




COMMUNICATION: CONFERENCE REPORT

Classics Off-Centre: Performing and Listening to the Music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven during the Long Nineteenth Century

Biblioteca Histórica Marqués de Valdecilla, Madrid, 23–25 November 2022

Teresa Cascudo 

Departamento de Ciencias Humanas, Universidad de La Rioja, Logroño, Spain
teresa.cascudo@unirioja.es

Writing about the history of music in Spain involves a peculiar exercise that some more radical anthropologists might term acculturation. This concept, which broadly refers to the substitution of one culture for another, could be used to characterize the process of arrival and initial diffusion in Spain of what we now call ‘classical music’. Proof that it was felt as a threat to Spanish culture is the journalistic polemic within which, at the end of the eighteenth century, the expression ‘national music’ was used for the first time. The controversial repertoires were Italian opera and the music of Haydn, both of which delighted some of the country’s elite groups (see Teresa Cascudo, ‘Territory is the Key: A Look at the Birth of “National Music” in Spain (1799–1803)’, in *Confronting the National in the Musical Past*, ed. Elaine Kelly, Markus Mantere and Derek Scott (London: Routledge, 2018), 196–207). The adoption by the elite of the musical practices associated with these repertoires, and particularly in the case of the string quartet, has been considered as part of a much more comprehensive ‘civilizing’ process, to use the expression of Norbert Elias (see Carolina Queipo, ‘Prácticas musicales y procesos de civilización de la élite financiera y comercial en la España de Fernando VII: el caso de A Coruña’, in *Procesos de civilización: culturas de élites, culturas populares. Una historia de contrastes y tensiones (siglos XVII–XIX)*, ed. José María Imizcoz Beunza, Máximo García Fernández and Javier Esteban Ochoa de Eribe (Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco, 2019), 191–212).

The debate that the ‘Classics Off-Centre’ conference attempted to stimulate was situated at the intersection of several perspectives: on the one hand, an understanding of the process of musical canonization as a combination of practices and discourses; on the other hand, the recent emergence of research into performance and listening. These perspectives, although by no means new, have recently acquired a renewed prominence. The conference also focused on the processes of reception and transference connected to the ‘Viennese triumvirate’ of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. The idea was that by focusing beyond major cities such as London, Paris, Berlin and Leipzig, it would be possible to observe the complex phenomenon involving the impact these composers had in the long nineteenth century (c1780–c1920).

To what extent did the conference achieve its objectives? First of all, the final programme (accessible at <https://clasicosdesubicados.weebly.com/programme.html>) reveals the preponderance of papers given by Spanish researchers, which accounted for around a third of the total. Thematically speaking, only three presentations focused on topics located outside Europe, namely Mexico, Cuba and South Africa. Nevertheless, this small sample revealed common questions and approaches that emerged from researchers’ responses to the theme. Among the papers related to Spain, seven of them were exclusively focused on Madrid. Secondly, from a thematic perspective, Beethoven was the central figure in six papers. This fact was probably a consequence not only of his pre-eminent status in the nineteenth century, but also of the recent commemorations of the

two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his birth and the impetus they have given to studies of the dissemination of his image and his music (for the Spanish case, see Paulino Capdepón Verdú and Juan José Pastor Comín, eds, *Beethoven desde España: estudios interdisciplinarios y recepción musical* (Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch, Tirant Humanidades, 2021) and Teresa Cascudo, ed., *Un Beethoven ibérico: dos siglos de transferencia cultural* (Granada: Comares, 2021)).

Studies of instrumental music, particularly those related to sonata-form movements, dominated discussions of musical genres. These were approached from different perspectives: concert production, (re)composition techniques and performance in the frameworks of musical pedagogy and professional concert life. Several papers alluded to the role of the Viennese classics in the construction and consolidation of networks of musical sociability, focusing both on private spaces and on more formalized organizations, such as the concert societies that were widespread throughout the nineteenth century. The changes brought about by mass culture and early electricity-based media were also analysed in order to demonstrate how they had transformed the ways in which the 'classics' were disseminated and appreciated in Madrid and Barcelona. There were sessions devoted to Haydn and the oratorio (with special emphasis on *The Creation*) as well as to opera (particularly the works of Mozart), both genres considered to be 'off-centre' given the primacy afforded to instrumental music in the reception of the Viennese canon.

The way the event unfolded revealed a high degree of transnational assimilation of debates and approaches in the discipline; gone are the days when it was almost impossible to establish a dialogue between different national academic traditions. There were still at least three types of approaches: those that focused intensively on the specific case study, those that consolidated established lines of work and those that broke new ground. I enjoyed all of the wonderful contributions regarding contexts beyond Iberia, but I will now focus on those papers that were linked to the area with which I am most familiar: the dissemination and consolidation of Viennese classicism in Spain.

One group of papers to highlight included those given by Josep Reinoso (Conservatorio Profesional de Música Juan Vázquez de Badajoz), Laura de Miguel Fuertes (Universidad Complutense de Madrid), Cristina Roldán (Universidad de La Rioja), Ramón Sobrino (Universidad de Oviedo), María Encina Cortizo (Universidad de Oviedo) and María Palacios (Universidad de Salamanca). These presentations demonstrated the extent to which systematic work on long-lasting lines of research (concert life and repertory, music teaching, the impact of mass culture and so on) can still open up new ways of assessing Madrid's musical life and the effect of the classics on it, from the rise of the Lenten concert series to the performance of the complete symphonies of Beethoven. Three other papers, which I found particularly fascinating, illustrated that the assumption of Madrid's centrality as a guarantee of up-to-date musical practices and discourses needs to be very carefully reconsidered. Joseba Berrocal (Conservatorio Superior de Castilla y León), Oriol Brugarolas (Universitat de Barcelona) and Lluís Bertran (Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales), and Belén Vargas (Universidad de Granada) analysed the role of the Viennese classics in formal and informal networks and spaces of sociability outside Spain's capital city. They focused on two families, the Zavalas and the Tusquets, linked to the Basque Country and Barcelona respectively, and on amateur circles in Granada.

It is also worth mentioning the contributions of Thomas Schmitt (Universidad de La Rioja) and Alberto Hernández (Universidad de Salamanca), who stressed the importance of social-historical readings when analysing the diffusion of musical repertoires. Schmitt sought to explain the different roles played by quotations of music by the Viennese triumvirate that are found in the works of several guitarist-composers of the nineteenth century, considering both the creative circumstances of these composers as well as the market conditions that obtained at the time. This paper opened up a new line of research on a subject that was doubly 'off-centre' in relation to the classics: that of arrangements and quotations, and that of the guitar repertoire.

Héctor Eulogio Santos Conde (Universidad de La Rioja) considered the survival and dissemination of Haydn's symphonies in Spanish cathedrals. He considered the manuscript sources

preserved there in relation to published sources from elsewhere in Europe, aiming to reconstruct the channels through which this music moved. Finally, the last session of the conference brought together two researchers from the University of La Rioja, Miguel Ángel Marín and Pablo L. Rodríguez. Marín's paper was based on his book on the reception of Mozart's Requiem in nineteenth-century Spain (*El Réquiem de Mozart en España: una historia cultural* (Barcelona: Acantilado, forthcoming)). He aimed to characterize the work's listeners and their listening practices, mediated by conventions and codes of conduct, but also influenced by the conditions in which the documented performances of the work took place. Rodríguez focused on a very specific type of listener: a professional composer who was outside his original cultural environment. In this case, he analysed the experience of listening to performances of Beethoven's symphonies in Vienna by Tomás Bretón (1850–1923), a composer who, as Víctor Sánchez (Universidad Complutense de Madrid) showed in his paper, used Beethoven as a model in his formative years.

In closing, the 'Classics Off-Centre' conference attempted to shed light on a long and broad process of musical interpretation, performance, adaptation, selection, appropriation, dissemination and listening that has continued through to the present day. Yet many questions remain to be asked and answered. Much also remains to be done to establish a vision that deserves the adjective 'global' when applied to the processes of reception and transfer of the music of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven. In the future we should also consider the systems of opposition into which this repertory was inserted or which it created as it spread around the world, creating an 'imagined community' of which many of us are still members today.

Teresa Cascudo is Senior Lecturer at the Universidad de La Rioja, where she coordinates the Interuniversity Doctoral Programme in Musicology. Her most recent works include the edited volume *Un Beethoven ibérico: dos siglos de transferencia cultural* (Granada: Comares, 2021).