RODOLFO HALFFTER’S VIOLIN CONCERTO; FUSION OF NATIONALISTIC SPANISH ELEMENTS AND NEOCLASSICAL STYLE; ANALYSIS AND A STUDY OF PERFORMANCE ISSUES

by

ELWIRA KRENGIEL

A DOCUMENT

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in the School of Music in the Graduate School of The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2009
ABSTRACT

Rodolfo Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* is a work conceived within the aesthetic ideals of Spanish neoclassicism which developed in the first half of the twentieth century. The composition epitomizes the essence of the trend which aimed at the cultivation of a national musical heritage, and modernization of musical language. Melodic and rhythmic elements of the work derive primarily from the transformation of Andalusian musical idiom, Spanish dance music and popular music of *zarzuela*. Those components are reworked within the boundaries of the aesthetic concepts of neoclassical composition and specifically stylistic features of the *style dépouillé*.

This document describes and classifies this concerto as a neoclassical composition, identifies the most important elements of Spanish influence, deliberates on the hybrid nature of the piece, and focuses on the coexistence of these elements which ultimately affect the interpretation of the work. This study offers introductory information which includes a brief biography of the composer, a description of his compositional style, and a consolidation of Spanish nationalism and Spanish neoclassicism. The discussion of the creative process within a neoclassical work, the classification of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* within the different possible categories that embrace neoclassical compositions, and the analysis of Spanish elements provide an aesthetic perspective vital for interpretative purposes.
In addition, this research paper intends to propose a critical interpretation of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* based on the exploration of historical and stylistic context. In this case the coexistence of both neoclassical and Spanish stylistic traits introduces a level of complexity which compels a performer to attend to the stylistic requirements of a number of accepted musical conventions and aim toward the perfect balance of these diverse elements. The argument herein delineates the most essential factors such as style and character which govern the interpretation of this work and suggests appropriate performance decisions based on the available editions. Further review and appraisal of choices concerning tempo, articulation, tone color and others considerations assist the performer in establishing boundaries for a stylistically informed interpretation.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am pleased to have this opportunity to thank members of my graduate committee which included Mr. Carlton McCreery, Dr. W. Marvin Johnson, Dr. Linda P. Cummins, Dr. Steven B. Bunker, Dr. Noel Engebretson and Dr. Daniel E. Sweaney for their instruction, help and assistance in pursuing this project. I also would like to thank to Dr. Peter Rovit and Dr. Joanna Biermann for making observations and providing suggestions. I would like to express my special gratitude to the Professor Consuelo Carredano for orientation in the research sources on Mexican and Spanish Music of the first half of the twentieth century. I am also indebted to my colleagues Russell Brown and Timothy Pratt for their support in the usage and expression in English and assistance in translation from Spanish to English. The effort and encouragement of all those mentioned above made possible the completion of this document which is particularly meaningful for the development of my professional career.
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................................... ii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ............................................................................................................. iv

LIST OF TABLES ........................................................................................................................ vii

LIST OF FIGURES ..................................................................................................................... viii

1. INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................................... 1

2. RODOLFO HALFFTER, SPANISH-MEXICAN COMPOSER OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ................................................................................................................................. 7
   a. Brief Bibliography ................................................................................................................ 7
   b. Overview of the Compositional Style .............................................................................. 13

3. SPANISH NATIONALISM AND NEOCLASSICISM IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY .................................................................................................................... 23
   a. Peculiarities of Spanish Nationalism .......................................................................... 25
   b. Spanish Neoclassicism ................................................................................................. 29

4. HALFFTER’S VIOLIN CONCERTO ..................................................................................... 31
   a. History of the Work ........................................................................................................ 31
   b. The Formal Design ...................................................................................................... 34
   c. Halffter’s Violin Concerto as Neoclassical Composition ............................................ 48
      i. Principles of Neoclassical Composition .................................................................. 48
      ii. Neoclassical Elements in Halffter’s Violin Concerto .............................................. 54
   d. Spanish Elements in Halffter’s Violin Concerto ......................................................... 61
5. PERFORMANCE PRACTICE COMPLEXITY RESULTING FROM THE COEXISTENCE OF BOTH SPANISH AND NEOCLASSICAL STYLISTIC TRAITS .............................................. 72

a. Aesthetic Background ............................................................................................................. 72
   i. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 72
   ii. *Fundamental Factors of Interpretation, Coexistence of Styles and Character* ............. 74

b. Interpretation and Performance Issues .................................................................................... 79

CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................................. 84

BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................................................................................................... 86
LIST OF TABLES

1. Chart I. Outline of the first movement................................................................. 35
2. Chart II. Outline of the second movement............................................................ 35
3. Chart III. Outline of the last movement............................................................... 35-36
LIST OF FIGURES

1. Falla, Fantasía bética, mm. 29-31, E-minor chord with added resonance generators ........ 17
2. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 2nd mvt. mm.1-2, F-major chord with added resonances e and g; B flat-major chord with added resonance g ................................................................. 18
3. Hexachord equivalent to the chord generated by superimposing technique .................. 19
4. a. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.42-52
   b. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.53-64 .......................................................... 37-38
5. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.112-123 ............................................................. 39
6. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 2nd mvt. mm.18-20 .............................................................. 40
7. a. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.1-3
   b. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 2nd mvt. mm.18-20 .......................................................... 41
8. a. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.4-6
   b. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 2nd mvt. mm.56-57 .......................................................... 41
9. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 3rd mvt. mm.199-203 ............................................................ 42
10. Falla, Siete canciones españolas, Jota, mm.24-38 ............................................................ 43
11. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.124-135 ............................................................ 44
12. a. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 2nd mvt. mm.1-12
    b. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 2nd mvt. mm.30-44 .......................................................... 45
13. Chordal pattern, mm.1-4, 7-9, 17-18, 33-35, 39-40, 48-49, 63-64 ................................. 46
14. a. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.7-24
   b. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.120-123

15. a. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 2nd mvt. mm.1-3
   b. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 2nd mvt. mm.7-9
   c. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 2nd mvt. mm.42-47

16. Bach, Sonata for violin and harpsichord No.3 in E major 1st mvt. mm. 1-14

17. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 3rd mvt. mm.16-19

18. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 3rd mvt. mm.102-105

19. a. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 3rd mvt. mm.155-162
   b. Joseph Hector Fiocco, Allegro, mm.34-39

20. Rhythmic patterns of jota

21. Rhythmic patterns of pasacalle

22. a. Andalusian scale
   b. Falla, Siete canciones españolas, El paño moruno, mm.23-32

23. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.216-225

24. Granados, Andaluza, mm.57-68

25. Falla, Siete canciones españolas, Jota mm.60-83

26. Granados Rondalla Aragonesa, mm.30-34 and mm.53-57

27. a. Sarasate, Danza Española Op.26 No.7, mm. 199-206
   b. Halffter, Violin Concerto, 1st mvt. mm.160-168
   
b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, 3rd mvt. mm.34-38 ................................................................. 70

   
b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, 3rd mvt. mm.168-182 ................................................................. 71

   
b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, 3rd mvt. mm.1-10 ........................................................................ 71
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Spanish-born Mexican composer Rodolfo Halffter conceived his Violin Concerto in keeping with the aesthetic ideals of Spanish Neoclassicism. This movement developed around 1920 and influenced many Spanish composers of the first half of the twentieth century. It combined the modernization of musical language with the cultivation of a national musical heritage. Halffter’s Violin Concerto can be considered as a representative work. Its melodic contours and rhythmic intricacies derived from Spanish dance and popular or folk music, but its form is akin to classical models. This neoclassical approach to composition is manifested by the interaction of new and old elements combined and reworked in an unusual context. Romantic, dramatic, or exotic treatment of popular or folk music is abandoned and the same traditional elements appear in their purified form to become components of an intellectual, humorous, even grotesque interplay. This atypical stylistic combination results in a highly original work full of rhythmic dynamism, humor and graceful lyricism—a welcome addition to the violin repertoire.

This study begins with biographical information about the composer, as it is not readily available, and a discussion of his compositional style. Apart from providing a description of nationalistic elements in the Violin Concerto, I also explore the consolidation of Spanish nationalism and its development prior to and apart from general European trends. In addition, I present a clarification of the principles of Spanish neoclassicism to provide an aesthetic perspective vital to the appreciation of the style of this work. A discussion of the nature of
neoclassical work in general supports the inclusion of this composition within the criteria of the style. All this information creates a basis for later arguments regarding interpretation.

The peculiarity of the style of this concerto, with its hybrid nature (neoclassicism combined with nationalism), requires an insightful approach to interpretation. The so-called *style dépouillé*, established by *Les Six* and their mentor, Jean Cocteau, strongly influenced this piece.¹ On the one hand Cocteau derived his concepts from aesthetic implications of Igor Stravinsky’s and Erik Satie’s works which for him embodied “the spirit of contradiction” and displayed the restriction of musical resources to the most vital and indispensable.² On the other hand his ideas were also influenced by the milieu of popular music and especially that of jazz. Their realism and straightforwardness confronted the predilections of French aristocrats and bourgeois who favored complexity, vagueness, and acute refinement in arts.³ The most significant was the impact of Satie’s compositions, which for Cocteau, epitomized French style; simple not passionate, intellectual not pretentious, humorous and concise.⁴ This new simplicity, called by the French *style dépouillé*, implied restraint and the reduction of expressive means to the most essential.

Many violinists favor without much concern for the historical context of the composition, a Romantic style of performance that emphasizes dramatic and passionate qualities of tone production and exhibits an exaggerated lyricism. In the case of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* this kind of interpretative style would obscure the composer’s intentions. In order to reveal the true spirit of this work, a well-informed aesthetic perspective is indispensable. The study of Spanish

² Ibid., 262-263, 265-268.
³ Ibid., 265-271.
⁴ Ibid., 268-271.
music and a consideration of the principles of neoclassical composition enable the performer to identify significant elements of the Spanish idiom, understand how the musical ideas of the concerto are developed, and finally make appropriate performance decisions for an effective interpretation.

Research in the field of Spanish or Latin American music is beset with its own problems. Spanish musicology developed later and separately from that of the rest of Europe, mainly because of the country’s cultural isolation during the nineteenth century. Later, Franco’s dictatorship, to some extent, cut Spain off once again from 1939 until his death in 1975. Many historical surveys of Western music omit or treat superficially the development of Spanish music, minimizing its significance in the advance of European musical thought. Apart from that, the study of Spanish language and culture in Europe was limited until the 1970s and 1980s, when an increased interest in Latin American literature sparked a fresh interest in Hispanic culture in general. In addition, performers, composers, theorists, and musicologists in Western Europe and the United States have had more knowledge of German, Italian, and French than of Spanish. This bias has distanced musical scholarship in those countries from their Spanish-speaking counterparts. Although more translations are currently accessible, a lot of material is still available in Spanish only. It is also necessary to remember that the Spanish musicological discourse is sometimes less systematic and less concise than that of North American scholars. These differences are partly due to the nature of the different languages themselves and partly to the different cultural traditions. As a result, special care must be taken in some instances in the translation of ideas first expressed in Spanish by Spanish or Latin American scholars.

These cultural differences also generate misunderstandings in the use of terms. Scholars who write about Spanish nationalistic music apply many interrelated terms without defining their
exact meanings. The translation process of Spanish sources into other languages further exacerbates the potential for misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Two groups of these terms bear on the topic at hand: terms used to consider the Spanish idiom in particular, and terms used to describe traditional music in general. Spanish idiom is called variously: Spanish flavor, Spanish color, Spanish national element, Spanish style, Spanishness and the like. Spanish idiom has the least specific meaning of all – it can include the others. Spanish flavor or Spanish color suggests a certain exotic connotation; Spanish national element lacks precision if we consider the multicultural traditions of Spain itself, with its various identities expressed distinctly in artistic terms. Spanish style is difficult to define; it can be used to mean a kind of style such as the French, Italian or German styles of the Baroque. It could also be a general referent for nationalism in music and the use of folk or popular elements in a nation’s art music, but it is difficult to consistently make clear distinctions between folk and popular music.5

Folk music pertains presumably to the musical repertoire of people who live in the countryside, or in small villages. It should differ from that of towns or cities (whose music is categorized as popular). The confusion grows especially if we realize that the word popular implies no association with urbanity (neither in English nor in Spanish). By the turn of the nineteenth century, a number of anthologies of regional songs under the title Cancionero popular had been published in Spain. Possibly only a skilled and dedicated ethnologist of a certain region could resolve the problem. As a matter of fact, the intermingling of both rural and urban musical traditions was not unique to Spain.6 In Spain, as opposed to most other European countries, the gap between popular and art music was never that obvious, so categories and

6 Ibid., 431-432.
influences blur readily.\textsuperscript{7} In current articles in Spanish,\textsuperscript{8} and also in Halffter’s writings,\textsuperscript{9} contradictory use of these terms abounds; worse yet, ambiguous terms such as regional, autochthonous, traditional, and authentic occur with frustrating frequency.

Since there are no exact quotations from folk or popular music in Halffter’s \textit{Violin Concerto}, the identification of sources is not significant. I refer to specific gestures of Spanish dance music and art music and occasionally use examples from \textit{zarzuela} to illustrate ideas. I employ the terms Spanish idiom and Spanish style, using the first term for the general descriptions and the second to refer to explicitly Spanish musical gestures. In cases when it is not possible to know the exact origin of elements, I apply the term “folk or popular” in place of “folk and popular”, in order to avoid the assumption that the two are not necessarily always distinct.

The lack of consistent nomenclature also applies to the term neoclassicism. Neoclassicism as a trend in twentieth century music eludes clear definition. Its meaning varies according to time and circumstances. Generally, neoclassicism refers to the concept of historicism in the arts that leads to the borrowing of aesthetic theories, artistic concepts, style, techniques and devices from the past and exploitation of them in contemporary work. On the one hand, neoclassicism in music has a very narrow meaning, the reference or imitation of elements of classical style; on the other hand it implies much broader connotations: any kind of allusion to models from the past epochs.

The neoclassical trend in the first half of the twentieth century was so complex that scholars still struggle to fully understand its implications. Writers who merely describe features

\textsuperscript{7} Gilbert Chase, \textit{The Music of Spain} (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1941), 17.
\textsuperscript{9} Xochiquetzal Ruiz Ortiz, \textit{Rodolfo Halffter, antología, introducción y catálogos} (México: CENIDIM, 1990), 16, 32.
of neoclassicism in music use terms (clarity, simplicity, sobriety, austerity, precision, formal perfection, logic, conciseness) which shed little light on general aesthetic principles of the style.\(^\text{10}\)

The definition of neoclassicism in music is still a matter of discussion, after almost a century; even a general theory that can suitably analyze the entire range of works under its aegis is lacking to this day. In the discussion concerning neoclassical identity of Halfter’s *Violin Concerto*, I will refer to the classification proposed by Martha Hyde which helps to understand at a deeper level the compositional process within a neoclassical work.\(^\text{11}\)

The hybrid coexistence of apparently opposite styles, neoclassicism and nationalism, can cause confusion in the aesthetic approach to the interpretative issues. The problem will be resolved on the one hand by the deeper study of neoclassicism and its connections with new simplicity epitomized in the *style depouillé*, and on the other hand by the greater familiarization with the peculiarities of Spanish nationalism and its links with neoclassicism. The intention of my discussion is to offer a wider explanation of stylistic features of Halfter’s *Violin Concerto* and to propose an example of historically informed interpretation and conception – an interpretation based on careful study of the stylistic attributes of the piece which emphasizes its authentic spirit and modern character, and a conception, which aspires to avoid the standardized romantic approach to the interpretation of modern works, which many times imposes the display of tone production over the musical demands of the piece.


CHAPTER 2
RODOLFO HALFFTER, SPANISH-MEXICAN COMPOSER OF THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY

Brief Biography

Rodolfo Halffter was born in Madrid in 1900 to a family of Prussian and Catalan origins. His father, Ernest Halffter Hein had immigrated to Spain from Königsberg earlier that year and married Rosario Escriche Erradón in Madrid. Musical tradition in the family of Halffter’s mother was strong: his uncle, Ernesto Escriche, was a concert pianist; his mother played piano and gave her children instruction in music. Three of the six children were particularly gifted: Rodolfo, Ernesto (also a composer) and Margarita (a pianist). Both brothers studied the rudiments of music and harmony privately with Francisco Esbrí and piano with Hungarian pianist Fernando Ember. In spite of the fact that they both attended the German College in Madrid and that Rodolfo studied at Barcelona University, neither ever studied composition formally; they were essentially self-taught. In 1921 the family lost much of their fortune and Rodolfo, as the oldest son, had to find employment in the Madrid Bank.

\[\text{References}\]

13 The musical tradition in the family still extended to the next generation. Rodolfo’s nephew Cristobal is also a renowned Spanish composer.
14 José Ramón Ripoll, “Ernesto Halffter y su entorno cultural,”122.
Rodolfo and Ernesto began to compose as teenagers. The compositions of both were performed for the first time at the Sociedad Nacional de Conciertos in Madrid 29 March 1922. Ember premiered Rodolfo’s Naturaleza muerta and Ernesto’s Crepusculos. He also introduced the Halffter brothers to the prestigious musicologist and critic Adolfo Salazar. Salazar became a mentor to both brothers and presented them to the artistic circles of Madrid. There they came in contact with such luminaries as painter Salvador Dalí, film-maker Luis Buñuel, and poets Gerardo Diego, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Rafael Alberti and Federico García Lorca. In addition, Salazar obtained for Rodolfo the position of music critic on the Madrid daily La Voz. His enthusiasm for the compositions of both brothers moved him to introduce them to the renowned composer Manuel de Falla, the Spanish authority in music of that time. In his youth Rodolfo had been influenced by Arnold Schoenberg and Claude Debussy and had composed atonal pieces, but the brief contact with Falla and his advice turned Halffter’s attention to neoclassical concepts and techniques. Even the few lessons Halffter received from Schoenberg in Barcelona in 1932 did not inspire any change in his stylistic intentions at that time.

By 1931 the brothers became part of the Grupo de los Ocho (Group of the Eight), an informal association of Madrid composers of the Generation of ‘27. They joined Salvador Bacarisse, Julián Bautista, Rosita García Ascot, Juan José Mantecón, Gustavo Pittalunga and Fernando Remacha. Never before in Spanish history had a group of composers united in common purpose. In a 1976 lecture, Halffter explained the group’s ideals and goals. The

17 Ibid., 42.
18 Ruiz Ortiz, Rodolfo Halffter, 13.
19 Iglesias, Rodolfo Halffter, 43.
21 Iglesias, Rodolfo Halffter, 411.
Grupo de los Ocho aimed to renew Spanish art musical language and also to align themselves with the new aesthetic trends that had emerged in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Falla had paved the way and subsequently served as a guide to the younger generation. Anti-romantic concepts, discipline, conciseness, the idea of pure music and the conception of an art work as an independent entity became the main aesthetic goals of those composers. The treatment of folklore changed drastically in comparison to the use of it in the nineteenth century; the new approach was at once intellectual and ironic.

Although immensely influential, Falla regularly instructed only two of the members of the group (Ernesto Halffter and Rosita García Ascot); others met their mentor only occasionally. Rodolfo received lessons from Falla in Granada in 1929. The Grupo de los Ocho shared some similar artistic perspectives with Les Six, particularly their anti-romantic approach to composition, rejecting excessive expressiveness and emphasizing simplicity. According to the contemporary Spanish musicologist Tomás Marcos, the influence of Les Six was of no less significance than that of Maurice Ravel and Stravinsky.

By the time of the Second Republic (1931-1937), Halffter acquired a full-time position as a journalist with a Madrid Daily El Sol while continuing to publish music criticism in La Voz. In addition, in 1936 he was appointed president of Comisión de la Enseñanza Musical as well as chairman of the Departamento de Música de la Subsecretaría de Propaganda. In 1937, he was appointed the Secretariat of the Consejo Central de la Música.

The Civil War (1936-1939) brought difficult times for the composer’s family. General Franco’s military revolt in 1936 obliged the Halffter family, as Republicans, to move eastward,

---

23 Iglesias, Rodolfo Halffter, 409-422. Ruiz Ortiz, Rodolfo Halffter, 140.
first to Valencia and then to Barcelona. Rodolfo traveled to Paris several times in 1937 and 1938, returning to Spain shortly before the Republicans were defeated in January 1939. He arrived to find the airport occupied by Franco’s troops, forcing his plane to land in a nearby field. After a bomb attack, he made his way to the French border and finally joined his wife and son in Paris.  

It is difficult to assess how deeply the composer was involved in the political issues of the time. However, the posts held by Halffter in the Republican Government and the capture of Halffter’s brother Emilio at the beginning of the Civil War suggest that he might have faced prosecution had he chosen to stay in Spain. Even as late as in 1962, when Halffter did return to Spain, his presence at a concert in Madrid made some people uncomfortable.

The year 1939 marked the end of the Spanish period of Halffter’s life and brought about an exceptional opportunity for the development of his professional career. Although Halffter managed to write a significant amount of music that was performed in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Paris during this time of conflict in Spain, his personal growth was frustrated to some extent by circumstances. In March 1939, Halffter was invited by the Mexican Embassy in Paris to the meeting of Junta de Cultura Española, an association which intended to help to maintain contact among Spanish intellectuals in exile. Through the association’s efforts Halffter traveled to Mexico as a special guest of the Mexican government. Immigration to Mexico and settlement in this country offered him favorable conditions that stimulated the development of his creative potential.

26 Ibid., 21.  
27 Iglesias, Rodolfo Halffter, 63.  
28 Ibid., 181. Halffter’s political past was remembered to the Minister of Tourism and Information Fraga Iribarne, who fortunately disregarded it.
The Mexican government under Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940) had supported the losing side in the Spanish Civil War. After the victory by Franco and the Fascists, Cárdenas granted asylum to thousands of Republicans. Cárdenas, as heir to the populist Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and in the midst of overseeing massive social and economic domestic reforms, had supported the Republicans for ideological reasons. Most of the Mexican intelligentsia and members of its artistic circles shared this leftist orientation. As a result, Spanish immigrants received a warm welcome from both the government and their professional colleagues.

This solidarity had already been demonstrated by Mexican writers such as Carlos Pellicer, José Mancisidor and Octavio Paz, who attended as delegates the Second International Congress of Anti-Fascist Writers in Valencia in 1937. At cultural events following the Congress, a Mexican composer Silvestre Revueltas presented some of his own works and met Rodolfo Halffter. The immigration of Spanish musicians, artists and intellectuals to Mexico was substantial. Among them were the poet José Bergamín, the musicologists Salazar, Jesús Bay y Gal, and Otto Mayer Serra, as well as the philosopher José Gaos.

Halffter thrived in this supportive cultural and political milieu. First he accepted a position as professor at the Escuela Superior Nocturna de Música; two years later he received an appointment as professor of musical analysis at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música. He became a Mexican citizen soon after his arrival in October 1940. Here he was able to devote his life to music, composing, teaching, and participating in projects which enhanced and

31 Rodolfo Halffter asserted many times in his writings that he received a Mexican citizenship in 1940. In fact he became Mexican a year later as reported in the archives of the Instituto Nacional de Migración. Consuelo Carredano, Ediciones Mexicanas de Música: historia y catálogo, (México: CENIDIM, 1994), 25.
influence Mexican musical life. His music was frequently performed in Mexico and published there.

Apart from his didactic activities, he continued to write music criticism for “El Universal Gráfico” (1945-1951) and in 1946 became a director of the magazine Nuestra música. He founded La Paloma Azul, the first Mexican contemporary Ballet Company, in 1940 and was a cofounder of Ediciones Mexicanas de Música (1946) and later appointed a manager of this publishing house. From 1959 to 1964 Halffter contributed to the organization of concerts and festivals as head of the Secretaría Técnica del Departamento de Música del Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes.

Mexican artists, intellectuals and musicians admired him. Composers were eager to learn about new European compositional techniques and to assimilate them. They also wanted to become acquainted with Spanish music of the twentieth century. Even Falla was little known in Mexico before Carlos Chávez, composer and conductor, introduced his works (1928).\(^{32}\) Halffter represented Mexican composers at the International Confederation of Authors and Composers three times (in Stratford, Ontario, in 1960, in Warsaw in 1973 and in New York in 1975) and became a member of the Mexican Academy of Arts in 1969. His influence on the future generations of Mexican composers was long lasting. He was a professor at the National Conservatory for thirty years (1941-1971) and was one of the first teachers to introduce twelve-tone technique in Mexico. Among his students we can find many internationally recognized figures: Mario Lavista; Luis Herrera de la Fuente; Eduardo Mata; Jorge González Avila; Mario Kuri Aldana; Héctor Quintanar; Francisco Savín and Arturo Márquez.\(^{33}\) In recognition of his

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 215.
contribution and to perpetuate his memory, the competition *Premio Iberoamericano de Composición Musical“Rodolfo Halffter”* was founded in 2004.

In 1963, Halffter renewed his contacts with Spain. He accepted invitations to teach courses in Granada and Santiago de Compostela. He participated in festivals in Madrid, Cuenca, and Basin and his music was widely promoted by his brother Ernesto. Recognition finally came from the Spanish authorities. In 1982 King Juan Carlos I rewarded Rodolfo Halffter with the royal distinction *La Gran Cruz de la Orden del Mérito Civil*, and two years later the composer became a member of the Royal Academy of Arts in Madrid. He died in Mexico City in October 1987.

**Overview of the Compositional Style**

Twentieth century composers were, in general, more aware of their place in history and their connection with the past than were the composers of previous epochs. Many of them aspired to explain their links with the past, to clarify their artistic creeds, and to describe their compositional techniques in writings and lectures. As an artist-composer of the modern spirit, Halffter left for future generations several articles, lectures and speeches intended to precede concerts of his music or events in his honor. As compiled by his biographers these provide an excellent and direct source of information concerning his compositional style. His writings, just as his compositions, display a conciseness and clarity that help significantly in understanding his music.

---

Especially interesting are the texts of the two introductory speeches to the performance of his piano music which took place in the Fundación Juan March in Madrid on February 6 and 13, 1980. Halffter detailed the aesthetic of the Grupo de los Ocho as dedicated to the continuous renewal of the Spanish musical language. He pointed out the influence of Falla especially with regard to the treatment of harmony and the harmonic resonances of chord tones. He spoke about the adoption of anti-romantic French concepts and the impact of Cocteau. He also discussed the concept of pure music, thinking of the musical form as an “objeto sonoro” (sounding object) and impact of this concept on the Spanish composers of the Grupo de los Ocho. Therefore these ideas awakened interest in Pre-classical music, along with adoption of neoclassicism and the acceptance of the compelling ideas of Stravinsky. Particularly meaningful was Stravinsky’s view that music lacks extra musical content and “establishes the order between a human being and time”.

Halffter also reported that the study of Falla’s and Domenico Scarlatti’s compositions helped him and his colleagues to understand the principles of clear and concise organization. He also explained a new approach to folklore, an approach favored by members of this group, which eschewed the use of old-fashioned, typically romantic gestures, such as quotation of folk or popular melodies elaborated within the boundaries of the tonal harmonic language and in the style of salon music.\(^{35}\) They promoted the idea of treating popular and folkloric elements as abstract musical ideas which could establish bases for a new style and musical language.\(^{36}\) Halffter asserted that he long pursued Falla’s ideas regarding the concept of polytonality, but that he turned to dodecaphonic methods when his own language needed renewal. Nevertheless, he stated that the concept of pure music was always relevant for him and encouraged him to search


\(^{36}\) Ibid., 5.
for new and unique designs created *ex novo* for a specific piece. This is especially true in his twelve-tone music. These works display a varied range of original forms. In addition, he claimed that this concept freed his spirit of playfulness, which emerges frequently in the majority of his compositions.

Halffter affirmed that he had kept faith with neoclassical concepts, that his use of twelve-tone technique had not radically changed his music and concluded the second speech with a statement that his work is believed to bridge and link two generations of Spanish composers, those of ‘27 and ‘51. In fact, Halffter’s output shows the evolution of compositional techniques from neoclassical and polytonal models to twelve-tone models, which by 1951 had been adopted by Spanish composers of that later generation. These two speeches were given close to the end of the composer’s life and consequently provide a useful summary of the evolution of his musical language.

Halffter’s output has been studied by Antonio Iglesias, José Antonio Alcaraz, Nancy Harper Lee, Greet Field and others. Alcaraz offers an insightful overview of the composer’s style. He brings to light the clarity, conciseness, and craftsmanship of Halffter’s works, the originality of an orchestration that reduces timbre and effects to achieve purity of sound, and the predominance of transparent textures through which basic contrapuntal devices are clearly perceptible. Furthermore he emphasizes the rich rhythmic diversity of Halffter’s music as well as his tendency towards reserved lyricism, and points out the composer’s strong inclination to economy of means. In addition, Alcaraz describes the evolution of his style as a very organic process, calling attention to the fact that the characteristics of Halffter’s particular musical language are always present and recognizable, regardless of the compositional style or technique.

---

37 Ruiz Ortiz, *Rodolfo Halffter*, 57-67.
being applied by the composer: neoclassical, polytonal, atonal, or dodecaphonic. Harper discusses the impact of aesthetic ideas of Falla on the development of Halffter’s style. She identifies similarities and differences in the styles of both and considers the mixture of polytonal and serial techniques in Halffter’s works in particular. Her analysis is informed by a personal contact with the composer, as well as the study of some unpublished material given to her by Halffter himself, or later by his widow.

Though influenced by Scarlatti, Antonio Soler, Falla, Debussy, Stravinsky, Schoenberg and Les Six, Halffter’s style stems primarily from that of Falla. Field believes that Falla’s *Concierto para clavecín y cinco instrumentos*, as a neoclassical piece marks the end of the evolution of Falla’s compositional language and a starting point of the development of the musical language of Halffter. Consolidation of Falla’s harmonic language was partly due to the influence of Louis Lucas’s (1816-1863) theory described in his work *L’Acoustique nouvelle, ou Essai d’application d’une méthode philosophique aux questions élevées de l’Acoustique, de la Musique et de la Composition musicale* (Paris, 1849). In this book, Lucas attempted to show the limitation of traditional tonal music and proposed to enrich that language by the application of Greek modes, Indian Sriraga scales and other folk, popular, exotic, and ancient melodic systems. Lucas, in his theory, distinguishes two principal elements of music: in his view the first is the major triad, the only perfect consonance in existence (because it is built on the sequence of the overtone series); and the second, the irregular unequal half-step division of the scale (he notes that the location of these small intervals obey a law of attraction).

Inspired by these concepts, Falla developed his system of *superposiciones* on chords, the primary element of his harmonic language. The study of one of the two books of compositional sketches Falla left allows us to understand the composer’s approach to Lucas’s ideas. In the book entitled *Superposiciones*, the composer reveals his process for the generation of chords by addition of resonant elements to the major and minor triad. The resonant elements (ex.1) allow all types of fifths (perfect, diminished or augmented) to be added (above or below) to any triad member (root, third or fifth). According to Harper this method produces an “apparent polytonality” as it broadens the possibilities of the tonal system.\(^{42}\)

Example 1. Falla, *Fantasía bética*, mm. 29-30\(^{43}\)
Chord E-minor with added resonance generators.

Halffter did not have access to the systematic representation of Falla’s method but he did incorporate such harmonies in his music, especially those written before 1953.\(^{44}\) In particular, works from that period exhibit the use of one such harmony derived by superimposing one seventh chord on another, so that the seventh of the first becomes the lowest tone (“root”) of the second. In 1971, Halffter received a copy of Falla’s manuscript which contained two chord charts. One deployed chords with added generators of resonance, plus suggestions for their possible use in bitonal or other scale combinations. The other chart indicated the application of

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 188-201.

\(^{43}\) The example is chosen from the chart which lists the usage of chord with added generators of resonance (example 9) enclosed in Falla’s sketchbook and reprinted in Nancy Harper Lee, *Manuel de Falla* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2005), 188-201.

such chords in Falla’s works. Halffter described this unique original source of Falla’s technique in his unpublished document *Notas*, in which he called chords with added generators of resonance “sonorous conglomerates.”

Example 2. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, second movement, mm.1-2
F- major chord with added resonances e and g
B flat - major chord with added resonance g

Open to other systems and experiments, Halffter linked the technique of *superposiciones* with dodecaphonic technique in his later works. He explained, in another unpublished document *Conjunto de series*, that both techniques could produce similar results. He claimed it was possible to manipulate hexachords of a row in such a way that the pitch content of the hexachord would be equivalent to the content of the chord generated by means of the superimposing technique. Halffter’s experiments of mixing both techniques in his late works produced highly original compositions, however these experiments were not unique. Fusion of polytonality with

---

twelve-tone technique was also explored by the Greek composer Nikos Skalkotos, a student of Schoenberg.\textsuperscript{46}

Example 3
Hexachord equivalent to the chord generated by superimposing technique \textsuperscript{47}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{example3.png}
\end{figure}

Falla’s influence on Halffter’s musical language concerned not only harmony but also the phrase structure. Falla admired the “internal rhythm” of Scarlatti’s works that display unevenness in grouping of phrases and shared this observation with his students. In fact Halffter developed further this technique by shortening, enlarging, or introducing measures in different meter to avoid the squareness of phrases and periods.

Despite the fact that Halffter lived in Mexico for such a long time, he did not assimilate elements of Mexican music. Although Halffter admired the works of Chavez and Reveultas (the main figures of Mexican nationalism), he was not influenced by any Mexican style: he kept to his Spanish roots throughout his career.\textsuperscript{48} He did include elements of Mexican music in two ballets, but was not satisfied with the results and decided to destroy them. One piece in his entire

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 76.
\textsuperscript{47} This example is the transcription of portion of Halffter’s example form the page 12 of his “Conjunto de Series” reprinted as example 10a in Harper, “Halffter and the Superposiciones of Manuel de Falla,” 66.
\textsuperscript{48} Malmström, \textit{Introduction to Twentieth Century Mexican Music}, 94.
output has a Mexican title *Paquiliztli*, but its character is that of a Spanish dance, the *estampa*. ⁴⁹,⁵⁰

Halfter was not an exceptionally prolific composer and his works were always carefully polished. Although his output varied greatly, he favored, according to the ideals of the *Grupo de los Ocho*, short and concise forms. The majority of his works are for piano; less numerous are his works for chamber ensembles and orchestra. Fewer still are his vocal works and ballets. Halfter also wrote music for films.

It is difficult to delineate specific periods in Halfter’s output because of the very organic evolution of his style. The year during which it evolved most rapidly was 1954, when *Tres piezas para orquesta de cuerda*, his first twelve-tone composition, was composed and subsequently performed in 1955. ⁵¹ Generally, before 1953 Halfter’s music displayed typical characteristics of the Spanish idiom, especially in the use of rhythm. The melodic element was sometimes influenced by the Spanish idiom, other times by Pre-classical models, still other times by Classical or Baroque models. The harmonic element is based on superimposing technique and features principles of “apparent polytonality.” Later, after he adopted the twelve-tone method, his style changed and the Spanish elements are far less pronounced in many of the works of that period. Even so, after 1953 the composer did not use the twelve-tone method exclusively nor did he abandon his earlier methods and style. Among the later works, we can find some which replicate polytonal, neoclassic, or Spanish characteristics; these include, the

---

Sonata for violoncello and piano, Paquiliztli for percussion ensemble, and Ocho Tientos for string quartet.

The compositions that most resemble Falla’s are the stage works (later transcribed as orchestral suits): Don Lindo de Almería and La Madrugada del Panadero. Spanish characteristics are also very obvious in his Violin Concerto and Two Piano Sonatas. Halffter’s dodecaphonic works are very different in character from those written by the composers of the second Viennese School. They also do not resemble Falla’s late works which have been described as restrained and mystical. In general, his expressive ethos is vivid, humorous, happy, simple, gracious, or even grotesque.

Though Halffter was attracted to sonata design and other traditional forms, he also created his own original formal structures that derived from general concepts of classical or even earlier schemes. Notably, such compositions as Labirinto for piano and Ocho Tientos for string quartet strike out in original formal directions. The form of the first work coincides somewhat with sonata design, but the subtitle of the piece Cuatro intentos de acertar la salida (Four Attempts to Find the Exit) sheds additional light on the structure. Each movement is quite different, though all end on F as a point of arrival, suggesting a unifying pitch center within the sonata form. Another innovative structural design can be found in Ocho Tientos with its allusions to the Spanish Renaissance form tiento (similar to the ricercar). The term tiento implies the intention of an experiment or an attempt. The piece mingles elements and concepts of the old form with contemporary musical language.

Halffter’s predilection for small ensembles and short concise forms is very evident. His style of orchestration stems from Falla and Ravel, where the precision of instrumental choices

---

52 Iglesias, Rodolfo Halffter, 134.
53 Harper, Manuel de Falla, 148-149.
and the avoidance of sonorous exuberance are the most important elements in a pursuit of transparency of texture. Halffter never wrote symphonies never tempted to exploit orchestral effects merely for their own sake. He chose instead to associate his instrumental decisions with underlying motivic and thematic content, or expose important contrapuntal lines. Alcaraz called his orchestration “the play of the light and dark nuances of a monochromatic palette.”

---

54 Alcaraz, Rodolfo Halffter, 78.
Substantial transformations in the political life of Spain at the beginning of the twentieth century and the proclamation of the Second Republic brought about the significant changes in the cultural atmosphere of the country. Liberal and progressive politics of the Spanish government of that time supported the development of arts, creating their institutional bases. Literature, especially poetry, painting, cinematography and music thrived and the amount of cultural activity was exceptional, particularly in Madrid and Barcelona. By 1900, the intensity of intellectual and artistic activity in Barcelona rivaled that of other European cultural centers.

In the nineteenth century, Spanish society had placed less emphasis on music than on other arts. Consequently the development of Romantic music in Spain was less spectacular than in some other European countries. Since stable orchestras did not appear until the turn of the century (Bilbao, 1896; Madrid, 1901) widespread appreciation for that repertoire was generally very limited. Notably, Ludwig van Beethoven’s symphonies were premiered in Spain only at the end of the nineteenth century. This situation changed considerably in the first decades of the twentieth century. The foundation of musical institutions (for example, the Sociedad Nacional

---

56 Ibid., 14.
de Música, 1915\textsuperscript{57}) began to inform musical life in Spain and the works of the major romantic and modern composers could finally be heard throughout the country.

Outstanding musical activity took place at the Residencia de Estudiantes, at that time one of Madrid’s most attractive intellectual centers. Many works by Spanish and foreign contemporary composers were premiered there. In 1928, this institution invited Darius Milhaud, in 1929 Francis Poulenc. In 1931, it organized a concert of works by Stravinsky and in 1933 Stravinsky himself performed his works for violin and piano (with Dushkin). The Spanish musical world opened not only to new aesthetic concepts and compositional techniques from Paris but also to those of Vienna. At the 14\textsuperscript{th} Festival de la Sociedad Internacional in Barcelona in 1936, a Spanish audience heard Alban Berg’s Violín Concierto.\textsuperscript{58}

But international recognition of Spain’s own composers only began when Parisian artistic circles discovered Falla. Falla’s modern and original work departed from the traditional Spanish idiom. Embracing elements of impressionism, primitivism, and neoclassicism, he was able to lead Spanish music away from provincial isolation. Moreover, he became a mentor of a following generation of Spanish composers, the Grupo de los Ocho (mentioned in the second chapter, page 9-10) and Grupo Catalán (Roberto Gerhard, Baltasar Semper, Manuel Blanchafort, Federico Mompou, Eduardo Toldrá, Ricardo Lamonte). These musicians, encouraged by Falla’s example, aimed at further modernization of Spanish musical language. In addition to assimilating his compositional concepts, they moved to adopt elements of new European trends. The Spanish music of that time had been oscillating between progressive French neoclassicism and German dodecaphonic influences. Two strong tendencies, nationalism and universalism, 

\textsuperscript{57} Ripoll, “Ernesto Halffter y su entorno,” 123.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 126.
shaped its language. Nationalism, in its turn, displayed two approaches: modern and traditional. Ernesto and Rodolfo Halffter deployed new techniques, while Joaquin Rodrigo and Joaquin Turina adhered to a conservative, nineteenth century tradition.

**Peculiarities of Spanish Nationalism**

Emphasis on national identities developed in western culture as a result of Renaissance Humanism, which celebrated the importance of vernacular languages. The appearance of poetry, printed books in vernacular languages, as well as their introduction into the service of the Protestant church awakened national consciousness and stimulated national artistic expression. The Baroque and Classical periods promoted the canonic arts. In the Baroque period, Italian, German and French styles in music were clearly defined by preferences for certain techniques, genres or particular means of expression. In the Classical period, European art music distilled somewhat into a more unified, universal style. In the Romantic era, as many countries fought for independence, the sense of national identity intensified significantly. Musical nationalism was thriving. Composers, going with the spirit of the time, began to depart from the norms of universal style, by seeking specifically national origins for their music. This spirit of nationalism led to an increased appreciation for folk and popular music. Consequently, elements of both began to appear in their art music.

The development of nationalism in music was inspired by the poet Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) whose theory of language had a significant impact on the growth of German nationalism in the Romantic era. Afterwards nationalistic trends in music based on the use of

---

popular or folk materials followed the German example. Scholars usually analyze the phenomenon of nationalism in music in Western culture in terms of German, Russian, Czech or American nationalistic trends, while others (among them Spanish) are either treated separately or neglected altogether. As a matter of fact, nationalism in music developed along different lines in each country and at different times and under diverse circumstances.

The history of Spain was shaped by different political circumstances than those of other European countries and these factors contributed to its cultural isolation. Longer lasting feudalism preserved ethnic diversity and regional distinctions longer in Spain than in other European countries. The coexistence of different ethnically strong regions with independent customs, (some even with their own languages: Catalonia, the Basque Country, Galicia), the influence of Jews, Arabs, and Gypsies, the interminable religious wars, as well as the power of the Catholic Church – all had a significant and distinctive impact on the arts.

Unlike in other European countries the development of a national idiom in music began much earlier in Spain than in the rest of Europe, not in the nineteenth but in the seventeenth century, and was closely related to the growth of popular and art theaters. Calderon de la Barca (1600-1681) dramatist, librettist and poet, collaborating with composer Juan Hidalgo (1614 - 1685), brought together music and poetry in a specifically Spanish *zarzuela*, a spectacle in two acts which included songs, dances, and spoken dialogue. Already some of the earliest *zarzuelas* had incorporated a popular element (popular song and the dance form of the *seguidilla*), soon after, the genre would embrace still more popular elements. By the mid-eighteenth century, as *zarzuela* declined, another genre, which influenced the consolidation of the Spanish idiom, began to emerge. The *tonadilla escenica*, a short popular lyric-dramatic form, featured music that

60 Chase, *The Music of Spain*, 199.
borrowed melodies and rhythms from both rural and urban sources. This fusion of both styles with the characteristic Spanish instrumentation (usually guitars and castanets) came to define stylistic traits peculiar to Spain. In the nineteenth century zarzuela reappeared, now based on the prior tonadilla. With its appeal to large audiences, it impeded to some extent the development of a national opera. Although at the beginning of the nineteenth century Queen Maria Cristina de Nápoles had promoted Italian opera – even to the training of singers in bel canto style at the Madrid Conservatory, which she founded in 1830 – interest in opera did not spread to the general public. Grand opera with its tragic and heroic action did not captivate large Spanish audiences. They preferred the national style: playful, comical and grotesque.

Despite a discouraging environment for the growth of musical art in the nineteenth century, Spain’s nationalistic spirit revived not only in the beloved zarzuela, but also in the instrumental music of Pablo Sarasate (1844-1908), Enrique Granados (1897-1916) and Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909). They were the first to spread the Spanish idiom worldwide with works dominated by the particularly Andalusian version of the idiom that at that time epitomized Spanish style. Many non-Spanish composers (Mikhail Glinka, Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov, Mily Balakirev, Georges Bizet, Edouard Lalo, Emmanuel Chabrier, Debussy, Ravel) were fascinated with its exotic qualities and wrote pieces which imitated or evoked this idiom.

The second half of the nineteenth century also saw the initiation of musicology in Spain. Research aimed at rediscovering and appraising Spanish art music from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century and inspired the collection of traditional Spanish music from the various regions. Especially important was the endeavor of Felipe Pedrell, who, as a teacher of a great number of composers, awoke their interest in their national heritage. His Cancionero popular

---

61 Ibid., 130.
(collection of traditional songs) constituted a valuable source of inspiration for many composers of subsequent generations. His artistic creed pointed toward an authentic, highly artistic national music which would find inspiration in folk or popular material as well as Spanish masterworks from past epochs.\(^2\) This opened a way to the redefinition of Spanish nationalistic music, and stimulated the development of Spanish neoclassicism.

Influenced as it was by gypsy and Arab music, as well as Jewish, Byzantine and Catholic chant (varyingly based on modal, gypsy, minor, major and Arabic scales), Spanish folk and popular music is among the richest and most varied in Europe. Spanish dance music is exceptionally abundant and rhythmically diverse. It is possible to distinguish thousands of different choreographic patterns with highly sophisticated rhythmic complexities; for instance: changeable accentuation between 3/4 and 6/8 (very common), frequent alteration of meter between 3/4 and 3/8, or 3/4 and 2/4 and the use of 5/8 meter by itself or in combination with others. Melodic variety plus energy of intense rhythmic patterns offer an outstanding resource for a composer. Thus it is not surprising that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought into vogue arrangements of Spanish folk or popular music. At the beginning of the revival of Spanish nationalism, Sarasate, then Granados and Albéniz, explored traditional music in the typically romantic manner (quoting melodies which were then elaborated harmonically within the boundaries of the tonal system, generally composed in the spirit of salon music).

The composers of the Generation of ‘27 aimed to create universal Spanish music. Conscious of the wealth and regional diversity of their own traditional music, they did not abandon this source of inspiration, but rather aspired to reuse it in a more intellectual, modern

and sophisticated context. They believed that their national heritage was not really brought to its potential in the old-fashioned, neo-romantic, and sentimental salon style; they trusted that more authentic forces were hidden in the folk or popular Spanish music, and that these forces could inspire the creation of a modern and universal artwork.

**Spanish Neoclassicism**

Neoclassicism as a trend alluding to different musical traditions from the past developed differently in different countries. In some, such as Spain, England or Hungary, neoclassicism brought together music from the past with elements of national traditional music. In Spain, the French concepts of *nouveau simplicité* or *style dépouillé*, plus the examples of Stravinsky and Ravel modernized Spanish musical language. Mixed with traditional elements, this resulted in the particularly Spanish variant of neoclassicism.

First traces of a more modern approach to the elaboration of elements of traditional music can be found in Albéniz’s *Iberia*, where the rhythmic element is exposed in isolation to emphasize its vigor.\(^{63}\) This idea was developed further by Falla, who in his works *El sombrero de tres picos* and *El amor brujo* introduced exclusively rhythmic passages as a unique means for creating excitement, relying simply on the natural primitive power of Spanish dances. Notably important for the development of Spanish music in the first half of the twentieth century were Falla’s two last works, *El retablo de Maese Pedro* and *Concierto para clavecín y cinco instrumentos*. The transformation of Falla’s style in these works was due to the new neoclassical aesthetic ideas dominating Parisian artistic circles of that time. Both works are neoclassical in approach to the composition and brought about a redefinition of the concept of nationalism in

Spanish music, looking for inspiration in masterworks from the past and borrowing melodies more from Castilian rather than Andalusian tradition.

French concepts overshadowed other modernist influences in the musical circles of Madrid where the Grupo de los Ocho was active. Its members articulated their own distinctive artistic program on the basis of the French ideas of “new simplicity” made manifest by Cocteau in Le coq et Arlequin and to a certain degree in the music of Les Six. Spanish composers rejected the post-romantic treatment of nationalistic elements and the vagueness of post-romantic musical form as French composers turned away from the aesthetic of impressionism. Both groups were fascinated with the idea of pure music and the so-called style dépouillé – style stripped of ornamentation – and revealed their preference for short and concise forms. Nevertheless, the notion of pure music was seen differently by Spanish and French composers. Spanish composers searched for purity of form in the masterworks of the Spanish Baroque and Pre-classical eras; French composers were more interested in simplicity than purity and sought for inspiration in popular song. Unlike Frenchmen captivated by such aspects of modernity as speed, machines, and cosmopolitan artistic expressions (jazz, musical, vaudeville and circus spectacles), Spaniards still cultivated a national heritage. However in the matter of compositional techniques both groups promoted and developed Stravinsky’s ideas, especially these concerning rhythmic complexity, polytonality and a novel exploitation of orchestral sonorities.
HALFFTER’S VIOLIN CONCERTO

History of the Work

Halffter’s Violin Concerto was commissioned by an eager supporter of modern composers Samuel Dushkin, an American violinist of Polish origins. Especially productive was his collaboration with Stravinsky, who dedicated him his Violin Concerto and entrusted its premiere. Halffter was introduced to Dushkin in Paris in 1939 by Nadia du Bouchet, a sister-in-law of the composer Georges Auric. En route to the United States by ship, the composer received a message from Dushkin inviting him to compose a violin concerto, which he began to compose soon after settling down in Mexico City. Halffter’s notes disclose that the Violin Concerto, completed in 1940, was the first of his compositions written in Mexico; also, that the work was an expression of his optimism caused by the favorable living conditions that country offered to him and to the Spanish immigrants – in general.64

Dushkin, to whom this concerto was dedicated, premiered it with the Orquesta Sinfónica de México under Chávez in the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, on June 26, 1942. That same year, in October, Dushkin gave the U.S. premier, this time under Stokowsky, in New York. The information provided by Iglesias in his book about Halffter’s life,65 with regard to

64 Iglesias, Rodolfo Halffter, 480.
65 Ibid., 327-328.
subsequent performances, is sketchy. Details are often missing, in some cases the name of the orchestra, or the venue, or even the name of the soloist is omitted.

In 1945, the work was performed during the Second Festival *Centre de Documentation de Musique International* (Paris: October, 1954) by the French National Orchestra under the direction of Manuel Rosenthal. In 1956 (probably between May and August) it was played by Enrique Iniesta with *Orquesta Sinfónica de Chile*, under Víctor Tebah, in the Aula Magna of Santa María University and in 1958 by Eduardu Acedo with *Sinfónica National de Buenos Aires* under Juan José Castro.66

The first performance in Mexico City was very well received. The only one who was not quite satisfied with the work was the composer himself.67 Accordingly, Halffter revised both the orchestration and the violin part, working with Henryk Szeryng, who later performed and recorded it. The concerto was also frequently selected as a representative piece of Halffter’s work in general at festivals or special events. Thus, it was played by Luz Vernova at the First Festival of Spanish and American Music (1964); the beginning of an extended series of festivals which brought compositions of exiled Spanish composers back to their homeland.

The catalog of Halffter’s works edited by Xochiquetzal Ruiz Ortiz, indicates that the *Violin Concerto* was recorded in 1964 by Luz Vernova and the *Orquesta Sinfónica de Xalapa* under Francisco Savin (Mexico: Musart, MCD-3031), in 1971 by Victor Martín with the *Orquesta Filarmónica de España* under Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, (Madrid: Columbia, SCLL-14083), and in 1985 by Szeryng with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra under Enrique Bátiz (Germany: EMI, EL-270151-1).68 In 1998, it was included in the collection *Clásicos Mexicanos*

66 Ibid., 327-328.
67 Alcaraz, *Rodolfo Halffter*, 77.
68 Ruiz Ortiz, *Rodolfo Halffter*, 306.
recorded by Jorge Risi and the *Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México* under Fernando Lozano (Mexico: Prodisc, SDX27273). The concerto was registered as Op.11 and score published twice by *Ediciones Mexicanas de Música* in Mexico City (score in 1953 and again in 1981; version with piano reduction in 1953 and 1964) and also by Peer International (New York, 1953).  

Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* has been the subject of several articles and essays appearing in journals or books on his work. Just after its premiere, Bergamín wrote an enthusiastic article of poetic quality about the composition, “Musaraña de la Música,” emphasizing its virtuosic and Spanish character. Alcaraz wrote an extended essay, *La obra maestra* (The Master Piece), in which he attempts to define the term and qualify the *Violin Concerto* as an example thereof. In addition, he emphasizes its uniqueness of style: the piece, he says, bears no resemblance to any other violin concerto of that period. Alcaraz’s essay also cites other impressions of the work. The English musicologist Field calls attention to the inclination of the composer to reduce the means of expression to the minimum necessary to present the sound image in its essence. He regards the *Violin Concerto* as a magnificent example of this aesthetic.

A negative appraisal may be found in the article published by the Argentine critic Jorge d’Urbano in *Música en Buenos Aires*. The author finds the work musically unattractive and states in particular that, like many other violin concertos of the twentieth century, it does not display the virtuosic qualities of the instrument despite being full of technical difficulties. A considerably different opinion is presented by Leon Spierer in his article “El concierto para

---

69 Ibid., 306.
70 Ibid., 209-217
71 Iglesias, *Rodolfo Halffter*, 99
73 Ibid., 77.
74 Alcaraz, *Rodolfo Halffter*, 72-73.
violin y orquesta de Halffter.” Spierer limits his discussion to the technical aspects. He points out that the composer had enough knowledge of the sonorous and technical possibilities of the instrument to create a piece which fully satisfies the virtuoso violinist. Although all of this material offers useful information, unfortunately none provides the analytical insight needed for a well informed performance.

The Formal Design

The Violin Concerto belongs to Halffter’s first creative period, a period in which aesthetic concepts of the Grupo de los Ocho strongly influenced the stylistic traits of his output. As has been discussed in the second chapter, the group’s artistic program stimulated the creation of Spanish neoclassicism. Their compositions feature various nationalistic elements, allusions to different past styles, simplicity (style dépouillé), and modern compositional techniques. Halffter’s Violin Concerto, demonstrates all these elements.

Although Halffter treats this form in a modern way, the design and basic tonal structure of the first and third movements can easily be grasped and understood in terms of classical models. The first movement Allegro is in sonata allegro form and the last movement Allegro vivace is akin in conception to the classical rondo form, however slightly modified. The design of the second movement, Andante cantabile, is less obvious because Halffter juxtaposes a variety of formal models from different periods in one movement. It is possible to understand it as five part song form, or a rondo form with the strong influence of variation technique.

The outlines of the movements are provided in the subsequent charts.

---

### Chart I. First movement, *Allegro*, A major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Tonal structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 119</td>
<td>EXPOSITION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 9</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>I - V Locrian-Lydian inflexions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 32</td>
<td>Principal theme</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32 - 59</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>I - flat VI, V “apparently bitonal” passages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 - 93</td>
<td>Secondary theme group</td>
<td>V modal and tonal mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94 - 119</td>
<td>Closing section</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 - 215</td>
<td>DEVELOPMENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120 - 139</td>
<td>Section 1</td>
<td>Locrian-Phrygian inflexions flat I, flat III, flat V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139 - 154</td>
<td>Section 2</td>
<td>natural VII, natural III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155 - 180</td>
<td>Section 3</td>
<td>IV - V/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180 - 200</td>
<td>Section 4</td>
<td>Locrian-Phrygian inflexions natural III, V/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201 - 223</td>
<td>Cadenza</td>
<td>I - minor, V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215 - 314</td>
<td>RECAPITULATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215 - 239</td>
<td>Principal theme</td>
<td>I - minor I – major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>239 - 253</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>I - flat II, I “apparently bitonal” passages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>254 - 288</td>
<td>Secondary theme group</td>
<td>I modal and tonal mix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>289 - 305</td>
<td>Closing section</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>305 - 314</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>IV-I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chart II. Second movement, *Andante cantabile*, F major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Tonal structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 20</td>
<td>A Main theme, a a' b a'' form</td>
<td>I - III – I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21- 32</td>
<td>B Episode</td>
<td>V over flat VI , V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33 - 50</td>
<td>A Varied abbreviated version of main theme, a'' a' b'' a' a'' form</td>
<td>I - III – I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 63</td>
<td>C Episode</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 - 69</td>
<td>a'' Return of the last section of the main theme in a new version</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chart III. Third movement, *Allegro vivace*, A major

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measures</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Tonal structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 - 62</td>
<td>Refrain theme A</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 - 93</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>V/II-II, V/VI-VI, IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94 - 101</td>
<td>Episode B</td>
<td>IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 - 119</td>
<td>Retransition</td>
<td>☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119-148</td>
<td>Refrain theme A1</td>
<td>I, minor, V, flat VII, V, V/V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>181-221</td>
<td>Episode C</td>
<td>VI natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>222-237</td>
<td>Retransition</td>
<td>flat IV, natural III, IV-I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>237-256</td>
<td>Refrain theme A2</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>257-285</td>
<td>Coda</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken as a whole, the composition is unified by a tonal center of A in the first and last movements, with a contrasting middle movement on F, the minor sixth scale degree of that key. Nevertheless, some sections show a strong modal derivation which gives a special color to the tonal progressions. Halffter’s technique of superpositioning (adding resonant elements to the chords described in chapter 2, page 18-20) disguises the clarity of the tonal progression, creating “apparent bitonality” or modal-tonal mixtures resulting from the juxtaposition of tonal and modal scales. The combination of two different tonal areas (ex.4a m.48) closely related in a traditional context, the mixing of modal scales with a single tonal area (ex.8b), or even the intermingling of two modal scales simultaneously, can occur within a single section (ex.11, mm.131-135), or between sections. These devices enrich and extend normal harmonic vocabulary associated with classical forms.

In general, the principal thematic sections of the concerto display single tonal harmonic backgrounds. However, transitions and portions of developments frequently engage extended harmonic practices and unusual harmonic juxtapositions. These shifts from one tonality to another may be achieved by the use of seventh chords which resolve deceptively to redirect the harmonic motion. For instance, the transitional passage (ex.4a and ex.4b), between the statements of the main and secondary themes in the first movement, does not modulate to the dominant or relative key in the same way as might be expected in the sonata allegro form.
It exhibits frequent employment of seventh chords which polarize harmonies giving the impression that every instrumental part or voice develops in a separate tonal sphere. For example (mm.42-48, ex.4a), the bass and inner voice lines suggest D minor, while the upper voice (violin part) is written in double stops in F major; two closely related keys. However the recognizable standard tonal harmonic concordance can only be found in the combinations of the upper line (violin part) with the bass line or the upper line with the inner line. The layering of Example 4a. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, first movement, mm.42-52
tonal spheres in this passage obscures the harmonic significance of the bass. The implied E-major chord in measure 58 seems to emerge from the convergence of two lines in contrary motion, rather than being prepared by a standard cadential progression. The chord (m.57) preceding the arrival of the secondary theme in E major is a half diminished chord on B in the first inversion, which is consequently “resolved” to the root position of an E-major chord.
In some sections of the work, Halffter avoids the usual tonal harmonic goals, however in other sections he strongly reaffirms them, introducing extended cadential formulas similar to these in the first and second movements (ex. 5 and 6).

Example 5. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, first movement, mm. 112-123
The Romantic predisposition to modify Classical models can also be observed in Halffter’s *Violin Concerto*. It does not open with the traditional orchestral tutti presenting the exposition in the home key, but it begins with the solo cadenza based on modal scales. The first movement also features a second cadenza which reworks the material of the first theme in A minor, just before its recapitulation (reminiscent of Mendelssohn’s *Violin Concerto*). The tendency of Romantic composers to blur the frames of the main sections of large forms emerges as an identifiable characteristic in this composition. The return of the main theme as “recapitulation” (m. 216) is less decisive because it first appears in the parallel minor. The arrival of the major mode is delayed, but returns later (m. 223) in the second phrase and is maintained in the following orchestral tutti. Halffter also employs frequent abbreviation of repeated thematic material as well as variation; keeping with the principle of romantic cyclic form, Halffter recalls ideas from preceding movements in a simple, varied, or elaborated version. The second movement brings back elements of the introduction to the first movement: simple (ex.7a and 7b) and elaborated (ex.8a and 8b).
Example 7a. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, first movement, mm.1-3

Example 7b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, second movement, mm.18-20

Example 8a. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, first movement, mm. 4-6

Example 8b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, second movement, mm. 56-57
In addition, the composer alludes to the second theme from the first movement in the last movement (ex.4b mm.59-64 and ex.9 mm. 200-203). Both melodies display stepwise motion in parallel thirds and similar rhythm.

Example 9. Halffter, Violin Concerto, third movement, mm.199-203

The classical formal design in Halffter’s Violin Concerto is also influenced, modified and determined by genuine Spanish forms which bring together dance and song. These forms feature the constant alternation between refrain estribillo (usually dance) and verse copla (usually song), contrasting habitually in mood, tempo and also frequently in meter. This typical Spanish discourse in music, which alternates contrasting verse-refrain form, is exemplified by Jota (ex.10) from Falla’s Siete canciones populares, which are based on material from a published collection of Spanish national music. Halffter introduces such contrasting sections in all the movements of his Violin Concerto. However, those from the first movement are more evident and more closely related to the Spanish style.

---

The difference between the characters of the first (dance) and the second (song) themes is clearly identifiable (compare ex.14a with ex. 4b), which at the same time fulfills the convention of thematic contrast within the concept of sonata allegro form. Even more in Spanish style are the constant alternations of short fragments in the first section of the development (ex.11), where the first six measures reflect dance rhythm and the next five measures are clearly song-like.

The overall phrase structure of the Violin Concerto is reminiscent of Scarlatti’s compositions which display a specific internal rhythm which results in asymmetric phrase structure (see chapter 2 page 19). Halffter brings out irregularities in the number of measures per phrase, and also develops the concept of introducing changes of meter, or of mixing even meter
Example 11. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, first movement, mm.124-135

with uneven, in unpredictable ways. A remarkable example of this technique occurs in the second movement of the concerto (ex. 12a and 12b). The restated thematic material in its varied form appears every time with a different metrical organization.
Baroque and Pre-classical allusions which shape the form of the second movement include the use of variation techniques. The violin repertoire of both epochs abounds in sets of variations that are aimed at a display of technical and expressive possibilities of the instrument. These variation sets from the Baroque period were constructed over different kinds of bass; recurring chordal patterns or recurring bass lines.
Although Halffter does not employ the ground bass technique in a conventional way, it is possible to trace recurrent chordal schemes which give a sort of harmonic frame to section A (see chart II page 35) of the second movement. The chordal scheme (ex.13) in this case is not always repeated in the same sequence, as some elements are shuffled every time and the number of chords is not the same in every repetition. It also does not determine the development of the bass line, the chords comprise inner voices and the violin line.

Example 13. Chordal pattern, mm.1-4, 7-9, 17-18, 33-35, 39-40, 48-49, 63-64
The use and manipulation of these chords is somewhat similar to the employment of harmonic patterns in variation suites in which the subsequent dances follow with a variation a similar harmonic progression.\textsuperscript{77}

In addition, Halffter refers to the convention of melodic-outline variations (Pre-classical and Classical sets of variations) where the period structure is maintained and the melody is only embellished, not transformed. However in this case, the regularity of design is frequently disrupted by changing meter (see ex.12a and 12 b).

Example 14a. Halffter, Violin Concerto, first movement, mm.7-42

One of the more interesting strategies applied in this Violin Concerto is the “reversed” order of the presentation of musical ideas as it occurs within the first movement of the piece, in which the theme appears first in an embellished form and later in its simple form. The essential

\textsuperscript{77} David W. Beach, Aspects of Unity in J.S.Bach’s Partitas and Suits (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 3-25.
musical idea of the first theme emerges as late as the opening of the development section. The first statement of the main theme (ex.14a) uses active rhythmic patterns of a *jota* dance, and its melody outlines a descending tetrachord from the major mode scale (4,3,2,1). At first it may not be obvious that this theme is an elaborated version of a more elementary musical idea. The following sections rework motives of the first theme and those same motives also appear in the secondary area and the closing section. It is quite surprising to find that the opening of the development section (ex.14b) outlines the origin of the melodic contour of the main theme (ex.14a). This melody presents an Andalusian feature, a descending Phrygian tetrachord (e,d,c,b).

Example 14b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, first movement, mm. 120-123

**Halffter’s Violin Concerto as Neoclassical Composition**

*Principles of Neoclassical Composition*

Igor Stravinsky, a leading composer in the neoclassical style, wrote a great number of compositions between 1920 and 1940, which emphasize their relationship with the past in many innovative ways. Without a doubt, many composers were influenced by his extraordinary works. However, sometimes the significance of Stravinsky’s achievements overshadows the work of other composers in that period who contributed in notable ways to this body of literature. As a
matter of fact, almost all the composers active in the first half of the twentieth century combined past styles with new techniques to produce music of extraordinary originality.78

The origins of neoclassicism stem from the revival of French tradition in works by Debussy (three last sonatas) and Ravel. Ravel’s compositions, for example such as *Le tombeau de Couperin, Sonatina for Piano, Sonata for Violin and Violoncello* and his *Piano Trio*, display many neoclassical attributes which became models for the following generation of composers. Later, the development of neoclassical trends emerged in Stravinsky’s experiments, the compositions of *Les Six* as well as in the music of Paul Hindemith, Sergei Prokofiev, Béa Bartók and many others.

Stravinsky’s works embody compositional practices from a wide range of stylistic periods from the Middle Ages (with references to Machaut’s *Mass*) to the Romantic period (with references to Tchaikovsky’s *The Fairy’s Kiss*). These works embrace, transform and recompose different prototypes and employ new creative strategies. His novel treatment of form was especially influential on subsequent generations. In works of this period Stravinsky frequently recasts traditional materials to fashion new formal design. Other composers such as Bartók and Schoenberg displayed new gestures within the boundaries of conventional forms.79 Similarly, Prokofiev used traditional forms as constructive frames for his modern, novel, “sarcastic” musical language. Hindemith, the leading composer of the German neoclassic trend, *Neue Sachlichkeit* (new objectivity), favored accessibility and utility of composed music. Neoclassical elements in the music of Hindemith reflect his keen interest in the contrapuntal

styles of the Renaissance and Baroque. The neoclassicism of Satie and Les Six reveals the influence of Parisian avant-garde nihilism, whose principles manifest an anti-academic approach to matters of art. These composers reacted against complex structures and favored simple, short forms frequently cast in humorous ways.

The great number of different associations and references to past models by neoclassical composers resulted in a wide range of variation within the boundaries of neoclassical style. Despite the fact that identifiable conventions emerged, composers employed strategies, methods, and techniques adjusting and modifying the processes of linking elements from different practices and stylistic periods. The multifaceted nature of neoclassicism concerns scholars even now because they still have difficulties in grasping its implications and developing a single theory for the analysis of such a diverse range of music.

Joseph Strauss one of the most important scholars who studied the nature of neoclassicism in depth, refers to the poetic theory of Harold Bloom to explain the philosophic and psychological bases of neoclassicism. Bloom’s theory centers on the frustrating situation of the twentieth century poets who, being conscious of the magnitude of their predecessors’ achievements, feared being overshadowed. This anxiety incited them to look for stimulation in a variety of past sources and to attempt to transform old ideas in a process called “misreading.” This process consists of the revision and interpretation of thoughts expressed by poets of past generations. A modern poet may bypass his fear of redundancy by explaining ideas stated by a predecessor. In this way old ideas acquire new meaning, and that transformation

supplants the origin from which they derived. As a result the significance of the original is reduced to simply a source of inspiration or a point of departure.  

The standard repertoire of concerts gave preference to the performance of old works regarded as masterpieces. Composers like their literary counterparts, struggle for recognition aimed at writing pieces that could equal or surpass those of the great masters. Hence they also began to “misread” models left by their predecessors. Straus points out that the process of “misreading” can be traced in the creation of neoclassical composition and can also serve as a basis for analysis. He believes that the identification of “misread” concepts provides a useful point of departure for understanding the coexistence, juxtaposition, fusion or transformation of disparate elements into unified musical structures.

Although Bloom’s speculations shed light on the coexistence of past and present components in musical works and offer a psychological explanation for the impulses which led to their creation, they display too many links with the Freudian authoritative figure of a punishing father, and tend to frame the concept of influence as negative undesirable. This negative concept of influence does not coincide with the spirit of many neoclassical compositions. As Richard Taruskin indicates, influences which resulted in adoptions of models for artistic purpose do not have to be considered as negative. They can, for example be grounded simply in the admiration of a particular work.

In my opinion, the most interesting approach to the issues of the neoclassical aesthetic can be found in the article published in *Music Theory Spectrum* “Neoclassic and Anachronistic

---


83 Burkholder, “Musical Time and Continuity,” 412-413.

Impulses in Twentieth Century Music” by Martha M. Hyde. She states that the concept of “neoclassicism” lacks a satisfactory theoretical background and points out that unlike literary and art history criticisms, music criticism does not have a well-structured theory of imitation.\(^85\) She asserts that the use of borrowing techniques does not imply that the composition is neoclassic but stresses that a combination of old and new elements in the same composition does qualify the work to be understood as neoclassic. She suggests that the theory of imitation applied to literature developed by Thomas Green in his work *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* can help to establish similar categorization in music. Green distinguishes five categories of imitation: naïve, abusive, serendipitous, creative and tragic. She believes that his classification, slightly changed, can serve as a useful tool to differentiate, understand and explore the neoclassical style in music, especially that from the beginning of the twentieth century. Utilizing concepts from Green’s theory she proposes an interesting categorization of imitations which is based on the identification of distinctive imitative ideas. She distinguishes two methods of treatment of “classic” models: 1) antiquarianism (pieces composed in the old style without any innovative, modern approach) and 2) accommodation. She considers the second to be a useful model for analytical techniques in analysis of twentieth century works. There can be two kinds of accommodation: 1) allegorical accommodation which involves straightforward direct imitation or 2) metamorphic accommodation, less direct, that involves various kinds of approaches to the model. Professor Hyde, without pretending to be exhaustive, differentiates four main ways of imitation: reverential, eclectic, heuristic and dialectical.

*Reverential imitation*, “the simplest”, usually refers to the specific model, elaborated in a modern way, but clearly identifiable with a specific composition (for example Stravinsky’s

---

\(^85\) This theory of imitation does not have any links with imitative contrapuntal techniques.
Pulcinella or Ravel’s Tombeau de Couperin). Eclectic imitation brings elements from unidentified past compositions frequently from different historic periods, and reworks them freely in modern ways, serving as a display of the technical skills of the composer (such as Stravinsky’s Octet, Hindemith Sympohonic Metamorphosis after Themes by Carl Maria von Weber). Heuristic imitation departs from the model and gradually transforms it into a new entity (Bartók’s Eight Improvisations on a Hungarian Peasant Song). Dialectical imitation “challenges” a chosen model. The new composition is engaged in a “dialogue” with its model, at first displaying a close relation to some of its elements and then later disrupting completely those links (Schoenberg’s String Quartet No.3, Tippett’s Fantasia Concertante on a Theme of Corelli).  

I think that these classifications can be combined and that such combinations may expand our ability to explore neoclassical compositions at deeper levels, which strengthen our understanding of their structure and, at the same time, our understanding of their relationship to past models. However, the classifications proposed by Hyde are limited to analysis of the concept of imitation. There are possibly other strategies, and concepts which could shed light on the nature of neoclassical composition.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, visual arts and literature brought about a revolution in aesthetic ideas. The reaction against past artistic or literary conventions was very strong and serious; a highly emotional approach to the creative process was rejected. As a result, a new attitude came to light, giving preference to a more abstract, humorous, lighthearted, artificial, and playful vision of artistic creation. Certain groups of artists did not aspire to be messengers of truth or to depict the depth of human emotions so much; they desired to champion

86 Hyde, “Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth Century Music,” 200-235. I have added some examples of works to those given by Hyde.
innovation, radical at times, to the point of astonishment. These aspirations incited them to establish contradictory or abstract conventions that can be exemplified by Pablo Picasso’s and Joan Miró’s painting, Guillaume Apollinaire’s poetry or James Joyce’s novels. This kind of conceptual impulse is also present in neoclassical musical compositions. Some of them display a deliberate and humorous destruction of the order or basic principles of the development of Classical forms (Stravinsky’s Symphony in C), or tonal harmonic progressions, or wrong note harmony (Stravinsky’s Pulcinella, Prokofiev’s works in general) or invent others and even propose absurd forms (Satie’s Piece in the Form of Pear).

Neoclassical elements in Halffter’s Violin Concerto

Halffter’s Violin Concerto can be considered a neoclassical piece. The coexistence of old and new elements, the main and most important characteristic of neoclassical composition, is evident in this work. As discussed, the overall formal design adheres to the form of concerto established by Classical and developed further by Romantic composers; however the unfolding of events within these patterns is affected by modern strategies. Modern elements such as the harmonic language (apparent bitonality), the departure from standard tonal progressions, the distortion of the regularity of phrase structure by metrical changes, rhythmic intricacies, a tendency to variation and abbreviation of restated material are important factors which transform the traditional formal design and assert its progressive attributes.

It is possible to classify Halffter’s Violin Concerto according to Hyde’s theory of imitative strategies. Reverential, heuristic and dialectical imitation can be primarily excluded because every one of these imitative strategies relies on a specific model. In the case of this composition a specific model does not exist. Halffter imitates the form of the solo concerto,
brings gestures of Baroque and Romantic idiomatic writing for violin, and alludes to the symmetrical phrase structure of classical works. This approach belongs to the category of eclectic imitation.

As mentioned before, the composition is also strongly influenced by the imitation of Spanish gestures which classify the piece outside the concepts of a neoclassical composition. However, in this case the nationalism could be reinterpreted as a neoclassical allusion to Spanish Romantic music. Consequently it would be appropriate to describe the technique of imitation used by Halffter as eclectic imitation based on Classical formal design and Spanish nationalistic tradition.

The explanation of the choice of the imitative technique employed in the piece is as meaningful for the understanding of the compositional process within neoclassical composition, as is the clarification of the exclusion of the technique. For example, it would be possible to create a variant (a subcategory or extended category) of heuristic or dialectical imitations which would find the neoclassical composition on varied sources of models. It would be appropriate to ask if Halffter’s Violin Concerto could match such a category. It does not, however, because the composer does not transform any model gradually nor does he challenge any model. Instead he shows the possibilities of different guises of ideas, being more interested in showing different facets of ideas than in their transformation in an extended evolution. In addition he does not undermine concepts and proportions of the Classical forms; he does not aspire to transcend the form and to create a new one (even in the second movement in which the form is not easy to define). He does not try to explore constructive elaborations in depth, or achieve greater complexity. He plays with conventions to a certain extent, but as an admirer of balanced proportions, elegance of design and modern creative playfulness, he merely incorporates layered
conceptions, juxtaposes elements, distorts conventional gestures, and demonstrates thereby his 
skillful compositional technique. He chose to explore the possible versatility of the material 
rather than transform it to produce a higher level of complexity. His preference for simplicity is 
consistent with the aesthetic goals of Spanish neoclassicism (explained in chapter 3).

In order to establish the neoclassical identity of the composition, it is indispensable to 
analyze the influence of past styles and techniques. Halffter, as mentioned, brings together 
elements of Baroque, Pre-classical, Classical and Romantic styles in his Violin Concerto. Some 
of them control the development of the form while others function as surface elements. Some of 
these influences which shape the form of movements have been provided in the description of 
the formal design and will be omitted here to avoid redundancy. The discussion of references to 
specific styles will be organized chronologically.

Baroque characteristics can be identified in the second and the third movements. The 
second movement features the following Baroque influences 1) a chordal pattern (described 
previously, page 45-47), 2) different treatments of the bass line, and 3) variation technique of 
recurrent melodic lines of the theme. The treatment of the bass line displays at first a static pedal 
point, then a kind of walking bass, after that the base line gains a melodic quality and is a part of 
a three voice contrapuntal passage.

Example 15 a. Halffter, Violin Concerto, second movement, fragments of bass line: a static 
pedal point, mm. 1-3

Example 15 b. Halffter, Violin Concerto, second movement, fragments of bass line a walking 
bass, mm. 7-9
The variation technique employed in the melodic line exhibits some affinities with the variation of the melodic line in the first movement *Adagio* of J.S. Bach’s *Sonata* No. 3 for violin and harpsichord in E major. A recurrent opening motive of every variation appears on different pitch level and also in inverted version. The following embellished melody is altered in each variation, some rhythmic patterns repeat but without any particular order. The movement could be one of the models for the kind of variation technique Halffter applied in the second
movement, where melodic and rhythmic figures repeat or allude to previous material freely without any established sequence.

Example 16. J.S. Bach, *Sonata for violin and harpsichord* No.3 in E major, first movement, Adagio, violin part, mm.1-14

Other devices can be seen in all movements such as two voice texture fragments and passage work with typical melodic-rhythmic Baroque gestures of idiomatic writing for violin which unfolds in the second and third movements. Passages written for only two instruments can be found in all movements. They imitate one of the possible performance practices of Baroque solo sonata with basso continuo. This texture is presented in the cadential formulas of the second movement (see ex.6). The two-voice-line passage of the first movement displays imitation of the upper voice by the lower voice in an augmented inversion (see ex. 5 mm.120-
In the third movement, a two-voice texture fragment (this time filled in with orchestral chords) recurs in the conclusive section of the refrain theme in every repetition. The third movement also introduces a fragment of three instrument texture reminiscent of the texture of Baroque sonatas written for two solo instruments (ex.18).

Some sections of the second and third movements exhibit passage work akin to the models of late Baroque idiomatic writing for violin which usually developed in sequences. The
ornamentation of this passage is similar to that used by Joseph Hector Fiocco (1703-1741) in his *Allegro* for violin and keyboard.

Example 19 a. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, third movement, mm.155-162

Example 19 b. J.H. Fiocco, *Allegro*, mm.34-39

Pre-classical elements are those which refer to Scarlatti’s example of avoidance of the schematic regularity of phrases (discussed on pages 43-45). Classical elements are primarily those concerning formal design already described (pages 34-36). Allusion to the Classical period structure is present in the form of the main themes throughout the composition, but it is constantly distorted and modified by an uneven number of measures and by sudden changes of meter. The influence of this style can be noticed in the variation technique used in the thematic

---

87 Allegro by Fiocco originally was written for harpsichord; however it later was transcribed for different instruments with piano accompaniment see Diana Petech, *Foreword* in J.H. Fiocco, *Pièces de clavecin* (Paris: Heugel, 1998). The arrangement for violin became very popular and I opted to choose it as an example because it also refers to the performance practice of late Baroque or Pre-classical violin repertoire by the violinist at the beginning of the twentieth century which is discussed later in chapter five.
section of the second movement. In fact, this section is affected and shaped by the mix and juxtaposition of various tendencies. One of them was mentioned concerning its similarity to J.S.Bach’s *Adagio* on page 57-58. The overall development of this section seems also to be inspired by the example of variation technique applied by Haydn in the slow movements of his String Quartets; for example Op.20 No.5 and 6, or Op.64 No.4. This variation technique primarily consists of the recurrence of a theme in embellished forms.

Romantic influences on the piece can be observed in its formal design (discussed before pages 40-42) and its virtuosic character. Some of the simple variation technique and the type of figuration applied by Paganini in his *Sonatinas* Op. 2 No.2 or Op.2 No.6 for violin and guitar can also be considered a prototype of the variation technique Halffter used in the second movement. Apart from that, the third movement of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* could be modeled in character and form on the third movement of Paganini’s *First Violin Concerto* in D major. Both are in rondo form enlarged and modified by sections which exhibit virtuosic passage work. Both main themes of these movements are in 2/4 meter and in their rhythmic patterns; they employ one of the most virtuosic bow techniques *ricochet*.

*Spanish Elements in Halffter’s Violin Concerto*

As a typical work of Spanish neoclassicism, Halffter's Violin Concerto displays a great number of elements that define its nationalistic character. This character is determined by the exploitation of: 1) essential rhythmic gestures, components of Spanish folk and popular music, 2) modality within the tonal frame, 3) major-minor mixtures and third related tonal areas, 5) verse-refrain form and 6) references to the Spanish idiomatic tradition for violin embodied in Sarasate’s compositions. Although Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* displays many nationalistic traits,
quotations are absent. Scholars who have studied his output, and this piece in particular, do not report any specific or implied borrowings from Spanish folk or popular music. Rather practices in the *Concerto* are akin to the artistic values of Spanish neoclassical composers, who in their reaction against the widespread romantic and neo-romantic practice of using quotation, proposed the elaboration of essential elements of Spanish folk and popular music. Elaboration of these elements could result in distortion, modification, juxtaposition, or a combination of these established conventions. Thus the following discussion will identify representative Spanish elements but the reader should not expect that they will appear in the Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* in literally the same form.

Spanish character is more evident in the first and the last movements. The opening movement makes use of melodic gestures of a descending Phrygian tetrachord, *jota*’s rhythms, major-minor mixtures, modes other than major and minor, refrain-verse form and successive sections in which tonal areas are related by thirds. The last movement employs melodic gestures and rhythmic patterns which resemble music written for *zarzuela*. The second movement exhibits the use of third related keys between consecutive sections and modal inflexions in sections which recall material from the first movement.

The most significant and vital element that establishes Spanish character in this composition is rhythm. Halffter uses rhythmic patterns of dances, in particular those of *jota* in the first movement of the concerto. *Jota*’s dynamic rhythmic patterns and the implied contrast of verse-refrain form; attracted the attention of many composers including some who were not of Spanish extraction.\(^88\) Although *jota* originated in the region of Aragón, it became popular in the whole country. There are varied types of *jota* with its regional distinctions; many of them

---

alternate slower singing sections with fast, very dynamic sections. *Jotas* written by the

Example 20. Rhythmic patterns of *jota*
renowned composers such as Granados, Albeniz, Sarasate, Emmanuel Chabrier, Falla and others employed a variety of rhythmic patterns such as shown in ex. 20.

Halffter uses elements from some of these patterns and employed them in the first movement; however he does not employ them in their simple original forms. They appear disguised by the alternation of triple and duple pulse which is a characteristic feature of other dances such as rondeña and guajira, a Cuban dance also popular in Spain.\(^8^9\) The rhythmic patterns Halffter employs become more complex when additionally measures based on hemiola pattern disrupt the steady accentuation (see ex.14 mm.11-12 and mm. 26-27). The use of hemiola is very common in Spanish folk and popular music. It is usually present in copla (singing section) of jota and malgueña another dance from the group of fandango dances. The mixture of rhythmic patterns from various dances and the creation of hybrid forms can be found in other Spanish compositions written before the Violin Concerto, in many Albeniz’s works for example. However, combinations proposed by Halffter display a higher level of rhythmic complexity achieved additionally by unexpected changes of meter. The first movement includes following rhythmic figures from patterns of jota.

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{\includegraphics[width=2cm]{rhythmic-figure1}} \\
\text{\includegraphics[width=2cm]{rhythmic-figure2}} \\
\text{\includegraphics[width=2cm]{rhythmic-figure3}}
\end{array}
\]

The third movement brings rhythmic patterns of pasacalle. The name pasacalle derives from two words, pasar (to walk) and calle (street). Originally pasacalle was a piece written for vihuela (a prototype of guitar) and played on the street to provide entertainment for passers by. Later, it became known worldwide as passacaglia, the familiar variation procedure of art music.

\(^8^9\) Walter Aaron Clark, Isaac Albéniz Portrait of a Romantic (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 231.
Despite that fact, *pasacalles* were maintained in their original form in the Spanish popular repertoire. It can be found in *zarzuelas*, such as *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* by Frederico Chueca and *Doña Francisquita* by Amadeu Vives. Patterns of *pasacalle* of these *zarzuelas* emphasize such rhythmic figures as shown in example 21. In the last movement, all these patterns are intermingled in the development of the melodic line of the main theme of this rondo.

**Example 21. Rhythmic patterns of *pasacalle***

Another important feature of Spanish folk and popular music is the use of modes other than traditional major and minor modes of Western music. Especially distinctive is the Andalusian scale, which can be understood as a varied form of Phrygian mode, in which the third degree can be raised or lowered. The use of the raised third degree, which creates an augmented second interval, and the alternation of the third degree give a particular color to melodies based on this scale (ex. 22a). One of the main features of Andalusian melodies is the emphasis of the descending first tetrachord of Phrygian mode at the closure of phrases (ex. 22 b). These characteristics drew the attention of many composers who desired to write music in Spanish style. For instance Albeniz in *Iberia* (a collection of Spanish pieces) based melodies of more than half of those pieces on a descending Phrygian tetrachord.

---

Halffter in his Violin Concerto introduces a melody outlining the Phrygian descending tetrachord in the opening section of development of the first movement (see ex.14b). However this tetrachord does not appear at the conclusion of the phrase but does occur at the end of the semi-phrase. Its Andalusian character is obscured by the accompanying contrapuntal line which unfolds in Lydian mode. Halffter even changes, in a humorous way, the tetrachord’s main
characteristic, presenting it as a major tetrachord. Its presence in the major version can be traced continuingly in the first movement.

The melodic lines of the main theme and transitions outline descending tetrachords. In addition, it recurs as the accompanying figure of the second theme (ex. 4b, mm. 59-64) resembling its use in Phrygian version in Ravel’s *Spanish Rhapsody*. The Andalusian scale and the conventional closure of melody does appear in the first movement of this concerto, but is delayed until the recapitulation. The main theme of the movement emerges from the solo cadenza in its Andalusian version outlining the whole scale, with its optional use of both raised and lowered third degrees of this scale (ex. 23).

Example 23. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, first movement, mm. 216-225

Modal inflections happen primarily in the first movement. The opening cadenza is developed on the Locrian and Lydian modes. The transitional passages after the secondary theme introduce modal inflexion and the first section of the development section displays a combination of Phrygian and Lydian modes. Short passages in Locrian mode appear in the second movement elaborating on recalled material from the introduction of the first movement (ex.8).

Major-minor mixture and the juxtaposition of tonal areas related by the interval of a third are not exclusively Spanish procedures derived from its folk and popular music, but were, of course employed extensively by Western Romantic composers. Even so, these practices are
found extensively in Spanish folk and popular music. For example they are among the most

Example 24. Granados, *Andaluza*, mm.57-68

Example 25. Falla in *Jota* from *Siete canciones españolas* mm.60-83
prominent characterizing features of fandango. Both major-minor mixture and the third related key modulations were used by Spanish nationalistic composers as exemplified by Andaluza from Danzas españolas by Granados – major-minor mixture (ex.24) and Jota from Siete canciones españolas by Falla – third related tonal areas (ex.25).

The major-minor mixture occurs twice in Halffter’s Violin Concerto; the solo violin cadenza and the second statement of the main theme of rondo (third movement) are in A minor. Structural tonal relationships related by intervals other than the descending third do occur, especially in the second movement which progresses from F major to A minor (I-III), C major (V) and D minor (natural VI). The third movement also departs from third related progressions and the first displays only twice such a third relationship, from I to flat-VI between the main theme and its transition and in the third section of the development (mm.139-153).

The next feature of Spanish style is the verse refrain-form (copla-estribillo), which was discussed above in relation to the design of Halffter’s Violin Concerto. It is necessary to add that the second theme of the first movement alludes to the copla from Granados’s Rondalla Aragonesa. Both of them elaborate similar motives in parallel thirds (compare ex.4b with ex. 26).

Example 26. Granados Rondalla Aragonesa mm. 30-34 and mm.53-57

---

95 Clark, Enrique Granados, Poet of the Piano, 132.
Spanish idiomatic writing for violin was fully developed by virtuoso Pablo Sarasate, a renowned Spanish violinist. He left a number of compositions for violin with piano accompaniment and a great number of them rework themes of folk and popular music. In Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* we can find some elements of passage work similar to those Sarasate employed in his pieces. This derivation can be exemplified by analogous use of harmonics technique (ex. 27a and 27b) or fast ascending arpeggios (ex. 28a and 28b).


![Example 27a](image1)

Example 27b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, first movement, mm.160-168

![Example 27b](image2)

Example 28a. Sarasate, *Habanera* Op.21 No.2, mm. 33-34

![Example 28a](image3)

Example 28b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto* first movement mm. 34-38

![Example 28b](image4)

---

96 Joseph Gold and Keith Anderson booklet to Pablo Sarasate, *Spanish Dances* (TianwaYang, violin; Marcus Hadula, piano), Naxos 8.557767/747313276721.
Spanish instrumental compositions, especially those for harpsichord (Scarlatti) and piano (Granados, Albeniz, Falla) were influenced by styles idiomatic for guitar. Therefore chordal arpeggiated passages associated with the guitar technique rasgueado (strumming) and pedal points on opened strings imitating another guitar technique such as punteado (plucking) were imitated in the works for other instruments. Sarasate referred to them as Halffter did later.


Example 29 b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, third movement, mm.168-182


Example 30 b. Halffter, *Violin Concerto*, third movement, mm1-10
CHAPTER 5
PERFORMANCE PRACTICE COMPLEXITY RESULTING FROM THE COEXISTENCE OF BOTH NEOCLASSICAL AND SPANISH STYLISTIC TRAITS

Aesthetic Background

Introduction

The performance of modern compositions is not as frequently preceded by research of a historic nature as has come to be the case in recent decades for the performance of compositions from the Baroque and Classical periods. In the case of the latter two, performers nowadays often gather information concerning the historical circumstances in which the work was conceived. In such cases their interpretative concepts derive more heavily from the study of performance practice of the specific period of time. To the limits of their knowledge and skill, these performers emulate stylistic conventions of the era from which the composition emerged, and when possible, use instruments with physical and acoustical properties similar to those of the day. Performers of modern works may not take the same studious approach and commonly adjust their conceptions to the conventions of standard interpretations of recognized repertoire; not always modern, usually Romantic.

A significant number of modern compositions have found a stable place in the concert repertoire. Frequent performance and recordings of these works (in many cases supervised by composers themselves) have resulted in new stylistic and interpretative conventions which follow rules of the specific style and correspond the composer’s idea. In the case of modern
compositions, which did not become generally known shortly after their completion and have been performed only sporadically, circumstances are considerably different. In these instances performers have not had a substantial number of examples on which to base their understanding of the work and its interpretation. Without such precedent the clarification of stylistic features of these works may become problematic and the justification for interpretative concepts may need to be supported by meticulous historical research.

Stylistic diversity in musical composition in the first half of the twentieth century creates new challenges for performers. In particular, subtle distinctions among various substyles of neoclassicism such as the new simplicity, *style depouillé*, and Spanish neoclassicism can be difficult to differentiate in performance. Thus the achievement of the stylistically proper and historically informed interpretation of a less-known neoclassical repertoire requires a thorough study of subtleties of related tendencies and trends.

Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* does not have a long performance history and its recordings are not easily available. A performer, who aspires to represent, the true spirit of this piece, needs to explore its stylistic identity. A misunderstanding of the stylistic concept of this piece can easily occur if the performer is led to believe that Spanish and Romantic elements of the piece as those which govern in this work. His interpretation may emphasize important features of Romantic style of performance, overlooking neoclassical components and at the same time disregarding the composer’s intentions. On the whole this work is controlled by the manipulation of the specific neoclassical and nationalistic Spanish elements, as discussed in chapter 4. However, these elements display distinctive traits within one of the implied styles. Thus it is vital for the interpreter to distinguish peculiar characteristics of those applied in this concerto in order to reveal the particularity of stylistic perspective.
Fundamental Factors of Interpretation; Coexistence of Styles and Character

An informed interpretation of Halffter’s Violin Concerto principally stems from the coexistence of diverse stylistic elements and is finally shaped by the specific character of its themes and episodes. Different stylistic conventions in this work are juxtaposed in varying proportions from section to section but tend to maintain the same relationship within a section. One of the styles can be more pronounced than another one as occurs in the first movement where convincingly exposed Spanish elements such as alternation of sections in contrasting character and melodic and rhythmic gestures derived from folk or popular music unfold within the boundaries of sonata allegro form. In contrast, the second movement exhibits more neoclassical characteristics, those which allude to Baroque and Classical traditions. The second movement includes Spanish elements only twice in brief quotations of material from the first movement (see ex. 7a, 7b, 8a and 8b). The second, indirect quotation emerges from the preceding melodic material which is written in a neo-baroque convention. Here we have an example of the transformation from one stylistic convention to another one. Similar procedure occurs later in this movement (mm.62-63) where the melody which imitates Baroque style suddenly changes to Classical convention. The same procedure is also used in the third movement where the bravura passages of Romantic quality unexpectedly acquire Baroque quality and vice versa. The third movement reveals more equal proportions. Particular sections of Halffter’s Violin Concerto have a clearly defined style and character such as the cadenza preceding the recapitulation (mm.201-222); others such as the main theme of the first movement (mm.10-31) are of a hybrid nature (a mix of juxtaposed Spanish dance rhythms unfolding within a neoclassical phrase structure).
Some information provided in written sources and the study of others works from the same creative period clarify the origin of the character of the Violin Concerto. It was composed in the same year (1940) as a ballet La madrugada del panadero Op.12. At that time Halffter was enthusiastically engaged in the premiere of this work and the first stage representation of his earlier ballet Don Lindo de Almería op.7 (1935).97 Both of these ballets are inspired by and resemble genuine Spanish theatrical genres.98 These facts had important bearings on the character of the Violin Concerto and the study of both of these ballets helps to understand better its amusing character and stylistic content. Writers on Halffter’s music point out connections in style and character among these works. Alcaraz indicates that both Don Lindo de Almería and the Violin Concerto allude significantly to the musical theater genres of zarzuela and tonadilla and bring into play elements of these.99 In his essays Bergamín, the author of both ballet’s libretti, emphasizes their Spanish and comic character.100 He describes Don Lindo101 as a caricature of sainete.102 Its libretto depicts in hilarious ways heroes of the story inhabitants of Cadiz, ridiculing their customs and creeds in the modern theater convention where the “narrative structure” is reduced to “series of allusions and proverbs” as described by Halffter himself.103

The influence of theatrical genres can also be observed in the development of form. The musical unfolding of ideas in Halffter’s Violin Concerto to some extent imitates the scene sequence in comic theater where the elements of contrast and surprise determine the narrative organization of the plot. Allusions to both sainete and zarzuela are evident in the character of

---

97 Iglesias, Rodolfo Halffter, 72, 93.
98 Ibid., 110.
99 Alcaraz, Rodolfo Halffter, 23,71.
100 Iglesias, Rodolfo Halffter, 110.
101 Ibid., 72, 81.
102 Clark, Enrique Granados, Poet of the Piano, 113-114. Sainete was one act comedy (initiated in eighteenth century) which depicted customs and incidents in the life of the inhabitants of Madrid. The satiric content of those comedies, not exactly of the highest level of literally expression provided entertainment for a long time.
103 Ruiz Ortiz, Rodolfo Halffter, 187.
the first and third movements. The first movement mischievously plays with conventions of Andalusian music. Traditionally the very passionate and sorrowful ethos of this music is exposed in humorous, lighthearted ways. The third movement rather goes along with the cheerful character of *zarzuela*. Its festive character is even expanded to approach grotesque in the final part of the third movement (mm. 257-285). These grotesque elements bring to mind the character of a number of compositions by members of *Les Six* or those by Satie or Stravinsky. Since a spirit of comedy prevails in this piece, the interpretation has to expose it.

The preceding discussion aimed to shed light in detail on the most important factors which have major bearing on the interpretation of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto*. This complex mixture of different styles forces a performer to consider several possible choices. Chief among these considerations will be an assessment of which of the two stylistic elements, neoclassic or nationalistic, is more prominent at any given time and whether or not their interrelationship is stable or whether it changes, first within each section and later within an entire movement or the entire composition. Since an analysis of those elements offered in chapter 4 reveals an almost equal distribution of the two styles overall, the question remains as to which of the two should govern the performance at the most fundamental level. This problem can be addressed by classifying the work within the great variety of stylistic departures that characterize neoclassical works. It adheres to the aesthetic concept of *style dépouillé* and overall aesthetic concept of new simplicity and to principles of Spanish Neoclassicism. In conclusion the interpretation should be akin to the “Classical” models which feature certain expressive restraint, balance, and simplicity of an objective, lighthearted and playful approach to the matter of artistic creation.

More challenging is the treatment of Spanish influences. The use of rhythmic patterns of Spanish dances does not present a major controversy; the appropriate articulation and the choice
of tempi can guarantee the satisfactory interpretation of those sections in which they appear. Much more complex is the approach to execution of fragments which display Spanish lyricism traditionally associated with an exuberant passionate performance style. The expressive quality has to be identified according to that implied by the music of a specific portion of the work, and later defined by such categories as sentimental, pastoral, lighthearted, serene, passionate or dramatic. The most Romantic and dramatic in character is the inner solo cadenza of the first movement, which evokes the Andalusian atmosphere by the imitation of improvised guitar playing and the appearance of the main theme in its Andalusian version (ex.23). While this cadenza provides contrast, a clear distinction between Romantic and Spanish notions is no longer necessary since at this point Spanish character can overcome the required restraint and simplicity of other sections.

Less Spanish in its character is the solo introduction, written with improvisational freedom and based on modal scales other than Phrygian with Andalusian inflections. This opening cadenza has the character of a prelude. Its modal melodic background tends to moderate a strong sense of harmonic direction and reduce dramatic affect. The second theme which alludes to the singing parts (coplas) of the refrain-verse form presents the motive in the character of lullaby with its serine quality and absence of drama. Other lyric parts are those from the opening of the development of the first movement. Their modal quality is of Phrygian character and the coloring of the contrapuntal line in Lydian mode scored in the high register of the bassoon produces a primitive expressive quality recalling Stravinsky’s fragments from Le sacre du printemps or Falla’s Amor brujo or La vida breve.

Lyricism in the third movement is confined to one section only (mm. 185-221) and develops a simple melody which recalls the popular style of music hall or lyric theater. The
melody is accompanied by brass instruments grotesquely imitating a brass band. At the end of this section (mm. 200-221) the melody modifies its meter and alludes to the lullaby character of the second theme of the first movement. The change of mood passes from cheerful and robust to serene and slightly nostalgic.

The second movement’s lyrical, thematic sections have a Classical character and therefore invite a certain emotional restraint from the performer, as suggested by the composer’s indication *molto semplice*. Performer’s attention should be directed toward the balanced phrases and production of high-quality soft sound, yet some contrasting episode sections, as verbal annotation and the level of dynamic and harmonic background imply, are of more intense expressivity. Thus the interpretation of the second movement should aim at exposition of those subtle differences which can be achieved by: 1) the adjustment of dynamic levels, 2) more or less pronounced arrival points in shaping of phrases and 3) variations in intensity of vibrato.

The vital issue for the preparation of faithful, expressive and convincing interpretation in the case of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* is the achievement of the stylistic equilibrium where the neoclassical elements govern the piece but do not inhibit a free unfolding of lyricism. A performer can find a similar complexity or controversy in works by masters of Classical music such as Mozart’s *Violin Concertos*. In fact these works present a great example of balance among such elements as lyricism, vigor, virtuosity, humor and grace which is also displayed in Halffter’s *Violin Concerto*. Thus a violinist can find there many valuable references to help accomplish the same purpose in a modern neoclassical composition.
Interpretation and Performance Issues

Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* in the Mexican editions of the full score and the version with piano reduction offer quality material for the interpretation of the work. They were scrupulously prepared without inconsistency; the score even includes bowings for both soloist and orchestra. Although we have no information about who prepared the score for publication, we can assume that both of them were endorsed by the composer\(^{104}\) and the articulation indications probably were influenced by collaboration with Szeryng.\(^{105}\) Articulation directions are generally clear and dynamics are meticulously designated. In some sections the interpretation of dots and notes without any indications can be problematic. In those cases the best solution may be determined by the style and character of a specific fragment. Slurs both indicate phrasing and bow changing. Indications for expressive gestures are not numerous but those few which are included are important and appropriate.

The only controversial elements are the metronomic markings for the first and third movements and the final section of the second movement which are very fast for the precise execution of required shifts, chords, and ornaments. Such tempos make a perfect performance of these passages difficult.\(^{106}\) In these passages, some measured adjustment of the tempo is necessary to assure an accurate realization of all the details; however, such adjustments should not be allowed to compromise the character of the melodic and rhythmic content. Therefore the choice of exact tempos or the determination of the range of tempos in which the piece can be

\(^{104}\) See information on page 12.
\(^{105}\) See information on page 32.
\(^{106}\) The tempo for the first movement, 66 per dotted quarter note, should be slowed down below 60. The indicated tempo for the third movement, 126 per quarter note, require to be change below 116 and also the section *Poco più mosso* of the second movement which begin in measure 51 calls for reduced speed of tempo from 100 to 90 or less. Apart from this section the second movement tempo is playable in the tempo annotated in both editions 96 per eighth note.
performed is very important because it affects directly the articulation and character of the piece. To assure the proper performance, first movement tempos should derive from the tempos featured by *jota* dance$^{107}$ and last movement from *pasacalle* tempo.$^{108}$ These links help to set an adequate tempo to emphasize grace and elegance of rhythmic patterns enhancing the Spanish character and assisting at the same time the achievement of greater rhythmic accuracy.

The tempo of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* is not always steady, changes are specified in some sections and indication of *ritenuto* often occurs at cadential points. This subtle freedom indicated in tempo changes makes Spanish influences noticeable and accentuates the alteration of themes and episodes which are different in character, particularly those in which rhythmic elements are foremost in importance and those which emphasize melodic content. Especially meaningful is the decisive and precise return to a *tempo primo* which helps to maintain appropriate proportions of alterations in relation to the overall tempo of the movement. This practice brings about a greater continuity in the flow of forces which articulate classical form and at the same time imitates the succession of events in comic stage works.

The detailed and exact dynamic markings, apart from specifying intensity level of sound, reveal directions within phrases and sections. A careful study of dynamic ranges and changes of intensity place the performer in a position to make subtle distinctions in style, character, and expressive quality. It is important to point out that the range of dynamics indicated is not very large. *Pianissimo* is only indicated in the orchestral score for the sake of balance. *Fortissimo* exclusively appears in a violin part and only for limited periods, suggesting climaxes or balancing interaction between solo instrument and orchestra. This reduced dynamic range, and a

---

$^{107}$ See information page 62-64

$^{108}$ See information page 64-65
tendency to maintain dynamics that are terraced within longer sections, alludes to the Classical
style and its performance practice.

Articulation as one of the most important interpretative tools defines the style and
color of the piece, delineates phrasing, determines the color of the sound, and enhances
rhythmic accuracy. Differentiation’s in particular help to achieve a required contrast within the
whole composition. The choice of specific types of articulation for the performance of Halffter’s
Violin Concerto adjusts to its neoclassical nature and Spanish elements. Allusions to Baroque,
Pre-classical, Classical and Romantic styles imply the selection of bowstrokes which derives
directly from the performance practice of these styles. The piece was written at a time when an
interest in old instruments was in fashion, especially interest in the harpsichord, although a
similar interest was not directed toward the violin. At the beginning of twentieth century the
expressive and sonorous quality of the modern violin and the use of the modern bow (Tourte
bow) for the performance of all repertoire ever written for this instrument was not questioned.
Thus, although the composer alludes to the older compositional styles and idiomatic writing for
the violin, he does not allude to the performance practice from that time. Halffter was rather
inspired by the contemporary interpretations of baroque or classical pieces on the modern violin
with a modern bow which has greater bouncing and sustaining sound capacities than an authentic
baroque or classical bow.

In fast movements, Halffter explores the modern bow technique in virtuosic and
imaginative ways, especially such bouncing bowstrokes as different varieties of spiccato and
ricochet. The group of spiccato bowstrokes is very important for the interpretation of this work.
It helps to shape the character of great majority of sections of the first and last movements. The
short, light spiccato functions very well in rhythms derived from dances (jota first movement) by
itself or combined with slurs. It helps to emphasize the humorous, lighthearted character of the first theme and other sections which permeate its motives. Heavier and more aggressive spiccato is appropriate to be used when consecutive three step chords are performed. It serves to obtain more resonance and imitates the strumming on guitar. This bowstroke has to be modified of course, depending on which factor is more pronounced, rhythmic or melodic. In the first case a shorter bow will bring to light the accuracy of the rhythm and in the second case a longer bowstroke will match better with detaché and slurred motives. The combinations of spiccato and ricochet are vital for the delivery of ideas of the third movement (ex.28.b, 29b, 30b). The use of the fast detaché is vital in the virtuosic “Baroque ” passages in the third movement which should be performed in the nineteenth century moto perpetuo virtuosic convention, which emphasized mechanical perfection. The last episode of the second movement also alludes to the Baroque style, but its slower tempo and dramatic character imply a different kind of detaché, sometimes called grand detaché, which enhances the power of the sound and a sustaining quality, characteristics which require modern bow technique.

The second movement combines mostly legato with detaché much of the time. Only the first episode’s material requires use of spiccato occasionally. The calm character of thematic sections calls for smooth connections between slurs and separated bows that should lead to the delineation of phrase development. The Spanish element which is only displayed twice in this movement can be emphasized by intense sound of passionate quality achieved by slower movement of the bow with more weight (pressure) on it, or more impressionistic quality of sound accomplished by the use of a fast, large bow with minimal weight (pressure) on it. The first refers to the Romantic style of playing Spanish music; the second alludes to the exotic

treatment of Spanish music which was in vogue at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century. The exotic and impressionistic quality of sound can also be displayed in the opening cadenza and the *meno mosso* fragments of the first section of the development.

Although Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* does not exhibit a “rigid” classical four-bar phrase structure, it does display articulated phrasing. Thus this characteristic has to be evident in performance by appropriate punctuation and breathing and overall classical discipline that aims at balance, proportion, clarity of phrasing and economy of means. Halffter’s dynamic markings additionally support the sense of directions within phrases and indicate the required contrast between sections or phrases. It is important to add that attention has to be paid to the stability of pulse at points where the meter changes. This special attention to keeping a steady tempo assures smooth phrasing and helps avoid inadvertent accents.

The interaction of the solo instrument with the orchestra is controlled by the thin texture, balance in dynamics and the leading role of the violin part. All the thematic material is always first presented by violin. The orchestra accompanies, imitates, develops and adds color to the ideas introduced in the solo part. These proportions imitate those of Classical and Romantic solo concertos which aimed at the display of expressive and technical abilities of a performer.

In summary, a performance of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* has to integrate classical discipline, with humorous and lighthearted character, expose a brisk and dynamic succession of events, generate attractive rhythmic drive, display Spanish elements and pay attention to the stylistic requirements of a number of conventions of such styles as neoclassic, neo-baroque, new simplicity, *style dépouillé*, and virtuosic bravura style. Recognition and realization of such a diverse array of stylistic features is not an easy task for a performer dedicated to exploring the full range of expressive possibilities afforded by this concerto.
CONCLUSION

Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* displays atypical stylistic fusion, multiple allusions, variety of characters, and explores virtuoso violin technique extensively. These characteristics make this work attractive for any violinist; performing this piece offers the opportunity to demonstrate creativity, imagination and excellent technique. Among violin concertos this one is *in sui generis*; it constitutes an original contribution to the genre. It does not present a direct resemblance to any other violin concerto of well-known composers who were active in the first half of the twentieth century. Its stylistic concepts evoke an aesthetic similar to Stravinsky’s and Prokofiev’s *Violin Concertos*, especially in its vivid ethos, humorous approach and the neoclassical convention; however the fusion of neoclassical and Spanish elements makes it distinctive.

The hybrid nature of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* presents a number of challenges which compel a performer to integrate a broad range of stylistic perspectives. Two in particular are crucial. The first requires a discriminating identification of the many styles involved, and the second an assessment of the way diverse elements control the succession of events, as they succeed one another in various combinations.

This analytical study of the coexistence of neoclassical and Spanish elements within Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* has aimed at an exploration of historical and stylistic context and how these have significant bearing on the interpretation of this work. These explorations suggest the boundaries for stylistic interpretations and historically informed performance. The goal of this
document has been to apply a systematic process of investigation which identifies and clearly
differentiates the various stylistic components and a process that can place a performer in a
position to make informed decisions about the interaction of these elements in so diverse a
composition.

I hope that my discussion can help performers not only of Halffter’s *Violin Concerto* but
also of other neoclassical compositions, especially those written for violin. Neoclassical
compositions frequently are “hybrid” in nature because they bring old and new elements
together. The compositional processes in these works are so complex and the mixture of
elements so diverse that the path to an integrated performance is sometimes obscured. My
document proposes at least one possible solution to this problem.

Finally I would like to see in the future that my study will initiate a deeper interest in
Spanish and Latin American music of the twentieth century, thus motivating performance and
further research.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Scores


**Recordings**

HALFFTER, Rodolfo. Concierto para violín y otras obras sinfónicas. Jorge Risi, violin; Fernando Lozano, conductor; Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México. Prodisc, SDX27273.

SARASATE, Pablo. Spanish Dances Tianwa Yang, violin; Marcus Hadula, piano. Naxos, 8.557767/747313276721.