



Roberto Matta: Coigutum (1972)

INTRODUCTION

Chile has made a surprising contribution to the arts; from fine arts to political rock, classical music to hip-hop. The city's cultural offerings now rank alongside those of Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, and Mexico City. Santiago is reinventing itself, with arts, nightlife, and restaurant scenes that have never been better, making this thriving and sophisticated metropolis into the civic, cultural, and historical nucleus of the country.

MUSIC & DANCE

Music in Chile ranges from folklore, to popular and classical. **La Cueca** is the national dance, while the music of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) and Mapuche music from the south of the country are perhaps the more emblematic of the indigenous musical forms. Folk music exploded in Chile between 1950 and 1970, led by such groups as **Los Cuatro Huasos** and **Los Huasos Quincheros**. Perhaps the most famous composer of this period was **Violeta Parra**. In the mid-1960s, native musical forms were brought to the fore by the Parra family by way of a movement known as 'La Nueva Canción Chilena' ('The new Chilean Song'), which was linked with social and political activists and reformers such as **Victor Jara**, **Inti-Illimani**, and **Quilapayún**. Another notable band from this period is **Los Jaivas**, a majestic progressive rock band that fused psychedelic sounds with native South American instruments. The 1980s were marked by the confrontational **Los Prisioneros**, whose clever, politically-motivated songs (with a strong anti-Pinochet message) became the soundtrack for an entire generation. The 1990s saw **La Ley** and **Los Tres** gain international acclaim, while today's music scene is dominated by artists such as **Francisca Valenzuela**, **Chico Trujillo**, and **Anita Tijoux**, whose song '1973' was featured in an episode of the US series 'Breaking Bad'. Chile has also given the world an extraordinary classical pianist. **Claudio Arrau** (1903-1991) was known for his interpretations of a vast repertoire spanning from the baroque to 20th-century composers such as Beethoven, Schubert, and Chopin. He is widely considered one of the greatest pianists of the twentieth century.

LIVE MUSIC

The city's main venues for rock music are the modern **Movistar Arena** www.movistararena.cl for large shows, and the **Teatro Caupolican** www.teatrocaupolican.cl, which is a particular local favorite. More intimate shows take place at the excellent **Teatro Nescafé de las Artes** <http://teatro-nescafe-delasartes.cl/>, from such diverse genres as jazz, hard rock, flamenco, and electronica. Jazz lovers will enjoy the two latest hot spots; **La Casa en el Aire** www.lacasaenelaire.cl and **El Perseguidor** www.elperseguidor.cl. For classical music, ballet, and opera,

Santiago's wonderful Teatro Municipal www.municipal.cl is the most important venue in the capital. Declared a National Monument in 1974, and among those who have performed here are Mikhail Baryshnikov, the Bolshoi Ballet, Zubin Mehta, Plácido Domingo, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, and Luciano Pavarotti.

ART

Established in 1849 in the University of Chile, the Chilean Academy of Painting has helped foster fine painting and inspire young artists. Chile's most celebrated artist, **Roberto Matta**, a seminal figure in 20th century abstract expressionist and surrealist art. Born in Santiago, he studied architecture and interior design, graduating in 1935. That spring, he journeyed from Peru to Panama and completed surreal drawings inspired by many of the geographical features he witnessed. He first encountered Europe while serving in the Merchant Navy, and during his travels he was able to meet artists like Arshile Gorky, René Magritte, Salvador Dalí, André Breton, and Le Corbusier. **Carlos Sotomayor** (1911-1988) is considered one of the main exponents of cubism from South America. **Camilo Mori** (1896-1973) was the founder of the Group Montparnasse, while **Claudio Bravo** (1936-2011) was a hyperrealist who lived and worked in Morocco from 1972. With its rich history of influences, from early native Mapuche and colonial Spanish to the more dominant, present day influence of America, Chile's art scene is a mesh of forms, mixed to create a distinct Chilean style that is prevalent in the country's thriving contemporary art scene.

GALLERIES

The **Chilean National Museum of Fine Arts** (Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes or MNBA), is one of the major centers for Chilean art and for broader South American art. Established in 1880 (making it the oldest in South America), it was designed by the French-Chilean architect Emile Jecquier in a full-blown Beaux-arts style and is situated in the Parque Forestal of Santiago. The nearby **Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC)** www.mac.uchile.cl has been the articulating axis of contemporary visual arts for over 50 years. One of the museum's most important objectives is to lead the field of visual arts, particularly in two aspects: to maintain and strengthen its role as preserver of the national contemporary artistic memory, and to develop an annual agenda intended to maintain its positioning as the country's most important art center. Santiago's art scene has taken root in affluent neighborhoods like Vitacura, with contemporary galleries like **Galería Animal** www.galeriaanimal.com. The recently relocated gallery opened its doors with an exhibition displaying a collection of works by world-renowned artists such as Picasso, Miró, Alfredo Jaar, Gonzalo Cienfuegos and Roberto Matta. **Sala Cero** www.salacero.cl, is housed in a raw concrete building on the city's fashionable shopping street, specializing in art mainly from Chile. The first of this new breed of galleries, **Isabel Aninat Galería de Arte** www.galeriaisabelaninat.cl, is an art space that dates back to 1983, and is dedicated to promoting Chilean and international contemporary artists.

PERFORMING ARTS

Santiago is known for its theater, including large playhouses and small-scale, independent theater groups. If you are curious or speak Spanish, try the city's well-regarded, vibrant theater scene. Well-established theaters with high-quality, contemporary productions and comedies in an intimate setting include **Teatro Bellavista** and **Teatro Alcalá**, both in the bohemian Bellavista neighborhood. It is the **Teatro Municipal**, however that is the jewel in the crown of Santiago's art scene. The neoclassical theater, Santiago's main venue for classical music, opera and ballet, oozes charm with its sumptuous marble, red velvet and crystal interior. The National Chilean Ballet holds productions from April to December, including contemporary and classic productions. There are musical events and special productions throughout the year; the best way to find out what's on is to check the theater's website. Elsewhere, visiting orchestras, the Fundación Beethoven, and contemporary acts play at the **Teatro Oriente**.

MUSEUMS

The city offers a wide range of museums, among the highlights are **Palacio de la Real Audiencia/Museo Histórico Nacional** www.museohistoriconacional.cl, which holds a superb collection of more than 70,000 colonial-era pieces, from furniture to suits of armor to home appliances. This fascinating collection of artifacts is laid out in 16 display rooms within the lemon-colored, neoclassical Palacio de la Real, built in 1807 and the historic site of the first Chilean congressional session. Perhaps the best known is the splendid **Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino** www.precolombino.cl, which houses more than 1,500 objects related to indigenous life and culture throughout the Americas make the Pre-Columbian Museum one of the best in Santiago. Since it opened in 2010, the hugely controversial but fascinating **Memory and Human Rights Museum** www.museodelamemoria.cl has shone the light on the difficult and fractious history of the Pinochet years from 1973-1990. The museum's displays are mostly multimedia recreations of key moments, including film and radio, newspaper clippings and personal writings. The superb English-language audio guide is a must for non-Spanish speakers. In stark contrast is **La Chascona** www.fundacionneruda.org, the Santiago home of the late Nobel Prize-winning poet Pablo Neruda. Eccentric and absorbing, the house is stuffed with books, whimsical curios, trinkets, and toys he collected during his travels around the world. A fascinating insight into the life a fascinating man.