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Samuel Llano, *Discordant Notes: Marginality and Social Control in Madrid, 1850-1930*

New York, Oxford University Press, 2018

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Samuel Llano, *Discordant Notes: Marginality and Social Control in Madrid, 1850-1930*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2018, p.258.

- 1 In this book, Samuel Llano takes the reader on a journey to Madrid in a period of intense transformation. Between 1850 and 1930, Spain went through political, social, and musical change. The defeat in the Spanish-American war dealt a severe blow to the nation's self-assurance and a sense of decadence permeated society. Nevertheless, it was a time of urban expansion, and planning played a key role in building the modern city. Paris and London have been taken as examples of how urban planning, sound, and music were fused with the rise of the professional middle classes in the 19th and 20th centuries. However, many cities expanded in very different ways. *Discordant Notes* studies how urban planning, social transformation, and sound interacted in Madrid, a city that did not follow Paris nor London. Starting in the middle of the 19th century, projects known as the *ensanche* were made to expand the city. However, these kept most of the old city centre virtually untouched while creating new planned districts. The contrast with the Haussmanisation of Paris, in which wide boulevards took over the narrow streets of the medieval city, is evident. Nevertheless, the new models of urban life made an impact in both sound and music.
- 2 Part I of the book (*Flamenquismo, Race, and Social Disorder*) focuses on how flamenco was integrated into Madrid's soundscape. Drawing extensively from the press, it discusses the ways *flamenquismo* became fashionable among the city's upper classes and

how their *señoritos* (snobbish sons of important families) incorporated the music in their leisure time. The private *juergas* (parties) in the *cafés cantantes* ('singing cafés') became the focus of the work of social hygienists, who associated flamenco with *mala vida* (the underworld), crime, alcoholism, and decadence. Thus, a moral panic was created, amplified, and disseminated by criminologists, journalists, politicians, and novelists. Moreover, the ubiquity of this music associated with Andalusia was believed to be hampering the placement of Castillian *casticismo* (authenticity) as the moral substrate of the Spanish nation in a period of decadence.

- 3 The prevalent discourse of the weakening of the 'Spanish race' had a deep connection with *flamenquismo*. *Discordant Notes* complicates the association between *flamenco* and Gypsies, a link made by many people, and shows how a narrative concerning the music taken by Andalusian migrants to Madrid was created. Discussing the ways the genre was transformed and weaved into the city's sonic fabric, capturing several influences, complicates a purist reading of flamenco. Moreover, it reveals how this music was associated with nightlife and the ways amusements were regulated to contain social disorder, reflecting the antagonism of moralist critics towards this 'alien' music, whose pervasiveness in the entertainment market was seen as a sign of alarm. The transformation of flamenco in Madrid and the hybridity of the new music were not a surprise to Federico Garcia Lorca and Manuel de Falla, who organised a *cante jondo* contest in order to show the 'true' music of Andalusia. This contest was instrumental in constructing a history of the genre, evoking ideas such as purity and nostalgia. For them, a local Modernism had to rely on 'authentic' music from Andalusia and not in its 'debased' urban form. This evidences how both flamenco and its environment were transformed in a long period of Spanish history. From an 'alien' source of all evils to a tourist attraction, flamenco crossed the lines between classes, races, and spaces in a city that was undergoing important changes.
- 4 Part II of the book (Organ Grinders, "Aural Hygiene," and Space) focuses on the *organilleros* (organ grinders), and how they were understood. This resonates with the John Picker's work concerning Victorian London, where many professionals who worked from home conducted campaigns to eradicate or to regulate them as public nuisance. In Madrid, the *organilleros* were a ubiquitous presence in the urban soundscape. Moreover, they circulated in the city, and their disruptive power was frequently caricatured in the press. Such as flamenco, organ grinders became the target of 'aural hygiene' policies. With the rationalisation of urban space and the Victorian focus on productivity, sound was to be contained in specific times and places, and some people wanted street noise to be regulated. Moreover, since domestic activities were predominantly carried out by women, there was a close link between the music of the male *organilleros* and the disturbance of household chores. Dancing to the *organillo* in the gendered space of the 19th century private home or in the public street was something to be regulated.
- 5 Since they were not beggars, the *organilleros* occupied a particular place in the city's aural landscape and were often demonised as a kind of sonic annoyance. Moreover, as marginal characters, they were often associated with criminality, which fuelled a moralistic discourse concerning public safety and morality. However, this changed in the 1910s. With the dissemination of American music in Spain, the *organillero* was often perceived as a carrier of local traditions. The sound of the *organillo* was heard as a residue of a bygone past in a city where nightclubs and jazz-bands thrived. The *organillo*

became a living museum that performed legally in the city's *merenderos*, open-air places for picnics. Llano captures competing and contradictory perspectives towards *organilleros*, showing a nuanced view of a character who lived in the nexus between musician and beggar, carrying a varied set of tunes wherever he went.

- 6 Part III of *Discordant Notes* (Workhouse Bands, Confinement, and Social Aid) discusses the role workhouse bands played in Madrid. Focusing on social aid, it traces the convoluted history of the San Bernardino workhouse band and its role in the city's soundscape. As in many European countries, workhouses played an important part in a strategy that aimed to confine and to discipline the poor. Thus, workhouses were places in which marginal and paupers, such as beggars, small-time criminals, and street musicians were held. The admission criteria varied and state regulation and private initiative went hand in hand in establishing this system. Moreover, the workhouses participated in public events to display their success in educating the poor. Thus, San Bernardino's band was instrumental for their engagement with public space and was frequently summoned to perform in open-air activities. Music as a way to contain social disorder contrasts with the music as an inducer of social disorder, embodied by both flamenco performers and *organilleros*. The workhouse band played a varied repertoire that catered to different occasions. Their sound muffled other city sounds and was perceived as a moralising presence in Madrid's squares and streets, abating unwanted noise. However, San Bernardino's band participated in political events that ended in violence in the 1880s. Thus, their efficiency as a provider of social cohesion was questioned and the local institutions stopped funding their activity in 1900. Despite their popularity among the working classes and their place as a 'safe' purveyor of street music, the band was terminated in 1907.
- 7 Samuel Llano's book is an important contribution to the sound studies bibliography. Its main subject is the political economy of sound in Madrid between 1850 and 1930, a continuous negotiation of boundaries that evokes race, class, and occupation. By selecting Madrid as its focus, it studies particular aspects of the city and how urban planning, sound, and politics interacted over a long period of time. Developing a sustained narrative concerning a Southern European city enriches the extant bibliography and contrasts with works concerning other places. Moreover, Llano highlights the contrapuntal narratives that concentrate on flamenco, *organilleros*, and workhouse bands, offering a rich perspective of the period when public health planning associated with the *ensanche* was paralleled by the sanitation of musical practices, targeting both musicians and repertoires. Therefore, implementing measures of 'aural hygiene' was fundamental to the city's notion of modernity. With this, politicians and planners aimed to eradicate (or, at least, to reduce) the *mala vida* associated with the marginal sectors of Madrid's population, a focus of suspicion of criminologists, philosophers, and journalists. Despite its association with the city's underworld, music could also be used as a tool for social reform, as the San Bernardino workhouse band illustrates. Since there was a significant overlap of repertoires between flamenco musicians, *organilleros*, and bands, the way the music was transformed to suit different purposes may be an interesting line of inquiry to pursue and to develop, as well as the ways this overlap was perceived by the audience. Overall, *Discordant Notes* provides a rich, polyphonic, and engaging narrative of the role played by music in Madrid's everyday life and how sound was used to create and to control sources of anxiety to its 'respectable' audiences.

AUTHOR

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João Silva received his PhD from Newcastle University in 2012. He studied at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa and teaches in specialist music schools in Portugal. His main research interests are popular entertainment and its complex relationships with modernity, nationalism, historiography, technology, and everyday life. He is the author of the monograph *Entertaining Lisbon: Music, Theater, and Modern Life in the Late 19th Century* published with Oxford University Press in 2016.