



Fabián Peres Ximeno (1591–1654): “presbitero organista mayor y maestro de capilla” Data in Mexico City Documents

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ALTHOUGH FABIÁN Peres Ximeno¹ (1591–1654) is today not as well known as either Francisco López Capillas—the chapelmaster who succeeded him at Mexico City Cathedral in 1654—or Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla—Peres Ximeno’s approximately contemporary counterpart in Puebla—he was nonetheless held in very high regard at both Madrid and in New Spain in his own day. Indeed, Robert Stevenson points out that “a century later Peres Ximeno was still remembered as one of the two best paid musicians in cathedral history” (1987, 87). His choral works which survive in Mexico City and Puebla yield ample testimony to the high level of his musical skills. These include two masses—one for eleven voices (“Missa sobre el Beatus Vir de Fray Xacinto” on the fourth tone) and one for eight (“Missa de la Batalla”²)—as well as two Magnificats and various motets and psalm settings (ibid., 97).

In New Spain he first enters the records of the Mexico City Cathedral on 1 December 1623 when he is listed as second organist. By 28 November 1642

¹In the modern literature he is referred to as either “Fabián Pérez Ximeno” or simply “Fabián Ximeno.” He signed his own name as either “Fabian Peres Ximeno” or “Fabian Ximeno.” The Puebla Cathedral capitular acts sometimes spell his name “Gimeno.” His will is listed in the catalogue of the Archivo General de la Nación as being that of “FABIAN PERES JIMENO,” but this seems to have been a whim of the cataloguer.

²This work has been recorded by Benjamín Juárez Echenique for the *Mexico Barroco* series.

he had become first organist, and by 31 March 1648, chapelmaster (ibid., 87). The Chapter minutes of 17 April 1654 record his death (ibid., 97). The recent discovery of two documents, including his last will and testament, reveals details of his life after emigrating to New Spain in 1622. Both documents surfaced from an on-line search of the digitalized data base of the Archivo General de la Nación in Mexico City. The present author first examined the documents there on 12 October 2004.

FABIÁN PERES XIMENO AS ORGANIST

The manner in which Peres Ximeno chose to be identified professionally in his last will and testament—*organista mayor y maestro de capilla*—reminds us of the double duty required of Luis Coronado and Francisco López Capillas, preceding and succeeding Mexico City Cathedral chapelmasters. Indeed, the order in which the titles are listed even seems to emphasize the importance that he placed on that part of his professional life which involved the organ.³ In addition, the last will and testament confirms and elaborates upon Peres Ximeno’s

³Indeed, it is exactly because Peres Ximeno listed himself as organist that the document was discovered: a simple search on the word *organista* turned up a folder full of last wills and testaments including that of “LIC. FABIAN PERES JIMENO,



close connection to the Vidal family of organ-builders. Taken together, this information leaves no doubt that the organ centralized Peres Ximeno's interest.

Recent scholarship has understandably focused attention on chapelmasters as composers of choral works, but their role in the historical development of the organ as an instrument is often ignored. Peres Ximeno's expertise extended beyond performance. He was twice invited to Puebla to examine new or renovated organs in the cathedral. Peres Ximeno's first trip to Puebla occurred in 1634. For evaluating the renovation then being carried out by Pedro Simón,⁴ Ximeno was paid 200 *pesos* (Stevenson 1984, 68)—equivalent to what seems to have been his annual salary as second organist in the Mexico City Cathedral (Stevenson 1987, 80 and 87). He received the same payment in 1648 when he inspected a newly completed organ⁵ for the Puebla cathedral and possibly performed for the dedication ceremonies on 2 May of that year (Stevenson 1984, 70).⁶

It is worth noting that Puebla authorities turned to Mexico City for help with the cathedral organs instead of consulting local experts. Although both Gaspar Fernandes and his successor Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla doubled as organists, they are both now

extolled for their compositions (*ibid.*, 65).⁷ And while Gutiérrez de Padilla had a music instrument workshop in Puebla (*ibid.*, 68), he has not been proved to have made organs there. The Puebla Cathedral organist and organ technician, Pedro Simón, was not engaged by the Cathedral to build the 1648 instrument (*ibid.*, 69)⁸ and neither Gutiérrez de Padilla nor Simón seems to have been asked to make a final evaluation of the new organ in 1648. It was rather to Peres Ximeno that they turned.

Traditionally organ construction experts were organists of particular repute, not employed by the local committee. Peres Ximeno belonged in this category: the esteem in which he was held for his expertise is made clear by a 1648 entry in the Puebla Cathedral Chapter minutes recording the visit of the *Liz^{do} Gimeno Organista de Mex^{co}* which notes "the blessing that he bestowed on this city by reviewing the organ and another large one which is to be built" (*ibid.*, 70). The reference to the organ that was still to be built reveals that Peres Ximeno served not only as an organ examiner, but also as an organ consultant, a function of great significance, and one carried out by the greatest organ performers throughout history.

In addition to being a nonpareil performer and an organ construction expert, Peres Ximeno had strong professional and personal relationships to the organ dynasty of Vidales (Vidal, Vital), a seventeenth-century group of organ builders that included Joseph, Hernando, Juan Antonio, and Juan Vital de Moctezuma, as well as Nicolás Castro de Vital.⁹ It was Fabián Peres Ximeno who convinced the cathedral authorities in Mexico City to hire a member of the Vital family in 1642 as *maestro de hacer órganos* and tuner.¹⁰ The details of the family and their work are yet to be well mapped out, but their activity was focused in the area between the capital and the State

PBRO., ORGANISTA MAYOR Y MAESTRO DE CAPILLA DE LA CATEDRAL." Archivo General de la Nación, Bienes nacionales 216, exp.15, without foja.

⁴Ecclesiastical authorities historically were wise enough to gather together experts to inspect important new instruments and, often, to write an evaluation report. The organbuilder was required to fix any flaws encountered during the inspection. Peres Ximeno was called to Puebla because Pedro Simón, who had been given the commission to renovate the large organ in 1631 had not yet completed the work in 1634 and Cathedral authorities wanted progress on the organ evaluated. The result was that Peres Ximeno agreed to send someone from Mexico City to help Simón finish the work (Stevenson 1984, 68).

⁵The builder of this instrument is unknown. One possibility would be Diego de Sebalos who is known to have been working in Puebla and involved with the Cathedral there at that time.

On the Epistle side of the Puebla cathedral today one can still see a magnificent choir facade (with its chair organ) which is likely that of the organ which Peres Ximeno examined in 1648. (The aisle facade of the organ was rebuilt by Felix de Izaguirre around 1710.) On the Gospel side is likely the case of the instrument rebuilt by Pedro Simón during the 1630s and examined by Peres Ximeno. Unfortunately, both organs have been highly modified and/or gutted so that neither of the musical instruments inside the cases has survived.

⁶Stevenson refers only to "his services at the dedication."

⁷The portion of Gaspar Fernandes's salary that had been for his organ playing was given on his death not to Gutiérrez de Padilla but to Pedro Simón.

⁸Simón was out of town a great deal—principally in Oaxaca—during the construction of the organ. In fact he was fired several times during the 1640s for absenteeism. It was probably for this reason, and for the delays experienced earlier with the rebuilding of an organ, that he was not engaged to build the 1648 instrument.

⁹It is unclear whether "Juan Vital" and "Juan Vital de Moctezuma" were the same person.

¹⁰Stevenson first gives the name as "Juan Vital (=Vidal)" (1964, 120). Later, he lists the name "Joseph Vidal(es)" (1987, 87).

of Michoacán. Several members of this family appear in Peres Ximeno's will.

In spite of the esteem in which Peres Ximeno was held for his expertise with organs, Mexico City authorities delayed installing a new organ until 1657 (Mazín 1999, Vol. II, 633)¹¹ after Peres Ximeno's death. This chapter in the history of the Mexico City Cathedral organs is still to be explored in detail.

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

Undoubtedly because of his professional status and relative wealth, Peres Ximeno's will is not of the one-page sort: it runs to four, and from the long list of names included in it a good deal more about his personal life can be learned. The will was written on 1 June 1651. Codicils were added on 2 June of the same year, and on 21 March 1654. Since, as has been mentioned, the Cathedral Chapter noted his death at their meeting of 17 April 1654, this therefore occurred between 21 March and 17 April. It is likely that Peres Ximeno was sick in 1651 when he first wrote his will. It begins by naming the *Licenciado* Bartolomé de Quevedo, succentor of the cathedral, and Ignacio Peres Ximeno (see below) as executors. The customary statements of faith follow. Next, Ximeno asks to be buried in the Chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Antigua, that associated with the confraternity of the Cathedral musicians (Carrera Stampa, 1954, 88).¹²

¹¹ Archivo del Cabildo Catedral Metropolitano de México, Fábrica Material, Libro 0, Caja 2, Exp. 5. These documents repeatedly show that Lopez Capillas was very involved in the purchase of the new organ for the cathedral of Mexico City. Lopez Capillas, who had been working at the cathedral of Puebla, brought Diego de Sebaldo from that city to build an organ for the capitol. Although Puebla cathedral officials had earlier called upon Peres Ximeno for his expertise, López Capillas's act reaffirms the importance of Puebla as an organbuilding center. Sebaldo was a Bohemian builder who had been working in and around Puebla from at least 1652 to at least 1669 (Castro Morales 1989, 16–17).

¹² The proper name of the confraternity was *la Venerable Congregación de Nuestra Señora la Sacratísima María de la Antigua* and it was based in the Chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Antigua in the Cathedral. One of the main functions of the confraternities was providing free burial for their dead (Bazarte Martínez 2001, 170–1).

The Chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Antigua unfortunately suffered a neoclassical makeover which does not allow us to see it as the cathedral's baroque musicians would have known it. The chapel is now known for housing *El niño cautivo*, these

We learn later in the will that Peres Ximeno served as *mayordomo* of the chapel.

The individual clauses that follow mix declarations and bequests. The declarations include: 1. that he was executor of the wills of, as well as an heir to, Melchor de Molina and Phelipe de Menesses; 2. that he was serving as occupant of the *capellanías* of Mother Mariana de Santa Cecilia (which owed money to *Licenciado* Herro) and Joan Gutierrez; 3. that he owed money to Antonio de Ysitta, merchant, Doña Augustina Escudero, Doctor Porto, Señor Zéspedes,¹³ Tomás de Carabajal (also spelled Carabal), silversmith, and to Captain Don Gonsalo de Luna; 4. that (according to a codicil) he no longer owed money to Tomás de Carabajal or Doña Augustina Escudero; 5. that he was owed money by the cathedral and the *capellanía* of Mother Mariana de Santa Cecilia; 6. that he was a member of the Brothers of St. Peter's Congregation;¹⁴ 7. that he was *mayordomo* of the chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Antigua; and 8. that Juan de Vital was in possession of a watch which belonged to Peres Ximeno which should be reclaimed from de Vital.

Two additional declarations are of particular interest. The first is that a certain Sebastian López of Castile had supplied Peres Ximeno with two boxes of music books and that he had sold one of the boxes and that the money had been entrusted to the Jesuit Father Alonso de Rojas. From this we see that Peres Ximeno, in addition to his duties at the cathedral and to his work as an organ expert, acted as an agent for the distribution of music books, another activity he shared with Sebastian Bach.

The second is that, although Fabián Peres Ximeno had become a priest by 1635 (Stevenson 1984, 87),¹⁵ earlier in life he had been married to Francisca de Salas Cobides and they had had four children. All

days a highly cathected statue because kidnapping is such a problem in Mexico City.

¹³ Possibly Dr. D. Nicolás del Puerto and Dr. D. Diego de Céspedes (who died in 1666), *canónigos* of the cathedral (Robles 1946, 12 and 16). The latter was not related to Juan García de Zéspedes, future chapelmaster in Puebla.

¹⁴ This probably means that he was a member of a confraternity associated with the Iglesia de la Santísima Trinidad called Congregación de Nuestro Padre San Pedro Apóstol. (Bazarte Martínez 2001, 275–6). Juan Gutiérrez de Padilla's will states that he was a member of the same confraternity in Puebla (Stevenson 1984, 61).

¹⁵ The Puebla Capitular acts list him as such on the occasion of his visit there to inspect the organ.



three daughters entered convents in Mexico City: one took the name Josepha de la Concepción upon entering the Encarnación Convent; the second took the name Ursula del Sacramento upon entering the Convent of Jesús María; and the third took the name Catalina de Jesús, also upon entering the Convent of Jesús María. Peres Ximeno's wife, Francisca, not mentioned in the will, would have died before Peres Ximeno became a priest.

Peres Ximeno's fourth, and final, child was Ygnacio, who was the "bachiller Ygnacio Ximeno" (Ygnacio Ximeno del Aguila) whom Stevenson states "on July 29, [1648]...succeeded [Francisco] López [Capillas]" as Puebla Cathedral organist (*ibid.*, 71). But he would also be the "pliant relative of the great Fabián Ximeno [who] agreed to [Pedro] Simón's henceforth siphoning off not only the tip money (*obenciones*) due for cathedral funerals and the like, but also to Simón's earning a pro rata share of the regular organist's salary any time that Simón felt inclined to mount the organ loft and play" (*ibid.*, 70). Lester Brothers considered this Ignacio to be Fabián's nephew (1989, 115). The fact that Fabián was a priest likely made Stevenson and Brothers reluctant to suggest it, but the "pliant relative" can now be identified as Peres Ximeno's son. By 21 March 1654, the date of the last codicil, the son had become a *Licenciado*.

The bequests include those made to the Church of the Santísima Trinidad, the Convent of Santa Inés (specifically the altar of Nuestra Señora de la Concepción), the Chapel of Nuestra Señora de la Antigua, the Colegio de Santos, and the convent of San Agustín. Bequests to individuals include ones to his three daughters and to various in-laws including: Thomasa de Cubides, María Rodríguez ("the daughter of in-laws"), a second María Rodríguez, Francisco de Vidales (nephew), Maria de Vidales, and Juan Rodríguez. The Rodríguez family will be discussed later.

As has long been known, the Chapter minutes of the Mexico City Cathedral mention that Peres Ximeno had a musical nephew, Francisco Vidales,¹⁶ who was second organist to López Capillas in Mexico City and later principal organist in Puebla Cathedral for 46 years (Stevenson 1984, 119). Vital (Vidales), presumably a member of the organbuilding dynasty, inherits half of Peres Ximeno's music papers. As *heredero y eredores*, Ygnacio Peres Ximeno

¹⁶Exactly how this Vital was related to Peres Ximeno remains to be established.

and Bartolomé de Quevedo would presumably have divided all remaining belongings, including the other half of the music papers. But if Ygnacio was an organist, it is not clear why Fabián left his clavichord, certainly a prized possession, to Vital.¹⁷ Peres Ximeno also left 20 *pesos* to a Maria de Vidales.

Of everything mentioned in the will, it is perhaps the music papers and books which arouse the most curiosity today. Certainly Pedro Cerone's *El Mellopeo y Maestro* must have been among the music books: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's copy still survived in 1988 (Stevenson 1996, 11). Francisco López Capillas quotes Cerone in his *Declaración de la Misa* (*ibid.*, 11) and the organbuilder Joseph Nassarre (active 1730s) is reported to have tuned his organs according to one of Cerone's tuning indications (Sahagún de Arévalo, 292). Montañós's *Arte de canto llano* is another candidate. And, if the books were very recent, they might have included—especially considering the connection to the Jesuit priest mentioned in the will—Athanasius Kircher's *Musurgia Universalis* of which two copies are preserved in the Palafox Library in Puebla.

Interestingly, the will seems not to have been executed until 1666, twelve years after Peres Ximeno's

¹⁷Peres Ximeno belongs to the large group of organists who owned a clavichord. (*Clavicordio* may be harpsichord.) Certainly the expense of an organ and the necessity for a bellows pumper made it impractical for most organists to have an organ at home. But recent research is showing that the clavichord was not just a second best option to having a house organ: theorists and chroniclers throughout the ages make it clear that the clavichord was desirable both as a practice instrument for the quality of its touch and as a performance instrument for intimate settings (Kastner 2000, 87). See also Joel Speerstra's recent book on the pedal clavichord (2004) and Lynn Edwards Butler's interesting review of the same (Edwards Butler 2004, 6–7).

For Pablo Nassarre, for instance, the clavicornio (harpsichord) was an essential instrument for anyone learning to play the organ. He says: *Es muy esencial, porque los que aprenden à tocar el Organo, no pudieran comodamente hazerlo sin èl; porque el Organo es Instrumento propriamente para las Iglesias, y no para estudiar en èl en casa. Es un Instrumento, que necessita de mucha agilidad de manos, cuya consecucion ha de ser con mucho estudio, y exercicio, y para hazerlo es Instrumento mas del caso el Manocordio, yà por mas manual, y yà por sus pocas voces, que con esso no dan enfado los que aprenden, à los que oyen, teniendo las bastantes, para que ellos puedan comprehender, lo que estudian* (Nassarre 1724, 471). Developing a keyboard technique on the clavichord also helped to perfect the sensitive touch of such paramount importance both to Spanish organists and organbuilders. See for example Dirk Flentrop concerning the action of the organs in the Mexico City Cathedral (Flentrop 1986, 5).

death. It was signed by Ygnacio alone, and while some of the clauses are marked on the copy as completed, the majority do not seem to have been executed. Perhaps Ygnacio, if organist in Puebla, had found it difficult fulfilling the wishes of his father's will.

THOMASA DE SALAS CUBIDES'S MARRIAGE PETITION

In a 1996 interview, Robert Stevenson presented a list of pressing questions for Latin American musical research (Stevenson 2000, 111). Included on that list was the desire to establish the birthplace of Fabián Peres Ximeno. A second document,¹⁸ a petition for license to marry dated 24 July 1629 for which Peres Ximeno served as a witness, does provide us at least some additional information. In the petition asking permission for Joseph Rodriguez Montañana, born in Saragossa, to marry Thomasa de Salas Cubides, born in Medinaceli (Soria), Joseph states that he is 36 years old, Thomasa states she is 26 years old, and Peres Ximeno states that he is 38 years old. Thus, if Peres Ximeno counted correctly, he was born between July 25 of 1590 and July 24 of 1591, four years earlier than the approximated date usually given.¹⁹

We also learn from the marriage petition that the Rodriguez family was related to Peres Ximeno through marriage to the sister, Thomasa, of his wife, Francisca. One of the witnesses for the petition was Roque (Diego) Calbo, *presbitero* of the Sagrario, who states that he had first met Thomasa in Madrid in 1615, and that she had come to Mexico City seven years ago "from the kingdom of Castile" in the company of her brother-in-law, Peres Ximeno. In the document, Peres Ximeno himself confirms that Thomasa came to New Spain together with him "going on seven years ago." We thus now know that Peres Ximeno came from Spain, and the date in which he emigrated—1622.²⁰ We do not know if Francisca was

¹⁸ Archivo General de la Nación, Matrimonios, Vol. 88, exp. 36, fojas 102–103.

¹⁹ We also learn that Peres Ximeno lived on the Calle Relox (Reloj).

²⁰ He must have arrived at the usual time, in the early fall. This explains why the first notices we have of Peres Ximeno are from 1623 when he was already second organist in the Cathedral of Mexico City.

also born in Medinaceli or if she met Peres Ximeno there, or later in Madrid.²¹ Peres Ximeno, already 31 years old when he left Spain, had already made his name and gained fame.

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²¹ We also do not know if they had their children while still in Spain. Nor do we know if Francisca was still alive in 1622 and made the journey with the rest of the group.



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