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## Vienna Before Madrid? Rethinking the Origins of the *seguidillas boleras* Through Martín y Soler's "Una cosa rara"

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### Abstract

This article reconsiders the origins and early dissemination of the *seguidillas boleras* by examining their possible presence in Vicente Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara* (Vienna, 1786). Although often understood as stereotyped musical markers of "Spanishness" in late eighteenth-century European opera, the *seguidillas* included in Martín y Soler's works have not been systematically evaluated in relation to contemporary Spanish practices. A key piece of evidence – a 1790 *Diario de Madrid* review referring to the *seguidillas boleras* sung in *La cosa rara* during its Madrid performances – suggests that local audiences identified in this Viennese finale a fashionable genre that had only recently gained prominence on the city's stages.

Questo articolo riconsidera le origini e la prima diffusione delle *seguidillas boleras* esaminando la loro possibile presenza in *Una cosa rara* di Vicente Martín y Soler (Vienna, 1786). Sebbene spesso considerate come marcatori musicali stereotipati della "spagnolità" nell'opera europea della fine del XVIII secolo, le *seguidillas* incluse nelle opere di Martín y Soler non sono state valutate sistematicamente in relazione alle pratiche spagnole contemporanee. Una prova chiave – una recensione del *Diario de Madrid* del 1790 che fa riferimento alle *seguidillas boleras* cantate in *La cosa rara* durante le rappresentazioni a Madrid – suggerisce che il pubblico locale riconoscesse in questo finale viennese un genere alla moda che aveva recentemente acquisito rilievo sui palcoscenici cittadini.

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## Vienna Before Madrid? Rethinking the Origins of the *seguidillas boleras* Through Martín y Soler's "Una cosa rara"

Within the broader 18<sup>th</sup> century European fascination with regional and national musical expressions and the musical construction of cultural "others", the Valencian composer Vicente Martín y Soler emerged as a key figure in the transnational dissemination of Spanish airs and tunes<sup>1</sup>. His operas, often set in the Spanish countryside – such as *Una cosa rara, ossia bellezza ed onestà* (1786)<sup>2</sup> and *La festa del villaggio* (1798)<sup>3</sup> – and those featuring Spanish characters or episodes – *Il tutore burlato* (1775)<sup>4</sup>, *In amor ci vuol destrezza* (1782)<sup>5</sup>, *La vedova spiritosa* (1785)<sup>6</sup>, *Pesnolyubie* (1790)<sup>7</sup> – as well as the London pasticcio *Le nozze dei contadini spagnoli* (1795)<sup>8</sup>, contributed significantly to shaping a stereotyped image of Spain abroad<sup>9</sup>. This portrait was frequently associated with dance songs, particularly *seguidillas*, which appear in at least five of these works: *Il tutore burlato*, *In amor ci vuol destrezza*, *Una cosa rara*, *Pesnolyubie*, *Le nozze dei contadini spagnoli*, and *La festa del villaggio*<sup>10</sup>.

However, the extent to which these Spanish dances in Martín y Soler's operas for non-Spanish audiences offered an authentic and realistic portrayal of Spain remains to be fully examined. Were these representations influenced by the composer's native background, or did they reflect prevailing cultural clichés – perhaps consciously adapting a familiar reality to meet foreign tastes<sup>11</sup> and thus

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1. To date, the most relevant study on this topic is Leonardo J. Waisman, *Vicente Martín y Soler, compositor periférico*, in Dorothea Link – Leonardo Waisman (edited by), *Los siete mundos de Vicente Martín y Soler*, Instituto Valenciano de la Música, Valencia 2010, pp. 443-465.

2. Libretto by Lorenzo Da Ponte. Premiered: Vienna, Burgtheater, November 17, 1786.

3. Libretto by Ferdinando Moretti. Premiered: Saint Petersburg, Hermitage, January 19/30, 1798.

4. Libretto by Filippo Livigni. Premiered: Segovia, Granja de San Ildefonso, 1775.

5. Libretto by Carlo Giuseppe Lanfranchi-Rossi. Premiered: Venice, San Samuele, Autumn 1782.

6. Premiered: Parma, Teatro Ducale, Carnival 1785.

7. Libretto by Alexander Khrapovitsky. Premiered: Saint Peterburg, Hermitage, January 7/18, 1790.

8. Pasticcio. Premiered: London, King's, May 28, 1795.

9. Leonardo J. Waisman, *Vicente Martín y Soler, compositor periférico*, cit., pp. 446-447.

10. *Ivi*, p. 454.

11. Martín y Soler was, in fact, cognizant of local aesthetic canons and understood the personal advantage of

constructing an image of Spain that was easily recognizable and appealing abroad?

To provide a preliminary answer to these questions, *Una cosa rara* – one of Martín y Soler's most celebrated operas – offers an excellent case study. Premiered in Vienna on 17 November 1786, the opera was inspired by *La luna de la sierra* (1653), a comedy by the Siglo de Oro playwright Luis Vélez de Guevara and is set in a village in the Sierra Morena (Granada) at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. According to Lorenzo Da Ponte's *Memoirs*, the choice of a Spanish subject was intended to flatter both the composer and his patron, Isabel María Parreño Arce y Valdés – the Marchioness of Llano and wife of the Spanish ambassador<sup>12</sup> – who had, in fact, suggested the idea herself<sup>13</sup>. Da Ponte also reported the opera's tremendous success, noting how it sparked a genuine fascination with Spanish themes in Vienna<sup>14</sup>.

The opera evokes a strong sense of *Spanishness* particularly in its final scene, which portrays a rustic celebration incorporating Spanish musical elements. Among these are the song *Viva, viva la regina* – which features rhythmic patterns typical of Spanish music, linked to the *tirana*, a fashionable Andalusian dance song<sup>15</sup> – and the *seguidillas* *Quando l'alba nascente*. The use of these *seguidillas* in this finale could easily be understood as a conventional musical representation of Spain, in line with other comparable cases such as Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais' *Le Barbier de Séville* (1775)<sup>16</sup> and its operatic adaptation by Giovanni Paisiello (1782)<sup>17</sup>. However, an article on the state of the theatres in Spain, published in the «Diario de Madrid» on April 6, 1790, mentions «the charm and wit with which the Italian singers sang the *seguidillas boleras* in the opera titled *La cosa rara*»<sup>18</sup>. This refers to the performances of Martín y Soler's opera, on the 24<sup>th</sup> and from the 27<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of September and from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1789 at the Teatro de los Caños del Peral in Madrid<sup>19</sup>, as part of the festivities celebrating the coronation of King Charles IV<sup>20</sup>. This quotation

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adapting his style accordingly. See Leonardo J. Waisman, *Bisogna adattarsi al gusto del paese: Vicente Martín, los géneros y la imitación*, in María Nagore – Víctor Sánchez (edited by), *Allegro cum laude: estudios musicológicos en homenaje a Emilio Casares*, ICCMU, Madrid 2015, pp. 115-123.

12. Lorenzo Da Ponte, *Memorie*, a cura di Giovanni Gambarin e Fausto Nicolini, Laterza, Bari 1918, p. 124.

13. *Ivi*, p. 104.

14. *Ivi*, p. 128.

15. Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Viva, Viva la Tirana: Clarifying an Elusive Spanish Dance Song*, in «The Journal of Musicology», vol. XXXIX, n. 4, 2022, pp. 169-539.

16. Elisabeth Le Guin, *The Barber of Madrid: Spanish Music in Beaumarchais' Figaro Plays*, in «Acta Musicologica», vol. LXXIX, n. 1, 2007, pp. 151-193.

17. Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Il Ritorno di Figaro in Patria: Some Comments on the Reception of Paisiello's "The Barber of Seville" in Madrid*, in «Rivista Italiana di Musicologia», n. 56, 2021, pp. 95-142, in particular pp. 131-136.

18. «Y la gracia y chiste con que las Italianas cantaron las seguidillas boleras en la Opera intitulada *La Cosa rara*» (D.M.R.F., [untitled], in «Diario de Madrid», April 6, 1790, p. 381). Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the original language of the sources into English are the author's own.

19. The theatre listings are available in «Diario de Madrid», September 23, 1789, p. 1068; September 24, 1789, p. 1072; September 27, 1789, p. 1080; September 28, 1789, p. 1084; September 29, 1789, p. 1088; October 1, 1789, p. 1096; October 2, 1789, p. 1100; October 3, 1789, p. 1104; October 4, 1789, p. 1108.

20. Emilio Casares, *La ópera en España. Procesos de recepción y modelos de creación. Vol. I: Desde Carlos IV al periodo*

suggests that Madrid's audience immediately recognized the piece as *seguidillas boleras* – a specific and highly fashionable variant of the *seguidilla* that enjoyed considerable popularity in the city in the late 1780s, whose danced form was called the *baile bolero*, or simply the *bolero*<sup>21</sup>.

Surprisingly, the earliest documented appearances of *seguidillas boleras* on Madrid's public stages so far identified occurred almost simultaneously with Martín y Soler's première of the opera in Vienna. This coincidence prompts several key questions: Was Martín y Soler intentionally incorporating a fashionable Spanish dance-song into his Viennese opera? Or could *seguidillas boleras* have been heard in Vienna before becoming established as a genre in Madrid's theatres? This paper seeks to explore the connections between Vicente Martín y Soler and the *seguidillas boleras*, shedding light on the possible presence of this kind of *seguidilla* in an opera such as *Una cosa rara*, composed and premiered in Vienna.

To this end, this study investigates the early manifestations of *seguidillas boleras* within the Spanish context, especially in Madrid, analyzing their characteristics and cultural significance<sup>22</sup>. As the cultural and political center of Spain, Madrid epitomized the novelties and aesthetic trends of the period, serving as a stage for the dialectical tension between stereotypical national representations and diverse regional expressions. Significantly, Madrid was also the last Spanish city where Martín y Soler resided before departing abroad in 1777, making it the final context in which he engaged directly with contemporary Spanish musical and dance practices<sup>23</sup>. This article offers a preliminary approach to a topic that undoubtedly merits further scholarly investigation.

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*fernandino* (1787-1833), ICCMU, Madrid 2018, pp. 40-42.

21. Fernando Sor distinguishes them clearly: «When referring to the song [...], it was called *seguidilla bolera*, and when referring to the dance, *el baile bolero*» (translated from French: «en parlant de l'air ainsi modifié, on l'appelait *seguidilla bolera* et en parlant de la danse, *el baile bolero*»). See Fernando Sor, *Le Boléro*, in *Encyclopédie pittoresque de la musique*, sous la direction de Adolphe Ledhuy et de Henri Bertini, H. Delloye, Paris 1835, *ad vocem*, vol. I, pp. 88-97: p. 83.

22. This article aligns with the recent scholar interest in 18<sup>th</sup> century *seguidillas* and the *bolero*, such as the PhD thesis by Elvira Carrión Martín, *La danza en España en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII: el bolero*, University of Murcia, 2017 and Elvira Carrión Martín, *El origen de la escuela bolera: nacimiento del bolero*, in «Danzararte. Revista del Conservatorio Superior de Danza de Málaga», n. 12, 2019, pp. 30-44, as well as the recent work – issued by the corporate editor Jornadas Nacionales Folklore y Sociedad – *Una mirada al patrimonio cultural inmaterial. La seguidilla: expresión de una cultura*, CIOFF, Ciudad Real 2020 – with articles such as Guadalupe Mera, *De la seguidilla al bolero (1780-1814)* (*ivi*, pp. 461-484) and Miguel Antonio Maldonado, *Sebastián Cerezo. El manchego que hizo de la seguidilla un bolero* (*ivi*, pp. 485-500) – and Dolores Segarra – Francisco Javier Moya – Cristian Yáñez (edited by), *Las seguidillas: ecos, melodías y contextos de un género folklórico más allá de las fronteras*, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca 2023. The recent article by María José Ruiz Mayordomo, *Tras los pasos del bolero: nuevas aportaciones para la historia del baile nacional en el teatro ilustrado*, in «Quodlibet», n. 78, 2022, pp. 7-58, is also worth noting, as it draws in part on previous research conducted with the autor of the current article developed in the paper by María José Ruiz Mayordomo – Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Tras los pasos del bolero: genealogía de un baile de escuela*, presented at the International Conference *Blas de Laserna y su tiempo* (Autonomous University of Madrid, April 5-7, 2017) and at the *II Jornada de Folclore Les Danses de València* (May 27-28, 2017). However, none of these studies either offers a choreomusical perspective or relates the origin of *seguidillas boleras* with Martín y Soler's opera *Una cosa rara*.

23. Leonardo J. Waisman, *Vicente Martín y Soler: Un músico español en el Clasicismo europeo*, ICCMU, Madrid 2007, pp. 27-30.

## *Seguidillas* and the late 18<sup>th</sup> century stereotyped image of Spain

The *seguidillas* have a long history with antecedents that date back to the Middle Age, but it flourished around 1600 boosted by the cultivation of the *romancero nuevo* – a body of ballads composed during the Spanish *Siglo de Oro* (16<sup>th</sup>–17<sup>th</sup> centuries) that imitated or reinterpreted the older traditional ballads (the *romancero viejo*). Its trajectory underscores the polysemic nature of the term, which refers simultaneously to a dance, a specific metrical form with a longstanding literary tradition, and a sequence of stanzas – hence the common use of the plural<sup>24</sup>. As a song form, *seguidillas* were widely employed in Spanish *Siglo de Oro* lyric poetry, and as a popular dance, they enjoyed great success during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, according to Juan Antonio Iza Zamácola in the *Prologue* of the first *Colección de las mejores coplas de seguidillas, tiranas y polos* (1799), around the 1740s the dance master Pedro de la Rosa systematized the choreographies of *seguidillas* and the *fandango* into clear principles and solid rules<sup>25</sup>. The extent of this renovation and the accuracy of Iza Zamácola's chronology remain uncertain<sup>26</sup>; nevertheless, his account suggests a probable formal renewal of the *seguidillas* around the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, presumably linked to their growing social popularity.

Indeed, the *seguidillas* were among the most popular and emblematic eighteenth-century Spanish musical forms. Present even in church music, particularly in paraliturgical genres with popular influences such as *villancicos*<sup>27</sup>, its widespread appeal is perhaps most vividly demonstrated in native musical theatre forms, especially the *tonadilla*, a type of sung intermezzo extremely popular across Spain during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which consisted of a series of sung numbers that usually develops very entertaining plots drawn from everyday life. The two municipal theatres of Madrid – Teatro de la Cruz and Teatro del Príncipe – were the principal producers of *tonadillas*<sup>28</sup>, although the genre enjoyed widespread popularity throughout Spain and its colonies<sup>29</sup>. This musical

24. Álvaro Torrente, *Tonos, bailes y guitarras: la música en los ámbitos privados*, in Id., *Historia de la Música en España e Hispanoamérica. Vol. 3: La música en el siglo XVII*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Madrid 2016, pp. 193-275, in particular p. 210.

25. Don Preciso [pseudonym of Juan Antonio de Iza Zamácola], *Colección de las mejores coplas de seguidillas, tiranas y polos que se han compuesto para cantar a la guitarra*, Oficina de Eusebio Álvarez, Madrid 1799, vol. I, pp. xxi-xxii.

26. *Ibidem*. Iza Zamácola notes that this dance master was still living in Madrid at the end of the century and Anonymous, [untitled], in «Diario de Madrid», November 18, 1807, p. 605, refers to a Pedro de la Rosa teaching social dance in the city – see Guadalupe Mera, *De la seguidilla al bolero*, cit., pp. 466-467. This makes it highly unlikely that the same individual could have initiated a renovation of these dances sixty years earlier.

27. See, for instance, Antonio Martín Moreno, *Historia de la música española. Vol. 4: Siglo XVIII*, Alianza Música, Madrid 1985, p. 453.

28. As evidenced by the large number of *tonadillas* preserved in the collections of Madrid's historical theatres of Madrid, held at the Biblioteca Histórica Municipal de Madrid (= BHM).

29. The present author has examined the case of Barcelona in several publications, particularly in Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *La tonadilla escénica a través del compositor Jacinto Valledor (1744-1809)*, Ph.D., Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2010, vol. I, pp. 237-452; and Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Jacinto Valledor y la tonadilla: un músico de teatro en la España ilustrada*, Arpegio, Sant Cugat del Vallès 2018, pp. 55-97, 137-160. On the reception and cultivation of *tonadilla* in the Americas,

theater repertoire functioned as a – stylized – mirror of the musical fashions of the time, ranging from operatic hits to many popular folk tunes, such as *seguidillas*, *fandangos* or *tiranas*. In *tonadillas*, *seguidillas* not only served an intradiegetic function – representing the songs and dances performed by the protagonists in the fiction – but also operated as dramaturgical devices. For instance, *tonadillas* customarily ended with *seguidillas* as a festive «apotheotic ending»<sup>30</sup>, which could at times be highly demanding from a vocal standpoint<sup>31</sup>. Indeed, the *tonadilla* – as a short theatrical genre marked by its intrinsic economy of means and one that Martín y Soler was undoubtedly well acquainted with – will offer particularly valuable insight for the present study.

In this regard, it is particularly significant that the *seguidilla* – along with other popular folk forms such as the *fandango*, *jota*, and *tirana* – came to be emblematic of national identity by the end of the century. As I pointed out elsewhere<sup>32</sup>, a compelling example of this identification appears in the 1792 theatrical piece *El reconocimiento del tío y la sobrina* (1792), by playwright Pedro Rodríguez and composer Pablo Esteve. This work represents a noteworthy attempt to innovate within the *tonadilla* genre by intentionally excluding such popular tunes – referred to in the libretto as *sonsonetes populares*. As stated in the «Advertencia» of the printed text:

It is missing those popular *sonsonetes* [necessary] to be a true *tonadilla*, [both] our own and those that composers invent in imitation of them, which is why they constitute a genre of composition that foreigners lack and always will lack, because their language does not allow it; the very reason why the *tonadilla* should be more cherished by us.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, these *sonsonetes populares* are qualified as «ours», that is, inherently Spanish, rooted in the Spanish language, making them impossible for foreign composers to replicate. This text emerges from 18<sup>th</sup> century interests in defining “national” musical styles, aligning closely with the ideas of thinkers such as Rousseau and Father Antonio Eximeno, who explored how universal

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see, for instance, Montserrat Capelán, *Las reformas borbónicas y la música venezolana de finales de la colonia (1760-1821): el villancico, la tonadilla escénica y la canción patriótica*, Ph.D., Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2016.

30. José Subirá, *La tonadilla escénica*, Tipografía de Archivos, Madrid 1928, vol. II, p. 165, and Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Jacinto Valledor y la tonadilla*, cit., pp. 30-31.

31. See Ingartze Astuy, *Cantando “a lo majo” y “a lo serio”. El estilo italiano y español en las seguidillas tonadillescas de finales del siglo XVIII*, in Dolores Segarra – Francisco Javier Moya – Cristian Yáñez (edited by), *Las seguidillas: ecos, melodías y contextos de un género folklórico más allá de las fronteras*, Ediciones de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, Cuenca 2023, pp. 199-225.

32. Aurèlia Pessarrodona, “*El reconocimiento del tío y la sobrina*” de Pedro Rodríguez y Pablo Esteve como intento de renovación de la tonadilla escénica, in Jorge García (edited by), *Miscelánea musical en homenaje a Josep Climent*, Institut Valencià de la Música, València 2009, pp. 345-400; Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Viva, viva la Tirana*, cit., pp. 474-475; and Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Boccherini and the “Spanish Body”: Reflections on Popular Dance and National Identity*, in Marcello Mazzetti (edited by), *The Body in Musical Performance: Knowledge, Gesture, and Identity*, Brepols, Turnhout, forthcoming 2026.

33. «Para ser una verdadera tonadilla le faltan aquellos sonsonetes populares, propios nuestros, y los que a su imitación inventan los compositores, que es por los que constituyen un género de composición de que carecen y carecerán siempre los extranjeros, mediante a que sus idiomas no la permiten; razón por que debería ser más estimada de nosotros» (Pedro Rodríguez – Pablo Esteve, *El reconocimiento del tío y la sobrina*, Oficina de Ramón Ruiz, Madrid 1792, p. 3).



musical elements evolved into distinct national expressions shaped by linguistic differences. Of particular significance is the pivotal role played by the dancing body in this musical representation of Spain. These *sonsonetes* were not merely songs but also dances – performed also with instrumental accompaniment alone. In this regard, Eximeno's ideas – he too a Valencian, like Martín y Soler – are particularly illuminating. In *Dell'origine e delle regole della musica* (1774)<sup>34</sup>, Antonio Eximeno implicitly suggests that the body may contribute meaningfully to the formation of distinct national musical expressions, especially in relation to his own cultural origins. While he expresses skepticism about the gestural origins of spoken language – viewing gestures as merely supplementary and insufficient without the full faculties of speech and hearing<sup>35</sup> – his account of music's origins nevertheless retains a notable gestural dimension: «Moved, then, by a gentle sensation to use the organ of voice, man spoke; seized by a surge of joy, he began to dance and sing»<sup>36</sup>. Eximeno seems to acknowledge a gestural element in the origins of music, suggesting that music and dance arise as spontaneous and intuitive responses to vocal sensations. Although Eximeno does not fully develop this idea, it is notable that he specifically selects precisely seguidillas as one of the examples to illustrate the character of Spanish music and the suitability of Spanish for singing, which he considers second only to Italian<sup>37</sup>.

These ideas would be expanded with particular vehemence by Juan Antonio de Iza Zamácola, in his introduction to the *Colección*:

Our *fandango* and *seguidillas*, which in Spain incite people to dance, are viewed in Italy and elsewhere as merely indifferent songs. And what accounts for this difference in emotional response in the human heart? It lies solely, gentlemen musicians, in the diversity of customs, in the character of nations, and in the fact that each has its own way of expressing its passions. For this reason, Italian music can never truly conform to the common taste of the Spanish people.<sup>38</sup>

Once again, the body appears to act as a catalyst for national musical preferences: *fandangos* and *seguidillas* elicit a spontaneous desire to dance among Spaniards, as they resonate deeply with their emotional and cultural sensibilities. In fact, these dances formed the foundation of the *bailes*

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34. Antonio Eximeno, *Dell'origine e delle regole della musica colla storia del suo progresso, decadenza, e rinnovazione*, Michel'Angelo Barbiellini, Roma 1774; published in Spanish as Antonio Eximeno, *Del origen y reglas de la música, con la historia de sus progresos, decadencia y restauración*, and translated by Francisco Antonio Gutiérrez (Imprenta Real, Madrid 1796).

35. Alberto Hernández Mateos, *El pensamiento musical de Antonio Eximeno*, Ph.D., Universidad de Salamanca, 2012, p. 296.

36. «Determinato dunque l'uomo da una sensazione mite ad usar dell'organo della voce, parlò: rapito da un trasporto di allegrezza si mise a ballare e cantare» (Antonio Eximeno, *Dell'origine e delle regole della musica colla storia del suo progresso, decadenza, e rinnovazione*, cit., p. 159).

37. Alberto Hernández Mateos, *El pensamiento musical de Antonio Eximeno*, cit., p. 398.

38. «Nuestro fandango y seguidillas que en España incitan a bailar, en Italia y en otras partes son miradas como unas canciones indiferentes, y en qué consiste esa diferencia de afectos del corazón del hombre? Consiste únicamente señores músicos, en la variedad de las costumbres, en el carácter de las naciones, y en que todas tienen sus diferentes maneras para expresar sus pasiones, por esta razón la música italiana jamás podrá ser acomodada al gusto común de los españoles» (Don Preciso [Juan Antonio de Iza Zamácola], *Colección de las mejores coplas de seguidillas, tiranas y polos que se han compuesto para cantar a la guitarra*, cit., pp. 211-212).

*nacionales* (national dances), stylized versions of Spanish popular dances that became a central feature of theatrical productions from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards<sup>39</sup>, and served as the breeding ground for what would later become known as the Bolero School, the earliest branch of Spanish Classical Dance.

The association between *popular* and *national* reflects an emerging ethnic conception of Spain that ties the entire nation to a stereotypical image of the common people. In Madrid's short theatre – which served as the main model for similar productions across Spain – this identity was primarily embodied by the *majos* and *majas*, representing working-class and marginalized communities from Madrid's suburbs, primarily immigrants, characterized by shared values such as hard work, fierceness, and sincerity, as well as distinctive preferences in fashion, music, and dance<sup>40</sup>. This attitude is vividly embodied in Anton Raphael Mengs' portrait of the Marchioness of Llano (1773), depicted in the guise of a *maja* (fig. 1). Her *majismo* is expressed not only through her attire – a short, close-fitting open jacket with lapels below the chest<sup>41</sup> and ornamented shoulders, together with a hairnet worn in place of a wig – but also through the characteristic gesture of *ponerse en jarras* (standing with arms akimbo), a pose typically associated with theatrical *majas*<sup>42</sup>. By adopting these distinctly Spanish traits while in Parma – where her husband served as plenipotentiary minister – the Marchioness seems to assert her Spanishness within a foreign context. This assertion is consistent with her later involvement in promoting Spanish-themed works, particularly in her role as a patron of Martín y Soler during her time in Vienna.

39. Cristina Roldán, *Bailes y danzas en los teatros de Madrid (1800-1808)*, in José Ignacio Sanjuán (edited by), *Estudios musicales del Clasicismo. Vol. 2: Danza y ballet en España*, Arpegio, Sant Cugat del Vallès 2015, pp. 51-88, in particular pp. 60-63.

40. Rebecca Haidt, *Women, Work and Clothing in Eighteenth-Century Spain*, Voltaire Foundation, Oxford 2011, p. 264.

41. Very similar to the *maja elegante* depicted in Juan de la Cruz Cano y Olmedilla, *Colección de trajes de España, tanto antiguos como modernos*, M. Copin, Madrid 1777, vol. I, [fig.] n. 6. This exemplar consulted is the one held at the Biblioteca Nacional de España (ER/339), accessed online through the Biblioteca Digital Hispánica: <https://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000051081> (Accessed 1/9/2025).

42. See Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Boccherini and the "Spanish Body": Reflections on Popular Dance and National Identity*, cit.





Figure 1. Anton Raphael Mengs, *Portrait of the Marchioness of Llano* (ca. 1773), Madrid, Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando.

Therefore, the inclusion of the *seguidillas Quando l'alba nascente* in the finale of *Una cosa rara* can be seen as aligning with this stereotyped, embodied image of Spain – an image that functioned effectively abroad to represent Spanish identity. However, let us examine this particular type of *seguidillas* – the *seguidillas boleras* – and their social significance in contemporary society.

## The Rise of the *Seguidillas Boleras* in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Madrid

During the 1780s, short theatrical forms in Madrid reveal a growing interest in experimenting

with new types of *seguidillas*. For instance, José Subirá noted that around 1784, *seguidillas* – particularly those used as finales in *tonadillas* – began to appear in 2/4 meter, a variant that departs entirely from the traditional danced form in ternary meter, transforming it into a vehicle for Italian-style vocal display<sup>43</sup>. Subirá also observes the emergence from the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century of *boleras* in 3/8 time, which often conclude the *coplas* (stanzas) in *tonadillas*<sup>44</sup>. However, he does not offer a more precise chronology for these developments.

Press offers valuable insight into clarifying this elusive chronology<sup>45</sup>. The earliest references to the *seguidillas boleras* – or *bolero* as the danced form – so far identified appear in some discourses published in the enlightened journal «El Censor» on March 1786<sup>46</sup>, as a well-established social practice, already subject to moral criticism and even regarded as dangerous – particularly for young women, as emphasized in a slightly later article published in *El Correo de los Ciegos de Madrid*:

The current fashion is to train them from the cradle in martial bearing, in the harmony and variety of colors, in the handling of the fan, the *mantilla* (lace veil), and other accessories: in body contortions and flirtatious glances, in the perfection of every dance, not omitting the *allemande*, *fandango*, and the famous *bolero*; but not in the management and economy of a household, because that is for ordinary people.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, these early references to the *bolero* in press align with certain Enlightenment critiques of modern and sophisticated fashions and luxuries – activities often seen as frivolous or idle because they contribute nothing meaningful to society's pursuit of public happiness, the ultimate goal of

43. José Subirá, *La tonadilla escénica*, cit., vol. II, pp. 425–427.

44. *Ivi*, pp. 206–208.

45. María José Ruiz Mayordomo, *Tras los pasos del bolero: nuevas aportaciones para la historia del baile nacional en el teatro ilustrado*, cit., draws primarily on the previous research conducted by María José Ruiz Mayordomo and Aurèlia Pessarrodona on sources collaboratively examined and presented at the aforementioned conferences.

46. Anonymous, *Discursos XCV*, in «El Censor», March 8, 1786, p. 508 and Anonymous, *C*, in «El Censor», March 15, 1786, pp. 609–610. Some scholars – see Javier Suárez-Pajares, *El bolero, síntesis histórica*, in Roger Salas (proyecto y coordinación de la publicación), *La Escuela Bolera: Encuentro Internacional, Instituto Nacional de las Artes Escénicas y la Música*, Madrid [1992], pp. 187–193, in particular p. 187; and Elvira Carrión Martín, *La danza en España en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII: el bolero*, cit., p. 324 and Elvira Carrión Martín, *El origen de la escuela bolera: nacimiento del bolero*, cit. – have proposed an earlier chronology based on the alleged appearance of the words *bolero* or *boleras* in certain *sainetes* by Ramón de la Cruz from 1772 and 1773. However, these claims rely on later editions of the text, and consultation of the original manuscripts, held in the BHM and the Biblioteca Nacional de España, reveals that the original wording was different.

47. «La moda corriente es instruir las desde la cuna en el aire marcial, en la armonía y variedad de colores, en el manejo del abanico, mantilla y demás muebles: en las contorsiones de cuerpo, y juego de ojos, en la perfección de todo baile, sin omitir alemanda, fandango y famoso bolero; pero no en el gobierno y economía de una familia, porque esto es de gente ordinaria» (Josef Revoj, [untitled], in «Correo de los Ciegos de Madrid», November 28, 1786, p. 60). In a similar vein, the *parola* (spoken dialogue) of Pablo del Moral's *tonadilla La novia a la moderna* (undated, BHM Mus 170-4) outlines what it means for a woman to think «a la moderna» (in the modern way) as follows: «To do exactly the opposite of what reason teaches us: to mock sensible people, to live recklessly, to subscribe to fashion magazines, to read French novels, to dance the *bolero* a little, and to have a thousand admirers» (translated from Spanish: «Hacer todo lo contrario de lo que la razón nos enseña: burlarse de los juiciosos, vivir a lo calavera, ser subscri[p]tora a los trajes, leer novelas francesas, bailar un poco el bolero y tener mil que la quieran»).

Enlightenment thought. From this perspective, the proper social role of young women is confined to the private sphere, specifically the management of the household<sup>48</sup>, rather than engaging in what was considered indecent behavior, such as dancing the *bolero* – an activity notable for the free and indiscriminate mixing of men and women.

Along similar lines – though aimed more broadly at the nobility – is the *Sátira a Arnesto* in *Discourse CLV* of «El Censor», attributed to Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos<sup>49</sup>. Here the *bolero* appears as yet another expression of the whims of an idle nobleman, particularly one enamored with *majo* culture. Certain Spanish Enlightenment thinkers such as Jovellanos, who advocated for societal reform grounded in reason and utility, viewed popular cultural forms like the *bolero* as perpetuating social excess and entrenched prejudice. A vivid example of this perception appears in a letter from the English traveler William Beckford, dated 19 December 1787. He recounts a gathering at the Madrid residence of the wealthy Portuguese merchant Juan Pereyra Pacheco, held in honor of the Turkish ambassador and historiographer Ahmed Vassif Effendi<sup>50</sup>. Following a performance by Turkish singers – which Beckford found especially tedious and irritating – several guests, including Beckford himself dressed as a quintessential *majo*, began dancing the *bolero* with great enthusiasm. The disapproving reaction of the composer Luigi Boccherini and that of his patron, the Duchess of Benavente, both present at the event, reveals the aversion to popular cultural expressions among certain Enlightenment-aligned elites<sup>51</sup>.

It is highly plausible that such criticism reflected a reaction to the growing social popularity of the *seguidillas boleras* and the *bolero*, at least in Madrid. In fact, the earliest instances of *seguidillas boleras* so far identified in Madrid's historical theatres collections date back to 1787. They appear in a *tonadilla* by Pablo Esteve, composed for the debut of the singer-actress Petronila Correa – of Manuel Martínez's company – beginning with the line «La Petronila Correa, ya saben, señores»<sup>52</sup>. This piece was performed at the start of the 1787-1788 season, probably on April 8, 1787, at the Teatro del Príncipe of Madrid. It is particularly significant that these *seguidillas boleras* are introduced by a *parola* (short spoken passage) as a novelty, in line with the latest theatrical trends in Spain: «Let's go with some *seguidillas boleras*, improvised as they come, since that's what's currently in fashion in the

48. See, for instance, Gloria Ángeles Franco Rubio, *El "Tratado de la educación de las hijas", de Fénelon, y la difusión del modelo de mujer doméstica en la España del siglo XVIII*, in Alfredo Alvar Ezquerro (edited by), *Las Enciclopedias en España antes de l'«Encyclopédie»*, CSIC, Madrid 2009, pp. 479-500.

49. Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (attributed), *Discurso CLV*, in «El Censor», n. 155, May 1787, p. 477. Although the source does not attribute the text to any author, it is well known that it was written by Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos.

50. William Beckford, *Italy: with Sketches of Spain and Portugal*, Key Biddle, Philadelphia 1834, vol. II, p. 226.

51. Regarding this anecdote and Boccherini's position towards Spanish dance and music, see Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Boccherini and the "Spanish Body": Reflections on Popular Dance and National Identity*, cit.

52. BHM Mus 90-17, online: [https://www.memoriademadrid.es/busador.php?accion=VerFicha&id=321909&num\\_id=1&num\\_total=1](https://www.memoriademadrid.es/busador.php?accion=VerFicha&id=321909&num_id=1&num_total=1) (Accessed 3/7/2025).

theatres of Spain»<sup>53</sup>. The piece is delivered precisely by the singer actress Petronila Correa – sister of the soprano Lorenza Correa – who had just arrived at the Madrid stage from Barcelona<sup>54</sup>. Just a few weeks later, the «Diario Curioso, Erudito, Económico y Comercial» announced in its theatre listings for May 26-31 and June 1-4, 1787 that at the Teatro de la Cruz, Josefa Luna and José García – both actors from Eusebio Ribera's company – would perform «*seguidillas a lo bolero*» as a dance within Ramón de la Cruz's *sainete* *Las forasteras en el teatro*<sup>55</sup>. A similar experiment was undertaken by Manuel Martínez's company a month later (July 26-29, 1787), this time presenting emancipated *seguidillas boleras* danced by Victoria Ferrer and Manuel García<sup>56</sup>.

Given the recent reopening of the Teatro de los Caños del Peral in early 1787 – a venue specializing in Italian opera and featuring a corps of professional dancers<sup>57</sup> – it can be argued that the emergence of these *seguidillas boleras* formed part of broader commercial strategies employed by the companies of Madrid's two municipal theatres, the Teatro de la Cruz and the Teatro del Príncipe. These strategies were likely aimed at attracting audiences by introducing novelty, drawing on the most fashionable musical trends of the time. According to María José Ruiz Mayordomo<sup>58</sup>, this pursuit of innovation ultimately contributed to the recognition of the dance as an autonomous stage art form, offering added value to theatrical programming and enhancing its competitive edge.

From this point onward, available evidence suggests that *seguidillas boleras* began to enjoy immense success as a social phenomenon – at least in the capital – reflected in a variety of notable commercial activities advertised in the press<sup>59</sup>. For instance, the earliest known advertisement for the sale of *seguidillas boleras* sheet music for various instruments appears in the «Diario Curioso, Erudito y Económico de Madrid» on July 29, 1787, alongside other popular genres such as *tiranas*, minuets, and contradances<sup>60</sup>. From 1788 onward, we also find advertisements for engravings related to the *bolero* dance, including the series by Marcos Téllez illustrating various steps of the *seguidillas boleras*<sup>61</sup>. There are even ads promoting the sale of hand fans decorated with images of the *bolero* dance<sup>62</sup>.

53. «Vayan unas seguidillas boleras a lo que salga, por ser lo que ahora se estila en los teatros de España» (Pablo Esteve, *La Petronila Correa, ya saben señores*, BHM Mus 90-17).

54. Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Los inicios de Lorenza Correa en Madrid: Su formación y desarrollo como actriz de cantado a partir del primer repertorio conocido (1787-94)*, in «Acta Musicologica», vol. XCIII, n. 2, 2021, pp. 140-176, in particular p. 146.

55. María José Ruiz Mayordomo, *Tras los pasos del bolero: nuevas aportacions para la historia del baile nacional en el teatro ilustrado*, cit., p. 31.

56. *Ivi*, pp. 33-34.

57. Emilio Casares, *La ópera en España. Procesos de recepción y modelos de creación. Vol. I: Desde Carlos IV al periodo fernandino (1787-1833)*, cit., pp. 28-45.

58. María José Ruiz Mayordomo, *Tras los pasos del bolero: nuevas aportacions para la historia del baile nacional en el teatro ilustrado*, cit., p. 35.

59. *Ivi*, pp. 39-42.

60. Anonymous, [untitled], in «Diario Curioso, Erudito y Económico de Madrid», July 29, 1787, p. 119.

61. Anonymous, [untitled], in «Diario de Madrid», June 23, 1789, p. 695.

62. Anonymous, [untitled], in «Diario de Madrid», May 6, 1789, p. 504.

Therefore, *seguidillas boleras* enjoyed considerable success in Madrid during the late 1780s – a period marked by musical and dance innovations likely driven by commercial interests – despite certain Enlightenment criticism. These *seguidillas* gained prominence in domestic and amateur contexts, functioning both as songs and dances – probably encouraging increased reliance on professional dance masters<sup>63</sup>. Simultaneously, they became highly fashionable on stage, likely stimulated by theatrical competition and contributing to the growing specialization of performers in both singing and dancing.

This widespread popularity of *seguidillas boleras* may help explain why Martín y Soler incorporated this type of *seguidilla* in the finale of *Una cosa rara*. However, the most striking aspect is that *Una cosa rara* premiered in Vienna before the earliest appearances of *seguidillas boleras* thus far documented on Madrid's stages. This raises two important questions: How could Madrid's audiences have identified this number as *seguidillas boleras*? And could it be possible that *seguidillas boleras* were performed onstage in Vienna before they appeared in Madrid?

## From *Manchegas* to *Boleras*

To address the first question, it is helpful to identify the defining characteristics of *seguidillas boleras* and examine how they emerged within the early theatrical repertoire of Madrid. As a distinct variant of the broader *seguidilla* genre, *seguidillas boleras* retain several of its fundamental features, including:

– *Poetic Form*: the lyrics follows the traditional *seguidilla* stanza, composed of an irregular quatrain, that consists of two unrhymed heptasyllabic lines (7–) interspersed with two pentasyllabic lines (5a) with assonant rhyme, yielding the pattern 7–, 5a, 7–, 5a. This is typically followed by a tercet with the structure 5a, 7–, 5a, often referred to as a *refrain* (*estribillo*) or *estrambote*<sup>64</sup>.

63. One factor that underscores the *bolero*'s exclusivity as a sophisticated and fashionable social dance is the requirement of specialized instruction. This is evidenced by an advertisement placed by Manuel Estevan, a «master of French and Spanish dance», in Anonymous, [untitled], in «Diario Curioso, Erudito, Económico y Comercial», July 21, 1787, p. 87. Contemporary theatrical works also reflect these practices, notably Juan Manuel Martínez's *sainete La academia de boleros* (1789, BHM Tea 1-160-41, A-B-C-D), which satirizes the teaching of *bolero* to young ladies, and Blas de Laserna's *tonadilla El maestro de bolero* (1791, BHM Mus 147-7), both of which highlight the dance's association with formal instruction and its growing role within elite social contexts.

64. *Quando l'alba nascente* is built on a hexasyllabic variant with just two quatrains: 7a, 6b, 7a, 6b, 7c, 6d, 7c, 6d.



– *Basic choreomusical structure*<sup>65</sup>: as described by Manuel García Matos<sup>66</sup>, this consists of an *instrumental introduction*, serving as a brief prelude to the dance; the *salida*, during which the singing begins and dancers take their positions; the *refrain* or *vuelta*, an instrumental interlude where the dancing begins and the performers execute *pasadas* – the partners exchange their positions; and the *coplas* (stanzas, or the proper *seguidillas*), in which dancers perform the core choreography in place. The poetic lines of the *seguidilla* stanza are distributed across the *salida* and the *coplas* in varying ways.

Despite the time that has passed, these same choreomusical structure described by García Matos can be observed in *seguidillas* found in 18<sup>th</sup> century *tonadillas*<sup>67</sup>, as well as in Iza Zamácola's description of the *seguidillas* dance, which even provides more precise details regarding the structure of the *boleras*. According to this source, the structure is as follows<sup>68</sup>:

- *Instrumental Introduction*: the ritornello or musical prelude begins.
- *Salida*: the singing begins – only the first verse if it is a *manchega*, or two verses if it is a *bolera*. This section should last four measures. *Manchegas* begin to be danced during this section, something that has been “corrected” in the *boleras*.
- [*Estribillo*]: an instrumental *pasacalle* of three measures.
- *Coplas* (or the *seguidillas* proper): in the fourth measure, the dancers begin to dance, playing castanets, for nine measures.
- The *estribillo* and *coplas* are repeated three times, with the refrain used to change positions. At the end of the final stanza, in its ninth measure, the music stops and the dancers remain in the pose known as *bien parado* (well-stopped).

Iza Zamácola's description underscores the close relationship between *seguidillas manchegas* – a specific variant of *seguidillas* originating from the La Mancha region – and the *boleras*. Contemporary

65. Several studies have attempted to analyze the musical form of *seguidillas* within the *tonadilla* tradition and the *bolero*, including María Encina Cortizo, *El bolero español del siglo XIX, estudio formal*, in «Revista de Musicología», vol. XVI, n. 4, 2003, pp. 217-226; Adela Presas, *Aproximación a la forma literario-musical de las seguidillas*, in Joaquín Álvarez Barrientos – Begoña Lolo (editors), *Teatro y música en España: los géneros breves en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII*, CSIC-UAM, Madrid 2008, pp. 149-164; and Elisabeth Le Guin, *The Tonadilla in Performance*, University of California Press, Berkeley 2013, pp. 121-123. These works primarily approach the subject from the perspective of music and text, often without considering the choreographic structure or the current dance practices, choreographic sources and choreologist approaches. According to the present author, *seguidillas'* structure cannot be fully understood without considering the choreographic form that underlies it, even in cases where the *seguidillas* were intended solely for singing.

66. Manuel García Matos, *Danzas populares de España: Castilla la Nueva, I*, Sección Femenina de FET y de las JONS, Madrid 1957, pp. 29-30.

67. Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *La tonadilla escénica a través del compositor Jacinto Valledor (1744-1809)*, cit., vol. II, p. 9 and Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Il Ritorno di Figaro in Patria: Some Comments on the Reception of Paisiello's "The Barber of Seville" in Madrid*, cit., pp. 129-136.

68. Don Preciso [pseudonym of Juan Antonio de Iza Zamácola], *Colección de las mejores coplas de seguidillas, tiranas y polos que se han compuesto para cantar a la guitarra*, cit., pp. x-xiv.



sources consistently affirm this connection, often portraying the *manchegas* as the direct precursor to the *bolero*<sup>69</sup>. Particularly significant in this regard is the comparison made by the dance master Antonio Cairón in 1820, who explicitly contrasts the two forms:

What we call *seguidillas manchegas* is, without any difference, the same as the *bolero*, as it consists of the same steps, the same refrains, and the same *bien parados*, all performed with the same type of combination and the same number of measures in the same 3/4 meter. The only difference is that the *manchegas* are danced with greater speed, and that simple *mudanzas* (figures or step changes) are more characteristic of them than double ones. With slight variation, this is how the *bolero* was danced at the time of its invention.<sup>70</sup>

Therefore, the *bolero* was understood as a slowed-down and choreographically refined evolution of the *seguidillas manchegas*. A particularly illustrative example of the musical connection between the *manchegas* – at least as they appear in this theatrical context – and the *boleras* can be found in the music composed by Blas de Laserna for the *fin de fiesta Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer* (1789), with text by Ramón de la Cruz<sup>71</sup>. Conceived also as a part of the celebrations for the coronation of King Charles IV<sup>72</sup>, the piece depicts people from various Spanish regions singing and dancing their local tunes in joyful homage. The work includes *seguidillas manchegas* in 3/8 meter, performed by the characters from La Mancha (ex. 1), followed by additional seguidillas in the same meter, sung by the characters from Murcia (ex. 2), described as *boleras* in the instrumental part manuscripts.

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69. For example, a *letrilla* published in the «Diario de Madrid» on 16 February 1790 (p. 186) states: «In the previous century, / they called manchegas / the seguidillas / that today are called boleras» (translated from Spanish: «En el otro siglo / llamaban manchegas / a las seguidillas / que hoy llaman boleras»).

70. «Lo que llamamos seguidillas manchegas es sin diferencia alguna lo mismo que el bolero, pues consta de las mismas pasadas, de los mismos estribillos, y bien parados, y todo se ejecuta en el mismo género de combinación, y en igual número de compases del mismo tiempo de tres por cuatro. Solo la diversidad que tiene es únicamente la de bailarse las manchegas con mayor precipitación, y el serles más características las mudanzas simples que las dobles. A corta diferencia así se bailaba el bolero al principio de su invención» (Antonio Cairón, *Compendio de las principales reglas de baile*, Imprenta de Repullés, Madrid 1820, pp. 113-114). A comparable explanation can be found in Carlo Blasis, *The Code of Terpsichore*, Edward Bull, London 1830, p. 34.

71. Blas de Laserna, *Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer*, BHM Mus 189-3.

72. The work was presented by both companies at the Teatro del Príncipe in Madrid on September 30 and October 1-14, 1789. See the corresponding days on the «Diario de Madrid» and René Andioc – Mireille Coulon, *Cartelera teatral madrileña del siglo XVIII (1708-1808)*, Presses Universitaires du Mirail, Toulouse 1996, vol. I, p. 415.

**Allegretto**

Oboes 1-2 *f*

Horns 1-2 (in D) *f* [a 2]

Manchas y Manchegos *f*

Violin 1 *f* [p]

Violin 2 *f* [p]

Bass *f* [p] [f]

No hay per-so-na en el mun do

10

a 2

que se-pa que rer co-mo el rey a la rei - na y la rei-na al

Ben-di-ga - los Dios y vi - van mu-chos a - ños con i-gual a -

17

rey, co-mo el rey a la rei - na y la rei-na al rey.

mor, y vi - van mu-chos a - ños con i-gual a - mor.

[f]

(Versos y repiten para bailar)

Example 1: *seguidillas manchegas* from Blas de Laserna, *Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer*<sup>73</sup>.

73. For the musical transcriptions, the author followed the editorial criteria established in Jacinto Valledor, *Tonadillas. Vol. I: obras del periodo 1768-1778*, edited by Aurèlia Pessarrodona, CSIC, Madrid 2019, pp. xliii-xlv, remaining faithful to the original while adapting it to current performance practice. The vocal parts, notated in the original with C clefs on

**Allegretto**

En la huer-ta de Mur - cia

to - das las mo - zas por-que a Ma-drid no vie - - nen, es - tán ra - bio - sas, por - que,  
Y es que de - se - an can - tar - les a los re - - yes mil can - ti - ne - las, can - tar,

por-que a Ma-drid no vie - - nen, es - tán ra - bio - sas.  
can - tar - les a los re - yes mil can-ti-ne - las.

(Vérsos y repiten para bailar)

Example 2: *seguidillas boleras* from Blas de Laserna, *Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer*.

the first line, are here transcribed in the G clef, with the understanding that these melodies were also performed by men, an octave lower. The horn parts, originally written at pitch, are transcribed in C with the tonality indicated in brackets, in accordance with modern practical conventions for music of this period.

Although a systematic study of the various *seguidilla* typologies within this 18<sup>th</sup> century short theatre repertoire is still lacking, *seguidillas manchegas* and *seguidillas boleras* appear to belong to a different category from the more commonly found types. The slow and solemn *Andante* tempo in 3/4 meter, typical of the *bolero* and often featuring its characteristic *bolero* rhythm, is already well represented in the *tonadilla* repertoire from earlier years – particularly in elaborate final *seguidillas*, but also in other contexts such as initial instrumental *ritornelli*<sup>74</sup>. However, speaking in general terms, and as illustrated by the example taken from Jacinto Valledor's *tonadilla Señores, señoras* (1775) (ex. 3)<sup>75</sup>, *seguidillas* from *tonadillas* typically feature shorter and more conclusive *estribillos*, which are less repetitive and more resolute than those in the *manchegas* and *boleras*<sup>76</sup>. Additionally, their *coplas* tend to be more fluid and structurally varied.

Curiously, these *seguidillas* by Valledor are labeled in their own text as «from La Mancha», but in fact, they do not follow the structural pattern of the prototypical *manchegas*. In contrast, the *manchegas* and *boleras* from *Las provincias españolas* (ex. 1 and 2) exhibit an identical structure – though more regular in the former – where the vocal melody is primarily organized around a binary unit, consisting of an initial offbeat, syllabic figure – even on a single note – of semiquavers followed by a full measure of vocal melisma on the line's final stressed syllable, which resolves on the downbeat of the subsequent measure<sup>77</sup>. In the *coplas* (mm. 12-20 in both cases), this binary unit is repeated four times in two-measure groups, with each melismatic resolution connecting to the next syllabic phrase and concluding with a closing measure. This yields the structure described by Iza Zamácola: 2-measure binary unit × 4 + 1 closing measure = 9 measures.

74. Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Ritmos de tonadilla: algunas consideraciones a partir de la obra conservada de Jacinto Valledor*, in «Cuadernos de Música Iberoamericana», n. 28, 2015, pp. 87-114, in particular p. 106.

75. BHM Mus 76-2. See Jacinto Valledor, *Tonadillas. Vol. 1: obras del periodo 1768-1778*, cit., pp. 287-291.

76. In fact, they are more reminiscent of the *sevillanas*, another kind of *seguidilla*. See Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *La tonadilla escénica a través del compositor Jacinto Valledor (1744-1809)*, cit., vol. II, pp. 16-19.

77. As Fernando Sor notes in his discussion of the *manchegas*: «the singing almost always moves at one note per syllable, except over the penultimate syllable, during which some vocalization occurs» (translated from French: «le chant va presque toujours à une note par syllable, excepté sur l'avant-dernière, pendant la durée de laquelle on fait quelque vocalization»). See Fernando Sor, *Le Boléro*, cit., p. 89.

Allegretto

Oboes 1-2

Horns 1-2 (in F)

Voice

Violin 1

Violin 2

Bass

6 [a 2] 3 3 sfz sfz [p] 3

Por u - nas se - gui - di - llas de \_ nues - tra Man - cha, \_ por u nas se - gui - di - llas de nues tra Man - cha, \_

11 [a 2] [f] 3 p sfz p sfz [p] 3

de \_ nues - tra Man cha \_ de - ja - ré cuan - tos tri - nos tie - ne la I - ta - lia tie - ne la I - ta - lia.  
 Y a - qui se a - ca - ba, \_ y pa - se por ju - gue - te es - ta to - na - da, es - ta to - na - da.

cb [f] [p]

Example 3: introduction, *salida*, *estribillo* and beginning of the *coplas* of the ending *seguidillas* from Jacinto Valledor, *Señores, señoras* (1775).

In spite of these similarities between *seguidillas manchegas* and *boleras*, there were differences, as one character of the *fin de fiesta* admit by saying just after the performance of the *seguidillas boleras*: «The origin of that dance / – if you'll pardon me – is Manchegan, / and now it's like the Spaniard / who goes to Paris and then comes back / so changed that no one recognizes him»<sup>78</sup>. In fact, what provides the key to understanding the evolution from *manchegas* to *boleras* – and consequently their intrinsic differences – is precisely the melismatic measures. Iza Zamácola noted, in the *Advertencia* of the second volume of his *Colección de las mejores coplas* (1816), the difficulty of adding vocalizations in *manchegas* due to their fast tempo in dance:

The first stanzas are flawed due to the impossibility of fitting the music to them; these other ones, however, can still be sung even to the music of the *manchegas*, which, being more forceful in rhythm than the *boleras*, do not allow for any vocal ornamentation, nor any space in which the shortcomings of the lyrics might be compensated for or concealed.<sup>79</sup>

In this context, Fernando Sor's explanation of the evolution from *seguidillas boleras* to *murcianas* – or, indeed to *boleras* – is particularly noteworthy, a development he attributes to an unknown – perhaps even mythical – dancer called *Bolero*:

A young man [a dancer called *Bolero*], who knew how to execute small *battements* and *entrechats*, imagined varying the steps of the *seguidillas manchegas* by marking halves and quarters of the beat with his feet. But these additions proved impracticable in the usual tempo, for the singing became insignificant and the accompanying rhythm lost its energy. He therefore divided some of the quavers in the rhythm into semiquavers or triplets in order to fill the intervals between the notes that began each beat; in this way the *seguidilla murciana* was sung, either in one or two voices. The musical framework of this dance is the same as for all the others, but it contains more variation in the vocalization performed on the syllables encompassed within a single measure.<sup>80</sup>

Therefore, according to Sor the increasing complexity of the steps in this new type of *seguidilla* required correspondingly more elaborate music, particularly through the subdivision of the musical

78. «El origen de ese baile / con perdón de usted, es Manchego / y ahora es como el español / que se va a París, y luego / viene tan de otra manera / que nadie lo conocemos» (Ramón de la Cruz, *Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer*, BHM Tea 1-184-11, f. 9).

79. «Las primeras coplas son defectuosas por la imposibilidad de colocar la música sobre ellas, son cantables estas otras aun con la música de las manchegas, las cuales, siendo más violentas en el compás que las boleras, no admiten ningún giro de voz, ni espacio en que se pueda suplir ni disimular el defecto de las letras» (Juan Antonio de Iza Zamácola, *Colección de las mejores coplas de seguidillas, tiranas y polos que se han compuesto para cantar a la guitarra*, Repullés, Madrid 1816, vol. II, pp. xii-xiii).

80. «Un jeune homme, qui savait exécuter de petits battements et des entrechats, imagina de varier les pas des *seguidillas manchegas* en marquant avec les pieds des moitiés et des quarts de temps. Mais ces additions étaient impraticables dans le mouvement usuel, car le chant devenait insignifiant et le rythme d'accompagnement perdait son énergie. Alors il divisa quelques croches du rythme en doubles croches ou en triolets pour remplir les intervalles entre les notes qui commençaient chaque temps; c'est ainsi que l'on chanta la *seguidilla murciana*, a une ou à deux voix. L'encadrement musical de cette danse est le même pour toutes les autres; mais il contient plus de variation dans la vocalisation faite sur les syllabes renfermées dans une mesure» (Fernando Sor, *Le Boléro*, cit., p. 92).



rhythm and the variations introduced during the one-measure vocalizations. This becomes evident when, as an experiment, one attempts to dance these early *seguidillas boleras* – originally intended for singing – using the choreography of the *Bolero liso de escuela* – the canonical *bolero* within the Bolero School tradition<sup>81</sup>. In the *seguidillas boleras* from *Las provincias españolas* (ex. 2), the music of the fourth melismatic measure of the *coplas* (m. 14) – particularly its striking syncopated leap of a minor seventh from B to A – provides a sonic impulse that facilitates the execution of the corresponding *cabriola*: a mid-air leap marked by a sharp beat of the legs<sup>82</sup>, as depicted in the painting *A Festival or The Bolero* by the – also Valencian – painter José Camarón Bonanat (dated ca. 1785 by the Museo del Prado, though probably later) (fig. 2). Although it is unclear whether this choreography was originally intended, this relationship supports the idea that the greater dance complexity was accompanied by a corresponding slowing of the music and an increase in vocal virtuosity. This aligns with broader vocal trends of the period toward a more refined *bel canto* style and suggests a mutually reinforcing relationship between vocal and choreographic virtuosity. This applies both to *seguidillas boleras* composed primarily for singing – such as the salon pieces by Sor – and to instrumental *boleros* intended for dancing.



Figure 2. José Camarón Bonanat, *A Festival or The Bolero* (Museo del Prado).

81. As discussed in the paper by María José Ruiz Mayordomo – Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Tras los pasos del bolero: genealogía de un baile de escuela*, cit., commenting on the case of the *seguidillas boleras* from the *tonadilla Los deseos opuestos* by Pablo del Moral (1790, BHM Mus 110-21).

82. For a discussion of the *cabriola* as a *bolero* step and its appearance in Spanish dance sources, see Elvira Carrión Martín, *La danza en España en la segunda mitad del siglo XVIII: el bolero*, cit., pp. 204-206.

Once the common structure between *manchegas* and *boleras* is understood, and the elaborate melismas have been identified as a possible characteristic gesture of the *boleras*, it becomes quite straightforward to trace the evolution of the earlier dated *seguidillas boleras* present in this repertoire<sup>83</sup>. These are characterized by their notation in 3/8 time and the inclusion of *bolero* elements, especially the tendency toward a syllabic-melisma binomial with a falling resolution. However, a gradual slowing down of the initial 3/8 meter can be observed, achieved through vocal melismas or a deceleration of the harmonic rhythm. Nevertheless, it is not until 1792 that we find – always with due caution – *seguidillas boleras* finally written in *Andantino* and 3/4 meter<sup>84</sup>. In fact, it can be considered that the use of 3/8 in the early *seguidillas boleras* originated as a subdivision of the common 3/4 *seguidillas* aimed at providing greater rhythmic regularity – especially in the *coplas* – and thereby consolidating the syllabic-melismatic binomial.

Martín y Soler's *Quando l'alba nascente* can be understood as part of the formative process of the *seguidillas boleras*. As shown in ex. 4, this *seguidilla* is written in 3/4 meter – typical of traditional *seguidillas* but not yet associated with *boleras* of the late 1780s, which were still generally composed in 3/8. The piece features the characteristic syllabic-melismatic binomial, particularly evident in the opening line (mm. 453-454), which corresponds to the *salida* within the choreomusical structure of the *seguidilla*. The following two measures serve as the instrumental *estribillo*, featuring a triplet passage that helps maintain the slow tempo associated with the emerging *bolero* style. However, in the *coplas* (mm. 456-461) we find several striking elements. The syllabic-melismatic binomial appears treated quite freely, as if based on an intrinsic 3/8 subdivision of the melody yet situated within a 3/4 meter. Part of this ambiguity arises from Da Ponte's addition of an extra syllable in normally five-syllables lines. This allows Martín y Soler to place the second line in the full last beat of m. 456, omitting the typical offbeat attack that would occur if it were in 3/8 (as in m. 11 of ex. 1 and 2), and to treat the melismatic and syllabic passages in m. 458 as a single, continuous unit. These features effectively emphasize the 3/4 meter; however, an intrinsic 3/8 subdivision seems to underlie the melody, aligning it with the regular metric patterns of *manchegas* and *boleras* and supporting the corresponding dance gestures. In fact, thanks to this subdivision, the melisma on the final stressed

83. Other early dated examples of *seguidillas boleras* sung in this repertoire include the following: from 1788, the *tonadillas El médico tronera* and *El nuevo de las boleras* by Pablo Esteve, and *La defensa de las mujeres* by Blas de Laserna (in this case, as a closing section to the *coplas*) (BHM Mus 133-3, Mus 185-14, and Mus 84-5); from 1789, the *sainete Todo y nada* with music by Rosales; from 1790, the *tonadillas Los burlados* and *Los deseos opuestos*, and the *sainete El tabernero burlado* by Pablo del Moral – the latter showing the union of the *bolero* with the *tirana* (BHM Mus 143-15, Mus 110-21, and Mus 62-32); and from 1791, the *tonadilla El maestro de bolero* by Laserna (BHM Mus 147-7), as well as *La alcarreña astuta*, *La ama de gobierno*, and *Los fingimientos* by Pablo del Moral (BHM Mus 109-9, Mus 139-5, and Mus 88-7), the music for the *sainetes La Petra y la Juana* or *La casa de Tócame Roque* or *El buen casero*, anonymous (BHM Mus 651-1), and *El cirujano de Villaverde* and *Los dos tutores* by Pablo del Moral (BHM Mus 63-20 and Mus 63-32).

84. Such as those appearing in the *tonadilla Los criados y loros*, BHM Mus 108-12.

syllable in «*lucente*» falls precisely in the choreographic position of the *cabriola* discussed previously (m. 458). On the other hand, the melodic treatment of this melisma echoes the dotted rhythm of the expansive melisma in the *salida*, yet its repetitive character contrasts with the virtuosic upward leap found in Laserna's *boleras Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer* (ex. 2). In fact, it aligns more closely with the melismatic treatment of Laserna's *manchegas* (ex. 1), reflecting the dance's characteristic quality of rapid, small jumps. In contrast, a more elaborate vocal display occurs on the fermata on m. 459, perhaps reflecting more operatic conventions more closely.

The musical score is for a voice and piano piece. It is in 3/4 time and G major. The score is divided into sections: *Introducción*, *Salida*, *Estribillo*, and *Coplas*. The vocal line starts at measure 453 with the lyrics "Quan-do l'al - ba na - scen - te sco-pre il vi-so". A box highlights a melisma on the last stressed syllable "scen". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The score continues to measure 457 with the lyrics "bel col suo rag - gio lu - cen - te or na ter-ra e ciel, la-la-ra-la-ra-la-ra, or - na ter-ra eciel." A box highlights a "cabriola" figure in the vocal line. The piano accompaniment includes triplets and dynamic markings like *p*, *cresc.*, and *più pp*.

Example 4: mm. 453-461 from the second finale of Martín y Soler's *Una cosa rara*, in a reduction for voice and piano, with principal musical and dance gestures indicated.

Taken together, these features suggest that, within its originality, this *seguidilla* reflects a transitional phase in the development of the *boleras*. Nevertheless, essential aspects – such as the meter, tempo, syllabic-melismatic binomial structure, and especially the extended first melisma – were key in enabling Madrid audiences to recognize this number as *seguidillas boleras*, in accordance with contemporary fashions.

Therefore, how could be possible that a piece identifiable as *seguidillas boleras* was performed onstage in Vienna before appearing on the Madrid stages? Martín y Soler was very likely aware of the rising success of the *boleras* – at least in Madrid – as a social phenomenon, reflecting it in original *seguidillas*. Perhaps he had also the intention of flattering his patron, the Marchioness of Llano, who herself was from La Mancha, giving the close relationship between *manchegas* and *boleras*. An

additional factor that may have contributed was Martín y Soler's Valencian origins. To clarify this point, let us explore the connotations of *seguidillas boleras* and the *bolero* regarding the construction of regional identities in late 18<sup>th</sup> century Spain.

## *Seguidillas Boleras* and the Spanish Levant

At this point, *Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer* again provides us with interesting information. As we have seen, in this piece, the *seguidillas boleras* are performed by the people of Murcia, and the reason is revealed in the following dialogue:

SECOND MURCIAN WOMAN: And what are we supposed to dance?

GARRIDO: If the *bolero* was Murcian,  
Wouldn't its countrymen dance it?

SECOND MURCIAN WOMAN: That goes without saying: *boleras*.<sup>85</sup>

Indeed, in this context the *bolero* appears to have a strong connection with Murcia, a Spanish region located south of Valencia and part of the area known as the Spanish Levant. In fact, within the collective imagination of Madrid, the *bolero* may have been more broadly associated with this Levantine region, as reflected in a *parola* from Blas de Laserna's *tonadilla El maestro de bolero* (1791), where this dance is described as: «the spice of celebrations and the soul of social gatherings, which was born in Murcia or Valencia, and has taken root in Madrid»<sup>86</sup>.

Thus, Martín y Soler's Valencian origins may also help explain the *boleras* features of *Quando l'alba nascente*. In this light, contemporary theatrical representations of Valencian characters may offer valuable insights into this connection with the *boleras* style. Alongside the centripetal image of *Spanishness* embodied by *majos* and *majas* and the aforementioned *sonsonetes populares*, Madrid's short theatre also sought to represent the country's diversity by featuring characters from regions such as Galicia, Catalonia, and Valencia – projecting a kind of centrifugal identity, albeit in highly stereotyped and often comic forms<sup>87</sup>. The inclusion of these regional figures in this repertoire likely

85. «MURCIANA SEGUNDA: ¿Y qué habemos de bailar? / GARRIDO: Si era murciano el bolero / ¿Qué bailarán sus paisanos? / MURCIANA SEGUNDA: Eso se cae de su peso: boleras» (Ramón de la Cruz, *Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer*, cit., f. 9r).

86. «Que es la sal de los festejos y el alma de los saraos, que nació en Murcia o Valencia, y en Madrid se ha avecindado» (Blas de Laserna, *El maestro de bolero*, cit.).

87. José Luis Ramírez, *Tipos cómicos y caracterización lingüística en el siglo XVIII: “Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer” de Ramón de la Cruz*, in «Letras de Deusto», vol. XXXII, n. 94, 2002, pp. 115-126; Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Catalans, balears i valencians en “tonadillas” escèniques madrilenyes del segle XVIII*, in «Journal of Catalan Studies», 2011, pp. 86-118; Javier Gándara, *Entre autóctono y foráneo. El personaje gallego en la tonadilla*, in «Revista de Musicología», vol. XLV, n. 1-2, 2022, pp. 123-148; Javier Gándara, *Teatro musical e identidades colectivas en territorio hispano y luso (1750-1814): perspectivas desde lo gallego*, Ph.D., Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2023.

reflected the social heterogeneity of Madrid's lower classes at the time, while also aligning with the Enlightenment fascination with the picturesque and the exotic<sup>88</sup>. In this regard, Eximeno – himself a Valencian emigrant, like Martín y Soler – felt the necessity to add in his essay, alongside the aforementioned *seguidillas*, a Valencian *dulzaina* (shawm) melody, which evoked him a profound personal emotion due to his Valencian heritage<sup>89</sup>.

Some *tonadillas* caricature Valencian people by employing visual and cultural stereotypes, including typical regional occupations like reed mat makers and water sellers. They also attempt to evoke Valencian musical and dance characteristics, especially through *dulzaina* melodies accompanied by a *tamboril* or *tabal* (drum) – described by Jordi Reig as the «most stable instrumental music duo in Valencian tradition»<sup>90</sup>. It is in this way that Valencian characters appear in *Las provincias españolas* – following the Murcians dancing their *seguidillas boleras*<sup>91</sup> – and in the ending *seguidillas* of Rosales's *tonadilla El valenciano* (1775-1777)<sup>92</sup>. Notably, the latter example, far from realistic, aligns more closely with conventional associations of rural life – distinct from the Madrid region<sup>93</sup>.

However, it is quite striking that some Valencians in *tonadillas* are presented with *seguidillas*<sup>94</sup>. The portrayal of Valencians through *seguidillas* highlights the previously mentioned connection between Valencians and the *bolero* style, in contrast to what appears in the *tonadillas* about Catalans, Majorcans or Galicians. Moreover, it is believed that the *majo* was the product of the diverse lower-class Madrid populace, resulting from a synthesis of elements from the original substratum and influences brought by varied immigration, including Valencian, as Mesonero Romanos notes:

They contributed to shaping in the *manolos* [or *majos*] of Madrid a distinct character, an original and highly unique type, though composed of Andalusian charm and swagger, Valencian liveliness, and Castilian seriousness and dignity.<sup>95</sup>

In brief, the *majos* embodied characteristics closely associated primarily with the southern half

88. Francisco Sánchez-Blanco, *La Ilustración goyesca: la cultura en España durante el reinado de Carlos IV (1788-1808)*, CSIC, Madrid 2007, pp. 221-222. In fact, these representations can be seen as the theatrical counterparts to contemporary visual works such as Manuel and Juan de la Cruz' engraving series *Colección de trajes de España tanto antiguos como modernos que comprehende todos los de sus dominios* (Casa de M. Copin, Madrid 1777), or Antonio Rodríguez, *Colección general de los trajes que en la actualidad se usan en España* (Librería del Castillo, Madrid 1801).

89. Antonio Eximeno, *Dell'origine*, cit., p. 451.

90. «La parella de fet més estable de la música instrumental valenciana» (Jordi Reig, *La música tradicional valenciana. Una aproximació etnomusicològica*, Institut Valencià de la Música, Valencia 2011, p. 383).

91. Ramón de la Cruz, *Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer*, cit., f. 9r.

92. Antonio Rosales, *El valenciano*, BHM Mus 144-20; edited in Begoña Lolo – Germán Labrador, *La música en los teatros de Madrid. I: Antonio Rosales y la tonadilla escénica*, Alpuerto, Madrid 2005, pp. 181-215.

93. Aurèlia Pessarrodona, *Catalans, balears i valencians en "tonadillas" escèniques madrilenyes del segle XVIII*, cit.

94. *Ibidem*.

95. «Fueron parte a formar en los manolos madrileños un carácter marcado, un tipo original y especialísimo, aunque compuesto de la gracia y de la jactancia andaluzas, de la viveza valenciana y de la seriedad y entonamiento castellanos» (Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, *El antiguo Madrid. Paseos histórico-anecdóticos por las calles de esta villa*, Oficinas de la Ilustración Española y Americana, Madrid 1881, vol. II, p. 25).



of the Peninsula – Valencia included – which lies within the traditional area of *seguidillas* (fig. 3). Therefore, despite their distinct characteristics, the stereotype of the Valencian – at least through the lens not necessarily realistic of Madrid’s audience – was likely linked to elements typical of Madrilenian *majo*.



Figure 3: Area of distribution of the *seguidillas* according to García Matos<sup>96</sup>.

## Conclusions: Martín y Soler, a Valencian emigrant

Through these pages, I explored the possible reasons why *seguidillas boleras* may have been performed onstage first in Vienna rather than in Madrid – or at least so early in the process of their establishment as a distinct genre. Even though a more in-depth study is needed, this exploration has shown that Martín y Soler, in the *seguidillas Cuando l'alba nascente* from the finale of *Una cosa rara*, reflected the latest musical trends in Spain, perhaps with the intention of flattering his patron. However, his own native corporality could play an important role. In fact, like the Valencians of the *tonadillas* and Antonio Eximeno, he was also a migrant – a Valencian who went to seek his fortune first in the capital and later in various European cities. He may have carried with him a Hispanic

96. Manuel García Matos, *Danzas populares de España: Castilla la Nueva, I*, cit., p. 32.



corporeality encompassing both the centrifugal identity of his Valencian origins and the centripetal one. For this reason, Martín y Soler could present the Viennese audience with an image of Spanish stereotypes, filtered through a particularly realistic and embodied lens.

This article represents merely a first approach to the topic. The exploration has been carried out through the lens of contemporary stereotypes within Spain, epitomized by those prevalent in Madrid. Future research could turn to Valencian and other Levantine sources, as well as to perceptions of Spain from abroad – an avenue of inquiry that I strongly encourage.