


Chapter 3

Cantigas e Agarimos in the 60s: Mass Galeguism from the Choir to the Theater

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the theatrical activity of the folklore group Cantigas e Agarimos (CeA) of Santiago de Compostela—particularly its Teatro Galego section—during the 1960s under Franco’s dictatorship. Challenging the idea of this period as a cultural void for Galician theatre, it shows how CeA staged important performances in Galician, serving as a space for identity and subtle resistance. Using rare and unpublished documentation, the study reconstructs CeA’s repertoire and highlights its cultural and political relevance. By analyzing authors, themes, and audience engagement, it reveals CeA’s key role in preserving Galician language and culture. The article also calls for more attention to 20th-century Galician theatre and the often-overlooked role of choral and folkloric groups in sustaining memory, identity, and resistance under repression.

INTRODUCTION

The folklore group *Cantigas e Agarimos* (from now on, also *CeA*) from Santiago de Compostela (Galicia, Spain) and, more specifically, the section *Teatro Galego de Cantigas e Agarimos* was an entity that represented, with a certain continuity, works by Galician authors (and in Galician) in the 1960s. The type of works they

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presented and the messages they conveyed are relevant to understanding the Galician cultural ideology that emerged and gained strength during these years of the Franco dictatorship. Thus *CeA* served as both producer and promoter of numerous narratives that expressed Galician identity through large-scale performances, whether via its choir or theatrical section. This study will examine the group's accomplishments, highlighting how *CeA* fostered a theatrical audience in the Galician language and navigated the challenges posed by censorship under the dictatorial regime.

Manuals and histories of Galician literature¹, along with literary dictionaries, often depict the 1960s as a dark period for Galician theatre. However, this chapter challenges that perception by demonstrating that prestigious performances in the Galician language did take place during this decade. To support this claim, it presents a detailed account—including previously unpublished information—of the works staged by *CeA*, offering rare data and images. The authors and plays featured in these productions serve as symbols of Galician identity and galeguism, often addressing themes that stood in opposition to the dictatorship.

GALICIAN PERFORMANCES

Cantigas e Agarimos

Cantigas e Agarimos (Figure 1) was founded as a choir in 1921 within the context of the Irmandades da Fala de Santiago de Compostela, emerging as the direct successor to the now-defunct Queixumes dos Pinos choir². The origins of *CeA* can be traced back to the 1918 influenza pandemic (“Gripe do 18”), after which some survivors of Queixumes dos Pinos came together to establish a new ensemble. Under the direction of Enrique Sánchez Guerra and the baton of Bernardo del Río Parada, this group gave rise to what would become the new choir, *Cantigas e Agarimos*³. Inma López Silva (2019, p. 17) writes that in the *Queixumes dos Pinos* choir “figuraban entre os fundadores persoeiros ben simbólicos no nacionalismo inicial como Salvador Cabeza de León, Camilo Díaz Baliño e Enrique Sánchez Guerra, alén do malogrado Lois Porteiro Garea naquela tentativa inicial que fora Queixumes dos Pinos”.

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