Reconstructing *zarzuela* performance practices ca. 1900: wax cylinder and gramophone disc recordings of *Gigantes y cabezudos*

Eva Moreda Rodríguez

University of Glasgow

When the first commercial recordings were made in Madrid in late 1896, *teatro por horas* ('heatre by the hour) dominated the city's musical-theatrical life. *Teatro por horas* first appeared in the early 1880s, with theatres putting on four different plays every evening in consecutive one-hour slots. The new business format lowered ticket prices, attracted new theatre-goers from a variety of social backgrounds, and, more importantly, replaced mid-nineteenth century's *zarzuela grande* with a new, shorter *zarzuela* subgenre: *género chico*. To facilitate rapid learning in a fast-paced industry where unsuccessful works were quickly replaced, *género chico* was often less ambitious musically than its predecessor, privileged lighter, contemporary subjects, and relied heavily on standardization of plot lines, characters and music.[1]

Unsurprisingly, *género chico* quickly found its way into the recordings made at the time in Spain at the hands of local companies called *gabinetes fonográficos*, becoming the most recorded genre in Spain after opera and wind band music. The surviving recordings are thus key sources for the vocal performance practices of the genre at its prime, but they have not received attention so far from musicologists or performance practice scholars. Obviously, to provide a comprehensive answer to the question "How was *género chico* performed around 1900?" within the boundaries of a single journal article would be too ambitious an enterprise.

[1] Contemporary accounts of *teatro por horas* and *género chico* include. Nancy.J. Membrez, "The *teatro por horas*: History, dynamics and comprehensive bibliography of a Madrid industry, 1867-1922 (género chico, género ínfimo and early cinema" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1987); Carmen del Moral Ruiz, *El género chico* (Madrid: Alianza, 2004); and Clifton Young, *Music Theater and Popular Nationalism in Spain, 1880–1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016).

Instead, my goal is to analyse the surviving recordings made between 1898 and 1905, both by Spanish *gabinetes* and by multinational companies visiting Spain, of Manuel Fernández Caballero's *zarzuela Gigantes y cabezudos* with a view to identifying parameters and methodologies for future research on the topic. I am particularly interested in exploring and demonstrating how an eminently indigenous genre such as *género chico* demands that we engage with its early recordings in a context-sensitive way. In this, most researchers of early recordings as documents of performance practice are in agreement, and have repeatedly argued that we cannot regard a specific recording as a photographic impression of common performing practices on stage at a given moment in time, in a given context, or even for a given performer. Instead, a wealth of contextual information – from the technologies used, to the dynamics in the studio, to the broader aesthetic discourses surrounding recordings - needs to be taken into account when ascertaining the extent to which we might draw conclusions from a particular recording. [2]

In the present article, I take this context-sensitive approach a step further, on account of the fact that most of these researchers have focused on the classical canon and, as such, they have tended to share certain assumptions above contexts that are not immediately applicable to *género chico*. For example, while singers in both opera and *género chico* made use of

[2] Robert Philip, *Early Recordings and Musical Style. Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance, 1900-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Michael Chanan, *Repeated takes: A Short History of Recording and Its Effects on Music* (New York: Verso, 1995); Patrick Feaster, "Framing the Mechanical Voice: Generic Conventions of Early Sound Recording", *Folklore Forum* 32 (2001): 57-102; Robert Philip, *Performing music in the age of recording* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "Portamento and Musical Meaning", *Journal of Musicological Research* 25, no. 3-4 (2006): 233-261; Nicholas Cook, "Performance analysis and Chopin's mazurkas", *Musicae Scientiae* 11, no. 2 (2007): 183-207; Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "Sound and meaning in recordings of Schubert's "Die junge Nonne"", *Musicae Scientiae,* 11, no. 2 (2007): 209-236; Patrick Feaster, "The following record": making sense of phonographic performance, 1877-1908 (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2007); Rebecca Plack, The substance of style: how singing creates sound in Lieder recordings, 1902-1939 (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2008); Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music* (London: CHARM, 2009)*;* Nicholas Cook, "The Ghost in the Machine: Towards a Musicology of Recordings", *Musicae Scientiae*, 14, no. 2 (2010): 3-21; Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the Score: Music as Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Massimo Zicari, "'Ah! non credea mirarti' nelle fonti discografiche di primo Novecento: Adelina Patti e Luisa Tetrazzini", *Schweizer Jahrbuch für Musikwissenschaft*, 34/35 (2014/2015): 193-222; and Massimo Zicari, "Expressive Tempo Modifications in Adelina Patti's Recordings: An Integrated Approach"*, Empirical Musicology Review*, 12:1-2 (2017): 42-56.

portamento, vibrato and tempo changes for expressive aims, it cannot be automatically assumed that these devices were used in the same way in both, as I will discuss in this article. *Género chico* also differed significantly from classical music in terms of how it engaged its audiences, and it always remained eminently local and place-specific, in contrast to classical music's aspirations of universality. These differences had some impact, respectively, in how *género chico* was recorded and how recordings were marketed. Another key difference is that the above-mentioned studies normally focus on recordings made and marketed internationally by multinational companies, while recordings of *género chico* were, at this stage, highly localized.

In this article, I first examine two key contexts that allow us to ascertain what existing early recordings can tell us about vocal performance practices of *género chico* around 1900: firstly, *género chico* culture on stage; secondly, the indigenous recording industry led by the *gabinetes*. In the final section, I analyse the surviving recordings of *Gigantes y cabezudos* under the light of these contexts and discuss how conclusions drawn from these might guide future research into *género chico*.

Género chico: **acting with the voice**

The heyday of *género chico* extended from 1880 to the early 1900s, and most of the authors of the first histories of the genre (published between the 1920s and 1950s[3]) could still boast

[3] These include: Marciano Zurita, *Historia del género chico* (Madrid: Prensa Popular, 1920); Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, *Historia de la zarzuela o sea el drama lírico en España, desde su origen a fines del siglo XIX* (Madrid: Archivos, 1934); José Subirá, *Historia de la música teatral en España* (Barcelona: Labor, 1945); Matilde Muñoz, *Historia de la zarzuela y el género chico* (Madrid: Tesoro, 1946); and José Deleito y Piñuela, *Origen y apogeo del "género chico"* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1949). A further study exists focusing exclusively on the Teatro Apolo, commonly known as 'the cathedral of *género chico:* Víctor Ruiz Albéniz "Chispero", *Teatro Apolo: historial, anecdotario y estampas madrileñas de su tiempo (1873-1929)* (Madrid: Prensa Castellana, 1953). An earlier work which touches upon the origins of *género chico* is Antonio Peña y Goñi, *La ópera española y la música dramática en España en el siglo XIX: apuntes históricos* (Madrid, Imprenta de El Liberal, 1881).

first-hand experience of it. They were therefore acutely aware that the history of *género chico* could not be told as a "composers-and-works" narrative, and they all paid attention to performance, often structuring their narrative around the premieres of significant works of the genre and discussing audience responses. They all also granted attention to performers - from naming them alongside some of the main titles they premiered, to offering more detailed commentary that allows us to understand, to an extent, what audiences regarded as desirable in a performance.

Indeed, if we could draw one conclusion from these histories about audience expectations, this is that good singing was not all what was expected from performers. There are numerous examples of successful performers whose vocal abilities were limited or non-existent, and it was even claimed that the foundational *género chico* play, Federico Chueca's *La canción de la Lola* (1888), was written in such a way that their two female protagonists did not have to sing at all.[4] Other performers did sing; some had mediocre or downright unpleasant voices,[5] and a few did have solid, trained singing voices which allowed them to occasionally venture into the more demanding *zarzuela grande* roles. Indeed, whereas *zarzuela grande* performers needed to have a trained voice and the ability to sing and recite Spanish-language text clearly and expressively,[6] *género chico* could accommodate more flexibly a range of skills or "performing languages" (singing, dancing, reciting and moving on stage), with different performers excelling at different languages.[7] Casares divides *género chico* performers into "acting singers" and "singing actors,"[8] although evidence suggests that, in practice, these

[4] Muñoz, *Historia de la zarzuela,* 245. See also, on Manolo Rodríguez, Cotarelo y Mori, *Historia de la zarzuela,* 860.
[5] On Julio Ruiz: Deleito y Piñuela, *Origen y apogeo del "género chico",* 68.
[6] Emilio Casares, "Voz", in *Diccionario de la zarzuela. España e Hispanoamérica*, ed. Emilio Casares (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 2008), vol. 2: 941-944. Casares uses singing teacher and treatise author Antonio Cordero (1823-1882) as his main source.
[7] Margot Versteeg, *De fusiladores y morcilleros. El discurso cómico del género chico (1870-1910)* (Amsterdam y Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000): 24.
[8] Emilio Casares, *Historia gráfica de la zarzuela. Del canto y los cantantes* (Madrid: ICCMU/Fundación de la zarzuela española, 2000): 147.

would have worked as two extremes of a spectrum rather than as absolute categories. Moreover, when we read a critic or a historian describing a particular performer as a good singer, we should be aware that this could mean different things: it could mean that he or she was indeed capable of tackling some of the most demanding (from a purely vocal point of view) roles,[9] but it could also mean that he or she, while not having a well-trained or beautiful voice, possessed strong musicianship skills and the ability to deliver the text clearly and expressively.[10]

The broader social and cultural context of *género chico* also offers insights into singing practices. By 1900 the genre had turned into a mass-production industry. Individual plays relied on audiences being familiar with certain types, plots and tropes, and intertextual references between *género chico* plays abounded under the form of sequels, prequels, contrafacta and parodies. Beyond the theatre, *género chico* was alive in the streets, with organ grinders and street singers performing numbers from recent successful plays.[11] Thus, for a Spaniard living in 1900, the experience of listening to a romanza or chorus on stage would be very different from listening to the same number in a recording, dissociated from its context. Our own experience of listening to the same recording is very different too, now that the lively *género chico* theatrical culture has long faded from living memory.

Useful here are some of the concepts that previous research has developed to bridge the perceptual gap between acoustic reality and recorded sound. Gauß writes that the earliest recordings "replaced the captured acoustic reality with something new, with its own specific qualities."[12] Audiences then needed to develop, in Ashby's words, "phonographic literacy" in

[9] Ramón Regidor Arribas, *La voz en la zarzuela* (Madrid: Real Musical, 1991): 12.
[10] Arribas, *La voz en la zarzuela,* 23.
[11] Deleito y Piñuela, *Origen y apogeo del "género chico",* 14.
[12] Stefan Gauß, "Listening to the Horn: on the Cultural History of the Phonograph and the Gramophone", in *Sounds of Modern History: Auditory Cultures in 19th- and 20th-Century Europe*, ed. Daniel Morat (Oxford, New York: Berghahn 2014): 71-100 (p. 81).

order to recognize recorded sound as a representation of acoustic reality,[13] and recorded sound itself started to be assessed in terms of its "performative fidelity", that is, the extent to which a recording "[was] accepted as doing whatever the original would have done in the same context."[14] Both Ashby and Feaster draw attention to the socially constructed, context-dependent mechanisms by which audiences came to accept recorded sound as truthful, and this is the case with *género chico* too. When analysing these recordings, we should thus bear in mind that their target audiences would have been immersed in this lively theatre-going culture. We should then consider whether these recordings literally captured stage practices that might not have always worked optimally in recorded form; or, on the contrary, whether recordists and singers consciously modified performance practices to compensate for the loss of certain aspects of a live performance to achieve performative, rather than acoustic, fidelity.

The *gabinetes fonográficos,* Gramophone and non-commercial recordings

The study of the early history of commercial recording in Spain provides further context for analysing early recordings. Between the introduction of the Spring Motor, Home and Standard Edison phonographs in 1896-1898 and the consolidation of multinational companies in Spanish territory in 1903-1905, the market was dominated by the so-called *gabinetes fonográficos*. *Gabinete*, apart from being the literal translation of cabinet, was also used to designate a room in a men's middle- and upper-class social clubs (*casinos*) where members could socialize and read newspapers and magazines – and so the name *gabinete fonográfico* would have carried an aura of exclusivity and privacy. Primary sources (advertisements, catalogues, surviving cylinders, press reviews) suggest that about forty *gabinetes* were active,

[13] Arved Ashby, *Absolute music, mechanical reproduction* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2010) (p. 30).
[14] Patrick Feaster, "'Rise and Obey the Command': Performative Fidelity and the Exercise of Phonographic power", *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 24:3 (2012), 357-395, at 358 and 359.

with more than thirty of these in Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia. Most *gabinetes,* though, were not operative for the full period 1896-1905, but rather for one or two years only: evidence suggests that it was a promising business with relatively low barriers of entry, but also an unstable one with no guarantees of success. Many *gabinetes* indeed operated part-time as departments of existing establishments in scientific or technical fields.

The *gabinetes* sold phonographs and wax cylinders – the former were always imported from the US or France, whereas the latter were commonly produced by the *gabinetes* themselves employing local singers or singers on tour. Most *gabinetes* only sold their own cylinders, but a few establishments in the provinces sold cylinders made by *gabinetes* in Madrid. Of these recordings, more than a thousand have survived, with about half of those being held at Eresbil – Archivo de la Música Vasca, more than three hundred at the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid, and the rest in other public or private collections. About two-thirds of those are of instrumental music and 259 are opera recordings, with the total number of *género chico* recordings amounting to 175 (*zarzuela grande*, on the other hand, counts 68). A further important corpus of wax cylinder recordings comes from the Ruperto Regordosa collection (now preserved at the Biblioteca de Catalunya). Regordosa, a textile industrialist and amateur recordist, recorded for his own private use well-known singers and instrumentalists in his home in Barcelona starting in 1898; his collection totals almost 400 cylinders, including 29 recordings of *género chico.* Finally, engineers from the Compagnie Française du Gramophon visited Spain for the first time in 1899 to record local artists (some of whom recorded for the *gabinetes* too) and then came back regularly until the company opened a branch in Barcelona in 1903. Most recordings were of indigenous genres (*zarzuela,* flamenco, some band music),

which allowed Gramophone to cater to the local market while offering a few 'exotic' selections to its customers elsewhere.[15]

Three aspects of the recording industry in *fin-de-siècle* Spain that are particularly relevant to my discussion of performance practices. Firstly, we must consider the technological capabilities and limitations of the available sound technologies. Since other authors have provided illustrative summaries (most notably Leech-Wilkinson 2009, chapter 2 paras. 21-28 and Peres da Costa 2012, 4-40), I will not provide an extended discussion here, but instead will refer to some of these particularities as necessary when discussing specific recordings in the last section of this article. There is one such technical aspect, however, that merits some attention, as it was rather particular to the *gabinetes* industry. *Gabinetes*, like their counterparts elsewhere, recorded on brown wax cylinders, which could not be easily duplicated. Worldwide, this represented one of the main obstacles to the growth of the developing recording industry, and individuals and companies took it to heart to overcome it. Solutions included having performers record for two or more phonographs at the same time, or making copies through the means of pantographic dubbing from a "master" recorded cylinder. But these strategies were not completely satisfactory: the size of recording studios at the time meant that no more than four or five phonographs could be used at the same time, while pantographic dubbing still only resulted in 25 to 100 copies before the master cylinder became too worn out, with the resulting cylinders being on inferior quality.[16]

Spanish *gabinetes* dealt with cylinder duplication in peculiar ways. Evidence suggests that some of them did use pantographic duplication (Viuda de Aramburo, Hugens y Acosta).[17]

[15] Details from recording sessions, as well as the musicians recorded in each session, can be gathered from Alan Kelly, *The Gramophone Company Limited, The Spanish Catalogue: including Portuguese recordings* (no location: self-published, 2006).
[16] David L. Morton Jr., *Sound Recording: The Life Story of a Technology* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2004), 27.
[17] Marquis of Alta-Villa, "Fonografía. Cuestión palpitante", *El cardo*, April 8, 1901: 14-5; *La Época*, February 15, February 1900: 2; Álvaro Ureña, "Comunicado", *La correspondencia militar,* February 16, 1900: 2.

However, some of the strongest voices in the recording scene – including *gabinete* owner Álvaro Ureña and the Marquis of Alta-Villa, editor of the specialized journal *Boletín fonográfico (El cardo)* – repeatedly and vocally opposed duplication. They cited concerns with quality,[18] but also argued that the main strength of the *gabinetes* lied in their commitment to producing cylinders in a quasi-artisanal way for a select group of customers, rather than for the masses.[19] Most of the surviving Spanish cylinders were thus unique, or quasi-unique – likely one of a multiplicity of performances of the same piece recorded that day in the studio. It follows from this that the surviving cylinders constitute a minuscule fraction of the *gabinetes'* output, and hence generalizations must be always made with caution.[20] The above does not apply to Gramophone discs, which could be duplicated easily; this was, indeed, ultimately one of the reasons why Gramophone imposed itself over the *gabinetes*.

A second relevant point concerns the connections between the recording industry and the *género chico* scene. The *género chico* community does not seem to have taken much notice of the *gabinetes:* none of the above-mentioned histories of the genre mentions the phonograph or gramophone at all and hardly engage with discography in any format, and neither did the numerous publications that reviewed *género chico* performances and published gossip about impresarios, composers and singers around 1900, such as *Juan Rana* and *El arte del teatro.* Nevertheless, recordings would have been appealing to at least some

[18] Marquis of Alta-Villa, "Fonografía. Cuestión palpitante", *El cardo*, April 8, 1901: 14-5.
[19] Cilindrique, "Para todos, sabios e ignorantes", *El cardo*, 15 December 1900: 14.
[20] No accounts or books from the *gabinetes* have survived, so quantitative data about their output are extremely scarce and unreliable. Hugens y Acosta claimed in January 1901 that they had sold 30,000 cylinders in the previous two years (anonymous, "Industria fonográfica", *El Cardo,* January 22, 1901: 15). If we accept this claim as truthful and assume that Hugens y Acosta's output remained stable during its eight years of operation (which is, of course not without its problems), this would yield a result of 120,000 overall for Hugens y Acosta only, of which 163 have survived – a ratio of 1 surviving cylinder per 736 produced. Tenor Jesús Valiente claimed to have recorded 7,000 cylinders for Valencia *gabinete* Puerto y Novella (anonymous, "Jesús Valiente", *Boletín fonográfico* 12 (1900): 189). Valiente only ever recorded for Puerto y Novella, which was active for only one further year after that; if we assume that Valiente recorded as much in his second year as he did in his first, he would have recorded a total of 14,000 cylinders, of which 18 have survived – so 1 surviving cylinder per 778, a rate not dissimilar to Hugens y Acosta's.

of the most affluent theatre-goers, and there are indications that the *gabinetes* tried to capitalize on that: most of the Madrid *gabinetes*, for example, were located literally next door or within less than two hundred yards from one or more *género chico* theatres.[21] The selection of titles that they recorded also suggests that *gabinetes* wished to follow the latest developments in the industry and quickly respond to changing fancies: indeed, about half of the surviving recordings of *género chico* are of numbers from strictly contemporary works, premiered between 1896 and 1905, even though the lack of dates in the cylinders do not allow us to establish how soon after a premiere the recordings would have been made.

The third point concerns how *gabinetes* and Gramophone selected singers for *género chico* recordings. These tended to be lesser-known singers rather than well-known ones, which is consonant with practices elsewhere. Celebrity recordings did not become widespread until 1903-04, with Victor's famed operatic series; before that, it was often the case that the phonograph allowed some relatively unknown artists to build a career around recording.[22] Although no first-hand testimonies from Spanish singers of the time have survived where they explain their reasons to record commercially, we can presume that, around 1900s, many singers would see the new industry as unstable and unpredictable. Similarly, the conditions in which recordings were made in Spain around 1900 would not be particularly appealing to those who had prestige and a good income from their stage engagements. Recording sessions could be long, and singers needed to contort themselves so that their voice could be captured at its best by the phonograph. Among *género chico*'s best known *primeras tiples*, about half of them recorded, whereas the other half did not, and, even for those who did record (Lucrecia Arana, Matilde Pretel, Leocadia Alba and Concha Segura), surviving cylinders are

[21] No fewer than three *gabinetes* stood in the Calle del Príncipe a few yards from the Teatro de la Comedia, with a further two within a hundred yards. There was one *gabinete* within the same block as the Teatro de la Zarzuela, and a further one within a hundred yards. Hugens y Acosta was located by the exit door of the well-attended Teatro Apolo. With the centre of Madrid being rather compact at that time, only the Teatro Novedades did not have a *gabinete* within a hundred yards of their premises.
[22] Roland Gelatt, *Edison's fabulous phonograph 1877-1977* (London: MacMillan, 1977), 54.

very scarce or non-existent, which suggests that they did not record as extensively as some of their lesser-known counterparts.

In the previous and present sections I have discussed those aspects of *género chico* theatrical culture, on the one hand, and the early Spanish recording history, on the other, that we must grapple with the very first recordings made of the genre. Before I move on to analyse some of the recordings, I would like to summarize some of the main questions that the above might invite. The first of these concerns the experimental nature of recording technologies at the time. This was certainly the case worldwide, but perhaps more so for the *gabinetes,* who worked independently of Edison and often in a rather precarious yet fast-paced milieu in which many *gabinete* owners developed their own technological innovations or published their findings regarding the recording process in the specialized press.[23] At the same time, with certain singers' names appearing frequently in catalogues and recordings, it is likely that these performers would have developed specific studio skills, such as being able to control their nerves in a recording session, or learning how to adjust their position so as to maximize the quality of the acoustic signal.[24] *Gabinete* cylinders were not dated, which makes it impossible to establish with any certainty how recording processes and the quality of recordings might have evolved in the period 1896-1906; nevertheless, our analysis of individual recordings should be informed by an awareness of the experimental nature of the business.

[23] These include *Boletín fonográfico (El Cardo)*, published in Madrid, and *Boletín fonográfico,* published in Valencia. Despite sharing a name, the publications operated independently of each other. They were both published for a period of less than two years between 1900 and 1901, with the former being published weekly and the latter, bi-weekly.

[24] Mark Katz, *Capturing sound: how technology has changed music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 45; and Simon Trezise, 'The recorded document: interpretation and discography', *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, eds. Nicholas Cook, Erik Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson and John Rink (Cambridge, 2009),186-209.

Secondly, we must bear in mind that experimentation was not exclusively technological, but it extended into the realm of the aesthetic and ontological. Indeed, *gabinetes* and their customers needed to grapple with the question of to reflect live performance of *género chico* in their recordings. The fact that most recordings were unique or quasi-unique, and that the *gabinetes* took steps in marketing them to *género chico* aficionados also opens up questions regarding what these recordings were supposed to do: it is likely that, at least in some contexts, they might have been intended as mementos of a particular performance or of the theatre-going experience more generally. Therefore, in analysing individual recordings, we must thus ask ourselves whether recordists might have been trying to capture some of the contextual cues naively (with singers simply doing what they would have done on the stage) or whether at some point they consciously tried to simulate them through other means or compensate for their absence.

Thirdly, written sources suggest that a number of different approaches to singing co-existed within *género chico*. Whereas expressive text delivery was key in all cases, we must be open to the possibility that different singers followed different strategies in this respect: some might have used portamento with expressive aims, whereas others might have opted for a *quasi parlato* form of delivery, with little vibrato, that allowed them to be fully intelligible. The same performer might have also taken different decisions on different occasions – depending on the piece they were performing, the circumstances of the performance, or whether they were performing live or in the recording studio. Comparing and contrasting the singing practices and styles we hear in a particular recording with written sources concerning its performer should thus help in ascertaining the extent to which the recording might be representative, as well as reaching broader conclusions about how *género chico* critics and audiences conceptualized specific performances within the landscape of possibilities open to performers of the genre.

Analysis of *Gigantes y cabezudos* recordings

Being the most successful *género chico* work premiered during the *gabinetes'* era, *Gigantes y cabezudos* provides a significant case study for the analysis of how *género chico* recordings might have situated themselves in the context in which the genre existed and evolved. Another reason which makes it attractive is that it is also the *género chico* work with the most surviving wax cylinder recordings (17), as well as two Gramophone discs predating 1905 (see table 1). The fact that instrumental versions of some of the numbers have made it to our days is testimony to the work's enormous success in its day.

Table 1. Surviving recordings of *Gigantes y cabezudos* on wax cylinder support and in early discs, 1898-1905

Number	**Performer(s)**	**Label**	**Date**[25]	**Collection**[26] **Signature**	**Digitized?**
No. 2, romanza: 'Esta es su carta'	Adela Taberner	Manuel Moreno Cases (Barcelona)	1900	BNE CL/51	Yes
No. 2, romanza: 'Esta es su carta'	Marina Gurina	Regordosa (non-commercial)	1898-?[27]	BC CIL/215	Yes
No. 3, jota: 'Si las mujeres mandasen'	Señorita Martínez	V. Corrons (Barcelona)	1898-1899	BNE CL/266	Yes
No. 3, jota: 'Si las mujeres mandasen'	Lucrecia Arana	Hugens y Acosta (Madrid)	1898-1905	Eresbil FA60/048	Yes
No. 4, chorus: 'Por fin te miro, Ebro famoso'	Singers from Teatro Apolo	La fonográfica madrileña (Madrid)	1902-1905	BNE CL/38	Yes

[25] The only recordings for which dates can be conclusively established (following Kelly, *The Gramophone Company Limited*) are the Gramophone ones. The *gabinetes* did not include dates either in the cylinders themselves or in catalogues, and so dates for *gabinete* recordings are tentatively suggested by using either 1898 or the date when the *gabinete* started trading (whichever is the latest) as the *post quem*, and the year where the *gabinete* was last active as the *ante quem* date.

[26] Recordings held at the BNE can be listened to free of charge at http://bibliotecadigitalhispanica.bne.es, by entering the signature number. Those held at Eresbil Archivo de la Música Vasca that have been digitized are only accessible at the archive's premises. The one held at the Biblioteca de Catalunya is accessible here: http://mdc.csuc.cat/cdm/singleitem/collection/sonorbc/id/75/rec/3.

[27] The Biblioteca de Catalunya gives 1898-1918 as the date for all Regordosa cylinders – 1898 being the launch date of the phonograph he employed and 1918 being the date of his death. However, a study of the dates in which the singers he recorded were visiting or otherwise active in Barcelona suggests that the bulk of the recordings was made in 1898-1908. It is not known when Gurina recorded for Regordosa and how many times, but she did record the concert song *La riojanica,* composed in 1906, so her recording of 'Esta es su carta' might date from as late as that or even afterwards, which would make it the latest of this corpus.

No. 4, chorus: ‘Por fin te miro, Ebro famoso’	Choir from Teatro de la Zarzuela	Hugens y Acosta (Madrid)	1898-1905	BNE CIL/359	Yes
No. 4, chorus: ‘Por fin te miro, Ebro famoso’	Unknown choir, soloist Rafael López	Gramophone	1902	BNE DS/11155/6	Yes
No. 4, chorus: ‘Por fin te miro, Ebro famoso’	unknown	unknown	unknown	Eresbil uncatalogued	No
No. 4, chorus: ‘Por fin te miro, Ebro famoso’ (instrumental version)	Banda del Regimiento de Vizcaya	unknown	unknown	Eresbil uncatalogued	No
No. 5, chorus and jota: ‘Los de Calatorao’	Choir from Teatro de la Zarzuela	Viuda de Aramburo (Madrid)	1898-1900	BNE CIL/391	Yes
No. 5, chorus and jota: ‘Los de Calatorao’	unknown	unknown	unknown	Eresbil uncatalogued	No
No. 5c, jota: ‘Luchando tercos y rudos’	Ascensión Miralles	Álvaro Ureña (Madrid)	1899-1903	BNE CIL/13	Yes
No. 5c, jota: ‘Luchando tercos y rudos’	Blanca del Carmen	Viuda de Aramburo (Madrid)	1898-1900	BNE CIL/313	Yes
No. 5c, jota: ‘Luchando tercos y rudos’	Blanca del Carmen	Gramophone	1902	BNE DS/14055/10	Yes
No. 5c, jota: ‘Luchando tercos y rudos’	Señor Navarro	Viuda de Aramburo (Madrid)	1898-1900	Eresbil FA60/184	Yes
No. 5c, jota: ‘Luchando tercos y rudos’ (instrumental version)	Banda del Regimiento de Vizcaya	unknown	unknown	Eresbil uncatalogued	No
No. 6, ‘Salve’	unknown (choir and two female soloists)	V. Corrons (Barcelona)	1898-1899	BNE	Yes

				CIL/257	
Unknown chorus	Unknown	unknown	unknown	Eresbil uncatalogued	No
Unknown instrumental excerpt	Banda del Regimiento de Garellano	unknown	unknown	Eresbil uncatalogued	No

The reasons for the play's success upon its premiere in November 1898 have to be sought in its commentary on the Spanish-American War in Cuba. The war was fought at a considerable cost for Spain's less privileged classes, and it is these classes (the *pueblo*) that *Gigantes y cabezudos* celebrates, praising their courage, patriotism and resilience at the front and the home front – exemplified here by the heroine, Pilar, a young woman from Saragossa who longs to be reunited with her boyfriend Jesús, a soldier in Cuba. [28]

My analysis of the recordings focuses principally on those numbers of which there is more than one good-quality vocal recording: that is, numbers 2, 4 and 5c.[29] In doing so, I will touch upon parameters that are by now well-established in the study of early recordings as documents of performance practice, particularly in vocal music. The weight I give to each of these in my discussion, though, is dependent on the particularities of *género chico,* a genre akin to opera in some respects but rather different in others. I draw on existing studies in other genres when considering portamento,[30] which was as consistently used in *género chico* as it was in opera and instrumental music, and existing research on the expressive use of large- and small-scale tempo modifications in both vocal and instrumental music[31] is equally relevant here.

Nevertheless, there are other respects in which *género chico* required a different focus. Vibrato is one of such categories. A great deal of research on singing practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (as well as bowed strings) has indeed focused on

[28] Enrique Encabo, *Música y nacionalismos en España: el arte en la era de la ideología* (Barcelona: Erasmus, 2007): 18-25; Young, *Music Theatre and Popular Nationalism in Spain,* 8-10;and Membrez, *The* teatro por horas, 69 and 115-8.
[29] This sadly excludes the recording of 'Si las mujeres mandasen' by Lucrecia Arana, the creator of the role of Pilar, whose. I will therefore be analysing on numbers
[30] Sarah Potter, "Changing vocal style and technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2014), 103-113; Leech-Wilkinson, *The changing sound of music,* chapter 4, paras 10-15; chapter 7, para 5-6; and Plack, "The substance of style", 15-19, 44, 70.
[31] Zicari, "'Ah! Non credea mirarti"; and Zicari, 'Expressive tempo modifications'; Peres da Costa, *Off the record,* 195-249.

vibrato,[32] and, while *género chico* early recordings could indeed be analysed on the basis of whether vibrato is present or not and what types of vibrato can be heard, this seemed, on the basis of the existing recordings and other evidence presented above, a somewhat narrow perspective. Instead, I propose to regard the presence or absence of vibrato in connection to the broader issue of text intelligibility and expressiveness. While vibrato could certainly be used for expressive aims, consistent use could have also compromised intelligibility, which was a key concern in *género chico.* Not all *género chico* singers were skilled enough to produce a consistent, reliable vibrato, but those who were must have been faced with the decision whether to suppress vibrato in favour of intelligibility, or whether to compensate with other expressive devices to make up for the fact that words would have been less intelligible. In practice, it is likely that singers made the decision depending on the context.

The analysis of these recordings is not intended to settle matters concerning these parameters in the performance of *género chico* around 1900: instead, it is intended as a starting point, providing a considered case study of how specific early recordings of the genre can be listened to, analysed and contextualized.

"Esta es su carta"

"Esta es su carta" (Here's his letter) is the first solo number of the *zarzuela*. Compared to Pilar's other solo numbers, based on *jota* rhythmic patterns, this one is the most demanding vocally, requiring good legato abilities, a solid low and middle register and a range stretching up to G_5. These were indeed, according to sources from the time, Lucrecia Arana's

[32] Potter, "Changing vocal style and technique", 67-89; Plack, "The substance of style", 12 and 19; and Phillip, *Early recordings and musical style,* 99.

strengths.[33] What little can still be heard in Arana's Hugens y Acosta recording of 'Si las mujeres mandasen', as well as in later Arana recordings which are not in the scope of this article, indeed suggests that Deleito y Piñuela's judgment was accurate.

The two other remaining recordings (Marina Gurina's for Regordosa and Adela Taberner's for Manuel Moreno Cases) are, fortunately, more suitable for analysis. Something we might find surprising when first listening to these recordings is how different Gurina's and Taberner's voices sound – and how different they sound too to Arana's voice as heard in later recordings. It is not simply a matter of *Fach* or technique, but rather of very different approaches to *género chico* performance and to how the different skills required of a performer should be balanced together. Gurina's recording, as digitized by the Biblioteca de Catalunya, sounds a minor third lower than written. We should not necessarily assume that this is indeed the pitch Gurina recorded at: indeed, one of the challenges of digitizing cylinders is that there is no straightforward way of determining the speed a recording should be played at, and playing a cylinder at too slow a speed results in the digitization being lower in pitch than the original.[34] Nevertheless, there are indications that the digitization speed for this cylinder must be generally accurate: an abnormally slow rate would have also altered Regordosa's voice in the spoken announcement he makes at the beginning of the recording, yet his voice here does not differ substantially from other spoken announcements in his collection. Similarly, the tempo the recording sounds at (crotchet = 130) is not abnormally slow, but rather on the fast side. Moreover, the practice of transposing solos to suit the soloist's range, which was commonplace in opera, happened in *zarzuela* too, and in this case what the recording suggests was that Gurina carefully chose the key she would sing in so as

[33] Reviewing Arana in a similar role (Carlos in *La* viejecita), José Deleito y Piñuela wrote that "in the low notes she reached exhilarating intensity, vigour and purity of metal" ("en las notas graves alcanzaba intensidad, vigor y pureza de metal, arrebatadores"). Deleito y Piñuela, *Origen y apogeo del "género chico",* 404 -5.
[34] Leech-Wilkinson, *The changing sound of music*, chapter 2 para 22-23; Adrian Poole, "Determining Playback Speeds of Early Ethnographic Wax Cylinder Recordings: Technical and Methodological Issues", Ethnomusicology Forum, 24 (2015), 73-101, at 74-5.

to play to their strengths of her voice. Her lower register, indeed, sounds at its most expressive, with Gurina veering into *quasi parlato* in short passages of particular expressive intensity.

Example 1. Bars 98-103 of 'Esta es su carta' as heard in Gurina's recording (a minor third lower than written). (Translation of the text): 'He walks through tropical forests and poodles with no bread or shoes'.

It is clear from the recording, however, that Gurina was not a 'singing actress' but rather a *bona fide* singer with an acceptably solid middle and higher register. Her recording for Regordosa matches what we can read in reviews about Gurina: she was not necessarily an established *primera tiple,* but was much in demand from companies touring the provinces, and had a reputation for having a powerful, flexible voice that allowed her to tackle *zarzuela grande* roles besides *género chico*.[35]

While there is no evidence that Gurina ever sang the role of Pilar on stage, Adela Taberner did in a tour of the provinces in 1900, with one critic describing her as 'a very acceptable Pilar'. [36] While the success of *Gigantes y cabezudos* in late 1898 in Madrid encouraged numerous companies elsewhere in Spain to put on their own productions, not all companies, would have casted a singer of vocal qualities comparable to Arana's, as demonstrated by reviews of Taberner and from her surviving recording. Indeed, reviewers did not normally single out Taberner's voice; instead, what was highlighted - in a rather vague, unspecific way – was her expressiveness or artistry,[37] which suggests that her singing was indeed not very good. The closest to an appraisal of her singing is a note in *La correspondencia de España*

[35] Anonymous, "Teatro de Parish", *La época,* October 15, 1898: 2; anonymous, "Teatro Circo de Parish", *El liberal*, October 15, 1898: 3; anonymous, "El Parish", *La izquierda dinástica*, October 15, 1898: 1; anonymous, "Parish", *El Globo,* November 9, 1900: 2; and anonymous, "Teatro Eslava", *El Guadalete,* July 4, 1902: 4.
[36] Anonymous, "Noticias teatrales", *La Rioja,* January 14, 1900: 2.
[37] Anonymous, "Crónica teatral", *Diario de Reus,* May 7, 1902: 2; anonymous, "Espectáculos", *La tarde,* May 12, 1903: 2; and Garcilaso, "Notas teatrales", *El eco de Navarra*, January 7, 1905: 2.

which points in that direction too, with the reviewer claiming that 'neither her singing nor her reciting skills will ever make her a *primera tiple.*'[38]

When listening to Taberner's recording, it is indeed tempting to agree with her critics. We must bear in mind that this is the only recording of hers which has survived, thus making impossible to ascertain the extent to which what we hear was influenced by environmental factors (poor recording practices, nervousness, the fragility of the cylinder itself). We do know that the technological limitations of the time were not particularly friendly to bright, high voice like Taberner's, and caused them to sound shrill.[39] The problem here, however, is not so much shrillness, but rather a lack of vibrato and an inconsistent, breathy tone: Taberner's diction was indeed clear, and she showed some good musicianship in her use of portamento, but it is easy to understand from this recording how her performance of this romanza would have paled from a merely vocal point of view, next to Arana's or even Gurina's. It is equally easy, though, to appreciate how Taberner's musicianship and diction might have made her a strong Pilar in other respects and, particularly, in less vocally demanding musical numbers.

Other singers recorded the role of Pilar around the turn of the century, but these cylinders have not survived. For example, the catalogue released in 1900 by Madrid *gabinete* Hugens y Acosta[40] includes recordings by three other *tiples:* Felisa Lázaro, Pilar Pérez and Carlota Sanford. Lázaro sang the role on stage, but there is no evidence that the other two did. From other recordings of these *tiples,* as well as reviews of their performances, we can conclude that their voices and performing styles were rather different: Pérez – whose stage career was

[38] Anonymous, "Cosas de teatros", *La correspondencia de España,* September 3, 1903: 1.
[39] Trezise, 'The recorded document', 193.
[40] Hugens y Acosta, *Catálogo de la Sociedad Fonográfica Española Hugens y Acosta* (Madrid, 1899). The only other surviving catalogue of the time, from Valencia *gabinete* Blas Cuesta, does not feature any solo recordings from *Gigantes y cabezudos.*

mostly in *zarzuela* but recorded Mimì for Álvaro Ureña[41] - had a trained lyric soprano voice; Sanford similarly possessed appreciable vocal abilities and a lighter voice, whereas Lázaro's strong points were, as is the case with Taberner, in her clear and expressive diction and delivery. The fact that singers with so different voices recorded the same romanza open up some important questions concerning voice casting in *género chico* and further suggest, together with written sources, that critics, audiences and impresarios might have had fluid ideas of what constituted a good performance of a given role or romanza. Two different performers might have brought in two very different sets of skills and both might have been regarded as valid, or good, performers. This does not mean that composers, audiences or singers themselves did not notice or appreciate differences between voice types, or between different combinations of skills,[42] or that ideas of what constituted a good performance were infinitely fluid. A more productive avenue for future research might be to attempt to establish the parameters within which *género chico* performers, audiences and critics operated and ascertain which combinations of skills might have been regarded as valid in specific contexts and for specific roles, and which ones were not regarded as less optimal.

But recording practices complicate this picture even further, since we cannot always assume that recordings were a faithful reflection of stage practices in this regard. While *gabinete* operators and their audiences would surely have a sense of what constituted a good stage performance of a given role, this does not mean that *gabinetes* would always be able to hire performers who could secure it.[43] A large *gabinete,* such as Hugens y Acosta, could afford to

[41] The recording is at the Biblioteca Nacional de España with the reference number CL/309.
[42] Indeed, the words *ligera, lírica, dramática* (light, lyric, dramatic), were often added to the basic *tiple*, although these were not necessarily consistent and it should not be concluded that *zarzuela* had a Fach system comparable to opera's. Arribas, *La voz en la zarzuela,* 14-5. See also Casares, "Voz", 942.
[43] Throughout the history of recorded music, there are countless examples of recorded performance influencing stage performance, rather than merely the other way around, the best-known one being perhaps Maria Callas's recordings of roles she never sang on stage. With recording practices being still largely experimental and haphazard at the time and numbers of recordings produced being small, however, it is difficult to imagine a singer having the same influence solely through recordings in the context of the *gabinetes.*

hire a multiplicity of singers in all voice types, some more famous than others; the same aria or romanza would be offered in their catalogue by different singers. Others, like Puerto y Novella in Valencia, did not have access to the same types of prestigious singers and relied on a small and seemingly stable pool of singers who recorded very broadly within their voice type.[44] Regordosa, who was recording privately in his home and not for release, would not have been subjected to the same market pressures: more often than not, he recorded singers in arias they would have often performed on stage (perhaps as a memento of the live performance experience), but his collection also includes singers singing outside their normal repertoire, perhaps as a reflection of the intimate, friendly atmosphere at Regordosa's recording sessions, likely more akin to a private gathering between friends than to a serious concert platform.[45] In the case of Gurina, who had not sung the role on stage and thus could not hold the same memento value as others, we might entertain the possibility that Regordosa chose her because her voice type was similar to Arana's.

"Por fin te miro, Ebro famoso"

The three surviving recordings of the chorus "Por fin te miro, Ebro famoso" (I see you at last, famous Ebro, also known as "Coro de repatriados") hold particular interest because they are representative of some of the issues that pioneers of recording technologies faced when trying to record choruses and ensembles. These difficulties were, on the one hand, technical, as recording a group of voices or instruments was more challenging than capturing a solo voice

[44] For example, Josefina Huguet seems to have taken on all operatic soprano recordings, and so she recording within her own Fach of light-lyric coloratura, but also purely lyric repertoire such as *La Bohème*'s 'Sì, mi chiamano Mimí', and Inés Salvador, covering mezzo-soprano repertoire, recorded both lyric and dramatic roles, but also 'Quando m'en vo', again from *La Bohème.*

[45] Two conspicuous examples include Gurina herself singing *Cavalleria rusticana*'s 'Voi lo sapete' (Biblioteca de Catalunya, CIL-207) and Josefina Huguet singing Schubert's "Ständchen" (Biblioteca de Catalunya, CIL-346); Huguet specialized in coloratura roles and would have also occasionally sang Spanish and Catalan art song on stage, but not Lied.

with piano accompaniment.[46] Recordists tried to overcome this by recording smaller choirs, and the three recordings discussed here possibly did not feature more than six or seven singers each.[47] Beyond issues of purely acoustic representation, we can also imagine that *gabinetes* would have also struggled to embed in recorded choruses some of the performative elements that were an essential part of live performances of *género chico*. Choruses were generally meant to be a rousing, inspiring moment, and often signalled the moment in which the Spanish *pueblo* (represented here by rank-and-file soldiers returning from the war in Cuba) appeared on stage displaying and celebrating their values, and encouraging the audiences to identify with these too. Although few of the existing *género chico* histories devote much attention to choruses, we might infer from press sources that the standard of singing and musicianship could vary: some chorus singers (*coristas*) needed intensive coaching from the choir master to learn their music and did not necessarily have full musical or dramatic understanding of the rest of the play,[48] whereas others had more solid voices and sometimes progressed to solo roles. Examination of chorus scores suggests that, as was the case with solo numbers, clear and expressive delivery of the text was key, as well as a commitment to convey the appropriate mood.

Although text delivery is not particularly clear in the two surviving *gabinete* recordings of this chorus (by Hugens y Acosta and La fonográfica madrileña), both show an attempt at expressiveness, and possibly, too, at copying some of the stage practices that audiences would have found appealing. The Hugens y Acosta recordings starts with exclamatory and spoken interjections; as with the rest of the text, it is difficult to make out the words, but they are likely intended to convey the excitement and patriotic feeling that the scene would have

[46] Philip, *Performing music in the era of recording,* 28.
[47] The same applies to other choral recordings by *gabinetes*, e.g. recordings of Puerto y Novella from *Marina* (FA60/084) and *Cavalleria rusticana* (FA60/096), and by Hijos de Blas Cuesta of *La Africana* (FA60/095) (all signatures from Eresbil Archivo de la Música Vasca).
[48] F. [first name unknown] Bello Sanjuán, "El teatro por dentro", *El arte del teatro,* November 10, 1902: 13.

had on stage. The obviously passionate introduction might have been intended to compensate for the flaws in the recording: apart from the text was not clearly understandable, the two-voice texture (shown in the example below) sounds blurry and undefined.

Example 2. Bars 28-35 of 'Por fin te miro, Ebro famoso'.

These sorts of off-the-score interjections, however, are not the norm in *gabinete* recordings, which opens up two possibilities. The first possibility is that such interjections were indeed not commonly used on stage, and that the Hugens y Acosta recordist decided to include them as a compensatory mechanism to capture at least some of the mood of the live performance. The other possibility is that such interjections were indeed used on stage, but were generally excluded from recordings as a generic convention – in the same way as spoken dialogue and other non-musical sounds were commonly excluded from *gabinetes* recordings, in such a uniform way that it suggests that this was a convention that imposed itself quickly.[49] With scarce attention being dedicated in reviews to chorus within the context of *género chico* performances, it is difficult to ascertain which of the two possibilities might be more plausible. Nevertheless, we can well imagine that the same range of skills available to soloists to deliver an expressive performance (singing, speech, movement, dance) could well have been available to choruses too, and so it would be implausible to assume that they would limit themselves to sing what was printed in the score with no expressive additions. We should thus not reject the possibility that similar interjections were indeed used in at least some live performances.

La fonográfica madrileña was able to capture the texture in a more nuanced way, and this is one example where close listening and comparison of recordings might help us advance some

[49] The only exception I have been able to find among surviving cylinders is Julia Mesa's recording of "La tarántula" (from *La tempranica*) for *gabinete* José Navarro (digitized by the Biblioteca de Catalunya together with other cylinders from the private collection of Mariano Gómez-Montejano in a non-commercial CD named *Cilindres de cera de la col·lecció Mariano Gómez Montejano*, CD 4175.

hypothesis concerning dating. With La fonográfica madrileña being active between 1901-1905, the recording would have been made towards the end rather than the beginning of the *gabinetes* era, so we might imagine here that their choral recording benefitted from the advances in technologies and also the improved know-how of recordists. The Hugens y Acosta recording of the same number is, as was the norm, undated, but the above suggests that it might date from an earlier time.[50] Despite the improved technological capabilities, though, we cannot automatically assume, though, that the Fonográfica madrileña recording is a more accurate reflection of performance practices on stage, since some aspects of it were likely still informed by technological limitations. Text, as in Hugens y Acosta, is still mostly unintelligible, and the tempo is rather brisk, not completely suitable for a chorus which is ultimately martial and intended to showcase the courage and patriotism of the defeated Spanish soldiers. With *gabinetes* recording at the time in two-minute cylinders,[51] we think that the chorus was recorded at a faster tempo than usual so that it could fit into the cylinder.[52] The dynamic range is similarly limited. This was, again, a well-known issue with wax cylinders, although not completely insurmountable, since some solo recordings produced by certain *gabinetes* do exhibit a modest yet appreciable dynamic range.[53] Choral recordings, though, were another matter: Regordosa himself produced a rather successful recording of a section of the Orfeó Catalá singing Clément Janequin's *Chant des oiseaux,*[54] but these improvements are not observed in *gabinetes'* recordings. There are a number of reasons why

[50] Further support to this hypothesis comes from Viuda de Aramburo's recording of another chorus from the work, "Los de Calatorao", which similarly renders the polyphonic texture blurred. Since Viuda de Aramburo operated from 1898 to 1900, this recording must by force date from the early years of the *gabinetes* era.
[51] Cylinders could, nevertheless, be extended by 40 or 50 seconds by slowing down the playing speed. Peter Schamberger, "Cylinder Records: An Overview", *ARSC Journal,* 26/2(1995), 135-161, at 135.
[52] Researchers, however, disagree on whether tempo acceleration was a widespread strategy to overcome the short duration of cylinders. Zicari ("Ah! Non credea mirarti", 194) argues that, if acceleration were the norm, then a trend towards more relaxed, slower performances as technology evolved would be observable, which is not. Leech-Wilkinson, while not making acceleration one of the fundamental assumptions of his study, occasionally concedes that it could have happened (*The changing sound of music,* chapter 3, para 74)
[53] For example, María Galvany's recordings of "Ah! Non credea mirarti" from *La sonnambula* and "Adieu beau ravage" from *L'Africaine,* both for Hugens y Acosta (FA60/005 and FA60/006 at Eresbil respectively).
[54] Biblioteca de Catalunya, CIL-105.

this might have been the case. Firstly, surviving choral recordings from the *gabinetes* are very scarce compared to solo ones: it might well be that such recordings existed but did not survive. But it could also be that the difficulties inherent in recording groups of voices discouraged *gabinete* operators, particularly since choral recordings were less popular (and presumably profitable) than solo ones. The Fonográfica madrileña does not use interjections to overcome these limitations, but it uses another expressive device with allegedly similar ends: a fermata on a high note at minute 2:00. Although the fermata comes across as a bit of a surprise in the middle of the performance's brisk tempo, it is executed rather gracefully and in a coordinated way.

The 1902 Gramophone recording, by contrast, had fewer technological limitations to overcome: the accompaniment here is played by a brass ensemble instead of a piano, and the textures and dynamics being captured considerably more accurately. There are no spoken interjections, nor a surprising fermata. It is easy to notice by comparison the difficulties that *gabinetes* would have faced in recording choruses, and to understand how the spoken interjections and the fermata might have worked as compensatory strategies to achieve performative fidelity. The fact that Hugens y Acosta and La fonográfica madrileña chose different strategies also suggest that the *gabinetes*' quest for performative fidelity must have been experimental to a considerable degree – and, as such, not always entirely successful.

"Luchando tercos y rudos"

"'Luchando tercos y rudos" ("Stubborn and rustic we fight") is the last *jota* to appear in *Gigantes y cabezudos*; it is sung by Pilar, who is joined by the chorus in the last *accelerando* section. Following on from my discussion about "Por fin te miro, Ebro famoso", what interests me about this number is how singers and *gabinete* operators dealt with the problem

of expressiveness in recordings. Whereas some of the challenges in recording soloists would be similar to those recording choirs (limited dynamics, reduced length of cylinders), soloists had a broader palette of tools at their disposal to make their performance expressive, including the use of large- and small-scale tempo changes, as well as portamento. This is obvious not only from recordings of "Luchando tercos y rudos", but from the array of early *género chico* cylinders currently available and digitized.

Relevant for the study of large-scale tempo changes is the fact that all four surviving recordings modified the original structure of the number, as follows:

Table I. Structure of "Luchando tercos y rudos" as written versus as recorded

Original score	Recordings
Instrumental introduction (88 bars) Section A ("Poco menos" – a bit less fast) – sung by Pilar alone Section B ("Un poco más" – a bit faster) – sung by Pilar alone Section C ("Un poco más sentado" – a bit more settled) – Pilar alone, then response from chorus Coda – Pilar and chorus	Shortened instrumental introduction[55] Section A – sung by Pilar alone Section B – sung by Pilar alone Section C – sung by Pilar; no response from chorus Section A – sung by Pilar alone to a second set of lyrics[56] Section B – sung by Pilar alone Section C – sung by Pilar with no response from chorus

[55] Different recordings shortened the introduction differently, ranging from 16 to 32 bars.
[56] Although the quality of the recordings does not allow a full transcription of the lyrics, evidence suggests that the second set of lyrics was different in each recording. Neither of these sets of lyrics came from the libretto of the play itself, but were likely newly composed texts of a satirical or political nature. This practice was widespread with well-known *género chico* hits sung in the streets.

All four recordings thus redefined the original *jota* as a strophic song, and all four performers made use of large-scale tempo changes, with a slower verse, or section A, contrasting with a faster chorus, or sections B and C). This is largely consonant with other recordings of strophic numbers from *género chico*, [57] but also with other vocal music of the period, as analysed, for example, by Zicari in recordings of *bel canto* cavatinas and cabalettas.[58] There are, nevertheless, some differences in how individual performers applied these tempo changes. Without a doubt, these are most obvious in Ascensión Miralles's recording for Álvaro Ureña, although there is a caveat here concerning issues of cylinder digitization. As heard in the digitized recording at Biblioteca Digital Hispánica, Miralles sings the verses at a speed of crotchet = 120, and the verses at an astonishing crotchet = 225. The romanza's key in the digitized file is also a full minor third higher than in the score. Even taking into account that transposing was not uncommon, both pieces of evidence suggest that the digitization was made at an abnormally high speed, and that Miralles would have originally sang at an appreciably slower tempo. It is likely, though, that the original tempo was still comparatively fast, since Miralles was regarded as a singer with a light, agile voice and solid technique who could sing through the flourishes that other *tiples* preferred to skip.[59] What can be conclusively inferred from this is that Miralles almost doubled the speed of the chorus with respect to the verse, which is a more drastic change than in any of the other performers. She also introduced some small-scale tempo changes in section A, slowing down the beginnings of phrases and accelerating towards the end.

[57] Indeed, use of tempo changes is usual in *género chico* numbers with strophic structures, often called *couplets*, e.g. señorita López's recording of *El tambor de granaderos*'s "Rataplán" for Blas Cuesta (FA60/047, Eresbil Archivo de la música vasca).
[58] Zicari, 'Ah! Non credea mirarti'.
[59] Ch. [full name unknown], "Teatro Eslava", *El imparcial,* October 3, 1896: 2; anonymous, "Crónica granadina", *La Alhambra,* July 15, 1898: 279-80; anonymous, "La zarzuela de Estremera", *Diario de Córdoba,* June 12, 1899: 1; Cirilo [last name unknown], "Teatro Circo", *Diario de Córdoba,* June 27, 1899: 2; anonymous, "De teatros", *El país,* April 28, 1900: 4; and Caramanchel, "Eslava", *Diario de Córdoba,* September 9, 1900: 3.

Example 3. Bars 91-94 of "Luchando tercos y rudos", showing small-scale tempo change. Metronome markings are approximate, since some beats can be slightly longer than others.

Whereas Miralles was relatively respected as a singer,[60] Blanca del Carmen – who recorded this number and others both for *gabinetes* and for Gramophone - did not have a stage career in Spain or elsewhere. Indeed, biographical sources on her are indeed non-existent, which suggests she might have been a talented amateur with no stage experience, as is the case with other singers who recorded for *gabinetes*. Del Carmen's recording of the *jota* for Gramophone comes across as the least expressive of the four versions analysed here. Preceded by a shortened but still rather substantial piano introduction (32 bars), Del Carmen hardly introduced any tempo changes to make up for the lack of dynamic range inherent in cylinders; her diction was understandable, if not particularly expressive. Her Viuda de Aramburo recording, although poorer in sound quality, reveals a more expressive performer. In contrast to Miralles' more maximalistic approach, Del Carmen's attempts at becoming expressive focused on smaller-scale detail: portamento is used very slightly and, in particular, the diction is very clear and expressive (to the detriment of consistent vibrato). In section B, a particular device Del Carmen uses for enhanced expressively here is to elongate the quaver rest at the end of the first beat of every two bars and then put a stress on the last beat of the bar. This also places the phonetic stress in the last syllable of the word, in what can potentially be regarded as an attempt to mimic the Aragonese accent Pilar would have spoken in.

[60] Miralles attracted attention for her singing technique on the occasion of her debut in 1895 at the Teatro Eslava in Madrid; after that, though, most of her career was spent touring the provinces. See anonymous, "Eslava", *La correspondencia de España,* September 10, 1895: 3; and anonymous, "Debut de la señorita Miralles", *El heraldo de Madrid,* September 17, 1895: 2.

Examples 4a and 4b. Bars 118-21 of 'Luchando tercos y rudos', as written and as performed by Del Carmen.

These rather striking differences in Del Carmen's performances invite questions about how Spanish performers might have adapted to recording processes and what sort of guidance they might have received from engineers and operators. With written sources on the dynamics of the studio being extremely scarce in the Spanish context, though, it is difficult to reach any definitive conclusions on the matter. Moreover, it is often the case that we only have three, two or even one surviving recordings for a single performer, so that advancing hypothesis as to how they might have evolved and changing their recording style will always be tentative. What cases such as Del Carmen's still reveal is again the highly adaptable, quasi-experimental nature of recording processes and the role that performers – as opposed to recordists – might have exerted in introducing performance decisions that might have been intended to make up for the limitations in recording technologies.

The final recording, Navarro's for Viuda de Aramburo, is unusual in that it features a male singer singing a female romanza. Although this was not common practice either on stage or in *género chico* recordings, the decision is understandable here because of how popular the song was and because the words do not at any point refer to the first-person voice in the feminine: it is indeed a patriotic song that could plausibly be sung by individuals of any gender. The cylinder is attributed to señor Navarro with no indication of his first name. There were at least three singers active in these years who could have made the recording: Enrique Navarro, José Navarro (both comic tenors), and Luis Navarro, whose voice type is not known.[61] The voice in the recording is certainly consonant with what would be expected

[61] María Luz González Peña, "Enrique Navarro", "Luis Navarro" and "José Navarro", in, *Diccionario de la zarzuela. España e Hispanoamérica*, ed. Emilio Casares (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales,

of a *género chico* comic tenor at that time, thus suggesting that the recording might have been made by Enrique or José. Navarro's is not an operatically trained voice, but the singing is relatively in tune and the diction is clear and expressive, again with an attempt at mimicking the Aragonese accent as in Del Carmen's recording. Navarro's timing of the quaver rest, however, is not as precise as Del Carmen's, suggesting that his strengths lied in text delivery and diction rather than in musicianship and singing. Navarro did not use portamento or small-scale tempo changes in the verses either, as his female colleagues did. As with the examples of Taberner and Gurina above, this can be interpreted as further proof that different *género chico* singers brought different combinations of skills to the stage (or recording studio), and at least some of those would have been regarded as equally valid. But, beyond individual differences, it suggests some crucial differences between male and female performers, which are further confirmed by written sources from the period. [62] Indeed, while many, though not all, of the noted *primeras tiples* of the time had solid, trained singing voices, male performers were more likely to capitalize on their diction and spoken expressiveness, and less likely to borrow from singing operatic practices.[63]

Conclusion

In this conclusion, I would like to consider which sorts of directions my analysis of the *Gigantes y cabezudos* might open up to keep tackling the unexplored field of vocal performance practices in *género chico.* I am particularly concerned with establishing where we might need to deviate from paths established by previous research in other genres and

2008), vol. 2: 339. There was also a *gabinete* owner called José Navarro, but this was not the same person as the singer.

[62] Deleito y Piñuela, xiii; and Muñoz, 145.

[63] A further example comes from bass Manuel O. Keyser's recording of the couplets of *El lucero del Alba* for Blas Cuesta (Eresbil Archivo de la Música Vasca, FA60/251).

contexts. The study of *género chico* can clearly benefit a great deal from this body of research: from studies that allow us to grapple with the limitations of early technologies, to studies of how parameters such as vibrato, portamento or tempo modification were used for expressive aims in other genres which were, to a great extent, part of the same sound world as *género chico* was. It is my contention that studies of performance practice in *género chico* should not treat the genre as completely separate from other genres and traditions, but they must also adopt a context-sensitive approach, carefully considering both the culture that surrounded the genre and the unique recording processes and enterprises that Spain saw in the years around 1900. In this article, I have attempted to provide practical examples of how findings from existing research on early recordings, as well as my own research on the Spanish context, can be drawn upon to contextualize and illuminate individual recordings. The process, however, is not straightforward: the lack of written records, the deterioration of cylinders or the scarcity of recordings might make it impossible, in many cases, to confirm or to refute a hypothesis; on the other hand, it is to be expected that, if more and more *género chico* cylinders are analysed, comparisons among these might also illuminate issues that cannot at present be dealt with conclusively.

In particular, I would like to highlight two respects in which *género chico* performance practice might differ from established wisdom in other genres. Firstly, as I have mentioned, we must grapple with the idea that notions of what constituted a good *género chico* performance were fluid and varied, with performers exhibiting different combinations of skills. Nevertheless, there is still work to be done in terms of understanding how these notions were defined and evolved throughout time for different types of audiences, and also consider the role that recordings could have had in influencing these processes. In this respect, the study of reviews and other accounts is key to ascertain how the *género chico* community viewed and appraised individual styles and performers, what kinds of styles and

strengths were valued, and where disagreements might have developed. The discussion above suggests that focus on expressive delivery of the text was regarded as key to the genre and likely guided appraisals and performing decisions (both in the studio and live) to a great extent. Expressiveness, though, might not be fully synonymous with intelligibility: in chorus recordings, or solo recordings with ample vibrato, performers might have chosen instead to emphasize or elongate certain words, as I have discussed above; further research might illuminate further how text delivery was understood and practiced within *género chico*. Studying how gender (and perhaps other factors, such as age) influenced the different skills that performers were expected or allowed to develop can also help us further clarify notions of what different audiences might have regarded as a good performance. Here, again, we must consider the possibility that some combinations of skills would have translated better than others into recorded sound, and that some performers might have stressed certain skills to the expense of others in recordings, thus marking the beginnings of the distinction between live and recorded performance in the *género chico* context.

The second aspect to bear in mind concerns the rapidly changing, quasi-experimental nature of the *gabinetes'* business, in two respects that are intrinsically connected: on the one hand, they developed some ingenious ways of overcoming the technological limitations of the products they imported from the United States; on the other, they pioneered and developed the concept of recording itself, as a commercial and aesthetic artefact, within Spain. Perhaps more so than with other early recordings (given the stubbornly independent and idiosyncratic nature of the *gabinetes'* business), we must become comfortable with the notion that tried-and-tested solutions did not exist and that what we hear in recordings was experimental to a great extent – whether using a specific diaphragm to make it easier to record certain types of voices, or inserting interjections or dialogue to mimic the live music experience. In the same way as the *gabinetes*' industry was to a great extent artisanal, our research might be better

served by adopting a similar approach, never losing sight of the broader forces and contexts which shaped all of these recordings, but bearing in mind that each recording would have been shaped by them in a unique, individual way.

Abstract

This article intends to make an initial contribution to the largely unexplored field of historical performance practices in *zarzuela* by examining the earliest surviving recordings of Manuel Fernández Caballero's *Gigantes y cabezudos* (1898) – one of the greatest successes of the genre in the early years of commercial phonography in Spain and, consequently, the *zarzuela* of which the most recordings made before 1905 have survived: a total of 19, made on wax cylinders by local *gabinetes fonográficos* and on disc by Gramophone. Both the thriving *género chico* culture and its singing practices, and a number of technological, commercial and cultural aspects of the early recording industry in Spain are discussed to consider how recordings related to live performance in this particular context, what the value of these recordings is as documents of performance practice, and which questions they open up for further study of performance practice in *zarzuela.*

Contact information

Dr Eva Moreda Rodríguez

School of Culture and Creative Arts, University of Glasgow

14 University Gardens

G12 8QH Glasgow

Phone number +44 (0)141 330 2613

Eva.MoredaRodriguez(at)glasgow.ac.uk