

Granaína versus Media Granaína

I have always wondered about know about the difference between ‘granaína’ and ‘media granaína’; I think I understand the difference, finally, but my head is swimming.

One often hears that the media granaína is more ornate than the granaína — there is more play on the final line, etc. Along these lines, Álvarez Caballero wrote, “The media granaína would be the more ornate and baroque version of the granaína.”

This also accords with something David Serva once said to me — he characterized the media granaínas as ‘screechy’ or something like that. The recorded examples I have seem to accord with this too — Morente records both on his *Homenaje a Don Antonio Chacón* — the ‘Granaína de Chacón’ is “*Rosa si no te cogí*”, and is beautifully understated, while the ‘Media Granaína de Chacón’ is “*La que vive en la carrera*” and is much more ornate.

So far so good.

However, Pohren seems to get it backwards! He says that *medias granaínas* are simpler, less ornate, and more jondas. Certainly he could just be wrong, but the term ‘media’ seems to suggest something less ornate, not more.

Perhaps Pohren is not wrong after all, however. This issue is discussed in *Cantes y Bailes de Granada* by José Luis Navarro García. It is very well researched and well written. First, he confirms Álvarez Cabellero’s story about the origin of these cantes — both the granaína and media granaína, as we know them, are creations of Chacón’s, based on the verdiales-like local cantes from Granada.

Navarro García’s description of Chacón’s granaínas makes them sound very ornate; his description of media granaína is “a true musical jewel. ... a cante that oozes sweetness, delicacy, and musicality”. This sounds like what Pohren was saying, contrary to what we’ve seen from actual examples. He also notes that the term ‘media’ just means ‘almost’, ‘similar to’ - i.e. a media granaína is something that is similar to, but not the same as, a granaína.

But read on! Navarro García goes on to say:

“Later, by one of those inexplicable and strange turns of fortune, the names of these cantes, which Chacón dedicated to the province of Granada, were transposed. What Chacón called ‘media granaína’ is today known as ‘granaína’, and consequently, his ‘granaína’ is called ‘media granaína’.”

This confusion is indeed confirmed by comparing his discussion with recorded examples and their labels. He gives examples of famous granaínas of Chacón — one of which has the letra “*La que vive en la carrera*” then he discusses Chacón’s medias granaínas, one of which has the letra “*Rosa si not te cogí*” — he goes on to say that Morente recorded these cantes in a manner that was very faithful to Chacón’s original cantes. *However*, they are called media

granaína and granaína respectively on Morente's record! The names have clearly switched places.

The confusion seems to have a number of sources: one is the practice of warming up for a granaína with a relatively easy (media granaína) verse, and then mistakenly calling the first verse 'granaína'. This practice, and the confusion, is attributed to José Cepero. Another cause of confusion is that Manuel Vallejo created his own style of 'media granaína' that was more ornate and *valiente* than the media granaína of Chacón — some singers have modeled their cante on Chacón, others on Vallejo, but the nomenclature of ornate and *valiente* = media granaína seems to have taken root.

I think I have it all straight, but my head, she swims.