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A ‘SPANISH VOICE’ IN THE INTERNATIONAL AVANT-GARDE ‘COUNTERPOINT’

The First Years of the Spanish Section of the ISCM During Francoism (1955–1960)

Introduction

In June 1951, the Spanish music journal *Ritmo* featured a report in its monthly issue highlighting the alleged ‘mistrust’ of composers towards the recent activities of the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM).¹ It explicitly drew on the harsh criticisms expressed by Peter Gradenwitz a few months earlier. The German-Israeli musicologist had denounced the ISCM for its ineffective methods and Eurocentrism, describing its international character as “a myth”, stating that, “as long as the international festivals do not offer a cross-section of contemporary trends and schools and a survey of music in the member-countries”, it cannot be considered truly international.² Despite these objections, the journal’s editorial acknowledged the ISCM’s “beneficial role” for contemporary music, as it remained the leading international forum for the exchange, performance, and dissemination of new repertoires. It was, as Giles Masters aptly put it, a real “transnational network”³ from which Spain had been absent since the ISCM resumed its activities in 1946.

This absence stands in sharp contrast to the regular inclusion of works by Spanish composers in the annual ISCM festivals in earlier decades, which saw figures such as Manuel de Falla and Gaspar Cassadó featured in 1923 and 1925 respectively. Even during the so-called 1922 “nulltes” (“zeroth”) festival, which marked the founding of the ISCM, Spanish composers like Falla and Adolfo Salazar were represented. This active participation went on through the 1920s and 1930s and was not interrupted by the Spanish Civil War. Remarkably, the Republican government managed to promote modern Spanish music throughout those turbulent years, ensuring its presence at ISCM festivals. Thus, Spanish works were performed in Paris (1937: Joaquim Homs: *Duo for flute and clarinet*; Josep Valls: *Concerto for String Quartet and Orchestra*),

1 Cf. Anon: “¿Por qué la Sociedad Internacional de Música Contemporánea no goza de la confianza de los compositores?”, in: *Ritmo* XXI/236 (1951), pp. 3–4.

2 Peter Gradenwitz: “The I.S.C.M. in Decline”, in: *The Music Review* XI/4 (1950), pp. 304–307, here p. 305.

3 Giles Masters: “Performing Internationalism: The ISCM as a ‘Musical League of Nations’”, in: *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 147/2 (2022), pp. 4–26, here p. 5.

London (1938: Julián Bautista: *Tres ciudades*; Roberto Gerhard: *Albada, interludi i dansa*; Joaquín Nin-Culmell: *Piano Quintet*), and Warsaw (1939: Homs again: *String Quartet no. 1*).

The prominence of Catalan-born composers in this list is not surprising, given the growing international stature of Roberto Gerhard, who served as a member of the ISCM international juries in 1937 and 1939 and was, at that time, vice-chairman of one of the committees of the Spanish Section of the ISCM. The Spanish Section itself had been established during the 1920s, spearheaded by Falla and the conductor Enrique Fernández Arbós,⁴ under a dual structure. On one side was a ‘Madrid committee’, led by music critic Adolfo Salazar, who acted as its secretary. On the other was a ‘Barcelona committee’, organised as a private association⁵ of composers based in Catalan-speaking regions, including Catalonia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands.

Although the ‘Madrid committee’ was initially conceived as early as 1922, and formally approved a year later, it had yet to function effectively as a national section by 1928.⁶ By contrast, the ‘Barcelona committee’ progressed more rapidly, requiring only a year and a half – from November 1926 to June 1928 – to draft and secure approval for its statutes. This dual structure of the ISCM-Spanish Section remained in place until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. Evidence of this can be found in the identifiers “Spain-Catalonia” and “Spain-Madrid”, which were used to denote the origin of the Spanish composers whose works were performed at the 1936 ISCM festival in Barcelona. As I will briefly show later, the dual structure was still under debate when negotiations to reactivate the ISCM-Spanish Section were resumed.

Building on the foundational and still significant pioneer study by Anton Haefeli,⁷ recent scholarship has approached the ISCM’s history – particularly its pre-Second World War period – from diverse and wide-ranging perspectives.⁸ Within this

4 Cf. Francisco J. Giménez-Rodríguez: “Manuel de Falla’s Music in Letters: Nationalism, Internationalism, and Modernism in his Correspondence with Enrique F. Arbós (1916–1939)”, in: *Music & Letters* 100/1 (2019), pp. 61–98, here pp. 84–91.

5 Cf. Anon: “L’Associació de Música Contemporània de Barcelona”, in: *Revista musical catalana* XXV/297 (1928), pp. 332–333.

6 Cf. Ad[olfo] S.[alazar]: “Vida musical – La representación española en la Asociación Internacional de Música Contemporánea”, in: *El Sol* (Madrid), 17 October 1928, p. 2.

7 Cf. Anton Haefeli: *Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (IGNM). Ihre Geschichte von 1922 bis zur Gegenwart*. Zürich: Atlantis, 1982.

8 Cf. Christiane Sibille: “Harmony must dominate the world”. *Internationale Organisationen und Musik in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Bern: Diplomatische Dokumente der Schweiz (DDS), 2016 (= Quaderni di Dodis 6), pp. 189–206; Giles Masters: *New-music Internationalism: the ISCM Festival, 1922–1939*. PhD dissertation, King’s College London, 2021; https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/156634738/2021_Masters_Giles_1101346_ethesis.pdf, 17.02.2025; Björn Heile: “Institutionalised Internationalism: The International Society for Contemporary Music”, in: Björn Heile:

body of work, Spain has received only limited attention, mainly due to the scarcity of studies that examine primary sources on the ISCM’s history in Spain in Spanish scholarship, which has only partially addressed specific aspects of this subject, such as Salazar’s role as a commentator on prewar ISCM festivals for the newspaper *El Sol*⁹ or the implications of organising the 1965 Madrid ISCM festival in the highly politicised efforts to promote avant-garde music in Francoist Spain.¹⁰

The aim of this essay, which forms part of a more comprehensive ongoing study, is to provide detailed insight into the early history of the ‘reinstated’ ISCM-Spanish Section (hereafter referred to as ISCM-SpS). Due to space constraints, this discussion is limited to the period from the start of negotiations for its re-establishment in 1946 to the late 1950s, which includes 1955, when it was legally recognised. Despite the lack of a centralised archive for the ISCM-SpS, its activities can be traced using several private archives (Archivo Fundación Mediterráneo-Legado Óscar Esplá; Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Frederic Mompou; Paul Sacher Stiftung, Sammlung Cristóbal Halffter), where, for instance, as many as twenty circulars from the ISCM-SpS, dated between the summer of 1955 and the autumn 1960, have been located. Additionally, a thorough examination of specialist music and cultural journals, along with a representative selection of national and local press outlets, has significantly contributed to uncovering factual information and critical evidence. In many cases, this evidence serves to correct, expand, or refine earlier assertions on the subject.¹¹ It also provides the raw data for the two tables included in this study.¹²

Musical Modernism in Global Perspective: Entangled Histories on a Shared Planet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024, pp. 107–150; Universität Mozarteum Salzburg in Zusammenarbeit mit der Internationalen Gesellschaft für Neue Musik, Sektion Österreich (ed.): *Achtung International! Salzburg & 100 Jahre Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik / Salzburg & 100 Years of the International Society for Contemporary Music*. Vienna: Hollitzer, 2024.

- 9 Cf. José María García Laborda: “Sociedad Internacional para la Música Contemporánea (SIMC). La recepción de Adolfo Salazar en *El Sol* (1922–1936)”, in: Alonso Celsa, Carmen Julia Gutiérrez and Javier Suárez-Pajares (ed.): *Delantera de paraíso. Estudios en homenaje a Luis G. Iberní*. Madrid: Ediciones del ICCMU, 2008, pp. 451–470.
- 10 Cf. Inés San Llorente Pardo: *Música y política en la España del desarrollismo (1962–1970)*. PhD dissertation, Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 2018, pp. 245–262; <https://hdl.handle.net/10578/19541>, 11.08.2025; Igor Contreras Zubillaga: “*Tant que les revolutions ressemblent à cela*”: *L’avant-garde musicale espagnole sous Franco*. Paris: Horizons d’attente, 2021, pp. 225–227.
- 11 Such as the actual representativeness of Spanish-born composers regarding the ISCM-SpS in the annual ISCM festivals. Cf. International Society of Contemporary Music. n. d.: “Previous festivals”; <https://iscm.org/wnmd-world-new-music-days/previous-festivals/>, 17.02.2025.
- 12 Cf. pp. 26 and 32–34.

Towards a new ISCM-Spanish Section: 1946–1955

Since 1945, the reconstitution of the ISCM-SpS had been hindered by the political aftermath of the Spanish Civil War and the international isolation of the Francoist regime. Yet it remained a cherished goal for many Spanish composers, especially those forced into exile due to their Republican convictions. Among them, the figure of Óscar Esplá stood out prominently. Esplá, who had been appointed as a member of the ISCM-SpS ‘Madrid Committee’ as early as 1923 and, by 1935, had risen to become its vice-chairman, was determined not to relinquish control of the reconstitution process to anyone else. Although settled in Belgium, he portrayed himself as the ‘true’ chairman of the so-called ISCM-SpS, even using official-looking letterheads that identified him as such (“The International Society for Contemporary Music – Section Espagnole – Président”) and demanding funding from his employers to attend ISCM meetings.¹³ To foreign colleagues, Esplá’s role as the representative of Spain’s musical interests before the ISMC was clear, as evidenced by the request made in the autumn of 1947 by Fernando Lopes-Graça, who sought Esplá’s help in having works from exiled Spanish composers performed in the Lisbon Concerts Society Sonata, the unofficial Portuguese branch of the ISCM active between 1947 and 1951.¹⁴

In his letter, Lopes-Graça informed Esplá that he had contacted him at the suggestion of Gerhard, who had already made a first attempt to reactivate the ISCM-SpS in 1946, after reaching out to several Catalan composers living in exile or abroad, such as Valls, who had been in Le Havre since 1923. It seems that the project quickly gained momentum by taking advantage of Gerhard’s British acquaintances – Gerhard himself had moved to Cambridge in 1939. Among these connections were Edward J. Dent, chairman of the ISCM between 1945 and 1957, and his successor, Edward Clark. At some point in 1946, Gerhard offered Esplá the chairmanship of the ‘new’ ISCM-SpS, conferring its vice-chairmanship to Valls, under the assumption that a ‘Catalan committee’ should be maintained, presided over by Gerhard himself and

13 Cf. Jan J. de Kloe: *Oscar [sic] Esplá in Belgium (1936–1949)*. Columbus, OH: Éditions Orphée, 2001, pp. 129 and 159.

14 Cf. Fernando Lopes-Graça to Óscar Esplá, 15 November 1947 (Archivo Fundación Mediterráneo ES.3014.AFM/LOE 17.21; <http://archivo.fundacionmediterraneo.es/opac/ficha.php?informatico=00036967MO&idpag=1939948498&codopac=OPPUB&presenta=mercurio>, 17.02.2025); Óscar Esplá to Fernando Lopes-Graça, 2 December 1947 (Academia de Amadores de Música, Lisboa, Arquivador Sonata. Correspondência de 1943 a 1961). Cf. also Teresa Cascudo: “Modernismo e internacionalismo como programa: o compositor Fernando Lopes-Graça e a sociedade de concertos Sonata (Lisboa, 1942–1960)”, in: *Resonancias* 21/40 (2017), pp. 71–110, here pp. 86–90.

comprising Valls, Jaume Pahissa and Baltasar Samper, who were respectively based in Argentina and Mexico.¹⁵

Although purportedly approved by the 1946 ISCM assembly held in London, the dire economic and political situation of the Spanish Republican government, along with the geographical dispersion of the exiled composers, prevented any ISCM-Spanish Section from staging an effective intervention at that time. As Haefeli has noted, this reduced Esplá's role to a merely nominal one.¹⁶ In his correspondence with Valls between late 1947 and 1951, Esplá lamented the lack of official financial support from the Republic to cover the expenses of the ISCM-SpS (such as membership fees, travel costs, and the copying of music scores). Nevertheless, he continued urging his Spanish fellow composers to send him works suitable to be considered for performance at successive ISCM festivals.¹⁷ By March 1951, Esplá's outlook on the prospects of the ISCM-SpS was wholly pessimistic:

Regarding the ISCM, we [Spain] still belong to it, but without a full say because we are unable to pay. The situation is unpleasant, for during the annual meetings (when I have managed to attend them), I have felt as though I were there purely for the love of God.¹⁸

Eventually, Valls declined the possibility of becoming a part of the ISCM-SpS, once it was fully reactivated in 1955, but his decision was based on straightforwardly political grounds: he was not willing to be associated with the 'half Spain' represented by the ISCM-SpS, which was organised under the auspices of the Francoist regime. Instead, Valls sought opportunities to participate in ISCM festivals as an 'independent'

15 Leticia Sánchez de Andrés: "Roberto Gerhard's First Decade of Exile (1939–1949): Rootlessness and Survival", in: Monty Adkins and Rachel E. Mann (ed.): *Roberto Gerhard. Re-appraising a musical visionary in exile*. London: The British Academy, 2022, pp. 130–146, here p. 138.

16 Haefeli: *Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik* (note 7), p. 211.

17 Óscar Esplá to Josep Valls, 30 December 1947 (Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Josep Valls, M-JVall/939 Esplá, Óscar). In this letter, Esplá even adduced having to take care personally of the conductor's fees for the performance of Gerhard's suite from *Don Quixote* at the 1947 Copenhagen ISCM festival. The impossibility of meeting this kind of performance expenses at the ISCM festivals would also lie behind Esplá's "veto" on some works submitted to them, such as Homs's *Variacions sobre un tema popular català* and Solo Violin Sonata in 1948 (cf. Ramón Ribé Queralt and Pietat Homs Fornesa [eds.]: *Robert Gerhard-Joaquim Homs. Correspondència*. Valls: Cossetània Edicions, 2015, pp. 40–43).

18 Óscar Esplá to Josep Valls, 16 March 1951 (Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Josep Valls, M-JVall/939 Esplá, Óscar). All translations are by the author.

composer, reaching out to Catalan musicians such as Pau [= Pablo] Casals and the conductor Jacques Bodmer for support.¹⁹

Political tensions, compounded by financial difficulties and personal misunderstandings, played a key role in the growing estrangement and eventual breakdown of the relationship between Esplá and Gerhard. In March 1946, in likely their first contact since the end of the Spanish Civil War, Gerhard shared with Esplá his optimism – which stemmed from informal conversations with Clark – about the potential recognition of the ISCM-SpS. Gerhard envisioned the section being headed by Esplá himself and operating under the same terms as its prewar status (internal autonomy of juries, separated representation, and a shared vote).²⁰ However, Esplá, who felt radically uncomfortable with this arrangement²¹ and likely feared losing his leadership role in the process, wrote back to Gerhard in early 1947, expressing the suspicions about some unnamed ‘colleagues’ regarding Gerhard’s non-Spanish identity – he was a Catalan composer of Swiss origins living in the United Kingdom. These suspicions were not entirely unfounded, as Julián Bautista, a Spanish composer exiled to Argentina, had repeatedly accused Gerhard of playing a “double game” in his correspondence with Esplá, recalling some incidents that dated back to the Spanish representation at the 1938 London ISCM festival.²² Gerhard tried hard to refute these accusations, which he described as the result of an “attack of exclusivist nationalism” that he believed Esplá did not share.²³ He sought to downplay the importance

19 Josep Valls to Pau Casals, 8 May 1956 (Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Josep Valls, M-JVall/1234 Casals, Pau); the decision, however, was taken after failing in the preselection process of the ISCM-SpS. Josep Valls to Jacques Bodmer, 2 January 1957 (Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Josep Valls, M-JVall/1956 ISCM).

20 Roberto Gerhard to Óscar Esplá, 30 March 1946 (Archivo Fundación Mediterráneo ES.3014.AFM/LOE 17-66); <http://archivo.fundacionmediterraneo.es/opac/ficha.php?informatico=00036753MO&idpag=797871806&codopac=OPPUB&presenta=mercurio>, 17.02.2025. Partially quoted by Belén Pérez Castillo: “Sobre nacionalismos, estéticas y omisiones capciosas: Roberto Gerhard en la bibliografía musical durante el periodo franquista (1943–1974)”, in: *Quodlibet: revista de especialización musical* 73 (2020), pp. 172–202, here p. 189 (English translation: Belén Pérez Castillo: “Roberto Gerhard in the Music History of Franco’s Spain”, in: Monty Adkins and Michael Russ [eds.]: *Essays on Roberto Gerhard*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017, pp. 63–91, here p. 82) and by Sánchez de Andrés: “Roberto Gerhard’s First Decade of Exile” (note 15), pp. 138–139.

21 Óscar Esplá to Josep Valls, 30 December 1947 (note 17): “It is pointless, indeed, to refer to groups within the ISCM-Spanish Section. Given the situation that the exiled musicians who make up the section are experiencing and the political uncertainty regarding the future of our unfortunate country, it is ridiculous to make any regional differences outside Spain.”

22 Julián Bautista to Óscar Esplá, 21 March 1947 (Archivo Fundación Mediterráneo ES.3014.AFM/LOE 16-14); <http://archivo.fundacionmediterraneo.es/opac/ficha.php?informatico=00036849MO&idpag=1939948498&codopac=OPPUB&presenta=mercurio>, 17.02.2025.

23 Roberto Gerhard to Óscar Esplá, 14 April 1947 (Archivo Fundación Mediterráneo ES.3014.AFM/LOE 17-66a); <http://archivo.fundacionmediterraneo.es/opac/ficha.php?informatico=00036743MO>

of such national distinctions and clarify the ISCM-SpS's role in selecting and funding the performance of his work at the 1947 Copenhagen ISCM Festival.²⁴ Despite Gerhard's efforts, the collaboration between him and Esplá ultimately collapsed, as did the possibility of restoring the ISCM-SpS to its pre-1939 status. Gerhard continued to advocate for the creation of a Catalan committee that would be autonomous, if not entirely independent, from the Spanish section, but this possibility was finally rendered unfeasible by the first article of the 1952 ISCM statutory reform, which allowed for national subsections only 'on ethnic grounds'.²⁵

For three years the reactivation of the SIMC-SpS remained in a sort of stand-by status until negotiations finally resumed in the first half of 1951. Following the agreements reached at the 1951 ISCM general assembly, held in Frankfurt, its secretary, Alexis Roland-Manuel, informed Esplá of the "unanimous" desire to entrust him with establishing a "true, active, and coherent" Spanish section, "representative of every musical trend in the country" and properly registered within the legal framework of the institution. However, the request was subject to the consent of "several [unspecified] Spanish composers currently resident outside Spain, with whom the ISCM had always had the best relationship"²⁶. Did this refer to composers such as Bautista and Gerhard, whose works had been performed at recent ISCM festivals (Amsterdam 1948 and Frankfurt 1951, respectively)? The situation underwent a drastic shift when Esplá returned to Spain in August 1950, and the risk that the 'new' Spanish section would consist solely of composers living in Francoist Spain was very real – a scenario that ultimately came to pass. Esplá soon began presenting himself as the chairman of the section in the Spanish media and advocating for ISCM statutory reforms to counter what he described as the "harmful snobbism" of the current

&suposi=3&idpag=2108061008&codopac=OPPUB&presenta=mercurio, 17.02.2025. Partially quoted by Pérez Castillo: "Sobre nacionalismos, estéticas y omisiones capciosas" (note 20), pp. 195–196 and by Sánchez de Andrés: "Roberto Gerhard's First Decade of Exile" (note 15), pp. 139–140.

24 Roberto Gerhard to Óscar Esplá, 24 April 1947 (Archivo Fundación Mediterráneo ES.3014.AFM/LOE 17-66 b); <http://archivo.fundacionmediterraneo.es/opac/ficha.php?informatico=00036749MO&suposi=4&idpag=2109251725&codopac=OPPUB&presenta=mercurio>, 17.02.2025.

25 Roberto Gerhard to Joaquim Homs, 22 December 1957: "I am not all surprised by the attitude of the Madrid people. It was to be expected. And I think you are right when you guess it will be an ever-present thing, as always happens with the Madrid people. The only solution is an autonomous sub-section, similar to the one approved at the Vienna assembly in 1932, but you can realise that this proposal will not be precisely popular now before the assembly. Not to speak of the Madrid people, who would brand you, at least, as a separatist 'commie'" (Queralt and Homs Fornesa [eds.]: *Robert Gerhard–Joaquim Homs. Correspondència* [note 17], p. 92).

26 Roland-Manuel to Óscar Esplá, 8 July 1951 (Archivo Fundación Mediterráneo ES.3014.AFM/LOE 18-157); <http://archivo.fundacionmediterraneo.es/opac/ficha.php?informatico=00037251MO&idpag=1939948498&codopac=OPPUB&presenta=mercurio>, 17.02.2025.

dominance of non-tonal music, “a virus that, generally, has not contaminated Spanish composers”²⁷.

1951 was probably too early for dictatorial Spain to gain full cultural recognition in the international arena, which, in musical terms, would have seen the country’s readmission into the ISCM. However, only a couple of years later, a clear shift in the political perception of Spain emerged: instead of being seen as a vestige of fascist times, Franco’s regime became a necessary ally in shaping the Western Cold War borders. As a result, it was gradually readmitted into international organisations such as UNESCO, the UN, and the EBU between 1953 and 1955. During this period, Esplá himself rose through increasingly prominent roles within Spanish musical circles,²⁸ culminating in his election as a full member of the San Fernando Royal Academy of Fine Arts. He formally joined in May 1955, delivering a discourse entitled “Musical function and contemporary music”, in which he unequivocally expressed his position against the principles of non-tonal music.

In this new context, Esplá seized the opportunity offered by the brief ISCM chairmanship (1954–1956) of his close friend Goffredo Petrassi²⁹ to accelerate the process and finally secure the reconstitution of the Spanish Section at the 1955 Baden-Baden ISCM assembly. At this assembly, Joaquín Rodrigo acted as spokesman for (Francoist) Spain’s interests, despite (or perhaps precisely because of) his mistrust towards new musical trends, which aligned closely with Esplá’s aesthetic stance. This mistrust was symbolised, for instance, by Gerhard’s First Symphony, premiered at that same Baden-Baden festival, as reflected in Rodrigo’s final remarks on the event:

And so: everything is in crisis, and more than in crisis, in doubt. On the one hand, those composers who do not decide to penetrate or disappear into the twelve-tone steppe or the infinite spaces of twelve-tone music launch into composing with an inter-tonal vagueness that can border on whimsy; and, on the other, we find the most numerous and braver group of the twelve-tone composers, although not disciplined, much less with a “unity of destiny” [...] And one wonders if twelve-tone music is an expressive necessity of our time, a new possibility for music, or just a confession of and a mask for a lack of ability.³⁰

27 Cf. Carmen Soriano: “Óscar Esplá[,] designado por la U.N.E.S.C.O. para fijar las bases del diapason internacional”, in: *Destino* 736 (1951), p. 20.

28 Cf. María Victoria García Martínez: *El regreso de Óscar Esplá a Alicante en 1950. Análisis del proceso de inserción de la figura y obra del compositor*. Alicante: Instituto Alicantino de Cultura Juan Gil-Albert, 2010.

29 Petrassi was, between 1960 and 1976, a member of the jury of the International Composition Prize up to seven times, a competition promoted by Esplá in his hometown, Alicante, from 1956.

30 Joaquín Rodrigo: “El XXIX Festival de la Sociedad Internacional de Música Contemporánea”, in:

Rodrigo reported on the ISCM-SpS's acceptance for several specialist media,³¹ and was also interviewed by the official press, which framed the news in political terms. The press celebrated the event as marking the "break of the siege" on Spanish composers,³² emphasising that the section had been granted "total freedom" from the ISCM's "elitist privileges" and "partisan proselytism". This perspective echoed Esplá's own views, as noted by the music critic and pianist Enrique Franco.³³ Incidentally, the expression "unity of destiny" in the previous quotation carried political connotations, since it was widely known to Spanish readers as a rhetorical hallmark of Falange discourse. Amidst jokes and scornful comments about the opposition of national sections represented by women composers (such as Norway's Pauline Hall and possibly Canada's Barbara Pentland), the ISCM-SpS's vice-chairman-to-be Rodrigo summarised the entire process in the following terms, while hypocritically considering the controversial subject of Spanish exiled composers as "solved":

At the end of 1950 or the beginning of the following year, I participated in these efforts. But whether because of how little the time factor counts for us, whether because things were perhaps not yet sufficiently serene and mature or because music is not all it seems – and much less "heavenly music" –, the fact is that until this winter, when both Esplá and I took the matter "to heart", the request for readmission and reorganisation was not made. We have the help of the Director General of Fine Arts [and] a great friend of Spain, the Italian Petrassi, as president of the ISCM [...] The problem for us (I mean for them, for the delegates from the different countries) lies in the Spanish composers incorrectly classified as "exiled". This problem arose only from the lack of information from our foreign colleagues, since [...] practically speaking there are no more Spanish composers left in exile. Everything was clarified, as well as the statement that the Spanish Section does not distinguish between Spanish composers – I mean, keeping this nationality – residing inside or outside our borders.³⁴

Imperio (Zamora) (15 January 1956), p. 8; *Libertad* (Valladolid) (16 January 1956), p. 8; *Falange* (Las Palmas) (19 January 1956), p. 2.

31 See for example Joaquín Rodrigo: "El XXIX Festival de la Sociedad Internacional de Música Contemporánea", in: *Música. Revista trimestral de los conservatorios españoles* 12–13 (1955), pp. 155–162.

32 Enrique Franco: "España forma otra vez en las filas de la S.I.M.C.", in: *Arriba* (Madrid) (18 August 1955), p. 3.

33 Enrique Franco: "España en la S.I.M.C.", in: *Ritmo* XXV/273 (1955), pp. 8–9.

34 Franco: "España forma otra vez en las filas de la S.I.M.C." (note 32).

Despite all the difficulties, the ISCM-SpS was finally reconstituted, as a reduced committee whose decisions would shape the relationship between Spanish avant-garde music and the ISCM until well after Franco's death in November 1975. The board members of the committee were Esplá (Chairman), Rodrigo (Vice-chairman), Antonio Iglesias, music critic and pianist (Secretary), Frederic Mompou, Xavier Montsalvatge,³⁵ and Manuel Palau. But in reality, these individuals were the *only* representatives of the section, as no evidence has been found to suggest that it was opened to the broader community of Spanish musicians. Despite the guidance of the first article of the 1952 ISCM statutes, the section did not share its management with "everyone interested in the development of contemporary music". Instead, it remained a closed stronghold, scarcely representative – either generationally or stylistically – of the increasingly complex landscape of Spanish music at the time. Nevertheless, it managed to survive for more than two decades, defying the pessimistic predictions of Gerhard, who, fully aware of the political implications of the process, bitterly expressed his concerns in a letter to his former pupil, Homs, dated September 1955:

The readmission of the Spanish Section to the ISCM is a fact. As UNESCO – as I see it – had set the example by accepting Spain in several sections, the ISCM has not wanted to be more Catholic than the Pope. The climate of the assemblies has changed, and in Baden-Baden, it was not favourable to maintain the "blackballing" of Spain. The fact that the request was made by the pathetic figure of Rodrigo contributed, no doubt. I got a terrible impression from the conversation I had with him. Both he and his colleagues seem to live in limbo. I doubt the new section will last long. The type of works proposed to be sent to the juries is not likely to arouse any interest, and it is even less likely that the Spanish [composers] will be willing to pay the annual fee if the works are rejected year after year. [...] Falla is still the last word in contemporary music as they understand it. I pointed out to Petrassi that a newly created Spanish Section puts expatriate composers in a situation of unjustifiable inferiority. To which he replied that the composers resident outside of Spain have and will continue to have the opportunity to send [works] directly to the International Jury as

35 It was Rodrigo's task to communicate to Mompou and Montsalvatge their appointment as board members, as early as late February 1955, assuring Mompou the ISCM-SpS would be "a serious thing that will not meddle in political intrigues nor go against anyone". Joaquín Rodrigo to Frederic Mompou, 28 February 1955, quoted by Dolores Segarra Muñoz: "Correspondencia entre Joaquín Rodrigo y Federico Mompou (1944–1978)", in: Javier Suárez Pajares (ed.): *Joaquín Rodrigo y la música española de los años cuarenta*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid-Glares Gestión Cultural, 2005, pp. 275–316, here pp. 312–313.

independents. It is your solution. For my part, it has been years since I declared myself independent, abandoning the idea of a Hispanic section *in partibus* [*infidelium*]. The jingoism of Esplá, Bacarisse, and Co. has caused them to be so poorly thankful for my efforts to keep the banner waving [...].³⁶

A less than promising start (1956–1960)

According to Article 7, section b) of the 1937 and 1952 ISCM statutes, one of the commitments of ISCM national sections was the organisation of concerts, courses, and activities to promote contemporary music in each country. Subsidised by the General Directorate of Fine Arts, the ISCM-SpS actively fulfilled this obligation during the first years of its existence. For instance, it co-organised two courses on the performance of New Piano Music by the pianist Margot Pinter in 1956³⁷ and 1957,³⁸ which attracted seven and twelve young Spanish pianists, respectively, including Pedro Espinosa, who would go on to win the 1958 Kranichsteiner Musikpreis in Darmstadt. In these “concerts of minority nature”³⁹, the performance of a wide repertoire – ranging from Bartók, Hindemith, Stravinsky, and the Viennese School to Copland, Ginastera, Jolivet, Khachaturian, and Liebermann – shared the stage with works by Spanish composers, both younger (Antón García Abril, Luis de Pablo) and veteran (Eduardo López Chavarri, Homs). However, they always reserved a generous space for all five members of the ISCM-SpS and were strictly controlled by Esplá, who, during the 1956 edition, brought the event to a close with a speech in which “he wanted to add the serene and ironical counterpoint of his experience and knowledge to the music heard, which did not lack proven or reputed technical and aesthetic audacities”.⁴⁰

More public events and concerts were organised with the section’s collaboration, although they were exclusively scheduled in Madrid and held at small cultural venues, such as the Ateneo, the Conservatory, or the Falangist Círculo Medina. As with

36 Roberto Gerhard to Joaquim Homs, 1 September 1955 (Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Joaquim Homs, uncatalogued). Partially quoted by Pérez Castillo: “Sobre nacionalismos, estéticas y omisiones capciosas” (note 20), pp. 189–190 (English translation: Pérez Castillo: “Roberto Gerhard in the Music History of Franco’s Spain” [note 20], p. 83). Gerhard’s judgment of Esplá’s role in the ISCM – and, by extension, the ISCM-SpS – did not change over the years: “The poor Esplá is a pathetic character. Everything he says about the ISCM is pure imagination, as he has never had a say in anything”. Roberto Gerhard to Joaquim Homs, 27 June 1959 (cf. Queralt and Homs Fornesa [eds.]: *Robert Gerhard-Joaquim Homs. Correspondència* [note 17], p. 108).

37 Cf. Fernando Ruiz Coca: “El atonalismo, hoy”, in: *Índice de artes y letras* X/93 (1956), p. 17.

38 Cf. Juan Deluc: “Ciclo de divulgación de música pianística contemporánea, organizado por ‘Cantar y tañer’”, in: *La Estafeta literaria* 107 (1957), p. 12; A[ntonio] Iglesias: “Ciclo de música pianística contemporánea”, in: *ABC* (Madrid) (3 December 1957), p. 60.

39 Deluc: “Ciclo de divulgación de música pianística contemporánea” (note 38).

40 Ruiz Coca: “El atonalismo, hoy” (note 37).

SOCIEDAD INTERNACIONAL DE MUSICA CONTEMPORANEA (S. I. M. C.)

SECCIÓN ESPAÑOLA

Reunidos en Madrid los componentes del Comité Directivo de la Sección Española de la Sociedad Internacional de Música Contemporánea (S. I. M. C.), han procedido a la elección de seis obras, número máximo permitido a cada Sección, de entre el total de las cincuenta y cuatro enviadas por veinticinco compositores. Estas seis obras elegidas para su envío al Jurado Internacional que habrá de decidir, en definitiva, su inclusión en los programas del próximo Festival 1956 de la S. I. M. C. en Estocolmo, son las siguientes, por orden alfabético de autores:

Conrado DEL CAMPO, «Granada», para orquesta; Arturo DÚO VITAL, Sonatina, para quinteto de viento; Jesús GURIDI, Tríptico del Buen Pastor, para órgano; Cristóbal HALFFTER, Tres Piezas para cuarteto de cuerda; Joaquín HOMS, Tríptico para flauta, oboe y clarinete bajo; Juan María THOMAS, «Campanas sobre el mar», para coro «a cappella».

Algunas composiciones más, han sido retenidas para su inclusión en los programas de los conciertos que esta Sección proyecta celebrar en España y sus autores, relacionados asimismo por orden alfabético, son los siguientes: Javier ALFONSO, Alberto BLANCAFORT, Victorino ECHEVARRIA, Gerardo GOMBAU, Jesús GURIDI, Joaquín HOMS, José MORENO GANS, José MUÑOZ MOLLEDA, Rafael RODRIGUEZ ALBERT y Juan María THOMAS.

Las obras no enviadas al Jurado Internacional de Estocolmo, ni retenidas por esta Sección para sus posibles conciertos en España, serán devueltas a sus autores respectivos.

La Sección ha hecho uso de su facultad de proponer al Jurado Internacional las obras de compositores nacionales que estime con méritos para ello, y ha incluido en aquella selección la de Conrado del Campo, rindiendo, además, así, un justo homenaje a la memoria del insigne músico.

Se hace constar que los directivos de esta Sección, se han abstenido voluntariamente de

presentar sus obras, en esta ocasión, al objeto de ofrecer mayores oportunidades a los demás compositores españoles.

Finalmente, esta Sección ha acordado reducir a cincuenta pesetas, la cuota que da derecho a la presentación de obras y, por lo tanto, todos los compositores que, hasta la fecha, hayan abonado la cantidad de cien pesetas, serán reembolsados en la diferencia.

Madrid, 12 de Noviembre de 1955.

Firmado: Oscar Esplá, Presidente; Joaquín Rodrigo, Vice-Presidente; Federico Mompou, Manuel Palau y Xavier Montsalvatge, Vocales; Antonio Iglesias, Secretario.



Fig. 1: ISCM-SpS Circular (12 November 1955), publishing its pre-selection for the 1956 ISCM Festival. Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Mompou M.5022/4 Sociedad Internacional de Música Contemporánea (S.I.M.C.) – Sección Española.

every initiative of the ISCM-SpS, these events were relatively well-covered in newspapers and cultural journals, benefiting, for example, from the roles of two section members as music critics: Montsalvatge in Barcelona⁴¹ and Enrique Franco, head of the Music Division of the Spanish National Broadcast, in Madrid. Franco joined the board in March 1957 and served as the Spanish representative at the 1959 ISCM assembly in Rome. Let us now review some of these activities, which focused on interwar repertoires and ‘moderately avant-garde’ compositions. The following is by no means an exhaustive list of concerts:

- 12.02.1957: Sibylle Ursula Fuchs, soprano; Otto Braun, piano (Hindemith, *Das Marienleben*);
- 20.02.1957: Sibylle Ursula Fuchs, soprano; Otto Braun, piano (works by Berg, Dallapiccola, Honegger, Krenek, Messiaen, Poulenc, Schönberg, Stephan);
- May 1957: “European Contemporary Music” (cycle of concert-lectures by Enrique Franco);
- May 1957: Reditti String Trio (Berkeley, Martinů);
- 30.10.1957: María Rosa Barbany, soprano; Carmen Bravo, piano (monographic concert of works by the ISCM-SpS members);
- March 1958: Franzpeter Goebels (Jelinek, Webern op. 27);
- April 1958: Göbel-Trio (Heimo Erbse, Jarnach, Martinů, Kiyoshi Sakuma);
- 28.02.1959: Javier Alfonso and Pedro Espinosa, piano; Pedro Puerto, José María Martín Porras, and Julio Magro, percussion (Spanish premiere of Bartók’s Sonata for two pianos and percussion);⁴²
- April 1959: Süddeutsches Kammertrio (Genzmer, Martinů, Reger);
- March 1960: José Tordesillas, piano; Rosa Valenzuela, soprano; Narciso Yepes, guitar; Cuarteto Clásico de Radio Nacional (Tribute concert to Villa-Lobos).

The main focus of the section was, as expected, to provide Spanish composers with something they deeply desired: the chance to have their works programmed in the yearly ISCM festival and to participate in international composition contests, which were widely publicised through circulars and press releases during those years [cf. Fig. 1].⁴³ Subject to the payment of a submission fee between 1955 and 1960,

41 Montsalvatge had already engaged with the 1946 ISCM festival, albeit indirectly through some comments on its programme and general impressions after hearing the broadcasting of its closing concert by the BBC (cf. Xavier Montsalvatge: “Las actividades de la Sociedad Internacional para la Música Contemporánea – Se han celebrado este año en Londres las importantes audiciones de música joven”, in: *Destino* 471 [1946], p. 12).

42 Cf. Alberto Blancafort: “Audición de la ‘Sonata’ para dos pianos y percusión de Bartok”, in: *Arriba* (Madrid) (1 March 1959), p. 34.

43 Nevertheless, Homs denounced the lack of accurate and extensive information, despite his direct

composers sent their works to be judged by the ISCM-SpS, which convened in late autumn each year in Madrid or at Esplá's private residence in Ruaya (Alicante). Except in 1955,⁴⁴ decisions were made by an even more restricted committee – for example, in 1957, Rodrigo and Montsalvatge did not attend the meeting.⁴⁵ It is also highly probable that, two years later in 1959, only the members residing in Madrid (Esplá, Rodrigo, and Iglesias) participated, apparently due to the small number of works submitted for consideration.⁴⁶

Without precise knowledge of the characteristics of each yearly submission, it is rather difficult to determine the extent to which the pre-selections took advantage of the aesthetic freedom and independence from extra-musical criteria vaguely outlined in Article 3 of the 1952 ISCM statutes [cf. Table 1]. Generally speaking, it seems that the tension between “aesthetic neutrality” and personal “aesthetic alignments,” noted by Sarah Collins as a distinctive feature of the ISCM during the interwar period, also applies here, intertwined with generational and personal factors.⁴⁷

For instance, the 1956 pre-selection, purportedly guided by rules of aesthetic and technical variety, favoured compositions by ‘old’ masters (‘old’ meaning born between 1873 and 1896, like Esplá, Mompou, and Palau themselves), such as Conrado del Campo (*Granada*, 1913 [!]),⁴⁸ Jesús Guridi (*Tríptico del Buen Pastor*, 1953), and Joan Maria Thomàs (*Campanas sobre el mar*, composed in 1936 but published in 1954), all rooted in a post-Impressionist language. Similarly, the selected work of the younger Arturo Dúo Vital (*Sonatina* [1955]), a former Parisian classmate of Rodrigo, reflected this stylistic orientation. More modern trends were represented only by Cristóbal Halffter's *Three Pieces for String Quartet* (1955), which shows a Bartók-Stravinsky influence, and the orthodox twelve-tone approach of Homs's *Trio for Flute, Oboe, and Bass Clarinet* (1954) [cf. Table 1].

contact with Montsalvatge (Joaquim Homs to Roberto Gerhard, 15 October 1955; (Queralt and Homs Fornesa [eds.]: *Robert Gerhard–Joaquim Homs. Correspondència* [note 17], p. 92).

44 Cf. Ricardo de Latorre: “Se reúnen en Madrid varios genios de la música española – Seleccionan obras de los compositores patrios para el Festival de Estocolmo”, in: *Pueblo* (Madrid) (28 November 1955), p. 18 and Xavier, Montsalvatge: “Pauta y clave – S.I.M.C.”, in: *Destino* 1556 (1967), pp. 66–67, both providing the only known joint image of the Spanish section.

45 Cf. Fernando Gil: “Los temas del día – Se reúnen en Alicante los ‘grandes’ de la música española”, in: *Información* (Alicante) (4 December 1957), p. 5.

46 Óscar Esplá to Frederic Mompou, 13 November 1959 (Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Mompou, M.5022/4 8° Esplá, Óscar); in his answer, Mompou recalled Esplá that he did not attend the 1958 meeting either, for the same reason.

47 Sarah Collins: “What Was Contemporary Music? The New, the Modern and the Contemporary in the International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM)”, in: Björn Heile and Charles Wilson (eds.): *The Routledge Research Companion to Modernism in Music*. Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2019, pp. 56–85, here p. 58.

48 Pre-selected as a posthumous tribute to the composer, who died in 1953.

CITY, YEAR	PRE-SELECTED COMPOSITIONS (ISCM-Spanish Section)	ISCM FESTIVAL PROGRAMME	REMARKS
Stockholm, 1956	Conrado del CAMPO, <i>Granada</i> Arturo DÚO VITAL, <i>Sonatina</i> Jesús GURIDI, <i>Tríptico del Buen Pastor</i> Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>Three Pieces for String Quartet</i> Joaquim HOMS, <i>Trio for Flute, Oboe and Bass Clarinet</i> Joan Maria THOMÀS, <i>Campanas sobre el mar</i>	Joaquim HOMS, <i>Trio for Flute, Oboe and Bass Clarinet</i> (8 June)	54 compositions submitted by 25 authors [among them, Alberto Blancafort's and Joaquim Homs's Piano Sonatas, and Victorino Echevarría's Wind Quintet, as well as works by Javier Alfonso, Gerardo Gombau, José Moreno Gans, José Muñoz Molleda, and Rafael Rodríguez Albert]
Zurich, 1957	Victorino ECHEVARRÍA, <i>Música para muñecos de trapo</i> Frederic MOMPOU, <i>Combat del somni</i> Xavier MONTSALVATGE, <i>Tres divertimentos</i> Manuel MORENO BUENDÍA, <i>Concertino</i> Fernando REMACHA, <i>Guitar Concerto</i>		15 compositions submitted Óscar Esplá, shortlisted as member of the International Jury
Strasbourg, 1958	Xavier BENGUEREL, <i>String Quartet no. 2</i> Jaume PADRÓS, <i>Piano Sonata [aka Spiegelbilder]</i> Óscar ESPLÁ, <i>La pájara pinta</i> Manuel PALAU, <i>Preludios a Castilla y Córdoba</i>		8 compositions submitted [among them, Joaquim Homs's <i>Music for Harp and Woodwind Trio</i>]
Rome, 1959	Xavier BENGUEREL, <i>Concert for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet and Strings</i> Emilio LÓPEZ DE SAA, <i>String Quartet no. 2</i> Xavier MONTSALVATGE, <i>Partita 1958</i>		Juan Hidalgo's <i>Caurga</i> , performed at the ISCM- Italian Section Concerts (Naples, 7–16 June)
Cologne, 1960	Xavier BENGUEREL, <i>Cantata [d' Amic i d' Amat]</i> Amando BLANQUER, <i>Wind Quintet no. 1</i> Xavier MONTSALVATGE, <i>Partita 1958</i> Manuel VALLS, <i>Three Pieces for Guitar</i>	Xavier BENGUE- REL, <i>Cantata</i> (18 June)	

Table 1: Compositions pre-selected by the ISCM-SpS for submission to the
ISCM festivals International Juries, 1956–1960.

Out of this handful of proposals, only Homs's *Trio* was selected by the ISCM international jury for performance at the 1956 festival, perhaps as a 'welcome gift' to the new section.⁴⁹ While international critics paid little, if any, attention to Homs's composition – or simply dismissed it outright – the Spanish press bombastically praised its inclusion.⁵⁰ They emphasised that its dodecaphonic affiliation perfectly "fitted the frame of music topicality" that the festival was aiming for⁵¹ and noted that it lay far from nationalistic Spanish themes, while still retaining a "vague and subtle emotion" that distanced it from the international "cold dodecaphonic rationale"⁵².

Turning back to some general observations on the results of the ISCM-SpS pre-selections during this period, the potential representation of Spain at the ISCM festivals was significantly hindered by the fact that, except for 1956, the section's choices never reached the maximum number of pre-selected works allowed for submission to the ISCM international jury. This number, which varied depending on the festival (cf. 1952 ISCM statutes, article 28), was usually normalised to six until the legal definition of this maximum in the 1965 statutory reform (cf. article 27). Even more strikingly, for four consecutive years, the pre-selections included compositions by members of the section – effectively making them both judge and jury – to the detriment of younger or less established composers. For example, in 1957, the

49 Homs could not attend the performance of his work, as he received no financial support from the ISCM-SpS; cf. Joaquim Homs to Roberto Gerhard, 8 June 1956 (Queralt and Homs Fornesa [eds.]: *Robert Gerhard–Joaquim Homs. Correspondència* [note 17], p. 80). Spain's representative at the Stockholm festival was Iglesias, who published some texts and interviews on it (cf. Antonio Iglesias: "El XXX Festival de Música de la S.I.M.C., en Estocolmo", in: *ABC* [Seville], 22 June 1956, p. 11; Antonio Iglesias: "El XXX Congreso Mundial de Música y Asamblea General de Delegados de la SIMC en Estocolmo", in: *Ritmo* XXVI/280 [1956], pp. 4–5 and [Xavier] M[ontsalvatge]: "Música – El XXX Festival de la S.I.M.C.", in: *Destino* 988 [1956], pp. 42–43), where he showed his distaste with the majority of the programme, but for a handful of works (specifically, Haieff's *Piano Concerto*, Mayuzumi's *Ektoplasm*, Rosenberg's *String Quartet no. 5*, and, above all, the *Pampeana no. 3* by Ginastera).

50 For example, it lacked any sense of fantasy or humour, according to Heinz Joachim: "Weltmusikfest in Stockholm zeigt IGNM am Scheideweg", in: *Melos. Zeitschrift für neue Musik* 23/7–8 (1956), pp. 226–228, here p. 228.

51 Cf. Iglesias: "El XXX Festival de Música de la S.I.M.C., en Estocolmo" (note 49).

52 Javier [sic] Montsalvatge: "Ha tenido lugar en Estocolmo el XXX Festival de la Sociedad Internacional de Música Contemporánea", in: *La Vanguardia Española* (Barcelona) (26 June 1956), p. 21. On the critical reception of twelve-tone music in 1950s Spain, see Germán Gan Quesada: "The Schönberg Enigma. The reception of Arnold Schönberg's Music and Aesthetics in Spain during the decade of 1950s", in: *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center* 17 (2020), pp. 101–118.

selections included Mompou's *Combat del somni* (1942–1951)⁵³ and Montsalvatge's *Tres divertimentos* (1941); in 1958, Esplá's *La pájara pinta* (an orchestral suite premiered in 1955 but composed in the late 1920s) and Palau's *Preludios a Castilla y Córdoba* (published in 1957);⁵⁴ and finally, Montsalvatge's *Partita 1958* (1957) in both 1959 and 1960. These choices did little to promote lesser-known composers or new works, especially since some of the pre-selected compositions had already been awarded prizes in other national events. For instance, Dúo Vital's *Sonatina* won Second Prize in the 1955 National Music Competition, while Montsalvatge's *Partita 1958* and Fernando Remacha's *Guitar Concerto* (1956) were awarded First and Second Prizes, respectively, in the biennial Óscar Esplá National Music Competition.

Even in the restrictive atmosphere of press censorship in 1950s Spain, such practices, along with the absence of Spanish composers' works from the ISCM festivals between 1957 and 1959, did not go unnoticed. Muffled criticism arose, attributing the repeated failures of the submissions to the "aesthetic conservatism" of the pre-selections.⁵⁵ Esplá reacted angrily, shifting the blame to the ISCM juries' supposed preference for non-tonal trends.⁵⁶ By this time, the chairman of the ISCM-SpS had become a vocal opponent of the potential expansion of avant-garde music in Spain, at least through the ISCM platform. Esplá maintained his staunchly conservative stance toward the international New Music scene, intensifying his criticisms of twelve-tone music, which he denied as a legitimate "new way" in music – completely dismissing the significance of *Moses und Aron*, for example –, as well as rejecting electronic music as devoid of any musical value.⁵⁷ Instead, he passionately advocated for compositions that he believed demonstrated "tonal polarities", such as Martin's *Études pour orchestre* and Hartmann's *Symphony No. 6*, and championed composers like Bartók, Honegger, Jolivet, and Stravinsky as the true representatives of contemporary music.⁵⁸ In his

53 In September 1955, the secretary of the ISCM-SpS asked Mompou to submit a couple of his works to be proposed for performance by other national sections; the Catalan composer chose *Combat del somni*, which was sent to Rome a month later (Antonio Iglesias to Frederic Mompou, 28 September 1955 and 13 October 1955. Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Mompou M.5022/4 Sociedad Internacional de Música Contemporánea (S.I.M.C.) – Sección Española).

54 Both preludes are part of an unfinished collection of six, dedicated to the abovementioned pianist Margot Pinter, who eventually recorded three of them (Telefunken TLE-93.002, 1958).

55 Cf. Anon: "El XXXII Festival Mundial de la Sociedad Internacional de Música Contemporánea (SIMC)", in: *Aria* 16 (1958), p. 23.

56 Cf. Anon: "Una carta de Óscar Esplá", in: *Aria* 17 (1958), pp. 10–11.

57 Cf. Antonio Fernández-Cid: "El maestro Óscar Esplá y el festival de música contemporánea en Zurich", in: *ABC* (Madrid) (18 June 1957), pp. 59–60.

58 Cf. E[nrique] Franco: "Óscar Esplá y la música contemporánea", in: *Arriba* (Madrid) (21 June 1957), p. 19.

view, this should have been the ISCM's official position, rejecting non-tonality on both acoustical and aesthetic grounds.⁵⁹

Although some members of the ISCM-SpS soon echoed Esplá's views,⁶⁰ the section was not entirely unwilling to contradict them if it meant improving the chances of having Spanish music performed at ISCM festivals. After two consecutive failed pre-selections of his early twelve-tone compositions, Xavier Benguerel succeeded on his third attempt. His *Cantata [d'Amic i Amat]*, based on texts by the medieval philosopher Ramon Llull, was selected by the ISCM international jury to represent Spain at the 1960 festival. It was performed in Cologne – a city with a vibrant musical life at the time⁶¹ – under the more abstract title *Cantate pour alto, chœurs, percussion et 7 instruments à vent*, conducted by Mauricio Kagel [cf. Fig. 2]. Although Benguerel's cantata was a significant milestone in the composer's international career,⁶² it went largely unnoticed by international critics,⁶³ who were far more focused on other works featured at the festival – such as *Anagrama*, *Apparitions*, *Kontakte*, and *Pli selon pli*. When it was noticed, the cantata was often dismissed as “boring” and described as a negligible product of “cultivated skill”⁶⁴.

59 Cf. Javier [sic] Montsalvatge: “El festival de música contemporánea de Zurich. Una conversación con el compositor Óscar Esplá”, in: *La Vanguardia Española* (Barcelona) (7 July 1957), p. 26. One year later, Esplá expanded on these judgments when reporting on the Strasbourg ISCM festival, considering that – due to the ‘snobbery’ of the audience and the critics lack of evaluative criteria – “almost everything [he had] heard was no more than acoustic experiences from which music was absent”, as they were dominated by an aberrant “dodecaphonic affiliation”; the only works that bucked this trend were those with an “absolutely Wagnerian romantic tendency” (Einojuhani Rautavaara's *Prevariata*) or “clear harmonic polarities” (Miloš Sokola's *Variations on a theme by Kaprálová*, and Rolf Liebermann's *Concerto for Jazzband and Symphony Orchestra*) escaped. They were nonetheless far from the achievements of the models provided by the symphonies of the ‘old masters’ Barraud, Milhaud, and Schmitt (cf. Óscar Esplá: “Festival Mundial de la S.I.M.C. en Estrasburgo”, in: *ABC* [Madrid] [28 June 1958], pp. 15–16).

60 For instance, Iglesias, when interviewed after attending the 1959 ISCM assembly in Rome, reproached the ISCM for its “overindulgence” in the selection of young composers and its submission to an alleged “serial dictatorship” (cf. [Xavier Montsalvatge]: “Los conciertos, en Roma, de la Sociedad Internacional de Música Contemporánea.”, in: *Destino* 1148 [1959], pp. 29–30).

61 Cf. Michael Custodis: *Die soziale Isolation der neuen Musik. Zum Kölner Musikleben nach 1945*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004 (= Beihefte zum Archiv für Musikwissenschaft 54), pp. 117–147.

62 Cf. Sempronio [= pen name for Andreu-Avel·lí Artís]: “La semana en libertad – Un profesor de fonética catalana contratado en Colonia para la ‘cantata’ de Benguerel”, in: *Destino* 1196 (1960), p. 33.

63 Cf. José Vicente Asuar: “El Festival de Colonia”, in: *Revista musical chilena* XIV/72 (1960), pp. 65–71.

64 Willi Schuh: “Das 34. Weltmusikfest in Köln”, in: *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* 100/5 (1960), pp. 311–316, here p. 313.

17

m

Cantata

per a ~~voce~~
Contraltista
Contralt solista, cor,
percussió, celesta i 7 instruments de vent
~~percussió~~ ~~y instruments de vent~~

Sobre text de Ramon Hull (Hibre d'Amic i Amat)
~~Sobre text de~~

Octubre 1919

Xarier Benguerel



I

Handwritten musical score for *Cantata [d'Amic i Amat]* by Xavier Benguerel. The score is written on multiple staves, including woodwinds (Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon), brass (Trumpet, Horn, Trombone), percussion (Timbale, Conga, Bateria), and strings (Violin, Viola, Cello, Double Bass). The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, dynamics (p, f, pp, ff), and articulation marks. There are also handwritten annotations in Spanish, including "frottati", "Sord.", "Caja Clava", "Bateria", "Toca con baqueta de timbal", "toca con una maderca (baqueta de ta-ba)", and "Toca con una maderca (baqueta de ta-ba)". The score is marked with a large Roman numeral 'I' at the top and a large number '5' at the bottom right. The page is numbered '31' in the top right corner.

Fig. 2: Xavier Benguerel, *Cantata [d'Amic i Amat]*, cover and p. 1. Biblioteca de Catalunya, Fons Xavier Benguerel i Godó, M 5083/1.

A brief glimpse into the early 1960s

That a dodecaphonic work once again represented Spain at an ISCM festival may seem natural, considering the international status that twelve-tone music had achieved by that time as a *lingua franca* in the main avant-garde forums for over a decade. Yet the possibility of an updated appraisal of new Spanish music – at least from the showcase of the ISCM-SpS – would remain hindered for years by the unchanging attitude of its chairman, who opposed any truly contemporary musical trend. At the 1961 ISCM assembly, Esplá insistently argued for the ISCM to adopt a guiding directive that drew a “definite aesthetic line” that rejected non-tonality – a proposal that was summarily dismissed.⁶⁵ In his “brave, clear, and youthful [!]” speech,⁶⁶ the composer simultaneously complained about the lack of representation and the scarcity of Spanish works performed at post-WWII ISCM festivals. He attributed this to the “monopoly of a unique trend, almost held up as an effective Freemasonry in each country [...] which conceals resentment and incompetence”, as emphasised by the Spanish press.⁶⁷

CITY, YEAR	PRE-SELECTED COMPOSITIONS (ISCM-Spanish Section)	ISCM FESTIVAL PROGRAMME	REMARKS
Vienna, 1961	José BÁGUENA SOLER, <i>Microsuite</i> Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>5 Microformas</i> José MUÑOZ MOLLEDA, <i>Circo</i> Luis de PABLO, <i>Radial</i> Jaume PADRÓS, <i>5 Lieder for Soprano and Ensemble</i> Josep SOLER, <i>Grünewald Symphony</i>		
London, 1962	Leonardo BALADA, <i>Música tranquila</i> Xavier BENGUEREL, <i>Sucesiones</i> Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>Formantes</i> Enrique RAXACH, <i>Metamorphose III</i> Josep SOLER, <i>Introduction, Double Canon and Passacaglia</i>	Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>Formantes</i> (6 June)	

65 Haefeli: *Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik* (note 7), pp. 307 and 457.

66 Cf. Antonio Iglesias: “La S.I.M.C. y la S.I.E.M. celebrant sus reuniones internacionales en Viena”, in: *Ritmo XXXI/321* (1961), pp. 4–5.

67 Federico Sopeña: “Música – Festivales”, in: *ABC* (Madrid) (19 July 1961), p. 60.

CITY, YEAR	PRE-SELECTED COMPOSITIONS (ISCM-Spanish Section)	ISCM FESTIVAL PROGRAMME	REMARKS
Amsterdam, 1963	Leonardo BALADA, <i>Allegro de Sonata in Four Movements</i> Victorino ECHEVARRÍA, <i>Chamber Suite</i> Joaquim HOMES, <i>Música per a cinc</i> Enrique RAXACH, <i>Prometheus</i> Rafael RODRÍGUEZ ALBERT, <i>Sonatina en tres duales</i> Josep SOLER, <i>Constantes rítmicas en el modo primero</i>		
Copenhagen, 1964	Leonardo BALADA, <i>Concerto for Violoncello and 9 Instruments</i> José BÁGUENA SOLER, <i>Symphony</i> Carmelo A. BERNAOLA, <i>Superficie no. 3</i> Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>Especios</i> Jaume PADRÓS, <i>Piano Quintet</i> Enrique RAXACH, <i>Metamorphose II</i>	Enrique RAXACH, <i>Metamorphose II</i> (3 June)	Cristóbal Halffter, Substitute Member of the International Selection Jury
Madrid, 1965	Román ALÍS, <i>String Quartet</i> Xavier BENGUEREL, <i>Nocturno de los avisos</i> Agustín BERTOMEU, <i>Variations for Bassoon and Strings</i> Manuel CASTILLO, <i>Violin Sonata</i> Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>Secuencias</i> Luis de PABLO, <i>Polar</i>	Luis de PABLO, <i>Polar</i> (21 May) Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>Secuencias</i> (22 May)	26 compositions submitted Óscar Esplá, Chairman of the International Selection Jury
Stockholm, 1966	Carmelo A. BERNAOLA, <i>Superficie no. 1</i> Tomás MARCO, <i>Car en effet...</i> José PERIS, <i>Five Songs</i> Enrique RAXACH, <i>Syntagma</i>	Enrique RAXACH, <i>Syntagma</i> (9 September)	Cristóbal Halffter, Substitute Member of the International Selection Jury
Prague, 1967	Leonardo BALADA, <i>Geometrías [no. 1]</i> Agustín BERTOMEU, <i>Music for String Quartet</i> Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>Symphony for Three Instrumental Groups</i> Luis de PABLO, <i>Iniciativas</i> Claudio PRIETO, <i>Contrastes</i>	Luis de PABLO, <i>Iniciativas</i> (4 October) Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>Symphony...</i> (7 October)	
Warsaw, 1968	Carmelo A. BERNAOLA, <i>Músicas de cámara</i> Agustín BERTOMEU, <i>Pantalán</i> Tomás MARCO, <i>Los caprichos</i> Claudio PRIETO, <i>Oda XIV</i> Salvador PUEYO, <i>Conceptos</i> Enrique RAXACH, <i>Textures</i>	Agustín BERTOMEU, <i>Pantalán</i> (22 September) Carmelo A. BERNAOLA, <i>Músicas de cámara</i> (25 September)	Cristóbal Halffter, Member of the International Selection Jury

CITY, YEAR	PRE-SELECTED COMPOSITIONS (ISCM-Spanish Section)	ISCM FESTIVAL PROGRAMME	REMARKS
Hamburg, 1969	Cristóbal HALFFTER, <i>Yes, Speak Out, Yes</i> Tomás MARCO, <i>Cantos del pozo artesiano</i> Luis de PABLO, <i>Imaginario II</i> José PERIS, <i>Ecce homo</i> Claudio PRIETO, <i>Sonidos</i> Salvador PUEYO, <i>Piano Quintet</i>	Luis de PABLO, <i>Imaginario II</i> (25 June)	
Basel, 1970	Ángel ARTEAGA, <i>Eloges</i> Ramón BARCE, <i>Obertura fonética</i> Agustín GONZÁLEZ ACILU, <i>Aschermittwoch</i> Tomás MARCO, <i>Aura</i> Eduardo POLONIO, <i>A1</i> Joan GUINJOAN, <i>Punts cardinals</i>	Tomás MARCO, <i>Aura</i> (24 June)	Cristóbal Halffter, Member of the International Selec- tion Jury

Table 2: Compositions pre-selected by the ISCM-SpS for submission to the ISCM-Festivals International Juries, 1961–1970.

By the early 1960s, young Spanish composers had begun to find new opportunities to promote their works within the country, such as the *Tiempo y música* and *Música oberta* concert series launched in Madrid and Barcelona, respectively, in 1960, and the *Aula de Música* at the Madrid Atheneum. Yet the ISCM-SpS retained its importance throughout the decade as a key tool for providing their catalogues with an international dimension. A quick look at the pre-selections established during this decade (cf. Table 2) reveals several general features that would merit closer attention were space to permit. I will limit myself to summarising three of them as a starting point for deeper research:

1. Around 1964, a clear generational shift occurred. Older composers, such as Homs – pre-selected again in 1963 – were replaced by composers born in the late 1920s and 1930s, even before the 1965 ISCM statutes required that at least half of the pre-selected works by national sections be composed by individuals under 35 years old (cf. article 27). In Spain, this generational shift preceded the actual renewal of the ISCM-SpS, which only occurred after Palau's death in February 1967 and the subsequent appointments of Tomás Marco and Halffter as members in December 1968 and 1969, respectively.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ It was nevertheless a partial and unfulfilling clearout, as the boards presided by Halffter (1976–1978) and Montsalvatge (1978–1981) after Esplá's death kept Iglesias as secretary as well as Mompou, Enrique Franco, and Montsalvatge himself.

2. The ISCM-SpS remained closed to Spanish Republican composers exiled during or after the Spanish Civil War. However, other exiled figures – those not (or not evidently) exiled for political reasons – emerged in the 1960s as representatives of Spanish music in the section's pre-selections. Perhaps to avoid the tougher competition in the national sections of their countries of residence, Enrique Raxach and Leonardo Balada chose to try their luck as potential Spanish representatives at ISCM festivals. Raxach, who had lived in the Netherlands since 1962, was pre-selected five times,⁶⁹ while Balada, who had settled in the United States in 1956, was pre-selected on four occasions.
3. Two composers emerged as leading figures of Spanish contemporary music, both domestically and internationally: Luis de Pablo and Cristóbal Halffter. De Pablo, a pioneer of Spanish electronic music and an influential theorist of new music techniques in Spain,⁷⁰ was pre-selected four times and performed at ISCM festivals on three occasions between 1961⁷¹ and 1969. His works demonstrated a reliance on spatialised serialism strategies (*Radial*⁷² and *Polar*) and an affinity for sound-texture composition (*Iniciativas*, *Imaginario II*).⁷³ Halffter's prominence was even greater during the 1960s, as he was pre-selected six times and included in ISCM festivals on three occasions. Moreover, he acted as a correspondent music critic when attending the performance of his macrostructural aleatory composition *Formantes* (cf. Fig. 3) at the 1962 ISCM festival.⁷⁴ From that point on, he established a long-term relationship with the ISCM, as evidenced by his participation in the organisation's international juries in 1968, 1970, 1975, and 1980.

69 Raxach's *String Quartet no. 2* was performed at the 1973 ISCM music days, this time on behalf of the Dutch section.

70 Cf. Luis de Pablo: *Aproximación a una estética de la música contemporánea*. Madrid: Editorial Ciencia Nueva, 1968.

71 This same year, Pablo branded the ISCM-SpS as "absolutely inept and unrepresentative". Luis de Pablo to Massimo Mila, 30 March 1961 (Paul Sacher Stiftung, Sammlung Massimo Mila, 167.1-2122/2123). According to Homs, Pablo declined to submit any work to the 1960 pre-selection process because he disagreed with the section makeup. Joaquim Homs to Roberto Gerhard, 29 July 1960 (cf. Queralta and Homs Fornesa [eds.]: *Robert Gerhard–Joaquim Homs. Correspondència* [note 17], p. 114).

72 Cf. Luis de Pablo: "Panorama sin perspectiva", in: *La Estafeta literaria* 215 (1961), p. 14.

73 Cf. Pablo: *Aproximación a una estética de la música contemporánea* (note 70).

74 Cf. Cristóbal Halffter: "Londres, Festival de Música Contemporánea-España presentó 'Formantes' de Cristóbal Halffter", in: *Triunfo* XVII/2 (1962), p. 31; Cristóbal Halffter: "El Festival de Música Contemporánea de Londres", in: *Arriba* (Madrid) (20 June 1962), p. 17; Cristóbal Halffter: "Festival de Música Contemporánea de Londres", in: *Arriba* (Madrid) (12 July 1962), p. 16.

Both De Pablo's *Polar* and Halffter's *Secuencias* were performed at the 1965 ISCM festival, held in Madrid. After ten years of fruitless attempts to host the festival "in a long-awaited future that never seemed to arrive"⁷⁵ and repeated announcements of its imminent realisation⁷⁶, the ISCM-SpS finally succeeded in securing approval to organise the festival at the 1964 ISCM assembly. This success followed complex negotiations, in which Halffter's mediation with Heinrich Strobel – who had commissioned Halffter's *Symphony for Three Instrumental Groups*, premiered at the 1963 Donaueschinger Musiktage – proved decisive in overcoming Esplá's persistent resistance. Symbolically, this event closed the circle that had opened in 1955: the ISCM-SpS had finally achieved normalisation within the institution, paving the way for new opportunities (and challenges) to arise.

Conclusions

Following Esplá's death in January 1976, the gradual political liberalisation of Spain's transition to democracy allowed musicians to openly criticise the "mean despotism" and "absolute lack of democratic transparency" – in the words of composer Ramón Barce – that had characterised the ISCM-SpS under Esplá's chairmanship. In this sense, the situation in Spain, as I have shown, seems to mirror, on a smaller scale, the "mixture of high ideals and low cunning; managerial nous and rank incompetence; mismanagement and nepotism; individual goodwill and institutional bureaucracy; effective international collaboration and vicious infighting" that Heile so eloquently identified as unbridgeable tensions in the history of the ISCM.⁷⁷

Even acknowledging the gradual "stagnation" of the ISCM's significance and relevance in the post-WWII era,⁷⁸ its Spanish section and its pre-selection processes provided both veteran and young composers with opportunities to enter international avant-garde music circles – well before they turned to other platforms such as Darmstadt, Donaueschingen, Warsaw, or Munich. The degree to which the pre-selected compositions reflected the evolving landscape of new Spanish music remains uncertain, as does their representativeness of the total amount of annual submissions.

75 Iglesias: "El XXX Festival de Música de la S.I.M.C., en Estocolmo" (note 49). For instance, the possibility of hosting the 1959 ISCM festival in Spain was soon abandoned, as the Spanish government was unwilling to take over its budget endowment. Óscar Esplá to Isolda Esplá Domingo and José María Mira de Orduña, 19 March 1958 (Archivo Sánchez Monllor, EO171; https://archivosanchez-monllor.com/e0171/_17.02.2025).

76 Cf. Fernández-Cid: "El maestro Óscar Esplá y el festival de música contemporánea en Zurich" (note 57); A. D. O.: "En 1959 tendrán lugar en España las sesiones del Festival Internacional de la S.I.M.C.", in: *Pueblo* (Madrid) (19 June 1959), p. 16.

77 Cf. Heile: "Institutionalised Internationalism" (note 8), p. 107.

78 Cf. Haefeli: *Die Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik* (note 7), pp. 286–344.

To date, I have been able to locate only one complete list of submitted works (for the 1971 call), which reveals a complex mixture of technical and aesthetic trends, as well as a coexistence of professional and amateur composers.⁷⁹

Notably, two women composers appear on this list: María del Carmen Hernández Martín and Doris Reichardt, each submitting a string quartet. The role of women composers and performers in the ISCM-SpS – and, by extension, in Spanish music during Francoism – remains one of the “blind spots” of its history and, to a great extent, of the ISCM as a whole.⁸⁰

Until new archival sources, still partially or completely unavailable, come to light,⁸¹ key questions will remain unanswered: Were there substantial differences between the ISCM-SpS’s funding, activities, procedures, and internal tensions compared to other “peripheral” and “secondary” national sections?⁸² How did the pre-selection process actually work? Did the section aim to present a distinct ‘Spanish’ voice in the avant-garde counterpoint of the Cold War period, or were its selections merely a distant echo or indistinguishable supporting sound amidst collaboration and competition, tension and agreement, critical acclaim and dismissal? These are some of the many open questions that demand further research, with the potential to offer illuminating insights into the dynamics of the ISCM and its Spanish section in the third quarter of the twentieth century.

79 Cf. Paul Sacher Stiftung, Sammlung Cristóbal Halffter-Korrespondenz, Folder Montsalvatge, Xavier.

80 Cf. Monika Voithofer: *Die Rolle von Komponistinnen, Interpretinnen und Musikwissenschaftlerinnen in der Institution Internationale Gesellschaft für Neue Musik (IGNM)*. Master’s thesis, Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Graz, 2015; https://genderforschung.kug.ac.at/fileadmin/03_Microsites/01_Kuenstlerisch_wissenschaftliche_Einheiten/03_Zentrum_fuer_Genderforschung/02_Forschung/Abschlussarbeiten/Masterarbeit_Endversion.pdf, 17.02.2025.

81 Both Esplá’s (Archivo Fundación Mediterráneo, Alicante) and Iglesias’ archives (Spanish National Library, Madrid) are still being inventoried, as is also the case for Enrique Franco’s collection at the Albéniz Archive and Documentation Centre, Madrid. Additionally, attempts to contact Montsalvatge’s heirs to consult his archive in Barcelona went unanswered.

82 Cf. Michael Blake: “South African composers on the world stage: The ISCM in South Africa”, in: *Fontes Artis Musicae* 54/3 (2007), pp. 359–373; Rūta Stanevičiūtė: *Figures of Modernity. ISCM and the Modern Music Movement in Lithuania*. Vienna: Hollitzer, 2024.