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## Between Nationalism, Exoticism, and Social Distinction: The Spanish Lyric Drama in the 19th Century

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### Abstract

Attempts to create a national opera in Spain repeatedly failed throughout the 19th century. Some authors have attributed this phenomenon to a deficit in the nationalization process. Others, to the contrary, have proved that there was a strong sense of Spanish national musicality from the middle of the 19th century onward. This article tries to explain this paradox underlining some essential elements that are not always attended by specialists: the importance of transnational, social, and economic dynamics that interfered in the process of the cultural construction of modern national identities. The projects of the Spanish nationalist intellectuals of the 19th century in relation to the definition of a national music were marked by the Romantic construction of Spanish musical exoticism, the new industry of entertainment, the existential situation of Spanish musicians, the formation of new artistic and musical fields, and the appearance of new forms of social distinction in the aftermath of the Spanish Liberal Revolution of the 1830s.

**Keywords:** musical nationalism; Spain; 19th century; exoticism; social distinction

On June 20, 1841, the premiere of the opera *El Contrabandista* (The Smuggler) by composer Basilio Basili and playwright Tomás Rodríguez Rubí at the Teatro del Circo in Madrid was a fiasco. The opera represented the most serious attempt yet made to create a Spanish national opera—a goal that was shared by many Spanish musicians of the time—on the basis of the *aires españoles* (Spanish airs) and melodies that had been causing a furor across the whole of Europe.<sup>1</sup> In addition to musical and organizational factors, the press cited among the explanations for this failure the poor reception that Basili's overall conception met with among the public: it did not look well upon the idea of an opera in Spanish, nor the introduction of tunes and motifs that felt “devalued by the frequent use that is made of them by the *populacho* [the rabble]” (*El Correo nacional*, July 3, 1841). Basili himself, months before the premiere, had already expressed his fears over the effect that might be caused by the use of light and festive popular melodies that were “discredited among people of taste” (Basili 1841).

The fate of *El Contrabandista* was not the only setback suffered by the idea of a national opera in the Spain of Isabel II (1833–68). The Spanish public gave no encouragement to this project. Some authors have attributed this phenomenon to a deficit in the nationalization process (Álvarez Junco 2011, 181–86). Celsa Alonso (2010a) has proved, to the contrary, that there was a strong sense of Spanish national musicality from the middle of the 19th century onward. This article tries to explain this paradox arguing that the frustrated emergence of a national opera in Spain was in large part due to the very success of the Spanish airs, both internationally and within the country. In this sense, it highlights two essential elements that are not always attended by specialists. First, it underlines the

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importance of the transnational dimension of the construction of national imagined communities. Second, it points out the relevance of taking into account the social and economic dynamics that interfere in the projects of nationalist intellectuals. In Spain, these projects were marked by the Romantic construction of Spanish musical exoticism, the emergence of the industry of entertainment, the precarious situation of Spanish musicians, the formation of a new musical field, and the appearance of new forms of social distinction in the aftermath of the Spanish Liberal Revolution of the 1830s.

### The Emergence of a National and Popular Spanish Music

The characterization of particular musical forms, rhythms or motifs as particularly national is quite recent, as it does not date back earlier than the second half of the 18th century (Anderson 1991; Dahlhaus 1980, 86–87; Curtis 2008, 17–39; Bohlman 2011; Riley and Smith 2016).<sup>2</sup> During that century, a debate had emerged that brought to the fore certain elements previously considered of little importance, such as the authorship or origins of music (Gelbart 2007).<sup>3</sup> From having been considered a quality exclusive to an elite, creativity began to be transferred to entire nations, including their most humble peasants. To understand the magnitude of this change, we should recall that throughout the 18th century the literary and musical forms associated with the plebs, and classified as popular, were considered immoral and a corrupting influence on good taste by the enlightened, reformist elite. Paradoxically, nevertheless, it was this link to the popular that endowed such forms with a special aura among the groups of intellectuals who articulated a patriotic discourse in opposition to Franco-Italian cultural hegemony. Wars and revolutions opened up new fields of public attention for these popular musical and cultural forms and granted them a previously unknown prestige: many began to consider them the true expression of national character (Mason 1996; Brophy 2007).

It was in this context that a musical romanticism spread across Europe. According to Johann Gottfried Herder, the pristine essence of the national character could still be found in the popular songs that were sung by the modern inhabitants of the continent. According to Herder, these songs were the surviving vestiges of an original national music that had to be saved (Thiesse 1999; Leerssen 2006). However, what was meant by this was not the restoration of forms of music that were irredeemably lost but an effort to research them in order to construct new, more sophisticated artistic styles. Instead of being just museum pieces, popular songs were to serve as raw material for a musician, who should elevate them. Hence, art would play the role simultaneously of expressing the national character and regenerating it (Gelbart 2007, 191–224). Romanticism thus spurred the emergence of a new cultural figure: that of the composer who was an active and conscious participant in a nationalist project. European musicians asserted their role as a fundamental element in the creation of a national culture and the moral elevation of their peoples. That explains, to a large extent, their obsession with the creation of a (serious) national opera, a form and style that would be a school of national values and a gauge of the prestige and civilization of their fatherland.<sup>4</sup>

The meaning of the term *popular music* changed in the wake of these new aesthetic coordinates. The term ceased to be used on an occasional basis to indicate the rural world, a specific region, or the popular classes and began to be employed to embody the values of the entire national community. It was at this time when musical forms that had previously been characterized precisely by their subnational or even transnational character, since they had been associated with individual regions or had developed in continuous dialogue with musical traditions from other areas and national groups, now began to be conceptualized as expressions of the idiosyncrasies of whole nations (Leerssen 2014).

Musicians were not simple spectators to this epistemological change but active and interested parties. It helped them assert their importance in the face of Italian musical hegemony. In Germany, musicians made patriotic discourse their own, emphasizing the significant role of musical education and ennobling their profession. They answered the dictums of Kant, who had effectively belittled

music as a lower art form aimed only at pleasure and entertainment, by affirming the existence of a serious and artistic music that was superior even to language, capable of speaking directly to the understanding: a classical music in which Germans had been particularly distinguished and which became a key element in their national culture (Applegate 1998, 2005; Applegate and Potter 2002).

In Spain, as in the rest of Europe, Italian music had enjoyed a dominant position in the royal court, in aristocratic salons, and in theaters since the 18th century.<sup>5</sup> This generated a feeling of rejection among Spanish musicians, who also chose to play the patriotic card. Following Rousseau's theoretical developments, they defended the musical virtues of their own language, stressing its close relationship to Italian, and argued that it was necessary to use it in serious opera. Their achievements, as in similar instances across most of the continent, were limited. During the first decades of the 19th century, Europe continued to share a common musical language imbued with an Italianism that experienced a new golden age with the explosion in popularity represented by the hugely successful operas of Rossini.

Nevertheless, there were specific features of the Spanish situation that had important consequences. In particular, there was the insistent identification made by the European Enlightenment between a barbarous and decadent Spain and its popular musical forms (Etzion 1998a; Lolo 2015).<sup>6</sup> Spanish followers of the Enlightenment generally shared in these same judgements and were especially severe in their attitudes toward these popular forms and music in general as an inferior art aimed at ephemeral entertainment. This made a rehabilitation of so-called lesser forms of performance sung in the indigenous language, of the kind that was successfully underway in other parts of Europe, more difficult in the Iberian Peninsula (Lamas 2006).<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, these so-called Spanish songs and accompanying dances also began to make their way into the gatherings and soirées of an aristocracy that, as in the rest of Europe, had begun to enjoy imitating plebeian ways (Alonso 1998, 17–38). In the highly precarious and unstable atmosphere of the decades that followed the French Revolution, Spanish musicians invoked the particular national character of a set of musical forms in which the Italians could not compete and responded to the demands of a public longing for entertainment. The *Colección de las mejores coplas de seguidillas, tiranas y polos que se han compuesto para cantar a la guitarra* (Collection of the best popular songs of *seguidillas*, *tiranas* and *polos* composed to sing with the guitar), published in two volumes in 1799 and 1802 by José Antonio Iza de Zamácola, demonstrates both the widespread acceptance of and demand for this kind of music, and its conversion into an idiosyncratic expression of the national character (Hernández Mateos 2013; Cascudo 2018a).

At the same time, however, the persistent association of this popular music with contexts tainted with immorality impeded its permanent acceptance as national. Iza de Zamácola sought to overcome this obstacle by asserting the music's decency, distinguishing between the pieces he celebrated and others that were to be condemned.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the populist inclination of these musical forms and the tension introduced by their association with the marginal classes of society would always make them suspect.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the clear connection that was drawn between this type of Spanish music (as well as music in general) and simple entertainment, which Iza de Zamácola linked with ideas of a cheerful, festive Spanish character, indicated a radical departure from the strategy followed by musicians in Germany. Hence, the entry of this kind of Spanish music into aristocratic salons did not take place as a replacement for Italian music but as a complement to it, as a mere diversion. This would be the status occupied by Spanish airs in salons and theaters during a first part of the 19th century that continued to bow down before a Rossiniesque opera that, moreover, enjoyed the patronage of Spanish governments. All of this made it difficult for Spain to experience the reevaluation of music and the musical profession that was taking place in Central Europe, a fact that prompted bitter complaints from Spanish musicians (Casares 1995a, 20–21).<sup>10</sup>

This manner of regarding Spanish music was consolidated during the first decades of the century, inside the country and in the rest of a Europe that was immersed in a great transnational enterprise of defining national musical identities. Romantic musicians launched themselves into investigations of the specific musical features of each nation, which they deduced on the basis of a

series of previously set national stereotypes (Lajosi 2014, 2018). This process was particularly significant in countries such as Russia and Spain that were exoticized by European romanticism (Taruskin 2000; Frolova-Walker 2007; Alonso 2010b; Andreu-Miralles 2016, 282–306). Among the intellectual circles that had followed events in the Iberian Peninsula since Napoleon's invasion of 1808, the meaning of Spanish popular music was transformed.<sup>11</sup> It became proof of the survival of a (now) treasured national character.

Spanish musicians took an active part in this change in perception, especially those who were obliged to go into exile after 1814 and the restoration of absolute monarchy under the returning King Ferdinand VII. Trained in Italian classicism but at the same time familiar with and cultivators of the styles associated with so-called Spanish musical forms like the *tonadilla*—a short theatrical piece with often-comic scenes and songs evoking traditional Spanish styles—they made a decisive contribution to setting out a Spanish musical language in dialogue with this romantic outlook (Alonso 1998, 157–192).<sup>12</sup> In the European fascination with Spain of those decades, musical fervor played a major part. Within a few years, Spanish airs could be heard across the entire continent, the great ballerinas of Europe competed on the great stages in performing Spanish dances, and the great composers recreated time and again a form of Spanish musicality that, by so doing, shaped it (Prot 2015).

However, this romantic celebration of Spanish music left a bittersweet taste. It took place within the context of an orientalization of the Spanish nation, which was converted into one of the internal others in modern, civilized Europe (Andreu-Miralles 2016).<sup>13</sup> The particular insistence of the French musical world on the exotic representation of Spain was a means of asserting its own advanced place in modern civilization—and leaving Iberia at its margins (Parakilas 1998). The freedom and voluptuousness of its songs and dances gave Spanish music a distinctive association with soul and spirit that allowed it to enter the great auditoria of Europe. However, in order to gain this soul, it was previously obliged to sell itself to the devil. For, ultimately, Spanish music was identified with picturesque, primitive, oriental characters on the margins of society: smugglers, bullfighters, or women with daggers in their garters, symbols of a country that was imagined as resisting the march of progress.

In Spain, the echoes of romantic attitudes in the rest of Europe consolidated the tendency to accept as “ours” those “national airs” that continued to be heard and danced to in popular (and not so popular) settings. Nevertheless, music of this kind also continued to be relegated to the role of innocent, nonserious entertainment in salons and theaters in which the great attractions of the repertory were still Italian arias. This preference had a sociological dimension. From the second quarter of the 19th century forward, attending the opera, the social space par excellence of refined society, became the focus of investment in cultural capital for those rising classes that wished to acquire the social distinction conferred by listening to (and performing, preferably on a French-made drawing-room piano) the music that was identified with a modern and civilized Europe (Cruz 2014, 298–312).

Consequently, rather than any replacement of Italian music by Spanish airs, what we find in the early 19th century is a musical field in which each type of music fulfilled different roles. The Spanish airs were associated with music that was light and ideal for relaxation, as well as with a set of lower-class and (mostly) Andalusian characteristics that further contributed to their being regarded as simple entertainment.

### The “Failure” of the Spanish Opera and the Success of the Zarzuela

These precedents enable us to understand the possibilities and the limitations that opened up for Spanish national opera from the second third of the 19th century onward. In a context of the progressive advance of musical romanticism within Spain and the definitive emergence of European fascination with the country, Spanish airs gained in importance in a variety of musical

sociability settings which tried to imitate the Parisian taste for the picturesque character of Spanish music.<sup>14</sup>

Spanish musicians joined in cultivating these genres in a manner that must be linked with another process. The Spanish Liberal Revolution of the 1830s delivered a deadly, albeit indirect, blow to the musical profession in Spain. The erosion of the financial power of the Catholic Church led to a crisis in the musical chapels, previously the principal centers for the training and employment of Spanish musicians. Moreover, the economic difficulties of the Spanish aristocracy affected the old forms of patronage. Furthermore, the chronic financial weakness of the liberal state made it difficult to establish alternative musical institutions (Carreras 2018b; Casares 1995a, 33–39).<sup>15</sup> For their survival, musicians depended ever increasingly upon a fledgling musical marketplace. They had, basically, two possible occupations: teaching and theater.

The need to meet the wishes of a public hungry for entertaining pieces of music meant that the composition of Spanish airs aimed at satisfying this demand and multiplied. In addition to a proliferation of bourgeois or aristocratic salons, and the musical activities of *ateneos* and other cultural societies, there were now performances in cafés, thronged by audiences from further down the social scale. This in turn further encouraged this wave of Spanish music to become still more popular, consolidating the tendency for it to be identified with musical experiences that were low in status, superficial, or solely associated with celebrations.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, this process resulted in a loss of economic, social, and symbolic recognition of musicians.

This same process gives us a better understanding of the failure of Basili and Rodríguez Rubí's *El Contrabandista*. In Spain the identification of Spanish music with exotic characters and settings on the fringes of society obstructed its presence in those environments where, as in the case of the opera, the public sought precisely to demonstrate its own elegance by its membership in civilized Europe. Class distinction could operate as a barrier to the acceptance of Spanish airs in serious opera. At the same time, however, they were celebrated and enjoyed by these same respectable classes in subordinate spaces within the musical field.

We find the same phenomenon in relation to the Spanish language, since it continued to be relegated in favor of Italian. Describing the difficulties he encountered in putting his 1845 opera *Padilla o el asedio de Medina* (Padilla or the siege of Medina) on stage, Joaquín Espín y Guillén lamented that impresarios were reluctant to present a production so expensive when, sung in Spanish, it was associated with genres that aroused suspicions among the public.<sup>17</sup> In 1847, the critic Eduardo Velaz de Medrano acknowledged one of the greatest difficulties for the success of a national opera in Spain: “The idea of singing in Spanish lends itself to ridicule in the minds of many people.”<sup>18</sup> In addition, the jovial Spanish airs did not combine well with the content that a serious opera should concern itself with. A critic in the magazine *Revista de Teatros* described Basili's efforts as “throwaway” (*arrojado*), the result of “writing an entire opera with national airs and from a libretto which at its core is essentially sentimental.”<sup>19</sup>

The failure to establish a national grand opera contrasted with the growing popularity of national airs, which were becoming an enormously profitable commercial product. Space was found for them in every kind of repertory. They moved on from initially subordinate, incidental appearances to a position where they were even able to make their way on stage by themselves, by means of a new form of lyric drama. This new lyric drama was sung in Spanish and incorporated elements from the courtly, 18th-century zarzuelas and tonadillas and from French comic vaudeville, and it was born with a close musical affinity to both the already ultrapopular Andalusian genre pieces and the preeminent Italian musical styles. This *zarzuela romántica* (romantic zarzuela)<sup>20</sup> did not, however, seek to displace Italian opera in any way.

An early illustration is *El Novio y el Concierto* (The Fiancé and the Concert) by Basili and Manuel Bretón de los Herreros (1839), in which Italian melodies alternate with Spanish ones, associated with more refined and more popular settings, respectively. Although the piece defends its popular characters from the accusation of inferiority and criticizes the mania for everything Italian, it does not fail to reiterate the different status each musical form occupies even within the



same performance. The Spanish music of songs such as “El Chairo,” “La Manola,” or “La Aguadora” are clearly identified with the lower classes, Spanish street life, and fiestas. An illuminating incident took place in the Teatro de la Cruz in Madrid in April 1847. After the soprano Cristina Villó had sung the aria *Casta diva* from Bellini’s *Norma*, the bass Francisco Salas surprised the audience by appearing on stage dressed as a Madrid *majo* and singing the verses that Basili had combined with the same aria for *El Novio y el Concierto*. The audience was furious, and “erupted in shouts of ‘get off,’ in indignation at seeing such sublime music so profaned” (Casares 1994b, 19–20). Salas had to go off. Except that sometime later, this same audience that had booed him asked him to come back and to sing some Spanish popular songs separately, which were then enthusiastically applauded.

It was within the framework of this national perspective and convivial, celebratory mood that these pieces of music were experienced by their listeners. These forms of music were overtly heard as being national, a feature that was underlined in every report and review and seemed to be embraced by both performers and spectators. The identification of this music with Spanishness was expressed on multiple levels (Castro 2008; Andreu-Miralles 2016, 282–306). In first place, by means of a series of leading characters that recreated the romantic myth of Spain, even when they disputed it and sought to renegotiate the moral status this same myth attributed to Spaniards. Secondly, through a musical language that was recognized as distinctly national. And finally, through the narrative content presented in these pieces, in which the enemy of national values was represented by the figure of a foreigner (or a Spaniard who had taken up French ways) who tries to take advantage of Spanish women and ends up being taught a lesson.

Similarly, and simultaneously, this type of music of popular origin was also experienced as something playful and celebratory. References to the humorous and risqué nature of these pieces appear repeatedly in press reports, as well as to the hilarity they provoked among audiences, who interrupted performances with applause and bursts of laughter (or sometimes sang along to songs they already knew), demanded encores of the most popular tunes, and cheered ecstatically the singers who really knew how to occupy their roles and give the expressions in the songs the popular touch they required. Words such as *gracejo*, for a particularly inventive kind of wit and charm, or *salero* (saltiness) for piquant humor, were habitually used, along with associations with the Andalusian character in general.

This kind of music and performance thus had a carnivalesque, festive aspect that was fundamental to its success. Both in the stories these zarzuelas evoked and the ways in which they were programmed and presented, there was a great deal of a world turned upside down.<sup>21</sup> They were often set in public spaces (markets, town squares), and they were full of tumultuous scenes involving large numbers of characters generally drawn from the bottom levels of society. They used to employ a language full of vulgar expressions and colloquialisms that often bordered on indecency. New works were customarily premiered at Christmas or around Carnival in early spring, times of year theaters kept reserved for popular performances of this kind, which were not expected to meet much in the way of artistic expectations.<sup>22</sup> One of their attractions was the opportunity to see serious actors put themselves momentarily in the skin of crude, uncouth characters and set declamation aside to do their best at singing. They did so generally as an appropriate concession for these holiday periods, though not always entirely willingly.<sup>23</sup> Placing characters of this kind on stage and giving them a voice had a transgressive dimension, which could also be seen in the fluid relationship between these genres and the cheap popular chapbook literature of the time (*literatura de cordel*), with crossovers of themes and imagery in both directions.

Among the most notable *zarzuelas románticas* which did most to consolidate the genre there were a great many that employed theatrical metafiction.<sup>24</sup> Particularly successful in the mid-1840s were the works of Agustín Azcona, which parodied the great Italian operas of the time. This playful, carnivalesque quality in turn generated a dynamic in which innovations and novelties were often introduced only by incorporating characters drawn from ever-lower levels on the social scale or by exaggerating even further the caricatures and stereotypes. That could explain the progressive

growth in prominence of gypsies in these genres in the course of the 1840s, a feature that also became accentuated in musical representations of Spain in the rest of Europe.<sup>25</sup>

The growing popularity of the national airs and their frivolous, carnival feel made the possibility of their being seen as acceptable in serious opera by the respectable classes still more remote—although they did not cease to enjoy them in less elevated venues. So it was, especially, once Spanish Liberal Revolution had been concluded in the early 1840s and the new conservatist elites tried to highlight the boundaries between them and those subordinate social sectors whom they wished to exclude from the public sphere. This reaction was not unconnected with the potential political dimension of these boisterous musical forms. Perhaps for this reason it was progressives with an interest in attracting the popular classes to them who did most to cultivate these genres in these years (Andreu-Miralles 2011). In fact, the great promoter of Spanish airs and the Andalusian romantic zarzuela after 1845 was the Instituto Español, the great social center for progressive liberals.<sup>26</sup>

Despite the opposition of these new conservative cultural elites, the romantic zarzuela continued to be performed on stage. The public appreciation for and financial profitability of the new genre was enormous. In the second half of the 1840s, and especially after the Christmas season of 1846, there was an explosion in the number of representations of these zarzuelas, which from only a few productions in very specific periods of the theatrical season began to appear in programs almost all year. The great popularity of these genres, in a context in which most theatre companies were financially extremely fragile, had its effect (Gies 1994). It did so in spite of the resistance of some actors, who did not want to be associated throughout the year with these genres perceived as lesser. In February 1847, Vicente Caltañazor and some other actors from the Teatro de la Cruz expressed their “repugnance at continuing to sing” Azcona’s *El Sacristán de San Lorenzo* (a parody of Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*) after the Carnival season was over. The conservative newspaper *El Heraldo* applauded Caltañazor’s attitude, since he was “no doubt motivated by a conviction of what he owes himself, as an actor of recognized merit” (*El Heraldo*, February 17, 1847). However, the writer doubted whether this protest would have much success “in view of the large ticket sales” the company was achieving with this production. More explicit was *El Popular*, for whom the objection to “carrying on warbling outside of Carnival” appeared entirely justified. “We have already said on other occasions,” the writer went on, “that the impresarios have no right to demand such a thing from their actors, and we will say again now that these parodies may go down well during the celebrations of Christmas, in the festivities of Carnival ... but there is no room for parodies after Ash Wednesday, on the ordinary days of the year.”<sup>27</sup> The production nevertheless continued.

Given this background, one can also understand the unease that this popularity prompted among the ruling classes, concerned by the atmosphere of moral, social, and political subversion that often accompanied these performances. The authorities introduced a series of measures intended to control or eliminate performances that they considered subversive.<sup>28</sup> Minister Luis José Sartorius’s various proposals for the reform of theaters were all designed to establish greater control over what was presented on stage. At the same time, the financial measures that accompanied these proposals impacted harshly upon the private associations and similar venues in which these entertainments had also flourished (Lécuyer 1994). The upper classes also began clearly to exclude from their own social arena types of Spanish airs that were accused of pandering to vulgar popular taste and encouraging a caricaturized vision of Spain. During these years, the Teatro del Circo in Madrid, owned by the property magnate Marqués de Salamanca, whose exorbitant prices blocked admission to anyone who did not enjoy a very comfortable status, became the prime symbol of the enthronement of Italian opera and French ballet by genteel society. The anxiety generated among these classes by their self-perception of belonging to a marginal country, one that was not completely ‘modern’ and European, thus acted as one more obstacle to full acceptance for a type of music associated with a Spain they wished to leave behind.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, despite all these objections, the efforts to dismiss such music were ultimately frustrated in the face of public demand

and the interests of theater owners. Spanish airs continued to be an essential part of theater programs.

### Achievements and Limitations of an Alternative: A New Kind of Zarzuela

In this situation, a group of Spanish musicians who still aspired to carve out a space of their own, in front of the foreign musical competition, and participate in the regeneration of Spain through the development of a national lyric drama attempted to follow a middle path. Their starting point was the already generally accepted idea that it was in national popular songs that one had to look for the national musical genius in order to use them as a basis upon which to elaborate a superior synthesis.<sup>30</sup> However, how was one to make a set of Spanish airs—that were increasingly identified with dark-eyed gypsy women and bandits, lewd jokes and crude melodies, and narratives and attitudes always bound up in rowdy celebrations—the foundations of a serious and artistic body of music? Spanish musicians saw before their eyes a panorama that could not have jarred more with the vista imagined by German romanticism, in which a cultivated and intelligent spectator immersed himself in a national musical heritage that demanded profound concentration and that would enable him to elevate himself morally together with his compatriots. Even Spanish composers themselves, heirs to the Enlightenment traditions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, had little faith in the virtues of genres that they reproduced and presented on stage without ceasing to consider them minor and purely comic. It is significant to note the scant attention these genres merited in *La Iberia musical y literaria* (1842–46) of Joaquín Espín and Mariano Soriano Fuertes, the principal publication promoting Spanish music at the time, still more so if one considers that the latter of the two editors was one of the great specialists in the zarzuela genre. Frequently, Spanish musicians even felt the need to justify themselves when they chose to work on zarzuelas, since this seemed to imply some sort of belittling of their own merits or an acceptance of the role of simple balladeer (*coplero*) that they were precisely seeking to move away from. The first revival of Soriano Fuertes's successful *Geroma la castañera* (Geroma the Chestnut-seller) of 1843 was announced in the press almost with an apology, an attitude that had become habitual.<sup>31</sup>

Faced with this great success of and demand for Spanish melodies that were identified as national songs, but their simultaneous rejection as the basis of serious lyric drama by those who could have been expected to sustain such a thing, a group of Spanish musicians put forward an alternative: to reform the existing zarzuela, make it duly stylized, and purge it of its most problematic features, in order to build upon it a Spanish comic opera, following the French model, as a first step toward the subsequent creation of a true national opera. This idea gained momentum in the later 1840s, in the context of a mobilization of musicians in reaction to a government decree for the reform of theaters in 1847, which they criticized bitterly for having disregarded their needs. Thanks to this mobilization, they succeeded in gaining more influence over the preparation of the subsequent regulations of 1849, which instructed that at least one of the theaters in Madrid should be dedicated to the presentation of Spanish lyric dramas. This broad project had the capacity to appeal to the cultural and political elites who, as we have seen, had looked on with concern at the direction taken by the popular genres. The dramatist Ventura de la Vega, all-powerful royal commissioner of Teatro Español, placed his pen at the disposal of new projects in which one can discern a clear change in moral and social direction, in terms of themes, characters, and content. Street majos, gypsy girls, bullfighters, and smugglers were replaced by respectable members of the urban middle classes, whose code of values would now be the one sustained on stage (Cortizo 1995).

Rafael Hernando, a leading figure in this movement, explained in a letter to his colleague Francisco Barbieri that the librettist Juan del Peral had proposed to him,

We should abandon the project we had brought from Paris to make an attempt at a Spanish grand opera, and which we had begun to write with French-style proportions, because we had not found any sympathy for this proposition in the circles of high society, which should have



leant it most support, while at the same time what we have observed in the public of the Instituto [has] patently demonstrated that in Spain it is necessary to begin with the *ópera-cómica*, in order to arrive some day at the *ópera-seria* (Casares 1994a, 86–87)

The success of *Colegialas y soldados* (Convent-girls and soldiers) and above all *El Duende* (The Spirit), both by Hernando and both premiered in 1849, demonstrated that those Spanish airs that had become an established part of the European musical scene and been adopted as their own by Spaniards themselves could also be used to construct a modern comic opera sung in Spanish. This new comic opera was nevertheless distanced both from the most caricaturish elements of the romantic stereotype and from the supposed excesses of earlier zarzuelas.<sup>32</sup> They also demonstrated that there was a public ready to support such works and sustain them financially: *El Duende* reached the figure of 120 performances. The zarzuela became an extremely profitable business. Even the great writers of the moment gave their pen to write their librettos.<sup>33</sup>

The controversy that arose among these same musicians over whether they should still call this new genre *zarzuela* or abandon it in favor of *ópera cómica* reveals the extent to which the older term had acquired negative connotations. Many believed that its use “lowered the standing of the performance in the consideration of the public” (Casares 1994b, 23). The option that finally prevailed was the one maintained by Barbieri, who argued for retaining the term *zarzuela*. It was, however, rehabilitated. An effort was made to give it roots in a cultured, national literary tradition, which these composers often looked to for themes and ideas (Cortizo and Sobrino 2013). At the same time, they also distanced themselves from the styles in vogue immediately before they began their reform by means of a much more measured and stylized use of national airs. Nevertheless, it was always difficult to shake off their former associations, which composers were obliged to turn back to if they wanted their music to be identified and recognized as Spanish and win popular favor. As a critic for *La España* wrote after the premiere of *Gloria y peluca* (Glory and a wig) by Barbieri (1850), its seguidillas

are, certainly, idealized; they are like those portraits that are similar to the original, but highly embellished by the painter.... They have been aristocratized in the hands of the composer, and the public does not cease to applaud such beautiful music, always so Spanish and essentially from the street, in spite of the adornments with which Sr. Barbieri has dressed it. It is true to say that the accompaniment with castanets gives it all the spice and zest (*sal y pimienta*) of our national songs.<sup>34</sup>

The financial viability of these zarzuelas, together with the purge of respectability to which they had been subjected, opened up the possibility of their gaining access to more elegant venues. It was especially so at a time when the theaters found themselves stricken by a deep crisis that even reached the Circo, which was obliged to make changes and modify its repertory to attract the largest possible audiences. In 1850 a company formed jointly by the composers and librettists Salas, Olona, Oudrid, Inzenga, Barbieri, Gaztambide, and Hernando succeeded in taking over this theater, a move that represented a spectacular symbolic victory for the nascent Spanish lyric drama.<sup>35</sup> This is what makes it particularly difficult to understand the personal decision of Francisco Salas to open the new season at the Circo with a zarzuela that had opened to enormous success in Seville at the end of the previous year, but which did not follow the precepts of the new style and instead remained faithful to the old, *El Tío Caniyitas o el Mundo Nuevo de Cádiz* (Uncle Caniyitas or the New World of Cádiz) by Mariano Soriano Fuertes and José Sanz Pérez (Le Duc 2003, 189–192). It is possible that financial reasons overrode other considerations. *El Tío Caniyitas* had been a runaway success all along the Mediterranean coast and would continue to be so throughout Spain and many parts of Hispanic America in the following years, demonstrating that this zarzuela tradition of belligerent gypsies, honest brigands, and fiery dancing girls so closely associated with the romantic stereotype continued to be well received among a large section of the Spanish public.

Its presentation at the Teatro del Circo, however, was a major miscalculation. The refined society of this theater, already ill-disposed to accepting any lyric drama sung in Spanish (even in a lesser genre such as comic opera) reacted coldly. An avalanche of criticism came from the respectable press and so-called serious music critics.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, others among the audience showed their enjoyment of a zarzuela that in many ways marked a turning point. It represented a landmark in some cities such as Valencia, where it generated a real enthusiasm (Galbis 1998, 212–119), but at the same time it acted as something of a beacon for the proponents of a renovation of the genre, since *El Tío Caniyitas* came to embody the tradition that they wished to disassociate themselves from. The critical and public success of *Jugar con fuego* (Playing with fire) by Barbieri and Ventura de la Vega in 1851 showed the way toward a definitive elevation of the genre.<sup>37</sup> *Jugar con fuego* became a point of reference for other composers who, like Martín Sánchez Allú, were eager to highlight their differences (and superiority) in comparison with the kind of zarzuela symbolized by *El Tío Caniyitas* (Mejías 2015). The superiority of the zarzuela model proposed by Barbieri over the one embodied by *El Tío Caniyitas* would be shared by the main, subsequent historians of the zarzuela.

The controversy sparked by the production of *El Tío Caniyitas* at the Teatro del Circo raises interesting questions regarding the difficulties that the new genre would encounter in achieving the goals that its creators had proposed for it. Its viability as a means of advancing toward a true (serious) national lyric drama would be constantly compromised. In the first place this was because, despite all their efforts, the Spanish airs upon which the *Zarzuela Grande* was based continued to be linked to a series of elements that hindered its acceptance among those who wished to differentiate themselves from such things by attending a performance that they perceived as modern and civilized. As far as in the musical world of Europe, these same Spanish musical motifs were employed and would largely continue to be employed in a manner that signified the opposite: as epitomes of a primitive nation.<sup>38</sup> There were many who were dubious of the new genre from the beginning, despite its being presented as comic opera.

Secondly, its potential as a major genre was compromised because there continued to be audiences that called for and demanded space in theater programs for works indebted to the older zarzuela tradition, and musicians and impresarios were ready to please them. Even the Teatro del Circo regularly revived *El Tío Caniyitas*, which always ensured a good audience even at the cost of driving away the more selective public. A correspondent from a Málaga newspaper complained about the phenomenon, exasperated as he was by the success of the “hapless *Tío Caniyitas*, [which] is performed most evenings: everything in it is detestable ... but, nevertheless, it always has the auditorium full.”<sup>39</sup> This musical tradition, therefore, did not disappear. It continued to adapt and transform itself, until decades later it gave rise to what became known as the *género chico*, the “little” or “minor genre,” of short, usually comic pieces of just one act (Salaün 2002; Young 2016). This was commonly on the defensive compared to the reformed zarzuela, whose opponents frequently associated the two together. Choosing the name zarzuela instead of comic opera had ultimately perhaps been an error. In March 1852, a writer in *El Clamor Público* asked himself how it was possible that authors of some reputation could lend their abilities to the concoction of these “monstrosities” and “abortions of bad taste,” and he concluded that he was still anxiously awaiting the “inauguration of a true Spanish opera.”<sup>40</sup>

At the same time, the very popularity of the new genre, which achieved great box-office success from the outset (the season at the Circo in 1851 ended with a profit of 1,840,000 reales, equivalent at the time to about £75,000) was also used as an argument against it. In the words of one of the editors of *La España*, the Teatro del Circo had converted itself into the popular theatre par excellence.<sup>41</sup> In a musical world in which the conception of artistic genius as something contrary to the adulation of a wider public was firmly gaining ground, this prompted doubts as to the quality of zarzuela in general. As in the literary field, a difference began to be drawn between so-called classical music that was serious and truly artistic, and directed toward an educated public with the capacity to understand it, and another that was supposedly manufactured to gratify the scarcely exquisite

tastes of the popular classes and obtain financial profit (Bourdieu 1996).<sup>42</sup> The zarzuela was included in this second category, despite the protests of composers such as Barbieri, who saw no contradiction between artistic quality and popular favor, but rather the opposite.

In 1855, a group of Spanish musicians headed by Baltasar Saldoni and José Alzamora asked for the protection of the national parliament, the Cortes Generales, for a new project to create a national opera that was implicitly opposed to the model pursued by the supporters of the zarzuela. It was at this time that the latter's principal champions, Barbieri and Velaz de Medrano, were most active in their efforts to defend it, in the pages of the *Gaceta Musical de Madrid*, founded in the same year, and in a magazine entirely dedicated to the new genre that appeared a year later, *La Zarzuela*. In the history of the zarzuela that Barbieri wrote around this time, he set out to differentiate it from French vaudeville and endow it with noble origins, associating it with the Spanish Golden Age through the works of Lope de Vega and Pedro Calderón de la Barca.<sup>43</sup> In addition, he denounced as "highly injurious" the opinions of those who said that the zarzuela was "written by mechanical speculation, with a lack of art or literature" (Casares 1994b, 216). Despite this, critics such as José Parada y Barreto and Pedro Antonio de Alarcón continued to regard the zarzuela as a simple burlesque spectacle that needed to be left behind.

Equally, Barbieri's position in some ways went against the tide of the predominant tendencies in Europe, which would eventually catch up with him. He argued for the idea of a Spanish comic opera that would express a national character defined by its propensity for the comical and the extravagant. He chose a musical style that was deliberately, scrupulously simple, based on clear and expressive melodies with an eminently popular, common feel. He consciously moved away from the musical forms coming from Germany, with which he was familiar and which he referred to on occasion as "philosophical," regarding them as over-heavily based on harmonic structures or excessively serious (Casares 1994b, 446). In doing so, he did no more than continue a tradition of Spanish musical thought that starting at the end of the 18th century (Antonio Eximeno, José Teixidor, Mariano Soriano Fuertes) had felt closer to Italian than to German music, despite the fact that there was no lack of supporters of the latter in Spain.<sup>44</sup> To some extent, one could say that Barbieri aligned himself with the South against a Northern Europe that had launched a campaign from Germany that would eventually defeat Rousseau (but also Herder and the first German romanticism) and overturn the musical hierarchies of the entire continent. The greater simplicity and naturalness of Italian melodies, the precise features that according to Rousseau had made them superior, would increasingly be regarded as elements characteristic of a Mediterranean music that was lighter and aimed at the creation of agreeable sensations but for this very reason insubstantial and incapable of acceding to a musical Valhalla reserved for the complex harmonic structures of more serious music, which demanded a deeper mental effort to be correctly appreciated.

These ideas became dominant throughout the continent (including Italy itself) in the final third of the 19th century. In Spain, the rise of so-called classical music was linked to a powerful self-perception of backwardness and a willingness to join European musical progress (Etzion 1998b). For many, zarzuela was no longer a viable option. In the new "musical field" of the second half of the 19th century, it was doomed to occupy a subaltern place in front of the so-called classical music of German origin. Even Rafael Hernando abandoned the possibility of developing a serious opera by expanding upon an essentially comic genre, which he turned his back upon, to the desperation of Barbieri.<sup>45</sup> This dispute was still very much alive in the last years of the century, between a Ruperto Chapí disposed to renew the zarzuela once again as a national comic opera and Felipe Pedrell, the great theoretical touchstone of musical regenerationism, ready to abandon the new zarzuela tradition (which he perceived as a corrupted, Italianized version of the authentic Spanish zarzuela of the 17th century) in favor of an approach much more influenced by German aesthetics and focused on claiming Spanish sacred music tradition. The great popularity of the Spanish zarzuela was, once again, an argument in favor of considering it as the true expression of the Spanish national soul, as stated by Antonio Peña y Gofñi, and as an obstacle to basing on it an artistic and noble national music, as pointed out by Felipe Pedrell. However, Pedrell was ultimately proposing that

Spanish cultured, national music should be based on the elevation of natural or popular Spanish music (Casares 1991–1992; Iberni 1996–1997; Lolo 1996–1997; Carreras 2001; Carreras 2018b, 183–187; Cascudo 2018b).

From the point of view of the new aesthetic coordinates from Central Europe, the zarzuela in the style of Barbieri carried no conviction as the first step to the creation of a national opera. Nevertheless, the acceptance of a German conceptual framework imposed upon “musical nationalists” new forms of subordination that kept them bound, in some ways, by the chains of “self-exoticization” (Ramos 2012). The connection that was established with the so-called seriousness of the German musical tradition, erected as the paradigm and yardstick for any body of music that considered itself artistic, obliged the other national schools born out of the same mould to employ the same musical language, but at the same time seek to give them a national inflexion of their own (Taruskin, 2001). The universal and timeless quality of German music was denied to the other musical nationalisms, which could not cast off their local color nor, for the same reason, attain true modernity (Taruskin 2000). In the 20th century, in a changing political and sociocultural context and when some authors struggled to get rid of this German musical domain, the meaning of Spanish music was again at stake. Paradoxically, as in the previous century, this national meaning was negotiated to a large extent from beyond its borders (Llano 2013; Christoforidis 2018).

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## Notes

- 1 *Aires españoles* (from now on, Spanish airs) was the phrase used in Spain to refer to a series of musical forms that were identified as properly Spanish. Throughout the 19th century, they were especially associated with certain Andalusian dances and songs, although not only: the phrase also made reference to rhythms, dances, or melodies associated with other regions of Spain. Likewise, it was habitually linked to a series of popular characters and plots.
- 2 For the Spanish case, see Carreras (2018a). See also Sánchez de Andrés (2013).
- 3 Until well into the eighteenth century, music was classified on the basis of its social function, not its origins.
- 4 Similar diagnoses were repeated elsewhere: the nation had become decadent compared to a glorious golden age because of external musical influences and the growth of bad taste. The remedies proposed also tended to coincide: regeneration through the means of music that was both sublime and national (Curtis 2008, 41–90). On the importance of opera as a school of patriotism, see Sorba (2015).
- 5 This did not prevent the continued presence of other, indigenous musical forms, some sung in Spanish, such as the short theatrical scenes with music and poems, often presented as light courtly entertainments, known as *zarzuelas*. However, at this time they were still not defined by their nationality and were developed in contact with and under the influence of the then-dominant Italian musical styles (Fernández-Cortés 2010; Labrador 2015).
- 6 Regarding the Spanish dances, see Etzion (1993) and Chanfreau (2000).
- 7 Similarly, schemes that sought to assert the value of Spanish music and to elevate the status of lesser genres by incorporating them into a Spanish musical canon were also regarded negatively (Lolo 2015). This process prompted an apologetic reaction that influenced and conditioned the Spanish musical historiography of the 19th century (Carreras 2001).
- 8 A similar reaction developed, for example, regarding the bolero dance form (Suárez-Pajares 1993).

- 9 At the same time, this also made them potential vehicles of social and political transgression for those who wished to address themselves to and mobilize precisely those social sectors with which such musical forms were identified. This could already be seen in the revolt against the French occupation in 1808 (Lolo 2007).
- 10 In one of the first issues of the magazine *La Iberia Musical*, José Espín lamented that he had observed “the contempt aroused by the word *musician* in certain circles of society” (“Conservatorio nacional de música: Ventajas que de él puede reportar el arte.” *La Iberia Musical* 3, January 16, 1842).
- 11 As the identification of Spanish music with these popular forms was consolidated across Europe, this simultaneously implied a growing disregard for Spain’s earlier traditions in cultured music or other contemporary music, as Spanish critics protested (Casares 1995b).
- 12 Particularly significant in this development was Manuel García (Radomski 2002; Romero and Moreno 2006). On the presence of Spanish musicians and dancers in France in these decades, see Aymes (2008, 201–21) and Plaza Orellana (2013).
- 13 The Spanish musical past was also orientalized in the influential work *Biographie universelle des musiciens* (1833–1844) by François-Joseph Fétis.
- 14 On the proliferation of these sociability musical settings and the progressive construction of a musical public sphere in Spain, see Cruz (2017).
- 15 This financial weakness also explains the limited efforts made by any government bodies to promote a serious opera, a style of performance that was enormously costly.
- 16 Santiago Masarnau complained bitterly of a musical theatre dominated by tonadillas and zarzuelas of minimal quality. He attributed this to the need felt by Spanish musicians to please a public most at home in taverns (Sancho García 2013).
- 17 One factor that worked against him was his refusal to translate his work into Italian (Rodríguez Lorenzo 2006). Nor was he helped by the fact that—at a time when, with Spanish politics dominated by moderate liberal monarchists, there was a widespread reaction against earlier revolutionary upheavals—his libretto, by the progressive writer Romero Larrañaga, focused on the 16th-century *Comunero* revolt against tyranny (Casculo 2020).
- 18 Eduardo Velaz de Medrano. “Consideraciones acerca de la necesidad de establecer en Madrid un teatro de ópera nacional,” *El Español*, October 2, 1847. Two years earlier, M. Jiménez had expressed similar views: “Let us be clear and avoid fruitless polemics,” he wrote. “There is no national opera because what is called elegant society does not feel pleasure unless it hears the melodic accent of *Di non parlare, né chiedere* or other similar verses, which, however good or well measured, will not cease to appear ridiculous when they are in the national language.” “Sobre la ópera nacional,” *La Iberia musical y literaria* 17, June 12, 1845.
- 19 J. M. D. “Revista semanal.” *Revista de teatros* 13, June 27, 1841. Indeed, *El Contrabandista* dealt with so-called “serious” themes of love and tragedy. Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE). Barbieri Collection, Mss/14604/8.
- 20 The formal characteristics of this type of zarzuela have been highlighted by Cortizo (1995). The hybrid nature of this music, which would eventually be regarded as among the most characteristically Spanish, is considered in Salaün (1996–1997). On the origins, development, and variants of this Spanish genre see Stein et al. (2002).
- 21 These pieces also drew on the equally carnivalesque, 18th-century tradition of the *Sainete*, short comic pieces that were often presented in the intervals of more serious performances (Romero 1999).
- 22 “The Christmas performances have proceeded as every year, joyful, boisterous and crowded. Critics rarely give attention to entertainments that are considered ‘seasonal fruit,’ the time span of which is irremissibly set. So long as the productions chosen are pieces that make people laugh and please all the classes that frequent the theaters on such occasions, the goal has been fulfilled, and one should not demand more.” “Teatros,” *Eco del comercio*, January 4, 1843.



- 23 During the Christmas season of 1843, the renowned actress Matilde Díez expressed her reluctance to take part. A writer in *El Corresponsal* urged her to reconsider for the sake of spectators “who always [looked on] their favorite actress with pleasure and enthusiasm, whether it was one moment drawing tears from their eyes, one moment on a lower note, or, just to please them, condescending to take part in zarzuelas and tonadillas.” “Un poco de todo,” *El Corresponsal*, January 23, 1843.
- 24 Notable among the first such zarzuelas, for example, was *La zarzuela interrumpida o lo que fuera sonará* (The Zarzuela interrupted, or what will be, will be) by Baltasar Saldoni and Ramón Carnicer, first performed on Christmas Eve 1841, in which the interaction between actors and audience led to Rabelaisian hysterics, as recorded by a local critic: “At every moment they screamed louder and louder, while others laughed, and in the end one could only hear one great, primeval burst of laughter in unison, such as one might hear from a race of giants. One [of the cast] took risks with the applause, like a popular orator; another acted as if he was in the congress, and called the patriarchal magistrate indolent, for having become part of the audience and playing his part while laughing. The latter called the actors to order, [but] they laughed too, when they saw the spectators imitating them.” “Noche-buena. Zarzuela y canciones en la Cruz, tonadilla en el Príncipe,” *Revista de teatros*, June 6, 1841.
- 25 A similar process has been indicated in the case of dance by Gerhard Steingress, for whom this was an element of fundamental importance in the birth of such a hybrid and cross-cultural genre as flamenco (Steingress 2006). On the relationship between flamenco and Spanish national identity, see the recent work by Holguin (2019). On the romantic construction of the Spanish gypsy, see Charnon-Deutsch (2004).
- 26 On the Instituto Español and its activities, see Cortizo (2001).
- 27 “Novedades,” *El Popular*, February 19, 1847a.
- 28 The first night of *El Suicidio de Rosa* by Agustín Azcona during Christmas 1847 provoked a disturbance between the representatives of the authorities present at the performance and a section of the audience, whom the former accused of being revolutionaries. The differing progressive and conservative versions of the incident can be found in “Una alcaldada,” *El Clamor público*, December 17, 1847, and “Parte indiferente,” *El Herald*, December 17, 1847. The latter newspaper, which had made a reputation as the principal enemy of the zarzuela genre, accused Azcona of persisting in “musical profanations.”
- 29 In 1847, an article signed by “many season-ticket holders” at the Liceo opera house in Barcelona reacted indignantly to the management’s decision to present Azcona’s *El Sacristán de San Lorenzo*: “Any person of common sense,” said the letter, “and who has some consideration for the good name of cultured and philharmonic Barcelona, cannot do other than feel injured by the detrimental opinion that any foreigner must form of our theatre [at seeing there] such a pantomime and *sainete*-like array, suitable at the most to be performed in a domestic theatre.” “Gacetilla de Provincias. Barcelona,” *El Espectador*, September 5, 1847. A similar argument was put forward regarding the zarzuela genre in general by a writer in *El Popular*: “Some bad dramatic authors go on perverting the taste of the public, to the point that it already causes shame to any rational person to see such stupid vulgarities so applauded, for the sole purpose of degrading us in the opinion of the whole of Europe.” “Novedades,” *El Popular*, December 27, 1847b.
- 30 “Tonadas nacionales de diferentes pueblos” (1838). As a noted critic, José María de Andueza pointed out, “The basis of opera, or of a national school of opera, is in popular song.” “Ópera alemana, italiana y española. Artículo IV. Ópera española,” *Revista de teatros* 3 (1842). See also P. L. Gallego, “Sobre la creación de la ópera nacional. Artículo II,” *El Piloto*, March 4, 1839.
- 31 “Del Príncipe,” *Diario de avisos de Madrid*, April 2, 1843.
- 32 The transformation of the genre was well received by the politically conservative *El Herald*, its great scourge in previous years, which declared that it had been “converted” to the zarzuela. See Eduardo Velaz de Medrano, “Revista musical,” *La España*, April 7, 1850. In the press comments

- favorable to *El Duende*, there was abundant praise for the selection of subject matter “in good taste” (“Parte indiferente. Gacetilla de la capital,” *El Herald*, June 7, 1849) and for the introduction of humor that was “suitable” and “befitting” (“Variedades. El Duende,” *La Ilustración*, June 9, 1849).
- 33 As Enrique Mejías (2014) has emphasized, we must therefore relativize the so-called failure of Spanish opera. What he calls *zarzuela isabelina*, which encompasses both the Spanish version of comic opera and other more popular lyrical genres, was enormously successful in Spain in the mid-19th century. The failure of the Spanish opera is rather, to a large extent, a historiographical construction founded precisely on the doubts and suspicions generated by a genre as popular as zarzuela.
  - 34 “Gacetilla: Teatro de Variedades,” *La España*, March 13, 1850.
  - 35 One of the first steps taken by the new management was a considerable reduction in ticket prices. “Gacetilla: Teatro de la Ópera,” *La España*, October 6, 1850.
  - 36 The impression of failure must have been added to by the enormous sense of expectation that had been aroused by the previous success of the piece and the reputation that preceded it before its arrival in Madrid.
  - 37 Favorable press reviews, in Casares (1994a, 119–120). Barbieri was confirmed as the great renovator of the zarzuela in a very early biographical essay, probably written by Ángel Fernández de los Ríos. See “Francisco Asenjo Barbieri,” *La Ilustración* 45, November 8, 1851.
  - 38 The concern felt by Spanish musicians over this exotic representation of Spain, which was given a further turn of the screw by Georges Bizet with his highly celebrated *Carmen* (1875) (also by Spanish audiences), only increased as the 19th century went on (Kertesz and Christoforidis 2008, 2018; Christoforidis 2011).
  - 39 “Boletín de espectáculos,” *La Nación*, January 8, 1851.
  - 40 “Revista de Madrid,” *El Clamor público*, March 21, 1852.
  - 41 “Crónica de teatros, bailes, bodas y diversiones públicas,” *La España*, January 1, 1853.
  - 42 Nevertheless, one should remember that this conception of music only established itself very slowly among the general public, even in Germany (Weber 1975). In Spain, the aficionados were reluctant to “wise music” (that of the German school) until the 1860s (Etzion 1998b).
  - 43 Effigies of both dramatists figured in decorative medallions placed on the facade of the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid, inaugurated in the same year of 1855. Barbieri also favored the idea of marking this inauguration by recasting a zarzuela by Calderón de la Barca (Casares 1994a, 190). On this historicist strategies, see Carreras (2018c).
  - 44 Barbieri’s strategy was similar to the one followed by those Italian musicians who were opposed to German musical ideas (Tedesco 2011). But Barbieri did not oppose German music or fail to recognize its merits. In fact, in 1859 he organized a series of concerts of great importance for the acceptance in Spain of this musical tradition, and during the 1860s he led the Sociedad de Conciertos, equally fundamental in this regard (Sobrino 1995).
  - 45 Part of the exchange of views between them can be followed in Barbieri (1864).

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