



Granados and *Goyescas* at the Met: American Reception of a Spanish Opera, and Spanish Perceptions of an American Premiere

Walter Aaron Clark

IN LATE 1915, Enrique Granados journeyed from Spain across the Atlantic to assist in the rehearsals and attend the premiere of his *Goyescas* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, slated for January 1916. This was to be the first Spanish opera on the Met stage, and it aroused intense curiosity and excitement among the press and public in America's leading city. Spanish commentators saw this as a signal honor for one of their own composers and a significant milestone in the progress of Spanish national music. The largely negative reaction of American reviewers to this opera and the aggrandizing manner in which Spanish critics chose to "spin" that reaction tell us much about Spanish-American relations only eighteen years after the war over Cuba. The critical reception of this opera reveals an enduring gulf of misunderstanding between the two nations, one at the beginning of its imperial epoch, and the other, at the end. Moreover, the American premiere of *Goyescas* provided a means by which Spaniards assessed their altered status and identity in a rapidly changing world.

Goyescas was originally a piano suite with a quasi-programmatic structure, inspired by the etchings of Francisco Goya. After its Barcelona premiere in 1911, Granados set about to convert it to an opera, with a libretto by the Madrid journalist and poet Fernando Periquet (1874–1946). Granados hoped that his opera would premiere in Barcelona, at the

Gran Teatre del Liceu. But that proved too difficult to arrange, and he set his sights on Paris, where it was accepted for production in 1914. Unfortunately, with the outbreak of World War One, the Paris premiere had to be postponed indefinitely. Through the efforts of Ernest Schelling (1876–1939), the American piano virtuoso and champion of Granados's music, as well as the firm of G. Schirmer, which had begun to publish the composer's works, the Metropolitan Opera agreed to premiere *Goyescas*.

New York's Spanish-language newspaper *Las novedades* devoted enthusiastic and detailed attention to the *Goyescas* premiere.¹ Though many commentators at the time pointed out that this was to be the first-ever Spanish-language production at the Met, New York was no stranger to musical theater in Spanish.² There was a large Hispanic community (especially Cuban) in New York that regularly patronized zarzuela productions in the city.³ Beyond that, of course, Spain had long since put down roots

¹ Particularly in its issues on December 30, 1915, January 6, 13, 27 and February 3, 10, 17, 24, 1916.

² In a curious historical irony, it was another Spaniard, Manuel García, who introduced Spanish opera (his own, albeit in Italian) to New York, in 1825. We recall that García was the maternal grandfather of Charles de Bériot, Granados's piano teacher in Paris.

³ See Janet Sturman, *Zarzuela: Spanish Operetta, American Stage* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 59–66.



in the American imagination, arts, and letters. *Don Quijote* was one of Thomas Jefferson's favorite books, while a host of nineteenth-century authors explored Spanish history and culture, including William Hickling Prescott, Washington Irving, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Artists taken with Spain included Thomas Eakins, John Singer Sargent, and James McNeil Whistler. The pianist and composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk visited Spain in 1852 and absorbed its musical *ambiente* into several works.⁴ Finally, there was a "surge in U.S. interest" in learning Spanish ca. 1915.⁵

It is perfectly clear from reading Spanish accounts at the time that Granados's mission to the New World was a source of national pride, and regardless of how the Americans actually reacted to him and his music, the Spanish press would remain convinced that this was a great victory for the name of Granados and for the country. *Musical Emporium* crowed triumphantly that "Granados, as did Albéniz before him, has carried to foreign lands the characteristic airs of Spain, that inexhaustible fount of inspiration, in order to popularize and glorify them."⁶ *Goyescas*

⁴A fascinating essay on this phenomenon is found in Carleton Sprague Smith's preface to *Granados and Goyescas. Catalogue of an Exhibition Honoring Enrique Granados and the American Premiere of Goyescas*, the Spanish Institute, May 27–July 9, 1982 (New York: Spanish Institute, 1982). Prescott, of course, wrote a celebrated history of the Spanish conquest. Irving's evocation of the Alhambra, based on his tenure in Spain as American ambassador in the 1840s, is a classic, while Longfellow also spent many months in Spain and translated classics of Spanish literature into English. Velásquez, El Greco, and other Spanish masters profoundly influenced American painters, and Sargent was actually a pupil of the Spanish-oriented Carolus Duran. Sargent's *Jaleo* is one of the most arresting images of flamenco performance ever committed to canvas. Whistler's 1884 portrait of Pablo de Sarasate (*Arrangement in Black*), who toured the U.S. in 1867 and 1889, is likewise a monument to the close connection between the U.S. and Spain, despite the conflict over Cuba.

⁵See James D. Fernández, "Latin America and Spain in U.S. Hispanism," in *Spain in America: The Origins of Hispanism in the United States*, ed. Richard L. Kagan (Urbana and Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 124–25. Educators demanded increased emphasis on Spanish because they felt the nation's future lay more with the Hispanic realm than with the warring European countries.

⁶"El estreno de *Goyescas* en Nueva York." *Musical Emporium* 9/76 (January–February 1916): 4–5. "Granados, como lo hizo antes Albéniz, ha llevado al extranjero, para popularizarlos y glorificarlos, los aires características de España, fuente de inagotable inspiración." "Un pasado de grandeza, con grandeza perdido, y con grandeza recobrado."

itself represented nothing less than "A history of grandeur: a grandeur lost, and a grandeur recovered," in the arts if not in war. The heroes of peace, then, would henceforth carry the Spanish flag of "blood and gold ever farther," even as the bold conquistadors had done in an earlier epoch.⁷

In the battles waged by artists, however, there would be no losers, only winners. *Las novedades* declared New York "proud to open its arms to Spain, which arrives in fraternal fashion, covered in august splendors." This was post-colonial Spain, not the "old" one of Cortés and Pizarro, but a "new and improved" one of Cervantes, Calderón, Velázquez, Sorolla, and yes, Granados.⁸ Of course, such reports were gross exaggerations, and we shall see that the opera received at best a mixed reception. Why all the jingoistic chest-thumping? Clearly, recognition by the U.S. meant a very great deal to Spain at this difficult time in its history, when its national self-esteem was wobbly and in need of propping up. The disastrous war with the very same U.S. had been the chief catalyst for this crisis of self-confidence, yet nowhere in any of this reportage is there the slightest hint of recrimination or bitterness, or even recollection of that event only eighteen years earlier.⁹

For his part, Granados was on a mission. He informed the U.S. press upon his arrival (in a way that struck many as rather haughty) that Americans were entirely misinformed about the music of his country, and he was here to set them straight: "For you, like so many other people, . . . know nothing of the real musical contributions of Spain. The musical interpretation of Spain is not to be found in tawdry *boleros* and *habaneras*, in Moszkowski, in *Carmen*, in anything that has sharp dance rhythms accompanied by tambourines or castanets. The music of my

⁷Red and yellow are the colors of the Spanish flag; *plus ultra*, "ever farther," is the motto on the flag.

⁸This is a partial quote, partial paraphrase of the Alfonso de Castilla article, "España Aquí," *Las novedades*, January 27, 1916, 6. "Porque así es, se enorgullece Nueva York de abrir sus brazos a España, que llega, fraternal, envuelta en resplandores augustos."

⁹Many Spaniards blamed their own government for stumbling into the debacle, and the army and navy for losing the war. As Donald M. Goldstein et al. point out in *The Spanish-American War: The Story and Photographs* (Washington: Brassey's, 1998), 166, "Spaniards in general seemed to bear no malice toward the Americans and appeared relieved that the war had ended and Spain had been freed from the crushing financial and personnel cost of maintaining reluctant colonies."

nation is far more complex, more poetic and subtle."¹⁰ He was expressing justifiable national pride and understandable national exasperation at the persistent stereotyping of Spanish culture by foreigners.¹¹ There was much truth to what he said. But the U.S. had a chip on its own shoulder: it was used to being looked down upon by Europeans as a land that could scarcely be called civilized, a realm of cowboys, Indians, and buffaloes on the outermost periphery of high culture. Granados touched a nerve, which he did not intend to do, by suggesting he had come to educate the heathen. Savaging *Carmen*, one of the most popular operas ever, did not help his cause at all. He would pay dearly for this.¹²

The cast featured the American soprano Anna Fitzu in the role of Rosario. Granados had wanted the Spaniard Lucrezia Bori to create that role, but she was unavailable due to throat surgery. Fitzu was no stranger to Spanish music, though, as she had studied Spanish in Madrid and performed at the Teatro Real there and at the Liceu in Barcelona, during the 1913–14 season. Fernando's role was interpreted by Giovanni Martinelli, while Pepa and Paquiro were played by Flora Perini and Giuseppe de Luca, respectively. Granados had hoped that La Argentina would be able to dance in it, but other engagements prevented this.¹³ Rosina Galli took her place and created

¹⁰Herbert F. Peyser, "Granados Here for Production of Goyescas," *Musical America* 23 (December 25, 1915): 4.

¹¹*Carmen* has been an irritant to many Spanish artists. Teresa Berganza wrote notes in the program for a 1977 production of the opera at the Edinburgh Festival, in which she sang the lead. Her anguished commentary reveals the same misgivings Granados had: "My greatest wish... is to... erase for good from the public's mind and imagination the false idea of *Carmen*... I shall... do my best to present to the public the image of a real Spain." Cited in James Parakilas, "How Spain Got a Soul," in *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998), 163.

¹²Actually, newspaper accounts differ as to his exact words, though not his general meaning. He would have spoken through an interpreter, and this permitted multiple interpretations. For instance, an undated clipping (gotten through the Internet reproduction service ProQuest) from an unidentified New York newspaper, entitled simply "Enrique Granados Arrives," put these words in his mouth: "[Foreign artists] have given the impression to the American people that Spanish songs are jingly and that the dances are performed in a jumpy manner of the twanging of a guitar." This certainly took the onus off audiences in the U.S., who were helpless victims of foreign "misinterpretation" of Spanish culture, by performers who "do not understand the language or the people."

¹³Novelist John Milton, *The Fallen Nightingale* (Edina, MN: Swan Books), 455–57, is of the opinion that La Argentina was

a sensation in her "Fandango de candil," which she danced with Giuseppe Bonafiglio. Gaetano Bava-gnoli conducted. Ironically, not a single Spaniard appeared among the cast of this, the first Spanish opera at the Met.

The premiere took place on January 28, 1916. Since its duration was only about an hour, it was paired with another opera: Leoncavallo's *Ipagliacci*, starring Enrico Caruso, who penned an impromptu caricature of Granados. At subsequent performances, *Goyescas* shared the stage with Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* or Humperdinck's *Hansel und Gretel*. Many of New York's elite were in attendance, including the Kahns, Vanderbilts, Mackays, and Whitneys, as well as the Spanish ambassador, Juan Riaño Gayangos, the wife of New York's governor, and a large group from the local Spanish community. Appropriately, Amparo donned the garb of the *maja*, replete with black lace and green velvet. There was standing room only, and "ecstatic bravos" erupted when Granados appeared on stage, clad in a "biscuit-colored waist coat." After the show, Gustav White of Schirmer hosted a dinner at Sherry's, a famous eatery in New York, to honor the Spanish composer.¹⁴

The sets were among the most beautiful ever placed on the Metropolitan stage. Designer Antonio Rovescalli had gone to Madrid to view Goya's paintings for inspiration, while the costumes were the result of Periquet's study of fashion plates at the National Archeological Museum in Madrid.¹⁵ Granados himself was ecstatic about the entire affair. He had written to writer Gabriel Miró on January 9

elbowed out of the production by Bonafiglio, whose mistress and future second wife was Galli. La Argentina had traveled from Argentina to New York before learning this news, however, and had to be consoled with another performance. This was a source of embarrassment to Granados.

¹⁴Douglas Riva, on p. 20 of the English manuscript version of his entry on Granados in *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana*, ed. Emilio Casares (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores, 1999–2002). This version is lengthier than the published entry and contains more information.

¹⁵The much-maligned Periquet must be given his due in this regard. He devoted meticulous and devoted study to getting this aspect of the production right. The materials he collected are in the library of the Hispanic Society of America. Contained in a volume entitled "Decorado. Vestuario. Accesorios," and dated Madrid June 1914, they include typewritten indications for sets in each scene as well as photos of San Antonio de la Florida and other locales, postcards of Goya's paintings (*El pelele*, *La maja vestida*, *La maja y los embozados*), shots of mannequins in period dress from the National Archeological Museum in Madrid, as well as examples of *literas* and *calesas*.



that "I have landed on my feet here. There is a magnificent atmosphere."¹⁶ Now he breathlessly declared to the local press: "I had been told the American public is cold, but its enthusiasm tonight has overwhelmed me. This is a serious work and not written to coax applause, but the listeners took every occasion to express their approval. The performance was wonderful. There is not an opera house in all Europe that could equal to-night's presentation."¹⁷ Years later Casals recalled that "I have never witnessed such an explosion of enthusiasm in the theatre. The audience not only applauded like mad but were crying at the same time. This audience was mostly composed of the Spanish and South American colony in New York, and they were therefore able to understand the real character of the work."¹⁸

So, why did *Goyescas* run for only five performances? Rumors circulated that Met general manager Giulio Gatti-Casazza "was not at all in sympathy with [the] work" and deprecated Granados's presumptuous comparison of his opera with Bizet's. Another factor contributing to the opera's early demise on the Met's stage was the fact that the fifth and final performance, on March 6, was wholly unsatisfactory, due largely to Bavagnoli's inappropriate tempos. He seems simply not to have understood the work, but he was also an ineffective conductor, and the 1915–16 season was his first and last at the Met. Granados had invited Ignacy Paderewski, Schelling, and critic Henry Finck to the performance, hoping that it would be the best of the five. Instead, as Finck remembered, Granados spent one of the longest hours of his life, "with a look of annoyance and . . . anguish in his face whenever the conductor made a blunder in the choice of his tempo. [Granados's] hands nervously indicated the right tempo, but I was the only person who could see those distressed hands."¹⁹

However, a survey of the press reaction makes it clear that the libretto's transparent lack of dramatic quality was primarily at fault. One reviewer stated

¹⁶ "He caído de pie aquí. Hay una atmosfera magnífica." This letter is in the Archivo Familia Gabriel Miró.

¹⁷ "Goyescas," Spanish opera, has world premiere here," *New York Herald*, January 29, 1916, 12.

¹⁸ J. Ma. Corredor, *Conversations with Casals*, trans. André Mangeot (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1956), 165.

¹⁹ Henry T. Finck, *Musical Progress* (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1923), 73.

that "*Goyescas* is an infantile production compared with *Carmen* . . . *Goyescas* would benefit from a few of the shortcomings which he seems to have detected in *Carmen*."²⁰ Nearly all commentators have blamed Periquet—who returned to Spain after the second performance—for the opera's early exit, because he had written such an inferior book. But it is only fair to remember that Granados had composed his score first and then compelled Periquet to apply a text to it, note for note. In fact, regardless of the librettist Granados was working with, what he produced in all of his operas were static *tableaux vivants*—charming, colorful, evocative, and seductive, but dramatically comatose. Periquet was not solely to blame.

It is also important to bear in mind that the New York critics had little or no knowledge of the dramatic model for Periquet's little play, which was not really Goya at all but rather Ramón de la Cruz. As Joseph Jones puts it, "The reviewers' descriptions of *Goyescas*—both bad and good—might apply with few changes to Ramón de la Cruz's *sainetes*, which have inconsequential plots because their dramatic impact depends not on character development but on the fast-paced interaction of types and groups."²¹ Another obstacle was that the title of the opera really made no sense, because the term *Goyesca* was a neologism for which there is no adequate English translation (the best is "Goya-esque"). And Schirmer's adaptation of the Spanish title, converting *Goyesca: Literas y calesas, o Los majos enamorados* ("Goyesca: Chaises and Sedan Chairs, or the Majos in Love") into *Goyescas, or The Rival Lovers* made for a colossal non sequitur. Not only was the term "Goyescas" mysterious, but what rival lovers had to do with it was anybody's guess.

For many reasons, then, the New York critics were downright scathing, even sarcastic, in their assessment of the work. In regards to the considerable effort required to mount a Spanish opera, the *New York Herald* asked rhetorically, "Was it worth all that? Hardly." It found fault with the opera's proportions—the third tableau was longer than the other two combined, and without any good reason, as the outcome is a foregone conclusion—and in general the authors "seem to have little sense of the values of dramatic action, little idea of proportion of various

²⁰ Cited in Riva, "Granados" [English], 21.

²¹ Jones, "Recreating Eighteenth-century Musical Theater" (Spring 2001): 145.

incidents," all of which pointed to "little real experience in the theatre."²² *Opera News* opined that "in *Goyescas*, the composer is everything, the poet little else than a running commentary on the music."²³ Another title put it more simply: "Opera in Spanish, First Sung Here, Fails to Impress: 'Goyescas' a Series of Tapestry Pictures, Lacking in True Character and Without Real Consistency."²⁴

The most acerbic critique came from another reviewer, who thought it "incredible that any composer should delude himself at this date with so hypothetical a notion as that a series of pictures strung together on the slenderest thread of a story would suffice to sustain interest or compel sympathy." Though Goya was potentially a very engaging and dramatic subject for an opera, the "dramatic technique displayed [in *Goyescas*] is puerile." This was no accident, for in fact Periquet's theory of drama was that a libretto should be so simple even a child could understand it. And again one hastens to point out that Periquet's mediocrity was exacerbated by the strictures placed upon him by Granados. In one scene, the antagonists agree to a duel in the course of four notes and syllables. Periquet had pleaded for more music in which to develop this, but Granados would not relent. Thus, the scene was singled out by this reviewer for its "surprisingly maladroit under-emphasis."²⁵ The *New York Tribune* cut to the heart of the matter: Periquet was "led more by his intention to supply a word for each note than by the dramatic demand to express the meaning of the music in appropriate language. By this crowding of words to short notes the vocal parts become instrumental."²⁶

The Spanish press was willfully blind to this negative reaction. *La esfera*, for example, marveled that "The most authoritative critics have devoted encomiastic articles to Granados's opera in which

they acknowledge the outstanding qualities of the music of *Goyescas*." True, the music of the opera had received praise. Perhaps *La esfera* was not indulging in hyperbole when it claimed that "the triumph of Granados in New York is of capital importance for Spanish music."²⁷ But this was still a fallacious argument, as it focused only on the good and ignored the bad. Other journalists adopted the same technique. The editors at *Revista musical catalana* enumerated all the positive things North American critics said and bowdlerized the press reports of anything negative.²⁸ This sort of whitewash continued for decades after the premiere. In 1966 one authority offered up the tired canard that in America, *Goyescas* had achieved "an absolute unanimity among the critics."²⁹

To be sure, some Spanish commentators were only too aware of the tepid response to *Goyescas* on the part of most New York critics; but their response was still defensive and evasive of the actual cause of the problems. Adolfo Salazar expatiated on one critique in particular, a January 29, 1916, review in the *New York Glass*. As Salazar relates it, the North American critic professed a familiarity with Spanish music not through direct experience but rather through the works of Chabrier, Debussy, Laparra, and Zandonai. He found that *Goyescas*, by contrast, exuded insufficient "local color," and was hence something of a disappointment. Of course, Granados had striven mightily to create a convincing ambience precisely through local color, but as Salazar pointed out, "the foreign conception of *españolismo* is something indistinguishable from a watered-down *andalucismo*," which finds a ready audience outside Spain.³⁰

For foreigners, the conflation of Spain and Andalusia was routine, and musically the entire country and all its regional folkloric traditions were

²² "New Grenados [sic] Opera; Mme. Barrientos' Debut Here," *New York Herald*, January 30, 1916, 11.

²³ Vernon Grenville, "New York Hears Its First Spanish Opera," *The Opera News* 7/13 (February 5, 1916): 2. On p. 5 of this article, we learn that "a most disagreeable claque" disrupted the premiere, though the audience "gave every evidence of pleasure, and called the artists, the composer," et al. for repeated curtain calls.

²⁴ In the *World* of January 29, 1916.

²⁵ "'Goyescas' in World Premiere: A Fair Success," clipping without periodical title or date in NYPL file on Granados and *Goyescas* in New York.

²⁶ Cited in Riva, "Granados" [English version], 20.

²⁷ R. V., "La ópera 'Goyescas,'" *La esfera* 3/177 (March 25, 1916): n.p. "Los críticos mas autorizados ... consagran artículos encomiásticos á la obra de Granados en los que reconocen las cualidades salientes de la música de *Goyescas*." "[E]l triunfo de Granados en Nueva York es de una importancia capital para la música española."

²⁸ See, for instance, the Niagara Falls of American encomiums that roars over the pages of *Lively* [sic], "Les *Goyescas* a Nova York," *Revista musical catalana*, 13 (March 1916): 78-83.

²⁹ Pablo Vila San-Juan, *Papeles íntimos de Enrique Granados* (Barcelona: Amigos de Granados, 1966), 87.

³⁰ Adolfo Salazar, "'Goyescas' y el 'color local,'" *Revista musical hispano-americana* 3 (April 30, 1916), 9. "[E]l criterio extranjero del *españolismo* es algo inseparable de un *andalucismo* chirle."



collapsed to flamenco and the *jota*. Salazar believed that any work presenting other regional styles, either Castilian or Basque or Valencian, would run the risk of boring the foreign listener through his "incapacity to perceive in them the various gradations of 'local color.'" He concluded in Granados's defense that the composer, as a "true artist," had been above banal conventions, altogether too accommodating to a superficial critique and poor taste."³¹ Rogelio Villar ascribed some of the blame, however, to native composers themselves: "When Spanish composers propose to create a national art, they feel and express a conventional Andalusianism or erroneous Arabism or Orientalism. Granados... does not need to resort to Andalusian music, though at times he employs its phrases and rhythms." As a result, Villar thought Granados "the most original of present-day Spanish composers."³²

In this commentary we get downwind of a disdain towards the Andalusian manner that lurks in Spanish (often Catalanian) attempts to define or refine national identity. A Granados pupil wrote years after the master's death that Granados's nationalist essays walked a fine line, that too much folklorism posed the real danger of "lapsing into vulgarity... a bit too much emphasis on a particular effect, a bit more symmetry in a given phrase, a bit too obvious an evocation of the accordion or the guitar, and the work would be converted into a zarzuela number."³³ Heaven forbid! Frank Marshall made such apprehensions more pointed, rooting them in class and ethnicity: "[Granados's] Spanishness is far removed from that of Andalusia: this Spanishness is devoid of coarseness, of violent expressions, of exultation and drama. Instead, Granados manages to capture all the elegance, subtlety, and aristocracy of eighteenth-

century Spain... He stylized, transformed, and polished the folklore of his music."³⁴

Such opinions about Andalusia were no doubt affected by the mass migration of poor Andalusians into Barcelona in the twentieth century. Though Catalans were fascinated with certain aspects of Andalusian culture, the increasing presence of Andalusians themselves colored the view of the Catalan upper bourgeoisie towards the entire region. Naturally, the issue of race lurked in the background. Andalusians represented a suspect and bastardized mélange of Gypsy, Moorish, Jewish, and European bloodlines that many associated with racial decadence. Whatever the case, Andalusian music was viewed as coarse, violent, and dramatic in an undesirable way. It required transformation and refinement before being acceptable in polite company. Above and beyond that, of course, is the fact that "Andalusian" music means specifically flamenco, the art of Gypsies and other lower-class, marginalized groups. Social attitudes about these groups are ultimately inseparable from the kind of nationalist discourse Marshall presents here. For Marshall and many others, Spain is a land of aristocratic refinement and grace, not of coarseness and violence. That it embraced and embraces both was apparently not a comforting thought. And yet Goya, whom all revered as the oracular voice of *casticismo*, fully understood the stark contrasts and contradictions in Spanish culture and history. How could they have idolized Goya and denied the very things Goya had to say about the enduring realities of Spain, its life and its people?

All of this reflects the continuing uncertainty and uneasiness about Spain's identity that forms much of the overall context in which we must place Granados's music. It also reflects the social realities of traditional Spanish society. For middle-class types like Granados and Marshall, upward mobility was the name of the game, to put distance between oneself and the lower classes and strive towards a greater emulation of the elite. In the view of some, the *majas* were very much in need of the sublimation Granados provided:

The *maja* of Granados was not the sexy and brazen woman of the slums, whose physical appeal could suffer

³¹ Ibid., 10. "[I]ncapacidad de percibir suficientemente en ellas las gradaciones del 'color local.'" "[E]ncima de banales convenciones, demasiado cómodas para una crítica superficial o un gusto fácil."

³² Rogelio Villar, "El estreno de Goyescas," *La esfera* 3/108 (January 22, 1916): n.p. "Los compositores españoles, cuando se proponen hacer arte nacional, sienten y se expresan... en un andaluz convencional o en un arabismo u orientalismo falso. Granados... no necesita recurrir a la música andaluza, aunque algunas veces emplee sus giros y ritmos." "[A]ctualmente el compositor español más original."

³³ Guillermo de Boladeres Ibern, *Enrique Granados: Recuerdos de su vida y estudio crítico de sus obras por su antiguo discípulo* (Barcelona: Editorial Arte y Letras, 1921), 140.

³⁴ Cited in Albert McGrigor, "The Catalan Piano School," liner notes for *The Catalan Piano Tradition*, sound recording no. 109 (International Piano Archives. New York: Desmar, 1970).

greatly from her insolent manner of speaking and her crude gestures. Rather, his was an aristocratic *maja* [thinking, no doubt, of the XIII Duchess of Alba] who, though dressed in a popular style, knew how to refine that which was plebian, elevating it to the category of the exquisite.³⁵

Granados echoed these sentiments in an interview with the *Christian Science Monitor*: "It is possible for a musician to take what is insignificant in the way of melody and to organize it until it becomes poetic and distinguished. He can keep the original rhythm, but can endow it with thought."³⁶ In other words, popular rhythms, though otherwise "undistinguished," could be sublimated through the intellect and transformed into suitable concert material. As one New York reviewer observed, Granados was "a man of extreme gentleness and modesty, but his music pulsates with wild emotions, fantastic rhythms and daring harmonies." There was a discomfiting contradiction here that the reviewer had somehow to reconcile: "It is built on Spanish dance instinct but with the skill of a highly trained musician."³⁷ His "instinct" was tamed and sublimated by intellectual skill and disciplined training, it had become "upwardly mobile" and risen from the lower to upper classes. There is something almost Freudian in such commentary, as if the proletarian id required sublimation by the bourgeois superego.

Regardless of the critical reaction to his opera, both pro and con, *Goyescas* was the highlight of Granados's trip to the New World. Granados had every reason to feel good about his success in New York, despite obvious disappointments. He had made, for him, a small fortune, in the neighborhood of \$4,000 from the Met production, and several thousand more from the recordings he made for the Aeolian Co. The publication of his music and his public recitals also netted him substantial amounts. In addition to the \$5,100 he had received as a gift from his friends, this represented a dramatic shift in his finances. It truly seemed that he had turned an important corner in his career, that the years of penury and struggle, difficult though they had been, had paid off and were now a thing of the past.

³⁵ José Subirá, *Enrique Granados: Su producción musical su madriñismo su personalidad artística* (Madrid: Zoila Ascasibar, 1926), 21.

³⁶ Cited in Riva, "Granados" [English], 17.

³⁷ Cited in *ibid.*, 20.

As is well known, Granados and his wife never completed their return voyage to Spain. After spending a few days in London, they took a cross-channel ferry from Folkestone, intending to catch a French train to Barcelona after landing at Dieppe. However, their vessel, the *Sussex*, was struck by a German torpedo. Though the ship remained afloat and made it to harbor, the Granadoses had panicked and gotten into the water, where they drowned.

The Chicago Grand Opera Co. presented a couple of scenes from it in May of 1916. One review concluded that the score was "[n]ot great, epoch-making music but music of spontaneous charm, the expression of a man who believed something and had both the courage and the skill to set it down."³⁸ Los Angeles was also interested in the opera³⁹ as was Boston, which would have to wait until 1982 to see it.

Goyescas continues to be performed in the United States, but only occasionally. The truth is that American critics never really warmed up to it. Decades later the premiere, in 1969, Herbert Weinstock dismissed the opera as a "protracted Spanish bore.... I shall feel no sense of deprivation if forced to wait [many] more years before hearing *Goyescas* again."⁴⁰ *New York Times* critic Harold Schonberg felt the conclusion was especially ineffective: "The whole thing is clumsily done."⁴¹ Ellen Pfeifer said of the Boston revival in 1982, "Unfortunately...there appears to be good reason for the opera's obscurity....this work is full of hot air, of musical wool-gathering."⁴² Periquet's dictum about the ideal libretto never

³⁸ Untitled review of May 27, 1916, in the file on *Goyescas* and Granados in New York Public Library.

³⁹ In Barcelona's Museu de la Música, fons Granados, is a February 23, 1916, telegram to Granados and Periquet from Florencio Constantino asking what the Met would charge for sets and costumes to bring *Goyescas* to Los Angeles and "under what conditions yourself would agree to come. Old Spanish Californians enthusiastic to greet eminent author." Their manager, Antonia Sawyer, wired on February 29 that the Met would charge \$600 and Granados, \$5000. Constantino wired back on March 1 wanting to know the cost of six performances guaranteed in May. For many reasons, this never happened.

⁴⁰ Herbert Weinstock, "America," *Opera* 20 (1969): 497-98. He reviewed a production by the Opera Theater of the Manhattan School of Music.

⁴¹ Harold C. Schonberg, "Colorful World of Old Spain," *New York Times*, March 15, 1969. This was a performance by the Little Orchestra Society.

⁴² Ellen Pfeifer, "Boston Concert Opera: Granados's *Goyescas*," *High Fidelity/Musical America* 32 (1982): 32.



gained any credibility either: "The story, a model of simplicity in the worst sense, lends itself to many awkwardnesses."⁴³ However, virtually all Spanish sources continue to portray the Goyescas premiere as an unqualified success, perhaps because to suggest otherwise would be to show disrespect for the work's composer, whose "triumph" had such a tragic conclusion.

Nonetheless, the truth is that the opera *Goyescas* is not Granados's finest work, musically or dramatically. Still, its local color and relatively short length make it an attractive diversion from the standard repertoire. As we have seen, American criticism of

the opera reflects not only an accurate appraisal of its shortcomings, but a more serious undercurrent of incomprehension of its cultural origins. The Spanish reaction reflected national insecurity and uncertainty about the country's post-colonial role in the world. This incomprehension is reflected in the ongoing tensions between the Anglo and Hispanic realms, between the United States and its erstwhile colonial adversary Spain.

⁴³ Harvey E. Phillips, "Reports: New York," *Opera News* 33 (1968-69): 24. This is a review of the same Manhattan School of Music production that Weinstock stoically endured.