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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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Spanish Musical Theater at the Crossroads of Two Centuries: Between Italian *Verismo*
and Realism, from 1895 to 1925

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

by

Alessio Olivieri

September 2022

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Walter A. Clark, Chairperson

Dr. Leonora Saavedra

Dr. Byron Adams

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The Dissertation of Alessio Olivieri is approved:

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University of California, Riverside

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A mia moglie Elisa.

Ai miei genitori Luigi e Marina, e a mio fratello Danilo.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Spanish Musical Theater at the Crossroads of Two Centuries: Between Italian *Verismo*
and Realism, from 1895 to 1925

by

Alessio Olivieri

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Music
University of California, Riverside, September 2022
Dr. Walter A. Clark, Chairperson

In my dissertation, I propose a new way of reading Spanish opera at the crossroads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, clarifying the definition of the so-called *ópera española* (Spanish opera). Unlike many European countries, Spain never developed a national style of opera. Instead, it showed a preference for the zarzuela, a kind of operetta alternating spoken dialogue and musical numbers. In the late nineteenth century, zarzuela was a one-act spectacle, and historians agree that it was the most representative type of Spanish musical theater. To be sure, Spain had also developed an operatic tradition, but it was indebted to Italian models. Starting from the 1850s, while engaging in the debate regarding Wagnerian vs. Italian opera, Spanish composers and critics concurrently sought to create *ópera española* by employing the Spanish language and folklore. This led to an impasse, and composers kept returning to the more lucrative zarzuela.

However, leading composers such as Bretón, Granados, Albéniz, Torroba, and Falla, together with others like Usandizaga and Penella, were nonetheless able to produce successful operas characterized by a great deal of realism. While traditionally considered realistic operas with some Spanish color, upon closer examination, such works share unique features, which distinguish them from both the hybrid zarzuela-opera model and the *tout court* Italian model: namely, an emphasis on realism, the use of national language, and the unique concurrence of both Italianate elements (in terms of the melodic invention) and Wagnerian ones (in the use of leitmotiv and prominence of the orchestra). In short, these operas present the peculiar *topoi* of Italian *verismo* opera.

After revisiting the highly controversial definition of *verismo*, which has been broadly assigned to too many operas, I suggest approaching Spanish realist operas through the prism of the *verismo* model. This provides a new and interesting perspective, and it allows a deeper understanding of many works of the time while concurrently providing a model that is useful in re-approaching some neglected Spanish operas. The last part of the dissertation is devoted to three case studies, *La Dolores* by Bretón, *Las golondrinas* by Usandizaga, and *El gato montés* by Penella, providing three unique examples of Spanish *verismo* at the crossroads of the centuries.

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PART I. Prologue

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is the product of two fascinations that have accompanied me most of my life: Italian opera and Spanish music. For understandable reasons, I have always strongly identified with the *verismo* repertoire. Trivially, I could say that being a native of Southern Italy, my cultural background resonates with that of writers like Giovanni Verga and Luigi Pirandello and with the stories they tell. This is a connection that in Italy is socially facilitated by the fact that such authors are included in the curriculum of public schools.

In reality, there are more profound reasons that have to do with youthful memories. My mind quickly goes back to the years when, as a child in my hometown of Manfredonia (in Apulia, Southern Italy), I would listen to the local marching band playing the interlude of *Cavalleria rusticana* and other traditional operatic numbers.

People from Southern Italy are particularly fond of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*. They are among the most performed operas during outdoor summer concerts—maybe

because they are short and reasonably affordable to produce, but maybe, and I would say more probably, because Southern Italians simply love them. Whether we call it an unconscious desire for self-exoticization or a Romantic process of self-representation, most everyone likes to travel back to the end of the century, reliving for an hour a world that is paradoxically unreal in its realism, and to feel again “that connection.” Just for being Southerners, or perhaps because we identify in them details or stories narrated by our grand-grandfathers.



Figure 0.1: A recent photo of the Swabian-Angevine-Aragonese castle of Manfredonia (Apulia). Built ca. 1279, it is one of many similar castles “by the sea” in Southern Italy.

Indeed, I cannot forget the pleasant summer evenings when my parents and I would attend opera concerts in the city's main *piazza* (square) or the parade ground (*piazza d'armi*) of the local Swabian-Angevin castle. I vividly recall the singer performing *Tosca's* "E lucevan le stelle," while towering old palms surrounding the Castle swayed gently in the summer breeze and a pleasant fragrance wafted in from the Mediterranean Sea. During those years, my mother was working on her degree in voice at the local music conservatory, and she would always bring me along to her singing lessons. In the evenings, especially in the late spring or summer, I would often fall asleep while my mum, sitting at my desk in my room, was studying and repeating aloud names, dates, and compositions for her exams in music history as well as poetic and dramatic literature.

My familiarity with Italian opera, which seems to be part of the country's collective memory, is mixed here with my passion for Spanish music, the consequence of over two decades of studying classical guitar. Besides, for historical reasons, Spain and Italy have many converging cultural traits that eased my approach to Spanish traditions. To close the circle, I married an Italian opera singer and expert on diction, with whom I share the endeavor of promoting Ibero-American repertoire, through performances and scholarship. Therefore—and to come back from the Southern Italy nostalgia—research that connects the two worlds of Italian and Spanish realist opera at the turn of the centuries has become an almost natural process for me—a process certainly facilitated and stimulated by my advisor's background, with his iconic scholarship on the great Spanish composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.



Figure 0.2: A photo of a religious procession in my home city, Manfredonia (Apulia), ca.1931. The similarity with Spanish traditions is such that this picture could very well represent any procession during a *feria* in Southern Spain.

My work aims to help fill a gap in the history of Spanish musical theater. I maintain that there are two major issues in the *ópera española* narrative. The first one pertains to the ambivalent reception of Spanish operas at the time of their composition, due to both an audience accustomed mainly to zarzuela and critics' biases towards either Italian or Wagnerian operas. The second is the consequence of both late-nineteenth-century "internal nationalism" in Spain and political dictatorship for much of the twentieth century, with regimes rejecting any form of musical theater other than zarzuela. This impacted the diffusion of previously composed operas and sometimes influenced the attitudes of Spanish musicologists.

Being essentially a study of a repertoire, my work on Spanish *verismo* has been conducted in two main directions: (1) a comparative study of problematic secondary literature, and (2) a study of primary sources, which are essentially of three types: publications (essays, volumes, critical studies, autobiographies, memoirs) contemporary to the problems faced, scores and librettos, and hemerographic sources.

Regarding the problem of Italian *verismo*, there is extensive primary literature on the subject, especially the writings of the critic Amintore Galli published in the years when the movement began in Italy. Likewise, for the question of Spanish national opera, there exists a vast quantity of essays and critical studies from around 1900, by the same composers and critics involved in the debate.

By contrast, in the case of *verismo* in Spain, the research is particularly problematic, as this aesthetic (or “tendency”) was never seriously contemplated in the narrative of the time—nor was it later—because of tradition, as well as for economic and political reasons. In that case, it was necessary to proceed indirectly.

After studying the literature on Italian *verismo* and producing a possible model of *verismo* opera, I applied the model to Spanish opera at large. Taking into account the differences in folklore, language, and local color, I then looked for references to *verismo* in specific Spanish productions in two ways.

The first is derivative, through the analytical study of the narrative on Spanish opera and the problem of national opera, as well as the study of the reception of Italian *verismo* in Spain. The writings and the hemerographic sources offer vital information that, although not directly linked to *verismo* (*verismo* is rarely mentioned, even in the review

of *veristic* works), leads us to understand the orientation that the Spanish music world exhibited towards this “tendency.” A typical example is a critic who, in describing the musical elements of a given realist opera, highlighted the blend of Wagnerian and Puccinian techniques, immediately leading us back to my *verismo* model, even if the word *verismo* was not directly reported.

The second way is the direct one. In this case, I focused on works (operas, lyric dramas, and zarzuelas) that present a strong realist mold but have traditionally been regarded as isolated cases, though seldom being wholly neglected. In particular, in the three cases studied (*La Dolores* by Bretón, *Las golondrinas* by Usandizaga, and *El gato montés* by Penella), realist *topoi* were sought, according to the model provided, in both the libretto and the music.¹ My study of the scores does not venture into a detailed analysis of harmony and is oriented more towards the formal macro structure, the leitmotivic strategy, and the use of local color.

Structure of the Dissertation

Part I offers a historical and cultural frame for the period 1895-1925. Chapter 1 offers an overall historical and cultural picture of Spain between 1800 and the first two decades of 1900, with particular reference to the problem of national opera, and the works produced from this perspective.

¹ In the dissertation, I use the words *topos* (singular) and *topoi* (plural) in their traditional sense, as Greek words that signify a theme or formula in literature. I am not referring to “topics,” which is the American translation of the term as employed in the “Topic Theory,” which I do not utilize.

Part II focuses on *verismo*, first in Italy, then in Spain. In Chapter 2, I explore Italian operatic *verismo* in its broader meaning, correlating it with complex narratives of *verismo* in literature. After re-assessing the concept of *verismo*, I propose a possible operatic *verismo* model based on macro features, which I identify as an “archetypical *verismo* model.” Chapter 3 is devoted to *verismo* and realism in Spain at the crossroad of the centuries. I investigate the cause of the lack of a narrative of Spanish *verismo*, and I propose applying the Italian *verismo* model to a group of Spanish operas, traditionally considered isolated realist instances, at a time when Spain had regarded the *zarzuela chica* as an implicit form of national opera.

Part III of the dissertation is devoted to specific works that I consider significant in the discourse on Spanish *verismo*. My case studies are three works from three different periods and with three unique and contrasting characters. They are three operas also set in various geographical locations, representing a different Spanish reality each time. These three works are just a sample of what I identify as the Spanish *verismo* opera.²

Chapter 4 is devoted to Bretón’s *La Dolores* as the work that opens the cycle of Spanish *verismo* operas. Above all, it is the work that points the way for Spanish opera. Not by coincidence was it subtitled *opera española*. The action occurs in an urban environment in Calatayud (Aragón). It was a successful opera but historically misunderstood, especially by contemporary audiences and critics. It became popular mainly for its famous *Jota*. It is a work of “simple” realism but that presents, albeit in a

² My study excludes analysis of two cornerstones, such as *La vida breve* by Manuel de Falla and *Goyascas* by Enrique Granados, although they are introduced briefly. This is because they have already been extensively studied.

germinal way, all the *topoi* of Spanish *verismo* opera, starting from a harmonic language of clear Wagnerian inspiration, which blends with the numerous numbers of Spanish dance and music and Italianate melodic invention.

The second opera, in Chapter 5, is Usandizaga's *Las golondrinas* (*The wanderers*). The realism offered by this work is of a different kind. In the first place, the opera is not localized in a specific area (although the first act is set "in the fields of Castile"), as it tells the story of a touring circus and theatrical group. In fact, the libretto was based on the play *Saltinbanquis* by Lejérraga and Martínez Sierra. Again, it is Verghian-type *verismo*, very indebted to *Pagliacci* by Leoncavallo. Furthermore, *Las golondrinas* is an example of how Spanish *verismo* was also realized by using the form of theater most dear to the Spaniards: the zarzuela. Although best known today in the operatic version (adapted in 1929 by José María's brother, Ramón), the opera achieved glorious success in the form of a zarzuela in 1914. The alternation of spoken dialogue and sung parts certainly made the action very real and lively, and above all, close to the tastes of the Spanish people. *Las golondrinas* has a unique sound, a new orchestration, and the reference to French modernism and, above all, to Puccini is inevitable. It is no coincidence that Usandizaga had been called also the "Spanish Puccini."

The third opera, in Chapter 6, is Manuel Penella's *El gato montés*. Here we have an opera whose action takes place in Sevilla and presents a typically Andalusian story, with a bullfighter and a bandit competing for the love of the *gitanilla* (Gypsy girl). What characterizes this work is classic Andalusian realism. This is what I call *verismo* as a "fatalistic realism." Andalusia is the land of bullfighting and *flamenco*, a direct musical

representation of this fatalism, and it is a land where the sacred and profane coexist in everyday life. This is precisely the fatalism that transpires in *El gato montés*, and that distances it from other *andalucista* works.

CHAPTER 1

Ópera Española at the Crossroads of Two Centuries

1.1 Introduction

This chapter offers an overall historical and cultural picture of Spain between 1800 and the first two decades of 1900, with particular reference to the opera production linked to the problem of national opera. The first part offers a brief summary of the historical/political situation in Spain in the period from about 1850 to the establishment of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in 1923. The second part focuses on the consequences of Italian cultural influence, which had begun a century earlier, in the (unsuccessful) attempts to establish Spanish national opera during the first half of the nineteenth century. The last part offers a summary of the more specific narrative of *ópera española*, which reached its peak between 1860 and 1916 and that was constantly informed by the discussion on the use of the Wagnerian opera model as a substitute for the Italian one.

1.2 Historical Context

In 1868, Queen Isabella II (1830-1904)¹ was dethroned through a *coup d'état* by General Juan Prim. It began a strange six-year period called the *Sexenio Revolucionario* in which, between 1868 and 1874, different types of government followed one another in Spain.

¹ Daughter of Maria Cristina of Bourbon and Delle Due Sicilie, fourth wife of Ferdinand II of Spain, also Bourbon.

General Juan Prim had created an alliance of Progressives with Democrats (who, between 1850 and 1860 were the then-radical fringe of parliament), triggering the creation of even more radical groups. Indeed, the Democrats wanted a federalist republic and pushed more to the left than the Spanish Progressive Party. The Progressives were disillusioned with Isabella from 1860 onward because she did not want to elect liberal ministers, but the party remained monarchist. Over the next six years, this led to greater political mobilization. However, the fact that Prim allied with the Democrats did not mean that he wanted to turn Spain into a republic, so he went in search of a monarch. The first candidate was Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern; however, as Napoleon III did not want two Prussian monarchs on his borders, his candidacy was withdrawn under solid French pressure, and this triggered the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. The second was Amedeo I of Savoy, the youngest son of the King of Italy, Vittorio Emanuele. Amedeo was king for less than three years (1870-73), and he hated every minute of it.

Juan Prim was assassinated the same day Amedeo arrived in Spain. According to Clinton Young,² this obviously affected Amedeo's view of Spain, and he was not wrong in his suspicions. Democrats gained more and more power in opposition to Progressives during his reign, particularly locally, where they won in twenty provincial capitals, including Barcelona and Seville. Republicanism grew as a political force, as leaders of the working class were enticed by the fact that there was also a congress of the First Communist International in Barcelona in June 1870. Over time, more radical ministers

² Clinton D. Young, *Music Theater and Popular Nationalism in Spain, 1880-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016), 26.

came to the government because progressives could not create a government that worked properly. At the same time, the representatives of the main parties asked Amedeo to abrogate the constitution. Amedeo's reign lasted less than three years, tormented by the fact that the Spanish parties did not want to collaborate with a monarchical structure. He abdicated, convinced that Spain was ungovernable.

Once the monarchy collapsed, the only alternative was to establish a republic. However, this alternative First Republic worked as badly as the constitutional monarchy under Amedeo. In 1873, there were several uprisings against the government, many organized by the Communist International. At the same time, the Spanish Carlists took the opportunity to wage a civil war against the government. There was a Second Carlist War in 1874 (the first happened between 1833 and 1840), which created more chaos. The First Republic ended in December 1873, replaced by a military dictatorship.

In December 1874, another group of military officers launched a *coup* promoting the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. Their candidate was Isabella II's son, Alfonso, who at the time was completing his studies at a military academy in England. He returned to Spain as King Alfonso XII in 1874, while his mother was exiled to France.

Contrary to what it might seem, the 1874 Restoration was not a return to pre-1868 politics. Spain quickly returned to being a parliamentary government, much in the British style, based on two conflicting parties and under the control of the Bourbon monarch. The difference from the previous parliamentary monarchy was that, in this case, they wanted to keep the political mobilization of the population "under" control. The idea that ordinary people could participate in political life together with elites had

developed in the six years following the revolution of 1868. The *sexenio revolucionario* had introduced radical political ideologies such as republicanism and socialism in Spain.

The architect of Alfonso's new political system was the liberal-conservative Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, who collaborated with the liberal-progressive Práxedes Mateo Sagasta. They were the leaders of the two opposing parties and, in accordance with the monarch, they set everything up for an objective union: political stability. They created what was called "*turno pacífico*" (The Peaceful Turn). According to this system, conservatives and progressives "alternated" the government in regular cycles, though regard for the electorate's wishes. With this system, the king, in agreement with party leaders, decided when to have the elections and who should "win" them, while the Minister of the Interior determined how many seats each party should have. The peculiarity of this rigged system was that it excluded from the political mechanism both unwanted politicians and unwanted or problematic parties, such as the republicans.

When the elections arrived, voters were "piloted" by the *caciques*. They were influential local people, usually landowners, who controlled the Spanish agricultural system and thus could pilot the votes in their areas. They distributed jobs and favors based on how their employees voted in elections or operated tactics to "discourage" votes, e.g., one technique was to place the urns in areas that were difficult to reach or dangerous, such as pigsties or areas quarantined for tuberculosis. This manipulation made the system anything but democratic.³

³ According to Clinton Young, the orientation towards political "quietism" was reflected in the zarzuelas written in that period, from the 1860s to the 1880s. Although the *teatro para horas* had developed, most of the zarzuelas of this period were still large works in two or three acts. These zarzuelas had a political angle between 1850 and 1860, but during the Restoration period, they returned to themes of romantic love. For

The *turno pacífico* lasted until about the end of the century. Meanwhile, in 1885 Alfonso XII died of tuberculosis and was succeeded by his son Alfonso XIII. As he was still a child, his mother Maria Cristina became regent from 1885 until 1902, when her son was able to ascend to the throne. The era of Alfonso XIII is considered the second period of restoration. Alfonso was king until 1930, but with the advent of General Miguel Primo de Rivera's military dictatorship in 1923, he was reduced to little more than a figurehead.

1.3 Regenerationism and The Generation of '98

In 1898, Spain engaged in a (provoked) war with the United States, which resulted in the loss of the last three overseas colonies of the Spanish empire: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines (along with Wake Island and Guam). Such a devastating event represents a turning point in Spanish history since Spain had to re-establish its lost identity from that moment on. The analysis made by historian Álvarez Junco shows how the consequences of the “disaster” were not so much on the political level or even on the economic one. On the contrary, it was an incredible crisis of conscience. In light of its disastrous situation, Spain had become the “dying nation” that British Prime Minister Salisbury alluded to in a famous speech.⁴ Junco writes: “Yet the intellectuals, journalists,

example, two of the *zarzuelas grandes* by Barbieri, *Pan y toros* (1864) and *El barberillo de Lavapiés* (1874), show a process of depoliticization. Young argues that during the Restoration, political criticism was anathema. See Clinton D. Young, “Theatrical and Political Revolutions in Nineteenth-Century Spain,” in *Music Theater and Popular Nationalism in Spain, 1880-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016), 21–40.

⁴ José Álvarez Junco, *Spanish Identity in the Age of Nations* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2011), 359.

and other creators of national opinion, who had stoked the jingoistic fires in the months before the conflict to the extent that the government had been left with no option but to declare war, now exempted themselves from the blame.”⁵ Furthermore, the popular masses, who had other problems to face, had not been indoctrinated like the middle class. This led to a certain indifference and a general patriotic skepticism.

Regenerationism was the word used all over Spain to indicate the rebirth after the *desastre*. One of the tenants of the *regeneration* was the idea that power should have been given to common Spanish people and taken away from political elites, which had been considered responsible, through all the Bourbon Restoration policies, for leading Spain towards the *desastre*. In general, in this period there was suspicion of any type of imperialist aspiration, while—on the contrary—the interest was shifted more towards within the nation’s borders, aiming at a process of modernization. There were tax reforms to repay the war debt and, over the years, the construction of much infrastructure. In all these, and with the fresh memory of the “disaster,” Spain kept its distance from international issues, starting with its neutrality during the Great War, and kept focusing on its process of industrialization and social regeneration.

The process of *nationalization of the masses* was enacted through school reforms by the Minister of Education, or the creation of the Center for Historic Studies by the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza (ILE)*. The ILE was an educational project aimed at academic freedom, concurrently refusing to teach dogmas and religious imposition of the time.

⁵ Ibid.

Inspired by the philosophy of Krausism,⁶ ILE was at first connected with the Complutense University in Madrid, but it eventually detached from the state institution and started an independent institution that proclaimed itself secular, not aligned with conservative Catholic education. Later, the ILE also reached primary and secondary education. Founded by Francisco Ginér del Ríos and other professors at the Complutense, over the decades the ILE supported such artists as Joaquín Costa, Clarín, José Ortega y Gasset, Antonio Machado, Joaquín Sorolla, or Juan Ramón Jiménez.

In the wake of the disaster, a group of artists and intellectuals, later called the Generación del '98, emerged. The artists of the Generation of '98 were indeed regenerationists, and their message was not devoid of anti-government political implications, including a firm opposition to Restoration policies. In an essay titled *Oligarquía y caciquismo como la forma actual de gobierno en España: urgencia y modo de cambiarla* (1901), Joaquín Costa (1849-1911) criticized the alleged definition of Spain as a sovereign nation and pointed to the corrupt tripartite system of the Restoration, composed by oligarchs, *caciques*, and the governor of the fifty provinces controlled by centralist Madrid. Indeed, the iconic first sentence of the first chapter of the essay states, "Spain is not a free and sovereign country." He writes:

In conclusion: the form of government in Spain is not the same as the one that prevails in Europe, although one day the *Gazette* may have tried to argue so: our backwardness in this regard is no less than in science and culture than in industry, agriculture, military and public administration. It is not (and on this I dare to especially request the attention of the audience), our form of government is not a parliamentary regime, vitiated by corruption and abuse, as is commonly understood, but on the contrary, an oligarchic regime, served, and not moderated, by apparently parliamentary institutions. Or to put it another way: the

⁶ Cfr.: José Ignacio Suárez García, "Krausoinstitucionismo y wagnerismo," *Nasarre*, no. 25 (2009): 57-72.

parliamentary regime is not the rule, and the vices and corruption denounced in the press and in Parliament itself for sixty years are not the exceptions: on the contrary, what we call deviations and corruption constitute the regime, they are the same rule. Basically, it seems that it is the same, and, nevertheless, having raised the problem in an inverted way, taking as a point of view and reference not reality, but the *Gazette*, what was imagined, not what was lived, as it proceeded, has had an unfavorable influence on our conduct, on the conduct of writers, propagandists, opinion, being the reason that our backwardness in this structure did not seem so African to us nor we were married, that we did not we have collected all the horror that we owed to the execrable, infamous and brutalizing regime that, in a runaway race, was leading the nation to dishonor and death.⁷

Together with Costa, the most prominent figures of the Generation of '98 were Miguel de Unamuno (1864,1936), Ramón María del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936), Azorín (1863-1967), Pío Baroja (1872-1956), and Antonio Machado (1857-1939). These intellectuals tried to re-appropriate (and reconstruct) an idea of Spain as a renovated country looking towards the modern world but concurrently rooted in its traditions. However, according to historian Moreno Luzón, while musicians, painters, and architects frantically sought an “authentic Spanish style,” intellectuals and writers started searching in the past for a solution to the current Spanish problem (*el problema de España*), and this

⁷ Joaquín Costa y Martínez, *Oligarquía y caciquismo como la forma actual de gobierno en España; urgencia y modo de cambiarla* (Spain: Estab. tip. de Fortanet, 1901). “En conclusión: no es la forma de gobierno en España la misma que impera en Europa, aunque un día lo haya pretendido la Gaceta: nuestro atraso en este respecto no es menos que en ciencia y cultura, que en industria, que en agricultura, que en milicia, que en Administración pública. No es (y sobre esto me atrevo a solicitar especialmente la atención del auditorio), no es nuestra forma de gobierno un régimen parlamentario, viciado por corruptelas y abusos, según es uso entender, sino al contrario, un régimen oligárquico, servido, que no moderado, por instituciones aparentemente parlamentarias. O dicho de otro modo: no es el régimen parlamentario la regla, y excepción de ella los vicios y las corruptelas denunciadas en la prensa y en el Parlamento mismo durante sesenta años: al revés, eso que llamamos desviaciones y corruptelas constituyen el régimen, son la misma regla. En el fondo, parece que es igual, y, sin embargo, el haberse planteado el problema en una forma invertida, tomando como punto de mira y de referencia no la realidad, sino la Gaceta, lo imaginado, no lo vivido, conforme procedía, ha influido desfavorablemente en nuestra conducta, en la conducta de los tratadistas, de los propagandistas, de la opinión, siendo causa de que nuestro atraso en este orden no nos haya parecido tan africano ni nos haya preocupado lo que nos debía preocupar, de que no hayamos cobrado todo el horror que le debíamos al régimen execrable, infamante y embrutecedor que conducía a la nación, en desbocada carrera, al deshonor y a la muerte.”

attitude remained more or less the same until the 1960s.⁸ While they found the “outside” references in France, Germany, and Great Britain, for the “internal” part, they revived an idea of a glorious Spain identified with Castile. Specifically, they glorified the Romantic bohemian *majos* and *majas*, and in the arts, they looked back to Francisco de Goya (1746-1828) for inspiration. Concurrently they rejected any other form of regionalism (especially *Andalucismo*), convinced that only the center of Spain had maintained its cultural tradition untouched.

Casticismo is a word that, according to Álvarez Junco, resists translation. Coming from *casta* (caste), “[it] has both biological and cultural overtones. It connotes everything that distinguishes one species of animals or one nation from another,”⁹ but it also connects to *castellano* and both the language and regional identification. An attempt to define *casticismo* and identify what characteristics made Spain unique compared to other nations was made, even before the *desastre*, by Miguel de Unamuno in his set of essays called *En torno al casticismo* (1902, first published as essays in 1895 in *La España moderna*). Unamuno’s theories were also based on the concept of *intrahistoria* (intrahistory), which he proposed starting in 1895. This was a sort of Spanish *Volkgeist*,¹⁰ which Unamuno

⁸ Javier Moreno-Luzón and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, *Metaphors of Spain: Representations of Spanish National Identity in the Twentieth Century*, 1st ed., 1, vol. 1, Studies in Latin American and Spanish History. (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2017), 4.

⁹ José Álvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert, eds., *Spanish History since 1808* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), 159.

¹⁰ Cfr.: Miguel de Unamuno, *Vida de D. Quijote y Sancho: según Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra* (Madrid: Librería de Fernando Fe, 1905).

identified as a “Quixotic spirit.”¹¹ Indeed, underneath the current and superficial history, he identifies the intrahistory as the history of common people. That is, for him the “true tradition”:

The waves of History, with their noise and their foam that reverberates in the sun, roll over a continuous, deep sea, immensely deeper than the layer that ripples over a silent sea and whose last bottom the sun never reaches. Everything that the newspapers tell daily, the whole story of the “present historical moment,” is nothing but the surface of the sea, a surface that freezes and crystallizes in the books and records and, once thus crystallized, a hard layer, no greater with respect to intra-historical life than this poor crust in which we live in relation to the immense fiery focus that it carries within. The newspapers say nothing about the silent life of the millions of men without history who at all hours of the day and in all the countries of the globe get up at the command of the sun and go to their fields to continue the dark and silent daily and eternal work, that work that, like that of suboceanic madrepores, lays the foundations on which the islets of History rise. On the august silence, he said, the sound leans and lives; above the immense silent Humanity rise those who make noise in History. That intra-historical life, silent and continuous like the very bottom of the sea, is the substance of progress, the true tradition, the eternal tradition, not the false tradition that is usually found in the past buried in books and papers and monuments and stones. Those who live in the world in History, tied to the “present historical moment,” battered by the waves on the surface of the sea where castaways shake, they only believe in storms and cataclysms followed by calms, they believe that life can be interrupted and resumed. [...] The tradition lives in the depths of the present, its substance; tradition makes science possible, or rather, science itself is tradition.¹²

¹¹ José Álvarez Junco, “History and National Myth,” in *Metaphors of Spain: Representations of Spanish National Identity in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Javier Moreno-Luzón and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, 1st ed., 1, vol. 1, Studies in Latin American and Spanish History (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2017), 10.

¹² Miguel de Unamuno, “En torno al casticismo,” *La España moderna* LXXIV (February 1895): 32-34. “Las olas de la Historia, con su rumor y su espuma que reverbera al sol, ruedan sobre un mar continuo, hondo, inmensamente más hondo que la capa que ondula sobre un mar silencioso y a cuyo último fondo nunca llega el sol. Todo lo que cuentan a diario los periódicos, la historia toda del “presente momento histórico,” no es sino la superficie del mar, una superficie que se hiela y cristaliza en los libros y registros y, una vez cristalizada así, una capa dura, no mayor con respecto a la vida intra-histórica que esta pobre corteza en que vivimos con relación al inmenso foco ardiente que lleva dentro. Los periódicos nada dicen de la vida silenciosa de los millones de hombres sin historia que a todas horas del día y en todos los países del globo se levantan a una orden del sol y van a sus campos a proseguir la oscura y silenciosa labor cotidiana y eterna, esa labor que como la de las madreporas suboceanicas echa las bases sobre que se alzan los islotes de la historia. Sobre el silencio augusto, decía, se apoya y vive el sonido; sobre la inmensa Humanidad silenciosa se levantan los que meten bulla en la Historia. Esa vida intra-histórica, silenciosa y continua como el fondo mismo del mar, es la sustancia del progreso, la verdadera tradición, la tradición

The concept of *casticismo* and the metaphor of *intrahistoria* were opposed to European nationalism. Ángel Ganivet (1865-1898)¹³ echoed Unamuno in his *Idearium español* (1897), in which the author proposes to focus on Spanish history and tradition, instead of opening to modern Europe.¹⁴

The Generation of '98 also had a profound impact on the music theater, a powerful means to research and represent the *casticist* spirit, and project Spanish life in the outside world. The whole production of zarzuelas of the time, belonging to the *género chico*, was infused with the realism of *costumbrismo casticista*. In the operas of my area of interest, the *casticismo* influenced particularly the work of Enrique Granados (with the *majos* and *majas* of *Goyescas*). The study of the generation of '98 and the coexistence of *casticismo*, *andalucismo* (and other forms of *-ismo*) is essential in approaching the study of the Spanish musical theater at the crossroads of the two centuries.

1.4 The Italian Problem. Opera in Spain since 1830s

Since the second half of the eighteenth century, Italian opera had been a musical and cultural point of reference for Spain, specifically in the Madrid area. The later works of Scarlatti, Farinelli, and Boccherini were of paramount importance, and the Italian

eterna, no la tradición mentida que se suele ir a buscar al pasado enterrado en libros y papeles y monumentos y piedras. Los que viven en el mundo en la Historia, atados al "presente momento histórico," peloteados por las olas en la superficie del mar donde se agitan naufragos, éstos no creen más que en las tempestades y los cataclismos seguidos de calmas, éstos creen que puede interrumpirse y reanudarse la vida [...] La tradición vive en el fondo del presente, su sustancia; la tradición hace posible la ciencia, mejor dicho, la ciencia misma es tradición."

¹³ Ganivet is considered a precursor of the Generation of '98. He could not participate in it, because he committed suicide (by drowning) in 1898.

¹⁴ Ángel Ganivet, *Idearium español* (Granada: s.n., 1897).

operatic model was the only one that had attracted the interest of Spanish composers. Even when the first *zarzuelas* appeared in Spain in the mid-seventeenth century, the musical style of such theatrical works drew partial inspiration from the Italian style. Critics of the time talked about the “Italian invasion.” The first zarzuelas of the eighteenth century were structured as small comic operas that alternated speech and singing, resembling the Italian *intermezzo*, the German *singspiel*, or the French *opéra comique*. But they still were very much Italian in style. Spanish royalty, which had historically strong ties with Italy (most of southern Italy was part of the Spanish empire), continuously brought Italian impresarios, singers, and musicians to Madrid. This facilitated the creation of a “Spanish” repertoire that was indeed Italian. The fact that, for almost two centuries, Italian was the only language allowed—by royal decree—for operas in Spain gives us a good perspective on the matter. However, zarzuela developed parallel to the operatic repertoire, and —while keeping an Italianate style in the musical structure— it originated using Spanish as a common language. For this reason, the repertoire quickly became popular among the Spanish middle class.

Before the diffusion of the zarzuela, Spaniards could self-identify only in the popular *sainetes* and *tonadillas escénicas*, which were performed in-between the acts of regular *comedias* or operas. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the music of Rossini became “the Italian opera.” Its influence was extensive, both in the genre of the *zarzuela grande* (the big zarzuela in three acts, inaugurated in 1851 by Barbieri with *Jugar con fuego*) and among the composers who tried to compose actual operas. What strikes us is that the attempts by composers such as Carnicer, Saldoni, Ducassi, Genoves, Eslava, who

also created “institutions” to promote a Spanish-opera project, often resulted in the composition of “Rossinian” operas. Italian influence was still too strong. In addition, the great Italian impresarios—Ricordi above all—had a substantial financial interest in Spain and pushed Italian opera into the major Spanish theaters. If we only quickly skim the list of the operas performed in the *temporadas* of the first half of the nineteenth century, we see an embarrassing predominance of operas by Italian composers, Rossini being the most common, followed by Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi.

The opening of the Teatro Real in Madrid in 1850 marks an important point in the history of Spanish musical theater. In fact, the Teatro Real became an official Madrilenian institution of the opera (mainly in Italian and French). In contrast, the popular Teatro de la Zarzuela (which opened in 1856) became the one that specialized in producing zarzuelas and all the “experimental” Spanish operas. Such works were usually rejected by the Teatro Real, which later became central to an extensive discourse on the problem of *ópera española*. Composers such as Barbieri, Arrieta, and Gazdambide proposed, at different levels, the foundation of a new Spanish musical theater. Barbieri, in particular, started adopting Spanish dances in his zarzuelas (e.g., *El barberillo de Lavapiés*, or *Pan y toros*), as well as the Spanish language and elements of realism in the plot and staging, and gradually developed a zarzuela that was remarkably “Spanish.” However, in Barbieri (though less in his last works) and even more in Arrieta, we can still readily identify the *topoi* of the Italian opera, including a *solita forma*. Barbieri’s zarzuelas had a clear nationalistic tendency and were groundbreaking in proposing a new form of realism in Spanish musical theater.

But the *zarzuela grande* was indeed a form of comic opera. In the following decades, there were some other operas composed by Spaniards. The Teatro Real started producing them, but very rarely, only four years after its opening.¹⁵ Until 1870, only two operas by Spanish composers appeared at the Real, *Ildegonda* (1854) and *Isabel la Católica* (1855), both works by Arrieta. That was not a surprise since Arrieta, at the time, was considered the embodiment of the Italian style in Spanish opera and thus perfectly *en rapport* with the artistic tendencies of the Teatro Real. Starting from 1870, the number of operas produced gradually increased and included *Marina* (1871) by Arrieta,¹⁶ *Don Fernando el emplazado* (1873-4) by Zubiarre; *Las naves de Cortés* (1874), *La hija de Jefe* (1876), and *Roger de Flor* (1878) by Chapí; *Leida* (1877) by Zubiarre; and *El Príncipe de Viana* (1885) by Tomás Fernández Granjal. In 1885, *Guzmán el bueno* by Bretón also premiered at the Teatro Apolo. These operas did not receive great critical reviews and were often criticized for their librettos. On the other hand, the public always liked them.

This is also the period of strong Wagnerian influence in Spanish musical theater, which informed the opera productions of some composers who also attempted to create a new Spanish national opera. Above all, Felipe Pedrell (1841-1922)¹⁷ synthesized his new ideas—presented in the essay/introduction *Por nuestra música* (1891)—in three of his operas *Els Pirineus* (1891), *La Celestina* (1902), and *Comte Arnau* (1904). Pedrell's ideas on

¹⁵ See Clinton D. Young, "Why Did Spain Fail to Develop Nationalist Opera?" *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies* 38, no. 1 (December 31, 2013).

¹⁶ *Marina* was originally written as a two-act zarzuela and premiered in 1855 at the Teatro del Circo Price.

¹⁷ Pedrell was the teacher of Spanish composers of the caliber of Granados, Albéniz, Falla, and Gerhard, who brought Spanish music to international recognition.

Spanish opera constantly clashed with those of Tomás Bretón, who wrote two major works in those years: *Los amantes de Teruel* (1889) and *La Dolores* (1895). Despite differences in style, such works exemplify a new idea of national opera that Bretón sought for decades. *Los amantes de Teruel* was the object of several controversies because, to have it performed at the Teatro Real, Bretón had to translate it into Italian (even though, right after, he prepared a Spanish version to be performed throughout Spain). For this reason, when he decided to write *La Dolores*, he skipped the national theater and premiered it at the Teatro de la Zarzuela. Details on the narrative of the *ópera española* will be presented in the following section of the chapter.

1.5 Decline and Revival of the Zarzuela

The decline of the zarzuela started in the first half of the eighteenth century and coincided with the arrival in Spain of opera companies from Italy, together with virtuosos like Scarlatti, Farinelli, and (later) Boccherini. Critics talked about a “*horrible tempestad*,” referring to Farinelli’s arrival in Madrid in the summer of 1737. A genre that initially flourished at court, the zarzuela had to move into theaters because of the arrival of the Italians to the court. But eventually the Italian companies also “invaded” the Spanish theaters. Consequently, many Spanish composers started writing operas, in the Italian style. By the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the zarzuela almost wholly disappeared under an invasion of Italian *opere buffe*, especially by Rossini.

A revival of the zarzuela did not happen until 1850. During this period, Barbieri and Gaztambide were trying to revitalize the genre through the just-founded *Sociedad*

Artística and by managing the Teatro del Circo. In 1851, Barbieri premiered the zarzuela *Jugar con fuego*, the first zarzuela ever composed in three acts, giving birth to a new form called *zarzuela grande*. This zarzuela was modeled on the French *opéra comique* but had music in Rossini's style, with many music numbers (at least five per act), a prelude followed by a chorus, and several *concertati* (in typical Italian style), especially at the end of the act. In the following years, other works were composed by Barbieri, Arrieta (*Marina*, 1852), and Oudrid, and in 1856 the Teatro de la Zarzuela was built. In 1864, Barbieri wrote his next *zarzuela grande*, *Pan y toros*, and ten years later followed *El barberillo de Lavapiés*. Consequently, he wrote another seventeen zarzuelas, most of which were produced by the Teatro de la Zarzuela. Under a vigorous nationalist impulse, in the following years, Barbieri transformed his zarzuela into a genre authentically Spanish and for the people—which he identified with the city of Madrid!

Concurrently, in 1866, the company called *Los Bufos Madrileños*, managed by the impresario Arderius and led by Ricardo de la Vega, revived the parodistic style of both *sainetes* and *tonadillas* in the style of Ramón de la Cruz, producing a new witty and frivolous style of zarzuela, opposed to the *zarzuela grande*. The fusion of these new types of spectacles generated the so-called *género chico*.

The *zarzuela chica* was a one-act spectacle, including usually four to five musical numbers (with less choral presence), popular stories and characters, several dance numbers, and Spanish folklore (*costumbrismo*), and the predominance of the spoken language over the singing. From then on, the *género chico* became the most popular form of entertainment in Spain and kept this privileged position until the beginning of the

twentieth century, for several reasons. First, its light and witty style made it easily approachable for people of any social class. Second, thanks to the newly established *teatro por horas* in the 1870s, people could pay for the single one-act spectacle they wanted to attend, and prices were very affordable. Third, people identified with the *género chico* because of its realism infused with regional *costumbrismo* (some zarzuelas, called *revistas*, were also oriented towards satire and social criticism). This attitude became even more emphatic after the events of 1898 (the devastating war with the U.S.), under the *casticismo* impulse of the Generation of '98. Furthermore, there was another economic reason. In those years, Spain had failed to resolve the problem of the *ópera española*, and many opera composers turned to the zarzuela, which represented a “safer” business.

As a result, in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, the *zarzuela chica* became the national form of musical theater, with hundreds of titles composed and continuously performed, at least until the Civil War (1936-39). These titles were produced by such composers as Federico Chueca (*Agua, azucarillo y aguardiente*, *La alegría de la huerta*, and *La Gran Vía*, with Joaquín Valverde), Tomás Bretón (*La verbena de la Paloma*), Ruperto Chapí (*La revoltosa*). At the beginning of the twentieth century, the zarzuela was influenced by the operetta, and in the following years, there also was a sporadic return to a three-act design. Notable composers in these years were Amadeo Vives (*Bohemios*, and *Dona Francisquita*), Federico Moreno Torroba (*Luisa Fernanda*), and José Serrano (*La Dolorosa*).

1.6 The Debate on the Operatic Model in Spain at the Crossroads of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.

The discourse concerning Spanish national theater crossed the whole nineteenth century. Still, it should be noted that it was the consequence of a nationalist sentiment that had already originated in the middle of the eighteenth century, with the advent of Spanish neoclassicism. In music, that meant the rejection of foreign influences, the most preeminent of which was undoubtedly the Italian one. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Spain presented a complex web of socio-political realities, affected mainly by the Spanish War of Independence, resulting from Napoleon's 1808 invasion of the Peninsula with the intention of placing his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne. In this period, theaters acquired new life, with the assimilation of the French operetta first and the Italian opera later. It is a transition period for Spanish opera. However, we can notice the first germinal intent (more than thirty operas that include some popular elements from *tonadillas*)¹⁸ of nationalizing an opera in Castilian, though still very similar to the zarzuelas. With the end of the war and the return of Ferdinando VII, we have the so-called "Italian invasion" and the disappearance of the French operetta, with Rossini becoming the primary operatic reference in Spain.

Through the press, composers and critics started to express a desire for a national operatic style. In 1835, the critic Masarnau wrote an article lamenting (for the first time in the press) how shameful it was for Spain not to have a national theater and suggesting a solution that started with a re-organization of the music-education institutions. However,

¹⁸ See Elisabeth Le Guin, *The Tonadilla in Performance: Lyric Comedy in Enlightenment Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

in the first thirty years of the century, the ideology was not followed by the facts. There was not enough real interest in producing operas in Castilian, and the preferred operatic model remained the Italianate one of Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti (all of whom were regularly performed in Spain). With the exclusion of García and Sor, who did not reside in Spain, Carnicér, Saldoni, Gomis, Genovés, and Basili's attempts to compose operas in Spanish were always strongly lambasted by the critics. In 1847, Basilo Basili founded *La España musical*, an association whose members included Eslava, Veláz de Medrano, Basili, Martin, Salás, and—most of all—Barbieri, Arrieta, and Gaztambide. In 1845, the Academia Real de Música y Declamación was founded (now the Real Conservatorio). The association and the academia had the unique intent of promoting a national opera. Still, they both failed due to a lack of support (primarily financial), though generating a prolific ideological debate on the topic of national musical theater. Most operas produced in the 1840s are by Saldoni, Eslava, Schez, Lamadrid, Basili, and Porcell, but even if they were Spanish in text and setting, they still were formally Italianate. The situation would not change, at least not until the late 1880s, and even after the opening of the Teatro Real in 1850. The problem was that the Teatro Real continuously rejected operas that were either not Italianate enough or just not in Italian, thus assuming an actively counterproductive role in the discourse on the problem of “ópera española.”

After the inconclusive experiences of the first fifty years of the century, which ended with producing Italian operas with Spanish titles (or vice-versa), in the second half of the century, the problem of the Spanish national opera (*ópera española*) became more prominent and unfolded in contemporary Spanish narrative with two lines. The first and

most recurrent debate, which started in the 1860s and continued until the end of the century, polarized the intellectuals on the adoption of either the Wagnerian operatic model or the Italian one, especially regarding the use of poetry, prose, and the orchestra. The second, which is supported by the first one, was the fundamental question of if and how to create a model of Spanish national opera, in which the choice of the Wagnerian or Italian model was an essential element. Over the decades, the two discourses constantly informed each other.

One detail to highlight in the narrative on *ópera española* is that most of the contributions were offered by those composers that, indeed, felt the urgent need for a Spanish national opera other than the *zarzuela chica*, such as, for example, Bretón or Pedrell. To be clear, those Spanish composers who sought to create a new kind of musical theater did so because they were not content with the *género chico* being elevated to a national theatrical form. On the contrary, composers such as Barbieri and Arrieta (in general, the composers of the previous generation), limited their participation in the conversation on the Wagnerian vs. Italian models.

1.7 Wagnerian vs. Italian

Starting with the 1860s and 70s, Spanish criticism had dealt with the problem of Wagnerian vs. Italian models. In particular, they focused on two themes: the relationship between text and music (which of the two was to prevail) and whether the drama was written in prose or verse.¹⁹

¹⁹ José Ignacio Suárez García, “Polémicas wagnerianas en el siglo XIX en España,” *Anuario Musical*, no. 66 (December 30, 2011): 181–202.

The relationship between text and music was linked to the problem of the arts hierarchy. Some said music had a primary position since the theater is indeed fiction. Nonetheless, others believed that text should predominate over music. That was a conception more linked to realism and the concept of Wagner's *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft* (1849)²⁰ and *Oper und Drama* (1851-52). Wagner believed the music should support the text to enhance its verisimilitude. This was criticized by many because it resulted in works that seemed somehow mechanical. Wagner preferred a kind of prose, *Stabreim*, based on assonance and alliteration (to overcome the conflict due to linguistic accents), and the use of *Stabreim* with leitmotifs allowed him to construct his works as sequences of great scenes without interruption. For supporters of Italian music, opera had two functions: to move affections and to create pleasure (entertain); for Wagner, neither. The Wagnerian reform assigns to the orchestra what in the Italian tradition was entrusted to melody, that is, the ability to explain the character's state of mind.

The discussions continued between 1871 and 1879. A first controversy unfolded, for example, between *La España musical*, a proponent of Wagnerism, and *El correo de teatro*, a defender of the Italian school. Following the premieres of *Lohengrin* and *Tanhäuser* at the Teatro Comunale in Bologna in 1871 and 1873, respectively, Wagnerians like Antonio Peña y Goñi sarcastically commented that the Italians, as expected, did not appreciate *Lohengrin*.²¹

²⁰ Richard Wagner, *L'opera d'arte dell'avvenire*, Biblioteca Universale (Milano: Rizzoli, 1963).

²¹ "Sección de Espectáculos," *El imparcial*, November 28, 1871.

In 1873, a new controversy was ignited by José Castro y Serrano (with the pseudonym *Un Caballero Español*), a convinced Wagnerian who presented Wagner's music in an article dedicated to Peña y Goñi.²² This created turmoil in Madrid's *tertulia*, which replied with an essay by Parada y Barreto dedicated to Spanish opera.²³ In 1874 the *Sociedad Wagner* was created in Barcelona to study and enhance the works of the German master. Wagner accepted the honorary presidency and promised a composition, of which no traces have yet been found.²⁴ Following the Society's inauguration, where music by Pedrell was performed,²⁵ new controversies arose. On that occasion, José Piqué criticized the Society, asking why it had been named after Wagner, a still controversial musician, and not Eslava, Barbieri, or Arrieta. Piqué maintained that it was not the form that must be infinite but the concept, the idea. Music, he said, should imitate nature (which he also identifies in folk songs) and suggested Wagner "imitate nature by making the voices sing melodically and sentimentally [and] do not prostitute them."²⁶

Also in 1874, another controversy arose between Barbieri and Peña y Goñi. In an article in the *Revista europea* addressed to José Piqué y Cervero, Barbieri pretended to take

²² Un Caballero Español, "Viaje alrededor de la Exposición Universal de Viena. XIII. Wagner," *La ilustración española y americana*, December 8, 1873.

²³ José Parada y Barreto, *La ópera nacional. Estudio crítico-analítico de la cuestión de la ópera española con instrucciones, observaciones y consejos útiles y provechosos a los poetas y a los jóvenes compositores de música que se dediquen en España al cultivo del drama lírico*, por D. José Parada y Barreto, con un prólogo del Excmo. Sr. D. Hilarión Eslava (Madrid, Imp. de El Arte, 1873). Published in *El Arte*, November 15, 1887 and December, 12, 1873.

²⁴ Suárez García, *ibid.*

²⁵ At the Liceu, Pedrell's opera *L'último Abenzeraggio* was performed.

²⁶ José Piqué y Cerveró, "Remitidos," *La España musical*, May 30, 1874.

a mediator position. Still, in reality, he attacked Peña y Goñi, who had previously accused him of being an anti-Wagnerian, which indeed he was. Barbieri, always pretending to be impartial, criticized Wagner's use of the voice because, in his opinion, he made the characters sing unnaturally. He always sarcastically stated that he did not condemn all of Wagner's works but only his excesses. This intervention by Barbieri is significant because it clarifies his idea of Wagner's music, but also because of the importance and the very influence that Barbieri had in the world of Spanish musical theater, of which, in those years, he was the main exponent.

Jesus Christ preached by word and example the doctrine of human redemption (which is more than the redemption of the opera), and yet, he gave Caesar what belonged to Caesar and tried to win proselytes with his modesty and humility: but Wagner, it seems, has less humility of the Savior than the pride of Satan; and although it is true that all the great geniuses of humanity have been convinced of the value of his works, it is no less accurate that modesty has been and always is an inseparable companion of true talent. [...] He told us about his *infinite melody*, and then, in most of his works, the melody is so *finite* and of periods and phrases of such limited and small size [...]. He makes fun of the rhythm and says that the operas of Rossini and Meyerbeer are dance music, and for his part, when he picks up any rhythm, he insists on it ad nauseam, creating *hammered* music, such as, for example, that of the overture of his *Tanhauser*. All these and many more contradictions that could be brought to light prove that theory and practice do not go hand in hand with this author. [...] I find in Wagner's works a defect of the greatest consideration in *the very bad use* he makes of the human voice, which is the first and main element of all lyrical drama: [...] he decides, finally, for an exaggerated realism, and at the same time makes his characters sing in a way contrary to the laws of nature and art. [...] They sing by jumping from one register to another and frequently using extreme peaks, dissonant intervals, and violent modulations. [...] Believe me V., friend Piqué, and believe me, furious Wagnerians; Unbridled passion removes knowledge, and for this reason, what is best is to treat the matter with the greatest calm.[...]²⁷

²⁷ Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, "Cartas musicales. Primera. Sobre la música de Wagner," *Revista Europea*, August 16, 1874. "Jesucristo predicaba con la palabra y el ejemplo la doctrina de la redención humana (que es más que la redención de la ópera) y sin embargo, daba al César lo del César, y procuraba ganarse prosélitos con su modestia y mansedumbre: pero Wagner, á lo que parece, tiene menos de la humildad del Salvador que del orgullo de Satanás; y aunque es cierto que todos los grandes genios de la humanidad han

The *querelle* between Barbieri and Peña and Goñi continued for weeks,²⁸ with the two contesting each other statements on several Wagnerian hot topics such as the concept of “opera of future.”²⁹ Even after Wagner died in 1883, the Spanish critics continued the conversation about the precepts suggested by the German master. In Spain, most composers did not consider it essential to replace poetry with prose, thus opposing the *infinite melody*.

In the summer of 1891, *La España artística* published the results of a survey in which eleven composers were asked their opinion on the use of prose in opera.³⁰ The comparison of the composers’ *informes* (statements) made by José Suárez-García shows interesting details.³¹ Arrieta, Márquez, Barbieri, Espinoza de Los Monteros, Valverde

tenido el convencimiento del valor de su obras, no es menos cierto que la modestia ha sido y es siempre compañera inseparable del verdadero talento.

[...] Nos hable de su *melodía infinita*, y luego, en la mayoría de su obras, la melodía es tan *finita* y de periodos y frases de tan limitada y pequeña medida [...]. Se burla del ritmo y dice que las óperas de Rossini y Mayerbeer son música de baile, y por su parte, cuando toma un ritmo cualquiera, insiste en él hasta la saciedad, creando una música *martillada*, como por ejemplo, la de la obertura de su *Tanhauser*. Toda estas y mucha más contradicciones que podría poner de manifiesto, viene á probar que la teoría y la práctica no marchan acordes en este autor.

[...] encuentro en las obras de Wagner un defecto de la mayor consideración en el uso *malísimo* que hace de la voz humana, que es el primero y principal elemento de todo drama lírico: [...] se decide, en fin, por un realismo exagerado, y al propio tiempo hace cantar á sus personajes de un modo contrario á las leyes de la naturaleza y del arte. [...] Cantan saltando da un registro á otro de la voz y usando frecuentemente de los puntos extremos, de los intervalos disonantes y de modulaciones violentas. [...] Créame V., amigo Piqué, y créanme los wagnerianistas furibundos; la pasión desenfrenada quita el conocimiento, y por esta razón lo que conviene es tratar el asunto con la mayor calma [...].

²⁸ Cfr.: Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, “Cartas Musicales. Segunda. Á D. Antonio Peña y Goñi,” *Revista europea*, August 23, 1874.

²⁹ Antonio Peña y Goñi, “Wagner y la música del porvenir,” *El imparcial*, August 28, 1874.

³⁰ “La ópera en prosa,” *La España artística*, October 1, 1891.

³¹ José Ignacio Suárez García, “El debate sobre el modelo formal del drama lírico en España a finales del siglo XIX: una encuesta realizada por La España Artística,” in *Crítica, polémica, y propaganda (Musica y prensa)*, ed. Enrique Encabo (Valladolid: Editorial Difácil, 2015), 93–102.

(father), and Vela de Castro were categorically in favor of poetry only. Arrieta argued that prose would have meant the death of the composer's brilliant inspiration.³² Bretón favored poetry emphasizing the importance of the rhythm, though not excluding the use of prose together with poetry:

Among other fundamental principles, *Music* is based on *rhythm*, without being moved by all the delusions of novelty and the paroxysms of impotence. If the *rhythm* is essential to music, the word that has to inspire it must also have its *rhythm*; otherwise, there could not be the desired, and fascinating spontaneity in the *sung* phrase [...] Prose is already used in a certain way in opera recitatives, written today with valid freedom in hendecasyllable meters [...] However, to be beautiful, an opera cannot be composed of eternal recitatives like that of *infinite melody*.³³

Emilio Serrano had a similar view, stating that the operas should be written in verse but that prose offers more freedom in the recitatives and that “there is no doubt that the verses in a musical piece must have a greater number of metrical combination than the ones they have today in Italy and Spain.”³⁴ These views were shared by Valera Silvari, Janke, and Leandro Guerra. The polls confirmed that the composers who rejected prose were of the Spanish “old guard,” older than the five who showed a more open attitude to new dramatic and versification forms. Furthermore, for most composers, poetry was still the ideal means of achieving the Real vs. Ideal, as Bretón explained.

³² Emilio Arrieta, “La ópera en prosa. Informe de Don Emilio Arrieta,” *La España artística*, August 8, 1891.

³³ Tomás Bretón, “La ópera en prosa. Informe de Don Tomás Bretón,” *La España artística*, August 8, 1891. “La *música* de asienta, entre otros principios fundamentales, sobre el *rítmico*, sin que lo puedan conmovier todos los delirios de la novedad y todos los paroxismos de la impotencia. Si el *ritmo* es esencial á la música, la *palabra* que haya de inspirar á aquélla debe tener también su *ritmo*; de otra manera no podía haber en la frase *cantada* la anhelada y fascinadora espontaneidad. [...] Ya se usa en cierto modo la *prosa* en los recitados de ópera, escritos hoy con acertada libertad en metros endecasílabo. [...] Pero como para ser *bella* una ópera no puede componerse de recitados eternos y como eso de la *melodía infinita*.”

³⁴ Emilio Serrano, “La ópera en prosa. Informe de Don Emilio Serrano,” *La España artística*, September 8, 1891.

Suárez Garcia also reports two more *polémicas*. The first one was between Barbieri and Chapí in 1878. In an open letter titled on *El imparcial*,³⁵ Barbieri criticized Chapí for having a too-Wagnerian style (which he thinks he would have learned in Rome), in the intricate modulations, the simultaneity of the rhythms, and the anti-operatic treatment of the voices. Barbieri suggested that Chapí took inspiration from Mozart, Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, Meyerbeer, and Gounod. He invited him to create his own style, avoiding being in the shadow of other composers (Wagner). Chapí replied soon thereafter in the same newspaper.³⁶ According to Suárez Garcia, the controversy also confirmed the deteriorated personal relations between Barbieri and Arrieta (who was Chapí's teacher). Eventually, Barbieri was Bretón's mentor, and Arrieta mentored Chapí.

The second polemic occurred between Joaquín Marsillach and Antonio Fargas y Soler between 1878 and 1879. Following the extensive publications of Marsillach on Wagner, Fargas y Soler eventually published a little essay called *Observaciones (en vindicación de la ópera italiana)*, which resulted in a detailed answer (almost point by point) to Marsillach's famous *Ensayo on Wagner*.³⁷ Fargas argues that in Wagner's drama, the traditional operatic relationship between music and text is inverted. For him, the music is essential, and he disagrees with Marsillach that the music is just a complement to the text. He also says that the decadence of the Italian operatic style depended upon the lack of great composers after Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi (Puccini still had not arrived).

³⁵ Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, "Carta a un joven compositor de Música," *El imparcial*, February 18, 1878.

³⁶ Ruperto Chapí, "Contestación del joven compositor," *El imparcial*, February 25, 1878.

³⁷ Joaquín Marsillach Lleó, *Ricardo Wagner: ensayo biográfico-crítico* (Barcelona: Texidó y Parera, 1878).

Nevertheless, he continues, the Italian repertoire is still performed in all major theaters worldwide, including Germany, while Wagner epigones have failed inside and outside Italy.

1.8 *Ópera Española* Narrative 1880-1915

In the last two decades of the century and up to about 1915, the narrative of Spanish national opera was boosted by publication and contributions in the major press. In this section, I will proceed chronologically proposing a survey of a selected narrative of *Ópera Española*, starting from 1880.

In 1885, Bretón published a *folletto* entitled *Más en favor de la ópera nacional*, representing the first comprehensive explanation of an ideal Spanish-national-opera project by the composer, who spent most of his life devoted to it. Bretón's narration goes from ideal to very concrete, demonstrating how he had a feasible plan, if only it would be recognized officially.

Bretón begins his discussion by reporting the proclamation made in 1855 by various composers of the Academy of San Fernando (including Arrieta, Barbieri, Eslava, Espín y Guillén). The latter requested and established a national opera house based in the Teatro Real, intending to create a Spanish national opera. However, says Bretón, national opera will reign at the Teatro Real only when it really deserves it.³⁸ In fact, he reminds us, we know that the national opera did not actually settle down and that the *zarzuela* was chosen instead. For this, he strongly criticizes Barbieri and Arrieta for turning

³⁸ Tomás Bretón, *Más en favor de la ópera nacional* (Madrid, 1885), 9.

towards the zarzuela.³⁹ For Bretón, the zarzuela is an imperfect genre, which is as distant from drama and comedy as it is from opera. Furthermore, he also considers it a mistake to compare it to foreign comic opera. The main problem is using spoken dialogues in prose and not verse—a “form error” which, according to Bretón, caused the decay of the serious zarzuela.

Logic imposes itself fatally over time, and serious Zarzuela could not escape this law! Hence the decay of a genre, clearly false and too small, so that neither the poet nor the musician can develop, much less realize, the ideals they sustain in their pure and rich fantasy.⁴⁰

Bretón identifies a further flaw in the declaration of the San Fernando Academy. Indeed, a national opera cannot stem from itself. On the contrary, it is the consequence of many experiences:

[...] A *Spanish Opera* can be today not only the summary of what good Spanish composers have done, but even a reflection of what contemporary masters do in Europe; because of the easy and growing relationship of our people with others, the speed of communications, plus the means that the State, Royal House and the multitude of private pensions today provide, allow the Spanish composer to place himself at the height of Art in countries more advanced than ours.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid., 10. “An Academician of the Real de San Fernando collaborator of a bullfighting newspaper!!!! Such contempt for Art, such deplorable abasements, are not done with impunity; they are not done without detriment to the artistic personality; because in music, as in all branches of human knowledge, *authority* is not bought, nor is it given, nor is it taken, it is EARNED! and once in possession of it, it is increased, maintained or LOST!”

[“Un Académico de la Real de San Fernando colaborador de un periódico de toros!!!! Tales desacatos al Arte, rebajamientos tan deplorables, no se hacen impunemente; no se hacen sin detrimento de la personalidad artística; porque en Música, como en todos los ramos del saber humano, *la autoridad* ni se compra, ni se dá, ni se toma, SE GANA! y una vez en posesión de ella, se aumenta, se mantiene ó.... SE PIERDE!”]

⁴⁰ Ibid., 12. “La lógica en el tiempo se impone de una manera fatal, y la Zarzuela *sería* no podía sustraerse á esta ley! De aquí el decaimiento de un género, falso á todas luces y harto pequeño, para que ni el poeta ni el músico puedan desarrollar y menos realizar los ideales que sustentan en su pura y rica fantasía.”

⁴¹ Ibid., 13. “[...] una Ópera española puede ser hoy, no sólo el resumen de lo que de bueno hayan hecho los compositores españoles, sino hasta el reflejo de lo que hagan los maestros contemporáneos en Europa; porque la fácil y creciente relación de nuestro pueblo con otros, la rapidez en las comunicaciones, mas los

He then explains how he would want to create the “patriotic enterprise.” First of all, he proposes creating opera companies run by Spaniards, with some Italian additions if needed. He says that “just as a Spanish artist can be in Italian companies, an Italian artist can be in Spanish ones.”⁴² Such artists should also be well versed in the traditional Italian repertoire because, to avoid sudden distress to the Real, operas of the “traditional repertoire” should alternate with newly composed Spanish operas. Also, such an enterprise needs state funding. Bretón proposed to split the financing usually destined for the zarzuela and give a certain percentage to the *ópera nacional*, and then not give it to the chosen company but deduct it from the sum that the entrepreneur of the Royal Theater has to pay to the State for rent. This will allow the company to give preference to good Spanish artists and, most of all, to devote three out of six months of each season to new operas by Spanish composers.⁴³

In sum, Bretón proposes making national opera using Spanish companies, thus gradually reducing the presence of Italian companies in Spain. To train Spanish artists, Bretón proposes changing the Conservatorio Real’s organization in Madrid by hiring only Spanish professors. He argues that by making it a Spanish musical center, the government will also save money on the pensions usually devoted to supporting Spanish composers studying in Italy or France. He concludes: “Happy me if I contribute in part,

medios que el Estado, Casa Real y la multitud de pensiones particulares hoy proporcionan, permiten al compositor español colocarse á la altura á que se halle el Arte en países más adelantados que el nuestro.”

⁴² Ibid., 22.

⁴³ Ibid., 27.

even if it is minimal, so that “The National Opera” is established once and for all in Spain!”⁴⁴

The year 1885 was also when the discussion between Bretón and the famous Basque critic Peña and Goñi was particularly heated. Although the two shared an appreciation for Wagnerian theories, they often came into conflict on the subject of Spanish national opera.

Already in 1881, Peña and Goñi had published the essay *La ópera española y la música dramática en España en el siglo XIX: apuntes históricos*.⁴⁵ The author claims from the first lines that “Spanish opera does not exist and has never existed,”⁴⁶ and he continues that national opera makes sense in Italy, France, and Germany because it is original in each of those countries. Creating a national work depends on the tremendous and continuous work that nurturing the national essence requires. From the writing, it is clear that Peña y Goñi does not have much consideration for Spanish composers, or at least does not consider them original enough to create a national style that distinguishes it for being uniquely Spanish.

In 1885 Peña y Goñi published the well-known essay *Contra la ópera nacional*. This is an exact critique of many of Bretón’s points in his writings and his reviews. Peña y Goñi

⁴⁴ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁵ Antonio Peña y Goñi, *La ópera española y la música dramática en España en el siglo XIX: apuntes históricos* (Madrid: Impr. y estereotipia de El Liberal, 1881).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 15. “¿Existe la Ópera española? No; la Ópera española no existe; la Ópera española no ha existido nunca. Voy a probarlo.”

did not believe in a national opera project of the kind Bretón wanted. On the contrary, he argued that a nationalized work would create mediocrity.

Mr. Bretón begins by assuring that Spanish opera will be successful «as long as public opinion and governments, echoing it, wish it, as a noble and patriotic goal.» Mr. Bretón's assurance is truly consoling because it facilitates a path for the Spanish masters, in which they should no longer enter due to impulses of genius or talent, as has been the custom until now, but led by the hand of the public opinion and the government. As soon as the people and the administration say: «I want Spanish opera; that the Spanish opera be done immediately,» everything will be a matter of form and procedure. The national opera will arise in the heat of files, such as ports, lighthouses, and roads. There will be a Spanish opera business and even musical calamity funds in the Government, to aid the whistled authors. There are those who believe, goofy! that the great artistic institutions impose themselves on public opinion and governments, by the overwhelming force of genius; There are those who believe that Weber, for example, did not need more than to present his Freyschutz to free Germany from the Italian chains that had oppressed her; there are those who believe that the inspirations of the great artist, of the true artist, are at odds with the alms of public opinion, and Gounod, the author of Faust, has said, in an admirable way, by the way, that posterity is a superimposition of minorities. How far is Mr. Bretón from professing those ideas! For him, Spanish opera will be made like a pair of boots or a Bouchardat formula; it's a matter of mixing ingredients or gathering materials. The issue is that public opinion and governments pronounce the *fiat*. Furthermore, doesn't Mr. Breton think it is about time? Infamous public opinion! Infamous Governments that have been silent until now! Fortunately, in these moments, they will hear the voice of the Spanish master, and they will entrust him with the beautiful work of our artistic-musical regeneration. Because, of all this, it would seem that in Spain there were no Spanish musicians until Mr. Bretón recently returned from abroad; such is the unspeakable indifference with which the young master looks at everything that has been done in this country in musical matters, from the middle of the century to date. You have to read, to believe it, the following paragraph that he copied verbatim: «... the development of the musical art of our country dates back to a short number of years, lacking, therefore, illustrious names, such as we can hold in poetry and painting, for example.»⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Antonio Peña y Goñi, *Contra la ópera española*, Tipografía de Manuel G. Hernández (Madrid, 1885), 13-15. “Comienza el Sr. Bretón asegurando que la ópera española se planteará con éxito «así que la opinión pública y los Gobiernos, eco de aquella, lo deseen, como un noble y patriótico fin.» La seguridad del Sr. Bretón es verdaderamente consoladora, porque facilita á los maestros españoles un camino, en el cual no deberán entrar ya á impulsos del genio ó del talento, como ha sido uso y costumbre hasta ahora, sino llevados de la mano por la opinión pública y el Gobierno. En cuanto el pueblo y la administración digan:

The extract shows the firm opposition of Peña y Goñi to the idea of nationalized art, as he believed that art was the result of genius and not of “funds.” Peña y Goñi then goes further and criticizes Bretón for believing that in Spain there are no composers up to the level of the project. In this, the author shows his preference for the zarzuela. He writes:

How! Aren't the names of Gaztambide, Arrieta, and Barbieri illustrious for Mr. Bretón? Or perhaps the columnist thinks that apart from the very new ideals that he expounds, there is nothing in our country that could make him proud in terms of musical art? I already hear the fateful word sound: La zarzuela! Well, yes, the zarzuela. It is unfortunate that despite Mr. Bretón and the pseudo-musicians who may think like him, the zarzuela, the misnamed zarzuela, the Spanish comic opera, is a great national glory, and will probably be the most important artistic-musical conquest of the present century.⁴⁸

«Yo deseo ópera española; que se haga inmediatamente la ópera española,» todo será cuestión de forma y trámite. La ópera nacional surgirá al calor de los expedientes, como los puertos, faros y carreteras. Habrá un negociado de ópera española, y hasta fondos de calamidades musicales en Gobernación, para venir en auxilio de los autores silbados. Hay quien cree ¡mentecato! que las grandes instituciones artísticas se imponen á la opinión pública y á los Gobiernos, por la fuerza avasalladora del genio; hay quien cree que Weber, por ejemplo, no necesitó más que presentar su *Freyschutz* para librar á Alemania de las cadenas italianas que la tenían oprimida; hay quien cree que las inspiraciones del artista grande, del artista verdadero, están reñidas con la limosna de la opinión pública, y Gounod, el autor de Fausto, ha dicho, de un modo admirable, por cierto, que la posteridad es una superposición de minorías. ¡Cuán lejos está el Sr. Bretón de profesar esas ideas! Para él, la ópera española se hará como se hace un par de botas ó una fórmula de Bouchardat; es cuestión de mezclar ingredientes ó reunir materiales. El asunto estriba en que la opinión pública y los Gobiernos pronuncien el *fiat*. ¿Y no le parece al Sr. Bretón que es ya tiempo? ¡Infame opinión pública! ¡Infames Gobiernos que han enmudecido hasta ahora! Afortunadamente, escucharán en estos instantes la voz del maestro español, y le encargarán la hermosa obra de nuestra regeneración artístico-musical. Porque, á todo esto, diríase que en España no han existido músicos españoles hasta que el Sr. Bretón ha vuelto recientemente del extranjero; tal es la incalificable indiferencia con que el joven maestro mira todo cuanto en este país se ha hecho en materia musical, desde mediados del siglo hasta la echa. Hay que leer, para creerlo, el siguiente párrafo que copio textualmente: «... el desarrollo del arte musical de nuestra patria data de un corto número de años, faltándonos, en él, por tanto, nombres ilustres, como podemos ostentar en poesía y pintura, por ejemplo.»»

⁴⁸ Ibid., 15. “Cómo! ¿Los nombres de Gaztambide, Arrieta y Barbieri no son ilustres para el Sr. Bretón? ¿Ó piensa quizá el articulista, que fuera de los ideales novísimos que expone, no hay ni ha habido nada en nuestro país que pueda enorgullecerlo en materia de arte musical? Ya oigo sonar la fatídica palabra: ¡La zarzuela! Pues bien, sí, la zarzuela. Mal que pese al Sr. Bretón y á los pseudomúsicos que como él puedan opinar, la zarzuela, la mal llamada zarzuela, la ópera cómica española, es una gran gloria nacional, y será probablemente la conquista artístico-musical más importante del presente siglo.”

Even more, Peña y Goñi, believes that currently zarzuela “is” the Spanish national form of musical theater. A Spanish opera “will come,” but only when it is the time, and in the meantime, one should enjoy and respect the works by masters like Chapí.

Our comic opera, improperly indigenized, I don't know by whom, with the name of *zarzuela*, is, today, Spanish lyrical-dramatic art. Indeed, this manifestation of our artistic genius has not crossed borders; but it is also true that no one abroad ignores its existence. [...]. The zarzuela in Spain is an institution; it has a body, an economy, and all the conditions of what lives and is in movement. Spanish opera is a worthy and noble ambition; it will be born when it should be born and will be the effect of previous causes. Investigate these causes, and you will find illustrious names that you must respect, [...] And above all, do not write articles in the newspapers like those of Maestro Bretón. [...] I would change a hundred thousand unbeatable articles, for being called Ruperto Chapí and having written *La fantasía morisca*, *La tempestad*, *Música clásica*, and *El Milagro de la Virgen*. Along this road, one goes in a straight line to the National Opera. With Mr. Bretón's articles, they work ardently AGAINST THE SPANISH OPERA.⁴⁹

In 1891, Pedrell published the manifesto-type essay *Por nuestra música*.⁵⁰ This essay is an introduction to his work *Els Pirineus* (1891), but over the years, it has been elevated to a sort of general manifesto on Spanish musical nationalism. The essay's main points, as summarized by Francesc Bonastre,⁵¹ are the following.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 42-45. “Nuestra ópera cómica, indigenizada impropiaamente, no sé por quién, con el nombre de zarzuela, es, hoy por hoy, arte lírico-dramático español. Es verdad que esa manifestación de nuestro genio artístico no ha traspasado las fronteras; pero también es cierto que nadie en el extranjero ignora su existencia. [...]. La zarzuela en España es una institución; tiene un cuerpo, tiene una economía, tiene todas las condiciones de lo que vive y está en movimiento. La ópera española es una digna y noble ambición; nacerá cuando deba nacer, y será efecto de causas anteriores. Investigad esas causas y hallaréis nombres ilustres que debéis respetar, [...] Y sobre todo no escribáis en los periódicos artículos como los del maestro Bretón. Dirigid orquestas como él, ó componed música. Yo cambiaría cien mil artículos inmejorables, por llamarme Ruperto Chapí y haber escrito *La Fantasía morisca*, *La Tempestad*, *Música clásica* y *El Milagro de la Virgen*. Por ese camino se va en línea recta á la ópera nacional. Con los artículos del Sr. Bretón, se trabaja-ardientemente CONTRA LA ÓPERA ESPAÑOLA.”

⁵⁰ Felipe Pedrell, *Por nuestra música* (Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona, 1891).

⁵¹ Francesc Bonastre i Betran, “El planteamiento operístico de Pedrell,” in *La ópera en España e Hispanoamérica: actas del congreso internacional “La ópera en España e Hispanoamérica: una creación propia”*: Madrid, 29.XI-3.XII de 1999, ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio and Álvaro Torrente, vol. II, Colección Música Hispana. Textos. Estudios (Madrid: Ediciones del ICCMU, 2001), 187–98.

First of all, Pedrell's idea of nationalism connects to the general discourse of the Spanish regenerationism of the end of the century, which sought an "internal" Spanish identity while projecting nationalism from a more European perspective. Furthermore, Pedrell conceives of the existence of a Spanish *Volkgeist* but wants this idea to fit into a discourse of nationalism tending towards modernism, which he identifies in Wagner's music. In explaining the dictates and techniques of the German master, Pedrell also clearly distances himself from some points, particularly on the very "technical" use of leitmotifs.

As for the *Leitmotiv*, it has already been said that the Russian school avoids it as much as possible, while not rejecting it at all. My ideas on this point are these: each character must have its own peculiar melodic-harmonic characteristic, and this characteristic must appear developed in themes transformed according to the general and expressive situations of the drama and whenever the particular and expressive situations of the character require it in all internal and external incidents of the action. [...] Therefore, I understand that interest should not be focused on the orchestra, if it destroys the importance that the vocal part has in the drama. The orchestra will not present a particular class of themes that seem to condemn the characters to articulate fragments of melodies or recitatives that, taken separately, have no intrinsic value or offer a precise meaning.⁵²

⁵² Pedrell, *Por nuestra*, 35-36. "En cuanto al *Leitmotiv* ya queda dicho que la escuela rusa lo evita en lo posible, aunque no lo desecha en absoluto. Mis ideas sobre este punto son estas: cada personaje ha de poseer su característico melódico-harmónico especial y este característico debe aparecer desarrollado en temas transformados según las situaciones generales y expresivas del drama y cada vez que lo exijan las particulares y expresivas del personaje en todos los incidentes interiores y exteriores de la acción. [...] Por lo tanto, entiendo que no se ha de concentrar en absoluto el interés á la orquesta, si ésta destruye la importancia que en realidad tiene la parte vocal en el drama. La orquesta no expondrá cierta clase de temas que parece condenan á los personajes á emitir fragmentos de melopea ó recitativos que, tomados separadamente, no poseen ningún valor intrínseco ni ofrecen ningún sentido preciso. Los personajes de una ópera sostienen la trama y el interés escénico, y su intervención en la obra no ha de quedar reducida á completar la orquesta: pronuncian las palabras hacia las cuales converge, necesariamente, la música, puesto que por ellos y en ellos existen la acción y la música del drama. Salvo raras ocasiones debe concederse siempre á los personajes del drama toda la supremacía musical. Aparezcan rodeados los personajes de todos los motivos que las situaciones exijan, pero transfórmense los temas cada vez que el drama lo reclame, pues, desenvolviéndose y diversificándose por distintos aspectos tonales, modales ó instrumentales, no pierden su unidad y sirven para pintar el carácter del personaje con toda la variedad deseada."

As for opera, Pedrell sees the *Lied* as the primary basis of operatic discourse.⁵³ He writes song cycles that change in style after his trip to Europe.⁵⁴ While writing *Lieder* he complains that this type of song has no public in Spain.

My friend Fr. Uriarte, one of the finest music critics among the very few that we have in Spain, [...] with whom I live in continuous and intimate communication of aesthetic principles, defines the *lied*, reducing the definition to brief terms saying that the genre of short pieces that in German is called *lied* (and with that same untranslatable word in the other languages or with that of *romances* or, simply, *melodies*, in attention to its dominant element), *is the transformed popular song*. By broadening the picture in such a way that the *lied* acquires an adequate dramatic development, can it not be said that the *national lyrical drama* is the same *lied* enlarged? Isn't the national lyrical drama the product of the force of absorption and the creative virtue that are needed to transform elements? Aren't not only the artistic idiosyncrasies of each author faithfully copied in them, but admirably reflected in all the homogeneous artistic manifestations of a people? *The national lyrical drama*, then, is the *lied* developed in proportions appropriate to the drama, it is the transformed popular song.⁵⁵

More importantly, Pedrell points out that the use of these elements does not in itself imply adherence to a model of national music, if they are not integrated with the assumption of one's own artistic identity, i.e., nationalism.

⁵³ Pedrell wrote two important cycles of *Lieder*: *Lais* (1897) and *La Primavera* (1880).

⁵⁴ Between 1876 and 1880 he lived in Italy and France.

⁵⁵ Pedrell, *Por nuestra*, 40-41. "Mi amigo el P. Uriarte, uno de los más finos críticos musicales entre los escasísimos que contamos en España, [...] con quien vivo en continua é íntima comunicación de principios estéticos, define el *lied*, reducida la definición á breves términos diciendo, que el género de piezas cortas que en alemán se denomina *lied* (y con ese mismo intraducible vocablo en las demás lenguas ó con el de *romanzas* ó, simplemente, *melodías*, en atención á su elemento dominante), es *el canto popular transformado*. Ensanchando el cuadro de forma y manera que el *lied* adquiera adecuado desenvolvimiento dramático ¿no se puede afirmar que *el drama lírico nacional* es el mismo *lied* engrandecido? El drama lírico nacional ¿no es producto de la fuerza de absorción y la virtud creadora que se necesitan para transformar elementos? ¿No aparecen copiadas en ellos con toda fidelidad no tan sólo la idiosincrasia artística de cada autor sino reflejadas por manera admirable todas las manifestaciones artísticas homogéneas de un pueblo? *El drama lírico nacional*, pues, es el *lied* desarrollado en proporciones adecuadas al drama, es el canto popular transformado.

In a lecture read at the *Ateneo Literario* in Madrid on February 5, 1904, entitled *La ópera nacional y El Teatro Real de Madrid*, Bretón continues to address the problem that haunted him for years. Ironically, he asks what national opera is. The answer is that, despite what is believed, national opera does not only mean creating a repertoire of Spanish composers' pieces, with Spanish polar themes and folk dances. Bretón believes that a national opera is only such if all the elements of the structure and project are Spanish and, primarily, the language is Spanish. Indeed, the main topic of this essay remains the language.

In almost all these countries there are national opera houses in which the most famous operas, their own and those of others, are performed; and they are national in that the *language principally*, directors, singers, musicians, choristers, painters, dancers, extras ... all the elements that intervene in the representation of an opera, are from the country; and then, scores and parts were edited right there and in the national language; [...] This is what we should practically understand in Spain by National Opera, that is how it is understood in France, and same in Italy, in Germany, in Austria, in Hungary, Scandinavia, Bohemia.⁵⁶

Obviously, Bretón continues, language in Spain means Castilian, but in the Madrid operatic world, the national language is ridiculed in favor of Italian. Bretón gives some examples from his works. The first refers to *Los amantes de Teruel*. As we know, this work caused controversy, because it was rejected by the commission of the Teatro Real as being in Spanish, and it was performed only after a translation in Italian was prepared.

⁵⁶ Tomás Bretón, *La ópera nacional y el Teatro Real de Madrid: conferencia leída en el Ateneo Literario el día 5 de febrero de 1904* (Madrid: Sociedad Anónima "Casa Dotésio," 1904), 5. "En casi todos estos países hay teatros de Ópera nacionales en los que se ejecutan las óperas más famosas, propias y ajenas; y son nacionales en cuanto que lengua principalísimamente, directores, cantores, músicos, coristas, pintores, bailarinas, comparsas ... todos los elementos que intervienen en la representación de una ópera, son del país; y luego, partituras y partes fueron allí mismo y en la lengua nacional editadas; [...] Esto es lo que prácticamente debemos entender en España por Ópera Nacional, así se entiende en Francia, así en Italia, en Alemania, en Austria, en Hungría, Escandinavia, Bohemia..."

Bretón says that after the premiere at the Teatro Real, he organized a company exclusively of Spanish artists (with the exception of the Italian baritone Menotti) to present the opera in Spanish theaters. During the rehearsals, he noticed that the choir of altar boys sang the word *historia* in the sentence written as “*e quivi ha fin la storia,*” and as much as he tried to explain to them that they had to sing “*storia,*” they continued to sing “*historia.*” Bretón realized that he himself had been conditioned by Spanish court customs in using the Italian version of the word: “Poor children—I thought—[...], I was obstinate in children saying *storia* instead of *historia* because that is what the sacrosanct routine of the Court imposes! Eventually, they sang *historia*, without compromising the success of the opera.”⁵⁷

Bretón expresses his admiration for Italian art and music but, reporting a passage from the speech he gave at the Academia de San Fernando, he maintains that the national language is always the best for singing.

“[...] the best language to sing, if it has to express something, is our own, because it is clearer to the ear that listens to it, and therefore more expressive [...] there cannot be a clearer, more beautiful, more proper and more expressive than the one our mother taught us on her lap, the teacher at school, the one we use to raise our prayers to God, the one with which we fell in love with our partner, the one we teach our children, the one that accompanies us and we use at all times and in all favorable or adverse moments of life, which forms an essential part of our own nature, because it is the wonderful valve that serves to externalize our most intimate thoughts and give an expansion to all the impressions of the soul and the senses.”⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid., 7. “Pobres niños—pensaba yo—[...], me obstiné en que los niños digan *storia* en lugar de *historia* porque así lo impone la sacrosanta rutina de la Corte! *Historia*, pues, cantaron, sin que perjudicara al éxito de la obra.”

⁵⁸ Ibid., 8-9. “la lengua mejor para cantada, si ha de expresar algo, es la propia, per ser al oído que la escucha la más clara, y por tato más expresiva [...] no puede haber lengua más clara, más bela, más propia y más expresiva que la que nos enseñó nuestra madre en su regazo, el profesor en la escuela, la que

One section of the essay is devoted to the public. Bretón is very direct and states that the public is so diverse that its judgments cannot be taken seriously. Besides, it has no interest whatsoever in any discourse on the language or national operas, and judges always what is seen and heard at the moment, not what could be seen or heard.⁵⁹ Also, Bretón recognizes the artistic value and operatic attraction of other countries, but he affirms that very good Spanish operas have been neglected just because “the main elements that congregate in the Royal Theater are unconscious and fatally contrary to Spanish works, and the public and the critics are as concerned with them as with the clouds of the last century.”⁶⁰ For Bretón, the “elements” of the Teatro Real also include his former teacher Arrieta.

Bretón also laments the fact that the *género chico*, a repertoire for which it takes “little amount of art to shine,” was elevated to “*arte nacional*” and states that “if Wagner had worked in Spain, [...] he probably would have had to dedicate himself to the *género chico*.”⁶¹ He then goes back again to the language, stating that the day the Italian language will disappear from the Teatro Real, Spain will have recovered a territory that Italy, France, and Germany now hold in fief. Overall, he argues that there is an institutional

empleamos para elevar á Dios nuestra preces, aquella con la que enamoramus nuestra compañera, la que enseñamos á nuestros hijos, la que nos acompaña y usamos en todo momento y en todo trance fausto o adverso, la que forma parte esencial de nuestra propria naturaleza, porque es la maravillosa válvula que sirve para exteriorizar nuestros más íntimos pensamientos y dar expansión á todas las impresiones del alma y de los sentidos.”

⁵⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 28. “los principales elementos que en el Teatro Real se congregan son inconscientes y fatalmente contrarios á las obras españolas, y al público y la crítica les preocupan tanto como las nubes del siglo pasado.”

⁶¹ Ibid., 28.

issue and proposes to start hiring famous foreign singers because Spanish singers could certainly sing operas in Spanish. That of course would be a long process but can be achieved.

What is interesting is that Bretón puts so much emphasis on the language that even suggests translating into Castilian foreign operas belonging to the repertoire and already popular in Spain. As we can see, these were issues that Bretón had already addressed years before, when—during the peak of the *genero chico* trend—the debate concerning *ópera española* was more urgent and current. Yet his passion for the subject leads him to continue the conversation passionately.

1.9 The Survey about *Ópera Española* in *Revista Musical* (1911-1913)

In 1911, Ignacio Zubialde (pseudonym of Carlos Gortázar, 1864-1926), the director of the Bilbao monthly magazine *Revista musical*, proposed a survey asking composers and critics whether the question of Spanish opera responded to a general aspiration, and if, in their opinion, Spanish could become a musical language. Among the famous composers who participated in the discussion, which lasted until the end of 1913, were Bretón, Pedrell, Conrado del Campo.

The first lengthy article, entitled *Sobre el drama lírico nacional*, was published in the January and February 1912 issues of *Revista musical*.⁶² Joaquín Gómez makes a long argument on the evolution of the Spanish opera and the problem of national opera. He concludes that the problem was unavoidable because all the masters who wrote great

⁶² Julio Gómez, “Sobre el drama lírico nacional,” *Revista musical*, January and February 1912.

zarzuelas were trained at the María Cristina Conservatory, which privileged Italian music and traditional Italian singing. Despite everything, says Gómez, many zarzuelas of great artistic value and inspired by popular repertoire have been created. However, despite zarzuela composers believing they could make a national opera, they could not.

According to Gómez, the zarzuela is dead, and traces of it, “sad and weak,” are today in the *género chico* (which he says he loves).

The solution proposed by Gómez, in line with that offered by Bretón years earlier, is to translate into Spanish any opera produced at the Teatro Real, the Liceum, and all Spanish opera houses.

[...] by offering one, two, three, or ten Spanish operas at the Teatro Real as it is today, singing foreign operas in Italian, we are not doing anything beneficial for Spanish art. [...] I do not think there is anyone today who dares to support the ridiculous thesis that Castilian is not suitable for opera.⁶³

Gómez believes it is absurd that even today, people sing essentially in Italian at the Real Conservatorio in Madrid, and he hopes that all cultural authorities will end the “national shame for the use of a foreign language [Italian] in the first theater in Spain.” To do this, he suggests shaking public opinion, asking for the participation of academies, universities, press, schools of fine arts, conservatories, and musical and literary societies, in all the cultural centers of the nation, because he is convinced they would join with enthusiasm the call for Spanish composers.

⁶³ Julio Gómez, “Sobre el drama lírico nacional (conclusión),” *Revista musical*, February 1912. “[...] estrenando una, dos, tres ó diez óperas españolas en el Teatro Real tal como hoy está constituido, cantando las obras extranjeras en italiano, no hacemos nada sólido por el arte español. [...] No creo que haya hoy nadie que se atreva á sostener la ridícula tesis de que el castellano no sirve para la ópera.”

In a contribution that appeared in the March issue, R. Arenal believes translating foreign operas into Spanish is very complicated and risky.⁶⁴ He is convinced that one of the reasons why the Spanish public appreciates Italian works is not for their novelty nor the language used, but because these works appear “gray,” faded, and that a more understandable language would show all their mistakes more clearly.

If the public shows this reluctance to accept the works in Spanish, it is because of the novelty that it finds, I would not say of the language, but of seeing clearly, of seeing the complete, detailed work, not its silhouette, as it happens represented in a foreign language, that when we do not know it, the whole is presented to us with a gray tint (slightly nuanced by the gesture, the action, the scenic apparatus), perfectly covering many details capable of causing failure by themselves. In my opinion, this is also the cause of the lack of consistency in the attempts made with already known and sanctioned operas translated into our language.⁶⁵

Ideally, operas should be left in their original language, but this would prevent less-educated people from understanding them. He also discusses the balance between text and music and suggests that it is a fluid feature, in which one must be more prominent than the other according to the dramatic situation. Arenal concludes that translating famous operas into Spanish is a feasible solution, but only if the translation is perfectly made. The final intent, he argues, is to “lead the listener along the right path until he gets used to and becomes attached to the language, and not predispose him to hate more and more the lyric art in Spanish.”

⁶⁴ R. Arenal, “Reflexiones sobre la ópera española,” *Revista musical*, March 1912.

⁶⁵ Ibid. “Si el público muestra ese reparo á aceptar las obras en español, es por la novedad que encuentra, no diría yo del idioma, sino de ver claro, de ver la obra completa, detallada, no su silueta, como sucede representada en lengua extranjera, que cuando no la conocemos se nos presenta el todo con un tinte gris (matizado levemente por el gesto, la acción, el aparato escénico), cubriendo perfectamente muchos detalles capaces por sí solos de ocasionar el fracaso. Y esta es también la causa, en mi concepto, de la poca consistencia adquirida por las tentativas hechas con óperas ya conocidas y sancionadas, traducidas á nuestro idioma.”

Arenal's vision was shared by Zubialde in an article from October 1912 entitled *Reflexiones sobre la ópera española*.⁶⁶ The critic explains that if by *ópera española* we mean one created by Spanish composers, everyone agrees. But if this nationalization is to be done through the use of Castilian only, he sees many problems and oppositions on the horizon. Zubialde explicitly declares his aversion to the use of Spanish in music and only in music. The reasons are the same as those brought by Arenal. For Zubialde, in one's own language, the words appear too clearly in their most intimate meaning. And then, we understand the conceptual content of the words and "the immateriality of music that escapes the contingencies of reality."

On the theme of the union between poetry and music, he explains that "music cannot and does not want to aspire to be the sonic representation of this infinite range of concepts, nor must it be subjected to all of these when there are so many that they can stain it with their touch."⁶⁷ Zubialde's unique (and controversial) conclusion is that "the safeguarding of Spanish opera lies in the nebulosity of the diction that Italian, or even regional languages and dialects, can lend to it. Everything except clarity, which, due to strange circumstances, generates pitfalls and dangers."

A direct answer to Zubialde came in the following issue of the magazine.⁶⁸ Joaquín Fesser criticizes Zubialde's assertions and believes that the causes of the impossibility of a Spanish opera are not to be attributed simply to the language but to

⁶⁶ Ignacio Zubialde, "Reflexiones sobre la ópera española," *Revista musical*, October 1912.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Joaquín Fesser, "Sobre la ópera española," *Revista musical*, December 1912.

other concurrent factors, such as the Spaniards' habit of always listening to it recited (in prose or verse) or sung in vulgar music. He obviously refers to the performances of the *comedias*, the *tonadillas escénicas*, *sainetes*, and the consequent *género chico*.

Above all, explains Fesser, there is a lack of Spanish poets and librettists who can create a text that harmoniously merges with music. Music must not be a slave to the text; there must be a fusion, which—as Fesser suggests—has already been perfectly realized by Wagner. He maintains that “whoever does something else, who wants to drive music crazy and submit it to requests, meanings, descriptions, and purely literary or pictorial imitations, is neither a poet nor a musician.” The secret is to find the perfect meeting point.

Bretón's response came in January 1913.⁶⁹ The composer disagrees with Zubialde's claims about language and its function in opera. According to him, there is an underlying national problem with Castilian in opera and reports a statement by Zubialde who said, “when we hear people sing in Spanish, an inevitable association of ideas catches us and knows everything about zarzuela.”

In my opinion, Mr. Zubialde starts from a capital error: that of not granting the word the importance it has, since “one arrives,” he says, “extending skepticism a little, to the conclusion that it is not necessary to grant the word more than a phonetic value and admitting it as a necessary evil, etc., etc.”—This cannot happen, my good Mr. Zubialde. The word precedes and completes the concept and precedes the music. [...] Apart from the fact that in zarzuelas there are wonderful phrases of lyrics and music, doesn't Mr. Zubialde know [...] Words have their own lyrical, autonomous, high or low value, often independent of the

⁶⁹ Tomás Bretón, “Sobre la ópera española,” *Revista musical*, January 1913.

onomatopoeia and the concept, and there are cases where a beautiful word by itself expresses a vulgar concept or thing.”⁷⁰

Bretón criticizes the contempt with which Spaniards discuss any form of national expression, with the exclusion of the *corrida*, of course, a sentiment that he calls “*antiespañolismo tácito*.”⁷¹ That is fatal for Spanish development and is precisely what generated such a problem with Spanish opera. Indeed, he quotes Zubialde when he says that his aversion to the Spanish language was only in the music, and that same would happen to him with French or German.⁷² However, Bretón argues, why does Zubialde not add Italian to the list? He sarcastically wonders whether Zubialde omitted it because he was tired of writing and missed it or because he considers Italian “untouchable due to habits or sympathy.”

In his contribution published in February 1913, Conrado del Campo supports Bretón and Fesser in identifying the language as the main problem of national opera.⁷³ All European countries (except Portugal, and of course Spain) have gotten rid of Italian.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1-4. “A mi juicio parte de un error capital el señor Zubialde: el de no conceder á la palabra la importancia que tiene, puesto que «se llega—dice—apurando un poco el escepticismo, á la conclusión de que no hay que conceder á la palabra más que un valor fonético y sí admitirla como un mal necesario, etc., etc.»—Esto no puede pasar, mi buen señor Zubialde. La palabra sucede y completa al concepto y precede á la música.[...] Aparte de que en zarzuelas hay frases muy bellas de letra y de música, ¿ignora el señor Zubialde [...] Las palabras poseen un valor lírico propio, autónomo, alto ó bajo, independiente muchas veces de la onomatopeya y del concepto; y se dan casos de que una palabra bella en sí, exprese un concepto ó cosa vulgar.”

⁷¹ Ibid., 5. “Esto se ha hecho muy largo y aún dijera muchas, muchas cosas más en apoyo de mis puntos de vista, porque tengo hechas multitud de observaciones antiguas y modernas, que juzgo interesantes y de todas las cuales se desprende un antiespañolismo tácito, inocente é impensado, en asuntos musicales, fatal para nuestro desarrollo.”

⁷² Ignacio Zubialde, “Reflexiones sobre la ópera española,” *Revista musical*, October 1912.

⁷³ Conrado del Campo, “Sobre la ópera española,” *Revista musical*, February 1913.

In Spain, there remains the “absurd tradition” of using a foreign language in the National Theater.

No; what must be achieved, and this must be the work of the good lyric poets who, fortunately, are not lacking in Spain today, is the cleansing, purification, and enrichment of the language applicable to musical drama, taking care of prose words; giving him back words and expressions of authentic freshness; give him lyrical flexibility;⁷⁴

However, observes Del Campo, national opera faces the biggest obstacle in the general indifference of the public and the government, but above all in the “incomprehensible indifference of composers, artists, and critics.” Opera, due to all the components that contribute to its realization, is a national form of art. Spain’s lyrical past is not very rich, but it is based on the zarzuela, a model that has decayed. Del Campo is referring here to the “classic” zarzuela at the height of its popularity, understood as the *zarzuela grande* of Barbieri and Arrieta.

The Zarzuela declined, the tradition was lost, the one that could and should have been the foundation of a modern and vigorous lyrical theater due to a progressive enrichment of the expressive means [...] With what we have replaced that Theater that has enjoyed such an existence rich? [...] These are the questions that we composers must ask ourselves in our hours of solitude, of decadence and, keeping our gaze turned to the past, greedily drinking the present and registering in our hearts a firm hope for the future, let’s throw ourselves into the work with ardor, with impatient enthusiasm, seeking in the language of the Fatherland the fertilizing germ of our inspirations, and in the light of our sun the vigorous ray that illuminates our works, so that they may one day constitute a solid foundation on which the triumphant column of our National Opera.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ibid., 40.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 41. “Decayó la Zarzuela, se perdió la tradición, aquella que pudo y debió ser fundamento de un Teatro lírico moderno y vigoroso por un enriquecimiento progresivo de los medios expresivos, por la evolución ascendente de formas, procedimientos y orquestación. ¿Con qué hemos sustituido aquel Teatro que tan rica existencia gozó? ¿Qué entusiasmos han sucedido á los entusiasmos de aquel núcleo de compositores tan simpáticos, tan sinceramente interesantes en medio de su ingenuidad? Estas son las preguntas que debemos dirigirnos los compositores en nuestras horas de soledad, de decaimiento, y, puestos los ojos en el pasado, bebiendo ávidamente en el presente y grabando en nuestros corazones una

In the March issue, L. Villalba, the director of *La Ciudad de Dios*, writes a long contribution in which he praises Fesser's and Bretón's arguments. However, he maintains that Spain has been a little bit too rigid with national musical theater, to the point that many works, which in his opinion were not a real disaster, have been filtered out or rejected.

In reality, the Spanish Opera issue has only these two avenues: doing operas and more operas, until it hits the mark, or the audience gets used to hearing our language sung throughout or tackling the issue from the beginning and in its philosophical foundations.⁷⁶

The allusion made by Villalba is not clear, as he seems to criticize the rejection of many zarzuelas as a potential form of national opera, and then he proposes to write more operas with a Wagnerian twist. As expected, the request for clarification arrives from Zubialde himself, in the following issue of the magazine:

You argue that Spanish art cannot be done except by following traditional footsteps; You complain of the abandonment to which the zarzuela has been relegated and attribute to this abandonment the alleged failure of the attempts at Spanish opera. For his part, Fesser proclaims the inferiority of this genre with respect to modern lyric drama, while recognizing that the guideline for the formation of a genuinely ethnic dramatic art must be sought in it. [...] Do you support the Wagnerian musical drama as an immaterial model for the future?⁷⁷

firme esperanza en el porvenir, lanzarnos al trabajo con ardor, con impaciente arrebato, buscando en el idioma de la Patria el germen fecundante de nuestras inspiraciones, y en la luz de nuestro sol el rayo vigoroso que alumbre nuestras obras, para que ellas un día constituyan base firme sobre que se eleve la triunfal columna de nuestra Opera Nacional.”

⁷⁶ Luis Villalba Muñoz, “La cuestión de la ópera española. Carta abierta,” *Revista musical*, March 1913, 60. “En realidad, la cuestión de la Ópera española, no tiene más que estos dos caminos: hacer óperas y más óperas, hasta que se de en el clavo, ó el público se acostumbre á oír cantar nuestro idioma para todo, ó abordar la cuestión desde el principio y en sus fundamentos filosóficos.”

⁷⁷ Ignacio Zubialde, “La cuestión de la ópera española. Cartas abiertas,” *Revista musical*, April 1913. “Aquellos sostienen que no puede hacerse arte español más que siguiendo las huellas tradicionales; se lamentan del olvido en que se tiene relegada á la zarzuela y atribuyen á este olvido el supuesto fracaso de las tentativas de ópera española. Por su parte, Fesser proclama la inferioridad de este género respecto del drama lírico moderno, aunque reconoce que en él debe buscarse la pauta para la formación de un arte

Felipe Pedrell participated in the discussion in the July/August issue of *Revista musical*,⁷⁸ by reporting a statement he published years before in *La vanguardia*, addressed to Ricardo Caterineu⁷⁹. First, he accuses Caterineu of claiming that the zarzuela represented the true Spanish national opera. “Are there still those [like you] who claim this? Or did you have a slip that made you say the opposite of what you thought?” Pedrell responds sarcastically. We must “speak clearly” says Pedrell, because three major misunderstandings mark the Spanish musical reality. The first misunderstanding is “our musical understanding,” which Pedrell says he can clarify in a few words. He considers the audience of the Royal Theater not very competent and that they allow themselves to be dazzled by good performances by famous singers or by a beautiful voice, without going further into the music.

Oh, what cunning! Either they deceive themselves or they deceive us as Chinese when it’s their turn to applaud, for what they will say, Wagner, or the latest Ravachol musical group to come. Don’t believe it. See them dazzled, open-mouthed, admire the *tomb* voice of that prodigy of the *titarufesque* prodigies, or see them swing on their seats to the tingling of the Viennese waltz⁸⁰

The second misunderstanding, the most “salty,” says Pedrell, is that of the Spanish national opera. “After fifty years of discussions and assemblies, we always return to the

dramático genuinamente étnico. [...] ¿Se pronuncia usted por el drama musical wagneriano como modelo intangible para lo sucesivo?”

⁷⁸ Felipe Pedrell, “La cuestión de la ópera española. Hablemos claro,” *Revista musical*, August 1913.

⁷⁹ Ricardo José Caterineu (Tarragona 1868 - Madrid 1915) was a poet and critic associated with the Generation of ‘98.

⁸⁰ Pedrell, “La cuestión,” 176. “Oh los muy ladinos! O se engañan ellos ó nos engañan á nosotros como chinos cuando les toca aplaudir, por el qué dirán, á Wagner, ó al último Ravachol musical de tanda que ha llegado. No les creáis. Vedlos encandilados, boquiabiertos, admirar la voz *tumbal* de ese prodigio de los prodigios *titarufescos*, ó vedlos columpiándose en la butaca á los cosquilleos del vals vienes.”

same problems, with the failure to define a national work, followed by creating new institutions that should succeed in the enterprise.”

[...] and after so much waste of intent and verbiage, we do not know, nor does anyone know, what Spanish opera is, whether or not it will arrive through Trinidad or San Antón, whether it will be through Spanish, Chinese or Sanskrit texts, prose or verse form, is based on this or that matter in which it is to be composed. [...] So that it appears that, by language, character or tradition trend of art, the dress makes the monk, and does not hide us under a seven-soled rascal ... All this order of beauties that I enumerate and others which I do not add so as not to tire the reader, so that we can conquer the only laurel apparently lacking in our artistic glory.⁸¹

The third misunderstanding concerns the misconception of Spanish musical knowledge. Pedrell states—and is willing to demonstrate it “technically” if his word is not enough—that Spain has only a tiny minority of musicians who know music “as God intended it.” Nevertheless, many who do not know it still make it, exploit it, and “even commit shameful cowries in its name.” Then there are the so-called “big fish,” says Pedrell, those who pretend to understand the problem of Spanish opera and at the same time deplore the poetry or the works of others, those who write their own librettos to give themselves prestige, imitating Wagner.

[...] they are the ones who appeal to street melodicism taking refuge in the sonorous lie, *moté feliz* attempted by Vives to describe that reigning and molle illiteracy, which only produces accordion music that infests the atmosphere of Spain with the smell of the stables; They are the ones who intend to carry out a work of musical nationalization, seasoning works with some *sardana*, with some *vito*, which for good looks covered the merchandise or served as a factory brand;

⁸¹ Ibid., 178. “[...] y después de tanto propósito y palabrería derrochados, no sabemos ni nadie sabe que es la ópera española, si vendrá ó no por la Trinidad ó por San Antón, si lo será por la letra española, china ó sánscrita, forma en prosa ó en verso, á base de tal ó cual asunto en que se ha de componer (mejor si se alude á Veremundo, á Sebastiana del Gastillo, ó al famoso Sargento-Cardenal) para que resulte que, por el lenguaje, carácter ó tendencia tradicional de arte, el hábito haga al monje, y no nos oculte debajo á un bribón de siete suelas... Todo este orden de bellezas que enumeró y otras que omito á fin de no cansar al que lea, para que conquistemos el único laurel que falta, al parecer, á nuestra gloria artística.”

They are the ones who, not having a national saint to entrust themselves to, kneel at the beginning of the twentieth century! before the altar of fifth-hand Meyerbeerism [...]; those who, in order to turn a large zarzuelón into an opera, get worse and worse in their futile attempt [...], or as you say trembling from this «mistake of our musicians” who believe it necessary to “pack up and feel solemn to do something remarkable”.⁸²

According to Pedrell, the blame is not due to the Italianism in Spanish music but rather a series of cultural and institutional factors. Pedrell’s intervention is very interesting because despite being very critical of the Spanish artistic system, he discloses some resignation. However, not all is lost; one can hope for divine intervention! Thus, Pedrell concludes his speech by inviting his friend Catherine to pray with him “so that God may improve the hours of that boastful and mushy Spanish opera, and arrive soon and without delay... the other.”

In September, Rogerio Villar published his response to the topic *La cuestión de la ópera española*.⁸³ To the first question (*Does the problem of the national opera respond to a general aspiration?*), he replies that theater and the public are uninfluential and that it must be the work of composers supported by the government.

However, he knows that the state has always been managed and poorly organized and that all institutions that depend upon the state complain about the same issue. The

⁸² Ibid. “[...] son los que apelan al melodismo callejero refugiándose en la mentira sonora, moté feliz intentado por Vives para calificar esa analfabeteria reinante y mollente, que sólo produce la música dé acórdeon que infesta de olor á cuadro el ambiente de España; son los que pretenden hacer obra de nacionalización musical salpimentando obras con alguna sardana, con algún vito, que por el bien parecer cubría la mercancía ó sirva de marca de fábrica; son los que no teniendo santo nacional á que encomendarse se arrodillan já principio del siglo veinte! ante el ara del meyerbeerismo de quinta mano; los que para convertir un zarzuelón grande en una ópera, de cada vez les salé peor la inútil tentativa [...], ó como dice usted teblando de esta «equivocación de nuestros músicos» que creen necesario «empaquetarse y sentirse solemnes para hacer algo notable».”

⁸³ Rogelio Villar, “La cuestión de la ópera española,” *Revista musical*, September 1913.

problem is that “every opera performed at the Teatro Real, almost always unconditionally deplorable, wants to be the “definitive one,” not taking into account that in other countries, national opera was not born suddenly. Villar also complains that many Spanish composers want to make the first performance at the Teatro Real, even aware that their opera will always be performed at the end of the season, without due rehearsal and preparation.

On the day of the premiere, the theater is filled with friends, invited by the author, who do not return for the second performance; the Company, which rents the Teatro Real to run it like any other industrial activity, rightly complains about the low box office receipts, as the audience is totally diverted and the hostility and atmosphere of the house are also contrary to the Spanish masters.⁸⁴

Furthermore, Villar points out that Spanish composers are subjected to incredible scrutiny and are heavily judged, usually compared to other composers. Conversely, foreigners performed in Spain do not undergo this treatment. The lack of a nationalistic artistic sentiment (the one that, in the rest of Europe, sees publishers printing everything and professional magazines supporting local composers) means that the Spanish operas that debut in Spain are already unjustly condemned to oblivion. Villar objects that the Spanish operas produced up to that moment (which, according to him, should be called “lyric dramas”) were nothing more than an imitation of Italian operas, that they were just written in Spanish, and, in many cases, they did not even have a national topic.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 205. “El día del estreno se llena el teatro de amigos, invitados por el autor, que no vuelven á la segunda representación; la Empresa, que arrienda el Teatro Real para explotarlo como se explota un negocio industrial cualquiera, se queja con razón de los escasos ingresos en taquilla, pues el desvío del público es absoluto y hasta la hostilidad y el ambiente de la casa se ponen en contra de los maestros españoles.”

To answer the survey's second question (*Will Spanish become a musical language?*), Villar replies that he absolutely agrees. He is convinced that Castilian will rise as a musical language, but at the same time, he hopes that Spaniards will write better librettos.

The question of language should be something out of the discussion since no language is superior to the one spoken, it does not matter whether it is more or less euphoric. And maestro Bretón master is right in this when he says: "The best language to be sung is your own, because being the best known, it must necessarily be the most expressive." This is what a German, a Frenchman, an Italian, or a Russian would answer if asked. [...] Some failures of the Spanish masters in this field of opera have undoubtedly been due to absurd and vulgar books, without any poetry or grandeur, written in a deplorable literary form.⁸⁵

Villar joins the chorus of those who criticize Zubialde's statement regarding the most "intense emotion felt in listening to works in a different language" and also takes the opportunity to criticize Wagnerian opera and the infinite recitative.

Of course: having been struck only by the vagueness of the music, the harshness of the word did not hurt his ears, nor was his attention distracted by the concreteness of the concept. The sensitivity of Mr. Zubialde saturated with symphonic and chamber music (the most spiritual and elevated manifestation of musical art) made him think and feel, perhaps unconsciously, what many of us believe: that opera, in general, is an inferior artistic genre (as it is, according to many illustrious writers, the theater in relation to the book, novel, poetry, etc.), except, of course, when it bears the glorious name of a symphonic like Wagner, despite the wastelands of the lyrical declamation (recited) that will always be overwhelming.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid., 206. "La cuestión del idioma debiera ser una cosa sin discusión, pues ningún idioma es superior al que se habla, importando poco que sea más ó menos eufónico. Y en esto tiene razón el maestro Bretón cuando dice: «El mejor idioma para ser cantado es el propio, porque siendo el que se conoce mejor forzosamente tiene que ser el más expresivo.» Esto mismo contestaría, si se le preguntara, un alemán, un francés, un italiano ó un ruso [...] Algunos fracasos de los maestros españoles en este terreno de la ópera han sido debidos indudablemente á los libros disparatados y vulgares, sin ninguna poesía ni grandeza, escritos en una forma literaria deplorable."

⁸⁶ Ibid. 207. "Claro: como que no le impresionaba más que lo inconcreto de la música, no herían sus oídos las durezas del vocablo, ni su atención se distraía con lo concreto del concepto. La sensibilidad del señor Zubialde saturada de música sinfónica y de cámara (la más espiritual y elevada manifestación del arte musical) le hacía pensar y sentir, quizá inconscientemente, lo que muchos pensamos: que la ópera, en general, es un género de arte inferior (como lo es, á juicio de muchos escritores ilustres, el teatro con relación al libro, novela, poema, etc.), excepto, claro está, cuando lleva el nombre glorioso de un sinfonista

According to Villar, Spain's main problem is that it is a refractory country, and he hopes that all vocal and instrumental music will be cultivated more. Villar's article also represents a summary at the end of this excursus of the narrative on *ópera española*. The main point is that the discussion remained at an impasse even when reopened in less "suspicious" times and during a phase in which Spain was more timidly opening up to modernist tendencies. Of course, there were other occasions where the question was discussed, but these were isolated cases linked to the representation of specific works. Overall, as Villar points out in his article, Spain remained refractory to significant changes like this.

1.10 Conclusions

The discussion about Spanish national opera spans more or less the entire nineteenth century but became more important after 1850, following the opening of the Teatro Real. The *zarzuela grande* model proposed by Barbieri, being in Spanish and including elements of folk tradition, created a first model, which, however, was not further developed and vanishes with the advent of the *género chico*. At the same time, composers such as Pedrell, Bretón, and Chapí reworked the Spanish-opera model in a more modern key under the pressure of the new Wagnerian influences. Nonetheless, attempts to compose operas, distant from the *zarzuela grande* model, always encountered resistance from both the Teatro Real, which remained tied to an Italian tradition, and a

como Wagner, no obstante los eriales de la declamación lírica (recitados) que serán siempre abrumadores.”

conservative Spanish culture too fond of the *género chico*, dominant from the late 1870s onward.

The discussion on the Spanish national opera was destined to fail from its inception. The fact that, in the second decade of the twentieth century, it was still discussed demonstrates that the conditions for achieving this type of project were lacking in Spain. The early 1900s witnessed the premieres of such operas as *La vida breve* and *Goyescas*, works that, in retrospect, became iconic of a Spanish operatic style not understood in a “closed” sense but more projected towards the outside. It is no coincidence that Falla and Granados, while appreciating and studying Spanish popular culture, positioned themselves as cosmopolitan composers without actively participating in a nationalistic project. The conclusion was that Spain could never agree on a form of national opera and implicitly raised the *zarzuela chica* to that position.

PART II. Realism and *Verismo*

CHAPTER 2 *Verismo*

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores Italian operatic *verismo* in its broad meaning, correlating it with *verismo* in literature. In the first part, I propose an explanation of Italian literary *verismo* as a reaction to French naturalism, and I present some of its most representative writers. This will serve to frame precisely what will be treated in the second part of the chapter, that is, what was the inspiration of the composers who ventured into the composition of *verismo* operas, only subsequently defined as *veristi*. I will discuss the choices composers had to make to adapt and translate the “raw reality” (as presented by literature) into the operatic musical universe. Through a brief study of the significant *verismo* works and their reception, we will face the historiographic problem of defining, if possible, *verismo* in music. The work covered will be *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890), *Pagliacci* (1892), *Mala vita* (1892) and *Il tabarro* (1915). To conclude, I will propose a possible *verismo* model based on macro features.

2.2 *Verismo* and Naturalism

The first step to understanding *verismo* in music and distinguishing it from the general idea of “realism” is to investigate its original meaning in literature. In doing so, it is imperative to establish the differences between the concept of *verismo* in literature and its French counterpart—from which *verismo* took its inspiration—called naturalism. Often these two concepts are confused and replaced with each other. Still, after the first convergence, they matured as two distinct literary realities, whose differences mainly concern their place of origin and the historical and cultural environment with it associated. It is generally well accepted that the Italian literature *verismo* draws from French naturalism, particularly Émile Zola (1840-1902). The writings of two prominent Italian *verismo* authors, Giovanni Verga (1840-1922) and Luigi Capuana (1839-1915), together with the literary criticism of Francesco de Sanctis (1817-1883), provide a precise picture of the relationship between Italian naturalists and their colleagues beyond the Alps, as well as their departure from Zola’s models.

French naturalism developed in the years 1865-70, and its name is a symptom of the deterministic conception that governs the literary movement, a vision that sees humans as being governed by nature. French naturalism is based on Positivism and Darwinian evolutionary theories, and its “manifesto” is in the 1880 *Le Roman Experimental* (The Experimental Novel) by Émile Zola. This work exemplifies the naturalistic approach to literature, which excludes romantic themes based on fantasy and sentiment, instead orienting itself toward reality. The naturalists’ idea was that the truth was “always” beautiful, even if it was exemplified in macabre or ugly situations and characters. The

Naturalists, therefore, overturned the traditional canons of beauty, and in doing so, they set up the so-called technique of impersonality, according to which the narrative must have a “scientific“ approach, that is, based on observation and experimentation.

Naturalist writers chose a human passion, applied it to a specific circumstance, and observed its evolution, which they then described in a “scientific” way. Because of this structure and approach, the novel became the preferred medium of French naturalists, who saw themselves as social scientists. Indeed, as science proceeds from the simple to the complex, in the same way, the writer will have to face the story of reality, starting from the analysis of the humblest classes and eventually moving up through the social hierarchies.

Italian *verismo* was born towards the end of the 1870s under the direct impulse of French naturalism. The place of origin of this realist movement is considered Milan, the city where several Southern writers (or Southerners) gathered. Among them are Luigi Capuana and Giovanni Verga, the author of the short novel and the subsequent theatrical play *Cavalleria rusticana*, upon which Pietro Mascagni based the eponymous opera. Other important *veristi* were Federico de Roberto (1861-1927), Matilde Serao (1856-1927), Salvatore di Giacomo (1860-1934) and Grazia Deledda (1871-1936).

Although operating from a large city in Northern Italy, which attracted intellectuals from all over the country, the *veristi* told stories of Southern Italy, particularly of Sicily (Verga and Capuana), Naples (Serao and di Giacomo), and Sardinia (Deledda).

The *verismo* movement has often been associated with the Milanese *Scapigliatura* movement. This developed between Milan and Turin in a short time frame (about ten

years) and was characterized by non-conformism and anti-traditionalism, which promulgated a synthesis of the arts. The *scapigliati* essentially sought to bring European artistic and literary trends to Italy, with particular reference to Decadentism (their poetry was often compared with that of the French “cursed poets”). Looking outside Italy, their interest was mainly in France and Germany. The label *Scapigliatura* appeared in 1862 as a translation of the French word *bohème* by Cletto Arrighi in the novel *La Scapigliatura e il 6 Febbraio*.¹ Narrating the stories of recklessness and adventurous life of the *scapigliati*, it soon became the manifesto of the movement. The main *scapigliati* in Milan were painter Tarquillo Cremona (1837-78), composer and conductor Franco Faccio (1840-1891), the critic Felice Cameroni (1844-1912), writers Carlo Dossi (1849-1910), Emilio Praga (1839-1875), Camillo Boito (1836-1914) and Arrigo Boito (1842-1918), the latter being a famous librettist also for Verdi.² In Turin, there was also the novelist Iginio Ugo Tarchetti (1839-1869), the playwright Giuseppe Giocosa (1847-1906), and the poet Giovanni Camerana (1845-1905).

The traditional narrative has always seen a direct influence of the *scapigliati* in the production of the first *verismo* writers, in particular Verga, to the point of even speaking of a “Verghian apprenticeship” in the context of the *Scapigliatura*. Recent studies cast doubt on this point by demonstrating how the influence of *Scapigliatura* on the young Verga may

¹ Matteo Sansone, “Verismo from Literature to Opera” (Ph.D. diss., Edinburgh, Scotland, University of Edinburgh, 1987), 6.

² Arrigo Boito (1802-1856) was a composer, author, and patriot who wrote the librettos of Verdi’s *Simon Boccanegra* (1881 revision), *Otello* (1887) and *Falstaff* (1893), Catalani’s *La falce* (1875), Ponchielli’s *La Gioconda* (1876), to cite a few, as well as the libretto for his own operas *Mefistofile* (1868-75) and *Nerone* (1894, unfinished).

have been only indirect and certainly cannot be dated before 1872 (the year in which Verga moved to Milan). Verga frequented literary circles in Milan, particularly the Salotto Maffei. There, he met Arrigo Boito, Giocosa, and Camerana. Still, his contacts with the cultural life of Milan and the *Scapigliatura* movement functioned mainly as a catalyst for new research in his writing that he was attempting to direct more towards the popular world of Sicily, departing from the high-society themes of his early novels. Scrivano argues that of the two components that characterized *Scapigliatura* literature—a certain tension towards realism that drew attention to social problems, and a decadent attitude—only the first one acted in some way on Verga.³

Undoubtedly, Verga shared with the *scapigliati* a late-Romantic attitude, but this was less decadentism and more a form of pessimism that transpires in many of his works even before the *verismo* phase. In particular, some are worth mentioning: *Storia di una capinera* [Story of a Blackcap] (1871-73), *Eros* (1873), *Nedda* (1873), and *Tigre Reale* [Real Tiger] (1875). However, most of these works are still linked to late-Romantic poetics, albeit imbued with pessimism. The exception was *Nedda*, considered the novel forerunner of *verismo*, the aesthetic that was later realized better in the collection of short stories *Vita dei campi* (Life in the Fields). This collection was first published in 1890 and then again in 1891 and 1897, and it included, among others, masterpieces such as *Cavalleria rusticana*, *La lupa*, or *Rosso Malpelo*.⁴ These short stories first appeared individually in magazines and

³ Riccardo Scrivano, “Il Verga tra scapigliatura e verismo,” *Belfagor* 20, no. 6 (1965): 653–63.

⁴ The final version of *Vita dei campi* included the following titles: *Fantasticheria*, *Jeli il pastore*, *Rosso Malpelo*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *La lupa*, *L’amante di Gramigna*, *Guerra dei santi*, *Pentolaccia*, *Il come*, *il*

then were grouped in the various editions of *Vita dei campi*. Another significant work elevated to a representative of *verismo* literature was the *Ciclo dei vinti* [Cycle of the Vanquished]. Verga's project was to create a collection of five novels, each with a specific theme, but all together representative of a universal theme, that of human beings' struggle for existence, for progress. *I Malavoglia*, the story of the infinite misfortunes of a Sicilian family, represented the struggle for survival. *Mastro-don Gesualdo* recounted the ambition to advance in society. *La Duchessa di Leyra* [The Duchess of Leyra] was representative of aristocratic ambition. This novel was left unfinished. Two other stories were not even started, *L'onorevole Scipioni* [The Honorable Scipioni],⁵ which was to represent political ambition, and *L'uomo di lusso* [The Luxury Man], which was to have dealt with artistic ambition.

Verga's preface for the novel *I Malavoglia* represents both a presentation of the *Ciclo dei vinti* and, most of all, a manifesto of Italian *verismo*.

In *The Malavoglias*, it is still only the struggle for material needs. Once these are satisfied, the search becomes greed for richness, and it will be embodied in a bourgeois type, *Mastro-don Gesualdo*, framed in the still restricted framework of a small provincial town, but whose colors will begin to be more lively, and the picture to become broader and more varied. Then it will become aristocratic vanity in *The Duchess de Leyra*; and ambition in *The Honorable Scipioni*, to arrive at *The Luxury Man* who gathers all these cravings, all these vanities, all these ambitions, to understand and suffer from them, if he feels them in his blood, and is consumed by them.

As the sphere of human action widens, the device of passion becomes more complicated; the types are certainly less original but more curious due to the

quando, il perché. Cfr. Giovanni Verga, *Vita dei campi: Cavalleria rusticana ed altre novelle* (Firenze: R. Bemporadeto, 1929).

⁵ The protagonist of *L'onorevole Scipioni* appears for the first time in the novel *I Malavoglia*, as the lawyer Scipioni.

subtle influence that education exerts on characters and everything that can be artificial in civilization. Even language tends to individualize itself, enrich itself with all the half-tones of half sentiments, with all the artifices of the word to give prominence to the idea, in an age that imposes an equal formalism as a rule of good taste to mask a uniformity of feelings and thoughts.

For the artistic production of these paintings to be exact, the rules of this analysis must be carefully followed; to be sincere to prove the truth, since the form is so inherent in the subject, as every part of the subject itself is necessary for the explanation of the general argument. The fatal, incessant, often tiring, and the feverish path that humanity follows to achieve the conquest of progress is grandiose in its result, seen as a whole, from afar. ... Every motive of this universal work, from the pursuit of material well-being to the highest ambitions, is legitimized by the mere fact of its opportunity to reach the aim of the continuous movement. When one knows where this immense current of human activity is going, one certainly does not ask himself how it goes.

Only the observer, also overwhelmed by the flood, looking around, has the right to be interested in the weak who remain on the road, in the vulnerable who allow themselves to be overtaken by the wave to finish more quickly, in the vanquished who raise their desperate arms, and they bow their heads under the brutal foot of the supervening, the victors of today, also hurried, eager to get there too, and who will be overtaken tomorrow.

The Malavoglia's, Mastro-don Gesualdo, The Duchess de Leyra, The Honorable Scipioni, and The Luxury Man are as many losers as the flood deposited on the shore after overwhelming and drowning them, each with the esteem of their sin, which should have been the blaze of their virtue. Each, from the humblest to the highest, has had their part in the struggle for existence, for well-being, for ambition -from the humble fisherman to the newly enriched, to the intruder in the upper classes, to the man of genius and with strong wills, who feels the strength to dominate other men, to take for himself that part of public consideration that social prejudice denies him for his illegal birth; to make the law, them, born outside the law- to the artist who believes he is following his ideal by following another form of ambition. Whoever observes this show has no right to judge it; it is already a lot if he manages to take a moment out of the field of struggle to study it without passion and to render the scene clearly, with the right colors, such as to give the representation of reality as it was, or as it should have been.⁶

⁶ Giovanni Verga, *I Malavoglia: romanzo di G. Verga* (Firenze: R. Bemporad & Figlio, 1921).

The introduction shows the positivistic approach, inspired by Zola, that Verga employs very personally. For Verga, progress is seen as an “overwhelming wave” (flood of progress) that submerges everyone, winners and losers. Verga argues that anyone is destined to become a loser. Here we note the pessimistic attitude of Verghian positivism, which distances him from French naturalism. Indeed, one of the main differences between the two movements lies precisely in the fact that *verismo*, as opposed to naturalism, has no faith in progress and believes that the human being is ultimately blocked forever in his social situation.

In the twentieth century, the definition of *verismo* in literature was controversial, especially about how much it was influenced by naturalism. In contrast with the subsequent studies on *verismo*, in 1945,⁷ the critic Vittorini (1859-1922) wrote that Italian *verismo* is to be considered independent from parallel European movements and that the word *verismo* has meaning only in the Italian language.⁸ On the contrary, naturalism and realism have only an aesthetic value and not a historical one. In French naturalism, the artist focuses on primal and primitive instincts, while realism has a broader resonance and examines the areas of the spirit that naturalism neglects. Vittorini gives the example of two works by Verga, *La lupa* and *I Malavoglia*, and underlines how they are also realist because they are linked to a particular historical point of view (which is that of the rural society of Southern Italy at the end of the century).

⁷ D. Vittorini, “Il verismo italiano,” *Italica* 22, no. 4 (1945): 161–65.

⁸ For a detailed explanation of the term *verismo*, please refer to the dedicate section in this chapter and to the article: Giorgio Ruberti, “Il verismo in musica: origine, evoluzione, e caduta di un concetto,” *Studi Musicali*, Nuova Serie, no. 2 (2010).

He believes that it is not essential to refer to the naturalism of Émile Zola to understand Italian *verismo*. In this, he relies on the argument of Capuana, who in one of his writings contested the validity of the theories on Zola and the definition of “experimental novel,” which Capuana considered unfortunate. Capuana underlines an essential point of the naturalistic writings, particularly that, in Zola’s artistic theory, there is mainly a “scientific” approach to the problems of the society he describes, all to the detriment of the true essence of art. This is an important point that differentiates *verismo* from French naturalism and will be later re-appropriated in discussing the problem of *verismo* in opera. Capuana was probably the most influential theorist of the new movement of Italian literature, which in reality never self-labeled as *verismo*. Capuana draws a precise line between the pre- and post-Risorgimento⁹ literature of Italy. For him, Romantic Risorgimento literature must be condemned *en bloc* because it has practical intentions in which art obeys only itself and does not have a social function. This was essentially the foundation of all the activity of the *verismo* writers.

Vittorini’s argument is essentially based on three points. First of all, *verismo* writers are not bourgeois at all; on the contrary, they oppose the bourgeois society resulting from the industrial revolution. Secondly, he dispels the myth that they are pessimists or cynics. In reality, for Vittorini, only the works they produce are pessimistic. The playwright “attacks” the world he describes, a world that is already full of evil and cynicism. And finally, for Vittorini, the realist theater is essentially a social theater, anything but

⁹ *Risorgimento* is the word that indicates the period—and the related cultural movement—in Italian history that led to the unification of the country on March 17, 1861, with the proclamation of the Regno d’Italia.

bourgeois, as is often confirmed by the intimate relationships with provincial literature. For example, Verga's and Capuano's novels are written against the backdrop of Sicilian peasant culture, D'Annunzio's first writings on rural Abruzzo, those of Serrao in Naples and that of Grazia Deledda in Sardinia. Vittorini also criticizes the common idea that Zola's "Experimental novel" (1880) is to be considered the birth of Italian realism. This work, according to Vittorini, would explain neither French naturalism, in Zola himself, nor even Italian *verismo*. What *veristi* do, Vittorini argues, is to observe the society of the time, in which they discover all the wounds. But this does not mean that they are always cold observers (technique of impersonality). Ironically, with this, Vittorini does nothing but clarify the concept of the principle of *impersonality* in the sense in which the *veristi* understood it. It is an actual narrative technique more than an aesthetic dogma, and it is impossible to know whether it was a reflection of the shared mood of the writers.

Based on the concept of objectivity initiated by the naturalists, the principle of impersonality was then developed to its highest point by the *veristi*. It consisted of an objective narrative in which the narrator's point of view does not shine through and where the narrator is detached from the characters and the plot (the story, called *intreccio* in Italian). Impersonality usually involves a narration in the third person and is devoid of comments or intrusions by the author, which could affect the reader. This technique goes hand in hand with another peculiar *verismo* technique, the so-called artifice of regression (or "regressive point of view"). It consists of adapting the narration's language to the cultural categories of the community it describes at all levels: knowledge, beliefs, language, way of thinking, and metaphors. This often involves simplifying the language,

which is “lowered,” even using slang or dialect expressions or simpler constructs. With the artifice of regression, we no longer have the omniscient narrator who judges the action but one who abandons his morality to adapt to what he tells. Verga says he tells his stories as a “voiceover.” The artifice of regression amplifies the objectivity proposed by Zola and involves Verga disappearing (or rather, hiding) in his narration.

To provide a topical example of the type of story presented in *verismo* literature, I will conclude this section by proposing a brief synopsis of Verga’s novel *I Malavoglia* (1881). The story, which is contemporary to the time when it was written, takes place in the village of Aci Trezza, in the province of Catania (Sicily), where the Toscanos, a family of fishermen, live. Their nickname is Malavoglia. The head of the family is Padre ‘Ntoni (Grandpa ‘Ntoni), a widower who lives in the Casa del Nespolo (House of medlar) together with his son, Bastiano (Bastianazzo), and his wife, Maruzza (La Longa). They have five children: ‘Ntoni, Luca, Filomena, Alessio (Alessi) and Rosalia (Lia). The whole family supports itself with the fishing done in their boat, called “La Provvidenza” (The Providence). In 1863, ‘Ntoni (the eldest of the children) leaves for military service, and the family is now lacking his help. Padre ‘Ntoni tries to make a business deal by buying a large batch of (damaged) lupins from a usurer and sends Bastianazzo to Riposto (another town) to sell the batch of lupins. However, the Provvidenza is shipwrecked during the journey, Bastianazzo dies, and the shipment of lupins is lost. The family is now missing the father, a boat to work with, and has a debt (of the lupins) to repay. Meanwhile, ‘Ntoni anticipates his return from military service. Still, he does not give much help to the family. The boat is recovered and put back into operation. Meanwhile, Luca, one of the

grandsons, dies while serving in the battle of Lissa (1866). To repay the lupins' debt, Padre 'Ntoni sells the "medlar house," as the family falls into a terrible financial hardship. Although advised by the lawyer Scipioni¹⁰ not to repay the debt because the house was part of a dowry and therefore was untouchable, the Malavoglias, moved by feelings of honor, decide to pay it.

Another shipwreck hits La Provvidenza, and Padre 'Ntoni almost dies. Meanwhile, Maruzza, the daughter-in-law, dies of cholera. 'Ntoni, the eldest, decides to go and find a job outside the village, but with no luck. Eventually, he returns to the village and, impoverished and tired of working without results, devotes himself to idleness and alcohol. Meanwhile, his departure had forced the family to sell the boat to recover money and buy back the medlar house. Santuzza, the local tavern owner, desired by the policeman Don Michele, falls in love with 'Ntoni (who, in the meantime, has turned to contraband). During a police raid at the tavern, a quarrel arises between 'Ntoni and Don Michele, and 'Ntoni stabs the policeman in the chest. After a trial in which the Malavoglias spend almost all their savings (originally designated to buy back their house, still in the hands of the usurer Zio Crocifisso), 'Ntoni is sentenced to five years in prison.

Padre 'Ntoni faints upon hearing of the rumors about a relationship between the policeman Don Michele and his niece Lia. Toni is sentenced to only five years because he has committed an "act of honor," in which he would have defended the reputation of his

¹⁰ In the *Ciclo dei vinti*, Verga planned to devote a whole novel to the lawyer Scipioni, titling it *L'onorevole Scipioni*. However, the work was never started.

sister Lia, who had rejected Don Michele. Padre ‘Ntoni begins to show signs of senile dementia and is hospitalized.

Concurrently, Lia, whose reputation is ruined due to gossip, moves to Catania, where she becomes a prostitute. Mena, due to the shame caused by her sister, decides to marry the carter Alfio Mosca¹¹ and look after the children of Alessi (her younger brother), who, in the meantime, has married Nunziata. By continuing to be a fisherman, Alessi has managed to reunite the family and buy back the Casa del Nespolo. When the family goes to the hospital to communicate the good news to Padre ‘Ntoni and announce that he will soon return to his beloved home, the old fisherman dies. Even the last joy of dying in his beloved home is denied to him.

‘Ntoni is eventually released from prison and returns to the village. However, he soon realizes that he cannot stay there because of his past. With his choices, he has excluded himself from the family that he has continuously disowned. Therefore, he is forced to abandon his home just when he finally realizes that it has always been the only place where it was possible to lead a worthwhile life.

2.3 Operatic *Verismo*

In music, *verismo* developed at the end of the nineteenth century in the intellectual circle of the so-called *Giovine Scuola*, a group of “young” (*giovane* in Italian) composers who sought to distance themselves from what they viewed as the excesses of the Romantic operatic tradition. The most renowned composers of the *Giovine Scuola* were Pietro

¹¹ The carter’s character, with the same name Alfio, also appears in *Cavalleria rusticana*.

Mascagni, Ruggero Leoncavallo, Umberto Giordano, Alberto Franchetti, Alfredo Catalani, Francesco Cilea, and also Giacomo Puccini, and they all emerged through the patronage of the publisher and talent scout Edoardo Sonzogno (1836-1920) in Milan.

Verismo operas share some dramatic and musical traits. Besides the choice of the subjects, set in a rural or suburban environments, with the coexistence of profane and sacred (there is often some religious element in *verismo* stories), in musical terms, they all incorporate—at various levels—a mixture of the Italian tradition (in the melodic invention, and the use of more-or-less closed numbers) and a Wagnerian treatment of the orchestra, with “personalized” use of *leitmotivic* techniques. *Violinata* is also very common and is sustained by what has been called a “regressive”¹² use of the orchestra (a term that resonates with the “regressive point of view” from the *verismo* literature), in which the orchestra simplifies its language to enhance the dramatic rendering of the voice. Puccini, traditionally associated with *verismo*, was the master of this technique.

Puccini’s case is unique and is usually treated separately. He participated in the *Giovine Scuola* but never officially related himself to *verismo*. Indeed, its language is so unique that it escapes any general classification. If we consider a pretty strict definition of *verismo* to include single act, low-class characters, maybe a homicide, the only opera by Puccini that we could consider *verismo* would be *Il tabarro* (1918, as part of *Il trittico*), to which I would also add *Suor Angelica* (by contrast), and certainly *La fanciulla del West* (1910, though in 3 acts). However, if we open the definition to other works that lean more

¹² Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, “Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation,” trans. Roger Parker, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 1 (1993): 39–53.

“towards” the realist/naturalist drama, we could also—by extension—add *Tosca* (1900), *La bohème* (1896), and *Manon Lescaut* (1892).

Modern musicology assigns the label of *verismo* to a group of works that is too large and that, in my opinion, refers to operas that are often just realist or naturalist. I will try to re-assess this problem, convinced that, although it is impossible to identify a univocal definition of *verismo*, it is helpful to identify at least the most recurrent common traits and be aware that each opera could be more or less *verismo* at all levels (plot, libretto, music).

2.4 A Conflicted Definition

The general trend of many scholars is to consider *verismo* as a “school” that includes composers who, to different extents, participated in the *Giovine Scuola*. However, upon careful analysis, we notice that many of them explored different opera styles, among which *verismo* appears only marginally. Even more importantly, there is a certain ambiguity in the use of the word *verismo*, which is often associated or mixed with the concepts of realism and naturalism. Egon Voss, in his intervention in the volume on *Cavalleria rusticana* published by Ostali, writes:

Literary verismo was dedicated to both local and temporal actuality [...]. On the other hand, Verismo opera preferred historical subjects and distant places. That the action of an opera takes place in the present is an exception rather than the rule. The action of *Mala vita* di Giordano is placed around 1810, *Andrea Chénier* at the time of the French Revolution, and *La Bohème* around 1830. *Tosca* also deals with a historical subject, as well as *Suor Angelica*, *Adriana Lecouvreur* of Cilea, *Francesca da Rimini* by Zandonai, and *Mona Lisa* by Schillings. *The Girl of the Golden West* takes place in the Far West, *Madama Butterfly* in Japan, *Turandot* in China, *Tiefland* by d’Albert, and *La Navarraise* by Massenet in Spain. The librettos of verismo operas

rather look for what are called decisive actions and State actions: events of a representative nature that occur in remarkable places.¹³

Voss includes in the category of *verismo* very heterogeneous works, many of which have no reference to *verismo* as initiated by *Cavalleria* and *Pagliacci*, other than the fact that their composer produced at least one *verismo* work. This is a trend shared by many scholars, at least until last fifteen years or so. The contrasting definitions of *verismo* offered by the most famous opera history dictionaries and textbooks show the confusion in defining the term in its musical meaning.

In *The Changing Opera* (1935), Bekker and Mendel wrote that:

Out of the artistic naturalism of Bizet and the realism of the later Verdi arose “veristic” opera. [...] The stronger the passions aroused by the genuineness of the stage action, the greater the expansion of the voice. It breaks the bonds even of Verdi’s realism. [...] Verismo [...] characters are simple, everyday people. The things that happen to them can happen to anyone, and the consciousness of that makes the effect even more penetrating.¹⁴

In his *History of Opera* (1990), Sadie states:

[...] the chief European literary representative of the ‘verist’ movement was the French writer Émile Zola; its leading Italian figure, the novelist Giovanni Verga, was the writer of the story that served as Mascagni’s basis for *Cavalleria rusticana*. [...] In verismo operas, their passions and their violence are central. [...] The movement was strongest in Italy, with such composers as Cilea, Giordano, and Zandonai, but was taken up too in France, with Bruneau [...] and Gustave

¹³ Egon Voss, “Il verismo nell’opera,” in *Cavalleria rusticana 1890-1990: Cento anni di un capolavoro*, ed. Piero e Nandi Ostali (Milano: Casa Musicale Sonzogno di Piero Ostali, 1990): 48-49. “Il verismo letterario si dedicava all’attualità sia locale che temporale [...]. L’opera verista invece preferiva soggetti storici e luoghi distanti. Che l’azione di un’opera si svolga nel presente è un’eccezione piuttosto che la regola. L’azione di *Mala vita* di Giordano si colloca intorno al 1810, *Andrea Chénier* all’epoca della Rivoluzione francese *La Bohème* intorno al 1830. Anche *Tosca* tratta un soggetto storico, come pure *Suor Angelica*, *Adriana Lecouwreur* di Cilea, *Francesca da Rimini* di Zandonai e *Mona Lisa* di Schillings. *La fanciulla del West* si svolge nel Far West, *Madama Butterfly* in Giappone, *Turandot* in Cina, *Tiefland* di d’Albert e *La Navarraise* di Massenet in Spagna. [...] I libretti delle opere veriste vanno piuttosto in cerca di quelle che vengono chiamate azioni decisive e azioni di stato: eventi di carattere rappresentativo che accadono in posti notevoli.”

¹⁴ Paul Bekker and Arthur Mendel, *The Changing Opera* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1935): 238-40.

Charpentier, in England with Ethel Smyth, and in Germany with d'Albert and Wolf-Ferrari [...].¹⁵

In dealing with the literature, Sadie mixes French naturalism and Italian *Verismo*, and he asserts that Zola was a veristic writer.

In *The Oxford History of Opera*, Roger Parker writes that Mascagni “launched a vogue for what is known as ‘verismo’—the approximate operatic equivalent of literary naturalism.”¹⁶ Here, he is confusing *verismo* and naturalism, even taking the label *verismo* from the opera and applying it to naturalism in literature. Similarly, Charles Osborne mixes French naturalism and Italian *verismo*.

Verismo, literally “realism.” The term is used to indicate realistic, or even more correctly, naturalistic school of Italian opera, which flourished in the late 19th century and early 20th. [...] The movement corresponds to the realistic school in French literature exemplified by Émile Zola. The only French composer to contribute significantly to verismo was Massenet, with *La navarraise*.¹⁷

In Norton’s *A History of Western Music*, when talking about realist or naturalistic operas, Burkholder makes an interesting note.

What some writers call “realistic” or “naturalistic” music is simply, in effect, a certain kind of program music: the realism is deduced not from the music but from an extramusical fact (such as a title) about the composition in question. When we speak about realistic or naturalistic opera, therefore, we have reference primarily to the libretto. [...] It goes without saying that such tendencies in late nineteenth-century opera grew out of earlier tendencies in literature.¹⁸

¹⁵ Stanley Sadie, ed., *History of Opera*, 1st American ed, The Norton/Grove Handbooks in Music (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990): 259.

¹⁶ Roger Parker, *The Oxford History of Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 133.

¹⁷ Charles Osborne, *The Dictionary of the Opera* (New York: Welcome Rain, 2001).

¹⁸ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 8th ed (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 505-509.

Mentioning *Cavalleria* and *Pagliacci*, Burkholder writes that “Both are examples of verismo (from Italian *vero*, “true”), an operatic parallel to realism to literature.”¹⁹

Burkholder centers the term but mixes it with the umbrella term of *realism* in literature, which was a general term that appeared much earlier than the *verismo* movement, both in literature and opera (e.g., the historical realism in the novels by Alessandro Manzoni and, likewise, historical realism in some operas by Verdi). He also states that *Cavalleria* and *Pagliacci* were an “explosive reaction to Wagner’s music.”²⁰ This statement is prone to two interpretations. Does he mean “as a positive consequence, inspired by,” or the exact opposite, that those operas were created as a contrasting “reaction” to Wagner?

Whatever the case, the composers of the *Giovine Scuola* certainly wanted to renew the Italian Romantic style. Still, their impulse was not a direct reaction to Wagner’s music, any more than it was to Verdi’s models. They held the past in high esteem and built upon it. Also, though they were great admirers of Wagner’s techniques, they were not merely Wagner’s epigones. Burkholder’s statement is even more surprising when we check the bibliographical reference in its footnote. He refers to a famous study by Rinaldi (*Musica e Verismo*, 1932), who is indeed one of the scholars who, already in 1932, followed the path initiated by Amintore Galli by offering a well-compromised vision of *verismo* as an aesthetic mediating between later Romanticism and new tendencies.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., 707.

²⁰ Ibid., 509.

²¹ Mario. Rinaldi, *Musica e verismo; critica ed estetica d’una tendenza musicale* (Roma: Fratelli de Santis, 1932).

Parakilas’s compelling *The Story of Opera* (2013) does not devote a specific section to *verismo* but cites Mascagni and Leoncavallo in the part related to “human-interest opera.”²² In the book *A History of Opera*, Parker is probably one among few who is surprised at how the term *verismo* has been “historically” associated with Puccini, who—he points out—produced only one *verismo* opera, *Il tabarro*, which we today consider the “last” *verismo* opera.²³

We can re-negotiate a *verismo* definition by going back to when this term first appeared and reviewing the critics’ reaction to the *verismo* repertoire. Giorgio Ruberti has proposed a comprehensive excursus of such a broad interpretation of the term *verismo*.²⁴ His detailed study is based exclusively on Italian sources contemporary to the debates. He concludes that the definition of *verismo* cannot be monolithic and that, in approaching it, one must consider the circumstances in which the term began to be used and the evolution of its meaning in its critical and aesthetic use. First of all, the use word “*verismo*” as it is applied to music. In one of the very first reviews of *Cavalleria rusticana*, Amintore Galli, the renowned critic of *Il Teatro Illustrato*, called it a *verismo* opera.

The young Mascagni celebrates the immortality of homeland art, frank and sincere, flowing with a moved soul and raising his eye to the sun of life with his

²² James Parakilas, *The Story of Opera* (New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton, 2013), 376.

²³ Carolyn Abbate and Roger Parker, “Realism and Clamour,” in *A History of Opera* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015), 397–424. Parker does not include *La fanciulla del West* in the list of Puccini’s *verismo*. This work is traditionally associated with *verismo*, of which it presents all the elements, but with one exception. None of the protagonists die. But the “happy ending” of the opera can also be interpreted not as such. For example, while Minnie and Ranch leave California to start a new life, the miners are stuck there in their miserable life.

²⁴ Giorgio Ruberti, *Il Verismo Musicale* (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 2011).

back turned to the hyperborean shadows. The *verismo* opera begins its reign in Italy!²⁵

Did he already use or read such a term in connection with opera? Indeed he did, and it was in his review of the Italian performance of *Carmen* in 1880 at the Dal Verme Theater in Milan. In that article, Galli refers to the characters' passionality, the use of local color, and the dramaturgically "true" character of the music as all elements that produce a *verismo* nature (*natura veristica*) of Mérimée's libretto, whom he defines as a precursor of the *verismo* school. It is clear, from these passages, the importance that he assigns to music in defining a *verismo* character.

Prospero Mérimé, one of the forerunners of the veristic school, but of those who had not lost the sense of the proper measure necessary in all things, provided Bizet with his fascinating story, the subject, the characters, the features, the *colour locale* of the opera [...]. The librettists Messrs H. Meilhac and L. Halévy faithfully followed the poet, not re-creating that character of Michaela. But it must be recognized that their reduction is made with a lot of knowledge of the theater.²⁶

Years before the premiere of *Cavalleria rusticana*, Galli was already discussing the problem of realism in the columns of *Il teatro illustrato*. In an 1884 article, he made his point about the new direction taken by realism in art and opera: the secret of the new art is the coexistence of realism and idealism. For him, *Carmen* epitomized the perfect

²⁵ Amintore Galli, "Cavalleria rusticana," *Il Teatro illustrato e la musica popolare*, January 1891. "Il giovane Mascagni celebra la immortalità dell'arte Patria, schietta e sincera, fluente dall'anima commossa e che alza l'occhio al sole della vita colle spalle volte alle ombre iperboree. L'opera verista italiana inizia in Italia il suo regno!"

²⁶ Amintore Galli, "Carmen, dramma lirico in quattro atti di H. Meilhac e L. Halévy. Musica di Giorgio Bizet," *Il Teatro illustrato e la musica popolare*, December 16, 1880. "Prospero Mérimé, uno degli antesignani della scuola veristica, ma di quelli che non avevano perso il senso della giusta misura, necessario in tutte le cose, fornì a Bizet, con un suo interessantissimo racconto, il soggetto, i personaggi, i caratteri, il colorito locale dell'opera [...]. I librettisti signori H. Meilhac and L. Halévy seguirono fedelmente il poeta, non creando di nuovo che il personaggio di Michaela. Ma bisogna riconoscere che la loro riduzione è fatta con molta conoscenza del teatro."

example of this new attitude. In Galli's analysis, Bizet represented the "real" only after having "re-tempered it in the ethereal wave of the ideal."²⁷

This is why realism will always be a fruitful element of art. But realism is not enough for the inspiration of the human being, and thanks to the activity of the intellect, we feel the need to create above the material and finite world an ideal and infinite world, which is the true empire of the imagination and the arts. [...] Verdi [...] is not always able to forget the traditional forms of opera: Bizet bravely breaks them and creates a new type of beauty in which realism and idealism are placed in immediate contact, without in the least bumping into each other, and the one serving to highlight the other and to double the aesthetic effectiveness. Fruitful union in which the secret of the new art resides.²⁸

Here, Galli brings out three dichotomies regarding musical theater that will be discussed to a great extent in the following years: the real vs. ideal, the real vs. beautiful, and color locale vs. universal effects. Such dichotomies will lead to a spirited debate on the problem of the ideal nature of music and whether it is possible to represent the "real in music."

The coexistence of realism and idealism also became Galli's general aesthetic idea on *verismo*, which he supported for years. Galli's perspective on the issue was that *verismo* and *realism* had a civic mission. However, the "ideal" should be an essential element of the recipe to achieve that. This is why operas like *Malavita* are traditionally considered a

²⁷ Amintore Galli, "Del melodramma attraverso la storia e dell'opera verista di Bizet," *Il Teatro illustrato e la musica popolare*, March 1884.

²⁸ Galli, *ibid.* "Gli è per ciò che il realismo sarà sempre un fecondo elemento dell'arte. Ma il realismo non basta alle ispirazioni dell'uomo, e mercé l'attività dell'intelletto noi sentiamo il bisogno di creare al di sopra del mondo materiale e finito un mondo ideale e infinito, che è il vero impero della immaginazione e delle arti. [...] Verdi [...] non sempre può obliare le forme tradizionali dell'opera: Bizet le spezza coraggiosamente e crea un nuovo tipo di bellezza nel quale il realismo e l'idealismo sono posti in immediato contatto, senza menomamente urtarsi, e l'uno servendo a mettere a mettere in maggior evidenza l'altro ed a raddoppiare l'efficacia estetica. Fecondo connubio nel quale risiede il segreto dell'arte nuova."

failure, since they do not conciliate the real and the ideal; thus, they do not lead to an enhancement of morality (*elevazione morale*).²⁹ Galli's argument, shared by ensuing critics, is that *verismo* in music should be "idealizing." In an 1887 article, he debates that realism by itself is pointless and even morally questionable when not "irradiated" with the "ideal." Also, an alternative is the "plausible" (*verosimile*), precisely the field where the artist's imagination thrives.

In works of art, what our aspirations finally converge on is not just beauty but the *real*. When human beings collect within themselves the images of objects, or things that surround them, and reproduce them as they are [...] their work of art belongs to *verismo*, realism, or naturalism, as others say. Today this art system seems to be the favorite in both painting and literature. And it also makes attempts in music, although this is not very suitable. Cremona, Sardou, Guerrini, Zola, the new French music school, in which David³⁰ and the Bizet have already attracted the public's attention, are trying it. But *verismo*, or realism, did not arise yesterday. [...]. If this realism offends the human conscience, the intemperances to which today's realism is abandoned often repel moral sentiment. [...] The sordid reality can never be the object of art, nor can our feeling be satisfied with it, if it [the reality] is mistaken for the purpose of art itself. Art is the sister of the *true*, but of the *true elect*, [...] because we believe that everything should aim to improve man's customs and nature, not worsen them. [...] After the real and the true, understood aesthetically, that is, irradiated by the light of the ideal, we have the *plausible*, whose field is so vast that it fully satisfies the flights of the artist's fantasy. [...] The alternation of the real with the ideal may be *interesting* in some parts. Still, in its entirety, it will leave our spirit unsatisfied because this finds its natural and complete satisfaction only in the *true* and in the *probable*.³¹

²⁹ Matteo Sansone, "Giordano's 'Mala Vita': A 'Verismo' Opera Too True to Be Good," *Music & Letters* 75, no. 3 (1994): 381–400.

³⁰ Félicien-César David (1810-1876).

³¹ Amintore Galli, "Fonti dell'Arte," *Il Teatro illustrato e la musica popolare*, July 1887. "La sola bellezza nelle opere d'arte non è l'ultimo termine cui convergono le nostre aspirazioni, ma questo è il vero. Quando l'uomo raccoglie in sé le immagini degli oggetti, o delle cose che lo circondano, e le riproduce tale e quali sono [...] la di lui opera d'arte appartiene al *verismo*, al *realismo*, o al *naturalismo* come dicono altri. Oggi questo sistema d'arte sembra essere il preferito tanto nella pittura quanto nella letteratura. E fa pure i suoi tentativi musica, sebbene questa poco o punto si presti. Il Cremona, il Sardou, il Guerrini, lo Zola, la nuova scuola musicale francese, nella quale già richiamarono l'attenzione del pubblico i David e i Bizet, lo provano. Ma il *verismo*, o il *realismo*, non è sorto ieri. [...]. Se questo *realismo* offende l'umana coscienza, le intemperanze cui s'abbandona il *realismo* odierno spesso ripugnano al sentimento morale. [...] La

Ruberti argues that Galli likely supported his theory with several articles written by Francesco de Sanctis on Émile Zola few years earlier. In these articles, de Sanctis maintains that Zola created the perfect combination of real and ideal in his writing and that he was “as realist as a scientist, and as idealist as a poet.”

The heated debate on the issue of idealism vs. realism (or the combination of two) occurred in the 1890s, mainly between *Il teatro illustrato* and the counterpart Ricordi’s magazine called *La Gazzetta Musicale Italiana*. The first reviews of *Cavalleria rusticana* in *Il Teatro Illustrato* described the opera as a perfect fusion between realism and idealism. In the beginning, *verismo* was seen as a “reaction” to the “old” and dramatic models of Romanticism. Indeed, for many, it was the cure for the illness of contemporary Italian opera. However, this theory is problematic because, drawing directly from the theories on *verismo* and naturalism in literature, it has seen the operatic *verismo* as a contrasting *departure* from the Romantic operatic model. However, already in 1932, in *Musica e verismo; critica ed estetica d’una tendenza musicale*—the first monography on *verismo*—Mario Rinaldi argued that Mascagni did not reject late-Romantic models, but he reinterpreted them offering a new direction:

To completely change, to seek the strength to give art a new musical direction, in order to be able to overcome oneself, one needs the genius of Vincenzo Bellini, Giuseppe Verdi, or Riccardo Wagner. [...] The so-called Mascagnian *reforms*, those that would range from realism to romanticism, from symbolism to old-

ignobile realtà mai potrà essere oggetto dell’arte nè in essa potrà mai compiacersi il nostro sentimento, se essa è scambiata con lo scopo dell’arte medesima. L’arte è sorella del *vero*, ma del *vero eletto*, [...] perocché a noi sembra che tutto quanto si debba prefiggersi di migliorare i costumi e la natura dell’uomo, e non già di peggiorarla. [...] Dopo il reale e il vero, intesi esteticamente, e cioè irradiati dalla luce dell’ideale, abbiamo il *verosimile*, il cui campo è così vasto da soddisfare pienamente ai voli della fantasia dell’artista. [...] L’alternarsi del reale coll’ideale potrà riuscire *interessante* in qualche parte, ma nel suo tutto lascerà il nostro spirito non soddisfatto, perocché questo trova il suo naturale e pieno soddisfacimento sono nel vero e nel verosimile.”

fashioned humourism, should be considered as an insatiable desire for change to reach the *original* rather than the *new*.³²

Starting in 1891, the debate shifted from the libretto level to the musical one.

Critic A. Biaggi wrote that *verismo* in music clashes with the “idealist” vision of the music.

The human being does not research the real in the music but rather the emotion

produced by the true aesthetic, the aesthetic emotion.³³ As a consequence, the less

progressive critics lamented the alleged irreconcilability of *verismo* with the opera theaters.

“Vulgar” and “plebeian” subjects, like the one of Giordano’s *Mala vita*, encountered a

harsh critique. In their view, the reality should have been more an aesthetic and

philosophical concept, and the way it was presented undermined the musical element.

Opposing the idealized view of *verismo* proposed by Amintore Galli, they argued that the

“real” was not a possibility in music because of the intrinsically fictitious character of the

musical theater. Music should then altogether avoid representing the harsh reality that

the tradition had so anxiously hidden. Even *Il teatro illustrato* later started to doubt the

possibility of *verismo* in opera, arguing about the difficulty of achieving reality in a system

(the theater) based on fiction.³⁴

³² Rinaldi, *Musica e verismo*, 155-56. “Per mutarsi completamente, per cercare la forza di dare all’arte un nuovo indirizzo musicale, onde riuscire a superare se stessi, occorre il genio di Vincenzo Bellini, di Giuseppe Verdi, o di Riccardo Wagner. [...] Le cosiddette *riforme mascagniane*, quelle che andrebbero dal verismo al romanticismo, dal simbolismo all’umorismo di vecchio stampo, vanno considerate come un insaziabile desiderio di mutamento per raggiungere l’originale piuttosto che il nuovo.”

³³ Cfr. Girolamo Alessandro Biaggi, “Rassegna musicale. La operosità dei compositori italiani; il melodramma secondo gli avveniristi,” *Nuova Antologia*, XXVI/116 (1891): 546.

³⁴ Paolo Fodale, “Sulla ricerca del vero e del nuovo nelle Arti e specialmente nel melodramma,” *Il teatro illustrato*, November 1891, 139.

The libretto of *verismo* operas received the same criticism as the music. In 1892, two years after the *premiere* of *Cavalleria*, anti-*verismo* polemics erupted and raged on for years. Critics on the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* (Ricordi's magazine) wrote that bringing the real into the music meant the "death of opera."³⁵ Arner justified his position by referring to the new relationship between librettist and composer. In his opinion, the poet aimed to affirm the superiority of the drama over the music. To go further, critics from the newly created *Rivista Musicale Italiana* (1894) argued that if *verismo* had been successful, it was just because there had been a change in the audience's taste, now accustomed to more "vulgar" subjects. The debate on applying the "real" to music became prominent in 1896. The role of the musical component kept primary importance in the narrative of *verismo* operas. According to Galli, if we simply apply the concept of "real" to the music, it will lose its uniqueness as a "depurating mean, in the ethereal wave of the ideal."³⁶ This brings the problem of the dichotomy of realism vs. *verismo* (later discussed by Dahlhaus),³⁷ primarily addressed in the Italian press of the time, especially in *Il teatro illustrato*. The debate kept focusing more on the aesthetic and philosophical implications of *verismo* in music. Critics from the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* agreed that *verismo* in music did not exist and that *verismo* operas received such a label only based upon their stories' subject.³⁸

³⁵ Carlo Arner, "La morte dell'opera in musica," *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, December 12, 1895.

³⁶ Amintore Galli, "Del melodramma attraverso la storia e dell'opera verista di Bizet," *Il teatro illustrato e la musica popolare*, March 1884.

³⁷ Carl Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

³⁸ Arnaldo Bonaventura, "Il realismo nella musica," *Gazzetta musicale di Milano*, February 17, 1892.

After 1896, the *Gazzetta musicale di Milano* did not continue a systematic discussion on *verismo* in music. Still, some references to it appeared in the reviews of some operas. The critic Torchi, in reviewing *Iris* by Mascagni in 1899, argued that the only “real” music could have been that which imitated natural phenomena, but that in Mascagni’s opera, it was pointless and not adequate to the drama.³⁹

[...] Musical painting according to the infallible doctrine of *verismo*. In general, the interpretation that the Italian *Giovine Scuola* gives to this word is a bit shrewd: the musical reproduction of the phenomenon, of the item, is more important than the impression it awakens. Thus, the lack of music is often justified, covered up, by the demands of *verismo*. [...] However, because it was more convenient, they wanted to take Wagner and Berlioz literally, to understand them externally, superficially, capturing them in a moment, in an external episode of their scores; [...] [In *Iris*,] with every handful of mud that the blind man throws on the shamed daughter, a sound of tam-tam is heard in the orchestra; here is some *verismo* in music. The scene has no adequate musical expression, no idea, no dramatic force; this does nothing; [...] In Mascagni, everything that is *verismo* is anti-musical, while where there is aesthetic falsehood, there is more music⁴⁰.

Torchi is accusing Mascagni, and the *Giovine Scuola* composers at large, of using music in a self-referential way. As opposed to Wagner, he argues, those composers neither wanted nor knew how to go further than the simple description of an object. They were

³⁹ Luigi Torchi, “‘Iris’, melodramma in tre atti di Pietro Mascagni,” *Rivista musicale italiana* VI/1 (1899): 71–118.

⁴⁰ Torchi, *ibid.*, 103-4. “[...] La pittura musicale secondo la infallibile dottrina del *verismo*. In generale, l’interpretazione che la *Giovine Scuola* italiana dà a questa parola è un po’ scaltra: la riproduzione musicale del fenomeno, della cosa, è più importante dell’impressione che essa sveglia. Così la mancanza di musica è spesso giustificata, coperta, mediante le esigenze del *verismo*. [...] Tuttavia, si è voluto, perché era più comodo, prendere Wagner e Berlioz alla lettera, si è voluto comprenderli esteriormente, superficialmente, cogliendoli in un momento, in un episodio esterno delle loro partiture; [...] [In *Iris*,] ad ogni manata di fango che il cieco getta sulla figlia svergognata, si ode in orchestra un colpo di tam-tam; ecco del *verismo* in musica. La scena non ha espressione musicale adeguata, non idea, non forza drammatica; ciò fa nulla; [...] In Mascagni tutto ciò che è *verismo* è antimusicale, mentre là dove c’è falsità estetica là appunto c’è più musica.”

incapable of communicating through music the idea of the object they had built in their minds.

As we have seen, the definition of a concept of *verismo* as applied to musical work remained an open historiographic problem. Nonetheless, the conversation was very useful in creating theoretical foundations for future discussions that will be taken up by modern musicology.

2.5 Sonzogno and the *Giovine Scuola*

What we today label as *verismo* might not have ever existed without the impulse and promotion of Eduardo Sonzogno. But let us make no mistake, Sonzogno was not a just philanthropist or just a passionate romantic. There were evident market reasons for the rise of the *Giovine Scuola*. Sonzogno was a businessman without specific musical training, though he had been an amateur actor. He came from a family of printers and librarians and became head of the family business in 1861. In 1886 he founded the newspaper *Il secolo* in Milan, which soon became very popular. *Il secolo* specifically addressed the middle class and focused on culture, fiction, and politics, even offering prizes to its readers. He also founded *La biblioteca del popolo* (The People's Library), a series of economic editions of classic writers. Among other endeavors, Sonzogno was one of the founders of the Italian SIAE (Italian Society of Authors and Editors) in 1882. Sonzogno was initiated into the music-publishing world by Amintore Galli, who was the first music critic of *Il secolo*, and later became Sonzogno's music consultant and chief editor of the operas of Casa Sonzogno. In the meantime, Sonzogno bought the copyright of many operas and operettas (including the copyrights of *Carmen*) and had them performed in

Italy. In 1881, he founded the famous magazine *Il teatro illustrato*, which soon became the virtual space where the *Giovine Scuola* challenged the more Romantic-oriented Ricordi publisher, which had its own magazine, called *la Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*.

Sonzogno used the “competition” method to identify and promote young composers, from whom he would then have required exclusive copyright for the production and dissemination of the work and, of course, royalties for representation. The second competition launched in 1888 in *Il teatro illustrato*,⁴¹ brought to light an until-then unknown Pietro Mascagni (1863-1945), who won with *Cavalleria rusticana*, with a libretto by Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Giulio Menasci. The opera’s premiere took place, with great success, on May 17, 1890, at the Teatro Costanzi in Rome.

In 1890, after having proclaimed the victory of *Cavalleria rusticana*, Sonzogno also brought in the very young Umberto Giordano (1867-1948). He had participated in the competition and came in sixth, out of seventy-two participants, with the opera *Marina*. This attracted Sonzogno’s attention, who commissioned from him a work that would later be *Mala vita* (1892, with a libretto by Nicola Daspuro). Francesco Cilea was recommended to Sonzogno by his professor at the Conservatory of Naples, the well-known Paolo Serrao, after the successful performance of his opera *Gina* at the conservatory theater. The first opera he composed for Sonzogno was *La Tilda* (1892). Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919) would join in 1892 with *Pagliacci*. Sonzogno continued

⁴¹ “Incoraggiamento ai giovani compositori italiani. Concorso.” *Il teatro illustrato e la musica popolare*, July 1888. This was the second competition promoted by Sonzogno (the first one was in April 1883). The directions asked for a one-act opera written by an Italian composer. The age limit was set at thirty years old, and the work should have been submitted no later than May 30, 1899.

to commission other works from his composers, but not all of them had *verismo* plots. Sonzogno had actually created the *Giovine Scuola* and promoted his composers both in Italy and outside the national borders. In 1892 he presented several works at the Vienna International Theater Exhibition. Although he did not reap great profits, this gained a lot of publicity for him and the composers. The works represented were *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *Tilda*, *Mala vita* and *L'amico Fritz*. In Vienna, they were received as a curious novelty, and with some exceptions, they were overall well appreciated by an audience accustomed to post-Wagnerian opera and Strauss's operettas.

The relationship between the composers of the *Giovine Scuola* and operatic *verismo* is not as conspicuous as one might suppose. However, the two terms have often been associated, perpetuating a historical misconception. First of all, the reasons. Unlike what happened in literature, Italian composers turned to *verismo* primarily for economic reasons and, in a few cases, because of an aesthetic fascination with specific realistic stories as a rejection of Romantic themes. Second, the label of "verismo composers" in modern times often associated with the members of the *Giovine Scuola* is incorrect. In fact, only a few of their operas pertain, to varying degrees, to *verismo*, while others have a completely different inspiration and style. Instead, we should more appropriately refer to "*verismo* works." If there is one element that many composers of the *Giovine Scuola* shared, it is not the fact that they wrote operas on *verismo* stories but rather that they were all young (*giovani*) composers interested in renewing Italian melodrama and that many of them took a great interest in Wagner's music, which they cultivated and employed in a very "personalized" way. At the time, Milano and Bologna were the catalyst cities in the

discourse on the Wagnerian operatic model, and the *Giovine Scuola* participated actively in it. However, far from being Wagner's epigones, the composers of the *Giovine Scuola* were able to develop a new language that mixes the Italian tradition, evident in their inspiration in writing memorable melodies, and Wagnerian-style orchestral texture.

Here are some examples of the problem with the “*verismo* composer” label. Pietro Mascagni, the composer of *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890), said to be the first *verismo* opera, is also the author of *L'amico Fritz* (1891), a work that is not *verismo*. Ruggero Leoncavallo is renowned as the composer of *Pagliacci* (1892), a *verismo* work traditionally performed together with *Cavalleria*. However, few know that Leoncavallo started a trilogy of operas called *Crepusculum* (based on Wagner's *Ring*) set in the Italian Renaissance. *Crepusculum* was Leoncavallo's life dreamwork, but he completed only the first one out of the three operas (*I Medici*, *Savonarola*, and *Cesare Borgia*). He turned to *verismo* (and *Sonzogno*) when Ricordi turned down his work *I Medici*. Umberto Giordano is today well known for his historic drama *Andrea Cheniér*. However, he participated in *verismo* with the opera *Mala vita* (1892), an important—and neglected—chapter in the history of this repertoire. Francesco Cilea, whose most performed work is probably *Adriana Lecovrieur* (1902), also wrote the *verismo* opera *Tilda* (1892), a trenchant story of street singers, bandits, and killings.

This section will be developed around the brief presentation of some major *verismo* operas, collectively considered representative of the genre and those that offer substantial literature. *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890), *Pagliacci* (1892), *Mala vita* (1892), and as the last opera written with such style, *Il tabarro* (1918).

INCORAGGIAMENTO
AI
GIOVANI COMPOSITORI ITALIANI
CONCORSO.

Il *Teatro Illustrato* apre ai giovani musicisti, di nazionalità italiana, un nuovo concorso per un'opera in un atto — in un solo quadro o in due *ad libitum* — di soggetto *idilliacco, serio o giocoso*, a scelta del concorrente.

Verranno conferiti due premi, il primo di 3000 lire e il secondo di 2000 lire, agli autori dei due migliori fra tre melodrammi presentati al Concorso e giudicati, da apposita Commissione esaminatrice, degni di essere pubblicamente rappresentati.

I tre lavori verranno messi in scena — a tutte spese dell'Editore del *Teatro Illustrato* — al teatro Costanzi di Roma, nella stagione autunnale 1889.

Considerato come il libretto sia uno dei principali coefficienti di successo in un lavoro drammatico-musicale, si destina un premio speciale di lire 1000 all'autore del migliore fra i libretti delle opere presentate al concorso.

CONDIZIONI DEL CONCORSO:

I. A questo Concorso — inteso ad incoraggiare i giovani esordienti — non sono accettati lavori già rappresentati, sia in pubblico che in privato; nè sono ammessi quei compositori che avessero già fatto le loro prove al teatro con qualsiasi lavoro melodrammatico.

II. Le opere saranno giudicate da una Commissione composta dai maestri: commendatore Filippo Marchetti, comm. Giovanni Sgambati, comm. Eugenio Terziani, marchese Francesco D'Arcis e professore Amintore Galli, redattore capo del *Teatro Illustrato*.

I libretti saranno giudicati da una Commissione composta dai signori: commendatore Paolo Ferrari, Antonio Ghislanzoni e Felice Cavallotti.

Un voto in merito al libretto sarà riservato pure alla Commissione musicale.

Restano esclusi dal concorso pel libretto i poeti di fama riconosciuta, e sarà tenuto conto speciale di chi è ancora a' suoi primi passi nella letteratura melodrammatica.

III. All'esperienza scenica verranno ammesse le tre opere giudicate migliori dalla Commissione esaminatrice, la quale non proferirà il suo definitivo giudizio, aggiungendo il premio a due sole di esse, che dopo il corso delle rappresentazioni.

IV. I premi saranno conferiti nel dicembre 1889.

V. Le partiture dovranno essere presentate, franche di spesa, alla Direzione del *Teatro Illustrato*, non più tardi del 30 maggio 1889, e nell'agosto dello stesso anno, saranno fatti noti, a mezzo del *Teatro Illustrato*, i lavori ammessi alla prova della scena, e verranno proclamati nello stesso tempo i nomi degli autori delle tre opere prescelte per la rappresentazione e quello dell'autore del libretto cui spetta il premio stabilito. Il libretto può essere premiato in-

dependentemente dal giudizio portato sulla musica.

VI. I maestri ammessi all'esperienza scenica dovranno assistere alle prove dei loro lavori.

VII. I componimenti premiati resteranno di esclusiva proprietà dei loro autori.

VIII. Le partiture presentate al concorso dovranno essere a grande orchestra, e scritte intelligibilmente.

IX. Colla partitura si dovrà pure presentare la riduzione per canto e pianoforte insieme al libretto dell'opera.

X. Le opere dovranno essere anonime, ma porteranno un'epigrafe, la quale andrà ripetuta sopra una busta suggellata e rachiudente il nome e l'indirizzo del concorrente.

XI. È in facoltà però della Commissione esaminatrice d'invitare gli autori dei lavori riconosciuti migliori ad intervenire ad una seduta per far udire essi stessi al pianoforte alcuni brani delle opere presentate al concorso. Gli autori che non volessero, o non potessero far atto di presenza, non perderanno però il diritto ai premi.

XII. La musica dei lavori aspiranti ai premi dovrà essere ispirata alle tradizioni dell'opera italiana, ma senza rinunciare agli splendidi portati della scienza dei suoni contemporanea.

Milano, 1.^a Luglio 1888.

LA DIREZIONE.

LE NOSTRE ILLUSTRAZIONI
ESTELLA DE VITA



ATA per l'arte soavissima del canto, la gentile artista il cui nome figura in capo a queste linee, nulla offre al biografo che non abbia la più stretta attinenza colla musica e col teatro. La signorina De Vita appartiene al novero di quegli ingegni che sbocciarono al sole dell'arte prima ancora che l'organismo fisico avesse raggiunto il suo pieno rigoglio; e ciò prova quanta indipendenza possa avere lo spirito dalla materia.

Vuol essere notato pure il fatto che nessun'arte o scienza dà tanti ingegni precoci quanti ne conta la musica. È forse questa una prova della spiritualità dell'arte di Mozart, di Rossini, di Beethoven? Si può crederlo.

Poche carriere artistiche furono più rapide di quella della signorina De Vita. Nata in Amsterdam, da famiglia d'origine italiana, non aveva ancora attinto il secondo lustro che già dimostrava le più belle attitudini per divenire pianista, e lasciava la patria per recarsi a Brusselle affine di perfezionarsi nell'arte che rese sommi i Clementi, i Thalberg, i Liszt. Ma la giovane musicista mentre interpretava i grandi

poeti del pianoforte, si sentiva trascinata da una forza occulta a sposare alle vibrazioni delle corde metalliche il suono della propria voce: una voce di mezzo soprano quale si ode di rado.

Ancora alunna, e a soli dodici anni, la signorina De Vita prendeva parte ad un concerto di beneficenza, nel quale essa si produsse come pianista, declamatrice e cantante.

Al pianoforte ella eseguì un concerto a quattro mani col proprio professore — il Cabel, — come declamatrice fe' gustare una poesia di Victor Hugo: *Pour les pauvres*, e come cantante spiegò la sua bella voce nella ballata di Odetta, nel *Carlo VI* di Halévy.

Venuto a morte il Cabel, la signorina De Vita si trasferì a Parigi, e quivi studiò di proposito il canto italiano con una celebre artista, la signora Ferretti.

Angers (Francia) ebbe il vanto di offrire la prima, fra le città che sin qui udirono la novella cantante, omaggi d'ammirazione alla giovinetta artista.

La bellezza della voce — simpatica, pastosa, nel registro grave robustissima, intonata alla perfezione e profondamente espressiva — unita ad un talento drammatico dei più distinti, e lo splendore incantevole di un visino appena baciato da diciassette primavere, fecero della signorina De Vita una Mignon incomparabile, l'attrattiva più potente e la gemma più fulgida del teatro d'Angers.

Sulle stesse scene cantò poscia nella *Favorita*, nei *Dragoni di Villars*, nel *Carlo VI*, nel *Rigoletto*, nell'*Aida*, e ogni nuova opera fu per la valente artista un nuovo successo.

In Italia si produsse la prima volta sulle scene del teatro Argentina di Roma, interpretando la parte di Rosa Friquet, nei *Dragoni di Villars* del Maillart: inutile il dire che vi riportò pieno successo per il brio, il sentimento e il talento artistico spiegato nelle caratteristiche scene della bellissima opera.

Ebbe pure grande successo all'Argentina sotto le spoglie di Carmen. Bizet non avrebbe potuto immaginare un'interprete più fedele dei propri intenti artistici, si nuovi, si ben trovati: veri miracoli di un genio peregrino.

Poche la signorina De Vita si fece applaudire nella *Mignon* e nella *Carmen* a Ferrara, ad Ancona, e, riconfermata più volte, al Bellini di Napoli, dove destò ciò che si dice fanatismo, vogliamo dire il più alto grado di artistica ammirazione.

Per aver idea del successo riportato colla dalla valente cantatrice olandese, basti sapere che essa cantò 94 sere: 50 la *Carmen* e 44 la *Mignon*!

Quale e quanta eloquenza in queste cifre!

Il successo più recente la De Vita l'ottenne al Politeama di Palermo, dove si presentò nella *Carmen* il 9 dello scorso mese.

Dopo Palermo è Torino che prodigherà il suo plauso alla gentile e valorosa cantante.

Milano la desidera!

Figure 2.1: Announcement of Sonzogno's second competition, "Encouragement to young Italian composers," in the magazine *Il teatro illustrato*, July 1888. (Digital Archive of Fondazione Giorgio Cini, Venice, Italy).

2.6 *Cavalleria rusticana*

Cavalleria rusticana is still considered today, together with *Pagliacci*, the most representative work of Italian operatic *verismo* and undoubtedly the opera that inspired ensuing works. It was written by Pietro Mascagni in 1889. He wrote the music in just four months after having convinced Giorgio Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci to write the libretto for an opera with which he would participate in the second competition held by Sonzogno in 1888.

Born in Livorno, Mascagni had studied law, only to abandon his studies and devote himself to music. In 1882 he moved to Milan to attend the conservatory. In those years, Milan was the cultural center of Italy. There, Mascagni came into contact with Wagner's music and was more than fascinated by it, to the point of considering Wagner "the Pope of all present and future musicians."⁴² Furthermore, he also befriended members of the *Scapigliatura*. Those young artists were the ones who brought some innovations to Italian opera, especially from the Wagnerian experience. First of all, the use of leitmotifs, the continuous orchestral texture, and a progressive move away from closed forms, together with a particular emphasis on the libretto, which at times also had exotic topics.

In Milan, Mascagni also became friends with Puccini, with whom he shared an apartment during the last year of the conservatory. In 1885, Mascagni left the conservatory and moved to Cremona, where he managed to work as assistant conductor

⁴² Letter of 8 April 1887, reported in: Pietro Mascagni and Mario Morini, *Pietro Mascagni* (Milano, 1964).

of operettas. According to Mallach, the fact that Mascagni experienced the itinerant world of operettas made him realize how much the contemporary world was full of poverty and humiliation. And in fact, Mascagni lived a life of hardship working for various companies around Italy. In 1887, he moved to Cerignola (in the region of Apulia), where he started giving music lessons and organizing and directing the local orchestra. It was during his stay in Cerignola that he composed *Cavalleria rusticana* and submitted it to the Sonzogno competition, changing his life forever.

The libretto is based on the novel *Cavalleria rusticana* by Verga (from 1880). More precisely, the librettists Targioni-Tozzetti and Menasci used the theatrical version of the story, prepared by Verga himself, called “*Scene popolari.*” *Cavalleria rusticana*.⁴³ In the play, Verga created a story more focused on sentiments than economic reasons, making it more appealing to a bourgeois and non-Sicilian audience. It became a story of adultery and revenge, taking place in a setting that was exotic to the public of Northern Italy, a recipe for success that would lead to another success when rendered in an operatic version.

Strange as it may seem, there were no particular aesthetic choices or desire for innovation in Mascagni’s choice of the libretto. According to Sansone, Mascagni, first of

⁴³ The main difference between the novella and the theatrical version is that this last one obliterates the economic motivations of the behavior of Turiddu and Lola. It also expands the role of Santa (Santuzza), who is transformed into a dishonored girl in love with an unscrupulous man. In the story, while Turiddu is in the army, Lola marries Alfio, who owns some mules and has a job and can give her a gold ring and beautiful clothes. Turiddu, who envies Alfio’s wealth, takes his revenge by courting Santa, whose father is wealthy and who lives in the house opposite Alfio. However, as soon as Lola, overcome by jealousy, re-approaches Turiddu, Santa is immediately forgotten. In the end, Turiddu will die for having touched the “property” of others (Lola), and before dying, his last thought goes to his mother. Turiddu is a loser in economic terms and metaphorically, as much as the smear of earth that Alfio throws in his eyes before stabbing him to death.

all, wanted to obtain a functional and “winning” libretto because of the competition, and above all, he would have preferred to get it for free, given his precarious economic conditions. For this, he turned to his friend Targioni-Tozzetti. He first refused Mascagni’s proposal to write a libretto on a Calabrian story by Nicola Misasi, and then he proposed to write the libretto on Verga’s play, after having attended one of the performances.⁴⁴

Mascagni replied:

It was useless for you to write to me, having wholly entrusted myself to you. Do what you want [...] The *Cavalleria rusticana* was already in my projects since it was performed for the first time in Milan.⁴⁵

It is clear that Mascagni did not have a particular preference for a specific libretto or subject. Besides, at that time, Mascagni experienced the continuous frustration of not being able, due to the various vicissitudes of his life, to complete his most important project, that of writing the opera *Guglielmo Ratcliff*. He would have finished it only years later and performed at La Scala in Milan on February 16, 1895. Therefore, Mascagni entrusted it to his friend Targioni-Tozzetti who, however, had no experience as a librettist, so he involved Guido Menasci. In general, the sense of reality and religion (the story is set on Easter day) and the detailed description of the characters are largely lost in the libretto. Sansone highlights how what Verga managed to retain while transposing the novel into a play is eventually broken up in the libretto.

⁴⁴ Sansone, “Verismo,” 34.

⁴⁵ Giovanni Cenozato, ed., *Cinquantenario della “Cavalleria Rusticana” di Pietro Mascagni, MDCCCXC-MCMXL. Le lettere ai librettisti durante la creazione del capolavoro, inedite* (Milano, 1940). As reported in Sansone, “Verismo,” 34. “Era inutile che mi scrivessi, essendomi rimesso completamente in te. Fa quello che vuoi... La Cavalleria Rusticana era già nei miei progetti da quando si eseguì per la prima volta a Milano...”

As we turn to examine the libretto[...], we immediately realize the complete wreckage of Verga's first scene. [...] In a veristic libretto, it only shows how far Targioni and Menasci were from the spirit and style of the play. [...] The character [of Alfio], whose psychological, dramatic, and linguistic identity was integrally preserved by Verga in working out the play from the novella, is partly disfigured into an operatic cliché.⁴⁶

The story is simple, direct, and fast. It takes place in a rural Sicilian town on Easter morning. Turiddu, who just returned from military service, has learned that Lola, with whom he is still in love, has married the carter Alfio. Turiddu has tried to console himself with Santuzza, but now he neglects her. Santuzza does not resign and confronts him, but she is badly rejected. Desperate and blinded by her pain, she reveals to Alfio that Lola is cheating on him with Turiddu. After Easter mass, outside of the church, Turiddu invites fellow villagers to drink wine in Lucia's (Santuzza's mother) tavern. There, Alfio provokes him and challenges him to a deadly duel. Before leaving to face Alfio, Turiddu—who is also incapacitated by alcohol—asks for her mother's blessing and asks her to protect Santuzza. Shortly after that, the two fight offstage, and the famous scream "They killed compare Turiddu" announces the tragic end of the rustic duel.

In rendering Verga's play in operatic terms, the librettists had to make essential choices from a dramaturgical point of view and rendered a libretto that is overall "softer" than the play.⁴⁷ They gave more weight to some parts and almost cut others. They created the "character" of the chorus of villagers, more or less following the one created by Verga in his play version. This way, they achieved two results. They can create a

⁴⁶ Sansone, "Verismo," 38.

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of the novel and play version and its translation into the libretto, Sansone, "Verismo."

constant presence of the “community,” and they interpolate parts of the opera that usually have few protagonists. Iconic, in this sense, is the “Regina caeli” chorus.

Mascagni’s melody of the diegetic performance of the “Regina caeli” resembles the one of the actual “Regina caeli” hymn (one of the four Marian antiphons), however, with the required operatic adaptations. In the opera, the hymn is in an antiphonal form, with a choir participating from inside the church (“Coro interno”) singing the verse, and the assembly (“Popolo”)—the villagers outside the church, waiting for Christ’s statue to be carried in procession outside in the square—responding with “Alleluia.” In the following section, the two choirs join in a homorhythmic section in which they praise Christ’s resurrection (“Inneggiamo, il Signor non è morto”). The whole section is a cappella, except for the organ’s basic accompaniment (an instrument symbolic of religion, which is a constant presence in the opera, even in the *Preludio* and *Intermezzo*).

The following part sees Santuzza singing the leading part on the same text, replied by the assembly, and it includes the full support of the orchestra. Mascagni imparts to this theme a great deal of importance. It epitomizes the essential social role of religion in Southern Italy’s rural culture and how it affects people’s everyday life. Religion is a central element in the opera, somehow a protagonist. The story takes place on Easter day, and there are many “sacred” references throughout the opera, including the sound of church bells. Moreover, by contrast, religion emphasizes the story of passion and blood, and a sense of tragic religiosity pervades the whole work. Even more important, the “Regina coeli” also becomes the main theme of the following “*Intermezzo*.” In the manuscript, Mascagni indicates, in the *Intermezzo*, “*Imitando la Preghiera*” (Imitating

the Prayer). This scene provides a good idea of the importance of the choir in *Cavalleria*. It never acts as a “background” but rather actively participates in the action.

In musical terms, *Cavalleria* sounds like no opera before it. The opera is in a single act, uninterrupted from a dramatic point of view, and Mascagni creates accumulations and releases of tension, which gradually magnifies the drama, directing it towards the tragic ending. The local color is actually fictitious; there is no actual use of Sicilian songs or use of bands on stage. For example, the “Siciliana” sung by Turiddu to Lola at the beginning of the opera is actually a Neapolitan *stornello*. Or, the *canzone* sung by Lola is a Tuscan *stornello*. The use of *stornelli* is a targeted choice by Mascagni. He uses the *stornello*, a very familiar genre to the Italian public of the time, because he wants to avoid exoticizing the music. This is a technique, as Mallach suggests, that does not take the audience away from the immediacy of the scene and the plot. However, he partially succeeds in this endeavor. If, on the one hand, he makes the story more “familiar” to the audience, on the other hand, the process of self-exoticization is unavoidable. This is automatic when a romanticized version of Southern Italian culture is presented in a theater. In general, Mascagni demonstrates great mastery in musical language, which, although deliberately simplified,⁴⁸ is imbued with Wagnerian techniques and recurring motives.

In 1890, *Cavalleria rusticana* was performed in more than forty Italian theaters and many European ones. For example, it arrived in Spain in the same year and was

⁴⁸ Cfr. Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, “Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation,” trans. Roger Parker, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 1 (1993): 39–53.

premiered at the Teatro Real in Madrid on December 17 and at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona on May 9, 1891. The first effect it obtained was to stimulate a sort of imitation by many Italian composers who began to produce realist works. In reality, *Cavalleria rusticana* was not the first opera based on a *verismo* libretto,⁴⁹ but it was undoubtedly the most significant one and created a rupture with the previous tradition. The result was a production of works, many of which remained neglected for a century, which scholar Riccardo Scardovi has defined as “plebeian melodrama” (*dramma plebeo*).⁵⁰ Scardovi analyzed forty-nine works of this genre, basing his classification exclusively on the theme of the libretto and limiting the temporal arc between 1892 and 1899. Of these works, ten were produced in 1892. Furthermore, among these, there are works of great interest, such as *Pagliacci* by Leoncavallo, *Mala vita* by Giordano, and *La Tilda* by Cilea.

It should be noted that many of these works were the fruit of purely commercial interest on the part of the composers who realized the enormous success of *Cavalleria rusticana*. Nonetheless, in one way or another, we can say that Mascagni was the proponent of significant interest, among many Italian composers, in “plebeian” themes that resonate with literary *verismo*. Indeed, the choice of the subject, however important it may be in establishing a trend, is not enough to establish a repertoire because the dramatic approach and the musical technique make the difference between a “volatile”

⁴⁹ About a month before the premiere of *Cavalleria*, another opera was premiered called *Mala Pasqua*, based on the same play by Verga and written by Stanislao Gastalodon. However, this opera was not as successful as expected.

⁵⁰ Stefano Scardovi, *L'opera dei bassifondi: il melodramma “plebeo” nel verismo musicale italiano*, Hermes: musica e spettacolo nel Novecento, ricerche e testimonianze 3 (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1994).

work and one destined to remain in the repertoire. History confirms that only some of these works remained in the repertoire, together with others dated after 1899. Those are precisely the ones that we can consider the corpus of the authentic Italian operatic *verismo*.

Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* does not represent the harsh reality of Sicilian life of the time. Mascagni knew Verghian literature, but this made little difference to him. Mainly, he wanted to create a work characterized by strong contrasts of emotions that appealed to an opera audience. But above all, he wanted to win the Sonzogno competition. This does not detract from the value of a work that was immediately seen as a novelty due to its freshness and originality of language and which brought many people to the theater, enjoying a success that continues today.

2.7 *Pagliacci*

Pagliacci is an opera in two acts by Ruggero Leoncavallo (1857-1919), premiered at the Teatro Del Verme in Milan on May 21, 1892, more or less two years after the premiere of *Cavalleria*. Leoncavallo's work was immediately considered exemplary in the genre, like *Cavalleria*, although the two works present substantial differences. According to an account by Leoncavallo himself, the story is based on an actual event that occurred in Montalto, Calabria. It was a crime story later judged by Leoncavallo's father, a judge in Cosenza.

For a detailed biography of Leoncavallo, I refer to the works of Sansone,⁵¹ Dryden,⁵² Mallach,⁵³ and Ruberti,⁵⁴ together with some conference proceedings.⁵⁵ Leoncavallo's biography is still quite controversial today, mainly due to the numerous "stories" he told about his youth and training. For example, his claims of having studied at the University of Bologna (earning the "diploma di dottore in lettere") and to have attended the lectures of Giosuè Carducci remain unsubstantiated.⁵⁶ It is confirmed that Leoncavallo spent a certain period in Bologna and that in such a culturally inspiring city, he fueled his admiration for Wagner's music. Indeed, Bologna, the city that hosted the oldest University in the Western world, was also considered "Wagner's citadel in Verdi's Italy."⁵⁷ In 1882, he was in Paris, where he led a bohemian life, working as a songwriter and piano accompanist for singers. Gradually, he managed to become a famous coach for some of the most acclaimed French singers. Paris certainly influenced Leoncavallo's musical language. At that time, he came into contact with Massenet, Zola, Charpentier, and in general, with the environment of French naturalism. However, these encounters

⁵¹ Matteo Sansone, "The 'Verismo' of Ruggero Leoncavallo: A Source Study of 'Pagliacci,'" *Music & Letters* 70, no. 3 (1989): 342–62.

⁵² Konrad Claude Dryden, *Leoncavallo: Life and Works* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2007).

⁵³ Alan Mallach, *The Autumn of Italian Opera from Verismo to Modernism, 1890-1915* (Boston: Hanover, NH: Published by University Press of New England: Northeastern University Press, 2007).

⁵⁴ Giorgio Ruberti, *Il Verismo Musicale* (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 2011).

⁵⁵ William Ashbrook et al., *Ruggero Leoncavallo nel suo tempo: atti del I Convegno internazionale di studi su Ruggero Leoncavallo: Locarno, Biblioteca cantonale, 3-4-5 ottobre 1991* (Milano: Casa musicale Sonzogno di Piero Ostali, 1993).

⁵⁶ Sansone, "The 'Verismo,'" 343.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

did not immediately and directly influence him. In fact, he continued to cultivate the idea (an obsession!) of composing a trilogy of works called *Crepusculum*, comprised of *I Medici*, *Gerolamo Savonarola*, and *Cesare Borgia*. The project was never completed. In 1888, Leoncavallo had started working for Ricordi (he also collaborated in the drafting of the libretto of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*), and in 1889, he had obtained approval from the same to produce *I Medici*.⁵⁸ However, shortly before the planned premiere, Ricordi rescinded their contract because he concentrated on producing a revised version of Puccini's *Elgar*. This was a source of incredible frustration and disillusionment for Leoncavallo, who immediately contacted Sonzogno with a completely different project, and in line with those in fashion around Europe and promoted by the publisher of the *Giovine Scuola*. *Pagliacci*'s libretto was written by Leoncavallo himself in just five months and sent to Sonzogno, who accepted it immediately and confirmed the production for 1892.⁵⁹

The work presents a Prologue, which has become the manifesto of *verismo* in opera, introduced by the hunchbacked clown Tonio. He briefly tells the subject of the drama and, above all, the artistic ideal of its author.

⁵⁸ Leoncavallo was referred to Ricordi by his close friend and famous baritone Victor Maurel. Maurel had been the first Jago in Verdi's *Otello*, and later would have been Tonio at the premiere of *Pagliacci*. Indeed, Sansone tells us that the opera's original title was *Pagliaccio* (which stayed in the opera's French, German, and English versions). Mascagni changed it into *Pagliacci* to homage his friend Maurel. For him, he added the prologue and the last sentence, "La commedia è finita" ("The comedy has ended") (which later became assigned to the tenor). Cfr. Sansone, "The Verismo," 350.

⁵⁹ The following year, Mascagni was also able to represent *I Medici*, which had its premiere at the Teatro del Verme in Milan, in November 1893, but received strong criticism. In particular, foreign newspapers accused him of being an epigone of Wagner.

May I? May I?
 Ladies! Gentlemen!
 Excuse me if I alone introduce myself
 I am the Prologue:
 Since yet in the scene
 The author uses ancient masks;
 In part he wants to bring back the old
 customs,
 And send me back to you.
 But not to tell you as before:
 “The tears we cry are false!
 Of spasms and our martyrs
 Do not be alarmed!”
 No! No. The author has sought instead
 To depict a glimpse of life.
 He believes utmost that the artist is a man
 And that he must write for men,
 And be inspired by the truth.

A nest of memories
 Was singing at the bottom of his soul one day,
 And he wrote with genuine tears,
 And his sobs beat the tempo!
 And so, you will see love
 As human beings love each other;
 You will see the sad fruits of hate.
 The spasms of pain,
 Shouts of rage, you will hear,
 And also laughter!
 And you, rather than
 Our poor actors’ changes,
 Consider our soul,
 Since we are men of flesh and bone,
 And from this orphan world
 We breathe the same air as you!
 I’ve told you the concept...
 Now listen as it is carried out.
 Let’s go. Begin!⁶⁰

The vocabulary used in his prologue shows how Leoncavallo identifies the true source of the “real” in sentiment, emotion, and passions. Kelkel affirms that this is a typical attitude among realists who do not use a subject inspired by current events or the Italian regions. For these *veristi*, the problem of representing the “real” leads to a very psychological approach to art, to an idealization.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Si può?... Si può?... / Signore! Signori!... Scusatemi / se da sol me presento. / Io sono il Prologo: / Poiché in iscena ancor / le antiche maschere mette l'autore, / in parte ei vuol riprendere / le vecchie usanze, e a voi / di nuovo inviami. / Ma non per dirvi come pria: / Le lacrime che noi versiam son false! / Degli spasimi e de' nostri martir / non allarmatevi» No! No: / L'autore ha cercato / invece pingervi / uno squarcio di vita. / Egli ha per massima sol / che l'artista è un uom / e che per gli uomini / scrivere ei deve. / Ed al vero ispiravasi. / Un nido di memorie / in fondo a l'anima / cantava un giorno, / ed ei con vere lacrime scrisse, / e i singhiozzi / il tempo gli battevano! / Dunque, vedrete amar / sì come s'amano gli esseri umani; / vedrete de l'odio i tristi frutti. / Del dolor gli spasimi, / urli di rabbia, udrete, / e risa ciniche! / E voi, piuttosto / che le nostre povere gabbane / d'istrioni, / le nostr'anime considerate, / poiché siam uomini / di carne e d'ossa, / e che di quest'orfano mondo / al pari di voi spiriamo l'aere! / Il concetto vi dissi... / Or ascoltate com'egli è svolto. / Andiam. Incominciate!

⁶¹ Manfred Kelkel, *Naturalisme, vérisme et réalisme dans l'opéra: de 1890 à 1930* (Paris: Libr. philosophique J. Vrin, 1984), 242-43.

The opera's first act opens with a company of wandering actors arriving in the square of a Calabrian village. Canio, the Pagliaccio, suspects that Tonio is trying to seduce his wife, Nedda, who, for her part, has an affair with Silvio, a wealthy landowner from the area. Found alone with Nedda, Tonio tries to approach her, but he is rejected and humiliated. He denounces Nedda's relationship with Silvio to her husband Canio to take revenge. Later, Canio surprises Nedda in a loving conversation with Silvio, who, however, manages to slip away without being identified. Canio then tries to extort her lover's name from Nedda, even threatening her with a knife. However, Tonio and Pippo intervene, reminding Canio that the show of the *commedia dell'arte* is about to begin and that he must get ready. In the second act, the *commedia* is represented. Colombina (Nedda) is courted by Taddeo (Tonio), whom Arlecchino (Peppe) chases away. When Pagliaccio (Canio) arrives, Arlecchino manages to escape. Pagliaccio demands the name of Colombina's lover. This is the moment when reality and fiction mix in the opera. Colombina (Nedda) does not reveal the lover's name, and Canio stabs her. Silvio rushes in and is also stabbed by Canio. The audience, who believed that it was all staged in the first place, is now horrified. Canio concludes the opera with, "The comedy is over." (*La commedia è finita!*).

The opera was highly successful and was soon performed around Italy and Europe, but not without some controversy. After the 1894 French premiere of the opera, the playwright Catulle Mendès accused Leoncavallo of having plagiarized the plot of *Pagliacci* from his play *La femme de Tabarin* (which appeared in Paris in 1887). Leoncavallo reciprocated the accusation, arguing that Mendès had himself taken his story from a play

titled *Un drama nuevo* (A New Play) by Spanish playwright Manuel Tamayo y Baus. On the other hand, Leoncavallo insisted that the opera was inspired by an episode he heard when he was a child in Calabria, while sitting in his father's courtroom.⁶² Mendès withdrew the accusation, but the doubt remained. According to Sansone, if Leoncavallo saw Mendès's play, he could have borrowed from him the use of the *commedia dell'arte* and "play within a play." On the other hand, Sansone also argues that Leoncavallo might have taken even more inspiration from the two-act opera *Tabarin* (1885) by Émile Pessard, which he likely heard during his stay in Paris. In a punctual comparative analysis of the librettos, Sansone shows how *Tabarin* had many more similarities with *Pagliacci*'s libretto and plot than the play by Mendès.⁶³

There are several interesting similarities between *Pagliacci* and *Tabarin*. Above all, the *commedia dell'arte* as a play within a play in Act II of both operas and the shift from fiction to reality counterpointed by the audience's reaction. Also, both Silvio and Gauthier (his parallel in *Tabarin*) are outsiders. They do not belong to the saltimbanques group, they are spectators of the show, and both ask their beloved to run away with them after the performance of a farce. *Tabarin*'s final situation is more or less the same as the one described by Canio in "*Vesti la giubba*." But even more striking is the last sentence

⁶² Sansone has actually found, in the archives of Cosenza, a file on the legal proceedings against two brothers accused of killing a man in Montalto. The man's name was Gaetano Scavello, and he worked for the Leoncavallos as a childminder for Ruggero and his brother. Ruggero's father handled the trial, and Ruggero actually knew the victim, so the fact certainly remains impressed in the memory of the young Ruggero. However, as Sansone argues, "most of the opera plot is pure fiction, which should either be attributed to Leoncavallo's imagination or traced back to other sources." Cfr. Sansone, "The 'Verismo,'" 346.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 350-57.

pronounced in the operas. Canio's "*La commedia è finita*" resonates with Tabarin's "*Le pièce est jouée*." Leoncavallo's stay in Paris coincided with the renewed interest in pantomimes centered on Pierrot. Such spectacles were very violent, with sadistic traits. Leoncavallo was undoubtedly aware of these latest fashions, and Sansone maintains that, when Leoncavallo decided to write a *verismo* opera, "his recollections of the Parisian cultural life were culturally more influential than his childhood memories."⁶⁴

Laura Basini has thoroughly analyzed the theme of Pierrot in *Pagliacci*,⁶⁵ showing how the opera can be read through a double filter of Italian/French. In such a perspective, Pierrot is Canio in *Pagliacci*, but Canio is also Pulcinella, the *commedia dell'arte* character belonging to the Naples region. By the nineteenth century, Pulcinella became the protagonist of written plays, characterized by harsh and sarcastic dialogues, often in dialect, in which the Pulcinellas were known to test the boundaries between fiction and reality. Precisely as in *Pagliacci*. Because they were dressed similarly and behaved similarly, Pierrot and Pulcinella were often interchanged in the literature. For Basini, Canio's costume is thus a double symbol pointing inside Italy (Naples) and outside (France), and Leoncavallo named his character Pagliaccio because it absorbs in one image two sets of theatrical practices: Pulcinella outside the theater (the *commedia dell'arte* was traditionally performed in the streets and squares), and Pierrot inside the theater. Concurrently, he is the synthesis of cultural filters from both Italy and France.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 358.

⁶⁵ Laura Basini, "Masks, Minuets and Murder: Images of Italy in Leoncavallo's 'Pagliacci,'" *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 133, no. 1 (2008): 32–68.

Basini maintains that *Pagliacci* has more of a historical consciousness than one of contemporary Italian life, which could be a result of Leoncavallo's Parisian sojourn. She reads the opera as a way to address and voice Italy's "Southern problem," that is, the problem of strong differences, economic and not, between North and South Italy. *Pagliacci* offers symbols associated with Southern Italian culture, such as the Pulcinella of the *commedia dell'arte*, and symbols commonly associated with the "civilized" Northern culture. For example, there are antique-music references, such as the Minuetto danced by Nedda in the Act II play, the Serenata that introduces Arlecchino, and the duets of the two characters accompanied by Tempo di Gavotta. Those are all antique genres associated with Northern culture. This way, the music provides the Northern presence that is otherwise absent in the plot and scenes.

Pagliacci, describing a place where morality is undermined and in which no law can control 'primitive' passions, provided a vision that fulfilled the stereotypes of the characteristics and barbaric acts for which the South was now well known. In this context, Leoncavallo's work is not just another dramatic tale, the final scene not just another operatic murder.⁶⁶

In this exoticizing view, in which the North represents the South,⁶⁷ Canio could be seen as a social threat, and Nedda embodies the classic exoticizing female musical tropes. However, Leoncavallo balances this issue by setting the story in an idyllic environment instead of the filthy rural environment typical of Pierrot's naturalistic

⁶⁶ Ibid., 51.

⁶⁷ Basini argues that *Pagliacci* epitomizes the tension between the Northern and Southern Italy, in which the North narrates the South from a classic asymmetric and exoticizing perspective. To go further, she demonstrates how, in the post-Risorgimento Italy, the practice of representing the South, by the part of the "civilized North," was very common especially through image-making media, such as magazines and novels. Cfr. Basini, "Masks."

depictions. The violence presented in *Pagliacci* differs from the one in *Cavalleria rusticana*. Leoncavallo keeps the violence explicit and brings it on stage, while Mascagni proposes a form of violence dignified by the chivalrous duel and indeed keeps it off-stage. Still, *Pagliacci* cannot be considered a *verismo* drama in the sense of Verga, as it offers a good balance between real and unreal, between ideal and rational. A ratio that is almost perfect due to several ingredients such as the play within a play, the classic village murder, the Pierrot/Pagliaccio pantomime, the veristic style of Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana*, the vanity of a singer (Victor Maurel), which led to adding a Prologue in which Tonio talks on behalf of the composer, and references to his childhood.⁶⁸

Pagliacci is an amazingly crafted work. It includes arias, duets, and choruses, with effective continuous action. It is technically more sophisticated than *Cavalleria rusticana*, but *Cavalleria*'s melodies are more inspired. Leoncavallo created a compelling, even too-perfect story, with a balance of real and ideal that is almost unreal but perfect for the operatic ecosystem. As Sansone has argued, Leoncavallo masterfully combines all the elements to create a *tranche de vie* that is even "too good to be true."⁶⁹

⁶⁸ From the Prologue: And be inspired by the truth. / A nest of memories / Was singing at the bottom of his soul one day, / And he wrote with genuine tears, / And his sobs beat the tempo! [Ed al vero ispiravasi. / Un nido di memorie / in fondo a l'anima / cantava un giorno, / ed ei con vere lacrime scrisse, / e i singhiozzi / il tempo gli battevano!]

⁶⁹ Sansone, "The 'Verismo,'" 359. The author's definition of "too good to be true," opposes to his idea of other *verismo* works that he has defined as "too true to be good." Cfr. Matteo Sansone, "Giordano's 'Mala Vita': A 'Verismo' Opera Too True to Be Good," *Music & Letters* 75, no. 3 (1994): 381–400.

2.8 *Mala vita*

Mala vita is the title of an opera in three acts composed by Umberto Giordano (1867-1948), with a libretto by Nicola Daspuro (1853-1941). The story is based on Salvatore di Giacomo's 1889 eponymous play, adapted from his short *verismo* story *Il voto* (1888). A peculiarity of both the short novel and the play is that the dialogues were completely in Neapolitan dialect, eventually translated into Italian for the opera libretto.⁷⁰

Giordano was barely twenty years old when he took part in the second Sonzogno competition (1888) with the opera *Marina*, with a libretto by Golisciani. The opera was then withdrawn from the competition, but this was still enough to stimulate interest in Sonzogno, who hired Daspuro, a Neapolitan journalist who represented Sonzogno in Naples, to convert the theatrical version of *Mala vita* (1889) into a libretto.

The story takes place in the slums of Naples and revolves around the love triangle between Vito (a dyer suffering from tuberculosis), Christina (a prostitute), Vito's mistress Amalia, and her cuckold husband, Annettiello. Afraid of dying, Vito makes a vow, promising to "save" a prostitute (which only by chance happens to be Cristina) if he is granted healing from tuberculosis. Amalia begs Cristina to give Vito up, and when the latter refuses, the former seduces Vito again while the powerless Cristina looks from outside. The opera unfolds during the Piedigrotta Festival in Naples and ends with Vito, Amalia, and Annettiello going to the celebrations, while Cristina, in despair, goes back to her old life.

⁷⁰ A comprehensive comparative study between the short story, the play, and the libretto versions can be found in the article by Sansone, "Giordano's 'Mala Vita.'"

The premiere took place at the Teatro Argentina in Rome on February 21, 1892, and it was an enormous success. Giordano was then hoping to be successful also in Naples, the city where he studied and spent many years, and the general expectation from local critics was very high. Besides, the cast included such renowned singers as Gemma Bellincioni and Roberto Stagno (who performed in many *verismo* operas, including the premiere of *Cavalleria rusticana*). Nonetheless, the performance in Naples on April 29 was a debacle. The Neapolitan public and the emergent middle class felt their morals had been offended, and the critics disliked the harsh realism:

The attempt at realism that wants to be modern is pushed to the limits of the vulgar and the unsightly. Here we are, and we remain in the putrid, either by vice or by character, and unfortunately, there is not a single person among those stage figures who do not move at all in disgust: no art can ennoble the deepest depravity revealed on the scene in the cruelest reality.⁷¹

The critic Valletta was affiliated with Ricordi's *Gazzetta Musica di Milano*, and a certain amount of bias against Sonzogno's productions was not a surprise. However, the critic praised Giordano's musical technique but lamented that he did not put it to good use in *Mala vita*.

Giordano's talent is not to be sought with the lantern; it appears clear and evident in the robustness of the lyrical conception, in the precision of the melodic line, in a certain contempt in the path taken for years, in a constant fluidity. But why spoil this last quality by worrying about wanting *the very new*, or rather what is currently on the agenda due to the absolute fortune of events [?] Why is the harmonization

⁷¹ Valletta, "Corrispondenze. Roma, 24 Febbraio. Mala vita di Giordano," *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, February 28, 1892. "Il tentativo di un realismo che vuole essere moderno è spinto ai limiti del volgare e dell'antiestetico. [...] Qui siamo e restiamo nel putrido, o per vizio o per carattere e per disgrazia non c'è una persona sola tra quelle figure sceniche che non muova assolutamente a schifo: nessuna arte può nobilitare la depravazione più profonda svelata alla ribalta nella più crudele realtà."

sometimes rigid and often mincing, and why there is such a lack of balance in the instrumental [texture] so that it reaches minimal effects?⁷²

On the contrary, people from Northern Italy liked the opera as a product of self-exoticization representing the “primitive” South. The opera was consequently very successful in Vienna, Berlin, and Milan. In Vienna, it participated in the International Theater Exhibition, together with other Sonzogno operas.⁷³ There, it was favorably reviewed even by the famous critic Hanslick:

In its ruthless truthfulness to life, *Mala vita* is both gripping and revolting simultaneously, as in most of these realistic operas. The music of Maestro Giordano makes its effects through the rough-hewn ability to achieve a tone appropriate to the situation, and now and again employing a gentler passage, as, for example, in Cristina’s first entry. His sense of drama is stronger than his musical talent, and his temperament is stronger than his artistry.⁷⁴

After 1893, *Mala vita* practically disappeared from the theaters. Indeed, in 1897 Giordano had re-arranged a “less offensive” version of the opera, using Di Giacomo’s original name, *Il voto*, which was nevertheless bound to be neglected.

Dramaturgically, it has structural problems (it is still the work of a young composer), especially in the distribution of musical numbers over the acts. It is in three

⁷² Ibid. “Il talento di Giordano non lo si ha da cercare col lanternino, appare chiaro e lampante nella robustezza della concezione lirica, nella precisione del disegno, in un certo disprezzo nella via battuta da anni, in una fluidità costante. Ma perché guastare quest’ultima qualità colla preoccupazione di voler il *nuovissimo*, o meglio ciò che per momento è all’ordine del giorno per incontestabile fortuna di eventi; perché l’armonizzazione è talora rigida e spesso affettata, perché c’è tanto squilibrio nello strumentale onde raggiunge effetti molto piccini?”

⁷³ The operas represented by Sonzogno in Vienna were Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* and *L’amico Fritz*, Leoncavallo’s *Pagliacci*, Cilea’s *La Tilda*, and Giordano’s *Mala vita*.

⁷⁴ Eduard Hanslick, “Italienische Opern von Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Cilea, Mugnone, Giordano,” *Fünf Jahre Musik (1891-1895)* (Berlin, 1896): 61-70, cited in Sansone, “Giordano’s ‘Mala vita,’” 399.

acts, but they are short, and the opera altogether does not last more than one hour. The protagonists, Vito, Cristina, and Amalia, perform, with different combinations, three duets.⁷⁵ Besides, the opera does not have memorable melodies, and the orchestral accompaniment is not emphatic. *Mala vita* is a cruel *verismo* story far more uncompromising than *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*. There is no consolation at all, and the characters, even those that could be sympathetic, like Cristina, are trapped in their misery, and any dream is destroyed. Still, the opera includes exciting features, including a strong impetus and the use of Southern Italian folklore: the neighborhood slum life, religion, the popular feast, and traditional music (a Tarantella and a Serenade, the latter said to have inspired the melody of “O sole Mio!”).

The major problem was that the opera greatly exceeds the play in the amount of *verismo*, but concurrently it is not natural enough because it is missing catharsis or redemption. For such reasons, Matteo Sansone (one of the prominent Italian experts on *verismo*) has defined it as a *verismo* opera “too true to be good.”⁷⁶

2.9 *Il tabarro*

Il tabarro is a one-act opera included in *Il trittico*, a set of three one-act operas composed by Giacomo Puccini and premiered in 1918 at the Metropolitan Theater in New York City. It is set on a barge docked on the Seine, in the suburbs of Paris, in the early 1900s. Michele, the barge owner, accidentally realizes that his young wife,

⁷⁵ Vito and Cristina (Act I, scene 4), Amalia and Cristina (Act III, scene 3), and Amalia and Vito (Act II, scene 4).

⁷⁶ Sansone, “Giordano’s ‘Mala Vita,’” 381–400.

Giorgetta, has an affair with the stevedore Luigi, whom he confronts and kills. He then hides the dead body under his cloak (the *tabarro*), eventually unveiling it to the terrified Giorgetta. The second opera of *Il trittico* is *Suor Angelica*, the story of an eighteenth-century aristocratic girl⁷⁷ who is forced to take her monastic vows after giving birth to an illegitimate child. After a visit from her aunt, she discovers that her son has died two years before, and in despair, she decides to commit suicide by poison. When she realizes how big a sin this would be, the Virgin appears to her, with Angelica's son in her arms. The last opera is *Gianni Schicchi*, a story set in Siena during the Renaissance. Based on a character from Dante's *Divina Commedia*, it is a sort of *commedia dell'arte* in which the protagonist, Gianni, pretends to be the recently deceased Buoso Donati in order to "revive" and dictate a new will that would benefit himself, his daughter Lauretta, and her lover Rinuccio.

Despite often being performed individually, the three operas can be seen as a unitary work, where *Il tabarro* is—by contrast—the most "cruel and real" and *Gianni Schicchi* the least. Puccini leads the listener through a progression of emotions, exploring three different types of theater: the dramatic, the lyric-religious, and the comic.

The libretto of *Il tabarro* was written by Giuseppe Adami, and it is based on the play *La Houppelande* by Didier Gold (who participated in the writing of the libretto with Adami). Gold's work was of the so-called *grand guignol* genre, a form of French puppet theater characterized by extreme realism and violence, which—in classic Zola style—

⁷⁷ Despite not being considered a *verismo* opera, I am convinced that *Suor Angelica* highly resonates, at least in terms of story and settings, with Giovanni Verga's *verismo* novel titled *Storia di una capinera* [Story of a Blackcap] (1869).

often included bloody scenes. These shows usually featured three works of contrasting character: gruesome, dramatic-sentimental, and comic. Exactly the sequence that Puccini set for *Il trittico*.

Gold's *grand guignol* is much harsher than the opera version.⁷⁸ Puccini's characters are "romantic" and much more characterized than Gold's. For example, Luigi is presented as ardently passionate and would like to leave Giorgetta because he does not want to share her. On the contrary, Gold's Louis is full of remorse but accepts his condition.⁷⁹ In *Il tabarro*, there are no classic Puccini heroines but only a tragic reality made up of misery. According to Girardi, the fact that Michele strangles his wife is not just a question of romantic revenge. In reality, behind the crime, a sordid background is made of misery, which creates the conditions for both adultery and murder. Furthermore, Puccini's libretto specifies the age of the characters (Michele, 50; Giorgetta, 25; Luigi, 20). Therefore, the betrayal is more of a physical nature, as Giorgetta is no longer attracted to her fifty-year-old husband.⁸⁰ Michele kills due to a raging impulse, which is a consequence of what surrounds him, and not—as Canio (*Pagliacci*) and Alfio (*Cavalleria*

⁷⁸ *The houppelande* also includes a secondary and parallel story in which Gujon (Tinca in Adami) kills his wife (with a knife) out of jealousy (So there are actually two homicides). Also, in Gold, Georgette seduces the stevedore, but Puccini omits this detail.

⁷⁹ Both Carner and Girardi agree that Puccini gave Luigi verses that would make him something of a fanatic Marxist. That is to say; he would like to get out of his social condition. This vision is much more in line with French naturalism than with Italian realism.

⁸⁰ Michele Girardi, *Puccini: His International Art*, trans. Laura Basini (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 379.

rusticana)—for a problem of “honor.” Indeed, while Alfio and Canio get their revenge and “regain their dignity,” Michele degrades himself with the homicide he commits.⁸¹

Despite Puccini employing short leitmotifs, repeated incessantly over the work (the so-called “mosaic” orchestration),⁸² some themes are stated entirely and not fragmented. Girardi identifies three major themes. The first one is the theme of the gloomy and mysterious Seine, a highly symbolist element that strongly attracted Puccini.⁸³ The other important theme is the one of love/adultery. It is a sinister theme that replaces the river when the action moves towards the tragedy. Finally, the *tabarro* (the cloak) theme, composed of two half phrases (a type of motive often associated by Puccini with death), is employed as an omen of tragedy. Melodies have a long arch and are supported by “naked discords,” major sevenths, tritones, and the use of bitonality. Puccini also uses parallel fifths and fourths as a dramatic device. Everything produces a chamber-like orchestration with dark and grey orchestral colors, resonating with the setting. According to Carner, orchestral lines “are often drawn as though with a pen, instead of a brush, and stand out with a new sharpness.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ Ibid., 396.

⁸² For a detailed harmonic and thematic analysis of the opera, see Julian Budden, *Puccini: His Life and Works*, series: The Master Musicians (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 380-91.

⁸³ The correspondence between Puccini and Ricordi confirms this. Puccini insisted that the opera should have been performed completely on the barge. Also, he suggested the barge be always at the forefront, while all the characters are in a sort of background, whit the barge creating an “alienating” space between the audience and the singers.

⁸⁴ Mosco Carner, *Puccini: A Critical Biography*, 3d ed. (London: Duckworth, 1992), 407.

Il tabarro is a story that tells of the struggling life of poor workers, characterized by violence and strong passions. According to Budden, it is not a good story, but in the hands of Puccini, it becomes a “human” story. And here we have “a new ‘*verismo*’ in which the emotional rhetoric typical of the movement’s earliest musical products is allowed only occasionally to break through the surface of observed phenomena.”⁸⁵

2.10 Conclusions. A *Verismo* “Archetypical” Model

We have seen how the concept of *verismo* arose in the literary field and was then used in the operatic repertoire. The analysis of the critical and philosophical discussions that took place between the years 1870-90 shows a multitude of approaches and tendencies, both about the label “*verismo*” itself and regarding its use to designate a “tendency” made up of a specific group of composers, belonging to the so-called *Giovine Scuola*. This plurality of approaches, on which no agreement could be found, has been perpetuated to this day. Judging by the definitions of realism offered by contemporary dictionaries and textbooks, we perceive an ontological indefiniteness that is not destined to be clarified. Nevertheless, at the end of our excursus, and following a review of the *verismo* narrative, some observations must be made.

First, there is no direct correspondence between literary *verismo* and *verismo* in opera. There is not even correspondence between literary *verismo* and theatrical *verismo*. Indeed, the transposition of a novel into a play already brings a series of due dramatizations, and that is even more accentuated when we move on to opera, which is

⁸⁵ Budden, *Puccini*, 380.

unarguably the most comprehensive dramatic form. Furthermore, the fact that they are often based on theatrical versions of *verismo* dramas positions the operas far away from original *verismo* novels. Verismo opera was a product of mass culture, meant to please everyone, while prose was intended for a small and more selected audience. Adriana Guarnieri-Corazzol argues that, for this reason, we do not see any identity between *verismo* composers and *verismo* writers. But the difference is not to be found in their artistic product but instead in the way authors, readers, and listeners locate themselves in relation to the texts.⁸⁶

Second, the libretto with a *veristic* subject is an essential element, whether taken directly from realist literature (as in the case of *Cavalleria rusticana*) or inspired by it (as in *Pagliacci*), or none of the above. *Cavalleria rusticana*, from this point of view, is traditionally exemplary and (almost) equaled only by *Pagliacci* and *Mala vita*. Leoncavallo's work is unique because it is conceived and dramatized precisely to give the public what they wanted and certainly took great inspiration from *Cavalleria*. This is even more important because it would let us question applying the label of *verismo* to many works traditionally considered so—for example, works like *La bohème*,⁸⁷ or *Tosca*, to cite a few.

Third, music alone can hardly define the verismo of a work. This was the most debated problem about realism and *verismo* in the 1870s, and many of the participants in the conversation agreed on it. However, when combined with the other elements, music

⁸⁶ Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, "Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation," trans. Roger Parker, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 1 (1993): 39–53.

⁸⁷ Cfr. Leah Bartlam, "Is La Bohème a Verismo Opera?" *Musical Offerings* 11, no. 1 (2020): 1–15.

serves to channel the drama, emphasize emotions, and create appeal. If it does not represent reality—or, to be precise, a “theatrical” reality—it can enhance its representation, especially with the use of local color. Authenticity is neither sought nor required. It is the function of the music that matters most. Turiddu’s *Serenata*, sung to Lola at the very beginning of *Cavalleria rusticana*, is indeed a Neapolitan *Stornello* sung in the Sicilian dialect. But this is irrelevant if the audience is brought into an exotic rural scene utilizing a song style that is undoubtedly familiar to most.

Fourth, what matters in *verismo* operas is the presentation of strong and violent emotions. None of the opera composers sought a faithful operatic rendition of the literary (or theatrical) *verismo* dramas. If they chose a *verismo* libretto, it was only a pure form of inspiration or, in most cases, a marketing choice. They wanted to create a musical theater of strong contrasts and passions, but a realist one, yet opposed to late-Romantic historical realism.

Fifth, there is an unavoidable amount of exoticism in *verismo* opera, often enacted as self-exoticization. The use of folklore (dances, songs, etc.) often goes together with the local color. As Dahlhaus pointed out, “realism unexpectedly turns out to be exotic. Mascagni’s Sicily, like Japan or California for Puccini, is a fantasy landscape in the imagination of the opera audience, peopled with noble savages, the utopian figures who had haunted the European imagination since Rousseau.”⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Carl Dahlhaus, *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 69.

I approached the problem of the *verismo* definition primarily by drawing from the recent studies by Giorgio Ruberti⁸⁹ and Andreas Giger.⁹⁰ Both analyze the discourse of the concept of *verismo* as revealed in the contemporary Italian press, more or less in the 1870-1900 time frame. To those, we can add specific studies and monographs, often focusing on the general aesthetic idea of *verismo*, published in the last eighty years, above all, the comprehensive survey by Mario Rinaldi, *Musica e verismo; critica ed estetica d'una tendenza musicale*,⁹¹ Carl Dahlhaus' *Realism in Nineteenth-Century Music*,⁹² Matteo Sansone's "Verismo. From Literature to Music,"⁹³ and Kelker's *Naturalisme, vérisme et réalisme dans l'opéra: de 1890 à 1930*.⁹⁴

Verismo operas are so heterogeneous and limited to a narrow time frame that identifying a set of recurring *topoi* common to all the works is virtually impossible.⁹⁵ Manfred Kelkel has highlighted this problem by distinguishing between the "historical" and "typological" significance of an aesthetic movement. For example, according to him, the "historical" significance of naturalism is defined by the timeframe 1890-1920. Still, its

⁸⁹ Giorgio Ruberti, *Il Verismo musicale* (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana, 2011).

⁹⁰ Andreas Giger, "Verismo: Origin, Corruption, and Redemption of an Operatic Term," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 60, no. 2 (2007): 271–315.

⁹¹ Mario Rinaldi, *Musica e verismo; critica ed estetica d'una tendenza musicale ...* (Roma: Fratelli de Santis, 1932).

⁹² Dahlhaus, *Realism*.

⁹³ Sansone, "Verismo."

⁹⁴ Kelkel, *Naturalisme*.

⁹⁵ Kelkel has conducted a thorough study on this problem. However, his research focused on recurring *topoi* in a corpus of very heterogeneous operas classified as realists, naturalists, and *verismo*. Cfr. Kelkel, *Naturalisme*.

typological significance, characterized by the coexistence of multiform tendencies, is expressed through a certain number of events belonging to periods that precede or follow the given time frame. Kelkel argues that the word *verismo* is no more satisfying than “naturalism,” since it encompasses too many different meanings. In the first place, it is a term inspired by French naturalism. Even more, it was developed as a departure from Romantic models. Therefore, for many critics, the term is relevant only to the libretto. According to Kelkel, there is a general issue with the historical and typological significance of the “-ism” words (naturalism, verism, romanticism, etc.):

They are only abstract generalizations, “working hypotheses, projected a posteriori on the works of art with the aim of illuminating them.” These generalizations, enclosed in the general term of “movement, aesthetic current,” are undoubtedly helpful to criticism. Still, they represent only a practical label for bringing together a more or less homogeneous group of artists. Literary naturalism, for example, is ultimately only “the set of works that fall within this aesthetic. “The works are the designated object, while the term in -ism (naturalism) is the object of our judgment.”⁹⁶

I contemplate the possibility of a *verismo* model by seeing it not so much as a model in the strict sense but as an “ideal type” in the form of an “archetype,” as intended in literary philology. The concept of an ideal type, in particular reference to the realism of the nineteenth-century work, was offered by Dahlhaus:

An ‘ideal type,’ briefly, is a hypothetical construction in which a historian assembles a number of phenomena which in historical reality are observed haphazardly and always in different combinations, and relates and compares them to each other in order to bring out the connection between them. It is then possible, in circumstances where only some of the phenomena are encountered together, and perhaps in combination with yet other elements, to discern the

⁹⁶ Kelkel, *Naturalisme*, 14. Kelkel is here also referring to: Jean-Louis Cupers, “Les termes en -isme et les mouvements musicaux,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 2, no. 2 (December 1971).

significant structure which allows the single detail to be understood and interpreted through the functional nexus of which it forms part.⁹⁷

Thus, in reading a realist work from a verismo perspective, a possible strategy is to identify various combinations of these elements. Besides, how these *topoi* combine highlights the uniqueness of the analyzed work. The presence of more or fewer *topoi* can also serve to identify the “quantity” of realism present in a given opera or, even better, how realism and idealism are balanced. *Cavalleria rusticana* is a work with an immediate *verismo* mold (first of all, because of a libretto based on Verga). Still, it has strong elements of late-Romantic idealization, such as the vestigial presence of closed forms (especially in the collective scenes). *Pagliacci* is not based on a *verismo* literary work, but that does not make it less veristic than *Cavalleria rusticana* since the story on which it is based was a real story (or at least Leoncavallo reported it so) and, most of all, it is musically more advanced, and the prose of the libretto is juxtaposed with a highly “continuous” and flowing orchestral texture. In addition, it also offers devices like the play-in-the-play with the representation of *commedia dell’arte*.

On the contrary, despite being based on verismo short stories, works like *Mala vita* present the opposite problem: the “raw” reality is not sufficiently filtered by idealism. Therefore, it is too *veristic* a work. It offers so much *verismo* that it is on the verge of not being considered operatic *verismo* but more a naturalist work.

I expand this concept, proposing that we treat the “ideal” model more specifically as an “archetype” in a strict philological sense, rather than trying to identify all the *topoi* of

⁹⁷ Dahlhaus, *Realism*, 121. Dahlhaus here draws this theory from Max Weber.

the ideal type in the given opera.⁹⁸ In philology, an “archetype” is technically the original witness from which all the others originated. However, in reconstructing the *stemma codicum*, that is, the genealogy of the manuscript with its versions and “variants,” it is often impossible to identify an actual “archetype.” In such a case, the archetype is “reconstructed,” using all the “variants” from the different witnesses, and becomes a witness itself indeed, one theoretically very close to the first manuscript version of a text. Suppose we hypothesized a possible archetype of the *verismo* opera as a model reconstructed using all the common topoi of *verismo* operas. In that case, we are arguing the impossibility of establishing a coherent and concrete operatic *verismo* model. Instead, it is an ideal model that can be used for comparison and reference. One could argue that the “archetypical” model does not resolve our problem. How to define a *verismo* opera? Which topoi are more critical? Which of them are needed, for example, to distinguish a realist opera from a *verismo* one?

My choice of “archetypical” model, rather than the “ideal model,” is dictated by the fact that an archetype is by itself an “ideal” entity. Still, it is nevertheless built upon “real” elements (the variants). This finds a parallel in the aesthetic definition of *verismo* opera (as proposed by Galli) as the balanced coexistence of real and ideal. The archetypical model does not offer an immediate solution but provides a pool of *topoi* to draw from. Moving inside this hypothetical fluid archetype, I identify five macro features that I consider iconic of *verismo* rather than more general realism.

⁹⁸ Expressing doubts on Dahlhaus’s “ideal type,” Giger suggests a definition of *verismo* that, based on the aesthetic conversation of the time, sees it as a process, a “gradual departure from Romantic conventions.” Cfr. Giger, “Verismo,” 308.

First, a linear and straightforward plot based on—or inspired by—literary *verismo*. A story of sordid realism, a “tranche de vie” in which, one way or another, one or more protagonists usually die (physically or emotionally). The story has strong characterization, both social and geographic. This is a primary feature that, if missing, excludes the opera from the group. Second, a dramatic organization that almost mimics the structure of the Greek tragedies (usually in the form of *Exposition – Peripeteia – Catastrophe*). Because it refers to tragedy, one of the chief traits of *verismo*, or realism in general, is the observance of the three “Aristotelian unities:” time, space, and action.⁹⁹ Guarnieri-Corazzol identifies the common sequence: Prelude (with the presentation of the themes)—Dramatic action with passionate conflict—Symphonic Intermezzo (“Singing of the orchestra,” emotional relief)—continuation of the action and dissolution (catharsis)—orchestral thematic peroration.¹⁰⁰ The drama proceeds for accumulation and release of tension when it reaches apexes. Third, a vocal style more prone towards a declamatory style (prose is preferred to poetry but is never a strict requirement) pushed to insist around the area of “*passaggio*” to the acute register. Phrasing and meter are irregular (similar to the spoken language). Also very common is the use of screams (e.g., “Hanno ammazzato compare Turiddu!”).¹⁰¹ Fourth, a Wagnerian-like orchestration, often with a simple use of

⁹⁹ The Aristotelian unity of time, space, and action particularly applies to one-act or two-act short *verismo* opera. However important, we cannot consider it a strict requirement since there are many exceptions of two-act or three-act operas that are eminently *veristic* despite not respecting the unities.

¹⁰⁰ Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, “Opera e verismo: un curioso connubio,” in *Cavalleria rusticana - Pagliacci*, Fondazione Teatro Lirico di Cagliari (Cagliari, 2009), 32–41.

¹⁰¹ Guarnieri Corazzol points out how, indeed, the “low” subjects of the *verismo* operas are counterpointed by the great vocal stardom of the singers. Often, they were “tenori di forza” (tenors of strength) or “soprani lirici spinti” (pushed lyric sopranos). Cfr. Guarnieri Corazzol, “Opera e verismo.”

leitmotifs, mixed with Italian melodic style. Far from mimicking Wagner's techniques, *verismo* composers assemble their own "Wagnerian" techniques. Leitmotifs are treated with more liberty, but they are still functional in dramatic terms: a breathless harmonic rhythm, but generally stable from a tonal point of view. The orchestra works like a "narrator" that sometimes also replaces the singers (as in the case of the Symphonic Intermezzi). Guarnieri Corazzol also suggests that the orchestra is simplified in a way that it is "regressive" (in the way *verismo* writers intended the "artifice of regression").¹⁰² Indeed, the orchestra is purposely lowered to the level of the characters represented, to their language, thus allowing the voice to stand out, though memorable melodies supported by extensive use of *violinata* (doubling the voice in the orchestra). Fifth, the use of local color and "characterizing numbers" exemplify a realism that, as said, is not adequately aligned with the one of literary *verismo*.

I concur with Giger when he suggests avoiding categorical classification of *verismo* operas, and that an opera can be more or less veristic depending on the number of abandoned conventions.¹⁰³ Far from wanting to offer a final model representing the multitude of *verismo* works, these selected macro features can nevertheless be helpful for narrowing the field of interpretation of the "archetypical model" and positioning some operas in their specific context.

¹⁰² Adriana Guarnieri Corazzol, "Opera and Verismo: Regressive Points of View and the Artifice of Alienation," trans. Roger Parker, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 5, no. 1 (1993): 39–53.

¹⁰³ Giger talks about abandoned conventions because he conceptualizes *verismo* as a post-Romantic trend, in which composers gradually abandon Romantic conventions. Cfr. Giger, "Verismo."

CHAPTER 3 Spanish *Verismo*

3.1 Introduction: Contemplating Spanish *Verismo*

It is difficult to accept that Spanish criticism and musicology have not seriously contemplated the possibility of an organic Spanish operatic *verismo*. The reasons for this little interest in *verismo* works are multifold, and they can be identified both in the foundational structure of the Spanish theater at the end of the nineteenth century—as explained in Chapter I—and in the attitude towards Spanish operatic works in the following years up to about 1920. In addition, the way ensuing dictatorships used music as a powerful tool of cultural propaganda limited the production and diffusion of specific repertoires perceived as unuseful or even dangerous for the nationalistic endeavor. The regime made sacred and Renaissance music the privileged means of artistic propaganda. It generally did not facilitate the performance of operas, which were considered a non-edifying spectacle because of their foreign influence. On the other hand, zarzuela (Spanish operetta) remained the only permitted form of Spanish musical theater, probably because of its popularity and solid casticismo character.¹ The effects of the dictatorships are beyond the context and scope of this dissertation. Still, they represented one of the problems that influenced Spanish musicology and music criticism for decades, orienting it towards *género chico* as a privileged form of national musical theater.

¹ For a detailed analysis of the problem, see Carmen Ortiz, “The Uses of Folklore by the Franco Regime,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 446 (1999): 479–96.

Mainstream literature on Spanish music, especially if produced in Spain, has not devoted much interest to *verismo*. Some valuable references are offered in monographic works on well-known Spanish composers of the period or with short contributions to dictionaries. For example, Samuel Llano has analyzed the controversial association of Falla's *La vida breve* with *verismo*, concluding that the opera is positioned as both a *verismo* and a naturalist work that is also indebted, in terms of its plot, to Giménez's *La tempranica*.² In his monograph on Enrique Granados,³ Walter A. Clark highlighted the casticist *verismo* of *María del Carmen*. Likewise, he has pointed to the marked *verismo* traits of some of Federico Moreno Torroba's works, especially *La virgen de mayo*.⁴ This one-act work was the last opera performed at the Teatro Real before its closure in 1925.⁵ It is set during a religious festival and includes low-class characters and a homicide. Clark writes, "[*La virgen de mayo*] is obviously indebted to Italian *verismo*, particularly *Cavalleria rusticana*. And the interest in realism extends to the music as well." In his book on Tomás Bretón, Victor Sánchez Sánchez wrote about *La Dolores* that "the composer from Salamanca not only

² Samuel Llano, "Falla's *La Vie Breve* (1914) and Notions of "Spanish Music"," in *Whose Spain? Negotiating "Spanish Music" in Paris, 1908-1929*, series: Currents in Latin American & Iberian Music (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 136-57. Llano drawn from previous studies by Michael Christoforidis, Suzanne Demarquez, and Carol Hess, and proposes his detailed study on the opera as a *verismo* work, focusing also on the issue of nationalism and authenticity in relationship to *La vie breve*'s reception in France.

³ Walter Aaron Clark, *Enrique Granados: Poet of the Piano* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 40-47.

⁴ Walter Aaron Clark and William Krause, *Federico Moreno Torroba: A Musical Life in Three Acts*, series: Currents in Latin American & Iberian Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 89-90.

⁵ The Real would eventually reopen in 1966. The circumstance of the premiere of *La virgen de mayo*, on February 14, 1925, was quite unique for Torroba. Indeed, as Clark reports, the composer was invited to join King Alfonso XIII in his box, and, out of courtesy, he also had fake that he could smoke the long cigarette (with a golden mouthpiece) that the king offered to him. Cfr. Clark, *Federico Moreno Torroba*, 76-77.

assimilated in it the main European operatic tendencies in a very personal style but also managed to positively adapt the models of operatic *verismo* to Spanish music.”⁶ Also, Elena Torres Clemente has analyzed Chapí’s *Curro Vargas* in terms of *andalucismo* and *verismo*.⁷

An isolated and a bit more comprehensive scholarly contribution to *verismo* in Spanish opera was offered by Luis G. Iberní with his chapter titled *Verismo y realismo en la ópera española*,⁸ included in the volumes on the Spanish opera published by Emilio Casares. Iberní makes a brief excursus of both zarzuelas and operas that he considers to be of a *verismo* “trend,” also offering some references to the realist literature of the time, in particular by Josep Feliú y Codina and Joaquín Dicenta. The works of these two poets and playwrights served as the foundation for such operas as Bretón’s *La Dolores* or Granados’s *Maria del Carmen*. Iberní avoids a description or definition of the *verismo* “tendency,” for which he refers to the well-known book by Manfred Kelkel.⁹ In looking for operatic references for Spanish realism and *verismo*, Iberní points to *Cavalleria rusticana*,

⁶ Víctor Sánchez Sánchez, *Tomás Bretón: un músico de la restauración*, Colección Música Hispana. Textos. Biografías 13 (Madrid: ICCMU, 2002), 236. “El compositor Salmantino no sólo asimilo en ella las principales tendencias operísticas Europeas en un estilo muy personal, sino que también consiguió adaptar con fortuna los modelos del verismo operístico a la música española.”

⁷ Elena Torres Clemente, “Andalucismo y verismo en la zarzuela grande de Chapí: el caso de Curro Vargas,” in *Ruperto Chapí: nuevas perspectivas*, ed. Víctor Sánchez Sánchez (Valencià: Institut Valencià de la Música, 2012).

⁸ Luis G. Iberní, “Verismo y realismo en la ópera española,” in *La ópera en España e Hispanoamérica: actas del congreso internacional La Ópera En España e Hispanoamérica, una creación propia: Madrid, 29.XI-3.XII de 1999*, ed. Emilio Casares Rodicio and Álvaro Torrente, vol. II, Colección Música Hispana. Textos. Estudios (Madrid: Ediciones del ICCMU, 2001), 215–26.

⁹ Manfred Kelkel, *Naturalisme, vérisme et réalisme dans l’opéra: de 1890 à 1930* (Paris: Libr. philosophique J. Vrin, 1984).

which he identifies as the first *verismo* opera together with *Pagliacci*, and he also recognizes the strong influences that *Carmen* had on the model. He states that *verismo* was received “quite well” in Spain. For this, however, he draws from a few reviews of *Cavalleria rusticana* and only of the Madrid performances. As we will see in the next section of the chapter, the critical reception of Mascagni’s opera in Barcelona was anything but positive. He then briefly summarizes the famous *temporadas* (the seasons) of the Circo Parish Theater. Specifically, they are the 1897-1900 seasons in which, with the intent of reviving the *zarzuela grande*, the impresario Figueras put together a series of works with a strong realist and *verismo* mold.

According to Iberní, the fact that operas like *La Dolores* were represented at the Teatro de la Zarzuela confirms a constant of the Spanish *verismo* and realism, that is, the fact that it was alien to the great theatrical circuits. Composers who ventured into this new trend relied on the zarzuela theaters (Teatro de la Zarzuela and Teatro Circo Parish), whose preference for *género chico* seemed to make them more suited to cultivating realism. This statement is valid if one considers the first period of Spanish realism and *verismo* (ca. 1895-1900), including works such as *La Dolores*, *Curro Vargas*, *La cara de Dios*, and *María del Carmen*. All were zarzuelas and operas of a type that the Teatro Real would have never accepted at a time when the institution rejected everything that was not in Italian. The ensuing *verismo* works by Spanish composers were either premiered in national opera theaters or out of the country.

A recent contribution has been offered by Maria Pilar Espín Templado in the volume titled *Teatro lírico español: ópera, drama lírico, y zarzuela grande enter 1868 y 1925*. In the

chapter dedicated to the dramatic texts as inspiration for the music theater, she adds a sub-chapter titled “El realismo-naturalismo en la creación literaria y el verismo musical en óperas y zarzuelas del fin de siglo (1875-1900)” where she acknowledges that, despite a widespread “general” interest, the relationship between realism/naturalism in literature and music *verismo* [in Spain] has been scarcely studied.¹⁰ Espín Templado refers to Iberní, Sánchez, and de Paco, and concurs that *La Dolores* by Feliú y Codina represents the first “autochthonous” product of a Spanish “rural drama” translated in opera (by Bretón, in 1895). She writes:

Musical verismo runs parallel to the development of popular drama and rural drama—sometimes confused by critics and historians—both in dramatic literature and in the novel; Both dramas are impregnated with naturalism in the prolongation of nineteenth-century regional *costumbrismo*, especially in the case of rural drama [...].¹¹

3.2 Performance and Reception of *Verismo* in Spain

Spanish audiences and critics were not unfamiliar with Italian *verismo*. Sonzongo’s works became soon famous all over Europe, and Spain was no exception. However, it is ironic that the Teatro Real and the Liceu were the first two theaters in Europe where *Cavalleria rusticana* arrived after the premiere in Italy. Indeed, *verismo* operas were of such a character that if we imagine them in Spanish rather than Italian, one would have seen

¹⁰ María Pilar Espín Templado, “El texto dramático y literario fuente de inspiración del teatro musical: una aproximación panorámica en la creación española del siglo XIX,” in *Teatro lírico español: ópera, drama lírico y zarzuela grande entre 1868 y 1925*, ed. María Pilar Espín Templado, Pilar de Vega Martínez, and Manuel Lagos Gismero, Primera edición, Arte y Humanidades (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2016), 74.

¹¹ Ibid: 77-78. “El verismo musical corre paralelo al desarrollo del drama popular y del drama rural—a veces confundidos por la crítica y los historiadores—tanto en la literatura dramática como en la novela; ambos dramas están impregnados del naturalismo en la prolongación del costumbrismo regional decimonónico, sobre todo en el caso del drama rural [...].”

them rejected by the Spanish national opera theaters and sent to the zarzuela ones. This shows how the administrators of the two theaters had very little artistic interest in the works and more interest in the place of creation and the composer's fame. Italian operas were always well accepted for production in Spain, regardless of their plot and the "trend" to which they belonged. On the contrary, Spanish works, whether they were comic, historical, or realist, were most of the time rejected by the Teatro Real simply for being in Spanish. What follows is an investigation of the reception of *Cavalleria rusticana* in Madrid and Barcelona and the limited discussions on *verismo* in music that happened in a few periodicals.

From 1890 on, the Spanish press closely followed the path and successes of *Cavalleria rusticana*. On May 1, 1890, the correspondent from Rome of *La España artística* announced the upcoming premiere in Rome at the Teatro Costanzi.¹² After the performance, the same chronicler praised "the most notable numbers" of the opera.¹³ In July, *El liberal* wrote a column on Mascagni and his opera, emphasizing how *Cavalleria rusticana* had already been successful in several theaters in Italy and had attracted the attention of American theaters.¹⁴ In August, *La dinastía* announced the possibility of

¹² R. Blasco, "Roma," *La España artística*, May 5, 1890.

¹³ G. M., "Roma," *La España artística*, June 15, 1890. "And the three operas that obtained first prize in the Sonzogno contest have been performed at the Costanzi theater. These were, as our readers will remember, the titles *Labilia*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, and *Rudello*. The success has been on the rise, as the first one only got a succès d'estime, the second one was well received and *Rudello* was a real hit. In *Cavalleria rusticana* (first prize), by Maestro Mascagni, the Bellincioni and Stagno worked, being directed by Maestro Mugnone. The most notable numbers are: the prelude, the introductory chorus, the tiple aria, its duet with the tenor, another contralto and baritone duet, and the toast of the tenor, which is of first order."

¹⁴ "La ópera del maestro Mascagni," *El liberal*, July 27, 1890.

having it performed in Madrid and wondered if it would also be performed in Barcelona.¹⁵ On August 11, *La Época* presented a possible lineup of operas for the next season at the Teatro Real, which included *Cavalleria rusticana*.¹⁶ An interesting detail is that the journalist points out that the Teatro Real would be the first theater outside Italy to host *Cavalleria rusticana*.

The impresario of the Teatro Real, certainly not satisfied with the formation of his remarkable company, wanted to do more than could have been demanded, and upon learning of the resounding success that Mascagni's opera, *Cavalleria rusticana*, seemed to obtain in Italy, he conceived, of course, the idea of representing it in his theater. And to carry out his purpose, he thought that the best thing was to hire the leading interpreters of said spartito, Bellincioni, and Stagno, unique artists.¹⁷

Doubts about the possible staging of *Cavalleria* remained for weeks,¹⁸ even when the rest of the Teatro Real's *temporada* was confirmed.¹⁹ Meanwhile, the successes of the Italian performances of Mascagni's opera continued to be reported, along with more detailed information on the author and the work. Commenting on the performance of the

¹⁵ "Ecos teatrales," *La dinastía*, August 6, 1890.

¹⁶ "En el Real," *La Época*, August 11, 1890. Similar rumors are reported also in *La España artística*, August 15, 1890.

¹⁷ A., "La temporada del teatro Real," *El liberal*, August 31, 1890. "El empresario del Teatro Real, no satisfecho sin duda la formación de su notable compañía, ha querido hacer más de lo que hubiera podido exigirsele, y al tener noticia del ruido éxito que se iba de obtener en Italia la ópera de Mascagni, *Cavalleria rusticana*, concibió desde luego la idea de ponerla en escena en su teatro. Y para realizar su propósito pensó que lo mejor era contratar á los principales intérpretes de dicho spartito, la Bellincioni y Stagno, únicos artistas [...]." A piece of similar information, where it was specified that the Real was still negotiating with Sonzogno, was reported by *La Correspondencia de España*, August 31, 1890."

¹⁸ Cfr. *La Época*, September 2, 1890; Alfonso Perez Nieva, "La proxima temporada del Real," *La Dinastía*, September 1, 1890; *La España artística*, September 1, 1890; "La compañía del Real," *La Época*, September 11, 1890; *Diario oficial de avisos de Madrid*, September 12, 1890.

¹⁹ Ibid. The operas confirmed were *Otello*, *Lohengrin*, *La stella del Nord*, *L'arlesiana*, *Tannhäuser*, *Amleto*, *Mefistofile*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *El profeta*, *Roberto el diablo*, *Norma*, *I puritani*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Edgar*, *La peste di Otranto* by Emilio Serrano (the only opera by a Spanish composer). *Cavalleria rusticana* was still unconfirmed.

opera at the Teatro de la Pergola in Florence (September 14, 1890), in which the well-known Spanish tenor Fernando Valero sang, the critic of *La Iberia* writes that “*Cavalleria rusticana* has essentially dramatic music, in which a master of powerful imagination is revealed, and [music] alive with melodic inspiration. His admirers, who are already numerous, greet him as Verdi’s heir and note that the composer is twenty-six years old, precisely the same age as the author of *Aida* when he composed his first opera.”²⁰

Eventually, *Cavalleria* was confirmed at the Teatro Real in Madrid for December 17, 1890. Since the week before the premiere, there were several announcements reporting the opera rehearsals at the Teatro Real²¹ or articles that summarized the opera’s plot.²² Above all, even the well-known critic Antonio Peña y Goñi wrote about *Cavalleria*. The first article is more generic and frames the opera; in the second, he is bit critical and laments an undeserved success for both Mascagni and *Cavalleria* in Italy:

For the success achieved by *Cavalleria rusticana* to have the character of a national event, other important theaters in Italy needed to confirm the triumph that the arrival of the opera and its almost successive twelve performances had signaled in Rome. And here begins what I would dare to call “the Italian parody.” The unofficial friends, especially the journalists, who are the most pernicious and fearsome, began an unlikely crusade in favor of Mascagni, breaking his nose at every moment with the censor. Mascagni was an indisputable genius; he was the Bizet of Italy; Verdi, reading the score of *Cavalleria rusticana*, had exclaimed: - Thank you, my God! Now I can die in peace! I do not say if the author of *Aida*

²⁰ *La Iberia*, September 24, 1890. “*Cavalleria rusticana* tiene una música esencialmente dramática, en que se revela un maestro de imaginación potente, y viva de inspiración melódica. Sus admiradores, que ya son numerosos, saludan en él al heredero de Verdi y observan que el compositor tiene veintiséis años, precisamente la misma edad que contaba el autor de *Aida* cuando compuso su primera ópera.” See also *Ilustración musical hispano-americana*, September 30, 1890.

²¹ *La Época*, December 7, 1890.

²² Cfr. “*Cavalleria rusticana*,” *La Iberia*, December 9, 1890; *El liberal*, December 10, 1890; *Diario oficial de avisos de Madrid*, December 11, 1890.

asked for help or passed out after such an astonishing development. Italian music was resurrected with new blood: Mascagni carried the new Gospel in his mind. Nothing existed until *Cavalleria rusticana*; everything was possible after the famous Cavalleria. *Et sic de coeteris*. The usual: southern passion with all its accompaniment of rudeness and terrible consequences; that passion that respects nothing and cordially sponges on all the known talents and reputations to be known. In truth, the current state of musical art in Italy was presented as mitigating circumstances to the epileptic success Mascagni's opera obtained in Rome. [...] The ovations from Rome over, Mascagni, ill-advised and less well-directed, entered a senseless display period in the *delirium tremens* of the "Italian parody."²³

The expectations for *Cavalleria rusticana* in Spain were high. Starting from December 18, the day following the premiere, there was an outpouring of reviews of different sorts. A reviewer from *El Día* reported about Mascagni as a possible genius, pointing out that *Cavalleria's* success in Madrid was greater than in Rome.

Great was undoubtedly this opera's success when it premiered a short time ago in Rome, but it could not be greater than the one it had last night at the régio coliseum. The Italian newspapers have praised the merit of this first work by Maestro Mascagni so much that the impatience of our public to meet them and judge her was natural, since there are so few musical geniuses in Italy and outside of Italy these days, that it is not strange that the news of the appearance of one is received with mistrust. It is known, moreover, that, due to patriotism, merit is often exaggerated and that the Italians do not willingly resign themselves to losing

²³ Antonio Peña y Goñi, "Cavalleria rusticana," *La Época*, December 10, 1890, sec. Crónica Madrileñas. "Para que el éxito alcanzado por *Cavalleria Rusticana* revistiera los caracteres de un acontecimiento nacional, precisaba que otros importantes teatros de Italia confirmasen el triunfo que había señalado en Roma la aparición de la ópera y su doce representaciones casi sucesivas. Y aquí comienza lo que yo me atrevería a llamar "la peratada italiana". Los amigos officiosos, sobre todo los periodistas, que son los más perniciosos y temibles, comenzaron en favor de Mascagni una cruzada inverosímil, rompiéndole á cada instante las narices con el incensario. Mascagni era un genio indiscutible, era el Bizet de Italia; Verdi, a leer la partitura de *Cavalleria Rusticana*, había exclamado: - Gracias, Dios mío! Ahora puedo morirme tranquilo! Yo no dicen si el autor de *Aida* pidió socorro ó se desmayó después de tan estupendo desarrollo. La música italiana resucitaba con nueva savia: Mascagni llevaba en su mente el nuevo Evangelio. Nada existía hasta *Cavalleria Rusticana*; todo era posible después de la famosa Cavalleria. *Et sic de coeteris*. Lo de siempre: el apasionamiento meridional con todo su acompañamiento de desplantes, con todas sus terribles consecuencias; ese apasionamiento que nada respecta y echa la esponja cordialmente sobre todos los talentos conocidos y todas las reputaciones por conocer. En verdad que el estado actual del arte musical en Italia se presentaba como circunstancias atenuantes al éxito epiléptico que obtuvo en Roma la ópera de Mascagni. [...] Terminadas las ovaciones de Roma, Mascagni, mal aconsejado y peor dirigido, entró en un período insensato de exhibición, en el *delirium tremens* de la *peralada italiana*."

the musical preponderance they have exercised for so long in Europe. But last night, these suspicions and precautions were not part of preventing the great success of *Cavalleria rusticana* from the first number of the work [...].²⁴

The critic Arimón, from *El Liberal*, highlighted the peculiarity and beauty of the organ playing throughout the opera, specifically during the Easter procession.²⁵ Again on December 18, a critic from *La Iberia* wrote a detailed and positive review, anticipating a continuous success for the opera:

It is a work of vigorous, committed, and sober composition, inspired by modern artistic taste and accommodated to the style of the innovative masters. The inspiration that dominates in it is constant, with slight exceptions, and the possession of the composition with which Mascagni has written his beautiful work gives it robustness in the structure, power of expression in the phrases, and a magnetic force that justifies the effect produced in all the theaters where it has been sung and the one that was produced last night in the selected and intelligent auditorium of the Teatro Real. [...] in it, we discover a wide-ranging composer who pours flattering promises for the future of dramatic lyric art.²⁶

From *El país*, the critic Allegro praised Mascagni's mastery, but he believed that the opera would nevertheless generate controversies:

²⁴ "Cavalleria rusticana," *El Día*, December 18, 1890. "Grande fué sin duda el éxito de esta ópera cuando la estrenaron hace poco tiempo en Roma pero no pudo ser mayor que el que tuvo anoche en el regio coliseo. Tanto han ponderado los periódicos italianos el mérito de esta primera obra del maestro Mascagni, que era natural la impaciencia de nuestro público por conocerlas juzgarla, pues abundan tan poco en Italia y fuera de Italia en estos tiempos los genios musicales, que no es extraño se reciba con desconfianza la noticia de la aparición de alguno. Sabido es, además, que por patriotismo se exagera muchas veces el mérito, y que los italianos no sa resignar de buen grado á perder la preponderancia musical que por tanto tiempo han ejercido en Europa. Pero estos recelos y prevenciones no fueron anoche parte á impedir el éxito grande de *Cavalleria rusticana* desde al primer número de la obra [...]."

²⁵ Joaquín Arimón, "Cavalleria rusticana," *El Liberal*, December 18, 1890.

²⁶ "Cavalleria rusticana," *La Iberia*, December 18, 1890. "Es una obra de composición vigorosa, resuelta y sobria, inspirada en el gusto artístico moderno y acomodada al estilo de los maestros innovadores. La inspiración que en ella domina es constante, con ligeras excepciones, y la posesión del asunto con que Mascagni ha escrito su hermosa obra le da una robustez en la estructura, un poder de expresión en las frases y una fuerza de cautivar que justifican el efecto producido en todos los teatros donde se ha cantado y el que anoche produjo en el selecto é inteligente auditorio del teatro Real. [...] en él se descubre á un compositor de aliento que vierte lisonjeras promesas para el porvenir del arte lírico dramático."

[...] that its author is a master who is worth and is worth a lot, who has genius, who knows how to find affection, who feels and makes the public feel, thanks to the dramatic warmth of a large number of passages in the opera, no one can doubt it. [...] In short: a good night for the Opera and one more score in the repertoire, which will give rise to quite a few controversies among fans.²⁷

The most awaited voice was undoubtedly the one by Antonio Peña y Goñi. On December 14, a few days before the premiere, Peña y Goñi wrote a lengthy article in *La correspondencia de España*, in which he introduced the opera in terms of its genesis, plot, and the expectation for the production and the performers. He points out that there had been previous attempts to stage other one-act works at the Teatro Real and cites the example of two works by Chapí. However, such works were not mature enough to be successful. Furthermore, he claims that “the [Spanish] theatrical industry was completely alien to those manifestations of the indigenous muse.”²⁸ Peña y Goñi places *Cavalleria* on a different level and heightens the expectations for the premiere.

With *Cavalleria rusticana*, the aspect radically changes. It is an Italian opera that is the musical success of the day, an opera that has revealed, in a way that is as unexpected as it is brilliant, the talent of a young composer, whose name is today read in all the newspapers of Europe. It is, in short, a work that has interested and intrigues the musical world, all the more remarkable as its material dimensions are smaller, and the circumstances that have accompanied this work before its

²⁷ Allegro, “El Teatro de la Opera,” *El país*, December 18, 1890. “[...] que su autor es un maestro que vale y vale mucho, que tiene genio, que sabe encontrar los afectos, que siente y hace sentir al público, gracias al calor dramático de gran número de pasajes de la obra, nadie puede ponerlo en duda. [...] En suma: una buena noche para la Opera y una partitura más de repertorio, la cual dará motivo á no pocas controversias entre los aficionados.”

²⁸ Antonio Peña y Goñi, “Cavalleria rusticana,” *La correspondencia de España*, December 14, 1890. “One-act operas have indeed been staged at the Teatro Real [...], but there is no equality of circumstances between these premieres and that of Mascagni’s opera. [...] The two of Chapí had been born at home and presented themselves modestly, like rehearsals of ingenuity that would later be filled with glory in another field. Furthermore, the theatrical industry was totally alien to those manifestations of the indigenous muse.”

training are more strange, and that, therefore, is worthy of being known and appreciated by the Madrid public.²⁹

In his contribution dated December 18, the critic joined the group of reviewers who focused exclusively on the event of the *premiere* and the outstanding performance of Stagno and Bellincioni.³⁰ In terms of the music, he just mentions “beautiful melodies” and that “the beautiful instrumental conduct of Mascagni’s opera unfolds dramatic and full of grandeur until the end [of the opera].”³¹ He also adds that the audience was deeply moved by the opera’s finale, in which Mascagni revealed “an astonishing theatrical intuition and dramatic temperament.”³² He promises to analyze the opera more thoroughly in the following article, which appeared in *La Época* on December 20. Here, Peña y Goñi writes an interesting “disclaimer” in which he points out that he waited to write the review a bit after the premiere because of the important circumstances that surrounded the premiere of *Cavalleria rusticana* in Madrid, including the fact that the Teatro Real was the first one to present the successful opera outside Italy. The author writes that it is imperative to proceed with utmost caution and promises that he will be

²⁹ Ibid. “Con Cavalleria, la cosa cambia radicalmente de aspecto. Se trata de una ópera italiana que es el acontecimiento musical del día, de una ópera que ha revelado, de un modo tan imprevisto como brillante, el talento de un joven compositor, cuyo nombre se lee hoy en todos los periódicos de Europa. Se trata, en suma, de una obra que ha interesado é interesa al mundo musical, tanto más notable cuanto son menores sus dimensiones materiales y más peregrinas las circunstancias que á esa obra han acompañado antes de su estreno, y que, por lo tanto es digna de que la conozca y aprecie el público de Madrid.”

³⁰ *La España artística*, December 18, 1890.

³¹ Antonio Peña y Goñi, “Cavalleria rusticana, el estreno en Madrid,” *La Época*, December 18, 1890. “[...] y, en efecto, la hermosísima portada instrumental de la obra de Mascagni se desarrolló, dramática y llena de grandeza, hasta su final.”

³² Ibid. “El final de la ópera, en el cual revela Mascagni una intuición teatral y un temperamento dramático asombrosos, conmovió profundamente el público.”

approaching the review with complete impartiality. Still, his appreciation for the opera is evident even from this disclaimer.³³ In the musical review, he praises the balanced proportions of the one-act opera, which he defines as “not too long and not too short,” and points out as the drama flows with clarity and notable brevity. In some parts, like the Easter procession, he notices the composer’s inexperience, which results in the choir and orchestra not always being well balanced. On the other hand, other parts, such as the duet between Turiddu and Santuzza, progress masterfully, with growing passion “driven by the heat of the warmth of the melody and the outburst of the orchestra.” All the scenes, he continues, follow each other without interruptions, with vorticose speed, and lead to the end of the opera, which is “an amazing page, before which critics must bow

³³ Antonio Peña y Goñi, “Cavalleria rusticana,” *La Época*, December 20, 1890. “Contrary to my custom, I wanted to leave the review of *Cavalleria rusticana* for after the premiere of Mascagni’s opera at the Teatro Real in Madrid. I do not want to be labeled as light in these exceptional circumstances. The decision of the Madrid public is eagerly awaited in Italian, as the royal coliseum is the first foreign theater of notable importance where Mascagni’s work is staged, crossing the borders of the homeland. Therefore, it is necessary to proceed with the utmost caution and enter into action armed with all weapons, frankly, loyally, without risky prejudices or unhealthy influences. Absolutely oblivious to boutique affairs between publishers and businessmen, placed in an independent, disinterested and impartial field, I can express my opinion about the famous *Cavalleria rusticana*, outside of any environment that could undermine the sincerity of my judgment. And that I am going to do with the greatest pleasure, in the case of a work that deserves the interest and respect of critics in all respects.”

[“Contra mi costumbre, he querido dejar la crítica de *Cavalleria rusticana* para después del estreno de la ópera de Mascagni en el Teatro real de Madrid. No quiero que me tachen de ligero en estas excepcionales circunstancias. El fallo del público madrileño se espera en Italia con viva ansiedad, per ser el regio coliseo el primer teatro extranjero de importancia notable donde la obra de Mascagni se pone en escena, al atravesar de las fronteras de la patria. Hay que proceder, por lo tanto, con suma cautela y entrar en acción armado de todas armas, francamente, lealmente, sin prejuicios aventurados ni malsanas influencias. Ajeno en absoluto á los asuntos de boutique entre editores y empresarios, colocado en un terreno independiente, desinteresado é imparcial, puedo emitir mi opinión acerca de la famosa *Cavalleria rusticana*, fuera de todo ambiente que pudiera menoscabar la sinceridad de mu juicio. Y eso voy á hacer con el mayor gusto, tratándose de una obra que merece por todos conceptos el interés y el respecto de la crítica.”]

and salute Mascagni with respect and admiration.”³⁴ Peña y Goñi is indeed defending the opera from the accusation of having many defects, some of which he had already pointed out in a previous “light” review, and concludes:

In sum, my frank, loyal opinion is the following: if we judge the music of *Cavalleria rusticana* from an absolute point of view, it is worthy of respect and admiration for the intrinsic qualities of Mascagni’s art; and if we judge *Cavalleria rusticana* from a relative point of view, taking into account the circumstances in which the work was written, the circumstances that constitute its history and that of its author, in this case, Mascagni’s opera is a prodigy of talent and can be the beater of an artistic genius who awakens the sleeping glories of Italian music. One word, and I conclude. For me, in particular, the man who wrote the Santuzza’s romance, the duet of Santuzza and Turiddu, and, above all, the end of *Cavalleria rusticana*, is more than a hope; he is a reality. Even if he didn’t write another note in his whole life.³⁵

This idea was reinforced in another review he published about the performance of February 17, 1892.

With its defects and its qualities, Mascagni’s popular scene has a vital warmth and a dramatic intuition that I consider extraordinary, conditions that will always make a dent in all audiences and will end up making it without a doubt in Paris, despite the rudeness of the Fourcaud, Wilder and friends. It is true that interpretations such as the one that landed *Cavalleria rusticana* last night are those required by Mascagni’s passionate work, full of southern blood.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid. “Todas esas escenas que se suceden unas á otras, sin interrupción, con rapidez vertiginosa, hacen del final de *Cavalleria rusticana* asombrosa página, ante la cual la crítica debe inclinarse y saludar á Mascagni con respecto y admiración.”

³⁵ Ibid. “En suma, mi opinión franca, leal es la siguiente: juzgada la música de *Cavalleria rusticana* desde un punto de vista absoluto, es digna de respecto y de admiración por las cualidades intrínsecas del arte de Mascagni; y juzgada *Cavalleria rusticana* desde de un punto de vista relativo, teniendo en cuéntalas circunstancias en que la obra se ha escrito, circunstancias que constituyen os historia y la de su autor, en ese caso la ópera de Mascagni es un prodigio de talento y puede ser batidor de un genio artístico que despierte las dormidas glorias de la música italiana. Una palabra y concluyo. Para mí particularmente, el hombre que ha escrito la romanza de Santuzza, el dúo de Santuzza y Turiddu, y, sobre todo, el final de *Cavalleria rusticana*, es más que una esperanza, es una realidad. Aunque no escribiera una nota más en toda su vida.”

³⁶ Antonio Peña y Goñi, “Cavalleria rusticana,” *La Época*, February 18, 1892. “Con sus defectos y sus cualidades, el cuadro popular de Mascagni tiene calor vital y una intuición dramática que yo estimo extraordinaria, condiciones que harán siempre mella en todos los públicos y acabarán por hacerla sin

The first negative review in Madrid came from the magazine *La ilustración católica*. This was not a surprise, given the religious affiliation of the magazine. The critic Mistigris was very harsh with the opera, which he defined as vulgar and lacking uniformity, but he praised the performance of Bellincioni, who “saved” the evening.³⁷ From the review, there is also an important detail on the author’s position on the problem of Spanish national opera. Mascagni is, for him, a pretext to criticize Italian opera, and he laments that there are many other Spanish composers who are likewise valid and whose names do not end in “-ini.” Obviously, he refers to Rossini and Bellini, whose operas still dominated the stages of Spanish theaters.

We speak like this, first of all, because *faire l'article* has always disgusted us, and secondly because we remember two or three Spanish operas, which have more than just a duet and a toast. After all, in them, indisputable harmonies beauties prevail, but they have long been relegated to oblivion. Perhaps because their

género de duda en el de París, á despecho de los desplantes de los Fourcaud, Wilder e *compagnia bella*. Verdad es que interpretaciones como la que anoche cupo en suerte á *Cavalleria rusticana* son las que requiere la obra apasionada, llena da sangre meridional, de Mascagni.”

³⁷ Mistigris, “¡Cavalleria rusticana! ¡Mascagni! ¡la Bellincioni!” *La ilustración católica*, December 25, 1890. “La ópera de Mascagni, lo decimos sin ambages ni rodeos, carece de uniformidad y peca de vulgar en demasía; sufre alternativas lamentables, y á no haber sido por los artistas encargados de interpretarla, sufrido hubiese un completo descalabro. No basta para salvar una ópera un dúo más ó menos apasionado, una *fermata* más ó menos valiente, un acorde más ó menos ruidoso y espeluznante; se necesita que desde los primeros compases hasta el final, el auditorio conozca la factura del genio, no la del músico novel que lo fia todo en los efectos escénicos del libreto. Meritorio, claro está, es saber aprovecharlos, sacar de ellos todo el partido posible; pero eso no basta ni con mucho para creer que el joven maestro llegue á donde han llegado músicos insignes, según se ha dado en decir por ahí.” [“Mascagni’s opera, we say it bluntly or without talking around, lacks uniformity and is too vulgar; It suffers unfortunate alternatives, and had it not been for the artists in charge of interpreting it, it would have suffered a complete setback. A more or less passionate duet, a more or less courageous fermata, a more or less noisy and hair-raising chord is not enough to save an opera; It is necessary that from the first measure to the end, the audience knows the craftsmanship of the genius, not that of the novice musician who trusts everything in the scenic effects of the libretto. It is a merit, of course, knowing how to take advantage of them, and get the most out of them; but that is not even close enough to believe that the young maestro will reach where famous musicians have reached, as it has been said around there.”]

authors, instead of having surnames ending in “ini,” are simply called Pérez or Gómez.³⁸

Alfonso Pérez Nieva, from *La ilustración* (Barcelona), who self-identified not as a musical critic, reported his positive “impressions” of the opera: “Such an idyllic subject has served Mascagni to compose a beautiful score. [...] The music is very modern in its making; in it, the orchestra appears carefully cared for, giving a great value to the instrumentation without neglecting the singing and with symphonic tendencies; perhaps, for this reason, it is a bit eclectic.”³⁹

In Barcelona, *Cavalleria rusticana* was premiered at the Gran Teatre del Liceu on May 9, 1891. The evening was divided into three parts, all including sections of Italian operas,⁴⁰ with *Cavalleria* performed alone in the last part. A critic from the magazine *La Tomasa* did not like this arrangement.

Last Saturday, it was premiered, having promoted heated discussions, [...] In short: *Cavalleria rusticana*, if it has not satisfied our audience, it is mainly because it is an opera in one act that is not full enough for the one-night show. Having been able to combine it [with other works], as in Italy and other places where a dance of great spectacle like *Radope*, etc., was performed before it, we are convinced

³⁸ Ibid. “Nosotros hablamos así, en primer lugar, porque siempre nos ha repugnado *faire l'article* y después porque recordamos dos ó tres óperas españolas, que tienen algo más que un dúo y un brindis, pues en ellas campear indiscutibles bellezas armónicas, y sin embargo hállense de antiguo relegadas al olvido, quizá porque sus autores en vez de llevar apellidos terminados en *ini*, llámense sencillamente Pérez ó Gómez.”

³⁹ Alfonso Pérez Niéva, “Caballeria rusticana,” *La Ilustración*, December 28, 1890: 818. “Tan idílico asunto ha servido á Mascagni para componer una hermosa partitura. [...] La música es modernísima de factura; en ella aparece esmeradamente cuidada la orquesta, dándole un valor grande á la instrumentación sin descuidar el canto y con tendencias sinfónicas; acaso por esto resulte un poco ecléctica.”

⁴⁰ The “Cronologia liceista” for the Liceu Theater in Barcelona indicates: Part 1, Act II of Verdi’s *Rigoletto*; Part 2, Overture of Verdi’s *I vespri Siciliani* + Scene I of Act II of Donizetti’s *Lucia di Lammermoor*; Part 3, *Cavalleria rusticana*.

that the maestro Mascagni's would have achieved the same just success that it has achieved in other philharmonic centers.⁴¹

Critics in Barcelona overall received the opera negatively. On May 11, Joaquim Homs Parellada wrote that despite all the advertisements, the audience of Barcelona was not fooled and did not fill the house at the premiere.

Is it that deception was feared by those interested in spreading it? Everything could be since we are accustomed to the claims of Italy's publishing houses and their works' failures. Be that as it may, they are that the public of Barcelona was withdrawn and that despite all the regrets and pompous announcements, a full house was not obtained, much less. [...] The publishing houses that could not dispatch their merchandise and were forced to resort to France and Germany welcomed the first Maestro that was offered to them and showered him with praise, making ovations for him and begging for long articles of recognition to be able to sell the merchandise. Hence the family of Mascagni and his work. In addition, the matter of the argument and the name and nationality of the leading performers ended up deciding the success.⁴²

His review appears to critique the Italian theatrical system at large. Curiously, in talking about the music, Parellada targets the extensive use of string unisons, that is, the

⁴¹ Un cómic retirat, "Liceo," *La tomasa*, May 15, 1891. "Dissapte passat s'estrená, habent promogut acaloradas discussións, mostra patent de que existeix algo de lo previst en altres públichs. [...] Resumint: *Cavalleria rusticana* si no ha satisfet de tor á nostre públich es degut en part principal á que sent una ópera en 1 acte no omplena prou pera l'espectacle de una nit. A haberse pogut combinar com en Italia y altres punts que primer se posa en escena un ball de gran espectacle com *Radope*, etc., estém convensuts de que la ópera del mestre Mascagni hauria conseguit lo mateix just éxit que ha alcansat en altres centres filarmónicas."

⁴² Joaquim Homs Parellada, "Cavalleria rusticana," *La dinastia*, May 11, 1891. "¿Es que se temía un engaño por partes de los interesados en propagarla? Todo podría ser, puesto que estamos acostumbrados á los reclamos de las casas editoriales de Italia y á los fracas de sus obras. Sea lo que fuere, ellos es que el público barcelonés mostróse retraído, y que á pesar de todos los pesares y de todos los anuncios pomposos, no se obtuvo un lleno ni mucho menos. [...] Las casas editoriales que non podían despachar su género y que se veían precisada á recurrir á Francia y Alemania, se acogieron al primer Maestro que se les ofreció y le colmaron de elogios fabricándole ovaciones y suplicando largos artículos encomiásticos á fin de poder expender la mercancia. De ahí la fama de Mascagni y de su obra. Además, el asunto del argumento y en nombre y nacionalidad de los principales intérpretes acabaron de decidir el éxito." Parellada review was also entirely reported in the *Ilustración musical hispano-americana*, May 15, 1891.

violinata, marking it as excessive. Indeed, we know that such a technique was a marker of the *Giovine Scuola* composers.

Only by making these considerations do we understand why an opera that offers nothing particular did not go unnoticed in Italy, examining it with all impartiality and good faith. [...] None of them attracted attention, to the point that the claque did not dare to ask for an encore. Why? Because there is not a single passage in the work in which the hand of a genius is discovered; because the thematic motif is not even original, since it is precisely similar to that of «Gioconda»; because it looks like a continuation of the old Italian school; because in the ensemble pieces those vulgarities to which the composers of Dante's homeland have accustomed us are noted; because the choirs seem ripped from any zarzuela; because in the endless duets there are always repetitions of a theme that is tiresome due to lack of originality, which brings monotony; because in the instrumentation the unison of the string is abused, and finally because the types and situations to be described are not well delineated. To a young master and at the end of the 19th century, other conditions were demanded to give him a patent of notoriety. Mascagni's work could appear as one of many. It was never to be presented as a model, as a celebrity, much less do conceive well-founded hopes.⁴³

An even more substantial criticism of the Italian theatrical system and the new operas derived from it was offered by Felipe Pedrell in the pages of the *Ilustración musical hispano-americana* of May 30, 1891. In a very long five-column article, Pedrell takes as an example the newborn *Cavalleria rusticana* to accuse Italy of “chauvinism.”

The Italian *chauvinism* (of the same scope as the French, which neither in the arts of peace nor of war ever confesses a defeat), every time operas of the force of

⁴³ Ibid. Únicamente haciéndonos estas consideraciones es por lo que llegamos á comprender el que no pasara desapercibida en Italia una ópera que nada ofrece de particular, examinándola con toda imparcialidad y buena fe. [...] De toda ellas ninguna llamó la atención, hasta el punto de que no la claque se atrevió á pedir ningún bis. ¿Por qué? Porque no hay en la obra un solo pasaje en que se descubría la mano de un genio; porque i siquiera resulta original el motivo temático, ya que es de un exacto parecido al de «Gioconda»; por que se ve una continuación de la vetusta escuela italiana; por que el las piezas de conjunto se notan aquellos ramplonismos á que nos tienen acostumbrados los compositores de la patria del Dante; porque los coros parecen arrancados de cualquiera zarzuela; porque en los interminables duos se notan siempre repeticiones de un tema que fatiga por igualdad de factura, que llega á la monotonía; porque en la instrumentación se abusa del unísono de la cuerda, y finalmente porque no están bien delineados los tipos ni las situaciones que se ha de describir. A un maestro joven y á últimos del siglo IX se le han da exigir otras condiciones para darle patente de notoriedad. Podrá la obra de Mascagni figurar como una de tantas, era nunca ser presentada como un modelo, como una celebridad, y mucho menos hacer concebir fundadas esperanzas.”

Cavalleria have appeared on the scene (at least, one case every two years) has exclaimed in identical terms: - Gentlemen, there you go to applaud the most appealing opera of modern times. - And nobody has pulled your ears, nor has objected: - By God, Italian gentlemen, has there not been a Mozart, a Beethoven, a Gluck, a Cherubini, a Gounod, and a Verdi in the world? The Italian “chauvinism” has reached such violent points for a few months now that it has put in the mouth of Verdi, of the very taciturn Verdi, a ridiculous “Nunc dimittis musicum tuum,” at the moment in which he was not precisely ready to die in peace, happy and content, prophetically blessing his successor Mascagni. [...]”⁴⁴

According to Pedrell, however, the main problem is not in the art per se. On the contrary, it is commercial Italy that has transformed the world of opera. Pedrell believes that Italian chauvinism is enacted through a well-oiled business system in which the “businessmen” (usually businessmen/publishers) pre-determine the fate of operas and consequently elevate to the status of celebrity composers up until then unknown.

The undone *buffera*⁴⁵ [tempest] that reigns has not been entirely produced by ancient and modern artistic Italy: it has not contributed, no, with certain excesses of dumb art to aggravate our melomania: it is commercial Italy that has been blowing hard and strong, ever since the opera, an artistic manifestation after all, always worthy of respect, has become shameless speculation that monopolizes half a dozen merchants throughout Europe. The entire interior and exterior mechanism of that modern show called opera is in the hands of very few publishers who, setting aside things of art, make opera a matter of commerce for the simple reason that *les affaires sont les affaires* [affairs are affairs]. [...] The forces are well distributed, the wheels well oiled, and the machinery runs so perfectly

⁴⁴ Felipe Pedrell, “El «chauvinisme» italiano y la «Cavalleria rusticana»,” *Ilustración musical hispano-americana*, May 30, 1891. “El *chauvinisme* italiano (de igual alcances que el francés, que ni en artes de paz ni de guerra confiesa jamás una derrota), cada vez que han aparecido sobre la escena óperas de la fuerza de *Cavalleria* (se da por lo menos, un caso cada dos años) ha exclamado en idénticos términos:- Señores, ahí van ustedes á aplaudir la obra más golosa de los tiempos modernos.- Y nadie les ha tirado de las orejas, ni ha objetado:- Por Dios, señores italianos, ¿no ha habido en el mundo un Mozart, un Beethoven, un Gluck, un Cherubini, un Gounod y un Verdi? A tal violencia de puntos ha llegado el *chauvinisme* italiano, de algunos meses acá, que ha puesto en boca de Verdi, del mismísimo taciturno Verdi, un ridículo *Nunc dimittis musicum tuum*, en el momento en que se disponía no precisamente á morir en paz, feliz y contento, bendiciendo proféticamente á su sucesor Mascagni[...].”

⁴⁵ Pedrell here intended “*bufera*,” which in Italian means “storm.” Of course, he is referring to the arrival of Italian opera companies, from the late 16th century, up to the Rossini “storm,” followed by Bellini, Donizetti, and Verdi, who impacted and, to some extent, monopolize the Spanish operatic world in the second half of the 19th century.

that with the lightest turn of the *crank* everything moves and works to the beat: authors, orchestra, stage, and choir directors, businessmen, singers, choristers, public, newspapers with *agenzia* [artist management](and without *agenzia*) attached, such that in a moment a *successone* [great success] is fabricated, a name is made, the legend is formed that is a drawer in the success of each work and rounded up a publishing business.⁴⁶

Pedrell does not go into an analysis of the opera or provide details on the reception of the work by the Liceu's audience. Mascagni's opera is, for him, a further example of this mechanism that produces box-office operas.

This is, neither more nor less, the secret of the *Cavalleria rusticana*: a kick drum of enormous dimensions, a well-proportioned mallet, the fists and verve of a chest-haired editor, and the Italian *chauvinism* that puts together such a riot, and he would shout every time that, according to the signs of the times, he imagines that the mountains have given birth to the desired musician. Italian *chauvinisme*, I said, and I don't take the word back. [...] I will tell you a little about the music because it is not worth taking the thing seriously. In the music of, there is merely and simply what there is in all the music produced by those Messiahs *manqués* [missed] of modern Italian art.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid.: "La *buffera* deshecha que reina no la han producido del todo la Italia artística antigua y moderna: no ha contribuido, no, con ciertos excesos de leso arte á agravar nuestra melomanía: es la Italia comercial la que sopla fuerte y recio desde que la ópera, manifestación artística al fin y al cabo, siempre digna de respeto, se ha convertido en especulación descarada que acaparan en toda Europa media docena escasa de comerciantes. Todo e mecanismo interior y exterior de ese espectáculo moderno llamado ópera, anda en manos de contadísimos editores que dando á un lado las cosas de arte, hacen materia de comercio la ópera, por la sencilla razón de que *les affaires sont les affaires*. [...] Bien distribuidas las fuerzas, bien engrasadas las ruedas, marcha tan á la perfección la maquinaria, que la más liger volteó de la *manivelle* todo se mueve y funciona á compás: autores, directores de orquesta, de escena y de coros, empresarios, cantantes, coristas, público, periódicos con *agenzia* (y sin *agenzia*) aneja, tal que en un momento queda fabricado un *successone*, hecho un nombre, formada la *leyenda* que es de cajón en el éxito de cada obra y redondeado un negocio editorial."

⁴⁷ Ibid.: "Esto es, ni más ni menos, el secreto de la *Cavalleria rusticana*: un bombo de dimensiones descomunales, un mazo bien proporcionado, los puños y bríos de un editor de pelo en pecho y el *chauvinisme* italiano que arma tal cotarro y gritería cada vez que, según las señales de los tiempos, se le figura que los montes han parido al *musico* deseado. *Chauvinisme* italiano, dije, y no retiro la palabra. [...] Poco diré sobre la música, porque no vale la pena de tomar la cosa en serio. En la música de la *Cavalleria* hay sencilla y simplemente lo que hay en toda la música que han producido esos Mesías *manqués* del moderno arte italiano [...]."

A survey on the performance and reception of *Cavalleria rusticana* shows that the opera was accepted with great enthusiasm by the public of both Madrid and Barcelona. On the other hand, while critics in Madrid overall approved it, the ones in Barcelona did the opposite. This is no surprise, especially if we consider that Barcelona's critics were championed by Pedrell, who had historically opposed Italian opera in favor of an authentic Spanish opera. Furthermore, Pedrell had the perfect medium to send his message, being the director of the *Ilustración musical hispano-americana*. What is important for us is not to verify a positive interest of the Spaniards in *Cavalleria rusticana*, but simply an interest in general, as well as the fact that Spaniards had many chances to become acquainted with Mascagni's opera. And there is no doubt that *Cavalleria rusticana* was appreciated by the Spanish public and sought after by Spanish theaters, even though critics were discordant, in the period of its first performance and the following decades. The two tables show the performances of *Cavalleria rusticana* at the Teatro Real between the Madrid premiere (December 17, 1890) and 1915 and the performances of the same opera at the Teatro del Liceu in the same period. A comparison between the two tables brings out some interesting details.

First, in the period indicated, the opera was performed forty times at the Teatro Real of the Spanish capital, compared to fifty-five at the Liceu in Barcelona. Furthermore, although we can note that as early as 1893, it began to be represented paired with *Pagliacci*, the Teatro Real continued to represent it together with works of Italian tradition (Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, and even Monteverdi), plus a few Wagnerian exceptions. In Barcelona, *Cavalleria* was combined with more modern works and often

more in line with the realist style, such as *Manon* by Massenet, *Manon Lescaut* by Puccini, and *Pagliacci*. In addition, it also stands out for its combination with works by Spanish composers—albeit of a very different character from *Cavalleria's verismo*—such as *Pepita Jiménez* by Albéniz, and *Tatàina* by Enric Morera in Barcelona, *La revoltosa* by Chapí, and *El año pasado por agua* by Chueca and Valverde in Madrid.

Table 3.1: Performances of *Cavalleria rusticana* at the Teatro Real from 1890 to 1915.

Temporada	Date/s	Perf.	Performed with
1890-91	Dec 17 / Jan 1, 7, 15 / Feb 28	5	<i>Lucia di Lammermoor</i> (Originally <i>Cenerentola</i> but changed due to singer's sickness)
1891-92	Feb 17, 24 (1892) / Mar 2, 28	4	Ricci's <i>Crispino e la comare</i> (02/17, 02/24); <i>Sonnambula</i> Act III (03/2, 03/28)
1892-93	Feb 21 / Mar 16	2	<i>Pagliacci</i> (02/21); Gluck's <i>Orfeo</i> (03/16)
1894-95	Jan 22, 24 / Feb 17, 20	4	<i>Otello</i>
1895-96	Nov 21, 24, 27 / Dec 19 / Mar 12, 17, 19, 25	8	<i>Don Pasquale</i>
1896-97	Dec 15, 19, 24 / Jan 7 / Mar 9	5	Meyerbeer's <i>Dinorah</i> Overture, Act I and II (12/15, 12/19, 12/24, 01/07); <i>Pagliacci</i> (03/09)
1897-98	Jan 2	1	<i>Hamlet</i> (Act I and III)
1898-99	Jan 1	1	<i>Aida</i> , <i>L'Africaine</i>
1901-02	Jan 23	1	<i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i>
1902-03	Jan 8, 10, 11, 21, 23	5	<i>Orfeo</i> Act I and IV (01/08); <i>Orfeo</i> Act I, II, and IV (01/10); <i>Rigoletto</i> Act II and III (01/11); <i>La bohème</i> Act III/IV and <i>El año pasado por agua</i> (01/21), <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> Act II/II and Aria from <i>Luisa Miller</i> (01/23)
1903-04	Jan 24 / Mar 1	2	<i>La revoltosa</i> (estreno), <i>L'elisir d'amore</i> Act III, Vals from <i>L'incantatrice</i> , Prelude and death of Isolda from <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> (01/24); <i>Orfeo</i> (03/01)
1906-07	Feb 23	1	<i>Pagliacci</i>
1911-12	Feb 17	1	Tannhäuser Overture, <i>Pagliacci</i>
1914-15	Feb 17, 20	2	<i>Pagliacci</i>

Table 3.2: Performances of *Cavalleria rusticana* at the Gran Teatre del Liceu from 1890 to 1915.

Temporada	Date/s	Perf.	Performed with
Spring 1891	May 9, 10, 12, 14	4	
1894-95	Jan 15, 17, 20, 29 / Feb 2 [1895]	5	Massenet's <i>Manon</i> Act I and II
Spring 1895	Apr 18, 28	2	Massenet's <i>Manon</i> Act I and II
1895-96	Jan 9, 11, 12, 19, 22 [1896]	5	Overture of Meyerbeer's <i>Dinorah</i> , Albéniz's <i>Pepita Jiménez</i> , Música de los bailables from Albéniz's <i>Henry Clifford</i>
1896-97	Jan 24, 31 [1897]	2	Puccini's <i>Manon Lescaut</i> Act I and II
Spring 1898	May 4, 5, 7	3	Puccini's <i>Manon Lescaut</i> Act I and II
1898-99	Jan 12, 13, 15 [1899]	3	<i>Pagliacci</i>
1904-05	Feb 2, 4, 7, 12 [1905]	4	Humperdinck's <i>Hänsel und Gretel</i>
1906-07	Jan 10, 13, 18, 20 [1907]	4	Mascagni's <i>Amica</i>
1907-08	Jan 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 22, 29 / Feb 2, 11 [1908]	9	<i>Pagliacci</i>
1911-12	Jan 17, 18, 21, 24 / Feb 2, 6	6	Enric Morera's <i>Tatàina</i>
1912-13	Nov 19, 26	2	<i>Pagliacci</i>
1913-14	Dec 7, 11, 14 / Jan 24	4	<i>Rigoletto</i> Act I and II
1915-16	Feb 13, 23	2	<i>Pagliacci</i>

This comparison also allows us to recognize another critical element. It is unlikely that the Spanish composers of the time were unfamiliar with the *verismo* of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* afterward. The work appeared in the major Spanish theaters, preceded by great publicity and followed by numerous criticisms and discussions, whether positive or negative. Newspapers and periodicals such as *La España artística*, *El liberal*, *El Día*, *El país*, *Ilustración artística hispano-americana*, or *La dinastia* were undoubtedly read and followed by artists and composers of the time, who also could attend the performances of Italian *verismo* operas in their cities. Furthermore, Spain was the first country to produce *Cavalleria rusticana* outside of Italy. The interest of Spanish theaters in the new

Italian repertoire (in the specific case, that of Sonzogno) was conspicuous and continuous. Whether this interest was the result of an artistic fascination or, more likely, the result of the “machinations” by Italian publishers (those machinations so criticized by Pedrell), it brought the operas to the limelight in the Spanish theaters just a few months after the premiere in Italy. That was probably expected because of the profound link between Spanish theaters and their impresarios with Italian opera, still considered “the opera.” Indeed, this was one of the causes leading to movements for the creation of a Spanish national opera, which was very often defined just in opposition to the dominant Italian opera.

3.3 *Verismo* and the Discourse on Spanish National Opera

In Chapter I, we have seen how, unlike many European countries, Spain never developed a national opera style. Instead, it showed a preference for the zarzuela. In the late nineteenth century, zarzuela was a one-act spectacle (so-called *género chico*), and historians agree that it was the most representative type of Spanish musical theater. To be sure, Spain had also developed an operatic tradition, but it was indebted to Italian models and was never elevated to a form of national opera. Starting from the 1850s, while engaging in the debate on Wagnerian vs. Italian opera, Spanish composers and critics had concurrently sought to create *ópera española* by employing the Spanish language and folklore. This led to an impasse, and composers kept returning to the more lucrative zarzuela. The public was used to the *género chico* and, in Madrid, there had been created an unofficial “division of labor,” whereby the Teatro Real was producing operas

essentially in Italian, and the zarzuela theaters (Teatro de la Zarzuela and Teatro Circo Parish) were producing the *género chico* and several zarzuela subgenres.

However, there were prominent exceptions, and leading composers such as Tomás Bretón, Enrique Granados, Isaác Albéniz, Ruperto Chapí, Federico Moreno Torroba, Manuel de Falla, and others like José María Usandizaga or Manuel Penella, were nonetheless able to produce successful Spanish works characterized by a great deal of realism. Those were either operas or a form of zarzuela called *drama lírico*. Indeed, the two terms do not offer much difference and are (and were) often interchanged. The word *drama lírico* was used to identify a hybrid zarzuela-opera, usually based on the model of the *zarzuela grande* with a historical or sentimental character, to oppose the witty one-act *zarzuelas chicas*.⁴⁸

While these works have been traditionally considered “realistic” operas with some Spanish color, upon closer examination, we notice they share unique features that distinguish them from both the hybrid comic zarzuela-opera model and the *tout court* Italian model: namely, a strong emphasis on realism, the use of national language, and the unique concurrence of both Italianate elements (in terms of the melodic invention) and Wagnerian ones (in the use of leitmotiv and prominence of the orchestra). In short, these operas present the peculiar *topoi* of Italian *verismo* opera. For this reason, I maintain that *verismo* can represent a solution to the impasse of the Spanish national opera.

⁴⁸ Ramon Sobrino Sánchez, “Ni ópera ni zarzuela: drama lírico, una vía alternativa en el teatro lírico español de la restauración,” in *Teatro lírico español: ópera, drama lírico y zarzuela grande entre 1868 y 1925*, ed. María Pilar Espín Templado, Pilar de Vega Martínez, and Manuel Lagos Gismero, Primera edición, Arte y Humanidades (Madrid: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, 2016), 85–121.

Suppose we were to identify a Spanish opera poised between the two centuries, one parallel to the *zarzuela chica*. In that case, we could argue that it was a realist opera, in many instances with a full *verismo* imprint. Approaching Spanish realist operas from a *verismo* perspective provides a new perspective. This allows re-negotiating Spanish realist works that have been considered isolated instances and, most of all, positioning them into an organic repertoire.

Most of the newly composed Spanish operas in the two decades at the crossroads of the centuries had a pronounced realist slant. I believe that this *verismo* tendency was inevitable. In the first place, the late-Romantic operatic models had already exhausted and gone out of fashion. As happened all over Europe, the same occurred in Spain, although with a bit of delay, and Spanish composers started looking for new sources of inspiration. Until at least 1900, while doing so, Spanish composers also frantically sought a possible solution to the problem of national opera. To be “Spanish” and “popular,” such operas needed to be in Spanish, incorporate folk elements, and be relatable to the audience. Ironically, previous attempts to craft Spanish operas had also failed because intellectuals did not reach a compromise on how to use the Spanish language, which for many was not “acceptable” if used in historical dramas with a marked Italian style. Furthermore, in those years, Italian *verismo* operas were very popular all over Europe and, as we have seen, were also extensively performed in Spain. But there was also another issue. A second narrative intersected the one of the *ópera española* and sought to establish whether the operatic model should have been Italian or Wagnerian. In addition, most of the realist operas were based on rural dramas that had been extremely popular. Spanish

public indeed loved the stories of honor staged in an idyllic rural environment. The Spanish *drama rural* (the equivalent of the Italian *verismo* play) was a theater created by the Spanish middle class for themselves—a classic form of escapism from the reality of urban life, which Spaniards always appreciated.

3.4 A Possible Theoretical Model

In trying to re-approach Spanish realist works through a *verismo* prism, one wonders whether we should accept the Italian *verismo* archetypical model entirely, that is, a linear and simple plot based on *verismo* literature and full of folk references, dramatic organization mimicking the structure of the Greek tragedy, vocality prone to a declamatory style, Wagnerian-like orchestration, and the use of local color. Even a preliminary survey of the Spanish works of the time shows how this is bound to be very difficult.

We must consider the long tradition of zarzuela in Spain and the fact that, especially in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, it would have been more likely to see *verismo* works structured as zarzuelas (and there are several), or some hybrid form, rather than operas. The use of speech instead of recitative does not diminish the dramatic effectiveness and realism of the work. Many Italian *verismo* operas were indeed *verismo* plays set to music, conceived and built around the spoken language, and there the dialogue carried an even greater dimension of realism. Think, for example, about the use of “almost-spoken” in the operas or the use of screams (*urlo*). Likewise, from the last decade of the nineteenth century, Spain had developed the tradition of the “social drama” and “rural drama,” the latter being the Spanish counterpart of Italian *verismo*

dramatic theater. There had been a copious production of rural dramas, many of which inspired zarzuelas and operas.

In the case of Italian *verismo* opera, it was unavoidable that the choice was made for sung recitatives, primarily for reasons of tradition. If we exclude the *intermezzo*, Italy has never had a tradition similar to the Spanish zarzuela or the French *opéra comique*. The Italian public expected an opera to be sung from beginning to end, and the composers, who responded to market demands, tried hard to please their audience. Furthermore, the period in which the *verismo* composers created their most relevant works corresponds to a period of critical Wagnerian influences (at least in the circle of the Young School). The fascination of Mascagni and, above all, Leoncavallo with the German master is common knowledge. And a work of Wagnerian musical inspiration generally excludes spoken parts, as it tends to avoid closed forms in favor of a sung-through structure. Again, we use the word Wagnerian here in a broad sense. As we have already explained in the chapter on Italian *verismo*, the *verismo* composers did not use rigorous *leitmotivic* techniques if not with the appropriate modifications in the Italian style.

Therefore, in seeking a Spanish musical-theatrical *verismo*, one must avoid the error of excluding the zarzuelas and the so-called *drama lírico*. Precisely in this repertoire, we find crucial Spanish *verismo* works. For example, Usandizaga's *Las golondrinas*, now very popular and known in the operatic version (1929), was conceived and represented by Usandizaga as a zarzuela in 1914. It was an enormous success in Madrid for this reason as well. The version in use today was prepared by Ramón Usandizaga (José María's brother) after the death of José María by putting the recited parts into music. Other

similar works are, for example, Chapí's *Curro Vargas* or *La cara de Dios*. In approaching Spanish *verismo*, we must consider the uniqueness of Spanish theater, how it was informed by Spanish literature, and how it related to Spanish culture and its audience.

The meaning of the term *drama lírico* changed frequently in the decades between 1870 and 1900. In the last ten years of the century, it indicated a hybrid zarzuela/opera which could have either spoken dialogues or sung recitatives, and was usually based on the model of the three-act *zarzuela grande*. The style of the *drama lírico* in these years is not comic but dramatic and aims at a fusion between music and poetry. The study made by Ramón Sobrino Sánchez⁴⁹ highlights how composers, librettists, and—we would assume—also publishers made an arbitrary use of this term, often associating it with works that are extremely heterogeneous.

Italy developed its *verismo*, a recognized movement, with a repertoire associated with specific aesthetic and dramaturgical canons (although, as we have seen, these canons are still discussed today). Italian *verismo* was the theatrical representation of Italian popular culture, particularly that of the South, with its specific traits. Although there are detractors of this term, we have demonstrated that there was *verismo* in literature first, a theatrical one, and an operatic one, with all the convergences and differences these perspectives had.

In searching for Spanish *verismo*, one strategy could be to seek the equivalents of Italian *verismo topoi* as represented in Spanish realist operas. It is virtually impossible just to transpose the archetypical Italian *verismo* opera model into Spanish operas. There is an

⁴⁹ Sobrino Sánchez, “Ni ópera ni zarzuela.”

apparent underlying diversity in terms of themes, musical tradition, and singing techniques. However, this does not compromise the process, as we are not using a static model but a fluid “archetypical” one. In general, Spanish *verismo* opera presents these elements of the Italian *verismo* archetypical model: a verist/naturalistic story, set in a defined regional environment, with a linear plot in which eventually one or more characters die, either literally or emotionally; a Wagnerian- style orchestration mixed with Italianate melodic invention and local tradition, with personalized use of leitmotifs; the use of folklore in various forms, including local musical color, with the performance—often diegetic—of regional dances and songs.

As we established for the Italian *verismo* operas, the *verismo* plot is a primary requirement. Many Spanish realist works are based on Spanish naturalistic dramas and have marked similarities with the novels and plays of Italian *verismo*. Spanish *verismo* operas can narrate a peasant reality (recalling *Cavalleria rusticana*) or a more suburban one (such as *Goyescas* by Granados). In Spain, especially until the end of the nineteenth century, there was a predominant “rural” drama in which the characters, in a perfect *verismo* model, undergo the internal dynamics of a harsh peasant reality based on issues of honor and virtue. In the rural love triangle, for example, Santuzza from *Cavalleria rusticana* would be easily identified with María (*María del Carmen*) or Salud (*La vida breve*). In general, many of these stories present the *topoi* of the God-fearing girl, a local boy who loves the girl, and an enriched local who also loves, or desires, the girl. The story often ends tragically. When associated with Andalusian culture, the peasant is replaced with the *gitanilla* (little Gypsy). In other cases, the characters vary, so we always have a *gitanilla*, a bullfighter, a wealthy

individual who has “saved the gitanilla,” a bandit, and often the iconic *majos* and *majas*—as described, for example, by Granados in his *Goyescas*.

In Italian *verismo*, it is very customary to have numerous musical elements of local color in the form of dances and songs (*tarantella*, religious songs, *stornelli*, *romanze*). The same happens in Spanish theater. In the debate at the end of the century on Spanish opera, the use of popular elements to define a national opera was a fundamental point. Spanish *verismo* operas use various dances, from the Andalusian traditional *cante* and *baile* flamenco (*Saeta*, *Seguirilla*, *Tonadilla*, *Sevillana*) to the more “theatrical” ones derived from other Spanish regions. Above all, for example, the *jota*, the *fandango* (memorable is the one in *Goyescas*), the *garrotín* (in *El gato montés*), the *passacalle*, or the *pasodoble*.

Religion always permeates *verismo* stories, and with it also come religious songs, representing a sub-category of folk songs/dances. In *verismo* operas, the religious songs are taken from the traditional and folk repertoire associate with Catholic holidays. Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* takes place during Easter Sunday. There, the Easter procession and the related chants become more than an environment sonic filler. They are employed as critical dramaturgical elements. Santuzza playing the solo part during the procession of the Virgin has a particular symbolic value. Spanish *verismo* is likewise saturated with religious symbols, even starting from the titles (e.g., *La cara de Dios*, *La Virgen de mayo*, etc.). In the Act II of *Curro Vargas*, Curro tries to stab Soledad during the procession of the Virgin, exactly when the procession stops and Soledad is going to sing a

traditional *saeta*.⁵⁰ Characters often seek the protection of the Virgin. For example, in *El gato montés*, Soleá asks the Virgin to protect Rafael during his (last) bullfight, and Rafael himself recites his *oración del torero* just moments before entering the arena. There is also often a priest or a “representative” of the religion. In *El gato montés*, we have the almost comical character of Padre Antón; in *La Dolores*, we have Lazaro, a theology student who falls in love with Dolores and even kills a man for her. In *Curro Vargas* we have Don Antón, who prevents Curro’s first attempt to kill Soledad.

Thus, if we were to summarize the general characteristics of the Spanish *verismo* opera, we could say that it has the same characteristics as the Italian one, with the due—and very much expected—differences in localization, regional-specific *costumbrismo*, and local language. One could argue that Spanish *verismo* could also draw from French naturalism. I would say that is not the case because the plots of Spanish *verismo* operas do not propose an analytical approach to the problems of society, which was the feature that distinguished naturalism from *verismo*. Also, French naturalism used the novel as the preferred method of “scientific” analysis of the world, while Italy and Spain have a large repertoire of plays complementing the novels.

At this point, I wonder why it is so difficult to contemplate the existence of Spanish *verismo*. I think the misunderstanding, especially for the operas of the first two decades of the twentieth century, comes from the fact that Spanish realism has always been interpreted as a folklorization of Spanish culture, perpetuating an image of Spain—

⁵⁰ A *saeta* is a song of the Andalusian Catholic tradition, usually performed during religious processions. It is sung unaccompanied, and it is characterized by strong emotional intensity. Traditionally, a *saetero* or a *saetera* sing it from a balcony, addressing the statue of Jesus or of the Virgin.

particularly the southern regions—exclusively as an object of exotic fantasies rather than a real and somehow difficult one, but still a fictional, theatrical representation of their contemporary world. The life of the Andalusian Gypsies was no less challenging than that of the Sicilian peasants, as narrated by Verga. Yet, *andalucismo* was often a signifier of romantically exotic imagery—ence the misunderstanding that positions most *andalucismo* works under the blanket definition of “españoladas.” In addition, what does not appear so much in the narrative, which is partly surprising, is that even *casticist* realism, widely employed in comic operettas, is a strong exoticization of Spanish culture. Indeed, it is a form of self-exoticization that is less projected towards the outside of the country, as the representation of southern culture could be instead.

3.5 Two Periods of Spanish *Verismo*

I identify two periods of operatic *verismo* production in Spain. The first period covers 1895-1900 and corresponds to the time in which Spanish composers took inspiration from the Spanish popular, or “rural,” drama for their works, as mentioned before. This is a period that saw significant transformations also in the social and political sphere in Spain, as we have seen in Chapter I, and in which Spanish literature produced a realism, inspired by French naturalism or Italian literary *verismo*, that is either popular, rural, social, or urban.

Interestingly, there is a time gap between *verismo* in Italy and Spain. If the golden period of Italian *verismo* is defined between 1890 and loosely 1900 with works such as *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Pagliacci*, *La Tilda*, and *Mala vita*, followed by later modernist trends by Puccini (*La fanciulla del West*, 1910) and ending with *Il Tabarro* (1918), on the other hand,

in Spain the phase of complete emancipation of a *verismo* language is shifted by about ten years compared to Italy. I identify this as the second period of Spanish *verismo*, and it corresponds to what Iberní called the “decay of the model.”⁵¹ Indeed, the first Spanish works indebted to Italian *verismo*, which appeared more or less in the fashionable Italian rural drama years, were transitional works. Breton’s *La Dolores* (1895), in particular, is an initial *verismo* experiment together with lyric dramas such as *Curro Vargas* and *La cara de Dios* by Chapí, or *La tempranica* by Gerónimo Giménez.⁵² The works of this first period are indeed faithful to the *verismo* literature from which they draw their stories; however, they represent a heterogeneous corpus, including operas, *dramas líricos*, or shorter zarzuelas, and they are still configured as experiments or transitional works.

I will argue that the second period extends from 1905 to 1917 and is when the most significant Spanish operatic *verismo* works were created. In a few years, we have Falla’s *La vida breve* (1913, but written 1904-05), Granados’ *Goyescas* (1916), Usandizaga’s *Las golondrinas* (1914), and Penella’s *El gato montés* (1917)—in sum, the main corpus of Spanish *verismo* works. In this phase, the language of the Spanish composers tends more toward modernism in a mixture of Wagnerian, Italianate, and French styles. To some extent, it leans towards a Puccinian style.

I believe the time lag between Italian and Spanish *verismo* is due to a combination of factors. In the period in which Italian operatic *verismo* flourished, specifically between

⁵¹ Iberní, “Verismo y realismo,” 225.

⁵² The problem of the one-act zarzuela indebted to *verismo* of this first period is that they keep having a certain operetta character, especially in the choice of some musical numbers, often witty, that clash with the dramatic sentiment of the plot.

1890 and 1894, Spain was at the highest point of the *género chico* and the *teatro por horas* practice. In those years, there was no particular interest in “serious” Spanish works, even less if realist. Composers lamented the lack of support and the institution’s scarce interest in new experimentations toward a national opera. The complex situation was summarized quite eloquently by Tomás Breton when he wrote that if Wagner had been in Spain, he would end up writing zarzuelas of the *género chico* type after having composed *Tannhäuser* or *Lohengrin*.⁵³ Zarzuela was preeminent in the Spanish music business, and Spanish composers encountered strong opposition in producing works that would have likely resulted in failures, at least for two reasons. In the first place, the audience was too used to the operetta, which theaters constantly required from the composers. Secondly, because of the language issue. Spanish was well accepted, but only for the comic and popular zarzuela, while Italian was “required” for more serious operatic works. Amid the *ópera española* discussions, Spanish opera theaters (most of all, the Teatro Real) tended to reject operas in the Spanish language.

This was enough to limit the potential diffusion and success of Spanish works with a *verismo* tendency; works that—to follow the definition of a much-sought-after “popular opera”—needed to be in the national language. Spanish opera lacked institutional support rather than an artistic substratum, which was also reflected in the realist repertoire. Many Spanish composers certainly had the means to create large-impact realist works, and above all, they had considerable supporting literature throughout the

⁵³ Tomás Bretón, *La ópera nacional y el teatro real de Madrid: conferencia leída en el ateneo literario el día 5 de febrero de 1904* (Madrid: Sociedad Anónima “Casa Dotésio,” 1904). “Si Wagner se hubiese producido en España, es muy posible que después de componer *Tannhäuser* y *Lohengrin*, hubiera tenido que dedicarse al *género chico*.”

period. The overall consequence was that composers, even after venturing into writing operas and lyric dramas, kept turning to the zarzuela, which represented a safer financial enterprise. Thus, the problem of “national opera” remained unresolved, and the *género chico* was elevated to the national form of musical theater.

Premiere	Title	Composer	Libretto	Denomination
1895	<i>La Dolores</i>	Tomás Bretón	Bretón, after Feliú y Codina	Opera Española (3 acts)
1896	<i>Pepita Jiménez</i>	Isaac Albéniz	Francis Money-Coutts	Lyric comedy / Opera (single act; 2 acts in 1906)
1898	<i>Maria del Carmen</i>	Enrique Granados	Josep Feliú y Codina	Opera (3 acts)
1898	<i>Curro Vargas</i>	Ruperto Chapí	Joaquín Dicenta and Manuel Paso, after Pedro Antonio de Alarcón	Drama lírico (3 acts)
1899	<i>La cara de Dios</i>	Ruperto Chapí	Carlos Arniches	Drama de costumbres populares (3 acts)
1900	<i>La cortijera</i>	Ruperto Chapí	Joaquín Dicenta and Manuel Paso	Drama lírico (3 acts)
1900	<i>La tempranica</i>	Gerónimo Giménez	Julián Romea Parra	Zarzuela (single act)
1913	<i>La vida breve</i>	Manuel de Falla	Carlos Fernandez Shaw	Drama lírico (2 acts)
1914/29	<i>Las golondrinas</i>	José Maria Usandizaga	Gregorio Martinez Sierra	Drama lírico / Opera (3 acts)
1916	<i>Goyescas</i>	Enrique Granados	Fernando Periquet y Zuaznábar	Opera (single act)
1917	<i>El gato montés</i>	Manuel Penella	Manuel Penella	Opera (3 acts)
1925	<i>La Virgen de mayo</i>	Federico Moreno Torroba	Fernando Luque, after Paul Max	Opera (single act)

Table 3.3: First corpus of Spanish *verismo* works.

3.6 Rural Drama, *Costumbrismo*, *Andalucismo*, and the Exotic.

Maria Espín Templado has pointed out how naturalism and regional Spanish *constumbrismo* inform two theatrical subgenres at the turn of the century, namely the “social drama” and the “rural drama,” with the latter particularly characterized by the

local language or vernacular.⁵⁴ Espín Templado proposes a list of works that more or less coincide with the ones suggested by Iberní. She identifies them as “popular dramas,” many of which were translated into Spanish *verismo* works. *La Dolores* (1892) and *María del Carmen* (1895) by Josep Feliú y Codina, which became the eponymous operas by Bretón (1895) and Granados (1896); *Juan José* (1895) by Joaquín Dicenta; *El niño del a Bola* (1884) by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón, that became *Curro Vargas* (1898) by Chapí; *Pepita Jiménez* by Juan Valera, used for Albéniz’s eponymous opera (1896); and *La cara de Dios* (1899) by Carlos Arniches, that became the eponymous opera by Chapí (1899).

This list highlights the enormous contribution writers and playwrights made to Spanish operatic realism. Together with the realist novels by such writers as Pedro Antonio de Alarcón (1833-1891), Carlos Arniches (1866-1943), and Juan Valera (1824-1905), José Maria de Perada (1833-1906), Pedro Antonio de Alarcón (1833-1891), Emilia Pardo Bazán (1891-1921), Benito Perez Galdós (1841-1920), and Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (1867-1928), a primary source of inspiration for the realist and *verismo* Spanish musical theater at the crossroads of the centuries was the Spanish *drama social* and, even more, the *drama rural*. These literary trends were undoubtedly informed by French naturalism but even more by Italian *verismo* literature, which started taking shape in the 1870s with Giovanni Verga, Luigi Capuana, Salvatore di Giacomo, Federico de Roberto, Matilde Serao, and Grazia Deledda.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Espín Templado, “El texto dramático y literario.”

⁵⁵ A detailed presentation of *verismo* in literature and music has been presented in Chapter I.

Mariano de Paco identifies four characteristics that make the Spanish rural drama “uniquely Spanish.” The use of *costumbrismo*, which is the realistic representation of regional customs; the influence of theatrical masters of the *Siglo de Oro*, above all, Lope de la Vega; a plot centered around problems of honor and virtue; and the use of a popular/vulgar language, often as a regional dialect.⁵⁶ Like *verismo* literature in Italy, Spanish rural dramas were a product of the Spanish middle class and used by the middle class. The bourgeoisie appreciated the idyllic representation of the rural world, even with its realism featuring sordid stories. It was still a highly idealized world inconsistent with the reality of life in the cities.

The rural drama is informed by the Spanish *sainete*.⁵⁷ De Paco draws from Fernández-Santos, who described the *sainete* as the urban equivalent of the Spanish rural drama. However, while the *sainete* has a degrading view of the society, and for this reason tends to be humorist, the rural drama tends to tragedy and sublimation.⁵⁸ Despite often resembling a dialect, the language of the rural drama is usually a construction that comes from an intensification of vulgar language. This draws from the idea of “real life” suggested by French naturalists—especially Zola—and Italian *verismo*, and also refers to the *verismo* “artifice of regression.” However, after an extensive linguistic analysis of the major rural dramas, de Paco concludes that the language rarely provides a precise

⁵⁶ Mariano de Paco de Moya, “El drama rural en España,” *Anales de La Universidad de Murcia*, no. 30 (72 1971): 141.

⁵⁷ The *sainete*, sometimes identified with a farce, was a form of Spanish comic theater. Usually, *sainetes* were single-act works and had some sort of music that accompanied or alternated with spoken language. Cfr: Roger Alier, “Sainete,” in *Grove Music Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.24299>.

⁵⁸ De Paco, “El drama rural,” 142.

geographic collocation. The language, which is characterized by deformations of the words (with loss of the last consonants, e.g., *mujé* instead of *mujer*) or the use of way of saying and vulgar expressions, eventually only serves the purpose of identifying a low social status.

According to de Paco, the “rural drama” started concurrently with the “social drama” (*drama social*), and the origins of the latter are usually identified with *Juan José* (1895) by Joaquín Dicenta. However, the two forms of drama must not be confused because, by definition, the rural drama has no social intent, despite, on certain occasions, an underlying social theme being presented concurrently with the rural one.⁵⁹ The stories take place in a rural environment around Spain. De Paco offers a comprehensive list of the authors and their works, specifying the geographic location of the plot where indicated.

Josep Feliú y Codina (1845-1897) explored any literary genres, and his main contributions to the theater were *La Dolores* (1892) and *María del Carmen* (1896). The former is staged in Calatayud (Zaragoza), the latter in Murcia. Both became eponymous operas by Bretón (1895) and Granados (1898). The topical rural drama is considered *Tierra Baja* (1896) by Àngel Guimerà (1845-1924), who also wrote *La boja* (1890). Others were: Benito Pérez Galdos with *Los condenados* (1894); Joaquín Dicenta (1862-1917) with *El señor feudal* (1897); the brothers Alvares Quintero, Serafín (1871-1938) and Joaquín (1873-1944) with *Malvaloca* (1912); Carlos Arnichés (1866-1943) with *Dolorettes* (1901);

⁵⁹ De Paco cites two examples of rural dramas with a “social” twist. *El señor feudal* by Dicenta and *El Labrador de más aire* by Miguel Hernández.

Jacinto Benavente (1866-1954) with *Señor ama* (1908), *La Malquerida* (1913), *La infanzona* (1945, set in a *pueblo* in Castilletes); Adriá Gual (1872-1943) with *Misterio de dolor* (1904); Linare Rivas (1866-1938), who staged his works *Cristobaldón* (1920) and *Flor de los pazos* (1912) in Galicia; José López Pinillos (1875-1922) was very prolific, and over the years his plays switched from an idealized bourgeoisie view of the rural world to a marked idea of class. His major works were *El pantano* (1913), *Escalvitud* (1918), *La red* (1919), *La terra* (1921), *El caudal de los hijos* (1922), and *Embujamiento* (1923).

With Eduardo Marquina (1879-1946), we have the beginning of the decadence of the traditional *drama rurale* by Feliú y Codina, leaning towards new forms that were eventually highly stylized by Federico García Lorca. Major Marquina's works were *Alimaña* (1919) and *Fruto bendito* (1912), both set in the Pyrenees of Aragón, *Salvadora* (1929, set in Guadarrama), *Fuente escondida* (1931, staged in the province of Herida), and *Las Julianes* (1932, set in Castille). Lorca wrote rural dramas that are unique in the style and—to use de Paco's words—unclassifiable. He writes, “Lorca's rural tragedies are something new in conception, in language, and intention; they are a vision of the rural from within, without prior compromise. The passions of his characters have a telluric character, the elemental fatalism of the earth.”⁶⁰ His three major works in the genre are *Bodas de sangre* (1932), *Yerma* (1934), and *Casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936). According to de Paco, Lorca and Marquina close the era of the Spanish rural drama.

Only a few of the cited dramas indeed became operas. However, the influence of such authors and works is still significant in shaping an idea of Spanish *verismo*, together

⁶⁰ De Paco, “El drama rural,” 167-68.

with influential novels that were structured as naturalist and *verismo* works by such novelists as José María de Perada (1833-1906), Pedro Antonio de Alarcón (1833-1891), Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921), Benito Pérez Galdós (1843-1920), Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (1867-1928).

During a recent trip to Seville, I visited a private collection of late-nineteenth-century Sevillian *costumbrismo* art at the Casa Fabiola-Donación de Arte Mariano Bellver y Dolores Mejías. In introducing the splendid works, the guide very acutely emphasized that most *constumbrismo* artworks were “not very authentic” by definition. He presented them as *pastiches* that combined elements of pictorial realism. In many cases, particular works offered representations of realistic but improbably combined elements, such as the tower of the Giralda of Seville inserted in a part of the city from which it is unlikely to be visible. The presence of *costumbrismo* in Spanish musical art is an element that should not be underestimated when one is interested in *verismo* and realism. *Costumbrismo* can be considered an ideal point of view for Spanish musical *verismo*.

Because we established the idea of Italian *verismo* as a theatrical idealization of reality (as I proposed in my archetype), we can also take the parallel idea of a Spanish *costumbrismo* as an idealization of Spanish life and customs of the time. It might sound like a contradiction because *costumbrismo* is itself a form of realism, but we confirm once again that reality is never “too real” when brought on the stage. The same concept can be applied to Andalusian *costumbrismo* when mixed with *andalucismo*, the celebratory emphasis of Andalusian culture. *Andalucismo* is the “-ism” probably more recurrent in Spanish theatrical productions of the first half of the twentieth century. Even when the themes

dealt with are sordid, it is always an idealized *andalucismo*. Sometimes such idealization becomes almost trivialization, and, in the eyes of the critics, the theatrical works become *españoladas*.

In Spain, even before 1898, southern cultural markers (folk songs, dances, and choirs) had been extensively employed in zarzuelas and always well accepted. However, according to Clinton Young, in the aftermath of the 1898 “disaster,” this took a political twist. In fact, after the 1898 war, the so-called “*turno pacífico*” system had been compromised, with the emerging working class in Madrid demanding more active participation in the political sphere. Young notes that “as urban spaces and urban politics became even more contested, what would be more natural than for zarzuela composers and librettists to turn to a romanticized rural past—one that had provided, no matter how ephemerally, peace and stability at the end of the nineteenth century?”⁶¹

The label *españolada* was often associated with works that exaggerated in representing Spanish folklore, especially from Andalusia. The idea of an “*andalucismo de pandereta*” (Spain of the tambourine) became part of an anti-Andalucía narrative, specifically after the Spanish-American war. It was primarily enacted by some poets and artists of the Generation of ‘98, who were inspired by centralist theories of *casticismo* and *castillanismo*. However, the concept is not to research exclusively in Spain but also in the representation of Spain in other countries, most of all France. Curious as it might seem,

⁶¹ Clinton D. Young, *Music Theater and Popular Nationalism in Spain, 1880-1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016), 109.

Spanish artists (visual and performing artists) active in Paris were the first to establish such a Romantic trope. Michael Christoforidis writes,

The influx of Spanish authors and visual and performing artists during the Second Empire, in tandem with the tastes of their patrons and the French public, served to reinscribe the tropes of l'*Espagne romantique*, in particular, their depictions of Andalusia and the performance of styles of music and dance associated with that region. The resulting art and entertainment consolidated the *espagnolade* as a genre in Paris, which became a key site for its international dissemination. [...] The Parisian *espagnolade* was arguably a unique manifestation of nineteenth-century exoticism because it resulted from continuous cultural exchange, as Spanish artists in Paris both informed the *espagnolade* and were inspired by it.⁶²

But in Spain, realism and exoticism were customarily relegated to a witty theatrical musical representation. Madrid's audience accepted the musical representation or rural culture as a means of comic entertainment. This issue prevented realist and *verismo* Spanish operas from being considered seriously by both audience and critic. The *españoladas* amplify and insist on some unique tropes of Spanish culture, like the bullfight, the gypsy woman, the *torero*, and the bandit. Such characteristics were real, but they were perceived as exotic and unreal due to exaggeration. The concept of *españolada* can be interpreted as a negative romanticization of Spanish realism. However, suppose we accept the definition of *verismo* provided in chapter II, as the right balance between reality and fiction, between sordid naturalism and its theatrical version. In that case, we can see that the alleged *españolismo* of some Spanish works perfectly aligns with a vision of a *verismo* opera that is neither too real nor too ideal.

⁶² Christoforidis and Kertesz, *Carmen and the Staging of Spain*.

3.7 A Brief Summary of Major Spanish *Verismo* Works (1895-1925)

This section offers basic information and the synopsis of the works introduced in the previous table. By including them in the scheme, I already have classified them as *verismo* because they share some characteristics proposed in the archetype. Thus, I will avoid focusing on those properties and will provide mainly a plot summary. Other details will be added if deemed relevant. Also, *La Dolores*, *Las Golondrinas*, and *El gato montés* have dedicated chapters in this dissertation, respectively Chapter 4, 5, and 6.

La Dolores (1895) [[see Chapter 4](#)] is a three-act opera, subtitled *Ópera española*, composed by Tomás Bretón (1850-1923), who also wrote the libretto, based on the eponymous 1874 play by José Feliú y Codina. It was premiered on March 16, 1895, at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid. The story takes place in Calatayud, Aragón. The innkeeper, Dolores, has many suitors, among them the wealthy Patricio, the sergeant Rojas, the barber Melchior (who first seduces her and then abandons her), and also the shy seminarian Lazaro, grandson of Gaspara (owner of the inn where Dolores works), who judges Dolores for her mocking attitude. Melchor says he will marry someone richer, infuriating Dolores, who promises revenge. A big party is improvised in the village, where everyone shows off their skills to impress Dolores, performing different Spanish dances and songs. Melchor sings the infamous *copla* “*Si vas a Calatayud, pregunta por la Dolores.*” Dolores is furious and challenges her ex-lover, but fortunately, the tension is eased by the execution of the famous *Jota*. Patricio then attempts to win over Dolores with gifts, while Rojas promises a memorable bullfight. Melchor, however, bets with the other two that Dolores will instead accept a date with him that night. To take revenge, Dolores plays

along and invites Melchor to meet at 10 p.m., but she also invites Patricio and Rojas simultaneously. Lazaro arrives and declares his love for Dolores. Celemín watches the scene and laughs at Lazaro, who grabs him by the neck, but he is interrupted by the beginning of the bullfight. Rojas is gored by the bull but saved by Lazaro, whom everyone now celebrates. Dolores is moved and gives him an appointment for 10 p.m. Gaspara accuses Dolores of seducing her nephew, who must leave for the seminary the following day. Dolores explains her feelings for him and tells Gaspara to tell Lazaro to go before 10 to avoid the other three. Lazaro greets Dolores shortly before ten, and when he hears the famous *copla* intoned again, he is furious and vows revenge. Melchor is arriving, and Dolores makes Lazaro hide in the adjacent room, telling him it is Gaspara. But Melchor tries to rape Dolores, and Lazaro rushes and kills Melchor. Dolores tries to take the blame for what happened, but Lazaro admits the crime to everyone.

Pepita Jiménez (1898)⁶³ is a one-act opera, defined “lyric comedy,” by Isaác Albeniz (1860-1909) with an English libretto by Francis Money-Coutts, based on the eponymous novel by Juan Valera. It was premiered on January 5, 1896, at the Gran Teatro del Liceu in Barcelona as a one-act opera, but in 1897 it was revised into a two-act version. The story, set in a village in Andalusia, opens during the feast of the Infant Savior. Pepita Jiménez, a 19-year-old girl, was recently widowed after being married to her late 80-year-old uncle Don Gumersindo, a wealthy money lender from whom she

⁶³ Cfr: Walter Aaron Clark, “Spanish Music with a Universal Accent: Isaac Albeniz’s Opera ‘Pepita Jimenez’” (Ph.D. diss., Los Angeles, University of California, 1992); Walter Aaron Clark, “«Cavalleria Iberica» Reassessed: Critical Reception of Isaac Albéniz’s Opera ‘Pepita Jiménez,’” *Revista de Musicología* 16, no. 6 (1993): 3254–62; Walter Aaron Clark, *Isaac Albéniz: Portrait of a Romantic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

inherited a large fortune. Pepita is sought after by many suitors, including Count Genazahar. However, she has eyes only for Don Luis, son of the wealthy Don Pedro. Luis is a handsome seminarian, but he flirts with her shamelessly. Pepita's maid, Antoñona, reveals to Don Pedro his son's sentiment for Pepita. Although initially surprised, Don Pedro sets aside his feelings for Pepita and decides to second the young couple's romance. After a meeting with the vicar, Pepita suggests Don Luis follow his vocation. Don Luis has realized that he loves Pepita but resists the temptation. Just as the two are about to separate forever, Antoñona interrupts and makes Don Luis promise to see Pepita again before he leaves town. After bidding farewell to Pepita, Don Luis overhears Count Genazahar, recently rejected by Pepita, making insulting remarks about her to two officers. Luis gets angry and challenges the count to a duel, in which the count is wounded. When Don Luis sees Pepita again, he can't keep his true feelings about her. She is distraught and informs him that her life will be lost because of his calling and locks herself in her room. Fearing she will attempt a suicide, Don Luis bursts into Pepita's room, and the two join in an embrace.

María del Carmen (1898)⁶⁴ is an opera in three acts by Enrique Granados, with a libretto by José Feliú y Codina, and based on Feliú y Codina's eponymous play from 1896. It was premiered at the Teatro Circo Parish in Madrid, on November 12, 1898. The opera is set in the region of Murcia. The farmer Pencho is in love with María. However, after a fight over water rights in which he wounded the wealthy Javier, he had to flee to Algeria. While he is away, María nurses Javier, bringing him back to health and

⁶⁴ See Walter Aaron Clark, *Enrique Granados: Poet of the Piano* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 40-47.

hoping, in doing so, to save Pancho's life. When Pencho comes back to the village, María tells him that she agreed to marry Javier to prevent him from being prosecuted. Pencho must now defend his honor, and during a village feast he confronts Javier and challenges him to a duel. María is distraught because, even though she loves Pencho, she feels affection for Javier and does not want him to be killed. However, she cannot convince Pencho to avoid dueling. When the duel starts, the doctor, Don Fulgencio, appears and reveals that Javier is actually bound to die of tuberculosis. Javier realizes that the duel is futile, and after reconciling with María and Pencho, helps them to escape.

Curro Vargas (1898) is a drama lírico (lyric drama), with spoken dialogues and in three acts by Ruperto Chapí (1851-1899), with a libretto by Joaquín Dicenta and Manuel Paso Cano. The work is based on the novel *El niño de la bola* by Pedro Antonio de Alarcón. It is an emblematic opera, since its premiere happened at the Teatro Circo Parish [originally called Teatro Circa Price] in Madrid on December 10, 1898, which was the exact day Spain conceded its last colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines) after losing the short war with the United States. For this, the opera is often seen as a strong critique of regional customs in a society described as decadent and full of violence. Curro Vargas has fled the village and his beloved Soledad to seek his fortune, but not without threatening both her and whoever would have tried to win her heart. Time passes; Soledad has married Don Mariano and had a son, although she has not forgotten Curro. Amid the fear of the whole village, Curro returns with a desire for revenge, as he has learned from Soledad's mother that she is now married. His return occurs during the procession of the Virgin, and just before Soledad begins to sing the

saeta, Curro attempts to stab her. Don Antonio, the priest who raised Curro after his father's death, manages to stop him. The tragedy seems to have been avoided, and it appears that Don Antonio has managed to convince Curro to forgive Soledad, but when Curro learns of a letter in which Soledad declares that she still loves him, his desire for revenge is rekindled. There is a dance in the village, and a weird "auction" is held in which men choose women as if they were cattle. Curro wins the auction by offering a large sum of money to dance with Soledad, amid the insults of her husband, Mariano. During the dance, he stabs and kills Soledad, and without her reacting, he is stabbed to death by Don Mariano himself.

La cara de Dios (1899) is a three-act zarzuela, or lyric drama, described as a *Drama de costumbres populares* (popular customs drama) and composed by Ruperto Chapí (1851-1909), with a libretto by Carlos Arniches. The work premiered on November 28, 1899, at the Teatro Circo Parish in Madrid. The story takes place in Madrid during the feast of the monastery (*ermita*) de la Cara de Dios (the face of God). The bricklayer Ramón learns of a previous relationship that his wife Soledad has had with the artist Víctor. He chases her out of her house, keeping her away from their son. All this happens because a colleague of Ramón, Eleuterio, is obsessed with Soledad and does everything he can to get her. On the night of the feast outside of the monastery of la Cara de Dios, Soledad meets Eleuterio in the construction building to try to clarify. A quarrel arises in which Eleuterio tries to assault her sexually, and Soledad threatens him with a knife. Ramón has witnessed the scene, intervenes between the two, and threatens Eleuterio. The duel is averted through the intervention of Doroteo, a friend of Ramón and Soledad. Doroteo

also intercedes with Ramón, who forgives his wife. Eleuterio is harboring revenge, and there is tension. The next day, during the inauguration ceremony of the building, Eleuterio's revenge is feared. Eleuterio gets on the scaffolding to fix the flag but falls. It will be discovered that Doroteo tampered with the scaffolding for the sake of friends Ramon and Soledad. The work has a strong realist impact and is highly dramatic, although there are also some comic interludes, a legacy of the zarzuela. Chapí creates wide-ranging music, getting very close to realist techniques. Special moments are Soledad's monologue and the mazurka of the drunken workers.

La cortijera (1900) is a three-act lyric drama (with spoken dialogue) by Ruperto Chapí (1851-1809), with a libretto by Joaquín Dicenta and Manuel Paso Cano. It was premiered on March 2, 1900. The action takes place in Madrid in the years 1829-30. The beautiful Rosario is betrothed to the cowboy Rafael, but for some time she has been attracted to the bullfighter Manuel, Rafael's friend. Her detached attitude towards Rafael is noticed by everyone in the village. Shortly before a bullfight, Manuel and Rosario reveal their feelings to each other, and during the bullfight, Manuel is injured by the bull. Sometime later, Manuel has recovered from the accident and, in the meantime, the relationship between Rosario and Manuel has not improved. Rafael is tense, and he could commit an outrage. Manuel has announced that he will be leaving but has told Rosario that he will come back for her. Her friend Carmela is convinced that Rosario is wrong to betray Rafael because he really loves her, while the torero considers her just one of his many conquests. Rafael appears, and then Manuel and everyone reveal their feelings. The situation is very tense. Time passes, and Rosario is shunned by the whole

city for her behavior, but she is convinced of her love for Manuel. Manuel appears to comfort her, and the two decide to leave the city together; however, Manuel's friends find out and warn Rafael. During the Candelara feast, Rafael hurries to stop Rosario more out of spite than out of love. Rosario passes out, and Rafael kills the bullfighter, leaving the woman alive to be despised by all citizens.

La tempranica (1900) is a one-act zarzuela written by Gerónimo Giménez (1854-1923), with a libretto by Julián Romea Parra. It was premiered on September 19, 1900, at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid. The opera is highly indebted to Italian *verismo* and denounces the social problems derived from the “disaster” of 1898. It is full of folk references and Jiménez makes use of leitmotivic techniques. *La tempranica* is considered by many as Falla's point of reference in composing *La vida breve*.⁶⁵

Upon returning from hunting, Don Luis, Don Mariano, Don Ramón, and the Englishman Mr. James meet to talk in a clearing in the mountains near Granada. In the meantime, the little Gypsy Grabié passes by, and they ask him to sing. Don Luis and Grabié recognize each other, and after Grabié's performance, Don Luis recounts that one day he fell from his horse, passed out, and woke up in the house of some gypsies who had found him in the mountains. He spent several days with them and, to satisfy their curiosity, he pretended to be a farmer. Among the family there was María, who fell in love with Don Luis. Don Luis at first reciprocated but then decided to abandon her. A

⁶⁵ See Samuel Llano, “Falla's *La Vie Breve* (1914) and Notions of “Spanish Music”,” in *Whose Spain? Negotiating “Spanish Music” in Paris, 1908-1929*, Currents in Latin American & Iberian Music (Oxford: University Press, 2013), 136–57.

year later, María is engaged to a Gypsy named Miguel. Upon learning that Don Luis is there, she sends Grabié to look for him, arranging a meeting at the front door where she declares her love for Don Luis. But he rejects her. On a later day, María and Grabié are on a *rancho* in the mountains with their parents. Shortly after, Miguel arrives, ready to have a party to celebrate the marriage with María, and immediately after, Luis, with his friends. Grabié tells his sister that Don Luis is there and will soon return to Granada, where he is now married. However, María decides to go to Don Luis's house in Granada, where she sees his wife Lolita and their son. María, accompanied by Grabié, hears the couple talking and looking at their son, and she realizes that she has no chance. Therefore, she returns to Miguel's side.

La vida breve (1913) is a Spanish opera by Manuel de Falla, first composed in 1905 but premiered in 1913 in Niece (in a French version). The work is in two acts and four scenes, with a libretto by Carlos Fernández-Shaw. It is the story of the passionate love of the Gypsy Salud for the well-bred Paco, whom she eventually discovers is already engaged with a woman of his same social status. In a desperate act, Salud appears at Paco's wedding and confronts him. When Paco rejects her, even denying knowing her, the heartbroken Salud dies at his feet. The work is an example of an *andalucista* opera, infused with several musical dances and elements of the southern-Spanish culture, including many aspects of *cante jondo*. For example, the beginning of the opera is a long section based on the *martinete*, and there are other diegetic performances and dances, like a *tocaor* and a *cantaor* performing "Yo canto por soleares" ("I sing the soleares"), followed by the well-known Danza. Initially, Falla wrote the opera with well-divided musical

numbers. It was Debussy who advised him towards more continuity in the music and singing, also providing suggestions on the orchestration. Falla's *andalucismo* is not the a stereotypically exoticized and exaggerated representation of Andalusia (the so-called *Andalucía de pandereta*), which was rejected by the generation of '98. From his first works (*Noches en los jardines de España*, or *El amor brujo*) and up until the ethnographic music research he conducted with Federico García Lorca in the 1920s, Falla had been interested in Andalusian music, which he thought be as representative of Spain as the Castilian culture was. Of course, he filtered this fascination through the musical language of the modernist composer he was. Because of its plot, conciseness, authentic Spanish color, and the modern use of the orchestra, *La vida breve* is a quintessential *verismo* Spanish opera. If we placed the story in Sicily instead of Granada's Albaicín district and substituted the *cante jondo* and the *baile* with Sicilian folk songs and the tarantella, we would have a Spanish *Cavalleria*. Yes, there are no knives and blood in Falla's (for the strong believer he was, he would have never represented a homicide on stage). Still, Paco nevertheless kills Salud with the powerful weapons of disdain and rejection.

Las golondrinas (1914/29) [see Chapter 5] is a zarzuela in three acts by José María Usandizaga. The libretto was written by Maria Lejárraga and Gregorio Martínez Sierra, based on the play *Saltinbanquis* (1905) by Martínez Sierra. The work was premiered as a zarzuela on February 5, 1914, at the Teatro Circo Parish in Madrid. After José María's death in 1915, his brother Ramón prepared an operatic version that premiered at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona on December 14, 1929. Puck, Cecilia, and Lina all work in the theater company of a circus. The nomadic life of the circus is very

hard, but while Lina is meek and conformist, Cecilia aspires to something better and wishes to change her life. When Cecilia leaves the circus, her lover Puck is embittered, and find comfort in the friendship of Lina, who secretly loves him. Together they achieve professional success in their show. One day, after a performance in big circus where Puck and Lina perform a Pantomime, Puck meets Cecilia again. He suddenly decides to abandon Lina, who is devastated. But Cecilia, who by now has chosen another life, mocks Puck, who, out of jealousy, strangles her. The killer clown is jailed and left alone.

Goyescas (1916) is an opera by the Spanish composer Enrique Granados, based on his piano suite *Goyescas*.⁶⁶ *Los majos enamorados* (1911). The title is an homage to the painter Francisco de Goya (1746-1828), whom Granados greatly admired and whose collection of prints entitled *Caprichos* inspired the composition of the piano suite in the first place. The story, set in Madrid's suburbs, presents the bullfighter Paquiro and the captain Fernando contending for the beautiful *maja* Rosario and ends with a predictable duel, in which Fernando—whom Rosario had previously chosen as her lover—is mortally wounded. The work is in one act, divided into three tableaux, with a libretto written by Fernando Periquet. However, the genesis of the opera is an *unicum* in opera history since Granados—who had not yet decided on a librettist—wrote the music first without any text. When Periquet joined him, he had to put words to an already defined music. With his representation of Madrilenian *majos* and *majas*, Granados was said to have captured the “essence of Spain,” precisely as Goya, with his art, went deeply into the Spanish soul. Indeed, *majos* and *majas* are the embodiment of the *castillanismo* (or *casticismo*), as advocated

⁶⁶ See Walter Aaron Clark, *Enrique Granados: Poet of the Piano* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

in those years by the members of the so-called *Generación del '98*. Despite Granados often expressing disdain for politics, he certainly was a patriot (he had a history of military service in his family), and he shared with authors Unamuno and Azorín the idea of Castile being representative of Spain's soul and a symbol of a reinvented national identity. For this reason, *Goyescas* is, to some extent, a political work, representing—with its *casticismo*—a Spain rooted in its traditions while looking outward toward Europe. From a dramatic point of view, the opera could be easily compared to both *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci* (in fact, during its premiere in New York, it was paired with Leoncavallo's work.)

El gato montés (1917) [see [Chapter 6](#)] is a three-act opera written by Manuel Penella (1880-1939), with a libretto by the same Penella. The opera was premiered on February 22, 1917, at the Teatro Principal in Valencia. The story takes place in Seville and tells of the rivalry between the bullfighter Rafael, known as “the Macareno,” and a bandit, Juanillo—the “wild cat”—for the love of the Gypsy Soleá. The Gypsy actually loves the bandit, who had become a criminal for defending her honor, but she feels attached to the bullfighter by a bond of gratitude, as he welcomed her into her home when she was alone. The two rivals face off in a knife duel, but Soleá separates them. Juanillo threatens to kill Rafael if, on Sunday, he does not kill six bulls in the bullfight. The following Sunday, Rafael is gored in the Seville bullring and dies. Soleá, seeing Rafael die, also dies of a broken heart. Juanillo bursts into the wake of Soleá's body and takes her corpse to his refuge in the mountains, but he is pursued. His life is meaningless after Soleá's death, so he decides to die, asking the faithful Pezuno to shoot him in the heart before falling into the hands of his pursuers.

La Virgen de mayo (1925)⁶⁷ is a one-act opera by Federico Moreno Torroba (1891-1982) with a libretto by Fernando Luque, based on a book by Paul Max. The opera was premiered at the Teatro Real in Madrid on February 14, 1925. The protagonist is an attractive woman who hides her past from the man who wants to marry her. She and her fiancé go to the local religious festival, and she prays to “save herself” while her boyfriend goes to offer flowers to the Virgin of May. Right at that moment, her past lover, a criminal who had taken refuge in the countryside, returns to the village to torment her. With the promise that he will stop harassing her, she agrees to give him one last kiss, but the criminal kills her and then reveals her terrible past to the fiancé. The criminal’s escape is blocked by the procession carrying the Virgin of May. The opera is clearly indebted to *verismo*, has an evident flamenco flavor, and includes Andalusian culture folklore in the form of *saeta*, *bulerías*, *petenera*.

3.8 Conclusions

To conclude, Spanish musical *verismo* develops in the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. The main composers participating in this trend, albeit not with a precise design, are Bretón (*La Dolores*, 1895), Granados’ (*Maria del Carmen*, 1898, and *Goyescas*, 1915), Chapí (*Curro Vargas*, 1898; *La cara de Dios*, 1899; *La cortijera*, 1900), Jiménez (*La tempranica*, 1900), Falla (*La vida breve*, 1913), Usandizaga (*Las golondrinas*, 1914/29), Penella (*El gato montés*, 1917), and Torroba (*La virgen de mayo*, 1925). Although these operas and lyrical dramas align with the *topoi* characteristic of Italian *verismo*, they

⁶⁷ Walter Aaron Clark and William Krause, *Federico Moreno Torroba: A Musical Life in Three Acts*, series: Currents in Latin American & Iberian Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 89-90.

have traditionally been considered isolated cases, realistic interludes in the production of composers who have explored different theatrical styles, sometimes returning, for economic reasons, to composing operettas. In crossing the realist narrative with the problem of Spanish opera at the end of the century, we discover that due to their recurrence and dramatic and structural characteristics, these works constitute a more or less unitary corpus that can represent a solution to the problem of the *ópera española*.

Even if, due to problems of radicalized tradition and practice, one did not want to offer a new definition of *ópera española*, we should nevertheless recognize that these works are linked to each other based on typical schemes of Italian *verismo* but are identifiable as being uniquely Spanish in their use of regional language and folklore. Yet, they represent a tendency, or a repertoire, if we want, identifiable as *Spanish verismo*.

PART III. Through the Prism of *Verismo*

CHAPTER 4

Bretón's *La Dolores*. A Transition Towards Spanish *Verismo* Opera

4.1 Introduction

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the intense debate on the Wagnerian vs. Italian operatic model took place all over Europe. Though only with a more “local” perspective, Spain joined the discourse, trying to conciliate it with the internal problem of establishing an ideal model of Spanish national opera—a model that (theoretically) should have rejected any foreign influence while using Spanish folklore and the Spanish language. The consequent impasse, together with an embarrassing lack of institutional support, pushed the majority of composers towards the safe financial enterprise of the *género chico*, while others kept composing Romantic operas that were Spanish in name but Italian in style. As a result, Spain could not develop an organic operatic repertoire and instead found its national musical theater in the *zarzuela chica*. Tomás Bretón (1850-1923) was himself a victim of this system and resorted to composing zarzuelas only to support himself.

Today primarily renowned for his production of zarzuelas of the *genero chico*, Bretón was a pupil of Emilio Arrieta at the Real Conservatorio in Madrid. He even studied in Italy, with a pension offered by the Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando, and also visited France and Austria, where he discovered Wagner's music. Bretón's fame is usually associated with some widely performed zarzuelas, above all *La verbena de la Paloma* (1894), a viral and realist work, often compared to *La revoltosa* by Chapí (who had been Bretón's classmate in the studio of Arrieta). However, Bretón's importance lies in his active participation in the discourse on *ópera española*. Musically, Bretón tried to fuse Wagner's chromaticism and orchestral texture with free Italianate melody, and for such reasons, he has been defined as an "imperfect Wagnerite."¹ He preferred the use of poetry over prose (rejecting Wagner's concept of "infinite melody"), and he considered the Spanish language to be the most distinctive feature necessary for a Spanish national opera.

I maintain that Bretón's successful three-act opera *La Dolores* (subtitled *Ópera Española*) (1895), on a libretto by Josep Feliú y Codina, represents the perfect transition toward a *verismo* Spanish operatic model, being a fascinating mix of Italianate style with elements of Wagnerian orchestration and Spanish folkloric elements (e.g., the famous *jota* in the first act).

¹ Clinton D. Young, "Why Did Spain Fail To Develop Nationalist Opera?," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies* 38, no. 1 (December 31, 2013).

La Dolores has been studied by Victor Sánchez in his biography of Bretón² and in the preface to a recent edition of the score published by the Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales (ICCMU).³ Therefore, the purpose of this chapter will be to briefly summarize the genesis of the libretto and the reception of the opera and then dwell on the identification in *La Dolores* of the *verismo topoi* presented in Chapter II (based on the archetypal model of Italian *verismo* presented in Chapter I). In short, I will try to introduce the work from a *verismo* perspective aiming to confirm its novelty and the fact that, in the context of the Spanish realist repertoire, it presents itself as a forerunner to many other works that will follow, pointing in the direction of *verismo*.

4.2 Libretto

The libretto of *La Dolores* was written by Bretón himself, and it is based on the eponymous rural drama⁴ by Jose Feliú y Codina. The drama was successfully premiered at the Teatro Novedades in Barcelona in 1892. The work was generally very well accepted,⁵ although some criticisms were not lacking. In the newspaper *La vanguardia*, Roca y Roca pointed out the uniqueness of the drama, in terms of realism and presentation of strong passions, and connected it with *Carmen*.

Since the work begins and we find ourselves transferred to an Aragonese inn until it tragically concludes, unraveling a love rivalry with an accurate stab punctuated

² Víctor Sánchez, *Tomás Bretón: un músico de la Restauración*, Colección música hispana. Textos. Biografías 13 (Madrid: ICCMU, 2002).

³ Tomás Bretón, José Feliú y Codina, and Oliva García, *La Dolores: drama lírico en tres actos*, ed. Ángel Oliver, Música hispana. Series A, Música lírica 26 (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1999).

⁴ For details on Spanish rural drama, see Chapter 3.

⁵ J. Burgada da Juliá, "Teatro de novedades. *La Dolores*," *La Dinastía*, November 13, 1892.

by defamation, we miss the hapless Bizet. If the illustrious French composer lived, for sure I am that he could not find a more appropriate book to carve a filigree opera that could serve as a partner to his famous Carmen. The virile Aragonese race with his rondallas, with the hobbies typical of his brave genius, with the accents of his passions without folds, would have provided him with more than enough elements to write pages of admirable music, such as those that shine in his masterpiece. I have been told that Mr. Feliú's first purpose was none other than to make La Dolores a zarzuela: the thought, if it had existed, was very successful; but I also judge it to be correct that it has been reduced to turning it into a drama because I cannot think of which of our current composers could have been in charge of writing such dramatic music, and which of our zarzuela companies could have interpreted it."⁶

Knowing that the drama was meant to become a zarzuela, Roca y Roca even wondered who, among Spanish composers, would have been able to render it musically. He certainly could not have known that Bretón would satisfy his request just three years later. According to Victor Sánchez, the fact that the drama by Feliú y Codina was associated with *Carmen* immediately makes it clear that the work already had intrinsic characteristics linked to *verismo*. And it is precisely this characteristic, adds Sánchez, that attracted Bretón, who at the time was very interested in opera trends, of which *verismo* was at the apex.⁷ Bretón probably saw the drama at its premiere in Madrid in April 1893.

⁶ J. Roca y Roca, "La Dolores, drama de don José Feliú y Codina," *La vanguardia*, November 13, 1892. "Desde que empieza la obra y nos vemos trasladados á un mesón aragonés, hasta que concluye trágicamente, desenlazándose con una certera cuchillada una rivalidad amorosa, salpicada por la difamación, echamos de menos al desventurado Bizet. De vivir el ilustre compositor francés, seguro estoy que no hallara un libro más apropiado para labrar una ópera aflagranada que pudiera servir de pareja á su famosa Carmen. La viril raza aragonesa con sus rondallas, con las aficiones propias de su genio bravo, con los acentos de sus pasiones sin repliegues, hubiérale proporcionado elementos más que suficientes para escribir páginas de música admirable, como lo son las que brillan en su obra maestra. Me han dicho que el primer propósito del señor Feliu no fue otro que hacer de la Dolores una zarzuela: el pensamiento, caso de haber existido, era acertadísimo; pero juzgo también muy acertado que se haya concretado á convertirla en drama, pues no se me ocurre cual de nuestros actuales compositores hubiera podido encargarse de escribir música tan dramática, y cuál de nuestras compañías de zarzuela, hubiera podido interpretarla."

⁷ Sánchez, *Tomás Bretón*: 231.

Dolores's story appears to be a real one, and it was researched by Antonio Sánchez Portero.⁸ There existed a woman named María de los Dolores Peinador Narvión, born in Calatayud in 1819. She married a retired soldier, but apparently she was not a faithful wife, hence the famous *copla*. Years later, Feliú y Codina himself visited the Aragonese town in search of details about the story that he would later turn into a drama.⁹ The study by Víctor Sánchez on Bretón's letters has brought to light some interesting details regarding the genesis of the libretto. Bretón began writing the libretto at least as early as 1893 and the score in 1894, as evidenced by two letters sent to his friend Salvador Raurich.¹⁰ Subsequently, Bretón even visited Calatayud incognito. During a night walk, he heard a *rondalla* ensemble accompanying the famous singer Damáso Salcedo, which later would inspire the famous *jota* of the opera.¹¹

In adapting the text by Feliú and Codina, Bretón tried to adhere as much as possible to the original. Obviously, as in every operatic transposition, there were some adjustments. The first was that Bretón shifted the time period from 1830 to 1840. According to Antonio Sánchez Portero, Bretón made this change so that the historical context would be consistent with that in which the real Dolores would have lived.¹²

⁸ Antonio Sánchez Portero, *La Dolores: algo más que una leyenda* (Calatayud: Cometa, 1998).

⁹ Sánchez, *Tomás Bretón*, 232.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Sánchez Portero, *La Dolores*, 217-18, as reported in Sánchez, *Tomás Bretón*, 233.

¹² Sánchez, *Tomás Bretón*, 231.

Another variation regards Dolores's *copla*. The famous *copla*, which belongs to the tradition of Calatayud, is presented right at the beginning of the play by Feliú y Codina. These are the first words in the drama, sung by Celemín while he accompanies himself with the guitar.

*Si vas á Calatayud
Pregunta por la Dolores,
Que es un chica muy guapa
Y amiga de hacer favores.*

[If you go to Calatayud,
Ask for Dolores,
Who is a very beautiful girl
Prone to dispensing favors.]

The composer himself pointed out this difference in an interview published on *El Día*. After being asked, he confirmed the “innovation” made to drama by Feliú y Codina, as indicated by a reputable magazine. He replied:

No Sir, the only change, made in agreement with him [Feliú y Codina], pertains to the *copla* [...] Instead of coming from the street to the scene, it is improvised right there, and from it originated the musical drama: the rest are just little detailed, which at this time I don't remember.¹³

Bretón places the *copla* at the end of the first act, primarily characterized by a festive atmosphere. This reposition is dramaturgically very effective because, in Spanish operas, the *copla* is an element of tension that usually sets in motion or accelerates the action. In Bretón's opera, it is perfectly positioned right after all the characters have been fully introduced, and from that point on, the drama will unfold quickly. A further

¹³ Ruíz Morales, “La Dolores,” *El País*, March 16, 1895. “No, Señor, La única Reforma, de acuerdo con él [Feliú y Codina], se reduce á de la copla [...] en vez de venir de la calle á la escena, se improvise allí miso, y de ella se origen el drama musical: lo demás son sólo detalles de poca monta, y quistión en este momento no recuerdo.”

addition is the *madrigal* of the tenor Lázaro in the third act, justified by the operatic convention aimed at giving all the protagonists a moment to shine.

Bretón received several criticisms for being the author of the libretto, some of which were very harsh. The critic “Eme” of the newspaper *El imparcial* called the libretto “completely non-literary.”¹⁴ The critic Arimón from *El liberal* wrote:

We advise, however, its author, that henceforth try to take care in the literary part of his future productions, using a more poetic and raised language and verses than those he has used for *La Dolores*. There are inadmissible prosaisms there, which utterly conflict with the ease, elevation, and elegance that the word of the singers should have.¹⁵

The critic of *La Época* was a little less harsh and wondered why Bretón had not asked Feliú y Codina to write the libretto so that he could have avoided the criticisms leveled at him by both *El imparcial* and *El liberal*.

I understand, although for the time being I neither censure nor applaud it, that Mr. Bretón was in charge of arranging, by himself, the plan of the book: but why did he not confide *the words* to Mr. Feliú, who lives, fortunately, and who he is not only a remarkable playwright but also a very remarkable poet and an excellent versifier? If he had done so, Mr. Bretón would have made the new opera, in all respects, more perfect, and not even *El Imparcial* would have had to tell him that the book of *La Dolores* is «non-literary,» nor would *El liberal* record that «There are inadmissible prosaisms [...]»¹⁶

¹⁴ Eme, “*La Dolores*, ópera española en tres actos del maestro Bretón,” *El Imparcial*, March 17, 1895. “No hay para qué hablar del libreto, completamente iliterario. En él de seguro no ha puesto mano [...] el Sr. Feliú y Codina.”

(“There is no reason to talk about the libretto, which is completely non-literary. Surely Mr. Feliú and Codina did not put a hand in it.”)

¹⁵ Joaquín Arimón, “*La Dolores*,” *El Liberal*, March 17, 1895. “Aconsejamos, no obstante, a su autor, que en lo sucesivo procure esmerarse en la parte literaria de sus futuras producciones, empleando un lenguaje y unos versos más poéticos y levantados que los que ha utilizado para *La Dolores*. Hay allí prosaismos inadmisibles, que riñen en absoluto con la facilidad, elevación y galanura que debe tener la palabra de los cantables.”

¹⁶ C. F. S., “*La Dolores*, ópera en tres actos del maestro Bretón,” *La Época*, March 17, 1895. “Comprendo, aunque per lo pronto ni lo censure ni lo aplaude, que el Sr. Bretón se encargara de disponer, por si solo, el plan del libro: pero ¿por qué no confló las palabras al Sr. Feliú, que vive, afortunadamente, y que no sólo

es notable autor dramático, sino un poeta muy notable también y un versificador excelente? De hacerlo así, el Sr. Bretón hubiera conseguido que la nueva ópera fuera, por todos conceptos, más perfecta, y ni *El Imparcial* hubiera tenido que decirle que el libro del *La Dolores* es «iliterario», ni consignaría *El liberal* que «Hay allí prosaísmos inadmisibles [...]».”

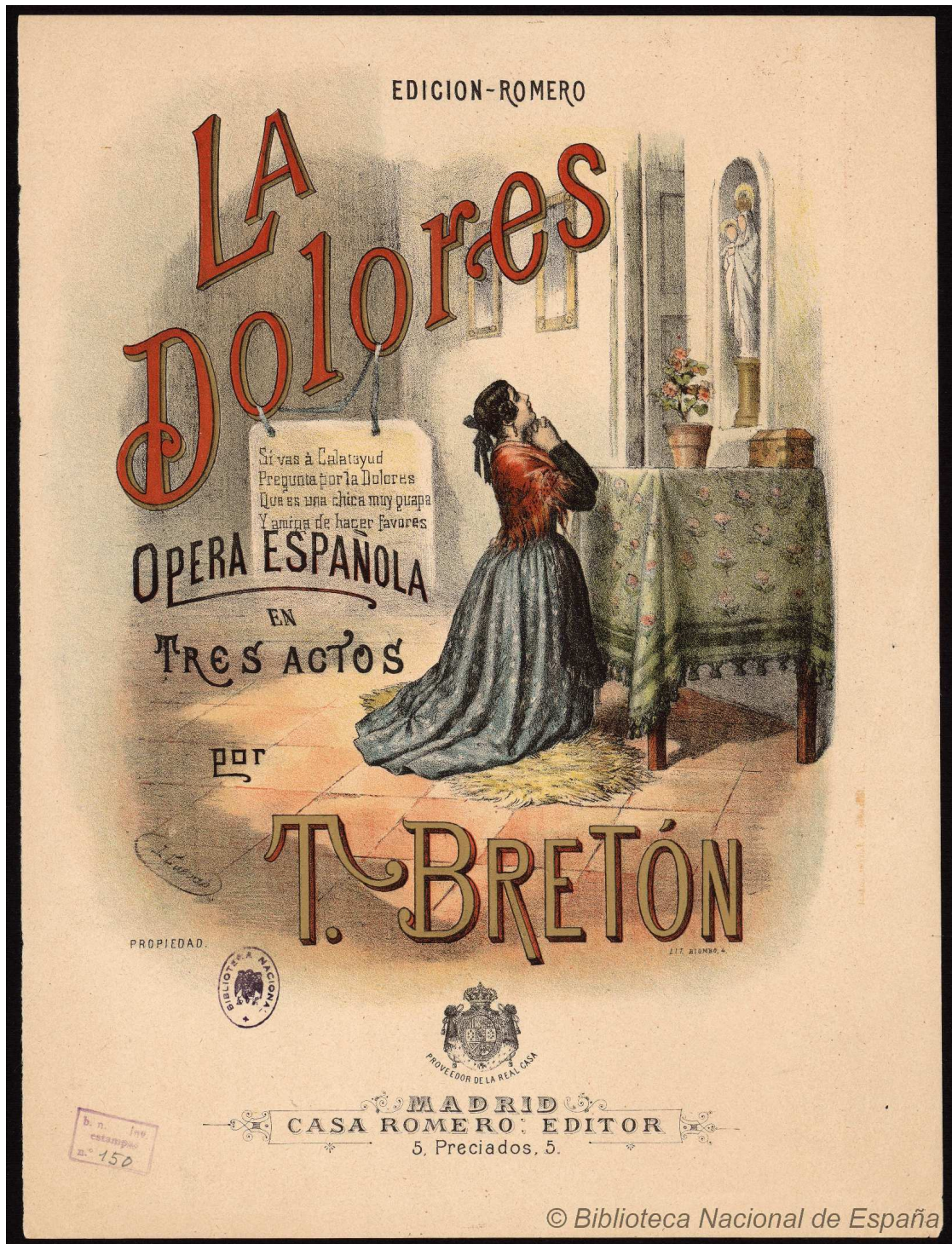


Figure 4.1: Cover of Breton's *La Dolores* (ca. 1894, Casa Romero Edition).
 The illustrations, by José Cuevas (1844-1923) refers to Act III, Scene 1.
 ©Biblioteca Nacional de España (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000164591>).

4.3 Reception

The opera was a success and featured sixty consecutive performances in Madrid.¹⁷ The reviews were all very positive and—apart from a few problems with the libretto, as we have already seen—all praised the music, history, and freshness of *La Dolores*. No reviews criticized, for example, the realist plot with the final murder of honor. This may be due to several reasons, most likely because the audience was not new to rural dramas, which they had seen for years at the Teatro de la Comedia. Likewise, the public had been exposed to *verismo* works, as we showed in Chapter II. On the contrary, some praised the choice of Feliú y Codina's drama, though they were still doubtful of Bretón's libretto. The critic of *La Época* was among a few who appeared to have understood the project behind *La Dolores* and its “national spirit.”

Because it has been told several times, the reader will already know that *La Dolores* was primarily a zarzuela book. He was not accepted by the composers to whom Feliú and Codina had to offer it; that ordeal was followed by the one who suffered the work already converted into drama; he triumphed in the end; it imposed itself with the charm and prestige of its multiple beauties on the public of all Spain; and, finally, thanks to maestro Bretón, he has been given musical form with extraordinary success. The author of *Los amantes de Teruel* was correct to focus his attention on *La Dolores*, a drama so beautiful and in which the national spirit beats so sincerely and vigorously, which abounds in characteristic pictures, full of animation, life, and local color, and in which they fight, encouraged by the inspiration of a true dramatic author, violent passions, of which they sing, as Rossini would have said, he already gave the composer half the road to success. He responded in an unbeatable way to the patriotic desire and the great desire

¹⁷ Afterward, the opera went to the Teatro Tívoli in Barcelona (for 112 nights), in Mexico on November 30, in Buenos Aires in January 1896, and in Rio de Janeiro (in Italian translation made by E. Golisciani) in August 1896. On January 16, 1906, it was performed in Milan, and later in Prague. It also received an English translation in 1907. It reached the Teatro Real in Madrid only in 1915, with only six performances offered.

Cfr. Victor Sánchez, “Introduction,” in Tomás Bretón, José Feliú y Codina, and Oliva García, *La Dolores: drama lírico en tres actos*, ed. Angel Oliver, Música hispana. Series A, Música lírica 26 (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1999).

that drove Maestro Bretón in his purpose of turning it into a tangible reality, ceasing to be false hope, the Spanish opera.¹⁸

Guerra y Alarcón wrote in *El heraldo de Madrid*, “The entire work is written in such a pure style and with such knowledge of all the procedures of the difficult art of counterpoint, and such a prodigious richness of harmonic devices, that it can be a model. Bretón has made a work where he has joined, to the deep knowledge of all the resources of harmony, a personal and very original way and an inexhaustible and spontaneous inspiration in each one of the musical numbers.”¹⁹ And the same author, in *Nuevo mundo*:

Dolores is a rich jewel of inspiration, mastery, of superior dramatic and lyrical talent. It shows the composer in the fullness of his genius. From that moment on, the national opera ceased to be a hope to become a reality. Little by little, the frightening monster of Spanish opera is making its way. Years ago, it was reluctantly tolerated; yesterday, it was listened to with respect, and today it is applauded enthusiastically.²⁰

¹⁸ C. F. S., “La Dolores, ópera en tres actos del maestro Bretón,” *La Época*, March 17, 1895. “Ya sabrá el lector, porque se ha contado varias veces, que La Dolores fue primariamente un libro zarzuela. No le aceptaron los compositores á quienes hubo de ofrecérselo Feliú y Codina; siguió a aquel calvario el que sufrió la obra convertida ya en drama; triunfó éste el fin; se impusó con el encanto y el prestigio de sus múltiples bellezas á los públicos de toda España; y, por último, gracias al maestro Bretón ha revestido forma musical con extraordinaria fortuna. El autor de *Los amantes de Teruel* estuvo realmente acertado al fijar su atención en *La Dolores*, Drama tan bello y en el que palpita el espíritu nacional tan sincera y vigorosamente, que abunda en característicos cuadros, llenos de animación, de vida y de color local, y en el que luchan alentadas por la inspiración de un verdadero autor dramático, violentas pasiones, de las que cantan, como hubiera dicho Rossini, daba ya por ganado al compositor la mitad del camino para llegar al éxito, y respondía de un modo inmejorable al afán patriótico y al generoso deseo que impulsan al maestro Bretón en su propósito de que se convierta en realidad tangible, dejando ya de ser una engañadora esperanza, la ópera española.”

¹⁹ Antonio Guerra y Alarcón, “La Dolores, ópera en tres actos del maestro Bretón,” *El heraldo de Madrid*, March 17, 1895. “La obra entera está escrita en un estilo tan puro y con tal conocimiento de los procedimientos todos del difícil arte del contrapunto, y tal prodigiosa riqueza de hechos armónicos, que puede ser ir de modelo. Bretón ha hecho una obra donde ha unido, al profundo conocimiento de todos los recursos de la armonía, una manera personal y originalísima y una inspiración inagotable y espontánea en cada uno de los números musicales.”

²⁰ Antonio Guerra y Alarcón, “La Dolores,” *Nuevo mundo*, March 21, 1895. “La Dolores es una riquísima joya de inspiración, de maestría, de superior talento dramático y lírico. En ella se muestra el compositor en la plenitud de su genio. A partir de ese momento, ha dejado de ser una esperanza la ópera nacional, para

However, was it a real success, from Bretón 's point of view? The fact that, after composing *La Dolores*, Bretón went back to composing zarzuelas provides some perspective on what he would realistically foresee. Guillermo Conde de Morphy provided the most detailed and interesting review of the work in *La correspondencia de España*.²¹ He was Bretón's friend and patron, so a certain level of bias should be expected. Nevertheless, his review brings to light some interesting points not highlighted elsewhere. He understood the intrinsic value of the opera and looked at it for what it represented for Bretón, that is, a new idea of Spanish national opera (indeed, the work's subtitle was *ópera española*). He praised Bretón's opera, considering it superior to *Carmen* in terms of authenticity (emphasis is mine):

This is, in summary, and slightly analyzed, *La Dolores* by Bretón, for me, the most complete of his works, which, as I have already said, **I believe will go down in posterity as a realized ideal**. Bizet's *Carmen* has unexpectedly changed the world, and more than to the talent of its author, it has been due to the supposed Spanish color of the work, as false in the literary part as in the musical aspect, which is undoubtedly inspired and beautiful, but inappropriate for a Spanish popular subject."²²

On the other hand, Conde de Morphy was not satisfied with the reaction of the audience and critics. He lamented that the audience applauded the opera primarily for its Spanish numbers. At the premiere, the performance was stopped by several minutes of

convertirse en realidad. Poco a poco se va abriendo camino el espantable monstruo de la ópera española. Hace años se soportaba á regañadientes; ayer se escuchaba con respeto, y hoy se aplaude con entusiasmo."

²¹ Guillermo de Morphy, "La Dolores de Bretón," *La Correspondencia de España*, March 18, 1895.

²² Ibid. "Esta es, en resumen, y ligeramente analizada, *La Dolores* de Bretón, para mí la más completa de sus obras, y que como ya he dicho, creo pasará a la posteridad como tipo de un ideal realizado. La *Carmen* de Bizet ha dado la vuelta al mundo y más que al talento de su autor, le ha debido al supuesto colorido español de la obra, tan falso en la parte literaria como en la musical, que es sin duda alguna inspirada y bellísima, pero impropia de un asunto popular español."

applause for the *jota*, followed by several calls for the composer. However, he points out, “they missed the artistic finesses of the opera, which are many.”²³ It is also plausible that the verismo setting of the opera could have appealed to the audience of the Teatro de la Zarzuela, certainly more than any Romantic opera, and that Bretón had seen in the *verismo* rural drama—fashionably successful around Europe—the missing element to create a work that would appeal to a larger public. To some extent, this was what the *costumbrista* zarzuelas of the *género chico* had successfully done. As for the critics, Conde de Morphy thought that among the very few able to understand the opera truly, there were also Bretón’s enemies, who would have rather “have their head be cut off than have their arms twisted, admitting that they were wrong.”²⁴

We know that the Spanish public represents a decisive factor in the history of the Spanish theater. The quite common discrepancy between an audience acclaiming an opera and the critics lambasting it makes it difficult to assess the true success of many works, while at the same time causing us to question the judgment of both audiences and critics—the former in terms of their music education, the latter in terms of their biases. At the time, the paradoxical situation was that newly composed Spanish operas, unless translated into Italian, were commonly rejected by the Teatro Real, a bastion of Italian

²³ Ibid. “[...] el público ha aplaudido con preferente entusiasmo un efecto de sonoridad material en la jota, quedándose en ayunas de las finuras artística de la obra, que son muchas. 2º, entre los críticos que pudieran entender y juzgar La Dolores, «que son muy pocos», los hay enemigos de Bretón y que antes se dejarán cortar la cabeza que dar á torcer su brazo, confesando que se equivocaron. De los aficionados á crítica musical, que se meten á hablar del ángulo, es decir, de lo que no entienden, nada tengo que decir y me guardaré muy bien de excitar sus iras, porque tal vez sean tan numerosos que pudieran caer sobre mí [...]”

²⁴ Ibid.

opera, sometimes being relegated to zarzuela venues, where they would be only superficially appreciated by an unprepared—though large—audience, mainly accustomed only to operetta.

The debate around *Los amantes de Teruel* was exemplary. Bretón composed this Spanish Romantic opera in 1889 and knew it was unsuitable for zarzuela theaters. In fact, he proposed it to the committee of the Teatro Real (chaired by Arrieta), which initially rejected it and then accepted it for production only after it was translated into Italian. It comes as no surprise then that, six years later, Bretón decided to propose *La Dolores* to the Teatro de la Zarzuela! However, Conde de Morphy lamented that the company hired for the premiere was not skilled enough for the high artistic requirements of *La Dolores*:

I am entitled to regret that the royal theater was not in charge of representing it and that the means of execution, although very worthy of praise, have not been up to the level that could and should be demanded in such critical and vital circumstances for the history of national art. This is a natural and logical consequence of the lack of organization in everything that concerns music and theater, as evidenced by the fact that if *La Dolores* had gone to the Royal Theater, it would have had to be translated so that the Italians could sing it in their language, passing after six or eight performances to the archive of the theater so that a century after some erudite investigator would come to remove it from the dust and oblivion.²⁵

When critic Ruiz Morale from *El país* asked Bretón why he chose an opera over a zarzuela, he replied:

On the other hand, we have more than enough elements to make the national opera, our popular airs are the best in the world, and above all, the jota marches to the head of all and has an epic character that makes it the warrior song of a virile people. I believe that with a bit of will, it can be achieved that we are free

²⁵ Ibid.

from foreign tutelage in what musical art is concerned. My purpose is to contribute to the extent of my forces to expel the Italians, already expelled from most of Europe. Surely, I won't make it, but with time, this, which I only pursue today, will be the purpose of many, and then its triumph will not admit doubt.²⁶

4.4 A “National” *Verismo* Story

To understand the realistic character of the opera *La Dolores* and its meaning in Bretón's theatrical journey, it is necessary to keep in mind Bretón's active participation in the discourse of Spanish national opera. His main contributions and the literature he produced have already been presented in detail in Chapter I. However, I will here briefly summarize the general ideas developed by Bretón starting from the 1880s—which resulted in the creation of *La Dolores*—and which the composer continued to nurture through the participation of several *querelles* up to the first decades of the twentieth century.

In 1891, the magazine *La España artística* proposed a survey to investigate the composer's position on the issue of the Wagnerian vs. Italian models, with a specific focus on the versification of the libretto. The result shows how the majority of musicians and intellectuals in Madrid still preferred poetry to prose, thus opposing the “infinite melody” proposed by Wagner. Bretón positioned himself halfway by arguing that beauty and

²⁶ Ruiz Morales, “La Dolores,” *El País*, March 16, 1895. “Por otra parte nosotros tenemos elementos sobrados para hacer la ópera nacional, nuestros aires popular son los mejores del mundo, y sobre todo la *jota* marcha á la cabeza de todos y tiene un carácter épico que la hace ser el canto guerrero de un pueblo viril, y creo que con un poco de voluntad puede conseguirse que nos veamos libres de tutela extranjera en lo que el arte musical se refiere. Mi propósito es contribuir a la medida de mis fuerzas á echar los italianos, arrojados ya de la mayor parte de Europa. Seguramente no lo lograré; pero con el transcurso del tiempo esto, que yo sólo persigo hoy, será el propósito de muchos, y entonces su triunfo no admitirá duda.”

spontaneity in singing could be achieved only by respecting the rhythm of the words and that “[...] an opera cannot be composed of eternal recitatives like an *infinite melody* [...]”²⁷ Bretón’s documented engagement with the problem of *ópera española* covers about thirty years, and includes, among others, two major publications.

The first one is the *folletto* titled *Más en favor de la ópera nacional* (1885),²⁸ in which he defines the zarzuela as an imperfect genre, equally distant from both the *comedia* and the opera, and laments the decline of the *zarzuela grande*, the three-act zarzuela initiated by Francisco Asenjo Barbieri in 1851. He criticizes Barbieri and Arrieta for having turned to the *género chico* and firmly disagrees with the proposed idea of a theater that would alternate performances of zarzuelas and operas, convinced that it would ridicule a national opera. Bretón is aware that Spanish operas are not, and never will be, at the same level as the ones from other European countries, but nevertheless proposes—starting from a corpus of seventeen Spanish operas—to gradually develop such a genre, maybe alternating the production of famous (and Italian) operas with new Spanish works.

Bretón also shows a firm rejection of anything Italian. However, I believe he purposely emphasizes this attitude to achieve a result. Indeed, it appears he contradicts himself when he suggests absorbing the best from every European country but

²⁷ Tomás Bretón, “La ópera en prosa. Informe de Don Tomás Bretón,” *La España artística*, August 8, 1891. “La música de asienta, entre otros principios fundamentales, sobre el rítmico, sin que lo puedan conmovier todos los delirios de la novedad y todos los paroxismos de la impotencia. Si el ritmo es esencial á la música, la palabra que haya de inspirar á aquélla debe tener también su ritmo; de otra manera no podía haber en la frase cantada la anhelada y fascinadora espontaneidad. [...] Ya se usa en cierto modo la prosa en los recitados de ópera, escritos hoy con acertada libertad en metros endecasílabo [...] Pero como para ser bella una ópera no puede componerse de recitados eternos y como eso de la melodía infinita.”

²⁸ Tomás Bretón, *Más en favor de la ópera nacional* (Madrid, 1885).

concurrently advocates for opera companies comprised of Spaniards only, even proposing a re-organization of the Conservatorio Real, which would exclude any Italian influence. By summoning Spanish composers to rally around the flag of Spanish nationalism, Bretón is trying to persuade them by offering a plausible incentive for defying both the dominant Italianate style and the—in his view, unpretentious—*género chico*.

Bretón dealt with the problem again in 1904, in a lecture at the Ateneo Literario entitled “*La ópera nacional y el Teatro Real de Madrid*.”²⁹ Twenty years after his first publication on the subject, and ten years after the premiere of *La Dolores*, he is still lamenting a widespread lack of interest in Spanish operas and keeps maintaining that the language is the primary element of a Spanish opera. Again, he is sharply critical of the *género chico*. He writes: “if Wagner had worked in Spain, it is likely that, after composing *Tannhauser* and *Lohengrin*, he would have had to dedicate himself to the *género chico*.”

Bretón’s “intermediate” position between German and Italian music and the fact that he actually did not despise Italian music (how could he, after having even studied in Italy?) is confirmed by the 1891 *Discursos leídos ante la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando*.³⁰ There, Bretón praises Barbieri’s *zarzuela grande*, Italian melodicism, and Wagner’s techniques but finds an issue in each of them.

The Italians weakened and unbalanced lyrical drama by exaggerating the importance they gave to the voice and the multitude of formulas they used. Wagner incurred the opposite defect, granting exaggerated importance to the orchestra and taking it away from the voice, after all the most beautiful instrument

²⁹ Tomás Bretón, *La Ópera Nacional y el Teatro Real de Madrid: conferencia leída en el Ateneo Literario el día 5 de febrero de 1904* (Madrid: Sociedad Anónima “Casa Dotésio,” 1904).

³⁰ Tomás Bretón, *Discursos leídos ante la Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando en la recepción ... del Señor Dn Tomás Bretón* (Madrid, 1896).

for being the work of God, and substituting those formulas with others similar to his own. In his last works, Verdi teaches us how well both factors can be balanced and completed, as do some French composers.³¹

This statement further confirms two points. First, Bretón's proposal of having only Spanish companies, Spanish teachers, and students at the Conservatory and, in general, to ban anything Italian from Spain's music culture was, indeed, a desperate solution proposed by a passionate patriot who spent decades trying to capture the attention of both the public and music institutions on the necessity of a national opera. The primary issue was Teatro Real which, with its preference for Italian operas, shaped the national production of operas. For this reason, the problem had to be solved by mitigating the Italian presence with drastic moves. In the same document, Bretón writes, "I cannot explain the adjective *Real* to the Teatro del la Plaza de Oriente, since it does not depend absolutely on the Crown of Spain. Depending on its history and the mission it fulfills among us, its name is *Teatro italiano*."³²

The reference to late Verdi (probably Bretón refers to *Otello* and *Falstaff*) is an allusion to the style developed by the Italian master in the last part of his life, when he

³¹ Ibid., 21.

"Los italianos debilitaron y desequilibraron el Drama lírico por la exagerada importancia que dieron á la voz y la multitud de fórmulas que emplearon. Wagner incurrió en el defecto contrario, concediendo exagerada importancia á la orquesta, y quitándosela á la voz, instrumento al cabo el más bello por ser obra de Dios, y sustituyendo aquellas formulas con otras tanta de su manera. Verdi nos enseña en sus últimas obras y algunos compositores franceses, cuan bien pueden equilibrarse y completarse ambos factores."

³² Ibid., 26. "No acierto a explicarme el adjetivo *Real* al Teatro de la Plaza de oriente, puesto que no depende absolutamente en nada de la Corona de España. Su propio nombre, ateniéndonos á su historia y á la misión que llena entre nosotros, es el del *Teatro italiano*."

blended a continuous form (but far from infinite melody) and a denser orchestration of a Wagnerian style—all, of course, supported by a typically Italian melody substrate. In practice, this was what Bretón had been looking for in the Spanish opera, a fusion of Italianism and Wagnerism but with precise Spanish localization. As we saw in Chapter 3, this operatic model is the one that the *verismo* composers had fully developed.

And this brings us back to *La Dolores*, as Bretón combined all these ideas in his new opera, even better than he had done with *Los amantes de Teruel*. In that case, the missing element to create an authentic Spanish work was the plot, which, although set in Spain, was still too late-Romantic in its historicism. Moreover, and the studies done by Sánchez confirm this, Bretón had a particular interest in Italian *verismo*, very fashionable at the time, and he certainly saw parallels between Italian and Spanish rural dramas.

4.5 *Verismo Topoi*

In *La Dolores*, we can identify numerous *topoi* of the Spanish *verismo* model presented in Chapter 3. These are the generic *topoi* of the *verismo* archetypal model (linear and tragic plot and unity of time/place/action, non-virtuosic and sometimes declaimed vocality and mix of Italian and Wagnerian styles) plus folklore and local regional color. In this, the work is a sort of sample of Spanish folklore, in terms of music and *costumbrismo*, the realistic representation of Spain's regional customs, including an offstage *corrida*, or bullfight. The musical language of the opera evolves over the three acts following the development of the drama.

Set in nineteenth-century Calatayud, it is the classic story of a tavern maid and her many suitors. The characters include the sergeant Rojas, the barber Melchor (who

boasts of having enjoyed Dolores's favors), the well-bred Patricio, and even a theology student, Lázaro, who first rescues Rojas during a disastrous bullfight and then kills Melchor to protect Dolores from his advances.³³

The first act is configured as a sort of skit, or *sainete*, in which nothing significant happens besides presenting a stereotypical Spanish village scene and introducing a classic love triangle—or “pentagon” would be more appropriate. There is a perceptible reference to the Spanish tradition of *zarzuela chica* and, as such, has a relatively light and cheerful character, although, as we will see, it hides a pitfall. Spanish folk music is prominent in the act, though we can always identify the presence of the Italian style. In the last scene, Patricio tries to impress Dolores and organizes a little festival inviting all the town's citizens. On this occasion, we first hear a *pasacalle*, diegetically performed by a *rondalla* (the typical Spanish ensemble of plucked-string instruments) on the stage, followed by an extended dance number with the famous *jota*. Following Rojas's performance of a *soleá*, Melchor takes the stage by singing the infamous *copla* “*Si vas a Calatayud...pregunta por la Dolores.*” This *copla* represents the germinal cell of the whole drama. However, while in the play by Feliú y Codina the *copla* is presented right at the beginning, Bretón decides to put it at the end of Act I because—once performed—the *copla* will set in motion the rest of the dramatic action.

In the dense third act, we have the only romance sung by Dolores. Having realized that she reciprocates Lázaro's affection, she sings of her anguish with an attitude of self-reproach. This is a touching melody in a traditional Italian style, with a second

³³ For a synopsis of the opera, see the end of Chapter 3.

section infused with Wagnerian orchestration. Here, we note a *regressive* use of the orchestra, which is simplified to let the voice stand out, exactly how Italian *verismo* writers would “lower” the language level to that of the characters presented, through the technique known as “artifice of regression.” However, as in the rest of the opera, *violinata*—which often pairs with such a technique—is not used.

The story unfolds in this last act. The end of Dolores’s aria is marked by the bells, a powerful *verismo* index. Melchor arrives, and they sing their love duet (“*Di que es verdad que me llamas*”) in a stereotypically Verdian style. The infamous *copla* about Dolores, which is heard one more time off-stage, mixed with the *rondalla* performing the *jota*, signals the imminent end of the drama. If, in the first act, the *jota* was a signifier of the happiness of the festival, now it is an omen of tragedy! Lázaro exits the stage and confronts Melchor. A few seconds later, Celemín’s scream announces Melchor’s murder, which happens behind the scenes, precisely as in Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*, with “*Hanno ammazzato compare Turiddu!*” (“Compare Turiddu has been killed!”).

The epilogue is Lázaro’s confession, the acknowledgment that he acted in defense of Dolores’s honor. The tragedy is fulfilled, and as in any classic *verismo* drama, there are no winners. Probably, Dolores will not be able to further her passion for Lázaro, who—once a man of the church—now is an assassin. Everybody is defeated. Musically speaking, the frantic finale is Wagnerian in style, with chromatic music abruptly leading to the descending curtain.

As in many Spanish operas and zarzuelas of this period, religion plays an important role and is constantly present in the story. For example, the character of

Lázaro is that of a young seminarian who encounters the dilemma of duty (fulfilling his obligations as a future religious by leaving for the seminary) against hidden and self-proclaimed love for Dolores. This is a dilemma that he ultimately seems to have no problem resolving, deciding to stay for Dolores and even committing murder to defend her honor. Gaspara, Lázaro's aunt and owner of the inn seems to be a very religious woman and is determined that his nephew leave and pursue his religious path, thus avoiding Dolores and all the problems that might arise. Dolores herself shows the contradiction of being a woman who "flirts" and plays with men (she invites them all at ten o'clock but with the intent of rejecting them all) but at the same time actively participates in prayer at the beginning of the third act.

Act III begins with a long religious scene in which the characters are in prayer, reciting the rosary, accompanied by solemn but, at the same time, tense and dramatic music. The prayer is a prelude and continues in the background when the dialogue between the characters begins. And the tension of the music prepares for the tragedy that will later take place.

One of the most apparent *verismo topoi*, which also identifies the work as eminently Spanish, is the use of typical songs and dances. There are several in the opera. We can hypothesize that Bretón, in wanting to build an *ópera española*, had almost assertively inserted social and regional markers from different areas of Spain. Or, even better, it can be said that the characters represent different regions and cultures of Spain. Several of the protagonists are identified as coming from regions other than Aragón, or in any case, based on their behavior, they seem to.

Interviewed by Ruiz Morales, Bretón said that “As for the artistic tendency of the work, I will tell you that *La Dolores* is genuinely and essentially Spanish; without being made in seguidillas and boleros; the folk songs of this country serve as its motive and foundation, and, above all, the *jota*, song for which I feel passionate admiration.”³⁴

The first region is Aragón, where the story takes place and is primarily identified through the use of the *jota*. This dance in the nineteenth century became the most popular in operas and zarzuela, probably due to its cheerful and lively character, and it is omnipresent in Bretón’s opera. In *La Dolores*, it is presented as an extended dance number performed by a multitude of villagers and interpolated with three *coplas* sung by the protagonists. It is the number that concludes Act I, before the action speeds up upon Melchor’s singing the infamous *copla* about Dolores. The length of this *jota* and its character immediately refer us to the tradition of the *género chico*. That does not surprise us when we consider Bretón’s experience with zarzuela. The long zarzuela-style dance, combined with specific operetta-style numbers presented in the first act, seems consistent with the composer’s intention to attract the audience with a familiar style, but above all, the desire to prepare a drama that develops quickly in the second and third acts, and in which the musical style also changes dramatically.

³⁴ Ruiz Morales, “La Dolores,” *El País*, March 16, 1895. “En cuanto á la tendencia artística de la obra, le diré que *La Dolores* es genuina y esencialmente española; sin estar hecha en seguidillas y boleros; sirvenle de motivo y fundamento los cantos populares de esta patria y, sobre todo, la *jota*, aires por el que siento apasionada admiración.”



Example 4.1: Jota (*La Dolores*, Act I, Scene 5)

However, if we exclude the prelude, which acts as a sample of the motifs presented in the opera, the *jota* rhythm is anticipated in Act I, sung by a muleteer who intones “*Solo á dos teclas responden ...*” (“They react only to two things,” Act I, Scene 1). Bretón is here already suggesting the presence of the *copla* as a dramatic element, although in this case, not directly related to Dolores. It is a kind of preparation in which Bretón provides two pieces of information. First, the story takes place in Spain and precisely in Aragón; second, the *copla* with a *jota* rhythm will play a primary role.



Example 4.2: *Copla* (Jota) “*Solo a dos teclas responden.*” (*La Dolores*, Act I, Scene 1)

The *copla* is first sung by the muleteer, and then the same melody is taken up by Celemín in his conversation with Patricio. The whole section of the muleteer features a pedal on F, with an arpeggio of strings superimposed on it, which creates a sense of stasis, together with one of indefiniteness. The part of the muleteer has a consistent meter in

6/4, but during the conversation between Patricio and Celemín, the two sing in 4/4. At the same time, however, the slow *jota* rhythm in 6/4 is held by the arpeggio of the strings, resulting in two overlapping meters of 4/4 and 6/4. The effect is that of hemiola, in which two quarter notes in one line correspond to three quarter notes in another line. This effect is also temporarily taken by Patricio, who sings some bars with triplets, creating a correspondence with the 6/4 accompaniment. It is a particular expedient that creates two narrative lines and amplifies the indefiniteness. But above all, the advanced use that Bretón makes of polymeters is surprising. The same melody will also be associated with the infamous *copla* of Dolores, sung by Melchior first and by Celemín after.

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system shows Celemín's vocal line in the upper staff and Patricio's vocal line in the lower staff. The piano accompaniment is shown in two staves below. The second system continues the dialogue with similar vocal and piano parts. The lyrics are: Celemín: "Pa - re - ce de Do - lo - res E - sa co - pla un re -"; Patricio: "Si. tra - to. Pues có - mo si ha - ce un ra - to con - ta - bas sus ri - go - res!". The piano accompaniment features a 6/4 arpeggio in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

Example 4.3: Polymetrics in the dialogue between Celemín and Patricio (*La Dolores*, Act I, Scene 1)

Most dances and songs presented in *La Dolores* are in the first act. To oppose Rojas's song "*You soy un soldado*," ("I am a soldier") Patricio sings his "*You soy hombre muy rico, y soy Aragones*." ("I am a very rich man, and I am from Aragón"). At that point, Dolores also enters the scene, and in the dialogue between the three, Bretón overlaps different meters again. A ternary rhythmic cell is superimposed on a quaternary accompaniment, for which a strange phase-shift effect is created, and that is resumed after three whole bars in 4/4. The ternary rhythm, which could seem a mixture between a *jota* and a minuet, references the gallant style, which we could trace back to Patricio. In reality, in this section, Bretón masterfully and subtly inserts the theme of the Spanish *folía*. The *folía* is a passacaglia form based on a recurring harmonic structure and is in triple meter. The accompaniment in this section follows precisely the "mirror" harmonic scheme of the traditional Spanish *folía*: i-V-i-VII-III-VII-i-V-i, but in 4/4. All this, however, is disguised in a gallant style that almost seems to be from a Rossini scene finale, or—to use a more Spanish comparison, but still very much indebted to Rossini—a scene finale of a *zarzuela grande* by Barbieri.

Allegro tranquillo ♩ = 108

The musical score is set in common time (C) and consists of three systems. Each system includes vocal lines for Dolores, Patricio, and Rojas, and a piano accompaniment. The tempo is marked 'Allegro tranquillo' with a metronome marking of ♩ = 108. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

System 1:
Dolores: Lo di - ce us - ted de ve - ras?
Patricio: Es ton - to de na - ción.
Rojas: Yo ven - go_ á que me

System 2:
Dolores: A - si de so - pe - ton ja ja ja ja!
Patricio: que - ras. O - ye te ad - vier - to que por ver - te no he co -
Rojas: pa - do. Un re - gi - mien - to mon - ta - do de car - lis - tas

System 3:
Dolores: Dio qué o - ¡!
Patricio: (no lyrics)
Rojas: (no lyrics)

The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte).

Example 4.4: The hidden *folia* (*La Dolores*, Act I, Scene 2)

As anticipated, Patricio, the patrician of the group, is often associated with a minuet rhythm. Sometimes it is not so obvious (with a 3/4 meter), but it is still suggested. We know that the minuet is a *topos* that identifies nobility and composure, both real or sought, as a reference to “history.” To use an example of the *verismo* repertoire, one can go to *Pagliacci*. During the performance of the *Commedia dell’arte*, Colombina (Nedda) is continuously associated with a minuet rhythm.³⁵ The minuet assigned to Patrizio differs from that of Nedda because it has less dramatic weight. We hear the minuet-style motive almost every time Patricio is on the scene.

dim. Patricio **Allegretto** ♩ = 56

Yo soy más ri - coy an - tes te a - do - ro que el mi - li - tar

se - rás la due - ña de mi te - so - ro de mi te - so - ro due - ña se - rás.

Example 4.5: Patricio’s minuet (*La Dolores*, Act I, Scene 2)

³⁵ See Laura Basini, “Masks, Minuets, and Murder: Images of Italy in Leoncavallo’s ‘Pagliacci,’” *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 133, no. 1 (2008): 32–68.

Andalucía is represented by Rojas, who sings a *soleá* during the performance of the *jota*. To evoke the 12-beat *compás* of the traditional flamenco *palo* called *soleáres*, Bretón uses the 3/8 meter and gives the voice some accents, creating a syncopation that mimics the typical accents of the *soleáres* (usually on the beats 3-6-8-10-12). Afterward, Rojas also sings another piece in 6/8 that resembles a *sevillana*.

Tempo de soléa

Rojas

Des - de que al pue-blo he lle- gao Yu- na lin- da ca - ra he vis - to.

Example 4.6: Roja's *soleá* (*La Dolores*, Act I, Scene 5)

Ben Moderato ♩ = 56

Rojas

A - sí que en el

cir-co la res se pre - sen - - - te Se - re - no y va - lien-te Me a - cer - co á la res.

Example 4.7: Roja's *sevillana* (*La Dolores*, Act II, Scene 4)

The *jota* in Act I is also anticipated and introduced by a *passacalle* (literally: passing through the street). It is performed by a *rondalla*, a typical ensemble of plucked-string instruments and diegetically performed on-stage. The *rondalla* will appear multiple times in the opera, including during the *jota* (it will play together with the full orchestra) and in the finale, when Dolores will hear it off-stage, signaling that Melchor and the others are coming to meet her. In the scene, Dolores worries that they will find Lázaro there. He insists on staying to listen and becomes furious when he hears Celemin singing once more the infamous *copla*. In that case, the *rondalla* plays the *jota* music, and the happy character of the dance clashes with the extremely tense situation.

5

f

Si - go los e - cos de la ro - da - lla que al

f *leggiero*

o - ir - la de gus - to mi pe - cho es - ta - lla.

Example 4.8: *Passacalle* performed by the *rondalla* (*La Dolores*, Act I, Scene 5)

The *pasodoble* is presented at the end of Act II, in the bullfighting scene, specifically before the bullfight begins. It is a slow *pasodoble*, contrasting with more dramatic music when Rojas is injured.

Allegro non tanto ♩ = 108

Example 4.9: *Pasodoble* in the bullfight scene (*La Dolores*, Act II, Scene 11)

Bullfighting (*corrida*) is a classic *topos* of Spanish theater and culture, as a general part of the Spanish *tauromaquia* (bullfight culture). Often, as in the case of *La Dolores*, it is not represented, both for obvious scenographic and specifically dramatic reasons. In Bretón's work, the bullfight follows a standard seen in ensuing operas. The bullfight is not represented but is only evoked and imagined by offering the reactions of the public spectators in it. In the finale of Act II of *La Dolores*, Rojas participates in a bullfight to show off to Dolores. But everything goes wrong, and he is wounded; at that point, Lázaro intervenes and saves him, generating the audience's ovation. A similar device was used in

Carmen, where the bullfight serves as the sonic background for the tragic ending—or, it will be used by Manuel Penella in *El gato montés*.³⁶

The use of a style that mixes Italian melodicism and a Wagnerian-like orchestral texture is a fundamental *topos* of *verismo* production. In *La Dolores*, Bretón maintains an all-Italian vocality, especially in the arias of the protagonists and in duets, to which he progressively adds a harmonically more daring language rich in chromaticism. There is a progression from Act I to Act III in terms of orchestral richness, texture, and chromaticism. Referring to the love duet between Dolores and Lázaro, critic Guerra y Alarcón called it “a musical page of brand-new timbre and wonderful tenderness.”³⁷

The solo arias and duets exhibit Verdi-style singability and melodicism. Still, the voices never go to extremes and mostly remain in an intermediate register, sometimes insisting in the *passaggio* area. For example, the soprano (Dolores) has a range from C⁴ to A⁵, while Lázaro has a range from F³ to B⁴. Despite being generically identified as “soprano” and “tenor,” both voices are kept in an intermediate tessitura, more or less in the center of the respective music staves, as is in the *verismo* tradition. If we compare them with the leading voices of *Cavalleria rusticana*, we see that Santuzza has a range that goes from D⁴ to Bb⁵ with only one C⁶ as the last note of the opera, while Turiddu has a range that goes from E³ to Bb⁴. This confirms the particular vocality sought by Bretón in terms

³⁶ See Chapter 6.

³⁷ Antonio Guerra y Alarcón, “La Dolores, ópera en tres actos del maestro Bretón,” *El heraldo de Madrid*, March 17, 1895. “El duo de amor es una página musical de un timbre novísimo, de maravillosa ternura.”

of color and power, aligning with the typical Italian *verismo* vocality.



Example 4.10: Main characters' vocal ranges comparison (*La Dolores* and *Cavalleria rusticana*)

Largo ♩ = 50
con molta espressione

Dolores

Tar - de sen - ti cui - ta - -

da Tar - de sen - ti Lo que sen - tir que - rí - - a!

The musical score is for Dolores's aria "Tarde sentí cuitada". It is in 2/4 time, marked Largo (♩ = 50) and con molta espressione. The score consists of two systems. The first system has a vocal line with the lyrics "Tar - de sen - ti cui - ta - -" and a piano accompaniment with triplets. The second system has a vocal line with the lyrics "da Tar - de sen - ti Lo que sen - tir que - rí - - a!" and a piano accompaniment with triplets. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with triplets.

Example 4.11: Dolores's aria "Tarde sentí cuitada" (*La Dolores*, Act III, Scene 5)

4.6 Conclusions

La Dolores is an essential opera in two main respects. In the first place, it closes the circle of a long discourse—in which the theories were not followed by facts—that saw such composers as Eslava, Arrieta, Gadzambide, even Barbieri, and many others before them eventually compose Rossini-style works "flavored" with some Spanish numbers.

Concurrently, *La Dolores* represents a pivotal work, marking (willingly or not) a new and

original direction for Spanish musical theater. By winking at Europe, but still with a self-referential approach, it fuses stylistic and musical elements in fashion at the time, including Wagnerian-style orchestration, the Italian melodic tradition, and a realist plot with *costumbrista* elements. For these reasons, it is an opera that opens new horizons, leading toward a new realist conception of Spanish musical theater, which strongly resonates with all the *topoi* of Italian *verismo*.

CHAPTER 5

Modernist Realism in Usandizaga's *Las golondrinas*

5.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces *Las golondrinas* by José María Usandizaga. Premiered in 1914 in the form of a zarzuela grande, at the time called *drama lírico*, the work was an enormous success and consecrated the young Usandizaga (at the time only twenty-four years old) as one of the brightest promises for the Spanish theater. Curiously enough, the opera has remained in history in its posthumous operatic version, made by José María's brother, Ramón Usandizaga, and premiered in 1929.

The zarzuela was based on the play *Saltinbanquis* by María Lejárraga and Gregorio Martínez Sierra, a sordid *verismo* story highly indebted to *Pagliacci*. Usandizaga rendered the story with music that, though still eminently Spanish, has a greater cosmopolitan breadth. Indeed, a modernist composer who trained in Paris at the Schola Cantorum with Vincent d'Indy, Usandizaga created a work that blends tradition and new techniques. He kept a solid tonal sense, injecting his work with chromaticism and dense Wagnerian orchestral texture. Also, he crafted melodies that are at times long and arching while at other times short and fragmented, following the "mosaic" orchestration by Puccini, of whom he was a great admirer.

After a brief biographical sketch of Usandizaga, I focus on the reception of the work and the detailed synopsis and leitmotivic analysis. For the study, I will use the 1929 operatic version of *Las golondrinas*. Ultimately, I analyze the work through the prism of the

verismo model. This will show that, because it is a modernist work, *Las golondrinas* lacks some of the traditional *verismo topoi* encountered in other works. Indeed, as Bretón's *La Dolores* can be considered a starting point in the turn of the century Spanish *verismo* endeavor, likewise *Las golondrinas* represents the apex of a journey that, had not the composer died so young, would have opened a new chapter for twentieth-century Spanish opera.

5.2 José María Usandizaga. Biographical Sketch.

José María Usandizaga was born in San Sebastián, in the Basque country, on March 31, 1887. He came from a family of five siblings, including his brother Ramón. The parents, Carlos—the Uruguayan consul in San Sebastián—and Ana were music lovers, and Ana was also a good pianist. José María had shown interest in music since the age of five. At nine, he was sent to study with the masters German Cendoya and Beltrán Pagoya at the Academy of Fine Arts in San Sebastián. Pagoya, who taught José María harmony, was the first to notice his “unusual lyrical talent” and suggested Carlo send his son to study in Paris. With the help of Francis Planté, José María prepared for the Schola Cantorum in Paris.

He entered the Schola Cantorum at the age of fourteen. He studied piano with Gabriel María Grovlez, harmony with the Baron Fernand de la Tombelle, composition with Vincent d'Indy, counterpoint with Louis Tricon, and ensemble with Luis de Serres. An injury to his right hand prevented him from pursuing a career as a concert pianist. Thus, he entirely devoted himself to composition.

He returned to San Sebastián at the age of eighteen. The four years spent in Paris were ones of emotional contrast between the austerity of academic study and creativity-nurturing ambience of Paris. As a young composer, his most important qualities were lyricism, melancholy, and an excellent sense of drama. In 1906, he premiered *Irurak bat* (Three in One), based on Basque themes, followed by the opera *Mendi-mendiyan* (In the Depths of the Mountain), which premiered in Bilbao in 1910. In 1912, he wrote *Costa Brava*, based on popular themes, which remained incomplete due to a severe health crisis.

He wrote chamber and symphonic music for the San Sebastián Casino. These works also included religious and choral music, which he always liked. However, José María's real passion was theater. His relationship with Gregorio Martínez Sierra and his wife María Lejárraga resulted in the zarzuela grande *Las golondrinas*, which was composed in 1913 but received its premiere in Madrid in 1914. It was a huge success and made Usandizaga one of the most celebrated composers of the time. María Lejárraga's words vividly describe José María, who lived as an eternal child despite (or maybe due to) his unfortunate health situation:

José María was a little boy. When we met him, he was twenty-four years old but seemed much younger. He was small, emaciated, sickly, with a slight limp. Tuberculous since childhood, only his solicitous maternal care managed to preserve his life. It was his infant spirit as his body; he had lived isolated from the world, as if inside a lantern made of affection and admiration because the family, contrary to what usually happens, had immediately realized the brilliant flame that burned within the diseased flesh. His mother, a distinguished pianist, had been his first music teacher and her discoverer. [...] Learning is not the exact word. José Mari, as his family called him, did not learn; he seemed to be drawing from himself the elements of a science that would have been his... When? Where? He was a musician and nothing but a musician for all the atoms of his mortal clay.

When referring to him and his work, it is not possible to speak of vocation but of *incarnation*. He was, in reality, music incarnate.”¹

In 1915, he retired to Yanci due to serious health problems to work on his next opera, *La llama*, again with a libretto by Martínez Sierra and Lejárraga. In September, his condition suddenly worsened, and he died on October 5, 1915. His death was considered a terrible loss for the community of San Sebastián, as it was for the Spanish world of music at large.

After his death, his brother Ramón, who had studied music at the local academy, committed himself to promoting José María’s work. In 1918, he revised and concluded *La llama*, which premiered later in the same year in San Sebastián. In 1929, he converted *Las golondrinas* into opera. He also adapted for mixed choir several works initially written for piano and voice. He was a very modest person, and he also composed some songs that remained unpublished. In 1941, he was appointed director of the San Sebastián Conservatory, and in 1942 he founded the conservatory’s symphony orchestra, which he directed until his retirement.

5.3 Genesis and Libretto

Tradition has it that the author of the libretto of *Las golondrinas* is the well-known poet and writer Gregorio Martínez Sierra (1881-1947). For many years, at least up to the present day, his name was the one appearing in all publications and productions.

However, it is now established that a large part of Martínez Sierra’s output was the result

¹ María Martínez Sierra, *Gregorio y yo; medio siglo de colaboración* (México: Biografías Ganesa, 1953), 105, as cited in José Montero Alonso, *Usandizaga* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1985), 70-71.

of collaboration with his wife, the writer María Lejárraga (1874-1974), who had the role of primary creator in several plays. The official version, provided by María herself, was that her family disapproved of the themes dealt with in her works and writings, as they were incompatible with her role as a teacher. To this was added the stigma of society towards women of letters.

Before even being what is called “boyfriends,” we had written and published four books: *El poema del trabajo*, *Cuentos breves*, *Flores de escarcha*, *Diálogo fantásticos*. We managed to publish the work poem and Short Stories in secret, pooling our meager savings. As a school teacher, I signed the Tales, intended for children; he, for being a recognized poet, the poem. Let’s take them the same day to our respective homes. In my collaborator’s, a book! It was almost a miracle, and the firstborn’s birth was received with all the honors: surprise, joy, and family pride. I think even champagne was wasted on the celebration. In mine, where there were so many, two more books didn’t mean much, although one was signed by the firstborn and the other by the “little friend” my parents and brothers before me suspected would become a boyfriend. The event did not arouse enthusiasm or cause any celebration. In my pride as a novel author, I had expected a better reception. I threw - inwardly, as is my custom - a tremendous tantrum and swore by all my major and minor gods, “You will never again see my name printed on the cover of a book!” This is one of the “powerful” reasons why I decided that the children of our intellectual union will bear no more than the father’s name. Another one was that being a school teacher, holding a public office, I did not want to tarnish the clearing of my name with the dubious fame that at that time fell almost dishonorably as guilt on every “literate” woman. [...] Especially if an incipient literate. If one could have been famous since the first book! Fame justifies everything. The third reason, perhaps the strongest, was the romanticism of a lover. Married, young, and happy, I was attacked by that pride of humility that dominates every woman when she really loves a man. “Since our works are children of legitimate marriage, they have enough honor with the father’s name.”²

² María Martínez Sierra, *Gregorio y yo*, 29-30, as cited in José Montero Alonso, *Usandizaga* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1985): 66. “Antes de ser siquiera lo que se llama ‘novios’, habíamos escrito y publicado cuatro libros: *El poema del trabajo*, *Cuentos breves*, *Flores de escarcha*, *Diálogo fantásticos*. El poema del trabajo y Cuentos breves logramos editarlos en secreto juntando nuestros escasos ahorros. Firmamos yo, por ser maestra de escuela, los Cuentos, destinado a los niños; él, por ser reconocidamente poeta, el poema. Llevémoslos el mismo día a nuestras respectivas casas. En la de mi colaborador, ¡un libro! era casi un milagro, y el del primogénito fue recibido con todos los honores: sorpresa, regocijo, orgullo familiar. Creo que hasta champaña de derrochó en la celebración. En la mía, donde había tantos, dos libros más, aunque uno lo firmase la primogénita y el otro el “amiguito” que mis padres y hermanos antes que yo sospechaban que había de convertirse en novio, no significaban gran cosa. El acontecimiento no despertó entusiasmo ni

María's story would suggest that living her artistic life in the shadows was more of a choice than a necessity. In reality, it was a choice imposed by a still very conservative Spanish society. Eventually, María left her teaching role in 1908 to devote herself entirely to writing. Among their many endeavors, Gregorio and María founded the magazine *Helios* (1903-03), together with Juan Ramón Jiménez. It was a magazine dedicated to literary modernism, in which authors such as Antonio Machado, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Jacinto Benavente, and the Quintero brothers (Serafin Álvarez and Joaquín Álvarez) were published.

María and Gregorio were the authors of the texts of significant works. María wrote and produced *Margot* (1914) by Joaquín Turina and *El amor brujo* (1915) by Manuel de Falla, whom she met in Paris thanks to Turina. Other composers with whom the Martínez Sierras collaborated were Vicente Lleó, María Rodrigo, and Gerónimo Giménez, just to cite a few. Between the 1920s and 1930s, María was also an active feminist, elected to parliament in 1933 as a member of the Socialist Party and secretary of the Spanish branch of the International Women Suffrage Alliance. She left parliament in 1934 and, with the outbreak of the civil war (1936-39), due to her anti-fascist ideas, she

ocasionó celebración alguna. Yo, en mi orgullo de autora novel, había descontado mejor acogida. Tomé—interiormente, como es mi costumbre—formidable rabieta, y juré por todos mis dioses mayores y menores;” ¡No volveréis jamás a ver mi nombre impreso en la portada de un libro!” Esta es una de las “poderosas” razones per la cuales decidí que los hijos de nuestra unión intelectual no llevarán más que el nombre del padre. Otra, que, siendo maestra de escuela, es decir, desempeñando un cargo público, no quería empañar la limpieza de mi nombre con la dudosa fama que en aquella época caía como sambenito casi deshonoroso sobre toda mujer “literata”. [...] Sobre todo literata incipiente. ¡Si se hubiera podido ser célebre dese el primer libro! La fama todo lo justifica. La razón tercera, tal vez la más fuerte, fue romanticismo de enamorada... Casada, joven y feliz, acometiome ese orgullo de humildad que domina a toda mujer cuando quiere de veras a un hombre. “Puesto que nuestras obras son hijas de legítimo matrimonio, con el nombre del padre tienen honra bastante.””

was exiled to Switzerland. She then moved to France (1938), New York, Los Angeles, Mexico, and finally to Buenos Aires (Argentina), where she died in 1974 in poverty. After the death of her husband, during the years of exile, she wrote the memoirs *Gregorio y yo* (1954). In the book, she finally explained the dynamics for which she was the author and co-author of many works historically assigned only to her husband, remaining a woman “in the shadow.”³

Through a common acquaintance, José María Usandizaga met Gregorio Martínez Sierra and María Lejárraga in 1912 after having witnessed the performance of their comedy *Canción de cuna*. During the meeting, Gregorio and María immediately proposed to José María to work together on a zarzuela. Usandizaga was very interested, but he had already agreed to write a zarzuela with Juan Arzadun. María insisted, “With us, you will be able to have a safe and quick premiere.”⁴ Eventually, Arzadun very generously freed Usandizaga from his commitment, understanding the importance that working with Martínez Sierra would have for the composer. At that point, the Martínez Sierras and Usandizaga separated, as José María retired to the village of Vidania, where he could work and restore his poor health. The Martínez Sierra’s sent him a copy of *Teatro de ensueño*, a collection that also included *Saltinbanquis*. The idea was to provide Usandizaga with material to inspire him for a new libretto they would write for him. But

³ Antonina Rodrigo, José Prat, and Arturo del Hoyo, *María Lejárraga: una mujer en la sombra* (Madrid: Algaba Ediciones, 2005).

⁴ María Martínez Sierra, *Gregorio y yo*, 30.

Usandizaga immediately saw the immense dramatic potential of *Saltinbanquis* and started corresponding with the authors regarding the libretto.

Saltinbanquis was a drama written years before the Martínez Sierras. It was “the drama of the miserable puppeteers who go from town to town and from village to hamlet doing somersaults and performing improvised farces.”⁵ The drama was unlucky. It almost arrived at the *Teatro de la Comedia* in Madrid (under the endorsement of the famous actor Emilio Thuiller), but the impresario was unmoved. The drama was rejected because it was considered too modern and unusual. As Lajárraga wrote, it was nothing different from many other realist dramas to which the audience was already accustomed.⁶ But the drama was never performed, so the authors included it in their book *Teatro de ensueño* “like the corpse of a loved one buried among flowers. [...] There, the melodious drama slept among beautiful chimeras for many years. The Genius of Music, embodied in José María Usandizaga, awoke him to joyful and triumphant life, like the Sleeping Beauty of the Forest, the Kiss of the Charming Prince, or the Valkyrie Brunhilda of Siegfried.”⁷ By 1912, while Usandizaga was writing the score, the Martínez Sierras had already secured the premiere in Madrid and another performance in Bilbao. In 1913, the opera’s title had already changed to *Las golondrinas*, and Gregorio had managed to ensure the participation of the famous singer Emilio Sagi-Barba.

⁵ Ibid., 30. “El drama de los titiriteros miserables que van de pueblo en pueblo y de aldea en villorrio dando saltos mortales y representando improvisadas farsas.”

⁶ Ibid., 35.

⁷ Ibid. “Allí durmió el malogrado drama entre bellas quimeras muchos años. Despertóle a vida gozosa y triunfal, como a la Bella Durmiente del Bosque, el Beso del Príncipe encantador, o como a la valquiria Brunilda el de Sigfrido, el Genio de la Música, encarnado en José María Usandizaga.”

Montero Alonso reports that sometimes the same María Lejárraga wrote to José María, also because of the deterioration of her husband's vision, giving him updates on the planned performances and other details. In the meantime, José María had moved to a bigger farmhouse, called *Aguerre*, in the town of Urnieta. In that place, he was able to work in a calm and carefree way. When he returned to San Sebastián, he also took with him one of the friends he had found on the farm: a small dog to which he had given the name of Puck, the protagonist of *Las golondrinas*, and which remained with him until his death.⁸

José María finished the opera in December 1913. In 1914, he moved to Madrid, where he stayed with the Martínez Sierras. There, they started reading the score. When José María went to meet singers Luisa Vela and Emilio Sagi-Barba to play the opera at the piano for them, Gregorio Martínez Sierra gave him one of his business cards with a note, "Dear Luisa and Emilio: there I send the Spanish Puccini."⁹ During the performance of the opera at the piano, Usandizaga asked many times whether they liked it and why they did not talk, and Sagi-Barba replied, "We like it very much; that is why we can't tell you our opinion. Continue [until at the end]. It's that we are speechless. You moved us. Tomorrow, we start rehearsing." The zarzuela was then premiered at the Teatro Circo Price in Madrid on February 5, 1914.

Act I. An itinerant theater company, somewhere "in the field of Castile." Cecilia (mezzo-soprano), who is blindly loved by Puck (baritone), despises a life of uncertainties,

⁸ Montero Alonso, *Usandizaga*, 72.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 77. "Queridos Luisa y Emilio: ahí les mando al Puccini español."

and wants a better future. She is ambitious, and she discusses this with Puck. Lina (soprano) also joins the discussion and calms them momentarily. But soon after, Cecilia escapes from the shack and insults Lina by calling her (and their peers) “miserable clowns.” Lina is initially sad about Puck’s pain, but concurrently she is happy because now she can pay attention to Puck, whom she loves.

Act II. The company is in “a big circus” for a show. They present their famous pantomime, in which Lina now takes the place of Cecilia, and it is a tumultuous success. Puck is satisfied, despite Cecilia having abandoned them. When Lina is about to reveal her feelings to him, Cecilia appears (Puck first hears her laughing in the distance). She is very elegant and accompanied by her new wealthy partner, a gentleman who supports her. Puck puts Lina aside, despite her pleas, and runs back to Cecilia.

Act III. In Lina’s dressing room, Cecilia and Lina converse animatedly and are separated by Puck, who goes away with Cecilia. Cecilia, perhaps concerned about a possible bad reaction from him, favors his amorous words. They leave Lina’s dressing room, who is now resigned to letting Puck go. Shortly after that, Puck returns to Lina’s room visibly shaken. He receives a perplexing confession of Lina’s love feelings. But his story is more tragic; after discovering that Cecilia was making fun of him, he killed her by strangling her. But Lina does not abandon him, and when they come to accuse him of the crime, which he admits, and take him, she hugs him for the last time before collapsing into her father’s arms.

5.4 Reception

Despite Usandizaga's concerns about an almost disastrous dress rehearsal, the premiere was a success. There were some reservations about the first act, a change of opinion regarding the second, and great success at the end of the third.¹⁰ The study of the reception of *Las golondrinas* allows us to understand how, right from the start, Usandizaga was seen as a modern composer, embodying the spirit of a new language of international scope. Everyone agreed that the young Basque was an incredible promise of Spanish music.

Usandizaga's uniqueness was highlighted thoroughly in the review of the *El heraldo de Madrid*:

Pepito Usandizaga [...] is a modern musician who does not wrap himself in the nebulosities of the modernists «to the extreme,» nor does he leave the «orechiente [unexpert listener]» as the one who sees visions. Those that seem mocking jokes of Strauss, in «Salomé»; of Dukas, in productions that do not come close to his admirable «Sorcerer's apprentice,» and the terrible orchestral and voice rumbles, fatally killer, as in «Bluebeard» do not form the manner of Usandizaga. Within true generosity, he will do the harmonizations without surrendering to easy work, not even for an instant; turning the orchestra into a guitarrón, Usandizaga's composition is transparent; it does not hide the ideas or the lack of ideas; the melodic lines stand out clearly, and the spectator does not come out, after attending the performance, with his brain turned into an oven of crickets or overwhelmed like he would come out after listening for five hours to the lecture of a profound and cavernous metaphysician.¹¹

¹⁰ José Montero Alonso, *Usandizaga* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1985), 87-89.

¹¹ S. A., "Price. Las golondrinas," *El heraldo de Madrid*, February 6, 1914. "Pepito Usandizaga [...] es un músico moderno, que no se envuelve en las nebulosidades de los modernistas «a ultranza», ni deja al «orechiente» como queda el que ve visiones. Esas que parecen burlonas humoradas de los Strauss, en «Salomé»; de los Dukass, en producciones que no se acercan a su admirable «Aprendiz de brujo», y las terribles monsergas orquestales y de la voz, fatalmente matadoras, como en «Barb azul» no forman la manera de Usandizaga. Dentro de una verdadera fastuosidad hará las armonizaciones, sin rendirse al trabajo fácil, ni un instante; de convertir la orquesta en un guitarrón, la composición de Usandizaga resulta trasparente, no oculta las ideas ó la falta de ideas; se destacan las líneas melódicas con limpidez, y no sale el espectador, después de asistir á la representación, con el cerebro convertido en un horno de

La correspondencia de España wrote, “When the newspapers are published today, the whole Spain will know with joy that since last night it has one more great musician, worthy of continuing the glories of Barbieri, Chapí, and Vives. [...] The absolute mastery of orchestral composition and the very modern orientations of his muse do not prevent him from a clear, translucent inspiration, with a popular flavor.”¹²

La Época reported the premiere as a triumph.¹³ Salvador, from the *Revista musical hispano-americana*, appreciated the opera but questioned the definition of *Las golondrinas* as lyric drama due to the lack of enough local color,

Apart from the interruptions that the spoken part makes to the musical part in *Las golondrinas*, there are other interruptions in the plan and in the character of the work that I believe do not fit into the type of lyric-drama. [...] I find that Usandizaga has not bothered much, except in rare parts of *Las golondrinas*, in seeking to characterize the work, much less has he attempted nationalization; in this sense, his *Mendi-mendiyan*, by environment and by its regional color, is far superior to this work.¹⁴

grillos ni abrumado cual saldría después de escuchar durante cinco horas la conferencia de un profundísimo y cavernoso metafísico.

¹² Caramanchel, “Las golondrinas,” *La Correspondencia de España*, February 6, 1914. “Cuando se publiquen hoy los periódicos, sabrá la España entera con alegría que tiene desde anoche un gran músico más, digno de continuar las glorias de Barbieri, de Chapí y de Vives. [...] El dominio absoluto de la composición orquestal y las orientaciones modernísimas de su musa no le impiden una inspiración clara, diáfana, de sabor popular.”

¹³ Un abonado, *La Época*, February 6, 1914. “Las golondrinas. Drama musical en tres actos, del maestro Usandizaga: letra de Martínez Sierra.”

¹⁴ Miguel Salvador, “El drama lírico ‘Las Golondrinas,’” *Revista musical hispano-americana*, February 1914.

“Aparte las interrupciones que la parte hablada hace á la musical en *Las Golondrinas*, hay otras interrupciones en el plan y en el carácter de la obra que creo que no caben en el tipo del drama-lirico. [...] Encuentro que no se ha molestado gran cosa Usandizaga, salvo en raros trozos de *Las Golondrinas*, en el buscar la caracterización de la obra, mucho menos ha intentado la nacionalización; en este sentido su *Mendi-Mendiyan*, por ambiente y por su color regional, es bastante superior á esta obra.”

In *El correo español*, Campos praises the incredible quality of Martínez Sierra's drama, which he compared to *Pagliacci*:

Pierrot's sorrows, Colombina's joys; tenderness, delicacies, goodbye, terrible passions; scenic process analogous to that of *Pagliacci*. [...] However, in *Las golondrinas* there are robust complexion, dramatic intensity, a delicacy of feeling, and natural development. [...] And this is the best merit of *Las golondrinas*. The poet, writer, and theater man have built an admirable framework highlighting the Art of a great composer. [...] What greater praise than being able to say that Martínez Sierra has given us the feelings with the music of Usandizaga?¹⁵

Even *La lectura dominical*, a magazine of the *Apostolado de la Prensa* (Apostolate of the Press) and thus usually very harsh with realist operas, wrote that "The work, conventional and of false sentimentality, but recommendable, does not have, however, the morbid deliquescent sensuality of the usual operetta librettos, and that is positive."¹⁶ The critic of *El duende*, a bit sarcastic, still praises Usandizaga,

I like the score premiered at Price very, very much, as much as speaking ill of the Quinteros. [...] Conrado del Campo [...] does not stop lamenting at length. With Usandizaga, an annoying pimple has come out, as annoying as a drama by López Pinillos. We must give Usandizaga a banquet since the muses are not at odds with the stomach, I think. [...] We are satisfied that Usandizaga is a musician with a full beard in this country of shaves. And now I fall into a detail: Usandizaga limps; Does the limp have to do with genius?¹⁷

¹⁵ G. Campos, "Las Golondrinas. Apoteosis lírica de un músico español.," *El correo español*, February 6, 1914. "Las tristezas de Pierrot, las alegrías de Colombina; ternuras, delicadezas, odios, terribles pasiones; proceso escénico análogo al de *Pagliacci*. [...] Hay, sin embargo, en *Las golondrinas* complejión robusta, intensidad dramática, delicadeza de sentimientos y desarrollo natura. [...] Y este es el mejor mérito de *Las golondrinas*. El poeta, el escritor, el hombre de teatro, ha construido un admirable marco que hace destacar el Arte de un gran compositor. [...] ¿Que mayor elogio que poder decir que Martínez Sierra nos has regalado los sentidos con la música de Usandizaga?"

¹⁶ P. Caballero, "Crónica teatral," *La lectura dominical*, February 14, 1914. "La obra, convencional y de un sentimentalismo falso, pero recomendable, no tiene, sin embargo, la morbosa sensualidad delicuescente de los libretos de operetas al uso, y eso se va ganando."

¹⁷ "Estreno de la semana. Price," *El duende*, February 8, 1914. "La partitura estrenada en Price me gusta mucho, muchísimo; tanto como hablar mal de los Quintero. [...] Conrado del Campo [...] no cesa de lamentarse á moco tendido. Con Usandizaga le ha salido un grano molesto, tan molesto como un drama de López Pinillos. A Usandizaga debemos darle un banquete, que no están reñidas las musas con el

The critic of *The Kon Leche* despised the libretto and story, “the most intolerable thing that has been perpetrated on the scene. The hackneyed crowd of Pulcinellas did not evolve in such a foolish plot.”¹⁸ However, he praised Usandizaga’s skills and inspiration, “Usandizaga has made music instead of composing Argentine tangos and has conquered applause with melodic values wrapped in lavish instrumentation. The enthusiastic ovations that have consecrated the young Bilbao maestro are not frequent in exuberant technical scores. And it is that an outstanding inspiration floats over the harmony and counterpoint that reaches the people’s souls. Greatness and simplicity.”¹⁹

The week after the premiere, a lavish event was organized at the Hotel Palace in Madrid to celebrate Usandizaga and Gregorio Martínez Sierra. Important personalities from the worlds of Spanish politics and culture participated. It was “a real tribute of admiration and affection towards the young master, whose work was the object of continuous ovations throughout the night.”²⁰

estómago, creo yo. [...] Quedamos conformes en que Usandizaga es un músico con toda la barba corrida en este país de afeitamientos. Y ahora caigo en un detalle: Usandizaga es cojo; ¿tendrá que ver la cojera con el genio?”

¹⁸ “El maestro Usandizaga. El grande hombre de ‘Las golondrinas,’” *The Kon Leche*, February 9, 1914. “lo más intolerable que se ha perpetrado en la escena. La manida caterva de polichinelas no evolucionó en tan necia trama.”

¹⁹ Ibid. “Usandizaga ha hecho música en lugar de componer tangos argentinos, y ha conquistado el aplauso con valores melódicos arropados con una instrumentación fastuosa. Las ovaciones entusiásticas que han consagrado al joven maestro bilbaíno, no son frecuentes en partituras exuberantes de técnica. Y es que sobre la armonía y el contrapunto flota una inspiración soberbia que llega al alma del pueblo. Grandeza y sencillez.”

²⁰ See “Por el arte español. Un homenaje.,” *El Imparcial*, February 15, 1914; “Homenaje artístico. Martínez Sierra y Usandizaga,” *La Correspondencia de España*, February 15, 1914; “Fiesta de arte,” *La Correspondencia de España*, February 12, 1914.

The company that premiered *Las golondrinas* was the one that, months later, also premiered Falla's *La vida breve* at the Teatro de la Zarzuela (November 14, 1914).²¹ For the occasion, Usandizaga sent a letter to Falla congratulating him on the work, and Falla replied that he enjoyed the performance of *Las golondrinas*.²²

My very distinguished colleague: many, many thanks for your very kind letter of congratulations, which I fully appreciate. I have already had the opportunity to talk about you with our dear and excellent friends María and Gregorio Martínez Sierra, and I very much want to know about the new work you are preparing, especially after I have had the artistic satisfaction of applauding *Las golondrinas* very sincerely. Hoping to have the opportunity to meet you personally soon, I have the greatest pleasure in offering myself to you [as] a very attentive and very affectionate colleague, *Manuel de Falla*.

²¹ The opera had first premiered on April 1, 1913, at the Casino Municipal in Niece (France), and then at the Opéra Comique in Paris (December 30). Only thereafter did it arrive in Spain.

²² “Mi muy distinguido colega: mil y mil gracias por su tan amable carta de felicitación, que estimo en todo su valor. Ya había tenido la ocasión de hablar de usted con nuestros amigos queridos y excelentísimos María y Gregorio Martínez Sierra, y mucho deseo conocer la nueva obra ustedes preparan, sobre todo después que ha tenido la satisfacción artística de aplaudir muy sinceramente *Las golondrinas*. Esperando tener pronto la de conocerle personalmente, tengo el mayor gusto en ofrecerme de usted muy atto. y afmo. compañero, Manuel de Falla.”



Figure 5.1: A photo taken on the day of the premiere of *Las golondrinas*. From the left: Gregorio Martínez Sierra (left), José María Usandizaga (right), and in the middle, the two major interpreters of the zarzuela, Luisa Vela and Emilio Sagi-Barba (Magazine *Mundo gráfico*, February 11, 1914).

5.5 Analysis

The following leitmotivic analysis and in-depth synopsis are based on the operatic version of *Las golondrinas*, which, with good reason, should be attributed to the brothers José and Ramón Usandizaga. Although I am convinced that the zarzuela version was dramatically stronger, it was never published, and the opera was popularized in the 1929 version. It should be clarified, however, that Ramón mainly sets to music the spoken parts. The few additions and cuts he made are irrelevant to the overall dramatic structure of the work, although in some sections, they are problematic and, as Ramón Lazkano points out, they might change the perspective of some scenes. Specifically, Ramón reduced the presence of the character Juanito and cut the character Leonor. He also eliminated two scenes from the original zarzuela version by José María. The first is what was the first scene in Act I. In this scene, Juanito is seduced by a group of “niñas moras” (Moorish girls), and the original first scene of Act III (a duet between Cecilia and Puck). In Act III, he created three supplementary scenes, using already presented melodic material. According to Lazkano, the elimination of Juanito’s scene was a bit more problematic than the rest. He writes, “Although these modifications better direct the main storyline, they make it more rhetorical, disguising its tragicomical side and the various perspectives offered by José María [...]. Thus, Juan[ito’s] superficial seduction by the Moorish girls put Lina’s nostalgia in perspective, as well as the drama of the Pantomime.”²³

²³ Ramón Lakzano, “Introduction,” in *Las golondrinas: ópera en tres actos, Música hispana*. Series C, Antologías 27 (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1999).

The work is built on leitmotifs, obviously not used in the Wagnerian sense, but still recurrent and readily identifiable. These motives—which I will identify as “themes”—are usually associated with the main characters. Following a description of the characters suggested by Igoa, I prefer associating the themes with moods or personalities, of which the characters are essentially representative. Igoa writes:

The psychological portrayal of the characters is truly on point: Puck’s nobility and gallantry are offset by Cecilia’s cunning and ambition, and Lina’s innocent playfulness and selfless dedication provide hope of redemption in a world of unrequited love and worldly desires.²⁴

Usandizaga’s orchestration is luxuriant and modernist and derives from the new musical trends and influences that he assimilated both from the Schola Cantorum in Paris, with his teacher d’Indy, and from the Parisian cultural world, which he imbibed as much as his fragile health would allow. The arias alternate long melodies with more fragmented sections. The tempo changes are continuous, and *violinata* is widely used. His ability as an orchestrator and familiarity with chromaticism and great orchestral arpeggios—widely acknowledged by the critics—were also demonstrated through his piano performances. María Lejárraga, recalled some evenings spent with Usandizaga during the period when the opera was being prepared in Madrid:

How he played! He was the devil himself. He would take a melody, a musical phrase, a theme, his own or someone else’s, and make of them what he wanted, seriously, in jest, passionately, romantically, slowly, with vertigo, in caricature... He played the music of the Pantomime of *Las Golondrinas* as it would be played, he said, by the orchestra of the Lamoureux concerts in Paris or the Municipal Band

²⁴ Enrique Igoa, “Las golondrinas de J. M. Usandizaga: análisis musical,” *Música y educación*, no. 30 (June 1997): 19–29. “El retrato psicológico de los personajes es realmente acertado: la nobleza y gallardía de Puck se ven contrarrestados con la ambición y la astucia de Cecilia, y son la alegría inocente y la entrega desinteresada en Lina las que proporcionan la esperanza de redención en un mundo de amores no correspondidos y de afanes materialistas.”

of Pamplona; he made burlesque laces of wonder with what he called “chromatic laments” of Cesar Franck and the moaning arpeggios of his teacher Vincent d’Indy.²⁵

Critic Contreras, referring to the duet between Lina and Puck at the end of Act II, wrote, “Suddenly, and always following the literary plot, brasses take part in the passionate love of Lina and Pierrot. The minor tone is interrupted, and the major appears with a richness of sonority that recalls Wagner in the extraordinary outbursts of his incomparable muse.”²⁶ Indeed, Usandizaga maintains a strong tonal sense throughout the work and masterfully blends tradition and modernity. This peculiarity did not go unnoticed by the critics of the time and even by Joaquín Turina. Miguel Salvador wrote:

Well then: Usandizaga, in the specific problem, which I cite as an example, is placed at this point of modernity. I will not end without pointing out, since I insist on it, that in this very thing, there had to be one more difficulty to overcome and to overcome *by modernity*: what I was saying in dealing with the drama regarding the non-rhythmed prose that abounds in the libretto of *Las golondrinas* and that it did not represent a difficulty of any kind for the musician. The defect that this badly accented and chosen prose leads to, I already said, is that the musician has to proceed by out-of-tune scraps and not by stanzas; Against this element of disunity, Usandizaga has a quality, which my friend Turina made me notice when listening to the work, which is its exquisite tonal sense, which is masterfully logical; in which the influence of the school (of Schola, better said), is noticeable more than in anything else.²⁷

²⁵ María Martínez Sierra, *Gregorio y yo*, 106. “¡Como Tocaba! Era il mismo demonio. Tomaba una melodia, una frase musical, un tema, propios o ajenos, y hacia de ellos lo que se le antojaba, en serio, en broma, apasionadamente, románticamente, con lentitud, con vértigo, en caricatura...Tocaba la musica de la Pantomima de las Golondrinas como la tocaría, decía el, la orquesta de los conciertos Lamoureux en París, o la Banda Municipal de Pamplona; hacia burlescos encajes de maravilla con los que él llamaba “lamentos cromáticos” de Cesar Franck y los gimientes arpeggios de su maestro Vincent d’Indy.

²⁶ V. Contreras, “Las Golondrinas. Apoteosis lirica de un músico español,” *El correo español*, February 6, 1914. “De pronto, y siguiendo siempre la trama literaria, toma parte el metal en el apasionado amor de Lina y Pierrot. El tono menor se trunca y aparece el mayor con una riqueza de sonoridad que recuerda á Wagner en los soberbios arranques de su incomparable musa.”

²⁷ Miguel Salvador, “El drama lírico ‘Las Golondrinas,’” *Revista musical hispano-americana*, February 1914. “Pues bien: Usandizaga, en el problema concreto, que cito como ejemplo, está colocado en este punto de modernidad. No terminaré sin señalar, ya que en ello insisto, que en esto mismo tenía que ser una

The opera begins with a short Prelude of a cheerful character, which introduces the assumption of cheerfulness in the company of acrobats. Based on an E pedal, according to Igoa, it allows many tonal shifts (e.g., from A to the dominant E). The theme, in minor mode and with a nostalgic character, is opposed to the second, which is more cheerful in representing the world of wanderers.

The first scene begins immediately with an instrumental theme, which will later be taken up by Cecilia (“*Camino siempre igual*,” [Always the same path]). I prefer to call it the “theme of ambition.” Often associated with Cecilia, it is repeated many times in the opera. The theme of ambition appears here, supported by an ostinato on F in the bass (double basses). It is in a minor mode and has a nostalgic character. Igoa points out the importance of the major-third C-E motif, an interval that shortly thereafter, in the act, also introduces the theme associated with Lina.²⁸ Her theme is more cheerful, and I call this the “theme of innocence.” It is sung by Lina immediately after the first lines are exchanged between Roberto and Cecilia. Lina is arranging some costumes and, in the meantime, rehearsing a part of her show. Her words (“*Señora, la mi señora*”) are actually those spoken by the character she is rehearsing. It follows the duet between Cecilia and Lina. The tone of the duet changes constantly. Lina, with her motive in major mode, tries

dificultad más á vencer, y á vencer *por modernidad*: lo que al tratar del drama decía relativo á la prosa no ritmada que abunda en el poema de Las Golondrinas y que no ha sido para el músico dificultad de ningún género. Al defecto que conduce esta prosa mal acentuada y elegida, ya lo decía, es á que el músico tiene que proceder por retazos desafines y no por estrofas; contra este elemento de desunión tiene una cualidad Usandizaga, que mi amigo Turina me hacía notar oyendo la obra, que es su sentido tonal exquisito, que es de una lógica maestra; en lo que la influencia de escuela (de Schola, mejor dicho), se le nota más que en otra cosa alguna.”

²⁸ Igoa, “Las golondrinas de J. M. Usandizaga,” 22.

to cheer Cecilia (“*Los titiriteros!*” [the puppeteers]), who keeps singing to her in a minor mode. The duet is very contrapuntal and imitative, showing the remarkable training Usandizaga received in Paris.

Allegretto
(Cecilia)



Ca - mi - no siempre i- gual, _____ ¿có-mo nos pue - de dar su flor?__

P (con melancolía apasionada)

Example 5.1: Theme of ambition (*Las golondrinas*)

Allegro
(Lina)



Se - ño - ra, la mi se - ño - ra, ten-go muer - to__ el co-ra - zón,____

mf

Example 5.2: Theme of innocence (*Las golondrinas*)

Here, Cecilia sings the following lines, which also explain the opera’s title.

Camino siempre igual,
¿como nos puede dar su flor?
¡Tristeza gris del arenal,
sin esperanza mi amor!
La golondrina que, al pasar,
se detiene a escuchar la canción,
prende su nido en el zarzal
...¡que el viento lo arrasó!

Always the same road,
How can you flourish?
Gray sadness of the sandbank,
without hope [is] my love!
The swallow that, passing by,
stops to listen to the song,
makes its nest in the bush
...that the wind blew away

In the second scene, Puck arrives and, speaking to Lina and Cecilia, sings his romance “*Caminar, Caminar*” (“Walking, walking”), explaining the noble life of an artist

who moves from one place to another. This is also Puck's theme. In the third scene, we have Cecilia, Puck, and Roberto, who asks them to rehearse for the show. Cecilia is sad and miserable and does not want to rehearse, and she hurls sarcasm at Puck's words, "How can you be cold in the shade if the fire of my heart is burning?" A duet starts, with Cecilia pronouncing the words "Straw fire in the wind, soon the flame goes out, soon the bonfire dies."²⁹ The duet begins in 12/8 with a hemiola effect and alternates with 4/4 in a more melodic section introduced by Puck. Also, the second part of this duet makes extensive use of *violinata*.

In this duet, a new theme is presented, which I call the "theme of abandonment." It is generated by a descending-fourth motive, first proposed by Cecilia and then performed several times by the orchestra, particularly at the end of the duet. Cecilia's abandonment is not yet material but has already happened in her spirit. This theme is "very" similar to the final motive of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut*.³⁰ I am convinced Usandizaga willingly added an homage to Puccini at this point.

²⁹ ¡Fuego de paja en el viento...pronto se apaga la llama...pronto se muere la hoguera...fuego de paja en el viento! ¡Fuego de amor engañoso...pronto se extingue la llama...triste quedó la ceniza...fuego de paja en el viento!

³⁰ Puccini's theme itself is basically identical to a popular theme from the soundtrack written by a noted American composer for a famous Hollywood intergalactic movie saga. Many think these are just coincidences. I do not.

Andantino (rubato)



Example 5.3: Theme of abandonment (*Las golondrinas*)



Example 5.4: Last theme of Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* Intermezzo



Example 5.5: Lina singing the “theme of abandonment” (*Las golondrinas*)

Realizing that Cecilia is rejecting the circus life—even making sarcastic remarks at those who appreciate it—and that she wants to seek fame and fortune elsewhere, thus also abandoning him, Puck is frustrated, furious, and attacks her. Usandizaga already shows us Puck’s impulsive character, anticipating the possible tragedy of the last act. He immediately repents and desperately seeks her forgiveness.

Right after the “theme of abandonment” is performed by the full orchestra, Lina can be heard from the window, singing, “*Me dices que ya no me quieres*” accompanied by a

very high-pitched tremolando in the strings. Lina's song is a sort of a commentary on

Puck's situation and a theoretical reaction he could have to Cecilia's rejection. She sings:

You tell me that you don't love me anymore: / you tell me that you can't see me anymore... / Love, who thought it would be so easy / to stop loving? / You tell me that you don't love me anymore.... / Who told you that I love you? / Love we had dreaming; / sleeping it vanished [...] / You tell me that you don't love me anymore, / you tell me that the singing is over... / If you liked the game of love, / we can start again.³¹

This song is critical. It is dreamy yet dramatic and tense at the same time. The song, sung by Lina but as if she were hearing it from Puck, summarizes the whole story. It is a mixture of resignation, pride, and denial, as well as a commentary on the "theme of abandonment." And in fact, the "we can start again" is emblematic because it anticipates Puck's obsession, which will persist to have until the end. Lina is a romantic soul and continues to try to reunite Cecilia and Puck. She even manages to make them hug (a little timidly and unwillingly).

In the Act I finale, we have the classic village-feast scene. Probably this is the moment of the opera more indebted to the zarzuela tradition. The main instrumental theme of the "*feria*" is derivative of Puck's "*Caminar*." The choir of men, women, and children sings "*Noche clara de San Juan*" ("Clear night of San Juan"). The singing of the children's choir is interspersed with a slow triplet effect in the woodwinds and brasses, which, with a slightly strident sound, recalls the street organ typical of the village feasts.

³¹ "Me dices que ya no me quieres: / me dices que ya no me puedes ver... / Amor, ¿quién pensara que fuese / tan fácil dejar de querer? / Me dices que ya no me quieres... / ¿Quién te ha dicho a ti que te quiero yo? / Amor nos tuvimos soñando; / durmiendo se desvaneció. [...] / Me dices que ya no me quieres, / me dices que ya se acabó el cantar... / Si el juego de amor te ha gustado, / podemos volver a empezar."

Più Vivo

Ob.
 Cl.
 Bsn.

Più Vivo
(Children) (gestos)

Al pa-sar el ar-ro-yo de San-ta Cla-ra ¡jay! ¡jay! de San-ta Cla-ra

Example 5.6: “Noche clara de San Juan,” street organ effect (*Las golondrinas*, Act I, Finale)

Lina realizes that Cecilia is leaving the company. They sing a duet in which Lina tries to convince her to stay because, she says, their life is full of success and, most of all, Puck could suffer upon her leaving. Cecilia is determined not to be with them anymore, and she calls them “*Payasos miserables!*” (“Miserable clowns”). Lina is upset and, in disdain, tells Cecilia to go then. Once Cecilia is gone, Lina repents and calls her back, without success. She wonders what Puck will do now that he is alone. At this point, in correspondence to her words, “*Y Puck? Se queda solo*” (“And Puck? He is left alone”) we hear an Andalusian-like phrase performed by the viola.

(Lina) ***p***

cy Puck? se que-da so-lo.

Via. ***p espress.***

Example 5.7: Andalusian motive (*Las golondrinas*, Act I, Finale)

Now Lina sings her final micro-aria, “*Se fue y se va con ella de Puck toda la esperanza*” (“She is gone, and with her all Puck’s hopes”). When she pronounces the words “*¡Ah! Si tu le dejas...*” (“Oh! If you let him [go]...”), we hear again the “theme of abandonment.” But in this case, the abandonment is reappropriated by Lina as a positive outcome. Indeed, Lina’s mood has changed as she finally realizes that she loves Puck, and now that Cecilia is gone, the situation has favorably changed for her. When she hears Puck’s voice coming from afar, she concludes, “*Ah! Es que Puck es mi alma y no lo sabía, Puck es mi amor*” (“Ah! Puck is my soul, and I did not know it; Puck is my love”).



Example 5.8: Lina singing the “Theme of abandonment.” (*Las golondrinas*, Act I, Finale)

Act II begins with cheerful music, of an unmistakable circus character, presenting a theme that will be repeated later. Puck’s theme “*Caminar...*” is performed several times in different orchestral registers. It anticipates and follows Puck’s entry on the scene dressed as Pulcinella. This first section is a preparation for the actual pantomime.

In the second scene, Puck calls Lina, who, dressed as Colombina for the imminent performance, starts innocently flirting with the unaware man. “Don’t forget that I’m Colombina, Mr. Pulcinella’s wife, in love with Pierrot!” Puck is upset because the pantomime reminds him of Cecilia. Lina tries to distract him, reminding him that they are now a thriving company named “Familia Sanders.” Lina tries to flatter Puck about

his ability to write farces. When he pronounces the words “*Me acuendo*” (“I remember”), followed by Lina’s “¿*Y te pones tristes al recordarlo?*” (“And does it make you sad remembering it?”), we hear a dramatic melody performed by unison strings, with a certain chromatic flavor.

(Allegretto) (Lina) *mf*
¿Y te po - nes stris - te al re - cor - dar - lo?

(Puck)
Me a - cuer - do.

(Allegretto)
Vln. 1 *f espress.*
Vln. 2 *f espress.*
Vla. *f espress.*
Vc. *f espress.*

divisi

Example 5.9: Dramatic unison (*Las golondrinas*, Act II, Scene 2)

Also, other themes appear as ghosts in this section. Right before Puck sings “*Las memoria viejas siempre son amargas*” (“Old memories are always bitter”), we hear a fragment of Lina’s song from Act I (“*Me dices que ya no me quiere...*”). Lina now sings an upbeat and happy melody, “*Los zarzales del camino*” (“I always like to see the brambles in bloom on the road”), shaped upon the orchestral theme presented at the beginning of the act.

The third scene starts with Juanito complaining about his costume. Puck says it is time to rehearse the pantomime. The pantomime begins. Puck’s saying “*Empieza la farsa*” (“The farce is starting”) sounds like an opposing reminiscence of *Pagliacci*’s “*La commedia è*

finita (“The comedy has ended”). As in *Pagliacci*, there is a clown who introduces the show. We hear a grave descending motive, perhaps referring to Pulcinella, and a beautiful melody with a modal flavor. Immediately after, we hear Colombina’s theme presented first by the orchestra and (later) by Puck. Colombina’s theme is a minuet, just like in *Pagliacci*. The bored Colombina is left alone, with some guards, by her husband Pulcinella, who is old and unattractive. Pierrot arrives intoning the Colombina theme. His arrival is ushered in by a swaggering long melisma on *Ah!* accompanied by a dreamy harp arpeggio, as if to indicate magic. Immediately after, he sings a song on Colombina’s theme, “*Colombina, Colombina bella*” (“Colombina, beautiful Colombina”). Colombina’s song is in a 3/4 minuet. Pierrot then does a slower dance based on the same theme, but it is in the quadruple meter and slowed down, and he manages to seduce Colombina. Pulcinella arrives accompanied by his theme in low triplets.

Allegretto
(Pierrot)

Co - lom - bi - na, Co-lom-bi-na be - lla o - ye mi can-tar, es-cu-cha mi can-ción.

Example 5.10: Pantomime, *Colombina*’s song (*Las golondrinas*, Act II, Scene 3)

He looks around, suspicious that something is wrong, while the lovers are hidden. Pierrot pretends to be dead while Colombina and the Pierrottine are around him, acting as if they are watching over the body. Colombina tells her husband that the boy (Pierrot) was passing by when he died suddenly. Finally, when Pulcinella is away, Pierrot gets up and hugs Colombina. General cheerfulness and mock gestures towards the unsuspecting

Pulcinella follow. The final dance of the pantomime is introduced by a long melismatic phrase (flutes, oboes, and clarinets) with an accentuated Spanish color. Also, the peculiarity of the final section of the pantomime is the superimposition of the lively rhythmic cell in 3/8, resembling a fast Spanish zapateado, or a “very” quick minuet, with the Colombina’s theme, supported by lush orchestration.

Allegro

The musical score is written in 3/8 time and marked 'Allegro'. It features two systems of two staves each. The top system contains a melodic line with dynamics *pp* and *p*. The bottom system contains a bass line with dynamics *cresc.* and *dim.*

Example 5.11: Pantomime, final dance (*Las golondrinas*, Act II, Scene 3)

In the following scene, Cecilia enters, accompanied by a gentleman. We hear her theme from Act I (“theme of ambition”), plus fragments of other arias, including “*Fuego de paja.*” Suddenly, she hears Colombina’s song in the distance. The music becomes more dramatic, and we hear the “theme of abandonment.” Cecilia is very nervous and suggests to her partner that they leave.

In the Act II finale, many people who have apparently just seen the show emerge enthusiastic about it. The public acclaims Colombina (Lina), and predictably we hear her theme. This scene, however excessive it may seem and entirely dedicated to Lina, has a particular dramatic value. Lina is the one who took Cecilia’s place both in the company

and at Puck's side and is now very successful. She has what Cecilia refused, seeking greater economic stability.

An exchange between Lina and Puck follows. The duet “*¡Oh Puck por ti mi corazón se encendie...*” (“Oh Puck, my heart is burning for you”) is based on a new theme, a simple ascending scale, which is first sung by the two protagonists in an imitative way and then in contrary motion. However, here they are not declaring their love. Puck is unaware of Lina's sentiments and sees her as a sister. At the song's end, we hear Cecilia laughing hysterically from far away. The mood of the scene changes quickly, in counterpoint with low brasses. Lina manages to continue their conversation, but the laugh is heard again. Puck now has recognized her and sings a nervous aria, “*Risa infernal*” (“Infernal laughing”). Lina implores him to listen to her and not to go to Cecilia because she will deceive him again. Puck, nervous and unreasonable, runs to Cecilia, leaving Lina in despair. At this moment, we hear again the “theme of abandonment.” In this case, it can have a twofold interpretation. It could signify either Lina's abandonment or just a memory of Cecilia, who abandoned the company and Puck.

Act III has its prelude, written with very fine harmony and built on two themes of Act I, “*Caminar*” and Lina's song “*Me dices que ya no me quires.*” Lina's song is heard again, but the chromaticism gradually increases. Lina is told that Cecilia has made it known that she will visit her. Juanito would like Cecilia to be forgiven, but Lina is determined not to do so. Cecilia appears, and they begin a duet in which both sing the “theme of ambition,” usually assigned only to Cecilia. Puck arrives and sends Lina away. Left alone with Cecilia, he attacks her by grabbing her by the neck because he is still full of resentment.

Cecilia understands that she is in a difficult situation and tries to indulge and deceive him by becoming increasingly docile toward him. Puck is confused at this point and asks her to be honest. Cecilia sings a new aria in which she successfully attempts to seduce Puck again, and the themes of the Act I duet (“*Fuego de paja en el viento*”) are heard once more.

Lina is desperate, and the theme of abandonment and other fragmented themes of the work are heard, including Colombina’s theme. The themes alternate as Lina’s thoughts alternate in desperation, to the point that she even thinks she hears Puck’s voice. The chromaticism of the orchestra underlines Lina’s agitated state of mind. Puck arrives, also agitated, and he does not understand why Lina avoids him and keeps him nervously away. He asks to be consoled, “*Consuélame, tu que eres mi Hermana*” (“Console me, you who are my sister”). Lina confesses her love to Puck, who is now upset and calls himself a villain. He wants to leave, and when Lina asks him why, almost in the grip of his madness, he confesses to having killed Cecilia because she had once again deceived him and laughed at him, calling him a miserable clown. The orchestra accompanies this declaration in an agitated and chromatic way. At the end of the story, the “theme of abandonment” is heard once again. The crowd arrives to take Puck, who, before being taken away, manages to obtain Lina’s forgiveness.

5.6 *Verismo Topoi*

Las golondrinas is a unique work of its kind due to its modernist characteristics in the treatment of the orchestra. A conspicuous and perhaps solitary precedent for this work in the Spanish operatic repertoire is Falla’s *La vida breve*, although the two works, while sharing a luxurious Wagnerian and Impressionist orchestration, present two

substantial differences. The first is the use of local color. Falla's work exhibits marked *andalucismo* in its use of typical songs and dances such as the *martinete* or *soleares*, as well as a strong Andalusian musical color that permeates the entire orchestral texture. By contrast, Usandizaga's work sounds a bit more neutral. There are moments when Spanish elements and a specific local color are identifiable, but they are not as marked as in other Spanish works. Furthermore, the use of leitmotifs in the two works is very different. If Falla sporadically recalls some themes during the work, Usandizaga treats them in a way that is structurally more advanced and continuous.

Las golondrinas lacks a certain unity of time, place, and action. The story occurs in two moments and two different locations, though not precisely indicated. The first is a small circus somewhere in the fields of Castile, and the second is "a big Circus." This is justified by the initial structure of the work as a *zarzuela grande* in three acts. Usandizaga had not planned to have a single act or action concentrated in one specific place. Nevertheless, this does not in the least impact the value of the work from a *verismo* perspective. As we have seen for other Spanish operas (as well as Italian), the characteristic of a single act is a peculiarity of very few works, especially Italian ones. Many Spanish *verismo* operas are in two or three acts. For this reason, we do not consider the single-act structure essential in adhering to the *verismo* model. What matters is primarily the plot of a *verismo* style.

The plot of *Las golondrinas* is eminently *verismo*, being based on the drama *Saltinbanquis* by Gregorio Martínez Sierra and María Lejárraga. The reference to *Pagliacci* is apparent, although we cannot say for sure that the Martínez Sierras' story is

directly indebted to Leoncavallo. As we know, the tragic stories of violent Pierrot were the order of the day in turn-of-the-century literature, especially French. Furthermore, it should be remembered that Leoncavallo himself—who, as we know, had spent a lot of time in Paris—was accused by Catulle Méndez of plagiarizing his naturalist drama *Le femme de Tabarín*. In any case, whether the Martínez Sierras found inspiration in *Pagliacci* or in any other naturalist drama of the time inspired by tumblers and Pierrots is irrelevant because the final result was a drama with a clear *verismo* slant, which was transformed into a compelling libretto for Usandizaga.

Furthermore, the structure of the work, which in turn recalls that of Greek tragedy, is that of many other *verismo* works. A first act presents the characters, their moods, and their roles, usually culminating in a village party, at the end of which something (in this case Cecilia abandoning the company) triggers the drama.³² A second act, which is compressed (i.e., usually the second act is much shorter than the first), develops and accelerates the action. Finally, there is a third act, in which the drama is consummated. Another element of theatrical realism and *verismo* is the use of the play-within-a-play plot device. In *Las golondrinas*, it is presented not only in the prominent example of the pantomime of the *commedia dell'arte* (another realist *topos* which is present not only in the theater but also in ballet)³³ but also in other moments of the opera. For

³² An eminent example is Bretón's *La Dolores*, in which, after the festive dance number at the end of Act I, with the famous Jota, a *copla* is sung that initiates the drama.

³³ For example, see Stravinsky's *Pulcinella Suite*.

example, in Act I, Lina sings “*Señora, la mi señora*” while rehearsing a male role. Or, in the same act, Puck tries to rehearse a scene with the distressed Cecilia.

The local color, when offered, is more scenic than musical. Spain is certainly identifiable in the opera. The scene of the village festival in Act II (*Noche clara de San Juan*) is probably the obvious example. Another omnipresent *topos* in the Spanish repertoire and absent in *Las golondrinas* is that of religion. There is no reference of any kind to religion in the opera. The characters, perhaps precisely because of their condition as derelicts (who accept or reject their life), are presented as disconnected from any sacred or supernatural presence. This is a characteristic of the crudest Italian literary realism.

5.7 Conclusion. The Death of the “Spanish Puccini”

Las golondrinas presents a point of arrival but perhaps also a new starting point for Spanish opera, i.e., a synthesis of realism, verism, modernism, and innovation. The study of the opera, in relation to the composer’s biography and its reception in Madrid in 1914, shows how audiences and critics welcomed the opera with enthusiasm and recognized José María as a composer who had something new to offer, whose name would soon resonate in Spanish theaters and around the world.

One question remains. Why did the opera later become famous in its operatic version, prepared by his brother Ramón, and not in the original zarzuela version? The first apparent reason could be that the zarzuela was not published and that José María would soon die while working on the new *Mendi-Mendyan* opera. Mario Larena recently provided another interesting explanation for the obscurity of *Las golondrinas* in its original zarzuela form. According to the Spanish musicologist, *Las golondrinas* established itself in

the “masculine” canon of Spanish musical culture because it was “monumentalized” in an operatic format, losing its hybrid zarzuela character. Usandizaga’s work came to occupy a unique place in the history of Spanish musico-theatrical culture. At that time, modernism was associated with the concept of femininity, or, to be precise, the “feminization process” was used to completely delegitimize the modernist aesthetic. Usandizaga was also an easy target for this controversial type of identification, because of his physical appearance (small and pale), not to mention that his librettist was a woman. According to Larena, critics and the press constructed an ad hoc image, a counter-narrative, which glorifies the composer as a strongly masculinized musical idol—which he obviously was not—underlining his constructed virility and representing him as a sort of national hero. The reasons for this choice were simple: the critics liked his music very much. All this lasted until Usandizaga was alive and for a few years after. However, from the twenties on and with the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, Usandizaga’s zarzuela entered into oblivion exclusively due to ostracism on the part of music critics who re-oriented towards a general masculinization of art, opposing modernist “femininity.” This was an endeavor that the regime institutionalized, with the support of philosophers of the caliber of José Ortega y Gasset.³⁴

On this subject, and as a conclusion to the chapter, I report the words that Adolfo Salazar dedicated to Usandizaga in the journal *Arte musical* immediately after his death. While recognizing in Usandizaga an Italian-style realism and a Puccinism in the

³⁴ Mario Larena, “La virilidad vulnerable de un héroe modernista (1914-1918): música, ornamento y ‘seducción’ en torno a Usandizaga,” *Cuadernos de música iberoamericana* 34 (September 17, 2021): 25–55.

orchestral treatment, Salazar distances himself and the composer from both, explaining how Usandizaga was good at balancing these elements, and adds that there was no need for Spanish Puccinism.

José María Usandizaga has died. The whole of Spain has wept for him. [...] Usandizaga has been the flower of a day [...]. José María has heard the public judgment, and that judgment was one of reward and praise; [...] Usandizaga has died as soon as the sweet wine of glory has reached his lips. [...] Youth was in him the ally of his genius, and the two of them are the pedestal of his triumph. Thus, the future of José María Usandizaga has been hidden in the indecipherable. What could have been the course of his career?

[...] We do not know the preliminary work of Usandizaga. [...] We then judge only by his theater, and the reality of his work is that of revealing himself as a first-rate theatrical talent, oriented towards conquering crowds and requesting the usual expressive means in the current Italian *verismo*. To this is added a refined musical sensibility that wanted to expand in higher regions. Thus, two disjunctive elements lead one to think whether all the moments of his lyrical drama (we are referring to *Las golondrinas*) may have flowed directly from the same sources, or whether Usandizaga would have gathered elements from the heat of different emotional phases. What promise results from the amalgamation that we mean? The triumph of his theatrical talent and the adoption of *verismo* expression? Then we prefer reality to promise. Or, would the symphonic element triumph and force a purification in the dramatic expression? Then we prefer the promise. There has been talking of the renovation that inaugurated the applauded lyrical drama mentioned; nothing more accurate because our popular theater is a pool of pestilent stagnant water.

[...] The main merit of Usandizaga would be his young strength and sincerity in the face of the weakness and *a posteriori* of the others. And yet, where would the triumphant *verismo* have taken us? What time was approaching of swelling, of truculence, of intemperate cries, that wanted to be tragic, of false, hollow, and vain rhetoric! Puccini stays well in Italy; but let us fear a possible Spanish Puccinism, and be grateful that Usandizaga's talent, disciplined in severe musical schools, had known how to dominate it by accepting it and diluting it among fragments of refined musicality. [...] In what sense could Usandizaga's genius have evolved from *Las golondrinas* to *La llama*? [...] Noble inspiration, which confirms our belief that the best of Usandizaga's art was not what was heard but precisely what remained to be heard! A few years ago, my friend Juan R. Maidagán and I were resting in an old farmhouse located on the top of one of the foothills of Mount Hernio. The panorama was splendid and superb. [...] Like a chant from the prophetic voice, the first lights lit up in the sky, and at the bottom of the valley, in the distance, other little lights seemed to respond in echo. "It's the lights of

Vidania,” my friend said. And among them, a young musician weaved the profuse plot of the work that was to glorify him.³⁵

³⁵ Adolfo Salazar, “La muerte de Usandizaga,” *Arte musical*, October 15, 1915. “José María Usandizaga ha muerto. España entera le ha llorado. [...] Usandizaga ha sido flor de un día. [...] José María ha oído el juicio público, y ese juicio era de premio y alabanza [...]. Usandizaga ha muerto apenas ha llegado á sus labios el dulce vino de la gloria. [...] La juventud fué en él la aliada de su genio, y ellos dos son el pedestal de su triunfo. Así, el futuro de José María Usandizaga ha quedado oculto en lo indescifrable. ¿Cuál hubiera podido ser el transcurso de su carrera? [...] No conocemos la obra preliminar de Usandizaga [...]. Juzgamos solo, pues, por su teatro, y la realidad de su obra es la de revelarse allí un talento teatral de primer orden, orientado hacia la conquista de multitudes y solicitante de los medios expresivos usuales en el actual verismo italiano. A ello se une una fina sensibilidad musical que quería explayarse en más altas regiones. Así hay dos elementos disyuntivos que dan á pensar si todos los momentos de su drama lírico (nos referimos á «Las golondrinas») habrán manado directamente de las mismas fuentes, ó bien si Usandizaga habría reunido allí elementos nacidos al calor de diversos momentos emocionales. De la amalgama que significamos, ¿qué promesa resulta? ¿La del triunfo de su talento teatral y el de la adaptación de la expresión verista? Entonces preferimos la realidad á la promesa. O bien, ¿triunfaría el elemento sinfónico y obligarla á una depuración en la expresión teatral? Preferimos entonces la promesa. Se ha hablado de la renovación que inauguraba el aplaudido drama lírico mencionado; nada más cierto, porque nuestro teatro popular es una charca de pestilentes aguas estancadas. [...] El mérito principal de Usandizaga sería el de su joven pujanza y el de su sinceridad, en frente de la debilidad y a posteriori de los otros. Y, sin embargo, ¿dónde nos hubiera llevado el verismo triunfante? ¿Qué época se avecinaba de hinchazón, de truculencias, de gritos destemplados, que querían ser trágicos, de falsa, hueca y vana retórica! Bien se está Puccini en Italia; pero temamos á un posible puccinismo español, y demos gracias á que el talento de Usandizaga, disciplinado en severas escuelas musicales lo había sabido dominar al aceptarlo y diluirlo entre fragmentos de fina musicalidad. [...] ¿En qué sentido habrá podido evolucionar la genialidad de Usandizaga moviéndose de «Las golondrinas» á «La llama»? [...] ¡Noble inspiración, que confirma nuestra creencia de que lo mejor del arte de Usandizaga no era lo oído, sino precisamente lo que restaba por oír! Hace algunos años, mi amigo Juan R. Maidagán y yo descansábamos en un viejo caserío asentado en la cima de una de las estribaciones del monte Hernio. [...] Como á un conjuro de la voz profética se iluminaban en el cielo los primeros luminares, y en el fondo del valle, á lo lejos, otras lucecitas parecían responder en eco.—Son las luces de Vidania—dijo mi amigo—. Y entre ellas, un músico joven tejía la profusa trama de la obra que había de glorificarle.”



Figure 5.2: Funeral procession for Usandizaga. The orchestra is playing at the entrance of the Victoria Eugenia Theater. San Sebastián (Basque Country), 1915.
© Gure Gipuzkoa <https://www.guregipuzkoa.eus/es/irudia/?pid=12217>.

CHAPTER 6

Penella's *El gato montés*. Andalucismo as Fatalistic Realism

6.1 Introduction

This chapter is a case study of the opera *El gato montés*. Composed by Manuel Penella in 1917, this work has recently returned tentatively to the stage after a lengthy oblivion lasting almost sixty years. This oblivion was undoubtedly a consequence of the censorship of two Spanish dictatorships and, to some extent, also the dramatic setting of the work, which Penella meant as a *popular* theatrical product, one with an authentic Andalusian character. Indeed, Spanish history teaches us that *andalucismo* was ostracized by dictatorships, except for the folklore rendition of flamenco, commodified by the regime as a tourist attraction.¹

El gato montés is an opera set in Andalucía, specifically in Sevilla, narrating a typically Andalusian story, with a bullfighter and a bandit competing for the love of the

¹ See José Alvarez Junco and Adrian Shubert, eds., *Spanish History since 1808* (London: New York: Arnold; Co-published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press, 2000), 1-12. "For their part, Spaniards decided that if they could not eliminate the stereotype they might as well profit from it. Bienvenido Mr. Marshall, an excellent film from the 1950s, provides an ironic account of Spain's exclusion from the Marshall Plan. Having heard that the US ambassador is about to visit, a Castilian village decides to please him by having all its residents dress up as flamenco dancers! In the 1960s the entire country did more or less that in order to attract tourism. Across Spain towns with no tradition of flamenco or bullfighting hurried to build bullrings or gypsy caves to lure the American and European descendants of the Romantic travelers for whom 'Spain' was Andalucía. The government marketed the country under the slogan 'Spain is different.'" See also Carmen Ortiz, "The Uses of Folklore by the Franco Regime," *The Journal of American Folklore* 112, no. 446 (1999): 479-96.

gitanilla, a tale imbued with fatalism. Andalusia is the land of bullfighting and of flamenco, a direct musical representation of this fatalism, and it is a land where the sacred and the profane coexist in everyday life. This is precisely the fatalism that transpires in *El gato montés*. Real characters (the gypsy, the bandit, the bullfighter, but also the concerned mother of the bullfighter, *picadores*, and the audience of the arena) live a real life, in which they act with impulsiveness and a certain amount of agency, already marked by an ultimate destiny, often tragic, of which they are more or less aware and against which they cannot rebel. What characterizes this work is a unique Andalusian realism. It is a form of *verismo* that I refer to as *fatalistic realism*. This distinguishes *El gato montés* from other *andalucismo* works and other Spanish realist operas at large.

In such operas, the boundary between realism and *españolada* is always very thin, especially from the perspective of Spanish criticism. While appreciating the realism of the work and certain musical qualities, many criticized the dramatic structure of the libretto, or—in the worst cases—the use of elements of Andalusian folklore, defining the opera as an *españolada*. In a conservative and ultra-Catholic *regenerationist* Spain, proposing such an opera in 1917 was undoubtedly a dangerous endeavor. Penella, supposedly aware of the risks, balances the work by inserting numerous fresh and popular numbers appreciated by the public and by avoiding the harsh death “by murder.”

The story of the opera *El gato montés* is one of many in which the issue of authenticity re-emerges in relation to Spain’s music and culture. Did Penella trade authenticity for marketability? Was the opera an “*españolada*”? Furthermore, if this is the

case, why did Penella deviate from the *género chico*—which he produced copiously, with over eighty titles—by composing such a unique opera?

After discussing the genesis and the libretto of the opera, the chapter expands on two parts—the analysis of the opera and the performance and critical reception. The first is intended more as a detailed description of the dramatic action, with particular emphasis on the leitmotivic development (I prefer to call them “themes”). The second represents an in-depth study of the critical reception—based on the copious hemerographic sources nowadays available—of *El gato montés*, following its overall successful path around Spain for fifteen months.

6.2 Manuel Penella. Biographical Sketch

Manuel Penella was born in Valencia on July 31, 1880. His father was Manuel Penella Raga,² a famous Valencian composer and choir conductor. Manuel began the study of solfège and harmony with his father at the local conservatory, and later studied composition and orchestration with Salvador Giner and violin with Andrés Goñi. He wanted to be a violinist. However, an injury to his left hand, which occurred when he was thirteen, prevented him from continuing playing, with the consequence that he decided to devote himself fully to composition. He presented his first *sainete*, entitled *El queso de bola*, in 1893, and from 1894 he was organist at the Church of St. Nicholas in Valencia. In the same year, he premiered in Valencia the zarzuela *La fiesta del pueblo*. In 1897, when he was only seventeen years old, Penella left for the Americas. He spent fourteen years there,

² Manuel Penella Raga (1847-1909) was also the founder of the popular choir *Orfeón Valenciano*. He was professor of music and voice and founded the first Municipal School of Music for Children.

experiencing life in full bohemian style. Besides performing in a chamber trio, he worked as a waiter, newspaper boy, tailor, pastry chef, circus performer, painter, and even a bullfighter. When in Ecuador, he was the conductor of a music band, for which he wrote music. Concurrently, he kept composing for the musical theater.

He returned to Spain in 1904, where he continued to work and compose for several zarzuela companies. From these early years, already evident was Manuel's total involvement with the fashionable world of the zarzuelas, which he wrote copiously during his life.³ He made a second trip to the Americas from 1912 to 1913. This time he was mainly in Argentina, where he became very popular, especially thanks to the enormous success of his zarzuela *Las musas latinas* (1913) throughout all Latin America. After a brief trip back to Spain in 1913, he soon after returned to Argentina. It was then that he met and married his wife and also befriended the writer Felipe Sassone, who would have an important role in Manuel's life also as a colleague. Manuel returned to Spain in 1914. The same year, he presented *La muñeca de amor* with a libretto by Sassone.

Penella's first opera, *El gato montés*, first saw the light of day in 1917. The work was introduced as *opera popular española* and premiered in Valencia on February 22, just a few months before the premiere of the single-act *revista* quite ironically titled *La última españolada*. The following year saw the premiere of his zarzuela *Friolína*. From 1919 to 1925, Penella was again in the Americas. *El gato montés* was even represented for ten consecutive weeks at the Park Theater in New York City, between December 1921 and

³ For a complete list of Penella's production, see Vicente Galbis López, "Manuel Penella Moreno," in *Diccionario de la música española e hispanoamericana*, ed. Emilio Casares et al., 8 (Madrid: Sociedad General de Autores y Editores, 1999).

February 1922. The cast featured the renowned singer Concita Piquer, for whom Penella also wrote many songs that became very popular (*Aguita clara, La chula celosa, Dulcinea* (con Valverde), *El florero, La maredueta, En terra extrána*). He was back in Spain in 1925 and continued to produce Spain-inspired zarzuelas until 1931, when he turned to works a bit more inspired by the American world (*Ku-Kus-Clan, Viva la república, El huevo de Colón*). In 1932 he wrote the zarzuela *Jazz band* and his second and last comic opera *Don Gil de Alcalá*. Premiered on October 27 at the Teatre Novedades in Barcelona, this successful opera was an homage to Mexico, where it was eventually also premiered in 1938. In 1935 he premiered the three-act zarzuela *Tana Fedorova*, with a libretto by Jacinto Benavente. In the same year, it was released a movie version of *El gato montés*, directed by Rosario del Pi and with the direct musical supervision of Penella. An earlier Hollywood adaptation of the opera is dated 1924, with the title *Tiger and Love*, in which Penella had to compromise to important changes in the storyline. In 1937, Penella established a company in his hometown of Valencia. During his certainly not boring life, Penella was a multifaceted artist. An interesting description of “Manolo” is offered by his friend Felipe Sassone:

Manuel Penella, who was my unforgettable friend and is no longer in the world of the living. Manolo was a Levantine, black as a Moor, sharp and charming, an artist and a Spaniard to the marrow of his bones, who knew his job perfectly. A great conductor and very skillful in all kinds of theatrical matters, he had a great musical culture and a very fine sensitivity, and he admired and understood Debussy, and cultivated, modestly and masterfully in his original compositions, good zarzuela music with that taste, so from their region—harmonies by Ruperto Chapí and melodies by Pepe Serrano—which smelled and tasted like orange trees and the sea.⁴

⁴ Felipe Sassone, *La rueda de mi fortuna (memorias)*. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1958), 390. “Manuel Penella, que fue mi compañero inolvidable y ya no está en el mundo de los vivos. Manolo era un levantino, negro como un moro, agudo y saladísimo, artista y español hasta la médula de los huesos, que sabía a maravilla su oficio. Gran director de orquesta y muy diestro en toda clase de menesteres teatrales, tenía una gran cultura

If we just scroll the titles of his theatrical works, we can perceive his interesting sense of humor and a satirical approach to the theater. Just to cite a few examples, his *La perra chica* (1908), subtitled *sátira política*, is a caricature of the 1907 zarzuela by Ruperto Chapí entitled *La patria chica*. In 1914, he wrote the *españolada* entitled *La España de pandereta*, and it is curious that after the success of the “*ópera española*” *El gato montés* (1917), which some indeed criticized as an *españolada*, in the same year, he composed the revista *La última españolada*. Even more curiously, Penella actually brought this last *sainete* in a tour together with *El gato montés*. Penella died on January 24, 1939, in Cuernavaca (Mexico) while he was supervising the music for the movie *El capitano aventurero*, based on the opera *Don Gil de Alcalá*.

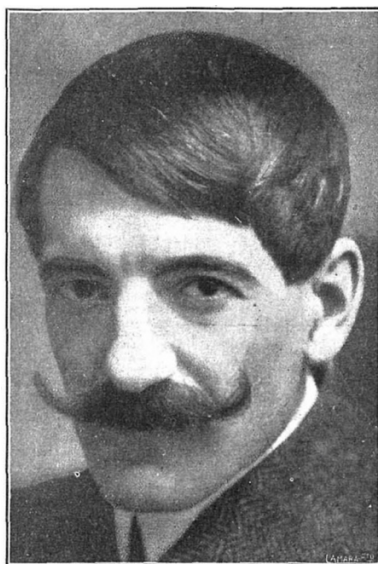


Figure 6.1: Photo of Manuel Penella (Magazine *Nuevo mundo*, April 20, 1917).

musical y una sensibilidad finísima, y admiraba y entendía a Debussy, y cultivaba, modesto y magistral en sus composiciones originales, la buena música de zarzuela con aquel gusto, tan de su región—armonías de Ruperto Chapí y melodías de Pepe Serrano—que olían y sabían a naranjos y a mar.”

6.3 Genesis and Libretto

A fundamental detail that is often overlooked in presenting the opera is that, in the first place, the drafting of the libretto of *El gato montés* had started as a collaboration with Felipe Sassone (1884-1959). Sassone was a Peruvian writer of Italian origin who spent most of his life in Spain. A pupil of Jacinto Benavente, he had been fascinated by writing from an early age to the point that he later abandoned the university studies to focus exclusively on writing. Sassone was a consummate bohemian and spent many years traveling around the world, after having lived and traveled frequently both in Italy and Latin America, until finally settling in Madrid. He devoted himself to many genres. He was a journalist, a playwright, and a novelist. Most of all, he became a very dear friend of Manuel Penella. Their friendship went far beyond the artistic and personal relationship carried on in the Madrilenian tertulias *El gato blanco* and *El gato negro*. In his memoirs, *La rueda de mi fortuna*, Sassone remembers how the two families were very close, with their respective wives also united by a sincere friendship. Together, they often embarked on vacations and trips.⁵

Sassone's autobiography contains little more information about Penella and *El gato montés*. For example, he does not specify how the two met. However, this information is elucidated in another document, a letter that Sassone sent to critic José María Carretero and that was later published by the same in the Madrid newspaper *El Día*.⁶ Carretero had previously published his review of the first performance at the Gran

⁵ Felipe Sassone, *La rueda de mi fortuna (memorias)* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1958), 390-98.

⁶ José María Carretero, "Sobre 'El gato montés,'" *El Día*, June 5, 1917.

Teatro of *El gato montés* (June 1, 1917), in which he raised the suspicion that the author of the libretto was not Penella, as advertised, but Sassone. Therefore, the latter sent a message to his friend and colleague Carretero to clarify his professional and personal relationship with Penella. Sassone explains that he met Penella in Buenos Aires. There, he had also met his future wife, with whom he then embarked on a honeymoon to Spain. Manuel Penella was also on the same ship that took the young couple to Europe. During the evenings spent on the ship deck discussing art and music, the two began their fervent collaboration. According to Sassone, during the journey, Penella showed him the score of his one-act zarzuela *Flor de té* which he asked him to make in three acts. Sassone would later transform it into what became *La muñeca de amor* (1914).

Sassone then goes into some details about *El gato montés*. He says that after a trip they took together to Seville, where they participated in the Semana Santa (Holy Week), Penella became obsessed with the idea of writing a “Spanish opera” (*ópera española*). They discussed it for several days, until one evening, over a plate of Italian *maccheroni* (Sassone had Italian ancestry, and in his stories, he never misses an opportunity to remember how good he was in the kitchen), Penella told him the plot he had invented, and the two started writing in that exact moment.

We talked for many days. One afternoon, after eating some Italian *maccheroni*, which I had cooked myself—I am an excellent cook, dear Pepe!—, Penella told me the plot of his opera.—Shall we do it? Do you want to plan it and write it “right now? “—He exclaimed. We agree to it. The following day he was returning home with the plan of the first act and the play’s title: it would be called “El gato

montés,” and the bullfighter should be nicknamed “el Macareno.” A name that was asking for an olé!⁷

Sassone reports that he wrote only Act I and the first scene of Act II of *El gato montés*. The reason that led to interrupting the work was tragic, and it is explained both in the letter to Carettero and in his memoirs. In a short period, he suffered the deaths of both his beloved Amelia (of heart complications)⁸ and the son she had just given birth to. Amelia had gotten much worse following the troubled pregnancy, and she died in 1915, twenty days after giving birth.⁹ After this tragic event, the devastated Sassone had even moved, with his children, to the home of his friend Manolo (Manuel) Penella, and he had stopped working on the opera, which Penella later completed alone. As a good friend, Manuel would have nevertheless liked the work to be registered in both their names with the Spanish Society of Authors and Publishers (SGAE), but Sassone refused. Penella then profusely repaid him for his work with a sum of 250 pesetas,¹⁰ an amount that would also

⁷ Ibid. “Hablamos muchas días. Una tarde, después de comernos unos *macarrones* a la italiana, que yo mismo había guisado—¡soy un cocinero magnífico, querido Pepe!—, Penella me contó el argumento de su ópera.—¿La hacemos? ¿Quieres planear y escribir «ya mismo»?—exclamó. Quedamos en ello. Al día siguiente ya volvía a su casa con el plan del primer acto y el título de la obra: se llamaría «El gato montés» y el torero debía apodarse «el Macareno». ¡Un nombre que estaba pidiendo un olé!”

⁸ Sassone reports that a famous gynecologist identified Amalia’s condition in an “alarming” amount of albumin in her blood. It eventually caused the embolism that led to her death. Cfr. Sassone, *La rueda*, 392.

⁹ Ibid., 393, 396. “El 21 de diciembre 1914 nació mi hijo. Nació trabajosamente [...]” and, referring to Amalia’s death: “No sé lo que escribo, no sé lo que recuerdo. Siento sólo otra vez una terrible sensación de frío. Todo aquello fué una niche fría del 11 enero de 1915.”

¹⁰ Sassone talks about 50 *duros*. A *duro* was the 5-peseta coin. “De todas suertes no fué poco, ni mucho menos, en aquellos tiempos, lo que Manolo me regalaba por un trabajo breve, fácil e insignificante, y me importa recordar la generosidad que tuvo conmigo, entre tantas como me prodigó, cuando la obra estaba todavía inédita y su éxito constituía una incógnita.” [“In any case, what Manolo gave me for a short, easy and insignificant piece of work was not little, far from it, in those days, and I care to remember the generosity he showed me, among so many that he lavished on me when the work was still unpublished, and its success was unknown.”] Cfr. Sassone, *La rueda*, 398.

have helped his friend Felipe get back on his feet, finding new accommodations for him and his children and in which to recover.¹¹ Unfortunately, during this period at the Penella's home, the child Amelia had given birth to two months earlier suddenly died. This second tragedy brought Sassone back into a situation of even worse despair, to the point that—as he confesses in his memoirs—he spent all the money that had been given to him by Penella on alcohol and drugs.

I was very sad, and I didn't think of anything, not even going back to my land, and I abandoned myself to my sadness. To amuse a melancholy that I thought was incurable, but in which I liked to sink with the literary voluptuousness of a cursed poet, I wasted the pesetas that Penella had given me in alcohol and drugs. The injection syringe, the morphine vials, or the laudanum bottle, which I took in drops when I ran out of injectables, were never missing in my pockets.¹²

It was clear, at this point, that Sassone would not ever be able to go back to working on the opera. The libretto, which started as a collaboration stemming from their mutual fascination with Andalusia, was finally completed by Penella.

The libretto of *El gato montés* is certainly indebted to the theatrical experience of the Alvarez Quintero brothers, Jacinto Benavente and Arniches. Furthermore, Penella's major literary inspiration is, without any doubt, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez. The comparison between *El gato montés* with Blasco Ibáñez's 1908 novel *Sangre y arena* is unavoidable, at least as far as the characters are concerned. The novel is based on the life of Manuel

¹¹ After the tragic death of his wife, Amelia, since Sassone was extremely poor, his friend Penella and Maestro Benavente also offered to pay all the expenses for the funeral. Cfr. Sassone, *La rueda*, 396.

¹² Sassone, *La rueda*, 399. "Me quedé muy triste, y no pensé en nada, ni siquiera en volver a mi tierra, y me abandoné a mi tristeza. Para divertir una melancolía que yo juzgaba incurable, pero en la cual me gustaba hundirme con una voluptuosidad literaria de poeta maldido, aburrí las pesetas que me había regalado Penella en alcohol y drogas. No faltaban nunca en mis bolsillos la jeringuilla de inyecciones, las ampollas de morfina o el frasco de láudano, que tomaba a gotas cuando me se acababan los inyectables."

García Cuesta, called El espartero, who died during a bullfight in Madrid in 1894. Ibáñez's story does not include any homicide of passion, making it probably even more realistic, more focused on the story that inspired it. However, there are many elements and topoi that we can find in Penella's. First of all, Juan Gallardo—the absolute protagonist of the story—is a bullfighter of modest origins from Seville. He manages to rise to success, thus providing a better life for all his family, and he marries his youthful love, Carmen. Secondly, the love triangle. As he becomes more popular, Gallardo is introduced to influential personalities. Among them, there is Doña Sol de Muira, the nephew of a prominent marquis. This love affair will be a turning point in his career, eventually leading to his ruin. The third is the bullfight, and the *tauromaquia* as a whole, which is represented in every respect with unsettling realism. The bullfight is not just an event but permeates the whole life of the torero and the Seville of the time. Gallardo lives for the *corrida* and the public who cheers him, but which can easily boo him and reject him if the spectacle does not satisfy them. The audience is indeed one of the protagonists of the story, one invested with enormous power. And eventually, when at the end of the story, Blasco Ibáñez presents the image of the two almost concurrent deaths—the bandit Plumitas killed by the guards outside of the arena while he tries to escape, and Gallardo gored to death by a bull inside the arena—we understand the author's subtle message. The actual killers are not the guards who shot Plumitas but the bullring spectators who “killed” Gallardo. The red blood that has soaked the shining light-brown sand of the arena is quickly covered with a new layer of sand, as the spectacle must continue with the next bullfight. The audience is already craving a new bloody spectacle, whether it will

result in the death of a bull or a torero. In its unique way, the novel is a harsh critique of the *corrida*. It is difficult not to compare Gallardo's story with Rafael's, if not in terms of the audience role, then at least in its fatalistic end.

The chosen idiom is another element enhancing realism in *El gato montés*. In the libretto, Penella employs a peculiar variant of the Andalusian language. It is a phonetic transcription of the local vernacular, a widespread practice at the time.¹³ It has been suggested that Penella could have used a form of caló,¹⁴ a sort of mixed language used by Spanish and Portuguese Romani. The caló usually cuts off many final consonants in words, while other consonants are substituted according to not very consistent rules.¹⁵

Penella's libretto	Possible transcription	Translation
En Seviya er domingo matâ seî torô en la corría.	En Sevilla en domingo máta seis toros en la corrida.	In Seville on Sunday kill six bulls in the bullfight.
Vamô a vé si erê hombre y hasta ande yega tu valentía;	Vamos a ver si eres hombre y hasta donde llega tu valentía;	Let's see if you are a man and how far your courage goes;

The use of Andalusian was not new in Spanish opera, as Manuel de Falla had already used it in *La vida breve* (1913). Although it does not appear to be *caló*, it

¹³ The same Álvarez Quintero brothers (Joaquín and Serafín) researched Andalusian dialect variants and made phonetic transcriptions that they used in their works. See Francisco Manuel Carriscondo Esquivel, "El Vocabulario Andaluz (1934), Fuente de Los Andalucismos Del DRAE (1936/1947)," *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 49, no. 2 (2001): 475–92.

¹⁴ Karen Esquivel, "El Gato Montés: A Victim in Spain's Struggle to Establish a National Operatic Identity" (DMA diss., Florida State University - College of Music, 2009), 42.

¹⁵ For example, the letter "d," together with other consonants, is often omitted and a chapeau is placed on the last vowel (*matador* becomes *mataô*, *ojos* becomes *ojô*). The letter "s" is often used in lieu of "z" or "c" (*razón* becomes *rasón*, *bendición* becomes *bendisión*, *cielo* becomes *sielo*). The letter "l," when in final position, or preceding a consonant, becomes an "r" (*culpa* becomes *curpa*). The "ll" is pronounced "y" (*Sevilla* becomes *Seviya*, *ella* becomes *eya*).

nevertheless shares the phonetic rendition of some common words with the latter. For example, the word *mujer* is—in both librettos—always written as *mujé*.

(El gato montés, Act I)

JUANILLO:

O dejâ a esa **mujé**
o juro q'he de matarte.

You either leave that woman
or I swear I will kill you.

(La vida breve, Act I, Scene II)

SALUD:

¡Allí está!
¡Riyendo, junto a esa **mujé**!

There he is!
Laughing, together with that woman!

However, to put things in context, Penella took a risk in choosing a language other than Castilian for a work identified as *ópera popular*. At least we can assume this is what many among both the public and the critics might have questioned. Indeed, at the end of the century, one of the main points in the never-ending *querelle* on the Spanish national opera, debated for years through press and publications, was the language problem. Those who advocated for a new *ópera española* were proposing the use of the Spanish language, namely, Castilian.

Everything considered the storyline is still in part problematic. The criticism offered by some periodicals in 1917, asserting that Penella failed in producing a libretto at the same level as the music, might not indeed be an exaggeration, or at least it is something we should reflect upon. Perhaps because he wrote the libretto himself? One unusual element is that two out of three protagonists (Rafael and Soleá) die by the beginning of the third act. And even if the death of *el macareno* would be acceptable, if not expected, in a story featuring a dangerous *corrida*, on the other hand, Soleá's death by grief is a dramatic commonplace that might not correctly align with the *topoi* of the

verismo stories, to which *El gato montés* is still indebted. I am convinced that Penella was aware of the dramaturgic risk of “killing” all the protagonists but nevertheless decided to follow this line to create a story pervaded by Andalusian fatalism.

6.4 Verismo as Fatalistic Realism

Martin Llade argues that *El gato montés* is permeated with Andalusian fatalism from the very first moment the curtain rises, but that such fatalism does not conflict with a particularly happy atmosphere, especially in the first-act scene of the celebration of *el macareno*.¹⁶ Indeed, Penella keeps reminding the audience that this is a drama but also an entertaining spectacle. Because the comparison with *Carmen* would have been unavoidable, Llade maintains that Penella purposely decided to set up elements that will clearly distinguish *El gato montés* from Bizet’s opera. In this “corrida of life” imbued with fatalism, the three characters apparently do not try to avoid their fate, namely, death. Despite being warned by Juanillo, Rafaél faces the arena aware that he would never kill six bulls, and instead of being killed by Juanillo, he is gored to death by the first bull. Soleá perpetually seeks redemption for her past. She acknowledges Rafael’s love and seldom enables it while, concurrently, she is still in love with Juanillo. However, she knows they could never be together again. And when Rafael is killed in the arena, she cannot bear the sorrow and dies herself. And Juanillo, *el gato montés*, himself devastated by the death of his beloved, runs towards his fate as well. He may have the chance to escape

¹⁶ Martin Llade, “Manuel Penella, un compositor con alma de torero,” in *El Gato Montés (2017)* (Madrid: Teatro de la Zarzuela, 2017).

but decides to stay with Soleá's corpse up to the end and—in a final tragic act of love—commits suicide (at the hand of one of his fellow bandits) to avoid being captured.

A chain of tragedies consummated rapidly between the end of Act II and Act III is typical of any topical *verismo* story, but here there is a significant difference. In the *verismo* love triangle, the protagonists traditionally kill each other (usually with sharp blades), but in *El gato montés*, death arrives in different ways and never by the direct hand of one of the protagonists. The idea that a supernatural force, whether associated with religion or not (or often a mixture of both), is responsible for humans' fate is one significant aspect of Andalusian fatalism. However, here there is neither the deity nor any other supernatural entity characteristic of operas from the Baroque period onwards, which eventually resolve “ex-machina” the entire dramatic dilemma. Neither is it a fate entirely left to the most primordial and instinctive human feelings, passions, and fears, which affect the human psyche and behavior up to the point of taking a life, be it that of the beloved, the love's contender, or even one's own. It is a unique fatalism that celebrates life through death, as Llade reminds us. It is a fatalism of the Andalusian lands, where the sacred and the profane meet in an indescribable mystery. This is one element that makes the *andalucista* Spanish realist works unique compared to Italian realism and French naturalism.

I draw my idea of fatalism from the one suggested by Timothy Mitchell,¹⁷ who, with particular reference to Southern Spain, distinguishes the fatalism of the systemic level (which he calls “in the macro-abstract”) from the one closer to real-life interaction

¹⁷ Timothy Mitchell, *Passional Culture: Emotion, Religion and Society in Southern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

(“in the micro-flesh”). At the latter level, fatalism is “neither passive nor resigned but capable of immense seething passion and impulsiveness. It has, moreover, its peculiar sense of black humor.”¹⁸ Such a definition stems from Mitchell’s argument that objective material reality and belief systems are mediated by emotion, and that fatalistic beliefs are a group’s *reaction* to certain harsh social conditions rather than a direct consequence of such injustices.¹⁹ Andalusian fatalism is intrinsically linked to the culture of *flamenco*. In fact, fatalism is the word that, according to Mitchell, describes the primordial ideology of flamenco throughout its history.²⁰ In Andalucía, it results in a peculiar and “dynamic mix of attitudes and behavior.”²¹ Arguing the importance of emotions as mediators between objective reality and a system of beliefs, Mitchell uses the word *passionate fatalism* to epitomize the Andalusian emotionality.²²

Mitchell’s interpretation of fatalism also relates to José Ortega y Gasset’s philosophical argument that life is concurrently fate and freedom and that, as a result, freedom is nothing else than acting free within a given fate.²³ Gasset exerted a great

¹⁸ Timothy Mitchell, *Flamenco Deep Song* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 49.

¹⁹ Mitchell, *Passional*, 5.

²⁰ Mitchell, *Flamenco*, 48.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Mitchell, *Passional*, 5.

²³ José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones del Quijote: Meditación preliminar. Meditación primera* (Madrid: Residencia de Estudiantes, 1914), 43-44. “We have to look for our circumstance, just as it is, precisely in what it has of limitation, of peculiarity, the correct place in the immense perspective of the world. Not to stop perpetually in ecstasy before the hieratic values, but to conquer our individual life the opportune place among them. In short: the reabsorption of circumstance is the concrete destiny of man. [...] I am myself and my circumstance, and if I don’t save it, I don’t save myself. [“Hemos de buscar a nuestra circunstancia, tal y como ella es, precisamente en lo que tiene de limitación, de peculiaridad, el lugar acertado en la inmensa perspectiva del mundo. No detenernos perpetuamente en éxtasis ante los valores hieráticos, sino conquistar a nuestra vida individual el puesto oportuno entre ellos.

influence on the poets of the Generation of '27, among them, of course, Federico García Lorca. As a native Andalusian from Granada, Lorca devoted most of his poetry to the dark shadows of the complex Andalusian culture. His reflections on *tauromaquia*, *duende*, death, and Andalusian fatalism offer a comprehensive understanding of Andalusian folklore. With specific reference to *tauromaquia*, Lorca asserted that the tradition of Spanish bullfighting can be traced back to the same fatalistic attraction to death. In this, Spain was a unique country, one in which “death is a national spectacle, the only one in which death sounds long trumpet blasts at the coming of spring.”²⁴ The same “bloody” fatalistic spectacle is vividly described in Blasco Ibáñez’s *Sangre y arena*, which, as already mentioned, was a source of inspiration for Penella. Likewise, in 1935, Lorca will offer his unique poetical rendition of the bullring’s tragic spectacle in the *Lamento*,²⁵ dedicated to the memory of his friend and bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejías, gored to death during a *corrida*.

The idea of creating a story ultimately governed by Andalusian fatalism, in which characters have nevertheless some impulsive agency, could explain some unconventional choices—deviating from standard theatrical tradition—that Penella makes in the libretto. When the protagonists do not kill each other, their death should arrive differently. The exaggeration proposed by Penella would then be coherent within an Andalusian fatalistic

En suma: la reabsorción de la circunstancia es el destino concreto del hombre. [...] Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia, y si no la salvo a ella no me salvo yo.”]

²⁴ Federico García Lorca, José Javier León Sillero, and Andrés Soria Olmedo, *Juego y teoría del duende*, Primera edición, Flamenco y cultura popular (Seville: Athenaica Ediciones Universitarias, 2018).

²⁵ Federico García Lorca, *Romancero Gitano; Poema Del Cante Jondo; Llanto Por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías* (México, D.F.: Pax, 1940).

perspective. This is a possible explanation that, while also partially mitigating specific accusations of *españolada*, would most of all be conducive to a better comprehension of some parts of the opera's dramaturgical structure that are often misinterpreted.

The opera includes several major tropes, recurrent in Andalusian culture, that connect with the idea of *passionate fatalism*: the trope of the Gypsy who reads one's hand and foresees an imminent death, for example. In *El gato montés*, this prophecy is a dramatic turning point that generates discordant "emotional" and "passionate" reactions. Rafael is defiant and reacts—apparently—with irony. On the other hand, Soleá and Frasquita are initially just upset, but they will become fearful and distraught when they discover that Juanillo has threatened to kill Rafael if a bull does not do so in the arena. The "macro-abstract" fatalism of a palm-reading prophecy is now made more real by the "micro-flesh" interaction among humans.²⁶

Even more fatalistic is the use of the *copla* (couplet), a poetic form associated with both Spanish folklore and even more with flamenco. It is the form that best expresses Andalusian emotion and, according to Mitchell, is the most appropriate receptacle for Andalusian fatalism in all its forms.

It is steeped in *sino*²⁷ and obsessed with good and bad *estrella*, malevolent *fario*, lurking *sombras*, mischievous *duendes*, and similar personalized destinies. In the Andalusian *copla* we find a hyperbolic exaggeration of the world's difficulty alternating with fantasies of uncanny luck—just the contradictory attitudes we might have anticipated for people subjected to a long-standing socio-economic

²⁶ Drawing from Nilsson and Tripp, who studied the problem in relation to Greek religions, Mitchell maintains that "fatalism arises in connection with the passion in three ways: as a way of acknowledging other-directedness, avoiding personal responsibility for one's actions, or influencing the future." Cfr. Mitchell, *Passionate*, 12.

²⁷ *Sino* is the Andalusian word that commonly expresses the idea of fate.

failure condition. We find curious *coplas* that simultaneously voice a desire for and fear of autonomy. [...] For over 150 years, passionately fatalistic Andalusians have spoken their minds in flamenco songs.²⁸

In *El gato montés* the *copla* ultimately triggers Rafael's reaction of both honor and jealousy. It first appears in Act I, sung by a little shepherd, and then again at the end of the first scene of Act II (before Juanillo leaves for his cave with Soleá's corpse). Indeed, the *copla* activates and closes the main dramatic action. This is a *copla* that evokes both love and death and, in its ambiguity, represents the synthesis of the opera.

A una gitaniya quiero
y esa gitaniya é mia,
er que quitamela quiera,
tiene pena de la via.

I love a Gypsy girl,
and that Gypsy girl is mine.
If anyone tries to take her from me,
he does so at the risk of his life!"

Such tropes invoke another major one, that of the "adverse fate" making love impossible, which indeed is the backbone of the opera. This trope has its own leitmotiv in the opera, which I call the "ill-fated love" and that evokes Soleá's and Juanillo's unattainable union, i.e., an impossible future that is caused by a "fatal" mistake made by Juanillo who, from that moment on, becomes the wildcat. Juanillo is the character who mostly epitomizes Mitchell's idea of *passionate fatalism*. His fate of becoming a bandit and, later, of losing his beloved and committing suicide are all consequences, in the first place,

²⁸ Mitchell, *Passional*, 19. Mitchell reports an example of a *copla* that epitomizes both the "desire for and fear of autonomy": "Si hubiera alguno en el mundo / que la libertad me diera, / me echara un hierro a la cara / y esclavito suyo fuera."

[If there were somebody in the world / who could give me freedom, / I would brand my own face / and be his little slave].

of his “passionate” reaction—the killing of the man who dishonored Soleá—that aligns with a harsh and violent social environment. Subsequently, becoming an outcast is for him more a necessity rather than a choice.

6.5 Analysis

What follows is a detailed description of the unfolding events in the opera. It represents more than a synopsis but less than a musical analysis in the strict sense. Since my interest, as far as the musical part is concerned, is mainly to identify the leitmotifs and the dramatic elements associated with them, my description will mostly gravitate toward the textual elements and how they are supported by specific melodic or harmonic elements. In fact, it will be noticed how Penella, by using a personalized leitmotivic technique, either suggests or re-proposes his themes when specific words are pronounced, when certain characters or some emotions appear (or are appearing), or when they are only evoked.

The opera is in three acts, with the first one being the longest and the last the shortest. This dramatic structure is not unusual in three-act realist operas and responds to the common practice of preparing the tragedy that will rapidly escalate in Acts II and III. In such works, the first act often features a greater abundance of folkloric elements.²⁹

The story is set in Seville. At the beginning of Act I, Soleá is picking flowers, and she is concerned that her beloved, the toreador Rafael, could be injured in the bullfight.

²⁹ Bretón's *La Dolores* has a similar structure, with a first act devoted to presenting the characters and extensive dance numbers (the Jota dance scene lasts about eight minutes). Also, the lack of a prelude in the opera is a specific dramatic device common to many *verismo* operas. It allows bringing the audience right into the story in an abrupt participatory interaction.

She sings “*Lo mesmito q’er queré son esta floré*” (“The very thing I want are these flowers”). The very first theme, presented in the introduction of the opera and restated by Soleá right after, suggests calm and serenity. We could consider it one of Soleá’s themes, one about her new and apparently happy life. I will call it the “household serenity” theme. This theme is presented, for example, when Juanillo, later in Act I, sings “*Juir de lo que se quiere*” (“Run away from the one you love”), referring obviously to Soleá.



Example 6.1: The “household serenity” theme (*El gato montés*)

Frasquita, Rafael’s mother, reassures her that today her *torero* will come back to Sevilla. Frasquita sings a little arietta in *género chico* style! “*Disen lô telegramã*” (“The telegrams say”). Padre Antón arrives introduced by a distinguishable theme and singing “*Ave Maria Purísima.*” Padre Antón has a motive that reflects the happy personality of the priest. Penella treats it as an actual leitmotiv which is heard many times in the opera.



Example 6.2: Padre Antón’s theme (*El gato montés*)

It is an instrumental motive, which is never sung by the character but instead introduces (and often closes) Padre Antón’s appearances. Right after this, Padre Antón sings a little aria interpolated by Soleá and Frasquita’s interjections (“¿*Cuando yega ese fenómeno?*” [“When will this phenomenon arrive?”]). This section is still in a witty operetta style. A *pasodoble* theme is then heard offstage as the villagers celebrate Rafael’s arrival (“*Corre muliya torda campaniyera, corre, que Soleá su cariño espera*” [“Run dapple-gray friend, run, that Soleá awaits her love”]). We hear his theme, the iconic *pasodoble*, a form typically associated with a bullfight, followed by a short dance number. The choir homorhythmically sings praises to Rafael, supported by the rhythms of a *sevillana*.

Tempo de Pasodoble



Example 6.3: Rafael’s *Pasodoble* theme (*El gato montés*)

As soon as Frasquita greets her son Rafael, we hear the theme of “maternal love.” Frasquita’s theme, the *maresita* (as Rafael calls her), appears several times in the opera, always signifying the strong relationship between mother and son. He then hugs his beloved Soleá and Padre Antón. Hormigón starts praising Rafael’s mythical bullfight in

Madrid. It is because he prayed to the Virgin, Rafael says! Frasquita, Soleá, and Rafael leave the scene to go and pray to the Virgin.

Andante

Rafael

¡Ma - re - si - ta!!

Example 6.4: Theme of “maternal love” (*El gato montés*)

Padre Antón starts reading the account of the bullfight from the *Heraldo de Madrid*³⁰ to an attentive audience of villagers (“*Sale al ruedo er primero toro*” [“The first bull goes into the ring”]). Again, this section maintains a light operetta style. Whenever Padre Antón mentions Rafael in the report, we hear the *pasodoble* rhythm in the background. Rafael and Soleá come back, and the torero asks her to publicly declare their love: “*Aquí está la reina de mi alegría*” (“Here is the queen of my joy”). Soleá’s answer is vague; she replies, “Why are you asking me if you already know I love you?”³¹ Satisfied by the response, Rafael orders *manzanilla*³² for everybody.

A Gypsy appears, accompanied by a group of Gypsy children (*gitanillos*). She greets everybody by intoning a melody in *cante jondo* style, with ornamentation and

³⁰ This is a very popular newspaper in Madrid. Penella could have just said that Padre Antón was reading the newspaper; instead, he decides to provide a detail that emphasizes realism.

³¹ “¿Por qué me lo preguntâ si ya sabê que te quiero?” The choice of the ambiguous verb *querer* (to *want*, to *love*, or to *care for*?) is actually perfect for addressing Soleá’s sentiments towards Rafael.

³² *Manzanilla* is a sweet white wine (cherry), typical of Andalucía.

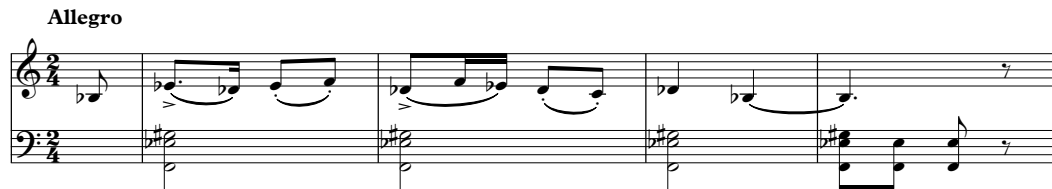
Phrygian modality. However, this is not to be considered a leitmotiv since the *gitana* appears only twice in the opera, and the second time she will not propose a recognizable new theme.

Adagio
Gitana

¡Sa - lú pa la gen - te güe - na!...

Example 6.5: The Gypsy's melody (*El gato montés*)

The gypsy and the *gitanillos* entertain the people by dancing a *garrotín*. Penella's choice to avoid setting to music this group scene using, for example, a popular Aragonese *jota* indicates his research into authentic Andalusian song and dance. Within limits imposed by the operatic rendition of a flamenco *palo* that is very improvisatory, Penella produces a dramatically functional dance scene. Indeed, he selects a *palo* that has a duple meter (instead of one of the *palos* with a complex twelve-beat *compás*, or meter) and a major mode. It perfectly fits the scene and renders a festive moment while concurrently evoking a tradition that Penella was striving to reproduce faithfully. This is understandably a stage rendition of the *palo* that actually is not from Andalucía but from Asturias. The *gitanillos'* (little Gypsies) theme appears in Acts I and III.

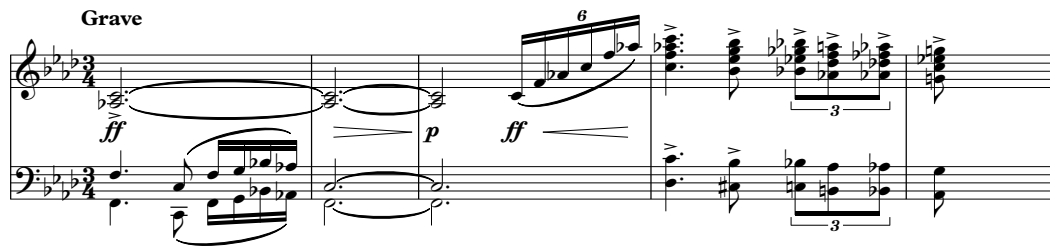


Example 6.6: *Garrotín* theme of the little Gypsies (*El gato montés*)

Rafael welcomes them and asks them to stay. The Gypsy asks to read Rafael’s palm. He accepts, although Soleá is troubled. Sure enough, the Gypsy predicts that a bull will kill Rafael! A sort of psalmodic recitation accompanies her prophecy. Interestingly, Penella frames the gypsy using references to sacred music. In the beginning, she also recites “*¡En er nombre de Dió nuestro Seño de Santa Crú*” (“In the name of our God of the Holy Cross”). The tone and the music suddenly change when she foretells the imminent death! This section is more in a *cante jondo* style, and it is introduced by a motive of four descending notes that seems to anticipate the theme of *el gato montés* himself (Juanillo), with the result that Penella is here evoking *el gato* way before his first appearance. The disdainful crowd demands that the Gypsy be kicked out, but Rafael tries to reassure everybody and invites them to continue the celebration. If the Gypsy’s prediction is a cause for concern for them, he promises he will fight even more bravely in the arena.

Suddenly, Juanillo (*el gato montés*) makes his first appearance, accompanied by fellow bandits. In the opera, Penella provides the character with two contrasting themes. This first one represents the wildcat (the bandit), and it is based on a sequence of diminished chords that proceeds downwards chromatically. Juanillo prompts Rafael to ask Soleá who he is and demands her to admit that she actually loves him. Rafael is

outraged, and a fight is barely avoided and then postponed to a later moment. With Rafael temporarily off the scene, Juanillo explains to everybody that he is now wanted because, years before, he killed a man and fled.



Example 6.7: Juanillo’s first theme, “the wildcat theme” (*El gato montés*)

The company urges him to leave and forget Soleá. As soon as Juanillo pronounces the words “*Juú de la gente, juir é mi ofisio*” (“Flee from the ones you love is a huge sacrifice”), we hear Soleá’s theme of “household serenity.” Juanillo then sings the aria “*Juye bandolero*” (“Flee, bandit”), which also introduces his second theme, signifiers of his existence in isolation. In this aria, Penella offers a more insightful description of Juanillo, presented as a derelict whose unhappy existence has been caused by a tragic mistake. He is an outlaw not by choice but by necessity. However, how can he forget a love that death itself cannot destroy, a love that is nailed to his bloody chest as “God is nailed to the cross”?³³ In this number, the choir (the people) has an active double role. It reinforces both Padre Antón and Hormigon’s advice to Juanillo (“Forget her,” “Juanillo, go back to the mountains”),

³³ “¡Cómo! ¡Orviarla! / Cómo se puede orviá / un queré, q’è ni àun la muerte / ha de poerlo arrancá, / un queré q’está aquí dentro / Como Dio está en la Crú. / ¡Clavao y sangrado er pecho!”

but it is somehow also the embodiment of Juanillo’s conscience, in a sort of theatrical representation of the fight between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, rationality and the emotions. Juanillo listens to the choir—the embodiment of his rationality—suggesting he leave and, most of all, let Soleá continue her now serene life. Concurrently, the people/conscience keep singing “*Juye bandolero*.” It is less a warning and more a piece of heartfelt advice. However, although Juanillo certainly understands the positive consequences of what they are asking him, he is ruled by the heart in his desire to reconcile with his beloved. Eventually, he will leave the scene, but only temporarily.

(Quasi Allegretto)

Gato

Ju - ye ban - do - le - ro, ju - ye ju - ye der mun-do en - te - ro,

Example 6.8: Juanillo’s second theme (*El gato montés*)

Padre Antón and Soleá are now left on the scene. We hear the “household serenity” theme one more time before Soleá confesses her struggle. In her soul, she still loves Juanillo, but that is an impossible love because she cannot leave Rafael, who was always so caring and good to her. She sings the aria “*Junto dende chavaliyo*” (“Together when we were children”), which introduces her own theme. This theme is also a leitmotiv, which I call the motive of the “ill-fated love.” Soleá sings this theme to narrate the sad story of Juanillo and herself, who had to separate because of an adverse fate. This

theme will repeatedly appear in Act III, where Juanillo weeps over Soleá's dead body.³⁴ Soleá's aria is a struggling and delicate melody in Puccini's style. She confesses to Padre Antón how hard it is for her to love Rafael, whom she sees more as a paternal figure. Indeed, she is convinced she could not have Juanillo, even if she wanted. She is unresolved and sings her angst about loving without hope. Here, we finally understand the relationship between Soleá and Juanillo and that he was doomed to a life of hiding because of a mistake he made to protect his beloved. He confronted a man who was molesting Soleá and killed him. Bel canto style is preeminent in this aria. The voice stands out, and *violinata* is used extensively.

Andantino
Soleá

Jun - tó den - de cha - va - li - yó por lá ca - rre - te - rá i - bá - mô lô dó.

Example 6.9: The “ill-fated love” theme (*El gato montés*)

Rafael is back, and now he and Soleá are alone. Soleá is concerned,³⁵ but she does not reveal to him the true story. He reassures her that he will always protect her and will always care for her, “forever.” After this lovely moment, we hear a little shepherd (*pastorcillo*) in the background singing the *copla*, “I love a Gypsy girl.”³⁶ Rafael perceives it

³⁴ This last scene includes a sample of all the main themes, including the one of the “household serenity.”

³⁵ “We are not alone, Rafael. A shadow is pursuing me.”

³⁶ “*A una gitaniya quiero / y esa gitaniya é mía. / Er que quitármela quiera, / tiene pena de la vía.*” (I love a Gypsy girl, and that Gypsy girl is mine. If anyone tries to take her from me, he does so at the risk of his life!)

as a threat coming from *el gato montés*. The use of an “infamous *copla*” at a certain point in the story is not new to Spanish opera. The *copla* is a powerful popular symbol that usually brings deep significance and references or triggers a variety of emotions that typically speed up the dramatic action.³⁷ Penella indicates the *copla* must be performed in “Andalusian popular style” and adds the harp to accompany it, thus evoking the flamenco guitar.

Un pastorcillo (Dentro) (En estilo popular andaluz)

Ad libitum

Harp

6

Harp

10

Harp

Example 6.10: The little shepherd’s *copla* (*El gato montés*)

³⁷ Tomás Bretón founded his whole opera *La Dolores* (1895) on the *copla* “Si va a Calatayud pregunta por la Dolores”. Indeed, a real one belonging to the folk tradition of Calatayud.

Juanillo suddenly appears. He has returned because he thought Rafael was alone. He claims Soleá because she could never love Rafael no matter what she says. Likewise, her love for Juanillo is impossible to carry on. When Juanillo pronounces the words “she can’t belong to any men,” we hear Soleá’s “household serenity” theme. Rafael is outraged, and Juanillo challenges him to duel. As Rafael reaches for the knife on the floor, Soleá anticipates him. She grabs his knife and, standing between them, threatens Juanillo to kill herself. The tragedy is once more avoided, but Juanillo threatens Rafael again. The torero should kill six bulls during Seville’s Sunday *corrida* to show *el gato montés* how big a man he is. However, he swears on his love for Soleá: if a bull does not kill Rafael, he will do it! When Juanillo pronounces the words “*lo juro por esa mujé*” (“I swear it on this woman”), we hear the “household serenity” theme again.

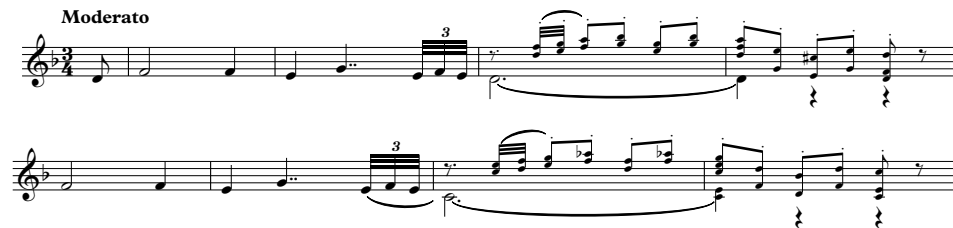
This time is in a modified version, based on an F-sharp diminished-seventh chord. The change of mode, from major to minor, and most of all the use of the diminished seventh suggest Penella’s intention to anticipate the drama that the alleged “household serenity” will create. Juanillo’s departure from the scene is anticipated by the motive of the bandit “*Juye bandolero*” played by the strings with a high-pitched tremolando. Padre Antón and Frasquita arrive. While the priest comforts Soleá, a distressed Rafael finds comfort in his mother’s embrace, ending Act I with the words “My mother, dear! Here stands the only truth in my life!”³⁸

³⁸ We hear a theme that resembles the “Maresita” theme.

A short prelude introduces Act II. It is composed of two contrasting parts. The first is a lively *sevillana*, and the second is a slow and passionate theme. They alternate creating a ternary ABA' form. The slow theme is what I define as “The Virgin’s theme.” It is an anticipation of a theme sung by Soleá at the end of the first scene of the same Act II, when she asks the Virgin to protect Rafael.



Example 6.11: *Sevillana* (*El gato montés*, Act II, Prelude)



Example 6.12: “The Virgin’s theme” (*El gato montés*, Act II, Prelude)

The first scene is set inside the house of el Macareno in Sevilla. The music paints an atmosphere that is both dreamy and eerie. A harp plays an arpeggio, conveying a sense of calm and serenity. Here Penella is evoking the guitar, the quintessential symbol of Andalusian music. This section is supported with a long and high-pitched drone on D, adding a sense of tension. Probably this presages the outcomes of the forthcoming *corrida*. Penella seems to provide a musical sign—right at the beginning of the dramatic action—

that something unexpected is bound to happen. However, the mood of the scene will quickly change to a happier one.

We hear offstage the voice of Soléa, who sings of her concern about being in love with a *torero*. “Never love a torero” (“*No quierá nunca a un torero*”), she says, because it brings a hard life in which you will always be worried about his safety. El Macareno is on stage, preparing for the bullfight and, introduced by his *pasodoble* theme, he instructs that Soléa be called into the house. He then sings his love for his homeland, Andalucía (“*Bendita la tierra mia*” [“Blessed my land”]). The song ends with the theme of Soléa’s “household serenity,” which concurrently introduces Soléa’s arrival. She helps Rafael fix his tie, and this represents the perfect excuse for him to kiss her hand. Again, we hear a religious reference (“I kissed your hand as one would kiss the feet of the crucified Christ.”) A duet follows, in which Rafael praises Soléa and says he loves her. However, when asked, Soléa replies that she loves him because he was always so lovely and welcomed her into his life when she was alone and in despair. In the score, in correspondence with those words, Penella writes in parenthesis “*Con estilo de Cante Jondo*” (with *Cante Jondo* style). Rafael sings that he would be “her” torero and that he would fight for her, “*Torero quiero sé, y a toreá p’á ti*” (“I want to be a bullfighter, and I will fight for you”). This section is again supported by *pasodoble* music, which is iconic of the figure of el Macareno.

Tempo de Pasodoble

Rafael

¡Si! To - re - ro quie - ro sé, ya - to - re - á pá - tí, que yo por tí, gi - ta - na mí - a, e - lan - te de lô to - rô, me jue - go la vi - a.

Example 6.13: Duet, Soleá and Rafael (*El gato montés*, Act II, Scene 1)

The appearance of Hormigón, dressed in *picador* robes, and the conversation among the three, bring concern—especially to Soleá—on the dangers of the bullfight. Rafael leaves, and Soleá is now left alone with Hormigón. She offers him some *manzanilla* and reveals to him Juanillo’s threats. Maybe, she fears, this was a prophecy or a jinx. However, Hormigón is more concerned about Frasquita. Should she know about the problem, she would not allow her son to fight in the arena. Called by Rafael, Soleá leaves the scene when Frasquita arrives. She quickly realizes something is wrong and offers Hormigón more *manzanilla*, but he declines and does not reveal the secret. Soleá and Rafael come back, followed by Padre Antón, who is introduced by his witty and comic musical theme. Dressed in lay robes, he is looking forward to the *corrida* and promises Rafael that if he dedicates a bull to him, he will stand up in the arena and give him a blessing in front of the whole audience. Rafael’s bullfight team arrives, and he is ready to leave, but not before saying goodbye to Frasquita. Her theme is heard twice when Rafael pronounces the words “*Maresita*” (mother, dear). He reassures her that he will come back to her. Soleá does not want him to go and tells him, “Remember that I don’t have anybody else in the world, except for you.” The music here is more dramatic, and with a

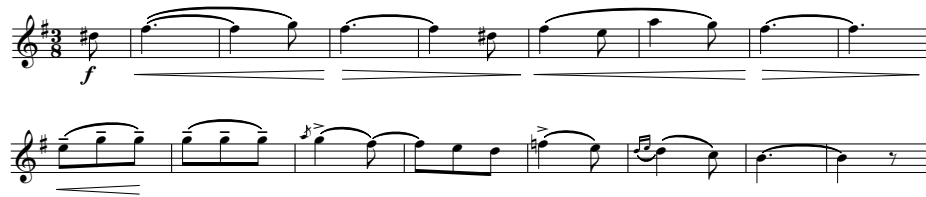
crescendo in the strings, the “maternal love” theme is heard once more when Rafael kisses Fraquita goodbye. As he then turns to Soleá asking for a kiss, the crescendo continues, and we hear again the theme of the duet (“*Ven a mi vera, ven gitana mia.*”) She agrees to kiss him for the first time, and we hear once more the “household serenity” theme. At the end of this scene, Soleá is alone with Frasquita. She sings her praise to the Virgin, asking her to protect and guide el Macareno (“Holy Virgin, be his protector and guide, protect my Rafael!”).³⁹ This represents a topical point in the opera. Frasquita calls Soleá, who, before hugging her, says, “Mother!” On this word, Penella gives the soprano a high B⁵, supported with an orchestral crescendo. Soon after, the curtain falls, accompanied by a few measures of *pasodoble*.

An *intermedio* introduces the second scene. A slow *cante jondo*-style theme alternates with lively sections of *sevillanas*. The harp is used in this *intermedio*, but this time it does not represent the guitar. Likewise, the *pandero* is used. The *pandero* is used as rhythmical support and local color, together with the bright triangle. The short *intermedio* suggests calm and serenity.



Example 6.14: First *cante jondo* melody (*El gato montés*, Act II, Intermedio)

³⁹ Mi Virge, óyeme tú: / sé tú su amparo y su guía, / protege a mi Rafaé.



Example 6.15: Second *cante jondo* melody (*El gato montés*, Act II, Intermedio)

The *intermedio* alternates sections in 3/8 (slow theme) with sections in 6/8 and 3/4 (*sevillana*). Penella changes the meter to 3/4 when he seeks a hemiola effect. The slow Andalusian-style theme is repeated twice by different sections of the orchestra, and one further time right after the second repetition of the *sevillana*. However, this last time is in the key of E Major, instead of E minor. The *intermedio* ends with a coda.



Example 6.16: *Sevillana* section.
Use of different meters to indicate hemiola (*El gato montés*, Act II, Intermedio)

This second scene starts in the horse yard of the bullring. In the libretto, Penella explains that the action takes place in Seville’s Plaza de Toros, but only regarding the ring and the sections that will be seen through the door used to drag in the dead bulls. However, he specifies, for the rest, “it is necessary to dispense with the truth because the

development of the action thus demands.”⁴⁰ Penella is justifying a temporary misrepresentation of the real architecture of the Plaza de Toros, which he assumes would be more or less familiar to the audience. The needs of the dramatic action must here mitigate Penella’s self-asserted and exaggerated concern with realism and authenticity in representing Andalucía and its culture. However, in the economy of the whole story, such “scenic licenses” are far from being considered a lack of authenticity. They are more ancillary choices that just serve the drama without taking out anything essential.

The bullfight will soon begin, and after briefly discussing with Hormigón about the “quality” of the bulls (Rafael does not like the tame ones!), Rafael instructs his crew of *picadores*. Each of them has a specific duty, and he will do the rest. Hormigón approaches Rafael and tells him that Soleá has revealed Juanillo’s threat. Rafael proudly answers that he can kill the six bulls and also kill *el gato montés* afterward. Then he goes into the adjacent chapel and asks God for protection. The short aria that follows is Rafael’s very last musical appearance in the opera. Penella places Rafael in a sacred environment and makes him sing a farewell that, ironically, will be a *requiem*. Rafael appears uneasy, and we can feel the omen of tragedy in his last words.

For this reason, this short “micro-aria,” very much in Puccini’s style, is quintessential and pivotal in the unfolding of the dramatic action. The aria is in D minor and is characterized by repeated chords assigned to the lower strings. In the second part,

⁴⁰ “Patio de caballos de una Plaza de Toros. Es la de Sevilla, en lo que se refiere al redondel y tendidos que se verán por la puerta de arrastre, pero en lo demás, es necesario prescindir de la verdad por exigirlo así el desarrollo de la acción.”

a countermelody is performed by violins and violas. A *cante jondo*-like little theme, played by the brass section, is added at the end to support the long A⁴ performed by the tenor.

Moderato

¡Se ñó!, que no me far - te er va

ló, que se - a er q'hé si - o siem - pre, e - so e lo que pí - o

A tempo

yo Se - ñó, no te pí - o ná

ma y par - gar - te yo es - pe - ro es - te fa - vó y aho - ra se -

ñó cum - pli - a se - a tu vo - lun - tá Se - - ñó.

Example 6.17: Rafael's prayer "micro-aria" (*El gato montés*, Act II, Scene 2).

What follows is the bullring scene. It is an instrumental number, and its uniqueness lies in the fact that we never see the actual spectacle. The *corrida* has started, and Soleá and Frasquita have reached the ring. Soleá has revealed everything, and together they hope to prevent Rafael from fighting. Hormigón intercepts them and, with an excuse, locks them inside the chapel. In the meantime, the fight is continuing as a sonic background. The technique of suggesting a bullfight on the stage is not new in this type of theater. Two significant examples are Bizet's *Carmen* (1875) and Bretón's *La Dolores* (1895). However, they are all very different cases. In *Carmen*, the bullfight is only a temporal pretext. The last scene, in which José stabs Carmen to death, happens while we hear in the background the crowd cheering Escamillo. For Bizet, the bullfight, other than representing the quintessential Spanish local color, is a pretext to locate the tragedy in a time and space that are iconic of Andalusian culture. Indeed, *Carmen* is staged in Sevilla, as is *El gato montés*. Bretón goes further, producing a unique dramatic device. In *La Dolores*, what we see on stage during the bullfight scene is the attendees' perspective. The "camera" points to them and their reactions to the bullfight. Through the music, we just hear and imagine that a *corrida* is happening. However, the critical element of the scene is the heroic act by Melchor (a man of church), who saves Rojas from certain death in the ring.

In this scene of Penella's opera, the iconic *pasodoble*—a march-like processional usually associated with the *corrida*—is itself the embodiment of a character. We hear it continuously, performed by both the orchestra and an "internal banda." Though far less effective than the *rondalla* diegetically performing on stage in *La Dolores*, this device allows

Penella to enhance the sense of realism in the scene. The music offers a counterpoint to the agitation of Soleá and Frasquita, who can hear and partially see the fight only through the door's grates from inside the chapel. A sense of anxiety permeates the scene. Furthermore, with its lively and pompous character, the *pasodoble* is purposely misleading, since it provides the false expectation that Rafael could survive the fight. Several exultant shouts of "Olé" from the crowd make Soleá think that el Macareno is mastering the bullfight, to the point that she says, "Thank you, Lord of Heaven!" and asks God to keep protecting her Rafael. This *pasodoble* scene presents two contrasting themes: the fast-paced instrumental one and the theme "*Torero quiero ser*" anticipated by Rafael in the duet with Soleá at the beginning of Act II.

Suddenly, a scream is heard from the crowd. Soleá and Frasquita understand what has happened, and they unsuccessfully attempt to leave the chapel. Rafael is fatally gored and brought to the infirmary. The public gathers around the infirmary entrance while the two women keep knocking hard on the chapel door, hoping somebody will hear them and let them out. From afar, we hear Rafael's voice calling again not for Soleá, but the beloved mother, "*Maresita!*" Hormigón comes out of the infirmary with his hat in his hand. At the sight of the dead body of el Macareno, the crowd steps back, and they all take their hats off. Finally, Hormigón opens the chapel door, Frasquita makes her way through the crowd, followed by Soleá, and enters the infirmary. Frasquita's final scream, "Rafael!" is followed by Soleá's exclamation of dismay (Ah!) on a high and long B⁵. Soon after, she passes out into Hormigón's arms.

The very short Act III is wholly dedicated to death and sorrow. We can consider it an extended coda to the opera. Even more, the first scene is devoted to the death (or the grieving about) of Soleá, and the second scene is dedicated to the death of *el gato montés*. The act opens with a short prelude of only twenty-three measures, played with the curtain down, in which we hear some of the leitmotifs associated with Soleá. First is the theme of the household serenity but in a minor mode rendition. Then the “ill-fated love” theme, ending with a half-diminished chord on E, which is repeated three times to signify the tolling of death bells.

The curtain rises, and the first scene is set in a house courtyard. In the main space, we see Frasquita, two other women, and Padre Antón, who is calmly walking around. The characters lament the absence of Hormigón, who is late. From an open door, we can see the lights of the candles coming from a burial chamber. From their dialogue, we understand what Soleá’s fate has been. At the end of Act 2, we left her passed away upon discovering Rafael being killed by the bull. We now find she has died of sorrow.⁴¹ After Padre Antón pronounces the words

“*Probesiya Soleá*” [“Poor Soleá”], we hear a chromatic descent from E to Bb.

Wagnerian chromaticism is prominent in this opera finale, even more than in the previous acts, and Penella uses it to paint a complex and descriptive musical background.

⁴¹ Padre Antón: “¡Probesiya Soleá... La mató er dolô; probe gitaniya, de pena murió” (“Poor Soleá... The pain killed her: poor gypsy, she died of sorrow”).

For the moment, Penella decides not to show Soleá corpse,⁴² thus avoiding giving the audience a powerful element to deal with emotionally. Instead, he lingers on others' reactions and coping processes. The somber and nostalgic music re-proposes the theme of "household serenity" as a leitmotiv that is now more than ever an embodiment of Soleá, the "good girl."

From outside, we hear villagers singing the tune "*Aseitunera, no corrá, espera.*" ("Wait, olive picker, don't run") This represents another instance where Penella celebrates Andalusian culture and frames the story in a precise and defined popular environment. Songs about *acetuneiras* and *acetuneiros* (olive pickers) are common in Andalusian folk tradition. They suggest images of everyday life, labor and love, connected the countryside and to one of the major businesses of Southern Spain, the olives farms.⁴³ Upon hearing the song, Padre Antón notices that the "good people" are returning from their work.

⁴² Recent productions of the opera have chosen to place Soleá's body right in the room, with the women by her side. However, Penella specifies in his score annotation that we just see the light of glowing candles coming from Soleá's death chamber.

⁴³ Juan Hidalgo Montoya, *Cancionero de Andalucía, Folklore musical español*, vol. 5 (Madrid: A. Carmona, 1971).

Coro interno

S.
 T.
 B.

A-sei-tu - ne - ra, no co - rrâ, es - pe - ra

no co-rrâ a-sei-tu - ne - ra, no co-rrâ es-pe - ra

co - rre, co - rre a - sei - tu - ne - ra, co - rre que es - pe - râ no pue - do, sper - ra

no co - rra

co - rre co - rre

no t'es - pe - ro

co - rra, spe - ra no co - rrâ a - sei - tu - ne - ra spe - ra

spe - ra spe - ra spe - ra

Example 6.18: Villager’s choir. Folk song “Aseitunera, no corrâ, espera” (*El gato montés*, Act II, Scene 2).

Hormigón arrives and consoles Frasquita. He goes into the burial chamber to contemplate Soleá’s corpse. He compares her beauty to the one of the Virgin on the altar, and, turning to Padre Antón, he argues that “We [humans] are nothing!” emphasizing the precariousness of human life. We keep hearing the choir of villagers in the background, this time singing “Tra, la, la, la” while the dialogue continues between Hormigón, Padre Antón, and Frasquita. It is an entirely static moment, and the dialogue is inconsequential to the story. However, it serves a double purpose. It allows Penella to

indulge in the choir a bit more while, at the same time, preparing for the following events.

Suddenly, the Gypsy appears at the courtyard entrance and asks Frasquita to let in the little Gypsies who are bringing flowers for their friend Soleá. As soon as Frasquita consents, the little Gypsies enter the scene accompanied by a sort of aria-prayer sung by the Gypsy woman, “*Ahí la tenéi, muertecita por la pena*” (“There you have her, death for grief”), which is interpolated with the *garrotín* theme heard in Act I. The *gitanillos* neither sing nor speak. They set around the Gypsy and keep looking at Soleá’s lifeless body through the open door leading to the burial chamber. During the aria, they move past Soleá’s corpse, together with Padre Antón. The Gypsy’s aria brings back a curious motivic element hidden into the musical texture. In the low orchestral register, played as a slow *ostinato* by low brasses, we hear a motive of five descending notes, with a prominent chromatic flavor, resembling the first theme of *el gato montés* (the one theme characterized by diminished chords descending chromatically). It would seem like a long preparation to the appearance of Juanillo, that indeed occurs right when the Gypsy sings that Soleá has died of grief as she wept for Rafaél.⁴⁴ In addition, this passage is symbolic in evoking the co-presence of the three protagonists.

⁴⁴ “Ahí la tenéi / muertecita por la pena / de yorâ a su Rafaé.” (“Here you have her, / death because of the sorrow / of grieving Rafaél”.)

Andante giusto
Gitana

Juanillo's first theme

Example 6.19: Juanillo's first theme evocations (*El gato montés*, Act III, Scene 1).

Juanillo suddenly appears, claiming that what the Gypsy just said is a lie. He is introduced by a modified version of his “chromatic” motive, presented in an ascending rendition. He says he has come to weep for Soleá, and Frasquita sarcastically asks how a person like him would be able to weep. He might not be able to weep—he replies—but his heart is aching, and he is choking with sorrow. As they urge him to leave, he asserts that he will not leave without Soleá. At this moment, we first hear a fragment of the “household serenity” theme repeated multiple times in an ascending sequence. Then, the theme is stated entirely, but in minor mode, as Juanillo approaches Soleá’s burial chamber. In seeing her dead body, he almost collapses from the unbearable sorrow. Juanillo now repeats the conclusion of the Gypsy’s aria but substituting the words to his own version of it. He re-appropriates the position he believes he deserves in the story by replacing himself with Rafaél in the verses. He sings, “Here she lies / death because of the sorrow / of weeping *for my love!*”

He claims nobody told him about her death, but his heart led him there. Padre Antón suggests that Juanillo leave, but he would not do so without bringing Soleá with

him, and nobody could stop him. Crazy with passion, he enters the burial chamber to take her corpse, while the other characters are stunned and terrified. At this point, we hear an offstage voice of a *pastorcillo* (a little shepherd, the same as Act I) singing the *copla* “I love a Gypsy girl / and that gypsy girl is mine. / The one who tries to take her from me....” Frasquita closes the windows to avoid listening to the last part of the *copla*.

However, Juanillo completes “should be sorry for his life!”⁴⁵ We do not hear anymore the “household serenity” theme, usually associated with Soleá’s life with Rafael. Indeed, now that Juanillo and Soleá are again together, we hear a statement of the first phrase of the “ill-fated love” theme. It is played in the very last measures of this first scene, right before Juanillo leaves through the courtyard entrance, followed by a quick curtain fall.

The second scene begins with some musical measures with the curtain lowered. Musically, this short final scene is a sampling of all the themes presented in the opera. In the first two measures, we listen to the first half of the “household serenity” theme followed, in the next bar, by the second part of the “el gato montés” theme (the four chromatically descending notes). This opening is undoubtedly symbolic and represents the closeness and coexistence of the two characters—Juanillo and Soleá—who are for the first time alone, though in extreme circumstances. At the same time, the presentation of the two incomplete themes can be a metaphor for the impossibility of such a union. The theme is neither Soledad’s nor Juanillo’s. Here the interpretations could be manifold. What is certain is that Penella is placing this theme’s collage at the beginning of the scene

⁴⁵ “A una gitaniya quiero / y esa gitaniya é mía. / El que quitármela quiera.... / ¡tiene pena de la vía!”

for a precise dramaturgical reason. Soon after, we hear Juanillo's theme ("*Juye bandolero*"), performed by tremolandi violins.

Only at this point, the curtain rises, and we are in the cave of *el gato montés*. The first image presented is Juanillo lying next to Soleá's body. The music continues with a sort of prelude, performed by the cellos, supported by a simple string accompaniment. It is a very dramatic melody, with a rich Andalusian color (the presence of the descending Andalusian cadence is very evident). This new melody acts almost as an introduction to a new exposition of another critical theme of the opera, that of "ill-fated love" ("*Juntô como chavaliyô*"), first sung by Soleá at the end of Act I. Now it is a sort of poignant *violinata* associated with the strings' top parts that, while briefly accompanying a partial thematic statement sung by Juanillo, is indeed evoking an absent voice, that of the deceased Soleá. The theme is restated a second time entirely, but by a denser orchestra, starting with the word "*sufri*" (to suffer),⁴⁶ when Juanillo—speaking to his beloved—wonders what meaning his life has now that she is no longer there. After completing the "ill-fated love" theme, we briefly hear a statement of the "household serenity" theme. Soleá is cold, and Juanillo wishes he could "resurrect" her with the heat of his body or with the blood from his veins.⁴⁷ He pronounces the words "Soul of my soul! My Gypsy," and we start hearing a warm *cante jondo*-style melody. The harp is now added to the orchestral color, evoking once more the guitar as an iconic Andalusian marker.

⁴⁶ ¿Pá qué quiero yo la vía? / ¡Si yo no mâ que vivía / pá querête y pá sufrí! ("Why to live, if I only lived to love you and to suffer?")

⁴⁷ ¡Ay, si er caló de mi cuerpo / te lo pudiera yo dá! / ¡Ay, qué a gusto moriría / si con la sangre e mî vená / te pudiera dá la vía!

Juanillo now sings what could be classified as a micro-aria. Like many of Puccini's arias, despite its shortness, it is something that is dramatically prepared and resolved and exists as an independent entity charged with profound sentimental meanings. Juanillo wonders where the "colors" on Soleá's face are, those colors that looked like a bouquet of flowers, and where those eyes are, tired of weeping, and that have shed more tears than there are grains of sand in the sea.⁴⁸

Suddenly we hear an offstage choir. The villagers are coming for Juanillo. His loyal Pezuño rushes to warn him that they are close and advises him to leave. Juanillo is determined not to go and reminds his friend to do what he has instructed him to. The villagers are approaching, and Juanillo states that he is there to give himself up and not resist. What punishment would they give him—he says—for loving a girl?⁴⁹ On the word "mujé" (*mujer*, girl), we hear the "household serenity" theme. Juanillo continues that there is nobody who does not pity him. He throws his knife on the floor, adding that it should be used to pierce his heart. He implores to let his *gitanilla* stay there with him. A temporary silence leads him to think he is right; however, in hearing other voices, he realizes that the guards are going to arrest him. At this point, he asks Pezuño to aim and shoot at his heart. Fatally wounded, he reaches the corpse of Soleá and dies hugging her. The music here is chromatic, and the orchestral texture is dense. After Pezuño shoots

⁴⁸ ¿Ande están de tu cara lô colorê / que paresían, tarmente, un manojito de florê? / ¿Y aquello ojô, cansaitô de yorâ, / q'han echao mâ lagrimitâ q'arenitâ tiene er má...? / ¡Mi vía...! ¡Soleá...!

⁴⁹ ¿Qué castigo vái a darne / por querê a una mujé?

him, we hear a final statement of the chromatic theme of the wildcat as he drags himself towards Soleá's body.

6.6 A Blockbuster Opera with Controversial Critical Reception?

The reception of an opera always happens on two levels, the public and the critical. However, the audience reaction must always be considered cautiously because, at the crossroads of the centuries, it was not expected to find a musically knowledgeable popular audience in Spain (or in Europe in general). Therefore, people's reactions to an opera often depended on other factors, such as how much they were surprised, moved, annoyed, or felt self-represented in the spectacle. Such elements could provide fascinating insights but add less than enough about the work's artistic value. The critical reception, on the contrary, could offer a more knowledgeable musical description and suggests more elements for comparisons. Besides, though each of them was undoubtedly biased, critics could also be seen, at least theoretically, as the informed expression of the musical taste of the local audience.

From this perspective, *El gato montés* is a textbook case. In terms of audience reception, there are only a few isolated newspaper articles reporting that some spectators did not like the opera. It was an enormous success with the public everywhere it was performed. Could it also depend upon the great publicity that preceded it? A plausible explanation, but certainly not the only reason. Overall, Spaniards enjoyed musical theater and even more so spectacles representing their Spain, their Spanishness, their *españolismo*. Was not this the reason why the *género chico* became so popular in the first place? Where the critical reception of *El gato montés* is concerned, we have a large number

of informed reviews of the opera by renowned or unknown critics and columnists from all the major cities in Spain, each of them with their unique background, local (or more cosmopolitan) point of view, and cultural, religious, and political biases. This is enough, however, to paint a good picture of the work through a process of comparison and interpretation and to provide—in a broader perspective—an idea of the differences in musical taste, trends, and theatrical expectations around Spain in those years.

A thorough study of the critical reception of the opera provides us with a better appreciation of the opera's qualities and, likewise, with a better understanding of the negative critics. In a few circumstances, Penella was criticized as a mediocre composer and—most of all—as an improvised librettist, and the opera was labeled as *españolada*. Traditionally, in Spain, such a definition had stemmed from a diffuse sentiment of *antiflamenquismo*, at least starting from the later years of the nineteenth century. Southern Spain had been dismissed as “primitive” by Spaniards themselves, especially the so-called regenerationists, intellectuals from (or operating from) the nation's “center,” Madrid, who developed a solid and opposing sentiment of *casticismo*, as well as by Catalans (*catalanisme*). The artists connected with the Generation of '98, many of whom were bourgeoisie Madrilenians, frequently used the label of *andalucismo de pandereta* to condemn Southern culture. Though under the impulse of a nationalist feeling, the controversial works by Joaquin Costa, Miguel de Unamuno, and Ángel Ganivet had polarized public opinion into *flamenquismo* vs. *casticismo*. The long-term result was the stigmatization of Andalusian culture—and flamenco most of all—often justifying it even with pseudo-scientific reasons. In his study on the national impact of *flamenquismo*, Samuel Llano points out the

common misconception associating *flamenquismo* and crime.⁵⁰ Gypsies were seen as social scapegoats in a post-*desastre* Spain that was frantically searching for a new national identity. Thus, they were associated with degeneration and, at large, a threat to society.

In music, composers of zarzuelas and, even more, operas were directly exposed to such a judgment. If we exclude Manuel del Falla—whose modernist *andalucismo*, especially in *La vida breve*, was overall well accepted—most Spanish composers who worked in the first two decades of the twentieth century suffered the long-term consequences of this attitude. *El gato montés* was no exception, at least as far as its traditional reception history is concerned. However, its case is unique since the opera did not suffer the immediate consequences of the hostile critics and was actually ostracized years after its premiere. The opera's presentation to Spanish audiences was highly successful, despite a few accusations of *españolada* that were predictable from certain fringes of Spanish music criticism.

Table 6.1 shows the journey of *El gato montés* throughout the theaters of Spain, from the date of the premiere in Valencia until the last performances in Andalucía in July 1918. Unless otherwise specified, all the performances refer to the *compañía Penella*, with Penella himself conducting. The table is self-explanatory; the opera toured the country for seventeen months, and we will see that it did so successfully. Furthermore, while Penella was still on tour with his company, two more theatrical companies started

⁵⁰ Samuel Llano, "Public Enemy or National Hero? The Spanish Gypsy and the Rise of Flamenquismo, 1898–1922," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 94, no. 6 (July 3, 2017): 977–1004.

presenting *El gato montés* in other parts of Spain. This tells us something about the popularity already achieved by the opera in its first six months.

Table 6.1: First performances of *El gato montés* (1917-1918).

Date (from)	City	Theater	
February 22, 1917	Valencia	Teatro Principal	
May 8, 1917	Barcelona	Teatre Novetats	
June 1, 1917	Madrid	Gran Teatro	
September 20, 1917	Zaragoza	Teatro Principal	
November 21, 1917	Alicante	Teatro Romea	
December 2, 1917	Murcia	Teatro Romea	Until December 8
December 14, 1917	Cartagena	Teatro Principal	
January 25, 1918	Málaga	Teatro Cervantes	
January 31, 1918	Salamanca	Teatro Moderno	Pablo López company
February 21, 1918	Sevilla	Teatro Cervantes	
March 30, 1918	Granada	Teatro Isabel la Católica	Until April 8
April 27, 1918	Murcia	Teatro del Circo	Pepe Angeles company
May 12, 1918	Córdoba	Teatro Circo	Until June 3
July 9, 1918	Amposta	Cine Doré	

El gato montés was premiered at the Teatro Principal in Valencia on February 22, 1917,⁵¹ and then presented in several other cities. It arrived at the Teatro Novedades in Barcelona on May 8;⁵² in Madrid,⁵³ it was first represented on June 1 at the Gran Teatro.⁵⁴ On September 21, it was performed at the Teatro Principal in Zaragoza.⁵⁵ On December 15, 1917, at the Teatro Romea in Murcia.⁵⁶ Eventually, it arrived in Andalucía⁵⁷ only in 1918.

The premiere in Valencia had been scheduled for Tuesday, February 13, 1917, but a severe stage accident during the dress rehearsal caused a last-minute change in the

⁵¹ Cfr. *La Nación*, February 27, 1917; *La Mañana*, February 25, 1917; *La correspondencia de España*, February 24, 1917; *Mundo gráfico*, April 4, 1917; *La Correspondencia de España*, February 14, 1917; *Diario de Valencia*, February 23, 1917; *Arte Musical*, February 28, 1917; *Nuevo Mundo*, April 20, 1917; *El pueblo*, February 23, 1917.

⁵² Cfr. *La Publicidad*, May 1, 1917; *La Vanguardia*, May 9, 1917; *El Poble Catalá*, May 10, 1917; *L'esquella de La Torratxa*, May 11, 1917; *Foment*, May 13, 1917; *El Liberal*, May 17, 1917; *Ilustració Catalana*, May 20, 1917; *Papitu*, May 30, 1917.

⁵³ Cfr. *La Correspondencia de España*, May 10, 1917; *La correspondencia de España*, May 30, 1917; *ABC*, June 2, 1917; *El Correo Español*, June 2, 1917; *El Día*, June 2, 1917; *El Imparcial*, June 2, 1917; *La Época*, June 2, 1917; *La Nación*, June 2, 1917; *El heraldo de Madrid*, June 3, 1917; *La correspondencia de España*, June 3, 1917; *El Día*, June 5, 1917; *El Imparcial*, June 5, 1917; *La Correspondencia Militar*, June 6, 1917; *El Mentidero*, June 9, 1917; *La Lectura Dominical*, June 9, 1917; *La Correspondencia Militar*, June 10, 1917; *Mundo gráfico*, June 13, 1917; *Arte Musical*, June 15, 1917; *La Esfera*, June 16, 1917; *La Lectura Dominical*, June 16, 1917.

⁵⁴ The Gran Teatro de Madrid (previously called Teatro Lirico) was founded in 1905. The theater stopped its activity in 1920 because of the extensive damages caused by a fire.

⁵⁵ Cfr. *La Crónica de Aragón*, September 18, 1917; *Diario de Avisos de Zaragoza*, September 21, 1917; *El Día*, September 21, 1917; *La Crónica de Aragón*, September 21, 1917; *Diario de Avisos de Zaragoza*, September 22, 1917.

⁵⁶ Cfr. *El Liberal de Murcia*, December 7, 1917; *El Tiempo*, December 7; *El Tiempo*, December 8, 1917; *El Liberal de Murcia*, December 13, 1917; *Murcia Grafica*, December 15, 1917; *El Liberal de Murcia*, December 16, 1917; *La Época*, December 16, 1917; *Arte Musical*, December 31, 1917.

⁵⁷ Cfr. *Diario de Córdoba*, May 7, 1918; *El Defensor de Granada*, April 8, 1918; *Diario de La Marina*, April 1, 1918; *Noticiero Granadino*, March 29, 1918; *La Alhambra*, May 15, 1918; *La Alhambra*, March 15, 1918; *El Defensor de Granada*, March 29, 1918; *El Defensor de Granada*, March 28, 1918; *El Defensor de Granada*, March 27, 1918; *La Union Ilustrada*, January 31, 1918; *Arte Musical*, March 15, 1918; *El Defensor de Córdoba*, May 13, 1918; *El Defensor de Granada*, March 31, 1918; *La Alhambra*, July 31, 1918.

plans. In a perfect drama-in-drama style—and not surprisingly, the newspaper headline was “From Fiction to Reality”—⁵⁸ the baritone Rusell, who played the role of Juanillo, was wounded in the neck by the cartridge of a rifle. That is the very last scene when Juanillo asks his loyal Pezuno to shoot him in the heart to avoid being captured. The person in charge of the “fake” theatrical shot, which was supposed to miss the singer, was the poor choir director, who saw Rusell collapse in front of him without eventually getting up. Since the scene envisaged this, the audience reacted with a tremendous ovation to theatricality and realism. Only later, following the screams of the terrified soprano, did they realize the accident. Fortunately, as the newspapers reported, the shot did not hit the singer’s jugular. The premiere of the opera could therefore be moved to the following week.

The rescheduled premiere in Valencia, Penella’s home city, took place concurrently with the inauguration of a monument to Salvator Giner (1832-1911), another illustrious Valencian, who had also been Penella’s first composition teacher. That evening of February 22, 1917, undoubtedly was a day of great significance for the Valencians, and they reacted by enthusiastically welcoming Penella and his new work. To understand how big a “triumph” it was, I will quote the words of columnist Ariño on *El pueblo*, the Valencian republican newspaper founded by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez.

The ovation is repeated with apotheosis character for Penella, who has triumphed in the whole line: will confirm it, if not, the repeated applauses that have been heard all night. [...] Penella spoke modestly, sincerely, to offer applause and [to dedicate] the great success [of the evening] to Giner; he paid compliments to the orchestra, to the artists, and, moved, proposed two cheers: to Spain and to

⁵⁸ “Da la ficción a la realidad,” *La Correspondencia de España*, February 14, 1917. The news was reported the day after also in Catalonia. Cfr. “Desgracia,” *El Poble Català*, February 15, 1917.

Valencia, which were welcomed unanimously. Then he was offered an artistic diploma, encased in a luxurious frame, and was nominated honorary president of the Committee for the Monument to Giner. [...] At the end of the premiere, the audience waited for maestro Penella at the door of the theater and, taking him on their shoulders, while a crowd of over a thousand spectators cheered him, they paraded him in triumph through the streets of the city center, accompanied by La Vega band. Penella was weeping, deeply moved, seeing the affectionate tribute paid by his fellow citizens. Night of triumph for the Valencian musician [...].⁵⁹

The extensive two-column article provides a thorough and vivid description of the event. It reports such details as the number of performers in the orchestra (eighty, who allegedly performed free of charge),⁶⁰ the name of the scenic painter, the presence of several specific local authorities, and the audience reactions to each number. Ariño notices the disproportion between the long Act I and the other two. Still, he praises Penella's choice not to end the act after Soleá's aria (applauded to the point that the singer had to offer an encore) and instead opt for the copresence of the three protagonists. He also commends the realism and theatrical effectiveness of the Act II bullfight representation, which, in his opinion, could not have been done better. For Act III, he praises the theatric sobriety and the focus on music.

⁵⁹ S. Ariño, "'El gato montés': éxito clamoroso de Penella," *El pueblo*, February 23, 1917. "Se reproduce la ovación con caracteres de apoteosis para Penella, que ha triunfado en toda la línea: díganlo, si no, los repetidos aplausos que ha escuchado toda la noche. [...] Habló Penella modestamente, sinceramente, para ofrecer los aplausos y el gran éxito á Giner; dedicó cumplidos ojos á la orquesta, á los artistas, y, emocionado, dió dos vivas: á España y á Valencia, que fueron contestados unánimemente. Luego se le ofreció un artístico diploma, encerrado en lujoso marco, nombrándole presidente honorario del Comité para el Monumento á Giner. [...] Al terminar del estreno, esperó el público al maestro Penella á la puerta del teatro, y, cogiéndolo á hombros, y vitoreándolo mas de un miljar de espectadores, á quiere acompañaba la banda de La Vega, lo pasearon en triunfo por las calles céntricas. Penella lloraba, emocionadísimo, al ver el cariñoso homenaje que le tributaban sus paisanos. Noche de triunfo para el músico valenciano [...]."

⁶⁰ Ariño indicated that the about eighty performers were gathered from both the *Asociación de Profesores de orquesta* and the *Ateneo Musical* of Valencia.

Likewise, the *Diario de Valencia* titles the article as “*grandioso triunfo*”⁶¹ (“grand triumph”), reporting that Penella obtained a “colossal triumph” from both a dramatic and musical point of view. The article also specifies that, while Penella was brought in triumph through the streets of Valencia, the band La Vega was following the crowd playing the actual *pasodoble* from the opera. The author uses the occasion to celebrate the art of the Valencian artists. Giner is indicated as a “colossus of the divine art [of music] who celebrated God with his copious production of religious works,” to whom a monument was long overdue, while Penella is a person with “fiery imagination, a restless spirit, a tireless fighter, a most notable hearth, a Valencian lover of the glories of *la terreta*.” He then emphasizes the tragicomic realism of the opera and the wise use of Andalusian melodies.

[...] It is admirably developed in the smallest details. The scenes, now tragic, now comic, are carried out with singular mastery and such realism, that credit maestro Penella as an excellent dramatic author. We would like to have enough time and tranquility to analyze the immense musical work carried out by maestro Penella, who, making particular use of Andalusian themes and airs, has woven an authentic filigree of lively and joyful music, with which he has linked several highly inspired numbers or irreproachable artistry. [...] Well done, maestro: let’s keep making real Spanish music.⁶²

⁶¹ “Homenaje al maestro Giner: estreno de ‘El Gato Montés’: grandioso triunfo del maestro Penella,” *Diario de Valencia*, February 23, 1917; “De actualidad,” *Mundo gráfico*, April 4, 1917.

⁶² Ibid. “[...] Está admirablemente desarrollado en los detalles más nimios. Las escenas, ora trágicas, ora cómicas, están llevadas con singular maestría y con un realismo tal, que acreditan al maestro Penella de excelente autore dramático. Quisiéramos disponer de tiempo y tranquilidad suficiente para analizar la inmensa labor musical llevada a cabo por el maestro Penella, quien sirviéndose especialmente de los temas y aires andaluces ha tejido una verdadera filigrana de música retozana y alegre, con la que ha enlazado varios números inspiradísimos, de factura irreprochable. [...] Bien, maestro: adelante a hacer musica española de verdad.”

The great success of the Valencian premiere was also reported by the press in Madrid.⁶³ F. Gil Asensio, from the periodical *Nuevo Mundo*, echoes the success of the performance and concludes with praise of Valencia and its “sons.”

Valencia knows how to honor her children, always anxious to honor her. Happy are those who know how to deserve and manage to conquer that incomparable fortune of devoting themselves to the same rays of sun that flooded their forehead with the first kiss of light! Master Serrano has conquered that honor; Master Penella has as well. Then there will be others, as others were before... Valencia contradicts the assertion that no one is a prophet in his homeland.⁶⁴

Ángel A. Gayoso, from the periodical *Arte Musical*, paints a precise picture of Penella as a modern, cosmopolitan, and versatile composer who is, first of all, Spanish and who avoids exoticism and respects the origins of the melodies he employs, developing his themes with sobriety. However, he continues, if Penella takes inspiration from the “same” [melodic] sources, on the other hand, the technique of his harmonic procedures evolves and develops to a higher standard, without sacrificing the melodic line, to which he gives essential importance and beauty.

The melody alone is Art. The drapery [harmony] is Science, and Penella, an artist of heart and by temperament, postpones the latter to the former that, when this is used without measure and rate, it is only to cover up with flows of science the total lack of the most essential quality of every artist: inspiration.⁶⁵

⁶³ Cfr. “El arte lírico español,” *La Mañana*, February 25, 1917; “Homenaje a un músico,” *La Nación*, February 27, 1917.

⁶⁴ F. Gil Asensio, “Un homenaje y un triunfo,” *Nuevo mundo*, April 20, 1917. “Valencia sabe honrar á su hijos, siempre afanosos de honrarla ¡Felices los que saben merecer y logran conquistar esa incomparable fortuna de consagrarse á los mismos rayos de sol que inundaron su frente con el primer beso de luz!.. El maestro Serrano ha conquistado ese honor; el maestro Penella también. Luego serán otros, como otros fueron antes...Valencia desmiente el aserto de que nadie es profeta en su patria.”

⁶⁵ Ángel A. Gayoso, “Una ópera del maestro Penella, ‘El gato montés,’” *Arte Musical*, February 28, 1917. “La melodía por sí sola, es Arte. El ropaje Ciencia, y Penella artista de corazón y por temperamento, pospone a lo primero lo segundo, que cuando esto se emplea sin medida y sin tasa, es sólo para encubrir con caudales de ciencia la falta total de la principalísima cualidad de todo artista: la inspiración.”

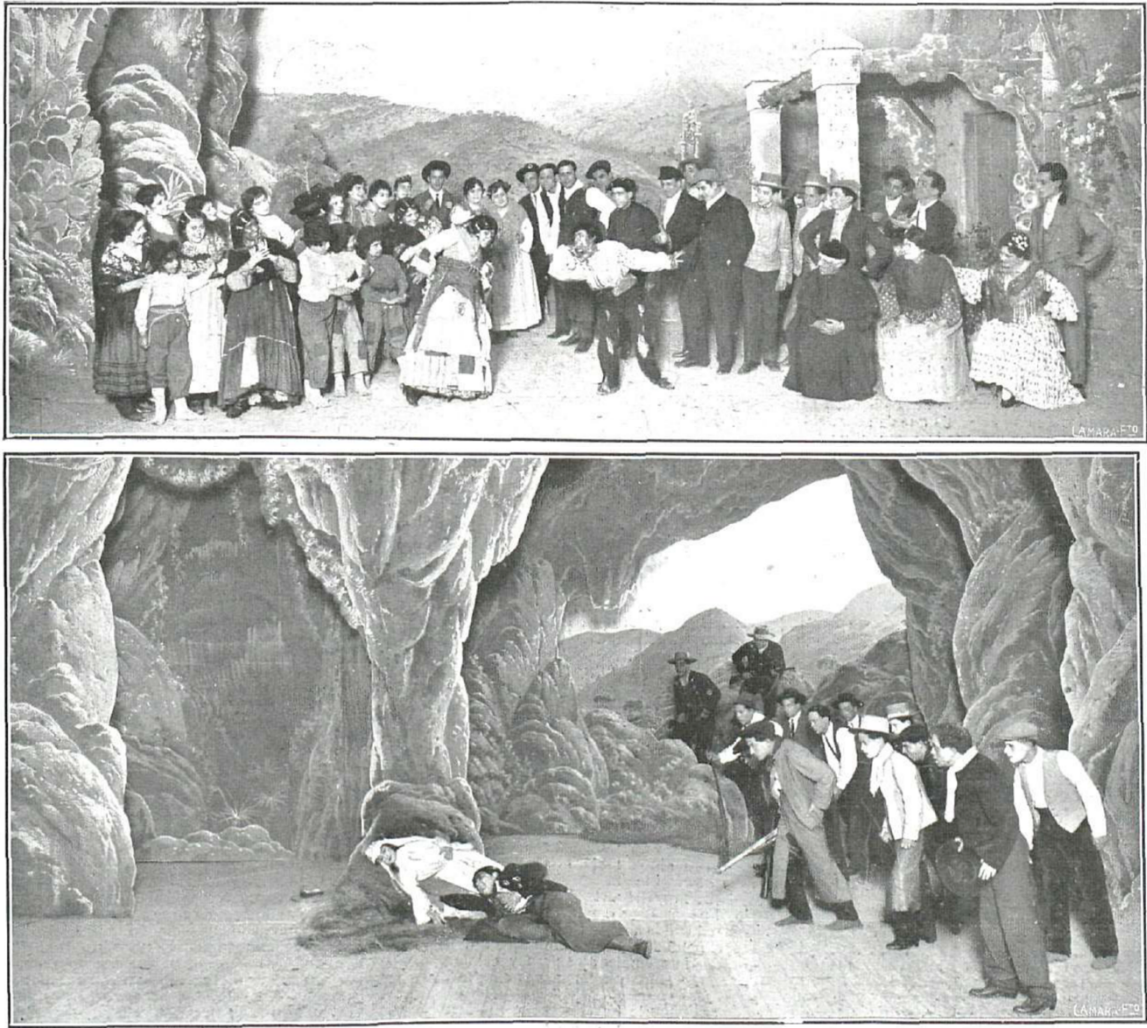


Figure 6.2: Photographs of the premiere of *El gato montés* at the Gran Teatro in Madrid, on June 1, 1917 (Magazine *La Esfera*, June 16, 1917).

After the Barcelona premiere, which took place at the Teatre Novetats on May 8, 1917, most Catalan magazines accused the opera of being an *españolada*. Later, such allegations were echoed by a few Madrid newspapers after the performance in the Spanish capital. The reception in Barcelona comes as no surprise if we consider what had

traditionally been the Catalanian critics' general attitude on the issue of *ópera espanyola*.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the world of opera in Barcelona had always looked more favorably at both Italian and French operatic models, even after the establishment of the Wagner Society in Barcelona in 1873.

On May 10, 1917, in the magazine *Foment*, an unknown author states that, despite the massive publicity and expectations, the performance of *El gato montés* in Barcelona was a failure,⁶⁷ and he refers to the detailed review by Cassimir Giralt from *El Poble Català*, according to whom both libretto and music were an *espanyolada* with “all the extenuating circumstances.”⁶⁸ Giralt lists all the elements that, in his authoritative opinion, make the *espanyolada* recipe, such as bandits, Gypsies, bullfight, *manzanilla*, *garrotín*, the bandit's cave, and, most of all, the girl who dies of grief, which he calls an “endemic disease in idiotic dramas and truculent novels.” Its poor libretto, he argues, was supported by “Valencian⁶⁹ rocket music,” with tricks and lightning that, in dramatic terms, he considers only faulty effects. Overall, Giralt considers the music “sarcastic and lacking

⁶⁶ Cfr. Felipe Pedrell, *Por nuestra música* (Univ. Autònoma de Barcelona, 1991).

⁶⁷ Unknown author, “Notes Teatrals,” *Foment*, May 13, 1917. “La ópera de Penella «El gato montés», estrenada recentemente en el teatre de Novetats de Barcelona, a pesar de la molta propaganda i de l'èxit alçat quan se estrená a Valencia, ha resultat un fracas.”

⁶⁸ Cassimir Giralt, “Teatre Novetats,” *El Poble Català*, May 10, 1917. “Llibre i música, una espanyolada amb totes les agravants del cas. Bandolers, toreros, gitanos i altra gent del mal viure. Manzanilla, navajes, garrotín, la capella de la plaça de toros, el pati dels cavalls, una corrida, la cova dels bandolers i una noia de cos present que ha mort de pena, una malaltia endèmica en els drames idiotes i les novel·les truculentes. I tot això el llibre, el lo que es refereix a la fauna que s'informa o a l'ànima que l'aguanta. En quan a la música: una traca valenciana amb coets, trons, rodes i tota la mandanga del cas. Vol dir això, en termes comeditats, que els efectismes fàcils i els trucs llampants hu abunden desmesuradament. Música de sarçuela amb espatec de metall i una ausencia d'insoiració desconsoladora. L'instrumentació obeeix quasi sempre a un marcat desig d'espantarrar i els temes melódicos acusen també una marcata pobresa de concepció.”

⁶⁹ The fact that the crisis is specifying the “Valencian” rocket tells us a lot about his bias and attitude towards “Valencian” music, somehow considered peripheral, even by Barcelona critics.

any heartfelt inspiration,” with an orchestration preeminently responding to a desire to impress the audience and the melodic themes lacking proper conception. A similar critique from *La Vanguardia* also emphasizes how Act II was missing only actual bulls on stage to be completely realistic. The critic Fausto makes an interesting note about the music, which he argues is based on the “old zarzuela” model, but without the abundance of melody that the previous generations (“their grandparents”) much appreciated. The libretto, he continues, cannot be discussed seriously and brings to memory the one created by Bretón. Here Fausto most certainly refers to the libretto Bretón wrote for *La Dolores*, which critics lambasted for some alleged poor vocabulary choices.⁷⁰

A week later, in *El liberal*, the well-known critic Adolfo Marsillach, reporting from Barcelona, writes what can be considered the most negative review of the opera, filled with intense sarcasm. Sharing the idea of some other local critics,⁷¹ Marsillach believes that the success of *El gato montés*, in terms of audience and box office, was only the result of a major advertising campaign. In fact, he criticizes the operatic production system of Barcelona at large, also mentioning examples of other works that, in his authoritative opinion, had been successful only for the same reasons. Along these lines, he continues, the Teatro Novedades certainly filled all the boxes at the premiere of *El gato montés*, although the name of Penella was, he states, worth very little in Barcelona.⁷² For

⁷⁰ In one of his writings, Bretón laments that he was specifically attacked by critics for his use of the word *ruído*. See Tomás Bretón, *La ópera nacional y el Teatro Real de Madrid: conferencia leída en el Ateneo Literario el día 5 de febrero de 1904* (Madrid: Sociedad Anónima “Casa Dotésio,” 1904), 11.

⁷¹ Cfr. “Teló Enlaire,” *L'esquella de La Torratxa*, May 11, 1917.

⁷² Adolfo Marsillach, “Estreno de ‘El Gato Montés,’” *El Liberal*, May 17, 1917. “El éxito de “Jesús que vuelve” se debió más al reclamo que al nombre de Guimerá, y gracias al reclamo se llenó de bote en bote

Marsillach, the opera has obtained a “gallery” success because it is indeed a gallery opera that would be performed a lot, but that certainly would not attract the attention of musicians and poets. It was a commercial project meant to satisfy the people’s taste. His sarcasm peaks when he compares the opera to *Carmen*, to eventually define it as a “*Carmen* without Carmen.”

However, «El Gato Montés» will be successful everywhere. It is a work written with a view to the box office, a mercantile opera designed to flatter and satisfy the tastes of the populace. Place of action: Andalusia, with its blue sky, its passions, its light, its bullfighters, its novel women and boxes of raisins, and its popular, sentimental, traditional bandits. Don José, Carmen, Merimée, Bizet, «Carmen». But without Don José, without Carmen, without Merimée, without Bizet, without «Carmen.» This is Penella’s opera, offered to fans of bullfight and Spanish flamenco. In the end, a bad product.⁷³

For Marsillach, Penella’s music is colorless, vague, empty, and the orchestration is poor, simplistic, and even vulgar. As for the libretto, the verse is ugly and naive.

Marsillach then sarcastically praises the *corrida* representation in the second act, which he says will undoubtedly delight Penella’s fans. Why find inspiration in Wagner?⁷⁴ He provocatively argues that “this is how operas should be written” and reports that when

el teatro de Novedades la noche del estreno de “El gato montés”, á pesar de lo poco cotizabile que es en Barcelona la firma de su ilustre autor.”

⁷³ Ibid. “Sin embargo, “El Gato Montés” tendrá éxito en todas partes. Es una obra escrita con vistas á la taquilla. Una ópera mercantil, destinada á halagar y á satisfacer los gustos de la plebe. Lugar de la acción: Andalucía, con su cielo azul, sus pasiones, su luz, sus toreros, sus mujeres de novela y cajas de pasa, y sus bandidos populares, sentimentales, tradicionales. Don José, Carmen, Merimée, Bizet, «Carmen». Pero sin Don José, sin Carmen, sin Merimée, sin Bizet, sin «Carmen». Eso es la ópera de Penella, brindada á los taurófilos y al flamenquismo español. En el fondo, una mala acción.”

⁷⁴ Ibid. “Así se escriben óperas. La tontería, para escribir óperas, es irse á inspirar en los Nibelungos. Donde hay toreros y plaza de toros, no hay Rain ni Nibelungos que valgan. Joselito es superior y más incesante que Wotan. En España, la menos, y para el Sr. Penella también.”

the curtain fell, the audience warmly applauded, not aware that they had been dulled once more.⁷⁵ He concludes:

We only needed to transfer the bullfighting into the theater, and the fact that there is an author, a “poet,” and a musician, who at this point believes that a man left by a woman should become a bandit. I do not know how to see the consequence. Anyway, there it is, Maestro Penella with his criteria.⁷⁶

In Madrid, the opera was premiered at the Gran Teatro on June 1, 1917, with Penella directing an orchestra of about seventy members.⁷⁷ A great public success, it was overall well accepted by the critics, despite a few mixed feelings. Several critics agreed that Penella’s libretto was not on the same level as the music. In *La lectura dominical*, Caballero even questioned Penella’s poor judgment in writing the libretto himself, which resulted in an *españolada*.

An *españolada* is the very opposite of a Spanish opera, and *El gato montés* is, to a large extent, an *españolada*. Mr. Penella, who, apparently, is not satisfied with the librettos offered to him (let it be known that we never offered him any, nor do we are going to), or else does not find Literature conducive, decides to manage it himself as Arrigo Boíto, Bretón... and Wagner did; [he considers himself] the Juan Palomo of dramatic music, I say that without any lack of respect. And *El gato montés* is born, which is a tremulous, truculent libretto, in which there is bullfighting Andalusia in style, tragic loves, abundant blood, and even the escape of *el gato montés* to the mountains, carrying the limp corpse of his beloved Soledad—¡Soleá churripandú!—next to which the formidable bandit, that gives the popular Spanish opera its title, calls for her, wounded by various types of

⁷⁵ Ibid. “El telón cae en medio de grandes aplausos. El público se frota las manos de gusto, sin parar mientes en que le han embrutecido una vez más.”

⁷⁶ Ibid. “Sólo nos faltaba el traslado del toreo al teatro, y el que haya autor, “poeta” y músico, que á estas alturas crea que el hombre desahuciado por una mujer debe meterse á bandolero. Yo no sé ver la consecuencia. En fin; allá el Maestro Penella con su criterio.”

⁷⁷ “Los Teatros, Gran Teatro,” *La correspondencia de España*, May 30, 1917.

guards' carbines. It is said with this that the book is pure nonsense in its conception, in its development, and in its language.⁷⁸

Caballero is evidently mocking Penella's choices. The exclamation *¡Soleá churripandú!* is a quote from a verse of a famous flamenco *bulería* titled "Hay quien jura que Granada" ("The are those who swear that Granada"),⁷⁹ which basically means "Oh poor Soleá!"⁸⁰ On the other hand, it is plausible that such an attitude might also reflect the religious affiliation of the "illustrated weekly magazine" *La lectura dominical*. In fact, it was associated with the *Apostolado de la prensa* and published with *licencias eclesiásticas* (ecclesiastical licenses)—that is to say, a magazine published by conservatives and religious fundamentalists, aiming to face the "godless journalism" considered a misfortune of contemporary society.

On the contrary, other critics saw the Andalusian flavor as one of the greatest strengths of the opera. *El Parlamentario* referred to *El gato montés* as "eminently

⁷⁸ P. Caballero, "Cronica Teatral," *La Lectura Dominical*, June 9, 1917. "Una *españolada* es lo más opuesto a una obra española, y *El gato montés* es eso, en mucha parte, una *españolada*. El Sr. Penella, a quien, por lo visto, no convencen los libros que se le ofrecen (que conste que jamás le ofrecimos ninguno, ni tenemos ese pensamiento), o bien no encuentra propicia a la Literatura, resuelve arreglárselos sólo como Arrigo Boito, como Bretón... y como Wagner, los Juan Palomo de la música dramática, dicho sea sin menoscabo de ningún respecto. Y surge *El gato montés*, que es un folletino tremebundo, truculento, en el que hay andalucería taurómaca por todo lo alto, amores trágicos, sangre en abundancia, y hasta la fuga, a las montañas, del *gato montés*, que lleva en brazo el cadáver yerto de su amada Soledad—¡Soleá churripandú!—junto al cual «la diña» herido de varios tipos de carabina de guarda jurados, el formidable bandido que da título a la ópera popular española. Queda dicho con esto que el libro es un purísimo disparate en su concepción, en su desarrollo y en su lenguaje."

⁷⁹ [...] Una vez queé de un inglés(?) / procedente de Londón / me dice ay beri güé / báilese usted el garrotón / En cuanto lo ven bailar / se quedan medio bajlú / y no dejan de clamar / soleá churripandú / Se arma una juerga que no tiene fin / cantan las greñudas / en el Albaicín [...].

⁸⁰ The exclamation "Soleá churripandú!" is often found in lieu of "Soleá triste de mí!" in other dances as the *petenera*. See Guillermo Castro Buendía, "Málaga en La Petenera," accessed July 15, 2022, <https://externos.uma.es/cultura/investigacion-recuperacion/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/M%C3%A1laga-en-la-Petenera.pdf>.

Andalusian”⁸¹ both for its realistic representation of characters and scenes and its use of authentic Andalusian music. The *Diario Universal* called it a “real” Spanish opera, not just for being conceived in Spain but because it was built upon authentic Spanish musical elements.⁸² Likewise, Gayoso⁸³ talks about it as an authentic Spanish opera for the richness of its melodic invention and orchestration and its realist libretto. Even more, he describes it as Andalusian realism and fatalism.

More importantly, two unique reviews even praised the opera by associating it with the *verismo* works by Mascagni, Leoncavallo, and Giordano. The reviewer from *El imparcial* writes:

We believe, yes, with all sincerity, that together with Giordano and Leoncavallo and alongside Mascagni’s works, «El Gato Montés,» premiered last night with resounding success, would be a brilliant work. «El Gato Montés» is a sincere, spontaneous opera, of an estimable technical height and melodic gestures that contain great sympathy, if not a great novelty.⁸⁴

⁸¹ *El Parlamentario*, as reported in AA. VV., “Juicios críticos,” *Arte Musical*, June 15, 1917. “«El gato montés» es una obra eminentemente andaluza, con música andaluza, claro es. El maestro Penella ha recogido los principales cantos de la pintoresca Andalucía, los más conocidos y populares y con ellos ha formado los motivos de su obra, encarnándolos en los personajes con habilidad en la exposición y en el desarrollo para que haya verdadera unión y conexión en las ideas. La unidad y la variedad persisten así en agradable consorcio.”

⁸² *Diario Universal*, as reported in AA. VV., “Juicios críticos,” *Arte Musical*, June 15, 1917. “«El gato montés» es, efectivamente, una verdadera ópera española, no en el sentido, meramente accidental, de haber nacido en España, sino por la circunstancia esencial de que musicalmente está construida con elementos españoles, pura y netamente españoles, a lo menos en su mayoría.”

⁸³ Ángel A. Gayoso, “Impresiones, El gato montés,” *Arte Musical*, June 15, 1917.

⁸⁴ “Gran Teatro, ‘El Gato Montés,»” *El Imparcial*, June 2, 1917. “Creemos, si, con toda sinceridad que junto a Giordano y Leoncavallo y a lado de cosas del propio Mascagni haría «El Gato Montés», estrenado anoche con estruendoso éxito, un papel brillantísimo. «El Gato Montés» es obra sincera, espontánea, de una estimable altura técnica y de rasgos melódicos que encierran una gran simpatía, ya que no una gran novedad.”

A few weeks later, the magazine *La Esfera* offers a similar statement, celebrating the success of the opera in one of the few reviews that—given the peculiar nature of the magazine, subtitled “Ilustración Mundial”—also include several beautiful photographs of the performance:

The Maestro Penella has obtained a resounding success in the Gran Teatro, of those that remain in the memory, with his popular opera *El gato montés*, a good lyrical work written on a libretto very interesting and moving to a high degree, with music [that is] fresh, spontaneous and, above all, genuinely national, and that—Why not say it?—, would not be diminishing if placed among other operas by Giordano, Leoncavallo, and Mascagni himself, so applauded in the main theaters of the world. *El gato montés* is a sincere, spontaneous work that reveals a complete mastery of the technique and exuberant melodic gestures of great feeling.⁸⁵

Penella’s famous *autocritica*, published in *La Tribuna* and entirely reproduced on June 15, 1917, in a special number of the magazine *Arte Musical*, would almost appear as a direct response to the already cited article by Cassimir Giralt.⁸⁶ Penella defends his work point by point, somehow following Giralt’s observations’ order. This self-defense has peculiar historical importance for several reasons. In the first place, because the composer himself confirms and justifies a precise definition for his work, which he indeed calls a “Spanish popular opera” (*ópera popular española*), or even more—he clarifies—an

⁸⁵ “‘El Gato Montés’ del Maestro Penella,” *La Esfera*, June 16, 1917. “El maestro Penella ha obtenido en el Gran Teatro un éxito ruidosísimo, y de los que quedan en el repertorio, con su ópera popular *El gato montés*, una buena obra lírica escrita sobre un libro interesantísimo y emocionante en alto grado, con una música fresca, espontánea y, sobre todo, genuinamente nacional, y que. ¿por qué no decirlo?, nada desmerecería colocada entre otras de Giordano, Leoncavallo y el propio Mascagni, tan aplaudidas en los principales coliseos del mundo. “*El gato montés*” es obra sincera, espontánea, reveladora de un completo dominio de la técnica y exuberante de rasgos melódicos de una gran simpatía.”

⁸⁶ Cassimir Giralt, “Teatre Novetats,” *El Poble Catalá*, May 10, 1917.

Andalusian one.⁸⁷ Penella considers Andalucía the richest region of Spain in terms of musical inspiration and states he has used such features to provide his opera with a unique character. He firmly rejects the allegation of having depicted an *España de pandereta*:⁸⁸

I think my friend was right. I do not believe that in my work there is a Spain of pandereta. I have not caricatured, I have not deranged, I have not ridiculed the characters that reality provided me. If the bandits of the Andalusian Sierra, that have had their last example in «Long Steps»⁸⁹[...]; if the docile village priests, aficionados of bulls and drinks; if the sentimental young girls and songs of the farmhouses; if the troops of gypsies that make the sunny roads happy with their dances; if the brave and lively bullfighters, that become idols of the town; if these constitute what they call a Spain pandereta, then pandereta is my work, and I do not repent of it. What fault have I if it exists? Furthermore, how would I seek a popular Spanish environment with delighted little princesses, sickening sweet pages, counts that made their fortune in New York, and waltzes of the Viennese style? None of the characters that «the land» gave me is repugnant.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Manuel Penella, “Autocrítica ‘El gato montés,’” *Arte Musical*, June 15, 1917. “Esto es «El gato montés». Una ópera popular española, más aún, andaluza, que a la cantera musical de Andalucía, en mi sentir más rica que ninguna otra de España, fui a basquear el asunto y los motivos de mi ópera, precisamente en mi afán de darle carácter.”

⁸⁸ *España de pandereta* literally means “Spain of tambourine,” a folkloric and exotic cliché usually associated with Andalucía and Gypsies.

⁸⁹ *Pasos largos* (Long steps) was a notorious bandit of the time.

⁹⁰ Penella, “Autocrítica ‘El gato montés,’” “Yo creo que mi amigo tuvo razón. No creo que en mi obra se pinte una España de pandereta. No he caricaturizado, no he desquiciado, no he ridiculizado los personajes que me dio la realidad. Si los bandidos de la Sierra andaluza que han tenido su último ejemplar en «Pasos Largos» [...]; si los mansos curitas aldeanos, aficionados a toros y cañas; si las mocitas sentimentales y copleteras de los cortijos; si las tropas de gitanos que alegran con sus danzas los caminos soleados; si los toreros jacarandosos y valientes, que convierte en ídolos el pueblo, constituyen la llamada España de pandereta, de pandereta es mi obra, y yo no me arrepiento de ello. ¿Qué culpa tengo yo, si existe? ¿Y cómo iba a buscar ambiente español y popular con princesitas encantadas, pajes almibarados, condes enriquecidos en Nueva York y valsos de estilo vienés? Ninguno de los personajes que me dio «la tierra» es repugnante.”

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AUTOCRÍTICA

«EL GATO MONTÉS»

Yo no quiero ser orgulloso ni pedante, porque no tengo ni siquiera en qué fundar mi vanidad; pero tampoco quiero ser excesivamente modesto, con modestia que huelga a hipocresía, ya que si considerase mi «Gato montés», que se estrena mañana en el Gran Teatro, como una obra desprovista en lo absoluto de méritos, no me jugaría las tres cartas que voy a jugarme: como empresario, como músico y como libretista.

No pido a la crítica una benevolencia excesiva, engaño más perjudicial que útil para quien pretenda hacer arte; sólo ruego que me juzguen con arreglo a mi intención, a lo que he pretendido hacer; y si al acuarelista y al paisajista no se les puede hablar, porque sería un contrasentido, ni de Velázquez ni de Goya, fuera también injusto recordarme a Wagner, a quien no profanan mis modestas semifusas, cuando anuncio una ópera popular. Esto es «El gato montés»: Una ópera popular española, más aún, andaluza, que a la cantera musical de Andalucía, en mi sentir más rica que ninguna otra de España, fui a buscar el asunto y los motivos de mi ópera, precisamente en mi afán de darle carácter.

Yo mismo me compuse el libro: un sencillo drama pasional. Le hablé de él a Felipe Sassone, le leí unos cantables, y tanto le gustaron, que él me animó a seguir en la tarea. «Cuando el músico puede hacerse el libro, nadie mejor que él; sale más una, más espontánea la obra», me dijo.

Yo creo que mi amigo tuvo razón.

No creo que en mi obra se pinte una España de pandereta. No he caricaturizado, no he desquiciado, no he ridiculizado los personajes que me dió la realidad. Si los bandidos de la Sierra andaluza que han tenido su último ejemplar en «Pasos Largos», porque no se acabaron en Diego Corrientes; si los mansos curitas aldeanos, aficionados a toros y cañas; si las mocitas sentimentales y copleteras de los cortijos; si las tropas de gitanos que alegran con sus danzas los caminos soleados; si los toreros jacarandosos y valientes, que convierte en ídolos el pue-

blo, constituyen la llamada España de pandereta, de pandereta es mi obra, y no me arrepiento de ello. ¿Qué culpa tengo yo, si existe? ¿Y cómo iba a buscar ambiente español y popular, con princesitas encantadas, pajes almirados, condes enriquecidos en Nueva York y valses de estilo vienés? Ninguno de los personajes que me dió «la tierra» es repugnante.

¿Cómo queriendo hacer una obra teatral, representable, «que le gustase al público», iba a desdeñar el elemento decorativo y pintoresco, la luz y el color, la alegre tristeza y la dulce melancolía mora y gitana que me daban los tipos, las danzas, los cantares y todo el ambiente popular y campesino de Andalucía? Los cantables, es decir, todo el verso de la obra, que a mi verso me parece, porque, cuando menos, es asonantado, no están escritos para una Antología precisamente. Con música suenan bien; expresan lo que yo quiero; entran pronto y fácilmente al público de lo que deben enterarle, y, sobre todo, corresponden al modo de pensar y de expresarse en unos personajes que no gastan coturno, ni pueden producirse con exámetros precisamente. Creo que se dice así, coturno y exámetros. ¡Perdón!

La música, claro está, sencilla y popular. He armonizado a mi modo los estilos andaluces, los que vagan en el ambiente y cantan los chalanes al trote de sus cabalgaduras y los gitanos al ritmo del yunque en que forjan sus calderos, y cuando el corazón, el corazón tan solo, me dictó una frase amplia, fácil, popular y sencilla, dejé libre y «popularmente» volar su diseño sobre el comentario más o menos colorido de mi orquesta. Consciente de que la música ha de expresar, di a cada personaje «un tema», a cada situación «un motivo», y recordando el «leitmotiv» de los maestros, adreecé, anuncié, cambié de tono y de intención aquellos temas y motivos, según el momento dramático, para que fueran lo que deben ser, la síntesis del personaje y, por decirlo así, la expresión plástica, el «gráfico musical» del pensamiento. Y no fué más allá mi técnica. Mucho admiro a César Franck, a Debussy, a D'Indy, a Strauss, a los grandes maestros; mas si Dios hubiera hecho el milagro de prestarme por un instante la musical sabiduría de

Figure 6.3: Manuel Penella's famous "Autocrítica," in the magazine *Arte Musical* (n. 59, June 15, 1917).

In the second place, in defending his music, Penella also calls it *sencilla y popular* (simple and popular)⁹¹ and points out that he has harmonized “in his way” the Andalusian style, emphasizing the simplicity of the melodic ideas. Third, Penella not only acknowledges that he used leitmotifs, but he also explains the arbitrary use he made of them:

Aware that music has to express «a theme» for each character, «a motive» for each situation, and remembering the «leitmotiv» of the masters, I adapted, introduced, and changed both tone and intention for those themes and motives, according to the dramatic situation, so that [those themes and motives] were what they should be, the synthesis of the character and, so to speak, the plastic expression, the «musical graph» of thought.⁹²

Such statement represents a unique first-hand piece of information on one of Penella’s compositional techniques for *El gato montés*, as well as a confirmation that a “personalized” use of leitmotifs was not a novelty among Spanish composers who approached a particular type of Spanish realist opera, featuring a *verismo* plot with elements of both Wagnerian and Italian/French style.⁹³ Each character is provided with a

⁹¹ Ibid. “La música, claro está, sencilla y popular. He armonizado a mi modo los estilos andaluces, los que vagan en el ambiente y cantan los chalanés al trote de sus cabalgaduras y los gitanos al ritmo del yunque en que forjan sus calderos, y cuando el corazón, el corazón tan solo, me dictó una frase amplia, fácil, popular sencilla, dejé libre y «popularmente» volar su diseño sobre el comentario más o menos colorido de mi orquesta.”

⁹² Ibid. “Consciente de que la música ha de expresar, di a cada personaje «un tema», a cada situación «un motivo», y recordando el «leitmotiv» de los maestros, aderecé, anuncié, cambié de tono y de intención aquellos temas y motivos, según el momento dramático, para que fueran lo que deben ser, la síntesis del personaje y, por decirlo así, la expresión plástica, el «gráfico musical» del pensamiento.”

⁹³ Several other composers had used this model, such as Bretón in *La Dolores*, Albéniz in *Pepita Jiménez*, Usandizaga in *Las golondrinas*, and Granados in *Goyescas*.

unique motive that introduces, evokes, or marks a character's exit. A more detailed description of the leitmotifs is provided in my analysis of the opera.

On September 20, 1917, the opera arrived in Zaragoza. The following day, the *Diario de avisos de Zaragoza* reports about some spectators who protested the opera or others who even left the theater disappointed. Nevertheless, the performance was to be considered successful.

With *El gato montés*, a very frequent case occurred last night in the theater; people left with a very bad taste in their mouths, dissatisfied, even indignant, and yet it cannot be denied that it was successful. During the performance and at the end of all the scenes, there were protests from part of the audience, but the applause prevailed due to the number or the noise, and the curtain was raised several times, especially at the end of the second Act and the work. Maestro Penella went up to the stage to receive the public's applause. Was it the work of the claqué, or was it that the public was fascinated by the representation of a bullfight and the subject of the drama, tragic, hair-raising, barbaric? Perhaps both; the fact is that today he has been able to place himself at the head of the cartels without falsifying the truth of these good words for the author: "great success."⁹⁴

From *La crónica de Aragon*, the critic Anton certainly disagrees with such statements. For him, the opera represents an offense to the audience. Penella is called "a metaphysician" and "the Benavente of the *españoladas*." This reference is curious because Jacinto Benavente was a famous playwright and a friend of Penella. Anton harshly criticizes the libretto and questions why Penella thought he could call it an *ópera popular*.

⁹⁴ "Circo. El Gato Montés," *Diario de Avisos de Zaragoza*, September 21, 1917. "Con *El gato montés* se dió anoche un caso muy frecuente en el teatro; la gente salió con muy mal sabor de boca, descontenta, hasta indignada y sin embargo, no puede negarse que alcanzó éxito. Hubo sí protestas, durante la representación y al final de todos los cuadros, de una parte del público, pero se impuso por el número o por el ruido la de los aplausos, y el telón se levantó varias veces, sobre todo al final del segundo acto y de la obra. El maestro Penella subió al palco escénico a recibir los aplausos del público. ¿Fué obra de la *claqué* o es que al público le sugestionó la representación de una corrida de toros y el asunto del drama, trágico, espeluznante, bárbaro? Quizás las dos cosas; el hecho es que hoy ha podido ponerse a la cabeza de los carteles sin falsear la verdad de estas palabras satisfactorias para el autor "gran éxito."

Admirable, Mr. Penella. You are a metaphysician. The malevolent will say that operas like the one written and set to music by you denigrate those who applaud them. Introducing bandits, bullfighters, an imbecile priest, pimps, gypsies, and people of the worst kind, has a lot of edifying. In addition, in «El gato montés» the dialogue reaches the limits of ignorance to elevate, spiritualize, and dignify us. [...] Very Spanish! Bravo, Mr. Penella! You reveal yourself to us as the Benavente of Spanishness! Come on,⁹⁵ master! [...] the set of music from “El gato montés” is nominated for a popular opera. Do you want to tell us? The author who has such a reputation of being popular?⁹⁶

The last part of the review is a judgment on the value of the opera and its musical numbers, which provides us with the general point of view of the author on Andalusian music.

Of course, we assure you that «El gato montés» is nothing more than a zarzuerilla, something insignificant, with a hateful, disgusting, embarrassing ending. In such a zarzuela, the music is known. We remember all the series of *garrotines*, *pasodobles*, and *other excesses* of rogue music heard in the *cafés cantantes*. All this is without prejudice that Mr. Penella thinks the work is very bad, but he believes it is good *because it makes money*.⁹⁷

At the end of this article, we understand two main points. First of all, a strong sentiment of *antiflamenquismo* moved Anton. Indeed, Andalusian dances are dismissed as

⁹⁵ The expression “¡Arse...!” actually has different meanings in Spanish. One of which is quite rude and vulgar, though common in colloquial Spanish. I do not think that was (at least not overtly) the meaning wanted by the critic.

⁹⁶ Anton, “El el Circo. Estreno de la ópera popular (sic) “El gato montés,”” *La crónica de Aragón*, September 21, 1917. “Admirable, señor Penella. Usted es un metafísico. Dirán los malévolos que obras como la por usted escrita y musicada son para denigrar a quienes las aplauden. Presentarnos bandidos, toreros, un cura imbécil, chulos, gitanos, y gente de la peor calaña, tiene mucho de edificante. Además, en «El gato montés», para elevarnos, para espiritualizarnos, para dignificarnos, el diálogo alcanza los límites de la incultura. [...] ¡Españolísimo! ¡Bravo, señor Penella! ¡Usted se nos revela como el Benavente de la españolaería! ¡Arse, maestro! [...] el conjunto de la música de «El gato montés» es nominada ópera popular. ¿Quiere decirnos? ¿El autor qué tiene tal nominación de popular?”

⁹⁷ Ibid. “Desde luego aseguramos que «El gato montés» no es más que una zarzuerilla, algo insignificante, con un final odioso, repugnante, que avergüenza. En tal zarzuela, la música es conocida. Recordamos todas las series de garrotines, pasodobles y otros excesos de música canalla oídos en los cafés cantantes. Todo esto sin perjuicio de que al señor Penella le parezca muy mala la obra, pero la crea buena *porque da dinero*.”

something “that we know.” Most of all, the reference to the excesses of the “sleazy music” of the *cafés cantantes* shows the critic’s negative attitude towards Southern culture, which aligned with widespread misconceptions considering Andalusian music and flamenco as the reflection of a rugged and even dangerous Southern Spain. Furthermore, the critic reports an indignant spectator protesting because of the “ignominious spectacle” of the dying bandit embracing his beloved’s (dead) body.

There was a spectator who at the end of the... opera(?) protested indignantly because to see a dying bandit wallowing hugging the corpse of his beloved woman is an ignominious spectacle. We want to say nothing about the artists. They were good, very good if you want it that way. Doesn’t enough punishment already come with being forced to scream at the popular opera?⁹⁸

Actually, it is more surprising that such a spectator mainly was concerned about a lover weeping over the dead body of his beloved, which would be quite expected, rather than the same bandit literally “kidnapping” the corpse of the gypsy and bringing her with him to his cave.

One should now wonder how the opera was received in the same region that it represented, namely Andalucía. Chronicles reported that before arriving in Málaga (Teatro Cervantes, on January 25, 1918), the opera had already been performed more than four hundred times around the country.⁹⁹ Only after, *El gato montés* was presented in several theaters in Andalucía, including Málaga, Sevilla, Granada, Córdoba, and Jaén. Reception study of the opera in the Andalusian regional theaters produces some

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “[...] obra que se ha representado más de 400 veces en los principales coliseos de Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, etc., etc.,” “El Gato Montés,” *Noticiero Granadino*, March 22, 1918.

interesting results that somehow contradict recent arguments—to be sure, based solely on a single piece of information—according to which even in Andalucía, the opera had been dismissed by some critics as an *españolada*. Indeed, an attentive reading of the “infamous” review¹⁰⁰ shows that the statement is incorrect. The critic Valladar is actually defending *El gato montés* by describing the libretto as *distant* from those *españoladas* that created the idea of an *Andalucía de pandereta*, which negatively affected Spain’s image around Europe. Yes, he writes that the opera is an *españolada*, but in the sense that it is a good one, which can be compared to Merimée’s *Carmen* or Blasco Ibáñez’s *Sangre y arena*. As a matter of fact, Valladar maintains that Juanillo, the protagonist of Penella’s opera, is even more “real” than the bandit Plumitas from *Sangre y arena*.¹⁰¹ He praises Penella’s inventiveness in writing the libretto and his fair use of Andalusian melodies. For Valladar, the score is far from being a collection of plagiarisms (not certainly, he clarifies, like the *intermedio* of *Maruxa*, in which Vives derived “inspiration” from the prelude of Act III of *Lohengrin*). He laments that the accusations of *españolada* have been made too easily, exactly as had happened to the opera *La virgen de Utrera* (1907), in which, in his opinion, critics were not

¹⁰⁰ Francisco de P. Valladar, “De Musica,” *La Alhambra*, July 31, 1918.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. “La novela es encantadora, aparte las «españoladas» que han sido la simiente, verdaderamente espléndida, de donde ha nacido la deplorable Andalucía de pandereta que aún nos mortifica por todas partes, hasta en las naciones en donde con más seriedad se nos ha estudiado: en Inglaterra y Alemania. [...] El libro de “El gato montés”, escrito, como la música, por el maestro Penella, es una «españolada», al estilo de *Carmen*, *Sangre y arena* (perdone por esto el gran novelista Blasco Ibáñez) y otras de menor cuantía. Hecho el libro con cierto ingenio, consérvese aparte el trágico robo del cadáver de Soleá, que es mucho robo—en las lindes de la realidad de la vida, y hay que convenir en que el protagonista de la obra de Penella es algo más real que el «Plumitas» de *Sangre y arena*... Mirado todo este repertorio desde un punto de vista verdaderamente español hay que rechazarlo sea de quien sea, incluyendo en esas «españoladas», las comedias, zarzuelas, óperas, novelas y leyendas, las pinturas y las esculturas... de toreros, bandidos y mujeres ligeras. Bien caro hemos pagado todo eso y lo continuamos pagando en estos tristísimos años de guerra europea... ¡Cuando viene bien, esas respetabilísimas potencias dicen de España: «Bah!... ¡el país de los toreros, las gitanas y los bandidos generosos!»”

able to understand the authentic *andalucismo* of Saenz y Saenz's admirable orchestration.¹⁰² Valladar seems to be using his column to criticize the current historical moment and the high expectations for modernist music.

Of course, there is nothing to be surprised about in these historical moments. The moderns want to exaggerate the revolution in music, the development of realist (?) music, to the point that a few months ago, when María Barrientes sang *La sonnambula* at the Teatro Real, one of the Madrid critics proposed that be made in that opera «the ruthless cuts imposed by the progress of the times»...so that those sweet melodies...do not annoy anyone. Later, the critic agrees that Barrientes, Schipa, and Masini Pierali excited Tyrians and Trojans by singing ... It's natural; for old operas, there is a need for singers, and singers are really very scarce. It is unnecessary for realist (?) music to resurrect the Donadío, Tamberlick, and Uetam, and I name almost the last ones who sang in the old way.¹⁰³

After the premiere in Málaga, Penella's company moved to Seville, where the opera premiered on February 21, 1917.¹⁰⁴ The Valencian composer should have been very concerned about this particular performance. Indeed, he was offering the Sevillanos a representation of their city, their costumes, their music, their being Andalusian. And, as far as we know, he was trying to do so in the most realistic way possible. How would they

¹⁰² A similar defense against the accusations of *españolada* is also available in another article dated May 15, 1918 and published in the same periodical. In addition, the author "V."—probably the same Valladar—defends Penella from the accusation of plagiarism. He argues that plagiarism should be proved by precisely indicating what and where Penella copied. Cfr. V., "Crónica Granadina," *La Alhambra*, May 15, 1918.

¹⁰³ Valladar, "De Musica." "No hay que extrañar nada, desde luego, en estos momentos históricos. Quieren los modernos llevar a tal exageración la revolución en la música, el desarrollo de la música realista (?), que hace pocos meses, cuando María Barrientes cantó en el Teatro Real *La sonámbula*, uno de los críticos de Madrid ha propuesto que se haga en esa ópera «la despiadada poda que impone el progreso de los tiempos»... a fin de que esas dulzonas melodías»... no fastidien a nadie. Luego, el crítico conviene en que la Barrientes, Schipa y Masini Pierali, entusiasmaron a tirios y a troyanos cantando... Es natural; para las óperas antiguas hacen falta cantantes y los cantantes, de veras, escasean mucho. Para la música realista (?), no es preciso que resucite la Donadío, Tamberlick y Uetam, y nombro casi a los últimos que cantaban a la antigua."

¹⁰⁴ Cfr. *El Noticiero Sevillano*, February 20, 1918.

have reacted, for example, to the representation of Seville's Plaza de Toros? Much to his peace of mind, the opera was a great success, and the audience profusely applauded the main arias, as well as some instrumental numbers like the cello intermezzo of the third act, which received an encore. The critic from *El noticiero sevillano* (his pen-name was Parsifal), who went to meet and greet Penella after the second act, observes that the composer's hands were "still trembling from the emotion of the premiere and his eyes flashed with joy at the ovations received."

Indiscreet, we asked some details about the gestation of this very Andalusian opera, in the mind of a Valencian master, and he, moved, as always when conducting his work, told us only this sentence, which is worth everything that can be said in music.—My friend, this opera has not been a *thought* work, but a *felt* work.¹⁰⁵

Parsifal's subsequent review of the opera is one of the more focused descriptions of *El gato montés* and appears to have centered all the main points on the conception and realization of the work. It is so even more because it comes from a newspaper from Seville, and from a critic who—even though we cannot know for sure his origins—was undoubtedly familiar with the specific local culture. To comment on Penella's laconic sentence, Parsifal argues that there is nothing of false intellectualism in *El gato montés*, nor "modernist complications," because it is an opera with an emotional character and, as such, it has emotional music.¹⁰⁶ Again, while this review brings appreciation to Penella's

¹⁰⁵ Parsifal, "El Gato Montés," *El noticiero sevillano*, February 22, 1918. "Indiscretos, preguntamos algunos detalles sobre la gestación de esta ópera tan andaluza, en la mente de un maestro valenciano, y éste, conmovido, como siempre que dirige su obra, solo nos dijo esta frase, que vale por cuanto se pueda decir en música.—Amigo mío, esta ópera no ha sido una obra pensada, sino una obra sentida."

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. "Y en efecto, no hay nada en "El Gato Montés" de falso intelectualismo musical, ni de complicaciones modernistas; es una obra de carácter emotivo, y como tal, la música es perfectamente anímica."

work, it concurrently validates a certain attitude that Spanish critics had towards modernism and modernist music. Indeed, one of the reasons why the opera managed to be successful in Spain and Latin America for the following two decades could be its lack of modernism. Penella was considered a cosmopolitan and not a modernist. In his operas, he was still able to project an image of masculinity—much required by Spanish critics—far distant from the “effeminate” modernist sounds that the Spanish cultural entourage mostly despised. We have seen how this was an issue that applied to other composers, among them Usandizaga, around whom critics—who liked his *Las golondrinas*—managed to build a false aura of masculinity to “balance” the extremely modernist approach he had taken in his music.¹⁰⁷

Finally, the opera arrived in Córdoba, where it was first performed on May 12, 1918, with a positive reaction from both public and critics.¹⁰⁸

In this section, we followed the path of the work through all the numerous stages that saw it represented in all the major cities of Spain. The hemerographic sources speak clearly. *El gato montés* was a successful work, both with the public and critics. Obviously, there were exceptions. From a diachronic perspective, the criticisms received from the Catalan newspapers or from some conservative commentators are not surprising at all. However, when we look at the big picture, the outcome is more than positive.

¹⁰⁷ Mario Lerena, “La virilidad vulnerable de un héroe modernista (1914-1918): música, ornamento y ‘seducción’ en torno a Usandizaga,” *Cuadernos de Música Iberoamericana* 34 (September 17, 2021): 25–55.

¹⁰⁸ Morsamor, “Teatro-Circo. ‘El Gato Montés,’” *El Defensor de Córdoba*, May 13, 1918.

Why did Penella feel the urge to defend himself in the special issue of *Arte Musical*? First of all, he was concerned about the negative commercial impact. Certain accusations of *españolismo*, often accompanied by bad judgments about his skills as a composer and the general quality of his music, could have brought him bad publicity. Penella was certainly not the latest arrival; he was a successful composer, a profound connoisseur of the world of zarzuela, but—above all—he was a man of the theater. He knew very well the market and the demands of the Spanish public. It is no coincidence that his output consisted mainly of zarzuelas, with the exception of only two operas: *El gato montés* first and *Don Gil de Alcalá* later.

Secondly, and probably more important, there is the personal impulse, which is something never to be underestimated in the complex and sensitive mind of a musician and an artist. From his writings, we see a Penella that felt sincerely betrayed by Spanish critics. He intended to create a truly “popular work,” honest and “genuinely Spanish.” In his passionate self-defense, the sincerity of intentions that prompted him to carry out such a risky undertaking clearly shines through.

What would have happened if Penella had structured the work in the form of zarzuela? Would he have received the unanimous warm welcome reserved for works like Chapí’s *Curro Vargas* (1898) or Usandizaga’s *Las golondrinas* (1914)? We are not bound to know, but one element is evident from the reviews: Spanish critics seemed to accept realism, which in Spain took the form of *casticismo* or *andalucismo*, much better when associated with light forms such as the zarzuela. The ideal of opera still remained an Italian one, but the one of Rossini and Verdi. “Serious” realist Spanish operas were often

received with skepticism or taken for something they were not, usually “lighter” than their profound meaning. On the contrary, the zarzuelas were always welcome due to their popular character and accessible musical numbers.

6.7 Conclusions

This chapter framed Manuel Penella’s opera *El gato montés* (1917) within the general discourse on Spanish national opera at the crossroads of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and as one of many cases in which the issue of authenticity re-emerges in relation to Spanish musical folklore. A careful analysis of the work, which goes beyond the superficial appreciation of the popular *pasodoble*, shows how it violates the boundaries of the zarzuela, re-confirming a model of opera—indeed already experimented with a few other unacknowledged works—that emphasizes realism and drama, more than entertainment and comic facets.

The conflicting reviews of Penella’s opera, especially by Catalan critics, confirm a widespread sentiment of *antiflamenquismo* that, despite not hindering the work’s success elsewhere in Spain, reinforced the idea of a “popular” opera, loosely associated with the *género chico*. Paradoxically, reviewers still accepted *flamenquismo* when employed as a *colour locale* in the fashionable *zarzuelas*—evidence of a perpetually controversial narrative about an “alleged” form of Spanish national musical theater, i.e., *ópera española*. Indeed, Penella strove to create an authentic Spanish opera. He chose to set to music a classic *verismo* story, embellished with numbers imbued with Spanish folklore and fatalism, and he extensively used leitmotifs. Moreover, he wrote the libretto himself, employing a unique variant of an Andalusian idiom.

In analyzing this opera from a *verismo* perspective, I opted for a theoretical framework that positions this opera within the *andalucismo* discourse through the concept of what I have labeled “fatalistic realism.” This approach is coherent with Penella’s research of Andalusian authenticity, which is still—just as in any other *verismo* work—an authenticity meant for the theater. Thus, this approach demonstrates consistency in the general dramatic thrust of the opera while concurrently refuting the superficial accusation of *españolada* made by some critics of the time.

EPILOGUE

The need to research Spanish *verismo* is dictated, in the first place, by the impossibility of placing several Spanish operas, traditionally considered realist works, into a coherent theatrical repertoire. We have seen how many works produced in the period 1895-1925 have been considered unique instances, eventually always overshadowed in Spain by either the foreign repertoire—particularly Italian and French—or Spanish *zarzuela chica*.

The reasons have been cultural and also economic. From the early 1700s onwards, the presence of Italian opera in Spain and the system of music education related to it have shaped and influenced operatic production, resulting in an Italianized music culture perpetuated by the National Conservatory, which trained artists in the Italian tradition, and the National Operatic Theater (Teatro Real), which rejected most productions that were not in Italian. The advent of Wagnerian music created a further fracture in the Spanish operatic world, which now had to negotiate between Wagnerian and Italian styles, while concurrently seeking a national form of Spanish opera.

The *ópera española* polemic involved composers, critics, and administrators, and it reached its peak in the twenty years around the crossroad of the centuries. The result was an impasse, the failure of establishing a shared model, and the composers returning more and more to the *género chico*, still in fashion and more profitable. In the meantime, composers such as Albéniz, Falla, Granados, Chapí, Penella, and Usandizaga still ventured—whether they were motivated by nationalist intent or not—into composing

realist works that, with very few exceptions, exist on the outer margins of the operatic repertoire. In this scenario, we saw how *verismo* could be considered a plausible response to the requirements of national opera, by blending of Italianate lyricism and Wagnerian orchestration with a realist plot.

The first step in this work has been to re-negotiate the definition of *verismo*—as discussed in the contemporary narrative—a distinctive Italian movement in opposition to both its French counterpart, naturalism, and the general umbrella term of “realism.” I started with literary *verismo* and then moved to the operatic version. A major conclusion is that *verismo* has been theorized as a “mediating” aesthetic. Distinguishing it from French naturalism, *verismo* writers always intended it as a balance between ideal and real. This theoretical framework was eventually translated into operatic *verismo*. In that case, the “ideal” became more of a necessity, dictated by the fact that theater, and particularly opera, is fictional by definition and that authenticity in the representation of reality is indeed a chimera.

I have then proposed a model of operatic *verismo*, which I called the “archetypical model,” that includes a set of *topoi* from which to draw when researching *verismo* features in a realist opera. In philology, the archetype is an ideal witness, reconstructed using real “variants” or versions, and for this reason, I see in it a feasible parallel with the ideal/real sought in *verismo*. This model of *verismo* also limits the number of works traditionally defined as such, showing how in most cases, they were just realist works.

The archetypical model was very useful in sorting out and identifying Spanish realist works that are indeed extremely heterogeneous, but that still share a core of *verismo*

topoi (e.g., a *verismo* plot, the coexistence of Italianate and Wagnerian styles and the national language, just to cite a few.). Looking at Spanish realist operas through the prism of *verismo*, I identified the first corpus of Spanish work that we can include under the definition of Spanish *verismo*. These works are mostly *lyric dramas* (a hybrid form of two-to-three-act *zarzuela grande* but with a dramatic plot), operas, or (in a few instances) zarzuelas. The reception study of these works has been essential in defining their aesthetic value, especially as perceived by the audience and critics of the time, and most of all as part of the narrative of *ópera española*. The analysis of the proposed operas is largely configured as an in-depth synopsis emphasizing the leitmotivic development (when applicable), the important dramatic elements, and orchestral texture.

The three case studies chosen were representative of a full arch of Spanish *verismo*, from the beginning of the 1890s to the late 1920s. Furthermore, the selected operas are profoundly different in style, thus offering a sample of the heterogeneous ways of producing effective Spanish *verismo*. Bretón's *La Dolores* has been chosen because it represents the first example of Spanish national opera of a marked realist tendency, which indicates a new direction. In addition, it is the embodiment of Bretón's ideas on Spanish opera, a cause that he advocated for most of his life. Its realism is still late Romantic and highly indebted to zarzuela, but its importance is pivotal. Casticist by localization (it is set in Aragón) and local color, it nevertheless presents a compelling survey of Spanish folklore. Penella's *El gato montés* is a *verismo* opera infused with *andalucismo* (it is set in Seville), and pivots around the classic *topoi* related to the *tauromaquia*: the bandit, the Gypsy, the bullfight, the *torero*, religion. It offers a peculiar *verismo*, which I have identified

as “fatalistic realism.” Usandizaga’s *Las golondrinas* is the more modernist of the three and, as such, eludes some of the traditional *verismo topoi*. Nevertheless, it is a sordid *verismo* story, indebted to *Pagliacci*, that opened a new chapter in the history of Spanish opera. A chapter that, unfortunately, was inconsequential due to the premature death of the composer, and consequent Spanish dictatorship’s stigma on Spanish opera.

Some major points have emerged from this dissertation. First, Spanish *verismo* is not to be seen as just an *a posteriori* construction or label. Spanish composers who ventured into realist operas often had a genuine interest in *verismo* plots, whether because they were familiar with the rural dramas staged at the *comedia* theaters or because they had attended performances of operatic *verismo* works in Spain. *Verismo* stories resonated with them as the perfect plots to attract a large audience, already accustomed to comic realism, through dramatic operas.

Second, when they were not the composers themselves, the critics recognized in those works the paradigms for a possible Spanish national opera. Whether they called it *verismo* or not, they expressed their desire to achieve *ópera española*. Therefore, the discourse on Spanish *verismo* is inseparable from the narrative on the “problem” of national opera. What is more, it could be a solution to it.

Third, if nothing else, we have confirmed an assumption that the idea of representing reality in music is a logical fallacy. This is an essential point to understand by those willing to study the realist repertoire as scholars or performers. The very nature of the theater mediates authenticity and realism, and aiming for an improbable realism, has

led to questionable dramatic results,¹ alien to the essence of theater. The term *verismo* in opera is misleading because what is represented is not the “real” but an “idealized real.”

Finally, to conclude, I would like to say a few words about the future of the Spanish realist repertoire and Spanish vocal repertoire in general. The risk in researches of this type is that they can become weighty tomes that are informative but disconnected from reality. However, music is not only studied; it is played. My background as a performer and educator strongly affects how I approach scholarship.

Thinking back to the problems that composers such as Bretón ran into regarding creating a national repertoire, I cannot help but draw a parallel with the *verismo* repertoire presented in this work. For Bretón, the problem was mainly at the level of institutions—primarily the Royal Conservatory and the Royal Theater—which deliberately did not promote Spanish opera. Bringing the problem back to the present day, the question it poses to us is whether a dissertation like this will promote a neglected repertoire both at home (Spain) and elsewhere.

Musical historiography assigns Spanish music an ambiguous position in the discourse on the Western canon, obviously due to Spain’s colonial history. In those academic institutions that show an interest in Ibero-American music, two narratives overlap: one proposes to decolonize the curriculum by incorporating Ibero-American scholarship and music; another one does so but stigmatizes Iberian music—because music of the colonizers—and focuses only on Latin American repertoire. The final result

¹ For example, see Matteo Sansone, “Giordano’s ‘Mala Vita’: a ‘Verismo’ Opera Too True to Be Good,” *Music & Letters* 75, no. 3 (1994): 381–400.

is the same that has been suffered by Latin American music up to modern times: exclusion of Iberian repertoire from the academic circle. Furthermore, even when ample scholarship is devoted to Iberian music, performance does not necessarily follow.

The curriculum of the voice programs in American universities, still based on the Western canon, requires students to sing in Italian, French, German, and English. Spanish is excluded, and the exploration of this repertoire is left to the individual curiosity of professors and students, the latter often unable to study pieces in other languages due to lack of physical time, given the demanding language requirements of the programs they attend. Recent studies have shown that the repertoire in Spanish, both in the form of art songs and (even less!) operatic arias, is a negligible percentage of the literature studied and proposed in academic recitals and competitions.²

For the above reasons, I hope my research will contribute to stimulating interest in Ibero-American opera and music at large, as I likewise hope to see these works performed more frequently.

² Elisa Ramon, “Decolonizing the Vocal Studies Curriculum in American University: A New Linguistic Approach to the Iberian and Latin-American Repertoire” (Conference Paper, Texas Tech University, Lubbock TX, November 6, 2020).

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