

Reseña

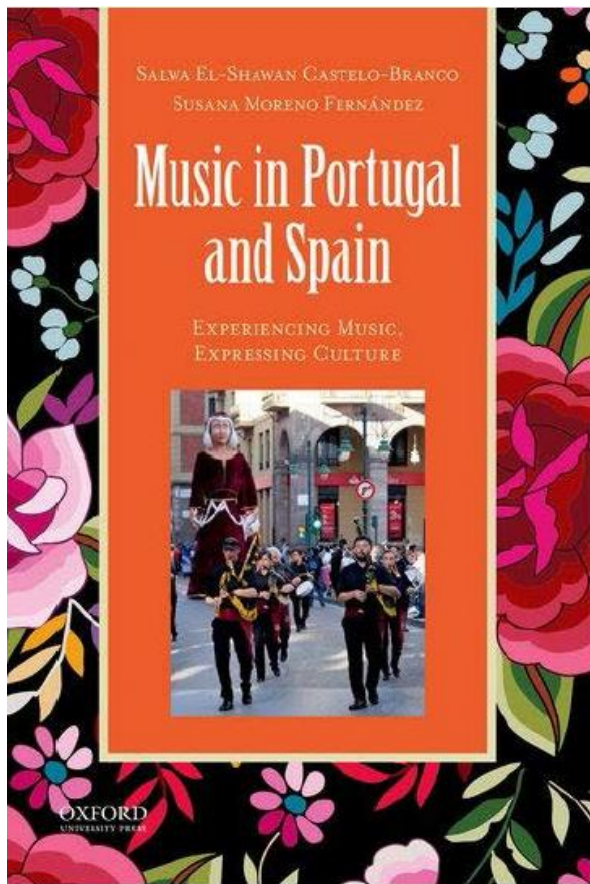
Castelo-Branco, Salwa El-Shawan y Moreno Fernández, Susana. 2018. *Music in Portugal and Spain: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 137 pp., CD and a companion website

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This textbook offers a refreshing vision of music from the Iberian Peninsula, delving into its complex diversity by addressing the multiplicity of regional genres, going beyond the well-known genres of *fado* and *flamenco*. The shift in perspective is immediately perceptible from the front cover illustration, a photo of bagpipers and drummers accompanied by a female *gigante* (giant) in medieval dress during a patron saint celebration in Cantabria. Throughout the first three chapters, the authors provide a broad overview of Spanish and Portuguese music that gives the reader a kaleidoscopic understanding of the rich and diverse musical genres existing across the two countries, contextualised through a range of historical, social and cultural backgrounds. The last two chapters do, however, concentrate on *fado* and *flamenco*, thus addressing the main themes that might interest a lecturer introducing their students to Iberian music. The richly illustrated book includes numerous activities and references to musical examples featured in the accompanying 22-track CD. An additional companion website proposes further activities, explanations

and musical examples, digitally complementing the volume.

Part of the Global Music Series, *Music in Portugal and Spain: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* is written by two of the leading scholars in music from Spain and Portugal, two countries that have experienced similar and even at times joint historical trajectories. As ‘the first textbook that deals with the musics of Portugal and Spain comparatively’ (pxii), we are offered a more comprehensive musical and cultural overview than a textbook dealing with either of these geographical areas separately. Supported by recent scholarship in Iberian musical studies, the authors do not shy away from the complex identity and ideological issues that accompany both areas. The downside to this, understandably, is that there is little scope to delve deeper into regional genres from either country and many significant musical cultures are only mentioned in passing, if at all.



The first chapter places Iberian music within a larger setting, introducing the reader to its connection with the world – mainly through Spain and Portugal’s colonial histories – whilst simultaneously framing the subject matter within the scope of the Iberian territory. After geographically situating Spain and Portugal, the authors introduce Iberian dance and music through three genres: the *jota*, the *vira* and the *romance*. As illustrated by these examples, the authors judiciously chose throughout the book musical genres that are linked to both countries – such as the *romance* and the bagpipers of Galicia and Northern Portugal – thus underlining their joint heritage. Equally pleasing, and, I believe, one of the main strengths of the book, is that dance regularly features alongside music, highlighting the importance of this cultural

form within the Peninsula. The second part of the chapter focuses on the historical trajectories of Portugal and Spain, putting into evidence the heterogenous nature of the countries’ history and, by extension, their musical cultures. The authors navigate through the Arab territory of Al-Andalus, touch upon a multi-faith medieval era before Christian kingdoms reconquered the territory establishing the Kingdom of Portugal in 1139 and completing in 1249 the conquest of what would become Spain. The ensuing maritime expansion highlights the influence of Iberian music in Africa, Asia and America but also how musical genres originating from these territories later came back to influence local music and form new styles, one of which is the well-known *fado*. The chapter concludes with the twentieth century political upheavals in both countries and introduces the Catalan New Song movement that emerged towards the end of Franco’s dictatorship in the late 1950s and 1960s, ‘inspired by protest song movements in North and Latin American and in other parts of Europe’ (p.22) as well as the reappropriation of local musical styles with the return of democracy.

The second chapter, ‘The construction of region and nation through music and dance’ addresses the turmoils of twentieth century Spain and Portugal, overflowing into the twenty first century. Essential to understand the current musical map in the Iberian Peninsula, the authors explore the sensitive themes of identity and music within nationalist (understood as the movement to recognise regions as independent entities), authoritative and

democratic movements. Different regional manifestations of cultural identity are presented through four musical and dance examples: the Catalan *Sardana*, the choirs of Alentejo, the traditional music of Cantabria and the bagpipers of Galicia and Terras de Miranda do Douro, all illustrated with activities and musical examples.

The third chapter focuses on the *fiestas*. Essential parts of life in Portugal and Spain, this section introduces the reader to the world of patron saint festivities with its musical manifestations in both secular and religious settings. Mobilizing entire villages and towns, who organise themselves throughout the year to create worthy annual celebrations, the *fiestas* are veridic moments of ‘ritual, community, tradition, religiosity, enjoyment, break from daily routine, excessive behaviour, and transgression (Martí 2008)’ (p.45). The authors chose an ethnographic approach for this chapter, proposing observation exercises for the students and illustrating two *fiestas*, one in Portugal and one in Spain with two vivid and welcome ethnographical descriptions.

The last two chapters focus on *fado* and *flamenco*. Both offer a similar structure: a short but detailed introduction to the genre including information about lyrics, performance, repertoire, form and meter, a brief historical overview of the genre, portraits of renowned musicians and singers who marked the genre –the choice of a female *fadista* and a female *flamenco* singer were particularly welcome – and the direction both genres are taking in more recent times. Both iconic genres are addressed enough detail to satisfy a reader

interested in them, while the authors judiciously frame them as one of many musical manifestations in Portugal and Spain and give elements of explanation for their commercial and international successes.

Music in Portugal and Spain addresses particularly well the diversity of music and its various developments throughout the peninsula. Although the length of the book and its introductory nature hinders more in-depth analysis of musical styles other than *flamenco* and *fado*, I feel that the complexity of the geographical area was successfully captured both through ethnographic examples and judiciously chosen themes.

This book forms a solid basis for lecturers to prepare a series of sessions on music from the Iberian Peninsula and offers ways to connect these genres with other geographical areas and musical styles. It would, I feel, form a strong addition to any university library and should certainly feature on students’ reading list for courses linked to the Iberian Peninsula.

Bibliography

Martí, Josep (ed.). 2008. *Fiesta y ciudad: pluriculturalidad e integración*. Madrid: CSIC.