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## Musical Commemorations in Post-Civil War Spain: Joaquín Rodrigo's *Concierto*

### *Heroico*

Eva Moreda

It took the Franco regime (1939-1975) a whole 25 years to commission a musical work – or rather, a set of works, as will be explained – to celebrate the triumph of its troops in the Spanish Civil War back in 1939. This happened in 1964, when the Ministerio de Información y Turismo (Ministry for Information and Tourism) asked four of the most eminent young Spanish composers of the time (Luis de Pablo, Cristóbal Halffter, Miguel Alonso and Ángel Arteaga) to compose works to be played at the so-called 'Concierto de la Paz' (Peace Concert). The name of the event was a clear hint to Franco's role as a peacemaker in a Spain which, from 1936 to 1939, had been driven to civil conflict by the allegedly excessive liberalism of the Second Republic (1931-1936). However, strikingly, in the years which immediately followed the conflict – the years of retaliation against the regime's enemies, of the reconstruction of the country according to the purest values of *Hispanidad* or Spanishness, of autarky and of the construction of Franco's image as a providential leader for Spain –, the regime never tried to intervene directly in musical composition by commissioning celebratory works. Nor the topic seems to have been popular among Spanish composers: only two works which explicitly celebrated Franco's victory were performed in Madrid during the 1940s, and neither of them had a significant impact, as will be explained later. However, there was a third work which did not include in its title or programmatic content any explicit reference to the triumph of the Francoist army, and yet was read as celebratory by the regime itself and by a significant faction of musical criticism, quickly establishing itself as one of the most successful musical works in 1940s Spain: Joaquín Rodrigo's *Concierto Heroico* for piano, first performed in 1943. It is the purpose of this article to discuss the circumstances in which the *Concierto Heroico* was interpreted as a celebratory work, and Rodrigo's own contribution to this interpretation. I will also explore recent and current attempts to depoliticize the concerto, including a puzzling title change

(*Concierto Heroico* to *Concierto para piano*) in a recent edition of the work made by pianist Joaquín Achúcarro (1995).

### **(Failed) musical commemorations in the 1940s: the *Ofrenda a los caídos* and the *Lamento***

The first work premiered during the 1940s which openly commemorates Franco's triumph is Conrado del Campo's *Ofrenda a los caídos* [Offering to the Fallen]. Del Campo, born in 1878, belonged thus to the same generation as De Falla and Turina – a generation which still dominated to a great extent the musical life of the country with their different renditions of musical nationalism. Strongly influenced by Richard Strauss throughout his career, he was something of an oddity in the Spanish musical panorama, traditionally more drawn to the French tradition. During the period of time under discussion, the 1940s, Del Campo worked as a professor of Composition at the Real Conservatorio de Música de Madrid (a post he had held since 1915), and as a music critic for the newspaper *El Alcázar*. He was also the conductor of the Orquesta Filarmónica de Madrid (Madrid Philharmonic Orchestra), one of the three major symphonies active in the capital at this time (the other two were the Orquesta Sinfónica and the state-sponsored Orquesta Nacional).

Del Campo's symphonic poem *Ofrenda a los caídos* was composed during the few last months of the Civil War, as stated by Del Campo himself in a short interview by the guitarist and critic Regino Sáinz de la Maza for *ABC* (1939, 19<sup>th</sup> October). It is not clear whether Sáinz de la Maza had had access to the *Ofrenda's* score at this stage, but he wrote about it most enthusiastically (Sáinz de la Maza was a fervent Falangist and Franco supporter), stating that it had been 'written with fervent enthusiasm and plenitude of feeling. Sánchez Mazas' prayer is recited at a certain point in this work over the muted, mortuary sound of drums, severely subjected to the rhythm of a slow march.' The reference to Rafael Sánchez Mazas is highly significant: he was a Falangist poet and one of the most remarkable

intellectuals of the earlier Franco regime, and his *Oración a los caídos* [Prayer to the Fallen] celebrated the sacrifice of those who had fallen in battle against the Republican army.

The work, however, was not first performed until 5<sup>th</sup> February 1944 in Madrid. Almost five years after the end of the Civil War, the programme notes made ample use of emotive resources and poetic images which evoked the horrors of the conflict and the own personal implication of the composer in the struggle (through his son, who served in the Francoist army), thus highlighting his credentials as a true Franco supporter:

Composed during the final months of the National Crusade, the poem *Ofrenda a los caídos* is, as expressed by its title, a musical tribute to those who, generously and heroically, gave their lives for Spain and its glorious traditions. It is through the hours of suffering, crossed by flashes of hope, which each day became brighter and brighter, that the poem slowly took form in the mind of the composer and gained amplitude and deepness and a moving pathos when the author knew that the life of his son, who was fulfilling a sacred duty in the noble lines of the National Army, was in danger.

The work was first performed by the Orquesta Filarmónica conducted by Del Campo himself. Although most reviewers highlighted the remarkable patriotic intentions of Del Campo, reviews were mixed when it came to assessing the value of the work itself. For example, Emiliano Morales de Acevedo's review for *El Alcázar* (1944, 7<sup>th</sup> February) was wholly positive and even enthusiastic. He stated that the *Ofrenda a los caídos* was 'one of the greatest works of the Maestro' and, besides its technical accomplishment (which was highlighted by most of the other reviewers as well), Morales found 'elevation, noblesse, austerity, emotion, love and suffering, melodic inspiration, supreme elegance and good taste' in the work, and stated that the performance received a 'triple ovation.' It must be taken into account, however, that Del Campo was the regular music critic for *El Alcázar*, and that Morales de Acevedo, as his colleague in the newspaper, was bound to be benevolent.

Writing for *Arriba*, Antonio Fernández-Cid (1944, 8<sup>th</sup> February) combined the praising of Del Campo's intentions with some criticism towards their technical materialization:

Conrado del Campo, thinking of those who made the triumph possible with their sacrifices, thinking of some of his dearest relatives, whom he knew to be in danger, with the pride of being a member of a race which has given so many proofs of heroism, receiving admiration from the whole world, conceived first and then wrote his work.

He objected, however, to Del Campo's use of 'powerful sonorities,' which detracted 'lightness' from the work, and stated that the work was 'extremely difficult' for the musicians (which might explain, as will be discussed later, why the work was hardly performed again). On the other hand, Víctor Ruiz Albéniz, writing for *Hoja del lunes* under the pseudonym of Acorde, found 'moments of the highest inspiration, phrases of extraordinary and very expressive beauty and an orchestral writing typical of a true master' in the work; however, his opinion was not positive overall, because 'the texture of the work, very similar to that of [Richard] Strauss' symphonic poems, is a bit archaic for the modern tastes and times.' Some of the main newspapers of the time, such as *Ya* or *Pueblo*, did not publish any reviews of the work at all.

In despite of the positive feedback from some of the reviewers, in no way was the impact of the *Ofrenda a los caídos* comparable to Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* (to name the most successful work of this era, first performed in 1940 and soon canonized as the most representative piece of post-Civil War times). This is not to say that the work was a failure: its fate was comparable to that of many works by Spanish composers first performed in Madrid during this time; some or even most of the reviews might be positive, but the work soon lapsed into oblivion and was only performed a couple more times, if at all. This was indeed the case with the *Ofrenda a los caídos*. It was performed again shortly after its première, on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1944, again by the Orquesta Filarmónica with Del Campo conducting, and with the same performers on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1945 in a concert broadcasted by Radio Nacional (the Spanish national radio station) to commemorate the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Franco's victory (interestingly enough, the concert included Rodrigo's *Concierto Heroico* as well, as will be discussed later). The work was never published and I have not been able to trace any recording of it. I would like to highlight that this is not, however, a case of a work being marginalized in a later stage due to its 'political incorrectness'; rather that the work did not manage to establish itself in the repertoire even at a time which was ideologically favourable, perhaps because of its technical difficulty (as highlighted by some of the

reviewers), perhaps simply because the organization of the musical life of 1940s Spain dictated that only a tiny minority of premiered works would manage to extend their life and establish themselves after their first performance.

The impact of the second work of the 1940s which openly commemorated the Spanish Civil War was even more limited. *Lamento*, for string orchestra, had been composed in 1939 by Facundo de la Viña, another composer of the same generation of Falla and Del Campo (he was born in 1876), but who certainly did not have the same public relevance as these (he developed most of his career locally in the small city of Valladolid). The piece was first performed on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1942 by the Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid, and few publications reviewed the work. José María Franco merely wrote for *Ya* that ‘the character of the work is consonant with the motif which has inspired it’ (1942, 31<sup>st</sup> March), and Federico Sopeña, writing for *Arriba* (1942, 31<sup>st</sup> March), was not terribly enthusiastic about it: although he considered it technically solid, he did not consider it emotionally adequate: ‘its shape is pathetic, too formulaic in its romanticism, in order to express an emotion which is still so recent that it must be limited to the simple personal remembrance or else treated with novelty.’ There are no records of further performances of the work in Madrid during the 1940s, and the work was neither published nor recorded during this time.

The examples of the *Ofrenda a los caídos* and *Lamento* show, in the first place, that the topic of the Civil War or the celebration of Franco’s victory was certainly not very popular among art music composers during the first years of the dictatorship – contrarily to what happened in literature, with a number of poetic compositions, sometimes by leading poets, celebrating Franco. On the other hand, as these two examples demonstrate, adherence to a commemorative or celebratory topic was not a guarantee of success for a work or a composer. Neither *Ofrenda a los caídos* nor *Lamento* were premiered by the state-sponsored Orquesta Nacional; they were not massively used in musical events organized by the state with propaganda aims, as was certainly the case with Rodrigo’s *Concierto Heroico* (the exception is the inclusion of the *Ofrenda a los caídos* in the Radio Nacional 1945

concert, as has been discussed). Their fate was very similar to that of most Spanish works premiered during the 1940s, which were performed only a few times before falling into oblivion; the fact that they unequivocally celebrated or supported the regime did not prevent them from being neglected and ultimately forgotten.

### **An ambiguous commemoration: The *Concierto Heroico***

What was different, then, with the *Concierto Heroico*, and which circumstances allowed to establish itself after its first performance? In this section, I will offer a brief description of the concerto before going on to explain its performance history, as the frame which later on will allow me to discuss the different ways in which it was presented and read by its contemporaries – and by present-day musicologists and critics.

The *Concierto Heroico* is divided (unusually for a concerto) in four tempi – Allegro con brio, Allegro molto ritmico, Largo, and Allegro maestoso. It relies heavily on fanfare and other effects which resemble military music, to the point that some tempi (specially the first and the second) seem to be constructed on the basis of rhythmic motives and fanfare effects rather than on melodic themes; this is accentuated by piano passages which are eminently percussive (and which require a remarkable level of virtuosity from the soloist), such as the passage in bars 291-325 of the second movement. The treatment of the relation between the orchestra and the soloist is highly innovative in the context of Spanish piano music: Rodríguez Cuervo (2005, p. 99) has defined the work as a '*concertante* symphony with virtuoso *piano obbligato*.'

After the concerto's first performance in Madrid, Víctor Ruiz Albéniz (1943, 10<sup>th</sup> May) remarked the influences of Liszt, Chopin, Bach, and Rachmaninov, but (as was usual in the nationalist criticism of the time) highlighter over all its 'Spanish character.' Sopeña (1946) considered it primarily a romantic work, dismissing any post-Romantic influences (Wagner, Richard Strauss). In modern times, Rodríguez Cuervo (2005) has seen an influence of

Brahms' second and Liszt's first piano concerti in the way in which the piano and the orchestra interact with each other. She has also highlighted the traces of orchestral resources typical of the operatic Italian dramaturgy of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and of the European symphonic tradition 1850-1900 – making thus the work extremely atypical in the Spanish panorama of the time because of its insertion in the European piano concerto tradition.

After completion of the work (in only a few months during the summer of 1942, but based on previous work, as will be explained later), Rodrigo submitted it to the Premio Nacional de Música (National Prize for Music), a state-organized competition which each year invited submissions in a different musical genre; the genre chosen for 1942 was the piano concerto. The *Concierto Heroico* was chosen as the winning entry, for which it received a prize of 10,000 pesetas. The award was a further step in Rodrigo's meteoric career after 1939: he had indeed been active as a composer before the Civil War, but his works never quite attracted critical enthusiasm, perhaps obscured by the most audacious proposals of other young composers such as Ernesto Halffter (heavily promoted by the powerful critic Adolfo Salazar as the new voice of Spanish music). After the conflict, Rodrigo was subjected to a similar process of canonization, mainly due to the powerful influence of the critic Federico Sopena, as will be explained later. The first performance of the *Concierto de Aranjuez* for guitar and orchestra in 1940 was saluted by most of the critics as the first event of importance after the end of the Civil War, the proof that musical life in Spain was starting to recover. The fact that the *Concierto Heroico* was the second of three Rodrigo concertos<sup>1</sup> (which the composer did not conceive as a series of works, but which were often presented as a classic triad, representative of contemporaneous Spanish music, by the critics) is one of the factors that contribute to explain its success.

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<sup>1</sup> The third one was the *Concierto de Estío* for violin, first performed 1944.



The work was first performed in Lisbon on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1943, in a very particular context: a musical expedition to Portugal organized by the Comisaría de Música<sup>2</sup> of the Spanish government aimed at making Spanish music known abroad and at furthering the friendly relationships with the neighbouring country. The expedition included some of the most remarkable performers of Francoist Spain, most of whom had at one time or another explicitly supported Franco: guitarist Regino Sáinz de la Maza, singer Lola Rodríguez Aragón, pianist José Cubiles, violinist Luis Antón, critic Federico Sopena, and Rodrigo himself. The Orquesta Nacional (National Orchestra), in their first ever concert abroad after having been created by the Comisaría de Música, performed the concerto under the direction of Ernesto Halffter, with Leopoldo Querol as the soloist.

The context in which the work was performed was certainly very telling of the way in which the Franco regime saw the work. Since its beginning, the Franco regime had made use of musical exchanges with Germany and Italy as a way to promote mutual friendship and to create pro-Axis support among the Spanish population (see Moreda Rodríguez 2008a, Moreda Rodríguez 2008b). After the friendly relationships with these two countries cooled down in 1942-3, Portugal was one of the few nations which remained loyal to Spain in the international context. Moreover, extensive coverage of the premiere in the Spanish press was also granted by the presence of several newspapers' correspondents in Lisbon. The newspapers' reports labelled the premiere of the concerto as extremely successful, with Federico Sopena (1943, 14<sup>th</sup> April) writing for *Arriba* that 'in two days, all Lisbon has gotten to know Rodrigo.'

The first performance in Madrid took place a month later, again with Querol and the Orquesta Nacional but under the direction of Bartolomé Pérez Casas; reviews –some of which will be discussed later- were unanimously enthusiastic. After first performances in

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<sup>2</sup> Literally, 'Commission of Music.' The Comisaría de Música was founded by the regime in 1939. At first, it was jointly managed by composer Joaquín Turina, pianist José Cubiles and musicologist Nemesio Otaño, but formally Turina was its first commissar. During its first years of existence, the main aim of the Comisaría was to create and manage the Agrupación Musical de Música de Cámara (National Chamber Ensemble) and, specially, the Orquesta Nacional (National Orchestra). Turina was replaced after his death by Antonio de las Heras.

Valencia and Bilbao, the work was played again in Madrid in October 1943, and in February 1944 it was first performed in Barcelona, again with Querol accompanied by the Orquesta Filarmónica de Barcelona and conductor José Sabater, in the context of a tribute to Joaquín Rodrigo during which several other works by him were performed. As has been discussed earlier, the work was next performed by the orchestra of Radio Nacional on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1945 in a program aimed at commemorating the anniversary of Franco's triumph; Querol was again the soloist, with Del Campo conducting Rodrigo's concerto and his own *Ofrenda a los caídos*. The period 1950-1953 also saw several performances in Madrid and elsewhere in Spain, as well as the work's first performance in the Netherlands.

### **Rodrigo on the *Concierto Heroico***

On the occasion of the first performance of the *Concierto Heroico* in Madrid, Rodrigo published in *Pueblo* his own comment of the work (1943, 8<sup>th</sup> May). The document is extremely interesting, as it carefully orchestrates a directly relationship between the composition of the work and the beginning of the Franco regime, but it never states clearly whether the *Concierto* was conceived as a celebration of the Francoist army. Certainly, reading Rodrigo's comment and taking into account the climate of the 1940s, when Franco's victory over the Republican army was still widely celebrated and reminded in a number of ways (as it was the very foundation of the Franco regime), one can understand the critics who unequivocally saw an association between the Civil War and the *Concierto Heroico*, even if such association was never explicitly stated by Rodrigo. In his description of the compositional process, for example, Rodrigo implies that the Civil War made him re-think his conception of the work – however, he never explains how it exactly influenced him. According to Rodrigo's words, he first annotated some ideas for the concerto in 1933 and wrote two tempi in 1935 after pianist Leopoldo Querol – who had recently premiered Ravel's piano concerto in Madrid to great acclaim – agreed to perform the work. 'The years went by

and our Movimiento began,' wrote Rodrigo. 'Things changed enormously and this new age changed the artists as well (...). When I finally decided to fulfil my promise to Querol, what I had written so far, which was more than half of the work, did not appeal to me. I wanted to write another work, and, in the spring of 1940, I started to write notes for a "Concierto Heroico" – nothing less.' Rodrigo seems to imply that the Civil War and the beginning of the Franco regime were crucial in the new approach he adopted when resuming the composition in 1940, choosing the adjective 'heroic' as the title of the concerto precisely at this stage. The adjective had obvious resonances in the European musical tradition, from Beethoven to Debussy, but such associations were not explicitly declared by Rodrigo.

However, in a successive passage of the *Pueblo* article, Rodrigo carefully rejects any programmatic interpretation of his work, arguing that the genre of the concerto itself is incompatible with the introduction of a definite program:

My intention was to write a "concerto" and a music of heroic ambitions, and to evoke (...) a series of poetic images; not even the titles of the different tempi have even the slightest allusion, because this would have been a flagrant betrayal of the "concerto", one of the purest, most abstract and most decorative forms of music. I also wanted the piano to be the hero, and the orchestra (...) to be (...) its stimulus, its impulse to visualize its pianistic deed. It was not difficult for me to understand that 'concerto' and 'heroic' are antagonistic, antithetic terms, but this is precisely the reason why I approached the composition of the work with increased aspirations.

However, one can wonder whether this last disclaimer was of any effectiveness taking into account Rodrigo's own reference to the change in his compositional approach after the end of the Civil War. It was certainly to be expected that the concerto was received by many as a celebratory work, especially in a musical scene which, four years after Franco's victory, still had not seen a significant and successful work celebrating his triumph. The fact that the concerto was first performed in Lisbon, in the context of a musical expedition controlled by the Comisaría de Música and aiming to promote further friendship with Portugal reinforces the view that the work was understood as a national asset, as an export product representative of the image which the Franco regime wished to present abroad. In the next section, the different readings presented by the Spanish musical press after the work's first performance will be discussed.

### ... and music critics on the *Concierto Heroico*

In associating clearly the *Concierto Heroico* with Franco's triumph, the most vocal reviewer was perhaps Víctor Ruiz Albéniz, writing for *Hoja del Lunes* (1943, 8<sup>th</sup> May):

Being as he was in the prime of life, it was natural for this young composer to feel in himself the vibration of the impulse, of the enthusiasm, of the brave sacrifice made by the best among Spanish young men to preserve our civilization, our beliefs and our patriotic sentiment (...). He is, has been and will always be a spiritual fighter, a fighter in heart and soul to defend Spain's greatness to liberate our country from the shame of the Marxist hordes.

To associate Rodrigo with the fight against Marxism was perhaps somehow risky: unlike some of the other critics, in his writings from this time Rodrigo generally avoided open praise towards the Franco regime or explicit criticism towards its enemies. Moreover, he had not taken part in either side of the conflict as a soldier: he spent the war in Germany and France, and he probably would not have been recruited anyway had he remained in Spain, as he was blind. However, by depicting him as a 'spiritual fighter,' Ruiz Albéniz was unequivocally presenting the *Concierto Heroico* as a weapon, even several years after the war had ended and Franco's enemies had been wiped out or subjugated. This link was even sought in the musical content of the work, which Ruiz Albéniz traced back to the military music played in the Francoist army, even if Rodrigo did not make any reference to this in his comment on the work or in subsequent writings:

Very popular accents and sounds, the accents and sounds which the soldiers carried to the front, were the source of the composer's inspiration to weave precise and precious melodies which express the ardour, the impulse, the sublime greatness with which the virile young men of Franco's Spain used to fight.

For the anonymous correspondent of *Informaciones* in Lisbon, the significance of the *Concierto Heroico* was also clearly associated to the Francoist triumph. On the occasion of the first performance of the work in Portugal, he wrote (1943, 7<sup>th</sup> April):

In his new work, the *Concierto Heroico*, Rodrigo thinks of the Spanish young men who, under the Caudillo, have achieved a better fatherland with their faith and their military and heroic sentiments, typical of the best Spain of all times. Now that the work is premiered in Lisbon, all the agencies proclaim great news for music: the apotheotic triumph of a work conceived and written when the blood of our martyrs and heroes was still fresh.

Almost three years after the first performance of the *Concierto Heroico*, Rafael Villaseca (1946, 26<sup>th</sup> February) highlighted once more the link between the work and the Civil War. In an article which analyzed Rodrigo's three concertos (the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, the *Concierto de Estío* and the *Concierto Heroico*), Villaseca stated that the latter evoked a general epic sentiment and, not being circumscribed to a definite program, it could be associated to most situations of war, but ultimately it was 'the musical consequence of our Crusade' (referring to the Spanish Civil War). He even associated the four tempi of the work with particular moments of the war: 'the march, the camp, the battle, and the victory, or, in representation, the spur, the sword, the cross, and the laurel.'

However, the identification between the *Concierto Heroico* and the Civil War was by no means uniform at the moment of the concerto's first performance. Some of the critics simply did not make any reference to the Spanish Civil War as the leading motif of the work. Writing for *Informaciones*, Antonio de las Heras (1943, 8<sup>th</sup> May) highlighted the Spanishness of the work and its depiction of the sufferings of war, but without necessarily linking both elements: 'its four tempi are characterized by Spanish themes of great nobility impregnated by a heroic impulse; the intention of the author was to portray the different stages experimented by the human being in the decisive moments of the war.' Conrado del Campo in *El Alcázar* (1943, 8<sup>th</sup> May) and Regino Sáinz de la Maza in *ABC* (1943, 8<sup>th</sup> May) also highlighted, on one hand, the Spanishness of the work, and its depiction of the epic sentiment, but without making any reference to the Civil War.

Without openly contesting those interpretations which saw in the *Concierto Heroico* a celebration of Franco's triumph, Federico Sopeña, writing for *Arriba* (1943, 15<sup>th</sup> May), stated that the work did not follow a programmatic plot, which would be 'an easy platform for a work which has been born with very clear intentions.' The word 'heroico,' in Sopeña's opinion, referred to the fact that 'this is an orchestral work which admits and highlights a piano which is treated unequivocally as a soloist (...). This is not a *piano concertante*, but a happy compromise between the two powers.'

Unlike most of the other critics, Sopeña was also an author of relatively successful and remarkably influential books; this is perhaps the reason why his non-political reading of the *Concierto heroico* has survived to our days, probably influencing some of the contemporary musicologists who will be discussed subsequently. Sopeña, born in 1917 and therefore very young when he started his career as the music critic for *Arriba* in 1939, was instrumental in presenting Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez* (first performed in 1940) as the most relevant musical event of the post-war years, and Rodrigo as the new major Spanish composer in a time in which many of the promising young composers of the pre-Civil War years (Julián Bautista, Salvador Bacarisse, Gustavo Pittaluga) had exiled due to political reasons. In 1946, Sopeña authored a monograph about Rodrigo (*Joaquín Rodrigo*, 1946) which precisely continued with this process of canonization of the composer – who was only 45 years of age at this time. In chapter 7 of the work, entirely devoted to the *Concierto Heroico*, Sopeña denies that the work is programmatic, stating that 'in this work there is no literary suggestion at all, not even implicit allusions: it is only the product of the concept imposed by the title and the moment in which Europe lives.' He furthered his assertions by writing that the work is governed by its 'circumstances', but not in any case by any 'political circumstances': the work, according to Sopeña, was a consequence of a sentiment of the European audiences 'who wanted to sit down and dream, not to be confused with wit or unrest.'

A number of modern interpretations of the *Concierto Heroico* have vehemently denied that the concerto has any political implications, but such interpretations fail to properly discuss the composer's ambiguous comment on his work, or the reasons which made it so attractive to the Franco regime, to the point of using it in a celebratory manner (in the Lisbon expedition and the Radio Nacional concert), which, in my view, are crucial to understand the reception of the work, regardless of Rodrigo's own formulation of his intentions. This is what Antonio Gallego does in *El arte de Joaquín Rodrigo* (2003), a work which, rather than an academic and well-documented biography, can be described as a profusely illustrated album

containing highly personal comments on the works and life of the composer. He states that the work 'failed' because it did not reach the relevance of the *Concierto de Aranjuez*, and 'what is worst, Rodrigo's work became unjustly linked to the Franco regime, which did not do anything for him except to edit half a dozen songs in 1945.' He attributed the politicization of the work to the name of the concerto: 'But the election of the adjective 'heroic' was a tremendous mistake, and nobody believed the late dedication 'to the ruins of Sagunto,' his hometown' (2003, p. 84). Similarly, in *Joaquín Rodrigo. Su obra para piano* (1996, p. 18), Antonio Iglesias (who was Sub-Commissar of Music and advisor to the Fine Arts Ministry under Franco) tried to depoliticize the concerto, writing that:

There were all sorts of comments about the first performance of Joaquín Rodrigo's work; many of us were amazed by its intrinsic strength. Of course, some of the comments were political in nature, and, owing to the era in which the concerto was written, had made it to our time. But it is only a malicious rumour, instigated by the words a critic wrote after the work's first performance in Madrid.<sup>3</sup>

Marta Rodríguez Cuervo (2005, p. 106) quotes Iglesias' text to explain 'the impact which Rodrigo's second concerto caused after its performance, the reception of the work in the following year and, in my opinion, the causes why a composition of the scope of this project has not had the presence which it should have in Spanish symphony music.' Although Rodríguez Cuervo reproduces many of the reviews of the first performances of the concerto, she does not explain the reasons why the political reading of the work was plausible and indeed successful. It is also puzzling that a work which in its title claims to offer an 'analytical study' of the *Concierto Heroico* then devotes less than half of its extension to the said analysis; we can only speculate whether the decision to announce a focus on the *Concierto's* analytical aspects is a way to elude the problems which surround its reception, in the context of a book which is highly critical of the view of Rodrigo as a composer promoted or protected by the Franco regime: in its introduction, Suárez-Pajares states that Rodrigo is not better positioned than others to be considered the 'official' composer of the post-War years: he names Del Campo (with the *Ofrenda a los caídos*), Juan Tellería (the composer of

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<sup>3</sup> Iglesias is probably referring to Ruiz Albéniz's comment, which is the most politically charged.

the *Cara al sol*, the hymn of the Falange, the fascist party of the regime) or film composers who worked for the national film industry such as José Muñoz Molleda.

A further modern example of this trend to de-politicize the concerto can be seen in pianist Joaquín Achúcarro's 1995 edition of the work, which slightly modified Rodrigo's work by taking out some of the piano cadenzas and introducing other modifications. Achúcarro's version was first performed in 1996 in Valencia and then recorded in 1997 by Achúcarro himself for Sony, with the approval of the composer. The title of *Concierto Heroico* was changed to the more innocuous *Concierto para piano* (Piano concerto) in both the edition and the recording, without any explanation whatsoever, although this is certainly not consonant with Rodrigo's habitude to name its concertos (*Concierto de Aranjuez*, *Concierto de Estío*, *Concierto Madrigal*, *Concierto Andaluz*) rather to refer to them by the name of the soloist instrument. This name change certainly obliterates the reference to Beethoven's, Chopin's, or Debussy's 'heroic' works, but also makes it more difficult to understand some of the critics' references to the triumphal Francoist army. However, another change was introduced that reinforced the association of the work with war: instead of the dedication to Leopoldo Querol of the 1946 edition of the score, the work is here dedicated to 'Sagunto, my hometown, to whose ruins I have dedicated this concerto.'

This dedication to Sagunto – to which Rodrigo already referred in an interview in 1967 (Arazo, 1967)– can be considered to be as ambiguous as the composer's comment for *Pueblo* in 1943: it can certainly evoke the destruction of Saguntum after several months of siege at the hands of the Carthaginian troops commanded by Hannibal during the second century B.C., and this is certainly the explanation that some of the program notes of the performances of the concerto during the early 1990s seem to privilege. But it also has another, more interesting, reading: between 1937 and 1939, this town in Eastern Spain was repeatedly bombed by the Francoist army and left in ruins – an episode which was still tremendously recent at the time of the *Concierto Heroico*'s composition and which undoubtedly had some kind of emotional impact on Rodrigo, whose family still lived there



during the Civil War. Thus the relatively inoffensive and irrelevant allusion to the Carthaginian siege may become a lament for the destruction of Sagunto during the Spanish Civil War, and thus be considered comparable, perhaps, to Picasso's *Gernika* in its denounce of the crimes of the Francoist side – a reading which was certainly more consonant with modern sensibilities in Spain than was the original interpretation of the concerto as a celebration of Franco's victory. Thus, through the history of its convoluted reception, the *Concierto Heroico* becomes a paradigmatic example of the 'transgressive element' which Edward Said (1992, pp. 70) identified in music as the 'nomadic ability to attach itself to, or become a part of, social formations, to vary its articulations and rhetoric depending on the occasion as well as the audience, plus the power and the gender situations in which it takes place.'

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