

Alegrías* and *Cantiñas* – major key *cantes **John Moore**

Practically all flamenco students know what *alegrías* sounds like. Some dancers have also heard of *cantiñas* – they may have had a *cantiñas* choreography. However, there tends to be some mystery surrounding what *cantiñas* actually is – this will try to clear this up – the basic problem is that the term *cantiñas* is used in different ways, as we will see.

Musical Background

Before diving into the details, it will be good to have a little musical background. *Alegrías* and *cantiñas* are in the major key. This means that their melodies use a major scale (similar to songs like ‘Happy Birthday’ and ‘Twinkle twinkle little star’). The guitar accompanies these *cantes* using two or three chords, similar to what is used in familiar American folksongs. There are three basic keys: E major, A major, and C major; here are the basic chords for each:

(1) key	tonic	dominant	sub-dominant
E major	E	B7	A
A major	A	E7	D
C major	C	G7	F

Because the relationship between these chords is the same for each key, we can generalize by naming the chords ‘tonic’ (the base cord), ‘dominant’ (the chord the tonic alternates with), and the ‘sub-dominant’ (the chord sometimes used in a “turn around” or towards the end a verse).

In addition, sometimes the seventh chord of the tonic (e.g. E7, A7, or C7) is used in passing on the way to the sub-dominant. You can listen to what these keys sound like here:

(2) E major	E	B7	E	E	B7	E	A	E	B7	E basic chords
	E	B7	E	E	B7	E	E7	A	B7	E basic chords with 7th tonic
(3) A major	A	E7	A	A	E7	A	D	A	E7	A basic chords
	A	E7	A	A	E7	A	A7	D	E7	A basic chords with 7th tonic
(4) C major	C	G7	C	C	G7	C	F	C	G7	C basic chords
	C	G7	C	C	G7	C	C7	F	G7	C basic chords with 7th tonic

You can hear how the three keys are similar, but also sound different – partly this because they have different pitches (E vs. A vs. C), but also because the notes of the chords are in different orders – this is because of the way the guitar is organized.

Because flamenco guitarists traditionally knew no music theory, they called the E position *por arriba* and the A position *por medio* – this refers to the position of the fingers of the left hand ('high' or 'in the middle' or the fingerboard) when playing the tonic chord for these keys. There is no standard traditional term for the C position.

Usually a guitarist plays with a cappo (*cejilla* in Spanish) – this allows a change in key without changing the chord patterns so that the guitarist can use the same chords and falsetas, regardless of the singer's range. The *cejilla* automatically transposes to the singer's key. So, for example, if you hear the singer say "3 *por medio*", the guitarist puts the *cejilla* on the 3th fret and plays in the A position. To the guitarist, it feels like playing in the key of A, but it is actually in the key of C.

The following examples are just like (2-4), except the *cejilla* is on 3 – notice how the sound is similar, except for pitch, to the corresponding examples in (2-4). Also notice that (6), 3 *por medio* (A position), is the same pitch as (4) – that is because both are in C.

- (5) [3 *por arriba*](#) (E position – actually G)
- (6) [3 *por medio*](#) (A position – actually C)
- (7) [3 in C position](#) (actually D#)

Because the *cejilla* can change from one key to another, it shouldn't matter which position the guitarist uses, as long as the *cejilla* accommodates the singer. However, it is most common to use the E (*por arriba*) position for most *alegrías*, except in Cádiz, where guitarists almost always play in the C position; indeed, below we will hear all the *alegrías* samples played in the C position. The A position (*por medio*) was more common in the early 20th century, but not used as much nowadays. In practice, however, the singers range might require the *cejilla* high up on the guitar neck in a particular position, leaving little room for the guitarist to maneuver.

Dancers often rehearse with a guitarist playing in a particular position (usually E). If they find themselves with a new guitarist playing in another position (e.g. C), the sound is similar, but different and it can cause confusion. Dancers should strive to be able to hear the similarities and not be thrown by different guitar positions.

Cantiñas

Much of the confusion regarding the term *cantiñas* comes from the fact that it is used to mean different things in different contexts. Here are three common ways the term is used:

(8) '*cantiñas*' can mean:¹

- a. A family of 12-beat *cantes* that are usually in the major key – these include *alegrías*, *romera*, *mirabrás*, *caracoles*, and others
- b. Any member of the family in (a), except *alegrías*
- c. Any member of the family in (a) that doesn't have a name – i.e. anything except *alegrías*, *romera*, *mirabrás*, and *caracoles*; sometime this type of *cantiñas* is named after its creator – e.g. *cantiñas de Pinini*

Here are three contexts that illustrate these three uses:

- (9) a. *Alegrías* is part of the *cantinas* family.
b. He sang a few verses of *alegrías* and then switched to *cantinas* (for example, this could describe when a singer switched from *alegrías* to *romera*)
c. I haven't heard that *cantiñas* before – maybe it is a *cantiñas de Antonio el Chaqueta?*

In order to understand how this all works, it is necessary to understand what all these *cantes* have in common and how they differ.

First how they are similar. They are almost always in the major key – that means the melodies will be accompanied with the chords discussed in the last section. Also, *cantiñas* – whether they be *alegrías* or something else – commonly have verse-*coletilla* structure. A *coletilla* (sometimes called *estribillo* or *juguetillo*) is a short verse tacked on the end of the main verse. In flamenco, a collection of verses are generally textually unrelated and this is usually true of the verse and the following *coletilla* – the words have nothing to do with one another. Here is an example from *alegrías*:

(10) [Alegrías – Pericón de Cádiz](#) (C position, *cejilla* on 1)

verse:

Qué murmuraítos son
los pasitos que yo doy
qué murmuraítos son
y otros tropiezan y caen
y no te lo murmuro yo

How they are scrutinized ('murmured about')
every little step I take
how they are scrutinized
while others trip and fall
and I don't say anything

¹ There is another use of *cantiñas* by some guitarists, particularly older ones. It used to be that when the guitarist played in the E position, it was called *rosas* and when in the C position, it was called *cantiñas* – this use seems to have died out, as in general, any *cante* can be played in any of these positions.

coletilla:

A la botica no vayas sola
que el boticario gasta pistol

Don't go to the store alone
because the owner packs a pistol

Notice that the accompaniment goes back and forth between the tonic and dominant (in this case, C and G7). Also notice that the last two lines of the verse is sung once and the *coletilla* is also sung once; this comes out to 5 *compases* for the verse, and two for the *coletilla*. However, this is an area where there can be variation – sometimes the singer repeats the last two line of the verse (for seven *compases*) and can also repeat the *coletilla* (for four *compases*) – this is commonly done when singing for dance. Nevertheless, the dancer should be prepared for any possible configuration of the verse+*coletilla* (and sometimes there is no *coletilla*).

The differences between the *cantes* in the *cantiñas* family come from the different melodies – generally, the *compás* and keys are the same. Interestingly, both the verses and the *coletillas* have different melodies. Finally, *alegrías* tend to be more compact than the other *cantiñas* – in the latter *cantes*, lines are sometimes extended, the verses may be longer, and the melody meanders more than the fairly straight-forward *alegrías*. Let's look at some.

Alegrías

We already saw an example in (10) – the chord structure alternates between the tonic and dominant. This verse is a bit under-stated and is often used as the first verse – that leaves room to add more intensity in later verses. Here is another verse, which might be sung as a second verse:

(11) [*Alegrías – Pericón de Cádiz*](#) (C position, *cejilla* on 4)

Que tú pases y no me hables
¿qué cuidado se me da a mí?
que tú pases y no me hables
si yo no como ni bebo con bue-
buenos días de nadie
que yo no como ni bebo con bue-
buenos días de nadie

If you pass me without saying anything
what do I care?
if you pass me without saying anything
in order to eat and drink
I don't need anyone's "good morning"
in order to eat and drink
I don't need anyone's "good morning"

Again, this melody is accompanied with alternating tonic and dominant chords; notice that here the last line is repeated, but there is no *coletilla* (but there could have been one).

Finally, there can be a *letra valiente* ('brave verse'), where the intensity is raised – this is often the last verse sung:

(12) [Alegrías – Pericón de Cádiz](#) (C position, *cejilla* on 1)

verse:

¿Quién va a comprenderme a mí?	Who's going to understand me?
si yo mismo no me entiendo	if I can't even understand myself
¿quién va a comprenderme a mí?	who's going to understand me?
yo digo que no te quiero	I say that I don't love you
y estoy loquito por ti	while I'm crazy about you
que digo que no te quiero	I say that I don't love you
y estoy loquito por ti	while I'm crazy about you

coletilla:

Una tortola canta ay en un almendro A turtledove sings in an almond tree
y en su cante decía "ay viva mi dueño" and in its song it said "ay long live my owner"

Yet a different melody – higher in pitch and intensity – but with the same tonic-dominant accompaniment. Here the last two lines of the verse are repeated, but not the *coletilla*.

The following is an example of a longer, four measure, *coletilla*. Notice how on the sixth line, the guitar passes through C7 (the 7th chord of the tonic) to get to F (the sub-dominant). We will see below that a good deal of the variation in *coletillas* has to do with whether they go up to the sub-dominant or not and whether they use a 7th chord to get there.

(13) [Alegías coletilla – Camarón](#) (C position, *cejilla* on 5)

Y a los Titirimundis	To the Puppet World show
que yo te pago la entrada	I'll buy your ticket
y si tu madre no quiere	and if your mother doesn't approve
ay ¿qué dirá, qué dirá?	what can she say
¿qué dirá, qué dirá?	what can she say
y ¿qué tendrá que decir?	what will have to be said?
que te quiero y te adoro	that I love and adore you
y no puedo vivir sin ti	and can't live without you

Finally, no discussion of *alegrías* would be complete without commenting on its distinctive *salida*. A *salida* (or *temple*) is the way the singer warms up before launching into the first verse. This is the place where the dancer often comes on stage. Usually, the *salida* is a series of vocalizations using the word "ay". However, *alegrías* has a distinctive *salida* consisting of nonsense syllables like "titiri tran". The story behind this (which might be an urban legend) is that Cádiz singer (and all around character) Ignacio Espaleta, who lived in the early 20th century, was once

contracted to perform in a theater production (“Las calles de Cádiz”).² This was his first professional theatrical engagement and he was not particularly assimilated to the theater culture – he usually showed up drunk. As the story goes, one night he was so drunk he could barely sing and couldn’t remember the words to the *alegrías* he was supposed to sing for the dancer - La Macarrona. What came out was a series of nonsense syllables and the famous *titiri tran salida* was born.

Cádiz singer Chano Lobato often told this story before singing *alegrías* in his performances – here he sings his version of the *alegrías salida*:

(14) [Alegrías salida – Chano Lobato](#) (C position, *cejilla* on 3)

Alegrías is the only member of the *cantiñas* family that regularly uses this *salida*.

From the point of view of the dancer, an *alegrías* verse may range from five *compases* (no repetition and no *coletilla*) to eleven *compases* (repeat last line and a four *compás coletilla*), as well as anything in between. By understanding the structure of these verses, a dancer can listen and have an idea of what is coming next. If there are repetitions and longer *coletillas*, it will be easier to adjust in the moment, if the structure is familiar. Finally, some dancers like to leave a *compás* without singing after the first line in order to accentuate the verse with a short footwork *pellizco* (*contestación*). This is not standard, however; if the dancer wants the singer to do this, it needs to be discussed beforehand.

Romera

Romera is a member of the *cantiñas* family – the *compás* and key are identical to *alegrías*, but the melody is different with a slightly different chord structure. In the following example, we here a different *salida*, followed by the most famous verse (“*Romera de mi Romera*”), which illustrates the characteristic *romera* melody:

(15) [Romera – Manuel Agujetas](#) (C position, *cejilla* on 6)

Ay Romera de mi Romera	Ay Romera
no me cantes más cantares	don’t tell me any more lies
como te coja en el hierro	if I catch you in another
no te salva ni to madre	not even your mother can save you
como te cojo en el hierro	if I catch you
no te salva ni to madre	not even your mother can save you

The accompaniment for this verse goes to the sub-dominant on the end of the first line (in this case, F). This is a recognizable aspect of the distinctive melody of *romera*.

² See the *Mil y una historias de Pericón de Cádiz* (or the translation) for several hilarious stories about Ignacio Espaleta.

Of course, if every *romera* verse began with “*Romera de mi Romera*” the *cante* would be easy to recognize. However, there are several other verses with similar melodies and with the characteristic sub-dominant at the end of the first line. In the following example, notice how the *coletilla* dovetails with the verse; this *coletilla* melody is very different from what we found with *alegrías*. Here the *coletilla* accompaniment also goes to the sub-dominant (on the word “*lagrimitas*”); this is the characteristic *coletilla* for *romera*.

(16) [Romera – Carmen de la Jara](#) (E position, *cejilla* on 5)

verse:

Cuando te veo venir	When I see you coming
con esa cara y agachaita, ay mi niño	with that face and bent over, my boy
mi niño que yo lo adoro	my boy that I adore
y que el no pase más fatiguitas	I don't want you to be sad

coletilla:

Tú no me llores	Don't cry
tú no me llores	don't cry
tus lagrimitas	your tears
me huelen a flores	smell like flowers

It is common to follow a *romera* verses with another *cantiña* “*Se han enredado*”; while this is often considered a second type of *romera*, it is actually a *cantiñas de Panini* (see below); this also goes to the sub-dominant at the end of the first line, but with a melody distinct from the classic *romera*. Notice how drawn out this verse is, with several repetitions. Also note that we have yet another *coletilla* melody – during the first line it uses a 7th chord of the tonic to go to the sub-dominant on second line. This *coletilla* is typical of *cantiñas de Panini*.

(17) [Cantiñas sung with romera](#) – Manuel Agujetas (C position, *cejilla* on 6)

verse:

Se han enredado	It got tangled
tus cabellos y los míos, ay tu ca -	your hair with mine, your
- bellos y los míos, ay tu ca -	hair with mine, your
- bellos y los míos, tu ca -	hair with mine, your
- bellos y los míos	hair with mine
se han enredado	it got tangled
se han enredado	it got tangled
como la zarzamora, ay como	like the brambleberries, like
la zarzamora, ay como	the brambleberries, like
la zarzamora	the brambleberries
por los vallados	along the fences

coletilla:

Ay qué tío
ay qué tío
por la medianoche
no te ha conocido

What a guy!
what a guy!
by mid-night
he doesn't recognize you

Both the *romera* and this last verse are quite long – several lines, repetitions, and often more than one *compás* per line. This contrasts with *alegrías*, where there is a more predictable range of variation. Therefore, when dancing to *romera*, a dancer needs to be prepared to mark though a good deal of *cante*. Again, knowing what the basic melodies are and knowing what is likely to come next allows the dancer to accommodate to any particular interpretation.

Mirabrás

There are three distinct melodies for *mirabrás* – two of them use prominent 7th chords on the tonic to pass to the subdominant, while another has a brief modulation to another key.

The first verse is almost always the one in (18), probably a reference to struggles between democracy (and rule of law) versus absolute monarchy – a theme that has figured prominently in Spanish history, particularly during the 1812 constitutional convention in Cádiz. Melodically, we hear the 7th chord on the “ay” on the second line, leading to a sub-dominant by the end of the line; the same melody is repeated on the fifth line. The *coletilla* is yet another melody; this time it goes back and forth between the tonic and dominant, with no sub-dominant.

(18) [Maribras, first melody – Chano Lobato](#) (E position – *cejilla* on 2)

verse:

¿Ay, a mí qué me importa
ay, que el rey me culpe?
si el pueblo es grande y me abona
voz del pueblo, voz del cielo, anda
que no hay más ley que son las obras
con el mirabrá, que anda

What do I care
if the king blames me?
the people are many and vouch for me
voice of the people is the voice of God
there're no laws that are not in the books
let's go with the mirabrá

coletilla:

Se amara pelo, se amara el pelo
Con una hebra de hilo negro

She ties her hair
with a strand of black string

The second melody begins with the same “ay” as the first, but then modulates. The guitarist plays a C chord and descends to the B7. This is a short excursion into the Phrygian mode. This involves a short musical space (one half-step) between C and B, giving a Middle-Eastern sound, similar to many other non-major key flamenco forms. What is interesting here is that this is built off the dominant chord (B7,

because the guitar is playing in E major). This Phrygian excursion resolves on the B7, and then it goes back to E, which puts us back into the major key. The *coletilla* associated with this verse is very similar to the one in (18):

(19) [Mirabrás, modulating melody - Chano Lobato](#) (E position – *cejilla* on 2)

verse:

Ay, anda, y mal fin tengas	I hope you have a bad end
si no me quieres,	if you don't love me
¿para qué te encelas?	why do you get jealous?
Si, yo te quiero	but I love you
pero de <i>lache</i>	but I'm too shy
no te lo <i>peno</i> ³	to tell you

coletilla:

Eres bonita, bonita eres	You're pretty
eres bonita, bonita eres	you're pretty
la más bonita de las mujeres	the prettiest of all women

This second, modulating verse is less commonly sung than either the one in (18) or the next one.

The third melody is usually part of every *mirabás* performance; it probably has its origin in a *pregón* – that is, a song that street vendors used to sing to sell their product. This rather drawn out verse asks a women to come to the stand and details all the wares on sale. We again hear a 7th tonic chord leading to the sub-dominant, but this time it doesn't happen until the middle of the verse, on the fifth line (“*Ay Marina*”). After this, the same sort of thing, but in a shorter space, happens on “*batatitas borondas*” and “*malacotones de Ronda*”. The *coletilla* is similar to the other ones associated with *mirabrás*, except there it goes to the sub-dominant on the third line.

(20) [Mirabrás, pregón verse – Carmen de la Jara](#) (E position, *cejilla* on 5)

Venga usted a mi puesto hermosa	Come to my stand, beautiful
y no se vaya usted salero	don't go away
castañas de Galarosa	chestnuts from Galerosa
yo traigo camuesa y pero	I bring pippen apples and pears
ay Marina	ay Marina
yo traigo naranjas	I have oranges
y son de la China	and they're from China
batatitas borondas	little round yams
y suspiritos de canela	cinnamon candy

³ The words *lache* and *peno* are Gypsy words meaning ‘shame’ (*vergüenza*) and ‘I tell’ (*penar = decir*), respectively.

malacotones de Ronda
castañas cómo vahean

peaches from Ronda
chestnuts – steaming hot

coletilla:

Tienes los dietes
tienes los dientes
que son granitos
que son granitos
de arroz con leche

You have teeth
you have teeth
that are little grains
that are little grains
from rice pudding

As was the case with *romera*, *mirabrás* verses can be quite long, particularly this last one. We see this is typical of several types of *cantiñas* and of crucial relevance to how a dancer needs to follow the *cante*.

Caracoles

Another drawn-out *cantiñas* form is *caracoles*. Although its origins are in Andalucía, it has become associated with Madrid, probably due to references to places in Madrid in some of its verses. There are three main melodies, followed by a sort of *coletilla* (“*caracoles*”); unlike the previous forms, the *coletilla* does not normally follow each verse, rather, it comes at the end as a sort of chorus. Also, unlike other *cantiñas*, *caracoles* is almost always accompanied in the C position.

The most famous verse associated with the first melody (and the one normally sung first) refers to a major street in Madrid – the *calle de Alcalá* – and to the *café de la Unión*, a famous bullfighter hang-out on the *calle de Alcalá*. Notice the distinctive *salida*. Also notice use of the sub-dominant at the end of the first and seventh lines. Finally, and most distinctively for *caracoles*, is the modulation to a Phrygian mode, but this time based on the sub-dominant – i.e. F to E (C position). In fact, the last line resolves to E and stays in the Phrygian mode for the next verse.

(21) [Caracoles – Enrique Morente](#) (C position, *cejilla* on 1)

Como reluce
ay como reluce, como reluce
la gran calle de Alcalá
ay come reluce, como reluce
ay cuando suben y bajan los andaluces
ay vámanos vámanos
al café de la Unión
ay donde paran Curro Cúchares
el Tato y Juan León

How they shine
how they shine
the great Alcalá Street
how they shine
when Andalucians walk up and down
let’s go
to the Union cafe
where Curro Cúchares
el Tato and Juan Leon hang out

The next verse is shorter. It begins in the Phrygian mode, but then returns to the major key, only to again end in the Phrygian mode (on E).

(22) [Caracoles – Enrique Morente](#) (C position, *cejilla* on 1)

Ay, y eres bonita, eres bonita, el conocimiento a la pasión no quita ah, te quiero yo como a la mare que me parió	You're pretty you're pretty, my consciousness doesn't dampen my passion I love you just like my mother who gave birth to me
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The final verse depicts a scene of a chestnut vendor on the winter streets of Madrid. Madrid's winters used to be more severe than they are now – air pollution has resulted in milder weather and it now rarely snows like it did in the 19th and early 20th centuries. This verse begins in the major key, but modulates to the Phrygian mode at the end of the second line, back to the major on the third line, but modulating to Phrygian again on the fourth and fifth lines, to finally resolve to the major by the verse's end. The *caracoles coletilla* ends the performance in the major key, with typical alternating tonic and dominant chords. The term "*caracoles*" literally means 'snails', but was a euphemistic version of the cruder "*caramba*" (which, in turn, was a euphemism for *carrajo*, an expletive with the literal meaning of 'penis').

(23) [Caracoles – Enrique Morente](#) (C position, *cejilla* on 1)

¿Porqué vendes castañas asdas ay aguantando la nieve y el frío? con tus zapatos y tus medias caladas ay eres la reina para tu mario y regordonas, que se acaban hermosas como recién casadas y yo los vendo por tu querer	Why do you sell roasted chestnuts braving the snow and the cold? with your shoes and stockings soaked you are the queen to your husband the fat ones are selling out a beautiful as a new bride and I sell them for your love
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coletilla: (x2)

Y caracoles, y caracoles ¿ay mozito qué ha dicho usted? que son tus ojos dos soles y vamos viviendo ole!	Caracoles boy, what did you say? that your eyes are like two suns and let's continue together – ole!
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Unlike *romera* and *mirabrás*, there is a tradition of treating *caracoles* as a dance form, separate from *alegrías*. Thus, there are a number of *caracoles* choreographies that already are tailored to its extended *cante*. This is often performed with a fan and, perhaps, a *castiza* costume, to emulate Madrid in the late 19th century. In this way, there is a cross-over between *caracoles* dance and atmosphere created in *zarzuelas*.

Cantiñas de Pinini

Fernando Peña Soto “El Pinini” (born 1863) was part of what has become one of the major Gypsy flamenco families of Lebrija, Utrera, and Jerez. He worked in a slaughterhouse and had a reputation as a partier. He is remembered for his own *cantiñas* creation – *cantiñas de Pinini*. La Fernanda de Utrera, one of the greatest singers of the mid to late 20th century, (best known for her *soleares*), was his granddaughter. These *cantiñas* are commonly sung today, particularly in Lebrija and Utrera. The first verse is structurally similar to *alegrías* – the accompaniment alternating between the tonic and dominant chords - but with a different melody. The *coletilla*, which we saw in the *romera* section, uses a 7th chord on to pass to the sub-dominant:

(24) [*Cantiñas de Pinini – La Fernanda de Utrera*](#) (E position, *cejilla* on 5)

verse:

El día que yo me muera	The day that I die
yo te lo voy a ti a encargar	I’m going to charge you
el día que yo me muera	the day that I die
que la tierra que a mí me cubra	that the earth that covers me
la tienes tú que venerar	you need to worship

coletilla:

Disparate	Absurd
qué disparate	how absurd
que yo te quiera	that I would love you
como de antes	like before

In the following verse the accompaniment begins with a seventh chord and passes to the subdominant, and then directly to the dominant on the second line. This pattern is repeated, before resolving by the verse’s end. The *coletilla* is similar to the one in (24), except it is longer and repeats the last line:

(25) [*cantiñas de Panini – La Bernarda de Utrera*](#) (E position, *cejilla* on 5)

verse:

La vió el rey David	King David saw her
A Isabela en el baile, a Isa –	Isebel dancing
- bela en el baile	Isabela dancing
la vió el rey David	King David saw her
la vió rey David	King David saw her
y se enamoró de ella, se ena –	and fell in love with her
- moró de ella	he fell in love with her
como yo de ti	just like I’ve fallen for you

coletilla:

Se sacude, se sacude y luego canta	He struggles and then sings
y el que duerme en cama ajena	whoever sleeps in someone else's bed
de madrugada se levanta	has to get up early
y el que duerme en cama ajena	whoever sleeps in someone else's bed
de madrugada se levanta	has to get up early

We have seen a version of the next verse in the discussion of *romera*, where it is common to include this *cantiña de Pinini*. Here Fernanda sings the same verse and melody, but a bit shorter than the way Manuel Agujetas sang it in (17).

(26) [*Cantiñas de Pinini – La Fernanda de Utrera*](#) (E position, *cejilla* on 5)

verse:

Se han enredado	It got tangled
ay tu cabello y el mío, tu ca -	your hair with mine, your
- bello y el mío, se han enredado	hair an mine
se han enredado	it got tangled
ay como la zarzamora, como	like the brambleberries, like
la zarzarmora	like the brambleberries
por los vallados	along the fences

coletilla:

Ay qué tío	What a guy!
ay qué tío, qué tío	what a guy!
que a la medianoche	by midnight
no me ha conocío	he doesn't recognize me

The first verse is the same length as a standard *alegrías*, while the second verse is more extended.

Jotas de Cádiz

In the early 19th century, there was a wave of immigration from Aragón, in Northern Spain, to Cádiz to resist Napoleon's invasion. The northerners brought their *jotas* to Cádiz, which were then incorporated into the local musical repertoire. There has been research that suggests that these "*jotas de Cádiz*" became the basis for the eventual evolution of *alegrías*. Indeed, many *alegrías* verses have northern themes, including references to Aragón, Navarra, and the Ebro river. Pastora Pavón "La Niña de los Peines" was a major singer from the early 20th century. She sang several northern-inspired verses, which she may have learned from El Niño Medina, who was noted for his performances of *jotas de Cádiz*. These are usually labeled "*alegrías*", although the melodies – both of the verses and *coletillas* - differ from what we saw earlier. Sometimes this style is labeled "*alegrías de la Niña de los Peines*:" or simply "*cantiñas*". These are structurally similar to other *alegrías* – alternating between tonic and dominant chords - with five to seven line verses and

short *coletillas*. The melody, however, is different from other *alegrías*. In the following recording, from the early 20th century, La Niña de los Peines is accompanied in the A position (*por medio*):

(27) [Alegrías de la Niña de los Peines – La Niña de los Peines](#) (A position, *cejilla* on 4)

verse:

Yo le di un duro al barquero	I gave the boatman a nickel
por pasar el Ebro a verte	to cross the Ebro to see you
y yo le di un duro al barquero	I gave the boatman a nickel
los amores de Navarra	love from Navarra
son caros pero muy buenos	is expensive but very good

coletilla:

Que me lo tienes que dar	You have to give me
que me lo tienes que dar	you have to give me
el tacón de la bota	the heel for my boot
para taconear	so I can do heelwork

Because the length of these verses is essentially the same as other *alegrías*, a dancer can use the same strategy for these as with *alegrías*.

These are some of the more common *cantiñas*. There are many others, however, e.g. *cantiñas del Chaqueta, del contrabandista, de las Mirris*, among many others.⁴ Sometimes dancers learn one particular *cantiña* in the context of a choreography. When they want to perform it with a new singer and ask for “*cantiñas*”, they may not get the same *cante*. As we have seen, the range of possible *cantiñas* is large.

Finally, we have seen that the length of each *cantiña* verse varies significantly. With the exception of *caracoles*, which has a history of *cante*-specific choreography, a dancer will generally adapt their *alegrías* choreography to the different lengths and melodies of various *cantiñas*. To do this, it is important to know where the *cante* is going. Another issue has to do with the structure of the choreography – *alegrías* typically feature, *letra, silencio, escobilla, and bulerías* sections. Dances that use other *cantiñas cantes* can be similarly structured, although the *silencio* may be omitted, as is also sometimes the case with *alegrías*. The dancer should let the guitarist know about these sections beforehand, as there are no hard-and-fast rules.

⁴ Mariana Corneja released an excellent anthology of *cantiñas* in 2008 “*Cádiz por Cantiñas*”. Unfortunately, it appears to be out of production.