

The composer and his critics: Music criticism in Portugal in the 1920/30's

Francine Benoît's review of the opera *Inês de Castro*, published on January 19, 1927, wasn't well received by the composer Ruy Coelho. In the next editions of the newspaper *Diário de Lisboa*, the readers followed an exchange of letters written by Benoît and Coelho in defense of their remarks and work. If at first the main point of disagreement was the idea that the prelude of the opera was "monotone", without harmonic variations, as Benoît described it, the letters quickly crossed the line of a musical discussion and the composer accused the critic of not having enough qualifications to express a valid opinion.

The public reaction of the composer against the judgement of the music critic arises questions on the use of the public sphere, on the authority of the critic and of the composer, and on the functions of the music criticism. It also allows us to observe the relations between artists and critics.

In this paper I will look at some reactions (sometimes polemics) maintained between composers like Ruy Coelho (who was a music critic too) and critics like Francine Benoît and Fernando Lopes-Graça (who were also composers). In the end, these situations may contribute to better understand the general panorama of the practice of music criticism in Portugal in the 1920/30's.

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