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Michael Christoforidis, *Manuel de Falla and Visions of Spanish Music*

London/ New York, Routledge, 2018.

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RÉFÉRENCE

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- 1 Michael Christoforidis's *Manuel de Falla and Visions of Spanish Music* (Routledge, 2018) is a monograph of a kind that we do not find often in English-language academic publishing anymore. It is not single-handedly committed to the advancement of an overarching hypothesis or to 'telling a story'. It is instead the book of an experienced scholar who offers a series of stand-alone essays (some of which were previously published and are now offered in revised form) on a topic he has worked on for the majority of his career, filling lacunae in his own and others' work, adding much-needed nuance, opening up avenues of enquiry without necessarily following them through to the end. From this point of view, it is a pleasure (again) to read Christoforidis on a topic in which he is such at ease – the life and works of Manuel de Falla and his role within international and Spanish modernism –, seamlessly navigating a wealth of primary sources concerning both notated music and the written word. In page 1 of the book, Christoforidis acknowledges the Archivo Manuel de Falla in Granada for having given a transformative push to scholarship on the composer from its opening in the 1980s; Christoforidis's book itself is perhaps the best testament to the richness and depth of the archive, in which one can still discover traces of abandoned projects (such as *La gloria de don Ramiro*, discussed in pp. 33-4 and 178-9) as well as correspondence and private writings that help situate Falla within the complex national and international landscape.
- 2 Christoforidis sees Falla as an international composer who appears to us at his best in its *castellanista* late works (*El retablo de maese Pedro*, the *Concerto for harpsichord*). In which

concerns the discussion of Falla's international stature, we find some of the obvious names here – Claude Debussy, Igor Stravinsky – and places – Paris –, with plenty of new, rich detail to illustrate Falla's positioning within this landscape, for example about his engagement with orchestration, which is discussed at length in the book. In which concerns Falla's standing as a *castellanista* composer, there are remarkable, meticulously researched contributions about his early works (particularly *Siete canciones populares españolas* in chapter 4: Christoforidis does not say the last word on this song set, but his detailed study of Falla's original sources certainly opens up avenues of enquiry), but it is about *El retablo* and the *Concerto* that Christoforidis writes most enthusiastically (three chapters on the former, two on the latter). The stress of Falla's *castellanista* works, although well justified, has nevertheless a lineage (dating to Adolfo Salazar in the 1920s and then Federico Sopeña in 1940s Spain) that Christoforidis could have engaged with more thoroughly, critically discussing his own positioning within it.

- 3 Other chapters are more concerned with aspects of Falla's biography and his standing within religious, philosophical and political trends of the time. Chapter 7, on the influence of José Ortega y Gasset on *El retablo*, is almost a must, given the ubiquitous, if sometimes convoluted, influence of the philosopher on Spanish musical circles of this time. Chapter 10, on Falla's ideas about Catholicism throughout the 1920s and 1930s and the influence of Jacques Maritain, is particularly illustrative and well-researched. A further chapter (chapter 6) falls under the banner of what we could call critical or cultural organology, analysing Falla's engagement with the guitar at a time in which the modern literature for the instrument was starting to develop.
- 4 This is a book that should be read side by side with Carol A. Hess's ground-breaking contributions to the redefinition of Falla's *oeuvre* for the international research community¹, the work of the later generation of scholars currently working on Falla (Chris Collins, Elena Torres Clemente) and Christoforidis' extensive body of work on the composer, most of which is cited in the bibliography. The clarity of the book, as well as the abundance of illustrations and examples, make it accessible not only to scholars of Spanish twentieth-century music: in fact, the book could also prove a useful teaching aid for those teaching twentieth-century music at university level; the material is surely engaging, relevant and clear enough to merit the inclusion of Falla in the teaching of musical modernism and neoclassicism.

NOTES

1. HESS Carol A., *Manuel de Falla and Modernism in Spain*, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2001; HESS Carol A., *Sacred Passions. The Life and Music of Manuel de Falla*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2005.

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Eva Moreda Rodríguez is Lecturer in Music at the University of Glasgow. She is the author of the books *Music and exile in Francoist Spain* (Ashgate, 2015) and *Music criticism and music critics in early Francoist Spain* (Oxford University Press, 2016), as well as a number of peer-reviewed articles on the cultural and political history of Spanish music in the nineteenth and twentieth century that have appeared in *Music and letters*, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, *Twentieth-Century Music*, *Hispanic Research Journal* and *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, among others. Moreover, she has a keen interest in the Digital Humanities and has authored a number of resources in the field of cultural mapping, which can be seen on the sites *Spanish Music in Exile* (<http://musicinexile.wordpress.com>) and *Inventing the recording* (<http://earlyphonography.arts.gla.ac.uk>). She regularly writes programme notes, edition introductions and CD liners and delivers public talks and lecture-recitals mostly in the field of Spanish twentieth-century music, and is frequently consulted by performers on this repertoire. Eva's work has been supported by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, the Music & Letters Trust and Indiana University's Lilly Library, among others. She is currently Principal Investigator on an AHRC Leadership Fellowship researching the arrival of the phonograph in Spain (1878-1905).