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## The Secret Nightingale: When Utterance and Silence Co-exist; Susan Metcalfe-Casals and the Genesis of “En Sourdine”

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### Abstract

The overwhelming presumption about songs is that they are meant to be sung. In the curious case of “En Sourdine” (“Muted”; 1904), composed by Pau Casals (1876–1973), we see an exquisite discrepancy: a love song that is both romantic utterance and yet muteness. The paradoxical genesis of “En Sourdine” stems from Casals’s then secretive relationship with lieder singer, Susan Metcalfe, during their performance engagements in and around New York City circa 1904. In “Musicology for Art Historians”, Jonathan Hicks tells us that musicology relentlessly promoted the association of “composerly authority with a masculine subject.” This focus obfuscated many aspects of compositional impetus and relegated the role of other historical agents to oblivion, particularly the roles of “singer, instrumentalist, patron, etc.—that women have most often been in positions to perform.” “En Sourdine,” a song that significantly appears in Casals’s catalog without a date, reveals the deeply personal nature of his vocal works. An analysis of “En Sourdine” reveals the song’s function as a form of sensual communication, not intended for public dissemination. This study contributes to a reassessment of the role of singer and muse, as well as a discussion of one of Casals’s 34 songs.

**Keywords:** musicology; vocal music; compositional authority; music Intertextuality; song secrecy.

In educating fledgling vocal students on the need for the song repertoire, Carol Kimball argues that singers should develop the ability to become “the conduit for channeling the poet and the composer to the listening audience, and [the composer’s] inner muse.”<sup>1</sup> Implicit in her recommendation is the function of song as public narrative. Songs, we assume, are meant to be sung to a nurturing audience, and numerous other academic articles specify ways to enhance musical expression. Susan Mardinly, for instance, describes the nature of Amy Beach’s (1867–1944) “Chanson d’Amour” (1893) as the outpouring of covert Victorian sexuality, offering the singer a well of interpretive expression.<sup>2</sup>

In world-acclaimed cellist Pau Casals’s “En Sourdine” (“Muted”; 1904), however, we have a song that is not designed for public dissemination. Indeed, “En Sourdine,” a song that significantly appears in Casals’s catalog without a date, reveals the deeply personal nature of Casals’s 34 songs,

<sup>1</sup> Carol Kimball, “Why Sing Art Songs?,” *Journal of Singing* 70, no. 3 (January/February 2014): 364.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Mardinly, “Amy Beach: Muse, Conscience, and Society,” *Journal of Singing* 70, no. 5 (May/June 2014): 531.

most of which were written as private messages that memorialize events, feelings, and persons very dear to him.<sup>3</sup>

An intertextual and compositional analysis of “En Sourdine,” which Casals gifted to his amorous interest, singer Susan Metcalfe, reveals the function of song as seductive utterance and even sensual foreplay, shared in an intimate space of communication where secrecy must coexist.

### **A flattering secret...**

It is a hot summer afternoon in Italy, and several gather for a family picture. The mother sits nobly to the right, surrounded by her four children. The girls wear white lightweight cotton dresses with slightly puffed sleeves gathered at the cuffs in typical Victorian fashion. Ruffles ornament the necklines, and a crush belt at the waist completes the look. The son stands tall, directly behind his mother. The father stands to the left at a gallant distance from the others, accentuating his stature. This was the typical domestic arrangement of the upper middle class in the late 1800s, including the Metcalfe family.

New York was a major hub for European immigrants. Susan Scott Whitlock Metcalfe was born in Florence, Italy, on November 16, 1877, to an American doctor, Francis Johnston Metcalfe (1850–1892), and a Swiss–French mother, Hélène Rochat (1850–1932). Susan Metcalfe faced significant challenges early in life. The family lived in Italy until 1892, when Francis died of alcoholism (he also had a gambling addiction). Hélène Rochat returned to the U.S. in 1892, and the remainder of the family in 1895.<sup>4</sup> Susan had three siblings: Louis Rochat Metcalfe (1874–1946), Marie Florence Metcalfe Chansarel (1875–1967), who was married to French pianist and composer Jacques René Chansarel, and Hélène Francis Metcalfe Kobbé (Lilli; 1880–unknown), who was once married to New York architect Herman Kobbé.<sup>5</sup>

In an interview with the author, Susan’s niece, Susan Metcalfe Kobbé Pitkin (1914–2012), discoursed effusively about her aunt’s studies in an Italian conservatory and later in Paris and also described Parisian music sessions where Metcalfe sampled new songs by fashionable composers such as Gabriel Fauré<sup>6</sup> before she began her U.S. career (around 1901). In those years, Metcalfe frequented artistic circles that often overlapped with those of Pau Casals, making an eventual encounter possible, indeed quite probable.

<sup>3</sup> Silvia Lazo, “Three Facets of Pau Casals’ Musical Life” (PhD diss., University of Montana, 2013), 11, UMI 3553130.

<sup>4</sup> “Twelfth Census of the United States, 8 June 1900, New Rochelle,” Ancestry.com Operations Inc., accessed August 29, 2011, <http://search.ancestry.com/search/category.aspx?cat=35>. The family is listed as Louis Metcalfe, Hélène Rochat, and daughters Susan and Helene Francis. Hélène Rochat’s date of immigration is listed as 1892 (same year as Francis Metcalfe’s death in Italy). The daughters’ date of immigration is listed as 1895.

<sup>5</sup> Lazo, “Three Facets,” 6.

<sup>6</sup> Susan Metcalfe Kobbé Pitkin, in discussion with the author, August 16, 2011.



**Figure 1:** The Metcalfe Family. Private archives of Maggie Pitkin. Reproduced with permission.

Metcalfe was a woman of sufficient artistic and social stature to entertain the upper crust of New York's glitzy crowd. A Sunday section of *The New York Times* entitled "Music of the Week," dated March 6, 1904, announced a joint recital by Metcalfe and Casals (to be held on March 8, 1904 at 3 p.m.) in Mendelssohn Hall,<sup>7</sup> and there soon followed a concert for "Italian Immigrants" on April 24.<sup>8</sup> There were at least three other joint recitals during the same season, on February 13 and 14 and March 9, 1904.<sup>9</sup>

Casals's main biographer, Herbert L. Kirk, mentions that since 1905, Susan appeared in various European tours "under the same management as Casals, Wolff & Sachs."<sup>10</sup> By that time, Casals and

<sup>7</sup> "Music of the Week," *The New York Times*, March 6, 1904.

<sup>8</sup> "A concert will be given for the benefit of Italian Immigrants tomorrow afternoon in the Vanderbilt Gallery of the Fine Arts Building. Among the artists who will take part are Miss Olive Fremstad and Signor Campanari, by permission of Mr. Conried of the Metropolitan Opera Company of which they are members; Miss Susan Metcalfe and Mr. Pablo Casals." "Concert for Italian Immigrants," *The New York Times*, April 24, 1904.

<sup>9</sup> Herbert L. Kirk, *Pablo Casals: A Biography* by H.L. Kirk (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), 176.

<sup>10</sup> Kirk, *Pablo Casals*, 295.

Metcalf shared much more than artistic engagements. Incessant correspondence since their first encounter in Baltimore in early January, 1904, portended a sweltering affair.<sup>11</sup> In Casals's first letter to Metcalfe, which recounts their acquaintanceship, the feelings of mutual interest are already quite palpable: "Let me tell you something you already know, it's been a real pleasure to meet you and your sister, and I'm happy I met a soul that I can understand and like, and that, I think, could understand me in return."<sup>12</sup>

In the months that followed, Casals's feelings intensified, evolving to a point where he freely expressed his passion and shared his daily activities. A song dedicated to Metcalfe, accompanied by a letter, communicated his intense feelings:

SS Byron, May 14, 1904.

My beloved,

... I wish that this letter could be already close to you... I practice playing the cello three hours per day and the rest of the time I am on the deck looking at the sea and thinking about my Susite. I also read Daniel Cortis that I like a lot although it is not something new. It reminds of Balzac and Goethe in "Werther" but the novel is well written.

... I like the sound of the wind and of the sea. I would like to enjoy them with you my love. I will see you soon and I am sending you a tender kiss. Pablo.

PS. After putting the letter in the envelope I started playing the piano: "My Beloved" by Boëllmann and "En Sourdine", and during this last piece (written full of love for you), I reopened this letter to ask you one more time not to show it to strangers. This is an intimate letter and it must not be revealed.<sup>13</sup> [See Appendix 1 for the entire letter.]

The emotional effect of the song is further accentuated by the secrecy surrounding the affair. At the time, Casals was engaged to Andrée Huré, sister of French composer Jean Huré, and the love triangle was kept hidden from her.

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<sup>11</sup> Many evidentiary articles corroborate the fact that Casals was on tour in the U.S early 1904. Kirk, *Pablo Casals*, 176: "Casals' first American tour on his own, from early January until the first part of May 1904, took him as far inland as St. Louis, but most of his concerts were in the East." A contemporaneous vessel record confirms Casals' travel aboard the SS St. Louis sailing from Cherbourg, France on December 26, 1903, and arriving New York on January 3, 1904. "New York Passenger Lists, 1820–1957," Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., accessed August 24, 2011. Note from the Passenger List: "Casals: 26, male, single, artist. Not a polygamist and not an anarchist."

<sup>12</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, January 22, 1904. Susan Metcalfe Letters, 1902–1922, The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University Archives & Manuscripts.

<sup>13</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, May 14, 1904. UNC Greensboro. French composer Léon Boëllmann was a recurrent part of Casals's repertoire. One mention appears in "Music of the Week," *The New York Times*, March 6, 1904, with "Music School Settlement" announcing Variations by Boëllmann played by Casals as part of an upcoming concert on March 10, 1904. Casals's Workers Organization in Catalonia (AOC) also announced that Suite Gotique by Boëllmann would be part of their program: "Audició 88.<sup>a</sup> (4 Febrer del 1934). Palau de la Musica Catalana." Francesc Carrau i Isern, *L'Associació Obrera de Concerts: Fundador Pau Casals; Barcelona* (Barcelona: Jaimes Libros, 1977), 50.



At a time when open relationships were unequivocally prohibited and Dan Savage’s concept of “monogamish marriages”<sup>14</sup> was yet inconceivable, Casals’s predicament presented him with an internal and an external conflict. The threat of personal scandal plus the potential breakup of his engagement both weighed heavily on his mind. Casals intended to keep the affair a secret and “En Sourdine” strictly private to his personal context. He wrote to Susan Metcalfe: “I have no reason to break my word; I could have done it at the very beginning of my relations with Andrée. I have not done it because I hoped that later on I would develop some affection for her. I was wrong and now I have to pay” (June 15, 1904).<sup>15</sup> And later: “If you think it is possible for you to love me just to love me, like you felt you were able to at the beginning (and you repeated it again in the beloved letter that you gave me on the Byron) prove it to me and suffer with me, and do not insist on something that could break my promise. It would destroy me morally and you do not want to be the origin of it. By keeping my word I do not have to reveal our secret to anybody.” Casals doubled his request for confidentiality: “I am asking you to avoid talking about this with your family in New Rochelle or Paris... My mother knew from the beginning that I am engaged to Andrée but she does not know more about it” (June 30, 1904).<sup>16</sup> The clandestine nature of “En Sourdine” stemmed from Casals’s refusal to sever his engagement and his desire to keep his secret encounters and communications hidden.

### Sexmusicking in 1904?

“En Sourdine” appears in Casals’s musical catalog with the notation “No date.”<sup>17</sup> The song very much follows the personal character of Casals’s vocal works—other titles include “Absence” (1901), “Silenci” (1940), and “Blat Segat: Cants Intims” (The Wheat is Harvested, 1897). “En Sourdine” is Casals’s appropriation of the penultimate text of a set of 22 poems written by Paul-Marie Verlaine (1844–1896). The poetic choice of the title, “Muted,” was telling of how risqué the affair with Metcalfe was, and it was also, in hindsight, incredibly foreboding of the couple’s constantly suspensive relationship.

For the first several months, the veiled liaison provided as much tension as a compelling adventure. To draw a parallel to similar and more contemporary scenarios like Craigslist’s “Casual Encounters,” which hosts anywhere from 10 to 40 ads per day in cities and towns across the United States, the allure of such a rich yet taboo social practice is understandable. Craigslist headlines promising “fun and excitement” in a discreet environment are unequivocal proof that many find

<sup>14</sup> Savage defines a “monogamish marriage” as one that “allows occasional infidelities, which [a couple] is honest about.” Mark Oppenheimer, “Married, With Infidelities,” *The New York Times*, June 30, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, June 15, 1904. UNC Greensboro.

<sup>16</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, June 30, 1904. UNC Greensboro.

<sup>17</sup> Kirk, *Casals*, 561.

nontraditional liaisons deeply engaging, despite social risks: “I am not concerned about you being married or in a relationship,” reads one ad. “Discretion is here if need be.”<sup>18</sup>

Long before the expediency enabled by twenty-first-century sexting, the hushed messages between Casals and Metcalfe showed a similar pattern of excitement and risk that is common to illicit affairs. It is easy to imagine that in the early 1900s, vessels traversed the ocean for several days carrying love letters back and forth between eager lovers afflicted by feelings of longing and separation. On May 31, 1904, Casals wrote to Metcalfe: “I wish you were here. I have been unhappy since I left you. New sorrows added themselves to the so many other ones about which you know, and especially the biggest one—about which only you know. Let’s love each other and let the future decide about the rest!”<sup>19</sup>

Casals urged Metcalfe to join him in his new residence in Paris, where he aspired to creating lasting, albeit closeted memories together: “I want it to smell like you. We could choose the furniture together and I would decorate it in your taste. Imagine what a great pleasure it would be if it happened!” (June 15, 1904).<sup>20</sup> Unwilling to renege on his engagement to Andrée Huré, Casals petitioned Metcalfe for unconditional loyalty and confidentiality: “I understand that your love wants to give me the freedom that I do not have... I dream about this all the time and it is also my constant suffering. But since the moment we confessed our love, I told you what was my position towards Andrée and that nothing could change my decision to marry her” (June 30, 1904).<sup>21</sup>

In the setting of this forbidden relationship, filled with emotion, cravings, and the desire for greater closeness, “En Sourdine” serves the function, among others, of sensual communication and even foreplay. At once a flattering love letter and a brainteaser that could electrify a distant partner with promises of delight and ecstasy, the song highlights an intense psychological exchange that is evident throughout the numerous notes: “I want [the house] to smell like you” and “Let’s love each other and let the future decide about the rest!”

The association between romance and music has been a long trope in the history of music, as evidenced by fertility songs dating back to 2250 BC,<sup>22</sup> all the way through the Craigslist

<sup>18</sup> “Are you a ..... - m4w (zoo & root). If you are a handsome older woman in need of some special attention, I am your man. I am not concerned about you being married or in a relationship. Discretion is here if need be. I know relationships have a tendency to get boring or non existent in the bedroom. Women still need to enjoy some adult fun and get off. I am a giver and really enjoy watching a woman squirm, moan and groan with the touch of my fingers and tongue. You will be pleasantly surprised at what I can do for you and walkaway with a big smile. I am a clean, dd free, fun single man just looking to please. Have a great Tuesday ladies !! Let me help brighten your day. I am available during the day. Please include a face pic in your response. Cheers !! :). body: average, height: 6'2" (187cm), status: single, age: 54.” Craigslist, “Casual Encounters,” accessed March 27, 2016, <https://missoula.craigslist.org/cas/5491997485.html>.

<sup>19</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, May 31, 1904. UNC Greensboro.

<sup>20</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, June 15, 1904. UNC Greensboro.

<sup>21</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, June 30, 1904. UNC Greensboro.

<sup>22</sup> “Naram-Sin Inscription,” Wikimedia Commons, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.tiki-toki.com/timeline/entry/410566/Love-Songs-5000-Years-of-the-Music-of-Romance-Courtship-Sex/>.

announcement entitled “Music teacher bored for the night”: “Trying to decide what band I want to go see. Leaning towards Nervis Rex. If you know of any other bands playing tonight that you would want to go to instead, I'm game for anything.”<sup>23</sup> Perhaps the buzzword “sexmusicking” would seem appropriate—an idea that is never far from the minds of musicians, as can be seen, for example, in the “audacious sensuality” of The Doors’s 1967 song, “Light my Fire.”<sup>24</sup> “En Sourdine” likewise creates a connection between music and sensual stimulation, with Casals seeking to flatter his beloved with a peculiar type of musical expression: a mating call of sorts, existing in the confines of an intimate relationship between lovers, in this case, between composer and singer.

### Does the song belong to the singer?

At the intersection of music and gender, the role of the singer has been frequently overlooked by music historians, who have tended to concentrate on analytical and performance traits rather than the magnitude of stimuli behind the music. It is in this connection that the role of singer as muse can be particularly interesting—as both a catalyst for and the recipient of compositional impetus.

Jonathan Hicks tell us that the discipline of musicology, once dedicated to “the great works of genius bestowed upon the present by the great men of the past,” relentlessly promoted the association of “composerly authority with a masculine subject.” The focus on a single subject often obfuscated many aspects of compositional impetus and relegated the role of other historical agents to oblivion, particularly the roles of “singer, instrumentalist, patron, etc.—that women have most often been in positions to perform.”<sup>25</sup> Following this approach, the present investigation of “En Sourdine,” composed for Susan Metcalfe, a notable New York lieder singer of the twentieth century, finds that it typifies the role of singer as muse.

“En Sourdine” features a musical trope found in many nineteenth-century songs: the association of singer and nightingale. The song’s final strophe references a passerine, famed in southern Europe for its singing skills that excel in their high and low notes.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Craigslist, “Casual Encounters,” accessed March 12, 2016, <https://anchorage.craigslist.org/cas/5488856447.html>.

<sup>24</sup> “The chords are based on [John] Coltrane’s version of ‘My Favorite Things’. He just solos over A minor and B minor, which is exactly what we did. It was a perfect vehicle for Jim Morrison’s audacious sexuality and provided the Doors with the breakthrough they needed. ‘Everything was there,’ said Manzarek. ‘The song was great. The parts were great. The groove was in the pocket.’” Robert Webb, “Double Take: ‘Light My Fire’—The Doors/Will Young,” *Independent*, accessed April 3, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/double-take-light-my-fire-the-doorswill-young-139680.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Jonathan Hicks, “Musicology for Art Historians,” in *The Routledge Companion to Music and Visual Culture*, ed. Tim Shephard and Anne Leonard (New York: Routledge, 2014), 38–39.

<sup>26</sup> “Nightingales are slightly larger than robins, with a robust, broad-tailed, rather plain brown appearance. They are skulking and extremely local in their distribution in the UK while in much of southern Europe, they are common and more easily seen. The famous song is indeed of high quality, with a fast succession of high, low and rich notes that few other



And when the solemn night  
comes through the dark holm-oak wood,  
making our anxiety obvious  
the nightingale will sing.

Anne Marie Weaver has discussed at length the development of the nightingale as a subject of songs, with its first appearance in the song “Solovey” (“The Nightingale”; 1825) by Russian composer Aleksandr Alyabyev (1787–1851). Weaver argues that the bird performs a metaphorical—and musical—role often associated with seduction, exoticism, and melancholy and that it serves as a poetic substitution for a distant, migratory lover.<sup>27</sup> The convergence of these ideas forms a web of meanings that associates aural stimulation with a mating call, as in the case of Casals’s “En Sourdine.” First, Casals and Metcalfe are captives in a romantic context where physical and emotional distance are inevitable. The couple’s performance schedules in the United States and Europe moved in and out of sync with each other, like a Ferris wheel of exciting encounters and farewells. The song, or “call,” is a way to bridge distances and mentally bring a beloved closer to one’s own mental and spatial location. The itinerant nature of Casals and Metcalfe’s encounters invoked a special sensibility of moments created anew, while preserving elements of a fragmented history and nostalgic memories. Second, Metcalfe as singer and beloved encapsulated the dyadic, quintessential role of “soprano as nightingale,” in a relationship that was both untenable and enthralling: “Writers have long characterized the nightingale as seductive and feminine, with two main hermeneutic threads, the lament and love song.”<sup>28</sup> Whether Casals was sufficiently conscious of all these connotations is not clear. Yet the song’s literary and visual connections indicate that he placed significant value on this particular song, more so than any other in his repertoire.

### The Intertextual Sources of “En Sourdine”

Through a synergy of influences stemming from the visual arts, poetry, and music, “En Sourdine” features a range of intertextual sources that are well worth citing, connecting as they do Jean-Antoine Watteau, Paul-Marie Verlaine, and contemporary musical sources.

In surveying intertextuality in art music, Michel Klein noted that although the term has no stable definition, it has been successfully applied to music criticism. First used in 1980 by Julia Kristeva, intertextuality is “the text within whose boundaries many types of writing interact.”<sup>29</sup> Klein

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species can match.” Nightingale”, RSBP, accessed April 1, 2016, <https://www.rspb.org.uk/discoverandenjoynature/discoverandlearn/birdguide/name/n/nightingale/>.

<sup>27</sup> Anne Marie Weaver, “The Soprano and the Nightingale: Aleksandr Alyabyev’s ‘Solovey,’” *Journal of Musicological Research* 35, no. 1 (January 25, 2016): 23–44, doi: 10.1080/014111896.2016.1116349.

<sup>28</sup> Weaver, “The Soprano and the Nightingale,” 24.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005), 11.

opines that among the various ways in which intertextuality proves useful may be in revealing how an author intentionally borrowed contemporaneous ideas or texts, and transformed them in another text. Such literal quotations are associated with the study of influence—it proves “connections between works.”<sup>30</sup> Intertextuality, however, can also be ahistorical and open-ended as, for example, when a reader or interpreter finds textual patterns and relations not intended by the creator of the original text. Intertextuality then points to the repetition of a topic from one work to another, be they temporally related or not. Like much Rococo art, Casals’s “En Sourdine” promotes intertextual and interartistic ideas that flow from painting, to poetry, to music.

Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684–1781), a French-Valencienne painter praised for his original portrayal of fancy Commedia dell’Arte characters in pastoral scenes, influenced subsequent literary, theatrical, and musical works. Martin Eidelberg wrote of the peculiar story involving Watteau’s entry into the *Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* on 30 July 1712 under the title of “Painter,” and his posterior public status as “Painter of Gallant Parties.” *L’Embarquement pour Cythère* (Pilgrimage to the Isle of Cythera, 1717) marked Watteau’s artistic maturity and his official reception piece into the *Académie*. Originally classified as “representing the Pilgrimage to Cythera,” the title was changed to “*Une Fête Galante*.”<sup>31</sup> The term, relatively new, was intended as a descriptor of parkscape celebrations attended by the aristocracy. Baroque paintings of the time tended toward mythological and historical characters in scenes reminiscent of the Renaissance—*Pastoral Concert* (*Fête Champêtre*, Louvre, c. 1509). Watteau’s *Fête galantes*, however, presents young noblemen and “women dressed in shimmering silks”<sup>32</sup> in sensual abandonment, theatrically staged in “fanciful outdoor settings”, often surrounded by music.<sup>33</sup> The soft palates, harmonious composition, and detailed humanistic figures infused the Rococo style with a more naturalistic feeling.<sup>34</sup> As a result of repeated usage, the term “Gallant Parties” came to signify a new artistic genre evoking “Love, Languor and Reverie.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Intertextuality in Western Art Music*, 12.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Eidelberg, “Watteau, peintre de fêtes galantes,” in *Watteau et la Fête Galante* (Musée de Beaux-Arts de Valenciennes, 2004), 17.

<sup>32</sup> Lisa MacDonald, “Jean-Antoine Watteau (1684–1721),” accessed August 23, 2014, <http://www.artchive.com/artchive/W/watteau.html>.

<sup>33</sup> Nicholas Pioch, “Watteau, Jean-Antoine”, Web Museum, Paris, accessed August 23, 2014, <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/watteau/>.

<sup>34</sup> “The sweetness of his palette, an homage to Rubens and the colorism of sixteenth-century Venetian painting recast in delicate pastels to suit the scale and aesthetic of Rococo décor, was widely followed.” The Metropolitan Museum of Art, “Jean Antoine Watteau,” accessed August 23, 2014, [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/watt/hd\\_watt.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/watt/hd_watt.htm),

<sup>35</sup> “Watteau, peintre de fêtes galantes,” 26.

In 1869, Paul-Marie Verlaine (1844–1896), one of Casals’s favorite poets, published *Fête galantes*, a set of 22 short poems praised for their metrical fluidity and musicality.<sup>36</sup> Verlaine’s poems are based on paintings by Watteau, expressing otherworldly scenes of romanticized love. For Verlaine, love assumed the form of idyllic scenes of intense connection with nature, with dusk-inspired sensuality and supple melancholy: “[C]haracters from the commedia dell’arte (Pierrot, Arlequin and others) [again] formed a source of inspiration, having been celebrated before in seventeenth-century poetry. Charm is a key word in this work.”<sup>37</sup>

The Rococo (1720s–60s) maintains a combination of four main interartistic trends – theatre, orientalism, pastoral themes, and music. Between the 1830s and the 1910s, Rococo experienced a revival, with nationalistic expressions in France, England, Germany and Austria.<sup>38</sup> Translations of Verlaine’s *Fête galantes* flourished in the 1890s, and publications on the Rococo and Watteau hastened in the 1900s.<sup>39</sup>

According to John Ireland, Rococo’s enduring tendencies can be characterized as: a predilection for small form (in music seen in the fluidity of affects within a single movement), the youthful innocence of Arcadia, a sense of fleetingness adopted from pastoral themes, intimacy and private disclosure, the infiltration of theatrical subjects, and musical motifs and values. Indeed, Watteau was known as a “musical painter.”<sup>40</sup>

As noted by Ireland, one more important trait plays up in subsequent developments, which is the appeal to moral relativism, with its emphasis on pleasure, courtship and female unreservedness: “Mozart, Watteau, and Marivaux all concentrate attention on themes of courtship. Delightful, elegant, or bashful, none of their female characters exudes the incredible virtue, or the inhuman beauty of heroines from other styles.”<sup>41</sup> Rococo’s erotic “*décadence délicate*” expressed through “images of abbé, the nightingale, and moonlight anticipate the poetry of Verlaine.”<sup>42</sup>

“En Sourdine,” the twenty-first poem of Verlaine’s *Fête galantes*, triggered composers like Claude Debussy (1862–1918) and Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) to write musical renderings of their own (both in 1891). Enrique Granados, Catalan composer and friend of Casals, followed suit with works

<sup>36</sup> National Library of the Netherlands, “Fete Galantes,” accessed August 23, 2014, <http://www.kb.nl/en/web-exhibitions/koopman-collection/contents/1940-1950/fetes-galantes>. See also Paul Verlaine, *One Hundred and One Poems by Paul Verlaine: A Bilingual Edition*, trans. Norman R. Shapiro (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>37</sup> National Library of the Netherlands, “Fete Galantes,” accessed August 23, 2014, <http://www.kb.nl/en/web-exhibitions/koopman-collection/contents/1940-1950/fetes-galantes>.

<sup>38</sup> John Ireland, *Cythera Regained? The Rococo Revival in European Literature and the Arts, 1830–1910*. (Danvers, MA: Rosemont Publishing Corp., 2006), 13.

<sup>39</sup> Ireland, *Cythera Regained?* 212.

<sup>40</sup> Ireland, *Cythera Regained?* 109.

<sup>41</sup> Ireland, *Cythera Regained?* 26.

<sup>42</sup> Ireland, *Cythera Regained?* 35.

presenting a combination of Rococo interartistic elements, as well as the thematic nightingale, including the piano suite *Los Majos Enamorados* (The Majos in Love): “Quejas o la maja y el ruiseñor” (Complaints, or The Maja and the Nightingale, 1909).<sup>43</sup> Indeed, Watteau and Verlaine’s text inspired at least 50 different renditions by various artists, including a 1902 version by French pianist Jacques Rene Chansarel (1864–1945), who was married to Susan Metcalfe’s sister Marie Florence. It’s also important to note that Chansarel executed the public premiere of several of Debussy’s works while participating in prestigious Parisian and American musical circuits that were frequented by both Casals and Metcalfe.

Casals appropriated these sources and set his “En Sourdine” in Catalan, thus imprinting a very personal mark on the song and also illuminating the undisputed connection between the emotional context in which he lived and his muse, singer Susan Metcalfe. A translation follows:

### Muted

Pleasant in the midday shade  
that the high branches make,  
let’s soak our love properly  
in this great silence.

Let’s melt down our soul, our heart  
and our senses full of charm  
amid the vague languor  
of pine trees and strawberry trees.

Close your eyes a bit,  
cross your hands on your chest,  
and from your sleepy heart  
throw the anxiety away completely.

Let us be convinced  
by the caressing blow  
that comes to your feet to curl  
the waves of the soft fine grass.

And when the solemn night  
comes through the dark holm-oak wood,  
making our anxiety obvious  
the nightingale will sing.<sup>44</sup>

### En Sourdine

Plàcids, en el semijorn  
que les altes branques fan,  
amarem bé nostra amor  
d’aquest silenci tan gran.

Fonem-nos l’ànima, el cor  
i els sentits d’encís rublerts  
en mig les vagues llangors  
dels pins i dels arbocers.

Clou els teus ulls un poquet,  
creua les mans sobre el pit,  
del teu cor adormit  
gita els neguits per complert.

Deixa convèncer-nos bé  
pel buf acaronador  
que ve a crespas als teus peus  
les ones de l’herbei tou.

I quan solemnial la nit  
vindrà pel fosc alzar, fent palès nostre neguit  
el rossinyol cantarà.

<sup>43</sup> Walter Clark, *Enrique Granados. Poet of the Piano*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 81, 141, 223.

<sup>44</sup> Pau Casals, “En Sourdine.” Fons Pau Casals. Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya. Trans. Carla Peralta.

### Literary and Visual Analysis

In analyzing the visual imagery of *Fête galantes*, Hallam Walker indicates that there is a “principle of personal projection” at play, wherein “[t]he phantoms which inhabit the gardens are part of Verlaine, and the final bleak emptiness is intensely his own.”<sup>45</sup> Walker argues that *Fête galantes* links the writer’s sentiments with the landscape to form a scene of great delicacy and musicality. The poetic development of *Fête galantes* brings the two lovers progressively into sharp contrast or dispersal into nature’s background.

The evocation of contrasting feelings of love and loss in Casals’s “En Sourdine” function as a form of sensual play for Metcalfe, while at the same time underlining a cry of mourning that accentuates rather than diminishes the sense of yearning between lovers. Does the pleasure acquired in experiences so transitory denote a recurrent exploration of something new? Perhaps so, as Casals gravitated toward different women throughout his life. The choice of text was anything but accidental. Walker notes that “En Sourdine” (the poem) specifically invokes opposing feelings of desire and grief: “Gloom and darkness, and the impossibility of recapturing the joys of love, are pervasive. Accompanying the loss of love is a resigned despair which seems to linger on forever. ‘En Sourdine’ is characterized by very strong images of merging but, this time it is into darkness and death that all dissolves.” He adds: “With the use of branches, trees, wind, russet grass, and oaks, Verlaine stresses the background scene,” segued by the final poem, where the lovers appear, but only “as disembodied spirits haunting neglected gardens.”<sup>46</sup> An examination of the intertextual sources proves extremely useful for understanding Casals’s musical setting.

### Music Analysis

“En Sourdine” commences with two measures of melodious, pensive music. The first chord enunciates a Lydian scale, reaching an A-flat major pedal in the second measure. The piano figuration has a busy double-noted left hand, which accentuates the sense of detachment between chords, denoting perhaps the fast, chirping sound of a bird. The voice begins at measure 3 with a very agreeable and fluid line (“Pleasant in the midday shade that the high branches make”) modulating to a darker resonance between measures 8 and 11 (“Let’s melt down our souls”). The effect adds a flair of mystery to the song, and Casals is obviously playing with techniques of word painting. The song unfolds through a series of unconventional extended dominant chords reminiscent of Ravel, the piano figuration acquiring a new character at the end of each stanza and ushering in a new mood.

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<sup>45</sup> Hallam Walker, “Visual and Spatial Imagery in Verlaine *Fêtes galantes*,” *Modern Language Association* 87, no. 5 (1972): 1007.

<sup>46</sup> Walker, “Visual and Spatial Imagery,” 1014.



**Figure 2:** “En Sourdine.” Pau Casals. Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya. Archives Conchita Badia.

Two dramatic peaks give shape and structure to the entire song; the first one gradually appears through an ascending bass line that goes from measures 16–22, when the voice then builds to a climax at measure 24 in F-sharp—the singer’s highest note in the entire song (“From your sleepy heart throw the anxiety away completely”). Tension is then reduced through a descending chromatic line, providing a sense of romantic nostalgia. A brief piano interlude guides an insistent, summoning chromatic line for the right hand (mm. 33–36) that marshals in the fifth and final section of the song. The shift in mood frequent of Roco’s small musical forms also shapes the present change in textual plot (“And when the solemn night comes,” m. 37), for it is now dusk. A sense of tension starts at measures 43–44, outlined by a whole tone scale and accompanied by a single suspended chord (F-sharp Major 9, “Making our anxiety obvious”). This is segued by the second most dramatic moment of the song, where the lone singer’s voice closes the narrative with a poignant suspended whole note, bringing forth a sensual ecstasy that lingers, suggesting the “small death” following orgasm: “The nightingale will sing.” A recap of the dreamily opening four measures ensues in A-flat Major with the same persistent raised fourth scale degree—a more cheerful Lydian trait—which Casals seems enamored with. Silvia Lazo notes: “Overall, the song is of difficult execution for both pianist and singer due to the heavy chromaticism, suspended harmonic and melodic lines, and disjunct

texture between piano and voice.”<sup>47</sup> “En Sourdine,” one of Casals’s most accomplished vocal works, appears to be crafted for a mezzo-soprano of high precision and skill, Metcalfe’s precise range.

Recalling Casals’s accompanying 1904 letter to Metcalfe, it is important to take into account one significant factor: the song was intended as an exceptional gift. A twenty-eight-year-old Casals was playing the piano, first a piece by Boëllmann—a composer who appeared recurrently in his performance repertoire—and then “En Sourdine,” causing him to reminisce over the freshly written letter (“and during the last piece (written full of love for you)”). Casals suddenly recognizes the potential implication of a public release of the contents, and is forced to reopen the envelope to add the important postscript: “I reopened this letter to ask you one more time not to show it to strangers. This is an intimate letter and it must not be revealed.” This is a significant moment with a deep contradiction: the writing and playing of a song that must nevertheless remain inaudible to outside ears. The utterance reverberates only in the mind, in the intimate space between lovers, out of the public purview.

### Spilling the beans

It is not hard to imagine that such a secretive liaison surrounding one of the most famous artists of the twentieth-century would eventually create a romantic impasse, intensified towards the end of 1904 when Susan Metcalfe supposedly traveled to Paris. The last available letter (September 16, 1904) reports that Casals was meeting with Metcalfe’s sister to find out her exact arrival date. For reasons still unknown, their relationship subsided for almost a decade.

Interestingly enough, Casals’s marriage to Huré also never materialized. In the book *Pau Casals: Dades biogràfiques inèdites, cartes íntimes i records Viscuts* (1979), Enric Casals noted the mystery surrounding the breakup with Andrée Huré: “I don’t think that love so pure and real as the one that I mention does exist. My mother received touching letters from Andrea almost every week, which she read with admiration. They were letters with an unimaginable sanctity. She was also sick. We have never been able to determine why, but this relationship ended. However, it didn’t prevent Andrea from continuing to write very tender letters to my mother.”<sup>48</sup>

Some sources indicate a new affair, this time with cellist Guilhermina Suggia: “On November 9, 1906, Suggia wrote to a friend announcing an upcoming concert with Casals ‘playing duos for two cellos by E. Moór.’ For six years, starting in 1906, Casals and Suggia cohabitated.”<sup>49</sup> The relationship with Suggia seems to have been marked by frequent disagreements. It is still unknown whether the end of this relationship coincided with Metcalfe’s reappearance; yet Casals and Metcalfe certainly

<sup>47</sup> Lazo, “Three Facets,” 13.

<sup>48</sup> Enric Casals, *Pau Casals: Dades biogràfiques inèdites, cartes íntimes i records Viscuts* (Barcelona: Editorial Pòrtic, 1979), 285.

<sup>49</sup> Lazo, “Three Facets,” 15.

reunited not long thereafter. Kirk reports that “[l]ate in 1913 Susan Metcalfe appeared backstage to greet Pablo Casals after a concert in Berlin.”<sup>50</sup> The two conversed at length, Casals proposed to coach Metcalfe on some Spanish songs, and, according to friends, “before they parted that night they had decided to marry.”<sup>51</sup> Months later Casals, still elated by the fact that he and Metcalfe were twice united, wrote: “I can remember as well so many things from our life at your house and in New York and everything comes back to me from further and further away. It is something that has to be done little by little in order to join up together two different times in a way that after that we will not be able to believe that our lives had not always been like this.”<sup>52</sup>

The speed of the marriage proposal is best understood in light of the previous relationship. They spent the holiday season together—Christmas 1913 and early January: “Tonight you will get to London, whereas I will leave this place at 4 or at midnight. In any case, I will get to London before the 4<sup>th</sup>, the day after tomorrow, and I will be waiting for you at the Dieudonné Hotel” (January 2, 1914).<sup>53</sup> By mid-month Casals discussed the “exciting news” they had to share with family and friends:

Tomorrow you will have the joy of seeing your family. You will be thinking about what you want to hide from them for the few days after your arrival, and you are right to wait, but not for much, right my darling? I calculate that around the 16<sup>th</sup> my mother will find out.<sup>54</sup>

Casals and Metcalfe married in a private civil ceremony on April 4, 1914 in the chambers of Judge Martin Keogh in New Rochelle, New York.<sup>55</sup> The couple established a seasonal lifestyle of spending spring–summer in Europe and fall–winter in the United States. Friends and family often described the marriage as ill-fated due to Casals’s controlling behavior. There were also some unfortunate incidents. In late November, 1914, while she was crossing to the United States, Metcalfe seems to have suffered an episode of rheumatic fever. She was under the impression that she was expecting, and became gravely concerned that the illness aboard the ship might possibly have affected the child. Upon her arrival and subsequent medical care, no signs of a pregnancy could be ascertained.<sup>56</sup> Was

<sup>50</sup> Kirk, *Casals*, 296. The November 8, 1913 “Emergency Passport Application” filed by Susan Metcalfe with the United States legation in Stockholm reports that she left the United States on September 23, 1913, and that, now in Sweden, she has requested entry into Russia, intending to return “within three months.” Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., “U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925. Record for Susan Metcalfe,” accessed July 13, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Kirk, *Casals*, 296.

<sup>52</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, February 17, 1914. UNC Greensboro.

<sup>53</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, January 2, 1914. UNC Greensboro.

<sup>54</sup> Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, January 13, 1914. UNC Greensboro.

<sup>55</sup> “Soprano Weds ‘Cellist. Miss Susan Metcalfe Married to Pablo Casals by Justice Keogh,” *The New York Times*, April 5, 1914. The marriage certificate issued by the County of Westchester, State of New York, attests that this was a first marriage for both Metcalfe and Casals, witnessed by Susan’s brother, Louis Metcalfe, and her brother-in-law, Herman Kobbé. Marriage Certificate No. 14287, filed on May 16, 1914. The marriage date was April 4, 1914.

<sup>56</sup> “We all thought that night that the baby had died, and until the doctor came again next morning, we thought this would have to be an operation. I thought she knew it, and that accounted for her expression. The doctor could make no examination that night. She was too tired. But next morning he came after she had had sleep and nourishment, made a

Metcalfe so entranced by Casals that she imagined a pregnancy? The idea is very plausible given her lifelong, nearly unhealthy attachment to Casals, despite his abusive temperament. Casals never had a child.

### **Then it was, and then it wasn't...**

The up-and-down pattern that defined the couple's affair years earlier was pervasive throughout the marriage, marked by alternating periods of fondness and estrangement. As seven and a half decades of correspondence between Metcalfe, family, and friends attest, it seems that the point of greater stress was Casals's irascibility. Lydia Field Emmet (1866–1952), acclaimed Irish-American painter—and close friend to other notable artists such as John Singer Sargent—wrote: “I thought Pablo was one of the great and splendid exceptions of what a great emotional artist could and should be. It is all too hideous, and yet to a great nature which can only touch and muse with what is good and great like Susie's, how beautiful the effect of even this.”<sup>57</sup>

Among the complex set of factors taxing Casals's state of mind were episodes of anxiety caused by stage fright, disaffection with impresarios and the business of music, excessive travels, a new orchestral endeavor in Catalonia (*l'Associació Obrera de Concerts* (AOC), The Workmen's Concert Association, 1925–1937), and two world wars. Casals was a man with a temperamental personality, which at times resulted in violent outbreaks. As a consequence, Casals damaged not only his marriage to Metcalfe (as well as others), but experienced strained social relations with family, friends, and professional contacts.

On April 1, 1918, three days after his arrival in the U.S., Metcalfe wrote a note to Casals dismissing his rapprochement and making reference to a painting by Watteau, not at all insignificant in the context: “Here are the letter and insurance receipt on Watteau. You ruined my happiness yourself. There is no joy in the wishes you sent me.”<sup>58</sup> As noted, Watteau was one of the main intertextual sources of “En Sourdine,” and its significance is only reinforced by Casals's subsequent purchase of the painting, which was insured for US\$20,000 (US\$300,000 in current estimates).<sup>59</sup>

The import of “En Sourdine” isn't simply that it elicited sensual feelings earlier in the relationship but also that, over time, it acquired a mystical aura for the couple, the intertextual-

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thorough examination and found no evidence of pregnancy whatsoever. He says that it could begin and then absorb and that may be what happened. The relief of finding this is unspeakable. It not only would have made complications but, except for elementary natures, I don't believe in the opportunity to such a marriage, especially after all this.” Lydia Emmet to Jane Emmet de Glehn, November 15, 1914. Susan Metcalfe and Pablo Casals Letter Collection, 1915–1918. Smithsonian, Archives of American Art.

<sup>57</sup> Lydia Emmet to Jane de Glehn, November 15, 1914. Smithsonian.

<sup>58</sup> Susan Metcalfe to Pablo Casals, April 1, 1918. Smithsonian.

<sup>59</sup> Albert B. Ashforth, Inc. “Insurance Policy, 2 April 1918, New York,” UNC Greensboro.



interartistic meaning of which was enhanced by the combination of actual painting with song. Although the specific Watteau painting is not referenced anywhere, its display would constitute another issue for public disclosure: Casals later mentioned that the painting was purchased in London during the War (WWI). Why was it acquired, some might ask?

“En Sourdine” was performed, and not for the first time, at the 110th Concert given by the *l’Associació Obrera de Concerts* (May 12, 1935) at the prestigious Palau de la Música Catalana in Barcelona, Spain. The singer, Conchita Badia, a close friend of Casals and frequent guest artist, was accompanied at the piano by the composer himself. The program note states: “A La Callada (“En Sourdine”) Paul Verlaine—Pau Casals.”<sup>60</sup> Another interesting turn in the story is the peculiarly revealing announcement that most of the songs were receiving a first *public* hearing, while only two were being premiered: “NOU CANÇONS EN PRIMERA AUDICIÓ, DUES D’ELLES ESTRENA” (“New songs get a first hearing, two of them premiere”: “Blat Segat” and “De cara al mar”; see Table 1 for a list of all of the songs). The contradiction is rather disconcerting, not so much regarding the two songs being debuted, but the surrounding mystery of the performance of the other seven songs—including “En Sourdine.” Where were they heard before if not in public?

Regardless of whether or not “En Sourdine” was performed prior to 1935, the fact remains that Casals provided a first public recital in Catalonia only that year, suggesting that he was not readily inclined to share the repertoire. More recently, recordings and sheet music of “En Sourdine” have been made publicly available, notably in a “critical edition”, yet the date of the song is still concealed.<sup>61</sup> The overall record suggests that Casals was protective of his music, and the intentional refusal to disclose the origins of “En Sourdine” and his actions indeed erases an important part of Casals and Metcalfe’s history. Most importantly, we must ask, should the song be performed in public, and if so, according to composer or the singer?

<sup>60</sup> “Audició 110ª (12 de maig del 1935). Al Palau de la Música Catalana, oom era costum, hi hagué un memorable recital de cançons per Concepció Badia d’Agustí, acompanyada al piano per Alexandre Vilalta, i consistí en la interpretació, la primera part, d’obres de Scarlatti, Lotti, Pergolese, Paisiello i Mozart. La darrera part foren tot obres the Schubert. En la importante segona part foren interpretades NOU CANÇONS EN PRIMERA AUDICIÓ, DUES D’ELLES ESTRENA, totes de Pau Casals, i acompanyades al piano per l’autor. Les lletres eren de poetes diversos i per aquest ordre: «No t’há trobat», «Què custes són les hores», «En elmirall canviant de la mar blava», totes très d’Apelles Mestres; «En l’enterrament d’un nin», de Mossèn Cinto Verdaguer; «A la callada» [“En Sourdine”], de Paul Verlaine; «Absència», de matthey Arnold; «Son image», de Teophile Gautier. Les dues estrenes ho foren, en lletra d’Apelles Mestres, «Blat Segat» i «De cara al mar» de Joan Llongueras. *Les traduccions adaptades a la música són de Joaquim Pena.*” Carrau i Isern, *L’Associació Obrera de Concerts*, 58–60.

<sup>61</sup> “Undated piece for voice and piano in A flat major and a meter of 4/4 based on a text by Paul Verlaine (1844–1896), a poet ascribed to the symbolist and decadent movement of great renown within Catalan cultural spheres.” “En Sourdine,” Marta Casals, *Pau Casals. Veu i piano*, vol. 2 (Spain, Barcelona: Editorial de Música, 2011): 11.



**Table 1:** Audició 110<sup>a</sup> (12 de maig del 1935).

Palau de la Música Catalana. Recital by Conchita Badia and Pau Casals.

Song	Designation	Year	Poet
No t'há trobat	Canço Catalana No. 3	Jan. 1896	Apelles Mestres
Què curtes són les hores	Canço Catalana No. 4	Jan. 1896	Apelles Mestres
En elmirall canviant de la mar blava	Canço Catalana No. 1	Sep. 1895	Apelles Mestres
En l'enterrament d'un nin	Canço Catalana No. 2	Sep. 1895	Mossèn Cinto Verdaguer
A la callada ["En Sourdine"]		s.d. [1904]	Paul Verlaine
Absència		1901	Mattheu Arnold
Son image		June 12, 1898	Teophile Gautier
Blat Segat	Canço – Cants Intims	Jan. 12, 1897	Apelles Mestres
De cara al mar		Feb. 1935	Joan Llongueras

### Echoes of the nightingale...

A fateful quarrel took place between Metcalfe and Casals sometime between April—the date of Metcalfe's last concert with Casals's orchestra in Barcelona—and September, 1927.<sup>62</sup> They did not divorce, and despite the absence of children who might have demanded constant exchanges, the couple remained loosely connected via friends and family, including the Passiglis, Metcalfe's Italian cousins, mistakenly categorized as "friends" in Casals's biographies. Franco Passigli, actively engaged with *Società degli Amici della Musica*, one of the foremost musical festivals of Florence, was the journalistic contact who arranged Casals's first performance for the United Nations in 1958—which had Casals return to the United States performance stage after thirty years.<sup>63</sup>

On December 15, 1930, Metcalfe bade farewell to her friend Lydia Emmet and set sail for Menton, France, where she lived with Hélène RoCHAT (her mother) and her brother Louis, near their Italian relatives. In the second year of World War II, Metcalfe wrote to Emmet of Casals's distance and rejection of reconciliation: "How you must wonder what I have heard about Pablo—nothing have I received from him but a few lines in answer to my short letter First of Jan 1940.... I had written

<sup>62</sup> See Lazo, "Three Facets."

<sup>63</sup> "Coming to the United States after an absence of 30 years, Pablo Casals, the venerated 82-year-old Spanish cellist, the master to whom all musicdom bows in homage, came to perform, with pianist Mieczyslaw Horszowski, the Bach D major sonata, No. 2." *The Berkshire Eagle*, Pittsfield, MA, October 25, 1958. "The invitation from Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld was brought personally by Franco Passigli, son of Casals' friend Alberto Passigli, who had succeeded his father as director of the *Amici della Musica* in Florence and joined the United Nations staff in 1957." Kirk, *Casals*, 506.

to him, having heard that he had lost all his money... & said that if he wanted to come and live in my apt. I would make him comfortable & safe & I hoped peaceful. At last a short answer to decline and advise for my good that I return to America.”<sup>64</sup>

Metcalfe did not oblige. Metcalfe spent the war years in France with her brother Louis, with the country switching to the government of General Phillip Pétain for most of the war (1940–1944).<sup>65</sup> To her artistic credit, Metcalfe resumed her performance career in 1943, when there was still a demand for her records. Singing had been an integral part of Metcalfe’s life.

Meanwhile, during the Spanish Civil War and continuing throughout World War II, Casals maintained an ambiguous lodging-living arrangement of sorts with Frasquita de Capdevila, widow of the treasurer of Casals’s orchestra. The two married on the eve of her death (1955) *in articulo mortis*, a Catholic ritual exception that permitted the priest to perform a near-death ceremony without the risk of interfering with Casals’s marriage to Metcalfe.

Casals then embarked on a new romantic venture, this time with Puerto Rican–American Marta Angélica Montañez y Martinez (b1936), an 18-year-old cellist who was 60 years his junior. The couple married in San Juan on August 3, 1957 under dubious legal circumstances. Casals had filed for divorce in Chichuahua, Mexico, earlier that year, a jurisdiction known for speedy yet fraudulent proceedings. A questionable divorce decree was issued on May 17, 1957.<sup>66</sup> At the time of the divorce, Metcalfe was suffering from dementia, which resulted in her living under the guardianship of her sisters in New Jersey. Emmet’s sister (Jane de Glehn) offered a critical perspective regarding Casals’s questionable marital status: “I have just read that Pablo Casals, 80, married a girl of 21 & states that his first wife died in 1955. He is a lying old bigamist & I hope somebody will show him up.”<sup>67</sup>

Casals settled permanently in Puerto Rico in 1957 and, given his long-term association with the United States, inaugurated a series of Cold War-related musical institutions, including the Festival Casals (1957), the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra (1957), and the Puerto Rico Conservatory (1959). Susan Metcalfe-Casals died at Bergen Pines Hospital in Cresskill, New Jersey, on September 25, 1959. A heart-wrenching scene described by Mr. Joan Alavedra, one of Casals’s friends, captures the tragic yet visceral nature of Metcalfe’s feelings for Casals: “[The sisters] take [Metcalfe back] to America

<sup>64</sup> Lydia Emmet to Jane de Glehn, August 18, 1945. Smithsonian. Also: “In addition to the various meanings of exile, distance from my family, I owe to the behavior of England my material ruin. They refuse the free disposal of the interests that I’ve relied on for nearly half a century. Even more: these interests are labeled *enemy property*.” Pau Casals to Josep Trueta, July 17, 1949. Prades. Quim Torra, *Pau Casals—Josep Trueta: Estimat doctor/Admirat mestre* (Barcelona: Contra Vents Editors, 2009), 74.

<sup>65</sup> Jacques Szaluta, “Marshal Petain’s Ambassadorship to Spain: Conspiratorial or Providential Rise toward Power?” *French Historical Studies* 8, No. 4 (Autumn 1974): 511.

<sup>66</sup> United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). File of Pau Casals.

<sup>67</sup> Jane de Glehn to Miss Sherwood, August 6, 1957. Smithsonian.

and until her death, a few months later, she wanted, in New York, to eat alone on a table for two, because ‘Casals had to come’.<sup>68</sup> The nightingale at last went mute.



**Figure 3:** Susan Metcalfe-Casals. Private archives of Maggie Pitkin. Reproduced with permission.

### Conclusion

In Chapter 32 (“The Sacred Fire”) of *Waiting at the Shore: Art, Revolution, and Exile in the Life of the Spanish Artist Luis Quintanilla* (2003), in which Paul Quintanilla chronicles his father’s exquisite career as a painter, including world travels and famed friends, Quintanilla describes his father’s visit to Casals on March 11, 1957 in Puerto Rico. The artist was there to create a portrait of the cellist and his instrument (nicknamed “La Fiera”), and Casals played the cello during the artist’s visit while reminiscing about his life and war years. A brief interruption to the narrative makes mention to Watteau’s painting, still highly treasured by Casals: “Don Pablo showed [Luis Quintanilla] a

<sup>68</sup> Joan Alavedra, *Pau Casals*, trans. Carla Peralta (Barcelona: Editorial Aedos, 1962), 272.

photograph of the interior of his home and pointed toward a painting, asking who he thought did it. The photograph is muddy but studying it [Quintanilla] said that it looked like Watteau. With his Spanish effusiveness [Casals] caught [Quintanilla's] arm: 'Exactly. A Watteau. I bought it in London during the war. It needs cleaning, but I wouldn't risk giving it to a professional restorer.'<sup>69</sup>

The story of "En Sourdine" bears a close connection to the life of Susan Metcalfe, whose centrality in Casals's world is deeply illuminating regarding his personal trajectory and compositional output. Dozens of biographies omit "inconvenient truths" about Casals, avoiding any discussion of events that do not favor him in the public light: "[h]is affair with Susan Metcalfe in 1904 while still engaged to Andrée Huré, the clandestine nature of 'En Sourdine', his violent temper and numerous separations, his Mexican divorce at the time of his wife's indicated mental disability, and subsequent marriages."<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, there is copious evidence of Casals and Marta's interference with the largest and most authoritative biography of Casals, by Herbert L. Kirk, including legally binding agreements with the biographer. Before the commercial release of the book, for instance, Marta Casals abridged one final detail, eliminating any trace of revisions imposed by Casals and herself. A letter from their attorney, Abe Fortas, to the publisher states: "However, I do want to thank you for informing me in your letter of September 19<sup>th</sup> that you were successful in arranging to have the adjective 'authorized' deleted from all references to the biography of Maestro Casals. As you know, it is important that this be supported by a letter of confirmation from your publisher."<sup>71</sup>

It is therefore a rich treasure that at the personal level so much information now exists about "En Sourdine," a compelling song that is quite revealing regarding an artist's struggle to keep a secret closeted for all time. Casals wrote 34 songs, the most precious of which was arguably "En Sourdine," especially given the aura of mystery with which he enshrined the song and the additional steps he took to purchase a Watteau and maintain its upkeep. In the context of the secretive affair between Casals and Metcalfe, "En Sourdine" is a special gift that functions as a form of sensual stimulation, connecting two distant lovers through sensorial, poetic imagery, yet destined to the confines of an unrequited love. Over time, the song grew in importance not just for Casals and Metcalfe but also, more recently, for potential listeners, yet always within the strict bounds of this larger "private" story. Perhaps the song should have been kept private. But since it hasn't been, the persistence of secrecy that has outlasted the original parties and context doesn't seem to make sense anymore.

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<sup>69</sup> Paul Quintanilla, *Waiting at the Shore, Art, Revolution, and Exile in the Life of the Spanish Artist Luis Quintanilla* (Self-published: Lulu Press, 2003), 197. Reprinted Canada: Sussex Academic Press, 2014.

<sup>70</sup> Lazo, "Three Facets," 67.

<sup>71</sup> Abe Fortas to H. L. Kirk, November 21, 1973. Abe Fortas Papers. Yale University Library, Manuscripts and Archives.

**Appendix:** Letter of Pablo Casals to Susan Metcalfe, May 14, 1904.

SS Byron, May 14, 1904

My beloved,

Sometimes, I suffer so much because you are not by my side. I feel an amazing happiness when I forget this sad reality and when I think about you. I remain so long in these ecstatic moments from the moment I left you that sometimes I have been through our whole life together. I wish that this letter could be already close to you. I do not even know when I will be able to send it to you!

The first days of the trip were splendid. Very calm and no one was sick. But since, the sea is choppy and it makes the boat swing. Almost all the passengers have been sick, I am one of the exceptions and I am very happy to realize this. From the first day I got the cabin just for myself. Bauer has the one next door; it must be the best on the boat.

The night we left was very cold and I put on the “slippers”, they are very beautiful and very warm, in spite of my innocent teasing I like their shape and color. I think that I was just used to say that I prefer grey.

Let me begin with the moment when I heard your heart for the first time, and thanks to the extraordinary prediction that Mrs. Farquar made one or two days before I met you.

Let's begin with our encounter in Baltimore and our trip to New York, and my first visit in New Rochelle. After that, I can remember almost every time we have met, almost every word, and every movement of our eyes. My thoughts go so fast, so often, that I can see you at the same time in different places at different occasions. Our night walks, I can see you waiting for me at the train station (!), we are playing music together or we are playing the small pool. Our races, the last days and afternoons at the Bronx Park and so many other dear memories. I see myself in the woods, my arm around your waist and full of life and happiness, running free just like little children.

I have just been chased out of the smoking room, it is midnight and they turn off the lights at this time. I'm writing in a notebook now and I want to talk to you more my darling Susite. You're so absent!

I have known the other passengers just for two days now, but I like being alone and I manage to do so most of the time. I ate some of our chocolate the day before yesterday.

Do you remember that you gave me an entire package? I ate almost half of it but I will make it last. I will eat only little bits of it at a time. I practice playing the cello three hours



per day and the rest of the time I am on the deck looking at the sea and thinking about my Susite. I also read Daniel Cortis that I like a lot although it is not something new. It reminds me of Balzac and Goethe in “Werther” but the novel is well written.

I read someone else but not much, because I cannot focus my thoughts on what I read. My thoughts are somewhere else and that is where I like them to be.

On one of the levels of my washstand I put two enlarged pictures of my mother. What an adorable idea you have had! I love you!

I do not have your portrait because I do not want to show you to strangers.

I often need to have a look at the pictures and the beautiful frame given by Lydia. But I don't want to show them. Have you received the ones of me that Mrs. Aicco was supposed to send you? You will probably receive them soon. My paper is over; I have got to leave you. I am going to bed. The sea is of letters that will reach the harbor. I like the sound of the wind and of the sea.

I would like to enjoy them with you my love. I will see you soon and I am sending you a tender kiss.

Pablo.

PS. After putting the letter in the envelope I started playing the piano: “My Beloved” by Boëllmann and “En Sourdine”, and during this last piece (written full of love for you), I reopened this letter to ask you one more time not to show it to strangers. This is an intimate letter and it must not be revealed.

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