



# Musical Life in Baroque Mexico: Rowdy Musicians, Confraternities and the Holy Office<sup>1</sup>

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## I

ONLY RARELY has a musical document surfaced in Mexico City's General Archive (the *Archivo General de la Nación*) that was not initially uncovered by Gabriel Saldívar y Silva or Robert Stevenson.<sup>2</sup> Both scholars have mined a wealth of information concerning Mexico's past by delving into the General Archive's various branches or "ramos." Fortunately, however, both the Holy Office as well as the Fraternity and Confraternity Sections have recently yielded fresh information concerning various aspects of Mexican musical life during the last baroque century, 1650–1750.

The wealth of some officials who controlled musical life in the chief cathedrals was astounding. Gas-

par de Cepeda y Castro, the *chantre* at the Puebla Cathedral who died in 1721, left possessions catalogued in a document of no less than 97 folios.<sup>3</sup> In contrast with his wealth and with the propriety of the musicians for whom he was responsible, street musicians were often notoriously profligate. In 1721, the same year that Cepeda y Castro's possessions were inventoried, Bartolomé Ortiz—who had a long list of aliases and false identities—was tried and convicted of bigamy (*casado dos veces*).<sup>4</sup> His story would make a fascinating screen play. After his conviction, Ortiz led a daring escape from prison but was eventually recaptured and incarcerated anew. In 1733 an organ builder at Puebla, Manuel de Zúñiga, was charged with bigamy.<sup>5</sup> During his trial he be-

<sup>1</sup>This is a revised and expanded version of a paper delivered at the Fifteenth Congress of the International Musicological Society, Madrid, April 3–10, 1992.

<sup>2</sup>Consult Gabriel Saldívar y Silva, *Historia de la música en México: Épocas precortesiana y colonial* (Mexico City: Ediciones Gernika y Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1987), rptnt. of Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1934; and also Robert Stevenson, *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968) and *Music in Mexico: A Historical Survey* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1952).

<sup>3</sup>Archivo General de la Nación (AGN), México, Ramo de la Inquisición: Tomo 766, número 16, fojas 316–413. 1717. "Autos de embargo en los bienes del Sr. Lic. D. Gaspar de Cepeda y Castro. Chantre de la Santa Iglesia Catedral de esta ciudad de Puebla de los Angeles."

<sup>4</sup>AGN, Ramo de la Inquisición: Tomo 790, número 1, fojas 1–200. 1721. "El Sr. Fiscal del Santo Oficio contra Bartolomé Hortiz; alias D. Manuel Echanagucia de Arteaga; alias Pedro Chacón, Alias D. Francisco Juncos; alias D. José de Lanzagorta, natural de la ciudad de Mérida, al parecer español y de oficio músico, por casado dos veces."

<sup>5</sup>AGN, Ramo de la Inquisición: Tomo 840, número 1, fojas



moaned the loss of his first wife who (he tells us) had died years ago. At this point in the trial his wife—who had “passed away”—strolled into the court room, a very angry woman. Needless to say, he was convicted. Like Ortiz, Zúñiga led a successful jail break only to be recaptured and die in prison six years later.

In 1720 Juan Bautista was denounced for being a “foreigner, trickster, and archlutenist.”<sup>6</sup> (Obviously the archlute was an instrument known in baroque Mexico.) In 1721 Dominican *corista* Fray Alonso Tirado of Quito province and in 1730 Juan de Escobar y Llamas, *chantre* in Campeche diocese, were questioned by Holy Office authorities.<sup>7</sup> In 1731 the mestizo musician Agustín Álvarez complained against the superstitious verses of a certain Francisco de Molina.<sup>8</sup>

## II

The Confraternity Section in the Mexican National Archive houses extensive documentation concerning the annual Festival of San Pedro Arbués (1441–1485), patron of the Mexican Santo Oficio after his beatification in 1664. In a 240-folio *legajo* is recorded every expense for the observance of San Pedro Arbués’s feast day during the years 1669–1741.<sup>9</sup> The annual budget supplies precise figures for candles, lilies, bouquets, bonfires, carpets for

1–264. 1733. “Manuel de Zúñiga, español: natural de la ciudad de Puebla, por casado dos veces.—Guanajuato—fojas 1 a 264. Inventario de los bienes de Manuel de Zúñiga, de oficio organero, fojas 21 y 22.”

<sup>6</sup> “[E]xtranjero, músico tañedor de un arcilaud, y jugador de manos, etc.” AGN, Ramo de la Inquisición: Tomo 725, foja 156. 1720. “Denuncia contra Juan Bautista, extranjero, músico tañedor de un arcilaud, jugador de manos, &a.”

<sup>7</sup> AGN, Ramo de la Inquisición: Tomo 889, fojas 204–251. 1721. “Contra Fr. Alonso Tirado, Religioso Corista del Orden de Santo Domingo de la Provincia de Quito en el Reino del Perú.” AGN, Ramo de la Inquisición: Tomo 830, número 33, fojas 419–429. 1730. “Juan de Escobar y Llamas, Chantre y Vicario General del Opispado de Campeche.”

<sup>8</sup> AGN, Ramo de la Inquisición: Tomo 858, fojas 605–610, 612–621. 1735. “Denuncia Agustín Álvarez, mestizo músico a Francisco de Molina por unos versos supersticiosos.”

<sup>9</sup> AGN, Ramo de Cofradías y Archicofradías: Tomo 17, expediente 2, fojas 73–312. 1688–1741. “México S<sup>t</sup> S<sup>o</sup> Pedro de Arbues.” This document contains the budgets for the Festival of San Pedro de Arbués celebrated by the Tribunal of the Inquisition every year on September 16.

the chapel, dramas, and—of course—music. As a sample, the budget for 1688 reveals the spectacular illumination of the royal Santo Domingo *convento* to have been the single most expensive item. The number of candles, their individual weights, and specific disposition or location is spelled out in great detail. The document begins thus:<sup>10</sup>

First, for the main altar	
10 candles of 2 lbs. each =	20 pesos
For placement next to the Saint,	
2 candles of 12 ozs.	1 peso
Plus 16 candles of 12 ozs.	
for the candelabras	12 pesos
Plus 12 candles of 4 ozs. . . .	

The sum for wax alone totalled 65 pesos, plus the peso charged for delivering the wax to Santo Domingo. This is a staggering sum, given that the budget for the entire festival was 133 pesos. In short, candles consumed *half* of the funds. Of the remaining 67 pesos, two pesos, two tomines were spent on six dozen rockets or fireworks<sup>11</sup> and the same amount on firewood for the *luminarias* (small bonfires that glowed outside Santo Domingo). Three pesos went toward the bouquets and carpets placed in the chapel. The cathedral musicians received 30 pesos for their services at vespers and mass. Twenty pesos, the same sum that paid for ten candles on the main altar, sufficed for the commissioning of a new *comedia* (play) to be performed as part of the celebration.

Twenty-two years later Holy Office treasurer Joseph de Bustos submitted the following expense account for the 1710 celebration:<sup>12</sup>

Don Joseph de Bustos reports that the funds expended for the Festival of San Pedro Arbués came to 162 pesos and 3 tomines.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Primeram <sup>te</sup> Para El Altar mayor dies velas	
de a dos libras	Vo 20 p.
Para Junto al S <sup>to</sup> dos Velas de a doce onças	Vo 01 p.
mas dies y seis velas de a doce onças para	
Los quatro colaterales	Vo 12 p.
mas doce Velas de a quatro En Libra	Vo 03 p.

<sup>11</sup> In the monetary system of the time, eight tomines equalled one peso.

<sup>12</sup> AGN, Ramo de Cofradías y Archicofradías: Tomo 17, expediente 2, foja 181.

<sup>13</sup> See the accompanying facsimile of Antonio de Salazar’s receipt for the 30 pesos paid the cathedral chapel musicians in 1710.



For the candle wax for the altar and renewal of the candlesticks as is specified by the receipt that I am submitting <sup>14</sup>	75 p[esos], 7t.
For the Preacher	12 p.
For the Musicians as is specified by the receipt <sup>15</sup>	30 p.
For the Sacristans	4 p.
For firewood and resinous pine	2 p. 4 t.
For the <i>juncia</i> , <sup>16</sup> string players, and shawms, firecrackers and fireworks	18 p.
For the play	20 p.
<hr/>	
The expenses for the cited items amount to	162 p. 3 t.
one hundred sixty two pesos and three tomines that I attest to in the proper form. I request that You dispatch payment.	

## III

In chronological summary San Pedro Arbués receipts yield the following data:

From the first entry in 1669 to the last in 1741, the chapel musicians were paid an invariable 30 pesos

for singing vespers and mass, no more, no less. For rehearsing and performing with his own theater troupe a newly written *comedia*, Matheo Xaramillo received 20 pesos in 1671. Two years later Rodrigo Bernal built a stage for musicians to occupy. To add brilliance to the music provided by the cathedral chapel choristers, *clarines* (clarion trumpets) began being hired in 1681 for four pesos, a sum increased to six pesos in 1682. Shawms (*chirimías*) received four pesos in 1683, and shawms and trumpets together five pesos in 1684. *Atabales* (timpani) appear on the payment records for the first time in 1685. Strings (*arcos*) enter for the first time in 1688, then lapse to begin anew in 1694. In 1691 the players of both shawms and trumpets are specified as being *indios* (Indians).

In 1699 strings, *juncia*, shawms, and firewood are consolidated as a single item in the budget. The list of cathedral maestros who signed receipts begins with Antonio de Salazar (1701–1714), continues with Gerónimo Zárate (1715–1724), Juan Salibes (1725–1732), and then alternates between Manuel de Sumaya (Zumaya) and Fernando de Castillo for the

Recibo del Sr. Diego Joseph de Bustos Trinitario,  
por la asistencia de la capilla, alas Vespers y Misa  
del Sr. Pedro de Arbués, q' celebra el Sr. Tribunal  
de la Inquisición, en el convento Real de S. J. de  
domingo, y por Verdad lo firmen me X<sup>co</sup>, a 7  
de septiembre, de 1710 =

30 p.

Antonio de Salazar

Archivo General de la Nación.  
Ramo de Cofradías y Archicofradías.  
Tomo 17, expediente 2, foja 184.

<sup>14</sup>Since wax was such an expensive item, there was often an additional receipt that spelled out precisely the "going rate" for wax per pound and the total number of pounds delivered.

<sup>15</sup>Beginning in 1701, the Mexico City cathedral chapelmasters signed receipts acknowledging the 30 pesos paid for the services of the cathedral musicians.

<sup>16</sup>The term *juncia* needs clarification. The author feels it most likely is a low-registered double-reed instrument such as a *bajón*. [Or it may apply to the loud instruments as a group. ED. NOTE]



years through 1738, followed by Salvador Zapata in 1739 and Thadeo Torquemada in the last two documented years of 1740 and 1741. Two accompanying facsimiles provide samples of these receipts: translated, the first facsimile signed by chapelmaster Antonio de Salazar in 1710 reads:

I received from Don Diego Joseph de Bustos thirty pesos for the attendance of the Chapel at vespers and mass for the festival of San Pedro Arbués that the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition celebrated in the Royal Convent of Santo Domingo. I testify this to be true. Mexico, the 17 of September, 1710.

Masetro Antonio [sic] de Salazar.

30 pesos

The second receipt is signed by Manuel de Sumaya in 1733 and states:

I received from the Treasurer of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Mexico, Don Aug.<sup>o</sup> Antt.<sup>o</sup> Castrillo y Collantes, thirty pesos for the attendance by the Chapel at vespers and the day of the glorious martyr San Pedro de Arbués that the Tribunal of the Holy Office annually celebrates in the Imperial Convent of Santo Domingo of Mexico. So that it might be declared, I sign this on the 16 of September, 1733.

Presbyter Manuel de Sumaya

30 pesos

*Recibo del thesoro del s. oficio de la Inq. de Mex. ta. y  
Don Augustin Castrillo y Collantes tesorero de la Inq. en Mexico  
de la capilla de las Justas y de la gloriosa memoria  
de San Pedro de Arbués que anualmente celebra el Tribunal  
del s. oficio en el Convento Imperial del s. de Sto. on  
Don Diego para y conto lo pague a 16 de Septiembre de 1733 y*

30  
=

*Manuel de Sumaya*

Archivo General de la Nación.  
Ramo de Cofradías y Archicofradías.  
Tomo 17, expediente 2, foja 279.