

**That unfortunate incident -  
PAU CASALS and EDUOARD JACOBS -  
what really happened?**

What is known by all is that Pau Casals travelled to Brussels with a letter of recommendation for François Gavaërt, director of the Conservatory of Music. After the entrance 'exam' with Edouard Jacobs, Pau Casals refused to enter the conservatoire and decides to go to Paris.

The following incident is what occurred at the academy, in Casals's own words - these are supposedly the exact translated words:

*"The next day I appeared at the class. I was very nervous...I sat in the back of the class, listening to the students play. I must say I was not too greatly impressed, and I began to feel less nervous. When the class had finished, the professor...beckoned to me:*

*"So," he said, "I gather you're the little Spaniard that the Director spoke to me about." I did not like his tone. I said yes, that I was the one.*

*"Well, little Spaniard," he said, "it seems you play the cello. Do you wish to play?" I said I would be glad to.*

*"And what compositions do you play?" I said I played quite a few. He rattled off a number of works, asking me each time if I could play the one he named, and each time I said yes— because I could.*

*Then he turned to the class and said,*

*"Well now, is not remarkable! It seems that our young Spaniard plays everything. He must be really quite amazing." The students laughed. At first I had been upset by the professor's manner—this was, after all, my second day in a strange country—but by now I was angry with them and his ridicule of me. I did not say anything.*

*“Perhaps,” he said, “you will honor us by playing the Souvenir de Spa?” It was a flashy piece that was trotted out regularly in the Belgian school. I said I would play it.*

*“I’m sure we’ll hear something astonishing from this young man who plays everything,” he said.*

*“But what will you use for an instrument?” There was more laughter from the students. I was so furious I almost left then and there. But I thought, all right, whether he wants to hear me play or not, he will hear me. I snatched a cello from the student nearest to me, and I began to play. The room fell silent.*

*When I had finished, there wasn’t a word. The professor stared at me. His face had a strange expression.*

*“Will you please come to my office?” he said. His tone was very different than before. We walked from the room together. The students sat without moving. The professor closed the door to his office and sat down behind his desk.*

*“Young man,” he said, “I can tell you that you have a great talent. If you study here, and if you consent to be in my class, I can promise you that you will be awarded the First Prize of the conservatory.” I was almost too angry to speak.*

*I told him:*

*“You were rude to me, sir. You ridiculed me in front of your pupils. I do not want to remain here one second longer.”*

*As a result, Queen María Cristina withdrew her pension.*

*After some difficult times in Paris, he decided to return to Barcelona*

*..*

*So now you know!*

*‘documenting the cello’ [www.johnstone-music.com](http://www.johnstone-music.com)*