The Last Musicological Frontier: Cathedral Music in the Colonial Americas

Until at least 1800, all the principal New World cathedrals regarded the fostering of musical composition as a prime duty. Just as Cristóbal de Morales at Toledo, Francisco Guerrero at Seville, and their successors who served as chapelmasters throughout Spain and Portugal were primarily composers, so also the cathedral *maestros de capilla* at Bogotá, Caracas, Cuzco, Guatemala, Lima, Mexico City, Oaxaca, Puebla, Quito, San Juan, Santiago de Chile, Santiago de Cuba, and Sucre, by way of example, were expected to provide a constant stream of new music for all the important religious and civic ceremonies in the colonies. To bring their compositions to immediate performance, the cathedral chapters made them conductors of ten to thirty paid adult choristers and instrumentalists, with a half-dozen boys on stipend singing the treble parts.

Much more music was composed under this system than is now preserved. Nonetheless, in cathedrals such as those at Mexico City, Puebla, and Sucre, hundreds of well-made and often richly inspired pieces do still survive. *Renaissance and Baroque Musical Sources in the Americas* (Washington: General Secretariat, Organization of American States, 1970) alone itemized more than 1200 American titles in colonial cathedral archives.

How shall this surviving repertory be most profitably studied, and how may the careers of the composers who wrote it be best assessed? A superficially attractive plan would call for a division by centuries. The accession of Philip III in 1598, of Philip V in 1700, and the arrival of Dom João VI at Rio de Janeiro in 1808 mark the turnings of political epochs. Nevertheless, when dates such as 1600, 1700, and 1800 are applied to New World music, too many composers' careers are inconveniently sliced in half—those of Gutierre Fernández Hidalgo, Tomás de Torrejón y Velasco, Juan de Araujo, and Manuel de Zumaya, for example. In the absence of any round dates meaningfully applicable throughout all the Americas, a geographic sequence seems most logical, limited of course to the sees with documentation that permits reconstructing a history. Cathedrals that for one reason or another have lost their archives—such as those at Asunción (1547), Cartagena (1534), Santa Cruz de la Sierra (1605), Santa Marta (1534), and Panama (1534)—are necessarily self-excluding.

Colonial English America fails to figure in a cathedral music history for other reasons. The senior see of Baltimore was not established until November 6, 1789, nor the old cathedral begun there until July 7, 1806. Consecration of Protestant Episcopal bishops awaited November 14, 1784, and February 4, 1787.

Not that English America as early as 1698 lacked a vital interest in Spanish

America. On August 27 of 1698, the year that marks the beginning of music printing with a psalmbook published at Boston, the heady news reached Boston "that New-Spain had Revolted from the Crown of Spain and had crowned the vice-Roy of Mexico their King."[1] Convinced that the freezing out of foreigners from all direct contact with Mexico was about to end, Cotton Mather—Boston's keenest scholar—then decided to break the ice at once with the first book published in English America (1) in the Spanish language and (2) destined for Spanish America. In his diary for January, 1699, Mather commented thus on *La Fe del Christiano: En Veyntequatro Articulos* (Boston: B. Green and J. Allen, 1699): "About this Time, understanding that the way for our Communication with the *Spanish Indies*, opens more and more, I sett myself to learn the *Spanish Language:* . . . a few leisure minutes in the Evening of every Day, in about a Fortnight, or three weeks Time, so accomplished mee, I could write very good Spanish."

So quick was he that his Spanish début was already being set up in print in the selfsame month. When the work came off the press, he announced it as his "Design to send it by all the wayes that I can, into the several parts of the *Spanish America*."[2] On September 30, 1701, news reached him from London that his self-taught Spanish-in-three-weeks had brought him fame even in Europe, and that his "little book" had been praised by a Portuguese "of a very good family, in his own Countrey" who now asked for many more copies.[3]

Mather's "mastery" of Spanish during odd moments of only three weeks and his ability to assess the situation in New Spain = Mexico at a glance set a pattern that even in the present century some New Englanders have insisted on aping. Although it may no longer be overtly *La Fe*, it is cultural fruits of Roman Catholic "fe" that are decried by New England critics who claim that only Mexican folklore has any worth—Mexico's historic art-music being all epigonic, worthless stuff. With not much more than three weeks' study, one doughty New Englander thus disposed of the entire pre-1900 Mexican art-music heritage: "As a pearl, it cannot stack up beside any of the musics of European areas of equal size. Like all colonial musics, that of the United States included, the history of the fine art of music in Mexico has been for the most part stumbling, mongrel, epigonic, and inept. Only a few works, and those very recent, can stand beside the great bulk of the best work of the big world except to disadvantage."[4]

Such a sweeping judgment by one of the Cotton Mathers of modern musicology calls to mind the equally grand dismissal of the entire French baroque by the pontiff who twenty years after Rameau's *Hippolyte et Aricie* decreed: "Therefore I conclude that the French have no music and are incapable of having any; or if they ever do have any, it will be so much the worse for them."[5] So far as this just quoted pontiff was concerned, he was recoiling against anything learned. For him "Counterfuges, double fugues, cancrizans, elaborate ostinati, and other stupid difficulties, that the

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[1] *Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674–1700* (Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 5th series, V), p. 484.

[2] Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, 7th series, VII, 284–285.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 402.

[4] *Notes of the Music Library Association*, sec. ser., X/2 (March, 1953), p. 270.

[5] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Œuvres complettes* (Paris: Bélin, Caille, Grégoire, Volland, 1793), XXVIII, 227–228: "D'où je conclus que les Français n'ont point de musique et n'en peuvent avoir; ou que si jamais ils en ont une, ce sera tant pis pour eux."

ear cannot take in and reason cannot justify, are the painful relics of the same barbarism and bad taste that gave birth to such monstrosities as the doors of our Gothic churches—which exist to shame those who wasted their time constructing them."[6] Contemporary enemies of the Latin American historic repertory are often infected with the same prejudices against anything whatsoever that is recondite or erudite, especially from an area that they like to regard as the home of the dressed flea.

To break down their prejudices, more historic music examples continue being needed. In 1974 Samuel Claro Valdés published an elegant 330-page *Antología de la música colonial en América del Sur* (Santiago: Universidad de Chile) and in 1975 was issued a distinctly less handsome 376-page *Latin American Colonial Music Anthology* (Washington: General Secretariat, Organization of American States), the examples in which were keyed to *Renaissance and Baroque Musical Sources in the Americas* (1970). To compensate somewhat for their shabby appearance in his 1975 anthology, Robert Stevenson should return to print with an Urtext edition of his anthology, the music engraved.

In order to include at least one piece by each major cathedral composer, villancicos or other self-contained short pieces have heretofore ousted Mass and Magnificat excerpts from anthologies. Given not excerpts but "wholes," whether in Latin or the vernacular, choral societies do now possess sufficient repertory for several "American" Renaissance and Baroque programs. Furthermore, these programs can be broadly representative. This is so, because before 1750 nearly everything composed in the Americas, or at least nearly all that has survived, flowed from the pens of cathedral chapelmasters. Though not invariably topnotch, cathedral maestros de capilla prove oftener than not to have been masters of their own craft, able to manage the niceties of polyphonic composition as neatly as their renowned European contemporaries. Nor did their cathedral appointments prevent their becoming the composers of the first New World operas and earliest surviving incidental music for the theater—as the instances of Tomás de Torrejón y Velasco in Peru (1701), Manuel de Zumaya in Mexico (1711), Blas Tardio de Guzmán in Bolivia (active 1745), and Ignacio Jerusalem y Stella in Mexico (died 1769) abundantly testify.

Adequately rehearsed and professionally produced, the colonial cathedral repertory does indeed boast numerous gems "able to stand favorable comparison with the best contemporary foreign product." In the July 24, 1970, *San Francisco Chronicle* (page 42, columns 1-4), one distinguished critic drove home this point when reviewing the July 22 Carmel Bach Festival concert that mixed composers from Spain (Cristóbal de Morales, Tomás Luis de Victoria, Antonio Soler) with colonial cathedral composers from the New World (Gaspar Fernandes, Manuel de Quiroz, Manuel Blasco, Antonio Durán de la Mota, José Maurício Nunes Garcia). In part, this review read:

> The sensation of the evening was the *Lauda Sion Salvatorem* of José Maurício Nunes Garcia [1767-1830], the first really great black composer of the Americas, who became director of music for Rio de Janeiro Cathedral in 1798. Aware of European masters he still worked out a quite remarkably robust, original style.

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[6] *Ibid.*, p. 187: "A l'égard des contrefugues, doubles fugues, fugues renversées, basses contraintes, et autres sottises difficiles que l'oreille ne peut souffrir, et que la raison ne peut justifier, ce sont évidemment des restes de barbarie et de mauvais goût, que ne subsistent, comme les portails de nos églises gothiques, que pour la honte de ceux qui ont eu la patience de les faire."

Garcia's *Lauda* is a small cantata for four soloists, chorus and orchestra, bright as the tropical sunshine and twittering with tiny little bursts of fanfares for oboes and horns. I emphasize that the style is original, but for comparison, the general sound is somewhere between late Haydn, Martín [y Soler], and early Beethoven. One hopes that it will be performed in San Francisco soon.

Another of these sophisticated marvels was the terse, bouncing madrigal style of Gaspar Fernandes's *Guineo a 5*, presented by five solo singers. . . . Fernandes whose dates are placed at *ca.* 1566–1629, took over the Scherzi Musicali style of Monteverdi, but laced in the free, syncopated Afro-American rhythm which was even then apparent. The beat of the music is regular, but what goes on within those beats was far in advance of any complexities among European composers.

For contrapuntal interest and exceptionally serious writing, the beauty of Antonio Durán de la Mota's *Laudate pueri* [1723] rather outshone the major European masters—Morales and Victoria—included in this concert. The sheer sonic beauty of that small chorus with harp was astounding.

Cristóbal de Morales's *O crux, ave, spes unica* opened the program and Victoria's *Surrexit pastor bonus* closed it. In between, at about the middle, harpsichordist Ralph Linsely and organist Kenneth Ahrens played Soler's pert little *Concerto No. 4* for two solo keyboards. One got the feeling that these more famous compositions were added to shore up our quaint Americana works. Alas, as great as Morales and Victoria were, they sound distinctly second best. There is a great deal more to the black and native American contribution to the Americas than even the musicologists yet suspect.

A severe example of this was the two sections of Domenico Zipoli's Mass.[7] . . . This was its first performance outside South America, but despite the occasion, it proved to be a drab, if highly polished example of late Baroque church music, no different from hundreds of others.

In addition to the Organization of American States, Technical Unit of the Performing Arts, and the Research Committee of the University of California at Los Angeles, several foundations have in the past generously subsidized Latin American music research. A representative list would include the American Philosophical Society, the Calouste Gulbenkian, Del Amo, and Ford Foundations (the latter supporting the California-Chile Project), Fulbright Commission in Peru, Guggenheim Foundation, and Social Science Research Council. The prefaces to Stevenson's Spanish (1960, 1961, 1976), Mexican, and Peruvian books (1952, 1959, 1960, 1968, 1970, 1976) itemized numerous individual benefactors. The following alphabetical summary of the living and the dead links patrons of research with the names of those whose publications have undergirded or advanced Latin American musicology (up to 1980).

Higinio Anglés, Isabel Aretz de Ramón y Rivera, José M. Argüedas, César Arróspide de la Flor, Lauro Ayestarán, Luiz Heitor Corrêa de Azevedo, Jesús Bal y Gay, Gerónimo Baqueiro Fóster, Rodolfo Barbacci, Steven Barwick, Gerard Béhague, Gerald Benjamin, Miguel Bernal

[7] Concerning him, see Francisco Curt Lange, "O caso Domenico Zipoli: uma retificação histórica," *Barroco Revista de ensaio e pesquisa* (Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais), V (1973), 7–44; "Der Fall Domenico Zipoli Verlauf und Stand einer Berichtigung" in Heinrich Hüschen, ed. *Musicae Scientiae Collectanea Festschrift Karl Gustav Fellerer* (Cologne: Arno Volk-Verlag, 1973), pp. 327–355 [German text of preceding]; and his liner notes for *Domenico Zipoli: La Obra Completa para Organo* and for *Misa en Fa Mayor para Coro, Solistas, Cuerdas y Bajo Continuo* (Buenos Aires: FONEMA Qualiton SQ1–4033 and SQ1–4059, both 1975). Also see Susan Elizabeth Erickson-Bloch, "The Keyboard music of Domenico Zipoli 1688–1726," Cornell University Ph.D. dissertation, 1975.

Jiménez, Ralph Steele Boggs, Charles Boilès, Paul Borg, Policarpo Caballero Farfán, José Antonio Calcaño, Julián Carrillo, Alice Ray [Catalyne], Mario Chacón Torres, Gilbert Chase, Carlos Chávez, Samuel Claro Valdés, Henry Cobos, Daniel Devoto, Jaime C. Diniz, Jorge D'Urbano, Ernesto Epstein, Guillermo Espinosa, Jesús Estrada, Julia Fortún [de Ponce], Juan Pedro Franze, Guillermo Fúrlong Cardiff, Blas Galindo, Carmen García Muñoz, Julio García Quintanilla, Ana Gayol, Alberto Ginastera, Xavier González, María Ester Grebe, Lewis Hanke, José Raúl Hellmer, Rodolfo Holzmann, Eduardo Indacochea, Enrique Iturriaga, Arturo Jiménez Borja, Francisco Curt Lange, Vanett Lawler, Alfred E. Lemmon, Irving Lowens, Albert T. Luper, Samuel Martí, Cleofe Person de Mattos, Otto Mayer-Serra, Gunnar Mendoza, Vicente T. Mendoza, Luis Merino, Efraín Morote Best, Juan Orrego-Salas, Elisa Osorio de Saldivar, Guillermo Ovando-Sanz, Efraín Paesky, Andrés Pardo Tovar, Mercedes Reis Pequeno, José Ignacio Perdomo Escobar, Eugenio Pereira Salas, Florencia Pierret V., Juan Bautista Plaza, Isabel Pope, Esperanza Pulido, Jesús C. Romero, Adolfo Salazar, Gabriel Saldívar Silva, Graciela Sánchez Cerro, María Elena Kuss Sanders, Domingo Santa Cruz, Andrés Sas, Guilherme Schubert, Charles Seeger, Nicolas Slonimsky, Carleton Sprague Smith, Carmen Sordo Sodi, Sylvia Soublette, Lota M. Spell, Lincoln B. Spiess, E. Thomas Stanford, Pola Suárez Urtubey, Juana Subercaseaux, Octaviano Valdés, Enzo Valenti Ferro, Carlos Vega, Manuel Vicente Ribeiro Veiga, Magdalena Vicuña Lyon, Lydia Wright, Silvio Zavala.

So far as creed is concerned, the *advertencia preliminar* (1883) in Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo's *Historia de las Ideas Estéticas en España* contains some generalizations which, loosely paraphrased, apply to any solid Latin American musicological publication.

> Before proceeding any further, I should here confess that this book has little or nothing to offer those who are mere sippers. It is for those who wish facts, not high-flown rhetoric; and because much of the territory lay still so virgin, all other goals have necessarily taken second place to the drawing of an accurate map. The thrills of elegant "phrase-making" and of fine writing about people and movements of which even I was imperfectly informed before beginning to compose this book, seemed from the outset a luxury that I could ill afford. When once the field itself becomes more generally known will be time enough to start amusing the reader with the tinkling small change of unverifiable anecdote. In the present book, nothing but documented, sober fact must be our currency.
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> For the trustworthiness of the documentation, I take full responsibility. I have not shrunk from reading anything—even the most unappetizing of materials—if only some hitherto inaccessible date or fact was promised. It is not immodest for me to say that on occasion I have read whole volumes searching for one open sesame to a beauty that had long lain silently locked away. I must also add, for the greater security of the reader, that I have personally handled all the documents on which this book is founded, with the few unavoidable exceptions to which I call the reader's attention at the proper moment in the text.

Menéndez y Pelayo goes on to say that his history of esthetic concepts in Spain can fill three different, but complementary roles. Taking our cue from him, we can continue by claiming for any worthwhile history of cathedral music in the colonial Americas a similar threefold character. Such a musicological venture can be considered as: (1) what the bare title indicates, a survey of music through more than three centuries, illustrated by supplementary examples; or (2) a filling in of the large vacant white spots on maps of the total Spanish American culture; or even (3) an index to changing ideas in the Americas of what constitutes musical beauty.

So far as Captain John Smith and his Virginia colonizers were concerned, Powhatan's tribesmen when they tried singing sounded like nothing better than "fiends

with most hellish shouts and cryes. William Strachey in *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania* (1612) summarized by calling the music of the Virginia Indians "such a terrible howling as would rather affright than giue pleasure to any man."[8] Juan Díaz—a member of the Grijalva expedition that reconnoitered Yucatán in 1518—had registered equal revulsion against a local mutilated priest's loud singing of a repetitive melodic formula to the all-night accompaniment of Maya drums on May 9/10, 1518.[9]

Another member of this same 1518 Grijalva exploring party, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, found nothing good to say of Aztec music; nor did either of Cortés's other companions-in-arms Andrés de Tapia (*Relación sobre la Conquista de México*) and Alonso = Francisco de Águilar (*Historia de la Nueva España*) discover anything to love in it.

Nowadays the Mexican music that repelled Díaz del Castillo would be considered priceless—were only it possible to conjure it up. On the other hand, much of the music heard over the ruins of Huitzilopochtli's temple in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries can still be heard. Cathedral music in the colonial Americas deserves a global survey devoted to the plausible proposition that what was sung over Moctezuma's sepulchre was probably no less significant and therefore has at least as much a right to our attention as any of the unhearable strains that delighted Moctezuma before June, 1520.

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[8]Hakluyt Society, sec. ser., CIII (London: 1953), p. 85.

[9]*Colección de Documentos para la Historia de México*, edited by Joaquín García Icazbalceta (Mexico City: J. M. Andrade, 1858), I, 285: "dicea ad alta voce uno canto quasi de uno tenore"; 289: "tutta la nocte sonavano in terra molti tamburi et se facevano grandi gridi."