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Singing and Speaking in Early Twentieth-Century *Zarzuela*: The Evidence from Early Recordings

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ABSTRACT

The present article draws upon thirty years of recorded evidence (from the first wax cylinders made in the late nineteenth century, to the first electrical recordings of the 1920s and early 1930s) to study two modes of voice production used in Spanish *zarzuela*: one indebted to operatic singing, characterized by timbral modification and widespread vibrato; and another one more connected to popular forms of entertainment, based on a low-larynx position and clear enunciation. Far from constituting a rigid dichotomy, this article discusses how both modes of voice production coexisted and were combined within the general governing principle of communicating text expressively, confirming—as has been suggested by recent historiographical research—*zarzuela*'s status as a hybrid genre able to absorb a number of influences. The article also discusses how the former of these two modes of production became more widespread at the end of the period under study, and considers the influence of recording technologies in this process.

Premiered on November 25, 1897, Ruperto Chapí's one-act *zarzuela*, *La revoltosa*, was one of the most phenomenal successes of the year on Madrid's stages. Critics celebrated it as a truthful, charming portrayal of Madrilenian common people (the *pueblo*).¹ Four months after its premiere it had seen more than four hundred performances in the capital, quickly becoming a mainstay of the repertoire.² It is unsurprising, therefore, that the *zarzuela*'s most popular number—the love duet known as “Dúo de los claveles”—was recorded several times on wax cylinders in subsequent years, at a time when commercial phonography took hold in Spain. Four wax cylinder recordings of the duet have survived in archival collections³ one

¹Zeda [pseudonym], “Veladas Teatrales,” *La época*, November 26, 1897; Juan Palomo [pseudonym], “Apolo,” *El Globo*, November 26, 1897; and J.A. [full name unknown], “Teatro de Apolo,” *El liberal*, November 26, 1897.

²Anonymous, “Apolo,” *La Correspondencia de España*, May 5, 1898.

³Catalogues suggest that other recordings of the duet existed, but they have not been preserved in public collections: *gabinete* Blas Cuesta made a recording with Josefa López and Antonio Domingo (cylinder currently held at the Eresbil archive in Errenteria, Basque Country, deteriorated), and Gramophone had recorded it at least four times by 1905: with Pepita Alcácer and Rafael Gil in 1900 (matrix no. 2154); with señorita Urrutia and señor (probably Vicente) Carrión in 1900 (matrix no. 2349); with Marina Gurina and Paco Martínez in 1902 (matrix no. 7162); and with Lola Membrives and señor Robles in 1905 (matrix no. 8826). Label Zonophone released a further recording with Blanca del Carmen and Emilio Aragón in 1902 (matrix no. 1378).

issued by Barcelona *gabinete fonográfico* V. Corrons between 1899 and 1900 featuring two unnamed performers;⁴ one by the French label Pathé Frères from 1902, again with unnamed singers;⁵ one by the Madrid *gabinete* La fonográfica madrileña dating from between 1902 and 1905, featuring señora Rossi and señor Moreno;⁶ and one made privately by Barcelona industrialist Ruperto Regordosa in the earlier years of the century, featuring señor Alba and Marina Gurina (1882–1931).⁷

When listening to the cylinders, one key difference between the former and latter two recordings soon becomes apparent: while Rossi, Moreno, Alba, and Gurina produce a type of sound similar to that heard in opera recordings from the same era (with relatively consistent vibrato, secure range, and modified vowels that sometimes make it difficult to understand the text), the singing of their unnamed colleagues in the Pathé and Corrons recordings is reminiscent of the styles heard in contemporary urban popular genres such as music hall singing: their tone is breathier and scarcer in vibrato, and their words are, on the whole, more intelligible and more expressive within the conventions of the genre in which, as I will discuss later, attention to text was paramount, sometimes at the expense of other parameters. In the landscape of Spanish recordings from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the duet from *La revoltosa* was typical in featuring singing that displayed two distinct styles: other recordings, produced well into the 1920s, also illustrate that both approaches (and gradations thereof, as will be discussed later) were represented in *zarzuela* singing. Practitioners of both types were praised in the musical press for their ability to *decir* (to say) their part, which was paramount in *zarzuela*, suggesting that both approaches were admissible within the genre's expressive code.

Enthusiasts of *zarzuela* might not find the coexistence of these two modes of vocal production overly surprising: both still exist—albeit in evolved versions—in more recent recordings of the genre (for example, in Ataulfo Argenta's extensive series of recordings from the 1950s). On

⁴This and other Spanish wax cylinders cited in this article are held at the Biblioteca Nacional de España and digitized through their portal, Biblioteca Digital Hispánica: <http://bdh.bne.es/bnsearch/detalle/bdh0000046493>. As with most wax cylinders produced in Spain at the time by Spanish companies (*gabinetes fonográficos*), V. Corrons's is undated; the company, however, only operated under that name in 1899 and early 1900, subsequently releasing its cylinders under the name J. Corrons.

⁵See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnsearch/detalle/bdh0000046303>.

⁶See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnsearch/detalle/bdh0000046366>. La fonográfica madrileña operated between the dates indicated above but did not date its cylinders.

⁷Held at Biblioteca de Catalunya, digitized at Memòria Digital de Catalunya, <https://mdc.csuc.cat/digital/collection/sonorb/id/174> (the duet is split between two cylinders). Regordosa did not date his cylinders. The Biblioteca de Catalunya, where his collection is held, dates all cylinders between 1898 (when Regordosa first acquired a phonograph) and 1918 (when he died). However, the types of performers and repertoires he recorded suggest that he made most, if not all, of his recordings in the first half of this twenty-year period. I have not been able to identify singers named Rossi and Moreno who were active during this time in or near Madrid. Señor Alba is likely to be Guillermo Alba, who was active in *zarzuela* theaters in Madrid and Barcelona in the early years of the twentieth century.

a metaphorical level, it is also tempting to interpret this dichotomy as symbolic of the hybrid nature of the genre, able to absorb a multiplicity of languages and practices not only across borders, but also across the perceived boundaries between high and low culture—just as operetta, to which *zarzuela* has often been compared or associated, has long been understood.⁸ Like operetta, *zarzuela* was a fully notated and orchestrated genre, but from the 1880s onwards it adopted mass production practices that predate those later employed by popular music.⁹ *Zarzuela* was decisively shaped by Italian *bel canto* in its earlier years (as well as by French *opérette*), but it also routinely integrated *canciones* that were akin to traditional and popular music forms. During the second half of the nineteenth century, many if not most *zarzuela* composers moonlighted as Spanish-language opera composers (with mixed results).¹⁰ By the early twentieth century the genre considerably influenced the development of eminently popular urban styles such as *revista* and *cuplé*. This hybridity has been celebrated by *zarzuela* scholars Serge Salaün, Enrique Mejías, and Christopher Webber, all of whom push back against earlier nationalist historiographical models that interpreted foreign influences as negative interference.¹¹ It is this hybridity that this article takes as its starting point to engage in a systematic investigation of these two modes of vocal production. I will analyze how both modes are present in recordings from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s, how the balance and gradation between the modes shifted over time, and how they contributed to shaping and redefining the expressive codes of the genre across its subgenres (*zarzuela grande*, *género chico*). The article takes a self-reflective view: as I discuss specific recordings, I also articulate what their limitations might be

⁸For a discussion of how *zarzuela* can be understood against the background of operetta and its global expansion, see Christopher Webber, "Spain and *Zarzuela*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Operetta*, ed. Anastasia Belina and Derek B. Scott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 103–19, at 103–6. Belina's and Scott's volume is grounded in an understanding of operetta as transnational (with the genre traveling across borders and adapting to local contexts, and in turn local versions of operetta reflecting various multi-cultural realities). See also Micaela Baranello, *The Operetta Empire: Music Theater in Early Twentieth-Century Vienna* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2021). Other relatively recent examples that focus on the hybrid and transnational in operetta include Zoltan Imre, "Operetta Beyond Borders: The Different Versions of *Die Csárdásfürstin* in Europe and the United States (1915–1921)," *Studies in Musical Theater* 7, no. 2 (2013): 175–205; and Lynn Hooker, "Turks, Hungarians, and Gypsies on Stage: Exoticism and Auto-Exoticism in Opera and Operetta," *Hungarian Studies*, 27, no. 2 (2014): 291–311, as well as numerous studies of operetta in local contexts as diverse as the Nordic Countries, Azerbaijan, and Yiddish-speaking communities.

⁹Scholars of operetta have typically regarded such mass production practices and their ubiquity in urban centers as key to understanding the genre. See, for example, Belina and Scott, "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to Operetta*, 1–14, at 2 and 7; and Derek B. Scott, *Sounds of the Metropolis: The 19th Century Popular Music Revolution in London, New York, Paris and Vienna* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 123.

¹⁰The tense relationship between *zarzuela* and Spanish-language opera is one of the key themes in the historiography of the genre, with the latter (with very few exceptions) failing to become viable. An overview can be read in Clinton D. Young, "Why Did Spain Fail to Develop Nationalist Opera?," *Bulletin for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies* 38, no. 1 (2013): 117–37.

¹¹Serge Salaün, *Les spectacles en Espagne, 1875–1936* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2011), 87–115; Enrique Mejías García, "Dinámicas transnacionales en el teatro Musical Popular: Jacques Offenbach, compositor de zarzuelas (1855–1905)" (PhD diss., Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2018); and Webber, "Spain and *Zarzuela*."

when analyzing vocal production, as well as (when relevant) other elements of performance practice. In doing so, I hope to contribute to two distinct areas of inquiry: scholarship on the history of *zarzuela* and scholarship on early recordings as sources of historical performance practices.

Starting in the 1980s, Spanish musicologists, as well as scholars outside of Spain, have studied *zarzuela* extensively. Within this wealth of scholarship, however, performance practice has remained mostly unexplored. Instead, most existing literature interprets *zarzuela* as literary-theatrical text,¹² as score,¹³ as social practice,¹⁴ or as a combination of these attributes. Few scholarly works have approached *zarzuela* solely or predominantly as performance. In biographical studies of performers (often published outside academia), one finds occasional references to singing practices, but they lack systematic analyses.¹⁵ Ramón Regidor Arribas's 1991 book, *La voz en la zarzuela*, is the only scholarly monograph to position singing practices and styles at the center of his study of the genre.¹⁶ He proposes a systematic classification of voice types through examination of several dozen key roles, and even though his book represents a valuable resource for singers and conductors, it is a prescriptive rather than historical text: it only considers performance history of the roles to a limited extent and it does not engage with recordings. More recently, the increasing availability of wax cylinders and other historical recordings through online portals of Spanish collections have stimulated scholarly interest in discography, cataloging, and the social history of recordings. Thus far, however, few have engaged directly on the topic of performance practice.¹⁷

The lack of attention to performance practice is perplexing: we can well imagine that a reason why audiences kept filling *zarzuela* theaters for a century (approximately 1850 to 1950) was because of the fascination that

¹²See, for example, Patricia Bentivegna, *Parody in the género chico* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2000); Nancy J. Membrez, "The *Teatro Por Horas*: History, Dynamics and Comprehensive Bibliography of a Madrid Industry, 1867–1922" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1987); and Carmen del Moral Ruiz, *El género chico: ocio y teatro en Madrid (1880–1910)* (Madrid: Alianza, 2004).

¹³The most obvious example of the *zarzuela*-as-score approach is the collection of editions of full scores of *zarzuelas* undertaken by the Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales (ICCMU) at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid from 1993 under the name *Música Lírica*.

¹⁴Numerous biographies of *zarzuela* composers, which constituted one of the flagship projects of Spanish musicology from the 1980s onwards, take this approach. More recently, one also finds social practice to be the focus in numerous studies of audiences, venues, and musical life. See, for example, Tobias Brandenberger and Antje Dreyer, eds., *La zarzuela y sus caminos. Del siglo XVII a la actualidad* (Berlin: Lit, 2016); Emilio Casares Rodicio, *Historia gráfica de la zarzuela. Del canto y los cantantes* (Madrid: ICCMU/Fundación de la Zarzuela Española, 2000); Víctor Sánchez Sánchez, Javier Suárez Pajares, and Vicente Galbis López, eds., *Ruperto Chapí: nuevas perspectivas* (Valencia: Institut Valencià de la Música, 2012); and Clinton D. Young, *Music Theater and Popular Nationalism in Spain, 1880–1930* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana, 2016).

¹⁵See, for example, Olimpio Arca Caldas, *Unha voz ... Mary Isaura* (A Estrada: Asociación Fillos e Amigos da Estrada, 2001); Pedro Gómez Manzanares, *Felisa Herrero. Musa de la zarzuela* (Madrid: Cultiva Libros, 2011); and José Manuel Rodríguez Arnáez, *Lucrecia Arana: jarrera castiza: la reina de las triples del género chico* (Haro: Asociación Cultural Manuel Bartolomé Cossío, 1992).

¹⁶Ramón Regidor Arribas, *La voz en la zarzuela* (Madrid: Ediciones Real Musical, 1991).

¹⁷Alberto Honrado Pinilla and Tatiana Aráez Santiago, eds., *La zarzuela mecánica* (Madrid: Fundación Jacinto e Inocencio Guerrero, 2020).

the music, as conveyed by performers, exerted. And yet, little is known about the sonic means through which *zarzuela* was conveyed, presumably enticing spectators to engage with the multiple discourses on national identity that coexisted in the genre. By focusing on a distinct aspect of *zarzuela* performance practice in a circumscribed period of about three decades, this article intends to shed preliminary light on how *zarzuela*'s expressive codes were built and developed, and to point out some of the opportunities and challenges that the newly available recordings offer for scholars wishing to center performance within the study of *zarzuela*.

The article also intends to contribute to the study of early recordings as sources that help illuminate historical performance practice, a thriving field since the 1990s, but one that has, until recently, paid relatively little attention to repertoires outside the classical canon. There are two key findings in this existing literature on which the present article intends to build. The first is the principle that sound recordings were not always immediately recognized as faithful representations of live sound by their contemporaries.¹⁸ Instead, audiences needed to gradually learn how to recognize recordings by familiarizing themselves with a range of generic conventions that helped to facilitate esthetic enjoyment. It was necessary, in other words, to develop what musicologist Arved Ashby has termed “phonographic literacy.”¹⁹ As commercial recording became widespread, performative fidelity (the extent to which a recording “[was] accepted as doing whatever the original would have done in the same context”) became increasingly vital to the listener experience.²⁰ Importantly, the mechanisms by which audiences came to accept recorded sound as truthful were, to an extent, context-dependent: while there are obviously strong commonalities in how performative fidelity was deployed and achieved in different territories across the world, due to the transnational nature of the recorded industry, local particularities also mattered. In the case of *zarzuela*, these particularities concern the challenges posed by the act of recording a living, changing art form that relied as much on acting, movement, and dance as it did on sound and singing.

The second key point is more specific to vocal music. While earlier studies on the topic tended to focus on discrete elements of performance in isolation (such as portamento and ornamentation), more recent work by Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, Rebecca Plack, Sarah Potter, and Barbara Gentili, among others, has called attention to the difficulties of separating technique, physicality, style, and expression in the study of historical singing as captured in

¹⁸Stefan 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, at 81.

¹⁹Arved Ashby, *Absolute Music, Mechanical Reproduction* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2010), 30.

²⁰Patrick Feaster, “‘Rise and Obey the Command’: Performative Fidelity and the Exercise of Phonographic Power,” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 24, no. 3 (2012): 357–95, at 358–59.

recordings.²¹ In the present study, this methodology entails regarding modes of vocal production neither as a manifestation of individual choice nor as inflexible constraints imposed by natural abilities or by convention. Instead, I regard vocal production as a key element in the expressive code of *zarzuela*, flexible and adaptable. Within the genre, singers were bound by conventions and expectations (including the technical limitations of early recordings), but they still possessed a modicum of control and choice within the boundaries of this expressive code. While *zarzuela* singers shared these kinds of negotiations with colleagues elsewhere, I am interested in how the linguistic and geographic specificity of the genre (written and recorded mostly in Spain, by Spaniards, for Spaniards or Spanish-speaking audiences) created its own conventions and expressive codes. These codes were not completely divorced from those of opera or operetta, but at the same time, they developed their own distinctive flavor.

The article will first present a chronological overview of the two modes of vocal production used in *zarzuela* in the period under study, from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s. It will then move on to a case study focused on recordings of the role of Julián in Tomás Bretón's *La verbena de la Paloma*. This case study illuminates how different approaches to vocal production is able to open new meanings for *zarzuela* scores.

From stage to cylinder to disc

The first Spanish commercial recordings were made on wax cylinder by *gabinetes fonográficos*, the first of which (Hugens y Acosta) opened in late 1896. The *gabinetes* were small businesses which sold imported phonographs and graphophones, as well as cylinders. They also produced and sold their own recordings featuring local singers hired for a day or a half day. These businesses were often one- or two-man operations, and sometimes they were simply a side-line to an existing business, such as an optician's or an electrician's. Surviving cylinders in archival collections suggest that opera and brass band music were the most frequently recorded genres, but individual pieces drawn from *zarzuela* had a significant presence as well. The *gabinetes* recorded mostly from *género chico* (one-act plays, typically with a light or comic subject revolving around the *pueblo*, as is the case with *La revoltosa*), which enjoyed enormous success on the stages at that time and had been doing so since the early 1880s.²² They also recorded, albeit less frequently, excerpts from the longer, typically more Italian-influenced *zarzuelas grandes* in three acts.

²¹Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, "Performance Style in Elena Gerhardt's Schubert Song Recordings," *Musicae Scientiae* 14, no. 2 (2010): 57–84; Rebecca Plack, "The Substance of Style: How Singing Creates Sound in Lieder Recordings, 1902–1939" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2008); Sarah Potter, "Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain during the Long Nineteenth Century" (PhD diss., University of Leeds, 2014); and Barbara Gentili, "The Invention of the 'Modern' Voice: Changing Aesthetics of Vocal Registration in Italian Opera Singing, 1870–1925" (PhD diss., Royal College of Music, 2019).

²²Federico Chueca's *La canción de la Lola* (1880) is often cited as the first *género chico zarzuela*.

From 1899, Gramophone's scouts visited Madrid and Barcelona to record local artists on Shellac discs, mostly in indigenous genres such as flamenco and *zarzuela*. In these early years, Gramophone, like the *gabinetes*, focused on recent successes and repertoire works that were still regularly performed. Gramophone opened a branch in Barcelona in 1903. Thanks to the company's lower pricing, stronger distribution networks, and ability to duplicate recordings, it drove the *gabinetes* out of the market by 1905.

Like those made elsewhere, Spanish digitized wax cylinders and early gramophone discs pose several problems: it is difficult, for instance, to ascertain the precise timbre and qualities of the voices heard in the recordings due to the poor quality of the discs. Moreover, it is difficult to discern whether performing decisions that are captured on these recording mirror those that singers used on stage, and some voices were known to record better than others.²³ The deterioration of cylinders and discs over time, as well as less-than-optimal approaches to digitization, can alter the timbre of the voices, and can render text that would have been easily understood when performed live unintelligible.²⁴ Moreover, the inexperience of most singers in the studio might have been detrimental (for example, some performers, out of nervousness, might not have been able to breathe optimally).²⁵ A technical particularity of *gabinete* cylinders was that a great number of them, if not most, were one-offs that were never duplicated. While duplication of cylinders was technically possible, many of the most active Spanish *gabinetes* took pride in the fact that their products were unique and individually crafted, and so they consciously chose not to duplicate.²⁶ It is unlikely, therefore, that *gabinetes* aimed for absolute perfection in each of their recordings.

A key requirement for ascertaining what these recordings can reveal about performance practice is understanding the broader context (commercial, cultural, esthetic) in which they were made, both worldwide and in Spain. Compared to other contexts, few Spanish accounts of how recording sessions were conducted exist, and none from a singer's point of view are extant.²⁷ We know, however, that the *gabinetes* and Gramophone during its early years

²³Daniel Leech-Wilkinson notes that singers, sopranos and tenors in particular, recorded particularly well in the early days of recording. See *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performances* (<https://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap4.html#par7>). On sopranos, see also Simon Trezise, "The Recorded Document: Interpretation and Discography," in *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*, ed. Nicholas Cook, Erik Clarke, Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, and John Rink (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2009), 120–39, at 193.

²⁴Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music* (<https://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap3.html#par29>).

²⁵Potter, *Changing Vocal Style and Technique*, 75; Neal Peres da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 13–14.

²⁶Marqués de Alta-Villa, "Fonografía. Cuestión palpitante," *El cardo*, April 8, 1901; and Álvaro Ureña, "Comunicado," *La correspondencia militar*, February 16, 1900.

²⁷The Valencia-based magazine *Boletín fonográfico*, which worked closely with the *gabinetes* in the city, frequently published technical advice on how to record on a phonograph. However, information about the dynamics of the studio and particularly the responses of singers are not documented in these writings.

in Spain did not tend to record star performers: many were beginners or those who performed secondary roles. It is likely that singers were put off by the laboriousness of the process, by the poor quality of the final product, or by the fact that the recording industry was still establishing its reputation.²⁸ Therefore, the *gabinetes* were not always able to hire their preferred singer for a specific number. Instead, they had to make do with performers of various abilities and levels of experience. Thus, the singers we hear in recordings were not always the ones selected for live performances.

Both the *gabinetes* and Gramophone faced the question of how to make their customers accept the new medium of recording as a faithful representation of reality. The genre's multifarious dramatic languages posed one obstacle: apart from singing, *zarzuela* employs extensive dialogue (which, however, *gabinetes* and Gramophone almost unanimously omitted)²⁹ and, in the case of *género chico*, dancing and movement were also prevalent.³⁰ This challenge of what to include was made more acute by the fact that recordings could only hold a few minutes of music (between two and three for wax cylinders, three for Gramophone's shellac discs). It was therefore impossible to record a full *zarzuela*, and individual numbers often had to be cut. Sometimes, a particularly long number would be split between two cylinders or discs, but this was rare, suggesting that the illusion of seamless performance was important to early recording artists and listeners. These caveats notwithstanding, these early *zarzuela* recordings allow us to distinguish two modes of vocal production based on the presence and consistency of vibrato and the strength (or lack thereof) of the various vocal registers: the "operatic" mode and the "speech-like" mode.

The operatic mode involves elongating the vocal tract to increase resonance by raising the soft palate or by lowering the larynx (what in Spanish was termed as *impostación de la voz*).³¹ It is relatively straightforward to ascertain how this mode of vocal production reached the *zarzuela* stages. The first singers to appear in *zarzuela* as it emerged in the mid-nineteenth century had often completed their training at the Real Conservatorio de Música de Madrid where, from the institution's inauguration in 1830, the pedagogy had been heavily influenced by Italian *bel canto*. Its first director was Francesco Piermarini, an Italian tenor; Manuel del Pópulo García—the Spanish-born Rossinian tenor and vocal pedagogue—was appointed as

²⁸Anonymous, "Un gran adelanto," *Boletín fonográfico* 16 (1901): 16–20.

²⁹Exceptions include a brief chunk of dialogue in Julia Mesa's recording of "La tarántula" for José Navarro around 1900 (private collection of Mariano Gómez-Montejano), and actor Miguel Lamas's recordings of spoken monologues from *La revoltosa* and *La catedral* for Gramophone in 1913 (matrix numbers 18447 and 18448). We do not know how these recordings were received by audiences, but their scarcity suggests that they should be regarded as experiments which never became established practice.

³⁰Margot Versteeg, *De fusiladores y morcilleros. El discurso cómico del género chico (1870–1910)* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), 24–31.

³¹Roger Freitas, "Towards a Verdian Ideal of Singing: Emancipation from Modern Orthodoxy," *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 127, no. 2 (2002): 226–57, at 232.

Adicto Facultativo (honorary professor).³² In the years around 1900, not all *zarzuela* singers—especially those who appeared in *género chico*—had conservatory training, but many studied privately with opera teachers. Many performers, moreover, began their careers in opera and then reverted to *zarzuela*, and some moved from *zarzuela* to the operatic stage.³³ This exchange suggests that it was generally accepted that the vocal production used in opera could be unproblematically applied to *zarzuela* as well.

At the time when the first commercial recordings were made, however, operatic singing was undergoing transformations on its own on a global level, as Barbara Gentili has recently demonstrated. The most salient and groundbreaking feature of the new style—which Gentili associates with the rise of *verismo*—was vowel modification with the aim of creating a uniform tone between registers.³⁴ This alteration in operatic singing partly explains some of the practices commonly heard in early recordings of *zarzuela*, many of which make use of the operatic mode of delivery. However, recordings also suggest that *zarzuela* singers sometimes approached this mode of vocal production in idiosyncratic ways. One of these idiosyncracies is rooted in the variety of voice sub-classifications (what we would call *Fächer* in opera) and the extent to which these were important in the expressive code of *zarzuela*. Generally speaking, *zarzuela* recordings of this time demonstrate less concern than operatic ones with distributing roles between different voice sub-types in ways that contributed to characterization. This is particularly the case in the very first recordings, made around 1900, which predominantly feature lighter soprano voices, with an agile top, decent low notes, and a honeyed tone (in which the singer is very clearly engaging the facial resonances around the cheekbones and nose). Heavier-voiced sopranos, in the vein of those who were starting to develop their careers in *verismo* roles, were rarer. In the earlier years, lighter sopranos are heard in roles that were later typically recorded by singers with more lyric voices, such as Antonietta Martínez in the romanza “Ay de mí” from Chapí’s *El rey que rabió*, recorded for Gramophone in 1899.³⁵

Should we conclude from this situation that *zarzuela* preferred lighter sopranos overall, or that differences (in timbre, in color) between voice sub-classifications were irrelevant to the performance of *zarzuela*? It is difficult to provide a conclusive answer to either question. The primitive technology available at the time likely influenced which kinds of voices were represented

³²María del Coral Morales Villar, “Los tratados de canto en España durante el siglo XIX: técnica vocal e interpretación de la música lírica” (PhD diss., Universidad de Granada, 2008), 173–81.

³³Anonymous, “Noticias varias,” *Fidelio* 11 (1903): 7; anonymous, “Isidro Soler,” *El arte del teatro* 58 (1908): 9–11; Miquis, “Bohemios,” *El teatro* 43 (1904): 13; anonymous, “Balbina Valverde,” *El teatro* 11 (1901): 11–12. This was the case, too, with Marina Gurina, the singer in Regordosa’s recording of the *La revoltosa* duet.

³⁴Gentili, “The Invention of the ‘Modern’ Voice,” 3–5.

³⁵Matrix number 3395. Available at https://yalemusiclib.aviaryplatform.com/collections/213/collection_resources/12900.

in recordings. Lighter (coloratura) soprano voices were known to record particularly well on wax cylinder compared to other voice types.³⁶ Spanish operatic recordings exemplify this well: the lighter sopranos Josefina Huguet (1871–1951) and María Galvany (1878?–1927) were among the most recorded by the *gabinetes*. This does not mean, however, that heavier sopranos were inactive: some of them indeed were, but they may have opted for a form of self-censorship, declining to be recorded because they were aware that their voices would not have recorded well. However, it is not possible to conclusively state whether the same situation happened with *zarzuela*: we do know—from reviews and from later recordings—that some singers, such as Lucrecia Arana (1871–1927), had lower, heavier voices, but often reviews gave little detail as to the vocal timbre and weight of singers.

Regarding voice sub-classifications, the evidence is similarly mixed and does not allow us to conclusively ascertain whether recordings merely reflected practices on stage, or whether they were influenced by technological limitations. The evidence from the stage suggests that *zarzuela* companies did not categorize their female performers (*tiples*) by their range, voice size, or color, but rather by whether their strengths were in singing or in acting, and by the age and significance of the roles they were able to tackle.³⁷ However, casting lists contain some evidence that role allocations were sometimes made with relative voice weight and tessitura in mind. The clearest example is trousers roles: Grabié in *La tempranica* was premiered by Julia Mesa, whose only surviving recording suggests that she was a mezzo soprano, while Concepción Segura (1875–1973), premiering the title role, had a lighter voice.³⁸ Marina Gurina, who was renowned for her lower voice, performed Roberto in *La tempestad* paired with a lighter performer as Angela.³⁹ In the subsequent sections, I analyze how voice casting became more common in *zarzuela* recordings as time moved on and discuss how improvements in technology might have played a role, alongside developments in the genre's esthetics.

A second area of interest with respect to the operatic mode of delivery in *zarzuela* lies in vibrato. Early recordings suggest that vibrato was not the default in *zarzuela* even among those singers tackling the romanzas most reminiscent of operatic writing: indeed, many performers did not have a particularly noticeable vibrato, including the tenor Rafael Bezares (ca.

³⁶Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music* (<https://charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap3.html#par25>).

³⁷*Primeras* and *segundas tiples* would normally be expected to be strong singers, with the former performing main and the latter secondary roles. A *segunda tiple* would normally expect to become *primera* as she advanced in her career. A *tiple cómica* had to have considerable acting abilities and some singing ability as well and a *tiple característica* would normally be an older singing actress. Although the words “mezzo soprano” and “contralto” were sometimes used in reviews to refer to the range and tessitura of specific singers, they were not formally part of the classification system for female voices.

³⁸“La tarántula” from *La tempranica* for *gabinete* José Navarro around 1900; this is part of the private collection of Mariano Gómez-Montejano.

³⁹Ch. [full name unknown], “Parish,” *El Imparcial*, September 30, 1900.

1860–1922) (the most-recorded Spanish singer in the era of the *gabinetes*) and the baritone D. Moreno.⁴⁰ The same singer could use vibrato on some occasions, but not on others, depending on his or her expressive intentions and technical limitations. Although unusual to modern ears, this approach was consistent with singing practices in other genres the time. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, vibrato was a device that singers (and instrumentalists) used to highlight or emphasize certain notes rather than as a default mode of delivery. This is consonant with recordings from the same era featuring opera, art song, and string music.⁴¹

In *zarzuela* recordings of this era, vibrato was often limited to long notes and on *calderones* (fermatas, which typically occurred on the penultimate note of a *cadenza*), suggesting that vibrato was, at least in some contexts, a device that singers could choose to switch on or off.⁴² In other recordings, vibrato correlates with pitch rather than with duration: it appears more commonly in the upper register of the voice and becomes less consistent (or non-existent) in the lower and middle registers. This could be a sign that that singers were not able to make their vibrato consistent across their range, but it could also be that this unevenness of vibrato between registers represented a deliberate choice. Recordings suggest that the lack of vibrato in the middle and lower register allowed singers to rely on a more speech-like mode of vocal production that enabled them to articulate text in a clearer and more intelligible way. In the extreme ranges, on the other hand, intelligibility would be difficult to achieve no matter what, and so singers might have chosen to capitalize instead on timbre and color, enhanced by vibrato. These examples of singers turning their vibrato on and off to communicate text in a more intelligible way suggest that the two modes of vocal production I describe in this article were not rigid or mutually exclusive, something I will discuss in greater detail below.

The second mode of vocal performance, the speech-like mode, was very common in earlier recordings, and its most prominent representative was the amateur singer Amparo Cardenal, who recorded extensively for *gabinete* Puerto y Novella in Valencia around 1900.⁴³ In her recordings, Cardenal's

⁴⁰See, for example, in his recording of *La tempestad's* "Alegres campanas" for Gramophone in 1904, matrix number 9241 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnsearch/detalle/bdh0000013212>). I have not been able to identify Moreno's first name.

⁴¹For opera and art song, see Potter, *Changing Vocal Style and Technique in Britain*, 81. String vibrato has been a point of contention in scholarship. Mark Katz argues that it was the technical limitations of earlier recordings on the phonograph that encouraged violin performers to adopt and generalize vibrato. See Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 102. Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, on the other hand, argues that while vibrato became widespread around the time recording technologies were introduced and the process happened relatively quickly, the reasons for this shift are unclear and cannot be conclusively attributed to the introduction of recordings; see Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music*, chapter 5 (<https://www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/chap5.html#par4>).

⁴²An example is heard in the performance of the unnamed singer in a 1902 Pathé recording of *El barberillo de Lavapiés's* "Canción de Paloma" (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnsearch/detalle/bdh0000046313>).

⁴³Some of Cardenal's cylinders are digitized at Biblioteca Digital Hispánica (although deterioration and issues with speed transfer do not always allow for firm conclusions about her singing); others are held at Eresbil. On Cardenal's recording career see anonymous, "Señorita Cardenal," *Boletín fonográfico* 6 (1900): 86.

diction is clear, her voice is strong (if not particularly refined) in the low register, but thinner and occasionally out of tune in the higher register. Cardenal, however, skillfully elongates or shortens syllables to create a cadence closer to that of spoken Spanish, she clearly articulates certain consonants, and sometimes she even verges on a *parlato* delivery.⁴⁴

The origins of the speech-like mode are more enigmatic than those of the operatic one. Discussion of speech-like vocal production does not appear in Spanish treatises, nor did it elicit detailed commentary or scrutiny from music reviewers. The genre of the *tonadilla escénica*, however, provides a suggestive line of enquiry here. *Tonadillas*—hugely successful in late eighteenth-century Spain—were short theatrical pieces performed in the intervals of theatrical plays. They initially consisted of individual songs and evolved into mini dramas involving two or three characters. Crucially, a *tonadilla*'s success depended on both text and music; it demanded, as Elisabeth Le Guin has put it, that “the words be uttered with greater clarity and some force” as well as with a “good, strong, and penetrating tone” that could cut through a noisy environment.⁴⁵ From a vocal point of view, this requirement had its own specific implications that were distinct from those of operatic singing. Morales Villar explains that *tonadilla* singing was characterized by the natural delivery of the voice and by “laryngeal” sonorities.⁴⁶ Timbral development (including consistent vibrato and the uniformity of the registers of the voice), he argued, was of secondary importance compared to the delivery of the text. This, however, does not mean that singing technique was consistently overlooked in favor of text. *Tonadilleras* needed to learn how to produce their characteristic tone freely and without tension to ensure a sustainable career. Those who had a natural ability to do so would also be expected to sing ornaments and *agilities* (fast passages in the style of *coloratura*).⁴⁷

The *tonadilla escénica* died out by 1820, and there is little certainty regarding how its performance practices might have influenced *zarzuela* singing. Morales Villar suggests that operatic singing simply replaced the *tonadilla*'s practices due to the increasing popularity of Italian opera in Spain.⁴⁸ In debates around singing that took place in the first decades of the history of *zarzuela*, the sources suggest, albeit obliquely, that the operatic mode was hegemonic and well-established. It was commonplace for *zarzuela*

⁴⁴See, for example, her recording of Rafael Calleja's and Vicente Lleó's *Los presupuestos de Villapierde* for Puerto y Novella, held at Eresbil (FA60/058); and the romanza from Gerónimo Giménez's *La guardia amarilla* (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000046514>).

⁴⁵Elisabeth Le Guin, *The Tonadilla in Performance: Lyric Comedy in Enlightenment Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 75.

⁴⁶María del Coral Morales Villar, “Los tratados de canto en España durante el siglo XIX: técnica vocal e interpretación de la música lírica” (PhD diss., University of Granada, 2008), 859.

⁴⁷Le Guin, *The Tonadilla in Performance*, 75.

⁴⁸Morales Villar, *Los tratados de canto*, 111–14.

composers and reviewers to claim that the Real Conservatorio was doing a disservice to the genre, because Italian or Italian-trained instructors did not teach their students to sing in Spanish.⁴⁹ It is likely that these controversies led early twentieth-century historians of the *tonadilla*, such as José Subirá and Rafael Mitjana, to believe that *tonadilla* singing technique was the authentically Spanish way of singing, whereas *bel canto* practices reflected foreign interference.⁵⁰ However, even though *zarzuela* pioneers could indeed be quite vocal against the popularity of Italian opera, they never articulated a clear dichotomy between different ways of singing. Their concern was that singers did not learn how to communicate text expressively, which was critical in *zarzuela* performance. The problem, in other words, was not the operatic mode of production per se, but rather the fact that teachers failed to teach their students how to adapt it to the Spanish language.⁵¹ In this context, it is difficult to conclusively establish a link between the styles cultivated in *tonadilla* in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and the speech-like mode of vocal production so prominently represented in the earliest *zarzuela* recordings. One possibility is that some reminiscences of *tonadilla* survived in the earlier years of *zarzuela* in the hands of comic singers who played roles that relied on strong acting and comedic skills rather than on a beautiful vocal timbre.

Contemporary operetta provides another useful reference, although it, too, evades firm conclusions. In his pioneering study on historical performance practice in Viennese operetta, Kevin Clarke argues that the clear and expressive enunciation of text is one of the key elements in the building of the kitsch and camp esthetic of the genre.⁵² In their briefer engagement with vocal practice in the genre, however, Belina and Scott suggest that “operetta calls for the same kind of singer as in opera.”⁵³ While none of these authors establishes a dichotomy in operetta singing in the way I am doing here, their views considered side-by-side, as well as the recordings used by Clarke in his article, suggest that the situation was in many ways comparable to *zarzuela*. Clarke explicitly contrasts the mode of delivery he describes, centered around text, to that found in recordings of operetta by modern opera singers, where “[text] is hardly intelligible because of the modification (*Ausgleich*) of the

⁴⁹Antonio Cotarelo y Mori, *Historia de la zarzuela o sea el drama lírico en España, desde su origen a fines del siglo* (1934; repr., Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 2005), 538-39; and Celsa Alonso, “Ruperto Chapí: música, pragmatismo y heterodoxia,” in *Ruperto Chapí: nuevas perspectivas*, ed. Víctor Sánchez Sánchez, Javier Suárez Pajares, and Vicente Galbis López (Valencia: Institut Valencià de la Música, 2012).

⁵⁰Le Guin, *The Tonadilla in Performance*, 76.

⁵¹Indeed, singing treatises in use in Spain during these years suggest that opera-focused methods did not offer much by way of practical advice on communicating text. Antonio Cordero, author of an influential singing treatise in 1858, for example, simply recommended “exaggerating the pronunciation,” but did not provide any further indications as to how this effect should be achieved. See Antonio Cordero, *Escuela completa de canto en todos sus géneros y principalmente en el dramático español e italiano* (Madrid: Beltrán y Viñas, 1858), 178.

⁵²Kevin Clarke, “Aspekte der Aufführungspraxis oder: Wie klingt eine historisch informierte Spielweise der Operette?,” *European Journal of Musicology* 9 (2006): 56.

⁵³Belina and Scott, “Introduction,” 8.

vowels and the avoidance of consonants; all the linguistic and musical sharpness is missing, as well as all the wit and bite.⁵⁴ Other histories of operetta indicate that some performers in the French beginnings of the genre (which considerably influenced the development of Spanish *zarzuela*) were known as comedians rather than singers.⁵⁵ This might suggest that their vocal delivery was closer to the speech-like, rather than the operatic mode suggested by Belina and Scott.

Nevertheless, it is not out of the realm of possibility that speech-like singing styles evolved more or less autonomously, without there being a direct, historically verifiable connection to *tonadilla* or operetta. Unlike the operatic mode of delivery described above, the speech-like mode of production is closer to natural vocal delivery. It is likely, therefore, that *género chico* performers—who were often untrained, learning on the job after joining a company while in their teens—developed their singing styles through trial-and-error, using their own and others' experience to identify what did and did not work well in terms of conveying text.⁵⁶ Through this process, they would have adopted ways of singing that coincided with those traditions found elsewhere in genres that shared *zarzuela*'s expressive focus on text and comic intention.

These two modes of vocal production should not be treated as opposites, but rather as two ends of a wide spectrum. Roughly speaking, and particularly at the beginning of the period under consideration here, the speech-like mode is more frequently found in *género chico* recordings and the operatic mode in *zarzuela grande*. But there are numerous exceptions that call attention to the commonalities between the sub-genres and also suggest that any pretense among *zarzuela* reviewers to allocate singers to one sub-genre or another according to their predominant mode of delivery was prescriptive rather than descriptive.⁵⁷ Perhaps the most conspicuous among these exceptions is Lucrecia Arana, widely celebrated in the years around 1900 as one of the best *tiples* in *género chico*. The early recordings of Arana, who had studied classical singing privately, reveal rather consistent vibrato as well as a strong, rich low register for which she was widely celebrated.⁵⁸ We can therefore describe her delivery as mostly operatic. However, the roles that Arana sang (including those written for her, such as the protagonists in Manuel Fernández Caballero's *La viejecita* and *Gigantes y cabezudos*) could also be comfortably performed by singers who embraced

⁵⁴Clarke, "Aspekte der Aufführungspraxis," 30.

⁵⁵Richard Traubner, *Operetta: A Theatrical History* (London: Routledge, 2003), 44.

⁵⁶María Luz González Peña, Javier Suárez-Pajares, and Julio Arce Bueno, *Mujeres de la escena 1900–1940* (Madrid: SAGE, 1996), 28; and Salvador Canals, "Crónica General," *El teatro*, May 7, 1901.

⁵⁷When a *género chico* singer consistently used the operatic mode of delivery, critics often claimed that she should start a career in *zarzuela grande* or opera. See, for instance, Regidor Arribas, *La voz en la zarzuela*, 22; Casares, *Historia gráfica de la zarzuela*, 33 and 38; and Víctor Sánchez Sánchez, "Un género no tan chico: la música de Chapí para las zarzuelas del teatro por horas," in *Ruperto Chapí: nuevas perspectivas*, ed. Víctor Sánchez Sánchez, Javier Suárez Pajares, and Vicente Galbis López (Valencia: Institut Valencià de la Música, 2012), 61.

⁵⁸Rodríguez Arnáez, *Lucrecia Arana*, 22.

a speech-like approach to vocal production or who had lighter voices. Among the latter is Adela Taberner (1885–1952), who sang the role of Pilar in *Gigantes* in 1900.⁵⁹ Both Taberner and Arana recorded Pilar's romanza "Esta es su carta." Taberner did so for the *gabinete* Manuel Moreno Cases in Barcelona around 1900 on wax cylinder,⁶⁰ while Arana recorded the number for Gramophone in 1905.⁶¹ Unfortunately, the digitization currently available of Taberner's recording at the BDH was made at too high a speed to allow for meaningful comparison in terms of tempo and timbre. Nevertheless, some conclusions can still be drawn. Taberner uses vibrato on the long notes at the ends of phrases, but her sense of a legato line sounds less accomplished than Arana's, which suggests that Taberner might have favored the speech-like delivery mode. Felisa Lázaro (1867–1930) was another *tiple* who found success in some of the same roles as Arana.⁶² Her recording of *La viejecita's* "Canción del espejo" for Gramophone in 1907 shows how, by manipulating the duration of the notes, Lázaro manages to successfully mimic the cadence of spoken Spanish.⁶³ On the other hand, her tone is thin and somewhat nasal at times and she does not elongate the ends of phrases excessively. This tone stands in contrast to Arana's recording of the same number from 1905, in which Arana elongates the vowels (with a few exceptions with obvious expressive effects) to display her dark tone and remarkably consistent vibrato.⁶⁴ A review published in *El Heraldo de Zamora* in February 1900 suggests that audiences were more accustomed to hearing singing actresses with speech-like vocal production in the role of Pilar. The critic admiringly noted that the voice of *tiple* señorita Roca was powerful and versatile, and observed that this was is not what audiences would have expected.⁶⁵ Although a passing observation in a scene in which detailed commentary of vocal production in reviews was exceedingly rare, the review can be taken to suggest that, even though different kinds of singers could tackle the role, critics and spectators were not insensitive to differences in vocal production and were able to perceive the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.

Recording conquers the home

Arana again provides a useful starting point to analyze how the balance between the two modes of vocal production shifted during the late 1900s

⁵⁹Anonymous, no title, *La Rioja*, January 16, 1900.

⁶⁰See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000046154>.

⁶¹See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000041629>.

⁶²Anonymous, "Gigantes y cabezudos," *La correspondencia de España*, January 9, 1899; and anonymous, "La tempranica," *La correspondencia de España*, January 26, 1900.

⁶³See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000046527>.

⁶⁴See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000012834>.

⁶⁵Anonymous, no title, *El Heraldo de Zamora*, February 1, 1900.

and 1910s, owing to changes in the *zarzuela* scene and in the recording industry. During this time, a new generation of *zarzuela* composers including Amadeu Vives and Pablo Luna entered the scene, while others such as Chapí, Bretón, and Federico Chueca had retired or passed away. A newer genre, the so-called *géneros frívolos* (short in length and reliant on dance and titillation) started to develop, while longer-form *zarzuelas* gained a new lease of life, as did operetta. The birth of the *géneros frívolos* had an impact on the career patterns of many performers: a singer as successful as *tiple* Leocadia Alba (1865–1952) felt that her physique would not allow her to stay viable as a *género chico* performer anymore. As a result, she chose instead to move on to spoken theater.⁶⁶ The development of the recording industry, on the other hand, resulted in the quasi-hegemony of the gramophone (and its 78-rpm discs) in Spain, which by 1905 had driven the phonograph (and its wax cylinders) out of the market. Unlike with wax cylinders, gramophone discs could be duplicated quickly and easily, and so the recording industry quickly grew in size and prestige. In these circumstances, Gramophone and other companies such as Pathé, Odeon, and Victor no longer needed to employ a multiplicity of unknown singers. Instead, they were able to capitalize on fewer, yet more established, performers.

The transition between Arana and the next generation of recorded singers illustrates how these broader changes impacted the choice of vocal production modes in *zarzuela*. Arana was a Spanish example of the “recording star” phenomenon that thrived from the early 1900s, after Enrico Caruso’s recordings convinced those with successful stage careers that going into the studio might work in their favor. Arana—who had some previous experience of recording for *gabinete* Hugens y Acosta—started recording for Gramophone in 1904, and kept doing so until her retirement in 1908.⁶⁷ She left a body of around sixty recordings, many of which memorialize the music with which she had achieved success on the stage. With *género chico* in full swing, Arana specialized in these kinds of roles, providing abundant proof that the divide between operatic and speech-like modes of delivery did not map neatly across sub-genres. By the time she retired, though, *género chico* as practiced by Chapí and Chueca was no longer thriving, and so in the following years a career like Arana’s became increasingly unviable. Singers with a similar approach to hers now combined different sub-genres. At the same time, recordings reveal that many performers still relied predominantly on speech-like singing, but these singers are mostly found in *género chico*. Luisa Vela (1884–1938)—the most active recording *tiple* in the generation following Arana—had an operatic voice that delivered a uniformity between registers (although her vibrato was not always consistent). This sound is demonstrated,

⁶⁶Emilio Casares, “Leocadia Alba,” in *Diccionario de la zarzuela. España e Hispanoamérica*, ed. Emilio Casares (Madrid: ICCMU, 2008), I: 27.

⁶⁷Unlike other singers, there is no evidence that Arana recorded for any other *gabinete*. Only one of her Hugens y Acosta cylinders has survived in public collections (currently at Eresbil).

for example, in her 1915 recording of *El rey que rabió*'s "Ay de mí."⁶⁸ Here, Vela chooses to use vibrato throughout the initial recitative, which compromises the intelligibility of the text. However, when the romanza proper starts around 1:20, she momentarily pays greater attention to diction, manipulating note values to get closer to the cadence of spoken Spanish. Vela recorded a few numbers from *género chico* works that had managed to stay in the repertoire (such as *La revoltosa*), with more numerous recordings of longer-form *zarzuelas*. Interestingly, she was celebrated as an operetta performer as well, suggesting that in Spain the latter genre was also integrated into the expressive performance code of *zarzuela* at this time.

Recordings of female singers other than Vela illustrate that they too embraced both modes of delivery. Carmen Domingo (1875–1953) was a *tiple* who recorded throughout the 1910s, after having appeared on stage in both *género chico* and *zarzuela grande* roles since the beginning of her career around 1900.⁶⁹ Her recordings display a competent and versatile singer who could sing expressively and in a relatively intelligible way, and who could also tackle the more operatic-like *zarzuela grande* roles from *La tempestad* and *Marina*.⁷⁰ Her vibrato was modest and her registers were relatively uniform, suggesting that the uniformization of registration that took hold under *verismo* was by this point spreading in the *zarzuela* scene as well. Reviews commonly described Domingo as a good singer, although they did so in rather vague terms.⁷¹ An anonymous review from 1902 stated that Domingo's sound was not "crystal-like," but rather her voice was "fresh, harmonious, cadential, sonorous, emotional," a description implying that the critic appreciated Domingo's strengths in communicating text expressively, instead of simply capitalizing on beauty or purity of tone.⁷²

Amparo Romo (1878–1968), too, combined a strong sense of speech-like delivery with a consistent tone and vibrato. This balance can be appreciated, for example, in her 1929 recordings of Chueca's *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* as the character Pepa (a role that required the ability to sing text fast and expressively), and Señá Rita in *La verbena de la Paloma* (a role often sung by older singers, as was the case with Romo at the time, which

⁶⁸See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000177780>.

⁶⁹Anonymous, "Teatro Circo," *Diario de Córdoba*, June 18, 1902; anonymous, "La tempranica," *Diario de Córdoba*, July 25, 1904; and anonymous, "Teatros: Serrano," *El pueblo*, July 30, 1910.

⁷⁰Recording of *La tempestad*'s "Dúo de tiples" for Gramophone in 1910, matrix number 35 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000043381>); recording of *Marina*'s "Dúo de Marina y Pascual" for Odeón in 1915 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000167355>); recording of *La revoltosa*'s duet for Odeón in 1922 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000175896>); recording for Odeón in 1915 of "Canción de la viejecita," <http://bdh.bne.es/bnesearch/detalle/bdh0000171464>. Interestingly, the other side of this last disc is from Franz Lehár's *Die lustige Witwe*, suggesting again—as with Vela—that operetta was performed in Spain in ways that matched the expressive codes of *zarzuela*.

⁷¹Casimiro Ortas, "La traperera," *Diario de Córdoba*, June 9, 1902; anonymous, "Teatro Circo," *Diario de Córdoba*, May 31, 1902; Casimiro Ortas, "La tempranica," *Diario de Córdoba*, June 14, 1902; anonymous, "Teatro Circo," *El defensor de Córdoba*, July 12, 1902; and anonymous, "Salón Eslava," *El Guadalete*, September 20, 1902.

⁷²Anonymous, "Carmen Domingo," *El Guadalete*, January 4, 1902.

required both typically Madrilenian expressivity with text and considerable singing chops).⁷³ Romo started her career around 1910 in the *géneros frívolos*, but throughout the subsequent decade she expanded her repertoire with vocally demanding *género chico* and operetta roles, as well as *zarzuela grande*.⁷⁴ Critical responses to Romo's performances illustrate that some critics still felt that different subgenres required distinct approaches. On the occasion of a performance of *La tempestad*, for example, Arturo Mori, writing for the Madrid newspaper *El país*, noted that it would be a shame for a singer of Romo's caliber to be forced to go back to the *géneros frívolos*.⁷⁵ Shortly thereafter, Mori noted that Romo's demeanor, while entirely appropriate for *zarzuela grande*, did not work successfully in *género chico*, likely referring to Romo's mode of vocal production.⁷⁶ Other critics, however, perceived Romo as a convincing performer of the latter sub-genre.⁷⁷ While both the personal taste of critics and the general vagueness of reviews are an obstacle, the general conclusion we can draw is that even though some critics thought that *género chico* and *zarzuela grande* necessitated different approaches to vocal production, stage and studio practices did not reflect this belief, with performers such as Romo appearing across a range of genres.

Recordings of this era from the establishment of Gramophone in Spain to the mid-1900s and the advent of electrical recording start to display a degree of specialization of voice sub-types. It is likely that technological change contributed to this shift: with improvements in technology, it was no longer only lighter sopranos whose voices sounded good on recordings, opening the market for other voice types. While the 1906 recording of the "Dúo de tiples" from *La tempestad* shows that Lolita Escalona and Teresita Silva did not have particularly contrasting voices,⁷⁸ the 1909 recording of the same work by Vela (Ángela) and Domingo (Roberto) shows that Vela leaned toward the lyric and Domingo toward the heavier side.⁷⁹ This is not to say that the

⁷³For Romo's recordings from *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente*, see "Mazurka y panaderos" (matrix number 2338, <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000177768>); here, Romo sings from 1:13 to 1:20, and again from 2:22 to 2:39. In the same link, "Cara B" contains "Pasacalle" (matrix number 2340), where Romo sings a solo phrase from 0:26 to 0:33. For *La verbena de la Paloma*, see Matrix number 2345 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000170987>); Romo starts to sing, responding to Julián, at 0:45).

⁷⁴For her involvement with *géneros frívolos*, see Anonymous, "fuera de España," *El Heraldo de Madrid*, April 15, 1910. For *zarzuela grande* reviews, see R.B. [full name unknown], "Los teatros. Debuts. El de Amparo Romo," *La correspondencia de España*, October 26, 1916; Polinomio [pseudonym], "De teatros. Zarzuela—Debut de Amparo Romo," *La correspondencia militar*, October 26, 1916; El indiferente [pseudonym], "En la Zarzuela. Presentación de la Srta. Amparo Romo en 'El barbero de Sevilla,'" *El heraldo de Madrid*, October 26, 1916; F. González-Rigabert, "Zarzuela—El rey que rabió," *El Globo*, November 11, 1916; F. González-Rigabert, "Zarzuela—La tempestad," *El globo*, November 20, 1916; L.P. [full name unknown], "Informaciones teatrales. Marina," *La correspondencia de España*, June 28, 1917.

⁷⁵Arturo Mori, "Zarzuela. *La tempestad*, por Amparo Romo," *El País*, November 19, 1916.

⁷⁶Arturo Mori, "Teatros. Los estrenos de ayer. En la Zarzuela y en Novedades. Un gran triunfo del maestro Jiménez. 'La embajadora,'" *El país*, December 13, 1916.

⁷⁷A. [full name unknown], "Veladas teatrales. Inauguración de la Zarzuela," *La época*, September 5, 1921.

⁷⁸See matrix number 9310, available at <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000015228>.

⁷⁹See matrix number 35, available at <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000043381>. Domingo starts the duet ("Ángela mía, mi dulce encanto") and Vela enters at 0:14 ("Por qué, Roberto, te quiero tanto"). For further reference, the score can be consulted at page 46 of <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000049409&page=1> (note that both roles are similar in terms of range and tessitura).

shift happened immediately after the introduction of the Gramophone; instead, the 1909 recording can be interpreted as an early example of a trend that would slowly consolidate itself in the recording industry in the following years.

Although the operatic mode of delivery became more widespread, some singers still used a predominantly speech-like mode of delivery, which they used to perform mostly *género chico*. Salud Rodríguez, for example, specialized in *tiple cómica* roles in *género chico*, such as Menegilda in *La Gran Vía*.⁸⁰ Her recording of the “Tango” displays very clear diction paired with a sense of flexible tempo which increases expressivity. She also sang comic roles in *zarzuela grande* (for which speech-like delivery was seen as appropriate), such as the king in *El rey que rabió* and Paloma in *El barberillo de Lavapiés* with considerable success.⁸¹ Other performers combined a speech-like delivery mode with remarkable singing and musicianship skills, even if they lacked a consistent vibrato, a broad range, or a conventionally pleasing tone.

Electrical recording and the normalization of operatic voices

From the mid-1920s onwards, the operatic mode of vocal production becomes even more widespread in *zarzuela* recordings: vibrato is almost omnipresent and subtle portamento is often the default, allowing singers to connect notes to each other and maintain a legato line.⁸² A mixture of factors can be invoked to explain this development: first, the proliferation of vocally demanding *zarzuela* writing, often with verismo influences, which necessitated a relatively solid technique⁸³; second, the emergence of a new generation of singers with solid classical training, such as Emili Vendrell (1893–1962) and Marcos Redondo (1893–1976); and third, the development of electrical recording: while *zarzuela* was certainly very much a living stage genre at the time, recordings became increasingly popular. It is likely, therefore, that those singers

⁸⁰For Rodríguez's recordings of *La Gran Vía*, please see Gramophone, 1929, matrix numbers 2377 and 2378, at <https://www.march.es/bibliotecas/tme/ficha.aspx?p0=teatro-musical%3a473&l=2> (Rodríguez's recording is on side B; to listen to it, press the play button, after which side A will start, and then press the forward button). For reviews of her live performances, see anonymous, “Salón Pradera. Estreno de *La venganza de la Petra*,” November 10, 1917; anonymous, “En Apolo. Debut de Salud Rodríguez,” *La mañana*, September 29, 1918; and anonymous, “Teatro en el extranjero,” *La correspondencia de España*, November 25, 1921.

⁸¹For a review of Rodríguez in the role of the King see anonymous, “Salón Pradera,” *El cantábrico*, December 7, 1917; for Paloma, see anonymous, “El teatro en provincias. Una buena compañía de zarzuela,” *La mañana*, November 26, 1919.

⁸²This type of subtle “default” portamento is distinct from portamento as a deliberately expressive device which performers can choose to use or not in different contexts. See Plack, “The Substance of Style,” 44 and 70; Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, “Portamento and Musical Meaning,” *Journal of Musicological Research* 25, nos. 3–4 (2006): 233–61, at 240.

⁸³Enrique Mejías García, “Introducción y estudio,” in *La del Soto del Parral, zarzuela en dos actos de Reveriano Soutullo y Juan Vert*, ed. Xavier de Paz (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 2009), xiii.

starting their careers in the 1920s felt the need to develop a more operatic technique to remain competitive.

This did not mean, however, that all *zarzuela* singers from this time sounded exactly like their opera colleagues; in fact, some of the most prominent *zarzuela* singers of this era were often described as possessing limited ranges or small voices that would have been insufficient in professional opera.⁸⁴ While this description should not be taken to indicate that *zarzuela* performers were lesser singers, it certainly illustrates that demands in terms of range and size between the two genres were distinct. *Zarzuela* performers were still expected to communicate text expressively. Vibrato and vowel modification could interfere with intelligibility, but the increasing range of recordings available at this time, as well as increased technical capabilities, reveal that performers made use of a range of devices to make up for any limitations. Portamento and some ornamentation, for example, helped some singers emphasize important words within a phrase; in order to imitate the rhythm of spoken Spanish, some singers also altered note values slightly or made use of small-scale tempo modifications.⁸⁵ One of the best examples of how these devices were combined in practice are the numerous recordings of “Por el humo se sabe dónde está el fuego,” the tenor romanza from Amadeu Vives’s very successful *Doña Francisquita* (1923).⁸⁶ The multiplicity of recordings of this number illustrates that tenors drew on a set of shared conventions which remained relatively constant since the first recordings were made (such as portamenti or small-scale tempo modifications appearing roughly in the same places between recordings).

The increasing reliance on the operatic mode of vocal production made it possible for greater differentiations between voice types to emerge. Terminology in reviews is not always useful here: for example, the words “ligera,” “lírica,” and “dramática” were often used to describe different types of female singers, but these terms do not map neatly onto the operatic light, lyric, and dramatic sopranos. “Ligera” could simply mean a singer who did not have a low or overly heavy voice,⁸⁷ and these terms often described the singer’s acting style rather than her voice.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, recordings as well as evidence from stage practices suggest that audiences, critics, and

⁸⁴Anonymous, “Mary Isaura: cancionista,” *El Progreso*, March 31, 1926; and Luis Paris, “Novedades teatrales. Reina Victoria. Inauguración de la temporada de zarzuela y estreno de ‘La Dolorosa,’” *El imparcial*, October 25, 1930.

⁸⁵Peres da Costa gives the former (“the rhythmic alteration of melody notes *while essentially preserving the metrical regularity of the accompaniment*”) the name “metrical rubato,” whereas small-scale tempo modifications involve a temporary change of pulse which does not last for very long. See Peres da Costa, *Off the Record*, 189 and 195.

⁸⁶These include Emili Vendrell for Gramophone in 1924 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000175406>) and for Columbia in 1930 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000170466>); Juan de Casenave for Gramophone in 1924; Pepe Romeu for Columbia Graphophone in 1930 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000179148>); and Juan García for Parlophon in 1930 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh000009555>).

⁸⁷Anonymous, “Teatro Principal,” *El diario palentino*, October 31, 1928; anonymous, “Mary Isaura,” *La correspondencia de España*, August 17, 1923; and anonymous, “El barbero de Sevilla,” *La opinión*, September 1, 1923.

⁸⁸Anonymous, “Teatro Pereda,” *El Cantábrico*, February 18, 1927.

composers were indeed sensitive to differences. For example, in recordings of *Doña Francisquita*, the upper-class character, Francisquita, was typically cast as a lighter or coloratura voice, with the character of the *tonadilla* singer, Aurora la Beltrana, typically sung by a mezzo. Such choices were already apparent in the original cast, with Mary Isaura (1897–1982) as Francisquita and Cora Raga (1893–1980) as Aurora. A review from one of *Doña Francisquita*'s first performances articulates the qualities that Raga's mezzo voice was thought to bring to the role of Aurora la Beltrana. The commentary also illustrates how singers with lower voices were increasingly associated with highly sexualized roles (Arana, on the other hand, while a similar voice type, was never particularly sexualized):⁸⁹

How much bravura, brio and panache in the warm notes that sounded between disdainful [*desdeñosas*] and seducing; magnificent in her expression and attitude, stimulating the audience while the stage became too small for her: this is what it means to feel and live a character; even more so, to create it.⁹⁰

Exceptions existed, however. Felisa Herrero (1905–1962), who possessed a lyric voice, for example, performed the role of Doña Francisquita in the 1930 recording next to Selica Pérez Carpio's (1900–1984) Aurora. Herrero's Francisquita was certainly more determined, less angelic than Mary Isaura's and Amparo Alarcón's.⁹¹ Herrero had been singing the role in theaters successfully since 1925, illustrating the close connections in casting between the stage and recordings.⁹²

The speech-like mode of delivery had not completely disappeared at this time. Speech-like delivery was still needed in some comic, patter-like numbers, particularly in baritone roles (Roque in *Marina* and Juan Eguía in *La tabernera del puerto* are two examples).⁹³ Comic singers were not necessarily expected to develop a conventionally beautiful tone or consistent vibrato, but the demands placed on these performers were still considerable: they needed to tackle moderately complicated ornaments and rhythmically challenging ensemble numbers.⁹⁴ Moreover, they had to ensure that they could consistently execute roles that included duets and even solo romanzas. One example was the role of Cardona in Amadeu Vives's *Doña Francisquita*, one of the

⁸⁹Regidor Arribas, *La voz en la zarzuela*, 15; and Emilio Casares, "Voz," 942.

⁹⁰Anonymous, "Teatro Ruzafa," *El pueblo*, March 29, 1924.

⁹¹Alarcón was another lighter soprano who appeared as Francisquita in the first recording ever made of the zarzuela.

⁹²Anonymous, "Doña Francisquita," *Las Provincias*, October 3, 1925; and anonymous, "Doña Francisquita," *Diario de Valencia*, July 2, 1926.

⁹³As exemplified by recordings by baritone Marcos Redondo, such as *La tabernera's* "Chiribí chiribí" for Odeón in 1936 and *Marina's* "Seguidillas y tango" for Columbia Graphophone in 1930 (the latter is available at <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000104782>).

⁹⁴As is the case with Manuel Alba, Manuel Gorgé, José Palomo, and Eduardo Marcén in the comic quartet "La dimisión" from *El rey que rabió*, recorded in 1931 for Odeón (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000012855>; see "cara B"), as well as Eduardo Marcén on his own in his recording of *La verbena de la Paloma's* "Coplas de don Hilarión" for Columbia in 1930 (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000171816>).

longest, most substantial comic roles to be written in *zarzuelas* of this era. Other *zarzuelas* from this time, such as *La del soto del parral*, exemplify the different expectations placed on comic singers. In *La del soto del parral*, Damián and Catalina (*tenor cómico* and *tiple cómica*) sing a duet together, whereas Tío Sabino (*actor cantante*) has only a solo part in one of the choruses. The 1927 Gramophone recording provides an illustrative practical example of how differences between comic singers and singing actors might have been understood at this stage.⁹⁵ Carmen Máiquez, singing the comic role of Carolina, possesses a light soprano voice, quite even in tone, while the tone of her partner Jacinto Gómez Bur (1887–?) is less pleasant, and he has to compensate for his limited range, jumping an octave in some passages to accommodate his voice. Both singers, however, possess a careful command of dynamics.⁹⁶ On the other hand, Eugenio Casals (1876–1953), singing the role of Tío Sabino, comes across as an even more limited singer, with audible intonation problems, but he delivers his text clearly and expressively, as would have been expected of him.⁹⁷ Casals and Gómez Bur were both part of the original cast of *La del soto del parral*.

Recording Julián

Recordings of the male leading role in Tomás Bretón's *La verbena de la Paloma*, Julián, are illustrative of how both modes of vocal production coexisted in *zarzuela*, and of how the operatic mode eventually imposed itself. Pausing for some time on this specific role allows a glimpse of how these general trends might have influenced the aural experiences of *zarzuela* for theatergoers and record listeners, with characters and stories remaining within the national flavor that was expected of the genre but acquiring new nuances as well. Detailed study of similar key roles might, in the future, help add nuance and depth to the discussion about vocal production modes that I am trying to stimulate with this article. I began with a review of recordings the duet from *La revoltosa*, and thus readers might wonder why I am now returning to a discussion of this music. The answer is that this duet became extremely popular and acquired a life of its own long after *La revoltosa* disappeared from the stage. As such, it was recorded by several opera singers who never appeared in productions of the full *zarzuela*, and indeed, performers who had little or no stage experience of *zarzuela* in general. These performers would have brought their own individual operatic styles and

⁹⁵As with recordings made in the pre-LP era, this is not a full recording but rather a collection including most numbers without dialogue.

⁹⁶Available at http://consellodacultura.gal/fondos_documentais/coleccion-de-lousas/titulo.php?p=2485 (side A). See dynamic gradations at 1:15–1:25. Gómez Bur changes octaves at 1:45.

⁹⁷Available at http://consellodacultura.gal/fondos_documentais/coleccion-de-lousas/titulo.php?p=2485 (side B). Casals comes in at 0:20.

habits to the number, which therefore makes it difficult for us to ascertain the extent to which their recordings might reflect common practices on the zarzuela stage. In contrast with *La revoltosa*'s duet, the role of Julián was almost exclusively recorded by zarzuela career singers, making it a more suitable candidate for generalization.

La verbena de la Paloma, premiered in 1894, was the greatest success of its composer, Tomás Bretón, to date, and his first attempt at composing a *género chico*. As with *La revoltosa*, the key to the success of *La verbena* was its perceived accurate portrayal of the *pueblo* of Madrid: Julián, a *cajista* (typesetter), is jealous of the affection that his ex-girlfriend, Susana, seems to feel for the rich, elderly pharmacist Don Hilarión. The zarzuela follows their various adventures and misadventures during the street festival of La Virgen de la Paloma, one of the main events of the summer season in Madrid.

The role of Julián was premiered by Emilio Mesejo (1864–1931), one of the most celebrated *género chico* performers at the time. Unfortunately, no recordings of Mesejo singing Julián, or any other role, survive. It is known that he made some recordings for a *salón fonográfico* set up in Madrid by a Mister Pertierra in 1894–1895.⁹⁸ In these *salones*, audiences could listen to cylinder recordings for a fee, but they were not intended for sale, as very few Spaniards owned a phonograph at this time. It is therefore likely that the cylinders featuring Mesejo were discarded after they had run their course. Pertierra's listings indicate that his recordings included selections from *La verbena de la Paloma*, and it is not implausible that Mesejo himself—having recently premiered the role to much acclaim—was featured in those recordings.

If recordings of Mesejo as Julián had survived, they would have helped us understand the earlier performance practices attached to the role, and the extent to which later recordings followed them or attempted to innovate. However, we do have a recording of Julián made around 1900—that is, within a decade of the role having been first performed by Mesejo—which may be of some assistance in ascertaining what some of the performance practices associated with the role might have been in those earlier years. The recording is a wax cylinder of the “Habanera” made around 1900 for *gabinete* Viuda de Aramburo featuring a señor Navarro, whose identity is unclear, and the *tiplé* Felisa Raso.⁹⁹ This recording is unusual for the *gabinetes*: it includes the “Habanera” itself (a duet sung by Julián and his godmother, Señá Rita)

⁹⁸Anonymous, “Notable fonógrafo,” *El popular*, May 23, 1894; anonymous, “Noticias,” *La Unión Católica*, May 25, 1894; anonymous, “Espectáculo científico,” *La correspondencia de España*, June 27, 1894; anonymous, “Fonógrafo,” *La Iberia*, January 10, 1895; anonymous, “Noticias,” *La correspondencia de España*, February 3, 1895; anonymous, “Madrid,” *El Correo Militar*, February 11, 1895; anonymous, “Noticias,” *El correo militar*, March 9, 1895; anonymous, “Noticias,” *El día*, March 18, 1895. These ad hoc recordings made for *salones fonográficos* and phonograph demonstrations between the early 1880s and mid-1890s were the first zarzuela recordings ever made, but none of them have survived.

⁹⁹See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000046123>. The *Diccionario de la zarzuela* features three singers named Navarro—Enrique, Luis, and José—who were active in the 1890s and 1900s, but the dictionary provides no information regarding their voice types. Mari Luz González Peña, “Enrique Navarro,” “Luis Navarro,” and “José Navarro,” in *Diccionario de la zarzuela. España e Hispanoamérica*, ed. Emilio Casares (Madrid: ICCMU, 2008).

followed by the beginning of the subsequent ensemble scene in which Julián confronts a party made up of Susana, Don Hilarión, and Casta (Susana's sister). In the confrontation scene, Navarro and Raso sing all of the male and all of the female roles, respectively: this was made possible by the fact that the scene consists mostly of short solos sung in rapid succession (as opposed to multi-part writing). Raso and Navarro also ad-libbed multiple spoken utterances.

While hiring two singers instead of five or six to perform an ensemble scene might have been an obvious way of saving money, there is no evidence that this was a common practice for the *gabinetes*: in fact, the “Habanera” is the only recording I have been able to find where two singers attempt to record a full ensemble on their own. It is therefore likely that the recording was intended as an experiment, or as a joke, and as such it might not be entirely reflective of performance practices on stage. Moreover, the excessively fast speed of the digitization on the BNE site and the lack of information regarding Navarro make it difficult to fully evaluate his performance or to ascertain how Julián might have been performed on stage in these earlier times. Despite these limitations, the fact that Navarro's diction remains relatively intelligible even today suggests that his mode of production was predominantly speech-like, and in fact we can hear that sometimes he almost switched to a *parlato* mode of delivery. This is consonant with what we know about Mesejo and about *género chico* baritones of this era more generally. In this respect, Regidor Arribas writes that *género chico* baritones possessed voices that sat between the tenor and the baritone range, or they were tenors who had failed to develop their high range. Because of this, *género chico* baritone roles sit higher than operatic ones.¹⁰⁰ Casares Rodicio gives these singers the name of “barítono tenoril” (tenor-like baritone) and, importantly, argues that their roles were written so that they could keep diction intelligible and expressive.¹⁰¹ Therefore, whereas we cannot conclusively ascertain what earlier Juliáns would have sounded like, chances are that these baritones, such as Navarro and Mesejo, would have chosen a speech-like rather than an operatic mode of delivery.

In 1910 and 1911 Gramophone released several numbers from *La verbena de la Paloma* with Vicente Carrión (dates unknown; active from the early twentieth century) in the role of Julián.¹⁰² Carrión was described as a “tenor cómico”: his voice is thin, not particularly strong in the lower register and void of vibrato. Nevertheless, Carrión reveals himself to be a competent singer in

¹⁰⁰Regidor Arribas, *La voz en la zarzuela*, 18. Male performers in *zarzuela* companies were classified into *tenor*, *barítono*, and *bajo* (as well as *actores*). However, as illustrated by *género chico* baritones, it should not necessarily be assumed that these classifications completely matched those in opera.

¹⁰¹Casares Rodicio, “Voz,” 943.

¹⁰²Carrión made an earlier recording of the “Dúo” in 1900 for Gramophone with señorita Urrutia (matrix no. 2322); however, I have been unable to find any copies.

other respects and not simply as a singing actor: his tone is relatively even, he displays a keen sense of intonation and, most important, he is able to deliver the text expressively.¹⁰³ Moreover, the fact that he was singing a role that was nominally written for a baritone was unlikely to pose a problem given the particularities of *género chico* vocal writing for *barítonos tenoriles*.

On the other hand, recordings by baritone Ernesto Hervás (1873–1949) illustrate that in the 1910s and early 1920s an operatic approach to Julián could coexist with a speech-like approach. Like Carrión, Hervás started his career around 1900 and *Marina* was one of the first *zarzuelas* in which he appeared.¹⁰⁴ Reviews suggest that he was received as a singer with good singing technique and style, but not the most beautiful voice.¹⁰⁵ Like Carrión's, Hervás's voice was on the thin side, and he attempted to communicate text in an expressive way. However, he also integrated more operatic approaches into his singing—for example, he used vibrato, albeit inconsistently. This allowed him—like female performers such as Domingo and Romo—to combine *zarzuela grande* roles with forays into selected roles of the *género chico* repertoire.¹⁰⁶ Hervás's 1922 recordings of the role for Odeón display a Julián who used vibrato liberally, and who resorted to a variety of techniques (other than simply clear pronunciation) to convey text expressively. For example, he added small appoggiaturas in front of each note in emotionally charged passages and he used rubato.¹⁰⁷

Two additional interpretations of the role of Julián are illustrative: Juan García's recording for Parlophon (1896–1969) and Juan Rosich's (?–1963) for Gramophone, both from 1929.¹⁰⁸ Their recordings point to an esthetic for the role of Julián that is distinct from that of their predecessors. Both singers made use of legato and vibrato in more systematic ways, and although both singers were tenors, Rosich boasted a darker voice than the former *barítonos tenoriles*. These attributes helped redefine Julián's personality and stature. In earlier recordings, Julián sounds like a humble, lovesick printing shop employee—a stereotypical *pueblo* man from *género chico*—whose misfortunes we might be tempted to regard with amusement and a touch of compassion. In García's and Rosich's recordings, however, Julián turns into a dramatic hero with a *verista* twist and his awareness of the

¹⁰³See "Canción de Julián" (matrix no. 52) and "Habanera-Dúo" (matrix no. 01906) (<http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000105463>). In "Canción de Julián," Julián's duet with Señá Rita starts at 1:45. There follows a short conversation between several minor characters (2:16), and Julián starts singing his song ("canción") at 2:58.

¹⁰⁴Anonymous, "Sección de espectáculos," *El imparcial*, February 25, 1900.

¹⁰⁵A. [first name unknown] Pérez Nieva, "Revista de Madrid," *La dinastía*, March 4, 1900.

¹⁰⁶Anonymous, "Parish," *La correspondencia de España*, February 27, 1900.

¹⁰⁷The best-known of the *zarzuela* baritones starting their careers in the early twentieth century was Emilio Sagi Barba. His voice as heard in recordings is consistent with Casares Rodicio's description of *barítonos tenoriles*, but—unlike Carrión—he was able to expressively execute vibrato and portamento. Sagi Barba never recorded Julián, but from his other recordings of similar roles (such as Felipe in *La revoltosa*) we can assume that he would not have sounded dissimilar to Hervás in the role.

¹⁰⁸For García, see <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000170714>. For Rosich, see <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000170986> and <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000170987>.

inequalities inherent in the social milieu of which he is a part becomes more obvious and pressing: the iconic opening phrase from Julián's song, "También la gente de pueblo tiene su corazoncito" ("The *pueblo* people have a heart, too") become more compelling and touching when sung in a fuller operatic voice with legato, as opposed to the more speech-like delivery used by earlier singers.¹⁰⁹

The Juliáns of the early 1930s were decidedly more operatic than their earlier counterparts. These included tenors Pepe Romeu (1900–1985) (a noted performer of *zarzuela grande*) for Columbia in 1930,¹¹⁰ and Emilio Vendrell for Odeón in 1931.¹¹¹ Indeed, the role was no longer the province of baritones, and its higher tessitura could have suited some tenors rather well. Marcos Redondo recorded the duet "Ya estás frente a la casa" with the opera star Conchita Supervía (1895–1936) for Odeón in 1931, although he did not record the rest of the role or perform it often on stage. Vendrell's Julián was paired with Cora Raga's mezzo, all in all providing a more *serio* protagonist main couple than had been the case in earlier recordings.

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to illustrate how the two modes of vocal production I identify in *zarzuela* recordings were not rigidly separated. While there was a correlation between subgenres (*género chico* and *zarzuela grande*) and the type of production used in one or the other, the two do not map out neatly: singers who became known mostly in *zarzuela grande* roles could integrate speech-like elements in their operatic approach, and while speech-like approaches were found mostly in *género chico*, there are also plenty of examples of singers who employ an operatic delivery. Changes over time in the use of these two modes of vocal production were determined by many factors, including developments in the recording industry, in the genre itself, and in broader singing practices, particularly in opera. Perhaps the main lesson to be gleaned from these changes is that the way singers approached vocal production is inseparable from other elements in the expressive code of *zarzuela*. In understanding vocal production, we need to bear in mind that this expressive code focused on communicating text, not necessarily in an intelligible way, but definitely in an expressive way, highlighting certain words or sounds to convey a sense of character.

I would like to finish this article by briefly articulating what these conclusions might contribute to the fields of *zarzuela* scholarship as well as the study of early recordings as sources for performance practice. The discussion above confirms the

¹⁰⁹See score at <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000156418&page=1>.

¹¹⁰See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000011724>.

¹¹¹See <http://bdh.bne.es/bnearch/detalle/bdh0000005320>.

status of *zarzuela* as a hybrid genre: different expressive languages could and did coexist, and they were not neatly mapped out in distinct categories; rather, they were part of the same ever-evolving continuum. From this point of view, greater focus on performance practices along these lines can work well alongside current historiographical views that center hybridity in *zarzuela* and try to move beyond national-foreign or low-high dichotomies. Similarly, comparative studies with operetta—whose historical performance practice have still not received a great deal of attention, except in the article by Clarke cited above—can illuminate how a shared expressive code of singing evolved, acquiring local particularities in some respects but showing transnational connection in others. Alongside this macro, comparative perspective, future work in the field might take a more microscopic view that was not possible in this study: for example, comparative studies of the full discography of specific singers who might have sung across different sub-genres; or studies of specific roles throughout time, as I have tried to do with Julián in the later part of the article.

The hybridity of *zarzuela* suggests that expanding the field of study of singing beyond what we might term classical practices (opera, art song) may be in order. The recordings analyzed here suggest that there was considerable hybridization between *zarzuela* and opera singing at this point in Spain (while, of course, none of these genres or their singing practices remained static). The study of further national contexts and other similar genres to *zarzuela* (most notably operetta) might reveal that this was the case elsewhere too, bringing us closer to understanding how widely shared transnational code of singing developed around the year 1900 and was captured by sound recordings.

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