



Manuel García in Mexico (1827–1828): Part III

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MEANWHILE, during the brouhaha caused by the proposal to sing his *Salve Regina* in the cathedral, García was presenting *Don Giovanni*. The Mexico City premiere June 23, 1828, was reviewed favorably on June 24 and 26 in the *Correo de la Federación Mexicana*:

On the whole, the actors and actresses sang well, and the Señora Amada Plata was better than ever. —May the sublime García continue giving us this class of performance; may he dedicate himself to instructing Señora Rafaels and, with that, be sure of the Mexicans' gratitude.⁶¹

García's *Don Giovanni*, which captivated audiences on three continents, caused Lucas Alamán to compose a dedicatory poem, published in *El Sol* on July 9, 1828, that enshrines García as a deity.

To Don Manuel García.

*SAPPHIC-ADONIC.*⁶²

Noble countrymen, forgive
me if today my lyre leaves an innocent note;
For today, high genius
inspires my enthusiasm—

⁶¹ *Correo de la federación mexicana*, June 24, 1828:

Los actores y actrices cantaron bien generalmente, y la Sra. Amada Plata estuvo mas feliz que nunca.—Siga el sublime García dandonos esta clase de espectáculos, dedíquese á instruir á la Sra. Rafaels y esté cierto de la gratitud de los mexicanos.

⁶² i.e. Sapphic (three five-stress lines followed by a short line) -Adonic (verse made of one dactyl followed by a spondee or trochee) verse.

That genius which could
ease my heavy heart
on the night the great artist
filled the theater with his voice.

I would listen to him, my breast throbbing,
And thus would be brought to my restless mind,
Luisa Todi,⁶³ to whom the muses gave
their solemn echo.

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With it [García's voice] marble learns to breathe,
love learns to love; with it trembles
the high mountain, that did hide in the cloud
its haughty countenance.

It paints the cry, that Ariadne alone,
there on the shore, uttered for Theseus—
desperate, in a black labyrinth,
the sad victim.

Timid, it paints the desires
of the shepherd, sweet Meléndez⁶⁴
who said, "I wanted to
express my longings, but couldn't."

But then it bellows, it becomes the trumpet
with which Mars called us to battle.
How terrifying, how lugubrious and somber
it then is heard.

⁶³ Luisa Todi (*b.* Setubal, 1753; *d.* Lisbon, 1833), the famous Portuguese mezzo-soprano.

⁶⁴ Juan Meléndez Valdés (1754–1817). Spanish neoclassic poet who wrote under the pseudonym of the little shepherd, "Batilo."

Genius of the world! Divine García!
 Who could measure the breadth of your power?
 Were you born there where Eurydice heard
 the celestial voice—

The voice of Orpheus himself?
 Where harmony first surrendered its magic?
 Where men and cruel beasts
 were awed?

Or where was the origin of
 this voice of yours, so marvelous and pleasing?
 This voice which makes the strings of the most
 precious violin seem dull?⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Despite its length, Alamán's 100-line poem deserves reproduction here—if only to illustrate the passionate responses that García evoked in Mexico. Nothing similar could ever have been imagined in a New York newspaper.

El Sol, July 9, 1828:

A.D. Manuel García.

SAFICO-ADONICA.

Patricios nobles, perdonad si os deja
 hoy de mi lira el candoroso acento;
 hoy arrebatada mi entusiasmo todo
 el alto géneo:

Géneo de aquel que ambalsamar pudiera
 á mi apenado corazon la noche,
 en que del teatro el arteson grandioso
 llenó en sus voces.

Yo le escuchara, palpitando el pecho,
 y asi trajera á la ardorosa mente
 á Luisa Tódi, á quien las músas daban
 su éco solemne.

Asi embebido, de la dulce pátria
 pude un momento desprender la vista:
 de la álba jóven que con negros ojos
 amor me inspira.

A mis sentidos el raudal inmenso
 llegó de aquella encantadora y pura
 voz que á la humilde admiracion mil veces
 dejára muda:

Llegó vertiendo su riqueza toda,
 súbitamente dominando maga
 todo el espacio a que llegar sabia,
 todas las áuras.

¿Quien la alcanzára en su celeste vuelo?
 ¿Quien cuando parte deliciosa y suave
 podría dejar en morbidez sabrosa
 de entusiasmarse?

Ora se suelta en delicados trinos,
 ora al Olimpo en su ambicion asciende,
 ora al averno en el furor bajando
 al fin se pierde.

No, no se diera resistir su imperio,
 de espresion tanta por doquier circuida,

The next intrigue menacing García involved the Italian soprano Carolina Pellegrini. *El Correo* on August 4, 1828 announced her imminent appearance in Rossini's *La Cenerentola*.

At last it seems that we will have the satisfaction of seeing the opera of Cinderella, and with the thousand-times desired Sra. Peregrini [sic]. May it please God that no unforeseen accident, or ill disposition disrupt the performance. The public longs to see Sra. Peregrini, and will applaud her if she is really as good as we are told. If she turns out to be the same kind of "hen" as a certain

de los arómas, de la accion mas noble
 siempre asistida.

Del corazon endurecido triunfa
 aqui y alli del corazon sensible
 apoderada, en su sencillo fondo
 júbilo imprime.

Arrebatada, cuanto mira vence;
 ya esplendorosa sobre su alto sólio,
 ó despidiendo desde el triste labio
 celo afrentoso.

Ya amenazando, en cólera soberbia,
 los edificios de ciudad alzada,
 ya si el aspecto de las hondas fúrias
 pavor la causa.

Yo la escuché, del Aquilon primero
 moviendo airada, asolador silvido:
 blanda despues de Citeréa llamando
 al cándido hijo.

Todo obedece á los clamores suyos,
 y de ella todo en derredor depende,
 y el mismo Apolo celestial por ella
 mayor se siente

Asi sacude al universo entero,
 asi en severa magestad se muestra,
 asi en deliquio modulado y grave
 el bosque atruena.

Con ella aprende á palpar el mármol,
 amor á amar; con ella se estremece
 el alto monte, que escondió en la nube
 la altiva frente.

Pinta el gemido, cual si Ariadna sola,
 allá en la playa, por Teseo gimiera,
 desesperada, en laberinto negro
 la triste envuelta.

Tímidos pinta los deseos que tuvo
 el pastorcillo de Melendez dulce
 que dijo, yo manifestar mas ánsias
 quise y no pude.

Mas bráma luego, la trompeta imita
 con que á la lucha nos llevó Mavorte:
 ¡que aterradora, y lúgubre y sombría
 se escucha entonces!

¡Ah! que su fuego por las venas mias
 ha discurrido con behemencia ciega:

“rooster” has been for us, she’ll get her comeuppance as well.⁶⁶

García was obviously the “rooster”; meanwhile Pellegrini and Rossini had become the fickle *yor-kino*’s new standardbearers. As their reason: the Italians, at least, were untainted by prevailing Spanish corruption. To pillory García, the *Correo* of August 5 and 6 brought the following charges against him.

Here are some proofs of why it has been said that there is a war declared against Sra. Peregrini by the opera company:

—Because the rehearsals have gone on for ages and don’t end because of the fault of some Tom, Dick, or Harry

—Because there is a *gachupín*⁶⁷ complot not to rehearse any more operas in Italian, thereby leaving Sra. Peregrini without any role to sing

—Because the *gachupín* opera singers keep on saying

ella á sentir, á embebecerse, á todo mi ánimo enseña.

Y lejos ya de la apasible noche,
aun al añoso y elevado cedro
conmover hace en la montaña espesa
aljjero éco.

¡Genio del mundo! ¡Divinal Garcia!

¿Quien la estension de tu poder midiera?

¿Naciste allá dó á Euridice llamaba
la voz ecselsa;

La voz del mismo sonoro Orfeo?

¿Dó dió primero la armonía su encanto?

¿En dó los hombres y las fieras cruels
fueron pasmados?

¿O en donde tuvo su divino oriente

esa tu voz maravillosa y grata,
esa tu voz que del biolin preciado
la cuerda opaca!

¡Ay! que desierto sin tu vista el teatro

en dó ora asistes, se verá algun dia.

Todo fenece . . . fenecer tu solo,
tu no debias.

L. A.

⁶⁶ *Correo de la federación mexicana*, August 4, 1828:

Al fin parece que tendrémós la satisfaccion de ver la ópera de la Cenicienta, y á la mil veces deseada señora Peregrini. ¡Qui- era Dios que algun *áccidente imprevisto*, alguna *disposicion maligna*, no vaya á entorpecer la representacion. El público ansia por ver á la señora Peregrini, y la aplaudirá si fuere como se nos asegura; si nos resultare gallina como cierto gallo, llevará su chiflo.

⁶⁷ *Gachupín*: the derogatory term for Spaniards living in Latin America. Given the recent conspiracy of Padre Arenas, this was a very serious accusation.

that all of the Italian opera singers are cliquish trouble-makers

—Because Sr. García is a little too rich to go begging for a weekly salary, and suspends rehearsals on this pretext

—And finally, if D. Jacobo Villarrutia⁶⁸ wanted to talk, he could tell us a thing or two.

We conclude by assuring that there is no law nor is it anywhere written that one has to be paid on a weekly basis. The actors can ask for it, but they have no right; Sr. García and friends should take a lesson in point from Sr. Garay and the other stage actors. —We will follow up on the matter if need be.⁶⁹

This accusatory letter must have been widely protested, for the next day the *Correo* published a feeble attempt to neutralize some of its poison:

A chance circumstance brought us to yesterday’s rehearsal of *La Cenerentola*, where we enjoyed quite a pleasant time. We finally heard Sra. Carolina Peregrini, and we can assure the public, without fear of being mistaken, that they will be satisfied, pleased, and enamoured of her rare talent when she appears on stage. Her voice

⁶⁸ Dr. Don Jacobo Villa Urrutia y López Osorio (b. Santo Domingo, May 23, 1757; d. Mexico City, August 22, 1833) was the brother of Dr. Don Ciro Villa Urrutia. He studied law at Toledo and Valladolid. As lawyer of the Royal Council, he was appointed judge of the Royal Audience of Guatemala, where he was editor of the *Gaceta*. In 1804 he was appointed Alcalde of Crime of the Royal Audience of Mexico. He was a co-founder, with Bustamante, of the *Diario de México* and later judge of the Royal Audience of the City. After Independence (1822) he returned from Barcelona to Mexico as Regent. He was president of the Supreme Court until 1827. In January, 1828, he was named circuit Judge of the Federal District. In November, 1828, he was appointed Minister of the Supreme Court of Justice, of which he was named president in 1831.

⁶⁹ *Correo de la federación mexicana*, August 5, 1828:

Vayan algunas pruebas de porque se dice la guerra declarada por la compañía de ópera á la Sra. Peregrini. Porque hace un siglo que se está ensayando y no se concluye por faltas continuas de Juan ó Pedro. Por que hay un complot gachupinezco para no ensayar mas óperas en italiano, y dejar asi sin papel á la Sra. Peregrini; porque andan los operistas gachupines diciendo que todos los actores italianos son unos embrollones y cabilosos; porque el Sr. Garcia es bastante rico para mendigar su sueldo semanalmente y con pretextos de esta clase suspender los ensayos. En fin, si D. Jacobo Villarrutia, que no es sospechoso como Correista, quisiera hablar algo, puede que nos digese muchos algos. Concluimos asegurando que no hay escritura ni ley para ecsigir los pagos semanalmente; que lo pueden solicitar los actores, pero no en derecho; y que el Sr. Garcia y consortes deben tomar leccion en este punto del Sr. Garay y demas actores de representado.—Seguiremos la materia si es preciso.



is sweet, high, and handled with an inexplicable mastery. The acting of Sra. Peregrini is worthy to accompany that of the profound Sr. García, who also has quite a good part in the opera. This celebrated musician is already known to the Mexicans and it is not necessary for us to anticipate praise of him, because everyone acknowledges his rare worth: he is the Prieto, after all, of opera, just as Prieto is the García of spoken drama. The buffo, Sr. Lombard, exhibits a store of rare musical knowledge, and we assure the spectators that when he appears in public for the first time their desires will also be fulfilled.

Finally, *La Cenerentola* has an amusing plot, and the music is very much to the liking of the Mexicans, as is all that of Sr. Rossini.

We were very sorry that we had to express ourselves against Sr. García, because it was extremely regrettable that he appear, as has been said openly, a bit thankless towards the public as well as towards the present establishment. No actor has been treated in Mexico with the consideration that he has received. And, for this reason, it is very strange that he forget this consideration at times.

In our articles we have praised him constantly.⁷⁰

García was hardly appeased, however. The viciousness of these two letters elicited from him the most violent reaction yet. On the same day as the second letter, August 6, he responded to the attacks

⁷⁰*El Correo de la federación mexicana*, August 6, 1828:

Una casualidad nos hizo concurrir ayer al ensayo de la ópera de la Cenicienta, y gustar, por favor que se nos hizo, de un rato bastante agradable. Hemos oido por fin à la Sra. Carolina Peregrini, y podemos asegurar, sin temor de equivocarnos, que el público quedará satisfecho, complacido, y enamorado de su rara habilidad el dia que se presente en la escena. Su voz es dulce, tiple, y la juega con una maestria inesplicable. La parte segunda de la Sra. Peregrini, es digna de acompañar al profundo Sr. Garcia, quien tambien tiene un papel bastante fuerte en la mencionada ópera. Este célebre profesor es ya conocido de los mexicanos, y no ha menester que anticipémos sus elogios, porque todo el mundo confiesa su mérito raro: es el Prieto en fin de la ópera, así como Prieto es el Garcia de la comedia. El Bufo Sr. Lombard, manifiesta un fondo de conocimientos en música poco comunes, y aseguramos que tambien llenará los deseos de los espectadores la vez primera que salga al público.

Por último, la Cenicienta tiene un gracioso argumento, y su música es tan del gusto de los mexicanos, como toda la del célebre autor el Sr. Rosinni [sic].

Mucho hemos sentido haber tenido que espresarnos contra el Sr. Garcia, porque nos ha sido en extremo sensible que aparezca segun se ha dicho en el público, un tanto ingrato, así con el público, como con la actual empresa. Ningun actor ha sido tratado en México con las consideraciones que él, y por lo mismo es mas extraño que se olvide de estas mismas consideraciones en algunos momentos.

En nuestros artículos lo hemos elogiado constantemente.

in a long letter inserted in *El Sol*. García's letter is significant inasmuch as it reveals both astuteness and daring in defending his stance.⁷¹ He presented himself, true to the image history has painted of him, as an impassioned, hot-tempered Andalusian. His references to the "Most Excellent City Government" display biting sarcasm. At the same time the letter shows García willing to compromise his own ambition (taking the buffo baritone part in *La Cenerentola*) for the sake of the company.

To the editors of *El Sol*.

I have just read the 61st issue of *El Correo*, an article which, despite being rather concise, contains too much malice and treachery. As head of the opera company, therefore, I find myself obliged to uncover the falsehoods with which an attempt was made to hurt the delicacy of the individuals who make up this company.

According to the cited article, *the war declared against Señora Pellegrini* consisted of my having, at the outset, opposed the Señoras Santa Marta and García playing two of the parts in *La Cenerentola*, which, for their lack of difficulty could just as well have been performed by the Señoras Amada and Gurrola. I based this decision on the fact that it was necessary to leave the two first-mentioned ladies out of some of the operas, since until now they have taken part in all of them, and if one of them were to fall sick it would paralyze the company and deprive the public of what has been promised, endangering at the same time the interests of the company. Afterwards I yielded, seeing that there was interest in the matter, and my wife took one of the roles. Señora Santa Marta did not take the other because the husband of Señora Pellegrini requested her not to do so. With the other actors there was no difficulty whatsoever, in spite of their having to sing the opera in Italian (a difficult language for those who neither understand it nor know how to pronounce it, and which, in any event, is a language not well-accepted by the public). Some singers even performed roles outside of their range as happened with Señor Castillo who has a rather high part and myself, who, in order to facilitate the execution of the opera have taken the part of the *buffo cantante*, since without this condescension on my part it would not have been possible to present the opera.

As regards the matter of "mocking the public and the authorities under indecorous pretexts," the author of the article must admit that it is the theater manager alone

⁷¹ Adeptness in legal matters as well as straightforwardness in confronting theater administration were typical of García from the earliest days of his career. See Radomski, "More Biographical Notes for Manuel García," *Inter-American Music Review* (vol. xi, no. 1, 1990): 45-86.

who "mocks" the public and actors when he fails to carry out the contract made with these. And although weekly pay may not be designated with definite words in writing, the custom of doing so is so old and invariable, that it has acquired the force of law, and every manager has, when hiring a company, considered it as a necessary tacit condition. It should be confessed equally that we have gone at least nine or ten weeks without being paid on time, the management always delaying it and causing incalculable damage to a group of unfortunate people who, because of this, pawn their goods, pawn even the costumes with which they have to go on stage, and fail in agreements with their own creditors (and who knows what other financial embarrassments they suffer).

The author of the article should understand, finally, that if many actors, and I the first among them, refuse to continue working because of not being paid punctually, it is because we know from the mouths of various "señores" of the Most Excellent City Government and even of the Theater Commission, that this corporation is young and without funds to cover even the most sacred necessities, such as hospitals, prisons, streets, water, etc. These are undoubtedly objects of preference and of absolute necessity, for which reasons the Most Excellent City Government is going to drop the theatrical enterprise.

I believe I have clarified the matter well enough to be able to vindicate all of my company and myself, and thus I have nothing more to add than to request that you gentlemen may see fit to include this in your fine newspaper, certain of the eternal gratitude of your faithful servant who kisses your hands.

—Manuel García.⁷²

⁷²*El Sol*, August 6, 1828:

Sres. editores del Sol.

—Acabo de leer en el número 61 del *Correo*, un artículo que aunque bastante conciso encierra demasiada malicia y doblez: me veo, pues, como cabeza de la compañía de ópera, en la precisión de descubrir las falsedades con que se trata de herir la delicadeza de los individuos que componen dicho ramo.

La guerra declarada á la señora Pelegrini, según el citado artículo, ha consistido en haberme yo opuesto al principio á que las señoras Santa Marta y García hicieran dos partes de la Cenicenta, que por su poca dificultad podían muy bien ser desempeñadas por las señoras Amada y Gurrola, fundandome en que era de necesidad dejar á las dos primeras fuera de algunas óperas, pues hasta hora entran en todas, y en la enfermedad de una paraliza el ramo y priva al público de lo que se le tiene ofrecido, perjudicando al mismo tiempo los intereses de la empresa. Posteriormente cedí, viendo se tomaba un empeño en ello, y tomó mi esposa uno de dichos papeles, no habiendo tomado el otro la señora Santa Marta, porque el marido de la señora Pelegrini le rogó que no lo hiciese: en los demás actores no ha habido dificultad ninguna á pesar de tener que cantar dicha ópera en Italiano, idioma de mucha dificultad para ellos que no lo entienden ni lo saben pronunciar, y de no mucha acep-

The very next day a lengthy supplement, supporting García, appeared in *El Sol*. In spite of political problems in the city of a most critical sort, theater was uppermost in everyone's minds and given coverage accordingly in the press:

Sol

Supplement to n° 1880.

Thursday, August 7, 1828

8°-7°

Upon seeing the flood of articles with which the *Correo de la Federación* has been attacking the opera company, I feel that I should explain all that has occurred which might have to do with Señora Pellegrini, whom certain bright new writers (the cream of good taste in the theater) want to defend from the shots and crude war they say is being waged against her. This is *preposterous*, for there is not a single individual who has thought of anything but serving her and contributing to her greatest brilliance and stardom: thus I will give a simple account of all that pertains to the matter.

tación para el público, y aun desempeñando partes que no están en sus respectivas cuerdas como sucede con el Sr. Castillo que tiene una parte bastante alta, y yo que para facilitar la ejecución de la ópera he tomado la del Bufo cantante, pues sin esta condescendencia mía no se hubiera podido efectuar dicha ópera.

En cuanto á la de burlar al público y á la autoridad bajo pretextos indecorosos, es menester que confiese el Sr. articulista, que solo el empresario es el que burla al público y á los actores, si falta por su parte al cumplimiento del contrato que con los últimos tiene hecho: que aunque en las escrituras no esté designado con terminantes palabras el pago semanal, es tan antigua y jamás variada la costumbre de verificarlo así, que ha adquirido fuerza de ley, y que todo empresario al ajustar las compañías, la ha considerado como condicion tácita necesaria. Confiese igualmente que por lo menos van nueve ó diez semanas de no pagar con arreglo, atrasandolas siempre y causando perjuicios incalculables á una porción de infelices que por este motivo malvaratan sus cosas, empeñan hasta la ropa con que han de salir á la escena, faltan á los compromisos que tienen con sus acreedores, y quien sabe cuantos más apuros sufrirán.

Sepa finalmente el autor del artículo, que si muchos actores, y yo el primero, se niegan á seguir trabajando como no se les pague con puntualidad, es porque sabemos de boca de varios sres. del escmo. ayuntamiento y aun de la comisión de teatro, que dicha corporación es menor de edad y que se hallan sin fondos para cubrir otras necesidades más sagradas, como son hospitales, cárceles, calles, fuentes &c. Objetos indudablemente de preferencia y de absoluta necesidad, por cuyas razones va á dejar el escmo. ayuntamiento la empresa teatral.

Creo que he aclarado bastante el asunto para poder sincerar á todo mi ramo y aun á mí mismo, y así no me queda otra cosa que añadir, sino el rogar á vds. se dignen admitir este en su apreciable periódico, seguros de la eterna gratitud de su seguro servidor q. b. s. m.

—Manuel García.



The actress was hired by the Theater Commission, having been urged to do so by many of the company and by García as their director. This is a readily verifiable fact. García, however, was not aware of the terms of the contract, and wrote to Don Simón de la Torre,⁷³ president of the commission, on June 3rd, asking him to clarify the matter for the better organization of his company and the distribution of the work. This gentleman answered García in an undated letter, telling him that, indeed, the actress had been contracted, leaving to her choice the pieces which she would have to sing in *intermedios* as well as the opera of her debut. For all of this he recommended that García make some agreement with her. García thereupon proceeded to make known to Sr. de la Torre various problems, such as the lack of a *buffo* to take the part of Don Magnifico, the assigning of the two secondary roles, and the copying of the opera (which he had been told was being taken care of by Sr. Paris, the husband of Señora Pellegrini).

In spite of the activity of García, it was impossible to begin rehearsing the opera as soon as desired, because of the lateness of the copying and the irresolution of the commission in determining with certainty what work should follow *Don Juan*. Señor La Torre's definitive reply (in which he indicated *La Cenerentola*) was not received until June 26th. But that same night His Lordship the Governor [José María Tornel] went with one or two other men of the commission to García's room in the theater to ask for *Jaira* before any other work [García's *Jaira* was, apparently, never performed in Mexico]. On this account rehearsals of this work were begun, until, after a few days, seeing that it could not be well executed, it was found necessary to suspend the work and to begin rehearsing *La Cenerentola*, of which, by that date, only the vocal parts had been copied. The first rehearsal was set for July 11th.

The opera company cannot be blamed for these delays, especially if the 26 days of rehearsal up to the moment in which it was ready are taken into account. And if one compares this delay with that of *Semiramis*, which was rehearsed from the middle of Lent until the 8th of May and with that of *Don Juan*, rehearsed from then until the 26th of June, one will see that *La Cenerentola*, far from taking "ages" as has been said, has gone much faster than the others. To this one adds the Italian, which is a difficult language for some of the company, and, on the other hand, the repeated requests (both written and spoken) made by García that the stage directors not detain Martínez and Amada at the time of rehearsal. All of this demonstrates the effort which all of the actors have put into *La Cenerentola*.

This was all preceded by the request made by Don

Cayetano Paris, and seconded by Señor La Torre, that the Señoras Santa Marta and García perform the two secondary roles. García tried to avoid this for the well-founded reasons which he himself made known in his article inserted in *El Sol* yesterday (the 6th of this month). And afterwards, when he met with the said Paris in the theater office, the latter, striking up a conversation on the distribution of the parts, contradicted himself by saying that Señora Santa Marta should not appear in the opera, while strongly demanding that Señora García take the part. He finally reached such an extreme in talking nonsense that he said to García, that, *he, being an actor, could not be a suitable director: that it was not his place to distribute the roles in the opera; and finally, that in Italy there weren't even any directors, and neither were they necessary*. It is hardly believable that he would use such language with García, who knows the principal theaters not only of Italy, but of all Europe, in which he has justly spread his fame. Thus it is that, knowing the malice of his miserable antagonist, he told him with his renowned frankness that *he was an intrigant*.

From that moment on, desires of a vile vengeance began to seethe in the breast of Paris, spreading with poisonous craftiness a thousand falsehoods among his acquaintances both within and outside of the theater, even so far as seeing to it that the cited articles against the company (the other actors having, for him, no other sin but that of being friends with García) appeared in *El Correo*. To attack them, pretext is made of their having refused to sing another opera in Italian, and the truth is that the writers of the articles could not have looked for a weaker argument, since if the actors were to have had the gumption to impede the success of Señora Pellegrini, as is asserted, they would have refused to sing in the first one as well, preventing thereby, the public from judging her merit or giving her their applause. One must, therefore, draw the conclusion that the only motives inspiring this resolution were those of (1) the difficulty of the language and (2) the resulting concern of not being able to act properly, inasmuch as not knowing what they were saying, they would suffer what happens to the parakeet who, when he sees a priest, calls him a "coal-man."

Finally, we should remember what little enthusiasm the public expresses for this language, despite the four or five gentlemen who want to abrogate so respectable a name. This is as clear as is the fact that the actors, by agreeing to be hired to perform *La Cenerentola* in Italian, have given unequivocal proof of the interest they had in the quickest and best success of Señora Pellegrini. Another undeniable proof is the silence with which Señor García permitted, and almost approved, the cuts of the pieces and scenes of the opera in which shone the other actors and which were cut so that the Señora might stand out in the resulting contrast.

In the first series of articles in the *Correo* (which I shall

⁷³ Simón de la Torre was one of six city government alcaldes [Guía de forasteros, 68].



not analyze, so as not to give them undue importance), the entire company was attacked. Castillo, who had up to that time, on good faith, held Paris and his wife in good esteem, and believing himself to be equally appreciated, told the Señora in the rehearsal, in front of various persons, that he hoped she would tell him frankly if she had any feelings against him, and she responded "no." Whereupon Castillo added that he hoped her husband, in order to disprove the articles in the *Correo*, would have no trouble saying the same. He afterwards wrote to her husband, asking that if he did not have reason for complaints against him nor against the opera company, could he dispel such imputations in his reply. But instead of responding, he [Sr. Paris] said to the person who brought the letter, that he would see Señor Castillo himself, as he did, in fact, that same evening in his house. Having informed himself well of the matter, since he said he had not known of the second submittal (already in print), and having taken upon himself the other's desire, he answered that he would have no problem whatsoever in giving him the letter he requested, but he thought it would be more natural if it were signed by his wife, since the matter was about her, and the public didn't even know who Don Cayetano Paris was, nor what interest he had in the matter. Paris added that since the letter was a document which Castillo might give to the public some day, he wanted to think very well about the matter of drawing it up, heeding the fact that all this that would be exposed to the public was very delicate. Castillo agreed, and the other day he received the letter, which by way of a friend should be put soon (if not already) in the *Correo*. This narration is given because it is known that someone has said that Castillo, surprising her, tore the letter away from Señora Pellegrini. Its testimony, together with the expressed information, prove the contrary, and Paris himself will not dare to deny a single bit of this.

The company is threatened with rumors of which, it is assured, Don Jacobo Villa Urrutia is aware. And I can affirm that this gentleman knows nothing of these matters other than that which has been told him maliciously, since he has neither so much as set foot in the theater nor been present at a single one of these squabbles, adding that he is too prudent and just to be swayed by reports that would without his being convinced, discredit anyone. Moreover, he would not even form judgments offensive to those who appreciate him greatly and honor him with their affection.

Neither are the members of the opera company those who have spread in the theater the chitchat that Señor Paris left Barcelona because of his intrigues; and if such chitchat goes around, I pay no heed to it, because I have never been in Cataluña; neither have I talked with anyone claiming to have been a witness.

The gentlemen, who try to adulate the said actress with

their articles, are the ones who start a "war" that does not exist, and it is a pity that in the end they are disappointed. The most reprehensible thing is that in matters of this sort they want to make these honorable actors hated with their expression of a *gachupín complot*. These skirmishes have no place here.

Not only do these four or five persons oppose the respectable voice of the theater public, but they even try, with their distorted perspective, to discredit certain individuals before the selfsame public. Their desire to enhance their heroine is the more difficult to understand when her custom is to avoid all such footlights. Would that they could move towards their end without using diatribes, which make them look, above all, like fools and do not give any idea of the grand school to which they belong. The desire they have to write cannot excuse them when they distort facts and hurt people. García has an abundance of reasons to resent these same rude attacks by his miserable detractors. Enough for today.

*Printing under the care of José Márquez.*⁷⁴

⁷⁴ *El Sol*, August 7, 1828:

Sol.

Suplemento al n° 1880.

Del jueves 7 de Agosto de 1828. 8°-7°

Al ver la lluvia de artículos con que en el *Correo* de la Federación se ataca á la compañía de ópera, me veo en el caso de esplicar todo cuanto ha pasado que pueda tener relacion con la Sra. Pellegrini, á quien ciertos flamantes escritores, flor y nata del buen gusto del teatro, quieren defender de los tiros y cruda guerra que dizque la promueve... ni el raton del parto de los montes, pues no hay individuo que haya pensado en otra cosa que en servirla y contribuir á su mayor brillo y lucimiento: así es que haré una sencilla relacion de todo lo acaecido en el particular.

Aquella actriz se ajustó con la comision de teatro, habiendo contribuido no poco las muchas instancias y empeño que con los miembros de ella manifestó García como director del ramo, lo cual es facil de testificarse. García sin embargo no tuvo conocimiento de la celebridad del contrato, sino pasados algunos dias en que escribió al Señor Don Simon de la Torre, presidente de la comision, en 3 de junio, preguntándole lo que habia en el particular, para el mejor arreglo de su ramo y distribucion del trabajo: este señor le contestó sin fecha, diciéndole que en efecto se habia contratado á dicha actriz, quedando á su eleccion las piezas que habia de cantar en intermedios y la ópera con que habia de presentarse por primera vez, para lo cual le recomendaba el que se pusiera de acuerdo con ella. García, pues, procedió con el mismo señor á facilitar varios inconvenientes, como fueron la falta de un bufo que hiciera la parte del Don Magnífico, repartimiento de las dos segundas y copia de la ópera, la que le dijeron corria por cuenta del Sr. Paris, marido de la Sra. Pellegrini.

A pesar de la actividad de García, fué imposible empezar á ensayar la ópera tan pronto como deseaba, por la tardanza de la copia y la irresolucion de la comision en determinar con certeza la que debia seguir al D. Juan, no habiendo obtenido respuesta terminante del Sr. la Torre hasta el 26 de junio, en que



Adding to the Pellegrini controversy was the fact that she refused to sing in Spanish. Throughout August and September several letters appeared in both *El Sol* and *El Correo* arguing both sides. However, the attacks against García, exacerbated by the antagonism between *yorkinos* and *escocés*, did not really seem to have hurt his public reputation. Judging from the letters in the press, García did not finish his Mexican stay on the "down note" heard in New York. His August 6 letter to *El Sol* as well as

that in the August 7 supplement show his consideration for the actors as well as the public (in his willingness to translate the works into Spanish and to expose himself to the injustice of being manipulated by a venal management). He had always shown similar sensitivity to injustice, suffered in Madrid and Paris.

A letter to *El Correo* on August 10, 1828, commenting on the performance of *La Cenerentola* (in Italian), supported García:

le señala la Cenicienta; pero esa misma noche fué el Sr. Gobernador con uno ó dos señores de la comision á su cuarto en el teatro, y le dió la órden de poner antes que otra alguna la Jaira, en cuya virtud se procedió á los ensayos de esta, hasta que viendo de allí á unos días que no podia ser bien ejecutada, fué necesario suspenderla y empezar la Cenicienta de la que á esa fecha se habia concluido solamente la copia de las voces, verificándose su primer ensayo de 11 de julio.

De estos retardos no se puede inculpar á la compañía de ópera, y menos si se cuentan los veinte y seis días que lleva de ensayarse hasta la fecha en que ya está lista, y si se compara esta dilacion con la de la Semíramis que se ensayó desde la mediana de la cuaresma hasta el 8 de mayo y con la del D. Juan desde entonces hasta el 26 de junio, por lo que se verá que la Cenicienta lejos de tardar un siglo, como se ha dicho, ha ido mucho mas pronto que las otras; á lo que se añade ser el italiano un idioma difícil para varios de la compañía, y por otra parte las repetidas instancias que por escrito y de palabra hizo García para que los directores de verso no le ocuparan á Martínez y Amada en las horas de escoleta, lo que demuestra el empeño que todos los actores han tenido en la Cenicienta.

Habia ya precedido la solicitud que D. Cayetano Paris habia hecho, apoyada y secundada por el Sr. la Torre, para que las Sras. Santa Marta y Garcia hicieran las dos segundas, lo que Garcia trató de evitar por las fundadas razones que él mismo ha patentizado en su artículo inserto en el *Sol* del 6 del corriente, y habiéndose encontrado con posterioridad con dicho Paris en el despacho del teatro, promovió este conversacion sobre aquel repartimiento, y se contradijo diciendo: que la Sra. Santa Marta no debia salir en la ópera, y escigiendo con gran empeño el que la Sra. Garcia lo verificara, llegando á disparatar hasta tal término, que le dijo á Garcia, que siendo él actor no podia ser director justo: que no era de su atribucion el reparto de papeles en las óperas; y finalmente, que ni en Italia habia directores ni se necesitaban. Apenas se hace creible que se usase de este idioma con Garcia que conoce los principales teatros no solo de Italia, sino de toda Europa, en la cual ha estendido con justicia su fama. Asi es que conociendo la malicia de su miserable antagonista le dijo con su genial franqueza, que era un intrigante.

Desde esta época empezó á herbir en deseos de una venganza vil el pecho de Paris, esparciendo con venenosa arteria mil faldades entre sus conocidos de dentro y fuera del teatro, hasta conseguir que en el *Correo* salieran los citados artículos contra la compañía, no teniendo para él otra culpa los demas actores sino el ser amigos de Garcia. Para poder atacarlos se valen del

pretexto de haberse estos negados á cantar otra ópera en italiano, y á la verdad no podian buscar peor medio de defensa, pues si estos tuvieran el ánimo de impedir el lucimiento de la Sra. Pellegrini, segun se asegura, no se habrian prestado tampoco á la primera, evitando así el que el público pudiese calificar su mérito ni dispensarle aplausos, debiéndose por tanto sacar en consecuencia que los únicos motivos que impulsaron esta resolucion, fueron los de la dificultad de la lengua y el no poder accionar con propiedad, pues no sabiendo lo que dicen, les sucede lo que al perico que cuando ve á un cura le dice carbonero.

Ultimamente, debemos convencernos del poco agrado que manifiesta el público por dicho idioma, á pesar de cuatro ó cinco señores que quieren abrogarse tan respetable nombre. Esto es tan claro como el que los actores con prestarse á hacer la Cenicienta en italiano, han dado una prueba inequívoca del interes que tomaban en el pronto y mejor éxito de la Sra. Pellegrini. Otra prueba innegable es el silencio con que el Sr. Garcia ha permitido y casi aprobado los córtes de piezas y escenas de la ópera que eran de lucimiento para los demas actores y que se le han quitado para que realice aquella señora en el contraste que con este método resulta.

En los primeros artículos del *Correo*, y que por menospreciar no analiso, se ataca á toda la compañía de ópera, y Castillo que hasta el presente no solo estimaba de buena fe á Paris y su esposa, sino que tambien se creia igualmente apreciado, le dijo á esta señora en la escoleta delante de varios individuos que esperaba le dijese con franqueza si tenia algun sentimiento de él, y habiendole ella respondido que nó, añadió éste, que esperaba no tendria su esposo dificultad en decirle lo mismo, desmintiendo los artículos del *Correo*: le escribió despues á su marido pidiéndole que si no tenia motivos de queja contra él ni la compañía de ópera, desvaneciese en su respuesta tales imputaciones; pero en lugar de responderle, dijo al que llevó la carta, que se veria con el mismo Castillo, como lo ejecutó aquella noche en su casa, y habiéndose enterado bien del caso, pues decia no saber del segundo remitido ya impreso y hecho cargo del deseo de aquel, le contestó que no tenia dificultad alguna en darle la carta que le pedia; pero que creia mas natural que fuera firmada por su esposa, pues era de quien se trataba, y el público no sabia quien era D. Cayetano Paris, ni qué interes tenia en el asunto, añadiendo, que pues la carta era un documento que Castillo podia dar al público un dia, queria pensar muy bien el modo, de redactarla, atendiendo á que era muy delicado todo lo que se esponia al público: Castillo se avino, y al otro dia recibió la mencionada carta, que por conducto de

Last night, in a very concrete manner, Señor García disproved whatever injustices have been written against him: he demonstrated with his effort and, without thinking of those miserable foregoing events, that he had pleasure in letting the new actress shine. Never have we seen him so skilled nor so complacent, nor so deserving of the idolatry which Mexico has for him.⁷⁵

Another review in the same paper and on the same day praised García (although not his operas):

un amigo suyo ya debe haberse puesto ó se pondrá pronto en el Correo. Se hace esta narracion porque se sabe que hay quien haya dicho que Castillo arrancó la carta de la Sra. Pellegrini sorprendiéndola, cuya acriminacion con lo espuesto prueban lo contrario, y el mismo Paris no se atreverá á negar un punto este hecho.

Se amenaza á la compañía con especies que se asegura sabe el Sr. D. Jacobo Villaurrutia, y yo puedo afirmar que este señor no sabe mas de estos asuntos que lo que maliciosamente le hayan contado, pues ni pisa el teatro en su interior, ni ha presenciado ninguno de los pormenores de tales enredos, añadiendo, que es demasiado prudente y justo, para que por solo informes y sin pleno convencimiento quisiera no digo desopinar, pero ni aun formar juicios contrarios á la estimacion de personas que lo aprecian sobremanera y á quienes él ha honrado con su afecto.

Ni son los individuos de la compañía de ópera los que han esparcido en el teatro el run run de que el Sr. Paris salio del de Barcelona por intrigante, y si ecsiste el run run, yo no lo fio, pues ni he estado nunca en Cataluña, ni hablado con quien me haya dicho haber sido testigo.

Los señores que con sus artículos tratan de adular á dicha actriz, son los que encienden la guerra donde no lo hay, y es lástima que al fin se lleven chasco. Lo mas reprehensible es, que en cosas de esta especie quieran hacer odiosos á estos honrados actores con su espresion de complot gachupinesco. Nada tienen que ver aquí las temporalidades.

Mas no solo se abrogan cuatro ó cinco en el teatro la voz respetable del público, sino que ascienden á desopinar ante este á determinados individuos con el prisma verdinegro de que usan. El interes que los mueve para realzar á su heroina, es tanto mas dificil de conseguirse, cuanto que ella está acostumbrada á ponerse fuera de toda segura bateria. Pudieran ir á su fin sin usar de diatrivas, que sobre ponerlos en ridículo, no dan la mejor idea de la escuela del gran tono á que ellos pertenecen. El humor que tienen de escribir, no puede disculparlos á la vez en que desfiguran los hechos y hieren las personas. García tiene un caudal de razones que se la han dado con esos mismos ataques bruscos de sus miserables detractores. Baste por hoy.

—*Imprenta á cargo de José Márquez.*

⁷⁵ *El Correo de la Federación Mexicana*, August 10, 1828:

El Sr. García ha desmentido anoche de un modo práctico cuantas injusticias se han escrito contra él: demostró con su empeño y sin pensar en esos miserables antecedentes, que tenia placer en que luciese la nueva actriz y jamás lo hemos visto tan hábil ni tan complaciente, ni tan merecedor de toda la idolatria que tiene México por él.

The night before last Señor García sang with all of the mastery of which he is capable and which so delights us. The public applauded him on repeated occasions, and the whole of the opera was well received. We are infinitely happy because, in this way, Señor García will be convinced that there are already many in Mexico who like to hear singing in Italian and preferentially desire the compositions of Rossini before any others. *Il Barbiere*, *Otello*, and *La Cenerentola* have been more applauded than *Semiramis*, *Un dia de matrimonio*, and even more than *Don Giovanni*. They need more work in the rehearsals but they also serve the public better and the company will receive more applause. The salaries paid are not commensurate with the pleasure given by the performers, but inasmuch as the applause expresses opinion, it [the applause] should capture the gratitude of the actors.⁷⁶

Two days later there was even more praise for García:

Señor García has not only delighted the ear, but has captured our admiration, always appearing fresh on the stage, and making us believe that each time he performs better, both for his gallantry and the naturalness of his antics as for the sonority and firmness of his voice.⁷⁷

But *aficionados* writing to *El Sol* were still extremely concerned about presenting the works in Spanish:

If Señora Pellegrini is not obliged to sing in Spanish, then neither should Castillo, Martinez, Amada and others have to do so in Italian. Furthermore, we understand that Castillo, at least, before beginning to rehearse *La Cenerentola*, told one of the commission members that if he was singing the work in a language that was

⁷⁶ *El Correo de la Federación Mexicana*, August 10, 1828:

El Sr. Garcia cantó antenoche con toda la maestria de que es capaz y que tanto nos encanta. El público lo aplaudió repetidas ocasiones, y el todo de la ópera fué muy celebrado. Nos alegramos infinito, porque así el Sr. Garcia se convencerá de que ya en México gusta mucho oír cantar en italiano y desean con preferencia las composiciones de Rossini a cualesquiera otras. *El Barbero*, *Otelo*, y *la Cenicienta*, han sido mas aplaudidas que *Semiramis*, *Un dia de matrimonio*, y aun mas que *D. Juan*. Se trabajará mas en los ensayos, pero tambien se servirá mejor al público y la compañía tendrá mas aplausos. Los sueldos no se pagan por gusto de dar, y los aplausos dando opinion, deben captar la gratitud de los actores.

⁷⁷ *El Correo de la Federación Mexicana*, August 12, 1828:

El señor García no solo ha encantado los oídos sino que ha arrebatado la admiracion, presentandose siempre nuevo en la escena, y haciendo creer, que cada vez lo hace mejor, tanto por la gallardia y naturalidad de sus chuscadas como por lo sonoro y firme de su elegante voz.



strange and difficult for him, it was only to give in to the desire manifested by Señora Pellegrini of his doing so—given that this was the work of her debut. He was equally obliging with García in *Il Barbiere* and *Otello* last year, although according to him, with less repugnance, having been well immersed in the plots of these and having sung them previously in literal Spanish translations. From the date on which he agreed to do *La Cenerentola*, Castillo stated that he would do no other opera except in his own language. We believe that they have tried to argue that he has done three, but there is no reason to turn into an obligation that which was a favor and pure graciousness.

Accustomed for many years to singing in Italian, García, it is true, wanted to present opera in that language to us here, but at last, convinced of our discontent, manifested to him by so many subscribers, not only in the newspapers, but even verbally, he desisted from his project, and as proof of his docility gave us afterwards *El Amante Astuto*, *Un Dia de Matrimonio*, *Semiramis*, and *Don Juan* in Spanish, having them all translated from Italian, the language in which they had been composed.

We can no more than laugh at the extravagant idea of letting some sing in one language and the rest in another, and it seems in vain to insist once more on the necessity of having to understand the words, since just as the music entertains, so the plot interests and communicates the theatrical illusion, which is not the least part in such spectacles. The gentlemen referred to as “*Terencios Grandes*,” who supposedly only want music, can “de-subscribe” themselves if need be, and open a subscription which we will gladly join, so that Señor García, together with Señora Pellegrini, Santa Marta, and others judged to be adequate, may give us concerts in one of the many salons to be found in Mexico useful for such a purpose. . . .

Finally, the desire of nearly everyone is to understand what is heard, and thus, leaving aside pedantry and a *Parisian tone*, we hope that in the future we will be given operas in *Spanish*.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ *El Sol*, August 25, 1828:

Si la Señora Pellegrini no tiene obligacion de cantar en castellano, tampoco Castillo, Martinez, Amada y otros no la tienen de hacerlo en italiano, y estamos entendidos de que Castillo por lo menos, antes de empezar á ensayar la *Cenicienta*, le dijo á la comision ó á alguno de sus miembros que si cantaba aquella en lengua para él estraña y difícil, era solo por condescender al deseo que la Señora Pellegrini manifestaba de hacerlo asi, visto que era la primera con que debía presentarse. Esta misma condescendencia tuvo con García en el *Barbero* y *Otelo* el año pasado, aunque con menos repugnancia, segun dice, por estar bien empapado en el argumento de ellas, las que literalmente traducidas habia hecho antes en castellano. Desde la misma fecha en que se prestó Castillo á la *Cenicienta* avisó que no haria otra sino en su lengua: con todo, creemos que le han

A writer to *El Sol* on August 26 also favored Spanish:

To the editors:—Since various theater-lovers and music-lovers are desirous of seeing operas in which the principal talents of our day can be brought together, we propose *Tancredi*, performed by Señoras Pellegrini, Santa Marta, and García (Señores García, Castillo and Martinez, translating the recitatives). Since the other parts are already translated, they could give us all in music and well-mounted, such as is required by such a beautiful and sublime composition. Equally they could put on stage *Los Maridos solteros* (by García) and *La Donna del Lago*, operas in which the above-mentioned talents could star together.

We do not expect to encounter opposition on the part of the actors, and much less on the part of the gentlemen of the Commission, who surely will keep in mind this request, which, in their name, is made by . . .

—*One of many*.⁷⁹

On August 31, 1828, a “fan,” after attacking sainetes and tonadillas, argued for opera in the original language, making a valid point about artistic integrity when comparing operas in Italian to Latin

querido arguir con las tres que tiene hechas, pero no hay razon para querer convertirle en obligacion lo que fue favor y pura condescendencia.

Garcia, es verdad, acostumbrado por espacio de muchos años á cantar en italiano, quiso ponernos aqui la ópera en esta lengua, pero al fin convencido de nuestro descontento con ella, como se lo manifestamos infinitos abonados, no solo en los periódicos, sino aun verbalmente, desistió de su proyecto, y por prueba de su docilidad nos dió despues *El Amante Astuto*, *Un Dia de Matrimonio*, *Semiramis*, y *D. Juan* en castellano, haciendolas todas traducir del italiano, en cuya lengua se habian compuesto.

No podemos menos de reirnos de la extravagante idea de que pueden cantar unos en un idioma y otros en otro, y parece por demas el inculcar de nuevo la necesidad que hay de entender la letra, pues al paso que la música recrea, el argumento interesa y comunica la ilusion teatral, que no es la parte inferior de semejantes espectáculos. Los Sres. Terencios Grandes, supuesto que solo quieren música, pueden desabonarse si lo están, y abrir una suscripcion en la que entraremos gustosos, para que el Sr. García en union de la Señora Pellegrini, Santa Marta y demas que juzgue á propósito, nos dé conciertos en alguno de tantos salones útiles para este objeto que se hallan en México....

Por último, el deseo de casi todos es entender lo que se oye, y asi dejandonos de pedantismo y tono pariciense, esperamos que en lo venidero nos den óperas en castellano.

⁷⁹ *El Sol*, August 26, 1828:

Sres. editores.—Deseando varios amantes del teatro y aficionados á la música el ver algunas óperas en que se reunan las principales habilidades con que contamos en el dia, proponemos el *Tancredo* desempeñado por las señoras Pellegrini, Santa

in Gregorian chant. Nevertheless, as with the discussions of liturgy during the novena to Our Lady of Remedios, the intellectual arguments probably masked the anti-Spanish sentiments of a *yorkino*:

Translating into Spanish some little French operas is more acceptable because their language is harder and ours is more gentle, and given the greater number of French words, the translation is easier. But in general, that which is composed to be sung in one language, can only with great difficulty be rendered in another language. Try singing the litanies, the *Salve*, and the *Credo* in Spanish and what I am saying will be evident enough. . . .

P.S. I have been assured that the celebrated Señor García is going to Paris. I will be very sorry if this turns out to be true; but no one in this world is absolutely necessary. If he were to die, would we renounce forever having a theater as required in this capital? No, sir. At first we would miss him greatly, and while a good first tenor occupied his spot and other vacancies were filled, we would manage as we could. When Sr. Castillo pleased us so much with the sweetness of his voice, he was not singing as well as he is now, and I believe that his persistent application and his talent would be sufficient to please us as first tenor as he has done many times before and now in *La Cenerentola*. Let us join together in sustaining a proper theater against the enemies of our glories.⁸⁰

Marta y García, y los Sres. García, Castillo y Martínez, traduciendo al efecto los recitados, pues ya lo están las piezas, y dándonosla toda en música y bien montada, cual lo requiere tan hermosa y sublime composición. Igualmente pueden ponerse en escena *Los Maridos solteros* y *La Donna del lago*, óperas en que lucirán á un tiempo las referidas habilidades.

No esperamos encontrar oposicion de parte de los actores, y mucho menos de los Sres. de la comision, quienes seguramente tendrán presente esta peticion que á nombre de muchos les hace....

—*Uno de tantos.*

⁸⁰*El Sol*, August 31, 1828:

Que se pongan en castellano algunas operillas francesas, es mas disimulable, porque su idioma es mas duro y el nuestro mas suave, y por su mayor abundancia es facil la traduccion; pero por regla general lo que se compone para cantar en un idioma, con dificultad se puede ajustar bien en otro. Cantense en castellano las letanias, la *salve* y el *credo*, con la misma música que tienen en latin, y se palpara lo dicho....

P.D. me han asegurado que el célebre Sr. García se va a Paris. Mucho sentiré que se verifique; pero nadie hay absolutamente necesario en este mundo. Si se hubiese muerto, ¿renunciaríamos para siempre á tener un teatro cual requiere esta capital? No Sres. Al principio lo echaríamos mucho de menos, y mientras se ocupaba su lugar con un buen tenor primero y se llenaban otros huecos, nos bandearíamos como se pudiese. El Sr. Castillo cuando gustaba tanto por la dulzura de su voz, no can-

A letter in *El Sol* on September 1 countered, in favor of Spanish:

La Cenicienta pleases us with its beautiful music, it pleases us by the novelty of Señora Pellegrini, because of her merit and that of the incomparable García. But we hear many around us saying: "What a pity that we don't understand!"

The non-subscribers, who provide the incidental receipts, try to find out before going to the theater if the function is good. *La Cenicienta* was praised in *El Correo* before and after being put on stage, *La Semiramis* and *Un Dia de matrimonio* were censured by the same. Although the criticism of these was truly unjust, it was enough to cool the enthusiasm of those who were ready to see them, and of course a strong cause for the difference noted in the receipts. . . .

On the opinion of García for this or that language, we remit what we have already said, and to answer the question posed to us regarding *Abufar*, it is enough to remember the last time it was given.⁸¹

A letter of September 2 attacked Señora Pellegrini:

Could Señor Paris tell us: "Why did his wife give up her role in *Los maridos solteros*?" "Why did she impede the performance of *Jaira*?"⁸² "Why did she consent to *El Engaño feliz* being translated and then afterwards resist doing it in Spanish?" "Is it the custom in the theaters of Italy to do only the roles and operas that one cares to do?" . . .

taba ni con mucho tan bien como ahora, y creo que su empeñosa aplicacion y su talento, serian bastante para agradar de primer tenor como lo ha hecho muchas veces y ahora en la *Cenicienta*. Unámonos todos para sostener un teatro desente contra los enemigos de nuestras glorias.

⁸¹*El Sol*, September 1, 1828:

Gusta la *Cenicienta* por su bella música, gusta por la novedad de la Señora Pellegrini, puesta por el mérito de esta y el del incomparable García; pero oímos decir á muchos que están á nuestro lado, ¡Qué lástima que no entendamos!

El público que no está abonado y forma la entrada eventual, trata de saber antes de ir al teatro, si la funcion es buena. *La Cenicienta* se alabó en el *Correo* antes y despues de puesta en escena, *La Semiramis* y *Un dia de Matrimonio* fueron censuradas en el mismo; aunque la critica de estas ha sido bien injusta, ha bastado con todo para resfriar los ánimos de los que estaban dispuestos á concurrir á ellas, y por supuesto causa poderosa para la diferencia que se nota en las entradas....

Sobre la opinion de García por este ó el otro idioma, nos remitimos á lo que ya hemos dicho, y para contestar á la pregunta que se nos hace del *Abufar*, basta recordar la época en que se dió.

⁸²Apparently García's *Jaira* was never performed in Mexico.



Carolina Artaud destroyed the ballet, and Carolina Pellegrini will destroy the opera. . . .

Now tell me with good faith, all of the "Terencios" of the world: is the only pleasing opera the one that draws three or four rounds of applause in this or that cadenza of the singer, and so one need not pay attention to the composition? What concerted pieces (or solo pieces, for that matter), have been applauded in *La Cenerentola*? The introduction passed in silence, the same went for Lombard's aria. In the duet of Castillo and *the beloved* there was applause only at the cadenza which ends the *andante*; this applause was not for Rossini. At the entrance of García there was again applause, this being much less; for the quintet, nothing. In the middle of the finale there was applause in another cadenza of García, this being only for his fertile imagination and his supple throat. The finale ended in silence. In the second act: nothing for the aria of Castillo, neither for the duet of García and Lombard, silence for the storm, the same for the sextet, nothing for Amada's aria, and in the middle of the finale, only for a *roulade* of Señora Pellegrini. Any stranger accustomed to the hearty applause that these compositions evoke in other parts, would say that they have bombed here, and truly he would be right in his just criticism.

—*The Spirit of Paris*.⁸³

⁸³ *El Sol*, September 2, 1828:

Diga el Sr. Páris ¿por qué devolvió su Sra. el papel de los *Mari-dos solteros*? ¿Por qué obstruyó la *Jaira*? ¿Por qué consintió en que se tradujera el *Engaño feliz* y luego se resistió á hacerlo en castellano? ¿En Italia se acostumbra en los teatros hacer cada uno el papel y la ópera que quiere y no mas?...

Carolina Artaud destruyó el baile, y Carolina Pellegrina destruirá la ópera....

Ahora díganme de buena fe todos los Terencios del mundo, ¿es gustar una ópera la que solo arranca a tres ó cuatro aplausos en una ú otra cadencia del cantante, y se mira con harta indiferencia la composicion? ¿Qué piezas concertantes, ni á solo, se han aplaudido de *La Cenicienta*? La introduccion pasa en silencio, aria de Lombard lo mismo, duo de Castillo y *La Amable* se aplaude únicamente en la cadencia con que esta finaliza el andante, este aplauso no es a Rossini. A la salida de García otro aplauso, este mucho menos; quinteto nada: final á la mitad se aplaude en otra cadencia de García, este es solo á su fértil imaginacion y su suave garganta: concluye el final en silencio. Segundo acto: ária de Castillo nada, duo de García y Lombard tampoco, tempestad silencio, sestetio lo mismo, ária de Amada nada, y en medio del final solo una volata de la Sra. Pellegrini. Cualquiera extranjero que haya oido esto, acostumbrado á ver prodigar muchos aplausos á las composiciones que agradan en otras partes, dirá que esta ha apestado aqui, y convendrá en que tiene mucha razon para su justa critica.

—*El duende de Páris*.

Another letter in *El Sol* on September 3, 1828, also complained of the prima donna's refusal to do *El Engaño feliz* in Spanish. A long letter on September 6, 1828, summed up the somewhat tiring incident:

When one does not find the truth because it is the passion and not the reason which is speaking, he closes his eyes in order not to see it—even if it is thrust into his face.

Is there anyone in the whole of Mexico who is unaware of the good harmony that reigned in the opera company until the arrival of Señora Pellegrini and her blessed spouse? Is there likewise no one who is aware of the efforts made by García in placing her in the company (to the point of being imprudent), without which we would not have heard the timbre of her voice, and without which neither would the infamies and abuses heaped upon the Mexicans by Señor Paris have erupted? And how has García been repaid? By declaring war against him by any means at their disposal. How ungrateful!

Publicly it was said to Señor Paris that he was thrown out of Barcelona for being an *intrigant*. The public still has not seen him defend himself against this, proving, with his silence, what any other man of delicacy would have considered an atrocious attack against his reputation.⁸⁴

Other letters continued the Spanish vs. Italian argument.⁸⁵ One of these, to *El Sol*, on September 10, proposed solving the problem by only performing works by García. Despite not being Rossini, one would at least have understandable works in their original language (without the composer's original intentions being destroyed):

⁸⁴ *El Sol*, September 6, 1828:

Cuando no se quiere hallar la verdad porque habla la pasion y no la razon, se cierran los ojos para no verla aunque se dé uno de hocicos con ella.

¿Hay alguno en todo México que ignore la buena armonia que reinaba en la compañía de ópera hasta la llegado de la Sra. Pellegrini y su bienaventurado esposo? ¿Hay asimismo quien no sepa los esfuerzos hechos por Garcia para su colocacion casi hasta con imprudencia, sin lo cual no se le hubiera oido el metal de la voz, ni hubieran tenido fin las infámias y denuestros que vomitaba contra los mexicanos el Sr. Paris? ¿Y cual ha sido la recompensa? Declararle la guerra por cuantos conductos han tenido á su disposicion. ¡Ingrato!

Públicamente se le ha dicho al Sr. Páris que de Barcelona lo arrojaron por intrigante. Aun no ha visto todavia el público que se haya indemnizado, aprobando con su silencio lo que cualquier hombre de delicadeza hubiera considerado como una injuria atroz hecha á su reputacion.

⁸⁵ *El Correo*, September 3, 1828; *El Sol*, September 7, 10, 16, 1828.

To the editors of *El Sol*: —I found it hard to believe that Señores Castillo and Martínez, so complacent until now towards the public, would refuse to sing in Italian, protesting a difficulty which until now they did not have in singing *Otello* and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* in the same language [Italian]; but now I see that they are not without reason, because naturally it must be easier for them to sing in their own language than in another. And so they are in luck having Señor García, who will compose for them operas in Spanish which will please the public, as did *El Amante astuto*,⁸⁶ or translating them, putting original music to the Spanish, free of the crass defects of the translations sung to music intended for the original words.

This will not be like having the operas of Rossini, Paccini, Coccia, Meyerbeer, and the like. But what difference does it make? We will have Spanish operas with their original music, and we will not need Italian music nor Italian singers for anything. If we could get composers here to dedicate themselves to writing operas, that is, the music, since for the rest, we have enough poets who, at a given juncture, could come up with an opera libretto. What big deal is it to make romances or any other genre of versification? Is it any more than a matter of weaving together four little sonnets (some which are pretty and sound well to the ear)? It seems that there might be a problem in that we would be going backward in taste to the former times of Paisiello, Haydn, and Mozart. But so what? In those times did we not enjoy the music of works such as *El Barbero de Sevilla* of Paisiello, of *La Isabela* and even of *El Farfulla*?⁸⁷ Were not La Carpintero, La Mungura, and Inés García applauded? And were they not tossed gold from behind the stage for *un terno*, a *cú, cú*, or a *buen pan hay*? It's all a matter of getting used to it. The truth is that with Señor García, his wife, the Señoras Amada Plata and Duranguena and Señores Castillo, Martínez, Rocamora and Prieto Jr. we will have a complete company.

I feel that I am seeing a case such as that of the great Roman orator when he composed his very celebrated: *O fortunatam natam me consule Romam*.

Kissing Your Hands, My Dear Editors, your bothersome servant,

—A subscriber.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Although the writer is in error (*El Amante astuto* was originally written in Italian), the setting is in Spain and features Spanish music as well as Spanish humor which would have made it especially accessible to the audience.

⁸⁷ A setting of this famous play by Ramón de la Cruz was attributed to García by Fétis. There is an extant version by Blas de la Serna in the Biblioteca Municipal in Madrid.

⁸⁸ *El Sol*, September 10, 1828:

Sres. editores del *Sol*. —Me resistía á creer que los Sres. Castillo

After *La Cenerentola*, García again presented his *Semifamis*.⁸⁹

On October 3, 1828, announcement appeared in *El Sol* of a special gala performance to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Constitution of the United States of Mexico (Constitución de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos). García's *El Amante astuto* was presented:

Inspired by the noble desires expressed to them by the Governor of the District, that the anniversary of our constitution be solemnized by some theatrical function, the opera company has, at this moment, decided to offer the respectable public, in celebration of such a joyful day, the performances listed below, and they will be offered on Sunday, the fifth of the present month, in the following terms:

y Martínez tan complacientes hasta ahora al público, se reusasen á cantar en italiano, protestando una dificultad que hasta ahora no habian tenido para ejecutar el *Otelo* y el *Barbero De Sevilla* en el mismo idioma; pero ya veo que no les falta razon, porque naturalmente les ha de ser mas facil cantar en su lengua que en otra, y se les ha caido la sopa en la miel, con tener al Sr. García que les compondrá óperas en castellano, que gustarán al público, como ha gustado *El Amante astuto*, ó traduciéndolas para ponerles la música original sobre la letra ya castellanizada, libre de los defectos crasos de las traducciones para cantar con la misma música que se habia compuesto para la letra original.

Ello no será como las óperas de Rossini, de Pachini, de Coccia, de Mayerver y semejantes; ¿pero qué importa? tendremos óperas castellanas con su música original, y para nada necesitamos de la música italiana ni de sus operistas. Si lográsemos que los compositores de aquí se dedicasen á componer óperas, esto es, la música, pues por lo demas, bastantes poetas tenemos que por cada coyuntura deserrajarían una ópera. ¿Qué mas dá eso que hacer romances ó cualquier otro género de versificación? ¿Hay mas que zurcir cuatro soncitos de la tierra, que los hay tan lindos y suenan tan bien al oído? Al parecer hay el inconveniente de que se retrogradará en cuanto al gusto de la música al tiempo anterior á Paisiello, Hayden y Mozart; ¿pero, qué importa esto? ¿En aquellos tiempos no gustarian de la música que entonces se usaba, como nosotros del *Barbero de Sevilla* de Paisiello, de *La Isabela* y aun del *Farfulla*? ¿No se aplaudía y palmoteaba á la Carpintero, á la Mungura y á la Ines García, y les echaban porcion de onzas al foro por un terno, un cú, cú, ó un buen pan ai? Todo es acostumbrarse. Lo cierto es, que con el Sr. García, su esposa, la Amada Plata, la Duranguena, Castillo, Martínez, Rocamora y Prieto menor, tendremos una compañía completa.

Me parece que estoy viendo un caso como el del grande orador romano cuando compuso el tan celebrado: *O fortunatam natam me consule Romam*.

b. l. m. de vds., Sres. Editores, su molesto servidor.

—Un Abonado.

⁸⁹ *Correo de la Federación Mexicana*, September 11, 1828.

In the Afternoon
 Rossini's accredited opera,
 entitled:
 EL BARBERO DE SEVILLA.

Prices.

Pátio	1 peso.
Boxes, 1st and 2nd tiers . . .	6 reales.
Idem, 3rd tier	4 reales.
Women's gallery	2 reales.
Rented boxes	5 pesos.

In the Evening.

The scene will be opened by a march, with appropriate text. Immediately following will be performed the applauded opera entitled:

EL AMANTE ASTUTO
 The ticket prices will be the same as have been charged lately for evening opera performances.⁹⁰

Predictably, a writer to the *Correo* complained:

To the citizen editors of the *Correo*:
 —Yesterday's newspapers announced that the opera company, *inspired by noble sentiments* (for the anniver-

⁹⁰ *El Sol*, October 3, 1828:

La compañía de ópera, animada de los mismos nobles deseos que el Sr. Gobernador del distrito, le ha manifestado, de que se solemnice el aniversario de nuestra constitucion con alguna selecta funcion teatral: al momento se ha decidido á ofrecer al respetable público en celebridad de tan fausto día, las funciones que á continuacion se espresan, y que se verificarán el domingo 5 del corriente en los términos siguientes.

Por la Tarde.

La acreditada ópera de Rossini,
 titulada:

EL BARBERO DE SEVILLA.

Precios.

Pátio	1 peso.
Palcos, 1 ^{os} y 2 ^{os}	6 reales.
Idem, 3 ^{os}	4 reales.
Cazuela	2 reales.
Palcos alquilados . . .	5 pesos.

Por la noche.

Abrirá la escena una marcha con letra análoga, y en seguida se ejecutará la aplaudida ópera titulada:

EL AMANTE ASTUTO

Los precios de boletos y entradas serán los mismos que regian últimamente en noche de ópera.

sary), will give Rossini's *El Barbero* (doubtless in Italian) as the afternoon function, and for the evening, *El amante astuto* (known to be the composition, in Spanish, of the virtuous *García*). What's going on here? So the Italian opera is to be given to all those folk who go to the theater in the afternoon, and in the evening the opera of yesterday? . . . Ah! but what an entertainment! "After so many days of being closed," you may say, "it is necessary to see complete attendance—you have seen already how much we like and prefer *El Amante astuto* . . ."

Here's the latest attack against dear Pellegrini, to stir up new intrigues. Goodbye, my dear editors.
 —*We who do not think as he who planned the event.*⁹¹

The gala performances on October 5 were *García's* last in Mexico. Political disturbances thereafter kept the theaters closed. However, even in the face of increasingly inflamed political rebellion, many lamented the closure. In the meantime, *García* and his wife must have been increasingly concerned about their own safety, and the more eager to leave.

An article in *El Sol* on November 10, 1828, praised *García* amidst a tribute to Malibran. While purportedly honoring *García*, the article poignantly reveals that *García's* career was nearing its end, and that his daughter was now the star in the family.

To the editors of *El Sol*: being passionately devoted to the merit of the great *García*, I could not resist the temptation to present the two attached articles which I have translated from the *Correo de las Artes* and *El Globo*, Parisian newspapers. What satisfaction for this artist to see, both as father and teacher, the praise and extraordinary triumph of the noted and admirable child who owes her being to him! What pleasure in seeing oneself exalted by a wise and impartial public! It is not strange that in cultured France the arts and sciences have arrived at such a degree of perfection if we see that, in addition to

⁹¹ *El Correo de la Federación Mexicana*, October 4, 1828:

Ciudadanos editores del Correo —Se ha visto en los periódicos de ayer, que la compañía de ópera animada de nobles sentimientos (por el aniversario) anuncia *el Barbero* de Rossini [en italiano sin disputa] para funcion de la tarde, y para la de la noche a *El amante astuto*. [Ya se sabe que en castellano y composicion del virtuoso *García*.] ¿Cómo estamos? ¿Conque la ópera italiana se dá por la tarde á todas las clases del pueblo que concurren tales horas al teatro, y por la noche la ópera de marras?... ¡Ah! pero ique distraccion! Es necesario que cuando, despues de tantos dias de clausura, se vea la concurrencia completa, se diga.... Ya lo ven como gusta de preferencia y con tanto entusiasmo *El Amante astuto*....

Primera nueva asechanza contra la amable Pellegrini, para las nuevas intrigas. A Dios, señores editores. De vds.
 —*Los que no pensamos como el que dispuso la funcion.*

financial recompense, all strive insistently to promote the emulation and noble ambition of glory, applauding and praising the good with the greatest enthusiasm and criticizing sweetly, moderately, and with finesse that which is defective. On this point I omit making comparisons with any one of our Mexican newspapers, and I only ask that you might be so kind as to insert these articles which would be a favor to him who will remain your attentive servant who kisses your hands.

—M.P.S.⁹²

The articles subsequently presented are significant because they not only laud Malibran but they speculate on the origins of her talent and contrast this talent with that of other singers of the day. While praising her schooling, the articles uphold García and the Spanish tradition:

One need have glanced over the European musical scene, one need be acquainted with the state in which the singers of our day and their art are to be found, both in Italy as in France and other countries, to comprehend how marvelous and already how perfect is this young talent, and to appreciate how irreparable is the lack of such talent elsewhere. Everywhere the decadence is complete. No longer do we see schools; there are no more conservatories: lack of preliminary studies, of originality and inspiration, is all that is found in those supposed singers who run about the world nowadays. Those who have a few measly ideas are incapable of executing them: those, on the other hand, who have acquired some agility of the throat do not have any ideas that are the least bit new or graceful. We will say it right out: one of those most guilty of causing this artistic degradation is the man who has created the modern musical system: Rossini himself. Having written note by note all of the orna-

ments, all of the flourishes of his pieces, not leaving to the fantasy of the singer the least little fermata, he has placed in uniform (so to speak) all of the present-day singers in Europe: he has made a "brotherhood," a regiment out of which it is impossible to distinguish the members, as it is impossible to distinguish one monk from another nor one grenadier from another. Without a doubt he has excuses: when he began his career the school was already in decline. If he were to have chosen the wisest path, that is, if he were to have formed singers by rigorous study, he would have grown old before reaping the fruit of his labor and his inspiration would already have grown cold by the time his interpreters would have been worthy of him. The desire of conquest burned within him and he needed, if not veteran warriors, at least recruits who might have some appearance of soldiers. To give them that appearance he took the shortest route: he whistled to them as to a parrot. But what has been the result? On one hand, an insupportable monotony has been protected by the musical scene: the uniformity of ornamentation has been made such, that we seem always to be hearing the same piece and the same singer. On the other hand, preliminary studies have been completely abandoned. Who would be so foolish nowadays to consecrate six years of his life to singing only diatonic and chromatic scales, intervals of thirds, fourths, fifths &c., trills, appoggiaturas and the rest as the Cafarellis, Farinellis, and Marchesis did in their youth? There is a much faster means of making oneself a singer: one learns to vocalize, doing somewhere between "well" and "badly" the passages and cadenzas of Rossini, and as long as no more than one-third of the notes are not lacking, one knows enough to earn a salary of 400 francs. One must confess that this method is much more comfortable, but at the same time: What has happened to the art? What about the poor music? . . .

Never has there come a prophetess [Malibran] more in time to reanimate the dying faith and to make the word of life blossom. She appears as the last offspring of that great family of true singers which we regarded as already extinct: one could say that she has been granted to us so that the chain of musical traditions might not be broken.

Daughter of a true artist, Madame Malibran has gone through the trial of those long preliminary exercises which Porpora and Scarlatti unmercifully imposed upon their disciples. The beautiful *proportions of phrasing*, such an essential art for the singer, vocalization, accentuation, pronunciation, all of these mysteries of art—it was not by routine that she acquired them, but by means of severe study. In short, her education has been that of the singers of the old school, and at the same time, through some fortune rare enough even in that age, she received from nature a creative inspiration, an impassioned soul and a voice which, without being innately

⁹² *El Sol*, November 10, 1828:

Sres. editores del Sol: Como apasionado al mérito del gran García, no he podido resistir á la tentacion de dar á luz los dos adjuntos artículos que he traducido del *Correo de las Artes y El Globo*, periodicos de París. ¡Cual satisfaccion la de este artista al ver ya como padre, ya como maestro, los elogios y extraordinario triunfo de la insigne y admirable jóven que le debe el ser! ¡Qué complacencia la del verdadero mérito en verse asi ensalzado por un público sábio é imparcial! No es extraño que en la culta Francia hayan llegado las artes y las ciencias á tal grado de perfeccion, si vemos que ademas de la recompensa pecuniaria se empeñan todos á porfia en fomentar la emulacion y noble ambicion de gloria, aplaudiendo y alabando con el mayor entusiasmo lo bueno, y criticando con dulzura, moderacion y finura lo defectuoso. Omito sobre este punto el hacer comparaciones con alguno de nuestros periodicos de México, y solo ruego a vds. tengan la bondad de insertarlos, que será favor á que quedará reconocido su atento servidor que s.m.b.

—M.P.S.



fluent, has been able to acquire great agility, and to lend itself admirably to all of the inflections and ornaments in comic as well as in tragic roles. . . .

And as far as improvising when singing Rossini, to possess the energy of *García* and the ornaments of *Velluti*,⁹³ certainly is a miracle for which it never occurred to us to ask.⁹⁴

⁹³ Giovanni Battista Velluti (1780–1861), one of the last great *castrati*, had appeared in London with Maria in Meyerbeer's *Il crociato in Egitto* in 1825 during the season of her operatic debut, shortly before she left with her family for New York.

⁹⁴ *El Sol*, November 10, 1828 [extracted from an article in *Le Globe* of June 21, 1828]:

Es preciso haber echado una mirada sobre la Europa musical, es preciso conocer el estado en que se encuentran en el día los cantantes y su arte, tanto en Italia, como en Francia y demas países; para comprender cuanto es maravilloso este talento tan jóven y ya tan perfecto, y para apreciar todo lo que su pérdida tiene de irreparable. Por todas partes es completa la decadencia, ya no vemos escuelas, ya no hay conservatorios: falta de estudios preliminares, de originalidad é inspiracion, es todo lo que se halla en esos pretendidos cantantes que corren el mundo hoy día. Los que tienen algunas pequeñas ideas son incapaces de ejecutarlas: aquellos que al contrario han adquirido alguna agilidad de garganta, no tienen la menor idea nueva ó graciosa. Lo dirémos de una vez: uno de los mas culpables de esta degradacion del arte es el hombre que ha creado el sistema musical moderno, es el mismo Rossini. Habiendo escrito nota por nota todos los adornos, todas las flores de sus piezas, no dejando á la fantasia del cantante el menor calderon, él ha puesto bajo un uniforme, por decirlo así, cuantos cantan en el día en Europa: él ha hecho una cofradia, un regimiento del que no se distinguen ya los miembros, así como no se diferencia un fraile de otro fraile ni un granadero de otro granadero. Sin duda él tiene disculpa: cuando empezó su carrera, la escuela estaba ya en decadencia. Si para restaurarla hubiese elegido el camino mas sábio, es decir, si hubiese formado cantantes por fuertes estudios, él habría envejecido antes de recoger el fruto de sus tareas y su númen ya estaria helado, cuando sus intérpretes fuesen dignos de él. Ardía en el deseo de hacer conquistas, y necesitaba, si no bravos veteranos, por lo menos reclutas que tuviesen cierta apariencia de soldados. Para darles esta apariencia él ha tomado el medio mas espedito, les ha soplado como á los loros. Pero ¿qué ha sucedido? Por una parte, una monotonía insoportable se ha amparado de la escena musical: la uniformidad de adornos se ha hecho tal, que nos imaginamos oír siempre la misma pieza y el mismo cantante. Por otra parte, los estudios preliminares han sido completamente abandonados. ¿Quién seria en el día tan tonto que consagrara seis años de su vida solo en hacer escalas diatónicas y cromáticas, saltos de tercera, cuarta, quinta &c., trinos, apoyaturas y demas como hicieron en su juventud los Cafarellis, los Farinellis, los Marchesis? Hay un medio mucho mas pronto para hacerse cantante: se aprende á vocalizar, haciendo entre bien y mal los pasajes y calderones de Rossini, y con tal que no fallen mas de dos notas de tres, ya se sabe lo bastante para tener 400 francos de renta. Preciso es confesar que este método es mucho mas

A letter of November 20 suggested that although Malibran could have learned by modern methods to sing as well as she did, *García* taught her in conformity with his own early training at Seville.

. . . Now then, although Señora Malibran could have learned by the modern method, her father, who wanted his daughter to be a profound and well-grounded musician, made her pass through fire and water, and subjected her, as is asserted, to six years of scales and solfège. Nor would this discipline surprise me, because he doubtlessly learned by this very method in Seville (as can be seen by his own extraordinary execution, and by the runs, arpeggios and trills in his own compositions). I, therefore, believe it would be a delight to hear her sing, especially being so outstanding in comic parts as the article describes and as I have heard said: I wish the pleasure of hearing her and I hope to do so, perhaps when her father returns to this city.⁹⁵

García, at this time, already had his eyes set on Paris, the city that had most appreciated his talents.

cómodo; pero al mismo tiempo, ¿qué es del arte? ¿qué de la pobre música?...

Jamas ha venido profeta mas á tiempo para reanimar la fé muriente y hacer florecer la palabra de vida. Ella es como el último vastago de aquella gran familia de los verdaderos cantantes que nosotros mirabamos ya como estinguida: se puede decir que ella nos ha sido concedida para que no se llegase á romper la cadena de las tradiciones musicales.

Hija de un verdadero artista, Madama Malibran ha pasado por la prueba de esos largos ejercicios preliminares que Pórpura y Scarlatti imponian sin piedad á sus discípulos. Las bellas proporciones del frasear, esta ciencia tan esencial para un cantante, la vocalizacion, la acentuacion, la pronunciacion, todos estos misterios del arte, no ha sido pues por la rutina como se ha iniciado en ellos, sino por medio de severos estudios. En una palabra, su educacion ha sido la de los cantantes de la antigua escuela, y al mismo tiempo, por una fortuna bien rara aun en aquella época, ella recibió de la naturaleza una inspiracion creadora, una alma apasionada y una voz que sin ser primitivamente fácil, ha podido sin embargo adquirir una grande agilidad, y prestarse admirablemente á todas las inflecciones y adornos tanto del género gracioso como del patético....

Y en cuanto á improvisar cantando á Rossini, poseer la energia de *García* y la abundancia de adornos de *Velluti*, ciertamente es un milagro que no nos habria ocurrido pedir.

⁹⁵ *El Sol*, November 20, 1828:

...Ahora bien, aunque la señora Malibran hubiese podido aprender por el estilo moderno, su padre, que quiso que su hija fuese una profesora profunda y fundamental, la hizo pasar per ignem et aquam, y la encajó seis años de escalas y solfeos, segun se asegura y no lo estraño, porque él aprendió sin duda en Sevilla por ese método, como se deja conocer en su extraordinaria ejecucion, glosas, arpeggios y trinos y en sus composiciones. Yo pues, creo que será una delicia oír la cantar,



As in Madrid and New York, he was escaping complete chaos in the theater. An article, dated November 19, 1828, lamented the loss of García, now slipping through the fingers of the devotees in Mexico (the theater had been closed for forty-five days).

What judgment will be made of the enlightenment and good taste of Mexicans when it is found out that, having among us the famous García, who is still yearned for in Paris, the teacher of La Malibran, the theater remains closed?⁹⁶

Accompanied by a military escort, García, Joaquina, and their daughter Pauline left Mexico City for Veracruz sometime toward the end of November.⁹⁷ During this trip occurred the oft-cited incident of his being attacked by a band of brigands. Although not mentioned in contemporary Mexico City newspapers, two Frenchmen, Blanchard and Dauzats, writing in 1839,⁹⁸ claimed that the attack took place at the foot of Malinche and Piñal mountains. The exact spot was without doubt pointed out to them by their guide, D. Calisto Zaragoza. The attack had, after ten years, already become part of the local folklore. Blanchard and Dauzats describe the scene vividly and give an idea of the poor condition of the road.

The route is mountainous after leaving Nopaluca, and trees replace the aloes. We had on our right⁹⁹ the tall mountain Malinche¹⁰⁰ which slopes gradually downward to the road that passes at its base. Then, rising boldly on the opposite side, there appears the mountain *Piñal*. This mountain is covered with fir trees, from which its name is derived.

especialmente siendo tan sobresaliente en la parte cómica, como pinta el artículo, y yo había oído decir: deseo lograr el gusto de oírlo y espero conseguirlo, acaso al regreso de su padre á esta capital.

⁹⁶ *El Sol*, November 19, 1828:

¿Qué juicio harán de la ilustración y buen gusto de los mexicanos, cuando sepan que teniendo entre nosotros al insigne García, por quien aun suspiran en París, al maestro de la Mila-breau [sic], nuestro teatro está cerrado?

⁹⁷ His departure was probably sometime after this letter (November 19, 1828) but before the revolution of the Acordada (November 30, 1828).

⁹⁸ P. Blanchard and A. Dauzats, *San Juan de Lúa ou Relation de l'expédition française au Mexique, sous les ordres de M. le Contre-Amiral Baudin* (Paris: Gide, 1839).

⁹⁹ Blanchard and Dauzats travelled from Veracruz to Mexico City; García enroute to Veracruz, had the mountain on his left.

¹⁰⁰ A footnote in the original states: "Tradition says that Hernán Cortés gave the name of his mistress to this mountain; thus

it was in this pass formed by the two mountains that the celebrated tenor García, father of Madame Malibran, of glorious and sorrowful memory, was despoiled by a band of robbers of his economic fruits; not content with stealing his money, they forced him to sing one of his favorite airs; one would not have expected to find a music-lover among robbers on the plains of America!

It is in this pass that one sees all the carelessness of the Mexican administration in making highways. During the time of Spanish domination, this route was one of the most beautiful in Mexico. Now there remains no more of it than uncomfortable and useless debris. Every twenty feet there is a row of stones, pounded into the earth, that used to serve to retain the gravel of the road's surface. The gravel has disappeared, carried away by winter rains and torrents that come down from the Piñal mountain although the rows of stones have resisted completely. The earth, badly eroded by the water, forms ruts, in which the wheels of a carriage are caught and roll with effort until they run into the rows of stones and are aroused from their lethargic pace by a violent chaos. This is repeated periodically at very short intervals and is, certainly, one of the most exhausting aspects of the trip.¹⁰¹

it was that his mistress was named Malinche and not Marina, unless this last name was substituted by Cortés for the Indian name." [p. 128: "La tradition dit que Hernán Cortés donna le nom de sa maîtresse à cette montagne; ainsi donc sa maîtresse se nommait Malinche et non Marina, à moins que ce dernier nom n'ait été substitué par Cortés au nom indien."]

¹⁰¹ P. Blanchard and A. Dauzats, 128-129 [partially quoted in Olavarría y Ferrari, 249]:

La route est montueuse en sortant de Nopaluca, et les arbres remplacent l'aloës; nous avons à notre droite la haute montagne de Malinche, qui s'abaisse graduellement jusqu'à la route qui passe au pied, et s'élevant tout à coup du côté opposé, d'une manière hardie, forme la montagne du *Pinal*; cette montagne est couverte de sapins d'où son nom est dérivé.

C'est dans ce défilé formé par les deux montagnes, que le célèbre ténor Garcia, père de madame Malibran, de glorieuse et douloureuse mémoire, fut dépouillé par une bande de voleurs, du fruit des économies qu'il avait faites pendant un long séjour à Mexico; non content de lui dérober son argent, ils le forcèrent à leur chanter un de ses airs favorés; on ne se serait guère attendu à trouver des mélomanes parmi les voleurs des savannes de l'Amérique!

C'est dans ce défilé que se montre toute l'incurie de l'administration mexicaine, en fait de grands chemins. Du temps de la domination espagnole, la route était une des plus belles du Mexique, maintenant il n'en reste plus que des débris plus incommodes qu'utiles; de vingt en vingt pieds une chaîne de cailloux roulés, profondément entrés dans la terre, servait à retenir les pierres brisées qui formaient le rempli; les pierres brisées ont disparu, emportées par les pluies d'hiver et les torrents qui descendent de la montagne du Pinal; les chaînes de cailloux ont résisté entièrement; la terre, profondément sillonnée par les eaux,



If the robbery took place between the mountains of Malinche and Piñal, then Paulin Richard's assertion that it occurred at a place called Tepeyahualco,¹⁰² must refer to the plain of Tepeyahualco,¹⁰³ rather than the village of the same name, some 70 kilometers farther along the road to the northeast.

García's granddaughter, recounting the family folklore as told to her by Pauline Viardot-García in 1908, stated that Joaquina Briones recognized the captain of their escort among the blackened faces of the band of robbers.¹⁰⁴ This was not out of the question. Attacks along the road to Veracruz were notorious¹⁰⁵ and the stark reality of government connections was brought to attention in the famous case of Col. Juan Yañez, assistant to president Santa Anna. At the time he was apprehended in 1835, it was estimated that he had been involved in crime around Puebla for some 14–16 years.¹⁰⁶ As for García: his high salaries had been begrudged from the beginning and the robbery would have easily been

construed as an act of heroic patriotism by Santa Anna's supporters.

To whatever extent the anecdotes about García's misadventure express fact or fiction, he nonetheless left Mexico at a supremely dangerous moment. It should be remembered that such a robbery was no isolated incident; when García left, fighting and military movement were endemic all along the road to Veracruz.

Throughout the early part of 1829, the revolution in Mexico made headlines in Paris. An extract from *El Censor* of Veracruz, December 12, 1828, was published on the front page of *Le Moniteur Universel* on February 27, 1829. It gives a vivid portrayal of the anti-Spanish riots in Mexico at the time García escaped:

EXTERIOR.
MEXICO.

Veracruz, December 12th

The *Censor*, newspaper of this city, has published an account of the deplorable events that happened in Mexico from November 30th until December 6th. Here are the details:

*Mexico, November 30th.*¹⁰⁷—Today, at nine-thirty in the evening, a cannon was shot onto the main plaza; at this signal, drums were sounded in all the barracks and all troops faithful to the government were gathered next to the palace. These and other measures were motivated by the fact that this very night General José-María Lobato and the colonels Santiago, García, Eugenio Tolsa, and the Marquis de la Cadena, with the active battalion of Tres-Villas, the first battalion of militiamen of this capital, two companies of permanent artillery, and several soldier officers of the other corps, declared themselves in favor of Santa Anna. At the head of these forces, which raised about 800 men, they have taken hold of La Acordada,¹⁰⁸ the citadel and San-Diego, as well as all of the artillery and munitions depots.

December 1st.—Today a junta of war took place and we were assured that, following the resolutions adopted there, the opposing party has been enjoined to surrender, with the threat of treating them as enemies of the country if they fail to lay down their arms. The president published today a proclamation which was widely distributed. Churches, workshops, and stores are boarded up, and Spaniards from the Peninsula locked themselves in their houses without daring to show themselves in the street, nor even to put their heads out of their balconies.

forme des ornières, dans lesquelles les roues des voitures s'engagent et roulent avec effort jusqu'à ce que, recontrant les chaînes de cailloux, elles sortent de cette allure léthargique par un cahos violent, qui répété périodiquement à de très-courts intervalles, est certainement une des choses les plus fatigantes de la route.

¹⁰² Richard, 174. MacKinlay [*García the Centenarian* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1908), 92] gives "Tepeyahualco [sic], in the valley of Río Frio." Manuel Payno (1810–1894), in a chapter entitled "La ópera en el monte" in the third volume of his *Los bandidos de Río Frio*, describes an attack on a troupe of Italian opera singers from the Teatro Principal in which the bandits claim an open-air performance of arias as their bounty.

¹⁰³ This plain is described by Blanchard and Dauzats [p. 124].

¹⁰⁴ Louise Héritte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, trans. from the German MS and arranged by E. S. Buchheim (London: Mills and Boon Ltd., 1913), 3.

¹⁰⁵ In a letter of January 28, 1829, a month after the attack on García, and a week after he had left the country for France, the governor of Puebla, Patricio Furlong, specifically urged General José Joaquín de Herrera to place military protection at San Martín Tsemelucan, Nopalucan, Tepeyahualco, and Acatzinco. Herrera replied affirmatively on January 29, 1829. [Both letters appeared in *El Patriota* (Puebla), February 4, 1829.]

¹⁰⁶ *Extracto de la causa formada al ex-coronel Juan Yañez y Socios, por varios asaltos y robos cometidos en poblado y despoblado, que para satisfacción del público dan a luz los fiscales que la han instruido* (México: Imprenta de Galván, 1839), 15; facsimile in Tomás de Castro and Antonio Alvarado, *Los Verdaderos Bandidos de Riofrio* (México: Ediciones y Distribuciones Hispánicas, 1987).

¹⁰⁷ Incorrectly given as 30 décembre in the original.

¹⁰⁸ La Acordada was a prison and munitions depot. The name derives from a Mexican brotherhood founded in 1710 as a means of protection against highwaymen.

At the entrance to the plaza, guns [*des pièces de 4*] were positioned; the towers of the cathedral were occupied, and they expressly refrained from ringing the bells; it seemed as if we had been transported to Good Friday.

December 2nd.—This morning, at nine o'clock, all of the officers who were confined in the prison of the Inquisition managed to escape; but they were arrested by the soldiers of the guard, who were on their trail. The advance posts of the government occupy the barracks of the cavalry, the house of Count del Valle and the Convent of St. Francis. The opposition party has placed a cannon [*de six*] at the entrance of the promenade of the Alameda, as well as the batteries that it established in this locale and at San Diego.

At noon, the general, Don Vicente de Filisola,¹⁰⁹ left the palace with a division. Taking charge of the cannon that the opposite party had placed on the promenade, they exchanged fire at all defense points, and from one part to another, they engaged in a terrible fusillade which lasted until nightfall.

The churches, the workshops, the stores, houses of commerce, still remain closed: everything presents a somber and frightening picture.

December 3rd.—Before six in the morning, combat was renewed: it has continued up to this moment (seven in the evening). The grenades and the cannonballs of the opposition party, which are of a large caliber, have caused great damage in the city, but especially to the façade of the palace, to the house of Count del Valle and to the Convent of Saint Francis.

December 4th.—At five o'clock in the morning, the partisans of Santa Anna recommenced the combat, and it continued with much activity until around noon; then the opposition party succeeded in taking control of the capital with the help of the innumerable populace which began undertaking five hours of pillage. In effect, at two o'clock in the afternoon, this mob began to sack the *Parián*,¹¹⁰ principal depot of the treasury, and, after taking hold of everything to be found, it moved towards the shops and warehouses already doomed to pillage. These disorders reduced to poverty more than 500 Mexican families which moments beforehand basked in opulence.

These excesses continued during the entire night: all of the atrocities, all of the evils which a city in the state of siege might endure took place and lasted until morning. More than 800 victims were counted.

December 5th.—Today the government of the rebels

¹⁰⁹ General Don Vicente de Filisola (1785-1850) joined Iturbide in 1821. At the latter's fall, Filisola called the Congress of Guatemala and declared Independence in 1823.

¹¹⁰ This enormous seventeenth-century building was destroyed in 1843 on the orders of General Santa Anna [Manuel Rivera Cambas, *México pintoresco, artístico, y monumental* (México: Editora Nacional, 1880), 118-19].

adopted measures to re-establish order as much as possible. The bakeries and stores where foodstuffs are sold were open, and on all of the balconies were placed white flags as a sign of peace and confidence.

Two ministers, several deputies and senators, some generals, officers of all ranks, and two hundred cavalry soldiers managed to escape from the town. Their destination is unknown.

December 6th.—The rebel leaders have made public a proclamation in which the Mexicans are congratulated for the acts which have covered their country with bereavement, this country which still has enough courageous sons to avenge the horrors to which it has just been witness.¹¹¹

Many more articles followed, describing the grim situation in Mexico and the plight of the Span-

¹¹¹ *Moniteur Universel*, February 27, 1829:

EXTÉRIEUR.
MEXIQUE.

Véra-Cruz, le 12 décembre.

Le Censeur, journal de cette ville, publie le récit des évènements déplorables qui se sont passés à Mexico, depuis le 30 novembre jusqu'au 6 décembre. En voici les détails:

«*Mexico, 30 novembre*

«Aujourd'hui, à neuf heures et demie du soir, un coup de canon a été tiré sur la grande place; à ce signal, les tambours se sont fait entendre dans toutes les casernes, et les troupes fidèles au gouvernement se sont réunies auprès du palais. Ces mesures et d'autres de la même nature étaient motivées sur ce que cette nuit même de général don José-Maria Lovato et les colonels Santiago, Garcia, Eugène Tolsa et le marquis de la Cadena s'étaient déclarés en faveur de Santa-Anna, avec le bataillon actif de Très-Villas, le premier bataillon de miliciens de cette capitale, deux compagnies d'artilleurs permanens, et plusieurs officiers soldats d'autres corps. A la tête de ces forces, qui s'élevaient à-peu-près à 800 hommes, ils se sont emparés de la Cordada, de la citadelle et de San-Diégó, ainsi que de tout le parc d'artillerie et des munitions.»

Du 1^{er} décembre.—«Aujourd'hui a eu lieu une junte de guerre, et on assure que par suite des déterminations qu'on y a adoptées, on a sommé le parti contraire de se rendre, avec menace, dans le cas où il ne déposerait pas les armes, de le traiter comme ennemi de la patrie. Le président a publié aujourd'hui même une proclamation qui a été répandue avec profusion. Les églises, les ateliers, les boutiques sont murées, et les Espagnols de la Péninsule sont renfermés dans leurs maisons sans oser se montrer dans les rues, ni mettre la tête à leurs balcons.

«A l'entrée de la place, on a braqué des pièces de 4; les tours de la cathédrale ont été occupées, et on a défendu expressément de sonner les cloches; il semble que nous soyons transportés au vendredi-saint.»

Du 2.—Ce matin, à neuf heures, tous les officiers, qui étaient enfermés dans la prison de l'*Inquisition*, sont parvenus à s'évader; mais ils ont été arrêtés par les soldats de la garde, qui se sont attachés à leurs pas. Les postes avancés du gouvernement occu-



iards.¹¹² An article in *Le Moniteur Universel* on February 4, 1829, mentioned 500 Spaniards having left with an escort. Another, on March 7, 1829 (news of January 7, Mexico), reported that a convoy of Spaniards fleeing Mexico City enroute to Veracruz was attacked near Puebla early in January and robbed of 200,000 dollars.¹¹³ The coverage of the

same event in the *Journal des débats* specifies that the convoy, which arrived in Veracruz on January 9, was robbed by the 7th regiment, which served as its escort.¹¹⁴

According to José Tornel y Mendivil only a portion of the 7th regiment was carried away by holiday spirit on the night of December 24 and went out on a shooting spree. The various commanding officers thought that a mutiny against the constitutional government had arisen.

pent la caserne des gendarmes, la maison du comte de Valle et le couvent de Saint-François. Le parti opposé a placé un canon de six à l'entrée de la promenade d'Alameda, outre les batteries qu'il a établies en cet endroit, ainsi qu'à San-Diego.

A midi, le général don Vincent de Filisola sortit du palais avec une division, il s'empara du canon que le parti contraire avait fait placer sur la promenade; on en vint aux mains sur tous les points de défense, et de part et d'autre s'engagea un feu terrible qui se prolongea jusqu'à l'entrée de la nuit.

Les églises, les ateliers, les boutiques, les maisons de commerce, restent toujours fermés: tout présentent un aspect sombre et effrayant.

Du 3.—Avant six heures du matin, le combat s'est engagé de nouveau: il a continué sans interruption jusqu'à ce moment (sept heures du soir). Les grenades et les boulets du parti opposé, qui sont de gros calibre, ont causé d'assez grands ravages dans la ville, mais surtout à la façade du palais, à la maison du comte de Valle et au couvent de Saint-François.

Du 4.—A cinq heures du matin, les partisans de Santa-Anna ont recommencé le combat, et il s'est prolongé avec beaucoup d'activité jusqu'au-delà de midi; alors le parti contraire est parvenu à s'emparer de la capitale avec le secours de l'innombrable populace qu'animait la promesse de cinq heures de pillage. En effet, à deux heures de l'après-midi, cette populace commença à saccager le Parian, dépôt principal du trésor, et, après s'être emparée de tout ce qui s'y trouvait, elle se dirigea vers les boutiques et les magasins qu'elle avait déjà voués au pillage. Ces désordres ont réduit à la mendicité plus de 500 familles mexicaines qui peu de momens auparavant jouissaient de l'opulence.

Ces excès se sont prolongés pendant la nuit entière: toutes les atrocités, tous les maux que peut éprouver une ville prise d'assaut ont eu lieu et ont duré jusqu'au matin. On compte plus de 800 victimes.

Du 5.—Aujourd'hui, le gouvernement des rebelles a adopté des mesures pour rétablir l'ordre autant que possible. Les boulangeries et les boutiques où l'on vend des comestibles ont été ouvertes, et sur tous les balcons on a placé des rideaux blancs en signe de paix et de confiance.

Deux ministres, plusieurs députés et sénateurs, des généraux, des officiers de tous rangs, et deux cents soldats de cavalerie sont parvenus à se sauver de la ville, on ignore sur quel point ils se sont dirigés.

Du 6.—Les chefs des rebelles ont publié une proclamation dans laquelle on félicite les Mexicains des faits qui ont couvert leur patrie de deuil, cette patrie qui a encore assez d'enfants courageux pour venger les horreurs dont elle vient d'être témoin.

¹¹²The story first appeared in the *Journal des débats* on February 22, 1829. This article also gave a count of 800 dead in the "Revolución de la Acordada." García escaped just in time.

¹¹³*Le Moniteur*, March 7, 1829.

Taking advantage of the confusion, the guard of the forts sacked the convoy, that had not been kept in safety because Colonel Rincón was not able to situate opportunely in Tepeyahualco the escort that the Commanding General of Puebla [José Joaquín Herrera] had asked. The troops of the seventh cast a stain upon their flag of the sort that can never be cleansed, because if it is tolerable to adopt a political party, it is not tolerable to commit crimes reproved by society.¹¹⁵

That the convoy arrived at all was regarded as extraordinary by the people of Veracruz:

Interior: Veracruz, January 11, 1829.

At three in the afternoon, the day before yesterday [January 9], the convoy entered the town, escorted by the valiant second battalion (a permanent squadron of this town) and a cannon (*pieza de a cuatro*) with corresponding crew. A considerable group of the virtuous Veracruz population came out to applaud the arrival of the worthy military members of the convoy, with the most sincere demonstration of the joy that overflowed in their souls.¹¹⁶

Could García have been a part of the convoy robbed by the guards of the seventh regiment? Travelling time from Mexico City to Veracruz

¹¹⁴*Journal des débats*, March 7, 1829:

Le convoi qui était à Puebla nous est arrivé le 9 courant, après que les troupes du régiment n° 7, qui lui servaient d'escorte, eurent enlevé environ 250,000 piastres fortes (1,250,000), dont la perte à été répartie à raison de 16 5/8 pour cent sur la totalité.

¹¹⁵Tornel y Mendivil, 418.

¹¹⁶*Espíritu público*, January 21, 1829:

Interior

Veracruz 11 de enero de 1829

A las tres de la tarde de antier entró en esta plaza la conducta, escoltada por el valiente batallón núm. 2, un piquete del escuadrón permanente de esta plaza, y una pieza de á cuatro con su correspondiente dotacion. Un grupo considerable del virtuoso pueblo veracruzano salió á felicitar la llegada á los dignos militares del convoy, con las demostraciones mas sincéras del júbilo que inundaba sus almas.



was between 22 and 31 days, depending on weather conditions.¹¹⁷ If García left Mexico City at the end of November, given possible delays caused by weather, the attack, and other complications resulting from the revolution, it is not out of the question that he would have arrived in Veracruz on January 9. On January 22, 1829, he sailed from Veracruz on the French packet no. 4, with his wife, daughter and sixty-four other Spaniards.¹¹⁸

Apart from García's financial failure and the terrifying circumstances of his departure, what were the net results of his Mexican visit? As in New York, he left behind memories of a high standard of performance as well as a repertoire new to Mexico. He would later even speak affectionately of Mexican musicians, saying, "My troupe in Mexico, I could have, without fear, presented to the Paris public, which would not have found them unworthy of itself."¹¹⁹ His viewpoint of the visit appeared at the end of 1829 in an article on the Mexican theater, which so far as ticket management was concerned, he found to be superior to that of Paris:

One does not often speak in Europe about the lyric theater of Mexico; it is probable that its splendor has fallen considerably since Monsieur García, director and composer, professor of voice and declamation, stage manager and first tenor of this establishment, left America. This talented master formed some individuals for the stage and instrumentalists who could hold their own in a finale of Rossini. Two women, above all, stood out among the numerous natives who embraced the theatrical career. These brave Mexicans, oftentimes themselves the subject of opera librettos,¹²⁰ can now get their revenge, and whiten their faces to represent, in their turn, European characters. In *Otello*, for example, the Mexican *prima donna* smeared her face with white, while the tenor García dove into a pot of black. And then, as bad luck would have it, the excessive heat of the stage caused an abundant flow of perspiration, the actors lost their makeup and Desdemona appeared as the *Moresque* of Venice. The principal operas of Rossini, some works written by Monsieur García, did certainly brighten the

¹¹⁷ Sergio Florescano Mayet, *El Camino México—Veracruz en la época colonial* (Veracruz: Universidad Veracruzana, Centro de Investigaciones Históricas, 1987), 106.

¹¹⁸ *Espíritu público*, Tuesday, February 3, 1829.

¹¹⁹ Richard, 174:

«Ma troupe de Mexico, j'aurais pu sans crainte la montrer au public de Paris qui ne l'aurait pas trouvé indigne de lui».

¹²⁰ For example, *Les Mexicains*, performed at the Ambigu-Comique, May 18, 1819; or Spontini's *Fernand Cortés*, premiered November 28, 1809.

days of some Mexican *dilettanti*.¹²¹ Musical spectacles are now frequented by high society; their zealously and high ticket prices cause the receipts to be excellent.

I don't plan to impress the reader with the musical prowess of the American virtuosos; I do not propose them as models for our young performers, even though *Maestro* García highly praises the aptitude and intelligence of his students; but it might be useful to make known the customs of the people of another world. I like to believe (while one can still find here in the empire of the Sun, or its environs, some manifestations of greatness) that we are in an enlightened century and country. This is how it is: In the theater of Mexico, all of the seats bear a number and are not available to just any theater-lover, *dilettante*, or customer, unless he presents a ticket with the corresponding number. In this way, there are never mobs at the door. Everyone arrives early or late, according to his pleasure or as his needs may require.

One comes to a performance as on a stroll, without hurry, because one is certain of being admitted (why rush if one is sure of a place?). The tribulations, the tumult, the seditiousness of an unruly *queue* which turns over barriers and breaks windows; the cold, the heat, the wind, the rain which one has to endure while waiting two hours at the door, followed by a third hour once one is actually inside the theater; disputes for the "saved" places, torn clothes, jabs in the side, watches and shawls snatched at the moment when the crowd is jammed in front of the door; the ladies' cries of despair which throw a pall on this palace of entertainment; the sabres or rifles which the soldiers thrust under the nose or in the stomach of a theater-lover at the moment when they want to dash into the temple of Euterpe or Thalia; all of these dangers do not surround the theater of Mexico. These Indians, too long called barbarians, these subjects of Moctezuma, of a king who didn't even have a buffoon or a bagpipe at his court, while our sovereigns had complete comic troupes and virtuosos; these Mexicans are now more advanced than we from the standpoint of theatrical decorum.

We lay siege to an opera house, one must mount an attack and make several attempts to pass through the breach in the enemy line. Not everyone has a bellicose temperament and the thirst of conquest does not draw all of the *dilettanti*. Many remain far from the battlefield; they would come to the *rendezvous* if by showing a protective number they could take their place as if a member of parliament (without the rigor of military law). I know well enough that the directors of spectacles want the orchestra seats to be unpleasant and prepare tortures for the parsimonious spectators in order to encourage

¹²¹ *Dilettanti* was the term by which the fanatic Italian opera lovers of Paris were known.



them in a most urgent manner to cross the frontier of the prime seats. This policy is perhaps well reasoned to a certain point, but the person who carries 24 francs a month for his theater budget, will not give himself this pleasure except every fortnight, if the pitfalls which surround your theater oblige him to take refuge in a box. Moreover, all the fashionable crowd tend to go to the most expensive places, and they go to the most uncomfortable: it suffices that one pay double or triple mostly because it is indispensable to show off oneself. The orchestra [parterre] and the galleries would easily fill up in a moment could they be entered without peril. An elderly person doesn't know how to defend himself from fisticuffs nor how to push with hips and elbows; a very young man, or a boy would also be too greatly disadvantaged in this struggle. The crowd rushes headlong into the middle of the parterre, and the firstcomers, sitting in the first rows, guard the places to their right and left for their friends, or to reserve themselves a place to facilitate their movements. The mob blocks the doors, one cannot penetrate into the enclosure, and most of these seats remain unoccupied. Were there reserved seating, these places would be occupied, for their numbers would be searched for and found.

Since one likes to prepare one's daily battleplan in the morning, if a reserved seat could be obtained [at that time] at the desk, a given spectacle would more often be assured a box-office success. The number of this seat would be kept 10 or 20 days (whatever) in a row by the same *dilettante* during the entire season. Free the theater-lovers from the tribulations of the door, and the loss of time caused by the long lines, and their zeal will pay back such a sign of affection and deference.

You have adopted the American method for writing, we eat finches [ortolans] *à la provençale*, let's imitate the Mexicans in their manner of attending the theater. It is truly indecent, I should say monstrous, that in a city such as Paris, where every day all the comforts of life are increasingly perfected, one has not yet thought of facilitating the workings of our theaters. Is it necessary to leap over the space which separates the gate of *Le Trône* from that of *Passy*? A cart will take you in a hop, skip and a jump for 5 *sous*. Whereas it is necessary to pay 3 francs and 60 cents to stand around waiting and to knock on the door for 2 hours in order to leave the cage (like sheep) where the troupe of theater-goers has let themselves be locked in each evening.¹²²

¹²² *Journal des débats*, November 12, 1829:

On ne parle pas souvent en Europe du théâtre lyrique de Mexico; il est probable que sa splendeur est considérablement déchu depuis que M. Garcia, directeur et compositeur, professeur de chant et de déclamation, régisseur et premier ténor de cet établissement, a quitté l'Amérique. Cet habile maître avait formé des sujets pour la scène et des symphonistes qui ne restaient point en arrière dans un finale de Rossini. Deux femmes

Had it not been for the political problems, Garcia would probably have remained longer in Mex-

surtout s'étaient distinguées parmi les nombreux indigènes qui avaient embrassé la carrière théâtrale. Ces braves Mexicains, tant de fois mis en scène par les faiseurs d'opéras, prennent maintenant leur revanche, et se blanchissent la figure pour représenter à leur tour des personnages européens. Dans *Otello*, par exemple, la *prima donna* mexicaine se barbouillait de blanc, tandis que le ténor Garcia se plongeait dans le pot au noir. Et si, par malheur, une atmosphère trop chaude excitait une trop abondante transpiration, les deux acteurs perdaient leur masque, et Desdémone se montrait en Moresque de Venise. Les principaux opéras de Rossini, quelques partitions écrites par M. Garcia, ont fait les beaux jours des *dilettanti* de Mexico. Le spectacle musical est fréquenté par la haute société; son empressement et l'élévation du prix des places rendent les recettes excellentes.

Je n'entretiendrai point le lecteur des prouesses musicales des virtuoses américains; je ne les proposerai pas pour modèles à nos débutans, bien que le *Maestro* Garcia loue beaucoup l'aptitude et l'intelligence de ses élèves; mais il n'est point inutile de faire connaître les usages des peuples de l'autre monde: nous sommes dans le siècle et dans le pays des lumières, j'aime à le croire, cependant on peut en trouver de plus grandes encore dans l'empire du Soleil, ou dans sa banlieue. Voici le fait: Au théâtre de Mexico, toutes les places portent leur numéro, et ne sont livrées aux amateurs, *dilettanti*, consommateurs, si l'on veut, que sur la présentation de ce numéro. Par ce moyen, il n'y a jamais de foule à la porte, chacun arrive plus tôt ou plus tard, selon que le plaisir le presse ou qu'il est retenu par ses affaires.

On se rend au spectacle comme à la promenade, sans se hâter, parce que l'on est certain d'y être admis; pourquoi se presser quand on est sûr d'arriver? Les tribulations, le tumulte, les séditions d'une *queue* indisciplinée qui renverse les barrières et casse les vitres; le froid, le chaud, le vent, la pluie qu'il faut recevoir pendant deux heures à la porte, lesquelles sont suivies d'une troisième heure d'attente après que l'on est entré dans la salle; les disputes pour les places gardées, les habits déchirés, les côtes enfoncées, les montres, les schalls enlevés au moment où la foule est comprimée au détroit de la porte; les cris de désespoir des dames attristant un lieu de plaisir; les sabres, les carabines que les gendarmes mettent sous le nez et sur la poitrine des amateurs au moment où ils veulent s'élancer dans le temple d'Euterpe ou de Thalie; tous ces dangers n'environnent pas le théâtre de Mexico. Ces Indiens, trop long-temps appelés barbares, ces sujets de Montézuma, d'un roi qui n'avait pas seulement un polichinelle et une cornemuse à sa cour, tandis que nos souverains possédaient des troupes complètes de comédiens et de virtuoses; ces Mexicains sont maintenant plus avancés que nous sous le rapport de la civilisation théâtrale.

Nous assiégeons une salle de spectacle, il faut monter à l'assaut et passer quelquefois par la brèche. Tout le monde n'a pas l'humeur belliqueuse et la soif des conquêtes n'altière pas tous les *dilettanti*. Beaucoup de personnes se tiennent loin du champ de bataille; elles seraient exactes au rendez-vous si l'exhibition d'un numéro protecteur les faisait entrer dans la place comme parlementaires, et non pas avec toutes les rigueurs des lois militaires. Je sais bien que les directeurs de spectacles veulent



rendre le parterre malheureux, et préparer des tortures aux spectateurs parcimonieux afin de les engager d'une manière pressante à franchir la frontière des premières places. Cette politique peut être bien raisonnée jusqu'à un certain point, mais la personne qui porte 24 fr. par mois sur son budget pour les spectacles, ne se donnera ce plaisir que tous les quinze jours, si les écueils qui environnent votre salle l'obligent à se remiser dans une stalle. D'ailleurs tout ce qui est fashionable tient à aller aux places les plus chères, fussent-elles les plus incommodes: il suffit que l'on paie double ou triple pour qu'il soit indispensable de s'y montrer. Le parterre, les galeries se rempliraient aisément du moment qu'on pourrait les aborder sans péril. Un vieillard ne saurait se défendre à coups de poing, et pousser avec la hanche et les coudes; un très jeune homme, un enfant aurait trop de désavantage dans cette lutte. La foule se précipite au milieu du parterre, et les premiers venus, placés sur les premiers rangs, gardent des places à droite et à gauche pour leurs amis, ou pour se réserver un espace vide qui rende leurs évolutions plus faciles. La foule encombre les portes, on ne peut plus pénétrer dans l'enceinte, et la plupart de ces places gardées restent inoccupées. Leurs numéros les auraient fait chercher et trouver. On aime à dresser son plan de campagne le matin; le spectacle en ferait la clôture plus souvent, s'il était loisible d'envoyer prendre un numéro d'ordre au bureau. Ce numéro serait gardé dix jours, vingt jours de suite par le même *dilettante*, que dis-je? pendant toute une saison. Affranchissez les amateurs des tribulations de la porte, et de la perte de temps que leur cause une trop longue attente, et leur zèle saura récompenser une telle marque d'affection et de déférence.

Vous avez adopté la méthode américaine pour l'écriture, nous mangeons les ortolans à la provençale, imitons les Mexicains pour la manière de se colloquer au spectacle. Il est vraiment indécent, je devrais dire monstrueux, que dans une ville telle que

After twenty years away from Spain, he found himself in a country where he could speak his native language. The demand for operas in Spanish might well have stimulated him to compose new works such as those towards which he had aspired in his early years in Madrid. The weather (especially after his stays in England and New York) would have helped him avoid the "rheums" that plagued him in Europe. Most importantly, in Mexico García was king of the musical scene. Nonetheless, to save himself and family from being lynched by a mob, he departed—escaping at least alive although robbed of a major portion of his earnings.

Paris, où [l'on] perfectionne chaque jour tout ce qui peut ajouter aux commodités de la vie, on n'ait pas encore songé à donner un abord plus facile à nos salles de spectacles. Faut-il franchir l'espace qui sépare la barrière du Trône de celle de Passy? Un char à cinq sous vous enlève en trois sauts. Tandis qu'il faut payer trois francs soixante centimes, faire le pied de grue et frapper à la porte pendant deux heures pour sortir de la cage à moutons où le troupeau des *dilettanti* se laisse enclorre chaque soir.

¹²³Richard, 174:

García, malgré tous les témoignages d'intérêt et d'affection que lui prodiguaient les Mexicains, ne pouvait voir d'un oeil indifférent l'animosité toujours croissante des indigènes contre les Espagnols; prévoyant une prochaine catastrophe, il résolut de quitter les pays et de revenir en Europe.