

## TALKING MACHINES IN SPANISH COMMERCIAL MUSICAL THEATRE, 1888-1913

EVA MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ

*University of Glasgow  
School of Culture and Creative Arts  
14 University Gardens  
GLASGOW, Scotland*

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### *Abstract*

In this article, I propose to explore questions around the transformations of talking machines into music machines in a specific national context (Spain), using a somewhat unconventional source: namely, Spanish *género chico* works (i.e. Spanish-language musical theatre) which feature such devices, in the understanding that these plays, because of the context in which they were produced and consumed, allow us insights into the reception of these technologies that are not easily available from other sources. The plays were all eminently commercial and present the phonograph or gramophone as a device for group listening,

used within the plot of the play in two predominant modes: as a truth-teller or as a stage-device. In the article, I discuss how perceptions of phonographs were initially shaped mostly by existing discourses about science, technology, mobility and knowledge, and they only slowly shifted towards sound and music.

**Keywords:** Phonograph; talking machine; Spanish music; zarzuela; early recording technologies

**Ključne riječi:** fonograf; govorni stroj; španjolska glazba; zarzuela; rane tehnologije snimanja zvuka

When Edison presented his first phonograph in 1877, he conceived of it mostly as an appliance to facilitate office work and correspondence; he certainly did not envisage it would be used primarily for the recreational playback of music.<sup>1</sup> Neither did most of his contemporaries at the time: indeed, it took about two decades for the phonograph (and other talking machines) to become more or less

<sup>1</sup> Roland GELATT: *The Fabulous Phonograph 1877-1977*, London: MacMillan, 1977, 27.

synonymous with commodified musical sound in different parts of the world. The shift was facilitated by technological improvements that ensured that listening to music on a talking machine could indeed be an aesthetically pleasurable experience rather than a science-enabled gimmick – but a key role was also played by changing perceptions and imaginaries of talking machines and recorded sound at the intersection of a set of broader cultural discourses about science, technology, sound and performance. Importantly for the purposes of this article, such imaginaries circulated transnationally, but they were also decisively shaped by national, regional and local circumstances and preoccupations.

### *Spanish musical theatre as a source for the reception of talking machines*

Researching the pre-musical, pre-commercial era, and specifically shedding light on the moment or moments in which the phonograph transitioned from scientific curiosity to musical entertainment machine, comes with its own set of complications. In the first twelve or so years following the public presentation of the phonograph, the device was not yet commercially viable or aurally pleasing. Exhibited as a scientific curiosity among reduced audiences, it did capture the imagination of many – but often in a rather abstract way, with little awareness of or concern for the materiality of the device. After Edison introduced the Perfect Phonograph in 1888, demonstrations became more common and reached larger sections of the population – but even then, it is difficult to ascertain how the technologies were received. Reviews and other accounts published in the press were often heavily influenced by Edison's own publicity, which was predominantly focused on fidelity (i.e. the supposed ability of the phonograph to reproduce sound exactly as it was).<sup>2</sup> Personal accounts, on the other hand (e.g. in journals or letters), are often difficult to track down. In this article, I propose to explore questions surrounding the transformations of talking machines into music machines in a specific national context (Spain) using a somewhat unconventional source: namely, Spanish *zarzuela* works (i.e. Spanish-language musical theatre) which feature such devices.

I contend that these plays allow us insights into the reception of these technologies that are not easily available from other sources. This is made possible by the nature of these plays. They were all eminently commercial, and fell under the *teatro por horas* (theatre by the hour) banner. *Teatro por horas* was a formula that imposed itself on the Madrid theatrical world after 1868: instead of putting on one full-length production an evening, theatres discovered it was more profitable to schedule as many as four one-hour plays, with tickets being sold separately for

<sup>2</sup> Emily THOMPSON: Machines, Music, and the Quest for Fidelity: Marketing the Edison Phonograph in America, 1877–1925, *The Musical Quarterly*, 79 (1995) 1, 131-171.

each.<sup>3</sup> The *teatro por horas* formula also reached *zarzuela*, resulting in the development of *género chico*<sup>4</sup> and other shorter formats such as *revista* (revue) – and it is indeed *género chico* and these shorter formats that the works studied in this article fall under. These formats managed to reach a relatively broad range of audiences thanks to low ticket prices and light subject matter: the lower-middle and skilled working classes could take enjoyment in the likes of themselves (the *pueblo*, or people) being portrayed as patriotic, witty, determined and resourceful in the face of a less-than-competent ruling class. But bourgeois and even aristocratic audiences could also trust that political or social criticism would never become too uncomfortable for them, and that the worldview expressed in the plays would generally be supportive of the *status quo* (in fact, revolutionary ideologies such as socialism or feminism were routinely mocked in *género chico*).<sup>5</sup>

Contrary to other sources such as advertisements and accounts of phonograph sessions, the plays covered here were not written for the purposes of publicizing the phonograph or gramophone, or educating audiences about their uses. This, as well as the fact that they were eminently commercial plays, means that they were unlikely to present views and ideas on recording technologies that their audiences would have found excessively challenging. Instead, they would have been more likely to present the topic in a way that instantly resonated with audiences and facilitated the introduction of the well-worn range of tropes, situations and plot devices that *género chico* relied upon. We can therefore presume that there was a high degree of commonality between the views on talking machines presented in these plays and the views that their diverse audiences held, therefore allowing us a glimpse into the reception of the phonograph and gramophone that in some respects goes beyond what we find in demonstration advertisements and reviews.

Table 1 below gives an overview of the plays considered in this article. In selecting them, I have used the extensive collection of *género chico* librettos held at the Biblioteca Nacional de España and the collections increasingly available in digital format at <www.archive.org>.<sup>6</sup> I am satisfied that the list below represents a reason-

<sup>3</sup> Carmen DEL MORAL RUIZ: *El género chico*, Madrid: Alianza, 2004, 20-21.

<sup>4</sup> «Género chico» literally translates to «small genre», by opposition to *zarzuela grande*, typically featuring larger-scale formats (three acts) and offering greater scope for historical or serious matters – as opposed to the mostly light, contemporary ones typical of *género chico*. The rigid dichotomy between *zarzuela grande* and *género chico* has come under criticism in recent scholarship (most notably by Enrique Mejías García); however, this does not negate the point made here that the *teatro por horas* format, together with other social and cultural developments in the Madrid theatrical scene, led to the appearance of new theatrical practices, with new audiences, that can be broadly grouped under the banner of *género chico*.

<sup>5</sup> Enrique ENCABO: *Música y nacionalismos en España: El arte en la era de la ideología*, Barcelona: Erasmus Ediciones, 2008, 18-25; Carlos FERRERA: Utopian Views of Spanish Zarzuela, *Utopian Studies*, 26 (2015) 2, 366-382; Clinton D. YOUNG, *Music Theater and Popular Nationalism in Spain, 1880-1930*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2016, 8-10.

<sup>6</sup> The scores will not be analysed, since not all of them have survived in the archives – only the libretti.

ably complete list of *género chico* plays featuring phonographs and gramophones – with the caveat that, in the fast-moving, mass-production *género chico* industry, it is likely that some plays which did not attain the success expected of them were quickly removed from the stage and disappeared without a trace. While none of these plays can be described as aesthetically valuable or innovative, they are indeed solid examples from the genre and therefore embody the ideological values discussed in the previous paragraph. Similarly, none of them can be described as particularly successful or influential: while there is evidence that some of these works attracted positive reviews when premiered, none stayed in the theatre or *zarzuela* repertoire, or was the object of extended reviews. This, again, was the norm with many of the commercial works produced during this time.

**Table 1: *Género chico* plays featuring phonographs and gramophones**

Title (subgenre in brackets, if available) <sup>7</sup>	Authors	Date and place of premiere
<i>El fonógrafo (invento)</i>	Libretto by José del Castillo y Soriano; music by Isidoro García Rossetti	28 August 1885, Teatro Recoletos, Madrid
<i>¡El arte del toreo! (revista)</i>	Libretto by Ricardo Monasterio and Julián García Parra; music by Manuel Nieto	6 March 1886, Teatro Eslava, Madrid
<i>El bazar H (establecimiento cómico-lírico)</i>	Libretto by Calixto Navarro and Manuel Arenas; music by Manuel Fernández Caballero	8 August 1887, Teatro Recoletos, Madrid
<i>Sombras chinescas (extravagancia cómico-lírica)</i>	Libretto by Enrique García Álvarez and Antonio Paso; music by Joaquín Valverde and Tomás Torregrosa	24 December 1896, Teatro Eslava, Madrid
<i>El paraíso perdido (bufonada cómico-lírica)</i>	Libretto by José Jackson Veyán and Gabriel Merino; music by Ángel Rubio and Ramón Estellés	17 June 1898, Teatro Eldorado, Madrid
<i>El fonógrafo ambulante (zarzuela)</i>	Libretto by Juan González; music by Ruperto Chapí	24 April 1899, Teatro Apolo, Madrid
<i>La luna de miel (humorada cómico-lírica)</i>	Libretto by Juan Molas i Casas, Enrique García Álvarez and Antonio Paso; music by Eduardo Montesinos	7 July 1900, Teatro Eldorado, Madrid

<sup>7</sup> Under the title of the play, the librettos also give the subgenre the authors or impresarios ascribed the piece to, with an indication of the number of acts and scenes (*cuadros*). Some of these sub-genres have more precise definitions than others: a *apropósito* was a short piece typically written in response to a given political event; a *revista* combined music, dancing and acting through a succession of loosely tied vignettes; a *sainete* was a comic piece intending to capture the lifestyle of the working classes; an *entremés* was originally (16th and 17th centuries) a short piece to be performed between acts in a longer play; here, it might have simply denoted a short, comic piece. On the other hand, terms such as *humorada* (humourful thing), *bufonada* (buffoon thing) and *extravagancia* (extravagance) were not established sub-genres, but were probably made up *ad hoc*, and serve mostly to emphasize the comic character of the play. Other names were similarly made up to have metaliterary connotations: *invento* (invention) would both refer to the piece itself and to the phonograph in the title; and *establecimiento* (establishment, including commercial establishment) would refer to the there-mentioned bazaar.

<i>El fonocromoscop (revista)</i>	Libretto by Rafael Abellán and Luis Constante Moya; music by Luis Foglietti and Eduardo G. Arderius	22 February 1903, Teatro Martín, Madrid
<i>El día de la victoria (apropósito)</i>	Libretto (and music?) by Juan and Pedro Fernández	28 December 1903, Teatro Lara, Madrid
<i>Los cuatro trapos (sainete)</i>	Libretto by Antonio Fernández Lepina and Antonio Plañiol; music by Luis Foglietti and Arturo Escobar	18 December 1908, Gran Teatro, Madrid
<i>En aras de la moral (entremés)</i>	Libretto by José Jackson Veyán; music by Luis Romo	16 January 1914, Salón Madrid

The analysis of these librettos reveals three particularly fruitful commonalities which, if analysed alongside the historical context on the arrival of the phonograph and then the gramophone in Spain, provide valuable insights into how these technologies and the discourses developed around them by its demonstrators, sellers and other champions might have been seen and received by some sectors of the population. The following sections will analyse in turn these three themes: talking machines and social class; the phonograph as a truth-teller; and the phonograph as a stage machine.

### *Talking machines and social class*

As has been anticipated earlier, Spaniards – like the rest of the world – first got to know the phonograph through group demonstrations, particularly after Edison introduced the Perfected Phonograph in 1888. The makeup of these demonstrations, as well as the spaces they took place in, were highly influenced by the sociability practices predominant at the time in Spain. Middle- and upper-class private clubs (*casinos* [clubs], *círculos* [circles]) typically hosted demonstrations restricted to members only and pitched towards scientific dissemination, whereas their working-class equivalents (*círculos obreros* [working-class circles]) and scientific societies (*ateneos científicos* [scientific athenaeums]) normally favoured outreach rather than exclusivity. Amusement operators also toured the provinces and offered demonstrations for a fee in a range of spaces (theatres, cafés, inns, civic centres, churches, fair stalls), targeting different types of social classes. In the cities, *salones fonográficos* (literally, »phonographic salons«) proliferated for a while, allowing the less affluent classes to play selected phonograph numbers for a modest fee.<sup>8</sup> Public demonstrations continued to be held into the 1900s, even after commercial phonography was introduced in Spain in 1896-1897 by the *gabinete fonográficos* (small recording studios and stores), which opened the door for some

<sup>8</sup> Eva MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ: *Inventing the Recording: The Phonograph and National Culture in Spain, 1877-1914*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2021, 50-57.

Spaniards starting to amass their own wax cylinder collections and practice solitary listening.<sup>9</sup>

Even though a good half of the plays listed above were premiered after commercial phonography was introduced in the country, theatrical authors unanimously chose to present the phonograph in the context of group demonstrations, and none of the plays represents solitary listening.<sup>10</sup> One reason for this is the fact that, even by the mid-1900s, talking machines were still heavily associated with group demonstrations. Even though the *gabinetes* tried to promote solitary listening and there is evidence that they achieved some success,<sup>11</sup> only a few affluent Spaniards could afford their own phonograph to practice solitary listening regularly: it is likely that it was not an immediately recognizable, stereotyped situation *género chico* could exploit. In the plays, even when phonograph listening takes place in a private household, it is not solitarily listening that is portrayed, but rather a reunion of individuals gathered to listen to the phonograph (*El fonógrafo*, *El día de la victoria*).

There might be, however, other factors contributing to the preference for group listening sessions; these might apply particularly to the two latest plays in the list, premiered in the era of the gramophone, when recording technologies were more established in Spanish homes. The reason might have to do with dramatic rather than purely representational considerations: a scene of collective rather than solitary listening would be better suited to the conventions and expectations of the genre, in which ensemble acting including a number of stereotyped characters drawn from different sections of Spanish society was paramount. In this context, the phonograph could help with characterization: the ways in which different characters reacted to the phonograph would have associated them, in the eyes of the audiences, with certain social classes and stereotypes.

These associations were made possible by discourses about recording technologies that proliferated since the first notices about Edison's invention arrived in the Spanish press. Such discourses emphasized the scientific and civilizing role of the nascent talking machines, and some of the *gabinetes fonográficos* went a step further in associating themselves with *regeneracionismo* – a broad, loose social movement active in Spain since the 1860s which advocated for the modernization of the country. Proponents of *regeneracionismo* claimed that science was crucial to achieve modernization, and often portrayed sections of the Spanish population as prone to religious fanaticism and superstition.<sup>12</sup> In this context, it is not surprising

<sup>9</sup> E. MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ: *Inventing the Recording*, 64-69.

<sup>10</sup> *La luna de miel* is unique in setting the scene in a *gabinete fonográfico*, portraying – in a comic, exaggerated way – some of the dynamics of recording at the time (e.g. a hunting scene is recorded, with the same individual mimicking all of the different voices and sounds). With *gabinetes* being at their peak at the time, it is likely that they were familiar enough by that point – at least in the urban centres – that the scene would have resonated with audiences.

<sup>11</sup> E. MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ, *Inventing the Recording*, 152-154; »El fonógrafo«, *La Correspondencia de España*, 19 November 1902, 3.

<sup>12</sup> E. MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ: *Inventing the Recording*, 71-77.

that, as phonographs started to tour Spain, newspapers published accounts of Spaniards from rural or working-class backgrounds allegedly reacting with fear and superstition to the device.<sup>13</sup> Similar situations are also to be found in some of the plays above. In both *El paraíso perdido* and *El fonógrafo ambulante*, the demonstration takes place in front of rural communities, who express their concerns that magic or witchcraft might be involved. In *El fonocromoscop* and *En aras de la moral* it is a female servant (*criada*) who expresses her doubts, and in *El día de la Victoria* it is a male servant from Galicia (*mozo gallego*). All three plays are set in urban contexts, and both *criadas* and *gallegos* are stereotypical characters in *género chico*, typically portrayed as ignorant and superstitious.

It is likely that these situations caused immediate comic effect in audiences; however, they should not be read as an attack on the working or rural classes and an endorsement of *regeneracionista* and pro-science positions. Instead, they should be regarded within the context of *género chico*, in which, as has been advanced earlier, the *pueblo* is the main focus and invariably comes across in a positive light. In the above-mentioned plays, while the utterances from the *pueblo* character might have elicited laughter, this is not to say that their more *regeneracionista*, science-driven counterparts are unequivocally portrayed as heroes. In *El fonógrafo ambulante*, Restituto, the phonograph demonstrator, is a sympathetic character, but rather extravagant, paternalistic and out-of-touch with the true motivations and feelings of the *pueblo*,<sup>14</sup> while another demonstrator and science enthusiast, Don Blas in *El día de la Victoria*, reveals himself to be a scammer. These somewhat distanced and reserved portrayals of *regeneracionismo* were broadly consonant with the ideological positioning of *género chico* – which often satirized certain aspects of the social order, but rarely advocated for revolutionary changes. These plays therefore open up a window to understanding how discourses emphasizing the technological novelty and civilising potential of the phonograph might have been received by audiences: indeed, the plays suggest that some sections of the population might have been ready to laugh at the lower classes' superstition, but they did not fully embrace discourses centring on science either.

### *The phonograph as truth-teller*

As I have discussed elsewhere, a salient characteristic of the very early reception of recording technologies in Spain was the trope of the phonograph as truth-

<sup>13</sup> PITIS: Un charro filósofo, *El adelanto de Salamanca*, 24 August 1903, 1; Antonio DE LA CUESTA Y SÁINZ: Cuento, *El correo ibérico*, 30 December 1904, 2.

<sup>14</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the character of Restituto, see Eva MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ: Travelling phonographs in fin de siècle Spain: recording technologies and national regeneration in Ruperto Chapí's *El fonógrafo ambulante*, *Journal of Spanish Cultural Studies*, 20 (2019) 3, 247-251.

teller – sometimes at the expense of other tropes more prevalent elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Crucially, this trope went beyond the mere notion of the phonograph as capable of capturing and playing back aural reality, both musical and spoken: writers often toyed with the idea of the phonograph reproducing the inaudible (namely, what could not be said aloud for political or social reasons) and articulating them in spoken form. One commentator even wrote that the phonograph had the ability »to play back the opposite of what has been recorded«.<sup>16</sup>

The trope of the phonograph as truth-teller is indeed present in the earliest zarzuela featured here, *El fonógrafo* (1885). This work introduced a plot device that we later find in subsequent works: the phonograph records a spoken conversation between two of the characters without them noticing; this conversation is then played back in a way that alters the relationships between other characters and often precipitates the resolution of the conflict. In *El fonógrafo* the recorded conversation reveals that the male protagonist, Próspero, cheated on his wife while on a trip to Paris; in *El fonógrafo ambulante*, the device proves that the protagonist couple, Antero and Araceli, sincerely love each other; in *El día de la victoria*, the recorded conversation shows that Don Blas, the alleged science enthusiast, was in reality a scammer. In *El bazar H*, the trope is subverted, again showing – as in the example from the newspaper above – that the phonograph’s alleged ability to tell the truth could be divorced from the mechanisms of sound playback. In the play, the phonograph becomes the centre of a gag by articulating what each of the characters are thinking, even though this is not what they say: for example, a politician claims that his main purpose is to achieve the good of his homeland, but the utterance the phonograph plays back says that he is only interested in personal advancement.

The relative frequency in these plays of the trope of the truth-telling phonograph suggests that librettists believed that the trope would have resonated with audiences of all kinds - and even clearer proof is the fact that the ubiquity and dramatic power of this plot device was sometimes deployed to the detriment of realism. In *El fonógrafo*, *El fonógrafo ambulante* and *El día de la victoria*, the recording of the compromising conversation does not take into consideration that this could not have happened accidentally (by virtue of the phonograph having been left switched on inadvertently, as would be the case e.g. with a cassette recorder), but would instead necessitate a complicit phonograph operator. While such a slip might have been understandable in the case of *El fonógrafo* (premiered at a time in which very few of these devices would have been seen in Spain), it is less so with the other two plays.

Another of the earlier plays in the list above, *¡El arte del toreo!*, suggests that the trope of the phonograph as truth-teller, pervasive as it was, was in the early

<sup>15</sup> E. MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ: *Inventing the recording*, 32-33.

<sup>16</sup> \*\*\*: *Novedades teatrales, El globo*, 4 January 1880, 3-4.

years of the phonograph just one of several competing tropes, some of which did not manage to establish itself in the collective imaginaries of talking machines. *¡El arte del toreo!* borrows from one of the most conspicuous themes in Edison's initial descriptions of the phonograph: the idea that one of the main functions of the phonograph was to preserve the voices of the dead – either of prominent individuals whose speech should be recorded before they passed away, or of common people, as a memento for their relatives.<sup>17</sup> In the play, one of the scenes is set in mid-1950s; a room from the Museo Nacional (Spanish National Museum) is shown, and on display are several cylinders allegedly containing the recorded voices of celebrity bullfighters, which are then played back to the audience. This is the only of the plays cited above that develops the idea of the phonograph as a memory machine, which is consonant with the broader context: while some iterations of this trope can be found after Standard Phonograph demonstrations started in the early 1890s,<sup>18</sup> they are scarce, and certainly less prominent than the phonograph as truth-teller, suggesting the latter trope had imposed itself over the former.

### *The phonograph as stage machine*

In *El fonógrafo*, *El fonógrafo ambulante* and *El día de la victoria*, as has been discussed above, phonographs have a key role in the development of the plot. However, talking machines also accomplished other functions on stage: including a phonograph or gramophone demonstrations also allowed the authors of the libretto to temporarily take a diversion from the plot, and feature a varying range of musics and sounds on stage. This is consonant with the hybrid, experience-ridden nature of *género chico*: indeed, in many of the canonic works in the genre, the plot itself is rather simple or even inconsequential, but it becomes enhanced by various songs, choirs and dances (often with a regional component) performed by characters who have minimal importance to dramatic development. The plays surveyed here suggest that the phonograph was the object of some experimentation in this regard, from both a technological and dramaturgical point of view. Although it cannot be said that the phonograph was ever fully adopted into *género chico* as a stage machine, its use illuminates how recording technologies resonated with the conventions of the genre and it confirms that, towards the end of the period under study, phonographs and gramophones were overwhelmingly seen as music-playing machines, and not predominantly as scientific artefacts.

*El fonógrafo* is the earliest of the plays to make use of a phonograph diegetically, and it is also among the ones to give the most detail as to how the phono-

<sup>17</sup> Pascual DEL SOLORNO: *El fonógrafo*, *Revista del Ateneo Escolar de Guadalajara*, 5 August 1882, 53-55.

<sup>18</sup> E. MOREDA RODRÍGUEZ: *Inventing the recording*, 36; Publio HEREDIA Y LARREA: *El testamento fonográfico*, Madrid: La revista política, 1895.

graph demonstration at the end of the play was to work in practice. The author indicates that a phonograph was to be placed to one side of the stage; near it, but off-stage, a choir of indeterminate size would perform the various voices and sounds supposedly emanating from the device. As has been advanced earlier, phonographs were still a rarity in Spain at the time, and the original Edison machine produced a rather soft sound, which probably made it unsuitable anyway for a performance in the theatre. However, in other respects *El fonógrafo* does attempt to be realistic: indeed, some of the sounds allegedly played by the phonograph would be the same or very similar to those audiences would have encountered in real-life demonstrations (political-military songs, birdsong, bells). After the introduction of the Perfected Phonograph and its successors, some plays did indeed use real machines, such as *El fonógrafo ambulante* and *Los cuatro trapos*, but others still relied on actors (*Sombras chinescas*) or gave stage directors the choice (*En aras de la moral*). Beyond technological and logistical considerations (e.g. the limited length of the cylinders, the possibility that the phonograph would not work), it is likely that using actors or choirs gave stage directors more flexibility. Indeed, several of the plays explicitly state in the stage directions that the list of numbers allegedly played back from the phonograph could be lengthened or shortened *ad hoc*, presumably depending on the audience's reactions. In doing so, the audience in the theatre would have joined the actors in becoming the audience for the phonograph demonstration on stage.

The most conspicuous example of a talking machine being used to introduce a range of other materials to the detriment of plot comes from *El fonocromoscop*. The play provides a typical example of the fragmentary nature of some subgenres in *género chico*, such as *revista* and *cuadros* (paintings), which became particularly prominent in the latest years of the genre in the 1900s: in these, there is no plot to speak of, and instead the play consists of loosely tied vignettes or sketches. In this work, it is a particular recording technology which provides this loose connection: the fonocromoscop, introduced in the prologue as a mixture of phonograph and cinematograph. The prologue sees various characters from different walks of life gathering to attend a demonstration; each of the subsequent scenes is supposed to be a recording-film (which effectively works as a self-contained sketch) played out by the fonocromoscop. Interestingly, there is no epilogue to take us back: instead of returning to the fonocromoscop demonstration at the end (and perhaps finding out, for example, whether the *criada* (maid) has changed her mind on technology), the play ends with one of the sketches, with no formal conclusion. In doing this, *El fonocromoscop* takes to the extreme one of the tropes first experimented with in *El fonógrafo* and *El fonógrafo ambulante*: the play ends with a succession of numbers of indeterminate length, changing the focus from the play to the phonograph demonstration itself (whether real or pretend).

### Conclusion

While notices and articles about phonograph exhibitions and the advertisements of the *gabinetes fonográficos* might tell us a story about the arrival of recording technologies in Spain – a story heavily embedded in science and progress – the plays featured in this article nuance this narrative somewhat, and in doing so they offer us a glimpse into some of the steps and shifts that might have slowly developed into the widespread embrace of phonographs and gramophones as music-making machines. What we find in these texts is a somewhat detached or ambivalent attitude towards discourses of science, modernization or civilization, and – perhaps as a consequence of this – a more welcoming attitude from a relatively early stage towards the idea of recording technologies as mere entertainment. While these historical understandings of the recording might approach our own, there are two others that might be more alien to us, and that have implications for histories of listening and, consequently, of performing too: firstly, the focus on group demonstrations and the absence of solitary listening even towards the end of the period under study; secondly, the notion of the phonograph as truth-teller – but one for which the truth might not involve exclusively audible reality.

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*Sažetak*GOVORNI STROJEVI U ŠPANJOLSKOM KOMERCIJALNOM  
GLAZBENOM KAZALIŠTU 1888-1913

Kada je Edison 1877. predstavio svoj prvi fonograf, uglavnom ga je zamišljao kao uređaj za olakšavanje uredskog rada i korespondencije. Zasigurno nije predvidio da će se ponajviše koristiti za rekreativnu reprodukciju glazbe, kao ni većina njegovih suvremenika. Zapravo, trebala su proći dva do tri desetljeća da fonograf (i drugi govorni strojevi) postane manje-više sinonim za glazbeni zvuk. Ključan faktor za ovu promjenu bila su, naravno, tehnološka poboljšanja koja su omogućila da slušanje glazbe na govornom stroju doista bude i ugodno iskustvo. Međutim, presudnu je ulogu odigrala i pojava, odnosno razvoj niza kulturoloških nazora o tehnologijama snimanja koje su se zauzvrat umetnule u šire kulturne diskurse o znanosti, tehnologiji, zvuku i izvedbi. Iako su imali važnu transnacionalnu komponentu, takvi su se diskursi presudno oblikovali nacionalnim, regionalnim i lokalnim okolnostima i preokupacijama.

Pratiti kako su se percepcije tehnologija snimanja razvijale u posljednjim godinama devetnaestog stoljeća gotovo je nemoguć zadatak: osvrti ili novinski izvještaji o interakcijama s tehnologijama snimanja (npr. demonstracije fonografa) nerijetko su bili pod jakim utjecajem Edisonova vlastitog publiciteta, a osobnim svjedočanstvima (npr. u dnevnicima ili pismima) često je teško ući u trag. U ovom članku koristim pomalo nekonvencionalan izvor za proučavanje takvih percepcija u specifičnom kontekstu: konkretno, španjolske komercijalne kazališne predstave (i glazbene i govorne), u kojima su tehnologije snimanja vrlo zastupljene. Takve predstave, napisane kako bi se postigao široko rasprostranjen komercijalni uspjeh, vjerojatno su izražavale stavove koji su brzo i lako naišli na razumijevanje publike koja je pretežito bila iz srednje i radničke klase (za razliku od sadržaja koji su im bili izazovni ili su ih težili obrazovati), te stoga mogu dati uvid u to kako su (neki) Španjolci gledali na ove nove izume. U članku govorim o tome kako su percepciju fonografa u početku uglavnom oblikovali postojeći diskursi o znanosti, tehnologiji, mobilnosti i znanju, a koji su se tek polako pomicali prema zvuku i glazbi. Iako bi nam obavijesti i članci o izložbama fonografa i reklamama za fonografe mogli ispričati priču o dolasku tehnologije snimanja u Španjolsku, predstave prikazane u ovom članku donekle nijansiraju navedenu priču, pritom nam nudeći uvid u neke od koraka i pomaka koji su se polako razvili u široko rasprostranjeno prihvaćanje fonografa i gramofona kao strojeva za stvaranje glazbe.