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MEDIA REVIEW

Diccionario de la Zarzuela. Website. 2026. https://diccionariodelazarzuela.es/dz

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The *Diccionario de la Zarzuela* is a digital reference published in 2026 by Madrid's Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales (ICCMU). It is free to any registered user and will be of enormous value to researchers and devotees of Spanish lyric theater. Those devotees extend to the Americas, including the United States, where companies continue to include zarzuela and related lyric dramas in their seasons, such as the 2026 production of the one-act *sainete*[1] *La Revoltosa* by the Miami company La Zarzuela, Inc. As an initial example, readers of Spanish can consult Luis G. Iberni's entry on *La Revoltosa* in the *Diccionario*, learning details of its premiere production in 1897, how the partnership of José López Silva and Carlos Fernández Shaw resulted in an elegant libretto with a true-to-life depiction of interaction and love in a Madrid neighborhood, how the music by Ruperto Chapí integrates inspiration from Gioachino Rossini, Giuseppe Verdi, and, in the instance of its celebrated duet for Felipe and Mari Pepa, a quality of Wagnerian "restrained eroticism," composed with a centered approach to the vocal range that allows for performance by various voice types. All help explain the persistent appeal of this work in the zarzuela repertoire.

More of an encyclopedia, the dictionary results from the digitization and amplification of the 2003 and 2006 print editions of the *Diccionario de la Zarzuela*,[2] prepared under the direction of Emilio Casares Rodicio, then chair of the ICCMU. The digitization project was directed by Álvaro Torrente, the current chair of the ICCMU, and coordinated by Lluís Bertran and Miguel Ángel Ríos (2021–2025) with contributions from a team of more than twenty scholars and specialists from Spain and Latin America. Like the print volumes, the online resource documents the rich musical universe of the zarzuela in Spain and beyond, such as the treatment of Cuban, Colombian, Argentine, Mexican, United States, and Filipino practices.

The 3,200 entries address four categories: individuals, families, works, and terms. Entries on individuals include composers, singers, actors, librettists, impresarios, set designers, dancers, producers, councilors, directors, and researchers in the field of zarzuela. All entries adhere to consistent formats. For example, entries on works, such as a particular zarzuela, provide initial information on the composer, librettist, date and venue of the premiere, lists of characters in the drama and performers in the original cast, orchestration, plot summary and themes, list of musical numbers, analytical commentary with discussion of the reception and legacy of the music, sources and archival locations with RISM denominations, editions of the dramatic text, editions of the music, recordings, and bibliography. Images of scores, covers, portraits, and photos of scenes provide 1600 illustrations throughout.

The basic search function can filter by section: plot, author, bibliography, commentary, libretto editions, music editions, recordings, musical sources, musical numbers, works, orchestration,

[1]A *sainete* is a short genre of zarzuela of a humorous and popular character. In the *Diccionario* article on the term, Emilio Casares offers the intriguing etymological note that its antecedent root, "sayn," was used to describe a fatty part of meat considered to be particularly tasty.

[2]Emilio Casares and Mari Luz González Peña, eds., *Diccionario de la zarzuela: España e Hispanoamérica* (Instituto Complutense de Ciencias Musicales, 2003).

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characters, and general text. There is also an advanced search request function. All best serve users who know what they seek. Unlike the printed dictionary, a user cannot begin a search by reviewing the table of contents or flipping pages to see what else is covered. The alphabetical ordering of entries is rendered inconsequential in a digital publication. Fortunately, the site's home page offers informative discovery guides, which will be particularly valuable to users unfamiliar with the subject or the print publications.

The first row of discovery panels in the homepage is related to a single work and exemplifies primary categories of content. The first panel directs attention to the score for *Jugar con Fuego*, the 1851 lyric drama celebrated for its definitive influence on the modern zarzuela. The second introduces the work's composer, the critic, musicologist, and director Francisco Asenjo Barbieri, whose range of contributions makes him one of the most important figures in the history of Spanish music. The third panel highlights the brilliant nineteenth-century playwright Ventura de la Vega, author of the book for *Jugar con Fuego*. The fourth panel introduces a celebrated performer, the soprano Adelaida Latorre who starred in the role of the Duquesa de Medina in the premiere performance of *Jugar con Fuego*.

A second row of topic panels invites exploration of the activities of the ICCMU. The first documents the public presentation of the completed digital dictionary on January 21, 2026. A second panel addresses current productions at the Teatro de la Zarzuela, including insights from its artistic director, Isamay Benavente. Commentary on the staged productions links to the ICCMU store, where users may acquire performance scores and materials as restored and published by the institute. The next panel highlights a new publication by the ICCMU, the 2025 edition of the *L'aplec del Remei,* one of the first zarzuelas in Catalan with music and book by Josep Anselm Clavé and whose 1858 premiere so thrilled audiences at Barcelona's Teatre del Liceu that it shared performance hours with operas by Verdi and Gaetano Donizetti.

Another row of panels provides users with links to valuable resources: one for recordings, which opens to a compiled alphabetical listing of individual zarzuelas, anthologies, preludes, and *intermedios.* Another panel links to selected lists of *romanzas,* the bel-canto-inspired, sentimental solo songs from zarzuela, here organized by voice type and range to assist users looking for performance repertoire.[3] The term *romanza* itself is an example of a content type (terminology) in the *Diccionario* and is well worth exploring, as it defies simple definition. Users may draw upon these lists to identify titles and terms to enter into the search function.

A fun resource at the base of the homepage is the box titled "*Tal día como hoy*/On this day," showing a sample of events (births, deaths, and premieres) for selected years in zarzuela history for the day and month accessed by the user. Finally, the homepage provides a Help link ("*¿Nos ayudas?*") and an invitation to subscribe to the ICCMU newsletter.

English language readers seeking an introduction to the zarzuela might first turn to Christopher Webber's bilingual website zarzuela.net, a rich source of information on the genre and related forms of lyric theater since its inauguration in 1997. However, for researchers seeking deep insight into the legacy of the genre over five centuries of history, there is no match for the online *Diccionario de la Zarzuela.* It provides public access to the scholarly production of the ICCMU and advances its aim of promoting research, recuperation, and dissemination of Spanish and Hispano-American cultural patrimony.

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[3]The thrilling "Romanza de Javier: De este apacible rincón de Madrid" from Federico Moreno Torroba's zarzuela *Luisa Fernanda* provides an example of this format. Some of the world's finest singers have sung and recorded it including Alfredo Kraus, Carlos Munguía, Placido Domingo, José Carreras, and Juan Diego Flores. While some of these recordings are listed in the *Diccionario*'s compiled Fonografía/Discography section, individual audio selections from those historic recordings as well as newer performances can be more readily accessed on streaming services like Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube.

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