

Nin, Joaquin (1879-1949): Summary of Writings

The solo and chamber music career of Cuban composer Joaquín Nin (1879–1949) (or Joachim Nin, depending on the period of his life) on the European continent during the first third of the twentieth century was marked by the publication of several works in which the musician expounded upon his uncompromising vision of the intrinsic, unalterable, and incorruptible value of art in general and music in particular.

While living in Berlin in 1908, Nin wrote a pamphlet called [*Pour l'Art*](#). In Brussels, where he settled between 1909 and 1911, he took up and supplemented the same argument in [*Idées et Commentaires*](#). This second book was printed in Brussels and published by Fischbacher in Paris in 1912. Between these two works, in 1911, Nin financed the publication of a limited-edition brochure “not intended for sale” entitled [*Huit Années d'action musicale \(1903-1911\)*](#).

In 1921, under the title *Clavecin ou Piano*, he compiled his articles from a sharp polemic exchange with Wanda Landowska in 1912 in *Le Mercure musical*, the [*Revue de la Société internationale de musicologie*](#) and in other journals, but the project for a full-length book was apparently abandoned. In his articles, Nin sided with the modern instrument, while Landowska, “the muse of the harpsichord” (according to Bernard Gavoty) had the difficult task of defending her frail instrument, barely exhumed from the oblivion into which it had been condemned by Romanticism. The harshness of Nin’s comments is rather surprising considering that he himself was an excellent harpsichordist and an fervent promoter of early music, especially Spanish. It thanks to Nin’s programs that the audiences of the period rediscovered the forgotten music of Padre Antonio Soler. The harpsichord polemic stemmed in part from the modern harpsichord built by Pleyel, the inauthenticity of which revolted the purist Nin.

[*Las tres grandes escuelas del siglo xviii*](#) [*The three major schools of the eighteenth century*], another work by Nin, was devoted to baroque and pre-classical music. It was essentially a collection of three lectures given in Spain in 1913 and published in Bilbao by Sabino Ruiz, probably the same year. A copy of this 36-page booklet can be found at the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid. The *Enciclopèdia Catalana* lists a number of nearly unknown writings by Nin : [*Tractat general de la música i sa història*](#) [*General treatise on music and its history*], L’Avenç, Barcelona, 1900 ; [*Reseña biográfica y algunas opiniones sobre sus actuaciones artísticas*](#) [*A biographical notice and other opinions on artistic roles*], Imp. Paton, Troyes, 1922 ; and, in collaboration with Auguste Sérieyx, (1865-1949), [*Étude des formes musicales au piano depuis le xvi^e siècle jusqu’à nos jours en douze auditions...*](#), Imp. Chaufour, Paris 1906-1907.

Alongside his published writings, Nin maintained an abundance of intimate, exuberant, and combative correspondence with leading figures in the musical world. The archives of the Biblioteca Nacional de España preserve his letters to Manuel de Falla, José Subirá, and many others. Those addressed to the composer and theorist Auguste Sérieyx, in a tone of friendship, confidence, and aestheticism, are held in the Sérieyx collection of the Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire de Lausanne. Others letters can be found in various archives and manuscript collections of the BnF, and are accessible on Gallica: these include his correspondance with musicologist Henry Prunières, pianist and teacher Alfred Cortot, playwright Gabriel Astruc, mezzo-soprano Jane Bathory , composers Nadia Boulanger, Joseph Canteloube, Tibor Harsanyi, Pierre de Bréville, Alfred Bruneau, conductors Henri Busser and Conrad Beck, etc.

Nin's spirit of aesthetic activism is evident even in the volumes he dedicated, such as the copy of *Idées et Commentaires* sent to composer Raoul Laparra (1876-1943): "To my dear Raoul Laparra, so that he can help me defend these ideas with the same fervor and enthusiasm that inspired them" (Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec). This does not include Nin's personal correspondence with his wife (notably the "hundreds of letters to Maria Luisa" mentioned in letter FAS-385 in the Fonds Sérieyx and written in 1939, the year of their separation); correspondence with his daughter, the torrid writer Anaïs Nin; correspondence with his son, Joaquín Nin-Culmell, also a composer, and the person responsible for the Catalan editions of *Pour l'Art* and *Idées et Commentaires*, published in a single volume by Dirosa in Barcelona in 1974.

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Further reading

LOTTINGER ANTHON, Gina. « An Introduction to Joaquín Nin (1879-1949) and His *Veinte Cantos Populares Españoles* ». Louisiana State University Digital Commons. Historical Dissertations and Thesis, 1999.

VALVERDE FLORES, Tamara. « The Writings of Joaquín Nin Castellanos: *Pour l'Art* (1909) and *Idées et Commentaires* (1912). A showcase of his aesthetic beliefs ». Síneris, *Revista de musicología*, n°24, TAP-PDF, p. 1-19, Madrid, mai 2015.

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