



REVIEW: RECORDING

## Antonio Juanas: Premiere Recordings of Selected Choral Works

Antonio Juanas (c1762–c1821)

Collegium Mundi Novi / R. Ryan Endris (conductor)

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The most prolific composer of music in the colonial Americas, Antonio Juanas (c1762–c1821) served as the last chapel master of Mexico City Cathedral before Mexican independence. A native of Spain, Juanas wrote liturgical music in multiple styles, including a cappella polyphony and galant works for chorus and small orchestra, as appropriate for cathedral ritual. He also organized and inventoried the cathedral's music archive, shaping the compositional legacy of the colonial period into more or less what exists today at the Archivo del Cabildo Catedral Metropolitano de México (ACCMM). As part of this endeavour, Juanas – like other chapel masters – made numerous arrangements and contrafacta of works by his predecessors, especially Ignacio Jerusalem (1707–1769). Juanas left annotations in the original scores that document his interventions, which range from the addition of new oboe parts to the composition of substantial new sections of music to accommodate a contrafacted liturgical text.

Despite his large oeuvre and interesting historical role, Juanas has attracted few professional performing groups, and the vast majority of his works remain unedited. Thus the release of *Antonio Juanas: Premiere Recordings of Selected Choral Works*, with Collegium Mundi Novi featuring Variant 6 conducted by R. Ryan Endris, is both thrilling and revelatory. Endris, who prepared the performing editions using microfilms from the ACCMM music collection made under the direction of E. Thomas Stanford and Lincoln Spiess in the 1960s, offers a generous and varied selection of repertory for Vespers and Matins services. While none of the pieces is a liturgical reconstruction, Endris does grant listeners a series of independent Vespers psalms, a collected Vespers service consisting of two psalms and a Magnificat, a setting of the antiphon 'Regina caeli', a lamentation for Holy Week and a cycle of eight responsories for the Feast of the Holy Trinity: seventeen pieces altogether. In his selection, Endris has privileged psalm settings in minor keys, including a *Lauda Jerusalem* in B minor (ACCMM, Papeles de música, A0284.01), a *Credidi propter* in G minor (A0258), a *Beatus vir* in E minor (A0287.01) and a Vespers service in E minor (A0288) (the call numbers may be used to consult further information about these works in the music catalogue at [www.musicat.unam.mx](http://www.musicat.unam.mx)). These minor-mode pieces are relatively rare in the late colonial repertory (as they are also, for example, in Haydn or Mozart), and they involve greater harmonic complexity and perhaps more varied tonal colours than some of the major-mode works by Juanas do. Altogether, the album presents an attractive and dignified repertory illustrating functional Catholic church music of the 1790s and early 1800s. Few recordings of any comparable music from the Spanish world exist; stylistic comparisons might be made with the slightly older composers Francisco Javier García Fajer (1730–1809) and Gaetano Brunetti (1744–1798), who were active in Spain.

In approaching the music of Juanas, Endris has made some intelligent and historically fairly appropriate performance decisions. For example, he retains a small ensemble consisting of only

eight singers, two violins and a continuo ensemble of cello and organ. Violinists Toma Iliev and Juan Carlos Zamudio, using period instruments, play with exquisite intonation and bring character to the galant figuration that often punctuates this sober music. Although the original singers would have been male choir chaplains, the mixed-gender choir sings with a sense of solemnity that serves the music well. The responsory *Magnus Dominus et laudabilis nimis* (track 16) opens with music for tenors and basses alone, momentarily revealing the all-male sound world of Catholic practice. The album reaches its greatest solemnity in *De lamentatione Jeremiae Prophetae. Heth. Miserecordiae* (A0133), which is scored for voices and continuo alone. At times, this work resembles *falsobordone*, and perhaps it might have helped the contemporary listener had the choir singled out some key-words, such as ‘convertere’, for more forceful rhetorical delivery within the fabric of largely chordal recitation. Dated 1792, the lamentation reminds us that *stile antico* music retained currency in New Spain throughout the colonial period and into the nineteenth century.

Engaged listeners to the album will notice a substantial stylistic shift between the music written by Juanas for Vespers and that of the *Ocho Responsorios para los Maitines de la Santísima Trinidad* (A1952), which Endris has also published in an urtext edition (Stuttgart: Carus, 2018). On both the album and in the edition, Endris attributes the music to Juanas, but on the basis of hearing alone, it should be evident that this is the work of a different composer or composers. For example, in the Vespers music by Juanas, the ‘second’ choir consists of ripieno voices that double the solo choir, but in the responsories, the two choirs are independent and sing antiphonally. Furthermore, the violin parts in the responsories have no independent ritornellos and few bridge sections, thus differing greatly from violin parts by Juanas. A further distinction can be heard in the last responsory of the cycle, *Duo Seraphim*, which has a more imitative polyphonic texture in the choral parts. Indeed, Endris himself seems puzzled by these issues, writing in the liner notes that the responsories were notated in ‘alla breve meters with long note values’ (3), which he rightly takes to be anachronistic in the late eighteenth century.

As it turns out, these responsories are not the work of Antonio Juanas, but rather of former Mexico City chapel master Antonio de Salazar (c1650–1715), who had written the cycle for two choirs and continuo nearly a century earlier. In fact, this older version of the cycle, without violins, is preserved incomplete at the ACCMM (A1944) in parts copied during the 1730s, and it counts among the earliest examples of the responsory genre to be found at the cathedral. In the 1770s, chapel master Matheo Tollis de la Rocca (1714–1781) created the version that Endris recorded and published. Tollis de la Rocca composed the violin accompaniments to Salazar’s responsories and added his own reworking of *Duo Seraphim*, a motet by Tomás Luis de Victoria (1548–1611) that with emendation could function as the eighth responsory to complete Salazar’s cycle. A bass line written by Manuel Sumaya (1680–1755) suggests that Victoria’s *Duo Seraphim* had been performed with the Salazar responsories decades before Tollis de la Rocca’s intervention. Tollis de la Rocca also copied out a score of the complete updated version of the cycle (A1952). Dianne Lehmann Goldman has thoroughly documented this process (‘Adaptation as Authorship of Eighteenth-Century Responsories for the Holy Trinity at Mexico City Cathedral’, in *Conformación y retórica de los repertorios catedralicios*, coordinated by Drew Edward Davies, ed. Lucero Enríquez (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas – Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2016), 139–153), and the multigenerational authorship is also reflected in the published catalogue of the music collection (Lucero Enríquez, Drew Edward Davies and Analía Cherniavsky, *Catálogo de obras de música del Archivo del Cabildo Catedral Metropolitano de México*, volume 3: *Maitines, oficios de difuntos, invitatorios, lecciones y responsorios* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas – Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2019), 329). Confusingly, Antonio Juanas did write a responsory cycle for the Holy Trinity (A0335), but the music is unrelated to the Salazar–Victoria–Tollis de la Rocca version recorded on this album.

At the time of the microfilming in the 1960s, Tollis de la Rocca’s score had been mixed in with works by Juanas and had been incorrectly assumed to be the work of the later composer. This case

exemplifies how far knowledge of colonial repertoires has come in half a century. Furthermore, it emphasizes why stronger links between performing musicians and music scholars must be encouraged and forged today to facilitate knowledge sharing across different types of projects. In any event, this well-performed recording is a ‘must-have’ for those interested in eighteenth-century music from the Spanish world. Ironically, one of the other leading recordings of eighteenth-century music from Mexico City, Chanticleer’s *Matins for the Virgin of Guadalupe, 1764* (Teldec 3984-21829-2, 1998), fails to acknowledge that Antonio Juanas arranged, recomposed and added contrafacta to that responsory cycle. Altogether it is becoming clear that a multi-generational creative process was characteristic of the Mexico City repertory, and indeed for the attuned listener, it is satisfying to listen for the contingent layers of music in Endris’s recording of the responsories. While the incorrect attribution to Juanas might haunt these works for a while, it is remarkable that such a high-level recording has been produced of them. I truly hope Endris and others will continue to explore the music of Antonio Juanas and his affiliates, moving the recorded legacy forward hand-in-hand with new musicological research.

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