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Samuel Llano, *Whose Spain? Negotiating "Spanish Music" in Paris, 1908-1929*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. xxii + 270 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$55.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-19-985846-0.

Review by Leslie Sprout, Drew University.

In *Whose Spain?*, Samuel Llano draws on existing musicological scholarship in two domains. The first is the career and French reception of Manuel de Falla, a Spanish composer who lived and worked in Paris from 1907 to 1914; the second is music and French nationalism during the Third Republic in France. Llano's book explores in detail how these two seemingly disparate areas of scholarship intersect. More specifically, Llano is interested in how French music critics and composers in the early years of the twentieth century used "Spanish music" as a foil for their obsessive and contentious search for a stable definition of "French music." In so doing, Llano contends, both French and Spanish musicians and intellectuals created a collection of stereotypes--not all of them flattering--that continue to constrain our view of what, exactly, "Spanish music" is. To complicate matters further, such stereotypes were formed on the basis of the longstanding vogue among French composers to write "Spanish music." What was "Spanish" about Georges Bizet's *Carmen*, for instance, was still being debated in France at the time of its fiftieth anniversary in 1925.

Why "Spanish music" in France, and not Spain? Llano's answer is that, in the decades leading up to the First World War, both countries had experienced disastrous setbacks on the world stage that had consequences in cultural as well as political arenas. That the French felt inferior to Germany after the latter's military victory in the Franco-Prussian War caused the French to look to Spain as a useful Latin ally in their defense of France against the victorious Germans. But it also led the French to adopt a patronizing, even chauvinistic attitude toward the Spanish as their more backward and unsophisticated Latin cousins. The Spanish saw shocking evidence of their own national decay in the collapse of their colonial Empire in 1898, when defeat in the Spanish-American War forced Spain to cede control of Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States. Spanish musicians and intellectuals flocked to Paris in the decades before the First World War because the French capital offered financial and institutional support that Madrid lacked--their flight appeared to add cultural decline to the political decay. Moreover, Falla's decision to move to Paris and his reworking of the award-winning, but unperformed opera *La vida breve* as *La vie brève* (complete with a French translation for the Spanish libretto) allowed French critics to note the lessons the talented but unsophisticated Spaniard learned from first-hand exposure to French composers (such as Bizet, Chabrier, Lalo, Debussy, and Ravel) who had been writing their own "Spanish music" for decades.

In the first of the book's three parts, "Spanish Music as Propaganda," Llano concentrates almost exclusively on the French intellectuals he calls *hispanistes*, "a loose group of professionals and specialists in various areas of Hispanic culture and history, who played a key role in shaping and spreading French propaganda in Spain" (p. 5). In the two chapters of this section--one on "Spanish music" as Allied propaganda, and the other on "Spanish music" as Catholic propaganda--Llano is not interested in how the music criticism of figures such as the *hispaniste* Henri Collet relates to the musical works under critique. Instead he draws connections among the writings of music critics such as Collet, those of

prominent French figures such as Charles Maurras and Maurice Barrès, and the high-stakes game of shifting political allegiances among European nations before and during the First World War.

As a musicologist, I found that Llano's decision not to address the musical repertoire under discussion made it the least convincing of the book's three parts. It does not help that Llano uses the label of "propaganda" for a vast range of publications and activities. For Llano, propaganda encompasses the work of French music critics who, in reviewing a concert of works by Spanish composers for a French newspaper, argue for the superiority of the shared musical heritage of Spain and France (with France being the stronger partner) to that of Germany—as well as the work of French intellectuals traveling to Spain with the specific intention of persuading their Spanish counterparts to advocate for Spain to join forces with France in fighting Germany during the war. Llano argues that these two groups of French thinkers agreed that shared cultural ties between Latin countries ought to be reflected in shared political allegiances. But it would strengthen his argument if he clarified the different contexts in which these various opinions were disseminated.

The strongest case Llano makes for a connection between political context and the writings of French *hispanistes*, for example, comes at the end of chapter two, when Llano maps out the fate of regionalism in postwar Spain. Llano argues that later political decisions such as the dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera's ban on the use of regional languages such as Catalan in the 1920s, followed by Franco's later emphasis on Castilian mysticism, were inspired by the same centralist, Catholic, and anti-Italian perspectives that Collet espoused in his 1913 doctoral thesis, *Le Mysticisme musical espagnol au XVIe siècle*. Calling both political decisions and musicological literature "propaganda" conceals the fact that such ideas had powerful sway in both countries precisely because they manifested themselves in such radically different contexts.

The second part of the book consists of "two case studies of operas that prompted French critics, audiences, and composers to question how they conceptualized and imagined 'Spanish music' before the War" (p. xix). In books aimed primarily at musicologists, such case studies would contain technical language and examples in musical notation that enrich the argument for specialists but limit its accessibility to non-specialists. What makes Llano's book useful for a general readership is that his focus is not on the specific musical traits that might make up a definition of "Spanish music" in the early twentieth century, but on the process by which currently accepted definitions were formed: "Rather than as a fixed repertoire, let alone 'the work of Spanish composers,' therefore, we should try to think of 'Spanish music' as a dynamic and cultural process that precisely encompasses a set of individual and collective experiences, as well as the personal and institutional agents engaged in their practice—and, of course, the repertoire at stake" (p. 237). Indeed, Llano concentrates most of his attention on the people who debated "Spanish music" and the cultural and political contexts of those debates; the repertoire under discussion interests him chiefly for the subject matter it provided for those debates.

In these two chapters, Llano has chosen one well-known example of "Spanish music" in prewar Paris: the aforementioned *La vie brève*, by the Spanish composer Falla, and one much more obscure, *La jota*, by Raoul Laparra, a French composer of Spanish and Italian ancestry. Paradoxically, it is the French Laparra who challenges what Llano describes as the "timeworn gypsy and southern stereotypes that, quite contradictorily, most Spanish composers, including Falla, continued to entertain" (p. 134). The political nature of the plot of *La jota*, which is set during the First Carlist War in early nineteenth-century Spain, is of great interest to Llano, who explores parallels not only with contemporary Spain, but also with contemporary France, as both countries were struggling with the role of regional difference within a centralized nation-state. Because of *La jota's* relative obscurity, Llano concentrates on contemporary critics and his own interpretation of the plot.

Not so for the chapter on *La vie brève*, for which there already exists considerable secondary literature. Llano takes issue with that literature, contesting that musicologists such as James Parakilas

oversimplify Falla's relationship to "Spanish music" by situating him "at the end of a European--mostly French and Russian--tradition of 'exoticizing' Spain" (p.148). Llano objects to Parakilas's statement that "Falla makes an exemplary case of auto-exoticism." [1] He compares Parakilas's attitude to that of Edward Said: "Like Said, Parakilas conceives of representation as a form of domination, and he casts the represented 'Other' as a passive object of cultural imperialism" (pp. 148-149). Llano wishes to make room for Falla to "engage critically and selectively with the elements that make up 'foreign' representations of his culture" (p. 149). However, Llano acknowledges that Falla "only discovered his identity as a 'Spanish musician' once he was exposed to certain aesthetic and social experiences in Paris" (p. 151). Llano's detailed exploration of the increasingly "Spanish" nature of Falla's music in the period during which Falla lived in Paris, surrounded by French musical representations of Falla's own culture, is one of the highlights not only of this chapter, but of the book as a whole.

After devoting chapter five to French critics' re-examinations of "Spanish music" in Bizet's *Carmen* on the occasion of the opera's fiftieth anniversary in 1925, Llano continues his exploration of Falla's engagement with "Spanish music" in the sixth and last chapter of the book, which examines the 1928 homage to the composer at the Opéra Comique. The performances of three of Falla's "Spanish" works, namely, *La vie brève*, *El amor brujo*, and *El retablo de Maese Pedro*, presented French audiences and critics with three very different conceptions of "Spanish music." Critics struggled with how to reconcile an evolutionary conception of these three works, in which each one becomes more "Spanish" than its predecessor, with the fact that the earliest of the three conformed most closely to the stereotypes of Andalusian folklore and flamenco dance. By the time of *El retablo*, Falla had "assimilated the principles of French neoclassicism" (p. 197), preferring to depict the adventures of Cervantes's anti-hero Don Quixote to the flamenco dancing of exotic female gypsies. Llano wisely discusses not only the subject matter of these three works, but also their staging and production, for the charismatic presence of the dancer La Argentina in *El amor brujo* and the use of avant-garde puppetry in *El retablo* was as much a topic of discussion for French critics as the "Spanish" nature of Falla's score.

Although Llano's book is a thoughtful and compelling exploration of "Spanish music" as a concept in early twentieth-century France, editorial lapses make his argument unclear in several places. Just as Llano applies the label of "propaganda" equally to political actions and music criticism, his overuse of the word "hegemony" dilutes its effectiveness. Whereas it is clearly appropriate to state that "cultural homogenization [is a] strategy through which powers exert hegemony over the territories falling under their control" (p. 66), it is bizarre to read that Laparra "introduces chromatic modulations to remote areas that put in question the hegemony of the main tonality for each number" (p. 111). Missing words mean that some sentences need to be read twice: "those formulations of Spanish [music] that became hegemonic at the time were mainly forged in Paris by Spanish and French composers alike" (p. 135). False cognates escaped the copy-editing process: we read that "Victoria was an epitome of Palestrina" (p. 55), and not an epigone; that "conflictive parts," not parties, have been "involved in the act of representation and perception" (p. 149); and that, in the foreword by Michael Christoforidis, the book is "a long-awaited text that engages with the role of Paris in the construction of Hispanic musical identity in the early nineteenth century" (p. xii), not the early twentieth.

More broadly, the logic of why chapters are grouped together in pairs is inconsistent. The two chapters of part one, on propaganda, clearly belong together, but the decision to organize the four chapters of parts two and three as "case studies" never makes explicit for the reader how the political trends of part one relate to the musical ones in parts two and three. Lastly, the decision to organize parts two and three chronologically--prewar and postwar, respectively--separates the two chapters on Falla, even though chapter six devotes considerable attention to *La vie brève*, which was the focus of chapter four. It is unfortunate that the organization of the book obscures its most useful contribution: namely, its demonstration that, far from indicating stable categories, contentious debates about "French music" and "Spanish music" were part of wider cultural and political discourses in the early twentieth century.

NOTE

[1] James Parakilas, "How Spain Got a Soul," in, ed., *The Exotic in Western Music* (Boston, Mass.: Northeastern University Press, 1998), p. 189.

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