, heaving with a kind of feigned exhaustion.

Mr. Aguilar dismissed the creature and swung up onto a silvery gray stallion that practically did a tap dance while the star crooned on.

The amalgam hit its artistic peak before intermission as Mr. Aguilar demonstrated a series of steps, trotting, the passage (a hesitation step), marching in place, and a motion in which the horse raises its forefeet high in the air and springs off its hind legs in a forward leap.

ROMANIAN CHORALE MAKES DEBUT HERE

A choral ensemble of uncommon excellence made its New York debut at Philharmonic Hall last night in the first concert of the 1969-70 Hurok International Series A. The group was the Romanian Choral Ensemble from Bucharest, directed by Marin Constantin.

There were 32 singers in the group, but if ever a chorus sang as one, this was it. The performances, especially of "Missa Brevis" by Palestrina and shorter items by Lasso, Victoria, Certon and Morley, could scarcely have been bettered in perfection of detail. The soprano tone had the purity and coolness of a boy choir sound, the melodic inter-

vals sung by all the voices were so finely tuned that the resultant choral intonation seemed flawless, and the clarity of the diction in all languages was notable.

Old Byzantine music and a contemporary setting of folk verses entitled "Ritual for Rain" by Miriam Marbé showed how versatile the chorus could be. In the Marbé work, some of the singers went out into the auditorium, and all hands were involved in a no-holds-barred amalgam of singing, sprechstimme, choral-speech, yells, wails and mechanical noise-making. The reserved manner of the old music was thrown off and replaced with gusto.

The energy continued in a final section of folklike music, including Christmas carols and "Go Down Moses."

ALLEN HUGHES.

Entertainment Events

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| <p>Theater</p> <p>OPENING TONIGHT</p> <p>A WHISTLE IN THE DARK, a play by Thomas Murnphy, starred by Arvin Brown, at the Mercury Theater, 131 East 13th Street, 7:15.</p> <p>Films</p> <p>TODAY</p> <p>BOB & CAROL & TED & ALICE, a comedy starring Natalie Wood, Ryan O'Neal, Elliott Gould and Robert Culp, and directed by Paul Mazursky, released by Columbia Pictures, at Cinema 1, Third Avenue and 60th Street.</p> <p>THE ITALIAN JOB, a comedy starring Michael Caine and directed by Peter Collinson, released by Paramount Pictures, at neighborhood theaters.</p> <p>ACE HIGH, a Western starring Eli Wallach and directed by Giuseppe Colizzi, released by Paramount Pictures, at neighborhood theaters.</p> <p>THE MONITORS, a political satire directed by Jack Shea and released by Commonwealth United Entertainment, at neighborhood theaters.</p> <p>Opera</p> <p>TONIGHT</p> <p>NEW YORK CITY OPERA, Borodin's "Prince Igor," State Theater, 8:15.</p> | <p>Concerts</p> <p>TODAY</p> <p>MARGARET TOPEL, mezzo-soprano, and 20 soloists in Giuseppe Verdi's "Requiem," at the Metropolitan Opera House, 12th St. at 30th St., 8:00.</p> <p>ORCHESTRA, Julius Grossman conducting, at the Metropolitan Opera House, 12th St. at 30th St., 8:00.</p> <p>CONTEMPORARY WIND QUINTET, Hudson Park Branch Library, 10 Seventh Avenue, South.</p> <p>RUGIERO RICCI, violin, Philharmonic Hall, 8:30.</p> <p>PAUL SPERRY, tenor, Alice Tully Hall, 8:30.</p> <p>SANTA CECILIA ORCHESTRA OF ROME, Fernando Previtali conducting, Carnegie Hall, 8:30.</p> <p>TADUSZ KERNER, piano, New York Cultural Center, 2 Columbus Circle, 8:30.</p> <p>Dance</p> <p>TONIGHT</p> <p>WILLIAM DUNAS, "Alax," the Cubiculo Theater, 414 West 51st Street, 8:30.</p> <p>CITY CENTER OFFFEEY BALLET, "Movs" (Wright, Verso), "The Lesson" (Magno, Fuente, Hrubert), "Asarte" (Singleton, Burke), 131 West 55th Street, 8:30.</p> <p>Cabaret</p> <p>TONIGHT</p> <p>ASTI'S, 13 East 12th Street, James Cosenza, tenor.</p> |
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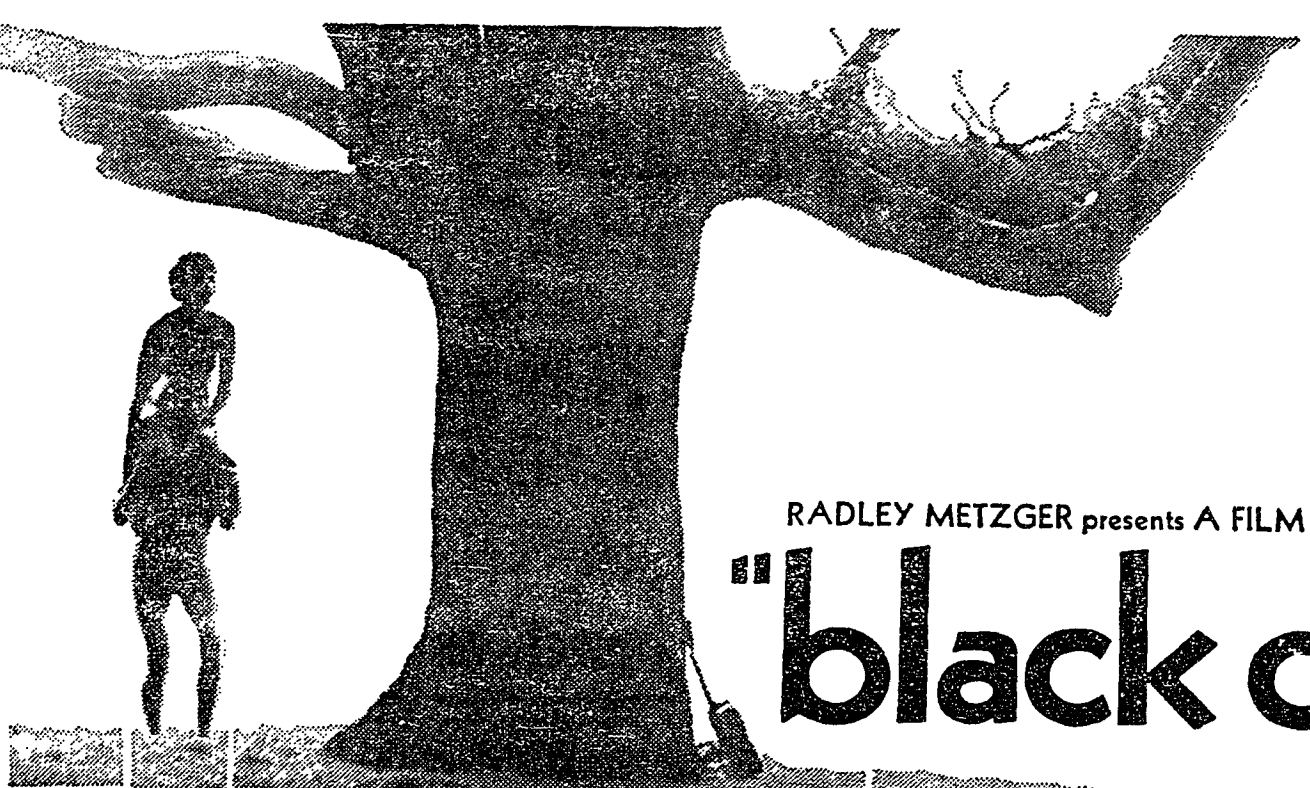
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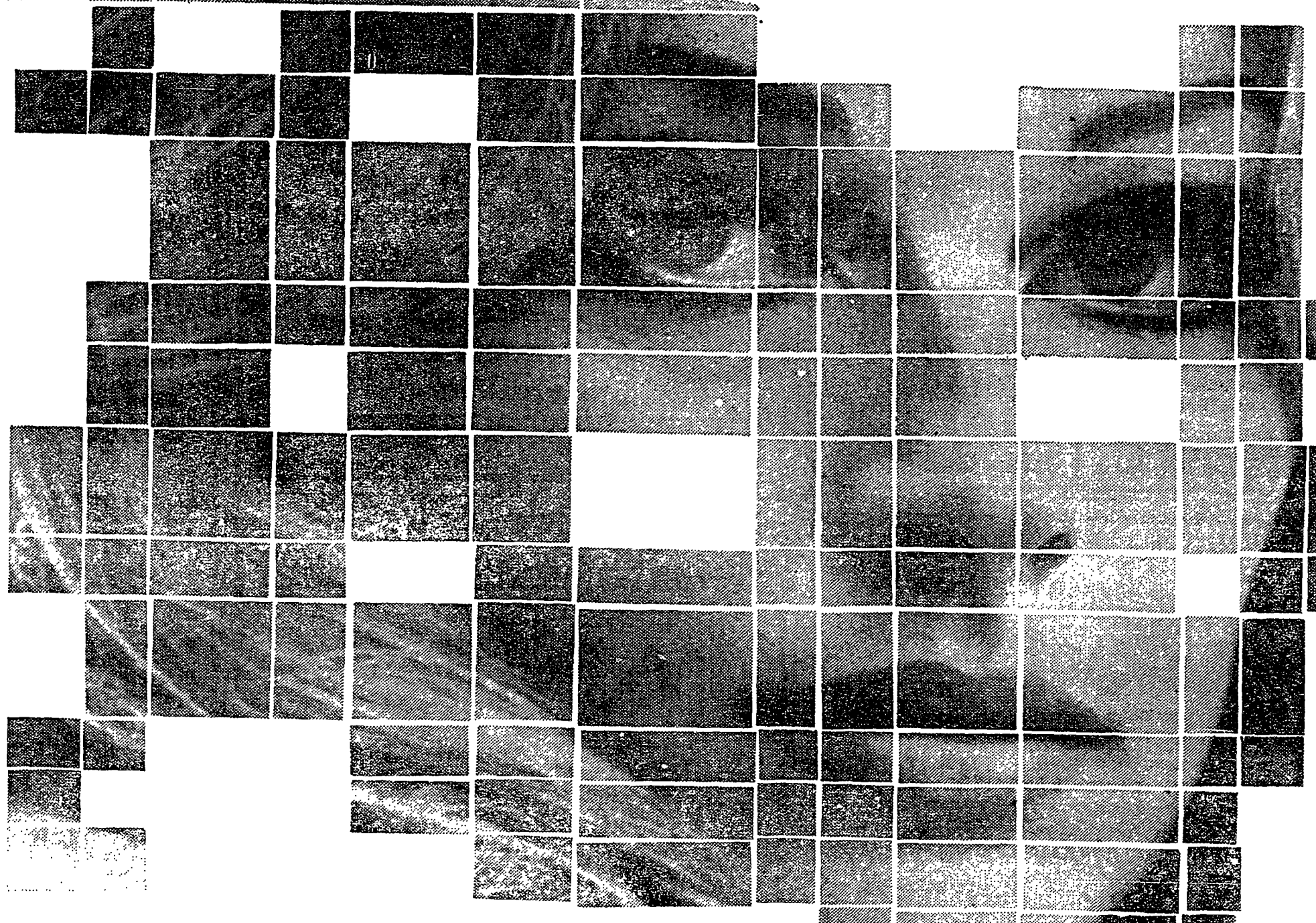
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 12:30, 2:55, 5:20, 7:45, 10:00
 PARIS | (Phone) 58 St. W. of 58th Ave.

BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID
 11:30, 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30, 11:30
 SUTTON | 57th St. at 3rd Ave.

ALICE'S RESTAURANT
 12:45, 2:25, 4:35, 6:35, 8:30, 10:30
 MURRAY HILL | 3rd Ave. at 34th St.

MORE
 12:00, 2:00, 4:00, 6:00, 8:00, 10:00
 PLAZA | 58th St. E. of Madison

EASY RIDER
 11:00, 12:35, 2:15, 3:55, 5:35, 7:20, 9:00, 10:45
 BEEKMAN | 65th St. at 2nd Ave.

PUTNEY SWOPE
 12:00, 1:40, 3:15, 4:55, 6:35, 8:20, 10:00, 11:30
 CINEMA II | 3rd Ave. at 60th St.

SHE AND HE
 2:20, 4:10, 6:10, 8:05, 10:00
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THE ITALIAN JOB
 12:30, 4:15, 8:05
 AND
ACE HIGH
 2:10, 6:00, 9:50
 8th ST. PLAYHOUSE | W. at 5th Ave.

A MAN AND A WOMAN
 2:50, 6:25, 10:00
 AND
BELLE DE JOUR
 1:15, 4:45, 8:20
 ART | 80 St. East of 5th Ave.

A MAN AND A WOMAN
 2:50, 6:25, 10:00
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