



## Foreign Concepts: Saverio Mercadante and the Seeds of Modern Lyric–Theatrical Spanishness

RICCARDO LA SPINA

Universidad de La Rioja (Logroño)

Center for Iberian and Latin American Music,

University of California, Riverside

### Abstract

Determined to resuscitate its *Ópera Italiana*, Madrid serendipitously engaged no less a figure than Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870) to direct its inaugural season, in April 1826. As its first celebrity composer in recent memory, he spearheaded important successes that reaffirmed the institution's necessity and enduring popularity, within weeks. Historians record *Ópera Italiana*'s adaptation to Spain's theatres as an imposition of foreign ideals on autochthonous culture. However, deeper analysis of Mercadante's Iberian sojourn uncovers a seemingly not hegemonic (not to mention less-than-opportunistic) rationale for furnishing new operas during this five-year period. His oft-stylized efforts contrast with his subsequent quest for style-maturity, betraying instead, a penchant for *couleur locale* and autochthonous subject matter (literary and historical). Thus, *I due Figaro* (Madrid, 1826) and *Don Chisciotte* (Cadiz, 1830), demonstrate Mercadante's characteristic concern for audience appeal, and personal conviction to serve Spain's theatrical interests. Within this new socio-cultural context, various elements of Spanish musical idiom are deftly employed, to further the composer's agenda to advance taste-formation by providing innovations to conventional opera with which Spanish audiences would readily identify. Consequently, he occasionally revisited this idiom in other works to the end of his life-long career.

Until now, elusive sources and sporadic interest have prevented the emergence of a cohesive account and assessment of this aspect of Mercadante's legacy, as being of import to the development of Spain's national romantic lyric genres. Notwithstanding ambitious and highly publicised efforts leading to the two operas' revival in recent decades, the continuing absence of both a competent, comprehensive Mercadante biography and history of opera in Spain during this seminal period continue giving rise to much scholarly conjecture and misinterpretation of historical events. Seeking to redress some of these imbalances over several decades of individual research (of which this study forms but a part), we explore the nature of Mercadante's continued ensuing inclination towards 'Spanishness' and establish its rationale. Originally a question of the composer's professionally motivated objective in incorporating local influences into his work for Spanish audiences, the compositional aspect of skill acquired via his innovations prevails beyond his presence in Spain. An examination of the material he left for the Spanish-character operas and subsequent works, in necessarily selective but salient examples, identify their sources of inspiration. Regarding the national genre question, interpreting available press and musical sources bespeaking these works provides evidence that the contribution of Mercadante was still engaged in Spain long after his ultimate 1831 departure. Regardless of prevailing inconclusive judgments, Mercadante's hitherto unrecognized influence deserves serious reconsideration. By systematically extracting the circumstances of the Iberian career segment and opus from historical obscurity into a new narrative, this study aims to facilitate their restoration to the proper context and reveal implications for further scholarship.

**Keywords:** Saverio Mercadante, opera, Spain, *I due Figaro*, Letizia Cortesi, Isabella Fabbrica, *Don Chisciotte alle Nozze di Gammacio*, Dionigi Brogialdi, Spanishness, Mariano Soriano Fuertes, Santiago Masarnau, Basilio Basili, zarzuela, Federico Moretti, Bolero, *Il Vascello de Gama*, intercultural transfer

### Resumen

Empeñada en resucitar su Ópera Italiana, Madrid contrató por casualidad nada menos que a un personaje tal como Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870) para dirigir su temporada inaugural, en abril de 1826. Como su primer célebre compositor de memoria reciente, encabezó importantes éxitos que reafirmaron la necesidad de la institución y su popularidad duradera, en cuestión de semanas. Los historiadores registran la adaptación de Ópera Italiana a los teatros españoles como una imposición de ideales extranjeros a la cultura autóctona. Sin embargo, un análisis más profundo de la estancia ibérica de Mercadante revela un fundamento aparentemente nada hegemónica (por callar de menos que oportunista) en proveer nuevas óperas durante este período de cinco años. Sus esfuerzos a menudo estilizados contrastan con su posterior búsqueda de madurez de estilo, traicionando en cambio, una inclinación por el color local y el tema autóctono (literario e histórico). Así, *I due Figaro* (Madrid, 1826) y *Don Chisciotte* (Cádiz, 1830), demuestran la preocupación característica de Mercadante por el atractivo del público y la convicción personal de servir a los intereses teatrales de España. Dentro de este nuevo contexto sociocultural, se emplean hábilmente varios elementos del lenguaje musical español, para promover la agenda del compositor para avanzar en la formación del gusto al proporcionar innovaciones a la ópera convencional con las que el público español se identificaría fácilmente. En consecuencia, ocasionalmente revisó este lenguaje en otras obras hasta el final de su carrera y vida.

Hasta ahora, las fuentes elusivas y el interés esporádico han impedido la aparición de una explicación y evaluación coherentes de este aspecto del legado de Mercadante, como importante para el desarrollo de los géneros líricos nacionales románticos de España. No obstante, los esfuerzos ambiciosos y altamente publicitados que condujeron al renacimiento de las dos óperas en las últimas décadas, la continua ausencia de una biografía competente y completa de Mercadante y la historia de la ópera en España durante este período seminal continúan dando lugar a muchas conjeturas académicas y malas interpretaciones de los eventos históricos. Buscando corregir algunos de estos desequilibrios a lo largo de varias décadas de investigación individual (de la cual este estudio forma solo una parte), exploramos la naturaleza de la continua inclinación de Mercadante hacia la "españolidad" y establecemos su *raison d'être*. Originalmente una cuestión del objetivo profesionalmente motivado del compositor al incorporar influencias locales en su trabajo para el público español, el aspecto compositivo de la habilidad adquirida a través de sus innovaciones prevalece más allá de su presencia en España. Un examen del material que dejó para las óperas de carácter español y las obras posteriores, en ejemplos necesariamente selectivos pero destacados, identifican sus fuentes de inspiración. En cuanto a la cuestión del género nacional, la interpretación de las fuentes de la prensa y musicales disponibles que hablan de estas obras proporciona evidencia de que la contribución de Mercadante todavía estaba empeñada en España mucho después de su última despedida en 1831. Independientemente de los juicios no concluyentes prevalecientes, la influencia hasta ahora no reconocida de Mercadante merece una seria reconsideración. Al extraer sistemáticamente las circunstancias del segmento de carrera y la obra ibéricos de la oscuridad histórica hasta una nueva narrativa, este estudio tiene como objetivo facilitar su restauración al contexto adecuado y revelar implicaciones para una mayor erudición.

**Palabras clave:** Saverio Mercadante, ópera, España, *I due Figaro*, Letizia Cortesi, Isabella Fabbrica, *Don Chisciotte alle Nozze di Gammacio*, Dionisio Brogialdi, españolismo, Mariano Soriano Fuertes, Santiago Masarnau, Basilio Basili, zarzuela, Federico Moretti, Bolero, *Il Vascello de Gama*, transferencia intercultural

## Introduction

The reputation of Saverio Mercadante (1795-1870) has yet to benefit fully from the unveiling of truths about his contributions as a highly influential operatic composer. Many of these truths are either still largely hidden by history or misrepresented, especially in the first hundred years since his death. Perhaps foremost among these stands his originality and philosophy as an innovator, and one of the starkest testimonies to that lies in his approach to providing new operas for the Spanish public, which our research reveals, was not without vision or sense of purpose. That journey began in mid-1826, when in the wake of his greatest success to date—*Caritea*—and finding himself idle to year’s-end, he grudgingly accepted a seven-month contract from the newly appointed Impresario for Madrid’s theatres, named *Príncipe* and *Cruz*, for their respective streets.<sup>1</sup> This first of several Spanish engagements as *Maestro Director* or *Compositor* of Madrid’s newly established *Ópera Italiana* (which rotated between the two venues) instantly gained him repute in a theatrical world unlike any he knew in Italy.<sup>2</sup> Upon arrival, with the season overdue to begin and much work ahead given the abysmal and backward conditions, Mercadante conscientiously addressed the theaters’ management, suggesting a highly constructive work agenda and concluding:

Rest assured, Mr. Director, that for my part, I will do everything possible to support the companies, insofar as I am able, since besides being my duty, it will give me great satisfaction to be able to serve and contribute to their interests without further imposing upon you.<sup>3</sup>

Returning to Spain in 1828 from interim engagements in Lisbon, his intentions to realize development in the country’s growing opera world through modernization (from the composer’s perspective) are evidenced in further contributions at Cádiz (1828-1830), and again in Madrid (1830-1831). By far, the most decisive impact of Mercadante’s involvement with the Spanish theaters will come through his original compositions, setting several heretofore misunderstood precedents for Spanish opera in the nineteenth century.

Of all his works written between 1826 and 1831, Mercadante’s two Spanish operas are those of a decidedly “national character,” reflecting his host country’s rich musical—and later, literary—culture. In creating *I due Figaro* and *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, he attempted to attach a

<sup>1</sup> *E-Mahv* Archivo Histórico municipal Secretaria 3/477- 18 “cartas de Dn. Cristobal Cuesta escritas desde Italia año de 1826 excepto la primera que se quedó con ella el Sr. Bernardo Gil.” Cuesta, Cristóbal Fernández de la Cuesta reported to Directors Gil (Príncipe) and Cristiani (Cruz), Milan, 8 April 1826 that he had managed to sign Mercadante while scouting for available talent in Milan in March of that year. In all likelihood, Mercadante only agreed once assured that his fiancée, contralto Isabella Fabbrica, might also sign. The composer’s motives, reasons or rationale for ending up in Spain as well as the relationship with Fabbrica are discussed in my dissertation, currently in preparation.

<sup>2</sup> The throwback Spanish theatre system of Fernando VII’s totalitarian *régime* still suffered government restructuring from the 1780s to prevent monopolization by one company in favor of the other and assure fair distribution of theater usage between home stock and visiting opera companies. The result was that no one house could function independently or specialize in a single genre without a great deal of unrest among personnel.

<sup>3</sup> *E-Mahv*, Secretaria 3.477. Autograph letter to theater director Eugenio Cristiani, signed/dated Madrid 4 July 1826. Vmd. debe saber, Señor Autor, que yo haré por mi parte quanto me sea possible á favor de las compañías pues además de ser de mi obligacion, me resultará una satisfaccion en poderlas servir y contribuir a favor de sus intereses, y sin otra osaqueidad á vmd.

stronger national identity to a genre that many Spaniards considered a foreign concept, by incorporating a strong vernacular musical influence into what he later loosely termed “national” operas.<sup>4</sup> In that respect Mercadante’s Iberian sojourn presents an alternative to the long-held chauvinistic view of Italian opera as an imposition of foreign ideals on Spain’s autochthonous culture. After a time there, Mercadante became somehow convinced that new works created in Spain should contain national interest and resonate on a cultural level. Taking advantage of his unique position, he calculated that a culturally Spanish operatic concept would work, monitoring his audiences’ developing tastes for modern opera, studying their theatre, literature, music, history, customs, and national ethos to conceive his own representation of “Spanishness.”

This was not achieved working in a vacuum, and Madrid’s theatrical milieu (though tightly controlled) afforded a window onto national musical traditions. As was customary, a Spanish dramatic troupe continued to play alongside the now-permanent Italian opera company, maintaining a repertory of plays and the quintessential Spanish short lyric musical forms. Music was an integral part of the prevalent vernacular theatrical tradition, requiring a structured program often consisting of a play, and one each of the vernacular genres, including the *sainete*, the *tonadilla*,<sup>5</sup> and various “national” songs and dances, many of them recently published.<sup>6</sup> By the time Mercadante arrived in Madrid in 1826, the latter form had not been heard in Madrid’s theaters (its chief outlet) with its former frequency in nearly a decade. Mercadante was likely introduced to such material by any number of colleagues attached to the theaters, like veteran theatre composer and assistant conductor Manuel Qijano (fl. 1802- d.1838), and Federico Moretti (1769-1839), among others. Therefore, musical inspiration for Mercadante’s local color, which we will explore later in this article, was just as likely of the immediate cultural milieu—or the theatre, to be precise—as of strains heard in the local back streets or countryside. This may have certainly helped the resident Italian create an eventual stylistic hybrid, by marrying conventional operatic and Spanish melody.<sup>7</sup>

As the works in question have a far from conventional past, and the context of opera in Spain during the period discussed will be new to many, the purpose of this study is to examine Mercadante’s contributions in terms of their Spanishness by, 1. reconstructing their histories, 2. assessing their critical reception, 3. identifying the traits that were intended to make them appealing locally, and 4. tracing their absorption into the culture. This has proven no mean feat, insofar as the

<sup>4</sup> Autograph letter to *Felice Romani*, Milan (Cádiz, 12 October 1829), private archive of Santo Palermo (Ostuni), by courtesy of S. Palermo. Upon privately commissioning the poet for a libretto on *Don Pelayo*, Mercadante coins the word “nazionale” in suggesting Spanish literary subjects to adapt to projected operas intended for Spanish audiences.

<sup>5</sup> This multipart musical form, incorporating folk melodies and popular texts into scenes, had seen the end of its last vogue decades earlier. Yet, though its heyday transpired during the final third of the 18th century, it remained a staple of the Spanish theatres (albeit to an ever-diminishing degree) throughout the first quarter of the next. For an exhaustive study of this material and its progression, see: Subirá, José *La Tonadilla Escénica* (in three volumes), Tipografía de Archivos (Madrid, 1929), or its more concise counterpart, *La Tonadilla Escénica – Sus Obras y Sus Autores* (Editorial labor, S.A., Barcelona, 1933).

<sup>6</sup> Though a powerful repository of Spanish theatrico-musical inspiration reflecting an era’s tastes and manner, José Subirá admits *tonadilla* was far from a manifestation of vernacular purity devoid of French and Italian influences.

<sup>7</sup> Quijano was the Cruz music director enjoying the longest continuous presence of any composer in Madrid’s theaters, to that time. His Príncipe counterpart, Esteban Moreno (dates), also assisted Mercadante with the *Ópera Italiana*.

circumstances under which these works saw the light of day did not necessarily afford them ready recognition in posterity. Nevertheless, we have here before us an opportunity to reread the long-forgotten critical record from that interval, wherein Mercadante was not only remembered but even discussed for the efforts in question. A main challenge in gleaning this scant but revealing critical record has been to identify any commentary, pronouncements, or insinuations of Mercadante's use of a Spanish vernacular or folk idiom crucial to this study. And while subtleties abound, careful discernment of key passages has rendered results from virtually all reviews. Musical examples will follow the main discussion, preceding the conclusions. Organizing the material into a single concentrated section afforded a stronger platform for showing the mechanics of incorporating themes into opera, bespeaking compositional technique.

It is also hoped that this study will lay the groundwork upon which further perspectives can be established, and further viewpoints reached and queried: for instance, on the premise of exoticism, cultural colonialism, or intercultural transfer *a priori*. Implications of applicability or relevance to these fields will be suggested at the end of this study. And far from arguing terminology, we may use the terms *casticismo* ('of castizo') and *españolismo* interchangeably with Spanishness, but only when one requiring a stronger indication of use of vernacular idiom (melody, rhythm, form, or style) is required, and then only as it reflects the contemporaneous context. The term *Españolismo* as coined by composer and scholar Mariano Soriano Fuertes (1817-1880) is a natural counterpart to the more frequent and often euphemistic *italianismo*,<sup>8</sup> used to describe the operatic style of Italian lyric melody. Therefore, it can be clarified here that "Spanishness" —as implied—generally connotes a global quality that extends to either various other extra-musical aspects or to all of them combined. The question of whether (or not) a special genre was either intended in these operas or thereby created is not at the forefront of our discussion. However, that is implied in the criticisms that Mercadante, by virtue of these works, did become part of an embryonic discussion on that subject, which shall also be engaged herein. Thus, while hoping it will lead to wider discussions or enhance others ongoing in the realms of exoticism or other related fields, ours is more to restore the subject's due historic place, elucidate the material, endow it with some context, and reconstruct its long-ignored historical perspective, via a hermeneutic understanding of its *raison d'être*.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Mariano Soriano Fuertes, *História de la música española*, vol. 3 (Madrid, 1856). Such terms, used derogatorily and still sadly prevalent and parroted in modern scholarship, owe their existence to the freer modes of Spanish critical expression originating during the period. For his part in: J.J. Carreras, "From Literes to Nebra: Spanish dramatic music between tradition and modernity" (p.7), the author, lamenting this tendency, suggests espousing more inclusive and forward-thinking terms, such as "cosmopolitan," en lieu of defining reception of foreign music as "invasion," or "colonialism," for instance. In M. Boyd, J.J. Carreras (Eds.), *Music in Spain During the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1998). Of this collection, "Part I – Music in the theatre" contains articles of great interest to the premise of the eighteenth century. Meanwhile, this writer regrets that terms like "cultural colonialism" and others still appear in contemporary scholarship on opera, especially with respect to the Iberian and Ibero-American world.

<sup>9</sup> Forms of this study were first presented at the following: *Annual Conference of the Society for Musicology in Ireland* (SMI, University of Ulster, Derry, NI), Conference: Music on Stage (Rose Bruford College, Sidcup, Kent, UK), 2010; and *Song, stage and Screen VI* (University of Missouri, Kansas City), 2011. The research presented in this article was executed from 1996, and aided in part by grants from the University of London Central Research Fund (2003), and from the Royal Historical Society (2003). The author also benefited from the support of the late Santo Palermo, and from visiting scholar residency at the Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales (ICCMU) and Musicology Department of the Universidad Complutense, Madrid under their director, Emilio Casares (2002-2006).

## I. Background and Origins of Works

### A. *I due Figaro*

#### 1. Madrid, 1826

Mercadante's Madrid contract purportedly called for two original operas: after a complete reworking of his successful *Il posto abbandonato*,<sup>10</sup> only the second of these—*I due Figaro*—was expressly written on the premises, on Felice Romani's 1820 libretto for Michele Carafa,<sup>11</sup> as modified for a setting by the obscure Italian musician Dionigi Brogialdi (fl. c.1818-1834),<sup>12</sup> two years earlier. It is based on a stage-play by the actor Honoré-Antoine Richaud [de] Martelly (1751-1817),<sup>13</sup> in which Figaro contrives to profit from Count Almaviva by marrying his daughter Inez to the love-struck Cherubino in the guise of a second Figaro, while instructing the would-be playwright Plagio to incorporate the action into his newest work. Besides the allure of its Andalusian subject, it was likely Brogialdi's recent yet little known (and today, still misunderstood) 1825 Barcelona success that prompted Mercadante to essay the subject for a far-less-seasoned and arguably less universally cosmopolitan Madrid

<sup>10</sup> ... ossia Adele ed Amerigo was conceived in its original form for Rosa Morandi, also casting contralto Isabella Fabbrica, La Scala, 1822. Mercadante began revising the Madrid version upon arriving in May, intended for the debut there of the latter (his betrothed at the time), and containing largely new material and accounted for one of the two original works required by contract.

<sup>11</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *I due Figaro* (ms copy of autograph score), E-Mbhv, música, 404-l. Often parodying and citing lines from Cesare Sterbini's text for Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, it is interesting that the underlying text has been edited out where these similarities occur in the score, replacing it with a modified text.

<sup>12</sup> Dionigi [alt. Dionisio] Brogialdi directed the opera in Barcelona from 1823 to early 1826, composing several lyric works (including the *farsa Zeliska e Amorveno*, premièred 14 July 1824), his only known, all missing. He announced his *I due Figaro* in the *Diario de Barcelona* (9 November 1825) as *los dos figaros, ó sea la tercera parte del Barbero de Sevilla*, the day of the première, which ran, ran fifteen and a half performances (from 9 November 1825 through 6 February, 1826), but never revived there. After Barcelona, Brogialdi was engaged as Maestro al Cembalo at the teatro Sutera (Turin), giving his *I due Figaro* for the 1827 Carnival season with some success (*I teatri – Giornale Drammatico, Musicale e Coreografico*, vol. 1, pt. 1 (Giulio Ferrario, Milano, 1827), 14. For more on this and a study of the composer's textual treatment, see: Mario Rinaldi, *Felice Romani: Dal melodrama classico al melodrama romantico*, De Santis (Rome, 1965). For the most complete secondary source on this episode to date, see: Francisco Virella Cassañes, *La Ópera en Barcelona – estudio histórico-crítico* (Barcelona, 1888).

<sup>13</sup> *Les deux Figaro, ou le Sujet de comédie* premièred in at the Théâtre Français de la Rue de Richelieu, Paris, 1794. Despite this opera's being publicized in Barcelona with the secondary title 'ossia la terza parte del Barbiere di Siviglia', the argument has nothing to do with Beaumarchais' original Figaro plots (let alone with his *La Mere coupable*). Instead, it is a cynical commentary on Beaumarchais' *Le Mariage de Figaro* and Martelly's own retaliation against the playwright, who accused him of ruining a Bordeaux production in which he interpreted Almaviva. See: William Driver Howarth, *Beaumarchais and the Theatre* (Routledge, 1995), 90-91. For an even deeper comparative analysis of Martelly's play with other 'creation literature' that continued developing the Figaro saga after Beaumarchais, see: Michel Delon, "Figaro et son double," *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France: Beaumarchais* (Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 84<sup>e</sup> Année, No. 5, Sep. - Oct., 1984), 774-784. This also contains further extremely valuable scholarship thereon, namely: Enzo Giudici, *Beaumarchais dans la littérature de création*, pp. 750-773. Hinting at (not citing or corroborating) a possible, yet unknown, 1832 Mantua staging of Mercadante, Giudici cites the 1827 Turin production of Brogialdi. An a-posteriori connection to Romani's work lists various settings with libretto sources (almost exhaustively), and subsequent versions with respective premières, except for Mercadante's and the Barcelona première of Brogialdi's.

audience.<sup>14</sup> Given the missing score, it is not known if this composer had worked more than one or two Spanish themes into the piece to heighten its national premise (as intimated by the Barcelona press), but the little evidence found indicates that he did not attempt it on the scale of Mercadante's subsequent effort. For one thing, Spanish dances were "intercalated" (i.e., between the acts) by members of the Spanish vernacular company whose contractual obligations included that function, and therefore, music would have been taken from the pre-existing repertory for that purpose.<sup>15</sup> And for another, the solitary extant example from the Brogialdi version not only incorporates a recently published folksong (*El Vejuquito*), but also constitutes a practically verbatim arrangement of the piece.<sup>16</sup>

Completed and signed 24 November 1826,<sup>17</sup> "Figari" (as it was abbreviated throughout the Madrid manuscript) was slated for a strangely immediate 3 December premiere, which the *Diario de Madrid* duly announced in advance: all signs point to its having passed censorship and gone into production.<sup>18</sup> However, it never made it to the stage, instead falling victim to a divisive last-minute and long-unexplained censorial prohibition, on the eve of its opening-night. Compounding the mystery, the Madrilenian press abided a plethora of governmental strictures causing a complete dearth of coverage during this period. That made the following entry in *The Harmonicon* a solitary source of news for the entire historic Madrid season, the only contemporaneous mention of the affair by default. In order of contextual relevance, the second paragraph explains:

The engagement of Mercande [Mercadante is most likely meant] with the director of our theatre,<sup>19</sup> entitled him to profits of one night's performance, a kind of benefit. He chose *The Two Figaros*, but the local authorities forbade it. These censors, composed of capuchins and Jesuits, have inserted in their *index expurgatorius* many airs of this composer, which they doubtless consider as opposed to morality and orthodox opinion.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> By the start of the 1826 season, Madrid had experienced Italian opera sporadically (from 1816), in terms of introduction to modern repertoire. This put audience sophistication levels behind those of publics in Italy and perhaps some other major European centers at that time.

<sup>15</sup> The *Diario de Barcelona* sometimes announced that it was "intermediada de las voleras [sic] de la Tirana" as danced by "Sra. Samaniego y el Sr. Alsina" [sic].

<sup>16</sup> This basically constitutes the addition of a voice part to harmonize the melody within the duet (Figaro and Susanna), over an extremely simplified accompaniment of repeated chords which detracts from the piece's intended 'Mexican' character. How Brogialdi was engaged for Barcelona is unknown: his cachet as a composer is doubtful, the signs of an arranger being more obvious, a function he filled extensively, in Milan. Interestingly, among his numerous piano reductions for Ricordi is a 4-hand version of the "Sinfonia alla Spagnuola" from Francesco Morlacchi's *Il nuovo Barbiere di Seviglia*, dating from c.1822, probably just prior to his departure for Barcelona.

<sup>17</sup> Mercadante, *I due Figaro*, E-Mbhv (música, 404-1). The score's final page bears the composer's signature in customary Italian month abbreviation, placing a numeral for the first two syllables, i.e. 8.<sup>bre</sup> or 9.<sup>bre</sup> (for *ottobre* and *novembre*, respectively), but it is difficult to discern which is meant. While the former makes sense, leaving time for the premiere date, a '9' is assumed, and so have we chosen November, not impossible, given the dates of ensuing events.

<sup>18</sup> Announcement for Mercadante's benefit (*I due Figaro*), *Diario de Madrid*, 28 November 1826, 322.

<sup>19</sup> Brackets here are original to source text.

<sup>20</sup> "Foreign Musical Report: Madrid," *The Harmonicon*, vol.1 part 5, May 1827, 37.

Whereas Spanish theatres were subject to submitting all works to both the  *censor político* and the  *censor eclesiástico*, the foregoing is unique in making the latter solely responsible for banning “Figari.” But it does not explain how the principal censor’s earlier decision to  *pass* the work, without which it could not have gone into production in the first instance, was overridden, or if the ecclesiastic authority had also previously ruled in its favor. Further reasons positing that only the “secular” (political) branch had been involved appeared only after the opera’s first complete and only “official” public staging in 1835 (Teatro del Príncipe, 26 February), nine years after its intended premiere, and two after the death of autocratic King Ferdinand VII.<sup>21</sup> Of three reviews occasioned by the production, the anonymous  *Revista Española* reveals particularly intriguing secrets surrounding the opera’s prohibition, lending—if not ultimate answers—signposts for further investigation. Reminding readers that the episode of  *I due Figaro*’s 1826 origins and fate were common knowledge, and “that its performance was prohibited when it was already at the point of being staged,” he confessed

I don’t know what [ideas] were put in the head of Mr. Villela, Governor of the [Supreme] Council [of Castile]; I don’t know what intrigues were parleyed on the part of  *Cortesi*, his Excellency’s favorite; I don’t know what theatrical machinations were set afoot. . . . what is certain, is that the anathema of irrevocable prohibition fell on the libretto, on the production, and in turn, on the music.<sup>22</sup>

But, the reviewer continues, this was not without emotional struggle involving many, noting that

Maestro Mercadante who had composed the second part of  *Figaro* especially for  *Fabrica* [sic], was agitated; he lobbied, did as much as he could, as did his devotees; but it was a waste of time.<sup>23</sup> Mr. Villela was not a man who convinced easily: he raised his eyebrows, twisted his expression, muttered some nonsense, and had no off-switch. Those were good times for a wretched politician to reach high rank without merit!<sup>24</sup>

Witnessing events first-hand, as might one of Mercadante’s aforementioned “devotees,” the critic anecdotally bridges some gaps extant in an archival record that generally bears him out. Without referring to either  *The Harmonicon*’s insights, or to the type of censorship applied, he guides us towards answers, purporting that no less a figure than Ignacio Martínez de Villela (1749- 1827),

<sup>21</sup> While 1826 is historically a year of relative peace and economic stability, it was also a very brutal one politically (D.T. Gies: “Entre drama y música: La lucha por el público teatral en la época de Fernando VII,”  *Bulletin Hispanique*, vol. 91, 1989, no. 1, 41), as  *The Harmonicon* article also witnesses (see next citation).

<sup>22</sup> “Los dos Figaros: Opera del Maestro Mercadante.”  *La Revista Española*, 29 January 1835, 1459. “Sabido es también que su representación fue prohibida cuando estaba ya á punto de ser puesta en escena. No sé qué hubieron de meterle en la cabeza al señor Villela, a la sazón gobernador del consejo; no sé que intrigas mediaron de la parte de la  *Cortesi*, favorita de S.E.; no sé que trapiondas teatrales hubieron de moverse...: ello es, que el anatema de la irrevocable prohibición cayó sobre el  *libretto*, sobre la representación, y por rechazo sobre la música.”

<sup>23</sup>  *Revista Española*, 29 January 1835. “El maestro Mercadante que á propósito para la  *Fabrica* [sic] había compuesto la parte del segundo  *Figaro*, bulló; se movió, hizo cuanto pudo, y lo mismo sus apasionados; pero tiempo perdido.”

<sup>24</sup>  *Revista Española*, “El señor Villela no era hombre que á dos lirones se daba á partido: estiró las cejas, frunció el gesto, dijo que  *nones* y no hubo escape. ¡Buenos tiempos eran aquellos para que un consejerazo de calibre se volviese atrás!”



manipulated by the jealous *prima donna soprano* Letizia Cortesi,<sup>25</sup> summoned considerable might to quash the work under false pretences, *post-approval*. Since Vilella, as Governor, or President, of the Supreme Council of Castile in Fernando's Spain, was second in authority only to the King, we might assume that censorship was political.<sup>26</sup> But research into Vilella's further credentials reveals a hard-line Fernandine cleric, religious leader and one-time grand inquisitor, thus enrolling him as both a political and religious menace, more coercive than even *La revista* had remembered.<sup>27</sup> Further concerning Cortesi's involvement, the few period documents mentioning her, beginning with earlier correspondence to theatre directors Gil and Cristiani, reveal what might have motivated her presumed vendetta.<sup>28</sup> Alluding to the Brogialdi work in which she created Susanna in the original 1825 Barcelona production,<sup>29</sup> Cortesi writes:

When the time comes for my benefit, I have decided to do it with the opera "Los dos Figaros," believing that this will afford the public some deserved novelty, and which to my mind, will prove more useful to the company, not just for its newness, but also because it is distinguished for its genre...<sup>30</sup>

Understandably, Cortesi's three-years' Barcelona experience under Brogialdi, *as a principal creatrix of all his known works*, shaped her vision of what Madrid should hear.<sup>31</sup> Convinced that her opera's further success in Madrid was in her interest, the directors' reply (despite their expressed desire to please the "donna" in any way possible) must have seemed vexing:

---

<sup>25</sup> *Revista Española*.

<sup>26</sup> My research substantiates that archival documents refer to Vilella not by name but by title: 'El Gobernador [del Consejo de Castilla].' Missives reflecting orders to cancel or prohibit any work during this period invariably originate with that office. Vilella lead the omnipotent governmental body of the Consejo Superior de Castilla from December 1823 as Ferdinand's answer to the liberal threat, for being instrumental in quashing the Constitution that May (as done a decade earlier, when prosecuting constitutional deputies on Fernando's return from exile in 1814). See: Juan-Eusebio Pérez Saenz de Urturi, *La libertad religiosa en el estatuto constitucional de bayona* (1808). (Departamento de H. Contemporánea, UNED, Madrid).

<http://digitum.um.es/xmlui/bitstream/10201/6972/2/La%20libertad%20religiosa%20en%20el%20Estatuto%20Constitucional%20de%20Bayona%20%281808%29.pdf.txt>. Accessed: 12 April 2012, 20:32. Also: Archidiócesis de Zaragoza, Temas de historia zaragozana (II): Eclesiásticos zaragozanos en las Cortes de Cádiz. 18 marzo, 2012.

<http://www.archizaragoza.org/actualidad/temas-de-historia-zaragozana-ii-eclesiasticos-zaragozanos-en-las-cortes-de-cadiz>. Accessed: 10 April 2013, 15:49.

<sup>27</sup> Because of this and records showing him active from the mid-1750s, thus making him sufficiently advanced in age at his death in office in 1827, his alleged relationship with Cortesi should be considered with great caution.

<sup>28</sup> "Oficios originales y sus contestaciones á varios sugetos entre ellos, de la Sra. Cortesi, Vaccani, etc.," E-Mahv, (Secretaría, 3.477-37), Letizia Cortesi, autograph letter to Eugenio Cristiani and Bernardo Gil, 1 October 1826.

<sup>29</sup> *I due Figaro, o sia I soggetto di una comedia* (libretto; Torner, Barcelona, 1825).

<sup>30</sup> Cortesi, autograph letter ... " ...que para quando llegue el caso de mi beneficio, me decido hacerlo con la ópera de los Dos Figaros, por creer que con ella se proporcionara al Publico una novedad digna de el, y que á mi entender reportará mas utilidad á la sociedad, no solo por ser nueva, sino tambien por el merito que en su clase encierra..."

<sup>31</sup> We omit citing scholarship utilizing sources cited here, as they either mislead or add nothing to knowledge by remaining completely oblivious to the otherwise well-documented and historically significant Barcelona episodes involving Brogialdi and Cortesi, which we have fully researched and presented for the publication of further studies.

... everything is developing contrary to this very request. It so happens that with this opera, since no one else has selected it for his or her benefit, Maestro Saberio [sic] Mercadante has, and is writing a new one [our italics], for which reason it is impossible to accede to your request.<sup>32</sup>

The existence of a solitary fragment of the Brogialdi version from Barcelona, in the Biblioteca Nacional, bears out the hypothesis that the work was somehow making its way to the capital (perhaps brought by Cortesi herself), and that arrangements or discussions had been underway to re-stage the work in Madrid.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the long-ignored fact that Brogialdi was then mounting his own production in Italy speaks to the score's likely unavailability (no copies have yet been found either there or in Spain).<sup>34</sup>

At Cortesi's insistence or not, the work was banned on Villela's orders, backed by a royal decree, which he conceivably finagled by playing upon King Fernando's notorious paranoia<sup>35</sup> and exaggerating *I due Figaro's* remote *Beaumarchais* premise.<sup>36</sup> This would have ensued easily in the wake of a recent censorship coup against plays suspected of Masonic symbolism (including *Polímenes ó los misterios de Eleusis* with incidental music by Mercadante, which Villela cancelled weeks earlier, after three performances).<sup>37</sup> As with Fernando himself, once convinced that a work was remotely subversive, and be it as cleric or statesman, Villela would have had no compunction in using the church's censorship machinery. Therefore, the ensuing religious ban (unusual for its severity and

<sup>32</sup> "Contestacion á la Sra. Cortesi" [draft], unsigned by Eugenio Cristiani or Bernardo Gil, to Leticia Cortesi, 1 October 1826 " ...todo se prepara en contrario de este mismo deseo; asi sucede con dicha opera, pues como ninguno la havia eligido para su beneficio, lo ha echo Maestro Dn. Saberio y la está escribiendo de nuebo, razon por que nos es imposible acceder á su solicitud de V. . . ." We translate "de nuebo" [sic] this way and not as "anew," for these reasons: firstly, Mercadante had not already written another one, as has been suggested, and, secondly: because, we logically deduce from careful reading of available sources on preceding Barcelona seasons that this reference to the opera, though not otherwise named, concerns the *Brogialdi* version. Cortesi neither seems to have known this, nor is it conceivable that a composer in Mercadante's position would not have opted to introduce an original work at his own benefit. Concurring with Michael Wittman (responsible for locating the second *Figaro* score in *I-Nc* long, unknown due to misfiling, much as the Madrid score in *E-Mbh*, located by this writer in 1998), that it is a partial, unfinished copy, we contend that it in no way constitutes "a prior version." When first drafting the present study, we believed that Mercadante, leaving some of his Madrid manuscripts behind despite planning to mount a *Figaro* in Italy, probably began it afresh, ultimately abandoning it. This is borne out via his unknown letters, in my forthcoming dissertation. The existence of a second partial *I due Figaro* score by Mercadante (*I-Nc*) does not imply his dissatisfaction with one version to begin another, but rather that it likely originates with its preparation for performance in Cádiz in late 1828 or early 1829.

<sup>33</sup> *E-Mbn*, MC/4617/19. Possibly from the Francisco de Paula collection. The composer's name is misspelled "Brogialdi," but the error seems to be a solitary instance; a libretto and all other sources (cited here) clearly bear the correct spelling. Ironically, this score constitutes the only extant fragment of Brogialdi's music thus far known, discounting piano reductions and arrangements of other composers works for Ricordi, Milan.

<sup>34</sup> See: note no. 12.

<sup>35</sup> Regarding issuance of the "Royal order" backing Villela's purported machinations, María Teresa Puga, *Fernando VII* (Madrid: Ariel, 2003), 113, avers that not a day passed when Fernando did not meet with his ministers, often responding (while otherwise occupied), "Alright, yes, just as you see fit /(*bien, sí, lo que te parezca*)." Gies, *Theatre and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 112.

<sup>37</sup> *E-Mahv* (Secretaria, 3.477), Corregidor León de la Cámara Cano (juez protector de los teatros), Madrid, 12 November 1826, conveying the Governor's orders to Eugenio Cristiani (Dir. Teatro del Principe).

post-approval timing) was probably effected due to his influence, as a premise to override the previously passed political censorship, and as a primary device implemented in support of obtaining the royal decree. Put otherwise, it was the surest way to drive the final nail in the opera's coffin.

This disparaging political chicanery and manipulation of religion, to which the public was not indifferent, went well beyond upsetting the creators and company, taking its toll on civic morale and betokening severe repercussions. The government had erred in ignoring the mystique now surrounding the much-anticipated manifestation of a new-age *Cherubino*, "his" cancellation personally humiliating Spain's most celebrated theatrical personalities in recent history, and therefore, a major disappointment to all:

*La Fabrica*, on whom Mercadante looked favorably,<sup>38</sup> could not do him justice in a role arranged for her, and the elegance with which she dressed as a man (for which she was corseted as if in a cast), remained in embryo. In a word, the piece was not done, and remained sepulchred in the files of censorial prohibition.<sup>39</sup>

A powerful reputation in portraying Rossini and Meyerbeer trouser roles at La Scala preceded Isabella Fabbrica (the company's "prima donna contralto" and Maestro's betrothed), whose off-stage masculine dressing habits caused a fashion furore upon her arrival in Madrid. To better understand this allure and the impact of the troupe's early presence there, this commonly evoked literary image illustrates the idolatry to which the singers were subject.<sup>40</sup>

This enthusiasm reached a point where not only was their singing imitated, but their gestures and mannerisms as well. They dressed à la [sic] Montresor, combed their hair à la Cortessi [sic], and women—cross-dressed as men à la Fábrica [sic]—were all the rage that entire year. So powerful is the prestige of novelty, and so dominant the precepts of fashion."<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Mercadante tried twice to salvage his work with a concert of the opera's excerpts for his benefit night instead (annotations in the manuscript of "per suggerire" on the first page of several

<sup>38</sup> This is a veiled reference to the betrothal between the composer and the singer at the time of their Madrid collaboration. It had been ascertained by both Santo Parlermo and by Michael Wittman through as yet unpublished research (still recent at the time of this study's first-draft completion a decade ago), shared with and corroborated by this writer: while noted in various sources in Spain, Italy and Portugal, scholarly disinterest in the composer and the singer's oblivion kept the question buried to that point in time.

<sup>39</sup> *Revista Española*. "La *Fabrica*, á quien Mercadante miraba con buenos ojos, no pudo lucirlo en un papel arreglado para ella, y la elegancia con que se vestía de hombre (para lo cual estaba contorneada como en un molde), quedó por aquella vez en embrión. En una palabra, la pieza nos e hizo, y quedó sepultada en los cartones de la prohibición censoria."

<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the entire company had some effect on the public, each member inspiring one fashion or another fad. As for Fabbrica's La Scala credits, her successes up to and through Madrid would be unmatched from that point on in her career, for reasons to be explained in my upcoming dissertation.

<sup>41</sup> Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, "La Filarmonía," *Obras completas de Don Ramón de Mesonero Romanos*, ed. Carlos Seco Serrano (Madrid; Atlas, 1967), I:171. Also cited in Luis Carmena y Millán, *Crónica de la Ópera Italiana en Madrid desde 1738 hasta nuestros días* (Madrid, 1878; rpt. ICCMU, Madrid, 2002), 51. "llegó a tal punto el entusiasmo, que no solamente se les imitaba en el canto, sino en gestos y modales; se vestía a la Montresor, se peinaba a la Cortessi, y la mujeres varoniles a la Fábrica causaron furor todo aquel año. Tan poderoso es el prestigio de la novedad y tan dominantes los preceptos de la moda."

pezzi chiusi attest to this). However, a further communications triangle on 8-9 December, has Magistrate León, conveying Vilella's orders to anxiously huddled directors, composer and company denying the request, unsure that the program contained pieces from the prohibited opera.<sup>42</sup> *The Harmonicon* helps flesh out what eventually happened next:

It is said that the *Barber of Seville* will be allowed, but it is a question whether the character of *Basilio* will be suffered to remain. Mercadante, who did not enter Spain very willingly, furnished himself with a passport to quit it, immediately after this event.<sup>43</sup>

Ultimately, the overzealous coup prevailed: a draconian ban encumbered *both* versions, ensuring neither could be performed, and causing—according to *The Harmonicon*—far greater backlash than historians would have us believe:

A VIOLENT war is raging here, between the public and Mad. Cortesi, a first singer at the grand theatre, notwithstanding which she persists in appearing on the stage. She performed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the present month (*December*) in *La Cenerentola*. The police had received orders to watch all those who manifested any signs of disapprobation; but the public, having got intelligence of this, preserved a dead silence after her songs, though they applauded in a violent manner Mad. Cori [sic],<sup>44</sup> who is decidedly and allowedly her inferior. In consequence of this, the former had no sooner finished her part in the opera than she found herself very ill; since which, she has become really indisposed, and is confined to her bed.<sup>45</sup>

Cortesi's suffered indisposition is all the more understandable given that the foregoing incident transpired during what should have been her benefit performance. In allegorical terms, this is a clear-cut case of a would-be Susana, reduced instead to a remorseful Figaro I, caught up in her own machinations and suffering the consequences of her guilt. Taken alone, this first of two seemingly unrelated paragraphs raised more questions than they answered. However, though *The Harmonicon* relates no circumstances behind Cortesi's disgrace, the timing of the news leaves no doubt of her involvement in the opera's ban. The December 1826 filing date keeps faith that recorded events transpired shortly following the scheduled premiere, showing that the *Figaros* ban indeed caused public indignation resulting in a theatrical incident of noteworthy proportions.

<sup>42</sup> E-Mahv (Secretaria, 3.477), Magistrate (Corregidor) León, conveying Vilella's orders to theaters, Madrid, 8-9 December 1826. Though known in memos and messages from the Corregidor (magistrate to the theatres) only as "El exmo. Sr. gobernador del Consejo," it does match the title and office held by the reviewer's Vilella at the time.

<sup>43</sup> "Foreign Musical Report, Madrid," *The Harmonicon*, vol.1, part 5, May 1827, 37. Until now, all interpretations of Mercadante's first Madrid sojourn have stemmed from conflicting nineteenth-century Italian and Spanish sources, the most accurate of which (however flawed) were published in Spain. Of these, Mariano Soriano Fuertes, *Historia de la Música en España desde la llegada de los fenicios hasta nuestros días*, v. 4 (Madrid, 1856), suggesting Mercadante broke the contract because of disagreements with theater managers, is worth noting in relation to *The Harmonicon's* statement. This casts doubt on Florimo's account, which has Mercadante under terms of a limited May-December engagement. See: Francesco Florimo: *La scuola musicale di Napoli*, vol. III (*Cenno storico*, 114; Morano, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Naples, 1882). Because the contract to write *Il Montanaro* is otherwise believed (by Wittmann) to have been an established obligation while already in Spain. *The Harmonicon's* allusion to Mercadante's changing his mind and meanwhile seeking other opportunities in Italy would have had the composer uncharacteristically unprepared.

<sup>44</sup> English soprano Fanny [Correy] Corri-Paltoni (married to tenor Giuseppe Paltoni) arrived in Madrid later in 1826 to complete the roster.

<sup>45</sup> "Foreign Musical Report: Madrid," *The Harmonicon*, vol.1, part 5, May 1827, 37, paragraph 1.

Why, then, Cortesi might sabotage a project wherein she embodied a fiery ‘Spanish-style’ *Susanna* fashioned especially for her by a leading composer has long remained otherwise unclear. While intriguing to know if she took umbrage at Mercadante’s following suggestions to supplant Brogiardi’s decidedly inferior *I due Figaro* with a new one of his own, it is more expedient to ask why Mercadante indeed chose it. Turning to the cast, Barcelona’s veteran *basso cantante* Luigi Maggiorotti—Mercadante’s Figaro “prime”—was likely eager to count that meatier role to his credit, having created Cherubino/Figaro II in the Brogiardi version.<sup>46</sup> More precisely, inquiring further into what motivated Mercadante’s unique approach to his first opera written entirely in Spain, lacking documentary proof of an actual quest for Spanishness in either Figaros or Chisiotte, some possible reasons emerge. Our most compelling source, the *Revista*, though asserting that *Figari* was written purposely for Fabbrica to portray Cherubino, explains neither for whom vernacular pieces were included specifically, nor why. Of the company’s Spaniards, José María Ruíz and *seconda donna* Soprano Giuseppina “Josefa” Spontoni (raised on the Spanish stage),<sup>47</sup> as well as Concepción Cobos, while feasibly aiding the composer’s exploration of vernacular vocal line, received those—for the Countess, Plagio and Inez, respectively—reflecting Mercadante’s signature Italianate style almost exclusively. It is, rather, Cortesi who surprises us as the likely answer, outstanding among the troupe’s Italians for having essayed the vernacular style in Barcelona, and garnering a reputation there for interpreting Spanish song and *tonadilla*.<sup>48</sup> Musically as well as dramatically, the work is clearly as much about her as it is Fabbrica (Mercadante was not without the common experience of his contemporaries in placating singers’ egos). With her vocality and personality mirrored in the most notable Spanish-character pieces, Cortesi was as instrumental in bringing about Mercadante’s first experiment with Spanish melody, ironically, as in allegedly silencing it.<sup>49</sup> In fact, further evidence of the backlash against the *prima donna* has long survived unexplained, in the form of one of several published fragments from the score, presumably to have been issued at the time of the premiere: the title page of the Spanish version of *Susanna*’s bolero has her name discernibly struck from the type where it would have otherwise figured at the end of the phrase “as sung by. . . .”<sup>50</sup> Moreover,

<sup>46</sup> The cast of the Barcelona “Due Figaro” also included tenor Francesco Piermarini as Count Almaviva.

<sup>47</sup> Spanish Soprano and actress of Italian parentage, Giuseppina Spontoni began her career as a child ballerina. Subject to low local wages, demands on her services to both Madrid’s Spanish dramatic and Italian opera companies were emblematic of the load of roles assigned each Spanish troupe member, such that her obituary (*Corréo Literario y Mercántil*, 13 October 1828) noted that her shoes would be very difficult to fill.

<sup>48</sup> Her first performance of *El presidiario* with veteran Spanish actor Felipe Blanco on 29 December 1825 (*Diario de Barcelona*, 29 December 1825) was reprised six times before the end of the season.

<sup>49</sup> Because Cortesi’s fame preceded her as the company’s sole leading soprano, jealousy between prime donne seems a questionable (though not impossible) root of her machinations. Contralto Fabbrica’s not technically representing the “threat” of another soprano, Cortesi’s contempt sooner points to her perceiving displacement of the Brogiardi version as depriving her of an expressly written vehicle, in favor of one rumored for the contralto. Beyond what is presented in here, the best source for further study of Cortesi’s life and career to date is José Luis Molina Martínez, María Belén Molina Jiménez, *María Manuela Oreiro Lema (1818-1854) en el diario de José Musso Valiente: La ópera en Madrid en el bienio 1836-1837* (Murcia; Universidad de Murcia, 2003).

<sup>50</sup> *Boleras Italianadas* (Madrid; Wimbs, 1826). A dedication to the concert singer (possibly one of the period’s frequently unnamed “aficionados”) Felicia Castellanos is instead included; she married Angelo Inzenga not long after that, and in 1828, the union produced a son, future composer José Ángel Inzenga y Castellanos. The Sicilian Inzenga had resettled in Madrid and was already active in the theaters from at least 1822. His association with Mercadante, though scanty

surprising new evidence will later show that Mercadante, recognizing the impossibility of summarily discounting Brogialdi's score altogether, was guided in part by a particular (the aforementioned) fragment.<sup>51</sup>

## 2. Cádiz, 1829

To sum up these necessary antecedents to its premiere, one occasion bringing the composer the satisfaction of seeing his *I due Figaro* publicly staged in Spain (albeit fractionally), came during his tenure at the Teatro Principal of Cádiz, on 28 February 1829. For the composer's benefit corresponding to the final performance of his expressly composed *La rappresaglia*, excerpts from *I due Figaro* were inserted between acts, including the "Bolero," "Polo," a "coro español," and the overture (repeated at the 15 March chorus benefit).<sup>52</sup> Though indicating only the Spanish excerpts, it probably constituted the first theatrical performance of Susanna's cavatina and duet with Figaro, interpreted by Josephine De Meric Glossop and Domenico Vaccani, respectively. The composer's faith in pursuing vernacular themes rekindled, and the public's appetite for new works whetted, it must have served as a teaser, stirring universal resolve for a new Spanish-style opera.

## B. *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* (Cádiz, 1830)

The second of these works, and the last of the two Mercadante wrote expressly for the Andalusian city of Cádiz (after *La rappresaglia*), *Don Chisciotte* had a less eventful but equally obscure past. While reasons behind the project are unclear, we may deduce that the musical-theatrical climate in Cádiz, opera-starved at Mercadante's arrival, was certainly rife with representations of Spanish music. Supplementing the ambient strains of folklore, the city found itself amid a full-blown *tonadilla* revival, through an enterprising Spanish company maintaining a season at the *Ópera Italiana's* rival theatre until its closure for most of the previous 1828 season.<sup>53</sup> Effectively transferred to the Teatro Principal for want of an opera company, they continued alongside Mercadante's 'Lisbon' troupe after its arrival.<sup>54</sup> Mercadante, arriving December 1828 to complete *La rappresaglia* in time for Carnival in 1829, would have certainly had occasion to hear such offerings (including, perhaps, a production of Manuel

---

documented, was likely a prominent part of the latter's support circle in Madrid, dating from shortly after his arrival in 1826.

<sup>51</sup> Brogialdi, ob. cit.

<sup>52</sup> *Diario Mercantil de Cádiz*, 21 February 1829. This program may have occurred in any of *La rappresaglia's* previous three performances on 21 (premiere), 22, and 25 February; Madrid staged *La rappresaglia* the next season. We initially presumed that Mercadante would not have had access to the opera's original 1826 materials, and therefore would have likely had to reconstitute the pieces en situ/pro loco [?]. Different versions of the overture, bolero, and polo in I-Nc, likely constituting the scores presented in Cádiz, bear out this hypothesis.

<sup>53</sup> In fact, as our research affirms, there really was no regular 1828-29 "carnival season," in the established sense of the term, during which Cádiz was indefinitely deprived of an *Ópera Italiana* (until 1834). The Teatro del Balon's interests now transplanted to the Principal for 1828-29, the latter resembled the former in its offerings from 1828. The Mombelli company gone, the Principal basically functioned as the old Balon (now renamed San Fernando). Only after the Lisbon troupe under Mercadante arrived at the tail end of the would-be 1828 Carnival season did the two theatres resume their separate functions again, until the next—and final—Carnival season.

<sup>54</sup> These singers had once formed the opera company for several seasons. They were consequently engaged as a Spanish dramatic company and therefore responsible for the noted vernacular musical repertory as well.

García's *El poeta calculista*).<sup>55</sup> This climate, and proof of Mercadante's potential for appealing to local passions for operatic and native musics with the “Figari” excerpts, probably sparked an exchange of ideas between himself, stockholders, and impresario Bernardo Darhan (a rich local entrepreneur). To that end, a program note concluding the preamble to the libretto for *Don Chisciotte* exists to show the reader the composer's intention in adding Spanish-style melodic features and language, outright. It explains what some may have considered risky business: an Italian composer's aptitude for its operatic treatment aside, perhaps with still-silenced “Figari” the genre's only precedent, the public's imminent reaction to unexpected vernacular elements concerned producer and creator. To justify his motivations, the foreword explains that Mercadante:

... having taken upon himself to apply characteristic Spanish music to this composition, [he] believed it convenient to avail himself of various themes of the best songs of the nation, in order to make his work even more characteristic.”<sup>56</sup>

The libretto itself divulges that *Chisciotte* was written on the spot by Stefano Ferrero,<sup>57</sup> a company *basso buffo* and the opera's title-role protagonist,<sup>58</sup> and translated into Spanish by one “D.T.C.”<sup>59</sup> Respecting a long-standing convention in Italian opera dating back to Cervantes's time, Ferrero and Mercadante drew inspiration from the Camacho wedding episode, which corresponds to Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, part two, chapters XIX-XXI. Historically, it was far less frequent as a lyric vehicle in Spain.<sup>60</sup> In it, we find Chiteria, forced by her father (the avaricious bungler, Bernardo) to marry the rich Gamaccio, with the blessing of his friend Chisciotte, to the desperation of her lover, poor Basilio. Unable to prevent the marriage, Basilio concocts an outrageous strategy involving

<sup>55</sup> Announced as “Los contrabandistas” (*Diario Mercantil de Cádiz*, 14 December 1828). Mercadante's arrival date is uncertain; the DMC (21 January 1829) noted that Mercadante, assuming the mantle of *maestro compositor*, was concurrently composing *La Rappresaglia* expressly for Cádiz and the current company, though he may have conceived or begun it before leaving Lisbon.

<sup>56</sup> Esteban Ferrero, *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio/Don Quijote en las bodas de Camacho*, Ramón Howe (Cádiz, 1830). “Habiendo tomado á su cargo el Maestro Mercadante el aplicar la música á esta composición de carácter español, creyó conveniente servirse de varios motivos de las mejores canciones de la nación, para hacer todavía mas característica su obra.”

<sup>57</sup> Little else is known of Sardinian-born Stefano Ferrero, except that after a stint in the Italian provinces, including as protagonist in *Mosé* (Teatro Riccardi, Bergamo, 1822), he was engaged in Porto at the Teatro São João (1824-27), arriving in Lisbon after the season, in 1828. He also provided the libretto for Mercadante's cantata *La contienda de los dioses* (*Diario Mercantil de Cádiz*, 29-30 December 1829), composed later that year for the wedding of King Ferdinand to his grandniece, Maria Cristina Borbone.

<sup>58</sup> Ferrero, *Don Chisciotte*. The libretto gives the name *Esteban*. David John Cranmer, *Opera in Portugal 1793-1828: a study in repertoire and its spread* (PhD. Diss., University of London, 1997), 405, notes that Portuguese libretti ascribed him the initial “E.” to signify the vernacular equivalent, ‘Estevão.’

<sup>59</sup> De Napoli, *La triade melodrammatica*, 125, erroneously contends that the opera was first sung in Spanish. Similarly, nothing indicates that the aforementioned cantata was performed in Spanish either: newspapers routinely announced titles in the vernacular, even assuming they would be performed in the original (Italian).

<sup>60</sup> Adela Presas, “Don Chisciotte en la ópera italiana del siglo XIX: ‘Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio,’ de Saverio Mercadante.” *Tus obras los rincones de la tierra descubren* (*Actas del VI Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Cervantes*, 623-26 (Centro de Estudios Cervantinos, Alcalá de Henares, 2008).

Camacho's newly arrived guests, Don Chisciotte and Sancio Panza. Enraged when Sancho dismisses him, Basilio coerces both knight and squire into helping him regain his love, which he achieves feigning death and subsequently reappearing at the wedding to demand Chiteria's hand *in extremis*, to which both groom and father are obliged to accede.

Since opera reviews had disappeared from the Cádiz press after Carnival 1829,<sup>61</sup> what we know of *Chisciotte's* initial February 1830 success comes from Mercadante himself, who wrote: "Our Teatro Principal fared very well, and I did myself much honor with the last opera in one act, composed by me expressly in Spanish character, and entitled *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*. . . ."<sup>62</sup> Despite premiering on 10 February 1830, within just weeks of the season's close, *Chisciotte* enjoyed a run of four more performances.<sup>63</sup>

## II. Later Performances and Critical View

### A. *I due Figaro* (Madrid, 1835)

#### 1. Critical reception

*I due Figaro* arrived at the wrong time, twice: first in 1826—hostage to political caprice—and next at its indifferently conceived 26 January 1835 premiere, doomed an ill-chosen, hastily revised vehicle for completely different voices than those for which it had been intended. As then, the work was especially chosen for a singer considered most apt to make an impression in the music, *prima donna* soprano Almerinda Manzocchi. She, like Adelaide Sala and Cortesi before her, delighted in showing off Spanish selections on occasion, gaining a reputation for interpreting vernacular song.<sup>64</sup> If the choice indeed suited her, the need to profile her part at the work's expense seems hardly imaginable. Yet, a badly scrambled score still bears witness to extravagant cuts made to diminish, even eliminate, certain roles in favor of others.

<sup>61</sup> This constituted a solitary example, with a full review of *La rappresaglia* contrary to the exaggerated claim by Thomas G. Kaufman that "As was customary at that time, no review was published in the local newspaper." "Catalogue of Mercadante's opera – Chronology with Casts," *Bollettino dell'Associazione Civica "Saverio Mercadante"*, no. 1, Altamura (BA), 1996, p.52, n.10.

<sup>62</sup> Autograph letter to accountant, Giulio Ferrari (Milan), dated Cádiz, 16 February 1830 (Private collection).

<sup>63</sup> Opening with the composer's benefit on 10 February, it was repeated on the 13th for Ferrero's, and again on 14, 19, and 21 February (closing). Giuseppe De Napoli, *La triade melodrammatica altamurana* (ristampa anastatica ccon appendice), (1931; rpt. Altagusta Editrice, Altamura, 1984, 125-125). De Napoli erroneously places both *Chisciotte* and *Rappresaglia* in 1829, reversing the chronological order, noting the premiere of the former as Carnival and that of the latter as 29 November.

<sup>64</sup> See also: Celsa Alonso, *La canción lírica española en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Música Hispana, ICCMU, 1996), 123. Manzocchi sang *La curilla*, as well as *El curillo* and *El serení*, which she interpolated into *La casa desabitata* by Lauro Rossi, in 1835 (according to Masarnau in *El Artista*). Meric-Lalande interpolated *El Chairó* into the lesson scene of Rossini's *Barbiere di Siviglia* (Madrid, 1833), and Alonso also mentions Adelaide Sala's Barcelona interpretations of *El tripií* in 1829, although she had set the precedent, appearing in that material there a decade earlier.



After its only chance on stage, the opera's failure was complete, and it was assumed to have received no repeat performances.<sup>65</sup> While the season's critical reception did not always concur regarding what caused this (some theorizing about deeper underlying problems), reasons emerge. Whereas one reviewer declined to review the performance outright (even cursorily), others did so in sparse, albeit relatively astute detail, comparing some of the original cast's instruments to those of their ill-fated replacements. Proffering this rationale, the *Revista Española* tried hardest to explain the failure:

We have remembered the artists for whom the piece was written in Madrid nine years ago so that the readers, having in memory the means and qualities which they had, consequently find amid these circumstances one of the principal reasons why this opera production was now received so coldly.<sup>66</sup>

It illustrated this further by singling out the Almaviva, tenor Giovanni Battista Genero, whom it compared favorably to Giambattista Montresor (a perusal of his repertory disproves the label of high tenor given the latter by later and contemporary chroniclers):

Género [sic] sang without faults, but [also] without having been able to produce a great sensation in a part written for a voice entirely different from his own; a short voice, and [one] that did not contain a single attribute of those with which Genero's manifests its [full] force and brilliance.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, if judging from tessitura alone, the comparatively low-lying part was ill-suited to the purportedly superior voice of Genero, for whom Almaviva's aria had to be raised a half-step in the score (from A to B-flat major, a transposition that was originally effected for Ignazio Pasini's concert performance of the piece in 1833).<sup>68</sup> Not wanting to appear uncharitable about the company's merits, Santiago Masarnau (1805-1888) openly declined to critique the work or performance in *El Artista* (long a solitary reference for this production),<sup>69</sup> reasoning:

... its execution did not generally seem bad to us, but we won't examine it in detail because we believe it preferable to lacking in veracity or to saying disparaging things about the writer [composer] or to the reader.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Seminario de Bibliografía Hispánica de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de Madrid, *Cartelera teatral madrileño, I: años 1830-1839* (Madrid: Cuadernos Bibliograficos III, CSIC, 1961). This gives a solitary date omitting it completely from the title index. Such inconsistencies abound in this chronology.

<sup>66</sup> *La Revista Española*. "Hemos recordado los artistas para los cuales se escribió esta ópera en Madrid, hace nueve años, con el objeto de que los lectores trayendo á la memoria los medios y las calidades que aquellos tenían: encuentren desde luego en estas circunstancias una de las razones principales porque esta producción lírica ha sido actualmente recibida con frialdad...."

<sup>67</sup> *La Revista*. "Género cantó sin defecto, y sin que pudiese producir gran sensación en una parte escrita para una voz enteramente diferente de la suya; voz corta, y que no tenía un solo punto de aquellos en que la de Genero ostenta su brillantez y su fuerza."

<sup>68</sup> See earlier note. An annotation in the Madrid score tells us that Almaviva's aria was "performed in concert in 1833 by Pasini," just after the death of Fernando VII.

<sup>69</sup> Santiago Masarnau Fernández, was a Spanish publisher, composer and influential (if, for us, controversial) critic.

<sup>70</sup> Santiago Masarnau, "Los Dos Fígaros. Recensión de la ópera homónima de Mercadante representada en el Teatro de la Cruz, por Santiago Masarnau." *El Artista* (Madrid, 1835): "[Volviendo á los dos Fígaros,] su ejecución en general no nos

Yet, generally reserving praise for the cast, he tellingly qualified his statement “...for, some of the artists that form the troupe, such as it is, are not undeserving of it./(... pues ciertamente no los desmerecen algunos de los artistas que forman nuestra actual compañía, tal como es.”).<sup>71</sup> This hint at the singers’ mediocrity is more bluntly echoed in the memoir of his contemporary Antonio Ferrer, who later recorded that “the opera company of 1835 was abysmal/(La compañía de ‘opera de 1835 era malísima...),”<sup>72</sup> corroborating the idea of the cast’s failure to meet the technical specifications of a work conceived for entirely different voices. Where the ambiguous critics failed to reflect this vital aspect, such at-large observations strengthen the assumption that the singers themselves were not as well-received, which consequently hindered their power to put across “new” works, although critics—especially *El español*—had praised Manzocchi’s Susanna and Bottelli’s Figaro, specifically.

But the critics’ lack of enthusiasm for the score also bespeaks causes they could not pinpoint, and over which Mercadante had no control: *I due Figaro* was not heard as the composer intended, thanks to the incompetent alterations to which the score was subject, consisting of erasures, folding and stitching together of entire leaves, paste-overs and other changes rendering it almost unrecognizable. Because the work in its entirety had been denied performance until then, comparisons with the original were impossible. Worse, *La Revista* divulged what most hindered the reviewer:

We would gladly enter into an examination of the opera, but no libretto having been printed which usually serves as a guide, and the inflexible law of the management of not permitting attendance at rehearsals... impedes us from doing so, because impressions caused by new works at a premiere are too fleeting to hazard a critical judgment.<sup>73</sup>

While this observation factors into the indifferent attitudes of a jaded theatrical management, and musical direction (under Ramón Carnicer), the *Revista* still proffered why “Dos Figaros” did not “rebound”: “When it was written ... we Madrilenians were still rather novice regarding music. ... we couldn’t discern the real merit of concerted pieces, as intelligently as nowadays./(Cuando se escribió en el año referido éramos los madrileños bastante novicios todavía en punto de música . . . no se desentrañaba con tanta inteligencia como ahora el verdadero mérito de las piezas concertantes.)”<sup>74</sup> In thus vaunting what he purports as the public’s decisive progress to better understand in 1835 what

---

ha parecido mal, pero no la examinaremos en detalle, y mucho menos la partición, porque lo creemos preferible á faltar á la verdad ó decir cosas desagradables al escritor y al lector.”

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Antonio C. Ferrer y Herrera, *Paseo por Madrid 1835*, ed. J.M. Pita Andrade (Madrid: Colección Almenara, 1952 cited in D.T.Gies: “Entre drama y música: La lucha por el público teatral en la época de Fernando VII,” *Bulletin Hispanique*, vol. 91, no. 1 (1989), 56.

<sup>73</sup> *La Revista Española*. “Entraríamos gustosos en el examen de la ópera; pero el no haberse impreso el libretto, que suele servirnos de guía, y la inflexible ley de la Empresa de no permitir que se oigan los ensayos . . . nos impide de hacerlo con la estención debida, en razón de que siempre son demasiado fugaces las impresiones que causa toda las novedades de una primera representación, para aventurar sobre ellas un juicio critico.”

<sup>74</sup> *Revista Española*. With regard to the statement reflecting the Madrilenian public’s letter discernment in 1826, Mercadante himself observed the same thing when writing to Felice Romani in the above-cited 1829 letter.

it could not in 1826, the *Revista Española* also inadvertently alluded to another reason for the opera's ultimate inability to impress: its relative complexity, owing to large, modern concerted numbers (a quartet, a sextet, and finales employing most or all of the cast on stage simultaneously). This review's perception of the public's *arguable* advancement conflicts. It maintains that audiences, jaded by *I due Figaro*'s perceived conventional, facile style and finding it trivial and bereft of novelty, had advanced enough in its taste and discernment of opera to recognize that: "while the first act finale and sextet of the second evidence a composer who knows theatrical effect, they still fall behind other concerted pieces by the same composer/(ha advertido que aun cuando el final del primer acto y el sesteto del segundo son piezas de un compositor que conoce los efectos teatrales, tienen sin embargo un mérito muy inferior á otras concertantes del mismo autor)." <sup>75</sup> Largely by virtue of their being from 1835, these statements contrast with those by Mercadante (in reference to Madrid), who alluding to their perception of large concerted pieces still in 1829, warned his prospective librettist that "these people do not understand complicated music." <sup>76</sup>

Nevertheless, if Madrid audiences had grown arguably more sophisticated, their interim familiarity with Mercadante's serious operas for Italian theatres since 1832 (to say nothing of newly introduced works by Donizetti and Bellini) leaves no question that *opere buffe* like *Figari* came too late to astonish, well produced or not. <sup>77</sup> So, too, would *Chisciotta*, which notwithstanding a healthier start in 1830, fared little better after delays in reaching a wider audience in 1841. <sup>78</sup> Now of another era, each suffered similar stigmas, exacerbated by inept alterations resulting from tampering and blatant disregard for the work's intricacies. <sup>79</sup> Reflecting this in a sewing allegory, the *Correo de las Damas* indifferently compared "Figaro" to a patchwork, one entailing, "A very familiar overture: remnants that can hardly displease a Spanish public entirely; a way of patching these scraps together that cannot agree with those who understand quilting [. . .]" but appreciated the ". . . careful adornment in keeping with the taste and genre of Spanish music." <sup>80</sup> Likewise, after bemoaning the music as generally familiar and trivial, *La Revista Española* nevertheless notes

<sup>75</sup> *Revista Española*.

<sup>76</sup> Mercadante, Letter to Felice Romani (autograph; private collection). To his credit and looking forward to helping ground Fernando VII's *national* opera theatre, the composer was already anticipating a new phase, proposing to write operas on "national" subjects, including *Consalvo di Cordova* and *Don Pelajo* [sic].

<sup>77</sup> The ill-fated timing of the revivals correlates to Francesco Izzo's suggestion that *opera buffa* was in a state of formal crisis during the 1830s and 1840s at the hands of major composers who combined *opera seria* convention to mixed effect. See Francesco Izzo, "Verdi's *Un giorno di regno*: Two Newly Discovered Movements and Some Questions of Genre," *Acta musicologica* 73 (2002): 165–88. In my opinion, this provides a fitting description of a Mercadante writing *opera buffa* already in the mid-to-late 1820s, who—as Michael Wittmann claims—is much more at home with/adept at the *seria* concept than with that of the *buffa*.

<sup>78</sup> With further regard to audience sophistication and taste, it is interesting to see that while Madrid did enjoy Mercadante's novelty, she also paid greater tribute to his talents by mounting *Il Giuramento* (1837), while Barcelona staged *La Testa di Bronzo* (1827), *Il Bravo* (1839) and *Francesca Donato* (1835, with Domenico Reina), given Mercadante's stronger following and relations with that city.

<sup>79</sup> We hypothesize that this be, in part, because of a disappearing singing style that was ever harder to reproduce, especially for male voices given the mid-century shifts in the vocality, its representation in contemporaneous vocal composition and corresponding reciprocal adjustments of the pedagogy to form voices accommodating those changes.

<sup>80</sup> Teatros./ Principe./Funcion del lunes último. *Los dos Figaros—Ópera*. *Correo de las Damas*, yr. 3, no. 4; 28 January 1835.

... that it does not want for grace and liveliness, and above all that the national songs in which it abounds are introduced with mastery and finesse. Certain pieces are borrowed citations and already familiar;<sup>81</sup> others are the author's own, and he has shown genius in their composition, and that he is well-immersed in the character of our music.<sup>82</sup>

## 2. Theoretical perception

Thus, amid consistent censure, are equally powerful resonances of what critics favored most, and where—most crucially—the opera failed least to impress: the elements of Mercadante's Spanish musical vernacular. What is more, critical awareness of this particular aspect produced the beginnings of an interesting concept, moving beyond the usual criticisms and touching, instead, upon the 'Spanishness' question, of which Masarnau first sought to make sense by veering off in this new direction.<sup>83</sup> Having summarily established that "The subject, the costumes, and many of the themes of this opera are entirely Spanish, but the opera is Italian, and just as Italian as *Otello*,/( El asunto, los trages, y muchos temas de esta ópera son enteramente españoles, pero la ópera es italiana y tan italiana como el Otelo.)," he reckoned that

It seems, nevertheless, that Mercadante intended to create a Spanish opera, since one observes that from the overture to choruses, there is hardly a piece in which he hasn't introduced some Spanish theme; but he ran into one great unforeseen difficulty that he could not surmount. We are alluding to the lack of a Spanish genre.<sup>84</sup>

After this puzzling statement, Masarnau then interrupts his review to rhapsodize, somewhat illogically, on what constitutes this otherwise non-existent "Spanish genre," seemingly dismissive of an opportunity to discuss or compare Mercadante's musical treatment on merit. While contemporaneous newspaper sources and Mercadante alike coined "in Spanish character" to describe his work,<sup>85</sup> Masarnau avowed that Spain's lacking a sovereign lyric genre rendered such creations impossible. He further contends that only the great stylistic diversity of Spanish music

<sup>81</sup> Several of these will be identified insofar as possible, below. Where it is not possible to discern between known and original themes, we will hypothesize on the composer's methodologies by give detailed observations of style.

<sup>82</sup> *Revista Española*, p.1459. "... que no carece de ligereza de gracia, y sobre todo que la mayor parte de cantos nacionales de que abunda están introducidos en ella con maestría y tino. Hay varios trozos repetidos y conocidos ya: otros son del autor, y en su composición ha manifestado genio, y que supo empaparse bien en el carácter de nuestra música."

<sup>83</sup> Santiago Masarnau, *El Artista*. For further reading on this, see: María Encina Cortizo, "La ópera romántica española hasta la apertura del Teatro Real (1800-1850)," *La Ópera en España e Hispanoamerica*, vol. II, E. Casares Rodicio, Álvaro Torrente, eds., (Madrid: Ediciones del ICCMU, 2000), 11-16. While affirming Masarnau as the first to call for "a national operatic genre," Cortizo does not mention his opening words on "Figaros" or Mercadante, despite its title.

<sup>84</sup> Masarnau, "... Parece, sin embargo, que Mercadante se había propuesta hacer una ópera española, pues se observa que desde la overtura hasta los coros, apenas hay pedazo en que no haya introducido algún tema español; pero tocó la dificultad grande que talvez no había previsto y que luego no pudo superar. Aludimos á la falta de *genero español*." Fragment also republished in: Mariano Soriano Fuertes *História de la Música en España desde la llegada de los fenicios hasta nuestros días*, vol. 4 (Madrid, 1856), 263.

<sup>85</sup> Autograph letter to accountant, Giulio Ferrari (Milan), dated Cadiz, 16 February, 1830 (Private collection).

(given the vast differences between the various cultures comprising the nation) precluded one from forming.<sup>86</sup>

We don't have a particular genre of music because the range of our little songs (some lovely, others not very, and others ugly) and dances which differentiate themselves as do the characters of the inhabitants of their respective provinces, do not constitute one style of music. There is no analogy whatsoever between these same folksongs, and certain ones can even be shown to have a diametrically opposed character.<sup>87</sup>

Comparing examples from opposite sides of Spain to conclude that “the differences are not minor...,” and postulating that there had been plenty of time since the formation of a nation unified of many peoples for it to have developed a nationally homogeneous musical paradigm, Masarnau vituperated:

Is it not shameful the Italians, the Germans, the French, the English and even the Russians have national operatic forms, while we whose language is that of a Fray Luis de León, a Rioja, a Villegas, and so many others, lack one? When Spanish opera is born, we will shudder to recall that it took so long to appear.<sup>88</sup>

Though recognizing an “attempted Spanishness,” Masarnau’s contradictions typify a stolid but irrational Chauvinism, already fomenting in the 1810s-1820s,<sup>89</sup> but only then emerging within post-Fernandine Spanish criticism. In pointing to the lack of a Spanish genre as if one of Mercadante’s shortcomings, the author errs in not crediting the composer’s innovative contribution towards its development, instead presupposing his intents while dismissing their merit. Fallout from this conceit still pervades contemporary studies on late-nineteenth-century Spanish opera’s nature, broaching vernacular musical usage, while, to their detriment, steering steadfastly clear of Mercadante’s erstwhile innovations.<sup>90</sup> Consequentially (and albeit a posteriori by nearly two decades), Mariano Soriano Fuertes now enters as if to vindicate this strange contention. He admonishes Masarnau and

<sup>86</sup> Masarnau, *El Artista*.

<sup>87</sup> “No tenemos un genero peculiar de música porque la série de muestras cancioncillas (graciosísimas muchas, otras no tanto, y algunas feas) y de nuestros bailes, que se diferencian entre sí como los caracteres de los habitantes de las provincias á que pertenecen, no constituyen un estilo de música. No hay analogía ninguna entre estas mismas canciones nacionales, y aun se pueden señalar varias de carácter diametralmente opuesto.”

<sup>88</sup> Masarnau, *El Artista* “¿No es vergonzoso que tengan una ópera nacional los italianos, los alemanes, los franceses, los ingleses y hasta los rusos, y que nosotros carezcamos de ella con la lengua de un Fr. Luis de León, un Rioja, un Villegas, y tantos y tantos otros? Cuando nazca la ópera española nos asombraremos recordando lo que tardó en aparecer.” Responding to Masarnau’s “astonishment” at a national lyric genre ‘tarrying in appearing’, especially on the basis of the Castilian language itself, we can only say “little wonder,” as Spanish poetics differ greatly to the rules of Arcadian or similar versification as other languages on which other European national opera strains are based, to say nothing of the fact that the greatness of the writers he cites lies in their mastery of prose. That said, nothing had precluded Spanish librettists from creating fine vehicles for various stage works since the concept’s beginning to that point. Indeed, Bretón de los Herreros set the most important and precedential examples of the craft during this time.

<sup>89</sup> If one were to identify a source of this phenomenon, it would be easily triangulated to the 1828 publication of Bretón’s *Contra el furor filarmónico*: indeed, if the long-dormant musical “nationalist” mindset was stirred at that moment, this satirical romance might certainly be considered its *manifesto*.

<sup>90</sup> Cortizo’s aforementioned piece is a fine example of such evasion/omission.

his approach a posteriori as nonviable, because his viewpoint suffered by dint of his international formation, having acquired all literary and musical knowledge abroad,<sup>91</sup>

... for, if he [Masarnau] had acquired them from Spain, he would have done greater justice to our music, giving more importance to its variety for his objective, comparing it to that which laid the foundation of the lyric drama of other nations.<sup>92</sup>

Explaining how composers (Rossini and Flotow with *Guillaume Tell* and *Marta*, respectively) successfully incorporated “music recognized and popularized in France...,” Soriano frames this dynamic with the example of Flotow’s inclusion of *The Last Rose of Summer*,

on which he [Flotow] based the principal idea of the opera, to demonstrate that the action of the drama took place in England [sic], making known the beauties of virgin melodies of a foreign country at the same time, amid his own, improved by the recourses of art as well as some reminiscences imported and adapted to the national type character.<sup>93</sup>

Thus, indicating a different example, Soriano has identified a generic simile for *Figari*, establishing compositional stratagems that apply to *Mercadante*, as we shall see, in what can be considered a practical application of the methods of the “well-versed genius,” evoked above in *La Revista Española*. But it is in his extremely important yet long-overlooked direct response to the above-cited *El Artista* passage that Soriano, arguing the opposite of it, attempts to rationalize both this and the lack of national operatic genre, postulating

What *Mercadante* did with *I due Figaro* is what Rossini did in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*,<sup>94</sup> being that which uncommon talents do. They established an opera in the Italian language, based on the genre of Italian music, but intercalated bits of Spanish music to give the argument of the drama local color, which no one can do better than can the music itself. They did not want to write a Spanish opera, for if they had thought of doing that, they would have achieved it with Spanish words, as Rossini did with French ones,<sup>95</sup> and the work would have been purely Spanish, because our brand of music is richer and more varied than that of other countries.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Himself a liberal in self-imposed exile in Paris, Masarnau only returned to Spain after Fernando’s death.

<sup>92</sup> Soriano Fuertes *História de la Música en España*, vol. 4, (Madrid, 1856), 264. “. . . pues si de España los poseyera, mas justicias hubiese hecho á nuestra música, y más importancia le hubiese dado á la variedad de ella para el objeto á que se refiere, comparándola con la que dio fundamento al drama lírico de otras naciones.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 262-63. “basando sobre ella la idea principal de la ópera, para manifestar que accion del drama pasaba en Inglaterra; dando de conocer al mismo tiempo, las bellezas de las melodies víregenes de un país estraño, en medio de las propias, mejoradas con los recursos del arte, y algunas reminicencias importadas y arregladas al carácter y tipo nacional.”

<sup>94</sup> Underscoring is our own. This statement reflects an attitude prevalent in Spain bespeaking deeper rationale for *Barbiere*’s early and fast popularity among Spanish publics, despite its lacking significantly discernible Spanish musical thought (contrary to what the author implies here). Remembering that it was chosen with no time for premeditation when replacing *Figaro* for *Mercadante*’s 1826 benefit.

<sup>95</sup> This is probably a refence to *Le Compte Ory*, though a viable general reference to Rossini’s Paris operas may be presumed.

<sup>96</sup> Soriano, *História de la Música en España*, 263. “Lo que hizo *Mercadante* en *Los dos Fígaros*, fué lo que hizo Rossini en su *Barbero de Sevilla*, y lo que hacen los talentos que no son rutinarios. Estabibieron una ópera en idioma italiano, basada en el género de música italiano; pero intercalaron trozos de música española para darle al arguomnto del drama el sabor

With that surprisingly topical and relevant affirmation, Soriano does admittedly attempt to establish a model by example of Mercadante's *Figaro*, under which precepts a composer's intentions are isolated as neutral, as not to "create Spanish Opera." This presupposes that only by setting a Spanish libretto, *in addition to musical matter*, would this have been achieved. After the "ópera Española" *El rapto* by Genovés (1832),<sup>97</sup> the first work so classified because it was set to an expressly composed Spanish libretto (albeit minus Spanish themes),<sup>98</sup> only Basilio Basili's *Los contrabandistas* (1841), which by contrast contained *both* Spanish words and music, recalls Soriano's definition. So, if for Soriano this difficult-to-determine topos perhaps rests on *affinity*, rather than national identity, it overlooks a third criterion, bespeaking contemporaneous chauvinistic attitudes that (still) preclude a Mercadante. Such was reflected in *El Artista* editor Eugenio Ochoa's yen for a future "... Spanish opera, purely national, in which words and music will be written by our co-national artists/(... ópera española, puramente nacional, en la que serán escritas letra y música por artistas compatriotas nuestros.)."<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, neither aforementioned experiment by Spanish nationals fared any better at laying foundations for, or grounding interest in, a national operatic type than Mercadante's two "Spanish" operas, so indifferent was the immediate response by the press and general public. The former denounced them for being too Italianate, while the latter was in large part not ready to accept a replacement for Italian opera.

So lost in a nationalistic dither, the arguments stonewall against recognizing that the work was calibrated to furnish state-of-the-art Italian opera to flatter a Spanish public by clear virtue of his skillful adaptation of Spanish themes to the equally adept application of the Italian operatic model. Therefore, representation of Mercadante's *I due Figaro* in genre discussions spanning from before to after the mid-century establishment of a national lyric theater in Spain, attests to his relevance to them. Still, "not bad" for a work produced only once, and under questionable circumstances.

Nevertheless, it becomes apparent that, given the memory of the opera's failure, the passage of time could only have served to weaken the work's full potential impact. Rounding out that speculative question of "what if," we return to the *Revista's* keen perceptions launched at *I due Figaro's* premiere. The following interestingly considers how even then, human nature compels a look back at what might have been had the opera been staged as planned in 1826, whereupon *La Revista* had already conservatively speculated

... if the piece had been done then, with the composer present, as he then was, he would have perhaps communicated his own prestige to his work, given certain pieces an impetus conform to his intentions,

---

de localidad, que nadie mejor que la música puede darle. No quisieron escribir una ópera española; pues si así lo hubiesen pensado, lo hubieran llevado á cabo con palabras españolas, como lo hizo Rossini con las francesas, y la obra hubiese sido puramente española, porque nuestro género de música es mas rico y variado que el de otros países (1)."

<sup>97</sup> It was announced as a "Spanish opera," indicating a prevailing consensus that *ópera española* admitted an Italian form on Spanish libretto "throughout this period, exemplified in these works.

<sup>98</sup> This was written by Manuel Bretón de los Herreros.

<sup>99</sup> Eugenio Ochoa: "Bellas artes. Galería contemporáneos. D. Ramón Carnicer," *El Artista*, vol. 3, no. 13, 145; cited in Cortizo, 14. In such a case, the criterion for a genuinely Spanish work would rest on the fulfillment of the one disqualifying factor, namely, of being born Spanish: which brings us back full circle to the exclusion act of 1799.

perhaps causing, in technical terms, *furore*. But now everything has changed . . . things are neither seen or heard in the same way.<sup>100</sup>

This indeed harkens back to the aberration made of the score in 1835, avoidable by soliciting the composer for remote consultation (as had been done with a work by Donizetti).<sup>101</sup> Had things gone differently, *Figari* would have undoubtedly caused a stir, possibly influencing things to come in ways hardly imagined. It is hard to say whether this would have led to Spanish composers essaying and developing an autochthonous lyric genre just as Italian opera was being planted as the standard of lyric theatre in Spain. For his part, *La Revista's* critic, writing in 1835, believed so, while Masarnau, Ochoa, and others hoped that the recently opened national conservatory would eventually turn out composers who would develop Spanish lyric forms.<sup>102</sup> But the timing of the 1826 ban and severity with which it was thereafter enforced precluded any hope of such a movement emerging in Madrid, where the *Ópera Italiana* (under Mercadante's immediate successor, Spaniard Carnicer) became permanent in 1827. There is no doubt that Italian opera, devoid of Spanish influences with the likely exception of *Don Chisciotte*, reigned supreme in Spanish theaters until the 1840s and 50s,<sup>103</sup> to the consternation of critics who, ironically, failed to see the subtleties and then wider implications of the "Figari" instance. They still blamed the opera establishment for the decline of vernacular spoken-word theater and, consequentially, for preventing the interim development of a national genre.<sup>104</sup>

Indeed, the very dysfunctionality of the theatrical institution also assured that the time was not right: the public on either side of the vernacular-*Ópera Italiana* divide may not have been quite ready for a generic breakthrough. That was also contingent upon the gradual dismantling of the entrenched Fernandine theatrical system during the intervening decade. Furthermore, since the badly revamped *I due Figaro* disappointed critics in 1835 (who invariably presumed to speak for the public), Madrid was deprived of sampling *Don Chisciotte* for themselves until 1841, when the idea of a new but highly experimental form of Romantic *zarzuela* was barely germinating as an alternative to opera.<sup>105</sup> Consequently, *Chisciotte's* 1841 Madrid production came six years after *I due Figaro*, as

<sup>100</sup> *Revista Española*. "Por otra parte, si la pieza se hubiera hecho entonces, estando como estaba aquí su compositor, hubiera este acaso comunicado á su obra su propio prestigio, habría dado á algunas piezas movimientos mas conformes á sus intenciones, habría quizás producido, en términos técnicos, *furore*. Pero ahora todo ha cambiado ... las cosas no se ven ni se oyen de igual manera."

<sup>101</sup> Gaetano Donizetti's *Fausta* was received for production in Madrid (1832); the score preserved in *E-Mbh* bears the composers annotations and advice.

<sup>102</sup> Masarnau, "Los Dos Fígaros." The extreme of Masarnau's lament that a Spanish lyric form did not develop independently of French or Italian models or influences rests in sublimating that it might have been possible.

<sup>103</sup> Soriano Fuertes blamed the management in Barcelona (Soriano, *Historia*).

<sup>104</sup> As cited/translated in D.T. Gies, *Theatre and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), that sentiment is best captured in a quote from Masarnau's contemporary, Mariano José de Larra (*El Duende Satírico*, 1828), who uses the impresario Juan de Grimaldi and his almost enigmatic role as an example: "Ironically, Grimaldi—himself a foreigner and champion of popular national theatrical forms—would come to regard the success of opera in Madrid with loathing; after all, it was a monster for whose creation he shared responsibility."

<sup>105</sup> First, time would have to pass, and a societal split to develop from which the separate genre of *zarzuela romantica* would emerge and eventually coexist alongside its "Italian" counterpart. Next, theatres dedicated to specific genres also



composers began essaying Spanish lyric devices, and as we shall see, eventually led to Mercadante's "Italian" work being revived to take its place on the vernacular stage.

### B. *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gammaccio*

#### 1. Madrid, 1841

Of Mercadante's Spanish operas, *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gammaccio* seems to have had the longest—if most sporadic—performance history. Despite its challenges to the cast, this score fared significantly better through its 1841 Madrid stagings than had *I due Figaro*, receiving five more performances: two at the *Teatro del Circo* and four more in the *Teatro de la Cruz*, for a total of six.<sup>106</sup> This landmark production (though not so recognized historically) enjoyed a longer run of showings than it had received even in Cádiz, spanning almost half the theatrical-year. Though sung in Italian (and split into two acts), it was nevertheless announced only as "Don Quijote." It shared the bill with Basilio Basili's completely Spanish *El ventorrillo de Crespo*,<sup>107</sup> coinciding with the recent premiere of that composer's Andalusian-flavored opera *El Contrabandista*,<sup>108</sup> a month before. This pairing of

---

had to appear, to include the Teatro Español, for national drama (formerly Principe, 1848), the Teatro Real, for opera (1850), and the purposely named and dedicated Teatro de la Zarzuela (1856), to name the most representative.

<sup>106</sup> While the *Diario de Madrid* announced these daily as "in preparation" from 5 through 14 July, they occurred on 15, 16, 18 July, and 1 August in the Circo and, 19 and 30 November, in the Cruz, respectively. Felix Herrero Salgado, *Cartelera teatral madrileña, II: años 1840-1849* (Madrid: Cuadernos Bibliograficos IX, CSIC, 1963), mistakenly gives 14 July as the premiere. One discrepancy in this work has four July performances in the chronology, but lists them in the index as "14-18," which by implying an extra performance on the 17<sup>th</sup> (where there are only three for that period), would indicate a total of seven. Conversely, Presas (*Don Chisciotte*) mistakenly gives only two total performances for 15-16 July, one each at the Circo and Cruz, respectively. The November performances of Mercadante's opera did not include Basili's zarzuela, which later returned for four more nights on its own (15-19 December), for a total of eight shows.

<sup>107</sup> With regard to the inclusion of Spanish themes, it is worth noting that Basili appears to have followed methods similar to those set forth by Brogialdi and Mercadante. In his preview of it and "Quijote" (*Diario de Madrid*, 15 July 1841), tenor Manuel Ojeda announced that "This little amusement abounds in Andalusian charm, dances and ballads of the country. In it, the celebrated Polo by the excellent Spanish actor [opera-singer] and composer Manuel García and the song *El charrán* by maestro Iradier –much applauded in other theatres – have been intercalated, and will be performed by yours truly in the costume of a beach fishmonger from Málaga. (Este juguete abunda en gracias andaluzas y tonadas del país. En él se han intercalado el celebrado Polo del excelente [sic] actor y maestro español don Manuel García, y la cancion de *El charran*, del maestro Iradier, tan aplaudida en otros teatros, y que sera desempeñada por el interesado con el traje de los vendedores de pescado de las playas de Málaga)." Twenty-two years later, Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, noting the score (still lost) could not be found, remembered "Ventorrillo" as containing both the songs to which Ojeda alluded, and as having "had a good outcome." Barbieri was also "very impressed with Basili's song *Ay, corazoncito mío!*" "the melody of which is very characteristic and was highly esteemed." Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, *Crónica de la Lirica Española y la Fundación del Teatro de la Zarzuela, 1839-1863* (Madrid: ICCMU, 2006), 18-20. For more, and regarding music which Basili published from this work, see Celsa Alonso *La Canción Lirica Española en el Siglo XIX* (Madrid: Música Hispana, ICCMU, 1996), 341.

<sup>108</sup> Luis Carmena y Millán, *Crónica de la Ópera Italiana en Madrid desde 1738 hasta nuestros días* (Madrid, 1878; rpt. Madrid: ICCMU, 2002), 92.

(originally) one-act Quixote titles, doubtless intended to validate the idea of Spanish opera (notwithstanding its proponents' Italian birth),<sup>109</sup> became a popular event in itself.<sup>110</sup>

By then, the now-permanent opera company (though still rotating between three theaters) grew to encompass larger numbers of native (Spanish) singers trained in the Italian repertory. Logically, their experience with—and natural propensity for—Spanish music and theatrical forms was a mitigating factor in the impending rise in demand for a vernacular musical theater approaching opera's technical and aesthetic exigencies. The day of its première, *Chisciotte* was described with some apparent knowledge of the music. In what is obviously the voice of Manuel Ojeda announcing his benefit, this leading tenor offered rare testimony by one of the performers (which later commentators failed to quote for accuracy as a chief source):

One of the most popular episodes of this work has served the *maestro* [Italian composers] in popularizing the name of Cervantes abroad more and more. There are melodies in this *spartito* [our italics] that herald authenticity/exactitude, brilliance, charm, contemplation; and it will be adorned with all of the attention to detail its argument requires without any of the actors wanting for care of prowess in interpreting the character of their respective roles to their utmost possible.<sup>111</sup>

These opening words describing the score's characteristics find and extol in Mercadante a perspicacity for approximating a Spanish form and style while implying an accurate imitation. This endorsement is significant coming from a highly regarded figure in the Spanish lyric theatre (particularly as an interpreter of the vernacular stage which would increasingly come to enfold the fledgling national genre of *zarzuela* and *ópera española*). Against the rather indifferent criticism to follow, Ojeda's own enthusiasm for the work should not be underestimated, the fact of his participation transcending mere approval. In playing Basilio on his benefit night, "Mr. Ojeda wilfully undertook the role, in homage of management and public despite its being inferior for his rank, and having been designated another score for his appearance/(“El Sr. Ojeda, en obsequio del público y de la empresa, se ha prestado a presentarse con el papel qué desempeñó en esta ópera no obstante

<sup>109</sup> Basilio Basili (1804-1895) was probably opera director of the Teatro de la Cruz, at the time. The son (not brother, as Barbieri notes) of composer and director of the Milan Conservatory, Francesco Basili, Basilio arrived in Madrid in mid-1827 as a replacement for *primo tenore* Giambattista Montresor in the recently founded Italian opera company. Poorly received, he retired from the stage that year, married, settled in Madrid and established himself as a teacher and ultimately, a composer and pioneering champion of *zarzuela*.

<sup>110</sup> *Diario de Madrid*, 21 November 1841,1. “Everyone being accustomed to hearing *El ventorrillo de Crespo* sung after *Don Quijote*, and failing this circumstance in the function of the 19<sup>th</sup>, [they] left it as though they had missed something; we never tire of what is good./(Acostumbrados todos á oír to *El ventorrillo de Crespo* cantar después del *Quijote* y faltando esta circunstancia en la función del 19, salieron de ella como si echaban algo de menos; nunca fatiga lo bueno.”). Instead, the evening opened with the play *Shakespeare enamorado*, presumably after Gogol (*Diario de Madrid*, 19 November 1841, 4).

<sup>111</sup> *Diario de Madrid*, 15 July 1841 “Uno de los episodios de esta obra inmortal a servido al maestro de popularizar mas y mas en el extranjero el nombre de Cervantes. Hay en los cantos del *spartito* [italics mine] que se anuncia oportunidad, brillantez, dulzura, filosofía; y será exornado con toda la propiedad que su argumento requiere, sin omitir por su parte ninguno de los actores [,] cuidado ni esmero para interpretar como más cumplidamente puedan el carácter de sus respectivos papeles.” The singer goes on to laud his colleague Salas for his masterful interpretation of “the difficult role of Sancho Panza,” describing it as central to the piece, an attitude reiterated throughout the short critical record of the opera's short 1841 run.

ser inferior a su clase, y haber estado destinada otra partición para su salida.)”<sup>112</sup> What is more, the columnist, thinking only in literary terms, clearly misunderstood Basilio’s significance to the work as Chiteria’s love-interest, in relegating Basilio to a lesser profile in relation to the plot. Not only had Mercadante originally written the part for a leading tenor, but an assertive Basilio also steals scenes with vocal acrobatics, as well as the title role’s (Camaccio’s) bride, triumphing in the end. Moreover, a singer’s status or rank within the company notwithstanding, Mercadante’s penchant for lending comparatively “principal” musical importance to dramatically strong ‘secondary’ characters is in evidence in both *Figari* and *Chisciotte*.<sup>113</sup>

But *Chisciotte* shows the composer pleasing not just the interpreters: a more positive review carried in *La Constitución* (of lesser circulation than the *Diario*), followed with news of Basilio’s *Ventorillo* on the same bill, before which

The opera *Don Quichotte de la Manche* was also performed. This version does not attain the same level of Cervantes’s admirable poem, but it does contain pretty airs and proves that Mercadante knows the tastes of the people of this nation.<sup>114</sup>

And though a solitary affirmation, it gives weight to the precedent already set by critics of *Figaro* in probably the most emphatic and precise way to date: *Mercadante knows the taste of the nation*.

Thus, despite the contradictory critical pronouncements of the 15 July 1841 Madrid premiere, in honor of Queen Isabel II, the opera appears to have been comparatively well received.

For its part, the *Diario de Madrid* corroborated this relative success months later, when it remembered that the opera had “received much applause when premiered.”<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, an elusive review of the earlier production, signed “JMD,” attributed any audience enthusiasm for the opera to the fact that it was based on Cervantes’s masterpiece alone:

This score by Mercadante was received with great uproar by the spectators. *Don Quijote de la Mancha* is the most brilliant laurel in the crown of Cervantes Saavedra, a national glory; consequently, it is not strange that its presentation on stage stirred such great approbation. That applause was consecrated to the memory of the valiant soldier of Lepanto.<sup>116</sup>

<sup>112</sup> *Diario de Madrid*, 19 July 1841, 3.

<sup>113</sup> This specifically relates to the mechanics of assigning equal musical responsibility conforming to the action, even in roles assigned to singers of inferior status, as their merit warranted. My dissertation currently in preparation contains studies on *I due Figaro* and on Mercadante and the *Opera Italiana* in Spain.

<sup>114</sup> *La Constitución*, 18 July 1841, published in: Antoine Leduc, *Zarzuela: Les origines du théâtre lyrique national en Espagne (1832-1851)*, Mardaga (Sprimont, Belgium 2003, p.87; note 240). “On a représenté ‘également au Circo l’opéra *Don Quichotte de la Manche*. Cette production n’atteint pas le niveau de l’admirable poème de Cervantes mais elle contient de jolis airs et prouve que Mercadante connaît les goûts des gens de notre nation. . . .” cited from Leduc’s French translation (published without the original text), given my not having been able to locate the source review.

<sup>115</sup> *Diario de Madrid*, 19 November 1841, 3-4.

<sup>116</sup> “*Revista de Teatros*, 18 July 1841, published in: Felipe Pérez Capo, *Quijote en el teatro*. Editorial Millá (Barcelona, 1947). Leduc also cites this in passing, in contrast to the article appearing that same day in *La Constitución*. (Leduc, p.87; note p.

The author, whom Felipe Pérez Capo identifies as José María Díaz (or JMD) took every opportunity to discredit the work—an opera—comparing it to the original Spanish *play* that inspired it. Calculated to destroy what little confidence or interest the Spanish public might have in a marriage of Spanish literature with “Italian” opera, this rigid, quasi-nationalistic attack even resorted to flaunting its ostensible failure in Italy, itself untrue.<sup>117</sup> The critique continues:

The music seemed light and graceful to us, albeit monotonous in some pieces, and the entire poem of large musical dimensions. Much to our regret, the abundance of material does not permit us to make a very long analysis of this composition [which was] performed in Italy with little success,<sup>118</sup> and received here with some indifference.<sup>119</sup>

The intent to smear is evidenced by inserting the contradictory “indifference,” for despite Mercadante's planning to present it there, the work was never mounted outside Spain in his lifetime.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, if we are to believe the critic, *Chisciotte*'s success was due largely to its cast, each member of which he praised in turn. This extended to the protagonist, whose shortcomings in the role he forgave, placing blame squarely on an unnamed librettist:

---

240). Translation: “*Don Quijote de la Mancha*. Esta partitura de Mercadante ha sido recibida con grande algazara de los espectadores. *Don Quijote de la Mancha* es el laurel más brillante de la corona de Cervantes Saavedra, es una gloria nacional; no es extraño, por consiguiente, las grandes simpatías que exitó su presentación en la escena: aquellos aplausos fueron consagrados á la memoria del valiente soldado de Lepanto.”

<sup>117</sup> Conversely, no Italian performances of Mercadante's opera are recorded for the entire period, despite the score remaining with the composer after his return to Italy.

<sup>118</sup> This statement precludes the columnist's possibly alluding to any number of other Italian Quixote operas, despite different composers having since produced several with the same title as Mercadante's there up to that time.

<sup>119</sup> *Revista de Teatros*, “La música nos pareció ligera y graciosa, si bien monótona en algunas piezas, y de grandes dimensiones musicales todo el poema. La abundancia de materiales, bien a pesar nuestro, no nos permite hacer un análisis muy detenido de esta composición representada en Italia con poca fortuna, y aquí recibida con alguna indiferencia.”

<sup>120</sup> This piece has proven extremely elusive. Thomas G. Kaufman “Catalogue of Mercadante's Operas – Chronology with Casts,” p. 52, footnote 15, merely alludes to “a review published in the *Revista de Teatros* (Madrid) of July 18, 1841...” neither quoting nor citing its source. Conversely, Presas gives a full bibliographic citation for the Pérez Capo book in her aforementioned article, printing the review in question. However, instead of *Don Chisciotte*, Pérez Capo erroneously references *Les noces de Gamache* (the notorious pastiche by M. Guinée for the Paris Odéon, 1825, based largely on excerpts from Mercadante's *Elisa e Claudio* (1821), and of which a specially commissioned score copy exists in the Quijote Collection of the Biblioteca Musical Municipal, Madrid (E-Mmh). His documentation (with Fétis as main source), containing some errors and oblivious to the Cádiz premiere of Mercadante's *Chisciotte*. Finally, though giving the correct date, Kaufman cites no sources, further confusing the issue by naming a Madrid production of a two-act opera spuriously entitled “*Don Chisciotto de la Mancha*” [sic] on 15 June [sic] 1841, and allowing “the distinct possibility that the work given in Madrid was actually *Les noces de Gamache*...” (an obvious allusion to Carmena's misspelling of “*Don Chisciotto della Mancia*” (*Crónica de la Ópera Italiana en Madrid*, p. 92.). Not only is the pastiche in three rather than two acts, its *dramatis personae* differs significantly in that Camacho is a bass, father Bernardo is replaced by bachelor Samson Carasco, and other remaining characters have only speaking roles (see libretto: *Les noces de Gamache: opera bouffon en trios actes, par MM. T. Sauvage et Dupin, musique de M.X. Mercadante, arrangée pour la scène française par M. Guinée*, [Paris: Lafilé, 1825]). As our 1841 *Don Quijote* is consistently announced with two acts, we concur with Kaufman's subsequent statement favoring Mercadante's Cádiz opera split into two acts for Madrid.

The execution was meticulous [. . .] Mirals [sic] pleased exceedingly in the role of *Don Quijote*, although he could not [be expected to] represent the character of the *knight of la Mancha* with verisimilitude; this was not Mr. Mirals [sic]'s fault, but rather the Italian poet's, who in his abysmal libretto had counteracted the admirable creation by the Prince of the Spanish writers.<sup>121</sup>

An exercise in propagandistic extremes in the mould of earlier criticisms of *I due Figaro* and reliant on fabrication, the reviewer's main intent is to dismantle the work and discredit its creators, or at least discount the significance of their having created something original. Since our discovering that the opera had gone on to complete a much longer run than previously believed, Díaz's detraction seems overzealous in retrospect, when after only three performances he condemned it to "indifferent reception." Had that been the case, there is no doubt that the management would have disallowed a total of six performances. As to reasons for this, and the run's interruption, the note announcing its later resumption on 19 November explains that:

...the comic opera in two acts titled *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, by maestro Mercadante, which was received with much applause when premiered, and of which performances were interrupted when the opera company had terminated their work for that season, will be staged again.<sup>122</sup>

In what clearly constitutes an affirmation of a positive reception, the reference to the company's having completed the season most likely connotes the 1841 summer break and not the Cádiz premiere. Contrasted with Diaz, this later review, following the penultimate 19 November performance, was far more conciliatory:

In celebration of our august sovereign's birthday, the opera *Don Quijote de la Mancha* has been staged again. Its excellent execution should be no surprise, since nobody is without knowing that it is one [piece] which our artists sing best, identifying themselves with the characters they are portraying as integral to one of our most splendid glories.<sup>123</sup>

Thus was the matter of *Chisciotte's* 1841 success or failure (or *demi-echec*), ultimately one of opinion. Regardless, this all shows that Mercadante (and Ferrero, for that matter) must have captured in his work the spirit of Quijote on some level, which perhaps that much more than Figaro, meant the spirit of Spanishness he had so hoped his audiences would appreciate. This is evidenced in the gap bridged between the idea of Italian opera as a foreign medium and Cervantes, the very stuff of Spanish national pride. So caught up were the critics, the public, and performers alike in actor-

<sup>121</sup> "Revista de Teatros, "La ejecución ha sido esmerada... Mirals agradó sobremanera en el papel de *Don Quijote*, si bien no pudo representar con la verdad necesaria el carácter del *caballero de la Mancha*; culpa no es esto del señor Mirals, sino del poeta italiano, que en su pésimo libreto ha contrahecho la admirable creación del Príncipe de los escritores españoles."

<sup>122</sup> *Diario de Avisos*, 19 November. ". . . y se volverá a poner en escena la ópera jocosa en dos actos, del maestro Mercadante, titulada *D. Quijote de la Mancha*, que con tanto aplauso fue recibida cuando se estrenó, y cuyas representaciones se interrumpieron por haber terminado sus trabajos en aquella temporada la compañía lírica." Be this a reference to the run in Cadiz or Madrid, these statements contravene an otherwise noted negative reception.

<sup>123</sup> *Diario de Madrid*, 21 November 1841, 1. "En celebridad de los días de nuestra augusta soberana, ha vuelto á ponerse en escena la ópera *Don Quijote de la Mancha*. No hay que sorprender su escelente, pues nadie ignora ser una de las que mayor cantan nuestros artistas, identificándose con los personajes á quienes representan como tan unidos á una de nuestras más esplendentes glorias."

participation and proper interpretation of a revered literary masterwork (despite its ‘foreign’ operatic format) that the work held—at least momentarily—an importance that transcended mere entertainment. Furthermore, the critic confirms this Cervantine relationship of Spanishness, boasting that neither at the *Scala* nor the *Royal Academy of Music* could the gestures, mannerisms, and body-language of the hero of *La Mancha* and his loyal squire be so admirably personified.<sup>124</sup> In sum, though ultimately somewhat overshadowed by its Basili counterpart, Mercadante’s *Chisciotte* was made to count at the very dawning of the development of Spain’s own lyric theatrical form.

Furthermore, though it was commonplace for newspapers to translate titles for an Italian opera, there is something in the insistence on the Spanish title—exclusive throughout this production—in this particular instance, over the one of ‘*Don Chisciotte*’. This may be explained in a spate of various new editions, commentaries and publications trumpeting renewed fervor for Cervantes, manifest in the local press throughout that year. This is reflected in the timely resurgence of interest culminating in the selection of Quixote-based compositions like Mercadante’s and Basili’s, each constituting a novelty for Madrid.

## 2. Madrid, 1869 (Mercadante, *azarzuelado*)

In retrospect, and as defined above by Soriano, *Don Chisciotte* might perhaps be considered a precursor to an eventual national archetype wanting only a Spanish libretto, which it eventually got, thirty-nine years after its world première (and 28 after the important Madrid production). When revived as a de facto *zarzuela* or “ópera española,”<sup>125</sup> *Don Quijote en las bodas de Camacho* launched a fateful two-night run at the *Teatro de la Zarzuela* in July 1869. The theatre’s director, Francisco Salas,<sup>126</sup> was likely behind the project. Having composed several libretti and songs himself, this famous 1841 interpreter of Mercadante’s Sancho had enough intimate experience of the work to be the best placed—and most likely—to have either written or supervised the new libretto, of which (so we are told) the public did not even want to know the author’s name.

News of this long-forgotten Madrid revival now resurfaces in two reviews.<sup>127</sup> *La Iberia* chides the author of any text paraphrasing the immortal Cervantes and questions the management’s mounting a work which, though translated into Spanish, was well beyond the means of the interpreters, as was *Figari* before it.<sup>128</sup> Even the singers were charged with marring literary verisimilitude, particularly because “...that clean-shaven face and those long, well-groomed

<sup>124</sup> *Revista de Teatros*.

<sup>125</sup> Spanish periodicals were otherwise accustomed to using these interchangeably.

<sup>126</sup> As our research into the company rosters gives faith, Salas got his start as a chorister in the Madrid Ópera Italiana in the early 1830s, under Mercadante and Carnicer.

<sup>127</sup> Even with the foregoing as proof to the contrary, Presas, for her part, corroborates the elusiveness of these sources while mistakenly conjecturing that this production must have been unsuccessful for a lack of press reviews (Presas, p. 624). The *Teatro de la Zarzuela*, which is often referred to in nineteenth-century sources as ‘Teatro [de la Calle] Jovellanos’ after the earlier custom of naming Madrid’s theatres for their respective streets, was inaugurated in 1856.

<sup>128</sup> “[Teatro de] Zarzuela: Don Quijote,” *La Iberia*, 22 July 1869, 3.

muttonchops belonged more to a mellifluous and lovelorn shepherd of Arcadian poetry than to Sancho Panza/(Aquella cara barbilimpia y aquellas largas y bien compuestas guedejas, más que Sancho Panza eran propias de un melifluo y enamorado pastor de la poética Arcadia).<sup>129</sup> But as with Díaz's earlier view (or with Masarnau's of *I due Figaro*), the bar for *Chisciotte's* success was set impossibly high and the work held to standards so idealistic that even the critic himself seems to acknowledge the impossibility of approaching them as tantamount to touching the hem of the immortal author's garments. Because Cervantes himself frowned on his works being violated, so too, the critic avows, would the public, "... encountering a certain *vacío* [void] in the barber's 'bacía' [basin], or helmet of Mambrino, of the never well-pondered Hidalgo of La Mancha/(... y el público) dá en encontrar cierto *vacío* en la bacía del barbero, ó sea yelmo de Mambrino del nunca bien ponderado hidalgo de la Mancha)."<sup>130</sup> And after lamenting the impossibility of conducting an entire theatre review column where four lines would suffice, the author still dedicated over half the allotted space to Mercadante's "Quijote."

Yet, alluding to how coldly the public received all theatrical offerings that season, *La Iberia* still praised the Zarzuela under Salas's direction as the one factor deserving the most credit, "generally." Ultimately, unhappy with everything from the libretto's distortion of characters to how these were portrayed on stage, this was the only review critiquing the singers' ability, albeit slanted towards theatricality and acting, not singing (save the Quijote). It blamed "... a real lack of foresight by the management to stage a work which they should have known would prove too expansive for the Zarzuela's artists' abilities/([Ha sido] una verdadera falta de previsión de la empresa poner en escena una obra que debió conocer vendría demasiado ancha á las facultades de los artistas de la Zazuela)."<sup>131</sup> Thus, in contrast to the 1841 production, reasons for the 1869's failure emerge as lying largely with the cast (excepting the protagonist). Whereas the music itself seemed to win out despite the singers' performance, it is nonetheless relegated to a reverent disclaimer: "With respect to the vocal [music], it would be better we make a prudent omission in order not to disparage the genius of Mercadante, author of the music of *Don Quijote en las bodas de Comacho*/(En esto del canto vale más hacer una prudente omisión, por no entristecer demasiado al génio de Mercadante, autor de la música de *Don Quijote en las bodas de Camacho*)."<sup>132</sup>

Nevertheless, whilst of an accord regarding the libretto's lack of merit, all reviewers either praised or upheld the music. This included *El Imparcial*, where, in a paragraph constructed of nautical similes comparing Cervantes's work to a ship, critic Francisco de Palacios y Toro closes the record. With a less dogmatic viewpoint, while wryly alluding to that of *La Iberia's* critique four days earlier, the critic reassures us that,

Happily, that same libretto, of Italian origin (although that does not excuse the sin of flaunting it like a flag), spares our blackened pride, since it is a crime in Spain for those of Spanish blood to touch the

<sup>129</sup> *La Iberia*.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

exalted vessel—pride and glory of the fatherland where the glories of Castilian letters are rooted—without deifying it.<sup>133</sup>

What, then, of our opera, as it departs its last port of call for the next 138 years?<sup>134</sup> Palacios sums up the choppy run of the now translated *Don Quixote* in the following terms:

As for good Mercadante, he shone in the music-riggings of the poorly-righted ship, as righteous amongst the righteous, harvesting the sweetest of halos unto his scores, made up of their own pleasing cadences.<sup>135</sup>

In fairness, native composers were not spared the wrath of the Cervantine purists either. As with the revived Mercadante work of two years earlier, the critic of the 1871 opera *Don Quijote* by Cádiz native António Reparaz,<sup>136</sup> seems more concerned with the dramatic and literary elements of this tabooed work than with the musical treatment.<sup>137</sup> That the jealously guarded genius of Cervantes posed an insurmountable obstacle, regardless of a composer's skill, is echoed in the phrase with which Reparaz was reproved: "not even Mercadante succeeded in tearing a page from Cervantes."<sup>138</sup> And with that, Mercadante is recalled one last time (however indirectly), within a year of his death and forty since his last Spanish engagement, on the subject of his Spanish creations.<sup>139</sup>

What remains, then, is to measure the work's ultimate success in light of its positive reception, first in Cádiz where *Don Quijote* had long been held a cherished symbol, and its subsequent disposition towards revival. Despite the critics, it was not devoid of an overriding *popular* appeal. Because of this, *Mercadante's* Chisciotte not only numbers among the first works of Spanish inspiration chosen as the new movement begins to take root in earnest and is therefore significant

<sup>133</sup> *El Imparcial*, 26 July 1869, 3. "Felizmente, el tal libreto, —de precedencia italiana, — aunque no excusa el pecado — de abanderarlo á la facha, —salva nuestra negra honrilla, — que es un delito en España —en quien há sangre española,— tocar sin divinizarla —á la excelsísima nao — prez y orgullo dela pátria, —donde radican las glorias— de las letras castellanas."

<sup>134</sup> *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* was eventually next revived at the 2007 "Rossini in Wildbad" festival, Bad Wildbad (Baden-Württemberg).

<sup>135</sup> *El Imparcial*, "En cuanto al buen Mercadante, —lució en la música-járcia— del poco arregladlo buque, —esa vis que la aquilata— como bueno entre los buenos, —y á sus partituras gana- la dulcísima aureola— de sus cadencias tan gratas."

<sup>136</sup> Known predominantly for his operas and zarzuelas, Cádiz-born composer António Reparaz (1831-1886) was also a noted symphonist.

<sup>137</sup> In enumerating what she believes to be the only three Quijote-inspired Spanish musical stage works of the nineteenth century, Presas omits Reparaz' *Don Quijote*, which had in fact been produced in two versions at the Teatro de la Zarzuela by 1871 (*El Imparcial*, 22 November 1871).

<sup>138</sup> Review of *Don Quijote* by António Reparaz, *El Imparcial*, 22 November 1871, 3.

<sup>139</sup> Mercadante chose not to accept management's offer to renew his final Madrid contract ending February 1831. Back in Italy that March, he never returned to Spain but retained some relations there through at least the following decade.



as part of the impression made during *zarzuela*'s essential early grounding in Madrid's theatres.<sup>140</sup> It also figures among the repertoire long after the genre's school and theatrical seat had been established.

Yet, the degree to which Mercadante succeeded in these experiments is not only manifest in the scores but also reflected by the overall critical record, beginning with *I due Figaro*. Regardless of varying judgments against the operas, critics generally agree in their approval of Mercadante's skilful treatment of the elements of Spanish music. This should be taken to mean more, and indeed does, as will become apparent in continuation. And further to the composer's intentions, as presumed by the critics, we might argue that notwithstanding the absence of a Spanish genre, Mercadante in the spirit of activism, sought to give his public something new to identify with. He does this anticipating that "audience-friendly" material would cement a good impression of Italian opera without epithet.

### III. Sources and Adaptation of Spanish Material

#### A. Method

Our discussion of source material for the Spanish elements of these operas is conceived as an introductory survey rather than an exhaustive attempt at cataloguing them. It is neither intended to be a definitive identification of the rhythms or forms used nor is it an attempt to codify what are otherwise still disputed types. Terms—such as *fandango*, for instance—either have contradicting definitions for different scholars or are even used interchangeably, and in perilous disregard to this dichotomy.<sup>141</sup> Yet, while the exact nature or origin of material that may have served Mercadante as inspirations cannot always be determined, we can hypothesize about what pieces he had to hand, and in some cases ascertain which of these pre-existing pieces acted as tangible sources.

Next, it is possible in some cases, through comparative analysis, to show how these sources were employed.<sup>142</sup> In terms of Spanish character in *I due Figaro*, after the orchestra and chorus,

<sup>140</sup> We have noted an intriguing, yet otherwise unexplained testament to the 1869 *Quijote* revival as a single prominent phrase appearing thrice in different parts of the Mercadante score. It was borrowed over two decades later by Ruperto Chapí (1851-1909), who unmistakably cites it in the quartet from his milestone *zarzuela*, *La Tempestad* (1882).

<sup>141</sup> Whereas within the different branches of musicological research one school of thought holds that the *fandango* only exists as an event or gathering during which music of various descriptions is played, sung and danced to, another more popularly contends that it is in itself a dance in triple meter. Instead, because the term is often used to describe what are otherwise more readily identifiable as, say, *jota* or *seguidilla manchega*, for instance, we will adhere to the latter appellations, as appropriate.

<sup>142</sup> The local supply of music was also a phenomenon of the Fernandine period with the founding of the Bartolomé Wirnbs concern in Madrid, which began offering a plethora of titles in subscription from 1817. This also included gems by Rossini and others performed contemporaneously in Spain, alongside the output of national and other foreign composers, and including pieces by others newly arrived or passing through (including Inzenga, Mirecki and Mercadante). Many of the catalogue listings may have found their way into the concert programmes (with several scores crediting the singer to introduce them at the Madrid premiere appearing on the title page). Other such services providing music from imported sources were offered at local booksellers and announced in Spanish periodicals. See: Gosálves Lara, Carlos José: *La edición musical española hasta 1936 - guía para la datación de partituras*. Asociación Española de Documentación Musical (ADEOM), Colección de monografías, No. 1 (Madrid, 1995).

Susanna is the opera's main catalyst among the *solo* parts, while Cherubino, and Figaro contribute, but lightly. Similarly, all the vernacular music in *Chisciotte* is exclusively entrusted to the orchestra, chorus, Chiteria and Basilio, with none allotted either to Quixote or Sancho. Thus, with many of the “non-Spanish-sounding pieces” cut from the production, Figari's 1835 reviewer's comment, “hardly a place where there is no Spanish music,” makes some sense (though large tracts of this were also cut). However, this is hardly the case regarding the original 1826 score: here, with the bulk of vernacular usage in the first act, the second, with the one notable exception of the *polo*, almost seems mismatched. This is particularly true of the *pezzi chiusi*, where most of the Spanish elements reside, *at least once per character*, in one movement of an aria or other (including the cavatinas). The second act follows the *opera seria* convention of its day, where the weightier, more emotional, and dramatic arias are placed, the showpiece for the *prime donne* with substantial solos for the “seconda,” Inez and the countess as well. But these completely follow the precepts of operatic style and convention: what contemporaneous Spaniards would call musically “Italian,” which may have contributed to their exclusion in 1835, thereby condensing the score and arguably profiling the vernacular element.<sup>143</sup>

Conversely, and as a one-act piece, *Chisciotte* constitutes a bit of an exception in that the Spanish idiom is allotted to but few of the solo or ensemble pieces, confided to two of the characters (Chiteria and Basilio). However, with an abundance of Spanish-character choruses sandwiched between its characteristic overture and to the *seguidilla* rhythm of its finale, the opera's very brevity perhaps lends the illusion that the vernacular element is more prominent than in the originally longer *Figari*. Therefore, the principal characters do not generally herald the use of the musical vernacular in either opera, as noted above. Instead, after the overture establishes the potency of Mercadante's characteristically “Spanish” orchestral sound, it is the chorus that consistently maintains a tone of *casticismo*, singing in decidedly Spanish accents through most of the pieces entrusted to them. Thus it is in *I due Figaro*, much as in *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, that the chorus mostly serves as the conduit for the *couleur locale* rather than the soloists.<sup>144</sup> In fact, the chorus fulfills the function of *dramatis personae*, that is, of a *de facto* character, a concept which will be borne out more clearly as its respective musical function is discussed, ahead.<sup>145</sup>

## B. Style

What frequently distinguishes the *castizo* ambiance of *Figari* from *Chisciotte* are differences in coloring and may be explained as regional soundscape divergences inherent to the locale where each opera was situated. We can differentiate some subtle variables with which, we argue, the composer imbued his treatment of vernacular passages drawing on his own aural experience of urban and rural folk music in Spain. At first, subtleties in *Figari* may not present themselves as readily to the non-

<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, many of the revisions and cuts from the 1835 score involve passages containing evidence of the noted interweaving of vernacular elements, to be shown further in the present study.

<sup>144</sup> Conversely, only the finale, where Elvira and Basilio rejoice in their ultimate betrothal, offers a more *seguidilla*-like melody, labeled “tempo di Bolero” in the score (incidentally, the solitary source on which the working edition was based), and drawing partially on a song by Federico Moretti, to be discussed in detail below.

<sup>145</sup> As Michael Wittman suggests in the performance notes, *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, 2007 ‘Rossini in Wildbad’ festival, Bad Wildbad (Baden-Württemberg), the chorus “takes on the function of *dramatis personae*.”

Spanish ear, such as a lesser dependency upon sonorities produced by the Andalusian scale or reliance on its degrees in succession, in certain figures. Yet precisely such elements stand out against the perception fostered by the early and still-developing popular notion of Spanish exoticism, and eventual assumption that the Andalusian equals all things Spanish. In fact, the tonal textures of *Figari* can be as diverse as they are subtle, and mistakenly identified as even ‘Italian’ (in contrast to how their first Spanish audiences heard or perceived them). In this sense, the opera’s lyrical melodies breeze along with an almost conspicuous absence of southern modalism, but often nod to the typical sounds of North-Central Spain. Conversely, the guitar imitations of *Chisciote* are not as prominent here as are those of the *gaita* (bagpipes) and other traditional reed instruments more generally common to that region. Examples of what contributes to this impression appear in the first-act introduction and are most strongly represented in various places throughout it.

### C. Musical Sources in Action: Identification, Origins, and Composer’s Treatment

#### 1. Significant published sources, personal influences

We abstain from proffering a full hypothesis of how—and with whom—Mercadante ‘studied’ or arrived at his own technical application of musical *españolismo*. We know he worked closely with maestros Quijano and Moreno in the theaters, themselves contributors to the Spanish musical literature in use. But several pieces published by Federico Moretti (1769-1839) manifest not only the elder composer’s influence on the younger but also evidence that an association had existed between them from Mercadante’s first arrival through at least the composition and production of *I due Figaro* (1826).<sup>146</sup> Moretti’s long experience with Madrilénian musical theatre, coupled with the Neapolitan origins of both men,<sup>147</sup> may have provided the unique stability of a confidence between countrymen and first-hand guidance in exploring the vernacular repertory and acquiring an understanding of *casticismo*.<sup>148</sup> Moretti undoubtedly entrusted his—among others’—compositions to the younger composer for examination and study. This possibly included the *fandango*-laden overture to his earlier ‘Spanish Opera’ *El Licenciado farfulla* (*The Lawyer Babbles*), though it may have also been shown to Mercadante after his arrival in Cádiz.<sup>149</sup> In any case, it is evident that out of this,

<sup>146</sup> While we are adamant that the present study should fill a void in knowledge rather than engage the plethora of scholarly discrepancy arising from research published on *I due Figaro* since 2009, a caveat to the reader may be in order here. Following the several productions of *I due Figaro* through 2019, a wave of interest in this episode has produced several reviews and commentaries which perpetuate spurious information originating in Italy with Francesco Florimo and a typo, long debunked by Santo Palermo, which put Mercadante’s original contract at seven years: he arrived in May 1826, departing that December, thus, seven *months*. As my dissertation research shows, that unusually short tenure stems from his having only accepted the engagement to remain near his fiancée, Fabbrica.

<sup>147</sup> Though born in Altamura (BA), in Apulia, Mercadante was raised in Naples from age four after his family moved there in 1799 in the wake of local uprising and political turmoil in his birthplace. The composer himself was staunchly Neapolitan and is considered the last great exponent and, as we argue since 1985, *proponent* of the Neapolitan school.

<sup>148</sup> Naples-born and naturalized Spaniard Federico (Conde de) Moretti y Cascone was a prominent military and musical figure in Spain from his arrival there at the end of the eighteenth century to his death in Madrid.

<sup>149</sup> Happily, it survives in piano reduction, in a rare and to now misunderstood edition: *Obertura de la ópera buffa española El licenciado Farfulla*/música del Cav<sup>o</sup> Moretti; arreglada para forte piano y violín ad libitum y dedicada a Lady Duff Gordon por D. Manuel Rücker (Madrid, “Se hallará en los almacenes de música,” c. 1816), *E-Mbn*, MP/4603/14. According to our research, dedicatee ‘Lady Duff-Gordon’ is Caroline Cornewall, wife of Sir William 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet Duff-Gordon (1772-1823),

the two men inspired each other's creations reciprocally, as inferred in the following table. It represents the most prevalent pieces of published Spanish salon songs presumably introduced to Mercadante (at least hypothetically) by Moretti, or in which the latter drew from the former.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, all corresponding musical examples drawn or extracted from this group are initially presented below, in the present section in that same chronological order of their respective publication. This will allow the reader's referring back to them when indicated for comparison to other examples as appropriate to sections further down, further aided by the framing and colored shading of specific regions relevant to our observations.

Individual Numbers from Song Collections of Potential Significance or Relevance in 'Spanish' Mercadante			
I. N. Paz, ed., <i>Collection des Meilleurs Airs Espagnoles: Boleras et Tiranas</i>			
Title	Year	Elements/Function	Speculative Scenario
Paz: <i>Seguillas Manchegas</i> , v.1, n.1	1812	est. bolero concept, inform stylemic usage	Moretti shows piece to Mercadante
Murguía: v.4, n.16	1813?	similar to above	as above
II. Six Relevant Selections by Federico Moretti ('Boleras Intermediadas') <sup>151</sup>			
Title	Year	Elements/Function	Speculative action
1. <i>Boleras atiranadas</i>	1824	Susanna: informs melodic figures Bolero	FM shows SM; informs Chisciote
2. <i>Boleras de la bola</i>	1824	Chisciote finale: paraphrases main theme	SM falls back on unused portions
4. <i>Boleras Ytalianadas</i>	1826	Bolero Susanna: 'Spanishes' both sections	informs later SM compositions
5. <i>Boleras de las habas verdes</i>	1826	Chisciote finale: informs melodic figures	FM shows SM; informs Chisciote
6. <i>Boleras del Sonsonete</i> <sup>152</sup>	1826	Figaro overture: paraphrases themes	informs Chisciote composition
9. <i>Boleras Apoladas</i>	1826	Chisciote: informs melodic figures	Mercadante possesses these in Cádiz

whom she married in 1810; he succeeded his uncle in title, the British Consul in Cádiz (and fourth Earl of Fife), Sir James Duff upon the latter's death in 1815. (<https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/3596473>). Also residing in Cádiz c.1810 alongside Sir James were his friend and fellow Spanish Army officer, Moretti, himself closely associated with the Austrian Wirmbs and the referenced arranger Manuel Rücker (a musical director of that city's Teatro Principal during the 1810s, of whom little is known, but likely also an Austrian transplant) prior to Moretti and Wirmbs settling in Madrid, in 1816. The rare exemplar in *E-Mbn* is catalogued with the plainly spurious year of "1860 (?)", notwithstanding its obvious age. Though lacking a publisher's credit, it may constitute an early printing of the *Calcografía Bartolomé Wirmbs* in Madrid preceding its official 1817 launch in which Moretti himself was instrumental (a fact neither Alonso nor Gonsalves acknowledge). Ergo, we argue the publication probably dates sometime after 1815, or slightly later as Cádiz's theaters had just reopened in 1816. Another possibility is that it was printed in London. Reenforcing this hypothesis and the Duff's connection to the composer, Brian Jeffrey conjectures that on Sir James's 1811 departure for England, Moretti handed him the twelve songs—dedicated to the Earl of Fife—that became F. Moretti, *Doce Canciones* (London: Clementi, 1812; rpt. London: Tecla, 1978). Jeffrey errs in stating that Sir James (d. 1815) "was created Baron of Fife" in 1827, in ignoring the existence of nephew William (d. 1823), and in not noting that publishing in England instead of Spain rested not only with the upheavals of the peninsular war (1808-1813), but also with the fact that no musical press yet existed there.

<sup>150</sup> Coincidentally, these have been identified and to some degree studied by Celsa Alonso, *La Canción Lírica Española en el Siglo XIX* (Madrid: Música Hispana, ICCMU, 1998), however in a way that is tangential to our study. The question of relevance to Mercadante, or any ensuing hypotheses or conjecture on connections between him and the pieces explored stems entirely from our own research into the present topic.

<sup>151</sup> Plates may have been prepared while the opera was still in production, but pieces not put up for sale until later in December, when the opera was banned; the latter two numbers therefore may hint to their first appearance in early or mid-1827. The typeface and footer information from each of the six extant pieces (establishment name and location) vary greatly, bearing numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, respectively and five of which the BNE catalogue dates from 1824 for the first to 1826 for the penultimate.

<sup>152</sup> S. Mercadante, *Sinfonia Caratteristica Spagnuola nell'Opera buffa I Due Figaro* (Milan; Ricordi, 1827).

As a point of stylistic reference, the *Collection des Meilleurs Airs Espagnoles*, edited and published in Paris by guitarist Narciso Paz, may have set the precedent in both availability of printed sources and compositional formulation of the genre (“Spanish” pieces), predating Moretti’s contributions by over a dozen years.<sup>153</sup> While still partially hypothetical in the case of the first two pieces, it is conceivable from apparent similarities of formula and texture that they fell under Mercadante’s scrutiny during the composition process.

**Example 1a:** N. Paz, *Seguillas Manchegas*: “El Amor es un Ciego,” frag.

**Example 1b:** J.T. Murguía, *Bolera*: “Cuantas Veces Mis Ojos,” frag.

Even more plausible is that being the case with all six Moretti songs (at some point). Nevertheless, a partial affirmation of certain dates faced with other details now allows us to deduce with reasonable certainty which pieces precede or coincide with Mercadante’s *I due Figaro*

<sup>153</sup> N. Paz, ed., *Collection des Meilleurs Airs Espagnoles: Boleras et Tiranas*, vv.1-4 (Paris; Benoist, c.1812-1813).

Significantly, these also predate the 1817 establishment of Spain’s music publishing industry (with the Wirmbs concern), purportedly backed and overseen by Moretti, by several years. Affirming this, we have found mention of noteworthy research that details not only Moretti’s life in Spain but also that of Wirmbs, corroborating an association between the two men which led to the former seeking government support from the Real Sociedad Económica Matritense as the principal backer/supporter and ergo founder of the Wirmbs concern.

See: <https://hispanamusica.wordpress.com/federico-moretti-1769-1839/>. Unfortunately, this somewhat ‘cryptic’ and anonymous site credits neither those behind much of the research it publishes, nor the owners/managers: all attempts at contacting them have proven fruitless.

composition process (thereby possibly serving as direct influence on the composer), and when they begin reflecting Moretti's paraphrasing of Mercadante's melodies from the opera. Moretti's six compositions were eventually identified with and later compiled as a sub-genre consisting of a "song-within a bolero" called *Boleras Intermediadas*.<sup>154</sup> Their tentative grouping into a rational succession in relation to their relevance to Mercadante might be as shown above (see: table).

From the little evidence available, this may constitute the haphazard and possibly unfinished attempt of its editor (Moretti) to assemble his species of song into a special collection. It is however certain that the idea of forming a series of *boleras* as "intermediadas" emerged only after the first two pieces (1824) were combined with those from 1826 and can be therefore varyingly linked to Mercadante.<sup>155</sup> Not until after he left Spain would the resulting assemblage of previously published titles become part of the series of *Primera Colección de Boleras Intermediadas*.<sup>156</sup> Their enfolding into a single generic corpus testifies in part to the impact of Mercadante's association not just with Moretti but also with Spain. Some titles may be as experimental as the forms employed in the pieces themselves in terms of defining a new genre or generic variant. Pertinent to the above-cited examples (and compared with the earlier Paris model), this affirms that the very forms on which he drew certain inspiration were undergoing a profound cycle of flux and *hybridization*.<sup>157</sup> In the meanest of terms, "intermediation" consists of intercalating or sandwiching a different song-type between two readings of the *bolera*; the specific type is indicated by the second descriptor word in the title, i.e., *atiranada*, *apolada*, *Ytalianada*, connoting inclusion of a *tirana* or a *polo*, respectively.

<sup>154</sup> Alonso gives a detailed analysis of the form's structure and popular but short-lived ambitus. See Alonso, 1998, 104.

<sup>155</sup> Also, caution is exercised with assumed dates and attributions, given the ample liberties taken by the BNE in cataloguing these and many other relevant pieces of the period. The accreditation of Wirmbs as the Publisher can seem spurious, as the imprints credit other names—his apprentices'—and ergo presumed still connected with the Bartolomé Wirmbs firm (i.e. Mintegui y Hermoso, [León] Lodre, or none at all). Similarly, Moretti is invariably (and somewhat ambiguously) identified as either editor, and in all cases presumed arranger, composer or all three.

<sup>156</sup> In the absence of further details, we credit the formation of a series of *boleras* as "intermediadas" exclusively to the publisher Lodre, as likely constituting a one-off editorial attempt at assembling the formerly published songs into a dedicated collection of this 'species.' Without citing the specific source, Alonso (1998), 106-107, reports that Lodre announced publication of *Primera Colección de Boleras Intermediadas* towards 1834 consisting of twelve numbers, including several by Moretti, with the rest by Sor, Bonrostro and Anonymous. For our part, we concur that Moretti is represented by the six found in the BNE and noted here. Further, our own archival research identifies Pablo Bonrostro — or Buenrostro — as a chorus and comprimario tenor attached to Madrid's opera company from the 1830s onwards, eventually announced with increasing frequency performing his own songs onstage, self-accompanied on the guitar.

<sup>157</sup> Alonso has repeated this as a generalization about nineteenth-century Spanish song through 2017.

no hay ojeros en el mundo ay como los tu... yos.

Example 2a: att. F. Moretti, *Bolas Atiradas*, frag.

GUITARRA VIVO.

CANTO.

PIANO.

FORTE.

Si piezas en g... me coaje, no adu...

sto con je, no a du...

sto con je, no a du...

sto con je, no a du...

sto con je, no a du...

Example 2b: att. F. Moretti, *Bolas de la bola*, frag.

(i)

**BOLERAS YTALIANADAS**

EXTRACTADAS DE LA CAVATINA DE LOS DOS FIGAROS  
MUSICA DEL M.<sup>o</sup> MERCADANTE  
CANTADA POR LA S.<sup>ta</sup>

ARREGLADAS CON ACOMPAÑAMIENTO DE PIANO Y GUITARRA  
Y DEDICADAS POR EL AUTOR  
A LA S.<sup>ta</sup> FELICIA CASTELLANOS DE YNZENGA

N.<sup>o</sup> 4 MADRID Pr. 6 r.

GUITARRA  
CANTO  
PIANO  
FORTE

(ii)

Allegretto

*a voluntad p*

do De aman tres ca. ha. las yo soy ma. es. tra o. tra mas

*a voluntad*

dis. tra. . nose halla. . ra' de amantes ca. ha. las yo soy ma. es. . tra o. tra mas

*compas*

die. tra no se halla. . ra' de amantes ca. ha. las yo soy ma. es. . tra o. tra mas

*a voluntad*

Example 2c (i-ii): att. F. Moretti (after Mercadante), Boleras Ytalianadas, frags.

**BOLERAS DE LAS HABAS VERDES.**

CON ACOMPAÑAMIENTO DE PIANO FORTE Y GUITARRA

COMPUESTAS ESPRESAMENTE Y DEDICADAS  
A DON FRANCISCO XAVIER MERCADANTE  
POR SU AMIGO  
D. / F. M. . . G.

31  
N.<sup>o</sup> 6

VIVO

GUITARRA  
CANTO  
PIANO  
FORTE

El que quisiera man . . . do . vi vir sin pe . . na

Example 2d: F. Moretti, Boleras de las habas verdes, frag.



P<sup>mo.</sup> T<sup>p</sup>o.

co mo la ma ri - po - - sa soy en que rer - te soy en que - rer - - - - te

Example 2e: F. Moretti (after Mercadante), *Bolerás del Sonsonete* “fandango” theme, frag.

**BOLERAS APOLADAS**

CON ACOMPAÑAMIENTO DE PIANO FORTE Y GUITARRA

DEDICADAS

AL CELEBRE M.<sup>o</sup> MERCADANTE.

Por D. F. M. y G.

— \* —

MADRID.

N.<sup>o</sup> 9. Pr. 6 r.

Mossu. 6

GUITARRA Pr. 6 r.

CANTO

PIANO.

Para a li vi ar mis

pe - - - - nas yo ne ce - si - - - to

Example 2f: F. Moretti, *Bolerás Apoladas*, frag.

As can be seen in the title pages of the relevant examples, some include dedications by Moretti to Mercadante, such as “Habas Verdes” which include the following inscription in continuation (ex. 2d): “. . . con acompañamiento de piano forte y guitarra / compuestas espresamente [sic] y dedicadas a Don Francisco Xavier Mercadante por su amigo D[on]. F[ederico].M[oretti].C[.]” Similarly, that of *Boleras Apoladas* invokes (ex. 2 f): “. . . Dedicadas al Celebre M<sup>o</sup> Mercadante. Por D. F.M. y G. [sic] Madrid.” Though speculative, Moretti’s intention may have been to console his younger colleague amid loss, as the conciliatory themes of the lyrics in the last two examples (2e, 2f) clearly—but allegorically—advise guarding against being jilted. In any case, the corpus was most assuredly published after Mercadante’s 1831 departure as noted above, after he had already made good use of them.

## 2. Score Application

### a. The overtures

It is generally accepted that an overarching sense of Spanish folk melody is perceptible throughout, which is much to the composer’s credit in reflecting his own perceptions of the country’s musics. However, as noted in our introduction, the music library of the Spanish vernacular theater constituted a repository of material on which Mercadante would draw and is, if not the nucleus of his inspiration, then certainly the source of many of the recognizable themes used. Conversely, we will show how some of these ideas lay concealed in the various overtures of the French operettes or their Spanish *operetta* (or *zarzuelitas*) counterparts, some of which Mercadante also seems to have studied. With respect to these already familiar borrowed citations, they are most prevalent in the overtures, though each commences with a short *castizo* section, likely containing melodic ideas that “are the composer’s own.” *I Due Figaro*’s overture affords several new insights (including some that only its published score can reveal).<sup>158</sup> Its opening theme, marked *Tempo di Fandango*, segues into what is labelled *El Sonsonete*, from a yet-unidentified source (ex. 3).<sup>159</sup>

<sup>158</sup> S. Mercadante, *Sinfonia Caratteristica Spagnuola nell’Opera buffa I Due Figaro* (Milan: Ricordi, 1827). Interestingly, this is published in piano reduction bearing plate numbers B3120G, dated to sometime in (possibly late) 1827. While we can only surmise that Brogialdi was chiefly a pianist whose main professional activity consisted of teaching and accompanying, we have ascertained from his few credited pieces that he worked for Ricordi as an arranger before and after his known directorship stints (Barcelona, Turin; 1824-c.1828). However, as the letter designations beginning Ricordi plate numbers indicate the last initial of the arranger’s name, “B” may well stand for Brogialdi. Mercadante was likely aware of Brogialdi’s return from Spain and obscure success mounting his Barcelona *I due Figaro* in Turin that same year, as Mercadante was himself engaged to write *Il Montanaro* in Milan.

<sup>159</sup> S. Mercadante, *Sinfonia Caratteristica Spagnuola nell’Opera buffa I Due Figaro* (Milan: Ricordi, 1827). The greatly informative article by Aurelia Pessarrodona, “Ritmos de tonadilla: algunas consideraciones a partir de la obra conservada de Jacinto Valledor” (*Cuadernos de Música Iberoamericana*. v. 28, 2015) gives insight into the *Sonsonete* and other song-dance genres (*tirana*, *cachucha*) in the *tonadilla*, showing early use of some of the themes discussed here. While our *sonsonete* example differs entirely, she indicates that the song-dance type was introduced into the *tonadilla escénica* in different versions and so probably associated with Cádiz through the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. Given Moretti’s residency there in the early 1810s, it is conceivable that he introduced Mercadante to the tune he used.

The image shows a page of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The top system is labeled 'Tempo di Bolero' and the bottom system is labeled '8.'. Both systems have red boxes highlighting specific musical passages. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, time signatures, and various musical symbols like dynamics (p) and articulation marks.

**Example 3:** S. Mercadante: *I due Figaro* – Overture, fandango (“Sonsonete” theme), mm. 26-35.

If not an original theme, it is one that Mercadante elaborates, presumably from a recent Moretti composition, *Boleras Atiranadas* (ex. 2b). From there, a triple-meter song-dance *Tirana* appears (A min.). Though without discernible source, this material emerges later in the song *El Sonsonete* (ex. 2f-i). Published in 1826 and ascribed to Moretti, it consolidates the first “Figaros” theme setting it to a *seguidilla* lyric, leaving the second (*Tirana*, ex. 2f-ii) intact<sup>160</sup> Thus combined, these two themes probably represent complete citations in themselves.

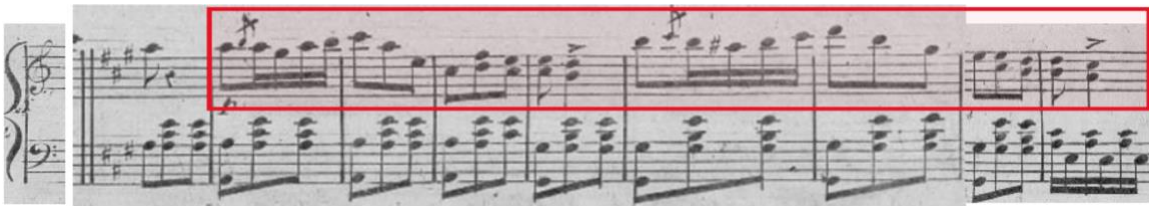
The image shows a page of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The top system is labeled 'Tempo di Tirana All.' and the bottom system is labeled 'con grazia'. Both systems have red boxes highlighting specific musical passages. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, time signatures, and various musical symbols like dynamics (p) and articulation marks.

**Example 4:** S. Mercadante: *I due Figaro* – Overture, *tirana*. (“Sonsonete” theme): mm. 101-120.

Not always owing to concrete written sources, the composer conceivably drew on popular folk-ditties or lyrics, in oral tradition, as heard sung locally. This is certainly a palpable dynamic when pondering unknown inspirations in each of our two operas. Of the discernibly borrowed themes and the most celebrated in terms of the overture’s later significance, the *cachucha* follows and is then alternated through the end of the piece. With little rhythmic distortion, this segment ends with the incorporation of the final phrase of a well-known tune, followed by some fill (unidentifiable as pertaining to other sources, but original and redolent of the “stretta” in the Figaro-Almaviva duet from Rossini’s *Barbiere di Siviglia*). It is repeated in a crescendo (C, returns before the end transposed to A).<sup>161</sup>

<sup>160</sup> S. Mercadante, *Sinfonia Caratteristica Spagnuola nell’Opera buffa I Due Figaro* (Milan: Ricordi, 1827).

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*



**Example 5:** S. Mercadante: *I due Figaro* – Overture, *Cachucha* theme (reprisal, A): mm. 206-214.

The aforementioned “well-known tune” is drawn on the *refrain* theme of the “*Tirana del Trípili*”,<sup>162</sup> and originates with what constitutes an important source of national and by then folklorized melody: the *tonadilla escénica*. During the Fernandine period, the song was frequently associated with the *tonadilla* entitled *Los Maestros de la Raboso*.<sup>163</sup> The choice of the *Trípili* in particular is interesting, as it is the title in which Cortesi had made her mark as ‘tonadillera’ before rapt Barcelona audiences, barely six months before, and therefore suggests that the maestro’s knowledge of this had somehow influenced its inclusion. This key citation is represented only by the last period of the refrain, or second phrase of the *estribillo* (“anda chiquita, anda salada, que me robaste el alma!”), and thus is used merely for effect.<sup>164</sup>



**Example 6:** S. Mercadante: *I due Figaro* – Overture, “*Trípili*” theme (*estribillo*): mm. 260-266.

Yet, the *Revista* chronicler’s remarks that some of the songs were of the composer’s own invention is also born out in the score’s reading. This is especially true of the overture to *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, which opens with two subsequent strikes of the tonic, wherein the second is preceded by an inferior octave-to-fifth *acciaccatura*. These pulses are followed by a half-step rise in key and three consecutive triplets of broken chords reminiscent in style of flamenco

<sup>162</sup> The otherwise highly informative introductory study to *Cien Años de Canción Lírica Española (I) – 1800-1868*, ed. Celsa Alonso (Madrid: Música Hispana, ICCMU, 2001), the author mistakenly notes (p.XXIII, vol. 2) that Mercadante had been inspired by the *Tirana del Tripilí* “in composing the overture to his opera *I due Figaro* (written for the Teatro del Príncipe in 1827).”

<sup>163</sup> An example exists in the announcement for a performance of the piece at the Teatro de la Cruz as “...la tonadilla del los maestros de la Raboso, ó el Tripilí, Trápala.” *Diario de Madrid*, 18 February 1817, no. 49, 198.

<sup>164</sup> *Raccolta delle più celebri sinfonie*, v. 6 Bellini & Mercadante (Ricordi, 1870), Saverio Mercadante, “*I due Figaro*,” 26-41. Used for technical reasons, the source of this fragment is from a later edition, which intriguingly also lends valuable insights. This posthumously published “pocket/(*tascabile*)” compilation appeared in new typesetting the year the composer died, in obvious homage: while his pupil and close friend Bellini has top billing, four of the six overtures printed are by Mercadante. Each overture bears the year of its respective premiere in parenthesis below the title, “1827” being an editorial error referring instead to the year of the piece’s original publication (see above citation). It likely also constitutes the still-cited erroneous premiere date originating with Florimo as its source.

guitar, very suggestive of an Andalusian theme. This highly original motif, of great symphonistic intensity, evokes an imagery of Quixote engaged in the tilt: the windmills' swing against the would-be champion's intermittent lunging at its swooping blades.<sup>165</sup>

**Example 7:** S. Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, Overture, incipit, mm 1-8.

However, the composer's originality notwithstanding, there are striking similarities between the *Chisciotte* overture and at least two others. Etienne Nicolas Méhul's *Les deux Aveugles de Tolède* (1806), given in Spain during the previous period as *Los dos Ciegos*, supplies key inspiration in Mercadante's overture, alternating repetitions of the following theme.<sup>166</sup>

<sup>165</sup> Saverio Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* (Autograph, 1830, Cádiz), I-Nc., 29.6.18.

<sup>166</sup> Étienne Nicolas Méhul, *Les Deux Aveugles de Tolède*, OC, 1a (Paris: Cherubini, Méhul, Kreutzer, Rode, Issouard & Boieldieu; 1806?), full score.

Allegro Moderato

Vln 1

Vln 2  
Vla

**Example 8:** E.N. Méhul: *Les Deux Aveugles de Tolède*, “Overture,” mm 55-62.

In turn, Mercadante employs it similarly, while somewhat adhering to Méhul’s tonal model throughout, but 1. reversing the repeated note figures to very different effect, blatantly paraphrasing the modular Méhul theme (ex. 9a), and 2. spinning it out into a complex melody, repeating the theme in the relative major (ex. 9b).

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Contrabass

**Example 9a:** S. Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, Overture: mm. 67-74.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Fl.

Picc.

B. Cl. 1

B. Cl. 2

Bsn.

E. Hn.

Vc.

Cb.

**Example 9b:** S. Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, Overture: mm. 75-79.

Using this as its base, Mercadante's overture reworks its French forerunner's principal ideas and themes, altering the accompaniment and making it both harmonically and rhythmically more Andalusian, without rendering its primordial inspiration unrecognizable. This now transitions to a *fandango*-like melody (ex. 9c), itself clearly based on the first eight measures of the *fandango* section from the aforementioned Moretti overture to *El Licenciado Farfulla* (ex. 10).<sup>167</sup>

Example 9c: S. Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, Overture: mm. 80-83.

Example 10: F. Moretti, *El Licenciado Farfulla*: Overture, mm. 142-146.

Furthermore, while twentieth-century musicologists stress that Mercadante had paraphrased the famous *Tirana del Tripilí*, they failed to note that he did so in *both* of his overtures. José Subirá and others remark on the Figaros' use of the *tripilí* motif but do not mention that the latter citation also occurs in *Don Chisciotte*, now based on the *verse* theme. In its turn, this preserves only the first part of the melody while shifting its triple-meter rhythmic emphasis by heavily syncopating it. Appearing in the oboe (from m.11), the paraphrase alters the trajectory of the melody, developing it beyond its original strophic scope, until taken up by the flute (m. 28), and completed with a final cadence (ex. 11a).<sup>168</sup>

<sup>167</sup> F. Moretti, *El Licenciado Farfulla*: Overture (Madrid; prob. Late 1816-early 1817), E-Mbn.

<sup>168</sup> Saverio Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* (Autograph, 1830, Cádiz), I-Nc., 29.6.18. An even more elaborate example of this melody's incorporation into a third-party work exists in the first of the *Goyescas* by Enrique Granados which reproduces the original character and rhythm of the melody more faithfully than either Mercadante example. Others exist, some even of an earlier date: Alonso (1998) mentions an 1830s ms. containing a piece on the "trípili" theme, by Pedro Albéniz.

**Example 11a:** S. Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, Overture “Trípili” (verse), mm. 125-143.

It is only thus that Mercadante completed the cycle (i.e., of citing the entire tune, albeit piecemeal), by inserting the *Trípili* in reverse order, across the two different pieces. Strikingly, the only phrase he avoids in both overtures corresponds to the nonsense text of the refrain (or *estribillo*) “*Trípili, trípili, trápala (esta tirana se canta y se baila).*” It also reflects the first major-key shift of consecutive strains, which after favoring the dramatic intensity of the minor and more languid lyrical quality of the first ones, breaks into a characteristically festive *fandango* motif:<sup>169</sup>

**Example 11b:** S. Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, Overture “fandango” theme, mm. 151-157.

Finally, while these “reminiscenzas” (reminiscences), or borrowings of Madrid’s theatrical music were not lost on the public, Mercadante nonetheless redeems himself through his acquired experience in vernacular themes and texture, which enabled him to revamp the original ideas to the

<sup>169</sup> Saverio Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* (Autograph, 1830, Cádiz), I-Nc., 29.6.18.



greatest possible effect. While yet awaiting published study, this is a phenomenon of his composition processes which we have long held under scrutiny.<sup>170</sup> Not limited to the overtures, it is a testament to the composer's skill in not only reworking but also in refining pre-existing material, as we shall see.

### b. *The Choruses*

When giving examples of Mercadante's Spanish stylings, it is noteworthy that the vocal is never divorced from the instrumental, which generally precede choruses and close solos in the form of an introduction often comprising most of the piece's main theme in anticipation. While it is not necessary to give these as part of the examples, a certain exception from Act 1, scene 2—subject to a paste-over cut—comes to mind. The reality of damage to the original score for the 1835 production is manifest in the altered scoring of this section, greatly curtailed into a sixteen-measure transition of little musical value or dramatic interest, which to the contrary was plainly Mercadante's scope in composing the original tract.<sup>171</sup> Once carefully layered by addition of brass, one at a time at four-measure periods, it now suffers in the repetition with chorus from the later alteration. Hash-marks (denoting repeats from an earlier section added by the editor or copyist from one designation to another) are overwritten with full scoring in a different hand, uncharacteristic of the rest of the 1826 manuscript.<sup>172</sup> The earthier colors of the original are trivialized by a resulting softening of instrumentation that does away with the gradual addition of parts in succession, blurring the otherwise vital pastoral harmonies of the woodwinds, which otherwise culminates together in this richly layered device (ex. 12).<sup>173</sup>

<sup>170</sup> An interesting example of these is the *Chisciotta* overture's uncommon if perhaps limited *manifestation of themes from the opera*, occurring as one of final motifs begins the opening chorus: though not yet practiced in the true Mozartian or Verdian sense, it at least nods to the concept.

<sup>171</sup> In fact, the cut in question does away with an entire scene.

<sup>172</sup> It is not certain just who effected these alterations. Nevertheless, responsibility probably lies with the presiding maestro serving that season.

<sup>173</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *I due Figaro* (part aut. ms., 1826, rev. 1835; Madrid), *E-Mav*, 405.

**Example 12:** S. Mercadante, *I due Figaro* – Introduzione, a1 (8 final mm. of instrumental intro. chorus entry on “viva”), mm. 54-65.

All this transfer of interest in vernacular themes to opera begs the rather unscientific-sounding question: how does one make the peasants sing together, or sound ‘traditional,’ minus evidence of a tangible extant ‘tradition’ of folkloric vocal polyphony?<sup>174</sup> Enter the chorus, comprising native Spanish artists, as more readily poised to represent down-home stock or *castizo* sentiments, which as we argue, translate into a surrogate national or folkloric musical language. Here, Count Almaviva’s servants, affectionately extol and welcome their returning patronesses as they prepare a banquet in their honor (ex. 13a-b).<sup>175</sup>

Andante mosso

**Example 13a:** S. Mercadante: *I Due Figaro* – chorus frag., finale al, mm. 41-49.

<sup>174</sup> We addressed this question through comparative analysis in the paper “Inventing Local Tradition? – Vernacular Elements in Early Nineteenth-Century Spanish Stage and Salon Ensemble Writing,” presented at the Tenth International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony, IRCTP, Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Tbilisi, GE, October 2020 (online). Link to abstracts-booklet: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/12YJEBz87aCxwIVTSqTG9qiSmhxnS1BTS/view>.

<sup>175</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *I Due Figaro* (part aut. ms., 1826, rev. 1835; Madrid), *E-Mav*, 405.

**Example 13b:** S. Mercadante: *I Due Figaro* – chorus frag., finale al, mm. 78-85.

This illustrates a key element distinguishing this type of ensemble writing: the use of any number of figures consisting of ornamental and structural components or passages, like a tag or post-cadential rhythmic figure of repeated notes over several beats or measures (ex. 13c):<sup>176</sup>

**Example 13c:** S. Mercadante: *I Due Figaro* – chorus frag., finale al, mm. 94-101

Though short, this example is indicative of what might be considered an early “symphonistic” prototype for setting of vernacular themes,<sup>177</sup> a model on which Spanish composers would subsequently draw in developing the new *zarzuela* and Spanish operatic forms, from mid-century onward.

Contrary to *I due Figaro* (with exception of its overture), some of the styles or rhythms utilized in *Chisiotte* are indicated in the score. Of the pieces that are clearly Spanish in nature, the overture and first chorus (no. 1: “Viva don Chisiotte”) are not so marked, while the remaining ones are

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> It seems that this technique of infusing vernacular musical settings with rich orchestral timbres would be adapted in the guise of *zarzuela* and “ópera española” by the late 1840s and remain a staple to the late-Romantic and ‘nationalistic’ era of Spanish lyric theatrical composition, e.g., through the twentieth century.

identified by their respective dance form. For instance, no. 4, a lively chorus marked “Allegro, tempo di manciacca,” uses exuberant vocalism, driven rhythmically by the *segudillas manchegas*. Further conventional operatic vocal formulae and cadenzas do double duty as the intermediary exclamations of the Andalusian folk singer, while the final chorus and finale in numbers 8 and 9, respectively, each bear “tempo di bolero.”<sup>178</sup> But the traits of Mercadante’s *españolismo* are diverse: one source claims that the melody for the folksong *Rogativas de San Isidro* (a folk-hymn to St. Isidore, intoned as an invocation for rain) is recognizable in the opening chorus.<sup>179</sup> However, we would argue that it constitutes merely an incomplete hint rather than a full citation: while the four tones incipient announce it over a measure and a half, the melody veers off midway through the initial phrase, and the remainder of the resemblance is solely in the rhythm, which is maintained throughout. Thus said, such nods to folk (and other borrowed) themes that are immediately changed into a different melody are a prevalent trait in Mercadante’s melodic development.

Returning to the special treatment Mercadante lavishes upon the chorus, the score setting of the following section constitutes a salient moment of technically difficult passages, which was left out of the 2007 revival of the opera (and its associated live recording). In a manner somewhat like that employed in *I due Figaro*, this section delineates the other side of the emotional spectrum of Mercadante’s earlier-noted *chorus-persona*, creating dramatic tension with an expression of tenderness, then sudden admonition and concern.<sup>8</sup> It reveals agile, folk-like counterpoint, pending on the pedal of III, inherent of the Andalusian mode while transitioning into the relative minor in A. The repeated single figures overlap as the voices enter one by one, culminating before the last repeat (ex. 14a).<sup>180</sup>

<sup>178</sup> Saverio Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* (Autograph, 1830, Cádiz), I-Nc., 29.6.18.

<sup>179</sup> Adela Presas, “Don Chisciotte en la ópera italiana del siglo XIX. ‘Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio,’ de Saverio Mercadante,” in *Tus obras los rincones de la tierra descubren* (Actas del VI Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Cervantes), pp. 623-26 (Alcalá de Henares: Centro de Estudios Cervantinos, 2008), p. 634. In a final section entitled “Aspectos Musicales,” the author mentions this solitary theme regarding Mercadante’s possible folkloric sources, alluding in a footnote to her doctoral dissertation in which these are identified in detail. After an exhaustive search through all available databases and resources, the work did not appear. Instead, a book bearing a similar title as well as a critical edition of the *Chisciotte* score (both by Presas) are announced as forthcoming on the publishing institute’s website (Centro de Estudios Cervantinos). With projected release dates for both having long passed, neither has yet been published as of this article’s publication.

<sup>180</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* (Autograph, 1830, Cádiz), I-Nc., 29.6.18.

Example 14a: S. Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* – chorus, mm. 1-10.

The emerging form, representative of a social reunion of voices, as in the continuation of the above passage, evokes a rustic Spanish ensemble, combining vernacular musical tropes generally intended for solo voices, in canon, imitation and even juxtaposed in thirds.<sup>181</sup> While the latter can only carry two distinct parts, the former may enfold as many as are on hand. In the case of the following, both traits are employed (ex. 14b).<sup>182</sup>

Example 14b: S. Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* – chorus, mm. 18-35.

<sup>181</sup> In the above-cited paper “Inventing Local Tradition?” (Tenth International Symposium on Traditional Polyphony, October, 2020), I argued for a hypothetical folk-polyphony representing a surrogate for vernacular communal singing via a hybrid Spanish polyphonic vocality which began taking form at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the works of certain Spanish composers to reemerge later at the hands of foreign composers with first-hand experience of the idiom like Brogialdi, Mercadante and M.V.P. García.

<sup>182</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* (Autograph, 1830, Cádiz), I-Nc., 29.6.18.

## c. Solo and Ensemble Writing

Figaro's entrance ("O fantasia di Figaro"), while typical of the "scena e cavatina" format, is subsumed into the *Introduzione* following Plagio's.<sup>183</sup> It is infused with subtle but still prominent traits of Spanish popular musical culture: the duple meter,<sup>184</sup> while not as blatantly "Spanish" as the other forms cited, is nevertheless indicative of the *pasodoble*, of which this piece may be an early precursor, influencing later Spanish composers (ex. 15).<sup>185</sup>

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Figaro

O fan - ta - sia di Fi - ga-ro Es-tro pri - mier, ti

Bass

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Ob.

Cl.

Fig.

de - - - sta La più su - bli - me su - bli-me e ul - ti - ma Del - le mie glo - rie mie glo-rie è

Cb.

<sup>183</sup> An Andante section preceding this *cabaletta*, though not labeled as such, serves as Figaro's *scena/cavatina*.

<sup>184</sup> As can be seen in Subirá, not all vernacular forms were in triple meter; some *seguidilla* finales being shown in 2/4.

<sup>185</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *I due Figaro* (part aut. ms., 1826, rev. 1835, Madrid), *E-Mav*, 405. Although the vocal form was likely in its embryonic stage by the mid-nineteenth century (with the dawn of the new form of *zarzuela*), the martial rhythms had existed since the late eighteenth. The *pasodoble taurino* is also thought to have originated in certain *tonadillas* (primarily by the prolific Pablo Esteve) evoking bullfighting, a concept which was further developed in the early *zarzuelas* of Barbieri and others. This was eventually carried over to identify the boastful auto-eulogium of the toreador immortalized in Bizet's *Carmen*, and beyond through the instrumental and vocal *pasodobles* of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

que - sta Del - le mie glo - rie mie glo - rie è que - sta Ta - le al - la

**Example 15:** S. Mercadante, *I due Figaro* – *Introduzione*, a1: Figaro’s entrance, frag.

While the use of the “alla polacca” rhythm in the accompaniment’s bass (usually reserved for a character’s emotionally assertive *cabaletta*) is not unusual for Mercadante in this position, its choice bears some consideration. It even approaches the later *pasodoble taurino* in its intent, since the words forecast what will be the greatest achievement and crowning glory of Figaro’s “career,” which in turn hints at the future Escamillo’s “Chanson du Toreador” (Bizet, *Carmen*). The harmony in the woodwinds on the lower third bears resemblance to instrumental folk harmonies of northern and central Spain.<sup>186</sup> This instance shares this trait with the above-cited choral fragment example prior to its having been “sterilized” via the previously discussed score changes (ex. 15).<sup>187</sup>

Similarly, Cherubino’s ternary *cabaletta* likely fits into the realm of original melodic ideas, while not necessarily deprived of a certain *casticismo*. Mercadante precedes it with a measure of accompaniment, which he has already associated with the *tirana* in the overture (a common trait he will employ later, as shall become apparent). The triple meter with repeated sixteenth-note accompaniment and the trailing *jota*-like figures ending each phrase of the vocal line lend the piece its unmistakable Spanish character (ex. 16).<sup>188</sup>

Com - man - da - te gen - ti - le si - gno - ri Dò - ri - po - sa fra - tel - lo mag - gio - re

<sup>186</sup> It also bears similarities to textures Méhul used in orchestrating his previously discussed overture.

<sup>187</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *I due Figaro* (part aut. ms., 1826, rev. 1835, Madrid), *E-Mav*, 405.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

Example 16: S. Mercadante: *I Due Figaro* – Cherubino, frag.

Example 16: S. Mercadante: *I Due Figaro* – Cherubino, frag.

Susanna's *bolero* constitutes an extremely important statement among Mercadante's assertions of *españolismo*, representing a conglomeration of the sources discussed (ex. 1-2c). Among other passages shown above in examples 1-2, it probably draws on elements from the ca.1812 *Bolera*, *Cuántas veces mis ojos* by Joaquín Tadeo Murguía which Celsa Alonso calls, "illustrative of the freedom of the *Bolera* form" (ex. 1b).<sup>189</sup> This in itself suggests the flexible and—in 1826—still evolving nature of Spanish popular song, when as previously noted (and according to Alonso), forms and functions underwent their own process of hybridization. Therefore, their subjection to Italian-style operatic treatment must have seemed a logical experiment by that time (ex. 17).<sup>190</sup>

<sup>189</sup> Cien Años de Canción Lírica Española (I) – 1800-1868, ed. Celsa Alonso (Madrid: Música Hispana, ICCMU, 2001), p. xxii, col. 2.

<sup>190</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *I due Figaro* (part aut. ms., 1826, rev. 1835, Madrid), E-Mav, 405.



The image displays a musical score for a vocal and instrumental ensemble. The score is divided into two systems. The first system includes parts for Violins 1 and 2, Flutes 1 and 2, Oboe, Bassoon, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Soprano (S), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabasso (Cb.). The vocal line (S) has the lyrics "te" and "Fam - mia". The second system includes parts for Violins 1 and 2, Viola, Flutes 1 and 2, Oboe, Bassoon, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Soprano (S), Violoncello (Vc.), and Contrabasso (Cb.). The vocal line (S) has the lyrics "ga - rao - gnor la... cor - te Più di mil - le spas-si - man - ti spas-si-man - ti Fam - mia". The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 3/4. The tempo is marked "Tempo di Bolero".

**Example 17:** S. Mercadante, *I due Figaro* – Aria Susanna, “Tempo di Bolero,” frag.

But just as in the use of melismatic and modal writing for the chorus, it is also here where Mercadante’s efforts are especially pioneering, demonstrated by the researched use of the “bolero” as a vehicle for operatic representation.<sup>191</sup> Despite its increasing frequency in Paris from the century’s

<sup>191</sup> Concerning this, we discuss it more fully in the Mercadante context farther along, in section D.

beginning, the term ‘Bolero’ is, at this point, as ambiguous in its way as a defined form as that of “fandango,” and rarely if ever used in Spain proper,<sup>192</sup> though Spaniards like Paz coin it in Paris as early as ca.1812.<sup>193</sup> In the Spanish tradition, the *bolera* (originally *volera*) was generally danced to the *seguidilla* which was sung (and from which—very broadly stated—the idea and tradition of flamenco *cante jondo* originates). But Mercadante, for all his immersion in the Spanish culture of that time that saw these traditions already well fixed yet changing, seems as concerned with a faithful rendering of the *seguidilla* as he does with the smooth transition of the idea of the *Bolero* into an operatic closed number. Thus, the objective is not to reproduce the *bolera* song form but rather to incorporate the essential rhythms of the *seguidilla-bolera* (as a dance) into the scene by keeping the suggestion of the dance form as ambiguous as possible so that just the flavor remains, instead of pretending to redefine the established song form after an Italian fashion. In fact, he achieves the transmutation of the song type into the necessary Italian operatic convention to the degree that the piece was subsequently retrofitted (presumably by Moretti) with a Spanish text for publication as the *Boleras Ytalianadas* (“Italianized Boleras”), and arranged with a Spanish text in the proper meter (ex. 2C-i).<sup>194</sup>

Interestingly, Moretti does not reproduce a verbatim reading of the *bolero* portion of Susana’s cavatina; he stops short of “Spanishing” it, even leaving out the final cadence. Instead, it transitions into the *cabaletta* portion, as an intermediary section, before culminating with a final repeat of the initial *bolero* theme. In the opera, this completely conventional independent section follows after ending of the a-b-a *bolero* (ex.2c)].

Other instances do exist where the vocal writing for the soloists may divulge subtly matched moments of vernacular coloring, and they bear mentioning here, albeit in passing. From Act I, these include fragments of the *finale primo*. Here, Mercadante’s usage of Spanish rhythms transcends the obvious suggestive dance-song element in the *pezzo chiuso*. The rhythmic formulae reminiscent of a *fandango* is employed progressively, not formulaically and without the typical harmonic structures. This highly experimental tract of the first-act finale finds a transitional “tempo” based on the *fandango*-type formula carried by the strings in pizzicato (the incipit of *a* and *b* with an intermediary ascent of broken chords against a steady rhythm in imitation of castanets by Susanna/Inez together in thirds, reprised by each in turn, then by the Count [*a* theme]). Another piece of Spanish inspiration,

<sup>192</sup> *Diario de Madrid*, 18 February 1817, no. 49, 198. Intriguingly, this number also contains a very rare instance of the word “bolero,” in the Spanish context, and certainly one of the earliest. From what we have thus far encountered, little evidence supports the use of this originally French term (most likely a bastardization of the Spanish word *volera* or *bolera*) in Spain as a generic term at that point or before the mid-1820s. It was probably just being coined and had not quite taken its place in the general lexicon, as it would as an international term of generic reference from the c.1830s.

<sup>193</sup> Narciso Paz includes an instrumental *Bolero* at the end of each volume, applying the term exclusively, and never to vocal pieces which retain the designation of *volera*. Unfortunately, even the most authoritative sources (i.e., Alonso) seem to use the term almost interchangeably within the discourse pertaining to the work of Paz and others in 1810s Paris. Alonso refers to several vocal “Boleros” by Paz, which do not appear in the volumes available for study.

<sup>194</sup> With regard to the Spanish version of Susanna’s Cavatina (*Bolero* and Italianate *cabaletta*), though the curious appellation “Italianadas” might seem to indicate the piece’s mere origins in an Italian opera, it sooner suggests two distinct modes of adaptation employed by the arranger (probably Moretti), namely by: 1. conforming the Spanish text to a melody inherent of the original Italian *ottonari* (or octosyllabic) versification, and 2. adapting the uncharacteristic and conventionally operatic duple-meter *cabaletta* into the corresponding section of the *seguidillas boleras*.

however subtle, comes in the finale of Act I. A short duet section for the Countess and Susanna (though the theme is later repeated by the remaining characters, beginning with the Count, in the fashion of the finale). This fragment (andante, second part), draws on the form of the *tirana*, employing a 6/8 rhythm and characteristic harmonization in thirds on a single line of text, very well suited to female duet and easily assimilated into the Italian operatic vehicle. Ergo, while underscoring the building of dramatic tension or the conventional mounting of suspense requisite to that moment in the opera, it illustrates how the above-noted use of vernacular idiom gains musical functionality within the dramatic context (finale). All this is nonetheless contained within seemingly conventional “Italian” treatments, with moments hinting at musical Spanishness that helps maintain its “castizo” illusion.

Furthermore, with the *sombre* exception of the so-called *polo* (perhaps technically not of his own choosing), the foregoing shows that Mercadante’s most prominent flashes of *couleur locale* typically tend to reflect a *brighter mood*. Conversely, while critical approbation of the Spanish melody generally abounds, instances identifying or singling out fragments do not. Despite this, we have ascertained the origins of several other sources through which we can now identify the original influences of specific passages in Mercadante. Most salient is the one to which Masarnau alludes as he commits his entire summation of the *Figari* score’s value to the following phrase: “we will only indicate in passing that the most-applauded scene does not belong to this opera, / (indicaremos de paso, que la escena mas aplaudida no pertenece á esta ópera)”.<sup>195</sup> Given what we now know, this alludes to “the ‘polo’ in the duet between Susanna and Figaro,” which the *Revista Española* deemed among the best pieces.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, the critic’s spurious illusion to outright plagiarism aside, the piece in question does constitute a full citation from a pre-existing work. It also corroborates our rediscovery of new sources identifying one of them as Brogialdi’s 1825 version as what informed Mercadante’s: the sole extant manuscript copy of this solitary Brogialdi *I due Figaro* fragment was likely Mercadante’s source (ex. 18a, i-ii).

The image shows a musical score for a duet section. It includes staves for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Susanna, and Contrabass. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 6/8. The lyrics for Susanna are: Brut - ta co - sa è l'es - ser mo - glie D'un ma - ri - to sec - ca - to - re.

**Example 18a (i):** D. Brogialdi, *I due Figaro* – Duet: Susanna-Figaro, “Polo,” mm. 2-9.

<sup>195</sup> Masarnau, *El Artista* (1835) –“Los Dos Fígaros.”

<sup>196</sup> Brogialdi’s *polo* likely constitutes the original source of Mercadante’s, just as *El Vejuquito* must have served to inspire Brogialdi to adapt it. We have dealt with this rediscovery and its wider significance and implications in a separate article, based on the following paper: “‘This new little song has come from...’ – The *Ida y Vuelta* Folk-song and Italian Opera Experimentation in 1820s Spain,” presented at the “42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Nineteenth-Century Studies Association Conference, 11-13 March 2020 (online).”

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Susanna  
Figaro  
Contrabass

Qualche don-na se m'as-col-ta E nel ca-so mio si tro-va Con-fir-mar do - v à per pro-va Che par-lai con ve-ri-tà.  
La la la la la Can-ta pu-re ma re-sta qua

**Example 18a (ii):** D. Brogialdi, *I due Figaro* – Duet: Susanna-Figaro, “Polo,” mm. 18-33.

Additionally, we at first suspected that Brogialdi himself drew on a newly published piece in composing the duet containing the “polo” adapting the song *El bejuquito* “as is” to the scene, leaving no doubt as to what prompted Mercadante to do the same, albeit with very different results.

Es-te so-ne ti-to nue-vo de Ve-  
ra-cruz ha ve-ni do es te so ni ti-to nue-vo de Ve-  
can-ta de lo lin-do Tai-rai-ri tai-ra-ri-ta tai-ri tai-rai-ri mi-re-  
ra-cruz ha ve-ni do y lo tra-jo u-na ne-grita que lo  
-le vi que ho-ni-to tai-rai-ri tai-rai-ri tai-rai-ri ta...ró lo lla-  
can-ta de lo lin-do y lo tra-jo u-na ne-grita que lo  
-tan el ve-ju-quito y con es-ta su-vi-dad a dor-



**Example 18b:** *El Vejuquito* (poss. Ed. Moretti), frag.

While Moretti's involvement in the musical preparation of pieces published at this time remains shadowy, as scholars continue crediting him even in anonymous publications, it therefore seems feasible that he had been behind this arrangement. Other arrangements had been published, which Brogialdi could have used. However, while the piece preceded Brogialdi's opera (which would have been completed in 1825), it is certain that both manifestations date from within a very short time of each other.<sup>197</sup> In any case, since the published song sports similar arpeggiated chords in the piano accompaniment and predates Mercadante's version, it seems feasible that this may have come to the composer from Moretti. That notwithstanding, Masarnau's veiled insinuations of plagiarism were obviously made in ignorance of Mercadante's markedly improved-upon composition. Mercadante's treatment of the *polo*, while straying even more from its source, gains in maturity and poise over its predecessor. While no such rhythm is indicated in Mercadante's score (but in Brogialdi's), this section is similarly intercalated into the middle of an Act II trio, in 6/8 meter (ex. 19).<sup>198</sup> An intermediary coda of two pairs of repeated figures intensely illustrates an emotional outburst, the figure repeated twice, presumably for setting an Italian text (mm. 41-46).<sup>199</sup>

<sup>197</sup> The published sheet bears a plate number that falls into an 'unknown' gap between the last given for 1824 and the first for 1825.

<sup>198</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *I Due Figaro* (part aut. ms., 1826, rev. 1835, Madrid), E-Mav, 405. This follows Brogialdi who similarly places it in the middle section of a duet. A cursory comparative analysis with *polos* of the time bears this out (a noted example being Manuel Garcia's "*El Contrabandista*"). We have presented a complete analysis and discussion of the use of *El Bejuquito* by Brogialdi and the use of that source by Mercadante in this fragment in the aforementioned paper and prepared it for subsequent publication.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.* The tune was originally furnished with two different Spanish texts, the original (*El Vejuquito*, 1825), and an alternate one included in the libretto for Brogialdi's *Dos Figaros* (Barcelona, 1825).

Violin 1

Violin 2

Viola

Flute 1

Oboe

Clarinet in Bb

Bassoon

Figaro

Bass

29 *pizz.* *pizz.* *pizz.* 34 *pizz.*

Brut-ta cosa è a - ver per mo - glie un-a don-na\_ ca-ric - cio - sa che non pensa ad al-tra

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Fl. 1

Ob.

Bb Cl.

Bsn.

Fig.

Cb.

35 *pizz.* *pizz.* 39

co - sa il ma - ri - to a far - cre - pa - re. Se qual - ch'uo-m'o - ra m'as - col - ta e nel ca - so\_ mio si\_

41 pizz. 44

Vln. 1

Vln. 2

Vla.

Fl. 1

Fl. 2

Ob.

B♭ Cl.

Bsn.

Hn.

Susanna

Fig.

Cb.

Con - fes - sar do - vrà per — pro - va che par - lai con — ve - ri - tà —

tro - va con - fes - sar do - vrà per — pro - va che par - lai con — ve - ri - tà. — con - fes -

**Example 19:** S. Mercadante: *I due Figaro* - Terzetto (Act II)  
 “Polo” duet section - Susanna-Figaro (frag.): mm. 29-55.

Fittingly, the musical exploration of Mercadante’s Spanish operas concludes with the finale to the last of these, *Don Chisciotte*. When Moretti created *Boleras de las habas verdes* he more than honored Mercadante with a song: he served him with what became the main theme of the *Chisciotte* finale (ex. 2d), in combination with *Boleras de la Bola* (ex. 2b), Moretti’s earlier arrangement of another popular melody.<sup>200</sup> The rhythms and formulae of the accompaniment are also typical of most

<sup>200</sup> F. Moretti, *Boleras de las habas verdes* (Wirmbs [Mintegui & Hermoso], 1826, Madrid). Also in: *Cien Años de Canción Lírica Española (I) – 1800-1868*, ed. Celsa Alonso (Madrid; ICCMU, 2001). Celsa Alonso, *La Canción Lírica Española en el Siglo XIX* (Madrid: Música Hispana, ICCMU, 1996), 103 refers to this as published by Wirmbs. She also notes *Habas Verdes*’s extreme popularity and its possible regional origins (Salamanca), but without explaining which came first, indicating “various editions,” some “a tone lower in D,” being the case with the present (oldest?) edition. For all its astounding depth of research and detail, such ambiguities abound, which we have tried to amend here, where necessary and possible.

published sources of the same period and likely derived from another similar to those used for Susanna's *cabaletta* (*bolero*); in fact, the introductory formula is common to both Chiteria's and Susanna's respective songs. There is an occasional nod to vernacular "galloping" rhythmic patterns or the "Andalusian" i-III progression, as in the transition between tempi in Chiteria's *cavatina* or in the duet between herself and Basilio.<sup>201</sup> But, only in the finale do the two lovers express their joy in such a fashion (in a more vernacular folk idiom) on a melody previously immortalized outside the opera itself by the same Moretti, and, as we shall see, also subjected to later repurposing by Mercadante himself (ex. 20).<sup>202</sup>

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Flute

Piccolo

Oboe

Clarinet in B♭

Chiteria

Contrabass

Ma do-po tan-ti af - fan-ni e tan-ti, sia-mo liet-ti e con - tenti

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Fl.

Picc.

Ob.

B♭. Cl. I

Chit.

Cb.

Quest - i so - no i bei mo - men-ti del - la mi - a fe - li - ci - tà, si del - la mi - a fe - li - ci -

<sup>201</sup> Chiteria's *cabaletta*, while supported by an otherwise conventional *alla polacca* rhythm, which, though it could be arguably construed as "Spanish," presents nothing supporting that notion melodically. In fact, two years later found Mercadante reworking this and other of his late excerpts produced for Spain into the main themes of *I Normanni a Parigi* (composed in Turin, late 1831), for carnival 1832.

<sup>202</sup> Saverio Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle Nozze di Gamaccio* (Autograph, 1830, Cádiz), I-Nc., 29.6.18.



The image displays a musical score for a scene from *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*. The score is arranged in ten staves, labeled from top to bottom as Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Fl., Picc., Ob., Bsn., Chit., and Cb. The Vln. I and II parts feature a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Vla. part has a similar rhythmic pattern. The Fl., Picc., and Ob. parts have rests. The Bsn. part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. The Chit. part has a complex rhythmic pattern and includes the lyrics: 'tà si del - la mi - a fe - li - ci - tà del - la mi - a fe - li - ci - tà del - la'. The Cb. part has a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

**Example 20:** S. Mercadante: *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio*, finale (Chiteria), frag.

Far from a closer theoretical examination of Mercadante’s methodological complexities in adapting this material (in terms of his compositional approach), the preceding exploration has been an attempt to identify some of the salient moments of *couleur locale* via several examples, as noted. Of course, it seemed necessary to give as much background as possible, to lay the foundation for further study on that premise. However, as declared at this study’s outset, this is by no means intended as an exhaustive or conclusive assessment, but rather a survey of our findings relevant to what may emerge as the musical equivalent of an otherwise uncommon Spanish *topos* within this stage of conventional Italian operatic usage.

#### D. Further Impact and Interim Absorption of Musical Sources

Although *I due Figaro* certainly went “underground,” the reaction against the censors was swift. One way of fighting back against the censorship was the almost immediate publication of various pieces from the opera, and of others which blatantly borrowed its themes and heralded their origins in homage to Mercadante. As the pieces were reabsorbed into new popular forms of Spanish musical expression, so too had *Figari* begun to insinuate itself onto Spain’s popular culture. From 1826 to 1835, enough of it had become known through rehearsal and private performance (no doubt circulating through the salons and *tertulias* of Mercadante’s noble patrons<sup>203</sup>) to have passed into legend. Notwithstanding, the overture premiering on the night of Mercadante’s Madrid benefit, was a fixture in the theaters from that point onward.<sup>204</sup> This also extended, in part, to *Chisciotte*, and as we shall

<sup>203</sup> Mercadante and the most prominent singers in the troupe enjoyed the patronage of several high-ranking noble families, notably of the Countess-Duchess of Benavente and of her daughters.

<sup>204</sup> Depending on the location, the piece was alternately announced in the newspapers as either “Sinfonía Característica” (a term Mercadante also used for later non-Spanish compositions) or as the overture to “Los dos Figaros,” notwithstanding the fact that the opera did not exist as a previously staged work. The overture to *I due Figaro* was eventually published in Italy as the *Sinfonia caratteristica spagnuola*. This is distinct from the *Chisciotte* overture, subsequently popularized in Spain as *Seconda Sinfonía Característica Española*, and to which Michael Wittman erroneously refers instead as “Sinfonia caratteristica spagnuola,” on p. 5 of the liner notes to the 2007 Bad Wildbad recording (Saverio Mercadante, *Don Chisciotte alle nozze di Gamaccio* Naxos 8660312-13, 2012).

learn, some of the material from both works would even resurface in the composer's own hand. The subsequent circulation of excerpts with accompaniments in guitar-piano reduction attests to this.

### 1. Reabsorption into Popular Musical Culture

The 1826 publication of several pieces discussed above from or inspired by *I due Figaro* date from the period when it was in production, thus attesting to the wildly anticipated work's popular appeal, given its 'national' connotations. These consist of the overture (*Sinfonía característica española*), two excerpts arranged for guitar and piano in ensemble, various "extractions" for flute and for violin, and a solitary vocal piece: a version of Susanna's Act I cavatina translated into Spanish, and published by Wirmbs as "*Boleras Italianadas*, extracted from the cavatina of *Los dos Figaros*, Music by Maestro Mercadante, "as sung by Mme..." (ex. 2c-i). In terms of what we call musical repurposing or "Spanishizing" of vocal excerpts from the operas, this example was about returning the opera's national inspiration back to its vernacular roots, as a device of popular consumption.<sup>205</sup> As previously noted, plates were likely prepared to coincide with the still-authorized staging, as the imprint shows that a name – undoubtedly "Cortesi" – had been typeset but blocked out during the printing process (ex.2C-i). Its obvious removal prior to publication might be seen as another very public display of retaliation intended to humiliate the singer. Furthermore, it was likely first performed in concert by the piece's dedicatee and subsequently associated with her exclusively. But as Mercadante borrowed themes from Moretti, for instance, so too was the process reversed. Mercadante's work gained further popularity through its incorporation into Moretti's *Boleras del sonsonete*, which employs two of the overture themes (ex.2e). However, the emergence of occasional pieces published in homage to Mercadante's "dos Figaros" would continue well into the 1830s and beyond, occasioning the overture-themes' amateur recreational use in salons or *tertulias*, the influence of which should not be understated.<sup>206</sup>

### 2. Theatrical Reappearance and Repurposing

Certain of the above-cited Mercadante pieces, whether attributed to him or not, were subject to widespread extra-operatic representation in Spanish theatres (to say nothing of private salons or studios). The phenomenon linking Mercadante to the progressing Andalusian fad extended to locales as far flung as Cuba (then still part of Spain), as early as 1839, where it was announced that María Cañete, dressed in Andalusian *maja* costume, would sing "... a *jaleo* [shout] song, composed by the famous Mercadante, which is named *Alza Pilili*."/(... una canción de *jaleo*, compuesta por el célebre Mercadante, que se denomina *Alza Pilili*).<sup>207</sup> A similar trend resurfaces in 1850s Madrid, where other

<sup>205</sup> F. Moretti, *Boleras Ytalianadas* (Madrid: Wirmbs [Lodre], 1826).

<sup>206</sup> So it is with *La Filarmonia*: "Vals característico español extractado de la sinfonía *Los dos Figaros*" (Madrid; Hermoso, c. 1830), a simple piano arrangement of the *I due Figaro* overture's principal themes. At some point, former apprentice Wirmbs engraver and Mintegui & Hermoso partner Antonio Hermoso began publishing one-page sheets with piano or guitar (mostly waltz) arrangements of recently performed Madrid operatic selections. These vary in difficulty, piquing in showier efforts by composers like Tomás Genovés. However, it seems implausible that the series really spanned 1827 to 1835, despite suggestions arising from the BNE catalogue's arbitrary dating according to the operas' Madrilenian premiere, ergo our refutation of its ascribed year, 1835. Also, the publisher's numerical order contains frequent erasures—here "14" becomes "1"—while pieces with earlier BNE dates may show higher numbers.

<sup>207</sup> "Gran Teatro de Tacón," *Diario de La Habana*, 10 August and 15 December 1839, [p.194], cited in José Luis Ortiz Nuevo, "Huellas de lo Andaluz en al Habana en la primera mitad del XIX" in "Cuba y Andalucía entre las dos orillas," Jesús Raúl

such performances of the piece are described in the same way, as part of a dance program by señorita Romero y el señor Atané, including a vocal performance of the “jaleo” in question as no. 5,<sup>208</sup> in the Teatro de Instituto Español (formerly “del Principe”) as late as 1851. Also credited to Mercadante, it was announced as the “Jaleo del alza pilili,” espousing even more fully the concept. This likely stems from the practice first introduced in Barcelona in 1825, whereby the colloquial interjection (or *jaleo*) “alza pilili” was inserted as a pliant with *an alternate Spanish text* for the Susanna/Figaro duet’s “polo” section, into the libretto of the Brogialdi version.<sup>209</sup> Ergo, the basis for its later being associated with Mercadante.<sup>210</sup>

However, despite occasional vocal performances related to themes from *I due Figaro*, these were neither as common nor as frequent as their use in “national” or “characteristic” *dance* numbers. While the dance-forms suggested by the music were probably not meant to function as such but rather serve instead as an indicator of Spanish character, this did not stop ‘Spanish’ dancers from later adapting Mercadante’s overtures for precisely that purpose. In fact, the practice of dancing the Spanish “bailes nacionales” to Mercadante’s overtures originated in Spain’s theaters. The earliest-documented performance occurred Nov. 1830 in Madrid during Mercadante’s second directorial tenure as *maestro*, in which “... a ballet based on music from the characteristic Spanish overture by Maestro Mercadante was performed, showcasing various national pieces, and in which all the dancers of both sexes showed effort and preparation./(... se ejecutó un bailable compuesto con la música de la sinfonía característica española del maestro Mercadante, en el que se lucieron varias piezas nacionales, y se esmeraron á porfía todos los bailarines de ambos sexos.)”<sup>211</sup> Thenceforth, the trend must have undoubtedly continued throughout the country well into the decade and beyond.

---

[J.R.] Navarro García (coordinador), Escuela Superior de estudios hispano-americanos, Consejería de Cultura, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (Seville, 2002), 239. This article was also published as “Noticia del Flamenco en la isla de Cuba,” 189-197, in *Libro de Flamenco*. Since *alza pilili* also exists as a distinct folksong, the referenced title might instead connote one neither entering the discussion nor being composed by Mercadante. If so, we must surmise that the *alza pilili-bejuquito* reference here originates from a transference of associations from the original Brogialdi *polo* to the Mercadante version through which the title was ascribed to the latter. Regardless, it is unknown what music was actually used in that performance.

<sup>208</sup> *Diario oficial de avisos de Madrid*, 7 November 1851. The Teatro del Instituto Español (formerly “del Principe”), presented a *bailable* (Spanish ballet) choreographed by troupe director Carlos Atané, consisting of a dance program of eight *bailables* including as number 5, the “Jaleo del alza pilili,” which he performed with (singer) “señorita Romero,” also named as *La cuchilera*, in parenthesis.

<sup>209</sup> *I due Figaro, o sia I soggetto di una comedia* (libretto; Torner, Barcelona, 1825).

<sup>210</sup> This concern was discussed in detail in the aforementioned conference papers on which we have based an article discussing its sources in relation to its popular usage and origins.

<sup>211</sup> *El Correo Literario y Mercantil*, 22 November 1830, no. 370, 4. The referenced overture may be the newer one from Don Chisciotte, premiered in Cádiz earlier that year; conversely, the Figaro overture may also have been choreographed when performed there alongside of the excerpts from the opera in 1828 or 1829.

Nevertheless, Fanny Elssler is credited with popularizing the *cachucha* in 1830s Paris,<sup>212</sup> purportedly to the *I due Figaro* overture (ex 6).<sup>213</sup> This probably transpired around Mercadante's 1835-1836 sojourn in Paris, whereupon he may have introduced it.<sup>214</sup> The score was then likely intercalated into a pastiche score for Jean Coralli's 1836 Ballet, *Le Diable boiteau* (The Lame Devil),<sup>215</sup> wherein she first performed the dance. Thenceforth, the trend seems to have continued throughout Spain in the 1830s-1850s, a fact slowly emerging with the intermittent appearance of painstaking research into the theatrical chronologies of various cities, with early instances. The earliest such, while not naming Mercadante directly, occurred in Havana where it was announced that María de Jesús Pérez would dance "La Cachucha Gaditana," following the play, on the same 1839 bill that included the above-mentioned performance of the "jaleo" crediting Mercadante.<sup>216</sup> In Valencia, an act following the Elssler influence is first announced as "Ballet pot-pourri of laborers and Gypsies on the overture to *I due Figaro*/Miscelánea bailable de labradores, andaluces y gitanos sobre la sinfonía de Los dos Figaros)," (5 December 1839),<sup>217</sup> followed by over six others in time.<sup>218</sup> Other instances continue elsewhere in the country: in 1852, Toledo announced "Dance selection on the overture of Spanish airs by.../(el baile de la gran sinfonía de aires españoles de Saverio Mercadante)."<sup>219</sup> These examples seem to constitute the continuation of a trend of dancing to an arrangement of Mercadante's 'Figari' overture likely extending from that established by Elssler. Interestingly, the practice of

<sup>212</sup> Ivor Guest, "Théophile Gautier on Spanish Dancing," *Dance Chronicle*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis, 1987), 1-104.

<sup>213</sup> Francisco J. Giménez Rodríguez, *Música española fuera de España: Olallo Morales (1874-1957)*, Ph.D. diss., 72-73; it is interesting how the author names Spanish composer Gomis (active in Paris during the Fernandine epoch), to follow up by mentioning Elssler's interpretation.

<sup>214</sup> The composer was there to write an opera for the Théâtre-Italien on Director Rossini's invitation, yielding *I Briganti* (22 March 1836).

<sup>215</sup> This is likely the case, as no composer is given for this title, which credits only the French choreographer, Corrali.

<sup>216</sup> *Diario de La Habana*, 10 August–15 December 1839, cited in Ortiz Nuevo, p.194. While a solitary example names Mercadante (despite the music's unconfirmable identity), another item in the same announcement names the "Cachucha de Cádiz."

<sup>217</sup> *Base de datos de Carteles teatrales valencianos del siglo XIX*, <http://parnaseo.uv.es/Carteles.htm>. This database contains a collection of playbills for the **Teatro Principal, Valencia, spanning the years 1839-76, and which is held in the** Biblioteca General e Histórica de la Universitat de València.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.* The playbills reveal the further catalog of choreographic presentations set to pieces crediting Mercadante, as follows: "Sinfonia bailable de los Dos Figaros" (1841); "Bolas de Mercadante" (29 April 1841); Musical fragment danced to an overture by Mercadante (3 September 1841); *ibid.* (30 May 1843); Dances to the "Sinfonía característica española" (28 November 1844); Dance "de Mercadante, por seis parejas valencianas y majos andaluces." It is not clear to which piece this refers; this program and others indicate that the piece was performed at function's end, thus not necessarily as the entire overture, as it was done after the "closing" overture; "Sinfonía característica española" (2 March 1848); "Sinfonía característica española" (19 November 1848); dance "Final de la Sinfonía" (6 March 1858).

<sup>219</sup> *Boletín Oficial de Toledo*, 16 November and 2 December 1852, cited in: Agustina Torres Larra, *La escena toledana en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX* (Ph.D. diss., Universidad Nacional de la Educación a Distancia, 1996). This, incidentally, was on the same bill with Soriano's zarzuela *Lola la Gaditana* and Spanish plays), for 19 November and 2 December.

choreographing Spanish dance to Italian operatic excerpts apparently extended beyond the noted Spanish-character works by Mercadante to eventually include selections by other composers.<sup>220</sup>

### 3. Salon and Bolero<sup>221</sup>

While seeing little published demonstrating his grasp of Spanishness beyond 1830, it is worth noting that Mercadante's interest in Spain's musical vernacular nevertheless continued, both within and outside of the operatic context.<sup>222</sup> Regarding the latter, two songs experimenting with the *bolero* (vs. "Bolera") concept attest to this, each worth mentioning both for their respective approaches to the form and idiom, and by way of contrast to the operas. The first, an unknown unpublished piece from the Madrid period, which though undated and suspected by its erstwhile documenters to date from c. 1830, is just as likely to date anywhere from 1826 onwards.<sup>223</sup> A *bolero* with a trailing 'tirana', its internal structures seem to follow—albeit loosely—those present in models published contemporaneously in Spain. However, the movement through a single verse in one form (*bolero*), and onto another in a completely different form without the usual repetitions to accommodate additional text (*tirana*), departs from known models.<sup>224</sup> Also, the great economy of vocal ornaments

<sup>220</sup> See: *Base de datos de Carteles teatrales valencianos del siglo XIX*, <http://parnaseo.uv.es/Carteles.htm>. A further reading of these programs shows that a trend had developed midway through the period whereby specific fragments from operas by Rossini, Bellini, Donizetti and Verdi were also repurposed as various Spanish dances.

<sup>221</sup> We investigated this more fully in the paper "‘Il Segretto di Susanna’: Saverio Mercadante (1795–1870) and the Origins of the Salon Bolero," presented at the following conferences: *The European Salon: Nineteenth-Century Salonmusik* (2-4 October 2015), National University, Maynooth, Ireland; and: *XXII Società Italiana di Musicologia Annual Conference, Conservatorio di Musica ‘Francesco Morlacchi*, Perugia, Italy (October, 2015). Parakilas, 151. To illustrate the Parisian *bolero* "tradition" (p.150), Parakilas—concerned not with the *bolero* per se, rather with "Spanish" song-types in general—mentions Chopin's 1833 effort "as one of the earliest" followed by *Gastibezza* (Liszt, 1844), and *Zaide* (Berlioz, 1845), claiming it to have been "capped" by Pauline Viardot's (1880s), though songs by Dessauer and Vasseur are better-known 'bolero' examples given their popularity as recital pieces into the twentieth century, as the existence of several recordings attests. But nowhere does he mention Paz, Rossini or Mercadante.

<sup>222</sup> Mercadante published several series of expressly written vocal pieces with Wirnbs in Spain in 1827 and again in 1830, respectively (presumably through Moretti). However, *except for those mentioned, none are in the Spanish idiom or language*. Therefore, it is worth noting that the song *El requiebro* credited to "S.M." on the cover is not "possibly attributable to Saverio Mercadante" as Alonso (1998), 98, surprisingly suggests. The use of initials is common in that year: besides first appearing in 1825—the year before Mercadante's Madrid arrival—the piece is most likely by Santiago Masarnau. He sent music from Paris to Spain for publication (along with close friend and mentor Gomis, et al), and in common fashion, preferred maintaining discretion of identity without entirely obscuring it. Conversely, Mercadante (not being directly subject to the Spanish crown) had nothing to hide and lived to build his reputation.

<sup>223</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *Bolero* (Ms. Autograph, c. 1826-31; Madrid?), Case Western Reserve Library.

<sup>224</sup> The evidence here is not that Mercadante was trying to incorporate Spanish forms into his work as much as to weave as faithful a representation of them as possible into his own Italianate forms of composing. What differentiates this experiment from most of its counterparts is how it goes into a *tirana* after only a short "expository" *bolero* lasting only a few measures, forming a species of Spanish *cavatina-cabaletta*, in miniature.

suggest an adaptation for audiences outside of Spain,<sup>225</sup> whereas structurally, it is much simpler than that of its operatic counterparts, seemingly keeping a step away from them (ex. 21a-i).<sup>226</sup>

Example 21a (i): S. Mercadante, *Bolero* (Unpl. aut.c. 1830): mm. 5-18.

Hence, this yet unknown source represents an apparent rehearsal for the second piece, the once-celebrated *Bolero* “La Zingara Spagnuola” from the *Serate Italiane* (Paris, 1835). Illustrating this, it incorporates the unpublished piece’s main rhythm and melody, and therefore must be considered its direct antecedent and source (ex. 21a-ii). Thence, the first song allows us to bridge the composer’s development of the form towards the second.

<sup>225</sup> While the ms is deemed autograph, the German phrase “Spanisches national Lied” precedes the music in another hand. Its existence on the same folio as a preceding Italian *romanza* allows the hypothesis that both pieces were probably written in continuation into the same manuscript, perhaps corresponding with pieces mentioned by Baltasar Saldoní as expressly composed for—and performed in Madrid’s salons by—*dilletante* Baldomera Díaz de la Cruz, and ergo intended for concert or private audience. In any case, these may have possibly been planned for submission to Wirmbs for publication and date from the period just before his final departure from Spain.

<sup>226</sup> This is meant not only in terms of simplicity, but also of its setting of a Spanish text, rather than of an Italian one, and the only known instance apart from Mercadante’s choral compositions for the theatres of Madrid and of Cádiz.

Musical score for Example 21a (ii). The vocal line (Soprano) is in 3/4 time and features lyrics: "ven - ga u - dir \_\_\_\_\_ la sua ven - tu - ra So gli ar". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, including triplets and trills.

**Example 21a (ii):** S. Mercadante, *Serate Italiane* (no. 8.): “La Zingarella Spagnuola – Bolero,” mm. 6-15.

Moreover this 1835 “Serate” piece also draws from the incipit of Susanna’s *bolero*, which is recognizable in the following two distinct themes of the song’s changing “Andalusian” sections (each interspersed by a modally major waltz section, nodding to the “intermediation” device of inserting a *polo* or *tirana*, and constituting a refrain), one every other verse of poetry (ex. 21b-i & 21b-ii).

Musical score for Example 21b (i). The vocal line (Soprano) is in 3/4 time and features lyrics: "Quel pa - lor \_\_\_\_\_ quel dir... tre - man - te quel tuo sguar - do lan - gui - det - to mi pa". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, including triplets and trills.

**Example 21b (i):** S. Mercadante, *Serate Italiane* (no. 8.): “La Zingarella Spagnuola – Bolero,” mm. 41-45.

Musical score for Example 21b (ii). The vocal line (Soprano) is in 3/4 time and features lyrics: "Quel ros - sor quel tuo sem - bian - te quel crin mol - le e \_\_\_\_\_ quel so - ri - so mi san". The piano accompaniment consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a complex rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, including triplets and trills.

**Example 21b (ii):** S. Mercadante, *Serate Italiane* (no. 8.): “La Zingarella Spagnuola – Bolero,” mm. 61-65.

Hence, evidence that the piece not only manifests vast developmental improvement on earlier projects (so often the case in Mercadante’s song versions), but also of a significant yet unknown episode of the genre’s historical trajectory. Though not yet so considered, this unique *hybridization* of form differs entirely from its counterparts originating in the Parisian salon milieu, and alongside which, it should now reclaim an important position in the genre’s development. The piece originates with Mercadante’s protracted Paris sojourn as the Opéra Italien’s latest visiting *maestro di carteggio*.<sup>227</sup> Perhaps not unlike his other Italian colleagues there, he was compelled to meet the inescapable demands of that city’s *salons* and to conceive the *Serate Musicali* on texts by Carlo Pepoli. Introduced in 1836, they were published just a year after Rossini’s collection containing a *Bolero*

<sup>227</sup> Spanning 1835-1836, this culminated in the opera *I Briganti*, based on Friedrich Schiller’s *Die Räuber*.

setting of Pepoli's mundanely "Italian" "L'invito," which as a text, conversely, bespeaks nothing of the Spanish exoticism of Mercadante's "La Zingara."<sup>228</sup> Intriguingly, Mercadante saw fit to mirror the incipient phrase of the Rossini song in his own, a citation presumably in homage to his friend and director of the Theatre Italien who invited him to compose an opera there. For a French audience in the first instance, it coincides with the *bolero*'s still nascent wave of popularity and was soon after paraphrased by Liszt (as he had also done with Rossini's),<sup>229</sup> whose admiration for the Italian composer is well documented.<sup>230</sup> Given this, it is significant that Mercadante does employ certain traits of authentic Spanish style therein, in function of the virtuosic repetition and agility of the vocal line: this was doubtless intended to reflect on his choice of dedicatee, the famous soprano Laure Cinti-Dammoreau. Thus, tracing Mercadante's innovative contribution back to the early stages in its progression bespeaks significant new perspective into the developing concept of the Parisian salon *bolero*.

#### 4. *Il Vascello de Gama* (1846): a functional postscript to 'Figaro' and 'Don Chisciotte'

We have chosen the word "postscript" to describe this opera given the distance in time from Mercadante's *musical activism* when working in Spain, to the composition—with librettist Salvatore Cammarano—of *Il Vascello de Gama* (Naples; San Carlo, 1845).<sup>231</sup> Indeed, discussing its sources fully here in relation to its token *españolismo* would constitute an overreach of our present mandate. However, after subjecting the autograph to complete analytical scrutiny against all potential similarities with Mercadante's three chief sources of Spanishness, the following must be said: *Vascello* constitutes an unlikely repository for material which was otherwise not readily heard in

<sup>228</sup> Expecting salient references to both Rossini and Mercadante versions of Pepoli's verses, we consulted Giulio Aldo D'Angelo, *Le Scelte Letterarie nella Romanza da Camera dell'Ottocento*, Diss., Eötvös Loránd Tudományegyetem, Budapest, 2016. Instead, on a single page discussing the literary inspirations behind Mercadante's song (152), the author misreads events, resulting in two significant errors. Citing no sources, he mentions: 1. Jacopo Crescini as the librettist of "Don Chisciotte" and, 2. Publication of a pair of "small collections" by Mercadante while visiting Madrid for the 1835 première of his *I due Figaro*. This last occurrence doubly confuses reference to the Spanish residencies: firstly, Mercadante never returned to Spain once leaving in March 1831; secondly, he did publish four collections of concert arias and *ariette da camera* with Wirmbs during his second (1827) and third and final (1830) Madrid sojourns.

<sup>229</sup> "La Zingara" is among the six which Franz Liszt immortalized as the transcriptions comprising the *Soirées Italiennes*, composed in 1838-39 (S.411) and published in 1840. The letter he wrote to Riccordi requesting Mercadante's *Soirees Italiennes* is cited in Janita R. Hall-Swadley, ed., *The Collected Writings of Franz Liszt, Volume 1. F. Chopin* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 21 (Introduction).

<sup>230</sup> Liszt's testimony is as follows: "Milan 10 March 1838.... It is even possible that since the composer has little participation or interest in the success of a composition, he can develop a certain careless or *laissez aller* attitude toward his work. Of the great number of ultramontane maestros, however, it would be very fair to exclude Mercadante. He always uses his time wisely, and he dedicates compositions to the most thorough examination. Thus, his compositions are some of the most faultless and best instrumented works that I have heard in Italy." In Janita R. Hall-Swadley, ed., *The Collected Writings of Franz Liszt, Volume 2: Essays and Letters of a Traveling Bachelor of Music* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2012). Ch. 7, "La Scala: To Maurice Schlesinger (1838)," 93. Unfortunately, what so pleased Liszt in Mercadante, though often cited by the latter's biographers in his defense, were the very traits that ultimately rendered him less popular in terms of Italian operatic conventionality (against which he and all Italian maestri had struggled).

<sup>231</sup> Dubbed "melodramma romántica," on a libretto by Salvatore Cammarano after *Le Naufrage de la Méduse* (Desnoyer) in a prologue and three acts, it premièred at the Regio Teatro San Carlo, Naples, 6 March 1845.



theaters outside Spain. It is surprisingly replete with the reworking of themes from both operas for Spain and the “Bolero” from the *Serate Italiane* (Paris, 1835). In true Mercadante fashion, self-borrowings are applied to a specific set of criteria that generally match the original situation in the work from which the themes were extracted. Of Mercadante’s few opera titles otherwise transparently intimating Spanish subject matter both before and after (but not including) *Figari* and *Chisciotte*,<sup>232</sup> only this one appears to have incorporated the rhythms and flavors of Spanish music with obvious intent and in such copious quantity. Moreover, their development seems to have instead culminated in the writing for “Vascello,” its non-Spanish setting/Subject notwithstanding. There is no characteristically ‘Spanish’ overture—indeed, no overture at all—to herald such an intent, no claim to a purposeful use of Spanish themes or pieces labeled with ‘Spanish’ musical terms (besides ‘bolero’) in either the score or the libretto. In fact, little of consequence can be found at least a quarter of the way through the score, in that regard.<sup>233</sup>

Nevertheless, *Il Vascello de Gama* attempts to be just as Spanish in places as did *Figari* or *Chisciotte*, such that original themes of blatant vernacular tint and hue were composed alongside several repurposed, arguably improved-upon “reminiscences.” *Il Vascello* goes beyond mere latent manifestations of the earlier Spanish vernacular writing, by incorporating it into the evolved style of Mercadante’s mature period. Furthermore, the work conceals what this writer playfully, but earnestly, refers to as “The secret of Susanna”: a progression from the initial experiment with Susanna’s bolero in *I due Figaro* through the finale of *Don Chisciotte* and the *Serate Italiane* culminating in the development of the bolero in Rosalia’s aria from the 1846 *Il Vascello*.<sup>234</sup> It incorporates elements of both Susanna’s and Chiteria’s boleros, and that from the “Serate” (ex. 22). Therewith, it serves as an interesting postlude to the indefatigable Mercadante’s surprisingly unrelenting work with operatic Spanishness, albeit with a gap of fifteen years (eleven since the Paris bolero).

<sup>232</sup> These include the most obvious: *Il podestà di Burgos* (1824), *La solitaria delle Asturie* (1840), and *Pelagio* (1857); Mercadante first suggested this last one to Romani for Madrid in 1829, together with a “Consalvo di Cordova.”

<sup>233</sup> Indeed, despite vaunting Spanish character in their music, the scores of both *Figari* and *Chisciotte* make no effort to be entirely Spanish in nature, most of the *pezzi chiusi* instead stolidly manifesting Mercadante’s signature ‘Italian’ writing, itself a serious requisite for conceiving vehicles for the roles’ respective creators.

<sup>234</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *Il Vascello de Gamma*, Prologue & Part 1 (Autograph, 1845; Naples), I-Nc, 1.2.22. It also predates by many years Verdi’s composition of *Les vèspres siciliennes* (Paris Opéra, 1855). Translated shortly after its premiere as *I Vespri Siciliani*, it contains what is now commonly known as the soprano’s “bolero” (a reference probably dating to the Italian version’s first being set in Spanish occupied Portugal), though originally labeled “Siciliana” in the score.

Rosalia

E - sul - ta, e - sul - ta o - gnor quest' a - ni - ma quan - do fra voi, si tro - va, o - gnor so -

a - vi pal - pi - ti, o - gnor - so - a - vi, so - a - vi pal - pi - ti di te - ne - rez - za io pro -

vo, ah si, di tenerezza io pro - vo ah! si, e - sulta, esulta o - gnor quest' a - ni ma

Example 22: S. Mercadante, *Il Vascello de Gamma* (Pt. 1), Rosalia “Bolero,” mm. 3-22.

Following that, salutary but concentrated Spanish character manifests in a few other spots, betraying Mercadante’s familiarity with the above-cited sources. In the following instance, the *Chisciotte* overture is paraphrased, reconfiguring the melody and accompaniments of two previously discussed themes, in the opening chorus from part 2, “Il Naufragio”), beginning with the first (ex. 23a).<sup>235</sup>

Allegro moderato

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Flute

Piccolo

Oboe

Clarinet in B.

Bassoon

Horn in F I

Horn in F II

Trumpet in C

Trombone

Optibass

Tuba

Cello I

Cello II

Example 23a: S. Mercadante, *Il Vascello de Gamma* (Pt. 2), Cho./ensemble, part 3, mm. 1-5.

<sup>235</sup> Saverio Mercadante, *Il Vascello de Gamma*, parts 2 & 3 (Autograph, 1845; Naples), I-Nc, 1.2.23.

Mercadante's characteristic perspicacity in supplying a lugubrious choral mood where most needed stands out; yet, though it lends foreboding, the sailors unwittingly sing that "the sky is bestrewn with stars, the wind keeps silent, and the sea, calm" (ex. 23b).<sup>236</sup>

The image shows a page of a musical score for Example 23b. It features multiple staves for various instruments and voices. The instruments listed on the left are Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Piccolo, Clarinet in B, Bassoon, Horn in F 1, Horn in F 2, Trumpet in C, Ophicleide, Corno & Tromba, Basses, and Celli. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "Se mi su - to è il ciel di stel - le è il ciel di stel - le, tu - cerò ven - to e po - so il noc - e po - so il noc". The score is marked with a tempo of mm. 10-17.

**Example 23b:** S. Mercadante, *Il Vascello de Gamma*, Cho./ensemble, Pt. 3, mm. 10-17.

A final instance of Mercadante's stylistic retrospect next occurs with the tenor's aria (Fausto: *allegro giusto*, 3/4, pp. 67-70). After a few introductory measures including of the galloping broken-chord pattern, the vocal melody's incipit sports a "Moretti" *seguidilla*-style run. However, an eighth-note bass-chord pattern supports a completely *spianato* vocal line bereft of ornaments into what we might call a "pseudo-bolero": partially following Rosalia's in structure, *minus the melismatic accoutrements*. Furthermore, that, and the argument's general setting and circumstances tempt us to draw inference to its subtle affinities with the "Steuermann's Lied" in Wagner's still recent *Der fliegende Holländer* (Dresden, 1843), somewhat warranted by the initial melodic phrase.

Otherwise, of Mercadante's many neglected operas, *Il Vascello de Gamma* (composed in haste) has stood until now as one of the least and worst-documented. Besides long wanting for published study, it is scarcely mentioned in reviews, or even in the composer's letters.<sup>237</sup> Much of the ensuing confusion bespeaks the continual state of flux and inconsistency of the Mercadante biography, where a select few oft-uncredited sources are carelessly repeated, giving rise to ambiguities and inaccuracies. Thus, when revisiting part of the critical reception, information about the opera's dubious success trickles down to us through sources less concerned with documenting the work than with cursorily cataloguing its general outcome in terms of its place in the succession

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Given Mercadante's invitations to write again for the Theatre litalien and *Vascello's* proximity to the Grand Opéra style, it is tempting to speculate that he may have conceived it for Paris.

of Mercadante's works.<sup>238</sup> For instance, listing 'Vascello' last among several titles, a German critic observes that "along with the very beautiful, the latter is said to include the very ordinary/(letztere soll neben sehr schönem, sehr gewöhnliches enthalten)." Mirroring this, London's *The Athenæum* circumspectly faults Mercadante with

... falling into studied harmonies, when he means only to adopt an elevated style, Mercadante will never be popular amongst those who frequent the theatres for amusement. The prologue of this new opera has musical merit, and the first act was not unproductive of effect; but *Il Vascello di Gama*, though not without beauties purely artistic, is not calculated to please a general audience. Some passages were applauded; but this applause, it was evident, was given rather to the acknowledged reputation of the author than to the opera.<sup>239</sup>

Another English reviewer scathes that only two events—both by Mercadante—"are worthy of recording" for the entire 1845 season. The first is 'Vascello,' which "the audience received with cold approbation," and wherein Mercadante's "great deficiency" of "want of invention" and "novelty of thought" marked the difference between his 'always pleasing' and 'seldom transporting his hearers.'<sup>240</sup> Not so for Neapolitan critic Andrea Martinez, whose long-unread fifteen-page critique begins with a long philological discussion of the opera's inspiration across several pages, after which he avers that

Universal and spontaneous applause honored Mercadante in all the performances of this opera of his, represented for the first time in S[an]. Carlo on the evening of the 6<sup>th</sup> of this month of March. And it will obtain much greater triumphs in other theaters, where the soprano has a voice and singing vigor equal to the bass and the tenor, and where the scenes are painted with less improbability, and are aided more by those machines necessary to simulate the movements of a raft and a ship in a storm.<sup>241</sup>

This, he notes is to the San Carlo's shame, and is likely to have marred the opera's overall impression, especially on foreign correspondents, much as the previous one who also confirms the theater's great decline. Furthermore, both above-cited critics deem the declining vocal prowess of soprano Anna Bishop (1819-1884) insufficient to either please the audience or sustain important parts, such as Rosalia.<sup>242</sup> Thus, while approval was not unanimous, a lukewarm "Northern" (German-

<sup>238</sup> "Nachrichtern. Italien. Neapel." *Berliner Musikalische Zeitung*, 12 April 1845 "along with the very beautiful, the latter is said to include the very ordinary/(letztere soll neben sehr schönem, sehr gewöhnliches enthalten)."

<sup>239</sup> "Foreign Correspondence" (Naples, April, 1845). *The Athenæum*, no. 917, 24 May, 1845, 516.

<sup>240</sup> "Correspondence. From our Italian Correspondent (June 10th, 1845). The Lyrical drama." *The New Quarterly Review, or Home, Foreign and Colonial Journal*, no. 6, July, 1846, 265. The second is *Leonora*, which the critic indeed correctly predicted would subsequently triumph abroad. The other English-language pronouncement (*Athenæum*) similarly condemning the opera to lukewarm reception, concurs with similar affirmations in the *AMZ*, both of which seem to have influenced the effort yet made to chronicle Mercadante's work and life (MGG, Grove, Treccani, etc.), while completely ignoring the positive reviews from Naples and Rio.

<sup>241</sup> "Il vascello de Gama, Melodramma di Sav. Mercadante." *Museo di Scienze e Letterature*, vol. 1, yr. 2 (Napoli, 1845). Onore di plausi universali e spontanei s'ebbe il Mercadante in tutte le recite di questa sua opera rappresentata la prima volta in S. Carlo la sera del 6 di questo mese di marzo. Ed essa otterrà assai maggiori trionfi in altri teatri, dove il soprano abbia voce e vigore di canto pari al basso ed al tenore, e dove le scene sieno dipinte con minori inverosimiglianze, e più sieno aiutate da quelle macchine necessarie a simulare i movimenti d'una zattera e d'una nave in tempesta.

<sup>242</sup> As creatrix of the role of Rosalia, she later boasted that Mercadante had composed the opera expressly for her.

English) consensus of its overall merit emerges, attitudes shown to not have been entirely shared elsewhere as our sources averred. Ultimately, Martinez's affirmation that the opera pleased the public in all of its performances there on some level lends invaluable clarity to what has been an otherwise confusing historical perception, fortified by subsequent *positive* affirmations.

Later tidings from Brazil indicate that *Vascello's* purportedly poor and rather mixed reception in Naples did not seal her fate.<sup>243</sup> Of her recent rediscovery of the opera's long-unknown 1850 Brazilian reception, Cristina Magaldi affirms that it was "well regarded by the Cariocas."<sup>244</sup> This prompted us to probe further into its run at Rio de Janeiro's Theatro de São Pedro de Alcantara, yielding brief but telling critical reception in the *Correio Mercantil*, averring that

The scene of the toast occasioned by the embarkation in Lisbon and the ship's departure, is excellent: the songs of the sailors on board and the piece that describes the shipwreck, are the most appropriate that could be desired. The Bolero sung by the *prima donna*, her duet with the tenor, and the final rondo performed at sea, have a magical effect, not only for the good taste and novelty of their composition, but also for the excellence, originality, and appropriateness of the instrumentation. Mercadante, is admired, above all for the instrumentation of his operas; but in this one, the distinguished maestro was divinely inspired, ...<sup>245</sup>

Besides affording the composer some not-undeservedly high praise, the forgoing constitutes direct confirmation that among the most applauded pieces in the opera were those given above in examples, and why. Intriguingly, these include the chorus chief among them, followed by Rosalia's Bolero, thereby indicating more fully what also conceivably pleased the San Carlo audiences most.<sup>246</sup> Thus, the composer's faith in its merits was sufficient to see "*Vascello*" sent abroad five years from its fateful 'maiden voyage' at the Naples première, to—in fulfilment of Martinez's prediction—enjoy certain popularity and critical acclaim in Brazil's Capital.

<sup>243</sup> In our opinion, this is due chiefly to later and somewhat blind scholarly reliance on secondary sources like an early multipart biography, summarily (contradictorily) pronouncing *Vascello* an: "Opera that did not succeed at the San Carlo. The way that this opera was coldly received ... / (... Opera che non ebbe lieta fortuna al San Carlo. Le fredde accoglienze fatte a quest'opera...)." "Saverio Mercadante. VII," *Gazetta Musicale di Milano*, no. 28, 21 September 1873, 1.

<sup>244</sup> Cristina Magaldi, *Music in imperial Rio de Janeiro: European culture in a tropical milieu* (United Kingdom: Scarecrow Press, 2004), 42.

<sup>245</sup> "Espectáculos. Teatro de São Pedro de Alcantara." *Correio Mercantil* (Rio de Janeiro), no. 169, 4 Jul. 1850, 4. ... A scena do brinde, por ocasião do embarque em Lisboa e partida da náó, é excelente: os cantos dos marinheiros a bordo e a peça que descreve o naufragio, são os mais apropriados que se podião desejar. O Bolero cantado pela dama, o seu duetto com o tenor, e o rondó final executado sobre o mar, são de um effeito máxico, não só pelo bom gosto e novidade da composição, como pela excelencia, originalidade e propriadade da instrumentação. // *Mercadante*, é admirado, sobretudo pela instrumentação das suas operas; mas nesta da que se trata, o insigne maestro estava divinamente inspirado, ... As the article cited by Magaldi could not be found, many thanks are due Rogerio Budasz for bringing this different and otherwise to now unknown and invaluable alternate source to our attention.

<sup>246</sup> Martinez enthusiastically describes the positive effect the piece had notwithstanding Bishop's shortcomings, and reasoning that only a composer of genius could fashion music capable of succeeding when executed by interpreters of otherwise modest (or, as it suggests in fairness to Bishop, technically receding) means. While the opera appears not to have been subsequently published in any form, the above-referenced *bolero* was immortalized in a paraphrase for harp by Bishop's consort, Robert Nicolas-Charles Bochsa (1789-1856). He was engaged alongside her in directorship of the San Carlo (1844-1845), during which he probably conducted performances of *Vascello*. The piece appeared in print as *Souvenir à l'Espagnole pour la Harpe sur un Célèbre Bolero tiré de l'Opéra Il Vascello di [sic] Gama de Mercadante Composé par N.C.Bochsa* (London; T. Boosey, 1845 or after).

If Mercadante had already shown a prominent grasp of local musical language in the 1826 *Il Figaro* (as the 1835 reviews suggest), he had certainly mastered its intricacies by 1829, when writing *Don Chisciotte*. Demonstrating competent manipulation of Spanish idiom, *Figari* already shows the composer's experience of the musical vernacular in formation, its elements circumspectly framed within conventional operatic forms. In *Chisciotte*, the effect is perhaps more immediate (if not more abundant), vibrant and purposeful, achieving an interweave of style and structure that while extant in *Figari*, is applied more confidently here; it is also more decidedly regional (Andalusian). This is to say nothing of the 1845 *Vascello*, in which all the attributes of an ever-evolving talent evidence refinement and development with practice (despite being rushed).<sup>247</sup> Thus evolved, Mercadante's fluency in Spanish vernacular expression transcends the boundaries of Italian operatic style and leads the way in proposing an archetype for enfolding local color into a singular treatment of symphonic textures, practically unknown in that place and time.<sup>248</sup> In sum, among the many precedential examples set by Mercadante discussed in this paper, the following spring most significantly to mind: the brilliant setting of vernacular themes, and their scoring and orchestral coloring, giving them a hitherto unknown symphonic richness that we have come to associate with Romantic-era "Spanish" classical music and its later followers.<sup>249</sup>

#### IV. Conclusions and Implications (Dismantling Misconceptions)

##### A. Establishing a new antecedence to zarzuela and modern national Spanish lyric genre studies

Without getting too far into the question of what should constitute the Spanish lyric genre, it still seems appropriate to address it as it relates to our context and discussion. It is not our purpose to delve into what did and would eventually become *zarzuela romántica* and *ópera española* in this paper, as the subject was just being broached largely as a result of events of 1832-1841.<sup>250</sup> Yet, awareness of its unfolding around Mercadante's works can be justifiably raised here. Within the context of that yet experimental stage, and fast-forwarding to what they eventually became, Mercadante's works stand out as ahead of their time. So much so, that they likely confused as much as inspired when first heard in that predawn of Romantic Spanish lyric writing (to be, consequentially, hardly remembered as legitimate precursors once national genres solidify decades later). As seen, the note concluding the *Don Chisciotte* libretto's preamble exists to show the reader outright what

<sup>247</sup> The year before his death, Mercadante revisited the Spanish theme with a symphonic work entitled *La Passione* (I-Nc). The entry in Grove Music Online mentions this only as *Serenata spagnuola*, dated 1869.

<sup>248</sup> See note 268.

<sup>249</sup> We might go even farther: many traits laid out in these scores can be considered as having influenced, albeit indirectly or vicariously through Spanish composers of the later nineteenth century (i.e. Chapí), even those whose creations span the twentieth (Falla, Copland, et al), the techniques associated with orchestral music evocative of Mexico, the American West (U.S.), and other territories inheriting Iberic cultural influence by natural association. In other words, as the critics themselves had noticed, grudgingly or not, it all points to the legacy of the successful adaptation of Spanishness into an Italian operatic formal-conventional framework.

<sup>250</sup> Essentially, Basili is due credit for helping (however inadvertently) to determine the early path the new genre would eventually take, by—if nothing else—planting the idea that it could be done, even if audiences used only to Italian operas were not yet ready. After pioneering it with the one-act comedy *El novio y el concierto* in 1839, setting a libretto by Bretón, he tried a more ambitious Spanish serious opera in three acts, *Los Contrabandistas*, in 1841 (for which reason Barbieri probably failed to recollect it within that context; for his part, Barbieri traces the genre's beginning from that year alone).

the composer's intention is in adding distinct Spanish-style melodic features and musical language. As noted earlier, the management may have been offering a caveat, because: firstly, the composer's aptitude for such treatment in an opera (*Chisciotte*) is still not fully known, and secondly, the silenced *Figari* being the genre's only precedent, the public's reaction to Italian opera with unexpected albeit distinguishable endemic elements could not be foretold.

#### B. An impractical dialectic: debunking incongruous "nationalistic" arguments

It is a curious phenomenon that an accepted lyrical component of Spanish vernacular spectacle had consisted of French *vaudevilles* or *operettes* in Spanish translation,<sup>251</sup> from the time when a separate *ópera italiana* had first been established, as noted in our introduction. This is of great import, when considering it from the following perspective. James Parakilas, for instance, points to how Parisians were exposed to French operatic adaptations of musical Spanishness in the works of Boieldieu (1800), Méhul (1806), and Cherubini (1813).<sup>252</sup> All this, without further telling us that the first two (in translation) were popular fixtures of "national" theatre companies in Spain through the 1830s, although many similar titles had since been reset by local composers, like Garcia and Christiani (and librettists like Comellas). As Italian opera simultaneously gained in popularity in its modern form through "rossinismo," it is quickly differentiated for lack of Spanish musical representation (although our research shows that by the 1820s, Rossini's *Barbiere* was already appreciated in the country for its *castizo* flair or "duende," the actual Spanish term for the very "soul" Parakilas unmistakably refers to without ever mentioning it).<sup>253</sup> There remained, therefore, a bridge to be built between the styles in order to somehow establish the nation-specific happy medium. Alas, this was instead supplanted by squabbling against Italian opera by supporters of the vernacular stage and might point to Basili's possible motivation for employing facets of the French model, as noted. Yet, this was not attempted before Mercadante arguably succeeded with *I due Figaro* in 1826, subsequently seeking to develop Spanish opera in various ways, notwithstanding resistance at the time of its intended introduction. While this bit of background may help our understanding of how this got into the mix to serve as a model, we remain hard-pressed to accept or to see the logic in the anti-Italianist platform.

In retrospect, the puzzling attitude and belief that eschewing the Italian cultural model would negate its presence and somehow magically create fertile ground for new Spanish creative ones, demands more explanation than the present study warrants.<sup>254</sup> Suffice it to say, that however absurd, that attitude inculcates what it identifies as exclusively Italian for the absence of as yet

<sup>251</sup> During the first third of the nineteenth century, and specifically during the second reign of Fernando VII (1813-1833), comic operas, or *operettes* after the French tradition, whether from the *ancien repertoire* in Spanish translation or original Spanish compositions on that model, were sometimes generically referred to in the Spanish press as "operetas" and as "zarzuelas."

<sup>252</sup> James Parakilas, "How Spain got its Soul," *The Exotic in Western Music*, ed. J. Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998). The reference to "1806" infers the year Méhul's *Les deux aveugles* premièred, later introduced to Spain as *Los dos ciegos*.

<sup>253</sup> Parakilas, "How Spain got its Soul" (1998), without mentioning the term "duende" coined by many commentators in the Spanish press, nonetheless refers to questions of auto-exoticism of Spanish musics by composers.

<sup>254</sup> As an example of this and a stand that starkly contrasts the principles that this study intends to establish, see: Serge Salaún, "La zarzuela, híbrida y castiza." *Cuadernos de Música Iberoamericana*, vols. 2-3, 1996-1997.

unimagined autochthonous generic models.<sup>255</sup> Furthermore, as we have intimated in the introduction, this attitude can be identified as that stemming from one originating in Madrid following Mercadante's first departure, and prevailing alongside enthusiasm for opera, when it did not in fact clash with it. Bemoaning a perceived Italo-centric artistic hegemony while themselves unable to identify a truly Spanish genre, critics eventually guffawed any effort they did not consider wholly home-grown, as if to refute outside help that might lead to its development or outright creation. That is the result of the founding principles of those propounding against Italian operas' influence in Spain, principles not proceeding from aesthetic reasons, but primarily from ones of economic interest, camouflaged as earlier political ideals: it basically grew to mean that those preferring the Italian genre to the Spanish were patriotically deficient. Worse, this trope survives to the present day, abiding as an undercurrent of the foundational mindset in Iberian and Ibero-American music scholarship.<sup>256</sup>

Yet identifying this particular "truth" was another matter, each one thereby precluding Mercadante's efforts from being recognized as seminal in setting the precedents for imbuing opera with the requisite vernacular features (be it "Italian" or not). Moreover, this had eventually transpired, importantly, notwithstanding the elemental influences of *sainete*, *tonadilla escénica* and earlier forms of Spanish "operetta" and *zarzuela* based on the mechanics of French *opérette* and/or *vaudeville*. Once *zarzuela* had developed, the extremity of opposing arguments attenuated (Soriano, Masarnau, etc.), it was recognized that Spain had achieved its own lyric forms in the romantic *zarzuela*, despite its inextricable relation to, or descent from, opera.

An example referenced earlier in our study illustrates this best. In Madrid's rapidly changing theatrical and societal milieu of the early 1840s, Basili's serious model proved a less effective vehicle for infusing a lyric theatrical work with Spanish melody than the shorter lighter comic vein. Thus, a work like *El ventorillo* could somehow better approximate—albeit temporarily—a format for developing the new genre and consequently the public's taste for it, notwithstanding its assumed throwback architecture reflecting its earlier French counterparts.<sup>257</sup> Yet, despite the producers'

<sup>255</sup> Perplexingly, this particular prejudice did not extend to the already total stylistic predominance of French models upon earlier Spanish lyric theater for reasons discussed in our forthcoming dissertation.

<sup>256</sup> The chauvinistic Spanish outcry against a hegemony of Italian music during a period (ironically) corresponding with its preponderance in other European countries, has left a rather dysfunctional legacy of reactionism: it retrospectively creates an emotionally intransigent and (therefore) intellectually incompatible barrier of negativity, of which we find Salaún's above-cited article approaching a seminal example. While offering an otherwise intriguing investigation into the mechanics of and argument for a dynamic keeping pioneering composers beholden to Italian opera's influences, the author nonetheless celebrates the raucous mid-nineteenth century tendency of casting blame on what he touts an inescapable cultural and musical hegemony. Even the section discussing 'other national influences' does not resist slighting what he calls "the inevitable Italian foundations" as if tantamount to political repression. But such entrenched attitudes almost always either precede or follow spurious claims, like—for Salaún—that of France's proportioning more musical (and sociological) ingredients that do not attain the "mechanical and academic character of the Italian reference." If anything, we might argue that Spain's nineteenth-century plight for an *autochthonous* lyric-theatrical composition template remained 'hopelessly' tied to French models for most of the century's first half, something only anti-Italianist/opera voices appear to accept as if natural, and which we see emerging in its printed public discussion at Zarzuela's 1840s outset.

<sup>257</sup> An unobtainable review of *Don Chisciotte* from *La Constitución* (18 July 1841) is published in Leduc, op. cit., p. 87; note p. 240. In the author's translation, it reads: "On peut faire le même élogé de la zarzuela intitulée *El ventorillo de Crespo*."



insistence on remaking the one-act ‘Chisciote’ into two (both in 1841 and 1869), it was unconsidered as an innovative precursor to the *zarzuela* musical form. Nevertheless, Mercadante’s locally inspired operatic writing is arguably closer to the approach eventually adopted by Spanish composers than the *vaudeville* style of Basili’s early attempts.<sup>258</sup> If anything, the two works given back-to-back in 1841 probably represented a combination of divergent features from which impressionable Spanish composers extrapolated—if not a “national genre”—then certainly a premise upon which to eventually identify an arguably more workable format by the 1850s (notwithstanding viewpoints like Soriano’s),<sup>259</sup> e.g., strong Italian influence of compositional structures with music incorporating Spanish vernacular musical forms and dialogue. Therefore, the genre dialectic sparked by Masarnau in relation to the Mercadante opera initiative (1835) and revisited by Soriano (1850) is problematic for several reasons:

Firstly, the statements of each demarcate two ends of an almost absolute ambiguity about what constituted a national lyric genre (at least Soriano both defines what might constitute one and is already producing works according to it). The earliest arguments are premature (Masarnau), as they precede pending development of Spanish lyric forms (opera, *zarzuela*), and therefore tend to idealistically couch the concept of genre in *imaginary* but purist terms, which are still hypothetical

---

La *zarzuela* *El ventorillo de Crespo* a eu plus de chance que le *Don Quichotte* de Mercadante. / (In the same way, one can extoll the *zarzuela* entitled *El ventorillo de Crespo*. The *zarzuela* *El ventorillo de Crespo* had more luck than *Don Quichotte* by Mercadante.” Though lacking musical examples (for want of sources) and being heavily oriented towards the socio-political elements, this book delves into the *zarzuela*’s mid-century inception and new progression as Spain’s foremost national lyric genre.

<sup>258</sup> The modern form of *zarzuela* being much closer to opera than its *vaudeville/operette*-oriented ancestors, which would also draw influence from opera, was also at the dawn of its development and identity formation. Basili’s importance as a founder of the *zarzuela* and the first to essay *ópera española* in the musical sense with *Los contrabandistas* (which Barbieri purposely skips over), is understated. His first works in the early 1840s may well trace the development of this still experimental genre in the fledgling Romantic era that would eventually come to encompass the techniques found in Mercadante’s two Spanish operas. Reviewers described Basili’s *El novio y el concierto* from 1839 (Barbieri 17-18) as a succession of songs akin to the French *vaudeville* merely continuing an earlier tradition of the format for which the genre was known through the eighteenth century (and the few that were attempted in the early nineteenth, to then). The only real difference would have been (obviously) in the music’s style.

<sup>259</sup> In blaming Italian opera for preventing the development of a Spanish lyric genre, Soriano (261) at least posits some rationale. Alluding to the use of exoticism in opera, he praises the use of local elements as a way of offsetting the “grave errors” leading to—among other things—lyrical-dramatic works being judged as mere concert pieces, begun and ended the same way “and truncated, the one and the other, with the incessant amen of the Italians of the fourth, fifth and tonic repeated *ad nauseam* [IV-I-V-I]. / (“...truncadas unas y otras con el sempiterno *amen* de los italianos, de la cuarta, la quinta y la tónica repetidas hasta el fastidio.”).

and based more on *emotion* than rationalization.<sup>260</sup> The response to it is late (Soriano), insofar as the new genres are in full swing and nearing the point of institutionalisation.<sup>261</sup>

Secondly, it categorically excludes works like Mercadante's as a starting point for the inevitable development of the highly operatic (i.e., developed on the model of Italian opera) *ópera española* and *zarzuela* to come, if not as an obvious predecessor to them. The exclusion transpires as each side typically evades the manifest point that vernacular features, as employed here, enrol an opera like *Figari* in a class unique to Spanish culture at the height or onset of the *furor filarmónico* (opera craze), in which they are highly offset from otherwise stereotyped 'Italian' convention.<sup>262</sup>

### C. Implications for deepening understandings of musical exoticism and intercultural transfer

Although studies in inter-cultural transfer and musical exoticism in opera have defined their object through similar insights on, say Bizet (*Carmen*), and even Glinka (*Spanish Overture*),<sup>263</sup> and despite being a wholly different field of study, it is hoped that the present effort might contribute towards a much-needed antecedent to it. Despite coming afterwards, and therefore obviously not *technically* a precursor, our research hopes to have put into perspective for the first time a series of facts and works hitherto unknown to the discussion. These elements show that not only did a less-studied paradigm of Spanish local color exist in operas between García's and Bizet's time, but also a precedent in the use and setting of its material. As such, Mercadante might (by way of intercultural example) be held up as a precursor to a Bizet or a Glinka in intent and method. The main difference being that the precedent must be recognized and understood to have been set fifty years earlier and consigned to interim oblivion from practical indifference. The dynamic of this phenomenon differs also in that, instead of a Frenchman working at home in the vernacular, we are confronted with an Italian working in his own language in Spain, more closely with the autochthonous musical idiom, two decades ahead of the Russian Glinka.<sup>264</sup> The contrast is thus one of agency: while the general task of

<sup>260</sup> We are at the early stage of *zarzuela* experimentation, where it and *ópera española* are in the embryonic stage of ideation. While he mentions Basili as an early proponent of *zarzuela romántica* (1840s), it is in Soriano himself who (remembered for his *Tío Caniyitas*), alongside Francisco Ansejo Barbieri (1823-1894), Juan Daniel Skoczupole (1817-1877), Rafael Hernando (1822-1888), Joaquín Gaztambide (1822-1870), among others that the established genre has its pioneering generation, in the 1840s to early 1850s. Even if 1832 saw the performances of the Spanish opera *El rapto* by Genovés on a libretto by Bretón, and the experimental "Los enredos" (by Carnicer and students), arguably considered "the first *zarzuela*," it happened in the vacuums of the *ópera italiana* and conservatory, respectively. Nothing else like them would be attempted until the decade's end.

<sup>261</sup> Here we refer to the 1856 founding of the Teatro de la Zarzuela.

<sup>262</sup> Despite tangible musical references, Salaún, ob. cit. still observes how "national" composers erred in maintaining Italian operatic conventional practices (form, periodic and harmonic sequence), and even modality (i.e. duet sections in major), somewhat seizing—but without developing—Soriano's above-discussed arguments. It begs the question: what might have transpired if he had examined the *available I due Figaro* score, such as it was, when writing in the 1990s?

<sup>263</sup> Parakilas (1998) refers to questions of auto-exoticism of Spanish musics by composers, also discussing the sojourn of Mikhail Glinka in great detail, only to jump ahead to Ravel. This draws a sketchy timeline that, given the knowledge to hand, seems somewhat premature.

<sup>264</sup> That scholarship is eager to have, in a Glinka, one who came to Spain to write Spanish music for the Spanish theater, without the slightest acknowledgement of Mercadante, is nevertheless uncanny. The Russian composer has recently been reevaluated on strength of his adoption of Spanish music, by virtue of his having researched and composed the

each is arguably similar, it is purported that the first, Bizet, approached it from vicariousness contrasted with the second, Glinka, who places himself “in the field” (so to speak). Mercadante not only resembles but sets a precedent for the presence and dynamic with which the latter (out of scholarly obliviousness) continues to be largely credited.<sup>265</sup>

The fact that the question of exoticism and intercultural transfer can be considered for works of the Italian literature, this early in the nineteenth century, when examples of “absentee” *españolismo* are just being traced to the opera houses of Paris, is quite uniquely significant. It demands a closer look at where, when, and how the question of Spanish local color in modern opera began. Such rediscoveries as Mercadante’s two operas for Spain certainly show that other hitherto undocumented precedents, unknown beyond the borders of Spain, were already being set a good three years prior to Auber’s enfolding a *bolero* into the score of *La muette de Portici* (1828), for instance.<sup>266</sup> In that regard, should we still apply the term of *musical exoticism* to works not only set in Spain but reimagined and also crafted there, albeit via agency of ‘an outsider’? And does the premise of this study justify its inclusion among questions of intercultural transfer, as well? In light of what we have been able to show so far, and in considering the precedent it sets, composer and work might well stand as an example or historical phenomenon in themselves, the point being not to categorize but rather to construe and contextualize their *hitherto unrecognized agency* and objectively fit them into the realm of study they so obviously should—but do not yet—influence.

#### D. Conclusory Perspective

If they achieved nothing else, Mercadante’s Spanish-character operas set a palpable precedent by demonstrating that national cultural elements could be effectively adapted to, and represented in, modern Italian opera towards defining a Spanish generic vehicle. They establish a paradigm wherein a Spanish musical presence could coexist within the predominant Italianate construct, and not be identified as wholly “Italian.”<sup>267</sup> This would serve as an interim model for

---

piece while living and traveling in Spain. However, arguments for his propensity for including Russian folk-idioms in his music as having aided him in this seem almost negligible in terms of the skills necessary to successfully incorporate them.

<sup>265</sup> This should be understood as without taking credit from Glinka’s achievements in context of *their time* and circumstances. Nevertheless, his motive, methods and efforts should be reconsidered as no longer unprecedented.

<sup>266</sup> Again, the term ‘bolero’ is likely a bastardized borrowing of *bolera/volera* probably originating in Paris with Spaniards working there (such as Paz) as a universal generic designation and not otherwise widely known or circulated in Spain before that date. As for its appearance in the 1826 Madrid manuscript of Mercadante’s *I due Figaro*, it stands for the likelihood of the word’s having first been coined there. For that reason, and others previously mentioned here, it is conceivable that the composer left the autograph behind on leaving Spain the first time, not retrieving it until his final departure, in 1831. The Madrid copy was likely prepared just prior, along that of *Francesca da Rimini*, as our close examination of their papers’ watermarks, rastrology, and bindings give proof.

<sup>267</sup> Emanuele Senici, *Music in the Present Tense: Rossini's Italian Operas in Their Time* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 99. Discussing Genre and noting that it bespoke the period’s bourgeoisie and emergent nationalisms, the author expounds that “critics of German lands,” for example, perceived that certain foreign (French, Italian) forms might yield something uniquely “German,” when combined. We proffer that his idea can be somewhat extrapolated onto how the search for a Spanish genre came about, albeit not as comfortably and fraught with over-idealization. It is therefore significant (and in due deference to Salaún) that we can observe that the *solis* in many early *zarzuelas* by Barbieri, Gaztambide, etc., give evidence of this by mimicking Italian aria constructs and conventions of operatic vocality, wherein nothing *castizo* is conveyed, other than its being set and sung in Spanish.

Spanish composers to extrapolate from—if not a “national genre”—then certainly a premise upon which one might be built or formed, which in our opinion eventually happened. Ironically, by Mercadante’s 1831 departure from Spain, Spanish operatic composition, though coming into its own with works by Carnicer and the debutant Genovés, still resisted by favoring the Italian model, as reliance on the *opera seria* mould only intensified via settings of old Italian libretti.<sup>268</sup> Within a decade, Mercadante’s archetype would eventually stand as an early example (albeit momentarily juxtaposed with the obsolete French model) for composers credited with inventing the *zarzuela* and *ópera española* to their own satisfaction.<sup>269</sup>

What is important about Mercadante’s methodology, and what prompted certain comments about his use of the “Spanish” vernacular facets alludes to this: it differentiates itself from the “potpourri” model of distinguishable Italian/Spanish moments in the striking use of local color. This often comes in the form of soundscapes, or sonic textures depicting a musical environment that is quintessentially endemic to the setting (the characters and their surroundings). However, Mercadante’s case transcends mere questions of *methodology*, itself solidified in the convictions of what for lack of a better term we might call a *cultural activist*, whose dedication to a certain cause or innovation we trust the forgoing study puts into evidence. This places Mercadante not only ahead of his time, but also rather of his station as a mere foreign composer in residence, not unlike Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904) in his celebrated United States period over sixty years later. This is because Mercadante was motivated by concerns like those occupying some of his “nationalistic” counterparts experimenting with autochthonous genres in their respective countries.<sup>270</sup> For our composer, this entails not just affixing recognizably national dance tunes, as Spanish scholars are keen to point out, but rather by imbuing, even permeating, the necessary passages with subtle but sure indications of place and culture. He achieves this synergistically while retaining the *requisite* Italian operatic convention or formula as needed for dramatic intent at certain moments, but moving deftly between, as some of the foregoing critiques indeed reflect. With that said, however, it is ultimately the music that does indeed give faith to this, if we really care to notice it.

La Spina, Riccardo. “Foreign Concepts: Saverio Mercadante and the Seeds of Modern Lyric-Theatrical Spanishness.” *Diagonal: An Ibero-American Music Review* 8, no. 1 (2023): 82–165.

<sup>268</sup> The two-act *opera seria* prevailed, with new works set to old libretti by Romani, et al (from *Ismalia* to *Clotilde*).

<sup>269</sup> That said, we should explain that we do not discount the 1832 composition of *Los Enredos*. However, given its circumstances, it can be considered as little more than a laboratory experiment, intended as a didactic exercise by Carnicer’s composition class at the newly opened conservatory, for performance by students. And although Genovés set *El Rapto* to a Spanish-language libretto for performance by the *Ópera Italiana* that year, he soon embarked for Italy, while Carnicer himself continued recycling libretti by Romani, et al. A composer’s interests and fortunes were still inextricably linked to the Opera Company’s, a reality spanning the 1830s, and not destined to shift until the 1840s.

<sup>270</sup> In fact, Mercadante’s Spanish period corresponds with the grounding of Europe’s most prominent and emblematic Romantic era operatic nationalisms, preceding some by over a decade. In Bohemia, František Škroup (1801-1862) already enjoys certain success inventing a Czech idiom (music and text) from the mid-1820s, thus contemporaneously with Mercadante, preceding now iconic Smetana on Prague’s stages by decades. Conversely, excepting Mirecki’s possible precedent, Stanisław Moniuszko (1819-1872) breaks ground with vernacular operettas in 1830s-1840s Poland, while in Hungary, the elder Ferenc Erkel (1810-93) advances premiering his autochthonously inspired operas, *Bátori Mária* (1840) and *Hunyadi László* (1844). Similarly, Naples’ Antonio Brancaccio (1813-1846) produces several full-scale Neapolitan-language operas throughout the 1840s, certainly considered in “nationalistic” terms at the time.