

GRANADOS' SECRETS REVEALED BY HIS PIANO ROLLS

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ABSTRACT

During the early twentieth century, a new and more sophisticated form of recording using piano roll technology was presented to pianists. The reproducing piano system was able to capture the fine subtleties of their artistry with much more detail than previous recording methods. The performance style of Enrique Granados can be gleaned from the numerous piano rolls he made until his very last recordings just a few months before his death in March 1916. His renditions are listed in Welte-Mignon, Duo-Art, Pleyela, Artechco and Hupfeld catalogues. His performance of *Valses poéticos* is captured on Hupfeld and Welte-Mignon piano rolls. The analysis of both transcriptions reveal ground-breaking facts not only on the performance style of Granados but also provide an empirical document that proves the authenticity of the Hupfeld Animatic rolls no. 51125ab (DEA roll no. 28419). This study also includes musical discussions on historical performance practice and pedagogical methodologies of Granados' pianistic tradition.

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In September 1904, the first reproducing piano, later called the Welte-Mignon was exhibited at the Leipzig Autumn Trade Fair. Until then, piano rolls were transcribed directly from a score by musical editors, whereas rolls for the Welte-Mignon were recorded directly by the pianist playing on a recording piano. From 1905, reproducing piano systems became popular and a number of companies started producing instruments and roll recordings. The most famous companies were based in Germany and the US such as the German companies M. Welte und Söhne, Ludwig Hupfeld AG, and J.D. Philipps und Söhne. American companies included the American Piano Company, which marketed the Ampico reproducing piano, and the Aeolian Company, marketers of the Duo-Art reproducing piano. Over the period 1905 to 1930, these companies collectively made over 10,000 roll recordings of art music.

Granados' artistry has been documented in early writings, however although we will never be able to hear all the pianistic subtleties in his playing, there are still some elements that can be observed by close examination of his piano roll recordings. The Spanish composer was a very active piano roll recording artist and made numerous recordings of his own compositions, among them some of his most internationally-acclaimed works as well as some improvisations and other works rarely programmed in concert halls today. Moreover, Granados recorded some of his works on different systems, providing an excellent opportunity to compare different interpretations of the same work and to draw conclusions, not only about his stylistic approach to the score but also to detect consistencies or deviations in his performances. Granados' recording of "Quejas o La maja y el ruiseñor" for example, is listed in the catalogues of four recording systems: Hupfeld no. 28418, Pleyela no. 6542, Welte-Mignon no. 2786 and Duo-Art no. 5763. Re-assessing the validity of all this material

will provide new and relevant sources to explore performance insights in the style of the Spanish composer.

Most of Granados' piano roll recordings can be listened to on compact discs produced by a number of recording labels, however the listening experience might be disappointing in most cases. First of all, the piano rolls are played on different instruments with different recording set ups. Furthermore, not all the recording companies used perfectly adjusted reproducing pianos. This is why essential elements in music expression such as tempo inflections and agogics might be heavily compromised, affecting for example, our perception of Granados' phrasing. Secondly, the different preferences in sound production make differences between recordings even more dramatic. All these alterations in sound might interfere with the listener's perception of musical expression. That is why the author strongly encourages the study of Granados' piano roll transcriptions to explore performance practice, avoiding as much as possible the interference of complementary editing processes.

The main focus of this study is the Granados recording of *Valses poéticos*. This work was premiered by the Spanish composer at the Salón Romero in Madrid on February 15, 1895. There are discrepancies among researchers about the year of composition of this work. Some authors, like Antonio Iglesias, believe he wrote this work in 1887, while others, like Walter Clark¹ and Douglas Riva suggest it was written around 1893-94 "given the maturity of the writing".² There are two piano roll recordings of this work captured on Hupfeld and Welte-Mignon reproducing piano systems, catalogued as Welte-Mignon roll no. 2781 and Hupfeld Animatic roll no. 51125ab (also catalogued as Hupfeld DEA roll no. 28419), respectively. These rolls have been transcribed and analysed in the author's dissertation "Echoes of the Master: A Multi-dimensional Mapping of Enrique Granados' Pedagogical Method and Pianistic Tradition".³ In this study, an analysis of Hupfeld and Welte recordings of *Valse*

poéticos combining empirical with traditional methods, has unveiled ground-breaking knowledge to understand many unique pianistic insights of his legacy.

Although reproducing systems were able to capture the musical prints of great pianists' artistry, the analysis of piano rolls must be taken cautiously. While some musicologists believe that the systems captured all pianistic elements during the performance, others are suspicious about the authenticity of the performance due to the possibility of post-editing the roll recording. However, as suggested by Neal Peres Da Costa, even if the recording was edited it would not be enough reason to invalidate the authenticity of the performance. Da Costa points out that editors hired by reproducing piano roll companies were highly skilled professionals that would work with the invited pianist in the post-editing of their recordings. He also reminds us that the editing process in recording studios today is far more dramatic than in earlier days.⁴ Today we can edit a recording by pasting together different takes, while in the early twentieth century the pianist would record the entire piece in one take. So, in this sense, we could say that recordings at that time were probably closer to a concert performance with some light editing.

Granados' Welte-Mignon piano roll no. 2781 is explored in the *Boileau* edition of Enrique Granados' piano works published in 2001. Traditional listening methods were used in the analysis of this particular piano roll revealing interesting facts in the performance style of Granados. However, as pointed out by Douglas Riva, the edition refrained from including any indication that could not be documented,⁵ like for example pedal markings. There are no pedal indications in the manuscripts and published editions. However, the emphasis in the use of pedal is characteristic in the pedagogy of the Catalan school of piano players and Granados was particularly concerned with its proper use, giving great attention to the study of pedalling as an essential element in musical expression and sonority. The data extracted from the rolls should not be simply copied but studied as a reference, since pedalling is always subject to the

characteristics of the instrument and the acoustic conditions of the venue. This study and the transcriptions by the author have revealed the possibility of documenting Granados' pedalling in the performance of *Valses poéticos* (Figure 1).

<PLACE FIGURE 1 HERE>

The transcription of piano rolls with the assistance of computer-based technologies reveals the possibility of documenting elements like the use of the sustained and soft pedals, note pitches, durations and speed variations. Therefore, a study of these musical transcriptions from the reproducing piano rolls provides a wealth of information to understand pianistic insights into Granados' pianistic tradition, as they enabled pitch, tempo, rhythm and dynamics to be registered. These transcriptions offer an accessible way for performers and scholars to explore interpretative trends within an artistic performance. Also, the information extracted from the piano roll perforations may be more reliable than the simple listening experience from edited sound recordings. When transcribed, the information on the rolls can be presented as a legible score for pianists (Figure 2).⁶

<PLACE FIGURE 2 HERE>

Leikin's analysis of the Duo-Art piano roll of Granados performing his Spanish Dance No.5, is another wonderful example of extracting the information from the rolls using a photographic method.⁷ Furthermore, his studies of Scriabin compare eleven works recorded by Hupfeld and Welte systems, where he examines tempo flexibility, asynchronization of parts, articulation, pedalling and score modifications.⁸ Since there is still a lack of

musicological research on the Hupfeld reproducing systems, these studies are a wonderful reference source.

Unfortunately, musicologists are often too cautious with Hupfeld rolls and tend to discard them as an authentic source for performance research.⁹ One reason for this is that early Hupfeld roll recordings were transcribed from one form to another, often requiring editors to add the expression, thereby negating the authenticity of these recordings. For this reason, recordings of Granados on Hupfeld rolls might be seen as edited, and therefore not original, which might explain why they have been avoided in musicological research until now. This study explores for the first time Granados' Hupfeld piano rolls. One of the ground-breaking aspects of this research is the way that the validity of the recording of *Valses poéticos* performed by Granados on Hupfeld rolls has been proven. It is interesting that there is a recording of *Valses poéticos* catalogued as Hupfeld DEA roll no. 28419. The DEA system was first marketed in 1907 and it is possible that the Hupfeld Animatic rolls no. 51125ab treasured at the Biblioteca de Catalunya in Barcelona are transfers from the DEA system. The Hupfeld DEA recordings are thought to have been recorded ca. 1912, however they could have been recorded at an earlier date. Because *Valses poeticos* is not in Pleyela catalogues, it is improbable that it would have been recorded on a DEA-Pleyela instrument.

The study of Granados' piano-roll transcriptions has been complemented with the study of the performance tradition passed down by Granados through musical discussions and master classes with the last living students of Granados' follower, Frank Marshall: pianists Carlota Garriga, Maria Teresa Monteys and Albert Attenelle. They are considered the direct inheritors of Granados' pianistic tradition. From the three pianists, Albert Attenelle is an internationally renowned concert pianist and still active as performer, Carlota Garriga is best known as a composer and Teresa Monteys as a pedagogue. The author has worked extensively with these three *maestros* and has been honoured to receive previously undocumented, precious

knowledge, and artistic insights, of this esteemed pianistic tradition. Listening to Granados' piano roll recordings together with the pianists invited for this study was an exciting and privileged experience.

During one-to-one interview sessions with Garriga, Monteys and Attenelle, the author played a selection of recordings by Granados performing *Valses poéticos*, *Spanish Dances* and *Goyescas*, among other works. The inheritors of this tradition were immediately struck by the love and nostalgia for what it represented. As if they were taken back in their early days as students when they themselves were receiving advice from their then teacher, Marshall. These sessions were truly astonishing and revealed the strong imprint this pianistic legacy has left on each of them, and also highlighted the changes in performance practices over time. The sessions were highly informative, and, during the lively discussions that arose after listening to the Granados' renditions, they all generously shared treasured knowledge on the performance style of the Spanish composer. Today, a century later, the recordings of Granados might sound strange to modern ears. Performance style from a century ago might not be valid for performers today. This might be one of the reasons why today most of the pianists learning his music often show no interest in listening to his recordings, and those who listen to them, might find them outdated or even regard them as incorrect. Performance taste has changed dramatically over the last hundred years and listening to these historical recordings will raise questions on performance style. If piano students are taught that "understanding performance style, and how and why it changes, is thus important for everyone who works on the perception or reception of music",¹⁰ those willing to approach the wonderful repertoire of Granados' music, might find precious learning material in the study of Granados' own renditions.

The author also analysed the performance tradition in the recordings of Albert Attenelle and Alicia de Larrocha performing *Valses poéticos*, through computer software complementing

traditional listening methods, as suggested by Nicholas Cook.¹¹ Concerning written sources, the author has examined original manuscripts¹² of Granados as well as pedagogical approaches from the Catalan School of Piano Players, not only in the piano methods written by Granados, but also in those written by his teachers, colleagues and followers alike. Every musical element in Granados' performance has been compared with every available source to explore stylistic trends in his pianistic tradition. A further and detailed explanation of all the dimensions, sources and methodologies involved in this study can be found in the author's dissertation.¹³

Granados was a multifaceted artist with an incredibly creative personality. He loved all forms of artistic expression, as apart from music, he had a special bond with poetry and painting. In fact, he used to always carry a little notebook around with him to write ideas that would come to mind, not only musical notation, but also drawings. He worked extensively with singers and adapted to music many poems written by his colleagues and friends—renowned poets from the Catalan modernism. This love of poetry is illustrated beautifully in the title of the work explored in this study: *Valses poéticos*. This work was published by Unión Musical Española circa 1914,¹⁴ although Victor Berdós published “Tempo de vals lento” in *Páginas íntimas: valses poéticos*¹⁵—a similar title was included in the programme of the concert in which Granados premiered the work—some decades earlier, in late nineteenth century. Most of Granados works were published some years before he recorded them. For this reason, there are numerous deviations between his performances and the published scores, probably as a result of his constant search for development and change. Interestingly, *Valses poéticos* was published circa 1914, but Granados made both piano roll recordings years earlier.

Surprisingly, Granados' modifications from the rolls are not reflected in the written score, presumably published after the recordings. This information raises new questions, whether all deviations met the performer's approval or they were simply errors is not known. However,

consistencies found in both original manuscripts and recordings might suggest a closer version in line with the composer's will.

Granados was an artist in constant search of perfection. His severe auto-criticism might be the reason for the continuous meticulous self-examination of his own musical compositions. This seeking of perfection influenced Granados, not only as composer but also as pianist. Granados had an incredibly skilful talent for improvisation and this fact might create confusion when analysing his recordings. The latest musicological research has pointed out the numerous deviations between his renditions and the printed score, leading to the conclusion that his liberties in performance might have been a result of careless playing and perhaps even a certain frivolity. However, of importance to note is that, many times, consistencies between recordings are often not found in the written text, such as the addition of a few bars of music before and after "Vals ideal" in both the Hupfeld and Welte-Mignon piano rolls in *Valses poéticos*. One might mistakenly think of a spontaneous improvisation by Granados when listening to his recording, but this presumption is far from the truth.

The author presented these consistencies for discussion to the three pianists invited in this study.¹⁶ All of them pointed out the significance of these discoveries and encouraged the inclusion of these elements in the performance of *Valses poéticos*. Also, in the recordings of Granados performing his "Spanish dance No.7", both renditions deviate from the printed text but are practically identical; one of them is an acoustic recording made in 1912 and the other a Duo-Art piano roll recorded in 1916.¹⁷ The Spanish composer was influenced by some expressive performance practices of his era, such as the use of *asynchronization or contrametric rubato*, arpeggiated chords and rubato. Perhaps, our modern ears are not used to listening to historical recordings and sometimes it might be difficult to understand the style. Although he showed great skills for improvisation on many occasions, his approach to performance was methodical and his playing carefully orchestrated. He used to practice away

from the piano, visualizing his fingerings and hand movements in advance. This mental exercise is described by Granados' student Guillermo de Boladeres,¹⁸ and is a wonderful example of Granados' critical approach to performance and his strict and methodical discipline. Furthermore, the author's examination of Granados' didactic writings in relation to his own performance practices is found in her thesis. It includes the author's transcriptions and examples related to pedagogy and interpretation.¹⁹

Over the last decades, Enrique Granados' legacy has generated great interest among musicological circles, culminating in a wealth of published documents presented during the anniversaries celebrating the life, and death, of the Spanish composer in 2016 and 2017. This paper aims to contribute to the core of this research with new knowledge relevant to the stylistic and interpretative aspects in his pedagogy and performance practices through the study of his piano roll recordings. For this investigation, the author has consulted every available source related to performance practices of the Catalan School of Piano Players and the pianistic tradition inherited by Granados' followers.

The present study proposes a fresh look into the source material in the analysis of Granados' piano roll recordings through computer-based technologies to aid the traditional listening methodology, resulting in an unveiling of new information extracted from the study of the rolls. Additionally, this investigation proves the beneficial impact of scientific research in the study of performance practice. Computational techniques reveal crucial information that cannot be obtained using only traditional methods. As a result, the author has proved scientifically the validity of Hupfeld Animatic rolls no. 51125ab (DEA roll no. 28419), which were discarded as inaccurate in previous studies. These rolls are as equally valid as the Granados' recording of *Valses poéticos* captured on the Welte-Mignon reproducing system. Moreover, exploring both renditions with the assistance of technology has revealed the

possibility of transcribing indications in Granados' performance that have not as yet been documented in any musicological field of research.

Notwithstanding that stylistic performance practices of the era greatly influenced Granados' performances, these historical recordings offer an invaluable document to understand performance trends in the early twentieth century. They also assist performers to understand style and interpretation and how *musical taste* have changed across time. Accordingly, this study raises further questions about current performance practices and the stylistic validity that pianists give to Granados' works through the study of his performances and writings.

Because today's researchers are starting to consider this practice an essential element of authenticity in performance within the context of a particular period, would it not then present a corollary practice for pianists today to assimilate the *musical taste* of this particular period in their performances, so much criticised during the second half of the twentieth century? Or, on the contrary, should the priority of authenticity in performance be placed aside or ameliorated to adjust to current performance practices?

Appendix One: List of Enrique Granados' piano roll recordings¹

Hupfeld Triphonola

52920 – GRANADOS – *Danzas españolas*, Op. 37, No. 9

52921 – GRANADOS – *Danzas españolas*, Op. 37, No. 2

Hupfeld Animatic

51118 – GRANADOS – *Goyescas* – No. 1 “Los requiebros”

51119 – GRANADOS – *Goyescas* – No. 2 “Coloquio en la Rreja”

51120 – GRANADOS – *Goyescas* – No. 3 “El fandango de candil”

51121 – GRANADOS – *Goyescas* – No. 4 “Quejas o La maja y rruiseñor”

51122 – GRANADOS – *Danza españolas*, No. 5

51123 – GRANADOS – *Danzas españolas*, No. 7

51124 – GRANADOS – *Danzas españolas*, No. 10

51125ab – GRANADOS – *Valses poéticos*

55611 – D.SCARLATTI-GRANADOS – Keyboard Sonata, D

55981 – GRANADOS – *Prelude sur une Copla Murciana*

Hupfeld Dea

28412 – GRANADOS – *Danzas españolas*, No. 5 “Andaluza”

28415 – GRANADOS – *Goyescas* No 2: “Coloquio en la reja” (“Love Duet”)

28416 – GRANADOS – *Danzas españolas*, No. 7 “Valenciana”

¹ Carolina Estrada Bascuñana, "Echoes of the Master: A Multi-dimensional Mapping of Enrique Granados' Pedagogical Method and Pianistic Tradition" (University of Sydney 2016), Appendix Six.

- 28417 – GRANADOS – *Danzas españolas*, No. 10
- 28418 – GRANADOS – Goyescas No. 4: “Quejas o La Maja y el ruiseñor”
- 28419 – GRANADOS – *Valses poéticos* (“Poetic Waltzes”)
- 28420 – GRANADOS – *Goyescas* No. 1: “Los requiebros” (“Compliments”)
- 28421 – GRANADOS – *Prelude sur une Murcian Copla*
- 28422 – D. SCARLATTI-GRANADOS – Keyboard Sonata, Bb
- 28423 – GRANADOS – *Goyescas* No. 3: “El fandango de candil”

Pleyela

- 5325 *Allegro de concierto*
- 5357 “Los requiebros”
- 5505 *Danzas españolas*, No.7 Valenciana
- 5513 *Danzas españolas*, No.5
- 5514 *Danzas españolas*, No.2
- 5931 Danza lenta
- 6542 “Quejas o La maja y el ruiseñor”
- 8245 “El pelele”
- 8246 *Sardana Clarga*

Welte-Mignon

- 2778 *Danzas españolas*, No.10 “Andaluza”
- 2779 *Danzas españolas*, No.7 “Valenciana”
- 2780 *Danzas españolas*, No.5 “Andaluza”

- 2781 *Valse poetique*
- 2782 Piece de Scarlatti
- 2783 *Goyescas* Part 1 “The Compliments”
- 2784 *Goyescas* Part 2 “Love Duet”
- 2785 *Goyescas* Part 3 “Dance By Candlelight”
- 2786 *Goyescas* Part 4 “Lady and the Nightingale”

Duo-Art

- 5756 *Reverie* (Improvisation)
- 5757 *Danzas españolas*, No.2 “Árabe”
- 5758 *Danzas españolas*, No.5 “Andaluza”
- 5759 *Danzas españolas*, No.10
- 5760 *Danzas españolas*, No.7 “Valenciana”
- 5762 *Goyescas*, “El Pelele”
- 5763 *Goyescas*, “Lady and the Nightingale”. Introduction to Act 3
- 6133 *Danzas españolas*, Op.37 No.1 “Lenta”
- 6295 Improvisation (on Theme of Valenciana Jota)
- 6429 “Prelude” from *María del Carmen*

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NOTES

- ¹ Walter Aaron Clark, *Enrique Granados: Poet of the Piano* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49.
- ² See vol.16. Enrique Granados, *Integral para piano* [Complete works for piano], ed. Alicia de Larrocha and Douglas Riva, 18 vols. (Barcelona: Editorial de Música Boileau, 2002), 19.
- ³ Carolina Estrada Bascuñana, "Echoes of the Master: a Multi-Dimensional Mapping of Enrique Granados' Pedagogical Method and Pianistic Tradition" (University of Sydney 2016). A digital copy is currently available at <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/14399>. This link was retrieved from internet on 21st February 2017.
- ⁴ Neal Peres Da Costa, *Off the Record : Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19.
- ⁵ Douglas Riva, e-mail message to author, March 3, 2015
- ⁶ A different technique was used to transfer each of the two piano rolls. A photographic technique was used to produce the MIDI files from the Hupfeld 51125ab piano rolls, thanks to the Spanish musicologist Jordi Roquer. The extraction of data using this method is a highly laborious task, involving two different stages in the process. The pedals and dynamics needed to be added manually, making it a time consuming approach. The Welte Mignon 2781 piano roll was extracted to MIDI files using a reproducing technique developed by Peter Phillips. This method captures every element in the performance of Granados without having to manually add any aspect of the performance. Peter Phillips explains in his upcoming thesis how the MIDI files are produced using this reproducing method. Acknowledgements to Peter Phillips who also taught me with great patience how to transcribe those MIDI files from the piano rolls into a legible musical score.
- ⁷ Anatole Leikin, "Piano-Roll Recordings of Enrique Granados: A Study of a Transcription of the Composer's Performance," *Journal of Musicological Research* 21, no. 1-2 (2002).
- ⁸ *The Performing Style of Alexander Scriabin* (England: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011).
- ⁹ Moreover, not only there is no research on the performance of Granados' Hupfeld recordings but also on his recordings in Pleyel or Artechó systems. There is little documentation on Pleyel and Artechó systems. They also tend to be systematically discarded and invalidated for musicological research. Notwithstanding that the author has proved the validity of the Hupfeld DEA roll no. 28149ab, further research is advised to re-assess the validity of "El fandango de candil" (Artechó 3110), "Danza española No.10" (Artechó 3287) Allegro de concierto (Pleyela 5325); "Los requiebros" (Pleyela 5357); "Danza española No.7, valenciana" (Pleyela 5505); "Danza española No.5" (Pleyela 5513); "Danza española No.2" (Pleyela 5514); Danza lenta (Pleyela 5931); "Quejas o La maja y el ruiseñor" (Pleyela 6542); "El Pelele" (Pleyela 8245) and Sardana Clarga (Pleyela 8246).
- ¹⁰ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "Performance Style in Elena Gerhardt's Schubert Song Recordings," *Musicae Scientiae Musicae Scientiae* 14, no. 2 (2010): 57.
- ¹¹ Nicholas Cook, e-mail message to author, February 22, 2004.
- ¹² Two holograph manuscripts by Granados (*02.1424 Mazurka – Valsos* and *02.1365 Valses poéticos*) and one copyist's manuscript (*02.1408 Valses poéticos*), all of them treasured at Espai de Documentació i Recerca del Museu de la Música de Barcelona.
- ¹³ Estrada Bascuñana, "Echoes of the Master: a Multi-Dimensional Mapping of Enrique Granados' Pedagogical Method and Pianistic Tradition." A digital copy is currently available at <https://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/14399>. This link was retrieved from internet on 21st February 2017.
- ¹⁴ Enrique Granados, "Valses poéticos para piano," (Barcelona: Unión Musical Española (antes Casa Dotesio), 1914).
- ¹⁵ "Páginas íntimas valsos poéticos," in *Album de la Ilustración Musical; núm. 144, year 7*. (Barcelona: Victor Berdós, 18-?-).
- ¹⁶ Estrada Bascuñana, "Echoes of the Master: a Multi-Dimensional Mapping of Enrique Granados' Pedagogical Method and Pianistic Tradition."
- ¹⁷ Leikin, "Piano-Roll Recordings of Enrique Granados: A Study of a Transcription of the Composer's Performance," 12-13.
- ¹⁸ Guillermo de Boladeres Ibern, *Enrique Granados; recuerdos de su vida y estudio crítico de su obra* (Barcelona: Editorial Arte y Letras, s.a., 1921), 135.
- ¹⁹ Estrada Bascuñana, "Echoes of the Master: a Multi-Dimensional Mapping of Enrique Granados' Pedagogical Method and Pianistic Tradition."