

# A Historiography of Music That Has Not Started Yet: The History of Contemporary Spanish Music in the Late Twentieth Century

Carmen Noheda

**Abstract**---Writing about the historiography of contemporary Spanish music is a task that requires both a knowledge of the history that is being written and investigated, as well as a familiarity with current theoretical trends and methodologies that allows for the recognition and definition of the different tendencies that have arisen in recent decades. This text provides a reflection on the way of thinking about the study of the history of music by examining the production of historiography in Spain at the turn of the century. Based on concepts developed by the historical theorist Jörn Rüsen, the article focuses on the following aspects: the theoretical artifacts that structure the interpretation of the limits of writing the history of music, the narrative patterns used to give meaning to the discourse of history, and the orientation context that functions as a source of criteria of significance for both interpretation and representation. This analysis intends to show that historical music theory is not only a means to abstractly explore the complex questions connected to the production of historical knowledge, but also a tool for obtaining concrete images about the intellectual practice of professional musicologists.

**Keywords**---Historiography, Jörn Rüsen, Spanish musicology, theory of history of music.

## I. INTRODUCTION

CONSIDERING the recent historiography of Spanish music takes the risk of falling mistakenly into the categories of truth and fiction<sup>1</sup>. Both are hiding in each history and their reading present them always displaced in the place of each other. When, in *El testimonio de Yarfoz*, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio claims the position of those who have invented the history and pretends to go beyond closing those who could even invent it, is not more than recall a de-historized present. Unlike Yarfoz, we do not come to usurp those who have attempted to describe the history of contemporary Spanish music. This truth-fiction's simulacrum pretends to open the debate around how to think and to represent historiographically a history that seems not hindering. The empty history against Yarfoz protests in his testimony, covered by names, "filling the gap what they overcome the ignorance"<sup>2</sup>. These histories of music never are in vain. In contrast, they involve a significant achievement through which renew them in the 21st century.

Where do we stand today regarding the historical narration in contemporary Spanish music? The few who have approached to their research, from the second half of the 20th century<sup>3</sup>, have done it by using a historical knowledge of *Trauerarbeit*<sup>4</sup>. These attempts have officiated solemnly the aprioristic funeral of history and have predicted successive apocalypses which are just a mere representation without addressing its challenge. "A certain sense of the 'end of history' has come to cast a long shadow on any attempt to narrate any history of music"<sup>5</sup>. This long shadow which, in case of Spain, has its own "specter of the end of the century", in words of Alberto González Lapuente. The shadow, attributed to Pedrell by Carreras that "is long in contemporary historiography", in arguing that "in 1983, the latest History of Spanish music published in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, still was opened rhetorically with a quotation of him"<sup>6</sup>, continues to retain the power of fatalistic Kabbalah. How have influenced these cataclysms in the historiographic experience?

The musicologist Rob Wegman has recently come up with the following question: "Historical musicology: Is it still possible?"<sup>7</sup>. His thought announced an epistemological crisis in founding results contaminated by the historical evidence. Far from transferring this approach to Spanish historical musicology and, rather than discussing if it is still possible, we must consider how to write about history of music in this century beyond the inherited preludes: a continuum of hopes that today, as we all know, have a "happy ending"<sup>8</sup>. The triumphalism which González Lapuente opens his first paragraph in *La música en España en el siglo XX*, —the latest history written about Spanish contemporary music—, seems to take us away from the crisis that other musicologists said they lived<sup>9</sup>: "What has come to an end is the confidence that history has a clear direction, and this loss of confidence has often been equated with crisis"<sup>10</sup>. *Historia a Debate*, one the most awareness groups with the history of present time in Spain, raises in its manifesto the crisis in terms with we do not identify the historiographic statement in music. Neither we do not site in "a mutation in the process of development", nor is in doubt the dialectic conjunction between "continuity, change and cessation"<sup>11</sup>. Instead, we place in a fragmented wholeness where everything grows in the middle, in a dynamic rewriting, without beginning or end<sup>12</sup>. In the same phrase, Lapuente writes final and continuity cannot come true without violence, thus potential for transition is delineated by the construction of a discourse that lies in the chronology

without interpretation. As if we were living rooted in the industrial era, these linear readings hide an experiential space's perspective whereby lives crucially the changes that hinder such continuity<sup>13</sup>. In the frame of the "Encuentro de Musicología y Música Contemporánea"<sup>14</sup>, Ángel Medina encourages musicologists to refocus the historical aim into the present. From his point of view, he considered that "to judge the history, looking at the key events or the avant-garde breaks is not enough", basing on this premise, he suggested "writing a history of continuities, of the bottom of the tradition that remains and even forces the impulse of the avant-gardes to back"<sup>15</sup>. The history of continuities, which Medina defends, is still a structural history, erected on the *longue durée*, on "the continuities given in people, institutions and aesthetic patterns"<sup>16</sup>; the *longue durée* that historians as François Bédarida sought to reintroduce in the present time for finding out the complex relations between breaks and continuities. The same *longue durée* is used by Tomás Marco in *La música en la España contemporánea*, where he connects continuity and quality in the evolution of the musical institutions<sup>17</sup>. This structural logic, as methodological approach, has been maintained explicitly in authors like José María Laborda, who in his *Introduction of La música del siglo XX, modernidad y emancipación*<sup>18</sup>, grants legitimacy to structuralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, "to be currently fashionable"<sup>19</sup>. This cultural-jet lag does not prevent Laborda from inadequately labeling its superstructure, dividing it in a tripartite perspective: historic, analytic and structural, as if both were mutually exclusive, in an approach that he takes pride because of its multiplicity, per him, in line with Dahlhaus<sup>20</sup>. In his structural support, the author referred to narratives that, while they highlight the sources, lack an interpretation and show no structuralist view of the musical events", regarding the *La música Española en el siglo XX*, by Antonio Fernández-Cid, and *Historia de la música Española. Siglo XX*, by Tomás Marco<sup>21</sup>. This structuralist treatment as historiographical panacea, lies in a collage where Dahlhaus is mixed with Adler or Danuser, with the biographical juxtaposition, the musical analysis, "the epochal structures and the history of genres, ideas and institutions", over a background that pretends accommodate a new conception that considers "the progress of musicology and historiography". This collage is no longer sustainable if we intend to take part in the historiographical debate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>22</sup>. This historical research model emphasizes the causal interpretation, objectivist, over the intentional, giving priority to the outside point of view and, therefore, it results in a nomothetic attempt deliberately distant and impersonal, that hides the individuality richness. Such allegation lays bare, once again, a narrow historiography perspective, more centered on causes and consequences than on supporting simultaneous argumentative levels. Furthermore, such methodological binarism exposes opposed research techniques between events and structures<sup>23</sup>. The historiography of Spanish music, in its structural obstinate, instead of interrelating methods, underpins a chronological framework that connects partially composers, works and forms, without making visible its functional relations, nor to show awareness system, but a mere juxtaposition or sum, that seek to sort the facts out for

providing a panorama<sup>24</sup>, returning to descriptive typologies more modest than the announced.

The historical consciousness, thus understood, continues to bear the documental fetishism, and the thinking of *Wie es eigentlich gewesen*, (how it really was), almost two hundred years later. Its outcome is rather a comprehensive summary of results arising from the research process, an ode to the heuristic. Once this step was reached, which would be followed by an absent criticism and interpretation, it begins the exercise of representation, in other words, the writing of history of music. How does generate historiographical knowledge through this attempt to reflect what actually has happened? Which are their narrative principles?

Without aiming to understand historiography as literature<sup>25</sup>, we can capture cognitively the historical narration issues through their linguistic forms, following the rhetoric-historiographical *topoi*, formulated by the theorist of history, Jörn Rüsen<sup>26</sup>. According to the conditions of affirmation, regularity, negation and transformation, with which humans are related in the course of time, Rüsen presents four functional types of historical narration with corresponding forms of historiography, interconnected to each other: traditional, exemplary critical and genetical narrative<sup>27</sup>. These *topoi* applied to current history of Spanish music, exhaust firstly in the traditional narrative, and expose some elements of the exemplary narrative and, to a lesser extent, of the genetical typology, excluding practically the critic narrative, which not only denies, but in turn, it acts as a catalyst of the other three. The historical narration of Spanish music seems comfortable supporting a discourse that simulates building a monument with words to make sense to the temporal experience. This typology of narration articulates a necessary condition for organizing and justifying a research by traditions. The *Pedrell's sons*, who come back to the origins to understand the present, thinking the continuity as permanence and the identity by affirming pre-given cultural patterns of self-understanding<sup>28</sup>. Not far from the traditional *topos* is located the attempt presented by González Lapuente in his *Introduction of Music in Spain in the 20<sup>th</sup> century*, when he manifests the effort of "synthesis around both a native and core genre in the Spanish society that reflects the expression of their mood"<sup>29</sup>. This sense of eternity departs from an inexhaustible account of authors, "that exemplify the message" —quasi-messianic— (...), "always registered to transit through the history, its process and distinctive elements, rather than people, its biographies and catalogues"<sup>30</sup>, is far from the Taruskin's approach in his *Oxford History of Western Music*. Taruskin is opposed to the displacement of the human agents, which provokes an impersonal narrative, and brings into foreground agents that can only be people. In this way, he launches a criticism through other forms of thinking about the history that give priority to the Dahlhausian autonomy of the work-object. I would like to illustrate the types by examples drawn from some histories of music where we could find similarities narratives in works of Tomás Marco, Fernández-Cid o Manuel Valls, whose writing range from the traditional narrative to exemplary and genetical, conferring validity on composers and works within a general view of compositional techniques, sometimes offered as a model<sup>31</sup>. José María

Laborda, in *Music of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, modernity and emancipation*, narrates common stylistic aspects that focus on concrete works analyzed in detail and preceded by a socio-cultural context. The author approaches to the genetical narrative when bases its discourse in transformations, thereby laying the dynamic continuity, where time gains the sense of temporalization against the sense of eternity and spatial extension given in traditional and exemplary narratives. When Tomás Marco refers in *Music in contemporary Spain* to the Generation of 1951, is presented as a generation in its creative maturity that, therefore, “can be considered as the promotion-type in the current Spanish music”<sup>32</sup>. Similarly, in relation to “the newest batches”, Marco develops continuity through a set of rules that temporarily fulfill the identity of agents in the boundaries of the tradition, where is exposed a temporal sense, not only of eternity, but within the spatial extension:

“(the newest batches) are confronted with problems of aesthetic order. The rejection of structuralism, the abundance of collage techniques, quotations, caricatures, sarcasms, theatrical elements, and other mentionable characteristics in almost all of authors, demonstrate (...) that the problem is not so much because of language, such it was in the case of Generation of 1951, as a problem of musical ideology”.

While postmodernism, in opposition to the antirhetorical turn adopted in the modernist historical research, again acknowledges the rhetoric in historiography, Rösen, moreover theorizes about the idea of keeping the aesthetic quality in mind<sup>33</sup>. The *topoi*, as repeated models of historical narration, releases forms of perception and representation within the historiographical texture. But other dimensions exist in the historical knowledge that may need to be considered for thinking historiographically. In addition to aesthetic and rhetoric, the Rösen’s disciplinary matrix includes the semantic, cognitive and political principles, in a systematic relationship where all of them are strategically dependents<sup>34</sup>. For our part, instead of proclaiming the obsolescence of historiography of Spanish music around “*topoi*”, such as the nationalist apology, the self-consciousness of periphery or the lack of memory<sup>35</sup>, we could transform this amnesia strengthening the historical knowledge with procedures that pursues, not only the actuality of contents and forms, but actualize the historical thought with theoretical principles that rend plausible rewriting history. If this “is presented serene, elaborately, what it is, how it is, why it flows in such a way and is pointed what is lacking, what need to be remedied”<sup>36</sup>, the result is no other than a “forced historization”, as Jorge Fernández Guerra criticized in an attempt to dismiss categories regarding to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

“The clusters by generations, the master-pupil affiliation, the ensembles of works and authors by countries, the overwhelming concerts with three or four works in the first part, the tribute to the famous grandfather, the group of works classified by instrumental formulas...”<sup>37</sup>

We do not demerit the information provided by the history of Spanish contemporary music, but nearly twenty years after, we stand immobile to the launching of debates that remove such issues. The announced “happy ending” of a historiography of music satisfied in its progresses<sup>38</sup>, on which some deaf voices write that “is yet to be made”<sup>39</sup> or “there are still so many and so big and so large gaps and mistakes, that

we can say that we do not have history”<sup>40</sup>, reveals a “Rashomon choir”<sup>41</sup>, invited to react to the historiographical discourses that circularly have confronted and reconciled theories and methodologies for decades. Never was so necessary the “schizophrenia”<sup>42</sup>.

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- [2] R. Sánchez Ferlosio, *Testimonio de Yarfoz*, Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1986, p. 15.
- [3] About historiography of Spanish music in the XX century, see: X. M. Carreira, “La musicología española: un’illusione autarchica”, *Il Saggiatore Musicale* 2 (1), pp. 105-142, 1995. J. J. Carreras, “Hijos de Pedrell: La historiografía musical española y sus orígenes nacionalistas (1780-1980)”, *Il Saggiatore musicale*, 8 (1), 2001, pp. 121-169; and J. J. Carreras, “Problemas de historiografía musical: El caso de Higinio Anglés y el medievalismo”, in *Pasados presentes. Tradiciones historiográficas en la musicología europea (1870-1930)*, A. Bombi, Ed. Valencia: CulturArts Generalitat Valenciana. Universitat de València, 2014. E. Ros-Fábregas, “Historiografías de la música española y latinoamericana: algunos problemas comunes y perspectivas para el siglo XXI”, *Boletín Música* (Nº 9). La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 2002, pp. 25-49. B. Lolo, and A. Aracil, Ed., *Musicología y música contemporánea. Actas del Encuentro*, Madrid: Sociedad Española de Musicología, Alicante September 27-29, 2003. F. Delgado, “Tras el chaparrón posmoderno: ¿qué lugar deben ocupar los enfoques sociales en la nueva historiografía musical?”, *Revista De Musicología* 29 (1), 2006, pp. 95-106. M. A. Roig-Francolí, “Teoría, análisis, crítica: Reflexiones en torno a ciertas lagunas en la musicología española”, *Revista de Musicología* 18, 1995, pp. 11-25. J. Suárez-Pajares, “¿Historia?” Bibliographic review: *Historia de la música en España e Hispanoamérica. Vol. 7: La música en la España en el siglo XX*, A. González Lapuente, Ed., Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica de España, *Revista de Musicología*, Vol. XXXVII, (Nº 2), 2011, pp. 629-644. Other Spanish musicologists have done a question state in an historiographic general view, such as: T. Cascudo, “Musicología histórica e historiografía” in: E. Cantera Montenegro, Coord., *Tendencias historiográficas actuales. Historia Medieval, Moderna y Contemporánea*, Madrid: Editorial Universitaria Ramón Areces, 2013, pp. 391-417. J. M. García Laborda, “Enfoques historiográficos en la música del siglo XX” in: *La música del siglo XX. Primera parte (1890-1914). Modernidad y emancipación*, Madrid: Editorial Alpuerto, S. A., 2000, pp. 8-10. P. Ramos, “Nuevas tendencias en la investigación musicológica”, *Revista de Musicología*, 28 (2), 2005, pp. 1381-1401.
- [4] J. Rösen, *History. Narration, interpretation, orientation*, New York: Berhahn Books, 2005, pp. 147-162. Jörn Rösen the historical thought as *Trauerarbeit* associated to Burckhart in an essay that addresses the radical rupture in cultural continuity using terms close to crisis. This question follows the way that Burckhart interprets the revolutionary era of our time as a loss of humanity, where only rest in the historical memory.
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- [12] M. Alfonso Bouhaben, *Entre la filosofía de Deleuze y el cine de Godard: introducción a una topología diferencial de las imágenes y los conceptos* (Doctoral Dissertation), Madrid: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Facultad de Ciencias de la Información, Departamento de Comunicación Audiovisual y Publicidad II, October 2011, p. 25. The historiographical narration can search for likeness in the cinema language, using cinematographic techniques, as in Godard's montage in histories without star, medium and end; R. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: the challenge of film to our idea of history*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.
- [13] R. Koselleck, *Futuro pasado: para una semántica de los tiempos históricos*, Barcelona: Editorial Paidós, 1993, p. 307.
- [14] B. Lolo, and A. Aracil, Ed., *Musicología y música contemporánea. Actas del Encuentro*, Alicante, September 27-29, 2003. Madrid: Sociedad Española de Musicología.
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