

Spring 4-9-2003

## "The Last Great Cause": The Spanish Civil War and Music of the Americas

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### Recommended Citation

Hess, Carol, ""The Last Great Cause": The Spanish Civil War and Music of the Americas" (2003). *ICS Fellow Lectures*. 45.  
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## “The Last Great Cause”: The Spanish Civil War and Music of the Americas

The Spanish Civil War erupted in July 1936 when General Francisco Franco and his Nationalist supporters sought to overturn through a military coup the left-leaning Second Spanish Republic, elected five years earlier. The war attracted the attention of intellectuals throughout the world, many of whom saw the struggle against fascism as “the last great cause.” Although various scholars have explored artists and writers in relation to the war, none has addressed the response of musicians. Various composers in the United States, many with communist affiliations, supported the Republic through political statements or compositions dedicated to some aspect of the war, thus putting themselves at risk during the McCarthy witch-hunts of the 1950s. There was also especially strong support for the Republic in Mexico, where several Spanish expatriate musicians took up residence.

After an overview of the war’s musical ramifications, this lecture will concentrate on the 1937 film The Spanish Earth, on which Orson Welles, Ernest Hemingway, and U. S. composers Marc Blitzstein and Virgil Thomson collaborated and which offers a compelling glimpse of the interpenetration between art and political ideology during this volatile period.



1:30 pm,  
April 9<sup>th</sup>  
Business  
Admin.  
Room 116

Carol Hess is an Associate Professor in the College of Musical Arts, BGSU. A specialist in Spanish music, she has received grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Program for Cultural Cooperation Between Spain’s Ministry of Culture and United States Universities, the Ministerio de asuntos exteriores of Spain, and BGSU. In 1998 she was a Fulbright lecturer in Barcelona. Her publications include numerous articles, one of which, “John Philip Sousa’s El Capitan: Political Appropriation and the Spanish-American War” (American Music, 1998), won the Society for American Music’s Irving Lowens Article Award. Her first book is a bio-bibliography of the Spanish composer Enrique Granados (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1991), and her second book, Manuel de Falla and Modernism in Spain, 1898-1936 (University of Chicago Press, 2001), won the ASCAP-Deems Taylor prize, a national award. Her biography of Falla, Manuel de Falla: Self, Circumstance, and the Pursuit of Perfection, will be published by Oxford University Press later this year.

Presently Dr. Hess is a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Culture and Society and is working on another book, “The Last Great Cause”: The Spanish Civil War and Music of the Americas.