

## SPANISH CHIAROSCURO

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THEY WERE SIMPLY two friars who passed across the stage of 15th century Spain, making music as they went. They were not great. Yet their works appear today in anthologies of early Spanish music alongside the names of Cabanilles, pride of Valencia, and Cabezón, the blind master of Philip II. They wore the habit of St. Dominic, and their names: Fray Tomás de Santa María, O.P., and Francisco Correa de Araujo, O.P.

Little is known of these two men. Like so many of St. Dominic's band, they seem to have been more involved in doing than in recording their doings. We might even question their existence, except for the very palpable manuscripts they have left us. As it is, their persons remain rather vague, unsubstantial shadows. One is a humble friar, of whom practically nothing is known. The other is an enigmatic figure who seems to appear and disappear from the historical scene, returning later as bishop of Segovia.

Such is our story; and we present it as a study in contrasts, since even the scant evidence available seems to warrant this. Between them, our subjects embody many of the rich colors that make up the variegated Spanish Character, colors mirrored in their music, as we shall now see. . . .

### MESETA Y MONTANAS

Castile is a bleak land of stark realities—from the rugged thrust of its mountain peaks, and the brittle dry of its arid atmosphere, to the flat stone-choked *meseta*, from which near-barenness the peasant wrenches a livelihood. The people of Castile are poor. Their life is branded with austerity. Their art is marked by simplicity. It was to such as these that our first Dominican came and brought his music.

Fray Tomás de Santa María was born in Madrid. We do not even know the year. All else we know is that he was a Dominican of Castile, and that he published in 1565 in Valladolid, "*El Arte de Tañer Fantasía, assí para Tecla como Vihuela*,"<sup>1</sup> a treatise on technique, in which he discusses the principles of rhythm, ornamentation, attack, touch, fingering, etc. With regard to his theorizing, it is interesting to note, among other things, that Fray Tomás, as well as Araujo, employed all five fingers in playing keyboard instruments, whereas it is generally supposed that the use of the thumb originated with J. S. Bach and his immediate forerunners a century later.

Fray Tomás uses mostly the "ricercare" form, a type of fugal composition employing all the resources and learning of the composer. The fugue might be defined as "a composition in which a theme, called the subject, is announced by one voice and imitated by other voices."<sup>2</sup> As the Latin word *fuga* (flight) suggests, one voice starts out alone, and others enter in pursuit, following it through a variety of musical keys and rhythms until all overlap and combine in the glorious *stretta* at the end.

The music of Santa María has about it a breathless sublimity, a purity of line and calm serenity not easily forgotten. It is the musical equivalent of El Greco's elongated torsos and solemn-faced nobles clad in black. It mirrors the naked austerity of St. John of the Cross and echoes the mystical lilt of his poetry.

We can see these characteristics in such of Santa María's music as survives. Joseph Bonnet, eminent contemporary French musician and teacher, has collected and edited two works of Fray Tomás in his *Historic Organ Recitals*.<sup>3</sup> They are called *cláusulas*. There is one written in the first tone, and one in the eighth tone. Musical dictionaries tell us a *cláusula* was a dance. But these are not the dances of the world. They savor of the sacred dances of Spain, the sacramental dances performed before the tabernacle. Theirs are the holy rhythms of David moving with measured grace and solemn exuberance before the Ark of the Covenant. Fray Tomás may well have filled the church with the music of his *cláusulas* while his brothers in robes of black and white inched silently with lighted tapers up the nave in procession.

The *Cláusula de 1º Tono*, the "grave" tone, with its rich D minor harmonies reminds us of the Gregorian *Salve Regina* chant, centering, as it does, around the range of notes from D to A. Played with soft flutes and a diapason, the piece has an unearthly quiet to it. When there is added a nazard 2 2/3 stop with its slightly nasal

quality, just the perfect sting of austerity is achieved to bring out the flavor of a Castilian landscape. The first voice, moving like a pathway of sunlight across the severe gray of cathedral stone, is followed timidly by a second voice, and then a third. The first leads its companions up into the spine of the nave—until the deep, majestic voice of the pedal sounds the theme. Now the contest of voices is on, growing and developing in various patterns of sound, all of which subside gradually in a *ritardando*, and the final cadence in D major dies away to a whisper of exquisite shimmering beauty.

This is the music of a simple friar of Castile. This is the art of meseta and montaña. This is the wind-whipped, weather-lined face of north central Spain.

### FIESTA Y SOL

Now, let us leave behind us the arid, wind-swept plateau of the North, and journey to the torrid, sun-splashed country of the South. Here is a land of metallic blue skies, of hillsides blanketed with terraces of purpling vines, of dense wooded groves and stucco houses. Through this countryside the Guadalquivir saunters and sings, rambles and rushes its way on to the sea. This is old Seville, and its Moorish courts are filled with sparkling laughter and the hypnotic click of castanets. The wine of the South is heady, and a tang of orange blossoms sails upon the breeze. Murmuring fountains are all that fill the midnight air, except when the trill of the *ruiseñor* floats down into the garden, or the occasional clank of keys and streaks of lantern-light announce the *sereno*. And so our scene is set. . . .

The life of Francisco Correa de Araujo (Arauxo) is shrouded in mystery, so few details of it are accurately recorded. What does come down to us reads more like an antique Spanish *leyenda*, woven through and through with gold and silver threads of fantasy and romance. According to one account, he came of the Spanish-Portuguese family of the Araujo, or Arauxo. (His works were well known both in Spain and Portugal.) Araujo was born around 1581, just nine years after the death of Tomás de Santa María. By the testimony of his own hand, he comes from Galicia in the North of Spain,<sup>4</sup> but his musical training was in the South, and reflects the spirit of that region. He received all his musical training under Jerónimo Peraza and Diego del Castillo, who successively served as organists of the Seville cathedral, *La Giralda*. Araujo himself soon took up the post of organist at the Collegiate

Church of San Salvador, next in importance only to the Cathedral. But he found this an unenviable lot. An acrimonious imbroglio with the Chapter of the Church eventually lead to lawsuits, and compelled Araujo to relinquish his position in 1633. After this he vanished from history. One solitary fact is recorded: the sale of some of his vocal compositions to the Cathedral Chapter of Jaén in 1636.<sup>5</sup>

According to another account, however, Araujo's career reads somewhat differently. The *Quellen-Lexikon der Musiker und Musikgelehrten*,<sup>6</sup> as well as the prologues and prefaces of Araujo's own theological works (listed in footnote 4), state that he was Dominican organist at San Salvador, rector of the cloister, professor later at Salamanca, and eventually bishop of Segovia. This is a rather illustrious calendar. One is tempted to harmonize the variant records by accounting for Araujo's disappearance from the limelight by the simple explanation of his cloistered life. Could it not well be that his active years as rector of his cloister in Seville, as well as the hidden years of study and lecturing behind the protecting walls of Salamanca took him out of the public eye?

In his treatise, *Facultad Orgánica*, published in 1626 at Alcalá de Henares, Araujo theorizes along lines that have been termed by some historians of music as little less than revolutionary. He introduces many new aesthetical variations and different techniques. His harmonies are striking, and he indulges in bold new dissonances. His *tientos*, especially, helped to introduce the dynamic era of the baroque into Spanish music. But this is a distinctly Hispanic baroque, different from its well-known Italian counterpart, as exemplified by such composers as Frescobaldi. Correa de Araujo's *Facultad* comprises 69 compositions. Some glosses and variations are to be found, but the majority of pieces are of that particularly Spanish genre, the *tiento*. The term, *tiento*, is difficult to explain. Most believe the word originated from the auditions given in Spanish cathedrals to those seeking the post of organist. The candidate was allowed to "try" the instrument for the space of a few minutes, and then was supposed to play a work of great skill and virtuosity, such as a fantasia or a rhapsody.

The musical palette of Araujo ranges in colors from dark, poignant melancholies to bright, tumultuous joys. If Santa María reflects the somber side of El Greco, Correa de Araujo's great musical tapestries are flush with all the riotous color of that painter's liquid silks and satins and courtly splendor. It has all

the passionate spontaneity of the theatre of Lope de Vega. It has all the verve, and pomp, and quixotic impulsiveness of Cervantes' mad hidalgo.

Typical of Araujo's music is the *Tiento de Quarto Tono por E La Mi*, the "harmonious" tone.<sup>7</sup> The bass voice of the pedal launches us into a sea of music. It is a smooth sea at first, ebbing with an even current as the Mediterranean often does at sunset. A sudden eddy of motion catches our attention as the second manual begins a new, slightly more agitated theme, but all soon returns to the steadier flow of earlier measures: a sea of contemplative tranquillity right down to the very last, where even the full, sonorous yawn of the pedal, rumbling a stentorian trill, is unable to dissipate the sombre spell. Then, in the *maestoso* passage, sunlight breaks across the face of the sea, as orderly whole-notes and half notes begin to march from A to c, to g, to c', and finally up to high a'. A wind springs up and sweeps the flaccid sea with dancing billows, while triad chords are flung out in handfuls of wanton carol. One thinks of those jutting, horizontal trumpet pipes in the Barcelona Cathedral, sending their fanfares in shrill reports out over the heads of the congregation. But now a pause follows in the slower *andantino* and *tranquillo* sections, played on languid flute stops suggestive of noonday calm. Yet the winds from the South are lurking not far distant, and, suddenly, the dread Sirocco is upon us in all its fury, lashing the ashen sea and sparkling white foam up, up into towering crests. *Allegro energetico* is the marking, and the section begins with undulating thirds around a fixed bass, describing ever wider circles of sound, rising into a swirling vortex to fill the fretted vaults a-tremble with the electric tension of its violent rhythms. Finally, the pedal itself, intoxicated by the whirling theme, seems seized with vertigo as it lumbers about in circular imitation. Now the soprano and alto voices break into a succession of ascending and descending scales, rushing at vertiginous speeds in a mighty cascade of sound, until a high peak is reached in the frenzied upper registers. A last word is curtly announced by the pedal with an air of finality and brusque decision, and all is frozen into the chill tonality of an E major chord.

And so you have it. Our sketch is complete. It is, indeed, a study in contrasts, in light and shade. Yet, perhaps we have here no rigid dichotomy after all. Would it be far-fetched to say that the very light and shade is only the black and white of the Dominican habit worn by both our subjects? Are not these colors

symbolic of the spirit of penance and joy? We have here reflected, then, two complementary characteristics of Dominican life and spirituality. The quiet, becowled figure of Santa María creates his soft, lute-like compositions in a spirit of contemplative calm, in an atmosphere drenched with that austerity by which nature itself has penanced Castile. He employs mostly the strictest musical forms of fugue and *ricercare*, as befits the Dominican and Aristotelian love of form. Araujo, on the other hand, represents the note of the *chevaleresque*, the enthusiastic abandon and dynamic élan of Dominican activity. He pours out the tempestuous melancholies and fervid joys of his soul in a torrent of unrestrained, form-free improvisations: *tientos* and *fantasias*. His lancing melodies rise heavenwards majestically as a bishop's mitre to pierce the blue Andalusian sky.

They were simply two friars who passed across the stage of 15th century Spain, making music as they went. . . .

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> "The Art of Improvising, both on Keyboard Instruments and on the Guitar."

<sup>2</sup> "Fugue," by Homer A. Norris. An article in *Music Lovers' Encyclopedia*, Music Times Co., Chicago. 1903.

<sup>3</sup> *Historic Organ Recitals*, Vol. VI. By Joseph Bonnet. G. Schirmer, Inc., New York. 1940.

<sup>4</sup> This testimony comes from a Prologue to *In Tertiam Partem D. Thomae (Aquinas) Commentarium*, Vol. I, written by Araujo while teaching theology at St. Stephen's, Salamanca, and published from that place in 1636. In the dedication to Ferdinand Andrade y Mendoza, "*Palatinae primum Antistiti Ecclesiae, nunc Archipraesuli Burgensis*," we read the following: ". . . quia Galaicu decus, illius Prouintie fausta proles, quae me genuit, ut sic Patriae amantissimae debuit pietatis cultum in te impenderem. . . ."

<sup>5</sup> This account is taken mostly from *Graves Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, St. Martin's Press, N. Y. 1955. Vol. II. p. 455.

<sup>6</sup> *Quellen-Lexikon der Musiker und Musikgelehrten*, edited by Robert Eitner, Musurgia, N. Y. Vol. I. p. 184.

<sup>7</sup> This is also included in Joseph Bonnet's collection cited above. The *Facultad* has recently been transcribed entirely into modern notation by S. Kastner and published by the Instituto Español de Musicología; Vol. I, 1948; Vol. II, 1951.



"Propriety naturally dictates a becoming respect for traditional Church music, but nevertheless the house of God should open its portals to the new, which, following the path of the golden age of Church music, is composed by gifted artists in a true Catholic spirit, even though in the modern style and contemporary technique."

Pope Pius XII: "Letter to Cardinal Innitzer, Archbishop of Vienna, for the Opening of the Second International Congress on Sacred Music, October, 1954."