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Zarzuela; or Lyric Theatre as Consumer Nationalism in Spain, 1874-1930

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requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

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2006

To my parents, in recognition of their boundless love and support.

Il faut méditerraniser la musique.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*

You have described very nicely an indubitably moral element in the nature of music: to wit, that by its peculiar and lively means of measurement, it lends an awareness, both intellectual and precious, to the flow of time. Music awakens time, awakens us to our finest enjoyment of time. Music awakens—and in that sense it is moral. Art is moral, in that it awakens. But what if it were to do the opposite? If it were to numb us, to put us asleep, counteract all activity and progress? And music can do that as well. It knows all too well the effect that opiates have. A devilish effect, gentlemen. Opiates are the Devil's tool, for they create dullness, rigidity, stagnation, slavish inertia. There is something dubious about music, gentlemen. I maintain that music is ambiguous by its very nature. I am not going too far when I declare it to be politically suspect.

—Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*

Extraordinary how potent cheap music is.

—Noël Coward, *Private Lives*

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entered the program together in 1998, and they are colleagues from whom I have learned much, who have provided me with hours of conversation and support, and who did much to smooth my initial travels in Spain. Enrique (Henry) Sanabria gave me much beneficial advice, while Matt Crawford and Daniel Stuber have inspired me with their unfailing good humor. Daniel Berenburg has been a constant and valuable friend; his guided tour of the Seville Cathedral was a highlight of my year in Spain—as was his gift of a ticket to the Madrid production of *Hello, Dolly!* Regarding Hispanists at other institutions, I have shared conference panels and stimulating intellectual debate with Scott Eastman and Andrew McFarland. I look forward to many more such interchanges in the future.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Zarzuela; or Lyric Theatre as Consumer Nationalism in Spain, 1874-1930

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This study examines how notions of national identity were developed and disseminated in Spain through the use of lyric theatre during the period of the Bourbon Restoration. Spanish light opera—*zarzuela*—was not only a popular manifestation of the intellectual project to create a unified sense of national identity; it also provided a mechanism by which the Spanish people could articulate the changes to that identity caused by the pressures of modernization. Furthermore, by aligning its sense of nationalism with the project of mass political mobilization, zarzuela created the distinction between elite and popular culture in Spain.

From the 1850s onwards, zarzuela positioned itself as a nationalist genre of lyric theatre through the use of Spanish folk music in its scores and the use of the Spanish people as the protagonists of its plots. Zarzuela also articulated a sense that Spanish nationalism was a popular project; to this end, the genre contrasted itself with opera, which was characterized as something foreign and elitist. Having established itself as a nationalist and populist genre by the 1890s, zarzuela was than able to portray the changing nature of Spain's national identity due to the country's industrialization and urbanization. The populist nature of the genre led to a sense that Spanish nationalism was built in opposition to the corrupt Restoration government; this linked zarzuela to the regenerationist movement that sought to reform government and society in the early years of the twentieth century. The link with regenerationism, however, increasingly placed zarzuela into the category of elite culture. This meant that by the 1920s, zarzuela had lost its position as a mobilizing and a nationalist force.

The study of zarzuela is crucial for understanding not only how the elite-driven project of nationalism was communicated to the people it was meant to nationalize; it also demonstrates how those people were able to critique and otherwise participate in the nationalization project through the simple means of buying tickets. Zarzuela also demonstrates the crucial role that nationalism had in creating modern definitions of popular and elite culture. Even a frivolous form of music can have serious political potential.

Overture

Music, Nationalism, and Consumption

Of all the arts, music is perhaps one of the most frustrating to study. It is one of the most elemental parts of any society—imagine a world without any music whatsoever—but also one of the most difficult to discuss with any degree of precision. Attempting to describe a melody, for example, is not unlike trying to describe the color green: it can be done, but only by using language so technical that advanced specialists alone can understand what is actually being stated. The rest of humanity is left to flounder in abstractions, generalizations, platitudes, and unwieldy metaphors. It can be argued, of course, that music is merely meant to be performed and enjoyed and that trying to analyze it is merely a foolish gesture that cannot increase our understanding. ("Writing about music is like dancing about architecture," or so the saying goes.)[1] Such sentiments, I feel, are based on what we might call the essentially irrational nature of music: since music cannot be dealt with by most people on the rational level of description, it is best left to the irrational—or, in other words, just enjoy the music and hang the consequences.

Unfortunately, this attitude hardly expands our understanding or appreciation of music. Music is built into the fabric of all societies: it crosses all spectrums from the most private of moments—lullabies sung to children—to the most momentous public occasions—band music in inaugural parades or coronation ceremonies. This all-pervasiveness of music would seem to demand some sort of investigation, if only

[1] Although most often attributed to Elvis Costello, the origins of this particular bromide remain something of a mystery.

because such a wide-spread phenomenon could hardly be so irrelevant as to merit uninvestigated acceptance. This pervasiveness has made it the target of different ideological agendas, all of which seek to channel the enjoyment one derives from music towards specific political goals. This fact makes the study of music crucial above and beyond the field of musicology; it opens up a series of questions about the interrelationship between music and politics.

This study will examine how music was used in Spain between the years 1874 and 1930. Specifically, it will examine how lyric theatre was used to develop and disseminate Spanish national identity. I will argue that lyric theatre is an ideal vehicle for understanding how nationalism developed in Spain: the popular nature of the Spanish theatrical milieu during this period means that the works performed provide an ideal insight into how the average Spaniard thought of their identity. Lyric theatre provided a way for Spaniards to understand their past and the changes their society was then undergoing. But the popular emphasis of nationalism had unintended consequences for Spanish art. It created a gap between popular forms of culture and elite forms of culture that marginalized the latter; and when popular lyric theatre genres found themselves displaced by other forms of popular culture, the effectiveness of the nationalism project was undermined.

The ambivalent power of music has long been recognized as the tension between its rational and irrational impulses; and nobody understood this ambivalence than Thomas Mann. Mann was fully aware of the dangers of letting the irrational element of music gain a foothold: his novel *Doctor Faustus* turns the irrationality of

music into a metaphor for the destruction of German—and by extension, European—civilization during the first half of the twentieth century. Knowing what we do now of Hitler's fascination with Wagner, as well as the active collaboration of composers and performing musicians with the Third Reich, Mann's view can hardly be considered an eccentric one.[2] In fact Mann is only the capstone in a series of thinkers who viewed music as an essentially irrational—and thus dangerous—force: Saint Augustine felt that music was dangerous in that it had the power to seduce the listener away from God, and Plato likened music to rhetoric, viewing both as forces that appealed to the emotions rather than the intellect.[3] And each of these thinkers realized that giving into music's irrational forces has highly destructive consequences. Just as German civilization was at the center of Mann's worldview, so God was at the center of Augustine's and knowledge at the center of Plato's; in each case, music has the power to destroy the idea that the philosopher holds most dear. In other words, music has the power to destroy the world.

But if it has the power to destroy the world, it also has the power to create as well. It is this paradox that Mann confronts in the quotation from *The Magic Mountain* that serves as one of the epigraphs to this dissertation. Music is an accepted part of the cultured life (or "the enjoyment of time," as Mann puts it). It is no coincidence that Mann places this soliloquy on the dual power of music in the mouth

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[2] On Hitler and Wagner—as well as how the Nazi dictatorship used the arts in general—see Frederic Spotts, *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (Woodstock & New York: Overlook Press, 2003); for a more general view of music under the Nazis, see Michael H. Kater's *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997).

[3] Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. R.S. Pine-Coffin (New York: Penguin, 1961), X:33; Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. James H. Nichols, Jr. (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998), 501e-502e.

of Settembrini, the Italian scholar who stands out as a beacon of rationality in the irrational dreamscape of Mann's novel. To recognize the essential irrationality of music requires, in a certain sense, a supreme rationalist; and the supreme rationalist will also realize that music has its moral, rational side—thus creating the essential paradox of music. It is this paradox that creates what Mann and Settembrini term the "political" nature of music: music uses its irrational nature to seduce listeners while supposedly embodying the highest and most rational moral concerns. Politicians tend to behave in much the same manner, after all.

It is this political nature of music that makes it the perfect vehicle for the study of nationalism. Nationalism, arguably, embodies much the same paradox of rationality and irrationality that music does. The project of nationalism was a part of the rationalist positivism of the nineteenth century, seeking to unify the disparate groups of people who happened to live in the same state under a common denominator. Nationalism was a method by which governments could overcome the older dynastic monarchies or the overarching influence of the Catholic Church, and it could be used to tie together the various strands of society needed to make the modern industrial state run efficiently.[4] Nationalism was one of the primary historical forces in Europe during the nineteenth century, the same period that saw the rise of rationalist positivism, the idea that human affairs could be modeled after the principles of science. And nationalism was precisely that: a way to remove human affairs from the

[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991) and Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1983).

irrationality of the Church and dynastic politics and place them in the hands of the state and industry.

The idea of the nation was originally a progressive one: rather than placing sovereignty in the hands of a monarch supported by the Church, it created a new entity known as "the people" in whom political power resided.[5] The traditional ties that had bound people together—be they religious, ethnic, communal, or even family—were superceded (although not necessarily eradicated) by the new and overarching bond to the nation. This new and collective identity assumed that what united the people in a given nation was a shared past and a common set of civic and political goals. Often these histories and goals had to be adapted and created: although nationalism seemed to be a transhistorical entity, its very particular development in the years after the French Revolution meant that the underpinnings of the nation had to be created rather than taken as a given.[6]

As the nineteenth century progressed, nationalism proved to be a rational move for European states for other reasons. The process of industrialization and urbanization that helped to make nationalism such an attractive prospect also brought with it the advent of mass politics. The forces that drove nationalism—linguistic unification, transportation infrastructures that bound the countryside to the city, military service that instilled patriotism and forced men from different regions into

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[5] For a fairly good working definition of nationalism, see the Introduction to Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992), although Greenfeld argues that the roots of nationalism lie in the early modern period—specifically sixteenth-century England—rather than the French Revolution.

[6] The classic study of this phenomenon is Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983).

contact with each other—also provided the impetus towards political participation for the lower classes.[7] The idea of the nation not only became a way to organize the burgeoning masses, but it was a way to steer their energy away from the class-driven politics of Karl Marx and make ideas of popular sovereignty much more palatable to conservative forces.[8] Although nationalism was transformed from a liberal force to a conservative one during the course of the nineteenth century, it consistently remained what seemed to be the most logical and orderly way of social organization during a time of rapid change.

However, the nineteenth century was also the era in which irrationalism became an accepted way of explaining human behavior: late in the century Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, among others, were quick to point out that human nature was neither entirely rational nor could it be explained by fully scientific principles. In regards to nationalism, we are today perhaps more aware of its irrational side: its tendency to engender wars and otherwise embody Freudian thanatos, its ability to create seemingly timeless feelings out of a vacuum, its tendency to make human beings with nothing in common identify as part of a group.[9] Nationalism has the capability to both create and destroy human societies, and has done both with equal historical abandon. In this sense, nationalism is a perfect counterpart to music—

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[7] The classic study of the forces that drove nationalism is Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1976).

[8] Not surprisingly, the historical studies of nationalism's conservative turn rely on the German case: see George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1971) and Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck*, rev. ed. (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1991).

[9] For the best historical explanation of nationalism's dark side, see E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992).

for it holds within its grasp the power to create and destroy. And this connection was certainly understood in the nineteenth century: Italian nationalists, seeking to remove Austrian dominance from the peninsula and establish an Italian monarchy took to painting the phrase "Viva Verdi!" on walls from Naples to Florence. "Verdi" could stand for either the composer and patriot or for *V*ittorio *E*mmanuel *R*e *d*i *I*talia, depending on the circumstance. Again, music intertwines with politics to the point that they are virtually indistinguishable.

The nineteenth century was also the period that saw the birth of what we might call "mass phenomena": movements that sought to unite vast numbers of people, regardless of social boundaries. Nationalism was one of these. However, such phenomena were not only political in nature. The nineteenth century also saw the birth of what today we would call popular culture. Of course, by the current standards of popular culture—especially as defined by the discipline of sociology—nineteenth century popular culture was not "popular" at all. Many of the material products of mass culture of this period were directed mainly at the bourgeoisie rather than across classes; it is thus perhaps more accurate to speak of it in terms of consumer culture. Nineteenth century consumer culture has perhaps been most often studied in terms of the rise of the department store; however, this is but one aspect of a wider trend that suddenly began to define many aspects of material culture in terms of buying and selling.[10] Newspapers and journals attempted to increase their circulation by including

[10] See, among other works, Michael B. Miller, *The Bon Marché: Bourgeois Culture and the Department Store, 1869-1920* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981); Rosalind H. Williams, *Dream Worlds: Mass Consumption in Late Nineteenth-Century France* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1982); Lisa

serialized novels—the *fuelliton*—while cheaply published sheet music accomplished something similar in the musical realm.

Sheet music made the consumption of music physical and tangible; however, musical consumption was also marked by a shift in the habits around which music was physically consumed—that is to say, the manner in which it was listened to. Before the nineteenth century, secular music was primarily a part of court life. It provided one possible backdrop for aristocratic sociability. Lyric theatre pieces were commissioned for state occasions and official entertainments. Composers were servants in royal households, somewhere in rank between the stable hands and the cook. The French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars that destroyed the fabric of European courtly life changed the situation of music as well. Music performance was no longer the sole province of aristocratic salons; the public concert hall as we know it today began to take shape. Operas began to play to wider audiences. This story is most often told in terms of the increasing size of orchestras and the technical refinements necessary for musical instruments to be heard in the new and larger spaces in which music was performed.[11] But the shift of music from a form of aristocratic sociability to a form of commerce had ramifications for musical composition as well. In lyric theatre, the French lead the way in what would eventually become a bifurcation of forms that sought to increase the audience for music.

Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001).

[11] A classic overview of this period is Henry Raynor's *Music and Society Since 1815* (New York: Schocken, 1976). On the technological development of musical instruments during this period—specifically the piano—see Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1954).

The first change in form was an inflationary tactic: the development of grand opera in the 1830s. In order to bring spectators into the opera house, impresarios began staging ever more lavish works. Opulent sets and costumes became the order of the day. Theatrical spectacle was key: *La muette de Portici*, the first grand opera, featured an exploding volcano at the climax of the work. Orchestral and vocal spectacle became key as well. The leading composer of Parisian grand opera was a German expatriate who adopted the name Giacomo Meyerbeer. His scores were filled with vocal acrobatics and were written with the leading singers of the day in mind; he also placed increasing numbers of players in the orchestra pit to increase the sheer heft of his music. Composer and music critic Hector Berlioz has left one immortal passage that, while satirical in intent, is not a far cry from what composers like Meyerbeer and his companions were actually doing on stage:

> …high C's from every type of chest, bass drums, snare drums, organs, military bands, antique trumpets, tubas as big as locomotives' smokestacks, bells, cannons, horses, cardinals under a canopy, emperors covered with gold, queens wearing tiaras, funerals, fêtes, weddings, and again the canopy … processions, orgies of priests and naked women, the bull Apis, and masses of oxen, screech-owls, bats, the five hundred fiends of hell, and what have you—the rocking of the heavens and the end of the world, interspersed with a few dull cavatinas here and there and a large *claque* thrown in.[12]

The results—operas such as Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable*, *Les Huguenots*, or Fromental Halevy's *La Juive*—tended to range somewhere between overwrought and histrionic, but the Parisian population lapped them up.

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[12] Hector Berlioz, *Evenings with the Orchestra*, trans. Jacques Barzun (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1956), 109.

Still, recent research has pointed out that grand opera was not merely a procession of spectacular vocal numbers on a riotously teeming stage that pandered to a popular audience. (Then again, Berlioz was hardly an impartial observer: his operas, built on the scaffolding of grand opera with a greater musical sophistication than Meyerbeer, routinely received critical drubbings and the audience stayed away in droves.) Grand opera was also a way of articulating the political tensions caused by the rise of the bourgeoisie and their new king, Louis-Philippe. The Paris Opéra, home of grand opera, became the bastion of the bourgeoisie as well as the focus of the switch from opera as a location of aristocratic sociability to one where attention was actually paid to what was happening on stage.[13] The operas themselves reflected many of the urban problems of the era, from the new social tensions to the problem of crime.[14] The theatrical censors of the period attempted to mold the plots of grand operas into forms that glorified the current government; audiences, however, invariably chose to interpret those operas in variant ways that were not always helpful to the state.[15] The oft-cited example is of Auber's *La muette de Portici* (the exploding-volcano opera), whose Brussels premiere in 1829 sparked the revolt that led to Belgian independence.

The problem with grand opera was its very grandiosity. While spectacular, it was also hideously expensive to produce. The technical demands, both in terms of the

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[13] James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995), especially 239-256.

[14] Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theatre in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998).

[15] See Jane Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987).

musicians as well as the stagecraft, meant that only the largest opera houses could afford to perform such works. This exclusivity was not a problem with the second tactic that composers used to turn music into marketable product. The deflationary tactic led theatrical composers to make their music simpler and performable by singers with limited vocal range and technique (which also made their sheet music much more attractive to the average drawing-room performer), and to scale down the number of musicians necessary to perform a work—both on stage and in the orchestra pit. Rather than the high-toned melodramatic tragedies favored by grand opera, composers and librettists turned to lighter themes, to sentiment, to comedy, and to satire. Although theatrical spectacle was still often present, it was scaled back and supplemented with wit and gaiety: in short, operetta. This form, pioneered by Hervé and Jacques Offenbach in the 1850s, would prove much more malleable and durable than grand opera.

If operetta developed as something of a reaction against French grand opera, its roots were still embedded in the operatic realm. Operetta has a number of genesis points: the German tradition of *singspiel*, which was opera with spoken dialogue in place of the recitative (Mozart's *The Magic Flute* being the best example of the form); English ballad opera, which plunked popular tunes of the day into a farcical plot (John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*); the French satires with musical interludes known as *vaudevilles*; and Italian *opera buffa* as mastered by Rossini.[16] These various forms were melded together in Paris in the 1850s and perfected by a German émigré, Jacques

[16] The best—and virtually only—overview of the history of operetta in English is Richard Traubner's *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, rev. ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

Offenbach. The spectacle of grand opera was denied to Offenbach in his earliest works: theatrical laws permitted only four actors on the stage of Offenbach's theatre at any given time (a restriction that would later be lifted as the composer's stature rose). Thus, Offenbach relied on wildly satirical plots and his own fertile musical invention in order to ensure the success of this new theatrical genre.

It was the satire, above all, that helped to establish Offenbach's—and operetta's—reputation. The work that catapulted Offenbach and operetta into the limelight was his *Orpheus in the Underworld*, an attack on the corruption of the French Second Empire disguised as a retelling of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth. It was not a straight retelling of the story: in the Offenbach version, Orpheus is quite happy to let his wife languish in Hades, as they cannot stand each other, and has to be forced into rescuing her by the character Public Opinion (a mezzo-soprano). Offenbach and his librettists were able to use this story as a critique of the corruption of Napoleon III's court. The figure of Jupiter was used to parody the Emperor, since both were legendary for their immense appetites for power and sexual gratification. The Olympian pantheon was reduced to the tribe of squabbling aristocrats seeking patronage that made up Napoleon's court. It is of little surprise that Siegfried Kracauer's still-definitive biography of Offenbach from 1937 essentially took the form of a history of the Second Empire; as Kracauer observed, "operetta would never have been born had the society of the time not itself been operetta-like."[17] Nor have other European operetta traditions been apolitical: Gilbert and Sullivan's Savoy Operas, for

[17] Siegfried Kracauer, *Jacques Offenbach and the Paris of his Time*, trans. Gwenda David and Eric Mosbacher (1937; New York: Zone Books, 2002), 215.

example, routinely mock and lambaste the class structure and political system of late nineteenth-century England.

Admittedly, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, one (hopefully) does not need to argue or prove that musical theatre can be political. Still, while interpretations of the European operatic tradition have changed, operetta is rarely viewed within this light. Kracauer's Offenbach biography was both one of the first and one of the only studies to make this point explicit. Even Charles Traubner's comprehensive history of operetta avoids questions of political content almost entirely. Operetta, when it has been studied by serious scholars at all, is usually presented as a capitalist, bourgeois phenomenon—the musical equivalent of Alexandre Dumas' novels. This dissertation will operate under the assumption that what holds true for opera—and especially grand opera, the forerunner of operetta in its emphasis on accessible music and stage spectacle—may be applied to operetta as well. The political dimension of musical theatre is not diminished by a lack of recitative.

Acknowledging the political dimension of operetta does not mean denying its commercial component; indeed, it seems to make more sense to see how the political aspects of nineteenth century musical theatre combined with its economic impetus. After all, it is all well and good to discuss the nationalistic impulses behind, say, Wagnerian opera and how that helped to shape German national identity.[18] But Wagnerian opera had a limited audience base. While it was widely discussed in the press, these discussions had a limited appeal, focusing as they did on questions of Wagner's modernism and musical construction. Operetta, on the other hand, was

[18] Mosse, especially 100-126, is the classic study on this.

music that was constructed to be appealing in the capitalist marketplace. Wagner never cared how many people came to hear his operas: he was far more concerned that they be an audience whose philosophy was in step with his. Operetta composers, insofar as they had a philosophy, wanted their music to reach as broad an audience as possible. No doubt they would agree with the traditional answer to that age-old question of which element of a song comes first, the words or the music: generally, it is the contract.[19]

The study of popular music, especially for a historian, does have certain limitations. On the one hand, the "new musicology" of the 1990s has drawn freely from disciplines such as sociology and anthropology, as history has; and the new musicology often displays a historicist bent that might serve to make it more congenial to those who would not know precisely what an augmented seventh chord is.[20] These recent changes have also made the study of popular music an accepted part of the discipline of musicology. But the reliance of the new musicology—and in particular, that aspect of it that focuses on popular music—on sociological methods can cause particular problems for the historian. Popular music tends to be defined solely in terms of American rock-and-roll, which leads to a rather presentist interpretation about the role of popular music.

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[19] Although often attributed to lyricist Sammy Cahn, the earliest written record for this quip comes from Ira Gershwin: "*What* comes first, according to show-writers in demand, is the contract." See his *Lyrics on Several Occasions* (1959: New York: Limelight Editions, 1997), 41. Even if there are other instances of the quip on record, there is little need to look further: with a Gershwin for a source, who could ask for anything more?

[20] For those seeking samples of the new musicology, see Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert, and Richard Middleton, eds., *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* (New York & London: Routledge, 2003); Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, eds., *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000); and especially Nicholas Cook and Mark Everist, eds., *Rethinking Music* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999).

In some historical case studies, this framework has worked well; consider Uta Poiger's *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels*, an examination of the uses of American culture in 1950s Germany and one of the few historical studies of popular music in Europe.[21] Poiger argues that American popular music (along with American popular culture in general) helped to articulate a new German youth identity in both West and East Germany after World War II that was in opposition to the traditional norms of German identity—norms which had been shattered by the Nazi regime. Poiger's study is built on many of the underlying assumptions about the role of popular music in culture. It is youth oriented. It is a music of rebellion against the traditional norms of bourgeois society. In other words, popular music can be directly equated with American rock music as it developed in the 1950s and 1960s. Politically, popular music is a music of opposition to the status quo. These assumptions work well in Poiger's study because she is studying what has become the paradigm for popular music in the academic world. But if one is to assume that popular music was not born with Bill Haley and the Comets, then this presentist model of popular music runs into significant problems.

In the first century of its existence—from Offenbach to Bill Haley, or roughly the 1850s to the 1950s—popular music was not a music of rebellion against the bourgeoisie, but was music written to directly appeal to the bourgeoisie. Consider, for example, what was arguably the most popular song written in the decade before World War I: the famous Third Act waltz from Franz Léhar's *The Merry Widow*. This number, like many popular songs, celebrates the act of finding true love. But within

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[21] Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2000).

the context of *The Merry Widow*, it assures its audience that true love is also perfectly compatible with raising one's social station—and making quite a bit of money out of the relationship, to boot. In other words, the "Merry Widow Waltz" is the ultimate bourgeois fantasy, in which one can marry for love *and* money *and* status. It is difficult to conceive of any self-respecting independent rock band putting together such a concoction. The presentist concerns of sociology make it problematic (at the least) to fully apply all of the new musicology to a historical study of popular music. At the very least, the historian must be aware of the context that defines "popular music" in most academic studies today.

Still, the sociological impulse in the study of music cannot be dismissed out of hand. More germane to the historical study of pre-rock popular music is a subfield that might be termed the "sociology of art," which examines how people use art and culture in order to help fashion and shape their identities. Much of this particular branch of study comes out of the work of Pierre Bordieu, who demonstrated how people use cultural objects and cultural attitudes to help shape class distinctions.[22] Art and music have long been used to help display power and wealth; in fact, until the rise of the concert hall and the museum in the nineteenth century, this was their primary purpose. And to a great extent, notions that an appreciation for art and classical music somehow denote sophistication or mark out one as being of a higher class still exist today. While many people may attend an opera for love of the music, just as many attend to display their perceived cultural superiority. But if "highbrow" music like opera can come to stand as a signifier of wealth, class, and power, then popular music

[22] See his *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1984).

must also have a matrix of references that say something about the people who choose to consume it.

This is the idea behind sociologist Tia DeNora's *Music in Everyday Life*.[23] On the one hand, DeNora's main premise—that music both consciously and subconsciously influences the social behavior of our daily life—falls squarely in line with Plato (as she herself admits) and proves the wisdom of the dictum from the Book of Ecclesiastes that there is nothing new under the sun.[24] And much of her argument would seem to build on some very common-sense assumptions: who would argue against the idea that retail stores play background music that they believe will encourage consumers to purchase goods? DeNora takes such arguments one step further, however. She examines "music's role as a device of collective ordering, how music may be employed, albeit at times unwittingly, as a means of organizing potentially disparate individuals such that their actions may appear to be intersubjective, mutually oriented, co-ordinated, entrained and aligned."[25] In other words, music is so wound into the fabric of our daily lives (especially these days, when music is so pervasive that the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony is best known as a cell-phone ring tone) that it organizes our behavior and even our beliefs. DeNora's conclusion sounds eerily like Thomas Mann: she too describes music as political, "in every sense that the political can be conceived."[26]

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[23] Tia DeNora, *Music in Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).
[24] DeNora, ix; Ecclesiastes 1:9.
[25] DeNora, 109.
[26] DeNora, 163.

It must be noted that DeNora's argument never really moves beyond the realm of the individual. While her book is rather eloquent in its discussions of how music helps to build our own personal identities, she makes no broader claims as to how her research might be used to build collective identities. The fifth chapter of *Music in Everyday Life*, which features a minute discussion of the strategies clothing stores use in selecting their background music as a way of building a certain type of clientele, hints at the fact that entire groups, and not merely individuals, define themselves through the music they choose to listen to. This becomes much more important in cases where the group is paying to listen to music, rather than absorbing it passively as one does in a retail store.[27] By shelling out money to listen to a certain type of music, one stakes an active claim that one's identity can be defined by that music.

But the idea of agency in popular culture is fraught with complications. These complications go back to the earliest theoretical studies on popular culture, those of the Frankfurt School. Any study of popular music must come to terms with the School's musical expert, Theodor Adorno. Adorno was a trained composer who studied with the avant-garde of the early twentieth-century musical world, most notably Alban Berg. (Indeed, Adorno was so familiar with the method of serial composition that Berg and Arnold Schoenberg developed that he became Thomas Mann's technical advisor for the writing of *Doctor Faustus*; the descriptions of Adrian Leverkühn's compositions in that novel were based explicitly on Schoenberg's theories.) He was equally well-versed in the German classical tradition of Bach,

[27] For a brief history of the development of ambient music and insight into how such music is selected and programmed, see David Owen, "The Soundtrack of Your Life," *The New Yorker* 10 April 2006: 66-71.

Beethoven, and Brahms. However, this technical training, in combination with the specifics of popular culture in the 1930s and 1940s, have lead to an extremely pessimistic theory of popular culture—and one that still shapes the way popular culture is conceived of today.

For the Frankfurt School—and Adorno in particular—mass culture was dangerous because it tends to politically demobilize and atomize the individual. Popular mass culture, for Adorno, is consumer culture: culture which is manufactured in much the way an automobile is, and then is forced upon an unwary populace.[28] Mass culture, in this view, is essentially an extension of the totalitarian ethos. It debases the true value of human culture and human life and places both at the service of a shapeless and malignant force, be that force capitalism or fascism. In fact, the rhetoric of the Frankfurt School often aligns capitalism with fascism, making them two sides of the same coin. Both are focused upon taking away the freedom of the human individual by presenting the individual with a false sense of freedom and choice. One has the freedom to choose among the many movies playing at the local multiplex: but this is a false choice, since all the movies have been created by the culture industry to a standardized template. "The culture industry," Max Horkheimer and Adorno note, "perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises."[29] Culture has traditionally been built around individuality and genius; consumer culture can supply only the illusion of this foundation.

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[28] The classic statement of the Frankfurt School's view of culture is "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception" in Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (1972; New York: Continuum, 2000), 120-167.

[29] Horkheimer and Adorno, 139.

Although the Frankfurt School approach to popular culture has been challenged over the years, much of the debate about the role of popular culture in society has come down to this question of whether or not mass culture takes away individual choice and demobilizes the individual or if the choices one makes when consuming mass culture are in fact valid choices that mobilize and fashion the individual.[30] Rebuttals to the Frankfurt School often focus on how the consumption of culture and cultural artifacts help to define the identity of an individual, and some historians have expanded on this critique to examine how popular culture can help to define the identity of a larger society. Lisa Tiersten's *Marianne in the Market* examines the clash between the individualism promoted by consumer culture and the communal aesthetic demanded by republicanism in early Third Republic France.[31] Eventually, these competing ideals were united and consumer culture became a way to shape the identity of the French nation by turning individualistic notions of "taste" into a hallmark of collective French identity. In essence, these competing theories of popular culture mirror the competing theories of nationalism: in both cases, the larger forces have both the power to mobilize and demobilize the members of a society. This parallel should hardly be surprising, since nationalism is itself a mass phenomenon and could in fact be considered one form of mass culture itself.

Even if the theories of the Frankfurt School have been widely challenged, the School itself is still a good point of departure for the study of popular music, and for

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[30] For a good overview of various theories of mass culture, see Dominic Strinati, *An Introduction to the Theories of Popular Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

[31] Lisa Tiersten, *Marianne in the Market: Envisioning Consumer Society in Fin-de-Siècle France* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001).

the study of operetta in particular. What surprisingly few commentators on the Frankfurt School have noted is that this particular theory of popular culture is built on a fear that mass culture is assimilating elite culture and cheapening it for mass consumption. This is especially true of Adorno's conception of popular music. For Adorno, the nexus of popular music was the phonograph, whose mechanical reproduction of music reduced music to a "fetish-object." Music becomes valued only to the extent that it can be reproduced—played over and over again in exactly the same way in millions of homes. The phonograph reduces all music to the same level, or as Adorno sniffs, "The climaxes of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony are placed on the same level as the unspeakable horn melody from the slow movement of Tchaikovsky's Fifth."[32] Popular music—by which Adorno usually means the big-band swing of the late 1930s and early 1940s—"has abandoned the idea that actual performance promotes the sale … of phonograph records" and instead focuses on the mechanical reproduction of music as an end in itself.[33] In this way, music becomes industry and not art.

Adorno's relationship with operetta is much more complex. On the one hand, he recognizes in operetta the beginnings of the industrialization of music and the roots of what he would eventually term "the culture industry"; when discussing operetta, he often throws around his favorite insulting epithet, "vulgar." On the other hand,

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[32] From "On the Fetish-Character in Music" in Theodor W. Adorno, *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert; trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: U of California P, 2002), 294. One also cannot help but suspect that Adorno might also be responding to Andre Kostelanetz and Mack David's adaptation of that unspeakable horn melody into "Moon Love," a pop song which was a substantial hit for Glenn Miller at about the time Adorno was formulating his theories.

[33] Adorno, 295.

Adorno cannot bring himself to dismiss fully operetta composers as complete vulgarians. He notes that the "music of Johann Strauss is set off from the art music of the time through its 'genre,' but this separation is not total; his waltzes leave room for harmonic differentiation and, furthermore, they are formed thematically out of small, contrasting units never subject merely to empty repetition"—which is, of course, the bane of modern popular music.[34] He later credits Oscar Straus with creating "complex" operetta music and names Leo Fall as a dignified operetta composer. For Adorno, operetta was music that stood on the border between the elite music that we tend to lump into that ill-defined term "classical music" and the popular music that Adorno held in utmost contempt.

It is worth noting that only operetta music straddles this bifurcation of culture into elite and popular strains for Adorno. The Frankfurt School theory of mass culture—and Adorno's view of popular music in particular—rest on an absolute distinction between great art and popular culture. Art leads to enlightenment and understanding of the nobility of the human soul; popular culture leads to alienation and prepares the way for a totalitarian take-over of the human spirit. "All 'light' and pleasant art has become illusory and mendacious": Adorno claims that art has a serious and uplifting social function, while popular culture is merely entertainment without any redeeming features whatsoever.[35] It is worth noting that Adorno's definition of "art" is extremely narrow, and virtually only encompasses the German classical tradition when it comes to music: he tends to place such composers as

[34] See "On the Social Situation of Music" in Adorno, 428.
[35] "On the Fetish-Character in Music"; Adorno, 291.

Sibelius and Tchaikovsky in the same boat with George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, and Walter Donaldson, never minding that the symphonies of the European composers are of a somewhat different stature than "The Man I Love," "Alexander's Ragtime Band," and "You're Driving Me Crazy."[36]

Reading Adorno's attacks on the phonograph, debased adaptations of the classics for movie soundtracks, and the perverse sexuality of jazz music, one gets the impression of a man who felt he was attempting to stem the collapse of western civilization single-handed. Clearly, he believed that the elite art that made up the western tradition was not to be disseminated to everybody but to remain in the hands of the educated few who could appreciate it. (This belief sits rather awkwardly on the Frankfurt School's inherent Marxism, if nothing else.) Adorno was obviously responding to the technological achievements that made mass dissemination of all culture—including elite culture—possible, such as the phonograph and the radio.[37] This technological dimension of popular culture was coming to a head in the 1930s and 1940s, as Adorno's thought was developing; and the Frankfurt School's reaction to it helps to mask the fact that Adorno and his companions missed the larger implication. The bifurcation of culture into elite and popular strands was a relatively recent phenomenon, something that had slowly developed during the nineteenth century. Adorno's comments on operetta (cited previously) would seem to demonstrate that he was at least subconsciously aware of this fact, although he missed

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[36] "On the Fetish-Character in Music," Adorno 293.

[37] For an interesting insight into precisely how this worked, see Joseph Horowitz, *Understanding Toscanini: How He Became an American Culture-God and Helped Create a New Audience for Old Music* (1987; Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1988), 229-243.

its significance. Mass culture is not some sort of debased and vulgarized version of the elite art that makes up the canon of what we consider to be "culture." It is, rather, a differing set of responses to cultural artifacts that are enjoyed by people across the strata of class and social status.

The examination of the bifurcation between elite and popular culture—what has been termed the "sacralization of culture" by Lawrence Levine—has been most often studied in the context of nineteenth and early twentieth century America.[38] Levine's study, like many in this vein, focuses less on the development of popular culture than on how what we today think of as artifacts of elite culture (like the plays of William Shakespeare or opera) became artifacts of elite culture, since they were once enjoyed by a diverse and popular audience. Although the major studies of this phenomenon focus on America, this development of a bifurcation is not strictly limited to the western side of the Atlantic Ocean. The widespread popularity of novelists like Charles Dickens, George Eliot, and Anthony Trollope in England is one example. In musical terms, until the early twentieth century opera was the second most popular indoor sport in Italy, a fact attested to by the funeral of Guiseppe Verdi in 1901. Over 200,000 people packed the streets of Milan, easily attesting to Verdi's achievement as the most popular opera composer of the nineteenth century.

Operetta itself is crucial to understanding the growing distinction between elite and mass culture in the late nineteenth century. The suffix that served to distinguish

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[38] The phrase is from Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988). For more specifically musical examples of this phenomenon, see Horowitz's *Understanding Toscanini* and John Dizikes, *Opera in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1993).

the progeny of Offenbach and his successors from the more imposing offspring of Verdi and Wagner was not originally derogatory: "little operas" were descriptive of size and perhaps seriousness, but not of quality. Many pre-1900 operettas have music of operatic complexity and often demand trained singers, not the singing actors that are traditionally cast in operettas. The work of Gilbert and Sullivan—the oeuvre that defines "operetta" for most Anglo-American audiences—demonstrates the links between elite and popular culture in another way. Much of the enjoyment of these "light operas" comes from Sir Arthur Sullivan's deft musical parodies of opera music. *The Pirates of Penzance* mocks the conventions of Italian opera; *Princess Ida* parodies the ornate arias of Handel, while *Iolanthe* sends up a much more modern composer, Richard Wagner. Sullivan obviously assumed that his popular audience would be musically knowledgeable enough to enjoy these operatic parodies—an assumption that would be inconceivable today.

But at the same time, operetta was one of the earliest examples of music as an industry. The division of operetta into "numbers" rather than into arias and ensembles helped to propel the sales of sheet music, the nineteenth-century equivalent of the phonograph record. Operettas were themselves written to be popular at the box office, which would eventually affect the music that was included in these works: Sullivan's operatic parodies aside, operetta often featured simple ballads and songs that the audience could remember and that those with only the most rudimentary musical education could sing or play on the piano. (The simpler music also allowed theatrical impresarios to hire actors rather than the more expensive opera singers, yet another

example of capitalist economics at work.) Operetta is crucial for understanding the split of culture into elite and popular strands, at least in musical terms: although it started as yet another offshoot of the operatic tradition, it quickly developed into an early example of the culture industry that Adorno so abhorred.

This bifurcation of culture can also be related back to the question of nineteenth-century nationalism. If culture was to be used to help mobilize the masses behind this ideal, it would have to appeal to everybody who made up the masses. Elite culture like Wagnerian opera was used to promote nationalistic ideals; but it turned out that simpler music proved to be much more effective in mobilizing patriotic sentiments.[39] The "Marseillaise," that traditional French call to popular action, was only formally declared the French national anthem in the 1890s.[40] The later nineteenth century also saw something of a revival in the interest in folk music by composers of a distinctly nationalist bent such as Dvóřak: the use of folk music in symphonic compositions was one way in which culture could be made nationalist and also help to cross the growing divide between elite and popular culture. Music was one of the crucial ways in which national subjects understood the new construction of the nation: it was one of the key components of a national culture to have a national style of music. And this national music reflected the ambivalence in the development of nineteenth century culture: while melding elite and popular musical forms such as the symphony and the folk song, nationalist music also tended to divide itself into

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[39] It may be worth noting, for example, that the music to most national anthems tends towards the undistinguished.

[40] See Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914" in Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., 270.

distinct forms such as opera and national anthems. Both elite and popular music could serve the goals of nationalism, but it was popular music that would ultimately reflect the aspirations of what was essentially a popular movement.

However, the study of musical nationalism has tended to focus on the role elite musical culture plays in forming national identity. This trend is beginning to change, but the emphasis still remains on the accepted "classics" of the musical tradition. A case in point is a recent volume of articles on *Music and German National Identity*, which seeks to examine how music became central to German notions of identity.[41] Although the volume does contain essays on the role of jazz music and popular music in shaping German identity, the majority of the essays focus on topics like Robert Schumann's choral music, Richard Wagner's opera *Der Meistersinger*, and the ideology of Hans Pfitzner. While this is not necessarily an incorrect way to proceed—even elites need to be brought into the realm of a national identity, after all—it is a very narrow focus of endeavor. This focus on elite music can no doubt be attributed to traditional musicology unencumbered by the cultural turn. The contributors to *Music and German National Identity* come from the fields of musicology, history, literature, and German studies; they thus seem to be more open to cultural and sociological concerns. This can be contrasted with more traditional—though excellent—studies on musical nationalism. Richard Taruskin's magnum opus on Russian music does place music in a cultural context, but tends to focus on composers like Glinka, Tchaikovsky,

[41] Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds., *Music and German National Identity* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002).

and Stravinsky.[42] Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes' study of English music goes even further and demonstrates in part how self-consciously "English" composers set themselves up in opposition to popular composers like Sir Arthur Sullivan.[43] Clearly, musical nationalism has been traditionally studied in terms of the canon of western art music.

But, as *Music and German National Identity* indicates, there is a shift towards paying more attention to popular music. Uta Poiger's *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels* (cited earlier) is one example.[44] Another example of how popular music may be studied in terms of national identity is Jeffrey Jackson's *Making Jazz French*.[45] Jackson studies how jazz music came to be assimilated as part of French identity between World Wars I and II. His argument is that jazz music is one way in which the French reflected their assimilationist ethic that defined national identity in cultural rather than ethnic terms. Jackson's cosmopolitan argument, though, does hit on one interesting aspect of the study of popular musical nationalism: like Poiger's study of popular culture in postwar Germany, Jackson studies what began as American popular music. There is a layering effect in these studies. Each discuss how music helped to shape identity, but they also must demonstrate how an essentially foreign musical product is reshaped or

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[42] Richard Taruskin, *Defining Russia Musically: Historical and Hermenutical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997).
[43] Robert Stradling and Meirion Hughes, *The English Musical Renaissance, 1860-1940: Construction and Deconstruction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).
[44] Not surprisingly, Poiger also contributed an article on jazz music to *Music and German National Identity*.
[45] Jeffrey H. Jackson, *Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003).

reinterpreted to achieve that end. Studies of indigenous popular music are much harder to come by.[46]

Where might one turn, then, to study how popular music comes to form a part of national identity in modern Europe? I would suggest that we follow the Nietzschean dictum that forms the first epigram to this study and turn to the Mediterranean: Spain. On the surface, this doubtless seems a little odd given the traditionally marginal role Spain has played in the study of European history and culture. Studies on Spanish national identity—as opposed to regional identity—are quite rare. There is a vast body of literature on regional identities in Spain: traditionally, studies of nationalism have focused on Catalonia and the Basque Country while more recent additions to the field have examined regionalism in Galicia and Andalusia. Compared with other continental European countries, even Spanish art music is comparatively understudied; studies of popular music are virtually nonexistent.[47] Furthermore, Spanish music as a whole is often discussed as a subset of the French school of composition—and music often thought of as "Spanish" was written by non-Spanish composers.[48] Nevertheless, recent developments in the historiography of Spanish nationalism and the particular outlines of late nineteenth and

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[46] I exclude those studies which link folk music to nationalism in this statement. Folk music does not fit the definition of consumer culture that this dissertation is using to study popular musical nationalism.

[47] As to just how understudied, consider Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca's *A History of Western Music*, 5th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), one of the standard music history survey textbooks. Modern Spanish music is dealt with in exactly one paragraph out of over 800 pages—and most of that paragraph is devoted to the work of one composer, Manuel de Falla: see pages 676-677.

[48] It should be noted that Nietzsche's declaration to make music Mediterranean is a response to George Bizet's *Carmen* and not to any music written by a Spanish composer. Furthermore, examinations of CD compilations of "Spanish" music are generally weighted towards figures like Bizet, Massenet, and Rimsky-Korsakov.

early twentieth century Spanish music make Spain an ideal case for the study of popular, consumer musical nationalism.

Even leaving aside the regionalist question (which is not the problem of nationalism this dissertation will choose to address), the study of Spanish nationalism has often been influenced by the particular contours of Spanish history. Such historiography tends to view the state and the Catholic Church as integral parts of Spanish identity. Thus the notion of a Spanish national identity is often traced back to the unification of the Iberian Peninsula under the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella. Not only is the heritage of Golden Age Spain—Cervantes, Vélasquez, Lope de Vega—an integral part of such an identity, it is assumed to be its core.[49] Catholicism is also assumed to be an integral part of this tradition, with religion as a part of Spanish identity rather than being in tension with Spanish nationalism. Admittedly, national identity is not monolithic and exists in conjunction with other identities; and religion may be a key component of an understanding of national identity.[50] However, there is an assumption that Spanish identity was formed early and that the Spanish nation is synonymous with the Spanish state, which (with a few exceptions) has been closely aligned with the Catholic Church.[51]

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[49] Few scholars have yet addressed to what extent Spain's Golden Age is an "invented tradition" in the Hobsbawm and Ranger sense; but for one good example of how interpretations of the Golden Age were shaped, see Chapter XI ("El centenario de *El Quijote:* La subjetivación de la política") of Eric Storm's *La perspectiva del progreso: Pensamiento político en la España del cambio de siglo (1890-1914)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2001).

[50] See for example, Caroline Ford, *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993).

[51] For one example of this sort of historiography, see Juan Pablo Fusi, *España: La evolución de la identidad nacional* (Madrid: Temas de Hoy, 2000).

It seems likely that this view of Spanish identity is something of a hangover from the period of the Franco dictatorship, which sought to promote a unified and Catholic Spanish identity. More recent scholarship has focused on ways in which Spanish national identity was constructed and contested in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, more generally focusing on the issue of contestation. This line of argument concentrates on the inability and unwillingness of nineteenth-century Spanish governments—particularly following the Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1874—to promote a sense of Spanish nationalism. What developed were a series of competing national identities: conservative identities that focused on the monarch and the Church as key components of the nation versus more liberal identities that rejected these ideas and wished to align Spain more closely with European notions of secular progress.[52] This contestation of the meaning of Spanish nationalism is generally assumed to have lead to the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939, in which the two main variants of the Spanish nation came into pitched battle.

This view of Spanish nationalism would seem to play into the traditional argument that Spain is somehow distinct and different from the rest of Europe. Such a view assumes that because Spain was a country with late industrialization and an essentially aborted bourgeois revolution, it does not follow the essential contours of European historiography. Her lack of traditional nineteenth-century nationalism and

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[52] The key work covering the debates over Spanish nationalism is Caroline Boyd, *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997); for another good example of how the debate developed among radical thinkers, see Enrique A. Sanabria, "Anticlerical Politics: Republicanism, Nationalism, and the Public Sphere in Restoration Madrid, 1875-1912" (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of California, San Diego, 2001). For a decent short overview of modern Spanish nationalism, see the first chapter of Stanley Payne, *Fascism in Spain, 1923-1977* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1999) which boils this fraught issue down to fifteen compact pages.

its proliferation of peripheral regionalisms would also seem to play into the "Spain is different" paradigm. This argument, however, rests on two untenable assumptions. The first is that the classic history of industrialization in England is somehow a model that the rest of Europe followed; in fact, English history is the exception rather than the rule, as most of Europe industrialized much later than the British Isles—and as a result, the political structures on the Continent were rather different.[53] The second untenable assumption is that Spain is somehow significantly different from the rest of Europe, an argument that became increasingly unhinged with Spain's increased integration into the European Union in the 1980s and its economic and political success in the post-Franco period. Increasingly, historians have viewed the Spanish failure to industrialize not as a different path that lead Spain away from the standard model of European development, but rather as a story of alternatives to standard industrialization that still laid the foundation for a modern European country.[54]

In terms of Spanish nationalism, this shift in interpretation means that the conflict over varying versions of what Spanish national identity was actually going to be is less surprising and less a "failure" of Spanish nationalism than might otherwise be the case. Indeed, studies of other European nationalisms have emphasized the extent to which such identities develop out of debates and that such identities were

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[53] Indeed, assuming England as a model for European history would be not unlike choosing to use the state of California for a paradigm of *anything* in the history of the United States—something most sensible Americans are supremely unwilling to assume.

[54] See David Ringrose, *Spain, Europe and the "Spanish Miracle," 1700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) and Jesus Cruz, *Gentlemen, Bourgeois, and Revolutionaries: Political Change and Cultural Persistence Among the Spanish Dominant Groups, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996).

hotly contested.[55] In this light, the varying definitions of what Spain might look like would seem to be less a failure of nationalism than perhaps an extreme variant of what was happening elsewhere in Europe. Even the regionalist component to this debate does not seem so out of the ordinary: the notion of a "Spanish" national identity was often rooted in the province of Castile, and thus the development of regionalism was perhaps an outgrowth of national identity that grew out of a particular part of that nation.[56] In short, Spain's peculiarities are not so peculiar and a scholar looking to understand nationalism could do worse than to head south of the Pyrenees.

Scholars have recently turned to the study of cultural aspects of Spanish nationalism and have begun to use both Anderson's idea of the imagined community as well as the Hobsbawm and Ranger notion of invented traditions to help explain the process by which a Spanish identity was formed. Carlos Serrano, for example, has examined the occasionally tortured process of establishing such basic markers of nationalism as flags, anthems, heroes, and commemorative street names.[57] He even examines how such a basic idea as a name—Carmen—becomes quintessentially "Spanish." Inman Fox's study *La invención de España* would seem to focus again upon one strain of Spanish nationalism (the subtitle of his monograph addresses "liberal nationalism"), but his emphasis upon the ways in which Spanish nationalism was built through its artistic and literary heritage makes an implicit argument that this

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[55] See Herman Lebovics, *True France: The Wars Over Cultural Identity, 1900-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992) and Helmut Walser Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995).

[56] On the relationship of Castile to Spanish identity, see E. Inman Fox, "Spain as Castile: Nationalism and National Identity" in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, ed. David T. Gies (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999), 21-36.

[57] Carlos Serrano, *El nacimiento de Carmen: Símbolos, mitos y nación* (Madrid: Taurus, 1999).

sort of cultural nationalism, no matter its political component, was in fact an effort to create a united and not a divided Spain.[58] Both Serrano and Fox place the study of Spanish nationalism squarely within the wider tradition of European historiography on the subject, at least on a cultural level.

But the most far-reaching claims in terms of placing Spain on the European spectrum in regards to nationalism are made by José Alvarez Junco in his *Mater Dolorosa*, which will doubtless be the definitive study of nineteenth-century Spanish nationalism for some time to come.[59] Alvarez Junco argues unequivocally that there was Spanish nationalism (and not merely some sort of over-inflated Castilian regionalism) in the nineteenth century and that the Spanish state followed the traditional nation-building course of other European powers, including colonial wars, national monuments, and the like. The one problem with the project of Spanish nationalism was that it failed to mobilize the population behind it, and it was never much of a viable project outside the elite political classes. Nevertheless, Alvarez Junco makes a strong argument that the nationalism project was a coherent intellectual project that can be found in politics, art, science, and other cultural phenomena; and to this extent, the more conservative version of Spanish nationalism is merely a more romantic reading of the same tropes that informed liberal nationalism.[60] If there is one flaw in *Mater Dolorosa*, it is that that it treats Spanish nationalism as a strictly intellectual project: like studies of musical nationalism, it focuses on an elite cultural

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[58] Inman Fox, *La invención de España: Nacionalismo liberal e identidad nacional* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998).
[59] José Álvarez Junco, *Mater Dolorosa: La idea de España en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001).
[60] On romanticism and Spanish nationalism, see Alvarez Junco, *Mater Dolorosa*, 383-392.

phenomenon without examining how—crucially—it might have been diffused, although Alvarez Junco does note the key problems with mass mobilization that bedevil the question of Spanish nationalism.[61]

But mass mobilization is key to understanding nationalism, which is a mass movement by definition. Nationalism without mass mobilization may not be nationalism at all. Nobody denies that Spain was undergoing mass political mobilization in the late nineteenth century—even Alvarez Junco has studied the subject.[62] So the key to understanding exactly how Spanish nationalism functioned boils down to this: if Spanish nationalism was a relatively coherent intellectual project, how was that project communicated to the Spanish people and how did they understand it? What were the strategies used to communicate this new vision (or visions, if nationalism is inevitably contested), and how was the intellectual project modified or altered for mass consumption? Finally, was the project a success—if not in terms of inculcating a sense of unified Spanish identity (which, in the face of the Spanish Civil War would seem not to have succeeded), then in terms of how the project was received amongst those who elected to take part in it? In order to answer these questions, one must find a vehicle which helped to disseminate the intellectual project of Spanish nationalism on a very wide scale.

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[61] For a concise view of the intellectual history of Spanish nationalism in the period directly following the nineteenth century, see Juan Carlos Sánchez Illán, *La nación inacabada: Los intellectuales y el proceso de construcción nacional (1900-1914)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2002).

[62] See his *The Emergence of Mass Politics in Spain: Populist Demagoguery and Republican Culture, 1890-1910* (Brighton and Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2002), which is an abridged translation of *El emperador del Paralelo: Lerroux y la demagogia populista* (Madrid: Alianza, 1990). For a concise overview of the topic, see Pamela Radcliff, "The Emerging Challenge of Mass Politics" in *Spanish History Since 1808*, ed. José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (London: Arnold, 2000), 137-154.

I would argue that the ideal vehicle for answering these questions and understanding how the intellectual project of Spanish nationalism was communicated is the genre of lyric theatre known as *zarzuela*, which is the overarching Spanish term for operetta. Both zarzuela and operetta share the same basic feature: they are musical theatre pieces that use spoken dialogue in place of sung recitative. Zarzuela was one of the earliest forms of mass consumer culture in Spain, and it was performed within a theatrical system that was designed to maximize the number of people who attended performances. Most importantly, zarzuela was a self-consciously nationalist genre of lyric theatre, one that constructed itself as a "Spanish" art form and one that claimed to be an accurate representation of the Spanish people and their daily life. Zarzuela was distinct in that it was an overtly nationalist form of consumer culture, and it used all the resources of mass culture to spread its nationalist message. Other forms of European operetta had nationalist overtones (Gilbert and Sullivan inevitably had a patriotic song somewhere in each of their works, for example), but only in Spain was operetta manifestly nationalist; more than anywhere else, Spanish popular musical theatre disseminated a nationalist project.

The Spanish often trace the history of zarzuela back to 1657 and the performance of *El laurel de Apolo* by Pedro Calderón de la Barca, which featured extended musical numbers in the tradition of that new art form coming out of Italy, opera. The genre became known as zarzuela because the first works were performed at King Philip IV's hunting lodge just outside Madrid, the Palacio de la Zarzuela. The palace itself derived its name from the numerous brambles—*zarzas*—in the

countryside nearby.[63] Zarzuela remained an entertainment for the aristocracy until the early eighteenth century; with the accession of the Italianophile Bourbon monarchs to the throne, opera became the entertainment of choice at court. At this point, zarzuela moved into Madrid's popular theatres, where it abandoned the high-flown mythological plots that had predominated and began to take an interest in the life of average citizens (or at least average stereotypes of citizens). The great Spanish playwright Ramón de la Cruz, who popularized the *sainete*, a theatrical genre of short plays about everyday life, wrote many libretti for zarzuela in the latter half of the century. Although the stories of these zarzuelas were Spanish, their music was not; composers still used Italian opera music as their main inspiration and model.

Zarzuela underwent a drastic decline in the early nineteenth century, especially as the Italian operas of Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini gained in popularity; their high-flown sentiments and lush music more perfectly reflected the Romantic theatrical culture in Madrid at the time. (In fact, Italian opera reflected Spanish Romanticism so well that two of the greatest legitimate Spanish dramas of the period in turn became operas by Verdi: the Duke of Rivas' *Don Alvaro* was the source for *La forza del destino*, while Antonio García Gutierrez's *El trovador* became *Il trovatore*.) By the 1830s and 1840s, a number of Spanish composers began to try their hands at writing operas; but to distinguish their works from the Italian imports that so bedazzled Spain, they dredged up the moribund genre of zarzuela and began to apply that term to their

[63] For brief English-language overviews of the history of zarzuela, see the first two chapters of Christopher Weber's *The Zarzuela Companion* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002) or Louise K. Stein and Roger Alier's entry on zarzuela in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., Stanley Sadie and John Tyrrell eds. (London: Macmillan, 2001), 27:755-760.

compositions.[64] The late 1840s and the early 1850s saw the birth of the modern zarzuela, which in its earliest incarnation featured Italian opera-style musical numbers, spoken recitative, and plots "adapted" (a polite term for "ripped off") from French light operas. The seminal work for modern zarzuela was Francisco Asenjo Barbieri's 1851 success *Jugar con fuego*, with an elegant verse libretto by the Romantic playwright Ventura de la Vega. Barbieri's major innovation was that he began to incorporate Spanish folk melodies into his music, especially in the choral numbers. It is at this point that the curtain goes up on the intertwined stories of nationalism and music theatre in Spain.

Although all dissertation manuscripts—including this one—are divided into chapters, it may help to think of the argument of this dissertation in terms of the construction of a traditional three-act play. Act I consists of Chapters I and II, and introduces us to the heroine of our story, zarzuela; it also lays out the basis of the "plot," in this case zarzuela's attempt to make herself definitively Spanish. Act II consists of Chapters III and IV; here zarzuela, having achieved immense popularity and accomplished her early goal (distinguishing herself from her sister, opera) finds herself waltzing to various nationalist themes—choreography courtesy of Anderson, Hobsbawm, and Ranger. She finds herself inventing a new, urban Spanish community and inventing a historical tradition for theatrical audiences. Act III opens with the heroine having gone through a crisis during intermission; Chapters V and VI find her redefining herself in the years after the 1898 crisis which posed problems for Spanish

[64] The best overview of this period is Roland J. Vasquez's "The Quest for National Opera in Spain and the Re-invention of the Zarzuela (1809-1849)" (Ph.D. Dissertation: Cornell U, 1992).

nationalism. After first turning to Viennese operetta and then to opera for assistance in burnishing the tarnished image of Spanish nationalism, zarzuela assembles all the varying parts of her heritage and arrays them to promote a vision of the Spanish nation even as her claim to be popular theatre is slipping from her grasp. In terms of dramatic structure, this dissertation ends as a musical tragedy should: zarzuela is dying, but goes out in a final blaze of glory.

Now for the sober and academic outline of the argument. Chapter I examines zarzuela in its earliest modern form, the three-act Italianate music dramas that Francisco Asenjo Barbieri perfected in the 1850s. Zarzuela composers created a nationalist genre by incorporating folk music into their scores, a move which allowed them to portray the chorus as the Spanish populace; they furthermore made the Spanish people the protagonists of the historical aspects of their plots, rather than as mere commenters on the private drama of the romance between the leads. But the Barbieri model of zarzuela became an anachronism in the early years of the Restoration regime. Just as the politics of the years following 1874 emphasized political demobilization, the changing nature of the Madrid theatrical world emphasized the entertainment value of theatre over the politicized nationalism of the Barbieri-style zarzuela. This in turn led to another problem: zarzuela was repositioning itself as popular entertainment, but still had a tendency to sound very much like Italian opera.

Chapter II therefore studies how zarzuela extricated itself from this dilemma by distinguishing itself from opera. The 1870s and 1880s were the high-water mark of

nationalist operas composed by Spaniards; and while these works were lauded for their high-minded goal of establishing a nationalist school of opera, their mission was undercut by weak libretti and undistinguished scores. The failure of these works in turn led to a debate in the musical press in which opera was castigated for its artistic pretensions while zarzuela was promoted as being the authentic voice of Spanish nationalism because of its popular appeal. Opera became "art," a form of elite culture. Opera also ran into problems because its main proponent, the composer Tómas Bréton, chose to defend opera as a nationalist genre based on its use of Spanish language texts (not as odd a move as it sounds, given that operas performed in Madrid—even those by Spanish composers—were usually given in Italian translations). Zarzuela, by contrast, was Spanish because it used Spanish music. And not just any Spanish music, according to critic Antonio Peña y Goñi; it used Spanish popular music in order to establish its credentials. The opera-zarzuela debate opened up the split between elite and popular musical culture in Spain, and placed nationalist music drama firmly on the popular side of that equation.

The changing economic climate of the Madrid theatrical world caused the predominate form of zarzuela to change from three-act music dramas to one-act diversionary pieces. Along with this change in form came a shift in the way zarzuela conceived of its nationalistic endeavor. Chapter III studies how zarzuela in the 1890s came to articulate an urban vision of Spanish identity. It did this in two major ways. The first was through the use of urban dance music in place of the folk tunes that had traditionally been used for musical characterization in zarzuela. The second way was

through an equation of zarzuela with the naturalist movement in literature: operetta purported to portray authentic daily life on the stage. The characters of zarzuelas from this period were drawn from the working classes; the dramatic interest in these works arose from their portrayal of everyday life and not romantic complications. There was something artificial about this discourse, constructed as it was by bourgeois composers and librettists; but it does reflect the attempts to come to terms with the new challenges posed by the growth of mass politics in late nineteenth-century Spain.

Chapter IV looks at two other major strands of zarzuela production in the 1880s and 1890s: satirical and historical zarzuelas. Works with historical themes not only revived the notion that the Spanish people were the main protagonists of Spanish history, but went further and portrayed the Spanish people as a force that would help to regenerate Spain at a time when the problems with the Restoration government were becoming more and more obvious. The problems in Spanish society that needed to be fixed were made quite evident in the satirical zarzuelas of the period. These satires mocked Spain's middle classes, the same group for whom the Restoration government had been set up and on whose behalf it operated. These satirical and historical strands came together—both on-stage and off—in 1898, when Spain became involved in a disastrous war with the United States. Although zarzuela has traditionally been portrayed as a jingoistic endeavor that helped to fuel popular fervor for the war, it also managed a fairly accurate portrayal of the popular tensions in Spain that led to increasing criticism of the government in the wake of the defeat.

The one-act zarzuela, like the society that produced it, underwent a sharp decline after 1898. Eventually zarzuela would incorporate the calls to help regenerate Spanish society by making Spanish culture more European by adopting a model that today is often regarded as the height of frivolity: Viennese operetta. Chapter V examines how zarzuela composers came to sound increasingly as if they were from Central Europe, but claimed that their works were no less Spanish for that. The backdrop for this regenerationist movement was a period of increasing musical sophistication in Spain: the first full-time symphony orchestras were established, more conservatory-trained composers came to public attention, and copyright control alleviated many fiscal problems facing Spanish composers. In addition to the use of Viennese operetta, a second and parallel process of musical regeneration turn up in Madrid's theatres during the 1910s: a revival of the idea of Spanish opera, this time more explicitly linked with modernist trends in music. However, this helped to lead to a major shift in the way zarzuela was perceived by the populace. Zarzuela increasingly looked like elite and not popular culture, especially given the rise of cabaret performances and cinema presentations. By 1918 zarzuela, in its own way, looked as rarified as opera.

Ironically, this shift happened just as zarzuela entered one of its greatest periods of artistic flowering. The 1920s are traditionally termed the "Silver Age" of zarzuela, a period that saw the premieres of works that were both critically lauded and wildly popular. Chapter VI discusses how the 1920s were an accumulation of the sum of the zarzuela tradition during the Restoration: new zarzuelas in the Barbieri models

existed alongside one-act pieces reminiscent of the 1890s and operetta-flavored works. Zarzuela became increasingly self-reflexive as well. Not only did zarzuelas increasingly reflect Spain's literary heritage in a way it had not done before; high points in the history of Spain's musical theatre began to appear before the footlights. All of this, however, had the effect of consolidating zarzuela's elite culture status. This trend was cemented when the Teatro Real, Madrid's main opera house, was shuttered in 1926; the Teatro de la Zarzuela became the Teatro Lírico Nacional and suddenly foreign operas played directly alongside zarzuela. The press began to brute about the notion of a "theatrical crisis," and by 1930 it had become apparent that lyric theatre in Spain no longer spoke in the forceful nationalist voice it had in the 1870s and 1890s. Instead, zarzuela had entered the pantheon of elite "art."

The basic sources for this study are the zarzuelas themselves; that is to say, the preserved scores and libretti. I have selected approximately 85 zarzuelas based on their popularity and historical or theatrical importance as the "canon" on which this dissertation is built. These works serve as the most immediate examples of how Spanish nationalism was portrayed upon the stage.[65] To help contextualize these theatrical works, the dissertation uses music and theatrical criticism from the period, primarily from the daily press in Madrid. Most of these notices are the quasi-anonymous reviews that occurred the day after theatrical premieres. Other sources used to help contextualize the stage works include polemical pieces by composers and

[65] For the most part, I have relied solely upon the scores and libretti; however, this dissertation has doubtless been influenced by the various zarzuela productions that I have been lucky enough to view while in Madrid—which will probably explain the possibly otherwise odd emphasis on *Los sobrinos del Capitán Grant* in Chapter I and *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* in Chapter III.

others interested in Spanish lyric theatre, composer correspondence, and some official archival material from the Spanish government.

Selection processes are necessarily built upon a process of well-reasoned arbitrary exclusion. Obviously, I could not make an exhaustive study of all Spanish lyric theatre works; the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid houses 7,436 published libretti—the majority of which come from the Restoration period, and which is not even a complete catalogue of all works performed or published.[66] In order to complete this dissertation sometime during my lifetime, I had to reduce the number of zarzuelas that would form the core of the evidence for my research. Ideally, I would have been able to determine the most popular zarzuelas from the period and focus on those. However, the standard measures by which one might determine the popularity of a work at the time either do not exist (such as the length of the original runs of the work) or have been lost (such as box office receipts).[67] One can get a general sense of which works were popular in the daily press, but in the end any measure of popularity must remain subjective.

The core of the zarzuelas analyzed for this dissertation—approximately 65—has been based, therefore, on works which were generally available on compact disc in Madrid record stores specializing in classical music in late 2001.[68] All of these

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[66] See Nieves Iglesias Martinez, ed., *Catalogo del teatro lírico español en la Biblioteca Nacional*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1986-1991).

[67] This is especially true of the nineteenth century; however, Dru Dougherty and María Francisca Vilches have begun to compile exhaustive performance statistics for the twentieth century based on the theatre schedules printed in Madrid's daily press. See their *La escena madrileña entre 1918 y 1926: Análisis y documentación* (Madrid: Editorial Fundamentos, 1990) and *La escena madrileña entre 1926 y 1931: Un lustro de transición* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1997).

[68] Specifically the Madrid branch of FNAC in the Plaza de Callao and the branches of the department store El Corte Inglés in the Calle de Preciados and the Calle de Goya. (Stores specializing in

zarzuela scores were originally recorded in the 1950s and 1960s by the Spanish record companies Alhambra (a subsidiary of BMG) and Hispavox (a subsidiary of EMI) and have since been reissued on compact disc.[69] This method has the advantage of selecting works which were not only popular upon their premiere, but narrows down the zarzuelas selected to those which have remained relatively popular in Spain to the present day and thus have remained in the collective consciousness. Furthermore, these works were not only popular but those which had some artistic merit to them. The recordings made by Alhambra regularly used Spain's greatest symphonic conductors of the day, Ataúlfo Argenta and Rafael Frübeck de Burgos; those recorded by Hispavox placed two of the last of the great zarzuela composers on the podium, Pablo Sorozábal and Federico Moreno Torroba.[70] The remaining 20 zarzuelas selected did not make it onto compact disc, but have been selected because of their

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current popular music rarely stock zarzuela recordings.) It should be noted that these CDs are extremely difficult to obtain in the United States: mainstream classical music retailers like Tower Records and Amazon.com do not carry them, although they may crop up from time to time in import shops. The French record company Auvidis Valois released a series of freshly made zarzuela recordings in the mid-1990s starring Plácido Domingo and conducted by Antoni Ros Marbà, who is probably the greatest zarzuela conductor currently living. (The sound is also vastly better than the Alhambra and Hispavox recordings, which often suffer from engineering problems.) Unfortunately, the Auvidis Valois recordings now seem to be out of print.

[69] More recently, an independent record company from Barcelona called Blue Moon has begun to release zarzuela recordings from the 1920s and 1930s on compact disc. While valuable historical documents in terms of zarzuela performance habits, a good number of the recordings are of ephemeral works from the period, while the music from the canonical zarzuelas is often abridged. The main advantage of the Blue Moon CDs, however, is that they are actually more widely available—this being a relative term—in the U.S. than the Alhambra and Hispavox recordings.

[70] Admittedly, the Hispavox catalogue does tilt rather heavily towards Sorozábal's own compositions and includes many works that were not popular successes; but since virtually all of Sorozábal's output postdates 1931, it does not affect the selections made for this dissertation. Moreno Torroba was more selective when it came to recording his own works; in any event, only one of his successes (*La Marchenera*, which has been included in this dissertation) premiered before 1930.

importance at the time of their premiere or for their thematic relevance to the topic of nationalism.[71]

Zarzuela—and operetta in general—sits atop a crucial juncture where questions of nationalism collide with questions about the nature of popular culture and its relation with elite forms of culture. Operetta did not begin life as an article of mass culture; although it was always geared towards attracting a wide audience, so did genres of lyric theatre that we today assume have always been elite, like grand opera. But operetta eventually became one of the earliest forms of popular music, and the case study of Spanish zarzuela provides one explanation why. As zarzuela developed into a distinctly nationalist genre of lyric theatre, it had to position itself as a popular genre in order to mobilize the wide number of people that nationalism requires. It marginalized other forms of lyric theatre that were unwilling or unable to attract the mass audience that is at the core of the nationalism project, and in doing so helped to lay the foundations of how we today conceive of popular culture.

Zarzuela was crucial to promoting a sophisticated vision of what Spanish identity would look like. It engaged with Spanish history, with Spanish literature, and even philosophy in order to create a unified community whose members would consider themselves not Catholics or Castilians or Catalans, but Spaniards. Zarzuela adapted itself to the rapidly changing world of fin-de-siècle Europe and took into account the increasing urbanization of the period, the new pressures of mass politics, and the need for reform and regeneration after the Disaster of 1898. In the end, however, consumer culture alone would not prove to be a powerful enough

[71] A complete list of the zarzuelas upon which this dissertation is built may be found in the Appendix.

mobilization tool to solidify a national identity in Spain. The theatrical marketplace had its limits, and without active support from the Restoration regime popular culture would not be enough to promote an identity. Nevertheless, zarzuela is crucial if one is to grasp how the Spanish populace understood the development of their national identity under the Restoration government. Other cultural manifestations of nationalism tell us specifically how the authors and creators of those works understood that phenomenon; but a consumer genre like operetta tells us how the average theatre-goer wanted to understand their national identity, since the composers and librettists had to create a compelling and genuine vision to succeed at the box-office. It is to the specifics of that vision that we now must turn.

I

Prosceniums, Politics, and Pesetas: The Changing Face of the Spanish Theatre and the Crisis of Zarzuela Grande

Theatres are locations that have a dual purpose. On the one hand, a theatre is a place for art—whatever one might think of the quality of the art being performed on any given night. One goes to see actors, playwrights, set designers, and other participants in the thespian arts ply their craft. On the other hand, a theatre is a place where money is made (and more often lost). It is an economic machine that takes income generated by ticket sales and turns it into salaries and profits for the performers and producers. During the past century, it has been the economic side of the theatre that has been its prevalent and driving force. For every moment of breathtaking "art" that bathes in the glow of the footlights, there are dozens—even hundreds—of works that were designed to rake in the cash for their backers. The theatre has become increasingly sensitive to economic trends as such trends have become the primary motivating force behind theatrical production.

Nowhere is this process more obvious than in those theatres that specialize in lyric drama. Musical theatre pieces—be they opera, operetta, ballet, or any other species—are, by nature, expensive to produce: in addition to the normal costs of sets, costumes, and actors, they require a complement of musicians (both instrumental and choral). Casts for musical theatre works are often larger than they are for so-called "straight" or "legitimate" theatre works; the sets and costumes are often more numerous, spectacular, and expensive. Thus music theatre pieces are, in the absence

of government or corporate subsidies, especially vulnerable to economic trends in the theatre. It can be safely assumed, therefore, that music theatre pieces are even more sensitive to changes in an audience's tastes than their legitimate counterparts.

On the other hand, this also means that music theatre pieces are crucial components of commercially driven popular theatre. The lavish productions and sweeping melodies usually prove a much bigger draw in terms of audience than even the most popular legitimate theatre works. Musical theatre has been crucial in the development of mass culture. In Spain, arguably, musical theatre was the first form of mass consumer culture to make an impact. Elsewhere in Europe, mass print culture in the form of the *feuilleton*—the serial novel as perfected by Alexandre Dumas and Charles Dickens—was the way in which consumer culture was introduced to the population. Spain, with a much less developed print culture than France or England but a much more highly developed sense of night-life, turned to the theatre for its earliest form of popular entertainment. This would prove to be crucial for Spanish nationalism. Nineteenth-century Spanish musical theatre engaged directly with questions of national identity; in turn, the growth of consumer culture in Spain would provide an avenue for disseminating nationalistic messages to the population.

This chapter will examine the origins of the link between consumer culture and nationalism in mid-nineteenth century Europe. Spain provides an excellent case study for uncovering the origins of this link. The development of European operetta from the 1850s onward was that of a specifically populist lyric theatre genre, geared towards attracting large audiences by providing accessible music and lavish spectacle.

But the Spanish variant of operetta known as zarzuela was not merely a vehicle that catered to popular tastes: it was also very much as nationalist genre of lyric theatre. Not only did it incorporate folk music (as might be expected), but it also devoted a very large portion of its dramatic action and interest to that amorphous group, "the Spanish people." It did so by giving the role of the Spanish people to the chorus and involving the chorus in plots that demonstrated their ability to influence and alter the course of history. In essence, zarzuela built its earliest plot lines around the development of a nationalist political consciousness in Spain.

But if the development of zarzuela demonstrates how consumer culture can readily adapt political content into a genre designed primarily for entertainment, it also demonstrates how both political and commercial changes can alter that content. Beginning in the mid-1870s, the landscape of both Spanish politics and the Spanish theatre began to change. The politicians of this period were frightened by the vision of an active and even revolutionary Spanish people altering the course of history; they were much more interested in a vision of a quiescent nation. Zarzuela responded by replacing the politically charged works of the 1850s and 1860s with more innocuous pieces whose drama was built around the complications of romantic love—not nation-building. This maneuver also fit very nicely into the changing theatrical dynamics in Spain, where the rise of a unique method for scheduling theatrical performances changed the traditional landscape of the theatre by increasing the demand for popular entertainment. What had been a potentially mobilizing force threatened to turn into a potentially demobilizing force.

Even so, the development of early mass culture in Spain did not turn zarzuela into what would today be considered popular culture overnight. Originally, zarzuela composers and librettists set out not to trivialize and vulgarize their product for mass consumption—as the new theatrical schedule seemed to demand. Instead, they set out to prove that sophisticated and even operatic music could exist side-by-side with the demands for romantic plots and lavish spectacle that consumer-driven theatre demanded. This was made easier by the fact that such operatic music furthered the goal of political demobilization: instead of the folk music that was associated with a politically active Spanish people, the elaborate and complex music of zarzuela in the 1870s and 1880s allowed the genre to elide the notion of a politically active population entirely. Even in its most nascent form, mass culture in Spain would prove to be an ideal vehicle for disseminating the nationalist vision of a quiescent population that was the driving goal of the Bourbon Restoration.

Barbieri and the Zarzuela Grande

In many popular histories of Spanish music or theatre, 1851 is usually described as one of the key moments in the development of zarzuela. This was the year of the premiere of *Jugar con fuego* (Playing with Fire), with a libretto by one of Spain's leading playwrights, Ventura de la Vega, and music by Francisco Asenjo Barbieri. *Jugar con fuego* is often assumed to have sprung forth from Vega and Barbieri not unlike Athena from the head of Zeus, creating a mold that zarzuela would follow for the next quarter-century. Like most other truisms in history, this is not quite accurate. Zarzuela had been developing in this direction for most of the early

nineteenth century, and many of the historians of zarzuela in the later nineteenth century were as likely to latch onto the 1849 work *Colegialas y soldados* (Students and Soldiers) as the key turning point.[1] However, the myth of *Jugar con fuego* is appropriate in one respect. The work did provide a model for what certain critics later in the nineteenth century would term the zarzuela grande.

If zarzuela grande refers to all full-length (i.e. three act) zarzuelas—as opposed to shorter works, known as the género chico—zarzuela grande specifically refers to those works built on the model that Barbieri constructed in *Jugar con fuego*, refined in *Los diamantes de la corona* (1854) and *Pan y toros* (1864), and adopted by other zarzuela composers like Emilio Arrieta, Joaquín Gaztambide, and Crístobal Oudrid. This model in turn was influenced by French *ópera-comique* (to the point that the libretto for *Los diamantes de la corona* was directly lifted from a Eugene Scribe libretto for Daniel Auber) and Italian opera of the bel canto school. The zarzuela grande was not operetta or light opera in the sense many later zarzuelas were; like *ópera-comique* (or even the Savoy Operas of Gilbert and Sullivan), it mixes music of operatic caliber with substantial quantities of spoken dialogue. The zarzuela grande was governed by a number of fairly rigid conventions. Dramatically, it was a work in three acts with the center of dramatic attention in Act II. The plots were generally drawn from Spanish history or used Spanish history as a fundamental part of the dramatic makeup of the work. Music predominated over the spoken text. There were fifteen or sixteen musical numbers in the score; each act opens with a choral number

[1] The best study of early nineteenth century zarzuela up to *Colegialas* is Roland J. Vásquez, "The Quest for National Opera in Spain and the Re-invention of the Zarzuela (1809-1849)" (PhD dissertation: Cornell U, 1992).

that gradually introduced the main characters and each act closed with a concertante (or ensemble) finale again for the main characters and chorus. Self-consciously "Spanish" music is generally associated with the chorus, which is used to represent the Spanish people.[2] From its inception, modern zarzuela sought to portray the Spanish nation on stage.

As can be gathered even from this brief and schematic description, the music is often of a technically high caliber. The arias—usually referred to as *romanzas*—and duets are of an operatic nature. The ensemble numbers are often in the form of extended musical scenes, and a concertante finale can have three to five independent vocal lines on top of a full chorus.[3] All this readily compares with the vocal writing and technique found in Italian opera. Zarzuela, as practiced between 1851 and the late 1880s was a complex and demanding art form—for both composer and audience. However, in the years following 1874 or so, changes began to take place in the zarzuela grande that altered the form. Much of this arose from pressures for the zarzuela librettists and composers seeking an audience and the encroachment of new forms of musical entertainment competing with zarzuela grande at the box office. The definition and expectations for zarzuela would change as it sought to keep a hold on an audience with ever-expanding possibilities for entertainment. And this box-office imperative dovetailed nicely with the emerging political outlines of Restoration Spain.

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[2] This analysis of the zarzuela grande model—also sometimes known as the zarzuela seria, especially for works from the 1850s and 1860s—is drawn from Emilio Casares Rodicio, "La Música del siglo XIX español. Conceptos fundamentales," in Emilio Casares Rodicio and Celsa Alonso González, eds., *La música española en el siglo XIX* (Oviedo: U de Oviedo, 1995), 79. Casares Rodicio lists a sixteen point model, of which the most important are given here.

[3] One fact that simplifies the technique required for a zarzuela finale is that zarzuela choral writing does not distinguish between sopranos and altos as is common elsewhere; female voices are compressed into a spinto soprano range generically referred to as a *tiple*.

To explore this situation, it is probably best to examine two of Barbieri's works side-by-side. The first work is *Pan y toros* (Bread and Circuses), an 1864 zarzuela with libretto by José Picón.[4] The second is 1874's *El barberillo de Lavapiés* (The Little Barber of Lavapiés), with libretto by Luis Mariano de Larra. These two works are generally regarded as Barbieri's best work (and were so regarded even by his contemporaries), and have several features in common. Both have plots built around key events in eighteenth-century Spanish history, and each manages to work a romantic sub-plot into the historical drama. Each follows the major musical conventions of the zarzuela grande and has important musical and dramatic roles for the chorus as a personification of the Spanish people. But the differences in the way these ingredients are used to construct each zarzuela are key to understanding the dramatic and political shifts to the Restoration regime.

The mid-nineteenth century in Spain—roughly the period from the early 1850s through the early 1870s—saw not only the consolidation of zarzuela as a potentially nationalist art form and the alteration of its political message; at the same time, Spanish liberalism was consolidating its power and altering its political message in response to threats from the revolutionary left. These parallels between the theatre and politics are not coincidental. When zarzuela came of age in the 1850s, the liberal nationalist vision of Spain seemed quite secure. By the 1870s, this was no longer the case. The problems of Spanish liberalism combined with pressure from more radical

[4] The literal translation of the title should be, of course, "Bread and Bulls." But it becomes clear at several points (notably Jovellanos' third-act curtain speech), that the titular bullfights are being staged to distract the public from issues of the day, much like the circuses of the Roman *panem et circenses* idea.

political groups to create a period of revolutionary chaos. Zarzuelas of the 1860s like *Pan y toros* reflect the increasing political mobilization of the Spanish population, while works from the 1870s like *El barberillo de Lavapiés* reflect the political demobilization built into the Restoration political settlement.

Although the Spanish liberal tradition had been born during the Napoleonic wars, it was not until the 1830s that it came to power in the Spanish government. King Ferdinand VII, who ruled from 1814 to 1833, favored conservative—if not absolutist—government and only implemented liberal measures when forced to by outside pressure. Such pressure arose in the early 1830s over the question of who would succeed Ferdinand. Ferdinand himself wanted to see the Spanish crown pass to his infant daughter, Isabella. Most of Ferdinand's staunchly absolutist supporters favored the king's brother, Carlos, citing his conservative tendencies and their own desire for a male ruler. (In addition, Ferdinand had overridden the Salic Law that his French Bourbon ancestors had promulgated in Spain in the eighteenth century to assure Isabella's succession.) This pressure caused Ferdinand and his wife Maria Christina, who would become Queen Regent after his death, into an accommodation with Spanish liberals. The liberals in return viewed this as an opportunity to push forward their own political agenda.[5]

Liberalism's rise to power in Spain was hardly uncontested: the 1830s featured a Civil War between Carlos' absolutist followers—who became known as Carlists in

[5] For more background information on this period, see Isabel Burdiel, "The Liberal Revolution, 1808-1843," in *Spanish History Since 1808*, ed. José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (London: Arnold, 2000), 18-32 and Raymond Carr, *Spain 1808-1975*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982), 146-169.

consequence—and Isabella II's fledgling regency government as well as several vicious attacks on liberalism by the Catholic Church in the wake of a desamortization program begun in 1836. But by the early 1840s, moderate liberals were running the Spanish government and had brought a relative amount of stability to the country. This stability came at a price, however. Liberalism elsewhere in Europe was associated with the rise of the bourgeoisie to political power; in Spain, the traditional elites maintained more of their political power than they did elsewhere. Liberalism was thus less of a political ideology in Spain than it was a political tactic by which any number of groups could achieve their political aims.[6] Indeed, even the basic liberal aim of open parliamentary elections never had a firm grounding in Spain; during Isabella's reign, parties only gave up office when forced to by the military intervention known as *pronunciamiento*.

The 1850s and early 1860s were probably the most stable period for Spanish liberalism under Isabella's reign. An attempted revolution in 1854 had forced moderate and progressive liberals into a sort of coalition government known as the Liberal Union. The period of the Liberal Union proved dynamic for the Spanish economy, and it is to this point that the development of a sizable Spanish middle-class can be traced.[7] It is not difficult to argue that the relative peace and prosperity of the period were what allowed zarzuela to flourish as a theatrical genre, since a larger number of people now had both the money and the leisure time to enjoy an evening at the new Teatro de la Zarzuela, which opened its doors in 1856. It was this same

[6] See Jesus Cruz, "The Moderate Ascendancy, 1843-1868," in *Spanish History Since 1808*, ed. José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert (London: Arnold, 2000), 33-47.
[7] On the expansion of the Spanish economy and its social implications, see Carr 264-290.

prosperity that allowed composers like Barbieri to travel abroad and expand their musical horizons; this was critical to the development of zarzuela as a musical genre, since the zarzuelas of the 1850s and 1860s were very closely modeled after French musical theatre works, as mentioned above.

Politically, however, this period was hardly unshadowed. Isabella, who had come of age in 1843, had been raised in a conservative setting. While not necessarily anti-liberal, she was certainly afraid of liberal policies that might reduce the role of the crown; she thus tended to favor conservative and moderate ministers. She refused to appoint progressive liberals to governmental positions, which lead the Progressive Party to become severely disenchanted with the crown. Beginning in 1867, economic problems caused by a poor harvest and the *Crédit mobilier* scandal in France (the *Crédit mobilier* had played a large role in financing the growing Spanish railway system) undermined the monarchy even further as the Progressives blamed these problems on Isabella's moderate ministers. Even Isabella's personal life had political repercussions: she was perceived by many Spaniards as sexually immoral and was accused by her enemies of placing her lovers into prominent governmental posts. By 1868, Isabella II and her increasingly conservative government were beleaguered on several different fronts. A military *pronunciamiento* led by the Progressive General Juan Prim in September 1868 proved to be more than Isabella's increasingly tenuous grasp on the throne could bear, and she was forced to abdicate.

Part of the reason that Prim's *pronunciamiento* had overthrown the Bourbon monarchy was that unlike previous military interventions into Spanish politics, Prim's

supporters included more radical political factions than had been traditionally given voice in parliamentary matters, namely the Democratic Party.[8] The Democrats were far more free-thinking and radical than either of the liberal political parties, even leaning towards a federal republican form of government. Although Prim counted the Democrats among his supporters, the leaders of the military coup never seriously considered abolishing the monarchy; they immediately began casting around Europe for somebody to take Isabella's place. The original candidate was one of the princes of the Prussian Hohenzollern family; Napoleon III of France objected to having German rulers on two of his borders, and Otto von Bismarck was able to manipulate the situation into the Franco-Prussian War and the founding of Germany. Following this debacle, Prim selected a member of the Italian house of Savoy to be Spain's new, constitutional monarch. Amadeo I became King of Spain in November 1870.

Amadeo was king for a little over two years, and apparently hated every minute of it. His main supporter, Prim, was assassinated the day Amadeo arrived in Spain; this seems to have influenced his view that Spain was a cauldron of chaos and political discontent. Looking at the period of the early 1870s, Amadeo was not far wrong. The Democrats gained increased political power vis-à-vis the liberal Progressives. This was especially true at the local level, where they won elections in twenty provincial capitals including Barcelona and Seville. Increasingly radical ministries came to power as the Progressives were unable to come up with a workable government. Republicanism grew as a political force, and working-class leaders were galvanized by a Congress of the Communist International in Barcelona in June 1870.

[8] The best overview of the revolutionary period—1868 to 1874—is Carr, 303-346.

The reign of Amadeo I is therefore most notable for being the epoch in which mass politics were born in Spain. Politics was no long the affair of a few elites as it had been under Isabella II; Prim's alliance with the Democrats in 1868 opened the way for more radical political movements and those political movements made a point of appealing to a broader spectrum of the population than liberalism ever had.

This point became crystal clear in February 1873, when Amadeo I abdicated. With the liberal parties and their constitutional monarchy discredited by its inability to rule (not to mention the fact that Spain had simply run out of potential monarch fodder from the great houses of Europe), the only governmental alternative was to establish a republic.[9] It is indicative of the chaos that ensued that the First Republic had four different presidents during its short life. The attempt to run Spain as a republic simply did not work; there were several risings against the central government during the summer of 1873, many of which were organized by members of the International. To make matters worse, the Carlists in the north of Spain chose that same time to launch another civil war against the Spanish government. By December 1873 the First Republic had virtually collapsed and what was essentially a military dictatorship took over. The Second Carlist War dragged on into late 1874, deepening the country's chaos. In December 1874, a group of young army officers formed another *pronunciamiento* against the generals in charge of running the war and the

[9] For all its importance in nineteenth century Spanish history, works on the sexenio are somewhat thin on the ground. For a general overview with an emphasis on the political narrative, see Jorge Vilches, *Progreso y libertad: El partido progresista en la revolución liberal española* (Madrid: Alianza, 2001); for an English-language overview, see C.A.M. Hennessy, *The Federal Republic in Spain: Pi y Margall and the Federal Republican Movement, 1868-1874* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1962).

government; they backed a restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in the person of Isabella's son, Alfonso, who was then completing his education in England. As Alfonso XII, he returned to Spain in January 1875; his mother remained in exile.

On the surface, it might seem as if the Bourbon Restoration of 1874 looks much like a return to the politics of the 1850s with a thin veneer of constitutionalism attached. Spain returned fairly smoothly to a parliamentary government with two competing parties under the control of a Bourbon monarch. There were, however, two major differences. In the 1850s, the political parties had alternated in power only due to military intervention; the Restoration arranged to remove the military from the political process. This arrangement would work until 1923. The second major difference was that the primary architects of the Restoration political system, the politicians Antonio Cánovas del Castillo and Praxades Sagasta, were looking for ways to demobilize the people of Spain. The six-year interregnum had stirred up a true hornet's nest: the idea that more people than merely the political elites could take part in politics. The Revolutionary Sexenio also introduced radical political ideologies like republicanism and socialism to Spain. If zarzuela had carried a nationalist message from its birth in the 1850s, that nationalist message would be even more necessary in the fractured political atmosphere of the Bourbon Restoration. As it would turn out, the vision of Spanish nationalism in zarzuela would align with the forces seeking political quietude in the 1870s.

The musical work most exemplary of the pre-revolutionary period—both musically and in terms of its politics—is Barbieri's *Pan y toros*. The work is set in the

early 1790s amidst the intrigues surrounding Godoy, the Count of Aranda and favorite to the queen, and his attempts to bring peace with France. The plot centers around Captain Peñaranda, who is attempting to bring news of the Army's wretched condition to the King. He is aided by several friends, including the artist Goya and the Princess of Luzán—who have plans of their own afoot to install Jovellanos as the king's chief minister. They are opposed by the *Corregidor* (Mayor) of Madrid, Quiñones, and his *femme fatale* sidekick Doña Pepita. Their goal is to keep the population of Madrid calm and they do so by distracting the populace with bullfights, thus giving the zarzuela its title. History and politics are set at the forefront: there is a love plot of sorts as the Princess falls for the Capitan—but the most extended "love" scene in the piece is an attempted seduction of the Capitan by Pepita to keep him from reaching the King. The importance of history to the authors becomes most noticeable in the finale: the curtain does not fall on a final chorus celebrating the love of Peñaranda and the Princess (as might be expected) but on a long speech from Jovellanos, who has just been named minister. Jovellanos speaks of the need to reform Spain's empire and asserts that the Spain subverted by *pan y toros* will act heroically when blood needs to be shed for the *patria*.

Indeed, *Pan y toros* is almost obsessed with history in a way few other operettas have ever been—in Spain or elsewhere. This comes not only from the identifiable historical characters who inhabit the work and play major roles in the plot (Goya, Quiñones, Jovellanos, and the three bullfighters Pepe-Hillo, Pedro Romero, and Costillares) but the care with which the historical backdrop is portrayed. Godoy's

machinations and the problems with the Army are not just mere plot devices but were major problems in the 1790s. Picón even gets the minor details right, such as the reactionary Quiñones' fulminations against Enlightenment thinkers such as Rousseau and Voltaire, whose followers "bathe in their poison."[10] And Picón actually manages to join the love affair of Peñaranda and the Princess into the historical fabric of the third act. She is planning to enter a convent because she thinks he has been murdered, but her followers manage to call the populace of Madrid to arms to prevent this, portraying the event as part of a plot by Quiñones and his minions.

In contrast, *El barberillo de Lavapiés* relegates history to the background in the interest of furthering the love plot. *El barberillo* is set in Madrid during the reign of Charles III. Although never explicitly stated, it takes place sometime between 1766 and 1776, for the historical backdrop to the play is the attempt to oust the King's Italian ministers, one Grimaldi, and replace him with the Count of Floridablanca. For the purposes of the work, the historical Grimaldi has been conflated with another Italian minister, Squillace; the zarzuela also dramatizes a riot similar to the one that finally forced Charles to dismiss Squillace.[11] This setting is the motor which drives the plot of the work, which centers around the ultimately successful attempts of Lamparilla (the barber of the title) and his girlfriend Paloma to aid the Marquesita in

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[10] José Picón, *Pan y toros: Zarzuela en tres actos y en verso* (Madrid: José Rodriguez, 1889), I.ii. Since zarzuela libretti exist in myriad different editions, this dissertation will cite all quotations and references by act and scene rather than by page number. Upper-case roman numerals refer to the act; arabic numerals to the scene (*cuadro*); lower-case roman numerals to divisions within the scene (*escena*—the French-style division of scenes according the entrances and exits of the actors). For information on the editions of the libretti consulted for the dissertation not included in the footnotes, please consult the bibliography.

[11] For a historical summary of this period, see John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain, 1700-1808* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 251-254 and 261-268.

toppling Grimaldi. Complications are provided by the Marquisita's love interest, Don Luis. Although Don Luis is in love with her, he is also an agent of Grimaldi's. In *Pan y toros*, it is the love interest that adds complications to the historical plot; in *El barberillo*, the situation is reversed and it is the historical situations that complicate the love story. The best example of this is the Act II Finale: the Marquisita is threatened with arrest as a conspirator against the government. When Don Luis is unable to save her (the soldiers sent to arrest the conspirators insist on arresting everybody), Lamparilla proceeds to arrange for a riot that shatters the street lamps in the neighborhood and allows the Marquisita to escape under cover of darkness. Historically, this did happen—but the historical riot was in protest of one of Squillace's edicts, and it lead to the fall of the minister.

In part, the differences between the libretti of *Pan y toros* and *El barberillo* stem from their differing dramatic functions. *Pan y toros* is very much a drama and a serious stage piece. *El barberillo* is a comedy that at times verges on becoming farce. Thus, it is natural that the 1874 work focuses on the love plot; purely historical comedies are a fairly rare dramatic species. But this shift in dramatic emphasis takes on a very different tint when considered against the vicissitudes of the Spanish political situation in the late 1860s and early 1870s. *El barberillo de Lavapiés* premiered on 19 December 1874, a mere ten days before the military pronunciamiento that reinstated the Bourbon monarchy. By this point, Spain had suffered from six years of political chaos: short-lived governments, military coups, a draining search for a new monarch, an experiment with republican government, and an outbreak of civil

war in the Basque Country. *Pan y toros*, by contrast, was a product of much more politically secure times: although there was mounting opposition to the Bourbon monarchy throughout the 1860s and constant interference in parliamentary government by both the crown and the military, the governmental system itself was relatively stable. Although Picón's libretto can be read as a criticism of the Isabeline monarchy—indeed, the zarzuela was temporarily banned in 1867 by the crown, seemingly for this very reason—it is very much a product of a period when public and intellectual interest in politics was quite active.[12]

By the time *El barberillo de Lavapiés* reached the stage, however, the political and intellectual climate was vastly different. The six year interregnum of the Bourbon monarchy had exhausted, if not the population at large, the political elites of Spain. When Antonio Cánovas del Castillo undertook the restructuring of the Spanish monarchy and political system in 1874-1875 he did so with the primary aim of preserving the advances liberalism had made while eliminating what he viewed as the new and unstable element in Spain's political system, popular mobilization.[13] The primary concern of the framers of the Restoration political system was not with political participation, but with political stability. *El barberillo* is, in fact, a foretaste in operetta form of the political system to come. The historical and political events are relegated to the background; the emphasis is taken away from the political

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[12] Although why Queen Isabella banned *Pan y toros* is fairly obvious from the tone of the libretto, why it took her three years to do so remains something of a mystery. For more information on the affair, see Casares Rodicio, *Francisco Asenjo Barbieri*, 1:296 and John Edward Henken, "Francisco Asenjo Barbieri and the Nineteenth-Century Revival in Spanish National Music" (PhD dissertation: UCLA, 1987), 204-205.

[13] Fidel Gómez Ochoa, "El conservadurismo canovista y los orígenes de la Restauración: La formación de un conservadurismo moderno," in Manuel Suárez Cortina, ed., *La Restauración, entres el liberalismo y la democracia* (Madrid: Alianza, 1997), 109-155.

participation implied in the libretto and put on more mundane and innocent matters, like love. The politically active world of *Pan y toros* had come to life in 1868, and Spain's ruling elites had not been pleased with the outcome. The shift from the public to the private realms in the zarzuela grande reflected a desire to put the genie of mass political participation back in the bottle. The vision of the Spanish nation portrayed on stage correspondingly shifted from one in which the people were crucial historical actors to one in which the people were barely present.

Key to understanding this shift is the contrast in the musical construction of each of Barbieri's works—specifically, how the chorus is used in each zarzuela. It is worth remembering here that the chorus, in the zarzuela grande, is used to represent the populace. *Pan y toros* is packed with work for the chorus. Of the twelve numbers in the vocal score that involve sung text, eight involve work from the chorus.[14] Of the remaining four numbers, two build the historical portion of the plot (No. 3, the Abate's "Canción" and No. 8, the Act II quartet), leaving only two numbers to advance the love story (the Act I duet and the Princess' romanza in the second act). Musically, the choral and ensemble numbers gain emphasis as the work progresses: by Act III, the private sphere has virtually disappeared from the work.

Admittedly, the amount of work the chorus does here can be overstated: with the exception of the Act I finale and the two choruses that open Act III, the choral work is intermixed in each numbers with various solos and ensembles. In fact, *Pan y toros* makes heavy use of extended musical scenes that mix together solos, ensembles, and choruses to advance the plot. In most lighter musical works, this technique is

[14] The Act I & III finales (Nos. 6 & 14) are orchestral music only.

usually applied at the act finales, when the plot must be advanced to a point where it can be halted for intermission or when it must be wound up at the end of a work. For the most part, when the chorus participates in these extended musical scenes, it is in a supporting role. Thus, although the chorus seems to be a large part of the musical construction of *Pan y toros*, it is not always the center of musical or dramatic interest when it is onstage. However, it is present.

This distinction is important to remember, because the chorus is more frequently not present in *El barberillo de Lavapiés*. The chorus does turn up for the introduction and finale of each act—as is typical of zarzuela grande and operetta construction in general—but virtually disappears between these points. There is some choral support to Paloma's famous entrance song, "Como nací en la calle," ("How I was born in the street") but this is the only time in which the chorus sings between the opening and conclusion of an act in the work.[15] This is a severe reduction in both scope and musical content for the chorus from the *Pan y toros* model. Again, the decreased use of the chorus has the effect of reducing the importance of historical events vis-à-vis the love story, since the chorus plays the role of the Spanish people. A zarzuela that gives emphasis to the chorus by definition gives emphasis to the actions of a broad section of the population. It is a better vehicle for historical drama than is a zarzuela which gives its emphasis to the soloists, which is more suited to intimate stories than to the broad brushstrokes of the historical panorama.

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[15] Technically, there is one other point at which the chorus participates in the middle of an act: No. 9, the Seguidillas manchegas in the second act. However, as this leads directly without pause—both musically and dramatically—into what the score indicates is the "Final del Acto II" (No. 10 in the vocal score), it can legitimately be considered a part of the Act II finale.

The use of the chorus in zarzuela grande directly parallels a then-contemporary idea in Spanish historiography—the idea of "general history" (*historia general*) prevalent in the mid-nineteenth century. As Inman Fox has argued, this notion of history (which is essentially the history of the development of a "people" into a state) was the primary vehicle for nationalist versions of history, especially for liberal Spaniards between the 1830s and the 1860s.[16] It thus makes an ideal counterpoint for the Barbieri model of zarzuela grande, which was the primary vehicle for nationalist musical versions of history. With general history, the protagonists of the historical action were not kings or politicians, but the people themselves. The emphasis for general history lies in collective action and identity, not in individual actions. This falls in line quite nicely with *Pan y toros*' emphasis on the actions of the chorus—remember, for example, it is the chorus that saves the Princess from the convent in Act III and thus clears the way for Jovellanos' appointment as minister, not the hero of the piece, Peñaranda—and the almost ubiquitous presence of the chorus in the musical fabric of the work. It may be stretching a point to claim that the chorus is the actual protagonist of *Pan y toros*, but it does drive the action of the work along in a manner similar to the way in which the Spanish people were assumed to be the motor of historical action in the school of general history.

By removing the chorus from this pivotal role in *El barberillo de Lavapiés*, the zarzuela grande is trying to do the same thing that Cánovas—both as politician and as historian—was trying to do: de-emphasize the potentially destructive powers of the

[16] See Inman Fox, *La invención de España: Nacionalismo liberal e identidad nacional* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998), 37-40.

people. Cánovas' historical works argued that the Catholic Kings failed to fully unify Spain after the Reconquest because the Spanish people were too fractious to be properly governed by the central state.[17] Cánovas the politician obviously took this lesson taught by Cánovas the historian to heart, and structured the Restoration political system in an attempt to avoid similar results. The portrayal of the chorus in *El barberillo* is similarly negative: in two of the three act endings, roughly half the time the chorus spends on stage, the chorus is engaged in defying governmental authority—even to the point of open riot in the Act II finale. It is hardly surprising that the Spanish people should be portrayed this way, given the previous six years of political unrest in the country before the work premiered; and it is hardly surprising that this potentially destructive aspect of Spanish history should be subsumed by something a little more frivolous at a time when the political system was trying to overcome such unrest and stabilize the state.

Finally, given zarzuela's self-proclaimed role as popular entertainment, this message was widely and rapidly disseminated to the population at large. *El barberillo* quickly became Barbieri's most popular zarzuela, and one of the most popular works in the general zarzuela repertory—so popular, in fact, that the acquisition of the rights to publish the piano score were deemed sufficient to set up an entirely new publishing house.[18] *El barberillo* not only reflects the political trends swirling about in the early phase of the Bourbon Restoration in Spain, but it was performed at exactly the time in which theatre was becoming a popular form of entertainment. If the message in the

[17] For Cánovas' historical views, see Fox 41-42.
[18] See *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 22 June 1875.

zarzuela grande in the wake of *El barberillo* was one in which the people of the Spanish nation should refrain from potentially destructive political participation, that message was being performed in a milieu in which the theatre catered to more patrons—and patrons from a broader social spectrum—than the zarzuelas of the *Pan y toros* model. Just as the economic expansion of the 1850s and 1860s had set the stage for the political unrest of 1868, it had also set the stage for a series of changes in the nature of the Spanish theatre as well.

A Theatrical-Musical Panorama of Madrid

The late 1860s and early 1870s was not only a period of revolutionary political activity; it was a time in which the theatre in Spain underwent revolutionary change. A few historians of zarzuela have noted the seeming coincidence that the change in theatrical structures occurred during the years of the revolutionary sexenio, attributing the changes to the revolutionary ideas in the air.[19] This seemingly facile interpretation is actually not far from the truth. This period saw the introduction of popular politics into Spain; why should popular theatre be far behind? With the growth of the economy in the 1850s and early 1860s and the growth of the bourgeoisie in Spain came the commensurate growth of the theatrical audience. More people had both the money and the leisure to spend an evening in the theatre. As a result, the latter half of the nineteenth century saw both an expansion in the number and type of theatres in Madrid. The number of theatres operating in the capital rose from ten in 1850 to sixteen in 1875 to twenty-six in 1900—doubling Madrid's theatrical capacity in a

[19] For example, see Marciano Zurita, *Historia del género chico* (Madrid: Prensa Popular, 1920), 7.

mere fifty years.[20] In addition to formal theatres there were the smaller establishments—the so-called "salones-teatros" where the shows had modest production values (only a few actors, and perhaps only a piano to accompany the music) and the profits were augmented by serving as a café as well—or large multi-purpose venues like the Circo Price, which, as the name implies, housed spectacles like circuses as well as theatre and opera performances.

More importantly, the function of theatres was changing. In Madrid, as in the rest of Europe, during the nineteenth century theatres became places where people went to be entertained, whereas their former function had been as places where society went to see and be seen. In short, theatres evolved from being sites of sociability to being sites of artistic and economic activity. Thus the size of theatres expanded during this period: the number of seats increased, foyers and staircases grew in size to accommodate more spectators, cafes were often built into theatres, and private rooms were built for subscribers to relax in before performances.[21] Improvements in lighting technology, as theatres graduated from candlelight to gaslight to electrical lighting allowed house lights to be lowered during the performance, which shifted the audience's attention increasingly towards the stage (as well as enhancing the theatrical illusions being portrayed there and away from their fellow audience members).[22]

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[20] Drawn from information in Virgilio Pinto Crespo, ed., *Madrid: Atlas histórico de la ciudad, 1850-1939* (Madrid: Fundación Caja Madrid, 2001), 342-349. These figures include both standard theatres as well as circus locations, (which frequently housed theatrical and operatic performances), but not the salones-teatros, which were essentially glorified cafés.

[21] See Angel Luis Fernández Muñoz, *Arquitectura teatral en Madrid: Del corral de comedias al cinematógrafo* (Madrid: El Avapiés, 1988), 100-108.

[22] For the progression of lighting technology in Madrid, see Fernanda Andura Varela, "Del Madrid teatral del XIX: La llegada de la luz, el teatro por horas, los incendios, los teatros de verano," in

Again, these shifts were not unique to Madrid. The decline in theatre as a nexus of sociability seems to have begun in Paris during the French Revolution and solidified with the increased bourgeois presence in theatres there during the 1830s.[23] Such ideas progressed relatively slowly however, for even as late as 1876 Richard Wagner's decision to lower the house lights during performances at his theatre in Bayreuth—and thus diminish the possibility of social interaction during the performance—caused something of a stir.

Admittedly, the theatre as a site of sociability never completely disappeared. (Anybody who attends an opera performance today and watches the society matrons at play can see quite readily that it still has not, for that matter.) In Madrid, what happened was a shift in the patterns of sociability. In music-theatre terms, this meant that Italian opera, especially as performed at the Teatro Real—which, as the name implied, was under the patronage of the royal family—became the assembly ground for the aristocracy and high society. The rapidly expanding middle classes turned to performances of zarzuela. This bifurcation was played out quite neatly in the story surrounding the inauguration of the Teatro de la Zarzuela on 10 October 1856. The date was chosen specifically because it was the Queen's birthday. However, the court and most of the aristocracy did not attend the inauguration of the new theatre because that same night they were celebrating the installation of General Ramón Narvaéz as

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Cuatro siglos de teatro en Madrid (Madrid: Consorcio Madrid Capital Europea de la Cultura, 1992).

[23] See James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1995).

minister at the Royal Palace.[24] Although such bifurcations were obviously never absolute, this separation of the audience for lyric theatre works—the middle class gravitation towards operetta or *opéra-comique* and aristocratic retrenchment into opera—was a general European trend during the nineteenth century. Offenbach's original audience for his operettas was the Parisian bourgeoisie, while Gilbert and Sullivan touted their Savoy Operas as works that the middle classes could watch without fear of embarrassment (i.e. that the chorines would be modestly dressed, and would not be showing off their legs and bosoms at every opportunity).[25] But this shift in sociability also indicates that the theatre was becoming more attuned to its economic potential as well. The middle class audience had more potential members than an aristocratic audience, and productions were rapidly tuned to come in line with their mores. In Madrid and elsewhere, more theatres were built and greater numbers of plays were put on in them.

Arguably, however, it was Madrid that came up with the most creative and most effective way to exploit the changing economics of theatre-going in the nineteenth century. And it did so in a manner that flies in the face of traditionally accepted theatrical economics: the Spanish found a way to make the one-act play profitable. The idea was born in 1867 in the Teatro El Recreo, one of the innumerable "cafés-teatros" that had begun to spring up in Madrid during the 1860s. The café-

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[24] For the selection of the date, see Emilio Casares Rodicio, *Francisco Asenjo Barbieri* (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1994), 1:193-94. On the celebrations for Narvaéz, see Salvador Valverde, *El mundo de la zarzuela* (N.p.: Palabras, 1976), 109.

[25] The best work on the relationship of Offenbach to the bourgeoisie is Siegfried Kracauer, *Jacques Offenbach and the Paris of his Time*, trans. Gwenda David & Eric Mosbacher (1937; New York: Zone Books, 2002). On Gilbert and Sullivan, see Michael Ainger, *Gilbert and Sullivan: A Dual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) and Jane W. Steadman, *W.S. Gilbert: A Classic Victorian and his Theatre* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996).

teatro's normal bill of fare was sketch humor and singing, often done by students or artists willing to be paid in coffee or toast instead of cash. The impresario at the El Recreo came up with the idea of staging one-act plays. Three or four would be staged in a single evening and separate admission was charged for each play, rather than a single and unified cover charge for the evening as was normal at a café. The admission charges were modest, and the short programs fit well into the traditionally peripatetic Madrid night-life. In very short order, the idea moved out of the cafés and into legitimate theatres and thus was born the phenomenon known as the *teatro por horas*, or "theatre by hours."[26] With its inexpensive admission prices and emphasis on entertaining works that would bring in large numbers of ticket-buyers, the teatro por horas was the first example of mass consumer culture in Spain and cemented the shift from the theatre as a location of sociability to the theatre as a location of commerce.

This new style of theatre was aided by the rising popularity of yet another theatrical novelty in Spain. On 23 September 1868, the Teatro de Variedades premiered a work called *El joven Telémaco* (Young Telemachus). This was the first play in the so-called *género bufo*, the Spanish version of what Offenbach had done at the Bouffes-Parisiens. In Paris, Offenbach had used classical mythology to satirize the

[26] There are two scholars who have studied the *teatro por horas* exhaustively and are the logical starting point for looking at this type of theatre. The first is María Pilar Espín Templado, whose *El teatro por horas en Madrid (1870-1910)* (Madrid: Instituto de Estudio Madrileños, 1995) gives an excellent summary of the phenomenon; this is a shorter version of her more comprehensive dissertation on the same subject, "El teatro por horas en Madrid (1870-1910) (Subgéneros que comprende, autores príncipales y análisis de algunas obras representativas)" (Tésis doctoral: Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 1986). For an exhaustive study in English—which manages to encompass not only the *teatro por horas* but early film as well—see Nancy Jane Hartley Membrez, "The *teatro por horas*: History, Dynamics and Comprehensive Bibliography of a Madrid Industry, 1867-1922," (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987). My brief summary draws on both of these works.

people and the mores of his day, and had succeeded by combining this satire with his tuneful music. The Spanish version aimed a little lower. The emphasis was not on the satire and the music, but on the physical charms of the chorus girls. Singing ability was not required as long as the prospective chorine was willing to appear half-undressed in "classical" gowns.[27] The shrewd political humor of Paris was replaced by slapstick and nonsensical jokes. The music relied heavily on dance forms—especially the notorious can-can, as might be expected where the actresses were auditioned on their physical charms rather than vocal talent—but did not engage in the arias and duets common in Offenbach's work. In any event, the *Bufos Madrileños* (the original company set up to produce not only *El joven Telémaco* but Spanish translations of several of Offenbach's operettas as well) spawned a wildly popular form of entertainment that appealed to the new theatrical audience looking for entertainment. Almost all of the pieces written in the género bufo style were short, one-act works, and they formed a vital part of the early repertory of the teatro por horas.

A brief examination of one of these bufo works can suggest not only how different they were from the zarzuela grande of Barbieri and his cohort, but also just how far the zarzuela grande was from being "commercial" theatre in the 1870s. The género bufo was an ephemeral genre; the only work that could be categorized as such that has held on in the general repertory is *Los sobrinos del Capitán Grant* (The Nephews of Captain Grant), an 1877 work with libretto by Miguel Ramos Carrión and

[27] Membrez 15-16, notes that the majority of the performers in the género bufo were untrained, and that many were seamstresses put out of work by the rise of the sewing machine.

music by Manuel Fernández Caballero. *Capitán Grant* is essentially an honorary bufo piece: it is a full-length work (in four acts) rather than the traditional single-act work, it was not based in classical mythology, and it was written by two talented authors rather than the usual hacks who seem to have made up the roster of regular bufo writers. But it does have the requisite slapstick libretto, charming dance music, and an emphasis on the physical production of the work (although here, the emphasis is on the stage spectacle rather than the charms of the performers). As such, it is vastly closer to the spirit of the *Bufos Madrileños* than it is to the more serious works being performed at the Teatro de la Zarzuela.

Capitán Grant is a parody of one of Jules Verne's around-the-world adventure novels, *The Children of Captain Grant*. In the zarzuela, the plot revolves around a group of mismatched adventurers attempting to find the missing Captain and thus gain a part of the immense treasure he has hoarded. Much of the humor is built around the stock comic types: the absent-minded professor, the blustering old solider, the blithely idiotic English gentleman (who speaks Spanish in a predictably awful accent), the gold-digging chorus girl in love with the divinity student, and so forth. And, if modern performance traditions are any indication, numerous sight gags (such as the moment at which the English gentleman reveals he is in fact Scots by whipping open his jacket—which is lined in a plaid tartan) and topical references were common in performances of the work.[28] The entire reason of existence for this particular play is

[28] The plaid gag is written into the libretto: see Miguel Ramos Carrión, *Los sobrinos del Capitán Grant: Novela cómico-lírico-dramático en cuatro actos y diecisiete cuadros* (Madrid: Teatro de la Zarzuela, 2001), I.xv. Although the topical humor is not in the various printed editions, the presence of several such jokes during the 2001-2002 revival at the Teatro de la Zarzuela seems to

its comic function and value. Unlike the zarzuela grande, there is not a serious bone in *Capitán Grant*'s body.

As important as the humor is the spectacle of the work. In following with Verne's round-the-world travelogue approach, the various scenes of the zarzuela move from a Madrid tenement to a quaint Chilean village to the Australian outback. Scenes are set on top of mountains, in the Amazon jungle, in a Maori temple, and even at the bottom of the sea. During their travels, the characters have to deal with an earthquake, a flood, and an erupting volcano. The sketches and plans of the original 1877 sets indicate that the first performances at the Teatro Princípe Alfonso were as lavish and eye-popping as could be desired.[29] The costuming also helps provide spectacle, as the chorus has to turn up as sailors, Chilean peasants, Australian bandits, and cannibals. As much as the humor of the text, it was probably the spectacle that helped keep *Capitán Grant* in the zarzuela repertory. In the first years after the original production, the work was a staple in the outdoor summer theatres of Madrid; after the turn of the century (and until into the 1960s), it became customary to perform the work around Christmas and Easter when theatres were more frequently patronized by families with children.[30]

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indicate this is accepted tradition. The best such example from that revival was an interpolation in the third act: as a group of bandits sat around talking about how much money their next robbery would bring in, one turned to the audience and converted the sum into Euros, much as the newscasters on Spanish television had been doing during the run-up to the introduction of the new currency. (The change to the Euro occurred midway through that particular run of *Capitán Grant*.)

[29] Many of these have been reproduced the 2001 Teatro de la Zarzuela libretto cited in the previous note.

[30] This information was drawn from a lecture given by Blas Matamoro on 17 December 2001 at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid discussing *Los sobrinos del Capitán Grant*.

But it is the musical construction of *Los sobrinos del Capitán Grant* that mark it as a particularly bufo work and far removed from the realm of zarzuela grande. Fernández Caballero was perfectly at home in the world that Barbieri had created (witness Fernández Caballero's *La Marsellesa* from 1876, which is as close musically to the zarzuela grande model as can be desired), but the music for *Capitán Grant* feels as if it came almost directly out of Madrid's cafés.[31] Completely absent is the Spanish folk music that inhabits the world of the zarzuela grande; only two pieces of folk music are used, and both of these are of Latin American origin—the Cuban habanera and the Chilean zamacueca.[32] Furthermore, these pieces of folk music are not used to delineate the chorus and identify it with the Spanish people as is customary, but rather to establish an exotic Latin American atmosphere.[33] Although the chorus is present in all but three of the sixteen vocal numbers in *Capitán Grant*, their presence is not integral to the plot as it is in the Barbieri model. It provides local color, reactions to the main characters, and underlying harmonic support musically, but it is not essential to the plot of the zarzuela bufa. Although the chorus spends as much time on stage in *Capitán Grant* as it does in *Pan y toros*, it could easily be removed without harming the dramatic framework of the plot in the former work, whereas such a course would be disastrous dramatically to the Barbieri piece.

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[31] For a more expanded musical analysis of *La Marsellesa* in its zarzuela grande style, see Regidor Arribas, 113-118.

[32] I have borrowed some of my musical analysis from Xavier de Paz's Introduction to Manuel Fernández Caballero, *Los sobrinos del Capitán Grant: Novela cómico-lírica-drámatica en cuatro actos* (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 2002).

[33] There is almost certainly an element of sly parody involved here as well. The habanera is sung by a female chorus smoking cigarettes—a reference to the famous habanera in Georges Bizet's *Carmen*.

The other major musical and dramatic difference in the género bufo implicit in *Los sobrinos del Capitán Grant* is its simplification of musical idiom. Fernández Caballero omits the soaring and operatic romanzas and duets that are the mainstay of the zarzuela grande and replaces these with simpler numbers, drawn from the idiom of urban dance music: waltzes, mazurkas, polkas and the like. Instead of through-composed vocal numbers (in which musical phrases are generally not repeated), the composer uses strophic songs (in which the music repeats itself over and over) with a limited vocal range. The result of such a musical construction is that the play can be cast with actors rather than with vocalists, and as a result more emphasis is placed on the plot and the characters than on the music. The simpler music would probably also gain currency more quickly through sheet-music sales and performances in non-theatrical venues than its more operatic counterpart. In short, the género bufo marks a distinct shift in lyric-theatre norms: a shift in emphasis away from the strictly musical aspects of the work and an increase in importance for the dramatic aspects of a work (such as plot, characterization, mise-en-scene, etc.). In an odd way, Rámos Carrión, Fernández Caballero and other bufo writers were actually doing—admittedly in a comic fashion—what Richard Wagner was trying to do for opera as well. That is to turn it away from being a venue simply for music and to turn it into a forum wherein the text, the music, the staging, the dances, the scenery all came together to form a unified whole.

It is this shift, perhaps, that defines the bourgeois commercialization of the theatre, especially as it coincides with the shift in theatre as a venue of social exchange

to a venue of economic exchange. Music can easily be used as background for social interaction; theatrical spectacle less so, because it demands the full attention of the audience and not merely their ears. In one sense, the entry of the bourgeois to the theatre marked a decline in the use of music—and possibly even a "vulgarization" of music with the shift away from the elaborate vocal lines of the Italian opera aria towards the repetition inherent in the dance music characteristic of operetta—but they paved the way for modern notions of what lyric theatre is supposed to be. However, this shift by género bufo left the zarzuela grande as practiced by Barbieri and his compatriots in an awkward position. It was caught in a netherworld between the economics of the new teatro por horas system as exemplified by the *Bufos Madrileños* and the aristocratic societal pretensions of opera at the Teatro Real. In fact, zarzuela in the wake of the teatro por horas sought to unite the grandeur of opera with the spectacular effects made popular in Madrid's commercial theatres.

Is It Zarzuela or Is It Opera?

Faced with shifts in the theatre it was designed for and threats from the género bufo, the zarzuela grande after Barbieri took on new forms and new shapes in order to reach its audiences. What seemed to be most notable to the musical and dramatic critics was that its musical tone was growing much more exalted and almost self-consciously operatic. Admittedly, the operatic overtones had always existed in zarzuela, but more and more frequently critics used terms like "operatic" to bestow praise on works that were deemed to be of high quality. This is especially true of three of the major zarzuela grandes of the late 1870s and 1880s: Miguel Marqués' *El*

anillo de hierro and Ruperto Chapí's *La tempestad* and *La bruja*. Each of these turned away from the conventions of Barbieri-style zarzuela grande with scores that were increasingly sophisticated and plots that were increasingly dramatic.

The tendency towards operatic plots and music for the zarzuela grande has its roots in the same phenomenon that caused the shift away from the political melodrama of the Barbieri zarzuela grande: the need for political demobilization in the wake of the Bourbon Restoration. The zarzuela grande dispensed with history and politics almost entirely to focus on the traditionally private concern with romantic love that is the earmark of musical theatre. The nationalist vision that would now unify Spain musically was to be a completely apolitical one. Doubtless this was the logical outcome of the shift in the importance of the role of the chorus between *Pan y toros* and *El barberillo de Lavapiés*. The chorus ceases to function as the Spanish people completely and give up their political role for a strictly musical one. As individuals become the protagonists of the zarzuela grande plots, the political concerns decline.

But the operatic tendencies of the zarzuela grande in the 1870s and 1880s also demonstrate that the dawning of mass culture in Spain did not lead to an instant polarization of popular and elite culture. Even though the género bufo had delineated the gags-and-girls model that has so often been the hallmark of popular lyric theatre, the zarzuela grande decided to embrace the consumer ethic in other ways. Again, the use of romantic love in the plots was of paramount importance: in addition to their ability to politically demobilize the population, these plots—with their exotic locations and stunning *coups de théâtre*—proved immensely attractive to theatre-goers. The

music might have been dubbed "operatic" by the critics, but in the early days of mass culture this was not necessarily a detriment for a nationalistic genre of music theatre. The evolution of the zarzuela grande demonstrates that popular nationalism was still very much in its birth throes in the 1880s in Spain.

The plot of the first example of late zarzuela grande, *El anillo de hierro* (The Iron Ring), is a melodramatic farrago involving the love of orphaned fisherman Rodolfo for Margarita, the daughter of the local lord; she is also being pursued by Rutilio, the Baron of San Marcial, who is not above blackmailing her father for her hand in matrimony. In the end, naturally, Rodolfo turns out to be the son of an aristocrat who was murdered at sea by his servant—Rutilio. (All of this comes out via the local hermit, who rescued the infant Rodolfo from the waves and somehow managed to piece together the story.) And, just as naturally, the iron ring Rodolfo wears on his finger proves that he was betrothed to Margarita at birth. The librettist Marcos Zapato termed the work a "fable," although exactly what sort of lesson he was trying to teach is wildly unclear. The closest the work ever gets to deep meaning is Margarita's realization that "True nobility / is written by God on the soul!"[34] However, in the classic tradition, such nobility of the soul only comes to those who were of noble blood to begin with—and one might also be forgiven for thinking that Rodolfo shows a little less than true nobility when he tries to murder Margarita late in the third act for betrothing herself to Rutilio in order to stop the Baron from blackmailing her father.

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[34] "¡La verdadera hidalguía / la escribe Dios en el alma!" Marcos Zapato, *El anillo de hierro. Drama lírico en tres actos y en verso*, in *Colección de obras dramáticas de Marcos Zapata*, 1:140-291, (Madrid: R. Velasco, 1887) I.ix.

The work was given a rapturous reception upon its premiere at the Teatro de la Zarzuela on 7 November 1878. Whatever the faults of the libretto, Zapato's writing was well received—the critic for the *Correspondencia de España* actually called the verses "magnificent" and noted that the audience "did not tire of applauding, frequently interrupting the performance."[35] (It also cannot be denied, that no matter how hackneyed the plot, many of the stage pictures are dramatically effective—the use of lightning to reveal Rodolfo's knife during his attempted murder of Margarita, for example.) However, most of the critics turned their attention to Marqués' music. Given the composer's stature in Spanish musical circles, this is perhaps not surprising. Marqués was considered the leading Spanish symphonist of his day and had been one of the few composers of his generation to have studied abroad—in Paris, where he befriended Hector Berlioz.[36]

Marqués' score is sophisticated and inventive, possibly the most well-composed zarzuela score between *Pan y toros* and *La bruja*. What most of the critics seemed to note is that the work reflected Marqués' predilection for symphonic composition. The critic for the *Crónica de la Música* saved his highest praise for the "Sinfonía" that opens the work and noted a "certain vacillation in the writing for the voices"—although he was more than willing to qualify this by noting that the work had made great strides over several of Marqués' previous attempts at vocal writing.[37] In the same vein, *La Correspondencia de España* noted that the pieces receiving the most applause and that had to be repeated were the preludes to the first and third

[35] *La Correspondencia de España*, 8 November 1878.
[36] For a fuller sketch of Marqués' life, see Gómez Amat, 183-87.
[37] "El Anillo de Hierro," *Crónica de la Música*, 14 November 1878, 3.

acts.[38] What the critics did not notice—or passed over rapidly—were some of the score's more sophisticated touches. *El anillo de hierro* does not indulge in dance or folk music like many zarzuela grandes do: it only uses one dance form, a barcarolle, which is traditionally associated with seafaring and sea songs. The score returns to this form again and again, helping to portray the coastal setting through the music. The barcarolle is the basis for the opening chorus, the tenor's music in the first act duet, and the opening of the second act finale.[39] The other notably sophisticated technique is the use of concertante (ensemble) finales for the first and second acts. Marqués has upwards of five independent vocal lines running at any one time, all moving at a fairly vigorous clip. (The critic for the *Crónica de la Música* found the cabaletta of the second act finale, in particular, "very original and energetic.")[40] Such densely composed textures are fairly common in the world of opera, if not in lighter works. Still, abandoning Spanish folk music is a potent example of the way in which the zarzuela grande went out of its way to avoid questions of political mobilization by dropping any potential musical references to the Spanish people

La tempestad (The Storm) was another work with operatic tendencies; it too moves away from Spanish folk music and towards the more musically complex world of opera. This work was the composer Ruperto Chapí's first major foray into the world of zarzuela; but he was well-known in musical circles for his operas *La hija de Jefté* and *Roger de Flor*, his operetta *La Serenata*, and an oratorio, *Los Angeles*. Like

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[38] *La Correspondencia de España*, 8 November 1878.
[39] See Nos. 1A, 3, and 8A in the vocal score: Miguel Marqués, *El anillo de hierro. Drama lírico en tres actos*; piano reduction, Isidoro Hernandez (Madrid: Romero y Marzo, n.d.)
[40] "El Anillo de Hierro," *Crónica de la Música*, 14 November 1878, 3.

El anillo de hierro, *La tempestad* was built on a wildly melodramatic plot. This time the love between fisherman Roberto and orphan Ángela is blocked by her guardian, Simón—blocked until a wealthy returnee from the Indies, Beltrán, promises Roberto a well-paying position. (He is incredibly touched by their obvious love and devotion, as well as by Roberto's work ethic.) At this point Simón recognizes Beltrán as the man accused some twenty years previously of murdering Ángela's father. All ends happily, however, when Simón has a nervous breakdown during the titular storm and confesses to the murder. Miguel Ramos Carrión's libretto has one fairly deft psychological touch: the link between Simón's guilt and stormy weather, which makes the climax seem less like the work of a plot-driven *deus ex machina* than it otherwise might. This having been said, Ramos Carrión's libretto came under greater fire than Zapatos'. The critic for *La Correspondencia Musical* found the entire idea of melodrama "antiliterary" and dismissed Ramos Carrión's "lively, fluid, and animated dialogue" as problematic contrast between form and substance.[41] Even the less caustic *Crónica de la Música* felt that the ovation the author received on opening night was unmerited as the libretto did not live up to the author's potential.[42] Possibly the critics were growing tired of melodrama.

Neither did the music fully please the critics, although most recognized its ambition, its brilliant orchestration, and the immense technical capability of the composer. The *Correspondencia Musical* found the work fairly uneven, with several delightful numbers (he singled out the first act duet and the quartet that closes the act),

[41] Sostenido, "Teatro de la Zarzuela," *La Correspondencia Musical*, 22 March 1882, 5.
[42] A. Leon, "La tempestad," *Crónica de la Música*, 15 March 1882, 4-5.

but found other pieces to be "vulgar" and have a "lack of inspiration."[43] The *Crónica de la Música* found an unevenness in the music as it did in the libretto, but chose to make an odd musical point by deciding not to praise Chapí (for fear that praise might go to his head, like it had other young composers), but to lavish its praise for the work on Emilio Arrieta instead—the somewhat unique logic being that Arrieta was Chapí's teacher and had given him the technique to both write this score as well as compose even better ones in the future.[44] Whatever the carping of the critics over the score, the evening had been a tremendous public success: according to the *Correspondencia de España*, the audience vigorously applauded each scene, called the authors to the stage at the end of each act and "awarded them with an explosion of well understood and most spontaneous enthusiasm."[45] The work became a popular season opener at the Teatro de la Zarzuela well into the next decade.[46]

Both *El anillo de hierro* and *La tempestad* have certain dramatic devices in common: both are situated in non-Spanish locales and both are built upon melodramatic plots. *La tempestad* is set in early nineteenth-century Brittany, while *El anillo de hierro* was removed to an even more exotic late eighteenth-century Norway. (This work seems even more exotic as the aristocratic participants in the plot actually seem to be members of the English gentry—Count William Belfort, for example—but it is not clear whether this was intentional or if everybody north of the English Channel was simply interchangeable for Zapato and Marqués.) In neither work is

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[43] Sostenido, "Teatro de la Zarzuela," *La Correspondencia Musical*, 22 March 1882, 5.
[44] A. Leon, "La tempestad," *Crónica de la Música*, 15 March 1882, 4.
[45] *La Correspondencia de España*, 12 March 1882.
[46] See, for example, *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 28 November 1890.

there any reason the setting should not be Spanish—but neither is there any reason the setting should specifically be Spanish. In *El anillo*, the secondary comic couple is at least Iberian (he from Cádiz, she from Portugal); in *La tempestad*, there is no definitively Spanish character.[47] The melodrama of each work is pronounced. In addition to the dog-eared plots already recounted, *La tempestad* features a musical pantomime depicting Simón's crime and subsequent feelings of guilt; *El anillo* has a mysterious, all-knowing hermit and its own attempted murder in the middle of a thunderstorm.

In any event, the melodramatic plot constructions of these two works remove both from the established conventions of the Barbieri-style zarzuela grande. The plots are not even remotely historical, and do not use historical events as a backdrop for their drama. Instead of turning on political events, the worlds that Zapato and Ramos Carrión created are intensely private, revolving around questions of parentage and identity rather than the public questions of liberty and political freedom that pervade *Pan y toros* or *El barberillo de Lavapiés*. The only public figures to appear in either work are the judge and the local attorney (*Procurador*) in *La tempestad*, and they are kept on the margins of the plot—it is Simón who identifies Beltrán as the man accused of murdering Ángela's father, and it is the fisherman Mateo who overhears Simón's confession of guilt. Even justice is a matter of private, not public concern. It may be for this reason that the authors chose to remove the settings of these zarzuelas from Spain—the zarzuela grande almost automatically associates a Spanish setting with

[47] Arguably, however, the figure of Beltrán—returned from America with new-found wealth—is a recognizably Spanish type: the *indiano*. See Plaza Sixto, "Sociologia del teatro musical español" (Ph.D. dissertation: Georgetown U, 1986), 112-113.

questions of public freedoms and political intrigue. There were, apparently, no such associations with Norway or Brittany. By eliminating any reference to Spain, they were able to avoid the fraught question of popular politics that had arisen in the 1860s and that Cánovas del Castillo was so eagerly trying to put to rest under the Restoration.

Chapí and Ramos Carrión returned to the Teatro de la Zarzuela five years later with yet another melodramatic concoction, *La bruja* (The Witch).[48] In comparison with *El anillo de hierro* and *La tempestad*, *La bruja* almost seems realistic—providing one overlooks the main plot device, that of a relatively benign witch being transformed into a beautiful young woman through the power of love. Indeed, the libretto is specifically set circa 1700, in the closing years of the reign of King Charles II—popularly known as "Carlos el hechizado" or "Charles the Bewitched." In the time frame of the libretto, sorcery and witchcraft were still common beliefs, and the libretto gains most of its dramatic mileage from this fact. Indeed, when Charles' death is announced at the final curtain, it is explicitly linked with the death of popular superstition and the dawn of the modern, rationalist age: "Along with the bewitched king, there will also disappear from Spain superstition and fanaticism … the recluse that occupies this cell will be the last witch."[49] Within the context of the story this shift is used to remove Blanca, the innocent and beautiful incarnation of the title character from the danger of the Inquisition and establish her ultimately happy fate.

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[48] Apparently, however, *La bruja* had a fairly long gestational period. It was originally announced for the 1883-1884 season at the Teatro Apolo. This was not the last time Chapí would let a libretto sit idle for a lengthy period: the opera *Margarita la Tornera*, his final composition, waited ten years to be set to music.

[49] Miguel Ramos Carrión, *La bruja: Zarzuela en tres actos* (Madrid: Teatro de la Zarzuela, 2002), 3.xx.

Unlike *El anillo* and *La tempestad*, the libretto for *La bruja* follows the historical conventions of the zarzuela grande. The work is set in Spain—here the Navarrese countryside—and in a specific historical time frame with actual historical events (the Spanish war in Italy and the death of Charles II) providing the historical backdrop. However, unlike *Pan y toros*—or even *El barberillo de Lavapiés*, for that matter—the historical background is not central the action of work. Removing the historical portions of the book would not cause the plot to fall apart, so long as the character of Leonello has a reason to remove himself from the scene for the extended period of time between Acts I and II, thus proving his love for Blanca. Again, the concerns of the private sphere dominate the plot to the virtual exclusion of public matters. The possible exception to the dominance of the private sphere in the libretto is the arrest of Blanca by the Inquisition in the Act II finale, which seems to be predicated on the idea that it is she who is bewitching Charles II. However, this motive is only alluded to briefly, in dialogue between Tomillo and the villagers early in the second act.[50] When the Inquisitor announces her arrest, he accuses her only of "magical spells, / enchantments and witchcraft," not political treason.[51] Again, the historical and political concerns of the zarzuela grande have been superceded by melodrama.

Like the libretto, Chapí's score also adopts the stylistic model of the zarzuela grande. Like *El anillo* and *La tempestad*, the multi-part musical numbers, extensive use of the chorus, and concertante finales are all present; however, unlike those works,

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[50] Ramos Carrión, *La bruja*, 2.iv.
[51] "Mágicos conjuros, / hechizo y brujería." Ramos Carrión, *La bruja*, 2.xxi.

La bruja develops other aspects of the model in new directions. The most notable is the use of popular and folk idioms. The heavy presence of military forces in the libretto calls for a pasa-calle and a rataplan; as for folk music, a jota is the basis for the first act finale, and the zortziko—a Basque folk dance—is a prominent motif throughout the second act.[52] In addition, the character of Rosalía is given a mock-Moorish number in the opening sequence, the "Romanza morisca."[53] All of this popular music is interspersed among the more traditional duets, arias and romanzas. This is a return to the zarzuela grande model of Barbieri, but it completes the political demobilization of the chorus that was evident in *El barberillo de Lavapiés*. Each of these self-consciously "Spanish" numbers is essentially a diversionary number. While they help establish the setting and thus provide local color, they do not mark off the chorus as a politically active unit as such music does in *Pan y toros*. It is worth noting the treatment of the second-act zortziko in this respect. The village celebration that the music embodies breaks off abruptly as the Inquisitor enters—the private concerns of the people give way to the political authority represented by the Church. The political demobilization of the zarzuela grande is complete as politics now occupies a non-musical realm, rather than the musicalized versions of politics that predominate in the Barbieri model.

But the critical reaction to the scores often seem to focus on that open-ended question of whether *El anillo*, *La tempestad*, and *La bruja* were zarzuelas or operas.

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[52] See Numbers 8A and 16 for the military music; Nos. 8C and 12A for the folk music. Ruperto Chapí, *La Bruja: Ópera cómica en tres actos*, piano reduction Valentín Arín (Madrid: Pablo Martin, n.d.).

[53] Although moorish, the music critic José María Esperanza y Sola found this particular number to have "un tinte genuinamente español." See *Treinta años de crítica musical: Colección póstuma de los trabajos*, 2:339 (Madrid: La viuda é hijos de Tello, 1906).

The scores certainly had operatic inclinations, but this was hardly an unusual feature for the zarzuela grande. Yet this particular question of definition had never really dogged earlier—and equally "operatic"—works like *Pan y toros*. Part of this attention to operatic quality stems from the debate about national opera that was rapidly demarcating zarzuela from opera proper. (This debate will be the subject of the following chapter.) Nor is this growing awareness of the operatic qualities of zarzuela necessarily an indication that the genre was moving away from its middle-class roots and attempting to assimilate into the more aristocratic realm of opera. Although opera in Madrid was based in the Teatro Real, it also found a comfortable home in many of the commercial theatres (especially the Teatros Price and Príncipe Alfonso), and summer operatic spectaculars geared towards popular taste were not uncommon at the Jardines del Buen Retiro. The situation of zarzuela is analogous to the situation of *opéra-comique* in France: both genres were works with spoken dialogue that boasted a sophisticated musical language. *La bruja* has many more similarities with *Carmen* than it does with *Der Fledermaus*.

Thus it is the plots and theatrical devices of these works that provide the final key to understanding the decay of the Barbieri model. Although it was *La tempestad* that came under the most severe attack for the melodrama of its libretto, each of these works have similar basic plot dynamics: a focus on the love interest of the main characters that is threatened by problems resulting from the mysterious past of one of the lovers. This threat is resolved in each case by a highly theatrical *deus ex machina* revelation: the hermit's tale in *El anillo*, the storm sequence in *La tempestad*, or the

kidnapping at the moment of the king's death in *La bruja*. What all this melodrama makes clear is that the zarzuela grande had completely abandoned the political realm of the Barbieri model for intimate and personal stories. The endings of *Pan y toros* and *El barberillo de Lavapiés* are, to a certain extent, unresolved. In the former work, the curtain speech is Jovellanos lamenting that politics in Spain never really change; in the latter, the Marquisita and Don Luis are nearly forced into exile and are only saved by a last-minute change in government. The implication would seem to be that whereas history is never resolved, private lives can be.

The operatic turn of the zarzuela grande, far from being an attempt to assimilate the genre into the elite world of opera, was actually a response to the political demands of the Restoration and the commercial demands of the teatro por horas. The musical spectacle of the zarzuela grande, in conjunction with the emphasis on romantic love and spectacular stage effects, were designed to bring in audiences in the newly competitive theatrical atmosphere of the 1870s and 1880s. This spectacle also went hand-in-hand with the political needs of the Restoration government. Spectacle and romance were part of the effort to demobilize the Spanish population and regain national unity in the wake of the fractures brought about by the experience of the revolutionary sexenio. Political and commercial realities proved to be surprisingly strong allies in the early years of the Bourbon Restoration. Nationalism had found an ideal vehicle for disseminating its vision of Spain: the new world of mass culture and popular theatre.

Zarzuela and Politics in Perspective

In retrospect, the turn towards melodrama and away from plots that dealt with Spanish history that is apparent in the zarzuela grande in the early years of the Bourbon Restoration is a symptom of several trends—both political and theatrical. On the political level, the move away from the depiction of Spain's troubled history by retreating into dramatic love stories is a direct outcome of the attempts at political demobilization encouraged by Cánovas and the other architects of the Restoration regime. While not as reactionary as such a track might sound—Cánovas was not seeking to overturn the accomplishments of the sexenio, merely to restrain the more disturbing aspects of popular revolutionary fervor—the shift in the zarzuela grande seems more ominous in retrospect. What had been an almost eminently political form of lyric theatre became almost innocuous and sanitized. Whatever the relative musical and theatrical merits of works like *Pan y toros* or *La tempestad*, the former gains its power and respected place in zarzuela history for its willingness to engage with serious political issues. The later can only seem diversionary in retrospect.

Still, even diversion can have its purposes. *La tempestad* might seem to be apolitical, but this does not mean it lacks a political message. In contrast with the more obvious political messages of Barbieri's zarzuelas, the zarzuela grande of the 1880s envisioned a Spanish nation that was politically stable and unencumbered by threats from radical popular politics. If this message is only decipherable by throwing the later works into relief with the earlier ones, it is no less a message for all that. Spanish audiences in the 1880s would have been as familiar with *Pan y toros* as with

more recent works: Barbieri's compositions continued to hold the stage. With the rise of the popular theatre in the late 1860s, more people had a chance to see these zarzuelas and understand their political messages. Pieces like *La tempestad* might have even been more effective than *Pan y toros* in a way, because the theatrical audience in 1881 was much broader than it had been in 1864.

This chapter has argued that the turn of the theatre towards economic principles and the demobilization of the Spanish populace worked together, that the fact these two trends became evident in the zarzuela grande at the same time was not coincidental. There has always been a strong link between politics and the theatre—even lyric theatre. Worth considering in this respect is much of the work done on French opera in the nineteenth century. Jane Fulcher, for example has argued that French opera in the mid-nineteenth century was used as a tool by the state to help legitimize the governments of Charles X, Louis Philippe, and Napoleon III.[54] Opera was inherently political. It was also, according to Anselm Gerhard, part and parcel of everyday life: he argues that these same French grand operas were always built around the realities of everyday urban life in the mid-nineteenth century.[55] The Barbieri model of the zarzuela grande bears these ideas out in a Spanish perspective: zarzuela was inherently political (both topically and in a wider public sense, as the 1867 banning of *Pan y toros* by the crown made absolutely clear), and its portrait of citizen

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[54] Jane F. Fulcher, *The Nation's Image: French Grand Opera as Politics and Politicized Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987). Admittedly, Fulcher's work hardly stands up to a historian's scrutiny—it fails to contextualize the various operas, the key to proving her thesis—but her hermeneutical readings of the operas are convincing.

[55] Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theater in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittal (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1998)

political action was drawn from everyday life. This became manifestly apparent during the years between 1868 and 1874.

But if culture can be used to mobilize, it can also be used to demobilize a population. Vanessa Schwartz's study of nascent mass culture in late-nineteenth century Paris makes this point quite vividly: the Third Republic used popular forms of culture and entertainment to take the population out of politics following the violent upheaval of the Paris Commune.[56] Popular culture reduced the potential violence of the Parisian mob as it reduced them to an amorphous mass. Although I am somewhat hesitant to push a direct parallel with Madrid (Paris, historically, was probably the most violent and politically polarized city in Europe during the course of the nineteenth century—certainly far more so than Madrid), Schwartz's suggestions are apropos for understanding how art can be used to calm mass emotions as well as rile them. The key lies in the popularity of such art. It must have a wide appeal (in order to calm a wide number of people), and it must deal in tropes and topics popular enough to distract from the natural diversion that politics so often provides.[57] The shift in the zarzuela grande from the Barbieri model to the melodrama of Marqués and Chapí accomplished this admirably.

The period of the early Bourbon Restoration—approximately 1874 to 1888 or so—marked a critical change in the nature of zarzuela. Not only was there the move away from historical topics that has been demonstrated here, but zarzuela became a

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[56] Vanessa L. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-siècle Paris* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1998).

[57] Admittedly, I penned this line on 8 October 2003, the day after the election that recalled California governor Grey Davis and placed an action-movie star in his place.

more obviously popular form of entertainment. Although still tied to its operatic roots, zarzuela sought to appeal to a broader audience; it became a truly popular form of entertainment. This popular distinction became even more critical during these decades: for even as the subject matter of the zarzuela grande was becoming less overtly political, the form itself was becoming even more politicized. Zarzuela was becoming the key to inventing a specifically "Spanish" style of lyric theatre, and even "Spanish" music more broadly. In order to do so, it would have to demark other forms of musical theatre—specifically opera—as foreign; and it would widen the emerging gap between popular and elite culture to achieve that goal.

II

Making Spanish Music and Making Music Spanish

The changes in the structure of the Spanish theatrical system had a profound influence on zarzuela music. The original impulse for dealing with an increasingly commercial theatrical system was to blur the boundary between elite and popular culture by moving towards a more operatic style of composition. During the late 1870s and the 1880s, both opera and zarzuela emphasized their nationalist credentials in order to become the authentically Spanish form of lyric theatre. Zarzuela would win the battle; but in doing so, it would crystallize the divide between elite and popular culture. Due to the cultural and political context of late nineteenth century Spain, Spanish nationalism had to root itself in popular culture. Zarzuela was best able to do this, leaving opera on the elite side of the cultural divide.

The case for opera's nationalistic qualifications was best exemplified by the journal *La Opera Española*, founded in 1875. *La Opera Española* devoted most of its editorial space to propagating the idea of Spanish opera and chronicled the various attempts to create a nationalist musical form with recitative. Although this publication only survived for two years, it was a symbol of the interest and desire to create a form of opera that would be viewed by the public as authentically Spanish. Furthermore, the founding *La Opera Española* coincided with an upswing in the production of Spanish opera at the Teatro Real, Madrid's—and arguably Spain's—leading opera

house.[1] The years following 1874 saw more productions by Spanish composers at the Real than had been seen in the entire history of the theatre to that point.

Central to opera's case for nationalism was language. The musical content of Spanish opera was not intrinsic to its nationalism; indeed, most of the Spanish operas that were performed in the 1870s and 1880s used the modernist musical language of Richard Wagner, not the pseudo-folk style that prevailed for nationalist music elsewhere in Europe. The reason for this emphasis on language, not music, was that the advocates of ópera española were keenly aware that they were trying to create a nationalist art form. Language was more critical than music for Spanish opera because the tradition at the Teatro Real of translating all operas into Italian—even those composed by Spaniards—destroyed the artistic unity of the sung text. The words no longer matched the music. Above all, ópera española was to be a work of art.

Proponents of zarzuela did not sit idly by while opera tried to establish itself as a nationalist genre of lyric theatre. The ópera española movement of the 1870s and 1880s forced zarzuela to more clearly articulate how it was a nationalist genre and why zarzuela was an authentically Spanish genre of theatre where opera was not. As we have seen, there had always been a tacit assumption that because zarzuelas used Spanish folk musical forms, this made the genre Spanish. In the atmosphere of the

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[1] The other main contender for the title of Spain's leading opera house is the Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona. In the twentieth century, the Liceu has indeed been in the vanguard of artistic innovation and has had a consistently higher standard of production than the Real; but in the late nineteenth century, the Liceu was far less adventuresome. Even the Liceu's numerous productions of Wagner's operas—which have always been one of the main bases for the claims of the Liceu's supremacy—only date from the mid-1890s. See Alfonsina Janés i Nadal, *L'obra de Richard Wagner a Barcelona* (Barcelona: Fundació Slavador Vives Casajuana, 1983).

early Bourbon Restoration, where the increased commercialism of the theatre had led to a blurring of the boundaries between opera and zarzuela—and thus subsequently led zarzuela composers into abandoning the use of folk music that had defined the genre in the first place—zarzuela had to more clearly define exactly why it was a nationalist genre. It did so by establishing its commercial and musical credentials. Zarzuela had traditionally incorporated popular music that was both familiar and widely appealing. In contrast to opera's emphasis on language, zarzuela built the core of its nationalist message around the use of music.

Proponents of zarzuela stressed the fact that zarzuela was a commercial genre; not for them the sanctified odor of "art for art's sake" or the Wagnerian ideal of *gestamkunstwerk*. Zarzuela was Spanish because it connected with the Spanish people. It connected with them musically, through the traditional use of folk music forms; but it also connected with them because it was commercial and people came to the theatre to see and hear it. For the zarzueleros, opera was a foreign import and something essentially outside the Spanish experience because it was an elite genre; zarzuela appealed to everybody. The proponents of zarzuela, virtually in a single stroke, created the gap between elite and popular culture in Spain. By placing zarzuela firmly on the popular side of the divide, they aligned zarzuela with the potential for mass mobilization inherent in nationalism and they relegated opera to an elite art form that had little contact with the reality of life for the majority of the population. In contrast, proponents of opera pushed for state subsidization of elite art;

but the Spanish government's lack of interest in nationalist mobilizing projects meant that this would not be a viable strategy.

Thus, the debate between opera and zarzuela marked the emergence of what I have termed "consumer nationalism" in Spain. Traditional state nationalism focuses on mobilizing the masses through the use of flags, holidays, and other invented traditions.[2] But the weakness of the Spanish state and its refusal to actually engage in any sort of politically mobilizing activity (since it was feared that this would disrupt the fragile Restoration political settlement) led to the development of the nationalism project in less obviously political realms, like the theatrical marketplace. But in order for this consumer nationalism to succeed, nationalist cultural forms had to be popular, not elite. That which wanted to be authentically Spanish had to be linked with popular culture. While proponents of both opera and zarzuela tried to make the connection between commercial success and nationalism, only zarzuela was successful in articulating a convincing case.

The Rise of Ópera Española

The idea of "Spanish opera" had been around as long there had been Spaniards writing operas. However, it was only in towards the middle of the nineteenth century that the idea of Spaniards writing operatic music became infused with the notion that music was somehow a part of the Spanish national identity. The beginning of the ópera española movement in the years around 1850 can be attributed to two sources. The first is the consolidation of the Romantic movement in music. Romanticism's

[2] The classic study of this is, of course, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983).

interest in nature and rural life quite frequently translated into an interest in folk music, which shared similar concerns. Although the use of folk music was to become more pronounced in the years after 1850, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, and Liszt had already made their first movements in this direction in early part of the century. After 1850, composers increasingly became interested in portraying nationality through their music, generally by quotations of folk music and Romantic evocations of rural life.

The appeal of folk music to nationalist composers was straightforward: it evoked the people, especially the rural population which had retained their traditional identities and had not been corrupted by the cosmopolitan influences of urban life.[3] Folk music projected the primordial and transcendental quality that nationalism constructs for itself by associating the people with musical forms that did not seem to have changed in centuries. The use of folk music to create nationalist forms of music was especially common in those countries that stood on the periphery of Europe's main musical circles: Russia, Bohemia, England, and Spain. Composers such as Modest Mussorgsky and Antonín Dvořák incorporated folk songs into their symphonic compositions and operas. It is perhaps of little surprise that these same countries also focused on creating nationalist schools of opera composition, whose choruses (often singing music derived from folk forms) represented the people of the nation, as they do in Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*. Choral singing, like folk music,

[3] See Philip V. Bohlman, "Landscape—Region—Nation—Reich: German Folk Song in the Nexus of German Identity" in Celia Applegate and Pamela Potter, eds., *German Music and National Identity* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2002), 108-110.

was assumed to be representative of the people and the traditions that nationalism was attempting to construct.[4]

The second source of the ópera española movement was the general upsurge in musical composition by Spaniards in the years around 1850. Much of this has already been discussed in Chapter 1 in regards to zarzuela, but a similar trend was to be found in operatic circles. For one thing, many of the composers who contributed to the development of zarzuela also composed operas, Emilio Arrieta being the most notable—and successful—example. But whereas zarzuela was successful, the quest for Spanish opera followed a slightly more rocky path. There were productions, meetings to discuss the question of Spanish opera, newspaper articles and pamphlets, and opera composition contests, but opera was something of a musical sideline, especially when measured against the number of performances at the Teatro Real in Madrid.[5]

The early performance history of the Teatro Real—the premiere venue for opera performance in the capital—neatly illustrates the challenges to establishing ópera española as a viable art form. The Real was originally planned as part of the rebuilding of the Plaza del Oriente in 1817; but construction was not started until the

[4] For an interesting account of the nexus between nationalism and choral singing in the later nineteenth century, focusing on both opera and religious music, see "The Voice of the People at the Moment of the Nation," Chapter 5 of Michael P. Steinberg's *Listening to Reason: Culture, Subjectivity, and Nineteenth-Century Music* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004), 163-192.

[5] For an excellent summary of this period, see Ramón Sobrino, "La ópera española entre 1850 y 1874," in Emilio Casares Rodicio and Álvaro Torrente, eds., *La ópera en España e Hispanoamérica*, vol. 2, (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 2002) 77-142.

1840s, and the first performance in the theatre was only held on 19 November 1850.[6] This performance was emblematic of things to come: the opera was Donizetti's *La Favorita*. This selection was made not by the theatre management, but by the contralto Marietta Alboni: it was part of her contract as the theatre's prima donna, and she sang the title role that evening. Attendance was by invitation only, and all of Madrid's aristocracy and high society was present (with the notable exception of the Duquesa de la Torre, whose husband was Queen Isabel II's current lover). The evening seems to have been a glittering success, but there was no popular audience present.

Although the Real was managed by the Spanish government in its first season, there was no effort to encourage the composition or performance of Spanish opera. This situation continued after the end of the first season when, management of the theatre was contracted to a private impresario due to enormous financial losses. The employees, however, continued to be paid by the Ministerio de la Gobernación (Ministry of the Interior), and the Real continued to receive subsidies from the government—the only theatre in the country that did so, a point that would become a bone of contention among the activists for Spanish music.[7]

Part of the reason for the Real's refusal to stage Spanish opera was that much of the choice regarding the repertory was left up to the artists. And most of those performers were Italian. The leads in *La Favorita*, who were the core of the singers of

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[6] There are numerous histories of the Teatro Real, but most are anecdotal compilations of limited scholarly value. The exception is Joaquín Turina Gómez's *Historia del Teatro Real* (Madrid: Alianza, 1997). For his account of the inauguration, see pages 75-81.

[7] For the early financial history of the Real, see Turina Gómez, 88-89.

that 1850-51 season, were Marietta Alboni, Herminia Frezzolini, Italo Gardoni and Paolo Barroilhet—all well-known Italian singers, and all of whom were paid rather large salaries. (Alboni's was over 10,000 reales a performance, an "exorbitant" sum for the time.)[8] Since the singers were Italian, it is not surprising the bulk of the repertory of the Real was Italian opera: that first season saw the performance of thirteen operas—seven by Donizetti, three by Bellini, two by Rossini, one by Verdi. What is slightly more surprising is that these were sung in Italian. It was traditional in the nineteenth century for operas to be translated into the national language when they crossed borders. However, the reliance of the Real on Italian singers prevented this—and the practice of Italian singing at the Real was perpetuated by the Royal Conservatory of Music, which trained the choristers to sing only in Italian and not in Spanish. When German or French operas were performed, they were always performed in an Italian translation.

These factors meant that works by Spanish composers were marginalized in the Real's repertory. Italian singers were often reluctant to learn new, non-repertory roles (especially as most of the singers who made their careers in Spain were either very young singers interested in learning the ropes of opera singing or somewhat over-the-hill singers trying to make enough money to pad out a comfortable retirement). The use of Italian singers also meant that Spanish operas had to be translated into Italian for performance. The Real took four seasons before it got around to staging a work by a Spanish composer: *Ildegonda* by Emilio Arrieta in April 1854. The work had been premiered in the private opera house of the Palacio Real in 1849, but this

[8] Turnia Gómez, 80.

was its first public performance. The work was given a cool reception and performed only twice. Like most Spanish operas in years to come, it was given only perfunctory rehearsal time and was staged at the tail end of the season, when the company was more or less exhausted.[9] Only one other opera by a Spanish composer made an appearance at the Real prior to 1870, Arrieta's *Isabel la Católica* in December 1855. It is probably not coincidental that Arrieta, as we shall see, was also considered the most Italian-influenced Spanish composer of the day; his music seemed at home in that temple to Italianophilia.

Things began to change at the Teatro Real in the 1870s. Italian singing and singers were still the order of the day, but there was an increase in the production of operas by Spanish composers. The turning point was the 1871 production of Arrieta's *Marina*. Ironically, *Marina* was not originally written as an opera: it had begun life as a zarzuela in the 1850s (its premiere was the same season as that of *Isabel la Católica*) and was adapted into an operatic form by the composer at the request of tenor Enrique Tamberlick.[10] The revision of *Marina* only held the boards for a season, but the production of Spanish operas became slightly more common at the Real. Valentín Zubiaurre's *Don Fernando el Emplazado* was staged at the end of the 1873-74 season, and Ruperto Chapí's *Las naves de Cortés* was given one performance as part of a benefit that same season. Chapí's *La hija de Jefté* was given in 1876, Zubiaurre's

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[9] Turina Gómez calls *Ildegonda* "a symbol, almost a curse" of how Spanish music was treated at the Real. See page 92.

[10] Tamberlick was one of the most celebrated tenors of the 1850s and 1860s in Europe. He was a notable exponent of Verdi's tenor roles (notably Manrico in *Il Trovatore*), and Verdi wrote the role of Alvaro in *La forza del destino* for him. See Charles Osborne, *Verdi: A Life in the Theatre* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 171-77. On the conversion of *Marina* to an opera and its reception, see María Cortiza Encino, *Emilio Arrieta: De la ópera a la zarzuela* (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1998), 417-430.

Leida in 1877, Chapí's *Roger de Flor* in 1878, and Emilio Serrano's *Mitridates* in 1882.

However, these Spanish operas were generally not well received by the critics, even though the reviews were frequently mixed; the works would then disappear from the repertory of the Teatro Real, never to be seen again. As a general rule, the libretti of Spanish operas were roundly castigated for their flaws—usually to the point that one must suspect the librettists of incompetence. The same few librettists keep turning up again and again, men like Antonio Arnao (who penned *Guzmán el Bueno* and *La hija de Jefté*) and Mariano Capdepón (who turned out *Mitridates* in addition to *El Príncipe de Viana*); their qualifications seem to have been based on enthusiasm or willingness rather than competence. Antonio Peña y Goñi's review of Arnao's work on *Guzmán el Bueno* accused the libretto of lacking both action and interest.[11] The critic for *La Epoca* accused Capdepón's libretto for *Mitridates* of failing to "fulfill the necessary conditions for being set to music."[12] Clearly, one of the main problems with ópera española was that the texts were simply unworthy of the composers for whom they were constructed.

However, the music of these Spanish operas also came in for much negative criticism. There was more understanding for the problems faced by the composers: they were usually forgiven due to a lack of experience, their failings chalked up to a lack of opportunity to see their music performed rather than any real lack of talent.

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[11] Antonio Peña y Goñi, "Una ópera española," *Ilustración Española y Americana*, 8 Dec. 1876. Interestingly, Peña y Goñi's evaluation of the music was that it revealed what Bretón would be capable of with a decent libretto—a positive assessment that is in stark contrast to the later relationship between the two.

[12] Goizueta, "Revista musical," *La Epoca*, 19 Jan. 1882.

The main problem with these works seems to be less with musical incompetence than with too much competence. The shadow of Wagner hung over many of these composers: *La Epoca* found the music to *Leida* to be rather too full of a "luxury of modulations in the orchestration," even though he otherwise he found much to admire in the work.[13] Although the same critic was less fond of *Mitridates* (finding the work heavy and dark), he acknowledged that its faults were those typical of a composer's first opera. (The major problem seems to have been that the heavy orchestration drowned out the singers—yet another charge routinely leveled against the operas of Wagner and his imitators.) As a general rule, the critics were far more enthusiastic about the operatic outputs of Bretón and Chapí, reflecting the greater talent and promise shown by these composers. Whatever its faults or merits, the critics seem to have been willing to give more leeway to Spanish operatic music—giving importance to aspiration over actual achievement. This was a noble stance, albeit one not likely to attract the average opera-goer.

The troubled early years of Spanish opera culminated in 1881 with the first attempt at staging a complete theatrical season of opera by the impresarios at the Teatro Apolo. The failure of the season illustrated the obstacles of creating a viable, popular, Spanish operatic tradition. There was the familiar critical appraisal of the quality of the works. As usual, the performers and the orchestra received warm reviews. Of the two main works on the bill, *¡Tierra!* (Land!) was generally passed over—it had been given previously at the Teatro de la Zarzuela, where it had received favorable reviews—and the critical focus was on Ruperto Chapí's *La serenata* (The

[13] Goizueta, "Revista musical," *La Epoca*, 30 Apr. 1877.

Serenade). Chapí's work was unusual in one respect: it was a comic opera, where most Spanish composers focused on serious material.

Within the reviews, however, one can find a certain tension over how to define the success of Spanish opera. The reviewers tended to dismiss the works on artistic grounds, but the audience response was enthusiastic. The critic for *La Epoca* went so far as to call *La serenata* "anti-musical."[14] The critic for *El Imparcial* also had harsh words for the libretto, but managed to put the problems into perspective: he noted that the main problem was that as the text was in Spanish, the audience was more likely to pay attention to the words—and thus the inanities of the libretto—than they would if the piece were sung in Italian.[15] José María Esperanza y Sola of the *Ilustración Española y Americana* set out the basic reason why Spanish opera was of such poor quality.[16] Although bad libretti were problematic, they were not the only possible answer to the failure of Spanish opera. Among other causes, Esperanza y Sola also tossed out the heretical possibilities that Spanish composers lacked the "virtue and abnegation" to abandon the commercial theatre and take up the important project—and he even suggested that Spanish composers might lack the musical genius to establish a nationalistic school of opera. He made it perfectly clear that there was a distinction to be made—and an important one—between art and commerce. When the review finally turned to the performance of *La serenata* it turned into a love letter for

[14] Goizueta, "Apertura del Teatro de Apolo," *La Epoca*, 6 Nov. 1881.
[15] "Los estrenos de anoche," *El Imparcial*, 6 Nov. 1881. It is interesting that nobody ever followed this train of thought to its logical conclusion and campaigned *for* Italian translations.
[16] J.M. Esperanza y Sola, "Revista Musical," *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 15 Nov. 1881. All subsequent quotations in this paragraph are drawn from this piece.

Chapí; the librettist was virtually ignored and his contribution was summed up in one word, "insipid."

But art and commerce might not have been that far apart. The critics acknowledged that Spanish opera was extremely popular with opening-night audiences. The music was not only positively, but rapturously received. *El Imparcial* noted that the audience for *La Serenata* could not be restrained from applauding even during the first notes of the piece, and this reception continued as the opera progressed.[17] The critic for this paper enjoyed the music as well, praising its originality and comic inventiveness, summing up the music as a "conversation in which one instrument answers another and one hears laughter, shouts [*ayes*], voices … animation and life."[18] Other critics agreed, one going so far as to put Chapí's piece on the same plain as Rossini's comic masterpiece *The Barber of Seville*.[19] Even so, the traditional critcal pattern was repeated: the music was well-liked but the text was dismissed.

But the Teatro Apolo season also revealed the paucity of available Spanish operas. The opening night had been erected on a flimsy foundation: an overture, two comic operas, and a ballet. There were two more one-act operas in reserve, but nothing more. By the end of the month, the endeavor failed financially and the theatre was taken over by a company producing verse dramas.[20] Ruperto Chapí, in an essay written close to a decade and a half after the event claimed that season had lasted

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[17] "Los estrenos de anoche," *El Imparcial*, 6 Nov. 1881.
[18] "Los estrenos de anoche," *El Imparcial*, 6 Nov. 1881.
[19] Goizueta, "Apertura del Teatro de Apolo," *La Epoca*, 6 Nov. 1881.
[20] See M.S., "Los teatros de Madrid," *Crónica de la Música*, 30 November 1881, 2-3.

fifteen or twenty performances—a highly respectable number, given that the standard run of a repertory opera at the Teatro Real was somewhere between four and seven performances in any given season—but that the impresario had lost the then-immense sum of 15,000 duros (approximately 75,000 pesetas).[21] More importantly, the failure of the season of ópera española at the Teatro Apolo doomed the commercial prospects for the production of native works. Although there was apparently a substantial audience for Spanish opera, there was simply not enough repertory to sustain more than occasional performances of such works in a commercial setting. And doubtless the music of the operas—which generally had more attraction to critics and academics than to the average opera-goer—contributed to this failure.

The lack of both artistic quality and a sufficient quantity of works to fulfill audience demand produced a commercial failure for Spanish opera. It was this basic problem that helped to open up the gap between elite and popular culture in Spain. The critics insisted on evaluating Spanish opera in the time-honored tradition of its artistic quality. But such quality, if not immaterial, was not the primary concern of the impresarios of the Teatro Apolo, who had seats to fill. The lack of artistic quality and the paucity of operas available for production only exacerbated the situation further. But the season at the Teatro Apolo would be the last time that anybody in Spanish musical circles would try to market "art" on a widespread scale. It had become clear that while ópera española was a noble idea, it was not one that could succeed in the new commercially driven atmosphere of the Spanish theatre. For opera to survive it

[21] Ruperto Chapí, "Historia de 'La Serenata'," *La Epoca*, 17 November 1895. To put this figure into perspective, the profit made by the Teatro Real for the *entire* 1881-1882 season was just under 125,000 pesetas (on an operating budget of just over 1.5 million pesetas). See Turnia Gómez, 141.

had to take refuge in its status as art, not in its commercial viability. It was this dynamic that would shape the subsequent debate over whether or not opera or zarzuela would be the authentically nationalist form of lyric theatre in Spain when the question of ópera española came to a head in early 1885.

El Príncipe de Viana and the Question of Spanish Opera

Tómas Fernández Grajal and his 1885 opera *El Príncipe de Viana* (The Prince of Viana) are now almost completely forgotten. It was this work, however, that was the catalyst that forced the proponents of zarzuela to clearly articulate its position as a nationalist genre and to create the split between elite and popular culture. The failure of the opera's original production opened a debate in which zarzuela was forced to clearly articulate its nationalist message. Ironically, for all the furor the opera aroused, it was penned by men whose fame was exceedingly fleeting. Fernández Grajal was a professor of composition at the Escuela Nacional de Música, whose career had only been distinguished by the first prize for composition from the Conservatorio de Madrid in 1863 and the composition of a cantata in honor of Verdi's visit to Madrid a few years later. The librettist, Mariano Capdepón, was a former military officer who had a distinguished career in the African and Second Carlist Wars, if not in literary matters. He had contributed libretti to two other attempts at Spanish opera, Ruperto Chapí's *Roger de Flor* in 1879 and Emilio Serrano's *Mitridates* in 1882.[22]

As might be expected of an opera that came from the pens of a literary dilettante and an undistinguished music professor, *El Príncipe de Viana* did not arouse

[22] The best biographical data on the authors of *El Príncipe de Viana* comes from "El príncipe de Viana," *El Liberal*, 3 March 1885.

great admiration from critics or audiences at its premiere on 2 February 1885. The libretto was dismissed as "languid, without movement, without interest or situations."[23] The music was dismissed as being an inferior copy of Italian opera: the critic for *La Época* pegged Fernández Grajal as being "a disciple of Donizetti, although not one of the better ones."[24] Worse was the fact that the music was not only derivative, but academically pedantic to boot. The critic for *El Imparcial* felt the orchestration and the development of the opera's main musical themes were well done, but even he could not find "a single moment of inspiration" in the opera; it lacked "a predominant style … vagueness reigns throughout the work, a colorless tint and identity to the tonality that fatigues the attention and shipwrecks any delicate melody" that might have turned up.[25] It is perhaps not surprising that the audience (which included the royal family) reacted coolly to the work, applauding only two or three numbers which displayed a "satisfactory success."[26] *El Príncipe de Viana* received only three performances at the Teatro Real before it joined the ranks of forgotten operas.

The reason why such a remarkably weak work was even performed at all lies in the regulations of the Teatro Real and the conditions by which impresarios could rent the theatre. The sixth clause of the Real's standard contract stated that the production of a new opera in at least three acts by a Spanish composer was required

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[23] "Sección de espectáculos," *El Imparcial*, 3 Feb. 1885. There is a fairly full description of the plot in "El Príncipe de Viana," *La Época*, 31 Jan. 1885 which backs up this statement; it also includes the text of the third act love duet, which is stilted and clichéd—even by Italian opera standards.
[24] Ariel, "Teatro Real: Estreno de «El Príncipe de Viana», *La Época*, 3 Feb. 1885.
[25] "Sección de espectáculos," *El Imparcial*, 3 Feb. 1885.
[26] "El príncipe de Viana," *El Liberal*, 3 Feb. 1885.

each season.[27] This work was to be selected by a jury of five composers selected by the Impresario of the Teatro Real and the Ministerio de Hacienda. *El Príncipe de Viana* was one of two works submitted for consideration during the 1883-1884 season. The selection jury (headed by composer Emilio Arrieta) credited the work as having an "uncommon artistic intelligence," although one cannot help but suspect that more practical considerations might have played a role as well—Fernández Grajal had already orchestrated his work, while his competitor had only submitted a piano-vocal score.[28] However, in March 1884 the Teatro Real decided to postpone the premiere, citing the problems of staging a new and unknown work. When the Real attempted to postpone the work again in December, the authors petitioned the jury to intervene and force the impresario to start rehearsals of the work within twenty days. This apparently had the desired effect, as the work had its premiere just over one month later. The Madrid critics tied the problems with the work to its status as a contractual obligation: the review in *El Liberal* noted that the majority of the music was greeted with "*protectionist* manifestations," while *La Época* argued that a production at the Real "ought to mark the highest level of genius and musical art in our country"—which this production clearly did not.[29] *El Príncipe de Viana* might have died a quiet death, had it not been for the composer Tómas Bretón.

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[27] See "Expediente relativo al cumplimiento de la cláusula 6ª del contrato de arrendamiento, en la temporada de 1883 á 84 concerniente á la representación de una opera nueva española," Archivo General de la Administración (hereafter AGA), 5.31/6903 No. 9. This file traces the saga of *El Príncipe de Viana* from it submission to the Ministerio de Hacienda to the first performance, and the following paragraph is drawn from this.

[28] On the other hand, given the tepid reception of *El Príncipe de Viana*, one hesitates to imagine what the musical qualities of the losing opera must have been.

[29] "El príncipe de Viana," *El Liberal*, 3 Feb. 1885; "Sección de espectáculos," *La Época*, 3 Feb. 1885.

In 1885 Bretón was a rapidly rising composer with a solid record of compositions behind him.[30] Born to a shoemaker in Salamanca in 1850, Bretón showed an early aptitude for music, and began to realize his musical career by a standard nineteenth-century career path: study at a provincial academy, followed by jobs as an orchestral musician in Madrid. His first opera, *Guzman el Bueno*, was performed at the Teatro Apolo in 1875 (having been rejected by the Real), and its prelude became his calling card in Madrid's musical society. He attracted the attention of the Royal Family (writing a hymn for the wedding of Alfonso XII in 1878), and in 1881 was awarded a pension from the Privy Purse for study in Italy. His years abroad—which included extended stays in Italy, Germany and France—opened his eyes to more European musical theory than he otherwise would have encountered in Madrid; it was at this time Bretón became a converted Wagnerite and began to develop his own theories about opera. He returned to Madrid in 1884 and had several of his works performed by the Sociedad de Conciertos: he was well received as a composer and conductor, and in January of 1885 he visited the offices of the daily *El Liberal*, apparently with the view of contributing some music criticism.[31]

Bretón's response to the negative reception of his opera was not to defend the artistic value of the work; he instead launched an attack on what he viewed as Spanish

[30] The following biographical sketch is drawn from Gabriel Hernández Gonzalez (Javier de Montillana), *Bretón* (Salamanca: Talleres Graficos Nuñez, 1952). The fact that this is virtually the only full-length biography of one of the most important nineteenth-century Spanish composers is evidence of the scale of the problems facing those who wish to study Spanish music.

[31] See the notes for 1-6 January 1885 in Bretón's *Diario (1881-1888)*, ed. Jacinto Torres Mulas, 2 vols. (Madrid: Acento Editorial, 1995), 2:433.

opera's main weakness—lack of state support. Bretón laid the fact that artists had trouble creating viable operas squarely at the feet of Spain's politicians:

> ...in other countries there are no such politicians as those who wish to make us happy in Spain; so many mutinies and coups [*pronunciamiento*] those gentlemen give us to demonstrate the goodness of their ideas, so many bullfights consume the wisdom of the Spanish public, lowering our intellectual level in the eyes of the civilized world again and again … Yes, it is difficult to create national opera! [32]

Bretón argues that while the Spanish state spends inordinate amounts of money on entertainments such as bullfights, it neglects to fund the arts, driving painters and composers away to Rome and Paris to study and work, for in those places they have a better chance of being recognized as artists and gaining recompense for their work. He compares this nineteenth-century version of "brain-drain" to the exile of the Israelites and can only conclude that Spain will be the worse for it: "Poor nation, dedicated exclusively to politics and to bulls!"

Implicit in Bretón's argument was the idea that Spanish opera needed to be supported as both an artistic and a nationalistic endeavor. State subsidies were what would provide the impetus for an elite cultural genre like opera to become fully nationalistic. Bretón steers away from any discussion of artistic value at all—not only of the opera in question, but of Spanish opera in general.[33] According to Bretón's

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[32] Tomás Bretón, "El príncipe de Viana," *El Liberal*, 7 Feb. 1885. All subsequent quotations in this paragraph come from this article.

[33] In fact Bretón tells us very little about whether he found anything to admire in Fernández Grajal's music. The notes for February 1885 in his diary indicate that he was initially disposed to write a straightforward review, and that he changed his mind only after seeing the general reaction to the work, indicating he found something worthwhile there; see the *Diaro*, 2:433. It may also be worth noting here that the tone and phrasing of many of the charges leveled at the opera were not only charges that were routinely leveled at Bretón's compositions in later years, but were the stock

logic, art must be supported no matter what the quality simply because it is art and therefore of some value to the nation. Bretón also assumes from the outset that this question of art is an inherently political one. Because it is Spanish art—and therefore national art—Bretón assumes that the Spanish state has an inherent interest in supporting the ópera española project. Without this support, both Spanish art and the Spain itself will become much weaker as its best and brightest talents travel abroad to achieve their artistic goals.

The rebuttal to Bretón's defense of opera came from Antonio Peña y Goñi, who established a different set of criteria for determining the nationalism of a lyric theatre genre—namely, its popularity. Peña y Goñi, a native of San Sebastian, had originally studied composition at the Conservatorio de Madrid; subsequently he went to work for the musical press in Madrid in 1869. By the mid-1880s he was one of the most eminent music critics in the country, working mainly for the daily *El Imparcial* and the weekly *Ilustración Española y Americana*. (In addition, he was also one of the eminent taurine writers of the day.) Like Bretón, he too had been bitten by the Wagner bug; but he was also extremely interested in the history of Spanish music, and was one of the first people to take zarzuela seriously as an art form.[34] It was this last preoccupation that formed the basis for his violent rebuttal of Bretón's claims.

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characterizations of Wagnerian music in Europe at this time; perhaps Bretón saw in Fernández Grajal a potentially kindred spirit.

[34] For a basic biographical sketch of Peña y Goñi, see Emilio Casares Rodicio, "La crítica musical en el XIX español. Panorama general," in Emilio Casares Rodicio and Celsa Alonso González, eds., *La música española en el siglo XIX* (Oviedo: U de Oviedo, 1995), 482-84. See also Gómez Amat, *Historia de la música española*, 237-38.

Peña y Goñi's critique of Bretón was based on a claim that artistic value was proved by commercial success, not state subsidy. Peña y Goñi's polemic, entitled "Contra la ópera española" (Against Spanish Opera)—not a title designed to comfort anybody involved in this debate—first appeared as a series of articles in the weekly *Madrid Cómico* between 15 February and 29 March 1885; it was later published as a pamphlet. His main criticism rested upon the fact that the government could not mandate genius:

> The assurance of Mr. Bretón is truly consoling, because it provides for Spanish composers a road in which the impulses of genius and talent need not enter, as has been usual and customary until now; rather, one is carried by the hand of public opinion and the Government. When the people and the administration say "I desire Spanish opera and Spanish opera must be made immediately," all it will be is a question of form and procedure.[35]

For Peña y Goñi, art could never be a government matter, for it was genius and not funding that created art—primarily because he feared that government funded art would only bequeath to posterity an art made by minorities and not worthy compositions. It is not that Peña y Goñi felt that government support was worthless—he cites the example of Weber's *Freischütz* and Gounoud's *Faust* as examples of operas that would not have been written without governmental assistance—but that such aid could not be an end in itself. He feared that the Bretón formula would result in operas that would be made like "a pair of boots," compositions reduced to a question of "mixing ingredients or uniting materials."[36] He almost certainly had the

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[35] Peña y Goñi, *Contra la ópera española*, 13-14.

[36] Peña y Goñi, *Contra la ópera española*, 15. As with much of Peña y Goñi's writing, this was vitriolic; Bretón noted that it "gave me a ferocious slap," and it may well have been this article that

tepid reception of *El Príncipe de Viana* in mind while arguing this. By arguing for the role of talent and genius, Peña y Goñi was arguing that a truly nationalist genre of theatre would have to succeed commercially, since talent was ratified by critical and commercial success.[37]

From this perspective, it was zarzuela that exhibited talent and nationalist sentiment. For Peña y Goñi, zarzuela was a "great national glory, and will probably be the most important artistic-musical conquest of the present century."[38] Most importantly, it was an art form that had succeeded commercially and thus been seen by many and not the relatively few aristocratic patrons of the Teatro Real.[39] Where Bretón clamed that Spanish opera was only just being born, Peña y Goñi notes that zarzuela had a long commercial tradition that simply could not be ignored: "Zarzuela in Spain is an institution; it has a body, it has an economy, it has all the conditions of that which is living and is in movement. This is our house, this is our home and we ought to be working on it constantly, rather than asking the Teatro Real for humiliating charity…"[40] Peña y Goñi quite clearly delineated that opera was an art form created by and for members of an artistic and cultural elite. Zarzuela, by

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poisoned the relationship between the two—certainly, they never had many kind words for each other afterwards.

[37] In an interesting psychological sidelight, Peña y Goñi had also suggested that Bretón's advocacy of opera and ignoring the merits of zarzuela stemmed from the failure of all his works in that genre, an idea which may have some merit. Although Bretón wrote numerous zarzuelas, almost all were failures—the magnificent exception being, of course, *La verbena de la Paloma* in 1894. See Peña y Goñi, *Contra la ópera española,* 27.

[38] Peña y Goñi, *Contra la ópera española*, 15.

[39] Admittedly, the audience at the Real was not completely aristocratic; there were a fair number of seats that went to less well-off patrons in the upper balcony. Even so, the audience who sat here was predominately middle-class; less wealthy patrons such as students and government clerks could only gain admittance by joining the claque. Benito Pérez Galdós left a vivid picture of the audience in the upper reaches of the Real in his novel *Miau*.

[40] Peña y Goñi, *Contra la ópera española*, 39-40.

contrast, was something that everybody in Spain could (and in fact did) enjoy equally. In the wake of *El Príncipe de Viana*, Peña y Goñi clearly articulated that there was a divide between elite and popular culture in Spain—and that the more authentically Spanish genre of lyric theatre would have to be on the popular side of that divide.

In this debate, Peña y Goñi's position was clearly enhanced by the poor quality of *El Príncipe de Viana*: it was exactly the sort of official, state-sponsored art that Bretón believed was crucial for a nationalist lyric theatre genre, but it was hardly an example of genius. Commercially, it failed utterly: it lacked the talent to take hold of the imagination of the Spanish people, become a commercial success, and become a popular way of communicating national identity—as Peña y Goñi demanded a nationalistic genre do. But the poor quality of *El Príncipe de Viana* did not automatically mean that elite art forms could not be commercially successful; elsewhere in Europe, elite forms of art became accepted ways of mobilizing the population behind a nationalist message.[41] The obvious question to ask, then, is why did this not happen in Spain? As a further examination of Bretón's arguments will make clear, the placement of ópera española into the camp of elite culture forced its advocates to build their arguments around questions of language and the universality of art—which, not unnaturally, lead to a dilution of the nationalist message that Bretón and his compatriots were trying to disseminate. Nationalism came to be associated with popular, not elite culture. Consequently, opera would not be seen as nationalist; zarzuela would.

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[41] See George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1971).

The Language of Music

Bretón's defense of Spanish opera would seem to place him on solid ground in regards to nineteenth-century nationalism; nationalist operas using national languages were being composed all across Europe. But Bretón had fallen under the spell of the German composer and opera theorist Richard Wagner. One of Wagner's avowed goals was to put an end to the flashy vocalism of Italian opera and create opera in which language and music fused into a musico-dramatic whole. Opera was meant to recreate mythic stories that would uplift and transform the audience; to do so, opera had to merge language and music into a unified whole. Just as language was crucial to the building of national identity in the nineteenth century, it was central to the new visions of musical art in the same period.

But adopting Wagnerian principles pushed Bretón into an awkward situation. Bretón was emphatically concerned with nationalist opera. Wagner, while a committed German nationalist, was much more concerned that his art achieve some sort of universal quality. Opera was supposed to communicate mythic truths that would apply to all mankind, not just one nation. Wagnerism unhinged Bretón's nationalist arguments: Bretón tried to insist—both in his polemics as well as in his opera *Los amantes de Teruel*—that it was the language of an opera's libretto that could make a universal music drama nationalist. But Wagnerism insisted on the universality, not the nationality of art. Bretón was trying to square the circle, and the

end result was only to confirm opera as a rarified, non-popular, non-nationalist form of art.[42]

Opera and zarzuela are (as Luis G. Iberni has pointed out) two different possible ways of expressing drama: drama expressed either wholly or only partially through music.[43] Wagner's theories of opera linked the language of the libretto directly with the music of a work. Whereas traditionally (especially in the Italian tradition) the libretto was written first and then set by the composer almost independently, the universal art that Wagner was proposing had to mesh and meld language and music. Wagner himself summed things up this way: "But where the thing prepared for is to become a reality, where the poet no longer has to separate and compare … there he can no longer work with the merely shadowing, explounding [sic] word speech, *except he so enhance it* as he has already enhanced the motive: and this he can only do by pouring it into tone speech."[44] Opera had to pay much greater attention to the language of the libretto than zarzuela, since it worked closely with the music in order to create the work of art that composers were supposed to aspire to. Opera, in the Wagnerian view, was more than the music: it was the sum of music and words together.

Tómas Bretón took Wagner's arguments and applied them to the question of ópera española. The clearest explanation of his views is featured in his address to

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[42] For another example of how nationalist musicians dealt with the spectre of Wagner, see Steven Huebner, *French Opera at the Fin de Siècle: Wagnerism, Nationalism, and Style* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999).

[43] Luis G. Iberni. "Controversias entre ópera y zarzuela en la España de la Restauración," *Cuadernos de música iberoamericana* 2-3 (1996-1997), 157.

[44] Richard Wagner, *Wagner on Music and Drama: A Compendium of Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, ed. Albert Goldman and Evert Sprinchorn (New York: Dutton, 1964; New York: Da Capo, 1988), 196.

Real Academia de San Fernando de Bellas Artes upon his election to that body in 1896. His argument here hinges on what the French considered nationalist opera—a tricky subject, since French opera had not only developed out of the Italian school, but many of the most eminent composers of French opera were of non-French origins. Gluck, Piccini, Spontini, and Meyerbeer fell into this category, and Bretón also mentions other non-French composers who wrote operas in the "French" style, such as Mozart, Rossini, Weber, Donizetti, Verdi, and even Wagner.[45] With this, it becomes fairly obvious that Bretón thinks that neither compositional style nor nationality of the composer have anything to do with the national identity of an opera. What made the works of those composers somehow "French" was the fact that they were all sung in French. In fact, this leads Bretón to an interesting conclusion, one that is logically born out by his arguments—although Bretón never followed it to its logical conclusion: "the most materially national opera does not exist anywhere; that which gives the stated meaning to the aspired-to adjective, is the fact that the general repertory is sung in the language of the land; the fact that the interpreters that perform and the complex instruments that are necessary for its execution, are national whenever possible."[46] Bretón's argument is unfortunate from the Wagnerian point of view: it detaches language from music for the purpose of turning universal art into nationalist art.

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[45] Tomás Bretón, *Discursos leídos ante la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando en la recepción pública del Ilmo. Sr. D. Tomás Bretón* (Madrid: Hijos de José M. Ducazcal, 1896) as reprinted in Tomás Bretón, *La Ópera Nacional* (Madrid: Música mundana, 1985), 42.

[46] Bretón, *Discursos*, 43.

Bretón wanted to use language to create a nationalist form of art, but he inadvertently ends up arguing that art simply cannot be nationalist. The interpretation of an art form might be nationally influenced due to language or performance style, but the art itself remains positioned high above these questions of interpretation and utility. In Bretón's argument art triumphs over more crass—and commercial—forms of nationalism: there is no such thing as opera that is somehow organically nationalist, because opera is an art form, and not something subjected to popular pressure. If Bretón's alignment of opera with the idea of "art" seems like standard operating procedure from the standpoint of the twenty-first century, it is worth remembering that from the standpoint of the late nineteenth century, where opera fell on the commercialism versus art spectrum was still very much in flux.[47] Opera before Wagner had been very much a popular entertainment heavily subject to commercial pressures. But Bretón's stress on opera as an art, not as a commercial product, placed him squarely in the progressivist Wagnerian camp of opera as "music-drama," as does his insistence regarding the universality of such art. Ironically, his attempt at creating nationalist art only reinforces the universality of Wagnerian opera theory

Bretón made a practical attempt at implementing his arguments with the composition of *Los amantes de Teruel* (The Lovers from Teruel), based on the 1837 Romantic drama by Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch. The opera was a clear attempt to put universalist theories of art in the service of a nationalist story. Hartzenbusch's play, a

[47] For one discussion of how opera's position on this spectrum influenced performance practices, see Anselm Gerhard, *The Urbanization of Opera: Music Theatre in Paris in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Mary Whittall (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998), 405-06. Although Gerhard is here referring to French grand opera, cutting and interpolation was also common in Italy until late in the century.

variation on a Romeo-and-Juliet style legend from thirteenth-century Aragón, was one of the pillars of Spanish Romantic drama, along with *Don Alvaro o la fuerza del sino*, *El Trovador*, and *Don Juan Tenorio*.[48] Bretón first became enamored of the play in mid-1883, and in the autumn of 1884 had submitted the work to the jury that would choose the Spanish work for the Teatro Real for that season. The work was not staged until February 1889: the vicissitudes of staging operas by Spanish composers were at work once again, this time in a particularly virulent form (as will be seen below).

Los amantes de Teruel was composed under the shadow of Wagner: Bretón had begun reading Wagner's *Oper und Drama* in early 1883—perhaps inspired by the composer's death in Milan on 13 February—while he was still looking for a suitable work on which to base an opera libretto. However, Bretón was an imperfect Wagnerite: "Wagner is not the truth, I at least think so, but nevertheless, he fills the world and all, or a large part of composers try to imitate him, closing the door on what is intended to be or should be simple and clear."[49] The path Bretón chose to chart was one that lay somewhere between the harmonics of Wagner and the free-flowing vocalism of the Italian school.[50] Bretón used *leitmotivs* of a sort to compose his work, but incorporated them as themes which crop up at various points in the opera, rather than as musical components that are reiterated and changed across the opera. (The

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[48] Spanish Romantic drama was an operatic gold mine: Verdi two the first two plays into operas, *La forza del destino* and *Il Trovatore* respectively. For more information on the Hartzenbusch play, including background on the legend, see the "Introducción" by Carmen Iranzo to Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch, *Los amantes de Teruel*, ed. Carmen Iranzo (Madrid: Cátedra, 1998).

[49] Bretón, *Diario*, 22 August 1882, 1:164.

[50] For a brief analysis of how this works, see Francesc Bonastre's introduction to Tomás Bretón, *Los amantes de Teruel: Drama lírico en cuatro actos y un prologo* (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1998), xiv-xv (Spanish) or xxiv-xxv (English). I have borrowed my analysis from this source.

effect is closer to Puccini's *Tosca* than to *Götterdämmerung*.) Bretón's vocal lines are often flowing rather than declamatory, as much of Wagner's vocal writing tends to be—but they never overflow in vocalism for vocalism's sake, as Italian opera often does. In short, Bretón sought to create a Wagnerian music drama in *Los amantes*, but without much of the compositional hallmarks of the German composer. It was an attempt to place universal theories of art at the service of a national story.

This attempt to write an opera that was both universal and nationalist probably influenced Bretón's other important musical choice in composing *Los amanates de Teruel*. The work was based on one of Spain's most revered plays which in turn was based on one of Spain's most cherished fables: in a certain sense, *Los amantes* had the potential to be the ópera española *par excellence*. However, Bretón chose not to use folk melodies or otherwise ostensibly Spanish-sounding music in the score. The only use of local color is the mock-Moorish march that ushers in the first-act finale (No. 9 in the vocal score), one of those pieces of late-nineteenth century exotica that were used to mark off characters from foreign climes. (Borodin's "Polovtsian Dances" from *Prince Igor* or Verdi's ballet music for *Aida* comes to mind.) The purpose and effect is orientalist rather than nationalist.[51] Although European composers (Spaniards among them) had a tendency to use "Moorish" music as a way to musically represent Spain, the effect here is to mark off the character of Zulima (an Arabian princess whose manipulations of the hero drive much of the plot of the Hartzenbusch play and Bretón's libretto) as an outsider. Nationalism through music alone is not the issue.

[51] The classic analysis of how such orientalism in lyric theatre works is Ralph P. Locke's "Constructing the Oriental 'Other': Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila*," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 3 (1991), 261-302.

And as usual with Bretón, when questions of nationalism in music arose over *Los amantes de Teruel*, they arose over the question of language. The production history of his opera is an object lesson in the potential strengths of Bretón's arguments, since the jury assembled to asses the opera attempted to deny its production based on the language of Bretón's text. The jury's reception of the work made it clear that language, not music, had become the crucial factor in determining the worth of opera in Spain. Bretón submitted the score and libretto of the work on 28 October 1884 for consideration as the contractual obligation to produce a new Spanish opera for the 1884-85 season.[52] The required jury report was not issued until April 1885 (even though the contractual obligation was to premiere the selected opera by 1 March). The most significant request made by the jury was that Bretón was requested to translate the libretto into Italian—not a simple translation, but "an arrangement based on the [libretto] composed by Señor Bretón, with the greatest conditions of scenic sobriety, and always inspired by the ideas of the magnificent drama by the immortal Hartzenbusch." The jury's charge, that the libretto deviated too far from the source material, seems to have been slightly trumped-up. The work's cool reception may also be due in part to Bretón's unpopularity in Madrid musical circles: the jury was headed by Emilio Arrieta, with whom Bretón had fallen out the previous year over a music prize.[53]

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[52] Except as noted, the production history of *Los amantes de Teruel* has been drawn from the "Expediente relativo al cumplimiento de la cláusula 6ª del contrato de arrendamiento en la temporada de 1884-1885 concerniente á la representación de una ópera nueva española," AGA 5.31/6909 No. 2.

[53] See Bretón, *Diario*, 15-23 June 1884, 1:404-06.

This evaluation of his work brought out the worst in Bretón. In a letter to the Ministerio de Hacienda he claimed the jury had been composed illegally: it had only two composers instead of the required three, and it had turned in the report late. Furthermore, it made its judgment and subsequent acceptance of the work by the Real on literary terms, when by terms of the contract it was supposed to focus only on the musical qualities of the work—and it had made the literary evaluation a basis for demanding revisions of the work when none of the judges had any literary qualifications. He also pointed out the essential irrelevancy of the charges, asking if artists "cannot borrow some new element that has not been employed by the cited illustrious poet?"[54] Again, Bretón chose not fight on musical grounds, but on strictly literary ones that focused on what an artist was allowed to do. There is no mention of the musical changes he was asked to make in his complaints; he instead focuses on the composition of the libretto.

Bretón's complaints lead to the appointment of a second jury (headed again by Arrieta) to consider the work. Its report, issued in June of 1885, repeated many of the same charges. It reproduced large chunks of the libretto verbatim, noting that the only literary qualification need to see its problems was knowledge of "the rudiments of Castillian grammar."[55] It also actively mocked the translation Bretón had commissioned of the libretto, claiming it "is sure to make all of the Italian singers laugh, from the Prima Donna to the last chorister." The jury also expanded upon their objections to the opera's music, claiming that it would be far too difficult for a

[54] Letter from Tomás Bretón to the Ministro de Hacienda, 7 March 1886, AGA 5.31/6909 No. 19.
[55] Untitled Jury Report, 23 June 1886, AGA 5.31/6909.

standard opera house orchestra to perform. But these spilled over into criticism of Bretón's compositional style, claiming "he frequently abuses the chromatic genre"—the jury noted that Bretón was aspiring to the universal musico-dramatic pretensions of Wagner but that he did not have "the elevated literary or musical talents" to achieve this. The jury summed up with the harsh conclusion that Bretón was primarily a symphonic composer and that it was not "decorous" that Bretón was "found to be so enamored of the words and music of his opera that he will not admit a priori the suppression of a syllable nor a semiquaver"—and that *Los amantes* was not to be admitted to the repertory of the Teatro Real.

The situation had reached a stalemate and stayed this way for two years. *Los amantes* was only produced at the Teatro Real after the intervention of Bretón's patron, the Conde de Morphy (and possibly members of the royal family—a memo exists indicating the Queen Regent's interest in the work).[56] The premiere, on 12 February 1889, left the critics were divided. Morphy, not unnaturally, thought the work was "*the decisive point of departure in the history of nationalist lyric drama"*; Peña y Goñi, also not unnaturally, took the opposite view, claiming that the music—in contrast to the saying the music sooths the savage beast—would turn animals into vermin.[57] The less partisan critics were pleased, but with reservations: Esperanza y Sola thought highly of the music but agreed with the jury that cuts could be made

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[56] Unattributed memo to the Conservador del Teatro Real, 24 March 1888, AGA 5.31/6909.

[57] Guillermo Morphy, "Los amantes de Teruel," *La Epoca*, 8 March 1889 (the italics are Morphy's); Antonio Peña y Goñi, "'Los amantes de Teruel' y el Señor Conde de Morphy," *La Epoca*, 9 March 1889. Peña y Goñi later adapted some of his critical pieces in pamplet form, published as *Estudio crítico de* Los amantes de Teruel *de D. Tomás Bretón* (Madrid: José M. Ducazcal, 1889). It should also be noted that in the above quote, he uses the phrase "músic domestica á las fieras," a slight (if standard) mistranslation of the original that "music sooths the savage breast."

without damaging the work, which he found overlong.[58] Even the wildly enthusiastic notice in *El Imparcial* managed to be rather backhanded (although to be fair, this was probably unconscious): it claimed that the work was the best opera written in Spain thus far—given the competition, this is hardly a glowing endorsement—and that Bretón had successfully emulated French and German composers, hardly what most nationalist composers would hope to hear.[59]

The saga of *Los amantes de Teruel* makes clear just how dependent the question of the nationalism in Spanish opera had become on the language of the text and not its music. Although the jury had criticisms of the music of the opera, the focus of the dispute came to be the libretto. This was probably unavoidable given the conjunction of the standard critical focus on the quality of the libretti of Spanish operas and the long-standing bone of contention over the language of opera libretti as produced at the Teatro Real. Public attention had come to focus on language forms as crucial to defining the viability of ópera española. Bretón and the other composers of the ópera española movement had musically and artistically identified themselves as allies of Wagnerism. Bretón had to fight for his libretto because language was as important to a work of art as the music was. Ironically, the music became of vastly lesser importance—which was a rather necessary argument, since all of the ópera española composers other than Bretón seem to have been, at best, amateurish. Better, then, to focus on the fact that Spanish composers were creating works of art, not

[58] J.M Esperanza y Sola, "Revista Musical," *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 8 March 1889.
[59] "Sección de espectáculos," *El Imparcial*, 3 March 1889.

commercial pieces of music that would have to succeed with the public in order to spread their message of nationalism.

At the end of the day, what are we to make of Bretón's stance on nationalism and the question of Spanish opera? For both in his compositional practices and his academic discourses, Bretón rejects the idea that art can somehow be linked to nationality even as he tried to defend ópera española. His life was dedicated to promoting the universality of art, as he once admitted to the Ateneo of Madrid: "He who argues for *the universality of art* cannot be faulted, that the limitations and borders that oppose it are chimerical and trivial, that the great personalities who illustrate the principle fill the world, not this nor that country [pueblo], etc., etc., etc."[60] In this, Bretón echoes one of Wagner's more obviously Schopenhauerian moments: "We can but take it that the *individual will*, silenced in the plastic artist through pure beholding, awakes in the musician as the *universal will*, and—above and beyond all power of vision—now recognizes itself as such in full self-consciousness."[61] Art is not about individual vision, but about something larger that will inspire all of mankind. Thus art could not be nationalist, for that would limit its scope and its very right to be called art. Nationalism would undermine the universal validity of a work of art; a nationalist opera would, in this sense, cease to be art.

It was one thing for Richard Wagner to make this argument. In Germany there was a long cultural tradition that music, in its very essence, was intrinsically German. Thus, there was actually no contradiction in German composer arguing that music

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[60] Tomás Bretón, *Conferencias musicales leídas en el Ateneo de Madrid* (Madrid: Ciudad Lineal, n.d.) reprinted in Tomás Bretón, *La Ópera Nacional* (Madrid: Música mundana, 1985), 70.
[61] Wagner, 184.

could appeal both as universal art and as a nationalist phenomenon at the same time.[62] Bretón attempted a similar argument, but ran into problems caused by the very different cultural traditions in Spanish music. In Spain, dramatic music had always been expected to prove it worth by attracting a paying audience; the court operas of central Europe had no equivalent on the Iberian Peninsula. Lyric theatre in Spain had to sell tickets and could only be universal insofar as this did not diminish the returns at the box office. Bretón had boxed opera into a corner by stressing its artistic universality; it would be up to the advocates of zarzuela to argue that a true nationalist genre of lyric theatre would have to appeal to a wider audience than the rarified examples of Spanish modernism on display at the Teatro Real.

Music as Nationalism: The Case for Zarzuela

If Tómas Bretón ended up by wrapping himself into argumentative knots over the contradictions between universality and nationalism, Antonio Peña y Goñi faced no such dilemma when articulating the case that zarzuela was Spain's nationalist lyric theatre genre. The advocates for zarzuela did not think of the genre as an art form; rather, they embraced the commercial aspects of the genre when staking their claim. Zarzuela was nationalist because it appealed to a large number of people. And what made it appealing was the music, which was drawn from popular elements and thus had a wider appeal than the modernistic modulations of ópera española. Furthermore, zarzuela had a rich history of appealing to the Spanish people: unlike Bretón's ivory

[62] Pamela Potter has explored this seeming contradiction in "National or Universal? The Case of German Music," a paper presented at the 120th Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association (Philadelphia, 7 January 2006).

tower geniuses, zarzuela composers proved their genius by writing works that were appealing to a broad range of the population. For Peña y Goñi, genius was not isolated. It worked within the context of the Spanish theatre to create works that would broadly appeal to the patrons of that milieu.

Peña y Goñi's fullest statement of his arguments in favor of zarzuela (much of which was actually distilled into his attack on Bretón in 1885) is to be found in his magnum opus, *La ópera española y la música dramática en España en el siglo XIX* (Spanish Opera and Dramatic Music in Nineteenth Century Spain), a massive if occasionally scattershot work of music history. He opened the work with this salvo: "Does Spanish Opera exist? No; Spanish Opera does not exist; Spanish Opera has never existed."[63] His primary argument for this exceedingly broad claim was that Spain lacked a national tradition for opera; in this vacuum, any pretence to nationalist music simply could not exist. Isolated geniuses could create valid works, but it was only with the accumulation of tradition that a fully nationalist art—like opera in France, Germany, or Italy—could develop. Or, as Peña y Goñi elegantly put it, "if Nationalist Opera does not contain and synthesize the aspirations, inclinations and artistic culture of a people, can it be called nationalist?"[64] Peña y Goñi did not discount the notion that individual genius was necessary to create a lyric work; but genius proved its worth by creating music within a recognizable framework. Genius did not haul off in unforeseen artistic directions. Instead, it used the traditions and

[63] Antonio Peña y Goñi, *La ópera española y la música dramática en España en el siglo XIX. Apuntes históricos*, (Madrid: Imprenta y estereotipia de El Liberal, 1881), 14.
[64] Peña y Goñi, *Opera española*, 21.

customs of the nation in order to create a work that would be appealing on a very broad scale.

So potent was this argument that Peña y Goñi went even further and rejected the traditional foundational myth of zarzuela. Most who discussed the subject eventually traced zarzuela's roots to performances of theatrical works at the Palacio de la Zarzuela during the reign of Philip IV. This term was rapidly used to distinguish Spanish lyric theatre from that new import from Italy, opera. In the early seventeenth century the only real distinction between the forms was that zarzuela used dialogue while opera was through-sung. The distinctions would become greater as time passed, and it was these increasing distinctions that Peña y Goñi seized upon in his argument. For him, "the zarzuela born in the Pardo Palace does not represent, nor could rationally represent the foundation of a completely new lyric-dramatic spectacle in Spain."[65] Italian opera had killed off the original zarzuela, since both had been too similar to be distinguished from one another.

So, what to call the present form of zarzuela? For Peña y Goñi, it deserved a new name because it was a new form of music:

> *Consumatum est*; we have our own music, we have musical nationality, we had realized an act *without precedent in the history of Spanish dramatic music*. I intentionally repeat, without precedent in the history of Spanish dramatic music. We had created a new genre. Which one? Zarzuela? No, no, a thousand times no; nationalist opéra-comique. Let us talk some of this matter. To baptize the new coliseum with the name of the Teatro de la Zarzuela was a true extravagance and, what is worse, a notorious injustice. If that theatre had been called the Opéra-Comique Theatre, or the Spanish Lyric Theatre, that would have been a title responding perfectly to the works that were subsequently performed in it and above all to the

[65] Peña y Goñi, *Opera española*, 313.

> new genre that a spirited and brilliant new artistic generation had just created.[66]

Peña y Goñi's use of the term "opéra-comique" accomplished several things at the same time. It distanced the current form of zarzuela from its origins within the limits of Italian opera. At the same time it connected zarzuela with other forms of European opera that used dialogue in place of recitative—notably French *opéra-comique* and German *singspiel*.[67] Peña y Goñi succinctly pointed out that, among other immortal works, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Weber's *Der Freyschütz*, and Gonoud's *Faust* were all essentially zarzuelas: that is to say they combined operatic arias, ensembles, and choruses with spoken dialogue in the place of sung recitative.[68] All of these works had been accepted by the musical world as masterpieces, and all were considered to be crucial works in the nationalist musical canon of their home countries.

Of course, *opéra-comique* is hardly a "Spanish" term, as the need to reinforce it with a nationalist adjective makes clear. What made it Spanish, in that case? It was here that Peña y Goñi introduced his musical arguments. For Peña y Goñi, "the most pure and direct product of popular song, zarzuela represents the people, it is the voice

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[66] Peña y Goñi, *Opera española*, 313. The italics are Peña y Goñi's.

[67] It is for this reason I have chosen to translate "ópera cómica" as *opéra-comique* and not the English "comic opera"; in addition, the English tends to imply opera with a humorous intent (what in Italian is termed *opera buffa*), whereas what Peña y Goñi clearly has in mind is opera with dialogue. As numerous French *opéras-comique* such as *Carmen* tended to prove, *opéra-comique* was often no laughing matter.

[68] Although *Faust* has become best known in its revised version, which uses recitative, it did indeed begin life as an *opéra-comique*. More curious are Peña y Goñi's other two examples. Neither *Fidelio* nor *Freyschütz* were performed frequently in Spain: at the Teatro Real, Weber's work had only received three performances in the 1873-74 season, while Beethoven's only opera was not even staged there until 1893. For performance statistics, see Turnia 319, 371, and 411.

of the people as an essential element of art, an inalienable hallmark of reality."[69] One suspects that what Peña y Goñi has in mind here is the traditional role of the zarzuela chorus as the embodiment of the Spanish people. This is the genre's most literal way of representing the people, and it does so musically as well as dramatically. He stakes the claim that what makes zarzuela nationalist is not its language—thus avoiding the trap that undermined Bretón—but its music. The music is nationalist because it is music that will appeal to a wide spectrum of the Spanish population (if only because the music was popular even before it was put onstage). Again, true genius is not in forging a unique artistic creation; it is in using the traditions of a country to create a broadly appealing piece of theatre.

Crucial to this argument is the fact that zarzuela already had a number of composers whose commercial success had sanctified them as geniuses. In fact, according to Peña y Goñi's argument, what made these men geniuses was the fact that when they revived zarzuela in its modern form in the early 1850s through the use of popular music. They incorporated it into their scores, thus assuring that modern zarzuela would be the national *opéra-comique* Peña y Goñi had envisioned, rather than the pale imitation of Italian opera that eighteenth-century zarzuela had been. Peña y Goñi focuses on three men—Joaquín Gaztambide, Emilio Arrieta, and Francisco Asenjo Barbieri—as a sort of Holy Trinity that created the modern, popular form of zarzuela. They measured up to the definition of genius that Peña y Goñi had created by producing music that succeeded in drawing the Spanish people into the theatre.

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[69] Antonio Peña y Goñi, *Discursos leídos ante la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando en la recepción pública de Don Antonio Peña y Goñi el día 10 de abril de 1892* (Madrid: Manuel Ginés Hernández, 1892), 37.

But just as with the Holy Trinity, the Zarzuela Trinity suffers from some paradoxes: all were equally honored, but there was one that stood above the others. Gaztambide may have been the first to use popular song in zarzuela, but Peña y Goñi analyzed his work in terms of his "exquisite sensibility"—flowing melody and clear form.[70] Whatever was essential to understanding Gaztambide's work, it was not his use of folk song. Arrieta was compromised by his attempts at opera composition and his "Italian" style. Peña y Goñi would state over and over again, in many different contexts, his admiration for Arrieta, but his suspicion of the composer's Italianate style would at some point always break through. (In one his newspaper pieces, the critic asked himself: "Is there no manner—I thought—to *deitalianize* this man?")[71] Peña y Goñi had great respect for Arrieta's work—especially *Marina*, widely regarded even then as the composer's masterpiece—but Arrieta was at heart an Italian composer, trained in Milan, one in whom the foreign influence was the predominate factor.

Thus the role of savior of Spanish music, in Peña y Goñi's musical theology, devolved to Barbieri, because it was Barbieri's use of popular music that elevated him to the title of the first nationalist composer in Spain. Peña y Goñi, always a lively writer, allowed his prose to take poetic flights of fancy when it came to discussing this particular composer. "Barbieri's muse," he argued at one point (probably written in the middle of a Madrid summer), "playful and irresistible, has refreshed all of Spain

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[70] Peña y Goñi, *Opera española*, 398.
[71] Antonio Peña y Goñi, *Impresiones musicales: Colección de artículos de crítica y literatura musical*. (Madrid: Manuel Minuesa de los Rios, 1878), 284. The italics are Peña y Goñi's.

with the fan of his popular songs."[72] Peña y Goñi argued this most forcefully in his analysis of *Pan y Toros*, which is the most exacting of his musical analyses in *La ópera española*. Peña y Goñi compared it to both *Hamlet* and *Don Quijote*—each of these works being the summit of their respective author's creative outputs. Even here, Peña y Goñi cannot deny the Italianate compositional processes of Spanish composers (indeed, *Pan y Toros* has a tendency to sound very much like mid-period Verdi, only with more castanets), but once again such stylistic quibbling is swept away in the torrent of the critic's prose: "The cement for the edifice is, as we can see, purely Italian, but the Spanish flag waves on the apex, floating gallantly and proudly on the impulses of popular sound. … The dramatic impulse represented by Italian art assimilated admirably to the Spanish nature, and the humor idealized by the popular perfume on the breath of the vocalizations of Doña Pepita form a contrast of irresistible beauty."[73] *Pan y toros* was constructed musically in the same manner as *El Barberillo de Lavapiés* (see Chapter 1): the dramatic portions of the plot were carried out in an operatic Italian fashion, while the comic relief received the popular, Spanish music. But for Peña y Goñi, "its ideal was purely and exclusively Spanish."[74] No matter what role Italian music played in the formation of a work like *Pan y Toros*, it was the Spanish portion that made it an important work of nationalist standing.

Why was this the case? Why did erecting a Spanish flag on an Italian edifice make a piece of music distinctly Spanish instead of some sort of hybrid? For Peña y Goñi, it was because Barbieri's revival of zarzuela was built upon a distinctly Spanish

[72] Peña y Goñi, *Opera española*, 451.
[73] Peña y Goñi, *Opera española*, 424-25.
[74] Peña y Goñi, *Opera española*, 428.

form of popular music, the *tonadilla*. The tonadilla was a short theatrical piece that arose in the mid-eighteenth century as a reaction to the Italianization of zarzuela. It became rapidly popular because of its focus on daily urban life and the music reflected this.[75] But being urban, the tonadilla was not necessarily of the folk traditions that marked other popular music: it was more synthetic, drawing out of more influences, and was thus more easily malleable itself. And herein lay its faults. For Peña y Goñi, the tonadilla was "inept": it often had witty and interesting lyrics, but the music was eminently forgettable.[76] Barbieri recognized the popular tradition of the tonadilla but had improved upon it and turned it into Spanish *opéra-comique*. Nationalistic genius involved improving popular forms, not turning one's back on one's national heritage.

Peña y Goñi had gone even further in his mission to create Barbieri as something of a "music Christ" figure. For this music critic, not only were Barbieri's works sacred, but he managed to produce relics as well. One of Peña y Goñi's musical pieces was devoted solely to the issue of Barbieri's piano. This was not just a musical instrument, but a repository for the history of Spanish music: "Yes, poor, humble, and modest instrument; in you is synthesized the history of our popular music, the history of our—as poor today as you—zarzuela."[77] What is perhaps most astonishing about Peña y Goñi's myth making is that it took place not only while Barbieri was still alive, but while he was still writing music. Peña y Goñi's writings that deal with the issue of zarzuela date from the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s; Barbieri would continue writing music until his death in 1894. There was a sense that Barbieri

[75] See Roger Alier, *La Zarzuela* (Barcelona: Ma Non Troppo, 2002), 48-49.
[76] Peña y Goñi, *Opera española*, 428.
[77] Peña y Goñi, *Impresiones musicales*, 262.

was somewhat past his prime—his last major success had been *El Barberillo de Lavapiés* in 1874 (the production of *De Getafe al Paraiso* in 1882, while a popular success, was deemed by the critics to be a falling off in quality), but he was still very much a living figure, conducting the Sociedad de Conciertos and carrying out musicological studies (culminating in the *Cancionero del Palacio* in 1890).

But perhaps this was exactly the point. The partisans of ópera española had no foundational figure or foundational myth because they had never created a truly popular piece of theatre. Bretón tried desperately to turn himself into a sort of founding father of Spanish opera, but his aristocratic and inaccessible personality tended to alienate the few people impressed by his music. Barbieri, by contrast, was an accessible and beloved figure—even Bretón, who rarely had good things to say about other Spanish composers of stature, respected and spoke well of him.[78] And Barbieri fulfilled Peña y Goñi's main criteria for artistic creation: genius that expanded upon existing traditions.

> Barbieri has emancipated it [the tonadilla], breaking the yoke that subjugated it and maintained it a slave to the facile and ephemeral expansions of the plebeians. He gave it new body, new form, and new life, emptying into the mold his admirable vivacity and his incomparable ingenuity; he has extracted it with a strong hand from the barren terrain in which it stagnated and has encased it in zarzuela, making it pass through all gradations and subjected it to all the varieties of talent and inspiration, until he synthesized it into a powerful artistic individuality.[79]

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[78] See Bretón's remarks in *Discursos*, pages 10-22. Since Bretón was elected to Barbieri's chair in the Academy, he was obliged to be complementary; however, since Bretón actually admits regret at breaking with Barbieri—an occurrence so rare as to be unique in Bretón's relationships with other composers—we may assume the remarks are genuine.

[79] Peña y Goñi, *Opera española*, 428.

Again, Peña y Goñi's prose style is worth noting. Here Barbieri appears as liberator, freeing the enslaved music of the people and raising it to new and dizzying heights. He took what was already popular and made it even more appealing, more able to speak to the Spanish people. In the end, a nationalist genius was not necessarily a creator. A nationalist genius was a synthesizer, who could take Spanish music and make it even more broadly appealing by fusing it with a dramatic story. Nationalist lyric theatre was not art for art's sake, as opera was; it was music with a theatrical purpose to draw as many people into the theatre—and into a vision of the nation—as possible.

A Popular View of Opera: *El dúo de la Africana*

In the end, the advocates of zarzuela came up with a more coherent set of arguments to articulate their position in the opera versus zarzuela debate. It is somewhat difficult to know exactly how the Spanish theatre-going public responded to these incessant newspaper debates. But we do have at least one indication that the public found the idea of opera as a nationalist manifestation at least slightly ridiculous. This indication is the immense popularity of *El dúo de la Africana* (The *L'Africaine* Duet), a one-act zarzuela first performed in May of 1893. The libretto, by Miguel Echegaray, is a behind-the-scenes glimpse at a third-rate summer opera company in the process of staging Giacomo Meyerbeer's *L'Africaine*. It was the zany antics of the plot and Manuel Fernández Caballero's irresistible music that made this one of the classics of the zarzuela repertory, but embedded within the work is a message that ridicules the pretensions of opera and glorifies self-consciously Spanish music.

The primary vehicle for ridiculing the world of opera is through the character of Querubini, the Italian impresario of the opera company. He is the primary comic element in Echegaray's libretto and the butt of its humor. Much of the fun comes from the standard comic situation of cuckoldry: his wife, the soprano of the company, is being pursued by the tenor and shows every sign of giving in. It is from this portion of the plot that the title of the work comes, as Querubini explodes with rage while watching performances of the title duet where the clinches between the soprano and the tenor are just a little more realistic than would seem absolutely necessary. But more important to the humor of the libretto is Querubini's language. He speaks in a broad bastardization of Italian mixed with just enough Spanish to make his speeches comprehensible—or humorously incomprehensible, as the case may be. Thus Querubini (and to a lesser extent his daughter Amina, who speaks in a similar mock-dialect) is marked off as distinctly different from the rest of the company, who speak standard Castilian dialect. He also knows astonishingly little about Spain: he has never heard of Lope de Vega and upon being told he was a very famous man, Querubini automatically assumes that he must be a tenor.[80] The Italian is marked off as an outsider.

The Italianisms of Querubini are set off against the Spanish traits of the two other main characters, the soprano and the tenor of the company. Each has a very Italian stage name: the soprano is known as La Antonelli, and the tenor sings under the name of Giussepini. Each, however, is identified as being authentically Spanish. La

[80] Miguel Echegaray, *El dúo de la Africana*, in Antonio Valencia, ed., *El género chico (Antología de textos completos)*, 215-247 (Madrid: Taurus, 1962), 1.iv. Admittedly, this may also simply be a twitting of the self-centered nature of performing artists.

Antonelli, we learn, began life as a street singer in Seville under the name Antonia Jiménez—which is where Querubini found her, performing in the Calle de las Sierpes. More importantly, she has never fully given up this life: she notes that no matter how often she sings *The Barber of Seville*, *La Sonambula*, or *Faust* she "remembers / the songs from down below."[81] Giussepini is even more Spanish—as part of the denouement of the plot, we learn he is nothing less than a hidalgo from Aragón, whose real name is Don José de Lanuza de Guzmán y de los Ríos, Espinosa, Calatrava, Tres Torres y Siete Picos—certainly a name any Spanish nobleman would be happy to claim for his own. Furthermore, like most Spaniards he can boast a proud lineage, including "a prince and twenty-five / counts, dukes, and marquises and his grandfather / was bishop of Zaragoza!"[82]

The other portion of ridicule comes from the mocking of the opera company itself. Part of the humor comes from the utter contempt with which Querubini treats his audiences in his haste to get *L'Africaine* staged. Upon learning that the only setting they have for the fourth act is a backdrop of the Buen Retiro Park (complete with statues of the kings of Spain) and not the jungle setting required, Querubini orders his stage manager to use it anyway, noting that "the public is not botanically minded."[83] His ultimate contempt for the public comes at the end of the play, when he again disrupts the love duet from the opera during a public performance. This, not unnaturally, upsets the audience to the point where a police inspector arrives to

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[81] "Recuerde / las canciones de allá abajo." Echegaray, *El dúo*, 1.vii.
[82] "Un infante y veinticinco / condes, duques y marqueses y un abuelo suyo obispo / de Zaragoza!" Echegaray, *El dúo*, 2.viii.
[83] Echegaray, *El dúo*, 1.iv.

suspend the performance. Querubini resists—not for artistic reasons, but because he does not want to return the audience's money. We also learn that the reason Querubini married La Antonelli was less out of love than to cut costs—being his wife, he does not have to pay her.[84] Despite all the assertions made about opera as an art form that Bretón might have made, Echegaray points out that opera is just as much about money as any other theatrical form. This exposes the critical flaw in the argument for opera as a nationalist genre: if it cannot appeal to a large section of the population, how can it do its job as a mobilizing force?

Echegaray's libretto does the bulk of the job in demolishing the pretensions of opera and in setting it off as Italian frippery; but it is Fernández Caballero's music that turns *El dúo de la Africana* into an embodiment of the zarzuelero assertion that Spanish music would have to be based in popular forms. Musically, he distinguishes the two Spanish singers with distinctly Spanish forms of music, while the rest of the score is composed of more neutral dance music and mock operatic duets. The first "Spanish" moment in the score is the introduction of La Antonelli. She and Guissepini enter to the salutes of the chorus, and she sings about the operatic roles she plays: "I am the soprano, I am Lucia."[85] These passages are sung in the soprano's upper register with a fair number of descending vocal runs to create the illusion of operatic vocal acrobatics. But then she begins to waver: "Although bel canto / was my passion… / I am Andalusian, I am from Seville."[86] Opera, it seems, is not native to

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[84] Echegaray, *El dúo*, 1.iii.
[85] Echegaray, *El dúo*, 1.vi. "Lucia" is Lucia de Lammermore in Donizetti's opera.
[86] "Aunque el bel canto / fue mi pasión… / Soy andaluza, soy sevillana." Echegaray, *El dúo*, 1.vi.

the true Spaniard; otherwise, why would La Antonelli use the world "although" to introduce her passion for opera?

After this admission, the orchestra launches into what is marked in the vocal score as a "Canción andaluza" ("Andalusian Song"). The music is a sevillana, with a distinctly stereotypical vocal line, full of chromatic runs and trills. The "Spanish" effect of the music is heightened by the repeated cries of "¡Ay de mí!," references to Andalusian locations like Granada, and the occasional slip into Andalusian dialect—"madre" is rendered as "mare," a vocal slip that La Antonelli makes nowhere else in the play. It is all about as far away from the world of opera as can be imagined, as Querubini makes clear when he enters at the conclusion of the number: "Is this a theatre for Italian opera, or a music hall?"[87] Into Querubini's mouth is put a variant of Bretón's argument. Opera is distinct from the material one would find in the popular theatrical world of the teatro por horas, which began life in the cafés cantantes. Opera is distinct from the daily theatrical life in Spain.

If popular Andalusian songs disturb Querubini, it is probably just as well he is off-stage for the next irruption of Spanish music in the orchestra pit. This is during the scene in which Guissepini finally attempts to seduce La Antonelli. Unnerved by his passionate declaration (which includes the obligatory promise to kill her husband so they can be together), she begins to sing "I understand how serious / is my situation," while Guissepini responds in kind.[88] This number, marked "Dúo" in the score is a

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[87] "¿Qüesto é un teatro di ópera italiana, ó é un café cantante?" The closest Anglo-American equivalent to the café cantante, a café with a small stage for entertainment, is probably the English music hall, which would also serve refreshment to its patrons. Echegaray, *El dúo*, 1.vii.

[88] "Comprende lo grave / de mi situación." Echegaray, *El dúo*, 2.v.

stock zarzuela duet. This is fairly low passion stuff, but Guissepini turns the heat up a notch: as he begs her to give up opera and come with him to Aragón, the music switches tempo and becomes a jota, the traditional regional dance of his home. It is only at this point that La Antonelli utters the crucial words "I love you." She still begs him to leave her alone, but the music finally becomes a love duet instead of a mere attempt at seduction. They finally begin to sing the same words at the same time—the usual sign that music has works its seductive charms on stage. Although this number fails to complete the standard love trajectory—Guissepini proves he is a typical Spanish male in the end, choosing his mother over his mistress—it marks the superiority of popular Spanish music over Italian opera by winning over the heart of an opera star.[89]

Admittedly, *El dúo de la Africana* was penned by two men who had a vested interest in promoting zarzuela as Spanish lyric drama; but it would not have had such a phenomenal run and have become one of the cornerstones of the zarzuela repertory had it portrayed a situation completely alien to theatre-goers. By 1893 it had become clear that ópera española was no longer in the running to become an authentically Spanish form of lyric drama. The Teatro Real had again stopped producing operas by Spanish composers. The two major operatic premieres of the decade, Bretón's *La Dolores* (1895) and Enrique Granados' *María del Carmen* (1898) were given their first performances in commercial theatres—the Bretón piece, ironically, at the Teatro de la Zarzuela. Polemics in the press about the necessity of ópera española had dried

[89] In fact, Fernández Caballero's prelude to the work foreshadows this: the rather stately strains of the duet from *L'Africaine* are overtaken and subsumed by the jota.

up, and the men who had composed the operas of the 1870s and 1880s had either turned to composing zarzuela or had retreated to the sanctuary of teaching in music conservatories. Zarzuela and the commercial theatre were again the gold standard for determining what music would be considered nationalist.

This is not to imply that the threat to zarzuela's nationalist standing posed by opera in the 1870s and 1880s should be considered a footnote to the history of Spanish music. In fact, the conflict between zarzuela and opera is utterly crucial to understanding the development of popular music in Spain: the conflict essentially created popular music by cleaving theatrical music in twain. Opera became art, placed on a pedestal. Zarzuela became entertainment, driven to prove its commercial worth. There is no particular reason it had to turn out this way: the 1881 season at the Teatro Apolo proved that Spanish opera might well have succeeded commercially, while zarzuela grande's tendency to assimilate operatic music late into the 1880s demonstrates that the popular genre could have turned away from popular music had composers felt so inclined. But Spanish opera's tendency towards musical modernism led its proponents to begin parroting arguments about the role of art that had no precedent in Spanish musical history. Advocates of zarzuela shrewdly placed their arguments within the accepted traditions of Spanish music and were thus more able to forcefully articulate their views as to which genre should be considered authentically Spanish, while proponents of opera floundered with philosophical questions about art and its intentions.

There were two crucial subplots to this debate that also helped to shape musical nationalism in the early years of the Bourbon Restoration. First was the question of state subvention of the arts. Calls for the Spanish government to fund opera demonstrate yet again the weakness of the pro-opera argument. The Spanish state had trouble—or, more accurately, lacked the will—to provide adequate funds for the basic mechanisms of nationalist mobilization such as schools, let alone expensive music-dramas.[90] The political structure of the Restoration regime favored a hands-off approach when it came to potentially mobilizing forces, thus favoring a theatrical genre that was based in the commercial theatre. The second subargument revolves around the question of genius and how that amorphous term is defined. The strength of the pro-zarzuela argument is demonstrated by its definition of the term. Insofar as Bretón ever developed a definition of genius, it was the stereotypical "artist in the ivory tower" picture of popular imagination. By contrast, Peña y Goñi formed a vision of genius melded popular tradition with inspiration in order to create works that would be widely appealing. One would not have to give up quality in order to achieve success, whereas Bretón seemed to hint that popular success could only come about through a dilution of artistic integrity.

Zarzuela's assumption of the mantle of popular culture in the 1880s made it an ideal candidate for the role of nationalist lyric theatre genre in Spain. Opera, by contrast, elevated itself (with a fair amount of assistance from zarzuela) into art and thus succeeded in isolating itself from the Spanish commercial theatre—and thus from

[90] On the troublesome relation between the Spanish state and its schools, see Carolyn P. Boyd, *Historia Patria: Politics, History, and National Identity in Spain, 1875-1975* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997).

the majority of the Spanish people, who would need to see and hear the works in order to be drawn into opera's vision of the Spanish nation. Critically for lyric theatre, zarzuela focused on its musical heritage and thus made its case that it was Spanish music. Opera became enmeshed in questions of language which seemed far removed from the sheerly musical aspects of the theatre; this made it seem a less viable nationalist candidate when it came to questions of music, no matter how vexing the thorny questions of performance practices at the Teatro Real were to Spanish composers. In the end, zarzuela succeed in articulating a clear position on its role as Spanish nationalist music simply because it kept its main arguments about music. Opera, fixated on questions of language and art, seemed to be dealing with something that simply was not musical at all.

Zarzuela's commercialism had immense ramifications for the meaning of nationalism in Restoration Spain. It very firmly removed nationalism from control of the state and turned it over to the theatre box office. Consumer nationalism meant that any vision of what Spain was to be would not be controlled by the state. It would be controlled by composers and librettists, by theatrical impresarios and theatre patrons. It would be a populist vision. However, populism was the last thing that the Restoration regime actually wanted. The Spanish government of the late 1870s and the 1880s desired stability and actively discouraged popular political participation. Ignoring the problem did not mean that the threat of popular politics went away; instead it was channeled into other venues, the theatre simply being another one. As the final decade of the nineteenth century dawned in Spain, zarzuela's emphasis on

popular, consumer nationalism would increasingly lead composers and librettists to focus on segments of the population that were not represented by the Restoration regime and to critique the government as it became increasingly clear that the system set up by Cánovas del Castillo was dysfunctional. Questions of artistic integrity were now soon to be succeeded by questions of political integrity, as we shall see.

III

Spanish Society Onstage: The Género Chico and Urban Nationalism

By the 1890s, the zarzuela grande was a moribund art form. Despite the nationalistic pretensions that critics like Antonio Peña y Goñi gave to zarzuela, despite the changes that composers and librettists made to the Barbieri-style zarzuela seria, and despite the implicit admission of defeat by proponents of ópera española, the last major zarzuela grande to have succeeded both theatrically and commercially was *La bruja* in 1887. However, all this hand-wringing covered up the fact that zarzuela was *not* in fact on its last legs. Far from it. The nature of zarzuela was slowly changing. Twenty years after Barbieri began subverting his own stylistic model in *El barberillo de Lavapiés*, Tomás Bretón—that arch-proponent of opera—would compose *La verbena de la paloma*, a work that essentially became the new model for zarzuela. But there is virtually no resemblance between *La verbena* and *El barberillo*. Instead, the incipient commercialism that had driven composers like Barbieri, Marqués, and Chapí into altering the zarzuela grande spawned a new generation of composers that transformed the old theatrical form into one that addressed the musical realities of 1880s and 1890s Spain: the *género chico*, literally the "little genre" of zarzuela. As with the zarzuela grande, this new form of lyric theatre demonstrates the compatibility of commercial theatre and politics. The género chico gained mass popularity by addressing the social and political realities of the period.

This sea change in the nature of zarzuela was born in 1880 at the Teatro de Alhambra. The playwright Ricardo de la Vega (son of Romantic playwright and

librettist of the first modern zarzuela Ventura de la Vega) had written a short play called *La camisa de la Lola* (Lola's Shirt) to be played as a curtain-raiser. The original impresario turned down the work, citing the racy title. Vega did some rewrites, turning the play into *La canción de la Lola* (Lola's Song); however, the impresario in the meantime had decamped to Latin America, leaving Vega with a work on his hands that he had trouble interesting other impresarios with, due to a glut of short one-act works on the market. Vega then had the inspired idea of turning to an up-and-coming composer by the name of Federico Chueca to set parts of the play to music.[1] The result was a smashing success. More importantly, it helped to revive the ailing fortunes of the teatro por horas: audiences in Madrid were growing tired of one-act plays, but one-act plays with "graceful music" were another matter entirely.[2]

La canción de la Lola certainly did not look like the traditional zarzuela grande, however. Gone were the historical figures, the high melodrama, the fixations on the difficulties of romantic love. The cast of characters includes the local blacksmith and a fireman; we are introduced to the main character not in the midst of a romantic dilemma, but as she is being berated by one of her neighbors for never having washed her hands or face in the last two years.[3] Nor did the work sound like the zarzuelas that had come before it. Gone were the operatic arias and the high-flown duets. Instead the musical numbers were "of the best that we know in the popular genre": a polka, a waltz, and other up-tempo numbers fill the score (all the numbers

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[1] This story is best recounted in José Deleito y Peñuela, *Origen y apogeo del "género chico"* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1949), 13-15.
[2] From *El Imparcial's* review of *La canción de la Lola*: "Sección de espectáculos," 26 May 1880.
[3] Ricardo de la Vega, *La canción de la Lola*, 1.i: Antonio Valencia, ed. *El género chico (Antología de textos completos)* (Madrid: Taurus, 1962), 23-48.

are either *Allegro* or *Allegretto*).[4] Chueca's musical inspiration was not grand opera, nor was it even Spanish folk music; it was the cafés and dance-halls of Madrid with their dance music straight from Central Europe. This combination of dance music and light-hearted plots was soon to be acknowledged as part of the zarzuela heritage by its new nomenclature. Vega and Chueca had reduced the extravagence of the zarzuela grande: hence, the "little genre" of zarzuela.[5]

A crucial feature of the género chico was that it abandoned the explicit historical and nationalist narratives that had been favored in the zarzuela grande of the 1870s and early 1880s. For this reason, most scholars have not considered the género chico to be part of Spain's nationalist musical culture. However, this chapter will argue that the género chico did not abandon Spanish nationalism. It continued the nationalist heritage of Spanish lyric theatre, albeit in a rather different form. The zarzuelas of the later 1880s and the 1890s instead focused on redefining what it meant to Spanish; the género chico articulated a new, urban, vision of the Spanish nation. It did so in two key ways. First, it replaced the traditional folk musical forms of the zarzuela grande with urban dance music that was, more often than not, of central European origin. Secondly, the género chico sought to articulate this urban nationalism in a naturalistic and realistic manner.

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[4] The description is from *El Imparcial*, "Sección de espectáculos," 26 May 1880. For the music itself, see the piano-vocal score: Federico Chueca and Joaquín Valverde, *La canción de la Lola: Zarzuela en un acto* (Madrid: Zozaya, n.d.).

[5] It should be noted that the género chico refers to any one-act play, not merely zarzuelas. In fact, the majority of género chico pieces were "legitimate," that is to say without music. However, for the purposes of this study, when I refer to the género chico I am referring specifically to its musical subset.

The género chico was not overtly nationalistic (with certain exceptions that will be discussed in Chapter IV)—and because the majority of género chico works are set in Madrid, they are often dismissed as representative only of the capital city and not of Spain as a whole.[6] However, zarzuelas of the género chico cannot be dismissed as merely frivolous entertainment simply because they did not use Spanish folk music or restricted their subject matter to one city. The género chico was the earliest form in which Spaniards tried to come to terms with the new realities of national identity brought about by urbanization and industrialization. Admittedly, Spain in the 1890s was not quite an urban, industrial society in the way that England or Germany was. But it was industrializing, the urban population was growing, and the hallmarks of modern society—including the growth of mass politics—were as much in place in Spain as they were elsewhere in Europe. Art, culture, and entertainment would have to shift its forms to acknowledge these new realities. The zarzuelas of the género chico did exactly that.

Chueca was the first composer to integrate light-hearted dance music into the zarzuela model, but he had some illustrious men who followed in his footsteps. Barbieri and Chapí also turned out some fantastically successful short works in the 1880s, and Bretón also tried his hand at the genre with one stupendously successful result. But for the most part, the most successful composers and librettists of the género chico were not those who had made their names in writing zarzuela grande—

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[6] See, for example, José Alvarez Junco, *Mater Dolorosa: La idea de España en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001), 258-259. If there is one weak spot in Professor Alvarez Junco's book—which is otherwise magisterial and will be the definitive treatment of nineteenth century Spanish nationalism for some time to come—it is the treatment of music.

Chapí and Manuel Fernández-Caballero were to be the exceptions, not the rule. The composition of dance music did not require the same sort of technical skill that the operatically influenced zarzuela grande did, and composers of the género chico ranged from eminent men of music like Chapí to talentless hacks (with far more of the latter than the former). However, theatrical economics worked in the favor of fast and facile composers: since a single theatre could stage four género chico pieces in an evening and since turn-over for all but the most popular pieces was quite rapid, demand was always in danger of outstripping supply.

The género chico differed from the zarzuela grande in a number of ways. First and foremost was length. Género chico works, as the name implies, were short: usually in one act (with a running time that usually lasts just under an hour) instead of the three-act, full-length zarzuela grande. More importantly, the musical composition of the género chico was very different from her older sister. The music is built not around operatic-style arias and ensembles, but around urban dance-hall music. Popular dances like waltzes, polkas, and mazurkas fill the scores, while the vocal refrains are more often strophic (that is to say, the musical phrases repeat themselves over and over) than they are through-composed. The vocal range of the songs is usually limited, so that they may be performed by actors with limited vocal training—and spoken dialogue is usually more prevalent than music in these works.[7] Finally, the subject matter of the works is quite different. Most works of the género chico

[7] As he does with zarzuela grande, Emilio Casares Rodicio provides a model (here of 13 points) that defines the género chico. "La Música del siglo XIX español. Conceptos fundamentales," in Emilio Casares Rodicio and Celsa Alonso González, eds., *La música española en el siglo XIX* (Oviedo: U de Oviedo, 1996), 80.

might be described as comedies of manners. They are vignettes of Spanish life that portray the interactions among various stock characters.

With the género chico zarzuela transformed itself from consumer culture into full-fledged mass culture, and as such it helped to widen the divide between elite and popular culture that the overt nationalism of the zarzuela grande had created in the first place. Whereas zarzuela grande had pitched itself very specifically at a bourgeois and musically educated audience, the género chico had fewer pretensions. There was nothing sophisticated about its music—although it must be emphasized that this is not a negative quality by any means. Chueca was unsophisticated in the same way that Irving Berlin was unsophisticated. Both men learned the art of composition "on the job" rather than by formal training, and both were talented enough to create popular music of the highest quality. The music of the género chico was designed to be hummed as the audience left the theatres; it was designed to be popular and easily accessible to those who would not even hear it in the theatre. Género chico music would be played in dance halls, cafés, bars; it would be played by military bands and wandering street musicians. It would be heard by anybody who listened to music in late nineteenth-century Spain.

The Teatro por Horas and Urban Society

As discussed in Chapter I, the late 1860s and early 1870s saw the development of a new style of theatre, the teatro por horas. This move away from the production of full-length works towards the shorter format of the género chico was originally driven by economic concerns, but it proved an extremely useful tool for disseminating the

new message of urban nationalism. Building upon older theatrical forms, the género chico was able to create works that helped to make sense of Spain's urbanizing society and the resulting development of mass politics. As the género chico further widened the gap between elite and popular cultures by making lyric theatre cheaper to attend and focusing on the realistic concerns of everyday citizens, it further developed the potential of mass culture to integrate even larger segments of the population into the project of Spanish nationalism.

The development of the teatro por horas was based on economics and the desire to maximize profit; but it is important to note that the system was already predicated upon certain Spanish theatrical traditions that emphasized shorter plays. Seventeenth century Spanish drama is best remembered for the *comedias* of Lope de Vega and Calderón but just as prevalent as those full-length works were *entremeses*—short plays that were performed as curtain raisers or between acts of full-length plays (hence the name). Keeping the audience entertained was a necessity, as Spanish theatres catered to a specifically popular audience, much like the English theatres of the period and unlike the court theatres on the rest of the continent.[8] The *entremes* was a crucial component of this system. By the eighteenth century the popular nature of Spanish theatre meant that the most memorable plays being performed were shorter works. Arguably the central Spanish playwright of the eighteenth century was Ramón

[8] For a good comparison of Spanish and English theatre in this period—one that stresses their public and popular nature—see Walter Cohen, *Drama of a Nation: Public Theatre in Renaissance England and Spain* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985); for a basic overview of early modern Spanish drama in general, see Melvina McKendrick, *Theatre in Spain, 1490-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).

de la Cruz, whose plays would have a vast influence on the nineteenth century teatro por horas system.

Ramón de la Cruz specialized in a genre of play known as the *sainete*. The sainete is a short play, always comic, usually set among the lower classes, whose emphasis is on depicting the customs and habits of the population.[9] Unlike full-length plays, these short works rarely have the time or space to develop a plot or fully drawn characterizations; thus the dramatic interest in the sainete falls to the depiction of local customs and the use of language—especially colloquialisms and slang. Cruz's works were always set in Madrid or the environs around the capital; some of his contemporaries expanded the reach of the sainete to depict regional customs in other parts of Spain, notably Andalucía. Notably, many of Cruz's sainetes also featured the use of music. Cruz was the undoubted master of the sainete, and after his death in 1794 the genre underwent a decline that lasted until the rise of the teatro por horas system.

The sainete was one of the key genres that would dominate the teatro por horas system. Its short format was obviously appealing for the economics of the system, as was the fact that sainetes could usually be performed with small casts and a limited number of sets and costumes. But the genre's emphasis on language and the depiction of everyday life also dovetailed quite nicely with the predilections of a new group of writers and journalists that Nancy J. Membrez has dubbed the "*Madrid Cómico*

[9] The best summary of Cruz's model and how it connects to the sainete of the nineteenth century may be found in Ramón Barce, "El sainete lírico (1880-1915)," Emilio Casares Rodicio and Celsa Alonso González, eds., *La música española en el siglo XIX* (Oviedo: U of Oviedo, 1995), 195-201. My summary of Cruz and his work is based upon Barce's work.

Generation."[10] *Madrid Cómico* was a magazine that specialized in what has been termed "festive writing": its pieces were often in verse, satirizing the news and society of the day. Most of the writers who submitted their work to *Madrid Cómico* also wrote for the theatre, and their ability to transmit a picture of society in verse was equally at home in the theatre as it was on the pages of the festive newspapers. The requirements of the sainete demanded writers with a keen ear for language, humorous jokes, and accurate depictions of everyday life. These were traits that the *Madrid Cómico* Generation had in abundance. The sainete was theatre that was precisely keyed to the group of popular writers who made their home in Madrid during the 1860s and 1870s—figures such as Felipe Pérez y González, Javier de Burgos, and Ricardo de la Vega, all of whom we shall meet shortly.

If the sainete was well situated to take part in the festive journalism of the late nineteenth century, it was also situated to take part in one of the more substantial European literary movements of the period as well: naturalism. On the surface, it doubtless seems a little odd to place one-act operettas into the same category as the work of Emile Zola and his compatriots.[11] But in fact the sainete was built on much the same principles as naturalism. Both sought to portray daily life, especially daily life as lived by those classes that were not normally the subject of literature. Both rejected the tenets of high romanticism and its emphasis on style over substance.

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[10] For her discussion of this group, see "The *teatro por horas*: History, Dynamics and Comprehensive Bibliography of a Madrid Industry, 1867-1922," (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987), 68-74. Much of my summary is drawn from Membrez's outline, although I do feel she perhaps overstates the political conservatism of these writers as a whole.

[11] A note on nomenclature is perhaps in order here: although not originally a musical work, by the late 1880s the term "sainete" was used for both lyric and legitimate theatre pieces. "Sainete" came to denote the fact that the work in question portrayed a slice of everyday life—with and without music. This dissertation deals only with the musical works in the genre, the *sainetes líricos*.

There is, of course, one major distinction between naturalism and what the sainete was doing. Naturalism sought to depict the often brutal aspect of lower-class life, usually with the goal of stimulating some sort of social change. The sainete presented a rather sanitized view of lower-class life; social change was hardly a part of the agenda.

Nevertheless, there was a certain sense among Spaniards that the sainete shared more than enough attributes of naturalism to speak of them in the same breath. Consider Pedro Bofil's review of *La verbena de la paloma* (The Festival of Our Lady of the Dove): he asks, with his tongue only somewhat in his cheek, "What can follow, when the run ends of this specimen of *pérezgaldosismo* that began its theatrical reign last night?"[12] The equation of Ricardo de la Vega with Benito Pérez Galdos, Spain's most eminent naturalist novelist, is mildly surprising. Galdos focused on the seamy and often tragic underside of life in Madrid where Vega's sainete is a comic look at flirting and jealousy; nevertheless, it does not take much imagination to see the potentially tragic implications of Susana's decision to take up with the elderly and lecherous—but well-off—Don Hilarión. Susana will eventually settle for the poor typesetter Julián by the end of the work. However, if one were to remove the short final scene, *La verbena* would probably fit quite well as a vignette in *Fortunata y Jacinta* or *Miau*. And even Galdos would have been pleased to have received the summation of Vega's work that cropped up in another review of *La verbena*, which praised "the spirit of just observation that characterizes all the works of Ricardo de la Vega."[13]

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[12] Pedro Bofil, "Veladas teatrales," *La Época*, 18 February 1894.
[13] J.A., "Teatro de Apolo," *El Liberal*, 18 February 1894.

The sainete thus did not necessarily lack the courage to tackle depictions of how people actually lived, and *La verbena de la paloma* is not the only example of a sainete that with only a twist could function as fully tragic naturalistic plot. Vega's *El chaleco blanco* (The White Vest) focuses on a boarding-house lodger who is almost condemned to a life of poverty by the loss of a lottery ticket. Antonio Dominguez and Antonio Paso's libretto for *El bateo* (The Baptism) features as one of its main characters the local anarchist agitator. Like naturalism, the sainete reduces the outsized heroism of Romanticism: its heroes are ordinary people who use their common sense to achieve results. Gone are the extravagant plans and plots that were hallmarks of zarzuelas like *Pan y toros* or *El barberillo de Lavapiés*: the heroism—if any—in *La verbena* rests entirely in Seña Rita's ability to point out that Julián is making an absolute fool of himself. If, as Domingo Ynduráin has stated, "Realism is, definitively, an intent to reduce romantic fantasies and extremes to normal conduct," then the sainete has as much right to belong to the naturalist (or realist) movement as any Galdosian novel.[14]

Naturalism—especially as manifested in the novels of Galdos, which is how the average Spaniard would probably have encountered it—was also very emphatically a reaction to the new realities of urban life in the later nineteenth century. (Naturalism did not hesitate to deal with rural life, of course, but lyric theatre treatments of rural life have more to do with Spanish *costumbrismo* literature.) Spain

[14] Domingo Ynduráin, *Del clasicismo al 98* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2000), 141. His discussion of naturalism as a reaction to romanticism, 123-160, is worth examining in terms of zarzuela if one thinks of the rise of the género chico as a market-based reaction to the possible excesses of romantic zarzuela. Interestingly, the género chico was never linked with the rise of Italian *verismo* opera, which shared many of the same characteristics and concerns.

was still not an urbanized society in the later nineteenth century, but it was taking on the shape of one. By the end of the nineteenth century, Spain had no fewer than six cities with populations of over 100,000: Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Seville, Málaga, and Murcia. In the last twenty-five years of the century, the population of Madrid grew 35%, and this was mild compared to rates of growth for cities whose identity was more firmly rooted in industry like Bilbao (154%) or Barcelona (114%).[15] Still, Madrid was the most populous city in Spain; and like the industrial cities, by the end of the century nearly half of her citizens would not have actually been born in the city itself. As the city grew, so did the number of industrial workers, which expanded from 11,000 in 1850 to over 68,000 in 1905 (in a city with a population of approximately 500,000).[16] The presence of industry and industrial workers was becoming a more and more obvious presence in all major Spanish cities under the Restoration.

While these changes were occurring in all major Spanish cities, the specific changes in Madrid that laid the groundwork for the rise of mass politics would become crucial to the formation of the urban nationalism of the género chico. The late nineteenth century saw a dramatic expansion in the physical size of Madrid with the incorporation of two new neighborhoods, the Barrios de Argüelles and Salamanca. The upper classes were attracted to these new, modern neighborhoods; their subsequent relocation consolidated the lower middle class and the working classes in

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[15] Brigitte Magnien, "Cultura urbana," *1900 en España*, ed. Serge Salaün and Carlos Serrano (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1991), 108.

[16] Santos Juliá, David Ringrose and Cristina Segura, *Madrid: Historia de un capital* (Madrid: Alianza, 1994), 415.

the older neighborhoods of Madrid, especially Lavapiés and other areas between the Puerta del Sol and the Puerta de Toledo. (Other major Spanish cities carried out similar urban reforms, most notably Barcelona.) The city slowly segmented into class-based areas, and the segmentation came to physically reflect the politics of the Restoration system. The upper classes and the bourgeoisie—those in the new neighborhoods—held the political power, while those who were intentionally excluded from politics by the Restoration government were increasingly concentrated into the city center. It may be this, as much as anything, that helped to implement a proletarian consciousness and laid the preconditions for mass political mobilization in Spain.[17]

The outlines of the Restoration system set up by Antonio Cánovas del Castillo and the other politicians of the 1870s determined the shape of mass political mobilization in Spain. As discussed in Chapter I, the entire premise behind the Restoration government was to promote political quietism and avoid the consequences of popular political mobilization that had become self-evident during the Revolutionary Sexenio of 1868-1874. Cánovas helped to set up what became known as the *turno pacífico* ("the peaceful turn"), a process by which the Conservative and Liberal parties alternated in power on a regular basis—regardless of the demands of the electorate. Formal elections were still held, but the results were mediated (or rigged, depending on how one views the situation) by figures known as *caciques*. Caciques were men of local prominence, usually large landowners, who controlled patronage of jobs and land throughout rural Spain. This meant they were in a position

[17] Juliá, Ringrose, and Segura, 428-432.

to arrange the votes in their areas so that results tallied with what was expected in Madrid. As a result, what appeared to be a democratic political system on the surface engaged in political bossism and control that would have been envied at Tammany Hall.[18]

There was one major flaw with this system (aside from the fact that it manipulated the electoral system, naturally), and that was its reliance upon a heavily rural population in order to maintain the necessary political control. Spain was slowly but surely urbanizing. The end result was a political system that was unresponsive to the political demands of the lower-class urban population. Had Spain remained the rural society it had been during the first half of the nineteenth century, the Restoration might well have worked. As it was, the system that Cánovas devised was outmoded even as it was being implemented. To further heighten the problems, the political movements towards which these new urban classes leaned—specifically republicanism and socialism—were not represented in the *turno pacífico* and thus had little formal political influence. As a result, mass political mobilization in Spain frequently took on an informal tinge: meaningful political participation by the new urban working class took place not at the voting urns, but in workingmen's clubs and casinos as well as in the streets themselves.[19]

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[18] The classic studies on the outlines of the Restoration political system, focusing on the issue of caciquismo, are Robert W. Kern, *Liberals, Reformers and Caciques in Restoration Spain, 1875-1900* (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1974) and José Varela Ortega, *Los amigos políticos: Partidos, elecciones y caciquismo en la Restauración (1875-1900)* (1977; Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2001).

[19] The best short overview of the question of mass mobilization is Pamela Beth Radcliff, "The Emerging Challenge of Mass Politics," *Spanish History Since 1808*, ed. José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert, 137-154 (London: Arnold, 2000). For more in-depth studies which focus very specifically upon the question of republican political culture, see Pamela Beth Radcliff, *From*

It is here that the question of the theatre comes into play. The advent of the teatro por horas system and the subsequent drop in ticket prices (discussed in Chapter I) allowed the working class to attend theatrical performances for the first time. The original café-teatros where the teatro por horas had begun would only charge the price of the food or drink consumed; the performance itself was free. By the 1880s most theatres had a working-class presence in their audience. How many members of the working class varied by the location of the theatre: there was a distinction between theatres which catered primarily to the aristocracy and bourgeoisie—the Teatro Real, the Teatro de la Zarzuela, the Teatro Apolo—those which catered to a primarily working-class audience—the Teatro Novedades, the Teatro Barbieri—and those which managed a mixed audience—the Teatro Variedades, the Teatro Calderón.[20] Even if it was not true, there was a distinct sense in the press that the teatro por horas and the género chico were catering to the working-class elements in the audience. Certainly, as we shall see, the content of the género chico would seem to bear that assumption out.[21]

Nevertheless, the upper classes remained at the core of the theatrical audience, and it was to them that theatres catered. Virtually all of the premieres of género chico

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Mobilization to Civil War: The Politics of Polarization in the Spanish City of Gijón, 1900-1937 (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) and José Alvarez Junco, *The Emergence of Mass Politics in Spain: Populist Demagoguery and Republican Culture, 1890-1910* (Brighton and Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2002); the latter is an abridged translation of *El emperador del Paralelo: Lerroux y la demagogia populista* (Madrid: Alianza, 1990).

[20] This partially reflects the geographic location of the theatres: the Zarzuela and the Apolo were located in central Madrid, the traditional entertainment district of the city. The Teatros Novedades and Barbieri were located south of the Puerta del Sol, the traditional working-class neighborhood. See Angel Luis Fernández Muñoz, *Arquitectura teatral en Madrid: Del corral de comedias al cinematógrafo* (Madrid: El Avapiés, 1988).

[21] Direct statistics about theatre prices and audiences are difficult to come by: for the best summaries on the subject, see Membrez, "The *teatro por horas*," 113-121 and María Pilar Espín Templado, *El teatro por horas en Madrid (1870-1910)* (Madrid: Insitituo de Estudios Madrileños, 1995), 72-75.

works by important composers and authors—those most likely to be widely played and become established as part of the general repertory—took place in the establishments frequented by the upper classes, such as the Teatros Apolo, Zarzuela, and Eslava. Furthermore, it was the middle and upper classes that had both the leisure time and disposable income to make theatre-going a regular habit. Finally, the evolution of the structure of the teatro por horas evolved to favor the habits of the middle and upper classes. In most formal theatres, there were four shows per evening: the curtain times were usually 8.30 or 8.45, 9.30, 10.30, and 11.30 or 11.45. The fourth section was usually reserved for the latest and most popular hits, which starred the best known actors of the day. Earlier shows were where older, less popular works received their airings (although smash hits early in their runs might also run during the first section as a way of boosting attendance). Thus the most popular shows were most easily accessible by the upper classes whose occupations did not require them to be up and about early in the morning. This became especially true at the famed fourth session of the Teatro Apolo. By the 1890s, this had become the place to see and be seen for those in high society, and often the rites of society in the lobby delayed the curtain time until after midnight.[22]

But most importantly—and something often overlooked by scholars of the género chico—is the fact that the authors and composers of género chico works came almost exclusively from bourgeois backgrounds. The few composers that came from the lower classes (Tomás Bretón is the best example: he originally began life as an apprentice to a shoemaker) very quickly assimilated to the bourgeois milieu of the

[22] See Espín Templado, *El teatro por horas en Madrid*, 75-76.

theatre. The reason for this class homogeneity is not hard to explain. Most composers and librettists needed at least a modicum of education before they could succeed in the theatrical world, and it was the middle classes that had the money to educate their children. The aristocracy had this money too, but their children were prepared for careers in the service of the state—diplomacy, leadership in the armed forces. Many of the composers of the género chico were originally intended for careers in fields other than music (usually engineering, medicine, or law), and almost all the librettists had journalism experience at some point or another. The result was a distinct and remarkably unified outlook on life and society. The género chico may well have been an early form of mass culture that sought to appeal to a diverse audience, but it was created within a fairly narrow social spectrum.

This is the key conundrum that must be addressed if one is to study the género chico properly in its historical context. On the one hand, it was part of a theatrical culture that sought to transcend class boundaries and appeal to the broadest possible audience. In this sense, the género chico could be a perfect vehicle for the ideals of nationalism, which seeks to do exactly that. On the other hand, the género chico was created by and carried within it a very particular worldview: that of the bourgeoisie. To make this picture even odder, the majority of género chico works—especially the subgenre of the sainete—tend to depict the urban lower classes almost exclusively. The género chico created a living tableau of the new outlines of urban Spain in the later nineteenth century; but whether that tableau worked effectively as a way to

integrate the new audiences created by the teatro por horas system in the new urban vision of the Spanish nation can only be answered by looking at the works themselves.

Face the Music and Dance

As might be expected, zarzuelas of the género chico sound very different from those of the zarzuela grande. This should not be surprising; a new vision of Spain's national identity demanded a different musical depiction of that identity. What is interesting is that the género chico turned away from self-consciously "Spanish" forms of music. Instead, the music that defined urban Spain tended to come from central Europe: waltzes and polkas dominated the aural world of urban Spain, and they came to dominate the aural world of the Spanish stage as well. Not only did this dance music depict what would have been heard daily in Spanish cities, its simplicity helped to make it popular and more appealing to a mass audience that might have been alienated by the more complex musical forms that zarzuela had traditionally used.

The género chico eliminated the operatic romanzas and elaborate concertante numbers that had populated the scores of earlier zarzuelas like *Pan y toros* and *El anillo de hierro*. Where the zarzuela grande had demanded trained singers to essay its main roles, the género chico relied primarily on actors who sing (or at least make a pretense thereof). The reason for this can be found in which part of a lyric theatre work—the words or the music—provide the main dramatic impetus. In opera and its cousin zarzuela grande, it is the music that provides most of the dramatic action; thus the casting requires singers who can make the most of the score. In operetta and the género chico, the plot is generally carried forward in the spoken dialogue portions of

the libretto. Thus, the casting is concerned with finding actors who can sing and who will not be hampered by the dialogue.

As a necessary result of the preference for actors over trained singers, the music of the género chico is simpler and less elaborate than that of zarzuela grande. The music often has a limited vocal range and lacks the high tessitura for tenor and soprano that are often a hallmark of opera and zarzuela grande. The use of "through-composed" musical numbers declines drastically in favor of strophic songs where the music is repeated (often with different lyrics), making the music easier to memorize and perform. This is partially the result of an increase in the use of popular musical material. Traditionally, popular folk and dance forms had been restricted to the chorus; with the género chico, the majority of the musical numbers took on a more popular cast. The orchestral underpinnings of género chico music change as well. There is a greater tendency for the vocal line to be doubled in the orchestra, which again makes matters easier for the singers. The size of the orchestra also decreases somewhat, usually by reducing the number of string players; this has the consequence of making the winds and percussion more important. All of these were features of European operetta music in general, and Spain was not the only nation whose lyric theatre was beginning to sound different in the later nineteenth century.[23]

But the biggest change in the sound of zarzuela—and what made it definitively urban—came through its use of dance music. As indicated above, popular forms of music came to form the majority of musical numbers in género chico scores. Given

[23] Emilio Casares Rodicio, "La música del siglo XIX español: Conceptos fundamentales," *La música española en el siglo XIX,* ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio and Celsa Alonso González (Oviedo: U de Oviedo, 1995), 79-80.

the consumer-driven economic nature of the teatro por horas, this is hardly surprising. Nor was this foreign to zarzuela even before the advent of the género chico: zarzuela grande composers like Barbieri had used folk dance forms like the seguidillas to characterize the chorus and set it apart as a representation of the Spanish people, as discussed in Chapter I. The changes from this format in the género chico are twofold. First, the use of popular forms is no longer restricted to the chorus. With the elimination of the operatic romanzas, even the leads get to sing music composed in popular forms. Secondly, the use of popular forms grew to include forms of music not generally associated with the Iberian Peninsula. The seguidillas and the jotas would never disappear completely, but they increasingly were sharing time with the strains of waltzes, polkas, and other popular dances of the day.

A cursory examination of the score of *La canción de la Lola* is instructive in this regard, for this tendency exists in a nascent form even in the first musical género chico work. There is one almost self-consciously "Spanish" number, Maximina's Song (No. 4 in the vocal score), which uses a lot of vocal melisma as well as "¡Ays!" and "¡Olés!" to create what could almost be a parody of Spanish music.[24] But the title music is a 2/4 *Allegro moderato* number whose musical identity shifts as the play progresses. Mostly heard as orchestral underscoring, Lola's Song is usually performed in one of two forms. The first is as a pasadoble, a march-style figure generally associated with bullfights. The other is as a polka. Both forms share obvious similarities and underlying rhythms—otherwise Chueca could hardly have pulled the

[24] See the vocal score: Federico Chueca and Joaquín Valverde, *La canción de la Lola: Zarzuela en un acto* (Madrid: Zozaya, n.d.).

switch off—but the aural effect is distinct. The polka sounds like the dance music it is, and in fact sits a little oddly on the libretto's depiction of daily life in Madrid. Nor is the polka the only Central European dance form in *La canción*; there is also a prominent waltz, the Memorialista's Song (No. 7B). The question remains: why would Chueca use Central European dances to help underscore what is essentially a depiction of the various types one might run into in a Madrid neighborhood?

Partially, the answer must be that these musical forms were the ones that Chueca was most familiar with. Federico Chueca, arguably the most popular and successful of the género chico composers, was also one of the few who was actually born and raised in Madrid.[25] Most of his musical experience and education was of a practical nature: he supported himself in his early years as a café pianist, playing popular music in the forms of waltzes, polkas, and the like. His main talent was improvisation, and although he did pursue some studies at the Conservatorio de Madrid these seem to have had little impact on his career. Writing music was difficult for Chueca, but spinning off melodies on the piano was easy. Thus it is probably not surprising that the majority of Chueca's stage output consists of the popular music that he first improvised in Madrid cafés. And these songs were generally based on Central European dance music.

It was hardly surprising that it was dance music that Chueca first learned to improvise, for if there was one form of recreation that everybody in Madrid enjoyed, it

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[25] The only full-length biography of Chueca is F. Hernández Girbal, *Federico Chueca: El alma de Madrid* (Madrid: Ediciones Lira, 1992); there are also decent biographical summaries in Carlos Gómez Amat, *Historia de la música española: 5. Siglo XIX* (Madrid: Alianza, 1988), 211-219 and Christopher Webber, *The Zarzuela Companion* (Lanham & Oxford: 2002), 73-74.

was dancing. Even more so than theatre, dancing was a leisure-time activity that appealed across classes and social groups.[26] Admittedly, most dance venues catered to very specific social groups—aristocratic balls to the elite, dance halls to the lower classes—but the important point is that there were venues for everybody to dance in. Dance halls and salons were the common venues for leisure-time dancing, and these forums imported the latest and most up-to-date dances from across Europe to attract their patrons, including polkas, mazurkas, schottisches, and waltzes. These dances were also the main attraction at many of Madrid's *verbenas*, its traditional festivals. Here, social classes would intermingle in the open-air evening dances that traditionally climaxed the verbenas, where the atmosphere was more permissive than in the socially segregated dance halls and salons.

The importance of dances to Madrid's leisure and social life can be measured by how often dances turn up as settings and plot devices in género chico works. In both *La verbena de la paloma* and *La Revoltosa*, a dance is the crucial scene in which the main dramatic conflict takes place and the lovers finally fall into each other's arms. The desire to attend a dance with the lady of one's choice is the motor that drives the plots of *El santo de la Isidra* and *Agua, azucarillos, y aguardiente* (and the climatic scene of the former takes place at the dance as well). Clearly, festival dances retained their traditional function as a place of sociability and celebration even as they were translated from rural to urban areas; what changed was the nature of the music.

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[26] On the history and importance of dancing as leisure activity in nineteenth century Madrid, see Virgilio Pinto Crespo, ed., *Madrid: Atlas histórico de la ciudad, 1850-1939* (Madrid: Fundación Caja Madrid, 2001), 368 and Antonio Barrera Maraver, *Crónicas del género chico y de un Madrid divertido* (Madrid: El Avapiés, 1983), 22-32.

The traditional folk dances, the seguidillas and the jotas, were replaced by dance music that reflected a more urban sensibility. Dances in rural festivals were about celebrating community life; dances in urban settings were more intimate and romantic, less focused on creating community than on creating romantic attachments.

The result is that the género chico, by adopting this urban dance music with its various associations into its aural world, helps to create an atmosphere of what Ramón Barce has dubbed "urban folklore."[27] This interest in the habits and customs of urban life is hardly surprising, given the necessary shift in dramatic emphasis undertaken by the género chico. It also helped to give the necessary feeling of reality and contemporanity that the naturalist ethic demanded and that the género chico catered to.[28] But most importantly, urban dance music increasingly took the place of traditional folk music on the Spanish lyric stage. Where folk music had depicted the Spanish people in the zarzuela grande, the new demands of the género chico required a different sort of music. The género chico was the theatre of a new and urban Spain; what it required to depict the people of this new vision of Spain was urban folk music. Just as the zarzuela grande had turned to dance music to depict the pueblo, the género chico followed suit. The difference was that this dance music is hardly what one associates with traditional rural Spain; but what was crucial for the composers of the género chico was that it did reflect the ambiance of urban Madrid.

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[27] Barce, "El sainete lírico," 223-229; see also his "El folklore urbano y la música de los sainetes líricos del último cuarto del siglo XIX: La explicación escénica de los bailes," *Revista de Musicología* 16:6 (1993), 3217-3225.

[28] See Barce, "El sainete lírico," 229.

If zarzuela was considered Spanish lyric drama at least partially because of its use of popular and folk music, how did Spanish composers naturalize this new urban folk music—in other words, how did they make it "Spanish" and thus a natural part of zarzuela? It is perhaps again best to turn to Federico Chueca, the acknowledged master of popular madrileñismo. Many of his scores have been referred to as suites of dance music, and an examination of how he and his librettists structured their works is instructive. For our purposes, the best of his zarzuelas to examine is his 1897 piece *Agua, azucarillos, y aguardiente* (Water, Sweets, and Spirits) with a libretto by Miguel Ramos Carrión. Subtitled a "summertime walk" (*pasillo veraniego*), the work is set in the Recoletos Gardens, a popular park in Central Madrid.[29] The ostensible plot revolves around the romantic intrigues of Serafín, a young bourgeois cad, and how these are thwarted by beverage seller Pepa and her fiancé Lorenzo. But the musical interest revolves around the various types who frequent the park and take their refreshment at Pepa's stand. Chueca's music deftly integrates central European dance music into a Spanish form of identity by celebrating a leisurely evening in Madrid.

It is significant that the first scene of *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* which lays out the broad outlines of the plot—such as it is—has no musical numbers in it whatsoever.[30] Although the scene is a deft parody of lower-middle class mores and bad poetry, it is little more than atmospheric set-up for what follows: the dramatic

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[29] Today, less happily, Recoletos is the main north-south automotive thoroughfare through central Madrid; however, there are still a few cafés and a tree-lined pedestrian walkway that recalls the gentler days in which Ramos Carrión's libretto is set.

[30] There is some orchestral underscoring for Asia's poem and the subsequent scene change (No. 1B in the ICCM vocal score—it is unclear, however, if this music was performed in the original production or not), but no sung numbers. See Federico Chueca, *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente: Pasillo veraniego en un acto*, ed. Benito Lauret (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1996).

concerns of the first scene (Doña Simona's precarious financial situation and the engagement of Asia to the possibly untrustworthy Serafín) become submerged in a second plot (the conflict between Pepa and Manuela) and the depiction of a typical summer evening in a turn-of-the-century Madrid park. The second scene—the heart of the work—opens with a scene of children playing games while their nannies look on. Chueca mixes two types of folklore in this opening chorus. The first are the songs sung by the children, which were not composed by Chueca but are in fact traditional children's songs from the period.[31] The second is an evocation of traditional Galician bagpipe music; at least one of the children indicates his nurse is from Galicia.[32]

This opening chorus (No. 2 in the vocal score) provides both visual and aural evidence of the impact of urbanization in late nineteenth century Spain. The children are unquestionably of the urban upper classes who have been shooed out of the house in the company of their nurses for fresh air. But the nurses themselves are immigrants, sent to the city in order to earn a living and clearly unhappy about it, as the refrain to one of their choruses indicates: "When will I go / to my hometown, / that insistently calls since I went away?"[33] Chueca's evocation of Galician bagpipes in the orchestra (actual bagpipes are not used, but the sound is mimicked by a combination of violins and muted trumpet) not only suggests the unhappiness of the transplants to Madrid, but is arguably an aural representation of the integration of the rural population into city life, as the music moves back and forth easily between the contemporary

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[31] I am borrowing the broad outline of my musical analysis from Barce, "El sainete lírico," 226-227.
[32] See Miguel Ramos Carrión, *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente*, 2.v.
[33] "¿Cuándo me iré / a mi lugar, / que el farruco me manda a llamar?" Ramos Carrión, *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente*, 2.v.

children's music and the evocation of a rural past. There is a sense that Ramos Carrión and Chueca are evoking the urban future with the upbeat children's music and contrasting it with the slightly mournful music that represents the countryside.

This linking of urban life with cheerful and upbeat music continues with the next musical number, the Chorus of the Barquilleros (No. 3 in the vocal score). After several extended book scenes which advance the plot(s), the stage is invaded by a female chorus dressed as young boys who sell barquillos, a waffle-cone and cream concoction enjoyed during the Madrid summer before the advent in popularity of ice cream. Set to march-rhythm pasodoble, the chorus is a catalogue of the poorer neighborhoods in Madrid where the urchins live—la Ronda, Embajadores, Lavapiés—and the slightly more upscale locations where they vend their wares—the Prado, the Plaza de Colón, the Puerta de Alcalá, the Plaza de Cibeles.[34] The number is a simple celebration of urban life and urban pleasures: either the ability to purchase a barquillo or the ability to mock some of the slightly snootier customers, depending upon which side of the transaction one is on. To musically characterize this slice of urban leisure life, Chueca uses one of the more popular dances of the period: the pasodoble.

It is the extended finale to *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* that cements urban life as the new basis for Spanish nationalism. This ten-minute scene is a kaleidoscope of various types of popular dance music. It opens with a mazurka-style chorus by a theatre audience happy to escape the roasting confines of the auditorium for the cooler night air—a serious problem in the days before air-conditioning. They encounter an

[34] The last is given a very madrileño pronunciation as the "plaza *la Cebá*" in order to fit the rhyme scheme somewhat more smoothly. Ramos Carrión, *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente*, 2.xvii.

Italian street musician who entertains them with a popular song. This is followed by a panaderos (a subset of flamenco music) in which Pepa and rival refreshment seller Manuela climax the turf war they have been carrying on throughout the play by slagging each other like fishwives; this evolves into a quartet in which their fiancés try to resolve the argument. Vicente and Lorenzo are able to do this by changing the music to a pasacalle reminiscent of music played before bullfights and by giving the women their Manila shawls (which had been pawned); all is forgiven and the four make their way to a verbena. Chueca has one last musical joke in hand: as Serafín falls asleep in the park (having been drugged), three robbers make off with his clothing to the orchestral music of Chueca's own "Jota de las Ratas" from *La Gran Vía*, which depicted the problems of urban crime.[35] Serafín is arrested for indecent exposure (another typically urban crime, come to think of it), deceit is punished, and all ends happily.

The finale to *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* functions as a microcosm of the musical construction of the work as a whole. Chueca mixes together popular songs, traditional folk music (the panaderos), and urban dance music (the mazurka and the pasacalle) to create what might be referred to as urban folk music. This mixes both the traditional rural folk music of inhabitants new to urban life as well as the dance music that increasingly filled the function of sociability that folk music had for rural society. But the use of this new urban folk music expands somewhat from its use in the Barbieri-style zarzuela grande. No longer is it used merely to characterize the Spanish people as it had been in Barbieri's works; it is used to characterize everybody,

[35] See Chapter IV.

since even the principles get to sing waltzes and mazurkas. Appropriately enough for the dawning of the age of mass culture, there is no longer an assumption that the Spanish people are of a different class or social standing from the protagonists of the drama, as they were in the zarzuela grande. Urban folk music characterizes everybody in the género chico because everybody—Doña Simona and Asia as much as Pepa and Manuela—are a part of the nation. Class differentiations are no longer be marked off musically.

Nor is *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* unique in its treatment of urban dance music. The majority of Chueca's scores function in a very similar manner, what Barce and others have described as suites of urban dance music.[36] Again, the concept appears in an embryonic form in *La canción de la Lola*, which uses the polka as its main musical theme and then proceeds to work in a popular waltz. By the time Chueca had composed the score to *La Gran Vía* six years later, he had more or less perfected the idea of the zarzuela-suite. The score to that work contains polkas, waltzes, a tango, and the schottische. *El año pasado por agua* (1889) has a mazurka, a waltz, a pasacalle, a habanera, and a number that mixes a zortzico—a Basque folk tune—with a schottische. Even Chueca's *Cádiz*—a work far removed from Madrid and whose emphasis is on the historical past and not the urban present—uses this formula in the construction of its musical score.[37] Clearly, the zarzuela-suite was the standard compositional format of Chueca, who was in turn the most aggressively urban of zarzuela composers. Doubtless, this is at least partially a heritage of his

[36] Barce, "El sainete lírico (1880-1915)," 223-224, 228.
[37] Each of these works will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV.

musical education in the dance halls of Madrid; but Chueca was not the only composer to pursue such a strategy, even if he was the one who pursued it most noticeably and most aggressively.

Both Tomás Bretón and Ruperto Chapí were more sophisticated and subtle composers than Chueca, but even their género chico works betray the influence of the zarzuela-suite method of composition. Bretón's *La verbena de la paloma* (The Festival of Our Lady of the Dove) features an instrumental mazurka (which is used as the on-stage music for a dance sequence) and a habanera. While the mazurka is played as a relatively straightforward piece of dance music, the habanera is developed instead as a concertante number (in fact, the vocal score give it the title "Habanera concertante"—No. 5B) that displays the operatic possibilities of strophic dance music.[38] The main melody is almost ridiculously simple: the vocal line alternates between two notes (A and F#) in a limited rhythmic pattern (the phrase is based on two sixteenth notes and an eighth note which is repeated three times; this larger phrase repeated twice over makes up the basic melody). The simplicity of the tune should not be underrated: "¿Dónde vas con mantón de Manila?" ("Where are you going in your Manila shawl?") is one of the most widely remembered melodies not only from *La verbena de la paloma*, but from the zarzuela repertory in general.[39] This insistent musical phrase is batted back and forth between the characters of Julián and Susana until the entrance of the rest of the cast. Even as the vocal textures thicken and

[38] See the vocal score: Tomás Bretón, *La verbena de la paloma, o El boticario y las chulapas y celos mal reprimidos: Sainete lírico en un acto*, ed. Ramón Barce (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1994).
[39] Ricardo de la Vega, *La verbena de la paloma*, 2.vi.

become more complex, Bretón continues to keep the relatively simple habanera rhythm going in the orchestra with the strings and woodwinds until the end of the number, thus tying the operatic excesses of what is happening on stage together with a simple and repetitive musical line in the orchestra pit.

Ruperto Chapí's *La Revoltosa* (The Mischievous Maid) from 1897 has a similar construction. Here, the urban dance music is pared down to a single form: the waltz. But again, the dance music crops up in the two most important numbers in the score, the quartet (No. 2) and the love duet (No. 4). Waltz rhythms also turn up at several points in the musical scenes that comprise No. 5 in the score, which also have a reprise of the theme from the love duet.[40] While much of Chapí's score consists of a flexible combination of song and *sprechtgesang*, these two numbers stand independently and serve to encapsulate the two key dramatic moments of José López Silva and Carlos Fernández-Shaw's libretto. The quartet consists of Mari-Pepa's (the titular trouble-maker) teasing of the three married men who are seeking her favors. But Mari-Pepa is having none of their promises and outlines the necessary attributes for a woman in search of love:

> Come, gentlemen,
> no quarrelling!
> A woman
> ought to have…
> Pupils to distinguish with,
> and a heart to love with,
> and good taste to choose with…[41]

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[40] See the vocal score: Ruperto Chapí, *La Revoltosa: Sainete lírico en un acto*, piano reduction, V. Arin (Madrid: Casa Dotesio, n.d.)

[41] "¡Vamos, señores, / no regañar! / La mujer / debe tener... / Pupila pa distinguir, / y corazón pa querer, / y buen gusto pa elegir.." José López Silva and Carlos Fernández-Shaw, *La Revoltosa*, 1.vi.

Chapí uses the waltz to underscore the nature of urban love. On the one hand, Mari-Pepa points out the advantages: with a little common sense a woman can choose with whom she will fall in love and eventually marry. On the other hand, the situation is a warning, since the adulterous context of the quartet would hardly be so open in any but an urban setting. The love duet, appropriately, will also use the waltz, but here the lyric nature of the waltz form is used to emphasize the passion between Felipe and Mari-Pepa.

Admittedly, Bretón and Chapí's use of urban dance music is more restricted than Chueca's; the notion of the zarzuela-suite might not stretch far enough to cover the score of *La Revoltosa*. This is not to say, however, that Bretón and Chapí drew the line at using dance music at the outskirts of Madrid. They continued to use traditional forms of folk music—the seguidillas especially—in tandem with the waltzes and mazurkas, just as Chueca incorporated the sound of Galician bagpipes and the flamenco-style panaderos into *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente*. What is most interesting about the way that Bretón and Chapí used folk music is the fact that such music is either used for the choruses—hardly surprising, given the heritage of zarzuela grande—or at moments when the characters become conscious they are singing.[42] The assumption is that the music people found most familiar was urban dance music. As with Chueca, everybody—regardless of class and station—sings music associated with the Spanish people, although that music was not what might have been traditionally

[42] Although the actors in lyric theatre pieces are always aware they are singing (one hopes), the characters they embody may or may not be aware they are singing. To clarify the distinction, consider *The Sound of Music*: Maria von Trapp (the Julie Andrews character) would not be aware she is singing the title song up on that Alp, but would be aware she is singing every time she has to lead the children through yet another chorus of "Do Re Mi."

though of as "Spanish." A redefinition of what constitutes Spanish identity is well underway in the género chico works of the 1880s and the 1890s, a redefinition built around the realities of everyday life in an urbanizing society.

Real Life Behind the Footlights

Lyric theatre is not often noted for its realism; more often, musical theatre pieces tend to revel in their inherent artificiality. Thus it may seem a little perverse that the género chico went out of its way to flaunt its realist credentials. Realism, however, was an important part of the new urban nationalism the works were attempting to articulate. Rather than the elaborate and romantic constructions of Spanish history that the zarzuela grande relied upon, the género chico hit upon the idea that portraying the Spanish nation meant portraying it as accurately as possible in a theatrical setting. This was an idealized vision, to be sure; but it was also an attractive vision of the possibilities and promises of urban life at the core of the redefinition of Spanish national identity. The género chico sought to integrate people into this new, urban, identity by showing just how attractive ordinary urban life might be.

With this in mind, one might ask the following question: was there ever a less spectacular or more ordinary way to open an operetta than the method Ricardo de la Vega and Tomás Bretón came up with for *La verbena de la paloma*? The curtain rises on a sweltering August night in a Madrid street with a pharmacy, a pastry shop, a house, and a tavern.[43] The shops are busy and the residents are enjoying the evening air:

[43] The description and all quotations are from Ricardo de la Vega, *La verbena de la paloma*, i.

> Don Hilarión and Don Sebastián are seated at the door of the pharmacy. The porter of the building and his wife are also seated, enjoying the night air. The wife has a small sleeping child in her lap. The pastry shop is full of people and there is much activity. At the door of the tavern, playing cards at a small table and seated on benches, are the Tavern-keeper and two friends of his. His wife serves them drinks from time to time. Julián, seated on a low stool and leaning against the wall of the tavern, sighs and complains.

It is a striking stage picture, and similar scenes can still be found from time to time in certain neighborhoods of the city during the summer. From the number of people in the scenario—especially the indications of activity in the tavern and the pastry shop—one might expect a standard ta-ra-ra-boom-der-e chorus extolling the joys of living in the vicinity. Instead, we hear a fidgety tune from the violins and piccolo, and one of the elderly gentlemen sitting in front of the pharmacy begins to sing:

> Castor oil
> is no longer unpleasant to take.
> They give it to you in little pills
> and the effect is still the same.[44]

If there is any other operetta that opens with two elderly gentlemen singing about the effectiveness of purgative cures, I have yet to encounter it.

Just as he does with this first song, Bretón uses music to heighten the ordinary, everyday quality of the entire opening scene. One might have expected Bretón, the archpriest of the ópera española movement, to indulge in a high-flown, operatic idiom. The orchestral prelude Bretón constructed to be played before the rise of the opening curtain bears this out. Although a potpourri of various themes from the work—the common form of zarzuela preludes and overtures in the 1890s—Bretón took great care

[44] "El aciete de ricino / ya no es malo de tomar. / Se administra en piloritas / y el efecto es siempre igual."

in constructing the piece, writing new musical passages to bridge the transition between numbers and often altering the key signatures to create an integrated overture. Most of these potpourri preludes consisted of three or four selections from the show; Bretón's for *La verbena* weaves together seven, including two vastly different versions of the habanera "¿Dónde vas con mantón de Manila?" Furthermore, Bretón's prelude is hardly the bright, up-tempo curtain-raiser one expects from musical comedy in general or the género chico in particular. Most of the music feels slow and quiet, even when the tempo is marked *Allegro*. The prelude is orchestrated almost entirely for the winds and strings, with very few brass passages. In short, the prelude to *La verbena* is hardly characteristic of zarzuela or "light music" in general: it has all the hallmarks of being very carefully composed, much like an operatic overture.

But the opening scene, while just as carefully composed and constructed by Bretón, is in no way operatic. In fact, the vocal lines in the opening number—especially those of Don Hilarión and Don Sebastián—verge very closely on being *sprechtgesang*, which is merely spoken in time to the music. Bretón does indicate pitch for his vocal lines, but the musical range is so limited that the dialogue between the two elderly gentlemen often sounds as if it is being spoken.[45] It will come as no surprise to discover that this opening is listed in the vocal score as "Parlante y escena," or literally "Speech and Scene."[46] Not only is Bretón trying to downplay any operatic tendencies, he seems to be trying downplay all his musical tendencies as well. This

[45] For those familiar with the classics of American musical theatre, the effect is much that of listening to Rex Harrison in *My Fair Lady* or Robert Preston in *The Music Man*.

[46] No. 1 in the vocal score. "Parlante" is, of course, the Spanish translation of the Italian "parlando," which means "speech over music."

continues as Julián and Seña Rita carry out a brief dialogue in which she chastises him for literally crying into his beer, which is followed by some discussion between the tavern-keeper and his card-playing cronies. Although the music has become a little more involved, it is still essentially parlando; the effect is that of making the entire introduction to *La verbena* more like what one would encounter on the streets of Madrid. Rather than using the music to heighten the emotion of the moment as opera would, Bretón uses his music to heighten the everyday quality of the scene he is depicting.

This strategy continues even as the music of the opening scene becomes more involved. Following the comments of the card-players, we get the first solo in the work, Julián's Song.[47] For the first time we hear a vocal line with some actual range to it. The first "musical" moment in the score also announces the theme and plot of the work, for Julián's monologue sums up his emotional situation, which gives *La verbena* one of its subtitles, "Celos mal reprimidos" (Ill-Restrained Jealousy):

> Regular people
> have hearts as well,
> and tears in their eyes
> and ill-restrained jealousy.
> …….
> For a dark-haired flirt
> I am lost,
> and the courage I have stored up
> drains from my face![48]

[47] No. 1A in the vocal score, "Canción de Julián."

[48] "También la gente del pueblo / tiene su corazoncito, / y lágrimas en los ojos / y celos mal reprimidos. / ... / ¡Y por una morena chulapa / me veo *perdío*, / y a la cara me sale el coraje / que tengo *escondío*!" Vega, *La verbena de la paloma*, i.

This soliloquy is the first moment in the work wherein a character announces their state of mind, and it is appropriate that Julián should thus be the first character to burst forth in full-fledged song. Julián's outburst is followed by the first ensemble of the work in which all the characters that have sung thus far reprise their vocal lines together. On one level, the effect is quite musical as the audience realizes that all the music heard thus far—Don Hilarión's praise of laxatives, the card-players' quarrel, Julián's laments—works together in counterpoint. However, since all but the last vocal line are effectively parlando, the naturalism of the opening scene has not been completely stripped away. The realism is only heightened by what follows: as the ensemble ends, the strings in the orchestra pick up a quiet figure while the Porter and his wife discuss whether their infant son is asleep and how hot their apartment is likely to be.

These enchanting nine bars of music give way with an orchestral crash to the chorus in the pastry shop. Now the chorus that a lesser composer and librettist might have used to open the work bursts forth. The orders of food and drink give way to one of the most famous choruses in the zarzuela repertory:

> Because it is the Festival
> of Our Lady of the Dove,
> a shawl from China-na,
> China-na,
> I will give to you.[49]

The chorus sets the scene and establishes that the Festival is happening that night. They also establish their identity as the Spanish people, since Bretón sets the chorus to

[49] "Por ser la Virgen / de la Paloma, / un mantón de China-na, / China-na, / te voy a regalar." Vega, *La verbena de la paloma*, i.

a seguidillas, the first folk music idiom to crop up in the score. It also ends the first musical scene quite effectively on a high note (as it were) that demands audience applause. As far as the demands of musical construction go, this opening number alone would establish Bretón as a musical genius of the highest caliber.

To gain a better sense of just why Bretón's musical construction is so brilliant, it is worth considering how a less sophisticated composer might have constructed the scene. As suggested above, the obvious move would have been to open with the chorus, which automatically establishes the place and provides for a rousing opening number. This might be followed by a dialogue scene introducing Julián (the main character, after all) and then his song. This probably would have been followed by another dialogue scene in which we meet the denizens of the neighborhood capped by Don Hilarión and Don Sebastián's comic laxative duet. The obvious sequencing of the discrete musical numbers is, in fact, the diametric opposite of the route that Bretón took. Furthermore, it is doubtful that another composer and librettist team would have used the various interactions between the neighborhood characters as bridging material. Each of the vignettes hardly seems musical, after all.

But that is precisely the point, and the explanation as to why Bretón and Vega chose to structure the opening scene in the manner that they did. They clearly had more than just creating an enjoyable evening at the theatre in mind. Nor was this merely to be the story of a jealous lover—else, why introduce the comic supporting players before the leading man? On one level, Bretón and Vega were seeking to depict a Madrid neighborhood in its entirety—from the dirty old men on the corner to

the excited patrons of the pastry shop. They created a slice of life exemplary of 1894 Madrid, where a lover's jealousy (which might well suffice as enough to build the plot of another operetta around) is only one part of the fabric of daily life. Moreover, a young man singing about his potential jealousy is not exactly the sort of thing one runs into on a daily basis, even in Madrid. On the other hand, elderly men complaining about their bodily functions and how those might be regulated are hardly uncommon.[50] Musically, this links with Bretón's intense use of quasi-parlando vocal lines and his attempts to minimize the "musical" effects of the opening number: both composer and librettist are seeking to create a realistic depiction of street life in Madrid even while working in a genre where realism is more often a detriment than a positive virtue. Of the numerous epithets hurled at operetta over the years, "realistic" is just about the last word that springs to mind.

Yet *La verbena de la paloma* and most other sainetes of the género chico prided themselves on their realism. This, in fact, was the key function of the sainete—a theatrical genre which has no counterpart outside of Spain. The sainete is a cousin of what the English would tend to call a "comedy of manners": the focus of the dramatic action is driven not so much by a plot as by the actions of the characters themselves. But unlike the traditional comedies of manners, the sainete's sole dramatic interest is in the behavior of the characters. Furthermore, the characters of the sainete do not behave in a … well, mannered fashion. Mrs. Malaprop would hardly be at home in the world of zarzuela. Instead, the characters' behavior is patterned very closely after the behavior of real people. Ricardo de la Vega's

[50] Anybody who has spent any time on a bus in Madrid can vouchsafe the accuracy of this.

libretti—*La verbena* in particular—were highly praised for just this aspect. *El Imparcial* commented that the characters "are painted with true skill, as are the principle scenes which give rise to the state of mind in which such characters are to be encountered."[51] Critics and audiences viewed the characterizations of the sainete as being an accurate representation of daily life in Madrid.

Nor was the inherent naturalism of the sainete strictly held to the characters. The localities in which the sainetes took place would also have been instantly recognizable to the theatrical audience in Madrid. Just how faithful the scenic representation would have been on stage is something of a matter of debate. Due to the expense of constructing scenery, most theatres had a selection of stock sets (a street, the interior of a shop, the courtyard of a house) that would serve for almost any sainete. Thus, most sainetes feature fairly generic settings in the stage directions—such as "a street in Madrid." However, sainetes by more established composers and works that the impresarios projected would be hits would have new sets created (often by the team of Bussato and Amalio Fernández, who were the leading set designers of the day) that created what audiences accepted as a theatrically accurate representation of the streets they traversed on a daily basis. Again, the review in *El Imparcial* is illuminating: "All of the action takes place in the neighborhood where the Paloma Chapel is located, and there are scenes in the open air, at the door of a tavern ... the style is that of an exact imitation, a faithful picture that is not even lacking a single detail, which appears before the view of the audience."[52] Even if we assume that the

[51] J.A., "Teatro de Apolo," *El Imparcial*, 18 February 1894.
[52] J.A., "Teatro de Apolo," *El Imparcial*, 18 February 1894.

sets were hardly exact replicas of the street scenes in Madrid—it can be a tad difficult to reproduce with wood and canvas what was originally brick and mortar—the audience accepted the overall reality and accuracy of the scenes portrayed on stage.

In fact, the realism of the settings became crucial to the construction of the sainete. Consider Carlos Arniches' first staged play, *El santo de la Isidra*. When the work was first staged on 20 February 1898 (five days after the *Maine* blew up in Havana harbor), the libretto was roundly panned for a number of jokes the critics held to be in poor taste.[53] On the other hand, the music by Tomás López Torregrosa was the saving grace that made the work wildly popular ("happy, frisky, very Madrilenian" is how *El Liberal* described it).[54] But the settings were integral to the plot. Two of the sets were representations of well-known Madrid landmarks. The second scene was set in front of the Toledo Bridge. This particular scene was probably played "in one"—in front of a drop curtain near the proscenium—and is a comic scene whose sole function is to provide cover for a more elaborate scene change going on behind the drop curtain. It also served as a geographic bridge between the Madrid setting of the first scene and the setting of the third scene, "La Pradera de San Isidro el día del Santo" ("The Holiday at St. Isidore's Meadow"). Here, not only is another familiar Madrid landmark represented, it is depicted on a festival day: Arniches' stage directions call for banquet tables, vendors, and carousels. This representation of a festival in Madrid is crucial to the denouement of the plot: neighborhood rake Epifanio has declared that

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[53] To the modern audience member who has had to suffer what passes for "humor" in most entertainment these days, it is difficult to see what the critics were complaining about in *El santo de la Isidra*.

[54] L., "Teatro de Apolo: «El santo de la Isidra»," 20 February 1898.

only he will dance with Isidra at the festival that honors her saint's day.[55] However, shy neighborhood tailor Venancio is in love with Isidra. Eventually Venancio contrives to dance with Isidra at the festival and exposes Epifanio's philandering, which wins him Isidra's hand and the approval of her parents. In essence, Arniches has created a classic carnivalesque plot in which the standard order is overturned during the carnival or festival. Thus, the naturalism of the setting is crucial to the main theme of the plot: without a traditional festival setting, Arniches' dramatic mechanisms would make much less sense.

For an even better sense of just how critical the realism of the sainete came to be, consider the stage directions for the setting of the first scene of *El santo de la Isidra*. Although it begins with the standard generic description, Arniches quickly becomes much more detailed:

> A small plaza in a working-class neighborhood. At the rear of the stage are two houses separated by an alley which leads to the Calle de Toledo, beyond which we can see the Plaza de la Cebada. The house on the left has functioning doors and on the ground floor, a shop selling imported goods. … The other house, on the right, has a tavern with a sign that reads: "No. 8, Wines and Liquors, No. 8". The door of the tavern opens into the alley and faces the audience. On the right wing of the stage is a house of modest construction, and in the corner where the house meets the tavern is the storage room of a shoemaker. On the left wing of the stage is another building, whose ground floor contains a furniture store, some of whose merchandise has been placed in the door. The sign of the store reads: "The Rocking Chair, Chair-Makers and Upholsterers."[56]

Arniches' setting may be imaginary, but the stage direction does all it can to establish the reality of the scene, from the precise address to the signs in the shop windows.

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[55] San Isidro also happens to be the patron saint of Madrid itself, which adds a few layers to the plot.
[56] Carlos Arniches, *El santo de la Isidra*, I.i.

Both the Calle de Toledo and the Plaza de la Cebada are well known locations in southern Madrid: the location that Arniches describes would be somewhere around the current La Latina metro station. I have not been able to determine whether or not the small plaza Arniches describes actually exists: nothing like it appears on Madrid street maps, but this part of Madrid has a number of small streets and plazas—any of which Arniches could have used for inspiration. The modest shops are the sort that still litter the neighborhood, and the "tienda de ultramarinos" (import shop) is a telling touch: the neighborhoods around the Calle de Toledo probably would have had a fair number of immigrants from America living in the area. Arniches' request for the practical doors, windows, and balconies would have heightened the realism since most sets consisted of painted back-drops (which forced the actors to make all entrances and exits from the wings, not from the buildings themselves).

It is an open question whether or not Arniches actually achieved his ideal setting during the first run of *El santo de la Isidra*. The review of the work that had the most to say about the sets was that in *El Heraldo de Madrid*, which commented that "Señor Muriel has painted for *El santo de la Isidra* two pretty sets, which represent Toledo Bridge and St. Isidore's Meadow."[57] No mention is made of the elaborate set described for the first scene. Keeping in mind that at this point in time Arniches was a new and relatively unknown writer, the impresarios of the Teatro de Apolo probably chose to use a stock set for the first scene, as there is nothing in the dramatic situation that absolutely demands the detailed realism that the author calls for. Doubtless Arniches was writing for an idealized production. Nevertheless, he

[57] "Estreno en Apolo," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 20 February 1898.

could not have been too displeased about the verisimilitude displayed on the stage. As the reviewer for *El Liberal* asked, "*El santo de la Isidra* will figure for many nights on the boards of the Apolo, because the last scene is very Madrilenian, and who has left Madrid without seeing St. Isidore's Meadow—the last scene of the work—represented by a most beautiful set from Muriel?"[58] Whatever the flaws in *El santo de la Isidra*, it obviously captured the true spirit of Madrid, its citizens, and its environs in a way that the audience and the critics recognized as accurate.

The sainete also managed to focus its realism through the depiction of its character's occupations. The workforce of traditional European operetta often seems to have come out of a Fragonard painting: squeaky clean peasant farmers and minor nobility. The workers in Spanish zarzuelas of the 1890s were still squeaky clean—the naturalist trend of the sainete hardly extended to placing the grimy miners of Zola's *Germinal* on the stage—but they were recognizably members of the working class. In fact what may be most interesting about the sainete, if its depictions are reasonably accurate, is the high number of women at work in Madrid. Men worked too, obviously; but female workers turn up in surprising quantity in the fin-de-siècle sainete.[59]

We have already met several types of these female workers in this chapter. There are the nannies who supervised the children in the Recoletos Park from *Agua, azucarillos, y aguardiente*. From the same play we also find the female refreshment

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[58] L., "Teatro de Apolo: «El santo de la Isidra»," *El Liberal*, 20 February 1898.

[59] Some of my discussion for what follows is drawn from José María Gomez Labad, *El Madrid de la zarzuela (Visión regocijada de un pasado en cantables)* (Madrid: Editoral Tres, 1983), Part II "Tipos Populares," 51-194—although it must be noted that Gomez Labad makes no mention of the heavy female presence in his listings.

vendors, most notably the ambulant water-sellers who carried their cool drinks in clay jugs and sold cups of water in the summer for a few céntimos. In the next chapter we will also encounter the female worker who was most visible to the members of the bourgeois audience and authors of the sainete: the domestic servant. While the nannies and the refreshment vendors receive a positive portrayal at the hands of the sainete authors, the authors paint a much more ambivalent picture of their servants: intelligent, but also thieving and duplicitous.[60]

The most prevalent female worker is the type that probably would also have been most prevalent in real life: the laundrywoman. These women took in washing from the bourgeois households in Madrid that did not have their own laundry facilities. Sainete composers often tended to use this group of women as part of a chorus, and with good reason: the laundrywomen of Madrid congregated in the same area to do their work, on the banks of the Manzanares River. The Manzanares, even at the best of times, hardly has more than a trickle of water running through it; but it was the only reliable source of free running water in the city. The use of the laundrywomen as chorus is used to best effect in Chueca's *El chaleco blanco* (The White Vest). Here, the cheerful women's chorus is used to set up an ironic contrast with Ventura's despair that he has lost his winning lottery ticket. In fact, the opening of the second scene of *El chaleco blanco* presents a typical tableau of the work-day along the banks of the Manzanares. The laundrywomen sing (not whistle) while they work; there are itinerant hairdressers and bread-sellers on foot hawking their services and wares; policemen pass by making misogynistic comments; and buglers wander by

[60] See Chapter IV.

to flirt with the women.[61] It is a charming scene that has nothing to do with the plot; but then again, the plot is almost always the most dispensable part of a sainete. In addition to providing a foil for Ventura's despair, this sequence had two other—interrelated—purposes. The first, as is standard, is to depict a tableau of daily life in Madrid. The use of the various types accomplishes this quite effectively. The second purpose is to carry out a little mild mocking of the bourgeoisie whose habits provide the laundrywomen with an occupation. Holding up a pair of socks, they state with amusement:

> These are the socks
> of a playboy,
> of a playboy.
> Oh, what a cold winter
> the poor boy has had!
> He has vents
> in front and behind.
> Be still my soul,
> that is how high society is![62]

If anybody can see through the pretensions of the middle classes—especially the social climbers—it would be the women who clean their underwear.

One suspects this mockery was far more prevalent and far more vicious among the real laundrywomen of the Manzanares River. The picture Rámos Carrión and Chueca present is sanitized, almost to the point where it would blur the recognition of real life. In reality, these women were poorly paid and worked under conditions almost unimaginable today. A small vignette from the novelist Arturo Barea, whose

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[61] The area of the Manzanares in which the women did their laundry was not very far from the Royal Palace; the buglers would have been from the Guards stationed at the Palace.

[62] "Estos son los calzones / de un señorito, / de un señorito. / ¡Ay, qué frío habrá pasado / este invierno el pobrecito! / Tiene ventiladores / por delante y por detrás. / ¡Marecita de mi alma, / cómo está la sociedá!" Miguel Rámos Carrión, *El chaleco blanco*, 2.xix.

mother was one of these laundrywomen, serves to blow apart the romanticized portrait of *El chaleco blanco*:

> My mother's hands were very small. As she had been washing since sunrise, her fingers were covered with little wrinkles like an old woman's skin, but her nails were bright and shining. Sometimes the lye would burn right through her skin and make pin-prick holes all over her fingertips. In the winter her hands used to get cut open; as soon as she took them out of the water into the cold air, they were covered with sharp little ice crystals. The blood would spurt as though a cat had scratched her.[63]

Doing laundry for living was hardly the idyllic romp that the sainetes portrayed it as. It aged the women prematurely and exacted a high physical toll: not merely the hands soaked in lye and coated in ice, but the constant bending and lifting of heavy loads would hardly pass modern OSHA standards.

Obviously, the argument that the lyric sainete was a realistic, naturalist genre can only be carried so far before the absurdity of such an argument becomes clear. Leaving aside the fact that musical theatre cannot be realistic almost by definition—sane people do not break into song at key emotional moments in real life, although we all might be better off if we did—it is clear that zarzuela only rarely even attempted to grapple with the more gritty aspects of working class life in 1890s Madrid. Nevertheless, in spite of this potential shortcoming, zarzuela composers and librettists were attempting to depict a new vision of the Spanish nation through the género chico. That vision was a picture of Spain that was urban, not rural; industrial, not agricultural; and modern, not backwards. Even if the género chico could not be utterly naturalistic, it did seek to carry some level of realistic discourse within it.

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[63] Arturo Barea, *The Forging of a Rebel*, trans. Ilsa Barea (London: Granta Books, 2001), 10.

But why was the discourse even important? What were the zarzueleros trying to do by cleaning up the working class citizens of Madrid and then proceeding to make them sing on stage? Consider the historical context. The 1890s—and, more widely, the period of the Bourbon Restoration—saw the political triumph of the middle classes over aristocratic government in Spain, but this triumph was almost immediately threatened by the increasing presence of an urban industrial class. The question became: how to deal with this new element whose very existence posed severe problems for the foundation of the Restoration settlement? The response of the government was to simply ignore the issue and somehow hope that the new pressures of mass politics would simply go away. The composers and authors of zarzuela took a different tack: by integrating the working classes into the Spanish national community. Spanish identity had traditionally been founded on notions of Spain as a rural, agrarian country. The zarzueleros changed this basic definition by incorporating new music and new characters into their work. Zarzuela would still be the authentic genre of nationalist lyric theatre, but it would be an urban Spanish identity and not a rural one.

In considering what the composers and librettists of zarzuela were attempting to accomplish, it is worth considering the arguments that Benedict Anderson makes about the way national communities are envisioned.[64] He links the rise of nationalism with the rise of mass literacy and likens the national community to the people who read a daily paper: none of the readers may actually know any other reader, but he imagines a group of people from other walks of life who are reading the same

[64] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991), especially 9-46.

newspaper at the same time. Nothing tangible links these people. They are a community only through the virtue that they can picture others doing the same thing they are doing. If popular literacy is one way to imagine a community, why not popular music? After all, virtually all urban dwellers (and presumably most people who visited an urban area) were familiar with the new urban forms of dance music: like folk music before it, dance music became a way of connecting people who had never met each other. It also proved an ideal vehicle in a time when urban culture was becoming more prominent than it had been before in Spain.

The perceived naturalism of the sainetes was also crucial in this project of helping to create a new, imagined community for an urbanizing Spain. The daily life of the working classes would have been something of a mystery to the bourgeoisie that made up the majority of the theatrical audience. What better way to help these audiences imagine the newest members of the Spanish community than literally placing them center stage? Furthermore, it can be argued that by placing sanitized representations onstage, it helped to diminish any threat the bourgeois audiences might have felt from the working classes. Turning a social question into entertainment romanticizes the issue as a matter of course; but then again, which foundations of national identity aren't romanticized fictions? There is a less positive spin that can be put on this question of romanticization as well. The sanitized presentation of the working classes can either be seen as putative attempts at bourgeois hegemony over the proletariat or an unconscionable attempt by a small group to exercise power over a majority, depending on whether one follows Marx or Foucault in these matters. All of

these interpretations ignore a crucial aspect of the story: the musical milieu in which zarzuela composers were forced to operate in late nineteenth century Spain.

It cannot be denied that the composers and librettists of the sainetes were very much members of the bourgeoisie, or at least desperately aspiring to be. Although many of the authors of the género chico had their social origins in the lower classes—Bretón the shoemaker's apprentice comes to mind—the musical world of late nineteenth century Spain was inherently and insistently bourgeois. The idea of "art for art's sake" aestheticism that flourished in England at roughly the same time is not to be found in the musical world of 1880s and 1890s Madrid. This is perhaps a natural consequence of a musical world that was so underdeveloped as to inhibit the performance of new works by Spanish composers, who were thus forced into the commercial theatre in order to make a living in their chosen profession. Even the most high-brow and serious composers like Bretón were forced to churn out commercial theatre pieces in order to pay their bills. This is a situation that happened in no other European country. In France, Germany, Italy, Russia, and England, musical culture was developed enough that composers could survive by writing orchestral music and opera—a situation which allowed Romantic notions about the production of art to thrive in a way they simply could not in Spain.

Thus there was a potential trap for the authors of zarzuela: in order to have their music heard at all, they had to create entertainment for the bourgeois theatre audiences—who doubtless would not have found the lice-infested realism of a Galdos

novel to be worth the price of a ticket.[65] On the other hand, once zarzuela composers had established themselves as the purveyors of nationalist lyric drama they had to continue to supply nationalist works even as the basis of Spanish national identity was beginning to change. And whatever ethical qualms one might have about the social function of depicting the working class on stage, it cannot be denied that zarzuela composers carried out their task supremely well with memorable music that rises far above the at-times pedestrian plots of the sainetes. Whatever these works might be, they are undeniably entertaining.

Most importantly, the género chico did succeed with its goal of fashioning a new urban national identity and integrating Spanish theatrical audiences into this new vision of the nation. The sheer proliferation of sainetes and the runaway popularity of works like *La verbena de la paloma* and *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente*—works which still form the core of the zarzuela repertory today—indicate that audiences enthusiastically accepted the vision of an urban rather than a rural Spain. It is at this point that zarzuela began its long association with forces that sought to modernize and regenerate Spain, as we shall see in Chapters IV and V. While this vision of a modern and urban Spain might seem to be merely the product of the middle class, the fact that it played in the teatro por horas system—with its lower ticket prices that allowed for the working class to attend the theatre and thus be integrated into the society portrayed onstage—meant that the género chico did have the potential to achieve nationalism's primary goal of uniting people across class boundaries.

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[65] Warts-and-all social drama faired somewhat better on the legitimate stage: one of the great non-lyric hits of the 1890s was Joaquín Dicena's 1895 *Juan José*, which is arguably the naturalist drama the sainetes could only aspire to be.

But this integration came at what would turn out to be a high—and highly ironic—cost. The urban nationalism of the género chico was built upon the use of urban dance music and the ability of composers to create settings for the music that made it the equivalent of the older folk-music forms predominant in the zarzuela seria. By doing so, the género chico further widened the gap between elite and popular forms of culture that zarzuela had opened up in the 1870s. With the género chico, zarzuela became mass consumer culture. In the 1890s, mass culture served the purpose of nationalism extremely well: a popular art form integrated people into the urban vision of the Spanish nation far better than elite forms had. But it also meant that the género chico was at the mercy of other, potentially more popular, art forms that might spring up. If those art forms did not pursue a nationalist agenda, then Spanish nationalism's reliance on popular culture to integrate people into that vision would become a liability rather than an asset. The demands of the marketplace—as we shall see—could easily trump the nationalist ideology of zarzuela and subvert its message.

IV

The Popular Politics of Zarzuela

By the 1890s, the género chico had established itself as a naturalistic genre of musical theatre that accurately portrayed Spanish society. In that same decade, it was also becoming clear that the political stability promised by the Restoration regime was coming at a rather high price: that of governmental corruption and inefficiency. At the end of the decade, the Spanish government would let the country slide into a war with the United States—a war that many in Spain's official circles wished to avoid but one that the weakness of the Restoration regime would prove helpless to prevent. These problems did not go unnoticed; many of Spain's intellectuals began to propose ways of fixing the country's problems. Given the naturalistic discourse that surrounded zarzuela in the 1890s, it is hardly surprising that these questions of degeneration and regeneration became a prominent thematic element in the lyric works of the period.

This chapter will deal with two subsets of the género chico that addressed the problems of Spanish society and government, as well as the potential solution to those problems. The first subset is that of satire. Although a major component of the theatrical scene in the 1880s and 1890s, satirical pieces have—for the most part—not become part of the zarzuela canon, primarily because of the limited life span of topical satire. However, those works that have survived give a keen insight into what Spaniards at the end of the nineteenth century found worth mocking in their society and government. Given the género chico's populism, it comes as no surprise that the target of satirical mockery is aimed high up on the social scale. Politically, género

chico satire takes on the flaws becoming readily apparent in the Restoration regime such as corruption and nepotism. A realistic genre demanded a realistic approach to the problems of society and politics, and the género chico provides this in spades. Furthermore, the satire of society and of government had become intertwined: the society that the género chico mocked was exactly that society which had constructed the Restoration regime and had hindered the political power of the new classes that were the focus of the género chico's urban nationalism discussed in the previous chapter.

It is the second subset that provided a potential solution for the problems satirized by the género chico: historical zarzuelas. These historical works provide a thematic continuity of nationalism from the explicit concerns of the Barbieri-style zarzuela grande to the seemingly frivolous and Madrid-centered comedies of manners. Like the historical works of Barbieri, historical género chico pieces seek to use the notion of national identity to override the problems of class in a slowly modernizing society. But the género chico version of history places its emphasis on the classic notion of the *pueblo*, the idea of the Spanish people as an organic whole. These historical works actually provide a possible model of fixing the corruption that the satirical works emphasize. Implicitly, the historical zarzuelas of the 1890s argue that an authentic populism, based on giving more power to the people, will override the shortcomings of the elites—much as it had during the period of the Napoleonic invasion of Spain. This critique of society and the suggestion of a potential regeneration, often overlooked by scholars who can only see the more overtly patriotic

messages in such historical works, is crucial to understanding the role of national identity in the years before the 1898 disaster. The género chico was not promoting a facile patriotism; it was, in fact, a nationalist solution to the problems developed by the elite-dominated Restoration regime.

In a broader sense, the satirical and historical zarzuelas of the género chico are significant because they most clearly demonstrate the power of popular culture to mobilize a population and act as an agent of positive change. Traditional interpretations of popular culture like the Frankfurt School tend to focus on how popular culture demobilizes a population, luring them into a condition of complacency where they can be exploited by the forces of power.[1] The role of zarzuela in Spain provides a optimistic counterargument to this view. Popular culture can, in fact, accurately diagnose the problems of those who hold power in society or in government and can provide a potential model for fixing those problems. Popular culture is not always a tool with which cultural and political elites can manipulate the unsuspecting masses; as we shall see, many of the works that will be discussed in this chapter could hardly have been appealing or comforting to those in power. Their ideology cannot be dismissed as some sort of officially sanctioned diversions whose role might be a mere safety valve for popular discontent. For popular culture was picking up on many of the same strands of thought that Spanish intellectuals of the day were also focusing upon in their quest to improve the Spanish nation.

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[1] This is the central argument behind the classic statement of the Frankfurt School's theories on popular culture, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (1972; New York: Continuum, 2000).

The historical narrative of the género chico is mirrored most closely by a the philosopher Miguel de Unamuno, a highbrow figure not generally associated with light opera. Beginning in February 1895, Unamuno published a series of essays in the review *La España Moderna*, which he would later collect and republish in 1902 under the title *En torno al casticismo*.[2] Unamuno's goal in this series of essays was to uncover the true nature of Spanish identity. His conception of the nature of Spanish identity remains somewhat controversial today due to its emphasis on the specifically Castilian and Catholic components of that identity. But more crucial to Unamuno's train of thought was a conception of history that he called *intrahistoria* (roughly translated, "intrahistory"). In one sense, intrahistoria was a variation on "general history," with its emphasis on the actions of the people of Spain over a narrative of high politics. Unlike "general history," however, in intrahistoria the people were not merely the primary force in history: they were the only force. Unamuno sweeps conventional historical forces aside to focus entirely on the pueblo.

For Unamuno, the pueblo was the spiritual center of Spain. It functioned as more than a quasi-Romantic "spirit of the people": Unamuno believed that the pueblo was the embodiment of the social contract by which people consented to be governed. Although he cites Rousseau in the development of his thinking, it is probably no surprise that Unamuno interprets the social contract a little differently than the French

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[2] Miguel de Unamuno, *En torno al casticismo* (1902; Madrid: Alianza, 2000). There are few studies on Unamuno in English—and even fewer on early works like *En torno al casticismo*. The most extensive of such monographs, and one that specifically links Unamuno's work with the questions that arose in 1898, is H. Ramsden, *The 1898 Movement in Spain: Towards a Reinterpretation with Special Reference to* En torno al casticismo *and* Idearium español (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1974).

philosophe. In Unamuno's vision, intrahistory provides the basis for the social contract not of any given state but for local communities.[3] These local communities provide the basis for the nation in its broadest context: Unamuno's vision of nationalism was based on an assumption that national identity could not be built out of narrow and parochial notions of what constituted a people. Instead, it had to develop out of and exist in an international, cosmopolitan context. In this historical view, a thing like the Napoleonic invasion of Spain was not necessarily a wholly negative phenomenon as it brought new ideas and innovations with it: it enabled the pueblo to become part of a wider and more universal community. Even at this early stage in his philosophical career, Unamuno was concerned with the universal and spiritual concerns that drive much of his later work.

On one hand, Unamuno's cosmopolitanism seems somewhat contradictory. Traditionally, it was opposition to foreign influences—such as we have already seen with the case of Italian opera—and not the absorption of them that had helped to build Spanish national identity. But in the late 1890s, there was an increasing sense that the problems facing the Spanish nation could not be solved except through the intervention of new, European ways of thinking. Such beliefs would become much more common in the wake of the War of 1898 (as we shall see in the following chapter), but even in embryo form we can see a tentative acceptance of this idea in some of the zarzuelas of the later 1890s. More important is Unamuno's argument that such cosmopolitanism will ultimately benefit the Spanish people as a whole: just as the pueblo had been strengthened during the Napoleonic invasion, so too could the

[3] Unamuno, *En torno al casticismo*, 53-54.

pueblo be regenerated from cosmopolitan influences and thus reclaim their role as the central figure of Spanish history.

Unamuno was hardly alone in his identification of the pueblo as the basis not only of Spanish national identity but of Spanish history as well. Angel Ganivet, Pío Baroja, and the essayist Azorín also found the pueblo the crux of their concerns about Spanish history and identity.[4] However, Unamuno is the critical intellectual figure of the 1898 generation when it comes to understanding the musical conceptions of history put forth by the zarzueleros. For not only is Unamuno exemplary of the understanding of the Spanish people as the true historical movers and shakers—an idea born out in the construction of historical zarzuela plots—but his arguments about the essential cosmopolitanism of any national identity are also born out by the very subject matter and even the music of these historical works. It can be argued that a focus on Unamuno's more universal aspects of national identity overlooks and possibly even minimizes the philosopher's intense preoccupation with the specifically Castilian nature of his conception of Spanish national identity. Nevertheless, it is the cosmopolitan aspect that Unamuno chose to end his cycles of essays with, not his notion of "el espíritu Castellano"—and it is this notion that received a wide-spread circulation through the historical zarzuelas of the 1880s and 1890s.

In terms of the plots of historical zarzuelas, it is the notion of the people of Spain as a historical force that is the most strongly felt of Unamuno's ideas. In the Barbieri model of zarzuela grande, the people of Spain (the chorus) are important and even crucial actors; but history ultimately operates along well-established grounds of

[4] See Ramsden, 118-127.

high politics. The subject matter of both *Pan y toros* and *El barberillo de Lavapiés*, after all, is essentially the replacement of a government minister. In the historical works of the 1890s, high politics disappear completely. It is *Cádiz*—the seminal work of género chico historicism—that is the key to understanding the nature of zarzuela history. Most other works fall back on the classic love-conflict-as-plot construction; Federico Chueca and Javier de Burgos' work, as we shall see, minimizes this. The purpose of the episodic plot construction of the género chico acquires a new resonance. By curtailing the amount of time any one character actually spends onstage, the libretto is forced to provide a broad panorama of daily life, behaviors, and customs. It is exactly this—what others termed mere "folklore," which upset Unamuno tremendously—that is the basis of intrahistoria and is the true basis of Spanish identity.[5] This is reinforced even further in the one scene of *Cádiz* which verges on the depiction of standard history: the presentation of the Constitution of 1812 to the citizens of Cádiz. Even here Burgos de-emphasizes traditional history. The only historical figure to appear is the Governor of Cádiz, whose name is not given in the libretto. Instead, Burgos merely informs us that this figure is the "Governor, who represents a very illustrious man from the historical fact we are celebrating."[6] The emphasis of this tableau is on the reaction of the people of Cádiz, who "fill the balconies and windows, waving their hats, handkerchiefs, and fans." The importance of the Constitution of 1812 is not in that document itself, or even those who created it; it is in the reaction of the populace to the idea of the new liberal order.

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[5] For Unamuno's criticism of these so-called "folklorists," see the Prologue to *En torno al casticismo*, 22.

[6] Burgos, *Cádiz*, II.6.xiii.

Unamuno's other main idea, that of the cosmopolitan in the formation of national identity, also helps to explain why historical zarzuela shifted its timeframe from the end of the Old Regime to the Napoleonic invasion. The crossing of the Pyrenees by the French armies in 1808 was a prime example of Unamuno's dictum that foreign invasion actually aids the civilizing process; such invasions provide the basis for assimilation of new ideas and the possibility of regeneration for stagnant cultures.[7] In essence, this was played out in the Cortes of Cádiz, whereby the radical liberal ideals of the French Revolution came to be enshrined in the 1812 Constitution. However, this aspect is missing from the zarzueleros' conception of history. Nowhere in any of the historical zarzuelas is there a good word for the French. They never appear on stage, and their only characterization is the constant vilification they receive at the hands of just about every single character. Pro-French characters are inevitably the comic villains of these pieces—and they usually are not even allowed the redeeming value of being truly evil or villainous. Instead, they are usually characterized as buffoons. But the intellectual ideas that had preceded them across the Pyrenees would help to regenerate Spain and further give power to the pueblo.

Placing light opera in relief with heavy philosophy, at least in the case of Spain in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, helps us to understand why zarzuela librettists and composers who tackled historical themes shifted their attention away from the eighteenth-century topics that had dominated zarzuela in the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s. The War of Independence had an even greater importance than merely being the foundation of the liberal and constitutional Spanish state. It was the perfect

[7] Unamuno, *En torno al casticismo*, 31-33 and 38-40.

dramatic vehicle for demonstrating not only the influence of foreign ideas in building national identity, but for developing the importance of the Spanish people in building the Spanish nation. During the 1880s and (especially) the 1890s it was becoming rapidly clear that the Spanish state was failing on a number of levels. Corruption and incompetence negated the stability that Cánovas and the other architects of the Restoration system had so desperately tried to implement. Intellectuals like Unamuno were already making calls for reform of the Restoration system, and these calls were reflected in the historical zarzuela of the period.[8] But it was popular culture that would be most influential in diagnosing Spain's problems and proposing potential cures for them.

Satire and the Restoration System

Satire, mockery, and ridicule are hardly the obvious modes of expression that come to mind when discussing nationalism. The nation is a serious subject, a quasi-religious expression of sentiment that is most often dealt with in a solemn and serious manner. (This no doubt helps to explain why most national anthems are extremely dull and turgid—but solemn—pieces of music.) But the nation may also develop problems and weaknesses: how are those best to be discussed? For those critical of a regime, the possibly counterintuitive answer is "with humor." Satire and mockery most easily deflate the potentially pompous solemnities of the nation and therefore

[8] Although Unamuno has traditionally been cast as an opponent of the Restoration system, Stephen G.H. Roberts has convincingly argued that he was more of a reformer than a revolutionary—certainly the mere idea of intrahistoria implies a continuous and organic system that must be respected and not overthrown. See his "Unamuno and the Restoration Political Project: A Re-evaluation," in Joseph Harrison and Alan Hoyle, eds., *Spain's 1898 Crisis: Regenerationism, Modernism, Post-Colonialism* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2000), 68-80.

show up the problems with the nation more vividly. Furthermore, humor and satire are generally more appealing than earnest drama: comedy is one of the bedrocks of modern popular culture. Satire is therefore completely compatible with the project of nationalism insofar as one may wish to explore the problems confronting a nation so that those problems can be solved—thus strengthening the nation. From earliest days of the mass popularity of the género chico, this seems to have been the rationale behind satirical depictions of Spanish society and government: the nation must be mocked in order for it to be saved.

The work that established the género chico as a force to be reckoned with was *La Gran Vía*, which was subtitled "Revista madrileña cómico-lírica, fántastico-callejera en un acto." This roughly translates as a "Comic-Lyric, Fantastic, Street-Smart Madrid Revue in One Act." As the subtitle implies, the authors threw in everything but the kitchen sink to come up with sixty minutes or so of entertainment. This approach proved successful: the work opened on 2 July 1886 at the Teatro Felipe, in the middle of the broiling Madrid summer. At the end of the summer it transferred to the Teatro Apolo and retained its vast popularity even after *Cádiz* became the smash hit of the fall. The theme of the work and its entertainment value can easily be summed up by the opening number. *La Gran Vía* was both a celebration of urban culture in Spain and a satire of the problems that confronted the new urban nation.

After a brief orchestral potpourri of tunes from the show, the curtain rises a bare stage. The female chorus troops on one by one, and when the full complement is on the stage, they sing a lively patter-style song:

> We are the streets, we are the plazas
> and the alleyways of Madrid
> because of a magical recourse
> we are congregating here today. [9]

To add to this effect, the chorines were dressed as the various streets they represented or as an ironic commentary on the names. Thus the Calle de la Primavera—Spring Street—wore a garland of flowers, the Calle del Tesoro—Treasure Street—was dressed as a beggar and so on, although the main point of the costumes seems to have been the very short skirts that emphasized the chorines' legs.[10] (One does wonder how the costumer solved the problem of dressing the Calle del Ave María and the Calle de Valgame Dios—Help-Me-God Street.) The point of their song, as they announce, is to welcome a new member to their midst: La Gran Vía, the Grand Boulevard. And thus the authors announced the improbable hook of their revue: urban reform. How many other works list Gaslight and Petroleum in the cast of characters?

The Gran Vía was an idea whose birth arose from a confluence of urban developments in nineteenth century Madrid. During the latter half of the century the urban bourgeoisie—as in most other larger European cities—began to move out of the congested historic center of the city and into newly constructed residential neighborhoods. In Madrid, these were the neighborhoods of Argüelles to the north of

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[9] "Somos las calles, somos las plazas / y los callejones de Madrid / que por un recurso mágico / nos podemos hoy congregar aquí." Felipe Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 1.i. Of the numerous librettos for this work in existence, the best one is the critical edition located in the vocal score: Federico Chueca and Joaquín Valverde, *La Gran Vía: Revista madrileña cómico-lírica, fantástico-callejera en un acto*, ed. María Encina Cortizo and Ramón Sobrino (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1996) which contains, along with the opening night's libretto, the various additions that were made later in the original run and printed in subsequent editions of the libretto.

[10] See the sketch in *Madrid Cómico*, 10 July 1886.

the city center and Salamanca to the east.[11] In these new neighborhoods the buildings were larger, the streets wider and rationalized (laid out in a grid plan, rather than the haphazard jumble of central Madrid), and there were more trees and parks to refresh the inhabitants. As the poor already tended to live south of the city center, the historic core became the location of commercial establishments and government offices. This core needed to be connected with the new neighborhoods; at the same time, reformers proposed a Haussman-style reconstruction of boulevards through central Madrid that would improve both traffic flow and public health by ridding the city of its narrow, medieval, pestilential streets. Although such plans had been in the works since 1860, the plan approved in January of 1886 seemed to be feasible: one main avenue that would run between Argüelles and Salamanca through the north-central part of Madrid.

This much-vaunted plan quickly ran aground, however. The cost of the project quickly ran out of control, and it was scrapped. The plan was reborn in 1904, and construction commenced in 1910. The first leg of the Gran Vía was opened to traffic in 1917 and the second a little over a decade later, although construction ultimately dragged on into the 1950s. The only thing that endured out of the 1886 debacle was *La Gran Vía*. Although the opening number of the revue and its closing tableau suggest a celebration of urban progress (the curtain falls on a celebration held on an idealized Gran Vía with statues to such abstractions as Liberty, Science, Justice,

[11] Much of my summary of the history of the Gran Vía is drawn from Steven L. Driever, "The Historical Geography of the Proposals for Madrid's Gran Vía, 1860-1904" (paper presented at the 34th Annual Congress of the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 3 July 2003. For a more general background to the urban reforms of the period, see Santos Julia, David Ringrose, and Cristina Segura, *Madrid: Historia de una capital* (Madrid: Alizana, 1994), 405-432.

Work, and Virtue in the foreground), the majority of material in between would seem to suggest that the authors did not have much faith the project would ever get off the ground.[12] For the majority of the songs and sketches satirize Madrid society even as they celebrate the promise of urban life and urban living.

La Gran Vía is loosely held together by the character of the Caballero de Gracia, a rapidly aging dandy who hopes to "unite" with the new street.[13] Learning that she has not been born yet, he takes a walk to pass the time where he meets various inhabitants of the city. The first characters the Caballero meets are exemplary of Pérez y González's social satire. This is the Menegilda, a serving girl who sings a rather mournful tango that opens with the most quoted lines from the show:

> Poor girl
> who has to serve!
> You would be better off
> if you were dying.[14]

The song is an unvarnished picture of what life must have been like for many lower-class serving girls: her story begins with the drudgery of low paid domestic labor such as ironing and sewing. Eventually she is thrown out of her post without warning and finds herself being propositioned by a gentleman from one of the large cafés. Her story does end with an ironic twist: she is eventually employed by an elderly gentleman and comes to be his housekeeper, ruling the roost. We are also told throughout the number that she supplements her wages via petty theft from her various

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[12] This was certainly the view of at least one reviewer: *El Imparcial*'s review of 4 July 1886 suggested that the actual Gran Vía would probably not be built until the year 3000 and praised the authors for being able to build theirs in a month.

[13] Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 1.iii. There may be some intentional irony in this, given that the Calle del Caballero de Gracia empties into the Gran Vía—uniting, indeed.

[14] "¡Pobre chica / la que tiene servir! / Más valiera / que se llegase a morir." Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 2.ii.

employers. Throughout, the satire is uneasy: Chueca's music is gentle and almost mournful, but it supports a song that could either be tragic or self-affirming, depending upon one's point of view.

This awkwardness is only confirmed when the Menegilda's employer, a woman ironically named Doña Virtudes (Mrs. Virtue), enters and—to the exact same music—begins to sing a plea about how difficult it is to have one of these creatures working for you:

> Poor mistresses
> who have to suffer
> from these wily tricks
> of their serving maids.[15]

She goes on to complain about her servant's bad manners, idleness, and propensity to theft, which climaxes with the following couplet:

> I am missing two earrings
> of superior jet,
> and finally, of all things,
> I am missing my husband, which is the worst of all.[16]

The target of the satire only becomes clear in the sketch that follows the reprise. Doña Virtudes is characterized as a grasping and tyrannical hypocrite in a wickedly brilliant set of puns by the Menegilda. In Spanish, the word for bean (*judía*) is remarkably close to the word for Jews (*judío*)—and both are remarkably close to a phrase meaning "dirty trick" (*judiada*). Thus, when Doña Virtudes attempts to pass herself off as a

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[15] "Pobres amas / las que tiene que sufrir / a esas truchas / de criadas de servir." Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 2.iii.

[16] "Me faltaron dos pendientes / de azabache superior, / y, por fin, de tantas faltas, / faltóme mi esposo, que fue lo peor." Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 2.iii.

model of Catholic respectability, the Menegilda retorts with a pun built on the fact that the word *católica* can also be used to refer to food that is past its prime.

> The one thing that is always off [*católica*]
> is the food in her house.
> A bit off…! Listen you…
> Beans [*judías*] in the morning
> and beans at night…
> That's just a dirty trick [*judiada*]![17]

Although the subsequent pun about beans and tricks was doubtless meant to play into negative stereotypes of Jewish greediness (given the closeness of both terms to the word *judío*), the point remains that Doña Virtudes' Catholic, bourgeois respectability is built on the back of her servants: she saves money by serving them food that may be unfit for human consumption. In retrospect, one almost begins to admire the Menegilda's willingness to play by her own rules in order to escape this oppression (which she will eventually do, we learn, by marrying her fiancée—a young and handsome solider with prospects).

On the surface, it would seem odd that Pérez y González and Chueca would set out to attack so viciously the class that made up most of their audience. Even if—as I suspect—there were not too many "Doña Virtudes" that were theatrical habitués, the bourgeoisie as a whole comes in for rather nasty swipes in *La Gran Vía*: for example, there are three ladies who later boast about their vacation plans while leaving out key qualifying phrases. Thus one appears about to swan off to the beach resort of San Sebastián, neglecting to mention she's traveling to San Sebastián de Alcobendas, a very landlocked village just to the south of Madrid—in other words, she's going

[17] "La que no es nunca católica / es la comida en su casa. / ¡Católica...! Escuche usted.... / *Judías* por la mañana / y *judías* por la tarde... / ¡Pues si es una *judiada*!" Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 2.iii.

nowhere.[18] In fact, this ambivalent attitude of satirizing those who were buying at the box-office can only be explained by the insistent populism of the género chico. As a nationalist genre, the género chico's sympathies were with the pueblo—with the servants and not their masters. As we have seen in Chapter III, the emphasis of the urban nationalism of zarzuela focused on the working classes; the core of the new urban nation is not with the elites who ran the government, but with those that the turno pacífico had locked out of power. The sympathy of the genre is with the Menegilda and not Doña Virtudes.

The character of the Menegilda and her song proved to be so popular that Chueca brought her back in another of his social satires, *El año pasado por agua* (The Past Year, With Water—which will be discussed more fully below). She is originally introduced as a gag: a citizen of Madrid asks the god Neptune (who has come to life from his fountain in the Paseo del Prado) if he has seen *La Gran Vía*; he replies that although he has not seen the play even he has heard of the "pobre chica."[19] We then learn that in the previous three years she has ascended the social ladder even further, becoming a fashion designer (*modistilla*) who calls herself "the Queen of Lavapiés." Unfortunately, even her wiles cannot lift her out of the station of life from which she began her attempted ascent of the social ladder.[20] The Menegilda might be the Queen of Lavapiés, but Lavapiés was a distinctly working-class neighborhood and one of the poorer sections of the city. Being an arbiter of fashion in such a neighborhood is

[18] Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 3.iii.
[19] Vega, *El año pasado por agua*, 2.vii.
[20] This can also be seen from the fact that she describes herself using the diminutive form of the word "modista"—which implies that she is not a very good fashion designer.

hardly much of an honor; even intelligence and cunning will not allow a person to get ahead in the rigidly stratified Restoration society.

El año pasado por agua solidifies its social critique towards the end of the revue, in a sketch involving a young married couple who reside in one of the working-class districts of Madrid. The humor in the sketch comes from the description of their living conditions in a small back room on the fifth floor of their building. Neptune asks incredulously if there is an elevator; the man replies in the negative, but does say there is a mezzanine—putting them on the sixth floor. Neptune then asks how on earth visitors have to knock at the street door and make themselves known. The reply: "It's really quite simple: three knocks and a ring, a ring and three knocks, four separate knocks, three kicks, a scream, and a pistol shot," to which a figure portraying The Year 1889 adds unbelievingly, "and the trumpet of the Day of Judgment."[21] The implication is that Madrid's working class is stuck in a system of poverty that will take until the end times to get out of. Just as the political settlement of the Restoration locked the working classes out of politics, so the social stratification of life in late nineteenth century Spain kept them in a specific social strata with no hope of escape or upward mobility.

The situation of the working class stands in stark contrast to the treatment of the wealthy in Chueca's 1890 satire *El arca de Noé* (Noah's Ark), with a libretto by Enrique Prieto and Andrés Ruesga—a work that billed itself as a "Problema cómico-lírico social," a "Comic-Lyric Social Problem." The work's most telling critique is its send up of elite society through an allegorical figure called the Caballero de Industria

[21] Vega, *El año pasado por agua*, 3.xi.

(no doubt deliberately meant to recall the Caballero de Gracia from *La Gran Vía*). The plot of the work is built around a doctor who is attempting to write a book that will synthesize the sum total of human knowledge and thus somehow equalize mankind's social inequalities. The Caballero de Industria complains that Doctor Noah's utopian solution will deprive him and his fellow industrialists of their material pleasures:

> We build hotels
> that are very comfortable,
> we drive in carriages,
> we eat at Lhardy.[22]

The Caballero de Industria has a distinct and selfish interest in seeing that the social inequalities of late nineteenth century Spain remain in place. This is a far cry from the world of the Menegilda and the young couple in *El año pasado por agua*, whose living conditions are squalid and who certainly cannot afford fancy carriages or fine restaurants. Society, like politics, was designed in Restoration Spain to keep the urban working class isolated from power.

In such a condition, it is easy to see how social satire could easily slip over into political satire. *El arca de Noé* alludes to this: Doctor Noah suggests that once social inequality has been rectified "Pí will have a close tie with Castelar / Sagasta and Martos will hug," suggesting that the problems of society and politics are interrelated: once society has been perfected, petty political squabbles will cease to exist.[23] The

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[22] "Edifican hoteles / muy confortables, / se pasean en coche, / comen en Lhardy." Prieto and Ruesga, *El arca de Noe*, 1.vi. Lhardy remains even today one of the best and most exclusive restaurants in Madrid.

[23] "A Pí con Castelar en lazo estrecho / á Sagasta y á Martos abrazados." Prieto and Ruesga, *El arca de Noe*, 1.i. Fransisco Pi y Margall was an advocate of Spanish federalism; in 1864 he had quarreled

interrelationship between society and politics is at its most clear in *La Gran Vía*, where the police became the symbol of the Restoration regime which the authors chose to attack. It is a little difficult to tell at this remove whether there was a crime wave in early 1886 that prompted these barbs, but it certainly turned loose the authors' formidable wit on a supposed bastion of authority that interacts closely with non-political society. The most memorable number in the show is the "Jota de las Ratas" (which roughly translates as the "Dance of the Rats"), a musical number that has the temerity to associate the only piece of music in the work based on a Spanish dance form with a trio of pickpockets—the "rats" of the title. And there is no question that this "Jota" was the hit of *La Gran Vía*: Friedrich Nietzsche—who had a much greater fondness for operetta than his philosophy might otherwise lead one to suspect—enjoyed the number immensely when he saw an Italian production of the revue in Turin two years later.[24]

The number opens with the three pickpockets extolling the joys of living a dishonest life and telling how they trained to become such experts at theft to a jaunty tune. (The entire number could be given to Fagin in *Oliver!* almost without alteration.) Part of their joy springs from the fact that

> When the police
> lay a hand on us

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with Emilio Castelar, an orthodox republican, over the need for state intervention in social policy. Praxades Sagasta was head of the Liberal Party and a staunch monarchist; Cristino Martos was a democrat who opposed Sagasta on the question of universal manhood suffrage.

[24] Letter from Nietzsche to Peter Gast, 16 December 1888. Quoted and cited in the introduction to Federico Chueca and Joaquín Valverde, *La Gran Vía: Revista madrileña cómico-lírica, fantastico-callejera en un acto*, ed. María Encina Cortizo and Ramón Sobrino (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1996), xiv and xxiv. There is a complete English-language translation of this letter in Christopher Middleton, ed., *Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1969), 333-335.

we are quite sure
it is only for a day.[25]

The metaphor likening thieves to rats is made quite plain when a group of policemen haul on a giant rat-trap in order to jail their thieves. The Rats calmly walk into one side of the trap—and right out the other, while the police brag about the precaution they are taking. The reason the police give for "trapping" the thieves is suggestive. Their song says nothing about law, retribution, or justice. Instead, their service will soon appear "in the *columns* / of *El Imparcial*."[26] Public perception is vastly more important than satisfying the demands of justice or carrying out one's public duty.

The focus of the "Jota de la Ratas" is, naturally, the thieves—the police and their portrayal is almost an afterthought. However, Pérez y González and Chueca sharpened their satirical pens in a revision to *La Gran Vía*. The third scene of the review, originally a series of comic sketches entitled "En la Puerta del Sol," was replaced by a new scene titled "En la Calle de Alcalá" on 10 February 1887, in honor of the 400th consecutive performance of the work. (Four hundred performances was an astonishingly long run at that time, and a very good run for a play even now.) The centerpiece of this new scene was a musical number entitled "The Security Waltz" ("Vals de la Seguridad"). The centerpiece of this waltz is a policeman who sings very elegantly his job—perhaps singing so elegantly as to make people overlook the fact that "if I ever encounter a criminal, / I never know how to nab them."[27] Having

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[25] "Cuando nos echa mano / la policía / estamos seguritos / que es para un día." Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 2.ix.
[26] "En las *colúmnias* / de '*El Imparcial*'."
[27] "Si me encuentro cualquier criminal, / yo nunca sé qué mano echar." Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía* (11th edition), 3.ii.

uttered these lines, the policeman begins to waltz around the stage while various chorines run on to announce that they have witnessed robberies, muggings, and other assaults. All the policeman does is to ask for calm. The chorus' response is to lament "how much money this one / costs our poor nation!" while the policeman admires the Parisian cut of his uniform.[28] Chueca's waltz music swirls all the while underneath this scene as an ironic counterpoint to the complaints of the chorus and reinforcing the rather lacksidasical attitude of the policeman towards his job.

Pérez y González's other main satirical target is summed up by the response of the Caballero de Gracia to a theatre playbill in the fourth scene:

> The Italian [acting] company
> of the Lambertini children.
> More children? Is there nepotism
> in the theatres as well?[29]

The practice of nepotism—here described as *yernocracia*, a combination of the Spanish words for "son-in-law" and "bureaucracy"—never absent for long in Spanish society, reached certain heights under the Bourbon Restoration. Indeed, it was not an uncommon practice for ambitious young men to marry a politician's daughter as a way of gaining a foothold on the political ladder.[30] It is this theme that ties the social and the political satire of *La Gran Vía* together: the middle class was not only the backbone of the social order that was satirized, it was the backbone of the political order that was under siege as well. This much is made abundantly clear in the sketch

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[28] "Cuánto dinero le cuesta / esto a la pobre nación!"

[29] "Compañía italiana / de niños Lambertini. / ¿Más niños? ¿Hay yernocracia / en los teatros también?" Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 4.iv. Acting companies composed solely of children enjoyed a brief vogue in the late 1880s.

[30] See Pilar Muñoz López, *Sangre, amor e interés: La familia en la España durante la Restauración* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2001), 67-80; for *yernocracia* specifically, see 78.

that falls after the "Jota de las Ratas" and stands at the physical center of the revue's action. There is a brief a capella children's chorus in which a group of boys sing "I am the cream and the flower of the yernocracia," setting up the following sketch in which sons-in-laws vying for offices and favors are likened to small children begging candy from their parents.[31] Chueca underscores the scene with a musical quotation from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*: the opening duet between Susanna and Figaro, in which Susanna describes how servants are at the beck and call of their masters, while Figaro announces that he will make the Count dance to his tune.[32] The subtle implication of quoting this tune is to imply that the yernocracia are using their offices for their own personal ends and not the greater public good.

There is no doubt that all of this satire hit its mark. In late July of 1886, the Governor of the province of Madrid came to see the show and was highly displeased by the "Jota de las Ratas"—especially the choreography of the number, which apparently had the policemen falling flat on the floor as the pickpockets made their escape. *La Epoca* slyly noted that this bit of choreography was removed after the Governor's visit and had not been reinstated.[33] *La Gran Vía* ran for upwards of 600 consecutive performances before it was taken off the stage of the Apolo, and had frequent revivals. It became enough of a national phenomenon that the critic Pedro Bofill at one point made the suggestion that the authors be banished from Spain but that they be made to forfeit all their money in order to make sure they did not take the money of every single Spaniard out of the country. Furthermore, he suggested a prize

[31] "Yo de la yernocracia soy la nata y la flor." Pérez y González, *La Gran Vía*, 3.i.
[32] See María Encina Cortizo's introduction to Chueca and Valverde, *La Gran Vía*, xiv and xxii.
[33] "Ecos teatrales," *La Epoca*, 2 August 1886.

be set up to give an award to every Spaniard who could answer truthfully that they had *not* seen *La Gran Vía*.[34] The combination of Chueca's melodic music and Pérez y González's trenchant critiques made the work a popular hit among a wide variety of Spaniards.

It was Chueca's music that propelled the other satirical phenomenon of the 1880s, the 1889 revue *El año pasado por agua* (The Past Year, With Water). Subtitled "Revista General de 1888 en un Acto," the work was a satirical take on the events of the previous year. The title comes from the main meteorological phenomenon of 1888: it was a very wet year. Most of the sketches take place with the implication there is a vast amount of water on the stage, and one musical number features dancers with umbrellas. (Following the initial run at the Teatro Apolo, the work seems to have been a prime candidate for revival after periods of heavy rains and flooding.)[35] Jokes about water, currents, and things that float (including floating debt) abound throughout the text. The marine aspect seems to have been more important than the satire on current events. The show ran for nearly three years—with two performances daily—at the Teatro Apolo, and the impresarios regularly updated the year in the subtitle; however, the text and the music does not seem to have undergone the various revisions that were used to keep *La Gran Vía* fresh during its run.[36]

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[34] Pedro Bofill, "Veladas teatrales," *La Epoca*, 1 October 1887.

[35] See *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 19 September 1893, which mentions a revival at the Teatro Príncipe Alfonso very shortly after a series of devastating floods hit the Madrid region.

[36] In fact, most reviews of the work suggest that *El año pasado por agua* was dated even before the premiere—a number of Vega's sketches were based on events that had slipped out of the public mind, most notably an excruciating scene involving two mute porters that was a reference to a sensational murder in the Calle de Funcarral that had occurred some five months previous to the premiere. See Pedro Bofil, "Veladas teatrales," *La Epoca*, 2 March 1889 and "Teatro de Apolo," *El Liberal*, 2 March 1889.

This lack of revision does not dim the overall thrust of Vega's political satire, however. Some of Vega's sketches have so many different levels of comedy operating at once that *El año pasado por agua* at times feels like an 1880s version of Monty Python. Take, for example, No. 6 in the vocal score. This scene is ostensibly a parody of Miguel Ramos Carrión and Ruperto Chapí's *La bruja*, which had premiered the previous season. Chueca has set the scene to the music of a zortziko, the Basque dance that formed the second-act finale of that work. Vega's sketch, however, is not merely a parody of the work. The heroine is transformed into the idea of the Republic. The hero is dressed as a monk and given the title of the Émigré; the scene consists of the Republic begging the Émigré to save her (presumably as Blanca asked Leonardo to save her in *La bruja*). It does not seem as if Vega was intending to satirize any specific person—none are mentioned in the review in *La Epoca*, which exhaustively catalogued all the other obscure references made in the revue—and instead seems to be a commentary on the rather difficult position of Republicanism in Spain. Excluded from formal political power by the turno pacífico, the sketch seems to imply that Republicans and their supporters—the working class—would have be reliant upon help from abroad to achieve their goals, just as Unamuno suggested that Spain would have to look abroad for help in regenerating the country.

However the sketch takes yet another turn with the entrance of the Inquisitor (another key figure in *La bruja*). The Émigré flees, hidden by the chorus, and the local constables apprehend the Inquisitor, mistaking him for the Émigré. As the scene

plays out, the Inquisitor tries to clear up his name by uttering the line "If I am *Sa*…!"[37] The constables haul him off to jail even before he can utter his full name: Sagasta, who was Spain's prime minister at the time and Cánovas' partner in creating the turno pacífico. Only now does it become clear Vega is directly attacking the Restoration regime itself. Making Sagasta head of the Spanish Inquisition is a fairly obvious attack on the restrictive policies of the Restoration political system. By the end of the sketch, the Émigré and the Republic sail offstage into the sunset on a gondola "saluting the people, who applaud them." Vega here alludes to republicanism's popularity among the working classes, who saw it as more responsive to their political needs than either of the dynastic parties who made up the Restoration government. Piling all of this into a musical parody of another work tends to obscure the message, since there are just enough references to the text of *La bruja* to muddy the waters. Well might *La Epoca* complain, "What a peculiar manner of introducing us into the terrain of politics!"[38]

The most trenchant political critique of the entire Restoration regime came out in another peculiar manner—a seemingly featherweight fantasy operetta. The libretto to *El rey que rabió* (The King Who Was Rabid) by Miguel Ramos Carrión and Vital Aza is a Ruritanian fantasy about a young king who disguises himself to learn more about his realm and—not unnaturally—fall in love in the process.[39] Ruperto Chapí's

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[37] "¡Si yo soy *Sa*...!" Vega, *El año pasado por agua*, 2.viii.
[38] Pedro Bofil, "Veladas teatrales," *La Epoca*, 2 March 1889.
[39] It is worth noting that *El rey que rabió* is technically not a género chico work; rather it is a full-fledged zarzuela grande in three acts, with all the musical sophistication that Ruperto Chapí could bring to bear on the score. Nevertheless, in its critique of the Spanish government the work is a companion to the satirical pieces of the género chico.

score aids the fantasy element: the sound world of *El rey que rabió* is based in Paris or Vienna and not in Madrid. Antonio Peñi y Goñi, who reviewed the music for *La Época*, described it as "the work of a Spanish Offenbach"; Chapí's biographer Luis Iberni describes it as "of Viennese cut, following the models of [Franz von] Suppé and [Oscar] Strauss."[40] The staging probably also aided in the fantasy element, if the sketches of the original production in *Blanco y Negro* are any indication: the costumes seem to have been a cross between a Fragonard painting of merry—and exquisitely clean—peasants and traditional comic-opera soldiers.[41] But in spite of these fantasy elements, it is quite clear that *El rey* is taking place in Spain. The King is a youth, so young that the role was actually written as a trouser role for a soprano to imitate the treble voice of a boy. The actual King of Spain was at the time even younger than his fictional counterpart; Alfonso XIII was only five years old in 1891, when *El rey* premiered. Furthermore, the countryside in *El rey* is very clearly supposed to be rural Spain: when the King chooses to travel to a backward hamlet, its citizens speak in distinctly Andalucian accents.[42] Even so, the point seems to have escaped a number of people: Pedro Bofil thought the King was supposed to have been the King of Siam, while the critic for *El Liberal* called the setting "a country of pure fantasy."[43]

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[40] Antonio Peña y Goñi, "El rey que rabió: Música," *La Época*, 21 April 1891; Luis G. Iberni, *Ruperto Chapí* (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1995), 188.

[41] A. Pons, "El rey que rabió, zarzuela de Ramos Carrión y Vital Aza, músical del Maestro Chapí," *Blanco y Negro*, 10 May 1891.

[42] Admittedly, this may simply be the standard dramatic procedure of portraying rustics as being from the south of any given country—an accepted dramatic custom in Spain, Italy, Germany, and the United States—but given that *El rey que rabió* goes so far out of its way to avoid any other references to Spain, both dramatically and musically, this can hardly be accidental.

[43] Pedro Bofil, "El rey que rabió: Letra," *La Epoca*, 21 April 1891; J. Ardión, "Teatro de la Zarzuela," *El Liberal*, 21 April 1891.

Whether or not Ramos Carrión and Aza created a fantastical version of Spain, their vision of politics is brutally realistic. Much of the political satire in *El rey que rabió* revolves around governmental ministers who are actively trying to cover up the extent of various problems within their spheres of influence. They attempt to dissuade the King from traveling incognito into the countryside, fearing he will discover their corruption; when they fail, they forecast their future (dismissal from office) in a comic quartet. This quartet was so popular that it had to be encored—although whether this was because of the music or the possibility of dismissing royal ministers from office cannot be determined.[44] When the quartet is finished, the exact problems with the system are described in detail, with each minister blaming the others:

> GOVERNOR (*To the Intendent*): Clearly! He will discover that the taxpayers are sick of paying taxes.
> INTENDENT (*To the Governor*): And that your policy leaves much to be desired.
> ADMIRAL (*To the General*): And that the army is discontented.
> GENERAL (*To the Admiral*): And that the navy, despite the peaceful calm you have been discussing, is neither peaceful nor calm.[45]

The complaints against the government become much more specific later in the act, when Chapí actually devotes an entire choral number to the people of a small village complaining about the government: high taxes and unemployment are rampant, as is corruption.[46] The implication is plain: those who actually ran the Restoration government are only serving their own pocket-books and not the population at large.

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[44] See "Teatro de la Zarzuela," *El Imparcial*, 21 April 1891.
[45] Miguel Ramos Carrión and Vital Aza, *El rey que rabió*, I.1.iii.
[46] Ramos Carrión and Aza, *El rey que rabió*, I.2.i.

This charge—that the Spanish government was corrupt and serving only narrow sectarian interests—form the backbone of satirical works in the late 1880s and 1890s. The political structure and the social structure of the Bourbon Restoration mirrored each other: both were designed to promote stability, but did so by entrenching elite interests in power at the expense of the poorer segments of the Spanish people. This was clearly a problem, as such corruption weakened and enervated the Spanish nation. But zarzuela composers and librettists had not only diagnosed the key problem of the Restoration regime, they had also found a solution. Through their examination of history, they had come to the conclusion that Chueca's Doctor Noah had: social unification would provide the impetus to regenerate the nation. Historical zarzuela in the 1880s and 1890s would focus on the power of the Spanish people—united across social class and political boundaries—to reshape the nation and strengthen it in the face of crisis.

A New Style of Musical History

The same season that Chueca and Valverde delighted madrileño audiences with *La Gran Vía*, they made an excursion into the realm of historical zarzuela. *Cádiz* premiered on 20 November 1886 at the Teatro Apolo, sharing the bill with *La Gran Vía*, which had moved from the Teatro Felipe at the end of the summer theatrical season.[47] It was this combination of two wildly successful plays that helped to

[47] The Teatro Felipe was a wooden theatre that was erected on the Paseo del Prado near the Plaza Cibeles. It was one of many temporary, open-air structures that housed theatrical spectacles during the broiling Castilian summers, when the temperature made indoor performances too stifling for audiences. See Angel Luis Fernández Muñoz, *Arquitectura teatral en Madrid: Del corral de comedias al cinematógrafo* (Madrid: El Avapiés, 1988) 143-148.

establish the musical género chico as a theatrical force to be reckoned with. More importantly, it was the success of these two works that helped to create the identity of the Apolo as the "Cathedral of the Género Chico." The Apolo had been built in 1873, but its location on what was then the outskirts of central Madrid, high ticket prices to offset the costs of a luxurious interior, and certain construction flaws that let snow into the lobby during the winter had made the theatre a less-than-attractive proposition; as a result, it changed impresarios frequently.[48] It had started performing género chico works in 1883. However it was the two Chueca pieces that turned the theatre into the dynamo that drove Madrid's theatre scene for over two decades.

Cádiz is hardly standard género chico fare. It is two acts long, and thus is forced to develop a plot—and plotting was hardly the forte of género chico writers. Fortunately, *Cádiz* had a reasonably strong librettist: Javier de Burgos. Originally a newspaperman from Cádiz—he had in fact been the editor of *La Palma de Cádiz* from 1866 to 1868—Burgos was another one of those men, so prevalent in Restoration Spain, who lavished their time and their ink equally between the theatre and the periodical press.[49] Burgos specialized in writing about Cádiz, and his most memorable works are set in and around the city. Burgos gave *Cádiz* only the thinnest of plots: the year is 1810, and the French are besieging the city. Elderly Don Cleto is eager to escape, and plans to abduct his ward Carmen in order to marry her. She is in

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[48] See Fernández Muñoz 119-122 and Juan Arnau, *Historia de la Zarzuela* (Madrid: Zacosa, 1979), 1:172-173. The Teatro Apolo was torn down in 1929; it stood near the modern-day confluence of the Calle de Alcalá and the Gran Vía. A corporate office of the BBVA Bank currently stands on the site.

[49] For further background on Burgos, see Alberto Romero Ferrer's Introduction to *Cádiz, El baile de Luis Alonso* (Cádiz: Publicaciones de la Univerdad de Cádiz, 1997), 35-37.

love with Fernando, who will manage to rescue her from the fate worse than death by the end of the play.

However, the plot is essentially beside the point—which is made manifestly clear by the fact that Carmen and Fernando are the only two leading lovers in the history of operetta not to sing a note.[50] Instead, the work is much closer to the revue style that Chueca and Valverde had used in *La Gran Vía* earlier that season. None of the numbers actually advance the plot in the sense of expanding our knowledge of the characters or causing a shift in the dramatic action. All the numbers are essentially diversionary, and almost all are performed by the chorus or a large vocal ensemble. (The exception is No. 9, the "Canción del ciego"—the Song of the Blindman—which was written specifically for the actor Julio Ruiz in order to allow him some satirical comments on the topics of the day.)[51] This does lead to an obvious question: if the traditional love plot to *Cádiz* is ephemeral and none of the musical numbers are necessary to the plot, what is the dramatic motor that actually drives Burgos' script and makes it work?

The hint that gives us the answer lies in the voices that Chueca is writing his music for—it is virtually all chorus and ensemble work. In other words, Chueca and Burgos have turned the dramatic action over to the chorus. They are essentially reversing the trend that we detected as zarzuela grande slowly changed form, when the chorus and its role as the Spanish people were reduced in importance. Burgos' libretto

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[50] To get a sense of just how strange this is, try to imagine, say, *West Side Story* without "Tonight," "Maria," or "I Feel Pretty."

[51] See Miguel Roa's "Introducción" to the vocal score of *Cádiz: Episodio nacional cómico-lírico-dramático en dos actos* (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1997), xviii-xix.

makes this especially plain: his protagonists are the Spanish people, not the cardboard figures of Carmen and Fernando. The very first stage direction spells out Burgos' plan: "As the curtain rises there appear in the plaza various groups of people belonging to distinct classes of society."[52] The opening chorus proudly proclaims that the French

> … will need to send more Frenchies
> than there are grains of sand on the beach;
> Because the elderly, women, little children
> and all the classes of society
> will fight them with rocks, with sticks,
> with lead shot, with nails, and with their teeth.[53]

Although this rhetoric partially reflects the typical strategy of besieged civilian populations awaiting a military relief column, it also marks a return of the chorus as participants in zarzuela plots. The politicians and the army cannot save Spain from the invaders; salvation lies in the hands of the pueblo. But while Burgos has reinstated the Spanish people as historical actors, he fails to reinstate the strong historical political plots that characterized the zarzuela grande. The political overtones to the Carmen-Fernando-Don Cleto love triangle are both underwritten (Don Cleto is the absolutist reactionary, while Fernando is a liberal constitutionalist: one can only imagine what Picón and Barbieri could have done with this raw material) and detached from the historical action. This is doubtless the result of the revue-style plot—which Burgos presumably constructed to suit Chueca and Valverde's particular talents as composers after the runaway success of their previous revue, *La Gran Vía*.

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[52] Burgos, *Cádiz*, I.1.i.

[53] "Necesita enviar más franchutes / que granos de arena contiene el mar; / Porque ancianos, mujeres, chiquillos / y todas las clases de la sociedad / a pedradas, a palos, a tiros, / con uñas, con dientes, sabrán pelear." Burgos, *Cádiz*, I.1.i.

Thus, if we are going to determine what Chueca, Valverde, and Burgos were trying to say about the nature of the Spanish people, a look at the musical construction of *Cádiz* becomes necessary. As with the zarzuela grande model, it is folk music that serves as the backing for the choral numbers. Where Barbieri tended to rely on a mere one or two forms—usually a jota and a seguidillas—to characterize his chorus, Chueca and Valverde change forms with virtually every number and sometimes even within a given musical number. *Cádiz* contains a seguidillas, a sevillanas, a caleseras, a barcarolle, a pasodoble, a flamenco, a zapateado, a polka, a tango, and a jota. Not all of these, admittedly, are Spanish folk forms: the polka is included as a comic interlude to characterize and mock some English visitors, while the tango (technically a Latin American dance) is danced by a pair of negro visitors to the city.[54] Even with these removed, there is still a plethora of purely "Spanish" dance forms. This is a startling shift from the standard practice—and one of which Chueca availed himself as much as anybody else—that was content to let the jota stand in as the self-reflexively "Spanish" number in any given work.

Indeed, by using such a vast number of folk and dance forms in *Cádiz*, Chueca seems to have been attempting to create a self-consciously "Spanish" musical idiom. Certainly the reviews of the work interpreted it in this manner. *Madrid Cómico*, a weekly magazine that mixed high wit, low humor, cultural news, and society journalism—often within the same article—fashioned its review of the work in the form of a conversation that the author claimed to have overheard at the Café de Viena.

[54] Actually, various versions of the libretto change their minds on whether the female is of purely African descent or if she is a mulata; nevertheless, the number became known as the "Danza de los negritos."

The part of the conversation relative to the music claimed that *Cádiz* "is spiced with seguidillas, caleseras, tangos, street songs, and patriotic hymns; it is, in sum, Spanish and, that is to say, Barbieriesque." A little further on, this speaker's companion notes that the comparison to Barbieri is the "highest praise" that could be given to a composer.[55] *La Epoca* termed the music of the work "happy and Spanish" (as opposed to dour and German, perhaps).[56] The combination of one of the glorious moments in Spanish history and the lively dance music of one of Spain's most fecund melodists combined to create a uniquely patriotic evening at the theatre.

This self-conscious Hispanism was set against a historical plot that, as has been noted, was different in construction from the zarzuela grande of Francisco Asenjo Barbieri. The historical works of the género chico also feature a temporal shift. The zarzuela grande of the 1870s had been set firmly in the eighteenth century. *Cádiz* moves itself forward only about fifteen years from the setting of *Pan y toros*, but by moving across the divide into the nineteenth century the work picks up a whole new set of political concerns. Where *Pan y toros* frames its major political battle in terms of Enlightenment rationalism versus absolutist rule, *Cádiz* ups the ante by making its heroes participants in the birth of Spanish liberalism. The most notable historical moment during the siege of Cádiz was not military: it was the meeting of the Cortés of Cádiz and that body's adoption of Spain's first constitution, the cornerstone of Spanish liberalism for the rest of the nineteenth century. Late in the second act of *Cádiz*, Chueca and Burgos have the Cortés march on to the strains of a military march and

[55] "Teatro de Apolo: Cádiz en Viena," *Madrid Cómico*, 25 November 1886, 2-3.
[56] "Los estrenos," *La Epoca*, 21 November 1886.

present the constitution to the population.[57] There is absolutely no reason for this scene in the plot of *Cádiz*; it serves no dramatic purpose except to furnish an exciting tableau. Clearly the authors felt that a presentation of the siege of Cádiz would not be complete without a dramatic reference to the constitution.

The Napoleonic invasion that forms the historical panorama against which *Cádiz* is set was the foundational myth for liberal Spanish nationalism in the nineteenth century.[58] But the lavish theatricality and pageantry of *Cádiz*, however, was hardly a model for historical zarzuela. When Burgos managed to recapture the rapture of that work with the similarly modeled *Trafalgar* in 1891 (with the composer Géronimo Gímenez supplying the music), the critics were pleased. *El Heraldo de Madrid* summed the work up best by noting that Trafalgar was "a glorious defeat for our country and will be a beneficial triumph for the management of the Apolo."[59] But *Trafalgar* is not exactly a reworking of *Cádiz* set on the high seas. Burgos drops the episodic review-style format that shaped the libretto of the previous work and develops the work in a manner similar to *El barberillo de Lavapiés*. Romantic intrigue mingles with history. Further explorations of history in the género chico to revert to this time-honored format. The historical zarzuelas of the 1890s pick up on this idea and radically foreshorten the amount of the plot turned over to the historical side of the work. This was mostly done out of necessity, for the one-act structure that

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[57] Burgos, *Cádiz*, II.6.xiii. This is actually somewhat anachronistic: the setting clearly indicates the year is 1810, but the constitution was not penned until 1812.

[58] See José Alvarez Junco, "El nacionalismo español como mito movilizador: Cuatro guerras" in *Cultura y movilización en la España contemporánea*, ed. Rafael Cruz and Manuel Pérez Ledesma (Madrid: Alianza, 1997), 36-42.

[59] *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 19 June 1891.

dominated the popular theatre in the last decade of the nineteenth century meant that something had to go: and most librettists no doubt felt they could get more mileage out of romance than out of politics.

Still, it would be a mistake to dismiss the historical panorama of the Napoleonic invasion as the equivalent of a painted drop-cloth against which the drama is played out. This is essentially the charge Carlos Serrano levels at works like *La viejecita* and *El tambor de granaderos*, calling their Peninsular War setting a "diffuse pretext for some journeys and adventures" with "the usual patriotic proclamations" thrown in to win applause from the audience.[60] At the very least, this ignores the fact that setting zarzuelas during the Napoleonic invasion was not a traditional practice, but one that only developed in the mid-1880s. True, these two works are much closer to the *El barberillo* model than they are to *Pan y toros*: the primary interests of the authors are not historical but dramatic. However, there is one key component of the historical setting in these works that informs us as to what exactly the authors were up to. Both are set in the moment of the Spanish victory over Bonaparte and the expulsion of the foreign (French) conquerors from Spain.

La viejecita (The Little Old Lady) seems to treat its historical backdrop as the lightest gloss on the plot. The piece itself is a musical adaptation of the classic British farce *Charley's Aunt*, in which a young man dresses up as an elderly lady in order to

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[60] Carlos Serrano, *El nacimiento de Carmen: Símbolos, mitos y nación* (Madrid: Taurus, 1999), 137. These quotes are from the chapter entitled "Cantando patria (Zarzuela, canción y tópicos nacionales)," virtually the only serious study of zarzuela and nationalism in a historical context. It should be noted that Serrano has a quite different opinion of *Cádiz*, which he describes on page 138 as having "un papel de suma relevancia en la historia cultural de los españoles del siglo pasado."

further his love affair with a young woman.[61] (This being Spain and not Britain, the sexual overtones of the work come not from the transvestitism directly in the plot, but from the fact that the young man is actually played by a woman—which no doubt allowed for a rather fetching hussar's uniform in the opening scenes.) The work is set very shortly after the French have been expelled from Madrid in September 1812, and the action of the plot is built around a ball that is being thrown in honor of the English for their assistance in driving out the invaders. A fair amount of the humor in *La viejecita* comes from mild mocking of the English accent. Still, the Spanish debt to their English allies is fully acknowledged by the librettist, Miguel Echegaray. He is able to use his characterization of the English to make an explicit statement about the worth of Spain's soldiers. The English captain, Sir George, make this speech to his Spanish comrades:

> In my country we are all valiant,
> as you are in this country.
> Courage is the same; only
> the manner differs.
> The English are cold-blooded.
> In Spain, you are hot-tempered.[62]

On the one hand, this effectively plays into certain stereotypes about "hot-blooded" Spaniards and "frigid" Englishmen. On the other hand, it effectively equates the

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[61] *La viejecita* passed itself off at its premiere as an original libretto (see "Teatro de la Zarzuela: *La viejecita,*" *La Epoca*, 1 May 1897), but *Charley's Aunt* had already established itself as something of a classic in Madrid; and I suspect that Echegaray claimed his libretto to be an original in order to avoid paying royalty fees—something that was not an uncommon occurrence among Spanish theatrical adaptors. *La viejecita* is not the only musical adaptation of Brendan Thomas' venerable work: Frank Loesser (later the composer of *Guys and Dolls*) had his first Broadway hit with *Where's Charley?* in 1947, which is today best remembered for spawning the standard "Once in Love with Amy."

[62] "En mi tierra ser valientes/todos, como en esta tierra. / Valor el mismo; variar / solamente las maneras. / Inglaterra, valor frío. / España, valor calienta." Miguel Echegaray, *La viejecita*, 1.iii.

guerrilla-style warfare that the Spanish used during the Peninsular War with the more organized standing army used by the English. As a result, this enhances the standing of the general uprising against the French invaders into something more coherent and more unified: not simply guerrilla warfare, but an organized battle recognized as such by a representative English solider. A national rising, in other words.[63]

This reading is further enhanced by the opening chorus. As such choruses are wont to do, this one provides us with the setting: the choristers announce they are happy that the French have been driven from Madrid while Carlos, the lead, indulges in mockery of Joseph Bonaparte. His joke, which puns upon the Spanish nickname for Bonaparte—"Pepe Botellas"—leads to what in any other work might be a straightforward drinking chorus. Carlos quickly turns this around, however. He announces that

> Fire is the wine
> of the Spanish soul;
> fire is the air
> and fire is the sun;
> fire is running
> in my veins
> for loving and drinking
> and fighting and winning.[64]

The chorus enthusiastically take up this theme, concluding their song with the announcement that "to fight is to live"—a fairly ominous announcement, given that this is supposed to be a celebration of victory. Indeed, this slightly dark tone that the

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[63] It may be worth noting here that Sir Jorge's full name is Sir Jorge Dover, while the protagonist's full name is Carlos España. These ultra-generic first names with geographically specific last names have the effect of turning the characters into stand-ins for their entire countries.

[64] "Fuego es el vino / del suelo español; / fuego es el aire / y fuego es el sol; / fuego en mis venas / ya siento correr / para amar y beber / y luchar y vencer." Echegaray, *La viejecita*, 1.i.

opening chorus sets up is born out by the end of the work. After the farcical encounters at the ball have been straightened out, an official enters to announce that the soldiers will have to depart to the front before daybreak. The work ends not with Carlos and Luisa in an embrace, but with Carlos' promise, "Do not fear, I will return."[65] The Marqués de Aguilar has already announced that he will only award Luisa's hand to Carlos if he can prove himself in battle. Thus *La viejecita* ends on an oddly ambiguous note, and one that is hardly an exponent of facile patriotism. The lovers are not united but are parted by the final curtain, and the threat of war hangs over the entire cast.

Given that *La viejecita* premiered at the Teatro de la Zarzuela on 30 April 1897—during the two-year period of high tension before the outbreak of war with the United States—this somewhat dark conclusion may not be surprising. On the other hand, it seems to have been fairly easy to overlook amidst all the farce and Fernández Caballero's elegant music. The magazine *Blanco y Negro* did go so far as to state that the "the most Spanish of our composers has created exquisite musical numbers for a very Spanish theme"; however, reviews stressing the work's nationalism seem to have been the exception to the rule.[66] The score does not indulge in those dance forms typical of the género chico. The only exception to this rule is a schottische in the second scene: but this is actually used to characterize a group of English dragoons, reflecting the origins of the name for a change. Most of the other reviews tended to focus upon the beauty of the score rather than its supposed "Spanishness." *La*

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[65] Echegaray, *La viejecita*, 2.xvii.
[66] Luis Bermejo, "Los éxitos: *La viejectia*," *Blanco y negro*, 22 May 1897, 7.

viejecita did not seem to have been received as an exemplar of patriotism by the majority of the critics; this is a judgment that developed later, perhaps in response to the events of 1898 or under the influence of Echegaray and Fernández Caballero's *Gigantes y cabezudos* from the following year, which was a much more nuanced and critical view of Spanish patriotism.

La viejecita may also suffer by association with the other major historical exemplar of the género chico: Ruperto Chapí's *El tambor de granaderos* (The Drummer of the Grenadier Guards), which was one of the most successful stage works of the 1894-1895 season. If *La viejecita*'s patriotism is not a notable part of its dramatic or musical make-up, the same cannot be said of *El tambor*. The ostensible plot is another dramatic cliché—young love threatened by the attempt of the ingénue's guardian to place her in a convent. This plot is set in relief against the French occupation of Madrid, and it is the problems of this wartime occupation that are of primary concern during the opening of the play. The opening chorus features not the standard happy citizenry in celebration, but a group of beggars waiting for a charitable distribution of "some miserable soup" from the local clergy.[67] Although the love conflict is indirectly introduced in dialogue (by secondary characters) after this, before we actually meet the characters of Gaspar and Luz, there is another scene referring to the problems of occupation. Here, an army colonel confronts the local clergyman (a loveably venal soul in the way only operetta priests can be) who has been helping soldiers desert from the army. This scene sets up a basic definition of national identity that will be deconstructed later. The colonel declares that "true Spaniards are those

[67] Emilio Sánchez Pastor, *El tambor de granaderos*, 1.i.

who obey their king," and that since the Spanish crown has been ceded to Joseph Bonaparte only those who swear allegiance to the French monarch are true Spaniards.[68] This stands in stark contrast to El Lego, the lay priest who has been helping soldiers desert—and whose definition of Spanish obviously rests on a different foundation than the question of who the monarch is.

This distinction between ideas of nationalism becomes even clearer during—of all things—the love duet in the following scene. Gaspar and Luz declare their undying devotion for each other, *sotto voce* because Luz's uncle and guardian, Don Pedro, is nearby reading a newspaper. Chapí and Sánchez Pastor interpolate Don Pedro's reading of this paper and his commentary on the items between each verse of the love duet. Don Pedro has sided with the French, and vociferously approves of "el rey José" and the occupation. As he says after having read that Queen María Luisa lunched with Napoleon the previous day and later heard mass:

> Whenever they want to, our monarchs
> see the Emperor;
> later they enforce the laws
> against he who attacks King Joseph.[69]

Although Don Pedro is not thinking in the strictly nationalistic terms that arose in the scene between the colonel and El Lego, he is thinking in similar terms of allegiance and obedience. What is important to the colonel and Don Pedro is obedience to the new order that rules in Madrid. Their focus is on the dynastic allegiance characteristic of absolutism. There is a king and that is sufficient to determine loyalty and

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[68] Sánchez Pastor, *El tambor de granaderos*, 1.iii.
[69] "Cuánto quieren nuestros reyes / al emperador se ve; / luego cumple bien las leyes / el que ataca al rey José." Sánchez Pastor, *El tambor de granaderos*, 1.v.

allegiance. This is in distinct contrast to El Lego, Gaspar, and Luz. These characters place a higher allegiance on something less tangible than a reigning monarch. For Gaspar and Luz, this is the idea of romantic love: their duet features them pledging their undying love for each other as Gaspar promises to rescue Luz from the awful fate of becoming a nun. Just as El Lego "rescues" soldiers who do not want to serve Bonaparte by aiding their desertion from the army, Gaspar promises to rescue Luz from a fate worse than death.

It is suggestive that Sánchez Pastor sets up a scenario in which the three traditional pillars of Spanish society—the crown, the church, and the army—have been corrupted. The crown has been corrupted by the nature of the man who rules Spain, a foreigner and a conqueror. The army has been corrupted by its allegiance to this crown, corrupted to the point that individual soldiers are no longer willing to remain loyal to their oaths of service. The church has been corrupted by its willingness to imprison an innocent girl against her wishes at the request of her Francophile guardian. In each case, an important pillar of Spanish society has been infected by its contact with the foreign occupying power. Having set up this problem, the remainder of *El tambor de granaderos* will set about the problem of purifying and regenerating the Spanish state. Luz is saved from the convent (after a mock musical exorcism, something unique in the annals of operetta), and the crown and the army are saved by the *deus ex machina* of the battle of Bailen which forces the French to flee from Madrid. The final scene also links the love of Gaspar and Luz with the vision of the nation originally espoused by El Lego, for as Luz exults that Gaspar has been freed

from prison, he exults in the fact that this has happened "at the same time as the country [has been freed]!"[70] This vision of the Spanish nation is mostly clearly set out in the finale to the first scene of the play in which the links between romance and nationalism come to a head and which sets out most clearly the vision of Spanish nationalism in *El tambor de granaderos*.

This finale is a scene in which the soldiers of the Madrid garrison are supposed to swear allegiance to José Bonaparte. The first sign that this is not going to be a completely happy and festive occasion occurs about a third of the way through the number. The chorus, which to this point has been acting much as choruses are accustomed to do (that is to say, making remarks about how festive and cheerful everything looks), hears the strains of the Royal March as the French officials enter and immediately sing "Poor soldiers / who swear without faith!"[71] The upshot is quite clear: the Spanish soldiers are swearing fealty to a monarch that they feel no loyalty towards. Luz, observing the scene, casts it in immediately personal terms. She knows that Gaspar's upright nature will not allow him to swear a false oath, and she fears that "for my love alone / he suffers this torture."[72] As in the love duet, the personal becomes political, and Luz fears that Gaspar's concern over her future will cause him to be untrue to his country.

As it turns out, she need not have feared. As Gaspar approaches the regimental flag to which he needs to swear his loyalty, Luz sneaks in the opportunity to give him a kiss. This apparently gives him the courage to reject swearing the oath to Napoleon:

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[70] Sánchez Pastor, *El tambor de granaderos*, 2.xiii.
[71] "¡Pobres soldados / que juran sin fe!" Sánchez Pastor, *El tambor de granaderos*, 1.x.
[72] "Por mi amor tan solo / sufre esa tortura."

> I will neither kiss nor swear to this infamy,
> from an ignominious and crippled country.
> …..
> What do I care for a life without honor!
> It is better to die for the fatherland!
> …..
> The vile invader may wound me
> in the name of the fatherland.[73]

The chorus instantly approves of Gaspar's stance, proclaiming "Very well done! … Long live the boy / who prefers to be faithful to the fatherland!" even as he is carted off to prison.[74] The chorus and Gaspar, much like El Lego in his earlier confrontation, swear their allegiance (through their actions, if not their words) to a much more abstract concept than Bonaparte. Their overarching loyalty is to the *patria*, their homeland. Gaspar becomes almost obsessive about his loyalty to the *patria*, referring to the word repeatedly in the finale. As might be expected of a solider, ideas of death and battle are intimately associated with his country; nor is his juxtaposition of a false country—one ruled by Bonaparte and the French—with a true country a real surprise.

El tambor de granaderos came in for heavy fire from the critics when it opened on 16 November 1894. *El Heraldo de Madrid* claimed that had any other composer but Chapí set the libretto to music, the work would have "died at birth."[75] The reviewer for *La Correspondencia de España* even went so far as to term the libretto "literary anarchism" that strained for laughter. Furthermore, the plot was described as "an episode from the year 1808 that entertains one little and interests one

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[73] "Yo, ni beso ni juro esa infamia, / de la patria ignominia y baldón. / ... / ¡Qué me importa la vida sin honra! / ¡Es mejor por la patria morir! / ... / Me la dan para herir a la patria / en el nombre del vil invasor." Sánchez Pastor, *El tambor de granaderos*, 1.x.

[74] "¡Muy bien hecho!...¡Que viva el muchacho / que a la patria prefiere ser fiel!"

[75] *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 17 November 1894.

less, despite its striking the relevant patriotic note."[76] Still another reviewer cattily attributed the success of the show to the tight cut of the uniform worn by Isabel Brú, who played Gaspar.[77] The only explanation that occurred to the critics for the work's success on opening night was Chapí's score. And the high point of that score, singled almost unanimously by the critics, was the scene just described: Gaspar's refusal to swear the oath. Much of this scene was set to a military march that Chapí was shrewd enough to open and close his overture to the piece with as well, which doubtless helped to build up an excited response to the music. The only paper not to ascribe the full reaction of the audience to the music was *El Liberal*, which judged that the audience reaction was driven by the fact that they enjoyed "the adventures that happen to the drummer boy, who with noble strain refuses to swear to the flags of the intrusive monarch."[78] Clearly, the one thing everybody liked about *El tambor de granaderos* was Gaspar's rejection of the French: whether they were swept along by Chapí's stirring martial music or by the high drama of the situation, both the audience and the critics recognized this was the crux of the work, its focal point. In essence, the audience was reacting to an idealized moment in Spanish history, when at least one person was willing to reject a foreign invader for the higher cause of his *patria*.

But what exactly were men like Chapí, Fernández-Caballero, Chueca, Sánchez Pastor, Burgos, and Echegaray trying to do by adapting history into the género chico format? On the surface, the format of género chico works—with their reliance on simple dance music and their minimal character and plot development—hardly seems

[76] El Abate Pirracas, "El tambor de granaderos," *La Correspondencia de España*, 17 November 1894.
[77] Zeda, "Veladas teatrales," *La Epoca*, 17 November 1894.
[78] J.A., "Teatro Eslava," *El Liberal*, 17 November 1894.

suitable to the broad and sweeping canvas of history. Even when Chueca and Burgos expand the género chico format into two acts with *Cádiz*, the action and characterizations are much closer to *El tambor de granaderos* than they are to *Pan y toros*. Historical themes have always found a comfortable home on the operatic stage, but have never been as warmly received in the world of operetta, except as the backdrop for musical romance.[79] As it should by now be clear, the zarzuela composers and librettists of the 1880s and 1890s were not even trying to do that: only *Cádiz* would seem to fall into the classic "romance against a backdrop of historical intrigue" pattern, but the extremely marginal role of the lovers to the dramatic action of the piece makes such a reading of the work implausible.

In one sense, what the zarzueleros of the 1890s were doing is yet another development of the "general history" idea that was posited in Chapter I. But the género chico had enhanced the role of the Spanish people from the protagonists of history, sharing a stage with kings and politicians, to the sole force that determined the destiny of Spain. This was clearly a response to the problems of the Restoration regime, which had stymied the traditional role of the Spanish people in favor of political stability. The historical zarzuelas of the género chico suggested that only response was to remove the politicians and the elites from power. All political movement should come only from the Spanish people who would act as a united whole without class distinctions, and who would be influenced by the cosmopolitan influences that liberalism and the Napoleonic invasion had brought to the peninsula.

[79] The one notable exception to this rule is the musical comedy *1776*, which managed to make the political infighting behind the U.S. Declaration of Independence into one of the most popular hits of the late 1960s on Broadway.

Although this was the vision of the zarzueleros, it was also the vision of a wider selection of the Spanish intelligentsia: Miguel de Unamuno, as we have seen, was espousing extremely similar ideas.

It is no coincidence that musical satire and musical regenerationist theories were highly popular in the 1890s in Spain. The corruption engendered by caciquismo and the turno pacífico were becoming increasingly plain—and worse, they were not promoting stability as the architects of the Restoration regime had hoped to do. With many people isolated from formal politics, anarchist activity was becoming more and more prevalent in Spain. There was an anarchist revolt in Jerez in 1892, and when this was violently suppressed anarchists bombed the Teatro del Liceu in Barcelona (during a performance of *William Tell*, ironically enough). Prime Minister Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, the main architect of the Restoration regime, was assassinated by an anarchist in 1897. Colonial conflicts also had the country sliding towards chaos. In 1895, a revolt against the Spanish government had broken out in Cuba; by the following year, the revolt had spread to the Philippines. Both of these revolts brought Spain into conflict with the United States, who supported the rebels as "freedom fighters" while hoping to pick up some colonial holdings of their own. Inexorably, the Restoration government let Spain slide into a war it could not hope to win. The Disaster of 1898 proved that the zarzueleros had been right: Spain had been corrupted by its socio-political system and was in desperate need of regeneration.

History, Satire, Music, and Defeat: 1898

In reality, the satire of the género chico turned out to be far less funny than it originally appeared to be on stage. By 1898, the Spanish had very little to laugh about: the military defeat of Spain by the United States destroyed the Spanish colonial empire as well as ending any remaining ambitions Spain might have had to becoming a world power once again. More important was the fact that 1898 made the flaws of the Restoration system of government impossible to ignore. Governmental corruption was widely attributed as the main cause of the disaster, as was the jingoistic fervor whipped up in favor of the war by the government and the press. Zarzuela had even been suborned by these elite interests to help arouse the population, in the infamous episode of the "Marcha de *Cádiz*." Sensing the popularity of zarzuela, the elite interests mocked in the satirical zarzuelas hoped to harness the genre's populism to further their own interests. This was not regeneration and thus was doomed to failure.

The orchestral march that Chueca and Valverde had used to introduce the Constitution of 1812 in *Cádiz* had been the hit number from the show. The march received a revival of sorts in 1896 when the librettists Celso Lucio and Enrique García Alvarez teamed up with the composers Ramón Estellés and Quinito Valverde (Joaquín's son) to pen *La marcha de Cádiz*. The motor for this farce is the prevalence of small community bands in even the most rural of Spanish villages. The governor of Castile is about to make a visit to the small town in which this zarzuela takes place, and he asks to be received by the community band playing the March from *Cádiz*. Unfortunately, local officials had pocketed the money earmarked for the local band,

and in a desperate attempt to hide their embezzlement from exposure decide to shanghai Pérez, a visiting clarinetist from Madrid, into organizing a makeshift band to welcome the governor. In standard farce style, however, they mistake one Atilano (who has come to the village to elope with the mayor's daughter) for Pérez. Thus Atilano, who cannot even read music, is put in the awkward position of training the musicians and playing clarinet with them.

If *La marcha de Cádiz* is an accurate reflection of musical and political customs in rural Spain, it is also evidence of the spread of zarzuela music outside Madrid. The four musicians hired to make up the municipal band clearly have fairly broad musical tastes—"we play more than just Wagner / Rossini and Mozart" they boast.[80] However, in spite of this fairly advanced taste in music (in 1896, the Teatro Real had yet to stage a full Wagner opera), there is the implicit assumption that it is Chueca's march that is most appropriate to welcome a visiting dignitary. Even more astonishing is the claim made for the piece at the fall of the curtain. As the mayor hustles Atilano off to jail, his daughter Clarita turns to the audience and asks for applause in these terms:

> The march has now finished;
> if it didn't seem bad to you,
> applaud, I beg you,
> for the national hymn.[81]

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[80] "Tocamos más que Wagner / Rossini y Mozart." Celso Lucio and Enrique García-Alvarez, *La marcha de Cádiz*, in Antonio Valencia, ed., *El género chico (Antología de textos completos)* (Madrid: Taurus, 1962), 491-512. 1.ix.

[81] "La marcha aquí terminó; / si no te parece mal, / aplaude, lo pido yo, / por el himno nacional." Lucio and García-Alvarez, 3.ix.

The poor "Himno de Riego," technically the national anthem, has been here supplanted by Chueca's march. Furthermore, the applause of the piece is solicited not for the dramatic characteristics of *La marcha de Cádiz* or the performances of the actors, but rather for the nationalist characteristics of the music.

In fact, the severe lack of patriotic music during the Restoration created a vacuum that Chueca's music filled quite nicely. The more-or-less official national anthem under the Restoration was the aforementioned "Himno de Riego," which had been adopted as the "national march" by the Cortes in 1822.[82] This piece of music was associated from the first with Spain's liberal governments, and was rejected by both absolutists on the right and the revolutionary left (who much preferred the "International" or the "Marseillaise"). By the time of the Restoration, this "national anthem" was hardly held to be a symbol of national unity by a large swath of the population; and this, combined with the reluctance of the Restoration regime to seriously undertake any nation-building initiatives, left a large symbolic gap. Chueca's march seemed poised to end up filling that gap partially due to its patriotic sound—as a march, it shares the common tempo and rhythmic feel of many national anthems—and partially due to its popularity. Success in the theatre was one sign that a particular piece of music could overcome the partisan factionalism that surrounded the "Himno de Riego." The renewed success of the "Marcha de *Cádiz*" a decade later gave further proof of this.

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[82] For the best discussion of the "Himno de Riego," as well as on national anthems in Spain in particular, see Carlos Serrano, *El nacimiento de Carmen: Símbolos, mitos, nación* (Madrid: Taurus, 1999), 107-130.

La marcha de Cádiz premiered at the Teatro Eslava on 11 October 1896. It became that theatre's biggest hit since *El tambor de granaderos* two seasons previously. It was presumably this success that prompted the newspaper *El liberal* two months later to publish a new version of the "Marcha de Cádiz," this one with a lyric by Leopoldo Cano that also calls the piece the "Himno Nacional." The new lyrics are both patriotic and martial, calling the men of Spain sons of El Cid and declaring that "the solider of my country will climb up a mountain to the skies and will descend to hell if he must."[83] The tone seems to have been inspired by a similar piece the previous week in that paper, which had published a selection of *villancicos*—Christmas carols—with a war theme. The majority of these also sounded a virile and patriotic note, although a few of these carols have a decidedly darker tone that specifically attacks the United States. Felipe Pérez y González (the librettist for Chueca's *La Gran Vía*) was particularly virulent:

> The pigs of Chicago
> say they have taken it badly
> that so many compare them
> with Sherman, Morgan, and Call.
> This is because pigs provide
> very good chops and good ham
> and those others only
> provide tongue… of a scorpion.[84]

Goodwill towards men had apparently been suspended for this particular holiday season. It is also worth noting that the Spanish press had a penchant for comparing the

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[83] *El Liberal*, "La Marcha de 'Cádiz'," 27 December 1896.

[84] "Los cochinos de Chicago / dicen que han tomado á mal / el que muchos los comparen / con Sherman, Morgan y Call. / Porque tiene los cochinos / muy buen lomo y buen jamón, / y aquellos sujetos sólo / tienen lengua... de escorpión." *El liberal*, "Villancicos de la guerra," 20 December 1896.

United States and its citizens to pigs, so this passage has a nasty double meaning: Pérez y Gonzalez is not just talking about the denizens of the Chicago stockyards here, but is making a sly reference to the average American at the same time.

These villancicos and *La marcha de Cádiz* were part of a rising tide of patriotic fervor that had begun when news of the Cuban revolt reached the Iberian Peninsula in early 1896. Chueca and Valverde's *Cádiz* had been successfully revived at the Teatro Apolo: the Queen, along with her daughter and son-in-law attended a performance in late February for the specific purpose of hearing the famous "Marcha de *Cádiz*." This event prompted one anonymous commentator to suggest that the Queen "in a certain manner had just awarded Chueca the Cross of Military Merit."[85] This particular revival of *Cádiz* had led the conservative daily *La Epoca* to begin agitating for the March to replace the Himno de Riego as the national anthem.[86] The ever patriotic Antonio Peña y Goñi actually went so far as to call the Himno de Riego "leftovers from the era of military coups."[87] On the other hand, the Wagnerian in Peña y Goñi could hardly stand attempts to alter Chueca's original intent by adding sub-par poetry, at least one sample of which he quotes; he also ridicules the attempts of *El Imparcial* to hold a contest that would set words to Chueca's march, noting that the paper had only published one of the entries.[88] Peña y Goñi agitated for both a new national

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[85] *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 21 February 1896.
[86] See Matamoros, "Crónicas madrileñas: El himno nacional," *La Epoca*, 17 February 1896.
[87] Antonio Peña y Goñi, "Crónicas madrileñas: ¡Vi-va es-paña!" *La Epoca*, 29 February 1896. Peña y Goñi actually uses the term "ropa vieja" which technically translates as "old clothes"; but he seems to be referring to a traditional Spanish dish that makes use of leftover meat.
[88] There is somewhat more information on this contest in F. Hernandez Girbal, *Federico Chueca: El alma de Madrid* (Madrid: Ediciones Lira, 1992), 328-332. The paper seems to have been so embarrassed by the quality of the entries that the contest was quietly forgotten and no prize ever awarded.

anthem and a new flag, implicitly citing Spain's degeneration, but setting amateurish words to already established music was hardly the way to accomplish this.

Nevertheless, the "Marcha de *Cádiz*" became even more popular in the wake of *La marcha de Cádiz*. Audiences began demanding it at band concerts and other public performances, as happened at a performance in the Teatro de la Zarzuela in late November: the coronet band that was sharing a bill with a performance of Chueca's *El chaleco blanco* was not allowed to continue with its performance until it had played the March.[89] Traditional historiography on the 1898 crisis has suggested that such popular fervor helped to drive Spain into conflict with the United States, although more recent work has suggested that much of this popular groundswell was in fact created by the press, and the populace as a whole was much more ambivalent about taking on "Sherman, Morgan, and Call."[90] The examination of zarzuela literature would seem to suggest that a certain ambivalence was the order of the day: patriotism was popular, but the sophisticated theatrical audiences of Madrid already knew that the government had a tendency to promise more than it could deliver.

The war with the United States was a historical disaster of the first magnitude for the Spanish, and the defeat magnified the problems with the Restoration regime that musical satire had laid bare in the 1880s and 1890s. Nowhere was this more clear than in *Gigantes y cabezudos* (Giants and Fat-Headed Dwarfs), the hit of the 1898-1899 season at the Teatro de la Zarzuela.[91] The work is, in many ways, astonishing:

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[89] *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 25 November 1896.
[90] See Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898-1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
[91] The title is a pun; not only does it jokingly describe the mental state of the characters in the play ("luchando tercos y rudos, / somos los aragoneses / gigantes y cabezudos"—3.iii), but it also refers

an operetta that provides an unvarnished and critical look at the aftermath of a misguided war. Set in Zaragoza, the plot revolves around the interference by the local police Sergeant in the love life of Pilar and Jesús; he attempts to convince both of them that the other has married while Jesús was fighting in Cuba so that he may wed Pilar. Although the Sergeant is a typical office-holder under the *cacique* system, abusing the powers of his office for personal gain, the work is most notable for its realistic portrayal of the repercussions of the crisis of 1898 on stage. With *Gigantes y cabezudos*, the satirical diagnosis of Spain's problems and the regenerationist solution are both clearly articulated in one work.

The zarzuela opens with a scene of tumult and turmoil: nothing short of a riot (accompanied by music, of course) is in progress. The local female vendors have just been informed of the latest raise in taxes, and are furious. Such a scene had been duplicated many times over (sans music) in towns across Spain in the months before the premiere, and would continue well into the next year. The women sum up their rejection of the system in a couplet at the end of the opening chorus: "…the marketplace has voted / and it has voted no."[92] This riot, like its counterparts in real life, featured the unrepresented in Spanish political life making their voices heard in the public sphere, replacing the non-representative "voting" of the Restoration system

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to the massive puppets used in the procession in the third scene. For further information on the use of such folk art forms and religious festivals in building communities—as well as for building resistance by those groups politically marginalized by the Restoration system—see Temma Kaplan, *Red City, Blue Period: Social Movements in Picasso's Barcelona* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1992), especially Chapters 2 and 3.

[92] "La plazuela ha votado, / y que ha votado que no." Miguel Echegaray, *Gigantes y cabezudos*, 1.i.

with a "vote" that was more meaningful in practical terms.[93] The opening scene of the zarzuela ends with the women attacking the municipal officers who turn up to enforce the new tax policy and a song that is even further an outright rejection of authority—this time addressed to the general audience. The stage directions indicate that the chorus comes to the proscenium and sings the following chorus:

> Though we are weak we can be what men can't,
> And when we look furious they are frightened
> And they will cede us the country
> . . . . . .
> Although the mayor may bring a canon here,
> We will not be moved if we are unified.[94]

Although it would be going too far to read this as a call for the audiences to revolt against the Restoration regime, it is by far one of the most confrontational passages in zarzuela literature. And, as if to reinforce the points made by this fictional riot, the scene closes with the couplet that reaffirms the rights of Spanish citizens to participate in their own government—"the marketplace has voted no."

Manuel Fernandez Caballero also uses his music to further this point. He makes extensive use of the jota in constructing his score; as the reviewer for *La Época* laconically noted, "there is a plethora of jota here."[95] The score itself is made up of six separate numbers, four of which are jotas; as these four numbers are also the most complex numbers in the score (each except the last is broken down into two or three

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[93] For an analysis of the importance of such riots in expressing the political opinions of those excluded by formal politics (with its analysis starting in this period), see Pamela Beth Radcliff, "Women's Politics: Consumer Riots in Twentieth-century Spain" in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain*, ed. Victoria Loree Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff (Albany: State U of New York P, 1999), p. 301-323.

[94] "Con nosotras, que débiles somos, los hombres no pueden, / y al mirarnos furiosas se asustan y el campo nos ceden. / ... / Aunque traiga el alcalde un cañón, / no nos echa de aquí si hay unión." Echegaray, *Gigantes y cabezudos*, 1.x.

[95] Zeda and M. Barber, "Veladas teatrales," *La Época*, 30 November 1898.

separately numbered sections), close to three-quarters of the music in the work is inspired by the jota. More importantly, three of these four jotas are the numbers that transmit the political message of the zarzuela. The first jota is the opening scene that features the fight among the vendors and concludes with the chorus "the marketplace has voted…" The second jota is the number in which the female vendors fantasize about how life would be if women ran the government—which concludes with the riot against the tax collectors. The third jota is less politically charged, but features a procession of gigantes and cabezudos that celebrates Aragón, the area of Spain from which the jota originated. The final number, a religious procession (marked "Salve" in the score) is a straightforward choral piece—but even here Fernandez Caballero cannot resist mixing in "the happy sounds of the jota."[96] The jota is originally from Aragón, the setting of *Gigantes y cabezudos*; but by 1898, it had also become one of the most self-reflexively "Spanish" musical forms in the musical idiom of the género chico. Fernández Caballero, no less than Chueca or Unamuno, places an authentic notion of Spanish identity with the popular classes and against the government.

Gigantes y cabezudos is unique in that it unites the satirical vision of Spain's problems with the historically based regenerationist solution to those problems—or at least the lessons that had been learned from the historical works of the género chico, since the piece has more of a "ripped-from-today's-headlines" quality about it. The corruption of the Restoration regime is made quite evident in the figure of the Sergeant and his abuse of political power for personal gain. But the work also suggests the power of the pueblo to fix such corruption: the women proudly proclaim

[96] Zeda and M. Barber, "Veladas teatrales," *La Época*, 30 November 1898.

that corruption cannot remain if the Spanish people are united. Fernández Caballero's music supports this idea: by composing virtually the entire score in the form of a jota, he suggests the unity and strength of the Spanish people. The jota, after all, is folk music—the music of the pueblo—and its message will eventually override the corruption of the regime. It is suggestive that the Sergeant, alone of all the main characters, does not sing during the course of the work. Musically, he is not part of the pueblo; he is isolated from the Spanish people and therefore not a true member of the Spanish nation.

The satirical and historical works of the género chico did as much as the sainetes to help redefine Spanish national identity in the 1880s and the 1890s. If the sainetes articulated the new vision of Spain as an urban nation, the satirical and historical works both isolated the problems of that new nation and proposed solutions to those very problems. Since zarzuela was popular entertainment, its diagnosis focused on the way in which the Restoration regime socially and politically isolated the popular classes; its prescription focused on how the power of the popular classes could solve such problems. Zarzuela's role as popular culture was crucial to its understanding of the problems facing Spain in the 1890s and it helped to determine the nature of the solutions to those problems. But zarzuela was hardly unique in its diagnosis of Spain's problems. Even intellectuals like Miguel de Unamuno (who could hardly be considered a "popular" figure) had come up with similar observations. The Restoration regime was widely regarded as corrupt and its elitist construction a problem for the Spanish nation. It was the role of zarzuela to articulate this view to a

wider portion of the population than a philosopher like Unamuno could ever hope to reach.

The question remains: how effective was zarzuela at articulating this message? In terms of the diagnosis of the threat to the Spanish state—the satirical works—the answer is that zarzuela was extremely effective. Especially in the aftermath of the 1898 Disaster, it became clear even to members of the Spanish government that the regime was inefficient and corrupt; but even before that, there was widespread disenchantment with the government and increasing calls for reform to the system that Cánovas del Castillo had set up in 1874. In terms of the regenerationist aspect, zarzuela must receive something of a mixed report card. True, there was increased popular action in the wake of the 1898 Disaster—the popularity of *Gigantes y cabezudos* was at least partially due to its realism—but for the most part, the social and political structures of the Restoration would remain unchanged through the first two decades of the twentieth century. Regeneration would still remain a crucial theme of zarzuela after 1898 but the tone of the genre would change, in the most literal sense of the term. Zarzuela would abandon Unamuno's notion of *intrahistoria* and would instead focus on the cosmopolitan aspect of his argument. What would reform Spain in the early years of the twentieth century would not be the united force of the Spanish people; it would be the adoption of European models of behavior and custom. Fernández Caballero's vision of the jota uniting the Spanish people was about to be supplanted by waltz music from Vienna as an aural representation of what would solve

Spain's problems. Regeneration after 1900 would sound very different from the works of the género chico.

V

"Española Soy": Operetta as Regeneration

Hanna Glawari (or Sonia, as the Spanish soon took to calling her), a wealthy widow in search of a new husband, arrived in Madrid on the evening of 8 February 1909. She proceeded to take the city by storm, just as she had Vienna, Berlin, London, Paris, and New York. The daily papers commented on her beautiful figure, her elegant dress, and her … "richness of harmonization."[1] Señora Glawari was not just any widow: she was *The Merry Widow*, the title character of Franz Léhar's wildly popular operetta that had premiered in Vienna three years previously. The Madrid critics were enthusiastic about Léhar's music, the performers, and the luxurious production (which cost in excess of 70,000 pounds sterling, according to *ABC*—an extravagant sum).[2] The libretto came in for some swipes ("stupid" [*tontín*] according to *El Heraldo de Madrid*), although a number of critics thought the plot had been lifted from the classic Spanish drama *El desdén con el desdén*.[3] Even as the new and exciting strains of the "Merry Widow Waltz" swept across Madrid, there was a definite impulse to turn this decidedly Viennese pastry into something resembling churros con chocolate.

The Merry Widow was hardly the first non-Spanish operetta to play in Madrid. Franz von Suppé's works had been extremely popular in the early 1880s, and one of the most successful pieces at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in the early 1890s had been a

[1] S.A., "La viuda alegre," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 9 February 1909.
[2] Floridor, "Los estrenos: Price, «La viuda alegre»," *ABC*, 9 February 1909, 10.
[3] See both the reviews in *El Heraldo de Madrid* and *ABC* cited above.

French import with the decidedly un-French title of *Miss Helyet*. Even Gilbert and Sullivan, who never had much success on the continent outside of Germany, found a warm welcome for *HMS Pinafore* at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in 1885.[4] Spanish composers also tried their hands at writing European-style works. I have already mentioned Ruperto Chapí's *El rey que rabió*, which used melodies in the style of Offenbach and Suppé style to disguise the work's satirical sting. But all of these productions were, in a sense, sidelines. The predominant theatrical product in Spain since the 1850s had been the home-grown variety of zarzuela. For nearly a decade, *The Merry Widow* changed that pattern significantly.[5]

The incursion of European operetta into Spain in the years following 1909 marked a definitive turning point in the history of zarzuela. At first glance, the use of European operetta music in zarzuelas seems to be a mere continuation of the regenerationist project discussed in the previous chapter: "European" music was adapted to a Spanish model in order to fix what was perceived as a decline in quality of the reigning form of zarzuela, the género chico. But operetta quickly became enmeshed with a second, parallel project of musical regeneration. A new generation of conservatory-trained Spanish composers was turning to opera and musical modernism as a way of reviving Spanish music, much as their predecessors had in the

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[4] See "Revista de Teatros: Teatro de la Zarzuela," *La Correspondencia Musical*, 15 October 1885, 3. It may not be surprising that *Pinafore* was the only notably successful Gilbert and Sullivan production in Spain: it features the heaviest concentration of Sullivan's ballads and does not have a classically Gilbertian "patter number," which means the work is probably the easiest to translate successfully of all the Savoy Operas.

[5] Its success also creates potential linguistic problems for the student of zarzuela. While "zarzuela" is commonly translated into English as "operetta," they are two distinct terms in Spanish. "Zarzuela" refers to the home-grown lyric theatre project, while "opereta" refers to imported productions. Throughout this chapter, I shall use these terms in their original Spanish meanings.

1870s and 1880s. The overall result was to cause a shift in the status of zarzuela. As the género chico was replaced by European-influenced operettas, zarzuela increasingly came to be considered a form of "art"—an elite form of culture—rather than the popularly based genre that it had traditionally been. This separation of zarzuela from its populist roots would cause the ultimate failure of the regenerationist project.

The Merry Widow opened what operetta historian Charles Traubner has termed the "Silver Age" of operetta.[6] "Golden Age" works—those by Offenbach, Gilbert and Sullivan, Suppé, and their contemporaries—were driven by satire. They were comedies with music, and the humor was the primary dramatic concern. (Consider the classic Gilbert and Sullivan Savoy Operas: the least interesting characters are almost always the romantic leads.) The dramatic motor of Silver Age works, by contrast, is romantic sentiment. Although humor is not absent, it would come to be increasingly relegated to the secondary characters. The move towards sentimental romance prompted a conversant shift in operetta music. The music of Léhar and his contemporaries was generally more lush and melodic than that of previous works. Rather than music written to fit the constraints of actors who were not primarily vocalists, Silver Age operetta required trained, legitimate voices rather than acting to put its music across.

The romanticism and the melodicism of Silver Age operetta found a comfortable home in a Spain that found itself assailed by a national crisis—although not for the escapist reasons that might immediately spring to mind. The first two

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[6] Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History*, rev. ed. (New York & London: Routledge, 2003); for his basic definition of the silver age, see page 244.

decades of the twentieth century saw the country assailed by a crisis of self-confidence engendered by defeat at the hands of the United States in the War of 1898 and by the severe economic dislocations of World War I. The years from 1898 to 1909 saw increasing social unrest as the forces of mass political mobilization pressed for entry into the Restoration governmental system, which had been designed to keep them out. This tension climaxed in 1909 with what became known as "The Tragic Week": working-class groups and trade unions in Barcelona, in response to a military expedition to Morocco, called a general strike that resulted in a general uprising against the government.[7] Social tensions were only exacerbated by rapid inflation after 1914: although Spain did not fight in World War I, her economy became crucial to the war effort for both sides in that conflict. The resultant influx of money and subsequent inflation only exacerbated the sense of social crisis, especially when rising food prices prompted a nation-wide general strike in 1917.[8] The Restoration settlement was rapidly devolving into a conflict between the popular classes, who wanted political power, and the elites that preferred stability to what they perceived as the inherent vagaries and threats of mass politics.

What had set off all this social unrest—which had been simmering ever since the Bourbon Restoration had put an end to Spain's first experiment with mass politics in 1874—was the Disaster of 1898, and what that Disaster had triggered was a sense that Spain was in decline. Defeat by the United States removed any pretensions Spain

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[7] The classic account of the tensions in this period—focusing on the anticlerical violence in Barcelona, but with an excellent interpretation of the political mobilization process—is Joan Connelly Ullman, *The Tragic Week: A Study of Anticlericalism in Spain, 1875-1912* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1968).

[8] On the role of World War I in Spain, see Francisco J. Romero Salvadó, *Spain, 1914-1918: Between War and Revolution* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

might have had to world power status. There was a distinct sense of unease about Spanish government and the very nature of Spanish identity. The one-act plays of the género chico, which had a distinctly nationalist ideological component (as discussed in Chapter IV), inevitably suffered from this intense questioning about the meaning of Spanish identity. The satirical component of the género chico became problematic in the wake of 1898: although it had attacked governmental corruption as often as not, satire had offered no solutions to Spain's problems. Oddly enough, the romantic component of Silver Age operetta did. These romances tended to take place in far-flung European countries, and it was precisely towards new European models that Spanish reformers were turning. Romance provided an excuse to explore Europe at a time when Spain was felt to be in decline.

The music of Silver Age operetta was also critical to reforming Spanish theatre and society. The other major problem in the género chico at the turn of the century was its reliance on simple dance music in its scores. Critics were intensely concerned that the often repetitious emphasis on jotas, seguidillas, and polkas had lowered the quality of Spanish music. Certainly, there was none of the complex and quasi-operatic music that had been the hallmark of zarzuela grande scores from the 1850s to 1880s that the género chico had supplanted. Silver Age operetta was a return to the melodic and complex scores that the género chico had abandoned. Such scores required training to execute. Operetta melodies provided a path to move around the over-reliance on dance music and other popular forms that had come to seem trite and commonplace in Spanish theatres by 1900. To be sure, the music was still popular

music; but its reliance on melody rather than rhythm was a distinctly fresh idea in Spain.

Silver Age operetta came to have a very specific ideological component attached to it in Spain that happened nowhere else—and one that could only have happened in Spain. Elsewhere in Europe, Léhar and his followers were treated as composers of light, escapist music that certainly offered no competition with the established, "serious" composers of the day. (In Germany, for example, Richard Strauss abhorred Léhar, and much of Strauss' later collaboration with the Nazi Party was focused on establishing operetta music as subordinate to serious classical compositions—with a concurrent realignment of royalty structures.) In Spain, this division between zarzuela music and "serious" art music had always been minimal: even that most rigid of composers, Tomás Bretón, had to write zarzuelas in order to survive and hear his music performed. But this lack of distinction between "light" and "serious" music slowly evaporated during the early years of the twentieth century. New forms of popular culture overtook zarzuela, and as a result the form became distant from the popular audiences that had built it up in the 1880s and 1890s.

This in turn opened up the possibility of a second, parallel, regeneration project for Spanish lyric theatre. Opera had been rejected as an authentically Spanish form of music in the 1870s and 1880s, but the idea came back with a vengeance in the years following 1910. As with operetta, proponents of operatic regeneration sought to raise the musical quality of zarzuela; however, opera was now seen as a way to incorporate new modernist musical ideas from Europe. The vibrant orchestrations of Rimsky-

Korsakov or Puccini and the more subtle harmonies favored by composers like Debussy or Richard Strauss were flourishing in Paris, Berlin, and Vienna in the first decade of the twentieth century. Spanish composers studied in Paris and were able to bring these ideas back to their home country—where there was finally enough of a musical infrastructure to place such ideas before an audience. If zarzuela was being pushed out of the realm of popular culture, perhaps it was time to take its place in the rarified realms of art.

But zarzuela had always defined itself as a popular art: this had been the key to its revival in the 1850s, to its ascendancy as a nationalist genre in the 1870s, and to the success of the género chico in the 1890s. Both the operetta and the operatic regeneration projects were going to take a daring, almost radical step. They sought to remove many of the popular elements from zarzuela and replace them with modern notions of "art." From the beginning, the regeneration project was a double-edged sword. True, it sought to improve the quality of Spanish theatre just as the political regeneration project sought to reform Spanish political life. But the theatrical version could only succeed at the cost of removing that which had defined zarzuela as a "Spanish" genre: its roots in popular music. Whether zarzuela could continue to succeed at the box office remained an open question; still, given the decline of the género chico in the first decade of the twentieth century, there may not have been that much to lose.

A Changing Theatrical World

The first decade of the twentieth century saw the slow decline of the género chico system that had dominated the structure of Madrid theatrical life since the late 1880s. The abundance of wildly popular works that had turned up on Madrid stages (especially during the glory years of 1896, 1897, and 1898) slowly dried up to a trickle. The distinct nationalism of the one-act género chico had fallen out of favor with Spanish audiences. The patriotism that verged towards jingoism in works like *El tambor de granaderos* was distinctly out of place in the post-1898 atmosphere that actively questioned whether Spain had any right to consider itself a successful nation at all. The famous march from Chueca's *Cádiz* was associated with the defeat of Spain at the hands of the United States—and this brush was used to tar the entire género chico. The naïve patriotic optimism of Spanish lyric theatre was simply out of step with the popular responses to the Disaster of 1898.[9]

The response of Spain's theatrical community to this dual crisis of society and theatre had an unintended consequence that would be disastrous to the regeneration project. Zarzuela was pushed out of its traditional position as popular culture and slowly assimilated into the realm of elite art. Even as death was claiming the most beloved of the género chico composers, they were being superceded by a new generation of sophisticated, conservatory-trained composers whose work benefited from new musical and theatrical institutions. New orchestras provided a venue for serious compositions to be heard, while the foundation of organizations to protect

[9] For the wider context of responses to the Disaster, see Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898-1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 92-131.

composers' rights shielded them from the vagaries of the marketplace. But even as zarzuela became elite art, its role as popular culture was taken by new genres like cabaret and cinema. New laws, taxes, and governmental regulations further reinforced this growing divide. The solution to Spain's theatrical crisis ended up by displacing zarzuela from its traditional role as the key form of Spanish popular culture and paved the way for its adoption of European musical forms.

The most obvious facet of Spain's theatrical decline was the fact that the most popular theatrical composers of the 1880s and 1890s were no longer writing for the theatre. The three composers who had dominated the world of the género chico died within four years of each other. Manuel Fernández Caballero passed away in 1906; Federico Chueca in 1908. Even before their deaths, these two composers had ceased to be active forces in the Spanish theatre. Fernández Caballero suffered from cataract problems and had been virtually blind ever since the composition of *El dúo de la Africana* in 1893. He hired younger composers to transcribe his music and in some cases seems to have appropriated their music as his own: he did this with José Serrano, who transcribed *Gigantes y cabezudos* and wrote music for Fernández Caballero that the older composer "accidentally" claimed as his own.[10] In any event, *Gigantes* was the composer's last stage hit. Chueca had also been suffering from ill health, and had not had a major hit since *El bateo* in 1901.

But the major blow to the género chico was the death of Ruperto Chapí in 1909. Chapí was the last of the old-school género chico composers; furthermore, he

[10] See Vicente Vidal Corella, *El maestro Serrano y los felices tiempos de la zarzuela* (Valencia: Prometo, 1973), 65-67 and Angel Sagardía, *El compositor José Serrano: Vida y obra* (Madrid: Organización Sala Editorial, 1972), 23.

was perhaps the most pre-eminent Spanish composer of his day. (Tomás Bretón could perhaps challenge that title, but Bretón only ever managed to compose one popular stage success—*La verbena de la paloma*—while Chapí managed to turn out hits in vast quantities.) Newspaper reports of Chapí's death rivaled, in both the quantity of the reporting and the quality of the panegyrics, the honors due to royalty. The entire front page of *El Heraldo de Madrid* was devoted to the death of the composer (including, dead center under the headline, a photograph of the corpse), while *ABC* placed a portrait of the composer on the cover and spread their reporting of the death across three pages.[11] All the news coverage was devoted to the enormous contributions of Chapí to Spanish musical life, not only as a zarzuela composer, but as a conductor and a composer of concert music as well. The tragedy of Chapí's death was only heightened by the fact that it had occurred a mere month after the triumphal premiere of *Margarita la Tornera*, his last and most successful attempt at opera composition. There was a distinct sense that the death of Chapí was the end of an era in Spanish music.

And it was. However there were younger composers ready to take the place of the old guard, and these men possessed the technical capability to help rejuvenate the Spanish theatre and rescue it from the musical clichés inherent to the género chico—and whose musical sophistication would do much to turn zarzuela music into "art." The musical career trajectory and training of these up-and-coming composers was vastly different from their older counterparts. For most previous zarzuela composers,

[11] "Muerte de Chapí," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 25 March 1909 and "La muerte de Chapí," *ABC*, 26 March 1909, 7-9.

music was not their original vocation; formal training played a minor role in the formation of their musical style. Francisco Asenjo Barbieri may serve as a model here: he originally intended to study medicine, only later switched to music, and seems to have developed his musical style while a member of a military band.[12] Similarly, Chapí's formative musical experiences were in community and military bands; his study under Emilio Arrieta at the Escuela Nacional de Música seems only to have given him the technique to put down the music he was already hearing in his head.[13] Composers who composed strictly for the género chico, like Chueca, often had no formal training at all: their entire musical training consisted of playing in cafés and theatre pit orchestras.[14]

The new generation of composers had a very different experience. For most of them, a career in music had been a possibility since childhood and not a refuge from law, medicine, or engineering. Amadeo Vives apparently knew by age ten that he wanted a career in music, and he eventually joined the children's choir at the Teatro del Liceu (where he is known to have sung in the first Barcelona production of Boito's *Mefistofele*).[15] Although he did not have conservatory training, he had enough raw musical talent to become music master for a convent at age eighteen; Vives was also one of founders of the Orfeo Catalá, the choral society that was part of the wider renaissance of Catalan music and culture.[16] José Serrano was one of the few Spanish

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[12] See Emilio Casares Rodicio, *Francisco Asenjo Barbieri* (Madrid: ICCMU, 1994), 1:68-71.
[13] Luis G. Iberni, *Ruperto Chapí* (Madrid: ICCMU, 1995), 41-45.
[14] F. Hernandez Girbal, *Federico Chueca: El alma de Madrid* (Madrid: Ediciones Lira, 1992), 72-87.
[15] Florentino Hernández Girbal, *Amadeo Vives: El músico y el hombre* (Madrid: Ediciones Lira, 1971), 34-40.
[16] Sol Burgete, *Amadeo Vives* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1978), 26.

composers who actually grew up in a musical family: his father had originally trained as an opera singer in Italy and was conductor of the municipal band in Sueca, near Valencia. Serrano mastered the piano, guitar, and violin by age ten; he later studied at music conservatories in both Valencia and Madrid.[17] When some of his music was shown to Tomás Bretón in 1895, that composer gave it what must have been one of his supreme accolades: he considered that it was not "vulgar."[18]

Bretón's tart comment provides insight into a fundamentally important difference between nineteenth century zarzuela composers and the new generation that came to prominence after 1900. Men like Chueca and Fernández Caballero were not unsophisticated composers, but they did lack the spit-shine polish of conservatory graduates. Barbieri and Chapí, having acquired this polish, quickly let their hair down and never quite did it up again. In either case, the music of nineteenth-century zarzueleros can seem—and in the case of many composers who never rose to either Chueca or Chapí's heights was—crude. The orchestrations may seem trite, choral arrangements unimaginative, and the repetitious use of a few dance form monotonous. Such rough-and ready compositional techniques should not be an indictment of the composers themselves, but rather of Spain's meager infrastructure for musical training in the mid-nineteenth century and of theatrical economics that demanded scores be rapidly composed with an eye towards popular acceptance.

The composers of Serrano and Vives' generation benefited immensely from more systematized musical training and support for musical students, which served to

[17] Sagardía, 14-18; Vidal Corella, 24-27 and 42-44.
[18] Vidal Corella, 45-48

enhance their musical sophistication and artistry: Serrano, for example, was rewarded with a pension of 3,000 reales from the Ministerio de Fomento when he enrolled at the Conservatorio de Madrid in 1895.[19] Admittedly, his was a somewhat exceptional case, since he had two very powerful patrons in the composers Jesus de Monasterio and Emilio Serrano (no relation). Still, it is a far cry from the conservatory career of talents like Bretón, who supported himself financially while attending conservatory by playing violin in the pit orchestra of a theatre in Salamanca.[20] The new generation had a broader theoretical knowledge of music, and their musical horizons had not been shaped strictly in the theatre. Similarly, where nineteenth century composers like Bretón and Chapí studied abroad in musically provincial Rome—a center only for theatre music—after 1900 composers looking for foreign polish turned to Paris. Paris was arguably the center of the musical world in the first decades of the twentieth century; and it attracted two of Spain's major compositional talents at that time, Manuel de Falla and José María Usandizaga. Each of these new Spanish composers had greater technical skill and mastery of their craft than their predecessors and were thus in a much better position to appreciate—and assimilate—new music and techniques from north of the Pyrenees. As composers, they had a broader, more European mindset; this would be crucial to regenerating the moribund Spanish lyric theatre.

The development of a new generation of sophisticated, European-influenced composers would have gone for naught had it not been for the simultaneous

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[19] Vidal Corella, 42-44.
[20] Gabriel Hernández Gonzalez (Javier de Montillana), *Bretón* (Salamanca: Talleres Graficos Nuñez, 1952), 21-25.

development of institutions that disseminated elite music. In 1903, Spain finally founded her first full-time, professional orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid. Two years later, Enrique Fernández Arbós became the orchestra's musical director and made it a force to be reckoned with in Spain's musical life. Fernández Arbós made it a crucial part of the orchestra's mission to present new works by Spanish composers; in the years between the orchestra's founding and the Civil War, Madrid audiences would have the chance to hear new works by Manuel de Falla, Conrado del Campo, Joaquín Turina, Ernesto Halffter, Óscar Esplá, and dozens of other young Spaniards.[21] The early years of the twentieth century saw the foundation of philharmonic societies in a number of cities, as well as the founding of two more orchestras: the Orquesta Sinfónica de Barcelona in 1910 and the Orquesta Filarmónica de Madrid in 1915. There was also something of a renaissance in choral music (especially prominent in the Basque Country and Catalonia) and the development of several string quartets that helped to create a foundation for the performance of chamber music in Spain.[22] These structural developments would allow Spain to better assimilate the regenerating force of European music.

At the same time, increased professionalization among composers furthered the cause of regeneration. Zarzuela composers received a certain amount of increased respect—and more importantly, more money—through the formalization of copyright control. This control lessened their dependence on the vagaries of popular taste,

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[21] Carlos Gómez Amat and Joaquín Turina Gómez, *La Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid: Noventa años de historia* (Madrid: Alianza, 1994).

[22] For a summary of early twentieth century musical life, see Tomás Marco, *Spanish Music in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Cola Franzen (Cambridge: Harvard, 1993), 14-17.

which placed composers in a position of being able to focus on the artistic quality of their works. This move, however, would provide an opening in which other genres of popular culture could flourish as zarzuela composers increasingly found themselves cushioned from the whims of theatrical impresarios and audiences. Late nineteenth-century Spain actually had one of the most advanced copyright laws in Europe: the 1879 Ley de Propiedad Intelectual gave authors copyright control over their works for up to eighty years after their deaths and covered most forms of artistic production. Spain also adhered to the Berne Convention of 1886, one of the earliest pieces of international copyright protection. In order to help enforce these copyright laws in the theatre, a number of zarzueleros—among them Barbieri, Chapí, Chueca, and Miguel Ramos Carrión—set up the Asociación de Autores, Compositores y Propietarios Dramáticos in 1880.[23] In theory, composers retained all the intellectual property rights to their scores and nobody could profit from those scores without the composer's permission.

In practice, there was a very large loophole that meant composers actually saw little revenue from their work. Before any piece of music can be performed, the orchestral parts must be transferred from the score to the individual sheets of music that each player will actually read in performance. This transcription is a tedious, laborious, and time-consuming process. In the early twentieth century, this process had to be farmed out to professional musical copyists (who also had the skill to create legible musical parts, something that was not within the ability of every composer)

[23] Javier Tusell, María Luz González Peña, and Antonio Delgado Porras, *La fuerza de la creación: Cien años de la Sociedad General de Autores y Editores* (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores, 1999), 16-17.

who were on the staff of Madrid's three main musical publishing houses: D. Florencio Fiscowich, los Hijos de Hidalgo, and D. Luis Aruej. In order to see their zarzuelas performed, composers would have to sell their scores to the theatrical impresarios, who in turn would negotiate with the musical publishers. The publishers oversaw the copying, leased all subsequent productions of the work (including provincial and foreign productions), and paid royalties to the authors. These royalties were often meager, with the publishing house taking a percentage for administrative costs. The maximum payment a composer might receive for the score of a full-length zarzuela was 2,500 pesetas; but if that same work had a successful first run, it could bring in between 50,000 to 60,000 pesetas for the impresario.[24] The composers saw virtually none of this profit.

There was one composer who had the talent and the clout to challenge this system: Ruperto Chapí. His passionate involvement in changing this system seems to date from 1894, when he quarreled with the impresarios of the Teatro Apolo where he was more or less serving in the role of house composer. Chapí was upset because he felt that his previous works were being overlooked when the Apolo revived older shows. The reason for this was fairly plain: the impresarios collaborated heavily with Florencio Fiscowich, who had the largest archive of lyric theatre works in Spain. Fiscowich controlled the works of most of Spain's most prominent composers except one—Chapí, who had managed to retain control over his own works. Fiscowich had made several attempts to buy Chapí's archive, without success, and he placed pressure on the Apolo to limit the amount of productions of Chapí's work—thus reducing the

[24] Tusell, Gonzáles Peña, and Delgado Porras, 16.

composer's income. Chapí left the Apolo and, proving that artistic success is the best revenge, moved to the Teatro Eslava where his next work was *El tambor de granaderos*.[25] (Interestingly, the libretto Chapí had been setting at the time of the rupture was none other than *La verbena de la paloma*, which was passed on to Tomás Bretón. Supposedly, much of the music of *El tambor* began life intended for *La verbena*.)[26] Chapí became only the foremost of a number of composers and authors who felt that the power of the musical archives, especially Fiscowich's, must be broken.

This push was aided by a piece of legislation that had originally been written with very different intentions: the 1887 Ley de Asociaciones, which had created the legal framework for trade unionism in Spain. Using this idea, Chapí and a number of other composers had founded the Sociedad de Autores, Compositores y Editores de Música in 1892. This organization slowly built up a position that would allow it to challenge the private archives. The Sociedad had two main assets: Chapí donated his archive to the group, and they had acquired the rights to Joaquín Dicena's 1896 naturalist drama *Juan José*, one of the most successful legitimate plays of the decade. The group also acquired another powerful fighter for the cause in 1898, when

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[25] Iberni, *Ruperto Chapí*, 205-206.

[26] Zarzuela historian José Deleito y Peña suspects that the first scene finale of *El tambor*, "Yo ni beso ni juro esa infamía," actually began life as the famous "¿Dondé vas con la mantón de Manilla?" He also supplies a second, less plausible, version of Chapí's break with the Apolo. According to Deleito y Peña, Chapí actually finished his score to *La verbena*, but librettist Ricardo de la Vega was horrified by the martial tone of the score; he quickly engineered Chapí's move to the Eslava where the score was turned over wholesale to *El tambor*. See José Deleito y Peña, *Origen y apogeo del "género chico"* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1949), 228-229. I'm also inclined to suspect that the reason Bretón was able to turn out his one género chico masterpiece with this libretto was due to his well-known envy and jealousy of Chapí, which might well have spurred him to unsuspected heights on a libretto abandoned by his rival.

composer Tomás López Torregrosa persuaded playwright and former editor of *Madrid Cómico* Sinesio Delgado to join the fray; Torregrosa reckoned that Delgado, a respected literary figure with nothing at stake in the fight, would be of value.[27] Torregrosa was correct. Both he and Delgado, along with Chapí, Carlos Arniches, and Joaquín Valverde (hijo), among others, would be founding members of the Sociedad de Autores Españoles (SAE) on 16 June 1899—the group that would bring about the fall of Fiscowich and establish modern copyright control in Spain.

Histories of Spanish music tend to create an image of a David-and-Goliath fight between the downtrodden but honest composers and the almost Satanic Fiscowich, who came to stand in for all the musical archivists. Much of the credit for this picture must go to Sinesio Delgado. He portrays Fiscowich, virtually wreathed in smoke and sulfur, "thinking about the orchestra material, and in a moment of happy inspiration doubtless said to himself: 'The rental of musical archives produces a regular profit, but it must be shared among many. Why should it not be for me alone?'"[28] In contrast, Chapí is portrayed as an "exceptional man with exaggerated altruism."[29] Neither is quite the case. The clash between the composers and the archivists was the logical consequence of the theatrical economics of the género chico at work. The impresarios and the archivists squeezed as much money from the composers as they could. But neither Chapí nor his fellow composers were true altruists: money was their main concern as well. In fact, many of Spain's legitimate

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[27] For Delgado's account of this, see his *Mi teatro: Cómo nació la Socedad de Autores* (1905; Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores, 1999), 71-72.
[28] Delgado, 66.
[29] Delgado, 69.

dramatists—among them Benito Pérez Galdos, José Echegaray, and Vicente Blascó Ibañez—were alarmed by the SAE and joined the Fiscowich camp: in June 1900, the archivist actually formed his own society of authors, claiming that the SAE's aim was to establish a business monopoly that would eventually reduce the royalties paid to writers even further. In the meantime, the SAE opened battle with Fiscowich by reducing their royalty administrative tariffs by half and offering to buy Fiscowich's archive from him. Fiscowich responded by setting his price at either one or two million pesetas, which the fledgling SAE could not afford.[30] Fiscowich had correctly identified the Achilles' heel of the SAE: they had no tangible assets.

This changed in the summer of 1901. Carlos Arniches had written a zarzuela entitled *Doloretes*, with music by Amadeo Vives and Manuel Quislant. It was scheduled to be premiered at the Teatro Apolo shortly before the theatre closed for the summer; not long before the first performance, the leading lady fell ill and Arniches refused to have the work be performed without her. Delgado seems to have realized how potentially important *Doloretes* could be to the future of the SAE: if it failed, the Apolo would close its doors for the summer and the main theatre operating in Madrid would be the Teatro Eldorado, which was a bastion of Fiscowich productions.[31] It is impossible to know just how much of this Delgado foresaw and how much he realized in retrospect—certainly, the narrative he supplies in his memoirs sounds a tad too well-scripted and dramatic to be fully plausible. Nevertheless, he claims to have cut

[30] Delgado, 91, claims the price was two million, the face value of all Fiscowich's publications then in circulation; Tusell, Gonzáles Peña, and Delgado Porras, 22-30, state the price was one million and that the SAE originally offered 500,000 pesetas.
[31] Delgado, 120-122.

short a cure in Bilbao and returned to Madrid to persuade Enrique Arregui and Luis Aruej, the impresarios of the Apolo, to keep the theatre open. Delgado claimed that nothing less than the future of the Spanish theatre was riding on the premiere of *Doloretes*:

> Who knows if you're going to lose or if you're going to win! Even if you lose, what does it matter? (Mute astonishment by Aruej over such foolishness.) Yes, what does it matter? The fortune of the Spanish theatre depends on the impresarios of the Apolo throwing a bunch of tickets into the street. We are in the heat of combat; the provincial theatrical companies will not be able to function within a few months if the question of the archives is not resolved soon; the bread of hundreds, of thousands of people depends on what is decided here, tonight… And that isn't all! With our victory will come an increase in theatrical productions, the growth in payments to authors… It isn't just your six thousand duros, Señores Arregui and Aruej, it is millions more you are gambling with![32]

Delgado's rhetoric made the premiere of *Doloretes* worth more than the 6,000 duros (30,000 pesetas) that the Apolo stood to lose if the summer season collapsed. He linked the production and the SAE with the livelihood of every single person working in the theatre in Spain. The SAE was the future, the body that could revitalize a moribund theatre and bring Spanish theatre into the twentieth century—and thus help to regenerate the nation.

Faced with such sweeping and apocalyptic oratory, Arregui and Aruej seemed to have had little choice but to agree. Delgado solved the problem of the ill actress with a tactic that prefigured those Warner Brothers backstage musicals of the 1930s: he had her understudy's name placed quite prominently on the advertising and then

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[32] Delgado, 129. One of the reasons this scene seems a touch implausible is that Arregui and Aruej were the same impresarios with whom Chapí had his quarrel in 1894 that precipitated the copyright battle in the first place. Delgado offers no explanation for their change of heart in the previous seven years.

went to great lengths to alert the star of this fact. She turned up at the dress rehearsal looking quite healthy.[33] *Doloretes* had a wildly successful premiere, and the Apolo did not close for the summer season. The success of this work, along with another piece by authors in the SAE stable, *El género ínfimo*, gave the fledgling organization some very significant assets for use in their negotiations with Fiscowich. Their success, which lasted well after the opening of the theatres in the fall for the 1901-1902 season, also had the benefit of depleting Fiscowich's income: the only shows turning a profit in Madrid were *Doloretes* and *El género ínfimo*. The archivist faced short term ruin and he agreed to sell his archive to the SAE for the sum of 300,000 pesetas. By early 1902, the SAE could claim victory and fully begin its avowed mission of protecting the rights of authors and composers to their own works.[34]

The SAE faced a number of problems in its early years: the press and certain authors lambasted it as being merely another private archive rather than a public entity, royalty payments regularly outstripped income, and there were a number of high profile employee thefts in Barcelona, Havana, and Buenos Aires.[35] Nevertheless, it was quite effective in its goals of maintaining the intellectual property rights of authors and composers. The SAE was also part of a larger professionalization of Spanish culture at the turn of the century that saw increased output and regulation of cultural entities such as the press and publishing houses.[36] Increased literacy and disposable income made such professionalization and organization both necessary and

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[33] Delgado 130-133.
[34] Tusell, Gonzáles Peña, and Delgado Porras, 22-30.
[35] On the early trials of the SAE, see Tusell, Gonzáles Peña, and Delgado Porras, 30-38.
[36] See Jean-François Botrel and Jean-Michel Desvois, "Las condiciones de la producción cultural," *1900 en España*, ed. Serge Salaün and Carlos Serrano (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1991), 33-58.

profitable for writers and composers. It is also exemplary of the attack on the entrenched elites in politics and the liberal professions that grew as the shortcomings of the Restoration system became plain in the 1890s.[37] Just as the regenerationist movement sought to sweep away the corruption in Spanish government that oppressed the authentic political voice of the population, the SAE sought to eliminate the corruption of the archivists that forced composers to work in conditions that demanded musical quantity. The SAE implicitly promised that composers could turn out works of musical quality, profit by them, and thus help to stop the decline of lyric theatre.

But at the same time that the SAE was protecting the artistic interests of zarzuela composers, new forms of popular music and popular culture were emerging. These new genres were not protected by the SAE; therefore, institutional frameworks like the SAE and Spain's new orchestras marked off composers as belonging to the elite world of artistic production; people looking for humble entertainment increasingly looked elsewhere. One of these new forms of popular culture was cabaret performance, which can be directly attributed to the second work that had given success to the SAE in the summer of 1901: *El género ínfimo* (The Negligible Genre), with a book by the Alvarez Quintero brothers and music by Quinito Valverde and Tomás Barrera. *El género ínfimo* was a satire on Spain's small but notorious music-hall culture. Music-hall and cabaret entertainment had not taken hold in Spain the way it had elsewhere in Europe until 1893 when a singer named Augusta Berges—of dubious and unknown nationality—arrived in Madrid as part of a variety show. She

[37] Enric Ucelay da Cal, "The Restoration: Regeneration and the Clash of Nationalisms, 1875-1914," *Spanish History Since 1808*, ed. José Alvarez Junco and Adridan Shubert (London: Arnold, 2000), 131-135.

secured her place in theatrical history by appearing in a solo spot in the show singing "La pulga" (The Flea), during the course of which she slowly stripped off her clothing in search of the titular insect. Cabaret performances grew rapidly in popularity in the following years.[38]

Cabaret gained in popularity over the género chico for many of the same reasons as the género chico had overtaken zarzuela grande in the 1880s. Cabaret performances could be staged more cheaply than theatrical shows, and even with smaller admissions charges impresarios could still make enormous profits. Sensing this potential, many younger composers and librettists turned to writing cabaret songs instead of theatrical works. Perhaps most importantly, cabaret songs were sexually explicit in a way few mainstream entertainments in Spain had ever been before. The performers were primarily women, usually dressed in revealing or racy clothing, singing songs with suggestive lyrics. Consider, for example, "El bombero" (The Fireman), first performed in 1904. The lyrics discuss a woman who is being rescued from a hotel fire. But when she sings the lines "he carried me to the divan / and I saw no more," it becomes quite clear that the titular fireman is actually quenching her flames of passion, not the flames threatening to destroy the building.[39] Not for nothing did cabaret owners announce that their shows were for men only.[40]

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[38] On the género ínfimo, see Serge Salaün, *El cuplé (1900-1936)* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1990) and Nancy J. Membrez, "The *teatro por horas*: History, Dynamics and Comprehensive Bibliography of a Madrid Industry, 1867-1922" (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987) 445-481.

[39] "Me llevó hasta el diván / y yo ya más no vi." "El bombero," lyrics by Eduardo Montesinos, as cited in Salaün, *El cuplé*, 216.

[40] Membrez, 451-452.

The overt sexuality of cabaret performances was more than just mere titillation, however. Cabaret and the music-hall have been traditionally viewed by scholars as places where the problems brought about by modern life have been negotiated and explored artistically. The sexuality of music-hall performances was a reflection of the ways in which society attempted to understand the new roles of women in an industrial, urbanized society. Primarily directed to a lower-class audience (and it is worth remembering that Augusta Berges' first performances took place in the working class neighborhood of Lavapiés), music-hall songs helped to construct a new identity for urban women in the face of the pressures of industrialization and urbanization.[41] More artistically "modern," cabaret also tried to deal with the dislocations of modern life: the increased tempo of modern life and its inherent shocks created the need for an art form with variety as opposed to the staid traditions of the standard theatre, born out of a slower-paced society. It also sentimentalized the lower classes for middle-class consumption, much as the género chico had done.[42] The distinction between cabaret in Spain and elsewhere in Europe is that it tended to blur class distinctions in a way not immediately evident in the music halls of London or the cabarets of Munich. In fact, Serge Salaün has argued that it was cabaret performances that were the main source of cross-class sociability in Spanish cities at the turn of the century.[43]

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[41] See Peter Bailey, *Popular Culture and Performance in the Victorian City* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998). Of course, it is worth remembering that while the performers were women, the audience was mostly male—as were the authors of the songs being sung. In other words, this presentation was hardly autonomous.

[42] Peter Jelavich, *Munich and Theatrical Modernism: Politics, Playwriting, and Performance, 1890-1914* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985), 160-185.

[43] See Salaün, *El cuplé*, 68-78.

In this endeavor, cabaret was aided by the second new form of popular culture: the cinema. The first movies in Spain were shown in May 1896 at the Hotel de Rusia in Madrid.[44] There was an almost immediate explosion of movie houses in the major cities, and film rapidly became a fixed part of the entertainment business. Movies were rarely shown alone; circus acts, novelty acts, and cabaret performances almost always accompanied cinema presentations. As early as October of 1896, the Teatro Apolo included film presentations in their género chico sections. Despite this, the audience for most early cinema was a popular one: the prices were low, and the hastily erected cinema buildings were flashy and elaborate in contrast to the staid interiors of the Apolo or the Zarzuela. The popularity of the cinema only increased after 1904 when established género chico theatres raised their prices in what seems to have been an attempt to improve the class of their clientele. Not surprisingly, the patrons of the seats in the upper balcony abandoned traditional theatres for the cheaper pleasures of the cinema.

As if the attraction of the género ínfimo and the cinema weren't enough of a problem for the género chico, the first decade of the twentieth century also saw increasing government regulation—or interference, depending on one's point of view—of the theatre, which further pushed theatre into the realm of elite culture. The main target of this regulation was the increasingly late curtain times for the fashionable sections of the género chico theatres. As a general rule, género chico theatres offered four performances (or sections) a night; curtain times were supposed

[44] For a brief history of the first decade of cinema in Spain see Membrez, 397-412, from which this paragraph draws its discussion.

to have been at 8.30, 9.30, 10.30, and 11.30. This never quite happened in reality. The first two time slots drew few patrons, who would only turn up at the theatre after dinner. Even then, as zarzuela historian José Deleito y Peñula has noted, "punctuality has never been firmly established as a Spanish or a Madrilenian virtue," and performances at the later sections would be delayed as patrons slowly drifted into the theatres.[45] This was especially true at the fashionable "cuarta de Apolo," which performed the most popular recent works for an audience that consisted of high society, politicians, the press, the literati, the business world, and the world of the arts. It was not uncommon for the curtain time of this final section at the Apolo to be delayed until 1.00AM in the morning—or even later. This meant that the theatres would not close until well after 2.00AM, making for some very late nights indeed.

Theatre laws that prohibited the operation of theatres after midnight or 12.30AM had been in effect since 1886, but were widely ignored. This lax enforcement might well have been due to the fact that many members of the late sections were themselves politicians and government functionaries, loath to curtail their own leisure pastimes. This changed in the aftermath of the Disaster of 1898. The government was desperate for money, and imposed taxes on the salaries paid to actors and on theatrical real estate. The government also attempted—yet again—to impose a midnight curfew that was ignored as all others had been.[46] A new government under the leadership of Conservative Prime Minister Antonio Maura imposed another curfew in 1904, which was enforced. The enforcement of the curfew

[45] Deleito y Peñuela, 178.
[46] Membrez, 508-510.

ended when the Liberals were returned to power in 1905, although they rapidly escalated the number of entertainment and theatrical taxes.[47] Then, in January 1907, Maura's government was returned to power and the curfew battle began in earnest.

Maura was the political heir to Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, who had been assassinated by an anarchist in 1897. Like Cánovas, Maura's primary goal was to preserve the stability of Spanish society and protect the basic outlines of the Restoration settlement. However, Maura was also forced to deal with the results of the Disaster of 1898 and the increasing calls for reform within the country. Maura did make an attempt at many reforms; however, these reforms were always top-down, initiated by the government with little consideration of public demands or public response.[48] He recognized the need to reform the Spanish political system, but was unwilling to accede to popular regenerationist demands in doing so. The theatrical curfew issue is a prime example of this. The curfews were tied to initiatives by Maura and his Minister of the Interior, Juan de la Cierva, to make governmental offices open at 9.00AM rather than 11.00AM, as had been the standard practice. Earlier theatrical curfews meant that people would be home and in bed earlier, and thus able to begin the business day at more productive hour. Maura and Cierva's hope was that businesses would follow suit; their overall goal was nothing than a renovation of Spanish life and customs that would rid the Spanish of unhealthy and unproductive

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[47] Membrez, 511-513.

[48] For the best short description of Maura's policies, see Raymond Carr, *Spain, 1808-1975*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1982), 477-489; for a more exhaustive version and biographical information, consult María Jesús González, *El universo conservador de Antonio Maura: Biografía y proyecto de Estado* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1997).

manners and habits—that their theatre-going habits would become more European.[49] The 1907 theatrical curfew law decreed that all theatrical shows must end by 12.30AM, and it was rigidly enforced. In an attempt to make up for lost revenue, theatres instituted what came to be called a "vermouth section" that played at 6.30 or 7.00PM in the evening—the idea being that the show, like vermouth, would provide a perfect pre-dinner aperitif. This new pattern of theatrical scheduling took hold so firmly that even after the Liberals returned to office in 1910, the new schedules stayed in place.

The Liberals increased taxes on theatres and theatrical enterprises even as they relaxed the enforcement of the curfew laws. By 1911, the surcharges on theatrical tickets had climbed to 15% of the price. This allowed the government to reduce taxes on food and alcohol, appealing to the popular classes for whom the theatre was no longer the main source of popular entertainment. Politics would again play a roll when the government raised theatrical taxes in 1917 to help offset rising food prices causing general public discontent; this forced a brief theatrical strike. Not only had ticket surcharges been pushed to 25%, but the government actively considered a tax on author royalties.[50] The problems with curfews and taxes display the tension inherent in Maura's top-down model of regeneration: both aimed to make Spanish theatre-going practices more European and enhance the productivity of the country in general. However, they were not based on popular demands for reform and thus engendered a significant amount of resentment. The taxes in particular also helped to exacerbate the

[49] González, *El universo conservador*, 182-188.
[50] Membrez, 516-520.

split between popular and high culture by making ticket prices unaffordable to a popular public.

By 1909 zarzuela was in a state of crisis that was only exacerbated in the following decade. No longer could the genre claim to be a popular one. Theatrical audiences were dwindling due to competition from the género ínfimo and the cinema. New laws and taxes helped to drive ticket prices out of the reach of some customers and significantly changed patterns of theatrical attendance. The deaths of mainstay composers like Fernández Caballero, Chueca, and Chapí further reinforced the idea that the glorious days of the género chico were at an end—a notion reinforced by the explicit link between the género chico and the Spanish nation. As the latter had taken a drubbing in 1898, the former suffered by association. The association that both theatre and nation were in decline was so strong that beginning in December 1908 *El Heraldo de Madrid* started to run a series of retrospective pieces on the premieres of some of the major works of the zarzuela repertory. This series, "Estrenos de antaño" (Premieres of Yesteryear), gave the historical background to the works, provided cast lists, reprinted lyrics, and published photographs of the composers, librettists, and actors. The series highlighted not only classic zarzuelas like *Jugar con fuego* and *Pan y toros*; it also featured important género chico works like *La gran vía* and *Cádiz*. The overall tone was one of nostalgia, that the glory days of zarzuela were a vanished epoch in history.[51] This sense was only reinforced by a fire at the Teatro de la Zarzuela on 8 November 1909.

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[51] The "Estrenos de ataño" in *El Heraldo de Madrid* included: "La Marsellesa," 14 December 1907; "Pan y toros," 25 January 1908; "Cádiz," 4 April 1908; "Jugar con fuego," 16 May 1908; "Fiesta

The history of the Teatro de la Zarzuela, in a sense, reflected the history of zarzuela in Spain: built to house the genre as it was reborn in the 1850s, its fortunes suffered along with the crisis of zarzuela grande in the 1880s and in the 1890s it became a género chico house with great success. The decline in the género chico after 1900 forced the impresarios to revamp the house again: it hosted cabaret performances, films, and even—at one low point that might have sent Barbieri spinning in his grave—wrestling matches.[52] In any event, the fire (whose origin was never determined) gutted the interior of the theatre, destroyed numerous sets, costumes, and musical instruments; more importantly, it seemed to have destroyed a symbol of the Spanish nation. As *El Liberal* stated: "For what it was and what it signified in the history of Spanish lyric art, the coliseum that was devoured by flames in only a few short hours could be described as a most fateful omen of national catastrophe. … Yesterday's fire has not destroyed "just another theatre." Within a few minutes, the flames had devoured the temple where the national lyric art, Spanish Zarzuela, was born and lived."[53] The fire was, in essence, the final blow to what had been a slow and painful decline in the quality and very nature of Spanish lyric art.[54] Not only that, but there was an explicit feeling in all the reports on the fire that the theatre was a stand-in for Spain itself. Both nation and its lyric representation were in decline, and the destruction of the home of modern zarzuela only confirmed this.

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nacional," 20 July 1908; "La canción de la Lola," 2 October 1908; "Los diamantes de la corona," 6 November 1908; and "La gran vía," 4 December 1908.

[52] See *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 28 May 1906. The paper noted, perhaps defensively, that the public was "passionate about fighting" ("apasionado de lucha").

[53] "El incendio de ayer: El Teatro de la Zarzuela, destruido," *El Liberal*, 9 November 1909.

[54] See also "Incendio del Teatro de la Zarzuela," *ABC*, 9 November 1909, 11-13 and "El incendio de la Zarzuela," *El Imparcial*, 9 November 1909.

By the end of 1909, the state of zarzuela (and of the género chico in particular) mirrored what many saw in Spanish society as a whole: both were moribund entities that required rejuvenation and regeneration. The calls for the regeneration of Spain, as we have seen, had started even before the Disaster of 1898 and had only increased in the early years of the twentieth century. Certainly, the potential regeneration of the theatre had some very strong bases: a new generation of highly trained composers, an increasingly sophisticated musical infrastructure, and a new organization to protect the rights of authors and composers. All that was lacking was the spark that would regenerate zarzuela. As Miguel de Unamuno and many of his fellow regenerationists suspected, that spark would come from Europe and not from within Spain itself. What was completely unexpected is that the saviors of zarzuela took the forms of a giddy heiress and a foppish aristocrat who was not aware of whom exactly he had married.

Salvation from Vienna

As noted above, the importation of *The Merry Widow* to Madrid in 1909 was, in a certain sense, viewed as simply the importation of another foreign hit in the vein of Suppé's *Boccaccio* or the French farce *Miss Helyet*. It received mixed reviews, with the critics praising the music but taking broad swipes at the libretto. There was even a sense that there was something a little decadent and frivolous about the work, as Floridor noted in *ABC*: "It does not lack—we are the midst of operetta—cuckolded spouses [*maridos buriados*], good humored people, amorous traps in the pavilion of a garden, gallants, little adventures and other side-arms that decorate the fundamental

action."[55] Here the term operetta is used to denote frivolity and a certain lack of dramatic construction in the plot. Especially noteworthy is his use of the phrase "side-arms" to denote what seem to be deviations from the main plot of the work. Spanish zarzuelas, by contrast, tended to have one single plot line; supporting characters did not have their own independent sub-plots as they did in *The Merry Widow*. (This singularity of plot was true both of full-length zarzuelas as well as the género chico.) Floridor uses the term "operetta" to denote a certain theatrical decadence—foreign and exotic. But it was this sense of foreignness about operetta that would allow it to become a force for regeneration. The plot might have been silly, but it was foolishness of a European order—and could thus be taken seriously in a way Spanish foolishness would not have been.

Still, operetta initially had a somewhat mixed reaction when it arrived in Spain, especially from Spanish composers. Amadeo Vives (who would within a few years would become one of the masters of Spanish-style operetta) groused about *The Merry Widow* and its popularity. In an essay that probably dates from about 1910 entitled "Hora de angustia o *La viuda alegre*" (The Hour of Anguish, or *The Merry Widow*), Vives sets out to have a serious conversation about Spanish opera and Wagner with a friend.[56] Unfortunately, Vives is driven to distraction and cannot make a firm declaration on the subject because no matter where he and his friend go, café orchestras are playing selections from *The Merry Widow*. The essay concludes with

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[55] Floridor, "Los estrenos," *ABC*, 9 February 1909, 10.

[56] At one point, Vives mentions in passing he is about to premiere an opera, which allows us to date the article to 1910, the year his *Colomba* premiered at the Teatro Real in Madrid. The essay is reprinted in Amadeo Vives, *Sofía* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1973), 135-141.

an amusingly prescient vignette. Vives encounters another friend, a pawnbroker, who wants to lend Léhar some music scores at 25 percent interest. The humor lies in the fact that Vives' friend does not realize that Léhar is not a resident of Madrid (nor, for that matter, is the Emperor Franz Josef, to whom Vives ultimately refers his friend). The popularity of *The Merry Widow* overrode any basic questions of whether or not the composer was Spanish. It was this instant familiarity of Viennese operetta music that would prove to be the key to integrating it into Spanish theatre.

Whatever the reservations about Léhar's first work, critical evaluations underwent a rapid reversal with the premiere of his next operetta to appear in Madrid, *The Count of Luxembourg*. In terms of the libretto, *The Count* indulges in a plot mechanism so outré it would seem to be an operetta parody: the central lovers are not aware they are, in fact, already married. (It was a wedding of convenience, and there was a screen between them during the ceremony. Only after this do they meet and fall in love.) The plot—for once—does not seem to have bothered the Madrid critics; instead, they were completely bowled over by Léhar's music. *El Heraldo de Madrid* actually went so far as to compare Léhar to Mozart and Beethoven.[57] José Juan Cádenas, in a piece for *ABC*, went further. The day of the premiere, he called the work "almost an opera" and humorously declared he would not be surprised to hear of the company of the Teatro Eslava mounting a Requiem Mass in the days to come.[58]

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[57] S.-A., "Eslava: El Conde de Luxemburgo," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 20 October 1910. One wonders what Beethoven would have made of this comparison; Mozart probably would not have been bothered by it.

[58] José Juan Cádenas, "*ABC* en Madrid: El conde de Luxemburgo," *ABC*, 19 October 1910, 3.

Cádenas' article seems to have been the piece that introduced the notion that Viennese operetta could save the flagging fortunes of the Spanish lyric stage. The Teatro Eslava was one of the houses that had turned to cabaret performances in the first decade of the twentieth century. In staging *The Count of Luxembourg*, Cádenas noted, "It isn't that the Eslava is regenerating, it is that they have modified and are cultivating a genre that exists everywhere and there is no reason why we should not know it here. What is happening in the theatre is what is happening in books and newspapers: everything can be said, on the condition it is well said."[59] Although rejecting the idea that this particular work was somehow a regenerating force, he still manages to talk about the piece with all the essential terms of regeneration: it is something that is unknown in Spain but ought to be, because it can raise the overall quality of Spanish life. It is well done, and that should be the only criteria for its production. A large portion of Cádenas' piece—which was more advance publicity for Léhar's work rather than an actual review—was devoted to pointing out the triumphal reception of *The Count of Luxembourg* across Europe and America, essentially stating that it was about time the work should come to Madrid. Admittedly, Cádenas was hardly unbiased in the matter: he was the translator and adaptor of the original German text to the work.

Cádenas also makes clear exactly why *The Count of Luxembourg* was needed in Madrid. He posed the question of whether the actors who would perform in the work would be up to the task of interpreting such a sophisticated piece of stagecraft: "Our artists, in general, lack flexibility... They are typecast [*achulapados*] and

[59] Cádenas, "*ABC en Madrid*," 3.

stultified… Authors have been dedicated, for the last twenty years, to present on stage wiseacres [*chulos*] and hicks, and naturally, the repertory has made the artists…"[60] The fundamental weakness of the teatro por horas system as practiced in Madrid in the 1890s was the formulaic quality of most of the works. Since only certain types of shows were popular and made money, only those types were written. As a result, actors and actresses only perfected their stagecraft (such as it was, Cádenas hints) in performing those types of works. In reviewing the performers who would star in the Léhar operetta, Cádenas noted that their qualifications were of the highest caliber: one actress had gained the personal approval of Maestro Léhar himself. In addition, Cádenas had only praise for Vicente Lleó, who would conduct the orchestra and arranged the music for the Madrid production.[61] He called Lleó a true artist who had lost as many fortunes as he had made in the theatre and set Lleó in direct opposition to the theatrical impresarios whose only concern was the bottom line and not the development of true art. Cádenas saw in the entire production of *The Count of Luxembourg* a way to redeem the economic basis of the Spanish theatrical system and infuse it with a more artistic product.

Cádenas was also apt in picking out Lleó as one of the driving forces behind the lure of Viennese operetta. Not only was the Valencian-born composer soon to become one of the foremost adapters of foreign operetta for the Spanish stage, he was

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[60] Cádenas, "*ABC* en Madrid," 4. The term "chulo" in the original is a more-or-less untranslatable term referring to a specific stereotype of the lower-class citizen of Madrid as a cocky and self-assured, street-smart character—not unlike the Cockney stereotype in England.

[61] Cádenas notes that Lleó had interpolated two numbers of his own into *The Count of Luxembourg*; this was anything but an unusual practice—both in Spain and elsewhere. (Jerome Kern, for example, spent most of his early career interpolating numbers in British operettas that were imported to the United States.)

also one of the first to try and unite zarzuela with European operetta. Lleó's *La corte de Faraón* (The Pharaoh's Court), with a libretto by Guillermo Perrín and Miguel de Palacios, manages to join the parodic tradition of the género chico, the racy humor of cabaret songs, operatic pastiche, and Viennese waltzes into an enticing package that was equally influential as *The Merry Widow* or *The Count of Luxembourg* in bringing continental Europe to Madrid. The plot is a parody of the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife as recounted in the book of Genesis, chapter 39. In the Perrín-Palacios version, Potiphar's wife—here named Lota—is a sexually frustrated virgin: her husband cannot consummate their marriage because of a battle wound.[62] Bawdy humor is the order of the day here, accentuated by Joseph's increasingly frantic protestations that he is "chaste Joseph," and the work climaxes in a scene omitted from the Biblical version where Lota and the Queen of Egypt try to seduce Joseph simultaneously.

Literary parodies were a common sub-genre of the género chico, although they usually tended to parody popular stage hits of the day. These had a rather short shelf-life; only *La corte de Faraón* has entered the zarzuela canon, primarily due to enduring popularity of the parodied text. Lleó also incorporated parodic elements into the music as well. Much of the first scene of *Faraón* is a send-up of Verdi's *Aïda*, specifically the Act II triumphal sequence. If Lleó's use of trumpet fanfares and rising string figures failed to tip off audiences to the nature of the parody, the chorus singing

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[62] Although not explicit, the text suggests that Potiphar may even have been castrated: his servant Selha notes that he "teniendo tan grave herida… / después de la operación… / se casa con esa niña?" ("He had such a grave wound… / after the operation… / he'll marry that girl?") See 1.ii in the libretto, published in Vicente Lleó, *La corte de Faraón*, ed. Josep Soler (Madrid: ICCM, 1997).

"Ritorna vincitor!" surely must have.[63] However, most of the critics chose to ignore this aspect of the music and focus on other numbers. Most commented heavily on the "Canción babilonica" (Babylonian Song) from the third scene of the play. These couplets, sung by a secondary character, are essentially a comic diversion; their slightly risqué humor betrays the influence of cabaret songs in Lleó's work—and in fact, the "Canción babilonica" quickly became separated from its dramatic context and became a staple of Spanish cabaret performances. As *La Época* had predicted, "we will hear it soon everywhere."[64]

However, it was not just opera and Spanish song traditions that Lleó melded into his score. *La corte de Faraón* also has two waltzes that betray Léhar's influence. The first is sung by three widows giving marital advice to Lota (No. 3 in the vocal score). The parodic element rears its head again: the idea of widows giving this sort of advice was doubtless inspired by *The Merry Widow* itself. The Léhar operetta had itself been the direct target of a parody, *La Viuda mucho más alegre* (The Much More Merry Widow); in any event, Lleó, Perrín, and Palacios gleefully mined this vein as well.[65] To the strains of a waltz, the three widows advise Lota to submit herself to her husband. To modern ears, there is a certain amount of double-entendre in the lyrics, though it is impossible to determine how much of this was intended by Perrín and Palacios.[66] The second waltz in Lleó's score, the "Vals del juicio" (Justice Waltz, No.

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[63] "Ritorna vincitor!" is one of the most famous arias from *Aïda*, although in the Verdi opera it is a solo aria for Aïda, not a chorus as in Lleó's version.

[64] "Los teatros," *La Época*, 24 January 1910.

[65] See Joseph Soler's introduction to the ICCM vocal score of *La corte de Faraón*, xiii or xvi.

[66] How else is one to interpret lyrics like "Es muy duro/y molesto, yo te lo aseguro, / … / el derecho que tiene el marido / sobre la mujer" ("It is very hard / and bothersome, I assure you, / … / the right a husband has / over his wife") (2.i)?

6 in the vocal score), features the attempted seduction of Joseph by both the Queen of Egypt and Lota. Although it is unclear if Lleó and his librettists were attempting to suggest a biblical ménage à trois here, we can see a pattern emerging. Lleó uses the Viennese waltz as a way of reinforcing the sexual element in *La corte de Faraón*. It unites the tradition of bawdy humor of cabaret and the género chico with the new musical strains of Silver Age operetta. It is probably this, as much as anything, that helped to pave the way for Léhar's operettas in Madrid and made the reception of *The Count of Luxembourg* even more rapturous than that of *The Merry Widow*. Still, Lleó had not fully integrated the new elements from Vienna into the Spanish theatrical tradition. That would be left for the other main adaptor of European operettas, the composer Pablo Luna.

Luna's career trajectory conforms to the new generation of composers. Born in Zarzagoza province, he studied music at a provincial conservatory and then gained practical experience playing in a theatre orchestra. He had moved to Madrid in 1905 and scored a minor hit in 1908 with *Musetta*—yet another adaptation of the novel that had inspired Puccini's *La bohème*.[67] The work that cemented both Luna's fame and the vogue for operetta *à la española* was *Molinos de viento* (Windmills), a tragic love triangle set in a fairy-tale version of Holland with more wooden shoes and tulips than even Vermeer ever dreamed of. Capitán Alberto, a prince from one of those imaginary Central European countries that form a large part of the geography of operetta, has washed ashore on the Dutch coast and fallen in love with his nurse, the beautiful Margarita, who is in turn loved by Romo. As he has never had the courage

[67] See Angel Sagardía, *Pablo Luna* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1978), 15-25.

to declare his love, Romo gets Alberto to teach him how to sing in order to win her. At this point, the plot takes a detour through *Cyrano de Bergerac* territory; and the play ends with Alberto sailing away, Margarita pining for him, and Romo realizing that Margarita will never love him.

The real attraction of the work, however, was the music. The critics viewed it as fresh and original, which in many ways is rather astonishing. For the most part, the score alternates between music in a 2/4 march time and music in a 3/4 waltz time in the manner of the moribund género chico.[68] No matter; it was the waltzes that attracted the attention of the audience, especially as Luna had orchestrated them with a Viennese gloss, with more emphasis on the strings and less on the percussion than the typical Spanish waltz orchestration of the 1890s. This in turn placed more emphasis on the waltz's lyricism and its intrinsically musical qualities, instead of the functional dance-music approach to the form favored by the género chico. *ABC* decreed that Luna had written "numbers worthy of being signed by Léhar, Fall, [Oscar] Strauss and other princes of operetta."[69] *Molinos de viento* also doubtless benefited from the proximity of *The Count of Luxembourg*, which had opened shortly before the premiere of Luna's work and at the same theatre where the Dutch treat was playing.[70] In fact, the conjunction of *Molinos de viento*, *La corte de Faraón*, and *The Count of Luxembourg* helped to save the Teatro Eslava from financial disaster, just as they were

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[68] See Pablo Luna, *Molinos de viento: Opereta en un acto* (1935; Madrid: Unión Musical Española, 1973).

[69] "Eslava: Molinos de viento," *ABC*, 4 February 1911, 12.

[70] The temporal conjunction is even closer than it appears: *Molinos de viento* was the first major zarzuela to receive its premiere production outside Madrid, opening at the Teatro Cervantes in Seville on 2 October 1910—two weeks before *The Count of Luxembourg* opened in Madrid. Clearly, Luna was not riding the coattails of a trend, but was forming part of it.

poised to save Spanish theatre from artistic ruin: the three works shared the evening bills at the Eslava for well over a year, usually with the Léhar work playing the early evening "vermouth" sections and the Spanish works alternating the late evening spots.

La Correspondencia de España suggested exactly why *Molinos de viento* was so important: it was, the reviewer claimed, "an operetta with the cut of classic Spanish zarzuela."[71] Luna's work had merged Viennese operetta with traditional zarzuela to form something that was fresh and new. Even if the plot sounds hackneyed today, it was viewed by the critics of the day as suitably theatrical and entertaining. And the Viennese gloss that so enraptured the critics does add a certain freshness and refinement to what might otherwise be a merely workmanlike score. Indeed, it seemed to point the way towards more sophisticated scores and plots that were at least not reliant on the same continual stereotypes as the género chico. The following year, a review of Amadeo Vives' *La Generala* (The General's Wife) suggested that Viennese operetta had actually advanced Spanish stagecraft to an astonishing degree: "Score and book are wrapped in the aristocratic prestige of Art."[72] Nobody had ever suggested that the género chico was art with a capital "A"; operetta seemed to have rescued Spanish theatre from the crudely capitalist machinations of the género chico and restored notions of art to the theatre—something that had not been seen in quite some time. If the increasing divide between popular culture and high culture had made zarzuela irrelevant as popular entertainment, European elements could make it respectable.

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[71] M. de Z., "Los teatros," *La Correspondencia de España*, 4 February 1911, 6.
[72] In *Comedias y comediantes*, July 1912.

For what European operetta actually meant to Spanish theater, we must move forward six years to the premiere of *El niño judío* (The Jewish Boy), which chronicles the misadventures of three Spaniards traveling through the exotic East: "It is one of those fantastic trips that seems to have been written by the enemies of the Cook Agency," as one reviewer put it.[73] The ostensible plot—a search by Samuel, the Jewish boy of the title, for his rich father so he can marry Concha—is a mere thread on which to hang a series of exotic tableaus and Pablo Luna's vaguely orientalist score. The work itself received mixed reviews, although these usually had more positive than negative things to say about the piece. The music was praised; the libretto was felt to be amusing, if episodic (*ABC* termed it "extremely funny" as well as "arbitrary and incoherent").[74] Every review singled out a number from the second act as the highlight of the work: Concha's "Canción española," which created such a stir that at least one review focused almost entirely on this one song alone.[75]

Part of the attraction of this song is the fact that musically it is unlike anything in Luna's score. The other numbers in *El niño judío* are a professional mix of operetta melodies (such as Manacor's song from Act I—a Viennese waltz) and oriental exotica (stereotypically Indian dances and so forth); but the "Canción española" sounded quintessentially Spanish to its first audiences. As the reviewer for *El Sol* described that first performance: "Miss Leonís decides to sing, accompanied by the guitar, a little number that ably mixes original airs from Andalucia and Madrid. The

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[73] A., "Veladas teatrales," *La Época*, 6 February 1918. The Cook Agency was one of the first modern travel agents in Europe.
[74] See Floridor, "Notas teatrales," *ABC*, 6 Februrary 1918.
[75] Leopoldo Bejarano, "Los estrenos," *El Liberal*, 6 February 1918.

association of granadinas and of seguidillas was realized quite well by the singer, and the audience acclaimed her unanimously. … The song was repeated three times, and the entire work was held up by this solid foundation."[76] The "Canción española" is easily the most inspired number in the score, and J.A. scarcely exaggerates in declaring that the song saved *El niño judío* from oblivion. But the "Canción española" displays a very self-conscious sense of Spanish identity. The scene, with a beautiful young woman accompanying herself on a guitar while singing gypsy melodies, is the sort of thing that almost automatically comes to mind when trying to think of Spanish clichés. The central portion of the song, which features stereotypical references to "black eyes," flowers, and gypsy shawls, makes one wonder if the librettists were actually trying to parody the genre of "Spanish song." If they were, it would seem the humor went right over the heads of the critics.

In another sense however, the "Canción española" sums up an entire decade's worth of zarzuela scores and the aspirations for incorporating European operetta into the zarzuela canon. The specifically Spanish dance forms of the granadinas and the seguidillas that make up the musical fabric of the number become just two more dance forms in a score full of exotic music. Even more importantly, consider the import of the words that open the song:

> I am Spanish, from Spain I come.
> In my eyes I bring the light of her skies
> and in my body, the grace of her womanhood.
> I am Spanish, from Spain I come
> and my brown face proclaims

[76] J.A., "Los estrentos de ayer," *El Sol*, 6 February 1918.

that I was born in Spain, to where I am returning.[77]

It is a most emphatic declaration of the singer—and the song's—Spanish identity. But in the middle of a cosmopolitan score built heavily on a base of Viennese operetta, such assertions of *españolismo* take on a slightly different tinge. It is a forthright musical assertion that while the specific song may be specifically Spanish, the wider context—the score as a whole—is Spanish as well: consider especially the import of the last line. Operetta came to Spain and became Spanish. What started out as foreign became part of the necessary musical fabric of Spanish identity.

Another Night at the Opera

The rise of Viennese operetta was not the only force that sought to regenerate the Spanish stage in the years following 1910. Opera, which might have seemed a rather mute art form in Spain following the ascendance of zarzuela as the authentic form of nationalist lyric theatre in the 1880s, actually made something of a comeback. The reintegration of opera into mainstream Spanish lyric theatre was a parallel to the incorporation of Viennese operetta. Opera became associated with new, modernist trends in European music, which were seen by many composers and music critics to have the same potential to regenerate Spanish music as operetta did. Opera came to influence the composition of many zarzuelas written in the decade following 1910. As the line between zarzuela and opera that had been set up in the 1880s became increasingly blurred, it helped to legitimize Spanish lyric theatre in general as a force

[77] "De España vengo, soy española. / En mis ojos me traigo la luz de su cielo / y en mi cuerpo la gracia de la manola. / De España vengo, de España soy / y mi cara serran va pregonando / que he nacido en España por donde voy." Enrique García Alvarez and Antonio Paso, *El niño judío*, II.1.

for regeneration; however, it helped to further widen the gap that separated popular culture from high culture in Spain by pushing zarzuela ever more firmly into the high culture camp.

The opera revival in Spain dates from 1907. It was in this year that the composers Vicente Lleó and Amadeo Vives, shocked by what they considered to be the decline of the Madrid theatrical system, pooled the resources of three theatres to form what became known as the "Theatrical Trust," which was a direct reference to a similar cartel of newspapers that had banded together in order to unseat Maura as prime minister.[78] The original idea was that each theatre in the Trust would focus on developing a different aspect of the lyric repertoire. The Teatro Cómico was to specialize in género ínfimo performances, the Teatro Eslava in género chico, and the Teatro de la Zarzuela in—significantly—both zarzuela grande and opera. Although *ópera española* was a possibility, Vives initially decided to present foreign opera in Spanish translation—a throwback to Bretón's notions that language was all it took to make an opera nationalist. If the idea was worthy, the execution was not: reviewing the Trust's first operatic production, Puccini's *La Bohème*, one reviewer was forced to call the translation "abominable."[79] The Trust broke up during the summer of 1908: the profits on performances from the Teatros Cómico and Eslava were funneled into the lavish but under-attended spectaculars at the Zarzuela, and this eventually

[78] Some of this is summarized from Membrez, 486-87. Ascertaining exact dates and data regarding the Trust is frustratingly difficult. Membrez, for example, asserts that the Trust began operation in the fall of 1906 (based primarily Hérnadez Girbal's biography of Vives, one of those works whose data must be treated with a certain amount of suspicion); I can find no references in the press to the Trust earlier than 1907.

[79] Antonio Garrido, "Teatro de la Zarzuela," *La Ilustración Española y Americana*, 30 September 1907.

bankrupted the organization. Lleó would eventually recoup his losses—he remained as impresario of the Eslava—but Vives would eventually lose his shirt trying to revive opera and zarzuela grande at the Teatro de la Zarzuela.

The episode of the Theatrical Trust indicates that increasingly, the zarzuela grande form was being considered as an "operatic" genre. As noted in Chapter I, the form had never been that far distanced from opera to begin with; and in the wake of the incorporation of the género chico as the primary mode of zarzuela production, the old zarzuela grande was losing its role as popular theatre. It was entering the canon of Spanish art, to be performed perhaps more out of respect than out of true popularity. The Trust had been set up to reform Spanish theatre, but it is indicative that Vives and Lleó felt the need to separate off zarzuela grande as a form that required more respectful treatment than it had been getting in the hands of impresarios. They seemed to have wanted to use opera and zarzuela grande as one tool to solve the problem in the decline of the género chico; but the only solution they could come up with was to further isolate these sub-genres of zarzuela from each other by associating zarzuela grande ever more solidly with opera.

In the wake of the operetta craze, opera would make its most serious effort at integrating itself into Spanish musical life and becoming a force to revitalize the theatre. Just as operetta melodies worked their way into the scores of the género chico, operatic music and tropes began to turn up in full-length and more ambitious zarzuelas. As we have seen, the notion that a theatre piece was "operatic" might not necessarily work against that play: such was the case with *The Count of Luxembourg*.

Opera española might have been dead in the water, but opera itself still retained a certain amount of musical power. Indeed, opera's foreign identity—the very thing that had destroyed its chances of its becoming the authentic form of Spanish lyric drama in the 1870s and 1880s—now became a positive virtue. Since opera was not Spanish, it had a greater possibility of reforming Spanish theatre. Opera was not Spanish, it was European.

One of the key figures who helped insert operatic tropes into zarzuela was the Catalan composer Amadeo Vives. His first major zarzuela was *Don Lucas del Cigarral*, staged in 1899.[80] *Don Lucas*, in many ways, is exemplary of Vives' career to come. It was a full-length zarzuela grande, staged at the height of the género chico's popularity. Vives further ensured the pedigree of his first work by having a classic seventeenth century Spanish comedy adapted as his libretto, Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla's *Entre bobos anda el juego* (A Game Played Between Fools). Vives' music for *Don Lucas* also indicates high purpose, even in what was the middle of a farcitical comedy: like the zarzuela seria of old, Vives indulges in sextets and concertante finales that spin out over extended periods of time, not the rapid and simple musical forms of the género chico.[81]

It is not accidental that Vives had started his theatrical career as an opera composer—his first opera, *Arthus*, received critical praise (if not public acclaim) in

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[80] Tomás Luceño and Carlos Fernández-Shaw, *Don Lucas del Cigarral: Zarzuela en tres actos* (Madrid: R. Velasco, 1899).

[81] See Vives' vocal score, *Don Lucas del Cigarral: Zarzuela en tres actos* (Madrid: Pablo Martin, n.d.): although this particular version has limited usefulness—it is a piano reduction that never directly indicates where the vocal line is—the music's complexity can be seen especially in No. 1 (the opening sextet) and No. 13 (a septet that evolves into a concertante number).

Barcelona—and he would at various points in his life return to the form. But more often than not, he would use several tricks from his operatic composition bag and insert them into more modest stage works. One of the best examples of this occurs in his 1904 género chico piece *Bohemios* (still another adaptation of Murger's *Scènes de la vie de Bohème*). Most commentators on the work tend to treat it as a forerunner of the post-1910 operetta invasion, as indeed in many ways it is.[82] However, the work also has striking similarities to opera, from its Verdian prelude (which alternates brass and timpani with lyrical string passages) to its skillful intermingling of duets, quartets, and choruses. In fact, the entire score does not have a single solo vocal number.[83] Admittedly, much of these individual pieces are foreshortened in a way they would not be in opera—Vives had only forty minutes to cover the same amount of musical ground that Puccini's *La bohème* covered in two hours—but their complexity is still far beyond what was traditional in the género chico.

But Vives' attempts to meld opera into the zarzuela fold are best represented by his 1914 work *Maruxa*. The libretto by Luis Pascual Frutos is ridiculously inane, even by operetta standards. It revolves around amorous intrigues set among shepherds and their masters in the Galician countryside, and can be best summed up by its opening sequence, which features the title shepherdess singing how much she loves her … favorite sheep. Maruxa asks:

> Little sheep as white
> as my dreams.

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[82] See, for example, Carlos Gómez Amat's "*Bohemios*, zarzuela peculiar" in the liner notes to the Auvidis Valois recording of *Bohemios*, conducted by Antoni Ros Marbà.

[83] See the vocal score: Amadeo Vives, *Bohemios: Zarzuela en un acto* (1935; Madrid: Unión Musical Española, 1971).

> Isn't it true you love me
> as I love you?[84]

The disappearance of this sheep later becomes a major plot point in the first act finale, and Maruxa is arguably far more enamored of it than she is of either Pablo or Antonio, the suitors for her hand. Most reviews overlooked the libretto, presumably on the assumption that if one cannot say anything nice about something, one should not say anything at all: as *La Correspondencia de España* stated, "the book … has not even the least minor literary importance, and there is no reason to be occupied with it. That is the most charitable thing we can do in this case."[85] Zarzuela expert Roger Alier asserts that even Vives privately laughed at the libretto.[86]

Perhaps the very nature of the libretto drove Vives when he composed the score, as if to prove one could have a work in which score and libretto were diametric opposites. *Maruxa*'s music is charmingly gorgeous, and all contemporary critics were enraptured by Vives' melodic imagination. The critics for *ABC* and *El Imparcial* went so far as to compare the Catalan composer with Beethoven for having captured "that ingenious sentiment of Nature."[87] But what is most striking about the reviews is the natural assumption that *Maruxa* was most emphatically an opera. The official subtitle of the work is either "lyric comedy" (*comedia lírica*) or "lyric eclogue" (*égloga*

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[84] "Ovejita tan blanca / como mis sueños. / ¿No es verdad que me quieres / como te quiero?" Luis Pascual Frutos, *Maruxa*, I.i.

[85] X., "Los teatros: Maruxa," *La Correspondencia de España*, 29 May 1914.

[86] Roger Alier, *La zarzuela* (Barcelona: Ma Non Troppo, 2002), 469. Part of the problem with the libretto might arise from the fact that originally *Maruxa* was supposed to be a one-act work and was expanded to a full-length evening only after Vives received it. See S.A., "La vida escénica," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 29 May 1914.

[87] "Los estrenos," *ABC*, 29 May 1914, 15. See also Eduardo Muñoz, "Teatro de la Zarzuela," *El Imparcial*, 30 May 1914.

lírica), depending upon the source.[88] While Vives had staged previous attempts at opera in opera houses, the premiere of *Maruxa* was at the Teatro de la Zarzuela—an ambiguous choice, perhaps, given the amount of operatic activity that had gone on there, but one indicative of an attempt to place the new work as a zarzuela nonetheless. Still, most of the reviews ran under the assumption that the work was an opera: *ABC* opened its review with the rhetorical question "Are all of you talking about Spanish opera?" and the other major papers followed suit.[89]

Certainly the work sounds like an opera. It is through composed, and the vocal score lacks the traditional division into discreet numbers that most zarzuelas have.[90] If overall length is perhaps a tad short (most full-length recordings run just shy of two hours, making the work only marginally longer than Richard Strauss' *Salome* or *Elektra*) and the vocal lines are no more demanding in terms of tessitura than is traditional in zarzuela, the leading singers are onstage and singing for virtually that entire time span.[91] Traditional zarzuela music requires only short moments of song—broken up by dialogue—from its performers. The score also contains the complex ensembles that were a hallmark of Vives' compositions. But while the work was operatic in scope, it did not lose that main prerequisite of national lyric drama—music that sounded nationalistic to its listeners. Vives "has not forgotten that popular music reveals to us only a nuance of lyric emotion ... through personal emotions."[92] It was

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[88] The 1915 vocal score uses the former, while most editions of the libretto use the latter.
[89] "Los estrenos," *ABC*, 29 May 1914, 15.
[90] See Amadeo Vives, *Maruxa: Comedia lírica en dos actos* (Madrid: Unión Musical Española, 1915).
[91] It may be worth noting in this regard that Maruxa was one of the few zarzuela roles recorded by Monserrat Caballé during the height of her operatic career.
[92] S.A., "La vida escénica," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 29 May 1914.

this ability to blend folkloric sounding music (which may well all have been in Vives' orchestrations: the critic Eduardo Muñoz commented heavily on the use of bagpipes in the orchestra, for example) with the more intense emotions generated by operatic music that made *Maruxa* so noteworthy.[93] The operatic element helped to save zarzuela's folk music element from the clichés of the género chico.

But 1914 had been a very good year for operatic zarzuelas, as Frank Sinatra might have sung. February had seen the premiere of what is inarguably the most operatic zarzuela ever written, José María Usandizaga's *Las Golondrinas* (The Swallows). In fact, the composer's brother Ramón would later adapt the zarzuela into a full-fledged opera by adding recitative in Acts I and II—as well as rewriting approximately half of Act III. It is this version that is the standard performing version today: the two major recordings of the score are of the operatic performing version, as are the two published versions of the vocal score.[94] Usandizaga was no stranger to opera: his first major work and calling card was *Mendi-Mendiyan*, a work from Basque folklore with Basque musical themes that had been premiered in San Sebastian in 1910.[95] And very shortly after the wildly successful premiere of *Las Golondrinas*, he would start to work on a second Basque-themed opera, *La Llama*—although this work was cut short by the composer's tragically early death in 1915.

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[93] For Muñoz's comments, see his review in *El Imparcial*, 30 May 1914.

[94] José Maria Usandizaga, *Las Golondrinas: Drama lírico en tres actos* (San Sebastián: Casa Erviti, n.d.) is a piano score; for the full score, see José Maria Usandizaga and Ramón Usandizaga, *Las Golondrinas: Opera en tres actos*, ed. Ramón Lazkano (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1999). The fact that the ICCM chose the operatic version for their published version would seem to indicate that this is the standard performing edition.

[95] For the background to *Medi-Mendiyan*, see José Montero Alonso, *Usandizaga* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1985), 38-43.

Usandizaga was arguably the most formidably trained of the crop of composers that came of age between 1900 and 1920 in Spain. He had the most extensive training abroad of this group, studying composition at the famed Schola Cantorum in Paris under the composers Vincent d'Indy and Paul Dukas from 1900 to 1906. In spite of the ingrained conservatism of both d'Indy and his academy, Usandizaga had some fairly advanced tastes in music for the first decade of the century: Puccini, Debussy, Ravel, Mussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov—all of which can be heard in Usandizaga's music (and all of which irritated d'Indy, who was otherwise pleased with his pupil's development).[96] The budding composer also made the acquaintance of Isaac Albéniz, who resided in Paris during this period. The young composer was thus well prepared when writer Gregorio Martínez Sierra approached him with a libretto that bore more than passing overtones to *Pagliacci*—a murderous love triangle among *commedia dell'arte* players.

What astonished the opening night audiences and critics was *Las Golondrinas*' modernity. The critic for *El Heraldo de Madrid* found similarities in Usandizaga's work with Dukas (especially *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue*) and with Richard Strauss' *Salome*—which was still considered fairly scandalous in 1914.[97] *ABC* also heard similarities to Dukas in Usandizaga's orchestrations, as well as traces of Debussy. But *ABC* went still further, noting that "the discovery of a composer with his astonishing methods bodes well for the definitive implementation

[96] Montero Alonso, *Usandizaga*, 34-37.
[97] S.A. "Vida teatral," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 6 February 1914.

of Spanish opera, more so than all the theorizing we will have done about it."[98] As they would with *Maruxa* a few months later, the critics proclaimed *Las Golondrinas* to be not only opera, but Spanish lyric drama as well: *La Correspondencia de España* proclaimed Usandizaga the heir of Barbieri and Chapí (as well as of Vives, oddly enough)—heady praise for the first Madrid production of anybody's work.[99]

Still, when discussing the composer, most all the reviews focused on Usandizaga's age (just a month away from 28 at the time of the premiere) and the modernity of his music. *El Liberal* used the perceived decline of lyric theatre in Spain as the lynchpin for its review of *Las Golondrinas*, which focused on Usandizaga's ability to manage his musical material—various themes and motives run in and out of the music all through the work, although Usandizaga's taste in this regard reflects Puccini more than it does Wagner—and his orchestrations, which truly reflect his admiration of Debussy and Rimsky-Korsakov.[100] *ABC* linked Usandizaga with other younger Spanish composers (including Conrado del Campo, Enrique Granados, and Joaquín Turina), all of whom it called upon to rejuvenate Spanish lyric drama and give it "the modernity that it needs."[101] The assumption behind all this was clear. Spanish lyric theatre was outmoded, and only the importation of modern—that is to say, European—music would save it. Certainly, in picking Usandizaga the critics were on the right track: all of his music sounds like little else in the Spanish repertory and is

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[98] "Los estrenos," *ABC*, 6 Februrary 1914, 8.
[99] Caramanchel, "Los teatros," *La Correspondencia de España*, 6 February 1914, 5.
[100] Tristán, "Teatro de Price: Las Golondrinas," *El Liberal*, 6 February 1914.
[101] "Los estrenos," *ABC*, 6 February 1914, 8.

amazingly impressive. One wonders how things would have changed had he not died of tuberculosis in 1915.

The answer to this rhetorical question, I suspect, is—unfortunately—not much. The climax of the attempts to bring ópera española back into the fold of authentic Spanish lyric drama occurred in the autumn of 1914. The fall season at the Teatro de la Zarzuela was designed as a showcase for regenerated Spanish theatre. Pablo Luna was the musical director, and he staged the cream of the latest successes of Spanish operetta and operatic zarzuela: his own *Los cadetes de la reina*, *Las Golondrinas*, and *Maruxa* among others. To sing the leading roles, the two biggest zarzuela stars in Spain—Luisa Vela and Emilio Sagi-Barba, who had triumphed in the premiere of the Usandizaga work—were brought in to headline the performances. The revivals, however, were only a warm-up for what was expected to be the crown jewel of Spanish lyric theatre, recently consecrated by success abroad: Manuel de Falla's *La vida breve* (A Short Life), a work whose history sums up the potential and pitfalls for Spanish lyric theatre in the early twentieth century.

Falla, like most other Spanish composers of the period, saw the lyric stage as the surest pathway to success. He composed a number of zarzuelas (two in collaboration with Amadeo Vives) after he graduated from the Madrid Conservatory in 1899, but only one was ever staged—and that with little success. He then turned to opera when he read Carlos Fernández-Shaw's poem "La chavalilla" (The Little Girl). Falla was convinced that the poem had dramatic potential and persuaded Fernández-Shaw to convert it into a libretto. Falla worked feverishly to have the opera ready in

time for a 1905 Real Academia de San Fernando de Bellas Artes competition designed to promote national art. The opera prize was to be 2,500 pesetas and the promise of staged performances of the winning work.[102]

La vida breve won the opera prize hands down, and Falla received his prize money. Performances, however, were not forthcoming. The impresario at the Teatro Real, José Arana y Elizora, was violently opposed to staging Spanish opera: he claimed that the public simply would not attend performances of ópera española, and that the costs of training and rehearsing singers in Spanish were prohibitive.[103] Falla's work languished; he traveled to Paris where the opera became his calling card and impressed composers like Dukas and Debussy. *La vida breve* would finally receive its premiere—in a French translation—at the Theatre of the Municipal Casino of Nice in December 1913. Shortly thereafter, Falla's opera was performed at the Opéra-Comique in Paris. Only after its triumphal reception here would the work come home to Spain and be performed in its original language.[104]

The Madrid reviews were uniformly ecstatic, as was the audience: contemporary reports note that Falla received ovations as he left the theatre from crowds in the Calles de Jovellanos and los Madraso, and that he was cheered in the

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[102] On the early career of Falla, see Federico Sopeña, *Vida y obra de Falla* (Madrid: Turner Música, 1988), 25-37 and Tomás Marco, *Spanish Music in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Cola Franzen, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993), 18-20.

[103] See the memoirs of Arana y Elizora's assistant José Bilbao: *Teatro Real: Recuerdos de las cinco temporadas del empresario Arana* (Madrid: Editorial Norma, 1936; Madrid: Comunidad de Madrid, 1996), especially pages 148-151. Ironically, Bilbao suggests that contests should have been held to promote the writing of Spanish opera, forgetting about *La vida breve*.

[104] The best short history of the travails of *La vida breve* was published in *ABC* the morning of the premiere: "Una ópera española: La vida breve," 14 November 1914, 18. A more thorough history, with selections of correspondence between Fernández-Shaw and Falla can be found in Guillermo Fernández-Shaw's *Historia larga de* La vida breve (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1972).

Café de Castilla later that evening.[105] Like *Las Golondrinas*, *La vida breve* was praised for its musical modernism and overtones of Dukas and Debussy (with whom, it should be noted, Falla became acquainted with only after he had completed the score); like *Maruxa*, *La vida breve* was praised for its use folkloric elements, especially the gypsy dances in the second act that have been the most popular parts of the opera ever since. Falla's return from Paris to Madrid (prompted less by the premiere than by the outbreak of World War I), was seen as the crucial element in the regeneration of Spanish music and theatre: "With Falla we now have, reintegrated into the country another valiant champion in the service of the musical renaissance that has been initiated in Spain."[106] Falla had the European polish that would be necessary to save Spanish music; he was undoubtedly the right man at the right time. But November 1914 was to be a high point in the renaissance of Spanish lyric theatre. *La vida breve* did not prove to be the spark that would ignite a revival of ópera española, and *Maruxa* would be the last popular attempt to meld opera with zarzuela. There would only be one more attempt to meld these forms; but *La canción del olvido* was the one work that merged the parallel regeneration attempts of opera and European operetta, and must thus be considered a slightly different case.

La canción del olvido (The Song of Oblivion) is arguably José Serrano's finest zarzuela and a rather astonishing piece of work. The libretto was the first one written by the team of Federico Romero and Guillermo Fernández-Shaw (son of Carlos, librettist to *La Revoltolsa* and *La vida breve*), and manages to infuse freshness into a

[105] See "De teatros," *El Liberal*, 15 November 1914.
[106] "Vida teatral," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 15 November 1914.

fairly stock situation—the rake who is redeemed through the love of a good woman.[107] The Romero and Fernández-Shaw team would be one of the keys to the zarzuela revival of the 1920s, precisely because of their theatrically professional librettos; their sure grasp of the potential of lyric theatre in their first collaboration is one of the reasons for the success of *La canción*. But it is Serrano's music that is most astonishing, precisely because it manages to encompass all the trends that sought to rejuvenate Spanish theatre in the first two decades of the twentieth century: zarzuela, operetta, and opera all intermingle in a truly enchanting score.

The operetta element to *La canción del olvido* is the most obvious: many of the numbers—notably the title song (No. 2 in the vocal score)—require lightly trained voices and are orchestrated heavily for strings and harp. Although some have found these numbers (especially Rosina's, of which "La canción del olvido" is one) to be more operatic than operetta-derived, the vocal lines are more restricted in tessitura than one would expect to find in Italian opera.[108] The specifically Spanish and zarzuela-driven elements can be found in the choral numbers, which follow the old zarzuela grande tradition of having the chorus represent a segment of the population (albeit here of Naples rather than of Spain). This is made clear by the fact that the

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[107] Part of the success is due to the fact that Romero and Fernández-Shaw kept their tongues somewhat in their cheeks when writing the libretto, acknowledging the fact that the libretto is hardly unique: at one point, they have Leonello declare "La aventura es singular; / parece una página / de un cuento oriental" ("The adventure is singular; / it seems a page / from some oriental story") (Scene 3). Christopher Webber, in his *The Zarzuela Companion* (Lanham & Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 197, points out the similarities in the plot to either Boccaccio or Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well*.

[108] The best musical analysis of *La canción del olivdo* can be found in Miguel Roa and Ramón Sobrino's introduction to the ICCM vocal score: José Serrano, *La canción del olvido: Zarzuela en un acto*, ed. Miguel Roa and Ramón Sobrino (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1993).

chorus is always accompanied by a group of street musicians known as the *rondalla*, rather than by the orchestra. The guitar and lute accompaniment of the *rondalla* were clearly meant to evoke the street musicians who had helped to popularize zarzuela music in Spain, without necessarily losing the Neapolitan atmosphere that Romero, Fernández-Shaw, and Serrano were attempting to recreate.[109] In addition, the choral numbers tend to comment on the action (although they are also designed to help advance the plot): this is especially true of the central choral number and the most famous piece of music from the zarzuela, the famous "Soldado de Nápoles," which serves as a mildly ironic commentary on Leonello's attempted seduction of Rosina—an irony which is doubled because Leonello has hired these serenaders to assist him.[110]

Both these elements were combined in the third scene of the work, which is the main love duet between Leonello and Rosina (No. 6 in the vocal score). The scene is a twenty-minute love duet whose scope—in terms of zarzuela music, at any rate—almost begs comparisons with the second act of Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. It is not simply the length that evokes the shadow of Wagner: much of Serrano's orchestral underpinning is derived in a leitmotiv fashion from the other numbers in the score, especially Rosina's "Canción del olvido" and Leonello's "Mujer, primorosa

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[109] The use of the *rondalla* is no doubt also meant to recall the use of street musicians in the scores to works like *Pan y toros*, *El barberillo de Lavapiés*, and *La verbena de la paloma*. It also foreshadows similar treatments in *Doña Francisquita*, *La Calesera*, and *La parranda*.

[110] One interesting footnote to this: "Soldado de Nápoles" also became the Spanish nickname for the worldwide influenza epidemic of 1918 because the flu reached Madrid at around the same time that *La canción del olvido* did. Fernández-Shaw (quoted in Roa and Sobrino's introduction to the ICCM score) would later joke the nickname stuck because the song was as contagious as the influenza. See also Ramón Barce, "El sainete lírico (1880-1915)," Emilio Casares Rodicio and Celsa Alonso González, eds., *La música española en el siglo XIX* (Oviedo: U de Oviedo, 1995), 207-208 which includes information on the sainete *El Soldado de Nápoles*, which was built around this contemporary allusion.

clavellina" (Woman, the Exquisite Carnation). This love duet also manages to work in the *rondalla* by opening with a reprise of their first number "Hermosa napolitana" (Beautiful Neapolitan Girl). In these twenty minuets, Serrano managed to do what Vives, Usandizaga, Luna, and Lleó had aimed at: reconciled zarzuela with more advanced forms of music.

The critics noticed what Serrano had accomplished. *ABC* placed *La canción del olivdo* directly in line with what it called "our classic zarzuela," while *El Imparcial* claimed that "our national genre is going to recover its prestige."[111] Nor was it only the critics. The opening night audience was apparently moved to cry "Long live Maestro Serrano! Long live Spanish composers! Long live Spain!" at the curtain call.[112] Clearly everybody felt that Serrano's mixture of zarzuela, operetta, and opera would accomplish what it had set out to do and regenerate Spanish music—and at the proper time, especially since, except for *El niño judío* the previous month, there had not been a zarzuela hit on this scale since 1914. If there was ever a summation of what the operetta invasion had attempted to do for Spanish theatre and what it could possibly accomplish, *La canción del olvido* was it.

But *La canción del olvido* came too late. Consider what had happened to zarzuela and opera in the years between 1880 and 1918. In 1880, zarzuela grande and opera were not that much different from each other—a matter of recitative versus dialogue, for the most part. There was a sense that opera was a matter of aristocratic entertainment and that zarzuela was for the middle classes, but their music was not

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[111] "De espectaculos: Notas teatrales," *ABC*, 2 March 1918, 13; J. de L., "Los teatros," *El Imparcial*, 2 March 1918.

[112] L.P., "Noticias e informaciones teatrales," *La Correspondencia de España*, 2 March 1918, 5.

fundamentally different. By 1910, the social divide had crystallized into a high culture versus popular culture divide. The development of the género chico had not only revitalized a fading genre, it had made it popular as well. Popularity came at a price: musical simplification. The género chico did not set out to lower musical standards and attract hacks; but the notion that what is popular cannot be "art" seems to have been in play here as much as anywhere else. In essence, there was a massive shift in mindset. In the 1880s, nobody would have been surprised that Ruperto Chapí wrote both a género chico work like *Música clasica* and the zarzuela grande *La bruja*; but by 1918, the idea that the same man could comfortably write in both genres without sacrificing quality was much more difficult to envision.

The terms that were used to discuss the possibility of opera's rejuvenation of lyric theatre were outside the vocabulary of the average theatre-goer, further reinforcing the divide between popular culture and opera. Consider, for example, the prevalence of references to modernism in discussions of *Las Golondrinas* and *La vida breve*: Debussy, d'Indy, and Dukas might have been familiar to a well-read musical audience, but not to the average theatre patron. Discussions of these composers were highlights of the musical press, but their music was not much performed by the Orquestra Sinfónica de Madrid or the Teatro Real in those years. The first performance of Debussy's "Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune" was met with protests on the part of the audience when it received its Madrid premiere in April 1906.[113] The Real gave exactly two performance of Dukas' *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* during the 1912-1913 season, along with twelve performances during the entire decade of Richard

[113] See Gómez Amat and Turina Gómez, *La Orquestra Sinfónica de Madrid*, 49.

Strauss' *Salome*; these two operas were the sum total of European modernism in Madrid's opera houses.[114] Modernism might have had the power to restore Spanish theatre, but most zarzuela audiences would have had little context with which to grapple with Usandizaga's or Falla's brand of Europeanism. As a result, modernism did not save zarzuela; it instead relegated the genre into the ethereal realm of elite culture.

Did the regeneration of Spanish lyric theatre ultimately succeed or fail? On the surface, it would seem that regeneration provided—at best—a temporary solution. The clearest evidence of this failure is to look at the works that have entered the standard zarzuela repertory: after the initial surge of Spanish operettas came to an end in 1914, only two works produced before 1922 entered the canon. (These were *El niño judío* and *La canción del olvido*.) In other words, for nearly a decade the Spanish theatre produced almost no works that were successful or popular enough to become staples. Furthermore, the lyric sainete—that mainstay of the género chico—disappeared from the stage almost completely. The one-act plays that had been the core of Madrid's theatrical life since the mid-1880s essentially vanished. As with the abrupt rise of the género chico after the success of *La gran vía*, Spanish theatre jettisoned old art forms in favor of new ones; this time, however, the new style of zarzuela failed to please sufficiently enough to attract audiences for very long.

The reason for this failure to regenerate the Spanish theatre lies in the changes in the nature of popular culture that were taking hold at the same time that the género

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[114] See the statistical appendix to Joaquín Turina Gómez, *Historia del Teatro Real* (Madrid: Alianza, 1997).

chico entered its crisis. Zarzuela in the 1880s and 1890s was unquestionably popular entertainment. By 1910, this was no longer the case: cabaret performances and cinema had taken the place of musical theatre as popular entertainment. Partially, this shift had to do with certain factors outside the control of the composers and librettists working in the theatre—the theatrical taxes and curfews imposed by Maura's government, for example. But it was also partially the result of certain entrenched interests of these same composers and librettists. The SAE was founded to secure the rights and royalty payments for theatrical composers; those who wrote cabaret music were left to fend for themselves. Zarzuela had always identified itself with the bourgeoisie in Spain. In the 1870s, the bourgeoisie could make a claim that they were the part of the popular classes in opposition to the aristocracy. By the early decades of the twentieth century, their status had changed. The bourgeoisie was in power, and as such its interests had separated from those of the popular classes. The growing split between popular culture and high culture was a mirror of the split between the popular classes and the middle classes.

The example of the SAE is instructive in determining why the regeneration tactics of the early twentieth century failed. While the goal of the SAE was to reform the Spanish theatre, its tactics only exacerbated the growing divide and further pushed zarzuela out of the realm of popular culture. This is comparable with opera's use of modernism to help reform Spanish music. Musical modernism only appealed to an elite; no serious efforts were made to disseminate this modernism more widely. It remained a topic for the musically educated, rather than an active visitor to Spain's

opera houses and concert halls. Viennese operetta suffered from a similar constriction. True, operetta was more popular than opera was; but its incorporation into zarzuela necessitated the removal of popular dance music from the lyric stage. Although operetta claimed to be Spanish, it removed the crucial element that had helped to define zarzuela as the authentic genre of "Spanish" lyric theatre since the 1850s: the use of popular music.

Ultimately, the regenerationist project of operetta failed because it detached zarzuela from its popular origins. At its heart, regeneration was a popular project; when the Spanish state attempted to reform society it ignored popular sentiment, which often doomed the projects to failure. If zarzuela was going to continue to play a vital role in Spanish society and culture it would have to find a method for reconnecting with its popular heritage. But the assimilation of foreign models into zarzuela's musical construction had proved to be a dead end. As the final years of the Bourbon Restoration approached, Spanish lyric theatre would gradually return to native musical models and literary sources in an attempt to reconnect with its popular heritage. But zarzuela's musical flirtation with modernism and opera would have dramatic consequences in the 1920s: as we shall see, the return to traditional Spanish forms would only hasten zarzuela's migration from a popular to an elite form of entertainment—further undermining the regenerationist project and even the genre's ability to articulate a vision of the Spanish nation.

VI

The Curtain Descends: Zarzuela in the 1920s

For reasons that are not entirely clear, lyric theatre suffered a severe depression in the years between 1918 and 1922 in Madrid. Pablo Luna's *El niño judío* not only marked the end of a string of zarzuelas built upon Viennese principles; for four years and one week, it was the last new musical theatre work to find popular acceptance on the boards in Madrid.[1] Then, on St. Valentine's Day in 1922, came the premiere of *La alsaciana* (The Maid of Alsace). This tale, a light comedy about a military detachment quartered in an Alsatian village during the Napoleonic wars does draw upon the operetta tradition in its mildly frivolous plot—and even in the entry of its heroine, who is first seen onstage with a lamb in her arms (shades of *Maruxa*). But musically, it is a more of a throw-back to the género chico. Martial music, not surprisingly, is prevalent. The Alsatian maid of the title is introduced with a good, old-fashioned *romanza*. Indeed, *La alsaciana* hovers uneasily between operetta and the género chico. This may help to explain why it took the composer of the work an inordinate amount of time to find a producer for the work; and unlike most zarzuelas, *La alsaciana* had its world premiere not in Madrid but in Barcelona (in September 1921, five months before the work made it to the capital).

The composer of *La alsaciana* was a young man named Jacinto Guerrero. Like other zarzuela composers of the early twentieth century, Guerrero came from a musical background—his father directed the municipal band in Toledo, and Guerrero

[1] José Serrano's *La canción del olvido* did open one month after *El niño judío*, but that work was not new at its Madrid premiere: it had received its world premiere in Valencia in 1916.

himself was a chorister in the Cathedral there as a boy—and had conservatory training. But Guerrero also had spent his time working as a musician in the cafés of Madrid, the traditional training ground for the men who wrote music for the género chico.[2] Throughout his life, Guerrero would be associated with music that was easily accessible to an audience. *La alsaciana* was the first of a string of popular hits that Guerrero would have in the 1920s. Guerrero's career during that decade is worth looking at briefly, for it functions as something of a microcosm of what was happening to zarzuela in those years. Unlike other zarzuela composers, who can be easily pigeonholed by compositional style and subject—Barbieri and the zarzuela grande, Chueca the género chico composer, or Luna the apostle of Viennese operetta—Guerrero's music and the subjects of his zarzuelas varied wildly. In this Guerrero merely reflects what was happening to zarzuela as a whole during this period. If the 1870s were the last fling of zarzuela grande, the 1890s the apotheosis of the género chico, and the 1910s the triumph of Viennese operetta, the 1920s saw all of these subgenres of zarzuela existing side-by-side.

This seeming schizophrenia of zarzuela styles in the 1920s was a logical outcome of the increasingly complex role the genre held vis-à-vis both the Spanish state and Spanish culture during the final decade of the Bourbon monarchy. As we have seen, zarzuela was increasingly becoming an elite form of culture; but there was still some ambivalence about abandoning zarzuela's traditional popular role. Thus while some zarzuelas turned towards literary models for their libretti and a revival of

[2] For Guerrero's basic biography, see Antonio Fernández-Cid, *El maestro Jacinto Guerrero y su estela* (Madrid: Fundación Jacinto e Inocencio Guerrero, 1994).

the musical style of the zarzuela grande for their music—cementing its role as an established Spanish genre of art—other zarzuelas increasingly returned to the use of folk music to reclaim zarzuela's status as a popular genre. But this return had an ironic consequence. The way folk music was used, to highlight regional rather than national identites, linked zarzuela with the decentralizing and localist tendencies of the regieme. The use of Spain's elite literary heritage and folk music consolidated the genre's position as elite culture rather than returning it to its popular cultural role, as had been the intent. Zarzuela became linked with the new dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, thus further minimizing its effectiveness as a truly popular way of conceptualizing the Spanish nation.

The zarzuelas of the Silver Age were attempting to correct the problematic gap that had opened up between elite and popular culture during the first years of the twentieth century. Zarzuela had increasingly become elite culture. But by melding high literature with popular music—or the reverse, by using increasingly sophisticated music to tell popular stories—zarzuela composers were trying to correct this divide and make their work more popular and thus more nationalist. Other composers tried to do the same thing through the increased use of regional folk melodies, returning zarzuela to its traditional role as a disseminator of popular culture that could unite the various parts of Spain. The use of Spanish literary culture and the use of folk music were two sides—one cultural, one political—of the same coin. Both strategies were attempts to restore zarzuela's role as nationalist popular culture. But both strategies

only consolidated zarzuela's elite status, which removed it from its popular roots and thus from its role as a nationalist mobilizing force.

The politico-cultural consolidation of zarzuela's elite status is best exemplified by the career of Jacinto Guerrero as it progressed during the 1920s. Guerrero's second hit was *La montería* (The Hunt Ball), which premiered in Madrid in January 1922. Where *La alsaciana* had been set in an identifiable historical past, *La montería* was contemporary and up-to-date. The setting, to be sure, was still exotic; but rather than Napoleonic soldiers and country maidens, Guerrero's next work was set amongst the fox-hunting English gentry. Oddly enough, the plot feels like it could easily have been lifted from one of Anthony Trollope's lengthy hunting sequences in novels like *Phineas Finn*; in spite of the thoroughly English setting (and charmingly hispanicized English names like "Ketty" and the Duke of Jetkinsson), the dramatic critic for *El Heraldo de Madrid* termed the libretto "a true zarzuela in the classic Spanish style, which lends a singular prominence to [the work's] modern characteristics."[3] The modernity attributed to the production can be more logically attributed to the music, which features Guerrero's first great popular hit, the tango "¡Hay que ver mi abuelita!" ("You must see my grandmother!")—which in terms of the plot actively mocks traditional country celebrations—as well as one of the earliest uses of American-inspired music in European operetta: the first-act fox-trot, in which ricky-tick 1920s dance rhythms punctuate an otherwise straightforward baritone *romanza*.[4] Although most of the music follows traditional zarzuela forms, these two numbers were enough

[3] F.J., "Estreno de 'La montería' en la Zarzuela," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 26 January 1923.
[4] See No. 3 in the vocal score: Jacinto Guerrero, *La montería: Zarzuela en dos actos*, ed. Benito Lauret (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1995).

to ensure that many subsequent scholars of zarzuela categorized *La montería* as thoroughly modern.[5]

But modern jazz music was a dead end in the attempt to make zarzuela popular again, as it had no connections with the genre's nationalism. Although a fox-trot and a tango turn up in his 1923 masterpiece *Los gavilanes* (The Sparrowhawks), such modern touches were distinctly out of place in a work set in a French fishing village in 1845. Rather than focusing on modernity, Guerrero and librettist José Ramos Martin, seem to have conceived of the work as an homage to the tradition of zarzuela grande—and specifically an homage to *La tempestad*, which had a libretto by Ramos Martin's father, Miguel Ramos Carrión. Like the 1881 work, *Los gavilanes* features a stranger from Latin America who arrives in a French fishing village and uncovers some long-hidden secrets. Like the classic zarzuela grande of the 1870s and 1880s, *Los gavilanes* features a complex and operatic score. Guerrero uses Wagnerian-style motivic development to demonstrate the emotional development of the hero, Juan, who moves from a potential figure of romance in the first act to a sacrificial figure in the finale. Guerrero's score contains other specifically operatic moments as well: the big romantic song (Gustavo's "Romanza de la flor") utilizes the cabaletta/cavatina

[5] Even as an enthusiastically astute critic as Christopher Webber refers to the "jazzy harmonic touches" of the score—see his *The Zarzuela Companion* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 133. To the listener more accustomed to Louis Armstrong or George Gershwin, the jazz influence in *La montería* seems pale at best. It is worth noting that in 1922, jazz had barely made its way into the mainstream of American consciousness—let alone crossed the Atlantic Ocean to Europe. Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* would only receive its premiere in February 1924, while Armstrong's earliest recordings with his Hot Fives date from November 1925.

construction typical of Italian bel canto arias, while the second act finale specifically evokes Donizetti's concertante-style act endings.[6]

The self-consciously modern music in *Los gavilanes* was out of place in this milieu, and many critics chose to overlook the fox-trot in favor of the more sophisticated aspects of the score. *ABC* ignored the modern aspects of the score completely, claiming that "Guerrero has disdained the facile, light, happy, and characteristic rhythm of the 'fox-trot" and has written a score in the classic mold of the zarzuela."[7] *El Heraldo de Madrid* chose to open its review of the work with a two paragraph-long screed on the history and importance of European-style operetta: while noting its importance in the regenerationist movement of the previous decade, the critic also denounced its importation of modern and foreign musical forms such as "los fox y los shimmy."[8] However, the critic proceeded to praise Guerrero's music for taking the zarzuela grande as its model—and even went so far as to compare the score with those of Chapí and Emilio Arrieta. There was clearly a sense that Guerrero's evocation of traditional zarzuela was a noteworthy event, and many critics called the score his masterwork (a critical reception that has not really changed in the intervening years).

The score for Guerrero's next major work, *El huésped del Sevillano* (The Guest at the Sevillano Inn), while pleasant, certainly did not aim so high. The nostalgic plot is set at an inn in sixteenth-century Toledo and revolves around the

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[6] For this musical analysis of *Los gavilanes*, I am indebted to a public lecture given by Andrés Ruiz Tarazona on 3 June 2002 at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid.
[7] F., "Informaciones y noticias teatrales: Los gavilanes," *ABC*, 8 December 1923.
[8] J. Forns, "Estreno en la Zarzuela: 'Los gavilanes'," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 8 December 1923.

kidnapping of the virtuous Raquel by villainous Don Diego and her eventual rescue by artist Juan Luis, who is abetted by the kitchen maid at the inn, Constancia. This plot may sound familiar to students of Golden Age Spanish literature, and it ought to: the title character, who first appears midway through the second act, is none other than Miguel de Cervantes. He assures Constancia at the final curtain that the story he is writing will be about the events at the Sevillano Inn and will be named after her—"La ilustre fregona" (The Noble Scullery Maid), one of his *Novelas Ejemplares*. *El huésped del Sevillano* was designed very specifically by its authors as an exercise in nostalgia. Guerrero, along with his librettists Enrique Reoyo and Juan Ignacio Luca de Tena, published a brief screed regarding their work in *ABC* the day before the premiere which made their agenda quite specific. They claimed to have been inspired "by tradition and legend more than by History, perhaps; the Toledo of the swordsmen and of the Jews, of dashing gentlemen and of glorious painters."[9] Clearly, this was to be sixteenth-century Castile as viewed through rose-colored glasses—as opposed to the decidedly unromantic warts-and-all view that emerges directly out of Cervantes' own works.

Guerrero's score sharpens the nostalgia of the zarzuela and its links with Spain's literary past. Guerrero and his librettists make their position most clear in a musically underscored monologue by Cervantes late in the second act. To what may be the most evocative music in the work, Cervantes declaims a series of lines in blank verse referring to the

[9] Enrique Reoyo, Juan Luca de Tena, and Jacinto Guerrero, "Antes de un estreno," *ABC*, 3 December 1926.

admirable and strange mix [of]…
Mystics and adventurers
and poets and soldiers.
It is Castile… and it is Spain![10]

The historical Cervantes would have been more likely to reflect upon the drunkards, thieves, and whores that made up Castile, but *El huésped del Sevillano* is not aiming for documentary reality. The other aspect of Guerrero's score that evokes nostalgia for Spain's past is his repeated use of folk songs from the countryside around Toledo—most famously in the female chorus that opens the second act, the Chorus of the Ladies from Lagartera.[11] Guerrero's vocal score actually goes so far as to indicate exactly which musical numbers are derived from folk songs.

However, the score steps backwards from classic zarzuela construction of *Los gavilanes* in two key ways. First, the use of folk music is not necessarily used to characterize the chorus as the Spanish people, as is prevalent in the Barbieri-style zarzuela grande. The crucial use of folk music in the first act is Juan Luis' famous Song of the Sword (No. 3 in the vocal score)—which, while undeniably thrilling, uses folk music to glorify an individual, not the people. Even when folk music is used to characterize the people, Guerrero and his librettist glorify a very specific section of the people; here, the citizens of Lagartera. Where the zarzuela grande glorifies the Spanish people as a whole, *El huésped del Sevillano* glorifies a specific regional subset of the Spanish people, the denizens of the province around Toledo. Guerrero makes this even clearer during Cervantes' melodrama late in the second act. While

[10] "Mezcla admirable y extraña… / Místicos y aventuereros / y poetas y guerreros. / ¡Es Castilla... y es España!" Juan Ignacio Luca de Tena and Enrique Reoyo, *El huésped del sevillano*, II.2.
[11] No. 7 in the vocal score: Jacinto Guerrero, *El huésped del sevillano: Zarzuela en dos actos*, ed. Jesús Villa Rojo (Madrid: Instituo Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1995).

speaking in nationalistic terms, the character's thoughts make it clear that this is a regional work:

> Toledo, Hispanic fatherland,
> crucible of the Iberian race,
> blessed are those who are born
> Spanish and Toledian![12]

It is the regional identity of Toledo that predominates in defining the Spanish, not their overall national identity.

The second way in which Guerrero moves away from the traditional forms of the zarzuela grande is that he retains the broad musical outline of the classic zarzuela score, but he simplifies its musical construction. The romanzas and the duets are not through-composed as they would have been in the 1870s; rather, they are strophic with a repeating musical pattern. The key number to be affected in this manner is the first act love duet between Raquel and Juan Luis, "Insolente, presumido" (No. 4 in the vocal score). The emotion of the duet moves from incensed anger over Don Diego's behavior to a declaration of love—but uses the same musical phrases, rather than composing new music to match the emotional situation. While Guerrero uses the broad outline of a zarzuela grande score, he readapts the formula to the necessities of 1920s popular music, with an emphasis on repeated melodies that will stick in the ear. Guerrero also adopts a technique not prevalent in the operatic scores of the 1870s and 1880s: the melody of the vocal line is almost always doubled in the orchestral accompaniment. While Guerrero appeals to the musical heritage of zarzuela to try and

[12] "Toledo, solar hispano, / crisol de la raza iberia, / ¡dichoso aquel que naciera / español y toledano!" Luca de Tena and Reoyo, II.2.

restore its popularity, he does not ignore the demands of 1920s theatre audiences. *El huésped* was an attempt to make the popular and the past work hand-in-hand.

The politico-cultural attempt to make zarzuela popular again is most clear in the last major zarzuela of Guerrero's to enter the canon, the 1930 piece *La rosa del azafrán* (The Saffron Rose). Again, the librettists have adapted a classic Spanish work—in this case one of Lope de Vega's best known works, the seventeenth century classic *El perro del hortelano* (The Gardener's Dog), albeit updated to the 1860s—for the libretto. Again, the identity emphasis within the libretto is not that of an overall Spanish identity but of a regional and local identity (here, the action is focused on the region of La Mancha, a notion made abundantly clear from the opening song, "Aunque soy de la Mancha"—Although I am from La Mancha—a veritable declaration of locational identity). Again, while there are the classic *romanzas* and other set-piece musical forms from the zarzuela grande, much of the music has been simplified for public consumption: the score to *La rosa del azafrán* has a higher share of strophic songs and dance music than would be customary in the zarzuela grande. Both plot and music are altered in such a way to make them more appealing to modern audiences.

Guerrero was clearly aiming at a popular audience in his 1920s zarzuelas; and just as in the heyday of the zarzuela grande, there is a sense in Guerrero's work that elite forms of culture are not incompatible with the economics of popular theatre. But the politico-cultural context of the 1920s was vastly different from that of the 1880s. The Bourbon Restoration had not been interested in a nationalist mobilization project,

which had left open space for a popular vision of the Spanish nation could occur. The Primo de Rivera dictatorship filled that space with an emphasis on regionalism and localism. Zarzuela's co-option of elite culture in the 1880s had worked because it was the only major form of popular culture in those years. By the 1920s, zarzuela had been supplanted by other forms of popular culture. The result was a reversed situation: rather than a popular form of culture popularizing elite music, zarzuela was an elite form of culture trying to popularize elite music. Rather than authentic popularization, zarzuela was engaging in a top-down attempt at fashioning nationalist culture. In this, zarzuela was operating in tandem with the new goals of the Spanish state—but it had lost its power to critique the state, which had previously made it such a potent force of nationalism.

Primo de Rivera and the Restoration System

The increased emphasis on regional music in works like *El huésped del Sevillano* and *La rosa del azafrán* can be directly linked to the rise to power of General Miguel Primo de Rivera, whose 1923 military pronunciamiento put an effective end to the chaotic parliamentary government of Restoration Spain, if not to the Restoration of the Bourbon monarchy itself. The dictatorship developed a number of initiatives to fix what it perceived as weaknesses and problems with the Spanish state and with Spanish society. The use of regional folk music tied in quite nicely with the dictatorship's efforts to strengthen local governments and thus undercut the problems of the *turno pacífico* system. But zarzuela's link with the government would

in the end prove more detrimental than beneficial, since it further distanced the genre from its popular roots.

The Primo de Rivera dictatorship has been traditionally viewed as a break with the Restoration regime; those examining the 1923-1930 period have found it convenient and instructive to categorize Primo de Rivera with the "new politics" being espoused by Mussolini in Italy.[13] Still, even those who espouse this view have trouble calling Primo de Rivera a full-fledged fascist. True, his rise can be attributed to the weaknesses of liberal parliamentary democracy, he used much of the political symbolism of the fascist movement, and his overtures to Spanish business seemed to herald the corporatist state. On the other hand, the heavily Catholic component to Primo de Rivera's conception of power hardly looks like a traditional definition of fascism where politics becomes the equivalent of religion. (The more likely parallel is with Salazar's *Estado Novo* in neighboring Portugal, which mixed Catholicism and corporatist planning with equal abandon.) Scholars are doubtless correct in identifying that Primo de Rivera's assumption of power in 1923 did mark some sort of break with the Restoration regime—if only because Primo de Rivera came to power in the exact style of military coup that the Restoration had been set up to prevent.

But the Primo de Rivera regime was, at its core, a continuation of the Restoration system of government. This is most clearly seen in the relationship between the dictator and the Spanish crown. As originally envisioned by Cánovas del

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[13] The classic example is Shlomo Ben-Ami's *Fascism from Above: The Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain, 1923-1930* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983). A certain amount of the temptation to term the dictatorship as "fascist" no doubt arises from the fact that Primo de Rivera's son, José Antonio, would become the founder of the Falange Española—the Spanish Fascist movement—in the 1930s.

Castillo, the king of Spain was responsible for the operation of the *turno pacífico* and determining exactly when political parties would alternate in power. In essence, the crown was to represent public opinion in a system where elections were essentially meaningless and thus preserve the fiction of a democratic alternation of power.[14] Although the convention that the crown represented public opinion had slipped somewhat during the early years of Alfonso XIII's reign due to the fact that governmental ministers had usurped this power from Queen Regent Maria Cristina, Alfonso's notorious acquiescence to the coup of September 1923 can be viewed as a reversion to the traditional notion of the crown as the tool of public opinion. Admittedly, Alfonso was hardly enamored of parliamentary democracy (he applied the term "cowards" to politicians shortly before the coup); but as the coup was originally embraced by both the right and the left as a potential solution, Alfonso's actions did align with public opinion.[15]

It may be worth noting that in certain ways Primo de Rivera was a traditional Restoration politician. Like many Restoration politicians—and zarzuela librettists, for that matter—he had some practical journalism experience. In the early years of the twentieth century, Primo de Rivera was actually elected to the Senate where he served until early 1923. Like most Restoration politicians, Primo de Rivera's seat was one

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[14] See Maria Angeles Lario González, "La corona en el proyecto Canovista," in *Antonio Cánovas y el sistema político de la Restauración*, ed. Javier Tusell and Florentino Portero (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1998), 89-95.

[15] On the "coward" remark, see Javier Tusell and Genoveva G. Quiepo de Llano, *Alfonso XIII: El rey polémico* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001), 421; on the popularity of the coup, see 435-436. For the more traditional view that Alfonso abrogated his constitutional responsibilities in September 1923—which is certainly not incompatible with this interpretation—see Mercedes Cabrera, "El rey consitutional" in *Alfonso XIII: Un político en el trono*, ed. Javier Moreno Luzón (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003), especially 102-110.

controlled by the practice of *caciquismo*. He never actually campaigned for election; his only real qualification for political office was his family lineage and his aristocratic title (the Marquis of Estella). In fact, the only reason he was unseated in 1923 was because his outspoken denunciations of Spain's colonial war in Morocco had insulted an important party leader.[16] While it would be overly simplistic to characterize the 1923 coup as the maneuvers of a frustrated politician—the very fact that liberal parliamentary government had essentially ceased to function puts paid to that idea—Primo de Rivera had ironic first-hand experience of the corruption that he set out to fix.

But the continuities with the Restoration are stronger than the disparities, especially in terms of Primo de Rivera's regenerationist project. The dictatorship continued the top-down, elite-driven regeneration of the Maura government, ignoring the popular will in favor of state projects. For what it might be worth, Primo de Rivera himself preferred to project the image of a more-or-less traditional regenerationist and was fond of speaking of his rule as a "parenthesis" in Spanish political life, where parliamentary politics would be temporarily set aside and fixed under the assumption that traditional democratic liberties would be restored when the regenerationist project was completed. Whether or not Primo de Rivera actually meant this is open to debate; still, the almost notorious simple-mindedness of the dictator does lend credence to his oft-repeated assertion that he would step down from

[16] On Primo de Rivera's political background, see James H. Rial, *Revolution from Above: The Primo de Rivera Dictatorship in Spain, 1923-1930* (Fairfax: George Mason UP, 1986), 45-46.

power as soon as some sort of functioning parliamentary democracy had been set up in Spain.

Finally—and perhaps most critically in terms of this study—the dictatorship's relationship with Spanish nationalism was no less muddied than that of the Restoration regime. That Primo de Rivera was a Spanish patriot is not in doubt; but that he can be called a Spanish nationalist is a rather more open to question. He did issue edicts that promoted the use of the Spanish flag and made Castilian the official language for all state occasions. However, all of these moves were prompted by a greater push for autonomy on the part of the government of Catalonia, which had believed that the dictator's relationship with the province (he had been Capitan General of Catalonia at the time of the coup, and Barcelona had provided the bedrock of his support) would encourage a loosening of ties from Madrid.[17] Virtually all of the dictatorship's attempts at imposing the trappings of Spanish nationalism on the state were driven by the need to suppress the pressure for autonomy coming out of Catalonia (and later the Basque Country). All of this had the ironic impact of strengthening regionalist culture at the expense of Spanish nationalism, much as similar moves by the Franco dictatorship would in the second half of the twentieth century.

Even as the dictatorship attempted to quell regional autonomy, it was concurrently making municipal governments more important. Primo de Rivera had come to power based partially on his regenerationist claims to rid Spain of the caciques who had made Spanish government a sham and a farce. The way in which the dictatorship went about trying to defeat caciquismo was to strengthen local

[17] On Primo de Rivera's relationship with Catalonia, see Ben-Ami, 194-202.

governments, believing that increased local autonomy would help to offset the influence of the caciques.[18] It never worked in the manner that Primo de Rivera intended. The reformed municipal governments were severely underfunded, and as such the new posts were unattractive to those who might have provided impetus towards some real reform. The traditional power structure of the caciques remained in the countryside. However, this emphasis on local government arrested the centralization of the Restoration regime. The upshot of the dictatorship is that it increased the emphasis on localism and regionalism—even when such was not the intent, as with the measures against Catalan autonomy. For all Primo de Rivera's claims about unifying the Spanish nation, he did more to arrest the progress of Spanish nationalism than the half-hearted attempts of the Restoration regime ever had.

The lyric stage reflects the new regionalist discourse of the dictatorship. Zarzuelas with specific regional tinges had been rare before the 1920s; but by 1930, virtually every region had its own zarzuela. Jacinto Guerrero, as we have seen, covered the Spanish heartland with *El huésped del Sevillano* and *La rosa del azafrán*. The Basque Country saw its music and several folk dances staged in Jesús Guridi's 1926 zarzuela *El caserío* (The Homestead); two years later, Galician bagpipes helped to form the background for Pablo Luna's *La chula de Pontevedra* (The Dame from Pontevedra).[19] José Serrano's *Los de Aragón* from 1927 depicts the travails of a singer from ... well, Aragón. Impoverished and unromantic Murcia gets what was

[18] For the clearest explanation of the municipal government reforms, see Rial, 79-98.

[19] Admittedly, *La chula de Pontevedra* is set in Madrid—although the titular character is from the Galician city in the title. "Chula" is one of the those words that more or less defies translation: it generally refers to a lower-class woman from Madrid who is flashy and cunning, although often with a heart of gold (especially on the musical stage).

arguably the best regional treatment on the lyric stage, Francico Alonso's *La parranda* from 1928.[20] A few Catalan composers not only started writing zarzuelas, but they actually wrote them in Catalan—the most famous being Rafael Martínez Valls' 1926 work *Cançó d'amor i de guerra* (A Song of Love and War), which was deemed sufficiently noteworthy to be recorded in the 1960s with Monserrat Caballé. No longer were the other regions of Spain being absorbed by Madrid, as had happened to the Galician nursemaids in *Agua, azucarillos, y aguardiente*. The increasing emphasis on regionalism unwittingly set in motion by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship resulted in a series of zarzuelas where the region was more important than the nation.

The connection between politics and culture was made explicit in an editorial that linked Spanish lyric theatre with the state of the country. Approximately one month after the pronunciamiento of 13 September 1923, the conservative daily *La Epoca* took the unusual step of building its leading editorial commentary around the premiere of a zarzuela. The premiere of *Doña Francisquita* would have merited extensive coverage in *La Epoca* in any event, since one of the librettists (Guillermo Fernándaez-Shaw) was on the staff of the newspaper. (In fact, the review of the work was one-and-one-half columns long: it was the one of the most lengthy items in the newspaper that day.) *La Epoca* deplored the turn that Spanish composers had made towards Viennese operetta and revues in the French style in the name of regeneration, equating it with Spanish politicians who modeled their policies after foreign

[20] Another difficult to translate title. "Parranda" has three different meanings: it can be a spree, a group of itinerant musicians, or a Murcian folk dance. All three feature prominently in the plot of *La parranda*. Christopher Webber's *The Zarzuela Companion* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 24, also notes that the title roughly translates as "wayward woman," which is a fair characterization of the leading lady.

politicians like René Waldeck-Rousseau, David Lloyd George, and Benito Mussolini.[21]

The core of *La Epoca*'s argument was that the true sentiment of the Spanish nation was not to be found by imitating foreigners in either politics or culture but by looking to the strength of Spain "in light of her own history." It then proceeded to praise Amadeo Vives, the composer of *Doña Francisquita*, for doing exactly this; but the praise of the editorial took a decidedly political tone in its final paragraph:

> This people [*pueblo*] that yesterday acclaimed Vives for his gesture of resurrection of Spanish zarzuela with its classical literary model, tradition [*castiza*] in setting and situation, in songs and in dances, surely knows that we have a constitutional period in Cádiz, inaugurated by Muñoz Torrero, which is the archive of good government; they know that we have a Jovellanos, who had nothing to envy from foreign statesmen regarding his capacity of vision; they know that in our recent history we had a Cánovas, who remade Spain and its institutions…[22]

The political parallels that *La Epoca* draws are extremely odd: while the eighteenth-century reformer Jovellanos was driven by nativist concerns, to call the 1812 Constitution of Cádiz a specifically Spanish document rather misses the mark. While inspired by the Spanish uprising against Napoleon, it was built around the same liberal principles that emanated from the French Revolution—specifically the Declaration of the Rights of Man—in the first place. And then there is the ambiguous final clause of the editorial, which would seem to imply that the Restoration government recast Spanish government in a foreign model. The final ellipsis implies what the conservative audience that *La Epoca* wrote for could fill in for themselves: just as

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[21] "La Tradición Española," *La Epoca*, 18 October 1923.
[22] "La Tradición Española," *La Epoca*, 18 October 1923. The original text ends with the ellipsis as quoted above.

Vives had remade Spanish music, so would Primo de Rivera remake Spanish government. Like the dictatorship, zarzuela was going to rely on Spanish tradition to cure the problems that beset the nation.

That the editorial in *La Epoca* was not merely an isolated gesture can be seen in the fact that the more left-leaning daily *El Liberal* took the unusual step the next day of running a story about an editorial in a competing newspaper. The author of the short piece did little more than sum up *La Epoca*'s argument, noting with a slightly cocked eyebrow that "*Doña Francisquita* will work a miracle that will return Spain to the jurisdiction [*fueros*] of its traditions, not only artistic, but political-constitutional as well."[23] This was then followed with a verbatim quote of the final paragraph of *La Epoca*'s editorial. *El Liberal* would have had to be veiled in any political criticism it offered—Primo de Rivera had instituted press censorship—but its brief summation offers little doubt that it looked askance at *La Epoca*'s pronouncement. But it is significant that zarzuela had cemented its position as a key component of Spanish culture, and such a key component that it could be discussed in the same breath with major political issues of the day. It is difficult to imagine an English newspaper doing this with Gilbert and Sullivan or Ivor Novello (if one looks for a post-Victorian parallel).[24]

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[23] "El tríunfo de *Doña Francisquita* y el régimen constitucional," *El Liberal*, 19 October 1923.

[24] Novello is not a direct parallel, since his operetta triumphs (like those of his better-known contemporary Noel Coward) date from the 1930s; however, English operetta underwent a severe dry spell after the breakup of Gilbert and Sullivan. Operetta production in England during the 1920s was dominated by American musical comedies and other foreign imports (mostly from Vienna).

But the editorial in *La Epoca* also unwittingly lays its finger on the key problem facing zarzuelas in the 1920s. The status of the zarzuela had risen to a point where it could be seriously discussed in constitutional terms. It was not quite the popular entertainment that it had been ever since the 1850s, no matter how hard regional folk music tried to reset the clock. One of the crucial features that the editorial isolated in *Doña Francisquita* was its "classicism in its literary model"; the notion that there was anything self-consciously literary about a zarzuela libretto would have surprised even the most eminent zarzuela librettists. The authors of Barbieri-style zarzuela grande spent most of their time "adapting" (or, less politely, "ripping off") their plots from French operettas, while the authors of the género chico—for all their emphasis on a naturalist style—were busy appealing to popular taste. For all the popularity of zarzuela in the 1920s, its status was not that of a popular art form. It was part of a national heritage; it had acquired an official status and as such had to aim its ambitions higher than mere popular entertainment. Just as zarzuela was becoming officially linked with the new dictatorship and could thus be discussed in political terms by the press, culturally zarzuela was rapidly solidifying its status as an elite and sophisticated art form. But this crystallization of zarzuela's pretensions would diminish the claims of the genre to represent the popular taste of the nation.

Amadeo Vives and the Literary Zarzuela

It is illustrative that the zarzuela *La Epoca* chose to discuss the new dictatorship was Amadeo Vives' *Doña Francisquita*. While the work was the first major theatrical premiere after Primo de Rivera came to power, it is also exemplary of

zarzuela's cultural attempt to regain its popular status. Just as zarzuela became aligned with the Spanish state, it was also turning into a prime example of Spanish elite culture. Zarzuela began to adapt its plots from the classic works of Spanish Golden Age theatre. The music coming from the orchestra pit increasingly revived the style of the classic zarzuela of the mid- to late-nineteenth century. While works like *Doña Francisquita* never gave up their aim of entertaining audiences, more and more they were using traditional literary and musical tropes to tell their stories. The turn to past forms was originally an appeal to zarzuela's popular audience by basing the works on familiar, tried-and-true stories. But the appeal to the past meant that zarzuela was building on the established canon of Spanish art. As zarzuela became culturally elite, the same thing that was happening to the genre politically also began to occur: zarzuela consolidated its status as an elite art form.

Much of the success of *Doña Francisquita* must be attributed to the plot, an intricate farce in which three pairs of mis-matched lovers eventually sort themselves out; the humor is heightened by the fact that the two men competing for the title character's hand are father and son, while Francisquita and her mother are both pursuing Fernando (the son). What makes this farce more rewarding than the average zarzuela libretto is the subtle characterization of the central lovers. Fernando is one of the few characters in all of operetta who actually matures emotionally as the play progresses, a process due mostly to Francisquita's subtle manipulations of her mother and her second suitor/prospective father-in-law. The success of the libretto must be laid at the feet of three men: Federico Romero and Carlos Fernández-Shaw, the

librettists, and the author of the source material for the work. The source in question is *La discreta enamorada* (The Discrete Lover), by Lope de Vega.

While the notion of adapting works from Spain's Golden Age was not exactly a radical idea, zarzuela librettists had generally steered away from its canonized "classics" and its major authors: Pedro Calderón, Tirso de Molina, and Lope de Vega.[25] The general consensus seems to have been that the major seventeenth century dramatists and their oeuvre were unsuitable for light lyric drama, much in the way Broadway musicals tend to avoid Shakespeare's tragedies as the basis for a fun evening at the theatre.[26] Vives had turned to the works of the Spanish Golden Age for his libretti from the beginning of his career: his first popular success, *Don Lucas del Cigarral*, was adapted from a play by minor seventeenth-century Spanish playwright Francisco de Rojas. As Vives' career progressed, he became somewhat bolder about his choices for libretto material. He might have been encouraged by his admirers: upon hearing *Don Lucas*, no less an eminence than Miguel de Unamuno declared he would like to hear Vives set Calderón's *La vida es sueño* (Life is a Dream)—arguably the greatest of Spain's Golden Age dramas—to music.[27] The selection of *La discreta enamorada* as potential zarzuela material originated with Vives. His collaboration with Romero and Fernández-Shaw originated in December 1922, when he met the librettists at the opening night party for Pablo Luna's *El hotel de las lunas de miel*

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[25] There's a certain amount of irony in this, given that Calderón is supposed to have written the libretto for the first zarzuela during the seventeenth century.

[26] Shakespearean comedy, on the other hand, has provided suitable inspiration: witness Rogers and Hart's *The Boys from Syracuse* or Cole Porter's *Kiss Me, Kate*.

[27] See Florentino Hernández Girbal, *Amadeo Vives: El músico y el hombre* (Madrid: Ediciones Lira, 1971), pages 130-133.

(The Honeymoon Hotel). According to tradition, Vives took the authors back to his apartment where he gave them a copy of Vega's play, claiming that "nobody but Lope … had captured the ambiance of Madrid."[28]

As with the music, the theatrical critics were enchanted by the libretto to *Doña Francisquita*; but much of their praise for Romero and Fernández-Shaw was directed to their sensitive adaptation of such an exalted author like Lope de Vega. The opening paragraph in the *La Epoca*'s review noted that the adaptation of a classic work had the potential to be an "unpardonable error."[29] The critic declared that the only way in which such an adaptation could be made was that it be done with "respect," and he fully concurred that Romero and Fernández-Shaw had shown the necessary respect to Lope de Vega. The critic for *El Sol* concurred, noting that while the authors were required to make significant changes in order to adapt the work for the lyric stage, "their hard work and discretion, which governs the complications of Lope's plot, reducing them by very modest proportions."[30] In each case, the upshot of the critics is clear: a play by Lope de Vega is a work of art, and one that needs to be approached with reverence. Only in this way could the familiar outlines that might make the work popular remain.

But in adapting one of Spain's literary classics, Vives and his librettists had done something even more significant: they had elevated what might have been merely a zarzuela, a piece of entertainment, into a work of art. *El Heraldo de Madrid*

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[28] Quoted in Hernández Girbal, *Amadeo Vives*, 269.
[29] Melchor Fernandez Almargro, "Veladas teatrales: Estreno de 'Doña Francisquita'—El libreto," *La Epoca*, 18 October 1923.
[30] E. Diez-Canedo, "El teatro," *El Sol*, 18 October 1923.

stated this most bluntly: "*Doña Francisquita* is, besides being an excellent theatrical work, a true work of art. In these times of prose and materialism that we are disgracedly living in, the mere fact of aspiring to write something of considerable aesthetic quality, something that is on a superior plane to the vulgarity and coarseness that prevail, is worthy of praise and indudable merit for those who carry out such work."[31] It is extremely difficult to imagine such praise being lavished upon even the most worthy specimens of the género chico. Most astonishing is the claim that *Doña Francisquita* was a work of art that prevailed against the rampant materialism of modernity. Zarzuela had always been about materialism: its duty had been to attract the largest number of customers into the theatre in order to create a profit for the authors and the impresarios. By 1923, however, zarzuela had many more competitors for the pesetas Spain devoted to entertainment: movies, cabaret and sporting events were beginning to loom larger in the entertainment pages of the daily newspapers. *Doña Francisquita* may not have been able to fully compete with Mary Pickford, but she did not really have to. Instead, zarzuela was "art." Nor would *Doña Francisquita* be the last attempt the authors made at adapting Spanish classics for zarzuela. Four years later, the same three gentlemen would present *La villana* (The Peasant Girl), a musical adaptation of one of Lope de Vega's most famous works, *Peribáñez y el Comendador* (Peribáñez and the Commander). The critics were enthusiastic, but the work did not last long on the stage: it seems that audiences found a light opera about *droit de seigneur* not to their liking. Romero and Fernández-Shaw had better luck

[31] José Forns, "Estreno en Apolo de 'Doña Francisquita: El maestro Vives obtiene un exito clamoroso," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 18 October 1923.

with their adaptation of Vega's *El perro del hortelano* (The Dog in the Manger) for Jacinto Guerrero in 1930—*La rosa del azafrán*, discussed in the introduction to this chapter.

However, the use of seventeenth-century source material for zarzuela libretti points up the fact that zarzuela had become accepted as art. Where the zarzuela librettists of the nineteenth century were reluctant to use the established classics of the Spanish tradition as the basis for a musical entertainment, by the 1920s librettists had very little hesitation about adding musical numbers to some of the most revered plays of Spain's Golden Age. It was one way that zarzuela attempted to regain its popular status, by relying on works familiar to a large number of Spaniards. There was virtually no outcry from the critics denouncing the practice, which helps demonstrate that zarzuela had left behind its origins in the commercial theatre and had become something more than just a light entertainment. Zarzuela had become not only an accepted part of the Spanish theatrical tradition, it had achieved status as art.

It was not merely the libretti of 1920s zarzuelas that had the critics invoking the "a" word. Vives' music was deemed integral to the achievement of *Doña Francisquita* (which is as it should be for any lyric piece), but critics also took note of the stylistic references he used in composing his score. Many noted the score's use of eighteenth century popular songs as models for the musical numbers—and one century's popular music is another century's high art. At least one music critic also approved of Vives' subtitle for the score: at the last minute, the composer changed the classification from "Zarzuela" to "Comedía lírica." The music critic for *La Epoca*

found this much to his liking, noting "when you hear the word zarzuela, you make an expression of disgust."[32] Clearly, the notion that zarzuela was a popular art form was not appealing to the music critics, a view that the anonymous critic for *El Imparcial* would seem to have agreed with: "there occur, even in works with a marked national character, the "fox" and the "shimmy" as an easy way of gaining applause, and the audience gives a hand to orchestral effects, to the hateful stridency of the "jazz-band." A work of the category of *Doña Francisquita* forcefully purifies this ambiance."[33] The very definition of popular music was changing in the 1920s; it was modern, American-style jazz that was proving to be popular. Zarzuela music was in danger of becoming as quaint as high-button shoes. Music critics began to speak of scores like Vives' as examples of elite culture. The critic for *ABC* claimed that Vives' music had "resuscitated Barbieri."[34] The invocation of Barbieri, who had been deified as one of Spain's greatest composers even before his death in 1894, says it all. Vives had entered the pantheon of Spanish Composers. *Doña Francisquita* was not entertainment, it was art.

It was no coincidence that the critic for *ABC* was reminded Barbieri, for Vives' score was a self-conscious resurrection of the musical forms of the zarzuela grande that Barbieri had perfected between 1850 and 1880. Gone from *Doña Francisquita* is the urban dance music of the género chico; gone, too, are the Viennese-style waltzes and other trappings of Central European operetta that had flourished in the previous

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[32] Víctor Espinós, "Veladas teatrales: Estreno de 'Doña Francisquita'—La música," *La Epoca*, 18 October 1923.
[33] "Un triunfo grande del maestro Vives," *El Imparcial*, 18 October 1923.
[34] Floridor, "Espectaculos y deportes," *ABC*, 18 October 1923.

decade. Instead, Vives reverts to the traditional folk forms that had helped the zarzuela to establish its reputation. Street musicians play a pasa-calle as the introduction to the musical scene between Aurora, Fernando and Cardona that establishes the love-triangle plot (No. 3 in the vocal score); Aurora herself has a bolero that leads into an orchestral fandango at the climax of the work (No. 13). The key song to establishing the play's main theme—the celebration of youthful love known as "Canción de la juventud" (Song of Youth; No. 4A in the vocal score)—is a seguidillas. This song is reprised in the finale of the play, so the audience would have left the theatre with a Spanish folk-style melody ringing in their ears.

It was not only in terms of musical style that Vives had revived the zarzuela grande; he also revived the role of the chorus in the musical action. The role and importance of the chorus had diminished with the ascension of the género chico in the 1890s, and their role in the operetta-style works of the early twentieth century was generally that of musical decoration. In *Doña Francsiquita*, however, they become critical to establishing the setting of the work. The chorus is first allowed to go to work in full force during the aforementioned "Canción de la juventud": in addition to being the thematic crux of the work, it also serves as the celebration of Madrid that Vives had in mind when he first provided *La discreta enamorada* to Romero and Fernández-Shaw. The song and the chorus link the notion of youthfulness with Madrid itself, noting that "The happy song of youth / is the soul of old Madrid."[35] While not the strictly nationalist sentiment that featured in the Barbieri-style zarzuela

[35] "Canto alegre de la juventud / que eres alma del viejo Madrid." Federico Romero and Guillermo Fernández-Shaw, *Doña Francisquita*, ed. Xosé Aviñoa (Madrid: Ediciones Daimon, 1986), I.x.

grande, it does establish the chorus as representatives of the people of a Spanish location. The authors also use the chorus to similar effect in the Act I finale, where a wedding celebration segues directly into a chorus celebrating Madrid (No. 5). Even in the revival of traditional zarzuela forms, the 1920s trend towards celebrating regional and local identities could still be present.

Vives also uses the chorus to establish the temporal location of his work as well. Like Barbieri's zarzuela grande, *Doña Francisquita* is set in the historical past—although not the eighteenth century settings that Barbieri himself used. In fact, one can see a pattern in the use of historical backdrops for zarzuela: for some reason, most historical backdrops are approximately 80 years in the past. Hence we see the use of the late eighteenth century in the 1860s and 1870s, the use of the Napoleonic Wars in the 1890s and the use of 1840s Madrid in the 1920s. This is most obvious in the opening scene of Act II, which is set against a Carnival ball. The chorus represents the local religious fraternity (*cofradía*) which helped to organize the Lenten festivities. In retrospect, there is an obvious contrast with the dancing habits of the 1920s—a secularized, mass-culture leisure activity—and the dancing of mid-nineteenth century Spain, where it was reserved for special celebrations like Carnival. In essence, the chorus is used to establish that the zarzuela takes place in an era before mass culture became dominant. The chorus is used to make a similar point in the Act III opening, the famous Chorus of the Romantics. The authors revive a period in which romancing one's sweetheart in the dark meant a moonlit walk in the park, not taking her to the cinema. Madrid in the 1840s is used in *Doña Francisquita* as a more

innocent and quieter past, before the disruptions of modern culture that pervaded the world in which Vives was writing. It is little wonder that the critics spoke of the work in terms of a work of art, since it consciously rejected the mass-culture dominated world of the 1920s.

The backdrop of Romantic-era Madrid was used to even greater effect by Federico Alonso in his 1925 work *La Calesera* (The Chaise-Driver's Daughter). If *Doña Francsiquita* most closely resembles the zarzuela grande of the 1880s, with its emphasis on romantic love, *La Calesera* reverts to the earlier style of zarzuela grande that uses history to make political points. Set in 1832, the plot of the work is built around the clash between the forces of liberalism and absolutism in the twilight of Ferdinand VII's reign, as a troupe of actors finds itself rescuing the liberal aristocrat Rafael from prison (although he ends up escaping the country at the bittersweet end of the zarzuela with fellow aristocrat Elena and not his actress-lover, the chaise-driver's daughter of the title). With historical hindsight, it is difficult not to read the plot as a commentary on the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. No critic at the time seems to have made the connection, although whether out of ignorance or self-preservation is open to question. Only the review in *El Imparcial* even noted the political subtext of the work, commenting that the play "offers us a picturesque episode of the persecution of the liberals in the year 1832": the unfortunate phrasing makes it unclear if the author thought that the persecution of liberals was picturesque rather than the Romantic-era setting.[36]

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[36] A.F.L., "Los últimos estrenos: Zarzuela—"La calesera," *El Imparcial*, 13 December 1925.

It is Alonso's use of the chorus that makes the claim that *La Calesera* was a piece of political criticism tenable. Unlike the traditional zarzuela grande, Alonso only uses the full chorus in its guise as the Spanish people once. This is the Act I finale, in which Rafael denounces any pursuit of love while political ideals remain in danger. This is the famous Hymn to Liberty, the show-stopping moment of the work (No. 4 in the vocal score).[37] With its unabashed opening line, "No hay bien más hermoso que la libertad" ("There is nothing more beautiful than liberty") and stirring music, the Hymn celebrates the freedoms that the Primo de Rivera government had a tendency to abrogate; by closing Act I with a recap of the Hymn by the full chorus, Alonso and his librettists associate the Spanish people with the protection of liberty. This sentiment would not have been out of place in Barbieri's *Pan y toros*, with its celebration of Enlightenment political ideals. The audience may well have understood this. The Hymn to Liberty had to be repeated three times at the premiere and was received with "strenuous acclamations."[38] Perhaps the 1832 backdrop would have provided camouflage had the government tried to make an issue of the work's political stance; in any event, *La Calesera* was allowed to remain on the boards.

Like *Doña Francisquita*, *La Calesera* also used Spanish folk idioms like the seguidillas in its musical construction. Both works also harked back to the complex musical construction of the zarzuela grande that had been abandoned by the género chico in the 1880s and 1890s: complex musical scenes and elaborate ensemble numbers are the rule rather than the exception in these works. Both scores also return

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[37] Federico Alonso, *La Calesera: Zarzuela en tres actos* (Madrid: Editorial Música Española, 1926).
[38] A.F.L., "Los últimos estrenos…"

to the use of the *romanza*, an operatic aria-style musical number, as the centerpiece of the romance driven portions of the plot. In fact, many of the 1920s zarzuelas were a return to the highly complex and operatic scores (like Chapí's *La bruja*) that had characterized the twilight of the zarzuela grande. Although certain composers had tried this tactic of composing operatic scores for zarzuelas during the previous decade (notably Usandizaga's *Las golondrinas*), the emphasis was no longer on regenerating Spanish music by imposing an operatic formula. Instead, the emphasis was now on using musical styles that had once been popular to recapture zarzuela's status as popular entertainment.

But even as zarzuela was trying to recapture its popular past, it was also indulging in the use of operatic tropes that had made it elite culture in the previous decade. The operatic trend is most obvious in the scores of the composing team of Reveriano Soutullo and Juan Vert, whose relatively small output was crucial to the zarzuela revival of the 1920s. The duo first came to prominence with their 1924 work *La leyenda del beso* (The Legend of the Kiss), a romantic farrago revolving around a gypsy curse. Although the score has been dismissed as "poor man's Puccini," the score's shortcomings can probably be attributed to the necessity of casting singing actors rather than trained singers in the leading roles.[39] Within its own limits, *La leyenda del beso* has a sweeping and melodic through-composed score that very rarely uses the repetitious and strophic melodies common to operetta in general and zarzuela in particular. While Soutullo and Vert's subsequent scores would not be as manifestly

[39] This somewhat harsh evaluation of the score is by Christopher Webber. See *The Zarzuela Companion* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 231.

operatic as *La leyenda del beso*, they would demonstrate the influence of operatic tropes in zarzuela material.

That influence is most prevalent in the team's most famous work, 1927's *La del soto del parral* (The Woman from the Vineyard in the Grove). From its inception, *La del soto* seems to have been constructed to demonstrate that zarzuelas could operate with subtlety: it may well be the only theatrical work about a love triangle in which the "other woman"—the titular character—never appears onstage. The score is not fully operatic: there are several strophic numbers for the comic relief characters and at least one choral number that was designed to be an audience pleaser ("Donde estarán nuestros mozos"—Where our young men will be—No. 4 in the vocal score).[40] But when the score of *La del soto* focuses upon the central dramatic conflict between husband Miguel and wife Aurora, Soutullo and Vert revert to the traditional romanza and duet structures that characterized similar emotional climaxes in the zarzuela grande. Most notable in this regard is the duet that closes the first act (No. 5 in the vocal score): in an operatic attempt to match the constantly shifting emotions of the characters in musical terms, the duet changes its time and key signatures with astonishing rapidity. Furthermore, rather than coming to a decisive end, Soutullo and Vert choose to let the music fade away into underscoring and allow a book scene to bring down the Act I curtain. While *La del soto* is an unquestionably popular zarzuela, it seems to have been designed with a damn-the-groundlings attitude in mind

[40] See the vocal score: Reveriano Soutullo and Juan Vert, *La del soto del parral: Zarzuela en dos actos* (Madrid: Sociedad de Autores Españoles, 1927).

at times: Soutullo and Vert were going to write music to match the drama without fully embracing the musical imperatives that would bring an audience to its feet.

The purist approach did not always work, as Amadeo Vives discovered with the other major "operatic" zarzuela of 1927, *La villana*: the through-composed score for that work ignores strophic, applause-catching music almost completely. As with *La del soto del parral*, the romanzas and duets never quite come to a complete stop but rather fade away.[41] Vives realized that the intensely dramatic story of *La villana* would require a dramatic and operatic score; unlike Soutullo and Vert (and even unlike his own *Doña Francisquita*), Vives' attempt at an operatic score never managed to find a happy medium between the demands of musical drama and the marketplace. But the fact that one has to discuss zarzuela music in these terms shows just how much zarzuela had evolved since its revival in the 1850s. As with the libretti, zarzuela music could now be legitimately considered artistic. Entertainment was no longer the primary concern of those who created zarzuela: it was now about creating works of art.

The Theatrical Crisis of 1926

The consolidation of zarzuela's status as an elite art form is most clearly reflected in the theatrical crisis of 1926, which firmly removed zarzuela from its popular roots and made it an agent of the Spanish state. The crisis had been sparked by a debate within the Spanish theatrical community, both legitimate and lyric: was live theatre art or entertainment? The question was not an idle one. Of the new genres

[41] See the vocal score: Amadeo Vives, *La villana: Zarzuela en tres actos* (Madrid: Sociedad de Autores Españoles, 1927).

of popular culture, only cabaret was based on live performance—and what made cabaret popular was sex, not the traditional theatrical virtues of plot and characterization. The solution to the crisis was to acknowledge that theatre was art, not entertainment, and to institutionalize its role in society. Thus zarzuela, the genre that had spent most of its life critiquing Spanish institutions, became an institution itself.

The notion of a "theatrical crisis" in the 1920s seems to have been born in the mind of Eduardo del Portillo, the theatre critic for *El Heraldo de Madrid*, who equated theatre with art. In a review of the 1925-1926 Madrid theatrical season that ran over three weeks in July 1926, Portillo argued that what seemed to be a luminous season of plays by Spain's most eminent playwrights and composers (here Portillo included the first zarzuela by Federico Moreno Torroba, for whom the critic accurately predicted "a future of glory and fortune") was actually the least successful on record: "never has the public been as bored as it has been at the recent premieres."[42] The argument that Portillo spun out for the following three weeks—a lengthy diatribe, even by Spanish journalistic standards—revolved around the tension created in the theatre by the need to make money.

The argument that Portillo makes is neatly summed up by two lists that he creates early in the first article that define the priorities within the theatre.

> The theatre is the most complicated machine that we know of.
> The theatre ought to be:
> First, the author.

[42] Eduardo M. del Portillo, "Cómo acaba una temporada y de cómo debiera empezar la siguiente," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 3 July 1926. Portillo's series of articles—all with the same title—continued on 17 July 1926 and concluded on 24 July 1926.

> Second, the actor.
> Third, the impresario.
> Fourth, the critics.
> Fifth, the audience.
> And so on. But this is an illusion.
> Reality has fashioned another classification of what the theatre is:
> First, the box-office.
> Second, the taxes.
> Third, the light bill.
> Fourth, the stagehand's union.
> Fifth, the musician's union.
> Sixth, the critics.
> Seventh, the audience.
> Eighth, the impresario.
> Ninth, the actor.
> Tenth, the author.[43]

Portillo's original list of what the theatre ought to be is a highly romanticized vision in which the theatre is a vehicle for expressing the personal vision of the playwright; the importance of the other participants is relevant only insofar as they are useful to carrying out this mission in which the author is supreme. (This is the only possible explanation for Portillo's placing critics ahead of the public on the list, since the critic is presumably necessary to tell the public just what the author's vision is, anyway.) While this argument is perfectly congruent with European artistic philosophy as it developed in the nineteenth century, it does not reflect Spanish theatre as it developed since the advent of modern zarzuela in the 1850s. Spanish theatre was a popular theatre, in which the wishes and desires of the audience were paramount—and in which authors catered to those demands, sometimes with work of exceptional quality and sometimes with tripe. Portillo dismisses this history, constructing a version in which the "art" of the author triumphs over the "commerce" demanded by the public.

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[43] Portillo, "Cómo acaba una temporada…," 3 July 1926.

His subsequent list of what the theatre actually looks like, however, is grounded in one of the more distressing realities of the popular theatre: its overriding economic aspect. Theatre is an expensive proposition: the rent on the theatre must be paid, the government must receive its tax income, the electricity company must be paid, the stagehands and the pit musicians must receive their wages. But Portillo implicitly argues in his list (an argument that becomes explicit as the article progresses) that these basic necessities have become the *raison d'être* of the theatre. The operating overhead of the modern theatre is much more expensive, which in turn has the consequence of dictating what plays the impresarios choose to stage—and this places the artistic vision of the author dead last. Ultimately, commerce cheapens art.

The overarching argument that Portillo makes in his series of articles is that the theatre suffers simply because its role and purpose in society is unclear. In his second article, Portillo makes this clear by discussing the different ways in which the state and the electrical companies view the theatre: for the state, the theatre is an industry and thus subject to taxation. Fair enough, except that the electrical companies categorize theatres not as industries but as private buildings, which must pay higher rates for electricity.[44] There is a similar confusion when it comes to the unionization of the theatres: while Portillo does not begrudge the stagehands the right to organize for higher pay, he does denounce the unions for focusing only upon questions of pay and the number of workers required in each theatre while ignoring how they might improve the effects they are called upon to stage night after night. The unions are only interested in the economic and not the artistic aspects of the theatre.

[44] Eduardo M. del Portillo, "Cómo acaba una temporada…," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 17 July 1926.

Nor do the actors and the audiences escape Portillo's withering glance. Portillo launches into what he terms "the vanity of the theatrical artist" and the desire for actors only to play roles in which they can shine, rather than roles which help to illuminate the larger artistic goals of the play: he even goes so far as to call such actors lazy.[45] And although Portillo does claim "I deny that the audience only likes to laugh," he does characterize the average audience member as saying "I don't want to think."[46] All of Portillo's criticisms can be boiled down to a single, overriding cause. Nobody—not the audience, not the actors, not the electric company, not the State—recognizes the true role of the theatre, which is to promote Art. Instead all of these entities seem to think that the theatre is supposed to be about entertainment: the audience so that it may enjoy itself, other groups so that they can make money from the theatre. The development of other forms of popular culture like the cabaret and the cinema, as we saw in Chapter V, pushed live theatre into its new status as an elite art form. Portillo's declaration that Spain was undergoing a theatrical crisis in 1926 confirms this change in status. Although the claim that theatre was Art would have seemed ludicrous to most denizens of the theatre in the 1890s (and this holds especially true for those who worked in zarzuela), by the mid-1920s popular culture had changed to such an extent that Portillo's claim seemed quite logical and rational.

Of course, to a certain extent the "crisis" of 1926 was an intellectual debate about the role of the theatre in society. The actual denizens of the theatre—actors,

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[45] Eduardo M. del Portillo, "Cómo acaba una temporada…," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 24 July 1926.
[46] Portillo, "Cómo acaba una temporada…," 24 July 1926. He does contrast this with the view of the critic: "Piensa con elevadas miras. Sé transcendental." ("Think upon elevated purposes. It must be transcendental.")

directors, stagehands—were divided on whether the crisis of the theatre even existed at all. *El Heraldo de Madrid* ran a series of articles in March 1927 posing this exact question. The results were split, and the answers sometimes surprising. Margarita Xirgu, one of the most respected serious actresses of day, responded flatly that the crisis did not exist. In contrast, the box-office manager at the Teatro Apolo (one of the traditional homes of popular theatre), Rafael Arjonilla Calderón, stated at great length that there was a crisis of the theatre: among other things, he blamed it on "the impresarios abandoning themselves to the arms of love"—proving, perhaps, that the casting couch is a multi-cultural phenomenon.[47]

In spite of this ambivalence about the division between art and entertainment, the theatrical crisis of 1926 was not merely something that resided in the mind of Eduardo del Portillo and the pages of *El Heraldo de Madrid*. During the fall and winter of 1926-1927 the most intellectually minded of the Madrid dailies, *El Sol*, also weighed in on the issue. The tone in which *El Sol* chose to address the theatrical crisis can be summed up by the first article on the subject: "The Transcendental Problem of the Theatre."[48] This article stressed the role of the theatre in collective life, citing the examples of Greek theatre and the role of theatre in Shakespearean England, and concluded that "This ought to be enough to indicate the extraordinary importance of theatrical activity in the life of a nation and the preferred attention that governments

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[47] See Carlos Sampelayo, "Habla el taquillero de Apolo," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 19 March 1927. The other articles in the series "Ante la crisis del teatro" included interviews with the heads of theatrical companies ("Los directores de compañias opinan..." 4 March 1927, 5 March 1927, 7 March 1927 and 9 March 1927), important actors ("¿Existe o no existe?" 10 March 1927 and 17 March 1927) and other box office managers ("Hablan los taquilleros," 30 March 1927).

[48] Ricardo Baeza, "El trascendental problema del Teatro," *El Sol*, 19 October 1926, 1.

ought to dedicate to it" because of its "immense influence" over "the culture and spirituality of the people [*pueblo*]."[49] For Ricardo Baeza, the theatre critic of *El Sol* and the author of this series of articles on the theatrical crisis, the theatre was even more than Art; theatre was the very location of the soul and the identity of the nation.

Baeza's series of articles, which were placed under the general heading "Regarding the Problem of the Theatre" ("En torno al problema del teatro"), were published in *El Sol* between October 1926 and January 1927. These articles were wide-ranging philosophical looks at the role of the theatre in modern life; Baeza's ultimate conclusion was that the crisis of the Spanish theatre was a disconnect between the theatre and the intellectual life of the nation, or what he called "the lack of correspondence between the aforementioned artistic activities and the intellectual disciplines."[50] Baeza originally contrasted the theatre with other aspects of Spanish artistic life—painting, orchestral music, literature—and argued that the theatre was intellectually "retrograde."[51] Interestingly, while he laid part of the blame for this on the insularity of the Spanish theatre and its lack of contact with other European theatres (shades of the regenerationist movement), most of the blame was laid at the feet of the usual suspects: the impresarios seeking profits, critics who refused to fulfill their basic functions, actors who refused to delve deep into their art, and the like.

Of course, there does arise the question of what makes any of this a "crisis"; why cannot theatre simply be entertainment? For Baeza, theatre was more than just entertainment or even just art: theatre was a "moral institution." Quoting an essay by

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[49] Baeza, "El trascendental problema del Teatro," 1.
[50] Ricardo Baeza, "El menos culpable," *El Sol*, 2 November 1926, 1.
[51] Baeza, "El menos culpable," 1.

Schiller, Baeza claims that the theatre is nothing less than "a great school of practical wisdom, a guide to civil life, a key to all the corners of the soul."[52] Art in general—and the theatre in particular—play an educating role in showing how a society should behave, what the morals of a society should be, and what the collective values of a society ought to include. Theatre is the apex of this moral function of art since, as Baeza argues, "the theatre is the only artistic modality in which the individual genius and the collective correspond."[53] Because theatre relies not only on the creation of artistic genius but on the appreciation of that genius in a collective arena (and unlike literature or the visual arts, which may be appreciated on an individual level), theatre unites the individual with the society in which they live. Theatre creates community.[54]

It is impossible to conceive of either Baeza's or Portillo's articles without the context of zarzuela's role in Spanish society over the previous fifty years. While both critics had grander ideals in mind when they wrote (such as Schiller or the ancient Greeks), what they described was precisely the role that zarzuela had played in Spain during the Bourbon Restoration. It had helped Spain grapple with the changing demographic nature of its national identity; by serving as a model for the potential regeneration of Spain, it had provided an example of what the collective values of Spanish society could possibly be. Zarzuela had been perhaps the most serious

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[52] Ricardo Baeza, "' La Escena como institución moral'," *El Sol*, 8 January 1927, 1.
[53] Baeza, "' La Escena como institución moral'," 1.
[54] In addition to the articles previously cited, Baeza's other entries in the series "En torno al problema del teatro" (all of which ran on the first page of their respective issues of *El Sol*) are: "Criticón, critilo y compañia," 6 November 1926; "El carro de Tespis," 11 November 1926; "Nuestra farándula," 15 November 1926; "Telon dentro," 19 November 1926; "Empresas y empresarios," 22 November 1926; "De la organización teatral," 29 November 1926; "La manufactura teatral," 3 December 1926; "La lacra del industrialismo," 15 December 1926; "Táctica industrial," 20 December 1926; "Nacionales y extranjeros," 28 December 1926; "Campo en barbecho," 13 January 1927; and "Capítulo de soluciones," 18 January 1927.

attempt to unite individual Spaniards into a larger national community. Certainly, none of the efforts of the Spanish state itself were as influential or had as much potential to mobilize as large a part of the Spanish people as lyric theatre had.

The theatrical crisis of 1926 was nothing less than the recognition that the role of the theatre was exactly what zarzuela had been doing all along: creating and expressing those values that were assumed to be quintessentially Spanish. Most zarzuela composers and librettists had seen nothing wrong with doing this in a fashion that was more entertaining than artistic—and thus, zarzuela had helped to create the theatrical crisis of the 1920s. Zarzuela's inherent need for a popular audience in order to expound its nationalistic message had essentially created the gap between art and entertainment that Baeza and Portillo were decrying. Ironically, however, the popular nationalism placed zarzuela on the entertainment side of this equation: zarzuela could only be considered part of the problem, not part of the solution.

Since commercialism was at the root of theatre's abandonment of its role as a moral institution, the critics decided that state intervention was the only way by which theatre could regain its authority. It is unfortunate that the ultimate solution to the theatrical crisis was to associate zarzuela further with the Spanish state. Through association with the state, zarzuela finally abandoned its popular roots, which had been based in a critique of the state. The first call for what would eventually become a series of plans—often highly contested—for the establishment of some sort of National Theatre in Spain, much as Italy and England had recently established

National Theatres, was issued by the Sociedad de Autores Españoles.[55] At the behest of *El Heraldo de Madrid*, the SAE held a meeting that discussed the theatrical crisis in September of 1926 and called for, "with the greatest possible urgency, 'an Assembly General of Theatres': of impresarios, artists, employees and us, the authors."[56] Technically, Spain did have two theatres that were associated with the state: the Teatro Español (which had been nationalized in 1849) for legitimate drama and the Teatro Real for lyric drama. Neither of these theatres, however, had anything like a program that would showcase Spanish drama (the Real, as we have seen, often did everything it could to avoid staging Spanish operas) and neither theatre was actually run by the government, which turned the operation of both over to a series of independent impresarios.

It was in the realm of lyric theatre that the goal of a national repertory theatre first came into existence; even as the SAE was attempting to convoke an assembly on the question, the stagehands and the musicians of the Teatro de la Zarzuela were preparing for the opening production of the 1926-1927 season, which would be the first production of the Teatro Lírico Nacional. The goal of this national theatre was to promote the performance of all genres of lyric theatre—not only zarzuela, but opera as well. The establishment of a national lyric theatre came about, to a great extent, by accident. A routine fire inspection of the Teatro Real in the spring of 1925 revealed

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[55] For a brief overview of the question of a National Theatre in the pre-Civil War period, see Juan Aguilera Sastre, "El debate sobre el teatro nacional durante la Dictadura y la Republica," *El teatro en España: Entre la tradición y la vanguardia (1918-1939)*, ed. Dru Dougherty and María Francisca Vilches (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1992), 175-187. See also Chapter IX ("El teatro nacional") of María Francisca Vilches and Dru Dougherty, *La escena madrileña entre 1926 y 1931: Un lustro de transición* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1997).

[56] Federico Navas, "Encuesta sobre la crisis del teatro," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 4 September 1926.

that Madrid's opera house was in a dangerously decrepit condition. The theatre was temporarily closed pending renovations; when it became clear those renovations would be an extremely long time in the offing, an alternate venue for opera in Madrid had to be found.[57] The government settled on the Teatro de la Zarzuela, and developed the idea of the Teatro Lírico Nacional, which would alternate performances of opera and zarzuela during the season. The composers Pablo Luna and Federico Moreno Torroba, along with librettist Luis Pascual Frutos were selected as the impresarios; they served alongside Luis París, who was the artistic director. For the first time in Spanish theatrical history, state funds would be used to assist the production of zarzuelas. Zarzuela had become part of the official apparatus of the Spanish state.

It was certainly no accident that the first production of the Teatro Lírico Nacional on 23 September 1926 was of Ruperto Chapí's *La bruja*. Not only was Chapí one of Spain's most revered composers, but *La bruja* (as discussed in Chapter I) was a classic zarzuela grande with a score of operatic complexity. It may well have been the work's position on the boundary between opera and zarzuela that led the impresarios to select it. Indeed, the reaction of many critics seems to have been to look forward to the moment in which zarzuela and opera would cease to be two genres and become one, much as they had been in the 1850s when zarzuela first began to distinguish itself from its Italian counterpart. This is certainly what the critic for *El*

[57] In fact, the proposed renovations were still on the drawing board when the Civil War broke out in 1936, and an incendiary bomb destroyed the interior during the siege of Madrid late in the year. The Teatro Real was not reopened until 1966—as a concert hall for the Orquesta Sinfónica de Madrid. Opera was not staged at the Teatro Real again until 1997.

Heraldo de Madrid prophesied: "One happy day our musicians will have brought zarzuela to the border of opera and will decide valiantly to tackle the business."[58] Even a mundane symbolic gesture seemed to hint at the convergence of zarzuela and opera, as that same critic also noted that the seats from the Teatro Real had been installed in the Teatro de la Zarzuela.

The opening season of zarzuela at the Teatro Lírico Nacional divided itself between revivals of important works like *La bruja* and *Doña Francisquita* and premieres of works that were deemed to be of special merit like Jesús Guridi's *El caserío* and Vives' *La villana*. And while the season was an artistic success, it was not long before critics of the Teatro Lírico Nacional began to question its mission and its goals. The critics' main salvo was fired off by one Rafael Marquina in an open letter to the leadership of the Teatro Lírico Nacional. The letter, published in *El Heraldo de Madrid* on 22 October 1926, focused on a claim made by Luna, Frutos, Moreno Torroba, and París that their goal was to establish an "autonomous body" (*Ente Autónomo*) for the production of lyric theatre. As an autonomous body, the Teatro Lírico Nacional would be independent of the "industrial enterprises" that churned out theatre for profit and could thus focus on creating Spanish art.[59]

Maquina's main criticism was that the leaders of the Teatro Lírico Nacional had given no concrete plans for the ways in which the theatre would promote Spanish art, relying instead upon generalities. The impresarios had turned down the services of Eugenio Casals, the artistic director of the zarzuela company at the Teatro Fuencarral,

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[58] "El Teatro Lírico Nacional," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 24 September 1926.
[59] See Rafael Maquina, "Movimiento teatral: Teatro Lírico Nacional," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 22 October 1926.

and were appearing to work against the interests of other zarzuela companies by presenting new works in addition to the classics of the zarzuela canon. All of this, Maquina argued, was inappropriate for a theatre that was essentially an arm of the state.[60] The impresarios responded that the Teatro Lírico Nacional was not, in fact, an arm of the state; it was an independent body whose main goal was to find a way to work outside the system of industrial theatre that was then prevalent.[61]

On the other hand, when the impresarios got around to defining what their mission was, one might be forgiven for thinking that Maquina had a point. Their description of the mission of the Teatro Lírico Nacional does not sound all that different from the profit-driven industrial theatre that everybody in the debate was criticizing: "Our program? … To better and improve our brilliant company; to premiere the works of acclaimed or new authors that gain our confidence, without neglecting the revival on the boards of the classic works of our national repertory."[62] Crucially, impresarios also rejected the idea that the Teatro Lírico Nacional was supposed to stage those zarzuelas that were closest in feel to opera, although this may seem somewhat disingenuous when one looks at the musical sophistication of the works staged in the autumn of 1926. All in all, it looked to Maquina as if the Teatro Lírico Nacional was trying to have its cake and eat it too: while protesting about their important goal in solidifying a national culture, the impresarios were at the same time behaving like heads of the for-profit theatres. There is an undercurrent to Maquina's

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[60] Maquina, "Movimiento teatral…"
[61] Pablo Luna, Luis Pascual Frutos, Federico Moreno Torroba and Luis París, "Teatro lírico nacional: Respuesta al Sr. D. Rafael Maquina," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 28 October 1926.
[62] Luna et. al, "Teatro lírico nacional…"

argument; while never explicitly stating so, he seems to be accusing the impresarios of profiting from both the state and the public.[63] Rather than standing for Spanish culture, the Teatro Lírico Nacional was in fact even more of a money-hungry machine than the so-called industrial theatres. By associating with the Spanish state, zarzuela had become part of the system that it had critiqued for so long.

The debate over the Teatro Lírico Nacional died out over the course of the 1926-1927 season, and the impresarios of the Teatro de la Zarzuela stopped using the term to advertise their productions. The idea of a national theatre would be revived in the 1930s under the Second Republic, when Amadeo Vives was appointed the head of the Junta Nacional de la Música y los Teatros Líricos.[64] But at the end of the 1920s, the split that zarzuela had created between elite and popular culture had developed a most ironic consequence. It had created a system whereby that which defined the Spanish nation was "art"; and that art was quite distinct from what would entertain the masses. And it was this split that made zarzuela irrelevant: how could popular nationalism be encased in a piece of "art" that was not supposed to be entertaining—and thus popular? The theatre critics had misdiagnosed the situation. The moral relevance of the theatre was not that it taught lessons to the Spanish people; the morality of the theatre lay in the fact that it communicated the lessons the Spanish people wished to give to their leaders.

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[63] See his "El teatro lírico nacional: Apostillas a una replica," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, 10 November 1926.

[64] See Sol Burgete *Amadeo Vives* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1978), 99-100.

Theatre of the Past as Theatre of the Present

By the late 1920s, it must have seemed to older audience members that zarzuela had come full circle to the works they remembered from their youth: musically, zarzuelas like *Doña Francisquita* and *La calesera* were reviving the musical forms of the old zarzuela grande. The nationalization of the theatre and the increasing sophistication of scores like *La leyenda del beso* and *La del soto del parral* had blurred the once distinctly-constructed division between opera and zarzuela. Zarzuela was no longer popular culture. It had become enshrined as high art, something that could hold the boards in a national theatre. Zarzuela had finally become a respected component of Spanish culture. Zarzuela in the 1920s had become increasingly engaged with varying components of Spanish culture, from regional folk music to the plays of Lope de Vega. It is perhaps not surprising that in its effort to encompass Spanish national culture, zarzuela became self-reflexive. By reflecting on its own past and acknowledging that zarzuela had a canon of its own, the genre institutionalized its role as a form of Spanish art.

El último romántico (The Last Romantic), with a libretto by José Tellaeche and a score by Soutullo and Vert, contains several sequences that are meditations on zarzuela's history. The action is set in Madrid in the recent past: the first act in 1872, the second act in 1887. Tellaeche dictated that the precise date of the action was to be made quite clear by visual references on the show curtain to events like the Second Carlist War or the entry of Amadeo of Savoy into Madrid; he also makes a direct

reference to the Second Carlist War in the opening chorus of the piece.[65] Other references to contemporary events are scattered throughout the libretto. Throughout the stage directions, Tellaeche is at pains to make clear that the set designers need to make their sets of Madrid as historically accurate as possible. For example, the second scene of the play is set "on the Paseo de la Fuente Castellana, just as one would have encountered the today splendid avenue between the years '70 and '75."[66] This is in part the heritage of the realism of the género chico (discussed in Chapter III); but even more so, it is an attempt to recreate an era that was only fifty years past and still within living memory of some of the audience.

Soutullo and Vert's most evocative attempt to recreate an era that was slowly receding into the past is the opening of the second act, which takes place in front of the Teatro Felipe, the summer theatre on the Paseo del Prado. Librettist Tellaeche has his comic relief, Encarnación, confront a group of street musicians, complaining, "Enough already of the street musicians! … There is too much street music / and too much of the trombone!"[67] This complaint develops into a trio of Encarnación and her friends Tomás and Ceferino, who sum up their feelings about street musicians this way:

> They go through the streets and the plazas
> the street musicians that you hear here,
> and I'm tired already of Chueca,

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[65] Although Tellaeche refers to a "telón alegórico," he does seem to be calling for what in the American theatre is called a "show curtain": a curtain, usually displayed during the overture of a lyric theatre piece, which is used to foreshadow events in the play. See José Tellaeche, *El último romántico: Zarzuela de costumbres, en dos actos, divididos en cuatro cuadros* (Madrid: La Farsa, 1928), I.1.

[66] Tellaeche, *El último romántico*, I.2.

[67] "¡Basta ya de murga! … ¡Ya esto es mucha murga / y es mucho trombón!" Tellaeche, *El último romántico*, II.1. Encarnación does have it slightly wrong, of course. One can never have too much trombone playing (or at least this author thinks so, having been a former trombonist himself).

of Bretón and of Marqués.
They only play the mazurka,
the habanera or the schottische.
Sometimes it's by Valverde
and other times by Chapí.
But it's just a joke
that everyday
you only hear
them playing the *Gran Vía*,
or *Niña Pancha*,
or *Cható Margot*,
Cádiz or other things
that are the fashion today.[68]

Tellaeche, along with the composers Soutullo and Vert, decided that recreating the musical ambiance was critical to understanding the time period; in fact, the opening of this number is a musical quotation from *Niña Pancha*.[69] Later in the scene, in order to help create tension and delay a crucial recognition scene, the authors send across the stage a pair of beggars: a blind violinist who accompanies a child singer. These beggars are, ironically, performing the ultra-sophisticated "Vals del Caballero de Gracia" from *La Gran Vía*.[70]

Amazingly, Tellaeche and the composers manage to get their theatrical history accurate. *Cádiz* and *La Gran Vía* had premiered in 1886 (*La Gran Vía* had even had its premiere at the Teatro Felipe, which is where this scene takes place) and were still wildly popular the following year; it is not surprising that beggars would be using music from these works to make their living. We can also assume that Encarnación,

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[68] "Van por calles y por plazas / los murguistas que aquí veis, / y estoy harta ya de Chueca, / de Bretón y de Marqués. / Tocan sólo la mazurca, / la habanera o el schotís. / Unas veces de Valverde / y otras veces de Chapí. / Pero es mucha broma / que todos los días / se oiga solamente / tocar la *Gran Vía*, / o la *Niña Pancha*, / o *Cható Margot*, / *Cádiz* u otras cosas / que se estilan hoy." Tellaeche, *El último romántico*, II.1.

[69] See No. 9 in the vocal score: Reveriano Soutullo and Juan Vert, *El último romántico: Zarzuela en dos actos* (Madrid: Unión Musical Española, 1968).

[70] See Chapter IV.

Tomás, and Ceferino are avid theatre-goers who are up-to-date on all the hit productions in Madrid, since *Chateau Margot* (which Madrilenian pronunciation reduced to "*Cható Margot*") was one of the last hits of the spring 1887 season and would have premiered only a few months before the scene being enacted on stage. Soutullo and Vert's score revives the past in other ways as well. Despite the trend towards more operatic zarzuelas—a trend Soutullo and Vert played a very large role in creating—*El último romántico* abandons this mode in favor of a string of dance numbers that evoke the aural world of the género chico. Jotas, pasacalles, mazurkas, and even a can-can populate the score. For this particular piece, composing music that enhanced the drama did not necessarily mean evoking a character's state of mind; for *El último romántico*, it meant evoking an entire era. In its own way, the reversion to the dance music of the género chico was not actually a musical step backwards. Rather, it was a way of capturing the historical essence of an almost bye-gone era.

The era that *El último romántico* was trying to create was an era in which art and entertainment were not two distinct and divergent entities. In the 1870s and 1880s, composers whose credentials as "artists" were unquestionable—men like Barbieri, Bréton, or Chapí—created works that did not shy away from operatic tropes and musical scores. Even with the rise of the género chico in the 1890s, these composers managed to turn out works of immensely high artistic quality alongside the more commercial productions that dominated the teatro por horas. Indeed, many of the género chico works like *La verbena de la paloma* or *La Revoltolsa* were recognized not only as popular works, but ones that would last in the repertory for a

long time to come—one of the main prerequisites of art. Even as late as 1914, Spanish composers and impresarios believed that complex artistic works of musical theatre could be popular; hence, that year saw the original productions of works like *Las golondrinas*, *Maruxa*, and *La vida breve*. During all those years, art and entertainment were not necessarily separate categories.

This changed in the 1920s. Against the backdrop of a political regime that seemed to espouse nationalistic tendencies but that in fact promoted regionalism, zarzuela—that lyric theatre genre which had been born proclaiming its popular origins—became an elite art form. This transformation had a hideous irony built into it. Zarzuela had originally based its claims to being the authentic nationalist lyric theatre genre on its popularity, and thus on its ability to mobilize a vast number of people into sharing the vision of the Spanish nation being portrayed on the stage. But in becoming a nationalist lyric genre, it became art. As a central part of Spanish national identity, zarzuela became something serious and solemn, something that could be threatened by frivolities like the fox-trot and the shimmy. The fact that zarzuela had built its entire notion of what Spain might look like on such frivolities was beside the point. Now that zarzuela was art, it would have to turn away from entertaining the masses. It marginalized itself and made itself irrelevant at the very moment in which its vision of a unifying national identity would be needed most of all.

The idea that zarzuela might have succeeded just a little too well at its job of becoming a crucial part of Spanish national identity and thus put itself out of business

would not have been an entirely unfamiliar argument even in the 1920s. The beginning of that decade had seen the publication of the first attempt at a history of the género chico, the *Historia del género chico* by Marciano Zurita.[71] As with many subsequent attempts to document the history of zarzuela, the *Historia del género chico* can best be described as overexcited: it was written by a man who was clearly an aficionado of the subject at hand, and as such is long on anecdotes and entertaining stories but short on documentary evidence. Nevertheless, Zurita isolates many of the critical elements of the género chico that are historically important but which other popular writers have missed. As one example, he attributes the success of Chueca's *La Gran Vía* to the "absolute reality" of the libretto.[72] The reader may recall that it was the realism of the género chico that allowed it to articulate the new identity of an urbanizing Spain in the 1890s.

But in the 1920s, Zurita was looking at a genre that was moribund. The género chico was dead, and Zurita attributed the death throes to what he termed "asphyxiation."[73] The Madrid that had spawned the género chico was no more, and the tropes that had been the dramatic motor of the género chico would not translate into the modern world of the 1920s. Summoning up the ghosts of the past, Zurita noted that "The Spanish shawl is no longer seen in the streets other than on Maundy Thursday. The street organists have been prohibited for some time. … We don't know where the festivals are being held. The Gardens of the Buen Retiro have

[71] Marciano Zurita, *Historia del género chico* (Madrid: Prensa Popular, 1920).
[72] Zurita, 46.
[73] Zurita, 124.

disappeared in order to build the palace of Telecommunications…"[74] The ladies' shawl that had driven the plot lines of *La verbena de la paloma* and *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* had become a picturesque costume used only on special occasions, while the location of Madrid's open-air summer relaxation—with its dances and theatres—had been replaced by a glorified post-office that looked nothing so much like an overwrought wedding cake. Zarzuela had sought to regenerate Spanish society, to modernize it and make it more European. And therein lay the problem: "Who doubts that all of this is going to Europeanize us? But, who doubts as well that the *género chico* cannot resist such Europeanization?"[75] The various attempts by zarzuela to fashion a new and modern Spanish identity had succeeded, but at the cost of rendering zarzuela itself obsolete. To modernize Spain, zarzuela had to adopt modern artistic tropes; and this isolated it from the influences of the people it was supposed to represent.

It is customary today to think of elite art and entertainment as two distinct and separate categories. But zarzuela was a lyric theatre genre that had always blurred the lines between high art and popular entertainment. It was the political and cultural currents of the 1920s that consolidated the division of art and entertainment into distinct realms in Spain—even though the process had begun in the 1870s. The problem in the 1920s was that the question of national identity had become a question of art, not one of entertainment as it had been in the nineteenth century. When nationalism became a question of art, it lost the potential to mobilize the majority of

[74] Zurita, 125.
[75] Zurita, 126.

the Spanish population: as the critics debating the Theatrical Crisis pointed out, art was something in which the critics—and not the public—had the right of first comment. Furthermore, the Spanish state co-opted zarzuela into its plans for reforming and regenerating the state, removing the genre from its traditional role as a popular form of social and political critique.

None of this was necessarily fatal in and of itself. But the linking of zarzuela to a top-down project of regeneration doomed its nationalist message to irrelevancy. Zarzuela's populist nationalism had flourished under the Restoration because the government's weakness left space for a popular vision of national identity to thrive. By strengthening the Spanish state, the dictatorship's enhancement of local powers actually undermined Spanish nationalism at a critical juncture. The dictatorship also upset the delicate balance of the *turno pacífico* which had helped to keep the competition between liberal and conservative Spain in check since the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in 1874. With the collapse of the dictatorship and the subsequent collapse of the monarchy in 1930, Spain was plunged into a period of oscillation between left and right that would eventually break into open Civil War. Whatever headway that lyric theatre had made at establishing a national identity that might have prevented such a disaster was halted by the Primo de Rivera regime. Zarzuela had become enmeshed within this system. At the very moment of the collapse of the Bourbon Restoration, zarzuela had become a part of the milieu that it had been working for so long to reform and regenerate.

Culturally, the hardening of the split between art and entertainment need not have been fatal for Spain. After all, had another form of nationalist popular consumer culture arisen in the 1920s to take the place of zarzuela, the displacement of that genre into the realms of elite art would not have mattered so much. This was not to be the case, and whatever nationalist message remained in the genre was negated by the fact that this was the final decade in which a significant number of new works would be performed. Zarzuela desperately tried to regain its role as popular entertainment by mixing fox-trots and shimmys into its romanzas and ensemble numbers, as well as by updating its settings. However, the division of lyric theatre into spheres of art and entertainment—which zarzuela had initiated when it began to distinguish itself from Italian opera—had succeeded too well. Zarzuela became art in the 1920s; and while this finally substantiated its claim to be an authentically Spanish form of lyric drama, it also made the genre essentially irrelevant as a way of mobilizing the Spanish population. Zarzuela came to be taken seriously, but at the cost of losing the *raison d'être* that had created it in the first place.

Coda

Zarzuela; or the Significance of Frivolity

By 1930, the subjects covered in the "Sección de Espectaculos" of Spanish newspapers—the equivalent of the "Arts and Entertainment" section—were rather different from the subjects that had been covered in 1874. At the beginning of the Bourbon Restoration, theatre, opera, and bullfights were the core of what was then the entertainment coverage in the papers. In the year that Alfonso XIII abdicated, the entertainment covered was more likely to be cinema or football (soccer). The nature of popular entertainment changed dramatically during the concluding years of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth century. Although the popular entertainments of the 1870s had not ceased to be covered as such in the press, by 1930 those entertainments had been supplanted in the popular taste by other leisure time activities. Zarzuela, the quintessential form of Spanish popular culture in the late nineteenth century, had ceased to be such by the early days of the Second Republic.

Although this study of zarzuela ends in 1930, the years leading up to 1936 and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War were something of an Indian summer for the genre. Much of this was due to the efforts of two composers, Federico Moreno Torroba and Pablo Sorozábal. These two men created a series of zarzuelas in the 1930s that rank among the best musical theatre created in that decade: highly sophisticated romantic plots that were attached to gorgeous music of the highest caliber. Moreno Torroba's *Luisa Fernanda* in particular, considered by many to be perhaps the best zarzuela ever written (this author, for one, ranks it even higher than

Doña Francisquita), has music on a level with the other great operetta-inspired composers of the 1930s such as Franz Léhar or Jerome Kern. Sorozábal had the distinction of composing the last canonical zarzuela, *La tabernera del puerto* (The Barmaid at the Port), which premiered on 10 May 1936, a scant two months before the outbreak of the Civil War.

As lovely as these works are, they were anachronisms even at the time they premiered. Other writers who had weathered the vicissitudes of lyric theatre began turning away from the genre in the 1930s. José Serrano, who had composed works in virtually every conceivable style since the late 1890s, gave up writing music after the success of *La Dolorosa* in 1930 and returned to his native Valencia province to devote his time to farming—and politics, oddly enough. He ran for a seat in the Cortes in the February 1936 elections on a platform that he would fund a fleet to ship Valencian oranges worldwide; he was defeated 6,000 to 14.[1] Jacinto Guerrero turned his compositional talents to stage revues and film music rather than musical drama. More of his energies were diverted into real estate: Guerrero was one of the backers and owners of the new Teatro Coliseum on Madrid's Gran Vía, a luxuriously appointed theatre that is still used today to host elaborate musical productions.[2] Amadeo Vives, one of the other main pillars of the genre since the 1890s, died in 1932. Thus, when the Spanish Civil War erupted in 1936, it served as a *coup d'grace* that helped to deliver the death blow to an ailing tradition.

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[1] Angel Sagardía, *El compositor José Serrano: Vida y obra* (Madrid: Organización Sala Editorial, 1972), 104-105. Sagardía does not actually indicate in which election this fiasco took place, but internal evidence suggests the Popular Front election of February 1936.

[2] Antonio Fernández-Cid, *El maestro Jacinto Guerrero y su estela* (Madrid: Fundación Jacinto e Inocencio Guerrero, 1994), 139-142.

The Civil War destroyed theatres and killed performers; it disrupted theatrical life in Spain, and zarzuela never recovered from it. Although there were new zarzuelas written and performed in the 1940s and early 1950s, these efforts often seem weak and anemic even when from such talents as Guerrero, Moreno Torroba, or Federico Alonso. Zarzuela had a minor role in early Francoist Spain. The policy of autarky espoused by the regime in those years had been developed to punish the country—and those who had supported the Republicans in particular—for its transgressions.[3] The main theatrical centers in Spain, Madrid and Barcelona, had been the strongholds of the Republic and it is perhaps not surprising that lyric theatre was not high on the regime's priorities, even had there not been more pressing economic rebuilding priorities.

Zarzuela became more important when the regime turned to more positive nation-building strategies in the mid-1950s and 1960s. The genre was already recognized as quintessentially Spanish, and the regime helped to cement its role as an artifact of the past and not a living art form. The Franco regime was, of course, interested in a national identity built emphatically on the Spanish past, and the establishment and preservation of a zarzuela canon helped to support this: zarzuela, like the literature of Miguel de Cervantes or the art of Diego Velázquez, was enshrined as a glorious and important part of Spain's cultural heritage. No longer an integral part of the theatrical scene, zarzuela was preserved with the help of two new technological mediums: the long-playing record and television. Spanish record

[3] See Michael Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998).

companies like Alhambra and Hispavox set about recording zarzuela scores in the 1950s using traditional zarzuela performers as well as up-and-coming singers like Plácido Domingo, Monserat Caballé, and Teresa Berganza. In the 1960s, Televisión Española filmed versions of the central works of the zarzuela canon for telecast. How much these efforts assisted the regime's nation-building may be debated; what is certain is that any claim zarzuela might have had to being a living art form was effectively ended as it was enshrined on vinyl and on celluloid.

Still, it may be easier to study an art form that is no longer living than one that is still transmuting itself into something new and different. The previous decade and a half has seen a rise in the treatment of zarzuela as something worthy of serious study. Critical editions of many central zarzuela scores and libretti have been prepared under the aegis of the Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales (ICCM) at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid; many of these works have been given lavish productions at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid using top-flight singers and even the occasional movie or television star to attract audiences—a distinct contrast to the often-amateurish zarzuela productions one can see all too often in Spain. The ICCM has also been responsible for publishing solidly researched biographies of key composers like Emilio Arrieta, Francisco Ansejo Barbieri, and Ruperto Chapí.[4] There has been a general upsurge in serious academic treatments of Spanish music in Spain itself, and a slow but steady growth of interest in Spanish music in the United States as

[4] María Cortiza Encino, *Emilio Arrieta: De la ópera a la zarzuela* (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1998), Emilio Casares Rodicio, *Francisco Asenjo Barbieri*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1994), and Luis G. Iberni, *Ruperto Chapí* (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1995).

well.[5] This study has sought to build upon these new trends in research as well as drawing attention to an important genre of Spanish music that is not widely disseminated outside Spain itself.

But the significance of zarzuela is far greater than its musicological importance. This particular lyric theatre genre is crucial for understanding the development of both nationalism and popular consumer culture in the waning years of the nineteenth century and the opening years of the twentieth. It was precisely during this time period that Europeans were at the zenith of their nation-building process. Governments were inventing traditions to bind people to the nation, folklorists and linguists were creating the ideas of national languages and national cultures, and composers were incorporating folk music into serious orchestral compositions. What is crucial to note about all of these trends, all of which have been widely studied in the literature on nationalism, is that they are all essentially elite-driven phenomena. Even the "mass-produced" traditions of new national holidays, flags, and anthems—even sporting contests like the Olympic Games—were "largely undertaken by institutions with political purposes in mind."[6] But nationalism is a popular project that has to be designed to appeal to a mass audience in order to succeed. The study of elite-driven phenomena does not tell us how the masses understood the nationalism project, nor

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[5] This interest does not revolve around zarzuela composers but those figures who composed the orchestral and piano music that a non-Spanish audience is more likely to encounter. See Walter Aaron Clark, *Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999) and Carol A. Hess, *Manuel de Falla and Modernism in Spain, 1898-1936* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2001). These authors have also recently published studies that I have not had a chance to review: Clark on the music of Enrique Granados and Hess a full-fledged biography of Falla.

[6] Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1983), 263.

does it tell us how they in turn sought to influence and create their own sense of national identity.

This, however, is exactly what zarzuela does tell us. Popular nationalist music demonstrates that nationalism was not completely a top-down, static, state-driven process. For theatrical composers, librettists, and audiences, nationalism might mean a critique of the state; it might also mean suggestions of how the masses themselves could unite to solve what they viewed as problematic with the state. This is not to say that zarzuela was uninfluenced by elite-driven nationalism; on the contrary, the thematic elements of these works often reflect the concerns of historians, philosophers, other intellectuals, and politicians who were a part of the nationalism project. But popular lyric theatre did not blindly accept the mandate of the elites. In contrast to those scholars who assert that nationalism and popular culture were designed to politically demobilize the masses, zarzuela demonstrates that understanding one's national identity does not always mean accepting the status quo imposed by elites and the state.

Nor should such a conclusion be at all surprising. The social, cultural, and political structure of Europe changed more rapidly and more dramatically in the nineteenth century than at any other time in history. It is either naïve or dismissive to assume that a large portion of the population would simply accept these changes without questioning what they meant or how they affected one's life. This is doubly true for a nation such as Spain, which was undergoing the turmoil of industrial social change at the exact same time period as it was trying to build a national community.

Northern Europe had undergone the transition from an agricultural society to an urban one earlier in the nineteenth century, while the nationalism project was still getting underway: thus, the shock of change from each transition was isolated from the other. Spain had to deal with the dislocations of nationalism and industrialization at the same time. Zarzuela was one of the buffers that allowed people to accept such rapid change and that helped them to articulate what the transition from a rural and agricultural sense of identity to an urban and industrial one might mean.

A component part of mass industrial society is mass culture. But while it is clear that mass culture helped to articulate what nationalism meant to this new mass society, there is an even more important symbiotic relationship between nationalism and popular culture. Zarzuela shows us that nationalism actually helped to create the modern conception of popular culture, for it was the nationalist project that categorized culture into elite and popular strands. Nationalism requires the development of an "us versus them" mentality—what Liah Greenfeld has termed *ressentiment*, a paradoxical condition whereby one both imitates and rejects the values of others.[7] Thus zarzuela, which had begun its career as an artistic genre by imitating Italian opera, first articulated its role as a uniquely Spanish lyric genre by setting itself up as something distinct from Italian opera. Part of what made zarzuela distinct was that it was popular; it was not something that was patronized by the aristocracy, that required the knowledge of a foreign tongue to understand and enjoy, or that was predicated on strange and exotic musical theories like Wagnerism. Financially,

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[7] Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992), especially 21-25.

linguistically, and musically zarzuela was accessible to all. If nationalism was a populist project, then it had to develop a populist culture in order to disseminate its message. Lyric theatre proved to be a necessary adjunct to the development of nationalism.

But if nationalism was the vehicle that helped to create popular culture, it was also a vehicle that helped to transmute zarzuela into an elite form of culture. The very process of becoming a symbol of nationalist aspirations and identity assured that zarzuela at some point would have to be taken quite seriously. As a nationalist form of culture, it would eventually have to interact with other nationalist forms of culture such as literature—and this began the process by which light entertainment became serious art. Zarzuela became superceded as popular culture by genres of entertainment that had no built-in ideological identification, such as the cinema or cabaret performances. Zarzuela's identification with the Spanish nation meant that the genre could not maintain its role as critic and analyst of the state indefinitely. Popular culture may be just one way of expressing the aspirations of nationalism, but in the end nationalism is a project of the state.[8] The case of zarzuela would seem to suggest that nationalist culture must inevitably become a form of art, just as aspirations of nationalism will eventually be coalesced and harnessed by the state.

Artifacts of popular culture like zarzuela are ideal vehicles for the study of modern life and modern problems; and certainly nationalism is one of the defining aspects of modern life. Zarzuela shows how political, social, economic, intellectual,

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[8] Or of areas that seek to be states, such as Catalonia and the Basque Country. See also E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), 15.

and cultural forces all fuse to help people make sense of the rapid dislocations of modernity and what that means for understanding one's identity. Conceptions of modernity may generally break down into two categories—politico-economic and cultural—as Marshall Berman has suggested; but zarzuela and studies of nationalism more broadly demonstrate that this dichotomy is rather artificial.[9] Or, to borrow a more prosaic metaphor from Will Friedwald: popular music and popular song are "like a car full of clowns at the circus: from the outside it looks small and unassuming, yet you can't believe how much is contained inside."[10] Zarzuela and popular lyric theatre in general may seem to be on the surface quite modest in their intent; but packed within those simple chords emanating from the orchestra pit are the aspirations of modern society.

Still, in the end it may be worth questioning whether or not a scholar such as myself is placing too much weight upon the shoulders of an admittedly frivolous musical genre. The authors and composers of zarzuelas were desirous of entertaining an audience and making a profit; considerations about national identity were secondary at best—if were they consciously considered at all. And while zarzuela survives today in part because of the role it constructed for itself as a quintessentially Spanish art form, few of the audience members will have purchased their tickets because of the genre's power to construct and redefine what it means to be Spanish.

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[9] See Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988)—especially Chapter 2, where he makes the same point using the works of Karl Marx.

[10] Will Friedwald, *Stardust Melodies: A Biography of Twelve of America's Most Popular Songs* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), xiv.

People attend zarzuelas for the same reason they attend other musical entertainments: to hear the live performance of great—or enjoyable—music.

It was this point that George and Ira Gershwin might have had in mind when they wrote their 1931 musical *Of Thee I Sing* and its hit song, "Who Cares?" Like *La Gran Vía*, *Of Thee I Sing* was political satire: it won the Pulitzer Prize for its astute observation that U.S. presidential elections were merely the political equivalent of the Miss America pageant. "Who Cares?" was performed early in the second act by the President and his wife to distract the press from the administration's problems. Among the couplets included in the sheet music is this one: "Who cares how history rates me / As long as your kiss intoxicates me?"[11] It is a pertinent question for those who study the artifacts of popular culture—or any aspect of the arts and culture, for that matter. If the political implications of a work of art were not uppermost in the artist's mind when he or she created the work, should they play a large role in the consideration of that work of art? Just how important is the cultural context of art?

One answer may be: not very. As Ira Gershwin's lyric indicates, what may be most important about a work of art is just how intoxicating it is. Does it please the audience and take them away from their everyday concerns for a little while? Certainly, it is not the political background that has kept works like *La Gran Vía* in the zarzuela repertory for over a century; indeed, many of the sketches and political references in that show are so dated as to be virtually unintelligible to anybody but

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[11] This lyric is generally not sung in stage productions of *Of Thee I Sing*. It was written by Ira Gershwin for the sheet music to replace a more topical couplet sung onstage: "Who cares what banks fail in Yonkers / As long as you've got a kiss that conquerors?" For the complete lyric, see Ira Gershwin, *Lyrics on Several Occasions* (1959; New York: Limelight Editions, 1997), 53-54.

historians or those equipped with an annotated libretto. It is not the text that has kept *La Gran Vía* at the center of the zarzuela repertory: it is Chueca's inspired music that has kept theatre-goers enthralled over the past one hundred-plus years. In general, operettas are not noted for the coherency or the brilliance of their plots. It is the music that allows for the revival of works by Chueca, Offenbach, or Léhar today. The worlds these composers portrayed have vanished utterly from the earth, but the melodies still remain to intoxicate the ear.

On the other hand, to dismiss the cultural context in which a work of art was created can lead to some serious ethical dilemmas; these, in turn, can distort an understanding of that work. Consider for example Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*. While this "secular cantata" is undeniably popular both in concert halls and on television commercials, few people consider its composer's links with Nazism or how the work fits into the overall artistic and cultural programme of the Third Reich.[12] Orff's music is hardly neutral, as its ideological content dovetails far too closely with the overall contours of fascist culture. This may or may not offset the quality of *Carmina Burana* in the ears of the beholder, but this is a judgment an audience must come to for itself. Art may be immortal, but artists are not; their choices and practices were formed by some sort of historical and cultural context. To understand and appreciate that art more fully, some knowledge of that context is necessary. Most artistic works do not have the dubious and controversial connections of Orff's *Carmina Burana*—certainly not the zarzuelas discussed in this dissertation—but all art

[12] See Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse: Musicians and Their Music in the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), 186-187.

comes from some time period. It is worth remembering in this regard that the stereotypical notion of art as an untrammeled production of individual "genius" is itself a historical construct from the nineteenth century.

Even seemingly frivolous works of popular entertainment have a serious cultural context—and, as this dissertation has demonstrated, even light music can carry a rather heavy political connotation. As I noted in the first paragraph of the introduction, this basic idea tends to disturb some people. Music is meant to be enjoyed, not analyzed. In other words, music—especially popular music—is entertainment. In a sense, this philosophy can be traced back to the "entertainment" versus "art" split that nationalism and zarzuela helped to engender in the first place. One might analyze a serious piece of art, admire it for its composition and form; but entertainment is meant to be an escape from worldly cares. Art is public, playing a large role in society. Entertainment is private, something that allows one to forget just how troublesome and problematic public life actually is. Art, like politics, is solemn and serious; entertainment is frivolous and fun. Perhaps so. But zarzuela demonstrates that politics, too, can be an awful lot of fun. Doubtless the average Spaniard found debates over regeneration tiresome and tedious. By attending a zarzuela performance they not only managed to take part in that debate, but presumably found a great deal of enjoyment by doing so.

In 1936, the same year that the zarzuela tradition in Spain came to an end, Irving Berlin (who was to American music what Federico Chueca was to Spanish music) wrote a song that would seem to sum up the distinction between the public,

political realm of art and the private, escapist world entertainment. In the film *Follow the Fleet*, Fred Astaire sang the following lines in a musical number entitled "I'd Rather Lead a Band":

> I haven't ambitions
> For lofty positions
> That wind up with the wealth of the land.
> I'll give you the throne that a king sat on
> For just a small baton
> Providing you included a band.
> ……
> If I could be a politician with a chance to dictate
> I would say, "Let it wait"
> I'd rather lead a band.[13]

As much as it pains me to admit this of two such musical icons, Astaire and Berlin were wrong. There is no need to choose between politics and music, between art and entertainment. While we may not know just how most politicians would fare as musicians, the study of Spanish zarzuela does lead to one conclusion: composers and musicians make quite effective politicians.

[13] For the complete song, see Robert Kimball and Linda Emmet, eds., *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), 305.

APPENDIX

ZARZUELAS CONSULTED

Listed below are the various zarzuelas that form the backbone of this study; although not all works are discussed in the body of the dissertation, all were examined and have informed my thinking about the subject. The list is organized by the composer of a given work. (Those interested in listing by librettists should consult the bibliography.) Following the title are the names of the librettists, the date of the premiere, and the theatre where the work was premiered. In the cases where the premiere was outside Madrid, the city is given in parentheses after the theatre; the information for the Madrid premiere follows.

Albeníz, Isaac

San Antonio de la Florida: Eusebio Sierra; 26 Oct. 1894, Apolo

Alonso, Federico

La bejarana (with Emilio Serrano): Luís Fernándaez Ardavín; 31 May 1924, Apolo

La calesera: Emilio González de Castillo, Manuel Martí Alonso; 12 Dec. 1925, Zarzuela

La parranda: Luís Fernándaez Ardavín; 26 April 1928, Calderón

La picarona: Emilio González de Castillo, Luis Martin Ramon; 6 Feb. 1930, Eslava

Barbieri, Francisco Asenjo

El barberillo de Lavapiés: Luis Marriano de Lara; 18 Dec. 1874, Zarzuela

De Getafe al Paraiso: Ricardo de la Vega; 5 Jan. 1883, Variedades

Bretón, Tomás

La verbena de la Paloma: Ricardo de la Vega; 17 Feb. 1894, Apolo

Chueca, Federico

Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente: Miguel Ramos Carrión; 23 June 1897, Apolo

La alegría de la huerta: Enrique García Alvarez, Antonio Paso; 20 Jan. 1900, Eslava

El año pasado por agua: Ricardo de la Vega; 1 March 1889, Apolo

El arca de Noé: Enrique Prieto, Andrés Ruesga; 26 Feb. 1890, Zarzuela

El bateo: Antonio Dominguez, Antonio Paso; 7 Nov. 1901, Eslava

El chaleco blanco: Miguel Ramos Carrión; 26 April 1890, Felipe

La zapatillas: José Jackson Veyan; 5 Dec. 1895, Apolo

Chueca, Federico with Joaquín Valverde

Cádiz: Javier de Burgos; 20 November 1886, Apolo
La canción de la Lola: Ricardo de la Vega; 25 May 1880, Alhambra
La Gran Vía: Felipe Pérez y González; 2 July 1886, Apolo

Chapí, Ruperto

El barquillero: José Jackson Veyán, José López Silva; 21 July 1900, Eldorado
Las bravías: Carlos Fernández-Shaw, José López Silva; 12 Dec. 1896, Apolo
La bruja: Miguel Ramos Carrión; 10 Dec. 1887, Zarzuela
El cortejo de la Irene: Carlos Fernández-Shaw; 6 Feb. 1896, Eslava
Curro Vargas: Joaquín Dicena, Antonio Paso; 10 Dec. 1898, Parish
La Czarina: José Estremera; 8 Oct. 1892, Apolo
El estreno: Serafín & Joaquín Alvarez Quintero; 19 July 1900, Apolo
Los golfos: Emilio Sánchez Pastor; 24 Sept. 1896, Apolo
Mujer y reina: Mariano Pina Domínguez; 12 Jan. 1895, Zarzuela
Música clásica: José Estremera; 20 Sept. 1880, Comedia
La patria chica: Serafín & Joaquín Alvarez Quintero; 15 Oct. 1907, Zarzuela
El puñao de rosas: Carlos Arniches, Ramón Asenso Mas; 30 Oct. 1902, Apolo
La revoltosa: Carlos Fernández-Shaw, José López Silva; 21 Nov. 1897, Apolo
El rey que rabió: Miguel Ramos Carrión, Vital Aza; 21 April 1891, Zarzuela
El tambor de granaderos: Emilio Sánchez Pastor; 16 Nov. 1894, Eslava
La tempestad: Miguel Ramos Carrión; 11 March 1882, Zarzuela
La venta de Don Quijote: Carlos Fernández-Shaw; 19 Dec. 1902, Apolo

Fernández Caballero, Manuel

El cabo primero: Carlos Arniches, Celso Lucio; 21 May 1895, Apolo
Chateau Margaux: José Jackson Veyan; 5 Oct. 1887, Variedades
El dúo de la Africana: Miguel Echegaray; 13 May 1893, Apolo
Gigantes y cabezudos: Miguel Echegaray; 29 November 1898, Zarzuela
La Marsellesa: Miguel Ramos Carrión; 1 Feb. 1876, Zarzuela
El padrino de "El Nene" (with Mariano Hermoso Palacios): Julían Romea; 21 May 1896, Zarzuela
Los sobrinos del Capitán Grant: Miguel Ramos Carrión; 25 July 1877, Príncipe Alfonso
La viejecita: Miguel Echegaray; 30 April 1897, Zarzuela

Giménez, Géronimo

El baile de Luis Alonso: Javier de Burgos; 27 Feb. 1896, Zarzuela
La boda de Luis Alonso: Javier de Burgos; 27 Jan. 1897, Zarzuela
Los borrachos: Serafín & Joaquín Alvarez Quintero; 3 March 1899, Zarzuela
Las mujeres: Javier de Burgos; 21 May 1896, Apolo
La tempranica: Julían Romea; 19 Sept. 1900, Zarzuela
Trafalgar: Javier de Burgos; 20 Dec. 1890, Principal (Barcelona); 18 June 1891, Apolo

Guerrero, Jacinto

La alsaciana: José Ramos Martin; 12 Sept. 1921, Tívoli (Barcelona); 14 Feb. 1922, Apolo

Los gavilanes: José Ramos Martin; 7 Dec. 1923, Zarzuela

El huésped del Sevillano: Juan Ignacio Luca de Tena, Enrique Reoyo; 3 Dec. 1926, Apolo

La montería: José Ramos Martin; 24 Nov. 1922, Circo (Zaragoza); 25 Jan. 1923, Zarzuela

La rosa del azafrán: Federico Romero, Guillermo Fernández-Shaw; 14 March 1930, Calderón

Guridi, Jesús

El caserío: Federico Romero, Guillermo Fernández-Shaw; 11 Nov. 1926, Zarzuela

Lleó, Vicente

La corte de Faraón: Guillermo Perrín, Miguel de Palacios; 21 Jan. 1910, Eslava

Luna, Pablo

Los cadetes de la reina: Julián Moyrón; 18 Jan. 1913, Price

La chula de Pontevedra (with Enrique Bru): Enrique Paradas, Joaquín Jiménez; 27 Jan. 1928, Apolo

Molinos de viento: Luis Pascual Frutos; 2 Oct. 1910, Cervantes (Seville); 3 Feb. 1911, Eslava

El niño judío: Antonio Paso, Enrique García Alvarez; 5 Feb. 1918, Apolo

Marqués, Miguel

El anillo de hierro: Marcos Zapata; 7 November 1878, Zarzuela

Millán, Rafael

La Dogaresa: Antonio López Monís; 17 Sept. 1920, Tívoli (Barcelona); 19 July 1921, Jardines del Buen Retiro

Moreno Torroba, Federico

La Marchenera: Ricardo Gonzalez del Toro, Fernando Luque; 7 April 1928, Zarzuela

Nieto, Manuel

El barbero de Sevilla (with Géronimo Giménez): Guillermo Perrín, Miguel de Palacios; 5 Feb. 1901, Zarzuela

Cuadros disolventes: Guillermo Perrín, Miguel de Palacios; 3 June 1896, Príncipe Alfonso

Serrano, José

La alegría de batallón: Carlos Arniches, Felix Quintana; 11 March 1909, Apolo

Alma de Dios: Carlos Arniches, Enrique García Alvarez; 17 Dec. 1907, Cómico

El amigo Melquiades (with Quinito Valverde): Carlos Arniches; 14 May 1914, Apolo

Los de Aragón: Juan José Lorente; 26 Oct. 1927, Centro

La canción del olvido: Federico Romero, Guillermo Fernández-Shaw; 17 Nov. 1916, Lírico (Valencia); 1 March 1918, Zarzuela

Los claveles: Luis Fernández de Sevilla, Anselmo Carreño; 6 April 1929, Fontalba

La Dolorosa: Juan José Lorente; 23 May 1930, Apolo (Valencia); 24 Oct. 1930, Reina Victoria

Moros y cristianos: Maximiliano Thous, Elías Cerdá; 28 April 1905, Zarzuela

La reina mora: Serafín & Joaquín Alvarez Quintero; 11 Dec. 1903, Apolo

Soutullo, Reveriano and Juan Vert

La leyenda del beso: Antonio Paso Díaz, Enrique Reoyo; 18 Jan. 1924, Apolo

La del soto del parral: Luis Fernández Ardavín, Anselmo Carreño; 26 Oct. 1927, La Latina

El último rómantico: José Tellaeche; 9 March 1928, Apolo

Torregrosa, Tomás López

La fiesta de San Antón: Carlos Arniches; 24 Nov. 1898, Apolo

El santo de la Isidra: Carlos Arniches; 19 Feb. 1898, Zarzuela

Usandizaga, José María

Las golondrinas: Gregorio Martínez Sierra; 5 Feb. 1914, Price

Valverde, Quinito and Ramón Estellés

La marcha de Cádiz: Celso Lucio, Enrique García Alvarez; 11 Oct. 1896, Eslava

Vives, Amadeo

Bohemios: Guillermo Perrín, Miguel de Palacios; 24 March 1904, Zarzuela

Doña Francisquita: Federico Romero, Guillermo Fernández-Shaw; 17 Oct. 1923, Apolo

Don Lucas del Cigarral: Tomas Lucena, Carlos Fernández-Shaw, 18 Feb. 1899, Parish

La Generala: Guillermo Perrín, Miguel de Palacios; 14 June 1912, Gran Teatro

Maruxa: Luis Pascual Frutos; 28 May 1914, Zarzuela

La villana: Federico Romero, Guillermo Fernández-Shaw; 1 Oct. 1927, Zarzuela

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