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## “MATERIAS QUE DISTRAEN”: THE MARGINALIZATION OF MUSIC IN SPANISH SCHOOLS

Teaching music in school does not have a solid tradition in Spain. Music entered the Spanish curricula with the *Ley general de Educación* in 1970, still under Franco’s regime, becoming a minor but official subject in schools. For the legislators, primary education required not only instrumental subjects but also “the initiation to artistic and aesthetic expression and appreciation” (Article 16), while secondary education included among the core subjects “Aesthetic education, with special attention to drawing and music”, at the same level of language, science or religion (Article 23).<sup>1</sup> It is generally accepted that the law was very progressive for the time, although its implementation met with many difficulties, due to the modest resources assigned and the lack of specialized teachers. The degree in Musicology had been introduced in the Real Conservatorio Superior de Música de Madrid in 1966, yet the low number of graduates couldn’t cover the tuition needs of Spanish schools,<sup>2</sup> while there was no music in Spanish universities until 1968, when music history was progressively introduced as a compulsory subject in the degree course in art history in several universities.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the teaching of music in schools was in most cases

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<sup>1</sup> “Ley 14/1970, de 4 de agosto, General de Educación y Financiamiento de la Reforma Educativa”, *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, n. 187, 6 August 1970, pp. 12,525-12,546. All documents cited from this journal can be consulted at <http://www.boe.es>.

<sup>2</sup> The conservatory degree of Musicology was created in 1966 but it is unclear when the actual teaching started in Madrid. See “Decreto 2618/1966, de 10 de septiembre, sobre Reglamentación general de los Conservatorios de Música”, *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, n. 254, 24 Oct. 1966, pp. 13,381-13,387.

<sup>3</sup> It actually started in 1968 at the Universidad de Sevilla with the new degree (*licenciatura*) in Art History which included Music History in the last year. See “Orden de 17 de octubre de 1968 por la que se crea la Sección de Arte en la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Sevilla”, *Boletín oficial del Estado*, n. 280, 21 November 1968, pp. 16,598-16,599. Before that date, in May 1968, the University of Salamanca created the “Cátedra de Música Francisco Salinas”, however its function was not

assigned to any teacher who could play piano or read a score or, if there was no one with these abilities, to the latest teacher who had joined the school.<sup>4</sup> It was only in 1984 that musicology became a university discipline in Spain,<sup>5</sup> as part of the geography and history courses, to a great extent thanks to the efforts of my colleague at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Emilio Casares, who was, not by coincidence, the author of one of the most acclaimed music handbooks for secondary schools.<sup>6</sup>

While in primary schools the curriculum mostly focused on music listening and experience, that of secondary schools was essentially a comprehensive review of the Western music tradition, from Gregorian Chant to the avant-garde. I was a school student during this period and I recall listening for the first time to the music of Varèse or Boulez. The concern was certainly the transmission of knowledge, although it did not prove very successful, since for most members of the community, either students or teachers, music was still a secondary subject. In a broader perspective, during this period, the study of the humanities in schools revealed a curious paradox: while the teaching of literature essentially focused on Spanish literature – I never studied Homer, Dante or Shakespeare at school – the teaching of music was mostly concerned with the great Western tradition, with very little references to Spanish music. Certainly, music was not regarded at that time as one of the building blocks of Spanish identity.

A major regulatory shift took place during the first period of the Socialist government in Spain (1982-1993). The *Ley orgánica de Ordenación general del Sistema educativo de España* (LOGSE), enacted in 1990, significantly improved the status of music in education,<sup>7</sup> consolidating its integration on an equal footing with other major subjects – one goal of the *Ley general de Educación* that was never fully achieved. In primary schools, music was included within Artistic

music education but music management and publishing. See “Orden de 29 de mayo de 1968 por la que se crea en la Universidad de Salamanca la Cátedra de Música Francisco Salinas”, *Boletín oficial del Estado*, n. 159, 3 July 1984, p. 9,732.

<sup>4</sup> This was my experience as secondary school student in the 1980s. Music was taught in the first year of BUP (*bachillerato unificado polivalente*), and our teacher (a good one as I recall, the same for the eight groups in the Instituto Torres Villarroel) was a philologist who happened to have piano studies.

<sup>5</sup> It was one of the itineraries in the Licenciatura en Geografía e Historia at the Universidad de Oviedo. See “Orden de 8 de octubre de 1984 por la que se aprueba el plan de estudios de la especialidad de Musicología, dentro de la Sección de Historia del Arte, de la Facultad de Geografía e Historia de la Universidad de Oviedo”, *Boletín oficial del Estado*, n. 301, 17 Dec. 1984, p. 36,288.

<sup>6</sup> First published as *Música y actividades artístico-culturales: BUP-1* in 1976 by Editorial Everest, it was revised, reprinted and translated into Basque and Catalan until 2012.

<sup>7</sup> “Ley orgánica 1/1990, de 3 de octubre, de Ordenación General del Sistema Educativo”, *Boletín oficial del Estado*, n. 238, 3 Oct. 1990, pp. 28,927-28,942.

Education (Article 14), specifying that it had to be taught by specialized teachers (Article 16), whereas music was identified as a core subject in the two levels of secondary education, although in the second one it could become an optional subject. Since 1990, the requirement of specialized teachers led to the creation of strategies for music education in degree courses for primary school teachers,<sup>8</sup> complementing the musicology studies created six years earlier. As had happened before, music tuition in primary schools – and therefore, the training of music teachers – focused mainly on the musical experience and on listening, whereas the history of Western music was still the core of secondary school units, with tentative but significant attention paid to the Spanish music tradition. As a result, music became more integrated both in primary and secondary schools, and as a university subject as well, thus providing, for the first time, an opportunity to consolidate a substantial body of specialized music teachers. The demand promoted the study of musicology at university level, leading to the creation of a new, separate degree of Historia y Ciencias de la Música that was established and implemented in a number of universities, keeping the focus of core subjects on music history, in order to prepare the new generations of secondary school teachers.<sup>9</sup>

Further changes in education legislation were introduced in the following years, with the *Ley orgánica de Calidad de la Educación* (LOCE), passed under the conservative government of José María Aznar in 2002,<sup>10</sup> and the *Ley orgánica de Educación* (LOE), under the Socialist government of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero in 2006.<sup>11</sup> Neither of these new laws substantially changed the weight of music in curricula, despite the fact that, as Lamberto del Álamo explains, they reflected the philosophy of the two main political parties governing the country. The laws clearly state this underlying philosophy: while in 1990 the motto was “Music as experience”, in 2002 it changed to “Music as cultural fact”, and in 2006 to “Music as creation and cultural object”.<sup>12</sup> The suppression of history, discussed by Bianconi in this volume, had not arrived yet but it was somehow announced.

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<sup>8</sup> The first one to introduce them seems to have been the University of Cádiz, which in 1990 instituted an “Especialidad de Educación musical de la Escuela universitaria de Formación del Profesorado de Educación general básica”, which was published in the *Boletín oficial del Estado*, n. 112, 10 May 1991, pp. 15,056-15,059.

<sup>9</sup> “Real Decreto 616/1995, de 21 de abril, por el que se establece el título universitario oficial de Licenciado en Historia y Ciencias de la Música”, *Boletín oficial del Estado*, n. 131, 2 June 1995, pp. 16,178-16,179.

<sup>10</sup> “Ley orgánica 10/2002, de 23 de diciembre, de Calidad de la Educación”, *Boletín oficial del Estado*, n. 307, 24 Dec. 2002, pp. 45,188-45,220.

<sup>11</sup> “Ley orgánica 2/2006, de 3 de mayo, de Educación”, *Boletín oficial del Estado*, n. 106, 4 May 2006, pp. 17,158-17,207.

<sup>12</sup> L. DEL ÁLAMO, “Música y LOMCE”, *Síneris, Revista de Música*, 13 Dec. 2013 ([http://www.sineris.es/musica\\_y\\_lomce\\_punto\\_final](http://www.sineris.es/musica_y_lomce_punto_final)).

This significant change in the teaching of music in schools and universities also had its counterpart in professional music education, which in Spain used to be a prerogative of Conservatories and music schools. The same laws I mentioned above also regulated specialized education in music and in other artistic disciplines,<sup>13</sup> and this caused a dramatic shift that can be best illustrated through an example from my personal experience: in the 1970s, when I was a music student in Salamanca, the city had one Conservatorio elemental de Música, which only provided entry level tuition, and where the only instruments available were the piano and the violin. Don Ángel, the only violin teacher, worked as a bank teller in the mornings and as a violin tutor in the afternoons at the Conservatory. Music education was basically an amateur occupation in most of the country. Many years later, in the late 1990s, when I got my first job at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Castilla y León, also in Salamanca, I remember my emotion at the rehearsals of the symphonic orchestra, made up of conservatory students who aimed at becoming professional musicians. This Conservatory was the final step in a ramified music training system that included another Conservatory for entry-level students – Conservatorio Profesional de Música – and about a dozen of private music schools for children, which applied a variety of didactic methods: Jaques-Dalcroze, Willems, Kodály, etc.

For more than three decades, albeit with different underlying philosophies, music was a significant component of Spanish education, as it had never been before in history. A dramatic shift took place in 2013, under the government of the conservative party of Mariano Rajoy. In response to the poor achievement of Spanish students in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) – which only evaluates literacy in three competence fields (reading, mathematics and science) – the importance of the arts in school curricula was dramatically diminished, based on the argument (explained by the Secretary of Education, Monserrat Gomendio Kindelan, in an intervention in the Parliament in June 2013) that the arts deflect the attention of students from the important, instrumental subjects. Gomendio explained to the Spanish members of Parliament that one of the main objectives of the new reform of Education laws was to “rationalize the teaching offer, reinforcing the hours devoted to Mathematics, the Spanish language, sciences and foreign languages. Today there is an extremely wide offer of subjects and potential combinations of approaches and options, particularly in secondary school, that *deflect* the [students’] attention from instrumental matters”.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The most comprehensive study on this matter is C. DE LOS REYES MARZAL RAGA, *El régimen jurídico de las enseñanzas musicales*, Valencia, Institució Alfons el Magnànim, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> “Racionalizar la oferta educativa, reforzando las horas de matemáticas, lengua castellana, ciencias y lengua extranjera. En la actualidad, existe una amplísima oferta de materias y potenciales combinaciones de modalidades y optativas, particularmente en el bachillerato, que *distrae* la atención de materias instrumentales”. Intervention of the

This statement by the highest authority on Education in Spain reflects a philosophy of education where the individual development of young people was superseded by a short-sighted, pragmatic instruction in instrumental subjects, which purportedly prepared them for a smoother entry into the labour market. Music, art or philosophy became mere appendages in the education of new generations. Although there was no reference to music in the Secretary’s speech, this preference for hard subjects was clearly reflected in the new *Ley orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad educativa* (LOMCE), which came into effect the following year.<sup>15</sup> In this law, artistic education remained a part of the primary school curriculum, but music was demoted from core subject to optional course in the two levels of secondary education: *educación secundaria obligatoria* and *bachillerato*. Furthermore, the law left to regional administrations and to the schools themselves the choice of whether to offer music education or not, depending on their own regulations, ability and convenience.<sup>16</sup> Ironically, this came just one year after 73% of Swiss citizens voted in a referendum to include music education in their constitution, Switzerland being a country that performed significantly better than Spain in the PISA assessment.<sup>17</sup>

It is not just about music: Spain has an endemic problem with education. Ever since the beginning of democracy, after the death of Franco in 1975, education has been one of the most powerful weapons in the political struggle, not only between leading national parties but also between the central and regional governments. As was explained by one of the leading historians of our country, José Álvarez Junco, for some twenty years now, Spanish politicians have not really cared about education, they only “fight for the control of the myths on which their legitimacy of our institutions is rooted”, in the hope that

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Secretaría de Estado de Educación, Formación profesional y Universidades, Montserrat Gomendio Kindelan, in the Comisión de Educación of the Congreso de los Diputados on 27 June 2012; see *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados*, X Legislatura, n. 141, Sesión 6.

<sup>15</sup> “Ley orgánica 8/2013, de 9 de diciembre, para la mejora de la calidad educativa”, *Boletín oficial del Estado*, n. 295, 10 Dec. 2013, pp. 97,858-97,921.

<sup>16</sup> “Artículo 24. Organización del primer ciclo de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria: En función de la regulación y de la programación de la oferta educativa que establezca cada Administración educativa y, en su caso, de la oferta de los centros docentes, un mínimo de una y, máximo de cuatro, de las siguientes materias del bloque de asignaturas específicas, que podrán ser diferentes en cada uno de los cursos”.

<sup>17</sup> According to the official results published by the institution that promotes the PISA assessment, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on their website, Switzerland reached the 9th position in the international ranking, with an overall score of 531, being the second best European country, after Liechtenstein, while Spain had the 33rd position with an overall mark of 484, behind most fellow EU countries. See *PISA 2012 results in Focus* (<http://www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results.htm>).

they can gain control of the wills, if not the souls, of their citizens.<sup>18</sup> A consequence of this attitude is that Spain had eight different laws of education since 1970:

- 1970 *Ley general de Educación* (LGE)
- 1980 *Ley orgánica del Estatuto de Centros escolares* (LOECE)
- 1985 *Ley orgánica del Derecho a la Educación* (LODE)
- 1990 *Ley de Ordenación general del Sistema educativo* (LOGSE)
- 1995 *Ley orgánica de Participación, Evaluación y Gobierno de los Centros docentes* (LOPEG)
- 2002 *Ley orgánica de Calidad de la Educación* (LOCE)
- 2006 *Ley orgánica de Educación* (LOE)
- 2013 *Ley orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad educativa* (LOMCE)

All of them passed without the agreement of the opposition. This lack of consensus implied that in some cases laws were never implemented, or had a very short life.

New elections took place in Spain in December 2015, but it was not until November 2016 that a new conservative government was appointed. Its failure to obtain an absolute majority in the Parliament forced the new administration to change its legislation strategy. The first victim was the LOMCE, which was suspended by the Parliament less than three years after its promulgation.<sup>19</sup>

What is going to happen next is unclear. In the best-case scenario, forced by the diversity of parliamentary representatives, Spanish political parties will have to reach a consensus on education, coming up with a new law approved by a vast majority. However, this does not imply, in and of itself, that music will be restored to its position as a core subject within an educational model aimed at educating individuals, and not at training a workforce.

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<sup>18</sup> J. ÁLVAREZ JUNCO, “De historia y amnesia”, *El País*, 29 Dec. 1997.

<sup>19</sup> *Diario de Sesiones del Congreso de los Diputados*, XI Legislatura, n. 6, 5 April 2016, pp. 19-35 and 53.