

Joaquín Turina (1882-1949): Overview of Writings

The evolution of Sevillian composer Joaquín Turina (1882-1949) may be traced through his music as well as through his writings, preserved by the [Fundación Juan March](#) (FJM). According to the information compiled on the foundation's [website](#), the [documentation](#) bequeathed by Turina's family in late 2003 may be classed into two sets of archives, one musical and the other personal. In the former may be found 349 [scores](#) (autographs, non-autographs, and printed); [manuscript texts](#) written by the musician (commentaries, lectures, prefaces, personal writings, catalogues) and by other authors; and over 200 [program notes](#). The latter set of archives, personal in nature, comprises thirty-six precious [diaries](#) containing the composer's bookkeeping, addresses, and daily notes; a voluminous and rich [correspondence](#), active as well as passive; about 6000 [photos and postcards](#); and thirteen albums of [press](#) clippings containing reviews by or of Turina. The FJM also facilitates access to this content by means of a search engine, or to browse by the following metadata: [authors](#) appearing in the archival documentation; [musical works](#); [document type](#) (including, for example, biographic information, inscriptions, musical exercises, studies, and homages); [persons mentioned](#) in the writings; and an abundant and diverse list of [themes](#) and [locations](#).

Amid this vast legacy may be found two theoretical works by Turina: the *Enciclopedia abreviada de la música* [*Abridged Encyclopedia of Music*] (1917), the fruit of the training he had received at the Schola Cantorum; and the *Tratado de composición musical* [*Treatise of Musical Composition*] in two volumes (1946 and 1950/1974 respectively, plus a third, unfinished volume, for which sketches may be found on site at the FJM), in which he restructured and amplified—with the benefit of experience acquired over time—the content of the prior work, broaching the essential problems of musical composition from historical and practical points of view. This theoretical facet of his work is complemented by his activity as a critic—a little-known role of his, which deserves to be rediscovered given the value of certain texts which capture with great precision the kaleidoscopic reality of his experiences.

Turina debuted as a critic in 1910, when Juan Carlos de Gortázar, director of the *Revista Musical* (Bilbao), offered him the role of Parisian correspondent to replace M. Uribe, who was stepping down due to old age. From then until he would return to Spain in 1913, Turina regularly sent the journal news and reviews from Paris, rounding up the principal artistic events from the French capital. He expanded this facet of his activity by sending writing to further periodicals, including the Madrid-based *Correspondencia de España*, with articles published under the title, "Musicalerías". His private writings from 1926 offer further information on this aspect of his life: on 12 April, he "assumed his functions" as critic at *El Debate*,

beginning the following day by reviewing a concert of Carlos Sedano. His arrival onto the newspaper's staff is dated 14 April, alongside a portrait and a presentation highlighting his artistic background, his accumulated successes, the various trends then animating the musical world, and the movement of renewal in which he situated himself and his work. His first article for *El Debate* was published on 16 April 1926 ("Musica. La Orquesta Sinfónica" [Music: the Symphony Orchestra]) and his work there continued until the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). But Turina was also linked to several other periodicals throughout his life, including the journal *Ya*, in which he was published for the first time on 7 June 1939 ("Concierto de Sainz de la Maza") and with which remained affiliated until 23 February 1940; or the weekly *Dígame*, for which his first article appeared on 27 February 1940, four days after he was hired ("Dissonancias musicales. Cubiles y la Sinfónica" [Musical Dissonances. Cubiles and the Symphony]), and where his trajectory as a critic came to an end on 30 November 1948 ("Un mar de canciones" [A Sea of Songs]).

Over the thirty-eight years that elapsed between his first and final review, Turina's affable and extroverted character always brimmed between the lines of his articles, in which he avoided unduly wounding criticism, preferring to highlight the virtues of his fellow travelers while still sticking to his principles. After all, besides his work ethic, what most characterized Turina (or, Miguel Ardán, to use the pseudonym he sometimes used, reincarnating the protagonist of Jules Verne's *From the Earth to the Moon*) were his camaraderie and generosity.

What is certain is that Turina's writings constitute a resource of inestimable value. They describe with great precision the reality of his experience, and offer new perspectives on his works and those of his contemporaries. His numerous texts shed light on several of the more obscure facets of the musical and cultural landscape of his time, all while revealing why certain artists, having been tarnished by political proceedings or ideological biases, never received the recognition they deserved—and thus serving as a corrective to the distorted perspectives that have shaped our musical historiography.

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Further reading

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