

Gerhard, Roberto : [Correspondence Roberto Gerhard - Joaquim Homs]

The correspondence between Roberto Gerhard and Joaquim Homs was one of the most sustained in Gerhard's life. This correspondence is also some of the most illuminating in understanding Gerhard's compositional practice and thoughts on music, as well as his reception in Catalonia while he was still in exile. The two men met in late 1930 in Barcelona. By then, Gerhard was already back from his studies with Schoenberg in Berlin and Vienna, while Homs was a twenty-four-year-old cellist, engineer and aspiring composer. Even though Gerhard never showed enthusiasm or dedication to teaching, he agreed to take Homs on as a private student. Over decades, the teacher-student relationship evolved towards one of mentorship and friendship.

Correspondence between Gerhard and Homs was scarce in the years following the end of the Civil War in 1939 due to the difficulties posed by the Second World War. Nevertheless, the two men finally reunited in 1948 when Gerhard visited Catalonia, after which time they started to correspond more frequently. The letters offer valuable insight into Homs's efforts to have Gerhard's music programmed in Barcelona under Franco's regime. Even though he did manage to have several of Gerhard's works performed over the years with little to no political disturbance, Homs expressed doubts particularly about difficulties finding performers capable and willing to perform complex contemporary scores. In the mid-1950s, some of Homs and Gerhard's letters focused on the latter's experiments with twelve-tone technique, which he encouraged Homs to try. Indeed, until the emergence of the so-called 'Generación de 1951', throughout the 1950s, Homs was virtually the only composer still living in Spain engaging with twelve-tone technique.

The letters between Roberto Gerhard and Joaquim Homs are held mostly at Cambridge University's library. The collection contains 34 original letters from Homs to Gerhard and photocopies of a similar number of letters sent by Gerhard to Homs. The Fons Homs at the Biblioteca de Catalunya in Barcelona also contains some sketches and notebooks sent to Homs from Gerhard.

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For further information :

- Homs, Joaquim, *Robert Gerhard i la seva obra*, Barcelona, Biblioteca de Catalunya, 1991.
English translation: Homs, Joaquim, *Roberto Gerhard and his music* (translated by

Meirion Bowen), London, Anglo-Catalan Society, 2000.

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