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# ESCAPING AESTHETIC CONTROL: FROM A HISTORIC *QUEJAS* TO A NEW *AMOR*\*

## HUYENDO DEL CONTROL ESTÉTICO: DESDE UNAS *QUEJAS* HISTÓRICAS HASTA UN NUEVO *AMOR*

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### ABSTRACT

Spanish pianists, educators, and commentators have relished passing down to following generations the performance practices of their own tradition, with the renowned institution L'escala de música de Barcelona claiming to offer specialist training in “Spanish music”. In this context, Granados’s *Goyescas* have inevitably become the almost-exclusive domain of native musicians, herding artists’ creativities towards sets of performance instructions familiar to them. That we should continue to consider this repertoire as a specifically separate entity, fully knowable only by local artists or those trained within their tradition, is worthy of attention, as it places anyone outside this educational background and performing tradition as ‘other’ in need of acceptance. While the study of Granados’s output has recently been enriched by analytical investigations, recording projects, and new critical editions, it is the still unfamiliar early-recorded legacy by the composer/pianist that will be the catalyst for insights in this article. His Welte-Mignon roll recordings show a dynamic and flexible artistry, unsurprising in pianists of his generation, together with a lack of highly

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•• Marco Fatichenti is an internationally acclaimed performer and recording artist. Described by Hilary Finch in *The Times* as ‘none other than Chopin incarnate’, he was hailed for offering ‘a different and refreshing slant on Brahms from a vantage point south of the Alps’ and praised for ‘marrying Romantic turbulence with Classical order’. His performances include broadcasts by the Spanish RTVE, Irish RTE, Polskie Radio, and several BBC appearances.

His academic research is focused on early twentieth-century performance practices, along with the aesthetic shifts taking place in Spain throughout the Francoist autocratic regime.

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articulated ornamental inflexions and the rhythmical rigour we might expect in performances of such repertoire. The question that I wish to raise is whether at some point during the twentieth century there was a cultural shift that shaped 'Spanish music' to sound as distinctively national as possible. Such a shift would have occurred, in the minds of players, in parallel to wider changes in performance styles taking place throughout the continent. Exploring these aesthetic ideals through the lens of the country's cultural history during the troubled years across the middle of the last century may hint at the subtle but meaningful ways that defined a canon flavoured with local folklore, both within and without the Spanish borders. The aim throughout is to challenge these orthodox approaches controlling the repertoire, resulting in my own renewed performance of *El amor y la muerte*; the hope will be that of empowering pianists to make different choices, diversifying performance options in the future.

**Key words:** cultural history; folklore; identity; *Goyescas*; Granados; piano performance; propaganda; spanishness; Spanish music history.

#### RESUMEN

Los pianistas, maestros y comentaristas españoles han transmitido con entusiasmo las prácticas interpretativas de su propia tradición. Así, una conocida institución barcelonesa declara ofrecer una enseñanza especializada en «música española». En este contexto, las *Goyescas* de Granados se han convertido, de forma casi inevitable, en dominio casi exclusivo de los músicos españoles, haciendo que la creatividad de los artistas se mueva en torno a un grupo de instrucciones interpretativas que les son familiares. El que sigamos considerando a este repertorio como una entidad específicamente separada, aprehensible solo por los artistas locales o por aquellos dentro de su tradición, llama la atención, ya que sitúa a cualquiera que esté fuera de esta base educativa y tradición interpretativa como el «otro» necesitado de aceptación. Mientras que el estudio de la producción de Granados se ha visto enriquecido recientemente por varias publicaciones analíticas, proyectos de grabación y ediciones críticas, el aún desconocido temprano legado grabado del compositor/pianista será el centro de este artículo. Sus grabaciones en rollos Welte-Mignon muestran un arte dinámico y flexible, común en los pianistas de su generación, junto con una falta de inflexiones ornamentales muy marcadas y del rigor rítmico que podríamos esperar en las grabaciones de este repertorio. La pregunta que quiero plantear es si en algún momento del siglo xx hubo algún giro cultural que hizo que la «música española» sonara lo más distintivamente nacional posible. Tal giro habría ocurrido, para los instrumentistas, de forma paralela a otros cambios más amplios que estaban teniendo lugar en el continente. Explorar estos ideales estéticos a través del filtro de la historia cultural del país durante los turbulentos años de mediados del siglo pasado puede indicar los modos, sutiles pero significativos, que definieron un canon favorecido por el folklore local, tanto dentro como fuera de las fronteras españolas. El objetivo de este trabajo es desafiar a los enfoques ortodoxos que controlan el repertorio. El resultado es mi interpretación renovada de *El amor y la muerte*, esperando que dé alas a otros pianistas para que tomen decisiones diferentes y elijan opciones interpretativas diversas en el futuro.

**Palabras clave:** historia cultural; folklore; identidad; *Goyescas*; Granados; interpretación pianística; propaganda; españolismo; historia de la música española.

## I. PROBLEMATISING GRANADOS'S SOUNDED LEGACY

I wrote [*Goyescas*] thinking of Spain, its soul, so different to that of other countries, filtering in those notes that movement and life which we can see in the work of the immortal Goya. The *majos* of that time! The loves of the painter! The fights, the passion, the life of the eighteenth-century!<sup>1</sup>

In recent years there has been an encouraging proliferation of research based on early-recorded sources, aiming to inform afresh our performances<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, pressures to reinvent business models and rekindle audience engagement are issues confronting promoters and artists directly, becoming even more pressing during the COVID-19 pandemic. How we decide to offer our performances to audiences, live or otherwise, and which directions our aesthetics will follow are some of the questions that are, or should be, at the forefront of our minds and solved in the practice room. There could hardly be a better time, then, to re-engage with the legacies of performers of legendary status in their early years of activity, or of composers sitting at the piano adopting revolutionary new technologies, since their approaches often lead us to question our aesthetic norms and beliefs. How we go about this, though, is up to us, and so is what we might be able to learn through our investigations, bearing in mind it has the potential to unsettle the gatekeepers of “proper” performance styles: on the one hand, those warning us against a playing style common in the early twentieth century and, on the other, those who would find it hard to relinquish a canon of performance built through the course of the century. The former scorn the return of pianistic techniques and expressive means that can be heard in Enrique Granados’s set of historical recordings. Granados’s playing has been described lucidly by Luca Chiantore as having a “transparent and elegant sonority” that was the result of “a free attack with little depth; octaves are most agile, evidently performed with an extremely elastic wrist; double notes, always light, seem to be conceived as an ornament at the service of a measured and elegant utterance.

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<sup>1</sup> “El 25 de abril de 1912 Granados declaró a un diario madrileño: ‘he escrito eso [*Goyescas*] pensando en España, en su alma, tan distinta de la de los demás países, infiltrando en sus notas aquel movimiento y vida que se ven en las obras del inmortal Goya. ¡Los majos de entonces! ¡Los amores del pintor! ¡Las luchas, la pasión, la vida del siglo XVIII! Estoy trabajando en la composición de otra segunda [parte] y que constará de tres fragmentos: *La calesa*, *El amor y la muerte*, y *Epílogo*’. Josep Maria Rebés Molina, *Granados: crónica y desenlace* (Granada: Libargo, 2020), 144. In this newspaper fragment, Granados also says that he is working on three new pieces for a second book of *Goyescas*; beyond the finally published two pieces, *El amor y la muerte* and *Epílogo*, we learn of a projected opening piece titled *La calesa*, for which only five sketched bars remain documented.

<sup>2</sup> Amongst some of the more influential and current: Neal Peres da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); David Milsom, *Romantic Violin Performing Practices: A Handbook* (Rochester: Boydell Press, 2020); and the work of Inja Stanović or Anna Scott.

The comparison with Chopin becomes inevitable<sup>3</sup>. These characteristics, together with widespread rolling of chords, desynchronisation of the hands, and temporal liberties, make his playing a prime example of an “old” approach to performance, which by the middle of the twentieth century came to be seen as “self-indulgent, pathetically naïve”<sup>4</sup>. Chiantore goes further, highlighting the improvisatory aspect embedded in Granados’s scores, which is crucially also transferred to his performances. With this in mind, we could reconsider mirroring such compositional style in performances that can become ‘unscripted’ and more creative, enabling us to aim towards emancipation from formal and analytical strictures without necessarily falling for an imitation of the historical pianist. The latter issue I mentioned, that of a canon of performance built over the past century, is less clearly defined, as it involves taking into consideration historical events specific to Spain and their cultural consequences, shaping a new national aesthetic. Both shifts took place around the same time, throughout Western Art performing traditions or specifically in Spain, and both rewarded precise score readings that avoided all those unnotated freedoms we associate with the ‘golden age’ of performance, or the so-called Romantic style of piano playing<sup>5</sup>. The resulting performances were thus characterised by the convergence of an objective modern style of playing with political and cultural nationalisms that can be heard in especially strong folkloric flavours and in drier and more rhythmically precise takes on embellishments, figurations or declamatory passages.

Could we stand to benefit from a change of paradigm that relinquishes the *statu quo* seeking to preserve a type of performance practice that has been dominating, somewhat homogenously, since the middle of the twentieth century? And, following this, can we find a newness in our performances, for example listening to Granados’s playing without contemporary preconceptions? Due to my background in performance, this comes front and centre as both my methodology and aim in research; starting from a close imitation of the sounded example of Granados’s recorded legacy, aware of the knowledge gained in the research of historical performance, it is through a practice of trial and error that I put forward alternatives for sounding his scores in a way that is distinctive and divergent from the canon set in the middle of the twentieth century. Similarly to how Anna Scott opposes modern Brahmsian performances, I contend that much of the playing of Granados’s repertoire has suffered

<sup>3</sup> “La sonoridad elegante y siempre transparente de Granados surgía, sin duda, de un ataque suelto y con poca profundidad; las octavas son agilísimas, realizadas evidentemente con la muñeca extremadamente elástica; las dobles notas, siempre ligeras, parecen concebidas como un ornamento al servicio de una pronunciación mesurada y elegante. La comparación con Chopin resulta inevitable”. Luca Chiantore, *Historia de la técnica pianística* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2001), 527.

<sup>4</sup> Such practices are discussed extensively in Peres da Costa, *Off the Record...*; quote from “CHARM”. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, accessed April 29, 2020, <https://www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap7.html#par5>.

<sup>5</sup> I use such terminology for simplicity and brevity, aware of the critiques moved against it in: Kenneth Hamilton, *After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); and Robert Philip, “The romantic and the old-fashioned”, in *The Interpretation of Romantic and Late-Romantic Music*, ed. Erik Kjellberg, Erik Lundkvist, and Jan Roström (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2002).

“a pervasive aesthetic ideology of psychological and physical control: one that leads pianists to shape their [...] performances in ways that might never have occurred to the composer”<sup>6</sup>. Such psychological and physical control in performance would have been shaped, in my opinion, by nationalistic ideas resulting in cultural subjugation, which we would do well to start questioning.

It is important to bear in mind that piano roll recordings have become objects of contention. For all the fascination they might produce, they remain a less than “reliable documentary source for historical performances, and listening to them can be a confusing, frustrating experience”<sup>7</sup>. But even if not everything that we hear in the transfers to modern technologies can be trusted, I subscribe to Denis Hall’s suggestion that “some facet of an artist’s playing may be revealed even in the least successful [transfer to disc]”<sup>8</sup>. Before moving on, some historical context on Granados’s recordings might be relevant at this point, as these still challenge us with historical uncertainties. A paper by Roquer, Monasterio, and Ródenas is problematic, in that it tangles up the location of the Welte-Mignon recording sessions; while the authors date the rolls vaguely to the years 1912-1913, the recording location is listed as Freiburg, Germany<sup>9</sup>. This is perhaps because that was the location of the company’s main office, but to be sure we lack the evidence to claim that Granados ever visited the German city in that period. More troublesome to clarify, though, is the dating of the recordings, for which I will propose a theory stemming from the latest research and epistolary evidence. Carolina Estrada Bascañana focused her thesis on Granados’s recording of his *Valses Poéticos*, catalogued with roll number 2781<sup>10</sup>. She also confirmed that the four pieces from the first book of *Goyescas* have roll numbers 2783-4-5-6, from which we might assume they belong to the same recording session in circa 1912. This approximate date is nevertheless put into question as Estrada referenced an exchange of emails with Peter Philips, who suggested that most of these sessions might have been performed on 14 September 1913. But this hypothesis conflicts with correspondence to and from Granados. He wrote a postcard to Pau Casals on 11 September 1913, from Barcelona. In it, he writes that he is “immobile” due to illness; he writes again to the same recipient on 19 September, while on 24 September he pens a letter to Ernest Schelling, in which he mentions his “convalescence” from recent illness<sup>11</sup>. Such

<sup>6</sup> Anna Scott, “Romanticizing Brahms: Early recordings and the reconstruction of Brahmsian identity” (doctoral thesis, Orpheus Instituut, 2014), 4.

<sup>7</sup> Carolina Estrada Bascañana, “Enrique Granados’s performance style. Visualising the audible evidence”, in *Rund um Beethoven: Interpretationsforschung heute*, ed. Thomas Gartmann and Daniel Allenbach (Bern: Edition Argus, 2020), 156.

<sup>8</sup> Denis Hall, “The player piano on record”, *The Pianola Journal—The Journal of the Pianola Institute* 2 (1989): 24.

<sup>9</sup> Jordi Roquer, Àngel Monasterio, and Joaquín Ródenas, *Granados a Través de la Pianola: Una Radiografía Transversal de su Producción para Autopiano y Piano Reproductor* (Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 2017), 12. Accessed May 9, 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329877976\\_Granados\\_a\\_traves\\_de\\_la\\_pianola\\_Una\\_radiografia\\_transversal\\_de\\_su\\_produccion\\_para\\_autopiano\\_y\\_piano\\_reproductor](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329877976_Granados_a_traves_de_la_pianola_Una_radiografia_transversal_de_su_produccion_para_autopiano_y_piano_reproductor).

<sup>10</sup> Carolina Estrada Bascañana, “Echoes of the master: A multi-dimensional mapping of Enrique Granados’ pedagogical method and pianistic tradition” (doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, Australia, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Miriam Perandones Lozano, *Correspondencia epistolar de Enrique Granados (1892-1916)* (Barcelona: Editorial Boileau, 2016), 406-407.

evidence makes a visit to Paris at this time hardly likely, as it would have involved travelling, recording, and returning to Barcelona in poor health, in the space of a week. With this evidence in mind, I would suggest that the likeliest timing for the Welte-Mignon sessions could have been precisely during the composer's trip to Paris in May 1912. This timeframe is corroborated by a hand-written note/testimonial to Welte-Mignon praising their recording technologies, at the same time as the documented participation as a jury member for the Diémer Prize<sup>12</sup>. Clearing the picture on this matter allows me to move to another of critical consequence and magnitude developing around the early decades of the century; if nationalism in performance is yet to be fully acknowledged and taken into account in current investigations, reacting to it prompted the core analysis later in this article, which will be paired with my performance of Granados's *El amor y la muerte* from *Goyescas*<sup>13</sup>.

## II. THE RIDDLE OF NATIONALISM

As I already hinted, alongside studies on Granados's recorded legacy there is a further path of research that I follow; a parallel history to the stylistic shifts occurring all over the continent from the 1920s onwards, which questions the ways in which Granados's scores have been sounded throughout the twentieth century, as well as the influences affecting performers in their stylistic choices. As political tensions grew in Spain throughout the 1920s and 1930s, they influenced and exerted control, on some level, over performers' aesthetics—since they influence and control people—becoming entangled with narratives that changed the way in which scores were viewed and interacted with. Where and when evidence of these changes starts appearing is not easy to pinpoint, nor trying to map out the exact shifts taking place in performance frameworks; that is, how political history and cultural nationalism manipulated performers in their practices. Such a path of research is relevant in order to understand how we arrived at the current stylistic canon in performances of pieces by Granados and other Spanish composers, and why a style that aims to depict the character of Spain has become so entrenched in our imaginations. Up to now, changes in style around the Civil War period—broadly understood as the decades from the 1930s to the 1950s—have been mostly studied within frameworks of composition and in the performances of then-contemporary repertoire. My interest, instead, resides in the rarely

<sup>12</sup> An invitation to form part of the jury came from Gabriel Fauré, director of the Conservatoire, in a letter from 1 March 1912. *Ibid.*, 365. Estrada Bascuñana further confirms this timeline, detailing the Welte recording system's arrival in Paris in 1912 after stops in Freiburg im Breisgau, London and Moscow, in her recent article: Estrada Bascuñana, "Enrique Granados's Performance Style...", 160.

<sup>13</sup> The three performances discussed mainly in the article are available at the following addresses: Marco Fatichenti マルちゃん, "El Amor y la Muerte - Live in Tokyo, 10.01.2020", YouTube video, 10:33, published January 15, 2020, <https://youtu.be/OD60MWDMFoM>; gullivior, "Granados plays Granados Quejas, ó la maja y el ruiseñor", YouTube video, 5:58, published August 2, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tkGeFklhyI>; and On the Top of Demavand for ever, "Granados – Leopoldo Querol (1953) Goyescas", YouTube video, 54:19, published August 28, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8IuiwCN6QU&t=1813s>.

explored substratum of performance practices of a mainstream composer, as codified during this timeframe.

I claim that pianists' imaginations, their approaches to a score such as *Goyescas*, could hardly have been free from reactions to the events that shook Spain during the dark years of political unrest in the 1930s, the Civil War, and throughout the rest of the century. The principle as outlined by Philip Bohlman seems fitting and appropriate:

The assertion that music could and does exist in a metaphysical domain separate from cultural forces such as nationalism is, undeniably, the product of European modernity. On the other hand, at a very basic, gut level there is the belief, predicated on contextual and cultural grounds, that nationalism cannot be good, or rather that it can only be bad. Music influenced by nationalism thus takes on all that is bad about nationalism and is ultimately sullied by it.<sup>14</sup>

The processes by which political and cultural -isms influence music-making may not be straightforward to identify in performance. It is not as easy as uncovering a pianist's political beliefs and from there extract an explanation, or justification, of why her performances turned out to be the way we hear them. The sully of music occurs at a deeper, more subliminal level, and it might even go beyond personal affinities and politics. In the case of Spanish music, it results in folkloric nuances becoming central to performances, conflated with a narrow expectation of southern Spanish folklore, even if their suitability to a score remains questionable (i.e., a more folkloric, Andalusian, approach might—though not necessarily—suit Albeniz's *Triana*, but not be ideal for a performance of Granados's *Quejas, o la maja y el ruiseñor*). In any case, there should be little doubt that the consequences of the years of nationalistic attitudes overwhelmed practitioners, conditioning their imaginations towards highlighting what could be seen as 'Spanish' in scores<sup>15</sup>. It is perhaps such a conditioned national style that I contest the most, alongside the authorities that have made the resulting approaches at the keyboard the only acceptable game in town. I have found it impossible to avoid looking at modern and contemporary performances of Spanish post-Romantic repertoire, and Granados's works in particular, outside of a framework that weighs in the concept and significance of political and cultural nationalisms. For this reason, I investigate and aim to identify *in* performances the construction and extensive propagation of a nationalistic performing style, which is glaringly absent in Granados's playing but seemingly unavoidable as the century progressed. Doing otherwise would mean evaluating the acts of performance within a bubble indifferent to historical events.

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<sup>14</sup> Philip V. Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, Inc, 2004), 19.

<sup>15</sup> Taruskin's analysis of musical intuitions dispels the idea that they might be the "fine, free, feral things we may think they are"; rather, they are formed and trained 'by long years of unconscious conditioning'. Richard Taruskin, "The authenticity movement can become a positivistic purgatory, literalistic and dehumanizing", *Early Music* 12, no. 1 (1984): 10.



The unique events I suggest that caused such shifting trends in performance also established and cemented a peculiarly strong national imagination. Iván Iglesias speaks of three separate and distinct steps that allowed Spain's musicology to deal with the Civil War: at first, discourses were tinted with mythology, followed by an "obligatory silence", and finally by a transformation into "persistent oblivion"<sup>16</sup>. Iglesias groups the three into a continuum of "symbolic systems [...] built upon historically, maintained socially and applied individually"<sup>17</sup>. Following from the attitudes around those subjects, it seems feasible that a more strongly pronounced nationalism at the piano might not require being acknowledged as necessary, or even taught explicitly. Iglesias postulates that "victory meant the 'necessary' end of musical and artistic degeneration during the Republican period and the beginning of a 'restauration' of glorious Spanish music, identified with that of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (called 'Siglo de Oro' [Golden century]) and folklore"<sup>18</sup>. The historical milieu, awash with such political and cultural tensions, could have steered individuals to select homogenous performing approaches, which I am defining practically as nationalistic.

To understand further the air of the time, Daniel Moro Vallina examines the aesthetic views of the 1950s within the context of Madrid's musical life. As I said above, the majority of the conversations at the time were centred around which kind of compositional style would best suit Spain's needs—be these political/propagandistic or of perception from outside the national borders—although these allow us to glimpse aesthetic positions that we could attempt to transfer onto the realm of performance. Moro says that Federico Sopena guided the views of musical critics in the 1950s, and that "[a]s in the previous decade, Sopena continued considering music an example of idealistic art, revealing of a transcendent mission, primarily at the service of clearly falangist ideologic objectives and also focused within a spiritual or religious perspective"<sup>19</sup>. In brief, society was being steered by the

<sup>16</sup> The full quote is interesting to read in the original Spanish language: "En un principio, los relatos sobre la guerra tuvieron un fuerte componente mítico, derivado de los discursos contruidos durante la contienda y alimentados en los años siguientes. Más tarde, debido a circunstancias políticas concretas, el mito fue sustituido progresivamente por un obligado silencio, y este, a su vez, se ha ido transformando en un persistente olvido que, hasta hoy, ha marcado la gran mayoría de la escritura musicológica sobre el conflicto. El olvido excluyente es uno de los mecanismos generadores de consenso más efectivos, al establecer aquello de lo que no se debe escribir o hablar; el otro es el mito, que, al contrario, no niega las cosas, sino que "simplemente las purifica, las vuelve inocentes, las funda como naturaleza y eternidad". Iván Iglesias, "De 'cruzada' a 'puente de silencios': mito y olvido de la Guerra Civil española en la historiografía musical", *Cuadernos de música iberoamericana* 25-26 (2013): 178.

<sup>17</sup> "Como sistemas simbólicos, siguiendo la célebre fórmula de Clifford Geertz, son contruidos históricamente, mantenidos socialmente y aplicados individualmente". Iglesias, "De 'cruzada'...", 178-179.

<sup>18</sup> "La victoria había supuesto el fin "necesario" de la degeneración musical y artística del período republicano y el inicio de una "restauration" de la gloriosa música española, identificada particularmente con el siglo XVI (llamado "Siglo de Oro") y el folklore". Iglesias, "De 'cruzada'...": 179.

<sup>19</sup> "...las principales posiciones estéticas que la crítica musical mantuvo en la década de 1950, encabezada por Federico Sopena. Al igual que en la década anterior, Sopena continuó considerando la música como ejemplo de arte contenidista y revelador de una misión transcendental, primeramente al servicio de objetivos de ideología claramente



dictatorship, through its cultural and ethical manifestations, towards “the ‘re-Spanishification’ and ‘re-Catholicization’ of society”<sup>20</sup>. Such objectives, focused on serving falangist ideals<sup>21</sup>, could have easily influenced performers to view their work as elevating the nation’s music; a clear example of this focus could be seen in the composition, performance and reception ‘amidst feelings of great nationalistic fervour’ of Joaquín Rodrigo’s celebrated *Concierto de Aranjuez*<sup>22</sup>. In other words, musicians began to “insert”, so to speak, the nation into the score in ways that must indeed have been unthinkable for Granados. At what level of consciousness this process occurred might be difficult to say; equally challenging, though, would be to deny that a shift towards more folkloric performances started taking place.

From the middle of the twentieth century Spanish pianists claimed their specialism in the repertoire, crystallising their performances around a uniform style. In the handful of decades from Granados’s death to the middle of the century, musicians and commentators acquired an imaginary and emphasised national identity, institutionalised from traditional and folkloric customs. And while we can say that composers wished to stay ahead of the game internationally, relinquishing easy compositional methods based around folkloric or dance materials, the same did not occur in performance. Three decades ago, James Parakilas discussed the specialism of Spanish performers, questioning “how seriously they may be taken outside that specialty. Would Pablo Casals have been acclaimed for his Bach if he had been willing to play on his Spanishness as a musician?”<sup>23</sup>. To obtain international recognition, he tells us, artists needed to shake off the branding of specialists in the music of their country. The same could not be argued for later generations, who became admired primarily for that very specialism.

Political and social anxieties were at the heart of the tensions that grew amongst commentators in the years before the Civil War. While in the early 1930s the Second Spanish Republic<sup>24</sup> fomented

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falangista y luego enfocados desde una perspectiva espiritualista o religiosa”. Daniel Moro Vallina, “Nuevas aportaciones al estudio de la vida musical en Madrid durante los años cincuenta”, *Revista de Musicología* 39, no. 2 (2016): 607.

<sup>20</sup> Alicia Alted, “Education and political control”, in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 197.

<sup>21</sup> Falangism was the ideology of the party guided by Francisco Franco throughout his dictatorship until 1977. Ideology, though, was not the only means of influence during the Civil War and ensuing dictatorship; Samuel Llano recently wrote about the tradition of orfeones (choirs), which he says, “were banned during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923-1930) and brought to a definitive end by General Francisco Franco in the Civil War”. Samuel Llano, “Noising forth social change: the Orfeón Socialista de Madrid, 1900-1936”, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies* 20, no. 3 (2019): 262. Accessed May 10, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14636204.2019.1644944>.

<sup>22</sup> Julian White, “Music and the Limits of Cultural Nationalism”, in *Spanish Cultural Studies: an Introduction*, ed. by Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 226.

<sup>23</sup> James Parakilas, “How Spain got a soul”, in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 163.

<sup>24</sup> The Second Spanish Republic, 1931-1939, was a constitutional attempt to reform the country that bridged the failed dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, the deposition of King Alfonso XIII, and the Civil War, with the beginning of Franco’s decades in power.

“the ethical, pedagogical, and Europeanist dimensions characterising the [government’s] musical and cultural programs” through “the ‘missionary’ eagerness of republican intellectuals”, after Franco’s takeover we find “the exaltation of the nation, a nation identified with the Empire, religion, and hierarchy, with an idealised past and utopian future”<sup>25</sup>. Such words suggest the improbability that many musicians would not be in tune with their role to advance the “exaltation of the nation”, achievable, for example amongst other things, through folklorising Granados’s output<sup>26</sup>. Suddenly then, political neutrality in such aesthetics can no longer be claimed, and questions around how these performances became the norm should arise. Though magnified by events from the 1930s, we need look no further back than to 1916 to read about early signs of such Spanishisation; in a publication marking Granados’s tragic death, the then youthful and soon-to-be influential and polymathic Adolfo Salazar<sup>27</sup> was already compelled to point out that “Spanishness is something inextricable from a superficial and basic Andalusianism that has had easy export and of which foreigners are not the only victims: it is a genre...whose main audience is amongst ourselves”<sup>28</sup>. Salazar’s influence would become almost legendary throughout the 1920s and the 1930s, showing favour for “a different European modernity: through the example of French Impressionism, the lessons of The Russian Five and Stravinsky, and, to a lesser extent, towards the revolutionary contributions of Arnold Schoenberg”; as Consuelo Carreano called it, this was “Salazar’s gamble for musical modernity”<sup>29</sup>. His legacy continues to be relevant as it allows to witness the direction of much of Spain’s musical discourse towards the avant-garde and the neo-classical style championed by Falla<sup>30</sup>. Both Salazar and Falla return at a pivotal turning point in the

<sup>25</sup> “Tras la Guerra Civil, la dimensión ética, pedagógica y europeísta que fue característica del programa cultural y musical de 1931, el afán ‘misionero’ propio de los intelectuales republicanos, dejaron paso en los textos legales a la exaltación de la nación, una nación identificada con el Imperio, la religión, la jerarquía, con pasados ideales y futuros utópicos”. Gemma Pérez Zalduendo, “Ideología y política en las instituciones musicales españolas durante la segunda república y primer franquismo”, *Quintana. Revista de estudios do departamento de historia da arte* 5 (2006): 153. Accessed May 10, 2021, <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=65323971009>.

<sup>26</sup> I refer to such figures as guitarist Regino Sainz de la Maza or pianist José Cubiles, whom I will mention again later.

<sup>27</sup> Adolfo Salazar, 1890-1958. More recognised as music critic and historian, he was also active as journalist, artistic and cultural commentator, and composer.

<sup>28</sup> “Primeramente cabe pensar que el criterio extranjero del *españolismo* es algo inseparable de un *andalucismo* chirle y ebén que ha tenido fácil éxito en la exportación y del que no son los extranjeros las únicas víctimas: es un género ese, de un españolismo italianizante cuyo más numeroso público se encuentra entre nosotros mismos”. Adolfo Salazar, “*Goyescas* y el ‘color local’”, *Revista musical hispano-americana* 30 (April 1916): 9-10.

<sup>29</sup> “...su tendencia iba a girar hacia una modernidad europea diferente: a través de las vías del impresionismo francés, de la lección del Grupo de los Cinco rusos y de Stravinski y, aunque en menor medida, hacia los revolucionarios aportes de Arnold Schoenberg”. ‘La apuesta de Salazar por la modernidad musical’. Consuelo Carredano, “Adolfo Salazar en España. Primeras incursiones en la crítica musical: la revista musical hispano-americana (1914-1918)”, *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 26, no. 84 (2004): 128 and 133. Accessed May 10, 2021, <http://www.analesiie.unam.mx/index.php/analesiie/article/view/2169/2127>.

<sup>30</sup> Falla would introduce Salazar to influential journalistic circles and facilitate his appointment at the newspaper *El Sol*, where he would become the primary musical critic from 1918 until the start of the Civil War. Carredano, “Adolfo Salazar en España...”: 143-144.

history of Spanish aesthetics, when a trade-off between the “dehumanisation of the vanguard of these years”, which saw the Grupo de los Ocho in Madrid<sup>31</sup> adopt revolutionary left-wing positions, and the validation of opposite political ideals only a few years later. The counterweight to the Grupo was found in “Falla, [who] with its fervent Catholicism cannot be considered an influential figure for the left. In the same way, Salazar’s neutrality, and the considerable distance he took from the revolutionary left in the 1930s, also mark a fracture with the development of the activities of other composers of the time”<sup>32</sup>. From these arguments it is possible to gather how musical conversations, and in particular Salazar’s preoccupations, resided mostly with contemporary composers, the reception of their works, both at home and further afield; yet it is also possible to deduce an aesthetic that in performance would have privileged shifts towards objectivity, precision, and adherence to the letter of the score. Shifts that suited well the advance of a regimented style favouring tightly executed rhythms, energetically delivered melodies, and less *rubato*. It should not be too difficult to imagine, perhaps unsurprisingly in hindsight, how the political and social environment following the dissolution of the Republic would have influenced pianists approaching the repertoire in question.

Much more research will need to be undertaken, focusing on a wider number of performance subjects and aspects, with investigative paths that sieve through changes in approaches during a timeframe of a few decades, before clearer and more definitive arguments can be made. But as a topic under the umbrella of performance practices in early-recorded sources, the study of a “performed nationalism” has the potential to yield results by clarifying performers’ influences and how these became implemented in their practices. What can be said now, with any degree of certainty, is that nationalistic/folkloric approaches in scores from Spanish composers of the early twentieth century went hand in hand with shifts in performance practices occurring more widely in Europe. The shifting aesthetics of the interwar years should become clearly audible by listening side by side to Granados’s performances and those from more recent pianists.

### III. GOYESCAS IN THE INTERREGNUM

After Granados’s recording of four pieces from *Goyescas* for Welte-Mignon, these were not set on record again until well after the Second World War. Significantly, though, none of the pianists doing so in the early 1950s would be widely recognised today. It might be obvious, yet necessary to state, that it is only with de Larrocha’s international acclaim that these pieces obtained some degree of

<sup>31</sup> Group of the Eight, also known as Generación de la República, or Generation of the Republic.

<sup>32</sup> “...la deshumanización propia de las vanguardias de estos años...”, “Falla, con su ferviente catolicismo, no puede ser considerado un personaje realmente influyente para la izquierda. De la misma manera, la neutralidad de Adolfo Salazar, y su considerable alejamiento de la izquierda revolucionaria en la década de 1930, también marcan una fisura respecto al desarrollo de la actividad de otros compositores del momento”. María Palacios Nieto, “(De) construyendo la música nueva en Madrid en las décadas de 1920 y 1930”, *Revista de Musicología* 32, no. 1 (2009): 507-508.

relevance in pianists' repertoire. But the blessing of bringing *Goyescas* to wider audiences turned out to be a double-edged sword, as de Larrocha's performances became much more than just celebrated; they obtained the status of authorities and absolute references for generations to come, the epitome of dynastic handing down of artistry—from Granados and his associate Frank Marshall through de Larrocha's own mother<sup>33</sup>. Regardless of the relevance of this lineage, Chiantore makes us aware, perhaps unintentionally, of a contradiction creeping out just below the surface:

When...the young Alicia de Larrocha learns to play the piano (firstly with her mother, also a student of Granados, and then with Marshall), World War 1 is already concluded, which signified the definitive fall of the romantic legacy and, by the way, took the life of Granados himself. However intense the memory left behind by Granados, within the musical world were circulating Stravinsky, Bartók, Schönberg, Berg and even the young Messiaen. It should not surprise, therefore, that when we compare the recordings of Granados with those of Alicia de Larrocha, the common traits cohabit with others clearly antithetic. And all this does not imply any 'negation' of the received legacy: Alicia herself, whom I had the immense privilege of being associated with during her last decade of life and collaborated actively in the courses organised by Musikeon in Spain, spoke with unconditional admiration of Granados, fully aware that in what she did nothing was a 'negation' of his legacy, but completely the opposite.<sup>34</sup>

One might become suspicious at the paradox laid out before us: that is, reconciling de Larrocha's sometimes "clearly antithetic" approach with the assertion that this should be "completely the opposite" to a "negation" of Granados's legacy. I want to make clear that de Larrocha's enormous success speaks for itself, needing no special dispensation from following, or otherwise, Granados's style. In fact, I take no issue with *not* playing in *the style of* Granados; it seems, though, that her legacy

<sup>33</sup> The obituary from a British newspaper explicitly, and curiously, speaks of de Larrocha having a "natural advantage in native repertoire, since both her mother and her aunt had been pupils of Granados". Adrian Jack, "Alicia de Larrocha Obituary", *The Guardian* 26 (September 2009). Accessed May 10, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2009/sep/26/alicia-de-larrocha-obituary>.

<sup>34</sup> "Cuando...la jovencísima Alicia de Larrocha aprende a tocar el piano (primero con su madre, también alumna de Granados, y luego con el propio Marshall), ya ha concluido la Primera Guerra Mundial, que significó el definitivo derrumbe de la herencia romántica y, de paso, se llevó la vida del propio Granados; por muy intenso que fuera el recuerdo dejado por este último, en el mundo musical circulaban Stravinsky, Bartók, Schönberg, Berg e incluso el joven Messiaen. No debe extrañar, pues, si cuando comparamos las grabaciones del propio Granados con las de Alicia de Larrocha, los rasgos en común conviven con otros claramente antitéticos. Y todo ello no implica ninguna 'negación' de la herencia recibida: la propia Alicia, a quien tuve el inmenso privilegio de frecuentar en su última década de vida y que colaboró activamente en los cursos organizados por Musikeon en España hablaba con incondicional admiración de Granados, plenamente consciente de que en lo que ella hacía nada era una 'negación' del legado de Granados, sino todo lo contrario". Luca Chiantore, *¿Una, nessuna o centomila? Apuntes históricos y reflexiones ontológicas en torno al concepto de escuela pianística* (Valencia: Musikeon S.L.U., 2010), 19.

has meant that future generations relied on *the style of* de Larrocha as the “ultimate authority”<sup>35</sup>. Her elevation to such status, above all pianists who also mastered this repertoire, seems to have excluded almost completely the conceivability of other approaches.

This is particularly troublesome, considering that the four decades spanning Granados’s death and de Larrocha’s early successes were far from a creative vacuum. Evidently, *Goyescas* secured less attention from non-Spanish pianists than, say, Albéniz’s *Iberia*: it seems plausible that international audiences might have found, as they still do, the latter’s scores more palatable and in line with their visions of the sounds of Spain. But it was mostly Spanish pianists who devoted themselves to complete recordings of *Goyescas*, such as Amparo Iturbi in 1950, shortly followed by Leopoldo Querol in 1953—*a year before his recording of the whole Iberia*<sup>36</sup>—and José Falgarona in 1955. The remarkable and obscure Frieda Valenzi, nevertheless, remains a personal favourite with her recording of the first book from 1951<sup>37</sup>. The influential José Cubiles—both in the musical and political spheres—also left a recording of *Quejas* from 1959, alongside some pieces by Albéniz and several selections from Falla and Turina<sup>38</sup>. It might feel somewhat disheartening to realise that none of these pianists left much of a mark through their exceptional recorded performances. All of them, though, achieved their musical maturity during an interregnum in the early twentieth century; that is, when a style of playing close to Granados’s was no longer viable and another generational shift was taking place through pianists maturing only a couple of decades later. Mario Masó speaks of this trend referring to Querol, although it could easily apply to the other pianists just mentioned, indicating that his style of playing started to fall out of fashion in the early 1950s. By then, sharper and more restrained performances were to come into fashion, at the hands of artists such as de Larrocha, Esteban Sánchez or Joaquín Achúcarro<sup>39</sup>. It is, therefore, all the more peculiar that de Larrocha alone, amongst these accomplished

<sup>35</sup> Peter Quantrill, “Rubato according to Granados”, *Pianist* 96 (June/July 2017). Accessed May 9, 2021, <https://www.pianistmagazine.com/blogs/rubato-according-to-granados/>.

<sup>36</sup> Alfonso Pérez Sánchez, “*Iberia* de Isaac Albéniz: Historia cronológica de los registros integrales”, *Revista iberoamericana de ciencias* 1, no. 3 (2014): 136. Accessed May 9, 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265051542\\_Iberia\\_de\\_Isaac\\_Albeniz\\_Historia\\_cronologica\\_de\\_los\\_registros\\_integrales](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265051542_Iberia_de_Isaac_Albeniz_Historia_cronologica_de_los_registros_integrales).

<sup>37</sup> *Granados: Goyescas*, Amparo Iturbi (piano). [LP] HMV, ALP 1320, 1950. *Granados: Goyescas*, Leopoldo Querol (piano). [LP] Ducretet Thomson, LPG 8681, 1953. *Granados: Goyescas*, José Falgarona (piano). [LP] Pathé Vox, PL8580, 1955. *Granados: Goyescas*, Frieda Valenzi (piano). [LP] Remington, R-199-116, 1951.

<sup>38</sup> This recording is located in the Sala Barbieri at the central branch of the Biblioteca Nacional de España (Spanish National Library), with catalogue number DC/3893. As of the beginning of 2021 I have not been able to hear it, as it is only available for perusal on site. *Recital de música española*, José Cubiles (piano). [CD] Zafiro, 50000140, [1957], reissued 1993. Nevertheless, the internet offered an interesting testimony in the form of a programme booklet from a concert held, amongst others, by Cubiles at the Sociedad Filarmónica de Madrid (Philharmonic Society of Madrid) on March 7, 1925, where he performed the first book of *Goyescas*. A copy is available at: <https://recursos.march.es/web/musica/publicaciones/100/docs/100.pdf>. Accessed March 7, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> “Aquest estil va començar a casar malament amb la nova estètica interpretativa predominant després de la II Guerra Mundial, la qual cosa el va portar a perdre ràpidament terreny respecte a pianistes de la següent generació com

pianists that preceded her or whose performing activities unfolded in parallel, would obtain the cult status of “ultimate authority” of this repertoire, and that she alone appears to have become a source of influence for successive generations<sup>40</sup>.

In view of this, it should prove interesting to explore how differently *Goyescas* was sounded during this interregnum. We shall never know how, or even if, Granados might have transformed his performances had he lived beyond the First World War, leaving us speculating on whether the widespread aesthetic shifts taking place in the 1920s would have influenced, and to what degree, his playing. What we can do is listen to him alongside an artist who sits comfortably between these timeframes: the just mentioned Querol being an ideal point of reference. Born and musically raised in a similar milieu to that of Granados’s maturity, Querol set *Goyescas* on record in 1953, in a version that can be seen as bridging between these widely differing styles. Querol is also relevant as far as the relationship between artistries and the cultural nationalism discussed earlier, since we are aware of his keen support for the patriotic forces at play during the years of the Second Republic and the Civil War. Being well known to have an ‘ideological affinity with the nationalist side’, he was also a teacher of French, from 1942 up to his retirement, at the *Instituto Ramiro de Maetzú*, a leading secondary school “of the new Francoist education”<sup>41</sup>. If some changes to performance occurred due to political affiliations, be these overt or more shaded and ambiguous, or simply by the influence of societal and cultural tensions, Querol appears to be a candidate worthy of our attention in our search for clues and to foster further studies in the shifting stylistic approaches that can be heard.

### III.1. Granados and Querol in *Quejas*

The fundamental aspect that characterises Granados’s playing in *Quejas*, which is heard throughout his recorded legacy, is that it gifts us with a “quintessentially ‘live’, casual, unpredictable and very nearly improvisatory” style<sup>42</sup>. Once again, Scott’s language referring to Brahmsian performances of early-recorded artists can apply fully to Granados’s of-the-moment example. The following section

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Alicia de Larrocha, Esteban Sánchez o Joaquín Achúcarro, amb interpretacions molt més nítides i contingudes”. Mario Masó Agut, “Leopoldo Querol i el seu lloc en el pianisme espanyol del segle XX”, *Anuari de l’Agrupació Borriana de Cultura: revista de recerca humanística i científica* 24 (2013): 71. Accessed May 10, 2021, <http://hdl.handle.net/10234/90771>.

<sup>40</sup> Quantrill, “Rubato...”.

<sup>41</sup> “...tot i que no havia ocupat cap càrrec ni s’havia significat políticament, i gaudia d’un gran prestigi i bon nombre d’amistats, era coneguda la seua afinitat ideològica amb el bàndol nacional”; “...la seua destinació definitiva a l’Institut Ramiro de Maetzú, centre capdavanter de la nova educació franquista”. Masó Agut, “Leopoldo Querol...”: 67-68. Ramiro de Maetzú (1875-1936) was an intellectual of the far right opposing the Second Republic and a keen promoter of *Hispanidad* through the work of the ultraconservative Acción Española. For a further example of Querol’s pianistic style, watch this rhythmically powerful performance of Chopin’s *Polonaise* in A flat, from around 2’00”: <https://www.rtve.es/filmoteca/no-do/not-226/1467441/>. Accessed May 10, 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Scott, “Romanticizing Brahms...”, 341.



also comments on Querol's performance of *Quejas*, which highlights at all times that freedoms and divergences from the score still occurred, if already to a much lesser degree<sup>43</sup>. Indeed, his pace and generous liberties differentiate him from the playing that we would recognise as contemporary—for simplicity, from de Larrocha onwards. What has clearly already changed in his approach is that Querol shows an obvious interest to comply with the verticality and rhythmical evenness of the writing in the score. Note-to-note elongations or shortenings—the characteristic 'swinging' of evenly notated values—are no longer heard at all, even if Querol still relies on plenty of expressivity through frequent and creative *rubato*.

So, how are we to make sense of these styles in the past, and should we allow ourselves to lay them out as *possibilities* in the imagination of modern performers<sup>44</sup>? I would like to think that for us all there is plenty of room for experimentation to renew our aesthetic choices, and therefore that these represent an opportunity for us to question what we do at the piano and perhaps add to our arsenal of stylistic choices and pianistic techniques. Our experimentation should not simply become a blind adoption of historical performance characteristics, though we could bear in mind that the historical recorded legacy allows us to witness 'wonderfully dynamic frameworks totally unrestricted by the solid written shapes so clearly visible on the page, which seems so short-breathed by comparison'. This is how Slåttebrekk and Harrison described Edvard Grieg's playing, pointing to the defining traits of that playing, which can serve as jolts to interact more creatively with a score<sup>45</sup>.

### III.1.1. *Swinging rhythms*

It is worth remembering that *Quejas* has received special attention from pianists, as a compromise between niche repertoire and popularity amongst audiences<sup>46</sup>. Nowadays performed mostly with crafted regularity aiming to portray a suave and peaceful, if somewhat dark, expression of love and longing (the dedication to Granados's wife Amparo being the foremost clue), hearing Granados proves, in comparison, all the more shocking. In the opening meandering section of figure 1, we witness an array of well-known characteristics of the playing of his time, such as displacement of the hands and arpeggiations of chords. But these are only surface characteristics, while the underlying feature is the ever-changing pace and swing of equally notated quavers.

<sup>43</sup> The performances discussed can be found at the YouTube addresses in footnote 13.

<sup>44</sup> An important research project on the matter is currently underway, hosted by the University of Oxford Faculty of Music: "Transforming C19 HIP". Claire Holden and Eric Clarke, accessed September 6, 2021, <https://c19hip.web.ox.ac.uk>.

<sup>45</sup> Sigurd Slåttebrekk and Tony Harrison, "Grieg Performs Grieg", *Chasing the Butterfly: Recreating Grieg's 1930s Recordings and Beyond...* (2010). Accessed May 10, 2021, [http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page\\_id=87](http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=87).

<sup>46</sup> Alongside *El amor y la muerte*, which has also seen a renaissance of interest from younger pianists.



**4. Quejas o la maja y el ruiseñor<sup>47</sup>**  
*A Amparo<sup>48</sup>*

The musical score is presented in four systems. The first system (bars 1-4) is marked 'Andante melancólico' and begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system (bars 5-8) is marked 'a tempo'. The third system (bars 9-12) includes a 'rall.' marking. The fourth system (bars 13-14) concludes the extract. The score features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, and includes various ornaments and phrasing slurs. Handwritten annotations include arrows pointing to specific notes or groups of notes, and wavy lines indicating a 'poco rall.' or 'rall.' effect.

Figure 1. Extract from Granados's *Quejas, o la maja y el ruiseñor*, bars 1-14 (including added embellishment)<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Extracts in figures 1 and 3-12 from: Enrique Granados, *Goyescas – Los majos enamorados* (München: Henle Verlag, HN 582, 2015). Markings in the reproduced scores are my own throughout.

In bar 14, Granados demonstrates the extemporaneous creativity of his approach, with the addition of a charming embellishment in the right hand (RH) strongly hinting at a momentary fancy—one which he did not adopt in the Hupfeld recording of the same piece<sup>48</sup>. Two habits are outstanding and worth underlining for their consistent appearances. The first is the relatively widespread use of what I like to call “out of context *ritardando*”; only at times heard in conjunction with the score’s notated *ralls*., they are also adopted at predictable structural junctures, stretching note values well beyond the surrounding average pace. For example, in bar 10 (at 0’39” in the video), two consecutive trills in each hand are prolonged freely without triggering a balancing *accelerando* in the following material, thus making it an altogether local and self-contained expressive device. In bar 13, again, three chords forming a perfect cadence are extended beyond any reasonable understanding of the score’s notation, effectively halting the flow of the music. The second element worth highlighting is Granados’s particularly striking and systematic avoidance of straightforward playing. This might be a defining feature differentiating today’s practices, whereby the idea of ‘beautiful’ and ‘romantic’ largely results in smooth and mellow playing that prizes regularity and predictability. I cannot escape from borrowing the neologism ‘instagrammable’ in describing such performances, whereby every detail is perfectly crafted, and the overall impression is one of ideal beauty. The onus remains with us to wish to make sense of Granados’s example and to accept some of its consequences onto our aesthetics, as we have started to do with other performers (and performers/composers) of the time. By the standards of his day, Granados’s style must not have been significantly controversial, nor particularly ‘liberal’; it is our perception and modern bias that have rendered such a style, or one even mildly resembling it, wholly inappropriate, especially to teachers and critics. It is interesting to note, for example, how de Larrocha herself warned us that, in Granados’s pieces, “a constantly free treatment of every phrase group leads to sentimentality”, adding that we should tread “the fine line of tasteful recreation”<sup>49</sup>. This warning rings as loud as ever as a veto constraining the spectrum of possibilities for performers, binding them to a score to be faithfully interpreted.

What does Querol’s opening tell us about the shifting customs and styles (from 24’43” in the video)? A change in approach can be heard immediately in the first few bars; the writing in quavers is performed plainly as such, shunning the elasticity of the long-short quaver sequences. Also different is the approach to the first *poco rall.*, which Querol treats as a gradual stretch of time in the second and third beats, whereas Granados pushed through the bar towards the third beat, elongating this final chord noticeably before resuming the original pace. It is remarkable, from just this opening, how much has changed—or has been lost—of what we understand as *melancólico* in Granados’s playing; even if

<sup>48</sup> Recorded in the same year as the Welte-Mignon sessions, the whole recording can be heard in the following video: RollaArtis, “Enrique Granados ~ Four ‘Goyescas’ ~ Premier recording by Granados ~ Leipzig 1912”, YouTube video, 30:27, published May 28, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXEHS9dTSu0>. The missing embellishment in the passage can be heard at 24’40”.

<sup>49</sup> Quantrill, “Rubato...”.

Querol is commendably expressive and more dynamic than is common nowadays, it is evident that almost all casualness and unpredictability has disappeared in favour of a clearer rhythmical conduct. But in his performance, we still find liberties that sound controversial to our ears: he enlarges the two trills in bar 10, also with an inflation of dynamics, and the junctures in bars 11 and 13 (at 25'20") are sounded following the notated *ralls*. as well as adding unnotated temporal relaxations. The result is one that, while demonstrating the shift that already occurred from a style that Granados would have recognised, highlights the strictures imposed on contemporary pianists.

This tendency has already been well described by Slättebrekk and Harrison, as they pinpoint the newly favoured aesthetic of the twentieth century from the point of view of performers:

We have as musicians collectively become more logical, reduced the level of disturbance in our music making, brought into balance tendencies that were before in conflict. If today we are perhaps now more in harmony with Newton's Law, then the greatest performers of the first half century of recorded history (very roughly up until the 1940s say) might have modified it a little to great effect—"every action has an unequal and opposite reaction".<sup>50</sup>

What is important about the tensions in the performances by "them"—in the past—and "us", is that how "they" used to play until little less than a century ago diverges by more than a few details of little consequence; it is not a case of some performance characteristic, or clever expressive gimmicks, having gone missing. They "are not at all decoration and interesting detail, but fundamental elements, essential to the way we perceive the music itself"<sup>51</sup>, and their disappearance has also signified a slow but fundamental shift in our auditive experiences and expectations. That is not to say that performances of the last half-century have lacked expression, or that remarkable artistry has stopped occurring on stage; rather, they have shifted towards largely predictable, mainstream, "instagrammable" approaches that "brought into balance tendencies that were before in conflict". And what would be left of art without conflict?

### III.1.2. *Polyrhythms*

Although plenty of musicological studies have already put into question our emphasised preoccupations with "the letter of the score"<sup>52</sup>, it seems appropriate to continue questioning this

<sup>50</sup> Slättebrekk and Harrison, "Grieg...", [http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page\\_id=87](http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=87).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, [http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page\\_id=288](http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=288).

<sup>52</sup> Alongside the radical performers-researchers mentioned in this article, some notable examples are: Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works: An Essay in the Philosophy of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); and the recent polemical Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *Challenging Performance: Classical Music Performance Norms and How to Escape Them*. Version 2.1, accessed July 7, 2021, <https://challengingperformance.com/the-book/>.

modern obsession and the consequences it has on our aesthetics—as well as questioning what could be gained by changing attitudes towards the printed notes. Nothing within contemporary musical thinking would lead us to dare imagine the notation-versus-performance heard in Granados’s account of bar 23 (figure 2), where he executes a complete overhaul of the notation (at 1’45”).



Figure 2. Extract from Granados’s *Quejas, o la maja y el ruiseñor*, bar 23<sup>53</sup>

No effort is made to abide by and perform the polyrhythmic figurations as written, whilst the passage is played almost completely as if vertically aligned (the semiquaver A4 in the third beat being the exception) with slight desynchronisation. Moreover, he repeats the left hand (LH) chord found in the first quaver triplet of the second beat, thus sounding a C# dominant seventh under the E# triplet of the second beat; the result is a fully chordal triplet figuration. Yet, what is most notable, for me, is the energy that emerges from the first two beats, contrasted with a remarkably held back final beat of the bar. The treatment of similar phrase ends is characteristic of Granados, who tends to mark important moments with out-of-time, almost immobile, slowdowns. I have marked the score above with a horizontal square bracket sign, over the third beat, to indicate the unit that Granados plays with a sudden stop of “coherent” regular motion; what is important to him, it seems, is the lengthening of the cadential gesture leading to the new bar, so much beyond rhythmical recognition as to feel as if the pace had come to a halt. I have stopped short of notating precisely Granados’s habits in this bar into a program that would allow a visually clearer example; while there is much to discuss and perhaps adopt in his of-the-moment fluidity, I could not encourage the exact adoption of his way of playing, lest it became the only one desirable, or even allowed.

Querol seems to adopt a remarkably middle of the road approach, vis a vis Granados’s example and that of more recent players (at 26’07”). The completely unnotated freedoms of Granados are taken over by a literal reading that is more correctly and vertically aligned, without rolled chords or dislocations; however, there is no evidence of a wish to stick to the exact rhythmical intricacies of

<sup>53</sup> Enrique Granados, *Goyescas: Los majos enamorados* (Madrid: Unión Musical Ediciones, 1991).

the score. The second beat of the bar is played as if each note/chord were of equal length, apart from the RH's final quaver triplet G natural, which is made to lean towards the last beat. In the final beat of the bar, the three chords of the lower parts are vertically aligned with the first, second and fourth semiquavers of the top voice, leaving the E natural sounding on its own, with a hold back preceding the tension of the final dominant seventh chord. One has the feeling that after Querol's approach the only path forward *had* to be, inevitably, to take a further step towards more precise approaches, sounding the correct rhythms and chord placements found in the score.

### III.1.3. *Left hand accompaniments*

As will be heard in this excerpt by Granados in bars 46-54 (3'48"), LH accompaniments are quite clearly amongst the more obvious details that have been reined in with the stylistic shifts I am discussing. The flexible treatment heard in the composer's performance—flexible being a descriptor necessary by us in the present, of course—is opposed to stricter readings applied from the middle of the twentieth century onwards. In this passage from figure 3, Granados focuses on the momentary gestures of the RH's melodic line, pushing and pulling, allowing it to take control of the *rubato*. The LH accompaniment becomes, on the one side, subjugated to the will of the melody's shapes, but on the other much worthier of our attention as it twists and turns unpredictably; the result sounds far removed from what the score would suggest, that is a metronomic, conductor-like, peaceful supporting act to the RH melody.

Nearly all modern performances place the focus on the RH's phrasing and on the even fluency of the sensuous harmonies in the accompaniment. But setting aside the visual uniformity of the score would make us notice, and question, the accompaniment we hear in Granados's recording; being conducted in a downright anarchic manner, wholly subservient to the melody's fancies, it should not be criticised for the LH's unpredictability, but rather noted for the dynamism it allows. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson speaks of a melody's contour as "the succession of ideas and evocative gestures playing along the musical surface"; through *tempo* elasticity, sudden dynamic surges, and unnotated embellishments or desynchronisation, Granados truly moulds this passage to become "as arresting and as touching as possible"<sup>54</sup>. We can hear the *espressione* and *dolore* conveyed by accelerating and decelerating motions alongside growing and subduing energy, in ways that are foreign to us, used as we have become to an approach closer to restrained gloomy suffering. Instead, it becomes exciting, energetic and highly expressive, both in dynamic range and temporal *rubato*. It bears considerable significance that Granados adopts this style of LH accompaniment frequently, when it is entrusted with sequences of arpeggiated figurations, even if not always to the same extent. The issue at hand, then, concerns what we *could* do with the writing in the score, rather

<sup>54</sup> Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "Portamento and musical meaning", *Journal of Musicological Research* 25, nos. 3-4 (2006): 258.

than what we *should not*; it becomes difficult to avoid reaching the conclusion that our aversion for such performing characteristics says more about us, modern performers and listeners subjugated to psychological and physical control, than it does about what we hear of the pianist, and style, in question.

Figure 3. Granados's *Quejas, o la maja y el ruiseñor*, bars 46-54



In more detail, the pattern we notice in Granados's playing is that of the rising quaver groups in bars 46-47, 49 and 52-53 (indicated with arrows), which create temporal and dynamic momentum that is released in the following descents (indicated by *portato* dashes in the score above). Such phrasing is not completely forgone in modern performances, its expression continuing to make sense to our ears; but this happens in ways that have become evened out and adjusted around the score's phrasing. Particularly unique in Granados is the treatment of the shorter phrased slurs, usually of four consecutive quavers, which consistently open up both dynamic and tempo, rather than being played as brief self-contained phrases. Unsurprisingly, instead, the longer slurs in bars 48 and 50, ending in dotted-crotchet chords preceded by embellishments, are used to close the larger surge-and-fade phrases. This hints at the wish to avoid a recurring relaxation and drop of energy that divides the whole section into short-spanned phrases, which would lead to miss out on the whirling motion that allows the whole page to be conveyed in one grand gesture.

After reviewing this approach, the passage becomes an ideal instance to investigate how a pianist intends to approach the expressive melody, but more importantly it gives clues to what function befalls the LH accompaniment. Querol can be heard to push-and-pull much more than we would expect from performers of today, even if this is done with predictable arrivals (i.e. slowdowns) at the rising melodic points marked with *poco rall.* in bars 48 and 50, and, to a lesser degree, also in 52 and 53 (27'48"). But once again, the evidence leads us to realise that the score's writing is now understood as inevitably signifying a paced and almost tranquil episode. Querol's *rubato* could be described as hilly: the pull-backs and push-forwards happen delicately, creating a *sentimento doloroso* that rises and falls more with melancholy than *dolore*. A century ago, this was done with more vivid effects; Granados's playing reminds of truly dramatic peaks and troughs, far from mirroring the straightforward notation of the score. Later in the article I will propose a contemporary take on similar material in *El amor*, portraying with more character and dynamism the melodic shapes of the RH and the LH accompaniments.

#### III.1.4. *Ruiseñor*

The signature passage from *Quejas* that depicts the nightingale of the title presents equally surprising elements of discussion (figure 4); after only one hearing, it is easy to spot where Granados departs from the score in some significant details.



Figure 4. Extract from Granados's *Quejas, o la maja y el ruiseñor*, bars 68-84

The two sequences of repeated broken chords, written out four times in the score, are instead repeated six and five times by Granados—a freedom in the *cadenza ad lib.* apparently forgotten (or still thought dangerous) in our days (5'07"). Although Querol plays the nightingale calls of bars 68-69 more quickly than we would predict in today's performances, he returns to an accurate reading of the broken figurations in bars 71 and 75, playing them regularly and in groups of four each (29'15"). In Granados's performance, the dynamic levels, just as unpredictably, seem generally far less *ppp*, creating a significantly less serene mood<sup>55</sup>; also, the trills are performed with a speed and energy that are technically brilliant and musically exhilarating, up to the last sequence of demisemiquavers leading to the final chords, where he finally resolves this hair-raising finale. Overall, Granados performs the closing section as a vigorous

<sup>55</sup> At this point accepting Hall's point that even if the recording method or reproduction might not be fully accurate, we are still able to grasp 'some facet of an artist's playing'. Hall, "The player piano...": 24.

*cadenza*, an unexpected change of character from the preceding complaints of the *maja* to near pianistic violence, completely contrary to the cheerful and melodious nightingale songs of mainstream portrayals. Querol's *cadenza* is indicative of the direction taken by succeeding generations; it is still creative, light and sparkly, although already calmed and under more control, in effect complying with the score's notation in all those details that Granados himself defied. Granados's approach as heard in this Welte-Mignon transfer seems uncompromising, and even if the shortcomings of the recording mechanisms are bound to limit what was recorded, it could be a catalyst for us to question our preferred laid-back approaches.

Following from these considerations on *Quejas*, I would want to stress my position that as artists we should consider it our responsibility, to ourselves as much as anyone else, not just to reconsider our performances out of reverence to a historical recording, but rather to question and explore what our priorities should be in performance. Why should we resign ourselves to what de Larrocha described as the "fine line of tasteful recreation", when we could break with current accepted customs and contemplate playing (something) like that again<sup>56</sup>?

#### IV. *EL AMOR Y LA MUERTE*: FROM THE PAST INTO OUR TIMES

The change in paradigm I have explored in my research resulted in experimenting with a practice that essentially shadowed Granados's playing. This has been done previously, and at great length with consequential results, by Scott and Slåttebrekk on composers such as Brahms and Grieg. It is a time-consuming adjustment to one's musicianship, which forces to shed one's acquired performing customs to allow developing another out of someone else's playing style. At its core, it requires stepping into a foreign style, with the aim to achieve a deeper understanding and learning about how things were done in the past—if the copying-practice is of a historical source—away from contemporary preconceptions of appropriateness. Beyond this already significant hurdle, this research can also become informative of how we, in the present, *could* play differently, treating our practice sessions as laboratories of creativity that day after day could signify a means to an unknown end.

In his research on Grieg, Slåttebrekk anticipated many of my own conclusions, as he established that the composer "contradicts almost everything his own written page seems to reinforce. He forms long, flexible lines, creating wonderfully dynamic frameworks totally unrestricted by the solid written shapes so clearly visible on the page, which seems so short-breathed by comparison". His research also pointed out that the analytical structure of the score affords Grieg's playing with "not a hint of square rigidity when one looks even a fraction below the surface"<sup>57</sup>. In my work, too, I can conclude that such descriptions could as easily apply to Granados's playing of his own scores. The out-of-time *ralls*, the creative treatments of junctures, the sequences of swung quavers or unnotated rhythmic flexibilities, combine to afford his

<sup>56</sup> Quantrill, "Rubato...".

<sup>57</sup> Slåttebrekk and Harrison, "Grieg...", [http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page\\_id=288](http://www.chasingthebutterfly.no/?page_id=288).

playing with “not a hint of square rigidity”. As we continue to explore these performing styles, we must come to terms with the fact that many of the details heard in historical recordings tended to happen “on a quite different level than today, [as] it was normal procedure for performers to introduce *their own* tempo modifications in a musical narrative, to separate the important from the less important in their interpretation, and to create a musical *relief* through internal tempo relations”<sup>58</sup>. Playing of such characteristics is not easily imaginable today, but it forces us to think about how music was *made* in the past and how far performers took their personal creativities. This might be no useless endeavour to allow our attitudes to evolve and our horizons to widen. In such ways, academic research could practically help achieve a deeper understanding of the *performances* of historical musicians and suggest the viability of focusing on the momentary gesture and the impermanence of sound to express meaning.

As I walked the reader through some aspects that characterised Granados’s playing alongside that from Querol four decades later, I am inclined to suggest that there is still something we can learn of and from the past. The case study that follows of my own, reviewed, performance of *El amor y la muerte*<sup>59</sup> wants to be proof of the possibility to renew our creativity in performances of established repertoire. What is important about the process towards that performance is that, wherever possible, I have taken clues from Granados’s recordings of other pieces from the first book of the Suite. In the end, I believe to have achieved a performance “which work[s] *now*”, without necessarily restraining myself to a performance “which supposedly worked for the composer”<sup>60</sup>. My focus on the analysis that follows will rest mainly on three characteristics found in the writing of *El amor*, which seem to offer remarkable differences between how we might have experienced them in the early twentieth century and how they are played nowadays. Each of these sets of details refer to increasing time values: I will start with demisemi-quaver embellishments that are located throughout the whole Suite as unifying thematic material, followed by arabesques of semi-quavers found in either hand, concluding with syncopated quavers at particularly emotional moments of the piece.

Far from a narcissistic wish to simply recreate Granados’s playing, this was acknowledged and absorbed in order to create a renewed performance. In this way, the transfer of knowledge is not simply due to copying the composer’s ways, but rather through accepting some techniques that as pianists we have slowly, but overwhelmingly, left behind.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* My emphasis.

<sup>59</sup> Full performance available at: Marco Fatichenti マルちゃん, “El Amor y la Muerte...”, <https://youtu.be/OD60MWDMFoM>.

<sup>60</sup> Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 240. Author’s emphasis.

#### IV.1. Demisemiquaver embellishments

A piece such *El amor* seems particularly suited to allow widely contrasting speeds and dynamics, with immediate surges between very fast and loud passages opposed to very slow and evenly paced melodic sections<sup>61</sup>.



Figure 5. Extract from Granados's *El amor y la muerte*, bars 1-12

Just as Granados approached the opening of *Quejas* with a surprisingly liberal metre and pace, similarly the beginning of *El amor* can be reconsidered away from a steady and solemn delivery (figure 5). It is common for pianists today to arrive at the first melodic material in bar 12 in around 0'46''-0'52'', with some peaking at around 1'08''. I decided instead to take a different route, one which makes the improvisatory passage nimbler, that retains a declamatory approach, but without giving up on the score's advice to expose this introduction in an *Animato e drammatico* fashion and *con dolore*. In these intense eleven (up to 0'35'') I planned for the analytical structure, where slurs would suggest the need to group the quaver sequences into three descending figurations, not to be implemented formally and predictably, thus leading to the *fermatas* as single-unit gestures. The first two bars, when played in a conventional way, result in holding back the first two

<sup>61</sup> Unnotated doublings of bass notes are widely adopted in both these extremes as, depending on an individual's point of view, they can add gravitas and power, or the perception of an improvisatory approach; all of which are, in principle, laudable intentions.

or three quavers—both solutions are common nowadays, together with a wholly metronomic approach—rushing through the demisemiquaver group, and again holding back towards the F# minim of the second bar. Taking the clue from Granados's performances of similar passages, one could argue that he might have played the demisemiquaver group with a long first note, almost a quaver, followed by four quicker notes; or else, avoiding a hold back of the first three quavers, in favour of a motion that leads towards the second bar. In such an example, historical recordings prove beneficial not for us to copy (Granados did not in fact record this piece), but rather as informative guides towards the different possibilities that can be available to us; it might be the case that without some historical backing we might still be simply too afraid to dare attempt such straying from the printed score or from accepted customs. I believe that, with the latter approach I suggested, the result is one that allows a different, stronger kind of rhythmic energy. Importantly, this change is one that requires some flexibility of conception—a degree of separation from the “letter of the score”; it is not merely based on speeding up or slowing down in a different way, but rather it urges us to reconsider the way in which we can interact with the score as to afford us the possibility of different, unexpected, and contrasting moods being communicated.

The same rhythmical and melodic cell is found again in bars 22-29 (figure 6), this time in a calmer setting. It is difficult to comprehend, after becoming acquainted with Granados's style, just how far we have travelled down the path of respecting the score in such an expressive passage, marked *ben calmato amoroso* and recalling perhaps one of the loveliest recurring melodic elements from *El coloquio*. The surprising number of directions found in bar 26 (*agitato, poco accel. poco rall. e con dolore*) are all within the bar) quite simply seem to have stopped meaning that a variety of moods could be sought in this brief space. It is the score's visual sameness, instead, that has taken over as priority to be sounded. But once again, for this passage as in many others, Granados's example became useful to allow me to reconsider my perspectives (1'05"). We can reimagine such passages without being tied to a metronomic rendition of the rhythms or being bound to playing chords vertically and synchronised between the hands. Having avoided both these aspects, it seems that the *ben calmato amoroso* can become less a self-contained section between tumultuous material than a flexibly shaped, if serene, episode within the same passionate mood. Bars 26-29, instead, can assume much more creative shapes, the pace of the RH arabesques pushed forward or halted, slowed down or rushed, aiming to gather energy throughout the rhapsodic sections that follow; the aim being that of making the LH demisemiquaver groups more plastic and creative. Just as importantly, though, by this measure my performance becomes a possible perspective on this passage; other pianists would ideally research and find their own *rubato*, notes or chords to highlight, and preferred phrasing, with the enticing prospect that our imaginations might differ in more varied ways.

Figure 6. Extract from Granados's *El amor y la muerte*, bars 22-29

#### IV.2. Semiquaver patterns

In bars 16-21 (figure 7, at 0'46'') I made a choice that would become characteristic in sequences of semiquavers; the arpeggues in the RH, for two bars before switching to the LH, are traditionally played as even accompanying material against the sweeping melodic gestures. But as I have discussed earlier, such material can be understood differently: in my performance, I attempted to make these follow the leading hand's *rubato*, which is shaped according to its ascending and descending arches, thus forcing the arpeggues to speed up or slow down accordingly.





Figure 7. Extract from Granados's *El amor y la muerte*, bars 16-21

Semiquaver sequences in the LH that would theoretically draw us towards regular patterns occur again in the *Andante* section at bars 45-50 (figure 8, at 2'25''), with a return of the *fandango* theme. As is the previous passage, it has become customary to play these steadily, as per the score's notation. I am making the case, though, for a type of performance that can become more arresting and unsettling when such accompaniments are allowed the rhythmical freedom to support the melody's nuances of dynamics and speed. We could, with this in mind, lessen the obvious appearance of the melodic cells as separate bar-by-bar events, as well as avoiding playing the RH chords strictly vertically above the accompaniment.

In each of these bars, I wanted to push the movement forward as the LH accompaniment rises, arpeggiating the RH's chords, and using each bar's third count as a point of relaxation before the next harmonic event took up the pace again. This was achieved by thrusting forward the LH's final three semiquavers into the new bar's downbeat, especially in the last episode in D Major in bar 47—Granados uses this method often, for example it is evident in the opening lines of *Quejas*, to revive a bar or phrase's ending and propel it into the next one. This then leads into two extemporaneous bars (48-49), where I escaped a precise rendition of the contrapuntal figurations; as we heard in Granados's performance of *Quejas*, where he overhauled the rhythms of the score in bar 23, such complex figurations and syncopations can sound less predictable if imagined as free-flowing gestures.





Figure 8. Extract from Granados's *El amor y la muerte*, bars 43-52

The brief passage in bars 65-66 (figure 9, at 3'03'') offers another example in which executing the score's rhythms faithfully poses an unnecessary headache; once again, Granados's example made me search for a viable alternative. As can be seen in the score, the LH's crotchet octaves of bar 65 are placed under semiquaver sextuplets, in the first two beats, and quaver triplets in the final two beats of the RH's arabesque figurations.



Figure 9. Extract from Granados's *El amor y la muerte*, bars 65-66

Playing this passage in this way, evenly and precisely, would signify a somewhat curious halting of the pace—descending gears in a vehicle while maintaining the same speed seems an accurate analogy. I imagined this passage, instead, as closely linked to the opening bar of *Quejas*, as well as several other appearances of the same main material; in these, a push forward towards the high note of the melodic gesture (on the downbeats of the second bars) and a relaxation of the downward curve allow for the passage to feel as if grouped into a larger unit. Practically, the third and fourth beats of bar 65 could see a speeding up of the LH's octaves, resulting in forward movement of the RH's accompanying quaver triplets. The arrival at the LH's A in the first beat of bar 66 could therefore be elongated, before the second beat's semiquavers allowed to drive forward towards the *Lento* in bar 67.

As the signature passage of *El amor*, bars 81-93 (figure 10, at 4'05'') deserve detailed attention. Through seven bars we find a step-by-step descending sequence; as the RH plays tender melodic material—returning from *fandango*—the LH, once again, features a succession of distinctively even semiquavers. These could be treated, as we have seen earlier, as an uneventful accompaniment or as a dynamic support to the melody's push forwards and pull backs.

In my own approach, the latter allowed me to use the semiquaver accompaniments as propulsive elements, especially in the sequence's midpoint in D Major in bar 84. While this is generally played with a dynamic surge coupled with a temporally even expansion of the rising arpeggio into the new harmony in bar 85, I opted to use this as a means to lead into the next section with renewed energy, not only in terms of dynamic but also speed. The following *appassionato* in bar 89 also seemed to benefit from a more creative rhythmical conduct, unbound by the equal semiquavers found up to the G diminished seventh chord in the second half of the last beat. This harmony, resolving into the new bar, could be understood as a written-out arpeggiated chord, rather than being precisely timed in the way the score suggests. With my approach, the two sets of sequences and the *appassionato* bars allow for an arrival in bar 90 with unusual urgency, which can be released, in speed and dynamic, through the descending pattern until the double bar that concludes the section. To summarise my approach to this extended passage, I have avoided the settled idea of holding back the *tempo* noticeably at each arrival to high melodic notes and ends of bars, while also staying clear of a steady LH accompaniment bound by predictably geometric bar-by-bar harmonic changes.

The image shows a musical score extract from Granados's *El amor y la muerte*, bars 81-93. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a piano accompaniment with a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'Lento' and the dynamics range from 'mp' to 'più molto'. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'rall.', 'appassionato', and 'sempre rall.'.

Figure 10. Extract from Granados's *El amor y la muerte*, bars 81-93

### IV.3. Quaver syncopations

In the emotional and lengthy central *Adagio* in bars 94-129 (figure 11), Granados's playing can help us devise an approach that is different from the more recent canon (4'41" of my video). In my performance I wished to steer clear from maintaining a steady LH accompaniment; I instead aimed to reconsider how best I could mould the melodic material, including through hand dislocations and *rubato*. This approach, if taken under consideration by other performers, would surely allow the possibility to come up with personal solutions to the expressive core of the piece. In particular, the recurring LH syncopations found in the writing, formed by a downbeat quaver followed by either one crotchet and three quavers, or two crotchets and a further quaver, are the elements that draw many to adopt an apparently unavoidable predictability and uniformity. Here is the passage in its entirety:

94 Adagio

pp

*P*

99 *creac.*

103 *poco dim.* *roll* *creac.*

107 *dim.* *P*

111

Detailed description: This is a musical score for piano, spanning measures 94 to 111. The tempo is marked 'Adagio'. The score is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. It consists of five systems of music, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (measures 94-98) begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic and features a melodic line in the right hand with a slur and a crescendo hairpin. The second system (measures 99-102) continues the melodic line and includes a 'creac.' (crescendo) marking. The third system (measures 103-106) features a 'poco dim.' (poco decrescendo) marking, a 'roll' instruction over a triplet, and another 'creac.' marking. The fourth system (measures 107-110) includes a 'dim.' (decrescendo) marking and a piano (*P*) dynamic. The fifth system (measures 111-114) concludes the passage with a final melodic phrase in the right hand.

Figure 11. Extract from Granados's *El amor y la muerte*, bars 94-129

Already in his recording from 1953, Querol opted for such a reliance on exact measurements in the LH chords, robbing it of any chance for plasticity in the accompaniment<sup>62</sup>. While the quick arabesques in the RH's melody, in bar 99 or 101, seem to have acquired a rhythmical precision that is characteristic of all more recent performances, a defining “golden age” custom remains widely adopted; that is, noticeable hand dislocations throughout the whole passage, or at especially significant junctures. Nevertheless, the gap with what we could suppose would have been Granados's style only widens as the century progresses, reflecting the shifts towards a nationalistic folklore coupled with the objective precision of modernity.

I attempted to conceive the whole *Adagio* section in a different way; to begin with, refraining from adhering the short-spanned phrasing, as much as avoiding slow-downs that are predictable at high points in the melody or in following descending closing junctures. The whole passage is heard with a speed that allowed individual sections to feel united, with momentum and fluency. Clocking

<sup>62</sup> Querol's *Adagio* can be heard from 35'47" of his recording, available at: On the top of demavand for ever, “Granados...”, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8IuiwCN6QU&t=1828s>.



at 1'59" my performance of the *Adagio* is much quicker than the average of around 2'40", although examples can be found that peak at a remarkable timing of 3'00"<sup>63</sup>. I would hope to convince listeners that the impact of my increased pace is not to the detriment of expressivity, but instead that the more fluent treatment of the passage can be stimulating. I found that some arpeggiation of LH chords can help propel material forward and add different textures in the accompaniment, in a similar way to how asynchrony of the hands highlights the melodic line creating a feel of *rubato* that acts on multiple levels.

As a last point of discussion, beyond the importance of drawing the reader's attention to the dead-slow pace typically heard in the final page, bars 165-177 (figure 12, at 8'19") present an enticing case for divergence from current approaches, as its material is parallel to bars 46-54 of *Quejas*. The argument for adopting a LH that is supportive of the RH's gestures through its syncopations, rather than being merely kept in strict time, has already been discussed, although in this case we might want to search for a different, more intimate, sound world.

The image displays a musical score for piano, consisting of three systems of music. The first system begins at bar 163 and includes the instruction "rall. molto". The second system starts at bar 166 and includes the instruction "Molto espressivo e come una felicità nel dolore". The third system starts at bar 169. The score features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic markings.

<sup>63</sup> I have considered a variety of pianists, ranging from A. de Larrocha to J. Achúcarro, R. Torres Pardo, D. Codispoti, and J. Menor; J-M Luisada's performance reaches the 3'00" mark.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The upper staff is a piano accompaniment, featuring a treble clef and a bass clef. It is marked with 'espressivo' and 'mancando'. The lower staff is a vocal line, marked 'Recitativo drammatico' and 'ten.'. It includes the text 'muerte del majo?' and 'rall.'. Dynamics include 'ff', 'dim.', and 'pp'.

Figure 12. Extract from Granados's *El amor y la muerte*, bars 163-183

As we change our overall aim for the passage, we can overlook the score's short-spanned slurring, instead bearing in mind the two-bar long melodic gestures, in both tempo and dynamic. One way of achieving an expressive "happiness in pain"<sup>64</sup> would be to phrase the melody with long arching *rubato*, while *using* the accompanying syncopated chords to push forward or pull back; timing the chords of the LH closer to the previous or the following beats allows for the rhythm to feel more *swung*, creating a type of freedom that can be moulded to each performer's taste. I particularly enjoyed quickly rolling the final LH chord in bar 170, almost allowing it to melt into the new harmony at the downbeat of 171 and arriving at a slightly softer dynamic in the RH's spread chord. From the transitory section at bar 172 (8'49") until the *Recitativo drammatico*, the writing in the score, if taken at face value, should suggest a constraint on our possibilities for creativity; once again, though, this is a moment that allows us to imagine progressing with some forward motion or *rubato*, like Granados did in the opening of *Quejas*; like in bars 165-177, this could be done with a different tone and mood in mind, suggested by the *mancando*, *rall.* and *più rall.* Even bearing in mind the inherently chordal nature of the passage, becoming even more prominent throughout this final page of the piece, I decided not to succumb to a languishing pace. Just as Granados's *doloroso* and concluding *cadenza* in *Quejas* (from bar 46 onwards) might have seemed fanciful and out of step with our understandings, similarly the direction *muerte del majo*<sup>65</sup> (9'11") and the closing moments of the piece might still be understood as a desolate mourning without necessarily forcing us into the static approach that the rarefied writing might at first suggest.

<sup>64</sup> *Molto espressivo e come una felicità nel dolore* is the direction in the score.

<sup>65</sup> Death of the majo, direction in the score in bar 181.



## V. CONCLUSION

Throughout this article I traced the path I undertook to arrive at a renewed performance of *El amor*. I made the case for studying Granados's sounded example hand in hand with the nationalistic and cultural forces at work during the years preceding and following the Civil War, within a performance framework. Alongside the stylistic shifts occurring independently in all pianistic traditions, the political situation characteristic of Spain influenced pianists and musicians at large in different ways, slowly modifying their approaches. Fundamentally, I aimed to bypass both aesthetics that have dominated the best part of the last century, by taking clues from Granados's approach to his own scores. Mine has never been simply a fascination with the recorded past, though, which superficially I could seem tempted to restore wholesale; I intend to evade the control of tradition and explore new ideas that challenge my playing, while wishing to alert future performers of the cleansed, 'instagrammable', performances we have aimed towards. In so doing, I highlight the possibility that our imaginations, and that of all listeners, could be best served by allowing a return of some freedoms that were put aside through the course of the past century. The ways in which nationalistic ideals controlled pianists and musicians at their instruments will still require much work to become identifiable and more clearly defined. For researchers in similar fields, the challenge ahead will reside in considering the parallel histories of performance and of cultural studies to define more fully the *zeitgeist* of that tumultuous period in Spanish history and how it was ultimately channelled when sounding the scores of local composers. More generally, though, the practices I have described, further expanded upon by future studies, have the potential to be useful not just in the realm of theoretical research, but also to performers at large, who might welcome new perspectives and suggestions on how to evade the "acceptable" in favour of the "personal", alongside some tools to make this transition possible.

Granados's performance of *Quejas*, together with a wider knowledge of his other recordings from *Goyescas*, allowed me to reimagine an approach in *El amor* that has little in common with modern performances. I decided to veer towards a playing that was generally more energetic and fluent, without in my opinion losing any of the expressivity and languish we would expect from such an intense score. Promisingly, other pianists wishing to forego deeply held and protected customs could reinvent their own performances through their judgement and imagination. The goal, especially in a repertoire that has become subjugated to a mid-twentieth-century canon, must continue to be that of freeing such scores from control, our imaginations from settled customs, and audiences from homogenised performances.

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