

**The Writings of Joaquín Nin Castellanos:
Pour l'art (1909) and *Idées et commentaires* (1912)**

A showcase of his aesthetic beliefs

Los escritos de Joaquín Nin Castellanos: *Pour l'art* (1909) e *Idées et commentaires* (1912):
Un escaparate de sus ideas estéticas

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Joaquín Nin Castellanos, although born in Cuba, was really more of a Spaniard in spirit who developed his works primarily within the Parisian musical scene. Nin stood out for being a renowned pianist in early twentieth century Europe, but his roles as a music critic/writer, a researcher, a musicologist, a pedagogue and as a composer, together combine to construct his distinguished professional career. Nin's output is based on a strict aesthetic doctrine whose elements are a result of his research, his extensive musical experience and the analysis of the musical environment.

A substantial part of Nin's aesthetic thought can be collected from his writings in *Pour l'art* (Paris, 1909) and *Idées et commentaires* (Paris, 1912), which aim at describing his concept of art. Nin's literature reflects a critical, combative spirit and it also raises some of the common musical concerns at that time. Therefore, the wide range of topics posed by Nin and their importance at that time, render his facet as a writer one of the most interesting features of his personality.

Joaquín Nin Castellanos fue un músico cubano de nacimiento, aunque siempre se sintió español de espíritu, cuyos trabajos fueron principalmente desarrollados dentro de la escena musical parisina. Nin destacó como pianista en la Europa de comienzos del siglo XX, pero sus facetas como escritor-crítico musical, investigador, musicólogo, pedagogo y, después, como compositor, complementan su notable carrera profesional. Su actividad se fundamenta en una estricta doctrina artística, cuyos elementos derivan del resultado de sus investigaciones, su amplia experiencia musical y la contextualización en la que se inscribe.

Una gran parte de su ideología estética se ve recogida en su colección de escritos *Pour l'art* (París, 1909) and *Idées et commentaires* (París, 1912), que tienen por objeto definir su concepción de ideal de arte. Estas páginas reflejan el espíritu crítico y combativo de Nin y, a su vez, revelan algunas de las inquietudes musicales propias de aquella época. Por tanto, debido a la gran variedad de elementos que Nin plantea en estos dos volúmenes y a su importancia, estos factores hacen que su faceta como escritor de estética musical sea uno de los aspectos más interesantes de su figura.



Keywords: Joaquín Nin, ideal of art, musical aesthetics, musical writings, twentieth century.

Palabras clave: Joaquín Nin, ideal de arte, estética musical, escritos musicales, siglo xx.



Constructing the figure of Joaquín Nin

Hang on a minute... *who* is Joaquín Nin? To answer this question, one should refer to several sources from the time in which he lived to acquire an understanding of Nin's life and work. Joaquín Nin Castellanos (Havana, 1879 – Havana, 1949) was a distinguished Cuban/Spanish musician within the Parisian musical scene at the beginning of the twentieth century. Nin stood out for being a great pianist in Europe and Latin America during the first decades of the century, but his role as a critic, a researcher, a musicologist, a pedagogue and later, as a composer, together combined to construct his remarkable professional career.¹ If these achievements appear somewhat unexceptional at first glance, it is in their union we find that which produces a unique result and represents an intriguing individual.

Although Joaquín Nin was a renowned musician in his own time, our knowledge of most aspects of his life remains largely inaccurate. To some extent, this is understandable since there are few and exiguous studies on him and to this day there is still no definite biography of this musician that includes his actions and his artistic thinking. Nor exists a complete catalogue of his works and the collection of his compositions is geographically dispersed, which presents a considerable difficulty concerning research. Consequently, his contributions to the field of music and musicology are largely unknown and his name is mentioned merely in relation to other artists from the same period, for instance, Manuel de Falla and Joaquín Turina.

Although Nin's compositions achieved a certain status in their time, they did not enjoy the recognition received by some of his counterparts, such as Isaac Albéniz and Enrique Granados. Several records have remained available up to this day, including a selection of his *Veinte Cantos populares españoles* (1923) performed by the

¹ CASANOVA, Ana V. "Nin Castellanos, Joaquín", en *Diccionario de la Música Española e Hispanoamericana*, vol. VII. Dir.: Emilio Casares Rodicio. Madrid, SGAE, 1999, pp. 1039-1040.



singer Ninon Vallin and Nin himself in 1929.² However, his music does not occupy a important place today in concert programmes.³

It is important to consider that dissociating each of Nin's roles from his other musical activities is a difficult task because of the close link between his writings, his performances and his compositions. These factors are therefore crucial to consider, since they constitute a complex, interconnected network. Nevertheless, it is in examining his role as an author of musical writings where we are able to gain a better understanding of his musical thought.

Joaquín Nin's background as a writer

Nin's output as a writer was significantly extensive, publishing a myriad of essays and articles in music periodicals in Spain, but also in France and Cuba. A large part of Nin's work as a music critic extends over the period that corresponds chronologically to the "Golden Age" of Spanish musical criticism.⁴ Thus, his articles in the Spanish cultural sphere are located in newspapers such as *Revista Musical Catalana* (from 1904 to 1929),⁵ the *Revista Musical de Bilbao* (from 1909 to 1913), coinciding with the publications of *Pour l'art* and *Idées et commentaires* – and its successor, the *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana* from 1914 to 1917. In the latter, Nin

² GRANADOS, Enrique; DE FALLA, Manuel; MOMPOU, Federico; NIN CASTELLANOS, Joaquín. *Composers in person*. Singer, piano. 1929. Compact disc. EMI Classics. CDC 7 54836 2.

³ At present, several musical cycles and record labels include Nin's works. Some performers of his music are as follows: GUILLÉN, Manuel; GARCÍA, M^a Jesús. *Joaquín Nin: Integral de la obra para violín y piano*. Violin and Piano. 1999. Compact disc. Tañidos (Several Records). 2N95YM; TIRINO, Thomas. *Joaquín Nin: Complete Works for solo piano*. Piano. 2001. Compact disc. Koch. 3-7516-2; GRAGERA, Elena. CARDÓ, Antón. BOFILL, Miquel. *Joaquín Nin: canciones de 1920 y 1930*. Singer, Piano and Saxo. 2002. Compact disc. Columna Música. 9041709; JONES, Martin. *Joaquín Nin. The Piano Music*. Piano. 2010. Compact disc. Nimbus Records. LC 5871.

⁴ CASARES RODICIO, Emilio. "Crítica musical", en *Diccionario de la Música Española e Hispanoamericana*, vol. IV. Dir.: Emilio Casares Rodicio. Madrid, SGAE, 1999, pp. 168-182; CASARES RODICIO, Emilio. "La música española hasta 1939 o la restauración musical", *España en la música de Occidente*, coord. por Emilio Casares Rodicio, Ismael Fernández de la Cuesta, José López Calo, vol. 2. Madrid, Ministerio de Cultura, Instituto Nacional de las Artes Escénicas y de la Música, 1987, pp. 261-322.

⁵ The first article is dated 1904, and the last one was published in 1929. In a letter from Joaquín Nin to Eduardo López Chavarri in 1904, the former stated he wrote articles to be published monthly in this musical newspaper. Letter 498. *Correspondencia/Eduardo López-Chavarri*. Edited by R. Díaz Cargo and V. Galbis López. Valencia, Generalitat Valenciana, Conselleria de Cultura, Educación y Ciencia, 1996, vol. 2, pp. 46-48.



was in charge of the section “La música en el extranjero; desde París” where he described the main musical events performed in the French capital, placing a particular emphasis on both the situation of Spanish music and the reception of new Spanish compositions. This allowed him to not only to keep abreast of the latest musical trends at his time, but he also took advantage of his position in Paris to promote Spanish music abroad, firmly expressing his thoughts in his articles. His writings in the French musical press are mainly contained within *La Revue Musicale*, *Le Courrier Musical*, *Le Monde Musical* and *Les Nouvelles Musicales*, which present a large content related to both the musical past and Spanish music. In the Cuban musical environment, Nin founded his own *Boletín Musical* in 1910, motivated by his personal belief that: “a well-run art newspaper is a great tool for popular culture which it is sorely needed in Cuba, where we all have somewhat of an artist in the veins [...] but where people rarely read and study less”.⁶ Several years later, Henri Collet pointed out, in *L'Essor de la musique espagnole au XXème. siècle* (1929), the combative nature of Nin apparent in most of his articles and writings, revealing an astonishing scholarship in addition to a burning enthusiasm for the ideal of art.⁷

His collections of writings: *Pour l'Art* (1909) and *Idées et Commentaires* (1912)

The writings on musical aesthetics collected in *Pour l'art* and *Idées et commentaires* appeared in Paris in 1909 and 1912, respectively. These can be considered as early writings within the framework of his musical career. Both collections of writings were originally written in French and due to their importance at the time, *Pour l'art* was translated subsequently into German, Spanish, Catalan, English and Italian; *Idées et commentaires* was edited later only in its Spanish version.⁸ All of

⁶ “Bien dirigido, un periódico de arte es un maravilloso instrumento de cultura popular que hace muchísima falta en Cuba, donde todos tenemos de artista algo en las venas [...] pero donde se lee poco y se estudia menos”. NIN, Joaquín. “Desde París. Carta de un Amigo”, *Bellas Artes*, 1 marzo 1908, nº 3, pp. 13-15.

⁷ COLLET, Henri. *L'Essor de la musique espagnole au XXème. Siècle*. Paris, Eschig, 1929, pp. 154-161.

⁸ The first Spanish version of *Pour l'art* was made and stamped in Berlin; the German version of *Pour l'art*, *Im dienste der Kunst*, appeared in Berlin edited by Otto Lange in 1908; the Catalan version was published



these writings seem to be originals and do not appear in any previous collection or newspaper.

Within his writings, Nin addressed a wide range of topics that provides us with a general idea of his musical doctrine. These collections are the result of his investigations which he carried out between 1903 and 1911, and together describe in detail his concept of the Ideal of Art. As Nin himself states in the preface of *Idées et commentaires*: “I refer to my art on them”.⁹ The difference between both collections lies in the fact that *Pour l'art* is just aimed at performers, whilst *Idées et commentaires* is intended for musicians and art lovers in general, including pedagogues, critics, performers, composers and students. Neither of the two volumes appears to present a general plan. Instead, each chapter contains a small synopsis which describes or defends a specific idea, principle or fact. Even though these ideas are independent of each other, they are so closely connected that it is problematical to analyze them separately.

As noted above, although these volumes were published at a relatively early stage in his musical career, it is worthwhile to consider that at that time Nin had already acquired a cosmopolitan experience and had thus reached a considerable artistic maturity.¹⁰ Indeed, his activity as a writer was combined with continuous, intense musical tours as a performer throughout Europe and America, and Nin received much praise from his contemporaries and audiences.¹¹ Only later, specifically in 1923, would he start composing – due to his continuous tours and his professional duties.

by Josep M^a Folch and Torres in *Revista Musical Catalana*, junio-diciembre 1910, n^{os} 78-84; the English version of *Pour l'art*, *In the Service of Art*, was edited in London by W. Reeves; a novel version of *Pour l'art* was published in the newspaper *La Razón* in Buenos Aires in 1922. *Idées et Commentaires* were included afterwards in the *Revista Musical de Bilbao* from March 1912 to January 1913. A Spanish especial edition was published in 1974 by the Catalan publishing house Dirosa, which collected both volumes into one. This contains a preface and some biographical references written by José Subirá. This edition was motivated by Nin's son, Joaquín Nin-Culmell.

⁹ “Hablo en ellos de mi arte”. NIN, Joaquín. “Preámbulo”, *Pro arte e Ideas y comentarios*. Barcelona, Dirosa, 1974, Ed. Especial, p. 22.

¹⁰ Nin arrived in Paris in 1902, enrolling at the Schola Cantorum. In June 1908, he decided to move to Berlin. At the beginning of November of 1909, Cuba became the new place of residence for him and his family until 1911, when they returned to Europe again and settled in Belgium.

¹¹ *La Presse dit*. Paris, Echig, 1930, pp. 65-68.



The principal concerns addressed by Joaquín Nin in these collections

Nin attached particular importance to the concepts of mercantilism and virtuosity in these publications and was strongly against these principles which are referred to repeatedly in the entire collection. Firstly, Nin defined mercantilism as the product demanded by society that satisfied the audience's tastes and its entertainment. From his point of view, the musical works therefore became subjects of trade designed for the sole purpose of pleasing the public. Secondly, Nin considered virtuosity as the extreme ability in using a musical instrument or the human voice. "Aesthetic poison" and "tool of artistic corruption" are among the epithets he used to describe this concept. Both notions, mercantilism and virtuosity, were closely associated for him, since the former tended to consider the exclusive technical exhibition as a synonym of true art.¹²

The figure of the artist is another of the most admired and most criticized concepts by Nin in his literature. His claims are full of reproaches, indicating his disapproval of the typical musician figure of the time. This led him to pose several hypotheses regarding how the artist should be. On the one hand, Nin made a clear distinction between the *virtuoso* and the *artist*. The former was a player who had merely developed a technical mastery of the instrument. The latter, in addition, showed an interest in examining the context of the works, life and thought of the composer, and also in exploring further beyond the known repertoire – based mainly on pieces of Classicism and Romanticism and several of Bach's works in his opinion.¹³ Thus, this difference in intellectual nature was the basis that every player needed to acquire in order to become an artist. In the Spanish cultural environment, other musicians also addressed this distinction. In 1913, the critic Miguel Salvador pointed out the difference between the *pyrotechnic executant* and the *conscientious performer*, marked by the superiority in culture and education of the latter.¹⁴

¹² NIN, Joaquín. *Pro Arte...*, pp. 23-26.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 27, 50.

¹⁴ SALVADOR, Miguel. "Movimiento Musical de España y el Extranjero: Madrid", *Revista Musical*, diciembre 1913, año 5, nº 12, pp. 273-274.



Furthermore, Salvador noted a positive change in comparison to the previous period, reflecting a modification of priorities in the training of musicians. In a nutshell, what they proposed was not just to be an instrumentalist, but a cultured musician.

On the other hand, Nin suggested the artist go through three stages: “*Initiation*: one learns to use the service of Art; *Struggle*: one forgets that it is possible to use the service of Art; *Sacrifice*: one should think about living in service to Art”.¹⁵ Thus, only those who went through these stages would become ‘real’ artists.

Nin’s claims also extended to a discussion surrounding the attitude of the artist in comparison to that of the *virtuoso*. He fiercely advocated the humility and simplicity of art music, stating that “the musician should attempt to disguise all of the knowledge he had acquired through his studies”, and that the artist should be “quite the opposite of the way in which the *virtuoso* presented himself in concerts”.¹⁶ In addition, Nin assigned the artist the social task of educating the audience by presenting new works, regardless of the public’s tastes and despite its lack of familiarity with such pieces.¹⁷ Nin therefore joined the tendency of the musical diversification at that time, which managed to challenge artistic perceptions, providing new conceptions in the conventional relation *music - musicians - audience* at the turn of the century.

In order to lead by example, Nin attempted to create an image of himself as a modest pianist. In a review published in the newspaper *ABC* in 1918, Nin was praised for being an excellent player all the while, demonstrating extreme humility:

Nin shunned the applause and looked for Falla [the composer] in the corners of the stage. There can be no greater amount of modesty which occurs alongside such greater artistic merit. Therefore, the victory was twofold: he was praised both for his mastery and for his modesty.¹⁸

¹⁵ “La vida de un artista, para ser completa, debe pasar por tres estados primordiales y esenciales: Estado de Iniciación, durante el cual aprende á servirse del Arte. Estado de Lucha, durante el cual ha de olvidar que es posible *servirse* del Arte. Estado de Sacrificio, durante el cual no debe pensar más que en servir al Arte”. NIN, Joaquín. *Pro arte...*, p. 85.

¹⁶ NIN, Joaquín. “¿Antítesis o equilibrio?”, *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, diciembre 1917, nº 12, pp. 2-6.

¹⁷ NIN, Joaquín. *Pro arte...*, p. 30.

¹⁸ “Rehuía el aplauso Nin y buscaba en los rincones del escenario a Falla. No puede darse modestia mayor junto a méritos artísticos más grandes... Por eso el triunfo fue doble: por su maestría y su modestia”. “Músicos y conciertos. Orquesta Filarmónica”, *ABC*, 14 diciembre 1918, p. 22.



Nin proposed to break with the routine of concerts in suggesting a change that would vary their dynamic. He recommended an alternative repertoire to the standard one being played *ad nauseam* in piano concerts – which ranged from Bach to Wagner, overlooking the eighteenth century and leaving aside Ravel, Debussy and Stravinsky.¹⁹ Nin's proposal was mainly focused on increasing early and contemporary compositions, and highlighted the fact that performers should construct their programs towards unknown and unexplored territory, as that would thus reveal the artist's knowledge and culture. This furthermore implied the musician's intellectual expansion toward other musical styles, modifying the dynamic of study and diverting from the standard mechanical training.

In order to achieve that aim, Nin gave some guidelines for musicians to follow. In the first instance, he recommended including newer pieces. That is the reason why Nin admired Ricardo Viñes and Enrique Van der Henst, who introduced a myriad of recent works by Debussy, Ravel, Séverac, Schmitt, Falla, Turina, d'Indy, Musorgsky, Villar and Esplá, among others. In the second instance, Nin proposed incorporating early music of the eighteenth century, but also of the seventeenth and sixteenth centuries. By way as example, composers such as Chambonnière, Rameau, Couperin, Daquin, Duphly, or Cabezón occupied an important place in his concert programs, arguing that each great master of the past created at least one masterpiece that was worthy of being transmitted to subsequent generations.²⁰ Thirdly, he was against repeating musical pieces in several different concerts since on the second hearing of a musical piece, interest tends to considerably decline, almost inevitably.²¹

In Nin's eyes, the difference between emotion and virtuosity was due to several issues. Firstly, as previously mentioned, the originality of the repertoire and its performance was a factor; secondly, Nin considered that emotional content not only expressed the composer's thoughts and feelings, but also the very expression of an

¹⁹ NIN, Joaquín. *Pro arte...*, p. 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-33.



entire race or nation.²² Finally, emotion is found in those musical pieces which have been composed with toil and unremitting study on the search for national roots, in particular those of *Spanish* roots;²³ for instance, Enrique Granados' *Tonadillas*. It is also interesting to point out that Nin considered himself to be an ambassador of Spanish music and musicians in Paris, defending the country's national values whenever possible.²⁴ This can be seen, for instance, when the Catalan Enric Montoriol and the French pianist Édouard Risler played Granados' *Goyescas* in 1914 within a few days of each other, following which Nin claimed the performance of Montoriol to be more "genuine", in other words, more "Spanish", than that of Risler's.²⁵

The core of the scientific and creative activity of Joaquín Nin was primarily based on two fundamental principles: the resurgence of early music and national folklore.²⁶ These two pillars were the basis of his artistic ideology. From the point of view of Nin as a performer and as a composer, when he recovered, played and edited music from the past, French, Spanish or Italian, he was completely keen on connecting with the national traditions. It is important here to stress just how relevant Nin's editions of seventeenth and eighteenth century keyboard music to the knowledge of Spanish historical music. From a literary perspective, these writings corroborate this assertion since Nin devoted many chapters to thoroughly describing a deep respect for the musical past.²⁷ It becomes all the more evident due to the fact that Nin inserted a quote founded upon the past, from classic authors as a header for each of the chapters. Moreover, the references to the classics in his narratives are continuous, suggesting a knowledge and deep interest in the philosophy of ancient cultures. For instance, the words of Pythagoras, Liszt, Homer and San Pedro were all featured in

²² *Ibid.*, p. 55.

²³ NIN, Joaquín. "Hispánicos reflejos", *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, marzo 1914, nº 3, pp. 14-15.

²⁴ Letter from Joaquín Nin to José Subirá: Paris, the 10th April 1928; preserved at Biblioteca Nacional de España, correspondence folder 178/1.

²⁵ NIN, Joaquín. "Goya y Granados", *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, abril 1914, nº 4, p. 15.

²⁶ BERGADÀ, Montserrat: "Figuras del piano español: Joaquín Nin o el dandi erudito", *Scherzo piano*, Primavera 2005, año II, nº 6, pp. 30-37.

²⁷ It is important to point out Nin's relevance within the musical return issues and the importance of his works for the significance of the Spanish neoclassicism.



these pages.²⁸ Even Nin sometimes presented his postulates in a rather philosophical way that is reminiscent of many of the classic thinkers.

Within the different conceptions that Spanish musical nationalism came to reach at the beginning of the 20th century, Nin belonged to those musicians who upheld that Spain should open up to Europe, but without relinquishing national values, such as Manuel de Falla and Conrado del Campo. However, although this topic was central in his artistic doctrine, one should read his articles which were published in the different musical newspapers in order to obtain a general idea of the magnitude that this topic had in his musical career. It became so important to him that Nin even told Falla later, in 1925, that he only played Spanish music.²⁹

Following the trend of that time, Nin also noted the division of the public as being comprised of two completely differentiated extremes: a large mass prone to remaining faithful to standard repertoire facing a minority or elite, whose musical refinement was more distinguished and who showed open-mindedness to the new musical trends.³⁰ In his writings, Nin frequently attacks this majority of amateur concert-goers. Francisco Giner de los Ríos had noted in 1894 the vulgarity of the feeling produced in the audience by the works of some nineteenth century composers, such as Jean-Henry Ravina's *Nocturnes* or even works by Chopin.³¹ However, although Romanticism in music was almost depleted for Giner, he also despised *symbolist music* considering it an evolution of the Romantic style.³² This contempt for romantic subjectivity and sentimental excess was one of the main points of the influential José Ortega y Gasset's writings,³³ and also in many critics' articles of the time, especially

²⁸ NIN, Joaquín. *Pro arte...*, pp. 53, 23, 87, 85.

²⁹ Letter from Joaquín Nin to Manuel de Falla: San Juan de Luz, the 3rd October 1926; preserved at Archivo Manuel de Falla, correspondence folder 7333.

³⁰ NIN, Joaquín. "Música Moderna", *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, abril 1914, nº 4, pp. 5-6.

³¹ GINER DE LOS RÍOS, Francisco. "La música romántica y la música simbolista", *Boletín de la Institución Libre de Enseñanza*, xviii:cdix (1894), p. 118.

³² Giner de los Ríos was passionate about music and a deep connoisseur of artistic expressions of the time. Although he was very advanced for his time in defending some innovative trends of the time very early on, in the case of music he was highly critical with many of the creations of his contemporaries.

³³ Ortega y Gasset pointed out the existence of two types of art for two different audiences in his *España invertebrada* (1917): the art of the 19th century directed to the great and undifferentiated mass and the new and *pure art* of the 20th century dedicated to the elite. ORTEGA Y GASSET, José. "La ausencia de los mejores", *España invertebrada: bosquejo de algunos pensamientos históricos*. Madrid, Austral, 2007, 2^a



those of Juan José Mantecón and Adolfo Salazar. Nin stated in his *Idées et commentaires* in 1912 that “the great Beauty and the real Greatness will never be accessible to the Multitude”.³⁴ In Nin’s eyes, beauty was found both in ancient art and in the modern art, identified with infinite, eternal values which depended on the creative activity of the artist.³⁵ This was also the topic of an article written by Nin on contemporary music “Música Moderna”, published in 1914.³⁶ He empathized with those intellectuals who believed that Post-Romanticism and the prevailing Wagnerism had lasted too long.

As noted above, Nin placed particular emphasis on the defense of the musician’s training within the pages of the collection, but his later comments in the *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana* were very clear, stating: “Nowadays, not to read is to become isolated, to become isolated is to ignore, to ignore is to move backwards”.³⁷ The idea of further academic training of the musician was also shared by many of his Spanish counterparts, such as Nemesio Otaño and Pedro Blanco in the aforementioned newspaper in 1914 and 1915 respectively,³⁸ signifying indeed one of the main concerns among the musicians of the early twentieth century. Other composers such as Julio Gómez posed curricula reforms to promote musicological studies or to spread innovative repertoire. Thus, most composers now developed a double role, as a musician and as a writer/researcher, and their contributions to the fields of musicology and historiography were substantially relevant; for instance: Pedrell, Falla, Turina, Salazar, del Campo, Gómez, Nin, Villar, Vives, Rodolfo Halffter, Gerhard, etc. Several

ed. revisada, pp. 89-140.

³⁴ “La gran Belleza y la Grandeza verdadera no serán nunca accesibles a la Multitud...”. NIN, Joaquín. *Pro arte...*, p. 64.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

³⁶ In this text, Nin attacks the static position of the audience stating that rather than taking the opportunity to broaden their knowledge to newer music, they preferred to be stuck in their routine. NIN, Joaquín. “Música Moderna”, *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, abril 1914, nº 4, pp. 5-6.

³⁷ “No leer, hoy, es aislarse; aislarse es ignorar; ignorar es retroceder”. NIN, Joaquín. “A guisa de prelude”, *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, Febrero 1914, n. 2, p. 13.

³⁸ In Otaño’s analysis of the musical situation in Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century, he recognized the lack of culture apparent in the musician of his time. Otaño considered musical history, literature and aesthetics as the basis of culture, and its expansion towards general literature and other arts in a second step. OTAÑO, Nemesio. “Sobre la situación de la música española”, *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, marzo 1914, nº 3, pp. 2-4; BLANCO, Pedro. “Regeneración por cultura”, *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, julio-septiembre 1915, nº 7-8, pp. 1-2.



years later, specifically in 1925, Rodolfo Halffter stated that “the composer was also an intellectual who must be interested in the fore, along with other intellectuals, in Spanish cultural life during the tumultuous historical moment in which we lived”.³⁹

Nin demonstrated that he was personally faithful to the concept of erudition, also considering it from a practical point of view. This may be gleaned by the words of his counterpart, Jean-Aubry, who said of Nin: “His concern is not restricted to the written music, but, with untiring curiosity, he looks all round it for everything that may determine with more precision the real atmosphere of the composition”,⁴⁰ later adding that “he can mock, but he can smile, and even his erudition is to him a pretext to better to smile”.⁴¹ There also remains proof from Nin’s concert programs and the prefaces of some of his compositions, in which Nin introduced some historical information regarding the content and the origin of the pieces.

One of the questions in which Nin makes his most critical, opinionated declarations is the lack of direction and competence of some Spanish musical criticism towards other national artists. Nin’s criticisms include the descriptions, “incorrigible charlatans”, “dissimulate an incompetence which is visible in each line” and “unsuccessfully arrogant”.⁴² These statements were exposed after reading a critique on a concert performed by an Orquesta Filarmónica in Spain, although Nin does not identify which one.⁴³ This criticism was completely unjust, because even when a performance was excellent and was well received by the audience, the critic focused exclusively on qualifying the musicians as “outcasts”, even describing their clothing, with a prejudicial attitude and ignoring the musical aspects. Nin, with noticeable irritation, does not specify the name of the critic but scathingly provides enough details for him to be identified. The *Philistine* in question had been a pupil of the

³⁹ “El compositor es un intelectual que debía como tal interesarse al lado de otros intelectuales por ocupar un primer plano en la vida cultural española durante la agitada coyuntura que nos tocó vivir”. Cited in IGLESIAS, Antonio. *Rodolfo Halffter*. Madrid, Editorial Alpuerto, 1979, p. 48.

⁴⁰ JEAN-AUBRY, Georges. *French Music of To-day*. Traducido por Edwin Evans; editado por A. Eglefield Hull. Londres, K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1919, p. 226.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁴² NIN, Joaquín. “Antítesis o equilibrio”, *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, diciembre 1917, nº 12, pp. 2-7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.



renowned cellist Pau Casals. Thus, Nin considered that he should have had a more distinguished judgement. Such outlooks led him to claim, however, that in view of this type of attitudes, many Spanish artists did well to leave Spain, including those that together compile a long list with names such as Albéniz, Granados, Sarasate, Malats, Falla, Turina, Zuloaga, Clará, Picasso, Casals, Barrientos, Viñes, Montoriol and Quiroga. They attempted to gain the recognition and support abroad, which they were denied in their own country.

Other topics which were less ambitious and of a more personal nature, were also addressed by the musician in these collections. Nin was against some advertising media for art,⁴⁴ although he publicized his recitals in the foremost musical periodicals. He harshly disapproved of transcriptions and musical arrangements;⁴⁵ however he edited and harmonized several works of early masters afterwards. Finally, Nin condemned the extra repertoire and even the repetition of any musical work outside the scheduled program at the end of a concert.⁴⁶ Yet, one can gather that from the reviews of his concerts that Nin frequently played works as *bises*.

Nin's standpoints and statements were generally well-received by many of his counterparts, who applauded him and shared his outlook, such as José Subirá, Raoul Laparra and the aforementioned *hispanistes*, Jean-Aubry and Collet. However, others did not hesitate to underestimate his talent as a writer, and were against the content of his publications. For instance, Joaquin Fesser referred to him in an article in the *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana* in 1917 by saying "the pianist [Nin] has published a pair of booklets and, from time to time, he scribbles some notes, waiting for better days to publish articles of greater interest".⁴⁷ Likewise, Nin replied to these accusations in the final number of the *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana* in 1917.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ NIN, Joaquín. *Pro arte...*, pp. 111-112.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁴⁷ "El pianista ha publicado un par de libretos y, de vez en cuando, sigue emborronando cuartillas esperando el advenimiento de mejores tiempos para publicar cosas de mayor cuantía e interés superior". See NIN, Joaquín. "¿Antítesis o equilibrio?", *Revista Musical Hispanoamericana*, diciembre 1917, nº 12, p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8.



To conclude, the wide array of topics revealed in the writings of Joaquín Nin demonstrates the way in which his ideology was gradually formed, as a consequence of both his musical experience and analysis of the French and Spanish artistic environment. This duality of contextualization renders the musician's aesthetic thought complex, but also interesting. From Paris, the musician was kept abreast of the musical situation in Spain and endeavored to defend the richness and complexity of the processes that underlie formulations of Spanish music through his theoretical postulates, offering the image of a culturally better trained Spain to Europe. Nin was laudatory about contemporary music since this signified for him the starting point with which to depart from Romanticism of the nineteenth century. Finally, Nin's immersions into the study of the classics and early music satisfied his aim of reaching the origins of musical tradition.

Yet, Joaquín Nin's arguments *do* present some contradictions... but that is another story altogether... We invite you to peruse these texts, so that you may come to your own conclusions about this unique and intriguing artist.



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