

Inocencio Haedo and the Coral Zamora

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In the little Spanish city of Zamora, a vocal ensemble became famous in the Spanish musical scene primarily between 1925 and 1950. It was the Coral Zamora, created by the musician, conductor, and composer Inocencio Haedo Ganza, who was a key pillar of the city's musical life in the first half of the 20th century.



Inocencio Haedo

Inocencio Haedo was born in 1878 in the Spanish city of Santander, where he began his musical education in the city's band. In 1892, he was engaged there as a professional piccolo player,[\[1\]](#) and he combined this job with harmony, violin, and piano studies.[\[2\]](#)

Haedo left Santander with his family and settled in Zamora in 1895, a city where he remained the rest of his life until his death in 1956. In these early years in his new city, Haedo worked as a pianist, flute and violin player, arranger,

etc.[3] He began a career as a composer as well, his early works dating from the last years of the 19th century. Soon he developed a deep interest in the province of Zamora and its folk music, which served as the basis for most of his vocal compositions.

The composer founded his first noteworthy music group in the year 1900: a male vocal ensemble called *Orfeón El Duero*. [4] In 1906, he was appointed music professor at the training school for women teachers in Zamora, [5] and a year later he also became music teacher at the local orphanage, [6] where he created a wind band called *Banda Provincial de Zamora*.

In 1925, Haedo founded his most important and notable ensemble: *Coral Zamora*, a 6-voice mixed choir that became the composer's main occupation during the following years (although he never abandoned his teaching activity). The project for this new ensemble had begun to take shape in 1922. [7] This choir maintained the four male voices schema of its predecessor, *El Duero* but now incorporated two feminine voice sections (soprano and alto), thus taking the form of a 6-voice mixed choir.

The début concert took place at the *Nuevo Teatro* of Zamora (now the *Teatro Ramos Carrión*), in July 1926. [8] After that first performance, the ensemble began an intense concert tour throughout Spain, soon reaching the entire country. In 1927, after it had given some concerts in Madrid, Queen Victoria Eugenia gave the ensemble the honorary title of *Real* (royal), [9] and so the choir's official name was changed to *Real Coral Zamora* until the advent of the republic in 1931.

In 1929, the same year in which the ensemble toured Barcelona and other cities of Catalonia, a contract was signed between the *Coral Zamora* and the Columbia Graphophone Company to record 6 shellac records containing part of the chorale's repertory. [10] The recording sessions took place in a dance hall in Zamora, [11] where 11 pieces were recorded, sung by the

Coral Zamora and conducted by its creator, Inocencio Haedo. Most of the recorded works were compositions by Haedo himself.

We can consider the decade between the ensemble's first concert in July 1926 and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 as the chorale's golden years. During this period, more than 60 concerts were performed, and activity outside Spain began to take shape in 1935, when the ensemble was able to visit Lisbon, giving three concerts there, one of which was attended by the President of the Portuguese Republic, António Óscar Carmona.[\[12\]](#) The tour was partly financed by the Spanish Government[\[13\]](#) and hosted by the *Casa de España* in the Portuguese capital.[\[14\]](#) A trip to Paris had been in the works two years earlier,[\[15\]](#) but it never materialised.

The Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, with Zamora's city in the zone dominated by the Fascists right from the beginning of the conflict. Because of this, the *Coral Zamora* was used by the new government as a political tool, incorporating Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, or German Fascist songs and hymns into its repertoire.[\[16\]](#)

The first concert during the Spanish conflict was held in January 1937 in Salamanca,[\[17\]](#) where General Franco had established his headquarters and where the Allied countries had their embassies. This concert featured the première of the choir's new political repertoire and was attended by many representatives of the Francoist government, as well as the ambassadors of Italy and Germany.[\[18\]](#) Until the end of the war in 1939, the few public appearances of the *Coral Zamora* were mostly political.

After the war, the ensemble had lost many members, some of whom had been incarcerated, executed, killed in conflict, or had emigrated. Thus, in 1940, Haedo restructured his choir by adding new members (Calabuig 1989, 197).

Between 1941 and 1943,,the *Coral Zamora* was absorbed by the Francoist cultural institution called *Educación y descanso*, which monopolized the official cultural activities in Spain during Franco's dictatorship.[\[19\]](#) Under this institution, the *Coral Zamora* ceased to exist as an independent and autonomous entity. After that, the number of the ensemble's purely musical performances (the usual activity of the prewar *Coral Zamora*) decreased, but its participation in political performances increased, becoming the most common activity of the postwar ensemble. Nevertheless, the choir still had the opportunity to make a few more concert trips during the 1940s, among them participation in two choral competitions organised in Madrid by *Educación y Descano*, in 1944 and 1946,[\[20\]](#) a concert in Oviedo in 1945[\[21\]](#), and a tour to Santiago de Compostela and La Coruña in 1948.[\[22\]](#)

The last concert tour of the *Coral Zamora* was a trip to Seville in 1951.[\[23\]](#) Two years later, in 1953, the 75-year-old Haedo retired from his job as music teacher and band conductor, but he continued working with his choir until 1956, when his increasing health problems, in the form of frequent fainting and severe deafness, forced him to finally leave his ensemble.[\[24\]](#) A few months later, in August, the musician died in his sleep from a heart attack.[\[25\]](#)



The Coral Zamora in its early years

After the composer's demise, a new conductor for the *Coral Zamora* was chosen by *Educación y Descanso*. It was the Valencian military musician Salvador Roig Olmedo, [\[26\]](#) who occupied this position until 1958, when he was appointed conductor of the Toledo Infantry Academy Band. [\[27\]](#) No public performances were given by the choir with Roig as its conductor. After that, news about the ensemble practically disappeared from the newspapers. What happened then is unclear, but it seems that the choir was dissolved or almost completely disappeared.

At the same time that the choir apparently dissolved, a new ensemble was created by old members of the *Coral Zamora*: the *Coro Haedo*, whose aim was to keep alive Haedo's choral work. [\[28\]](#) This new choir, conducted by a former member of the *Coral*, Emilio Antón, lasted barely a year, giving only a couple of concerts. The most noteworthy was the one performed in Madrid in February 1959, organised to raise money for the

victims of the tragedy that had taken place in Ribadelago (Zamora), where a dam on the Tera river had broken, killing 144 people and destroying the whole town.

Shortly after this concert, the *Coro Haedo* disappeared, but in 1959, the *Coral Zamora* was reborn.[\[29\]](#) Only a few members from Haedo's era were present in this new group, which was also conducted by Antón. Under Emilio Antón, the ensemble enjoyed its final years during the 60s. In what we could consider an epilogue to the ensemble founded by Haedo, only a few minor performances were given in these years, the last known one in 1964.[\[30\]](#) The choir lasted until around 1970, when it was definitively dissolved.

What gave the *Coral Zamora* its own personality was its repertoire. Part of this repertoire consisted of standard works varying from the Renaissance to the early 20th century, but the major and most distinguishing part of the *Coral Zamora*'s repertoire, which really identified this ensemble, was the series of short *a capella* works composed by Haedo, all of them based on folk songs from the province of Zamora. Unfortunately, these choral works were gradually abandoned by the ensemble after its creator's death in 1956, so that in the choir's final years, during the 60s, Haedo's works were no longer performed.. Moreover, these works were never printed, and the composer himself was not prone to copy them for other ensembles, because he thought that other choirs and conductors wouldn't be able to perform them in the way he would like. As a result of this, only handwritten copies of some of Haedo's works are available nowadays, in varying states of conservation. Many of them are third-party copies, or incomplete ones, and in some cases they are lost. This has been a handicap in the retrieval of a complete set of works, although during our research we were able to recover most of them, leaving an almost complete set available for future studies or performances.



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Letter from Henri Collet to Inocencio Haedo (21/04/1933)

Letter from Inocencio Haedo to Nicolás Gonzalez (1956)

Annexation document between *Coral Zamora* and *Educación y Descanso* (27/02/1943)

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[\[1\]](#) Designation of Haedo as class 3 musician by Santander City Council (24/03/1892), private collection.

[2] *Ritmo* (30/06/1930), p. 6.

[3] Examples in *Heraldo de Zamora* (07/12/1897), p. 3; *Heraldo de Zamora* (08/02/1899), p. 3; *Heraldo de Zamora* (04/08/1899), p. 3.

[4] *Heraldo de Zamora* (18/05/1900), p. 3; *Heraldo de Zamora* (22/05/1900), p. 2.

[5] *Datos biográficos del Maestro Haedo (1878-1941)* (brochure with Haedo's biographical data from 1941), private collection.

[6] *Heraldo de Zamora* (/1907), p. 2.

[7] Calabuig, S. (1987). *El Maestro Haedo y su tiempo*. Zamora: Diputación provincial.

[8] *Heraldo de Zamora* (04/07/1926), p. 1; concert programme (04/07/1926), private collection.

[9] *Heraldo de Zamora* (22/05/1927), p. 1.

[10] Contract with the Columbia Graphophone Company (30/08/1929), private collection.

[11] *Datos biográficos del Maestro Haedo (1878-1941)* (brochure with Haedo's biographical data from 1941), private collection.

[12] *A voz* (26/03/1935); *Diário da Manhã* (27/03/1935).

[13] *Datos biográficos del Maestro Haedo (1878-1941)* (brochure with Haedo's biographical data from 1941), private collection.

[14] *Heraldo de Zamora* (14/02/1935), p. 1.

[15] Letter from Salvador de Madariaga to Higinio Merino (18/05/1933), private collection; letter from Henri Collet to Inocencio Haedo (21/04/1933), private collection.

[16] Examples found in original scores located in Haedo's personal archive: *Imperio* (10/01/1943), pp. 3, 6.; *Heraldo de*

Zamora (20/01/1937), p. 2.

[17] *Heraldo de Zamora* (20/01/1937), p. 2.

[18] *El Dardo de Plasencia* (14/07/1903), pp. 1, 2.

[19] *Imperio* (08/05/1941), pp. 1, 2; Annexation document between the *Coral Zamora* and *Educación y Descanso* (27/02/1943), private collection.

[20]" *Imperio*, (14/04/1946), p. 3; *Imperio*, (26/04/1946), p. 3.

[21] Concert Programme (07/05/1945), private collection.

[22] *Imperio*, (10/08/1948), p. 3; *Imperio*, (12/08/1948), pp. 1, 4. *Imperio*, (13/08/1948), p. 1.

[23] Concert Programme (05/10/1951), private collection; *Imperio* (05/10/1951), pp. 1, 4.

[24] Letter from Inocencio Haedo to Nicolás Gonzalez (1956), private collection.

[25] *Imperio* (30/08/1956), pp. 1, 2.

[26] *Imperio* (04/12/1956), p. 6.

[27] Concert programme with curriculum of the Toledo Infantry Academy Band (07/10/2017), private collection.

[28] *Imperio*, (23/05/1958), p. 5

[29] *Imperio* (27 November 1960), p. 7.

[30] *Merlú* (yearbook from 1965), p. 40.