



**COMELLA-LASERNA'S *LA CECILIA*
AND BOURBON IDEALS OF PROGRESS
IN THE LATE SPANISH
ENLIGHTENMENT**

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Author Luciano Francisco Comella and composer Blas de Laserna wrote *La Cecilia* in 1786 for performance at the Mortara palace in Madrid.¹ The Marchioness of Mortara sponsored the work and performed the title role.² The action of *La Cecilia* takes place in a Spanish village where a Count presides over the peasants, including Cecilia and her husband Lucas. The Count owns the land where the village is located. In addition to the peasants and the Count, the plot features a Don Juan-esque character, the Marquis, who arrives from the city and tries to rob Cecilia, an impoverished hidalga (lady), of her virtue. The Marquis's presence disrupts the harmony between master and villagers. Aided by the righteous Count, Cecilia and her husband Lucas enlighten the Marquis with their virtuous example. Order is restored as the once corrupt Marquis mends his ways, and the village returns to peace under their master.

The present article proposes that in *La Cecilia*, the pastoral topic applied to the Spanish village served to stage the model agricultural community that was meant to further Spain's economic development under Carlos III (reigned 1759-1788). More specifically, the play customizes pastoral conventions to fit Bourbon ideals of progress partly (but not exclusively) informed by the French economic theory of physiocracy. These ideals dictated that landowners were to deal directly with the peasants harvesting their land, thus eliminating the intermediaries that could take advantage of the rural population, and channeling taxes directly to the crown. Therefore,

¹ Printed libretto: *La Cecilia. Primera parte. Drama en dos actos que se representó en casa de los Excelentísimos Señores Marqueses de Mortara* (Madrid: Benito Cano, 1786). Manuscript libretto: Tea 1-16-4. Manuscript scores: Mus 25-1. Both manuscripts in Biblioteca Histórica Municipal, Madrid.

² The VII Marquises of Mortara in 1786 were Benito Palermo Osorio de Orozco y Lasso de la Vega and Josefa Dominga Catalá de Valeriola y Luján, later known as the Duchess of Almodóvar.

in order to maximize national productivity, peasants needed to be happy. *La Cecilia's* village represents this Spanish New Arcadia, with its happy, productive peasants thriving under the moral authority of their lord the Count. Contemporary neoclassicist works produced in Spain also used the pastoral to represent an idealized version of rural life.³ However, unlike most of them, *La Cecilia* excludes high-pastoral characters such as shepherds and nymphs. In this play, the forests and riverbeds of Tasso and Garcilaso have mutated into a small town, and the sanctuary is no longer Diana's temple but the Count's country residence, where the villagers sing their praises to their master.

By the time *La Cecilia* was written, Laserna was employed as a composer for the Madrid city theaters, and Comella was a freelance author and playwright.⁴ Comella is known for his heroic tragedies, and also for his sentimental plays, both of which were popular genres during the late-eighteenth century. Laserna in turn wrote all kinds of music for the theater, standing out as a *tonadilla* composer.⁵ They were both very active in Madrid's artistic and literary life, despite the fact that the city's intellectual elites did not always acknowledge their works.⁶ Comella and Laserna lived off their work, and though they counted on noble patronage from time to time, commercial success was very important to their careers. After the private performance at the Mortaras's in 1786, *La Cecilia* was commercially adapted (that same year)

³ For a prime example of the high pastoral topic merged with the Bourbon agricultural agenda, see Rodríguez de Arellano, *Delicias de Manzanares*. See also the study about Montiano y Luyando by Fernández Cabezón.

⁴ Both Comella and Laserna had previously worked for the VI Marquis of Mortara in the 1770s. Writer and composer collaborated often in musical plays and short theater pieces up until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Comella was orphaned as a young man and became the protégé of the VI Marquis of Mortara, who had served with his father in the military. *La Cecilia* was commissioned by the VII Marquis – more precisely, by his wife, the Marchioness. Angulo Egea has researched Comella's work in *La otra cara del teatro de la Ilustración*, and has also written about his collaboration with Laserna in *Los melólogos de Comella-Laserna*. On Comella and his works, see also Cambroner, Ebersole, and Fernández Cabezón.

⁵ For the most detailed biography of Laserna to date, see Gómez. For his activity as a *tonadilla* composer, see Le Guin and Subirá.

⁶ Most notably, Leandro Fernández de Moratín parodied Comella's popularity in the dilettante character of Don Eleuterio in *La comedia nueva* (1792).

for the Coliseo del Príncipe.⁷ In 1787, Comella and Laserna wrote a sequel titled *Cecilia viuda*, also sponsored by the Mortaras. The city coliseos programmed *La Cecilia* again on September 1787; December, 1792; May, 1801 and January, 1810. On May 30, 1812, the *Diario de Madrid*'s issue announced the play at the Coliseo de la Cruz with the modified title *La honesta Cecilia*, and again in May 1813 as *La Cecilia*.⁸

This paper hones in on the intersections between the pastoral qualities of the musical numbers and contemporary Bourbon policy. But the play is multi-faceted. *La Cecilia* certainly draws from sentimental plays, novels, and operas of the late-eighteenth century, so much so that discussing sentimentality would merit an entire article on its own.⁹ The topic of sentimentality exceeds the scope, length, and intention of the present text, so references to sentimental works will be inserted sparsely and only when pertinent, such as when discussing Cecilia's character.¹⁰ *La Cecilia* is also indebted to a tradition of pastoral musical theater in Spain, from mythological zarzuelas and villancicos in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, to the zarzuelas of Ramón de la Cruz in the 1760s and 1770s, to the *payos* (villagers) and *majos* of stage tonadillas and sainetes.¹¹ Without ignoring the connections between *La Cecilia* and other contemporary *comedias*, tonadillas, and operas, the main frame of analysis for this article is centered instead around the physiocratic theories in the works of Mercier de la Rivière, Quesnay and the writings of Olavide and Jovellanos. While a few connections

⁷ There were two theaters managed by the City of Madrid in the late-eighteenth century: the Coliseo del Príncipe and the Coliseo de la Cruz.

⁸ The last date annotated in the manuscript prompters' librettos from the coliseos archive is 1810.

⁹ In fact, *La Cecilia* is considered one of Comella's most well-known sentimental or lachrymose plays. Pataky Kosove suggested that it may be an adaptation of Charles Johnson's *Coelia, or the Perjured Lover* (1732) (68). Yvonne Fuentes has more recently rejected this idea, linking *La Cecilia*'s plot to Lope de Vega's librettos – a connection also acknowledged by Pataky.

¹⁰ About sentimental theater in Spain, see García Garrosa 1990 and 1996, Pataky Kosove, McClelland, and Cañas Murillo.

¹¹ Some studies about the representation of popular characters in tonadillas and sainetes include Romero Ferrer, Sala Valldaura ("El payo y la ciudad"), and Subirá ("Madrid y su provincial").

to other musico-dramatic works will be established, the present investigation is not a comparative study. Comparative studies of *La Cecilia* with Golden Age Spanish theater, with De la Cruz’s zarzuelas, and with sentimental opera (in particular with Goldoni’s *La buona figliuola*) remain to be written.

The first section of this article will briefly situate *La Cecilia* in the context of Bourbon policy, in particular that of Carlos III, his ministers, and surrounding intellectuals, such as Pablo Olavide (1725-1803) and Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744-1811). I will then approach *La Cecilia*’s music and dance numbers from its characters’ tiered status: first, the Count as a noble landowner; second, Cecilia and Lucas as enlightened-sentimental peasants; and third, the villagers as the ideal rural community. These characters express themselves through declamation (the Count), solo song (Cecilia and Lucas), and choral singing/dancing (the villagers), respectively.

Character	Music	Status	Where they live
Cecilia	Solo song	Poor hidalga, now peasant	Secluded cottage
Lucas	Solo song	Poor soldier, now peasant	Secluded cottage
Count	---	Noble, landowner	City and village
Marquis	---	Noble	City
Marchioness	---	Noble	City
Count’s butler	---	Servant	City
Marquis’s lackey	---	Servant	City
Four village girls	Ensemble singing	Peasants	Village
Four village lads	Ensemble singing	Peasants	Village
Village mayor	---	Peasant, comic	Village
Two aldermen	---	Peasants, comic	Village

Table 1: Characters in *La Cecilia*.

(Characters addressed in this article shaded in gray)

As a guide, the following table charts all musical interventions in *La Cecilia*.

	Scene	Location	Music and dance numbers
ACT I	1	Forest, Cecilia and Lucas’s cottage	Song “Lily and Jasmine,” eliminated from public performance (Cecilia and Lucas)
	2	Town hall	---

	3	Count's palace	<i>Bailete</i> * (full ensemble, see Example 1)
	4	Village plaza	Seguidillas** (full ensemble), Canzonetta de payas (female peasant ensemble, see Example 2)
	5	Forest, Cecilia and Lucas's cottage	---
ACT II	1	Forest, Cecilia and Lucas's cottage	---
	2	Town Hall	Canzonetta de payas (male peasant ensemble, see Example 3)
	3	Count's palace + village plaza	<i>Bailete</i> repurposed as chorus*, Stick dance (Danza de paloteo, full peasant ensemble)
	4	Street	Seguidillas** repurposed as serenade (full ensemble)
	5	Entry hall of anonymous house	---
* and ** have the same music, different lyrics.			

Table 2: Musical numbers in *La Cecilia*

Finally, the article will conclude with an explanation of why *La Cecilia*'s interpretation changed over time. The social model it proposed proved unsustainable from the start because it required a type of peasant who was subservient and simultaneously capable of agency and morally sophisticated. Moreover, the coexistence of traditional, pastoral, and sentimental elements in the same play caused some confusion in terms of genre. Further iterations of *La Cecilia* produced in commercial theaters ended up treating it as a proto-nationalist comedy of manners.

***La Cecilia* and Bourbon ideals of progress**

La Cecilia depicts a Spanish rural community flourishing under the paternalistic, absolute authority personified in the Count – until the Marquis comes from the city and threatens to violate this order. In producing such a play, Comella, Laserna, and the Mortaras nodded to Carlos III and his ministers, who at the time were envisioning a prosperous nation that would thrive on government-sponsored agricultural and commercial reforms. In the government's vision, peasants played a crucial (if subordinate) role as the

productive force of the economy. Given the resemblance between peasants and shepherds, and given the topic’s ethical implications, the pastoral was a suitable platform for staging late-Bourbon ideals of progress.¹² In fact, the pastoral had already been used on stage, in French *pastorales héroïques*, for example, to portray the stratified society characteristic of an absolutist regime, where deities stood for nobles and shepherds stood for commoners (Charlton 166). In the case of *La Cecilia*, shepherds and nymphs morphed, with some adjustments, into diligent *labradores*¹³ who inhabited nature in productive, instead of contemplative, ways.

Portraying aristocrats as enlightened rulers sensitive to their subjects’ wellbeing was common practice in eighteenth-century works for the stage, but Comella in *La Cecilia* adapts this general trend to fit sociopolitical programs specific to Spain.¹⁴ Bourbon agricultural philosophy and policy was built partly on physiocracy, an economic model formulated by French economist and surgeon François Quesnay (1694-1774).¹⁵ For physiocrats, the economic order stemmed from the natural order, and the same universal law dictated both. To ensure the production of wealth, the same laws that govern the physical world must also rule the economy. Colonial functionary Pierre Paul Mercier de la Rivière (1719-1801) elaborated on Quesnay’s idea of natural order in *L’Ordre naturel et essentiel des sociétés politiques* from 1767. Their conjunct economic theory presupposed enlightened despotism as part of the natural order since the interests of the king were everybody’s interests, from landowners and workers to clergy and merchants (Mercier de la Rivière iii). French Encyclopédistes like Voltaire criticized physiocracy for its support of absolutism, but Spanish economists embraced it. Intellectuals such as Olavide and Jovellanos adopted some physiocratic principles and combined them with mercantilist and free-trade ideas to create their own brand of economic and social policy.

¹² In his consideration of the pastoral topic in the eighteenth century, Mantz observes that “from antiquity down, the pastoral was commonly justified on ethical grounds: it was said to be particularly adapted, through a pleasing picture of the life of the most simple people, to offer a salutary example to the harassed denizens of courts and cities.” (422).

¹³ “One who ploughs or cultivates.”

¹⁴ See Strohm 273 ff.

¹⁵ François Quesnay developed this theory mostly in *Physiocratie, ou Constitution naturelle du gouvernement le plus avantageux* from 1768.

According to physiocracy, God himself designed the laws of society as part of the general order of creation.¹⁶ Theories combining enlightened ideas with religious belief were often popular in Spain, and physiocracy appealed to Spain's Catholic monarchy for justifying absolutism as part of God-given natural law. It also offered a formula for earthly happiness and wealth that agreed with reason. In *La Cecilia*'s interpretation of a physiocratic order, the Count embodies the caring ruler, while the villagers' happiness stems from obeying the natural order and freely subjecting themselves to their master, trusting that he will protect their interests.

Neither *La Cecilia* nor Bourbon projects for progress disrupted the status quo, and they certainly did not question monarchy as a system of governance. Nevertheless, some of the late-Bourbon models for agricultural reform, such as those proposed by Olavide and Jovellanos, did grant modest landownership to peasants in order to foster national development. The economic structure represented in *La Cecilia* avoids this model built on small landowners (*pequeños propietarios*), relying instead on the conservative model where the high aristocracy owned all of the land. Comella preferred this latter model probably because it was the traditional paradigm of seventeenth-century Spanish theater. More to the point, the Marquises of Mortara (for whom he first wrote the play) owned considerable expanses of land in different regions of Spain. Thus, it is unlikely that Comella and Laserna would want to present their patrons with a work supporting the idea of dividing and redistributing their land to small landowners. Instead, both playwright and composer created a flattering representation of aristocrats in their portrayal of the Count, the enlightened lord who runs his estate for the profit of nation and king.

The high nobility as landowners

In *La Cecilia*, the Count stands for the grandees of Spain as the landowners and benevolent authorities emulating the king. The characterization of the Count follows a template similar to that of the enlightened ruler found in Comella's heroic tragedies, which were inspired by the lives of European monarchs such as Frederic II of Prussia (1788, 1789,

¹⁶ Mercier de la Rivière thought all men have "a portion of happiness" and "an order meant to assure [their] own enjoyment" contemplated "within the general plan of creation." This order is the same underlying the natural world; men can get to know the laws of this order through an inner "divine light," and happily live in society if they follow the rules (Mercier de la Rivière v-vi).

1792) and Catherine the Great (1797).¹⁷ Comella wrote *La Cecilia* before he created his most famous heroic tragedies, so it is possible that he used the Count as a prototype for his future noble characters. His interest in the role of the enlightened leader, together with the Mortaras' status as landowners, could have motivated his thematic choice for *La Cecilia*.¹⁸

Spanish grandees like the Mortaras held extensive land property around the country but lived in urban centers such as Madrid, Barcelona, and Cádiz. They managed their estates through administrators, seldom venturing into rural areas, and especially not the remote ones. In an effort to reshape this pattern and make aristocrats contribute to the central economy, the authorities insisted that noble landowners supervise their territories in person. To make this direct involvement in their estates palatable to aristocrats, artists and intellectuals looking for official approval recreated Spanish villages as Arcadian communities, *loci amoeni*, to where the high nobility could escape from the corruption of the cities. Thus, in Act I, scene 2 of *La Cecilia* the Count appears onstage reading newspapers and journals in the comfort of his country palace, where he has retreated away from city life. In his opening monologue, the Count recalls the pastoral by evoking the *beatus ille* and by speaking in the refined versification associated with eclogues. He reflects upon the blessings of provincial life in a five-stanza speech (first stanza transcribed here):

Qué placenteros días	A	7
me dispensa el retiro de la Aldea!	B	11
Entre sus caserías	A	7

¹⁷ See Caldera about sentimentality in the enlightened despots of heroic tragedies.

¹⁸ Little to nothing is known about the personal lives or stances of Benito Palermo Osorio or Josefa Dominga Catalá de Valeriola y Luján (the VII Marquis and Marchioness of Mortara) during the time they were married, perhaps because the marriage was annulled in 1789. I have consulted records both at the Arxiu General i Fotogràfic in Valencia and at the Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza in Toledo. There are virtually no primary sources related to *La Cecilia* other than a couple of related expenses. Since Josefa Catalá de Valeriola went on to be a patroness of the arts later in her life, we can assume that she had a personal investment in producing plays at her Madrid abode. Furthermore, Comella dedicated the play specifically to her and gave her the title role, suggesting she paid for the commission. Both the Marchioness and the Marquis of Mortara owned considerable amounts of land, but she seems to have been wealthier than him. The marriage lasted only seven years, and some financial disputes ensued.

el alma noblemente se recrea	B	11
pues sin la cortesana desventura	C	11
logra, haciendo dichosos, su ventura. ¹⁹	C	11

(What pleasant days
the retreat to the village affords me!
Among its hamlets
the soul finds recreation in noble ways
for, without the courtesan misfortune
it achieves its bliss in making others happy)

Even though the Count does not sing in the play, his monologue harkens back to the leisure song of shepherds central to pastoral poetry.²⁰ The specific poetic form of the Count's monologue is the *sesta rima* or *sextina real* stanza in Spanish (*sesta rima* or *sestina narrativa* in Italian), consisting of six-line stanzas with an ABABCC rhyming pattern.²¹ *Sextinas* can be written using only hendecasyllables, or in an alternation of eleven- and seven-syllable lines, sometimes referred to as *versi sciolti*.²² The count's monologue uses this seven-plus-eleven pattern, common in sixteenth-century high-pastoral poems such

¹⁹ A similar (much shorter) encomium of the village is found in Goldoni's play *L'incognita* from 1751. In Act I, scene 3, the banker Ottavio enjoys his country home: "Che delizioso soggiorno è la campagna!... Quanto volentieri spendo la metà dei miei giorni in questa solitudine amena! Non darei un giorno di villa per un mese di abitazione in città."

²⁰ In the words of Alexander Pope, "'Tis natural to imagine, that the leisure of those ancient shepherds requiring some diversion, none was so proper to that solitary life as singing; and that in their songs they took occasion to celebrate their own felicity" (xxxii).

²¹ Spanish poets in the Renaissance learned the *sextina* from Italian poets like Petrarch, who in turn adopted the form from Provençal poetry in the troubadour tradition. The *sestina narrativa* refers more specifically to a form also called Provençal *sextina*, which consists of six stanzas of six lines each, plus a *congedo* of three lines. The form is attributed to the twelfth-century Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel. See Cenizo Jiménez 31-39.

²² *Versi sciolti* are frequently used in Italian recitative, but in *La Cecilia* they function as heightened speech to mark important structural points in the play. Comella only uses this verse meter for three monologues, once for each of the three main characters: the Count, Lucas, and Cecilia.

as Garcilaso's second *Égloga*, or San Juan de la Cruz's (1542-1591) spiritual allegories, *Cántico espiritual* and *Subida al Monte Carmelo*.²³

The Count's monologue casts the *beatus ille* in the particular guise of the court (or town) vs. village (or country) topic, which Spanish authors had been using recurrently since the Renaissance.²⁴ In general, the court signified the perils of modernity, while the village stood for an Arcadian community preserved from corruption. Even though the town vs. country topic intersects with the pastoral, there are some differences between the two. First, whereas the pastoral is set during the primal Golden Age, the court vs. village topic situates the *beatus ille* in a more specific historical timeframe, in this case, the Bourbon late Enlightenment. Second, the *beatus ille* distances itself from idyllic scenes to focus instead on social values. In other words, the court vs. village topic emphasizes ethics over aesthetics, making it all the more suited to advertise for the kind of social reform sponsored by Carlos III's government. Comella was not the only one who chose the court vs. village topic for his work. Several of his contemporaries revisited the *beatus ille* cum town vs. country, using high-pastoral poetic forms such as hendecasyllables and even full eclogues, to support and promote the Bourbon project of agricultural modernization.²⁵

In spite of his connections to the high pastoral, the Count is very much a man of late-Bourbon times when it comes to his economic stance.²⁶ Under

²³ Garcilaso adopted the Petrarchan style from Naples, where he lived in 1522-3. He personally knew Tasso and Minturno from a second sojourn in Naples between 1530 and 1533.

²⁴ The foundational work for the court vs. village topic in Spain is Fray Antonio de Guevara's *Menosprecio de corte y alabanza de aldea* (*Disdain for Court and Praise of Village*, 1539). Guevara's sixteenth-century *Menosprecio* continued to be reprinted in the seventeenth (1673) and eighteenth centuries (1735, 1790), and as such, would have been a familiar frame of reference for Comella.

²⁵ Among these authors we find Tomás de Iriarte with his 1780 eclogue *La felicidad de la vida en el campo* (*The joys of a country life*) and Juan Meléndez Valdés with his 1794 poem-epistle *El filósofo en el campo* (*The country philosopher*).

²⁶ For "high pastoral," see Monelle, 183-270. Monelle defines the high pastoral in connection with the classical topics established in Virgil's and Theocritus's works, and later reworked by Jacopo Sannazaro (*Arcadia*, c1480) and by Torquato Tasso (*Il pastor fido*, 1590). Monelle contends that in the nineteenth century the high pastoral gave way to the rustic or low pastoral "based on the Volkslied and its embodiment of an idealized European peasantry."

Carlos III, the high nobility was expected to manage their own estates efficiently, but yield economic control to the king. At the time *La Cecilia* was written, the Bourbon government was experiencing trouble with intermediary leasers. The high nobility would lease their vast lands to local nobility or to the rural bourgeoisie, who in turn leased it to small farmers. In the eyes of the government, the peasants (*labradores*) were then victims of an economic system in which they paid for the land they worked on with what they produced, at the detriment of their own sustenance. From this point of view, intermediaries and taxes stood in the way of progress. Politician and political theorist Pablo de Olavide discussed the problem of leasers in his 1768 *Informe sobre la Ley Agraria (Report on Agricultural Law)*.²⁷ His solution to the problem of leasers involved convincing the high nobility to negotiate labor and crops directly with peasants, who would then avoid being taxed for their use of the land. This is the model that we see in *La Cecilia*, where the Count goes to the village not only to seek retreat but also to interact personally with the peasants living and working on his land. Thus, the Count embodies the “good father” figure linked to enlightened absolutist leaders, who sympathizes with the needs and woes of his subjects (Caldera 221-222). The epitome of the ruler-protector of agriculture was of course the king, but all aristocrats were encouraged to emulate him.²⁸ In *La Cecilia*, music and dance frame all the interactions between the Count and the villagers as a group, as will become clear through a closer look at the musical numbers in the play.

The first choral number of *La Cecilia*, a *bailete* (see Example 1), directly addresses the issues of taxes and of the duties of a good aristocrat. In Act I, scene 4, the villagers have assembled to greet the Count's daughter (the Marchioness) and her husband the Marquis, who have just arrived from the city for a visit. The eight female and male peasants in secondary roles, along with “other lads and lasses” ... “enter [the stage] singing and dancing.” The ensuing number is titled “Bailete con panderetas” (chorus/dance with

²⁷ Meléndez Valdés in *El filósofo en el campo* also refers to major-domos as the cause of the peasants' sufferings.

²⁸ Tomás de Iriarte ends *La felicidad de la vida en el campo* by praising Carlos III as the ultimate protector of agriculture: “Who knows how to love them [*labradores*] more benignly / Who promotes their wellbeing more eagerly / Other than Carlos, the magnanimous?” (“¿Quién más benignamente sabe amarlos / Quién con ansia mayor su bien promueve / que el magnánimo Carlos...?”) (Iriarte 20).

tambourines.) The main purpose of *bailetes* was to create an aura of festivity – often in honor of a king or another ruler – much like ball scenes in opera.²⁹ *Bailetes* like this one also signified the pastoral, and on occasion composers even called them “bailete pastoral.”³⁰ Their music featured markers Raymond Monelle connects to the rustic pastoral: compound meter, drone-like uniform patterns on the bassline (especially the “rocking” siciliana pattern ♩ ♪), simple melodies with dotted rhythms, non-expressive harmonies, and major tonality (Monelle 229 ff.). The music of *La Cecilia’s bailete* presents all of the rustic pastoral markers listed by Monelle. Through these musical conventions, the chorus/dance evokes the idyllic atmosphere of the pastoral, even though the characters performing it represent rustic villagers. The peasants are applauding the Count's progeny because they are grateful for the Count's magnanimity, which manifests itself in a very specific way: he does not tax them.

Pues los amos no exigen
tributos de los pobres,
nuestro afecto a sus plantas
tribute corazones,
coronando de aplausos
su hermosa prole.

(For the masters do not exact
taxes from the poor,
may our affection at their feet
pay hearts in tribute
crowning with applauses
his beautiful progeny.)

From the point of view of the Bourbon ministers, aristocrats who

²⁹ The term “bailete” derives from the Italian “balletto.”

³⁰ We find “bailetes pastorales” representing peasants and other rustic characters in the musical theater pieces of several Spanish composers. These are but a few examples of pieces with *bailetes pastorales* (dates and authors correspond to the music, not the text): *La jura del alcalde* (*Sainete*, Antonio Guerrero, 1764), *El alba y el sol* (*Comedia*, Antonio Guerrero), *Doña Inés de Castro* (*Comedia*), *Las bodas de Camacho el rico* (*Comedia*, Pablo Esteve, 1784), *La espigadera* (*Comedia*, Pablo Esteve, 1785), *La restauración de Madrid* (*Comedia*, Laserna, 1781), *La fiel pastorcita y tirano del Castillo* (*Comedia*, Mariano Bustos, 1790).

charged the peasants little to no tax for working their land performed a great service to the nation because it meant more revenue for the king. Moreover, farmers unburdened with taxes felt happier and, under physiocratic logic, worked harder. In fact, Olavide wrote in his *Informe* that taxes should be abolished (23). Besides Olavide, writers like Pedro Rodríguez de Campomanes (1723-1802) and Juan Sempere y Guarinos (1754-1830) also rejected any taxation not paid directly to the king.³¹ These writers' archetype of a good ruler was influenced, along with physiocracy, by Ludovico Antonio Muratori's *Della pubblica felicità*, published in 1749 and translated into Spanish in 1790.³² At the opposite extreme of the good ruler of the Bourbon Enlightenment is the unproductive noble, personified in *La Cecilia* by the Marquis.³³ This type of noble, who lived the life of the court (city) without any first-hand knowledge of his agricultural territories, distressed Bourbon officials and their intellectual allies endlessly. The Marquis also displays features of what Mercier de la Rivière calls the "arbitrary despot." Once the peasants are at the mercy of the arbitrary despot, their rights become uncertain and mayhem ensues (Mercier de la Rivière, 173). This is exactly what happens when the Marquis shows up in the Count's village, altering the equilibrium between lord and peasants. Luckily, Cecilia and Lucas do not fall for his charm, and in standing up to the Marquis, defend the Bourbon idyll of a happy and productive peasantry.

The enlightened peasants

In *La Cecilia*, the modest nuclear family unit formed by Cecilia and Lucas, living in the Spanish countryside far from the court (Madrid), signifies the New Arcadia of late-Enlightenment Spain. Politically speaking, this New Arcadia of burgeoning agricultural communities was meant to bring about national progress. Cecilia and her husband Lucas embody the uncorrupted Spanish village, and their marriage exemplifies the prototype of a farming

³¹ The belief that taxes not paid directly to the king impoverish the nation had been around since the seventeenth century.

³² Muratori's accepts the need for taxes (ch. 22) but condemns excessive taxation (ch. 23).

³³ In her analysis of *La Cecilia*, Angulo Egea sees the rural environment of *La Cecilia* as an excuse for Comella to contrast old (the Count) and new (the Marquis) noble types (*La otra cara* 106).

family, content with their subsistence-economy way of life.³⁴ They derive their happiness and productivity from internal rather than external wealth. The social order envisioned by Comella and Laserna in *La Cecilia* required that all peasants, including the leading roles, accept their fate at the bottom of the economic pyramid. Nevertheless, Cecilia and Lucas's agency and moral aspirations called for a degree of subjectivity akin to that of the proto-bourgeoisie found in the sentimental genre, though lacking their economic means. This subjectivity separates them from the rest of the villagers in the play. To highlight the protagonists' subjectivity and moral agency, the play presents the marriage of Cecilia and Lucas in a mix of pastoral and sentimental terms, musically codified as solo song in the first scene of the play.

In the first scene, wife and husband sing complementary stanzas of a solo song next to their cottage, a *locus amoenus* framed by luscious trees. First, Cecilia spins thread as she sings a memento mori with agricultural references in the mold of the pastoral topic *collige, virgo, rosas*. After she delivers a monologue, Lucas reprises the song.³⁵

Cecilia: Aunque el hombre y la alfalfa
 sin contratiempo
 disfruten verdor,
 cortan su lozanía
 al mejor tiempo,
 tiempo y labrador.
 Lirio y jazmín
 rosa y clavel
 quiero yo coger,
 para hacer guirnaldas

³⁴ Ideally, peasant families ought to bear children who could in turn contribute to familial economy. However, the Marchioness and Marquis of Mortara had no descendants. Possibly, Comella took into account this fact when creating the character of Cecilia for the marchioness.

³⁵ Cecilia spinning thread may have recalled the 1765 zarzuela *El amor pastoril*, written for the wedding of Carlos IV (then Prince of Asturias) to Maria Luisa of Parma. In the opening scene, the shepherdesses are spinning thread. *El amor pastoril* is a translation of Goldoni's (under the pseudonym Polisseno Fegio) *La Cascina, dramma giocoso per musica* (Venice, 1761) (Calderone, Pagán 365).

a mi dulce bien.³⁶

Lucas: Matizados objetos
que de este prado
fuisteis el primor:
Adornad de Cecilia,
mi dueño amado,
el dulce candor.
Lirio y jazmín...

(Cecilia: Even though man and alfalfa
enjoy their verdure
without setbacks,
time and the farm worker
cut their vim and lushness
in the best of times.

Lily and jasmine,
rose and carnation
I want to pick
to make garlands
for my beloved.

Lucas: Embelished objects,
you, who were the delicacies
of this meadow:
Adorn the candor
of Cecilia,
my beloved.
Lily and jasmine...)

Even though the music is lost, the poetic meter and lyrical content allow one to infer how this song shaped the mood of the first scene. First of all, the song is labeled “*canción*.” Comella, De la Cruz, and other contemporary authors mark solo songs in their librettos either as arias or simply as “*canción*” or “*canta*”. They write arias in regular meters such as hexasyllables or octosyllables, usually on the subject of love. Songs, on the contrary, may on occasion be in seguidilla meter, a genre associated to rural environments and characters such as peasants or *majas*. Cecilia’s song loosely follows seguidilla meter, but is structured in two contrasting stanzas, like an aria da capo (the second stanza functions as a refrain, picked up by Lucas in the reprise). The

³⁶ The music for this song has not been found, since it did not form part of the version for the public theaters. There is no known score for the Mortara staging of *La Cecilia*.

two-stanza solo song form had been widespread in Spanish theater since the mid-eighteenth century, because of the influence of Italian opera (Leza 322). Thus, the opening musical piece of *La Cecilia* can be described as something between a traditional song and a pastoral aria.

Cecilia and Lucas’s opening song and the entire first scene of *La Cecilia* structurally resemble that of Goldoni/Piccinni’s *La buona figliuola*, though the characters and the plots are substantially different in both works.³⁷ One of the key differences lies in *La Cecilia*’s emphasis on ethics over romance, making Cecilia a virtuous heroine with sentimental tinges, rather than a fully sentimental character like Cecchina. A full comparison of *La buona figliuola* and *La Cecilia* surpasses the scope of this article, but a reading of the texts of the opening songs for Cecchina and Cecilia can illuminate the different emphases in each work. Even though both texts allude to nature, more specifically to flowers, Cecchina sings of beauty and pleasure, whereas Cecilia meditates on the fleetingness of life. They are both surrounded by nature, but while Cecchina sings in a garden, Cecilia experiences nature as an agricultural working place, as evidenced by her use of words like “alfalfa” and “farm worker.”

Act I, scene 1, *La buona figliuola*

What a *pleasure*, what a *delight*
it is to see in this morning
the jasmine competing

³⁷ McClelland suggests that *La Cecilia* is inspired in *La buona figliuola* (161), but a side-to-side reading of both scripts reveals that *La Cecilia* draws just as heavily on other styles, such as sixteenth-century pastoral poetry and seventeenth century Spanish theater. McClelland herself admits that, like other early Comella scripts, the style of *La Cecilia* is “more traditional than foreign” (162). In his evaluation of Comella’s plays, eighteenth-century censor Santos Díez González says “if I am correct, [*La Cecilia*] is a version of an Italian pastoral...”, but he doesn’t mention which one. Based on the research of authors like Angulo Egea, McClelland, and Pataky, and upon comparison of *La Cecilia* with *La buona figliuola*, it is not accurate to say that the former is a version of the latter, since the parallels are too scant. It seems like Comella took the structure of the first scenes of Act I and Act II of Goldoni’s libretto for the corresponding first scenes of both acts in *La Cecilia*, but the rest of each act is very different, as are the plots and the issues at stake. Beyond that, he may have borrowed other ideas from French sentimental plays, from other Goldonian librettos, and from baroque Spanish *comedias*. Thus, it is entirely possible that *La Cecilia* reminded audiences, then as now, of other famous operas and plays.

in beauty with the rose!

And to be able to say to the herbs,
it is I, with fresh humors,
who is coming to water you.³⁸

(Act I, scene 1, *La Cecilia*)

Even though man and *alfalfa*
enjoy their verdure
without setbacks,
time and the *farm worker*
cut their vim and lushness
in the best of times.

Lily and jasmine,
rose and carnation
I want to pick
to make garlands
for my beloved.)

In spite of these differences, attendees at the Mortara performance were likely familiar with *La buona figliuola* and would have recognized Cecilia's connection to Cecchina, all the more because the ensuing monologue (recitative, in Cecchina's case) and the reprise of the song by a male character also appear in both works.³⁹ Following Cecilia's singing, the audience learns

³⁸ The music for Cecchina's aria could not have been used for Cecilia's song, because the verse meter is different. Cecchina's aria is in octosyllabic verse.

³⁹ In both cases, the protagonist's love interest sings a reprise of the song, Mengotto in *La buona figliuola* and Lucas in *La Cecilia*. For Spanish versions of *La buona figliuola*, see Calvo Rigual. A two-act zarzuela version of *La buena figliuola* in Spanish, by Antonio Furmento Bazo, was performed at the Coliseo de la Cruz in Madrid on November 11, 1765, with the title *La buena fillola* or *La buena muchacha* (Andioc and Coulon 643). Cotarelo y Mori (based on Napoli Signorelli) attributed this zarzuela to Ramón de la Cruz (Cotarelo y Mori 70). However, Calvo Rigual has recently refuted De la Cruz's authorship on the basis of comparison with an existing manuscript at the Biblioteca Histórica Municipal of Madrid (Tea 1-188-2 bis), which attributes the libretto to Bazo (Calvo Rigual 248). Like in other zarzuela adaptations of operas, the libretto was translated into Spanish and spoken dialogue in verse took the place of recitative. Arias, duets, and other musical numbers were for the most part preserved. Pablo Esteve (a contemporary of Laserna) arranged some of Piccinni's music and added a few new pieces (Cortès 144, 145). The libretto and the score for this zarzuela

that she is spinning out of necessity –although she is of noble birth, she and Lucas lost their land because they offered it as bond to help someone else. Like Cecchina, Cecilia bemoans her fate, except that the former laments not knowing her origin of birth, while the latter knows she comes from a wealthier *hidalgo* status. Cecchina finds redemption when she is restored to her noble origin, whereas Cecilia finds redemption in turning poverty into virtue.

Cecilia's solo song can be compared to those of sentimental opera heroines but also to the mid-century reformulation of the zarzuela genre, which largely dispensed with mythology in order to focus instead on representations of the popular classes. De la Cruz contributed in great part to this reformulation, as did composer Antonio Rodríguez de Hita (1722-1787). Much of the libretto text in De la Cruz's zarzuelas is written in simple, even coarse language. Nevertheless, some of the songs depart from this quotidian register to include metaphors rich in natural elements and alluding to simplicity, beauty, and sometimes love.⁴⁰ Akin to operatic arias in their contemplative function, these "nature songs" in De la Cruz's zarzuelas evoke the grievances or celebrate the joys of peasant life, introducing tropes of the rustic pastoral into the comic plot.⁴¹ In De la Cruz's zarzuelas, however, the

can be found at the Biblioteca Histórica Municipal of Madrid (Tea 1-188-2bis, Mus 52-2). *La buona figliuola* was staged in Italian at least in Barcelona (1761, 1770), in the court theater of San Ildefonso in Segovia (1767), in the court theater of Aranjuez (1769), and in Valencia (1769) (Calvo Rigual). Spanish productions included Cádiz (1762), and probably Sevilla (1764). A *comedia* version in three acts took place at the Coliseo de la Cruz in 1784 with the title *La bella Pamela inglesa* (printed libretto at BNE U/9246). Goldoni's libretto, based on Samuel Richardson's novel, first and most successfully brought the Pamela character to Madrid. Richardson's novel was not translated into Spanish until 1794. For more on the connections between De la Cruz and European theater, see, among others, Lafarga.

⁴⁰ For example, in the opening song for *Las segadoras de Vallecas*, a character named Cecilia sings: "Fresh little flowers / embellish my breast / free, and full / of simplicity" ("Frescas florecillas / adornad mi pecho / libre, y satisfecho / de simplicidad.") *Las segadoras* was an original zarzuela by De la Cruz.

⁴¹ Many (though not all) of De la Cruz's zarzuelas were adaptations of Italian opera buffa with librettos by Goldoni. Sometimes, the original music was preserved, and other times it was arranged or newly composed. Further connections between De la Cruz and Goldoni can be found, among others, in Angulo Egea ("Traducido libremente"), in Dowling ("Libretista de zarzuelas"), in Leal Duart/Rodríguez Gómez, in Marcello, and in Rodríguez Gómez's dissertation. For a comprehensive view of the life and works of Ramón de la Cruz see Cotarelo y Mori and Sala Vallaura. For more about his zarzuelas, see John C. Dowling, "Las castañeras

spoken dialogue surrounding these “nature songs” is comic, while in the first scene of *La Cecilia*, the dialogue is sentimental, preserving the atmosphere set up by the “Lily and jasmine” song. Neither Cecilia nor Lucas ever speak with idioms or barbarisms, as do other peasant characters in the play (like many of De la Cruz’s characters), so one can imagine that their musical language also sets them apart from the commoners.

“Lily and jasmine” was performed at the Mortaras’ but eliminated from the commercial version played at the city theaters. The single press review ever written of *La Cecilia*, in Madrid’s monthly periodical *Memorial Literario* (August 1786), does not offer any information that could help us understand why the song was discarded. One lone sentence at the end of the review notes that “this play had previously been staged in an illustrious house adorned with some musical songs, omitted from the public performance.” (*Memorial* 473).⁴² In the privacy of her mansion, the Marchioness of Mortara, playing Cecilia, would have opened the play singing “Lily and Jasmine,” establishing her character as a morally sophisticated *hidalg*a turned farm woman – poor on the outside, rich on the inside. Thus, ideally, individual agency and moral stature bridge the vast economic differences between the Count as the landowner and Cecilia and Lucas as poor farmers.

The first scene of *La Cecilia* reveals a few similarities between Cecilia and Lucas and the small landowners (*pequeños propietarios*) imagined - yet never concretized - by Olavide and later by Jovellanos. In physiocracy, property (of the land) is at the core of the natural and social order (Quesnay XXXI). When men do not own the land, they are miserable because they depend on other men, ultimately becoming unproductive. To avoid this situation, Olavide proposes that small landowners lease the same plot of land indefinitely, which would make them feel rooted in it as much as if they owned it. If farmers can live in their own small parcel together with their families and cattle, Olavide assures, they will be contented and contribute to the prosperity of the State (36). Economist and lawyer Campomanes adds that while the farmer works the land, his wife and daughters can contribute to familial economy by

picadas,” and Labrador López de Azcona. Coulon and Sala Valldaura (“El sainete de costumbres teatrales”) have studied De la Cruz’s costumbrismo, also in his *sainetes*.

⁴² The *Memorial* review found lack of verisimilitude in Lucas’s survival to the Marquis’s stabbing at the end of the play. According to this review, the strongest points of the play were Cecilia’s displays of sentimentality when Luca is wounded, the Marquis’s repentance, and the town council’s comic scenes (473).

spinning wool and weaving fabrics (x).⁴³ Much like the ideal small landowner, Cecilia and Lucas reside in the same land they farm, as opposed to day laborers, who lived in villages and had to hike long distances to the plots they were hired to farm. However, Cecilia and Lucas are much poorer than the farmers Olavide envisioned.⁴⁴ Of course, as a playwright, Comella was hinting at Bourbon ideals only generally as he was seeking to join the ranks of the enlightened writers, not create policy. Nonetheless, both *La Cecilia* and reform attempts by Olavide, Jovellanos and Campomanes, arrive at a similar conundrum: how to foster individual agency in order to bolster productivity, while restraining access to economic power or upward social mobility. The rest of the peasants in the play escape that contradiction, behaving like obedient subjects but not like moral equals to the Count.

Revamping the peasant: From rabble to people

Through ensemble numbers where the villagers sing and dance together, the New Arcadia depicted in *La Cecilia* stretches beyond Cecilia and Lucas's nuclear family to encompass the entire rural community. As is conventional in operatic tradition, in zarzuela, and in *comedias*, *La Cecilia*'s villagers express themselves only in choral numbers and group dances. This collective expression differs in genre and intention from Cecilia and Lucas's individual song at the beginning of the play. In singing and dancing, the villagers perform their roles as healthy and happy people who obey their sovereign out of free will, following thus the physiocratic logic (Quesnay 43).⁴⁵ The connection between productivity and enjoyment of life lies at the core of physiocratic theory. If men are deprived of the freedom to enjoy life, then there is no motivation, they don't work, the land does not produce goods, and the social order falls apart.⁴⁶ Jovellanos conjures up the connection between freedom, social order, and happiness in his *Memoria sobre las diversiones*

⁴³ Manufacturing, even of the domestic kind, is not a source of wealth in physiocracy, but it is a fundamental pillar of Bourbon policy (Fernández Fernández 225).

⁴⁴ A small proprietary in Olavide's vision ought to possess fifty *fanegas* of land, while Lucas owns only one *fanega* (1.59 acres).

⁴⁵ For Quesnay freedom is intrinsically linked to property: "Property, Security, Freedom." (440).

⁴⁶ "Désir de jouir et liberté de jouir, voilà l'âme du mouvement social; voilà le germe fécond de l'abondance" (Mercier de la Rivière 33).

públicas.

Rustic choral numbers similar to those of *La Cecilia* formed part of Spanish pastoral zarzuelas and *comedias* since at least the seventeenth-century (Stein 24ff., 143, 159).⁴⁷ Either pre-existing or newly composed, traditional choral numbers were meant to represent the commoners and their worldview.⁴⁸ Harvest songs or *canciones de labradores*, for example, are choral numbers where the peasants sing of the joys and miseries of the laborer to the tune of simple melodies.⁴⁹ The practice of “rustic” choral numbers continued into the eighteenth century, and in fact, the “Canzonetta de payos” in the second act of *La Cecilia* is a *canción de labradores*. Besides their connection to harvest songs and other traditional songs, *La Cecilia*’s music and dance numbers were also influenced by Ramón De la Cruz’s zarzuelas from the late 1760s and 1770s, which featured peasants (especially peasant women) as the main characters.⁵⁰ Functionally, the ensembles in *La Cecilia* greatly resemble those of heroic tragedies from the last third of the century, where people (not always peasants) appear as loyal subjects singing the praises of their lord. Comella and Laserna gave these conventions, already present in musical theater, a new twist: choreographing a communal life essential to the

⁴⁷ Choral numbers in four parts are called *cuatros*. Some times, the term “*cuatro*” is used even if the chorus has fewer than four parts. *Cuatros* in Spanish musical theater of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are often associated with commoners. They express popular sentiment, whether rejoicing in a festivity, praising a leader or monarch, enjoying nature, or narrating shared experiences related to work or status. Even though all *cuatros* express popular sentiment, not all of them are rustic or inspired in popular song.

⁴⁸ Contrary to recitative and arias of mythological zarzuela, rustic songs from the *comedia* tradition are diegetic: they portray a working-class group of people singing a song on stage.

⁴⁹ See Frenk.

⁵⁰ See, for example, the opening chorus of *Las segadoras de Vallecas* (1768), where peasants implore the sun to treat them mercifully: “Ardent planet/ cool down the burning heat/ and treat the reapers/ with mercy// Abridge the hours/ of slumber and nourishment/ may they give us strength/ to work.” (“Hermoso planeta / templá los ardores / y a los segadores / trata con piedad.”). Zarzuelas by Ramón de la Cruz featuring peasants include *Las segadoras de Vallecas*, *Las labradoras de Murcia*, *Las labradoras astutas* (1774, adaptation of *Le contadine bizzarre* by Petrosellini/Piccinni). *Las pescadoras* (1765, adaptation of *Le pescatrici* by Goldoni/Bertoni and Galuppi) also features workingwomen.

Bourbon agricultural project. At the same time, of course, these ensembles provided the audience with entertainment and spectacle.

Except for Cecilia and Lucas's opening song, all the musical numbers in *La Cecilia* feature the peasants as a group. In fact, collective music and dance *make* the peasant characters come to being. Peasants were at the foundation of the Bourbon reform edifice. Without a consolidated peasant community, absolutism could not exist, for the old regime thrived on the lord-vassal economic relationship configured during the Middle Ages (Yun Casalilla 483). Bourbon administrators wanted peasants to be happy for them to be productive, and in Jovellanos (as in Quesnay), freedom is the condition for happiness. The role of the state is to guarantee people's freedom to enjoy life and love their sovereign (Fernández Fernández 150). In *La Cecilia*, the Count's character represents the *res publica*, the guarantor of public order who keeps the Marquis's threat of disruption at bay. In return, the villagers love him, and this is seen clearly in their musical numbers.

Comella and Laserna use the middle (third) scene of each of the two acts in *La Cecilia* to stage the villagers as grateful servants but also as an orderly social group. In scene 3, act II, the Marquis promises to stop seducing the village women, even though in reality he is plotting to kidnap Cecilia later that night. The rest of the characters believe his false promises, and thus, the social order is momentarily restored and sealed with music and dance: the villagers sing a chorus honoring the Count, followed by a stick dance interspersed with group recitation. The stick dance was Comella and Laserna's chance to introduce a highly attractive show number.⁵¹ Stick dances, to this day, form part of the folklore of nearly every Spanish region, as well as the Spanish Americas; they are highly choreographed, even ritualistic, and often performed during patron saint festivities. In many eighteenth-century staged works, dance music is used to highlight the setting of a drama and the characters' background (Strohm 243).⁵² Indeed, this stick

⁵¹ According to the libretto, after the chorus, "Six couples enter the stage to the beat of a march, who form a stick dance, and at the end of each different formation, the dancers say the following verses [...]; once they are finished, they leave to the beat of the same march" (Comella 57). The music manuscript includes a page with two short dances under the title "A march." The first dance is in compound meter and repeats three times - this would be the stick dance, since the peasants recite three stanzas in between; the second is in duple meter, most likely the march proper.

⁵² Strohm is talking about dance movements in Metastasian opera sinfonias, yet the same principle applies to this instrumental dance. Strohm goes on to explain that the opera sinfonia (his examples are from Pergolesi, Vinci, and Hasse) expresses "the

dance is by far the most traditional number in *La Cecilia*, drawing attention to the setting of the drama in the Spanish countryside. To further emphasize the dance's rustic nature and its relation to popular celebrations, the stanzas recited in between the dancing include barbarisms (*mosicada* for *musicada*, *beninos* for *benignos*, *endinos* for *indignos*.)

La Cecilia's stick dance typifies the collective, public, and orderly fun recommended by Jovellanos in his *Memoria sobre las diversiones públicas* (*Report on public amusements*), which was commissioned by the Spanish Academy of History in 1786 (the year *La Cecilia* was written), and published in 1796. In this report, Jovellanos divides the population into two sectors: those who work and those who live a life of leisure. The government needs to provide entertainment for the latter, but the former must amuse themselves. Jovellanos observes, however, that when the state polices public amusement and expressions of happiness, peasants fear for their safety and stop gathering to have fun. True to physiocratic principles, Jovellanos warns local authorities that:

El estado de libertad es una situación de paz, de comodidad y de alegría: el de sujeción lo es de agitación, de violencia y disgusto: por consiguiente el primero es durable, el segundo expuesto á mudanzas. No basta pues que los pueblos estén quietos: es preciso que estén contentos.... Un pueblo libre y alegre, será precisamente activo y laborioso; y siéndolo, será bien morigerado y obediente á la justicia. Cuanto mas goce, tanto más amará el gobierno en que vive, tanto mejor le obedecerá, tanto mas de buen grado concurrirá á sustentarle y defenderle. (Jovellanos 76-77)

(Freedom is a state of peace, of comfort and joy, but restriction is a state of agitation, of violence and discontent; therefore, the former endures, but the latter is subject to change. Consequently, it is not enough for people to be at rest; they need to be happy.... Free and happy people will be active and hard-working, and as such, they will be well-behaved and obedient to justice. The more they enjoy life, the more they will love the ruling

most important subject matter and characters of the drama, *hierarchically differentiated*." The hierarchy Strohm lays out coincides with that of *La Cecilia*. Thus, "the first movement [of the *sinfonía*] presents the royal and male subject." This would be *La Cecilia*'s Count, who does not sing, but speaks in *arte mayor* declamation akin to that of pastoral eclogues. Cecilia's solo song corresponds to Strohm's second movement of a *sinfonía*, which presents "a suffering female or conflict with her or within her." Finally, the *bailete pastoral*, chorus, seguidillas, and stick dance, fulfill the function of the third movement, which "catches a glimpse of further characters and their backgrounds." (Strohm 246).

government, the better they will comply with it, with more enthusiasm and willingness will they agree to support it and defend it.)

Jovellanos also paints a bleak picture of a village so threatened by police surveillance that they barely venture out in the public space:

En los días mas solemnes, en vez de la alegría y bullicio que debieran anunciar el contento de sus moradores, reina en las calles y plazas una perezosa inacción, un triste silencio que no se pueden advertir sin admiración ni lástima. Si algunas personas salen de sus casas, no parece sino que el tedio y la ociosidad las echan de ellas, y las arrastran al ejido, al humilladero, a la plaza, o al pórtico de la iglesia, donde, embozados en sus capas, o al arrimo de alguna esquina, o sentados, o vagando acá y acullá sin objeto, ni propósito determinado, pasan tristemente las horas, y las tardes enteras sin espaciarse ni divertirse. (Jovellanos 72-73)

(In the most solemn days [major religious holidays], instead of the joyful hustle and bustle which ought to announce the contentedness of its dwellers, a lazy inactivity reigns on the streets and plazas, a sad silence which cannot go unnoticed without surprise and pity. If anyone leaves their house, it looks like only boredom and idleness prompt them to go out and drag them towards the fields or the small chapels on the village's edges, to the plaza, or to the church's porch, where, covered by their capes, or leaning against a corner, or sitting, or wandering aimlessly, they despondently let the hours go by, and spend entire evenings without any amusements or diversions.)

The working people, he argues, must therefore be allowed to pursue fun activities, such as "games of strength, dexterity, or agility; public dances, bonfires, or picnics; strolls, races, parties with costumes or masks; any and all will be good and innocent as long as they are public." (Jovellanos 80-81).⁵³

Contrasting sharply with Jovellanos's somber figures, Comella and Laserna's villagers in *La Cecilia* create a convivial public space with their music and dance. Even though their communal celebration honors the aristocratic characters, the villagers organize and direct it themselves. Comella had to comply with the dramatic unit of time prescribed by the neoclassicists. As a

⁵³ Like Jovellanos, Iriarte in *La felicidad de la vida en el campo* praises town dances as a constructive pastime: "In the nearby towns and farmhouses / you can often find / dances and rejoicing / as innocent pastimes." ("No son poco frecuentes / En los cercanos pueblos y cortijos / Los varios pasatiempos de inocentes / bailes y regocijos.") (Iriarte 19)

result, the villagers gather three times in the course of one day to sing and dance together. Additionally, female and male peasants appear once each in gender-defined groups. These villagers are the *antithesis* of the grim reality perceived by Jovellanos: they live in community, they have fun, and they make noise - albeit of an organized kind. The liveliness of *La Cecilia's* village shines through in the staging of the chorus and stick dance scene:

Descúbrese la plaza con la fachada del Palacio iluminada, y en el resto del teatro varias luminarias: En el balcon de en medio estarán el Conde, Maldonado, el Marques, la Marquesa, Beltran, y demas, y en la plaza Celedonio, Bartolo, y Pascual, mozas y mozos.

(The plaza appears with the palace facade lit up, and around the rest of the theater [stage] several torches: In the balcony in the middle [of the facade] are the Count, Maldonado and the Marquis, the Marchioness, Beltran and other servants, and in the plaza Celedonio [the mayor], Bartolo and Pascual, lasses and lads.)

The scene takes place at dusk, but the villagers still have enough energy to assemble to praise their master, thus fulfilling Jovellanos's utopia wherein “Men who congregate often to relax and have fun together, will always form a united and affectionate people” (77-78). The Count, in turn, tolerates their praise as an expression of affection. Like Jovellanos's “good judge,” he does not actively participate in village activities, but “protects the people during such pastimes, prepares and decorates the venues where they take place, keeps away anything that could disturb them and lets the people fully enjoy the fun and happiness” (Jovellanos 81). The chorus before the stick dance sings of the peasants’ loyalty to the Count, while he presides at a distance from his palace balcony. The music is the same one from the *bailete* where they cheered the Count for not charging taxes, and has the characteristic siciliana rocking pattern indicative of the pastoral ethos of this community.

CHORUS:	Esas ardientes teas que al Amo se dedican de nuestros corazones el amor simbolizan, deseando a su progenie dichas cumplidas.
Count:	Todas estas ceremonias, no obstante que las repruebo, me halagan, porque me dicen el afecto de mi Pueblo.

(CHORUS: These burning torches
 devoted to the Master
 symbolize the love
 from our hearts,
 wishing his progeny
 abundant joy.
 Count: Even though I disapprove
 of all these courtesies,
 they please me, because they speak
 of the love of my people.)

When Jovellanos asserts that “any and all [small-town leisure activities] will be good and innocent as long as they are public,” the key term is “public.” By the time *La Cecilia* was written, the Bourbon administration had grown anxious about indoor social activities because women and men could mingle behind the private walls of family homes and mill houses. Local confraternities and associations often organized and sponsored these parties, hosting them beyond the reach of official surveillance and regulation (Saavedra 125, 130-131). Jovellanos instead proposed outdoor, communal leisure, which authorities could easily supervise. *La Cecilia*'s music and dance numbers happen safely in the public space, reaffirming the peasants' group identity and strengthening community ties while maintaining proper gender separation.

Indeed, the two choral numbers performed away from the Count's supervision are the “Canzoneta de payas” on Act I (see Example 2), and “Canzoneta de payos” on Act II (see Example 3), for female and male chorus respectively.⁵⁴ In the female canzonetta, the peasant girls pick fruit from the village trees, while in the male one the lads return from working in the fields. The term “canzonetta” (or “canzoneta”) in Laserna's compositions refers to a simple, cantabile song with rustic pastoral connotations, not meant for dancing.⁵⁵ The “Canzoneta de payas,” the more Italianate of the two in *La*

⁵⁴ Ensemble pieces like these two were expected in musical theater at the time, to showcase each cohort of singers.

⁵⁵ Both Laserna and Esteve use “canzonetta” in the same way. Most of their canzonettas are in 6/8 or 3/8 meter and frequently use siciliana rhythmic patterns in the bass or in the vocal melodies. Vocal melodies start on the downbeat, as opposed to those of the dance-based genres of *bailete* and *seguidillas*, which start on the upbeat. In contrast, De la Cruz in the 1760s-1770s and Pablo del Moral in the 1790s can use “canzonetta” for a French rustic song. See for example Del Moral's *sainete El tabernero*

Cecilia, begins with a siciliana rhythmic pattern (♩♩♩♩) on compound meter, over a pedal simulating a bourdon in the bass, in a moderate allegretto tempo, as befits pastoral music.⁵⁶ In contrast, the male “Canzoneta de payos” sounds less conventionally pastoral but does sound closer to some Spanish peasant songs in minor mode featuring a walking rhythm in duple meter.⁵⁷ For this second canzonetta, the male villagers enter the stage “with winnowing rakes, as if coming from the threshing floors,” the steady rhythmic pattern of the song suggesting that the actor-singers marched to the beat of the music, while a soloist sang the verse.

Neither of the two canzonettas in *La Cecilia* stem from popular tradition directly. Instead, Laserna penned them to emulate traditional songs “dressed up” with orchestral accompaniment, tonal harmonic progressions, and Italianate formal and melodic conventions.⁵⁸ The “Canzoneta de payas,” for example, presents the folk-inspired trope of a girl confronting her mother in love/marriage matters: ‘Mother, I earnestly want a fiancé’, but Comella writes an original text, and the form is ternary, instead of the more traditional strophic. Likewise, the “Canzoneta de payos” imitates *labrador* songs expressing grief, but expands on the melody, phrasing, and harmonic plan of popular tunes. Comella and Laserna’s makeover of traditional songs mirrors their revamping of the Spanish rural community. Music and dance in *La Cecilia* shape a proper people, the opposite of the rabble, orderly, but still subservient.

Preserving the idyll

La Cecilia’s first version combines pastoral, sentimental, and traditional traits in a distinctive way, perhaps because it was written for a noble

burlado, where there is a “French” canzonetta in 2/4, followed by a “Spanish” canzonetta in 6/8 with a siciliana pattern in the vocal melodies over a bass pedal.

⁵⁶ See Monelle, “The Pastoral Signifier,” 207 ff. The tripartite ABA design of the “Canzoneta de payas” points to a certain degree of stylization and Italianization of Spanish traditional song.

⁵⁷ See, for example, the traditional Spanish “Ya se murió el burro.”

⁵⁸ As Frenk notes, many old traditional songs had, since the second half of the seventeenth century, become part of the urban repertory, merging with newly composed ones. This makes it difficult to differentiate between anonymous tunes and those traceable to a composer (18-19).

patroness, rather than to satisfy public demand at the city theaters.⁵⁹ With this particular stylistic blend, Comella and Laserna staged a positive image of rural Spain as a happy and productive environment, and also presented an exemplary model for the landowning nobility. To this end, the play draws not only from pastoral, sentimental, and seventeenth-century Spanish dramatic conventions, but also on physiocratic ideas favored by the government of Charles III. These physiocratic ideas can be found intermingled with other economic and political principles in the writings of Spanish intellectuals and policy makers, such as Olavide and Jovellanos, among others. However, later adaptations of *La Cecilia* (for performance at the city theaters) privileged traditionalism and comedy, minimizing the political content and even some of the high-pastoral referents of the original. This shift is not surprising, considering that the genre standards of theater production at the time usually maintained the high pastoral, linked to sentimentality, separate from the rustic pastoral, linked to comedy.⁶⁰ As the years went by, the libretto of *La Cecilia* tended to shrink, all except in its comic scenes.⁶¹

Even though cuts to the libretto of *La Cecilia* were intended mainly to streamline the action, it is possible to discern in them a progressive lack of interest in the didactical and sentimental intentions behind the original version, together with increasing emphasis in the comic and entertaining aspects of the play. During the last third of the century, Madrid audiences began favoring sentimental characters in plays that were set in one of the

⁵⁹ There were two public theaters or *coliseos* in Madrid in 1786: the Coliseo de la Cruz and the Coliseo del Príncipe, located in the streets of the same name. Neither of them stands today. A third public theater opened in 1787, specifically destined for Italian opera: the Theater of Los Caños del Peral.

⁶⁰ In musical theater, rustic pastoral music and dance (like the ensemble numbers in *La Cecilia*) often followed the vein of *costumbrismo*, representing stereotypical popular characters such as *majas* and *majos*, Asturians or Galicians, muleteers, orange vendors, peasants, or *payos* – an umbrella term for rural people.

⁶¹ In fact, from the start, the most favorable reception went to the comic elements of *La Cecilia*. We know this from the *Memorial* review: "The comic scenes performed by the village's town mayor and his aides, to please their masters, pleased [the audience]." (*Memorial* 473). Santos Díez González's evaluation of *La Cecilia* and its sequel *Cecilia viuda* also approve of the comic elements: "The two *Cecilias* are less flawed than [Comella's] other pieces, for the action is comic, and the fable as a whole has morality." (*Cambronero* 580).

exotic locations fashionable at the time (Andioc 53-60).⁶² However, a Spanish peasant with bourgeois sensibilities such as Cecilia posed more challenges to genre conventions. Therefore, coliseo administrators, and perhaps Comella himself, decided to modify *La Cecilia* to conform to predominant genre standards. The long soliloquies commending virtue by the Count, Cecilia and Lucas were shortened and ultimately eliminated, and the political message was therefore curtailed. The comic parts and musical numbers suffered less trimming,⁶³ and without the didactic stretches of dialogue, the music veered towards entertainment. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, traditional music and dance started to be re-shaped as nationalist proto-folklore. Thus, the 1812 *Diario de Madrid* advertised the play as “adorned with a great set of an illuminated plaza, and with an entertaining national *bailete*.” (*Diario* 608).

As a consequence of these modifications, *La Cecilia* eventually became more and more akin to a typical Spanish *comedia* in the Golden Age mold of Lope de Vega, which eighteenth-century neoclassicists despised so much.⁶⁴ Baroque theatrical codes always formed an integral part of *La Cecilia*, but editions and cuts brought these stylistic codes to the forefront, at the expense of high-pastoral, sentimental, and political traits. The core moral message remained nonetheless: Cecilia's virtue vanquished the Marquis's devious ways, and he repented of his sins. Perhaps it was this moral message, acknowledged even by the powerful censor Santos Díez González in his 1790 critique of Comella (Cambroner 580), that kept *La Cecilia* in the Madrid theatrical repertory even after a reform that came into effect in 1800 banned several plays by Comella and other authors (Andioc 42). Indeed, local newspapers report stagings of the play in 1801, 1810, 1812, and 1813.

In spite of all the changes recorded in *La Cecilia*'s manuscript librettos, the Marquis's threat to the otherwise idyllic peasant community remained almost intact, with his cunning plans to seduce Cecilia and the other peasant girls who crossed his path. Indeed, the external threat to the idyll is a key

⁶² England was the favorite exotic location for sentimental plays. See Guinard.

⁶³ Curiously enough, the earliest public theater libretto *expanded* the first *bailete* by treating it as a chorus followed by two verses in seguidilla poetic meter, then a new iteration of the chorus with new lyrics. This expansion was later omitted. Both iterations of the seguidillas were also shortened, eliminating the middle verse.

⁶⁴ *Censorship* authority Santos Díez González harshly criticized Comella for catering to the public's “bad taste” for the “erroneous practice” of theater inherited from Lope de Vega (Cambroner 579).

element to plots within the pastoral topic, and the Marquis as the "bad nobleman" jeopardizes the New Arcadia of a thriving Spanish countryside. Musically, the villagers disclose the grievance he as an urban outsider brings to the village in the "Canzoneta de payos," where the minor mode paired with the marching pace of the duple meter reveals how heavily the Marquis's threat weighs on the peasants' shoulders. The "Canzoneta de payas" obliquely refers to the same threat, for the girls sing of their eagerness to find a fiancé—and implicitly get involved in sexual activity—as the Marquis roams around writing down their names, Don Juan-style. The figure of the Marquis imperils the possibility of the idyllic pastoral as much as it endangers peasant reproduction (another concern of the Bourbon administration) and lurks over Cecilia and Lucas's domestic bliss. When the Marquis tries to seduce Cecilia, he is, by extension, violating the social body of the village.

According to Nina Birkner and Your-Gothart Mix, at the core of the idyllic (*conditio sine qua non*) is "the presence of a well-structured [identifiable] group, organized on the basis of egalitarian principles, who operate in a world entirely free from hopeless distresses. This world is staged as organized as a domestic realm in a beautiful rural area, far from the court and the city." In this idyllic realm, time follows the cycles of nature (Birkner and Mix 4). Birkner and Mix's definition of the idyllic as a European topos matches perfectly with the world of *La Cecilia*. The whole drama evolves from the irruption of the court (personified in the Marquis) into the pastoral village, and the ensuing disorganization of the community. Songs and dance in *La Cecilia* serve only to reinforce the cyclical nature of the pastoral world. It is not a world of action propelling society forward but a world that endures as it is, because it is already as it should be. With their binary forms and strophic settings, traditional songs and dance lend themselves to representations of this cyclical idea of time in the pastoral world. They perform the rural community better than any words can.

EXAMPLES

The musical score for Example 1 is presented in a single system with six staves. From top to bottom, the staves are labeled: Flute, Clarinet, Horn, Voice, Violin, and Continuo/Bassoon. The music is written in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a common time signature (C). The score begins with a series of rhythmic patterns in the instrumental parts, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The voice part enters with a vocal line. The lyrics are written below the voice staff: "Pues los a-mo-ri-ño-sos xi-gen tri-bu-tos de los po-bres Nues- / For the ma-ri-tes do-not de-mand-ia-tes from the poor Ours". The score continues with further instrumental and vocal development.

Example 1

35

Flutes

Clarinet

Horns

Voice

Todas

Violins

Continuo, Bassoon

Ma-dre yo que-ro no-vio - Yo que-ro no-vio ma-dre an-tes con an-tes.
 Ma-ther I want a fan-cé I want a fan-cé mo-ther soo-ter than lá-ter.

41

Ma-dre yo que-ro no-vio - Yo que-ro no-vio ma-dre an-tes con an-tes
 Ma-ther I want a fan-cé I want a fan-cé mo-ther soo-ter than lá-ter

Example 2

25

Flutes

Clarinet

Horns

Voice

por que-rer-se ha-zer mer-zed las que-re ha-zer se-ño-ri-tas las que-re ha-zer se-ño-
 to-grant him-self a fa-vor he wants to make of them la-dies he wants to make of them

en el li-bro de me-mo-rias su se-ño-ri-a es-cre-bi-das su se-ño-ri-a es-cre-
 m-his note-book his lord-ship scri-tten down his lord-ship scri-tten

Violins

Continuo, Bassoon

33

ri-tas ti-ra ri-ra ri-ra ti-ra ri-ra ri-ra que bu-no an-da el chis-te con su se-ño-ri-a
 bi-das ti-ra ri-ra ri-ra ti-ra ri-ra ri-ra im' it a big_joke with his lord-ship
 la-dies

Example 3. *Canzoneta de payos* (male chorus), mm. 25-42

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LA CECILIA.

DRAMA EN DOS ACTOS.

POR DON LUCIANO FRANCISCO COMELLA.

TERCERA EDICION.

PERSONAS.

Cecilia, <i>hidalgos pobre.</i>	♣ El Conde, <i>Señor prudente.</i>	♣ Benito.	} Aldeanos.
La Marquesa.	♣ Beltran, <i>Lacayo del Marqués.</i>	♣ Simon.	
Manuela.	♣ Maldonado, <i>criado mayor del Conde.</i>	♣ Luis.	} Aldeanos.
Paca.	♣ Celedonio, <i>Alcalde de la Aides.</i>	♣ Bias.	
Tomasa.		♣ Dos <i>Alguaciles.</i>	} Aldeanos.
Petra.		♣ Lacayos del Marqués, <i>que no hablan.</i>	
Crisidas de la Marquesa.	♣ Bartolo.	♣ Coro de <i>Labradores.</i>	} Regidores.
Lucas, <i>morido de Cecilia.</i>	♣ Pasqual.	♣ Coro de <i>Labradoras.</i>	
El Marqués.			

ACTO PRIMERO.

El Teatro representa una selva frondosa, poblada de árboles: á la izquierda habrá una entrada de una casa pobre con puerta transitable; junto á ella un poyo, en que estará sentada Cecilia devanando, cantando la siguiente

CANCION.

<p>Cec. Aunque el hombre y la alfalfa sin contratiempo disfra en verdor, cortan su lozanía al mejor tiempo, tiempo y labrador. Lirio y jazmin, rosa y clavel quiero yo coger, para hacer guirnaldas á mi dulce bien. Cansada estoy: el destino ¡cómo muda las escenas del teatro de la vida</p>	<p>donde el hombre representa, haciendo que en un instante la alegre pase á funesta! Ayer yo representaba descuidada y satisfecha en decoracion alegre posesion de honra y riquezas; y hoy, corrido en un momento el telon de la opulencia, me presento en el teatro con situacion tan diversa, que estoy por necesidad devanando estas madejas. ¡O soberbios que mirais</p>
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Ayuntamiento de Madrid

con