Music and the Making of Portugal and Spain

Published by University of Illinois Press

Music and the Making of Portugal and Spain: Nationalism and Identity Politics in the Iberian Peninsula.

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Recording zarzuela grande in Spain in the Early Days of the Phonograph and Gramophone

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The first recordings ever made in Spain—from the arrival of commercial phonography in the mid-1890s to the invention of electrical recording in 1925—have received increased attention over the last twenty years, particularly at the hands of collectors and enthusiasts and archives that have digitized part of their holdings. While these initiatives have made invaluable contributions in terms of uncovering, cataloging, and dating recordings and providing some contextualization, critical approaches to this wealth of material that contextualize it within the growing body of research on early recording technologies are scant. This chapter outlines one such critical approach by focusing on recordings of zarzuela grande. Even though zarzuela grande was by no means the most recorded genre (as I will explain later), its recordings offer important insights into how early recordings were integrated. The recordings likewise reveal, to an extent, the ways in which they influenced existing debates around music and national identity and around technology and national regeneration, the latter, in particular, integrated within broader discourses circulating transnationally. I say “to an extent” because we must bear in mind that the privilege of owning a phonograph was accessible only to the middle and upper classes at first. At the same time, the international reach of some of these recordings allows us to gain more nuanced insights into how the early recording industry allowed repertoires, even vernacular ones,
to circulate beyond their place of origin, remaking our “musical ear” (Denning 2015, 5–6). In fact, even though Denning aptly demonstrates that such changes only materialized on a large scale after the invention of electrical recording in 1924, examples like zarzuela grande suggest that some repertoires relied on circulation networks and understandings of recordings that were already in place from the very early years of the industry.

In this chapter, I first offer an overview of zarzuela grande before the invention of phonography, exploring the tensions between the zarzuela grande, Spanish opera, and género chico in relation to debates around Spanish musical nationalism in the second half of the nineteenth century. I also briefly contextualize the two zarzuelas I focus on, namely, Emilio Arrieta’s Marina and Ruperto Chapí’s La tempestad. Finally, I analyze two bodies of recordings: those made by gabinetes fonográficos (phonographic offices) on wax cylinder format between 1896 and 1905 and those made in Spain on disc by Gramophone from 1899 onwards. My aim is not just to document who recorded zarzuela grande and when but also to discuss how recording and distribution decisions were partly informed by national identity concerns on two fronts: perceptions of what constituted national music and discourses that connected technology (including recording technologies) to national regeneration.

Zarzuela grande Before Recording Technologies

Modern zarzuela developed from the 1840s and soon adopted the standard, three-act format that would then be known as zarzuela grande, with spoken dialogue instead of operatic recitative. Although the genre soon became popular among bourgeois urban audiences, from its beginnings it existed in a complicated relationship with opera, and this, as I will argue subsequently, impacted on the different practices followed by the gabinetes in the recording of both genres. Like their counterparts from around Europe, many Spanish composers of the nineteenth century aspired to found and develop a tradition of national opera. Seen as the highest, most prestigious form of musical theater, and also the most exportable one, national opera should speak to universal audiences while still portraying national identity in an “authentic” way (Young 2013, 117–18). Nevertheless, even though several operas were indeed composed and premiered in Spain at this time, the national opera project failed to materialize. Institutional support was scarce and Madrid’s Teatro Real, which could have been the obvious stalwart, left most programming decisions in the hands of its Italian singers and companies. Because these decisions rarely favored Spanish operas
and, when they did, they typically gave these limited rehearsal time, a repertoire of Spanish opera never consolidated (Young 2013, 121–23).

Most composers of Spanish operas at this time also wrote zarzuela grande and did not see the genres as incompatible. Some, like Antonio Peña y Goñi, envisaged a dual tradition of serious and comic opera as it existed in other European countries (particularly in France), with zarzuela grande occupying the latter space. The serious alternative, however, failed to develop, and some took to blaming the more commercially successful zarzuela, since composers devoted most of their efforts to this genre rather than to opera in order to pursue financial gains (Young 2013, 136). Italian opera—then the most successful form of musical theater in Spain—was seen as a threat to both Spanish opera and zarzuela, with critics claiming that the Italians teaching at the Real Conservatorio de Madrid and privately did not teach Spanish singers to sing in Spanish (Cotarelo y Mori 2001, 538–9; Peña y Goñi 2003, 103). It must be noted, though, that not even the most enthusiastic supporters of Spanish opera and zarzuela grande advocated for a completely indigenous style, with no foreign influences whatsoever: composer Francisco Asenjo Barbieri imported several innovations from French opéra comique and advised young composers to study Italian bel canto to learn how to write for the voice; and Peña y Goñi did not necessarily disapprove of Spanish composers following Italian models, but criticized that composers did not add anything original and “national” to these (2003, 279). Similarly, while many zarzuelas grandes were set in recognizably Spanish locales, others were not. Therefore, while musical style or plot played a role in determining whether specific zarzuelas or the genre as a whole were sufficiently national, these were not the only factors. Generally speaking, the popularity of zarzuela grande with audiences was seen as a sign that Spaniards—or at least some of them—saw themselves reflected in the genre.

In the 1880s, the situation was complicated with the development of the género chico. Plays were shortened to one hour, and as a result theaters could program four different plays in one evening, maximizing profits and attracting audiences from a range of social classes. To adapt to this fast-paced industry, the new genre drew heavily on traditional and popular music rather than Italianate operatic writing. It typically featured lighter, contemporary subjects, and relied heavily on standardization. Beyond the theater houses, género chico was alive in the streets, with organ grinders and street singers performing numbers from recent successful plays (Deleito y Piñuela 1949, 14; Llano 2018, 20). At the same time, Italian opera maintained its popularity (and prestige) with bourgeois audiences, but zarzuela grande started to decline (Mejías García 2014, 24).
time commercial recordings were introduced in Spain, new zarzuelas grandes were regularly still being written and premiered, but much of the performance activity centered around tried-and-tested works, including the two this chapter focuses on: Emilio Arrieta’s *Marina* and Ruperto Chapí’s *La tempestad*.

Emilio Arrieta’s *Marina*, set to a libretto by Miguel Ramos Carrión, exemplifies some of the tensions between Spanish opera and zarzuela grande. It first premiered in 1855 and, although not hugely successful initially, it then became more consolidated within the zarzuela grande repertoire thanks to frequent performances in the provinces (Encina Cortizo 1998, 226). In 1871, at the suggestion of tenor Enrico Tamberlick, Arrieta turned it into an opera, setting the spoken dialogues to recitative, writing additional numbers to transform the original two acts into three, and expanding the orchestration (423). *Marina* was premiered at the Teatro Real to considerable success and even made the theater slightly more receptive to Spanish operas (Young 2013, 120–21). However, Arrieta’s strategy to transform his own zarzuela into an opera was never seriously considered as a viable option that other composers could follow to build a school of national opera, probably because institutional and audience support for the latter was weak anyway (Young 2013, 136–37).

*La tempestad* was premiered in 1882, and its composer, Ruperto Chapí, was similarly affected by the tensions between opera and zarzuela. During his composition studies in Rome in from 1873 to 1878, he dedicated most of his efforts to writing operas, of which *Roger de Flor* (1878) was performed at the Teatro Real. Back in Spain, Chapí defected to zarzuela grande, with *La tempestad*, *La bruja* (1887), and *El rey que rabió* (1891) quickly establishing his reputation in the genre. From the early 1890s, he moved into the more lucrative género chico, and, whereas his zarzuela grande *Curro Vargas* (1898) was well received, it still could not compete in popularity or financial success with *El tambor de granaderos* (1894) and, especially, *La revoltosa* (1897).

Both *Marina* and *La tempestad* remained among the zarzuelas grandes performed most often, even during the heyday of género chico: between 1890 and 1905, there was not a single year that did not see at least one run of performances of each, either in Madrid, Barcelona, or the regions. Both works were key to the zarzuela grande revival launched by Madrid’s Teatro Circo de Parish during 1897 to 1898. *La tempestad* opened the season to great acclaim and *Marina* was performed shortly thereafter, attaining even greater success than the former.

The Parish opened its next season with *Marina* again, with newspaper *El Globo* claiming that “the much-desired rebirth of Spanish lyrical art has turned from dream into reality.” *Marina* stayed in the Parish repertoire for a decade, and it was also prominently featured in other theaters in Madrid that, encouraged by
the successes at the Parish, organized their own zarzuela grande seasons, such as Teatro Lírico. *Marina’s* operatic version was also programmed at opera venues. *La tempestad*, while not so prominent, was also performed several times at the Parish and elsewhere during these years, allegedly to great success each time.

**Zarzuela grande, Take 1: Gabinetes fonográficos**

From its invention in 1878, the phonograph was known in Spain through public or semi-public phonograph demonstrations led by entertainers and scientists. However, commercial recordings for domestic consumption were only introduced in Spain in the years 1896 to 1898, after the launch of the Spring Motor, Home, and Standard Edison phonographs. These new devices were less cumbersome, easier to operate, and relatively cheaper than previous models. Small businesses, particularly those connected to applied science, healthcare, and technology (pharmacies, opticians, drugstores, manufacturers of scientific equipment, etc.), as well as newly opened establishments all over Spain, started to sell phonographs and other imported equipment and to make their own recordings on wax cylinder, employing local and visiting musicians. These establishments were known as *gabinetes fonográficos*. Evidence from press advertisements, press accounts, and surviving cylinders (see below) suggests that about forty *gabinetes* were active in the period between 1896 and 1905, with more than half in Madrid and Barcelona and many staying open for one or two years only. The *gabinetes* model was relatively unique in the international recording landscape at that time: in more industrialized countries, the market tended to be dominated by large companies such as Edison’s and Pathé. *Gabinetes* were fatally impacted by the arrival of the gramophone, with some becoming Gramophone resellers from 1903 and the last standing *gabinete*, Hugens y Acosta, liquidating its assets in late 1905.

Over a thousand commercial recordings made by the *gabinetes* have survived in Spanish archives, mostly consisting of two-minute cylinders. Whenever I use the word “recording” in this context, I refer to recordings of single movements, arias or romanzas, and not full multi-movement works, operas, or zarzuelas. It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which the surviving cylinders might be representative of the *gabinetes’* output, and this, as I will illustrate later, complicates the conclusions we can reach about recordings of zarzuela grande (and other genres). Since cylinders could not be reliably duplicated, it is likely that most or all of these surviving cylinders were sole copies. Singers would often make several recordings of the same number during a recording session, but catalogs merely listed the titles of recordings they had available at the time.
of print, with no indication of how many were available. The little quantitative evidence that exists is not always reliable but suggests that surviving cylinders represent much less than 1% of those produced.\textsuperscript{17} Singers were initially lukewarm to phonograph recordings, and a significant percentage of the \textit{gabinetes’} output was recorded by working musicians who were not particularly well-known. There are no accounts or interviews with singers that can conclusively establish the reasons, but these are likely to include the laboriousness of the process, the relatively poor quality of the final product, and the fact that the recording industry was still in the process of establishing its prestige and reputation.\textsuperscript{18}

The connections that \textit{gabinetes} established between \textit{zarzuela grande} recordings and discourses of national identity were expressed in two ways. Firstly, the \textit{gabinetes} sought to align their products (in all genres) with broader social discourses around national identity, science, and technology. Secondly, their decisions on whether to record \textit{zarzuela grande} versus opera and \textit{género chico} were also informed, to a certain extent, by the discourses around national music described above. Key to understanding the first of these issues is the broader movement of \textit{regeneracionismo} (regenerationism), which posited that Spain was in the midst of a deep crisis and solutions needed to be implemented at an economic, political, cultural, scientific, and even existential level (Harrison 2000, 55). \textit{Regeneracionismo} originated in the 1870s but peaked after the 1898 \textit{Desastre} (in the early years of the \textit{gabinetes’} development), with Spain having lost its colonies and therefore feeling displaced in the international colonialist context (Andrés-Gallego 1998, 253; Salavert and Suárez Cortina 2007, 22). The movement was never centrally organized or directed; rather, it grouped individuals from different backgrounds (in terms of social class, political ideology, and institutional allegiances), often working within their own area of interest or expertise, although not all sectors of Spanish society equally took part or benefitted from \textit{regeneracionismo}.

\textit{Gabinete} owners, as middle-class professionals, would have been particularly aware of these discourses, and they positioned themselves within them in ways that would have likely resonated with their middle- and upper-class customer base, focusing on how their activities contributed to the economic development and modernization of Spain. They emphasized the scientific, research-based nature of what they did,\textsuperscript{19} conveyed an impression of practical and pragmatic (rather than extravagant) luxury,\textsuperscript{20} and underlined the contribution that the \textit{gabinetes} made to the domestic economy through their national\textsuperscript{21} and international trade networks.\textsuperscript{22} They also occasionally voiced concerns about the alleged lack of institutional support for their activities,\textsuperscript{23} in line with other \textit{regeneracionistas} (Salavert and Suárez Cortina 2007, 11). These discourses and concerns
were often disseminated through the magazine *El Cardo*, a lifestyle periodical which between 1900 and 1901 included a regular supplement on recorded music.

While *gabinete* owners would have been reasonably familiar with *regeneracionismo*, it is unlikely that they were equally so with the debates about *zarzuela grande*, *género chico*, and Spanish opera outlined above since none of them were musicians or are known to have had significant contacts with key figures in music debates. Their recording decisions are consonant in some respects with the differences in status of the genres as outlined above, but not in others. For example, it is not surprising that *zarzuela grande* was recorded to a smaller extent than other genres, with sixty-seven surviving recordings, given that *zarzuela grande* tended to attract smaller audiences on stage. The number of recordings is not insignificant, but it is certainly well below opera (259 recordings),

24 *género chico* (175), and flamenco (88).

25 On the other hand, the fact that opera was recorded more often than *género chico* and flamenco merits explanation: the latter did attract greater audiences in absolute terms, but opera audiences would typically have greater purchasing power, and opera also had a prestige that *gabinetes* were keen to capitalize on. *Zarzuela grande*, on the other hand, did not have the aura of opera nor the popularity of the *género chico*.

Beyond sheer numbers, the surviving recordings also reveal different strategies and attitudes towards each genre. Recordings of *La tempestad* (11) and especially *Marina* (26) clearly outnumber any other *zarzuela grande*, which count no more than four. In opera and *género chico*, recordings are spread more evenly.

There are no less than nine operas of which ten or more cylinders have survived, and the most numerous, *La Bohème*, totals 19 cylinders—consonant with its popularity in Spain after its premiere at the Teatre del Liceu in April 1898. In *género chico* there is a clear winner too: *Gigantes y cabezudos* (14 cylinders), which became an instant hit in November 1898 for its relatable portrayal of Spaniards’ sufferings in the home front during the Spanish-American war. Nevertheless, recordings of *Gigantes y cabezudos* represent a much smaller percentage of the total surviving number of recordings of *género chico* than *Marina* does for *zarzuela grande*.

What unites *La Bohème*, *Gigantes y cabezudos*, and *Marina* is that all three were being performed to great success during the years when the *gabinetes* were active. Cylinders are not dated, meaning that we cannot confirm how promptly *gabinetes* responded to stage successes; however, generally speaking, what this suggests is that *gabinetes*, while being sensitive to issues of prestige and popularity as discussed above, decided which specific works to record on the basis of what was popular on stage. With few contemporary *zarzuelas grandes* attaining the success of *La tempestad* and *Marina*, and the *zarzuela grande* scene...
being generally smaller and less active than opera and género chico, this would explain too why gabinetes focused their efforts mostly on these two works, as opposed to diversifying their catalogs with a range of materials.

The focus on recent stage successes as well as the quasi-artisanal recording processes described above (with each cylinder being a unique or quasi-unique exemplar) suggest that these early recordings were still intrinsically connected to the audiences’ and performers’ experiences of live music, still far from the notion of recording as commodified sound that developed later on. In providing customers with the opportunity to recreate some of their live music experiences at home, gabinetes were following already existing ways of consuming and disseminating music. This is most obvious in género chico, where a range of practices contributed to making sure that the experience of seeing a particular play did not finish after the curtain fell. Organ grinders and street singers, as mentioned earlier, performed popular numbers on the streets, and individual plays would often reference each other under the form of sequels, prequels, contrafacta, and parodies that borrowed the plot, music, or characters from other successful plays (Bentivegna 2000, 1–15). Zarzuela grande, while more modestly represented on the streets, also featured parodies. Both Gerónimo Giménez’s _La noche de la tempestad_ (1900) and Guillermo Palacios’s _El trueno gordo_ (1903) were parodies of _La tempestad_, composed at a time in which the original was receiving renewed attention.

Further insights about the connection between gabinetes and live performance are provided by the locations of the former in Madrid. A number of gabinetes were located next to zarzuela and opera theaters, suggesting that recordings could have been initially intended as mementos of a specific performance or series of performances for keen concertgoers. Another piece of evidence in this respect comes from the selection of singers who recorded _Marina_. Prominently represented among surviving recordings are tenors Manuel Figuerola and Rafael Bezares, who both started their careers around this time and both sang _Marina_ as a zarzuela on stage to considerable success. This is not to say, however, that the connection between recordings and live music was always straightforward. Some of the most successful singers to sing _Marina_ on stage around these years never recorded it, while some recordings of _Marina_ and _La tempestad_ feature singers who never sang _zarzuela grande_ on stage or who were admittedly amateur. Therefore, while it is likely that some of the gabinetes tried to further the connection between live music and recordings by employing performers who had attained success on stage with _zarzuela grande_, they had to work within the limitations imposed by the reluctance of singers to record, as discussed above.
Finally, whereas the gabinetes’ recording practices are to a great extent consonant with the popularity enjoyed by zarzuela grande among Spanish audiences, there is less evidence that gabinete owners were willing to take a stance in the debates around Spanish opera, género chico, and zarzuela grande. The gabinetes’ regeneracionista strategy involved the dissemination and normalization of domestic phonography in the belief that this would stimulate both international and domestic trade and contribute to raise the scientific and cultural capital of Spaniards. Nevertheless, the gabinetes typically associated these values with the fact of merely owning and knowing how to operate a phonograph and not so much with the consumption of specific repertoires. There is, however, some evidence from their published writings that some gabinete owners were aware of the opera/zarzuela debates and wished to intervene in these, albeit in an unorthodox way, not consonant with the opinions of music critics and composers like Peña y Goñi and Asenjo Barbieri. Indeed, these gabinetes regarded Italian, German, and French opera as more suitable to their civilizing, patriotic mission than zarzuela, because opera recordings allowed Spaniards to acquaint themselves with higher, superior art forms, even if these were not national. The magazine El Cardo repeatedly complained that gabinetes were forced to produce cylinders of zarzuela (instead of dedicating themselves exclusively to opera) because of the alleged ignorance of Spanish audiences, who voraciously consumed zarzuela, and because zarzuela recordings were consistently sold at lower prices than opera (but still higher than flamenco and wind bands).

**Zarzuela grande, Take 2: Gramophone**

From 1899, gabinetes had a competitor in the Gramophone company, which had started both to sell gramophones and to make recordings in Spain. While gabinete owners and customers initially despised the gramophone for its poor technical and artistic quality, the new technology had several advantages over the phonograph: discs could be easily duplicated, so they could be sold at lower prices relative to phonograph cylinders, and a broader range of repertoires was on offer, as Gramophone engineers were being sent on recording trips all over the world. Regeneracionista traces were still present in Gramophone’s publicity strategy, as the new device not only allowed customers to access music in the privacy of their own homes but also to enjoy the latest global technological developments in fidelity. Since the gramophone used at this stage 10-inch and 12-inch discs, containing three and four to five minutes of music respectively, the recordings I am referring to here still contain only individual music numbers rather than full zarzuelas or operas.
Gramophone started to record zarzuela not much later than the gabinetes did, with sound engineers from the company’s London office first visiting Madrid in August 1899 and sending back 157 matrix recordings to the company’s headquarters in Germany, of which 39 were rejected (Torrent i Marqués 2005, 9). Successive visits took place in 1900, 1902, and 1903, involving, in all cases, both Madrid and Barcelona. After the company opened an office in Barcelona later in 1903, recording sessions continued taking place regularly, with engineers occasionally venturing into the provinces to record local musicians. These visits caused some friction with the gabinetes, with El Cardo claiming that British engineers were not qualified to appropriately assess flamenco and zarzuela performers and that they hired many mediocre ones. This claim, however, must be understood in a context of commercial rivalry. As has been discussed above, gabinetes often recorded mediocre singers too, and there were significant overlaps between the singers who recorded for the gabinetes between 1899 and 1903 and those who did so for Gramophone (for example, with Bezares, Figuerola, and Blanquer). Because of the lack of dates on the gabinetes’ cylinders, we do not know whether singers tended to record for these first and then for Gramophone or vice-versa, but we can presume that some singers might have actively pursued or developed a reputation for being good at making recordings. Even though the phonograph and gramophone recording processes were different at this stage, they were both rather laborious, and both the Gramophone recording engineers and the musical directors of the gabinetes might have appreciated being able to rely on singers who could sing confidently in front of a recording device and follow the instructions imparted to them (Trezise 2009, 190). Nevertheless, as the gramophone consolidated both technologically and commercially, well-known stage singers did warm up to the idea of recording in the studio, presumably because of the development possibilities it offered to their careers in Spain and abroad, as is the case with famed género chico tiple Lucrecia Arana, who recorded more than twenty numbers in 1904 for Gramophone (Kelly 2006). In the realm of zarzuela grande, husband-and-wife duo Emilio Sagi-Barba and Luisa Vela and baritone Inocencio Navarro often took up the sorts of recording opportunities that in the earlier years would have gone to lesser-known performers. This helped to concentrate zarzuela grande repertoire in the hands of a few singers with solid stage experience and reputation—contrary to what was the case in the gabinete years, where less experienced and even amateur singers were often heard in cylinders.

Another key difference was that Gramophone, having a network of offices and representatives across Europe, was not constrained to the local market but operated globally. When recording in Spain, Gramophone focused on zarzuela (both
zarzuela grande and género chico), flamenco, Spanish brass band music, and some traditional music (jota, choral societies). Unlike the gabinetes, Gramophone did not normally record Italian, German, or French opera in Spain: such jobs were now increasingly given to singers with international careers and reputations. This is consonant with Gramophone’s operations elsewhere, which have been extensively documented by scholars and collectors: recordings made locally of vernacular or “ethnic” repertoires to cater to local markets that would not have warmed up to American brass band music or music hall. Some of those “ethnic” recordings, though, were also included in some of the company’s US or international catalogs, therefore becoming an early example of the global circulation and relative uniformization of consumption habits that the recording industry would favor in successive decades.

This concern with speaking to markets outside Spain might be one of the reasons why, contrary to what gabinetes did, Gramophone recorded both zarzuela grande and género chico almost in equal measure and included the former in its international catalogs to a greater extent than the latter, with Sagi-Barba and Vela being regular names from the late 1900s and throughout the 1910s. One further reason for this is simply that the fortunes of zarzuela grande and género chico were reversed during these years: the latter started to decline after 1900, eventually morphing into the cabaret-style géneros frívolos (Salaün 2005, 136–37), whereas zarzuela grande underwent a revival thanks to composers such as Pablo Luna, Amadeu Vives, and Francisco Alonso. Gramophone indeed recorded numbers from some of these recent successes, but it also kept recording Marina and La tempestad to a greater extent than any other work in the repertoire. It is also likely, however, that Gramophone’s strategy was informed by a belief that zarzuela grande traveled better than género chico. Having been written predominantly in an Italianate style and borrowing numerous themes and stereotypes from French and Italian opera (and operetta in the case of later works), zarzuela grande was deemed to be more successful in speaking to non-Spanish audiences than the very place- and circumstance-specific género chico.

This, however, does not mean that zarzuela grande composers and advocates felt vindicated regarding the international reach of the genre vis-à-vis opera. Debates around Spanish opera reappeared in the mid-1910s, particularly in the journal Revista musical hispano-americana. Composers and critics still lamented that Spanish opera had failed to develop and generally regarded género chico (particularly in its last years) as a degeneration of zarzuela, whereas zarzuela grande itself enjoyed some renewed consideration as an example of “arte nacional.” Recordings, however, rarely featured in such discussions, so we should not conclude that the international circulation of zarzuela grande recordings
contributed significantly to this new stage in the debate in one way or another: it is more likely that the renewed appreciation for recordings of *zarzuela grande* was due to the recent revival of the genre on stage. Nevertheless, the early circulation of *zarzuela grande* recordings brought about two important changes that would then become more pressing in the coming decades, as the genre declined on stage but thrived in recordings that were often marketed outside Spain. First, such recordings suggest that consumers no longer expected recordings to simply replicate their live music experiences, as was the case in the *gabinetes* era. Second, they also suggest that *zarzuela grande* demonstrated that it could receive a modicum of interest outside Spain and travel beyond what its composers thought was possible.

**Conclusion**

Experimentation in the early years of commercial recording did not simply affect technologies and commercial models. The new listening practices and ways of thinking about music, sound, and repertoires stimulated by the phonograph and gramophone were equally significant. Moreover, it is often vernacular repertoires such as *zarzuela* and relatively small national or local scenes such as the Spanish one that allow the most fruitful opportunities to disentangle these complex processes. Technology and listening habits often changed very rapidly and might not have always left extensive or reliable sources that make it possible to track when and where they took place and developed. The above case study on *zarzuela grande* allows us to draw a few conclusions relevant to both the early history of recording technologies and the history and reception of *zarzuela*. In which concerns the former, it calls attention to the changing definitions and discourses surrounding live and recorded music and to the ways in which these discourses were informed by place-specific practices and debates that have only recently started to be studied and compared in a considered way (Roy 2021), such as, in this case, the theatrical culture surrounding *género chico* and *zarzuela grande*. In which concerns the latter, this case study suggests that the introduction of commercial recordings, which complicated the relationship between live and recorded music, added an extra layer to debates concerning the role of *zarzuela grande* in national identity-building processes both in Spain and abroad. New opportunities seemingly opened for the genre, most notably thanks to its ability to reach broader audiences beyond national borders. Yet, at the same time, an increasing distance emerged between recordings of the genre and its live performance—a chasm that would only become more pronounced in the decades to come, as *zarzuela* started to decline as a living music genre.
4. Recording zarzuela grande in Spain

Notes

1. The only existing book-length study of the early recording industry in Spain is by Gómez-Montejano (2005). Barreiro (2007) is a CD release of early recordings with a short booklet, and Kelly (2006) is a catalog of Gramophone recordings made in Spain and Portugal. Numerous contributions that appeared between 2002 and 2010 in Girant a 78 rpm, the newsletter of the Associació per a la Salvaguarda del Patrimoni Enregistrat (a Catalonia-based association for the conservation of recordings), and on collector Carlos Martín Ballester’s website (www.carlosmb.com), also offer considerable amounts of information.

2. Examples include: Biblioteca Nacional de España through Biblioteca Digital Hispánica (bdh.bne.es), Eresbil Archivo de la Música Vasca (www.eresbil.com), and Biblioteca de Catalunya through Memòria Digital de Catalunya (mdc1.csuc.cat).


4. It was only from the early years of the twentieth century that the gramophone began to democratize access to recorded music, although the great spread of record consumption worldwide did not come until after electrical recording (Maisonneuve 2007, 52–56).

5. As opposed to Baroque zarzuela, which developed in the second half of the seventeenth century.

6. Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, “Carta a un joven compositor de música.” El imparcial, February 18, 1878, 11. All further references to newspaper articles will appear in endnotes.

7. Present-day accounts of teatro por horas and género chico include Membrez (1987), Del Moral Ruiz (2004), and Young (2016).

8. The only other noteworthy example is Gerónimo Giménez’s género chico piece La Tempranica (1900). His student Federico Moreno Torroba transformed it into an opera in 1930 (María la Tempranica), which was not very successful.

9. Press reviews suggest that Marina, although most often performed as a zarzuela, was sometimes performed as an opera. This, however, is difficult to establish with certainty, as the press sometimes used the terms “opera” and “zarzuela” rather loosely.

10. R. Blasco [first name unknown], “Parish.” La correspondencia de España, October 3, 1897.


12. Demonstrations were held at a multiplicity of venues (e.g., theaters, cafés, inns, casinos, ateneos, clubs, schools, churches, civil halls), some for free and some requiring payment or membership of a club or society. See Moreda Rodríguez (2019, 246).

13. More than half of these are held at Eresbil (Archivo de la Música Vasca), with others at the Biblioteca Nacional de España, Museu Vicente Miralles Segarra in Valencia, Museu de la Música in Barcelona, Biblioteca de Catalunya, and Centro de Documentación Musical de Andalucía.

14. This does not necessarily mean that all recordings were exactly two minutes in length, as the duration of these cylinders could be extended by forty or fifty seconds by reducing the playing speed.

15. One way of “duplicating” recordings consisted in recording the performance with two or more phonographs at the same time. Still, this would not have resulted in more than a few copies of each recording.

17. For example, *gabinete* Hugens y Acosta claimed in a magazine article in early 1901 to have sold 30,000 cylinders in the previous two years (“Industria fonográfica.” *El cardo*, January 22, 1901, 14–15). If we assume that the figure was accurate and constant throughout their eight years of operation (even if such an assumption is problematic), this would yield a total of 120,000 cylinders. Of these, 162 have survived in public collections—a survival rate of one for every 741 cylinders.

18. On the other hand, with a minority of the Spanish population having access to recordings, it seems unlikely that singers were deterred by the possibility of losing live audiences, as was the case later.


23. Garcifernández, “Política europea.” *La región extremeña* (Badajoz), February 8, 1900; Garcifernández, “Política europea.” *La región extremeña* (Badajoz), March 1, 1900.

24. This includes Italian, French, German, and Spanish opera. Spanish opera recordings, however, are limited to a few cylinders of Tomás Bretón’s *La Dolores*.

25. Flamenco was prominently recorded outside Andalusia, given that at the time flamenco was already popular outside its place of origin thanks to the *cafés cantantes* (cafés, mostly in large cities, which put on flamenco shows for their patrons).

26. For a discussion of the relationship between live and recorded music in these early recordings, see also Moreda Rodríguez (2020, 464, 468, 476–77).

27. No fewer than three *gabinetes* stood in the Calle del Príncipe a few yards from the Teatro de la Comedia, with a further two within a hundred yards. There was one *gabinete* within the same block as the Teatro de la Zarzuela and a further one within a hundred yards. Hugens y Acosta was located by the exit door of the well-attended Teatro Apolo. With the center of Madrid being rather compact at that time, only the Teatro Real and Teatro Novedades did not have a *gabinete* within a hundred yards of their premises.

28. Three recordings of *Marina* numbers by Figuerola have survived as well as five by Bezares.

29. Particularly tenor Eduardo García Bergés, widely regarded in the late nineteenth century as the best performer of the role of Jorge.

30. For example, tenor Bernardino Blanquer, whose stage engagements were limited to opera chorus and liturgical music.

31. Such as Valencian teenage soprano Amparo Cardenal, who recorded for Puerto y Novella.


4. Recording zarzuela grande in Spain

34. “Gacetillas.” *El bien público* (Palma de Mallorca), December 13, 1899.
35. Details from recording sessions, as well as the musicians recorded in each session, can be gathered from Kelly (2006).
37. Cilindrique, “De fonografía.”
38. Exceptions include Josefina Huguet and Andrés Perelló de Segurola, who recorded opera extensively for Gramophone in Barcelona between 1902 and 1905. Both, however, had established international careers and reputations by that point. After 1905, they both moved on to record in Milan.
39. The term “ethnic” was used by recording companies from the very early years of gramophone disc production. It referred, in the first instance, to non-English language records “directed at both the cosmopolitan and foreign-born customers” (Spottswood 1990, xv). Many of the ethnic records marketed globally were in languages spoken by emigrant communities in the US (German, Hebrew, Yiddish, French, Spanish, Czech, Danish, Russian, Swedish, Polish, and Hungarian). Apart from language, global spread and perceived universalism also determined whether a record was considered ethnic or not: Italian opera and classical music were not considered ethnic, while English-language Irish and West Indian music were (Spottswood 1990, xvii).

References


