

Manuel García (1775–1832)

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*Chronicle of the Life
of a bel canto Tenor
at the Dawn of Romanticism*

James Radomski

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For my Mother and Father

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Introduction

On Tuesday, 12 June 1832, the following notice of the death of Manuel García appeared in the Paris *Journal des Débats*: ‘Monsieur Manuel García, composer, actor, singer and professor of the most remarkable talent died yesterday. It is a great loss for the art of music.’¹

It is ironic that while García has truly gone down in history as a man of ‘remarkable talent’, the various aspects of that talent, by and large, have been remembered in an order directly opposite from that presented above. He is acclaimed first as the founder of the famous García school of singing, carried on by his son Manuel into the twentieth century; he is renowned as the exacting teacher of his daughters, Maria Malibran and Pauline Viardot—two of the most important singers of the nineteenth century; he is hailed as the tenor of Rossini’s *Otello* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*; he is remembered as a legendary stage presence whose *chaleur andalouse* in the title role of *Don Giovanni* made his the standard by which future ‘Don Juans’ would be judged for generations in Paris. Lastly, as if an afterthought, we are reminded that he was an extremely prolific composer—although none of his works are known or have ever received serious evaluation. But the distinguished composer and historian François-Joseph Fétis, in his tombstone discourse, honoured García first and foremost as a composer: ‘You understand, gentlemen, that I wish to speak of García as composer. Pleasant melodies, the deepest feeling for harmony, behold what one notes in his productions, or rather that which is there and which is not well enough known, for the greatest number of these works, and without doubt the best, remain unpublished.’²

Lamentably, what Fétis declared in 1832 remains true over 150 years later. With the exception of a collection of songs³ and one *tonadilla*⁴ all of García’s fifty-odd operas, numerous songs, symphonies, masses, and chamber works remain unpublished in the twentieth century.

¹ *Journal des débats* (12 June 1832). The notice errs in regard to the date of García’s death; he died on 10 June. It was written the previous day (Monday, 11th) inasmuch as it refers to the death as yesterday and the funeral as tomorrow, Tuesday. Clarification of the death date, which has been variously reported as 2, 9, or 12 June 1832 is given in Chapter 13.

² *Revue musicale*, 12 (1832), 159.

³ Manuel García, *Canciones y caprichos líricos*, ed. Celsa Alonso, ser. ‘Música Hispana’, (Madrid: Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 1994).

⁴ *El majo y la maja, tonadilla duo* (1798), ed. José Subirá, ser. ‘La tonadilla escénica’ (Madrid: Unión Musical Española, 1973). The complete work is also included in Subirá’s *La tonadilla escénica*, iii (Madrid: Tipografía de Archivos, 1928–30).

Yet, García's Spanish operettas were extremely popular in Madrid and his Italian operas were successfully performed in Naples and in Paris. His later Spanish operas were well received in Mexico and his largest French work, *La Mort du Tasse*, received favourable notices when premièred at the Paris Opéra. His Spanish songs with piano and guitar accompaniment graced the salons of Paris and were enjoyed by the likes of George Sand, Hector Berlioz, and Franz Liszt.

Twists of fate, the political situation in Spain, García's historical position (having been educated in the eighteenth century but having to compete with the innovations of Rossini), prejudice towards a Spaniard outside Spain, and an exhausting performance schedule as leading tenor in Europe, perhaps all contributed towards this neglect of his compositions.

Objectively, however, the works themselves, as well as the mere consideration of García's amazing multi-faceted contribution as virtuoso, teacher, director, and composer, suffice to place him among the most important figures of opera history. The present work, drawing upon correspondence, contemporary criticism, and eyewitness accounts, pieces together a chronicle of the life of the founder of a musical dynasty, with the hope of giving some glimpse into the workings of the career of a genius—with all its inevitable ups and downs—and with this, to capture the spirit of the world of opera at the dawn of the Romantic era.

I

Birth, Education, and Early Performances, 1775–1797

The operatic world in 1775, the year in which Manuel García was born, was still ruled by the spirit of the Enlightenment with ‘Nature’ and ‘Reason’ seen as the guiding forces in science, art, and literature, as well as in music. Gluck was at his height; his *Orphée et Euridice* and *Iphigénie en Aulide* had just premiered at Paris in 1774. Mozart’s *Entführung* would come seven years later, and *Don Giovanni* five years after that. The works of Mozart, revolutionary at the time, would be the inspiration of García’s youth.

Indeed, García was born on the eve of revolution: the American was imminent and the French soon to come. Rousseau’s *Contrat social* (1762) was coming to fruition. García, with one foot in the eighteenth century and another in the nineteenth century, would see tremendous social change in his lifetime, from which he did not remain aloof. His own profession, officially considered ‘despicable’ in Spain, would not have that stigma removed until revolution had rocked the country (1808), an experiment with democracy had been attempted and failed (1812), and the king, Fernando VII, finally granted the favour of officially declaring the actor’s life to be respectable (1819).¹

It is also significant that in the year 1775, Beaumarchais’s *Le Barbier de Séville* was premiered in Paris. García, born that very year in Seville, would have a hand in the popularization of the play in its Romantic incarnation as Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* from the world première in 1816 until García left the stage in 1829. Beaumarchais’s sequel, *Le Mariage de Figaro*, appeared in 1784, to be followed by Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro* in 1786. García would take part in the Madrid première of the latter in 1802. He is one of the few, if not the only singer who had the distinction of singing the role of the Count in both Rossini’s and Mozart’s operas.

García’s importance in opera history, however, was not as a ‘Classical’ singer, but as a Romantic. Some may find this assertion perplexing, inasmuch

¹ Letter to the president of the council, 2 Apr. 1819 (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional (Consejos), MS 11.408–10).

as García favoured a florid style, generally associated with the eighteenth century. But virtuosity was an important part of Romanticism—particularly in Paris where García flourished. And the virtuosity of the nineteenth century was distinct, imbued with a superhuman, almost mystical fire. García's artistry was of this sort, and he played, in the vocal sphere, a role akin to that of Paganini in the instrumental. Paganini's influence on the young Liszt is well known. But it is also not without significance (in considering the early Romantic musical scene) that García sang on the same programme that introduced the young Liszt to London in 1824 and that one of Liszt's early bravura pieces was a fantasy based on a Spanish song by García. Indeed, at the height of his career, in the 1820s, García was nearly the personification of Romanticism. His electrifying performances of *Otello* (Rossini) and *Don Giovanni* created a furore among the dilettanti of Paris. And although this spirit was carried on to even greater heights by his daughters, María Malibran and Pauline Viardot, the seeds were planted by García.

That García was to be the father of a Romantic operatic dynasty was not an accident. He was born at a time and place in history that gave him the tools (artistic, psychological, philosophical) he needed to represent his age—that is, to have the special quality that sets the artist apart from the rest of society while at the same time allowing him to reflect and interpret that society. For the artist generally is a complex character: one whose sensitivity, whose successes and failures, speak in a way larger than life. And the tensions that result from such a complexity were not absent in García. He was, after all, born in a monarchy, but lived through revolutions and democracy; he was born in Catholicism but ended in atheism; he was born into a period that extolled Gluck, but ended his life in one swept away by Rossini and Liszt. He began singing in church choirs, provincial and court theatres, but ended as perhaps the first truly international singing star, having conquered capitals of Europe as well as North America. To travel, thrilling the world with Italian opera, represented the spirit of the age, the spirit of revolution and change. This was also the spirit of a Romantic, of which García was one of the first—a pioneer.

But apart from his fortune in being born at the right time, García was born in the right place for the Romantic. While paying lip service to Voltaire, Rousseau, nature, and reason, the Parisians of the early nineteenth century were swept away by the mystery of exotic places—with a new understanding of 'nature' as the natural and the savage. Thus it was to be expected that Dominique Garat² would praise the 'Andalusian fire' (*chaleur andalouse*) of García's singing. Andalusia embodied everything that enlightened France was not and which it envied while despising.

² Renowned French tenor who taught at the Paris Conservatoire from 1796 to 1823.

García's artistry was imbued with the mystery of Spain, where the drama between the past and present, between life and death, between faith and reason was so vivid and so alluring. Although he left Seville at an early age, the cathedrals, the universities, the religious processions, the bullfights, the gypsies, all left their mark on García's character, and neither he nor his audiences would forget it. Romantic audiences were entranced by Spanish themes in operas from *Don Giovanni* to *Don Carlo*, not to mention *Il barbiere di Siviglia* or *Carmen*. But García did not just play the part, he *was* Spanish, and that very important aspect of his background did not go unnoticed by the cosmopolitan audiences of the early nineteenth century.

Early Years, Family, and Education, 1775–1791

Manuel del Pópulo Vicente Rodríguez was born in Seville on 21 January 1775. The baptismal record in the archive of the parish of Santa María Magdalena reads as follows:

In the city of Seville, on 23 January 1775, I, Dr Don Luis Antonio González Blanco, pastor of the parish of Seville, Santa María Magdalena of the aforementioned city solemnly baptized Manuel de el Pópulo Vicente who was born on the twenty-first of this month and year and is the legitimate son of Gerónimo Rodríguez and of Mariana Aguilar his wife. The godparents were Joseph Rodríguez and María de Aguilar, of this parish, to whom I explained Spiritual Parenthood and its obligations; dated as above.

—Dn. Luis Ant^o González Blanco, Pastor—seal³

It seems, thus, that García was not illegitimate and probably neither was he a gypsy, as has been suggested.⁴ The origin of the last name, García, remains an open question. It has been suggested that García, left fatherless at the age of 6, took the name of his stepfather.⁵ Since his father died in 1817, this is out of the question. The archivist at Santa María Magdalena, Don Enrique Hernández Alemany, who did considerable personal research on the García family, hypothesized that the name García came from the paternal grandfather, Diego Rodríguez-García (d. 12 January 1760).⁶ It must be kept in mind that usage of Spanish family names in the eighteenth century was not standardized to the modern 'father's name–mother's name' formula. It is quite possible that Diego was commonly known as 'García' and that this surname was passed on to his son and grandson.

³ Seville, Parroquia de Santa María Magdalena, Libro de bautismos 32, fo. 192.

⁴ Robert Rushmore, *The Singing Voice* (New York: Dembner Books, 1971), 220.

⁵ April Fitzlyon in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, vol. 7, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan, 1980), article for example.

⁶ Seville, Parroquia de Santa María Magdalena, Libro de bautismos 6, fo. 132^v.

We can certainly be sure that García was not an orphan. Parish records show that the father, Gerónimo Rodríguez-Torrentera, died on 16 March 1817⁷ and that the mother, Mariana Aguilar, died on 11 December 1821.⁸ They had married on 27 December 1766⁹ and their first child, Joseph María de Santa Rita, was born a year and a half later, on 7 June 1769. Eleven children were born to the couple between 1769 and 1791, but few lived to adulthood.¹⁰

The family lived at No. 3 of the Calle Cestería (in the vicinity of the present-day Calle Galera). This was a poor section of town, actually outside the walls of Seville. Gerónimo was a shoemaker,¹¹ a craftsman like others in the neighbourhood (a tailor, chocolate grinder, and cathedral musician lived nearby as listed in the incomplete 1794 census).¹² García later disassociated himself completely from his kin. Was this because the family was against his musical career? Or did García simply want to forget his humble origins as ambition drove him up the social ladder? Although the motive remains a mystery, García's actions in the matter do not. From early on he was not adverse to lying about his past. In his marriage certificate (1797), he claimed his parents were dead. Later García and his second wife fabricated a delightful story of how she had been a postulant in a convent until swept off her feet by his singing. It is not surprising, therefore, that his granddaughter, Louise Heritte-Viardot, in 1913, declared that García was the son of a lawyer.¹³ This was probably the story he had passed down.

Around the corner from García's home was the Augustinian monastery of Nuestra Señora del Pópulo whose imposing edifice dominated the neighbourhood. Founded in 1625,¹⁴ this was one of the most important

⁷ Seville, Parroquia de Santa María Magdalena, Libro de difuntos 11, fo. 62.

⁸ *Ibid.*, fo. 140^v.

⁹ Seville, Archivo del Obispado, Sección: Matrimonial, Serie: Sevilla y Pueblos expedientes Matrimonial. Legajo 3 (Año 1766) Letra G, Expediente de matrimonio: Gerónimo Rodríguez-Torrentera and Mariana Aguilar-Martínez. Witness: Pedro Arabia, 30 years old.

¹⁰ The baptismal records of Santa María Magdalena give the following birth dates: Joseph María de Sta. Rita, 7 June 1769 (book 32, fo. 25); Juana María de Sta. Rita, 24 June 1770 (book 32, fo. 49^v); María Josepha Florencia Antonia, 23 Feb. 1772 (book 32, fo. 89^v); Manuel del Pópulo Vicente, 21 Jan. 1775 (book 32, fo. 192); María del Amparo Gertrudis Rosenda Juana, 1 Mar. 1777 (book 32, fo. 244^v); Rita Gertrudis Joana Paula, 26 June 1779 (book 33, fo. 5^v); Salvadora Agustina Gertrudis Petronila, 31 Jan. 1781 (book 33, fo. 48^v); Salvador Vicente Cornelio Cipriano, 16 Nov. 1782 (book 33, fo. 87); Agustín Matheo Ruperto, 27 Mar. 1785 (book 33, fo. 164); María Luisa Josefa Romana, 29 Feb. 1788 (book 33, fo. 249^v); Josef María Julian, 16 Feb. 1791 (book 34, fo. 14).

¹¹ Seville, Parroquia de Santa María Magdalena, Padrón 2, No. 377.

¹² Seville, Archivo Municipal, section V, vol. 254.

¹³ Louise Héritte-Viardot, *Memories and Adventures*, trans. E. S. Bucheim (London, 1913; repr. New York: DaCapo, 1978), 1.

¹⁴ Fray Luis de Jesús, *Historia General de los Religiosos Descalzos del Orden de los Hermitaños del Gran Padre, y Doctor de la Iglesia San Augustin, de la Congregación de España, y de las Indias*, vol. ii (Madrid: Lucas Antonio de Bedmar, 1681), 62–6.

Augustinian monasteries in Spain.¹⁵ Not only was it an architectural focal point for the neighbourhood, but a religious and cultural one as well. It is certainly possible, if not likely, that here the young Manuel was first exposed to art music and perhaps even received his earliest education. In any event the significance of the monastery for García's family is clear from the Augustinian names which appear among the children: Agustín, Rita (an Augustinian saint), Pópulo.

Seville

Seville of the late eighteenth century was a city of sharp contrasts. Colonial wealth continued to be evident in the art and architecture, and the grandeur of the cathedral, churches, and public buildings, the lavish gold of the stunning altar *retablos*, are still to be seen. No longer extant for the perusal of the modern tourist, however, is the magnificence of the cathedral music that, for centuries, was every bit a match for the architecture. In the early nineteenth century, secularization and expropriation of Church lands and wealth by liberal government leaders made it impossible for music to be supported as in the past: the glorious musical tradition of Morales, Victoria, Guerrero—and many others—was plunged into a sharp decline from which it never recovered.

During García's youth, the cultural traditions of the cathedral and convents were still carried on, but were already being questioned by those espousing 'enlightened' liberal ideas imported from France. Indeed, the historian Francisco Aguilar Piñal signals 1775, the very year in which Manuel was born, as being of special importance in the development of liberalism in Seville:

The year 1775 has a particular importance in Sevillian history. It marked the culmination of a relevant process of 'enlightened' politics which could signify for Seville a brilliant economic, social, and cultural future. In the reborn theatrical life, the Sevillians could applaud the works of modern authors such as *La isla del amor*, a *zarzuela* by Ramón de la Cruz. The enlightened José Cevallos was named Rector of the University. The town council, in the hands of the erudite and indefatigable Count of Aguila, took charge of the new public Library of San Acacio. In the Alcázar is born the Patriotic Society, in which the most select of the nobility, the magistrate and the clergy operated. . . .¹⁶

In this year were also born in Seville the writers José María Blanco y Crespo (Blanco-White) and Alberto Lista. Both would later look back upon the formative years of their youth in Seville, recognizing the critical impact

¹⁵ The monastery was closed after the *desamortización* of 1836. It was subsequently used as a prison until converted to its present use as a market.

¹⁶ Francisco Aguilar Piñal, 'El Sevillano Alberto Lista', in *Temas Sevillanos*, segunda serie (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1988), 119.

of the city's cultural currents. Blanco White was thrust upon a tortuous spiritual journey which finally led to his leaving his country and religion. Lista was to be caught up, as journalist, in the political strife in Andalusia at the beginning of the nineteenth century before becoming known as one of Spain's most important educational reformers (he was named dean of the University of Seville in 1844 and Rector in 1847).¹⁷

To what extent did the conflicting religious and liberal elements of the Sevillian environment at the end of the eighteenth century have an impact on the early life of Manuel García? This struggle between tradition and liberalism may well have been the catalyst for García's decision to break away from home, leaving a permanent rift between the tenor and his family. Throughout his life, García's professional and family decisions reflected the liberal currents of the day.

But apart from political, philosophical, and religious influences, the Sevillian musical environment of his early years was crucial in moulding García, both as composer and performer. This musical environment contrasted the classical harmonic and polyphonic traditions of the cathedral (where Antonio Ripa¹⁸ was *maestro de capilla*) with the traditional Andalusian music (coloured by modal melodies and characteristic rhythms and ornaments) of the streets and cafés. García was well served by both his conservative education in the 'Classical' tradition and the spirit of Andalusian folk music. Although we think of him primarily as a singer immersed in art music, García continued playing the guitar and performing traditional Spanish songs through his final years in Paris. In fact, his role in popularizing such music among the Romantics was significant. The combination of such diverse elements (artistic and folk, patriotic and cosmopolitan, traditional and revolutionary) *in a single artist* appealed to the Romantics. George Sand, for example, in *Consuelo*, her novel inspired by the life of García's daughter, Pauline, curiously put into the mouth of her heroine (a Spanish opera singer) the following words:

[Consuelo] had sometimes whispered to Anzoletto . . . that she loved several of the barcaroles sung by the fishermen of the Adriatic, better than all the science of Padre Martini and Maestro Durante. Her mother's songs and boleros were a source of poetic life from which she never wearied in drawing inspiration.¹⁹

Consuelo, of course, is expressing none other than the thinly disguised philosophy of George Sand—such an extraordinary personality, from whom one can learn so much about the mentality of the Parisian Romantic. The blending of the folk with the artistic appealed to her, and

¹⁷ Piñal, 'El Sevillano Alberto Lista', 133.

¹⁸ Antonio Ripa y Blanque (c.1720–95) was appointed *maestro de capilla* of Seville Cathedral in 1768.

¹⁹ George Sand, *Consuelo: A Romance of Venice* (New York: A. Burt Co., 190?, repr. Da Capo Press, 1979), 356.

logically so. Virtuosity was the medium for art, but the soul of art was the free spirit of the artist. What better symbol of free spirit than the folk music of the Spanish gypsy? The blend of these (apparently) disparate traits was magic. All this George Sand saw in Pauline—but Pauline had inherited it from her father.

José Joaquín Mora, in the earliest biography of García (1825),²⁰ claimed that the tenor received his musical education from Antonio Ripa, *maestro de capilla* in the cathedral. García's name, however, neither appears among the lists of *seises* (a group of six select young boys who, to this day, not only sing but dance before the main altar of the cathedral) nor in any other capacity in the cathedral records.²¹

But another possibility exists regarding García's early musical education. Mora indicates that García was educated not in the cathedral, but in the *Iglesia Colegial* of Seville. Three collegiate churches belonged to the archdiocese of Seville at the time: Jerez, Osuna, and the church of San Salvador in Seville itself.²² Of these, obviously the most likely place of musical contact for García would be the latter. Although a certain Manuel García, employed as a singer in San Salvador, left the position on 1 May 1791,²³ his handwriting²⁴ seems not to correspond with a sample of the tenor's signature in 1798.²⁵ Still, 1791 was the year when Manuel del Pópulo García began singing in the theatre of Cádiz and so the departure from Seville in May of that year would be logical. At San Salvador, he could have studied with Juan Almarcha as claimed by Paulin Richard in the first substantial biography of García,²⁶ for Almarcha, who was a cellist as well as keyboardist²⁷ (and may have taught García the violin²⁸) was hired at San Salvador on 4 June 1779.²⁹

²⁰ José Joaquín de Mora, 'Manuel García', in *No me olvides* (London: Ackerman, 1825), 149–54.

²¹ Seville, Archivo de la Santa Metropolitana y Patriarcal Iglesia Catedral, Sección V: Patronatos (4. Colegio S. Isidoro), Libro 361.

²² Francisco Aguilar Piñal, *Historia de Sevilla: Siglo XVIII*, 2nd edn. (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1982), 289.

²³ Seville, Archivo del Obispado (San Salvador), Legajo 21, Actas Capitulares, 1791, fos. 299^v and 304.

²⁴ Seville, Archivo del Obispado (San Salvador) Legajo 399 (receipt for payment, 30 Apr. 1791).

²⁵ Madrid, Archivo de Protocolos, protocolo 21814, fo. 100^v.

²⁶ Paulin Richard, 'Notes biographiques sur Manuel Garcia', *La Revue musicale*, 12 (1832), 171.

²⁷ Seville, Archivo de la Santa Metropolitana y Patriarcal Iglesia Catedral, Autos Capitulares, 5 Dec. 1794, fo. 105.

²⁸ Marie-Pierre Pascal-Yves and Léon [Jacques-Victor] Escudier, *Études biographiques sur les chanteurs contemporains, précédées d'une esquisse sur l'art du chant* (Paris: Just Tessier, 1840), 28: 'He studied violin assiduously and devoted himself at the same time to the study of composition' ['Il étudia le violon avec assiduité et se livra en même temps au travail de la composition'].

²⁹ Seville, Archivo del Obispado (San Salvador), Legajo 21, Actas Capitulares, 1779, fo. 8.

All of García's early biographers (Mora, Richard, Fétis) mention the lack of theatre in Seville as a stimulus for his moving on to Cádiz. While theatre was not as important in Seville as in other cities of comparable size, it was sufficiently well established for García to have had his first exposure to it there. Indeed, García's first wife, Manuela Morales, who was also born in Seville, came from a theatrical family, and her father directed a company there as early as 1785.³⁰

In any event, frequent complaints from the clergy did not inhibit theatrical performances at Seville, whether professional or popular. Other entertainments flourished as well. Even in an empty lot next to the convent of Nuestra Señora del Pópulo an acrobatic troupe performed in 1783, soliciting the prior's complaint that the audience damaged the roof of the convent by climbing onto it in order to get a better view of the show.³¹ In all probability the 8-year-old Manuel was a spectator at this and similar events. The sense of fun, entertainment, and showmanship which to this day are considered part of the Sevillian character laid the foundation for the actor who years later would delight audiences in the salons of Paris with his boleros and *seguidillas*.

Cádiz, 1791–1797

According to Fétis, by 1791 García was in Cádiz where 'he was already well known as singer, composer and orchestral conductor'.³² While there is no documented evidence to support the precise year of 1791, it is certain that García did move to Cádiz at some time in the early 1790s and that he made his professional début there.

Cádiz, the 'little silver cup' (*tacita de plata*) as it is known, was the port of entry for ships returning from the New World and, therefore, a city of considerable economic and artistic activity. It reached a golden age in the eighteenth century, attested to by the magnificence of the treasures in the cathedral. This was by no means a plebian town in which Manuel García began his career. Cádiz was a city accustomed to splendour in the arts, the city for which Haydn's *Seven Last Words* had been commissioned. It

³⁰ Apart from the father, José Morales (born in Cádiz, the son of Josef de Aguirre y Loizaga, of Bilbao, and of Teresa Quirós, of Cádiz (Cádiz, Archivo Histórico Provincial, Protocolo (Cádiz) 3863, fos. 80–80^v)), both Manuela's mother, Manuela Pacheco (born in Seville, the daughter of Francisco Pacheco, of Palma de Mallorca, and Florencia de Osorno, of Seville (ibid.)) and older sister, María del Amparo Morales sang (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional (Consejos) 11.407–24). Manuela was born 20 Apr. 1776 and baptized in García's own parish, Sta. María Magdalena, on 23 Apr. 1776 (Seville, Parroquia de Sta. María Magdalena, Libro de bautismos, Libro 32, fo. 220^v).

³¹ Francisco Aguilar Piñal, *Sevilla y el teatro en el siglo XVIII*, Textos y estudios del siglo XVIII, no. 4 (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 1974), 174.

³² François Joseph Fétis, *Biographie universelle des musiciens et bibliographie générale de la musique*, 2nd edn., iii (Paris: Librairie de Firmin-Didot Frères, 1874), 403.

was, furthermore, a cosmopolitan city of liberal thought where the first constitutional congress would meet in 1812.

The wealth of Cádiz was not evident only in sacred ornament. The mark of secular splendour in the eighteenth century was the theatre and it is not surprising that Cádiz, during this time, boasted three theatres. The Teatro Principal, finished in 1781, was one of Spain's most elegant. Horseshoe shaped, it had four tiers with 346 orchestra seats, 31 boxes, 21 mezzanine seats, and 230 seats among the remaining three tiers.³³ The Coliseo de la Opera Italiana, built in 1739, had four tiers of 15 boxes each.³⁴ The other theatre, the Teatro Francés, was built around 1769. According to an English traveller, Richard Twiss, who visited Cádiz in 1773, this was the finest theatre outside France.³⁵

The glory of Cádiz, however, was starting to wane by the time García arrived in the early 1790s. Maritime wars waged against England and the beginnings of independence movements in the Americas took their toll on the city's economy. By the end of the century only the Teatro Principal was operating as is described in the account of the German traveller Frederick Fischer:

It may easily be imagined that such a town as Cádiz could not be without a theatre, which accordingly is larger and more commodious than at Madrid, though it makes no external appearance, being surrounded with other buildings. The internal distribution differs from that of other theatres in Spain, and approaches the French style. All the seats are numbered, and every one is obliged to occupy that expressed in his ticket.³⁶

Formerly there were at Cadiz a French and an Italian theatre; but since the present war began, the former has been shut up, and the latter united with the Spanish. The principal actors are Italians, whose pronunciation is excused in consideration of the fine airs they sing between the acts.³⁷

From Fischer's writing we obtain a valuable glimpse of the theatre in late eighteenth-century Spain. The presence of Italian opera and Italian

³³ Ricardo Moreno Criado, *Los teatros de Cádiz* (Jerez, 1975) 21 (from José María Rivas Perez, *Aproximación a la música en Cádiz durante el Siglo XVIII*, Cuadernos de la Cátedra, no. 1 (Cádiz: Fundación Municipal de Cultura, Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Cádiz, 1986), 21).

³⁴ Ricardo Moreno Criado, *Los teatros de Cádiz* (Jerez, 1975), 21 (from José María Rivas Perez, *Aproximación a la música en Cádiz durante el Siglo XVIII*, Cuadernos de la Cátedra, no. 1 (Cádiz: Fundación Municipal de Cultura, Excmo. Ayuntamiento de Cádiz, 1986), 26).

³⁵ 'The French theatre is extremely grand, large, handsome, and well illuminated, and the actors, singers, dancers, and musicians, were all capital performers: I esteem it to be the most magnificent, and the best furnished with actors of any French theatre out of France. I had before seen those of the Hague, Amsterdam, Brussels, Berlin, Dresden, and Vienna, all which are surpassed by this of Cadiz. The price of a pit ticket is about two shillings and three pence' (Richard Twiss, *Travels through Portugal and Spain, in 1772* (London: Robinson, Becket, & Robson, 1775), 280. Cited in Moreno Criado, *Los teatros de Cádiz*, 29).

³⁶ As will be seen in Chapter 11, theatres in France did not offer to reserve seating even well into the 19th cent. while those in Spain and Mexico did.

³⁷ Frederick Augustus Fischer, *Travels in Spain in 1797 and 1798, with an appendix on the method of travelling in that country*, trans. from the German (London: Longman & Rees, 1802), 301–2.

singers was notable, yet the native Spanish element (described below in another passage from Fischer) was ever-present. The mixture of these two elements occurs not only as regards the Italian arias sung between the acts of Spanish plays, but in the very music of the *sainetes* and *tonadillas*. *Sainetes* were skits, but the *tonadillas* were more substantial, something of a miniature opera which required singers of considerable ability. They were short theatre pieces filled with local colour, generally of a comic theme, for a small number of performers (frequently only two or three). *Tonadillas* were composed regularly by theatre staff musicians. They included arias, duets, trios, brief dialogue, perhaps some dance—all with orchestral accompaniment—and served as intermezzi between the more serious plays and operas on an evening's programme. In the *tonadillas* one hears what can often best be described as a mixture of Italian opera and flamenco. The charm of this 'sound' of eighteenth-century Spanish opera lies in its tendency to crystallize and refine the rustic sounds of the street for sophisticated audiences in the same way that the painter Velásquez had raised, aesthetically, the stature of peasant life in the previous century.

Fischer makes reference to the audience's preferences for *sainetes* and boleros. Such preferences were typical in Spain and one must keep in mind the popular, almost revue-like atmosphere surrounding the serious drama and opera. One indeed might attend a play by Voltaire or Shakespeare, or an opera by Paisiello or Cimarosa, in order to claim a place among society's élite—but the real entertainment (*per se*) took place in the intermezzi. The two forms of theatre (serious and light) were not incompatible to audiences of the time in the same way that opera and television situation comedies may not be incompatible to a modern audience. Whereas in the modern world the two are separated, however, in the eighteenth century they were presented side by side. This not only made an evening's performance stimulating, but also fostered artistic creativity: opera composers were helped to 'keep their feet on the ground' by the popular environment, and popular music was rooted in the Classical, composed and performed by the best musicians that society had to offer.

Generally, an evening's performance consisted of an opera and/or stage play, interspersed with short *tonadillas* or *sainetes* and often ending with a bolero. The challenge which García was to face as a young composer was how to combine the popular themes and sounds, which attracted the public, with his formal cathedral training in eighteenth-century harmony and counterpoint. This combination of styles was to be his hallmark not only as composer but also as singer and actor. After his Classical training, the young Manuel was toughened (to his great benefit) in the demanding life of the popular theatre in the same way that many of our own century's best film and stage actors learned their craft in vaudeville.

García's early Spanish theatrical experience would never be lost. In Paris, years later, he continued to compose and perform boleros, *seguidillas*, *tiranas*,

as well as other Spanish songs. Among all of the Spanish genres that were to spread throughout Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, however, most popular was the bolero (while Chopin did not compose *seguidillas*, he did compose a bolero). New at the end of the eighteenth century³⁸ and considered daring, if not *risqué*, the dance captured the flavour of the *majos* and *majas* as painted by Goya at the same time. Fischer's detailed description of the bolero brings to life the theatre of Cádiz at precisely the moment García was there:

But what chiefly attracts the inhabitants to the theatre are the little comedies called saynetes, which are somewhat licentious, and the lascivious dances called voleros; the former containing the chronicles as it were of scandal, and the latter portraying the mysteries of love.

When the play is ended, the stage is converted into a magnificent apartment, the orchestra again strikes up, the castanettes are heard, and a dancer and his partner come forth from opposite sides, each in the graceful andalusian costume, which seems invented for dancing, and dart toward each other, as if they had long been seeking each other. The lover seems about to embrace the object of his passion, who appears ready to throw herself into his arms; but she suddenly turns round, her partner half angry does the same, and immediately the music stops, generally in the middle of a bar. The art of the dancers consists in a rapid equal and neat poise, and stopping so accurately together as to seem at once rooted to the ground opposite to each other. They now appear undecided, but presently the music which begins again reanimates and quickens their motions. The lover now grown more ardent endeavours to express his desires, and his beloved receives him with more tenderness, her looks become more languishing, her bosom palpitates with more force, and she extends her arms toward him. Vain hope! too timid to meet him she flies off again, till a new pause gives them fresh courage.

The music now more lively gives wings to their feet, and inebriated with passion the lover again darts toward his mistress, who transported with similar sensations flies with ardour to meet him. They join their arms, the lips of the fair dancer open, and she seems ready to surrender at discretion. The music now gives louder and stronger sounds, a more rapid melody, and the motions of the dancers are redoubled. 'Tis a kind of intoxication of delight, and the same sensations seem to animate them both; each muscle is alive, and every pulsation accelerated, when suddenly the music stops, and the dancers at the same instant become motionless and disappear: for the curtain falls, and the illusion of the spectators is dissolved.

The climate, the vivacity, the beauty, and the agility of the inhabitants render Andalusia exclusively adapted to this dance. You should see it performed by a well-assorted couple, whose persons are only exceeded by their talents, and then you

³⁸ Richard Twiss, for example, writing in 1775, mentions performances in Madrid in 1772–3 ending with a fandango, rather than a bolero: 'Between the comedy and the farce, tonadillas are sung: these are cantatas for two, three, or four voices, the music of which is national and uncommon, and consists of three or four airs, set in different keys, and different movements. After this performance there is usually a fandango danced on the stage. A seguidilla is only a part of a tonadilla' (Twiss, *Travels*, 167).

would forget every thing of the kind you had seen before as tame and inexpressive. How can such a dance, which refers so strongly to a passion that animates the whole of nature, and which alone can counterbalance the selfish principle, not be preferred to all other amusements? I am confident I shall gratify you more by describing these dances than bull-fights, which are the common amusement at Cadiz as well as at Madrid.

There is indeed a series of engravings, in which in order to facilitate the learning of this dance all the motions and attitudes are represented in succession, entitled 'Laminas que manifiestan los varios pasos y mudanzas de las seguidillas, voleros, y los trages mas propios para ese bayle,' twelve sheets (if I am not mistaken), 4 reals each: sold by Escribano, Calle de las Carretas, with the music for the guitar and voice. Also several others under the title of 'Modo facil para aprender el ayre volero en la guitarra y arreglar la voz:' sold by Fernandez and Co.³⁹

Manuela Morales, García's first wife, was especially celebrated as a dancer of boleros and she, or her older sister Amparo, in all probability was the dancer witnessed by Fischer in 1797. At this time Manuela's career was flourishing and, with considerably more experience than García, she had by then made a name for herself and was regarded as a more valuable performer than he.

Manuela, with the advantage of having been born into an acting family, had made her *début* in Madrid as *dama octava* (i.e. eighth in rank among principal female actresses) in 1792. Because of dissatisfaction with the roles given them, the family moved to Barcelona in 1794.⁴⁰ Sometime after this they returned to Cádiz, the home of the father, José Morales. Although Morales has been dismissed as an only average actor,⁴¹ he seems rather to have been a performer of some importance, who not only sang and acted in comic roles in the *sainetes* and *tonadillas*, but also took part in stage plays, as evidenced by his performance in Calderón de la Barca's *Dar tiempo al tiempo*, given in Barcelona in 1794.⁴² Morales also had directing experience,⁴³ and probably gave professional advice to García and helped promote the young tenor's career. Their close relations, however, eventually turned sour, as a result of the secret marriage between García and

³⁹ Fischer, *Travels in Spain*, 302.

⁴⁰ The various listings in the *Diario de Barcelona* in 1794 mention the bolero being danced by 'la famosa Sra. Amparo Morales' (29 April); Manuela Morales is given as singing in a *tonadilla à 2* (23 April). Other performances of boleros and *tonadillas* only ambiguously mention 'la Sra. Morales'.

⁴¹ 'Morales, Manuela', in *Enciclopedia Universal Ilustrada*, xxxvi (Barcelona: Hijos de J. Espasa, Editores, 1924), 908.

⁴² *Diario de Barcelona*, 14 June 1794.

⁴³ An undated company list for the theatre of Seville gives Joseph Morales as *autor*, as well as *gracioso* . . . 'hace figurones y canta, de Cádiz'. On the same list, Manuela Pacheco is *graciosa de verso* as well as third *graciosa de cantado*. María del Amparo Morales, five years older than Manuela Morales, is listed as *graciosa de cantado* as well. Presumably Manuela was still too young to perform; thus dating the list probably somewhere between 1785 and 1795 (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Consejos*, II.407–24).

Manuela which took place on 8 May 1797 in the church of San Lorenzo in Cádiz.⁴⁴

Perhaps with parental wisdom, José and his wife, Manuela Pacheco, saw that the marriage was doomed—for they were bitterly against it. But the issue was more complicated than this: on the very day of the wedding, the parents filed a formal complaint with the notary Rafael Gil in Cádiz, protesting against García's unethical behaviour, not only in marrying their daughter against their will, but in extracting from them an unfair dowry as well.⁴⁵ The seriousness of their position is reflected in the fact that one month later when they drew up their will, Manuela Pacheco and José Morales reiterated their protest against García's action:

Likewise, we declare that at the time the expressed Manuela de Aguirre, our daughter, contracted matrimony, for which effect she was extracted judicially from our home, we found ourselves forced not only to give our consent, but also to surrender to her all of the jewelery and clothing of the theatre, whose value reached 91,024 *reales vellon*, under a receipt and dowry note which her husband had drawn up before Don Isidro Ciatica, scribe of His Majesty, which instrument, aside from being void for having been declared by a Royal Scribe in a town where there are Public Scribes, is also void because the aforementioned jewellery and clothing were received by our son-in-law as goods belonging to our daughter, something which is a direct transgression of the Law which prohibits a child from making his own that which he acquires while still a minor, and being under the power of the father, which application of the instrument we could not avoid because we were compelled to carry it out by our Judge-Protector of the Theatres to whom it was not proper to protest, since to have done so would have caused us serious harm. Nevertheless, now we declare before the undersigned Public Scribe this which has been made manifest, so that it may be made known and so that in due time the expressed amount may be brought to the attention of our daughter.⁴⁶

García's actions in this situation, while far from laudable, do reflect remarkable aspects of his character. To the end of his life he had no qualms about using legal means to achieve his ends. Sometimes this was appropriate, and even commendable: for example, his efforts later in demanding fair treatment of actors in Madrid and Mexico. But at other times, as in this case, it was plainly selfish. Although these dealings with his parents-in-law might be considered shocking in any age, when seen together with the pattern of similar actions later in his life, one can surmise that García acted almost self-righteously—with a hot-headed conviction that justice was being done.

⁴⁴ This date is confirmed by marriage indices in the archive of the Obispado de Cádiz where it appears as follows: 'Mayo de 97. En 8. Dⁿ Manuel Rodriguez conocido p^r Garcia, y Manuela Aguirre conocida por Morales.' A copy of the marriage certificate also concurs (Madrid, Archivo de la Villa, *Secretaría*, 2-479-9). Problems with the records in the parish of San Lorenzo are discussed in Chapter 13.

⁴⁵ Cádiz, Archivo Histórico Provincial, Protocolo (Cádiz) 3863, fos. 54–55^v.

⁴⁶ Protocolo (Cádiz) 3863, fos. 80–80^v.

He was, quite simply, an independently minded rebellious youth in a rebellious age. Furthermore, García was a temperamental artist, hardly immune from the egotistical pride to which many a *primo tenore* throughout history has been susceptible.

Were Manuela's parents unjust in their opposition to the marriage? Was it this lack of justice which motivated García's rash actions? Such impulsive—if not exaggerated—reactions to (at times misperceived) injustice were typical of García throughout his life and would make him many enemies.

Another, more despicable, motive presents itself, however. One suspects that García and Manuela were ambitious for their careers and that the dowry money would serve well in their move to the capital. One might even further question whether it was really Manuela that attracted García—or whether it was her dowry. The marriage would not last.

The simplest, and perhaps most likely, scenario, is that the marriage was the impulsive act of a young couple in a liberal environment. Certainly the plays in which they were acting abounded in scenes of amorous intrigue. Manuela and Manuel were caught in the spirit of the times and probably felt that 'the world was against them'. In their minds, the ruthless dealings with José Morales and Manuela Pacheco were justified for the sake of a passionate love.

García's first known extant work, the *tonadilla El majo y la maja* was performed by Manuela Morales and Manuel García the following year (1798) in Madrid. A curious dialogue towards the end of the piece makes references to Cádiz which suggest that it was written before they moved.

Still more significantly, the dialogue makes references to marriage which may be defiantly autobiographical on the part of the young, hot-tempered Sevillian composer. The references are subtle, but given the tumultuous circumstances of his recent betrothal to Manuela, thoughts of marriage were certainly never far from García's mind. This text, notably, did not pass the censor and was omitted from the published version of the work edited by José Subirá.

Such subtle allusions to incidents in García's own life recur in his most important works and, when seen throughout his long career, help to give insight into the character of the man.

El: ¿Qué quieres más?

Ella: Nada quiero, y satisfecha,
ahora me vas a cantar
las boleras de ante noche.

Pero te han de acompañar.

El: Dispón y manda chuscona,
pues tienes más calidá
que todas las Andaluzas
de Cadiz, y Puerto-real.

He: What more do you want?

She: Nothing do I want—I'm satisfied.

But now you will sing for
me the boleros of the
night before last.

And they must accompany you.

He: Command as you wish, *chuscona*,
for you have more class
than all the *andaluzas*
of Cádiz, and Puerto Real.

[Canta]

El: Hay madres en el mundo
tan aplicadas
que se alquilan por Madres
de muchas Damas:
Por lo que hay Moza
que en Madrid tiene una
y en Cadiz otra.

Muchos hay que se casan
con alegría,
sin gastar en Parroquia
ni en Vicaria:
Son aplicados
y celebran la boda
sin combibados.

[He sings]

He: There are ‘Mothers’ in the world
so enterprising
that they hire themselves out
as the mothers of many Ladies.
So that there are girls
who in Madrid have one
and in Cádiz another.

Many there are who marry
happily,
without spending anything in the parish
nor in the vicarage.
They are smart
and celebrate the marriage
without guests.⁴⁷

Inasmuch as García’s marriage was a secret one, any celebration must have been minimal, if not ‘without guests’. Manuela and Manuel were alone, embarking upon an adventure that would lead García around the world, but which would soon bring Manuela back humbly to the doorstep of her father.

⁴⁷ Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, Papeles de Barbieri, MS 14.066(14).