



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

James Radomski

THE TENOR, Manuel del Pópulo Vicente García (1775–1832), his wife Joaquina, son Manuel, and daughter Pauline, together with other members of his operatic troupe, sailed from New York for Veracruz on October 16, 1826, in the brig “Brown.”¹ The fact that, when he applied for a passport on February 28, 1828, García affirmed having resided one year and four months in Mexico, would indicate that he went there directly.²

García was eagerly awaited by Italian opera lovers. Yet he was to find himself in a delicate position. Not only was he to confront the bureaucratic problems of theater management (with which he was by now all too familiar), but also he entered Mexico at a moment of political turmoil that affected his reception in the press—which was controlled by various bitterly opposed factions. Indeed, García at times became a pawn in the debates between the two principal parties: the *yorquinos* (named after York rite masonry) and the *escocés* (after Scottish rite masonry). The newspaper, *El Sol*, edited by Lucas Alamán,³ in whose house, on the street of los Bajos

de S. Agustín, it was established,⁴ was the organ of the *escocés*. This newspaper was critical of the *iturbidistas*, followers of Agustín de Iturbide (1783–1824), who had been proclaimed emperor in 1822, only to be shot two years later. The *iturbidistas*, in turn, founded their own newspaper, *El Águila Mexicana*, located in a printing shop on Medinas Street formerly owned by Iturbide himself.⁵ *El Sol*'s most formidable enemy, however, was the *Correo de la Federación Mexicana*, the paper of the *yorquinos*, edited by Lorenzo Zavala.⁶ To counter it, the *escocés* founded still another newspaper, *El Observador*, edited by Francisco Molinos del Campo, Rejon, Florentino Martínez, Francisco Manuel Sánchez de Tagle, Villa, Quintero, Cabrera and Mora.⁷ This organ of the *escocés* was in turn replied to by the *yorquinos* with *El Amigo del Pueblo*, edited by José

established the first iron foundry in independent Mexico. In 1830 he returned to his government post. In 1832 he was accused of complicity in the death of President Vicente Guerrero, but acquitted. He served later in the governments of Bravo and Santa Anna. Among his writings, the five-volume *Historia de México* is a classic.

¹ New York Public Library clipping file on Manuel Patricio García.

² *El Sol*, March 1, 1828.

³ Lucas Alamán (*b* Guanajuato, 1792; *d* Mexico City, 1853), gained fame both as politician and historian. After visiting Europe (where he studied mining techniques and served as secretary to the Cortes de Cádiz, extraordinary sessions), he returned to Mexico in 1823. At Iturbide's fall, Alamán was named minister of Relaciones Exteriores e Interiores, but quit the post in 1824 to devote himself to the Compañía Unida—which es-

⁴ José María Tornel y Mendivil, *Breve reseña histórica de los acontecimientos más notables de la nación Mexicana, desde el año de 1821 hasta nuestros días* (Mexico: Impr. de Cumplido, 1852; repr. Mexico: Instituto Nacional de Estudios Históricos de la Revolución Mexicana, 1985), 80.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* Lorenzo de Zavala, governor of the state of Mexico, was instrumental in the overthrow of Manuel Pedraza in October, 1828.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.



Manuel Herrera, José María Bocanegra, Agustín Viezca, José Ramon Pacheco, José Domínguez Manzo, and José María Tornel.⁸

In 1827 and 1828, during García's visit, the *yorquinos* accused the *escoces* of being Spanish-sympathizers. Since García remained a Spanish citizen, it was but natural that he should find support from the *escoces* in *El Sol*. On the other hand, the *Correo* criticized him at times, if for no other reason than to contradict *El Sol*.

Anti-Spanish sentiment culminated, finally, in the December 20, 1827, decree of expulsion followed by the annihilation of the *escoces*'s party. Worse still, violent rebellions led by Antonio López de Santa Anna in the fall of 1828, overthrowing the elected Manuel Gómez Pedraza, resulted in deaths and the looting of Spanish property in the capital. On the whole, therefore, García's visit could hardly have been worse timed.

The most important theater in Mexico City during his visit was the Teatro Principal. This theater, originally known as the Coliseo Nuevo (giving its name to the street on which it was located) was inaugurated on December 23, 1753, and after various refurbishings continued in use until destroyed in a fire that broke out during a performance Sunday night, March 1, 1931.⁹ The building—except for its distinctive façade of three arched doorways—changed appearance radically several times during its long history.¹⁰ Some idea of the theater at García's time, however, is offered in descriptions by Joel

⁸ *Ibid.* José María Tornel y Mendivil (*b* Veracruz, 1789; *d* Tacubaya, 1853) served as Secretary to Santa Anna and Guadalupe Victoria. Later he was federal deputy, and (at the time of García's stay) governor of the Federal District. He was also director of the College of Mining from 1843 until his death. Apart from politics, he was interested in literature, translating works of Byron and writing a drama of his own, *La muerte de Cicerón* [preface to the facsimile edition of *Breve reseña histórica*]. His *Breve reseña* (see note 4), an important historical work, is frequently cited by Alamán in his *Historia*.

⁹ Manuel Mañón, *Historia del Teatro Principal de México* (México: Editorial Cvltvra, 1932), 460. The destruction of the theater was lamented in a corrido by Eduardo Guerrero, "Triste fin del Teatro Principal" [Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley].

¹⁰ Among others, in 1845, 1863 [Manuel Orozco y Berra, *Memoria para el plano de la ciudad de México* (México: Imprenta de Santiago White, 1867), 207], 1880, when the façade was changed, and 1895 [Mañón, 130, 173-4].

Poinsett in 1822¹¹ and William Bullock in 1824.¹² Both comment on the horseshoe shape; Poinsett affirmed that it narrowed so much toward the proscenium that the view from the boxes was obstructed:

The boxes of the theatre were filled with well dressed people; the front part of the pit, where there are seats, was occupied by gentlemen, and the back part of it was crowded with common people and soldiers, who are obliged to stand during the whole performance. The theatre is shaped like a horse shoe, the stage being at the smallest end, so that very few of the spectators in the boxes can see the whole of it. A balcony projects from each box, where the ladies display their persons and finery to great advantage.¹³

Bullock describes the theater in more detail and also comments on the Mexican custom, unknown to French and English audiences, of reserving seats:

Mexico has but one place of dramatic exhibition; it is a good building, and of considerable size. Its internal form is that of a lengthened horse-shoe, narrowing considerably towards the stage, the proscenium of which is too much contracted to admit of showy exhibitions, or many actors at the same time. The amphitheatre, or audience part, consists of a pit and four tiers of boxes,¹⁴ which are let off by the month or season:—the front of these is scarcely raised a foot from the floor. They are furnished with chairs, &c. according to the taste or opulence of the owners; and, if occupied by a full-dressed audience, the effect should be very imposing, as the whole-length figures of the ladies are seen to much more advantage than in our own theatres, pressing over the high parapet of what we correctly call boxes. The pit has three divisions, to each of which the prices vary, and each seat is separated by arms, and numbered; which practice, however convenient, could hardly be established in our crowded houses.

The orchestra is indifferent; the scenery, dresses, and machinery, inferior to the theatrical exhibitions seen at

¹¹ Joel Roberts Poinsett, *Notes on Mexico, made in the autumn of 1822* (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey and I. Lea, 1824). Poinsett (1799-1851), native of South Carolina, was the U.S. minister to Mexico. In 1828 he discovered in Mexico the flower that bears his name.

¹² William Bullock, *Six Months' Residence and travels in Mexico* (London: John Murray, 1824).

¹³ Poinsett, 80-81.

¹⁴ Only three tiers of boxes are mentioned in Mañón's description of the theater, as it was in 1753 [p. 17]. Three tiers agree with the price listings at García's time.



Bartholomew fair, and the performers in general below mediocrity.

The house is lighted from above by sconces, each holding a number of glass lamps; and is more pleasing than might be expected. It is open every night, and twice on Sunday, on which day, and on holy-days, the price is double; but this establishment paid so ill, at the time of our visit, that its final close was announced from the stage while we were present—so that the capital of New Spain is now without any dramatic entertainment.

Of the audience I must say but little, in consequence of the woeful change which has taken place among the inhabitants of this once gay city. Not a tenth part of the house was occupied; and of those present but very few were females, and they not dressed for the occasion as in Europe,—wearing no ornaments, with the exception of one young lady of distinction, who had a plume of black feathers in her head. Two or three Canton crape shawls were the only coloured articles of dress to be seen. With very few exceptions, all present, of either sex, pursued their favorite habit of smoking; the ladies even in the boxes, with a fan in one hand and a cigar in the other, enveloped in a smoke that rendered it difficult to see from one side of the house to the other.

The “Spectator” thinks that women may so manage the graceful use of the fan as to make it an engine capable of ensnaring the hearts of men. If this be possible, how are we to withstand a Mexican beauty thus doubly armed? how many a hero who has fearlessly stood fire at Trafalgar or Waterloo, how many men who have dared all the artillery of the quadrille at Almack’s, would fly from the fair one with smoke issuing from her lips and nostrils, and enveloped in the fragrant incense of “real Havannah.”

The last time I visited the theatre was in company of M. Lewis Sultzer, agent of the Rhenish Company of Merchants. He had been in Mexico 40 years before, during the viceroyalty of the celebrated Galvez; and was strongly impressed with the miserably altered appearance of this once splendid place of amusement, which he had before seen crowded to excess by brilliant audiences. In the presence of the Viceroy smoking was prohibited, but between the acts a curtain was let down before his box, that the people might not be altogether debarred this luxury.¹⁵

When García arrived performances were being given not in the temporarily closed Teatro Principal but in the Teatro del Palenque de los Gallos (variously known as the Teatro Nuevo, Teatro de los Gallos, Teatro Moderno, Teatro Provisional, or Teatro de las Moras) which had been inaugurated on

October 9, 1823.¹⁶ A company directed by Andrés Prieto presented plays which alternated (as in Madrid) with opera performances. In January and February of 1827, *Otello* and *Tancredi* of Rossini were given in Spanish, with the tenor, Andrés del Castillo, in the leading roles.¹⁷

Colonel Luis Castrejón,¹⁸ who “engineered” García’s visit had set afoot plans to renovate and reopen the temporarily shuttered Teatro Principal well before García’s arrival.¹⁹ But since the Ayuntamiento had refused to underwrite the expenses, he announced charging enough to recoup the costs. In reply to the Ayuntamiento’s demand that prices be lowered:

Castrejón emphatically protested and even went so far as to announce that in the event that he were not permitted to charge two pesos for the orchestra seats and eight for the boxes, twenty reales in the mezzanine and five for general admission, he would not go ahead with the performances.²⁰

Nonetheless, the Ayuntamiento not only refused to relent but furthermore the councilman (*regidor*), Don Matías Fernández, announced that every effort should be made so that *foreigners* (including, of course, the opera performers) be not allowed to take money out of the country.²¹

As a result García opened, on the feast of the Saints Peter and Paul, June 29, 1827, not at any renovated Principal but at the Teatro de los Gallos.²² As in New York, the initial work was, again, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. The following appeared in *El Observador de la República Mexicana*:

¹⁶ Mañón, 55.

¹⁷ *El Sol*, January 20 and February 9, 1827.

¹⁸ Although Olavarría y Ferrari gives Castrejón the title, “Colonel,” he seems to have been a businessman at the time of García’s visit. Probably he was the same Luis Castrejón who, while in London in 1823, had difficulty in obtaining a passport for a business trip to Paris [Secretaría de Relaciones, *La Diplomacia Mexicana*, vol. 3 (Mexico: Eusebio Gómez de la Puente, 1913), 280-285].

¹⁹ Enrique Olavarría y Ferrari, *Reseña histórica del teatro en México*, 3. ed. (México: Porrúa, 1961), 1, 228.

²⁰ *Ibid.*:

“Reclamó Castrejón con energía y aun llegó anunciar que en caso de no permitirle cobrar dos pesos en patio, ocho en los palcos, veinte reales en anfiteatro y cinco por entrada general, desistiría de dar principio a las funciones.”

²¹ Olavarría y Ferrari, 228.

²² *Ibid.*, 231.

¹⁵ Bullock, 169-173.

Since the 29th this distinguished actor has been presented in the Teatro Provisional. His performance lived up to the impatient expectations which everyone had since the announcement of his arrival on the shores of our Republic. Thus everyone is content, excited and satisfied.²³

This was an exaggeration. By no means was "everyone" pleased. Some of the audience did not even stay to the end of the performance:

Certainly the grand opera is the best we have seen so far, but García subtracted most of the value of the work by performing it in a foreign language. And the most shocking thing is that, while being an opera on a Spanish subject, we had to witness these characters singing it in Italian. This displeased most of the Americans inasmuch as we were left without understanding a good deal of the plot.²⁴

Thus began a polemic that was to last during García's entire stay. There were factions for both sides. Mostly, however, it can be seen from the abundant letters in the newspapers that, no less than in Europe, whether sung in Spanish or Italian, the public was craving Italian opera—and especially that of Rossini. And if not a whole Rossini opera, excerpts. A letter to *El Sol* of July 15, for example, begged García to allow the soprano Santa Marta's singing the aria with chorus, *Cruda sorta*, from the *Italiana in Algeri*.

Not yet ready to bend, García, on July 13, 1827, presented even his own *Abufar ossia la famiglia araba*, for the opening of the subscription series, in Italian. The announcement in *El Sol* of the previous day read as follows:

In [the theater] of grand opera, a work entitled *Abufar* is being rehearsed for presentation on the evening of Fri-

²³ *Ibid.*:

"Desde el día 29 se presentó este distinguido actor en el Teatro Provisional, habiendo su desempeño correspondido a la impaciente expectativa que fue común desde que se anunció su arribo a las playas de nuestra República, por lo que todos se hallan contentos, ansiosos y satisfechos."

²⁴ Luis Reyes de la Maza, *El Teatro en México Durante la Independencia* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1969), 26:

"Ciertamente que el ramo de la gran ópera, es lo mejor que hemos visto hasta ahora, pero García le quitó la mayor parte de mérito al haberla ejecutado en un idioma extranjero, y lo más chocante es que siendo una ópera española se veía a éstos cantando en italiano, lo que no agrada a la mayor parte de los americanos pues se quedan sin entender buena parte del argumento."

day, the 13th of this month. Of the merit and sublimity of this composition not a single word will be uttered, because its evaluation is reserved for the good taste of the enlightened Mexican public to whom it is being offered.²⁵

The *Águila Mexicana* on July 14, 1827, acknowledged that the opera was well received, but again demanded that all works be sung in Spanish:

Last night, Friday, the 13th of July, the Italian opera, *Abufar*, was premiered in the Teatro Provisional, and the expectations of the numerous and dazzling crowd which attended were certainly fulfilled. The applause was strong and sincere; Señor García, his wife and son manifested their grand and extraordinary ability and artistic knowledge. Also, neither Señor Waldeck nor the Señora Santa Marta was found wanting. Nevertheless, we are of the opinion that if operas are not sung in the language of the country (even at the risk of losing quality in the music), it will not be easy to sustain the enterprise, because the number of persons versed in Italian, or who are content just with the pleasure of the singing and the music, without understanding what it is all about, cannot be as great in Mexico as in Paris and London. And therefore neither will attendance sufficiently cover the costs demanded by performances of this class. Were Señor García and his family Italians, the case would be different; but since it is a matter of singing in their native language, it doesn't seem to us that they would fail to do so if the theater management were to take the initiative.²⁶

Finally, therefore, García did relent, translating the texts of his own Italian operas as well as presenting

²⁵ *El Sol*, July 12, 1827:

"En el de la grande ópera se está ensayando la titulada del *Abufar*, para que se represente la noche del viernes próximo 13 del actual. Del mérito y sublimidad de esta composición no se dirá una sola palabra, porque su calificación se reserva al buen gusto del ilustrado público mexicano á quien se ofrece."

²⁶ Olavarría y Ferrari, 234:

"Anoche, viernes 13 de julio, se ejecutó por primera vez en el Teatro Provisional la ópera italiana *El Abufar*, que ciertamente llenó la espectáculo del numeroso y lucido concurso que asistió a ella. Los aplausos fueron vivos y sinceros; el señor García, su esposa e hijo, manifestaron su grande y extraordinaria habilidad y conocimientos en el arte, no quedándose atrás el Señor Waldeck y la señora Santa Marta. Sin embargo, somos de opinión que si no se trata de ejecutar las óperas en el idioma de país, aun cuando desmerezcan un poco en su mérito musical, no es fácil que se sostenga la Empresa, porque el número de personas inteligentes en el italiano, o que se contenten sólo con el gusto del canto y de la música, sin entender de lo que se trata, no puede ser en México tan considerable como en París y Londres, ni bastar por consiguiente para cubrir los costos que demandan esta clase de representaciones. Si el señor García y su familia



original works from his days in Madrid, such as *El Poeta calculista*.²⁷

However, apart from language, by October the theater was forced to close for financial reasons. García, his wife, and other singers from the company tried to compensate by giving a concert on September 19, 1827, in the Gran Salón de la Lonja.²⁸ Frustrated, he would have left Mexico at this point, but his wife took ill and he was obliged to stay.²⁹ A letter to *El Sol* on October 26 complained that García had sung only eight nights and that was all. A letter writer on November 2 lamented being deprived of his talent. Another concert was given on November 17 (announced in *El Sol* November 2, 1827). On November 20, the following notice appeared:

With the appropriate permission, singers Manuel García, his wife, Andrés del Castillo and Santa Marta, have together decided to serve the public (prevented against their wishes from hearing the beautiful works of the most celebrated composers) by singing the most select pieces. For this purpose, use of the Gran Salón de la Lonja has been requested and obtained. Various scenic-philharmonic spectacles will be performed by the four above-mentioned artists and a brilliant orchestra. The first of these will be held next Thursday, the 22nd of this month. The spectacles will be composed of arias, duos, trios and quartets in the Italian and Castilian languages. To assure the greatest comfort of the spectators who deign to honor them with their presence the society promises to use every means, with regard both to the decor as well as to the brilliance of the spectacles. The tickets will be available starting Wednesday from 10 in the morning until 6 in the evening in the store of Señor Ackerman, in front of la Profesa, and in the Lonja itself. The price of each ticket is 2 pesos. The function will begin at 7:30 p.m.³⁰

fuesen italianos, habría mayor dificultad; pero tratándose de que canten en idioma de su patria, no nos parece que dejarán de prestarse a ello si los señores empresarios toman empeño.” [At this point Olavarría comments that what the *Aguila* was requesting was “easier said than done,” that García and his wife, having lived so long away from Spain, had forgotten much of their Spanish and spoke with Italian accents. April Fitzlyon [*Maria Malibran* (London: Souvenir Press, 1987), 28], on the other hand, affirms that Spanish was always spoken at home. Indeed, it seems unlikely that García, who left Spain when he was 32 years old, had forgotten his native language.]

²⁷ Olavarría y Ferrari, 235.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 236.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 242.

“Los profesores de música, Manuel García, su esposa, Andrés del Castillo y Santa Marta, unidos en sociedad han deter-

At the very same moment that these concerts were being announced, anti-Spanish sentiment was increasing—due to an aborted conspiracy earlier in the year.³¹ In January of 1827, Padre Joaquín Arenas proposed to the commander general of the District and State of Mexico, Don Ignacio Mora, a plan (drawn up in Madrid) that would turn the rule of Mexico back to Fernando VII. The general feigned interest before Padre Arenas but immediately advised the government. It was decided that witnesses were necessary. Mora invited Padre Arenas back to discuss the matter in more detail, while five members of the government, including the governor of the Federal District, Francisco Molinos del Campo (supported by the *escoces*) and José María Tornel y Mendivil, deputy of the Federal District (and avowed *yorquino*), listened in an adjacent room. Padre Arenas was convicted of treason and shot, on June 2, 1827, near the palace of Chapultepec.³²

Both Tornel y Mendivil³³ and Alamán³⁴ agree that the importance of the conspiracy in itself was blown out of proportion—an “act of dementia” which would never have succeeded.³⁵ But they also acknowledge the transcendent importance of the repercussions resulting from it. The minister of war, Gómez Pedraza, and the *yorquinos* used it to discredit the *escoces*, whom they accused of complicity in the

minado, con el correspondiente permiso, servir al público que carece y solicita oír las bellas producciones músicas de los más célebres autores, cantando las piezas más escogidas, para lo cual ha solicitado y conseguido el gran Salón de la Lonja, donde se darán espectáculos escénico-filarmónicos, desempeñados por los cuatro profesores arriba mencionados y una brillante orquesta, verificándose el primero el jueves próximo 22 de corriente. —Dichos espectáculos se compondrán de arias, duos, tercetos y cuartetos en los idiomas italiano y castellano. —La sociedad ofrece no perdonar medio que esté a su alcance para la mayor comodidad de los expectadores que se dignen honrarlos, así como para el decoro y brillantez de los espectáculos. —Los billetes se expendrán desde el miércoles a las diez del día hasta las seis de la tarde en el almacén de señor Ackerman, frente de la Profesa, y en la misma Lonja, siendo el precio de cada boletín a dos pesos, dando principio la función a las siete y media de la noche.

³¹ Olavarría y Ferrari, 242.

³² Tornel y Mendivil, 88.

³³ *Ibid.*, 109.

³⁴ Alamán, v: 826.

³⁵ Mendivil claimed that later evidence showed that Arenas worked solely as a “blind instrument,” and was the “first victim” of the conspiracy [p. 86].



conspiracy,³⁶ and to justify deporting all Spaniards.

However, despite the rising sentiment against Spaniards, the upper echelons of Mexican society kept demanding more performances from García. On December 12, 1827, a notice in *El Sol* therefore announced the reopening of the theater.

Not that theater-goers were completely happy for long:

To the editors of *El Sol*:

If deals made one-to-one between persons must be honored, even more so should agreements made between the theater management and the public be honored! Why, then, have we not been given all that was promised when ticket prices were raised? Why, in addition to other important faults, has not a single opera been presented this last week?

If the managers of the theater are not more faithful in the future to their promises, be it known that they will suffer more of the just complaints of this obliging servant.

—*A Subscriber*.³⁷

Meanwhile on December 20, 1827, came the decree expelling all Spaniards from Mexican territory. The first of the twenty-one articles reads as follows:

Art. 1. Capitulated Spaniards and other Spaniards mentioned in article 16 of the treaty of Córdoba, will leave the territory of the republic on the terms indicated by the government. This must be within six months.³⁸

But since many who promoted the decree were opera lovers (including the *yorquino* Tornel y Mendivil himself) they did include the following exception:

³⁶ Alamán, v: 826.

³⁷ *El Sol*, January 27, 1828:

"Sres. editores del *Sol*. —Si los tratos que se hacen de particular a particular deben cumplirse, ¡con cuanta mas razon los compromisos que los empresarios del teatro han contraído con el público! ¿Por qué, pues, no aparece en la escena todo lo que ofrecieron al subir los precios de los palcos, lunetas &c.? ¿Por qué ademas de otras notables faltas no se ha ejecutado ópera alguna en la última semana?

Si los empresarios no son mas fieles en lo sucesivo á sus promesas, no dejarán tampoco de volver á escuchar las justas reconvenciones de este afectismo servidor de vds. —*El abonado*."

³⁸ Tornel y Mendivil, 168:

"Art. 1º Los españoles capitulados y los demas españoles de que habla el artículo 16 de los tratados de Córdoba, saldrán del territorio de la república en el término que les señalare el gobierno, no pudiendo pasar éste de seis meses."

Art. 7. The government can exempt from the classes of Spaniards that, according to this law, should leave the territory of the republic, (1) all those who have lent distinguished service to our Independence and have proved their affection to our institutions, as well as (2) the sons of these who have not betrayed the patriotism of their parents, and reside in the territory of the republic, and (3) those professors of some science, art, or industry, useful in the republic and not the government's object of suspicion.³⁹

Despite the exemption, García did apply for a passport in February of 1828.⁴⁰ The opera-loving community, seeing in him their best hope of raising cultural standards in Mexico (as had hoped a similar group in New York), loathed seeing him a "victim of the rabble." Next month *El Sol* included a letter dissociating the government⁴¹ from García's decision to leave:

It has been said, rather carelessly and with no foundation, that the government of this district, in use of its faculties, has "violently" expedited a passport to the

³⁹ Tornel y Mendivil, 168:

"Art. 7º El gobierno podrá esceptuar de las clases de españoles que conforme á esta ley deban salir del territorio de la república, á los que hayan prestado servicios distinguidos á la independencia y hayan acreditado su afecion á nuestras instituciones, y á los hijos de éstos que no hayan desmentido la conducta patriótica de sus padres, y residan en el territorio de la república, y á los profesores de alguna ciencia, arte ó industria útil en ella que no sean sospechosos al mismo gobierno."

⁴⁰ Paulin Richard mentioned García's difficulty in obtaining the passport ["Notes Biographiques sur Manuel García," *Revue Musicale*, vol. 12 (1832), 174].

⁴¹ José María Tornel y Mendivil was named governor of the Federal District on February 15, 1828. In his own words: "In those days the law of December 20th of the previous year on the expulsion of the Spaniards was carried out and Tornel attended to this exigency of that time, neither exaggerating nor annulling it. Never did he object to any of the exceptions claimed, and in that which depended upon his faculties, he smoothed and lightened the fate of those unfortunate persons who were the victims of circumstance." [Tornel y Mendivil, 284: "En aquellos dias se daba cumplimiento á la ley de 20 de Diciembre del año anterior sobre espulsion de españoles, y Tornel atendió á esta escigencia del tiempo, sin escagerarla, ni anularla. Jamas opuso objecion á las escepciones que se acreditaban, y en cuanto dependió de sus facultades, suavizó y endulzó la suerte de los desgraciados que eran víctimas de las circunstancias."]

The letter to *El Sol*, if not directly penned by Tornel y Mendivil (likely, given the signature "T."), was certainly submitted at his behest and in his defense. Given his erudition and love of theater, he certainly wished to avoid being held publicly responsible for García's departure from Mexico.

singer Don Manuel García, so that he might leave the national territory.

So that it may be brought into the light that this is not so, and that the government, in expediting the said passport, has done no other than to defer to the request of Sr. García, we ask that, for the general knowledge of the public, you may be so kind as to insert his request.

—T.

Sr. Governor⁴² of the federal district.

—Manuel García, musician, native of Seville, Spain, with all due respect toward your Lordship, states: that having resided no more than one year and four months in this capital, and being embraced by the law of expulsion, he therefore begs Your Lordship to grant the necessary passport to him, his wife and daughter⁴³ so that he may take advantage of the good travel conditions at this time of year.

—Thank you. God and liberty.

México, February 28, 1828.

—Sr. Governor of the Federal District.

—Manuel García

Decreed. February 28, 1828.

—Request granted.

—His lordship's seal.⁴⁴

⁴²The general, José María Tornel y Mendivil. (See notes 8 & 41.)

⁴³Manuel Jr. had, by this time, returned to Paris. On October 7, 1828 he made an unsuccessful debut as Figaro (with his sister, María, in the role of Rosina) at the Théâtre Italien.

⁴⁴*El Sol*, March 1, 1828:

"Se ha dicho con bastante ligereza y sin ningun fundamento, que el gobierno del distrito en uso de sus facultades ha espedido violentamente pasaporte al profesor de canto D. Manuel García para que salga del territorio nacional.

Para que se vea á todas luces que no es asi y que el gobierno al espeditelo no ha hecho otra cosa que deferir á su solicitud, suplico á vds. tengan la bondad de insertarla para inteligencia del público. —T.

Sr. Gobernador del distrito federal. —Manuel García, profesor de música, nativo de Sevilla en España, con el debido respeto á V.S. espone: que no habiendo mas que un año y cuatro meses que reside en esta capital, y comprendiendole la ley de espulsion de españoles, por tanto á V.S. suplica se digne despacharle el pasaporte necesario para él, su muger y una hija suya para que pueda aprovechar de la presente época por ser la mas provechosa para viajar. —Gracias S. —Dios y libertad. México 28 de febrero de 1828. —Sr. Gobernador del distrito federal.

—Manuel García.

Decreto. Febrero 28 de 1828.

—Espidase lo

—Rubricado de su señoría."

Nonetheless, García still lingered. On April 16, *El Sol* announced that *Otello* would be performed the next night. *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* followed on April 24, and then came the premiere of García's own *La Semiramis* (given as the "new grand opera in 2 acts") on May 8. This work was to ignite further hostility of the *yorkinos*. It was announced in *El Correo* as follows:

This evening we will have a performance of [García's] famous opera *La Semiramis* in Spanish. We hope that the performance will hold up to all the fanfare with which it has been announced! It would be the greatest disappointment if not, since, with the pretext of preparing for this performance, we had no opera last week—as if it were not easy for Sr. García, in spite of rehearsals, to give us *El amante astuto* or another of the operas that are so well known to him as well as to the other actors.⁴⁵

With such a negative disposition even before the premiere, it is not surprising that the *Correo*'s notice the following day was devastating:

To the editors of the *Correo de la Federación Mexicana*.

—Last night we saw the opera, in three acts (although announced in two), *La Semiramis*, and so we come to know each day more that the talent of Sr. García as composer is not as outstanding as his singing and acting. The public had to suffer through monotonous music and boring recitatives until a quarter to twelve. This was mainly in the first two acts since in the third, two duets of pretty good taste made up for the dullness of the entire night. The last aria with chorus of Sr. García is excellent, but it seems to us that either it isn't suitable for the actor, or it is too tough for him. In short, the public missed those sublime passages of Rossini that involuntarily move and excite the emotions of the spectator. One might add that *La Semiramis* could not be listened to unless sustained by the talents of García, Santa-Marta and Briones, although it seems to us that they sang beyond thier limits. The role of Martínez is insufferable and those of Castillo and Amada-Plata are also quite weak.

⁴⁵*El Correo de la federación mexicana*, May 8, 1828:

"Tendremos esta noche la representacion de la famosa ópera *La Semiramis* en castellano. ¡Ojalá que su representacion conenga al aparato con que se nos ha anunciado! Seria el mayor chasco que no fuese así, despues que con pretesto de estar disponiendo lo necesario para esta representacion, no hemos tenido ópera la semana pasada, como si al Sr. García no le fuera fácil, á pesar de estos ensayos, darnos el "Amante astuto" ú otra de las óperas que asi á él como á los demas actores de canto le son tan conocidas."



The scenic aspect was brilliant, not only because of the new sets (which are really quite fine) but also because the actors were well-costumed and well-rehearsed.⁴⁶

Apart from the fact that anti-Spanish sentiment contributed to the caustic comments in the review, it may further have been provoked by a personal grudge. García, at least, was convinced that it came from a person who had sought a position in the orchestra (and presumably been rejected by him). In any event, the aggrieved person's next letter to the *Correo* proves that García considered him the culprit.

To the editors of the *Correo*:

Listen to this and let the whole world learn of an occurrence that makes known what kind of person Sr. García is—who by his warbling not only takes away our silver, but without a doubt has come to believe that in our society, or rather, in our republic, he can show off as grandly as he does in his operas.

A musician who had been contracted for the theater orchestra, but then not accepted by the individual put in charge by the illustrious city government, met yesterday with a friend, who told him that García wanted to see him—supposedly to offer him employment. He went today to García's house, expressing to him, with the utmost courtesy, his hope of employment. But without paying attention to him, García at once began shouting, with a thousand insults and abusive language, saying that if he didn't get out of the house, he would personally kick him

⁴⁶*El Correo de la federación mexicana*, May 9, 1828:

"Señores editores de Correo de la Federación Mexicana. —Anoche hemos visto en tres actos la ópera Semiramis, anunciada en dos, y sentimos conocer cada día mas que el talento compositor del Sr. García, no sobresalga tanto en su habilidad como en el canto y su acto segundo. Hasta las doce menos cuarto de la noche, estuvo el público sufriendo una música monotoná y recitados fastidiosos, principalmente en los dos primeros actos, pues en el tercero dos duos de bastante gusto compensaron la pesadez de toda la noche. La última aria coreada del Sr. García, es excelente, mas nos parece que ó no esta en la cuerda del actor, ó que es demasiado fuerte para él. En una palabra, el pueblo echó de menos aquellos pasajes sublimes de Rosini, que involuntariamente conmueven y escitan la sensibilidad de espectador, pudiendo decirse de la Semiramis que no podria escucharse de modo alguno sino cantando habilidades como las de García, Santa-Marta y Briones aunque nos parece cantaron fuera de su órgano natural. El papel de Martínez es insufrible, y bastante débiles los de Castillo y Amada-Plata.

La parte escénica estuvo brillante, no solo por las nuevas decoraciones presentadas que son de mucho mérito, sino por lo bien vestidas que estuvieron las comparsas, y bien ensayado de la función."

out into the street. And all of this was just because García believed him to be the author of a letter pointing out some defects of García in fulfilling his duties which are obvious to anyone who isn't blind.

The contrast evident in this scene was impressive: García forgetting, or not knowing, the rules of hospitality, calls this musician to his house to throw him out of it as soon as he sees him, using the most insulting terms; the guest, in coming to the house, maintains all due respect; one does not hear from him a single word out of line. And his protests were intended solely to help both maintain the respect due to the place where they were. For if it was indeed sacred for the one, it was even more so for the other. García paid no mind to anything, but gave free rein to his infernal pride: he shouted, he threatened, he attacked, he offended and made use of the most insolent and insulting expressions. The musician, on the other hand, remained composed and repeated that consideration and respect of the place should be maintained. And he left the house without losing his composure in the midst of the torrent of insults and offenses.

As I contemplate these things (García, in my judgment, should maintain control), I sigh and ask myself: "How far will the Catilinarian⁴⁷ Spaniards go in abusing our patience?" "At what point will the proud sons of D. Pelayo⁴⁸ cease to mock us with their fury?"⁴⁹

⁴⁷A reference to Lucius Sergius Catilina (108?-62 B.C.), Roman conspirator at the time of Cicero.

⁴⁸Don Pelayo (*d* 737), Visigoth noble who defeated the Moors at Covadonga in 718, later proclaimed the first king of Asturias.

⁴⁹*El Correo de la federación mexicana*, May 18, 1828: "México mayo 15 de 1828

Señores editores de correo. —Oigan vds. y sepa el mundo entero un acontecimiento bastante para dar a conocer quien es el Sr. García, que á titulo de gorgoritos no solo nos lleva la plata, sino que sin duda se ha creído que en la sociedad, ó por mejor decir, que en nuestra república figura, como en las óperas, un gran papelón.

Un profesor de música que habia sido contratado para la orquesta del coliseo, lo que al fin no tuvo efecto por el individuo encargado del ilustre ayuntamiento, concurrió ayer con un amigo, quien le manifiesta que García desea verlo con el objeto sin duda de proporcionarle algunos medios para su colocación: se le presenta hoy en su casa, y esponiéndole con los modales mas urbanos el principio de aquella visita, sin ser escuchado, y sin mas ni mas, le comienza García á gritar, que si no sale de su casa, lo votara de un puntapie á la calle, con mil y mas denuestos é insultos, tan solo porque supone ser autor de un comunicado en que se dicen algunos defectos en que incurre García en el desempeño de sus deberes, y estan al alcance de todos por mas que quiera comulgarnos con semita.

Es admirable el contraste que se vió en la referida escena: García olvidando, ó no conociendo los deberes de la hospitalidad, llama á dicho profesor á su casa para correrlo de ella



From this point on, García was branded more and more openly an enemy of the *yorkino* party. That some *yorkinos* were further viewing García in the role of conspirator is seen in an attempt to associate him with the clergy (despised by the *yorkino* masons as “blind agents of the foreign sovereign”⁵⁰), after he chose to “neglect his theatrical obligations” in order to participate in the Corpus Christi procession held Thursday, June 5, 1828:

Neither the tolerance of the respectable public, nor the sacrifices that have been made by the most excellent municipality, nor the interest that all of the authorities have had for the theater (particularly the Sr. Governor of the District), have been enough to stimulate the actors into doing their part so that the enterprise may turn out well and to the public’s satisfaction. Sr. García, who has

en el acto mismo de verlo, usando de los términos mas insultantes: el invitado para presentarse en aquella casa guarda todas las consideraciones debidas, no se le oye una palabra descompuesta, y sus reconveniones se contraen á hacer se guarden mutuamente el debido respeto al lugar en que están, que si bien es sagrado para el uno, lo es aun mucho mas para el otro. García á nada atiende sino á dar rienda suelta á su infernal orgullo: grita, amenaza, acomete, injuria y procura las espresiones mas insolentes é insultantes: el profesor le contiene y repite que se guarden las consideraciones y respetos que se deben al lugar en que están, y se separa de aquella casa sin haber perdido su moderacion en medio del torrente de insultos y de injurias.

Contemplando yo algunas cosillas que en mi juicio debieran contener á García, doy un suspiro y pregunto: ¿hasta cuando los catilinas españoles abusarán de nuestra paciencia? ¿Hasta cuando los orgullosos hijos de D. Pelayo dejarán de burlarnos con su furor?”

⁵⁰ *El Correo de la federación mexicana*, June 2, 1828:

“El *clero romano*, agente ciego del soberano estrangero á quien obedece predicando la pobreza, hizo suyas las mismas riquezas que al parecer condenaba . . .”

given so many proofs of his good disposition to please, failed us last night in the opera that was to be presented, under the pretext of being ill: there are those who assured us that he was taking part in the procession. Sra. Cordero, who was supposed to have danced last night also failed to fulfill her obligation, also under the pretext of illness, and even Sr. Garay wanted to excuse himself from performing last night under the same pretext.

We had promised ourselves not to talk about the theater, but it is impossible to fulfill this vow when we note omissions that might compromise the delicacy of the governor, or of the theater commission of the Most Excellent city government. If some actors persist in their manias, we promise them that it will not go unnoticed in our newspaper, just as we do not fail to praise them when they justly deserve it.⁵¹

⁵¹ *Correo de la federación mexicana*, June 6, 1828:

“Ni la moderacion del público respetable, ni los sacrificios que hace la Escma. municipalidad, ni el interes que todas las autoridades han tomado por el teatro, particularmente el señor gobernador del distrito, nada basta á estimular á los actores á que se presenten por su parte á contribuir á que la empresa salga con lucimiento y el público satisfecho. El Sr. Garcia que tantas pruebas nos ha dado de su buena disposicion para complacernos, nos faltó anoche con la ópera que tocaba al día, prestando enfermedad, y hay quien asegure que andaba en la procesion: la Sra. Cordero que debió bailar anoche segun lo anunciado, tambien pretestó enfermedad, y no cumplió con su deber, y aun el Sr. Garay quiso excimirse de representar esta noche so pretesto de lo mismo.

Nos habíamos propuesto no tocar para nada el teatro; pero nos es imposible cumplir este voto cuando notamos faltas en el foro, que pueden comprometer la delicadeza del señor gobernador, ó de la comision del teatro del Escmo. ayuntamiento. Si persistiesen algunos actores en su mania, les prometemos no abandonarlos en nuestro periódico, así como no dejamos de elogiarlos cuando justamente lo merecen.”